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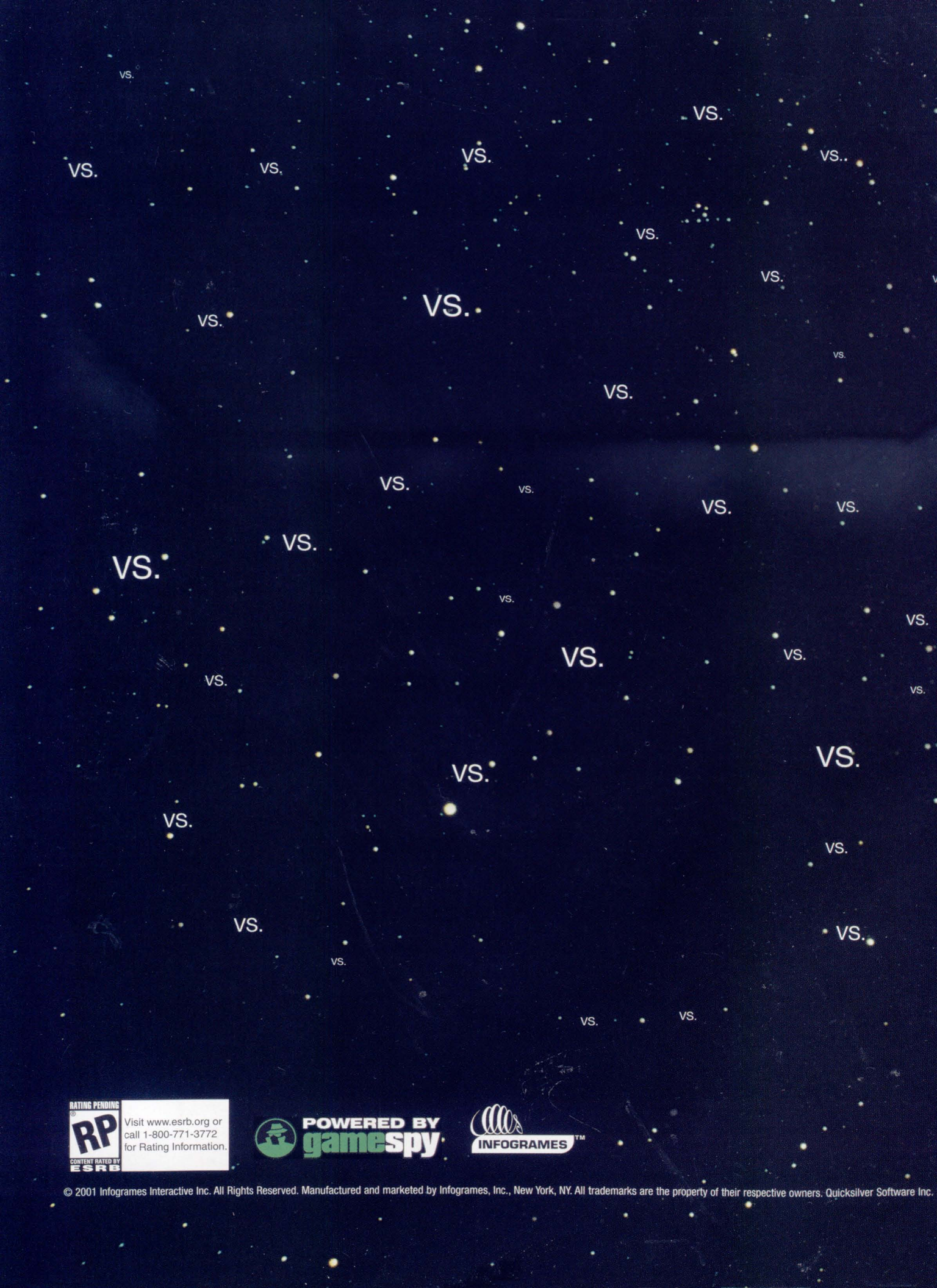
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Marc Sasso
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January/February 2003
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Romeo.
Courage, man; the hurt cannot be much.

Mercutio.
No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve: ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world.—A plague o' both your houses!

—*William Shakespeare*
Romeo and Juliet. Act III, Scene i

COVER

Marc Sasso shows us Volpone Venazzi, a gladiator from "Pandemonium in the Veins," standing ready to face any who would challenge his title of arena champion.

YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER

I'm a pretty lucky fella. I get to play in Chris Perkins's Wednesday night Arveniar campaign, I have the opportunity to enjoy Matt Sernett's Oriental Adventures office game, and I'm forced to endure—that is, I am privileged to be a part of—Jesse Decker's office gladiator campaign. But the joy of my gaming existence, the apple of my devilish eye, is the Sunday game I run at home.

Like most players, I long envied the power of the screen jockey, the uber-mighty DM. I ran the occasional game, to be sure, but not until 3rd Edition launched was I able to coerce a few of my gaming compadres to join me in exploring the possibilities of the new system. I began with six players, promptly drove half of them away, gained a few more, lost a couple, and finally, two years later, settled in with a solid group of loyal, hale, slightly off balance, and remarkably juvenile (like DM, like player, so they say) group of five willing to deal with my idiosyncrasies.

We play roughly every two weeks, but frequently my players get scarce for some reason. I've yet to find a pattern to their disappearances, but I'm sure I have nothing to do with it. Anyway, the sporadic nature of our sessions leads to some difficulties in campaign continuity. In a weekly game, it's easier for the players to stay focused and keep track of a campaign's inner workings since fewer days pass between sessions. The same isn't true of less regular session, which is the conundrum I want to address here.

Often, when my players sit down for a new session, I have to spend the first half hour reminding them what happened in the previous game. I often layer plots together with intertwining themes and intersecting story threads. It all works in my head (that might actually be most of the problem), but when I make a grand revelation concerning said twists, I'm met with blank stares and slack jaws as often as not (Sernett, one of the players, is working on the jaw thing, and I'm patient about the drool).

How frustrating! Here I've onioned together a plot of near Shakespearean complexity, but all for nothing. The plans of last month's villains reach out to touch the lives of the PCs in this week's session. The "randomly" dropped item of no discernible value suddenly turns out to be the key to a puzzle on the other side of the world. The petty evil-doers' goals are revealed as part of a larger conspiracy that could destroy reality. And they never make the connections. All this work wasted! But should it be?

I realized something early on in my campaign, when we first had to cancel a game session due to a lack of attendance: It wasn't up to my players to remember all the tiny details of the ongoing plots in the campaign; it was up to me to be sure the details remained memorable. Failing that, I needed to provide them with some way to retain the information I fed them, some way they could occasionally be given some sort of direction in the crazy morass of plots I threw at them each week.

Enter the Dungeon Master—you know, that little, bald freak with the creepy voice from the D&D cartoon who made a spot appearance in each episode to tell the kids where they next needed to go. Okay, in my head, I actually first thought of Gandalf, but the role is the same. I needed some figure of authority within the campaign who could show up, lay out the cards for the characters, intimate that he's much tougher than they are and knows what he's talking about (PCs respect nothing more than a show of chutzpah), then disappear. I needed the Dungeon Master.

What my players got was Chogrin Flagonbearer, a dirty, foul-mouthed dwarf with a magic mug who claims to serve the forces of light. He doesn't need to appear all *that* often—my players are pretty sharp (for mere players, of course). But when they start to look really lost, Chogrin or one of his emissaries shows up, straightens out any confusion that has arisen due to a lack of gaming time, then disappears. It's worked marvelously well.

I know lots of our fearless readers out there must have similar gaming schedules. How do you deal with lapses in player attention span? Send me a letter at **dungeon@paizopublishing.com** and let me know. I could use the help!

Chris

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Dungeon

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LETTERS

Tell us what you think of this issue. Write to:
Letters, *Dungeon Magazine*, 3245 146th Place SE, Suite 110,
Bellevue, WA 98007 or send an email to dungeon@paizopublishing.com.

CLARITY AND A WISH FULFILLED

Okay, it surprised me that you published my letter. Anyhow, you said that you wanted me to explain what I meant by tactical maps. I meant dungeon tiles, or floorplan maps of rooms or encounter areas that can be used as combat mats. This type of map was featured in the entry series of modules as well as *The Rod of Seven Parts* and *The Gates of Firestorm Peak*. These could be poster inserts or website downloads. This might be as easy as enlarging the maps in the module and releasing them in a 1 inch = 5 foot scale, probably one room per printable page.

Let me know if you have any other questions

Ted Albert
Via Email

Once again, our prescient cyborgs in the basement have granted a request before it can be sent in. Check out this issue's super-cool battle-map, intended for use with "Pandemonium in the Veins," as well as the companion map in Dragon Magazine *#303. They serve all your gladiatorial combat needs.*

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CORRECTION AND CLARIFICATION

I just received *Dungeon* #95 in place of my two-year subscription of *Star Wars Gamer* and found nothing in it about Star Wars. The letter I got from the publishing company wrote that the game content of *Gamer* would be in *Dungeon* and that fiction would appear in *Star Wars Insider*. This is the third month and I've seen no information on Star Wars; what's up?

I'm not putting *Dungeon* down; I like it just as much as *Gamer*. Now I have to have to go out and buy some of the back issues of *Dungeon*. Oh, and I did not see anything in *Dungeon* #95 that I could order back issues from.

I was reading the "Letters" section and was very happy to read about Gamma World d20 until I tried **www.gammaworld20.com**. It was wrong, though—you need to add another "d" to the address to get there: **www.gammaworldd20.com**.

Wes Young II
Hopewell, VA

It takes time for these things to fall together. Polyhedron editor Erik Mona has been working with Lucasfilm to get some Star Wars content in the magazine; you'll probably see something in issue #97. This is new ground for our staff, though, so be patient. And thanks for pointing out the Web address error. For those who missed the subtle difference, the correct address is: ***www.gammaworldd20.com*** *(two ds).*

WE'RE CONFUSED

I have never subscribed to *Dungeon* even though I live seventy miles from the nearest store that carries it. I have, however, been a faithful reader of the magazine since issue #6 (July/August, 1987). In fact, I'm looking at it right now. To summarize, there are six excellent adventures for characters ranging from levels 4–12. There is little else, so I have tried to grow as *Dungeon* does. The additions of sections like "Critical Threats" and "Side Treks" were welcome, but *Polyhedron* . . . well, I was uncertain, although the cover made it pretty obvious what lay within. I kept hoping though, and each issue I would read through *Polyhedron*. I hated every one, but I figured it was free, so it wasn't a problem. Now it's a problem, as I am paying an extra $2.00 an issue for something I don't use. Reader Calinda Lucas tried to tell you this in issue #95, but you discounted the opinion as silly.

True, Lucas had never read *Polyhedron*, but as I said, the cover is all one needs to see to know if it's something they'll enjoy.

Like it or not, *Polyhedron* and *Dungeon* have two different audiences, and I now resent having to pay for both. The reason I never subscribed is because I want the magazine on as many store shelves as I can get it (I purchased #95 in a bookstore that had never carried it until I requested they do so). I don't expect a price reduction, but I do expect something more for my money (issue #95 has only three adventures, discounting "Porphyry House Horror" due to its mature rating). *Dungeon* readers carry the magazine, and as your primary subscribers, you need to stop dismissing our criticisms and start doing something before you start losing those of us who have been patient through this transition period.

In the coming few months I'll keep buying and hoping, but if this isn't addressed soon, I won't be with you much longer.

John Daily
Via Email

We never dismissed Calinda's opinion. But we do respectfully disagree that you can dismiss POLYHEDRON*, or anything for that matter, without actually taking it for a test spin. The point we tried to make in our response is that* POLYHEDRON *might very well be worth the cover price to you; you never actually know until you give it a look. We strongly believe that you can't judge a book by its cover, to use the old cliché, and that there is something in nearly every* POLYHEDRON *for any D&D player. Our reader response has been nearly overwhelmingly positive regarding the flippy magazine; we regret the price increase, but having explored the other options, none of the others made the magazine healthy. And once more for the cheap seats: Neither* POLYHEDRON *nor* DUNGEON *was doing well on its own, but together they have a chance at success.*

As for the number of adventures per issue, we've been printing fewer in each issue because, due to the demand of our readers, we've been printing longer adventures. While "Side Treks" and other short adventures remain popular, the vast bulk of our readers cry out for longer, juicier adventures, so we've obliged them with modules like this month's "Pandemonium in the Veins" and "Beyond the Light of Reason." But the page count of the magazine is actually higher than it was with issue #6, and we now fit more words per page, so the amount of adventure content has only grown over the years.

JUICY VILENESS

Wow, where do I start? This is my first time writing a letter to *Dungeon Magazine*. I've been a subscriber for a couple years now and enjoy reading it from cover to cover—well I used to enjoy reading it when POLYHEDRON wasn't attached. But that's another story.

I'm writing to you about issue #95. All the adventures were quite good and interesting, especially "Porphyry House Horror." Let's see, we have demon worship, prostitution, interspecies relationships, magic narcotics, evil tattoos, necrophiliacs, cannibalistic monks, a masochistic ogre, and exotic and erotic spells and weapons . . . and I thought you guys were getting soft? Keep up the good work!

My favorite adventure so far, though, has been "The Harrowing" from issue #84.

I have a question: With the release of *City of the Spider Queen* will the drow be showing up in any future issues? Also, I really enjoy "Critical Threats."

Dave Howe
Via Email

"Spiral of Manzessine" from issue #94 easily tied in with City of the Spider Queen, *but it intentionally didn't feature drow so DMs and players alike wouldn't experience dark elf overload. Now that you mention it, we haven't had a good drow adventure in some time. We'll need to look into that . . .*

PERDIDO ME

I just wanted to voice my support for Erik Mona's plea for an RPG based on Mieville's *Perdido Street Station*, and would like to strongly recommend the book as an innovative, fresh, and well-written novel.

Gamers might especially be amused by the description of adventurers:

"They were immediately and absolutely recognizable as adventurers . . . They were hardy and dangerous, lawless, stripped of allegiance or morality, living off their wits, stealing and killing, hiring themselves out to whoever and whatever came. They were inspired by dubious virtues.

"A few performed useful services: research, cartography and the like. Most were nothing but tomb raiders. They were scum who died violent deaths, hanging on to a certain cachet among the impressionable through their undeniable bravery and their occasionally impressive exploits."

I cannot recommend this book any more highly.

Stephen Gryphon
RPGA #290016

NOT KID FRIENDLY

The sealed section of issue #95 was interesting, but please don't do it again. I have two problems with this kind of content: First, I like to use DUNGEONS & DRAGONS as a tool to get my six-year-old son excited about learning how to read, doing math, and solving problems, and it works like a charm. So, out of all of the volumes of gaming material I own, and fifteen some years of *Dungeon Magazine*, issue #95 is the only thing I won't be able to share with him. Second, I use DUNGEONS & DRAGONS as an escape from grim reality. I really don't want it to be a mirror of the same things the media bombards me with every day. I think there's enough graphic content in our world already.

Please let those people who want to play evil, in all it's glory, go out and buy the *Book of Vile Darkness*. I bet they'll be able to come up with their own adventures, and I'm sure they'll be just as depraved, if not more, than Monte Cook or James Jacobs. Personally I want to keep my escape from reality just that: an escape from reality.

Joel Rodda
Tacoma, WA

First of all, we knew going in that the sealed section wasn't for our younger (below 18) audience. But our research indicates that the number of our readers in that age category is incredibly small. That doesn't mean we want to discount those young D&D pioneers. However, we do want to present content that appeals to the largest portion of our readership possi-

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ble—that's how you sell magazines. We don't have more sealed or mature sections on the agenda right now; the verdict on the issue has by no means been decisive, but we're still waiting for more feedback. If you want to chime in, send an email to **dungeon@wizards.com**.

VILE IT UP

Great job on the latest issue, folks. The adventures were interesting and well-written with very enjoyable adversaries. I especially enjoyed the expandable adventure ideas that are included in all the adventures but left to individual groups to develop fully. Keep doing that—it's a way to remind us players you authors aren't the only ones with creativity out there.

I enjoyed the "Critical Threats" once again. Both these adversaries should prove interesting opponents should our DM use them, and I can hardly wait to foil whatever foul schemes they might try—neither can the rest of the party.

To the writer of *Nodwick:* My loving wife says to tell you: "Be aware that you have exposed something man was not meant to know. Despite the fact that you have done it in the wonderfully hilarious manner in which you usually write cartoons, the deed must still be punished. As you will soon be aware, the elder gods have nothing on us." I swear, sometimes I have no idea what she's talking about.

One more thing: I'd like to thank James Jacobs, Beet, Jonathan Wayshak, Lee Ballard, Christopher West, and whoever else worked with them on "Porphyry House Horror." Thank you for creating such a disturbing adventure. It is so vile that I trembled and gasped frequently while reading it, and yet at the same time your creation of Scuttlecove has done two very good things.

First, it has made me feel better about my work environment. I'm the head security guard at a decaying, low-income, inner city, riverside apartment complex that was, until recently, overrun with drunks, gang members, vandals, a professional car burglar, a greedy crooked manager, lazy bums, scam artists, and other assorted lowlife villains who I enjoy vanquishing on a daily basis. Many of said villains have recently been vanquished for good (hopefully) in part thanks to my own dedicated hard work, but they did leave a lot of physical and emotional damage in their wake that is only just beginning to be repaired and can never be forgotten. Let's just say I am glad to know someone can conceive of a worse place than where I work!

Second, the mostly lawful and neutral good adventuring party I game with now has a place where we can exert the impulses for mindless slaughter and destruction we indulge in without fear of our DM forcing an alignment change on any of us. Now if I can just convince him to import the place into the campaign and send us there to wreak havoc . . . Wish me luck, okay?

Doug Elder
Austin, TX

Thanks for the feedback. Speaking of Nodwick, *Aaron Williams was married while we wrapped up this very issue. Congratulations, Aaron!*

UN-SEAL-ME

First of all, thanks for a good magazine.

This month I felt compelled to provide some feedback on the structure of the issue. No more sealed sections please. Apparently they increase your publishing costs. In addition, people do not like to cut their magazines open to read them. I have seen many complaints on message boards from people saying their magazines were ruined during this delicate operation.

Secondly, I greatly appreciate the reproduction of the cover art on the inside of the magazine. However, please do not print it twice! Issue #95 reprinted the cover art on page 6 and on page 20. That space could be used for a longer adventure.

Jason Ward
Centennial, CO

If we didn't reprint the cover art facing the "Table of Contents," you'd just get another ad since we can't print a one-page adventure, and front matter is no place for a "Critical Threat."

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TEEN T
Violence
Blood
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

CRITICAL THREATS

BY DUNGEON STAFF
CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST



COLD STORAGE

The cold is unbearable. Although you thought your journey to this chamber was difficult, nothing prepared you for the sight of your own breath crystallizing before your face, and the oppressively frigid air that burns your lungs with each breath.

The chamber beyond the narrow tunnel in which you stand open into a massive cavern. The floor of your small passage drops precipitously a full 50 feet to the icy floor below, while the ceiling barely rises from its current height—just a few feet overhead in the tunnel. Nearly 60 feet away, however, an icy slope rises 30 feet into what appears to be a second chamber beyond the first.

To the east, a sluggishly moving river choked with large and small chunks of ice drifts into a low cave mouth. You can hear the sounds of splashing water—perhaps rapids or a waterfall—out of sight to the northeast.

The ice walls, floor, and ceiling glow with a pale blue light from some source beyond this chamber, creating pools of shadow throughout the cavern. Sadly, the luminescence brings no warmth.

TACTICS

The Cold Storage chamber works as an excellent point to stage tough encounters against creatures accustomed to fighting in the cold. The lighting conditions as described are eminently suitable for those of a roguish persuasion, and you can always alter them as you see fit. The two chambers in the room enable villains to engage in running battles against the PCs, and the freezing river presents a difficult obstacle for characters, especially if the foe has both cold immunity and a swim speed.

The southern room's ceiling ranges from 55–60 feet overhead, as does the ceiling over the river. The northwest chamber's ceiling is only 30 feet high.

The rushing water can be a significant threat in the adventure. The noise can conceal the movement of stealthy opponents moving into position to ambush the characters. Characters who fall in must not only deal with the danger of drowning (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 85) and being swept away (the river moves at 30 feet per round) but also with extreme cold (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 86). The river might also be totally frozen over with a 2- or 3-inch-thick layer of ice (hardness 0, 3 hit points per inch) that breaks when exposed to 50 pounds of weight or more. When the ice then refreezes within 1 round, PCs who fall in must break a new hole in the ice before resurfacing to catch a breath of air.

The icy floors might be covered with a layer of rough frost that enables characters to keep their footing without a problem. Alternatively, the ice might be extraordinarily slippery, requiring characters to make Balance checks (DC 12) or fall prone. Checks near the water are even more difficult (DC 17) due to moisture from the river. If you're especially devious, you might add a slight grade to the floor toward the water. PCs who fail their Balance checks and fall prone then begin to slide at a rate of 10 feet per round toward the water.

DEVELOPMENT

A group of half-water elemental (see the *Manual of the Planes*)/half-frost giants claims the Cold Storage as their lair high on some mountain peak. The giants come and go via a secret tunnel behind the waterfall, unaware of the small tunnel in the southwest that is covered by a thin layer of ice and frost. The leader of the giants, a fighter/cleric of Thrym named Rousikache, has found clues to an artifact capable of pushing the mountain snowline into the soft, fertile foothills below. Such a plan would devastate the towns that rely on the rich farmlands in these hills, killing numerous inhabitants in the process.

An old white dragon named Hezziurithues has been breeding a pack of half-white dragon/half-frost worm pets in the Cold Storage. Hezziurithues's plan is to take his offspring—full-blooded dragons and half-breeds alike—out of the cave and up onto the tundra proper to wage war against the tribes of northmen, giants, and other arctic denizens that live there.

Long ago, a group of renegade devas known as the Word of Law allied themselves with a group of devils to banish all the demons in the Abyss to another inhabited plane—a plot that would result in the utter annihilation of that plane's residents. Discovered by the rest of heaven before they could complete their plan, the devils were destroyed and the devas banished to an eternity of purgatory, frozen within a massive glacier on the Prime Material Plane. They have been locked in the ice of the Cold Storage for centuries now, but when the bold PCs enter the chamber, they unwittingly trigger a series of magical glyphs planted by a secret ally of the Word of Law when the rebels were first imprisoned. These wards were designed to thaw the ice entrapping the celestials; soon these devas will be free to pursue their dark plan once more. Ω



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HOLLOW THREATS

BY RICHARD L.J. PETT

ARTWORK BY LARRY MACDOUGAL

† Magic Items Monsters NPCs Objects Settlements Traps

"Hollow Threats" is a D&D Side Trek adventure suitable for four 1st-level PCs, but it can be modified for parties of different levels as noted in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. It takes place on any saltwater coastal region and can easily be dropped into an existing campaign.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs arrive at a coastal hamlet and hear a halfling merchant, Grubby Stinkhorn, tell the tale of a terrible dragon turtle menacing the nearby coast. Strangely, the merchant seems to care little about the goods he carries, nor anything of their value; he is much more interested in finding out about the strengths and abilities of the PCs. The actual menace is nothing more than a small family of orcs who have made a boat out of a dragon turtle shell they found; Grubby acts as their spy.

The evening wears on, and Grubby becomes very friendly with the PCs, whom he plies copiously with drink in the hope of dulling their skills for the morning after.

At dawn, the dragon turtle slips through the mist and its crew debarks to attack the town.

BACKGROUND

Gruntruff Slaphead ruled his orc tribe with a rod of iron, and woe betide any orc who mentioned his wig.

Bogbad was a lowly orc warrior in his tribe, strange in that he had a wife—Breedbound Fellface, who in truth wore the trousers in the family. She gave him four fine sons and countless scars over their years together, and as he entered orc old age, Bogbad hoped that one of his sons would be kind enough to poison him in his sleep. All this changed when Bogbad, on rug cleaning duty in his chief's bedchamber, accidentally set fire to Gruntruff's wig.

Fearing the worst, Bogbad decided to flee but was spotted packing his belongings by his wife. She insisted that she and the boys come along rather than stay at home and be punished in Bogbad's place.

As the sun rose, the orcs sought a place to hide. In the sunlight their eyes couldn't make out much, but they found what they thought was a boat, hidden in the marshes. Hardly able to believe their luck they cast off, paying little heed to the huge bones within. Exhausted from their flight, they fell into a deep sleep

The orcs awoke to discover that the boat had drifted into a town—doubtless crawling with orc-hunting humans. However, as the orcs peered out in fear, they noticed that the town appeared totally empty. Swimming to shore they discovered the town seemed suddenly deserted—meals lay on plates and shop doors were thrown wide open. Bogbad then looked back to sea and noticed the "boat" the family had stowed away on was actually the shell of a dragon turtle. It didn't take a great leap of logic to surmise that the townsfolk, upon seeing the "beast" enter the harbor, must have fled.

The orcs then embarked on a campaign of piracy using their new vessel, sailing into settlements at dawn and watching the villagers flee, even perfecting their plan by making semi-realistic dragon turtle growls through megaphones they found in a village. They also made the shell a moveable wooden head.

Shortly thereafter, they had their second piece of luck. Entering a small village, they stumbled upon a halfling named Grubby Stinkhorn hiding from the terrible beast. Grubby managed to convince the orcs that he could be useful, scouting ahead, checking out places to be raided, and ensuring everyone knew about the terrifying dragon turtle so the band could be sure that everyone had vacated the area.



FOR THE DM

The PCs arrive at the coastal hamlet of Fogly during the late afternoon. The place is probably little more than a stop on the trail, perhaps to some further adventure.

Grubby arrived just before the PCs, and after meeting them, the halfling attempts to assess the PCs' strengths. He notes the group as the hamlet's only real defense. Later, Grubby sneaks out to pass this information to his orc accomplices.

Remember that Grubby is in the village to ensure that the place is easy to attack. He does not want a fight. If attacked, he attempts to flee. The scoundrel has little loyalty to the orcs and will not risk himself to help or warn them. For their part, the orcs do not recognize Grubby as an individual—just a little man who dresses flamboyantly. Should the PCs track Grubby to the ship on one of his excursions to its hiding place, they could easily fool the orcs later by impersonating him.

FOGLY

♛ **Fogly (Small Hamlet):** Standard; AL NG; 250 gp limit; Assets 2,500 gp; Population 85; Mixed (human 79%, gnome 10%, halfling 8%, half-elf 3%).

Authority Figures: Polliducius Morningwhistle, fisherman and town council chair, male gnome Com3; Yari Reefseeker, fisherwoman and town council member, female human Com2; Wallice Ollingrot, shipwright and town council member, male human Exp2.

Other Notable Figures: Tubby Tubwide, landlord, male human Com2.

Famous for its sea mists, Fogly is a populated largely by fishermen. A dozen hovels cluster around the harbor, and a dozen fishing vessels sit drawn up to a pair of 30-foot-long timber piers. A large whitewashed tavern, The Speckled Cockatrice, sits at the center of the village. Run by Tubby Tubwide, the inn is poor and unremarkable. The villagers lead quiet, unassuming lives.

MEETING GRUBBY

Grubby, Male Halfling Rog1: CR 1; Small Humanoid (2 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 1d6+1; hp 7; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Atk +1 melee (1d4/crit ×3, punching dagger) or +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +5, Climb +1, Craft (trapmaking) +4, Hide +11, Intimidate +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +7, Search +2, Spot +5, Tumble +6. *Feats:* Improved Initiative.

Possessions: masterwork leather armor, punching dagger, light crossbow with 20 bolts, pack (see below), courtiers outfit, pouch containing 20 gp and 15 sp.

Grubby dresses in flashy, bright garments; he smiles constantly and is very talkative. He claims to be

traveling the area dealing in rare and exotic goods; in reality, the goods he carries are plunder from the last village raided by Bogbad's crew. He keeps this loot in a pack in his room at the tavern (see below).

Tactics: Grubby is interested in a safe and easy job; on first meeting the PCs he goes out of his way to be friendly. Anyone who makes a successful opposed Sense Motive check (versus Grubby's Bluff check) realizes the halfling isn't totally sincere in his overtures. He buys all the locals (and the PCs) drinks and continues to do so all day, Bluffing to make it seem that he drinks as much as everyone else. In reality, Grubby drinks very little. Later, he attempts to sell his goods to the PCs, although he has absolutely no idea of their value and haggles solely based on the PCs' first offer (assuming it is not ludicrous).

During the afternoon, Grubby tries to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the PCs, paying particular heed to those characters carrying ranged weapons and any spellcasters.

Trap (EL 2): Grubby's room is unlocked, but Grubby sets a a trap in his pack whenever he isn't in the room. A pair of wires release a crossbow bolt from out of the pack at the thief who fails to first find and disarm the trap.

Bolt Trap: CR 2; +12 ranged (1d10/crit 19–20); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

Treasure: Within the pack, Grubby keeps three *potions of bull's strength*, a set of thieves' tools, a pair of tapestries depicting hunting scenes (100 gp each), a pair of silver candlesticks adorned with symbols of Heironeous (50 gp each), a masterwork lute, and six flasks of holy water.

THE SETUP

Early in the evening, Grubby tells the following tale about his recent visit to a nearby hamlet just up the coast. Read or paraphrase the story as you see fit:

> It came into the bay at dawn, a great foul green thing, bigger than a church, I'd say, and wider than a village green. Its head was the size of a horse, with great teeth that dripped venom and jaws that gouted flame. The brave guards put up a fight, but what chance did they have? Only forty of them guarded the town; it squashed or ate them all. Only the ones who fled survived.

Characters can make bardic knowledge or Knowledge (local) checks (DC 15) once Grubby launches into his story. Those who succeed realize they've heard a similar tale. But no one recalls any mention of fiery breath or such a creature attacking a town large enough to have forty guards. Grubby attempts to enhance any description of the dragon turtle's prowess mentioned over the evening, as townsfolk ask nervous questions, and some even head home to pack a few belongings.

Just after dark, Grubby excuses himself and slips from the tavern, using Move Silently and Hide to escape unseen from the village. He heads for the cove where the orcs wait to warn them of Fogly's defenses. The journey takes about an hour. If questioned about his absence after returning, Grubby claims to have gone for a breath of fresh air.

Development: Presuming the PCs don't hunt down Bogbad and his family tonight (if they do, proceed to the "Orc Cove"), morning arrives. At dawn, Grubby slips out of the tavern once more. He finds a good vantage point of the harbor and waits to sound the alarm as the dragon turtle ship sails into the harbor. Once Fogly is on alert, Grubby dashes about town, adding to the panic and general mayhem. Proceed to "The Attack!"

ORC COVE (EL 3)

Until dawn, the orcs wait in their boat about a mile north of the village in a small cove.

The boat is a huge, green dragon turtle shell. It moves as a standard rowboat (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 150). The orcs have refined their ship recently; it now has a moveable timber head protruding from the front. Anyone who makes a successful Spot check (DC 15) can see it's a fake from 60 feet away. In the morning mist, the difficulty increases to DC 20.

Within, the shell forms a large, domed chamber approximately 20 feet round and 10 feet high. Numerous pieces of fine furniture have been nailed down about the room; unfortunately, the orcs have scrawled filthy writing over each article, making the lot valueless. A large locked chest lies near the head (see below).

Creatures: Bogbad isn't really the leader of the group; he never actually gets to make any decisions. That task is taken by his wife Breedbound Fellface.

Bogbad, Male Orc Ftr1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 1d6+1; hp 7; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, heavy mace) or +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +5*, Craft (weaving) +3, Hide +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +1. *Feats:* Dodge, Power Attack.

*Includes –2 armor check penalty.

Possessions: potion of cure light wounds, chain shirt, small steel shield, heavy mace, light crossbow with 2 bolts (he is only allowed 2 bolts, as his wife thinks he is incompetent with the weapon).

Breedbound Fellface, Female Orc Bbn2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d12; hp 18; Init

+1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Atk +6 melee (1d12+6/crit ×3, greataxe) or +3 ranged (1d8 +1/crit ×3, mighty composite longbow [+1 Str]); SA rage 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; light sensitivity, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will –2; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 11 Int 9, Wis 7, Cha 6.

Skills: 15 Hide +2, Jump +5*, Move Silently +2, Pick Pockets +2, Wilderness Lore +2. *Feats:* Blind-fight.

*Includes –4 armor check penalty.

Possessions: potion of spider climb, breastplate, greataxe, mighty composite longbow [+1 Str] with 20 arrows, noble's outfit, silver ring with gold filigree work (150 gp), two vials of fine perfume (20 gp each), gold choker (200 gp), great iron key (to the chest below).

Bogbad and Breedbound have four sons. Each is armed with a heavy crossbow and a scimitar.

Orcs (4): hp 4, 4, 5, 5; *Monster Manual* 146 except Atk +3 melee (1d6+3/crit 18–20, scimitar) or +1 ranged (1d10/crit 19–20, heavy crossbow).

Tactics: If forced into battle, Breedbound immediately rages and charges the nearest character. If reduced to half her hit points, she draws her potion (she has no idea what it does) and drinks it. She looks momentarily confused when nothing obvious happens, then continues to fight.

The four sons follow their mother gleefully into battle. They try to break away only if half their number fall, but they flee into the boat and try to row away.

Bogbad follows his family into a fight much more cautiously. He makes use of his two bolts before closing into battle with a weak-looking character. He fights only until reduced to half his hit points, then attempts to flee down the coast.

Locked, Reinforced Wooden Chest: 1 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 23); Open Lock (DC 20).

Treasure: The chest contains the orcs' plunder. In various bags and sacks they've stored 400 sp, 100 gp, and 50 pp; a small green bottle with gold stopper (25 gp) that contains a *potion of heroism*; and numerous valuable ladies clothes, two articles of which have yet to be spoiled by Breedbound: a green dress with silver buttons (75 gp) and a blue gown with amethysts sewn down the front (100 gp).

THE ATTACK! (EL 3)

The morning of the attack dawns misty and overcast. Grubby sounds the alarm as the ship approaches the shore, and the roaring of the "dragon turtle" begins. This noise is created by three of the orc sons growling and snarling through megaphones. A Listen check (DC 15) reveals that the growling of the beast is actually composed of several individual snarls. Also, allow the PCs a Spot check (DC 15—as described in "Orc Cove") to notice the false head sprouting from the front of the shell.

Unless PCs convince them otherwise (Diplomacy, DC 20, and they need proof of some sort), the villagers flee, leaving the place deserted. The boat soon emerges from the mist, and the orcs land. Unless they're attacked, they plunder the village. See "Orc Cove" for the family's tactics.

For Breedbound and her sons, the most important goal is to make sure no one can spread the word of their ship, so they fight until slain (see "Orc Cove" for the orcs' statistics and tactics). Bogbad, on the other hand, is more concerned about staying alive.

CONCLUSION

If the PCs flee, the orcs plunder the town and move on. If they stay and defeat the raiders, a number of other adventures could spring from this one.

- A local noble hears about the dragon turtle boat and approaches the PCs to use it to rid a nearby island of pirates.
- Gruntruff Slaphead appears on the scene a few days after the PCs kill the orcs and decides that through orc tradition, the crimes of Bogbad are now their crimes. Using hostages, he coerces the PCs into making him a new wig to replace the burnt one. He demands that the new one is exactly the same as the old one—made of the pelt of a fiendish dire wolf. Ω

Richard is a real life ranger who spends his time thwarting plots involving foul constructs in the spring, up in his woods and fields. He has just finished work on a full-length comedic fantasy novel.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Hollow Threats" is designed for 1st-level PCs, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

2nd- and 3rd-level PCs: Give Grubby an accomplice, add a level each to Bogbad and Breedbound Fellface, and double the number of sons.

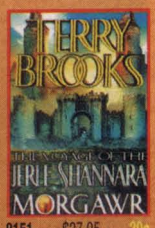
4th- and 5th-level PCs: Make Bogbad's sons 1st-level barbarians. Add two levels to both he and his wife. Make Grubby a 5th-level rogue who uses poison and is willing to fight with the orcs if they are confronted.

If you really want to complicate things for a higher-level party, consider having a furious Gruntruff show up as the battle between the PCs and orcs ensues. He could be accompanied by as many as a dozen orcs, and is both furious and intrigued by his former employee's exploits. Which side of the battle he joins is up to you.

PEER INTO THE POSSIBILITIES



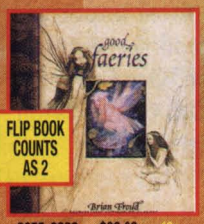
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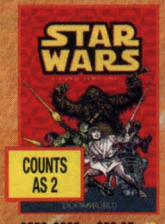
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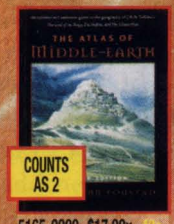
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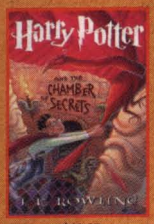
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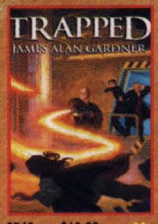
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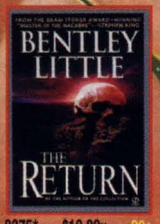
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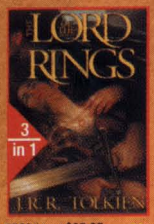
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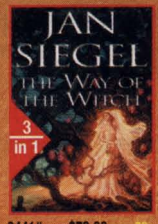
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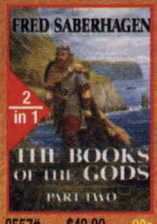
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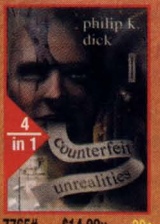
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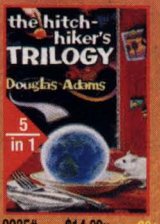
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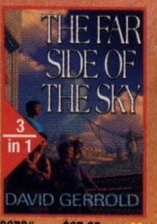
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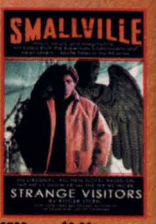
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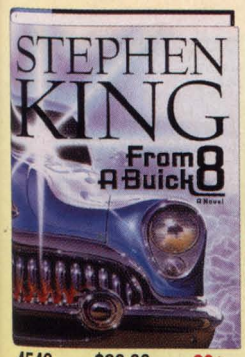


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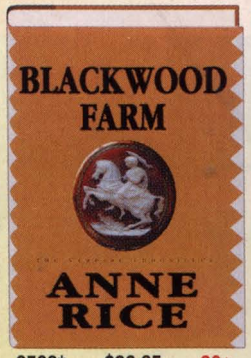
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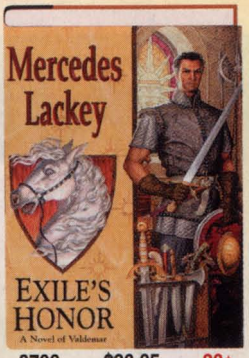
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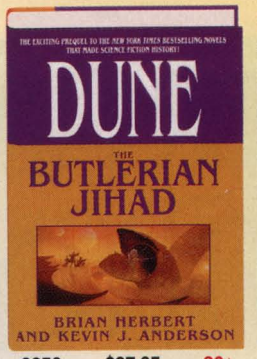
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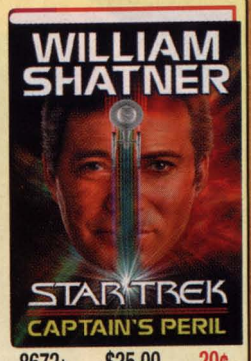
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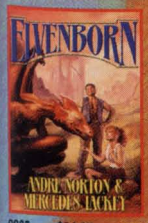
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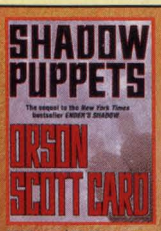
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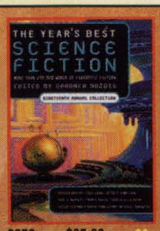
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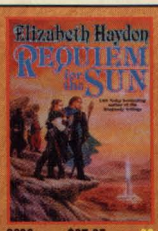
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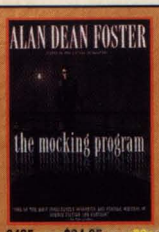
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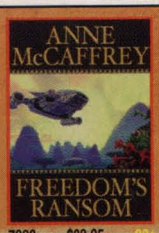
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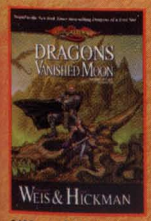


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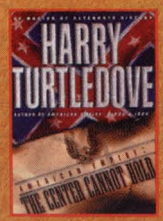
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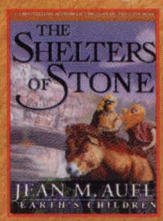
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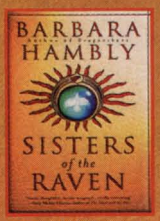
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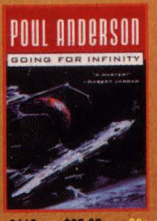
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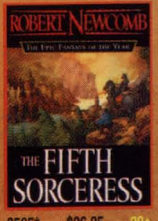
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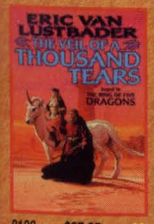
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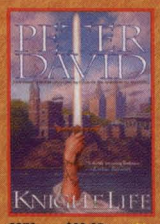
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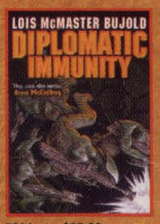
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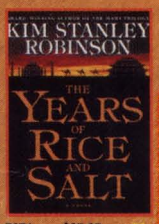
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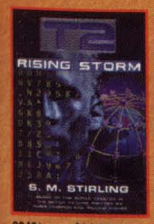
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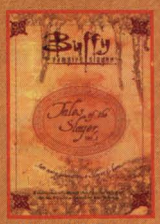
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PROVINCIAL PRIOR CAUSE

BY JOHNNY L. WILSON

ARTWORK BY VAL MAYERICK · CARTOGRAPHY BY KYLE HUNTER

† Magic Items Monsters NPCs Objects Settlements Traps

Based on an idea from T.H. Lain.

"Provincial Prior Cause" is a short D&D adventure for four 1st-level characters. It is ideal for moving adventuring parties from one geographical area to another via a large body of water. Although designed for a party with a paladin or cleric who is willing to be part of the Soldiers of the Sun (loosely based on the Templars), any party can end up on the adventure by encountering a dying or dead cleric and reading his letter from the Master General. Although the adventure can be set in any world with a coastline, the basic design here reflects events prior to those in T.H. Lain's *The Bloody Eye*.

BACKGROUND

When King Ingemar banished the Soldiers of the Sun from his land, they were forced to relocate their entire organization. The heads of the order, including Master General Theobald of Aquitaine, set a plan in motion to establish two bases of operations in different countries to minimize the chances of such a decree so thoroughly disrupting the group in the future. The Soldiers of the Sun tasked two of their most trusted members with half of the order's treasury each, sending them with a contingent of trusted guards to begin the construction of the new havens.

One of these Soldiers was the Provincial Prior Augustin Calmet. Sent to the backwater region of Caledon, Calmet soon fell out of contact with his order. Unknown to the Soldiers of the Sun, the prior became enchanted with the ancient, rural religion of Caledon and abandoned his faith to worship the god Gruumsh (a Celtic version of this deity would be Balor, not to be confused with the demon of the same name).

Meanwhile, concerned about the fate of the half of the treasure entrusted to the prior (as well as about the fate of their fellow Soldier of the Sun), the organization has decided to enlist the aid of some brave adventurers to discover what has happened in Caledon.

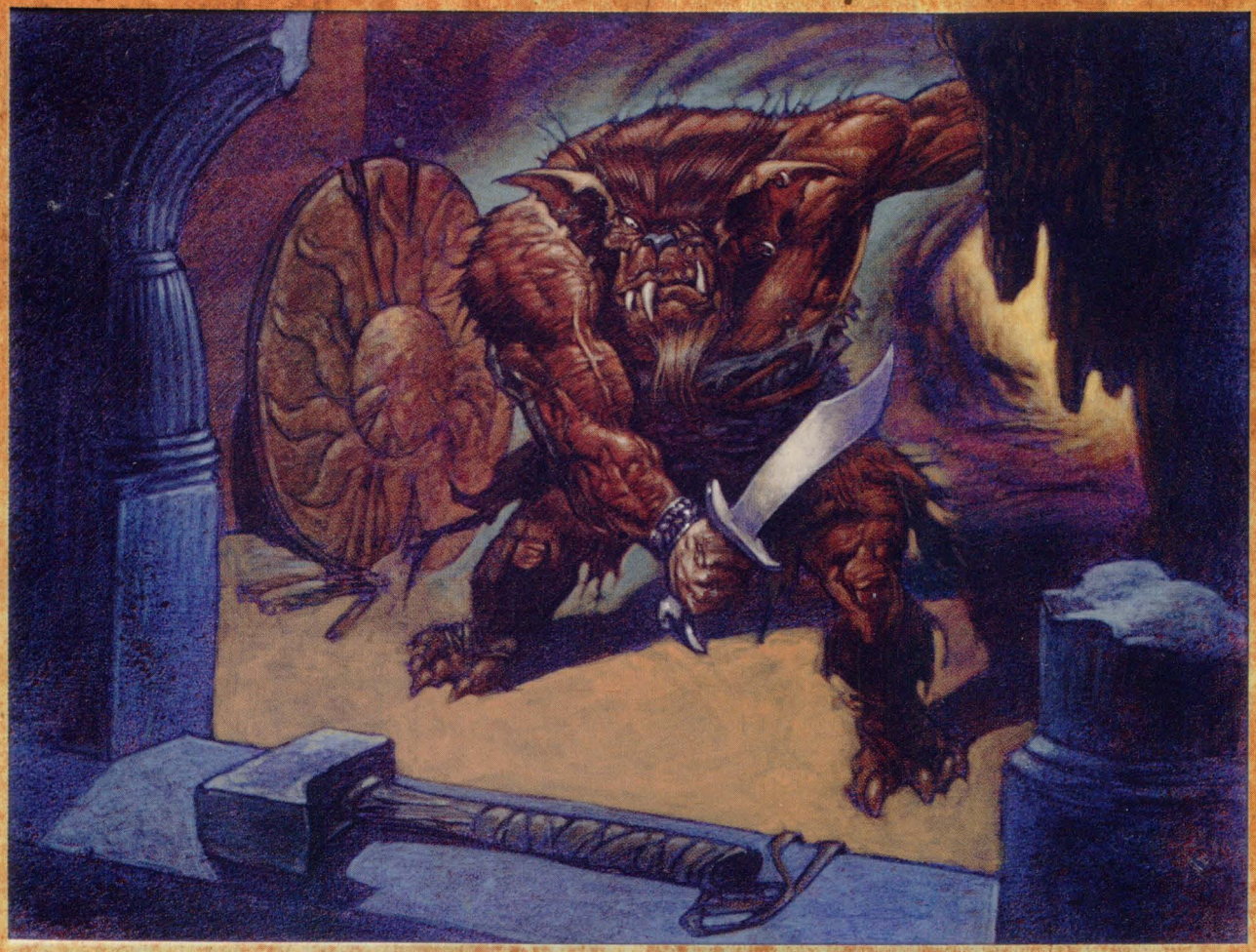
ADVENTURE SUMMARY

One of the PCs receives a letter from the Master General of the Soldiers of the Sun indicating that Provincial Prior Augustin Calmet, sent to Caledon to set up a haven for the order recently banned in the master general's homeland (as Templars were in France under King Phillip IV), has disappeared with the portion of the order's treasury. The prior was supposed to preserve the funds from the grasping hands of the homeland's sovereign, but no one in the order has heard from him in weeks.

While attempting to solve the mystery, the PCs encounter opposition that foreshadows more. At the prior's hermitage, on an island in a loch, they find a grotto beneath his hermitage with an alchemical laboratory, chapel, and library. They discover that Calmet was extremely taken with the old gods from the frontier—especially Gruumsh—and, in his desire to wreak revenge upon King Ingemar, sold his destiny to Gruumsh, the one-eyed god of the old tales. They also discover that he has taken the order's treasury with him to another location—one sacred to the ancient deities.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins when the PCs arrive in Ratik or any other land with a rocky shoreline. The shipmaster knows the cove where they are to land and uses the



ship's dingy to bring them close enough to wade ashore and meet the envoy herald, their guide to the hermitage. Before starting the action, however, read or summarize the letter from the Master General (see the player's handout).

Once the PCs have perused the letter, read or paraphrase the following as their boat approaches the shore:

> A low-lying mist makes the shadowed cliffside look like it rises from a gray slate cloud. You have been told that the dark scar of shadow in the midst of the cliff disguises a path to its summit. The misty fingers of fog grab at your legs with a cold grasp of uneasiness. The envoy herald should have been here by now, but you see no sign of him.

SHORELINE (EL 2)

The following text assumes that the PCs wade ashore. If you feel like making the characters make Spot checks (DC 12) to see the dead soldier lying on the shore, feel free. If this is the case and the PCs fail their checks, continue to the boar attack below. The PCs should find the body after the battle no matter what, since it serves as an important plot device.

> You stumble across a mail-clad figure, brutally bloodied and partially eaten. The dripping blood on his snow white tabard nearly covers the solar symbol of Pelor emblazoned over his heart. A heavy mace with a stylized sun atop its head is grasped in his hand. He is clearly dead.

Creature: Before the party can discover what killed the fighter, a wild boar charges out from the shadowy cleft and attacks.

Boar: hp 22; *Monster Manual* 194.

Tactics: The boar charges the largest PC and keeps attacking that foe until the boar or the character is killed.

After the boar is dead, read the following:

> As the killing blow is dealt, the boar turns its head to face its killer. For the first time, you notice that this boar has only one eye—a wild, angry eye that looks as red as the blood seeping from its wounds—that glares at you with intense hatred.

The body on the shore is that of the envoy herald the PCs were supposed to meet. He was attacked and killed

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"My Hardy Friends,
It is with the deepest anxiety that I must call upon thee to render a service to our order. As our intelligence indicated that His Bellicose Majesty King Ingemar intended to imprison all members of our order, seize our property, and confiscate our treasure, I commissioned two of our most fiscally sound priors to carry our treasury to safety in two disparate directions. One prior has successfully established a sanctum for our order in Whitefang Bay with the funds with which he was entrusted. The other, in most despicable shame, has disappeared with our gold. With heavy heart, I must ask you to trace the whereabouts of one Augustin Calmet, a Provincial Prior of our order, who was dispatched to the forest near Ratik to found a place of refuge for our brothers. Find him, I beseech you. Seek him out and compel him to repent and return the treasury of our brotherhood. Failing that objective, condemn him to the one we worship and dispatch his soul to that dimension of eternal agony he deserves.

His Grace,
Theobald of Aquitaine
Master General/Soldiers of the Sun

by the boar while waiting for the PCs' arrival after his escort climbed to the top of the cleft to scout the area. The escorts ran into some problems of their own (see "Cliff Top," below).

CLEFT PASSAGEWAY (EL 2)

A dark, barely 5-foot-wide cleft slashes through the cliff-face ahead, angling up steeply. The sides of the crevice are rough and rocky, while the floor is one large sand drift spilling down from the plateau above.

A simple Listen check (DC 10) allows PCs to hear several horses at the top of the cliff. An easy Spot check (DC 10) enables them to see the passageway through the rock that they spotted from the boat.

Trap: The horse thieves (see "Cliff Top") who frequently use this cleft have trapped it with a pair of spiked, spring-loaded planks. The two boards are concealed behind spurs in the rock about knee high to a human. When a PC steps on a trigger mechanism hidden in the sand of the cleft, both boards release. One targets the PC stepping on the trigger; the other is released 5 feet behind the first. The envoy's escort found the trap and climbed around it (Climb, DC 12).

Spiked Boards: CR 2; +12 melee (1d10); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

CLIFF TOP (EL 2)

Should the PCs circumvent the trap, they surprise the horse thieves at the top of the cliff. Read or paraphrase the following if this is the case:

As you reach the top of the cliff, you see six horses, saddled and ready to go, and two bodies lying face down in spreading pools of blood. One scruffy fellow attempts to hold all six horses by the reins, while another has just used his club to strike down a squire in the livery of the envoy herald.

If the trap goes off, the horse thieves are prepared for the PCs' arrival. In that case, the scoundrel holding the horses has dropped the reins and turns to face the new foes. If the trap goes off and the PCs take more than a minute to reach the top of the cleft, the bandits finish off the herald and actually set an ambush for the characters. Use opposed Listen and Move Silently checks, as well as opposed Spot and Hide checks, and give the thieves a free surprise round if they remain hidden from view.

Creatures: If any PCs rush to engage the horse thieves, neither attempts to use his shortbow. As soon as the thieves notice the PCs, Sandy drops the reins of the horses, which scatter into the night.

Alexander Pilson, Male Human Rog1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 6 in. tall); HD 1d6; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Atk +2 melee (1d6+2, club) or +1 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, shortbow); AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 9.

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) +5, Disable Device +5, Hide +5, Intimidate +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Search +5, Spot +6, Tumble +5, Use Rope +5. *Feats:* Dodge, Skill Focus (Hide).

Possessions: leather armor, club, shortbow with 10 arrows, 14 gp.

Sandy Yusler, Male Human Rog1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 1d6+1; hp 6; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Atk +0 melee (1d6, club) or +2 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, shortbow); AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will –2; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 7, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +4, Craft (trapmaking) +5, Hide +6, Intimidate +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +6, Pick Pockets +6, Search +5, Spot +2, Tumble +6. *Feats:* Dodge, Mobility.

Possessions: leather armor, club, shortbow with 10 arrows, 9 gp.

Horses (6): hp 19; *Monster Manual* 196.

Tactics: If the rogues aren't surprised, they begin combat by shooting the first character to emerge from the cleft with their shortbows. Once a foe engages in melee, they drop their bows and draw clubs. Once one of the thieves dies, the other attempts to flee.

Development: Be sure to share the information in the read-aloud text below before the party moves on. If the PCs actively look for the horses, 20 minutes of Searching turns them up.

Once the PCs have either killed, captured, or routed the thieves, the characters quickly discover that the herald is not dead, only unconscious. If revived, he can share the following information:

When he regains consciousness, the squire tells you his name is Aidan Pym. Hearing of the envoy herald's death at the tusk of a one-eyed boar, he vows vengeance against the old gods and Gruumsh, in particular. He tells you that Gruumsh is the one-eyed evil god of the orcs and agrees to lead you to the hermitage before returning for the envoy herald's body.

Aidan Pym, Male Human War1: CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 1d8+1; hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1/crit 19–20, short sword); AL LG; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +3*, Handle Animal +5, Ride +3, Swim +0**. *Feats:* Dodge, Lightning Reflexes.

*Includes –1 armor check penalty.

**Includes –4 penalty for weight of gear carried.

Possessions: studded leather, masterwork buckler, short sword, 14 gp.

Ad-hoc XP Award: The PCs should earn 200 bonus experience if they successfully rescue Aidan.

EN ROUTE (EL 3)

The island on which the hermitage is build lies about five miles inland in a loch, but the road ahead isn't entirely clear. Two miles inland, the party encounters a cleric of Gruumsh wearing an eye-patch, a one-eyed falcon, and the cleric's bodyguard. These three are looking for anyone sent by the Soldiers of Light. Calmet informed his new "friends" that someone might come looking for him. Consequently, an archprelate of Gruumsh named Thurston Laud sent Ulmut and Evan to scout for any such interlopers.

The muddy road stretches before you, making occasional sucking sounds as the horses lift their feet clear of the muck. Silhouetted against the somber gray sky sit two figures astride horses, one with a falcon on his arm. Aidan Pym points and cries, "He's one of the Gruumsh worshipers. At that, he wheels his horse about and flees into the underbrush. The figure with the eye-patch lifts his arm and releases the falcon, while the armored figure at his side charges your way. As the falcon takes flight, you can see that it, too, has only one eye.

Creatures: The cleric doesn't join the battle immediately, but he sends his barbarian companion to attack the PCs as soon as they are spotted. After 1 round, the cleric moves forward and begins casting spells.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Provincial Prior Cause" is designed to challenge four 1st-level PCs, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

2nd- to 3rd-level PCs: The adventure works fairly well for PCs of 2nd level, but 3rd-level characters need more challenging encounters.

- Add another 1st-level rogue (total three) to area **3**.
- Give Evan (area **4**) another barbarian level.
- Add another darkmantle to area **6**.
- Replace the homunculus (area **8**) with a pair of large zombies.
- Give Durim (area **10**) a level of rogue.
- Give Edfang (area **11**) another level or two of cleric.

4th- to 5th-level PCs: Following the pattern established in the changes above, consider the following options.

- Make the boar in area **1** a dire boar.
- Add another rogue (total four) area **3**, and make them all 2nd level.
- Give Evan another barbarian level (total three) and make Ulmut a 4th-level cleric.
- Replace the darkmantles (area **6**) with a cloaker, or possibly two.
- Replace the homunculus (area **8**) with two Medium-size earth elementals.
- Give Durim a fighter level (making him a Rog1/Ftr1) or replace him with a one-eyed minotaur.
- Give Edfang sufficient cleric levels such that his CR is one higher than the average party level.

Remember that changing the Encounter Levels should raise the amount of treasure in the adventure. Consult page 170 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (**Tables 7-2**, **7-3**, and **7-4**) to determine treasure appropriate to the new encounters.

Evan Remisthimis, Male Human Bbn1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 1d12+1; hp 13; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; SA rage 1/day; Atk +5 melee (1d8+3/crit ×3, battleaxe); AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +3, Listen +3, Ride +4, Search +2, Wilderness Lore +4. *Feats:* Dodge, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

Possessions: chain shirt, small steel shield, battleaxe, 40 gp.

Falcon: hp 4; *Monster Manual* 197.

Ulmut Thrawn, Male Human Clr2 (Gruumsh): CR 2, Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 2d8+4; hp 14; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk +2 melee (1d8+1, morningstar) or +2 melee (damage varies, touch) or +1 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +10*, Heal +5, Knowledge (religion) +3, Ride +1, Spellcraft +1. *Feats:* Combat Casting, Spell Focus (Necromancy).

*Includes +4 bonus from Combat Casting.

Spells (4/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, detect poison, light*; 1st—*bane, cure light wounds* ×2, *protection from good**.

*Domain spells. *Domains:* Evil (evil spells cast at +1 caster level), Strength (feat of strength 1/day—+2 enhancement bonus to Strength for 1 round).

Possessions: scroll of *cure light wounds*, half-plate, large steel shield, masterwork morningstar, 50 gp.

Tactics: As Evan and his falcon rush the nearest PC, Ulmut hangs back to cast *protection from good* on himself. He then moves into position to target as many PCs as possible with *bane* before moving to engage them with his morningstar and spontaneous *inflict light wounds* spells.

Development: If Ulmut and company don't report back to the hermitage within a few hours, the inhabitants there get nervous and are unlikely to be surprised by the PCs' arrival.

HERMITAGE

When the party nears the island, share the following description:

> A small cottage is built into the side of hill on the loch's nearest island. Tied to a small dock on the near bank are a number of small rowboats.

Provided he's still alive, Aidan can tell the PCs that the boats are free for visitors to the hermitage to use. He offers to ferry them across.

> Rowing you across to the island, Aidan tells you that the house is completely empty, but even from here you hear strange noises coming from the root cellar.

1. ROOT CELLAR AND TUNNEL (EL 2)

The house is indeed empty. Inside, the PCs find nothing more than a pair of battered wooden chairs, a table with three legs, and a pile of musty blankets half covered with leaves in one corner. When the characters move to investigate the root cellar, read or paraphrase the following:

> The trap door is open and the air is pungent with vegetal odors as you climb down the crude ladder. The cellar holds an assortment of rotting roots and tubers, but on one wall you see a crude opening that appears to become some sort of dark tunnel. From the mouth of the cave, you can hear dripping water. The cavern opening and floor of the cave descends at a gentle grade from the back of the cellar.

Creatures: The tunnel proceeds for roughly 30 feet before bending to the south. As the PCs reach the first bend (marked "B" on the maps), they are ambushed by a group of darkmantles. Allow the characters to make Spot checks opposed by the darkmantles' Hide checks to avoid surprise before the darkmantles trigger their darkness ability and attack.

> An unnatural darkness engulfs you. As you try to peer through the black, you feel long tentacles brush your faces and shoulders.

Darkmantle (2): hp 9; *Monster Manual* 39.

Once the darkmantles are dead, allow the PCs a Spot check (DC 15) to see the blue glow in area 2.

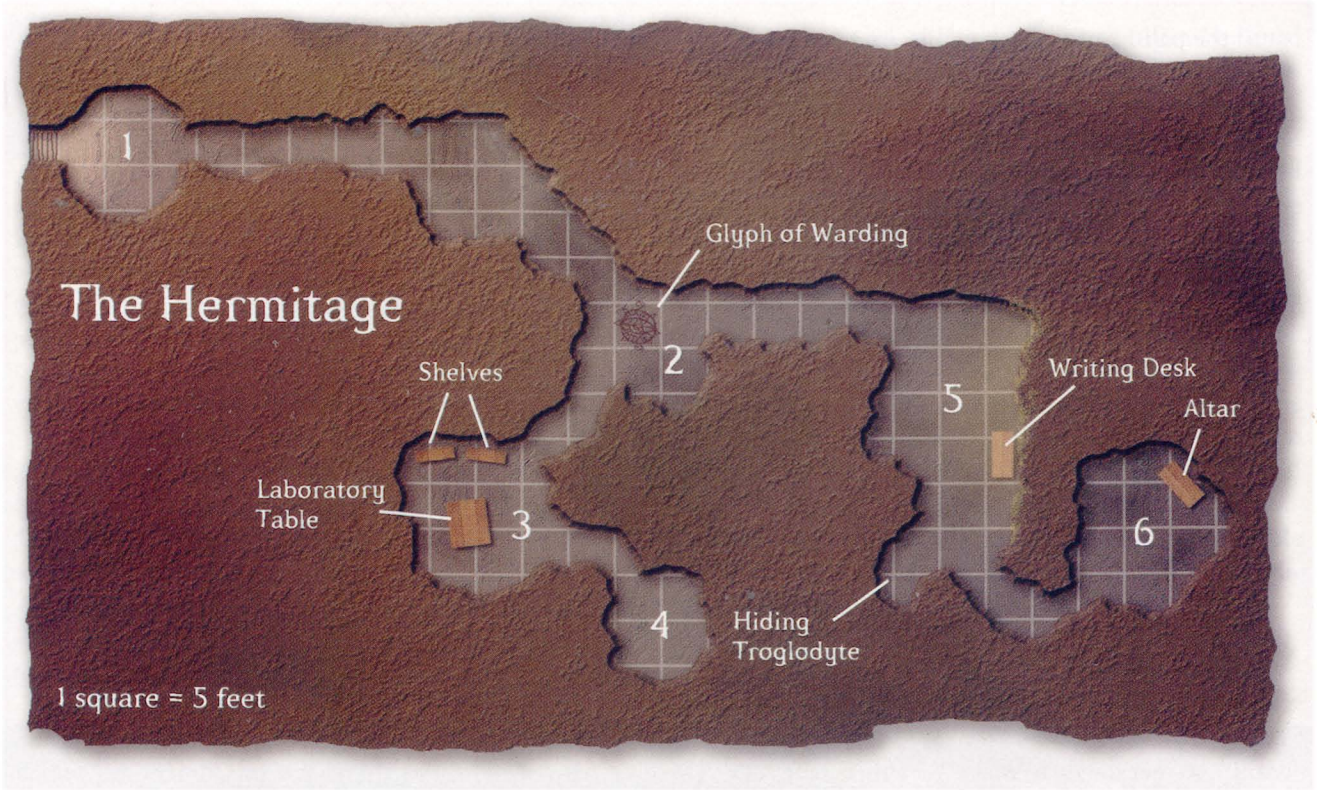
2. GLOW ROOM (EL 2)

This room serves as a warded checkpoint against intruders. The blue glow emanates from the floor of this chamber. It serves as a warning for wary PCs that something is not quite right about the room.

Trap: The characters should be concerned. A *glyph of warding* has been placed on the entrance to the chamber by Thurston Laud, Archprelate of Gruumsh. Unless a character states the passphrase, "Bow to the all-seeing eye of Gruumsh" the glyph is triggered by the first character who steps in the affected area.

Glyph of Warding: CR 2; *ray of enfeeblement* spell; Will save (DC 11) negates; Search N/A; Disable Device (DC 26). *Note:* The *glyph* does not reset once discharged.

After the party is finished with the *glyph*, read or paraphrase the following:



Two passageways fork from this chamber. The southwest passage glows with a trace of torchlight. The east passage is dark.

3. ALCHEMICAL LABORATORY (EL 1)

If the party travels toward the glow to the southwest, they enter Calmet's alchemical laboratory. Calmet has created a homunculus to protect his laboratory and to preserve his potion ingredients and potions. Read the following description and then allow the PCs to make Spot checks opposed by the homunculus's Hide check.

Shelves of fungi, dried leaves, and desiccated body parts are arranged on wooden shelving. A table with mortar and pestle sitting amid a half-dozen jars, two vials, and two candelabras stands in the center of the cavern.

Creature: The homunculus attempts to Hide from the PCs on the top storage shelf. If successful, it jumps from the top shelf and attacks the lead character.

If any of the PCs sees the homunculus, read or paraphrase the following:

In the midst of the leaves and fungi on the top shelf, a tiny creature with a vaguely humanoid form is readying itself to pounce in your direction. The one-eyed creature bares sharp fangs, spreads its tiny wings, and prepares to jump.

Homunculus: hp 16; *Monster Manual* 120.

Tactics: The one-eyed homunculus tries to jump from PC to PC, moving on if a character succumbs to its venom and falls asleep.

Once the party has dealt with the homunculus, they find the treasure listed below.

Treasure: On Calmet's workbench the PCs can find a *potion of delay poison* and two sunrods.

4. CRAFTING ROOM

As the party enters this small area, read or paraphrase the following:

There is nothing here save for a potter's wheel holding a half-formed clay creature similar to the one you just defeated. The bloodstains on the clay give the room a disturbing, coppery odor.

5. LIBRARY (EL 1)

This chamber reeks of sulfur; the scent emanates from a vein of the mineral that cuts through the wall. A writing desk holds quill, ink, parchment, and a stack of animal skin palimpsests. A grimoire and a book of local heraldry are stacked on the floor.

Creature: Calmet's manservant—a troglodyte named Durim—keeps up the library for his master. Unless the PCs have taken extraordinary precautions to be stealthy, the troglodyte has heard them coming and is hiding in the room. The creature won't attack

until the palimpsests on the table are touched or until the PCs attempt to enter the tunnel to the southeast.

If any of the PCs succeed at a Spot check opposed by the troglodyte's Hide check, read the following:

A gray-skinned, lizardlike creature dressed in a leather breechcloth hides near the southeast opening of this cavern. When he realizes that you see him, he flees down the tunnel, glaring at you from his one remaining eye.

Should the PCs attempt to follow Durim, they must contend with the troglodyte's stench ability as soon as they come within 30 feet.

Durim, Male Troglodyte: hp 13; *Monster Manual* 179. Note that the troglodyte, like the other creatures in the cavern, has only one eye.

Tactics: The troglodyte retreats into the tunnel so that he must face only one PC in melee at a time. He triggers his stench ability, sets his longspear against a charge, and waits for someone to come within reach. When the troglodyte's stench is activated, anyone within 30 feet needs to make Fortitude saves (DC 13) or be overcome with nausea. Durim tries to target unaffected PCs with his melee attacks first.

Upon defeating the troglodyte, the party can read the palimpsests.

The top skin was recently scribed. It reads, "Archprelate Laud is correct. We must turn to the more powerful gods and use them for our purposes. He has taught me how to channel the power of Gruumsh, the one-eyed god of the orcs. I believe I can become Gruumsh's avatar by restoring the old gods. I must find and rebuild their holy shrines."

The second skin has a "Hymn to Gruumsh" in one hand with some scribbling that appears to be in Draconic below it. If any PC reads Draconic, the phrase simply reads: "May only be summoned during Beltane ritual." The others have ink scratched off, but no new writing. One is recognizable as the financial accounts of the Soldiers of the Sun before Calmet absconded with their gold.

6. SHRINE (EL 3)

Once the party nears the opening to the final cavern, read or paraphrase the following:

An agonized cry of pain, half-human and half-animal, sounds from the upper tunnel as you approach a cavern. "Desecration!" growls the voice inside the cavern. A bright light flashes and you hear the cry again. As you approach the entrance to the chamber, you see a bugbear eyeing a hammer on the floor with his lone, good eye. A splintered wooden holy symbol with inlaid gold rests on the altar behind him.

Creature: Edfang, the bugbear standing over the hammer, was tasked by Calmet to destroy the Hammer of St. Winfrid. This minor magic item isn't superbly powerful, but it plays an important part in the history of the Soldiers of the Sun because it was once supposedly wielded by a saintly member of their order.

The bugbear can't use the hammer but is perfectly capable of wielding his scimitar effectively.

Edfang, Male Bugbear Clr1 (Gruumsh): CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 4d8+4; hp 25; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Atk +5 melee (1d6+3/crit 18–20, scimitar), +5 melee (damage varies, melee touch), or +4 ranged (1d6+3, javelin); SA spells, rebuke undead 2/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +2, Concentration +7*, Hide +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Spot +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting.

*Includes +4 bonus from Combat Casting.

Spells (3/3; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor, detect magic* ×2, *read magic*; 1st—*cure light wounds, doom, protection from good**.

*Domain spells. *Domains:* Evil (evil spells cast at +1 caster level), Strength (feat of strength 1/day).

Possessions: potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of invisibility, scroll of *inflict light wounds*, masterwork studded leather, morningstar, javelin ×3, note from Calmet (see below), topaz (100 gp), 64 gp, 140 sp.

Tactics: Edfang casts *protection from good* on the first round of combat, then drinks his *potion of invisibility*. In the following round, the bugbear casts *inflict light wounds* from his scroll on any clerics or paladins he can see, or another spellcaster if no holy PCs are present in the group. Once visible, Edfang uses his morningstar primarily, although if someone looks close to death he tries to finish him off with a spontaneous *inflict wounds* spell.

Development: The note carried by the bugbear cleric reads, "When you've finished this simple task, join us at the rendezvous. The rebuilding of Scaun awaits our attentions."

Hammer of St. Winfrid: This *+1 warhammer* radiates a slight aura of positive energy. While it has no effect when wielded in combat, an evil creature who attempts to wield the weapon takes 1d6 points of divine damage. Merely being within 5 feet of the weapon makes evil creatures uncomfortable, although they suffer no penalties for doing so.

Caster Level: 1st; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *protection from evil; Market Price:* 2,312; *Cost to Create:* 1,312 gp + 80 XP.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Give the PCs a bonus 300 experience if they gather all the clues about the clergy of Gruumsh and learn about Scaun.

CONCLUSION

With the name of Archprelate Laud and the idea of rebuilding Scaun implanted in the party's mind, other adventures can result. The party might be recruited by the Soldiers of the Light to continue to seek Laud, Calmet, and Scaun. The adventurers know that Archprelate Laud is behind a conspiracy to bring more power to the ancient gods and that Calmet has fallen in with this conspiracy. They also know that something is going to happen in or near a place called Scaun.

Such adventures might involve tracking either Laud or Calmet across country, finding out more about Gruumsh, discovering what could be happening at Scaun, or facing down expressions of the more vengeful gods wherever they are found. Encounters with one-eyed monsters can tie together adventures and help the party know they are on the right track. A short campaign builds on this adventure in T.H. Lain's fifth novel, *The Bloody Eye.* Ω

Johnny L. Wilson is President of Paizo Publishing, LLC, as well as author and co-author of several bestselling books on computer games. His SimCity Planning Commission Handbook *and* High Score! The Illustrated History of Electronic Games *provide a nice counterpoint to his theological articles in* The Mercer Dictionary of the Bible *and* Holman Bible Dictionary. *This is his first adventure for* DUNGEON.

ISSUE #97 PREVIEWS

LIFE'S BAZAAR

by Christopher Perkins

The city of Cauldron nestles quietly in the mouth of a dormant volcano. But then people begin to disappear from the streets, and the rumormongers whisper of dark dealings somewhere in—or perhaps below—the once idyllic metropolis. "Life's Bazaar" launches the all-new, first-ever *DUNGEON Magazine* Adventure Path. Begin a new campaign within the Shackled City, or simply run "Life's Bazaar" a own stand-alone module. A D&D adventure for four 1st-level characters.

See page 62 for more details on this exciting new campaign!

HEART OF THE IRON GOD

by Campbell Pentney

Long ago, an order devoted to Heironeous and the powers of good built a massive construct. Designed to guard against the forces of darkness in the area—especially those dedicated to the god of slaughter, Erythnul—this structure resembled a gargantuan iron man. Powered by the soul of a holy worshiper of Heironeous who was willing to give his life for the cause of good, the Iron Colossus wiped out the forces of darkness for miles around. When it was needed no more, it lay dormant; eventually, its existence was forgotten.

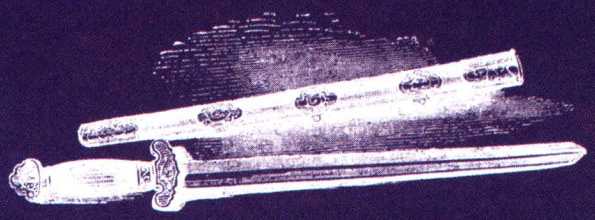
Now the Colossus walks the world again, but this time, on a path of destruction. Does this once potent force for good now operate of its own volition? Or does some dark power now have control of the iron monstrosity? Only a brave group of powerful champions can penetrate the hull of the Colossus and uncover the truth. A D&D adventure for four 13th-level characters.

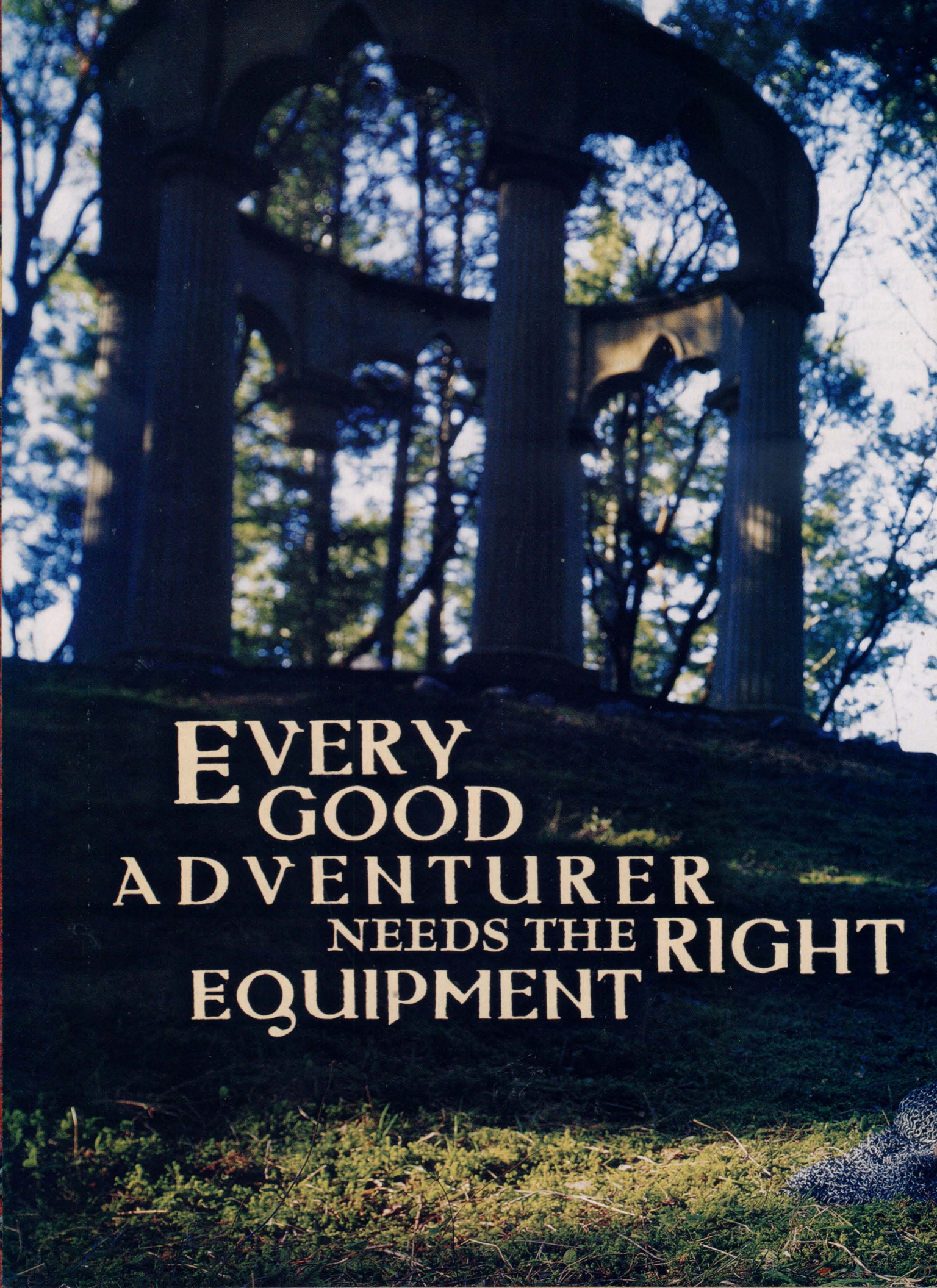
DEMONBLADE

by Hank Woon

Those who yearn for ultimate power pay a dear price. Lord Tathos longed for the day his father would die and he could take control of his family's lands. When that day comes sooner than expected, the local landholders whisper of Tathos's ambitions.

The situation in and around the town of Manderaun quickly takes a turn for the worse when Tathos's hubris leads him to seek out the terrible weapon known as the *demonblade.* As the blade's imprisoned inhabitant begins a gradual conquest of Tathos's soul, strange creatures from the depths of the Abyss begin to ravage the land. Only determined heroes can stop the creature Tathos has become from raising an army of evil and setting forth on a war of conquest. A D&D adventure for four 16th-level characters.




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Marc Silvestri

PANDEMONIUM IN THE VEINS

BY FRANK BRUNNER

ARTWORK BY MARC SASSO AND DEREK THOMPSON
CARTOGRAPHY BY ARNIE SWEKEL

"Bodies fall by wild sword-law;
But who would force the Soul, tilts with a straw
Against a Champion cased in adamant."

—*William Wordsworth, "Ecclesiastical Sonnets"*

† Magic Items Monsters NPCs Objects Settlements Traps

"Pandemonium in the Veins" is a gladiatorial D&D adventure suitable for four 5th-level characters. It is both site- and event-based; the primary location is an arena nicknamed the Veins, and the primary events are gladiator matches held therein. Characters who survive should advance to 6th level by the adventure's conclusion, and they might also earn a number of Fame or Infamy points (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules"). The adventure can very easily be adapted for stronger or weaker PCs by increasing or decreasing the number and power of the opponents, as noted in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. Note that although this adventure deals with the topic of drug abuse, such use is not encouraged, and in fact, like the real world, leads to the deaths of NPCs in the adventure. Player characters who indulge risk a similar fate.

"Pandemonium in the Veins" works well in conjunction with "Campaign Components: Gladiators" in DRAGON *Magazine* #303. Expanded rules for gladiatorial combat and campaigns can make this adventure even more exciting for your players.

BACKGROUND

Constructed nearly five hundred years ago, the Nyos Amphitheater takes its nickname, the Veins, from the scarlet striations that run through its white marble building blocks. Over the bloody centuries, the Veins has played host to many of the most famous pit fighters in the land.

Last year in the "Thunder Throwdown" match, one fighter unwittingly provoked a madman whose prescription for vengeance threatens to destroy the arena. That fighter was Thel Achillia, she of the trademark triple-plaited hair and adamantine-trimmed leather armor, and the provocation was a particularly memorable kill—namely, when Thel bull rushed rival gladiator Arxus Nod into an Ankheg Pit. Thel was not being cruel; combat in the Veins is bloodsport, and she also knew that the arena clerics could *raise* Arxus after the event.

Thel didn't count on Arxus's demented father.

Paramezzus Nod saw in his son's death the chance to prove himself. For long years, toiling as the arena physician in his office below the stands, Paramezzus listened to the echoing cheers of the crowd. The happy sounds haunted him. Gladiators won glory and the adoration of thousands, clerics drew plaudits and gifts of golden rings from raised fighters, but Paramezzus and his alchemical skill languished unrewarded. Where was the laurel for the tonic that soothes the sword-sore muscle? Where the championship helm for the blood-staunching cataplasm, and where the medal for the oil that glistens on posing fighters' chests? With each slight, Paramezzus grew more embittered. Seeking to combine his alchemy with the priestly powers he both despised and coveted, he took up the blunt club of Erythnul the Many, Lord of Slaughter, and researched arcane and terrible new physicks. He believed he had succeeded in making

discoveries of unsurpassed puissance, and when his son died, in a paroxysm of hubris he forbid the arena clerics from *raising* the gladiator. Instead, he tried to use his most potent distillations to revivify the young warrior in the hopes of bringing him back stronger, faster, and deadlier. Then everyone would witness Paramezzus's power.

Of course, the father failed miserably. His foul concoctions ravaged the boy's body beyond aid, rendering it down to a foul, black ichor. Unstable to begin with, Paramezzus now slipped completely into madness; as his son's remains deliquesced, so did his psyche.

The crazed alchemist blames not himself but Thel, the other gladiators, and the arena for Arxus's death. He has concocted a scheme for revenge that began when he made the illicit drug bloodrush available to the Veins gladiators (see the sidebar for bloodrush's statistics). Fighters who have secretly developed a bloodrush habit are unaware of the drug's debilitating, and ultimately lethal, effects. Already, many gladiators have died from its use. Once his toxic attrition has sufficiently thinned the ranks of the professional fighters, Paramezzus plans to complete his perfidy by striking Thel, the fans, and the arena itself, possibly slaughtering thousands in his mad quest for vengeance.

Meanwhile, Thel has no idea that Paramezzus is behind the gladiator deaths. She does know that the physician with the crooked spine has always hated her. At first, it was because Arxus loved her and she rejected him. Punctuated by execrable poetry and unaccepted invitations to the Nyos Gardens Cotillion, those years were hard enough. But after she threw Arxus to the ankhegs and the revivification was botched, she realized that Paramezzus must writhe at night with hatred for her. Still, she considers Paramezzus too frail and doddering to be a serious threat.

Sand Net, on the other hand, is neither frail nor doddering.

Two main gladiator stables vie for supremacy in the Veins: Sand Net and Thel's eponymous stable, Achillia. Sand Net has ties to the Nyos Thieves' Guild and is headed by the current arena champion, the erudite colossus Volpone Venazzi. Venazzi and his organized criminals have corrupted the arena commissioner and constantly pressure Thel to sell her Veins ownership shares, which currently constitute a slim majority. Thel suspects that Sand Net is behind the knife murder of her father two years ago, the former Achillia stable boss, and even though some Sand Net gladiators have perished of the current mysterious illness, Thel suspects that Sand Net orchestrated those deaths as a cover for their activities.

Achillia stable has been decimated by the recent bloodrush killings. Because Paramezzus hates Thel's stable more than any other, he has been especially aggressive in the locker rooms and baths when hawking his vile drug to Achillia gladiators. The remaining Achillia gladiators are growing increasingly paranoid, and the traditional rivalry between Sand Net and Achillia have reached the boiling point. Even a chance meeting between Achillia and Sand Net fighters in the bazaar might lead to drawn blades.

With her last relative, her father, dead, and with her gladiators dying, Thel stands athwart the tides of fortune, fighting for her arena and her stable—and desperately looking for help.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

In a bustling bazaar, two Sand Net rogues steal up to a wheeled cage and pick the lock, releasing a slavering, arena-bound manticore on the innocent city folk. The characters dispatch the manticore and thereby win the attention of both the Sand Net and Achillia gladiator stables. Achillia recruits the PCs, and Sand Net marks the meddling characters for surveillance and possible extermination.

Stable houses, training fields, arena clerics, beast pens, and more are off limits to civilians; therefore, the characters assume gladiator identities and go undercover to stop more prize fighter deaths. As official doctor and unofficial procurer in the Veins, Paramezzus has been eagerly applying bloodrush poultices to the gladiators' necks before their matches. Ultimately, the PCs link the killings to the alchemist's base drug. When Paramezzus is faced with evidence of his treachery, a *contingency* spell whisks him to the pits, where he frees all the gladiatorial beasts, sets the arena ablaze with alchemist's fire, and then sets off to kill Thel amid the chaos. His son, who survives as a ghost possessing a black pudding, harries the PCs while they fight through a stadium gone mad, trying to stop Paramezzus, save Thel, and protect the fans.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The first portion of the adventure is event-based. The four events marked "Plot" (**Events 2**, **6**, **10**, and **17**) are essential to the plot and presented in chronological order. Other events are grouped along with these events into "blocks." In general, events in a block can be staged in any order. See the timeline for a list of events by block and time. At nearly any point in the event-based portion of the adventure, a PC or a DM can initiate a gladiatorial match using one of the gladiators from the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar. The match can be given an extra twist by consulting the

"Spice on the Sand" sidebar. Also, PCs can (and should) leave the keyed events and interrogate suspects, witnesses, and bystanders throughout the arena at any point. Use the appropriate "Gather Information" sidebars (**Event Block A** or **Event Blocks B and C**) to assess the results of their investigations.

The second portion of the adventure is a site-based room-to-room slugfest (or sneakfest or gabfest, if parties are so inclined). Simply track the players' actions through the locker rooms, the Cloud Boxes, and the rest of the Veins as you would through a normal dungeon.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Nyos Amphitheater can be placed in any major urban center. The following hooks can pull the PCs into the action:

- Achillia youth Rufillius "Short Fang" Syreme recruits the PCs after they face down a rampaging manticore in the Amphitheater Bazaar.
- A PC or friendly NPC exhibits symptoms matching those of the dying gladiators (Paramezzus was covertly doping the ale at the Spotted Mastiff with test prototypes of bloodrush the last time the PC or NPC stopped by to lift a flagon). To save her, the party must discover what is felling the gladiators. In fact, because of the prototypical nature of the ingested drug, the character is in no danger—but she doesn't know that.
- The PCs respond to an Achillia kiosk poster offering a 250 gp signing bonus for any new fighters joining up to replace stricken veterans. There is an additional reward of 1,000 gp for information that helps stop the deaths.
- A former comrade-in-arms or henchman of the PCs strapped on arena armor after leaving the party. The character is now dying and appeals to them for help. "I've nothing to offer you now, but if you get me well and out of this priest's armpit they call a temple, I'll show you how to slaughter a girallon bare-handed."

LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE

Start through the following events and event blocks when you're ready to begin.

1. A MANTICORE IN THE CHINA SHOP—THE BAZAAR (AREA V6)

Stick and Drag, two Sand Net members, have loosened the bolts on a manticore cage. The cage door works open in the middle of the arena Bazaar, and the manticore, though still chained, crashes out of the cage and flails mightily against his tether. The hapless Achillia handlers can only duck and cover with the rest of the market-goers while the PCs bring down the beast.

Fruit mongers, criers, beggars, vintners, cobblers, weavers, and glassblowers all vend and toil in this open-air market. Suddenly, a bony black spike splits a nearby coconut, which begins gushing milk. A panicked hue rises behind you.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Pandemonium in the Veins" is intended for four 5th-level characters, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

1st- and 2nd-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following adjustments:

- Reduce all classed NPCs by 2–3 levels. Make Paramezzus a Sor3/Clr1.
- Change the girallons to wolves, the owlbear to a worker giant ant, the manticore to a bugbear, the phantom fungi to violet fungi, the huge zombie to a large zombie, and the wyvern to a medium air elemental.
- Make Arxus a gray ooze and the ochre jelly a gelatinous cube.

3rd- and 4th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following adjustments:

- Reduce all classed NPCs by 1–2 levels.
- Change the girallons to lions, the phantom fungi to violet fungi (but let Paramezzus cast *invisibility* on them first), and the wyvern to a griffon.
- Make Arxus an ochre jelly and the ochre jelly a gray ooze.

6th- and 7th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following adjustments:

- Increase all classed NPCs by 1–2 levels.
- Change the phantom fungi to a tendriculos, the ankheg to a bulette, the manticore to a chimera, the huge zombie to a gargantuan zombie, and the wyvern to a dragonne.
- Give Arxus a level of sorcerer and a toad familiar that he will die to protect from his father.

8th- and 9th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following adjustments:

- Increase all classed NPCs by four levels.
- Add a lamia to the manticore encounter, add a tendriculos to the phantom fungi encounter, make the girallons athachs, make the huge zombie a gargantuan zombie, and make the wyvern a dragon turtle and the Caltrop Match a naval battle (the PCs are given one 10-foot raft to perch on).
- Give Arxus four levels of sorcerer, a toad familiar as above, and several *potions of haste* he keeps stashed in the foundation.
- Place a *mirror of opposition* in Paramezzus's office.

This manticore was condemned to the arena for rapine in the Sheldomar valley farmlands. Stable Achillia bought his contract and was delivering him to the Veins when the Sand Net factors struck, trying to make Achillia look dangerously incompetent in the eyes of the commoners. Stick and Drag have vanished by the time the PCs face the manticore, although Sand Net sympathizers in the crowd inform the nefarious factors of what transpires.

Creature: The manticore is Gar. Because he has not yet had his tail clipped for arena fighting, he is able to use his full attacks.

Gar, Male Manticore: hp 57; *Monster Manual* 130.

Neck Fetter: 1 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 20; Break DC 26; Open Lock DC 20.

Tactics: Gar flies up to the 50-foot limit of his chain and thrashes furiously, trying to break the fetter. Once attacked, he looses volleys of six tail spikes each round for 4 rounds while winging to and fro as high in the air as possible. On the fifth round, because he is out of spikes, Gar uses the dive action, which makes his claw attacks do double damage, although he must forgo his bite attack this round (see the *Monster Manual*, page 7, for more details). In subsequent rounds, Gar attempts to maul any the six Achillia handlers still standing or the PCs, should any of them attack the beast.

Note that multiple strategies can be successful with Gar. If a rogue leaps into the wheeled cage and picks the lock on Gar's chain, the evil creature immediately flaps away, his chain dangling but his heart singing with freedom. Similarly, a PC who succeeds at a Diplomacy check (DC 20) can persuade Gar to relent momentarily.

GATHER INFORMATION CHECKS (EVENT BLOCK A)

Charismatic PCs can pick up many clues from garrulous arena folk. In the first part of the adventure, using the Gather Information skill, a character can glean the following:

- **DC 10:** Arfgutter, mountain barbarian—"They are all berserkers like Arfgutter! By the gods, who knew city scum could fight like the crazed bear?"
- **DC 15:** Tiber Atkannis, above-the-knee amputee gladiator—"I still do security for Venazzi, surveillance mostly, and let me tell you he's breathing fire over this. No way is Sand Net behind the gladiator killings."
- **DC 20 followed by an Innuendo check DC 10:** Scrap of parchment bearing Sand Net seal, caught in a sparring dummy's armor, in local Thieves' Cant—"[unreadable] hog's high on mark's waterlegs. More whip and Thel's upping it all in a wince." Translation: "Volpone Venazzi is happy with you scaring Thel. Keep threatening her and she will sell her shares in the arena soon."
- **DC 25:** M'baye Kampo, honeyball concessionaire—"I sold a lot of honeyballs this last year to fighters after their matches. I heard one say that he is always hungry after the heat of the blood rush. Sadly, the gladiators who were my best customers keep dying. But I assure you, it is not the honeyballs. They are safe!"
- **DC 15:** Huffa Beame, Sand Net teamster—"I just haul stuff. Lots of weapons, lots of sand, lots of herbs. It's a good thing I don't get paid by the wagonload or every dragon in the kingdom would be after my hoard." If the PCs ask about the herbs, Huffa can direct them to Fra Lorenzo (see the "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar).
- **DC 15:** Diamond Dharina, arena announcer—"Commissioner Flugg has been spending a lot of time with Volpone Venazzi lately. I don't know what those two are cooking up, but if you're serious about saving our fighters, I think you should talk with them."

If a character directs his questions to a particular NPC, use the following results with either a successful Diplomacy, Gather Information, or Intimidate check (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 149):

- **DC 20:** Paramezzus Nod, base alchemist—"I'm surprised you're asking my opinion. Usually everyone just ignores the arena physician. Since you asked, yes, I do have a suspicion. I believe this outbreak resembles the leech diseases in Port Rhemis fifteen years ago. I suggest you investigate the Baths very closely. Now go away and let your betters do their work." Paramezzus is happy to send the PCs barking down this false trail. If questioned about the alchemist's fire on the locker room benches, Paramezzus states flatly, "I had nothing to do with that." The PCs can make a Sense Motive check opposed by Paramezzus's Bluff check at any time to see if he's telling the truth. See the "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar if the PCs ask Paramezzus if they can see the corpses of the most recently deceased gladiators.
- **DC 10:** Rufillius Syreme, aspiring gladiator—"The Golden Shambler was the only gladiator I really knew. Whatever killed him, it wasn't a man. The Shambler could take any man that lives!"
- **DC 15:** Stick and Drag, Sand Net factors—"We don't fight in the arena, but sure, we hear things. We were delivering some packages from Fra Lorenzo to Paramezzus one night, and we heard that Thel is doing this to herself. She's sick of running the stable and is looking for a way out." See the "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar for details on Fra Lorenzo.
- **DC 10:** Trixa Hatchet, gorgeous manager—See **Event 5**.
- **DC 10:** Thel Achillia, haggard stable boss—See **Event 2**.
- **DC 18:** Alfonse Drellus, scumbag father—See **Event 5**.

Note that the PCs probably won't be able to interview Volpone Venazzi or Commissioner Flugg yet, as those two Veins luminaries don't deign to speak to anyone with fewer than 10 Fame points.

If a PC then gets the keys from one of the Achillia handlers, she can unlock the manticore's collar, again allowing the criminal monster to fly away harmlessly. (At your discretion, good-aligned PCs might face alignment difficulties for allowing a condemned pillager to go free.) If a PC wins an opposed Bluff check (the manticore's Sense Motive skill modifier is –1), he can convince the manticore to go quietly back into the cage by promising to secure a contract with Commissioner Flugg, under which Gar will never face a deadly match during his sentence in the arena.

Development: If at least one PC makes a Diplomacy check (DC 10), the party collects a total of 500 gp from grateful shopkeepers, minus 25 gp for each round of combat, since merchants whose tents are ruined cannot afford a reward.

Because of their tussle with the manticore, the PCs come to the attention of both the Sand Net and Achillia stables. Rufillius "Short Fang" Syreme immediately tries to recruit the PCs for Achillia; this is detailed in **Event 2**. He pushes his way out of the crowd as soon as the manticore is dealt with. If the PCs elude or ignore him, he does not give up. Rufillius eventually discovers where the PCs are staying, and he stakes out that establishment until he meets the PCs; he then attempts to recruit them. Rufillius is desperate for someone to save his stable and replace his fallen idol and mentor, the Golden Shambler.

Sand Net, on the other hand, merely monitors the PCs' progress anonymously at this point. If the PCs join Achillia in **Event 2**, Sand Net mobilizes Stick and Drag once more to strike the PCs in **Event 3**.

2. THE GAMES MUST GO ON (PLOT)—THE BAZAAR AND THE ARENA FLOOR (AREAS V2 & V6)

If the PCs handled the manticore successfully, Rufillius (use the pregenerated rogue stats on page 55 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* if you need them for Rufillius) asks them to help the Achillia Stable at the gladiatorial arena.

A boy with eyes as big as a mace's head and a leather training belt five sizes too big for his waist pushes forward out of your admiring crowd. "Wow!" he exclaims. "That was great! Can you come with me to Stable Achillia? I can pay you. We really need help. Gladiators have been dying, and no one knows why. Even the Golden Shambler died!" He pauses in his continuous stream of babble and looks down forlornly at his training belt. Then he looks back up at you with renewed passion. "Please help! I promise you, the pay is good, and the glory is even better! You could be heroes!"

TIMELINE

Event Block A (Events 1–6)

A. Thel hires the PCs.

B. The PCs begin their investigation.

C. The PCs learn that Sand Net and Achillia are rival gladiator stables.

D. The PCs learn that many of the gladiators exude a curious mint smell.

Event Block B (Events 7–10)

A. The PCs discover that someone is individually targeting Thel.

B. The PCs pursue their investigation of the gladiator deaths.

C. The PCs find an herbalist, Fra Lorenzo, who might help them.

D. The PCs recover a used bloodrush poultice from their battle royal with Team Tongue.

Event Block C (Events 11–17)

A. With Fra Lorenzo's help, the PCs link the gladiator deaths to the bloodrush poultices and Paramezzus.

B. Arxus confronts the PCs and tries to force them to win Thel's love for the ghostly pudding.

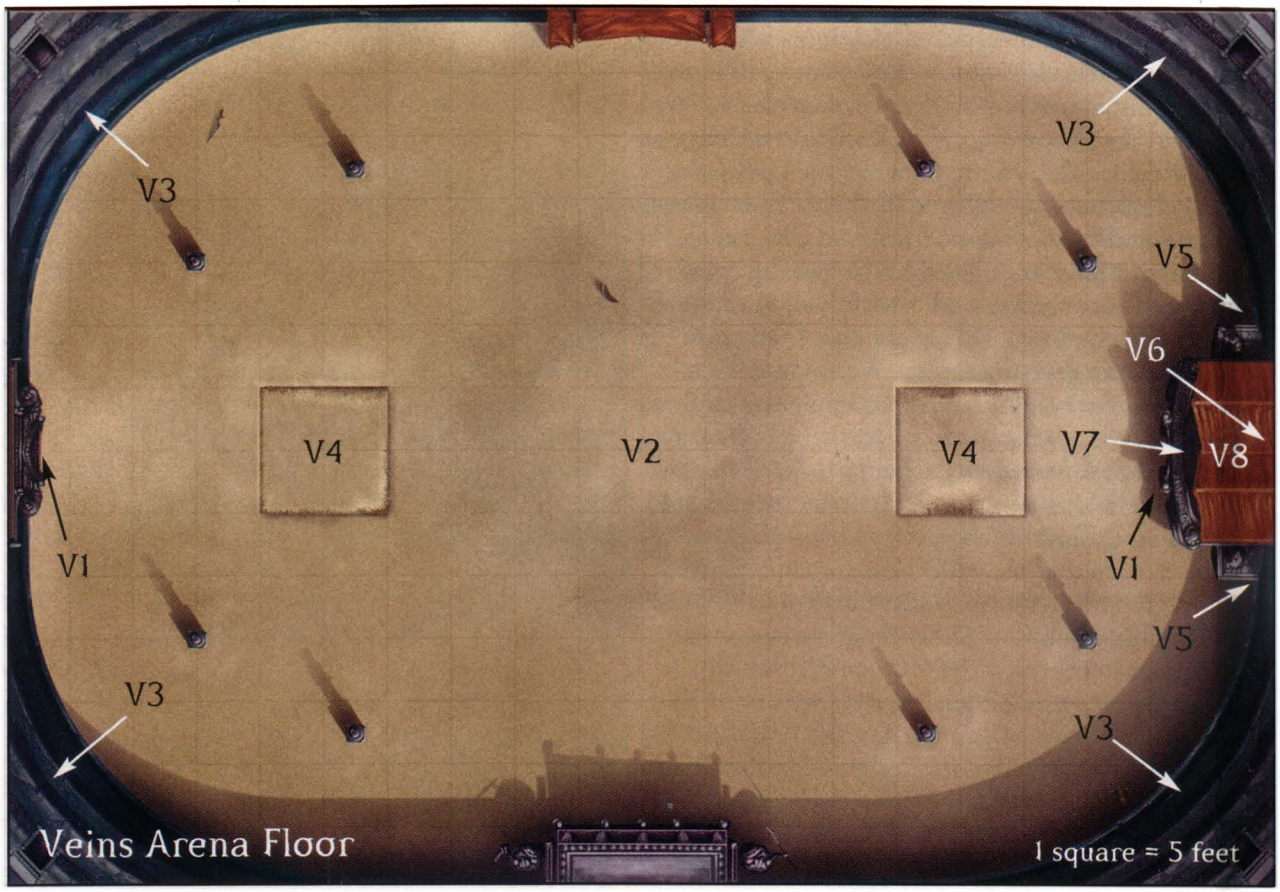
C. The PCs confront Paramezzus, and he teleports away to destroy the Veins.

Site-based Adventure (Areas B1–V8)

Although not destitute, Rufillius can offer the PCs no more than the 1 gold piece he solemnly presses into each of their palms. More will come from Thel, he avers, after the PCs' audition. Rufillius's leather belt is a gift from the Golden Shambler given before that champion expired from bloodrush use. Rufillius refuses to let anyone touch the belt (which actually contains an important clue, although Rufillius is unaware of that—see **Event 12**). Also, he becomes petulant if the PCs call him by his given name rather than "Short Fang."

Rufillius leads the players to the entrance of the Veins.

The narrow tent labyrinth of the bazaar gives way to open space, and the grand arena known as the Veins looms into view. At first, the walls are nothing but a singularly massive, blinding sheet of white marble gleaming in the sun, but gradually individual features resolve themselves. The third story rings the building with lancet arches, each containing a statue of a champion from the arena's history. On the top story, turrets fly banners of the major stables that fight in the Veins. Wide ramps soar up the walls, and concessionaires trundle carts up and down, shouting their wares. Everywhere, the pris-



tine white stone is veined with the vermilion streaks that give the Nyos Amphitheater its famed moniker.

Overriding everything else is the impression of size. In Nyos, the townsfolk say that twenty krakens with tentacles spread wide could not encompass the walls of the mighty arena. The formidable building is the sort of structure that makes such tales seem true—a larger-than-life arena built for larger-than-life heroes.

The PCs can stop to talk to the vendors, the fans, and the aspiring gladiators outside. If they so choose, consult the "Gather Information (**Event Block A**)" sidebar for the results of their inquiries. Otherwise, Rufillius continues to lead them inside through area **V7**.

The interior of the Veins is no less impressive. Each building block is taller than two longswords and just as wide. You smell sweat and oil from the locker rooms below, and the clang of steel on steel resounds from sparring chambers. The Veins throbs with activity.

The entrance tunnel to the arena is enormous. Deep claw-scratches in the marble tell of the chained beasts dragged into the arena to fight the mighty champions who make their living in front of the crowds. Halfway into the tunnel, a portcullis bars the entrance to the arena floor itself, leaving open only narrow passages up into the stands.

Short Fang leads the way up to the spectator seats. Once again the bright sun is nearly blinding, reflecting off the vast expanse of sand that covers the arena floor. Archery targets, portable paddocks, weapon racks, and armor trunks are scattered haphazardly across the giant fighting floor. Wooden bleachers on marble tiers rise high into the air behind you. Thousands of fans could fit in this amphitheater. Sixty feet overhead, chains creak as they support the hanging, enclosed luxury seats known as Cloud Boxes.

A table is set up in the sand at the near end of the arena floor, just over the marble rail from where you emerge. At the table sit an orange-haired fat man, an imposing fighter in fancy full plate, and a woman with three braids in her hair. In front of the table, two bare-chested men are screaming at each other. "That's right! I hope you're a rust monster, because you're going to eat my sword!"

The fat man is Commissioner Jacobus Flugg. His corruption matches his corpulence, and he is firmly in the (very large) pocket of Sand Net. The woman is Thel Achillia, and the man in full plate is Sand Net

boss and arena champion Volpone Venazzi. A character who makes a successful Spot check (DC 15) spies the Veins platinum championship helm underneath Volpone's chair. These three are auditioning potential new gladiators.

Commissioner Jacobus Flugg, Male Human Ari5: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 5d8+5; hp 29; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/crit 19–20, masterwork short sword); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise +10, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +6, Forgery +6, Gather Information +10, Innuendo +5, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +3. *Feats:* Dodge, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Bluff).

Possessions: *+1 glamered leather,* masterwork short sword, dagger, assorted jewelry (235 gp), 15 pp, 43 gp.

When she sees Rufillius subtly signalling her and gesturing toward the PCs, Thel vaults over the marble rail and joins the PCs in the stands, away from Volpone and his toady Flugg. Encourage the PCs to roleplay this encounter. Thel direly needs saviors, but she is suspicious of everyone and fears the PCs might be Sand Net infiltrators. She willingly shares the following public information with anyone:

- "It's true. Gladiators are dying, and no one knows why. My stable, Achillia, has been especially hard hit."
- "I can offer you an independent contract. There is a 250 gold piece signing bonus." Until they earn her trust, PCs are not allowed to train in the arena or Achillia facilities.
- "The rules are simple: Any weapons, any spells. Nothing cast before the match. Quarter must be granted when asked. Get *raise dead* insurance from the clerics." Thel discusses all of the rules listed in "Appendix I: Arena Rules" if asked, but she also tells the PCs they need to show up for orientation to get a full briefing.

If the PCs earn her trust, Thel divulges more information and in fact begs the PCs' aid. At your option, Rufillius might have observed the Sand Net factors loosening the manticore's cage lock in **Event 1**, and he vouches for the PCs' heroism. In this case, Thel automatically trusts the PCs.

Otherwise, PCs can win Thel's confidence by capturing rather than killing Gar in **Event 1** (the manticore's contract is a sizable investment for her stable), by succeeding at a Diplomacy check (DC 25), or by catching a Sand Net factor or gladiator while he is committing some crime (there is an opportunity for this in **Event 3**). Once she trusts them, Thel tells the PCs the following:

- "Please help us investigate. We have to stop the deaths." Thel offers a 1,000 gp reward for information leading to the capture of whoever or whatever is responsible for the deaths. She also offers standard pay as a gladiator (see below).
- "I need someone on the inside. Many areas are restricted to the pros only, and you need to go to those areas for your investigation. Don't worry, we'll make an Achillia gladiator out of you. The best in the Veins." Thel increases the signing bonus to 400 gp and offers a 250 gp cut at the gate on each match featuring the PCs. If a PC bargains and succeeds at a Diplomacy check (DC 20), Thel increases the gate cut to 300 gp.
- "Poor Short Fang, he's one of the arena orphans now. His mentor, the Golden Shambler, died last week. Short Fang can't bring himself to take off the Shambler's training belt."
- "My father was mur . . . he died while delivering the gate's take to the bank two years ago. The stable came was my inheritance, along with my family's majority share in the arena."
- "Technically, I'm still under contract myself. But I haven't fought in a year." Thel has been occupied with running the stable and the Veins, and she found herself rattled by the battle with and death of Arxus.

Thel has another, unvoiced motive. Her stable is about to collapse, and if she does not get fresh recruits, she faces bankruptcy and the loss of her stake in the arena. A PC who succeeds at an opposed Sense Motive check (DC 20) learns that Thel is holding something back. A Diplomacy check (DC 15) encourages her to reveal that her family's stable is in need of aid to avoid an unpleasant business decision. Although Thel won't reveal it here, this "unpleasant business decision" would almost certainly mean her death: If she loses her majority share, Sand Net will take over the arena. Because Thel is still under contract, she would be forced to fight in a series of increasingly dangerous matches until Sand Net succeeded in conveniently and legally exterminating her.

A final successful Sense Motive check (DC 25) lets the PCs determine that Thel strongly suspects Sand Net. She doesn't say anything about her suspicion because she wants to avoid biasing the PCs.

Once the PCs agree to become gladiators and investigate the fatalities, they must audition. Thel escorts them onto the arena floor to face the other two partial owners of the Veins.

Commissioner Flugg speaks with flapping lips and arms, and the occasional flying saliva drop stains the sand like rain. "You can't just traipse out and fight! Look at me. Rakkel Tinkswatter died. Do you care? No,

because who in Pandemonium is Rakkel Tinkswatter? But if I say your mom died, then you'll be madder than a beholder in a shampoo waterfall. Why? Because you know your mom. Understand? Look at me. The audience has to know you, to know your character, before they care about you. When they care about you, they pay good gold to see you fight.

The audition consists of two events:

The first is Grudge Building. Each PC must stand in front of the judges' table and emote, cursing the heavens, tearing his clothes, and making it clear how much he wants to rip out his opponent's liver. There is no crowd to excite, but each PC passes if he succeeds at a Perform (drama) check (DC 11) against an imaginary opponent (feel free to allow creative characters to use other Perform checks in place of Perform—drama). An Intimidate, Diplomacy, or Bluff check (DC 11) also suffices. Encourage the players to roleplay this and give appropriate skill check bonuses; a PC who works hard at Grudge Building can earn a bonus on his check equal to half his character level. A PC who passes this part of the test gets to choose his own stage name; a PC who fails gets a stage name assigned by Commissioner Flugg (for example, an arcane caster might be Moon Pants Morris; a divine caster Daring, Deadly, and Divine, or Triple D; a fighter could be dubbed Eric the Giant; and a rogue, Supersly).

The second and last part of the audition is gladiatorial combat.

Creatures: Flugg locks the party in a 30-foot × 30-foot square paddock with one dire boar and one dire lion (trained not to attack each other). The PCs pass the test by reducing both beasts' hit points to 15 or lower. If the PCs need outside aid before they can do this, they fail the test. Failing, they are still accepted into the arena as gladiators, but only after Thel bribes Flugg. Consequently, Thel cannot afford to give the PCs their signing bonuses.

If the PCs have questions about the arena's rules, Flugg and Thel answer them honestly and completely (see "Appendix I" for details).

Dire Boar: hp 52; *Monster Manual* 57.

Dire Lion: hp 60; *Monster Manual* 57.

Tactics: The dire boar and dire lion are trained to flank one opponent and ignore others. The dire lion uses its pounce ability on one random PC to start combat. The dire boar then circles to attack that same PC from behind. Unless a single blow causes one of them more than 20 points of damage (in which case they both focus on the perpetrator of this mighty blow), the two animals relentlessly attack the same opponent until he falls.

Thel Achillia, Female Human Ftr4: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 4d10+12; hp 40; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Atk +9 melee (1d6+5/crit 18–20, scimitar); AL LG; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +6, Diplomacy +4, Handle

ARENA RECORDS AND HELMS

The Veins Championship Helms are:

The Platinum Veins: This winged helm is currently held by Volpone Venazzi. Forged of hammered platinum with channeled rubies inset to evoke the image of the Veins's famous marble striations, it is the most prestigious helm in the arena. It can only be won in one-on-one combat, and only a gladiator who has amassed 15 Fame points can challenge for it. Volpone forces Commissioner Flugg to do everything in his power to prevent a fighter from reaching 15 Fame points, but if one does, Volpone is honor-bound to face him in one-on-one combat with the helm on the line. According to arena rules, Volpone need only defend his helm against any given challenger once every three months. Also according to arena rules, the champion is allowed to dictate the Spices (if any) of the championship match; the challenger has no say in the matter. Because of his Blind-fighting and Improved Bull Rush feats, Volpone often chooses Basilisk Matches and Ankheg Pit Matches for title defense bouts. Winning this helm earns a PC 2 Fame points.

The Marble Helm: This helm is awarded to the winner of the year's Marble Cage event. Currently, it is worn by Severus Tulero. It is gold with a marble intaglio in the shape of the arena on the front. Winning this helm earns a PC 1 Fame point.

The Garnet Helms: These helms are worn by the Team Champions of the arena. The helms are vacant right now, because Thel's Achillia team has lost too many members to bloodrush. It is possible that the commissioner will put the Garnet Helms up in a tournament involving the PCs, Team Tongue, the Hurk brothers, and the Diving Duo (Gar and the Dreadwood Wyvern). Winning these helms earns each member of the team 1 Fame Point.

The following are records in the Veins.

Fastest Knockout: Mountain Morasso and Volpone Venazzi. Tied at two blows.

Consecutive Solo Wins: Mountain Morasso. Seven.

Consecutive Team Wins: Sand Net Prisms. Four.

Wins in One Day: Mountain Morasso. Four.

Consecutive Matches Unharmed: Severus Tulero. Three.

Most Spice Wins in One Day: Hektor Achillia. Three.

Most Spells Absorbed Without Losing: Kitrina Bolt. Seventeen. Five were *feeblemind*, and one such dweomer finally worked, but it was a basilisk match and the scroll-carrying mage Kitrina was fighting caught the lizard's gaze just as he was about to finish her off.

Animal +4, Ride +4. *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar).

Possessions: +2 leather, small steel shield with Achillia intaglio, masterwork scimitar, two hematite armbands (20 gp each), belt pouch with 50 gp, deed to The Veins. Thel once possessed the gladiatorial gear accumulated by her line over a century of pit fighting, but she has sold all save her father's armor to stave off Sand Net. She never lets the deed out of her sight for fear of theft.

Volpone Venazzi, Male Human Ftr5/Rog2: CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 5d10+10 plus 2d6+4; hp 55; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; Atk +11/+6 melee (2d6+6/crit 19–20, masterwork greatsword); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +9, Climb +8, Diplomacy +6, Intimidate +11, Jump +9, Pick Pocket +2, Sense Motive +6, Swim +8, Tumble +2. *Feats:* Blind-fight, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (greatsword),Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Possessions: full plate, masterwork greatsword, two gaudy gold medallions (300 gp each), Veins championship helm, personal copy of Sand Net account logs.

Volpone tucks his medallions under his armor when he fights, otherwise he doffs his breastplate and opens his tunic to bare the flashy jewelry. Volpone's personal copy of the Sand Net account logs could be used to prove that he did, in fact, pay for the killing of Thel's father two years ago.

Development: After the audition, the PCs can take several paths:

If they were hired by Achillia as either full gladiators or independent contractors, Volpone sends Stick and Drag after them (see **Event 3**). At some point, the PCs should attend the Gladiator's Orientation (**Event 4**).

The PCs likely want to talk to the locals and begin their investigation; consult the "Gather Information (**Event Block A**)" sidebar for results. While tracking down rumors, the PCs probably encounter Trixa Hatchet (**Event 5**). Ultimately, the PCs stand in the arena for their first battle (**Event 6**).

3. PURSE STINGS— THE BAZAAR (AREA V6)

Volpone Venazzi does not want stable Achillia to recover. Accordingly, he orders Stick and Drag to tail the PCs after their audition and plant two tiny monstrous scorpions in each PCs' backpack or belt pouch. Stick and Drag must make a Pick Pockets check opposed by the PCs' Spot checks to place the scorpions.

If the factors are successful, the scorpions strike the next time a PC takes an object out of his pack. If the PCs spot the two villains, Stick and Drag fight until reduced to 10 hp, then flee. If captured, Stick and Drag confess after an Intimidate check (DC 15) that they are from Sand Net and were sent to kill the PCs. They maintain Sand Net's innocence in the case of the gladiator deaths.

Creatures: The scorpions are angry at being tussled about and sting repeatedly.

Tiny Monstrous Scorpion (2): hp 4; *Monster Manual* 208.

Stick, Male Human Ftr2/Rog1: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 2d10+2 plus 1d6+1 plus 3; hp 30; Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AC 12, touch 10, flatfooted 12; Atk +6 melee (1d6+3/crit 19–20, short sword); SA sneak attack +1d6; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will –1; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +3, Jump +7, Move Silently +3, Pick Pocket +3. *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Possessions: leather armor, short sword, Sand Net garnet signet ring (10 gp), pouch with 21 gp.

Drag, Male Human Rog2/Ftr1: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d10+1 plus 2d6+2 plus 3; hp 23; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Atk +5 melee (1d6+2/crit 19–20, short sword); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will –1; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 11.

Skills: Bluff +3, Gather Information +2, Hide +5, Listen +1, Move Silently +5, Pick Pocket +6, Sense Motive +1, Spot +1. *Feats:* Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Possessions: leather armor, short sword, two Sand Net garnet earrings (10 gp), Sand Net garnet signet ring (10 gp), pouch with 21 gp. Only one of the earrings is Drag's; the other he stole from Stick.

4. PRIZE FIGHTER'S ORIENTATION— LOCKER ROOMS (AREA B5)

The locker rooms underneath the arena floor are packed with aspiring gladiators. Three men who look like they could be brothers are playfully roughhousing on the wooden bench in front of you, a silent woman in orange robes sits in the lotus position on the floor to your right, and many other hopefuls are packed with you into the room. In front, the Commissioner confers with Volpone and a gnarled old man with a bent spine. When he's

done, he stands up on a gear trunk at the front of the room.

"Hello. Welcome to the Veins! Look at me. Do you think you're here because you're the best? Ha! You whelps don't even know the rules yet. A kobold with filth fever and no hands could shame you in the arena. Now, look at me. If somebody asks for quarter, you give it. There's no money in death! Unless you're a cleric. But that's a separate operation. The point is, if we run out of gladiators, we run out of business. You get that? Good. Look at me. We're going to go through all the rules one by one so even a bunch of girallons like you can understand them."

The commissioner explains the rules presented in "Appendix I: Arena Rules." He answers any questions the PCs might have and expansively insults them for having them. ("My dog could learn these rules faster than you, and I sold half his brain to a mind flayer last year.")

Creatures: The gnarled old man with the bent spine is Paramezzus (see area **V8** for statistics). He knows that the PCs are working for Achillia, and he has decided to make their lives in the arena just a little bit harder. Using a *mage hand* spell, he tips over a bottle of alchemist's fire disguised as muscle tonic right at the PCs' feet. The bench in front of the PCs catches on fire, and anyone staying on it for another round has a chance to catch on fire as well (see the DUNGEON MASTER's *Guide*, page 86). A PC who succeeds at a Spot check opposed by Paramezzus's Hide roll (Paramezzus gets a +5 circumstance bonus to his check due to the number of people in the room between himself and the characters) sees the alchemist casting a spell. No one else witnesses this, however (at least, no one willing to talk), and the Commissioner and Volpone prevent the PCs from questioning or laying hands on Paramezzus, commanding the rest of the neophyte gladiators to hold back the PCs if necessary.

The PCs also have to deal with the Hurk brothers, who were sitting on the bench in front of them (see **Event 6** for statistics). If the PCs do not succeed at a Diplomacy check (DC 10), the enraged Hurks whirl on the PCs and attack them through the flames. After 2 rounds of combat, the Commissioner and Volpone order the other gladiators to separate the PCs and the Hurks.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner acknowledges it was just an accident but still fines the PCs the cost of the bench (13 gp). He also takes the opportunity to insult them some more.

Development: After attending orientation, the characters are cleared for arena fighting. They can go sniff out more clues in the arena (see the "Gather Information—**Event Block A**" table), they might encounter Trixa (**Event 5**), they can face independent gladiators in one-on-one matches (see the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar), or they can head straight to their first arena battle, which the Commissioner makes certain is against the Hurk brothers (**Event 6**).

BLOODRUSH

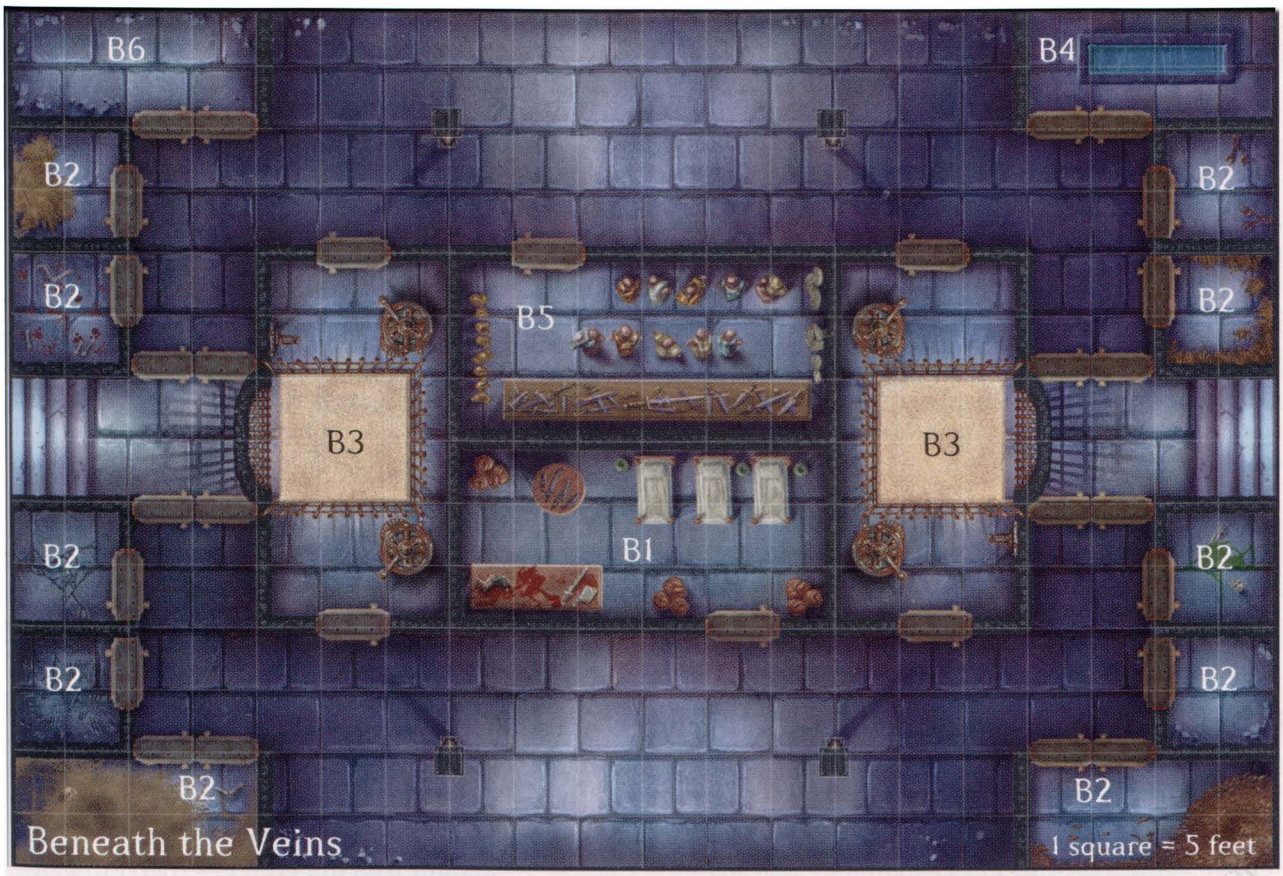
Bloodrush is a melange of herbs packed into tight netting. This poultice is pressed to the user's neck, and the drug seeps through the net and skin into the blood. Ten minutes after applying the bloodrush, the user must make a Will save (DC 14) or rage as a barbarian (+4 to Constitution, +4 to Strength, +2 to will saves, and –2 on AC). Success indicates the user manages to avoid raging, but is shaken for a number of rounds equal to the amount of time he would have raged had he failed the save. Of course, a user can voluntarily fail this save. After the drug wears off, the user is fatigued (–2 to Strength, –2 to Dexterity, can't charge or run). Moreover, when the bloodrush wears off, the character must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or suffer 1 point of permanent Constitution drain. Paramezzus has been using the delayed effect and nonmagical nature of the drug to smuggle it past the arena's referees, and he intends to keep doing so until every gladiator in the arena has unwittingly poisoned him or herself.

Bloodrush is addictive. Upon initial exposure, a character must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 14) or become addicted to the drug. Addicted characters take 1 point of permanent Constitution drain each day unless they succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or are satiated by another dose. Addicted characters are satiated each time they take bloodrush; doing so staves off withdrawal symptoms. After each satiation period ends, the character goes into withdrawal and the DC to resist the effects of addiction increases by +5. So a character who becomes addicted to bloodrush must succeed at a Fortitude save every day or take 1 point of permanent Constitution drain. As long as he continues to use bloodrush every two days, his saving throw DC is 14. If he stops taking bloodrush for more than two days, the DC of the addiction saving throw increases to 19. If he starts using it again, the DC drops back to 14.

A character who makes two successful Fortitude saving throws in a row has fought off the addiction. These lucky individuals recover, although the Constitution drain still doesn't heal normally, and take no further damage.

Greater restoration or *heal* negate the ability drain and forced recovery. *Remove disease* forces immediate recovery, but the victim might still have Constitution drain.

Cost: 100 gp; *DC to Create:* 25.



5. THE RED AND YELLOW, PART I—BATHS (AREA B4) (EL 6)

A young woman in well-cut armor and a short, red leather skirt beckons you into one of the bathing alcoves. A dark, brooding bodyguard watches you while Trixa strikes a pose. "Do you like what you see? Of course you do. So do the fans. I'm a manager, and my name is Trixa Hatchet. At 20 gold pieces per match I'll pay for myself."

Appearing in a match with Trixa gives the PCs one additional Fame point and a +2 on Perform (drama), Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Bluff checks when Grudge Building or entering the arena dramatically (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules"). Trixa is currently managing Hamidou Mombasa, who doubles as her bodyguard (see the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar for statistics). She is looking to take on additional gladiators, however, because like her previous two clients, Hamidou is suffering from ill health (caused by bloodrush abuse, but neither Hamidou nor Trixa knows that).

Trixa is happy to hear of the PCs investigation into the gladiator deaths. She has a vested interest; after all, if the gladiators all die, she has no one to manage. She can tell the PCs three things: None of her gladiators worked for Sand Net; all her gladiators would do anything to win; and fans loved her fighters, and no one she knows of hated them enough to kill them. If asked about a mint smell, Trixa remembers that yes, her gladiators all did often smell like mint after a match. She conjectured the smell originated with the cleaning fluids Commissioner Flugg uses on the arena. Like Thel, Trixa suspects that Sand Net is behind the gladiator deaths.

Hired or not, Trixa walks away blowing a Parthian kiss. Moments later, her father approaches the PCs.

A bald man in a yellow tunic with a matching yellow beard down to his moneybelt saunters out of the shadows. Two great, six-legged black cats flank him. Twin tentacles sprout from the cat's backs and end in rough pads covered with horny ridges.

"You like my daughter, eh? I'm afraid she underestimated her price. You'll find it can be very expensive to work with a wanted criminal. You see, Trixa has been picking flowers she shouldn't have, and the King would almost certainly throw anyone involved into the copper mines for a decade or two."

Creatures: This is Alfonse Drellus, Trixa's loathed father. A slimy operator who stalks his own daughter, he is jealous and possessive of her success. She wants nothing to do with him, but that only infuriates him further. He attempts to extort money from any PCs who hire her.

At first, Alfonse claims that Trixa is wanted in Plenith for stealing sapphire roses from the King's garden. The crime, he claims, is punishable by twenty years in the copper mines, and he will report the PCs as abettors unless they do not pay him 40 gp per match.

A successful Sense Motive check opposed by Alfonse's Bluff check reveals that Alfonse is lying. If caught in the lie, or if the PCs refuse to pay him, Alfonse tenses and attacks if provoked much further. Unless the PCs scare him with a successful Intimidate check (DC 20) or placate him with a successful Diplomacy check (DC 20), Alfonse sics the displacer beasts on them.

Alfonse Drellus, Male Human Ftr2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 2d10+4; hp 19; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flatfooted 14,; Atk +3 melee (1d8/crit 19–20, longsword); AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will –1; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +3, Climb +4, Handle Animal +4, Jump +3; *Feats:* Endurance, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: chain shirt, longsword, 35 pp, lapis lazuli locket with miniature painting of Trixa at age four (250 gp, but Alfonse would liquidate his considerable holdings to recover the locket, should he become separated from it).

Displacer Beasts (2): hp 51, 50; *Monster Manual* 59.

Trixa Hatchet, Female Human Rog3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d6+6; hp 18; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Atk +1 melee (1d6–1/crit 19–20, short sword); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 9, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Forgery +7, Hide +9, Listen +3, Move Silently +9, Perform (drama) +10, Pick Pockets +7, Sense Motive +7, Spot +7. *Feats:* Alertness, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perform—drama).

Possessions: chain shirt, short sword, red leather skirt, gold toe rings (4 gp each), ruby and gold couatl hair pin (120 gp).

Alfonse has trained these beasts and won their loyalty, but they belong to the arena. An arena employee finding them in the halls simply assumes they escaped their pens and herds them back.

Tactics: Alfonse seeks to stay out of the fight and cowers behind his displacer beasts. If attacked, he answers with his longsword while trying to maneuver to a safe place; if brought below 10 hp, Alfonse calls off his beasts and retreats. Similarly, the beasts don't fight to the death for Alfonse. They are dimly intelligent, and at 15 hp, they retreat, even running to arena employees who prevent the PCs from killing the expensively contracted beasts.

Development: Alfonse should become another suspect for the PCs. He is a red herring, but his hatred for his daughter and his bloodthirstiness make him a creepy force the PCs cannot discount. Whether or not he gets his money, Alfonse leaves the PCs with this thought: "You might have need of my services soon. Bad things happen to gladiators that I don't like." Alfonse is trying to capitalize on the recent gladiator deaths to give his threats more weight. However, just as is the case with his daughter's career, he is trying to leech power from a phenomenon for which he is not at all responsible. For her part, Trixa refuses to discuss her father, except to deny his charges, until the DM judges it time to run "The Red and Yellow, Part II" (see **Event 13**).

With this new suspect on their list, the PCs might continue to interrogate citizens in the arena (see the "Gather Information—**Event Block A**" sidebar). They might also attend the Prize Fighter's Orientation if they have not yet done so (see **Event 4**), they might fight in individual gladiator matches (see the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar), or they might move on to their first arena battle (see **Event 6**).

6. FIRST BLOOD (PLOT)—THE ARENA FLOOR (AREA V2) (EL 7)

The PCs' first battle is a four-man match versus the Hurk Brothers and their pet hell hound. When they are ready or the DM deems it time, they should report to the locker room.

The mood in the locker room is tense before your first battle. Steam from the baths hangs in the air, and you can hear the Hurk brothers, your opponents, hooting and hollering in the hall outside, psyching themselves up.

Suddenly the ceiling shakes as the bronteum thunders through the arena. The match is about to start!

Gathering at the arena entrance tunnel, the Hurk brothers stare you down. The feral dog that fights with them curls his upper lip at you, but you can't hear his growls because the cheering in the arena is too loud.

The Hurks enter first, sprinting out onto the sands. Jeb and Rebus hold hands in the fashion of their "Hurkules" finishing move, and Squirt runs alongside the hound. At the center of the sands, Squirt turns to you and points you out to the dog while making a chomping motion with his teeth.

Then another smoke cloud billows in front of you, the thunder cracks, and more music resonates from the bronteum. The fans are stomping in the bleachers, demanding your entrance.

Don't forget to have the PCs make rolls to enter the arena dramatically and to build Grudges against the Hurks on the arena floor before the match (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules"). The Hurks' catch phrase is "Don't scorch 'em too much Sparky; momma likes 'em pink on the inside!"

Creatures: Sparky the hell hound has been hand-fed by the Hurks since it was a puppy, and it has grown up hale and loyal.

Hell Hound: hp 33; *Monster Manual* 118.

Squirt Hurk, Male Human Clr4: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 4d8+4; hp 25; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Atk + 4 melee (1d6+1, light mace); SA spells, turn undead 4/day; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +9; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills: Heal +10, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +5, Spellcraft +2, Spot +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes.

Spells Prepared (5/4/3, base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* ×3, *detect magic* ×2; 1st—*command, divine favor, inflict light wounds*, sanctuary*; 2nd—*bull's strength*, hold person* ×2.

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Destruction (smite 1/day—+4 attack and +4 damage); Strength (feat of strength 1/day—+4 Strength for 1 round).

Possessions: breastplate, buckler, light mace, two turquoise scarab pins (40 gp each), pouch with 29 gp.

Jeb and Rebus Hurk, Male Human Ftr3 (2): CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d10+6 (currently 3d10+3); hp 30 (currently maximum 27); Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AC 17, touch 10, flatfooted 17; Atk +5 melee (1d8+1/crit 19–20, longsword); AL N; SV Fort +5 (currently +4), Ref +1, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14 (currently 12), Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +3, Climb +5, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +3, Ride +3; *Feats:* Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: breastplate, longsword, large wooden shield, 1 gp, five aleskins of homebrewed "J&R Special" liquor.

Tactics: Jeb and Rebus use bloodrush before this match; see the sidebar for its effects.

Jeb and Rebus are the older brothers and refuse to follow their more talented younger brother's lead. They blindly try to flank the characters no matter what Squirt is doing. They also herd the PCs into one clump so the hell hound's breath weapon blasts for maximum effect. Squirt tries to keep his brothers alive and uses his *sanctuary* spell to avoid attacks. When the Hurks have an opponent in trouble, they attempt their finishing move, the Hurkules. The Hurkules (pronounced HERK-yoo-lees) consists of Jeb and Rebus linking arms and charging with their swords pointed forward in their outside hands (Jeb is left-handed). The one time they cooperate with Squirt is when he has *held* an opponent; they immediately attempt to skewer *held* foes with a Hurkules coup de grace. They surrender the match rather than pay *raise dead* fees; thus they cry quarter if wounded below 15 hit points.

Development: The PCs can earn a substantial number of Fame points in the match that will aid them in their investigation. Note also that the Hurk brothers have never won a gladiatorial match, so if the PCs lose the match, they lose at least 1 Fame point (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules").

The PCs can learn the following clues from this match:

- The Hurk Brothers smell strongly of mint. Wisdom check (DC 10).
- The mint smell is from a faraja leaf. Profession (herbalism) check (DC 25). Faraja leaves come from the faraja plant, which has a pulpy stem, white flowers in the spring, and oval leaves. The faraja leaves have no special qualities in and of themselves, save for their strong minty smell. Paramezzus uses this herb to make the bloodrush, but the characters probably must consult Fra Lorenzo, a local herbalist, to make this connection (see the "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar for information on Fra Lorenzo).
- The odor of mint does not cling to the hell hound. Wisdom check (DC 10).
- The Hurk Brothers are Sand Net gladiators. Gather Information check (DC 10).
- If the combat lasts more than 6 rounds, Jeb and Rebus flag noticeably. Wisdom check (DC 20).
- The Hurk Brothers spent a good deal of time with the physician Paramezzus before the match. Gather Information check (DC 20).

From here, the PCs can continue their investigation on the "Gather Information (**Event Block A**)" table. If they have not yet met Trixa, they might also encounter her (see **Event 5**). When you judge the time is right to proceed, the PCs move to **Block B**, which begins with "Every Girl Loves a Romantic Ooze, Part I" (**Event 7**).

7. EVERY GIRL LOVES A ROMANTIC OOZE, PART I— LOCKER ROOMS (AREA B5) (EL 5)

This can occur whenever the PCs confer with Thel.

> As you speak with your patron, a fellow prize fighter passes and gives the traditional "Hail, Thel!" salute. Thel answers, "Hail . . . Gaahhh!" as a gash is ripped in her skin from her ear to her jaw. You see no assailants.

Thel is under attack from two phantom fungi trained by the ghost of Arxus Nod, who, in a love as

enduring as it is twisted, is attempting to kill Thel and re-grow her as an ooze like himself (in fact, Arxus is not even an ooze, he is a ghost possessing a black pudding, but he believes himself to be the pudding—see **Event 15**).

After the characters spirit Thel to safety or extirpate the fungi, Thel can tell them that ooze and fungus attacks like this one commenced around the same time as the gladiator deaths.

Creatures: The phantom fungi have orders to attack Thel, but neither is especially intelligent. Ultimately, each fungus attacks whoever last caused it damage.

Phantom Fungus: hp 15; *Monster Manual* 149.

Development: The PCs likely suspect that Thel's assailant and the force behind the gladiator deaths are one and the same. This is not true, and PC investigators who spend time interrogating the arena regulars about the attacks can discover this (use the "Gather Information—**Event Blocks B and C**" sidebar. Truthfully, it is of no consequence if the PCs are confused about who is attacking Thel personally at this point; this subplot becomes much clearer to them when you run "Every Girl Loves a Romantic Ooze, Part II" (**Event 15**).

After this attack, the PCs might question the regulars, Grudge Build in an interview with Diamond Dharina (see **Event 8**), fight the Mountain (see **Event 9**), engage in some one-on-one gladiator matches (see the "Independent Gladiator" sidebar for statistics), or even head into their next arena battle (see **Event 10**).

SPICE ON THE SAND

Any match's rules can be altered arbitrarily by the commissioner or by the agreement of both gladiators or teams of gladiators. The locals call this "putting spice on the sand." See "Appendix I: Arena Rules" for basic match rules.

Basilisk Match: A muzzled basilisk is set loose among the gladiators. It cannot bite, but its gaze remains deadly. The gladiators are forbidden to attack or touch the basilisk, and the combat must proceed around the lizard. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* page 77, for gaze attack rules.

Ankheg Pit Match: For this match, two special 10-foot-square pits, 20 feet deep, are installed to replace the trap doors. At the bottom of each pit are two ankhegs, which are trained not to attack anything on the arena floor. Anything that falls into their pit, however, is fair game. Other than that, the rules for the match are standard.

Caltrop Match: A bag of caltrops is taped under every spectator's seat before the match. During combat, Diamond Dharina calls out a section number, and the fans in that section go wild as they get to toss their caltrops onto the sand. This results in one 20-foot by 20-foot square of the arena floor being filled with caltrops each round.

Gauntlet Match: Especially for stable factors, the winner of this match is the first rogue to run through a gauntlet of three traps. Roll three times on **Table 4–11** on page 118 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to determine the traps. For harder gauntlets, use **Table 4–12** or even **Table 4–7** on page 117 (but be warned, **Table 4–7** lists extremely powerful magic traps). If one factor is killed or disabled, the other one must still disable all his traps to win.

Grappling Match: No weapons and no offensive spells are allowed in a this match. In fact, the only attacks allowed are grapples, and the first gladiator to pin his opponent twice wins. Defensive spells or items that target only the caster are allowed. After each pinfall, the gladiators return to their starting positions.

Platform Match: Two 5-foot-square platforms are raised 10 feet high and 30 feet apart in the arena. The first opponent to touch the arena sands loses. This match is popular among mages.

Random Weapon or Random Spell Match: Weapon racks stocked with random weapons are dragged onto the sands for this match. After at most 2 rounds and at least 1 round with any given weapon, a gladiator must draw and wield a new random weapon (roll on **Table 8–11** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* page 184, to find the next random weapon on the rack). In a Random Spell Match, a gladiator rolls randomly among the spell schools every 2 rounds, and she is only allowed to cast spells from that school until she rolls again. If she does not have any spells of the appropriate school memorized, she cannot cast that round.

Ziggurat Match: A seven-step ziggurat is placed in the center of the sands (each step is 5 feet wide and 5 feet high, the top is a 10-foot square). The winner of the match is the gladiator who stays on the top step for 3 consecutive rounds.

Flying Match: Each participating gladiator has a *fly* spell cast on him or her before the match. Gladiators who fly higher than the *antimagic* moat (40 feet) are disqualified; gladiators who fly through the moat fall—a popular tactic among veterans of the arena is to bull rush or toss flying opponents through the *antimagic* wall.

Tilting Floor: Massive bellows are brought into the lower part of the arena and attached to the bottom of the arena floor. Every 1d6 rounds during the match, the floor tilts in a random direction (use one of the grenadelike weapon scatter diagrams on page 68 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Gladiators must make Balance checks (DC 15) to keep their feet. Those who fail slide quickly to the edge of the arena, taking 1d6 points of damage for every 20 feet slid.

Hidden Pits: Ten-foot by 10-foot pits (Search, DC 20) are hidden around the floor of the arena. Characters must make Reflex saves (DC 20) each time they step into a trapped square or fall 20 feet into the arena's lower level. Gladiators who fall must make their way back to the stairs and up into the arena again to continue in the fight; they can also surrender if they don't wish to continue.



8. DIAMOND DHARINA INTERVIEW—VEINS ARENA FLOOR (AREA V2) (EL 7)

One of the arena announcers, a female dwarf with the name of Diamond Dharina and the shape of a lumpy sling bullet, spreads her arms in a gesture of inclusive harmony. Visceral boos rain down from the crowd as crimson *dancing lights* highlight her ruddy mien. "We're all friends here, aren't we, my dearies?"

Between matches in a two-out-of-three grappling match, Diamond Dharina hosts a Grudge Building show. The PCs get five times their Fame points in gold if they agree to appear, and a second five times their Fame points in gold if they make successful Grudge Building checks while on stage. They also gain an extra Fame point if they roll a higher Grudge Building check than their next opponents, Team Tongue (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules" for Grudge Building checks, and see **Event 10** for Team Tongue's statistics).

Note that if the characters roll higher than a 20 on their Grudge Building check, they insult Team Tongue so well that the yuan-ti and his cohorts leap over Diamond Dharina and attack the PCs immediately. This brawl gives the PCs an additional Fame point if they win, but it also causes the commissioner to fine the PCs 50 gp each for fighting outside the arena floor.

Creatures: The PCs can smell mint on Niggles and Dunlop but not on Severus (Wisdom check, DC 10). Paramezzus feared the intelligent yuan-ti would see through his bloodrush scheme and did not offer his brewbag to Severus.

Tactics: If Team Tongue attacks during the Diamond Dharina show, they simply fight until one of their number is at half hit points. Then they flee to the locker room, where Severus prepares for the real match based on what he just learned of the PCs.

The real match, a battle between Team Tongue and the PCs, occurs in **Event 10**. Until then, the PCs can investigate further (see the "Gather Information—**Event Blocks B and C**" sidebar), fight one-on-one matches (see the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar), or duel the Mountain (see **Event 9**).

9. THE MOUNTAIN—THE BATHS (AREA B4) (EL 2)

This encounter works best if the PCs come to it after some investigation reveals that the Mountain might have some valuable information. The "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar has hooks that can bring the PCs into the event.

The hulk before you prompts you to recall Short Fang's hero-worship and his exaggerated tales of the Golden Shambler. The difference is that this man really is that big. Steam rising from the baths hangs around his head just like clouds hang around the summit of a real mountain.

Creatures: Mountain Morasso, the Living Legend, is looking to resurrect a career better left in the record books. He holds the records for fastest knockout, most wins in one day, and consecutive solo match wins, but now he lives on memories of his glory days.

The Mountain has heard of the PCs' quest for

information and is prepared to tell them some stories. However, he refuses to talk unless the PCs' best gladiator agrees to face him in a solo match. The Mountain agrees to any Spice the PC suggests. In fact, if any of the PCs question the Mountain's age or fitness, he becomes embarrassed and angry, and insists upon one of the more dangerous Spices to prove himself (at your option, probably a Poisoned Caltrop Match or an Ankheg Pit Match).

Once the PCs sign with the Commissioner for the match against the Mountain, he shares his information.

He claims that Volpone Venazzi once confided in the Mountain and adumbrated a plan to "knock off gladiators one-by-one to ruin the whole business, even my own Sand Net. Insurance money is better than gladiator money, that's sure as sand in your eye." Unfortunately for the PCs, this is completely made up and another example of the Mountain trying to feel important. PCs can make a Sense Motive check opposed by the Mountain's Bluff check (which is made at +2) to determine that he's not telling the truth.

Also unfortunate for the PCs is the fans' reaction to their match with the Mountain: Should the PC win, the crowd only boos the character for pulling the Living Legend off his pedestal. The PC in the match loses 3 Fame points.

Mountain Morasso, Male Human Ftr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 3d10–6; hp 16; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Atk +2 melee (1d8–1/crit 19–20, longsword); AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 7, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 15.

Skills: Climb +5, Perform (drama) +5. *Feats:* Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Toughness ×2.

Possessions: chain shirt, large steel shield, longsword, 55 sp, scroll case containing certificates for his records in the Veins, scroll case containing ten charcoal portraits of Mountain Morasso that the gladiator can autograph and sell (or give away).

Development: If the PCs treat Morasso kindly and ask the right questions following the match, he can provide them with an important clue: he knows some gladiators have been using some sort of poultice that supposedly enhances their abilities in the ring. The Mountain thought about trying it a few times, he admits, after getting a sample from a now-deceased gladiator, but he has since stopped because he didn't feel a win while under the influence of the substance was an "honest" win. He subsequently tossed the poultice in the trash. "In fact," says the Mountain, "I think a good number of fighters who used those things now number among the dead." He doesn't know about the poultice's specific effects, but he can confirm a link between the use of the drug and the deaths of the gladiators.

After their match with the Mountain, the PCs might be ready for another battle, this time against Team Tongue (**Event 10**). If not, they can continue interrogating arena regulars (see the "Gather Information—**Event Blocks B and C**" sidebar), fight in an independent match or two (see the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar), or appear on the stage with Diamond Dharina if they have not yet done so (see **Event 8**).

10. TASTE TEST (PLOT)—VEINS ARENA FLOOR (AREA V2) (EL 7)

When the PCs are ready for their next battle, they should report to the locker room once more.

The crowd is even more raucous for your second battle. The locker room ceiling is vibrating in time with the fans' stomping feet. The snake-headed yuan-ti you must face is trying to stare you down from across the locker room; his glassy pupils break their gaze only when the blaring bronteum summons you to the arena entrance.

The stands are awash in human chaos. Fans wave at you, and someone—presumably an illusionist—projects a large silent image of your faces just below the Cloud Boxes. One fan is holding up a marriage proposal, but when the bronteum thunders again, your attention snaps back to the arena floor. A loud hiss crescendos in the arena, and at the climax of the sound, Team Tongue sprints into the ring.

Don't forget to have the PCs make rolls to enter the arena dramatically and to build Grudges against Team Tongue on the arena floor before the match (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules"). Team Tongue's catch phrases are, "Taste this!" and "Watch your tongue!"

Creatures: Team Tongue is named for its leader, Severus Tulero, a snake-headed yuan-ti halfblood. His two human partners have cut their own tongues to resemble Severus's forked one.

Severus Tulero, Yuan-ti Halfblood: hp 38; *Monster Manual* 190.

Dunlop, Male Human Rog2/Rgr1: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d6+4 plus 1d10+2 (currently 2d6 plus 1d10); hp 22 (currently max 16); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Atk +4 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, masterwork longsword) and +2 melee (1d4+1/crit 19–20, dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6, favored enemy (human), two-weapon fighting ability; SQ evasion; AL CE; SV Fort +4 (currently +2), Ref +5, Will –1; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14 (currently 11), Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Diplomacy +6, Forgery +2, Gather Information +4, Handle Animal +2, Hide +7, Listen +3,

Move Silently +6, Ride +6, Spot +3, Use Magic Device +4. *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: chain shirt, masterwork longsword, dagger, used bloodrush poultice, 43 gp.

Niggles, Male Human Rgr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 3d10+3 (currently 3d10–3); hp 28 (currently max 13); Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Atk +5 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, masterwork longsword) and + 3 melee (1d4+1/crit 19–20, dagger); SA favored enemy (human), two-weapon fighting ability; AL CE; SV Fort +5 (currently +3), Ref +1, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12 (currently 9), Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Animal Empathy +4, Handle Animal +4, Intuit Direction +4, Jump +6, Ride +6, Swim +8. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Track, Weapon Focus (longsword).

GATHER INFORMATION CHECKS (EVENT BLOCKS B AND C)

In the latter stages of the adventure, PCs making successful Gather Information checks can pick up the following rumors, lies, and clues:

- **DC 15:** Ignatio, bronteum operator—"My pipes and bells overlook the delivery entrance. There have been a lot of deliveries lately from Fra Lorenzo, an herbalist." See below for information on Fra Lorenzo. Also, a PC making a Diplomacy check (DC 10) and spending 25 gp can persuade Ignatio to compose a custom bronteum theme for the PC, and play that when the PC enters the arena. This gives a PC a +4 on any checks to enter the arena dramatically (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules").
- **DC 10:** Tippy Giblets, coconut saleswoman—"Ach, business has been slow. Slow for everyone, until I saw that Volpone Venazzi sashay through the bazaar with his medallions glowing gold on his chest. How is he grabbing such pretties in such hard times? I'd ask him, I would, if I could get him to give me the time of day."
- **DC 15:** Sir Levelyn Dodd, wandering minstrel—"When they asked us to play in the Veins, I was thrilled. But then when I saw what goes on in the locker rooms, I thought again. Have you seen the training those gladiators go through? It's a wonder they don't kill themselves."
- **DC 15:** Piggut, half-orc sandsweeper—"I found this in sand after Tongue match." Piggut gives the PCs a faraja leaf. If they take this to Fra Lorenzo, he can identify it.
- **DC 15:** Wilhemina Dodd, costume seamstress—"I was so busy with my husband's costumes that I forgot to finish Volpone's gladiator tunic. I thought he was going to flay me alive. That man is unstable."
- **DC 15:** Argosian Lutellus, animal handler—"That Alfonse Drellus creep is always sneaking our animals out and working with them. But at least he doesn't make the animals hoot and howl when he walks by, like that Paramezzus joker. Sheesh, you'd think that guy killed the Great Animal Spirit up in the sky, the way the critters jump when he comes around."
- **DC 15:** Giovanni Diometian, Cloud Box butler—"Working with all them rich folk, you get a nose for perfumes. Funny how the strongest smell isn't in the cloud boxes, it's the mint smell I catch on gladiators sometimes. Same smell hangs around that herbalist's booth out in the bazaar." Giovanni cannot supply Fra Lorenzo's name, but a diligent PC can find Lorenzo by making another successful Gather Information check (DC 15).

If a character directs his questions to a particular NPC, use the following results with either a Diplomacy, Gather Information, or Intimidate check:

Volpone Venazzi, crime lord: Volpone is an articulate brute. PCs might think to question him themselves, or they could be led to him by clues found in random Gather Information checks. His twelve-goon entourage (same statistics as Stick) brushes aside all questions from characters with less than 10 Fame points. If the PCs accumulate more than 13 Fame points and have not yet interviewed Volpone, he seeks them out, wanting to size up his new competition.

- **DC 10:** "How droll. You think I would kill my own gladiators? That's why you're not rich like me—because you're dense."
- **DC 15:** "Who hates gladiators? The Pacifists, of course. And Paramezzus, ever since Thel aerated his son in last year's Thunder Throwdown. And Trixa Hatchet's dad—he wants his daughter dead and the whole place rotting with her. But all of those people are pixie pants and couldn't hurt a millipede." The Pacifists are a group of peaceful protesters who frequently picket the arena. They might decide to heckle the PCs outside their lodging one night, causing them to be fatigued the next day (*Dungeon Master's Guide* page 84).
- **DC 20:** "All right, all right. Let me put it simply for you: Certain of my boys have been getting a boost. I don't know from whom, but it's powerful, and I suspect it's hurting them long term. Like you will be if you don't leave. Now."

Commissioner Flugg, corrupt official: Jacobus Flugg moves through the Veins like a fat little whirlwind spraying nonsense wherever he goes. He only stops for gladiators with a reputation (10 or more Fame points), and even then he is not normally helpful.

- "Of course I know who the killer is, I'm the Commissioner. Look at me. I will deal with this situation, and you will go bother someone else." This is his standard answer to any question of substance, and it is a lie.
- **DC 15:** The Commissioner relates the story of Thel, Arxus, and Paramezzus from the "Background" section if the PCs ask about any of those NPCs. The Commissioner speaks of Paramezzus's hatred for Thel and gladiators in general, but he does not fret because he considers the alchemist harmless.
- **DC 20:** "Don't touch that. Look at me. There is a connection between all the deaths. All the dead gladiators were veterans. No one new has died."

Possessions: chain shirt, masterwork longsword, dagger, map of lockers and owners in the locker rooms with the more affluent gladiators' lockers circled in green, 21 gp.

Tactics: Niggles and Dunlop use bloodrush before the match begins; see the sidebar for its effects.

Severus uses his aversion ability on the strongest fighter to keep him out of melee. He then attempts to poison an arcane caster. He targets other fighter types with *cause fear* and *suggestion*, uses *polymorph other* on other spellcasters, and uses the full-attack action with his scimitar and bite if he feels that he can stand toe-to-toe with his adversary (note that Severus is very smart and won't make stupid mistakes in combat). Team Tongue's finishing move is the Tongue Twister, which is executed when two team members flank a foe and swing their swords simultaneously, trying to spin the enemy in place.

Development: Niggles and Dunlop take bloodrush without Severus's knowledge. He has noticed their

GATHER INFORMATION CHECKS (EVENT BLOCKS B AND C) CONTINUED

• **Severus Tulero, yuan-ti halfblood gladiator:** Severus's teammates desert him after the match.

• **DC 10:** "I've got no team and no idea what you're talking about. I also have no idea what that bag of junk was. I did hear Niggles got it from someone inside the arena."

• **DC 20:** "All I know is that Niggles and Dunlop said it could have helped me fight better. I don't know what it was."

• **Hurk Brothers, good ol' boys:** The Hurk Brothers have been on bloodrush for several matches now.

• **DC 15:** "Our secret? It's not magic. That's all I'm saying. So it ain't illegal, because if it were illegal, they'd test for it, right?"

• **DC 20:** "May my mother come back from her grave—again—and rip your spine out if you ever say I told you, but yeah, there's a little extra oomph going around. You got to find it yourself, though, and if the man ain't selling you the stuff, I ain't selling you the man."

Paramezzus, arena alchemist: Paramezzus is a bent and crooked old man; he looks like a malformed homunculus, or like a doll that someone broke and put back together wrong. See area **V8** for Paramezzus's statistics.

• **DC 10:** "Yes, come see the corpses. The smell is formidable." Traces of bloodrush use disappear after death. *Speak with dead* spells are of limited use because the dead gladiators do not know why they died. If asked directly, a dead gladiator answers honestly about his bloodrush use. But it will not think to volunteer the information.

• **DC 10:** "Certainly I use fungus. Have you ever tried to make a tindertwig without firewort? But no, I don't know anything about this phantom fungus that attacked Her Holiness."

• "My son was a god! And she cut him down like a pig in the slaughterhouse. No one could have saved him. No one!" Paramezzus nearly goes mad when asked about his son or Thel. He will answer no more questions for a day.

• "I brew no such cataplasm." This is Paramezzus's answer to any interrogative concerning or alluding to bloodrush. As soon as possible after this question, Paramezzus bribes Commissioner Flugg to declare the party's next match a Caltrop Match against the Dreadwood Wyvern (see **Event 12**).

Fra Lorenzo, tattooed neighborhood herbalist: Fra Lorenzo (male human Exp5; Innuendo +5, Profession (herbalism) +8) is a special NPC. He can provide the link between Paramezzus and the gladiator deaths. Lorenzo mans a table in the bazaar, and the PCs might learn of this through Gather Information checks (see above). Unfortunately for the PCs, Fra Lorenzo harbors a justified fear of Paramezzus, and he hedges some of his answers.

Fra Lorenzo's back is a single large sunflower tattoo, with holy words of Pelor written in the petals.

• **DC 10:** "Indeed, I do sell a lot of faraja leaves. Yes, to someone at the Veins." See **Event 6** for details of the faraja leaves, which smell like mint and which Paramezzus uses to create the bloodrush. A PC who succeeds at a Sense Motive check (DC 15) realizes that Lorenzo is referring to Paramezzus, and another Sense Motive check (DC 20) reveals that Lorenzo suspects Paramezzus of brewing illegal concoctions with the herb.

• **DC 10:** "A plant always grows toward light. A man may grow toward darkness. A plant is predictable. A man is not. Why would Paramezzus need so many faraja leaves? We cannot know or predict. The leaves have a very strong smell, like mint; perhaps he is dabbling in perfumes?" Lorenzo is trying to communicate that he does not know if Paramezzus is good or evil, but that the possibility exists for either. In fact, he suspects that Paramezzus might be cooking up dangerous mélanges with his faraja leaves and his alchemical equipment. Another Sense Motive check (DC 15) reveals that Lorenzo considers it possible to create something deadly out of the materials he sells to Paramezzus.

• "Ah, you say that you took this poultice from Team Tongue? Let me see . . ." If the PCs bring Lorenzo the used poultice from **Event 10**, he informs them that it could be the source of the gladiators' deaths. He would like a fresh one to be sure. If the PCs do get a fresh one from Paramezzus's office (area **B1** and **Event 13**) or from the Golden Shambler's old belt in **Event 15**, Lorenzo can prove that Paramezzus and his bloodrush are behind the deaths of the gladiators. However, Lorenzo still fears Paramezzus, and PCs can only glean the preceding information from him via a Sense Motive check (DC 20), by calming him with a Diplomacy check (DC 20), or with a great deal of gold (250 gp loosens his tongue). When PCs have Fra Lorenzo's damning evidence, they can confront Paramezzus as in **Event 17**.

increased prowess, however, and is concerned (Sense Motive, DC 20, to detect his anxiety in the battle). If the PCs gain the upper hand in the match or even just strike a telling blow, they might hear Niggles complain, "See? I told you we should have given some to Severus, too." (Listen, DC 10) This distracts Severus and he labors under a –1 penalty to attack rolls and skill checks for the remainder of the combat while he puzzles over his teammate's comments. If the PCs are about to win, Niggles pulls out his used bloodrush poultice and tries to slap it onto Severus's scaly neck. This causes Severus to attack his teammate. The match is signaled as over, Commissioner Flugg sputters into the ring, and Team Tongue is disqualified for fractiousness. Niggles fights to the death to retrieve the used poultice.

If the PCs recover the poultice, they have a clue to crack the case. If they show it to Paramezzus, he feigns indifference but acts quickly to remove the PCs as a threat (see **Event 12**). If the PCs take the used poultice to Fra Lorenzo, the neighborhood herbalist, he asks to see a fresh brewbag (see the "Gather Information—**Event Blocks B and C**" sidebar for details on Fra Lorenzo).

The PCs are likely to raid Paramezzus's office for a fresh cataplasm after meeting the herbalist. See **Event 13** and area **B1** for the circumstances and possible results of such a raid. Make sure to stage any remaining events you wish before the characters take an unused poultice to Fra Lorenzo, for once Paramezzus is linked to the the drug and the gladiator deaths, the alchemist looses anarchy on the arena and disrupts the normal flow of events.

In any case, after this battle, the PCs move to the **Block C** events. **Block C** wraps up the event-based portion of the adventure, and an excellent starting point, although not the only starting point, for **Block C** is "The Red and the Yellow, Part II" (**Event 11**).

11. THE RED AND THE YELLOW, PART II—THE BEAST PENS (AREA B2) (EL 5)

Whether Trixa is the PCs' manager or not, they almost literally run into her in the pens. This encounter works well if staged while the PCs are walking toward Paramezzus's office to confront him or to search for more bloodrush.

A very human voice shrieks in pain among the growls, barks, and cries of the beasts. Trixa Hatchet comes running around the corner, a girallon in hot pursuit!

Trixa's father is upset because Trixa refuses to give him a percentage of her earnings in the arena. To teach her a lesson, he used his Handle Animal skill to lock the girallon onto Trixa's scent.

Alfonse comes around the corner 2 rounds after the girallon does. He planned on calling the beast off after scaring his daughter, but upon seeing the PCs, Alfonse lets the girallon have at them.

Creatures: See **Event 5** for Trixa and Alfonse's statistics.

Girallon: hp 52; *Monster Manual* 104.

Development: If the PCs kill the girallon, Alfonse runs. But now Trixa sees the depths of her father's evil, and she helps the PCs run him down. With his daughter threatening to bear witness against him in the King's courts, Alfonse offers to trade information for his freedom.

Alfonse can tell the PCs that there is a drug operation going on in the Veins. He knows that it involves a drug called bloodrush, that gladiators are using it, and that Niggles and Dunlop offered to help him found a bloodrush ring in Plenith and Port Rhemis. He doesn't know who supplied the drug; he only heard Niggles and Dunlop refer to their supplier as a "twisted kook."

Alfonse can also be persuaded to tell the PCs the above information via a successful Intimidate check (DC 15). Trixa wants to turn him over to the King and let him be sentenced to the copper mines no matter what information the PCs coax out of Alfonse; she has begun to feel very uncomfortable knowing he's around.

After dealing with Trixa's father, the PCs are free to try to raid Paramezzus's office (**Event 13** and area **B1**) or engage in more gladiatorial matches. They might also encounter Arxus Nod's proxy ooze (**Event 14**) or confront Paramezzus with the used bloodrush poultice obtained from the Team Tongue match (for the confrontation, see **Event 12**).

12. BAD MEDICINE—PARAMEZZUS'S OFFICE AND THE VEINS ARENA FLOOR (AREAS B1 AND V2) (EL 6)

If the PCs take the used poultice bag from Niggles and show it to Paramezzus, he pretends to know nothing about it. A successful Sense Motive check opposed by the alchemist's Bluff check reveals that Paramezzus is holding something back. In fact, as soon as he sees the poultice netting in the PCs' hands, he makes up his mind to bribe Commissioner Flugg into declaring the PCs' next match a Caltrop Match versus the Dreadwood Wyvern. As soon as the PCs leave, he does just that.

Creatures: The Dreadwood Wyvern once ate forty halflings in one night. Outraged, the Kingdom sent the Royal Halberdiers to hunt it down. Sand Net factors secured the beast's contract for the arena, but its time here has made it no less bloodthirsty.

Wyvern: hp 59; *Monster Manual* 186.



Tactics: The wyvern can fly to avoid the caltrops. This makes the match inherently unfair, which is exactly why Paramezzus picked it. See the "Spice on the Sand" sidebar for details on a Caltrop Match.

The wyvern attempts to fly up and down the length of the arena on its 100-foot chain and make Flyby Attacks with its claws. If it hits with a claw, it hangs on and stings with its tail. The wyvern's first targets are arcane spellcasters, because they are typically the most susceptible to its poison. They are also the ones most likely to be able to cast *fly* or deal significant damage from a distance, thus negating the wyvern's mobility advantage. If only one or two foes remain on the ground, the wyvern lands and attempts to use the full-attack option with its bite, stinger, and wings. In this case, it attacks the strongest fighter first and finishes off any lingering foes later.

Development: If the party survives the Caltrop Match, Paramezzus animates the Golden Shambler and sets it upon them at some time in the near future (see **Event 15**). If the PCs attempt to raid Paramezzus's office to obtain a fresh poultice rather than a used one, see **Event 13** and area **B1**. If they ask further questions of those in the arena, see the "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar. They might also encounter Arxus's proxy ooze (see **Event 14**), or rescue Trixa from her father if they have not yet done so (see **Event 11**).

13. DIGGING UP THE DIRT—PARAMEZZUS'S OFFICE (AREA B1)

Run this event when the PCs go to search Paramezzus's office.

See area **B1** for the details of Paramezzus's office. In addition to the information contained in the room's description, a few notes are in order.

First, keep in mind that Paramezzus is almost always in his office. He even sleeps there. The PCs most likely need to create a diversion to lure him away from his office if they want to ransack the room unmolested.

Second, realize that once the PCs acquire a fresh bloodrush poultice from this room, they are close to solving the mystery. If they take one of these herb nets to Fra Lorenzo, he identifies it as the cause of the gladiator deaths (see the "Gather Information—**Event Blocks B and C**" sidebar for details on Fra Lorenzo). All the PCs must do then is return with Fra Lorenzo or his signed statement; when Paramezzus is shown this evidence, he triggers his plan to destroy the Veins.

Take care to stage all the events you wish before the PCs confront Paramezzus with their final pieces of evidence. **Events 11**, **12**, **14**, and **15** have been designed so that they all could occur while the PCs travel between Paramezzus's office and Fra Lorenzo's booth in the bazaar.

14. EVERY GIRL LOVES A ROMANTIC OOZE, PART II—THE BEAST PENS (AREA B2) (EL 5)

Although listed as occurring in the Beast Pens, this event can transpire in almost any underground location at the Veins.

The normal damp of the corridor gives way to a glistening jelly coating the walls. The jelly is throbbing with life and slithers off the wall toward your feet.

If the PCs refrain from assaulting it, the jelly shares its message.

The slime begins to form letters. Slimy pseudopods spell out, "Help Arxus." Rearranging themselves, the gelatinous tendrils form the message, "Loves Thel." Next is, "His touch deadly." Then the jelly rears up and splats down all at once, leaving blobs spelling, "She must be fungus too. Help Arxus!" Finally the jelly coalesces into a giant arrow pointing to a crack in the wall.

Creatures: The ochre jelly is a slave to Arxus and has been trained to form its body into words, begging the PCs' intercession with Thel on Arxus's behalf. If the PCs peremptorily attack the ochre jelly, it splits, and one part fights while the other spells out Arxus's message. PCs fighting the belligerent jelly can make a Spot check (DC 10) each round to see the message; those not fighting spot it easily.

In the crack in the wall is a recipe that Arxus believes will transform Thel into a pudding like he believes himself to be. In fact, these are the scribblings of a madman and merely make her hair fall out.

If the PCs take the paper and do not molest the ochre jelly, Arxus assumes they are his proxies and will woo Thel for him. If the PCs tear up the paper and laugh, continue to attack the jelly, or run away, the jelly fights until reduced to half its hit points. It seeps through cracks in the walls, and that night Arxus sends the ochre jelly to attack the PCs in their sleep.

Ochre Jelly: hp 60; *Monster Manual* 105.

Development: If the PCs inform Thel of Arxus's survival and his slimy intentions, her face goes ashen. Thel teeters between wanting to kill whatever vile creature Arxus has become and feeling guilty about slaying Arxus in the first place. In the end, she connects Arxus with the fungal assaults she has been suffering and instructs the PCs to add Arxus's extermination to their list of tasks in the service of the Achillia stable.

After encountering Arxus's ocher jelly, the PCs can encounter Trixa and her father if they have not yet done so (see **Event 11**). They can also ransack Paramezzus's office (see **Event 13**) or engage in questioning the locals or fighting independent gladiators (see the appropriate sidebars). It might also be time for Paramezzus to sic the re-animated Golden Shambler on the PCs (**Event 15**).

15. DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK—THE TUNNEL ENTRANCE (AREA V1) (EL 3)

If possible, Paramezzus sends the Shambler zombie at the PCs right after a match before they have regained their strength. He decides upon this course of action only after the PCs have proven themselves a threat, probably by showing him a recovered bloodrush poultice (**Event 10**), and after they have defeated the Dreadwood Wyvern (see **Event 12**).

A boy yells excitedly up ahead in the tunnel. Soon, Short Fang comes running into view. He stops in front of you, heaving and catching his breath. Then he draws himself up, inhales deeply, and unleashes a torrent of questions. "Is it true? Did you see it? Where is it? Can you . . . Oh no!"

Following Short Fang's gaze, you see a rubbery mound of flesh, roots, and yellowing vegetation undulating toward you. Suddenly, it snaps two tendrils straight at your eyes!

Creature: These are the remains of the Golden Shambler, animated by Paramezzus's scroll of *animate dead* to kill the PCs. A bizarre golden shambling mound in life, the creature retains no memories of its former self. The Golden Shambler originally died of bloodrush use and was buried with great ceremony in a nearby graveyard. Paramezzus guided the zombie mound to the PCs and then stole back to his office to avoid suspicion as long as possible.

Rufillius came running because word spreads fast in the Veins, and he heard that his beloved mentor shambled the halls once more. The boy stands shocked, feet rooted to the ground, broken-hearted to see what has been done to his idol. He wails inconsolably throughout the ensuing fight.

BEASTS IN THE PENS

Any number of creatures can be found in the pens of the Veins at any given time. Currently, the owners keep the following creatures in the pens, all of which have had some level of training:

- One owlbear
- Two displacer beasts
- One wyvern (the Dreadwood Wyvern)
- Two girallons
- Four ankhegs
- Two carrion crawlers
- One basilisk

If you're looking for an easy way to add spice to a match, add one of these or another monster to the mix and see what happens. If the PCs are having an easy time of their trek through the burning Veins, an encounter with an enraged monster can shock them out of any complacency.

Animated Golden Shambler, Huge Zombie: hp 55; *Monster Manual* 192.

Tactics: The zombie executes a partial charge in the first round. It follows up with melee attacks on anything living and within reach.

Development: During the fight, sobbing in shock and despair, Short Fang drops the leather training belt the Golden Shambler bequeathed to him. The belt lands oddly, a secret pouch is jostled open, and a hidden net of bloodrush tumbles out.

This is another potential case-cracker. If the PCs haven't searched Paramezzus's office, this is a second place where they can find an unspoiled sample of bloodrush. If they take it to Fra Lorenzo, he can link it to the deaths and to Paramezzus.

If they go knocking on mausoleum doors at the nearest graveyard, the PCs eventually turn up the local undertaker, Rig Jambones (male Com1). Rig is a die-hard fan, and a Diplomacy check (DC 10) convinces Rig to tell the PCs, "Yeah, I did see that crazy crook-back poking around the Shambler's grave yesterday."

Ad-hoc Experience Award: Award 50% more experience (as a story award) for defeating the Golden Shambler zombie if any PC was thoughtful enough to either shield Rufillius from the violence or comfort the boy after the battle (requires a successful Diplomacy check, DC 10).

16. A CAGE WITH A VIEW—THE VEINS ARENA FLOOR (AREA V2)

This is the climactic battle of the gladiatorial season. Only the seven gladiators with the highest Fame point totals receive entry bids. For any PCs who do not qualify, Thel can find them jobs as honeyball concessionaires for the match (that job pays 2 gp per day).

The Fame or Infamy Point totals for the other gladiators are: Severus Tulero—23; Squirt Hurk—20; Mountain Morasso—15; Niggles—14; Jeb Hurk—12; and all the rest have less than 5.

The crowd is chanting with Diamond Dharina, "Lock them in! Lock them in!" Like the arena itself, the marble cage is white but shot through with red veins. The cage has no roof; once the portcullis falls, the only way out is up.

This event is deceptively simple: The first one out of the cage wins. However, the only way out is to climb up and over the walls; all transportation save climbing is forbidden (no flying, no *spider climbing*, and so on). The walls of the massive cage are 40 feet high and fairly easy to climb (DC 10). The cage itself covers a 40-foot square. While still in the locker room, the PCs must choose whether to wear armor or to leave it off and avoid the armor check penalty. Squirt Hurk is the only gladiator who doffs his armor for the match.

Tactics: Squirt doesn't wear armor because he plans on using his *sanctuary* spell to scramble up the walls untouched. Severus, the defending Marble Cage champion, uses *suggestion*, *polymorph other*, and *deeper darkness* to slow the ascent of any climber in the lead. The yuan-ti's overarching strategy is to destroy the competition and then enjoy the adulation of the crowd while leisurely climbing out, just like he did last year. Mountain Morasso assumes everyone will target him and uses the total defense action for the first 3 rounds. Niggles and Jeb Hurk seek to team up with any other gladiator only to betray their partner and make a climb to glory.

Granting quarter is still mandated in a marble cage match. Any NPC gladiator reduced to 15 hit points or fewer cries for quarter. A handler then lifts the portcullis halfway, and the shamed gladiator is forced to exit.

See the *Player's Handbook*, page 64, for rules on climbing and fighting while climbing.

Development: If the PCs have not fingered Paramezzus yet, he tips his hand during this event. This is the grandest event since last year's Thunder Throwdown, and the memories it stirs are too painful for Paramezzus to bear. After 10 rounds, he storms downstairs and attempts to burn down the Veins (see **Event 17**).

If the PCs have already defeated Paramezzus, feel free to run this event as a fun denouement to the adventure. The winner receives a gold and platinum Veins championship helm and earns 1 Fame point. The winner also receives a gate cut of 500 gp plus ten times his Fame score. Stable Achillia gladly picks up all clerical fees incurred.

17. HOLDING THE BAG (PLOT)—PARAMEZZUS'S OFFICE (AREA B1)

If the PCs confront Paramezzus with sufficient evidence (for example, a fresh poultice and Fra Lorenzo's testimony), he panics.

The twisted alchemist narrows his eyes. His breath comes rapidly, and his bent back rises and falls with the effort. He sneers, "Those scum deserved their poison. Gladiators? Ha! Murderers! Slaughter decent boys, will they? Kill my son in the arena? No! Where are you, Thel? I'm coming for you, girl, and you'll be cold in the Veins this night. Erythnul speed me!" There is a popping sound, the scent of burning leather, and a billowing cloud of gritty smoke. When it clears, Paramezzus is gone.

Paramezzus purchased a *contingency* spell from an archmage fan and had it keyed to trigger a *teleport* spell

on the phrase, "Erythnul speed me!" He *teleports* to the Beast Pens (area **B2**). Once there he flings open the cage doors. Then he dashes to area **B3** and douses the trap doors with alchemist's fire. The floor supporting the arena is wood, and the alchemist's fire is incendiary enough to burn it despite the sand massed on top. Lastly, Paramezzus hurries off to find and kill Thel.

This concludes the **Block C** events and the event-based portion of the adventure. Proceed to area **B1**, where the characters begin their fight through a stadium gone mad.

PANDEMONIUM IN THE VEINS

To reach Thel and rescue her, the PCs must run a gauntlet of burning rooms, wild beasts, and stampeding fans. If instead of confronting Paramezzus in his office, the PCs were fighting in the Marble Cage when the alchemist struck, then they are trapped inside the cage and hear Thel screaming for help from her Cloud Box when they reach the top of the cage.

B1. ALCHEMIST'S CHAMBER (EL VARIES)

This is Paramezzus's office. The door is open during the day and locked at night (Open Lock, DC 25). An odor of mint hangs in the room at all times. A masterwork alchemist's lab is set up against the far wall beside a bed that looks like a millipede breeding ground. Inside the physician's desk, he keeps records of the injured fighters he has treated at the Veins.

Trap (EL 3): In a trapped secret panel behind the main drawer (Search, DC 25), Paramezzus keeps an onyx and jade holy symbol of Erythnul, Master of Pandemonium (50 gp), several fresh bloodrush poultices, and his Autodemonia, a diary. The Autodemonia is filled with panegyrics to Erythnul and disgusting vituperations against Thel. Near the first of every year, the diary has a shank of fur, a feather, or a scale pinned to its page. Characters who make an Intelligence check (DC 15) realize that ever since Paramezzus first manifested sorcerous talents, he has been unable to resist the perverse self-destructive behavior of summoning a familiar and then torturing it to death.

Poison Needle Trap: CR 3; +8 ranged (1 plus giant wasp poison); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20). Note: See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 80 for a description of giant wasp poison and its effects.

The room is normally occupied; by day, Paramezzus sees patients, by night, the alchemist sleeps while his son broods in a wall and curses his father for not accepting his new form. PCs who attempt to Search the room have to overcome, distract, or win the confidence of the room's occupants before they can ransack its contents.

If the PCs confront Paramezzus here, he disappears as in **Event 17**. After he vanishes, read the following:

> The door blew shut when Paramezzus vanished, but now a black ooze begins seeping under the cracks. The bottom of the wooden door sizzles and burns where it touches the dark mass, and an acrid smoke wafts up.

Creature (EL 7): This is Arxus Nod. By a freakish combination of unrequited love and long-suffering hatred, Arxus came back from death as a ghost. What's worse, his body was transformed by his father's horrid alchemy into a black pudding (the final stages of the transformation took place after the body was disposed of). Arxus's death drove him beyond sanity; when he first returned as a ghost over the remains of his body, he assumed that this the pudding was merely a new form. He possessed the creature and now thinks he actually is a black pudding. He can communicate with literate PCs by shaping letters with his pseudopods.

If the PCs played Cupid earlier for Arxus with Thel, or tried to help the pudding outside of acting as proxies, then the deranged fungal ooze might forget filial loyalty and step aside to let the characters rescue his beloved (Diplomacy, DC 10). If not, the PCs can attempt to Bluff their way past Arxus by pledging to deliver Thel to him.

If the confrontation with Paramezzus did not take place in his office, Arxus still appears and attempts to waylay or at least bargain with the PCs (he has little entertainment other than spying on his father through the cracks in the walls and keeping an "eye" out for his beloved Thel).

Regardless of the status of his relationship with the PCs, if he survives his encounter with them, Arxus tails the characters through the arena and is watching when they face his father in the Cloud Box above.

Arxus Nod, Male Human Ghost Ftr4: CR 6; Medium-size Undead (6 ft. 0 in. tall); HD 4d12; hp 24; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Atk +7 melee (1d4, incorporeal touch); SA horrific appearance, malevolence, manifestation; SQ undead, incorporeal, rejuvenation, turn resistance +4; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con —, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +6, Diplomacy +4, Handle Animal +4, Hide +10, Listen +9, Ride +4, Search +8, Spot +9. *Feats:* Endurance, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Run, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Black Pudding (possessed): hp 115; *Monster Manual* 145.

Note: Arxus currently possesses the body of a black pudding. He believes, in fact, that he is the black pudding and he never voluntarily leaves the body of the black pudding or uses his undead powers in any way. While Arxus does not gain the improved grab, acid, constrict, and split extraordinary abilities of the black pudding, his caustic "friends" retain full command of their own powers.

Grey Ooze: hp 26; *Monster Manual* 145.

Ochre Jelly: hp 60; *Monster Manual* 146.

B2. BEAST PENS (EL VARIES)

In normal times, these cages are locked (Open Lock, DC 20), and two animal handlers constantly shovel food in and dung out of the cages. When the PCs arrive here after the fire has started, read or paraphrase the following.

> The corridors here are full of hooting, gibbering, screeching, and the general noise of panicked, trapped creatures. Feathers drift through sooty black smoke.

The smoke induces coughing and hacking but is not suffocating. It does obscure vision, giving everything one-half concealment and a 20% miss chance. The smoke extends to the red lines on the map.

Creatures (EL 6 or EL 8): If the PCs helped Trixa slay one girallon, only one remains; otherwise, two are loose here. The arena also keeps an owlbear that has been in the gladiator pits for thirty years and is screeching in delirium at its moment of freedom. Both monsters attack the PCs once the characters are spotted, avoiding each other with the mutual respect big predators often show one another.

Girallon: hp 52; *Monster Manual* 105.

Owlbear: hp 47; *Monster Manual* 148.

Tactics: The girallon fights until slain, but the owlbear, thrilled at its freedom, tries to flee in the direction of the trapdoors (the only exit it knows of) if reduced to half or fewer hit points.

B3. ELEVATORS AND TRAP DOORS

There are four platforms here, each connected to a complicated pulley system. A platform can elevate 1,000 pounds up through the trap door into the arena when cranked (Strength check DC 10).

> The ceiling is ablaze with a scarlet fire. Dirty smoke clogs the hall, and a syrupy, black liquid drips from the ceiling.

The syrupy, black liquid is alchemist's fire. Anyone moving under the trap doors has a chance to catch on fire (*Dungeon Master's Guide* page 86).

B4. BATHS

Gladiators relax here before and after matches. Short Fang can often be found in here listening to the older gladiators tell stories from the pit.

> The air is clear here, and you can see bathtubs and bathing pools lining the walls. A desk in the corner is charred but not on fire. Bone dice lie scattered on top in disarray.

The water here can be useful for a PC who catches on fire and needs to douse herself.

B5. LOCKER ROOMS (EL 5)

The locker rooms are a place where gladiators can store their stagewear. Most of the time, a sharp-eyed attendant monitors the entrance to chase away fans.

> Banging sounds betray the presence of two looters in the locker rooms. When one thief pulls his head out of Mountain Morasso's locker with an armload of valuable memorabilia, he shouts in surprise and recognition.

Creatures: Dunlop and Niggles have decided that now would be a great time to raid a more successful gladiator's locker. They only attack the PCs if the PCs look vulnerable. Otherwise, they attempt to Bluff ("Mountain asked us to bring this stuff to him, honest!"). An Intimidate check (DC 20) forces the truth out of them, and they replace Mountain's trophies and slink out of the burning arena.

Niggles and Dunlop: See **Event 10** for statistics.

B6. STORE ROOMS

These rooms contain boats for naval battles when the arena is flooded, extra chains for hauling reluctant beasts up into the arena, as yet unused wooden legs, and much more. Every weapon in the *Player's Handbook* can be found here, including the exotic weapons.

A Search check (DC 20) reveals a stash of over a hundred vellum sheets, all covered with love poems scratched out in a very large hand (it is difficult for Arxus to manipulate a quill with only pseudopods for hands). The works are unsigned, but most of them focus on Thel's penultimate beauty and long for the day when she will be positively effulgent with spores for hair and skin that crawls over a liquefied skeleton.

THE VEINS

Once they emerge into the smoke-dimmed daylight, the PCs glimpse Thel Achillia battling in a luxury Cloud Box suspended high above the arena floor.

All around the edge of the arena (just inside the first row of seating) rises a 40-foot-high *antimagic* moat. It protects fans from any magical or supernatural effects employed in the arena, and it also keeps PCs from launching spells into the skybox at Thel. To defeat Paramezzus, they probably need to make their way to the battle and engage him in melee.

Trap (EL 1 or EL 2): The skybox in which Thel is currently battling Paramezzus is directly across from the staircase the PCs use to ascend to the arena floor. The characters have two choices: They can either sprint across the burning floor of the arena before climbing into the stands, or they can climb into the stands right next to the stairs and clamber through the smoldering bleachers, fleeing spectators, and the remaining debris of the arena. The first option puts the PCs at more risk, since the floor of the arena is dancing with hotter flame, but it also takes less time since the route is more direct.

Characters moving either way must make a saving throw each round they spend in either area. See areas **V2** and **V3** for details on these hazards.

Development: Once the PCs reach the base of the skybox, it takes 1 more round to climb the narrow stairs and gain access to the chamber.



V1. TUNNEL TO BASEMENT (EL VARIES)

Thel and Commissioner Flugg engineered the tunnels to enhance the natural pressure differential between the underground complex and the arena. The resulting constant zephyr makes banners wave and manes of hair dance dramatically on the wind when gladiators and beasts enter the Veins. When fire consumes the stands, the pressure differential is dangerously amplified.

The tunnel disgorges into a scene from the lower planes. A wind blasts at your back, pushing you out of the tunnel into the conflagration that consumes the Veins. Fans, some with tunics and cheering signs ablaze, are stampeding toward the bazaar on the far side of the arena. Looking up to the Cloud Boxes, you briefly glimpse an arm in adamantine-laced leather and the flash of a scimitar through the sparkling window, but then the flames leap up and block your vision.

Creatures (EL 3): A panicked ankheg skitters about the tunnel entrance. Terrified by the wildfire in the Veins and stymied by the edifice's marble foundation, it remains as trapped now as it was in the pens. Too frightened to be hungry, it ignores the PCs unless they assault it. Unfortunately, the backdraft rushing from the tunnel into the arena might blast the PCs into the beast. If a PC is blown into the ankheg, it interprets this as an aggressive charge and attacks.

Ankheg: hp 29; *Monster Manual* 18.

Trap: PCs can avoid the buffeting winds by detecting the peril and clinging to wall handholds as they enter the arena. They are safe unless they ascent the final 10 feet of the stairs leading up into the arena floor. A PC affected by the trap suffers contusion damage as noted, rolls to a stop 30 feet into the arena floor (area **V2**), and provokes the ankheg as he tumbles by unless he succeeds at a second Reflex save (DC 20).

Wind Trap: CR 2; no attack roll necessary (1d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20). *Note:* A successful Disable Device check means the character has rigged a makeshift breakwall of spare weapon trunks and archery targets, deflecting the wind from most of the passage's entrance. Also, if a character is blown onto the arena floor, he risks taking damage from the flaming sands (see area **V2** for details).

V2. ARENA FLOOR (EL 2)

The fighting floor of the Veins has never been more deadly. The sand radiates waves of heat, and ash from the burning bleachers falls like snow. Animal and human screams mix with the thunder-cracks of timber beams snapping under the sand. Each time a beam cracks, the sand heaves and sinks a little more.

The wooden floor is reinforced by stone and does not collapse completely. A Profession (engineer) check (DC 10) reveals this, but otherwise the PCs should be worried about the floor collapsing at any moment.

Trap: The heat is abysmal, and the ash is hot enough to set characters' clothes, hair, and equipment on fire. See page 86 in the DUNGEON MASTER's *Guide* for rules on abysmal heat and catching on fire. Moreover, a PC must make a Balance check (DC 10) for each round of movement in the sand; failure means that he is knocked from his feet as a support beam cracks and the sand slides.

End to end, the arena is 100 feet long, so most human characters should be able to make it the entire length with one run action, a single Reflex save, and a single Balance check.

Flaming Arena Floor: CR 2; flaming floor (2d6) and risk catching on fire; Reflex save (DC 13) avoids; Search N/A; Disable Device N/A.

V3. BLEACHERS (EL 1)

Hysterical spectators rush through the inferno in the stands. Next to you, a half-orc grunts as he is knocked against a balustrade by three dwarves barreling past.

Exits at the back of each aisle allow relatively quick evacuation, but fans at the end of every line are mad with fear and run haphazardly searching for alternate egress.

Trap: PCs have a chance to catch on fire as they hurdle through the burning bleachers (see the DUNGEON MASTER's *Guide* page 86). Moving through the stands at full speed requires a character to make a Balance check (DC 8) or fall prone. The total distance through the stands from the stairs to the base of the skybox is 150 feet.

Flaming Arena Gallery: CR 1; flaming bleachers (1d6); Reflex save (DC 13) avoids; Search N/A; Disable Device N/A. *Note:* Moving through the bleachers requires a character to make a Balance check (DC 8) each round or fall prone.

V4. TRAP DOORS (EL 1)

Trap: The trap doors here have been weakened by the heat and will collapse under a character's weight.

Pit Trap (20 ft. Deep): CR 1; no attack roll necessary (2d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

V5. STAIRS

The hanging Cloud Boxes sway in the breeze 60 feet up. Windows line the four walls of each box. The undersides bear frescoes of gladiator matches, chariot races, and flooded arena naval battles, all famously painted by the Aerdi, who hung beneath the boxes for two years to complete his masterpiece.

V6. BAZAAR

The bazaar is normally crowded with bargain hunters, but after Paramezzus fills the Veins with pandemonium, it is flooded with escapees and burn victims. When operating under usual conditions, the bazaar offers any item in the *Player's Handbook* for sale at standard prices.

Burn victims moan in triage while waiting for the arena clerics. A father calls out for a missing son. A stranger leads a boy out of the crowd, and the reunited father and son hug and clap each other on the back, sending puffs of sand ash skyward.

V7. BAZAAR TUNNEL

The portcullis bisecting the tunnel that runs from the arena floor to the bazaar fell and stopped about 4 feet above the floor. An escaped carrion crawler lies impaled under the portcullis, its dead body propping the gate up and allowing spectators to run through to safety outside.

V8. CLOUD BOX FIVE

Iron chains suspend the Veins' luxury suites 40 feet over the searing sands. This is high enough to be out of the ash storm falling below.

Suspension Chains: 4 inches thick; hardness 10; hp 120; Break DC 30.

Cloud Box Floors and Ceilings: 6 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 60; Climb DC 20.

Cloud Box Exterior Walls: 1 in. thick window glass; hardness 1; hp 1; Climb DC 25.

Wind sweeps the catwalks high above the arena floor. Thuds and the angry ring of steel on steel resound from Cloud Box five. With a spray of glass, a rogue in Sand Net leather crashes out the window and plummets, arms flailing, to the hot sand below. From inside the box, a voice growls, "Wench, that man had a wife and child. Sell me your shares, or they'll be in the front row when you're chained at the stake on Hydra Day." The answering cry rings out over the cacophony in the arena: "Never!"

Thel has just eliminated one Sand Net thug, but Volpone Venazzi and another thug remain. Compounding the difficulty is Paramezzus, who has just arrived.

Fighting on the catwalk requires a Balance check (DC 10) each round. Failure means the character falls to the ground.

Creatures: Paramezzus arrived just ahead of the characters. Volpone and his guild crony gained the box immediately before that, surprising Thel while she was shouting evacuation instructions to the crowd below.

Paramezzus Nod, Male Human Sor4/Clr3: CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 4d4 plus 3d8; hp 27; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk + 3 melee (1d4–1/crit 19–20, dagger); SA spells, rebuke undead 5/day; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +9; Str 8, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills: Alchemy + 10, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +6, Heal +5, Knowledge (religion) +4, Scry +4, Spellcraft +6. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Skill Focus (Alchemy), Spell Focus (Conjuration), Spell Focus (Enchantment).

Sorcerer Spells (6/7/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*daze*, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, read magic, ray of frost*; 1st—*charm person*, grease*, mage armor*; 2nd—*web**.

*Conjuration or Enchantment spells. The base save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

Cleric Spells Prepared (4/4/3; base save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×2, *read magic, resistance*; 1st—*command†, protection from good*, random action†, sanctuary*; 2nd—*hold person†, invisibility*, spiritual weapon*.

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Evil (evil spells cast at +1 caster level); Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

†Conjuration or Enchantment spells. The base save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

Possessions: wand of Melf's acid arrow, brooch of shielding (57 hp remaining), *Quaal's feather token (whip)*, scroll of *mirror image* (already read), scroll of *animate dead* (already cast if the Golden Shambler was reanimated), *potion of invisibility* ×2, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, onyx and jade holy symbol of Erythnul (50 gp), monocle on platinum chain (350 gp), hide scraps of former familiars, pendant coin purse with 15 pp.

Volpone Venazzi: See **Event 2** for statistics.

Thel Achillia: See **Event 2** for statistics.

Tactics: Paramezzus has one goal: Thel's death. He is willing to die himself if his death assures Thel an identical fate. He has already read his *mirror image* scroll, and he launches a *web* at Thel and her other assailants in the first round, hoping to immobilize everyone and have Thel at his mercy. If the Achillia stable boss ever moves near a broken window or onto the catwalk, Paramezzus casts *grease*, hoping she will slip and fall to her doom. Paramezzus casts *spiritual weapon* and uses his *Quaal's feather token* to occupy opponents while he concentrates on the head of the Achillia stable. If all else fails and Arxus survived, Paramezzus calls to his lurking son to eat the chains that support the Cloud Box. Arxus cannot do this himself, but his gray ooze cohort can do it in 3 rounds. At the end of the third round, the box free-falls into the melting sand. If Arxus is allied with the PCs, Paramezzus and the PCs can roll dueling Diplomacy checks to see to whom the pudding is more devoted. The DM should apply modifiers to the roll according to how well the PCs have treated Arxus.

Volpone Venazzi is afflicted by nothing resembling Paramezzus's monomania. In fact, Volpone and his bodyguard flee if the PCs reduce him to half his hit points. Until then, Volpone attacks Thel or any PC he thinks he can quickly finish off. He like to use his Improved Bull Rush feat to send PCs crashing out windows.

As long as she has 10 or more hit points, Thel fights alongside the PCs. She is almost glad that Volpone has finally faced her over swords; she is more comfortable with blades than business contracts. Thel is surprised by Paramezzus's capacity for murder, and she can't quite believe how evil the man truly is. She attacks Volpone rather than Paramezzus, seeing him as more of a threat, unless Paramezzus catastrophically wounds her.

CONCLUSION

If Thel survives, she rebuilds the Veins with the PCs—if they're willing—headlining the fundraising event, Clash in the Clouds. This is a gladiator match staged to recreate the PCs final battle with Paramezzus and Volpone. A special glass-walled Cloud Box is suspended 20 feet over the sands, this time with a net, and the last fighter inside the box wins. Thel adopts Short Fang as her personal apprentice, and the Clash in the Clouds is his first match.

Thel also wants the PCs to finish off Sand Net. Volpone could be convinced to face a PC champion one-on-one with his interests in the arena at stake.

If Thel perishes and Volpone survives, Sand Net takes over the Veins. Fair competition is a thing of the past, and unless the PCs intervene, Short Fang endures a brief but harsh apprenticeship culminating in death at the claws of a harpy in a fixed match.

In any case, the PCs can capitalize on their fame. The new boss of the arena declares Savior Day, and the PCs can earn ten times their Fame points in gold by standing in the bazaar, greeting fans, and signing vellum sheets. Any PC who has accumulated more than 15 Fame points is asked to sit for the Aerdi as he is brought back in to re-paint the bottoms of Cloud Boxes damaged by smoke.

Frank writes, "This adventure is dedicated to my lovely fiance. Without a doubt, I rolled a natural 20 when I met her."

APPENDIX I: ARENA RULES

The basic arena match pits gladiators versus gladiators with no weapons barred, mundane or magical. It is "bring your own sword"; magical weapons are not supplied but are permitted. To protect spectators, a permanent *antimagic* moat has been raised in front of the first row of bleachers. The moat rises 40 feet to the top of the arena.

Any match's rules can be altered by the commissioner or by the agreement of both gladiators or teams of gladiators. The locals call this "putting spice on the sand." Common Spices are listed in a sidebar.

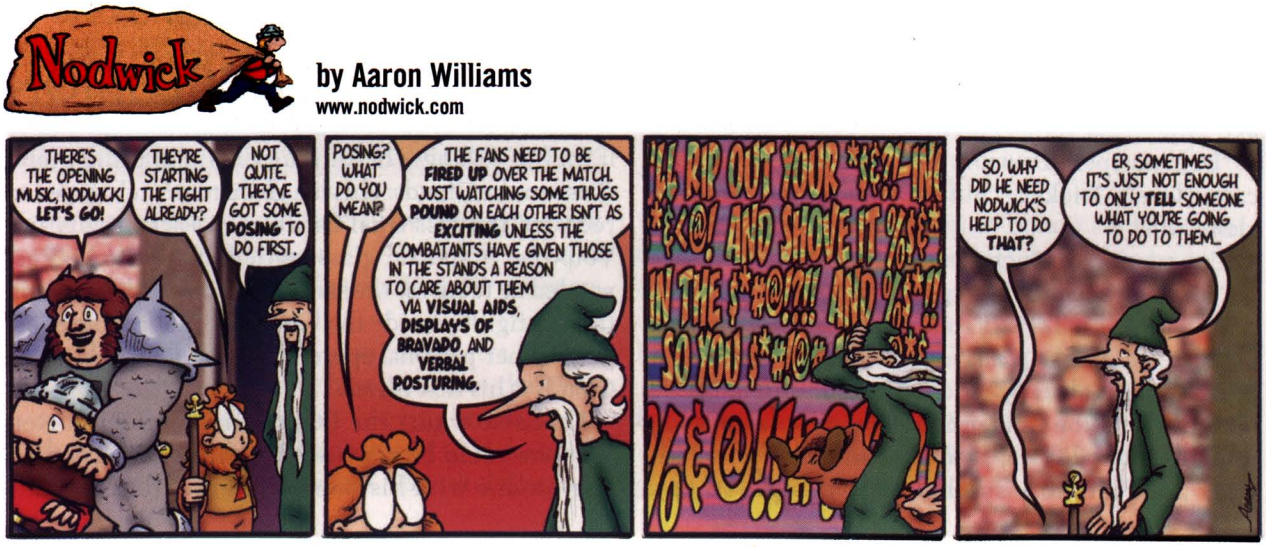
Preparation: In the locker rooms before a match, the gladiators are checked by the commissioner's referees armed with *wands of detect magic* (male human Wiz1; Sense Motive +2). Spellcasting is permitted during a match, but no gladiator is allowed to start a fight with spells already in place. This "no pre-casting" rule is what Paramezzus's non-magical bloodrush drug cleverly circumvents. Many gladiators go through personal rituals before a match, but these serve only to pump the warriors up. Some gladiators lift weights to appear larger before the crowd, others meditate, still others attempt to stare down their opponents from across the room. But no one is allowed to magically enhance him or herself until the fight has started.

Grudge Building: Playing to the fans is essential in the Veins. Bizarre creatures of myth, mighty magic, and incredible feats of strength and endurance are commonplace in a D&D gladiatorial arena, so the combatants must go to great lengths in other ways to gain the attention of the arena-goers. Much of this is accomplished through Grudge Building. Before each match, the opposing gladiators attempt to enter the ring dramatically and then perform for the crowd. Common actions in pre-match Grudge Building include casting figments and glamers to amaze the crowd and intimidate one's opponent, posing and flexing in the center of the ring, and of course shouting at one's opponent and detailing exactly how he will be dismembered.

Grudge Building can also be done during specific hosted shows between gladiator matches (see **Event 8** for an example). A character can choose another gladiator to build a grudge against on these shows, or he can ask the commissioner to assign him one. Grudge Building on such shows can be very lucrative (again, see **Event 8** for an example).

A Grudge Building check is a Perform (drama), Intimidate, Diplomacy, or Bluff check. Another type of Perform check can be substituted at your option. If the subject of the attempted grudge is present at the time of the check, this is an opposed check (failure on the part of the character attempting to build the grudge indicates the audience doesn't buy the performance). If the subject isn't present, the DC of the check is 10 + the subject's level + 1 for every 5 Fame points the subject possesses. The character can choose what skill to use. Players who roleplay Grudge Building especially well can be awarded a bonus to their Grudge Building check of up to one-half their character level. If a character defeats any opponent against whom he has made a successful Grudge Building check, he gains a bonus Fame point.

Fame Points: Every character has a certain



number of Fame or Infamy points. Infamy points and Fame points are identical and instantly interchangeable. For example, if Squirt Hurk has 13 Infamy points and suddenly turns good by traitorously Squirt Bombing one of his brothers, he now has 14 Fame points (13 originally, plus 1 for a successful finishing move).

A character can gain 1 Fame point by:

- Using his named finishing move to finish an opponent. The finishing move gets no bonus outside the normal D&D rules, but the player must describe and name it. A finishing move can be attempted once per match.
- Winning a match.
- Winning a match versus an opponent against whom the PC has successfully built up a Grudge.
- Winning a match in 2 rounds or less.
- Winning a match without taking damage.
- Appearing in a match with Spice.
- Entering the arena dramatically before a match. A character can make a successful Perform (drama), Intimidate, Diplomacy, or Bluff check (DC 15 + his current Fame point total) to accomplish this. Another type of Perform check can be substituted at your option. If a player describes how his character uses a class skill or ability to enhance his entrance, he earns a bonus on his check equal to half his character level.
- Using his catch phrase in any combination of three separate and successful Grudge Building attempts or victorious matches. A player must devise his own catch phrase (famous examples include, "How about a ride on the Fireball Express?" or "It's time to play kobolds and dragons. Guess which one you are!").
- Doing massive amounts of damage with a single blow or spell to an opponent who still threatens you or your companions. In game terms, someone who successfully confirms a critical hit that deals more than 30 points of damage gets a fame point. A character or monster who deals more than 30 points of damage without a critical hit doesn't get the fame point, since the style and flash of a regular blow doesn't wow the fans as much, even if the damage dealt is incredibly high.
- Taking out (knocking unconscious or otherwise incapacitating) more than two uninjured foes in a single round.
- Any action that makes the fans cheer and jump and hug their friends in ecstasy or throw ale steins in derision (your judgment). An example of this might be using *telekinesis* to hoist one enemy into the air and then dropping him onto his companion to deal falling damage to both. Another example might be a villainous PC pouring acid down the back of a gladiator while that gladiator is distracted by Trixa or another manager.

Fame point gain is cumulative, but a PC can gain a maximum of 2 Fame points per match, so if a PC wins a Spiced grudge match against an opponent in 2 rounds or less, he gains a total of 2 Fame points (he would have gained 4).

Arena crowds are fickle. Characters can lose Fame points more easily than they can gain them. Loss of Fame points can happen in many ways, such as by:

- Missing a match (the fans consider this cowardly). Lose 1d4 Fame points.
- Missing a match versus an opponent against whom the character has built up a Grudge. Lose 2d4 Fame points.
- Missing a match with Spice. Lose 2 extra Fame points (in addition to those for missing a match).
- Losing a match in 2 rounds or less. Lose 1d3 Fame points.
- Losing a match without harming the opposing gladiator. Lose 1d2 Fame points.
- Losing to a gladiator who has never won a match. Lose 1d2 Fame points.
- Asking for quarter if the PC still has more than 10 hp remaining. Lose 1d3 Fame points.
- Employing any sort of delaying tactic (hiding in a *rope trick*, running around invisible while waiting for barbarian's rage to run out, and so on). Lose 1d3 Fame points.

Again, Fame point loss is cumulative, so if a PC loses a Spiced Grudge match against an opponent in 2 rounds or less, he loses 4 Fame points (note that there is no limit to the number of Fame points a character can lose in a single match). Characters who drop to –10 Fame points or less are usually released by their stable, as they've become more a liability than a draw to the arena.

In general, add half a character's Fame points to any Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, or Intimidate check in the Veins (but do not add this bonus to any checks that could result in more Fame points). Add the full score if the character is talking to a fan rather than an employee.

Also add double a character's (new) Fame score in gold pieces to the character's cut from the gate after every match.

Note that Fame and Infamy scores can be negative; in such a case, apply the score as a penalty to all appropriate rolls and gate cuts.

Finally, note that only characters with Fame scores of 10 or higher can speak with Commissioner Flugg or Volpone Venazzi directly, and only the seven gladiators with the highest Fame scores are invited to the Marble Cage event at the end of the season.

Combat: As long as the players stay within the moat surrounding the arena floor (and extending 40 feet upward), no rules infringe upon the combat itself. All weapons, magical or mundane, are allowed, and no spell is forbidden. In the unlikely event that they damage something outside the moat, characters are liable for reparation costs.

A match ends when any gladiator cries "Quarter!" of his own free will. An entire team loses if just one of their member asks quarter. A match also ends when all of one side is unconscious or dead. Attacking a gladiator who has cried for quarter results in instant expulsion from either stable, as well as possible prosecution from local law enforcement. Other gladiators shun such killers, and might even go out of their way to take the law into their own hands against someone who commits this most heinous of arena crimes.

Clerics: Arena clerics cast *raise dead* on any gladiators who perish in a match. The clerics charge standard fees (950 gp) and take the fighter's gate cut in his future matches if the raised gladiator is unable to afford the miracle. The clerics also cast *cure moderate wounds* or other healing spells after fights for sums as listed in the *Player's Handbook*, page 114. Stable Achillia pays half of any cleric fees for its gladiators.

Arena Cleric, Male and Female Human Clr10 (2): CR 10; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 10d8+10; hp 68; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+2, +1 *heavy mace*); SA spells, turn dead 4/day; AL NG; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +11; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +5, Heal +17, Knowledge (religion) +5, Spellcraft +4. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Run.

Spells Prepared (6/6/6/5/5/3; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×2, *guidance, light, resistance* ×2; 1st—*bless* ×2, *deathwatch, entropic shield, obscuring mist, sanctuary**; 2nd—*aid**, *calm emotions, hold person* ×2, *lesser restoration, remove paralysis*; 3rd—*deeper darkness, dispel magic, protection from elements**, *remove blindness/deafness, remove disease*; 4th—*dismissal, freedom of movement, holy smite**, *neutralize poison, restoration*; 5th—*break enchantment, raise dead, spell resistance**.

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Good (good spells cast at +1 caster level); Protection (generate protective ward 1/day).

Possessions: +1 breastplate, +1 heavy mace, cloak of resistance +1, masterwork large steel shield.

General Arena Operations: The Veins is open 24 hours per day. Depending on the Commissioner's whims and the availability of gladiators, an event may range from 3–4 one-on-one matches to a grand, four-team blood bath. Special events are held seasonally. They include Hydra Days (summer), the Marble Cage (fall), the Thunder Throwdown (winter), and the Veins Immortals (spring).

Characters might wish to skulk through the Veins without thousands of spectators and dozens of employees watching them. The chart below details which areas are occupied during which hours on typical days in the Veins.

Gladiators frequent area **B1** by day, Arxus lurks there at night, and Paramezzus is always stationed there unless the PCs deliberately draw him away. Other areas, when occupied, contain 1d4 random gladiators (see "Appendix II: Independent Gladiators" and the named NPCs from the adventure), 1d4 arena employees (male human Exp1; Handle Animal +4, Profession (teamster) +3, Use Rope +2), or any number of fans (male and female human Com1), as appropriate to the venue.

Time of Day	Area Occupied (Match Day)	Area Occupied (Regular Day)
12–6 A.M.		V3
	B1	V3
	B1	
6–9 A.M.		V1, V2, V6
	B1, B2	V6
	B1	
9 A.M.–12 P.M.		V1, V2, V3, V6
	B1, B2, B4, B5	V1, V2, V6
	B1, B2	
12–9 P.M.		V1–8
	B1, B2, B4, B5	V1, V2, V6
	B1, B2, B4, B5	
9 P.M.–12 A.M.		V1, V2, V6
	B1, B4, B5	V6
	B1	

APPENDIX II: INDEPENDENT GLADIATORS

For those times when you or a player want a quick and dirty one-on-one, or when you just need extra muscle on the arena floor, here are the names and characteristics of some of the independent stable gladiators in the Veins. If you want to add a sense of urgency to the adventure, feel free to stage the dramatic death of one of the bloodrush users among this number.

Hamidou Mombasa, Male Dwarf Bbn3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (4 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 3d12+9 (currently 3d12+6); hp 36 (currently maximum 33); Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Atk +7 melee (1d8+3/crit ×3, +1 *battleaxe*); SQ dwarf traits, rage 1/day, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CG; SV Fort +6 (currently +5), Ref +6, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 16 (currently 15), Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +4, Jump +8; Listen +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +5. *Feats:* Dodge, Lightning reflexes, Weapon focus (battleaxe).

Possessions: +1 battleaxe, hide armor, buckler.

Hamidou learned to fight by watching the hyenas and jackals scavenge on the veldt. He crouches when fighting (Dodge feat), howls and springs from all fours when attacking. Hamidou has just started using bloodrush before every match.

Catch Phrase: Hamidou's catch phrase is a high-pitched howl, which the crowd loves to harmonize with.

Finishing Move: The Scavenger. When Hamidou attempts his finishing move, he crouches on all fours with his buckler over his head, slinks forward, and then lunges at his opponent's mid-section (or head, if the opponent is on the ground).



Kang Manjing, Male Elf Sor6: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 6d4+18; hp 35; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk +3 melee (1d6, quarterstaff) or +4 ranged (ranged touch); SA spells; SQ elf traits; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 9, Cha 17.

Skills: Appraise +6, Concentration +11, Craft (calligraphy) +6, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Profession (antique dealer) +7, Spellcraft +9. *Feats:* Craft Wondrous Item, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll.

Spells (6/7/6/4; base save = DC 13 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, ghost sound, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*charm person, hypnotism, shield, ventriloquism*; 2nd—*levitate, Melf's acid arrow*; 3rd—*suggestion.*

Possessions: scroll of *lightning bolt*, scroll of *grease*, scroll of *magic missile* (5th level), scroll of *shield* ×3, scroll of Melf's acid arrow (3rd level) ×3, dagger, Lotus Tiger mustachio wax.

Kang is a mystic with the ability to bend men's minds. He covets Trixa. He might challenge any PC spellcaster associated with the manager to a spell duel. In normal fights, Kang *levitates* up and out of the reach of melee fighters.

Catch Phrase: "Mind over sword."

Finishing Move: Conqueror's Pose. Opponents who succumb to Kang's *suggestion* that they lie down and surrender are then subject

to the humiliating experience of Kang placing one foot in triumph on their chests while raising his arms in victory.

Oakarms, Male Human Drd5: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 5d8; hp 30; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Atk +4 melee (1d6, sickle); SA animal companion, spells, wildshape 1/day; SQ nature sense, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 17, Cha 15.

Skills: Animal Empathy +8, Diplomacy +10, Handle Animal +8, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (nature) +8, Wilderness Lore +9. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Track.

Spells (5/4/3/2; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*create water, detect magic, flare, guidance, light*; 1st—*calm animals, cure light wounds* ×2, *faerie fire*; 2nd—*barkskin, charm person or animal, heat metal*; 3rd—*cure moderate wounds, poison.*

Possessions: +1 *hide, potion of cure moderate wounds* ×2, *potion of lesser restoration, potion of protection from elements (fire)*, scroll of *heat metal*, wooden shield, masterwork sickle with mistletoe-wrapped hilt.

Oakarms loves to cast *barkskin* and *faerie fire* on young fans, much to the youngsters' delight. Oakarms fights with his black bear companion, Bharis.

Bharis, Black Bear: hp 19; *Monster Manual* 193.

Catch Phrase: "It's like Bharis always says, 'Don't smack the hive if you aren't ready for the bees.'"

Finishing Move: Harvester. Oakarms swings his sickle underhanded as if harvesting, and Bharis stands up and attacks from his hind legs.





Orange Enlightenment, Female Half-orc Mnk5: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 5d8+5; hp 35; Init +7; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 18; Atk +6 melee (1d8+3, unarmed strike) or +4/+4 melee (1d8+3, flurry of blows); SA stunning attack, unarmed strike, SQ evasion, immune to natural diseases, still mind, slow fall (20 ft.); AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 9.

Skills: Balance +11, Diplomacy +7, Hide +11, Innuendo +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Spot +6, Swim +3, Tumble +6. *Feats:* Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Orange sari, meditative devotional journal. She has forsaken all other worldly goods.

This mysterious woman has taken a vow of silence. In a fight, she leads with her feet. If she participates in a match that requires the use of a weapon, she borrows equipment from the arena. Because of her high Balance skill modifier, she enjoys Tilting Floor matches.

Catch Phrase: In lieu of a spoken catch phrase, Orange Enlightenment simply poses in one of her martial arts forms.

Finishing Move: The Awakener. Orange Enlightenment tumbles into a handspring (Tumble check) and launches a flurry of blows at her foe with both feet.

Pop Gut, Male Human Ftr4: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 4d10+4 (currently 4d10–4); hp 35 (currently maximum 27); Init +4; Spd 15 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Atk +9 melee (1d12+7/crit ×3, greataxe); SV Fort +5 (currently +3), Ref +1, Will +1; AL CN; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 13 (currently 8), Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +7, Craft (armorsmithing) +6, Craft (weaponsmithing) + 6, Intimidate +2, Jump + 7. *Feats:* Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe).

Possessions: +1 *greataxe*, splint mail, five beard barrettes in the shape of axes.

Many younger fighters in the arena affectionately revere Pop Gut as a father figure. They emulate his extreme use of Power Attack; he almost always employs it to its maximum each round. Pop Gut uses bloodrush.

Catch Phrase: "You only need to hit them once if you make their gut pop!"

Finishing Move: Popping the Gut. Pop Gut uses a maximum Power Attack and swings for the belly.

Kitrina Bolt, Female Human Evo5: CR 5; Size Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 10 in. tall); HD 5d4+5; hp 19; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; Attack +2 melee (1d4/crit 19–20, dagger) or +4 ranged (ranged touch); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; AL CN; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 7.

Skills: Concentration +9, Craft (seamstress) +8, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Perform (drama, epic) +2, Scry +10, Spellcraft +12. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (Evocation).

Spells (4/4/3/2; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, flare*†, light, resistance*; 1st—*magic missile* ×2*, *shield, sleep*; 2nd—*blur, flaming sphere*†* ×2; 3rd—*lightning bolt*†, haste.*

Spellbook: 0—*arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare*, ghost sound, light*, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*burning hands, chill touch, expeditious retreat, feather fall, identify, magic missile*, shield, sleep*; 2nd—*blindness/deafness, blur, flaming*



sphere, knock, rope trick, scare;* 3rd—*dispel magic, haste, lightning bolt*, wind wall**.

*These spells belong to the school of Evocation, which is Kitrina's speciality. Prohibited school: Conjuration.

†Because of Spell Focus (Evocation), the base save DC for these spells is 16 + spell level.

Possessions: wand of summon monster II, scroll of *lightning bolt* ×2, scroll of *wind wall* ×2, *potion of haste,* dagger, sewing kit, scarlet gladiator catsuit, unicorn-embossed spellbook.

Kitrina took her stage name from her favorite spell: lightning bolt. She likes Flying Matches, since they allow here to capitalize on the long ranges of her powerful Evocation magic. Kitrina is quite vain, and this has made her unpopular in the arena.

Catch Phrase: "Don't I look great?"

Finishing Move: Sandstorm. Kitrina uses a *wind wall* to kick up sand and then launches a *lightning bolt* through the disturbance at her opponent.

Amaranth, Female Half-elf Ftr5: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 5d10+10 (currently 5d10); hp 45 (currently maximum 35); Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Atk +7 melee (1d8+4, dire flail) and +7 melee (1d8+3, dire flail); SV Fort +6 (currently +4), Ref +3, Will +2; AL CG; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 14 (currently 10), Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +3, Jump +8. *Feats:* Ambidexterity, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dire flail), Two-weapon Fighting, Weapon focus (dire flail), Weapon Specialization (dire flail).

Possessions: +1 chainmail, masterwork dire flail, bandolier of 10 darts, 36 gp.

Amaranth never fit in when the other children who played Oak Oak Dryad, but she fits in just fine when the gladiators play their bloodier games at the Veins. Amaranth calls the two heads of her dire flail Tulip and Black Dahlia, and each is painted with an appropriate flower blossom. Amaranth uses bloodrush before her matches.

Catch Phrase: "If one is good, two are better."

Finishing Move: Deadly Bloom. Amaranth whirls both heads of her dire flail in circles while she spins in place, quickly striking out at opponents who attempt to close on her.

Vejes, Male Minotaur Ftr2: CR 6; Large Monstrous Humanoid (8 ft. tall); HD 6d8+24 plus 2d10+8 (currently 6d8+12 plus 2d10+4); hp 70 (currently 54); Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24; Atk +14/+9 melee (1d10+6, *+1 Large trident*), +7 melee (1d8+2, gore); Reach 10 ft.; SA charge 4d6+7; SQ scent, natural cunning; AL CE; SV Fort +11 (currently +9), Ref +5, Will +6; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 18 (currently 15), Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills: Intimidate +6, Jump +3*, Listen +9, Search +6, Spot +9. *Feats:* Cleave, Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (trident).

*Includes –6 armor check penalty.

Possessions: +1 Large trident, full plate, masterwork large steel shield, 55 gp.

See the *Monster Manual,* page 137, for minotaur special attacks and qualities.

Vejes doesn't play well with the other gladiators. Although a stronger fighter than most of his fellows, Vejes avoids most contact with them due to his savage nature. He never attends orientation meetings, preferring to show up for his battles, win (nearly always), and leave. Commissioner Flugg usually pits Vejes against monsters in matches with Spice, since a battle against most of the other gladiators wouldn't be fair. Vejes's last battle against another gladiator, in fact, was a loss to Volpone Venazzi for the Veins championship helm. Vejes uses bloodrush. See the cover of DRAGON #303 for an illustration of the savage Vejes.

Catch Phrase: "More gore!"

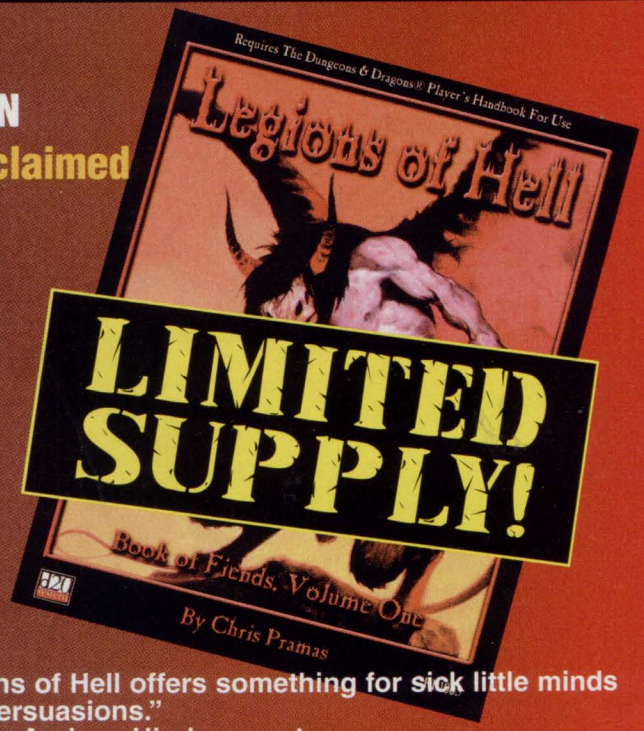
Finishing Move: Five-tine Toss. Vejes holds his trident in front of his face as he charges his foe (using the charge special attack), attempting to catch the opponent on all three tines of his weapon and his horns (this deals no extra damage). He then tosses his head and howls as the blood on his horns streams down onto his face.



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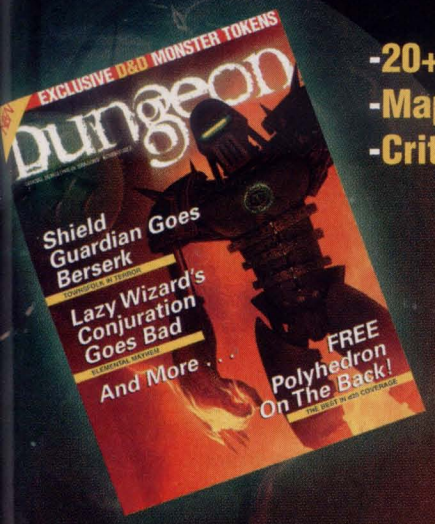
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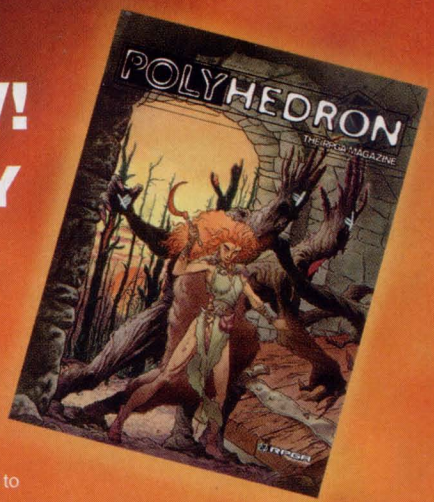
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BEYOND THE LIGHT OF REASON

BY CAINE CHANDLER

ARTWORK BY ADAM REX · CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

Magic Items · Monsters · NPCs · Objects · Settlements · Traps

"Beyond the Light of Reason" is a D&D adventure designed for four 13th-level characters. Although designed to challenge an evenly balanced group of this level, this module can be played with 9th- to 15th-level PCs by increasing or decreasing the power levels of the villains accordingly. A cleric would be a good addition to a group playing through this module; any character with darkvision would also be invaluable.

BACKGROUND

Rutherton is a small village located on the north border of the Duchy of Tehn, and it was once the target of constant raids and harassment by creatures hunting for winter nourishment. For years it suffered the attacks of humanoids and denizens of evil, struggling to survive in a harsh environment.

Fifty years ago, Rutherton was the center of a terrible power struggle, for their cleric of many years had just passed away. The clergy of Pelor then sent a new priest to supply guidance to the villagers.

Narhalm was a young man of much experience. He had adventured for several years, struggling to rid the world of unholy menaces. His retirement in Rutherton was to be a peaceful one, but less than three days after his arrival, he discovered evil brewing in the small village.

The villagers lived in squalid conditions, under the constant harassment of bandits and humanoids. After some investigation, Narhalm identified the local burgomaster as the source of many of the village's troubles. This man, Vargnin, was revealed as a cleric of the dread deity Nerull, and he was responsible for weakening the community with bandit raids so he could eventually sacrifice the entire village to his dark lord without resistance.

Vargnin fled into the nearby mines of Mount Rantoloch when confronted; Narhalm followed fast in pursuit. Deep within the mines, the two met for the final time as an epic battle ensued. During the great conflict, a great rift in the bedrock opened, venting natural gas into the chamber where they fought. Thus, when Narhalm smote Vargnin with holy fire, the gas exploded violently, rocking the mountain and its surroundings. Many in Rutherton thought that perhaps the mountain was in fact a volcano thundering to life, but the rumbling ceased as quickly as it occurred.

Three days later, Narhalm appeared from the mines carrying an elegant silver lantern, in which a holy white flame burned brightly. He told the story of his battle with Vargnin and related that the flame within the lantern would bring peace to the village as along as it shed its light across the village from the chapel's bell tower.

Created in the final battle between Narhalm and himself, the flame sprang from a source born as a result of the conflict deep within the mountain—a holy pyre of good, pure energy. If the flame was ever extinguished from the lantern, it could only be re-lit by returning it to the chamber in which the original font still burned. Narhalm warned the people of Rutherton to be vigilant in the guardianship of the lantern and its flame, which he dubbed the *light of reason*.

Narhalm bid his final farewell and returned to the mines to secure the sacred flame that burned brightly within. He never returned. So the *light of reason* burnt for fifty years, keeping the forces of darkness at bay.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs are fleeing from an oncoming storm and looking for shelter when they see a light burning bright in the distance. The light is the magic lantern



that wards the small village of Rutherton from evil. Here they are drawn into a crisis as the lantern is damaged during the storm and a great dragon threatens to destroy the village. The village cleric asks them to take the lantern deep into the mountain to re-light the holy flame, while the villagers beg the characters to protect them from the dragon that would surely lay waste to their village.

Meanwhile, deep within the mountain, the undead form of the cleric Vargnin lives, plotting his escape from his holy prison and revenge upon the village that thwarted his plans fifty years ago.

The PCs must race against time, making their way past the denizens of the mountain to confront Vargnin and his minions deep within the bowels of an ancient temple. There they must re-light the lantern before the village is attacked by the dragon that waits only for the storm to end.

Only quick thinking allows the PCs to traverse the dangers of the mountain, which has been converted into a prison of evil by the holy flame that burns beneath. They must be quick to stop Rutherton from being attacked and preventing Vargnin from completing a ritual that might snuff the holy flame forever.

FOR THE PLAYERS

The PCs begin the adventure on the road, perhaps returning from a previous adventure or on their way to their next one. They have been wandering in the frontier wilderness for some time when they happen upon Rutherton.

> Dark clouds rumble overhead. The storm that has been building for the last few hours begins to spit droplets of rain. The wind steadily picks up as you realize that unless you find shelter soon you will be in for a rough night.
>
> Ahead in the darkness you see a pure white light shining like a beacon in the night. The light seems to have warmth to it that bids you to come in from the cold—an indescribable urge to approach a place of safety and rest.

The attraction the characters feel is the power of the lantern that keeps the evil at bay, and also makes it uncomfortable for any evil creature to approach the village (see the "Light of Reason" sidebar for further information on the item).

If the PCs believe that the light is a trap and approach no further, they suffer the full wrath of the elements. The biggest storm of the year descends upon the area, blowing down trees, striking areas with

lightning, and releasing over 6 inches of rain in the area in one night. Rutherton is located on stable ground and has numerous run-off points to prevent houses from flooding badly and other areas from completely washing away.

ARRIVING AT RUTHERTON

Rutherton was once a small mining community located at the base of a large mountain rich in iron ore. It has no guards itself, but a local militia keeps the peace when necessary. The residents are huddled in the local inn (the sturdiest building in town) when the storm arises. PCs who bang on the door are let in, but frightened villagers might have to be calmed down (via Diplomacy checks—your option) to avoid unfriendly reactions.

A total of seventy people huddle in the crowded taproom or in the guestrooms upstairs, making it a tight fit for everybody there. During the first hour after the PCs' arrival, few people are brave enough to look at them, and only a handful talk to them. The burgomaster, Soon-jee, and a cleric of Pelor, Tatiana, both approach the PCs and ask their business in the village; once it becomes clear they pose no harm the two talk freely. They answer any questions the PCs might have, and Tatiana might even relate the story of the lantern, although many mock it as a fairy tale. It isn't until after an hour that the storm reaches its full strength and the action begins.

A thunderous boom rocks the inn as the storm pulls into full swing outside. Gale force winds threaten to topple the building and demolish the small village, but somehow it all stands firm.

A second boom rocks the building as a great flash of light pierces though the shutters of the inn, lighting the room momentarily. The noise of crashing stone rises above the wailing of the storm as a look of terror spreads across the townsfolk's faces. Tatiana runs to the door and looks out into the raging weather. The cleric glances back, ashen-faced, and waves for you to come over.

The lantern that has hung in the chapels' bell tower for fifty years has just been struck by lightning. It has dropped to the mud and water in the center of town (only 80 feet away), and Tatiana urges the PCs to retrieve it for her. The rest of the townsfolk look on expectantly, too scared by the storm's vengeance to step foot outside. The lantern itself is amazingly only mildly damaged, although it took a direct hit from lightning, but the flame within has been snuffed. Any PCs who attempt to retrieve the lantern must weather the storm raging outside.

Running across to the lantern, they must try to keep their feet and stop themselves from being knocked down or blown away (see the sidebar or page 87 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for rules on wind effects—this is considered a windstorm). As the PCs retrieve the lantern from the mud outside the chapel, another disaster occurs.

As you lift the silver lantern from the mud, a succession of booms rocks the skies above. Chain lightning lights up the skies above, and the dark clouds release a torrent of rain upon you in one tremendous barrage. As the skies erupt, a terrifying sight fills your vision. A long, reptilian shape snakes across the skies, the full length of its crimson body stretching across the dark rumbling skyscape.

The great dragon looks down and breathes a cone of flame towards the village, although its gout of

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Beyond the Light of Reason" is intended for four 13th-level characters, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

- **9th- to 12th-level PCs:** Replace the skum that have been enhanced by the advancement rules with normal-sized creatures, and reduce the levels of NPCs within the mountain. This allows lower-level parties to survive longer. Grant the PCs more time to complete the module, perhaps by allowing Tatiana's *control weather* spell to last another day, giving them time to rest more within the mountain. Lower Vargnin's levels (minimum 11 levels) and give him less powerful magic items. This allows lower-level parties to survive the depths of Mount Rantoloch.
- **14th- to 15th-level PCs:** Increase the numbers of creatures and Hit Dice of existing creatures, and add several levels to existing NPCs. The ogres in the lower mines can be given several levels of warrior and better equipment (perhaps +1 weapons), give the grimlocks more levels in warrior or barbarian, and allow Vargnin to summon more creatures before the PCs reach the temple. Increase the damage on all traps within the dungeon (an extra few dice of damage, adding +2 or +3 to all DCs). Also, grant Vargnin the phylactery that he needs to reform after being slain. Vargnin should always be two levels higher than the PCs at the beginning of the adventure, giving the PCs a sufficient challenge when they finally meet him.

Remember that changing the Encounter Levels should alter the amount of treasure in the adventure. Consult page 170 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (**Tables 7-2**, **7-3**, and **7-4**) to determine treasure appropriate to the new encounters.

fire falls far short of the ground. Lightning strikes continue, allowing you to watch as it struggles through the storm and into the mountain range to shelter from the storm.

Firing missile weapons is pointless in the storm; the dragon is flying over 400 yards away and has no intention of stopping to fight in this weather. Instead she seeks refuge in a cave further up in the mountains. The cave is located deep within the range, but close enough that the dragon can return quickly once the storm has abated.

In the inn the locals are frightened to death; first the storm almost devastates their village, now a dragon threatens to attack! Eventually Tatiana approaches the characters for help, hoping they can save their village.

"You must help us, for without the lantern we shall surely be doomed. The *light of reason* has guarded our village from harm for fifty years, its holy flame preventing evil from harming us. For years the flame stopped evil creatures such as that wyrm from causing us harm, although now with the light dead, it will surely return and deliver its wrath on us. My fellow villagers no longer believe in the power of the flame, and are more scared of the danger that this dragon will bring come morning; however, I believe the lantern can be repaired. The lantern itself is only a little damaged, and if you could take it deep into the mountain where the flame was born you could re-light it and return before the village is harmed. But you must make haste, for without the lantern we have no defense against the creature.

The source of the flame resides in the heart of Mount Rantoloch. Please, help us!"

Although this might sound like a massive task to the PCs, Tatiana can supply them some equipment to assist them. The equipment she offers includes the remains of the adventuring treasures she collected over the years. She requests that anything the PCs do not use during the course of the adventure they return so the items can aid the village in the future:

- *potion of cure moderate wounds* (×2)
- *potion of neutralize poison*
- *potion of cure light wounds* (×3)
- *potion of hiding*
- scrolls of *cure serious wounds* (×3) and *cure critical wounds*
- *pearl of power* (3rd level)

If the PCs are in need of more assistance, Tatiana also has a scroll of *control weather* that she offers to use to extend the storm. She is loath to do this however, as extending the storm damages the village and surrounding farmlands further. If the PCs do not return by midnight of the following night, she tells them that she will then cast the spell.

Creatures (EL —): Tatiana is a young cleric who settled in Rutherton five years ago after leaving adventuring life forever. She is a small redhead in her mid-twenties who wears simple blue dresses. She is thin and comely, but has never had time for men and rejects advances.

Soon-jee is an elderly man who has lived in Rutherton most of his life. He is tall and carries an air of respectability, although he spends most of his time resting his injured left leg. Soon-jee was once a well-known ranger of the area until his leg was crippled by the touch of a wraith.

Tatiana, Female Human Clr5 (Pelor): CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 5d8+5; hp 30; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Atk +2 melee (1d6–1, light mace); SA spells, turn undead; AL LG; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +4, Diplomacy +7, Heal +11, Knowledge (religion) +6, Spellcraft +3. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Scribe Scroll, Craft Wand.

Possessions: +2 leather armor, +2 cloak of resistance, wand of detect evil (20 charges; command word "Hedgel"), light mace.

Spells (5/5/4/3, base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, light, detect poison, guidance, virtue;* 1st—*protection from evil*, shield of faith, bless, detect undead, remove fear;* 2nd—*aid*, lesser restoration, spiritual weapon, speak with animals;* 3rd—*magic circle against evil*, searing light, protection from elements.*

*Domain spells. *Domains:* Good (good spells cast at +1 caster level; Healing (all healing spells cast at +1 caster level).

Soon-jee, Male Human Rgr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 3d10+6; hp 28; Init +3; Spd 15ft (due to injured leg); AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Atk +2 ranged (1d8+2/crit ×3, mighty composite longbow [+1 Str]); SA favored enemy (orcs), two-weapon fighting ability; AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Animal Empathy +4, Handle Animal +5, Hide +1, Intuit Direction +7, Knowledge (nature) +4, Move Silently +2, Ride +2, Swim +1*, Wilderness Lore +6. *Feats:* Track, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Improved Initiative.

*Includes penalty for weight of gear carried.

Possessions: leather armor, mighty composite longbow [+1 Str] with 15 +1 *arrows*, dagger.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Give the PCs a story award of 500 XP for braving the storm to retrieve the lantern.

MOUNT RANTOLOCH

Before the battle between the two clerics, Mount Rantoloch was an important mining colony that was the lifeblood of the village and its environs. Several large veins of iron ran through the mountain, and although it should have made the villagers quite wealthy, most of the profits were stolen by brigands and raiding humanoids.

For the last fifty years, the villagers have not returned to the mines because of the many sightings of dangerous creatures haunting the tunnels. Those that did enter to restore the old mines never returned. The creatures spotted include a small tribe of grimlocks that has taken up residence in the caverns.

The mountain itself is a highly magical area due to the presence of *Pelor's pyre* deep within its bowels (see sidebar). Imprisoned within it are many creatures that could overwhelm the village easily. Any creatures that might be able to break through the magical barrier produced by *Pelor's pyre* must then contend with the power of the *light of reason*. Consequently, none of the inhabitants of the mountain have mustered the courage to leave their lair, break the enchantments of the mountain, and assault the village in force. Now that the *light of reason* has been extinguished, however, it's only a matter of time until they discover the weakness and exploit it—yet another motivation for the PCs to undertake the mission (feel free to have Tatiana share this information if the PCs seem reluctant to head into the mountains).

A jagged road climbs the mountain toward the mines, timbers intended to secure mining carts and keep them from rolling down the mountain are ragged and worn. It takes the PCs 2 hours to climb near the entrance to the lower mines, and an extra hour to reach the upper entrance. In addition, the narrow pass that once led to the external lower entrance was blocked by a massive landslide after the clerics' battle. Tatiana warns the PCs of this before they leave Rutherton, telling them it would be quicker to ascend to the upper entrance, then make their way into the lower mines through there. Tatiana tells the PCs that within the mines they should look for an entrance to an ancient temple to Pelor. Within its halls they will find the source of the *light of reason*; she doesn't know on which mine level the temple can be reached.

THE UPPER MINES

Dungeon Features: In the upper mines, many fallen boulders, rubble, and loose rocks confront the PCs. Characters fighting in melee in chambers obstructed by such terrain must succeed at a Balance check (DC 10) every round of combat or fall prone.

Cold Dangers: The upper mines in Mount Rantoloch are cold and icy. The miners who once worked on the mountain dressed warmly and lit braziers filled with a smokeless alchemical compound to heat non-work areas. The current denizens of the caverns either cope with the cold or use similar methods. The PCs might not be so prepared. The characters must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or sustain 1d6 points of subdual damage. PCs can be furnished with warm clothing in Rutherton, but only if they think to ask (the citizens don't think to offer).

U1. UPPER MINE ENTRANCE

This large cavern smells of fire. Rubble lies haphazardly about the chamber and the far wall is badly charred as if a huge blast of flame had scorched that area recently. On the far side of the cavern lay several corpses; each looks like it once stood over 15 feet tall.

On the floor near the stairs (marked **B**) lie the bodies of three giants. All three have been burned badly and torn beyond recognition. PCs who have had experience with frost giants before recognize them (although the fact that they're giants is fairly obvious). The three giants confronted the dragon Kah-la-hi when she sheltered from the storm on the way to her lair in the mountains; after a savage battle, she slew both of them and gnawed at their bodies for most of the night. Since her wounds were still fresh, she broke free of the *Pyre of Pelor's* power and returned to her lair to heal herself before she attacked the village.

Kah-la-hi is currently traveling to a minor lair nearby. When she returns she is fully healed and ready for trouble. It takes her 7 hours to fly through the storm to her lair. She then rests for 8 hours and heals herself. After preparing herself with magic items from her lair it takes her another 5 hours to survey the area before she attacks. Any PCs deep within the mountain complex when she returns will be horrified when they surface to see Rutherton ablaze with dragon fire.

If the PCs await her return she fights them first, sitting atop the mountain and swooping past while strafing them with dragon fire, spells, and magic items. If the PCs flee, refusing to fight her, she heads straight for the village. It takes the PCs too long to head down the side of the mountain after her unless they can fly or *teleport* to the village.

Kah-la-hi is a very old red dragon of great power. During the Greyhawk Wars she served with Iuz the Old in his armies, assisting the orc hordes in the Vesve forest. After the Flight of Fiends she though the Old One was weak and losing power, so she fled to the east to lair anew. Her exact statistics have not been listed because she has a greater interest in destroying the village and returning to her lair with food than actually confronting the PCs in battle.

U2. THE GATHERING CHAMBER

This large chamber contains a large hewn shaft that delves deep into the mountain's core. A small river filled with large pieces of ice rushes under a small wooden bridge and tumbles down one side of the shaft; far below you hear it striking rocks clearly. A large metal pulley system lays mangled to one side of the shaft. Several broken mining carts lie about the south wall.

At the beginning of winter, a small hunting party of frost giants reached Rutherton. Seeing the small town as easy pickings, they decided to sleep in the upper mines for the night before attacking the next day. During this time they succumbed to the power of the pyre. Of the group now only one remains; the rest died, mostly of starvation. The leader and his pets lair nearby, although they rarely enter this room anymore.

The chamber contains several things of interest to the PCs. A spiral staircase descends the side of the shaft for 300 feet (although the PCs must walk through the waterfall and succeed at four Balance checks, DC 10, not to fall) to area **L1**, and cave paintings adorn the western wall.

The painting depicts a crack in the ground that spews flames high into the sky. A horde of hellish abominations shy away from it while a dark figure watches. Other paintings are too faded and worn to comprehend.

Near the painting lay two large skeletons. These are the remains of frost giants killed and eaten weeks ago. PCs who succeed at a Search check (DC 15) find a loose rock in the wall, behind which they discover the giants' meager possessions.

Treasure: Within the large hole rest two large sacks containing all of the giants' worldly goods. Sack #1 contains several large, badly carved bones, a short sword, two large fur blankets, a small empty keg, an iron flask containing a *potion of levitate*, seven bloodstones (70 gp each), 69 gp and 238 sp. Sack #2 holds a broken heavy crossbow, a large fur blanket, a large drinking horn, four golden pearls (120 gp each), eight nuggets of silver (30 gp each), a masterwork dagger, a *potion of water breathing*, a small wrought golden bracelet (60 gp), 12 pp, 79 gp, and 312 sp.

U3. REFUSE REMOVAL ROOM (EL 8)

A set of crudely hewn stairs leads down into a cave that has seen little use lately. Rubble fills most of the chamber and cobwebs cover the ceiling above.

This room was once used to remove the miner's refuse after they decided that throwing it into the stream would pollute the drinking water in the lower mines. An old rusted lever is located (marked **A**) near the far end of the cave; it triggers the mechanism that opens the trapdoor that allows refuse to be tipped into the shaft. Old age, combined with the explosion that rocked the mountain, has made this room extremely dangerous; anyone who pulls the lever (requiring a Strength check, DC 16) triggers the trap.

When the minor earthquake shook the mountain, the rock beneath this room shifted, opening a shaft that stretches across the majority of the chamber. When the mechanism is activated, the device causes the entire floor to crumble and fall into the shaft, tumbling 100 feet down to the bottom. To make things worse, rocks shake loose from the ceiling and tumble down atop anyone trapped in the shaft.

Traps: Detecting the trap in this room is a little different than normal, and anyone falling victim to this

NEW MAJOR ARTIFACT: THE LIGHT OF REASON

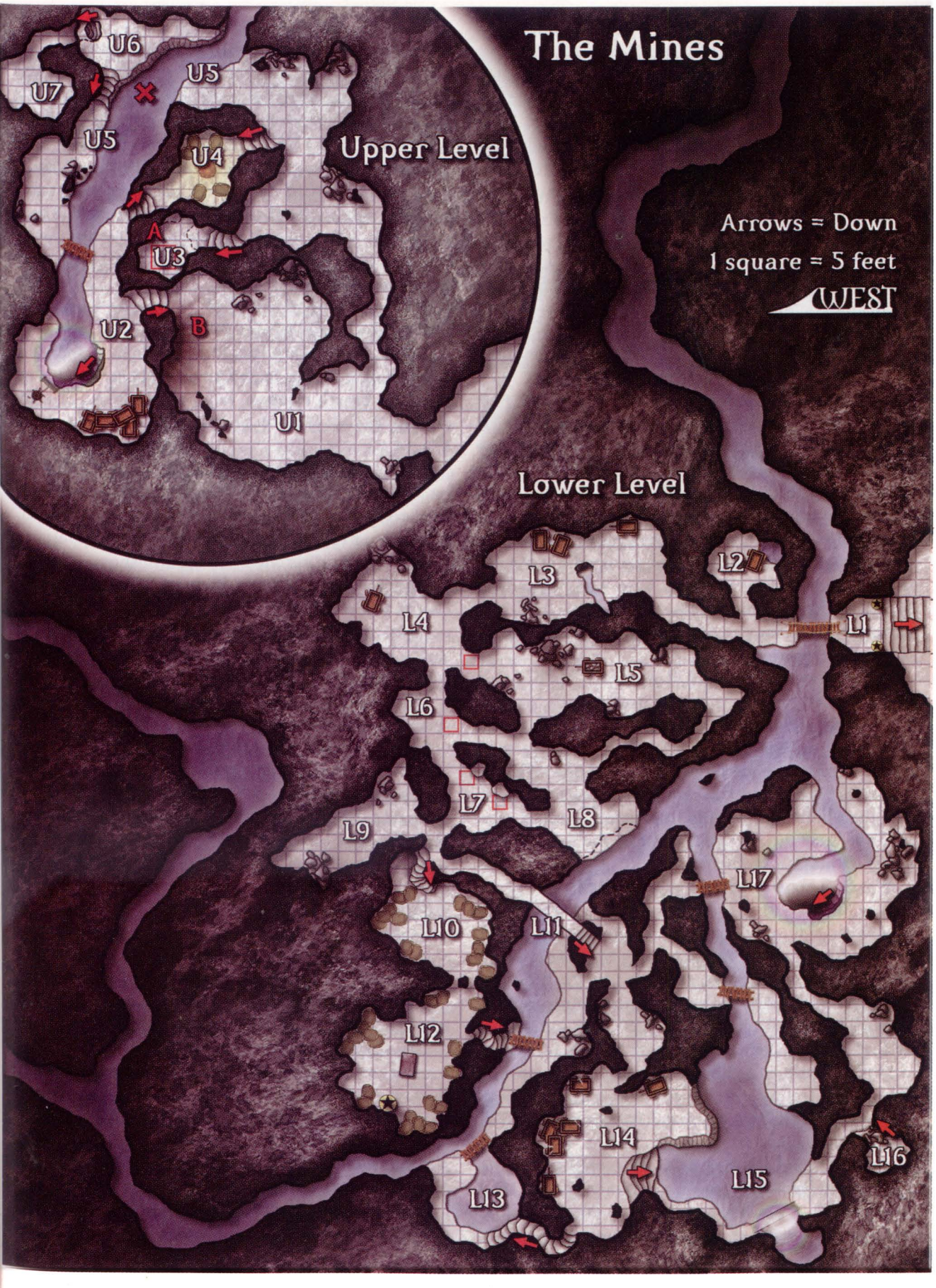
The cleric Narhalm crafted a silver lantern and lit it with a holy fire of Pelor fifty years ago. Holding the receptacle of the flame has little effect, granting the bearer the effects of a constant *magic circle against evil* spell. But if it is placed on ground *consecrated* by a cleric of Pelor, in a place where it is clearly visible, it radiates a *forbiddance* against evil effect in a one-mile radius (creatures need not see the flame to be affected). An evil creature must make a Will save (DC 30) to enter the *forbiddance* zone. The light also emits an *antipathy* effect against creatures of evil alignment in the same one-mile radius. So even creatures that manage to push through the *forbiddance* feel a strong sense of unease and a reduction of their Dexterity scores (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 175).

Finally, the light grants all good creatures within one mile a +2 morale bonus to saving throws and doubles their normal rate of healing. A cleric of Pelor can also call upon the light to emit a *searing light* spell three times per day. Each cleric of Pelor can access this effect, so more than three *searing light* spells can be drawn from the light per day (only one per round), but a single cleric can call upon only three. The cleric must have line of sight to both the target and the *light of reason*, the *light of reason* must have line of effect to the target, and all normal modifiers to AC (such as cover) and concealment still apply. The light uses the cleric's ranged attack bonus to make such an attack.

The *light of reason* can only be created (or recreated) from *Pelor's pyre;* only one *light of reason* can exist at a time. A *light of reason* can only be held in a receptacle of pure silver built to hold a flame (such as a lantern or brazier).

A *light of reason* can only be snuffed by total immersion in earth or water. The light grants its receptacle immunity to all forms of damage, magical or mundane, as long as it remains lit.

Caster level: 20th; *Weight:* 2 lb.


The Mines
Upper Level
Lower Level
Arrows = Down
1 square = 5 feet
WEST
U1
U2
U3
U4
U5
U6
U7
A
B
L1
L2
L3
L4
L5
L6
L7
L8
L9
L10
L11
L12
L13
L14
L15
L16
L17

room is in for a terrible surprise. A dwarf with stonecunning can search for the trap.

Pit Trap: CR 7; no attack roll necessary (10d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 26).

Falling Boulders Trap: CR 5; +20 ranged (6d6); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (not possible). *Note:* The rocks strike all characters in the shaft or clinging to the remains of the chamber.

U4. THE CHIEFTAIN'S CHAMBER (EL 13)

This large cave has seen recent use. Fur beds line the walls and a large fire smolders in the center of chamber. Over the fire cooks a kind of meat you do not recognize, but the stench of it almost overcomes you.

The frost giant leader, Arisngraurd, and his pets have settled in this room. The leader is a minor cleric of Thrym (the frost giant deity) and has recognized the mountain's effect on his party as magical and spends most of his waking hours pondering what to do about it. He knows he is not powerful enough to break it. When the dragon arrived, Arisngraurd decided he wished to parley with it, but after the deaths of the rest of his band he doesn't know where to begin. The dragon's absence has allowed him time to think, although the sheer size of the creature has him more than a little worried.

In the cave, Arisngraurd sleeps with his hunting dogs, a pack of winter wolves he uses to track his prey. The winter wolves were the first to succumb to the mountains' magic.

Creatures: The warband leader is a powerful foe who uses his hounds to back his advances. If attacked, the giant believes the dragon is using *charmed* creatures to clear the narrower areas of the tunnels and fights with utmost ferocity.

Arisngraurd, Male Frost Giant Clr3: CR 12; Large Giant (cold); HD 14d8+84 plus 3d8+18; hp 160 (194 with *endurance* cast); Init +4; Spd 40 ft.; AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 23; Atk +23/+18/+13 melee (2d8+15, Huge masterwork greataxe), or +12/+7/+2 ranged (2d6+10, rock); SA spells, rock throwing, rebuke undead; SQ rock catching; AL CE; SV Fort +18, Ref +5, Will +11; Str 30, Dex 10, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +14, Concentration +8, Jump +14, Knowledge (religion) +2, Spellcraft +2, Spot +8. *Feats:* Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Sunder.

Spells (4/4/3; base save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, light, detect poison, cure minor wounds;* 1st—*magic weapon*, shield of faith, entropic shield, cure light wounds;* 2nd—*spiritual weapon*, endurance, cure moderate wounds.*

*Domain spells. *Domains:* War (Weapon Focus—greataxe), Destruction (smite 1/day for +4 attack and +3 damage).

Possessions: scroll of *dominate animal, stone shape,* and *remove curse,* masterwork huge greataxe, huge chain mail armor, and a holy symbol of Thrym. Arisgraurd also owns a large sack where he keeps his personal belongings. Within lies the corpse of a sheep, three polished ogre skulls, three blankets, two *potions of lesser restoration,* a longsword, a silver ewer (60 gp), seven tourmaline (120 gp each), a fire opal (1,200 gp), 32 pp, 168 gp, and 430 sp.

Winter Wolves (2): hp 49, 55; *Monster Manual* 184.

Alpha, Male Winter Wolf (1): CR 5; Large Magical Beast (cold); HD 9d10+27; hp 75; Init +6; Spd 50ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Atk +12 melee (1d8+6, bite); SA breath weapon, trip; SQ scent; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +1*. *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Initiative.

*Their natural coloration grants winter wolves a +7 racial bonus to Hide checks in areas of snow and ice. A winter wolf has a +4 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

Possessions: +2 *ring of protection* (pierced through his ear), a black leather collar studded with eight bloodstones (950 gp).

See the *Monster Manual* page 184 for winter wolf special attacks and qualities.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Alpha is a larger than normal specimen of his species; consider him a CR 7 monster for the purpose of awarding experience.

Tactics: Arisngraurd is extremely paranoid after the appearance of Kah-la-hi and believes that the PCs are agents of the dragon, sent into the tunnels to destroy the inhabitants of the mountain. It takes a great deal of diplomacy to calm the giant, and PCs that do so will still be a target of the cleric's constant paranoia.

In combat, Arisngraurd orders his wolves to attack immediately while casting *endurance* and *entropic shield* on himself if he has the time. He enters combat fiercely, taking no quarter and expecting none in return.

Development: Arisngraurd does not flee from combat and hunts the PCs through the upper mines if they try to escape. He is passionate about hunting the PCs down both to prevent them from escaping the complex and to use them as food. If the PCs befriend Arisngraurd somehow, he talks of large groups of creatures that war in the lower mines, and of a force of great power that lures the unwary to this mountain, enchanting them all to stay forever.

U5. THE ICY STREAM

A small underground river runs quickly before you, the current carries large chunks of ice downstream. Both sides of the river rise 3 feet above the surface of the icy water.

Although the river is dangerous, nothing hostile lives within it. If any PC decides to dive into the river and risk frostbite, hypothermia, drowning, (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 85–86) and perhaps even being forced down the waterfall at area **U2**, he might see a skeleton weighed down at the bottom of the river if he succeeds at a Spot check (DC 18).

Twelve years ago, a cleric of Pelor visited Rutherton to determine the fate of Narhalm. While he stood near the river, a piece of rock broke away and plunged him into the icy depths here.

PCs who retrieve the body of the cleric can attempt to cast *speak with dead*, or even *resurrect* the corpse. A *true resurrection* is needed to bring the man back to life (he has been dead several years), although a *speak with dead* spell might grant a wealth of information.

The cleric's name was Rathicar, and he was sent from Greyhawk to the village by the clergy of Pelor. He has the following information to relate, should the proper questions be asked:

- Rathicar traced Narhalm's steps into the mountain and delved deep within the mountain's caverns.
- Deep in the cave system, the cleric saw a set of stone doors that were locked by an intricate system of rotating circular locks.
- Nearby, Rathicar witnessed spawn of the underworld working within an infernal forge.
- The Pelorite also spotted some of these same creatures conversing with a walking rotting corpse. The undead spotted Rathicar hiding and summoned a creature to hunt him down. He managed to escape, only to fall prey to a natural trap on his way out of the caves.

If the PCs have the means to bring Rathicar back to life, he is considered a standard 6th-level cleric of Pelor (see page 51 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for complete statistics).

Treasure: Upon the skeleton of the drowned cleric is a badly rusted set of half-plate armor, a silver holy symbol of Pelor, a small golden wedding band engraved: "May our love shine forever" (30 gp), a small leather pouch containing six jaspers (80 gp each), a +2 *heavy mace*, and a sealed vial containing a *potion of heroism*.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Rathicar belonged to a minor noble family that lives outside the city of Dyvers. If the PCs take time to recover and return the body to them, they are rewarded with 500 gp each. Also award the PCs 500 XP for his recovery and final rest.

U6. MANTICORE LAIR ENTRANCE

Within this cave, a rock shelf looks across a flowing stream of ice, and a section of the ledge crumbles into the water as you enter the chamber. On the far-left side of the cave a tunnel has been cut into the floor, and crude stone steps descend into it.

When the PCs enter this chamber, there is a 50% chance that 1d2+1 of the manticores in area **U7** climb the steps to investigate the new smell. They immediately take flight and shower the PCs with spikes from the opposite ledge. If the fight goes poorly, they attempt to bull rush PCs close to the edge into the river, and they roar to attract the rest of the pride in area **U7**.

U7. THE MANTICORE LAIR (EL 10)

A sloping tunnel turns smoothly into a small cave where piles of bones lay pushed against the far wall. The stench of refuse is strong here.

The manticores that live here were unable to leave the mountain and subsequently made these caverns their home. When they hunt, they fly through the shaft at area **U2** and feast upon the creatures of the lower mines.

Creatures: The manticores are growing weaker through hunger after the frost giants in area **U2** killed three of their pride a few days ago. Two more attempted to leave the mountain but were killed by the dragon early this morning as she left (the bodies were taken as snacks to eat as she flew).

Manticores (5): hp 50, 53, 55, 60, 65; *Monster Manual* 130.

Tactics: The manticores use their spikes to soften the party up before entering melee combat. Once engaged, they attempt to flank the most dangerous PCs. If the battle goes poorly, they fly out of the opening if possible and flee across the river to area **U5** to regroup. If trapped, they fight to the death.

Development: Any escaping manticores attempt (and fail) to leave the mountain. From there they fly to area **U2** and flee down the shaft. Here they rest on ledges, licking their wounds. If the PCs use the shaft to enter the lower level, they have to fight the manticores on a narrow staircase. There the creatures attempt to pull them off the ledges and let them plummet to their deaths.

Treasure: Several skeletons of miners lie in this cave, along with the bodies of orcs and hobgoblins. The accumulated possessions the creatures have collected include: a masterwork chain shirt, twenty large nuggets of silver (20 gp each), a silver razor with an ivory handle caved with rampant elephants (350 gp), an alexandrite (590 gp), 482 sp, 612 gp, and 10 pp.

THE LOWER MINES

Dungeon Features: The lower mines contained the richest deposits of iron in the mountain and were heavily mined before the battle beneath the mountain. Only days before it was abandoned, many miners discovered new veins of ore and began uncovering them before they were slain by allies of the lich lord. The tunnels here vary from 8 to 12 feet tall while the caverns reach heights of up to 30 feet.

This section of the mines is home to a small tribe of grimlocks. The currently battle the minions of an aboleth for control of the area. Once alerted to the party's presence, they are informed by their leader (a slaad summoned by Vargnin to control the creatures) to slay the PCs using any means necessary. These encounters are meant to weaken the group's resources as they move through the mountain toward their goal. The grimlocks are weak creatures compared to the PCs' level and quickly adapt to use tactics designed to counter the PCs' strengths and abilities. Since they have only the one night to reach the pyre, these constant encounters will frustrate, annoy, and finally tax their strength.

Unless the PCs managed to bypass the blocked crevice leading to the external lower mine entrance, they arrive at area **L1** by following the stairs down from area **U2**. Clever PCs who do avoid the upper mines altogether shouldn't be penalized for conserving their energy and resources for the battles ahead.

L1. ENTRANCE TO LOWER MINES (EL 7)

The long stone steps lead up to a hewn stone entrance. Two worn statues of armed and armored warriors stand on either side of the opening, stone swords raised high. Through the entrance you can see a rope and wooden bridge spanning a large gap in the floor.

The rope bridge spans a small river of near-freezing water that runs through the mountain. Lurking below the bridge in the water waits a group of skum controlled by the aboleth in area **L17**.

Creatures: The skum are the spawn of an aboleth that is trapped within the mountain. The creatures are positioned here to ambush newcomers (and bring them back for food) before the other denizens of the mountain get to them.

Advanced Skum (6): CR 2*; Large Aberration; HD 6d8+18; hp 50; Init +0; Spd 20 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; Atk +11 melee (2d6+8, bite), +9 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws), +9 melee (1d6+4, 2 rakes); SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 27, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills: 28 Climb +14, Hide +3*, Listen +7*, Move Silently +5, Spot +7*. *Feats:* Alertness, Multiattack.

*Skum receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Listen, and Spot checks underwater

Tactics: When PCs attempt to cross the bridge, the skum burst out of the water to smash planks and tear at the bridge's ropes. If one PC crosses at a time, they attack the character wearing the most metal. Once they have dragged at least one person beneath the water, they attack mercilessly until their captive is slain and swim off with the corpse to feast.

Development: The skum flee in the face of heavy resistance, but they swim to other areas of the mines to warn the other skum of the food approaching. The survivors of this group might attack anyone approaching the edge of the river in other parts of the mine.

Ad-hoc XP Award: These skum are larger specimens than normal; consider them CR 6 monsters for the purpose of awarding experience.

L2. TOOL STORAGE

The cave walls here are lined with old wooden brackets and rusted mining tools. Moisture drips down the east wall, forming a small pool at the base of a large cart. Cobwebs cover the entrance to a set of stone stairs, and rats scuttle across the floor into cracks in the northern wall.

This cave was once used by the miners to store their smaller tools when they returned to the village for the night. All of the tools here are badly rusted and the wooden handles are rotted, but the mining cart is in barely usable condition.

L3. OUTER MINES

This cavern contains visible signs of a mining operation. Broken carts line the walls, which also hold empty iron sconces. A small opening in the south wall lets a small stream of water dribbles into the center of the room and through a hole in the floor.

The stream that runs through the chamber is a small offshoot of the river system that runs through the mountain. As the water passed through the cavern walls in the complex, it wore away at a deposit of toxic chemicals. Anyone drinking from the water risks contracting blinding sickness (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 75).

L4. MORE OUTER MINES

The mines continue into this chamber, revealing small, unmined veins of iron in the west wall. Several humanoid bones poke out from beneath a broken mining cart, and a pile of picks and pry-bars rest in a pile nearby.

The bones are the remains of some of the miners who were caught when the grimlock clan entered the mines after the clerical confrontation. Any attempt to *speak with dead*, or other similar spiritual communication, reveals only that the miners believe that large, dark-skinned demons surged though the mines, killing everyone in sight.

L5. A GRIMLOCK TRAP (EL 2)

A longer mining chamber stretches before you, and old ladders and scaffolding line both sides of the cave. One mining cart, filled with hewn rock, rests in the center of the chamber. Small patches of iron ore can be seen clearly in the walls of the mine.

The miners who once worked here built pit traps in some of these chambers as a means to slow down invaders of the mines should they be attacked. As such, detecting and disabling them is more difficult than a finding a "normal" pit trap.

Trap: If the PCs enter the chamber by the west entrance, a pit trap could plunge the leading characters into a deep crevice in the floor. This room shows signs of constant use; a successful Track check (Wilderness Lore, DC 20) reveals that humanoids have been passing through here often. Their tracks also give away the location of the pit trap.

Pit Trap (40 ft. deep): CR 2; no attack roll necessary (4d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Development: If any PCs fall into the pit, they are automatically detected by the grimlocks in area **L6** who prepare an ambush for the characters there.

L6. A GRIMLOCK GATHERING (EL 11)

PCs approaching this area who make a fair amount of noise alert the grimlocks in the caverns. The creatures then prepare to ambush the intruders.

Trap: Like area **L5**, this room holds a pit trap that serves as more of an inconvenience to PCs of this level than an actual threat. The real danger in the room lies in the room's other denizens.

Pit Trap (40 ft. deep): CR 2; no attack roll necessary (4d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Creatures: PCs who fall prey to the pit trap in the chamber must deal with six grimlocks who throw alchemist's fire from their hiding places near the small tunnel running from area **L5** to **L8**. Others are charged by four more grimlocks hiding near the entrance to area **L7**. If the PCs put up a good fight, the grimlocks retreat skillfully past the pit traps in area **L7**.

Grimlock Ftr4 (6): CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 4d10+8; hp 45; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4/crit ×3, battleaxe) or +7 ranged touch (1d6+2, alchemist's fire); SA blindsight; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +16*, Listen +6, Search +5, Spot +6. *Feats:* Alertness, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

See page 114 in the *Monster Manual* for grimlock special attacks and qualities.

Possessions: flask of alchemist's fire ×2, studded leather, masterwork battleaxe.

Grimlock Ftr3 (4): As above, except the charging grimlocks carry no alchemist's fire.

Tactics: PCs who detect the trap have to move around it if they wish to engage the fire throwers. When the first PC is halfway across, the grimlocks hurl fire at their feet. Other grimlocks attempt to bull rush PCs from hiding either into patches of alchemist's fire or into the pit trap using their Improved Bull Rush feats.

Development: If the grimlocks are attacked by magic or engaged in melee, they flee into the mining complex to warn their kin.

L7. ENTRANCE TO THE GRIMLOCK LAIR (EL 12)

Trap: Each entrance to this area is trapped with another pit trap. High above the pits, two ledges allow the grimlocks here to look down at all intruders. When PCs attempt to carefully negotiate the traps, the creatures hurl large stone clubs down at them (see Tactics below). Any victims of the traps find themselves likewise pelted with rocks and possibly alchemist's fire from grimlocks who have fled from area **L6**.

Pit Trap (2): CR 2; no attack roll necessary (2d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Creatures (EL 8): The grimlocks send two messengers into the complex to the south if the tribe has not yet been alerted. It takes a full round for the messengers to lower and climb down rope ladders into the chamber before they can escape. The attacking grimlocks hide on their ledges and throw stone clubs at intruders.

Grimlock Ftr4 (8): CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 4d10+8; hp 45; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4/crit ×3, battleaxe) or +7 ranged (1d6+2, thrown clubs); SA blindsight; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +16*, Listen +6, Search +5, Spot +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

See page 114 in the *Monster Manual* for grimlock special attacks and qualities.

Possessions: studded leather, masterwork battleaxe.

Tactics: Each of these grimlocks hides next to a small pile of four stone clubs (broken off stalactites and stalagmites). They hurl them at enemies below until they are engaged in melee or run out of clubs. Once their numbers are reduced below half, one grimlock runs to area **L8** to warn the rest of the tribe, while the remaining grimlocks draw their battleaxes and fight to the death.

L8. THE GATHERING CHAMBER (EL 5)

A fast river surges past the cavern here. A ledge on the far side of the room overlooks a 15-foot drop into the dark icy water. Many old tools are scattered across the floor and old scaffolding covers the walls.

Trap: The ledge overlooking the river is extremely unstable due to years of erosion. If any weight more than 100 pounds is placed upon the ledge, it collapses into the icy water where the current washes it downstream and out of these caverns.

Weak Ledge: CR 5; no attack roll necessary (1d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (N/A). PCs attempting to pull themselves out of the river before getting washed to area **L12** (the river's speed is 20 feet) must make a Swim check (DC 15) to reach the wall and a Climb check (DC 25) to climb back into area **L8**. PCs who fail the Swim check by more than 5 could begin to drown. See the DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide* page 85 for details.

L9. SILVER VEIN

The floor of this cave is covered in human bones, many of them still clutching the tools they once held in life. From the western wall a jagged stripe of metallic color shines in the light.

This was the last area mined by the villagers only days before they were killed. The western wall shows evidence of a small vein of silver; any PC who makes an Appraise check (DC 18) knows that the silver is quite pure and if mined would fetch enough money to make the village a thriving mining town again.

Treasure: Several nuggets of silver are buried under the rubble in this cave. A Search check (DC 20) or a successful Spot check (DC 25) results in the discovery of 3d6 silver nuggets (each worth 1d3×5 gp). Mining the vein itself would result in enough silver to create thousands of silver pieces.

L10. GRIMLOCK LAIR (EL 12)

A set of crude stairs leads down into a large cavern where a strong stench offends your nose. Across the floor several large bones have been scattered and a great deal of excrement covers the floor of the cave. Dozens of fur mats and sleeping areas are scattered about the area.

This chamber is the main living area of the grimlock tribe. The majority of the creatures eat and sleep here, although the leaders usually gather in a nearby cavern to receive their orders from the tribal elders.

The grimlocks here defend their homes with ferocity and the barbarians rage as soon as the PCs enter. The others assist their brethren while their children escape through small tunnels at the rear of the cave.

Creatures: This area is one of the two lairs for the grimlock tribe. Although roughly thirty grimlocks lair here, only a few are trained combatants, while the rest include nonclassed grimlocks and grimlock children.

Grimlock Bbn4 (6): CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 4d12+8; hp 55; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Atk +12 melee (1d12+4/crit ×3, masterwork greataxe); SA blindsight, rage 2/day; SQ immunities, scent, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +11, Hide +16*, Listen +6, Search +4, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +3. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

Rage (Ex): While raging the grimlocks' statistics change as follows: hp 67; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 17; Atk +14 melee (1d12+6/crit ×3, masterwork greataxe); SV Fort +7, Will +5. The barbarians' rage lasts for 7 rounds.

Possessions: studded leather, masterwork greataxe.

Grimlock Ftr4 (5): CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 4d10+8; hp 45; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4/crit ×3, battleaxe); SA blindsight; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +16*, Listen +6, Search +5, Spot +6. *Feats:* Alertness, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).



*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

See page 114 in the *Monster Manual* for grimlock special attacks and qualities.

Possessions: studded leather, masterwork battleaxe.

Grimlocks (11): 11 hp; *Monster Manual* 114.

Grimlock Children (6): CR 2; Small Monstrous Humanoids; HD 1d8; hp 4; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Atk +2 melee (1d3+1 subdual, unarmed strike); SA blindsight; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +6, Hide +15*, Listen +4, Search +4, Spot +2. *Feats:* Alertness.

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

Tactics: When the PCs enter the cavern, the grimlock combatants immediately attack, allowing the rest to help the children escape through narrow openings in the south wall of the cavern. The barbarians immediately go berserk, and the entire group attempts to flank, strike and bring the intruders down using overpowering numbers. The noncombatants enter the fight if it goes poorly, although they are poor fighters compared to the trained warriors of the tribe.

Development: Any children escaping through the gaps run to area **L12**, alerting the tribal elders to the danger. They send a scout to peer through the narrow gaps into **L10** and report back. The gaps are very small, allowing only Small creatures with no more than light armor to squeeze through them or anyone who succeeds at an Escape Artist check (DC 30).

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award 50% the normal experience for defeating the grimlock children.

L11. TOLL BRIDGE (EL 9)

A narrow stone bridge spans the underground river and a large chamber below. At the far side of the bridge a set of stone stairs leads down.

As the PCs cross the bridge, a large troll *charmed* by the grimlock leader walks up the stairs to block the characters' path. The bridge is only 10 feet wide, and the drop to the water and chamber below is 30 feet. Dispelling his *charm* accomplishes little, since the troll proceeds to attack the PCs anyway.

Creature: Horace was once a very successful commander of an elite unit of ogres in the service of Iuz. Several weeks ago they spied the village of Rutherton and slept the night in these caverns, resting themselves before the slaughter the morning would bring. During the night, the shaman of the grimlock clan *charmed* him into service while the remaining ogres were captured by the aboleth. Horace now guards this bridge against the ogres that it once worked with; the shaman renews the charm every week to keep the creature on the grimlocks' side.

Horace, Male Troll Ftr3: CR 8; Large Giant; HD 6d8+42 plus 3d10+21; hp 140; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 27, touch 11, flat-footed 25; Atk +17/+12 melee (1d12+10 plus wounding/crit ×3, +2 *greataxe*) and +9 melee (1d6+4, bite); SQ regeneration 5, scent, darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 26, Dex 14, Con 24, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +5*, Jump +5*, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim −17**. *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

*Includes −4 armor check penalty.

**Includes −26 penalty for weight of gear carried.

Possessions: +1 chainmail, large adamantine shield, +2 greataxe of wounding, and a black dragon leather bracer set with six small rubies (1,200 gp).

Tactics: PCs who walk across the stone arch toward

Horace's guardpost have to fight him on a narrow ledge overlooking a 30-foot drop into a fast-running (speed 30 feet) river. Horace uses his Improved Bull Rush feat to knock PCs over the edge, thinning their numbers as he attempts to lay waste to them with his greataxe.

Development: Horace is heavily *charmed* and currently unable to comprehend much apart from his duty. PCs fleeing might escape if they travel more than 30 feet from the makeshift bridge, although he pursues anyone attacking with ranged weapons.

L12. TRIBAL CHAMBER (EL 13)

A set of crude stone stairs winds up into a large cavern decorated with dozens of skulls that hang above alcoves that dot the walls. Within the alcoves several animal pelts have been used for beds, while crude furs hang crudely as curtains. The center of the room is decorated with a large stone block that has seen use as a table. Leaning against the far wall of the cavern is a life-sized marble statue of a deer, though it has seen better days.

This room is the spiritual center of the grimlock tribe. The tribal leader is a slaad that Vargnin has bound into service, forcing it to clear the mountain of all non-loyal groups. This cave also houses the grimlock tribal leaders, although the slaad has the only true voice in the decision making process. From here the creature plans its attacks on the aboleth's area to the east. Many of the best grimlock warriors meet here with it to discuss tactics.

Creatures: As the PCs enter, the slaad commands the grimlocks to slay the intruders. The grimlock elder (her title is her name) casts *darkness* in the chamber to blind the PCs, but not before the slaad uses its petrifying gaze to disable as many as possible.

Grimlock Bbn4 (3): CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 4d12+8; hp 55; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Atk +12 melee (1d12+4/crit ×3, masterwork greataxe); SA blindsight, rage 2/day; SQ immunities, scent, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +11, Hide +16*, Listen +6, Search +4, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +3. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

Rage (Ex): While raging the grimlocks' statistics change as follows: hp 67; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 17; Atk +14 melee (1d12+6/crit ×3, masterwork greataxe); SV Fort +7, Will +5. The barbarians' rage lasts for 7 rounds.

Possessions: studded leather, masterwork greataxe.

Blue Slaad: hp 60; *Monster Manual* 166.

Chaotic Variation: As creatures of chaos, no two slaadi are identical. The grimlock leader has darker skin and narrow eyes that grant it a gaze attack like that of a medusa.

Any slaad summoned must be rolled randomly (see Variant Slaadi on page 169 of the *Monster Manual*).

Nas-kargren, Male Grimlock Bbn9: CR 10; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+6 plus 9d12+24; hp 124; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 21; Atk +17/+12/+7 melee (1d12+8 plus 1d6 cold/crit ×3, greataxe); SA blindsight, rage 2/day; SQ immunities, scent, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +6; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +17, Listen +16, Search +6, Spot +7, Climb +16, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +11, Swim +17, Wilderness Lore +7. *Feats:* Dodge, Expertise, Mobility, Spring Attack.

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

Rage (Ex): When raging, Nas-kargren's statistics change as follows: hp 146; AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20; Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d12+10 plus 1d6 cold/crit ×3, *+1 greataxe*); SV Fort +11, Will +8. A rage lasts for 8 rounds.

Possessions: +2 mithril shirt, +1 frost greataxe, potion of haste, potion of cure moderate wounds (×2).

Grimlock Elder, Female Grimlock Clr9: CR 10; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 9d8+16; hp 80; Init +6; Spd 20 ft.; AC 28, touch 12, flat-footed 27; Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+3/crit ×3, *+1 battleaxe*); SA blindsight, spells, rebuke undead; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +12; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +7, Listen +10, Search +6, Spot +7, Concentration +13, Heal +8, Scry +4, Climb +7, Spellcraft +5, Knowledge (religion) +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Spell Focus (Necromancy).

Possessions: +1 full plate, +1 large steel shield, +1 battleaxe, ring of protection +1, wand of charm monster (10 charges, command word "Ethmigal"), *horn of blasting, potion of blur, potion of fly.*

Spells (6/6/6/5/3/2; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, purify food and drink, resistance, virtue* ×2; 1st—*cause fear*†, cure light wounds, divine favor, doom, sanctuary, shield of faith*; 2nd—*bull's strength, death knell*†, endurance, sound burst, find traps, cure moderate wounds*; 3rd—*cure serious wounds, deeper darkness, dispel magic, magic circle against good*, prayer*;

4th—*cure critical wounds, summon monster IV, unholy blight**†; 5th—*slay living**†, *flame strike.*

*Domain spells. *Domains:* Evil (evil spells cast at +1 caster level), Death (death touch 1/day; see page 163 of the *Player's Handbook* for details).

†Necromancy spells. The base save DC for Necromancy spells is 15 + spell level.

Tactics: Nas-kargren is a fearless warrior and leader of his people. He is the first into battle and the last to leave. He fears no one, although he respects the elder of the tribe. He immediately rages and attacks the strongest-looking opponent, and he doesn't change the focus of his fury until his foe is slain. Once the first target goes down, he uses Spring Attack against "lesser" opponents. If the fight goes badly, he assists his warriors battling any remaining foes who prove difficult to bring down.

If she's given enough time, the elder casts as many preparatory spells as she can. She casts *bull's strength* and *endurance* upon Nas-kargren; just before battle, she then casts the following: *virtue* (on herself and Nas-kargren), *shield of faith, prayer, summon monster IV* (summoning a howler), and *resistance.* She attempts to stay back and cast spells rather than enter combat. If the battle goes badly, she drinks her *potions of fly* and *blur* before attempting to engage a weaker PC in melee. Her first action is to use her death touch domain ability, then commence with attacks from her battleaxe.

Development: If the elder escapes, she attempts to use her *horn of blasting* in a narrow passage to collapse a weakening tunnel structure where the PCs walk. She has no idea that continuing to use the horn risks an explosion, so she uses it as much as needed to try and drive the PCs away or kill them with a cave-in.

Trap (EL 6): In addition to the horn's normal effects, every time the elder uses it in an area, the ceiling might collapse (20% chance). The cave-in is in a 20-foot-diameter within the area of effect. If possible, she uses it at two tunnel endings to trap the PCs within, attempting to asphyxiate them.

Falling Boulders: CR 6; +20 melee (6d6). *Note:* The boulders strike all characters in a 20-foot-radius area.

Treasure: In one of the alcoves that riddle the walls rest three small chests in which the grimlocks store their valuables. Each of the chests is locked with good quality locks (Open Lock, DC 30). Within the chests are the following:

Chest #1: 4,012 cp, 82 sp, six small agates (20 gp each), and three polished dwarven skulls.

Chest #2: 307 sp, thirty-two nuggets of silver (1d4×5 gp each), four tourmalines (100 gp each), six vials of holy water labeled with the symbol of Pelor, and a small piece of iron shaped in an arc with a large metal ball on the end (one of the two keys that grant access to the temple below).

Chest #3: 430 gp, 22 pp, a *potion of levitate,* a *potion of cure light wounds,* a *potion of spider climb,* an arcane scroll of *knock* and *detect invisibility,* another scroll of *fireball* and *detect magic,* and a third scroll of *identify, illusory wall,* and *veil.*

Ad-hoc XP Award: Many of the grimlock encounters result in no experience gains for 13th-level PCs. If the characters successfully negotiate the grimlock lair, award them a bonus story award of 800 XP each.

L13. SKUM LAIR (EL 7)

Several small pieces of ice float in the pond in this chamber. Near the edge of the pond are a flight of crude, narrow stairs that climb up into darkness. A chill fills the chamber, and you can see bones in the shallows of the pond.

Creatures: The pond is currently home to a group of skum that guard the stairs leading into the aboleth's lair through the tunnel above. If the PCs approach the base to the stairs, several groups of large hands reach out of the water to try and pull them underwater to drown.

Advanced Skum (8): hp 50 each; see "Entrance to the Lower Mines" for statistics.

L14. THE OLD IRON MINES (EL 9)

The large cavern slopes upward to the northeast that leads to a ledge overlooking a small lake. Large chunks of ice float atop the water. Wide, hewn steps lead down into a lower area that gives access to the lake's shore easily. The cavern is decorated with large sets of scaffolding, discarded mining tools, and dozens of broken mining carts.

This was the main mining area of the entire complex. This chamber is also where the miners were slain by the grimlocks. Veins of iron can still be seen along the walls of the cavern, although little is left to extract from this chamber.

Creatures: As the PCs enter the chamber, several large ogres hiding both in the shadows of the pillars at the north side of the chamber, and within the tunnel leading to **L14**, assault them. They have been enslaved by the aboleth within the lake and fight to the death without fear.

Ogres (12): hp 30 each; *Monster Manual* 144 except AC 19, touch 8, flat-footed 19.

Possessions: Large chain shirt, large wooden shield, greatclub.

Tactics: The charmed ogres have been instilled with a false sense of invulnerability and ferociously attack the PCs with complete disregard for their own lives. The aboleth is paranoid and has positioned these ogres

here to serve as an early warning device against assassins sent by the slaadi in area **L14**.

Development: The ogres should prove little challenge for the PCs, but this encounter alerts the aboleth in area **L15** to the PCs' presence. During the battle, it swims out into the lake and uses its enslave power and psionics on as many PCs as possible. It also uses illusions to cause the intruders to turn on each other. During any round of combat, the aboleth retreats to its chamber if it believes a PC spots it in the lake.

L15. ABOLETH'S WATERFALL (EL 9)

A cascading waterfall on the south wall fills an icy lake that seems to suck the warmth from the chamber. The water flows slowly to the north, picking up speed as it delves deeper into the mountain. The base of the waterfall barely hides a crude stone bridge allowing slippery access to the other shore.

Behind the waterfall is a cave that sports a small pond. It is home to an aboleth that was trapped within the mountain several months ago as it swam through underground rivers and made its way here. Since then it has *charmed* a group of ogres to do its bidding, bring it food, and attempt to find a way out of its prison.

It has discovered the existence of Vargnin and believes the lich to be the cause of its imprisonment. Because of this it sees the grimlock tribe as a threat (it knows of their alliance with Vargnin) and is using its skum and ogres against them. The aboleth's enslaved ogres currently hold the entrance to the lower chambers, awaiting the lich's return so that the aboleth can meet it and hopefully strike a bargain for its freedom.

The aboleth is not stupid, however. If it believes that it is going to die, or that the PCs can provide an opportunity for escape, it tries to parley. In fact, if the PCs promise to seek out the "dark-robed mystic" (the aboleth doesn't know of Vargnin's spellcasting type—divine or arcane—nor is it aware that he is a lich) and bring him back here to negotiate, it would lend the characters some of its ogre slaves to accompany them deeper into the mine. If the PCs seem to be struggling with the encounters so far, you might consider having the aboleth approach them sooner with the offer of aid in exchange for arbitration with Vargnin.

Creatures: The aboleth and its skum bodyguards lurk within a pool of water in the center of the room. As soon as the PCs enter the room, the aboleth orders its minions to draw the PCs into the pool and assists using its psionic powers.

Advanced Skum (6): hp 50 each; see "Entrance to the Lower Mines" for statistics.

Aboleth: hp 90; *Monster Manual* 15.

Tactics: The aboleth orders the skum to assault the PCs, giving it time to mentally command all the remaining skum to swim to flank the PCs. As the PCs enter its lair, it uses its *project image* ability to provide a fake version of itself amid the skum while it hides behind an *illusionary wall* at the rear of the chamber. The aboleth uses its enslave power to the fullest.

Development: If things go poorly for the aboleth, it attempts to escape, using as many of its servants as needed to slow the PCs as it swims away. After a resounding defeat, the aboleth lays low and does not attack the PCs again, using its powers to avoid them completely if possible.

Treasure: At the base of the pool is a chest filled with silver nuggets (Search, DC 25). It contains 200 nuggets (1d3×4 gp each), as well as a larger nugget that acts as a *stone of good luck*. Scattered across the bottom of the pool are 212 gp, 88 sp, and two small eye agates (10 gp each). In one corner of the room is a small piece of iron shaped in an arc with a large metal ball on the end (the second of the two keys that allows access to the temple—Search, DC 15 to find).

Ad-hoc XP Award: Like the grimlock encounters, most of the run-ins with the skum result in little to no experience gains for 16th-level PCs. If the characters successfully negotiate the skum lair, award them a bonus story award of 500 XP each.

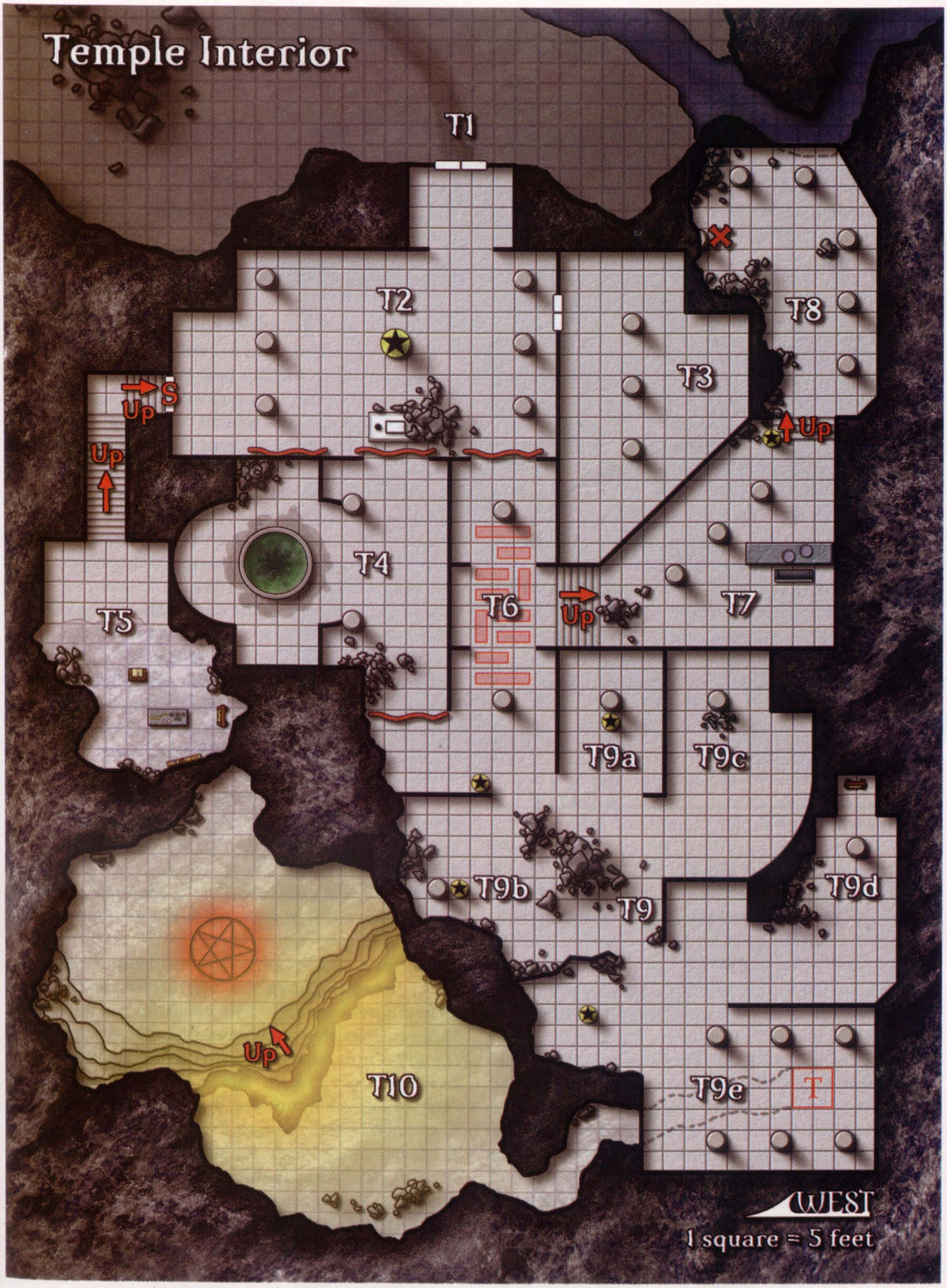
L16. TREASURE

A set of crude stone steps leads into a large pile of rubble that has collapsed in the entrance of another tunnel.

Moving the rocks causes more to fall, sparking a chain of rockfalls that causes the tunnel between areas **L17** and **L18** to collapse. The fall takes several minutes, and the PCs have plenty of time to escape.

The only way into the blocked tunnel is by carefully stabilizing the area with more support beams or magic. Alternatively, a PC can magically pass through the rock into the chamber using spells such as *dimension door, teleport, meld into stone, passwall,* and similar effects. Using mundane techniques to construct a makeshift tunnel requires 4 hours of labor.

The small cave contains several skeletons of dead miners still clutching their tools. A vein of iron can be easily seen on the east wall of the room. But to the south of the vein, a statue has been mostly excavated from the rock wall. The statue is constructed of white marble and depicts a beautiful woman in elegant white robes holding her cupped hands to the ceiling, within them rests a small bird. The base of the statue is set with a copper plaque. Written in an ancient Dwarven dialect on the plaque is the following message:


Temple Interior
T1
T2
T3
T4
T5
T6
T7
T8
T9
T9a
T9b
T9c
T9d
T9e
T10
Up
S
WEST
1 square = 5 feet

"Hold your hands where she may see your offering, without the sacrifice that winter brings, spring may never bloom."

Treasure: Although the statue itself is not magical, the bird that rests in its palms is. The bird looks like a small robin but it holds all of the powers of a *figurine of wondrous power, silver raven.*

Feel free to plant some campaign specific, important plot hook or device in the pouches of one of the dead miners.

L17. PASSAGE TO THE TEMPLE (EL 9)

A small stream snakes its way into this large chamber before falling over the lip of a large shaft that leads deeper into the mountain complex. Stalactites and stalagmites are scattered throughout the room, providing plenty of hiding places.

Creatures: The main group of ogres that have been enslaved by the aboleth has camped in this chamber. Some of them have explored the stairs that wind about the shaft, but none have returned.

Ogres (12): hp 30 each; *Monster Manual* 144 except AC 19, touch 8, flat-footed 19.

Tactics: The ogres attack PCs with an unearthly ferocity, completely secure in their magic enslavement that they will be successful. If the PCs have struck a deal with the aboleth in area **L17** and secured aid from its minions as part of some arrangement, six of these ogres follow the PCs wherever they go within the mountain.

THE TEMPLE

Deep within this ancient temple of Pelor stirs the undead form of Vargnin, the cleric of Nerull destroyed by Narhalm fifty years ago. Trapped in his den of evil by a power greater than his own, he has spent the last fifty years fighting the holy flame's powers. Finally able to pierce the barriers of the planes and contact minions of his deity, he then began his unholy plans to break free from the pyre's influence.

Vargnin has been summoning creatures from the underworld to act as his minions, binding them with promises of virgin souls to feast upon once he snuffs *Pelor's pyre.* He also discovered that other evil creatures summoned here by lesser spells did not disappear after the spell's duration expired; they remained trapped by the same effect—*Pelor's pyre*—as that which imprisoned the cleric.

Some of the creatures Vargnin has called to his lair have survived the years of infighting and need for sustenance and live in the depths of the temple today, awaiting their release.

Dungeon Features: The temple itself contains ceilings that reach up to 20 feet high, although many of them have been cracked open, allowing people to see the rock beyond. Every room shows some effect from the earthquake, though none of the areas are unstable to walk through.

T1. TEMPLE ENTRANCE (EL 8)

Long, climbing stairs lead into a large cavern adjoining a small lake. At the far side of the chamber, a large set of stone double doors seem to be carved into the rock wall.

Hiding behind the rubble (marked **A**) is one of the lich's servants, summoned to protect the temple from interlopers. When the PCs pass its position, it attacks the party, attempting to surprise them.

The large stone doors contain two separate, concentric, circular locks that prevent the doors from being opened. They were designed so that both locks had to be opened simultaneously, preventing any but the best of thieves from gaining entry. The doors have also been locked magically; the characters' best bet is to open them with one of the two special keys (found in areas **L12** and **L15**).

Attempting to unlock the doors without the keys is a difficult task, as the locks are of amazing quality and the doors are also *held* and *arcane locked* (Vargnin uses *stone shape* spells to bypass the doors, sealing his passages behind him as he goes). Thus, a single *knock* spell is insufficient to open the doors (as they're held shut by three obstacles), but if a character can pick the mundane locks, a *knock* spell bypasses the two magical wards. Simply using both keys simultaneously bypasses all the barriers keeping the doors closed; using one reduces the Open Lock DC of the doors to 30.

Held and *Arcane Locked* Large Stone Doors: 1 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 180; Break DC 35; Open Lock DC 45.

Creature: Hidden behind one of the rock slides in the chamber is a forge that a kyton has slowly constructed over several years with the assistance of Vargnin. From this vantage point, the devil watches as the PCs enter, waiting to spring out to attack the intruders.

Advanced Kyton: CR 6; Medium-size Outsider (evil, lawful); HD 12d8+12; 70 hp; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +8 natural); Atk +15 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, chain rake); SA dancing chains, unnerving gaze; SQ baatezu qualities, damage reduction 20/+2, SR 17, cold immunity, regeneration 2; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +18, Craft (blacksmithing) +10, Craft (weaponsmithing) +11, Escape Artist +15, Listen +15, Spot +15. *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Critical (chain), Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (chain).

See the *Monster Manual*, page 51, for kyton special attacks and qualities and page 50 for baatezu qualities. Note that the Will save for the devil's unnerving gaze is DC 17 due to its increased Hit Dice.

Tactics: The kyton uses its unnerving gaze to appear as Tatiana as it approaches the party, altering the image subtly to make it appear as though the cleric has been horribly tortured. If the PCs fall for the disguise, the creature collapses into the arms of an unarmored or lightly armored PC before animating the chains about its body and attacking its victim. If it is in danger of dying, it uses chains to spike into the roof above it, climbing away into the darkness above where it has a small cave to rest in. From sections of the roof, it might hang over the PCs and animate its chains to attack outside the reach of melee weapons.

Development: The kyton usually does not leave this area, but if it believes the PCs are a serious threat (defeating it in battle would be more than enough) it attempts to warn Vargnin.

Treasure: The devil has had years to practice its smithing; the results of its labor were to equip the forces Vargnin planned to gather after his escape. Dozens of normal weapons are displayed on racks (whichever you see fit), plus the following masterwork items: two greataxes, a greatsword, four daggers, a bastard sword, a dire flail, and two short swords.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award the PCs 50% more experience for defeating the kyton due to its increased power.



T2. WITHIN THE TEMPLE (EL 8)

The great doors open into a small, domed antichamber before stretching into a large worship hall. Pillars line the left and right areas, while a partially buried altar dominates the far wall. In the center of the room is an ancient statue of a man dressed as a nomad holding high an image of the sun.

The statue isn't particularly remarkable, although a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 10) reveals that it was once a symbol of Pelor, as a character might assume from the raised sun symbol. A closer examination of the statue (Spot DC 20) reveals that the nomadic figure now wears a sardonic smirk on his face (the result of some careful *stone shape* spells), and the symbol of a jagged scythe is carved into his forehead.

Creatures: This room has been adopted by a group of howlers let loose in the temple. As the PCs enter the

room, they don't hesitate to attack the potential sources of food.

The howlers are part of the forces Vargnin summoned to the area in one of his many experiments. They act as guardians to the temple proper, as the kyton is not always at its forge.

Howlers (6): 42 hp; *Monster Manual* 121.

T3. THE SPIDER'S LAIR (EL 6)

Thick cobwebs obscure much of the room beyond the doorway; all you can see beyond the webs is darkness. On the far side of the room you can almost make out a figure that appears to be beckoning to you, whispering names and encouraging you to enter.

Creature: This chamber has become home to Vargnin's consort, a creature called to his side early after his transformation into a lich. He has been distracted for so long, though, that the creature—a half-devil named Suzanelle—has made plans to visit the mines above. Since the PCs opened the doors, she intends to use them for entertainment before pursuing her release.

Suzanelle, Female Half-fiend/Half-harpy: CR 6; Medium-size Outsider (evil, lawful); HD 7d8+14; hp 60; Init +4; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Atk +11/+6 melee (1d4+4/crit 19–20, +2 *dagger*), or +9 melee (1d6+2, bite) and +4 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws); SA captivating song, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., poison immunity, acid, cold, fire, and electricity resistance 20; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 19, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 17.

Skills: Bluff +10, Hide +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Perform (chant, dance, drama, epic, lullaby, melody, opera, storytelling) +8, Spot +10. *Feats:* Dodge, Fly-by Attack.

See the *Monster Manual*, page 51, for harpy special attacks and qualities. Note that the Will save for Suzanelle's captivating song is DC 16.

Spell-like Abilities (Su): 3/day—*darkness, poison;* 1/day—*desecrate, unholy blight.* Caster level 7th; base save DC = 13 + spell level.

Possessions: +3 bracers of armor, +2 dagger, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of invisibility.

Tactics: Suzanelle initially attempts to captivate as many of the party as possibly, then stabs them to death with her dagger or claws their eyes out with her bare hands. If she only captivates a few targets, she quickly attempts to dispatch them with her *poison* spell-like ability before engaging the rest of the intruders. She has no qualms about escaping and does so if the fight turns against her.

Development: Suzanelle escapes if she can, but she doesn't flee to warn Vargnin of the PCs. Instead she attempts to appear on the other side of the blade trap from the PCs (area **T6**) and tries to *charm* them into crossing to her.

T4. FOUNTAIN ROOM (EL 7)

A beautifully carved marble fountain adorns the center of this room. Cherubs dominate the artwork, but various images of beautiful women are scattered about the mural. The fountain itself spews black bile into the air, the thick goo splattering in the basin below and across the floor.

NEW MAJOR ARTIFACT: PELOR'S PYRE

Pelor's pyre is a magnificent, 40-foot-tall, 10-foot-radius gout of white flame erupting from the earth. The pyre is immobile. The source of the *light of reason, Pelor's pyre* has abilities both similar and different to its smaller offspring.

The pyre's raw powers emanate several different effects. First, it acts as a focused inward *magic circle against evil* in a one-mile radius. Unlike most inverted *magic circles,* this effect traps any evil creatures that wander within its area of emanation. Such creatures can only break free from the *magic circle* if the pyre fails to defeat their spell resistance. Evil creatures trapped by the pyre cannot use any sort of teleportation or extradimensional travel to escape the *magic circle.*

Any evil creature that comes with 30 feet of the light of reason must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 19) or be destroyed (as the *destruction* spell). Creatures who make their saving throws take damage normally, and they feel uneasy in the presence of the pyre and are shaken (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 85), resulting in a –2 morale penalty to attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws. Evil creatures exposed directly to the pyre's flames must make another such saving throw, even if they succeeded at the initial one, except this save is DC 30.

Finally, any evil creatures summoned within the pyre's area of effect are likewise trapped by the artifact's *magic circle.* This effect supercedes the normal temporary nature of summoning spells. So an imp summoned by a spellcaster within the pyre's area of influence does not return to its home after the summoning spell used to bring it has expired. Instead, the imp remains, free to move within the confines of the *magic circle,* but unable to leave it. After the duration of the summoning spell expires, summoned creatures are no longer compelled to answer to the summoner. A trapped, summoned evil creature that finds some way to escape the *magic circle* (or if the pyre doesn't beat the summoned creature's spell resistance) is instantly sent back to the location it occupied prior to being summoned.

Caster level: 20th; *Weight:* N/A.

Within the debris in the northwest corner of the room lurks once of the lich's vile servants, a horrible chaos beast that awaits the party to approach the fountain before spewing out of its hiding place to engulf the hapless adventurers.

Creature: As part of one of the lich's dire rituals, he accidentally made contact with a terrible beast of unknown power, this chaos beast. It slipped through into this plane of existence and fought the lich ferociously until Vargnin bound it to this room. He now avoids this area, hoping that it will starve to death; unfortunately, its hunger has driven it insane.

Advanced Chaos Beast: CR 7; Large Outsider (chaotic); HD 16d8+48; 120 hp; Init +4; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16; Atk +22 melee (2d6+9, 2 claws); SA corporeal instability; SQ SR 15, immune to critical hits, immune to transformation; AL CN; SV Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +12; Str 22, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +22, Escape Artist +17, Hide +18, Jump +20, Listen +20, Spot +20, Tumble +18. *Feats:* Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Weapon Focus (claw).

See the *Monster Manual*, page 34–5, for chaos beast special attacks and qualities. Note that the Fortitude save for the chaos beast's corporeal instability is DC 19.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award the PCs 100% more experience for defeating the chaos beast due to its advanced nature.

T5. LICH'S CHAMBERS (EL VARIABLE)

The stairs lead down into a chamber that has been crudely extended back into the rock at the rear of the room. A large stone altar has been transformed into a laboratory table and a nearby shelf is filled with tomes. In the southeast corner, a large brass gong with a mallet hangs in its bracket. Near the center of the chamber, a large wooden podium holds a large tome bound in pitch-black leather.

This is the lich's study. When the PCs discover this chamber they are too late to stop his research, so destroying the room or its accoutrements achieves little (he is currently in area **T10** performing the ritual necessary to snuff the pyre).

While the lich no longer needs anything in this chamber, he has left a blue slaad to guard what possessions he has from any intruders. When the PCs enter the chamber, the creature summons a cohort from its hiding place beyond the east wall to assist it in battle.

The tome is actually a *book of vile darkness*, granted to Vargnin by the last demon called to his chambers from Nerull's realm. It was intended to grant the lich the power needed to break the enchantment that held him prisoner. Any PC flipping through its pages feels the grasp of Nerull himself upon his or her soul.

Creature (EL 7): Vargnin summoned two slaadi after he discovered that summoned creatures didn't leave after summon monster spells expired. The first now serves as the grimlock leader in the lower mines. The second guards the lich's chambers. Vargnin is cautious; he knows that if any representative of Pelor's church learned of his continued existence he would be hunted down. The second blue slaad stands in the way of any assassins who make it past his grimlock servants.

Blue slaad: 66 hp; *Monster Manual* 166.

Chaotic Variation: As creatures of chaos, no two slaadi are identical. The lich's guardian has large, blade-like claws that deal 3d6+4 points of damage with each rake attack.

Any slaad summoned must be rolled randomly (see variant slaadi on page 169 of the *Monster Manual*).

Tactics: If Vargnin knows of the PCs' approach, then his guardian knows of their presence, as well. The creature immediately attempts to summon another blue slaad to fight the intruders.

Trap (EL 7): An old chest lies next to the slaad's bed. Vargnin stores trinkets that he has not used in his experiments here. The chest is locked with a good lock, and is trapped with a *greater glyph of warding* (see below).

Trapped Chest: hardness 5; hp 15; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 30.

Greater Glyph of Warding: CR 7; 30-ft. radius *blade barrier* (14d6); Reflex save (DC 19) negates; Search (DC 31); Disable Device (DC 31).

Development: Triggering the trap on the chest is potentially devastating to the PCs. Already on a time crunch, those who make their saves if the *blade barrier* is triggered get pushed back out of the room through the door they entered. The *blade barrier* is slanted at a slight angle such that the low point (at shin level on a human) is near the entrance the PCs used to enter the chamber, and the high point (chest high on a human) is on the opposite end of the room. So characters who trigger the trap and make their saving throw take no damage, but they also end up back outside the room and must reenter the *blade barrier* (forcing a new Reflex save) to pass to the other side of the room. Alternatively, they could wait for the spell to expire, which it does after 140 minutes.

Note the clanging of the blades against the various objects in the room alerts the inhabitants of the next chamber to the presence of intruders.

Treasures: The chest holds 700 pp, six small sapphires (650 gp each), a slender silk glove backed with a fine golden mesh and adorned with five rubies (2,500

gp), and a jade statuette of a coiled blue dragon (1,000 gp). Vargnin also keeps a carved ivory scrollcase with images of tortured elves and chaotic tentacled creatures upon it (worth 200 gp). The case holds divine scrolls of *scrying, control weather, plane shift, commune,* and *helping hand.*

In a false bottom (Search DC 25 to find) is Vargnin's journal, a book that details his unlife of the last 50 years. It details his plans and his lack of a phylactery. He frequently curses his inability to create a phylactery to store his soul, so he may return to unlife if slain.

Ad-hoc Experience Award: If the PCs destroy the book of vile darkness, award them a bonus story award of 500 XP. At your option, destroying the artifact might require a special ritual or quest, in which case you can forgo awarding this experience.

T6. THE GAUNTLET (EL 12)

The corridor that allows access to the augury chamber was trapped heavily by creatures summoned by the lich years ago. Six pressure plates line the area; they cause a flurry of blades to spring from the floor and walls to slice victims apart. If this was not bad enough, as soon as the PCs enter the area (past the first of the plates) a group of spectres rise from the floor to combat the PCs amid the blades. The blades pass through them harmlessly but cause the PCs no end of trouble and danger.

Creatures: When the kyton built its forge, Vargnin ordered the devil to place a deadly trap in this area to decimate any who tried to enter the forbidden areas of the temple (areas **T7** and **T8**). Once the floor was trapped by the whirling blades, the lich summoned a group of spectres to lurk beneath the floor, rising into the corridor to kill anyone or anything (except Vargnin and Suzanelle) that attempts to pass into the augury chamber through the blades. The incorporeal creatures are unfazed and unharmed by the blades.

Trap: Several small plates are scattered around the area, unavoidable if the area is casually strolled across. In order for the trap to be disarmed, each plate must be disabled. While this slow process takes place, the spectres rises through the floor to attack. Ten pressure plates dot the hallway.

Whirling Blades Trap: CR 7; +14 melee (1d8/crit ×3 crit); Search (DC 24); Disable Device (DC 28). *Note:* In any given round, a particular person might be the target of 1d4–1 blades.

Spectres (5): 45 hp; *Monster Manual* 169.

Tactics: While the spectres attack anyone who attempts to cross the trapped floor, they do not stray past the chamber and retreat back into the floor if the PCs pass or flee the area.

T7. AUGURY ROOM

A large stone table decorated with two basins decorates the far wall of this chamber. This room seems to have seen little use—thick dust cakes the floor and cobwebs hang loosely from the ceiling. A second stone bench rests next to the basins, a large hourglass rests atop it. Another statue decorates the base of a second staircase, this one depicting a beautiful woman caring for a wounded deer.

This room was once the augury room of the temple, though it is now a derelict chamber that was abandoned because Vargnin found little use for it.

The hourglass is filled with sparkling metallic dust that measures the passage of exactly 30 minutes. If it is spun in its bracket, a mechanism is activated within the frame that unlocks and opens the trap door in area **T9** (marked **T**). The door remains open for 15 minutes before closing again. If the hourglass is forced, the mechanism breaks, forcing PCs to open the trapdoor through some other means. If a character flips the hourglass over, have the group make a Listen check (DC 25) to hear the grating of the trapdoor in area **T9** as it opens.

T8. NARHALM'S RESTING PLACE

This chamber seems to have suffered under the earthquake fifty years ago; much of the left wall has collapsed, burying most of the room under a large pile of rubble. Leaning against a pillar on the left side of the room is a skeleton dressed in the vestments of Pelor and a set of immaculate armor that shines in the light like a beacon.

The skeleton (marked "X" on the map) is the remains of the priest Narhalm, his body left to rot in the accursed walls of this temple. When he returned to the mountain after delivering the lantern to the townsfolk, he was surprised to see that Vargnin had risen from the grave as an undead creature. Unprepared for another battle, the cleric fell quickly to the dark magic of the lich.

Narhalm managed to drag his dying body into this room and prayed that the curse of undeath not claim him; he never finished his prayer. Vargnin bound his soul to this chamber, forcing it reside in a sort of pseudo-existence within the very stone of the room. Narhalm cannot manifest a physical form or affect the material world in anyway; he can only wait for somebody to free his soul. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter the chamber:

As you enter the chamber, an apparition passes silently through the wall ahead of you. The form of a handsome man glows with a dim radiance, his

insubstantial body wavering in the light. The spirit looks sadly at you, glances once at the skeleton against the far wall, then fades quickly from sight.

Although Narhalm would dearly like to be buried on holy ground, the only thing that shall release him from his bleak eternity is the death of Vargnin. Although the PCs might believe that Narhalm is pointing to the body, wishing that it be buried, he is actually trying to draw their attention to the large mace gripped in the skeleton's bony hand. The mace is a powerful weapon against evil and might prove to be the downfall of Vargnin.

Creature: Narhalm is not a true ghost, but a geist unable to effect the real world in any way but to manifest an incorporeal form similar to that of a ghost. The only way to banish his spirit is with a *dispel good* spell or by slaying Vargnin.

Treasure: The body of Narhalm still bears all the possessions the cleric carried when he died. The lich deliberately left it there, hoping to forget the embarrassment he faced in the eyes of Nerull when he was slain by the cleric of Pelor. The body carries *+1 full plate* armor embossed with decorations of red roses; a masterwork large metal shield; a *potion of cure serious wounds;* a divine scroll of *true seeing, cure critical wounds, prayer, healing circle, find the path, divine power,* and *cure moderate wounds*; and Salinthine, an intelligent *+2 heavy mace of disruption.*

Salinthine: The *+2 heavy mace of disruption* has the following abilities: Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 16, and Ego 15. It can speak Common and Celestial, is lawful good, and grants its wielder use of the Improved Initiative feat and the evasion ability. The mace can cast *cure moderate wounds* (2d8+5 hp) three times per day. The mace has a passionate hatred of undead creatures, and it attempts to convince its wielder to attack all undead creatures in melee in preference to all other actions. Salinthine prefers to be wielded by clerics or paladins and asks any new wielder who does not fit one of these categories to pass it to such an individual's hands as soon as possible.

T9. THE INNER SANCTUM

This inner complex of chambers is decorated with numerous alcoves and statues that cast shadows about the deathly silent room. Pieces of the ceiling have fallen recently, piling rubble about the chambers and creating numerous possible hiding places.

Each of the alcoves once held the temple's greatest treasures, including valuable artwork collected from across the lands. Much of the treasure was destroyed in the battle between Vargnin and Narhalm (and the earthquake that followed), or it has been used by Vargnin in his unholy research. Some of the alcoves still hold items of note.

T9a: A large stone statue of a rearing horse has been molested by inhabitants of the temple as well as by time. Most of its legs have disappeared, and the precious gems that once adorned it have all been pried out.

T9b: A statue of an elegant priest is barely recognizable through the deep grooves and markings that cover it. The figure's hands seem to have once held something of value, although it is long gone.

T9c: The rubble from a shattered statue covers the floor of this alcove. Searching the rubble turns up a curious find: a thin golden chain with a heart-shaped locket attached (250 gp). Within is a picture of a beautiful woman.

T9d: A large bronze gong identical to the one in area **T5** adorns this alcove. If the gong is struck, it's twin rings also, causing the slaad there to become curious (if it still lives) and leave the lich's chambers in search of intruders in this chamber.

T9e: The alcove here seems empty, but a stone trapdoor is hidden in the floor. The PCs must succeed at a Search check (DC 25) to locate it, and an Open Lock check (DC 30) to proceed to *Pelor's pyre.* The trapdoor also opens willingly if the hourglass in area **T7** is turned around.

Trap Door: hardness 8; hp 60; Search DC 25; Break DC 28; Open Lock (DC 30).

T10. PELOR'S PYRE (EL 16)

A massive crack in the center of this cavern emanates a roaring pyre from deep within the bowels of the earth, the flames roaring to the ceiling high above you. The heat in this chamber is almost unbearable, but the white flame that has turned this room into a furnace also emits waves of peace and security.

Creature: As the PCs enter the cavern, the flame ebbs for a moment, allowing them to see the upper ledge where Vargnin is chanting his ritual to snuff the holy flame. He will not be recognizable as a lich without magical detection from this range, as heat waves interfere with vision to that distance (Spotting distances are halved). A successful Spot check (DC 25) reveals only that the figure is exceptionally gaunt, and that he is obviously some sort of spellcaster. If the check exceeds DC 30, the character also notices the holy symbol of Nerull around Vargnin's neck.

Vargnin has just completed his spell, which caused the flames to dim and wane; in 14 rounds, the flame dies and the lich can escape his prison. In order for his ritual to continue to affect the flame, the lich must stay

within his unholy summoning circle for the entire 14 rounds. If Vargnin is killed or thrown from the circle, the spell dies and the flame roars to life once more. As the PCs battle the lich, allow a Spot check (DC 20) to notice his concentrated efforts to stay within the circle. A Spellcraft check (DC 30) reveals that the flame is some sort of holy font that acts as an inverted *magic circle against evil*. A successful Intelligence check (DC 15) following the successful Spellcraft check reveals that the lich is probably bound to the vicinity of the flame as much as the other evil monsters the PCs have encountered in the mines. Finally, another successful Spellcraft check (DC 25) once the PCs reach Vargnin reveals that his circle is probably part of some ritual intended to alter the flame in some way.

Although the cavern is stifling hot, the flame causes no damage to non-evil beings within the cavern. During the ritual it also has no effect on the evil creatures summoned by the lich or the lich himself.

If the PCs have allowed creatures to escape their many skirmishes, eventually word has reached Vargnin of the powerful intruders, and he has prepared wisely by using a scroll of *scrying* in his lair to view the PCs' progress through the mountain.

The lich notices the intruders as soon as they enter and begins to cast spells accordingly, beginning with his *summon monster* spells. The distance between Vargnin and the PCs allows the lich time to prepare for his attack, and he uses his time wisely.

Vargnin, Male Human Lich Clr14: CR 16; Medium-size Undead; HD 14d12; hp 100; Init +2; Spd 30ft.; AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 25; Atk +15/+10 melee (2d4+5 plus 2d6 unholy damage/crit 19–20 ×4, +2 *keen unholy scythe*); SA fear aura, paralyzing touch; SQ turn resistance +4, DR 15/+1, immunities (cold, electricity, polymorph, and mind-affecting spells); AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +15; Str 15, Dex 14, Con —, Int 15, Wis 22, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +18*, Craft (engraving) +8, Diplomacy +11, Heal +10, Hide +9†, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +16, Move Silently +9†, Profession (burgomaster) +8, Search +12, Sense Motive +14, Scry +8, Spellcraft +5, Spot +16. *Feats:* Combat Casting, Dodge, Spell Penetration, Spell Focus (Necromancy), Weapon Focus (scythe), Martial Weapon Proficiency (scythe).

*Includes the +4 bonus from Combat Casting.

†Includes the –3 armor check penalty for Vargnin's armor.

Spells (6/8/8/6/6/5/5/3; base save DC = 16+ spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×2, *guidance, light, read magic, virtue*; 1st—*cause fear**, *divine favor*††, *doom*††, *endure elements, random action, shield of faith, entropic shield*††; 2nd—*aid, augury, bull's strength, death knell**, *desecrate*††, *hold person, silence, spiritual weapon*; 3rd—*create food, dispel magic*††, *invisibility purge, magic circle against good**††, *searing light* ×2; 4th—*divine power, greater magic weapon*††, *poison, spell immunity*††, *summon monster IV, unholy blight**; 5th—*flame strike* ×2, *plane shift, slay living**, *true seeing*††; 6th—*banishment, blade barrier, create undead**, *greater dispelling, harm*; 7th—*blasphemy**, *destruction, summon monster VII*.

*Domain spells. *Domains:* Evil (all evil spells cast at 15th-level); Death (death touch 1/day; see page 163 of the *Player's Handbook* for details).

†Necromancy spells. The base save DC for Necromancy spells is 18 + spell level. Note that this includes any spontaneously cast *inflict wounds* spells.

††These spells have already been cast by Vargnin as part of his ritual to put out *Pelor's pyre* or as they move to engage the lich.

Possessions: +3 breast plate; +2 keen unholy scythe; ring of protection +2; wand of contagion (17 charges, command word "Egal"); scroll of *invisibility purge, meld into stone, repulsion,* and *spell resistance; minor cloak of displacement; +2 periapt of wisdom; potion of gaseous form*; a small silver circlet set with twelve moonstones with a central sapphire (8,000 gp).

Paralyzing Touch (Su): Any living creature the lich touches must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 20) or be permanently paralyzed.

Tactics: As soon as Vargnin completes the ritual and the flames begin to ebb, he immediately casts *summon monster VII* and summons a bebilith to delay the PCs. The next round he follows up with a *summon monster IV* spell, which he uses to bring a howler to join the battle. Once his minions are summoned, he casts *blade barrier, spell resistance* (from his scroll), and *shield of faith*. After the spells are cast, he launches a barrage of ranged offensive spells until he runs out. He makes liberal use of his *energy drain, repulsion, harm, destruction, slay living, unholy blight, searing light,* and *blasphemy* to take out key PCs while they fight his minions or attempt to cross the gap to where he waits. If reduced to fewer than 15 hit points, he uses his *potion of gaseous form* to flee, although this causes his ritual to fail.

Due to the unique creation of his lich form, Vargnin does not have a phylactery, nor has he had the materials to create one during his imprisonment. Should he be destroyed, he cannot reform. He is completely aware of this vulnerability and does not hesitate to flee if the PCs prove a serious threat.

Development: If Vargnin is defeated but not slain, his ritual is ruined. The lich is furious at the interruption and summons as many of his remaining minions into the temple to dispatch the intruders. If the PCs are too strong, he flees to the kyton's small cave in area **T1** to regroup.

If Vargnin's ritual succeeds, he doesn't stick around. He casts *plane shift* and travels to Carceri, Nerull's home plane. Once there, he sets his sights on a return to the Prime Material Plane where he can begin another crusade of death and destruction.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Give the PCs a story award of 1,500 XPs if they successfully save Rutherton and prevent *Pelor's pyre* from being extinguished. If the artifact is destroyed but the town is still saved, award them a story award of 1,000.

CONCLUSION

PCs who reach this point will have been taxed to their limit. The appearance of Vargnin should present a challenge to even the best of groups. Because of Vargnin's lack of a phylactery within the mountain, he does not fight to the death. If he is engaged in a dangerous level of melee combat (such as defending the blows of two fighters) he flees the scene, hoping to perform the ritual another day, by using his *potion of gaseous form* to enter his lair (area **T5**).

Slaying the lich in his lair is a task of no small mettle. Parties that accomplish such a monumental task see *Pelor's pyre* flare into existence once more if it was extinguished, its light filling the cavern. In the flames, the PCs can see the ghost of Narhalm raise a hand in gratitude before fading away.

Lighting the lantern once more is as easy and plunging it into the flames of *Pelor's pyre*. The PC who undertakes this task might be a little wary of being burned, but the pyre harms no one of non-evil alignment. Carrying the lantern back to the villagers of Rutherton, the PCs are met with great joy.

Further adventures in the area could include hunting down the old wyrm Kah-la-hi, who might return to the area and destroy much of the countryside around the village before flying back to her lair. With the constant threat of a dragon, the villages would surely want the PCs to track down its lair and slay her.

If Vargnin is unsuccessful and manages to escape, he surely tries his ritual again as soon as possible (this could hinge on a number of possible events or materials). He summons dozens more denizens to the mines, and if he succeeds, descends with a fury on the land at some point in the future. Ω

Caine says, "I like ducks. They quack, they eat, and they run around chasing people with food. That's my type of animal. I like ducks.

"So, in short, there is little to me past my somewhat morbid collection of ducks and their assorted strange names, and my girlfriend, Alex. This module is dedicated to her, the first person to ask the question: 'Why aren't their any dungeons abandoned in the wilderness that have been dedicated to good?' For her this module was spawned."

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