

WISDOM AND WARNING:  
**THE DEMON WASTES**

Translated from the Original Draconic  
and Annotated by Kendal Santor d'Sivis



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## FOREWORD

Wow!

My excitement for this project has never been higher than it is right now as I write this. Nearly 120 pages of content by a host of brilliant contributors and I couldn't be happier with the results! I hope the community enjoys playing through what we're presenting as much as we enjoyed creating it.

The Demon Wastes was a vastly blank canvas, with many "dots on the map" that had a name, but little else to guide us. We all started with one simple idea: what do you suppose happened *there*? The resulting journey of creation was a fascinating ride with stories of demons, war, sinister plots, and even bits of humor sprinkled in for good measure. No matter your level or style of campaign, you'll find something here you can graft into your game and spawn hours of fun for you and your players.

Now that Eberron has joined the ranks of "official" settings with the release of *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*, I look forward to many more fantastic adventures in this rich world. My thanks to Keith Baker and the team at Wizards of the Coast once again for bringing it back to life.

Now, the honorable Kendal Santor d'Sivis has something intriguing to show you...

—Alan Tucker

## SHORTHAND

Within this document, some terms will be highlighted in **bold**, referring to a creature, or item from one of the published D&D materials, such as the *Monster Manual*, with a page number reference listed immediately after. The core published books for fifth edition are abbreviated as follows:

*PH* = *Player's Handbook*

*DMG* = *Dungeon Master's Guide*

*MM* = *Monster Manual*

*OotA* = *Out of the Abyss*

*VGtM* = *Volo's Guide to Monsters*

*XGtE* = *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*

*MToF* = *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*

*GGtR* = *Guildmaster's Guide to Ravnica*

*GoS* = *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*

*BG:DiA* = *Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus*

*E:RftLW* = *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*

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# INTRODUCTION

I came upon this document quite by happy accident in the depths of the Library and have since verified its authenticity. I have not been able to identify its precise date of creation, but given its author, it is likely quite old—certainly predating Galifar and the unification. The information within is far more extensive and detailed than any other account of the region I've been able to find and thus, I am presenting it for submission into the Archives—with my annotations and some additions, of course. Anyone with aspirations of traveling to this area of death and mystery would do well to heed the warnings contained within this dissertation and probably avoid the place at all costs.

—Kendal Santor d'Sivis  
Head of the Ninth College of House Sivis  
Stack Keeper Emeritus, Library of Korranberg

# WISDOM AND WARNING

It remains a blemish on our kind's legacy, and the sacrifice of our allies, that such a place still exists. Even more so that it lies near such a promising vein of study in the Prophecy. Revelations from these new dragon-marks are no doubt impending, yet the proximity of the fiends makes acting upon them difficult. As part of this document's mission, I hope to prove to the Council that the creation of a new sector of the Thousand is woven to allow Argonessen the ability to proactively counter any machinations by the Lords of Dust.

In the wastelands of this region may be the final fate of all outside our homeland if we, the stewards of the world, allow the spawn of Khyber to enact her will. Though we may fear the rise of the Daughter, I believe limited action within the scope of the Prophecy may not cause her any unusual slumber. Furthermore,

this new organization may allow Argonessen to discipline those who choose to hide beyond our traditional reach.

May the information within this document come some small way toward educating the Vast-returned youth of our ancient foes, and swaying the Thousand Council elders to the idea of a small group who may fight them on superior ground.

—Endeolorth





## FAH'LRRG (THE DEMON WASTES)

### HISTORICAL RECORD

**F**ah'lrrg, from the fiendish tongue, more commonly known as the Demon Wastes among the lesser races, was created, along with the rest of the world as we know it, from our Mother Eberron's intervention in the dispute over the Prophecy between Father Siberys and the Other, Khyber. Eberron placed herself between the two combatants, but not before a mortal blow had been dealt to Siberys. His essence rings the world and his tears and scales are found occasionally fallen to the ground as we did. Khyber is bound below and she excreted the fiends to eternally blight the purity of Eberron.

The greatest of these were the Overlords, once rulers over all, now bound within their mother's cursed coils by the blood of Siberys and our ancient allies, the couatl. These celestial beings, with our help, transformed their number into an entity—or more accurately a force of nature—known as Kalok Shash by the barbarian tribes that now guard the Wastes, and

called the Silver Flame by humankind<sup>[1]</sup>. This force gathered and imprisoned the Overlords within the depths of Khyber and dragons were free once more to roam the world, unfettered by the demons' influence.

The Prophecy, however, was not finished with the spawn of Khyber and our war is not over. Some of the most powerful servants of the Overlords escaped the time of binding and fled into the Demon Wastes. They call themselves the "Lords of Dust," perhaps ironically, for that is all we left them, and they fight every moment to release their Overlords once more upon us. Though we wage a battle against the Talons of the Daughter, the lesser races are not so enlightened. One day we will have to fight these fiends on their terrain. Let this work help us do so.

---

**[1] That these "forces" are one and the same is disputed by the leaders of the church in Flamekeep. They are not enamored with the idea that they might not be the sole custodians of said flame. —Kendal**

# THE DEMON WASTES



## GEOGRAPHY

This land, which our ancestors helped repurpose to serve as a prison for the fiends who once lorded over our kind, is a wasteland, as the modern name for it suggests. Sand, smoke, ash, and fire fill the skies to varying degrees and the terrain below is just as inhospitable. Active volcanoes dot the landscape, as well as smaller fire pits, lava flows, and patches of boiling mud. Ancient—even by our standards—ruins still exist across the Wastes, but most have long since been plundered and picked over for any treasures they might contain. A handful still stand, even after all this time, recognizable for their alien nature—often strange fusions of volcanic glass and metal—but these also bear the most powerful wards and protectors. Those who foolishly venture near are rarely heard from again.

To best understand our foe, we must first examine where they live and breed. Therefore, I have endeavored to detail the important features of this horrible land so that a viable plan can be crafted for the inevitable time when we are called upon to push back the fiendish horde once again.

## THE BARREN AND BITTER

Before we examine the land itself, let us familiarize ourselves with the surroundings. The swath of land known as the Demon Wastes is bordered on two sides by ocean, divided roughly into the Barren and Bitter seas. The western coasts are surrounded by the Barren, where the traveling manifest zones of Dolurrh provide an environment hostile both to fiend and dragon.

This is, as such, a neutral area. We cannot establish permanent outposts here, though regular observation of the nomadic locals may be helpful. Likewise, the fiends are prevented from moving through this region without preparations.

The places where the fiends may land by traveling through this ocean are also of low priority, as the students of Vvaraak<sup>[2]</sup> remain vigilant against many

[2] Vvaraak is a prominent culture-hero in the druidic traditions of north-western Khorvaire. The oldest tales are among the orcs, leading some scholars to identify Vvaraak as an orc druid, though a few do indicate the nearly mythological figure was indeed a dragon. —Kendal

supernatural threats, especially those they interpret as being close to Xoriat. Manipulation of the local folklore has convinced them most of the fiends are such, and they use druidic arts to contain or destroy all but the most subtle threats. Cults in the area may cause concern.

The Bitter Sea, to the north and east of the land, is much more hospitable. Despite the polar chill in the currents flowing here, many demons can withstand them. Since this is a possible avenue of escape, it must be monitored. Simultaneously, it is a possible staging ground if an assault on the land becomes necessary. White and Silver may be the best of us in such an action, with others flying in from the nearby Tlalusk Island.

It is more worrying where they can get to by sea from here; the major settled areas of the continent lie across a bay, and its inhabitants are particularly vulnerable to subtle manipulation. This is a place that certainly requires vigilance to achieve total containment. Unfortunately, this bay is also an insufficient barrier for the lesser races, who see the land as a potential for expansion and resources for plundering, rather than the prison it should remain.

## DEMONSONG BAY

This is a wide indent into the peninsula more than a bay, but it is considered one region due to the spina-gon-blooded harpy flights<sup>[3]</sup> that nest here. Combining a terrifying song reminiscent of their namesakes with sharp keratin tails spawned straight from Khyber, these harpies prey upon humanoids of their size or greater, swarming them with spines from a distance, then closing in when the prey is weakened.

They attack the native sakah tribes, and are not above harassing weakened fiends. These harpies make the waters around Demonsong Bay nigh impassable for humanoid ships. The coast itself is composed entirely of cliffs, with either rocky pebble beaches or submerged rocks lining the shores. This inhospitality is likely the only reason the harpies thrive here, as individually they are little threat to the more powerful beings that stalk these lands.

---

*[3] For more information on these and other unique creatures mentioned within the work, please consult the "Creatures" section —Kendal*



## BLOODCLIFF BAY

The mouth of one section of the Labyrinth, this is likely the closest thing to a “safe” harbor. The water, however, is tainted with a reddish substance the Ghaash’kala call taarik’urrva, which means “rosy molasses” in their tongue. Fitting because the stuff is viscous and sticky, like syrup, but deceptively dangerous, like a rose. Any creature falling into these waters is certain to exhaust themselves and drown. Ships become mired here as if they ran aground, depending on the consistency of the “blood.” Some shipwrecks decades old have not completely sunk, despite their crews being long dead.

It is also one of the few areas in the Demon Wastes uninhabited by fiends. Only those capable of flight visit here, possibly in the hope of finding a victim, but none of them venture far enough that they cannot return to the mainland. Aquatic fiends are hampered just as much by the substance as mundane aquatic beasts, causing them to also avoid the bay.

Perhaps most insidiously, the substance disappears if the water is purified. This leaves mired victims with plenty of water to drink, but they instead slowly die of hunger.

## THE KEEPER’S MAW

The northernmost bay in the region, the Keeper’s Maw hosts ice during the midwinter months. During Zarantyr, it is thick enough for humanoids to walk on, extending the reach of the Carrion Tribes and smaller fiends for a short time. Some make a habit of camping here in the deep winter, earning a respite from the larger beasts and other tribes.

Unfortunately, the influence of the nearby prison of Katashka has supernaturally tainted these waters. Any creature that drowns here rises again within a day as a **drowned one** (GoS), a waterlogged undead with little will except to drag the living beneath the water. As soon as the ice thins in spring, the drowned ones lumber and crawl ashore in terrifying numbers, only to be turned away by the concerted efforts of both barbarian sects—a mutual, temporary truce of necessity, lest the Wastes be overrun by the undead.

## THE LABYRINTH

By far the most prominent feature in the Demon Wastes is the maze of canyons, caves, and rock formations known as the Labyrinth.

Wind whips through the twisting passageways like a host of keening banshees and dust often obscures vast stretches of this gnarled landscape, making it impossible to map from above. Some even claim the earth itself shifts and moves over time, changing the paths through the already challenging terrain so none may ever know the Labyrinth’s secrets. While this may or may not be true, there are verifiable dangers aplenty within. Rivers of lava, open chasms—possibly leading to Khyber itself—and rockfalls make ground travel through the region hazardous to all but the hardest of beings. The place has served to confound many of the lesser fiends, who wander its endless passages searching for freedom and create yet another obstacle for any brave or foolish enough to explore the maze.

In addition, some areas exist where the veils between worlds are thin enough to allow passage, leading to any number of potentially unpleasant destinations<sup>[4]</sup>. It could be the reason this strange, but seemingly natural geography has been relatively effective in keeping most of the fiends from spreading their influence to the rest of the continent.

Bands of couatl-blessed orcs, calling themselves the Ghaash’kala, have taken the mantle as guardians of the Labyrinth. They actively patrol its outer edges, warning away those who seek to enter and aggressively confronting any who manage to exit the area. Their resolve is noble, but their methods and number will be wholly ineffective against a full assault by the hordes of Khyber.

---

*[4] Scholars understand these to be “demiplanes” and theorize they might be what allow those who patrol the Labyrinth to cover so much territory. —Kendal*

---

### Labyrinth Encounter Tables

You can either roll on the tables a number of times for each day of travel, or simply go through the lists and pick out some encounters you find interesting.

Saving throw DCs and damage are calculated based on Average Party Level (APL) and an additional modifier. As an example, for a party with an average level of 10, encountering Strong Winds on the Meteorological Sub Table, the saving throw DC would be 18 (10 + 8), dealing 3 (10 ÷ 3) d4 slashing damage. Fractions are rounded down with a minimum result of 1. DCs are capped at 22. Parties are assumed to have 4-5 characters. DMs may need to make adjustments for smaller or larger groups.



## LABYRINTH ENCOUNTER TABLE

d10	Sub Table	d10	Sub Table
1	Meteorological	4	Magical/Planar
2	Geological	5-10	No Encounter
3	Biological		

### METEOROLOGICAL SUB TABLE (D4)

#### d4 Result

- Ash:** A cloud of ash has blown into the area. Vision is completely obscured beyond 5 feet. For every 10 minutes spent in the cloud, creatures must succeed on a DC (APL + 2) Constitution saving throw or become poisoned from ash inhalation until they complete a short or long rest. Creatures with magic which allows free breathing, or those who do not need to breathe, are unaffected. The cloud lasts for (APL x 5) minutes.
- Blowing Sand and Glass:** A whirlwind of sand and volcanic glass shards tears through the area. Creatures must succeed on a DC (APL + 9) Dexterity saving throw or take (APL ÷ 4) d6 slashing damage, half that on a success.
- Lightning:** Static discharge creates a freak lightning storm which crackles between the canyon walls. Creatures must succeed on a DC (APL + 7) Dexterity saving throw or take (APL ÷ 2)d6 lightning damage, or half as much on a success.
- Strong Wind Gust:** The ever-present breezes pick up suddenly into a roaring wind. Creatures must succeed on a DC (APL + 8) Strength saving throw or fall prone and take (APL ÷ 3)d4 slashing damage from being dragged across the sharp, rocky ground.

### GEOLOGICAL SUB TABLE (D4)

#### d4 Result

- Cave In/Crevasse:** The ground suddenly falls away, revealing a deep crevasse. Creatures must succeed on a DC (APL + 8) Dexterity saving throw or fall in. Anyone with a Passive Perception above (APL + 8) rolls the saving throw with advantage. The pit is (APL x 5) feet deep and anyone falling in takes appropriate bludgeoning damage (1d6 per 10 feet fallen).
- Falling Debris:** Rocks and other debris tumble from the canyon walls above. Creatures must succeed on a DC (APL + 6) Dexterity saving throw or take (APL ÷ 2)d6 bludgeoning damage or half that on a success.
- Fire Geyser:** A plume of fire erupts beneath the travelers' feet. Creatures must succeed on a DC (APL + 7) Dexterity saving throw or take (APL ÷ 3)d10 fire damage, or half as much on a success.
- Lava Flow:** A river of lava emerges from one of the canyon walls, crossing the path ahead and completely blocking it. The lava flow is (APL x 5) feet across. Anyone who enters or begins their turn in lava takes 44 (8d10) fire damage. The lava is considered difficult terrain.

## BIOLOGICAL SUB TABLE (D20)

#### d20 Result

- Deranged Arcanoloath: 1 arcanoloath** (*MM p313*), disguised by alter self as a rakshasa, mutters to itself as it stumbles forward toward the party, seemingly oblivious. It has been driven mad from wandering for years through the Labyrinth, unable to find a way out. The DM can decide how aggressive the creature is once it comes within range and notices the adventurers. It may also have information the characters need.
- Ghaash'kala Scouts:** A patrol of 5 Ghaash'kala encounter the party. Depending on the characters' disposition, this can result in aid or combat.
- Leucrotta Pride: (APL - 3) leucrotta** (*VGtM p169*) prowl the Labyrinth for wayward souls. They especially enjoy the Ghaash'kala. Their keen smell allows them to detect most creatures early, allowing them to set up an ambush by mimicking the cries of a humanoid in distress.
- (For APL 9 and lower) Lone Lamia: 1 lamia** (*MM p201*), under the guise of a gynosphinx with an injured wing (*disguise self* spell) wanders the Labyrinth searching for someone it can trick into showing it the way out. It pleads for help from anyone it comes across, using *charm person* or *suggestion* to help persuade if necessary. If its disguise is discovered, it fights or attempts to flee depending on the strength of its adversaries.  
**(For APL 10 and higher) Purple Worm: 1 purple worm** (*MM p255*) bursts from the ground, attacking the most heavily armored party member.
- Stampede: (APL - 3) nightmares** (*MM p235*) charge in a crazed rage through the canyon toward the party.
- Wasp Nest: (APL ÷ 3) hellwasps** (*BG:DiA p236*) have begun construction of a nest here. A hard, amber-colored substance blocks much of the path ahead, with twisting tunnels granting access.

### MAGICAL/PLANAR SUB TABLE (D8)

The party encounters a manifest zone or pocket dimension of the rolled result. Choose a creature native to that plane, or an effect that plane might have in Eberron for the party to interact with.

#### d8 Result

- Dal Quor, the Region of Dreams
- Dolurrh, the Realm of the Dead
- Fernia, the Sea of Fire
- Kythri, the Churning Chaos
- Mabar, the Endless Night
- Risia, the Plain of Ice
- Shavarath, the Battleground
- Xoriat, the Realm of Madness

Be sure to check out *Exploring Eberron*, by Keith Baker, et al for more information on the planes of Eberron!

## STONE CAGE MOUNTAINS

Named for their peculiar shape, the Stone Cage mountains are thin, narrow mountains that resemble worked iron. Knife-like from the air, the equally thin ravines between them vent chunks of ice into the air, which settles on the volcanic ground nearby and melts. This is one of the few sources of pure fresh water in the region, but it is the nature of this land that nothing stays untainted for long.

By the time the water reaches the lowlands, it carries with it an ichor of undetermined source. Said ichor is most similar to Khyber dragonshards in color and apparently sharing the ability to bind creatures to it. It is not uncommon to encounter watery simulacra of creatures common to the area; including the tribes of the area and the more common fiendish mortals. How this happens is still undetermined, as the simulacra remain as hostile as their living counterparts.

Perhaps most interestingly, these simulacra appear within the mountains themselves, yet appear dissimilar to any known creature. These giant simulacra do not appear to be hostile, but the risk of a dragon coming into contact with the ichor is too great to risk close examination for now.

### Creating Simulacra

The simulacrum takes the same stats as its creature of origin, whether NPC or PC, with a few changes. First, the simulacrum is immune to piercing and poison damage, but vulnerable to fire and slicing. In addition, the simulacrum's maximum hit points are half that of the original creature and its alignment is diametrically opposed (e.g. a simulacrum of a lawful good creature is chaotic evil). If the simulacrum kills its counterpart, it gains their coloration and attempts to replace them. It is still made of water and retains its immunities and vulnerabilities.



## THE SHADOWCRAGS

by Joe Raso

If there is a positive aspect to the fiendish taint lying within these lands, it is that a rugged mountain chain shields the remainder of the continent from the foulness within. The western portion of these mountains is regularly enshrouded by a thick gray mist which lies thick upon the lower elevations. I am confident the caliginous setting is not due to an encroachment from Mabar, but rather a natural manifestation of the land's unique geography.

Though there can be little doubt that agents of the Lords of Dust manage to seep through cracks of this physical barrier, large scale, land-based incursions will certainly be hindered by the environment's inhibiting nature. The northern face of these mountains drops precipitously to a broken expanse of canyons, blackened sand, and volcanic glass. Few passes carve through this geological barrier with most carefully guarded by the Maruk Ghaash'kala.

### THE SEER'S RUIN

High upon a remote mountain pass at the western end of the Shadowcrag stands a crumbling ruin of gray stone. No records exist in Korranberg's collection describing the origin of this structure, but as recently as 50 years ago, transcriptions of Gatekeeper oral histories refer to the ruin as the home of an aged dusk hag. The name of the hag is curiously absent from these narratives. Some scholars speculate the stories may refer to Sora Teraza before she joined with her sisters to create the nation of Droaam. I hope to send an expedition to the ruin to determine if there is any truth to this rumor. Preliminary scouting of the area has sighted packs of horrid wolves in the nearby mountain slopes. Occasional wisps of smoke issuing from the ruin suggest that it may still be occupied.

—Kendal

### RUIN OVERVIEW

The Seer's Ruin sits within a well-hidden mountain pass joining the Eldeen Reaches with the Demon Wastes. The ruin is a small fortification of ancient Dhakaani construction. It now crumbles beneath the weight of centuries since the empire's fall. The name and purpose of this place has long been forgotten.

Currently, the ruin is occupied by Bazsallaradh, a rogue silver dragon obsessed with parsing the secrets of the Draconic Prophecy. She was once a member of

the Chamber, but has refused to communicate with her fellow dragons for some time.

Bazsallaradh arrived at the ruin seeking insights into the Prophecy left behind by Sora Teraza. The dragon is convinced the location has a special tie to the Prophecy and continues to pursue her research within. She is aided by a pair of orc Gatekeepers and their trained horrid animals. The orcs believe the dragon follows the legacy of Vvaraak and needs their help to reveal the secrets of the Draconic Prophecy. Bazsallaradh speaks of a pending invasion from Xori-at and her work is essential to protect Khorvaire.

In truth, the dragon is desperate to save herself from real and imagined threats. She heartlessly probes dragonmarked individuals her orc servants bring to her, hoping to decipher strands of the Prophecy. Most captives die under her investigations.

### APPROACHING THE RUIN

The mountains surrounding the ruin are perpetually smothered by a thick fog, making travel in the region exceedingly difficult. The lands within 1 mile of the ruins are considered heavily obscured. Spells that disperse clouds or vapor temporarily remove the thick fog in the spell's area of effect, but it returns as soon as the spell's duration ends.

Strangely, the fog thins as it nears the ruin. Within 60 feet of the structure, the area is considered lightly obscured, and within 30 feet of the ruin's walls the fog is completely absent, providing clear views of the ancient keep's immediate surroundings.

### THE STRUCTURE

The ruin was once a small, well-made fortress crafted by goblins of the Dhakaani Empire. Its black stone walls bear evidence of terrible battles with the Daelkyr. Time continues to erode the structure, opening many gaps in its once-proud walls.

**Loose Rubble.** In and around the ruin, areas of loose rubble are considered difficult terrain. The crumbling stone crunches loudly beneath anyone walking across it, causing Dexterity (Stealth) checks to be made with disadvantage.

**Lighting.** Unless specified otherwise, natural light provides the only illumination within the ruin.

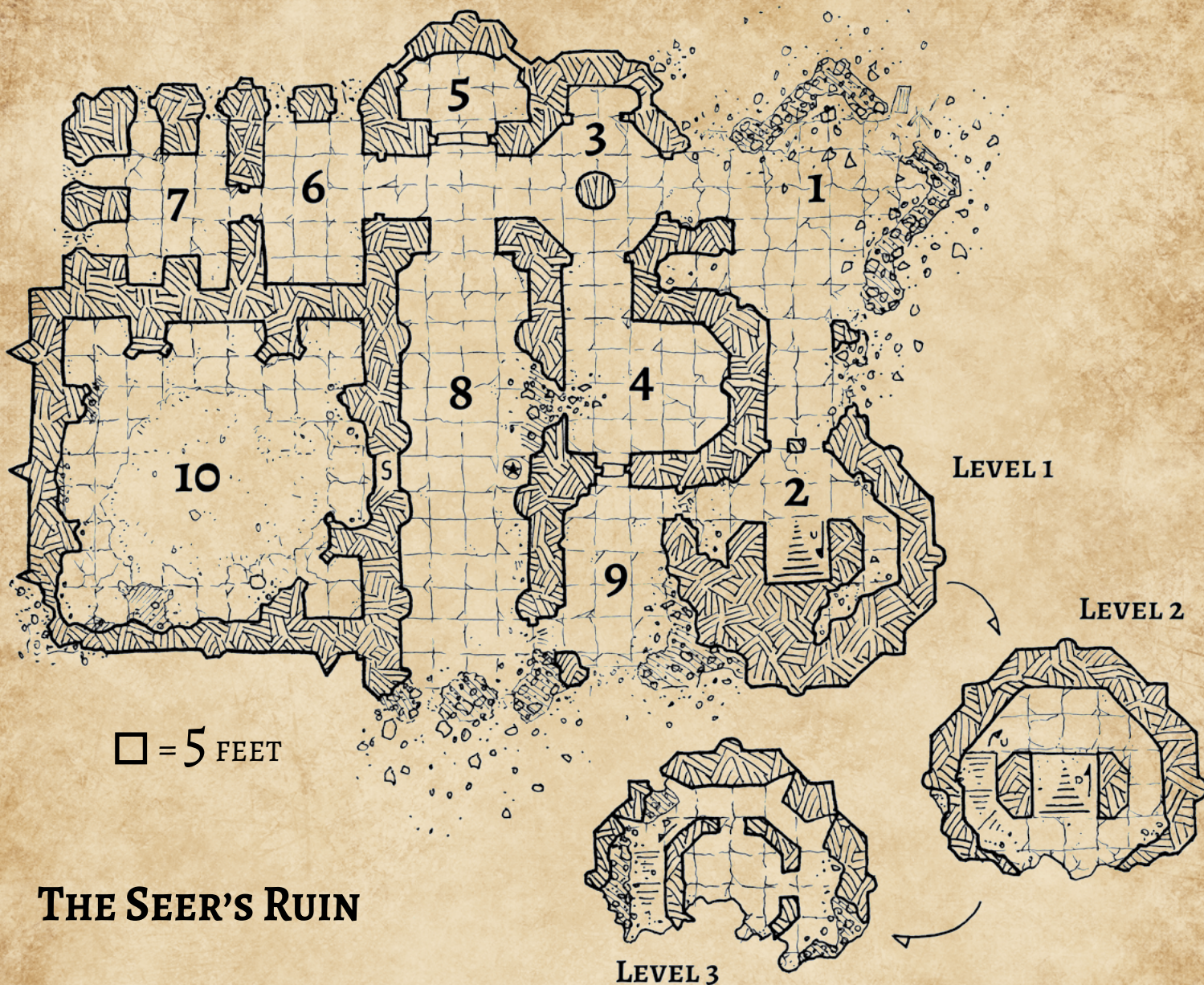
**Construction.** Most rooms in the ruin have 10-foot-high ceilings. The floors are made of well-crafted interlocking stone.

## The Seer's Ruin Adventure Seeds

The Seer's Ruin is best suited for a party of 4-6 with an average level of 7-8, but could be adapted to a range of 5-10. Here are suggestions for integrating this location into your campaign:

- A desperate patron beseeches the adventurers to find a missing loved one. Clues lead to a remote ruin hidden within the Shadowcrag.
- A disguised Chamber agent hires the adventurers to discover what Bazsallaradh has been up to in the Shadowcrag since they lost touch with the rogue dragon.
- A rakshasa openly approaches the party seeking their aid in removing a dragon from its lair in the Shadowcrag. It suggests they have a mutual enemy, claiming the dragon has abducted numerous dragon-marked individuals from across Khorvaire.
- A courier delivers a cryptic prophecy to the adventurers, claiming it was sent by Sora Teraza herself. It says the secrets to their destiny lie within a ruined keep high within the Shadowcrag.
- A Korranberg scholar hires the adventurers to explore the ruin in hope of finding details about its past occupants.





## THE SEER'S RUIN

### RUIN INHABITANTS

**Bazsallaradh.** She is a young silver dragon bent at uncovering the secrets of the draconic prophecy at all costs. She has an irrational fear that nefarious powers wish her dead and is desperate to understand the Draconic Prophecy to forestall this doom. She fooled a pair of orcs into believing she is a follower of the mythical Vvaraak and that her deeds are intended to stop another incursion from Xoriat.

Bazsallaradh prefers to appear as a middle-aged human woman with graying hair and a pale complexion, particularly when meeting people or performing her dragonmark investigations. When in her dragon form, her scales are a silvery-white in color. She can normally be found examining a captive dragonmarked

individual in **Area 10**.

Bazsallaradh is a neutral evil, **young silver dragon** (*MM* p128) with the following changes:

**Languages.** Common, Draconic, Orc, Goblin

**Change Shape.** As an action, Bazsallaradh magically polymorphs into a humanoid or beast that has a challenge rating no higher than her own, or back into her true form. She reverts to her true form if she dies. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by her new form (the dragon's choice).

In a new form, Bazsallaradh retains her alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Her statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class

features or legendary actions of that form.

**Innate Spellcasting.** Bazsallaradh's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1/day each: *blink, expeditious retreat, grease, misty step*

**Yagmutt.** Yagmutt is an orc Gatekeeper originally from the Shadowmarches, who watched over the western Shadowcrag. She is in awe of Bazsallaradh, believing the dragon is Vvaraak reborn. She thinks the dragon is on a mission to protect Khorvaire from an impending invasion of daelkyr. Yagmutt is willing to ignore the dragon's cruel research, believing the ends justify the means. She is usually found in **Area 10** helping Bazsallaradh with her investigations.

Yagmutt is a lawful evil orc using the stats of a **druid** (MM p346) with the following change:

**Aggressive.** As a bonus action, Yagmutt can move up to her speed toward a hostile creature that she can see.

**Hydak.** This powerful orc is Yagmutt's devoted mate. He does not fully trust Bazsallaradh and suspects the dragon may be pursuing her own selfish objectives. Hydak, however, continues to follow Bazsallaradh's orders because Yagmutt believes in the dragon and he unquestionably follows his mate. Hydak uses the stats of an **orc war chief** (MM p246), but is of lawful neutral alignment. Hydak wields *Ghazalog's Spear*, an ancient magical Dhaakani weapon. Hydak is usually found in **Area 6** resting with his trained **horrid wolf** (p17), T'char.

## GHAZALOG'S SPEAR

Weapon (spear), rare

The ancient Dhaakani hero Ghazalog wielded this magical spear defending the empire against the Xoriat incursion. Fine swirling filigree decorates its bright metallic head. The weapon's wooden shaft is protected by unblemished smooth black enamel.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. The bonus increases to +3 when you use the spear to attack an aberration.

When you roll a 20 on an attack roll made with this weapon, the target takes an extra 7 piercing damage, or 14 piercing damage if it's an aberration.

Proficiency with a spear allows you to add your proficiency bonus to the attack roll for any attack you make with it.

## AREA 1: BROKEN ENTRANCE

The stone walls of the fortress lie broken on the ground. Loose rubble covers much of the area. A passage to the west leads into the fortress, as does another to the south that enters the base of a crumbling tower.

Unless precautions are taken, traversing the broken stones of this area alerts the horrid rats in **Area 9**.

The manticore at the top of **Area 2** also becomes aware of the adventurers, but waits to see how the horrid rats deal with intruders before deciding to act.

Loud noises may also attract the attention of Hydak and his trained horrid wolf in **Area 6**.

## AREA 2: TOWER

This small tower rises above the ancient fortress. The tower's upper level crumbles dangerously, with large sections missing from its outer wall.

### LEVEL 1 – THE GREAT STAIR

A well-made stone staircase dominates the ground floor. Relief carvings of goblinoid heroes from the Dhakaani Empire encircle the room. The room is permeated with an unpleasant animal smell.

The horrid rats of **Area 9** become aware of any individual moving through this chamber unless they take appropriate precautions. If the rats are not already aware, they notice any creature failing to succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check**.

### LEVEL 2 – THE WEAPONS CACHE

The great stone stair from the ground floor ends at a platform where a portion of the outer wall has fallen away. Circling the walls of this room are mostly-empty weapon racks. A few rotten spears and longbows remain, but appear useless. A stairway hugs the outer wall circling upwards to the top level of the tower. A strong animal scent emanates from above.

**Falling.** This level stands 15 feet above ground level. Characters falling to the ground from this height take 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage.

**Treasure.** Characters searching the weapon racks may discover an old quiver containing a set of +1 magical arrows with a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check**. The quiver contains 1d4+1 magic arrows.

### LEVEL 3 – THE MANTICORE'S ROOST

The curving stairs are strewn with loose rubble as it ascends to the tower's top level. Arrow slits punctuate the outer walls, providing a clear view of the ruin's



surroundings. A wooden roof precariously covers the top of the tower. A large section of the southern floor and wall have fallen away. The central section of this floor is covered by pelts thrown over a bed of sticks and bones. The stench of animal urine overwhelms the area.

Rawk is a **manticore** (*MM* p213) from the Eldeen Reaches, befriended by Bazsallaradh. The dragon invited Rawk to take up residence atop the tower. Bazsallaradh ensures that an occasional corpse of those who die under her investigations is left for the manticore to devour.

The manticore detests the orcs and their trained horrid animals. It watches with interest from the tower should any combat break out in **Area 1** below. Rawk enters combat if threatened or if the adventurers look vulnerable. Rawk flees if his hit points drop below half his maximum total.

**Social.** Adventurers succeeding on a **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check** could enlist the monstrous creature's aid to defeat the orcs and horrid animals. Rawk is not very brave and a **DC 12 Charisma (Intimidation) check** could also

illicit the creature's assistance. The manticore never acts against Bazsallaradh and eagerly turns on adventurers who foolishly trust it beyond fighting the orcs or their pets.

**Falling.** This level stands 30 feet above the ground. Characters falling to the ground from this height take 3d6 points of bludgeoning damage.

**Treasure.** Characters searching the manticore's bedding find the bones of Bazsallaradh's past victims, who were ultimately consumed by the manticore. A successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check** uncovers a pouch containing 12 gp and a *potion of healing*.

### AREA 3: STONE TREE

This circular space is dominated by a thick pillar carved to resemble an oak tree whose branches spread across a domed 10-foot high ceiling. Ancient Dhakaani illustrations of dirge singers inspiring goblinoid troops are carved into the walls of this room.

Close examination of the stone pillar reveals the goblinoid phrase "Ta Muut" is inscribed around its base. This phrase translates to "You Do Your Duty." A *detect magic* spell reveals an aura of transmutation magic on the pillar. If a creature recites the inscribed goblin phrase while touching the stone pillar, it gains the *Charm of the Duur'Kala*. Once the pillar grants this charm, it cannot do so again until a month has passed.

### Charm of the Duur'Kala

As a bonus action, this charm allows you to gain the Bardic Inspiration ability of a 10th level bard. The charm's benefit lasts for 1 hour. Once used three times, the charm vanishes from you.

### AREA 4: KITCHEN

This room has been made into a makeshift kitchen. A cauldron filled with thick stew simmers above a smoldering fire. A variety of wild game hangs on the walls. A wooden crate is filled with plates, cutlery, and cooking utensils. Two hooded lanterns hang on the walls as well, providing ample illumination within the room.

Yagmutt and Hydak regularly use this room to cook their meals. The wild game is fresh. The stew is tasty and satisfying.

### AREA 5: STORES

A pair of finely crafted doors open outward to reveal

what once must have been a glorious meeting room. Broken window frames tenuously hold a few remaining shards of stained glass. Tattered fragments of banners hang limply on the stone walls. Crates and barrels of supplies are stacked around the edge of this room.

The room contains supplies Yagmutt and Hydak have brought to the ruin. There is enough food and equipment for the two orcs to live comfortably for a number of months.

### AREA 6: ORC CHAMBERS

Fur pelts are carefully arranged on the floor of this room. A hooded lantern and a collection of grooming items rest upon a simple wooden table, underneath which rests a wooden coffer. Well fashioned leather packs lean against a corner of the room. A large gnawed bone lies in the middle of the floor and a stone fire pit fashioned from the ruin's rubble sits at the north-side of the room. Glowing embers warm the area and its smoke escapes out large holes in the outer wall. The fire pit and hooded lantern illuminate the area at night.

Yagmutt and Hydak use this room as their personal chamber. If not otherwise alerted, Hydak is found resting here along with T'char, his trained horrid wolf. The wolf follows directions given to it by either Hydak or Yagmutt. If Hydak believes the ruin is threatened by intruders that their horrid animals cannot defeat, he rushes to **Area 10** to warn Yagmutt. He defends his mate no matter the cost.

**Social.** Hydak can be swayed to help the heroes defeat Bazsallaradh if they convince him that the dragon is pursuing its own selfish motives. This is a difficult task requiring a successful **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check**. Hydak could also be intimidated, but because he is a headstrong warrior, this requires a successful **DC 25 Charisma (Intimidation) check**. These checks are made with advantage if the adventurers suggest Yagmutt's life is in danger.

**Treasure.** The unlocked wooden coffer contains 25 gp, a small ruby worth 50 gp, and a well-executed bone carving of a bear. The packs contain the orcs' traveling clothes. Hydak possesses *Ghazalog's Spear* (see Ruin Inhabitants above).

### AREA 7: PRIVY

Cool mountain air easily enters through a series of openings in the outer wall. These were once arrow slits, but time has worn them into openings that a medium

sized humanoid can easily squeeze through. The room contains a simple bench, a large barrel of fresh water, empty buckets, a ladle, and a scrub brush.

Yagmutt and Hydak have set up this room as a makeshift privy and washing area.

### AREA 8: GALLERY OF HONOR

A 3-foot high pile of loose rubble is all that remains of the southern wall of this gallery. Decrepit mosaics of glorious goblinoid warriors cling to the remaining walls. A mighty 8-foot-tall stone statue of a hobgoblin warrior stands in front of the eastern wall. The statue's right hand reaches forward as if its fingers once wrapped around a now missing item.

Characters who search the wall across from the statue and succeed on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** find a secret door. A successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check** is required to discover how to open it. The secret door may also be forced open with a successful **DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check**.

**Treasure.** The statue once held *Ghazalog's Spear*, which is now in the possession of Hydak. The statue still wears *Ghazalog's Armor*.

### GHAZALOG'S ARMOR

*Armor (splint), rare (requires attunement)*

This splint mail armor once belonged to the hobgoblin hero Ghazalog. Its black enameled metal remains unblemished despite the centuries that have passed since its creation. While worn, this armor provides a +1 bonus to AC and grants you resistance to bludgeoning damage.

### AREA 9: RAT'S WARREN

The outer wall of this room has fallen away leaving a pile of loose rubble. The stench of animals and urine is overpowering.

A group of eight trained **horrid rats** (p16) reside here. Unless they have already engaged the adventurers, the rats voraciously attack any who enter. The bones of previous victims of Bazsallaradh are scattered throughout this chamber. The rats follow any directions given to them by either Hydak or Yagmutt.

### AREA 10: PROPHETIC ABATTOIR

The walls and floor of this large stone room are covered by glowing silvery sigils. A large desk covered in books and papers is pushed against the western wall. A pair of everbright lanterns on the walls illuminate a female half-orc holding down an individual lying in

the center of the room. A middle-aged human woman with white hair and silver robes pushes a sharp spear into the captive's shoulder. The victim moans in pain as the vibrant dragonmark on its shoulder flares with a sudden flash of light.

Bazsallaradh is busy "investigating" the dragonmark of another unfortunate captive with the help of Yagmutt. The captive has endured days of torture and is close to death. They have only 1 hit point remaining and 4 levels of exhaustion.

If the adventurers were sent to find a missing person, it is the captive being examined. The bodies of two past victims lie piled in the corner waiting to be fed to either the horrid rats in **Area 9** or the manticores atop **Area 2**.

The thick walls of this chamber and the well-made secret door block most external sounds from entering this room. Bazsallaradh and Yagmutt are deeply focused on their examination. While the secret door to this room remains closed, Basallaradh and Yagmutt have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to notice events outside of the chamber

**Sigils of Foresight.** A successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check** reveals that the sigils covering the room are representations of aberrant dragonmarks. These marks were carved by a past occupant of the ruin.

Basallaradh discovered how to invoke the power stored within the runes of this room. Once per encounter, as a bonus action, the dragon can invoke this power, causing the sigils to flare and force all creatures within the room to make a **DC 15 Wisdom saving throw**. Creatures may choose to fail this saving throw to be affected by the sigil's magic.

Those who fail the saving throw gain the benefits of premonition. They must immediately roll two d20s, which become their foretelling rolls. For the next minute, they can replace any attack roll, saving throw, or ability check made by them, or a creature they can see, with one of these foretelling rolls. Each foretelling roll may be used only once. They must choose to use a foretelling roll before the result of the attack, saving throw, or ability check is known. If a creature uses a foretelling roll to replace a die roll, another creature can supplant that foretelling roll with one of their own.

Basallaradh and Yagmutt are aware of this effect and will choose to fail their saving throws when this room's power is invoked.

**Tactics.** Bazsallaradh aggressively defends this room and her research. However, she attempts to flee if

seriously threatened, abandoning Yagmutt to her fate. Yagmutt fervently defends Bazsallaradh and her work.

**Social.** Convincing Bazsallaradh that the adventurers mean her no harm is a very hard task requiring a successful **DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check**. She cannot be intimidated.

Yagmutt completely believes in the dragon and will gladly sacrifice herself to save Bazsallaradh, unless Hydak is present. If Hydak has joined the adventurers, they can convince Yagmutt that Basallaradh has fooled her with a successful **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check**.

**Treasure.** Bazsallaradh has amassed a large collection of books and scrolls filled with studies of the draconic prophecy. These are collectively worth 100 gp to interested buyers. The two everbright lanterns are easily removed from the walls. Anyone searching the collection and succeeding on a **DC 10 Wisdom (Per-**

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## HORRID RAT

*Small beast, neutral evil*

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**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d6 + 4)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

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**Damage Immunities** acid

**Condition Immunities** charmed

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

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**Ill-Tempered.** Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks involving a horrid rat are always made with disadvantage.

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The rat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Pack Tactics.** The rat has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the rat's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

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### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The horrid rat makes two attacks.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage and 3 (1d6) acid damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or contract a disease. Until the disease is cured, the target can't regain hit points except by magical means, and the target's hit point maximum decreases by 3 (1d6) every 24 hours. If the target's hit point maximum drops to 0 as a result of this disease, the target dies.

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**ception) check** discovers two spellshards.

One shard contains prophetic statements dictated by a mysterious dusk hag. The details of these prophecies are left to the discretion of the DM.

The second spellshard contains the spell book of someone who died under Bazsallaradh's examinations. This spellshard contains six 1st-level spells and four 2nd-level spells.

*Horrid Rat and Horrid Wolf were originally published by Anthony J. Turco in The Korranberg Chronicle – Threat Dispatch.*

## HORRID WOLF

*Large beast, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 47 (5d10 + 20)

**Speed** 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)	3 (–4)	12 (+1)	7 (–2)

**Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +4

**Damage Immunities** acid

**Condition Immunities** charmed

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Ill-Tempered.** Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks involving a horrid wolf are always made with disadvantage.

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Pack Tactics.** The wolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The horrid wolf makes two attacks.

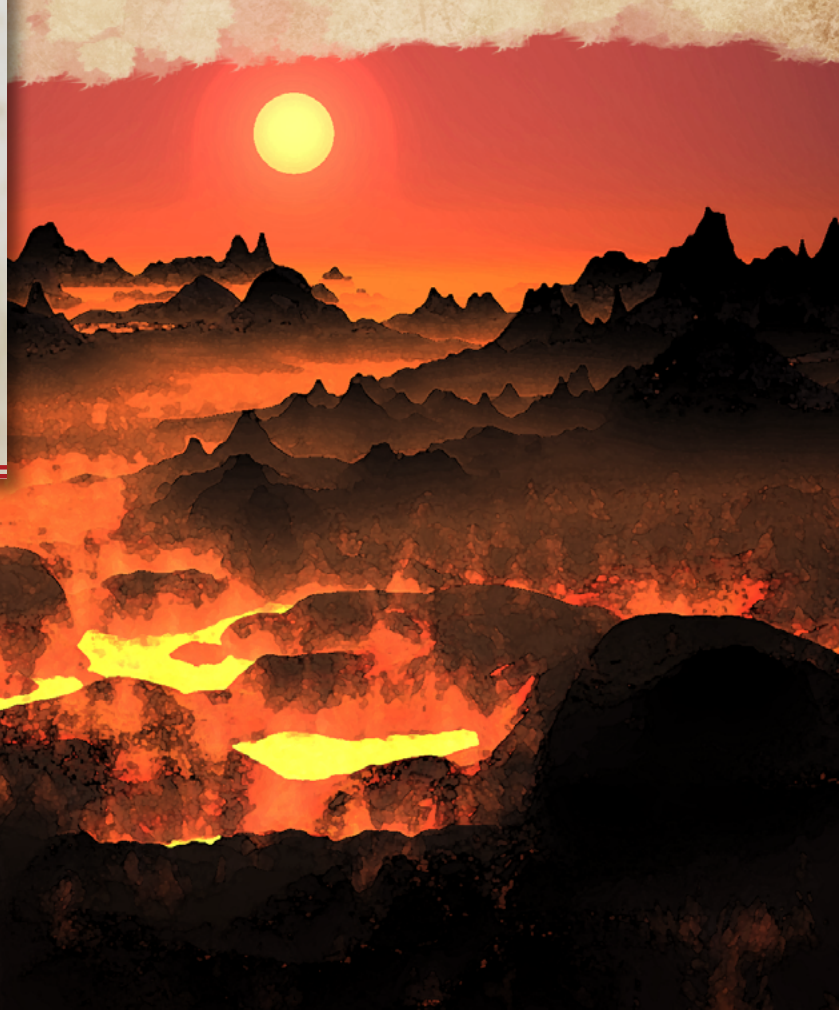
**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) acid damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

## LAKE OF FIRE

Of all the fire pits and volcanoes that dot the Wastes, the Lake of Fire is certainly the grandest and most deadly. Located at the southern end of the Labyrinth, its maw spans nearly a mile and actively belches fresh lava onto the landscape. Its geologic power aside, the molten lake is also said to possess magical properties.

Some rites—particularly those involving evocation or summoning—are reportedly enhanced when performed in proximity to the lake.<sup>[5]</sup> Because of this, it may be a potential staging area for a fiendish uprising and bears close scrutiny. Demonic activity is certainly higher here than in much of the Wastes and stories of Khyber-spawned beings rising from the lava abound through the centuries. Some of our own kind have been drawn to the Lake of Fire by stories of artifacts and other treasures that have been cast into the fires in often-vain attempts to destroy them. We must not, however, let our avarice cloud our judgement where this feature is concerned and keep in mind its potential threat to Eberron.

*[5] Arcane scholars are divided in this assertion. Verification is, of course, problematic because of the aforementioned demonic fascination with the area. —Kendal*





## ICEHORN MOUNTAINS

For those moving on foot, the Icehorn Mountains are a torturous and cold place on the best of days. The fierce winds sweeping down the slopes are enough to challenge even the most capable flier as well. Cold clings to these stone giants and acts as the last obstacle for anyone hoping to exit the Demon Wastes by land. Augmenting the elements are roving bands of Ghaash'kala, who patrol the passes even during the harshest of winter conditions. Thus far, this two-clawed approach has sufficed to keep the fiends bottled up. Only time will tell if they are able to discover a way to circumvent their geographic obstacles.

The mountain range also serves as a deterrent to the thrill-seekers and the profiteers who inevitably try to explore what should remain hidden. Unfortunately, it is slightly less successful at this secondary purpose, though the Ghaash'kala are a boon in this as well.

## ONCE BY ICE, TWICE BY MADNESS

*by Kayla Bayens*

### ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

A major encampment houses a few bands of Ghaash'kala who are hunkering down for the long winter. This time of year rarely brings explorers to the Demon Wastes, but they are still vigilant with frequent patrols and scouting parties. Warriors from the Maruk tribe, led by their spiritual leader, or sar'malaan, Lhare Suusha have taken up the mantle of protection for the Icehorn Mountains this season. Adventuring parties can try to avoid the encampment, but patrols, scouts, and riders are likely to spot them and escort them to the camp to speak with the sar'malaan.

Caverns and tunnels tangle through the mountains but many lead nowhere or to sheer drops. The Ghaash'kala know of a cavern, long forgotten by most, that leads through the heart of the Icehorn Mountains, allowing travelers to avoid the deadly creatures

lurking in the mountain passes, as well as the storms that suddenly appear out of nowhere. These caverns and tunnels are home to a number of undead and some strange sludge, in addition to plenty of traps set by the Ghaash'kala to snare the unwary. Convincing the sar'malaan to help grants knowledge to the characters about how to circumvent some of the dangers.

### APPROACHING THE CAMP

A crevice opens up in the mountainside revealing tight-packed snow from many footfalls leading to some low snowy walls packed around the perimeter of an encampment. The party is stopped a few times on the way by scouts who give the group's escorts (if they have some) a nod before disappearing into the snow again. If the party manages to arrive without guides, they must talk with the guards first.

### WALKTHROUGH OF GHAASH'KALA CAMP

#### AREA 1: SOUTHERN ENTRANCE

Here, wooden walls are packed with snow and ice for additional height. There is **1 Young Ghaash'kala Warrior (p23)** on the outside and another on the inside of the gate.

#### AREA 2: FOOD STORAGE

Smoked meats hang from the ceiling; crates and barrels are full of nonperishable foods.

#### AREA 3: SAR'MALAAAN'S ENTERTAINING HALL

Multiple people enter and leave the largest building in the encampment directly to the right as the party passes through the main gate. The party's escort marches them toward it.

This interesting structure is covered in animal skins with rough paintings displaying battles against black smudges and grotesque, twisted beings in red.

### Multiple Paths

Depending on how the group interacts with the Ghaash'kala and decide to go about things, there are a few paths the adventure can take. The party can convince the Ghaash'kala to let them enter and travel across the mountains; they can antagonize the Ghaash'kala by trying to sneak in and be hunted by them; or they can try their luck with a hidden tunnel that eventually leads to the Labyrinth.

### Once by Ice, Twice by Madness Adventure Seeds

This adventure is best suited for a party of 4 - 5 with an average level of 2 - 5 as an introduction to the Demon Wastes, but could be adapted to a higher range as needed. There are notes per area on how this can be accomplished. Here are suggestions for integrating this location into your campaign:

- The party is recruited by House Tharashk and are on their way to Blood Crescent to support operations there.
- A rich merchant has offered a large sum of gold for any dragonshards they recover in the mountains or wastes beyond.
- A group of panicked parents stumbles into the party and begs for help with a group of raiders who snatched the village's children and dragged them into the mountains.
- The Church of the Silver Flame has sent the party on a mission to retrieve a powerful artifact from the Demon Wastes which, if it falls into the wrong hands may herald a new Age of Demons.

The building's frame is made from thick bent beams that stretch the animal skins taut. Two intimidating warriors guard either side of the entrance. (See: Meeting with the Sar'malaan)

#### AREA 4: WEAPONS STORAGE

Stacks of well maintained weapons are arrayed in this tight space. A sharpening stone waits in the corner for use.

#### AREA 5: CAMP SQUARE

As you pass the gate, you see people are busy preparing against a coming storm though there isn't a cloud in the sky. Workers cut and pile additional wood, others smoke the meat handed to them by a carver who slices long strips off a strange creature, and more perform maintenance on the various structures.

Buildings seem to be constructed of wooden frames with animal skins pulled taut between them and rubbed down with animal fat or wax. There are also structures going into the mountainside on either side of the widened crevice.

# ICEHORN GHAASH'KALA CAMP



## AREA 6: GUARD BUILDING

3 Young Ghaash'kala Warriors reside here. Rough low walls block the wind and there are small cots to rest on between shifts.

## AREA 7: TENTS

Small and medium tents, camouflaged to hide in the snow and ice, are spread out in this large flat area, housing 10 Young Ghaash'kala Warriors.

## AREA 8: CARVED TUNNEL

Here is a tightly packed tunnel, whose walls are reinforced with thick wooden beams, that holds crated supplies for winter survival.

## AREA 9: TRAINING GROUND

Sounds of clashing steel echo in this high chamber as 6 Young Ghaash'kala Warriors spar with each other.

## AREAS 10 & 11: QUARTERS

Injured warriors or visitors are housed here to keep

warm. The rooms are sparsely furnished with a simple bed, desk, table, and single bookshelf. Everything is handmade and well worn. The buildings carry a musty smell.

## AREA 12: DINING HALL

This cramped space serves as a mess hall. It is always filled with loud boisterous talk and a steady flow of mead.

## AREA 13: STORAGE

Miscellaneous crates, barrels, and chests holding various goods are stored here, including heavy furs, survival gear, and travel rations.

## AREA 14: TEMPORARY PRISON

This storage room sometimes serves as a makeshift prison. It contains a few crates which hold blankets and tents.

## AREA 15: NORTHERN GATE

A smaller and more tightly patrolled gate where 2 Young Ghaash'kala Warriors stand guard, one on either side. Several more patrol the area right outside.

### MEETING WITH THE SAR'MALAAAN

The party is brought to **Area 3**. Two imposing guards with javelins stand on either side of the entrance and halt the party before they can enter. After a brief exchange with your escorts they let you in, one of them following in behind the party.

A large fire roars in the middle of the room and the floor is covered in animal furs. Oil lamps swing from the rafters illuminating several people having a heated discussion with an older orc woman, draped in multiple layers of robes against the chill. Age shows on her face but she sits up straight and proud. Spotting the party, she dismisses the unhappy group with a sharp word and a wave of her hand before motioning you forward.

Should the party wish to continue into the Demon Wastes they need to convince Lhare Suusha to let you pass. She stares the party down for a long while before speaking in loud, deep, and clear Common to question why they have come here to what is certain death. The party can make a deal with her to assistance in cleansing the lands by making a successful **DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check**, or a successful **DC 18 Charisma (Deception) check**.

Lhare Suusha knows she doesn't have the manpower to keep everyone from moving through the mountains, but she tries to take advantage of those her clan finds to kill as many of the corrupted as possible. She demands an oath to Kalok Shash to take on that mission should they want to leave the camp alive. If a cleric or paladin is in the group, she may offer a guide in exchange for such an oath.

### TRAVERSING THE LAND

Should the party decide to travel overland there is a 30% chance that a snowstorm blows in from nowhere. This makes visibility limited to 5 feet around them and they gain a level of Exhaustion should they remain out in the storm unprotected for more than 3 hours. A successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check** allows the party to find or make shelter to wait out the storm.

Outside of surprise storms players will have to deal with **corrupted corpses** (p24) and **mangy wolves** (p24).

Traveling over the land is also considered difficult terrain as several feet of ice and snow coat everything.

Several days to a week of travel is suggested with chances of random encounters of the above mentioned inhabitants, and additional run-ins with Ghaash'kala scouting parties. Showing them a symbol from the sar'malaan, or having a Ghaash'kala guide, will keep them from questioning the party's presence or attacking.

### Hunted by the Ghaash'kala

If interactions have gone poorly with Lhare Suusha and the party tries to force their way through the camp and the mountains, she sends hunting parties after them. A party of 5 to 8 Young Ghaash'kala Warriors attempt to capture the adventurers. Should the warriors defeat the party, they are brought back to the camp and imprisoned. To earn back the trust of the sar'malaan and entry to the Demon Wastes the party could be ordered to clear out all of the corruption from the nearby hidden cavern system. To ensure compliance, parties of Ghaash'kala would be positioned at entrance A to keep the players from escaping until it can be verified all are killed.

## FINDING THE CAVERNS

The entrance to the caverns is cut into the side of the stone behind a rock outcropping a half-day's travel from the Ghaash'kala camp. A strange sigil, pulsing with a faint icy glow, is carved into the stone above. It is a warning in Goblin that reads "Death holds those that enter here." A successful **DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check** finds the passage in clear weather, or a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Nature) check** discovers it during a storm. It is a tight squeeze for a Medium-sized humanoid and stays cramped for 20 feet before opening up into a wider tunnel.

### CAVERN STRUCTURE

The walls are roughly carved and chipped out, the stone glistening and sparkling in any light. Closer examination reveals a mineral embedded in the walls is responsible for reflecting the light. Should the party gather some of it to identify later, it can be used to replace a material spell component worth up to 50 gp.

### CAVERN INHABITANTS

Corrupted corpses (undead), black ichor, and swarms

of vampire bats live in the cavern systems, attacking the party if disturbed.

A banished Carrion Tribe (Enshrouded) member named Thyacrel hides in the tunnels as well. She can be convinced to guide the party through the tunnels in exchange for food.

## WALKTHROUGH OF CAVERN AREAS

### ENTRANCE A

Squeezing through a tight tunnel the party must navigate a few tight turns before finding relief as it opens up into **Area 1**. Most Medium-sized creatures find this extremely uncomfortable and tight without wearing any gear. Any members in heavy armor cannot pass

through wearing their armor. Anyone wearing chain mail or studded leather has a 20% of getting caught on a protruding rock and becoming stuck. A successful **DC 12 Strength (Athletics)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** is required to free themselves.

### AREA 1

The smell of musk is strong in the air as water drips from the ceiling. The slick and uneven stone floor is considered rough terrain. Upon entering, **2 Swarms of Vampire Bats** (p25) descend upon the group.

A slightly larger, hand-carved tunnel, with bits of crumbling wall, leads away to **Area 2**. Moisture slicks the walls and a slippery slime coats it. Toward the end of the tunnel a crack opens up in the floor.

### AREA 2

The damp musk smell mixes with that of rotting flesh. A deep crack cuts across the stone floor, marring what appears to be a faded mosaic lost to time. Every small sound echoes through the cavernous



## ICEHORN CAVERN

□ = 5 FEET

room, which is surrounded by small chambers containing entombed bodies from long ago. A successful **DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) check** must be made or 3 corrupted corpses are alerted and attack. *To scale add 1 corrupted corpse per level over 5.*

Once the corrupted corpses are defeated a scared shaking Thyacrel creeps out of one of the tombs and tries unsuccessfully to sneak past the group.

### AREA 3

Smooth tiles hold a light layer of dust here and the smell turns sulfurous. A **dart trap** is at the entrance to this hallway, requiring a successful **DC 11 Wisdom (Perception)** or **Intelligence (Investigation) check** to spot, and a successful **DC 13 Dexterity check with thieves' tools** to disarm. If triggered, it shoots from the wall across the hallway causing 18 (4d8) piercing damage. Around the corner there is a spiked pit trap requiring a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** or **Intelligence (Investigation) check** to spot, and a successful **DC 14 Dexterity check** to navigate. Failure results in a fall, dealing 10 (2d6 +3) bludgeoning damage and 5 (2d4) piercing damage. *To scale add 2 swarms of vampire bats per 3 levels over 5.*

### AREA 4

Locked doors, requiring a successful **DC 13 Dexterity check with thieves' tools** to open, lead to a room of crates and broken urns. Dust chokes the air and the rotting smell weakens here. A successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check** finds 8 gp, a small ruby jewel worth 20 gp, and a rusty dagger. Characters rolling 15 or above on the check find an additional 21 gp and a *scroll of firebolt*. A single **black ichor (p25)** lurks in the center of the chamber, looking like a simple dark pool, and lunges at the party when they come within range.

### AREA 5

These doors are trapped with a tripwire requiring a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** or **Intelligence (Investigation) check** to spot, and a successful **DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** to disarm. If triggered, it releases an *acid splash* dealing 1d6 acid damage. Upon opening the door, 1 corrupted corpse lunges at the group, giving them the Surprised status. *To scale add 1 corrupted corpse per level over 5.*

### EXIT B

Before fully exiting, a successful **DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** is needed to leap across the widened crack that cuts across the tunnel. Warmer air hits you full in the face as the smell of sulfur increases with each step. You have entered the twisting passages of the Labyrinth!

## YOUNG GHAASH'KALA WARRIOR

*Medium humanoid orc, any good alignment*

**Armor Class** 16 (hide armor)

**Hit Points** 22 (4d8 + 4)

**Speed** 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Str +4, Con +4

**Skills** Athletics +4, Perception +3, Stealth +4, Survival +6

**Damage Resistances** cold, fire

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** common, orcish

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Martial Role.** The warrior has one of the following traits of your choice:

**Attacker.** The warrior gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls.

**Defender.** The warrior gains the Protection reaction below.

**Pack Tactics.** The warrior has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the warrior's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

### ACTIONS

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack. The target must make a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be pinned and considered grappled.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take an additional 9 (2d6 +2) poison damage.

### REACTIONS

**Protection (Defender Only).** The warrior imposes disadvantage on the attack roll of a creature within 5 feet of it whose target isn't the warrior. The warrior must be able to see the attacker.

## MANGY WOLF

Large beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 37 (5d10 + 10)

**Speed** 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

**Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +4

**Damage Vulnerabilities** fire

**Damage Resistances** cold

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Pack Tactics.** The wolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

**Snow Camouflage.** The wolf has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made in snowy terrain.

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned.



## CORRUPTED CORPSE

Medium undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 22 (3d8 + 9)

**Speed** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

**Saving Throws** Wis +0

**Damage Immunities** poison, necrotic

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the corpse to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the corpse drops to 1 hit point instead.

**Diseased.** The corpse is rife with disease. Any living creature that comes in contact with the corpse must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or take on a random condition (d4) from this list: (1) Blinded, (2) Frightened, (3) Poisoned, (4) Paralyzed.

### ACTIONS

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or gain the poisoned condition for 1 minute.



## BLACK ICHOR

Large ooze, unaligned

**Armor Class** 10

**Hit Points** 25 (3d10 + 9)

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

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	2 (-4)

**Skills** Stealth +2

**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire

**Damage Immunities** necrotic

**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Amorphous.** The ichor can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

**Corrode Metal.** Any nonmagical weapon made of metal that hits the ichor corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal that hits the ooze is destroyed after dealing damage. The ooze can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical metal in 1 round.

**False Appearance.** While the ichor remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an oily black pool.

**Spider Climb.** The ichor can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

### ACTIONS

**Pseudopod.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage, and if the target is wearing nonmagical metal armor, its armor is partly corroded and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

### REACTIONS

**Split.** When an ichor that is Medium or larger is subjected to necrotic or slashing damage, it splits into two new ichor pools if it has at least 10 hit points. Each new ichor has hit points equal to half the original ichor's, rounded down. New ichor pools are one size smaller than the original ichor.

## SWARM OF VAMPIRE BATS

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

**Armor Class** 12 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 22 (5d8)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Echolocation.** The swarm can't use its blindsight while deafened.

**Keen Hearing.** The swarm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny bat.

**Regeneration.** The swarm regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If the swarm takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of the swarm's next turn.

**Sunlight Hypersensitivity.** The swarm takes 2 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 11 (2d4 + 6) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) necrotic damage, or 8 (1d4 + 6) piercing damage and 3 (1d6) necrotic damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the swarm regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A humanoid slain in this way and then buried in the ground rises the following night as a vampire spawn.





## THE ASH BEACON

by Cat Evans

The Ash Beacon is a grand and civilized name for a threatening natural feature: an active volcano that sits on the northern end of the Demon Wastes, spewing ash and smoke for miles around. The only mark in its favor is that it's been ignored for centuries, giving the carcasses of demons slain in ancient battles time to rot down to rich narstone deposits, prized by summoners and conjurers across Khorvaire.

Unfortunately, this narstone is a sufficiently precious resource that reckless, profiteering mining companies have begun to move in on The Ash Beacon to stripmine the land around it. One can only guess at the dangers and misery they will uncover.

### Narstone

Narstone, the fossilized bones of demons, is found throughout the Demon Wastes. When used as a component for a summoning spell, narstones grant any creature or creatures summoned by the spell a +1 bonus to their Armor Class for the duration of the spell. A single spell's worth of narstone can sell for hundreds of gold pieces, to the right buyer.

### OVERVIEW

There are three factions in the vicinity of The Ash Beacon. The Longshadow Mining Corporation camp, whose workers are a mixture of warforged and Aun-

dairian humans from Fairhaven, sits on the southern side of the volcano. The Sk'arash Ghaash'kala patrol the area, harassing the mining operation. And, inside the volcano, the fiend Selix torments one of the last living couatls, just as it has for centuries.

### (1) LONGSHADOW CAMP

This sprawling camp and open-pit mining operation is eating away at several square miles of land. Run by Valeray d'Cannith, supported by the warforged overseers Duster and Drill, the camp ships out a caravan of narstone every two weeks.

Production has diminished lately, due to the Screaming Sickness which has become increasingly prevalent among the human miners (see below).

The camp itself is made up of a few poorly constructed wooden buildings, a large number of sturdy tents, and the mine itself, which takes the form of a huge spiral boring down into the earth. Security is tight, with warforged guards constantly alert for Ghaash'kala raids, or threats from the many monstrous denizens of the area.

### (2) SK'ARASH GHAASH'KALA

This tribe, led by the half-orc Ferrike, followed the Longshadow Corporation across the northern Demon Wastes. When Longshadow initially sent an expedition into the Wastes, the Sk'arash tried to drive them out. They failed, taking heavy losses in the process. But the Ghaash'kala know what lurks in the depths of the Ash Beacon, and outsiders must be kept away, for fear of stirring it up.

Ferrike and the tribe's shaman Ilbis have tried negotiations, threats, and have now resorted to raiding the mining camp in order to make the operation unprofitable, and drive the outsiders away that way.

The Ghaash'kala know of the tormented couatl trapped in the volcano. That knowledge torments them in turn, for they know facing a fiend as powerful as Selix would destroy their tribe. They believe the couatl has been turned to evil by its years of torture, and—if asked—would advise killing it, rather than setting it free.

### (3) THE VOLCANO

Deep within the volcano, accessible only by an hours-long trek through tunnels carved by molten lava, within which reside magmin, fire elementals, and salamanders, is the lair of the fiend Selix. An **erinyes**

(*MM p73*), Selix has held the Ash Beacon since the battle fought there thousands of years ago between dragons and rakshasa. She and a badly injured couatl named Mecayatl were among the only survivors of the battle. Assisted by two chain devils, Selix dragged the couatl into the volcano and proceeded to wreak revenge for every defeat it and its allies had inflicted upon the fiends. She's barely looked up from this task in the millennia that have passed since. Selix has a lot of anger to work out.

### THE SCREAMING SICKNESS

This is the reason the Ghaash'kala are so intent on keeping outsiders away from the Ash Beacon. The psychic screams of the tortured celestial within seep out into the world, poisoning the minds and spirits of



humanoids who spend too long in close proximity.

At first the sickness manifests as nausea, followed by fever. Once in the grip of the fever, sufferers are wracked with nightmares which give the “disease” its name. Eventually, they cannot sleep at all. If they are lucky, death swiftly follows.

Humanoids who take a long rest within a mile of The Ash Beacon must make a Charisma saving throw at the end of each rest. This saving throw begins at DC 10, but increases by one for every full week of proximity to The Ash Beacon. The DC decays at the same rate: spending a week away from the volcano reduces the DC by one.

Characters who fail this saving throw suffer nausea and fever, gaining the poisoned condition.

Infected characters suffer terrible nightmares of fire and pain, and only gain the benefits of a long rest if they succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. After two weeks of these symptoms, sufferers no longer sleep at all—taking levels of Exhaustion as normal.

The Screaming Sickness cannot be healed through mundane or magical means, but ends after one month away from The Ash Beacon. The Screaming Sickness has no effect on individuals with Dragonmarks.

## NPCs

**Valeray d’Cannith** (human male **swashbuckler**, *VGtM* p217, neutral good) is a tall, handsome man in his early fifties. He has repeatedly sent letters to Fairhaven asking his House to suspend the mining operation, fearing for his own health and the health of his workers. House Cannith has refused. Val is very close to abandoning the site—or at least sending the humanoids away and carrying on with only his warforged staff.

If a team of adventurers were to happen by, however, he might prefer to invest in having them explore the volcano, which he is sure is the source of the sickness.

Valeray uses the swashbuckler stat block with the following modifications granted by his Mark of Making (*E:RftLW* p45):

- Proficiency in Arcana (+6 modifier), and +1d4 on all Arcana checks, or checks with artisan’s tools
- Can cast the *mending* cantrip at will, and the *magic weapon* spell once per day (lasting 1 hour, and without requiring Concentration)

**Drill** (agender **warforged soldier**, *E:RftLW*, p320, lawful neutral) and **Duster** (agender warforged sol-

dier, neutral) run the mining operation for Valeray. Drill loathes the Demon Wastes: this bleak, dead land repulses them. Duster, on the other hand, is simply pleased to be something other than a soldier in an endless war.

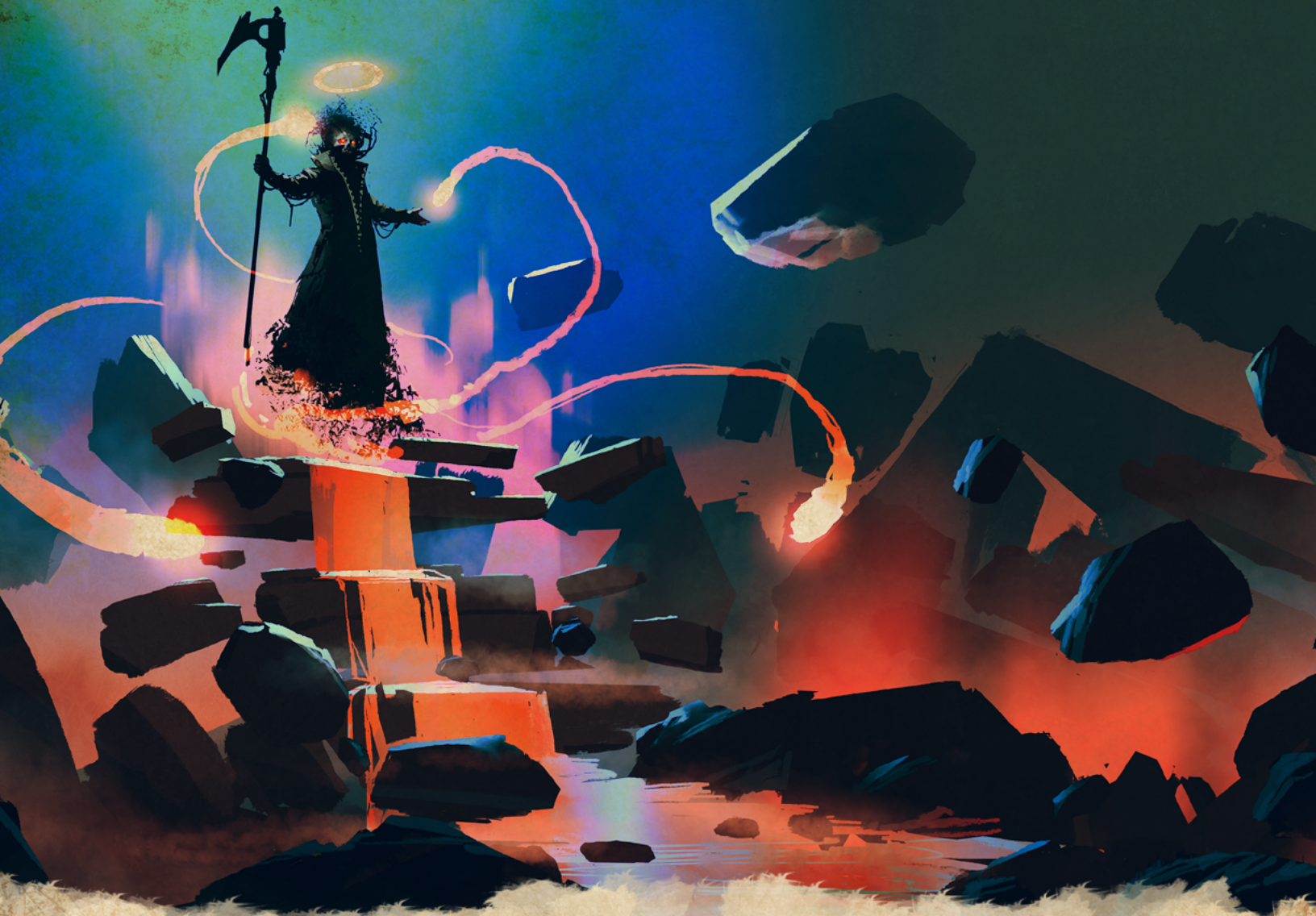
Drill and Duster use the warforged soldier stat block, with the following modifications:

- 60 hit points
- Armblade deals 7 (1d8+3) damage

**Fellike** (nonbinary half-orc **veteran**, *MM* p350, chaotic good) is a strapping figure in piecemeal armor, with a dozen protective talismans about their neck. They take their responsibility as a protector of the Demon Wastes extremely seriously. The Longshadow Corporation frustrates them to no end: all attempts have failed to convince the idiot human in charge that the Ghaash’kala know the dangers he faces, and he should leave. Fellike is wise enough to keep their people several miles away from the Ash Beacon, except when they ride close enough to raid.

**Ibis** (male orc **Ghaash’kala clan priest**, p34, neutral) is the tribe’s shaman. Young, proud, and less patient than Fellike, he has begun to argue for simply leaving the miners to their fate.





## LAIR OF THE KEEPER

A gigantic, open wound lies at the northern tip of this land, a gorge many miles wide and long that bores down into the depths of Khyber itself. The entire area exhibits strong manifestations of Dolurrh, which would be enough to cause any sentient being possessing clear thoughts to steer clear of it, but within the darkest plumbs of this chasm lies what the mortals here refer to as the Lair of the Keeper.

Falazure<sup>[6]</sup> himself may lord over this place from within his prison, or the sense of terror pervading it may stem from residual energies of the conflict long ago; regardless, it is a zone of death—or worse. Crystals of Khyber grow in large numbers, covering the walls and floor of the vast canyon. I also understand

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*[6]Falazure is presumed to be the dragons' equivalent of the Keeper. What religion the dragons profess, if any, remains unknown. —Kendal*

many crystals contain trapped souls of those foolish enough to explore there. Magic is inhibited throughout the region and spells cast there are either altered in some seemingly sinister way or are snuffed out entirely. Even all but the most powerful fiends avoid the place as the appetites of Dolurrh are indiscriminate and voracious.

While the area is certainly a danger, for the reasons stated, I do not believe it to be a bastion of fiendish activity. Many other places in the Wastes require our focused attention and efforts more than this “lair.”<sup>[7]</sup>

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*[7] This dismissal is quite shocking to me and I had to confirm my translation several times before concluding I had made no errors. Based on our limited knowledge, it would certainly behoove the inhabitants of Khorvaire to keep a close eye on the Lair of the Keeper in my estimation. —Kendal*

# INHABITANTS

Who lives in these forsaken lands? The fiends, obviously, which I will detail a bit more here. There is, however, a surprising population of the lesser races who have decided to call the Wastes home. Lastly, there are a handful of other creatures who are unique to Fah'irrg.

## DEMONS

A rare few escaped the binding created by the efforts of our ancestors and the couatls, but they are of number and power to be of major concern. Many seem content to remain in the Wastes. Others lose themselves in the Labyrinth and either wander endlessly, or are dealt with by the Ghaash'kala or the natural disasters which pervade the maze of canyons. Nevertheless, we cannot become complacent thinking that the magics which bind the Khyber-spawn to the region will be everlasting. Indications are the fiendish population is slowly building. Eventually, even those who are currently unmotivated to venture beyond the boundaries of their prison may feel the urge to expand their territory—especially if overcrowding becomes an issue.

In addition, incursions from humankind and others into the land are also on the rise. While the coming conflict<sup>[8]</sup> may dissuade them temporarily, humans and their ilk are nearly as curious and motivated by greed as we are. It is only a matter of time before their desires for knowledge and profit drive them headlong into this place where they do not belong. What damage might they do to the wards our ancestors sacrificed so much to create? Increased interaction between the lesser races and demons is a recipe for disaster for everyone but the spawn of Khyber.

*[8] Because of my theories regarding the time of origin for this document, I can only assume the author is referring to the Last War. Did the Draconic Prophecy foretell that horrid chapter in our history? If so, did they also know how it would end? These questions lead down a bulette tunnel that is disconcerting to say the least. —Kendal*



## Demons in Eberron: All Fiends, All the Time

Unlike other settings, Eberron does not differentiate between types of fiends. To all but the most learned scholars, demons, devils, and even yugoloths, are all simply fiends and the words "fiend," "demon," and "devil," are used interchangeably. This sameness extends to their interactions; devils may serve demons and vice versa, regardless of their natural proclivities for law or chaos. The only place in the thirteen planes where a distinction is drawn is Shavarath, the plane of war. Here separate armies of devils and demons battle against each other and armies of celestials. The devils sometimes temporarily ally with the celestials against the demons, but fall back to fighting the celestials at the earliest opportunity.

## LORDS OF DUST<sup>[9]</sup>

Mentioned previously, these powerful fiends were the lieutenants to the now-imprisoned Overlords. Referred to as “prakhutu,” which translates as “speaker,” these mighty zealots are at the forefront of all efforts against us. They seek to mold and twist the Prophecy into something which will unleash their masters upon the world again, propelling us into another Age of Demons where they rule over all.

Their ability to scheme and manipulate is frightening. It is only hindered by their seeming unwillingness to cooperate fully with one another. They congress infrequently in their former capital, Ashtakala, presumably to update one another on the progress of their nefarious plots and incite further mischief among the inhabitants of Khorvaire and beyond. Each Lord of Dust, however, is bound so tightly to their individual Overlord that they cannot place trust in their compatriots, as of course the fiendish are ever trying to put themselves ahead at the expense of others. This failing isn't unique to demonkind though, and we must resist our own urges in this arena lest our internal bickering cede advantage to those who oppose us.

Make no mistake. The Lords of Dust are each formidable adversaries individually. If they ever overcome their inherent distrust of each other, we will be in for the fight of our lives.

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*[9] While the draconic author of this document seems steadfast in their belief of the existence of these “archfiends,” I have my doubts as to whether they are truly real. I find it hard to believe a group of disparate demons could successfully manipulate something as complex as the politics of Khorvaire from such a remote location as the Demon Wastes. The sheer size of the network of spies required for such an undertaking is preposterous to ponder. Best we focus on the verifiable dangers of that land, of which there are plenty. —Kendal*

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## BARBARIANS

Two factions of what the lesser races refer to as “barbarians”—as if they all didn't fall into that category—compete for resources in this desolate land and serve very different masters.

### GHAASH'KALA

*by Jeremy Melloul*

Dedicated to containing the evil of the Demon Wastes, the Ghaash'kala, meaning “ghost-guardians” in Orkish, are a confederation of four clans. They stand fast against the land's overwhelming demonic influence, pursuing a divine mission to defeat it or, at the very least, prevent it from spreading beyond the Wastes.

While the Ghaash'kala frequently patrol the Wastes in order to confront its many horrors, most make their homes in the Labyrinth, which is also home to bands of demons and some of the Carrion Tribes, the Ghaash'kala's most common enemy.

The Ghaash'kala's faith is based around the worship of a spiritual force they call Kalok Shash, the Binding Flame, which grants them the strength they need to survive the dangers of the Wastes. Those same dangers have led these clans, which were initially founded by orcs, to welcome others, including half-orcs, humans, and tieflings.

Though fierce, the Ghaash'kala are generally peaceful with outsiders who visit the Demon Wastes, though they strenuously discourage all travelers from entering. They believe that any who pass beyond its borders are irrevocably tainted by the land's demonic influence. Offering their strongholds as havens to travelers, or rarely guiding them through the Wastes, the Ghaash'kala are welcome allies in a very dangerous land. But should any who enter the Demon Wastes try to leave, the Ghaash'kala become their most adamant enemies—refusing to allow passage for fear they might spread the corruption.

### DIVINE DUTY

Giving their lives to defend an ignorant world from demonic horrors, the Ghaash'kala are, by and large, a noble group. Faith is their key motivator—faith in Kalok Shash, the Binding Flame, which casts its light against the dark of evil.

The Ghaash'kala believe Kalok Shash is a spiritual force: a flame made of the souls of righteous warriors who have fallen in the fight against evil. Through their worship and spiritual practice, the barbarians of

the clans draw on the flame to burn away their fears and call forth the strengths of other warriors who have fought for the forces of good, hence the name, “ghost-guardians.” They also believe this sacred flame acts as a divine beacon which naturally calls those of noble virtue to join them and keep their numbers strong. This is a big reason why the Ghaash’kala tend to be welcoming to outsiders and also why they are so zealous in confronting the “tainted” who try to leave the Demon Wastes.

## TWO FLAMES

Beyond the Demon Wastes it is believed by some that Kalok Shash and the Silver Flame are both different names for the same force. The two faiths are remarkably similar, but do have their differences, like two sides of a coin. The Church of the Silver Flame is dedicated to protecting its communities, encouraging the development of all that is good in the world and, by extension, life itself. On the other hand, the worshippers of Kalok Shash are far more violent than their Silver Flame counterparts. Their faith is inherently martial and proactive—it compels them to seek out demonic terrors and fight to remove them from the world.

## BRAND OF THE BINDING FLAME

In order to better fulfill their divine duty, Ghaash’kala warriors mark their bodies with the brand of the Binding Flame. Each of the Ghaash’kala clans use their own symbol for their brand, which their priests burn onto the skin of the clan guardians. The brand marks the wearer as a warrior of the clans. The individual symbols the tribes use are detailed below.

## CLAN HIERARCHY

Though the clans’ customs vary, each clan has two leaders: the kizshmit, or chieftain, leads the clan in its military duties and mundane matters, and the sar’malaan, the high priest, guides the clan’s spiritual practice and communes with the Flame on behalf of the clan. The sar’malaan is also responsible for appointing and assisting the kizshmit. Of the two, the sar’malaan is the more esteemed position, as they generally have the authority to step in and take control when they deem it necessary—

including even installing a new chieftain at any time.

Serving the two leaders are the malaan, or priests, and the guardians, warriors of the clan who have been branded by the flame. The un-marked are next in the hierarchy, below all the others, and encouraged to aspire to the martial and spiritual greatness the Binding Flame requires of all of its faithful.

## THE JAASAKAH

The Jaasakah (*The Deadly*) clan inhabits the eastern Labyrinth and the lands east of the Labyrinth. The clan is led by kizshmit Svash Ramaal (NG male half-orc barbarian) and sar’malaan Gan’dal Homm (LG male human cleric). The Jaasakah’s tribal brand is not any set symbol. Instead, their branding involves a





lengthy process that covers the entire body with complicated scars, burns, and colored tattoos.

Zealous and dogged, the Jaasakah are the most unforgiving of the Ghaash'kala, having built a reputation for being particularly remorseless in their treatment of outsiders. While most Ghaash'kala warriors only act against those who try to leave, the Jaasakah go even further, acting preemptively against any who they deem too risky to leave alive. Generally that tends to be anyone that is not of the Ghaash'kala clans.

### THE KASTAR

The Kastar (*The Swift*) clan inhabits the western Labyrinth and the lands west of it. Its kizshmit is Maalo Sahai (CG female orc fighter), and its sar'malaan is Naakah Shahar (NG female orc cleric). The Kastar's tribal brand is a sunburst pattern with wavy, radiating rays.

Proud and relentless, the Kastar are the most wide-ranging of the Ghaash'kala. Kastar warriors are reputed among the clans for their knowledge of the Labyrinth and their ability to navigate its many dangers safely and quickly. Because of their wide-ranging patrols, most Ghaash'kala that people encounter are members of the Kastar clan.

### THE MARUK

The Maruk (*The Mighty*) clan inhabits the central Labyrinth. Torgaan Shashaarat (LG male orc paladin) serves as its kizshmit, and its sar'malaan is Lharc Suusha (LG female orc cleric). The Maruk's tribal brand is a small, simple flame with three points. The Maruk clan guards the central passages through the Labyrinth, the routes most often used by the Lords of Dust and their agents.

Somber and serious, the Maruk are the most warlike and adept in battle of the Ghaash'kala, prepared to die at any moment. The fervor with which they approach their fighting also means they tend to have more paladins among their number than the other clans. Unfortunately, that same virtue also means they suffer the greatest number of casualties of all the clans and must recruit more widely, resulting in the Maruk clan being the most diverse of the four.

### THE VAANKA

The Vaanka (*The Final*) clan inhabits the northwestern Labyrinth, where it connects to the rest of the Wastes. Its kizshmit is Dalkal Mal'fonn (LG female human paladin), and its sar'malaan is Silvik Raam (NG male orc



—Brand of the Maruk Tribe

cleric). The Vaanka's tribal brands vary greatly among their number, as the symbols the Vaanka warriors have branded onto them is determined by the priest and the recipient.

Pious and astute, the Vaanka have the greatest spiritual affinity to the Binding Flame. In times of great danger or conflict, the clans turn to the Vaanka for their insights. The most individualistic of the clans, the Vaanka push their priests and warriors to explore their own personal connection to the Binding Flame and find guidance in it for themselves. Though they rarely encounter people outside the Ghaash'kala, when they do, they often try to expose them to the light of the Binding Flame and recruit them for their cause.

### GHAASH'KALA WARRIORS

The Ghaash'kala are far less numerous than their counterparts, the Carrion Tribes, but they make up for it with skill, equipment, and divine strength.

The Ghaash'kala Clan Guardians comprise the main forces of the clans. Bearing the brand of the Binding Flame and able to turn their divine fervor into martial strength, they are righteous crusaders against evil. The Ghaash'kala Clan Priests are not the ecclesiastical clerics often seen in the rest of the world. These are war priests, who have managed to forge deeper connections to Kalok Shash and can manifest greater divine power.



## GHAASH'KALA CLAN GUARDIAN

Medium humanoid, lawful good

**Armor Class** 13 (studded leather armor)

**Hit Points** 75 (10d8 + 30)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	9 (–1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Condition Immunities** frightened

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common, Orcish

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Reckless.** At the start of its turn, the guardian can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

**Brand of the Binding Flame.** The guardian is connected to Kalok Shash, empowered by its light. The first time guardian hits a creature with a melee weapon attack on its turn, the creature becomes the target of the righteous souls within the flame, hindering its fighting ability. The target has disadvantage on attack rolls made against the guardian until the start of the guardian's next turn.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The guardian makes two melee attacks with its longsword or longbow.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

**Longbow.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

## GHAASH'KALA CLAN PRIEST

Medium humanoid, lawful good

**Armor Class** 15 (studded leather armor, shield)

**Hit Points** 102 (12d8 + 48)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	9 (–1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Religion +6

**Condition Immunities** frightened

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Common, Orcish

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Spellcasting.** The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, guidance, resistance, sacred flame*

1st level (4 slots): *bles, command, guiding bolt, healing word, protection from evil and good, unseen servant*

2nd level (3 slots): *continual flame, prayer of healing, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (2 slots): *beacon of hope, spirit guardians*

**Brand of the Binding Flame.** The priest is connected to Kalok Shash, empowered by its light. The first time the priest hits a creature with a melee weapon attack on its turn, the creature becomes the target of the righteous souls within the flame, hindering its fighting ability. The target has disadvantage on attack rolls made against the priest until the start of the priest's next turn.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The clan priest makes two melee attacks with its longsword.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

## CARRION TRIBES

by Jeremy Melloul

Initially descended from Sarlonan refugees over a millennium ago, the Carrion Tribes are primarily comprised of human savages, along with the tiger-like Sakah tieflings, who are revered members of their tribes.

These tribes are diverse, each of them holding their own customs and beliefs, but sharing a common way of life: forged in battle and bloodshed against each other and any other foes they encounter. Most tribes worship one of the Overlords and answer to an individual Lord of Dust. These rakshasa rajahs command the tribe on behalf of their patrons, though few are involved in the day-to-day decisions of the tribe. Some tribes even follow the hags who claim rule over certain sections of the Wastes.

For those traveling through the Demon Wastes, any encounter with the Carrion Tribes is an undesirable event. These primitive, bloodthirsty warriors are known to slaughter strangers on sight, or capture them for dark rituals. Though they generally use nothing more than hide armor and stone weapons, they are still terrifying foes. Tribe leaders tend to possess superior equipment scavenged from defeated enemies.

All the tribes are engaged in an ongoing, brutal conflict with the Ghaash'kala clans.

### LIFE IN THE TRIBES

Resources are scarce in the Demon Wastes, forcing the tribes into a nomadic lifestyle, hunting and scavenging for sustenance in the blighted land. Some tribes even cull the weak among their number to ensure the strongest among them can better thrive and grow stronger. Shaped by their open worship of ancient fiends, the Carrion Tribes care little for anything but battle, bloodshed, and deepening their connection to their fiendish patrons—primarily by seeking to emulate them in any way they can.

### WARRIOR CULTURE

Though they wield primitive weapons and armor, they compensate with unnatural strength. It is common practice for warriors of the Carrion Tribes to take trophies from those they defeat. Some are simply ritualistic items taken to mark a battle that was fought, while others are more useful, such as weapons and armor fashioned from metal. Ritual scarring is prevalent among the tribes and sometimes results in severe deformities, causing them to appear beastly or fiendish.

## RITUAL PRACTICE

While the tribes practice different rituals, they all tend to believe that barbaric rage opens themselves up to the energies of Khyber, which empowers their bodies and minds. As a result, the strongest and most fiend-like hold the positions of greatest authority in all but the rarest of Carrion Tribes.

In addition, most of the tribes are cannibalistic and believe that a warrior can gain the strength of those they've defeated by consuming their body and drinking their blood. Some make elaborate rituals out of the practice, especially for particularly powerful enemies, like rival champions.

### THE SAKAH

Among the Carrion Tribes, some sport characteristics that echo the rakshasa Lords of Dust: sharpened teeth or claws, strangely colored pupils, tiger-striped skin, or some other sign of the patron's fiendish influence. Sometimes these are evident at birth or they may emerge later, as the barbarians mature and grow stronger. The Carrion Tribes believe these individuals are blessed and call them "Sakah," meaning "touched ones."

These physical manifestations are sometimes accompanied by subtle powers, fiendish boons that make them stronger or more cunning. These can include a talent for sorcery, unnatural charisma, or the ability to change their form at will. Sakahs often rise to positions of prominence within their tribes.

### EXAMPLES OF CARRION TRIBES

Detailed below are a few of the dozens of tribes that roam the Demon Wastes along with descriptions of the unique powers that blessed warriors and Sakah may wield.

#### Briarthorn

Worship: Drulkalatar

Symbol: branches of a thorn bush

Signature Spells: *thorn whip* (cantrip), *entangle* (1st level), *alter self* (2nd level), *conjure animals* (3rd level)

The Briarthorn tribe is particularly savage. Often rearing fierce beasts to fight by their side, Briarthorn barbarians exhibit bestial features and qualities, including pronounced fangs and claws. While many Carrion Tribes are primarily made up of humans, the Briarthorns have a number of gnolls, who hold an esteemed position within the tribe due to their fiendish strength. The Briarthorns are led by a savage gnoll

chieftain named Drecktooth (**gnoll flind** *VGtM p153*). Powerful warriors of the Briarthorn tribe have the Thornskin trait.

**Thornskin.** When this creature takes damage from a melee attack, they can use a reaction to deal 1d10 piercing damage against the creature that attacked them.

### Deathbringers

Worship: Katashka, the Gatekeeper

Symbol: a skeletal hand reaching up through a grave

Signature Spells: *toll the dead* (cantrip), *inflict wounds* (1st level), *ray of enfeeblement* (2nd level), *animate dead* (3rd level)

The Deathbringers are one of the more ritualistic tribes of the Wastes. Unlike many of their fellow barbarians, they do not engage in cannibalism, instead taking great care of their enemies' bodies, keeping them preserved so they may rise to fight on the Deathbringers behalf.

Tribe members are accompanied by the putrid stench of death and paint themselves with skulls and other skeletal imagery. Their use of undead warriors makes the Deathbringers one of the stronger tribes, boasting great numbers that do not need food or sleep. Their strength grows after every battle, as even their own members can be raised to continue fighting for the tribe long after their death. Powerful warriors of the Deathbringer tribe have the Gravebound Rage trait.

**Gravebound Rage.** When this creature is reduced to 0 hit points it may immediately take an attack action against an enemy within range before falling dead.

### Enshrouded

Worship: Hektula, the Bloody Scribe

Symbol: a twisted dagger

Signature Spells: *minor illusion* (cantrip), *silent image* (1st level), *darkness* (2nd level), *fear* (3rd level)

While the Enshrouded are not the most brutal or dominant of the Carrion Tribes, they are still foes to be reckoned with, who attack with far more cunning than



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most. They prefer to operate in the dead of night, when their abilities grant them the greatest advantage.

All warriors of the Enshrouded tribe have darkvision (30 feet) and the Champions and Sakah Hunters of their tribe are even immune to the effects of magical darkness. Powerful warriors of the Enshrouded tribe have the Umbral Strike trait.

**Umbral Strike.** As a bonus action, this creature can weave shadow magic into its next attack, causing it to occlude its target's vision with shadows. A successful attack deals an extra 1d6 psychic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be unable to see anything farther than 5 feet away until the start of its next turn.

### Grayflame

Worship: Korliac of the Gray Flame

Symbol: a gray flame

Signature Spells: *fire bolt* (cantrip), *absorb elements* (1st level), *dragon's breath* (2nd level) (fire only), *fireball* (3rd level)

Wherever the Grayflame Tribe wanders, they leave behind scorched earth and the burnt remains of their enemies. Fierce in battle and wielding powerful fire magic, the Grayflame barbarians attack their enemies recklessly—never relenting until either they die or their opponents have fallen. The loud battle cries, rhythmic ritual drumming, and signature gray fire are the tell-tale signs of these barbarians. Powerful warriors of the Grayflame tribe have the Baleful Roar trait.

**Baleful Roar (Recharge after a Short or Long Rest).** As an action, this creature can unleash a terrifying roar. Every hostile creature within 20 feet must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is frightened until the start of its next turn. If the saving throw is successful, the creature is immune to the Baleful Roar for the next 24 hours.

### Moon Reavers

Worship: night hags

Symbol: an eclipsed moon

Signature Spells: *chill touch* (cantrip), *ray of sickness* (1st level), *hold person* (2nd level), *bestow curse* (3rd level)

Unlike the other Carrion Tribes, which answer to the Lords of Dust and Overlords, the Moon Reavers revere the night hags. Moon Reavers delight in terrorizing their foes, willing to cast aside a direct battle in favor of harassing their enemies over a prolonged period of time. The Moon Reavers sometimes use the bones and skin of those they kill to make masks.

While warriors are still held in high esteem in this tribe, spellcasters and rogues can also hold authority.

The most notable Moon Reaver tribe is led by Karka Darkbane, a cruel woman afflicted by a curse that deformed her since birth, leaving one of her arms short and twisted. Despite that, Karka's strength is still prodigious and she wields a mace gifted by the sinister patron that marked her.

Powerful warriors of the Moon Reavers tribe have the Ethereal Shifting trait.

### Ethereal Shifting (Recharge after a Long Rest).

As an action, this creature gains the benefits of the *blink* spell, requiring no material components.

### Plaguebearers

Worship: Vvaria (Rotting Blade)

Symbol: a drop of sickly, green poison

Signature Spells: *infestation* (cantrip), *detect poison and disease* (1st level), *acid arrow* (2nd level), *stinking cloud* (3rd level)

The Plaguebearers are easily the most disgusting of the Carrion Tribes. They smear their weapons with poisons, dung, and filth. Through generations of exposure, they have become remarkably resistant to the effects of diseases and poisons. If a Plaguebearer warrior doesn't kill their enemy during battle, it's very possible their enemy will succumb to lingering infections in the aftermath. Plaguebearers typically wield weapons crafted from the bones of their enemies.

The Plaguebearers are led by the male half-orc Fulgrun Bloodboil (**Conjurer** *VGtM* p212—but with HP 72), a hideous individual surrounded by a horrible stench of pus and rot who uses his magic to wield pestilence as a weapon.



—Symbol of the Plaguebearers

### Plague Carrier (Recharge after a Long Rest).

When this creature deals damage with a melee weapon attack, they can use a reaction to force the target to make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target is poisoned for 1 hour. On a successful save, they are not poisoned and are immune to the Plague Carrier trait for the next 24 hours. A creature poisoned by the Plague Carrier's plague suffers from one of your choice of diseases from the *contagion* spell.

### TREASURE

The Carrion Tribes frequently take trophies from the enemies they conquer. Most of these trophies are of little practical value, as only weapons and food tend to have any true purpose for the Carrion barbarians. Instead they are of symbolic importance to the Carrion Tribes - taken to indicate their strength and sometimes used in their rituals.

#### CARRION TRIBE TROPHIES

##### d10 Trophy

- |    |                                    |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 1  | 1d20 human, orc and half-orc teeth |
| 2  | Beast hide                         |
| 3  | Adventurer's keepsake              |
| 4  | Collection of small animal skulls  |
| 5  | Cape of flayed humanoid skin       |
| 6  | Stone carving of a fiend           |
| 7  | Necklace of finger bones           |
| 8  | Horned beast skull mask            |
| 9  | Bracelet of flayed scars           |
| 10 | Random Trinket*                    |

\*Roll on the Trinkets table in Chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook*.



### CARRION TRIBE WARRIORS

A Carrion Tribe includes a large number of the following warriors.

Carrion Tribe Reavers make up the vast majority of Carrion Tribe forces. Carrion Tribe Champions are those who have been blessed with the ability to wield their fiendish rage. A Carrion Tribe Sakah Hunter typically has the most magical power of any tribesmen.

### CARRION TRIBE CHAMPION

*Medium humanoid, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 14 (hide armor)

**Hit Points** 76 (9d8 + 36)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Demonic Wrath.** At the start of its turn, the Carrion Tribe Champion can channel its demonic anger to gain resistance to bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing damage until the start of its next turn. In addition, if the Champion uses the ability it can make one extra melee attack that turn.

**Tribe Ability.** Carrion Tribe Champions have the signature abilities of their individual tribes.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Carrion Tribe champion makes two melee attacks with its greatclub.

**Spiked Greatclub.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 3) bludgeoning damage.



## CARRION TRIBE REAVER

*Medium humanoid, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 13 (hide armor)

**Hit Points** 32 (5d8 + 10)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

### ACTIONS

**Greatclub.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

**Javelin.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, ranged 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* (6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

## CARRION TRIBE SAKAH HUNTER

*Medium humanoid, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (hide armor)

**Hit Points** 58 (9d8 + 18)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Tribe Spells.** Carrion Tribe Sakah are 5th-level spellcasters and typically have the signature spells of their tribes. Their spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks) They can use their Cantrips at will and have 4 slots for 1st level spells, 3 slots for 2nd level spells, and 2 slots for 3rd level spells.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Carrion Tribe Sakah Hunter makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft or range 20/60 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

## CREATURES

### CRYSTALMONGER

These creatures may have begun their existence as fey, but have been irrevocably twisted by the negative energies of Dolurrh that emanate from the Lair of the Keeper. Their entire purpose seems to be to safeguard the Khyber crystals which line the walls of the gigantic canyon in the northern tip of the Demon Wastes. Why they do this is unknown. Perhaps their life force is tied to the crystals, since the strange creatures wither and expire if they spend more than a day away from their vicinity. Or the reason might have a more sinister origin.

**Soulless.** The crystalmongers are unaffected by the soul-trapping properties of the crystals which have snared many unfortunate souls who have wandered into the area. Whether they possess a special immunity or simply have no soul to steal is anyone's guess.

**Bathed in Fire.** Volcanic activity is no stranger to the Demon Wastes, but the crystalmongers seem to revel in fire and brimstone as they can often be observed cavorting in lava flows or pits of boiling mud that crop up in the area.

**Crystal Guardians.** Though they don't appear to communicate in any recognizable way, the one thing all crystalmongers hold dear is the safety of the Khyber crystals growing in the Lair of the Keeper is paramount. The creatures have been known to completely ignore explorers to the area, as long as they don't touch or go near any of the crystals. Once they do, however, the creatures fly into a berserk rage and attack until either they or the offending creature is dead.

### CRYSTALMONGER

*Medium fiend, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 58 (9d8 + 18)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	5 (-3)	9 (-1)	7 (-2)

**Damage Immunities** fire, necrotic

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, paralyzed

**Senses** passive Perception 9

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Fierce Protector.** If any creature within 30 feet of a crystalmonger possesses a Khyber dragonshard, they fly into an uncontrollable rage, gaining advantage on all attacks against that creature, but also granting advantage to anyone attacking the crystalmonger due to their recklessness.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The crystalmonger makes two attacks with its claws.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) slashing damage plus 2 (1d4) fire damage.





## SPINAGON-BLOODED HARPY

While they resemble their monstrous namesakes in physicality and their ability to manipulate with a haunting song, these foul creatures are without question the spawn of Khyber. The plague of Demonsong Bay, these flying fiends terrorize any that come within range of the cliffsides they call home.

**Paralyzing Song.** The spinagon-blooded harpy sings a song not to lure victims closer, but to stop them in their tracks. The enchanting magic of the song paralyzes their prey, making it easier to finish them off with their deadly tail spines.

**Poisoned Barbs.** With a lightning-fast flick of its tail, a spinagon-blooded harpy can fling a razor sharp spine at a target up to 80 feet away. These projectiles not only puncture skin with ease, they also carry a dangerous toxin which further incapacitates any unfortunate enough to cross the harpy's path.

## SPINAGON-BLOODED HARPY

*Medium fiend, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 44 (8d8 + 8)

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

**Damage Resistances** cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Limited Spines.** The harpy has twenty tail spines. Used spines regrow after the harpy finishes a long rest.

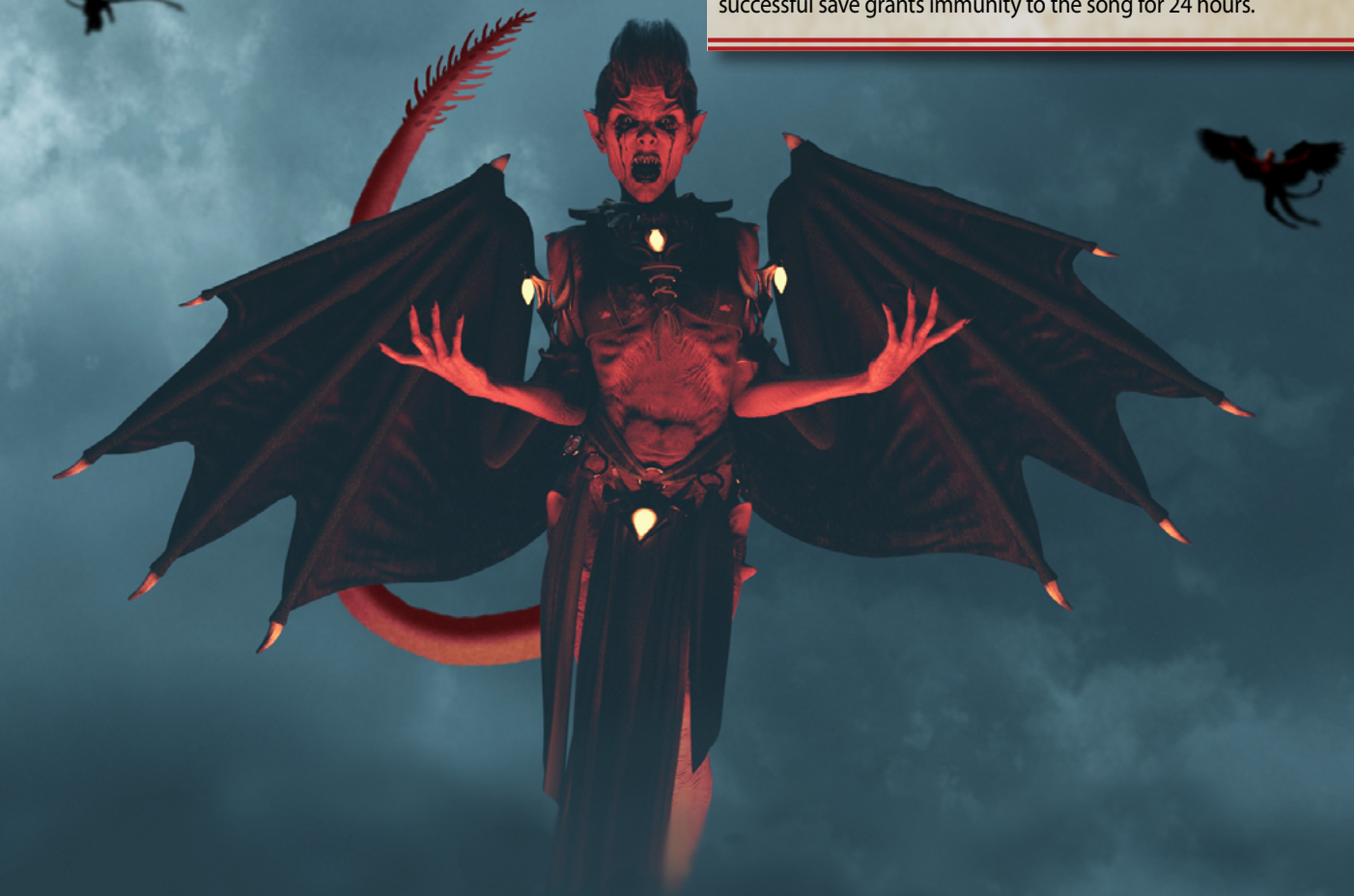
### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The spinagon-blooded harpy makes two attacks with its claws, or two with its tail spines.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

**Tail Spine.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/80 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) poison damage.

**Paralyzing Song.** The spinagon-blooded harpy sings a haunting song. Every creature within 300 feet that can hear the song must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or become paralyzed for 1 minute. Those who fail can repeat the save at the end of each of their turns. A successful save grants immunity to the song for 24 hours.



## SETTLEMENTS, PAST AND PRESENT

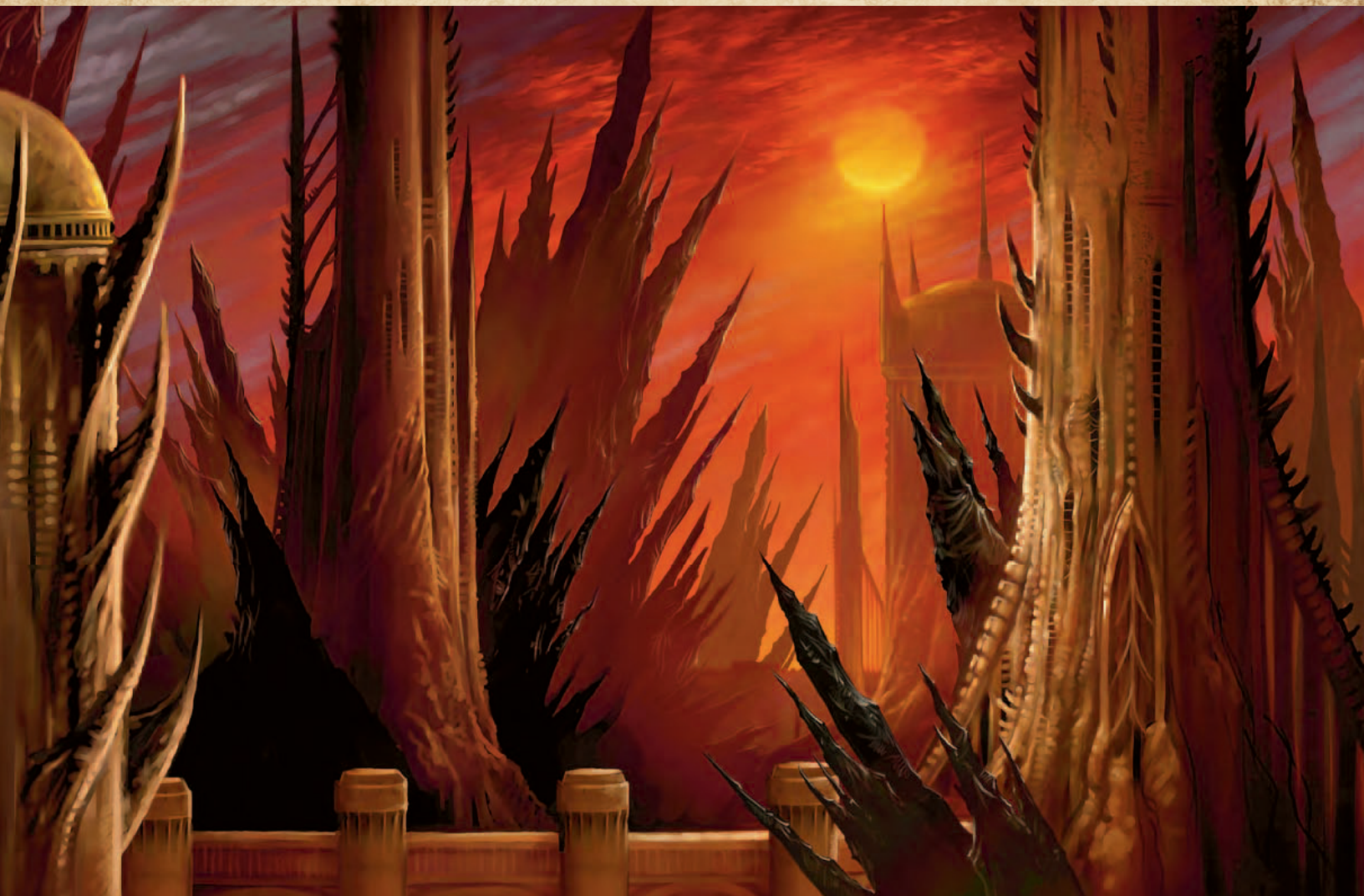
While I would rather not spend time discussing the living arrangements or conditions of either the fiends or the lesser races, it is important to know where concentrations of them are as well as their general disposition. In that spirit, I include the following information on these former and current areas of congregation for both demon and mortal alike.

### ASHTAKALA

The last and strongest of the fiends' true citadels, Ashtakala, lies within the northern wastelands of Fah'lrng. This city was broken and destroyed, like all of them, in the war, but demonkind has since reclaimed and restored it to a semblance of habitation. Today, much of it is illusion—produced and maintained by what source is unclear—but sufficient reality remains to sustain numerous fiends and Shadow knows how many dark artifacts and sources of magic lie hidden within its walls.

Enormous, jagged towers of obsidian climb hundreds of feet into the sky, jutting from a tiered hill perhaps a mile wide and rising about 250 feet above the desert plain. Ashtakala's formidable walls wind between these black spires around the circumference of the uppermost portion of the hill. How much of the wall is actually illusion is undetermined. Explorers fortunate enough to return from this Khyber-infested city have reported it teems with demons of all kinds, although many of those are illusory as well, so a true census of its population is virtually impossible. There are, however, enough verifiable fiends who call Ashtakala home to make it the prime target for concern regarding a possible resurgence of demonic activity in the world. Sitting atop Ashtakala is a great palace—the seat of power for the Lords of Dust, who continue to meddle in the affairs of Eberron to mysterious ends even more obscure than some aspects of the Prophecy.

Lastly, a perpetual sandstorm of obsidian shards and howling wind surrounds the demonic capital, making surveillance hopeless by both mundane and magical means. For all of these reasons and more, we must remain steadfast and vigilant against the fiendish threat lest the legacy of our ancestors and



# ASHTAKALA



the coatl become a forgotten footnote in our history. Fortunately, these storms do subside periodically; it is imperative that we watch most carefully when these calms occur.

## The Endless Storm

Ashtakala is protected by a nearly ceaseless storm of dust, sand, and volcanic glass. Anyone trying to move through it suffers 11 (3d4 + 4) slashing damage every 10 minutes. Visibility is limited to 5 feet and characters must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check in order not to become hopelessly lost and wander aimlessly for 1 hour. They can repeat the check after the hour has passed.

The air clears approximately 500 feet from the edge of Ashtakala and never troubles the city itself.

The storm also prevents scrying or any sort of divination magic from working on anyone within the storm or Ashtakala.

## (1) ENTRANCE GATES: PRIDE AND SLOTH

Gigantic gates on the eastern and western sides of the city have been dubbed “Pride” and “Sloth” respectively. Made from huge slabs of black granite 20 feet tall, they are each guarded by a troop of **6 horned devils** (*MM* p74) and a host of lesser fiends.

## (2) BOUNDLESS MARKET

So named because anything can be bought or sold here. Anathemic to the dark tones and sinister nature of the vast majority of Ashtakala’s architecture and decor, the Boundless Market is a riot of color with enthusiastic vendors exalting their wares to any passersby. Disappointingly, most of the shops, sellers, and clientele are illusory, harkening back to the glory days of the city, eons ago. Persistent and resourceful shoppers can discover real treasures—for the right price. More often than not, these sellers are seeking payment in something other than gold.

## (3) DRAIN WORKS

This building is largely underground, with a descend-

ing ramp leading to a dimly lit chamber. Columns sculpted to look like succubi seem to eye anyone brave, or unfortunate, enough to venture into the structure's depths. The dusty interior houses 26 sarcophagi, arranged in two equal rows and constructed of either glass or crystal, allowing anyone to see inside. Tubes with grisly suction cups lie within each one, awaiting their next victim. One or two contain bodies and horrific sucking sounds echo through the chamber. These poor creatures are on their way to becoming dust-stuffed, the brainchild of Ethon Panjilcuttra, a rakshasa artificer and one of the Lords of Dust. These transformed creatures are used as playthings for the rajahs and others, and sometimes employed as spies throughout Khorvaire.

### Creating a "Dust-Stuffed" Adversary

You can create a dust-stuffed for your campaign by using the following template, which increases the CR by 1:

A dust-stuffed creature uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

- The creature's type becomes construct and their alignment changes to lawful evil.
- Their Strength and Dexterity increase by 2 and their Constitution increases by 1. They become resistant to bludgeoning damage. They also gain the following traits and abilities:
- **Choking Hazard.** When a dust-stuffed takes more than 15 points of damage from a single slashing or piercing attack, dust billows from the wound. All creatures within a 5-foot radius must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage on attack rolls, saves, and ability checks while within the cloud.
- **Indistinguishable.** A dust-stuffed projects no alignment and no magic when abilities or spells such as *detect magic* are cast in its vicinity. This does not extend to any items in its possession.
- **Churn (1/Day).** A dust-stuffed is fitted with one or more stirring rods whose winding keys sprout from its neck, rib-cage, or eye sockets. As an action, it (or someone else) can wind its key, which stirs its inner dust into a frenzy and it gains the effects of a *haste* spell with no concentration required.

## (4) GARDEN OF ETERNAL TORTURE

Untouched by the illusions that pervade the rest of the city, this "garden" is little more than a mass of shriveled vines, dust, and ash. A broken stone fountain, long dried up, sits in the middle of this dessicated area. Trapped on top of the fountain by powerful enchantments, a couatl thrashes about in obvious pain. Imprisoned before its brethren sacrificed themselves, with the help of the dragons, to defeat the fiendish menace, Miklatumh has spent thousands of years in constant torment. The magical prison can be breached by dispel magic cast using a spell slot of at least 8th level, an antimagic field, or a wish spell. Miklatumh has lost their sanity and are incapable of conversing or interacting with anyone who might free them, however a greater restoration spell or similar magic can bring a semblance of normality back to them. If freed and healed, Miklatumh can be a faithful ally.

## (5) DEMON GLASS GALLERY

In Ashtakala's heyday, this building served as an information nexus for the rajahs and all the forces of Khyber. Demon glasses—gems, fragmented mirrors, and crystal shards that float and lazily spin—show glimpses of places in the Wastes and all of Eberon and beyond. Glowing Infernal runes flicker in different colors as well within the polished glasses. Above, skylights of wavy glass allow what light shines through the ever-raging storm surrounding Ashtakala to glint off the scrying devices in this vast hall—which is all a mesmerizing illusion. Even so, some of the demon glasses are still intact and functional and would fetch a premium price if liberated from the gallery for their material alone. Alas, the magical properties of most of the glasses cease to work outside the gallery. Only those that are fully functional can be removed without issue.

If a character chooses to look into one of the glasses, roll on the following table to determine its effect:

### DEMON GLASS TABLE

#### d20 Demon Glass Effects

1-4	<i>Mirror of life trapping.</i> Roll a d12, on a 12 a creature is released from the glass in place of the trapped character.
4-5	Fully functioning demon glass. The glass can be used as the focus for a <i>scrying</i> spell. When so used, it imposes disadvantage on the target's Wisdom save. If sold on the open market, demon glass can fetch 5,000 gp or more.
6-20	Inactive

## (6) AMPHITHEATER OF PAIN

Under a cracked brass half-dome, a spectacle of torture and suffering plays out in an endless loop. A pair of illusory **mariliths** (*MM p61*) inflict pain on young dragons, lesser fiends, and a host of other creatures, flashing knives and saws in their multiple arms. Equally unreal onlookers in the audience area cheer and laugh as the mariliths terrify and mutilate their victims over and over. Even after all this time, the magic infused here persists and any time blood is spilled within 60 feet of the stage, every creature in that range gains the effect of a bless spell.

## (7) FOUNTAIN OF SORROWS

This illusory fountain depicts an expensively dressed rakshasa, with folded arms and an upturned face, ignoring a group of children of varying races kneeling with hands clasped at its feet. Water pours from the eyes of the children representing unending tears. If a coin is tossed in the fountain, the giver receives advantage on their next attack roll within an hour's time. If someone tries to take coins from the fountain, they must succeed on a **DC 19 Wisdom saving throw** or gain a point of exhaustion. Any coins taken magically return to the fountain after 1 day.

## (8) PALACE OF ASHTAKALA

A crumbling rajah's palace sits atop the highest point of Ashtakala, portrayed by illusion as it was during the Age of Demons. Magnificently constructed from onyx, dark marble, and volcanic minerals, the palace was created to awe and intimidate. The interior boasts one enormous throne room, where the rajah held court. Massive columns of obsidian support the roof, 50 feet above the gold-flecked marble floor. Surrounding each column are six stone pedestals, about waist high, holding golden bowls filled with either unholy water, dragons' tears, or blood. Dark lotus blossoms float on the foul liquids. At the end of the impressive chamber is an imposing throne made from bloodstone and malachite. A sulfurous stench permeates the air and brings tears to the eyes of anyone not accustomed to it.

The Lords of Dust hold their infrequent Bleak Congresses here. These meetings allow the Lords to plot and scheme against the rest of Eberron—and sometimes each other. They devise intricate plans that may take centuries to come to fruition. Immortality breeds patience.

## FESTERING HOLT

by Stuart Broz

To most of those who have heard about it, the town of Festering Holt is a mystery. It is located only a few dozen miles outside of Ashtakala. In the heart of a land full of demons, its continued existence defies logic. While no one would say that Festering Holt is a thriving community, it has somehow lingered on and survived. Many of the several dozen buildings that make up the town are little more than hovels, and its residents have a reputation for opportunistic cannibalism. Anywhere else, a town like this would be considered a loathsome blight upon the map, but in the Demon Wastes, it is a veritable oasis.

### HISTORY

When the Daelkyr invaded the Dhakaani Empire several thousand years ago, an ak'chazar rahshasa named Razalheshan took the opportunity to leave Khorvaire. Eventually finding himself in Aerenal, Razalheshan met and seduced Vaelian, an elven necromancer. Vaelian followed Razalheshan back to the Demon Wastes and became a vampire through necromantic research. The two settled in a demiplane accessible via a scar-like chasm southwest of Ashtakala. A village sprung up around the chasm, protected by the two so Vaelian could occasionally use its citizens as a food source. Over the centuries, the town's population rose and fell and residents of the Demon Wastes began referring to the village surrounding the chasm as a festering wound upon the land, giving rise to its name.

Festering Holt became a refuge to those looking for a more peaceful and civilized way of life among the Wastes. That is not to say Festering Holt is peaceful or civilized by any reasonable standard. Many who live in Festering Holt come from the Carrion Tribes and haven't entirely relinquished cannibalism.

In the final days of the Last War, a band of soldiers from Darguun—mostly bugbears and goblins—settled in Festering Holt. When they had set out, there had been well over a hundred in their group. Fewer than half survived the trip to Festering Holt, but they dramatically increased the town's population. Their warchief, a clever bugbear named Karbal, has since taken ownership of the town's largest structure, which functions as an inn, tavern, and general store dubbed Dead by Morning. The goblins do not talk of their past, but Karbal has, when drunk, spoken of Lhesh

# FESTERING HOLT



Haruuc Shaarat'kor in terms that suggest that they once knew each other well.

## OVERVIEW

Festering Holt is located about fifty miles southwest of Ashtakala. The village's population consists of a diverse mix of races about 200 strong. Goblinoids, orcs, half-orcs, and humans are well represented, with a smattering of various other humanoids and a handful of monsters, including fiends.

### (1) DEAD BEFORE MORNING

When Karbal's band of goblins came to Festering Holt, he put them to work immediately. A dozen abandoned homes were repaired for use as barracks and they built a series of earthen tunnels to connect them to a larger structure which served as a great hall. Over the years, the goblinoids have become more integrated into the community, and most of them have moved into their own separate homes, while Karbal's hall has come to serve as the town's tavern and meeting place, and the barracks is now an inn for travelers.

Almost every evening, Karbal opens the bar with the same toast, "Drink well, lads, because it's a sure bet we'll all be dead before morning!" This toast is notably absent on those few occasions when Vaelian wanders in.

Dead Before Morning is always well stocked with food and drink. Hunters bring in meat daily, and Karbal's cook alternates between roasts and stews. What sort of meat is a question best left unasked.

In addition to the tavern, Dead Before Morning serves as the town's general store and marketplace. One of Karbal's assistants, a goblin named Farrag, offers a variety of merchandise. Residents and visitors alike are permitted to sell their wares at one of the tables, provided Karbal gets first choice—at a discount.

### (2) JAGDA'S COTTAGE

One cottage stands alone at the edge of town, separated by an outcropping of rock. The locals call its resident **Jagda the Cruel** (p52) and whisper she is a night hag. She is actually a dusk hag—a far less malevolent daughter of a night hag. She has, however, done nothing to discourage her reputation, as it has earned her the privacy she seeks. Jagda's home is tidy and well-appointed. An elaborate rock garden with precisely balanced towers of stones decorates the outside. Those few who have seen inside report the walls are largely lined with books and scrolls.

### (3) THE SCAR

The Scar is a deep chasm in the center of Festering Holt. A single narrow staircase is carved into the rock face on the north side of the fissure. There is no guard-rail and the stairs quickly disappear into darkness.

Ten feet from the top of the staircase is a large iron post set deep into the ground with several sets of manacles attached to it. The town preys on visitors who are too weak to defend themselves, but it leaves the choicest selections here for Razalheshan and Vaelian. Residents of Festering Holt do not willingly approach any closer to the Scar than the post.



The inside of the chasm is perpetually cloaked in a magical gloom. It is never more than dimly lit inside, and magical light is ineffective unless it comes from a spell of 4th level or greater. The walls of the chasm are made of a dark, smooth stone which is always damp and slightly sticky. Four **shadow demons** (*MM* p64) dwell in a deep crack in the chasm wall and act as servants for Razalheshan and Vaelian. They typically retrieve the towns offerings, but they will investigate anyone who comes down the stairs.

About 40 feet down, the stairs come to a small landing before continuing on for another 80 feet, becoming increasingly treacherous. Eventually, they descend into foul water at the bottom. The water is the lair of a **wastrilith** (*MToF* p139) and is fully corrupted. There is no bottom to the chasm. Instead, those diving

deep enough eventually breach the surface of an underground lake in Khyber.

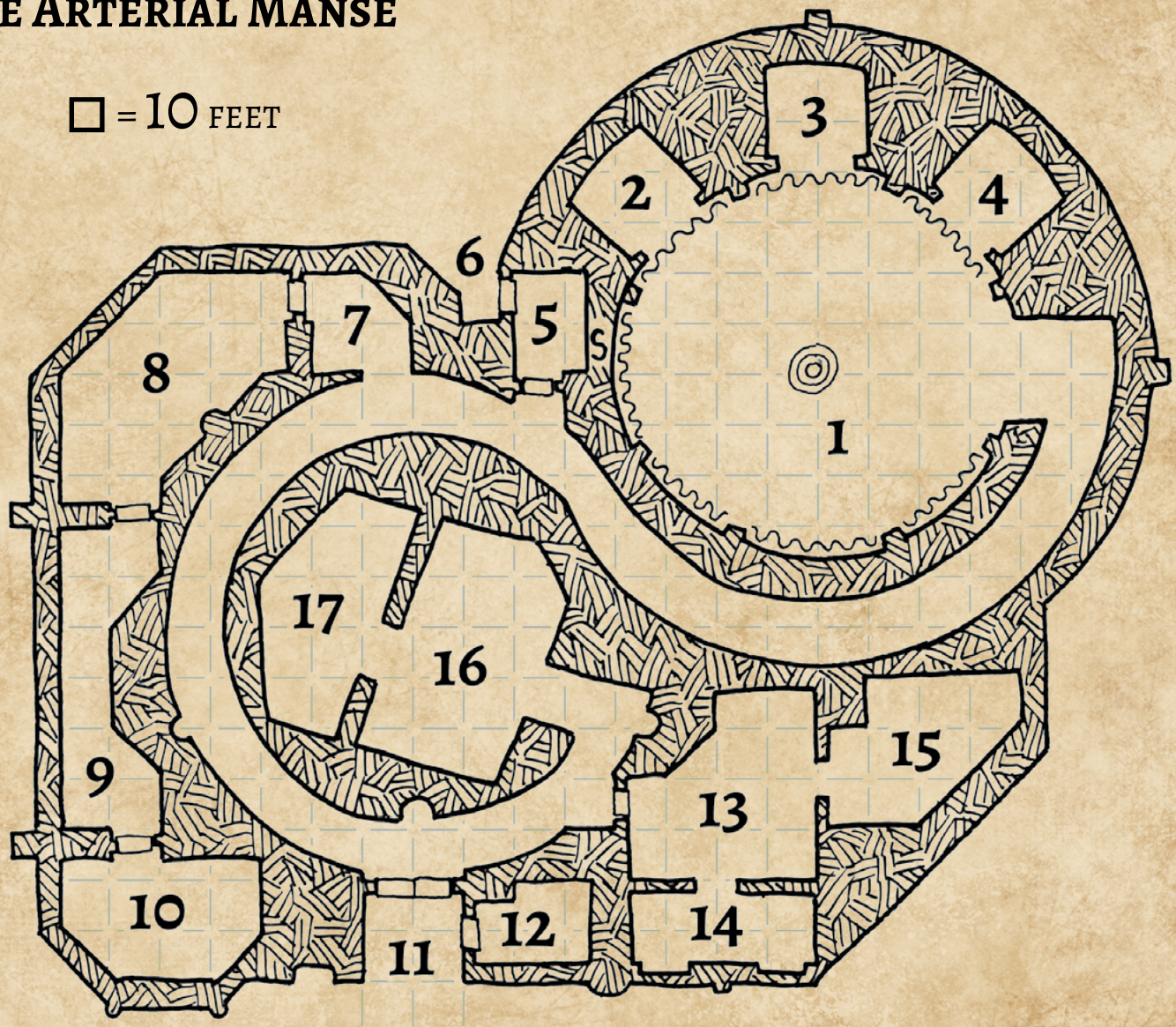
The chasm is the entrance to the home of Razalheshan and Vaelian. A creature that steps off of the landing on the staircase will enter the demiplane that they live in, appearing in the center of **Area 1** of the Arterial Manse, below.

## THE ARTERIAL MANSE: THE LAIR OF RAZALHESHAN AND VAELIAN

The walls, floors, and ceiling of their home look like pink marble, but are warm and slightly yielding to the touch. If examined closely, the veins in the stone appear to have liquid slowly flowing through them. If punctured, the walls ooze a poisonous ichor. A creature touching this ichor must succeed on a **DC**

### THE ARTERIAL MANSE

□ = 10 FEET





**15 Constitution saving throw** or be poisoned for 1 minute. The poisoned creature is incapacitated. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If exposed to bright light, this poison evaporates after one round.

Ceilings in the manse are smoothly domed, rising to about 20 feet at their apex unless otherwise noted. There are no obvious light sources, but the entire place is dimly lit. Permanent unseen servants keep the place clean and fetch things for either Razalheshan or Vaelian upon their command.

Searching any given room in the manse is likely to turn up various art objects, often with minor enchantments. These would normally be worth between 250 and 1,000 gp each, but finding a buyer for them may be difficult as they tend toward the macabre and bizarre. Typical items include: a realistic crystalline sculpture of an orc's heart, animated to beat, or a brush made from the severed hand of a gnome, coated in silver and set with pearls.

### AREA 1: GRAND HALL

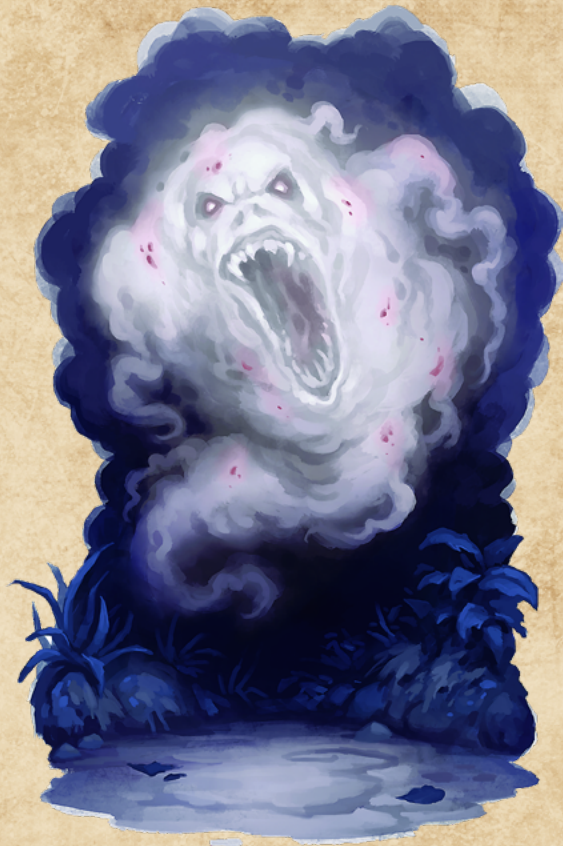
Creatures transported to the Arterial Manse appear in the center of this room. The walls here are covered with a tapestry depicting scenes from Razalheshan and Vaelian's romance through the ages. The images are animated to move extremely slowly, such that they appear still, but are slightly different from day to day. Creatures with a **Passive Perception of 15** or more find this room unnerving as a result, as they feel like there is something moving that they can't quite detect. The ceiling here rises to 30 feet.

The vampiric mists in **Area 4** are alerted if creatures are transported to the Grand Hall.

Hidden behind the tapestry, a **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** discovers a discoloration in the wall running from the floor to about 7 feet high that looks like a healed scar. Cutting a slit along the scar causes the wall to open, revealing a passage to **Area 5**. Creatures passing through this door must succeed on a **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw** to avoid the dripping ichor.

### AREA 2: CLOAK ROOM

A permanent unseen servant cleans and hangs any clothing left in this room. It contains a number of richly appointed robes and cloaks, worth a total of 1,800 gp. Among these is a *cloak of elvenkind*.



### AREA 3: RECEIVING ROOM

This room is lined with comfortable couches. A large painting of Razalheshan and Vaelian hangs on the wall across from the entrance. When they are in the manse, either Razalheshan or Vaelian can animate their image in the painting, speaking through it and seeing through its eyes.

### AREA 4: GUARD ROOM

Four **vampiric mists** (*MToF* p246) wait in this area, ready to defend the manse against intruders. These were once vampire spawn and are still under Vaelian's command.

### AREA 5: PURIFICATION CHAMBER

This chamber is a defense against creatures invading from Khyber. Both doors to this room are closed by *arcane lock* spells cast at 6th level. The inside of each door is also covered by a *glyph of warding*, which activates when someone other than Razalheshan or Vaelian passes through the doorway. The glyph on the hallway door holds a 6th-level *blight* spell. The door to **Area 6** triggers a glyph with a 6th-level explosive runes effect that deals 8d8 thunder damage. The noise from the latter alerts anyone in the manse and the thunder damage causes the walls in this room to ooze their ichor.

## AREA 6: KHYBER GARDENS

The door opens onto a nighttime garden of alien plants in beautiful cavern covered with faintly phosphorescent crystal growths. A path leads through the garden and deeper into the caverns of Khyber.

## AREA 7: SITTING ROOM

This room is comfortably appointed and appears to be a waiting area.

## AREA 8: NECROMANTIC LABORATORY

Elwind Bittryn, a **deathlock mastermind** (*MToF p129*), is Vaelian's laboratory assistant and is conducting experiments for his master.

Vaelian's laboratory is outfitted with a wide variety of equipment, including embalmer's tools, an alchemist's kit, and an herbalist's kit. Among the equipment is an *alchemy jug* and a *gem of seeing*.

## AREA 9: LIBRARY

The library has shelves built into the walls from floor to ceiling and is full of arcane texts with a particular focus upon necromancy. The books here contain nearly all spells from 1st level to 4th level, and all necromancy spells up to 6th level, though it could take hours to find the book that holds a particular spell. There are several rare texts here that could fetch a hefty price from the right buyer.

## AREA 10: PERISHABLE STORAGE

This storage area is under a permanent *gentle repose* effect. Fifteen corpses are in this room, laid out on large shelves. Four of them are drained of blood. Large ceramic jugs full of noxious substances and organs of various creatures (mostly humanoids) line the wall close to the door. These are all well-labeled.

## AREA 11: SCAR EXIT

A pair of unlocked double doors open onto a landing flanked by sheer obsidian walls. A creature that walks forward down what appears to be a path finds itself stepping onto the landing in the chasm with nothing but a sheer drop behind them.

## AREA 12: GHAST KENNEL

A door set into the obsidian leads to Vaelian's kennel, in which there are **10 ghasts** (*MM p148*). They each wear a magical collar that removes their stench ability, but raises the DC of their claw attack to 12. The door is unlocked, but it cannot be opened from the inside.

## AREA 13: BEDROOM SUITE

The bedroom is luxurious, with piles of exotic furs. While some of the furs have been animated through strange uses of necromancy and may move about, they cannot attack.

## AREA 14: VAEIAN'S TOMB

Vaelian's sarcophagus is in this room. The cover is trapped with a 6th-level *glyph of warding*, which targets anyone other than Vaelian who opens it with a 6th-level *blight* spell. A secret compartment inside the sarcophagus requires a successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check** to find and a **DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check** to determine it can only open when the sarcophagus is closed. Inside are 13 gems: 2 star sapphires (1,000 gp each), 3 sapphires (1,000 gp each), 1 emerald (1,000 gp), 6 black pearls (500 gp each), and an *elemental gem* (yellow diamond, earth).

## AREA 15: RAZALHESHAN'S STUDY

The study is quite unlike the rest of the manse, with crystalline walls that act as a *crystal ball of telepathy* with a range that extends both throughout the manse and a 5 mile radius centered on Festering Holt.

## AREA 16: LOUNGE

This room is designed for comfort, filled with pillows and low furniture. A bar along the wall is full of rare intoxicants and hallucinogens.



## AREA 17: DINING ROOM

This would look much like any other dining room were it not for the small stage at the far end outfitted with silver restraints clearly designed to hold a humanoid.

### Lair Actions

When fighting inside their lair, **Razalheshan** (p54) and **Vaelian** (p55) can each invoke the ambient magic to take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), one of them can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- An area of the ground with a 20-foot-radius that Razalheshan or Vaelian can see oozes ichor. The area becomes difficult terrain until initiative count 20 on the next round. Anyone who begins their turn in that area must succeed at a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw** or be affected by the poison. (Razalheshan or Vaelian)
- An area of up to a 40-foot-radius is plunged into magical *darkness*. (Razalheshan or Vaelian)
- A **shadow** (MM p269) is summoned to a space within 60 feet of Vaelian and attacks a target that it can see. It then disappears. (Vaelian)
- A target that Razalheshan can see within 60 feet must succeed on a **DC 16 Charisma saving throw** or be ejected from the manse and teleported to **Area 6**. (Razalheshan)

An effect can't be repeated until they have all available effects have been used, and the same effect cannot be used two rounds in a row.



## RESIDENTS OF FESTERING HOLT

To determine the residents of any home or who the PCs might otherwise encounter in town, roll on or choose from the table below:

### FESTERING HOLT RESIDENTS

#### d100 Creature Type

1-12	Goblins 1d6 goblins (MM p166). 50% chance for each to be a goblin boss (MM p166). 10% chance for one to be a goblin assassin (MM p343).
13-22	Bugbears 1d4 bugbears (MM p33). 50% chance for each to be a bugbear chief (MM p33).
23-25	Hobgoblins 1d4 hobgoblins (MM p186). If 3 or more are encountered, one will be a hobgoblin captain (MM p186). Others have a 50% chance of being a hobgoblin iron shadow (VGtM p162).
26-38	Orcs 1d6 orcs (MM p246). Half of all orcs will be orogs (MM p247). If 4 or more are encountered, one will be an orc war chief (MM p246). If 1 is encountered, it has a 50% chance of being a tanarukk (VGtM p186).
39-51	Humans 1d6 encountered, 50% chance of a mixed group. Roll 1d10 for each: 1-3 berserker, 4-6 cult fanatic, 7 spy, 8-9 veteran, 0 warlock of the fiend.
52-59	Half-Orcs
60-72	Tieflings
73-82	Shifters
83-91	Gnolls 1d6 gnoll flesh gnawers (VGtM p154). Each has a 50% chance to be a gnoll fang of Yeenoghu (MM p163) instead.
92-95	Changelings Roll again on this table. One of the creatures will actually be a changeling. Roll 1d8: It will either be 1-3 a spy (MM p349), 4-6 a cult fanatic (MM p345), or 6-8 an assassin (MM p343).
96-00	Monster Roll on the Monster table below:

#### d6

1 Arcanaloth (MM p313)

2 Imp<sup>1</sup> (MM p76)

3 Incubus<sup>2</sup> (MM p285)

#### d6

4 Minotaur (MM p223)

5 Ogre (MM p237)

6 Oni (MM p239)

<sup>1</sup> Imps have a 75% chance to be in the company of others. If so, roll again on the residents table to find out who they are with.

<sup>2</sup> An incubus has a 75% chance to be disguised as another creature in the company of another of that creature type. If so, roll again to determine that type of creature.

## NPCs

**Elwind Bittryn** was, in life, an alchemist who served as Vaelian's assistant. He engaged in secret necromantic experimentation, drawing necrotic energies from Vaelian in the hope of becoming a lich. Instead, Vaelian discovered his efforts and bound him as a **deathlock mastermind** (*MToF* p129). Now, he is utterly devoted to the necromantic researches that Vaelian assigns him, almost never leaving the laboratory.

**Farrag** is a goblin in Karbal's employ who is responsible for selling general wares out of Dead Before Morning. He and Karbal have worked out a routine with newcomers where Karbal is off putting and Farrag gains their confidence. Farrag takes to this naturally as he is quite personable. Use the stats for **spy** (*MM* p349) with goblin racial traits.

**Jagda** began dreaming of Festering Holt the night she saw a dragonmark etched into the sand by the wind. In the decades since, she has become a student of the Draconic Prophecy and eventually made her way to the site of her dreams. She knows something important will happen at Festering Holt. Whether she should prevent it or enable it she is less certain about.

The other residents of the Holt think she is a night hag and, to her satisfaction, leave her alone. Vaelian is the closest thing she has to a friend and the two consider each other peers in arcane matters. Razalsheshan and Jagda are cordial, but neither trusts the other.



## JAGDA THE CRUEL

*Medium fey (dusk hag), neutral*

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 82 (15d8 + 15)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Int +7, Wis +6

**Skills** Arcana +7, Deception +7, Insight +9, Perception +6, Stealth +5

**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, frightened

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Infernal, Sylvan

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** Jagda's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

*At-will: detect magic, disguise self, fog cloud*

*3/day each: augury, dream, hypnotic pattern, sleep (9d8)*

*1/day each: legend lore, scrying*

**Magic Resistance.** Jagda has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Spellcasting.** Jagda is an 8th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Jagda has the following wizard spells prepared:

*Cantrips (at will): fire bolt, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation*

*1st level (4 slots): absorb elements, charm person, magic missile, protection from good and evil*

*2nd level (3 slots): detect thoughts, invisibility, misty step*

*3rd level (3 slots): counterspell, fear, fireball*

*4th level (2 slots): arcane eye, polymorph*

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Jagda makes two Nightmare Touch or claw attacks.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

**Nightmare Touch.** *Melee Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) psychic damage. If the target is unconscious, it takes an extra 10 (3d6) psychic damage and is cursed until Jagda dies or the curse is removed. The cursed creature's hit point maximum decreases by 5 (1d10) whenever it finishes a long rest.

### REACTIONS

**Dream Eater.** When an unconscious creature Jagda can see within 30 feet of her regains consciousness, Jagda can force the creature to make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. Unless the save succeeds, the creature takes 11 (2d10) psychic damage, and Jagda regains hit points equal to the amount of damage taken.

**Karbal** was under the command of Haruuc Shaarat'kor when they were both mercenaries for House Deneith. Later, after multiple field promotions, he took command of the remains of a battalion that had been sent on a suicide mission for Darguun. Darguun needed plausible deniability for their actions and they did not conveniently perish as expected. Karbal realized they either needed to disappear or die. He chose the former and led them into the Demon Wastes. Karbal typically carries a *potion of speed* and *potion of greater healing*.



## KARBAL

Medium humanoid (bugbear), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 16 (unarmored defense)

**Hit Points** 102 (12d8 + 48)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

**Skills** Intimidation +5, Persuasion +5, Stealth +8, Survival +5

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Common, Goblin, Infernal

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Karbal hits with it (included in the attack).

**Heart of Dhakaan.** Karbal has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned, or put to sleep.

**Reckless.** At the start of his turn, Karbal can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn, but attack rolls against him have advantage until the start of his next turn.

**Surprise Attack.** If Karbal surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage from the attack.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Karbal makes two melee attacks.

**Warhammer.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage or 15 (2d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

## RAZALHESHAN

Medium fiend (rakshasa), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 123 (13d8 + 65)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

**Skills** Arcana +8, Deception +10, Insight +9, Investigation +8, Religion +8

**Damage Vulnerabilities** piercing from magic weapons wielded by good creatures

**Damage Immunities** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elvish, Goblin, Infernal

**Challenge** 14 (11,500 XP)

**Limited Magic Immunity.** Razalheshan can't be affected or detected by spells of 6th level or lower unless it wishes to be. It has advantage on saving throws against all other spells and magical effects.

**Innate Spellcasting.** Razalheshan's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). Razalheshan can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect thoughts, disguise self, friends, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation*

3/day each: *charm person, detect magic, dissonant whispers (6th level), invisibility, levitate, major image, phantasmal force, sending, suggestion*

1/day each: *dominate person, fly, hallucinatory terrain, plane shift, power word pain, project image, synaptic static, true seeing*

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Razalheshan makes two claw attacks.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage, and the target is cursed if it is a creature. The magical curse takes effect whenever the target takes a short or long rest, filling the target's thoughts with horrible images and dreams. The cursed target gains no benefit from finishing a short or long rest. The curse lasts until it is lifted by a remove curse spell or similar magic.

**Double Self.** Razalheshan creates an illusory duplicate of itself. This works like the mirror image spell in all respects except that it creates one image per action.

## LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Razalheshan can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Razalheshan regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Cursing Slash.** Razalheshan makes a claw attack.

**Fade.** Razalheshan turns invisible and moves up to half its speed. The invisibility lasts until the beginning of its next turn. If Razalheshan has illusory duplicates due to Double Self, they fade and reappear as Razalheshan's true form does.

**Mind Burn.** Razalheshan casts dissonant whispers as a first-level spell.

**Multiply.** Razalheshan uses Double Self.

**Razalheshan** is a rakshasa, allied with the Lords of Dust, who left Khorvaire during the Xoriat invasion and traveled to Aerenal. There, he met Vaelian, who impressed him as no mortal ever had. Eventually, he brought Vaelian home and ensured her beauty would not fade with age.

Razalheshan uses the resources of Festering Holt and Vaelian's arcane talents to provide a variety of services for the Lords of Dust.

**Vaelian** was a brilliant necromancer from Aerenal who fell in love with Razalheshan. When House Vol was wiped out, Aerenal became unsafe for other Mabaran necromancers, and Vaelian followed Razalheshan back to the Demon Wastes. The two have a quiet and comfortable existence as the implicit rulers of Festering Holt, and the people of the Holt have learned to leave offerings to Vaelian so as not to be fed from themselves.

Vaelian carries a *wand of paralysis* and a spellshard with the following ritual spells: *detect magic, comprehend languages, identify*, and *tenser's floating disk*.



## VAELIAN

Medium undead (shapechanger), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 144 (17d8 + 68)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Dex +9, Wis +8, Cha +9

**Skills** Arcana +10, History +10, Medicine +8, Investigation +10, Perception +8, Stealth +9, Religion +10

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** necrotic

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Elvish, Giant, Infernal

**Challenge** 15 (13,000 XP)

**Shapechanger.** If Vaelian isn't in sunlight or running water, they can use their action to polymorph into a Tiny bat or a Medium cloud of mist, or back into their true form.

Please refer to the vampire ability (*MM p297*) for specific features of the bat and mist forms.

**Legendary Resistance (3/Day).** If Vaelian fails a saving throw, they can choose to succeed instead.

**Misty Escape.** When Vaelian drops to 0 hit points outside their resting place, they transform into a cloud of mist (as in the Shapechanger trait) instead of falling unconscious, provided they aren't in sunlight or running water. If Vaelian can't transform, they are destroyed.

While Vaelian has 0 hit points in mist form, they can't revert to their vampire form, and they must reach their resting place within 2 hours or be destroyed. Once in their resting place, Vaelian reverts to their vampire form. Vaelian is then paralyzed until an hour has passed and they regain 1 hit point and are no longer paralyzed.

**Regeneration.** Vaelian regains 20 hit points at the start of their turn if they have at least 1 hit point and aren't in sunlight or running water. If Vaelian takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of their next turn.

**Spider Climb.** Vaelian can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

**Vampire Weaknesses.** Vaelian has the typical vampire flaws (*MM p297*).

**Spellcasting.** Vaelian is a 14th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). Vaelian has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand, mending, mold earth, prestidigitation, toll the dead*

1st level (4 slots): *absorb elements, disguise self, magic missile, shield, protection from good and evil*

2nd level (3 slots): *gentle repose, locate object, misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *blight, charm monster, dimension door*

5th level (2 slots): *negative energy flood, telekinesis, wall of force*

6th level (1 slot): *circle of death*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack (Vampire Form Only).** Vaelian makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

**Unarmed Strike (Vampire Form Only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, Vaelian can grapple the target (escape DC 18).

**Bite (Bat or Vampire Form Only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by Vaelian, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and Vaelian regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A humanoid slain in this way and then buried in the ground rises the following night as a vampire spawn under Vaelian's control.

**Charm.** Vaelian targets one humanoid they can see within 30 feet. If the target can see Vaelian, they must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed by Vaelian. The charmed target regards Vaelian as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under the Vaelian's control, it takes Vaelian's requests or actions in the most favorable way it can, and is a willing target for Vaelian's bite attack.

Each time Vaelian or Vaelian's companions do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until Vaelian is destroyed, is on a different plane of existence than the target, or takes a bonus action to end the effect.

**Control Dead.** Vaelian targets one undead they can see within 30 feet. If the target can see Vaelian, they must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or Vaelian determines its actions until the end of its next turn.

**Dance with Death.** Vaelian targets a corpse within 60 feet, creating a zombie or skeleton, as appropriate. This creature gains 14 temporary hit points and deals an additional 5 points of damage with its weapon attacks. It is under Vaelian's control for 24 hours.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Vaelian can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Vaelian regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Move.** Vaelian moves up to their speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

**Unarmed Strike.** Vaelian makes one unarmed strike.

**Bite (Costs 2 Actions).** Vaelian makes one bite attack.

**Necromantic Master (Costs 2 Actions).** Vaelian uses Control Dead or Dance with Death.

# GHAASH DAR

by Jeremy Melloul

Separated into four clans, most of the Ghaash'kala settlements built into the Labyrinth's walls belong to a single clan. While members of other clans might visit on occasion, they do not interact as frequently as you might expect. Each clan has its own domain with the Demon Wastes and associated set of responsibilities. Ghaash Dar, however, is the great exception to this: an inter-clan stronghold and the closest thing the clans have to a holy site which belongs to none of them individually, but instead to the Ghaash'kala as a whole.

The guardians and priests of the various clans make frequent pilgrimages here as part of their worship of Kalok Shash, the Binding Flame. Due to its

importance, Ghaash Dar is also the most populous and best defended of the Ghaash'kala's enclaves. It is a veritable city unto itself, connected to the Labyrinth by an astonishing number of smaller tunnels.

## THE CLAN HOLDS

Ghaash Dar is comprised of four separate Clan Holds, each with its own Cave Heart, where the clan sleeps and goes about their daily lives. These Clan Holds extend across multiple levels and are connected to each other to form a spherical ring surrounding a fifth Cave Heart, the Ghaash'kala's holy ground, where the Balefire lies.

The location of each of the Clan Holds in relation to the Balefire, reflects the lands they are responsible for in the Wastes. The Jaasakah Clan patrols the area east of the Labyrinth and their Clan Hold lies east of the Balefire. The Kastar Clan Hold sits to the west, the Maruk to the south, and the Vaanka to the north.

Though the Clan Holds are all similar to each other, furnished with things acquired from travelers they have encountered or crafted from what the Ghaash'kala scavenge from the Wastes, they do bear their distinctive differences. The Jaasakah, for example, adorn their Clan Hold with trophies from the enemies they have conquered and throw proud celebrations for the completion of a successful hunt. The Kastar collect materials from all across the Demon Wastes and the various demiplanes they venture into, frequently trading these rare commodities with the other clans in exchange for things not found in their domain. The Maruk create training grounds and crafting caves where they maintain their weapons with the meager





tools at their disposal. And lastly, the Vaanka cover their Clan Hold in carvings which tell the story of the Ghaash'kala and extoll the virtues of notable ancestral guardians and priests that answered the call of Kalok Shash.

## THE BALEFIRE

The central Cave Heart of Ghaash Dar is bare, consisting of a circular, open space, with a raised platform in the center. Resting on that platform, the Balefire roars as a golden-red magical flame, held within a massive stone and metal brazier. It is a powerful source of magic and a connection point between the Ghaash'kala and the spiritual force that is Kalok Shash.

Here the priests and guardians of the Ghaash'kala gather four times a year for religious ceremonies, displays of skill, and to share counsel and information. In those times this area is brimming with people, but at all other times the chamber containing the Balefire is quiet and solemn. The priests and guardians who visit kneel in deep contemplation as they seek to deepen their connection to the Binding Flame and offer it their strength so it can continue to keep the demons at bay.

Upon entering the room, the heat is palpable and the closer one gets to the flame the more overwhelming it becomes. Only priests, or those with a profound connection to Kalok Shash, are able to reach the raised platform without succumbing to the heat and exhaustion. Those able to commune with the flame often report receiving visions from the fires. The priests of the Ghaas'kala use these visions to guide the clan's movements, thwart demonic incursions, and find entrances to other Khyber demiplanes they can raid for supplies.

## THE CAVES OF SOLACE

Located below the Jaasakah Clan Hold, the Caves of Solace are integral to the Ghaash'kala's existence in the Demon Wastes. When travelers or adventurers enter the land, they do so against the Ghaash'kala's warnings. If they later try to exit, they must face the Ghaash'kala again. Few pass the rigorous tests the Ghaash'kala give those seeking to leave; the evil of the Wastes is so insidious that it taints all but the purest of souls.

When the Ghaash'kala deem someone unfit to leave the Wastes, there are two options. Either the travelers are killed to avoid any chance they might spread the Wastes' demonic influence, or they are brought to the Caves of Solace.

To describe the Caves of Solace as a prison is not

wrong, but that does not cover the nuances of their purpose. While those kept here are under constant guard, they are also cared for as best the Ghaash'kala can. Their wounds are treated and training provided so that they can contribute to the Ghaash'kala's survival. Each group is assigned a guardian to watch over them and be responsible for showing the "foundlings" the ways of the Ghaash'kala. They are trained, educated in the ways of the faith, and expected to contribute to the clan. Those who do not take to the training and re-education either live out the rest of their lives in the Caves as prisoners, or are used as fodder to fight dangerous beasts or powerful fiends.

Those who demonstrate progress and come to terms with their new life can potentially be adopted into one of the clans. This requires a member of one of the clans stepping forward to sponsor the foundlings, taking responsibility for them in place of their original guardian.

## NPCs

Below are a few members of the four Ghaash'kala clans you can expect to encounter in Ghaash Dar. Though each of the clans, except for the Vaanka, have their own strongholds, the sar'malaan, or high priests, of each clan spend a lot of time in Ghaash Dar, where they can be close to the Balefire of Kalok Shash.

**Gan'dal Homm.** Gan'dal Homm is the high priest of the Jaasakah clan. A human, he is one of only a few non-orcs in positions of power or high esteem among the Ghaash'kala. Born to adventurers who had come to the Demon Wastes and been forbidden to leave by the Ghaash'kala, he is not blind to the ways of outlanders and can be more forgiving than his clanmates. Because of this, Gan'dal holds a position that keeps him in Ghaash Dar as guardian of the Caves of Solace.

**Naakah Shahar.** High priest of the Kastar clan, Naakah is an orc renowned for her ability to commune with the flame and locate portals to the demiplanes of Khyber where the Ghaash'kala find supplies critical to their survival. In her youth, she traveled much of the Demon Wastes, learning the ways of the other clans, but now spends most of her time in Ghaash Dar to help guide the Ghaash'kala in their endless mission.

**Muglok Ikaba.** Muglok is not the sar'malaan of the Maruk clan. Instead, he is a speaker appointed to remain in Ghaash Dar to coordinate with the other clans on behalf of the Maruk. A half-orc with a keen mind for strategy, Muglok does his best to temper the rage of the Ghaash'kala barbarians into a productive

form, teaching them to harness their anger rather than completely lose themselves in it.

**Dalkal Mal'fonn.** Dalkal is the kizshmit, or chief-tain, of the Vaanka clan. Despite her Orcish-sounding name, Dalkal is a striking human, who wears her long red hair in braids. The Vaanka live in Ghaash Dar year-round in order to remain as close to the Balefire as possible and Dalkal is the most diplomatic of the clan leaders, with a great mind for organization. Once viewed skeptically by the clans, she earned their respect when she proved able to channel the power of Kalok Shash, becoming a paladin of the Binding Flame.

**Silvik Raam.** Sar'malaan of the Vaanka, Silvik has spent more time in the light of the Balefire than any other member of the Ghaash'kala. A powerful cleric of the binding flame, Silvik is a completely bald orc with an intricate series of tattoos that cover his entire body and serve as his tribal brand. Silvik is unusual because he is not as zealous as many of the others. Some accuse him of not truly believing in the Ghaash'kala's mission, but Silvik feels he understands it better than most. He knows the battle they fight is one they will never win, but one they must

continue to wage forever. Despite this understanding, Silvik wishes this weren't the case and gazes into the Balefire for a path to end the corruption in the Demon Wastes once and for all.

## ADVENTURE SEEDS

Ghaash Dar is the heart of Ghaash'kala settlements in the Demon Wastes and an opportunity for players to explore the Labyrinth and get to know the Ghaash'kala clans through individual NPCs and their larger missions. The adventure seeds below can offer great stand-alone missions or be expanded into longer adventures that can better fit your campaign.

## MONSTER HUNTS

One of the main tasks of the Ghaash'kala is to eradicate the demons found in the Labyrinth. These monster hunts are both martial challenges and spiritual undertakings. The monsters—usually fiends—the Ghaash'kala have identified to hunt are posted in the Jaasakah's Clan Hold. They are accompanied by any information the clans have on the monsters, including their location or any hints the priests were able to divine from the fires of Kalok Shash. Rewards are rarely offered, besides the glory and the contribution to the Ghaash'kala cause. All hunters are expected to return with a trophy of their prey.

## CAPTIVE TRAVELERS

**Breton** (male human **noble** *MM p348*), **Riva** (female human **veteran** *MM p350*), and **Holt** (male half-orc **knight** *MM p347*) are travelers to the Demon Wastes who came searching for profit and glory. Riva and Holt are Breton's retainers, and Breton is a young, dragonmarked member of House Tharashk. Finding no success they tried to leave, but were stopped by the Ghaash'kala and brought to the Caves of Solace, where they've spent the last few months enduring the clan's training and re-education.

Breton wants to hire the party to help them escape Ghaash Dar and the Demon Wastes, promising rewards from his house if they do. Their guardian is an orc named Dagon Bul'da from the Jaasakah clan. He is an angry, unforgiving guardian who has a reputation for sending his wards to their deaths in battle. Dagon is convinced that Breton and his retainers are tainted and refuses to let them be sponsored to join a clan. Helping them escape may earn the players rewards back in the Shadow Marshes, but risks making an enemy of the Ghaash'kala if not handled with care.



# MARUK DAR

by Jeremy Melloul

Built within the winding caverns of the Labyrinth, the Ghaash'kala settlement of Maruk Dar is one of their largest enclaves, second only to the inter-clan stronghold of Ghaash Dar. Hidden from view and protected by numerous traps and watchful guardians, the sanctity of Maruk Dar is of great importance to the Ghaash'kala in general and the Maruk clan specifically.

The Maruk clan is the most warlike of the Ghaash'kala, pursuing their divine mandate to defeat and contain the evils of the Demon Wastes with great fervor. They are charged with guarding the central passages through the Labyrinth—a dangerous route frequently used by the Lords of Dust and their agents.

Due to their martial dedication to Kalok Shash's mission, Maruk Dar itself is not just a settlement, but a staging ground for many of the clan's raids into the demiplanes within Khyber. Though the Maruk clan is the biggest of the Ghaash'kala clans, even the "bustling" Maruk Dar only has a few hundred people in it at any time, since much of the clan is forever on patrol.

The path to Maruk Dar is difficult to navigate without the guidance of a seasoned Ghaash'kala guardian, or someone who can recognize the symbols carved on the walls which indicate the way forward. Spike pits, rockfall traps, and secret passages and staircases serve well to deter those who might wish the clans harm.

## THE CAVE HEART

The central area of Maruk Dar is the Cave Heart: a large open space with smaller chambers carved off to the sides, used as personal living areas. The Ghaash'kala do not have much in the way of material wealth, but make good use of anything they come across. Curtains, clothes, and bedrolls are woven from scarce plant fibers or taken from the Waste's trespassers. Other items are crafted from anything they can scavenge. It is a meager existence, but not an unpleasant one for the Ghaash'kala, who have

little desire for luxury, instead leading almost monastic lives organized around their faith.

## THE BATTLEGROUND

The Maruk clan believes they deepen their connection to Kalok Shash through combat. Therefore, the Battlegrounds are places of both martial and spiritual significance to the clan. The Battlegrounds consists of numerous small arenas: patches of flat dirt demarcated by circles of stones. It also is where the Maruk clan stores and cares for weapons not currently in use. Any from across the clans who aspire to be guardians, or seek to increase their skill in combat, make their way to Maruk Dar to learn techniques with a variety of weapons, although swords are most common. Enemy tactics are likewise taught—beast and fiend alike.

## NPCs

The Maruk Ghaash'kala, like the other clans, spend the majority of their time traveling the Wastes. But





there are a few members you can expect to find in Maruk Dar.

**Torgon Shashaarat** (Chieftain/Kizshmit). A powerful orc, Torgon is leader to the Maruk clan in more than just title. First into the fray in any battle, Torgon is an extraordinary warrior, wielding a sword and a strong, metal shield—a rare piece of equipment among the clans. Sporting many scars from previous battles, Torgon also takes trophies from his enemies, adding them to his armor. Torgon can also channel the light of Kalok Shash to some degree and is the bulwark of the Maruk clan.

**Lharc Suusha** (Head Priest/Sar'malaan). Old and wrinkled, Lharc's dedication to Kalok Shash and the ways of the Ghaash'kala is unquestioned. The elderly orc has watched over many chieftains and several generations of Maruk guardians in her capacity as a priest and now, sar'malaan of their clan. Though compassionate to her warriors, she has no patience for weakness. Lharc generally moves between Maruk Dar and Ghaash Dar, except when her prodigious divine powers are called for elsewhere. In Maruk Dar, she is frequently charged with cremating the remains of fallen guardians, consecrating their souls to the Binding Flame.

**Ahnad Cai** (Trainer). An elderly olive-skinned human, Ahnaid Cai has long retired from the battlefields of the Demon Wastes. Instead, the taciturn war veteran now spends his days in Maruk Dar, training those who come to the enclave's Battlegrounds and helping new inductees to the Ghaash'kala get settled. Ahnad also boasts a particularly vast knowledge of fiends and the dangers of the Wastes.

## ADVENTURE: EXPEDITION TO KHYBER

The party encounters a group of Maruk Ghaash'kala guardians who were attacked by an unexpectedly large group of Briarthorn Carrion Tribe barbarians before they could enter a nearby Khyber demiplane to gather supplies their clan needs to survive. The lone survivor of the Ghaash'kala band, a half-orc named Valka, requests the adventurers help her burn her fallen comrades and venture into the demiplane with her to stop the Carrion Tribe from making off with the much-needed supplies.

## STORY HOOK

The adventurers could encounter Valka (Ghaash'kala Clan Guardian) anywhere in the Demon Wastes, though it makes the most sense for them to do so in the southern or western portions of the land. They can come across her tracks, mixed with a trail of blood, which lead to a small cave where she's attempting to treat her injuries, with little success. She greets the group with suspicion, ready to put up a brave fight and die if it comes to it. If the characters can convince her they mean her no harm, however, she'll accept their help and share her story while leading them to the scene of battle.

## DEDICATION TO KALOK SHASH

The dust has long settled by the time Valka and the party arrive. The victorious Carrion Tribe barbarians have ravaged the bodies of the Ghaash'kala warriors, taking all the weapons, many of their heads, the fangs of the orcs, and their armor. Several dead

Carrion Tribe warriors litter the ground as well. With the party's help, Valka lays her fellow guardians out and builds a pyre to consecrate their souls to Kalkok Shash. She leaves the Carrion Tribesfolk to rot. Though not a priest, she gives a hesitant prayer while the bodies burn. Afterward, she is more comfortable with the party, taking their arrival as a sign the Binding Flame acted as a beacon to draw the adventurers in her time of need. With renewed determination, she asks the party to help her once more, this time to follow the Carrion Tribe into the demiplane and complete her mission.

### THE TEMPLE IN THE DEMIPLANE

Valka leads the party to the location of the portal her people found. After stepping through they arrive in the demiplane: a small grove of twisted trees which surround a sinister, overgrown stone temple. A short staircase leads up toward the temple.

### THE HALL OF TORMENT

Stepping inside, the party sees a 20-foot wide, 60-foot long chamber, with an imposing set of doors at the far end. Three sets of large demonic statues line the walls, facing each other, at 15-foot intervals. The ground is littered with the corpses of dead Carrion Tribe barbarians, who seem to have already sprung many traps here: darts, swinging axes, and more. In addition, the bodies of many quasits, who have clearly died in combat with the barbarians, are strewn about the floor. Whenever the party approaches within 10 feet of one of the statues, it activates. Its eyes glow red and the trespasser must make a **DC 12 Constitution saving throw** or suffer 1 level of exhaustion. The statues can be destroyed. They have an AC of 17 and 22 HP.

### CONFRONTATION WITH THE CARRION TRIBE

Through the doors at the end of the hall is the central chamber of the temple. It is 40 feet square and the far wall is overgrown with vines and a large, healthy tree towers in front of it. In the center of the room is a raised dais, with a small, demonic wooden shrine. A **barlgura** (*MM p56*) is curled up asleep next to it.

Just inside are **3 Carrion Tribe Reavers** (*p39*), **1 Carrion Tribe Champion** (*p38*), and **1 Carrion Tribe Sakah Hunter** (*p39*). Rather than attacking immediately, the barbarians immediately go on guard and the Sakah Hunter quietly offers to work together, despite the presence of the Ghaash'kala guardian. The Carrion Tribe wants the items on the shrine: demonic tools

that Valka wants no part of. They indicate Valka is likely more interested in the *goodberries* which hang from the tree's thick branches. Though reticent, Valka will follow the group's lead in deciding whether to work with the Carrion Tribe to defeat the barlgura, or fight the barbarians here and now. If the party chooses to cooperate, the Carrion Tribe barbarians will not betray them, but do insist on taking the contents of the shrine. If they instead choose to fight the Briarthorn warriors, the barlgura wakes from the sounds of battle and attacks the two groups indiscriminately.

### THE BOUNTY OF BALTIS

The shrine upon the dais contains the *Mask of Nightmares*, the *Tyrant's Gauntlet*, a strange seed, and a damaged stone tablet with an inscription written in Infernal. If none of the party can read the Infernal, the Carrion Tribe Sakah Hunter can translate for them, if she survives, or Valka can try to read it in her barely passable Infernal. The inscription reads, "...and so the great Baltis stole the druid's treasure, and nature's gift became the demon's bounty: a tree of unending fruit that grows anew every day." The seed, like the tree, is magical. When planted, the seed grows to a full sized tree in three days and produces 100 *goodberries* each day. Once picked, the berries wither and die after 24 hours.

### RETURN TO MARUK DAR

Should Valka survive, she leads the party to Maruk Dar to present whatever they managed to acquire. Returning to Maruk Dar with Valka and the supplies in tow earns the party the favor of the Maruk clan.

### Magic Items

#### MASK OF NIGHTMARES

*Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)*

While worn, this horned bone mask, grants you advantage on saving throws against being frightened. In addition, you can use the mask to cast *fear* once per day without expending a spell slot or any material components.

#### TYRANT'S GAUNTLETS

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

These clawed gauntlets turn your hands into magic weapons that deal 1d6 slashing damage and grant a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. In addition, while wearing these gauntlets you can cast *command* once per day.

# ROTTING BLADE

by Alan Tucker

If there is one thing many of the night hags crave more than power, it is adulation. Sometimes they seek the former only in an effort to gain the latter. Vrarua seems to be one of these. To this end, she has established a settlement of sorts, sitting in the northern foothills of the Shadowcrag and west of the Lake of Fire. It consists of a handful of buildings—hardly more than shanties to be honest—and a modest stone edifice used for worship and likely other sinister activities. The only times Vrarua wanders away from her demesne is to replenish her supply of lackeys, who exist only to grovel and serve their self-styled queen. Her vanity is imminently exploitable and she poses little threat when the inevitable conflict with the fiends arises.

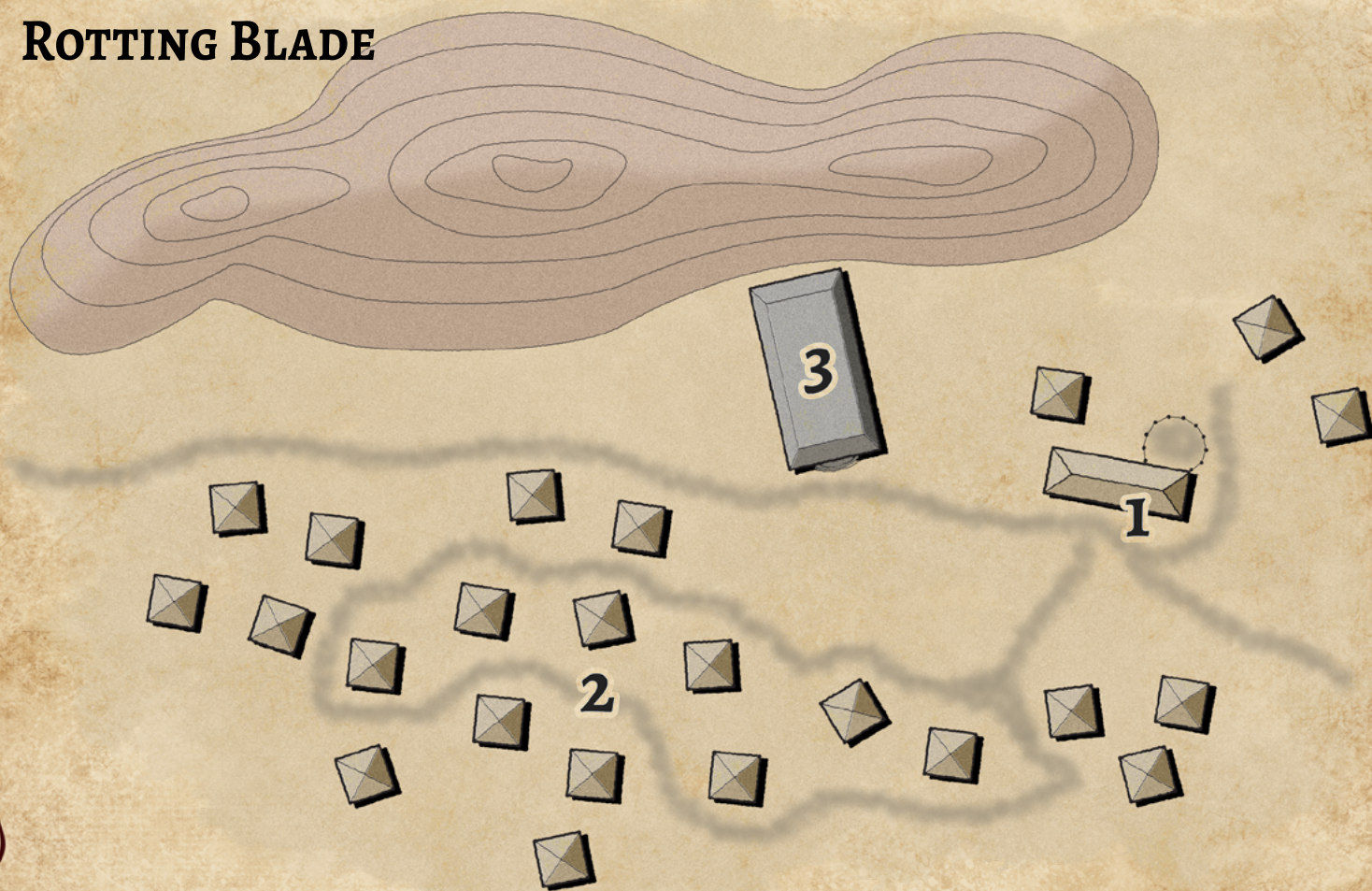
## OVERVIEW

The village only boasts a population of around 40, consisting primarily of kobolds, orcs, half-orcs, and a handful of humans. They survive at the whim of Vrarua, since food does not grow in the Wastes and hunting is scarce in the best of times. How the majority of them spend their time is anyone's guess, though Vrarua requires frequent "offerings" in her temple. These range from hair and nail clippings to blood and even body parts such as fingers and toes—all of which she uses as ingredients in her vile potions and elixirs.

### (1) THE SPIT AND POLISH

One structure in the town proper stands out only because of its size. Built like all its neighbors from mud and bits of rock, with an aging wooden roof, the Spit and Polish takes up the space of about three of the "regular" hovels. It loosely serves the function of a tavern and gets its name from what the proprietor spends most of her day doing: cleaning a mismatched collec-

## ROTTING BLADE



tion of glassware using her spittle and a grimy rag. Kip is a kobold who values her glass treasures above everything but the queen she worships. Patrons are served something that Kip calls ale—strongly alcoholic, but tastes like dirty bathwater—in clay mugs. Her prized collection is displayed proudly behind the poorly constructed bar and definitely not used for customers.

There are 8-10 townsfolk in the Spit and Polish at any time of day or night, though they are not the typical farmers or traveling merchants one often finds in such an establishment in the rest of Khorvaire. Other kobolds, snarling orcs, and filthy half-orcs and humans sit and dull their minds with Kip's ale. Any newcomers to Rotting Blade are viewed as opportunities by both the populace and their queen. All are wary, however, and spend time sizing up anyone who ventures into the Demon Wastes before making a move.

If lodging is desired, Kip grudgingly moves a few tables and chairs from the far corner of the room and offers the floor space for bedrolls. She has no food for sale and explicitly forbids making a cooking fire inside. She charges whatever she thinks she can get away with for ale and lodging, starting at a gold piece each and quickly working her way down if challenged.

## (2) HOVELS

Each of these 10-foot, roughly square buildings is made from a conglomerate of mud and loose stone and capped by a roof of rough wood planks.

## (3) TEMPLE

This building is of much finer construction, fashioned from carved granite and detailed with dark marble. Two rows of unforgiving stone benches fill most of the space inside. A wide copper bowl sits on a granite pedestal at the back of the temple where an altar would normally stand. The back wall is covered, floor to ceiling, with heavy, red velvet drapes. These hide a concealed door which leads to a pocket dimension Vrania calls home.

Vrania keeps herself hidden most of the time, preferring to concoct potions and sery on others from the safety of her lair. She relies on her subjects to determine the danger or usefulness of any newcomers to Rotting Blade before deciding to make herself known or not.

## VRARIA'S LAIR

This small pocket dimension is accessed through a portal behind the curtains in the temple. It is essentially a single large chamber filled with spell ingredients and sundries. In the middle sits a bubbling, iron cauldron where Vrania spends most of her time.

## LAIR ACTIONS

If **Vrania** (p65) is confronted in her lair, she gains the following lair actions which happen on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties). Vrania can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

**Cauldron Cloud.** Vrania's cauldron bubbles and froths, creating a cloud of toxic mist with a 15-foot radius, centered on the cauldron. Any creature other than Vrania within the effect must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) necrotic damage and become poisoned until the end of their next turn.

**Acid Bombs.** With a flick of her wrist, Vrania causes 6 (1d4 + 4) vials of acid to fly off the shelves in her lair. Every creature in the lair, except Vrania and her allies, must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (2d8) acid damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

**Cackling Fright.** Bare skulls and mummified heads throughout Vrania's lair cackle and screech, creating a terrifying din. Each creature in the lair who can hear, except Vrania and her allies, must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. Creatures can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the



effect on a success. Once a creature succeeds on the saving throw, or the effect ends for it, they are immune to Vraria's Cackling Fright for 24 hours.

## NPCs

**Kip** runs the Spit and Polish and is a female kobold of middle age. She was raised from an egg by Vraria and may have been exposed to some odd chemicals during her gestation. She obsesses over her collection of glassware, which she constantly polishes in between serving customers in the bar. Kip talks in a gravelly, high-pitched voice and isn't afraid to charge exorbitant prices for her ale or a section of floor to sleep on. Although she is gruff with the clientele, anyone else in town will rise to her defense immediately if she is threatened.

**Praxar** is an **oinoloth** (MToF p251) who serves Vraria in a couple of different capacities. Praxar enforces the law, such as it is, in Rotting Blade. The law being that every resident must hold their ruler, Vraria, above all others and be ready to give her anything she asks for. In addition, the toxins Praxar's body produces are key ingredients in some of Vraria's more insidious brews and she is constantly experimenting with new formulas. Praxar prefers to be alone most of the time, but does patrol the area regularly, just to remind Rotting Blade's citizens of their presence. After countless years of warfare across many planes, Praxar tired of battlefields and decided to settle in a place where blight was already ever-present. They feel comfortable in the Wastes, if not in the company of mortal humanoids, and Vraria has treated them very well. When they speak, telepathically, it is a guttural whisper that commands attention without volume.

**Birk** is another fiend in Vraria's employ. He is an **orthon** (MToF p169) who is in charge of rounding up new "recruits" to Rotting Blade's small, but ever-changing population. Birk regularly leads expeditions into the Eldeen Reaches and sometimes the Shadow Marches or even Droaam to replenish Vraria's supply of subjects. She also sends Birk on solo missions occasionally to satisfy his lust for the hunt and challenging combat. Birk's telepathic voice is a booming basso that can't be ignored.

**Arad'dok** considers himself Vraria's high priest, though he has no clerical magic. He

is an elderly orc with two fingers missing on his left hand and one on his right. He has also given one of his tusks and four toes to the object of his worship, Vraria, and is proud of his sacrifices. He wears a set of tattered red robes and walks barefoot to better show off his missing digits, though he walks with a noticeable limp. Vraria frequently visits him in his dreams using her Nightmare Haunting ability, where she appears to him as a strong and beautiful female orc. Arad'dok can only withstand a few more of the hour-long visits before his soul is lost, but Vraria is careful not to fully exhaust him too often. Arad'dok is always quick to praise his queen in his deep, rough voice that gives off a small whistle sometimes because of his missing tusk.

**Makka** appears to be a typical half-orc denizen of the village, but is actually a changeling spy for House





Tharashk. Use the **veteran** (*MM p350*) for stats, plus the changeling racial traits. Makka was sent to investigate a number of disappearances from Droaam and the Marches, but is in over their head. Vvaria is aware of Makka's true nature and has chosen to play along because it amuses her. Makka recently sacrificed a finger in the temple and is looking for a way out of Rotting Blade. They attempt to surreptitiously contact any adventurers that pass through the hellish hamlet,

speaking in clipped whispers.

Lastly, six of Rotting Blade's inhabitants are actually **dybbuks** (*MToF p132*) inhabiting the bodies of former citizens. These body-possessing fiends help keep the other citizens in line and are the first to be called upon for Birk's hunting parties. They delight in macabre displays which reveal their otherworldly nature and ruin their "disguises."

## VVARIA (ANCIENT NIGHT HAG)

*Medium fiend, neutral evil*

Armor Class 19 (natural armor and ring)

Hit Points 187 (25d8 + 75)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	22 (+6)	18 (+4)	24 (+7)

Skills Arcana +9, Deception +11, Insight +9, Perception +9, Persuasion +11, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks made by weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities necrotic

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal, Primordial

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

**Ancient Secrets.** Vvaria can maintain concentration on two spells at once and automatically succeeds on Constitution saving throws to maintain concentration due to taking damage.

**Innate Spellcasting.** Vvaria's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 19, +11 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At-will: *detect magic, invisibility, magic missile*

2/day each: *plane shift* (self only), *ray of enfeeblement, sleep*

**Legendary Resistance (2/Day).** If Vvaria fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

**Magic Resistance.** Vvaria has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Spellcasting.** Vvaria is an 18th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). Vvaria has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, fog cloud, identify, protection from good and evil*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, mirror image, misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fly, gaseous form*

4th level (3 slots): *arcane eye, banishment, blight, greater invisibility*

5th level (3 slots): *contact other plane, hold monster, scrying*

6th level (1 slot): *chain lightning*

7th level (1 slot): *reverse gravity*

8th level (1 slot): *mind blank*

9th level (1 slot): *foresight*

### ACTIONS

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

**Change Shape.** Vvaria magically polymorphs into a Small or Medium female humanoid, or back into her true form. Her statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies.

**Etherealness.** Vvaria magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. To do so, the hag must have a heartstone in her possession.

**Nightmare Haunting (1/Day).** While on the Ethereal Plane, Vvaria magically touches a sleeping humanoid on the Material Plane. A protection from evil and good spell cast on the target prevents this contact, as does a magic circle. As long as the contact persists, the target has dreadful visions. If these visions last for at least 1 hour, the target gains no benefit from its rest, and its hit point maximum is reduced by 5 (1d10). If this effect reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and if the target was evil, its soul is trapped in Vvaria's soul bag. The reduction to the target's hit point maximum lasts until removed by the greater restoration spell or similar magic.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Vvaria can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Vvaria regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

**Move.** Vvaria moves without provoking opportunity attacks.

**Cast a Spell.** Vvaria casts one spell from her Innate Spellcasting trait.

**Cast a Spell (Costs 2 Actions).** Vvaria casts one spell from her Spellcasting trait.

*Inspired by the Ancient Night Hag from The Korranberg Chronicle: Threat Dispatch by Anthony J. Turco*

# BLOOD CRESCENT

by Jeremy Melloul

*Note: Though too new or inconsequential for Endeolorth to mention, I am including information on both Blood Crescent and Desolate (p110) in these writings. —Kendal*

The fiendish lands of the Demon Wastes are known to be treacherous and hold many dangers. Most steer clear from this ancient, long-fallen seat of power. But some see opportunity in its ravaged plains. House Tharashk is notable among these outliers. Renowned for, among other things, its prospectors and their willingness to hire monstrous help for projects, House Tharashk has always relentlessly pursued profit. The ancient ruins and precious deposits of Khyber dragonshards within the Demon Wastes are prizes the House greatly desires. After several attempts, they succeeded in building an outpost near the southern end of the Demon Wastes, overlooking Crescent Bay and its surrounding waters. This is Blood Crescent: a small, but well-defended outpost, used by both House Tharashk and independent adventurers as a base from which to launch expeditions into the Demon Wastes searching for wealth and lost knowledge.

## OVERVIEW

Blood Crescent is located south of Fiendfell, built on the shores of Crescent Bay, from which it gets its name. Across the bay lie the Shadow Marches and the town of Yrlag, Blood Crescent's primary source of supplies.

Established shortly before the end of the Last War, Blood Crescent's history isn't long, but it is storied. From the initial efforts to establish the outpost to the endless sieges it's suffered at the hands of not only the Carrion Tribes, but also the random fiends and monsters that roam the Demon Wastes. Life in Blood Crescent is hard.

As a result, the people of Blood Crescent, at least those who have stayed there for any stretch of time, are hardened. They live in constant tension, the many dangers of the Demon Wastes always looming overhead. Nobody knows when the Carrion Tribes will strike in great numbers, or if a powerful fiend will set its sights on their tenuous bastion of safety. For now, they endure—either because they seek profit for themselves, or because they have been ordered here by their House.

So, while Blood Crescent might be little more than a fortified hamlet, its small size belies the grit and resolve of those who make their lives within the outpost's walls.

## (1) THE GUARDHOUSE

As the largest building in Blood Crescent, the guardhouse's size reflects its importance to the outpost's defenses and garrison in the town.

The guardhouse contains its own barracks, an armory, a canteen, as well as offices where the outpost's commander handles their affairs and oversees the protection of the settlement.

Around the guardhouse are several other emergency warehouses and lesser facilities, as well as training fields where not only guards, but also commoners, can work on their weapon skills. When Blood Crescent comes under attack, it's all hands on deck.

The guardhouse is defended by the thickest and tallest walls and even has its own set of walls and gate, facing the rest of the town. This separation allows the guardhouse and surrounding area to serve as a last bastion in the event of an overwhelming attack.

## (2) OUTPOST WALLS

Blood Crescent's many walls defend it from any attack that doesn't come from the sea or the river that separates the settlement. These walls have sentries posted to them at all times, keeping an eye out for the Demon Wastes' many dangers. There are small towers along the walls with bunks, extra ammunition, and signal bells to warn the rest of the outpost of any attack.

## (3) HARBORS & WAREHOUSES

Blood Crescent's lifeblood is the bay upon which it is built. Not only does the harbor give the settlement access to its few trading partners, it also provides an important, albeit scarce, source of fish. As a result, the small settlement boasts a surprising number of small docks for its size and a number of warehouses nearby store food and supplies.

## (4) BARRACKS

Most of the soldiers in Blood Crescent live in one of the outpost's many barracks. Due to the high casualty rate, most of the barracks are sparsely populated. Some veterans even have entire smaller buildings to themselves. While this can be a mark of pride and skill among the soldiers, it is also a bitter reminder of the lethality of the Demon Wastes. Most of the regulars have taken care to maintain memorials in each barracks for deceased bunkmates. Some of these memorials sport names from years before the current occupants lived there, encouraging green recruits to quickly steel themselves for life in Blood Crescent.

# BLOOD CRESCENT



## (5) THE DENTED SHIELD TAVERN

Located in a converted barracks, the Dented Shield is very much a soldier's watering hole. While that might make it less desirable anywhere else, Blood Crescent's civilians are generally more than willing to sit and drink with the soldiers who keep them safe.

The Tavern is run by a half-orc named Maknok, who once served as a soldier before receiving a severe injury during a Carrion Tribe attack on the outpost. Though crippled, he converted the large barracks that housed his squad—from which he was the sole survivor—into a tavern. Ever since it has been a place of warmth and fellowship for soldiers and transient adventurers alike.

Adventurers intent on exploring the Demon Wastes may find Blood Crescent, generally, and the Dented Shield, specifically, suitable to use as a home base. They could arrange for more permanent housing with Maknok, or even be granted one of the numerous empty warehouses or barracks should they manage to win the favor of Blood Crescent's commander.

### NPCs

Almost the entirety of the population in Blood Crescent work for House Tharashk in some way, either as operatives and soldiers of the House, or through its various enterprises. Primarily comprised of humans and half-orcs, the outpost does also have a small share of other races, including some monstrous beings House Tharashk is known to employ as mercenaries and laborers.

Below are a few of the most notable individuals in the settlement.

**Baruk** (Commander). Tall with a strong build, Baruk is a male half-orc with a number of scars. While he has a reputation as a ruthless and no-nonsense commander, Baruk nonetheless is well-liked and respected by the guards of Blood Crescent because of how well he has kept the settlement safe during his tenure. Baruk is direct and to the point in all his conversations. He is keenly aware of how uncertain life can be in the Demon Wastes and has little tolerance for anyone who wastes his time or works against the interests of the settlement. As such, he comes down quickly and harshly on crime. To him, you're either working to support Blood Crescent or you're better off dead. Baruk can serve as both an authority figure and a quest-giver.

**Maknok** (The Tavernkeep). The half-orc Maknok

who runs the Dented Shield Tavern once served as a soldier. An injury during a heroic effort against an early Carrion Tribe attack on Blood Crescent left him crippled—robbed of his left arm from the elbow down. That didn't stop him, however. Being a genial and encouraging soldier, he wanted to contribute to building morale in Blood Crescent and converted his old barracks into the Dented Shield Tavern. Ever since, it has been a place of warmth and fellowship for soldiers and transient adventurers alike, with many of these people giving damaged equipment or battle trophies over to the tavern to be displayed and encouraging the denizens of Blood Crescent to strive toward greater heights and keep the settlement protected.

**Esmelda** (Harbormaster). A Tharashk operative, this olive-skinned woman has a cunning intellect and seems to always know the latest rumors around the outpost. Whereas Baruk commands the outpost's military forces, Esmelda handles much of Tharashk's efforts to extricate valuable resources from the dan-



gerous land around them. She is deeply invested in House Tharashk's internal politics and can be a strong ally for an adventuring party that comes to the Blood Crescent, though she won't hesitate to use passing adventurers to pursue profit for the House, an agenda that often causes her to butt heads with Baruk, who is most concerned with Blood Crescent's security.

## ADVENTURE SEEDS

Blood Crescent is an effective launching pad for characters to explore the Demon Wastes. The adventure seeds below are designed to get them involved in Blood Crescent and give them opportunities to meet NPCs in the outpost. These can be stand-alone missions or be expanded into longer adventures to better fit your campaign.

### DRAGONSHARD DEPOSITS

While the Demon Wastes are dangerous, the soldiers of Blood Crescent are required to venture out into the treacherous landscape in order to find profitable resources to deliver to House Tharashk. As a result, scouting parties are regularly sent out on missions to find pits of Khyber dragonshards and other valuable materials. While these parties are generally comprised of House Tharashk soldiers and operatives it has become an increasingly common practice for the outpost to hire adventurers in their stead.

Rather than a specific mission, this is an ongoing request by House Tharashk—one that, when complete, they are always willing to reward handsomely. The House pays a modest deposit for any information and then provides more substantial payment once the claim is verified. Depending on the dangers, House Tharashk's operatives in Blood Crescent may have more work for the adventurers to protect any prospecting parties or mining operations they launch around any discovered deposits.

Before that happens, however, a deposit must be found. Describe rumors around town of possible locations, or hand out vague maps showing large swaths of the Demon Wastes that have yet to be explored.

This exploration phase can involve some skill checks or encounters (*see Survival Challenges Table below*) over prolonged periods of time to allow parties to experience the myriad dangers and mysteries of the Demon Wastes. Once they find a deposit, you can include a danger to overcome like a nesting fiend or rival mining operation that has been covertly set up.

## SURVIVAL CHALLENGES TABLE

### 1d6 Survival Challenges

- 1 **Barren Wasteland.** The Demon Wastes are an empty, grueling environment that weighs on you physically and mentally. Make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion.
- 2 **Briarthorn Patch.** A patch of twisted vines tainted with demonic power curl up out of the badlands. The patch is noticed by a passive Perception of 14 or higher. If approached, the patch shifts, forming a **shambling mound** (*MM p270*) and attacks the nearest target.
- 3 **Shifting Shadows.** The shadows around you are shifting strangely. Characters with successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) checks notice a **shadow demon** (*MM p64*), which attacks when spotted. It gains a surprise action if the party fails the check.
- 4 **Feasting Demons.** A putrid stench fills the air. You notice the sounds of feasting. On a nearby mound, a **vrock** (*MM p64*) feeds on a group of fallen adventurers. If unmolested, the vrock ignores the party, but one of the adventures may still be alive...
- 5 **Lone Guardian.** You encounter a lone **Ghaash'kala clan guardian** (*p34*) who questions your motives for being in the Wastes. If you're entering, they give you a remorseful warning. But if you're leaving, they try to stop you and may call more allies.
- 6 **Boiling Mud.** The ground ahead seems to bubble occasionally. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check spots the danger and characters receive advantage on DC 15 Dexterity saving throws to avoid the scalding mud. Characters who fail the save take 7 (2d6) fire damage.

## THE LOST SCOUTS

Recently, a group of House scouts failed to report back after being sent out to investigate a particularly treacherous stretch of the Wastes. Hesitant to lose more of his soldiers, the outpost commander is searching for any adventurers willing to take up the task.

Should the party accept, a **harpy** (*MM p181*) named Calira is assigned to guide them. She one of the Droaamite mercenaries hired by House Tharashk, and serves as the party's liaison to the House and outpost for this mission.

With a general idea of where the scouts were lost and Calira's help, the party finds tracks leading to an abandoned camp that came under attack.

Following the trail left by the attackers leads them to a demonic temple occupied by **Carrion Tribe warriors** (*p38-39*). They are preparing a fiendish ritual to

sacrifice the captured scouts. The temple itself is full of ancient markings and artifacts of historical value that will likely be of interest to House Tharashk. It is up to the party whether they strike now or return to Blood Crescent to get reinforcements.

The party receives a greater reward depending on whether they are able to recover valuables from the temple and/or save the captured scouts.

## A STRING OF SABOTAGE

A recent string of events within Blood Crescent—destroyed warehouses, missing supply ships, and outbreaks of sickness among the outpost guards—has been troubling its commander, Baruk. He needs someone to investigate.

Baruk believes that House Deneith—House Tharashk's greatest rival among the dragonmarked houses—is behind the sabotage. They are Tharashk's clearest competition as mercenary contractors and while Blood Crescent is a small outpost it is a sizable burden on House Tharashk's resources.

The individual subterfuges are all being carried out by independent mercenaries, who receive their orders through dead drops and magical messages. The characters can pose as mercenaries themselves, or simply stake out the area. Investigation can determine the mercenaries have been targeting warehouses belonging to Esmelda, the harbormaster.

The truth of the matter is Esmelda is actually behind these events, orchestrating them in order for Baruk to lose support with their house and position herself to claim more power in managing Blood Crescent's operation. She and Baruk belong to opposing clans within Tharashk.

It is up to the party whether they ally with Esmelda or Baruk in this conflict. Depending on their choice, the outpost's general operations will remain the same, or shift in focus to the exploration of the settlement's economic prospects.



## FIENDFELL

by Kayla Bayens

The body of the great fiend known as Oruk the Devourer rests beneath the sands with only their skull and part of their spine exposed. Corruption is tangible near this being's body and no sounds of life can be heard. Should you decide to visit, beware. Dark powers are drawn to this corpse in hopes of utilizing its ability to focus dark magics.

Oruk the Devourer was a gigantic fiend in service to Drul Katuur. Oruk towered over buildings and ate whole villages in vain attempts to quench a never-ending hunger. First killed by the inhabitants of a fledgling orc town, Oruk rose a year later to continue the feast. Ultimately brought down by the might of Rak Tulkesh shortly before the end of the Age of Demons, Oruk has remained dead ever since...

## THE BROKEN BONDS OF DEATH OVERVIEW

This adventure takes place inside chambers recently unearthed under the massive skull of Oruk the Devourer. The party is tasked with stopping a ritual intended to weaken the bonds holding Drul Katuur. A massive sacrifice is planned involving many prisoners who have been captured by a splinter sect of the Deathbringers and other devout followers under the command of the Lord of Dust, Jurulx.

## FOLLOWERS

Worship among a particular tribe of Carrion Tribe Deathbringers has risen to an intense fervor now that Drul Katuur's bonds are so close to being undone. They wish nothing more than for their new master to herald a new Age of Demons.

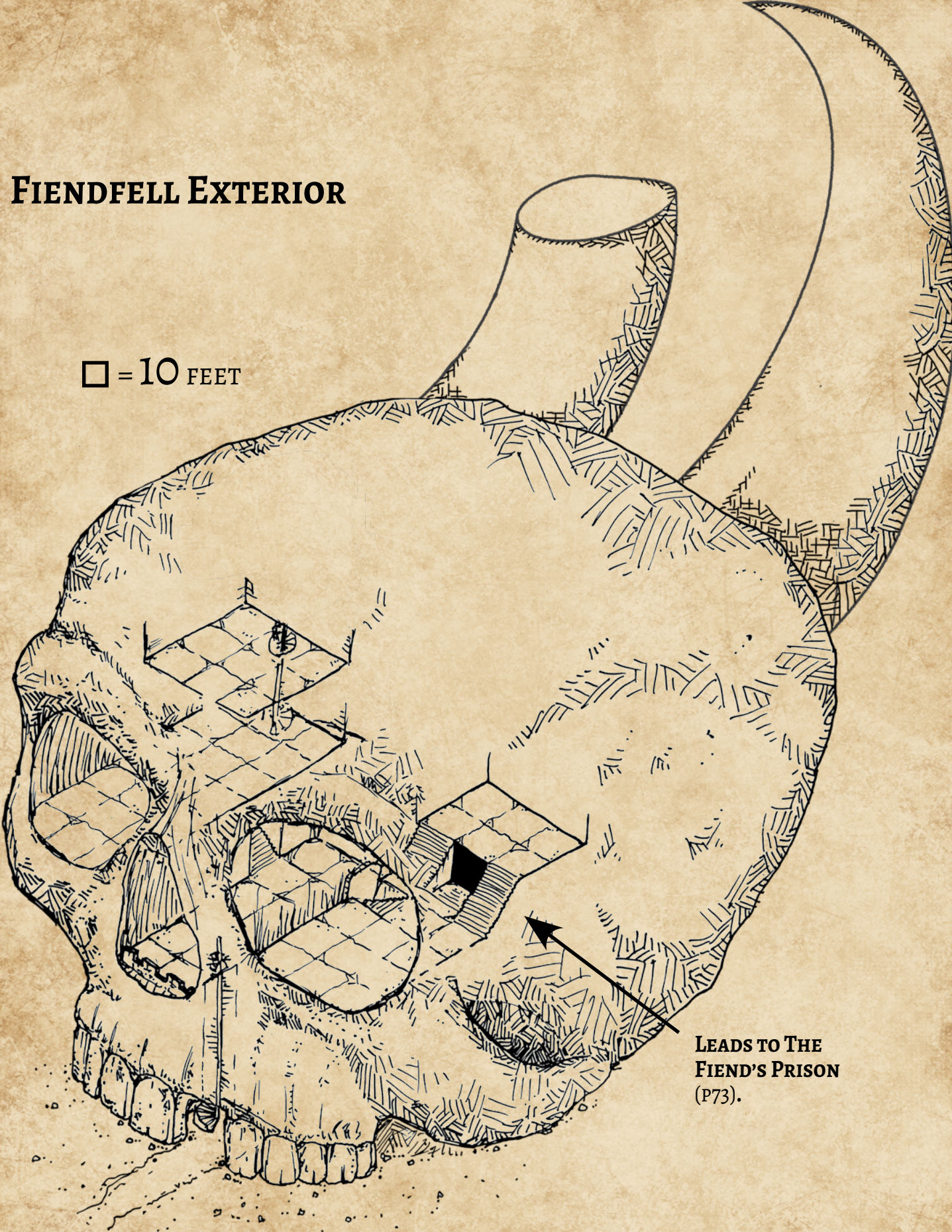
Promises of death, war, and destruction raining down upon the mortal realm, followed by a vicious ice age where only they would thrive, has galvanized the members of this particular Carrion Tribe. Fanatic and zealous in their devotion, they would rather die than allow outsiders to interfere in their preparations.

Jurulx, a powerful fiend and Lord of Dust, has been learning from the whispers of Drul Katuur for centuries. They have spent considerable money to gather the objects needed to perform the ritual.

Sometimes mistaken for a tiefling at first glance with blue skin and large, ice-like horns, Jurulx has cloven feet, elongated limbs, icy claws, and menacing spikes running across their shoulders and down their back.

# FIENDFELL EXTERIOR

□ = 10 FEET



**LEADS TO THE  
FIEND'S PRISON  
(P73).**

Jurulx has been promised the secret of a powerful magic that would elevate them over the other Lords of Dust by their bound master. Jurulx seeks to avoid direct confrontation, but has no problem sacrificing any mortal worshipers to protect the plan.

## RITUAL

Nearly 100 prisoners have been gathered for the mass sacrifice necessary to carry out the ritual. Jurulx has also gathered five objects that radiate a dark aura. Any characters with a holy background or class feel physically ill when coming within 10 feet of them and must make a **DC 16 Constitution saving throw** or become poisoned in their presence. Should they move away, the poisoned status wears off after a minute.

The five objects are: a mummified hand, a large black gem, a goblet encrusted in rubies, bones, and a sword that constantly drips blood.

## ENTRANCE STRUCTURE

With teeth taller than a goliath by several feet, this massive hollow skull sits in the southwest tip of the Demon Wastes. Giant horns come straight off the rear before curling towards the sky, though one has broken off mid-way. The remains of a spine—still attached—trails off to form a bridge over a chasm before plunging into the ground on the other side.

### Fiendfell Adventure Seeds

This adventure is best suited for a party of 4-5 with an average level of 12-15. Here are some suggestions for integrating this location into your campaign:

- A ragged and bleeding Ghaash'kala collapses at the party's feet, begging for their help. Their clan was attacked and taken prisoner.
- The party is set upon by a Carrion Tribe on its way to the ritual.
- Kalok Shash visits an appropriate member of the party with dreams warning about the impending ritual.
- A raid nearly destroyed the outpost of Blood Crescent, with many taken hostage and the trail of the raiders leads towards Fiendfell.
- A prakhutu of a rival Overlord informs the party of the ritual and offers a substantial reward to stop it.

The bones are bleached an eerie white and everything is unusually quiet, even for the Demon Wastes, on approach. As the adventurers pass through a missing tooth into the maw of this once great fiend, they find a crude temple made to worship the powerful entity trapped below. The chambers are all derelict and empty, echoing as the group moves through. Hints of old sacrifices and dark magic are scattered about. Clear signs of recent digging and excavation are found inside the skull where the creature's throat must have been, with a pile of rubble stacked above a hole and a rope leads down into the dark.

Should an adventurer walk to the chasm outside and look down, they see darkness. A **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check** allows them to just barely see an ancient stone bridge and, with a result of 18 or more, also hear the sounds of water far below.

## THE FIEND'S PRISON

### AREA 1: ENTRANCE

A fresh hole has been dug into the ground that is 10 feet in diameter. Rocks and rubble have been piled nearby. Discarded tools, a few of which are broken, are scattered about. It is cooler inside the skull than the sun-baked desert outside and any noise echoes in the hollow chambers of the long-dead fiend's head. Wind whistles as it passes through the empty eye sockets.

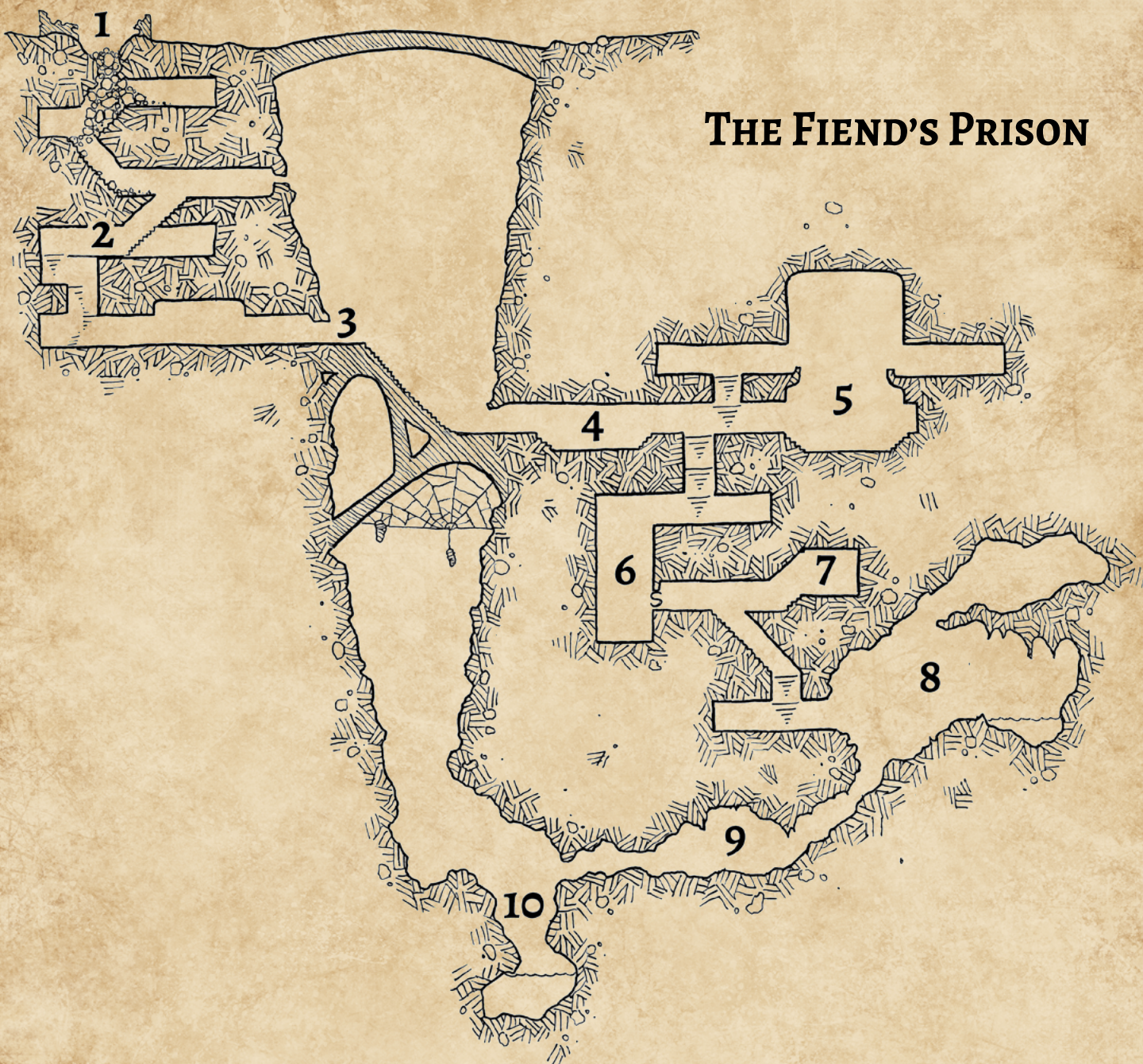
A peg in the ground secures the rope which disappears down the hole into darkness. It doesn't budge from its place if tugged and would take a successful **DC 25 Strength check** to be pulled from the ground. Once the adventurers descend the rope, they are in complete darkness. Upon reaching the bottom, a rumbling sound proceeds the falling of the debris and rocks that had been stacked around the hole. Everyone must make a **DC 16 Dexterity saving throw**, taking 4d6 bludgeoning damage on a failure, and half as much on a success. The way back is now blocked with tightly packed rocks and impassable.

### AREA 2: DESCENT

Rough, haphazard stairs—small planks of wood—have been pounded into the sides of the steep sloping tunnels to aid with footing. After the first set of these stairs, the party must drop down, with a successful **DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check**, onto another set, or leap across a 15-foot gap, requiring a successful **DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check**. Failure of either check results in a fall and 2d6 bludgeoning damage. A wooden landing reaches out from



## THE FIEND'S PRISON



the bottom of the stairs over another drop. One more successful **DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** is required to navigate the last 15-foot drop. A smart and prepared adventuring party can avoid the checks with ropes, climbing gear, or spells.

A long tunnel stretches ahead with a faint bit of light at the end of it (**Area 3**). A fine trip wire, requiring a successful **DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation)** or **Wisdom (Perception) check** to spot and a successful **DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** to avoid, is set midway down the tunnel. If tripped it silently alerts the Carrion Tribe that they have intruders.

### AREA 3: ANCIENT STONE BRIDGE

Well-worn stone stairs descend across the chasm, with a faint sound of water far below. The bridge's underside and supports are infested with **6 phase spiders** (*MM p334*) that attack and attempt to catch anything that moves by their bridge. Several large web bundles attached to the sides and hanging from below have dead or paralyzed Carrion Tribe members.

Once the adventurers are crossing the bridge, the spiders swarm up over the sides in front and behind the group.

## AREA 4: THE FAITHFUL

Hiding in a recessed portion of the wall here is a **Carrion Tribe Cultist** (p76) laying in wait for any who attempt to stop the ritual. If the group triggered the trip wire in **Area 2** there are also 2 **Sakah** (p76) here.

## AREA 5: THE CALLED

This odd-shaped chamber seems to have been largely ignored by the cultists and tribesmen for some reason. The ceiling vaults nearly 60 feet overhead and carvings on the wall depict violent images of war. A successful **DC 14 Intelligence (History) check** reveals the scenes to be from the Age of Demons. Anyone with a successful **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check** discovers impressions in the stone floor and bits of a broken stone throne on the far side of the room at the top of a short staircase. They also find 150 gp, a large emerald worth 250 gp, and 2 scrolls of *chaos bolt* hidden in the rubble.

Magics from the ritual taking place below have opened a small rift to Shavarath. If the party investigates this chamber, or triggered the trip wire in **Area 2**, then 1 **marilith** (MM p61) appears through it.

## AREA 6: OFFAL

A sickly stench wafts up from the darkness as the party approaches the drop-off leading to this area. A partially concealed set of hand and footholds are carved into the east wall leading down.

The cultists have been using this as a middens in order to throw off intruders to the chambers hidden behind the secret door 10 feet off the floor in the east wall. Once the characters are within 20 feet of it, the door itself can be discovered with a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation)** or **Wisdom (Perception) check** and its method of opening is obvious once found.

Resting within the heaps of trash and sewage at the bottom of this tall room is an **otyugh** (MM p248) who doesn't appreciate being disturbed if it isn't offered more food.

## AREA 7: RITUAL ITEMS

Once through the secret door, the hallway proceeds for 20 feet before coming to a steep staircase that descends to **Area 8**. A wobbly plank bridges the gap over the stairs, leading to a room where the items needed for the ritual are carefully being prepared by 2 Carrion Tribe Cultists.

Casting *identify* on the items, or succeeding on

a **DC 22 Intelligence (Arcana) check** reveals the following:

- The mummified hand belonged to a long dead archdevil from the Age of Demons.
- The large black gem has an essence trapped within. It acts as a *mirror of life trapping* with a single cell. The DM can decide what resides inside.
- The goblet belonged to Rak Tulkesh, who used it to drink the blood of innocents.
- The bones are those of an ancient Lord of Dust named, Guirth, who was a lich.
- The bleeding sword is the *Sword of the Cursed War* (p78).

The *identify* spell or successful check also identifies the goblet as the weakest of the magic items and the easiest to destroy. A *dispel magic* successfully cast against an 8th-level spell dissipates its evil aura and makes it useless for the ritual. The DM can create methods to destroy the other items, possibly leading to more adventure, if so desired.

If a ritual item is destroyed there is a 60% chance that a massive angry roar from below shakes the chamber and bits of rock fall from the walls and ceiling. The party must make a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** or be knocked prone. All the tunnels and chambers above **Area 8** completely collapse after 1 minute, trapping anyone inside and dealing 6d6 bludgeoning damage to those caught by the cave in.

## AREA 8: PRISONERS

As the stairs from **Area 7** descend, the chamber opens up and becomes a more natural cavern. The steady dripping sound of water mixes with the muffled cries of the prisoners, all shoved and chained together at the back of the room and forced to stand knee deep in water. Only about 70 prisoners remain alive and seem to have been kept here with little to no food for many days. Talking to them reveals the cultists have been dragging groups of the prisoners down the tunnel to **Area 9** where sounds of screaming echo through the caverns.

## AREA 9: THE MASTER

The air here makes everything seem hazy as if there are heat waves. A **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check** shows through the haze, as if looking into somewhere else, a massive, roaring creature fights against tightly-wrapped chains. A **DC 17 Intelligence (Religion) check** reveals this is the essence

of Oruk, who uses the **Baphomet** stat block (*MToF* p143), but with a size of Gargantuan. The haze fades in and out, as does the appearance of Oruk while the **Lord of Dust, Jurulx** (p77), prepares to sacrifice the next batch of prisoners.

If the characters managed to destroy a ritual item there is no vision of Oruk and the party is met with an angry Jurulx to deal with as they begin to slaughter the prisoners from anger.

If the players manage to keep Jurulx from killing 5 more of the 8 prisoners, the vision of Oruk starts to flicker and fade. Seeing this sends Jurulx into a rage. This is treated as the barbarian's Rage feature (*PH* p48), but for the fact Jurulx can still cast spells at the cost of disadvantage on spell attacks.

## AREA 10: A FAST STREAM

Sounds ahead indicate a fast-moving river somewhere below. A 35-foot drop leads into a torrent of warm water about 15 feet deep. Using the river as an escape requires the characters to hold their breath for a minimum of 2 minutes (see "Suffocating" in the *Player's Handbook*). Successful navigation of the roiling waters deposits the adventurers on a river bank about half-way to Blood Crescent.



## CARRION TRIBE CULTIST

Medium humanoid (any race), any evil alignment

Armor Class 18 (stone breastplate)

Hit Points 110 (20d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

**Skills** Deception +7, Persuasion +7, Religion +4

**Damage Resistances** necrotic

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Infernal

**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

**Dark Devotion.** The fanatic has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

**Spellcasting.** The cultist is a 12th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The cultist has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *mending*

1st level (4 slots): *false life*, *mage armor*, *ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *web*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *bestow curse*, *vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *dimension door*, *stoneskin*

5th level (2 slots): *Bigby's hand*, *cloudkill*

6th level (1 slot): *circle of death*

**Grim Harvest (1/Turn).** When a cultist kills a creature that is neither a construct nor undead with a spell of 1st level or higher, the cultist regains hit points equal to twice the spell's level, or three times if it is a necromancy spell.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The cultist makes two melee attacks.

**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature.

*Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) slashing damage. The target must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take an additional 19 (3d10 + 3) necrotic damage.

**Withering Touch.** *Melee Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 14 (4d4 + 4) necrotic damage.

## SAKAH

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 12 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 81 (18d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

**Skills** Arcana +6, Deception +5, Perception +4, Stealth +5, Religion +6

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Infernal

**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** The sakah's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *chill touch*

1/day each: *enthrall*, *inflict wounds*, *ray of enfeeblement*

**Spellcasting.** The sakah is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The sakah has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *green-flamed blade*, *ray of frost*, *toll the dead*

1st level (4 slots): *burning hands*, *magic missile*, *ray of sickness*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *crown of madness*, *dragon's breath*, *phantasmal force*

3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse*, *vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): *black tentacles*, *sickening radiance*

5th level (2 slots): *enervation*

### ACTIONS

**Staff.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6 – 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8 – 1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands, plus 3 (1d6) poison damage.

**Summon Demon (2/Day).** The sakah magically summons a fiend rolled on the list below. The summoned demon appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet of its summoner, acts as an ally of its summoner, and can't summon other demons. It remains for 10 minutes, until it or its summoner dies, or its summoner dismisses it as an action.

d4	Result
1	Bone devil ( <i>MM</i> p71)
2	Glabrezu ( <i>MM</i> p58)
3	Hydroloth ( <i>MToF</i> p249)
4	Master of Cruelties ( <i>GGtR</i> p196)



## LORD OF DUST JURULX

*Medium fiend, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 228 (24d8 + 110)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Con +10, Int +9, Wis +8

**Skills** Arcana +14, Insight +8, Perception +8, Religion +14

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** necrotic

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

**Senses** truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 18

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Elvish, Infernal

**Challenge** 14 (11,500 XP)

**Legendary Resistance (3/Day).** If Jurulx fails a saving throw, they can choose to succeed instead.

**Regeneration.** Jurulx regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If Jurulx takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of their next turn. Jurulx dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

**Spellcasting.** Jurulx is a 14th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). Jurulx has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash, chill touch, mage hand, poison spray, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *chromatic orb, magic missile, ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *acid arrow, ray of enfeeblement, spider climb, web*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, bestow curse, fear, vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): *blight, Evard's black tentacles*

5th level (2 slots): *cloudkill, insect plague*

6th level (1 slot): *circle of death, create undead*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*

**Shadow Step.** While in dim light or darkness, Jurulx can teleport as a bonus action up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space they can see that is also in dim light or darkness. Jurulx then has advantage on the first melee attack they make before the end of the turn.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Jurulx can make three attacks.

**Death's Sword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage.

**Deadening Touch.** *Melee Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (6d6) necrotic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The paralyzed target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Jurulx can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Jurulx regains spent legendary actions at the start of their turn.

**Cantrip.** Jurulx casts one of their cantrips.

**Noxious Touch (Costs 2 Actions).** Jurulx uses Deadening Touch.

**Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions).** Each creature within 30 feet of Jurulx must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

## SWORD OF THE CURSED WAR

*Weapon (greatsword), legendary (requires attunement—a deal must be made with this sword)*

You have a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. Once attuned, 3 times per day as a bonus action, you can cast *thorn whip* without the need for material components and using your Strength modifier and proficiency to determine the save DC. In addition, any time you hit while making an attack of opportunity with this weapon, it is considered a critical hit.

**Making the Deal.** In order to attune with the sword you must make a deal with it for access to its power. The sword wants nothing more than to kill and bathe in blood. If you promise to slay at least one Small or larger creature a day with it, attunement completes. Should you fail to slay something during a 24-hour span, it strip its powers from you and begin to feed on you instead for 2d10 points of necrotic damage each hour until you kill a creature of Medium size or larger.

**Curse.** This greatsword is cursed, and becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. As long as you remain cursed, you are unwilling to part with the greatsword, keeping it within reach at all times. You also have disadvantage on attack rolls with weapons other than this one, unless no foe is within 60 feet of you that you can see or hear.

Every time you kill with this weapon you have to make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or enter into a Bloodlust. When in a Bloodlust you blindly attack the creature closest to you no matter if they are an ally or foe. You gain +4 to your attack and damage rolls while in the Bloodlust's hold and are resistant to bludgeoning, slashing and piercing damage from nonmagical items. You may repeat the saving throw at the end of each of your turns. Once you succeed, the Bloodlust ends and you take a point of exhaustion.

Proficiency with a greatsword allows you to add your proficiency bonus to the attack roll for any attack you make with it.





## KASHAKANTA

by Christopher Walz

During the Great War,<sup>[10]</sup> Kashakanta was a dreadful sight to behold. Black, hateful spires loomed over winding, labyrinthine, avenues. The dim glow of lava cast the city in a quiet orange light, like a sunset not fitting of Fah'lrrg. Fiends came together here as independent groups, answering to no real ruler. They were drawn by the lava flows ebbing just under the surface, which they used to fuel great forges for the war effort. Here barbed spears for torturing couatl and wicked engines of war were hammered upon enchanted obsidian anvils.

As the last of the demons were imprisoned in Khyber, our forces did not suffer Kashakanta to stand. A host of dragons and their mortal agents laid waste to what few fiends still remained in the city, and toppled the twisting spires that marked Kashakanta. What

**[10]** *The Great War refers to the war between the demons and dragonkind many thousands of years ago. —Kendal*

remains now is a blasted ruin, the wilds of the Demon Wastes having reclaimed the place. Over the years the ghost guardians—the Ghaash'kala tribes—have kept the place under guard from afar, believing the ruins too far removed from the still-occupied Ashtakala to be of much concern.

Below the surface, however, an old evil is growing. Torakar, the Bone Whisperer, an ak'chazzar rakshasa necromancer has laired in Kashakanta for many long decades. The rakshasa serves the Overlord Katashka, the Gatekeeper, and claims to know the death of any mortal he meets, whispered to him by his master. Torakar was once counted among the Lords of Dust, where he often reminded other Lords of their eventual decay, but has been exiled by his peers for plotting against his lesser brethren. Thought dead, Torakar withdrew to the ruins of Kashakanta to plot the Lords' demise. Now the Bone Whisperer is gathering an army of the Demon Waste's dead, setting his spiteful eyes on those Lords of Dust that scorned him, but first he has more pragmatic concerns: the settlement of Rotting Blade.

## SURFACE LEVEL

The dragons were quite thorough in their destruction of Kashakanta; heaps of rubble might be mistaken for small hills from far off, and even the subterranean tunnels were caved in by magic and dragonbreath. A small section in the far south of the once-great city still stands, just barely. Four ruined buildings, the remains of a barrier wall, and the skeleton of a barbed spire escaped the worst of the dragons' wrath. Below, a small underground lair decays with age.

Slow-moving lava flows churn through the area, rolling south from the Lake of Fire, and gathering in a small pool in the center. When the Demon Waste's volcanoes are less active, these flows can solidify entirely, but are typically filled with molten, stinking rock. Great ash storms can overtake the area suddenly, casting a choking shadow over the ruins.

## Environmental Hazards

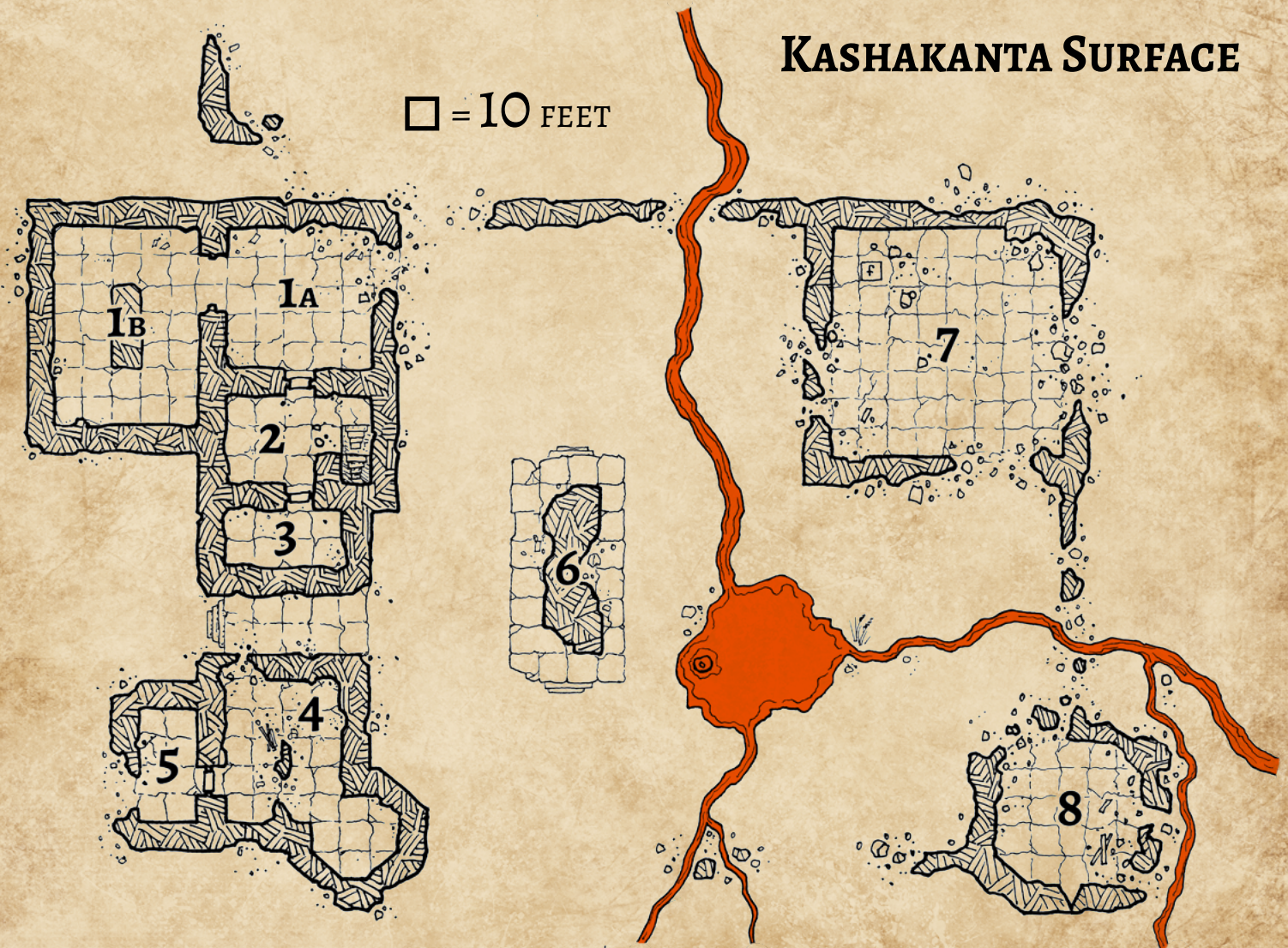
The ruins of Kashakanta can pose many dangers even before adventurers engage with Torakar and his minions.

Combine the Meteorological and Geological Sub Tables (roll a d8) on [page 9](#) for some random environmental effects in and around Kashakanta.

## AREA 1A & B: VIEWING PARLOR

*Ruined tapestries, burnt canvases, and warped iron weapons—destroyed by dragonfire—stand sentry to a forgotten age along cold, black walls.*

This building was once a grand three-story manse of a priest in service to Khyber, now long dead. The upper levels have been destroyed and are inacces-





sible. This room and **Area 1b** were used to show off fiendish art—often in the form of weapons forged at Kashakanta or the displayed bodies of couatls—to the priest’s followers.

Now, an outcast naztharune rakshasa, once called Speaker-in-Shadows, lurks here, watching for invaders. The rakshasa has had his tongue cut out by the Lords of Dust for providing faulty reconnaissance and sought out Torakar, whom he knew to be hidden in Kashakanta. The naztharune attempts to assassinate a weak or lightly armored character if it can, and uses its darkness spell for evasion if necessary. The rakshasa Disengages to **Area 2**, where it clammers down the steps to warn Torakar, if brought below 35 hit points.

The iron door leading to **Area 2** is unlocked.

## AREA 2: ENTRANCE TO THE UNDERGROUND

*The roof of this room sags precariously under the weight of the ruins above. Amidst the rubble is a small, neatly made cot in a dark corner. A musty wave of heat drifts up from a set of stairs.*

If the characters succeed on a **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** while searching the area, they find a small iron lockbox hidden amongst some debris. Speaker-in-Shadows carries the key, or it can be opened with a successful **DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves’ tools**. Inside is a purse filled with 20 pp, 32 gp, and a large ruby worth 700 gp. There is also a single vial of wyvern’s poison (see chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*) and a smaller box, containing Speaker-in-Shadow’s severed tongue.

### SPEAKER-IN-SHADOWS

*Medium fiend, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (studded leather)

**Hit Points** 90 (12d8 + 36)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	21 (+5)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+1)	16 (+3)

**Skills** Deception +7, Insight +6, Perception +9, Stealth +13

**Damage Vulnerabilities** piercing from magic weapons wielded by good creatures

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing made from nonmagical attacks

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

**Languages** Common, Infernal

**Challenge** 11 (7,200 XP)

**Cunning Action.** On each of its turns, the rakshasa can use its bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

**Hide in Darkness.** The rakshasa can attempt to hide even when only lightly obscured by dim light.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The rakshasa’s innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The rakshasa can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *darkness*, *detect thoughts*, *disguise self*  
2/day: *misty step*

**Limited Magic Immunity.** The rakshasa can’t be affected or detected by spells of 4th level or lower unless it wishes to be. It has advantage on saving throws against all other spells and magical effects.

**Shadow Sight.** Magical darkness doesn’t impede the rakshasa’s darkvision.

**Shadow Evasion.** If the rakshasa is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the rakshasa instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails. Immediately after making such a save, the rakshasa can use its reaction to cast *darkness* centered on itself.

**Shadow Jump.** While in dim light or darkness, the rakshasa may cast *misty step* without using a daily use if the destination of the spell is in an area of dim light or darkness. The rakshasa may cast *misty step* in this way if out of daily uses.

**Vicious Assassin.** Once per turn, the rakshasa deals an extra 24 (7d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the rakshasa that isn’t incapacitated and the rakshasa doesn’t have disadvantage on the attack roll. If this attack deals damage, the target is cursed. The magical curse takes effect whenever the target takes a short or long rest, filling the target’s thoughts with horrible images and dreams. The cursed target gains no benefit from finishing a short or long rest. The curse lasts until it is lifted by a remove curse spell or similar magic.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The rakshasa makes two attacks with its shortsword and one with its claws.

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

#### REACTION

**Uncanny Dodge.** The rakshasa halves the damage that it takes from an attack that hits it. The rakshasa must be able to see the attacker.

The stairs leading 60 feet into **Area U1** have been recently rebuilt and reinforced by Torakar's minions, allowing for the undead to come and go easily. The iron door leading to **Area 3** is locked and requires a **DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** to open or a **DC 15 Strength check** to break open. Speaker-in-Shadows also carries the key to this door.

### AREA 3: PRISON CHAMBER

*An old, coppery smell you can taste wafts out of this room. The chamber is unadorned save for three pairs of manacles along the bloodstained walls. An orc warrior hangs lifelessly from one set, his chest crimson with dried blood from a jagged throat wound.*

Speaker-in-Shadows uses this bleak chamber to house captives for Torakar, often before succumbing to their "questioning" and being raised as undead servants. Currently a recently deceased Ghaash'kala warrior hangs chained to the southern wall. If the characters have means to speak with the orc, such as *Speak with Dead*, he can tell them of the undead in **Area 7** and that there is a door leading to the subterranean level.

### AREA 4: DILAPIDATED GUARDHOUSE

*Old bunks and sundered footlockers are scattered about this room and covered in ash an inch thick. Wicked curved blades, their edges dull beyond use, hang from the walls.*

This outbuilding served as a guardhouse and barracks for the mansion. The exterior stairs north of the guardhouse once led to a maze of fiendish hedges with snapping, fanged buds that flourished even in the Demon Wastes, but only remnants remain. If the characters approach from the north, they can easily make out the hole in the wall to the west, near the stairs. Medium-sized characters must squeeze through the opening and have disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws and attacks against them have advantage while squeezing through the area. Large-sized creatures cannot fit through the hole.

If the characters enter this area and have not dealt with Speaker-in-Shadows (see **Area 1**) and have not been stealthy in their approach, he notices them and attacks them here. The naztharune rakshasa casts darkness in the guardhouse and attempts to inflict its curse on as many characters as possible.

If the characters choose to take a rest while exploring the ruins of Kashakanta, this is likely the safest location, as the hole in the northern wall could be shored up with debris with an hour of work and

the door leading to **Area 5** barricaded.

The iron door leading to **Area 5** is locked—the key lost to the ages—and requires a **DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** to pick or a **DC 15 Strength check** to break open.

### AREA 5: GUARD FOYER

*The remnants of an ebony desk stand along the northern wall of this foyer. The doorway to the west was once blocked by a great cast-iron double door whose pieces lay blasted across the ground.*

This area was used to welcome and screen guests to the manse. If the characters search and succeed on a **DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check**, they discover a false stone along the northern wall. Inside is a *dagger* +2 carved from a dragon's tooth set in a cold-iron hilt, and a potion of growth, secreted away by one of Kashakanta's former residents.

### AREA 6: RUINED CHAPEL

*Piles of debris, scarred by dragonfire, kneel before the remains of an obsidian spire like worshipers at a forgotten god's feet. The structure still stretches some forty feet into the ash-choked skies of the Wastes.*

This pile of debris is what is left of a great chapel to Khyber that once connected to **Areas 7 and 8**. If the characters spend two hours digging through the dragon-blasted rubbish here, they find 1d4 pieces of ancient fiendish art praising Khyber. If they find someone willing to deal in such artifacts, they are worth 1,100 gp a piece.

### AREA 7: CHARNEL HOUSE

*The stench of decay and death pour from the place even before you draw near. Inside, sitting among heaps of corpses, a terrible creature with a fiendish, childlike face and exposed ribcage, is admiring each body.*

During the Age of Demons, this was a large gathering hall connected to the chapel. Torakar houses the bulk of his undead forces here and one of his lieutenants, forcibly bound to his will.

The lieutenant, a **devourer** (*VGtM p138*) brought up from the depths of Khyber, makes countless undead for Torakar's needs and spends its days here, fawning over its ghastly "children." Currently there are **5 zombies**, **3 ghouls**, and **2 wights** with the devourer. The devourer and its children swarm the characters, using the devourer's soul rend ability to affect as many characters as possible. They fight to the death but will not leave the walls of the ruins without Tora-

## Embracing Pulp Action

A key theme of the Eberron setting is pulp action, like you might expect in an Indiana Jones film. The battle with the devourer is a perfect opportunity to highlight this. If you want to spice up this combat, consider using the following additional rule for the encounter.

- **Crumbling Ruins.** If a spell effect, such as *fireball*, would deal damage to the area's walls, roll a d6. On a 5-6, pieces of the collapsing roof fall away. Each creature inside the area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. If you roll 5-6 three times, the area begins to collapse. At the end of the next round, the roof falls, burying all inside. Creatures buried in the rubble take 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage and begin to suffocate.

kar to command them.

The unlocked trapdoor on the floor reveals a 60-foot-long ladder leading into **Area U4**.

### AREA 8: RELICS FROM AN ANCIENT AGE

*From inside the ruined walls you hear a massive creature struggling against chains before a bestial howl pierces the air.*

The building used to house several reliquaries created by the long-forgotten rakshasa priest; the fiend claimed they housed items touched by the Overlords themselves.

Torakar keeps one of his latest experiments here: an orc of the Carrion Tribes infused with fiendish blood (use the **tanarukk** statistics but instead of a greatsword attack, the tanarukk attacks twice with its bite, *VGtM p186*). The demonic orc is chained to the floor at the center of the area with iron links 2 inches in diameter. The chains are long enough to allow the demon-orc to reach anywhere within the ruined walls, but not beyond. It attacks any creature that comes into the area, including Torakar's undead servants.

The ruins were looted long ago by warriors from both the Carrion Tribes and Ghaash'kala, but they did not discover one of the relics: a cloak thought to be lined with fur from the Wild Heart, the Overlord of lycanthropes. If the characters search and succeed on a **DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check**, they notice a 1-foot-wide stone circle set into the western wall, so masterfully crafted that the seams are almost invisible. A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana)**

**check** reveals that the runes carved in the stone are Infernal and relate to bestial rage (if a character can understand Infernal, they automatically succeed). The stone slides away if a character with the Rage class feature touches the stone and expends one use of their rage, or through a successful **DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools**. If the Dexterity check fails, an internal mechanism triggers, snapping the lockpicking tools and sealing the stone in place.

Inside the reliquary is the *cloak of the bestial hunt* (see p87).

## UNDERGROUND LEVEL

Kashakanta's underground housed sweltering forges that drank up the nearby lava flows, as well as living quarters for lesser fiends and captives subjected to working them. Now, Torakar makes his personal lair here, only allowing those few rakshasa allies he has remaining to visit him without summons.

The subterranean level is completely dark, as Torakar and his minions rely on their darkvision to see.

### AREA U1: HALL OF FIRE

*Great iron furnaces, melted and twisted into grotesque shapes, line the walls of this long chamber. Although the lava flows both above and below should keep the place warm, a chill lingers in the hall.*

This expansive chamber carries what is left of Kashakanta's fiendish furnaces. Through some twist of magic, the souls of the lesser demons that died here have coalesced into a haunting presence, bound to the furnaces they once tended. They have not lashed out at Torakar—even in death they understand the power of an ak'chazzar—but attempt to burn the characters alive.

The door to **Area U3** is magically sealed (see below).

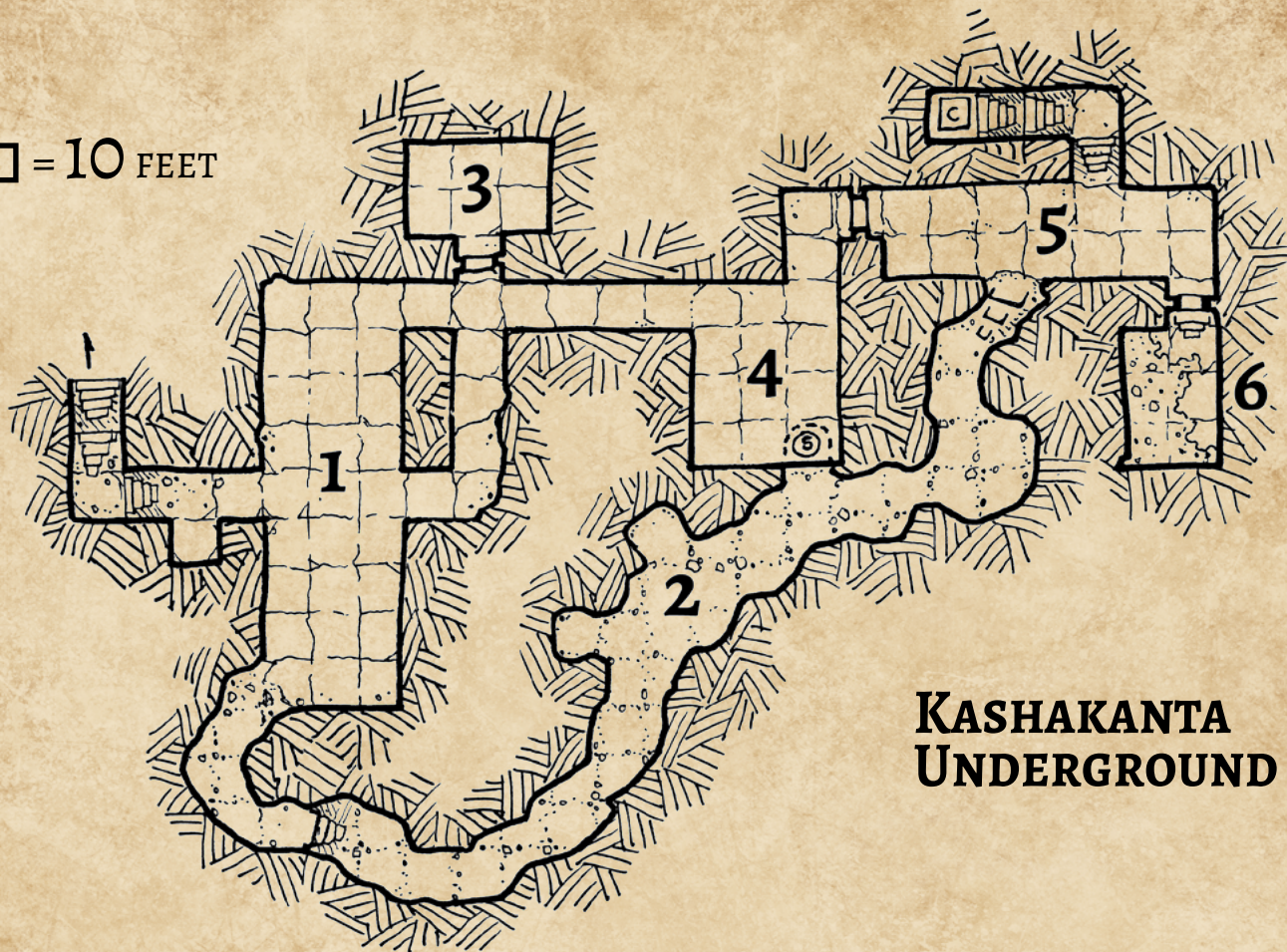
#### Haunted Furnaces

There is a ruined furnace every 10 feet along the eastern and western walls of this chamber. When a living creature that is not a rakshasa enters the area, the spirits become active. The spirits cannot be attacked and do not count as creatures. The haunting progresses the longer the characters stay in the area.

**First Round.** The furnaces smolder slowly and a haunting presence fills the area. Characters with a passive Perception of 16 or higher notice the furnaces ignite.

**Second Round.** The furnaces roar to life. A demonic-looking form of fire and smoke flies out of one of them, seemingly attacking a character before disap-

□ = 10 FEET



## KASHAKANTA UNDERGROUND

pearing again. All characters in the area must make a **DC 17 Wisdom saving throw** or become frightened until they leave the area.

**Third Round.** Fiendish ghosts lash out at the characters. Choose a character at random; the character must make a **DC 17 Dexterity saving throw** as a piece of smoldering slag flies toward them. On a failed save, the character takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning and 7 (2d6) fire damage.

**Subsequent Rounds.** Add one additional character at random to the third-round effect until all characters are being attacked.

The haunting ceases for 1 hour if the characters douse at least two of the furnaces with a water-skin's worth of water. Additionally, if a character with Channel Divinity expends one use of the feature and succeeds on a **DC 14 Charisma check**, the haunting does not reactivate for 24 hours. A character with the Channel Divinity feature understands how to use their ability to suppress the haunting if they succeed on a **DC 16 Intelligence (Religion) check**.

If the haunting persists for 4 or more rounds, Torakar hears the commotion and prepares for invaders.

### AREA U2: INFESTED LAVA TUBE

*Mounds of writhing brown mold cover every surface of this irregularly shaped corridor, stretching across into the darkness.*

When Kashakanta's forges burned bright, this area was a flowing lava tube, used to power the fiends' industrial pursuits. Over the many centuries, the lava flows have changed direction and left this tube to harden. Torakar has left the area untouched, uninterested in the mold that grows here.

The entire area is covered in brown mold (see chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) that fed on the remaining lava. A successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check** identifies the mold and its properties. Due to the severity of the infestation, any character who brings a fire source within the area is instantly covered in mold and must make their Constitution saving throw with disadvantage.

At the center of the area is a long-dead adventuring duo that met their end to some forgotten foe. The mold has covered their skeletal remains, but a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals the glint of polished steel from under the mold. If the

characters destroy the mold or spend a round scraping it off the skeletons, they discover a suit of elven chain worn by one skeleton.

The secret door to **Area U4** cannot be opened or perceived from this side.

### AREA U3: TORAKAR'S ATELIER

*This small chamber houses a long, bloodstained table and wickedly shaped tools. Jars of preserved anatomy are neatly arranged on shelves along the walls. A thick tome, bound in patchwork leather, sits at the edge of the table.*

The rakshasa necromancer has turned this small chamber, once a cramped workers' barracks, into a sinister workshop. Here Torakar experiments with creating new undead servants in a twisted sense of worship to Katashka.

The door leading into the workshop is sealed with arcane lock and warded with *alarm*, set to mentally alert Torakar if it is triggered.

The tome resting on the table is a *manual of flesh golems*. If a character succeeds on a **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check** while reading through the manual, they realize the tome has specific mentions of actions taken by the Overlord Katashka, and may have been penned by the rajah himself. How this plays out in your ongoing Eberron campaign is up to you, but the manual would certainly be of greater importance than other such tomes, and may come with some unattended consequences, such as agents of the Overlord scrying on the characters, if they use it.

### AREA U4: THE BONE WHISPERER'S THRONE

*An imposing throne of polished bone sits along the*

*back wall of this chamber, before it a roughly hewn ebony table. Peering over a collection of maps and books is a rakshasa with snow-white fur and black markings wearing an ash-stained robe. Next to the fiend stands an armored skeletal monstrosity, its three heads speaking in unison.*

This chamber once housed work areas for the demons' slaves. The rakshasas had a secret trapdoor installed in the southeastern corner of the room, which they used to throw insubordinate workers into the once-thriving lava tube below. Torakar uses the area as a planning and gathering hall for his undead servants.

**Torakar** (p87) and his closest servant, a **skull lord** (MToF p230), a night hag's creation that the rakshasa has forced under his control, are in this area looking over a map of Rotting Blade. After a paltry attempt at convincing the characters to leave, Torakar commands his servant to destroy the intruders. The skull lord uses its legendary action to summon 5 zombies whenever it has 3 or fewer zombies remaining. Since both the undead and Torakar are immune to the effect of *cloudkill*, the skull lord casts it as quickly as possible, forcing the characters to fight in the deadly poison. If the skull lord is forced into prolonged melee combat, it casts *haste* on itself and uses its bone staff. The skull lord fights to the death.

Torakar expends a 5th-level spell slot to use *Pain Wave* at the start of combat, hoping to overpower the adventurers quickly. He stays at range as much as possible, using his spells. Torakar uses *plane shift* to flee if he is brought below 65 hit points. If the rakshasa is able to escape, he focuses his efforts on finding and slaying the adventurers who nearly ended him. If the characters are of a more gray shade of morality, they might even leverage what they know of Torakar with the Lords of Dust.

The iron door to **Area U5** is unlocked but warded (see below). The secret trapdoor in the southeastern corner can be discovered and opened with a successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check**. It leads into a 10-foot drop into **Area U2**.

### AREA U5: GRISLY STOREROOM

*Severed limbs, some already gnawed to the bone, are piled along the walls here. Old bloodstains trail away to a small drain in the center of the room.*

Once a dining hall for the workers, Torakar has relegated this area to house his undead minions' food stores—decaying flesh from beasts and humanoids

#### Dynamic Encounters

It is possible that the characters have made themselves known to Torakar—Speaker-in-Shadows might have escaped to warn the Bone Whisperer, the *alarm* or *glyph of warding* spells may have been triggered, or the characters may simply have created a lot of noise.

If this happens, consider having Torakar send the skull lord out to scout the area and engage the characters using hit-and-run tactics. The skull lord's dimension door spell is perfect for this. Speaker-in-Shadows, likely wounded in this scenario, remains with Torakar to defend the ak'chazzar.

alike. Crude steps have been cut out of the natural stone to the south, leading to the dead lava tube.

The iron door to **Area U4** is protected with a *glyph of warding* (spell save DC 17, cast as a 4th-level spell) from one of Torakar's former "associates." The glyph is set to allow any fiend or undead to pass, but other creatures who touch the door set off a 20-foot-radius explosion that deals 6d8 thunder damage.

The iron-reinforced wood door to **Area U6** is unlocked. Characters who succeed on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** notice a strong moldy smell coming from the room.



## Kashakanta Adventure Seeds

Kashakanta is best suited for a party of 4-6 with an average level of 14-16, but could be adapted to a range of 13-17. Here are a few ideas to introduce it into your campaign:

- One of Vvara's agents approaches the characters offering to get them into Kashakanta to investigate recent movements in the ruins. Whatever ancient treasures they find are theirs to keep.
- A House Cannith smith employs the characters to search out Kashakanta's lost forges. Has the Dragonmarked house turned to fiendish magic?
- A group of Torakar's undead servants attack the party while in the Wastes and their tracks lead to the ruins.
- A young Ghaash'kala warrior went into the ruins to cleanse it of whatever evil still lurks there. Her companions all slain by Torakar, she fled. The orc has been several days without rest—cursed by the rakshasa—and will die soon without help.

## AREA U6: TASKMASTER'S QUARTERS

*Brown mold has seeped into the western side of this small room, overtaking a bed and desk.*

A lesser rakshasa who oversaw the laborers used this room as their personal quarters. The brown mold from **Area U2** has crept through the earthwork and begun to take hold in the room. If the characters have remained unnoticed and deal with the mold here, the chamber could be easily secured for a short rest.

## TORAKAR THE BONE WHISPERER

Medium fiend, lawful evil

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 175 (27d8 + 54)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	24 (+7)

**Skills** Arcana +13, Deception +12, Insight +9, Religion +8

**Damage Vulnerabilities** piercing from magic weapons wielded by good creatures

**Damage Immunities** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing made from nonmagical attacks

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Common, Infernal

**Challenge** 16 (15,000 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** The rakshasa's innate spell-casting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 20). The rakshasa can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect magic*, *detect thoughts*, *disguise self*  
2/day each: *fly* (self only), *plane shift* (self only), *true seeing*

**Limited Magic Immunity.** The rakshasa can't be affected or detected by spells of 6th level or lower unless it wishes to be. It has advantage on saving throws against all other spells and magical effects.

**Magic Weapons.** The rakshasa's weapon attacks are magical.

**Spellcasting.** The rakshasa is a 12th-level spell-caster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). The rakshasa knows the following sorcerer spells:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *mage hand*, *poison spray*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *magic missile*, *ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *mirror image*, *ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *lightning bolt*, *stinking cloud*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion*

5th level (3 slots): *dominate person*

6th level (2 slots): *disintegrate*

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The rakshasa uses Pain Wave and makes two claw attacks.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Pain Wave.** The rakshasa sacrifices a 4th-level or higher spell slot to project a wave of agony-inducing necromantic energy. Every creature within 20 feet of the rakshasa must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, taking 44 (8d10) necrotic damage plus an additional 11 (2d10) necrotic damage for each level of the sacrificed spell slot higher than 4th on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

Whether they succeed or fail on the saving throw, any creature that takes damage from this effect is cursed. The magical curse takes effect whenever the creature takes a short or long rest, filling the creature's thoughts with horrible images and dreams. The cursed creature gains no benefit from finishing a short or long rest. The curse lasts until it is lifted by a remove curse spell or similar magic.

**Command Undead (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).** The rakshasa targets one undead creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target must obey the rakshasa's commands until it or the rakshasa is slain. An undead creature with a greater challenge rating than the rakshasa is unaffected by this ability. The rakshasa can control a total number of undead this way equal to its Charisma modifier. If it successfully gains control of more undead than it can control, the earliest affected undead creature is no longer under the rakshasa's control.

### Magic Item

## CLOAK OF THE BESTIAL HUNT

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This heavy, black fur-lined cloak is adorned with bestial fangs. As an action, you can command the cloak to transform you into a werewolf's hybrid form for up to 1 hour. The transformation otherwise functions as the *polymorph* spell, but you can use a bonus action to revert to your normal form.

**Curse.** This cloak is cursed by the Wild Heart, and becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. Until the curse is broken with remove curse or similar magic, you are unwilling to part with the cloak, keeping it within reach at all times.

The third time you use the cloak, and each time thereafter, you must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the transformation lasts until dispelled or until you drop to 0 hit points, and you can't willingly return to your normal form. If you ever remain in werewolf form for 6 hours, the transformation becomes permanent and you lose your sense of self. Thereafter, only remove curse or similar magic allows you to regain your identity and return to normal. If you remain in this permanent form for 6 days, only a *wish* spell can reverse the transformation.



## BURNING KEEP

by Alan Tucker

Located near one of the “entrances” to the Labyrinth, Burning Keep was once a bastion of the rakshasa artificer, Ethon Panjilcuttra, who now claims membership in the Lords of Dust and is said to reside in Ashtakala. This powerful fiend abandoned his workshop at Burning Keep during the conflict long ago when our ancestors assaulted it from the sky. Its structure remains largely intact to this day and now serves as the home of Rikha'trrj, one of the ancient night hags who lay claim to various sections of the Wastes. Her name translates as “masterful schemer” from the Infernal and only the most cunning fiends would deign to argue the aptness of her moniker. Through the decades since her occupation, she has made a few modifications to the original design and filled it with loyal followers and devious traps. While a glamour causes the place to appear ruined and abandoned, I can assure you it is indeed a bustling hive of demonic villainy.

The keep sits on a promontory, surrounded by lava pools and toxic, bubbling mud. As such, the only safe approach for anyone not immune to fire is from the air, but Rikha'trrj has installed numerous ballistas, trebuchets, and other surprises which make that problematic as well.

### GROUND LEVEL

The structures above ground of Burning Keep are solely dedicated to defense. Rikha'trrj employs a variety of fiends for personal protection as well as the keep's. Ceilings are 15 feet high unless otherwise noted.

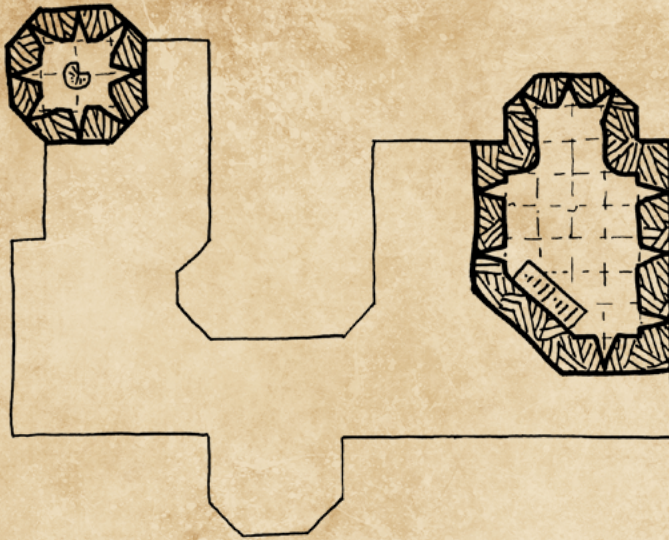
#### AREA 1: ENTRANCE

A 10-foot-wide stone bridge spans a rough, empty chasm and leads into the main floor of Burning Keep. Two iron portcullises, separated by 40 feet of hallway, block immediate access. A number of arrow slits line the walls, each occupied by a **spined devil** (*MM p78*), and **4 merregons** (*MToF p166*) guard the final portcullis. The captain of Rikha'trrj's guard is a **yagnoloth** (*MToF p252*) simply referred to as “Sir” by the rest of the keep's inhabitants. If the party has managed a stealthy approach, there is only a 25% chance Sir will be present near the second portcullis. If the keep has been alerted to intruders, he prowls **Area 2**, telepathically giving orders and glancing down the hallway toward the bridge for signs of the party.

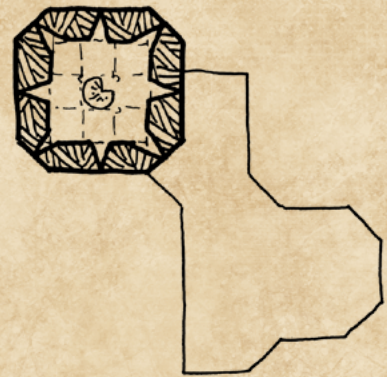
#### AREA 2: COURTYARD

This odd-shaped chamber is open to the sky and serves as a courtyard for the keep. The merregon use

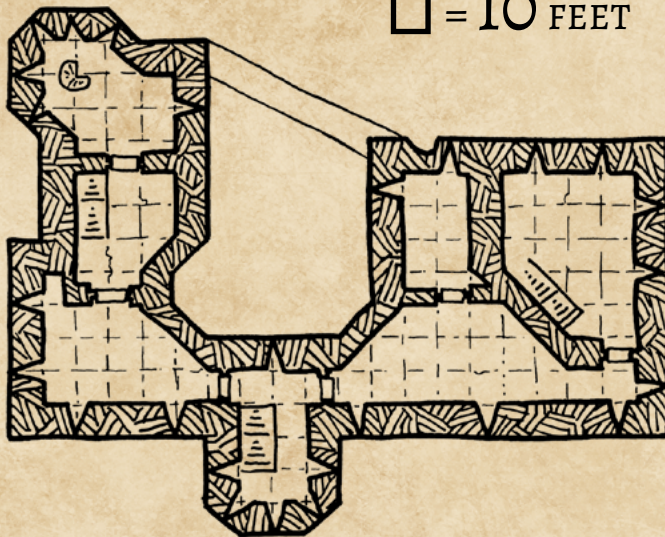




**TOWERS**



□ = 10 FEET



**UPPER LEVEL**



**BURNING KEEP**

**GROUND LEVEL**



## Burning Keep Adventure Seeds

Burning Keep is best suited for a party of 4-6 with an average level of 9-10, but can be easily adapted to a range of 7-12. Here are a few ideas to introduce it in your campaign:

- The Lords of Dust, or a rival night hag, have caught wind of Rikha'trrj's scheme and send a disguised agent to hire the party to investigate.
- A representative of the Ghaash'kala approaches the party about investigating the disappearance of a number of tribe members in recent months.
- The party hears of an opportunity for riches by plundering the abandoned workshop of Ethon Panjilcuttra. This rumor is spread by Rikha'trrj to lure new subjects for her experiments.

this space to spar during the long periods of inactivity within the fortress. Exits lead in many directions. Access to the chambers where spined devils man the arrow slits is granted by several petrified wooden doors. A set of stone stairs in southern end leads to the **Upper Level**.

### AREA 3: UPPER LEVEL ACCESS

This chamber houses two arrow slits and a set of stone stairs leading to the **Upper Level**. At least 2 spined devils are here at all times.

### AREA 4: ARMORY

Behind a locked door, requiring a successful **DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to pick**, lies the keep's main armory. It is filled with forks for the spined devils, as well as halberds, heavy crossbows, and bolts for the merregons. Ammunition for any siege weapons is also stored here.

### AREA 5: LOWER LEVEL ACCESS

A set of two doors, 10 feet apart, guard the entrance to this room. A successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check** alerts the character to the *glyph of warding* which Rikha'trrj has set on the floor between the doors, triggered by any non-fiend who steps on it. Once triggered, a *cloudkill* fills the area, spreading into any other open space within range.

Inside the room are more arrow slits and a trap

door near the southern wall which leads to **Area 7** in the **Lower Level**.

### AREA 6: UPPER LEVEL ACCESS

Another stone bridge spans the gulf between the two main structures and leads to a smaller open courtyard similar to **Area 2** and more defensive positions. Behind the door opening to **Area 6** is a set of stairs leading to the **Upper Level**. 4d4 spined devils and 1d4 merregons are always present in this group of rooms around and including **Area 6**.

### UPPER LEVEL AND TOWERS

These areas are purely for defense, containing arrow slits stationed by spined devils. Add a merregon for every 4-5 spined devils. Feel free to add ballistas, trebuchets, or even cannons (*DMG p253*) to the roofs of the upper level, as the spined devils can easily fly there to operate them in teams of two or three.

### LOWER LEVEL

Ceilings in both the Lower Level and the Secret Laboratory are 10 feet in height unless otherwise noted. These areas are hot and musty from the press of fiendish bodies and the lava flows farther below.

### AREA 7: GROUND LEVEL ACCESS

The trap door in **Area 5** leads into this well-used chamber, which grants access to the living areas for the Burning Keep's inhabitants. The western door opens to a common area and Sir's quarters, while the eastern door leads to a curved hall and stairs down to the barracks for the spined devils and merregons. Rikha'trrj's private quarters and workshops are also this way.

### AREA 8: COMMON ROOM

The spined devils and merregons use this space to feed and sometimes relax. There is a 10-foot square storage room to the north which holds items of fiendish sustenance such as pickled blood, larvae, and a few jars of souls kept for special occasions in a locked chest at the back. A successful **DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** opens it and a successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) check** can determine the contents of the cloudy jars.

### AREA 9: SIR'S CHAMBER

The door to Sir's quarters is locked, requiring a successful **DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** to open, or the key which Sir has in his possession. The room is sparsely furnished with a desk and chair

## BURNING KEEP



LOWER  
LEVEL

□ = 10 FEET



SECRET  
LABORATORY

along the west wall and bookcases lining the south wall. Searching the bookcases reveals reams of documents all written in Infernal. Characters who can read the language and spend 10 minutes or more with a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** can find detailed notes on Rikha'trrj's dealings with various political groups, including the Lords of Dust, as well as contracts involving other fiendish entities. DMs can use these as breadcrumbs for further adventure in the Demon Wastes and beyond.

### AREA 10 (2): BARRACKS

These two rooms serve as resting areas for the spined devils and merregons. The spined devils occupy the first room along the hallway and (25) 10d4 of the creatures are here any time a general alarm has not been sounded. The second room contains 7 (3d4) merregons if they are unalerted. The fiends carry no valuables other than their weapons.

### AREA 11: CURIO STORAGE

Stairs and a long hallway lead to a locked door requiring a successful **DC 19 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** to open. Inside, the room is packed with tables and shelves, piled high with ingredients and curios from all over Eberron. Characters who search for at least 10 minutes and make a successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check** can find a number of small valuables. Roll 4 times on the 50 gp Gemstone table and 2 times on the 25 gp Art Object table (*DMG p134*). Characters who roll 20 or higher on the check find 1 item from the 750 gp Art Object table (*DMG p135*). DMs can also place random items relevant to their campaigns here if desired. Rikha'trrj has had many years in which to acquire a plethora of trinkets and baubles.

### AREA 12: RIKHA'TRRJ'S CHAMBER

Rikha'trrj makes her home, such as it is, in this room. It looks as though a tornado had a fight with a hurricane. Tattered clothing, trinkets, spell components—even a few dessicated body parts—lie everywhere. While it appears to be utter chaos, Rikha'trrj knows exactly where everything is in the room and knows at a glance if anything has been disturbed. A dedicated search of at least 20 minutes and a successful **DC 22 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals a lockbox inlaid with jade and onyx. Unlocking it requires a successful **DC 24 Dexterity check using thieves' tools**. Failure activates a poison dart trap dealing 21 (6d6) poison damage and the target is poisoned for the next hour. A successful **DC 24 Intelligence (Investigation) check** spots and identifies the trap beforehand and a similarly successful **DC 22 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** deactivates it. Inside the lockbox (which itself is worth 500 gp) is 450 pp.

### AREA 13: TRAPPED HALLWAY

This hallway extends 20 feet to a set of stairs leading to some of Ethon Panjilcuttra's old workshops of more mundane interest. The walls are carved with strange runes that seem to flicker with their own light, but are themselves harmless. The floor from the door to the stairs, however, is trapped in the following way: the stone is 1 foot thick with a 6-inch iron "axle" running through it down the center, the length of the hallway. If pressure is applied on either side, the entire length of floor spins, revealing a 10-foot deep pit beneath filled with acid. Characters who step on the floor must

make a **DC 16 Dexterity saving throw** or fall into the pit, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and 18 (4d8) acid damage. Have the party roll initiative and apply the acid damage again at the start of each character's turn who has fallen in the pit. The walls and floor are coated with glass, making climbing out nearly impossible and the spinning floor is no help. Characters whose **passive Investigation or Perception is 25** or above, or those who actively search as they enter the hallway and make a successful **DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check** can determine the presence and nature of the trap.

### AREA 14: ALCHEMY LAB

Here the party finds what appears to be a normal alchemical laboratory, stocked with standard supplies and apparatus. Characters with a **passive Investigation or Perception of 18** or higher, or those who actively search and make a successful **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check** notice a secret door located in the southern wall. The short passage leads to **Area 16**.

### AREA 15: WORKSHOP

This chamber houses a tinkerer's workshop, again full of equipment one would expect in such a place. It is dusty and seems to have been vacant and unused for quite some time.

### AREA 16: SECRET LAB ACCESS

A few discarded items, such as broken metal rods and gears, are scattered throughout this space. An unsealed trap door leading to **Area 17** is in the southeast corner of the floor.

## SECRET LABORATORY

### AREA 17: RESTING AREA

As the characters climb down the ladder into this room, sconces on the wall light up to reveal a rough stone chamber, approximately 30 feet square. There is a worn cot in the southeast corner, but it is covered with a layer of dust and doesn't look like it's been used in some time. An unlocked door opens to a hallway leading north. Characters with a **passive Investigation or Perception of 18** or higher, or those who actively search and make a successful **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check** notice a secret door located in the western wall. The short passage leads to **Area 22**.

If Rikha'trrj is in **Area 22**, she is alerted to the

party's presence from an *alarm* spell she sets up in **Area 17** whenever she comes down to work. She immediately casts *detect thoughts* and *invisibility* (thanks to her Ancient Secrets ability), then moves to the opposite side of **Area 22** to await anyone coming through the secret passage.

### AREA 18: WARFORGED WORKSHOP

Workbenches span both the north and south walls here, cluttered with every tinkerer's tool known to exist and some unique to Ethon Panjilcuttra's genius. On a pedestal against the western wall stands an armored figure, not unlike a warforged. A thick layer of dust cloaks its head and shoulders and lifeless eyes stare forward as if waiting for a command.

While many will expect the figure to animate, it is indeed without life or magical energy. Perhaps Ethon experimented on a warforged in order to understand its workings... or could Ethon somehow have provided the spark of inspiration House Cannith needed to make the warforged a reality?



## AREA 19: STORAGE

During the rakshasa artificer's tenure in Burning Keep, this room was the epitome of organization and precision. Every scrap of armor, every gear, every cog had a place. Rare ores and minerals, magic-infused inks, and carefully preserved organics were cataloged and inventoried. Now, the shelves are plundered and the chamber is a shambles. Rikha'trrj understands the value of the items here, but not the purpose for most of them. Her methods, while effective, are haphazard and her treatment of this storage area is a prime example.

## AREA 20 (2): HOLDING CELLS

These two small cells are used to hold creatures awaiting their turn as Rikha'trrj's experiments in **Area 22**. A faint scent of blood and urine wafts from each, but otherwise they are empty and the doors stand open.

## AREA 21: LAVA CAVERN

Both doors leading into this twisting cavern are locked and barred from the outside. The heat is oppressive and anyone entering the area must make a **DC 9 Constitution saving throw** or gain a level of exhaustion. Sulphurous fumes sting nostrils and the bubbling of lava can be heard from the western and southern reaches. Nothing could live in this environment for long, but the creatures that inhabit the cave aren't technically alive.

Rikha'trrj's failed experiments with Ethon's sarcophagus reside here, the **aberrant dust-stuffed**. Hags are hoarders at heart and Rikha'trrj feels these mindless failures may still prove useful at some point. Rather than destroy them, she has imprisoned them here. DMs should populate the area with as many aberrant dust-stuffed as they see fit to challenge or creep out the party. Most have either orcish or half-orcish features and the rest appear to be of full human stock. If the adventurers don't enter with at least a modicum of stealth, the dust-stuffed twist their keys (use their Churn ability) and attack immediately.

## AREA 22: SECRET LABORATORY

Within this workspace is the precursor to one of Ethon Panjilcuttra's crowning achievements: a Drain Works sarcophagus. It is, however, an early prototype and does not function correctly. It drains the life from humanoid creatures and refills their husks with a magical dust just fine, but the resulting dust-stuffed entities are nearly mindless zombies, rather than viable doppelgangers of their original flesh and

## ABERRANT DUST-STUFFED

*Medium construct, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 75 (10d8 + 30)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, necrotic

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages** Common, Infernal (vaguely understands but can't speak)

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Choking Hazard.** When an aberrant dust-stuffed takes more than 15 points of damage from a single slashing or piercing attack, dust billows from the wound. All creatures within a 5-foot radius must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage on attack rolls, saves, and ability checks while within the cloud.

**Indistinguishable.** An aberrant dust-stuffed projects no alignment and no magic when abilities or spells such as *detect magic* are cast in its vicinity. This does not extend to any items in its possession.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The aberrant dust-stuffed makes two slam attacks.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

**Churn (1/Day).** An aberrant dust-stuffed is fitted with one or more stirring rods whose winding keys sprout from its neck, rib-cage, or eye sockets. As an action, it (or someone else) can wind its key, which stirs its inner dust into a frenzy and it gains the effects of a *haste* spell with no concentration required.

blood counterparts. Ethon subsequently perfected his technique, resulting in the Drain Works located in Ashtakala. Rikha'trrj found the equipment Ethon left behind after she moved into the abandoned Burning Keep and has been trying to duplicate Ethon's work ever since—but with a twist. Rikha'trrj wants to not only create dust-stuffed humanoids to use as her own spies, she desires fiendish dust-stuffed creations to infiltrate the inner circles of the rakshasas, perhaps even the mighty Lords of Dust. Unfortunately, her experiments to date have only resulted in the aberrant dust-stuffed, which she keeps in **Area 21**.

The sarcophagus dominates the center of the room. With a delicate, crystalline appearance, its beauty belies its deadly nature. An abundance of glowing suction cups and tubes fill the interior, waiting patiently for their next victim. Two 6-foot-tall

cylindrical metal tanks stand against the western wall with tubes running from their bases to the sarcophagus. They hold the “dust” which is pumped into the empty creature husk after draining. Shelves full of phosphorescent jars, boxes of pungent herbs, and colorful gemstones line the other walls in this room—an alchemist’s dream.

## RIKHA’TRRJ (ANCIENT NIGHT HAG)

*Medium fiend, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor and ring)

**Hit Points** 187 (25d8 + 75)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)

**Saving Throws** +2 (*ring of protection*)

**Skills** Arcana +10, Deception +10, Insight +9, Perception +9, Persuasion +10, Stealth +7

**Damage Resistances** cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks made by weapons that aren’t silvered

**Damage Immunities** necrotic

**Condition Immunities** charmed

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal, Primordial

**Challenge** 14 (11,500 XP)

**Ancient Secrets.** Rikha’trrj can maintain concentration on two spells at once, and automatically succeeds on Constitution saving throws to maintain concentration due to taking damage.

**Innate Spellcasting.** Rikha’trrj’s innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At-will: *detect magic, invisibility, magic missile*

2/day each: *plane shift* (self only), *ray of enfeeblement, sleep*

**Legendary Resistance (2/Day).** If Rikha’trrj fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

**Magic Resistance.** Rikha’trrj has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Spellcasting.** Rikha’trrj is an 18th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). Rikha’trrj has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, frostbite, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, fog cloud, identify, protection from good and evil*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, mirror image, misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fly, magic circle*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, blight, phantasmal killer*

5th level (3 slots): *cloudkill, contact other plane, hold monster*

6th level (1 slot): *globe of invulnerability*

Rikha’trrj is not normally merciful with intruders, however, she is in need of more subjects for her experiments. Her priorities for a fight are: capture, kill, or escape if the first two prove impossible. She is willing to negotiate if the party doesn’t act overly bloodthirsty.

7th level (1 slot): *forcecage*

8th level (1 slot): *mind blank*

9th level (1 slot): *weird*

### ACTIONS

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

**Change Shape.** Rikha’trrj magically polymorphs into a Small or Medium female humanoid, or back into her true form. Her statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn’t transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies.

**Etherealness.** Rikha’trrj magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. To do so, Rikha’trrj must have a heartstone in her possession.

**Nightmare Haunting (1/Day).** While on the Ethereal Plane, Rikha’trrj magically touches a sleeping humanoid on the Material Plane. A *protection from evil and good* spell cast on the target prevents this contact, as does a *magic circle*. As long as the contact persists, the target has dreadful visions. If these visions last for at least 1 hour, the target gains no benefit from its rest, and its hit point maximum is reduced by 5 (1d10). If this effect reduces the target’s hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and if the target was evil, its soul is trapped in Rikha’trrj’s soul bag. The reduction to the target’s hit point maximum lasts until removed by the *greater restoration* spell or similar magic.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Rikha’trrj can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature’s turn. Rikha’trrj regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

**Move.** Rikha’trrj moves without provoking opportunity attacks.

**Cast a Spell.** Rikha’trrj casts one spell from her Innate Spellcasting trait.

**Cast a Spell (Costs 2 Actions).** Rikha’trrj casts one spell from her Spellcasting trait.

### ITEMS

Rikha’trrj wears a +2 *ring of protection*

*Inspired by the Ancient Night Hag from*

*The Korranberg Chronicle: Threat Dispatch* by Anthony J. Turco

# BROKEN STONE

by Ginny Loveday

What would I say about Broken Stone? Not a lot in honesty as it is terribly easy to fly right over without noticing that there was a settlement at all. The most notable feature is the enormous shard of jagged glass jutting from the black earth. It made an excellent outpost for our enemies during the Great War though, for that very same reason. Fiends of all types roamed the tunnels hidden beneath the surface, pouring forth with their frightful weapons to wage battle upon us or even amongst themselves at times.

I have heard that one of the Carrion Tribes inhabits Broken Stone now, claiming loyalty to Malathar, but I see no reason to believe that as more than a story meant to warn off foolish travelers. Still, the area is treacherous, covered with dangerous ravines that swallow the unwary, and prone to fearsome storms that rage for days with whirling sands and lightning. I wouldn't advise heading that way if you value your life, at least not without powerful enchantments to protect you. If anything does inhabit those tunnels, it is likely worse than anyone could guess.

## Broken Stone Adventure Seeds

Broken Stone is best suited for a party of 4-6 with an average level of 9-10, but can be easily adapted to a range of 7-12. Here are a few ideas to introduce it in your campaign:

- The Church of the Silver Flame has received reputable information claiming that an unusual number of fiends have been sighted near Broken Stone. They request your group to perform reconnaissance and possibly eliminate this evil blight.
- The sphinx Flamewind who has been studying the Draconic Prophecy requests that your group travel to Broken Stone to study the large piece of glass located there and note down any unusual properties it might have for her.
- Explorers on a ship in Bloodcliff Bay have sent back unusual reports of large plumes of black smoke issuing from this area. They request additional help to travel inland to investigate.



## THE SURROUNDING AREA

Situated close by to the point where the labyrinth meets the edge of Bloodcliff Bay, Broken Stone lies beneath a vast plain of black rock and sand criss-crossed with sharp peaks, ravines, and pits. Most of the land is considered difficult terrain and caution should be exercised at all times. The large jagged chunk of glass marking its location stands out on the rare clear day in an area ravaged by frequent storms. Storms hurl the black sand through the air obscuring sight for more than 30 feet. Frequent lightning strikes also hamper vision, with intense flashes in the sky alternating with the almost pitch black created by the whirling dust. Travel through one of these storms is extremely treacherous with would-be explorers frequently falling into a ravine or pit on accident and never being seen again.

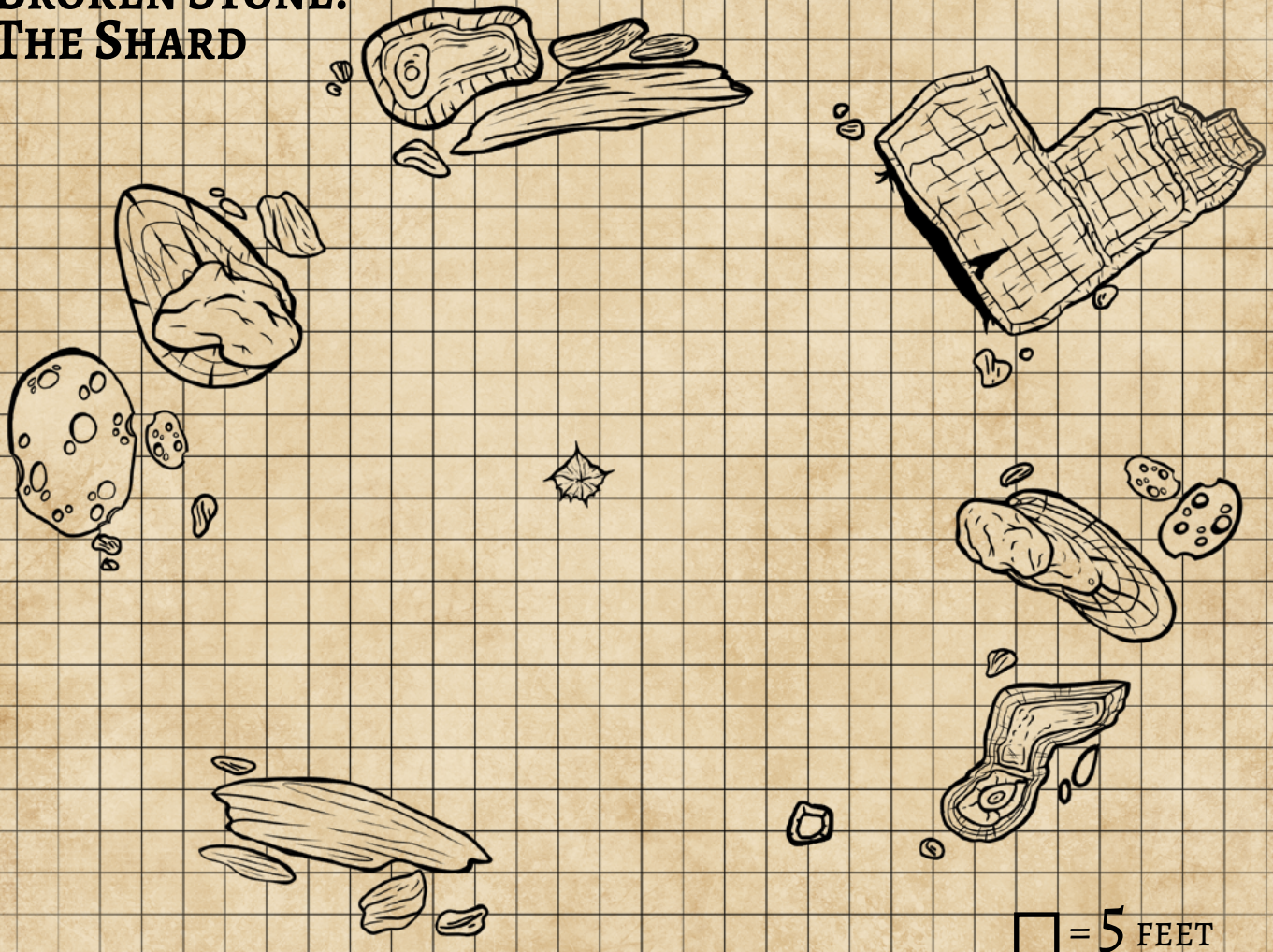
## Braving the Storm

If anyone is foolish enough to attempt to travel in one of these storms, they find themselves confronted with the following potential difficulties:

Combine the Meteorological and Geological Sub Tables (roll a d8) on [page 9](#) for some random environmental effects around Broken Stone.

Tunnels meander for unknown distances beneath the surface. Falling into one of the pits or ravines could potentially deposit someone into these tunnels if they manage to survive the fall, but then there is the new challenge of finding a way out through the twisting maze.

## BROKEN STONE: THE SHARD





## AREA 1: THE SHARD

Before you rises an immense shard of black glass, almost 30 feet tall and easily 5 feet on each side. On a clear day, the jagged shard can be seen from Bloodcliff Bay, but on most days, you can be nearly upon it before you see it. An eerie feeling settles upon you as you approach, almost as if a chill has settled into your very bones. It is obvious this shard has been here for thousands of years, managing to survive countless storms and who knows what other natural phenomena.

Around the shard, approximately 50 feet out from it, there are several rock formations which provide a small respite from the worst of the wind. In the shadow of one of these rocks, an opening leads down into a tunnel. If the characters are not stealthy as they approach the shard, **3 glabrezu** (*MM* p58) appear from this opening.

## AREA 2: ENTRYWAY

In the shadow of a large rock, a 10-foot-wide opening gradually slopes downward, continuing for 60 feet until it opens into a small 20-foot square chamber. If the characters did not see the glabrezu exit the tunnel, it can be located with a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check**. If the glabrezu did not emerge, they are located in this area. Sounds of combat in this area alert the creatures in the Barracks (**Area 4**).

The area is dark save for any light sources the characters brought with them. It is empty but for a small pile of bones, a tattered rucksack containing 17 sp and 30 cp, and a broken sword. If examined, the bones appear to be human. They are mostly broken as

if they had been bitten in two. The walls of this area are made of roughly hewn, black crystal material.

## AREA 3: CENTRAL HALLWAY

Leading east from the entry chamber, this 10-foot-wide hallway stretches out for 300 feet with a number of tunnels and rooms opening off of it. The hallway offers no light other than what the characters brought with them.

## AREA 4: BARRACKS

Set back 5 feet from the hallway, a large iron door opens into a cavern approximately 40 feet by 55 feet in size. The walls of this room are made of a deep purple crystal and a faint glow emanates from them. **3 zakya rakshasa** (*E:RfLW* p309) are resting in this area. Sounds of combat from the entryway draw their attention.

## AREA 5: PRISON CELLS

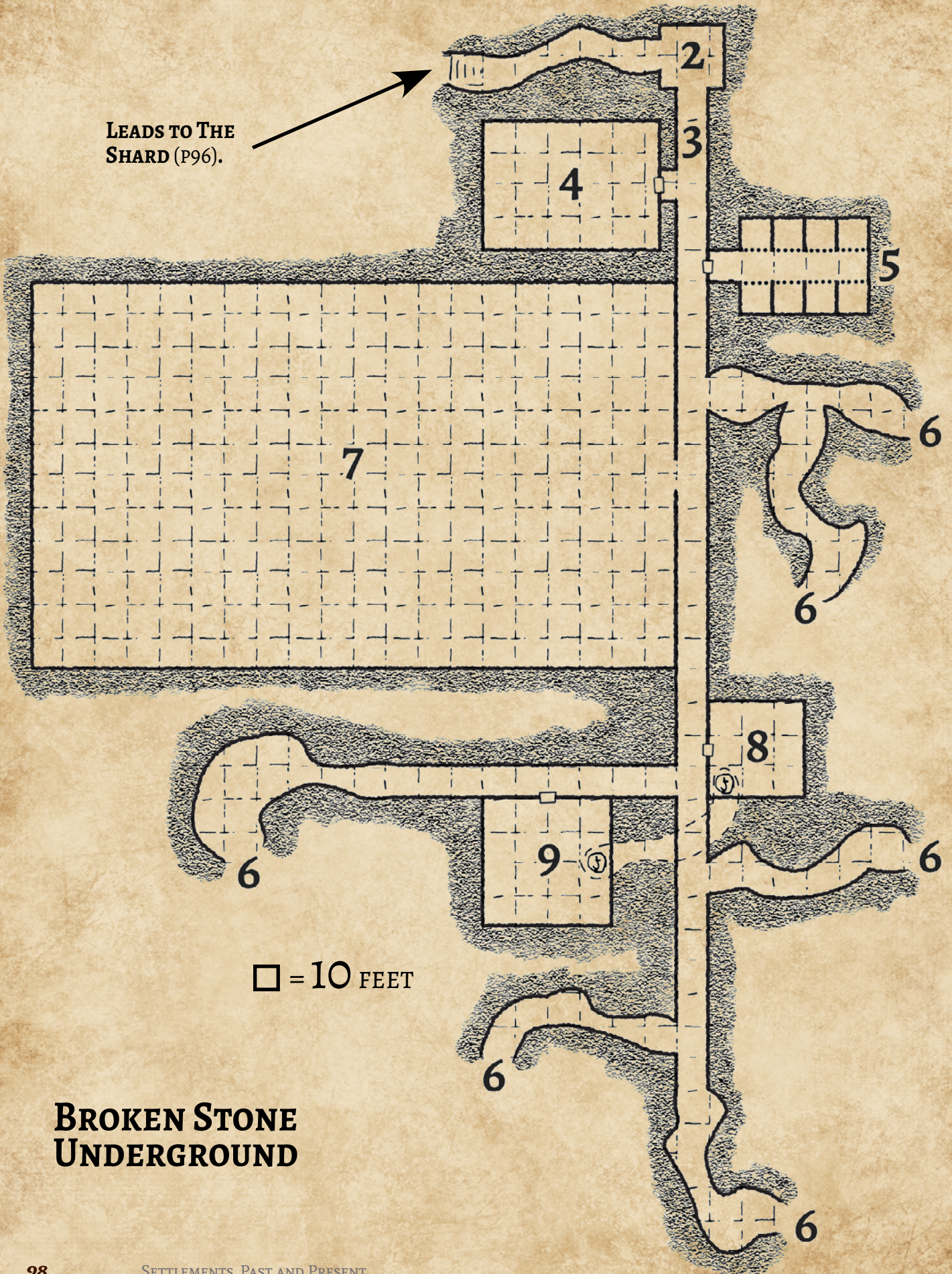
Behind a locked door, requiring a successful **DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** to pick, lies a short 50-foot-long hallway lined on either side with several cells. **2 shadow demons** (*MM* p64) stand just inside the door. The rear and side walls of these cells are made of the same rough black crystal as the entryway area with the front wall and doors constructed with adamantium bars. None of the cells contain living prisoners at present. The two cells furthest back contain two humanoid bodies in various states of decay. A successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check** shows these bodies have been down here for at least five weeks. A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals a spell scroll of *protection from evil and good* and a *potion of superior healing* on the bodies.

## AREA 6: ANCILLARY TUNNELS

Branching off from the main hallway, and then farther off from the side tunnels, and then farther still off from them, a vast network of warrens fans out from the entryway, connecting other clusters of rooms and other hidden exits. These tunnels twist and turn seemingly at random, making them very difficult to navigate. If the characters decide to explore these at length, they encounter **1d6 bulezau** (*MToF* p131) for each hour they spend exploring and they must make a successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check** as a group in order to find their way out of the maze to the surface. On a failure, they are able to attempt this check again after the



LEADS TO THE SHARD (P96).



□ = 10 FEET

# BROKEN STONE UNDERGROUND

next hour passes. These tunnels and other rooms are similarly constructed of various shades of crystal, some roughly hewn and others polished smooth.

### AREA 7: ASSEMBLY HALL

An archway off of the main hallway opens into a vast 200-foot-by-120-foot chamber with walls of smoothly polished deep blue crystal that curve in and out, making it seem even larger as light from several torches reflects in odd ways. A plethora of tables, strewn with books and papers, are arranged along the perimeter of the room along with several bookcases containing tomes about the Overlords, magical artifacts, and the Draconic Prophecy. A locked iron chest is tucked beneath one of the tables. A successful **DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** can unlock it. A successful **DC 19 Intelligence (Investigation) check** is required to spot the magical trap which triggers when the chest is opened. It can be disabled with a 4th-level or higher *dispel magic* or a successful **DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools**. If triggered, the character who opens the chest takes 12d8 force damage, or half on a successful **DC 18 Dexterity saving throw**. The chest contains 1 *potion of greater healing*, and a *scroll of protection*.

### AREA 8: RITUAL CHAMBER

An altar rests on the far side of this 30-foot square chamber, atop which a burning brazier produces a thick column of black smoke that rises up through a natural chimney in the ceiling. Eight runes are carved into the stone of the altar around the brazier. Four similar runes line the floor at the threshold of the room. Any character entering the room without first disarming the runes takes 8d6 lightning damage as electricity sparks from the walls, or half with a successful **DC 18 Dexterity save**. The runes can be disabled by dealing 50 damage to each one (each one destroyed reduces the damage by 2d6). The runes have an AC of 20 and are resistant to all bludgeoning, piercing, slashing, fire, cold, and force damage. They are immune to lightning damage. Triggering the runes alerts Eevershak in **Area 9** of the characters' presence if she was not already. A secret tunnel leads from the ritual chamber to Eevershak's chamber. A successful **DC 18 Investigation (Intelligence) check** can discover the entrance.

### AREA 9: EEVERSHAK'S CHAMBER

Eevershak's room contains a lavishly appointed bed, a desk, two bookshelves, a wardrobe, and two chests.

The walls are made of the same deep blue crystal as the assembly hall. An array of magical symbols are carved into the floor and walls. Once she is aware of the characters' presence, she turns to the door and speaks with a smug-sounding drawl.

*Before you stands a rakshasa outfitted in brightly colored silks topped with highly polished armor. She stands with one hand cocked on her hip, smiling at you. "Darlings, at last! It takes so much effort these days just to get someone to come and visit. Have you been enjoying my settlement so far? Excellent! Now to complete my ritual you just need to meet my friend." With that, she snaps her fingers and a large demon fills the doorway behind you.*

A **marilith** (*MM p61*) appears in the doorway behind the characters when **Eevershak** (*p100*) summons it. Both Eevershak and the marilith attack the characters. If reduced to less than half of her hit points, Eevershak attempts to activate a teleportation circle carved in the floor near the corner of the room.

Once Eevershak and the marilith have fled or been defeated, the characters can search her chamber. A secret tunnel leads from this chamber to the ritual chamber. A successful **DC 18 Investigation (Intelligence) check** can discover the entrance. On the desk they find a large number of journals with writings on rituals meant to release the Overlords from their captivity and notes on ancient magics that might allow these rituals to work. The unlocked chest contains 500 gp in coins and gems, and a spellbook containing the following spells: *shield*, *magic circle*,

### Roleplaying Eevershak

Eevershak is a Naztharune rakshasa who serves Hektula, the Bloody Scribe. Hektula is the prakhtu of the Overlord Sul Khatesh, and serves the Council of Ashtakala as their librarian. In this position, Hektula has spent decades studying the Dragon Prophecies. She appointed Eevershak as the commander of a legion traveling the Demon Wastes studying various ancient magics in an attempt to find a way to fulfill enough of the prophecy to free Sul from her prison beneath Arcanix.

As a result of her travels, Eevershak has picked up an affinity for certain magics. With her skills in magic and combat, she has grown arrogant when dealing with those she considers to be beneath her.

*teleport, divination, contact other plane, and geas.* A hidden compartment can be found in the wardrobe with a successful **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check**. In the hidden compartment, a stack of correspondence between Eevershak and Hektula, a Lord of Dust, outline several years of failed experiments across the Demon Wastes, the most recent referring to the shard above Broken Stone and using it to focus magical energies generated by a sizable living sacrifice. The experiments completed thus far do not seem to have pleased Hektula. The most recent letter conveys her frustration with deciphering the intricacies of the Dragon Prophecy and Eevershak's failure to complete this ritual. A journal beneath the letters has entries outlining several other theories that correlate with Hektula's understandings on other aspects of the prophecies and potential experiments to complete those at various locations.



## EEVERSHAK (ZAKYA RAKSHASA)

*Medium fiend, lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 19 (scale mail, shield, cloak)

**Hit Points** 85 (9d8 + 45)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14(+2)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	15(+2)

**Saving Throws** +1,

**Skills** Athletics +11, Perception +10

**Damage Vulnerabilities** piercing from magic weapons wielded by good creatures

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** Common, Infernal

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** Eevershak's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

*At-will: detect thoughts, disguise self*

*1/day: shield*

**Limited Magic Immunity.** Eevershak can't be affected by spells of 1st level of lower unless she wishes to be. She has advantage on saving throws against all other spells and magical effects.

**Magic Weapons.** Eevershak's weapon attacks are magical.

**Martial Prowess (1/turn).** When Eevershak hits a creature with a melee weapon attack, the attack deals an extra 11 (2d10) damage of the weapon's type and the creature must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failure, Eevershak can push the creature up to 10 feet away from her, knock the creature prone, or make the creature drop one item it is holding of Eevershak's choice.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Eevershak makes three melee weapon attacks. Alternatively, she can make two ranged attacks with her javelins.

**+3 Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack.* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d8 + 8) slashing damage, or 13 (1d10 + 8) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Javelin.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack.* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30-120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage.

# SHAAZARAK

by Cat Evans

Desolation is plentiful in the Demon Wastes. Dead earth, dust-choked skies, and the rotting remains of those who fall victim to fiends or Carrion Tribes are hallmarks of the region. Few locations wear their desolation so proudly as the ruined palace of Shaazarak.

The ancient rakshasas built Shaazarak to keep intruders out. It stands to defend something—to keep a secret, protect a treasure—but in the Demon Wastes nothing is sacrosanct, and fiends and monsters fight over the remains like animals picking over a carcass.<sup>[11]</sup>

*[11] A tiefling known as Alene currently holds Shaazarak, conscripting any living being she can capture to excavate the site, hoping to uncover whatever treasures she can before someone bigger and tougher than she is steals the palace from her. For now, Shaazarak's secrets remain its own, but I fear it is a matter of time before they are laid bare. Whose hands they fall into might have grave consequences for all of Khorvaire. —Kendal*

## Shaazarak Adventure Seeds

Shaazarak is best suited for a party of 4-6 with an average level of 8, but can be easily adapted to a range of 6-10. You can bring it to characters' attention in a number of ways:

- **Shelter from the storm:** The sulfurous pools around Shaazarak cause deluges of acid rain that can strip flesh from bone. Offer Shaazarak as an escape from the cruel environment of the Demon Wastes.
- **Dreams of the end:** Magic users have had terrible dreams presaging a great apocalypse that will ripple out from Shaazarak. There is still time to avert the crisis—and with the Day of Mourning fresh in people's minds, they should want to—if a group of heroes acts fast.
- **Forbidden knowledge:** The mages of Arcanix have their suspicions about what treasures Shaazarak conceals and fund an expedition to uncover them. The characters might be scholars, guards, or an opposing expedition—perhaps one secretly steered by the Lords of Dust, who aren't ready to give up whatever awaits in the palace.
- **Worked to death:** The characters are captured and put to work in the excavations, or dispatched to rescue someone who suffered that fate.

## AROUND SHAAZARAK

Shaazarak is partially excavated. On the east side of the complex, most of the earth and rock has been cleared away, revealing unnaturally well-preserved red stone carved with bas-reliefs depicting the Overlords and their legions conquering their draconic foes. On the western side, the palace is still obscured by millennia of accumulated dirt.

There is no path to Shaazarak. The blasted red earth around it breaks down into stinking mud and bubbling, sulfurous pools. Sometimes, if travelers are especially unlucky, the rising gas from these pools returns as poisonous, acidic rain.

### AREA 1: SULFUR POOLS

The area for a half mile around Shaazarak is broken up by toxic pools of hot, sulfurous acid. Sucking mud and blazing hot air make this area **Difficult Terrain**, and traversing it requires a single **DC 15 Constitution saving throw**. Those who fail are Poisoned for one hour, and take 10 (4d4) acid damage. Those who succeed take half of this damage.

At any given time, there is a 20% chance that it is raining around Shaazarak. When rain falls, the saving throw increases to DC 17 and the acid damage to 15 (6d4).

### AREA 2: SECURITY

Patrols criss-cross the area around Shaazarak, sent out from Area 15. Each patrol comprises:

**2 bearded devils** (MM p70)

**2 hellhounds** (MM p182)

**1 imp** (MM p76), who is sent out a hundred yards from the other fiends; either it reports back, or its death screeches serve as an early warning

In addition, sentries on top of the **East Courtyard (Area 4)**, have a clear view of the entire area.

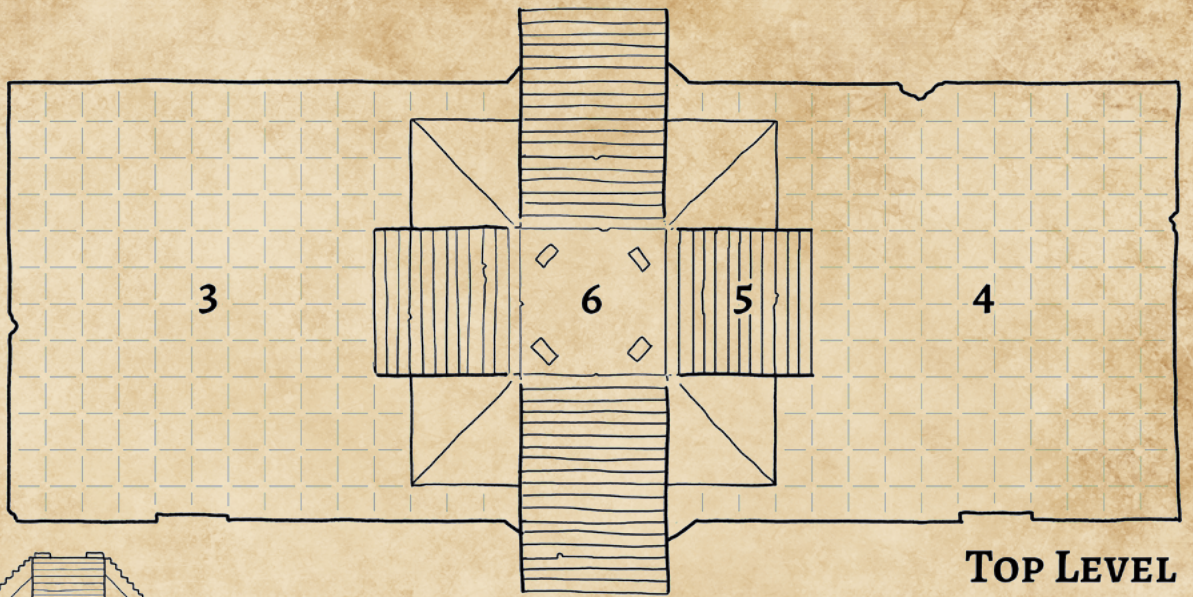
Patrols are under orders to capture any intruders and take them to Alene.

### TOP LEVEL

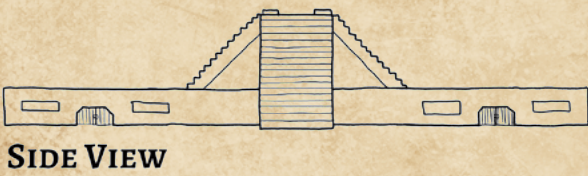
The top level of Shaazarak is a majestic dais, now partially ruined, with mighty stone steps leading up to it, and a lookout spot for sentries.

### AREA 3: WEST COURTYARD

The western side of the palace of Shaazarak has not yet been excavated. The ground level here is 25 feet higher than **Area 4**, and level with **Area 6**. Scaling it requires a successful **DC 14 Strength (Athletics)**

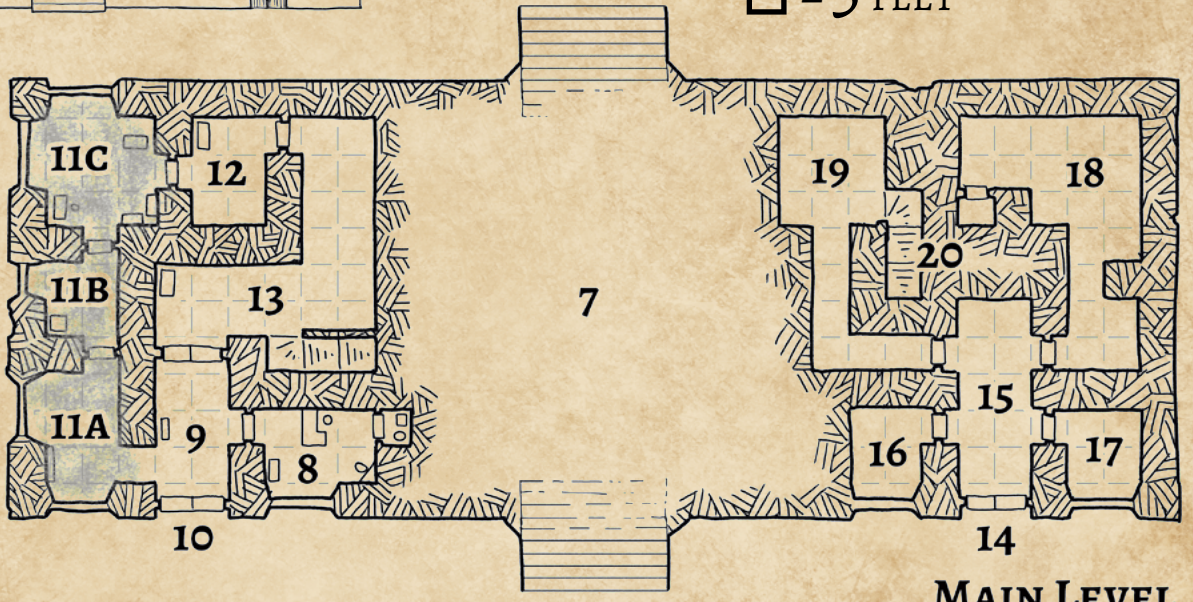


TOP LEVEL



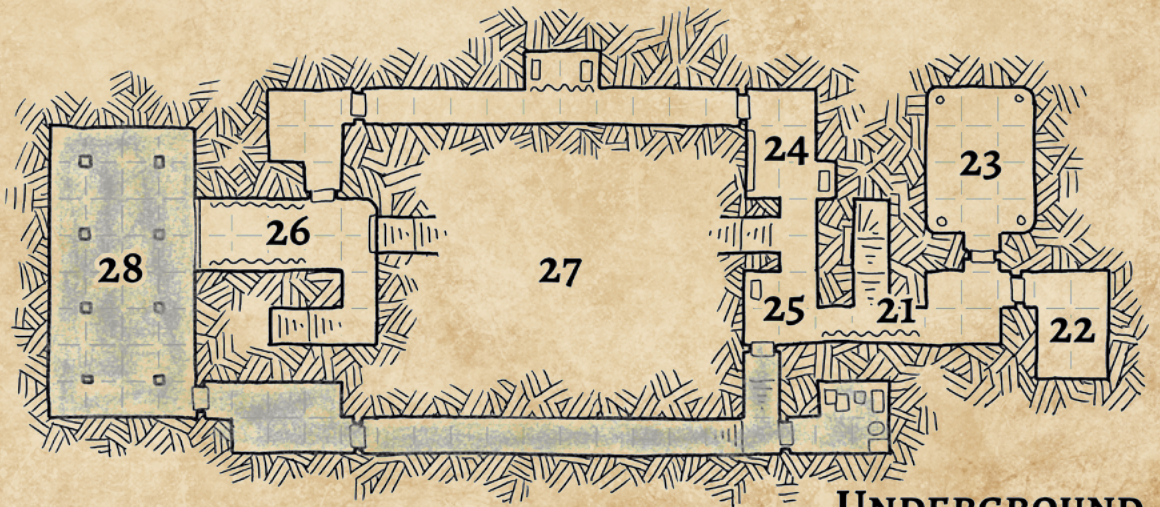
SIDE VIEW

□ = 5 FEET



MAIN LEVEL

# SHAAZARAK



UNDERGROUND



**check.** From the top, characters have unobstructed views of **Areas 1-6**.

### AREA 4: EAST COURTYARD

The stone of this courtyard is lightly pockmarked from the region's acidic rain. Alene's sentries are camped out here. They cluster around two sagging, rotting, canvas tents, each 10 feet by 10 feet. The creatures positioned as sentries are those Alene can't use for the heavy labor of excavations: imps and kobolds (1d6+2 of each at any given time). Their attention spans are short, and unless a bearded devil has recently visited to keep them on task, which happens once every hour, they are easily distracted by conversation, games of tag, or wrestling (imps) or shooting down with shortbows (kobolds) one of the region's few scrawny birds or bats from the sky.

### AREA 5: STAIRS

The western flight of stairs is hidden under earth and rock, but the other three are visible. All are well worn. Each set is 25 feet high.

### AREA 6: RUINED DAIS

Lightning and the marks of mighty claws have ruined this platform. Some of the stone has fallen away, providing both access and line of sight to **Area 7**.

What remains of the floor shows a map of the stars and the planar system, carved into the rock. The stonework is sufficiently damaged that puzzling out what the carvings depict requires a successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana, History, or Investigation) check**.

A rough wooden ladder leads down to **Area 7**. It supports up to 200 pounds of weight. If more weight is placed on it, the ladder breaks, sending anyone on it tumbling to the hard, stone floor below. The fall deals 7 (2d6) points of bludgeoning damage, and alerts anyone in **Area 7**.

## MAIN LEVEL

The main level of the palace of Shaazarak is a hive of activity. Alene's prisoners work on excavation and menial tasks, her fiendish allies study or amuse themselves, and her guards rest between patrols. It's almost impossible to discern the original function of most rooms on this level: they are empty, picked over, and inhabited by Shaazarak's new owners.

### AREA 7: WORKER CAMP

This square, high-ceilinged room holds a veritable tent city of captive workers. There are 25 prisoners here, watched over by one of the three teams described in Area 15. The tiefling **Tarsis** (p109) is in charge of the prisoners, but only visits to deliver work orders at the start of each day. The excavations are almost complete, which means two things:

- There isn't enough work for all the prisoners: usually no more than six are needed, each day.
- All of the prisoners are starting to fear what will happen to them when Alene and Merakta have no more need of them.

The guards change shift every eight hours. Their job is to break up fights, punish any suspicious activity (e.g. gatherings of prisoners in groups of more than three or four), and occasionally raid tents or search individuals to make sure they don't have any excavated treasure, or tools that could be repurposed as weapons.

The prisoners are made up of goblins, kobolds, human commoners, and a small number of other humanoids. Carrion Tribespeople usually prove to be too hard to hold. Most of the humans present are folk unlucky enough to have found their way to the Demon Wastes from elsewhere in Khorvaire.



## Notable Prisoners

**Mirade.** A wiry, quiet, middle-aged woman, Mirade is the only one of the workers not there against her will. A spy for the Moon Reavers, Mirade slips out once every two weeks to report, using the *ring of invisibility* that, the rest of the time, she swallows (vomiting it up when needed). The Moon Reavers fully intend to let Alene figure out the complexities of the Great Machine, and then either sweep in and claim it from the fiends, or destroy it, depending on what it actually does.

**Kruk'tur.** This squat, lisping, goblin is an unlikely rabble-rouser, but that's the role in which he has found himself. Kruk'tur has been secretly hiding weapons and tools in the workers' camp, and trying to convince other prisoners to join him in turning on their fiendish guards. He'd rather die free than live like this. He's had little luck so far, but as they sense the end of their captivity drawing near, they're starting to warm to the idea.

## AREA 8: OVERSEER'S OFFICE

Candles on the single desk don't disturb the long shadows in the corners of this room. The desk itself is made of a couple of planks of wood laid across lumps of masonry. On it are:

**Area Map.** A sketched, but reasonably accurate, map of the northern part of the Demon Wastes

**Floor Plan.** A floor plan of Shaazarak. Several colors of ink, and in some places charcoal, have been used to fill in different areas. This is a recent floor plan, made by Tarsis as the excavation progressed.

**Progress Log.** A concise document listing excavation progress. The process is almost complete. Barring a couple of rooms on the west side of the main and sub levels, which have collapsed, all chambers have been opened up. The document notes that focus has shifted to 'empowering the Great Machine'; arcanists are needed, and there are brief notes on how to tempt some qualified magewrights and academics to the excavation—or, if need be, abduct some from Arcanix. The document also notes that there is no further use for the workers, and that they are expensive to feed. They are to be gifted to the various fiends working on the dig, in payment for services rendered.

A locked door leads to Area 8a: Supply Closet. A successful **DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** unlocks the door.

**Tarsis the Overseer.** Tarsis is here most mornings until noon, and returns in the early evening to write notes on the day's progress. He doesn't tolerate the

presence of other people in 'his' part of Shaazarak, and immediately launches into a blistering tirade of abuse if he thinks the intruders are prisoners or other 'harmless' civilians. If they appear armed and dangerous, he shouts for guards; two arrive from **Area 7** the same turn, and six more from **Area 17** 1d4 turns later.

## AREA 8A: SUPPLY CLOSET

This small room contains stacks of parchment, ink, quills, and receipts for equipment purchased (e.g. digging tools; even devils have to buy shovels, it appears). The total value of the contents is approximately 100 gp.

## AREA 9: OVERSEER'S QUARTERS

This area is large and empty, except for a comfortable bedroll and a locked wooden chest in the center of the floor. A floating driftglobe hovers near the bedroll, providing gentle blue light. It has the feel of an atrium or entrance hall.

**Wooden chest.** The chest is locked with an *arcane lock* spell. It contains:

- 137 gp, 42 sp, and 98 cp
- Components for all the spells Tarsis knows
- A collection of books on magical theory, the history of the Demon Wastes, and some mystery novels (including *The Streets Below*, a gritty thriller set in the deepest levels of Sharn)
- A handy haversack
- An **air elemental** (*MM p124*) bound to Tarsis' service that attacks if anyone other than him opens the chest

**Tarsis the Overseer.** Tarsis spends evenings here alone reading, and sleeps here overnight. See **Area 8** for Tarsis' reaction to intruders. If he screams for help here, Alene also comes running from **Area 12**, arriving in 3 turns.

## AREA 10: BLOCKED DOORS

This pair of bronze-bound, wooden double doors, carved to depict a rakshasa wrestling a feathered serpent, stand closed. They are stuck fast, and open only with a successful **DC 20 Strength check**. Alternatively, they have AC 15, 45 hit points, and a damage threshold of 12.

## AREA 11A, B, C: RUINED ROOMS

The walls and ceilings of these rooms have collapsed, making them impassable.



## AREA 12: ALENE'S QUARTERS

This room is lavishly decorated: purple drapes cover the ceiling and walls, and numerous small, magical, lights peek from between the folds of fabric like stars. A real bed stands in the middle of the room, along with two finely made wooden daybeds, both showing the same style of decoration as the palace's architectural carvings. A crystal *decanter of endless water* provides cold, fresh water on demand.

**Alarm.** Unauthorized entry triggers a silent *alarm* spell that alerts Tarsis, who in turn uses a *message* cantrip to alert the guards, and then Alene. All of them arrive together, 1d4 minutes after the alarm is triggered.

**Acquisitions.** Alene has helped herself to a few of the lesser artifacts recovered from various parts of Shaazarak. Mundane items include: a bronze statue of a stretching tiger (worth 750 gp but weighing 200 lbs), a gold and ruby collar (worth 500 gp), a set of golden claw-sheaths decorated with opals (worth 350 gp), and numerous pieces of pottery and ornaments.

**Alene.** *Alene (p109)* is here during the evenings and overnight. She knows everyone who should be in Shaazarak, including the workers, and runs for the guards the second she notices intruders.

## AREA 13: ALENE'S SITTING ROOM

This sitting room holds more of the palace's original furniture and ornaments than any other room. The walls are painted with friezes of rakshasas hunting, fighting, holding court, and defeating mighty dragons, and every piece of furniture has the same style of intricate carving that is common in Shaazarak.

A side table next to one of the chairs holds a half-full bottle of very good Aundairian wine (worth nothing, half empty, but delicious and strong), a pewter goblet, and a leather-bound journal.

**Alene's Journal.** Inside the journal are Alene's notes on the Great Machine. She believes it to be a manufactured manifest zone: an area where the influence of any plane, perhaps even multiple planes at once, might be brought to bear on the Material Plane. She theorizes that overlapping manifest zones might, depending on

## The Great Machine

Like the Mourning, the workings of the Great Machine are best left to the imagination and the ruling of individual DMs. No mechanics are provided, and the only hint of its purpose is what Alene believes it to be capable of. DMs are encouraged to keep it mysterious and threatening; the more players know, the less fearful they will be and—in the worst possible scenario—the more interested they will be in trying to use it themselves.

the planes involved, be something she could weaponize (though she's not clear on how). She goes on to speculate how much this 'potential weapon' might be worth.

A page has been torn out of the journal.

**Staircase.** This narrow staircase leads down to **Area 26**.

**Alene.** Alene is here for a couple of hours in the early morning and evening. She runs for the guards the second she notices intruders.

## AREA 14: MAIN DOORS

This pair of bronze-bound, wooden, double doors, carved to depict a rakshasa tearing out a dragon's throat, stand closed. They are unlocked, and open to the plateau on which the palace is built.

## AREA 15: BARRACKS

Fires fed by wood, peat, or humanoid waste burn here constantly, turning this room into a sweltering, stink-



ing sauna comfortable only for the fiends that relax and rest here.

The fiends in Shaazarak spend their time here when not at work. Their work patterns are:

#### SHAAZARAK FIEND PATROLS

Team	Composition	Day	Evening	Overnight
A	3 bearded devils 1 chain devil	Area 7	Area 28	Area 15
B	2 bearded devils, 1 hellhound, 1 orthon	Area 28	Area 15	Area 7
C	3 merregons, 1 medusa	Area 15	Area 7	Area 28

As well as these three groups, Alene's cousins, the tiefling siblings Varin and Belexas—slender, tiger-striped, creatures with feline eyes and a claim to rakshasa heritage—spend all day here, 'guarding the doors', though they mostly pass the time gambling, grooming one another, or napping. Initially they were terrified of the pure-blooded fiends, but over time they've realized that Alene's affection keeps them safe. They're convinced they are untouchable and irreplaceable. They are wrong, and if they were ever to go too far in their bragging and talking down to the real fiends, their life expectancy would be too short to accurately measure.

#### AREA 16 & 17: STOREROOMS

These rooms hold nothing but rubbish: cracked bones, humanoid teeth, and scraps of skin and hair that remain from the devils' feasts

#### AREA 18: ARCHIVE

Stone shelves cut into every inch of this room's walls suggest it served as a library or archive, but nothing remains of the wealth of knowledge once stored here except for some worm-eaten wooden rollers and fragments of parchment. Time is not the only force that has left its mark: stretches of the walls and ceiling are streaked with scorch marks and smoke stains, and a similar, circular mark on the floor brings to mind a bonfire. Someone set this library ablaze.

Any expression of curiosity—such as wondering what the room was, investigating the marks of fire, or trying to read any scraps of parchment—causes the **2 allips** (*MToF p116*) that haunt the library to manifest, emerging from the black stains on the walls. The allips do not attack unless attacked, but try to share the terrible knowledge that killed them, whispering secrets to the characters in an ancient dialect of Infer-

nal. Any characters exposed to the allips' Whispers of Madness or Howling Babble almost know the secrets of the Great Machine, but while the knowledge is tantalizingly close, it remains out of reach.

The allips fight to the death if attacked, but cannot leave the library.

Alene, Tarsis, and many of the fiends in Shaazarak are under the subtle, lingering, effects of the allips' powers. After excavating the library and hearing the creatures' whispers, Alene and Tarsis went from greedy treasure seekers to passionate hunters of knowledge, obsessed with uncovering the Great Machine and figuring out its secrets. None of them will even consider stopping until that goal is achieved.

#### AREA 18A: SECRET ROOM

This hidden door is apparent to anyone with a **passive Perception of 20** or higher, or who exceeds that number on a **Wisdom (Perception) check**. The door is not locked.

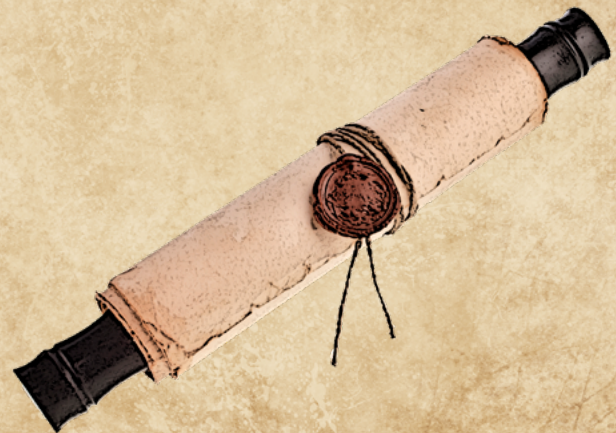
Inside is a small shelf of scrolls containing histories of strategies the rakshasas used in their campaign against the dragons (extremely valuable to the right collector), and a *scroll of recording*.

#### SCROLL OF RECORDING

*Wondrous item, rare*

A scroll of creamy parchment on slender ebony rollers. It has the Infernal word for 'secret' written on the back of the parchment.

On the speaking of a command word (the Infernal word for 'secret'), this scroll immediately begins to record every word spoken within 20 feet of it. It attributes different speakers (as "First Speaker", etc.) and any non-verbal, but audible, communication (e.g. "Second Speaker laughs"). The scroll records for the next hour, or until stopped by speaking the command word again. Speaking the command word a third time erases whatever is written on the scroll.



## AREA 19: EMPTY ROOM

An empty, stone-walled, room.

## AREA 20: STAIRCASE

This narrow staircase leads to **Areas 21 and 24**.

## UNDERLEVEL

The underlevel is less populated than the main level, which means intruders are unlikely to be mistaken for workers. It is hot and dry, the air heavy with millennia-old hints of incense and perfume. There is little light, save an occasional candle or lamp set up to let Alene or Tarsis scrutinize a frieze.

## AREA 21: THE GRAND FRIEZE

The wall opposite the stone staircase is enlivened with a painted frieze, its colors of red, gold, and orange still vivid, depicting a rakshasa seated upon an enormous, carved throne. Points of black, gold, and red light radiate out around the rakshasa's head.

Characters who succeed on a **DC 13 Intelligence (History) check** conclude that the colors and shapes of the 'lights' suggest the lines around the rakshasa's head are Khyber, Eberron, and Siberys dragonshards.

An **Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals the following:

- **DC 15:** On closer inspection, the rakshasa is not merely seated on the throne, they are strapped to it. Their eyes are pure white, which may indicate an altered state, or may mean they are dead.
- **DC 18:** A line of infernal script has been painted, in tiny lettering at odds with the scale of the frieze, in the bottom right hand corner. It reads 'what hubris, to build a machine that could change the world, and what cowardice not to use it.'

## AREA 22, 23, 24: FINDS STORAGE

These rooms contain everything recovered from Shaazarak that has not yet been sold. Furniture, tapestries, pieces of art, and pottery cram these rooms from floor to ceiling.

If characters investigate these rooms, roll 1d100 on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge 11–16 table (*DMG*). Ignore the 'coins' result, substitute all 'gem' results for art objects, and modify the roll based on the result of the characters' **Intelligence (Investigation) check**.

- Result of 13 or lower: no modifier
- Result of 14–17: add 10 to the number rolled on 1d100

- Result of 18+: add 20 to the number rolled on 1d100

Thoroughly searching each room takes 30 minutes. Combing through these cluttered, disorganised rooms is loud, and for every ten minutes the characters spend searching there is a cumulative 10% chance that the guards stationed in **Area 27** will hear them and investigate.

## AREA 25: STAIRCASE

This staircase leads down to the Great Machine. Only the fiends who guard Shaazarak are supposed to use this staircase and, to ensure intruders can't creep silently down it, they have scattered the steps with broken glass, pottery shards, and fragments of bone. Descending them is noisy, and **Dexterity (Stealth) checks** are made with disadvantage.

## AREA 26: ALENE'S WORKROOM

This room is empty save for two desks that must be as old as the palace itself, each with a well-cushioned chair. Both desks have three drawers, all locked. Only one, Alene's, has anything in the drawers.

If characters force the drawers with a successful **DC 14 Strength check**, or pick the locks with a successful **DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves' tools**, they find:

- Drawer 1: thirteen small Khyber dragonshards, thirteen Eberron dragonshards, and eight Siberys dragonshards.
- Drawer 2: a *Tome of Clear Thought* that Alene has started, but not finished, reading.
- Drawer 3: a page torn out of Alene's Journal (**see Area 13**), detailing her realization that activating the Great Machine will either kill the person seated on the throne, or convert them to a state of pure energy. The throne must be occupied by a powerful spellcaster... so effectively, Alene is going to have to kill Tarsis. She considers this regrettable, but necessary.

Forcing the drawers open is noisy, and alerts the guards in **Area 27**.

A door in the east of this room leads to **Area 27**.

Alene and Tarsis. Alene and Tarsis spend most days down here, either in **Area 27**, inspecting the Great Machine, or sitting here and theorizing about it. Characters who are able to sneak up on them learn they're in need of a few more Eberron shards

to be able to safely power up the machine, and they fully intend to do so. Neither of them seems entirely sure what will happen when they do, but the drive to uncover Shaazarak's secrets, made still more powerful by the allips' whispers, has pushed them far past the point of common sense.

When Alene and Tarsis realize they are not alone, they attack immediately, and summon the guards from **Area 27**, who call for reinforcements from upstairs.

### AREA 27: THE GREAT MACHINE

This vast, cavernous room has a floor level several feet deeper than the surrounding chambers. Lit by dozens of driftglobes and lanterns, it is as bright as daylight, and every light source is turned to illuminate the stone dais rising in the middle of the room.

On the dais is a throne. Carved from ebony, with channels containing gold flowing in a complex pattern, and set with brackets into which something—dragonshards, for example—might be set, the throne dominates the space. The floor of the room is dusty, but a carved diagram of the planes, their intersecting movements mapped out for all to see, is clearly visible.

**The guards.** One of the guard patrols described in **Area 15** is here. On seeing intruders, they first summon the others, then attack.

**Alene and Tarsis.** See **Area 26**. If Alene and Tarsis are not in the underlevel when the characters enter this area, they arrive seconds after any alarm is raised.

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Shaazarak is presented as a location, not an adventure. It's up to the DM how to put these various puzzle pieces together. For a high-action, exciting conclusion, have Alene ready to use the Great Machine, either with Tarsis forced to sit upon the throne, or some other NPC (a kidnapped researcher from Arcanix, or friend of the player characters, perhaps).

Alene has slightly too few Siberys dragonshards to operate the machine (she has eight and needs thirteen) but that won't stop her—the unnatural curiosity inspired by the allips has her in its grasp. When the improperly supplied machine is activated, the entire palace shakes and begins to collapse. Run this as a chase scene, using the rules from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, rolling on the following table for complications.

### SHAAZARAK COLLAPSE COMPLICATIONS

#### d20 Complication

- 1 A large obstacle such as a fallen piece of rubble blocks your way. Succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to get past the obstacle. On a failed check, the obstacle counts as 10 feet of difficult terrain.
- 2 A group of curious—and terrified—workers comes to investigate the ominous rumbling and shaking. Succeed on a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Charisma (Intimidation) check to move through them. On a failed check, the obstacle counts as 20 feet of difficult terrain.
- 3 Rubble clatters down upon you from the ceiling. Make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, you take 10 (4d4) points of bludgeoning damage.
- 4 A collection of excavation tools, formerly propped against a wall, falls and blocks your path. Succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid them. On a failed check, the obstacle counts as ten feet of difficult terrain.
- 5 Make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, you are blinded by dust and pebbles falling from above until the end of your turn. While blinded in this way, your speed is halved.
- 6 You are jostled and shoved by workers attempting to flee the scene. Make a DC 14 Strength saving throw. On a failed save you are knocked prone.
- 7 You run into a group of bearded devils attempting to prevent workers from fleeing. Succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics), Dexterity (Acrobatics), or Charisma (Intimidation) check (your choice) to get past the ensuing fight unimpeded. On a failed check, you take 2d4 bludgeoning damage, and the combatants count as 10 feet of difficult terrain.
- 8 In the frenzied rush to escape, some liquid—water, wine, or lamp oil—has been spilled on this stretch of floor. Make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, you fall prone.
- 9 You find yourself blocking a chain devil's chosen escape route. It attacks you as it attempts to shove past, making two attacks with its chains.
- 10 A section of wall collapses just as you sprint past. Make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save you take 10 (3d6) points of bludgeoning damage.
- 11-20 No complication.

If the characters do not escape the palace in ten rounds, they are knocked unconscious in the collapse. They don't die, but wake up prisoners of a Carrion Tribe, or something worse, kick-starting a subsequent adventure in the Demon Wastes.

### AREA 28: COLLAPSED ROOMS

The ceilings of these rooms have collapsed, rendering them inaccessible.

## ADVERSARIES

### ALENE (TIEFLING ARCHAEOLOGIST)

Alene is a tiger-striped tiefling with some faint traces of rakshasa blood. She is also a professional thief and dealer in antiquities. She began the excavation of Shaazarak hoping to make her fortune, but is now fully obsessed with uncovering the palace's secrets. She is ordinarily a lover of luxuries, and not inclined to work harder than she has to, but the Great Machine fills her thoughts, and she devotes as much time as she can to uncovering its secrets.

Alene uses the **master thief** (VGtM p216) stat block with the following modifications:

- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.
- **Damage Resistances** fire
- **Sneak Attack.** Alene's Sneak Attack does an additional 24 (7d6) damage instead of the master thief's 4d4.
- **Reactions: Hellish Rebuke.** The tiefling can cast the *hellish rebuke* spell as a 2nd-level spell once with this trait and regain the ability to do so when they finish a long rest.

### TARSIS (TIEFLING MAGE)

Tarsis is Alene's friend, confidante, and sometimes lover. He is a very private individual, avoiding most other beings in Shaazarak in favor of spending time with his books, studying the palace, and the Great Machine. Tarsis is responsible for the pacts and contracts which require the various fiends to work for Alene. If he were to die, those pacts would be broken, and she would find her control over the devils much less iron-clad.

Tarsis uses the **conjuror** (VGtM p212) stat block, with the following modifications:

- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.
- **Damage Resistances** fire
- **Reactions: Hellish Rebuke.** The tiefling can cast the *hellish rebuke* spell as a 2nd-level spell once with this trait and regain the ability to do so when they finish a long rest.



# VOSTETHATRA

by Matthew Booth

This small, crudely fortified village is an anomaly in the Wastes; a place where people live relatively normal lives. There are no fiends ruling over the population, nor secret depravities. Instead, the town is populated by tieflings and cambions. Vostethatra is home to Sakah, the rakshasa-influenced tieflings common here, but also Dolurrhi and Fernian tieflings. Family lines are unclear, as the taint common to tieflings seems almost random; a child of two Sakah may be touched by Fernia instead.

Notably, the leadership of the town falls to a small number of semi-immortal cambions. Knifearm, the leader of the council of elders, has been in charge for several centuries. He is named after a peculiar injury that caused his lower left arm to decay into a short, bone-edged stump. What caused this is unknown, but it is assumed his undying hatred for the Carrion Tribes is related. He takes particular pleasure in the fatal injury and slow death of Carrion Tribe Sakah, though is often pressured to not fully indulge this particular vice.

The other council members have changed over time, as members leave or temporarily retire from leadership. Other notable elders include a woman known as Renna, whose skin is adorned with arcane symbols, giving her a savage air despite her clear

beauty underneath; Arnesian, whose body is covered in flattened bone plates that include flattened horns rising from their skull, and Torminus, whose resemblance to a rakshasa forces him into virtual house arrest so as to not provoke Knifearm.

Vostethatra means “oasis” in a dialect of Infernal, and is so named thanks to a small Lamannia manifest zone that allows crops to grow normally in the otherwise barren soil of the Wastes. The residents fight viciously to protect their home, against any who approach, so it is hardly a place of rest for anyone else.

The only way travelers might buy their way into the settlement is to appeal to Shivras, a Dolurrhi tiefling who seeks to become a cambion herself. She and a small group of followers believe the most expedient way to achieve this goal is by eating the flesh of fiends. Given that their ability to travel is limited, any outsiders who bring them a gift of demonflesh can buy their acceptance for at least a short while. The more powerful or rarer the origin, the longer they allow their gift-givers to stay.

Ritual feasts take place in a cavern beneath Shivras' home. This is a small space, with barely enough room for the feasting table and the twelve chairs surrounding it. The centerpiece of the table is a set of shackles bolted directly to the stone surface. It's not often they use the locks on the “13th Seat,” though Shivras highly anticipates the day one of the council is bound and at her mercy.



# DESOLATE

by Ed Chivers

“A miserable collection of buildings cowering in a shallow cove” is how one of my sources described the abandoned settlement of Desolate. The draconic source has little to say about this part of the Wastes, and nothing on the town itself, since it has only existed for a mere five hundred years.

The description of Desolate’s current wretched situation comes from accounts of sailors and fishing folk forced to shelter in Desolate’s harbor by inclement weather and seasonal storms common to the northern parts of Eldeen Bay. Some ventured into the town itself, but none remained long, owing to the air of uneasy quiet which hangs over the settlement and its surroundings. I have also managed to secure a map of Newholt—as it was previously known—from the archives of the University of Wynarn in Fairhaven, which I have included in these pages.

Sheltered within a natural inlet on the northeastern coast of the Demon Wastes, the town and its harbor were built on low-lying volcanic rock at the foot of towering cliffs. Once home to nearly a thousand people, Desolate is a crescent-shaped town whose form follows the contours of the stark cliffs above it. The buildings are still mainly intact in spite of the many years since the town’s lackluster heyday—even today a visitor can find former homes, businesses and public buildings more or less untouched, huddled behind the defensive walls built over successive centuries. Those walls, however, did little good for the inhabitants.

## HISTORY

The area where Desolate sits has been settled several times, beginning in the early 470s when druids from the north of the Eldeen Reaches crossed the Icehorn Mountains and discovered a small sheltered bay. There they established a community called Greenholt. It stood for nearly sixty years before suddenly collapsing and falling into ruin.

Later, settlers from Thrane arrived in the 580s and expanded the abandoned settlement, adding a harbor, houses, temples, and a curtain wall to protect the revived town they dubbed Newholt. These settlers were devout followers of the Silver Flame, drawn by tales of the Kalok Shash. Pilgrims ventured into the Wastes to seek out the Ghaash’kala tribes, hoping to find kindred spirits in an accursed land. Few of these pilgrims

ever returned from their expeditions, and those who did were deeply haunted by the experience. The clergy at Newholt kept detailed records of community life, the very last of which is dated 2 Sypheros 599 and describes an ordinary day of harvesting the last of the fruit from the temple gardens ahead of anticipated autumn storms. No further records exist, although there are contemporaneous tales of a strange woman, delirious and wild, dressed as a Silver Flame missionary who washed ashore on the beaches of the Eldeen coast in a rowboat one spring. According to storytellers from Merylsward, the fisherfolk cared for the poor woman for the remainder of her life, in which time she never spoke a word, but screamed whenever she saw a bird or heard the flapping of wings.

In 826, the Church of the Silver Flame had a new Keeper of the Flame, Jolan Sol, who made it his mission to spread the light of the Flame across Khorvaire. He set Newholt as his prize—a shining beacon of faith and purity in the Demon Wastes. So, in spite of the previous setbacks, new settlers from Fairhaven and Thaliost set sail across Eldeen Bay to seek their fortune in the north and reestablish Newholt, bigger and better than before. The Aundairian colonists restored the temple to St. Valtros, extended the town’s wall and built new houses, a busy market square, and a school for the children. For nearly forty years the town flourished as a fishing port on the edge of the Wastes, under the leadership of the Bishop of Newholt, Erben Kymar. In the summer of 862, however, a trading ship from Owl’s Perch arrived at the harbor to find it silent and empty. Nearly a thousand people lived in Newholt by that time, a thousand people who vanished without a trace and no sign of violence or struggle.

Today, the town stands empty and uninhabited by the living. Rumors say it is haunted, supported by sailors’ accounts of dim, flickering lights seen in windows in the newer parts of town and the unsettling feeling of being watched the entire time they were there. Harpies have also been spotted at dawn and dusk flying in and out of caves which line the cliffs a few miles southwest of the town.

## THE TOWN AND ITS DISTRICTS

Today, Desolate is divided up into four separate districts, each representing a different period of the town’s occupation, from the original druidic settlement and Thranish temple in the west, to the Aundairian revival district in the eastern end. Between old and new is the harbor district, where most of the

town's businesses were based. Observant players (DC 15 Perception) will notice unusual clusters of trees at certain points in the town—for example around the temple infirmary and the Revival schoolhouse. These trees are natural gravemarkers, showing where awakened trees once fell, fighting to protect the town's most vulnerable inhabitants.

## GREENHOLT

The oldest part of Desolate is the druidic encampment at Greenholt, dominated by a grove of trees and flowering vines with three large standing stones at its center. The three stones are crudely carved with symbols and glyphs and were a focus for the magical protection cast within the grove. Some of this magic lingers in the form of a wispy mist which lingers between the stones regardless of the weather.

Toward the edges of the trees are the ruins of small stone buildings which served as storerooms or living quarters. Most of these are little more than foundations now, although a few can still provide shelter from the elements or cover from attack.

The three standing stones are the site of a permanent *druid grove* spell, which provides protective magical effects to a 90-foot cube with the stones at its center. All the ruined buildings are outside of this protected cube.

The spell only affects evil-aligned creatures. If *dispel magic* is cast on the area it removes one of the effects of the caster's choosing, listed below. The druid grove is completely dispelled if all its effects are removed.

**Solid Fog.** The innermost section of the protected area is filled with a thick magical fog. This fog reaches 10 feet high in a 50-foot by 50-foot square at the center of the druid grove, making this area heavily obscured. Every foot of movement through the fog costs 2 extra feet. To a creature immune to this effect, the fog obscures nothing and looks like soft mist, with motes of green light floating in the air.

**Grasping Undergrowth.** The outer section is a 20-foot-wide border filled with grasping weeds and vines, as if they were affected by an *entangle* spell. To a creature immune to this effect, the weeds and vines feel soft and reshape themselves to serve as temporary seats or beds.

**Grove Guardians.** Within the area, four animated trees act as silent guardians. These trees have the same statistics as an **awakened tree** (MM p317), except they can't speak and their bark is covered with

druidic symbols. If any creature not immune to this effect enters the warded area, the grove guardians fight until they have driven off or slain the intruders. The grove guardians can't leave the warded area and will not act or move unless triggered by an evil creature entering the grove.

## THE TEMPLE DISTRICT

To the north of Greenholt lies the Temple District, dominated by St Valtros's Church, made of locally quarried dark gray volcanic stone. It is a large building measuring 200 feet across and 250 feet from front to back. The front is marked by a portico entrance supported by four tall stone pillars; inside is a domed worship chamber with smaller side chapels to the left and right. Behind the main chamber are small offices, the vestry, and a reliquary where the most precious items of the faithful were kept. Currently the church is in a terrible state: its stained glass windows smashed, its banners and tapestries pulled down, and the library ransacked and destroyed. An easy (DC 10) Perception check reveals that the church seems to have been specifically targeted for attack—the other buildings in this district have been left alone.

Two other noteworthy buildings are the temple infirmary in the west of the district under the shadow of the cliffs, and the library and scriptorium in the east near the gatehouse which leads to the harbor. Dotted around the middle of the district are houses, workshops, meeting halls, and communal kitchens.

In the southern end of this district are the walled temple gardens, which originally grew food for the community. These are now overgrown and wild, but this area offers a plentiful supply of berries and fruit in the summer and autumn—Wisdom (Survival) checks to forage for food in the temple gardens have advantage.

## THE HARBOR DISTRICT

Desolate's modest, sheltered harbor sits in the middle of town and is still usable as a docking point for smaller ships.

At the mouth of Newholt Bay is a small island called Tira's Isle which once housed a silver-colored everbright beacon the locals named the Guiding Light, which showed the way into the harbor. Twisted metal remains jut from the rock and the beacon went out when Newholt fell in 862.

Harbor offices and warehouses sit alongside the jetties where ships once pulled up to trade. Near the gateway to the Revival District was a bawdy drink-



# NEWHOLT

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NEWHOLT BAY

Tira's Isle

- Town Guard
- Temple or Shrine
- House Lyrander weathertower
- Guiding Light harbor beacon
- Gatehouse
- Tavern or boarding house
- (1) The Westside Inn
- (2) The Palace Hotel
- (3) The Garden Tavern
- (4) The Lamplight Inn
- (5) The Merchant's Rest
- Town walls and watchtowers

Market Square

School

Bishop's Residence

St. Valtrous Church

Temple Infirmary

Library and Scriptorium

Temple District

Gardens

Greenholt Stones

ing spot popular with sailors and traders, called the Lamplight Inn. A small House Lyrandar tower looks over the harbor, where weather mages once worked to keep the waters of the bay calm and ward off approaching storms and high winds.

### THE REVIVAL DISTRICT

By far the largest part of town is the Revival District, built by the 9th century Aundairian settlers and their families. Much of this district is residential housing, but those exploring the town also find the occasional tavern, temples and shrines, and numerous small businesses. Revival boasts a large market square and the bishop's residence: a large and lavish house where the bishops of Newholt and their staffs lived and worked.

### NOT UNINHABITED AFTER ALL...

Popular opinion has it that Desolate is uninhabited, but popular opinion is wrong. Desolate has a small population of **wererats** (*MM p209*) who scavenge for food and supplies where they can among the deserted town and occasional visiting ships. These were-

rats are the descendants of three Fairhaven families afflicted with lycanthropy: the Aarlands, the Bartells, and the Redaekers, who all fled the persecution of the Lycanthropic Purge and settled in Newholt. This is the reason St. Valtros's Church is in its current forlorn state. The wererat families have grown up with the stories of the Purge and have a hatred of the Church of the Silver Flame. As far as they know, the Lycanthropic Purge is still happening, so they react with extreme hostility to any visitor wearing or carrying symbols of Silver Flame worship.

Each family holds and controls a separate section of Desolate and is fiercely protective of its own territory, but will not attack intruders in other parts of town unless provoked, preferring to carefully watch from the shadows.

### THE AARLANDS

The Aarland family consists of six wererats ruled by an older wererat matriarch. The most powerful of the wererat families, they control the bishop's residence in Revival and the buildings immediately surrounding it. The Aarland matriarch wears the *amulet of Velraasa*, a magical item which gives her the option to transform



into a swarm of rats rather than a single giant rat. It also allows her to appear unexpectedly from her rat swarm in the middle of combat, and to escape through gaps only tiny creatures can manage. In swarm form, she has the same stats as a wererat's rat form, but gains condition immunities from the amulet.

## AMULET OF VELRAASA

*Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a shapeshifter)*

Recovered from subterranean ruins within the Demon Wastes, the amulet looks like a simple necklace, a brass pendant set with blood-red stones. While wearing this amulet a shapeshifter—including a druid with Wild Shape—gains the ability to transform into a swarm of creatures. The creatures making up the swarm must be ones the shapeshifter could already transform into, and must be at least two size categories smaller than their natural form. While the wearer is transformed, the amulet is magically incorporated into the swarm.

While in swarm form, the shapeshifter gains resistance to bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage. They are also immune to the following conditions: grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned.

**Curse.** Any time the wearer uses this amulet to transform into a swarm of creatures, they must change back to their natural form within an hour, otherwise they will lose the ability to transform and will be trapped as the swarm. The effects of the curse end on their own after 24 hours but can also be ended through the use of a *remove curse* spell.

## THE BARTELLS

The Bartell family are four wererats based in the Lamplight Inn in the harbor district. They attack any intruders in the inn itself but otherwise do not engage in combat. Poorly-guarded ships at the harbor are tempting targets for the younger members of the Bartell family, who use their natural stealth to sneak aboard and steal any valuables they can get their hands on.

## THE REDAEKERS

The Redaeker family consists of four wererat siblings who hold territory in the eastern portion of the Revival district—several houses and a musical instrument shop which bears the family name.

## THE HAUNTED SCHOOLHOUSE

In the very center of Revival's housing neighborhood is a small schoolhouse where the settlers' children were educated. At first glance, nothing about the school-



## Desolate Adventure Seeds

- The party is hired to accompany and protect a pair of reporters from the Korranberg Chronicle who intend to explore Desolate and write a series of travelogue articles on their experiences.
- House Lyrandar are taking the first steps to reestablishing Newholt as a beachhead in the Demon Wastes. You are members of a post-war exploring party sponsored by the house, sent to investigate Desolate and report back on the state of the town and any Lyrandar assets still there.
- Shipwrecked during a voyage across Eldeen Bay, the party must explore the abandoned town for supplies.
- A journal discovered at the end of the Last War hints at a small fortune buried in the cellar of the bishop's residence.
- The party is tasked to rescue a crew of Eldeen fisherfolk trapped in Desolate. Upon arrival, they discover the fishing boat scuttled in the harbor and occupied by sahuagin (MM p263). The crew have fled and are sheltering in the druid grove, but are besieged by harpies (MM p181) and running low on food.

house seems amiss, aside from its dilapidated state and the school bell lying forlornly near the entrance. But players succeeding on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** notice the rats and seabirds common to the rest of the district are conspicuously absent from this area. An unnatural and oppressive stillness hangs over the schoolhouse, which is haunted by the **ghosts** (*MM p148*) of three children who were killed in the school when Newholt fell. They exist in a state of permanent despair—all they want is for their parents to collect them and take them home, but of course they never come. The children don't understand they are dead and are unaware of any passage of time since their deaths more than a century ago. The ghost children have little control over their powers and tend to lash out at living visitors. If the ghosts are defeated in combat, they reappear after 1 hour.

If the children's remains are found and returned to their former homes, the ghosts might be able to find peace. Characters succeeding in a **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check** can find a registry of children's names who attended the school so long ago inside a broken desk at the back of the main room. Bones and tattered clothing are scattered throughout the space. DMs can decide how difficult it is to match up the remains with names and determine where their families lived in the town, depending on how much of an adventure they want to make of the experience.

None of the wererats go near the school. They all know what's in there.



## IN CONCLUSION

So, mine elders, as I hope this informs the youth and the uninvolved of the dangers of this land, I also hope it sways your minds towards the creation of a section allowed limited intervention beyond our traditional stronghold for the purposes of countering the plans our ancient enemies seek to implement. It is prudent and wise that we do not involve ourselves on a greater scale—we cannot allow the Daughter any more influence than what is safe for our own race—however the war with the fiends has not ceased. If anything, it has intensified beneath the notice of lesser races.

This small chamber of trained youth shall infiltrate the society of the lesser races to seek signs, follow the rise and fall of their kingdoms, and subtly alter their paths through the world in service of the Prophecy and the greater good of Argonessen. Under the vision of Chronepsis and the guidance of Siberys, we may even find benefit in using the lesser races in pursuit of our goals. A single claw may suffice where a hand may not. As the Prophecy expands into the lesser races, closer interaction could provide more accurate predictions and a greater ability to act.

In short, esteemed elders of the Thousand, this humble document regarding the actions and habits of our ancient enemy may certainly prove useful as an educational tool, or it can be a template for a more focused, surgical period in our maintenance of the world we have been rightly given by our Father and Mother to protect and cultivate.

—Endeolorth

## FINAL THOUGHTS

And thus, I present this manuscript for the record and cataloging within the hallowed shelves of the library. I do hope, however, it does not sit idly there, waiting in vain to impart its important information. Many of the warnings here are dire indeed and deserve further research and follow up from the Houses.

Take heed, any who read this: the Demon Wastes are waiting and watching.

—Kendal Santor d'Sivis

Head of the Ninth College of House Sivis  
Stack Keeper Emeritus, Library of Korranberg



# APPENDIX: CREATURE LISTS

## STAT BLOCKS BY CREATURE TYPE

### Beasts

Horrid Rat . . . . .	.16
Horrid Wolf . . . . .	.17
Mangy Wolf . . . . .	.24
Swarm of Vampire Bats . . . . .	.25

### Constructs

Aberrant Dust-Stuffed . . . . .	.93
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### Fey

Jagda the Cruel . . . . .	.52
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### Fiends

Crystalmonger . . . . .	.40
Eevershak (Zakya Rakshasa) . . . . .	100
Lord of Dust Jurulx . . . . .	.77
Razalheshan . . . . .	.54
Rikha'trrj (Ancient Night Hag) . . . . .	.94
Speaker-in-Shadows . . . . .	.81
Spinagon-Blooded Harpy . . . . .	.41
Torakar the Bone Whisperer . . . . .	.87
Vraria (Ancient Night Hag) . . . . .	.65

### Humanoids

Carrion Tribe Champion . . . . .	.38
Carrion Tribe Cultist . . . . .	.76
Carrion Tribe Reaver . . . . .	.39
Carrion Tribe Sakah Hunter . . . . .	.39
Ghaash'kala Clan Guardian . . . . .	.34
Ghaash'kala Clan Priest . . . . .	.34
Karbal (Bugbear) . . . . .	.53
Sakah . . . . .	.76
Young Ghaash'kala Warrior . . . . .	.23

### Oozes

Black Ichor . . . . .	.25
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### Undead

Corrupted Corpse . . . . .	.24
Vaelian . . . . .	.55

## STAT BLOCKS BY CHALLENGE RATING

### Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Corrupted Corpse . . . . .	.24
Swarm of Vampire Bats . . . . .	.25

### Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Black Ichor . . . . .	.25
Carrion Tribe Reaver . . . . .	.39
Mangy Wolf . . . . .	.24
Spinagon-Blooded Harpy . . . . .	.41

### Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Horrid Rat . . . . .	.16
Young Ghaash'kala Warrior . . . . .	.23

### Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Aberrant Dust-Stuffed . . . . .	.93
Carrion Tribe Champion . . . . .	.38
Carrion Tribe Sakah Hunter . . . . .	.39
Crystalmonger . . . . .	.40
Ghaash'kala Clan Guardian . . . . .	.34

### Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Horrid Wolf . . . . .	.17
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### Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Ghaash'kala Clan Priest . . . . .	.34
Karbal (Bugbear) . . . . .	.53

### Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Eevershak (Zakya Rakshasa) . . . . .	100
Jagda the Cruel . . . . .	.52

### Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Sakah . . . . .	.76
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### Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Carrion Tribe Cultist . . . . .	.76
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### Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Speaker-in-Shadows . . . . .	.81
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### Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Lord of Dust Jurulx . . . . .	.77
Razalheshan . . . . .	.54
Rikha'trrj (Ancient Night Hag) . . . . .	.94
Vraria (Ancient Night Hag) . . . . .	.65

### Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Vaelian . . . . .	.55
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### Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Torakar the Bone Whisperer . . . . .	.87
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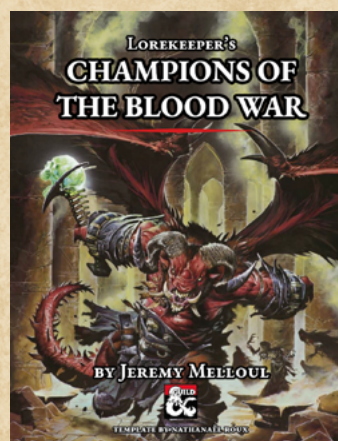
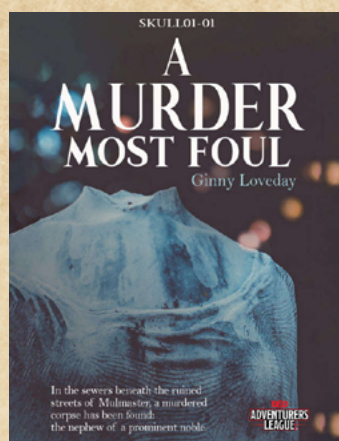
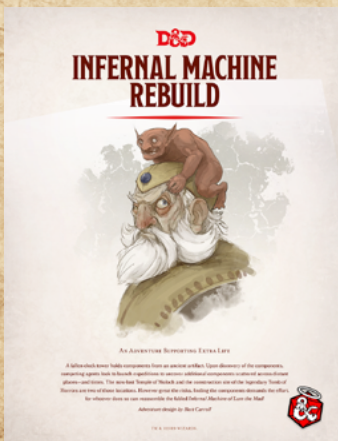
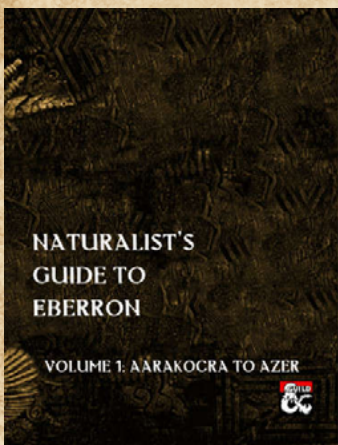
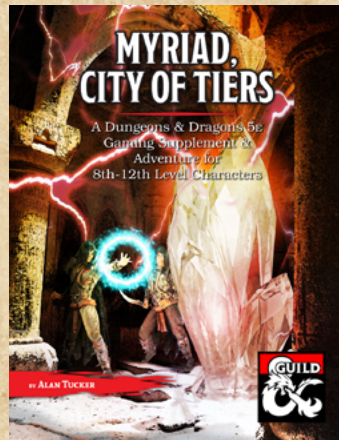


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