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PENUMBRA

an adventure module for 4-6 second to fourth level characters

IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

BY MIKE MEARLS

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PENUMBRA™

IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

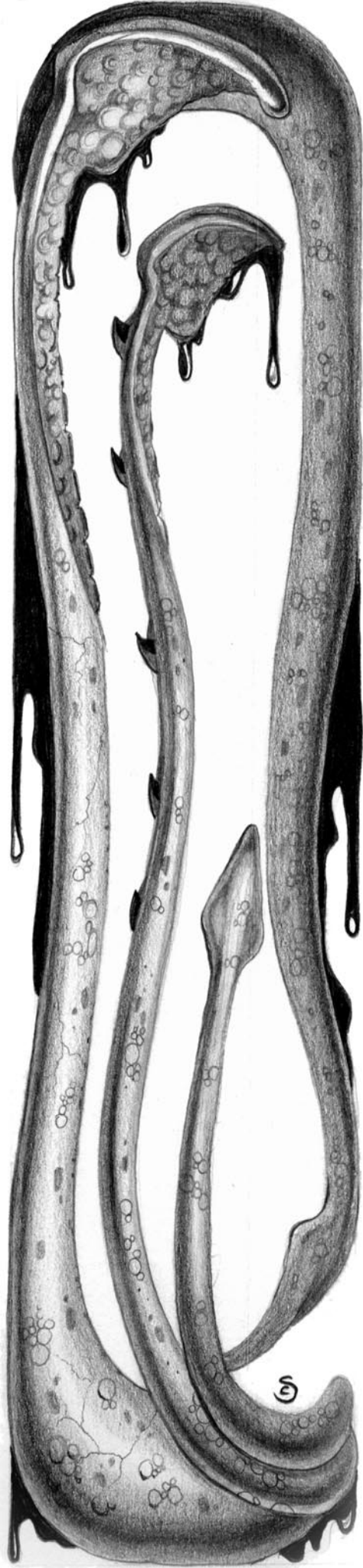
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IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

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CHAPTER ONE

I NTRODUCTION

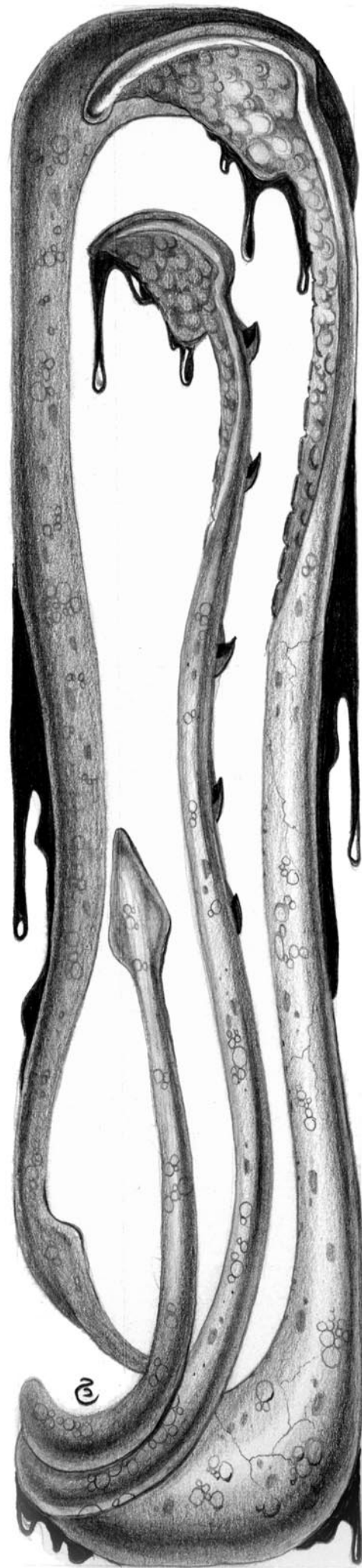
The thing about dirty deeds is that it takes a dirty sort of person to do them — the type that you can't completely trust. It's old hat among the morally upright to point out the inherently self-destructive bent of evil. After all, the fellow who's slimy enough to help you kill your trusting business partner is, by definition, more than ready to turn around and kill you for a few extra coins. Betrayal is a given among thieves and trust is the last resort of the stupid or desperate. Consequently, if you find yourself having to trust some scum bag, count yourself among the stupid and desperate...

Or maybe among the very, very unlucky.

In the Belly of the Beast is a scenario designed for a group of three to six characters of 2nd to 4th Level. The scenario is very roleplaying intensive, as the meat of the story revolves around the characters' ability to successfully hold together an uneasy alliance of three rival groups. There are plenty of chances for negotiation, social tension, and backstabbing. The scenario also includes a fair bit of combat and tactical planning. With a small amount of work, the adventure can be modified to optimize the action towards either a roleplaying or tactical focus, depending on your group's preferences. Throughout the text, we highlight ideas and tips for modifying the adventure to suit your needs and goals.

The story leading up to the events covered in the adventure is a critical driving force behind the problems and conflicts that the characters must deal with. It is important that you study the background and acquire a fair grasp of it. *In the Belly of the Beast* is a character-driven story, and as such you'll need to understand the characters involved in the adventure to run it well.

A few common gaming aids can come in handy when running this adventure. First, miniatures will help for the tactical portions of the action and may even help keep things clear when the characters are interacting with the cast of non-player characters (NPCs) that they meet. Second, a large-scale recreation of the adventure setting, such as a dry erase mat, will aid the players in making plans and visualizing their situation. Finally, as the adventure features a lot of roleplaying and diplomacy, you may want to formulate a distinctive voice and mannerisms that you can act out for each NPC in order to make each one a distinct person in the players' minds.



CUSTOMIZATION

This scenario is designed to be adaptable to any fantasy setting with a minimum of work. The bulk of the action takes place in the sewers beneath an unnamed city. The details of the city, such as its government and important personages, are intentionally left undeveloped so that the adventure is as portable as possible. Each NPC's background is left vague as to particular places or people. You may want to incorporate elements of your own game world into the backgrounds in order to better integrate the NPCs into your game. If your campaign is in the planning stages, you may wish to drop hints about the NPCs and the organizations they represent into your game in order to foreshadow the action in this scenario and to increase the tension between the player characters (PCs) and the NPCs.

CC2 MAPS

The maps in this module were created using *Campaign Cartographer 2* from ProFantasy Software. The PC-format files of these maps are available on our website; just point your browser at www.atlas-games.com. If you own *Campaign Cartographer 2*, you can take these maps and use or manipulate them as you see fit, linking them into your own campaign maps, modifying them to integrate with your campaign world, and so forth. Even if you don't own CC2, you can follow a link on our site to the ProFantasy website, www.profantasy.com where you can download a free map reader.

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OGC Boxes

To clearly distinguish the Open Gaming Content in this module from the rest of the material we have placed all of the Open Gaming Content in boxes like this one.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STORY SO FAR

CAST OF CHARACTERS

HOUSE MEZZIA, MERCHANTS

Hallan Mezzia	The patriarch of the Mezzia family, now on hard times.
Bruno Mezzia	The disreputable son of Hallan Mezzia, whose ambitions lead him to form ties with the criminal underworld.
Tyvis	A trusted servant to Bruno Mezzia, sent to start a bar fight.
Terret	A belligerent brute who owes Bruno money.
Terret's Thugs	Bar-goers itching for a fight to test the PCs.

RING OF IRON, SLAVERS

Tarmalac	The leader of the local Ring of Iron cell, whose outpost is now a demonic chrysalis.
Lydia	A bounty hunter working for the Ring of Iron, and ex-lover of the jealous Tarmalac.
Ring of Iron Thugs	Tarmalac's underlings, who have been told reinforcements are coming.

BLOOD HATCHET TRIBE, ORCS

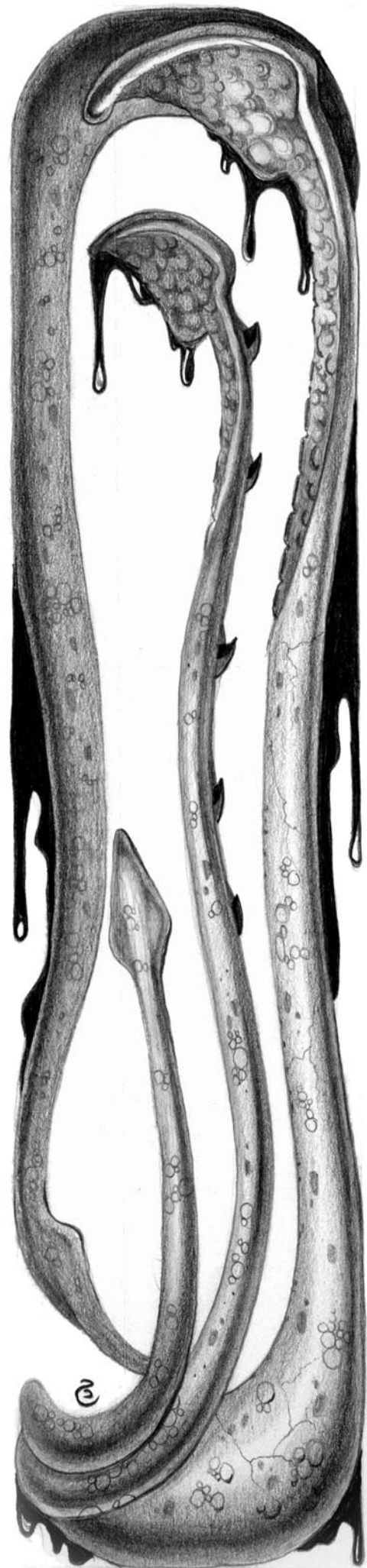
Vurgrum	The old deposed chieftain of the orc tribe.
Karnuk	The new, disputed chief of the orcs.
Vadgral	Karnuk's warrior daughter and leader of the orc war party.
Nazzek	A veteran orc warrior vying for leadership of the war party.
Blood Hatchet Orcs	Warriors of the Blood Hatchet tribe sent to retrieve the stolen diamond.

NECROMANCERS

Ofec	Thimony's apprentice and murderer, who is now mentally imbalanced.
Thimony	A master necromancer, recently deceased but transformed into an undead servitor.
Ironcrow	Thimony's half-orc servant, who stole the diamond/demon egg from the Blood Hatchet tribe.

DEMONIC BEINGS

Vog Mor	An ancient demonic entity which hatched inside of the Ring of Iron's outpost.
Servitors	Vog Mor's minions, risen from the corpses of those trapped in its chrysalis.



HOUSE MEZZIA

For generations, House Mezzia has been a pillar in the trading community, carefully tending markets and establishing long-lasting and lucrative ties to a variety of trade routes. Mezzia caravans have journeyed the world over, visiting every port on the known seas at one time or another. Recently, though, business has taken a severe downturn for the Mezzia family. A sustained string of bad luck and poor business decisions has left the family on the brink of bankruptcy. Mezzia caravans have been particularly hard hit by bandits, natural disasters, and other strokes of ill luck. The family has badly overextended itself in the past few years, hiring mercenary guards under short-term contracts and stockpiling equipment in an effort to aggressively expand the already considerable Mezzia fortune. As they were already in debt, the House's recent string of bad luck blew apart the expansion plans and left the family trying to simply cut its losses to an acceptable level. Even now, creditors clamor for payment and the family faces pitifully few options to relieve its debts. The current patriarch, Hallan Mezzia, is an honorable man who is deeply troubled that he may face no other action than to eat his losses and start all over again. Most of the family bitterly agrees with Hallan, unhappy with the situation but unable to see any legitimate way out.

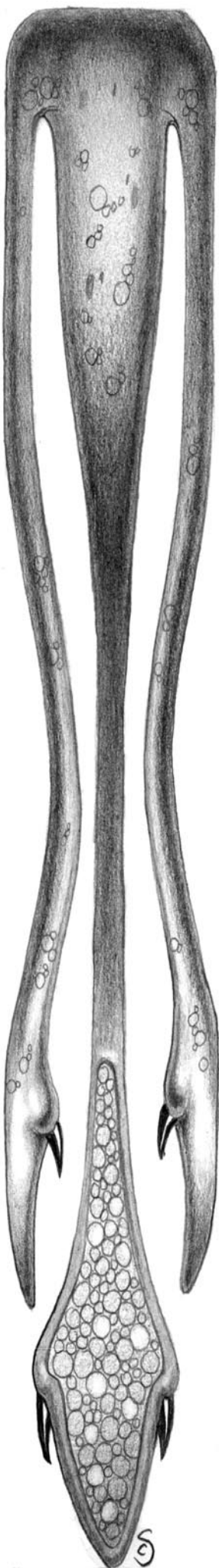
Bruno Mezzia, Hallan's youngest son, sees plenty of financial avenues just waiting to be exploited. Unlike his father, Bruno is an opportunistic and highly amoral man. He is used to a life of hedonistic luxury and is horrified at the thought of losing it all because of his doddering father's poor business acumen. In the course of acquiring some of his more exotic, and illegal, delights, Bruno made the acquaintance of many morally dubious characters. Through them, Bruno learned the lay of the criminal underworld. Bruno sees a lot of money changing hands between those who aren't afraid to break a few laws. With House Mezzia's resources, experience, and contacts within the government, Bruno believes that he could quickly rise through the ranks of the crime bosses, racketeers, and smugglers. In particular, Bruno sees a lot of potential in the slave trade. From what he has learned, House Mezzia's far-flung contacts, access to a variety of ports, and perfect cover opera-

tion as a legitimate trader is the perfect cover for smuggling slaves all across the world. Bruno has tracked down the local headquarters of a moderately powerful slave cartel, the Ring of Iron, and plans to cow the Ring into taking him on as a partner through a show of force. Bruno knows that he cannot yet involve anyone from House Mezzia in his plans, for fear of alerting his father to his scheme. Instead, he has decided to hire a group of adventurers to secure his position in the underworld for him. He plans to feed his hired rube a cover story of a punitive mission against one of the Ring's slave-trading outposts and to send them on their way none the wiser that they simply traded one slave lord for another. Once he has control of the outpost, Bruno plans to negotiate terms with the Ring of Iron and force it to work with him. What Bruno doesn't realize is that the Ring is liable to come down on what it sees as an upstart little punk with everything it has rather than to simply capitulate.

ADAPTING HOUSE MEZZIA TO YOUR GAME

Any merchant family that you've already created for your campaign world can easily substitute for House Mezzia. Bruno Mezzia is the only character in the scenario with ties to the merchant family, and changing his background has minimal effect on the adventure's course of events. However, it is important to give Bruno a good reason to look beyond his circle of associates for help in muscling in on the Ring of Iron's business. Bruno cannot afford to involve his family because of his father's moral bent; a convenient excuse for involving the PCs in this adventure. In campaign terms, the impact of Bruno's plans can be greatly increased if the PCs have such a good impression of House Mezzia that they trust Bruno simply because he is a Mezzia. When Bruno's treachery comes to light, the surprise and shock of that development will be all the more intense.

If you choose to use House Mezzia in an already-developed campaign, it can easily be adapted to a smaller merchant family that has fallen on hard times. Alternatively, you can explain that House Mezzia is based in a neighboring country that has only recently expanded its business into the city where you plan to set the adventure.



THE RING OF IRON

The Ring of Iron is a loose confederation of cutthroats, mercenaries, and other assorted scum. The Ring is named for the core group of crime bosses that coordinate Ring activities and formulate Ring standards of conduct. The primary aim of the Ring – both the organization in general and its eponymous ruling body – is to keep the energies of its members focused on expanding the Ring's profits and spheres of influence while keeping street level, outright infighting between criminal organizations to a minimum. The Ring operates as a sort of United Nations for thieves' guilds. It handles inter-guild disputes, acts as a go-between for guildmasters, and serves as a disinterested third party when mediating conflicts. The Ring's primary source of income is the smuggling trade, which explains how the Ring was able to secure its position in the criminal underworld. Operating across guild borders, the Ring quickly came to cultivate contacts with thieves in cities all across the known

world. Rather than compete directly with local cartels, the Ring instead offered to take on the expenses of transporting and selling illicit goods in return for a cut of the profits. This deal gave the Ring a sense of legitimacy in many cities, cutting off both nascent and established competition by tying in the profits of the local guildmasters with the Ring's success. With the Ring dependent upon good relations with a wide number of guilds for its continuing existence, it quickly became an important force in the underworld as a third party mediator. Amongst thieves, trust is a scarce commodity, and as the sole (somewhat) trustworthy crime organization, the Ring quickly turned that asset into a very profitable venture. Few business agreements and treaties that cross political lines come into being without the very expensive aid of the Ring of Iron.

A man named Tarmalac, as head of the local Ring of Iron cell, is responsible for negotiations on the sale and purchase of everything from slaves and narcotics to magical artifacts and demonic grimoires. He exults in the role, as it harkens back to the confidence games and scams of his bygone days. Still, Tarmalac



ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID INTERDONATO

IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

desires more. Money from the guild is steady but unspectacular; his position lacks the risk and danger of the life of a thief, but he is also missing any shot at a truly big score. Tarmalac took to casing out his clients, looking for that one heist that would be worth angering the Ring and fleeing once again from forces far more powerful than he. He saw his chance in the wizard Ofec, a weakling necromancer who needed slaves to serve as sacrifices and test subjects for his work. Harboring a smoldering grudge against spellcasters (see Tarmalac's complete background in the tear out section, pages 13-20) he planned out what should have been a perfect robbery. After successfully evading Ofec's magical defenses, Tarmalac found a prize truly worth a lifetime of running from an angered cartel and a few revenge-seeking wizards: a diamond the size of a human head. Sadly for Tarmalac, three factors of which he was unaware conspired to shatter his plans:

- Ofec is not the true wizard with whom Tarmalac dealt. Rather, he was simply working as a front man for his master, a truly powerful necromancer named Thimony. Thimony, unlike Ofec, had more than enough magical skill to divine Tarmalac's identity and track him back to the Ring of Iron's stronghold in the sewers.
- Thimony, in turn, acquired the diamond from his servant Ironcrow, a half-orc who stole it from the orcish tribe who raised him and subsequently ostracized him. Ironcrow wanted revenge against the tribe for his mistreatment and leapt at the chance to seize the diamond. The orc tribe, called the Blood Hatchet clan, has since dispatched their best warriors to track down the diamond and retake it. The tribe's shamans communed with their gods, learned that their prize rests in the sewers beneath the city, and sent a war party to reclaim it.
- The diamond is actually the inert, embryonic form of a powerful demon named Vog Mor. At the time of the theft, Thimony had only just learned the true nature of the diamond and had set into motion the incantations necessary to awaken the beast, hoping to bind it to his service upon its birth. Instead, the egg hatched within the close confines of the Ring of Iron's stronghold and subsumed a large portion of the surrounding sewers into a chrysalis at the center of which the avatar of Vog Mor is slowly

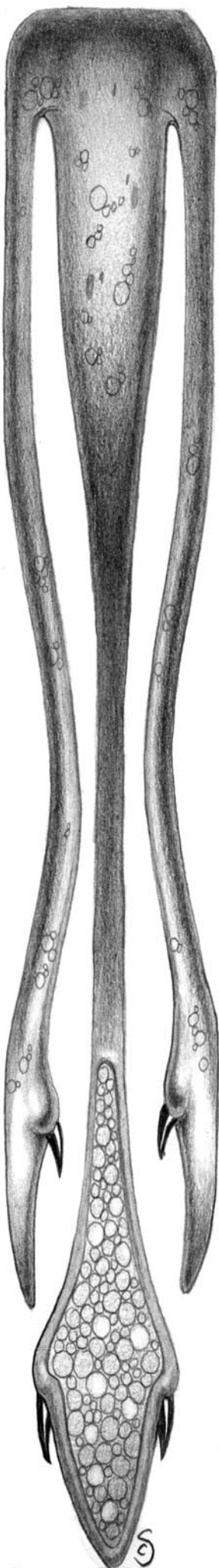
developing. The sewers have thus become a part of Vog Mor's extended body.

ADAPTING THE RING OF IRON TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

The Ring of Iron, by its nature, is a somewhat secretive organization that does not generally seek to attract attention to itself. PC rogues or characters with a bounty hunter or other background in frequent contact with the criminal underworld may have heard of it, but adding the Ring to a campaign in midstream is not so hard as adding an open, publicly acknowledged group such as House Mezzia. If your campaign is in the planning stages, the Ring can serve as a continuing foe for the characters. As head of the local Ring cell, Tarmalac, in particular, makes a good background villain. He is the sort of "bad guy" that the characters hear about and indirectly foil, but do not directly confront until this adventure. Their meeting can become a very dramatic moment, especially since they may have to ally with a man whom they've spent time and effort tracking.

THE BLOOD HATCHET ORCS

The Blood Hatchet tribe is an isolated band of orcs that is only moderately active in raiding civilized territory. The tribe is in a state of political flux, as the old chieftain Vurgrum was overthrown by a cadre of his advisors a little over a year ago, splintering the tribe into several factions as a clear successor to Vurgrum has only appeared in the past week. Taking advantage of the extended period of chaos, Vurgrum's half-orc son Ironcrow stole a sacred tribal artifact, a large diamond that the shaman claimed contained a mighty spirit. Ironcrow took the gem to his new master, hoping to curry favor with him while simultaneously striking a blow against his old tribe. The theft of the gem is a grievous blow against the legitimacy of Karnuk, the newly appointed chief, who has sent his own daughter Vadgral with a hand-picked team of warriors to retrieve the gem. Included in the team is Nazzek, a mercenary orc warrior who only recently returned to the tribe after a long period of service to an evil human lord.



CHAPTER TWO: THE STORY SO FAR

ADAPTING THE BLOOD HATCHET ORCS TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

As with the Ring of Iron, the Blood Hatchet orcs are relatively easy to adapt into an existing campaign. Most of the advice concerning the Ring of Iron applies to this orc tribe, especially the idea of introducing the orcs as an antagonist at an earlier point in the campaign in order to make this adventure more compelling. If you do not use orcs in your campaign or are planning on setting this adventure in a region where orcs do not live, it is relatively simple to convert the orcs presented here into a different CR 1/2 creature types, such as hobgoblins or even human barbarians. Using a more powerful creature type, such as ogres or trolls, may toughen the scenario overly much, unless you plan on using this adventure with characters higher than Level 4.

THE NECROMANCERS

The necromancer Thimony's primary interest in the diamond was the spirit that he suspected was bound within it. After hearing Ironcrow's explanation of the tribal legends that surrounded it, he launched an intensive search of his personal library, seeking any mention of a demon or other entity that had been bound within a diamond. Unluckily for Thimony, he overlooked the possibility that the diamond was actually a manifestation of the demon, not a material prison for its essence. By the time Thimony had learned the truth about the diamond, it had already been stolen by Tarmalac and his men. Using a crystal ball, Thimony tracked down the thieves and quickly headed out to confront them, bringing his half-orc servant Ironcrow and his apprentice Ofec in tow. It was in the sewers that Thimony recently met his end at the hands of Ofec, who was eager to seize the master's spellbooks, magical items, and place of prominence.

ADAPTING THE NECROMANCERS TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

The necromancers present a somewhat different problem when integrating them into an existing campaign. If your characters, especially any PC wizards, are active in any magical

guilds or similar organizations in the city in which the adventure is set, they may expect to know something about Thimony and Ofec. Thimony's work is most likely illegal in good or neutral civilized lands. For that reason, Thimony keeps a low profile and avoids contact with the outside world. Thimony and Ofec also do not make good characters to introduce to the PCs before the start of the adventure. Thimony dies before the bulk of the action, which isn't exactly a satisfying way to eliminate an NPC antagonist. Ofec relies on the characters' ignorance of his true capabilities in order to pass himself off as a powerful necromancer. Should the PCs know that he's just Thimony's flunky, the dynamics of the adventure may take a radical change for the worse. If the PCs are aware that Ofec is simply putting on a good act, they can quickly eliminate him as a source of conflict and reduce the social landscape from three competing camps to a much more manageable two too early in the adventure.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Vog Mor is beginning to hatch, creating a massive chrysalis around the slowly forming demon, made from the very stone of the sewers. Trapped within the cocoon that the slavers' outpost has become are the surviving members of Tarmalac's Ring of Iron cell, the Blood Hatchet war party, and the necromancer Ofec with Ironcrow the half-orc. For the past two days, the three groups have fought off Vog Mor's undead minions while dealing with starvation (their food has spoiled in the unwholesome environment of the cocoon) and increasing tensions between and within the groups. The cocoon is an extension of Vog Mor's mortal form, drawing in food for the demon to feast upon and protecting it from attack. Thus far, the outside world suspects nothing of this course of events. Thimony had no friends who would notice him missing after only a few days, the orcs aren't due back to their tribe for a few weeks yet, and the Ring of Iron operates secretly enough that a few more days will have to pass before anyone notices. While the city above moves through its business as usual, deep below a desperate war is being fought. Into this conflict step the characters and Bruno Mezzia.





CHAPTER THREE

THE SETUP

Bruno Mezzia needs to hire muscle that is both skilled and trustworthy in order to wrest power from the Ring of Iron. He plans to test potential recruits by hiring them as a group of adventurers to rough up a somewhat shady character who is in Bruno's debt. Bruno lies to the characters about the true nature of this mission, telling them that he just needs them to accompany one of his servants to a rough part of town for a meeting. Bruno is confident that his debtor, a belligerent, unthinking brute, will provoke a fight with the characters.

INTRODUCING BRUNO TO THE CHARACTERS

Bruno most likely hears about the characters from stories about their earlier exploits, assuming that the characters have done something heroic enough to spark stories and rumors. Considering that this adventure is designed for level three characters, that should be a likely possibility, but if you have scaled this adventure for use with first level characters, Bruno might consider approaching relative unknowns in order to avoid attracting any attention to his plans.

THE CONTACT

Bruno sends one of his servants, Tyvis, to deliver a message to the characters. Tyvis prefers to approach the characters in as inconspicuous manner as possible, per his master's orders. His first plan of action is to meet them wherever they are staying, arriving just before dawn to catch the characters while they are in and to avoid as many prying eyes as possible. Tyvis delivers his master's dispatch and offers little other information to the characters. He claims to not know the contents of the message and has little other information to offer the characters beyond the location of Bruno's mansion. In truth, Tyvis is one of the few servants that Bruno trusts enough to give any inkling of the true nature of the mission. Normally, a mission as simple as delivering a message is a little bit below the sort of responsibility that Tyvis handles.

Tyvis delivers the letter (see the tear out section, p. 13-20) to the PC's and

CHAPTER THREE: THE SETUP

answers any of their questions, though the only information regarding their assignment or Bruno that he provides is directions to Bruno's mansion. If asked about House Mezzia, Tyvis explains that it is a respected merchant family that is well known for its fair dealings.

MEETING WITH BRUNO

Bruno makes his home in the noble district of the city. He dwells within a large, three-story mansion that is a popular place for parties and other social functions amongst the city's upper class. The mansion is very well kept, with a small, carefully tended lawn and a fresh coat of paint. The servant Tyvis meets the characters at the front door and leads them to Bruno's dining room. The dining room is an opulently furnished room, dominated by a long, dark wooden table decorated with an intricate seal of House Mezzia (a stylized sailing ship inscribed on a shield) inlaid in gold upon the tabletop. A crystal chandelier hangs directly above the dinner table, casting a gentle light upon the room. Besides the door that the characters entered through, two other doors lead out of the room, one to the kitchen and another to a study. Bruno is already seated at the head of the table when Tyvis ushers them into the

dining room. Bruno stands and greets them heartily, introducing himself and asking the characters to make themselves at home. If the characters are experienced adventurers, Bruno mentions their previous exploits and asks the characters a few questions about their heroics. Make it clear that Bruno has done some research into the characters' backgrounds. Not so much that he is aware of every detail of their personal lives, but enough to indicate that he has been asking about them around town. The goal of this banter is to show that Bruno has had an eye on the characters, not to creep them out and show him to be some sort of obsessive stalker. Bruno wants to flatter the characters in order to work his way into their good graces, not scare them.

After a few minutes of conversation, Tyvis enters the room bearing a platter of food and dinner begins. Tyvis is the only servant that the characters see throughout their stay at Bruno's home. Should any of them ask about this, Bruno explains that he fears a spy may have been inserted into his household and he can only fully trust Tyvis. Emphasize the rich and plentiful food at the dinner. The meal is of a much higher quality than the characters normally have access to. Throughout the meal, Bruno quizzes each character in turn on their background and experience, hoping to gain a general sense of each adventurer's capabilities and personality. If any-

Tyvis, Trusted Servant

Level 2 Human Rogue

Hit Dice:	2d6 (9 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft.
AC:	12 (+2 Dex)
Attacks:	Dagger +1 melee; Thrown dagger +3 ranged
Damage:	Dagger 1d4
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Sneak attack +1d6 damage
Saves:	Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +0
Abilities:	Str 10, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 13
Skills:	Appraise +6, Bluff +6, Decipher Script +6, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +6, Forgery +6, Gather Information +6, Read Lips +6, Sense Motive +5
Feats:	Point Blank Shot, Skill Focus (diplomacy)
Challenge Rating:	2
Alignment:	Neutral

Tyvis is one of Bruno's most trusted lieutenants. Bruno recruited him from the thieves' guild to serve as a spy and advance scout. Tyvis is a nondescript individual. He stands about 5' 10" tall, with a slim build, short, dark hair and hazel eyes. Tyvis prefers to project a deferential and quiet demeanor, preferring to let the characters do most of the work in order to fully assess their capabilities.



Alternate Hooks

- One of the PCs is related to the Mezzia clan, either by blood or marriage. When the party enters the city, Hallan Mezzia contacts him, imploring him to keep the family out of ruination. Bruno then sees his chance to enlist a group of adventurers who will be loyal to him.
- Bruno contacts the group of adventurers, and when faced with their hesitancy claims that one of the characters is a long lost cousin. He appeals to the character's sense of family obligation to gain his trust.
- The city watch contacts the PCs and asks them to work with Bruno. They suspect he is up to something shady, and they need someone on the inside to gather evidence against him.
- A character's relative or loved one has been kidnapped while the PCs have been away. Bruno contacts the character and tells him he knows where to find her — she has been sold into slavery to the Ring of Iron, conveniently enough.
- Rumors have been circulating in town that the local slave traders have gotten their hands on a mysterious artifact — an enormous diamond of untold power. The locals know that their hideout is somewhere in the sewers, if anyone is brave enough — or poor enough — to go looking for the priceless jewel.

one asks about the problems that have beset House Mezzia, Bruno insists that such talk wait until after the meal. Bruno would rather make sure that he is not dealing with complete fools or worse before making any mention of the job at hand. If the characters are thoughtless, rude, or otherwise make a horrid impression, Bruno isn't likely to hire them.

Assuming that the characters avoid any serious gaffes, once the meal is over Bruno leads them into his study, where Tyvis has left out a decanter of cognac and enough glasses for the characters and Bruno. The study, like the dining room, is richly furnished, with a large oaken desk, several soft couches, and several oil lamps providing illumination. Once the characters are seated, Bruno gets down to business. He outlines to them the following points:

- A conspiracy involving corrupt members of the local government has arisen to destroy House Mezzia. Bruno believes that as the family's competitors have not been able to surpass them using legitimate means, the competition has decided to take more direct action.

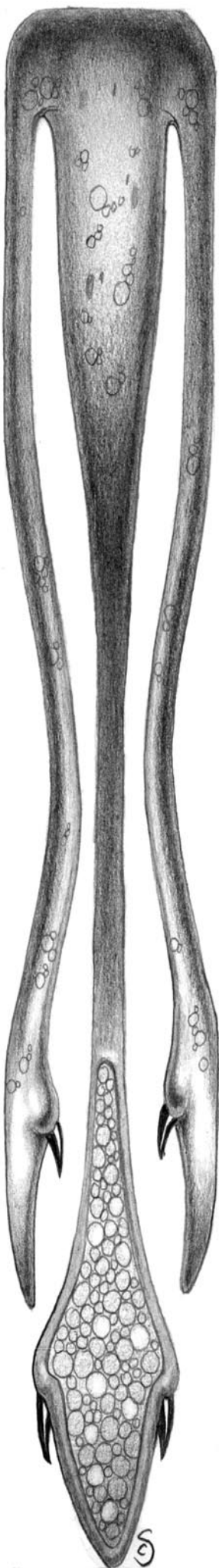
- Until Bruno learns more of the true nature of the conspiracy, he does not dare contact anyone within the government. He does not dare make any accusations or otherwise tip his hand until he has concrete evidence of who is involved in the conspiracy.
- Bruno has chosen to contact the characters because he believes that they have the skill to help him with the situation and the moral bearing (or sense of discretion) to keep silent on the issue.

(continued on page 21)

Investigating Bruno and House Mezzia

Asking around town reveals the following tidbits about House Mezzia and Bruno. The easiest information to acquire is listed first, with a corresponding DC for an Information Gathering skill check listed after each bit of information. Assume that a character who uses Information Gathering hears each fact that has a DC rating less than or equal to the result of the Information Gathering check.

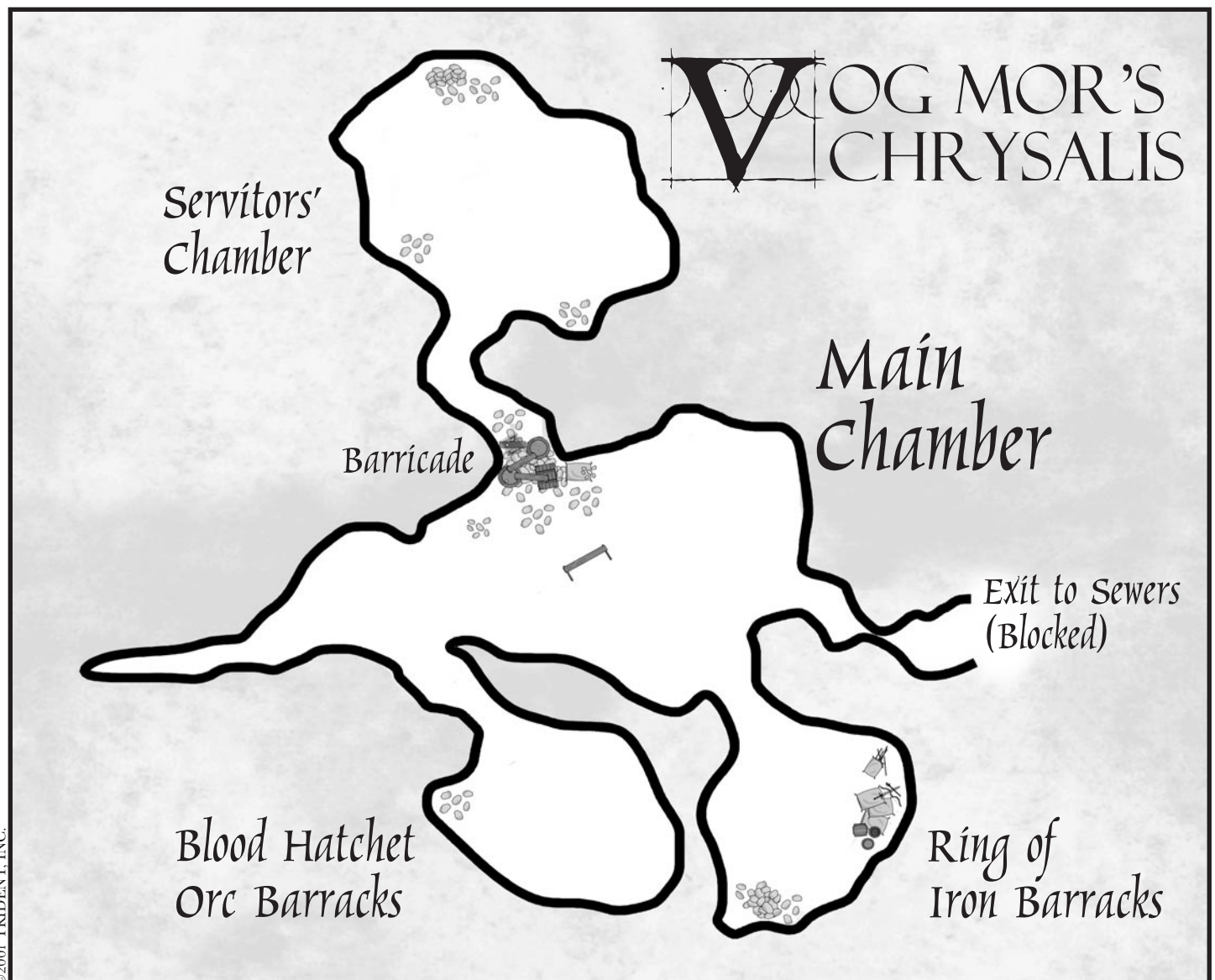
- House Mezzia is a well-known and highly respected merchant family. The Mezzia family is very rich, having amassed quite a fortune on both overseas and overland trading routes. Few cities in the known world have never played host to a Mezzia trading representative. (DC 5)
- The last few Mezzia caravans that arrived in town were in sad shape, the victims of bandit attacks. A few other Mezzia caravans never arrived. (DC 10)
- Bruno Mezzia is the youngest son of Hallan Mezzia, the current patriarch of the House. Bruno is in charge of Mezzia operations in the city, but to most observers he seems to spend more time in alehouses and throwing parties than actually attending to business. (DC 15)
- Bruno has recently come under a lot of pressure from Hallan to improve the family's luck in the area. Bruno hasn't been out on the town much lately, and it looks as if he might be turning his attention to the family business, rather than to simply spending the family fortune. (DC 20)
- Bruno Mezzia is a rotten branch on an otherwise healthy family tree. He spends his time consorting with thieves and other lowlifes, and he spends more time in brothels than attending to the business. He's a slimy customer, but ultimately harmless. (DC 25)



SPECIAL SECTION

TEAR OUTS

The eight pages of this special tear-out section (pages 13 – 20) are intended to be detached from the book and used as GM aides. The purpose of the map below should be obvious. The combat table on the next page lists the characters in the chrysalis in order of initiative bonus, leaving room for the GM to write down each NPC's final initiative total for Vog Mor's arrival event, and to keep track of the damage each takes during the battle. The rest of this section is dedicated to character cards listing the stats and background details for each of the NPCs trapped in the sewer chamber. These are designed to be cut out, giving the GM all the information for each NPC in one place; this saves the GM from having to page through the book looking for character specifics in the middle of combat. Bruno's note, mentioned earlier on page 10, is on the last page of this section so it can be given to the players. Feel free to photocopy the pages in this section for personal use if you'd rather not remove them.



Combat Table

Listed below are the key combat stats for each NPC and monster in the chrysalis. This chart is designed for the GM to be able to keep track of initiative and damage. Feel free to photocopy this chart for your personal use.

NPC	Init. Bonus	Init. Rolled	Attacks/Damage	Special	AC	Hit Points	Damage Taken
Lydia	+6		longsword +4 melee/1d8+2 short sword +4 melee/1d6+2 shortbow +4 ranged/1d6	two-weapon fighting	14	22 hp	
Tarmalac	+6		rapier +5 melee/1d6+1 dagger +5 ranged/1d4+1	sneak attack (+2d6 damage) evasion, uncanny dodge	15	20 hp	
Vog Mor	+2		2 tentacles +10 melee/1d8+4 each	grab and devour, animate and possess dead, environmental control, telepathy, cleave, power attack	19	46 hp	
Ironcrow	+2		club +2 melee/1d6 throwing axe +3 melee/1d6	barbarian rage, <i>ray of frost</i> , <i>expeditious retreat</i> , <i>magic missile</i>	14	18 hp	
Ofec	+2		dagger +1 melee/1d4-1 dagger +4 ranged/1d4-1	<i>mage hand</i> , <i>chill touch</i> , <i>ray of enfeeblement</i>	12	13 hp	
Vadgral	+1		falchion +6 melee/2d4+3 talon gauntlets +8 melee/1d4+5 throwing axe +4 ranged/1d6+3	power attack, sunder	14	30 hp	
Nazzek	+0		longsword +6 melee/1d8+2 shortbow +3 ranged/1d6	blind fight, improved trip	17	23 hp	
Bruno Mezzia	+1		longsword +1/1d8 longbow +2 ranged/ 1d8	none	16	11 hp	
Servitors (at least 10)							
Servitor	+0		claws +2 melee/1d6+1	undead immunities	12	16 hp	
Servitor	+0		claws +2 melee/1d6+1	undead immunities	12	16 hp	
Servitor	+0		claws +2 melee/1d6+1	undead immunities	12	16 hp	
Servitor	+0		claws +2 melee/1d6+1	undead immunities	12	16 hp	
Servitor	+0		claws +2 melee/1d6+1	undead immunities	12	16 hp	
Servitor	+0		claws +2 melee/1d6+1	undead immunities	12	16 hp	
Servitor	+0		claws +2 melee/1d6+1	undead immunities	12	16 hp	
Servitor	+0		claws +2 melee/1d6+1	undead immunities	12	16 hp	
Servitor	+0		claws +2 melee/1d6+1	undead immunities	12	16 hp	
Servitor	+0		claws +2 melee/1d6+1	undead immunities	12	16 hp	
Blood Hatchet Orcs (4)							
	+0		battleaxe +2 melee/1d8+2 throwing axe +0 ranged/1d6+2	none	14	4 hp	
	+0		battleaxe +2 melee/1d8+2 throwing axe +0 ranged/1d6+2	none	14	4 hp	
	+0		battleaxe +2 melee/1d8+2 throwing axe +0 ranged/1d6+2	none	14	4 hp	
	+0		battleaxe +2 melee/1d8+2 throwing axe +0 ranged/1d6+2	none	14	4 hp	
Ring of Iron Thugs (6)							
	+0		heavy mace +1 melee/1d8+1 shortbow +0 ranged/1d6	none	13	4 hp	
	+0		heavy mace +1 melee/1d8+1 shortbow +0 ranged/1d6	none	13	4 hp	
	+0		heavy mace +1 melee/1d8+1 shortbow +0 ranged/1d6	none	13	4 hp	
	+0		heavy mace +1 melee/1d8+1 shortbow +0 ranged/1d6	none	13	4 hp	
	+0		heavy mace +1 melee/1d8+1 shortbow +0 ranged/1d6	none	13	4 hp	
	+0		heavy mace +1 melee/1d8+1 shortbow +0 ranged/1d6	none	13	4 hP	

Key Info: Tarmalac plays the devil's advocate with any proposed plan and keeps up a detached, sarcastic demeanor.

Quote: "Oh, now that's a brilliant idea. I've got a better one: why don't we toss you over the barricade and hope that they choke on your tiny little brain?"

Background: Tarmalac is a self-made man. Growing up the fatherless child of a streetwalker, Tarmalac learned from an early age to fend for himself. He took up with a grizzled old con artist who worked the streets, bilking yokels out of their silvers with a variety of scams and fixed games of chance. When the thieves' guild began to pressure Tarmalac's mentor for its cut of his take, Tarmalac gladly turned him over when it became apparent that the old man was underreporting his earnings. With his mentor gone, Tarmalac claimed the streets he once worked as his own. He carefully parlayed his natural magnetism and quick wit into a steady stream of lucrative con games. Tarmalac began to target the wealthy and the nobility with his schemes, eventually getting into more than he could handle when he unsuccessfully tried to bilk an archmage out of his fortune. Since then, Tarmalac has literally gone underground, joining the Ring of Iron as a sort of salesman, meeting with potential slave buyers and negotiating terms.

Appearance: Tarmalac is a charming and attractive man in his mid-forties. His blond hair is carefully trimmed, and he fastidiously maintains a cleanly appearance. He is the only Ring member stationed in the sewers who bathes daily.

Roleplaying Notes: Tarmalac is the veteran of many confidence games, and this is reflected in his approach to the current situation. He seeks to sow as much discord amongst the other groups as possible, hoping to keep them from forming a unified front against his command. He works toward this goal by playing the devil's advocate with any proposed plan and by keeping up a detached, sarcastic demeanor. His only weakness is the Ring bounty hunter Lydia. They were lovers for a time, and only recently did she break off the relationship. While he would never admit it to anyone, he still harbors strong feelings for her and carries an irrational grudge against anyone to whom she shows her favor.

Goals: Tarmalac's main goal is to avoid compromising the Ring's trading operation. He knows that he cannot risk exposing himself to the outside world, for fear of attracting the attention of his past victims, and he does not want to fail the Ring of Iron. If he does fail and the outpost is lost, he is quite aware that heads will quite literally roll.

Tarmalac

Key Info: The thugs pay little mind to the characters and take their orders from Tarmalac.

Quote: "Tarmalac has gotten us out of trouble before, and the Ring of Iron has reinforcements on the way. If you knew as much about the Ring as we do, you'd know that we're already saved. Just get on Tarmalac's good side and you might survive along with us."

Background: The Ring of Iron recruits most of its foot soldiers from amongst lower class toughs and barroom brawlers. These six hoods have seen a fair bit of action, and though they are nervous about their situation, Tarmalac has told them not to worry, for reinforcements are, according to him, due to arrive any moment now. This is a lie, though they do not realize it.

Appearance: Each thug wears a battered suit of studded leather armor and keeps a hand on his mace, ready to put it to work at a moment's notice. The thugs have an air of quiet confidence about them, as they are convinced that reinforcements are due to rescue them.

Roleplaying Notes: The thugs pay little mind to the characters and take their orders from Tarmalac. Only if Tarmalac's lie is revealed do they turn against him, and even then they opt to strike out on their own, trusting no one should their leader prove untrustworthy.

Goals: The thugs wish only to escape the sewers alive. They care little for any other long term plans.

Ring of Iron Thugs

Key Info: Bruno is a manipulative schemer who hides his true nature beneath an easy-going, friendly façade.

Quote: "They'll say and do anything to save their own skins. I suggest that we trust none of them. Only if we stick together can we hope to survive this ordeal."

Background: Bruno is the youngest son of Hallan Mezzia, the current patriarch of House Mezzia. As the family's fortunes have declined, Bruno has clamored loudly for more extreme actions to ensure that the family maintains its position as a powerful force on the trade routes. Bruno sees his father as old and obsolete, unwilling to change his ways in the face of fierce competition and thus dooming House Mezzia. Bruno is renowned as a hardened carouser and womanizer. His more unorthodox desires have placed him in contact with some of society's less reputable sectors. After witnessing the sheer amount of money that flows through illicit trades, Bruno decided that the time was ripe to expand House Mezzia's dealings in a new direction.

Appearance: Bruno is a dashing young man in his mid-twenties. His blue eyes twinkle with a hint of mischief, and his blond hair is always slightly tousled. He wears his armor and carries his weapons with the assured confidence of a student of some of the region's most skilled fencing tutors.

Roleplaying Notes: Bruno's outward appearance is that of a gregarious, friendly, and somewhat talkative socialite. He is an easygoing person who knows how to leverage his looks and speaking ability into gaining the trust of those with whom he deals. Beneath the surface, though, Bruno is a manipulative schemer. He is driven by a deep-seated desire to rebuild his family's fortune by any means possible. To Bruno, people are no more than pawns to be used as he sees fit in the game of life.

Goals: Bruno's initially wants only to capture Tarmalac in order to strike a bargain with the Ring of Iron. However, once he witnesses the power of Vog Mor he quickly changes his plan. Bruno desires to curry the favor of the devouring fiend. He plans to earn this by betraying the characters and everyone else involved in the siege to the demon. Bruno fully supports everything the characters do, hoping to convince them that he is an eager greenhorn out for his first taste of adventure.

Bruno Mezzia

Key Info: Lydia is smart enough to at least make the pretense of working for the good of all; not above seducing anyone in order to win loyalty.

Quote: "I'm scared. I'm not much of a warrior, and I never knew the true nature of Tarmalac's dealings. Please, help me. I just need someone to stand by me, someone that I can trust."

Background: Lydia was born the daughter of a frontier guide. She grew up watching her father work himself to exhaustion day after day, doing the grunt work for adventurers and other travelers, barely earning enough from his toil to keep a roof over his family's head and food on the table. Determined to lead a better life for herself, she learned all she could from her father's knowledge of the woodlands, and then struck out on her own. She worked first as a scout in a local baron's garrison, and then as an independent mercenary. She took up adventuring for a time before finding her true calling in life. A valuable idol had been stolen from a temple of an evil deity, and the price placed on the heads of the thieves was too much for Lydia to ignore. Carefully, she tracked and hunted down the thieves, experiencing the thrill of bringing down a prey far more challenging than any mere woodland beast. Since then, Lydia has worked as a bounty hunter. She likes working with the Ring of Iron, as it gives her a steady job and plenty of chances to track down escaped slaves, and ambush and capture travelers to sell into slavery.

Appearance: Lydia stands a hair shy of six feet tall. Her lithe, athletic figure indicates her martial training. She has golden blond hair that she keeps braided in a long pony tail, and her gray eyes hint at some distant elvish ancestry. She wears simple, utilitarian clothes, preferring to wear her armor at all times, even when off duty at the Ring's hideout.

Roleplaying Notes: Lydia, like most of the NPCs in this scenario, is very self-centered. However, she is smart enough to at least make the pretense of working for the good of all. Of all the surviving members of the Iron Ring's outpost, she is the least loyal to that organization and thinks nothing of betraying it in order to save her own skin. She is not above seducing a character or NPC in order to win loyalty, though she does not know the effect such a move would have on Tarmalac.

Goals: Lydia is concerned only with escaping alive. She has little loyalty to the Ring of Iron, and is not very picky about who she chooses to make alliances or deals with. She is very confident that she has the wit and talent to turn almost any situation to her favor.

Lydia

Bruno Mezzia, Merchant's Son

Level 2 Human Aristocrat

Hit Dice: 2d8 (11 hp)
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 16 (+5 Chainmail, +1 Dex)
Attacks: Longsword +1 melee; Longbow +2 ranged
Damage: Longsword 1d8; Longbow 1d8
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 14
Skills: Appraise +7, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Knowledge (trade routes) +5, Ride +6, Sense Motive +4
Challenge Rating: 1
Alignment: Neutral



Tarmalac, Head Slaver

Level 4 Human Rogue

Hit Dice: 4d6+4 (20 hp)
Initiative: +6 (Dex +2, Improved Initiative +4)
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 15 (+3 Studded Leather Armor, +2 Dex)
Attacks: Rapier +5 melee; Dagger +5 ranged
Damage: Rapier 1d6+1; Dagger 1d4+1
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Sneak Attack +2d6 damage
Special Qualities: Evasion, Uncanny Dodge
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14
Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +8, Decipher Script +6, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +7, Forgery +6, Gather Information +7, Hide +6, Innuendo +5, Move Silently +6, Sense Motive +5
Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (rapier)
Challenge Rating: 4
Alignment: Neutral Evil



Lydia, Bounty Hunter

Level 3 Human Ranger

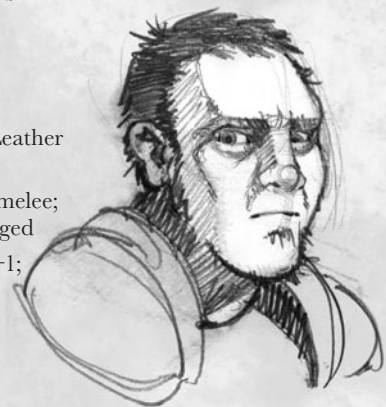
Hit Dice: 3d10 (22 hp)
Initiative: +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 14 (+2 Leather Armor, +2 Dex)
Attacks: Longsword +4 melee (+2 if using with shortsword); Short sword +4 (+2 if using with longsword); Shortbow +4 ranged
Damage: Longsword 1d8+2; Short sword 1d6+2 (1d6+1 if used in off-hand); Shortbow 1d6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Two-weapon fighting
Special Qualities: Favored enemy (humans)
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 14
Skills: Knowledge (nature) +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +7, Wilderness Lore +5
Feats: Alertness, Ambidexterity (light armor only), Improved Initiative, Tracking, Two-Weapon Fighting (light armor only)
Challenge Rating: 3
Alignment: Neutral Evil



Ring of Iron Thugs

Level 1 Warriors

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 13 (+3 Studded Leather Armor)
Attacks: Heavy Mace +1 melee; Shortbow +0 ranged
Damage: Heavy Mace 1d8+1; Shortbow 1d6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10
Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2
Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike
Challenge Rating: 1/2
Alignment: Lawful Evil



Ofec, Apprentice Necromancer

Level 4 Human Necromancer

Hit Dice: 4d4+3 (13 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 12 (+2 Dex)
Attacks: Dagger +1 melee;
 Dagger +4 ranged
Damage: Dagger 1d4-1
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Spells
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +2
Abilities: Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10,
 Int 16, Wis 6, Cha 11
Skills: Alchemy +10, Concentration +7, Knowledge
 (demonology) +10, Knowledge (undead) +10,
 Spellcraft +10
Feats: Brew Potion, Scribe Scroll, Spell Mastery (*chill touch*,
protection from good, shield), Toughness

Challenge Rating: 4

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Spells: Ofec has the following spells prepared at the beginning of the scenario. Normally, he may cast five 0-Level, five 1st-Level and four 2nd-Level spells. He has already used many of his spells battling the minions of Vog Mor.
 0 Level: *detect magic, mage hand*
 1st Level: *alarm, chill touch, ray of enfeeblement*
 2nd Level: *darkness*



Vog Mor, Devourer of Flesh

Large Outsider

Hit Dice: 6d8+18 (46 hp)
Initiative: +2 (-2 Dex,
 +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 10 ft.
AC: 19 (+12 Natural Armor,
 -2 Dex, -1 Size)
Attacks: 2 Tentacles +10 melee
Damage: Tentacle 1d8+4
Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks: Grab and devour
 opponents
Special Qualities: Telepathy,
 animate and possess dead,
 environmental control
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +0, Will +3
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 6, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14
Skills: Listen +8, Spot +8
Feats: Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack
Challenge Rating: 6
Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Vog Mor is an ancient, though minor, demonic entity that delights in rampant destruction and chaos. When the mood strikes it, Vog Mor causes a small egg, which contains the undeveloped form of its avatar, to appear on an inhabited world. Over time, the egg hatches and the avatar grows into a monstrous beast which leaves a trail of death and destruction in its wake, devouring every living creature it encounters. Occasionally, a cult springs up around the egg and worships the hatched avatar as a god. Vog Mor approves of this practice, as the cult, goaded on by Vog Mor through the avatar, can often create more long-term havoc over a wider area than a single rampaging creature.

After hatching, the avatar typically grows to a truly titanic size, roughly two hundred feet long and thirty feet wide. In this form, the avatar appears as a monstrous worm-like creature with a horde of tentacles sprouting near its toothy maw. In the confines of the sewers, the avatar is unable to attain its full size. Instead, the demonic entity absorbs its surroundings and partially transforms them into its body. The avatar then takes a smaller, humanoid form which builds its strength by devouring living creatures.



Ironcrow, Half-Orc Servant

Level 1/1 Half-orc Barbarian/Sorcerer

Hit Dice: 1d4+1d12+4 (18 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 14 (+2 Leather Armor,
 +2 Dex)
Attacks: Club +2 melee;
 Throwing Axe +3 ranged
Damage: Club d6;
 Throwing Axe d6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Barbarian Rage, Spells
Special Qualities: Fast Movement,
 Illiteracy
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 6, Cha 14
Skills: Climb +4, Jump +4, Knowledge (arcana) +1, Swim +4
Feats: Weapon Focus (club)
Challenge Rating: 2
Alignment: Lawful Evil

Spells: Ironcrow can cast five 0-level and four 1st-level spells per day.
 0 Level: *detect magic, light, ray of frost, resistance*
 1st Level: *expeditious retreat, magic missile*



Servitors of Vog Mor

Medium-sized Undead

Hit Dice: 2d12 (16 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 12 (+2 Natural)
Attacks: Claws +2 melee
Damage: Claws 1d6+1
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Undead immunities
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2,
 Will +2
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 10, Con -,
 Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11
Skills: Hide +4, Move Silently +4
Feats: Toughness
Challenge Rating: 1/2
Alignment: Chaotic Evil



Once the humanoid has devoured 500 hit points worth of living creatures, it is absorbed back into the semi-transformed material and the evolution into the avatar's monstrous form is completed.

Vog Mor's humanoid avatar appears as a morbidly obese human male whose arms end in flabby, hooked tentacles. Its bald head is no more than a lump perched atop its torso and its beady eyes glow red with the fires of Hell. The avatar's toothy mouth stretches from its head to half way down its torso.

Combat

Vog Mor's humanoid avatar relies on brute strength to overwhelm foes, clubbing them with its tentacles, then grabbing opponents and stuffing them into its greedy mouth.

Grab and Devour: If Vog Mor hits the same target with both of its tentacles, it may attempt to grapple and devour the target. Make an opposed strength check between Vog Mor and its victim. If Vog Mor wins, the victim is plucked up by the tentacles, stuffed into Vog Mor's mouth, and swallowed. Up to two medium-sized creatures, four small creatures, or one medium-sized and two small creatures can fit into Vog Mor's gut. Characters within Vog Mor's gullet may attack with small weapons at +2 to hit. In addition, they must make a fortitude save with a DC of 18 or take 2d4 points of damage from suffocation and Vog Mor's gastric juices.

Animate and Possess Dead: Any creature that dies within the confines of Vog Mor's developing body meets a fate quite worse than death. The demonic entity feeds off the agony of the dying, forcing their souls to remain bound to their bodies as Vog Mor slowly devours them. As a result, anything that dies within Vog Mor lingers on as an undead servitor of the devourer — undead creatures that retain their memories and cunning yet whose sanity has been blasted by the horrific agony caused by the slow process of Vog Mor's digestion of their souls.

Environmental Control: Vog Mor is capable of reshaping portions of its proto-body. The results of this control in combat may manifest in two ways. Vog Mor can cause a sinewy tentacle to sprout from the floor or wall and attack at +6 to hit, dealing 1d8 damage, or Vog Mor may cause the area to tremble violently, forcing all spell casters to make a DC 15 concentration check to successfully cast a spell. Attacks are unaffected by the later ability, as its effect on attacking and defending in combat cancels each other out. Vog Mor may use each form of this ability once per day. Tentacles created with this ability have an AC of 15 and 16 hit points.

Telepathy: Vog Mor may communicate via telepathy with any creature within 500 feet of its humanoid form. This communication typically manifests as a voice speaking directly to the target's mind. However, if the target is asleep Vog Mor may employ visual and aural components in the communication, essentially controlling the target's dream. A person contacted in this manner by Vog Mor may make a Will save with a DC of 17 to deny contact to the demon.

Vog Mor

Servitors of Vog Mor are the undead remains of those who have died within Vog Mor's developing form. While they are slow and durable like zombies, they retain their memories from life and use them to help further the cause of Vog Mor. A servitor may call out to its old friends, hoping to lure them into an ambush, or may use its knowledge of its prey to devise a plan that plays on their personal weaknesses and foibles. Vog Mor loves to leave the spirits bound to his service just free enough that they can beg their friends to destroy them, wail in terror and pain, and otherwise strike terror into Vog Mor's foes.

Servitors of Vog Mor are thoroughly dominated by that being and obey the demon's mental commands to the best of their ability. A servitor that somehow moves beyond the range of Vog Mor's telepathic abilities (500 feet) immediately crumples into a lifeless form, utterly destroyed.

Servitors of Vog Mor

Key Info: Ofec is paranoid and extremely self-centered. He tries to bully his way in with the strongest group, using his supposed knowledge of Vog Mor and his mastery of magic as bargaining chips.

Quote: "Only I can save us. If that thieving idiot Tarmalac hadn't stolen the chrysalis, I could have hatched this thing under controlled conditions and set its destructive impulses to obey my will. If you wish to live, you will guard me with your lives. When it comes, only I will have the power to stand against it."

Background: Ofec attended a prestigious academy of magic, but was kicked out shortly before finishing his apprenticeship for his unauthorized experiments on living human subjects. The son of a wealthy noble, Ofec had the money and influence to avoid any official charges of wrongdoing. Aimless yet full of unfocused ambition, he continued his work in secret, eventually coming into contact with a skilled necromancer named Thimony. Under the tutelage of his new master, Ofec completed his magical training and came into his own as a magic-user.

Ofec was not content with life as an apprentice. He plotted against Thimony, concocting an elaborate scheme to murder him and usurp his position. Ofec's plans were delayed by Tarmalac's theft of the egg, yet Ofec turned this into his advantage. He strangled Thimony to death when the two of them were separated from Ironcrow while journeying through the sewers to confront Tarmalac's Ring of Iron gang. Ofec insisted on pressing on, and as Tarmalac and his men never met Thimony, Ofec has been able to convince them that he is a far more powerful necromancer than he actually is.

Appearance: Ofec has stringy, greasy dark hair and a patchy, scraggly beard. His complexion is unhealthily pale, and his beady eyes are constantly in motion, scanning his surroundings for threats both real and imagined. He wears a long black overcoat studded with many pockets holding a variety of spell components and tools.

Roleplaying Notes: Ofec is paranoid and extremely self-centered. Ironcrow is the only person that he trusts, though he has no idea how misplaced his trust is. Ofec is also wracked with worry, for with his dying words, Thimony vowed vengeance from beyond the grave against his apprentice. Ofec hams up his assumed role as a master of the mystic arts, hoping to leverage that into respect and a chance at escape.

Goals: Ofec tries to bully his way in with the strongest group, using his supposed knowledge of Vog Mor and his mastery of magic as bargaining chips, though he is terrified of the orcs and will not ally with them. Ofec is smart enough to concoct reasonably cunning plans, but he lacks the wisdom to properly implement them. He tends to underestimate the intelligence of those he deals with.

Ofec

Key Info: Ironcrow is sullen and quiet, somewhat resigned to dying at the hands of Vog Mor. He wishes only to escape from the sewers with his life.

Quote: "We're trapped here, and I really don't think there's any way out. Between the orcs and the undead, it can't get any worse than this. If you have any gods, I'd suggest you start praying to them."

Background: Ironcrow is the son of Vurgrum, the old chieftain of the Blood Hatchet tribe, and a human sorceress captured by Vurgrum and kept as his concubine. Ironcrow was never fully accepted by the tribe. At his coming of age ceremony he was bestowed with a name taken from the human common tongue, a grave insult to both him and his father. When his father's regime was toppled, he barely escaped with his life. Ironcrow loathes his human heritage. His father's opponents pointed to his mother's continued presence in the tribe and the favor Vurgrum showed her to the detriment of his orcs' wives as a damning sign of his softness and inability to properly lead. After his father's overthrow, Ironcrow fled to a nearby human town where he found work as a bodyguard to the necromancer Thimony. It was while serving under Thimony that Ironcrow's magical talents manifested themselves. Under the necromancer's tutelage, Ironcrow has made great progress in developing his talents.

Appearance: Ironcrow's orcs' features are rather faint. The only hints to his pedigree are his slightly sloped brow and grayish skin. He has short, black hair, blue eyes, and a pockmarked complexion. Ironcrow wears a simple blue tunic and black breeches beneath his leather armor.

Roleplaying Notes: Ironcrow is sullen and quiet, somewhat resigned to dying at the hands of Vog Mor. While he knows the true limit of Ofec's powers, he is afraid of revealing this information to anyone for fear of turning the rest of Vog Mor's prisoners against himself. Ironcrow does not actively seek out allies, but he responds very well to anyone who treats him with respect and courtesy. Thimony dismissed him as a useless apprentice, the orcs disdain him as weak, and the wizard Ofec dares not put any more trust in the half-orc than he has already. Ironcrow holds no grudge against Ofec for killing Thimony, as he sees such an action as a natural turn of events, given his childhood spent in an orcs' settlement.

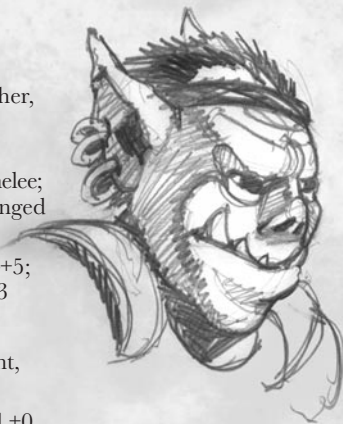
Goals: Ironcrow wishes only to escape from the sewers with his life. He cares little for how he accomplishes that feat. He bears no loyalty to Ofec, and is more than willing to abandon the necromancer. He hates the Bloody Hatchet orcs and will do anything to bring about their deaths, including feigning interest in allying with them. Ironcrow bears no malice towards Tarmalac's gang but does not work with them if he can avoid it.

Ironcrow

Vadgral, War Party Leader

Level 3 Orc Barbarian

Hit Dice: 3d12+6 (30 hp)
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 14 (+3 Studded Leather, +1 Dex)
Attacks: Falchion +6 melee;
Talon Gauntlets +8 melee;
 Throwing Axe +4 ranged
Damage: Falchion 2d4+3;
Talon Gauntlets 1d4+5;
 Throwing Axe 1d6+3
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Rage, Fast Movement, Uncanny Dodge
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0
Abilities: Str 14 (16), Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10
Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +5, Jump +8
Feats: Power Attack, Sunder
Challenge Rating: 3
Alignment: Chaotic Evil



Talon Gauntlets +2

These steel gloves are of high quality craftsmanship, with the faint outline of a bird's feathers etched on their surface. On command, steel talons pop out of the gauntlet's fingertips. A second command word causes the talons to retract. These talons operate as spiked gauntlets with a +2 magical bonus to hit and damage, except that they cause slashing instead of piercing damage. In addition, the gauntlets grant the wearer +2 strength. While the talons are retracted, they are undetectable by any means.

Nazzek, Veteran Warrior

Level 3 Orc Fighter

Hit Dice: 3d10+3 (23 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft.
AC: 17 (+5 Chainmail, +2 Large Wooden Shield)
Attacks: Longsword +6 melee;
 Shortbow +3 ranged
Damage: Longsword 1d8+2;
 Shortbow 1d6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Skills: Climb +3, Ride +6, Swim +3
Feats: Blind Fight, Expertise, Improved Trip, Weapon Focus (longsword)
Challenge Rating: 3
Alignment: Lawful Evil



Blood Hatchet Orcs

Level 1 Fighters

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft.
AC: 14 (+4 Scale Mail)
Attacks: Battleaxe +2 melee;
 Throwing axe +0 ranged
Damage: Battleaxe 1d8+2;
 Throwing axe 1d6+2
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8
Skills: Listen +4, Spot +3
Feats: Alertness
Challenge Rating: 1/2
Alignment: Chaotic Evil



Honored heroes,

It is in desperation that I turn to you, knowing full well the tales of your past exploits and your trustworthiness. I am Bruno Mezzia of House Mezzia. For generations my family has plied the trade routes of the world, yet recently a series of disasters has left us on the brink of ruin. The information I am about to impart to you in this letter, and the mission for which I would like to employ you, are both of a highly sensitive nature. Should you have any misgivings about holding secrets — secrets which may put you in grave peril — I bid you to read no further.

Recently, information has fallen into my hands that points to a corrupting presence within the local

Key Info: Nazzek, unlike most orcs, looks like a professional soldier. He wishes to be the sole orcish survivor of the mission into the sewers.

Quote: "Vadgral is the true problem. She is powerful, but cunning. I am strong in arm, but cannot match her wits. Work with me to destroy her and bring the warriors under our control."

Background: Nazzek is the grizzled veteran of many a campaign. In his youth, he left the Blood Hatchet tribe seeking adventure and treasure in distant lands. For a time, he served in the retinue of an evil overlord, where his exceptional intelligence and talent earned him specialized training far beyond what the typical orc warrior masters. Nazzek returned to his tribe after the power of the overlord was broken in a series of unsuccessful campaigns. He lacks the political and familial connections he needs to take a place amongst the leaders of the tribe, a situation he hopes to change through both guile and a demonstration of his skill at arms. He considers the current mission to retrieve the tribe's stolen property beneath him, and he chafes at his posting as the second-in-command to a mere woman. Compounding the tension between him and Vadgral is Nazzek's view of her as being a spoiled brat, a woman who should be put in her place. He has avoided voicing these complaints because she's the chieftain's daughter.

Appearance: Nazzek, unlike most orcs, looks like a professional soldier. His chainmail is well kept and clean, his sword is of human make, and he fights with the cold calculation of a cunning warrior rather than the hot-tempered fury typical of most orcs. Nazzek learned much from his time as a mercenary; most importantly he knows that the controlled application of force beats out a disorganized, though furious, assault every time.

Roleplaying Notes: Nazzek is cold and calculating. He plays upon humans' assumption that orcs are stupid and impulsive, acting the part of the unthinking brute while all the while carefully turning over everything he sees in his mind.

Goals: Nazzek wishes to be the sole orcish survivor of the mission into the sewers, both to increase his share of the booty and to boost his prestige with the tribe. He knows that should he return alone, the tribe's faith in Karnuk will be sorely shaken because of Vadgral's apparent failure. Nazzek is not above betraying his fellow orcs and fighting against them to see this goal through. Should he fail and escape alive, he knows that he can always find work as a warrior amongst the humans. Nazzek allies with whichever group comes up with the best plan for dealing with the situation. If the PCs attempt to organize a coordinated defense, he gravitates towards them and even betrays Vadgral to them if they prove capable in combat.

Nazzek

government which conspires to bring down the power of House Mezzia. I fear that this is but the first step in a long-ranging plan to bring chaos and ruin to the city and regions beyond. I dare not contact any within the government for fear of alerting my family's enemies, yet I cannot stand by and ignore this threat. I beg you to meet me tonight for dinner at my residence within the city. Tyvis will be more than happy to provide you with directions. I urge you to proceed with utmost caution, as my enemies may be on the alert for an attempt to elicit aid such as this.

B.M.

Key Info: Vadgral is far from diplomatic, but feels something of a kinship to fellow women warriors.

Quote: "Bah! More weaklings to die and swell the ranks of the demon's legion. If we are attacked, step aside and let the real warriors go to work. And if Tarmalac can't hold his tongue, I'll cut it out and hold it for him."

Background: Vadgral is the first-born daughter of Karnuk, the current chieftain of the Blood Hatchet tribe. An ambitious young orc, Vadgral counters the derision and scorn heaped on her gender by orcish warriors with the ferocity and skill of an ogre. From a young age, she refused to live her life as a typical orc maid and readily took to the martial arts, much to her father's amusement. Eager to cultivate a talented lieutenant who could never fully challenge his power, Karnuk allowed Vadgral to train with the warriors, claiming that such an action was necessary to counter Vurgrum's taking of a human woman as mate (see Ironcrow's description for more information). For her part, Vadgral lacks the foresight to realize that she has little chance of one day leading the tribe. She insists on undertaking the most dangerous missions and taking many risks upon herself to demonstrate her mettle.

Appearance: Vadgral is massive even by the standards of orc males, and she moves with the easy fluidity of a natural athlete. She wears a suit of red-dyed, bulky studded leather armor that hides the feminine aspects of her physique, and keeps her black hair cut close to her scalp.

Roleplaying Notes: Vadgral has had little contact with civilization that didn't involve combat. She is far from diplomatic, as she meets social interactions with the same decisive, direct strategies she prefers to employ in combat. She considers herself and the orcs under her command powerful enough to take on any threat, and she plans on betraying and taking captive anyone who survives the siege to demonstrate her guile and resourcefulness to the tribe. The exception to this is any women who negotiate with her. Vadgral feels something of a kinship to fellow women warriors, and will keep her word should she strike an alliance with one.

Goals: Vadgral wishes to demonstrate her martial skill and take back captives and booty for the tribe. She would rather die than take a cowardly course of action in the face of the enemy and is willing to battle to the death rather than flee. She despises the orc warrior Nazzek for his dealings with humans, and if she can arrange an accident to befall him, she leaps at the opportunity.

Vadgral

Key Info: The orc war party favors Nazzek over Vadgral. The orcs do not speak common, and both Nazzek and Vadgral use this to keep them isolated from the others.

Quote: "Death holds no fear for us. We have fought like warriors, and we shall die a warrior's death. If that's against the dead or the likes of you, we do not care." (Translated from orcish)

Background: These four brutes are the survivors of the initial Blood Hatchet assault team. They are scared near to death, though they'd never admit that to anyone. They favor Nazzek as their leader over Vadgral, and may revolt against the chief's daughter if Nazzek pushes them towards it. They blame her for the disastrous turn of events that befell them, and see this situation as a sign that Vadgral's place in the tribe is an affront to the orcish gods.

Appearance: Each orc wears simple furs over his armor and carries his weapons close at hand in his belt.

Roleplaying Notes: The orcs do not speak common, and both Nazzek and Vadgral use this to keep them isolated from the others.

Goals: The orcs wish to live to escape the sewers, though they believe that only Nazzek (and maybe Vadgral) can lead them out of this mess. Under no circumstances do they betray both of their leaders.

Blood Hatchet Orcs

CHAPTER THREE: THE SETUP

- Bruno is unable to recruit help from within House Mezzia. He is the only family member living within the city, and many of the servants, caravan guards, and other people who work for the House are short-term contract mercenaries whom Bruno cannot necessarily trust. He strongly suspects that spies have infiltrated the trading company and helped bring down House Mezzia from the inside.
- Bruno is willing to pay the characters 200 gp each per day for their involvement in foiling the conspiracy. He also offers them the undying support and allegiance of House Mezzia. Given the House's presence in most every center of civilization in the known world, he reminds them, this could prove to be a very valuable commodity in the future. If pressed, Bruno ups the fee to 300 gp and also offers free passage on Mezzia ships and a chance to invest in future trading expeditions.
- The first task that Bruno has for the characters is a simple escort mission. Bruno would like them to accompany Tyvis on a courier mission. Bruno explains that he has contacted

a person who might be willing to turn coat against the conspiracy. He wants the characters to go with Tyvis to guard him in case the meeting is only a trap. Should that go well, Bruno promises them more chances to strike at the forces of evil that are “slowly rotting away at the city’s core,” as Bruno puts it.

THE ESCORT MISSION

Should the characters accept Bruno’s offer, he asks them to return to his mansion the next night in order to guard Tyvis while he meets an important contact who has information on the conspiracy against House Mezzia. Tyvis meets the characters at the door when they arrive at the mansion and explains to them that they must quickly head out to the meeting point. If the characters insist on seeing Bruno first, he grudgingly allows them into the mansion and fetches his master. Bruno insists that the characters hurry, emphasizing the time-sensitive nature of the information.



ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID INTERDONATO



Terret, Belligerent Brute

Level 1 Human Fighter

Hit Dice:	1d10+1 (11 hp)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft.
AC:	12 (+2 Leather Armor)
Attacks:	Fist +2 melee; Dagger +2 melee
Damage:	Fist 1d3+1 (subdual); Dagger 1d4+1
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +0, Will -1
Abilities:	Str 13, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 11
Skills:	Climb +5, Swim +5
Feats:	Run, Track, Weapon Focus (Longsword)
Challenge Rating:	1
Alignment:	Neutral Evil

Terret served for a time as a mercenary fighter before getting in on the smuggling game. He is too small potatoes to come to the attention of the Ring of Iron. Based on his business acumen and talent level he won't last long enough, or meet with enough success, to draw any to himself.

THE PICK UP

Tyvis leads the characters to the Hanged Man, an alehouse notorious even amongst the dives of the slums. Feel free to substitute a similarly sinister joint from your own campaign. The bulk of the action takes place outside of the bar.

When the characters arrive at the Hanged Man, Tyvis quickly spots a rough-looking man lingering near the bar's entrance with four other toughs. This is Terret, a small-time smuggler who owes Bruno a few hundred gold pieces. A little too confident in his abilities and disdainful of a soft merchant prince such as Bruno, Terret agreed to meet Tyvis at the Hanged Man in order to discuss paying his debt. Bruno knows Terret well enough to guess that the negotiations will turn violent. True to form, Terret has no intention of handing over anything but a heaping helping of hurt to Tyvis and the characters.

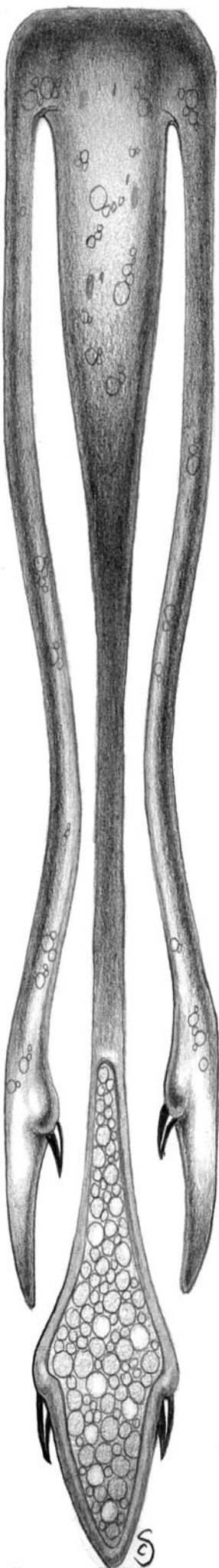
Tyvis takes a congenial, friendly approach with Terret. He wants the characters to see this encounter as an unprovoked attack by Terret. Tyvis greets the smuggler in a friendly tone, making small talk for a minute or two before asking Terret to "complete his end of the bargain." Tyvis is careful to not reveal the true nature of Terret's relationship to Bruno. Once Tyvis brings up the matter of the debt, Terret threatens him and attacks, joined in by his four compatriots.

Terret and his friends do not attack with deadly force unless the characters draw weapons or use damaging spells, such as *magic missile* or *burning hands*. Any tough reduced to half his hit points or less immediately flees; once two thugs turn and run the rest break immediately. Tyvis counsels the characters to break off any pursuit, warning them that Terret is more than likely simply leading them into an ambush.

COMPLICATIONS

If things are moving a bit slowly in the game and your players are eager for a little excitement, consider throwing a few complicating factors into this scene:

- A small crowd gathers to watch the fight. Some of the spectators side with the local boys, throwing rotten vegetables at the PCs and yelling insults at them. Tyvis insists that the PCs avoid any confrontations, but the loudmouths in the crowd do their best to provoke them.
- The city guard arrives to break up the brawl. Tyvis warns the PCs to say nothing about Bruno and their mission. The guardsmen question the PCs, hassle them for a bit, and maybe even threaten to drag them off in irons.
- On the way to or from the Hanged Man, the PCs run into a friend of theirs who bugs them about what business they are on, who Tyvis is, and other questions that make Tyvis very uncomfortable.



CHAPTER THREE: THE SETUP

Once the thugs are driven off, Tyvis expresses regret over how things went with Terret. If the characters handled themselves well in the fight (which should be a given, considering the skill of their opposition), he asks them to accompany him back to Bruno's mansion.

At the mansion, Bruno offers the characters potions of *cure light wounds* if any of them were wounded in the brawl and apologizes for how things turned out. Assume that Bruno has one potion for each character, but feel free to bump this number up to bring the characters fully up to health.

Bruno leaves the characters in his study while he speaks to Tyvis alone for a moment upstairs. This is allegedly to go over what happened, but actually to discuss how the PCs handled themselves in the fight. Assuming that the PCs didn't get their butts kicked, Bruno returns and offers the characters a second mission, a raid on the Ring of Iron stronghold.

THE PITCH

Bruno is eager to strike at the Ring of Iron, as he has competent and clueless warriors on hand, the element of surprise, and a steadily shrinking cash reserve. He wants to head out

to the sewers the next night, and is willing to make a generous offer to the PCs to ensure that happens. He first explains that, given the night's events, the conspiracy may have uncovered his activities. He wants to strike now, while he can. Bruno then outlines his cover story about the Ring of Iron, describing it as a critical component in the conspiracy against him. He wants to strike at the Ring's base in the sewers in order to deal a sharp check to his enemies and to free any House Mezzia retainers who may be held there. Bruno suspects that the Ring is behind many of the attacks on his caravans, and he fears that loyal House Mezzia servants are being sold into bondage. He plays on the characters' sense of pity, telling them that if they do not act soon innocent people may be doomed to a life of slavery. He describes some of the Ring's less-than-savory activities, such as selling slaves to dark cults for use as sacrificial victims, and asks the characters how they could live with themselves knowing that through their inaction innocents were doomed.

Bruno's goal is to get the characters to want to go on the mission out of some sense of justice and revenge. He's wily enough to know that if he can bend the characters' desires to match his own, things will go much more smoothly

Terret's Thugs

Level 1 Human Warriors (4)

Hit Dice:	8 (5 hp)
Initiative:	+0
Speed:	30 ft.
AC:	12 (+2 Leather Armor)
Attacks:	Fist +2 melee; Dagger +2 melee
Damage:	Fist 1d3+1 (subdual); Dagger 1d4+1
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Saves:	Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0
Abilities:	Str 12, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10
Skills:	Climb +5, Swim +5
Challenge Rating:	1/2
Alignment:	Neutral Evil

Terret's underlings are typical riff-raff brigands. Their ties to Terret are tenuous at best, and they are strong believers in saving their own skins.





CHAPTER FOUR

INTO THE BEAST

The next night, the characters are once again met at the door of Bruno's mansion by his servant Tyvis. He leads them into Bruno's study, where the young merchant lord waits for them in his armor. Journeying to the site of the adventure is relatively easy. Bruno leads the characters to a hidden entrance to the sewers not far from his home. The sewers are thick with the stench of waste and garbage. The tunnels are built with dull gray bricks, with a three-foot-wide ledge on each side and a four-foot-deep channel of murky, garbage choked water.

After a few hundred feet of walking, Bruno leads the characters to a side passage that opens on the left side of the sewer channel and leads up and away from the main channel. This tunnel leads to the main entrance to the Ring of Iron's hideout. It also marks the outer limit of Vog Mor's transforming power. As the characters head up the side passage, the air grows thicker and hotter.

With a DC 15 Listen check, the characters can hear the faint sounds of a slow breeze coming from the tunnels ahead; they can feel the outflow of hot, wet air down the passageway compared to the influx of cool, foul-smelling air from the sewers behind them.

The walls abruptly shift from brick and mortar to a moist, gray stone that's warm to the touch. After the characters all turn around the first bend in the passageway it begins to bend and contract. The opening to the sewer channel seals up with a sickening squelch, and the tunnel begins to close in upon itself, starting near the entrance and rapidly approaching the characters, picking up speed as it goes. This event forces the characters down a steep incline to the meeting chamber.

Any character who is dense enough to stay behind and let the passageway crush him takes 4d8 points of damage per round. The tunnel contracts just slowly enough that the characters can run ahead down the incline to the main chamber. Any character blundering down the steep slope at the end of the passageway must make a DC 15 Balance check or take 1d6 points of damage from tumbling down the incline and hitting the floor awkwardly.

THE MAIN CHAMBER

As the characters tumble into the main chamber area, the NPCs described in the center layout are all there holding a rather tense meeting. Vog Mor's undead attacked the remaining survivors only an hour ago, and a veteran orc warrior named Nazzek

CHAPTER FOUR: INTO THE BEAST

has managed to convince the others to meet and discuss strategy. Everyone but Tarmalac's Ring of Iron thugs (who think the PCs are reinforcements) readies their weapons but do not attack.

SITUATION

The characters are a tempting target for an alliance to everyone but the orc band leader Vadgral. At this point, tensions are very high within the group, and each sees the characters as the perfect tool to use against the others. The remainder of this module presents events that can occur as the PCs interact with the NPCs and learn about their situation. Be sure to thoroughly read up on the NPCs' personalities, as described in the tear out section on pages 13-20. These descriptions are designed to be detached from the book and cut out into quick-reference cards, to make roleplaying the NPCs easier for the GM.

In the Belly of the Beast requires you to juggle a lot of NPCs. Keeping track of them all can quickly become a headache. Your easiest option to keep things simple is to kill off a few characters. If you simply do not like running

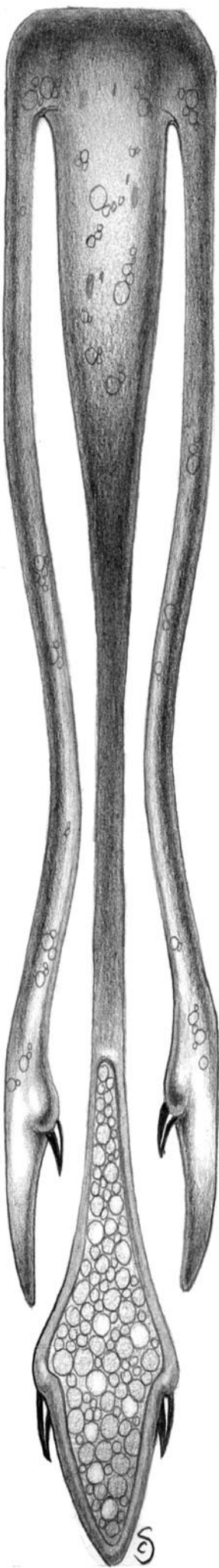
one of the NPCs presented, or some of them don't click with the characters, let Vog Mor's servants or the other NPCs kill them. Such an event can easily increase the tension.

You may also want to reverse this idea. Take an NPC with whom the characters formed an alliance and let him die at the hands of an NPC that the characters either don't like or avoid. Almost every NPC has a major reason to hate the others. Use that to keep the PCs on their toes and to prevent things from resolving themselves in a predictable manner. In fact, unless you go about the business of killing off NPCs, the final showdown with Vog Mor will be simply too easy for the characters. You have roughly three groups to deal with: Tarmalac's Ring of Iron gang, the Blood Hatchet orcs, and the necromancers. All of them have reasons to hate the other two groups, and the orcs are fractured into virtually two separate camps by Vadgral and Nazzek. The orcs are probably the most powerful group, but the PCs must choose between backing Nazzek or Vadgral. If their chosen ally dies at the hands of the other orc, they've made themselves an enemy. Ofec is desperate for an ally, but he isn't too much help in building bridges with other groups or dealing with Vog



ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS SEAMAN





IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

Mor. Tarmalac makes a dubious ally, and his feelings for Lydia can drive a rift between the group. Keep these divisions in mind when the characters begin to interact with the NPCs. If you let the characters quickly ally with everyone, then the adventure will be too easy for them. If you kill off all the NPCs, then it may be too hard. Of course, if the players slaughter the NPCs, then they're probably out of luck in the final battle.

Running this module requires careful balancing, but if done correctly you can provide your players with a tense roleplaying experience that can serve as a springboard to later adventures.

ENVIRONMENT

The main interior chamber of the beast is lit with magical sunrod-like lanterns that the Ring of Iron purchased to keep the hideout lit without clogging it up with smoke. The walls are the same as those in the entrance tunnel; gray, moist, and warm to the touch. Hacking at the walls causes watery green ichor to flow from them, though the wound closes up within a minute after it is inflicted. Attacking the walls does no permanent damage to Vog Mor or its chrysalis. The channel on the east wall that the characters slid down seals behind them shortly after they enter the main room.

If asked, the NPCs admit that the passage was sealed before, and Vog Mor must have opened it to trap the PCs. No amount of hacking can open it again. Spells are similarly ineffective, as the walls have a spell resistance of 30

This room was once a meeting area. An 8' long wooden table lies in the middle of the 60 x 40 ft. room, flipped over on its side to act as a barrier facing towards the passageway to the north. The northern passage is blocked by a barricade, which was constructed to keep the servitors of Vog Mor trapped in the room beyond. The passageway makes a sharp turn between the barricade and the 40 x 40 ft. room to the north, making it impossible to see what's happening behind the barricade or how many servitors lurk beyond it. The two rooms to the south were both once barracks. Now, the Ring of Iron members inhabit one and the orcs have claimed the other. The furniture from each of these rooms has long since been added to the barricade, though the Ring of Iron keeps a small store of supplies in their chamber (see below). A twisting passage that heads out of the main room to the west is both damp and claustrophobically tight; it narrows into a dead end about 20 feet in.

Tarmalac or Vadgral may try to lure any potential murder victims down this passage before attacking.

RING OF IRON'S SUPPLIES:

Short spears (4)
Arrows (100)
Leather armor (2 suits)
Torches (bundle of 80)
Tinderboxes (3)
Waterskins, empty (4)
Waterskins, full (7)
Rope, 50' coils (3)
Ladder, 10' tall
Hammers (4)
Iron spikes (16)

EVENTS

As the characters interact with their fellow prisoners, a lot of the action results from improvisation and the natural flow of roleplaying. As so much of this adventure depends on the personalities of the characters, it is difficult to give a concrete course of action for the rest of the scenario. Read over each NPCs' goals and motivations and keep those in mind as the PCs interact with them. It is important that you present the turn of events that led up to the current situation in accurate detail. Each faction is convinced that the other is to blame for the situation, and unless an NPC has reason to lie, his attitude towards the others should be clear in his words and emotions. Listed below are eight events that can increase the tension within the group and a final event that resolves the current situation.

EVENT ONE: SERVITOR ATTACK

In another passageway located opposite of the entrance, Tarmalac and his Ring of Iron men have erected a crude barrier from furniture, barrels, and other bulky items. Beyond the barrier dwell the recently dead members of the Ring of Iron, the orcs, and others who have been raised by Vog Mor as servitors. A group of at least 10 servitors lurk beyond the barrier. They spend much of their time calling out to their former comrades, wailing in agony, and threatening the survivors with fates worse than death. At random intervals, they attack the barrier en masse, seeking to destroy it and surge forward to slaughter the living beyond.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTO THE BEAST

The barrier is AC 3, hardness 5, with 25 hit points of damage needed to breach it. The barrier can also be climbed requiring a DC 12 climb check; this rises to DC 18 if it is being attacked, due to the instability of the barrier. Up to two medium-sized creatures can attempt to climb over the barrier at once.

Most of the NPCs strongly oppose tampering with the barricade, unless the PCs want to reinforce it. Vadgral favors kicking the barrier over and launching a frontal assault on the servitors, and she proposes this course of action after the servitor attack.

If the barrier is breached, the servitors rush through it. Vog Mor is not eager for a decisive attack until after its avatar appears, but it does direct regular assaults against the barrier to keep the characters under pressure and to wear away their strength.

Any living humanoid killed within the confines of the chrysalis arises as a servitor five rounds after death unless a total of 16 points of damage are dealt to the corpse before then. Any damage short of 16 hp inflicted on the corpse post-mortem is applied to the new servitor's hit point total as damage. The NPCs are aware of this fact and tell the characters to hack at the bodies of the fallen. Note that the servitors do not reanimate after they are destroyed.

EVENT TWO: LOFEC'S BREAKDOWN

The necromancer Ofec, in an effort to keep himself in a relatively safe position with regard to the others, begins to make more aggressive claims about his power. He boldly predicts that Vog Mor will manifest itself within a few hours and demands that he be given peace, quiet, and a set of attentive guards so that he may focus his mystic powers. As silence descends upon the tunnels, a low voice is heard calling from the barricade for Ofec. Ofec's murdered master, Thimony, has been reanimated by Vog Mor and has returned for his revenge. Upon hearing the voice, Ofec begins an irreversible move towards madness. He panics and screams in terror, wailing that someone must go beyond the barricade and destroy the creature which calls for him. If pressed about its nature, he lies and claims that Vog Mor has spawned a terrible creature which, if it is not destroyed soon, will drain Ofec of all his prepared spells and doom them all. Thimony is now a servitor of Vog Mor and has lost the ability to cast spells. If the characters go beyond the barricade, only the orcs Nazzek and Vadgral agree to go with them. When directly

confronted, Thimony's undead form makes a mad dash for the barricade, while a swarm of servitors (two for each attacking character and NPC) springs from the shadows to grapple with any attackers who ventured across it.

If the characters cross the barricade, you should make opposed Spot and Hide checks for the characters and Thimony. In the confusion, Thimony attempts to spring across the barricade and make a mad dash for Ofec.

If the characters do not volunteer to cross the barricade, no one else suggests it. Ofec is tormented sorely by the voice. After a few minutes spent curled in a ball in the corner, his ears stopped shut, Ofec makes a rush at the barricade and unloads all of his remaining spells over the top of it, to no real effect. If no one follows him to the barrier, he is promptly grabbed by the servitors and killed.

If Ofec survives this event, the others' faith in him is disintegrated. If approached diplomatically, the half-orc servant Ironcrow is willing to explain the truth about Ofec. For his part, Ofec becomes very paranoid and refuses to aid anyone. He makes many grave prophecies of the doom that is sure to befall everyone at the hands of Vog Mor. If Ofec is completely abandoned by both the characters and the other NPCs, he sides with Vog Mor during the final battle.

A PC cleric or paladin may attempt to turn Vog Mor's servitors. *Turning, destroying, rebuking, or commanding* undead does not work within the confines of the chrysalis. Vog Mor's malevolent influence prevents it from having any effect. Describe to the player how her character's appeal to the gods echoes off into the cosmos, unheard. In addition, while divine magic operates normally, regaining divine spells is somewhat difficult. The character must make a DC 15 Wisdom check for each prepared spell. Success means that the spell is prepared as normal, failure means that the spell is not prepared properly due to Vog Mor's influence. This check applies to both good and evil characters.

EVENT THREE: EORC BRAWL

One of the orcs is discovered by his fellows to have some unspoiled food on him. As the captive NPCs have been trapped here for two days with little water and no fresh food, a brawl quickly breaks out between the four (or however many are left) orc warriors. Nazzek and Vadgral eye each other warily as the fight drags on; depending on how confident each is about support from the others, one of them might attack the other. If the characters do



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nothing to break up the fight, one of the orcs is accidentally killed without the others realizing it. He soon returns from the dead and attacks the nearest living creature, at which point the orcs stop their fighting and attack their one-time ally. If the characters take action to stop the fight, the orcs resent their interference but the others are grateful (though not obviously so) that the PCs stopped the brawl from spilling over to involve anyone else. Whatever happens, the food that the orc was carrying (some dried meat) ends up smeared across the floor and promptly begins to rot.

to have their spellbooks to regain spells, though Ofec can prepare the spells he knows with his spell mastery feat.

A character that Vog Mor attempts to suffocate in this manner must make a DC 15 listen check with a -4 penalty in order to wake up before taking any damage. A character who misses this roll takes 2d8 points of crushing damage per round. The character may free herself with a DC 20 strength check. If someone attempts to help free the character, add +2 and the helper's strength bonus (not penalties, if any) to the check.

EVENT FOUR: ERESTING

At some point, the PCs (especially any spellcasters) may wish to rest and regain spells. Anyone who tries to lie down on the floor of the chamber and sleep is attacked indirectly by Vog Mor. The demon uses its environmental control ability to slowly draw the sleeper down into the floor and suffocate him, bringing him back as an undead servitor. The process takes about twenty minutes, and Vog Mor does not attempt it if anyone is nearby and keeping watch. Vog Mor has not used this trick as of yet, and the NPC survivors are unaware of this potential danger. Note that wizards still need

EVENT FIVE: EMURDER

Unless the PCs take serious steps to keep everyone together, the stress of the situation proves too much for their co-captives and they begin to plot against each other. Soon Vadgral realizes that the orcs favor the veteran warrior Nazzek over her. Enraged, she lures him into an ambush in either the orcs' barracks chamber or the dead-end passageway and attacks him. Unless the PCs intervene (none of the NPCs do so) she slays him and is left with half of her hit points remaining. If Vadgral allies with the PCs, she expects them to help her. If Nazzek has allied with them, she begins plotting against them next. Whatever the case, she tosses



ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS SEAMAN

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Nazzek's corpse over the barricade and attempts to pin the blame for the murder on either a PC that she has been in conflict with, the Ring of Iron slaver Tarmalac, or the necromancer Ofec. Unless the characters have done an excellent job of keeping the NPCs together, they are all thrown into a paranoid fit.

EVENT SIX: EBRUNO'S CONSPIRACY

At some point, Bruno approaches Tarmalac, as the representative of the Ring of Iron, with an offer of alliance. He explains to the slaver who he is and the power and influence he wields. Bruno wants the characters dead, for fear that they may turn against him once they escape, and tell his father of his involvement with the seedier elements in town. Unless the PCs make an ally out of Tarmalac, he agrees to aid Bruno. They first try to lure away a lone PC to either the Ring's barracks chamber or the dead-end passageway, ambush, and kill him. Failing in that, they wait until Vog Mor arrives (see below) and then turn on the PCs in the confusion. This would work especially well to add a bit more challenge if the PCs make quick work of Vog Mor and its servitors.

EVENT SEVEN: ELYDIA'S PLAN

If a powerful bloc forms around the PCs, Lydia decides that it is time to guarantee her safety. She picks out a male PC and tries to worm her way under his wing. A paladin is the ideal choice for this, but any warrior type will do. Lydia prefers to approach someone with a low Charisma, in hopes of flattering him with her attention. As a somewhat shallow person, she assumes that an ugly member of the party has never been approached in a romantic manner. Lydia plays up her helplessness and need for some strong, powerful man to take care of her. Of course, Tarmalac is enraged by this action, and he attempts to lure his rival into either a quiet area corner of the Ring's barracks chamber or the dead-end passageway and then murder him.

EVENT EIGHT: THE DREAMS

If at any time, a large number of PCs or NPCs sleep, Vog Mor sends dreams designed to instill paranoia and mistrust against them.

Each sleeping person must make a DC 17 Will save. Any who fail wake up remembering that at some point in the night, they partially woke to see someone either hunched over a sleeper with a dagger, stealing from someone's backpack or belt pouch, or dozing off when they were supposed to be standing guard.

Vog Mor tailors the dreams so that each person sees someone they are already prone to mistrust committing the action. The NPCs will either see a PC if the characters have not formed an alliance with them yet, or a rival NPC. Vadgral, for example, probably sees Nazzek plotting against her with the other orcs. Try to match up suspects to dreamers in a way that complicates the PCs' job of bringing the group together, or aggravates situations that are already on the verge of violence.

FINAL EVENT: VOG MOR ARRIVES

After a total of twelve hours, Vog Mor's avatar manifests itself and attacks the remaining characters, hoping to destroy them, feast on their souls, and then march forth to wreak havoc on the city above. Luckily for the characters, Vog Mor is relatively weak in its initial form, yet still a challenge for the characters. Vog Mor easily smashes through the barrier and leads its remaining servitors on a final assault against the characters. While Vog Mor marches forward, the servitors charge before, trying to surge past any warriors and slay any spellcasters. If the PCs have done a good job of unifying the NPCs and have taken few casualties, only a few of the NPCs, such as Ofec and Bruno, may turn against them, hoping to placate the demon and earn its favor. Remember to play up Vog Mor's ability to control the sewer environment. The floor shivers with each of its footfalls, while tentacles sprout from the walls, floor, and ceiling and writhe menacingly. If the PCs are victorious, Vog Mor lets loose a deafening howl as its remaining servitors crumple lifeless to the floor. The walls shimmer and quake as the barrier above the steep slope leading into the main chamber opens up with a sickening, wet tearing sound. The PCs are free to flee as the walls begin to shudder. Green ichor sprays from wounds that spontaneously appear upon them and the chrysalis begins to collapse. It would be unfair to kill off any characters at this point, but don't let the characters know that. Put some more fear into them and send them running for the sewers above.





CHAPTER FIVE

LOOSE ENDS

If the characters manage to defeat Vog Mor, they still have their temporary allies to deal with. More than likely, unless the characters have been very clever they are in no shape to go toe to toe with their fellow survivors. Included below are ways to integrate any survivors into your campaign and long-term repercussions that may result from the adventure.

IRONCROW

The half-orc is left without any real allies or friends should he survive the adventure. With Thimony dead and Ofec either dead or barely hanging on to his sanity, Ironcrow strikes out on his own as a mercenary and adventurer. If the characters were kind to him or saved his life, he feels a debt to them and may want to adventure with them or otherwise stay in contact. Conflict eventually erupts between Ironcrow and the PCs if the PCs are mainly of good alignment. The half-orc is evil, and though he is somewhat agreeable that is primarily a reflection on his life experiences so far. He's never been in a position of power, and as he grows more confident in his abilities, he begins to crave respect and authority over others. Perhaps after a few years, Ironcrow grows in power and decides to take revenge against all who wronged him, including the PCs.

OFEC

The necromancer Ofec nurses grudges. Like his servant Ironcrow, he may decide to gun for the PCs at the earliest opportunity. Even if the PCs helped Ofec survive, he views them as a threat that must be eliminated.

VADGRAL

The orc leader Vadgral would like to drag any fellow survivors back to the tribe as hostages and war trophies. However, if she struck a bargain with a female PC she does not do this. Vadgral does not harbor any grudges against the PCs, viewing everything as fair in war. She doesn't make a particular effort to even any scores that remain after the scenario is over, but she doesn't ally with or extend friendship to any of the PCs, even if they saved her life. If she survived the adventure but lost the power struggle to Nazzek, she may strike out on her own rather than return to her tribe, quickly rising to a prominent position amongst the local bandit gangs.

NAZZEK

The orc warrior Nazzek is likely to avoid returning with the rest of the orcs if Vadgral is still in power at the end of the adventure. Instead, he seeks work once again as a mercenary, preferring to work for a lord who can offer him a shot at fame, fortune, and power. If Nazzek returns to the tribe in triumph, he soon engineers a coup and installs himself as chieftain. Under his rule, the Blood Hatchet tribe makes many aggressive raids against human settlements and slowly begins to dominate the surrounding groups of humanoids in preparation for an eventual war under Nazzek's skilled command.

TARMALAC

The Ring of Iron cell leader Tarmalac high-tails it out of town as soon as the scenario is over, terrified that both the Ring of Iron and the archmage that he crossed long ago might follow his trail and eliminate him. Tarmalac blames everyone but himself for the disaster in the sewers, and should he dodge his pursuers he concocts endless plots against the PCs. He prefers to strike when least expected and seeks to indirectly harm the PCs, planning attempts

to kidnap a PC's loved one, or striking at a temple or other institution that one of the PCs is a member of.

LYDIA

The Ring of Iron bounty hunter Lydia presents some interesting options if a PC pursues her romantic overtures. While she may work with the PCs during the course of the adventure, she quickly reverts to her selfish ways once the danger has passed, though she may stick with the characters if she can get some benefit from the association. She betrays the PCs if such a move can help her, and her fundamentally evil nature manifests itself in subtle ways. For example, if the PCs take prisoners after a fight, she may argue for letting them go, only to hunt them down afterwards purely for the sport of it. Such developments are made all the more compelling if she has seduced a good-aligned PC.

THE RING OF IRON

Unless the Ring of Iron tracks down Tarmalac, it has little information to go on about the PCs' involvement in the destruction of its hideout. Depending on the role, if



ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID INTERDONATO



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any, that you wish to give the Ring in your campaign, the group could either seek revenge on the PCs or simply ignore them, angered by the destruction of its base but content that a giant, rampaging demon (which would most definitely not be good for business) was destroyed.

HOUSE MEZZIA

If Bruno turns traitor on the PCs, allies with Vog Mor, and is killed, the PCs are visited by a House Mezzia agent within a month of the end of the adventure. Hallan is saddened by the loss of his son and wishes to get to the bottom of Bruno's plan. If the PCs are honest with the Mezzia family and can demonstrate that they were merely Bruno's dupes, they are left alone by the merchants. On the other hand, if Bruno survives and manages to get a stake in the slave trading business without the characters' knowledge, he gladly rewards them and offers them support. Of course, if at some point the characters learn that their benefactor is a slave trader and general scum bag, they may decide to take him down. In addition, good-aligned PCs might be a bit troubled by the fact that they've been associating with and aiding a thoroughly amoral person.

Rewards

If Bruno survives, he pays the characters the fee they agreed on at the beginning of the scenario; either 200 or 300 gp. He is willing to double this amount if the characters figure out his plans and do not reveal them to anyone — especially to his father.

Award the characters 100 XP value for each NPC with whom they successfully form an alliance. Do not award any XP for NPCs that the characters kill, besides Vog Mor and its servitors, unless the NPC made an unprovoked attack against the NPC. For example, if Bruno convinces Tarmalac and the thugs to attack the PCs, the characters should receive XP for defeating them. Succeeding at this adventure requires the PCs to form alliances and pull the group together against Vog Mor. Slaughtering everyone in sight is counter-productive towards this goal and should not be rewarded.

In addition, any characters who survive the adventure each receive a 500 XP story award bonus. Good or neutral characters gain an extra 250 XP each for discovering Bruno's plans and/or alerting the authorities to the existence of the Ring of Iron's lair. The authorities should be told of the menace posed by Bruno and the disaster averted by the characters. Evil characters receive this bonus if they use the opportunity to work with the Ring or blackmail Bruno. Working with the slavers can give evil characters access to money and power, while blackmailing Bruno puts a powerful and wealthy man under their thumb.

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