

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]

VOR RUKOTH[™] An Ancient Ruins Adventure Site



ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT
Greg Bilslund

VOR RUKOTH™

An Ancient Ruins Adventure Site

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INTRODUCTION

Vor Rukoth™: An Ancient Ruins Adventure Site is a book for Dungeon Masters that explores the crumbling ruins of a once-great tiefling city of the empire of Bael Turath. It is not intended to present a cohesive adventure path, but rather, dozens of locations and hooks that you can weave into an existing adventure or campaign setting.

With *Vor Rukoth*, you can put together narrative threads as you see fit, forming a tapestry that produces a campaign or providing a series of short, one-shot quests. Characters might visit Vor Rukoth occasionally, searching for lost lore, valuable items, or ancient magic. The numerous quests and hooks described here can also be the basis for lengthy adventures in and around the ruins. For example, a rich patron might send the adventurers to the city to recover an item, but in the process of retrieving the relic, they might run afoul of the Black-whips slavers. After they deal with the slavers, one of the freed captives might ask the heroes for help in searching for a relative who went missing in the ruins.

Vor Rukoth is suitable for characters from 1st to 15th level. It assumes you have the *Player's Handbook*®, *Monster Manual*®, and *Dungeon Master's Guide*® core rulebooks. It makes reference to various other books, but they are not necessary for play.

BACKGROUND

Vor Rukoth was one of the jewels of the empire of Bael Turath. Sometimes called the City of Forges, it was ruled over by the emperor's sister, a human named Lady Najala. During the long and violent war with the dragonborn empire of Arkhosia, the powerful humans of Bael Turath—nobles, wealthy merchants, spellcasters, and priests—underwent a sinister transformation through diabolic pacts. Among the first to swear the oaths to devils and become a tiefling was Lady Najala. Seeing her power and influence grow as a result of her oaths, many of the other nobles of Vor Rukoth lined up for the opportunity to participate.

As the threat from Arkhosia grew more imminent, Lady Najala became suspicious of everyone and began scouring Vor Rukoth's population for traitors. She called out those nobles who had refused to take infernal oaths, believing they conspired against her, and she erected a gate to Hell to ensure her hold on power. Ultimately, it proved her undoing. As a dragonborn host marched on the city, she desperately threw open the portal to any creatures that would aid her. On what came to be known as the Day of Devils, legions of fiends spilled out from the Nine Hells. They repelled the dragonborn host on the outskirts of Vor Rukoth, but they also slaughtered the thousands who inhabited Vor Rukoth. Najala's victory meant little, for the city was shattered and left a ruined vestige.

THREE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT VOR RUKOTH

Three features define Vor Rukoth as a unique adventure site.

1. NAJALA'S GATE

Deep in the bowels of the city, infernal forces stir. Like a toxic fog, corrupt energy from the Nine Hells creeps through Vor Rukoth, permeating every crevice. None can escape its influence. Long-abandoned weapons still burn to the touch. The stench of brimstone stings the nostrils, and the crackle of flames is heard where no fire burns. The source of this evil is Najala's Gate, a yawning archway that maintains a thin veil between the world and the Nine Hells.

During the final mad years of Najala's reign, she commissioned the building of the gate to give her unlimited access to diabolic forces. Once its construction was complete, she had its architects executed, ensuring they would take the secret of its location and power to the grave. Najala went one step further to secure her control of the gate. From a spellcaster named Inariam (see "The Deep Pits," page 29), she learned the ritual to become a lich. She modified the ritual, though, for she had discovered how to instill her soul into a much larger object than a normal phylactery. She placed her soul within the gate, giving her control over its flow.

On the Day of Devils, as rebellion sparked within Vor Rukoth and Arkhosia's forces marched on the city, Najala desperately turned to the gate for power. Manipulated by her advisors, many of whom were devils, she threw open the portal and called upon an infernal host to defend the embattled city. In the Nine Hells, the gate shone like a beacon, calling devils to it. As the diabolic hordes poured from the portal, Najala briefly lost control.

After the dust had settled and the blood had soaked into the streets, the gate closed again, but its malign influence persisted. Devils occasionally emerge from it, either by their own power or at Najala's behest. Hellish corruption remains rife within the walls of Vor Rukoth, and any adventurers daring to remain in the city for long are likely to draw evil to them unless they destroy the gate or surrender to its malevolence.

2. LIVING CITY

Although Vor Rukoth lies in ruins, it remains a city alive with iniquity. Devils in the guise of maidens lure hapless travelers to their doom. Slavers funnel their captives through the city to eager buyers. And bandits and murderers find refuge in the dark recesses of shattered buildings.

Vor Rukoth is a constantly changing environment. If one group loses its grip on power, another rises to fill its

EXPLORING VOR RUKOTH

place. Zealous heroes might wipe out a group of slavers, only to return weeks later to find that one of the prisoners they freed has turned the former slave den into a pit for betting on beast fights.

Even the old influences in Vor Rukoth are not diminished. House Varrik was the greatest of the noble houses to stand against Najala—now called the Queen of Roses—and still seeks to unseat her (see “Varrik Estate,” page 17). The self-styled queen, meanwhile, is attended by many devils, even centuries after the city’s fall. She is a major player in the politics of the region, offering power to those who flatter her and offer tribute. Warlords, pirates, tribal chiefs, and necromancers are among her beneficiaries.

Over the course of their adventures, the characters might confront a number of villains who have received the support of Queen Najala. Alternatively, they might be forced to visit Najala’s court and request her assistance to resolve a problem. Vor Rukoth is a tightly knit web of alliances and enmities, in which a single action can ripple through the factions in and around the ruins. Ultimately, Najala is an evil figure, but if you want to run an intrigue-filled adventure or campaign, help your players understand that confronting her is not as simple as they might believe.

3. DIVERSE ENVIRONMENTS

Vor Rukoth’s unique geography lets you run a game with a variety of moods and in an array of terrains. Seismic activity, possibly resulting from the imprisoned volcanic dragon Kaxhar (see page 20), has made the city geologically unstable. The events of the Day of Devils caused water from the nearby Midnight Sea to rush in, flooding part of the city. For an aquatic adventure, the characters can explore the waterfront and the drowned Lost District. To quest in the Underdark, they can delve into the Blood Grounds or the catacombs below Najala’s Ruby Court. Or, for a Feywild excursion, they can visit the city’s gardens and swamps. The geography of Vor Rukoth is continually changing, whether spontaneously or through the characters’ actions.

The way that Vor Rukoth is parceled out among different power groups also allows for quick visits. Adventurers can enter the city, tackle a few encounters, and then escape without too much effort. As an adventure site, Vor Rukoth can be used for consecutive encounters or spread across several sessions. If you want it to become the scene of a larger-scale storyline, its geography also caters to that. Because entry points are limited—and because the city is surrounded by sheer cliffs and treacherous water—just to get into or out of Vor Rukoth might be an adventure. Refuges exist within the city, but even these are not without peril. And the city’s environment can change without warning, whether as the result of external events or the actions of the characters.

For centuries after its fall, Vor Rukoth remained lost to civilization, inhabited only by wrathful spirits, monstrous beasts, and devils trapped by ancient bonds with its undead queen. The human empire of Nerath came and went, never realizing the potential wealth that lay within this remote ruin.

Then, a couple of decades ago, a company of halfling explorers discovered the remnants of an ancient road. They followed it to the ruined city and began exploring, discovering much wealth but also many dangers within. Only one survived. This halfling, who later came to be known as the Coyote, established a small outpost just beyond the gates of Vor Rukoth. He spread the word of the ancient city and helped guide others there. The highway leading to it came to be known as the Ruby Road, both for its crimson cast and for the wealth it brought to those who managed to pull treasures from the ruins.

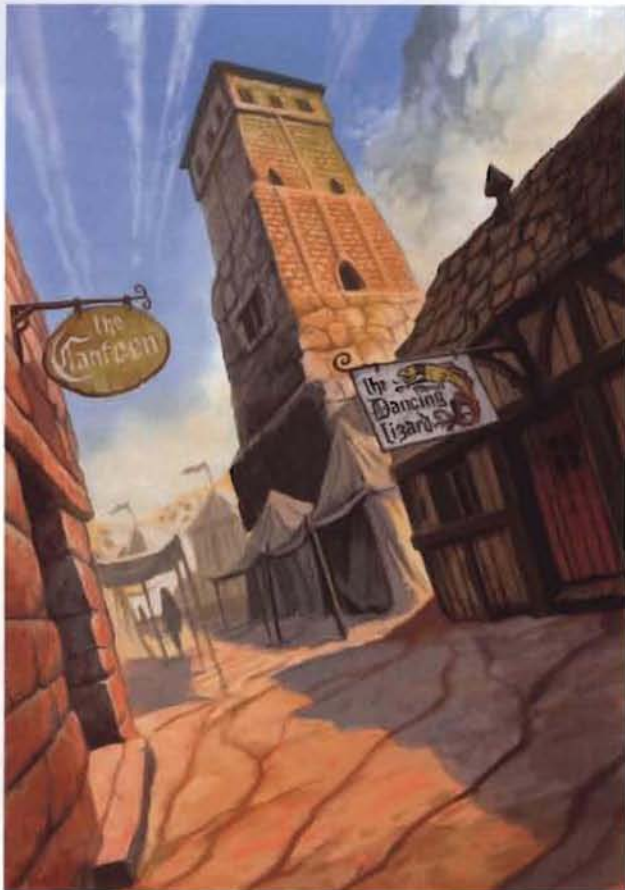
The halfling’s outpost was called Coyote’s Refuge (“the Refuge” for short), and it attracted all manner of folk. Adventurers came in search of treasure; divine agents sought to cleanse the ruins of their evil; criminals came looking for a base of operations, and outcasts to find sanctuary and solitude. Coyote’s Refuge became a jumping-off point for anyone entering Vor Rukoth, supplying the essentials to those with the audacity to venture within.

COYOTE’S REFUGE

Coyote’s Refuge is a tent city, so it is constantly changing. Only a few permanent buildings rise above the tents, because the Coyote—for reasons he won’t explain—doesn’t allow the construction of new structures. People around the Refuge tell stories of a group of dwarves from the city of Turak-tol (see page 7) who tried to build a tavern without the Coyote’s permission and all ended up buried in its foundation. Some of the tents are small, providing scant shelter from the glare of the sun and the cold breath of night. Others are large and complex, with lavish furniture and cordoned-off chambers.

The few permanent buildings in Coyote’s Refuge include the following locations.

The Watchtower: The Coyote resides in the remnant of a tower that once kept watch over the plains surrounding Vor Rukoth. The tower was torn apart in the battle between the infernal forces and the dragonborn army, but the halfling had it rebuilt with mismatched stone taken from the wall that once surrounded Vor Rukoth. From its top, he can see for miles around, from the Midnight Sea to the south all the way to the Horned Hills to the north and the Skull Fields to the west. The Coyote keeps watch over everyone entering and leaving the Refuge.



The Dancing Lizard: This is the only tavern in Coyote's Refuge, owned by the dwarf Terris Halfjaw. Terris runs the establishment with the permission of the Coyote, who occasionally deigns to descend from his tower and share a drink with guests in the Refuge. Like the Watchtower, the Dancing Lizard is built of stone taken from Vor Rukoth's walls. The tavern's drinking hall sits aboveground, where it grows hot from the beating sun and the masses of people that crowd it during the day. The bedchambers are built underground, allowing them to stay cooler. The Dancing Lizard has only eight of these, and they are almost always occupied. Rarely does a tenant check out, leading some to murder for the chance to secure a coveted room.

The Canteen: This general store is owned by the Coyote, but he rarely takes a hand in its operation. The halfling is more interested in who is coming to the store and what they are buying. The store is managed by a female tiefling named Inferna. A fastidious shopkeeper, Inferna takes inventory regularly and keeps detailed records of anyone who enters or leaves the shop, whether or not they buy something.

The Canteen is a large, cavernous structure without windows, and on hot days, it becomes an oven inside. Most of the perishable goods are kept in chambers below ground, safe from the heat and from intruders. A secret corridor connects its basement to the Watchtower.

The store is the only source of water in the Refuge, so unless travelers carry in their own or have a magical way to produce it, they invariably show up at the Canteen. The water is expensive and tastes terrible, so some adventurers prefer to survive on wine and ale.

PEOPLE OF THE REFUGE

Few people are permanent residents of Coyote's Refuge. The cruel heat of day and the bitter cold of night, along with the unscrupulous characters who lurk in the shadow of Vor Rukoth, make it an unwelcoming home. Those who do live there have a saying: "To stay in the Refuge, you either hate yourself or are hated by everyone else." Still, those who remain help to keep Coyote's Refuge thriving.

The Coyote: This elusive figure is in fact not a halfling at all. The real Coyote is trapped in a magical prison shaped like an ordinary die. He found the object, a crystal cube with a small figure carved in the center, when his adventuring band first explored the ruins. When he escaped, he brought it with him and rolled the die habitually. Unbeknownst to him, the object contained an imprisoned creature called a raavasta, a foxlike entity born of the Abyss. When the halfling rolled the cube's sixth side three times in a row, he became trapped in the object, freeing the raavasta. The treacherous and cunning fiend has an uncanny ability to change its appearance. It assumed the guise of the Coyote and bent the Refuge toward its own purposes.

Hook: The Coyote contracts adventurers and monitors the flow of goods out of Vor Rukoth in search of one particular object. Although he collects many different items of power, what he really seeks is a map to the Athnaeum, the temple in the capital city of Bael Turath where the first infernal pacts were spoken.

Terris Halfjaw: This male dwarf has a surprisingly friendly, personable facade, given the cold metal that completes half his lower jaw. Terris might laugh and carouse with adventurers, but he is in fact a cruel, calculating murderer. The dwarf spies on his tenants for the Coyote, who in exchange allows him to keep the Dancing Lizard as an implement of revenge.

NO REFUGE?

When you place Vor Rukoth within your game, you might decide that you don't need Coyote's Refuge. If the characters have already established a base of operations, you might prefer to use that location as a jumping-off point for exploring the ruins. A word of caution, though: Vor Rukoth relies on its many factions and nonplayer characters to drive the adventure hooks and quests that make it feel like a living city. If you're going to place the ruins next to an existing location, make sure there is adequate reason for those inhabitants to be there. Otherwise, you risk it becoming simply a treasure destination that the characters quickly tire of.

Hook: Terris was once a member of an adventuring party, but when one of its expeditions went terribly wrong, he was infected with mummy rot and left for dead. He survived the disease, though it left his jaw horribly maimed. Since then, he has been searching for his former companions with little success. Figuring that Vor Rukoth is a premier adventuring site, he set up the tavern as a trap for them. The bedchambers are rigged to lock and flood with sand, ensuring a terrifying death.

It has been many years since Terris saw his erstwhile companions, so he and they both look different. He might mistake one of the characters for a former ally, or he might attempt to hold them hostage, believing they have information on his old companions. Perhaps a character was indeed part of that ill-fated party and left Terris behind only because the dwarf appeared to have perished.

Inferna: This female tiefling has a fiery temper that ignites at disorder and sloppiness. Although she serves the Coyote, she bears him no loyalty. She has also come to suspect that he is not a halfling and is searching for something in particular. The tiefling has her own reasons for being in Coyote's Refuge.

Hook: Inferna is seeking information about her lineage, for she is a descendant of House Rexia (see "Rexia Estate," page 18). Some members of her family survived the fall of Vor Rukoth because they were not in the city at the time. She has several items passed down from her ancestors that are draconic, and she hopes to find out the truth about her family. She could be a useful source of information to characters who help with her quest, or at least, offer a little dignity and cleanliness in an otherwise dirty and unsophisticated place.

VOR RUKOTH ENVIRONS

Nearby Coyote's Refuge and Vor Rukoth are several notable geographic features that could present other possible adventure sites.

Hammerfast and the Dawnforge Mountains: Northwest of Vor Rukoth lies a mountain range containing the bustling mercantile town of Hammerfast (refer to the *Hammerfast*™ supplement for more information on this location). Hammerfast lies along the Trade Road, so adventurers heading to Vor Rukoth are likely to pass through the town on their way. The Dawnforge Mountains contain many perils, including goblins, orcs, giants, and trolls. They trouble travelers along the road, but few ever make it as far as Vor Rukoth.

Skull Fields: The Ruby Road veers south from the Trade Road, taking travelers through a great open scrubland where few plants grow. Eventually, at the edge of the scrubland, the Ruby Road briefly disappears as it passes into the Skull Fields. Nothing grows in this vast wasteland, filled with blood rock (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 67). Arkhosia and Bael Turath fought numerous battles here, and the dead are still restless.

Once a year, phantom soldiers rise up to repeat the decisive battle that allowed the dragonborn army of Dhuryan Flamebrow to march on Vor Rukoth.

Horned Hills: The hills to the north of Vor Rukoth rise like jagged horns toward the sky. The whipping of wind and sand has carved out the stone, giving the hills a gruesome visage. Savage tieflings—remnants of Bael Turath—still live in the hills, guarding treasures looted from the ruins of the fallen empire. Attempts to negotiate with the savages might be rewarded with access to secrets and treasures, or they could lead to a deadly battle.

FACTIONS

Several groups have significant power in Vor Rukoth and the surrounding territories. Some are loose organizations that share a culture or mutual interest, while others have a clear, unified objective. Any one of these factions could become allies or enemies to characters interested in exploring the ruins.

SCIONS OF THE HORNED EMPIRE

Although the personal ambitions of the tieflings in this group vary, the organization's overall goal is to restore Bael Turath to its former glory. Some strive for power, others hope to redeem their race, and still others want to bring light to an otherwise dark world. Members of the Scions seek magical objects, ancient records, and relics of historical importance. They purchase such items or hire adventurers to recover them. On the surface, the organization seems benign, but certain circles within it operate covertly to acquire the objects of their desire through any means necessary. Specifically, they seek weapons or knowledge that will unlock the power of Bael Turath and allow them to destroy their enemies.

Most members openly display their affiliation, proudly showing the Scions' symbol of two crossed horns. They inhabit several large tents within Coyote's Refuge, and a few of their members also lurk within the ruins of Vor Rukoth. They are always eager for new recruits, but few of them are not tieflings. They advertise for adventurers to go on quests, but they usually fail to mention the dangers involved. Should characters acquire a coveted relic and refuse to sell it, the leaders of the group don't hesitate to send thieves to steal the object or assassins to eliminate its owners.

For quests and adventure hooks related to the Scions of the Horned Empire, see pages 20, 26, and 28.

KEY MEMBERS

Araksis Firehand: The leader of the Scions of the Horned Empire, this male tiefling has a set of impressive horns and rippling muscles to match. Despite his thuggish demeanor, he is charismatic and the organization's most avid recruiter. His geniality hides an inherent brutality, though—he hopes to restore Bael Turath with himself as emperor. Although he does not speak of his ambition openly, many in his organization suspect it. Araksis dresses in leathers dyed crimson with the blood of his enemies. He claims that this attire signifies his ancestry, which he traces back to House Zannifer, the Red House of Bael Turath. Although he has no proof of his noble ancestry, few dare to repudiate his claim, lest their own blood soak his clothing.

Zar Rel: This tiefling spellcaster is a former resident of the dwarven city of Hammerfast. When he was discovered conducting foul arcane experiments, he was banished from the city. Zar Rel didn't forget the disgrace he'd suffered, and when he learned of the Scions, he recognized an opportunity for revenge. Using the organization's wealth of knowledge and resources, he has been combing the ruins for a tool that will allow him to achieve the vengeance he desperately seeks. None of the other members of the Scions are aware of his deception. See also the Lavafalls of Kaxhar, page 20.

Pleasure: This red-headed human warlock aspires to become a tiefling, whose race's mortal form she believes to be the most perfect. She dresses as tieflings dress, speaks as they do, and has even taken a name appropriate to a female of that race. She is flirtatious and freely indulges her desires, using her charm to achieve her ambitions. She wants to locate the Athenaeum of Bael Turath, which she believes can transform her into her preferred form. To that end, she helps the Scions of the Horned Empire locate historical information regarding the ancient pacts. Other members of the Scions regard her with caution, for she has tricked many of them into revealing information they shouldn't have. Despite having little formal power in the group, she is a broker of power and information—at least whenever it suits her purposes.

Redemption: The tiefling leader of a group of paladins and clerics within the Scions, Redemption is trying to redeem the cruelty and evil of her race by raising up an empire that can bring light back to the world. She is a follower of Pelor, though members of her group worship a variety of deities. Redemption knows that many among the Scions are power-hungry, but she hopes that by helping them, she can guide them toward a path of righteousness. She is pragmatic enough to recognize the need to use weapons and magic recovered from the ancient ruins, but she tries to destroy anything that might lead to associating with devils, which she regards as the source of her people's downfall.

ARKHOSIA'S LAST

This group is composed of thirty-three elite dragonborn warriors and spellcasters who continue to wage war against Bael Turath. Its goal is to destroy all trace of the damned empire. The members of Arkhosia's Last are all talented in some art, usually arcane, martial, or divine. They operate in cells of three individuals and consider themselves above working with mercenaries. They use a variety of beasts to help comb the vast lands of the former empire, searching for relics and records to destroy.

The symbol for Arkhosia's Last is a clawed hand, open and raised high. The group does not attempt to hide its presence, and its members are extremely antagonistic toward anyone interested in preserving items or history from Bael Turath. They believe that Vor Rukoth represents one of the most vile examples of the former tiefling empire, and if they have their way, it will be buried in rubble along with anyone invested in the city. Fights frequently erupt between this group and the Scions of the Horned Empire. These bouts are usually devastating to both sides, for what Arkhosia's Last lacks in numbers, it makes up for in strength.

For quests and adventure hooks related to Arkhosia's Last, see pages 14, 18, and 26.

KEY MEMBERS

Kira Bloodbane: Kira is the leader of Arkhosia's Last and a descendant of the ancient Bloodbane clan. She is a lean dragonborn with bronze-colored skin and ruby eyes. Her family was slaughtered at Razortear when the tiefling general Achazriel and his devil allies ended a decade-long siege by tunneling up into the fortress. The only dragonborn who survived the massacre were those thrown into slavery, condemned to work in the orium refineries of Vor Rukoth. Kira's ancestors toiled there for years until the Day of Devils brought the city to ruin. Some of her clan escaped the destruction, and for generations they passed down their enmity to their children, swearing that a great secret lay within the vaults of Vor Rukoth—one capable of putting an end to tiefling tyranny forever.

Balkovi: This dragonborn is an avenger of Tiamat sworn to exact vengeance upon those who long ago defied dragonkind. Balkovi leads a group of silent assassins within Arkhosia's Last. He is humorless, with a dull gray hue and opaque eyes. He views his allegiance to Arkhosia's Last as a means to an end. He knows that in the final days of the war, the tiefling empire crafted two *dragon orbs*, one to control metallic dragons and one to control chromatic ones. On behalf of his god, he now seeks the chromatic orb, which he believes might lie somewhere within Vor Rukoth.

Jase Silverspear: Grizzled and battle-scarred, Jase appears unfriendly, but much of that persona is a facade to maintain appearances within Arkhosia's Last. The dragonborn does not share the ambitions of the rest of



the company. He is a devotee of Bahamut tasked with opposing worshipers of Tiamat. He participates in the activities of Arkhosia's Last only for the opportunity to uncover those members who are truly evil. Jase suspects that Balkovi is on some dread mission for Tiamat, but he has yet to get definitive proof. Although Jase rarely opens up to outsiders, he could be a rewarding ally to those who are enemies of the Chromatic Dragon.

TURAK-TOL

Several miles inland from the Midnight Sea, hundreds of feet below the Horned Hills, lies a burgeoning dwarven city. Turak-tol was established about fifty years ago when a small tribe of dwarf exiles set out in search of a new home. For a long time, the dwarves lived without any contact with the surface. They were unaware that just miles from their home lay a cursed city with a wealth of lore and treasure. After several decades, the dwarves finally discovered a path leading up to the surface, emerging close to Coyote's Refuge.

The dwarves of Turak-tol had been exiled from their people for their secret use of slaves. This practice has not subsided in the decades since. Although a few good dwarves dwell there, the majority are cruel and pitiless, believing that everyone is exactly where he or she deserves to be and that suffering is one's own fault. The city has three major clans: Rockhide, Hammerfoot, and Ironbar. Each is interested in expanding its influence in Vor Rukoth and reaping the city's many rewards.

For quests and adventure hooks related to Turak-tol, see pages 18, 22, 28, and 30.

KEY MEMBERS

Delrie Rockhide: If any clan of Turak-tol can be said to be good, it is the Rockhides. At the clan's head is Delrie. A plump but stern mistress who speaks swiftly and bluntly, she is not easy to get along with and demands respect from everyone. Unlike the other dwarves of Turak-tol, the Rockhides do not use slaves and instead offer subsistence living to anyone who is hungry or homeless. Such a life is not easy, but Delrie ensures that those her clan employs suffer none of the abuses of the other clans. In recent years, she has grown increasingly disgruntled with the other dwarves of Turak-tol, who seem to be slipping further into iniquity.

Kor Ironbar: This black-haired dwarf keeps his beard trimmed short and wears a floppy black hat. He is a cruel slave-trader who frequently travels through Coyote's Refuge into Vor Rukoth in search of new merchandise. He makes most of his purchases from the Blackwhips (see page 12), but he is not above doing his own collection work. More than one stranger to Coyote's Refuge has awoken in a small cage rolling toward Turak-tol. The Ironbar clan has recently been acquiring more slaves to unearth an ancient temple it has discovered near the city.

Jasper Hammerfoot: This lively dwarf oversees imports and exports from Turak-tol. The dwarven city supplies Coyote's Refuge with much of its resources, including food and water. As well, many of the relics recovered from Vor Rukoth pass under Jasper's sight. Jasper owes allegiance to no one except himself. He has become very wealthy by taking bribes and skimming profits. Many of the other dwarves resent him, but he has enough allies that none dare act. Jasper manages the caravan runs between Coyote's Refuge and

Turak-tol, so he can be found in either place, usually accompanied by an entourage of bodyguards. He is glad to provide information if the price is right—little does he know that a price is also mounting on his head.

WHITE LANTERN CONSORTIUM

This association of merchants, traders, and explorers is one of the most powerful forces in the region. The consortium's reach extends far beyond Vor Rukoth, though its attention has been most focused there in recent years. The White Lantern Consortium has no unifying goal or vision other than the acquisition of profit. Factions within the group—noble families, merchants, and wealthy adventurers—might become members for their own reasons.

The consortium's symbol, a lantern with rays of light shining from it, is emblazoned throughout Coyote's Refuge. With the exception of items from Turak-tol, almost all the goods sold and traded in the camp are brought in by the White Lantern Consortium. Anyone attempting to assert mercantile power in the camp is likely to receive a visit by members of the group. Membership is by invitation only, and it usually requires a handsome sum of money or a great deed on the



organization's behalf. Membership has its benefits, including discounts on goods and access to privileged information about Vor Rukoth and other adventure sites.

For quests and adventure hooks related to the White Lantern Consortium, see pages 13, 17, 18, 20, 22, 28, and 30.

KEY MEMBERS

Taleen Quirrelle: This female eladrin is a pariah of Mithrendain (an eladrin city in the Feywild) who was exiled after her spouse died of poison. The eladrin authorities couldn't definitively pin the crime on her, but she was exiled nonetheless for suspected complicity. She departed the city with a great deal of wealth, which she funneled into starting what was then called the White Lantern Company. Her beauty, cunning, and business acumen soon attracted other companies until she was able to form the consortium that exists today. Exile from her people has made her bitter and ruthless. Whispers sometimes call her the Princess of Poison, for it is said that anyone who opposes the consortium soon ends up face down in an alley somewhere.

Taleen is attractive, but her face is cool and emotionless. Her green eyes constantly study her surroundings, searching for opportunity. She has a weakness for expensive jewelry and clothing, so she always looks a little out of place in Coyote's Refuge. She no longer wears the motifs of her people, preferring the more cosmopolitan style of humans.

Vinn: This gnome accountant oversees the consortium's investments. He is a shrewd, shadowy figure who minds his own business and is a stickler for precise contracts and records. He came over from the Feywild with Taleen, and he is the only person who knows her dark origins. He carries records with him detailing the consortium's business, including its many underhanded dealings, such as the purchase of poison, the hiring of assassins, and the blackmailing of other businesses.

Lord Kelevan: Occupying one of the lavish tents of Coyote's Refuge, Lord Kelevan is an enigmatic figure who seems out of place on the dusty frontier. This male human is in his late fifties, with a boisterous quality that can be alternately endearing or a bit off-putting. Though no one knows the origin of his title, he declares himself to be a lord and certainly has the wealth to support the claim. Kelevan is a heavy investor in the White Lantern Consortium and says he is personally overseeing his investment. He is a common patron for adventurers and explorers, though his motivations remain hidden. This "lord" is in fact a former adventurer. Now that he is advanced in years, he lives vicariously through the experiences of others, constantly pushing them toward more and more dangerous endeavors.

Melby Fairweather: This halfling entrepreneur wears her hair in a long single braid that wraps around her head like a snake. She is suspicious of everyone. In her role as head of the consortium's exploration of the Nightmare Forges (see page 19), she has learned that the source of the lavafalls in Vor Rukoth is a small dragon statuette. She plans to betray the consortium by stealing it away and selling it to the highest bidder.

OBSIDIAN COVENANT

This group of several dozen spellcasters is devoted to uncovering the arcane secrets of Bael Turath. Some seek lore and knowledge, but a few within the organization covet the profane and destructive powers once wielded by the wizards of the tiefling empire. The covenant has become obsessed with attaining the secrets within the Obsidian Spires (see page 15). Many of its members live within the ruins, attempting to break ancient wards and uncover information contained within moldering tomes. The group acts covertly, and it swiftly eliminates any who interfere with its endeavors.

The Obsidian Covenant has a formidable presence in Coyote's Refuge as well as Vor Rukoth. Although few of its members advertise their arcane abilities, many long-term residents of the encampment recognize certain people as wizards, sorcerers, and warlocks. Not every member of the group is a talented spellcaster; some are more interested in the acquisition of lore, and for the right price—usually an exchanged secret or bit of esoteric information—they are willing to share their own knowledge of the ruins.

For quests and adventure hooks related to the Obsidian Covenant, see pages 16, 17, and 20.

KEY MEMBERS

Elias: A deva wizard, Elias is the unofficial leader of the Obsidian Covenant. He is quiet and contemplative, leading through his arcane talent and extensive knowledge rather than through charisma or bravado. He says little about his motivations, though it is rumored that he was once a wizard of Vor Rukoth who lost his life on the Day of Devils. Members of the covenant believe he has some grand plan, perhaps seeking an ancient weapon or lost library. In reality, Elias is just trying to reconcile the fragmented memories of his past and learn about who he was. He fears that he was responsible for the city's fall, having suggested that Najala call forth a legion of devils to aid her.

Ulben of the Waves: This male human's real allegiance lies with the cult dedicated to the Elemental Prince of Water, Olhydra. Ulben works to recruit more cultists from the ranks of the Obsidian Covenant while eliminating all who might interfere with the cult's ambitions (see "Chamber of Tides," page 22). He speaks without emotion, giving him the cold demeanor

of a serial killer. Several people have been discovered drowned in Coyote's Refuge—a strange death in such a dry place. Many suspect Ulben, but none dare call him out. His peers instead just stay clear of him.

Zarra: This windsoul genasi is the most amicable member of the Obsidian Covenant. Unlike most of her counterparts, Zarra speaks openly about her activities. She is regarded as a liability by many members of the group, but her uncanny ability to break into protected and guarded places makes her an invaluable resource. She is quick and elusive, so even her unlawful activities, such as breaking into others' rooms, don't cause her much trouble. Many have tried to kill her, but all have failed. She is not above helping anyone who pays enough or offers the right incentive—usually some arcane treasure.

RAVEN'S WINGS

This group of Raven Queen worshipers was originally founded by an emperor of Bael Turath. The organization has a presence throughout the lands, but its focus has recently turned toward Vor Rukoth. Unlike many of the other factions in and around the ruins, it has relatively benevolent intentions. Members of the Raven's Wings hunt malevolent undead and lay to rest their unsettled souls. The group launches regular expeditions into the ruins and is very familiar with the city's layout and the threats within. It doesn't share its knowledge, but someone who earns the group's trust through good deeds and kind words can gain aid from the Raven's Wings.

For quests and adventure hooks related to the Raven's Wings, see pages 15 and 28.

KEY MEMBERS

Shala the Shadow: This shadar-kai runs the small encampment of the Raven's Wings in Coyote's Refuge. She leads the holy warriors on frequent raids into the ruins of Vor Rukoth. She speaks with a whispery voice that disturbs most people, but her manner is actually quite pleasant. She realizes that allies are useful tools in accomplishing her goals, so she extends the hand of friendship to the right people. Shala is merciless to those who consort with the dead, though. If she even suspects someone of being undead or performing necromancy, she dispatches that person, after first inflicting great suffering. She believes, rightly, that a small conclave of vampiric tieflings has taken root in Coyote's Refuge. Heirs of a Turathi noble house called Kahlir, the vampires take advantage of travelers passing through the refuge to satisfy their grisly appetites.

CIRCLE OF NINE

The Circle of Nine primarily lairs in a lighthouse called the Dagger's Light, overlooking Vor Rukoth (see page 23). However, two or three of the group's nine members reside in Coyote's Refuge and patrol the borders of the ruined city. The Circle of Nine hopes to find Najala's Gate and use it to create a permanent portal between the Nine Hells and the world. The portal cannot be opened from the Nine Hells, so agents of Asmodeus must work within the world to operate it.

Asmodeus's followers keep a wary eye on adventurers and treasure hunters passing through Coyote's Refuge. They know that such people have a way of interfering with their plans. They adopt personas and disguises, such as an old traveler or a disillusioned explorer, in an effort to keep would-be heroes from meddling in their affairs. In these guises they might provide a map or rumor to adventurers. These tips might simply be a distraction, or they could lead the party to its doom.

For quests and adventure hooks related to the Circle of Nine, see pages 16, 23, and 28.

KEY MEMBERS

Sora Lighthand: This female elf is so convincing in her deceptions that sometimes members of her own organization doubt her loyalty. Sora pretends to be a cleric of Corellon, working to bring light to Vor Rukoth. However, her true loyalty is to Asmodeus. After her village was destroyed by a human warlord who sought to expand his holdings by "spreading righteousness to uncivilized lands," she swore vengeance upon anyone representing the gods of good. Before whispering her dark oaths to Asmodeus, she was a devotee of Corellon, so she knows her part well. Despite her anger, she might be redeemed if shown mercy or brought to believe in the gods of good again.

Karzan Halfhorn: Though he appears to be a male tiefling, Karzan is in fact a cambion who has magically disguised himself to fit in with the Scions of the Horned Empire. He is a powerful member of the Scions, and he feeds its members information to keep them busy and prevent them from interfering with the Circle of Nine. Karzan is currently trying to stir up trouble between the Scions and the dragonborn of Arkhosia's Last. Believing that his group would be best served if Coyote's Refuge were razed, he fosters hostilities in the hope that a turf war will break out and destroy the small settlement. He has a broken horn in both his tiefling and his cambion form, and he bears several large and ugly—though illusory—scars. He doesn't hesitate to recount horrible tales of how he acquired them while fighting the deadly beasts of Vor Rukoth. He spreads these stories in an attempt to discourage people from visiting the ruined city, though usually they only pique adventurers' interest.

EVENTS

As a locale where opposing forces are constantly at work, Vor Rukoth is active even when the characters are not there. One way to make the city seem more alive is to introduce events that disrupt the balance of power or change the geography of the area. Here are several ways to accomplish this task.

Earthquake: As the characters come and go in Vor Rukoth, they begin to notice small changes. More buildings seem to have fallen, and small gaps have formed in the cobbled streets. After a few visits, they feel the first tremor. It is brief, but alarming. Maybe nothing worse happens for a while, but eventually a full-blown earthquake rocks the city—set off by a natural force, an earthquake dragon, a foul spell, or something else of your design.

When the party arrives at an adventure site, the ground begins to shake violently, tearing open great cracks and destroying long-standing buildings. The characters might seek shelter, only to be trapped underground and forced to find their way out, or they might undertake a skill challenge to escape the collapsing ruins. When the dust settles, the city is altered. A vast chasm runs across its length. The Infernal Fens and Lost District are drained, revealing districts long ago flooded, and the Lavafalls of Kaxhar have burst into the streets, creating rivers of lava.

Flood: On the Day of Devils, the spellcasters of Vor Rukoth sought to purge the city of the rampaging fiends by sending a deluge through the streets. The waters never fully receded, and as a result, part of the Golden Estates was flooded, the seaside commercial district was submerged, and the Infernal Fens were formed. Now the waters have begun to rise again, much to the alarm of the ruined city's denizens. Salty waves lap against buildings once safe from the ocean swells. Steam rises where the Lavafalls pour into a newly formed lake, and the entire center of the city has become a morass of crimson mud. Of all the parties invested in Vor Rukoth, Queen Najala is most alarmed at the flooding. She has reinforced the crumbling ancient walls in an effort to stymie the tide, but doing so is a stopgap measure at best. She is so desperate to preserve her cursed city that she seeks the aid of anyone who can stop the water. Perhaps an evil kuo-toa or aboleth gang is behind the flooding, or maybe the heroes must confront the Elemental Water cult that has taken over the Chamber of Tides (see page 22). If no one will help save the city out of the goodness of their hearts, Najala is not above blackmail and kidnapping to get her way.

New Emperor Arises: The prophesied New Emperor of Bael Turath arises after discovering the Athenaeum in the capital city of the former empire. With the renewed power of the burning pact, the New



Emperor has created an army of devils, tieflings, and undead to reclaim the territories that Bael Turath once controlled. First on the ruler's list is to seize Vor Rukoth and restore it as a jewel of the empire. With the Nightmare Forges churning again, he or she can equip the new army to march on nearby lands. If this ruler's rise to power is to be stopped, then Vor Rukoth is the place to do it.

Stars Align: A fateful alignment of stars, prophesied by a group of tiefling star pact warlocks called the Constellation (see "Star Tomb," page 22), causes meteorites to rain down across Vor Rukoth. The blazing metallic objects crash among the ruins, collapsing buildings and leaving great cavities in the streets. The greatest of these

rocks strikes the heart of the Ruby Court. For a few minutes after the event, everything is quiet. Then a loud keening rises up from the center of the city, which is echoed by creatures all across the area. From the iron-clad rocks emerge aberrant monstrosities—starspawn, foulspawn, grells, and chuuls—that begin to slaughter any creatures they find. The worst of the monsters is not seen but heard as it rampages through the Ruby Court, destroying Najala's forces. The foul creatures search for something—perhaps the black rock containing the members of the Constellation, an artifact stored within the Vaults, or a bit of profane lore hidden in Taru Maaj, the great library (see page 26).

LOCATIONS

Vor Rukoth has eight broadly defined districts, ranging from a destroyed commercial area to the sunken remains of once-sumptuous estates. Over it all broods the Ruby Court, seat of Najala's power and still a source of lingering evil. This section provides an overview of the city districts and describes significant locations in each, along with adventure hooks, sample monsters, magic items, and other details to help you craft adventures in Vor Rukoth.

OUTER WARD

Bleached bones litter the streets, and blood stains the cobblestones. In the Outer Ward, evidence of Vor Rukoth's grim fate is written upon every brick and plank. Most of the city's tenements were built here, home to Vor Rukoth's most desperate people—beggars, slaves, criminals, nomads, ladies of the night, and freebooters. Although the slums of the Outer Ward have since disintegrated into heaps of stone and rotting wood, many of its buildings still stand. Less densely populated now, they currently house an unscrupulous crowd.

The Outer Ward was the last part of Vor Rukoth to be overrun by devils when Najala's Gate opened, yet its population suffered the most. Its people, lacking the means to escape or defend themselves against the rampaging hordes, were slaughtered by the thousands. Many of these victims, so helpless in life, have found new power in death, rising as angry spirits or skeletons. Yet even with threats both living and dead, the Outer Ward remains the most accessible part of the city to outsiders. Its proximity to Coyote's Refuge makes it a perfect stepping stone for adventurers looking to plumb the depths of Vor Rukoth.

1. PURITY ROW

This lane contrasts starkly with the rest of the city. The streets are clean and the buildings are in good repair, with intact windows and newly painted signs. Purity

Row was the red-light district of Vor Rukoth, and its brothels yet stand, though a passerby might mistake them for taverns. Although its mortal inhabitants are gone, others have come to replace them. A harem of succubi lives here, seducing anyone foolish enough to enter. Beautiful but sad songs emanate from some of the buildings along this road. The singers plead for help, but woe to anyone who seeks them—they are banshees, ghosts of the workers who died in Purity Row, and they want vengeance.

Hook: Men have been disappearing from Coyote's Refuge. Accounts tell of a stunningly beautiful female tiefling who dwells within the fallen city; once each month, she emerges to lure males into her demesne with dark promises. Those who heed her words and follow her into the ruins never return. Some folk say Coyote's Refuge is better without them, but not Kara Halfbow. Her brother, who has always had a weakness for beautiful women, hasn't returned from a recent visit to Vor Rukoth.

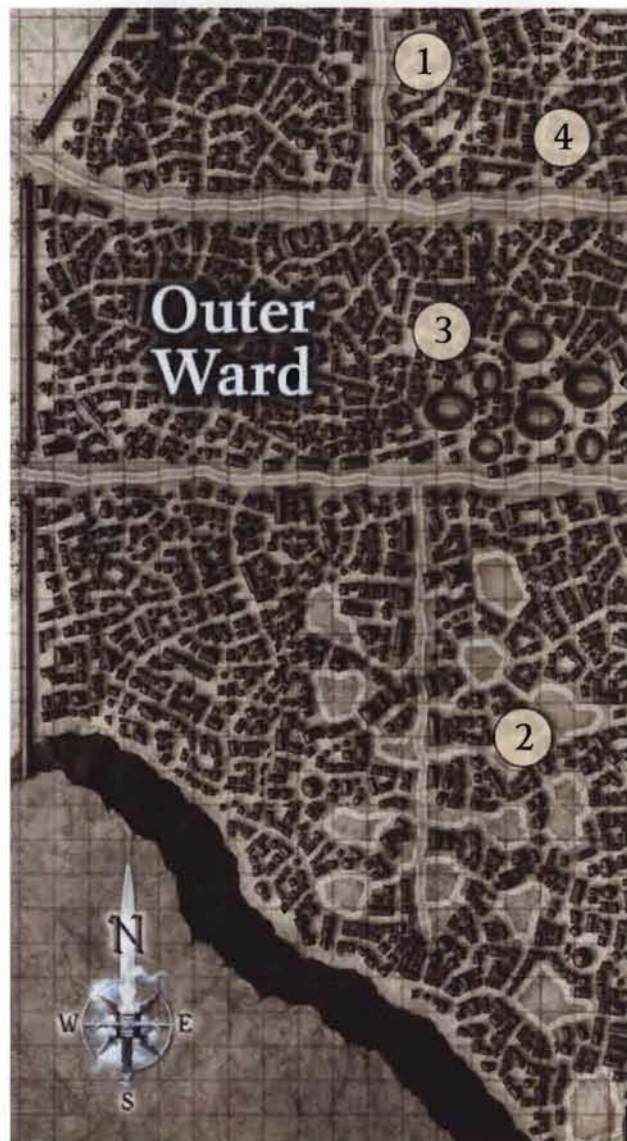
2. SLAVER'S BLOCK

In Vor Rukoth's heyday, hundreds of people were sold into slavery every week. Many were consigned to labor in the Nightmare Forges; a few were fortunate enough to become servants and household staff to the city's elite. Vor Rukoth's thriving slave market helped it become a colossus in the empire of Bael Turath. Now, a group of half-orcs called the Blackwhips has renewed the city's dark legacy, using the network of corridors and cages beneath Slaver's Block to hold captives for sale into slavery. Even some shades of Vor Rukoth's slavers have joined in the cruel exploits, teaching their own wicked tricks to the Blackwhips.

Hook: The Blackwhips slavers get their merchandise from several different sources. Although they pick off explorers in the ruins or travelers coming to Coyote's Refuge, they purchase most of their slaves from the Bloodmoon Bandits (see "The Corridor," below) or the pirates serving the Crimson Marauder (see "Redwater Cove," page 22). Adventurers who clash with either of these groups might find evidence of their dealings with the Blackwhips, or they might encounter a slave caravan heading north from the ruins, bound for hobgoblin lands. One of the prisoners they rescue is Malcolm Goldwater, the son of a lord. He believes his father was sold into slavery by the Blackwhips.

3. FIGHTING PITS

Although Vor Rukoth lacked the great coliseum of Bael Turath's capital, the Outer Ward was renowned for its brutal fighting pits. Dug into the solid ground, these were anywhere from 10 feet to 100 feet across and connected by a network of tunnels and chambers. Some pits were much wider and able to host multiple fighters or beasts. Their sand is still stained from the countless



lives that were spilled onto it. Though the humanoid combatants died in the devil onslaught, many of the fighting beasts survived and reproduced. Feral animals abound here: behemoths, tigers, lions, wolves, bears, and drakes. Many of the slain combatants linger on as ghosts or wights, continuing their contests against any who intrude in the pits.

Hook: Niom, a collector of Turathi antiquities, has learned that in the years before Vor Rukoth's destruction, a great champion rose to fame in the fighting pits of the city. Undol Half-Ogre was said to be undefeated and could snap the necks of even the most ferocious beasts. He was supposed to depart the city on the day the devils exploded from Najala's Gate. Accounts by survivors tell of his heroic battle against the devils, the marvelous suit of spiked armor he wore, and the enormous two-handed weapon he wielded. Niom is looking for someone to recover the items and is willing to split the two treasures with anyone who will help. What Niom doesn't realize is that Undol still survives as a wight, killing any who dare to come near his fighting pits.

Undol Half-Ogre		Level 8 Elite Soldier	
Medium natural humanoid (undead), wight		XP 700	
HP 184; Bloodied 92	Initiative +12		
AC 24, Fortitude 21, Reflex 19, Will 18	Perception +6		
Speed 6	Darkvision		
Immune disease; Resist 5 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant			
TRAITS			
Bloodied Speed			
While bloodied, Undol can take two immediate actions per round instead of one.			
Marked for Death			
Whenever Undol hits a creature marked by him, that creature loses a healing surge.			
STANDARD ACTIONS			
⚔ Soul Strike (weapon) ♦ At-Will			
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC			
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Undol's next turn.			
⚔ Soul Cleave (weapon) ♦ Recharge ☒ ☒			
Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in burst); +13 vs. AC			
Hit: 2d10 + 10 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Undol's next turn.			
TRIGGERED ACTIONS			
⚔ Gladiator's Reaction (weapon) ♦ At-Will			
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to Undol shifts.			
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): Undol makes a melee basic attack against the triggering enemy.			
Skills Acrobatics +12, Athletics +13, Endurance +14			
Str 18 (+8)	Dex 17 (+7)	Wis 15 (+6)	
Con 20 (+9)	Int 14 (+6)	Cha 12 (+5)	
Alignment evil		Languages Common	
Equipment spiked plate armor, greatsword			

UNDOL IN COMBAT

Undol starts a battle by plunging into the midst of enemies and using *soul cleave* to mark as many of them as possible. He then focuses on one opponent, lashing it with *soul strike* and draining it of healing surges. He punishes foes that attempt to leave melee with *gladiator's reaction*. Undol does not fear being the target of multiple foes—in fact, he welcomes it since he becomes more dangerous when bloodied.

4. THE CORRIDOR

This section of the Outer Ward was once densely populated. The narrow streets and crowded tenements made escape almost impossible when the infernal legions came rampaging through. Many of the buildings are heaped ruins. The inhabitants are fewer than before, but devils still linger in these streets, claiming what victims they can or working with other villains that lair here. The Corridor now serves as a black market trading in illicit goods that can't be found in Coyote's Refuge. Of course, anyone trying to make a purchase must first survive a gantlet of bandits, devils, traps, and murderers.

Hook: A group of lycanthrope robbers called the Bloodmoon Bandits dwells in the Corridor. The group normally targets merchant caravans and travelers along the Trade Road, sparing the lives of those who

don't fight back. Everything changes on the full moon, though, and simple banditry becomes mindless murder. Several slaughters have recently occurred on the border of Coyote's Refuge and along the Trade Road, and now a group of merchants led by the White Lantern Consortium seeks to eliminate the bandits.

Hook: A lord has dispatched one of his servants to Coyote's Refuge to locate a notorious halfling trap-maker named Vandle Quickfoot. The lord wants to commission some traps from Vandle, but the halfling is a recluse, and the servant has no idea where to find him within Vor Rukoth. The servant hires the adventurers to deliver the request to Vandle. Making their way through the halfling's section of the Corridor requires them to deal with a dense field of traps.

BLOOD GROUNDS

In Vor Rukoth's final hours, its citizens stood against the infernal horde that swept through the city. Their valiant efforts did slow the onslaught, but not before thousands lay massacred upon the cobblestones, cowards and heroes alike. The streets and plazas where once merchants hawked their wares became testaments to the folly of unchecked ambition and power. The commercial district of Vor Rukoth is now known as the Blood Grounds, for the mingled ichor of infernal bodies and blood of citizens that soaked into the pavement. It is a nightmarish landscape, with great swaths of blood rock and necrotic energy gathering in its dark places. The Blood Grounds is a ghost town in every sense of the word. No one remained in Vor Rukoth to bury the dead, so many of the defenders' possessions still lie where their bodies fell.

Explorers willing to risk the wrath of devils, undead, and angry spirits can find a wealth of treasures in the Blood Grounds. The district's buildings were better built than those of the Outer Ward, so many are still in good repair. The infernal invasion was so abrupt that much remains as it did hundreds of years ago: Decaying clothes still hang on hooks in tailors' shops, half-finished furniture gathers dust in the workshops of woodcarvers, and partially copied texts rest on tables where scribes once labored. The district has remained so well preserved because most folk have the good sense to steer clear of the dangers that lurk there.

Blood Caves: Beneath the streets of the Blood Grounds is a network of caves leading into and out of the city. The entrance is hidden in a rocky outcropping just outside Vor Rukoth's ruined walls. The few humans and tieflings who escaped the slaughter at the Blood Grounds got away through these secret tunnels. Some returned later, hoping to claim the treasures of the fallen city, but found an unpleasant surprise. The gore from the slaughter aboveground had seeped down into the caves, attracting all kinds of Underdark denizens.

Hook: Despite the many dangers, a group of poison makers has taken up residence in the Blood Caves. The group has been distributing an intoxicant called fiend's breath, concocted from the ground bones of devils and humans. The caves are both a resource from which they can gather the components and a means of secretly moving the finished product. The drug has recently found its way into the population of Coyote's Refuge and is being sold abroad through an agreement with the Crimson Marauder pirates (see "Redwater Cove," page 22). When used in small quantities, fiend's breath produces a warm euphoria. An overdose sends the user into a murderous rampage, culminating with his or her spontaneous combustion. In settlements neighboring Vor Rukoth, fiend's breath has become a problem. The town authorities are hiring adventurers to investigate the source of the intoxicant and stop its distribution.

The dealers in the Blood Caves apply the poison in paste form to weapons and sometimes throw packets containing the powder.

Fiend's Breath Level 10 Poison

Created from the powdered bones of devils and murdered humanoids, this poison is an intoxicant in limited quantities—in larger doses, it means death.

Poison 1,250 gp
Attack: +13 vs. Will; the target is weakened (save ends).
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is also dominated (save ends both). It uses its one action to attack the nearest creature during its turn (determined randomly for multiple creatures).
Second Failed Saving Throw: The target also takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends all).

Hook: Long before the Blood Caves formed, the eggs of purple worms lay gestating in the natural caverns beneath Vor Rukoth. For centuries, the pupae of the worms grew and fed on the infernal and necrotic energy of the blood-soaked rock they burrowed through. Over generations, they slowly underwent a hideous transformation until they became the monsters called blood worms. The beasts have also begun to plague the lands outside Vor Rukoth as they reproduce and spread their kind.

An elf hunter named Sarultha recently tracked the creatures to their source with her two hounds. She barely escaped with her life, losing an arm and both the hounds. She now recounts tales of a great, palpitating mother worm in the Blood Caves. The worm is spawning more of its kind, and these juvenile blood worms fill the caverns. Sarultha hopes to find heroes to help eliminate the creature.

Blood Worm		Level 12 Skirmisher
Large natural beast		XP 700
HP 122; Bloodied 61		Initiative +14
AC 23, Fortitude 26, Reflex 23, Will 21		Perception +9
Speed 7, burrow 7		Darkvision, tremorsense 10
TRAITS		
Blood Rock Born		
A blood worm can score a critical hit on a roll of 19–20.		
Devourer of Earth		
A blood worm can burrow through solid stone at full speed, and it can shift while burrowing.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Bite ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d8 + 11 damage, and the blood worm grabs the target (escape DC 20).		
† Drag Under ♦ At-Will		
Requirement: The blood worm must have a creature grabbed.		
Target: The grabbed creature.		
Effect: The blood worm shifts its speed. It must end its shift burrowing. At the end of the shift, the grab ends, and the target is removed from play and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both). When the target saves against this effect, it appears in an unoccupied square of its choice within 5 squares of its last location.		
← Eruption ♦ Recharge when first bloodied		
Requirement: The blood worm must have started its turn underground, burrowing through solid rock or earth.		
Effect: The blood worm shifts its speed, ending its shift above ground. When it emerges from underground, it makes the following attack.		
Attack: Close burst 2 (creatures in burst); +15 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 4d6 + 6 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of its next turn.		
Str 16 (+9)	Dex 22 (+12)	Wis 17 (+9)
Con 18 (+10)	Int 2 (+2)	Cha 3 (+2)
Alignment unaligned		Languages –

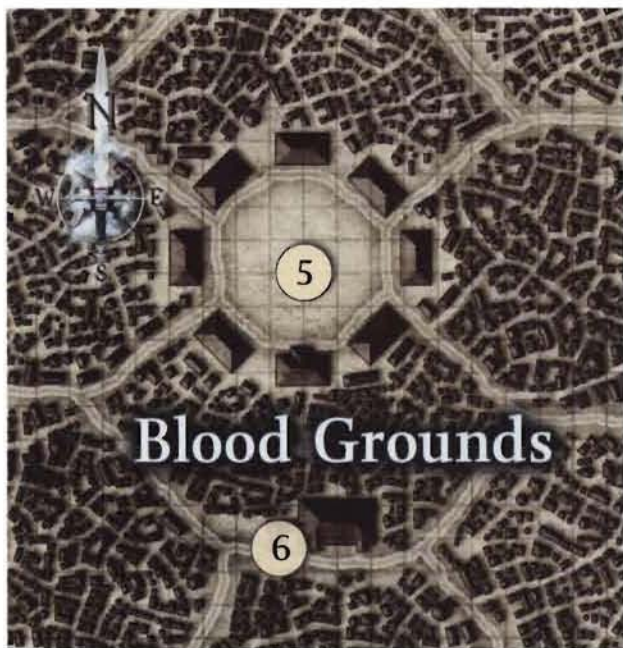
BLOOD WORMS IN COMBAT

A blood worm burrows up underneath a group of creatures, using *eruption* to blind and disorient them. It then grabs one and uses *drag under* to feast on the helpless prey. An opportunistic predator, it retreats from food that fights back too hard, this time using *eruption* to discourage pursuit.

5. THE OCTAGON

This wide plaza was the crux of the city's defense during the Day of Devils. Here, city guards, merchants, and commoners stood against the infernal legions. The Octagon is named for the large trading halls that stood on each of its eight sides: the Hall of the Sword, the Hall of Armors, the Hall of the Harvest, the Hall of Silk and Satin, the Hall of Commons, the Hall of Spices, the Hall of Travel, and the Hall of Metals. The dusty halls are now empty but still intact, and many of their treasures and secrets remain within, awaiting anyone audacious enough to cross the Octagon and enter.

Hook: A human warrior named Marik, a humble guard of the city watch, rose up to lead the people of Vor Rukoth against the infernal forces Najala had



released. He made a last stand in the Octagon, where it is said he slew a hundred legion devils before finally being overwhelmed. The weapon that Marik wielded became known as *Fiendcutter*, for with each immortal he dispatched, it seemed to become stronger. Now the leader of Arkhosia's Last (see page 6) seeks *Fiendcutter*, not only as a weapon against the devils that still lurk in the ruins but also as an anathema against tieflings. Legend says it fell with Marik in the Octagon. The weapon might still lie there, or some denizen of Vor Rukoth might have claimed it.

Hook: One reason that many of the Octagon's treasures remain is the Slaughtercurse. On that fateful day when Najala released the infernal hordes upon her city, a hexer named Amithria announced that Vor Rukoth's imminent destruction foretold the doom of Bael Turath. The spiteful prophet pronounced a curse as the devils swept over her. Since then, all those loyal to Najala have been cursed to rise again every sunset to relive their final hour. The curse had the unfortunate side effect of encompassing anyone who fought to defend the city, so now ghosts rise each evening in the Octagon to battle the shades of infernal creatures—and anyone else unlucky enough to be in the area. One of the goals of the Raven's Wings (see page 9) is to lay these souls to rest, but doing so requires first locating the scrolls of Amithria, who died in the Octagon.

6. ZAMBAK'S BANK AND DEPOSITORY

This large stone building was owned by the dwarf Zambak. The merchants of Vor Rukoth favored his bank because they did not trust the native usurers with their goods, and the dwarf had a reputation for security. On the day of Vor Rukoth's destruction, Zambak locked himself in the deepest of his vaults to stay safe from the rampaging devils. Most people believe he later escaped

with his wealth, though some say that he remains locked in those vaults, a victim of his own security.

Hook: A group of treasure hunters calling itself the Steel Storm has taken up residence in Zambak's Bank and Depository. Its members claim to be adventurers exploring the ruins. They know much about the area and charge a levy on anyone who explores what they deem their territory. They might be friends or foes, depending on how one deals with them. They're partial to working with other adventurers who can help them explore the lower vaults of the bank, which are haunted and full of traps.

OBSIDIAN SPIRES

Jutting from the center of the city like the spines of some enormous beast are jagged towers of gleaming obsidian. These spires and the buildings below them were home to Vor Rukoth's spellcasters. They began as centers of magical research, but they adopted a more foul purpose as time went on and the war with Arkhosia became more desperate. The spellcasters designed arcane engines to slaughter enemies, discovered means of controlling people to crush insurrections, and warped beasts to create abominations.

The Obsidian Spires met the same fate as the rest of Vor Rukoth, though not right away. As devils raged through the streets, many citizens sought refuge in the towers. The spellcasters, fearing they would be overrun by the mobs, shut their doors and sealed them magically. This act saved them for a time, but they soon became prisoners in their own spires as infernal creatures roamed the city. Those with the means to leave magically did so at the onset of the attack. Those who stayed behind began to starve or go mad. Eventually the components for their rituals ran out and their magical wards faded, allowing their vile experiments to escape and slaughter them—a fate that most scholars agree was well deserved.

7. TOWER OF POISON

A foul-smelling green fog, the result of an incomplete arcane experiment that escaped the tower, hangs over the lower levels of this spire. Although the fog is not harmful, its presence dissuades most explorers from approaching. The lowest levels were devoted to simple experimentation, deriving poisons and their antidotes from beasts. The upper levels were host to much nastier research. There, spellcasters sought to create magical diseases and poisons that would lay low ranks of enemies as certainly as any sword.

Hook: A group of snaketongue cultists, including several yuan-ti, has learned that the spellcasters of the Tower of Poison completed a powerful toxin that kills swiftly and for which no cure exists—magical or otherwise. Devotees of Zehir, the cultists seek to acquire the poison and learn its secrets so that they might kill all who oppose them.

Hook: One of the characters or a close ally has been exposed to a fatal disease (perhaps originating from within Vor Rukoth) for which no cure is known to exist. The afflicted character will die unless the party can find a ritual or recipe within the Tower of Poison that might reverse the disease's effects.

8. TOWER OF ACID

The stink of brimstone surrounds this tower, burning the nostrils of anyone who approaches. The Tower of Acid is populated by failed experiments that have taken on their own life to become oozes and jellies. In a last-ditch effort to escape, one of Vor Rukoth's spellcasters attempted to transfer his mind to an ooze contained in the spire's top level. The ritual went awry, and the chamber exploded, blowing off the top of the tower. The ooze split apart and seeped into the cracks of the tower's masonry. Now the ooze permeates the building, giving it life and cunning.

Hook: A roc has made its nest in the shattered top level of the tower. The enormous bird has been seizing people and livestock from all around, bringing them back to feed its young. Some local victims of the roc's attacks have pooled their funds to hire hunters who can eliminate the threat. The characters might accept the job, or they could oppose the hunters, who wish to slay the bird and sell the chicks on the black market.

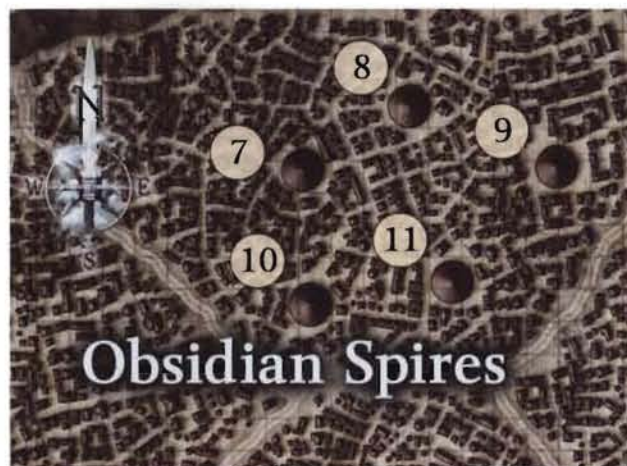
9. TOWER OF FIRE

The deepest sections of this tower's interior continually burn, making the interior rooms scorching hot. The flames are the result of an enchantment that a tiefling put on the spire to protect it from the onslaught of devils. He did not have time to secure the doors, so he created everburning walls of whitefire, which blazes with both fire and radiant energy.

Hook: The wizard who created whitefire perished in the conflagration, but the secret of his creation remains locked away in the tower. The Obsidian Covenant seeks the formula, hoping to use it against the devils that still infest the ruins. The Circle of Nine also pursues the secret of whitefire. It would be a great boon to Asmodeus and his followers, who must constantly contend with creatures resistant to normal fire.

10. TOWER OF DREAD AND DECEPTION

The spellcasters of this tower specialized in magic of fear and illusion. During the war with Arkhosia, they extensively researched ways to create illusory armies and beasts to strike terror into their foes. Once Najala released the devils into the city, the spellcasters were forced to hole up within their tower. Their numbers dwindled as one by one they succumbed to madness, hunger, or panic. Eventually only one remained, an eladrin named Halanthis. To resist madness,



Halanthis created incredibly complex illusions, conjuring people with fully realized personalities and monsters that acted at his behest. Halanthis was young when Vor Rukoth fell, so some say he still lives in the tower, while others say he died and that now only illusions walk its halls.

Hook: Halanthis yet lives, but he is held captive by the illusions that once were friends to him. A malign influence has possessed the phantoms—perhaps an aberrant from beyond the stars or an evil group such as the Obsidian Covenant that seeks his knowledge—and turned them against him. He has managed to maintain control of one of his illusions, a dog named Trick. The dog, which can speak Common, has managed to sneak out of the tower and is now seeking help to free its master.

11. TOWER OF DECAY

The upper levels of this spire collapsed a century ago. Before the fall of the city, the Tower of Decay was the domain of Bael Turath's necromancers. Although the empire did not condone necromancy in its early years, desperation during the war with Arkhosia drove it to investigate darker options. Ultimately, the emperor and generals of Bael Turath turned to infernal powers for aid, but that did not stop the spellcasters of the tower from continuing their research, becoming increasingly captivated by the power of death.

Hook: The lower levels of the tower are now inhabited by Vecna worshipers who pursue the secrets of the Turathi necromancers. They were initially content to rob graveyards for bodies, but lately they have been sending forth undead servitors to collect living people for experimentation. Inhabitants of the settlements near Vor Rukoth know that the kidnapped victims are being taken to the ruins, but the patrols that followed the tracks into the city have never returned. Now the victims' relatives are seeking the help of heroes to stop these abductions.

THE ONYX STAR

When the towers were first constructed, a powerful fragment of onyx was planted in each of them. These fragments were pieces of an artifact dating back to before Bael Turath—an item crafted secretly by efreet in the heart of the volcano where the primordial Imix dwells, deep in the Elemental Chaos. During its rise to power, Bael Turath bartered for the artifact, trading the secret of orium to the efreet of the City of Brass for it. The artifact, which was shaped like a star, was then shattered into five pieces. One piece was placed within each of the Obsidian Spires to help channel arcane energy for research.

Hook: The shards alone are powerful objects, each with its own trait related to the tower in which it rests. Together, they form an item of power that any spellcaster would covet. The Obsidian Covenant has begun exploring the towers, trying to locate the shards. The efreet also want to reclaim the artifact and have sent salamanders to comb the spires for the fragments. At least one has been retrieved already: the Shard of Decay (its removal is the real reason for that tower's collapse). The other shards might still lie within the towers, awaiting discovery, or one or more factions within Vor Rukoth might have seized them—the White Lantern Consortium, the Obsidian Covenant, the salamanders, or perhaps even Queen Najala.

Shard of Decay

Level 15

This fragment of onyx, no longer than a human finger, thrums with magical energy. The shard seems to absorb light that hits it.

Wondrous Item 25,000 gp

Property: This item can be used as an implement for arcane powers. As an implement, it grants a +3 enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls, and on a critical hit, it deals 3d6 extra necrotic damage and ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).

Property: Your attacks ignore necrotic resistance.

Power (Daily): Free Action. **Trigger:** You hit an enemy with an arcane attack power using this implement. **Effect:** The triggering enemy loses any temporary hit points. In addition, the triggering enemy cannot regain hit points (save ends).

GOLDEN ESTATES

Puddles of fetid water linger in the streets where Turathi nobility used to stroll. Wood rots and bricks crumble, revealing the decaying interiors of once-lavish homes. Seafront villas lie half-submerged, victims of time and tide. The Golden Estates represent everything that Vor Rukoth—and the empire of Bael Turath—lost. This district was home to the wealthiest citizens of the empire, who made fortunes from the manufacturing and export of weapons, armor, jewelry, magic items, and expensive fabrics.

In the city's heyday, the noble houses of the Golden Estates were rife with conspiracy, intrigue, and occult activities. Their history is little more than legend now. In the constant battle for primacy among the houses, most families jumped at the opportunity to swear oaths to Hell and gain power and influence within the upper echelons of Turathi society. A few houses resisted Najala's proposal, though, regarding pacts with devils to be too high a price for victory in the war. Some of the Turathi nobility of Vor Rukoth are said to have mounted a rebellion in the weeks before Arkhosia marched on the city. The Golden Estates fell, not to the dragonborn army but to Najala's desperation. By the time the city watch had put down the rogue noble houses, it was too weakened to stand against the unleashed devils.

12. VARRIK ESTATE

The Varrik family was among the oldest in Vor Rukoth and controlled much of the city's wealth (see "Nightmare Forges," page 19). It was also the largest house to rebel against Lady Najala, and even in the final days before the city's destruction, the fortresslike estate withstood her assaults. The mansion has begun to crumble, but the iron wall surrounding it and the bars on its now-shattered windows remain firmly in place. Although Najala never managed to bring down House Varrik, the infernal forces finished the job she began. The devils swept over the estate, killing all the inhabitants—but not before many whispered oaths of eternal vengeance against the woman who had wrought their destruction.

Hook: If the characters speak to anyone who knows the story of Vor Rukoth, they will hear the tragic tale of House Varrik's rebellion against the tyrant Najala. The story claims that the house possessed a secret about Najala, and that she feared it for this knowledge. (In fact, the house's leaders had learned that she was a lich, as well as the nature and whereabouts of her phylactery.) Should the characters decide to confront Najala, they will need to visit the Varrik estate in search of the secret.

SKILL CHALLENGE: LEARNING VARRIK'S SECRET

The nobles of House Varrik still inhabit their estate, waging their war against Najala even in death. They are led by a ghost named Nathaniel Varrik, who might be willing to make an arrangement with the characters if they can prove their worth.

Level: Any.

Complexity: 4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Insight, Streetwise.

Bluff (easy DC by level): The character lies about the party's intentions or exaggerates his or her accomplishments within Vor Rukoth to gain House Varrik's trust and admiration.

Diplomacy (easy DC by level): The character expresses an intent to destroy Najala or to lay the souls of the Varrik family to rest. He or she might also describe the party's accomplishments or praise House Varrik for resisting Najala.

History (moderate DC by level): The character can earn the respect of the Varrik family by recounting knowledge of Vor Rukoth, describing the events that led to its destruction, or telling of House Varrik's accomplishments.

Insight (easy DC by level): The character asks questions that help reveal important information about House Varrik, such as its resentment toward Najala and other houses or its hope that the adventurers can help free the family's souls.

Streetwise (moderate DC by level): The character describes what he or she has learned about Vor Rukoth, earning the trust of the Varrik family and proving that the characters are qualified to take on Najala.

Success: Nathaniel tells the characters Najala's secret—that she is a lich—and agrees to reveal the location of her phylactery if they recover the ruby dragon statuette from the Lavafalls of Kaxhar (see page 20).

Failure: The characters must earn the trust of the family by completing three additional quests around the city in order to learn the secret.

13. REXIA ESTATE

House Rexia specialized in courier and travel services. When members of the Turathi nobility first began to swear oaths to devils, the house strongly opposed the action. The Rexia family led the way in revolting against Najala, though for different reasons from those of House Varrik. Privy to valuable information and opposed to the tiefling empire's actions, House Rexia colluded with Arkhosia to bring down Bael Turath.

Hook: The Rexia estate is a burned-out husk, the first to succumb to Najala's wrath. However, part of the house's lower levels survived, and within lie complete records of Rexia's correspondence with Arkhosia. Legacy, a tiefling scholar and descendant of House

Rexia, suspects that such documents exist and seeks adventurers to recover them. However, Arkhosia's Last is also searching for the records. The group has found information in Arkhosian ruins that reveals House Rexia smuggled a valuable magic item called the *devil's claw* out of Vor Rukoth that would have turned the tide of the war had it been put into production. The dragonborn want to search the records to learn the item's destination.

Devil's Claw

Level 10+

This hideous, clawed hand hangs on a thick hemp cord. Holding it makes you feel as if you had the power to enthrall even the most powerful infernal beings.

Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp
Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp			

Item Slot: Neck

Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Property: You gain resist 10 fire.

Level 20 or 25: Resist 15 fire.

Level 30: Resist 20 fire.

Power (Daily): Standard Action. Make an attack against a devil or tiefling: Melee 1; Charisma or Constitution + the item's enhancement bonus vs. Will; on a hit, the target is dominated until the end of your next turn.

14. HOUSE OF THE BETRAYER

The former estate of House Zolfura is now a cursed place. Commonly known as the House of Ice and Fire, this family joined Varrik and Rexia in the rebellion against Najala but ultimately betrayed them to her, informing the ruler of the tunnels the rebels were using. House Varrik managed to seal off its tunnels, but other houses were not so lucky. Najala had her beastmasters unleash hordes of kruthiks into the passages and seal them in. The creatures poured through into the connected estates, tearing the rebels to shreds.

With her dying breath, a mystic of one of the other noble houses uttered a curse, damning House Zolfura for its betrayal. The curse did not take effect until the devils of Najala's Gate swarmed through the city. When they reached the Zolfura estate, the family's members unleashed a storm of elemental ice and fire. Although it slew their enemies, it consumed the nobles as well. Death was not the end, though—they soon arose as arcanians, undead cursed to constantly burn and freeze (*Monster Manual 3*, page 16).

Hook: House Zolfura is said to have copied the map of the tunnel system it handed over to Najala, which details the underground corridors between Vor Rukoth's Ruby Court and the houses of the Golden Estates. Many of the city's factions jealously pursue this map, but most of all those interested in profiting from Vor Rukoth, including the White Lantern Consortium and the dwarves of Turak-tol.



15. PARADISE GARDENS

This immense and lavish series of gardens was shared by the noble families of Vor Rukoth. The plants are now overgrown, and their Feywild guardians have become hostile. In the final days of Vor Rukoth, the garden took on a life of its own to protect itself from the infernal horde. Deep within it is a fey crossing, as well as many yet-unclaimed treasures of the Golden Estates.

Hook: A group of fomorians has discovered the fey crossing from the Feywild into Paradise Gardens. The fomorians have been exploring the area and recruiting the dark fey of the garden to their cause. Currently, the fey crossing allows passage only on the Green Moon, the first new moon of spring. The twisted giants are attempting to alter it with foul magic to allow access during the first new moon of every month, enabling vast numbers to pass through. Their chief, Gravak, hopes to make the gardens a base from which to recruit Vor Rukoth's other denizens, launch raids, and acquire slaves.

16. FLOODED ESTATES

An earthquake several centuries ago caused part of the Golden Estates to sink below sea level, allowing the water of the Midnight Sea to rush in. The water kept adventurers and treasure hunters from picking over the wealth of those estates, so much of it remains. The sunken treasure has also attracted the black dragon Falmystria, who dwells in the flooded grounds and devours any foolish enough to approach.

Hook: Falmystria's offspring have been spreading out from her demesne, swimming along the coast in search of prey. The families of those lost seek someone to capture or kill the wyrmlings and track down their mother.

NIGHTMARE FORGES

Lava cascades from a cliff, pouring through canals and sending up ominous plumes of smoke. Sulfur burns the nostrils. And anyone who listens carefully can hear the rhythmic clink of hammer on anvil. The Nightmare Forges are the burning heart of Vor Rukoth, source of the fallen city's wealth. Great treasures were forged here: powerful weapons of war, magical artifacts long since forgotten, and jewelry befitting Bael Turath's wealthiest nobility.

The Nightmare Forges are more than a series of furnaces. They are a honeycomb of underground and aboveground rooms connected by wending passageways and fraught with dark abysses, crumbling walls, airtight vaults, and centuries-old traps—all made more dangerous by an abundance of magma, which flows freely in Vor Rukoth's decadent state. The creatures that inhabit the Nightmare Forges are no less perilous than the environs—the treasure, power, and secrets of this district have drawn Underdark denizens, greedy spellcasters, and elemental monstrosities. The greatest danger, however, lies dormant within the center of the forges, awaiting escape from the ancient bonds that enslave it.

17. LAVAFALLS OF KAXHAR

Centuries before Lady Najala came to power, a powerful lord of Vor Rukoth named Varrik founded the noble house that still bears his name. He had the audacity and power to bind a volcanic dragon (*Monster Manual 3*, page 70) in a ruby dragon statuette. Varrik placed the statuette into the stone of a network of caves above Vor Rukoth. The dragon, Kaxhar, raged against his prison, and his fury caused lava to bubble up from the earth around the statuette. The lava flowed down the cliffside into Vor Rukoth, providing fuel for the Nightmare Forges, from which House Varrik acquired its wealth. Eventually, the population of Vor Rukoth forgot what peril lay within the cliffs. Now, after centuries, the bonds of Kaxhar's prison have begun to weaken.

Hook: Melby Fairweather of the White Lantern Consortium (see page 8) has learned that the secret to the Nightmare Forges lies in a ruby dragon statuette hidden within the cliffs. She seeks adventurers to recover the item, though she has no idea that removing it might unleash Kaxhar.

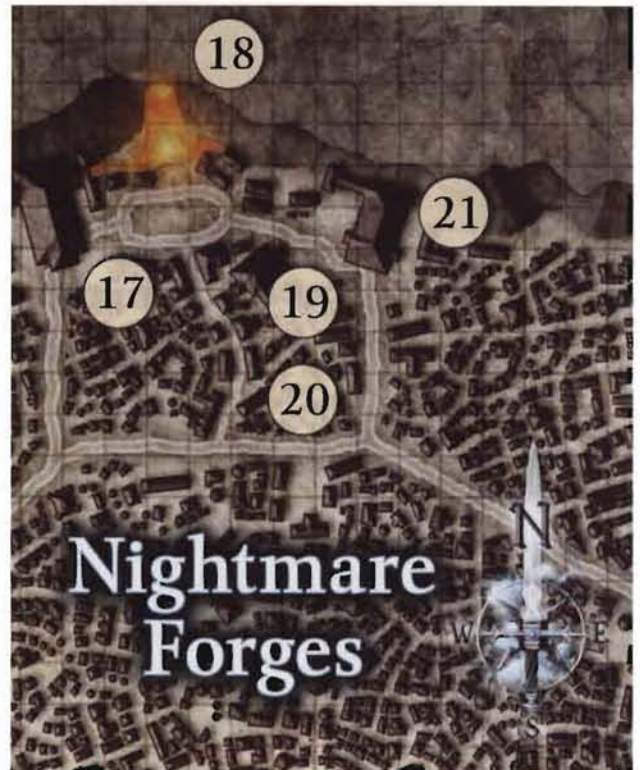
Hook: Zar Rel of the Scions of the Horned Empire (see page 5) seeks the ruby dragon as well. His fellow members believe he intends to harness its power and restore the Nightmare Forges to their former glory. Zar Rel instead plans to take the statuette to nearby Hammerfast and unleash the dragon as revenge against the city that banished him.

18. ORIUM REFINERY

The metallurgists of Bael Turath possessed knowledge of how to create the red-gold metal known as orium. Though knowledge of orium's creation has since been lost, the refinery of Vor Rukoth remains. The process of refining orium has left the place a toxic wasteland. Vast pools of acid and poison spread throughout, and the refinery is overgrown with deadly plants that have created a jungle-like environment. An orium dragon (*Draconomicon™: Metallic Dragons*, page 169) now inhabits the refinery. It has enslaved a group of deformed kobolds, which help guard the place against all who seek its secrets and treasures.

Hook: The Obsidian Covenant is scouring Vor Rukoth for the secret of creating orium, which has the power to enhance implements. The group knows that the knowledge might lie within the refinery. It needs only to find adventurers foolhardy enough to distract the dragon while Covenant members search the area.

Treasure: Adventurers might find a sample implement crafted from orium or recover enough of the metal to craft their own.



Orium Implement

Level 5+

The glyphs carved into this staff suggest its ability to recall mundane and magical secrets.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Implement (Orb, Rod, Staff, Wand)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d10 damage per plus

Power (Daily): Free Action. **Trigger:** You hit a nonminion enemy with an at-will arcane attack power using this implement. **Effect:** You can repeat the attack against a nonminion enemy within range that you have not yet targeted with the attack this turn.

19. TURATHI MINT

Bael Turath's currency, the triam, was once used throughout the world. Most of the empire's coinage was minted in the forges of Vor Rukoth. Enormous clockwork machines worked day and night, churning out copper, silver, gold, and platinum coins. Although the thrumming of the mint no longer echoes through the city, its machines still wait, as do its ever-vigilant guardians—golems and homunculi crafted of stone or metal.

Hook: Hidden among the musty ledgers of Vor Rukoth, or perhaps in the possession of a distant traveler or entrepreneur, is an ancient manifest that describes a huge shipment of coins bound from Vor Rukoth to the capital city of Bael Turath. However, according to the record, the shipment never left Vor Rukoth—the city met its end before the caravan could depart. The coins were hidden away in a vault, and there they remain, awaiting discovery.

20. SMITHIES

The smithies of Vor Rukoth have begun smoking again. The methodical clink of hammers against anvils is no longer just a ghostly echo of the past. Large shadows can be seen flitting about near the bellows. Fire giants have seized the smithies and are forging a vast arsenal of weapons, far beyond what they need for themselves.

Hook: The fire giants are crafting weapons for a patron. Perhaps they serve King Snarr (see the *Revenge of the Giants*™ adventure), or maybe they are preparing for the arrival of the fire titan Surtur, who plans to lead a great host from the Elemental Chaos into the world through the portal in the Demonforge (see below). Alternatively, the fire giants might work at the behest of a wealthy lord in a nearby city, who has the more mundane goal of conquering the neighboring lands and crafting his own realm. Whatever the case, the clues hide within the smithies, where the giants work tirelessly.

21. THE DEMONFORGE

Deep within the Nightmare Forges is one furnace that is far different from the others. Around it, the air is thick with noxious, sulfuric fumes, and the heat is almost unbearable. Vor Rukoth's rulers built the Demonforge to draw elemental fire directly from the Abyss. Powerful wards once barred the abyssal rift, preventing any escape, but they have weakened over the centuries. Now demons freely emerge from the portal to roam Vor Rukoth.

Hook: In a settlement near Vor Rukoth, a series of brutal attacks has been connected to a group of demon-binders calling itself the Cult of the Forge. This cult has sent members to the Demonforge to bind abyssal creatures and use them for its own foul purposes. Ultimately, its leaders seek the lost knowledge of creating a rift to the Abyss for the cult's own use.

Hook: As creatures from the Abyss escape into Vor Rukoth, the city streets look like a scene from of the fabled Blood War, with devil fighting demon at every turn. Queen Najala has thrown her full might against the demons, but before long they will tear through her remaining forces and escape into the world. The only way to stop the abyssal influx is to seal the Demonforge. Otherwise, as Najala summons more diabolic servants from her own portal, the full fury of the eternal battle between the Nine Hells and the Abyss could reignite in Vor Rukoth.

THE LOST DISTRICT

The dark waters of the Midnight Sea lap against the ruins of Vor Rukoth's once bustling and prosperous port. The smell of the shore is strong in the air, though nothing remains of the fish markets. Stores and warehouses lie submerged, their rooftops barely peeking above the murky water during high tide. The

tops of sunken buildings form chains of islands that dot the shore. Foundered ships rot in the depths, many still containing the cargo they carried on the day Vor Rukoth was destroyed.

In Vor Rukoth's final hours, as the infernal army destroyed all in its way, three court spellcasters sought to stop the onslaught. They undertook a powerful ritual to bring the waters of the Midnight Sea crashing in through the streets, sweeping away devil and innocent alike. Their power was insufficient, though. The ritual failed, and a massive wave of water slammed into the city. The waters that came never full retreated, and to this day, the seaside district remains submerged. Explorers and adventurers renamed it the Lost District.

SKILL CHALLENGE: RESEALING THE DEMONFORGE

Whether spontaneously or through the actions of the Cult of the Forge, the Demonforge becomes unstable. It becomes a yawning gate to the Abyss through which hordes of demons can invade the world. The heroes represent the only chance to prevent this disaster.

This skill challenge can be part of a battle or take place as a separate encounter.

Level: Any.

Complexity: 4 (10 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Arcana, Athletics, Dungeoneering, Endurance, Thievery. Each skill can provide up to 4 successes.

Arcana (moderate DC by level, minor 1/round): The character manipulates the magic around the rift to stop it from opening wider or partially close it.

Athletics (moderate DC by level, minor 1/round): The character forces shut the metal doors of the forge, pulls levers, or otherwise physically manipulates the machinery, helping to bar the rift.

Dungeoneering (hard DC by level, minor 1/round): The character figures out how to close off the forge's buried valves and stymie the flow of abyssal energy.

Endurance (hard DC by level, minor 1/round): The furnace is dangerously hot, but the character braves the heat to approach the inmost parts and destroy or disable them.

Thievery (moderate DC by level, minor 1/round): The character mechanically disables the gauges, pipes, or other components of the forge to stop the flow of energy.

Success: The characters either seal the rift or lock the doors of the Demonforge, preventing the escape of more demons.

Failure: The Demonforge remains open, forcing the characters to fight an onslaught of demons or flee at the approach of a horde and seek another way to close the rift.

22. CHAMBER OF TIDES

This great hall lies far below the Lost District, beneath even the submerged streets of the former city. The court spellcasters of Vor Rukoth, in their hubris, had the chamber constructed to create artificial high tides and low tides for the convenience of merchants, fishers, and shellfish farmers. As the war between Arkhosia and Bael Turath escalated, the chamber also became a line of defense against invasion by sea. From this location, Najala's spellcasters attempted to turn the ocean against the forces of the Nine Hells. When their efforts failed, the Chamber of Tides was drowned along with the rest of the district.

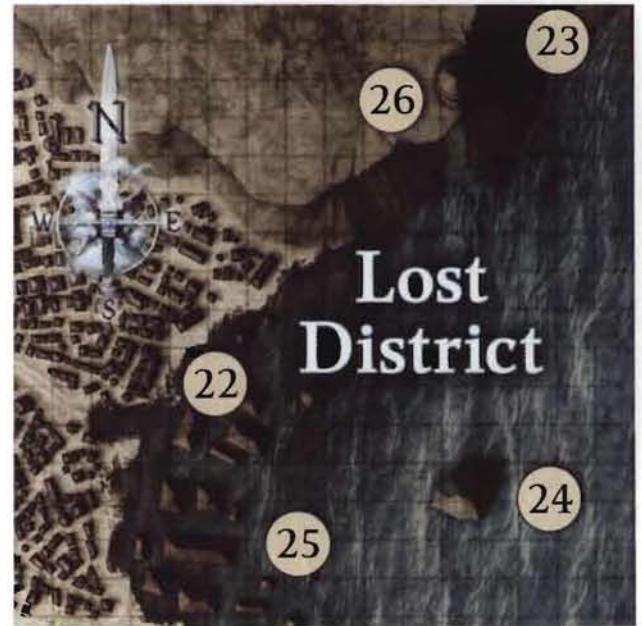
Hook: A cult of Olhydra, the Elemental Prince of Water, has discovered the Chamber of Tides. The cultists have learned the secret to its magic and are wielding its power for their own malign purposes. Already the water level along the coast has begun to rise, inundating several nearby villages. Sailors can attest that the tides are acting strangely, ebbing and flooding out of sync with the moon. Fisherfolk avoid the waters around Vor Rukoth, but a few have spotted strange watery creatures lurking there, as if guarding something.

Hook: A dwarf named Walthrel from the city of Turak-tol (see page 7) is seeking a way to manipulate the water levels in the Lost District. He and a company of dwarves are digging tunnels below Vor Rukoth, but their progress has been impeded by flooding. Walthrel has learned of the Chamber of Tides from Vor Rukoth's records and is willing to pay someone to locate it for him. The dwarf doesn't reveal that he actually wants to raise the water level. He believes that if he can build up enough pressure using the chamber's power, the sea will pour into Turak-tol through the tunnels he has dug, utterly destroying the city of slavers.

23. REDWATER COVE

Surrounded by high cliffs, this harbor is where Vor Rukoth kept its small navy. The city was not known for its fleet, but the few ships it possessed were armed with powerful weapons. Rumor tells that Vor Rukoth even had an underwater vessel made of magic and steel. The navy has since been captured or sunk, but Redwater Cove is far from empty.

Hook: Pirates sailing under the banner of a figure calling itself the Crimson Marauder have begun plaguing marine traffic passing through the Midnight Sea near Vor Rukoth. The pirates are rumored to lair in Redwater Cove. Ships attempting to go after them have mysteriously sunk without suffering a single shot. Now the shipmaster of the White Lantern Consortium, an amicable half-elf named Naranda, is looking for a group of adventurers to eliminate the threat. No one knows that the pirates have restored the ancient underwater ship and are using it to defend the harbor.



Hook: A male human calling himself Joccand is looking for someone to seize the flagship of the Crimson Marauder, which he claims was stolen from him. Disguised as a merchant, Joccand is actually a rival pirate who covets the ship's magic ballista for his own criminal activities. Should anyone oblige him, Joccand is happy to pay—with gold if he must or a sword through the belly if he can. If the characters help him recover the ship, they soon hear of a new pirate wielding the weapons once used by the Crimson Marauder.

24. STAR TOMB

In the days before and during the war, a group of star pact warlocks called the Constellation conspired with horrors of the Far Realm to overthrow the Turathi emperor. Most of the organization was destroyed by both Bael Turath and Arkhosia, but a cell survived in Vor Rukoth, meeting in an abandoned building within the Lost District. When the group was discovered, it avoided destruction at the hands of Najala's forces by calling down a great black rock. The meteorite smashed into the building, sealing the warlocks away in a mass of dark stone that glimmered like the night sky. Najala sought to destroy it to no avail, and the Star Tomb remains today, just visible above the waters—perhaps awaiting a particular alignment of stars or ritual before opening.

Hook: The warlocks of the Constellation possessed a set of items called the Points of the Constellation (*Adventurer's Vault*™ 2, page 125). The Star Tomb might contain one or more of these items, but a character seeking them needs to find a way in.

Hook: An eladrin scholar named Indrithius has been possessed by a Far Realm entity that is searching for the Star Tomb. The scholar is not aware of this possession and believes his interest is purely academic

when he hires adventurers to accompany him. In truth, fragments of distant stars—Hadar, Acamar, and Gibbeth—within the tomb have horribly transformed the members of the Constellation during their long imprisonment. The onetime warlocks are now star spawn (*Monster Manual 2*, page 195) that seek to unleash ruin upon the world. The creature possessing Indrithius wants to open the Star Tomb and release the aberrant horrors within.

25. OLD MARKET

Once a bustling, multilevel market that sold fish, produce, and goods from throughout the world, this area is now mostly submerged, inhabited by crazed kuo-toas. The market was a honeycomb of chambers, some of which still contain air. Most of the vendors were small businesses that collected a few silvers a day, so there is little wealth to be found on the upper levels. However, stories tell of a minotaur crime lord named Valgo who extorted thousands of gold pieces from the merchants and craftspeople of Vor Rukoth. His hideout, it is said, was located deep in the Old Market.

Hook: The adventurers come across a map showing the way down through the chambers of the Old Market into Valgo's former hideout. Perhaps it is part of a treasure or a reward for services rendered. In fact, the map is a trap provided by enemies of the characters. Some dwellers in Coyote's Refuge know of a monstrous creature that lives in the Old Market, which they call the Beast. Whoever supplied the map hopes the creature will wipe out the party. Of course, if the characters manage to defeat the monster—a sea kraken—they might seek revenge against whoever set them up.

The kraken is ancient and immense, with tentacles that extend into many chambers of the sunken market.

Kraken Tentacle		Level 9 Minion Controller
Medium aberrant magical beast		XP 100
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +9
AC 23, Fortitude 21, Reflex 23, Will 19		Perception +7
Speed 0		
TRAITS		
Aquatic Threat		
The tentacle begins combat occupying 1 square of water and cannot move.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Slam ◆ At-Will		
Requirement: The tentacle must not have a creature grabbed.		
Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 8 damage, and the tentacle grabs the target (escape DC 17).		
⊕ Squeeze and Slide ◆ At-Will		
Requirement: The tentacle must have a creature grabbed.		
Effect: The tentacle sustains the grab and deals 8 damage to the grabbed creature. In addition, it slides the grabbed creature 2 squares.		
Str 14 (+6)	Dex 20 (+9)	Wis 16 (+7)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 17 (+7)	Cha 12 (+5)
Alignment unaligned		Languages —

FIGHTING THE KRAKEN

The fight with the Beast of the Old Market might take place across several chambers occupied by different kinds of creatures: kuo-toas, troglodytes, bullywugs, sahuagin, and the like. Create a battleground covered with pools of deep water where the kraken's tentacles can reach up and grab the characters while they are engaged in fighting the other denizens.

Once the party has destroyed enough tentacles, the Beast—a level 10 sea kraken—rises to confront them (*Monster Manual 3*, page 122).

26. DAGGER'S LIGHT

This magnificent lighthouse has withstood storm and quake and stands on a high lookout over Vor Rukoth. In the city's heyday, the light of the tower could be seen for miles around, reflecting off the gold plating on its exterior. Looters have since stripped away the outer gilding, but the interior remains dry and in good repair—a perfect refuge in the dangerous ruins.

Hook: The Dagger's Light can be a great location for the characters to rest and recover, but they must first contend with the tower's other inhabitants. The Circle of Nine uses the lighthouse as a base to monitor the city and search for Najala's Gate. The Asmodeus cultists and their infernal servitors watch for any movement of Najala's thralls or other devils who might be serving rivals of Asmodeus. Explorers and seafarers have spotted activity in the tower, but they believe it is haunted by ghosts that guard the lighthouse's reflector, which legend says was an astral diamond.

INFERNAL FENS

When water flooded into the Lost District from the Midnight Sea, some of it escaped into the gardens surrounding the Ruby Court. These manicured grounds, which once hosted vast rose plantations, bountiful orchards, and carefully sculpted topiary, became morasses of death and decay. The inflowing current swept corpses along with it, and once the waters settled, the bloated bodies polluted the air with a stench that has never faded.

The infernal energy leaking up from Najala's Gate twisted and corrupted the newly formed swamp. Its landscape began to match that on the other side of the portal, until the mire became an extension of Minauros, the Third Hell. The Infernal Fens began to attract foul beasts and humanoids alike. The creatures made their homes in the former gardens, and the beautiful statues and fountains of gold and marble disappeared, becoming no more than memories. Although many treasures still lie concealed within the quagmire, few explorers have ventured within to search for them, fearing the horrors that lurk in its water and prowl its paths.

27. ORCHARDS

Untended in the centuries since the fall of Vor Rukoth, the once fruitful orchards of the Ruby Court have become crooked and overgrown, forming a dense weave that shades much of the swamp. Beneath this canopy, night rules eternal, cultists congregate, devils lurk, and vile creatures lair. Warped by infernal energy, the trees that once produced succulent apples, pears, and oranges now yield a sinister crop.

Hook: Bloating by the evil energy leaking up from beneath the fens, the fruit of the orchard has become a tempting but deadly treat. Not long ago, the beetles feeding upon it began to take on an evil intelligence, eventually forming into a lamia that calls itself Mara. Disguised as a young human girl, Mara gathers the infernal fruit and sells it on the streets of Coyote's Refuge and other nearby settlements. It is delicious, granting temporary hit points to any who eat it. However, Mara has been planting one of her beetles in each fruit, which she then uses to dominate the eater and send him or her walking into the fens, never to be seen again.

Hook: A predatory vine, which locals call death creeper, has begun to push into a nearby settlement and strangle people who venture off the roads. The heart of the vine tangle lies somewhere in the overgrown orchards, where it is served by a tribe of lizardfolk it has enslaved. Entwined in the plant's roots is a seed of evil brought over from Minauros by one of Mammon's devils long ago. The devil controls the vine and through it the lizardfolk, and it is using both to collect bodies from miles around. To what end, though, no one knows.

28. MAZE OF THE BEAST

Long have the settlements around Vor Rukoth whispered of a great beast that inhabits the Infernal Fens. The beast has many names, and many tall tales surround it. Countless heroes have sought to slay the monster, but none have succeeded. The creature dwells in the deepest reaches of the swamp, amid a great hedge maze that has grown tall and dangerous in the years since Vor Rukoth's end. Many hunters who track the beast instead find death, caught in the shifting hedges.

Hook: A rich patron from a nearby city has offered a generous reward to whoever brings back the head (or heads) of the beast. Fame is reward enough for many hunters, but the promise of treasure has attracted hopefuls from all over the world—and beyond. Even a firbolg from the Feywild is rumored to be searching for the monster. Not all are interested in hunting the beast, though; the contest has also drawn opportunists who hope to secretly kill whoever manages to slay it and claim the reward for themselves.



29. GARDEN OF BLACK ROSES

The Garden of Black Roses once produced Najala's most cherished blossoms. Since the Day of Devils, the bushes have continued to grow, but they've become twisted, haggard things. The perfume of the black roses is said to send a person into a feverish sleep filled with terrible nightmares. This section of the swamp is dominated by the night hag Gul-Yara. A foul-tempered, sadistic creature, the hag cultivates the flowers for her own malign purposes, guarding her domain with evil fey and plant creatures.

Hook: Recently, the inhabitants of settlements near Vor Rukoth have been plagued by terrifying dreams. Some killed themselves in their madness; others wandered into the ruins, never to be seen again. A visitor can readily tell from the sleep-deprived faces of the villagers that something is amiss. Gul-Yara has been using her power over dreams to collect tormented psychic energy as fertilizer for the corrupt roses. The survivors of these dreams recount the horrible, twisted visage of the hag staring at them, and they are vaguely aware of the swamp in which the creature dwells.

Hook: An elf herbalist named Quoranth has learned of the black roses and is interested in acquiring samples for study. He knows of Gul-Yara, but he neglects to mention the hag's presence to anyone he hires to collect the roses. An opposed Insight check can reveal the deception; if caught out, the elf offers to pay a premium for the service. Alternatively, the elf might be in league with Gul-Yara and is sending victims into the swamp. The hag intends to trap the trespassers in an endless sleep and use their psychic torment to feed the roses.

Bush of Black Roses

Hazard

Level 13 Lurker

XP 800

When a creature moves next to one of these rose bushes, the blossoms explode with toxic black pollen.

Hazard: A rose bush fills its square and squares adjacent to it with a black pollen that causes dizziness and unconsciousness. The bush's square is difficult terrain.

Perception

◆ DC 20: The character distinguishes the black rose bush from surrounding shrubbery.

Additional Skill: Nature

◆ DC 20: The character identifies the black roses as producing a narcotic toxin.

Trigger

A character enters a square adjacent to the rose bush for the first time during the encounter.

Attack**Opportunity Action** Close burst 1

Target: Each creature in burst

Attack: +16 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dazed (save ends).

First Failed Saving Throw: The target is instead unconscious (save ends).

Second Failed Saving Throw: The target is instead unconscious and takes ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends both).

Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. Until the zone ends, the hazard can make a secondary attack.

Opportunity Action Close burst 1

Trigger: An enemy enters the zone.

Secondary Attack: +16 vs. Will

Secondary Target: Triggering enemy in burst

Hit: The secondary target is dazed (save ends).

First Failed Saving Throw: The secondary target is instead unconscious (save ends).

Second Failed Saving Throw: The target is instead unconscious and takes ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends both).

Countermeasures

◆ A character can make a DC 29 Nature check to determine that hitting a square of the zone with a fire attack (AC 27, Fort 25, Ref 25) ends the effects of the zone in that square.

30. TOPIARY GARDENS

Once, a stroll through this garden was like a walk through a tame bestiary. Hedges and bushes shaped like beasts from across the world rose from the soil: elephants with trunks held high, lions in predatory poses, wolves gathered for the hunt. Without a gardener to tend to them, ordinary topiaries would have become overgrown and soon lost their shape altogether. Instead, like everything else in the Infernal Fens, the gardens absorbed the hellish energy pouring out of Najala's Gate and became horribly changed. The deformed, animated bushes behave like dire beasts, killing and devouring any creature that approaches.

Use the following monster template to create topiary beast creatures.

TOPIARY BEAST

Prerequisite: Natural beast

Topiary Beast

(plant)

Elite Soldier

XP Elite

Hit Points +8 per level + Constitution score

Senses tremorsense 5

Vulnerable 5 fire

Level 11: Vulnerable 10 fire

Level 21: Vulnerable 15 fire

Saving Throws +2

Action Points 1

TRAITS

☼ **Seed of the Earth** ◆ **Aura** 1

Any enemy that starts its turn within the aura treats all squares as difficult terrain until the end of its next turn.

Thorned Touch

The topiary beast's melee basic attack deals ongoing 5 damage (save ends), and if the target of the basic attack ends its turn farther away from the topiary beast than where it started its turn, the ongoing damage increases by 5 and the target cannot make a saving throw against the ongoing damage that turn.

Level 11: Ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Level 21: Ongoing 15 damage (save ends).

MINOR ACTIONS

† **Creeping Vines** ◆ **At-Will** (1/round)

Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); level + 3 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6 + Strength modifier damage, and the topiary beast pulls the target 3 squares. The target is marked until the end of its next turn.

Hook: Yuan-ti and snaketongue cultists have erected a temple from a ruined garden conservatory where Najala once kept her most exotic and deadly plants. The temple lies at the center of the topiary gardens, and the cultists have managed to quell the rage of the mutated plants enough to gain passage through them. Recently, the temple has been sending its cultists to kidnap folk from nearby villages for dark sacrifices to Zehir.

RUBY COURT

Built of rose quartz and red marble, the Ruby Court is a testament to the wealth and prosperity of Vor Rukoth. It is also a symbol of the former city's decadence and excess. The court is actually several large structures, connected by a vast plaza, that once housed the most privileged of Bael Turath nobility. Members of the royal family and their retinues walked these halls—brothers and sisters or aunts and uncles of the emperor or empress—until all came to an end on the Day of Devils.

Now echoes reverberate through the vaulted chambers and wide hallways of the Ruby Court, but the only voices heard are ghostly reflections of the past. The lavish furnishings that once bore witness to the dark intrigues of Najala's court have been reduced to scorched heaps, evidence of the battle that wrought the destruction of Vor Rukoth. Cobwebs have replaced the chandeliers, and vines have taken the place of curtains. The trappings of the court lie under a blanket of ash

and dust, silent testimony to the power of time to obliterate the wealth and pride of any nation.

Yet the Ruby Court is not wholly unoccupied. From her throne of ruby and gold, Queen Najala still holds court. The dead walk these moldering hallways, nobles who had remained loyal to Najala and now cursed to share undeath with her. Those few explorers and adventurers who dare to set foot in the Ruby Court had best tread lightly and quietly, lest they draw the ire of the Queen of Roses.

31. ARMORY

The palace armory of Vor Rukoth was one of the best stocked in the world. Magical and mundane weapons lined its walls—enough to equip twice the number of guards who attended the palace. The armory was overseen by golems and homunculi with absolute loyalty to the ruler. When the devils poured from Najala's Gate, few of the guards had time to do much more than grab the nearest sword or pike. Thus, this armory still contains much of the equipment it did centuries ago.

Hook: The Scions of the Horned Empire have learned that the armory is still well stocked, and the group hopes to use the items there to begin arming its own force. All it needs is someone brave or foolish enough to destroy the security mechanisms first.

Hook: A gnome arms dealer named Nyvia has put out a call for adventurers. She claims to be searching for a famed suit of Feywild armor stolen from her people by Bael Turath. The suit of armor exists, but Nyvia really just wants the adventurers to destroy the armory's security devices so that she can retrieve its Turathi weapons and sell them. Her customers might include enemies of the characters.

Ever-Fading Armor

Level 10+

This armor is inlaid with leaf patterns and seems to fade in and out of existence, like the camouflage of a magical beast.

Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp
Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp			

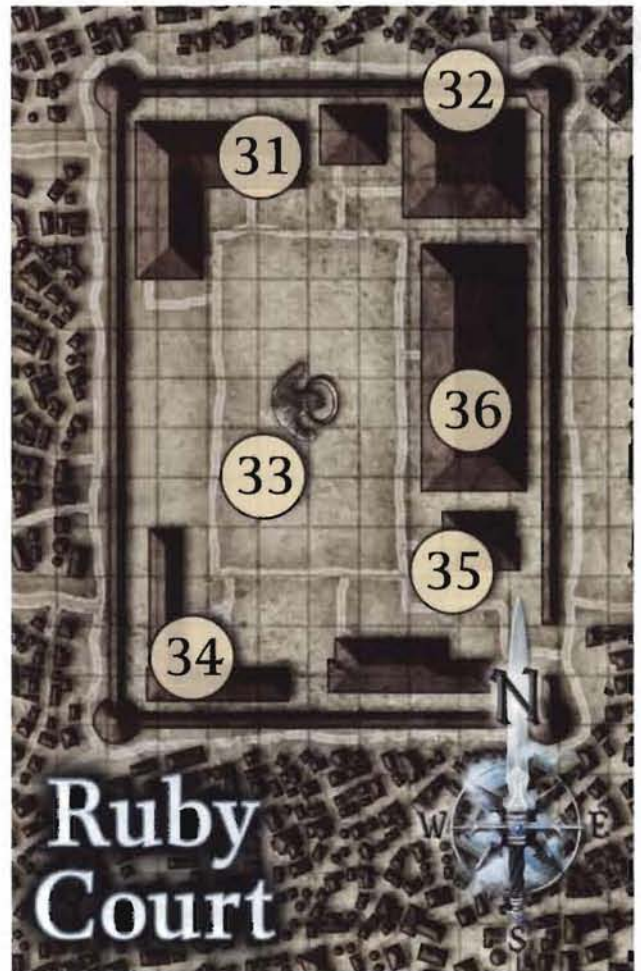
Armor: Leather, hide

Enhancement: AC

Power (At-Will): Standard Action. **Requirement:** You must be invisible. **Effect:** You remain invisible until the end of your next turn.

32. TARU MAAJ

Built adjacent to the Ruby Court, Taru Maaj was the library of Vor Rukoth. It was overseen by a figure known as the Luminary. On the Day of Devils, the Luminary transported the library and all within it to a timeless demiplane to preserve its knowledge. The library remains trapped there, for were it to return to the world, the centuries it has remained out of time would pass in a matter of seconds, destroying it and its inhabitants. A foundation remains where the library once stood, but Taru Maaj is still accessible to those who know where to look.



Hook: Arkhosia's Last has learned of the library and seeks to destroy it and the history it contains. A half-mad dragonborn sorcerer named Vanghar has uncovered a ritual that, if performed on the foundation, will bring Taru Maaj crashing back into the world. From within the demiplane, the Luminary has divined the group's plan and is scrying Vor Rukoth and the surrounding area, hoping to locate someone who might be able to stop the ritual.

Hook: Taru Maaj is in danger of reentering the world. An assistant to the Luminary, a young eladrin named Quatheral, has left the library in search of help to stop this disaster. Upon leaving, he instantly aged, becoming wizened and weak. The Luminary has the magic to strengthen the ritual, but he lacks the components, so Quatheral asks the characters to journey to locations across Vor Rukoth in search of the correct materials. As payment, he offers one of the *lenses of the Luminary* (*Adventurer's Vault 2*, page 63).

Hook: The characters need a piece of obscure information that might be contained within the library.

33. PLAZA OF THE COLOSSUS

Amid the chambers and halls of the Ruby Court is a wide stone plaza, now overgrown and scorched by bouts of hellfire. In its center stands a great marble statue of a male human who, according to legend, was the

SKILL CHALLENGE: REACHING TARU MAAJ

The characters need to learn a secret regarding Vor Rukoth or some other bit of obscure lore or history. After learning of the library's existence, they must find its whereabouts, magically reach it, and convince the Luminary to let them search its lore.

Level: Any.

Complexity: 4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures).

Success: The characters learn what they need to know.

Failure: The characters learn only a fragment of the necessary information—enough to allow them to move forward, but with greater difficulty.

Stage 1: Combing the Ruins

Rubble and detritus covers arcane sigils inscribed on the library's foundation. Reaching the library requires that the sigils be uncovered. After the heroes achieve 3 successes at this stage, move on to Stage 2.

Primary Skills: Arcana, Athletics, Perception

Arcana (easy DC by level): The character can identify magical sigils to help transport the group to the library.

Athletics/Perception (easy DC by level): The character can help clear the area or search for evidence of how to gain access to the library. A successful check lowers by 2 the DC of the Arcana check.

Stage 2: Transporting to the Library

Getting to the library requires the characters to reactivate the magical sigils inscribed on its foundation. After the heroes achieve 3 successes at this stage, move on to Stage 3. If the characters fail the skill challenge at this stage,

founder of Bael Turath. Vines hang thick on the statue like ropes. Before the destruction of the city, a defensive enchantment on the colossus animated it to attack intruders. Over the centuries, the magic affecting the statue has also bled into the vines, giving them sentience and a similar objective.

Hook: The Coyote has heard tales of the colossus of the Ruby Court and wants someone to bring its head to him. He desires the object mostly because he is a collector of curios, but he is also interested in having his assistant, Myla, try to investigate and unravel the defensive spell on the statue.

34. SERVANTS' QUARTERS

When the devils rampaged through the palace, the servants' quarters were first in their path. Chambermaids and stewards fled before the slaughter, but the cramped quarters hemmed them in, preventing escape. Many of those who died swore vengeance against Najala for her folly, and to this day the queen avoids the area, wary of the malign forces there. The carpets remain damp with the blood of the dead, even though the bodies have long since withered away.

the Luminary is obliged to summon them to the library instead. Two of the party's failures are removed, but skill checks made during Stage 3 of the skill challenge take a -2 penalty.

Primary Skills: Arcana, Thievery

Arcana/Thievery (easy DC by level): The character manipulates the sigils to transport the party to Taru Maaj.

Stage 3: Exploring the Library

The heroes comb the library for the information they seek, helped or hindered by the Luminary. To complete the skill challenge successfully, the heroes must achieve 4 successes at this stage.

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Insight, Perception, Stealth

Bluff/Diplomacy (easy DC by level): The character convinces the Luminary to help them find the needed piece of information.

History (moderate DC by level): The character impresses the Luminary with his or her knowledge of history or is able to navigate the library to find the information the party needs.

Insight (moderate DC by level): The character gauges the Luminary's feelings or motivations.

Perception (moderate DC by level): The character combs the library, looking for the information the party needs.

Stealth (hard DC by level): Characters who manage to reach the library without assistance from the Luminary might be able to sneak around and find the information they seek.

Hook: Banshees inhabit these corridors, wailing curses against Najala in a terrible cacophony. Anyone coming near the servant quarters might hear them. The vengeful spirits attack most who dare enter their domain, but their hatred for Najala is enough that they might make allies of others who oppose the Queen of Roses. Passing a difficult skill challenge might quell their rage long enough to gain their assistance. The banshees could point out a secret entrance to Najala's throne room, tell of her weaknesses, or even follow the characters into battle.

35. VAULTS

An impregnable stronghold of reinforced walls, devious locks, deadly traps, and fearsome guardians, this giant block of stone remains much as it did during the city's heyday. The smooth basalt walls of the windowless structure are distinguished only by the gruesome visages of the gargoyles that leer down at anyone who approaches. The only obvious entrance is a set of giant doors that have remained locked for centuries. On the Day of Devils, the vaults' steward and other guardians shut and locked the doors from the inside. One key remains inside with the steward, who continues to protect the vaults after his assistants mummified him. Another key exists, but its whereabouts have been lost to time.

Hook: The location of the second key is highly coveted knowledge. Treasure hunters and organizations have sought the key for years with no success. The White Lantern Consortium wants to plunder the city's treasures, the Scions of the Horned Empire seeks to recover historical artifacts, and the Raven's Wings wants to use the vaults as a base from which to attack Najala and her undead cohorts. Many believe that queen possesses the key—and she might. Others speculate that one of her attendants stole it and whisked it away to the servants' quarters, where it remains. The key might still be hidden away in the ruins of Vor Rukoth, or perhaps it long ago made its way into the hands of a certain half-ling who oversees Coyote's Refuge.

Hook: Locked away within the vaults is a treasure that even the tieflings of Bael Turath dared not touch. A magical disease—a living plague—is trapped within, locked away since the early days of the empire. Members of the Scions of the Horned Empire have learned of this disease and acquired a sample from the ruins of another Turathi city. They have managed to control this fragment of the living plague, which they have unleashed upon their enemies. People around Vor Rukoth and the outlying areas have been found dead, strangled by tentacles that sprouted from their bodies. If the group is not stopped, it might unleash the full force of the living plague, which could spread across the world.

Hook: The dwarves of Turak-tol have drilled a tunnel into the base of the vaults. They are in search of treasure, specifically a relic stolen from them centuries ago by Bael Turath. The object, known as the Fist of Moradin, has no magical power, but it has intrinsic historical and cultural significance for the dwarves. They have not yet breached the final wall, for legend tells of traps, devils, undead, and constructs that guard the riches within. The dwarves are willing to let a group of adventurers use their tunnels to hunt for treasure, provided they recover the Fist of Moradin for Turak-tol.

36. HORNED THRONE ROOM

Huge dragon skulls adorn the walls of Najala's throne room, testaments to her power. Spiral columns shaped like devilish horns rise up around the chamber, and from high atop them infernal stone faces glare down. In this macabre, bloodstained domain, Najala oversaw the affairs of her city.

In the grim period before the Day of Devils, public executions of rebellious nobles and Arkhosian sympathizers were conducted here in view of the entire court. Blood ran thick across the rose quartz floor, and in her growing madness, Najala ordered that the pools of gore not be cleaned up. All the beauty of the Horned Throne Room became ugliness. Najala, the so-called Queen of Roses, even let the hundreds of rose bushes around the court wither and die. Like Najala, the roses returned from death, and like her soul, they became

Living Plague Fragment		Level 13 Controller
Large natural animate		XP 800
HP 134; Bloodied 67		Initiative +10
AC 27, Fortitude 26, Reflex 24, Will 24		Perception +10
Speed 6		
Immune disease		
TRAITS		
☼ Inflamed Contagion ◆ Aura 2		
An enemy that has been exposed to a disease and ends its turn within the aura must make a saving throw against infection if it has not yet made the saving throw. Any enemy that has already been infected and ends its turn within the aura must make an Endurance check against the disease as if it had just completed an extended rest.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ Writhing Touch ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +16 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage, and the target sprouts hostile tentacles (save ends). While the target is affected by the hostile tentacles, it takes ongoing 5 damage, and any ally of the target that ends its turn within 2 squares of the target takes 5 damage.		
⬅ Plague Burst (disease, poison) ◆ Recharge ☼ ☼		
Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in burst); +16 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d10 + 10 poison damage, and the target is exposed to one of the following diseases (<i>Dungeon Master's Guide</i> , pages 49-50). Roll a d4 to determine which, and roll separately for each target hit.		
1. Mummy rot (Endurance DC 23/18/17)		
2. Blinding sickness		
3. Cackle fever		
4. Shakes		
MINOR ACTIONS		
† Seeping Tendril ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +16 vs. Reflex		
Hit: The plague fragment slides the target 3 squares.		
Str 14 (+8)	Dex 18 (+10)	Wis 19 (+10)
Con 22 (+12)	Int 12 (+7)	Cha 6 (+4)
Alignment unaligned		Languages —

black reflections of what they once were (see "Garden of Black Roses," page 24).

In this part of the Ruby Court, Najala yet rules over her dead city, and any who trespass in her demesne pay the price. The queen still holds court in the Horned Throne Room, conducting ghoulish balls and masquerades as she did during Vor Rukoth's heyday. The wretched souls who remained loyal to her persist in undeath as wights, ghosts, skeletons, death knights, and wraiths.

Hook: The characters have learned that the diabolical Circle of Nine hopes to convince the Queen of Roses to reveal the location of Najala's Gate. Members are planning to attend one of her macabre balls and use flattery and bribes to gain access to the portal. The characters might be able to secure invitations to this party and persuade Najala to refuse the Circle, perhaps with a moderate to difficult skill challenge. Failure to convince her might result in imprisonment or combat with the undead court; in the worst case, Asmodeus's followers might seize control of the portal and redirect it to the Lord of the Nine's dread purpose.

NAJALA'S GATE

Hook: As long as Najala remains, Vor Rukoth will be cursed, the souls of its citizens forced to languish in a tormented existence. Although many have tried to unseat Najala, none have succeeded. The queen still sends patrols out into the city to search for rebels and intruders. Until she is destroyed, these undead soldiers will continue to harangue explorers and adventurers. If the characters visit any one of several locations, including the Varrik estate (page 17), the Demonforge (page 21), the servants' quarters (page 27), or the vaults (page 27), Najala might launch a personal attack against them.

THE DEEP PITS

This area under the Ruby Court is named for its numerous oubliettes, which were at first used to contain the worst criminals. As the war with Arkhosia progressed, though, these dungeons filled with prisoners. Najala condemned foreigners and natives of Vor Rukoth alike for the slightest offenses, declaring them traitors. Most of those consigned to the oubliettes escaped the slaughter of the Day of Devils, only to starve to death soon after. The Deep Pits became a cursed place, rife with necrotic energy and filled with zombies and tortured souls. Najala continues to use the prisons: Many explorers and treasure hunters have met their end in the Deep Pits after being captured by one of her patrols. A few manage to survive on stale water and rats, but most quickly succumb to disease or starvation.

Hook: Two members of an adventuring party have been captured by Najala after attempting to sneak into her court. The third member of the party, a human rogue named Dal, managed to escape but lost his hand in the process. Dal is willing to exchange some of the secrets he has learned or else offer payment if the characters help him recover his companions: Brona, a dwarf cleric, and Yurik, a goliath fighter. The characters might convince Najala to give up the two adventurers in exchange for a service, or they face her in battle if she refuses.

Hook: In the farthest reaches of the dungeons is a great yawning pit, a column of stone rising at its center. Shackled to the stone is the prisoner Najala feared most. Unable to kill him, she instead forgot about him.

Stories tell of a great wizard named Inariam who Najala took as a lover. He taught her powerful and dark magic, and in exchange, she lavished him with wealth and attention. The stories do not say why, but they recount that in a fit of rage, Najala threw Inariam into the Deep Pits. There he remains, still possessing a secret that Najala fears.

A normal mortal would have long since died, but Inariam remains imprisoned; like Najala, he is a lich. (He taught Najala the dark ritual to transform herself.) He lacks the spells to free himself, and centuries of isolation have driven him mad. He thinks of nothing but revenge. If dissuaded from killing the characters on sight, he might make a valuable ally against Najala—if only to supplant her and rule the cursed city himself.

Far below the Ruby Court lurks the black heart of Vor Rukoth. Seething with infernal energy, tainting the vast network of caverns and caves that surround it, Najala's Gate waits for those who would use it or destroy it. The portal cannot be opened from the Nine Hells. Someone in Vor Rukoth must free the devils on the other side to resume the onslaught that was cut short centuries ago.

Najala's Gate lies at the center of a much greater complex of corridors and caves. During her reign, Lady Najala used humanoid slaves and infernal thralls to carve out a section of the Underdark once controlled by drow. In the time since the fall of Vor Rukoth, Underdark denizens have returned to inhabit these chambers. Some are mindless beasts drawn to or warped by the corruption that permeates the air of the caverns. Others are intelligent humanoids that search for the lost riches of both the tiefling and the drow civilizations, killing anyone who interferes.

LOCATIONS

The numberless passages, stairs, crypts, and caverns that surround Najala's Gate are far too extensive to map. Instead, they can be the setting for custom encounters to challenge adventurers in search of the gate. You can create any challenge that suits your campaign and story goals, using these locations for inspiration.

THE CATACOMBS

This network of cobweb-strewn corridors forms a dizzying labyrinth that houses hundreds of bodies, from minor nobles to wealthy royalty. Skulls are piled in ancient sanctuaries, and desiccated corpses lie tucked away in dark recesses. A few of those buried in the catacombs have their own elaborate crypts. Guarded by ancient constructs, magical wards, deadly traps, and restless dead, these tombs promise great reward and great danger to those who venture into them.

Hook: A cult of Orcus has taken up residence in the dark chambers within the catacombs. Najala lacked the power to complete the lich transformation ritual on her own, so she made a deal with the demon lord. In exchange for the necessary power, she would lower the wards on the catacombs and allow Orcus's followers to use the area as a meeting place and a source of undead minions. In recent years, though, the cult has grown larger and more powerful. Najala has grown anxious over its presence and is looking for a way to eliminate it. She might try to bribe or manipulate adventurers into destroying the cult. For its part, the cult is looking to unseat Najala and place its own adept of Orcus on the throne as a steward of Vor Rukoth.

Hook: Some ancient crypts remain protected, even centuries after Najala attempted to break their wards and disable their traps. Great wealth lies within, and anyone in Coyote's Refuge would pay handsomely for just a few of their treasures. However, the crypts have a life of their own. The spirits of the humans who ruled Bael Turath before the infernal transformation are restless. Awoken by the dark events and powers within Vor Rukoth, they wait for a champion to free the city of its curse and redeem the empire's name. These spirits have little influence within the city, but occasionally one manages to escape and seek out a worthy hero, perhaps one with lineage dating back to the ancient empire. Accounts also exist of spirits possessing adventurers or guiding them to the crypts. So far, no one has been formidable enough to meet the expectations of the restless shades.

ENDLESS STAIRS

To reach the site for her marvelous gate, Najala enslaved dwarves, drow, minotaurs, troglodytes, and other subterranean creatures. For over a decade, she forced them to dig and carve a great circular staircase that descended almost a mile. She also had them excavate hundreds of corridors along the staircase. Some were dead ends; others led to traps and guardian beasts. A scarce few led to stores of treasure and secret libraries. One alone led to the chamber containing Najala's Gate.

To ensure that none of the slaves would reveal the way to her treasure, she unleashed medusas among them. Now hundreds of statues stand as macabre decorations along the length of the staircase and in adjoining corridors. Amid these grim forms, dangers yet lurk. Medusas still inhabit some of the chambers, and gargoyles and other monsters wait to send trespassers plummeting to the depths below.

Hook: Many of the statues along the Endless Stairs are fragmented or crumbling, but a few are still in fine condition. The Rockhide dwarf clan of Turak-tol has learned of the staircase from records dating back to the period of its construction, which indicate that ancient members of the clan were enslaved and killed by Najala. The Rockhides hope to find someone to recover their bones and relics and bring them back for proper burial. What the clan leaders do not realize is that some of those lost members are not dead but have been preserved in stone for centuries.

Hook: A creature called the Eater in the Darkness lurks at the bottom of the Endless Stairs. Rumors say that it guards the entrance to a great treasure chamber or even to Najala's Gate. In reality, it is a ravenous, opportunistic ooze that has taken up residence at the base of the staircase, consuming those who fall to their deaths. Recently, an expedition of by the White Lantern Consortium managed to reach the Endless Stairs. Only one member of the company survived, a wan elf named



Najala's Gate		Level 15 Solo Controller (Leader)	
Huge natural animate (blind, construct)		XP 6,000	
HP 584; Bloodied 292	Initiative +2		
AC 29, Fortitude 25, Reflex 26, Will 28	Perception +17		
Speed 0	Blind, tremorsense 20		
Immune conditions, forced movement, gaze; Resist 10 all			
TRAITS			
☼ Gate Defense ◆ Aura 5			
While within the aura, allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls.			
Infernal Bond			
Whenever an enemy reduces a devil to 0 hit points within 10 squares of Najala's Gate, the gate loses its damage resistance until the end of that enemy's next turn.			
STANDARD ACTIONS			
◀ Invoke Pain ◆ At-Will			
Attack: Close burst 5, or 10 while bloodied (one or two creatures in burst); +18 vs. Fortitude			
Hit: 3d10 + 8 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and damage rolls (save ends).			
Miss: Half damage, and the target takes no penalties to attack rolls or damage rolls.			
◀ Invoke Fealty (charm) ◆ Recharge when first bloodied			
Attack: Close burst 5, or 10 while bloodied (enemies in burst); +18 vs. Will			
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage, Najala's Gate slides the target 1 square, and the target falls prone.			
◀ Invoke Obedience (charm, psychic) ◆ Recharge when first bloodied			
Attack: Close burst 5, or 10 while bloodied (two or three creatures in burst); +18 vs. Will			
Hit: 2d10 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is dominated until the end of its next turn.			
MINOR ACTIONS			
☼ Diabolic Summons ◆ Recharge [i]			
Effect: Najala's Gate summons one of the following devils from the Nine Hells. Roll a d6 to determine the kind summoned. The devil appears in an unoccupied space within 5 squares of Najala's Gate. Roll initiative for the summoned devil.			
1. Bearded devil (<i>Monster Manual</i> , page 60)			
2. Chain devil (<i>Monster Manual</i> , page 62)			
3. Bone devil (<i>Monster Manual</i> , page 62)			
4. Misfortune devil (<i>Monster Manual 2</i> , page 66)			
5. Shocktroop devil (<i>Monster Manual 2</i> , page 67)			
6. Withering devil (<i>Monster Manual 2</i> , page 68)			
◀ Release the Legion ◆ At-Will (1/round)			
Effect: Najala's Gate summons a legion devil veteran (<i>Monster Manual</i> , page 64) from the Nine Hells. The devil appears in an unoccupied square within 5 squares of Najala's Gate. Roll initiative for the summoned devil.			
TRIGGERED ACTIONS			
◀ Burning Rebuke (acid, fire) ◆ At-Will			
Trigger: An enemy hits Najala's Gate with an attack.			
Effect (<i>Immediate Reaction</i>): The triggering enemy takes 10 acid and fire damage, and ongoing 10 acid and fire damage (save ends).			
Skills Bluff +19, Diplomacy +19, Insight +17			
Str 1 (+2)	Dex 1 (+2)	Wis 20 (+12)	
Con 18 (+11)	Int 20 (+12)	Cha 24 (+14)	
Alignment evil		Languages Common	

Aristhis. He recounts that when his companions fell, they disappeared with a great slurping sound. Aristhis has a secret, though. While his companions were descending, tied together for support, he lost his nerve. He tied off his rope to a statue and sent it plummeting to the bottom. He thought that tales of the Eater would be enough to dissuade the White Lantern Consortium from investigating. He did not consider that the group would hire others to do so.

NAJALA'S GATE

The hidden location of Najala's Gate is a great cavern that radiates evil and malevolence. Vicious-looking stalactites hang from the ceiling, giving the chamber the look of a massive maw. Adding to that impression is the warm wind that blows from an unseen source, carrying the smell of sulfur. The portal is a large archway crafted of orium and inscribed with diabolic runes. Anyone entering the cavern is immediately struck by the sense that the gate is watching him or her, passing cruel judgment.

The archway contains the soul of Najala, for she used it as her phylactery when becoming a lich. She cannot be truly slain until the gate is destroyed. She exercises control over the portal, opening or closing it at her whim to allow devils to wander in from the Nine Hells. She works to conceal its location, fearing that others might wrest control from her if it were discovered.

Virtually everyone in or around Vor Rukoth covets Najala's Gate for one reason or another. Some seek power, hoping to summon and command their own diabolic force. A few want to destroy it. Others want to throw it open and unleash Hell. Opportunists want only to sell maps of its location to treasure hunters. Arriving at Najala's Gate should be a climactic confrontation for adventurers in Vor Rukoth, the final step to unseating Najala. The gate does not submit to destruction easily and readily throws upon a portal to the Nine Hells to summon infernal defenders.

ABOUT THE DESIGNER

Greg Bilsland is an editor at Wizards of the Coast whose previous design work includes the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Player's Guide*, *Monster Manual 2*, and *Monster Manual 3*. He lives in Seattle.

Coyote's
Refuge

VOR RUKOTH

1/2 mile 1 mile



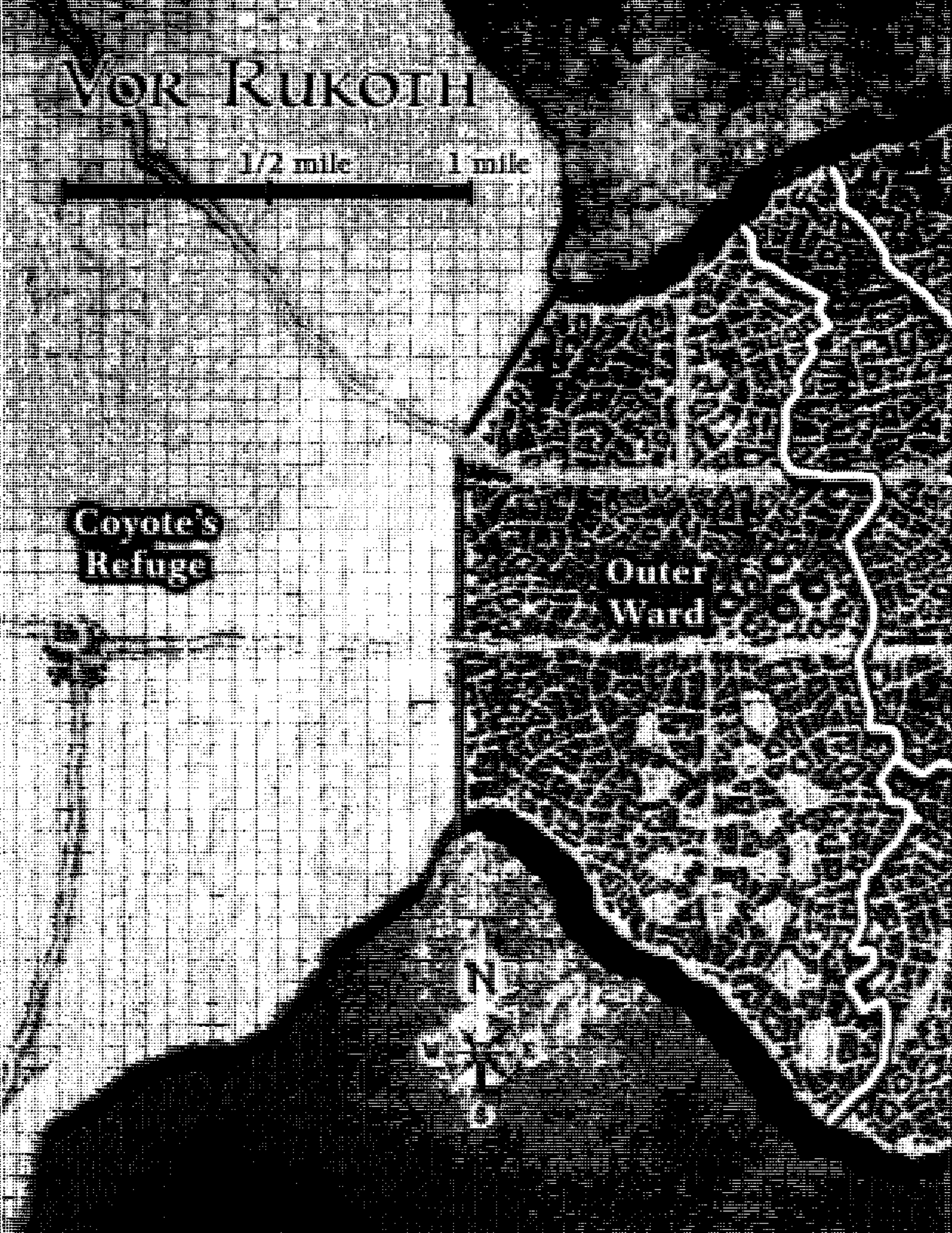
VOR RUKOTH

1/2 mile

1 mile

**Coyote's
Refuge**

**Outer
Ward**





**Obsidian
Spires**

**Nightmare
Forges**

**Lost
District**

**Blood
Grounds**

**Ruby
Court**

**Infernal
Fens**

**Golden
Estates**

**Midnight
Sea**



EXPLORE A WICKED CITY

Once the gem of the tiefling empire of Bael Turath, Vor Rukoth fell into ruin and was lost. Now rediscovered, the ancient city draws heroes and villains to its shattered streets in search of treasure. Monsters and intrigue abound in this cursed place, protecting its deepest secrets. Visitors must tread softly, lest they invoke the wrath of Vor Rukoth's undead lord, Queen Najala.

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