

Red Queen Adventure Path Plug-Ins



HERO'S BLOOD

by Tom Phillips



HERO'S BLOOD

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WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE *HERO'S BLOOD*

As the PCs make their way through rugged territory claimed by warlike barbarian clans, they discover a frontier garrison surrounded by a corpse-strewn battlefield. Upon further investigation, the PCs find that the entire garrison has been slaughtered to a man and the fort has been turned into a charnel house. Furthermore, the bodies of the barbarian besiegers and those of the slain Corovossan soldiers all bear ghastly chest-wounds and have had their hearts cut out and removed. Who or what caused these terrible mutilations? And why is the silent, lifeless garrison's main gate barred from within? What terrors may arise when the fires of courage turn to hate and the battlements run red with *Hero's Blood*?

Hero's Blood is a *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* adventure for 4 6 10th-level characters. It can be run as a standalone wilderness adventure or tied into an ongoing campaign dealing with warfare or clashes between a corrupt colonial city and the tribes of the hinterlands and is an ideal complement to the official "Red Queen Adventure Path," easily connecting to the fourth adventure in that series. This adventure deals with the theme of corruption of the mind, body, and soul, using the corruption rules presented in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Horror Adventures*, to bring an extra element of terror to PCs as they uncover acts of carnage and cruelty that are even more sinister than they appear. If you want to bring home the horrors of war to your PCs, open up the pages of this terrible tale stained crimson with blood and **Make Your Game Legendary!**



- Jason Nelson

SUPERSCRIPT REFERENCES

The following superscripts are used to reference rules not found in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*. These references have been hyperlinked to online resources in the PDF version and are provided here for your reference.

^{ACG} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Class Guide*

^{APG} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

^{ARG} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Race Guide*

^{B1} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*

^{B2} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*

^{B3} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*

^{B4} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 4*

^{B5} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 5*

^{MC} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Monster Codex*

^{OA} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Occult Adventures*

^{UC} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat*

^{UE} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Equipment*

^{UI} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Intrigue*

^{UM} = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic*

WELCOME TO ADVENTURE PATH PLUG-INS!

This product is a part of our line of support materials for extended Adventure Path-style campaign play for use with Paizo's *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*. When you see the "Adventure Path Plug-In" logo at the top of a Legendary Games product, you can expect it is designed to fit directly with the themes of a particular Adventure Path campaign. The all-star team of designers here at Legendary Games is committed to bringing you—the busy GM or player—the absolute best third party support for your Pathfinder campaign. To deliver on that commitment, we've assembled the best of the best of current gaming authors, designers and layout experts so that you can feel comfortable that Legendary Games products will be the most creative, rules-legal and well-designed content you can find. Though Adventure Path Plug-Ins all share a theme with a specific Adventure Path campaign, they are designed to be easily incorporated into your home game regardless of what campaign you may be running.

HEY, WHAT'S WITH THE NAMES?

You will see us use the phrase "Red Queen Adventure Path" instead of the title of the official Adventure Path for the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*. Or, you may see us use names such as the city-state of "Corovoss", the "Sun-rider clan", or the "Redlands Plateau" instead of the proper names of specific characters or places from those adventures. While we can create compatible products under the Open Game License, we still have to be respectful of certain content Paizo owns. Because we want to be very respectful of their content and work in partnership with them, we use these "replacement phrases." Plus, this helps the product have a more general appeal to those who may be running a home campaign that fits the same themes. In any event, we are 100% confident you know what we are talking about and will have no problem making the required connection.

SPECIAL ELECTRONIC FEATURES

We've hyperlinked this product internally from the Table of Contents and externally with links to the official Pathfinder Reference Document as well as d20PFSRD. If it is in the core rulebook, we generally didn't link to it unless the rule is an obscure one. The point is not to supersede the game books, but rather to help support you, the player, in accessing the rules, especially those from newer books or that you may not have memorized.

CONTENTS

Adventure Background	2
Part One	3
Part Two	25
Concluding the Adventure	37
Appendix 1: Austan Mileswood	38
Appendix 2: Onochtu Spirit Corruption . .	42
Appendix 3: New Rituals	45
Appendix 4: Unkeyed Maps	48

ABOUT LEGENDARY GAMES

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Adventure Background

Several weeks ago, taking advantage of a recent catastrophe affecting the city-state of Corovoss, an ambitious war leader of the Sun-rider clan gathered three hundred tribal warriors and besieged Fort Hiraksos, a fortified watchpost in the southern reaches of the great Redlands Plateau. Under the leadership of Kirak-the-Blood-Wolf, the Sun-riders directly assaulted the fort unsuccessfully several times before they settled in for a prolonged siege. With the advantage of numbers, and with the city-state of Corovoss distracted by its own problems, Kirak believed he and his warriors could afford to wait and starve-out the hated Corovossan interlopers. Unfortunately for Kirak, a single mad-man would be his undoing.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

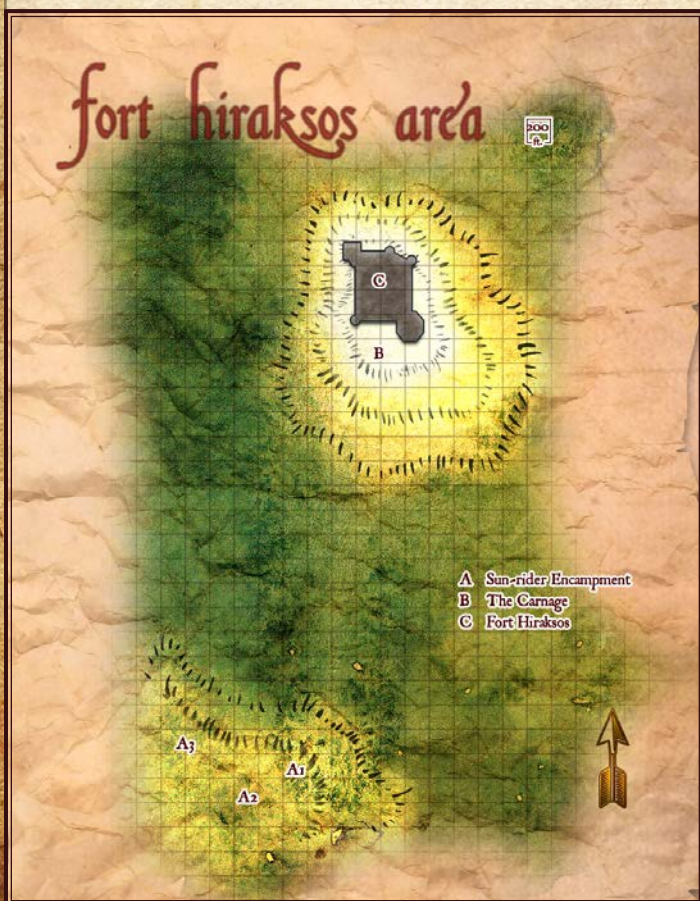
As the PCs make their way through the southernmost reaches of the searing wilderness known as the Redlands Plateau, they happen upon Fort Hiraksos and find it surrounded by a corpse-strewn battlefield. The PCs also find the entire fort's Corovossan garrison slaughtered to

a man. Yet, the Corovossan flag still flies and the fort's main gates are barred from within. Investigating further, the PCs realize that all of the corpses—the Sun-riders and the Corovossans—bear horrific, gaping chest-wounds and have had their hearts cut out and removed.

Evidence within the fort point to a single man responsible for the terrible mutilations: Austan Mileswood, a highly decorated hero of the Corovossan City Guard stationed at the fort's garrison. Suffering from madness and an ancient supernatural corruption, Austan has learned how to derive strength and courage by eating the hearts of sentient beings. The PCs eventually track Austan to an ancient well and forgotten catacombs beneath the fort that were once sacred to a degenerate clan of barbarian tribesmen. The PCs must traverse a claustrophobic labyrinth and caverns haunted by primordial cannibal spirits, undead guardians, and worse horrors. After overcoming these challenges, the PCs confront Austan only to find that he has taken drastic measures to embolden himself against the PCs' inevitable assault by performing his last Hero's Blood.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

- The PCs should begin *Hero's Blood* as 10th-level characters.
- The PCs should be close to or slightly above 11th-level by the end of the adventure.



The PCs are traveling through a region of hills and desolate badlands known as the Redlands Plateau. There are few trees here, with most of the vegetation consisting of scrub brush, stunted trees, and dry, knee-high grass.

EVENT 1: DEFEATED WARRIORS (EL 8)

This encounter takes place the evening before the PCs arrive at Fort Hiraksos.

After a grueling day of travel through the hot, often-desolate wilderness of the Redlands Plateau, you and your companions spot a defensible location on which you can establish your campsite. The sun hangs low in the sky as twilight begins to fall. As you begin to make camp, a thin plume of smoke suddenly appears in the sky above a low, sandy ridgeline a short distance away.

PCs that succeed at a DC 10 Survival check can identify the smoke as likely originating from a small campfire. The smoke comes from the campfire of a band of Sun-rider barbarian warriors—survivors of Kirak-the-Blood-Wolf's ill-fated assault on Fort Hiraksos.

Creatures: After discovering their leader's mutilated corpse in their encampment near Fort Hiraksos early this morning (see area A1 A3), the surviving Sun-rider warriors lost all interest in taking the fort. The survivors splintered into smaller groups and fled. These four warriors are desperate to regain their honor and put up a token resistance when they first encounter the PCs.

SUN-RIDER WARRIORS (4)

CR 4

XP 1,200

Human barbarian 5

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; Senses Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 11 (+3 armor, +1 deflection, +1 Dex, -2 rage)

hp 58 (5d12+20)

Fort +8, Ref +2 (+1 vs. traps), Will +4; +3 vs. magic

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft. (50 ft. when mounted on heavy war horse)

Melee masterwork klar +12 (1d6+9/x2) or handaxe +11 (1d6+6/x3)

Ranged masterwork composite longbow +7 (1d8+4/x3)

Special Attacks rage (14 rounds/day), rage powers (powerful blow +2, superstition +3)

TACTICS

During Combat The Sun-rider warriors have an initial attitude of Hostile and attack the PCs on sight. If they are not surprised, they immediately mount their heavy warhorses and fire a volley of arrows at long range, then retreat out of range and fire another volley of arrows. They then gallop in and try to perform an overrun maneuver against the PCs. If the opportunity presents itself in melee, the Sun-rider warriors try to perform a fast dismount and use their Acrobatics skill to leap off their horses and flank an opponent.

Morale If two of the Sun-rider warriors are slain, the survivors throw down their weapons and surrender.

STATISTICS

Str 22, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10

Base Atk +5; CMB +11; CMD 20

Feats Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge

Skills Handle Animal +8, Knowledge (nature) +7, Perception +9, Ride +9, Survival +9

Languages Common, Tribal tongue

SQ fast movement, trap sense +1

Other Gear masterwork studded leather, masterwork composite longbow with 1d6 arrows, handaxe, masterwork klar^{UE}, heavy horse (combat trained)

Base Statistics

When not raging, the Sun-rider warriors' statistics are: AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; hp 48; Fort +7, Will +3; Melee masterwork klar +10 (1d6+6/x2), handaxe +9 (1d6+4/x3); Str 18, Con 14; CMB +9, CMD 20.

Development: If the PCs manage to improve the Sun-rider warriors' attitude to Friendly or if the warriors surrender, they prove willing to speak to the PCs. Disturbed by their experiences at Fort Hiraksos, the warriors will not accompany the PCs there unless they are coerced by magic.

Here are answers to some possible questions the PCs might have.

Who are you? "We are warriors from the Sun-rider clan."

Why did you attack us? "We thought you were Corovossan soldiers sent to punish us for attacking the fort."

What fort? "The Corovossan fort a day's ride north of us, called Fort Hiraksos in your tongue. It has been a menace to our tribe since its construction two years ago."

How fares the fort? “Fort Hiraksos still stands, though we killed many of the lowlander dogs posted there. But we failed to take the fort and no longer want anything to do with that accursed place.”

Accursed place? What happened? “Our war leader Kirak-the-Blood-Wolf led us on a glorious crusade against Fort Hiraksos. We assaulted the fort’s walls several times before Kirak commanded us to settle in for a prolonged siege. We outnumbered the Corovossans almost eight-to-one and Kirak reasoned that Corovoss would be too distracted by the city’s current troubles to send reinforcements. Kirak reasoned that we could easily starve-out the soldiers and pick them off one by one with our arrows. So we did so, and we started to whittle them down little by little each day. But four days into our siege, the killings and mutilations began. Each night, a silent devil entered our encampment, and each morning we woke to find several of our brothers fiendishly butchered and their hearts removed! This went on each night until we found Kirak himself cruelly butchered inside his yurt when the sun rose this morning. That was enough for us.”

What will you do now? “We will return to our tribal lands in the north. We want nothing to do with that accursed fort!”

KNOWLEDGE (HISTORY, LOCAL, OR NOBILITY) CHECKS

Fort Hiraksos is a relatively new fort that has received very little attention outside of the Corovossan City Guard and the late Lord Hiraksos’s social circles. However, the PCs still might have heard something about the obscure fort. Allow each of the PCs a single Knowledge (history, local, or nobility) check to remember some facts about Fort Hiraksos.

15+ Fort Hiraksos is a small fortified garrison in the southern Redlands. It is named for its benefactor, the late Lord Brinian Hiraksos, a minor lord from Corovoss known for his hatred of the barbarian clans of the Redlands.

20+ Fort Hiraksos has a reputation as a place of punishment, where the dregs of the Corovossan City Guard are stationed. Many of the soldiers stationed at Fort Hiraksos choose the post to avoid imprisonment or execution for their various offenses.

22+ Fort Hiraksos was purposefully built on a hill shunned and considered cursed by the barbarian clans of the Redlands Plateau. Lord Hiraksos scoffed at such native superstitions and believed the shunned hill would add an additional level of security to the fort since the barbarians seemed unwilling to approach it.

25+ Fort Hiraksos was built atop a hill once sacred to the now extinct Blood Crow clan, a degenerate tribe that broke away from the Sun-rider clan centuries ago. As punishment for their blasphemous practices, the Blood Crows were hunted down and completely exterminated by the other tribes three centuries ago.

30+ The Blood Crows practiced cannibal rites before major battles and communed with evil spirits and fiendish outsiders. Unlike most of the modern barbarian clans of the Redlands, the Blood Crows were sedentary and maintained a permanent camp at a sacred location called the Well of Bloody Hearts.

40+ The Blood Crows venerated the Onochtu, a triad of evil spirits sometimes collectively referred to as the Ravenous Ones. These spirits were said to drive men into blood-frenzied madness and inspire them to perform ghastly acts of cannibalism. The three spirits of the Onochtu were called *Nkaaz*, *Ozoc*, and *Vucub*.

EVENT 2: THE BODY (EL 7 OR 10)

This encounter takes place a few miles away from Fort Hiraksos. As the PCs travel through the region, they pass over and around numerous rugged hills and sandy ridges. When the PCs reach the crest of one of these heights, they spy a ghastly scene a short distance away.

As you reach the summit of yet another sun-blasted hill, the unmistakable smell of death assails you, immediately followed by the growls of feeding beasts. At the base of the hill, less than 200 feet away, you spy a scene of bestial carnage.

Creatures: At the base of the hill, 180 feet from the PCs’ current position, a group of four dire hyenas are feeding and occasionally fighting over the remains of a Corovossan soldier from Fort Hiraksos. The soldier died in battle in one of the early Sun-rider assaults outside the fort’s walls nearly five days ago, and her comrades were unable to retrieve her body. Eventually, a dire hyena absconded with her corpse and carried it here. As the animal fed on the body several of its pack-mates arrived and have been challenging the beast for its prize. The corpse is missing its head and both legs and is nearly unrecognizable. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) check accurately identifies the corpse’s tattered red and black clothing as the uniform of the Corovossan City Guard. The dire hyenas are content to ignore the PCs unless the PCs attack or come within 60 feet of them.

DIRE HYENAS (4 OR 12)

CR 3

XP 800

N Large animal

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +8

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +4 natural, -1 size)
hp 26 (4d8+8)
Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.
Melee bite +6 (2d6+6 plus trip)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

TACTICS

Before Combat Because the dire hyenas are distracted, the PCs automatically surprise the beasts.

During Combat The dire hyenas gang up on the smallest, weakest-looking PC. They surround and flank their would-be meal hoping to take it down quickly. If they manage to disable or kill a PC the beasts try to abscond with the body and return to their lair to feed.

Morale If half of the dire hyenas are slain, the rest flee.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 15, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6
Base Atk +3; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 20 (24 vs. trip)
Feats Skill Focus (Perception, Stealth)
Skills Perception +8, Stealth +7 (+11 in tall grass or heavy undergrowth); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth in tall grass
Development: If any of the dire hyenas escape the first time the PCs encounter them, the survivors make their way to their lair—a shallow cave a mile to the southeast. Bolstered by their greater numbers, a dozen dire hyenas return one hour later seeking vengeance for any of their lost pack-mates.
Treasure: PCs searching the solder's body find a gold ring (worth 70 gp) on one of her fingers and an *everwake amulet*^{UE} stashed under her savaged and ruined chain shirt.

ENCOUNTER AREAS

There are three primary encounter locations for the PCs to explore: the Sun-rider Encampment (area A), Fort Hiraksos (areas B and C), and the forgotten caves and caverns below Fort Hiraksos that comprise the Well of Bloody Hearts (area D).

CORRUPTION EFFECTS

By the time the PCs arrive at the fort, Austan Mileswood has completed the first day of the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see area D7 and Appendix 3). The ritual takes Austan three full days to complete, after which Austan's body and soul is transformed into a vessel from which the malevolent Onochtu spirits can once again directly influence the world. As Austan progresses through the complicated, grueling ritual, the newly roused Onochtu spirits grow increasingly stronger as their vile essences slowly bleed into the world, and begin corrupting the

The Onochtu

The Onochtu—or Ravenous Ones, as the tribes of the Redlands Plateau refer to them—are a triad of evil spirits once worshipped by primitive human tribes, including the barbarian tribes of the Redlands. The three spirits that form the Onochtu are *Nkaaz*, *Ozoc*, and *Vucub*. *Nkaaz* enjoys sadistic bloodshed, either from murder or war, and delights in the desecration of corpses and the taking of corporeal trophies. *Ozoc* inspires fearlessness and ferocity, and revels in the carnage wrought by those who lose themselves in the ecstasy of battle. Bloated, ever-voracious *Vucub* is a gibbering, near-mindless entity that inspires men to indulge in acts of cannibalism. Bound together in antiquity, the Onochtu form a malevolent spiritual collective, one that is both jealous of and hungers for the flesh of living sentient beings. Though the Onochtu are supernatural entities, they are intrinsically tied to the natural world. Yet due to their supernatural and disembodied nature, they must use an insidious form of possession—represented by Onochtu spirit corruption (see Appendix 2)—to physically impact things on the Material Plane.

The ancient Blood Crow tribe of the Redlands Plateau revived the worship of these evil spirits when they broke away from the Sun-rider clan. Guided by these malignant beings, the Blood Crows engaged in horrific rituals of blood, slaughter, and cannibalism. It is from these rituals that the Blood Crow priests and shamans taught their warriors how to gain strength and courage from eating the hearts of sentient beings and thus worked to spread Onochtu spirit corruption. Eventually, the other Redlands tribes could no longer tolerate their atrocities and united to destroy the degenerate Blood Crows three centuries ago.

very fabric of reality. These effects are detailed in the **Corruption** entries noted at the end of some encounter areas (though not all of the encounter areas have them). Each **Corruption** entry is broken down into **Day 1**, **Day 2**, and **Day 3** effects, with the effects growing in magnitude until Day 3, when Austan completes the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth*. The effects are cumulative, so on **Day 3** the effects listed for **Day 1**, **Day 2**, and **Day 3** all occur. Note that when the PCs arrive at the fort, it is effectively **Day 1**.

A. SUN-RIDER ENCAMPMENT (EL 10)

Perched atop a low hill several hundred yards southwest of Fort Hiraksos is a scattered collection of small hide tents dominated by a much larger yurt bearing red and gold banners depicting the rising sun.



The Sun-rider warriors hastily abandoned this camp the day before the PCs arrive, soon after the warriors discovered their leader, Kirak-the-Blood-Wolf, slain and mutilated in his yurt (area A3). PCs that succeed at a DC 25 Knowledge (local) check can recall that the rising sun symbol on the yurt's banners is the insignia of a minor warlord from the barbarian Sun-rider clan named Kirak-the-Blood-Wolf, known as a ruthless and aggressive warleader with a keen tactical mind.

A1. Graves

Small mounds of freshly dug dirt and piled stones lay scattered at the hill's edge here, several dozen yards from the abandoned encampment.

The mounds comprise 33 hastily dug shallow graves, each containing the remains of a slain Sun-rider warrior. These warriors perished during the first few days of the siege and each body bears one or more fatal wounds inflicted by sword blades, spears, or arrows. None of the bodies are mutilated or missing their hearts.

Treasure: PCs seeking treasure here must spend 1d6+10 minutes unearthing each of the bodies. Each

time the PCs dig up one of the graves, they find a suit of masterwork studded leather, a handaxe, a masterwork **klar**^{UE}, and have a 50% chance of finding several pieces of tribal jewelry or body ornamentation worth 2d6x5 gp.

Corruption: As Austan Mileswood progresses through the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see area D7), the corrupting influence of the emergent Onochtu spirits begins to eat away at the very fabric of reality. This causes the following effects, which increase over the next three days.

Day 1: Any living creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or greater that moves within 5 feet of any of the graves is immediately filled with a palpable feeling of wrongness and dread. Other than this vague feeling of unease, there are no other game effects.

Day 2: Any living creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or greater that moves within 5 feet of any of the graves must succeed at a DC 15 Will save to resist being shaken with fear while they remain near the graves, plus an additional 2d6 minutes thereafter. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Day 3: When Day 3 begins, five wights (an EL 7 encounter) dig their way free of the graves and begin to wander the abandoned encampment seeking victims.

WIGHTS (5)

CR 3

XP 800

LE Medium undead

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 26 (4d8+8)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities undead traits

Weaknesses resurrection vulnerability

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +4 (1d4+1 plus energy drain)

Special Attacks create spawn, energy drain (1 level, DC 14)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 11, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 15

Feats Blind-Fight, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Intimidate +9, Knowledge (religion) +7, Perception +11,

Stealth +16; **Racial Modifier** +8 Stealth

Languages Common, Tribal Tongue

SQ create spawn

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Create Spawn (Su) Any humanoid creature that is slain by a wight becomes a wight itself in only 1d4 rounds. Spawn so created are less powerful than typical wights, and suffer a –2 penalty on all d20 rolls and checks, as well as –2 hp

per HD. Spawn are under the command of the wight that created them and remain enslaved until its death, at which point they lose their spawn penalties and become full-fledged and free-willed wights. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Resurrection Vulnerability (Su) A *raise dead* or similar spell cast on a wight destroys it (Will negates). Using the spell in this way does not require a material component.

A2. Abandoned Camp

The main encampment radiates south and east of Kirak's large yurt (area A3). Though only a few dozen animal hide tents (each large enough to house two warriors) remain here, the burnt-out remnants of dozens of small camp fires suggest that at least 300 warriors called this place home for the last 10 days. The surviving Sun-riders scoured the camp for weapons and items of value when they fled the previous morning. Aside from the tents and a few scattered mundane items (cooking implements, baskets, bloody bandages, etc.), nothing of real worth remains.

A3. Kirak's Yurt (EL 9)

An enormous yurt of sun-bleached animal hides stands here. Several banners depicting a blazing golden sun hang from sides of the great tent. The sound of the wind-blown banners slapping against the sides of the yurt cut through the ominous silence of the abandoned encampment.

Read or paraphrase the following text when the PCs peer into or enter the yurt:

The inside of the yurt is unsurprisingly spacious, yet dimly lit. Hides and furs cover the entire floor, encircling a stone-lined fire pit in the center of the yurt. A dozen simple wooden stools—many of them overturned—surround the fire pit. A blackened humanoid skull and a few charred bones sit half-buried in the barely smoldering ashes of the fire pit. The body of a second individual lies against the far wall of the yurt half-buried beneath a pile of sleeping furs.

The inside of the yurt is 20 feet in diameter and 12 feet high. The charred skull and bones in the fire pit belong to Kirak's mother, Mezvaele (see the **Creature** entry below). After the surviving Sun-rider warriors murdered her, the superstitious tribesmen hacked apart her corpse and burnt her remains. The second body half-buried under the blankets and furs is that of a powerfully built Sun-rider warrior bearing many tattoos and ritual scars. This is the body of Kirak-the-Blood-Wolf, the former

war leader for the Sun-rider warriors (in life a 12th level chaotic neutral human barbarian). Casual examination shows that Kirak's throat has been slit and his chest bears a ghastly open wound. A PC examining Kirak that succeeds at a DC 12 Heal check realizes the warrior's heart has been removed.

Creature: Lurking within the yurt is the undead spirit of Kirak's mother, Mezvaele, now an incorporeal undead horror known as a caller in darkness. In life, Mezvaele was an evil shaman and psychic who trafficked with malevolent spirits and evil outsiders. Mezvaele groomed her son Kirak for greatness from birth, often advising and manipulating the impressionable warrior to commit greater and greater acts of atrocity. It was Mezvaele who coerced Kirak to defy their Sun-rider clan chieftains and gather his own warband to lay siege to Fort Hiraksos. The old shaman helped Kirak gather a horde of loyal followers and used her magic to compel them even when they faced stubborn opposition from the Corovossan soldiers. Though Mezvaele loved her only son dearly, her true goals had more to do with increasing her own personal power than helping her son establish himself as an influential war leader. In truth, Mezvaele learned



long ago about the ancient Blood Crow clan and coveted the secrets and powerful magic that she believed lay somewhere in the forgotten caverns of the Well of Bloody Hearts.

Though she manipulated Kirak and his followers to lay siege to Fort Hiraksos and bolstered their attacks with her vile magic, Mezvaele's plans were foiled when Austan Mileswood crept into Kirak's yurt, murdered the war-leader in his sleep, and cut out and devoured the man's heart. Upon discovering Kirak's mutilated body, the remaining Sun-riders—then only numbering about 40 healthy warriors—lost their desire to take the fort and turned on Mezvaele, blaming her for their leader's death and for the many Sun-rider warriors lost over the previous week's attacks and siege. Mezvaele, well past her 70th winter, was quickly overwhelmed by her son's former followers. She was cut down and dismembered, and her remains tossed into the fire pit in the middle of Kirak's yurt.

Mezvaele's spirit rose from the dead as a caller in darkness just after the sun set the day before the PCs arrive at the Sun-rider encampment. She appears as an inky-black swirling vortex of darkness in which hovers the old woman's contorted, ghostly face. Though Mezvaele's mind remains intact and is as sharp as ever, her soul is thoroughly corrupted from a long life of greed, murder, and wicked deeds. This covetousness has followed Mezvaele into undeath, and she is now driven to consume the minds and souls of every living creature she encounters.

MEZVAELE

CR 9

XP 6,400

Caller in darkness

CE Large undead (incorporeal)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +22

Aura unnatural aura (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 20, flat-footed 12 (+3 deflection, +7 Dex, +1 dodge, -1 size)

hp 97 (13d8+39)

Fort +7, **Ref** +11, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities incorporeal; **Immune** undead traits

Weaknesses sunlight powerlessness

OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee incorporeal touch +15 (6d6 plus consume mind)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks consume mind, wrap in despair

Psychic Magic (CL 10th; concentration +12)

12 PE—**aversion** (2 PE, DC 15), **emotive block** (3 PE, DC 16), **greater oneiric horror** (4 PE, DC 17), **mind thrust V** (5 PE,

DC 18), **paranoia** (2 PE, DC 15), **telepathic projection** (1 PE, DC 14)

TACTICS

During Combat Mezvaele begins combat by casting *aversion* at the PC wearing the heaviest armor. She then casts *mind thrust V* at the closest PC before moving to engulf as many PCs as possible inside her incorporeal form (subjecting them to her wrap in despair and consume mind attacks). Thereafter, she makes incorporeal touch attacks against the PCs until she is destroyed. She pursues fleeing PCs, but only if it is night. She does not leave the yurt during the day.

Morale Mezvaele fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 25, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 27 (can't be tripped)

Feats Ability Focus (wrap in despair), Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Intimidate, Stealth)

Skills Fly +5, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Perception +22, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +21

Languages Abyssal, Tribal tongue

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Consume Mind (Su) Whenever a caller in darkness hits a creature with its incorporeal touch attack, or begins its turn occupying the same space as a creature, it drains away a portion of that creature's mind, inflicting 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. This is a mind-affecting effect, but not a negative energy effect. If the caller in darkness reduces a living creature's Wisdom score to 0 in this way, it absorbs that creature's mind, killing it. The caller in darkness gains psychic energy equal to the creature's HD and access to all of the creature's memories. A creature whose mind is absorbed in this way cannot be resurrected until the caller in darkness is slain, unless the caster first uses a *wish* or *miracle* to free the creature's mind.

Wrap in Despair (Su) Any living creature that begins its turn occupying the same space as a caller in darkness must succeed on a DC 21 Will save or be overwhelmed by crippling depression for 1d4 rounds. Affected creatures are unable to take any action. Adjacent allies can offer words of encouragement as a standard action to grant the creature a new saving throw. If the creature succeeds on a saving throw granted in this way, it is immune to the caller in darkness's wrap in despair ability for 24 hours. Creatures with Intelligence scores of 2 or less are immune to this effect. This is a mind-affecting, emotion, and fear effect. The saving throw DC is Charisma-based.

Treasure: Fearing a reprisal from the afterlife, the surviving Sun-riders looted most of the camp, but not Kirak's yurt. Kirak's suit of +3 *hide armor* sits on a wooden

stand near his body. Hanging from the same stand is Kirak's +1 *invigorating klar*^{UE}. PCs searching Kirak's pile of sleeping furs easily uncover a stout wooden chest carved to resemble the head of a snarling wolf. Inside the chest is 316 gp, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, a *potion of speak with animals*, and Mezvaele's skull-capped *staff of dark flame*^{UE} with 2 charges remaining.

Corruption: As Austan Mileswood progresses through the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see area D7), the corrupting influence of the emergent Onochtu spirits begins to eat away at the very fabric of reality. This causes the following effects, which increase over the next three days.

Day 1: Any living creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or greater that enters the yurt is immediately filled with a nearly overwhelming sense of dread and revulsion and must succeed at a DC 17 Fortitude save or become sickened while they remain inside the yurt plus an additional 1d6 rounds. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Day 2: Unnatural darkness fills the interior of Kirak's yurt, filling the yurt with dim light during the day and darkness during the evening hours. This effect is identical to a *darkness* spell (CL 20).

Day 3: Mezvaele gains the Advanced Creature simple template. Newly invigorated, the caller in darkness departs Kirak's yurt each evening to scour the abandoned encampment (area A), the fields of carnage (area B), and the fort (area C) seeking living creatures to kill. It returns to the yurt during the daylight hours.

B. THE CARNAGE (EL 8 OR 11)

Scores of human corpses, some half-buried in the shifting chalky scree, lay scattered before the gates of Fort Hiraksos. Though some of the bodies are clad in tattered black and red uniforms, most wear the barbaric skins and furs of the primitive people of the Redlands Plateau. Dozens of vultures and clouds of black flies feast on the foul-smelling remains.

When Kirak-the-Blood-Wolf's horde assaulted Fort Hiraksos, the open area south of the fort's main gate (area C1) became a blood-soaked killing ground. In the first few direct assaults, the soldiers of Fort Hiraksos engaged the barbarians outside the fort's walls. Though they were vastly outnumbered, the better-equipped Corovossan soldiers were able to hold their own against the primitive tribesmen and the forays cost the Sun-riders dearly. After several very costly direct assaults, Kirak ordered his warriors to fall back and settle in for a prolonged siege. Now, the area extending 200 feet south

of the main gate is littered with the corpses of dozens of Corovossan soldiers and scores of Sun-rider warriors. None of the bodies here are mutilated or missing their hearts.

Rotting Corpses: The reek of rotting bodies is almost overwhelming here and the air is thick with buzzing flies and blood-hungry midges. The first time they enter this area, each PC must succeed at a DC 14 Fortitude save to resist being nauseated for 1 round and then sickened for an additional 3d6 rounds.

Corpse Flies (CR 4): Though most of the flies are common insects, there are many dangerous corpse flies (see **Corpse Flies** sidebar) also buzzing about the corpse-strewn area around Fort Hiraksos. When the PCs come within 100 feet of the fort, the flies and midges begin to harass them mercilessly. Each PC must succeed at a DC 15 Perception check to spot the corpse flies and avoid becoming infested by them (as described in the **Corpse Flies** sidebar).

Creatures: The common vultures squawk defiantly if the PCs approach, but they scatter when anyone comes within 10 feet and generally do not pose a threat to the PCs. However, five juvenile rukhs have gathered together for a grisly feast about 20 feet in front of the fort's main gate (area C1). The oversized two-headed vultures are busy feeding and are not particularly alert; they suffer a 6 penalty to Perception checks. Additionally, the juvenile rukhs are so obsessed with their feeding that they only attack if they notice PCs within 30 feet of them or if they are attacked first. A juvenile rukh is nearly as large as a horse, so it's likely the PCs spot them from dozens of yards away.

The juvenile rukhs' mother, a massive creature with a 30-foot wingspan, currently sleeps in her recently created nest atop the East Tower (area C11), having already sated her appetite. If the juvenile rukhs are injured, they begin to shriek for their mother, who automatically awakens and arrives to defend her young 1d4+1 rounds later.

Note that combat here has a 20% chance per round of being noticed by the wood golems that patrol the fort's walls (see area C3 for details).

JUVENILE RUKHS (5)

CR 3

XP 800 each

N Large magical beast

Init +2; Senses low-light vision; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +4 natural, -1 size)

hp 37 (5d10+10)

Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor)

Corpse Flies (CR 4)

Corpse Flies are tiny black flies that are attracted to rotting animal carcasses. They typically mingle with swarms of common flies, though they are exceptionally aggressive towards living creatures. A creature that succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (nature), Perception, or Survival check notices them and distinguishes them from common flies. Once a creature is aware of the corpse flies, it can use a free action to simply wave them away and prevent infestation. If unnoticed, one or more of the corpse flies slip into the creature's mouth or nostrils. Once there, they lay a clutch of eggs and embed them in their host's nasal cavity before dying. The eggs hatch 1d4+1 days later and scores of tiny black maggots begin to devour the surrounding flesh and cartilage. Two days after the death of their host, the corpse fly maggots transform into adult corpse flies and depart to seek a new host. *Remove disease* kills any corpse flies or unhatched eggs in or on a host. Alternately, if a creature spends 10 minutes and succeeds at a DC 25 Heal check, he or she can remove the corpse flies and eggs from a creature with a knife, dagger, or similar implement. However, the host creature takes 3d6 points of slashing damage and 1d6 points of Charisma drain from the invasive, disfiguring procedure.

CORPSE FLIES

(HAZARD)

Type infestation; **Save** Fortitude DC 18

Onset 1d4+1 days; **Frequency** 1/hour

Effect 1d4 Con damage

Melee 2 bites +7 (1d8+2), 2 talons +6 (1d6+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

TACTICS

During Combat The juvenile rukhs become enraged when their feast is interrupted. Three of the juvenile rukhs gang up and charge the closest PC. The other two juvenile rukhs take to the air and attempt to attack PCs that hang back from melee with fly-by attacks.

Morale As soon as the first juvenile rukh takes damage, all of the rukhs begin shrieking for their mother who arrives in 1d6 rounds as described above. If the mother rukh is slain the juveniles rukhs flee and do not return to the fort for 1d4 days. As long as the mother rukh lives, they fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** 14, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 20

Feats Flyby Attack, Snatch, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Fly -4, Perception +17; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Perception

Treasure: PCs looking for valuables find very little

of worth here, aside from the combatants' armor and weapons. PCs looking for such items can easily find serviceable suits of masterwork leather armor, masterwork chain shirts, longswords, javelins, hand axes, klars, or daggers if they spend at least a minute sorting through the scattered piles of bodies. Persistent PCs that spend at least two hours searching through the carnage that succeed at a DC 20 Perception check can scrounge up 3d6x5 gp in coins and ornamental jewelry (wedding rings, tribal beads, gold teeth, etc.).

Corruption: As Austan Mileswood progresses through the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see area D7), the corrupting influence of the emergent Onochtū spirits begins to eat away at the very fabric of reality. This causes the following effects, which increase over the next three days.

Day 1: Any living creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or greater that enters this area is immediately filled with a palpable feeling of wrongness and dread. Other than this vague feeling of unease, there are no other game effects.

Day 2: Any living creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or greater that enters this area must succeed at a DC 15 Will save to resist being shaken with fear while they remain here plus an additional 1d6 minutes. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Day 3: When Day 3 begins, seven wights (an EL 8 encounter) stir to unlife and begin to haunt the battlefield. Clever creatures, they cover themselves with corpses and attempt to take the PCs by surprise. This grants them a +4 circumstance bonus to their Stealth checks.

WIGHTS (7)

CR 3

XP 800

LE Medium undead

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 26 (4d8+8)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities undead traits

Weaknesses resurrection vulnerability

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +4 (1d4+1 plus energy drain)

Special Attacks create spawn, energy drain (1 level, DC 14)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 11, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 15

Feats Blind-Fight, Skill Focus (Perception)



Skills Intimidate +9, Knowledge (religion) +7, Perception +11, Stealth +16; **Racial Modifier** +8 Stealth

Languages Common

SQ create spawn

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Create Spawn (Su) Any humanoid creature that is slain by a wight becomes a wight itself in only 1d4 rounds. Spawn so created are less powerful than typical wights, and suffer a –2 penalty on all d20 rolls and checks, as well as –2 hp per HD. Spawn are under the command of the wight that created them and remain enslaved until its death, at which point they lose their spawn penalties and become full-fledged and free-willed wights. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Resurrection Vulnerability (Su) A *raise dead* or similar spell cast on a wight destroys it (Will negates). Using the spell in this way does not require a material component.

C. FORT HIRAKSOS

Fort Hiraksos sits atop a large hill in the southern reaches of the great Redlands Plateau, several hundred miles north of the city-state of Corovoss. Forty years ago, the fort's namesake, Lord Brinian Hiraksos, lost his three adult sons to a Sun-rider raiding party while the young nobles were travelling through the Redlands with a merchant caravan. Because of that loss, Lord Hiraksos developed a lifelong hatred of the tribesmen of the Redlands Plateau and sought unsuccessfully until his death five years ago to convince the king of Corovoss to send his army into the Redlands to completely exterminate the barbarian clans.

Though Lord Hiraksos failed to instigate an all-out war with the clans, the wealthy noble was eventually able to privately finance the construction of a fortified garrison in the southern Redlands. Unfortunately for the aged and embittered Lord Hiraksos, the fort was not completed until three months after his death. Since its construction two years ago, Fort Hiraksos has guarded Corovoss's northern border from potential barbarian raids and other monstrous threats. The fort has also been used numerous times as a staging area for Corovoss's sporadic preemptory assaults on the barbarian clans, which has earned the fort a contemptible reputation among the barbarian tribesmen.

Features of the Fort

The walls of Fort Hiraksos are constructed of gray stone blocks and stand 20 feet high. The walls are punctuated by three 20-foot tall round towers, a 35-foot tall square tower (called the West Tower), and a 60-foot tall octagonal tower (called the East Tower). Within the walls stands a two-story wooden barracks building and



an enormous pile of smoldering wooden debris that was once the stables. The barracks has a steeply pitched roof covered with rows of pale gray slate tiles.

The ceilings inside the towers and barracks are 10 feet high. Unless otherwise noted, the towers and barracks are only lit by exterior light (dimly illuminated by arrowslits during the day and dark during the night). The arrowslits are four feet tall, cross-shaped, and fishtail at their bottoms. The arrowslits are too narrow for Medium characters to squeeze through, although a Small character can slip through as a full round action with a successful DC 30 Escape Artist check. Unless otherwise stated, the fort features strong wooden doors with sturdy locks (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 25, Disable Device DC 30), though the keys are now in Austan Mileswood's possession (area D7).

C1. Main Gate

A massive set of iron-banded oak doors bisects the fort's southern wall here. Each door has the image of a great snarling tiger carved in bas relief. The doors are pitted and notched with dozens of axe-marks.

The fort's main gate consists of a pair of reinforced oak doors that are sealed and barred from within with a heavy iron bar (hardness 5, hp 300 (now reduced to 220), break DC 40). Each door is 14 feet tall and 5 feet wide. If the PCs attempt to break down or destroy the doors, the noise automatically alerts the wood golems (see area C3), who arrive in 1d6 rounds to investigate.

Fort Hiraksos



C2. Drill Yard

The fort's drill yard is dusty, with patches of desiccated weeds growing along the walls. A well with a protective wooden lid stands in the northeast corner of the yard and a small stone-lined fire pit covered with a scorched cooking grate sits to the southwest.

The soldiers stationed at Fort Hiraksos used the drill yard for their morning and evening inspection assemblies, for training, and occasionally for consuming meals and recreation. The ground here is dusty and flat and scored by countless boot prints. Halfway between the garrison building (area C15) and the southwest bastion tower (area C3a) is a small fire pit filled with ash and charred wood. This is where the fort's soldiers cooked their own meals. An empty cauldron sits inside the fire pit and two well-used iron cooking grates lay in the dust nearby.

Creatures: If the PCs have not dealt with them yet, the wood golems (area C3) spot the PCs almost immediately unless the PCs use stealth or magic to hide. Additionally, if the haunt in area C10 has not been destroyed, PCs in the drill yard within 50 feet of the East Tower are targeted by a phantom arrow attack each round (see area C10 for details).

C3. Walls and Bastion Towers (EL 9)

The stone walls of Fort Hiraksos stand 20 feet high and 5-10 feet thick in places. The tops of the walls are fortified parapets, topped by 4-1/2 foot tall crenellated battlements. The walls connect to the octagonal East Tower (areas C6-C11), the rectangular West Tower (areas C12-C14), and three smaller bastion towers (areas C3a-C3c). Three stout wooden ladders provide access to the parapets.

The parapets are littered with dozens of dead Corovossan soldiers, all pierced with multiple arrows and javelins. Though a few of the corpses lay sprawled where they died, most of them have been wedged into standing positions between the wall crenellations in an attempt to make the fort's walls appear fully manned. Most of the bodies bear the same ghastly chest wounds. A character examining the chest wounds that succeeds at a DC 10 Heal check realize the soldiers have had their hearts cut out, while a character succeeding at a DC 15 Heal check realizes the chest wounds were inflicted post-mortem.

Creatures: Fort Hiraksos had a squad of five wood golems that constantly patrolled the walls. Over the course of the Sun-rider attack and siege, two of the golems were destroyed. The remaining three wood golems continue to patrol the walls together, marching

single file down along the stone walkway. The golems were programmed to recognize the soldiers stationed at Fort Hiraksos as allies, including Austan Mileswood (area D7). However, the wood golems do not recognize the PCs as allies, and attack them on sight. The wood golems patrol the walls constantly, taking 18 minutes to circumnavigate the entire wall. The golems move slowly (moving at a rate of 20 feet per round) along the walls, and pause for 2 minutes when they reach areas C3a, C3b, C3c, C9 and C13.

Though not particularly perceptive, the wood golems are constantly roving the walls and looking for enemies. Unless the PCs use magic to mask their presence or are exceptionally stealthy, the wood golems have a 30% chance per round of spotting the PCs when the PCs enter the drill yard (area C2) or scale any of the fort's towers or walls. Additionally, combat outside the fort's walls (see area B) has a 20% chance per round of attracting the golems' attention, and noisily hacking at or breaking down the main gate (area C1) automatically alerts them.

WOOD GOLEMS (3)

CR 6

XP 2,400

N Medium construct

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 64 (8d10+20)

Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

DR 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +12 (2d6+4)

Special Attacks splintering

TACTICS

During Combat The wood golems begin combat by firing a volley of wooden shards with their splintering ability. After that, they move in and pummel foes with their wooden fists. They pursue the PCs relentlessly, but do not pursue the PCs if they move beyond the fort's walls.

Morale The mindless wood golems fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 25 (30 vs. trip)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Immunity to Magic (Ex) A wood golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance, with the exception of spells and spell-like abilities that have the Fire descriptor, which affect it normally. In addition,

certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

- *Warp wood* or *wood shape* slows a wood golem (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds (no save).
- *Repel wood* drives the golem back 60 feet and deals 2d12 points of damage to it (no save).
- A magical attack that deals cold damage breaks any *slow* effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for every 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points. A wood golem gets no saving throw against attacks that deal cold damage.

Splintering (Su) As a free action once every 1d4+1 rounds, a wood golem can launch a barrage of razor-sharp wooden splinters from its body in a 20-foot-radius burst. All creatures caught within this area take 6d6 points of slashing damage (Reflex DC 14 halves). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Treasure: The dead soldiers still wear their arms and armor. PCs that spend at least three hours gathering equipment around the fort's walls can collect the following functional items: 19 chain shirts, 16 longswords, 21 longspears, 19 daggers, 21 javelins, 11 longbows, and 112 arrows.

Corruption: As Austan Mileswood progresses through the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see area D7), the corrupting influence of the emergent Onochtu spirits begins to eat away at the very fabric of reality. This causes the following effects, which increase over the next three days.

Day 1: Any living creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or greater that walks the walls or bastion towers begins to see flickering movement out of the corner of their eyes, almost as if the corpses are twitching and subtly moving when not viewed directly.

Day 2: Select a random PC. That PC sees the face of one of the dead soldiers suddenly contort into a horrified grimace as the dead body convulses and emits a terrible inhuman scream. The scream is only audible to the selected PC, who must succeed at a DC 20 Will save to resist being shaken and deafened for 1 hour. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. This effect only happens once.

Day 3: When Day 3 begins, seven wights (an EL 8 encounter) stir to unlife from among the dead bodies. If the wood golems have not been destroyed, assume the golems easily dispatch the wights shortly after they rise. Otherwise, the wights begin to stalk the fort seeking victims.

WIGHTS (7)**CR 3**

XP 800

LE Medium undead

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11**DEFENSE****AC** 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)**hp** 26 (4d8+8)**Fort** +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5**Defensive Abilities** undead traits**Weaknesses** resurrection vulnerability**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** slam +4 (1d4+1 plus energy drain)**Special Attacks** create spawn, energy drain (1 level, DC 14)**STATISTICS****Str** 12, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 11, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 15**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 15**Feats** Blind-Fight, Skill Focus (Perception)**Skills** Intimidate +9, Knowledge (religion) +7, Perception +11, Stealth +16; **Racial Modifier** +8 Stealth**Languages** Common**SQ** create spawn**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Create Spawn (Su) Any humanoid creature that is slain by a wight becomes a wight itself in only 1d4 rounds. Spawn so created are less powerful than typical wights, and suffer a –2 penalty on all d20 rolls and checks, as well as –2 hp per HD. Spawn are under the command of the wight that created them and remain enslaved until its death, at which point they lose their spawn penalties and become full-fledged and free-willed wights. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Resurrection Vulnerability (Su) A *raise dead* or similar spell cast on a wight destroys it (Will negates). Using the spell in this way does not require a material component.

C3a. Southwest Bastion Tower

Five motionless soldiers lean against the crenellations along the walls of this rounded tower-top. All of them bear bloody wounds and several have multiple arrows protruding from them.

These soldiers are all dead. After falling to Sun-rider bowmen, the remaining living soldiers propped their bodies up as a ruse to make the fort's garrison appear larger than it was. These bodies bear the same ghastly chest wounds as the soldiers described in area C2.

C3b. and C3c. North Bastion Tower and Northeast Bastion Tower

Unlike the Southwest Bastion Tower (area C3a), these two towers saw much less action during the Sun-rider attacks and contain no bodies.

C4. Ruined Stables (EL 9)

The partially collapsed ruin of a barn and stables stands here. Most of the structure's roof has burned away and its timbers still trail thin wisps of smoke from the fire that recently consumed it.

On the second day of the Sun-rider siege, the tribesmen launched barrages of fire arrows into the fort's drill yard, hoping to destroy the wooden buildings and sow confusion. Though the Corovossan soldiers kept the garrison building (area C15) from burning down, the stables and the twelve horses kept inside it were not so lucky.

Though it's possible to enter the partially collapsed building, the ruined stable is a tangled mess of charred timbers and smoldering debris. The entire area is considered difficult terrain and vision is reduced to 10 feet due to billowing smoke and the collapsed wreckage. Additionally, when a PC inside the ruined stable moves 10 feet or more in the same round, the PC must succeed at a DC 17 Reflex save to avoid taking 1d6 points of damage from collapsing debris.

Creature: In addition to the nonmagical fire arrows used by the Sun-rider bowmen, the fort was also targeted by the Sun-rider shaman Mezvaele (see area A3), who summoned evil outsiders and elemental creatures that rampaged inside the fort's walls. Though most of these creatures were destroyed, a pair of heat swarms still lurks in the smoldering ruins of the stables. These strange creatures appear as clouds of tiny red, orange, and gold motes of flickering sparks that radiate a great deal of heat. If the PCs approach within 10 feet of the ruined stable, the heat swarms emerge and attack.

HEAT SWARMS (2)**CR 7**

XP 3,200

NE Diminutive outsider (elemental, extraplanar, fire, swarm)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15**Aura** fiery aura (20 ft., DC 16 Fort, 1d6 fire)**DEFENSE****AC** 21, touch 21, flat-footed 14 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 size)**hp** 67 (9d10+18)**Fort** +7, **Ref** +12, **Will** +6**DR** 10/--; **Immune** fire, weapon damage, elemental traits, swarm traits**Weaknesses** swarm traits, vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee swarm (2d6 plus 2d6 fire and burn)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks burn (2d6, DC 16), distraction (DC 16)

TACTICS

During Combat The heat swarms always try to engulf as many PCs as possible.

Morale The heat swarms consider the ruined stables their territory and fight to the death as long as the PCs remain within 10 feet of it. Otherwise, the heat swarms retreat into the collapsed stables if reduced to 20 hit points and make their final stand there. They never willingly move more than 30 feet from the stables.

STATISTICS

Str 1, **Dex** 24, **Con** 14, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +9; **CMB** --; **CMD** --

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Finesse

Skills Fly +12, Knowledge (planes) +10, Perception +15, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +18, Survival +12

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fiery Aura (Ex) Anyone within 20 feet of a heat swarm must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of heat damage per round from the intense heat. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Treasure: A PC that spends at least 1 minute searching through the ruined stable and succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check locates a scorched, but still usable +1 *longsword* clutched in the skeletal hands of a soldier's charred corpse and a set of magical silver horseshoes that function as both a set of *horseshoes of speed* and *horseshoes of a zephyr* on the corpse of charred horse.

C5. The Well

A well with a waist-high fieldstone rim stands here, midway between the garrison building and the northwest wall. The well is securely capped with a hinged wooden lid and a wooden bucket and coil of rope lay nearby.

The hinged wooden lid capping the well weighs 40 pounds. The well itself is slightly less than five feet in diameter and is 50 feet deep, with the bottom 10 feet full of fresh cold water. Anyone peering into the well can see the sides of the well shaft are lined with ancient weathered stones, obviously much older than the fieldstones that form the well's rim. Many of the ancient stones lining the well shaft are clearly engraved with strange symbols and runes. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the symbols as

significant to the worship of primordial nature spirits, while a successful DC 40 Knowledge (religion) check identifies them as significant to the worship of a triad of evil nature spirits collectively known as the Onochtu (see **The Onochtu** sidebar).

PCs examining the well that succeed at a DC 12 Perception check notice dried blood smears on the well's wooden lid. The blood was left there by Austan Mileswood shortly after he murdered Commander Etranus (see area **C15e**). After extracting her heart, Austan fled here carrying his blood-soaked satchel of recently harvested hearts. He then descended the well and made his way to the Sanctum of Bloody Rebirth (area **D7**) to invoke the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth*.

If the PCs descend more than 40 feet down the well, they reach area **D1**.

C6. Chaplain's Office

This small room contains a small wooden desk, behind which sits a tall-backed wooden chair. Sitting atop the desk is a disheveled stack of papers, four books, and a small wooden coffer. Three plain wooden chairs sit in front of the desk. A tapestry depicting a glorious sunrise over a sprawling walled city covers most of the north while and a set of ascending spiral stairs is set in the southeast corner.

This was the office of Brother Ezekran, the fort's chaplain. Brother Ezekran used this office to prepare his twice-weekly sermons and to counsel the fort's soldiers, many of whom often became agitated or depressed after spending only a few months at this bleak and remote posting.

The wooden coffer on the desk has the name "Ezekran Highmark" branded onto its lid. The coffer is unlocked and contains three vials of black ink, two quill pens, a partially used block of sealing wax, and 24 sheets of blank paper. The papers on top of the desk are either status reports intended for Brother Ezekran's superiors in Corovoss or personal letters to or from distant colleagues and family. The books consist of two unremarkable prayer books, a book on military-themed religious sermons, and Brother Ezekran's private journal. The journal depicts Ezekran as a serious, deeply religious, and dedicated spiritual leader that was plagued by self-doubt and bouts of depression lasting for weeks at a time. Most of the journal entries are tedious and unremarkable, except for the last few pages detailed below:

Ten days before the PCs arrive: This entry mentions the sudden appearance of the Sun-rider horde and

details the Sun-riders' initial direct assaults on the main gate.

Eight days before the PCs arrive: This entry mentions the Sun-riders have ceased their direct assaults and have settled in for a prolonged siege. Ezekran notes that a third of the garrison's soldiers have been killed.

Five days before the PCs arrive: In this entry, Ezekran notes that there are only 13 soldiers still alive including the fort's commander, and that they are hopelessly outnumbered at least 10-to-1.

Three days before the PCs arrive: This entry mentions that a terrible fiend haunts the fort and that yesterday morning and this morning Ezekran and the surviving soldiers awoke to discover that several of their dead comrades have had their hearts cruelly cut from their bodies. Ezekran speculates that some undead spirit or demonic abomination summoned by the Sun-riders is to blame, for he notes that the fiend has avoided being seen by the constantly vigilant wood golem guardians.

Two days before the PCs arrive: This entry contains only a few hastily scrawled words: "Three of use left now. All is lost. I am undone."

Treasure: The tapestry on the north wall depicts the city of Corovoss. Though it weighs 120 pounds and is nearly eight feet long when rolled up, the tapestry is valuable and worth 800 gp for its exquisite workmanship. Additionally, anyone looking at the underside of the desk can easily spot a slim leather holster affixed to it that holds a masterwork dagger and two wands (a *wand of searing light* with 4 charges and a *wand of cure moderate wounds* with 39 charges). Finally, anyone examining the wooden coffer on the desk that succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check notices a cleverly hidden clasp inside the coffer that opens its false bottom. The false bottom hides a small space just large enough to hold a *ring of the sophisticate*^{UE} wrapped in a white cloth handkerchief.

C7. Chapel (EL 8)

This spacious chapel is unfurnished except for a simple altar of roughly hewn white marble sitting a few feet in front of the south wall. A set of four tapestries—each depicting several deities and divine entities—adorn the east, west, southeast, and southwest walls. An unlit hooded lantern hangs from an iron hook next to the door in the middle of the north wall.

Brother Ezekran conducted services here twice each week, which were attended by most of the fort's soldiers. Aside from the altar, the chapel is unfurnished, so

worshippers stood or knelt during these services while Brother Ezekran preached standing behind the marble altar. The altar is carved from a single block of marble and weighs 650 pounds. The hooded lantern is unlit and is half-full of lantern oil.

Haunt: Though Brother Ezekran was a stalwart and faithful man and took his pastoral responsibilities seriously, he secretly harbored a fatalistic attitude that led him to believe that all life events were predetermined and inevitable. During the final days of the Sun-rider siege, Brother Ezekran's sorely tested faith finally crumbled. Upon losing his faith Brother Ezekran spiraled into a deep inexorable depression that led him to commit suicide by hanging himself in his private quarters (area C8). Ezekran's suicide caught the attention of the newly roused Onochtu spirits. The evil spirits fed on Ezekran's despair and death, and used the failed cleric's departing lifeforce to manifest a dangerous haunt in this once-holy chapel.

Shortly after the PCs enter the chapel, the temperature drops dramatically and a ghostly black hangman's noose materializes a foot or so over the head of each PC. The nooses look to be made of an oily black mist and radiate an intense amount of cold.

PHANTOM NOOSES

CR 8

4,800 XP

CE persistent haunt

Caster Level 8th

Notice Perception DC 20 (to notice the room's temperature drop dramatically) **hp** 90, or see **Destruction** below; **Trigger** constant (always in effect); **Reset** 1 day; **Weakness** nooses affected by physical damage

Effect Two rounds after the first PC enters the chapel, a chill fills the air and a black hangman's noose appears hovering over the head of each PC. Each noose follows its target unerringly as long as they remain in the chapel, disappearing if a PC leaves the room and reappearing if the PC returns. Each round, a noose attempts a combat maneuver check to wrap itself around its target PC's neck (each black noose has a CMB of +20). If the noose succeeds, the victim cannot move out of the square in which the noose ensnared them, nor can the victim speak or cast spells with verbal components. Additionally, when first ensnared, a victim must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or become fatigued as their body is overwhelmed by intense supernatural cold. At the beginning of each round in which a victim is ensnared by a noose, the victim takes 4d8 points of damage as the noose tightens and begins crushing their neck. Half of this damage is cold damage and half is constriction and suffocation damage. A victim can escape a noose with a successful DC 30 Escape Artist check, a DC 30 Strength check, or by



severing the noose with an attack with a slashing weapon. Each noose has AC 20, hardness 5, and 20 hit points. A destroyed noose melts away into an oily, foul-smelling mist.

Destruction Each noose that materializes above a PC must be physically destroyed, followed by the casting of a *hallow* spell on the chapel. Alternately, *holy smite* cast in the area permanently destroys the haunt.

Treasure: The four tapestries depict all of the most commonly worshipped good and neutral deities, surrounded by their divine servants. They are of fine workmanship and are worth 100 gp each, or 600 gp if sold as a set. Each tapestry weighs 50 pounds.

C8. Chaplain's Quarters (EL 8)

This small, tidy, wedge-shaped room contains a simple bed and a wooden chest reinforced with brass bands and hardware.

This was Brother Ezekran's private quarters. Ezekran slept and occasionally took his meals here, but otherwise spent very little time in this small claustrophobic room.

The room smells strongly of rot and decay from Brother Ezekran's corpse (see **Creature** below).

Creature: As described in the **Haunt** entry in area C7, Brother Ezekran took his own life after suffering a severe mental breakdown during the final days of the Sun-rider siege. Believing all was lost, Ezekran abandoned the few remaining Corovossan survivors as well as his faith, and hung himself in this small bedchamber. Ezekran's cowardly and blasphemous act caught the attention of the Onochtu spirits, who implanted a fraction of their essence into Ezekran's dying body, instantly corrupting it and transforming it into an undead monstrosity.

Brother Ezekran still hangs slumped and head down in the northern corner of the room, his form held up by the rope he used to asphyxiate himself. When the PCs open the door to this room, Brother Ezekran stirs to unlife tries to yank the rope free from the small iron lantern-hook on the wall. Brother Ezekran is a powerful unique form of wight whose slam attack acts as a catalyst for Onochtu spirit corruption. See Brother Ezekran's stat block below and Appendix 2 for additional information.



BROTHER EZEKRAN

CR 8

XP 4,800

Advanced unique wight

CE Medium undead

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 114 (8d8+32)

Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +9

Immune undead traits

Weaknesses resurrection vulnerability

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +11 (1d4+6 plus energy drain)

Special Attacks energy drain (1 level, DC 20), Onochtu infection (DC 19)

TACTICS

Before Combat When the PCs enter area C8, Brother Ezekran lurches to unlife, though he is still held fast by the rope around his neck. To move from his current position, Brother Ezekran must use a standard action to break the rope. This requires a successful DC 12 Strength check.

During Combat Brother Ezekran shambles forward to attack the closest PC with its slam attack. The wight follows the PCs if they retreat and chases them relentlessly throughout the fort.

Morale Brother Ezekran fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 17, Con —, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 19

Base Atk +6; CMB +10; CMD 23

Feats Ability Focus (energy drain), Blind-fight, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Climb +15, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (religion) +13, Perception +17, Sense Motive +14, Stealth +22; Racial Modifiers +8 Stealth

Languages Common

SQ create spawn

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Onochtu Infection (Su) When Brother Ezekran scores a critical threat against a sentient humanoid with his slam attack, the target must succeed at a DC 19 Will save or gain Corruption Stage 1 and manifestation level 1 of Onochtu spirit corruption (see Appendix 2). Creatures already afflicted with Onochtu spirit corruption are immune to this effect. This is a curse effect and the DC is Constitution-based.

Treasure: The chest is unlocked and contains several changes of unremarkable clothing, including two finely tailored clerical vestments worth 5 gp each, a *cloak of resistance* +3, and a pair of *healer's gloves*^{UE}. Hidden under the clothes are a silver holy symbol worth 25 gp and a

leather coin purse containing 93 gp and 9 pp.

Corruption: As Austan Mileswood progresses through the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see area D7), the corrupting influence of the emergent Onochtu spirits begins to eat away at the very fabric of reality. This causes the following effects, which increase over the next three days.

Day 1: After Brother Ezekran is destroyed, select a random PC. That PC sees a vision of Brother Ezekran's final minutes of life, as the failed cleric mutters his final prayers and then commits suicide by hanging. The selected PC is suddenly inundated with feelings of guilt and remorse and must succeed at a DC 18 Will save or take 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. This is a mind-affecting emotion effect. This effect only happens once.

Day 2: Brother Ezekran's Onochtu infection attack increases to DC 20.

Day 3: Brother Ezekran's Onochtu infection attack increases to DC 22. Brother Ezekran gains DR 10/good. This makes Brother Ezekran a CR 9 creature.

C9. East Tower Armory

Several chainmail shirts hang on neatly organized racks along the walls, while nearby weapon racks hold longswords, spears, and crossbows. A large chest with its lid open sits against the west wall.

Treasure: The spare armor and weapons held here for the soldiers includes four masterwork chain shirts, five masterwork longswords, eight masterwork longspears, and three masterwork light crossbows. The chest once contained crossbow bolts, though it is now empty.

C10. Haunted Barracks (EL 7)

This large octagonal chamber contains a dozen bunk beds and a long wooden table surrounded by 10 wooden stools. Scores of small iron hooks dot the walls, with a few containing empty quivers or unlit lanterns. The floor around the chamber's four arrow slits is clear of furniture, allowing archers easy access to them.

This barracks once housed two dozen Corovossan soldiers, all expert archers. The hooks along the walls once held their longbows and quivers full of arrows, though now most of the hooks hold nothing or empty quivers. The soldiers quartered here are now all dead, their bodies lying either in the battlefield in front of the fort (area B), scattered with the other dead soldiers on the walls (area C3), or in the drill yard (area C2).

Haunts: The deaths of the soldiers once quartered

here, combined with the Onochtu spiritual corruption that is slowly saturating the region, has resulted in the formation of two haunts here. The first haunt takes the form of an invisible ghostly archer that targets living creatures in this chamber as well as those within 50 feet of the East Tower—but only those in the drill yard (area C2). The second haunt is quite visible, appearing as a swirling vortex of whirling, darting arrows that moves about the chamber with an unnatural fury. Both haunts target the PCs as soon as they enter the chamber.

GHOSTLY ARCHER

CR 5

XP 1,600

CE persistent haunt (30-ft. area between the arrows slits on the west wall and north wall in area C10)

Caster Level 5th

Notice Perception DC 20 to hear a bowstring being pulled back

hp 22; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 day

Weaknesses tricked by *hide from undead*; cannot target a creature protected by *protection from evil*

EFFECT

The ghostly archer makes a single +20 arrow attack for 1d8 points of damage against a target within 50 feet of the tower in area C2 or anywhere within area C10. Living creatures struck by one of these arrows must succeed at a DC 16 Will save to avoid being sickened with supernatural revulsion for 2d6 rounds. This is a mind-affecting effect.

DESTRUCTION

Any of the following spells cast within area C10 destroys both the ghostly archer and the phantom arrow vortex haunts: *consecrate*, *dispel evil*, *hallow*, *holy smite*, or *holy word*.

PHANTOM ARROW VORTEX

CR 7

XP 2,400

CE persistent haunt (10-ft. radius, plus special)

Caster Level 7th

Notice automatic

hp 31; **Trigger** proximity and see below; **Reset** 1 day

Weaknesses tricked by *hide from undead*; cannot harm a creature protected by *protection from evil*

EFFECT

The whirling vortex of arrows moves to engulf as many PCs as possible, moving at a rate of 30 feet per round. PCs that begin their turn inside the vortex take 4d8 points of piercing damage and must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save to avoid being blinded by the supernatural arrows. PCs blinded by this effect remain blind until the piercing damage they sustained from the phantom arrow vortex is healed.

DESTRUCTION

Any of the following spells cast within area **C10** destroys both the ghostly archer and the phantom arrow vortex haunts: *consecrate*, *dispel evil*, *hallow*, *holy smite*, or *holy word*.

Treasure: If the phantom arrow vortex haunt is destroyed, 66 perfectly usable masterwork arrows fall to the ground in a clattering heap. Additionally, under each of the 12 bunk beds is a pair of small wooden footlockers, each locked with an average lock (DC 20). The lockers contain clothing and unremarkable personal items, though the PCs have a 20% chance per locker of finding something of value (roll randomly):

Roll (1d10)	Item
1-4	A leather coin purse holding d100 gp.
5-6	A small velvet pouch holding 1d4 gemstones worth 50 gp each.
7-8	A jeweled item (belt buckle, drinking horn, necklace, religious statuette, etc.) worth 4d6 x 10 gp.
9	A potion of <i>cure moderate wounds</i> (50%) or a <i>potion of heroism</i> (50%).
10	A rose-tinted gemstone (a martyr's tear ^{UE}) on a thin silver necklace (a <i>necklace of adaptation</i>). This item can only be found once.

C11. Rukh's Roost (EL 10)

A makeshift nest made up of dozens of half-eaten corpses litters the floor of this high octagonal tower.

The top of the East Tower is 60 feet high and is capped by a 20-foot stone flag-spire that still proudly flies the red and black Corovossan flag.

Creature: A female rukh slumbers here in her recently fashioned nest of corpses. Attracted to the ripening corpses scattered around Fort Hiraksos, she and her young arrived here the day before the PCs arrived. The mother rukh awakens automatically if her young scream for her (as described in area **B**). Otherwise, she sleeps soundly and suffers a –10 penalty to all Perception checks. If awakened, the cantankerous mother rukh is enraged at being disturbed and attacks on sight. Though the mother rukh is a Gargantuan-sized creature, the East Tower's battlements do a surprisingly good job of hiding her sleeping bulk. PCs positioned below the tower's 60-foot mark only spot her with a successful DC 25 Perception check.

MOTHER RUKH

CR 10

XP 9,600

N Gargantuan magical beast

Init +2; Senses low-light vision; Perception +32

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 8, flat-footed 21 (+2 Dex, +15 natural, –4 size)
hp 147 (14d10+70)

Fort +14, Ref +11, Will +7

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)

Melee 2 bites +23 (2d8+12 plus grab), 2 talons +23 (2d6+12)

Space 20 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

Special Attacks swallow whole (2d8+12 bludgeoning and 1d6 acid damage, AC 17, 14 hp)

TACTICS

During Combat The mother rukh moves into the midst of the PCs and tries to spread her attacks to reach as many of them as possible. She tries to swallow the PC wearing the least amount of armor first (to avoid having to digest or regurgitate metal).

Morale The mother rukh fights to the death to defend her young. However, if all of the young are killed, the mother rukh flees if she is reduced to 20 hit points or less.

STATISTICS

Str 34, Dex 15, Con 20, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 11

Base Atk +14; CMB +30 (+34 grapple); CMD 38

Feats Flyby Attack, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception), Snatch, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (talon), Wingover

Skills Fly –4, Perception +32; Racial Modifiers +8 Perception

Treasure: PCs searching through the corpse-nest that succeed at a DC 25 Perception check locate a tarnished gold cloak clasp forged in the shape of a barbaric looking horned helmet that looks to be worth 30 gp, but is in fact a suit of *folding plate*^{UE} armor.

C12. Supply Room

The stores here were nearly depleted during the Sun-rider siege. All that remains here are nine barrels of fresh water (filled with water from the well, area **C5**), a cask of potent apple brandy, three half-full sacks of potatoes, and a sack of turnips.

Treasure: PCs standing next to the sacks of food automatically see the suit of masterwork field plate armor lying in a disassembled pile between the sacks and the wall. The armor is dented and bloody and has a gaping hole in the breastplate where a Sun-rider arrow punctured it (the armor currently has the broken condition).

Development: A PC spotting the armor that succeeds at a DC 14 Perception check notices a trail of dried blood droplets that begins at the cast aside suit of armor, goes

across the room, and then up the spiral stairs to area **C13**. The armor and the blood trail were left by the dying soldier, Virea Brool (see area **C13** for details).

C13. West Tower Barracks

This large chamber contains a dozen beds and a large round wooden table surrounded by eight wooden stools. Empty armor and weapon racks line the walls. A wooden ladder near the middle of the room provides access to a wooden trapdoor in the ceiling.

This barracks once housed a dozen elite Corovossan shock-troop soldiers, all skilled at fighting in heavy armor. The racks along the walls once held their suits of field plate armor and weapons, though they now stand empty. Like the soldiers from the East Tower barracks (area **C10**), the soldiers quartered here all perished during the siege.

A PC that succeeds at a DC 14 Perception check notices a trail of dried blood droplets that leads from the spiral stairs to a bunk closest to the northwest corner of the room. (PCs following the blood trail from area **C12** automatically notice the blood trail.) This trail was left by the dying soldier, Virea Brool, who after being critically wounded by a Sun-rider arrow, hid in the supply room (area **C12**) after she witnessed Austan Mileswood cut out and devour the heart of a dead fellow soldier on the west wall parapet. Seeing this terrified Virea, who immediately fled and went into hiding. Unwilling to remain hidden in one place for too long, Virea took off her encumbering armor and staggered up the stairs to the barracks. Once here, she crawled under a bunk to hide. Unfortunately, when she removed her armor, Virea inadvertently forced the Sun-rider arrow deeper into her chest where it pierced a major artery. She bled out and died shortly after hiding beneath the bed.

Development: Austan never discovered Virea's body and never realized she witnessed his ghastly acts of corpse desecration and cannibalism. Aside from the arrow still lodged in her upper chest, Virea's body is intact. If the PCs use *Speak with Dead* and ask her questions, Virea can tell them she was killed by a Sun-rider arrow. She can also answer questions about the fort and its inhabitants and give a general synopsis of the Sun-rider attack and siege. If the PCs ask her why she was hiding under the bed or what drove her into hiding, she says she was hiding from Austan Mileswood because she didn't want him to eat her when she died.

Treasure: Virea shed her suit of field plate armor when she was hiding in the supply room (see area **C12**) and she lost her greatsword while fighting the Sun-riders

just outside the main gate. She still has a +1 *short sword* and a masterwork dagger at her belt. Additionally, under each of the 12 bunks is a small wooden footlocker, each locked with an average lock (DC 20). The lockers contain clothing and unremarkable personal items, though the PCs have a 20% chance per locker of finding something of value (roll randomly):

Roll (1d10)	Item
1-4	A leather coin purse holding d100 gp.
5-6	A small velvet pouch holding 1d4 gemstones worth 50 gp each.
7-8	A jeweled item (belt buckle, drinking horn, necklace, religious statuette, etc.) worth 4d6 x 10 gp.
9	A <i>potion of cure serious wounds</i> (50%) or a <i>potion of lesser restoration</i> (50%).
10	A tarnished silver belt buckle that looks to be worth 2 gp, but radiates faint enchantment magic. This buckle once belonged to a <i>belt of incredible dexterity</i> +2. If the buckle is reattached to a leather belt—requiring 16 hours of work and a successful DC 15 Craft (Leatherworking) check—the belt becomes magical again. This item can only be found once.

C14. West Tower Roof

The top of the West Tower is 45 feet high. In the middle of the tower is a 10-foot square, 10-foot high stone square structure with a conical tiled roof designed to protect soldiers from the wind and the elements. Inside the structure are three wooden stools and a wooden trap door leading to area **C13**.

C15. Garrison Building

The walls of this stone two-story building is fortified with sturdy oak support beams and punctuated by arrow slits instead of typical windows. The building was used as a barracks for most of the rank-and-file soldiers of Fort Hiraksos, as well as the officers and the fort commander.

C15a. Lower Dormitory

Overlooking the fort's drill yard, this spacious room is furnished with 20 bunk beds, four long wooden tables, several benches, and two free-standing coal braziers made of clay. Empty racks for weapons and armor line the walls and a wooden bin half-full of unused coal sits against the middle of the west wall.



C15b and C15c. Sergeants' Quarters

These identical rooms each contain a simple bed, a wooden footlocker secured with an average lock (DC 20), and an empty rack that once held a single suit of armor and a few weapons. The fort's two sergeants, a half-elf named Tindian Falstar and a half-orc named Grena Scarbelly, were quartered in these two rooms. Both sergeants are now dead. Tindian had the distinction of being the first Corovossan soldier to fall on the first day of fighting and Grena perished five days ago when a javelin skewered her through the neck as she repelled Sun-rider warriors attempting to scale the fort's walls.

Treasure: The footlocker in Tindian's room (area C15b) is neat and orderly. It contains several changes of unremarkable clothing, a coin pouch holding 52 gp, and two *potions of cure serious wounds*. The footlocker in Grena's room (area C15c) is cluttered and foul-smelling due to the three rotten apples Grena left there. Below the reeking, wormy fruit are several changes of filthy clothing, a coin pouch holding 12 gp and 11 pp, and a *potion of resinous skin*^{UC}.

C15d. Upper Dormitory (EL 10)

A dozen bunk beds fill this room, along with two small wooden tables and a dozen stools. A thick layer of translucent greenish-yellow slime drips from almost all of the furniture and small puddles of the strange goo cover the floor.

Additional rank-and-file soldiers were quartered here, though all of them perished fighting the Sun-riders.

Hazard: The translucent greenish-yellow slime that coats much of the floor and furniture was excreted by the ectoplasmic hungry flesh (see **Creature** below) that inhabits the room. The entire floor is slime-covered and acts as a *grease* spell (CL 17). Additionally, each time a PC moves more than 5 feet in this room, they must succeed at a DC 12 Reflex save to avoid having their bare flesh come in contact with the slime. PCs wearing light armor receive a +2 bonus to this save, PCs wearing medium armor receive a +4 bonus to this save, and PCs wearing heavy armor receive a +6 bonus to this save. PCs that have their bare flesh touch the slime must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract the ectoplasmic hungry flesh's tumor infestation.

Creature: Shortly after Austan Mileswood murdered Commander Etranus (see area C15e), the newly roused Onochtu spirits gathered the commander's departing spirit and infused it with terrible unlife, creating an awful semi-corporeal form of undead that resembles a glowing, slime-covered tangle of slime and dripping flesh. Unable to leave area C15d, the creature hovers about the room constantly gurgling and emitting low, guttural moans even though it has no mouth.

ECTOPLASMIC HUNGRY FLESH

CR 10

XP 9,600

Ectoplasmic^{B4} hungry flesh^{B4}

N Large undead

Init -3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 6, flat-footed 11 (-3 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 86 (11d8-30)

Fort -1, Ref +0, Will +7

DR 5/slashing; Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.; *air walk*

Melee slam +12 (1d6+7)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (1d6+7), horrifying ooze (DC 11), Onochtu infection (DC 15)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +1)

Constant—*air walk*

TACTICS

During Combat The ectoplasmic hungry flesh attacks immediately and indiscriminately, focusing its slam and constrict attacks on any creature it can reach.

Morale The mindless ectoplasmic hungry flesh fights until destroyed. It is unable to leave room C15d.

STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 5, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 3

Base Atk +8; CMB +14; CMD 21 (can't be tripped)

Feats Toughness

Skills Acrobatics –3 (–7 to jump)

SQ compression, monstrous growth, phase lurch, reactive regeneration, slime trail

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) *Tumor Infestation*: Injury; save Fort DC 17; onset 1 minute; frequency 1/day; effect 1d2 Con and 1d2 Cha; cure 2 consecutive saves. Anyone who dies from tumor infestation turns into an ectoplasmic hungry flesh 1d4 hours later. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Horri-fying Ooze (Su) Any creature struck by an ectoplasmic creature's slam attack must succeed at a DC 11 Will save or be shaken for 1d4 rounds.

Monstrous Growth (Ex) A hungry flesh gains growth points from its reactive regeneration ability or from eating creatures. When it consumes a creature that's been dead no more than an hour, it gains 1 growth point if that creature is of its size or one size category smaller, or 2 growth points if its meal is larger than it is. Eating a creature takes a full-round action if it is the same size or smaller than the hungry flesh or 1 minute if it is larger. Each time a hungry flesh reaches 5 growth points, it gains the giant creature simple template. This template stacks with itself each time the hungry flesh gains another 5 growth points, but the hungry flesh can't increase its size beyond Gargantuan. When it stops gaining growth points, a hungry flesh loses a single application of the giant creature simple template for each hour that passes.

Onochtu infection (Su) When the ectoplasmic hungry flesh scores a critical threat against a sentient humanoid with its slam attack, the target must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or gain Corruption Stage 1 and manifestation level 1 of Onochtu spirit corruption as described in Appendix 2. Creatures already afflicted with Onochtu spirit corruption are immune to this effect. This is a curse effect and the DC is Constitution-based.

Phase Lurch (Su) An ectoplasmic creature has the ability to pass through walls or material obstacles. In order to use this ability, the ectoplasmic creature must begin and end its turn outside of whatever wall or obstacle it's moving through. An ectoplasmic creature cannot move through corporeal creatures with this ability, and its movement speed is halved while moving through a wall or obstacle. Any surface it moves through is coated with slime that lingers for 1 minute.

Reactive Regeneration (Ex) Whenever a hungry flesh takes piercing or slashing damage, it regenerates 5 hit points and gains 1 growth point.

Slime Trail (Ex) A hungry flesh leaves behind a trail of slime that acts as a *grease* spell (DC 17). Any living creature that touches this slime with bare flesh must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save (with a +4 bonus) or contract tumor infestation. The slime dries up after 1 minute. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Corruption: As Austan Mileswood progresses through the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see area D7), the corrupting influence of the emergent Onochtu spirits begins to eat away at the very fabric of reality. This causes the following effects, which increase over the next three days.

Day 1: The first PC to come within 5 feet of the ectoplasmic hungry flesh sees an image of the face of the last sentient humanoid creature he or she killed or helped to kill appear amid the ectoplasmic hungry flesh's constantly roiling body. The ghostly image howls accusingly, forcing the PC to succeed at a DC 22 Will save to resist being dazed with guilt and bitter remorse for 1d4 rounds. With a successful Will save, the PC is merely staggered for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting emotion effect. This effect only happens once.

Day 2: The ectoplasmic hungry flesh gains DR 5/good.

Day 3: The ectoplasmic hungry flesh's tumor infestation increases to DC 19 and the ectoplasmic hungry flesh gains DR 10/good. This makes the ectoplasmic hungry flesh a CR 11 creature.

Treasure: Additionally, under each of the 12 bunks are two small wooden footlockers, each locked with an average lock (DC 20). The lockers contain clothing and unremarkable personal items, though the PCs have a 20% chance per locker of finding something of value (roll randomly):

Roll (1d10)	Item
1-4	A leather coin purse holding d100 gp.
5-6	A small velvet pouch holding 1d4 gemstones worth 50 gp each.
7-8	A jeweled item (belt buckle, drinking horn, necklace, religious statuette, etc.) worth 4d6 x 10 gp.
9	A potion of <i>shield of faith</i> +2 (50%) or a <i>potion of owl's wisdom</i> (50%).
10	A pair of tattered, filth-stained leather gloves that are actually a pair of <i>gloves of feasting</i> ^{HA} . This item can only be found once.

C15e. Commander's Office

The door to this room has been hacked apart by axe-blows and stands open and barely attached to the wall by a single brass hinge. The room itself is an office of some kind, furnished with a desk and chair, several side chairs, and an empty rack designed to hold a suit of heavy armor and several weapons.

This office belonged to Fort Hiraksos's commander, Commander Eleya Etranus, a veteran soldier who was well-liked by the soldiers under her command at Fort Hiraksos. Now dead, her body sits slumped in the desk chair, her eyes wide open and her head lolling to one side. Casual examination shows that her chest bears a ghastly open wound identical to the wounds found on many of the mutilated bodies in and around the fort. A PC examining Commander Etranus's body that that succeeds at a DC 12 Heal check confirms her heart has been removed.

Commander Etranus had turned a blind eye to Austan Mileswood's nocturnal forays into the Sun-rider encampment during the final days of the Sun-rider siege, even when the man returned soaked in blood and gore. She reasoned that Austan was aiding in the fort's defense by sneaking out each night to kill more Sun-rider warriors. However, her attitude changed the evening she caught Austan mutilating the body of one of the dead Corovossan soldiers. By this time, she and

Austan were the only soldiers left alive. Weary from battle and lack of sleep, Commander Etranus panicked, fled, and locked herself in her office. Soon, however, Austan—driven into a murderous frenzy by the growing Onochtū spirits—tracked her down. He used a battleaxe to hack down her office door, and then murdered her.

Development: If the PCs use *Speak with Dead* and ask her questions, Commander Etranus can tell them she was killed by Austan Mileswood. She can answer specific questions about Austan, his nocturnal forays into the Sun-rider camp, and how she caught him mutilating corpses. She can also answer questions about the fort and its inhabitants and give a general synopsis of the Sun-rider attack and siege. She knows nothing of the Well of Bloody Hearts and nothing of the Onochtū.

Treasure: Commander Etranus still wears her +1 *field plate*, though the armor's breastplate has been removed and is lying on the floor nearby. A +2 *longsword*, two masterwork hand axes, and a +1 *adamantine dagger* are still sheathed at her belt.



C15f. Commander's Quarters

Commander Etranus's private quarters are tidy and modestly furnished with a bunk and a large wooden chest locked with an average lock (DC 20; the key is hidden under the mattress of the bunk).

Treasure: Aside from several changes of unremarkable clothing and other personal items, the chest contains a coin purse holding 222 gp, a small wooden coffer holding six *potions of cure moderate wounds*, a *wand of feather step*^{APG} with 36 charges, and a large leather satchel emblazoned with the red and black flag of Corovoss that contains an additional 420 gp (the fort's provisional funds).

In Part Two, the PCs descend into the Well of Bloody Hearts and explore the ancient caves and catacombs. Eventually, they confront the deranged and corrupted Austan Mileswood either as he works to complete the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* or shortly after the ritual has concluded.

THE WELL OF BLOODY HEARTS

The Well of Bloody Hearts was inhabited by primitive tribes thousands of years ago, long before the now-extinct Blood Crow tribe used the hill on which Fort Hiraksos stands as their home. Only the ruling priests and shamans of the tribe were permitted to enter these sacred caves, where the most powerful of their number communed with the Onochtu spirits.

The caves and tunnels of the Well of Bloody Hearts are crudely hewn and the floors, walls, and ceilings are rough and slightly uneven. Stalactites and other limestone features adorn some of the ceilings, though the floors have been cleared of such features. Unless otherwise noted, ceilings average 12–18 feet high in the caves and 5–7 feet high in the tunnels.

D1. Well Shaft and the Great Leering Face

When the PCs descend 40 feet down the well, read the following:

The strange symbols and runes carved into the well shaft walls end abruptly here, replaced by the disturbing carving of a leering feral humanoid face done in bas relief. The carving is roughly circular in shape and nearly five feet in diameter. Its gaping, toothless mouth forms a forbidding black hole.

The well shaft continues for another 10 feet before hitting cold water. The water is 10 feet deep and intersects a swiftly moving underground stream, barely narrow enough for a Tiny-sized creature to navigate. The great leering face is smeared with bloody handprints, left here by Austan Mileswood when he fled here to begin the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see area D7). The carved face is the entry door to the caves of the Well of Bloody Hearts, but it is also a trap-like hazard.

The Mouth and lever: The lever that opens the door is inside the carving's open mouth. To reach the lever, a PC must reach their arm a foot-and-a-half inside the mouth

and then reach downward for another foot-and-a-half. Only a Medium-sized humanoid can fit one arm inside the oddly shaped cavity and extend their arm far enough to reach the lever. Because of the cavity's odd angle, weapons, tools, and other non-flexible items cannot extend deep enough into the mouth to reach the lever.

If the PC pulling the lever has achieved at least Corruption Stage 1 of Onochtu spirit corruption (see Appendix 2), pulling the lever causes the great leering face to quietly roll safely away, allowing access to the tunnel beyond. If the PC pulling on the lever is not afflicted with Onochtu spirit corruption, the PC must succeed at a DC 25 Reflex save to quickly remove their arm and avoid having the carving's mouth snap down on it. If the PC fails the Reflex save, the PC takes 4d6 points of damage and is held completely in place by their arm. To escape, the entrapped PC must succeed at a DC 40 Escape Artist check, though each time the PC makes an Escape Artist skill check they take 1d6 points of damage (whether the check succeeds or not). If the Great Leering Face carving is targeted with *knock*, *passwall*, *stone to flesh*, or *stone shape*, any victim trapped in its mouth is immediately released, though the door remains sealed. The door is impervious to all other forms of magic. Pulling the lever is the only way to open it.

Once a victim is entrapped, the mouth does not release on its own, and each hour the PC remains entrapped they take another 1d6 points of damage from blunt trauma and internal bleeding. However, one minute after being entrapped, the victim suddenly receives a strange vision. Read the following:

You are suddenly free of the great leering face. Your arm is bruised and sore, but otherwise intact. However, you are no longer in the well shaft, and your companions are nowhere in sight. Instead, you stand in the middle of a great carnage-strewn battlefield, alone amid tangled piles of dead warriors of a dozen races and cultures. The sky overhead glows blood-red and contains neither sun, nor moon, nor stars. Your eyes suddenly focus on one of the nearby bodies, and a sickening hunger begins to grow in your belly. Unable to resist the urgings of your hunger, you fall upon the corpse, and tear out its cold, dead heart with cruel clawed hands that you barely recognize as your own. As you greedily chew and bolt down the grisly delicious morsel, you are suddenly transported back to

the well shaft, where you find yourself entrapped once again in the mouth of the great leering face.

This image was sent by the Onochtu spirits, eager to grant the PCs entry into the Well of Bloody Hearts in the hope that more of them fall to their insidious corruption. The image is a clue to another method of escaping the mouth and opening the door. If an entrapped PC devours the heart of a sentient humanoid creature (easily found among the scores of unmutated corpses in and around the fort) the mouth immediately releases its victim and the door safely opens. Unfortunately, this also automatically afflicts the PC eating the heart with Corruption Stage 1 and manifestation level 1 of Onochtu spirit corruption.

Once opened, the door remains ajar for two minutes before snapping shut again with a loud slamming sound (warning the mummies in area D3). Creatures standing in the opening when this happens must succeed at a DC 20 Reflex save or take 8d6 points of damage from the crushing door. The opposite side of the door has a large stone handle that PCs can easily open as a standard stone door.

D2. The Crawling Climb

The tunnel beyond the Great Leering Face carving stretches for just over 280 feet before reaching area D3. The tunnel is narrow—it is barely 3-1/2 feet in diameter—and descends toward area D3 at very steep angle. To safely navigate the long descending tunnel, each PC must succeed at a single DC 17 Climb check. PCs that fail this check stumble at some point as they try navigate the steep tunnel and take 2d6 points of damage.

D3. Blood Crow Guardians (EL 11)

A shallow, waist-deep circular pit dominates the middle of this large cave. Sitting cross-legged inside the pit are six ancient, withered humanoid corpses all wrapped in tattered funerary linens and primitive furs and skins. The corpses are positioned around a black iron brazier that emits a constant plume of purple-black smoke.

The brazier weighs 10 pounds. See the **Corruption** entry below for additional details.

Creatures: The six figures sitting in the shallow pit are mummies—three of the mummies have the Cleric Creature template and three of them have the Fighter Creature template (both templates are found in the *Pathfinder Monster Codex*). In life, the mummies were members of the now-extinct Blood Crow tribe, who volunteered to have their bodies undergo

mummification.

When Austan Mileswood discovered the Well of Bloody Hearts several years ago, he made peaceful contact with these guardians. Sensing that he was a kindred spirit and was in the process of being corrupted by the Onochtu, the mummies provided Austan with spiritual guidance, answered many of the man's questions, and ensured that the other denizens of the Well of Bloody Hearts recognized him as an ally. The mummified priests seduced Austan with lies and half-truths and eventually taught him how to complete the arduous *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see Appendix 2).

MUMMIFIED PRIESTS (3)

CR 7

XP 3,200

Cleric of Onochtu mummy

CE Medium undead

Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

Aura despair (30 ft., paralyzed for 1d4 rounds, Will DC 16 negates)

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+2 deflection, +10 natural)

hp 60 (8d8+24)

Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +12

DR 5/—; Immune undead traits

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee slam +14 (1d8+10 plus mummy rot)

Special Attacks channel negative energy (5/day, DC 16, 3d6)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +7)

3rd—bestow curse (DC 17), inflict serious wounds (DC 17)

2nd—desecrate, dread bolt (DC 16), hold person (DC 16)

1st—bane (DC 15), doom (DC 15), divine favor

TACTICS

Before Combat If they have time to prepare, the mummified priests cast *desecrate* and ensure the spells' overlapping effects cover the entire cave.

During Combat If they do not have time to prepare, the priests cast *desecrate* during the first round of combat. The mummified priests prefer to hang back while the mummified warriors engage the PCs in melee. Each mummified priest casts *dread bolt*, *hold person*, *doom*, *bane*, and *bestow curse* (in this order) before casting *divine favor* and engaging the PCs in melee. They reserve *inflict serious wounds* to provide healing for themselves or another mummy.

Morale The mummified priests exist only to defend the Well of Bloody Hearts from interlopers. They fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 24, Dex 10, Con —, Int 6, Wis 19, Cha 15

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 23

Feats Power Attack, Toughness, Skill Focus (Perception),
Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Perception +18, Stealth +11

Languages Tribal tongue

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Despair (Su) All creatures within a 30-foot radius that see a mummy must make a DC 16 Will save or be paralyzed by fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by the same mummy's despair ability for 24 hours. This is a paralysis and a mind-affecting fear affect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Mummy Rot (Su) *Curse and disease*—slam; **save** Fort DC 16; **onset** 1 minute; **frequency** 1/day; **effect** 1d6 Con and 1d6 Cha; **cure** —. Mummy rot is both a curse and disease and can only be cured if the curse is first removed, at which point the disease can be magically removed. Even after the curse element of mummy rot is lifted, a creature suffering from it cannot recover naturally over time. Anyone casting a conjuration (healing) spell on the afflicted creature must succeed on a DC 20 caster level check, or the spell is wasted and the healing has no effect. Anyone who dies from mummy rot turns to dust and cannot be raised without a *resurrection* or greater magic. The save DC is Charisma-based.

MUMMIFIED WARRIORS (3)

CR 6

XP 2,400

Fighter^{MC} mummy

CE Medium undead

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

Aura despair (30 ft., paralyzed for 1d4 rounds, Will DC 16 negates)

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 26 (+2 deflection, +4 armor, +10 natural)

hp 60 (8d8+24)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +10

DR 5/—; **Immune** undead traits

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee slam +17 (1d8+13 plus mummy rot)

TACTICS

During Combat The mummified warriors immediately move to engage the PCs in melee. As the mummified warriors shamle forward, they shout a warning to the undead cave bears (area D4). The mummified warriors do their best to remain between the PCs and the mummified priests, whom they defend to the best of their ability.



Morale The mummified warriors exist only to defend the Well of Bloody Hearts from interlopers. They fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 23

Feats Power Attack, Toughness, Skill Focus (Perception),
Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Perception +16, Stealth +10

Languages Black crow tribal tongue

SQ armor training (+2), weapon training (monk weapons)

Gear hide armor

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Despair (Su) All creatures within a 30-foot radius that see a mummy must make a DC 16 Will save or be paralyzed by fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by the same mummy's despair ability for 24 hours. This is a paralysis and a mind-affecting fear affect. The save DC is Charisma-based.



Mummy Rot (Su) *Curse and disease*—slam; save Fort DC 16; onset 1 minute; frequency 1/day; effect 1d6 Con and 1d6 Cha; cure —. Mummy rot is both a curse and disease and can only be cured if the curse is first removed, at which point the disease can be magically removed. Even after the curse element of mummy rot is lifted, a creature suffering from it cannot recover naturally over time. Anyone casting a conjuration (healing) spell on the afflicted creature must succeed on a DC 20 caster level check, or the spell is wasted and the healing has no effect. Anyone who dies from mummy rot turns to dust and cannot be raised without a *resurrection* or greater magic. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Corruption: As Austan Mileswood progresses through the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see area D7), the corrupting influence of the emergent Onochtu spirits begins to eat away at the very fabric of reality. This causes the following effects, which increase over the next three days.

Day 1: The black iron brazier has become a sacred focus of power for the Onochtu spirits and is equivalent to an altar or shrine for the purposes of enhancing a *desecrate* spell (it effectively doubles the *desecrate* spell's modifiers). The brazier also bears an enchantment that grants evil-aligned creatures within 60 feet a +2 deflection bonus to AC and a +2 resistance bonus on saves (these bonuses have been added to the mummies' stat blocks and to the stat blocks of the cave bear mummies in area D4). It also constantly burns (without requiring fuel) and emits a greasy, foul-smelling smoke. If removed from the pit, the brazier instantly becomes nonmagical and ceases to act as a sacred focus.

Day 2: The mummified priests, mummified warriors, and mummified cave bears gain fast healing 5.

Day 3: The mummified priests, mummified warriors,

and mummified cave bears gain the benefits of the *divine power* spell.

Treasure: Hidden inside the brazier is a single **black soul shard**^{UE}, placed here and forgotten long ago by a Blood Crow shaman. The brazier itself is worth 5 gp, or 300 gp to someone interested in primitive antiquities.

D4. Undead Bears (EL 10)

The walls of this side cave are covered with primitive cave paintings depicting various humans and animals undergoing mummification.

Creatures: A pair of mummified cave bears squat here, eternally vigilant. They resemble great, gaunt hairless bears, wrapped in tattered funerary linens and festooned with primitive fetishes made of bones, feathers, and carved pieces of wood. They respond immediately if the mummies in area D3 call for their aid. Otherwise, they wait here silent and unmoving, as they have for the past three centuries. They attack the PCs on sight.

MUMMIFIED CAVE BEARS (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800

CE Large undead (augmented)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +12

Aura frightful presence (30 ft., DC 15)

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 23 (+1 Dex, +2 deflection, +12 natural, -1 size)

hp 55 (10d8+10)

Fort +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

DR 5/—; **Immune** undead traits

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +15 (1d8+9 plus grab), bite +15 (1d10+9)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks burst of vengeance, dust stroke

STATISTICS

Str 29, **Dex** 13, **Con** —, **Int** 1, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +15 (+19 grapple); **CMD** 26 (30 vs. trip)

Feats Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attacks, Iron Will, Run, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness

Skills Perception +12, Stealth +5, Swim +21; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth, +4 Swim

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Burst of Vengeance (Su) Despite its slow, lumbering nature, a mummified creature is capable of lurching forward to attack with a short but surprising explosion of speed. Twice per day as a swift action, a mummified creature may act as if affected by a *haste* spell for 1 round.

Dust Stroke (Su) A creature killed by a mummified creature's natural attack or slam attack is disintegrated into a cloud of dust and ash, completely destroying the victim's body (as *disintegrate*).

D5. The Horrible Pit (EL 10)

This cave is dominated by a large open pit. The edges of the pit, the ceiling, and the surrounding cave walls are spattered with a vile blackish-green slime.

This small cave is barely 15 feet in diameter and has a 12-foot high ceiling. The pit takes up most of the cave, leaving a 2-foot wide ledge around the pit's edge. The slime coating the floor and walls also extends into the pit. Though sticky and foul-smelling, the slime is harmless. The pit is 10 feet in diameter and 40 feet deep, though it is almost entirely filled by the **Creature**.

Creature: An ancient monstrous aberration dwells within the pit. Called from some terrible realm beyond time and sanity by a powerful Blood Crow shaman, the thing resembles an enormous animated human tongue that constantly drips blackish-green slime and is covered with thousands of tiny, fanged mouths that gibber and wail ceaselessly. When the PCs enter the cave, the Tongue has contracted its bulk to fill the bottom 15 feet of the pit. To PCs peering into the pit, it looks as if the bottom of the pit contains a quivering mass of blackish-green flesh.

THE TONGUE

CR 10

XP 9,600

NE Gargantuan unique aberration

Init +6; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft.; **Perception** +22

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 8, flat-footed 11 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, -4 size)

hp 126 (12d8+72)

Fort +14, **Ref** +5, **Will** +10

DR 5/good and slashing; **Immune** acid, cold, disease, mind-affecting effects, poison, sonic; **Resist** acid and fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 0 ft. (The Tongue cannot leave the pit.)

Melee tongue +20 (3d6+14/19-20 and grab)

Space special (fills the pit); **Reach** special (can reach 10 feet beyond the pit's edge)

Special Attacks constrict (3d6+14), otherworldly attack (DC 17), tiny maws (DC 26)

TACTICS

During Combat Unless attacked first, the Tongue waits until the first PC crosses the pit and reaches the far side before it strikes. It then immediately expands and uses its otherworldly attack ability to catch the PCs off-



guard. It targets creatures at random, preferring to attack creatures dazed by its otherworldly attack. After it grabs and grapples a creature, it holds the creature above the pit and allows its tiny maws to devour the victim in full view of its comrades. Once it completely devours a creature, the Tongue methodically moves on and attacks another creature at random.

Morale The Tongue fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 14, **Con** 23, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +23 (+33 grapple); **CMD** 35 (can't be tripped)

Feats Dodge, Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Perception +22

Languages Aklo (cannot speak)

SQ no breath

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Otherworldly Attack (Ex) The Tongue's otherworldly nature is difficult for most sane creatures to fathom. When the Tongue lurches to attack for the first time, any creature seeing it must succeed at a DC 17 Will save to resist being dazed for 1d4 rounds. Even with a successful save, any creature witnessing this initial attack is still dazed for 1

round. This is a mind-affecting insanity effect and the save is Wisdom-based.

Tiny Maws (Ex) The Tongue is covered with thousands of tiny, toothy mouths. If a creature begins its turn grappled by the Tongue, the creature is subjected to the Tongue's constrict attack and takes an additional 2d6 points of piercing damage from the tiny biting mouths. Additionally, the victim must succeed at a DC 26 Fortitude save to resist being staggered for 1 round due to intense pain. The save DC is Strength-based. The body of any creature reduced to negative hit points from this attack is completely consumed (as *disintegrate*).

D6. Cavern of Spirits

This large, long cavern has a high ceiling dotted with stalactites and various limestone formations. At the northern end of the cavern stand three enormous stones, each surrounded by swirling dark red vapors. The large cavern continues to the south out of sight.

The cavern is nearly 100 feet long and averages 25 feet wide. The ceiling is 60 feet high. When the PCs first enter the cavern, they emerge standing on a natural shelf 30 feet above the cavern floor. A narrow, 2-foot natural stairway gradually descends from the shelf and allows access to the cavern floor.

Corruption: As Austan Mileswood progresses through the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see area D7), the corrupting influence of the emergent Onochtu spirits begins to eat away at the very fabric of reality. This causes the following effects, which increase over the next three days.

Day 1: As the Onochtu spirits grow in strength, restless spirits begin to bleed into this reality and coalesce as phantom-like entities. At this point, these beings appear as flickering movement and other disturbances out of the corner of the PCs' eyes. The first time the PCs enter this cavern, each of them must succeed at a DC 20 Will save to avoid becoming shaken for while they remain in the Well of Bloody Hearts. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Day 2: The spirit stones animate as described in area D6a.

Day 3: The spirit stones (area D6a), Yndak (area D6b), and the hungry door (area D6c) gain fast healing 5.

D6a. The Spirit Stones (EL 12 if the spirit stones are animated)

Read the following when the PCs move within 10 feet of the three stones:

Three enormous stones, each nearly twice the height of an adult human, hover a few inches off the ground here. Swirling crimson mists surround each of the stones.

These three irregularly-shaped stones are roughly five feet in diameter and 10–12 feet tall. They hover three inches off the ground, though no amount of force or magic can move them. Vibrating with power and surrounded by swirling crimson mist, the stones have acted as the physical manifestations of the Onochtu since the spirits were last roused from inactivity three centuries ago.

The spirit stones continue to grow in power as Austan Mileswood progresses through the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth*. See the **Corruption** entry for area D6 for the specific effects the PCs encounter in areas D6, D6a, D6b, and D6c.

Creatures: As Austan Mileswood completes Day 1 and begins Day 2 of the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth*, the Onochtu spirits grow powerful enough to animate the spirit stones. At any point on or after Day 2, when a PC first moves within 30 feet of the stones, the stones emit a loud rumbling growl and quickly dissolve and transform into brimstone oozes. A variant form of magma ooze, these oozing horrors do not have a fiendish creature's smite good ability; instead, the spirit stones' DR is increased to 10/good.

SPIRIT STONES (3)

CR 8

XP 4,800

Brimstone ooze (fiendish magma ooze)

CE Large ooze (fire)

Init –5; Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Perception –5

DEFENSE

AC 4, touch 4, flat-footed 4 (–5 Dex, –1 size)

hp 85 (9d8+45)

Fort +8, Ref –2, Will –2

Defensive Abilities split (cold and slashing, 8 hp); DR 10/good; **Immune** fire, ooze traits; **Resist** cold 10; **SR** 13

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold, vulnerability to water

OFFENSE

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

Melee slam +14 (2d6+13 plus 2d6 fire plus grab and burn)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.



Special Attacks burn (2d6, DC 19), constrict (2d6+13 plus 2d6 fire plus burn)

TACTICS

During Combat The brimstone oozes each move to engage a different PC. They each focus on a single target until that target is destroyed. If the PCs retreat, the oozes relentlessly pursue them.

Morale The brimstone oozes fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 1, **Con** 21, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +16 (+20 grapple); **CMD** 21 (can't be tripped)

Skills Climb +17; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Climb

SQ lava body

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Lava Body (Ex) The brimstone ooze is formed of molten rock. Whenever a creature strikes a brimstone ooze with a weapon, that weapon takes 4d6 points of fire damage unless the attacker makes a DC 19 Fortitude save. Damage caused to weapons in this manner is not halved, but hardness does help prevent some of the damage dealt. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Vulnerability to Water (Ex) A significant amount of water, such as that created by a *create water* spell, the contents

of a large bucket, or a blow from a water elemental, that strikes a brimstone ooze forces the creature to make a DC 20 Fortitude save to avoid being staggered for 2d4 rounds. A brimstone ooze that is immersed in water must make a DC 20 Fortitude save each round (this DC increases by +1 each subsequent round) or become petrified, reverting once the water is gone.

D6b. Yndak's Throne (EL 12)

A massive chair carved from a single block of stone sits atop a three-step dais in this large natural alcove. The chair looks large enough for a creature three or four times the size of an adult human.

The natural alcove is 35 feet wide at its widest point and narrows to 15 feet wide near the back of the alcove. The alcove's ceiling is 40 feet high. The three-step dais on which the great stone chair sits rises nine feet above the cavern floor. The seat of the great stone chair is another ten feet high and the top of the chair's back rises another 15 feet. The chair is devoid of artistic carvings or any other markings. There is an eight-foot wide gap between the chair and the back of the alcove that contains a pile of coins and other valuables, some

of which has spilled into plain view (see the **Treasure** entry).

Creature: The Blood Crows often employed monstrous creatures, like giants, intelligent magical beasts, and evil humanoids, to act as bodyguards and mercenaries, and occasionally one of these creatures ascended to prominence to become a champion for the tribe. These champions acted as bodyguards for the ruling priests and shamans of the tribe, and often achieved positions of influence and honor. One such creature was Yndak, a powerful athach who served as an engine of destruction on many battlefields for the Blood Crows before being elevated to a position of honor as a bodyguard for the priesthood. Shortly before the Blood Crows faced the host of enemy barbarians that would end the evil tribe's existence, Yndak volunteered to undergo a ritual called the *Damnable Binding of Flesh and Stone* (see Appendix 3) that transformed him into an ageless guardian for the Well of Bloody Hearts. When Yndak emerged from the ritual, he no longer aged and no longer required nourishment in the form of food or water. However, in exchange for these gifts Yndak cannot venture more than 100 feet from the great stone chair, which acts as a tethering storage vessel for his lifeforce. This supernatural connection is visible as dozens of wispy, black smoke-like tendrils that extend from Yndak to the great stone chair. The tendrils prevent the athach from moving more than 100 feet from the chair, as if the creature was bound to the chair by unbreakable chains.

The tendrils have an AC of 25 and 50 hit points. In addition to being incorporeal, the tendrils can only be struck by good-aligned enchanted weapons (they are immune to magic and all other forms of attack). If the tendrils are reduced to 0 or less hit points, Yndak immediately dissolves into fine dust (as *disintegrate*) with no saving throw. A creature studying the wispy black tendrils that succeeds at a DC 28 Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), or Spellcraft check recognizes the tendrils' unholy origins, understands their purpose, and recalls how to destroy them.

Yndak sits patiently atop the great stone chair, forever guarding the approach to the Sanctum of Bloody Rebirth (area D7). He is a great, hulking creature, standing 19 feet tall and weighing a little over 5,000 pounds. He wears a suit of blood-red leather armor, brandishes a Huge-sized masterwork greataxe in battle, and wears an enchanted resizing spiked gauntlet on his cadaverous third arm. Yndak also carries a large sack containing three enormous throwing rocks.

YNDAK THE UNDYING

CR 12

XP 19,200

Male athach

CE Huge humanoid (giant)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 9, flat-footed 25 (+2 armor, +1 Dex, +15 natural, -2 size)

hp 161 (14d8+98)

Fort +16, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Resist cold 10

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee masterwork greataxe +20/+15 (4d6+11), bite +17 (2d6+5 plus poison) or 2 slams +19 (1d8+11), bite +19 (2d6+11 plus poison)

Ranged rock +10/+5 (2d6+16)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 with Lunge)

Special Attacks rock throwing (140 ft.), swift gauntlet (+2 heartseeker spiked gauntlet +21 [1d8+13])

TACTICS

Before Combat If Yndak is aware of the PCs (he is likely alerted when the PCs do battle with the brimstone oozes), he does not engage them in melee right away. Instead, he moves to position himself next to the hungry door (area D6c) so he can throw rocks at the PCs.

During Combat Yndak begins lobbing rocks at the PCs and does not engage them in melee unless they approach within 30 feet. He positions himself so he can reach as many PCs as possible and spreads his attacks evenly among his opponents. If a specific foe inflicts 30 or more points of damage to him in a single round, Yndak focuses all of his attacks on that enemy and uses his Vital Strike feat to put a quick end to them.

Morale Yndak knows he is trapped here. He fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 13, **Con** 25, **Int** 7, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 34

Feats Cleave, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lunge, Martial Weapon Proficiency (greataxe)^B, Multiattack, Power Attack, Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +1 (+9 jump), Climb +20, Perception +12, Stealth -7

Languages Giant

Other Gear +1 heartseeker resizing spiked gauntlet, leather armor, masterwork greataxe, throwing rocks (5)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; save Fort DC 24; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d4 Str; cure 2 consecutive saves.

Swift Gauntlet (Ex) Yndak wears a (+2 *heartseeker spiked gauntlet* on his gangly third arm and can attack with it as a swift action, even when Yndak's movement would normally restrict him to one attack. This attack is made at a +21 bonus and deals 1d8+13 points of damage, regardless of what other attacks are made on Yndak's turn.

Treasure: The Blood Crow priests used treasure to entice Yndak to agree to undergo the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth*. That treasure still lies in a heaping pile behind the great stone chair. It consists of 5,610 sp, 1,040 gp, 103 pp, a string of nine pale lavender freshwater pearls worth 50 gp each, a pair of bloodstained solid silver boots once worn by a murderous redcap (worth 400 gp for the pair), a *hurricane quarterstaff*^{UE}, two *javelins of lightning*, and a suit of intimidating-looking spiked hide armor (this is a suit of enchanted *hamatula hide*^{UE}).

Various runes and arcane symbols have been carved into the back of the great stone chair, easily seen by anyone moving behind the chair to inspect the pile of treasure. A PC studying the runes and symbols that succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), Linguistics, or Spellcraft check realizes the arcane writing comprises two long lost occult rituals: *The Damnable Binding of Flesh and Stone* and the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (both rituals are fully described in Appendix 3). The *Damnable Binding of Flesh and Stone* requires 6 days of study and a successful DC 21 Intelligence check to master. The *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* requires 8 days of study and a successful DC 23 Intelligence check to master.



D6c. The Hungry Door (EL 10)

This stone door is dominated by a bas relief carving of an enormous canine mouth. A simple stone rung is set just to the right of the carving.

The stone door has hardness of 8, 100 hit points, and is unlocked. However, the door is an exceptionally dangerous hazard (see below).

The Hungry Door: The door is a semi-sentient trap-like hazard. Any living creature that touches the door that has not attained at least Corruption Stage 1 of Onochtu spirit corruption (see Appendix 2), is subject to



a single grapple attempt by the door (CMB +18, CMD 30). Creatures that touch the door with a tool or non-reach weapon are also subject to this attack. If the door manages to pin a creature, it “devours” the creature as a free action. Creatures “devoured” by the door are not literally consumed, but are instead pulled into a small extradimensional “gullet” that can hold up to 60 cubic feet of matter. The door only consumes living tissue, so any material possessions and inanimate matter not surrounded by flesh are left behind, falling into a pile in front of the door. Creatures drawn inside the door have a 1% cumulative chance each hour of being “spit out” into a void-like realm. This completely obliterates the creature (with no saving throw) and prevents any form of raising or resurrection that requires part of the corpse. Only a *wish*, *miracle*, or *true resurrection* spell can restore an obliterated creature to life. Creatures trapped inside the door cannot use physical means to escape. However, if the door or its internal gullet is targeted with *antimagic field*, *break enchantment*, *dispel magic*, *geas/quest*, *gate*, *knock*,

remove curse, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *passwall*, *phase door*, *repel metal or stone*, *soften earth and stone*, *stone shape*, *stone tell*, *transmute rock to mud*, or *wish* within 1 minute of devouring a creature, the door automatically returns the devoured creature (or a random creature if the door devoured multiple creatures). If this occurs, the creature appears naked and prone in front of the door and takes 3d6 points of damage from the ordeal.

To safely open the door, a creature that has not achieved at least Corruption Stage 1 of Onochtu spirit corruption must do one of the following:

- Succeed at a DC 30 Disable Device check. This turns the door into a standard stone door for 1 minute.
- Touch the door with a *chime of opening* or target it with one of the following spells: *antimagic field*, *break enchantment*, *dispel magic*, *geas/quest*, *gate*, *knock*, *remove curse*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *passwall*, *phase door*, *repel metal or stone*, *soften earth and stone*, *stone shape*, *stone tell*, *transmute rock to mud*, or *wish*. This turns the door into a standard stone door for 1 minute.
- Allow the door to consume and obliterate a living creature. This turns the door into a standard stone door for 1 hour.

Anyone studying the door that succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft check understands the door’s capabilities, how to free those trapped within, and how to safely bypass the door. The opposite side of the door (exiting area D7) functions as a standard stone door. Creatures touching this side of the door are not subject to the door’s grappling or devouring attacks.

D7. Sanctum of Bloody Rebirth (EL 11+)

The rough walls of this large natural cave glow blood-red. Hovering in the center of the room is a circle of glowing red runes and other mystical symbols that look as if they are imprinted on the very air.

The ceiling here is 18 feet high and clear of the stalactites and other limestone formations common throughout the Well of Bloody Hearts. The entire cave is infused with malevolent supernatural energy, noticeable as a strange tingling sensation on the PCs’ skin.

The Rune-heart: Hovering in mid-air in the center of the cave is a 5-foot diameter translucent, semi-transparent circle of blood-red symbols and runes that pulses and pounds rhythmically like a monstrous, otherworldly heart. This is the Rune-heart, a focus of

spiritual energy that acts as the anchoring force for the Onochtu spirits in the Material Plane. When the Onochtu spirits first bled into this reality thousands of years ago, they could only drift about as dream-haunting incorporeal entities and could not physically interact with or even directly communicate with living creatures. When the first primitive tribes took notice of the Onochtu and began to worship them, the primitive shamans invoked a terrible ritual that sanctified this cave and brought the Rune-heart into existence. This allowed the Onochtu spirits to begin infecting living creatures with their spiritual corruption (Onochtu spirit corruption is fully described in Appendix 2). Millennia later, the Rune-heart persists: a rhythmically pounding spiritual cancer that is the key to defeating the Onochtu.

Any creature seeing the Rune-heart that succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), or Spellcraft check realizes that the runes and symbols swirling within it form a supernatural “tether” that ties dangerous evil spirits to the Material Plane, and that if this tether is destroyed the evil spirits will be weakened significantly. The Rune-heart has AC 20, 100 hit points, and is effectively incorporeal unless targeted by good-aligned weapons or weapons with a +3 or greater enchantment. Reducing the Rune-heart to 0 or less hit points destroys it. If the PCs manage to destroy the Rune-heart, the following occurs:

- If Austan Mileswood has not yet completed the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth*, the ritual is ruined and Austan suffers as if he failed to cast the ritual (see Appendix 3).
- The Day 1, Day 2, and Day 3 corruption effects (detailed in the **Corruption** entries throughout this scenario) are immediately negated.
- Austan Mileswood and the aether elementals each take 2d6 points of damage and are dazed for 1 round.
- The ectoplasmic hungry flesh (area **C15d**) and the Tongue (area **D5**) are banished from the Material Plane and the Hungry Door (**D6c**) becomes a standard stone door.

Restoring the Rune-heart requires the invoking of a long-lost ritual, created by primitive shamans of the Redlands Plateau thousands of years ago. Discovering and invoking this dreadful ritual is beyond the scope of this scenario.

Dust of Sneezing and Choking: Austan has nailed a small leather pouch 5 feet above the door leading into the cave (15 feet off the floor). The bag contains *dust of sneezing and choking*, and is intended as a trap for unwary intruders. PCs entering the cave that succeed at a DC 35 Perception check notice the pouch. Note that since they do not breathe, the aether elementals are immune to the dust’s effects. See Austan’s **Tactics** for additional details.

Witnessing the Ritual

If the PCs enter the Sanctum of Bloody Rebirth (area D7) at any point on Day 3, GMs are encouraged to have them witness the bloody conclusion of Austan Mileswood’s ritual. PCs that see Austan cut out and devour his own beating, steaming heart could be understandably traumatized by the horrific scene. Particularly devious GMs might even force these PCs to succeed at a DC 20 Will save to resist being dazed for 1 round, as their minds try to comprehend Austan’s gruesome act.

DUST OF SNEEZING AND CHOKING TRAP CR 10

XP 9,600

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 35; **Disable Device** N/A (simply grabbing the pouch before Austan can open it defeats the trap)

EFFECTS

Trigger touch (must be triggered manually); **Reset** none
Effect *dust of sneezing and choking* fills a 20-foot spread centered 15 feet off the floor, above the door (3d6 Con damage; DC 15 Fort negates; however, those who succeed on this saving throw are still disabled by choking—treat as stunned—for 5d4 rounds); **Note:** The dust does not filter into area **D6** and only affects creatures inside area **D7**.

Creatures: Wild-eyed, blood-spattered, and thoroughly mad, the man that was once Austan Mileswood waits here. When the PCs enter, Austan is either in the process of completing the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (if the PCs enter here before the end of Day 3) or he sits in silent meditation below the Rune-heart as he communes with the evil Onochtu spirits. If Austan is busy conducting the ritual, he is automatically surprised—though the aether elementals that guard him are not. To conclude the ritual, Austan must carve out his own heart and devour it. Doing so takes a full-round action, and during the grisly endeavor Austan is considered helpless. Empowered by the ritual’s magic, Austan survives the gruesome ordeal and his transformed body becomes a vessel for the Onochtu spirits. At this point, GMs should use the CR 11 version of Austan. While Austan fights, he curses the PCs in Aklo, promising to devour their hearts. When he speaks, Austan’s voice sounds like three distinctly different beings speaking simultaneously. These hollow, discordant voices are utterly alien and cause the very air within the cave to echo and tremble ominously.

Six aether elementals were bound to this cave centuries ago by the Blood Crows priests and shamans. Unlike normal aether elementals, these creatures lack the telekinetic invisibility special quality. In place of this ability, the damage from their slam and telekinetic

throw attacks is increased by 1d6. These creatures appear as wraith-like skeletal creatures, swathed in black and gray ectoplasmic mist. Though Austan cannot command them or even communicate with them effectively, the aether elementals are aware of Austan's importance and fight to the death to protect him.

AUSTAN MILESWOOD

CR 10 OR 11

XP 9,600 or 12,800

hp 68 or 74 (see Appendix 1)

TACTICS

Before Combat Having eaten several hearts within the last 24 hours, Austan has already used his *Heart of Courage* and *Heart of Strength* manifestation abilities earlier today (these effects are already reflected in both the CR 10 and CR 11 stat blocks). If Austan is aware of the PCs and the PCs do not surprise him, he drinks his *potion of haste* before combat.

During Combat Austan immediately moves to position himself against the south wall, where he takes a full-round action to readjust his partially removed *veiled chain* (if he was interrupted while performing the ritual). He then drinks his *potion of haste* (if he has not already done so) and *potion of heroism* (note that his CR 10 and CR 11 stat blocks do not account for these potions). Next, he draws his war razor and waits patiently for at least two PCs to pass through the doorway. When this happens, Austan casts *mage hand* from his *apprentice's cheating gloves* and rips open the pouch containing *dust of sneezing and choking* (as described above). If Austan has completed the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth*, he uses his *Seize the Heart* manifestation ability against a PC that does not succumb to the *dust of sneezing and choking*. Austan then activates his *jaunt boots* and uses his Spring Attack and Jaguar Pounce feats and engages the PCs in melee with his war razor. He invokes his studied target slayer class ability whenever he has the opportunity and he is quick to use his war razor's sneaky ability (see *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Horror Adventures*) if he can't use his sneak attack ability against a foe.

Morale Completely under the sway of the Onochtu spirits, Austan fights to the death.

AETHER ELEMENTALS (6)

CR 4

XP 1,200

Advanced variant aether elemental

NE Medium outsider (aether, elemental, extraplanar)

Init +10; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 21, flat-footed 17 (+5 deflection, +6 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 42 (4d10+20)

Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +5

Defensive Abilities telekinetic deflection; **Immune** elemental traits, force effects

OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee slam +8 (2d6+6)

Ranged telekinetic throw +10 (3d6+4)

Special Attacks telekinetic maneuver, telekinetic throw (DC 17)

TACTICS

During Combat The aether elementals immediately position themselves between the PCs and Austan Mileswood. The creatures each try to focus their attacks on a different PC, preferring to use their telekinetic throw attacks to hurl PCs away from Austan and away from the Rune-heart.

Morale The aether elementals fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 23, **Con** 20, **Int** 8, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 29

Feats Improved Initiative^B, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot

Skills Acrobatics +13, Fly +17, Perception +9, Sense Motive +9, Stealth +13

Languages Aquan, Auran, Ignan, Terran

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Telekinetic Deflection (Su) An aether elemental gains a deflection bonus to its AC equal to its Constitution modifier.

Telekinetic Maneuver (Su) An aether elemental can attempt a ranged combat maneuver check, as per telekinesis, with a CMB of +10.

Telekinetic Throw (Ex) An aether elemental can fling a creature or object (with a maximum range of 480 feet). A creature receives a Fortitude save to avoid being thrown (DC 17). The telekinetic throw deals the listed damage to both the thrown creature or object and the target. The aether elemental can throw a creature or object that weighs 200 pounds.

Corruption: As Austan Mileswood progresses through the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth*, the corrupting influence of the emergent Onochtu spirits begins to eat away at the very fabric of reality. This causes the following effects, which increase over the next three days.

Day 1: Use the CR 10 version of Austan Mileswood.

Day 2: Austan's DR increases to 10/good.

Day 3: With the conclusion of the ritual, Austan advances to Corruption Stage 3 and manifestation level 6 of Onochtu spirit corruption. He also earns enough experience to become a 10th-level character (taking another level in the assassin class). Use the CR 11 version of Austan Mileswood.

Concluding the Adventure

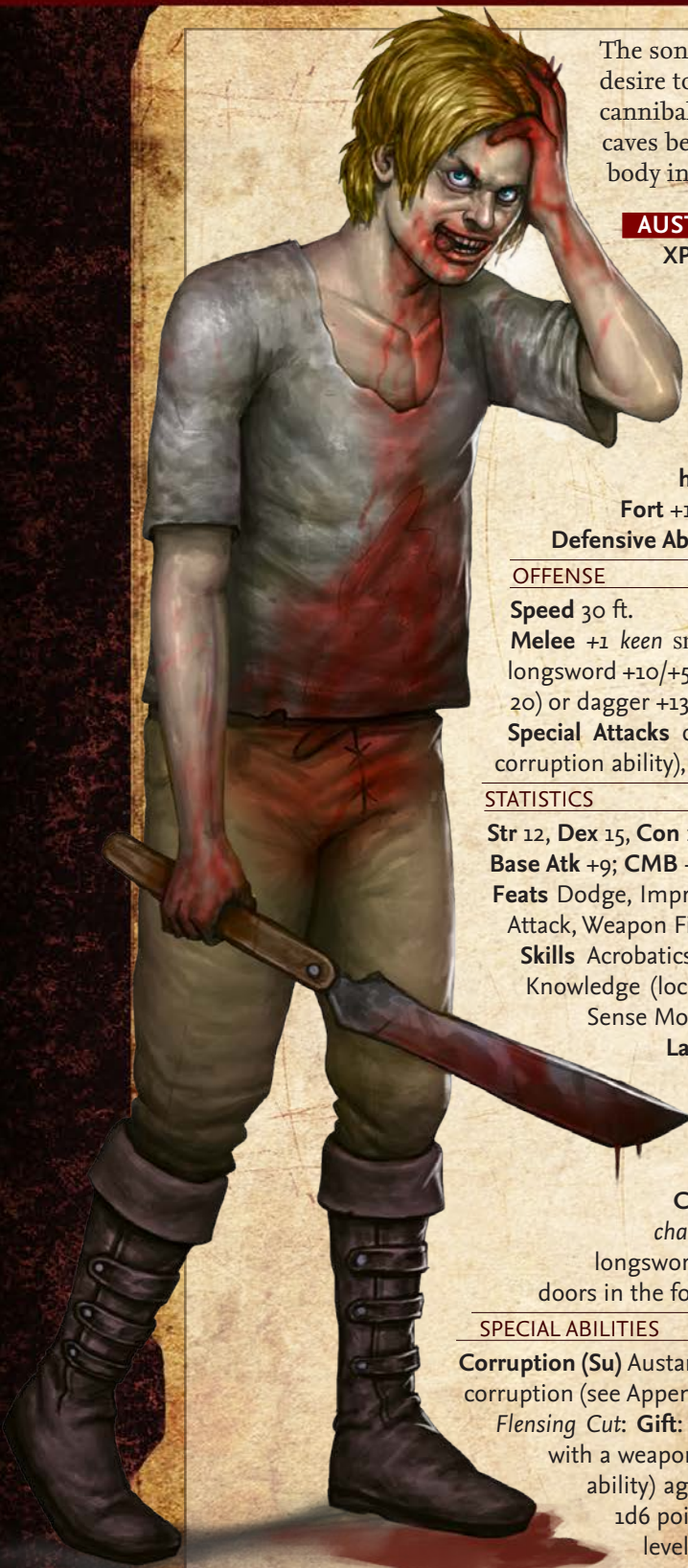
By killing Austan, the PCs strike a major blow against the evil Onochtu spirits. Without a viable champion, the Onochtu quickly fade back to dormancy and must wait until another champion discovers the Rune-heart and performs the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth*. If the PCs destroy the Rune-heart, the Onochtu are effectively crippled on the Material Plane since the ritual for restoring it was lost long ago.

Never a popular posting, and too expensive to maintain considering the city's current troubles, the city of Corovoss is content to abandon the fort. Eventually, the barbarian tribes of the Redlands Plateau become aware of what has transpired at Fort Hiraksos and send a small army to destroy the haunted stronghold to the ground. In addition to razing the fort down to its foundation, this army takes great pains to collapse the well shaft leading to the Well of Bloody Hearts.

It's possible that enterprising PCs might decide to claim the fort or petition the city of Corovoss for help restoring it. Though such an endeavor is beyond the scope of this adventure, it is very likely that the city's military leaders would eagerly approve of such an arrangement as long as the PCs paid for the fort's upkeep. Additionally, in exchange for helping to keep the area secure, the Corovossan City Guard might offer the PCs a modest discount on provisions and arms.

Claiming the fort could invoke the ire of the Redlands tribes, many of whom still consider the site a sacred place. The PCs could be forced to negotiate with the tribes of the region and possibly undertake various missions for the tribes to prove their goodwill. Such negotiations should be considered carefully, for even the slightest misstep could result in the tribes uniting into a massive army bent on eradicating the Fort Hiraksos once and for all.

Appendix 1: Austan Mileswood



The son of a proud military commander, Austan Mileswood's cowardice and desire to please his father led him to pledge his body and soul to malevolent cannibalistic spirits. As the PCs investigate Fort Hiraksos, Austan lurks in the caves beneath the fort, laboring to complete the ritual that will transform his body into a vessel of these sinister otherworldly entities.

AUSTAN MILESWOOD

CR 10

XP 9,600

Male human assassin 4/fighter 3/slayer 3

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; Senses Perception +12

Aura predator's intensity (10 ft., DC 20, see corruption ability)

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 18 (+5 armor, +3 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 98 (10 HD; 4d8+6d10+43)

Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +2 (+1 vs. fear); +2 vs. poison

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge; Immune fear effects (see corruption ability)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 keen sneaky^{ACG} war razor +13/+8 (1d4+3/17–20) or dagger +11/+6 (1d4+1/19–20) or longsword +10/+5 (1d8+1/19–20); vs. humanoids: +1 keen sneaky^{ACG} war razor +15/+10 (1d4+5/17–20) or dagger +13/+8 (1d4+3/19–20)

Special Attacks death attack (DC 16), flensing cut (see corruption ability), heart taker (see corruption ability), sneak attack +3d6, studied target +1 (1st, move action), true death (DC 19)

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 15, Wis 8, Cha 14

Base Atk +9; CMB +10; CMD 23

Feats Dodge, Improved Critical (war razor), Jaguar Pounce, Mobility, Slashing Grace^{ACG}, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (war razor)

Skills Acrobatics +15, Bluff +8, Climb +5, Disguise +7, Heal +12, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (religion) +10, Linguistics +10, Perception +12, Ride +6, Sense Motive +6, Stealth +15

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Daemonic, Draconic, Infernal, Orc, Tribal Tongue

SQ armor training 1, heart of courage (see corruption ability), heart of strength (see corruption ability), hidden weapons, poison use, slayer talent (fast stealth), track +1

Combat Gear jaunt boots^{UE}, potion of haste, potion of heroism; Other Gear +1 chain shirt, +1 keen sneaky^{ACG} war razor, belt of mighty constitution +4, dagger, longsword, apprentice's cheating gloves^{UE}, ring of protection +3, keys to all the locked doors in the fort.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Corruption (Su) Austan has reached Corruption Stage 2 and manifestation level 5 of Onochtu spirit corruption (see Appendix 2). He has the gifts and stains of the following manifestations:

Flensing Cut: Gift: Once per day per manifestation level, you can make a flensing cut attack with a weapon from the light blades weapon group (see the Fighter weapon training class ability) against a humanoid creature as a standard action. If you hit, the target takes 1d6 points of bleed damage for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 your manifestation level. **Stain:** You suffer from hypercoagulation; your blood thickens and clots from

time to time, and your muscles and nerves are impaired due to insufficient oxygen and nutrients passing through your capillaries. You take a -2 penalty to your Constitution score.

Heart of Courage: Gift: If you eat the heart of a humanoid creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher, you become immune to fear effects for 24 hours. Eating a heart is a full-round action, and the target must be dead or helpless. **Stain:** You must eat at least 1 pound of meat each day. If you fail to do so, you are sickened until you eat a pound of meat.

Heart of Strength: Gift: If you eat the heart of a humanoid creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher that has more Hit Dice than you, you gain a +2 insight bonus to your Strength score for 24 hours. Eating a heart is a full-round action, and the target must be dead or helpless. **Stain:** Your teeth and lips become stained a permanent blood-red. You take a -2 penalty to your Charisma score.

Heart Taker: Gift: You gain a +1 insight bonus to attack and damage rolls with weapons from the light blades weapon group (see the Fighter weapon training class ability) when fighting humanoids. This bonus increases to +2 at manifestation level 4 and +3 at manifestation level 7. You can also remove a humanoid heart as a standard action, instead of a full-round action. **Stain:** You take a -2 penalty on all ranged attacks.

Predator's Intensity: Gift: Humanoid creatures that begin their turns adjacent to you are sickened for 1d6 rounds unless they succeed at a DC 20 Will save. A creature that succeeds can't be affected by your predator's intensity again for 24 hours. At manifestation level 5th, this aura extends out to 10 feet. **Stain:** Humanoid creatures have their starting attitudes toward you reduced by one step.

PC Gear (Ex) Austan has the equipment of a 10th level player-character. His CR is increased by +1.

AUSTAN MILESWOOD

CR 11

XP 12,800

Male human assassin 5/fighter 3/slayer 3

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; Senses Perception +13

Aura predator's intensity (10 ft., DC 21, see corruption ability)

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 18 (+5 armor, +3 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 107 (11 HD; 5d8+6d10+48)

Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +3 (+1 vs. fear); +2 vs. poison

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge; Immune fear effects (see corruption ability)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 keen sneaky^{ACG} war razor +13/+8 (1d4+3/17-20) or dagger +11/+6 (1d4+1/19-20) or longsword +10/+5

(1d8+1/19-20); vs. humanoids: +1 keen sneaky^{ACG} war razor +15/+10 (1d4+5/17-20) or dagger +13/+8 (1d4+3/19-20)

Special Attacks death attack (DC 17), flensing cut (see corruption ability), heart taker (see corruption ability), seize the heart (DC 21, see corruption ability), sneak attack +4d6, studied target +1 (1st, move action), true death (DC 20)

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +9; CMB +10; CMD 23

Feats Critical Focus, Dodge, Improved Critical (war razor), Jaguar Pounce, Mobility, Slashing Grace^{ACG}, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (war razor)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +9, Climb +6, Disguise +7, Heal +13, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (religion) +10, Linguistics +10, Perception +13, Ride +6, Sense Motive +7, Stealth +16

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Daemonic, Draconic, Infernal, Orc, Tribal Tongue

SQ armor training 1, hidden weapons, poison use, slayer talent (fast stealth), track +1

Combat Gear jaunt boots^{UE}, potion of haste, potion of heroism; **Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, +1 keen sneaky^{ACG} war razor, dagger, belt of mighty constitution +4, longsword, apprentice's cheating gloves^{UE}, ring of protection +3, keys to all the locked doors in the fort.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Corruption (Su) Austan has reached Corruption Stage 3 and manifestation level 6 of Onochtu spirit corruption (see Appendix 2). He has the gifts and stains of the following manifestations:

Flensing Cut: Gift: Once per day per manifestation level, you can make a flensing cut attack with a weapon from the light blades weapon group (see the Fighter weapon training class ability) against a humanoid creature as a standard action. If you hit, the target takes 1d6 points of bleed damage for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 your manifestation level. **Stain:** You suffer from hypercoagulation; your blood thickens and clots from time to time, and your muscles and nerves are impaired due to insufficient oxygen and nutrients passing through your capillaries. You take a -2 penalty to your Constitution score.

Heart of Courage: Gift: If you eat the heart of a humanoid creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher, you become immune to fear effects for 24 hours. Eating a heart is a full-round action, and the target must be dead or helpless. **Stain:** You must eat at least 1 pound of meat each day. If you fail to do so, you are sickened until you eat a pound of meat.

Heart of Strength: Gift: If you eat the heart of a humanoid creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher that has more Hit Dice than you, you gain a +2 insight bonus to your Strength score for 24 hours. Eating a heart is a full-

round action, and the target must be dead or helpless.

Stain: Your teeth and lips become stained a permanent blood-red. You take a -2 penalty to your Charisma score.

Heart Taker: Gift: You gain a +1 insight bonus to attack and damage rolls with weapons from the light blades weapon group (see the Fighter weapon training class ability) when fighting humanoid. This bonus increases to +2 at manifestation level 4 and +3 at manifestation level 7. You can also remove a humanoid heart as a standard action, instead of a full-round action. **Stain:** You take a -2 penalty on all ranged attacks.

Predator's Intensity: Gift: Humanoid creatures that begin their turns adjacent to you are sickened for 1d6 rounds unless they succeed at a DC 21 Will save. A creature that succeeds can't be affected by your predator's intensity again for 24 hours. At manifestation level 5th, this aura extends out to 10 feet. **Stain:** Humanoid creatures have their starting attitudes toward you reduced by one step.

Seize the Heart: Gift: As a full-round action that provokes an attack of opportunity, you can target a single humanoid within 30 feet with the appropriate anatomy (the creature must have a heart). The target creature must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save. If the target creature fails the save, the creature is stunned for 1 round and is immediately reduced to -1 hit points as its heart is torn from its chest (or exits the creature's mouth if the creature is wearing armor) and appears your hand. Each round thereafter, the target creature takes 3d6 points of bleed damage at the beginning of the creature's turn until it receives enough magical healing to restore it to 0 hit points. (A Heal check will not stop this bleed.) Even with a successful save, the target creature takes 3d6 points of damage. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 1/2 your manifestation level. **Stain:** You no longer benefit from magical healing.

PC Gear (Ex) Austan has the equipment of a 10th level player-character. His CR is increased by +1.

AUSTAN'S STORY

Though Austan Mileswood descended from a long line of decorated soldiers and fighting-men, he knew from a very young age that he was a hopeless coward. Austan spent his childhood fleeing bullies and avoiding confrontation, traits that followed him into adulthood, much to the consternation of his career soldier father. Though craven, Austan was a dutiful son and joined the city-state of Corovoss's City Guard just as his father and older brothers had done. Austan excelled as a swordsman and had a gifted mind for strategy and logistics, but his cowardice and lack of ambition prevented him from rising in rank and branded him as "unfit for duty" in the eyes of many of the City Guard's commanding officers. Only by the intervention of his influential father was Austan able to serve in the City Guard, and only then because he served under his father's command.

When his father's unit was sent as part of an allied military force to combat an orc uprising hundreds of miles northeast of Corovoss, Austan's father hoped the conflict would finally make a man of his timorous son. However, though Austan's strategic and logistical skills proved useful, the young warrior was unable to muster the courage necessary to stand and fight alongside the other soldiers. Instead of fighting, in the few engagements in which he participated, Austan either panicked and fled the melee or dropped to the ground and cowered in fear.

One evening inside the walls of their fortified encampment, Austan's father summoned him to the barracks for a private conversation. The conversation quickly turned from a pep-talk to his father's usual condescending tirade, as he berated his son and tried to use intimidation to instill Austan with courage. Deep down, Austan only wanted to please his father, so he sputtered and stammered a half-hearted response and promised his father that he would "find his courage somehow." His father then turned cold and responded by calling Austan a coward and a fool. His father's last words resonated with Austan: "You don't find your courage like a lost copper piece or a stray uniform button! Every man makes his own courage ... any way he can! From the ancient Blood Crow barbarians who tore the heart out of a slain warrior and ate it to gain strength and courage ... that's been the way of it!"

At that moment, an enormous explosion consumed the barracks building in which they stood and the entire structure collapsed in a burning heap around them. The orcs had counter-attacked their encampment and were lobbing balls of burning pitch over the camp's palisade walls. One such missile struck the barracks building

and instantly toppled it. Austan awoke minutes later, but found himself pinned and trapped beneath the smoldering rubble. At first, he panicked, fearing that he and his father would soon burn to death. But then, by the flickering light of the burning debris, he saw his dead father next to him and the gaping wound in his father's chest. Austan's mind snapped. Yet even in madness he realized he was dying—but only because of his own hysterical fear. He needed to calm himself, he needed courage. At that moment, Austan's mind flooded with images of primitive tribesmen dancing wildly before misshapen stone monuments and feasting on the steaming hearts of their foes. The names *Nkaaz*, *Ozoc*, *Vucub* came unbidden into his broken mind and he found himself praying to these ancient and terrible spirits. With his eyes fixed upon the great open wound in his father's chest, Austan recalled the man's final words: "Every man makes his own courage ... any way he can!"

Austan licked his lips and a primordial hunger enveloped him. There, trapped beneath the smoldering ruin of the barracks building he made a final effort to appease his father and gained courage at a terrible price. Calmness quickly settled over Austan, and if it was the serenity of sheer madness he did not question it. He found the strength to dig free of the rubble and found that the orcs had breached the walls and were running rampant throughout the camp. Austan found the courage to deal with the orcs, the same way he had found courage under the collapsed barracks building. With his newfound bravery, Austan slaughtered scores of orcs and was instrumental in organizing and inspiring his fellow soldiers to drive away the orcs and retake the camp. Austan fought valiantly over the following weeks and months. Whenever the calmness would begin to fade, and the old terrors start to surface again, he would steal away into the night to raid the orc encampments and use his war razor to acquire more courage. When the orc incursion was finally put down, Austan returned to Corovoss where he was awarded numerous medals for valor and distinguished service.

Yet courage is not a quality for war alone, and there are needs for it in everyday life as Austan discovered years later when he left military service. To his growing horror, he found that his obsessive need for courage had to be renewed on a regular basis. On nights when his courage waned, he took to the streets of Corovoss with his war razor in hand. At first he preyed upon vagabonds and violent street thugs, and he left a bloody trail of mutilated victims for the city watch to puzzle over. Eventually, Austan's need for courage led him to murder an innocent young woman. Horrified at taking

an innocent life, Austan knew he had to leave the city and find another way to satisfy his unholy appetite.

Austan recalled his father's final words and sought to learn more about the ancient Blood Crow barbarians of the Redlands Plateau. After months of research, Austan learned that the Blood Crows had been eradicated centuries earlier. However, Austan did learn of a site once sacred to the Blood Crows called the Well of Bloody Hearts—a place the ancient Blood Crows would bring captives taken in battle in order to feast on their hearts and gain strength and courage from them. Austan's research revealed that the Well of Bloody Hearts was a real place, and was located on a remote hill in the southern reaches of the Redlands Plateau. To his delight, Austan also soon confirmed that this hill was now home to a recently constructed Corovossan watchpost called Fort Hiraksos. Armed with this knowledge, Austan immediately rejoined the Corovossan City Guard and used his late father's influence and his own impressive service record to get himself posted to Fort Hiraksos. Located deep in the barbarian-infested badlands north of Corovoss, Austan reasoned that the remote fort would be the perfect place in which he could safely indulge in his Hero's Blood.

Appendix 2: Onochtu Spirit Corruption

A vile, primitive hunger grows more every day, for only by consuming the hearts of sentient beings can you hold back the scourge of cowardice and tap into the power and vitality offered by the Onochtu spirits.

The following corruption rules follow the Pathfinder rules for corruption introduced in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Horror Adventures*.

CATALYST

Onochtu spirit corruption commonly stems from a desperate need for courage or revenge, or the primitive belief that courage and power can be gained by eating the heart of a sentient being. You might contract Onochtu spirit corruption after offering your service to the Onochtu spirits after cutting out and consuming the heart of an intelligent being.

PROGRESSION

Each week, you need to consume the heart of a sentient creature. The creature must have an Intelligence score of at least 3 and must be no smaller than two size categories smaller than you. The entire heart must be consumed bloody and uncooked.

After a week, if you haven't consumed a heart, you must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC = 15 + your manifestation level) each day until you've eaten a heart. If you fail the save, the next time you rest your corruption takes over and you unconsciously hunt and feed, devouring a living sentient creature's heart. In this state, you can't differentiate between creatures and might consume an innocent or even a trusted friend or loved one; if you do so, your corruption progresses to the next stage.

If circumstances make it impossible to feed (such as if you are tied down or in a locale with nothing to feed upon), you gain the sickened condition and have a –6 penalty to resist all fear effects. You continue to hunger for the heart of a sentient being and struggle to escape and feed until you have devoured one.

Corruption Stage 1: Once you feed on an innocent sentient creature's heart—either willingly or because you failed a saving throw—your alignment shifts one step toward evil.

Corruption Stage 2: The second time, your alignment shifts another step toward evil. You cannot advance to Corruption Stage 3 until you complete the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth* (see Appendix 3).

Corruption Stage 3: After you complete the *Ritual of Bloody Rebirth*, you become an NPC under the GM's control.

REMOVING THE CORRUPTION

Getting rid of Onochtu spirit corruption typically requires fasting and isolation from humanoid creatures. It also requires that you are targeted by a spell, effect, or special ability that removes possession (as described in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Occult Adventures*). For the purpose of exorcising and cleansing your body of the possessing spirits, the controlling DC is 20 + 5 for each Corruption Stage you have achieved. However, upon reaching Corruption Stage 3, your soul is completely consumed and replaced by the Onochtu spirits and your mind is completely absorbed and assimilated. You can only be restored at this point by *miracle*, *wish*, or similarly powerful magic.

MANIFESTATIONS

The following are manifestations of Onochtu spirit corruption.

FLENSING CUT

Your surgically precise strikes can drain your victims' lifeblood.

Prerequisite(s): Manifestation level 4th, heart taker*.

Gift: Once per day per manifestation level, you can make a flensing cut attack with a weapon from the light blades weapon group (see the Fighter weapon training class ability) against a humanoid creature as a standard action. If you hit, the target takes 1d6 points of bleed damage for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 your manifestation level.

Stain: You suffer from hypercoagulation; your blood thickens and clots from time to time, and your muscles and nerves are impaired due to insufficient oxygen and nutrients passing through your capillaries. You take a –2 penalty to your Constitution score.

Special: Upon taking this manifestation, you must take both the gift and the stain, even with the useful corruption or vile corruption variants.

GREATER FLENSING CUT

Your bleeding cut attack is even deadlier.

Prerequisite(s): Manifestation level 7th, flensing cut*, heart taker*, staggering cut*.

Gift: Your flensing cut attack deals 3d6 points of

damage for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 your manifestation level.

Stain: Your hypercoagulation grows chronic, and your heart has a difficult time pumping your blood effectively. You take an additional -2 penalty to your Constitution score.

GREATER PREDATOR'S INTENSITY

Your menacing aura is nearly overwhelming to humanoid creatures.

Prerequisite(s): Manifestation level 7th, heart taker*, predator's intensity*.

Gift: Creatures that fail their saves against your predator's intensity manifestation become nauseated for 1 round before being sickened for as long as they remain within 10 feet of you. Once they have become nauseated in this way, they are immune to the nausea effect of your aura for 1 hour. A creature that succeeds at its save becomes immune to both your aura's nausea and sickened conditions for 24 hours.

Stain: Your menacing aura is so great that it makes interacting with other humanoids almost impossible, as humanoids find interacting with you extremely disturbing. Humanoid creatures have their starting attitudes toward you reduced by two steps and their attitudes can never increase beyond Indifferent.

HEART OF COURAGE

You derive courage from devouring the hearts of sentient humanoids.

Gift: If you eat the heart of a humanoid creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher, you become immune to fear effects for 24 hours. Eating a heart is a full-round action, and the target must be dead or helpless.

Stain: You must eat at least 1 pound of meat each day. If you fail to so, you are sickened until you eat a pound of meat.

HEART OF STRENGTH

You derive strength from devouring the hearts of defeated foes.

Gift: If you eat the heart of a humanoid creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher that has more Hit Dice than you, you gain a +2 insight bonus to your Strength score for 24 hours. Eating a heart is a full-round action, and the target must be dead or helpless.

Stain: Your teeth and lips become stained a permanent blood-red. You take a -2 penalty to your Charisma score.

Special: Upon taking this manifestation, you must take both the gift and the stain, even with the useful corruption or vile corruption variants.



HEART TAKER

You are adept at using a dagger or other small sharp weapon to quickly extract a humanoid's heart.

Gift: You gain a +1 insight bonus to attack and damage rolls with weapons from the light blades weapon group (see the Fighter weapon training class ability) when fighting humanoids. This bonus increases to +2 at manifestation level 4 and +3 at manifestation level 7. You can also remove a humanoid heart as a standard action, instead of a full-round action.

Stain: You take a -2 penalty on all ranged attacks.

PREDATOR'S INTENSITY

You exude an aura of menace to your chosen quarry.

Prerequisite(s): Heart of courage*.

Gift: Humanoid creatures that begin their turns adjacent to you are sickened for 1d6 rounds unless they succeed at a Will save. A creature that succeeds can't be affected by your predator's intensity again for 24 hours. At manifestation level 5th, this aura extends out to 10 feet.

Stain: Humanoid creatures have their starting attitudes toward you reduced by one step.

Special: Upon taking this manifestation, you must take both the gift and the stain, even with the useful corruption or vile corruption variants.

SEIZE THE HEART

You can pull a humanoid's heart from its chest from thirty paces away.

Prerequisite(s): Manifestation level 6th, flensing cut*, heart of courage*, heart of strength*, heart taker*, predator's intensity*.

Gift: As a full-round action that provokes an attack of opportunity, you can target a single humanoid within 30 feet with the appropriate anatomy (the creature must have a heart). The target creature must succeed at a Fortitude save. If the target creature fails the save, the creature is stunned for 1 round and is immediately reduced to -1 hit points as its heart is torn from its chest (or exits the creature's mouth if the creature is wearing armor) and appears your hand. Each round thereafter, the target creature takes 3d6 points of bleed damage at the beginning of the creature's turn until it receives enough magical healing to restore it to 0 hit points. (A Heal check will not stop this bleed.) Even with a successful save, the target creature takes 3d6 points of damage. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 1/2 your manifestation level.

Stain: You no longer benefit from magical healing.

Special: Upon taking this manifestation, you must take both the gift and the stain, even with the useful corruption or vile corruption variants.

STAGGERING CUT

Your surgically precise strikes slow and impair your victims.

Prerequisite(s): Manifestation level 4th, heart taker*.

Gift: Once per day per manifestation level, you can make a staggering cut attack with a weapon from the light blades weapon group (see the Fighter weapon training class ability) against a humanoid creature as a standard action. If you hit, the target must succeed at a Fortitude save or be staggered for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 your manifestation level.

Stain: As your gruesome feedings continue, your hunger begins to eat away at your emotions as you feel your humanity slipping away. You take a -2 penalty to Will saves.

THORACIC EXPERTISE

Your familiarity with the chest cavities of humanoid creatures borders on the obsessive.

Prerequisite(s): Manifestation level 5th, heart taker*.

Gift: When using a weapon from the light blades weapon group (see the Fighter weapon training class ability) against a humanoid opponent, your critical threat range is doubled. You can also remove a humanoid heart as a move action, instead of a standard action.

Stain: Your penalty on ranged attacks increases to -4.

Appendix 3: New Rituals

The Blood Crow priests and shamans were keen students of the occult and augmented their divine spellcasting with many, often malevolent, occult rituals. Though most of the Blood Crow rituals were lost when the tribe was exterminated three centuries ago, the two rituals detailed below are inscribed on the back of the massive stone chair in area **D6b**. The following rituals follow the Pathfinder rules for occult rituals introduced in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Occult Adventures*.

THE DAMNABLE BINDING OF FLESH AND STONE

School necromancy; **Level** 6

Casting Time 60 minutes

Components V, S, M (a *rope of entanglement* and special paint made from the blood of a good-aligned outsider), F (the heart of a good-aligned outsider and a stone object weighing at least twice as much as the target creature), SC (up to 13)

Skill Checks Knowledge (arcana) DC 28, 2 successes; Knowledge (dungeoneering) DC 28, 2 successes; Knowledge (religion) DC 28, 2 successes

Range 30 feet

Target one creature

Duration permanent (see text)

Saving Throw no; **SR** no

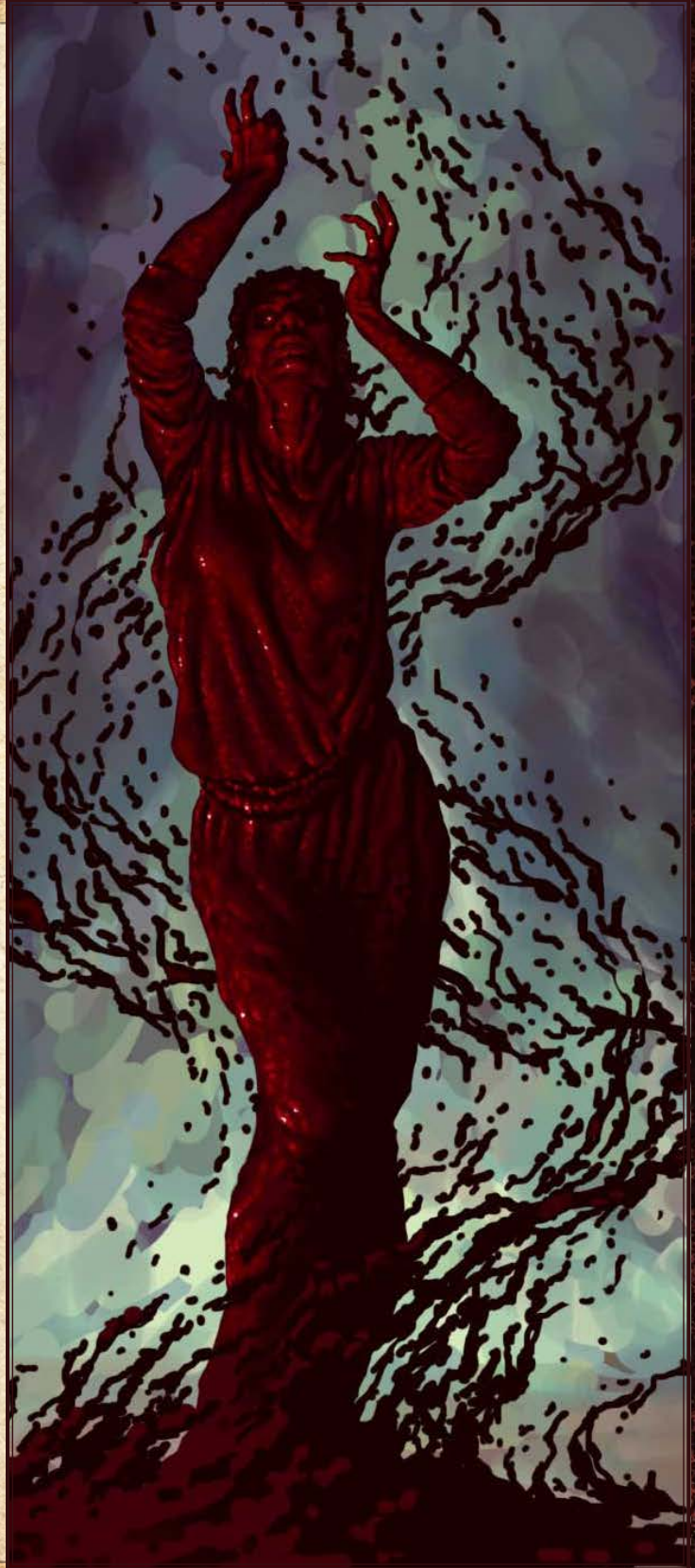
Backlash The primary caster is exhausted and the secondary casters are fatigued.

Failure The casters take 2d6 points of damage, 1d3 points of Wisdom and Charisma damage, and are sickened until the Wisdom and Charisma damage is healed.

EFFECT

This ritual must target a living creature that is not compelled by magic and fully understands and willfully accepts the ritual's effects. The target creature is bound to the stone object by the *rope of entanglement*. The primary caster then paints intricate occult symbols using the paint made of outsider's blood on the stone object and the target creature. Next, all of the casters consume a tiny piece of the outsider's heart, with the primary caster consuming the largest piece.

If the incantation is successful, the *rope of entanglement* appears to melt into the target creature's body (the rope is destroyed) and the target creature ceases to age and no longer requires nourishment in the form of food or water. However, the creature's body and soul is permanently bound to the stone object. This supernatural connection is visible as dozens of wispy, black smoke-like tendrils that extend from the creature to the stone object. The tendrils prevent the creature from moving more than 100 feet



from the stone object, as if the creature was bound to it by unbreakable chains. The tendrils can be destroyed; they have an AC of 25 and 50 hit points. In addition to being incorporeal, the tendrils can only be struck by good-aligned enchanted weapons (they are immune to magic and all other forms of attack). If the tendrils are reduced to 0 or less hit points, the creature immediately dissolves into fine dust (as *disintegrate*) with no saving throw.

Anyone studying the wispy black tendrils that succeeds at a DC 28 Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), or Spellcraft check recognizes the tendrils' unholy origins, understands their purpose, and recalls how to destroy them.

RITUAL OF BLOODY REBIRTH

School necromancy; **Level** 8

Casting Time 72 hours

Components V, S, M (25 hearts taken from humanoid creatures that have been dead no longer than 5 days, a sharp knife or razor)

Skill Checks Heal DC 31, 4 successes; Knowledge (arcana) DC 31, 2 successes; Knowledge (religion) DC 31, 3 successes; caster makes a skill check every 8 hours; three of the successful skill checks (including the final skill check) must be Heal checks

Range touch

Target primary caster

Duration permanent (see text)

Saving Throw no; **SR** no

Backlash none; however, with each failed Heal skill check, the caster takes 2d6 points of damage

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Failure The caster takes 6d6 points of damage and must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or die

EFFECT

This ritual must be cast within the Sanctum of Bloody Rebirth, a cave sacred to the Onochtu spirits. It must be cast by a creature with the proper anatomy (the creature must have a heart) that is currently afflicted with at least Corruption Stage 2 of Onochtu spirit corruption (see Appendix 2).

The caster kneels underneath the circle of runes and symbols in the middle of the Sanctum of Bloody Rebirth (see area **D7**) and begins the ritual by devouring all 25 of the humanoid hearts. The caster then spends the next 72 hours in meditation, intoning silent praises to the Onochtu spirits, and occasionally making surgically precise incisions on their chest (represented by the Heal checks). At the end of this 72-hour period, the caster concludes the ritual by carving out and consuming their heart.

If the incantation is successful, the caster survives the gruesome ordeal and immediately advances to Corruption Stage 3 of Onochtu spirit corruption (see Appendix 2). At this point, the caster becomes a physical vessel for the Onochtu spirits, who now control his every action. Though similar in effect, this is not possession. Instead, the caster's soul is completely consumed and replaced by the Onochtu spirits and the caster's mind is absorbed and assimilated. The caster can only be restored at this point by *miracle*, *wish* or similarly powerful magic. If the caster is a PC, the character becomes an NPC under the GM's control.

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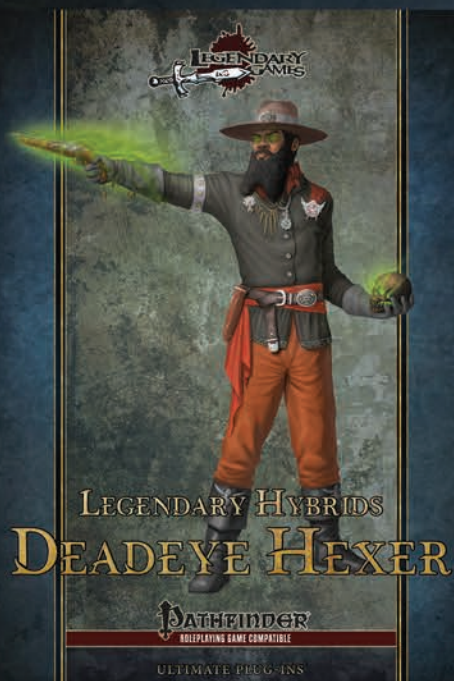
Appendix 4: Unkeyed Maps



Map of the Fort

Fort Hrakos area





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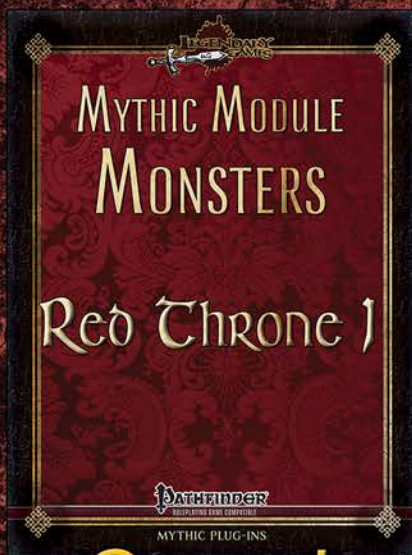


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