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ADVENTURE PATH[™]



IRONFANG  INVASION

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

by Larry Wilhelm

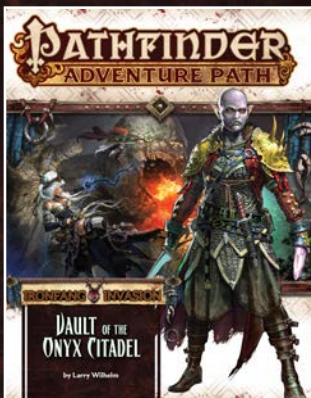
SOUTHERN NIRMATHAS AND IRONFANG TERRITORIES





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ON THE COVER



Nowhere is safe when the land itself carries foul intent! A mean-tempered zarxarin welcomes the mavens of the Ironfang Invasion to the Vault in this month's cover art by Remko Troost.



IRONFANG INVASION

ADVENTURE PATH 6 OF 6

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

Foreword by Crystal Frasier	2
Vault of the Onyx Citadel by Larry Wilhelm	4
NPC Gallery by Larry Wilhelm	56
Continuing the Campaign by Crystal Frasier	64
Ecology of the Vault Builders by Greg A. Vaughan	70
Relics of the Vault Builders by Tim Hitchcock	76
Bestiary by Paris Crenshaw, Kalervo Oikarinen, and Larry Wilhelm	82

REFERENCE

This book refers to several other Pathfinder Roleplaying Game products using the following abbreviations, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Pathfinder RPG hardcovers can find the complete rules of these books available online for free at paizo.com/prd.

<i>Advanced Class Guide</i>	ACG	<i>Occult Adventures</i>	OA
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>Bestiary 2</i>	B2	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Bestiary 3</i>	B3	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM



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EXTRA SHINY

Here we are again. The sixth volume of every Adventure Path is a chance for the developer to wipe her proverbial brow, exhale, and say, “That was a hell of a ride, wasn’t it?” It’s a weird little ritual now, where we talk about the challenges and the growth and how happy we are. But, y’all...

Ironfang Invasion kicked my ass.

This job is harder than I ever gave it credit for. Developing adventures is hard; I knew that going in. But I’ve been developing adventures for years, so how bad could developing six adventures be?

It turns out it’s one of those “exponential challenge” deals. Like, I can ice-skate and I can juggle, but if I try to juggle while I ice-skate, I fall on my butt. And wow, did I fall on my butt a few times over the course of Ironfang Invasion. There were tears at multiple points. Tears and liquor and swearing and *oh my god, why the hell is there no CR 14 ooze you can find in a forest?!?*

But it’s done, and as I foreshadowed above, I learned a lot in the process. Hopefully people have a fun time with the challenges and opponents that the Ironfang Invasion

brings to the table. Time will tell—we have to wrap up the entire Adventure Path before the first volume even hits store shelves, so it’s impossible to know how the audience will react until the project is already in our rearview mirror. As after all my creative endeavors, I have to let go and focus on making the next one even better. On to new adventures!

Most of the lessons learned over the past 10 months have been about organization, record-keeping, math, responsibility, and the importance of family (because you can’t work in the entertainment industry in America without shoe-horning in a moral about the importance of family). Adventure Paths, as it turns out, are major projects that touch many people’s lives, both inside the company and out. There’s a temptation to see them solely as a creative endeavor—to hold it back until it’s perfect or to feel defensive when your choices are questioned—but no one benefits from my little self-indulgent flights of ego. Keeping to a schedule means no one has to work weekends, and those questions lead to a stronger, better product. While I’ve always loved our editors here at Paizo,

the hectic process of creating an Adventure Path has only confirmed how central they are to every product and our overall reputation as professionals. The editors had no patience for my excuses and tracked down the errors that crept into my work as stress levels mounted. For that I am incredibly grateful. Everywhere this Adventure Path succeeds, thank the Paizo editors.

Everywhere it falls flat, you can still blame me. I gotta take credit for something.

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A—WELL, JUST ROCKS

Most of “Vault of the Onyx Citadel” occurs inside a rock. More accurately, most of the adventure takes place inside a massive geode somewhere deep in the Plane of Earth, and while the adventure location is technically on another plane, the intention isn’t to make it feel like an interdimensional romp. The Vault is isolated because it needs to be safe and unknown for story reasons. In your home game, it could just as easily be an Orvian Vault deep in the Darklands (we opted against that because we’d already touched on the Darklands in this Adventure Path) or a secluded stronghold in some forgotten valley (this was considered and set aside so as not to step on the toes of Rise of the Runelords).

The Vault of the Onyx Citadel (the place, not the book) is a vast, mysterious, alien wilderness—a snow globe of adventure that can serve either as a backdrop for the campaign’s climax or to open up future opportunities. As you can see from the map on page 26, the PCs investigate only a small corner of the self-contained world over the course of this volume, but many ancient and mysterious locations remain to be discovered. “Continuing the Campaign” on page 64 describes a few points of interest, but don’t limit yourself to these entries if you’d like to add new locations or adventure hooks to this strange wilderness or even begin a new campaign. It’s a classic fantasy trope for a new generation to come of age and seek to investigate the mysteries and legends their forebears left unanswered. Ancient xiomorn magic and technology scar every corner of this vast world, and outsiders—from the shaitans and xorns featured in this adventure to elementals, mephits, and thoqqas—migrate in and out with the extraplanar “seasons” like birds do in the mortal realm. GMs who want to extend their ongoing campaigns can vastly increase the resources of the Ironfang Legion and grant Azaersi and her commanders a few mythic tiers (by way of Vault Builder magic), forcing the PCs to explore the Vault’s secrets, decouple additional geomantic nexuses, and gather more allies before finally bringing an end to the Ironfang Legion.

The overall point of the Vault is to isolate the PCs once again, just as they were at the outset—with few friends or resources to call upon besides their own

MEANWHILE, ON THE FRONT...

As “Vault of the Onyx Citadel” opens, the Ironfang Legion has expanded its lines farther than ever before, solidifying its claim on western Nirmathas and spreading out over the Plains of Moltune. More importantly, the Legion has broken the backs of regional defenders: Tamran is still rebuilding after a daring raid by the hobgoblins, and the defense force of Moltune’s Mindspin Province is still counting its dead after several ingenious ambushes by Ironfang forces. With little left standing in the Legion’s way, only the PCs give the hobgoblins reason to pause.

Wary now that the PCs have won control of the *sardonyx shard*, General Azaersi fully expects a counterattack by human forces. Her expansion has slowed, and her army now focuses on reinforcing its current holdings, while other units are pulled back through the Stone Road to defend the Onyx Citadel from the imminent attack.

wits and the allies they might win along the way. Now, however, instead of being hunted, the PCs hunt. Instead of running, they chase. Every step brings them closer to the monsters who destroyed their way of life, rather than desperately increasing that distance. Even if you have no desire to explore every nook and cranny of the Vault, the isolation it imposes starkly contrasts with the isolation the PCs endured in their earliest days as adventurers. Game Masters who want to play that up might consider either removing access to spells such as *gate* and *plane shift*—simply making them unavailable to PCs—or else imposing a Vault-wide *dimensional anchor* effect generated by the Onyx Citadel (no doubt a side effect of whatever magic it uses to maintain the Stone Road). Either of these options forces the PCs to once again rely on their own ingenuity and resources.

At long last, we here at the Paizo offices get to put Ironfang Invasion to bed. Beginning next month is the Ruins of Azlant Adventure Path, headed by the unflappable Adam Daigle and kicking off with Jim Groves’s “The Lost Outpost.” I’ve already been assured I (and I alone) get to play a mermaid.

Scratch the last item off my bucket list.



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VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY



VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PAGE 5

The PCs rally several potential allies under one banner to fight against the Ironfang Legion, despite the efforts of a traitor in their midst.

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PAGE 14

With their new alliance, the heroes coordinate their allies to divide Ironfang defenders and attack Azaersi's strongholds, including their devastated hometown of Phaendar, while they use the *sardonyx shard* to enter Azaersi's otherworldly stronghold.

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PAGE 24

Within the nation-sized Vault of the Onyx Citadel, the PCs must disable the fortress's magical defenses or be overwhelmed by the Ironfang forces within.

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

PAGE 38

As the clock ticks toward the activation of Azaersi's doomsday weapon, the PCs assault the Ironfang Legion's stronghold, confront its champions, and ultimately stop Azaersi from destroying that which she can't conquer.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Vault of the Onyx Citadel" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.

16

The PCs begin this adventure at 16th level.

17

The PCs should reach 17th level before entering the Onyx Citadel.

18

The PCs should be 18th level by the adventure's end.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The heart of the Ironfang Legion's success lies in the Stone Roads, a mystical system of tunnels that allows its army to attack without warning and fall back without obstacle. General Azaersi first learned of the Stone Roads while she plotted to seize Nirmathas as a land for her people. She initially saw it merely as a tactical advantage, one that dwarven legends warned against tampering with for fear of releasing "deep earth monsters." But when she opened the Stone Roads for herself and discovered the vault and the stronghold that now serves as their hub—the Onyx Citadel—she realized she'd discovered an unassailable fortress that would allow even a small army to weather any assault. Seizing control of the citadel proved challenging: far from abandoned, it was home to a circle of mythical Vault Keepers led by the ancient and powerful xiomorn Ziguch the Seventh Facet.

The xiomorns—who comprise the legendarily powerful Vault Builders and their attendants, the Vault Keepers—claimed a massive cavern deep within the Elemental Plane of Earth millennia ago to exploit a unique vein of onyx that grew from the vault's quicksilver lake. Infused with power from the Elemental Planes of Earth, Fire, and Water, this stone held a natural resonance with the cosmic rhythms that made conjuration and teleportation magic far easier. Over time, the xiomorns used this power to craft a network of extraplanar passageways (which the dwarves named the Stone Roads many centuries later) to connect their far-flung strongholds and experiments. When they expanded their experiments to Golarion in the distant fog of history, they brought with them a sliver of their Onyx Citadel: the *Onyx Key*.

Seizing such a mystical stronghold from an entrenched and ancient owner and its army of pech servants presented a challenge. As was her way, Azaersi overcame her obstacles by making the right friends, first recruiting the shaitan mercenary and confidence man Shaakhib. Through him, she turned many of the vault's elemental denizens to her cause and, in subverting Ziguch's own agents, circumvented many of the xiomorns' defenses. In the final confrontation, the general easily bested even these powerful opponents, sending Ziguch fleeing into the vault's alien wilderness to lick its wounds.

While the Onyx Citadel can open gates to its black towers on the Material Plane, these gates can be opened to return to the vault only if aligned via the *sardonyx shard*, a removable piece of the *Onyx Key*. Usually under heavy guard, the *sardonyx shard* slipped through Azaersi's grasp when she ordered her spymaster Taurgreth to forge an alliance with the evil fey Arlantia (see the events of "Prisoners of the Blight" from *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #119). Distrustful of the fey and their magic, Taurgreth borrowed the *sardonyx shard* as an emergency escape should his mission go badly, never realizing that Arlantia's evil magic prevented interdimensional travel within her domain. The key to

Azaersi's stronghold fell into Arlantia's possession, and with her defeat it is now in the heroes' hands.

While the Legion can still open portals to the Material Plane from the Onyx Citadel, its spies and soldiers on the Material Plane cannot return unaided. Far worse, Azaersi's enemies now have access to the Vault of the Onyx Citadel, compromising her invulnerable stronghold. Azaersi has expanded her bounty on the so-called Fugitives of Phaendar and contracted the dwarf Obsik Shalehammer to recover the *sardonyx shard*.

As the tides of war begin to shift, Azaersi's arcane advisor—the cunning naga Zanathura—knows her days are numbered should the Legion begin to lose ground. Through her studies of the xiomorns' ancient magic, the naga has learned to channel the citadel's conjuration power back through the geomantic lines of power that charge it, using them like anchors to pull not just the Onyx Citadel but the entire nation-sized vault into the Stone Road, sending it crashing down on top of Nirmathas. The apocalyptic event would crush enormous swaths of Nirmathas and Molthune, killing untold numbers of the nations' inhabitants but leaving anyone within the Onyx Citadel protected to rule over whatever remains.

Using subtle charms and spells, Zanathura has quietly pushed Azaersi toward greater paranoia and emotional extremes, convincing her that this drastic scheme is her only recourse if the human resistance overwhelms the Ironfang forces in Nirmathas. Now that Zanathura has subverted the citadel's magical defenses into a massive transposition engine, it is only a matter of time before the Ironfang Legion completes its conquest of Nirmathas, or else lays waste to Avistan should they fail.

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

With Azaersi's forces falling back through the Stone Roads in anticipation of the PCs using the *sardonyx shard* to attack their stronghold, the nation of Nirmathas has issued a call for allies. The PCs have spent months gathering allies among the nation, and Forest Marshal Weslen Gavirk—leader of Nirmathas's loose-knit military—includes them as he calls out both within Nirmathas and beyond for assistance with ousting the remaining hobgoblin forces. Because of the considerable forces they PCs control, including the Chernasardo Rangers and the foundries of Longshadow, Gavirk asks them to take point in the negotiations, even allowing them to host if they like.

The adventure begins as a messenger from Forest Marshal Weslen Gavirk arrives for the PCs, either soon after they emerge from the depths of the Fangwood after their previous adventure (perhaps even waiting for them to return), or else after several weeks or months of the Nirmathi coalition's ineffectual offenses against the Ironfang Legion. Stories of the PCs' heroics have spread far and wide, and as Nirmathas grows desperate, Gavirk reaches out in hopes that the PCs' legend can unite

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

his fractious military. Gavirk's messenger delivers the following missive.

Greetings to you, Defenders of the West, Conquerors of Kosseruk, Champions of the Chernasardo,

My messengers and soldiers have had great difficulty breaking through the Ironfang Legion's lines to reach you for comment or support, but now that the hobgoblins stir and reposition their forces, it is clear you have struck yet another blow against them.

The people of Nirmathas are proud and brave, but also fractious and fiercely independent. They chafe under command as surely as they would in hobgoblin chains. They need more than an elected officer to unite them against the forward march of the Ironfang Legion: they need legends, and yours are the legends being told around soldiers' campfires these days. More practically, your forces have been at war with the Ironfang Legion longer than anyone else's, and you have won more victories against them than anyone else. I would like to meet with you and, if you indeed measure up to your legends, offer you command of the Nirmathi forces until the Legion is turned back or destroyed. I have other allies offering aid as well—the financier Santila Savros and a representative of the Knights of Ozem, Daq Sontine—who will likewise aid the war effort should you convince them.

Name a time and a place, and I will arrange for this summit.

Weslen Gavirk,
Forest Marshal of Nirmathas

With Tamran destroyed as reprisal for the PCs' defense of Longshadow, the PCs will need to choose their own location for the summit. Nirmathas has no shortage of abandoned fortresses, and the PCs themselves command three Chernasardo redoubts and may enjoy close ties with the free town of Longshadow. Though Kraggodan remains closely allied with the PCs, it lies in the heart of the Ironfang Legion's territory, making it too dangerous for the other attendees to approach.

When the summit finally begins, the PCs find themselves thrust into a leadership role thanks to their reputation and achievements against the Ironfang Legion. In addition to Weslen Gavirk, Santila Savros, and Daq Sontine, three additional parties have heard of this war summit and wish to participate. The glaistig Gendowyn, ruler of the newly restored Accressiel Court, sends her representative Gossamer to negotiate an alliance with the humans. The dwarf Obsik Shalehammer arrives as a representative of Kraggodan, though he has his own agenda. Finally, the Molthuni General Lord Katra Sebina, whose land the Ironfang Legion has begun to conquer, arrives after the

summit has already begun (see Day 2 on page 9), slowed by her approach through a hostile nation.

The PCs' task is made far more challenging by the presence of Obsik Shalehammer. Though he claims to be a representative of Kraggodan and good friend to the PCs' old contact Karburtin Lightbrand (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #119: *Siege of Stone*), Obsik is actually a spy employed by the Ironfang Legion to disrupt the summit and steal back the *sardonyx shard* the PCs recovered in the previous adventure. Should the dwarf succeed, the PCs will need to track him down before they can follow through on their plan to assault the Legion's stronghold.

While it is not strictly necessary for the PCs to participate or gain the allegiance of various guests, each alliance they forge makes fighting the Ironfang Legion easier and grants them additional rewards and treasures. If you choose to continue the campaign, alliances may also provide the PCs with the resources to pursue other goals.

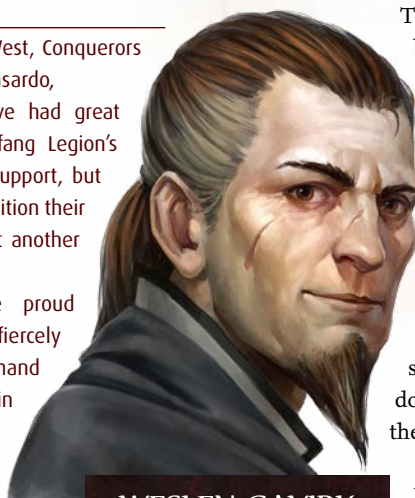
GAINING INFLUENCE

This part of the adventure uses a simplified version of the rules for influencing an individual presented in Chapter 3 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue*. If you have those rules available to you, you can use them instead.

Each day during the war council, each PC can select one NPC in attendance to influence by attempting an influence check, as long as that PC has interacted with that NPC during that day. As an influence check, a PC can attempt a Bluff check (to feign agreement) or a Diplomacy check (to win the NPC over). Each NPC also has specific skill checks, mentioned in the Influence Checks entry of the NPC's social stat block, that can be used to win the NPC over. Each day, in addition to the influence check, each PC can attempt a DC 20 Sense Motive check to identify one of these specialized influence skills.

An NPC can be successfully influenced only once each day, though multiple PCs can work together, using their checks to aid one another to improve their chances of winning an ally to their cause. This adventure assumes that the PCs are trying to gain allies for the Nirmathi war effort, so bullying NPCs through Intimidation is generally inappropriate.

Each NPC has a social stat block that details the NPC's basic race and class information, background and personality, goal in attending the summit, and interests. In addition, the social stat block indicates the NPC's influence check DCs and the number of times that NPC must be successfully influenced before the NPC formally aligns with the PCs and grants them a useful benefit in their battle against the Ironfang Legion. A PC earns an



WESLEN GAVIRK

additional success for every 5 by which the result of her influence check exceeds the listed DC.

The PCs can also gain advantages over the targets of their influence checks by playing to the NPCs' interests. The PCs can discover these passions by succeeding at a discovery check, with the skill specific to each character listed in the Interests entry of the social stat block. A PC can forgo an influence check on any given day to instead attempt a check with the listed interest skills to notice the NPC's particular interests in a subject or approach. If successful, the PCs learn the NPC's passions, granting all PCs a +4 competence bonus on future influence checks against that target, so long as they incorporate that NPC's predilections into their negotiations.

WAR COUNCIL GUESTS

Besides the PCs, there are five additional guests at the war council. The council's chair, Weslen Gavirk, hopes that the PCs' merits can win the support of the various factions who, if convinced, will pledge aid to Nirmathas. Since the PCs have the opportunity to interact with these dignitaries during the council, each is presented through a social stat block below. Adding tension to this meeting is an uninvited sixth guest from the neighboring nation of Molthune (see Day 2 on page 9).

WESLEN GAVIRK

NG male human ranger 11

Background An esteemed warrior of the Nirmathi people, Weslen holds sway over the nation's fiercely independent militias.

DESCRIPTION

Personality Weslen favors the company of other woodlands folk and those who make their own way in the world. He is a quiet man with watchful eyes and seems to shy away from the more gregarious personas at the gathering.

Goal Weslen wants the legends he's heard of the PCs' heroism to be true, but he is a skeptical man accustomed to his soldiers' boasting. He needs to see evidence of the PCs' prowess and morality before potentially handing over the lives of his militias.

DISCOVERY

Interests (Knowledge [geography] or Survival DC 20)

Weslen favors honest dealings with simple folk and gravitates toward druids, hunters, rangers, and other similarly minded PCs.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks Diplomacy DC 25; Bluff or Survival DC 30

Successes Needed 3

Benefit Weslen begins organizing his militias to execute a series of hit-and-run raids to disrupt Ironfang forces and draw out their numbers. He also informs the PCs of a hidden cache near Phaendar (see area A1 on page 17) they can access when they assault the Ironfang Legion garrisoned there.

COUNTERINFLUENCE

During negotiations, the dwarf Obsik tries to sow distrust and prejudice among the assembled parties, making the PCs' task more difficult. Each day, select a delegate as a random victim (roll 1d4; 1 = Gossamer, 2 = Daq, 3 = Santila, 4 = Weslen). Obsik avoids using magic or similar effects, fearing the PCs' ability to detect such tactics, and relies instead on his extraordinary social skills. Each time a PC attempts an influence or discovery check on the NPC Obsik has targeted for the day, increase the DC of checks relating to that particular NPC by 5. When Obsik moves on to a different target, the NPC's DCs return to the listed number.

GOSSAMER

CN female atomie⁸³ fighter 6/duelist 7

Background Gossamer is a loyal soldier of the Accressiel Court and attends the war council as Gendowyn's proxy.

DESCRIPTION

Personality Arrogant and brash, Gossamer repeatedly challenges the toughest-looking PCs to contests of drinking and fisticuffs to liven up the drab gathering.

Goal While she is eager to aid the PCs, Gossamer is wary of allying with any other humanoids, especially the Nirmathi who log and trap in the Fangwood.

DISCOVERY

Interests (Acrobatics or Perform [any] DC 20) Gossamer is easily bored, but anyone demonstrating deft swordplay or telling boisterous tales holds her attention.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks Knowledge (nature) DC 25; Bluff or Diplomacy DC 30; successfully strike her in a duel (initiative +14; AC 34, touch 28, flat-footed 20 [+6 armor, +6 Dex, +8 dodge, +4 size])

Successes Needed 3

Benefit On Gossamer's advice, Gendowyn dispatches a large force of dryads and satyrs to harry Ironfang messengers and scouts. In addition, Gossamer gifts the PCs with 50 +3 goblinoid bane arrows.

SANTILA SAVROS

LN female old human diviner 8/prophet of Kalistrade 8 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Paths of Prestige* 42)

Background An arms merchant and a devout adherent to the Prophecies of Kalistrade, Santila has amassed her fortune by selling to both sides of the Molthune-Nirmathas conflict.

DESCRIPTION

Personality On the surface, Santila is arrogant, though most of this is an act to give her an edge in negotiations.

Goal Santila attends the summit because of its potential for profit and little more. She has no stake in Nirmathas's safety beyond its value as a steady client.

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE XIOMORNS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

DISCOVERY

Interests (Perform [oratory] or Sense Motive DC 20)

Santila appreciates a good metaphor in speeches or negotiations.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks Profession (merchant) DC 25; Appraise or Bluff DC 30; Diplomacy DC 35

Successes Needed 3

Benefit If the PCs influence Santila, she lends her small private army to the nation of Nirmathas. She also offers a sample of her wares: four rings of minor energy resistance, one each for acid, cold, electricity, and fire.

GENERAL LORD KATRA SEBINE

LN female human investigator^{ACG} 9

Background Katra is an ambitious politician and has set her eyes on becoming Molthune's next imperial governor. She cares deeply for her people and is frustrated that the rest of Molthune won't move faster to help her fight back now that the Ironfang Legion has crossed the border into her province.

DESCRIPTION

Personality Reserved and observant, Katra is very aware of the conflict between her nation and Nirmathas. When faced with adversity, she remains calm and exhibits grace.

Goal Katra Sebina has no hope of becoming imperial governor if she loses her province to goblinoid invasion, and she hopes she can spin an alliance with Nirmathas as a bold and decisive action for the good of all Molthuni.

DISCOVERY

Interests (Knowledge [history or nobility] DC 20) Katra is easily swayed by her patriotism and ambition. Anyone hearkening back to when Molthune and Nirmathas were still one country fighting Chelish rule earns her favor.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks Profession (architect or barrister) DC 20; Knowledge (engineering) DC 25; Bluff or Diplomacy DC 30

Successes Needed 2

Benefit General Lord Sebina can muster some military aid, but more importantly, she can broker a temporary truce between Molthune and Nirmathas, allowing Nirmathas to focus solely on the Legion. If the PCs are respectful, she also confides in them her family history with the Ironfang Legion (see the Sebina's Shame sidebar on page 10).

OBSIK SHALEHAMMER

NE male middle-aged dwarf mesmerist^{OA} 17; see page 12

Background Once loyal to Kraggodan, Obsik was exiled after the discovery that he employed mind-manipulating magic to climb the Sky Citadel's social ladder. He went on to serve as a mercenary spy and saboteur for Molthune, and he now does the same for the Ironfang Legion.

DESCRIPTION

Personality On the surface, Obsik supports the PCs. He hopes they will quickly disregard him as annoying, allowing him to act without scrutiny. His true demeanor is calculating, subversive, and selfish. He uses *misdirection* to conceal his alignment.

Goal Obsik claims that he's a fan of the PCs and hopes to secure aid for them.

Hidden Agenda Obsik has been hired to steal the *sardonyx shard* for the Ironfang Legion, and he hopes disrupting the summit will provide the distraction he needs to perform the theft.

DISCOVERY

Interests (Appraise DC 20) Obsik appreciates luxury, especially gemstones. He is fond of fine things and those who can provide them for him.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks Special; see Successes. Suggested skills include Bluff, Diplomacy, or Knowledge (engineering).

Successes Needed 3 checks; once the PCs attempt any three checks to influence Obsik, he feigns being influenced.

Benefit None. Obsik promises the world—siege weapons, troops, access to Kraggodan's forges—but delivers nothing.

SIR DAQ SONTINE

LG male human paladin of Iomedae 14

Background An honored member of the Knights of Ozem, Daq grew up in northern Nirmathas and has long worked to persuade his fellows to assist their neighbors to the south.

DESCRIPTION

Personality A passionate man who enjoys the company of other overbearing personalities, Daq wants to be at the center of any discussions.

Goal Daq wants to help Nirmathas turn back the Legion, both because he cares for the nation's people but also because a goblinoid nation on Lastwall's southern border would force the Knights of Ozem to split their resources and would further draw their attention from their holy mission.

DISCOVERY

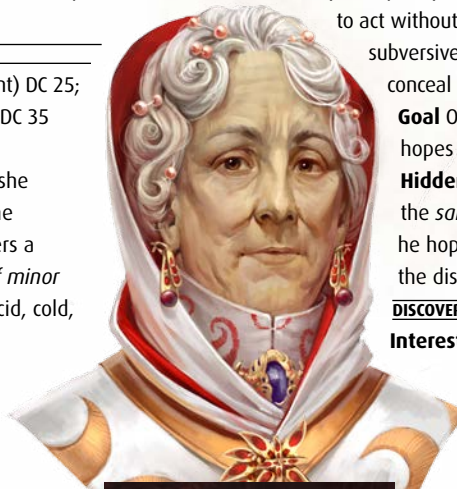
Interests (Knowledge [religion or nobility] DC 20) Daq is faithful and proud of the Knights of Ozem. Anyone discussing the tenets of the Inheritor's faith or the leadership of the Knights of Ozem finds Daq enraptured.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks Profession (soldier) DC 20; Diplomacy or Knowledge (religion) DC 30; Bluff DC 35

Successes Needed 3

Benefit Daq leads a regiment of mounted knights into Nirmathas to assist the war effort. In addition, he presents the PCs with one scroll each of *raise dead* and *mass heal*, as well as his grandmother's +2 *wild heavy wooden shield*.



SANTILA SAVROS

EVENTS AT THE WAR COUNCIL

The council proceedings take place over a span of 5 days. Most of this time is tedious, with each representative demanding intelligence reports, ledgers, maps, witness testimonies, and promises of returned favors and concessions. Although they share a common enemy in the Ironfang Legion, none wants their resources squandered, and each attendee must be convinced that the PCs are the best leaders for their efforts. Players do not need to roleplay every dreary meeting or round of drinks—only a few distinct events stand out and demand direct attention. Each event includes a suggested time for the encounter to take place, but feel free to adjust the timing of each event as you see fit to provide the most drama.

Day 0: The Council Opens

As the delegates assemble, Weslen introduces the PCs to Sir Daq Sontine, Obsik Shalehammer, and Santila Savros as they arrive. The fey representative, Gossamer, arrives unexpectedly, confusing fellow attendees. Several guests begin to exchange small talk. During this time, the PCs do not have the opportunity to begin influencing the NPCs, but each PC can learn one of a single NPC's influence skills or interests with a successful DC 20 Perception check as they listen in on these conversations.

Day 1: Politics as Usual

While a good deal of quips and couched insults are traded between Sir Sontine and Santila Savros over issues of faith and war profiteering, nothing escalates, and most of the day is spent with each representative presenting the resources they can contribute and on what terms.

Day 2: Uninvited Guest

Day 2 of the summit begins with a dull recap of the first day's discussions, but around midmorning a loud voice outside the meeting exclaims, "You can't go in there!" After this proclamation, the council doors burst open to reveal a small troop of battered Molthuni warriors. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (nobility or geography) check recognizes their livery as belonging to Molthune's Mindspin Province, which borders Nirmathas along the Nesmian Plains; troops from there frequently invade the lightly defended south. Tensions rise, and unless the PCs intervene, a skirmish erupts between the party crashers and Weslen's guards. Both parties can be calmed through a successful DC 22 Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Profession (soldier) check, allowing the Molthuni troops' leader, General Lord Katra Sebine, to command her troops to stand down. If the PCs wait until after the fighting has begun or fail their

first attempt at this check, raise the DC of the Diplomacy check to defuse the situation by 10. If the PCs stand idly by, Santila takes charge, defusing the situation, but the PCs' lack of leadership increases the DC of further skill checks involving Katra Sebine and Santila Savros by 5. Once the situation has calmed, read the following aloud.



KATRA SEBINE

From the battered Molthuni ranks, a tall woman steps forward with an air of confidence, her uniform marking her as a general lord—one of the heads of the Molthuni state. She drops a bloody sack to the ground, and severed hobgoblin ears spill out. "We come under the flag of parley to bring you this gift. Many of my soldiers paid the highest price for it. I am General Lord Katra Sebine, daughter of General Muriel Sebine, granddaughter of General Lord Marley Tavenoos.

"I do not look for bloodshed. I ignored the horror set upon our neighbors, and now my people and my land pay the price for my arrogance, crushed beneath the boots of the Ironfang Legion. My fellow general lords in Canorate argue how, or even if, to intercede. Meanwhile people die—my people and yours—and unless we put aside our war, we shall both be overrun. Rumors claim you know where the Legion hides, and if your arm knows where to strike, I may be willing to place my sword in your hand."

After Sebine's monologue, Weslen angrily orders her away; however, Santila demands the entire council vote on including General Lord Sebine, as she too is affected by the war. Amid Weslen's protests, Santila emphatically suggests that the forest marshal abstain from this vote due to his bias—a proposal he grudgingly accepts. The remaining NPCs split on the matter—Gossamer and Obsik vote against her inclusion, and Daq and Santila vote in favor of it, leaving the matter up to the PCs to settle. If any PC wishes, she can take a moment to talk with the Molthuni noble before they cast their vote. During such an aside, Sebine begs them to let her stay; after touring the burned remains of Valor and Oxbow, two small farm communities overwhelmed by the hobgoblins, she wishes to see an end to the Ironfang Legion's violence.

If Katra joins the summit, increase the DC of influence and Sense Motive checks against Weslen by 2.

Day 3: Edge of Civility

While the third day begins much like the others, General Lord Sebine's appearance the previous day (whether she was admitted to the summit or not) has left the attending members paranoid and defensive. Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks to influence the summit attendees (except Sebine and Weslen) or learn their interests take a -5

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE XIOMORNS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

SEBINE'S SHAME

If the PCs gain Katra Sebine's aid, she shares her embarrassment at her family's role in creating the Ironfang Legion. When her elder brother Vetrigan was waylaid by Azaersi's bandit forces a decade ago, he pleaded for his life and offered the hobgoblins steady work as mercenaries in the border war, using family connections to win the newly formed Ironfang Legion the best training and equipment. Funded and supported by a powerful nation, Azaersi and her mercenary group prospered and made a name for themselves as particularly ruthless raiders. No one realized that Azaersi's keen mind helped her recruit the best talent from rival monster legions, or that she spent her tenure as a mercenary quietly embezzling a substantial sum from the Sebine family.

Treasure: Azaersi killed Vetrigan when she and the Ironfang Legion went rogue, and the Sebine family has covered up any proof of their involvement in the disaster, but a powerful hatred still burns in Katra's heart. If the PCs learn this information and agree to avenge her brother and right her family shame, she gives them her brother's sword: the *sylvan scimitar Vigilance*, a family heirloom their ancestors discovered upon first settling in the unnamed wilderness that eventually became the Plains of Molthune.

circumstance penalty. Despite this tension, no further incidents occur, and by the end of the night observant PCs might notice the forest marshal chatting and laughing with the Molthuni leader.

DAY 4: BOASTFUL PROCLAMATIONS

When the council reconvenes on the fourth day, Gossamer can't take the dull proceedings and apparent waste of time any longer and lashes out at the gathering. Read the following aloud.

The smallest member of the council takes flight and booms in a shockingly powerful voice, "We waste precious time sitting around arguing over petty details! While you quarrel over every fraction of silver, the fey of the Fangwood have learned of an onyx tower within our realm! Everyone should be ashamed that while we talk, the Accressiel Court alone takes action to push back against the Legion!"

When Gossamer finishes her rant, she storms out of the hall. The knight Daq Sontine follows her in an effort to console her, and following his exit, Weslen emits a heavy sigh. He simply states, "Let's retire for an hour or so. It seems some members have more important items to attend to."

During this unexpected development, the traitor Obsik lets his guard slip for a moment. PCs can notice his momentary look of distress with a successful Sense Motive check opposed by the mesmerist's Bluff skill (see Obsik's stat block on page 12). If approached with this information, Obsik attempts another lie, claiming he feared the atomie would strike him. While he responds to any PCs efforts to influence him or determine his influence skills, he looks to retire for the evening early.

Having departed, Gossamer and Daq are not available for influence checks for the day. PCs can track them down with a successful DC 20 Diplomacy check to gather information or a successful DC 20 Survival check, and discover the pair in a quiet retreat, drinking heavily. Any PC who approaches them during their binge must accept a drinking challenge of mulberry milk (see below), or the two ignore them. If any PC can down at least one glass without succumbing to its dancing effects, her fortitude grants an instant success toward influencing Gossamer, and the entire party gains a +2 circumstance bonus on future attempts to influence or analyze Gossamer or Daq Sontine for the rest of the summit. Gossamer remains tight lipped on the matter, despite her heavy inebriation.

Hazard: Despite its name, mulberry milk is not milk at all, but rather a fermented drink made from the milky-white juice of young mulberries, along with various secret ingredients—a favorite of the Accressiel Court. Since the court's restoration, the atomies of the forest have wasted little time in resuming its production. The potent liquor is treated as a drug, using the drugs and addiction rules found on page 236 of *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*.

MULBERRY MILK

Type ingested; **Addiction** moderate, Fortitude DC 24

Price 200 gp

Effect 1d4+1 rounds; *irresistible dance* as per the spell (Fortitude DC 24 negates)

Effects 3 hours; +1d4 alchemical bonus to Charisma, +1d8 temporary hit points, -1d4 alchemical penalty to Wisdom

Damage 1d4 Con damage and 1d4 Wis damage

Development: After everyone retires for the night, Obsik approaches the drunken Daq Sontine and uses guile and magic to pry out information about the impending fey attack on the onyx tower in the Fangwood. After the dwarf gains this information, he casts *modify memory* on the knight, causing him to forget this exchange entirely. Obsik then retreats to his chambers, where he casts *animal messenger* to warn the Ironfang soldiers defending their Fangwood tower.

DAY 5: TRAGIC NEWS

On the morning of the fifth day, as the delegates settle in once again, one of Weslen's aides approaches the forest marshal and begins whispering into his ear.

Weslen's features grow grim as his attention turns to Gossamer. He approaches her and very quietly informs her that the battle at the Fangwood onyx tower went poorly. "The fey pushed through some token defenses and entered the stronghold, only to be inundated with explosives and fire and then set upon by reinforcements waiting in ambush. It was a massacre."

Gossamer sits stunned for several seconds, then speaks: "That isn't possible; the only people who knew were us." After an awkward silence, the fey's tears turn venomous. "Traitor! Who is it? Who is the snake in our midst? I'll skewer the conspirator!" She turns her wrath and her blade toward the knight Daq, and screams, "You! You knew all the details! Curse you for taking advantage of my drunkenness, but I shall have my revenge!"

If the PCs wish to intervene and prevent Gossamer from attacking Sir Sontine, have them roll initiative. PCs can dissuade her from the attack with a successful DC 34 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, or else subdue her physically (CMD 24) or incapacitate her with spells or other abilities (Fort +8, Ref +16, Will +9). Due to the erupting conflict, Santila and Obsik retreat from the chamber. Weslen tries to defuse the situation before his guards drag him away from danger. Finally, General Lord Sebine watches the fight with mild amusement. If Gossamer is able to attack Daq, she charges the knight and plunges her rapier into the confused knight's gut. While the resulting wound is serious, the knight is able to shake it off thanks to his lay on hands ability.

If the PCs don't intervene, the assault goes on for 4 rounds. The paladin never launches a counterattack and instead desperately pleads his innocence as Gossamer's attacks inflict increasingly grievous wounds.

During this attack, Sir Sontine acts confused, as he can find no reason for the fey's assault. In fact, he remembers very little of the previous night thanks to his intoxication, and thus a part of him wonders if he didn't drunkenly reveal the Accressiel Court's battle plans to someone. A PC can detect some signs of enchantment magic in his behavior with a successful DC 25 Sense Motive check and can identify the effects of a *modify memory* spell with a successful DC 19 Spellcraft check. The *modify memory* spell placed on Daq radiates an aura, so if the PCs cast *arcane sight*, *detect magic*, or similar spells or effects, they can detect the aura. If the PCs are aware of this aura, they gain an additional +10 competence bonus on any Sense Motive check to determine the knight's strange behavior. If the *modify memory* spell is dispelled, Daq remembers

the dwarf Obsik questioning him about everything Gossamer revealed the previous night.

If the PCs question Weslen about how he obtained news of the massacre, he offers that after Gossamer's outburst the previous day he dispatched a scout to the Fangwood tower to report on the attack. By the time his agent arrived, the fey were already on the march, and she barely escaped from several hobgoblins in the ensuing massacre.

Development: If the PCs prevent Gossamer's assault, both the fey and the Knight of Ozem recognize the PCs' ability to take charge of a situation, granting an automatic influence success with both parties. The PCs still have the opportunity to attempt normal influence checks against NPCs for Day 5 in the wake of this event, in addition to this potential success.

THE SUMMIT'S END

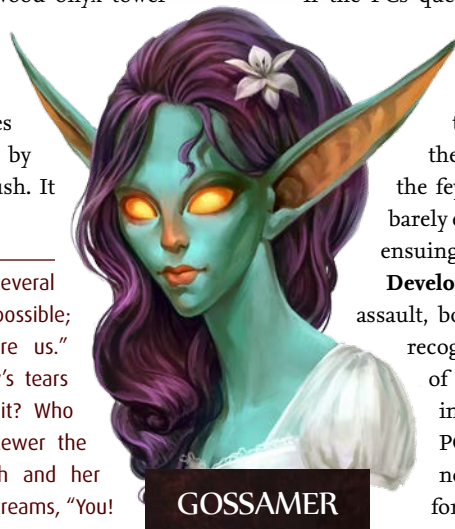
Regardless of how many allies the PCs have secured, by the end of Day 5, it has become clear that the summit is no longer secure. Those allies the PCs have acquired offer their aid in the coming offensive against the Ironfang Legion (see the Allies Against the Legion sidebar on page 12), while those who remain unconvinced abandon the alliance to pursue their own plans.

Story Award: Award the PCs 25,600 XP for each ally they secure.

WOLF AMONG SHEEP (CR 16)

Whether the PCs recognize Obsik's involvement in the leak or not, the dwarf uses this chaos to finally attempt his mission: stealing the *sardonyx shard* back for the Ironfang Legion. His task is complicated by his own greed, however, and he has begun arguing with his Ironfang handler, Scabvistin (see page 22), over his payment, tripling his asking price and holding the *sardonyx shard* hostage from all involved parties until he succeeds.

How exactly this event plays out is left largely to your discretion. You may wish to hand-wave this theft as an automatic success, especially if the PCs haven't taken any specific steps to secure the artifact and haven't shown any suspicion of the dwarven councilor thus far. If the PCs have taken precautions to protect the *sardonyx shard*, or if they specify that a PC keeps it on her person at all times, look to Obsik's stat block and test his most appropriate skills—likely Disable Device, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth—and his magic against whatever safeguards the PCs employ, or against the PCs themselves. Obsik despises a fair fight and does anything he can to isolate whichever NPC or PC he believes to be carrying the artifact.



VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE XIOMORNS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

ALLIES AGAINST THE LEGION

At the completion of the war summit, the PCs' chance to gain allies has ended. Each ally the PCs recruited lets them draw away Ironfang defenders or conduct raids ahead of their main offensive. Several encounters in Fort Phaendar vary in difficulty based on how many allies the PCs have recruited; consult the Special section in encounters in this area to determine how many opponents the PCs face, as some of the Fort's defenders could be drawn away to engage with their allies' secondary attacks.

If the dwarf fails in his theft, you can alert the PCs to his deceptions and allow them to confront him before he escapes the summit. If he succeeds, however, the PCs need to track the dwarf to his hideout: the abandoned Ironfang camp in the Fangwood long ago employed by the bounty hunter Scarvinious (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #115). The dwarf has taken advantage of a buried

cache of supplies nearby and doesn't expect agents from either side to search the now strategically useless camp.

Obsik leaves behind a *programmed image* to confuse any pursuers and waste their resources. The illusion paces in Obsik's quarters at the summit and is triggered when first spoken to. It feigns confusion and innocence as Obsik would, but if confronted with information provided by Daq, the figment bellows a mocking laugh and belittles the PCs' abilities as negotiators. Unless disbelieved, the figment continues this invective for its duration (17 rounds). If attacked, the figment reacts as if injured, but it continues taunting the PCs rather than fighting back.

At this point, anyone currently manipulated by the mesmerist is no longer affected by his increases to the DCs of checks to influence them. Anyone not yet made an ally at the day's end sees no reason to remain at the council, as its security has been compromised.

Creature: Obsik is the eldest son of the prominent Shalehammer family in Kraggodan. A font of charisma, especially by dwarven standards, he rose unusually quickly through the ranks of high society, which is especially odd considering his lavish displays of wealth and apparent disdain for the dwarven values of hard work and humility. It eventually came to light that his success was the result of mind-controlling magic, which he used to win favors and wealth, and the Sky Citadel's ruling council declared him an outlaw and banished him from the city. In the 20 years since his exile, Obsik has made himself at home in Molthune and Druma, playing at his old games of manipulation and subterfuge, and he now sells his services as a professional negotiator and occasional saboteur.

Luckily for the PCs, Obsik's greed has temporarily cut him off from his Ironfang allies. As he came to understand the value of the *sardonyx shard*, he sent a series of increasingly demanding letters to Scabvistin, demanding a higher payment for its theft. If the dwarf escapes the PCs, he decides to lay low in the woods (ironically, where Scabvistin's son met his end at the PCs' hands) and let the Legion sweat until it coughs up the money he feels he is owed. By keeping the *sardonyx shard* in a lead-lined box, he believes himself effectively immune from any divinations. Not realizing the messy job he's done covering his tracks, he doesn't expect anyone to be able to find his hideout.



OBSIK SHALEHAMMER

OBSIK SHALEHAMMER

CR 16

XP 76,800

Male middle-aged dwarf mesmerist 17 (*Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 38)

LE Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +21 (+23 to notice unusual stonework)

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 13, flat-footed 25 (+8 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 165 (17d8+85)

Fort +12, **Ref** +13, **Will** +20; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

Defensive Abilities defensive training

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee *assassin's dagger* +13/+8/+3 (1d4+1/19–20)

Special Attacks bold stare (allure, disorientation, sapped magic, susceptibility), hatred, hypnotic stare (–3), manifold tricks (5), mental potency (+3), mesmerist tricks 13/day (astounding avoidance, compel alacrity, free in body, levitation buffer, mesmeric mirror, misdirection, psychosomatic surge, spectral smoke, spell anticipation), painful stare (+8 or +5d6+8)

Mesmerist Spells Known (CL 17th; concentration +22)

6th (2/day)—*insanity* (DC 23), *mass hold person* (DC 23), *programmed image* (DC 21)

5th (5/day)—*foe to friend*^{DA} (DC 22), *mass inflict pain*^{DA} (DC 22), *mind fog* (DC 22), *shadow evocation* (DC 20)

4th (5/day)—*dimension door*, *dominate person* (DC 21), *freedom of movement*, *greater invisibility*, *mind probe*^{DA} (DC 19)

3rd (6/day)—*confusion* (DC 20), *displacement*, *glibness*, *major image* (DC 18), *sending*, *vampiric touch*

2nd (6/day)—*alter self*, *animal messenger*, *glitterdust* (DC 17), *hold person* (DC 19), *hypnotic pattern* (DC 17), *mirror image*

1st (7/day)—*cause fear* (DC 16), *charm person* (DC 18), *disguise self*, *psychic reading*^{DA}, *undetected alignment* (DC 16), *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 15), *daze* (DC 17), *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 15), *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

TACTICS

Before Combat Each morning, Obsik implants himself with the following mesmerist tricks: astounding avoidance, free in body, misdirection, psychosomatic surge, and spell anticipation tied to an *insanity* spell. If he expects trouble, he drinks his *potion of barkskin* and casts *mirror image* and *freedom of movement* on himself.

During Combat Obsik begins a fight by blanketing the area around himself with *mind fog* to make his enemies more vulnerable to his spells, then casts *mass hold person*. He attacks anyone frozen by his spell with his *assassin's dagger* and painful stare, hoping his opponents will be too distracted healing a friend to chase him. Afterward, he relies on *confusion* and *cause fear*. He reserves his 5th-level spells to cast *foe to friend* to deflect attacks.

Morale If reduced below 15 hit points, Obsik attempts to use *dimension door* to flee, leaving the *sardonyx shard* behind. If that fails, he falls to his knees and begs for mercy.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 20

You greedy sack of dwarf meat! You were paid for a job—do your damned job. So consider my counteroffer: instead of paying triple the agreed price, I'll just send a few of my people to pick up the sardonyx shard in person. And then, once they drag your miserable, mud-eating carcass back to Fort Phaendar, we'll see how many times we can regenerate your stubby little hands and feed them to you before they start growing back crooked.

I don't care if you know everyone. I don't care if the worm likes you. The worm isn't here. So bring me that damned shard, or by Hadregash's curdled coinpurse, I'll use your skull to open the Stone Roads the old-fashioned way!

—Scabvstin

HANDOUT #1

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 24 (28 vs. bull rush or trip)

Feats Bleeding Stare^{DA}, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Deft Hands, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (enchantment), Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +0 (–4 when jumping), Appraise +20 (+22 to assess nonmagical metals or gemstones), Bluff +31, Disable Device +19, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (nobility) +20, Perception +21 (+23 to notice unusual stonework), Sense Motive +21, Sleight of Hand +22, Spellcraft +13, Stealth +18;

Racial Modifiers +2 Appraise to assess nonmagical metals or gemstones, +2 Perception to notice unusual stonework

Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin, Terran

SQ consummate liar +8, glib lie (DC 32), touch treatment 8/day (greater, *break enchantment*)

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* (CL 12); **Other Gear** +4 chain shirt, *assassin's dagger*, *cloak of resistance* +2, *headband of mental prowess* +4 (Wis, Cha), *ring of protection* +2, courtier's outfit, emerald rings worth 900 gp

Development: If Obsik escapes, the PCs can search his chambers, where they locate a discarded, mud-caked cape. The mud on this garment matches the mud from the gully where the PCs fought the bugbear Scarvinious long ago—including thorns from the same briars—and is recognizable as such with a successful DC 15 Intelligence or Wisdom check. If the PCs search the desk, they can discover a hidden envelope stuck to the bottom of the desk with wax

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

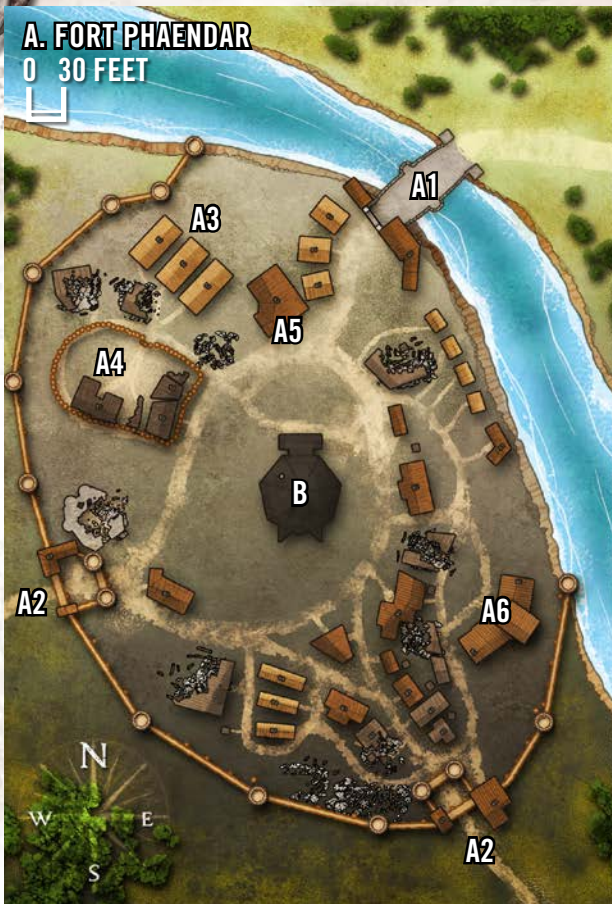
NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE XIOMORNS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY



with a successful DC 25 Perception check. When opened, this packet reveals a crumpled-up note (see Handout #1 on page 13): the final communiqué Obsik received from Scabvstin regarding his demand for more payment.

If Obsik escapes, the PCs can also track him using clues coaxed from NPCs with successful DC 25 Diplomacy checks. Santila, for example, sold a shipment of weapons to the dwarf during the summit and arranged to deliver them to a meeting place in the Fangwood, while Gossamer or Weslen can be coaxed to share scouting reports from their forces mentioning sightings of a well-dressed dwarf.

After the PCs either interact with Obsik's *programmed image* or defeat the dwarf, every other NPC (regardless of whether they have become the PCs' allies or not) comes forward to admit that the dwarf has been quietly trying to convince them of the alliance's folly since the beginning. Several NPCs have additional information that they reveal if the PCs have made allies of them—see their social stat blocks in War Council Guests.

PART 2: HOMECOMING

Having secured allies, the PCs can begin their plan for a full assault against the Ironfang Legion's strongholds in Nirmathas. Four onyx towers remain; the others have been destroyed by the Ironfang Legion as they consolidate their forces in anticipation of the PCs' counterattack.

One stands on the Plains of Molthune—a vulnerable and politically loaded position for the PCs to assault—while another stands on the southern edge of the Nesmian Plains, several weeks' march south. A third stands in the Fangwood, protected against large-scale sieges by the hills and impassable foliage of the primeval wood. Only a single onyx tower, and with it access to the Ironfang Legion's extraplanar fallback location, stands within easy striking distance: the one located at Fort Phaendar.

The adventure assumes the PCs use whatever forces they've collected to harry the other three Ironfang fortresses while they approach Fort Phaendar. In a worst-case scenario—with no strong allies—the PCs can dispatch their Chernasardo Rangers and a collection of Longshadow irregulars alongside whatever militia they have mustered themselves to create distractions and spread the Ironfang forces between their four choke points, slowing any reinforcements to the PCs' true target at Fort Phaendar. If the PCs managed to recruit specific allies, the bulk of these forces focus on taking advantage of the simultaneous strike to divide the Legion's forces. Recruiting Weslen Gavirk means the PCs recapture the southern Nesmian Plains. If they make an ally of Gossamer and the Accressiel Court, they recapture the Fangwood. If they ally with General Lord Katra Sebina, they retake the Plains of Molthune. While largely

descriptive, these captured strongholds also give PCs other options for entering the Vault of the Onyx Citadel should they be overwhelmed or repulsed from Fort Phaendar, or if Scabvistin manages to destroy the tower before they can defeat him (see area **B7**).

A. FORT PHAENDAR

When the PCs return to Phaendar, they find once-familiar buildings shattered in heaps of rubble. In their place, a palisade surrounds tents and sturdy stone buildings. Within the town's once-festive fairgrounds, a menacing onyx tower looms atop a motte.

Until recently, Phaendar acted as a staging point for the Ironfang Legion's invasion. However, when Azaersi lost the *sardonix shard*, she started to pull her forces back into the Vault of the Onyx Citadel in anticipation of a counterattack from the PCs' forces. The hobgoblins who remain are a dire threat to any mundane army, but to legendary heroes backed by a coalition of Nirmathi and fey forces, they are simply another challenge to lay low.

Without the *sardonix shard*, the Legion forces on the Material Plane have no way of opening the Stone Roads into the Plane of Earth. Instead, they must rely on the citadel to open irregularly scheduled portals from the other side for reinforcements and communications. One of these irregular gates opens 2d6+12 hours after the PCs begin their initial assault, and if Scabvistin realizes the Legion stronghold is compromised when this happens, he orders any remaining forces to pull back through the gate. The PCs can learn about this protocol by capturing Ettoran (in area **A5**) or a hobgoblin commander.

FORT PHAENDAR FEATURES

A 30-foot-tall wooden wall (hardness 8, hp 150, break DC 30) surrounds Phaendar on three sides, while the northeast is protected by a 20-foot ravine plunging into the turbulent Marideth River below. A successful DC 25 Climb check is required to scale the outer walls. The Marideth River is running much faster than the last time the PCs saw Phaendar, thanks to seasonal storms, and requires a successful DC 20 Swim check to cross.

The Legion felled the southernmost trees of the forest, both to build their fortress and to push back the tree line. The tree line ends 400 feet from Phaendar Bridge (area **A1**). A few well-concealed blinds dot the forest 50 feet into the trees, used as hidden scout redoubts by the Chernasardo Rangers to monitor activity. The PCs can use these as fallback positions to hide if things go badly.

The flat plains surrounding Phaendar afford sentries a clear view of anyone approaching. Sentries demand travelers identify themselves when they come within 60 feet of the walls, and the bored guards happily fire upon those who fail to reply. Wagonloads of human slaves traveling to and from farms and logging camps depart each morning and return at sunset, each overseen by a

hobgoblin paragon and a half-dozen hobgoblin sergeants (see pages 122 and 118 of *Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex*).

Because hobgoblins' darkvision only extends 60 feet, roads and walkways within Phaendar are kept lit with torches, illuminating the fort with dim light at night.

IRONFANG LEGION PATROLS (CR 14 OR 16)

Several hobgoblin units patrol the area surrounding Phaendar, as well as the fort's interior. Unless the PCs take precautions to avoid these patrols, they encounter one every 10 minutes (or more frequently, if the PCs bring attention to themselves). If PCs opt to disguise themselves during their approach—especially if aided by magic—they have little trouble convincing the hobgoblins they are scouts or messengers. An entire army cannot be so easily disguised. If combat ensues, the sounds of battle bring an additional patrol to the area every 1d4 minutes.

If Scabvistin fails to receive the morning report from one or more patrols, he bunkers down within his onyx tower (see area **B7** on page 22) and takes several initial steps in the tower's destruction process, reducing the time required to destroy the tower to 10 rounds.

Creatures: Each of the four patrols consists of two hobgoblin commanders and a hobgoblin troop. Three of these are beastmaster troops, but one unit of elite, anti-arcane soldiers also patrols the area and defends the stronghold. Each time the PCs run into a patrol, they have a 25% chance of encountering this magehunter unit instead of the beastmaster troop.

HOBOGoblin COMMANDERS (2) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 141 each (*Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 123)

IRONFANG BEASTMASTER TROOP CR 10

XP 9,600

hp 126 (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #115 78)

IRONFANG MAGEHUNTER TROOP CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 199 (see page 88)

Special: For each ally the PCs recruited during the summit, reduce the number of patrols by one as allied forces draw away the fort's defenders, until only the patrol consisting of magehunters remains. No matter how many allies the PCs recruit, the magehunters can be eliminated only by PC actions.

THE SKIES OVER PHAENDAR (CR 17)

While the skies above Fort Phaendar seem clear save for occasional messengers mounted on trained wyverns, they are the domain of one of the outpost's strangest residents: the horned devil Maltagra. A longtime ally of the barghest Azlowe, Maltagra is a fearsome warrior.

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

The barghest taught the horned devil the secrets of shapeshifting as payment for her service, and to keep the hobgoblin forces at ease, Maltagra remains out of sight or takes the form of a tall, stern hobgoblin woman swathed in a tattered black cloak. Many Ironfang soldiers don't realize their trainer's infernal nature, attributing her power and ragged wings to miracles of alchemy—rumors that Scabvistin encourages, along with the quiet suggestion that loyal soldiers can expect similar “gifts.”

Creature: With the fort on alert, Maltagra patrols the skies above disguised as a massive black raven, occasionally pausing to roost atop the onyx tower. She attacks any strangers she sees in the air above the town, trying her best to force them to ground, where other Ironfang soldiers can join the assault. If the PCs enter Fort Phaendar via one of the gates rather than from above, unless they take extreme measures to conceal themselves she eventually spots them moving through the ruins and drops down to attack.

MALTAGRA **CR 17**
XP 102,400
 Advanced horned devil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 76)
hp 247

STATISTICS

SQ change shape (hobgoblin or Medium raven; *polymorph*)

A1. BRIDGE GATE (CR 17 OR 18)

A sturdy wooden gate and stone fortifications block the western end of the ominous bridge arching over the Marideth River. Several large, charred stains mar the bridge, suggesting its impressive strength.

The Ironfang Legion quickly rebuilt Phaendar Bridge after its destruction during the PCs' escape, overengineering it in anticipation of moving heavy troops and siege equipment back and forth across the river. A 20-foot-tall stone guardhouse stands on the western shore, supporting a sturdy iron portcullis (hardness 10, hp 60, lift DC 25) that is kept closed day and night except to allow patrols in and out. A walkway atop the guardhouse allows sentries to keep watch, and its wall provides cover from opponents below. A winch inside raises the portcullis.

The bridge deck has several charred sections from repeated detonations of alchemical bombs, which can be identified as such with a successful DC 30 Knowledge (engineering) or Craft (alchemy) check. Furthermore, a successful DC 36 Perception check reveals the remnants of crude straw targets that the grenadiers blow into smithereens to while away the time during uneventful shifts.

Creatures: A trio of Ironfang munitions officers keep watch at this gate day and night. The munitions officers stand guard atop the gate, coming down once every few

hours to spend 5 minutes setting up and obliterating straw targets placed on the bridge deck. If the PCs take note of this routine, they can use it to their advantage.

In addition to the alchemists, the Ironfang Legion has retained the services of the Thunderstrikers, a brutal storm giant mercenary company, to defend the gates.

THUNDERSTRIKER MERCENARIES (1 OR 2) **CR 13**
XP 25,600 each

LE storm giants (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 152)
hp 199 each

IRONFANG MUNITIONS OFFICERS (3) **CR 13**
XP 25,600 each

Hobgoblin alchemist (grenadier) 14 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 26, *Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 116)

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 35, touch 19, flat-footed 26 (+7 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 natural, +4 shield)

hp 178 each (14d8+112)

Fort +18, **Ref** +19, **Will** +8

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft.

Melee mwk longsword +13/+13/+8 (1d8+1/19–20)

Ranged bomb +19/+19/+14 (7d6+3 cold or fire)

Special Attacks bomb 17/day (7d6+3 fire, DC 20), staggering blast

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 14th; concentration +17)

5th—*delayed consumption*^{APG}, *polymorph*

4th—*cure critical wounds*, *death ward*, *freedom of movement*, *stoneskin*

3rd—*cure serious wounds* (2), *displacement*, *haste*, *heroism*

2nd—*barkskin*, *cure moderate wounds*, *lesser restoration* (2), *resist energy*, *spider climb*

1st—*bomber's eye*^{APG}, *cure light wounds* (2), *shield* (2), *true strike*

TACTICS

Before Combat Munitions officers use an extract of *delayed consumption* to prepare *freedom of movement*. While on duty, they use their greater mutagens to augment their Constitution and Dexterity, and if they spot intruders, they down extracts of *barkskin*, *haste*, and *shield*.

During Combat On the first round of combat, munitions officers use poison bombs to target enemies before switching to mundane or frost bombs.

Morale Munitions officers are fanatics and fight to the death.

Base Statistics Without extracts or mutagens, a munitions officer's statistics are **AC** 21, touch 14, flat-footed 17; **hp** 136; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +16, **Will** +9; **Speed** 30 ft.; **Ranged** bomb+16/+11 (7d6+3 cold or fire); **Dex** 19, **Con** 16, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8; **CMD** 28; **Skills** Disable Device +20, Heal +16, Perception +21, Profession (soldier) +17, Stealth +7.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 23, **Con** 22, **Int** 16, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 28

Feats Alertness, Brew Potion, Extra Discovery^{APG}, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword), Throw Anything, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bomb)

Skills Craft (alchemy) +20 (+34 to create alchemical items), Disable Device +22, Heal +16, Knowledge (engineering) +17, Perception +20, Profession (soldier) +16, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +9; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Goblin, Orc

SQ alchemical weapon, alchemy (alchemy crafting +14), directed blast, discoveries (dispelling bomb, enhance potion, fast bombs, frost bomb, greater mutagen, infusion, poison bomb, precise bombs, smoke bomb), mutagen (+6/+4/-2, +4 natural armor, 14 hours), swift alchemy

Combat Gear *boro bead* (3rd level)^{UE}, *oil of flame arrow*, *oil of keen edge*, *potions of cure serious wounds* (2); **Other Gear** +3 *chain shirt*, *mwk longsword*, *belt of incredible dexterity* +2, *cloak of resistance* +3, granite and diamond dust (worth 500 gp)

Special: If the PCs recruited at least two allies during the war summit, their forces draw one of the storm giant mercenaries away from her post. Eliminate one storm giant from this encounter.

Treasure: A secret cache near the bridge's eastern landing contains a pack of materials hidden weeks ago by Maristra, a bold Nirmathi scout, and requires a successful DC 46 Perception check to find. If the PCs allied with Weslen during the summit, he told them how to find the cache, reducing the DC of this Perception check to 21. The cache contains two *potions of heroism*, two jars of *restorative ointment*, a *wand of cure critical wounds* (14 charges), a *wand of restoration* (6 charges), and a *bead of force*.

A2. REINFORCED GATES (CR 16)

Fort Phaendar's two landlocked gates are built with an iron portcullis (hardness 10, hp 60, lift DC 25) guarding the outer gate, while an inner wooden portcullis (hardness 5, hp 30, lift DC 25) forms a small barbican where incoming wagons are inspected before being allowed to pass. Crenellated walkways above give guards cover from attackers below. A linked winch mechanism controls the portcullises, preventing both gates from being opened at the same time.

Creatures: Each barbican is defended by a pair of Ironfang shadows leading an Ironfang hobgoblin troop. Normally assigned alone or in pairs to scout the wilderness and assassinate enemy leaders, the shadows have grown increasingly frustrated serving on guard duty, but Scabvistin insists on keeping these valuable assets nearby in case the Legion recalls his forces. The troop handles inspections, while the shadows observe from above.

If obvious fights break out within Fort Phaendar itself, the Ironfang shadows order their troops to remain on guard at the gates but fall back into the shadows to begin patrolling the fort's buildings in pairs.

IRONFANG HOBGOBLIN TROOP

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 73 (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #115 77)

IRONFANG SHADOWS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

Hobgoblin ranger (skirmisher) 15 (*Pathfinder RPG*

Bestiary 175, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 128)

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 21 (+8 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural)

hp 177 each (15d10+90)

Fort +15, **Ref** +14, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 *scimitar* +19/+14/+9 (1d6+4/18-20)

Ranged +3 *composite longbow* +22/+17/+12 (1d8+6/×3)

Special Attacks combat style (archery), favored enemies (animals +2, dwarves +4, elves +4, humans +4), hunter's tricks (7/day; catfall, defensive bow stance, distracting attack, hobbling attack, ranger's counsel, surprise shift), quarry

TACTICS

Before Combat Ironfang shadows prefer to fight from superior positions or to stage ambushes. They poison an arrow before entering combat.

During Combat Shadows grant their favored enemy bonuses to allies before launching volleys of arrows. They prefer using their ranger tricks to keep foes at range or to fire in melee without provoking attacks of opportunity, and they switch to their scimitars only when desperate.

Morale Ironfang shadows are fanatics and fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 33

Feats Deadly Aim, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Precise Shot, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot On The Run, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Acrobatics +0 (-4 when jumping), Climb +13, Intimidate +14, Perception +14, Profession (soldier) +14, Stealth +18, Survival +14, Swim +14; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ camouflage, favored terrain (forest +4, underground +4, urban +2), hunter's bond (companions), swift tracker, track +7, wild empathy +16, woodland stride

Combat Gear arsenic (4), large scorpion venom (5),

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

marker dye^{UE} (3); **Other Gear** +2 breastplate, +1 scimitar, +3 composite longbow (+3 Str) with 40 arrows, amulet of natural armor +1, belt of mighty constitution +2, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +2

A3. BARRACKS (CR 14)

These newly constructed barracks are normally filled to bursting with Legion soldiers, with additional space in the fields beyond where lower-ranking soldiers pitch their tents. Each building features bunks for 48 soldiers as well as dressing areas and an iron stove for heat and cooking.

Creatures: Even short-staffed, the barracks house many hobgoblins. At any given time, one patrol—consisting of two commanders and a unit of beastmaster troops—is resting in the barracks. If the PCs have already dispatched all the patrols (see Ironfang Legion Patrols on page 15), the barracks are empty aside from a few slaves cleaning.

HOBGOBLIN COMMANDERS (2) CR 12
XP 19,200 each

hp 141 each (*Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 123)

IRONFANG BEASTMASTER TROOP CR 10
XP 9,600

hp 126 (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #115 78)

Treasure: PCs can find any mundane weapons or armor listed in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, but the barracks otherwise offer no wealth.

A4. PRISONER PEN

A fence of wooden bars encircles several half-ruined buildings of the original Phaendar.

Sturdy oak bars with steel fittings (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 26) encircle this enormous pen. The bars are spaced 6 inches apart and can be squeezed through with a successful DC 36 Escape Artist check. A large iron gate (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 26) is locked with a superior quality lock.

The Ironfang Legion keeps their slave workforce here: nearly 100 humanoids in varying states of malnutrition and exhaustion (use the statistics for prisoners on page 270 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*). The bulk of these survivors are inhabitants of Phaendar whose morale is bolstered by two NPCs who maintain their well-being: **Maristra** (N female human expert 9; use the statistics for a guide on page 277 of the *GameMastery Guide*, but without equipment), a recently captured member of Weslen's Nirmathi militia, and **Friar Damerto** (LN male human cleric of Irori 9; use the statistics for a priest on page 305 of the *GameMastery Guide*, but without equipment), who preaches hope while clandestinely using his spells to treat injuries and illness.

If the PCs have lost allies, family, or friends to the Ironfang Legion, this is a likely place to be reunited with them.

Creatures: Ettoran Phark (see area A5) casts *alarm* on the pen's gate every day, which silently alerts him whenever the door is opened. If alerted, he gathers his honor guards and arrives to investigate after 1d6 rounds.

Development: If the PCs defeat Ettoran, the slaves feel confident enough to leave their cage. Once freed, Friar Damerto offers to use his spells and ability to channel energy to heal the PCs so long as his magic holds out. If the PCs haven't found Maristra's cache yet, she mentions its location once she is free. Both captives report observing several hundred Ironfang Legion soldiers entering the onyx tower daily, but never exiting.

Story Award: If the PCs free the prisoners, award them 51,200 XP.

A5. OFFICERS' QUARTERS (CR 16 OR 17)

The Taproot Inn still stands, but has been recommissioned as lodging for Fort Phaendar's commanding officers. This sturdy stone inn previously appeared in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #115: *Trail of the Hunted*.

Creatures: A few hobgoblin commanders use the rooms here, but the Taproot is largely empty now. Only Ettoran Phark remains, watched over by a pair of elite Ironfang honor guards trained by Azaersi herself. The PCs may recognize Ettoran from before Phaendar's fall, as the traveling merchant and gossip frequently stopped at the Taproot to trade. When the Ironfang Legion captured him, Ettoran quickly revealed his true identity: Molthune's regional spymaster. Scabvistin—not sharing his soldiers' superstitious hatred of arcane magic—saw Ettoran's spellcasting as a boon and now uses Ettoran to control the hobgoblins, threatening to let the bard perform his arcane trickery on anyone who disobeys his commands. Ettoran's skills have earned him an unofficial position as Scabvistin's second-in-command, charged with “caring” for the slaves and directing their activity.

IRONFANG HONOR GUARDS (2) CR 14
XP 38,400 each

Hobgoblin monk (martial artist) 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 59)
LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 21, flat-footed 26 (+3 armor, +2 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 monk, +5 natural, +3 Wis)

hp 176 each (15d8+105)

Fort +14, **Ref** +13, **Will** +14

Defensive Abilities improved evasion; **Immune** exhaustion, fatigue, stunning

OFFENSE

Speed 80 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +17/+12/+7 (2d6+6) or unarmed strike flurry of blows +19/+19/+14/+14/+9/+9 (2d6+6) or mwk spear +14/+9/+4 (1d8+3/x3)
Ranged mwk spear +14 (1d8+3/x3)
Special Attacks flurry of blows, quivering palm (DC 21), stunning fist (15/day, DC 21)

TACTICS

Before Combat The honor guards each drink a *potion of barkskin* if they expect trouble.

During Combat Trained to value their charge's life over their own, the honor guards form a wall between their charge and any enemies, relying heavily on the Bodyguard feat. They use Scorpion Style to prevent opponents from escaping.

Morale Ironfang honor guards fight to the death.

Base Statistics Without a *potion of barkskin*, the honor guard's statistics are **AC** 24, flat-footed 21.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 34

Feats Bodyguard^{APG}, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Gorgon's Fist, Greater Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Scorpion Style, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist, Toughness, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Weapon Specialization (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +15 (+50 when jumping), Intimidate +12, Perception +21, Profession (soldier) +16, Sense Motive +21, Stealth +6; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ defensive roll, exploit weakness, fast movement, high jump, maneuver training, pain points, physical resistance

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* +5 (3); **Other Gear** mwk spear, *amulet of mighty fists* +2, *belt of mighty constitution* +2, *bracers of armor* +3, *headband of inspired wisdom* +2, *ring of protection* +2

ETTORAN PHARK

CR 14

XP 38,400

Male vishkanya bard 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 281)

N Medium humanoid (vishkanya)

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 17, flat-footed 25 (+3 armor, +4 deflection, +3 Dex, +5 natural, +3 shield)

hp 146 (15d8+75)

Fort +10, **Ref** +14, **Will** +13; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic; +15 vs. poison

Defensive Abilities poison resistance; **DR** 5/piercing or slashing

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *kukri* +12/+7/+2 (1d4+1/18-20)

Ranged +1 *corrosive shuriken* +15/+10/+5 (1d2 plus 1d6 acid)

SNAKE CHARMER'S FLUTE

Crafted from teakwood and etched with serpents, this flute hisses a dual tune from twin pipes, one very melodic and the other an accompanying drone.

SNAKE CHARMER'S FLUTE

PRICE
26,000 GP

SLOT none

CL 17th

WEIGHT 3 lbs.

AURA strong conjuration and enchantment

Two distinct songs are etched on the entwined pipes of this flute. Playing the first creates a soothing, rhythmic melody that lulls snakes and serpents into compliance. This tune grants a +5 competence bonus on Handle Animal and wild empathy checks to influence snakes as well as snakelike animals and magical beasts. If the musician lacks the wild empathy class feature, she can still use this song to influence snakes and snakelike creatures as if she had wild empathy, applying only her Charisma modifier and the flute's +5 bonus to the roll.

The second song of the snake charmer's flute can be performed only once per day as a full-round action. When used, it summons an advanced giant anaconda (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 252). This serpent obeys the musician's mental commands and remains as long as the user continues to spend a move action each round maintaining the tune, up to a maximum of 3 minutes.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 13,000 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *dominate monster*, *summon nature's ally VIII*

Special Attacks bardic performance 37 rounds/day (swift action; countersong, dirge of doom, distraction, fascinate, frightening tune, inspire competence +5, inspire courage +3, inspire greatness, inspire heroics, soothing performance, suggestion)

Bard Spells Known (CL 15th; concentration +20)

5th (4/day)—*deafening song* bolt^{APG}, *greater dispel magic*, *foe to friend*^{APG} (DC 21), *mass suggestion* (DC 21)

4th (5/day)—*cure critical wounds*, *dominate person* (DC 20), *greater invisibility*, *modify memory* (DC 20)

3rd (6/day)—*cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *haste*, *major image* (DC 18), *screaming* (DC 18)

2nd (6/day)—*cure moderate wounds*, *eagle's splendor*, *heroism*, *hold person* (DC 18), *mirror image*, *suggestion* (DC 18)

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *charm person* (DC 17), *disguise self*, *hypnotism* (DC 17), *memory lapse*^{APG} (DC 17), *silent image* (DC 16)

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 15), *ghost sound* (DC 15), *lullaby* (DC 16), *read magic*

TACTICS

Before Combat Ettoran envenoms three of his shuriken, casts

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

eagle's splendor and greater invisibility on himself, then drinks a *potion of barkskin* before entering combat.

During Combat Ettoran prefers to remain invisible, inspiring courage in his honor guards and using his *snake charmer's flute* to conjure an anaconda to engage enemies. If his serpent is slain, he turns to spells, casting *mass suggestion* to order opponents to drop their weapons, followed by *deafening sound bolt* and *dominate person*.

Morale Ettoran is a coward at heart. He flees if both his guards are slain and he is reduced below 30 hit points.

Base Statistics Without his spells, Ettoran's statistics are **AC** 23, touch 17, flat-footed 20; **Cha** 16; **Skills** Perform (act) +23, Perform (wind instruments) +23.

STATISTICS

Str 9, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 32

Feats Arcane Strike, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lingering Performance^{APG}, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Spell Focus (enchantment), Toughness

Skills Perception +20, Perform (act) +23, Perform (wind instruments) +23, Sense Motive +18, Sleight of Hand +20, Stealth +22; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Escape Artist, +2 Perception, +2 Stealth

Languages Common, Vishkanya

SQ bardic knowledge +7, jack-of-all-trades, lore master 2/day, poison use, toxic, versatile performances (act, oratory, sing, wind)

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* (2, CL 12th); **Other Gear** *boneless leather*^{APG}, +1 *animated heavy steel shield*, 24 +1 *corrosive shuriken*, +2 *kukri*, *cloak of resistance* +2, *ring of protection* +4, *snake charmer's flute*, keys to the prisoner pen (area **A4**) and the gate of the onyx tower (area **B2**).

Special: If the PCs gained at least three allies at the summit, one of Ettoran's honor guards is in the field commanding troops against the various diversions the allied forces organize, leaving the bard with only a single defender.

A6. INTELLIGENCE COMMAND (CR 16)

Agents stationed at this newer wooden structure once collected scouting reports and information on troop movements from across Nirmathas and Molthune, and large maps of the region are still tacked to the walls, depicting the Legion's advancements, the previous locations of onyx towers, and gatherings of Nirmathi troops, including the PCs' own coalition. Most of these records were cleaned out when Fort Phaendar first began preparing for the PCs' counterattack, but a few valuable treasures—and fierce guardians—remain.

Creatures: A pair of rawheads, vicious predators from the most reclusive corners of the Fangwood, served the Ironfang Legion as scouts and saboteurs and proved pivotal in undermining several of Molthune's key defenses when the Legion crossed the river. Their latest

assignment has been to strip any remaining intelligence and scouting reports and prepare a unit of undead bloody bones (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 49) from the fort's slave population to ambush the encroaching Nirmathi army. But without direct oversight, the rawheads have grown lazy, simply squatting in the command building and waiting for the excitement to begin.

The pair hide in waiting if they detect anyone approaching, using their frightful presence, *suggestion*, and *phantasmal killer* abilities to panic visitors before springing their ambush.

RAWHEADS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 200 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 241)

Treasure: PCs who take time to search the office realize it has been packed hastily, leaving many tidbits that may be useful to allies assaulting other Ironfang outposts. The PCs can uncover useful information with a successful DC 25 Linguistics, Perception, or Profession (soldier) check. A PC can try again to find additional intelligence, but each subsequent skill check increases the DC by 5. Once the PCs retreat or defeat Scabvistin, they can pass on this information to any allies they secured during the war summit and gain a reward from the ally in question: for each piece of recovered intelligence, the PCs receive a single magic item worth up to 50,000 gp. The categories of magic items the PCs can choose from is limited based on which allies the PCs managed to recruit: Weslen Gavirk (magic armor), Gossamer (wondrous items), Santila Savros (rings), Katra Sebene (magic weapons), and Daq Sontine (rods). If the PCs failed to recruit any allies during the summit, any intelligence they recover is largely useless.

Development: In addition to any worthwhile intelligence the PCs may uncover, with a successful DC 30 Perception check a character discovers a discarded key ring, which holds keys that open the slave pens (area **A4**) as well as the doors and chests in the onyx tower.

B. THE ONYX TOWER

A new addition to Phaendar, the onyx tower is a shining example of what the shards of the *Onyx Key* can accomplish in the hands of a knowledgeable engineer like Scabvistin. This onyx tower stretches to a height of 65 feet, with 15-foot interior ceilings and a complex array of rooms that make it a useful command center for the Ironfang Legion's operation in northwestern Nirmathas. The tower's walls are magically treated hewn stone (hardness 16, hp 1,080) with iron doors (hardness 10, hp 60). There are no light sources within the tower, as the goblinoids rely on darkvision, but the translucent nature of the tower's material means that during daylight hours, every room is illuminated with dim light.

A balcony looks out from the tower's northern side some 40 feet above the entryway stairs. The balcony overhangs the slick, glassy exterior of the tower, making it a very tricky climb (Climb DC 30 to scale the tower, and DC 35 to navigate the balcony's tricky overhang).

B1. THE FANGWAY

Fluttering red banners flank wide stairs before the tower gate.

Nicknamed "the Fangway" for the constant comings and goings of goblinoids, the stairs are spaced to allow the Legion's larger allies such as minotaurs to use them easily. The stairs count as rough terrain.

B2. THE GATE (CR 16)

A heavy iron gate (hardness 10, hp 60, lift DC 25) blocks passage at the top of the stairs, raised and lowered by winches in the guardrooms just inside. Normally left open so troops can pass, the gate is now kept closed.

Creatures: A pair of Ironfang shadows stand guard inside. The gate and the barricades beyond provide them with cover against any attacks from creatures outside the gate. If the PCs manage to penetrate the gate, the shadows fall back to support the guardians in area B3.

IRONFANG SHADOWS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 177 each (see page 17)

B3. THE STONE ROAD HALL (CR 15)

Four glittering columns of glassy, black stone support the ceiling nearly thirty feet overhead. Doors open on three sides of this massive hall, but to the south stands only an elaborate arch of black stone, enshrining a featureless wall.

This large hall is a receiving area for the forces and supplies arriving and departing via the Stone Roads. Gateways between the arch here and any other onyx towers can be opened via the controls in the war room above (see area B8), but opening the gateway from here into the Vault of the Onyx Citadel requires a creature to press the *sardonix shard* against the black wall beneath the arch. The stone begins to groan and grind itself into a slow spiral, and after 1 minute it opens to a red-illuminated Stone Road that leads to the extraplanar vault (see Part 3 starting on page 24). The tunnel closes on its own after 10 minutes.

Creatures: For reasons the Ironfang Legion can't explain, the onyx tower at Fort Phaendar—the oldest tower on the Material Plane—spontaneously manifested a pair of guardians several weeks ago. Frightened at first, Scabvistin soon realized the obsidian golems responded to his commands, though they refuse to leave this chamber. The obsidian golems curl up alongside the arch

unless disturbed or strangers enter the chamber. They are merciless combatants, hurling sprays of razor-sharp stone and slicing trespassers to ribbons. Their only real concern seems to be protecting the arch, however, and they won't pursue anyone beyond this hall.

OBSIDIAN GOLEMS (2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Advanced obsidian golems (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 288, 141)
hp 157 each

Development: Once the PCs defeat or bypass the guardians here, Scabvistin realizes they might succeed and begins the process of destroying the onyx tower (see area B7 for full details). As he sets the crystal arrangement for the tower's destruction, a sickly green light begins to pulse through the translucent walls. A successful DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft check surmises that the tower's magical structure is beginning to unravel and is likely to collapse soon. You should give players some idea of how much time remains, as the pulsing grows faster the closer the tower comes to destruction.

Activating the destruction sequence requires a total of 36 full-round actions, divided between Scabvistin and however many of his guardians remain (see area B7); if the PCs failed to recruit any allies and Scabvistin has all five of his defenders, the process requires only 6 rounds to complete unless interrupted.

B4. RECORDS STORAGE

This office kept records of those soldiers and supplies coming and going through the Stone Road. Hasty packing has left scattered information lying around. Hobgoblins are better warriors than bureaucrats, so most of the record keeping fell on slaves, and as a result the records remaining are written in Common.

Development: A locked wooden chest (hardness 5, hp 15, Disable Device DC 25) in a corner contains correspondence to Scabvistin from the Legion's arcane advisor, Zanathura (see page 62). Several of the notes reference an obscure arcane theory called geomancy and order scouting reports for oddly specific but tactically useless corners of Nirmathas. Zanathura's final letter mentions several chilling details.

My experiments with the geomantic nodes here have succeeded in rendering the citadel unassailable and our troops within indestructible, but the General considers them useless isolated as we are. The nodes also seem to function well as anchors, however, and with the reports you have sent I believe I can align our stronghold with Nirmathas and repurpose this ancient complex as a sort of transposition engine. The results are likely to be devastating and widespread, however, at least to those outside the citadel, so continue recalling our forces into the vault.

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

B5. SUPPLY DEPOT

The Legion stored materials, supplies, and weapons here while the surrounding fort was being built. Now this small storeroom serves little purpose and is largely ignored.

Treasure: The storeroom contain 6 months' worth of iron rations as well as any mundane camping equipment mentioned in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*. A large, dusty chest in the corner contains a *bottle of air*, a *traveler's any-tool*^{VE}, a 10-foot-by-10-foot *carpet of flying*, and a *bag of holding* (type VI) containing 500 1-pound bags of salt.

B6. GUARD POST (CR 16)

The doors to the north and east are locked (Disable Device DC 40). A globe of black glass hangs from the ceiling on a chain, glowing with a *continual light* spell.

Trap: The looming light fixture radiates a strong evocation aura and is ensorcelled to project a withering ray of green light at the first creature entering the landing, unless that creature wears the insignia of the Ironfang Legion or speaks the trap's bypass phrase aloud.

EMPOWERED DISINTEGRATE TRAP CR 16

XP 76,800

Type magic; Perception DC 33; Disable Device DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger sight (*true seeing*); **Reset** none; **Bypass** speaking aloud the Goblin word for "respect"

Effect spell effect (empowered *disintegrate*, +9 ranged touch, 30d6 damage plus 50%, Fortitude DC 19 reduces the damage to 5d6 plus 50%)

B7. WAR ROOM (CR 15–19)

Red banners hang from the ceiling, depicting the red, toothy shield of the Ironfang Legion. A table in the room's center holds a tiny model of the countryside, and various maps hang from the walls. A dizzying array of crystalline circles and bars covers the eastern wall, glowing with a soft, green light.

Much of the Ironfang Legion's campaign of conquest was orchestrated from this room, personally overseen by Azaersi. The table in the room's center depicts the countryside of Nirmathas and Molthune, including tiny models representing various Ironfang and human forces. Bookshelves along the south wall contain volumes on Avistani history and tactics, as well as several volumes imported at great cost from distant Tian Xia.

The crystalline circles and bars to the east are control diagrams. Using this display, Scabvistin has manipulated the tower's design since Taurgreth first planted the *onyx shard* in the center of Phaendar, expanding it to suit his needs. By tracing patterns in the arrangements, the tower can be ordered to reshape itself over the course of 1d4 weeks. Alternatively, with a full-round action, the tower can be made to open a Stone Road to any other onyx

tower on the Material Plane. Deducing the patterns to rebuild the tower requires a successful DC 30 Knowledge (engineering) check, while linking to another tower requires a successful DC 25 Knowledge (geography) check. These controls can also be used to destroy the tower; deducing the proper arrangement to trace for this requires a successful DC 35 Knowledge (engineering) or Use Magic Device check. The pattern takes 36 full-round actions to trace, though this work can be divided between up to six creatures. Once the pattern is traced, the onyx tower can be ordered to crumble to rubble immediately or at any time within the next 2 hours.

Creatures: Lieutenant Scabvistin, commander of Fort Phaendar—and father of one of the PCs' first dedicated enemies, Scarvinious—has secured himself here along with his remaining command staff. Scabvistin remained behind and refuses to leave Golarion until he avenges his son's death. While an abusive monster, the bugbear felt his own sort of possessive love for the boy, and rails against the PCs from the moment he spies them.

Scabvistin begins the process of destroying the onyx tower once the PCs defeat or bypass the golems guarding area B3, putting the PCs on a tight timeline for defeating him. So long as his allies remain to guard against the intruders, he continues to spend his time each round pushing the tower closer to destruction to prevent the PCs from using it. He is easily goaded into confronting his son's murderers, though, and a successful DC 15 Bluff or Intimidate check draws him away to join the fight.

Scabvistin's remaining officers are his honor guard, two Ironfang shadows, and two munitions officers. Some of these officers may have been dispatched to deal with distractions created by the PCs' allies; see Special on page 23.

IRONFANG HONOR GUARD CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 176 (see page 18)

IRONFANG MUNITIONS OFFICERS (2) CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 178 each (see page 16)

IRONFANG SHADOWS (2) CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 177 each (see page 17)

SCABVISTIN CR 15

XP 51,200

Male middle-aged bugbear rogue (knife master) 14 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 38, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 72)

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 16, flat-footed 26 (+6 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 natural, +1 shield)

hp 209 (17d8+133)

Fort +15, Ref +21, Will +11

Defensive Abilities blade sense +4, evasion, fortification 50%, improved uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *keen punching dagger* +18/+13/+8 (1d4+5/19-20/x3), +2 *keen punching dagger* +18 (1d4+5/19-20/x3)

Ranged mwk dagger +17 (1d4+5/19-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +7d8 plus 7 bleed

TACTICS

Before Combat Scabvistin uses his *scroll of barkskin* on himself once the PCs begin their assault, and he uses his *scroll of bear's endurance* and *scroll of bull's strength* before they arrive in his war room.

During Combat Scabvistin flanks with minions whenever possible and relies on his Two-Weapon Feint feat to catch opponents flat-footed. Whenever he hits an opponent with a sneak attack, he gains a +7 dodge bonus to his AC, so his first concern is catching opponents unawares. He prefers targeting obvious warriors first and savors the spellcasters' growing fear as their defenders fall.

Morale Scabvistin knows death awaits if he lets Fort Phaendar fall, and so he fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without his spells, Scabvistin's statistics are **AC** 26, touch 16, flat-footed 21; **hp** 175; **Fort** +13; **Melee** +2 *keen punching dagger* +18/+13/+8 (1d4+3/17-20/x3), +2 *keen punching dagger* +18 (1d4+3/17-20/x3); **Ranged** mwk dagger +17 (1d4+3/19-20); **Str** 13, **Con** 18; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 30; **Skills** Climb +10.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 21, **Con** 22, **Int** 15, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +15 (+17 disarm); **CMD** 32 (34 vs. disarm)

Feats Combat Expertise, Disarming Strike^{APG}, Dodge, Double Slice, Improved Disarm, Iron Will, Toughness, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Feint^{UC}, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (punching dagger)

Skills Acrobatics +22, Bluff +18, Climb +12, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (engineering) +17, Knowledge (geography) +12, Perception +18, Profession (soldier) +18, Sense Motive +18, Stealth +26, Use Magic Device +18; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Intimidate, +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin, Undercommon

SQ hidden blade, rogue talents (another day^{APG}, assault leader^{APG}, bleeding attack +7, combat trick, finesse rogue, offensive defense^{APG}, weapon training), stalker

Combat Gear *scrolls of barkskin* (2; CL 12), *scrolls of bear's endurance* (2), *scroll of blur*, *scrolls of bull's strength* (2), and *scrolls of cure serious wounds* (3); **Other Gear** +2 moderate fortification chain shirt, +2 keen daggers (2), duelist's vambraces^{UE}, mwk daggers (3), belt of incredible

dexterity +6, coat of resistance +4 (as a cloak of resistance), keys to all the fort's locks

Special: For every ally the PCs gained during their war summit, one of Scabvistin's officers is instead commanding forces against the various distraction operations the PCs' allies are performing. Scabvistin's honor guard is the last potential companion to be dispatched, remaining by her commander's side under all but the most dire circumstances.

Development: With Scabvistin slain or subdued, the tower's destruction sequence can't be completed (unless the PCs themselves decide to destroy the tower).



SCABVISTIN

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

B8. COMMANDER'S OFFICE

Lieutenant Scabvistin's office is quite tidy and organized for a bugbear. Shelving along one wall displays an assortment of skulls—mostly human and hobgoblin.

PCs searching the office can easily uncover a timetable of upcoming Stone Road openings to the Vault of the Onyx Citadel, giving PCs some opportunity to access the vault even if they lose the *sardonix shard*.

Treasure: The fort's payroll is in a locked chest beside Scabvistin's desk: 50,000 gp divided into bags of 20 gp.

B9. SCABVISTIN'S QUARTERS

Scabvistin's room is overlarge for his tastes, but he has wasted little time filling it with trophies collected during his hunts and pacification of the surrounding area. A secret door in the northeastern corner of the room, behind a shaved bear, requires a successful DC 30 Perception check to discover.

Treasure: The five razors accompanying Scabvistin's grooming kit are made of silver and worth 50 gp each.

B10. SECRET CRYPT

This area is a secret crypt dedicated to Scabvistin's dead son, Scarvinious, who is now preserved as taxidermy and posed with an intimidating grimace. (If Scarvinious survived his encounter with the PCs, Scabvistin himself executed his son for incompetence.) Scabvistin put this memorial here to mourn his progeny and to remind himself not to succumb to the same vile weakness his boy embodied. With a successful DC 18 Knowledge (religion) check, a PC can identify the altar as dedicated to Hadregash, the goblinoid god of conquest and slavery.

Treasure: Much of the altar holds worthless candles, animal carcasses, and lacquered elven hands, but among the mess PCs can find a *periapt of wound closure* with a successful DC 30 Perception check.

CLAIMING FORT PHAENDAR

Even if Scabvistin is slain, the hobgoblins do not abandon the fortress or halt the fight until all remaining Ironfang shadows, honor guards, and munitions officers are slain, as well as the bard Ettoran and the devil Maltagra. Once this command structure is gutted, any remaining hobgoblins flee to regroup wherever and whenever they can. The rawheads in the intelligence building (area A6) remain until slain, and if they remain hidden may cause future problems for the PCs or whatever occupying force they leave behind.

If the PCs simply use the *sardonix shard* to enter the Vault of the Onyx Citadel without dispatching any of the fort's defenders—especially Scabvistin—then their allies put up a valiant fight but are ultimately overrun by hobgoblin forces before being repulsed. The allied forces are crushed, losing one out of every three soldiers, and when the PCs finally return from the vault, they will have

to answer to former allies, furious at being abandoned against such overwhelming odds.

Story Award: Once the PCs claim Fort Phaendar as their own, award them 102,400 XP. If they manage only to enter the Vault of the Onyx Citadel without securing Fort Phaendar, instead award them 51,200 XP.

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

Once the PCs press the *sardonix shard* to the stone arch in area B3, the rocks begin to grind and twist in the slow process that opens the Stone Road across dimensional barriers and into the Vault of the Onyx Citadel. Walking the road takes only a few minutes and deposits the PCs inside a massive geode that holds an alien landscape.

The vault is located on the Plane of Earth and stretches 170 miles long by 120 miles wide, with a ceiling ranging from 1 to 2 miles overhead. Large deposits of magnetic materials along one wall provide an effective “north,” easing navigation. The ceiling glows with a combination of phosphorescent fungi and alien crystals, providing normal light day and night, and the vault's large size and abundant water sources even provide occasional cloud cover and rainfall. A map of the vault can be found on page 26.

Alien beings called xiomorns—known on Golarion as the Vault Builders—terraformed the Vault of the Onyx Citadel millennia ago, creating small planar seeps to the other Elemental Planes to provide their isolated landscape with fresh air, heat, and water. As part of this terraforming, the xiomorns imported and created a wide variety of life, including abundant ferns and grasses, crystalline flora, hearty conifers, and towering fungi. The result is a rich and diverse landscape in which dense, primeval forests, raging rivers, rugged mountains, and even volcanoes all host their own varieties of creatures.

Most of the xiomorns moved on millennia ago, leaving their vault in the care of xiomorns called Vault Keepers. Other inhabitants of the Plane of Earth eventually discovered the wonderland, and the Vault of the Onyx Citadel now supports thriving populations of xiomorns and once-subservient pechs, as well as shaitan visitors who trade with the residents for the unique crystals and creatures that live here. These residents once paid homage to the masters of the Onyx Citadel, but have seen little change in their day-to-day lives under Azaersi's rule.

When the PCs arrive, they appear in a random stretch of the demiplane's wilderness near the pech settlement of Stonehome (area C). Normally, the PCs would have arrived at the Onyx Citadel's inter-dimensional gatehouse; however, Azaersi and Zanathura's recent activation of the transposition engine (area H35) has made the planar magic of the Onyx Citadel increasingly erratic. Despite this setback, the Onyx Citadel is visible in the distance.

GEOMANCY OF THE VAULT

Some of the xiomorns' greatest successes within the Vault of the Onyx Citadel involved experiments in the occult art of geomancy—shaping natural features and architecture to create and harness artificial ley lines. The Vault Builders created several auspicious locations—nexuses tied to various other planes—throughout the vault for their experiments, the final result of which are the Stone Roads.

Unlike normal ley lines (*Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 232), geomantic lines and nexuses must be carefully crafted and aligned and their location can be shifted, making them more akin to artifacts. Zanathura has aligned three of these potent locations with the Onyx Citadel to create a powerful protective field around it and its inhabitants, making the fortress a death trap for enemies while it remains aligned with these sites of power. While most of the Legion believes these alignments were performed to enhance their power, only Azaersi and Zanathura realize that the naga has transformed the citadel's magical hub for the Stone Roads into an engine capable of transporting the ancient structure and the portion of the vault's floor within 50 horizontal miles of it and dropping it on the heart of Nirmathas, thereby devastating central Avistan!

The Onyx Citadel is currently attuned to the three closest geomantic nexuses, each of which provides a different benefit to those creatures who dwell inside. Simply standing within the Onyx Citadel isn't enough to gain this benefit; a creature must be invited into the location by its owners or their representatives. In the case of the Onyx Citadel, the PCs must be invited inside by Azaersi or one of her commanders to gain these benefits. These effects last only as long as a creature remains within the Onyx Citadel, and they fade immediately once the creature leaves. The effects resume after sleeping for a night inside the citadel.

Nexus	Element	Benefit
Shard Nexus (area E)	Earth	DR 10/adamantine
Molten Nexus (area F)	Fire	Melee attacks deal +2d6 fire damage
Flow Nexus (area G)	Water	Resistance 20 to cold, electricity, and fire

AN ALIEN WILDERNESS

When the PCs arrive within the Vault of the Onyx Citadel, read or paraphrase the following.

In the distance, a great citadel glitters like a wedge of cut glass on an island in a silvery-blue lake. A river the color of blue topaz tumbles along through winding fields and hills to meet the distant lake, bisecting a colossal valley of trees, fields, and stands of gleaming crystal. Mountains loom here and there, seeming to support a glistening ceiling far overhead, which ripples and glows like a soothing ocean of light.

Once the PCs exit, the entrance to the Stone Road collapses behind them, leaving them without an immediate means of returning to the Material Plane. They find themselves alongside the Quartz River, one of two major waterways within the Vault of the Onyx Citadel, where even a casual examination of the landscape reveals a lush and varied land unexpectedly filled with life—more akin to a fairy-tale kingdom than a hobgoblin stronghold. About a mile downriver stands a small dock near a rocky outcropping: the entrance to the pech village Stonehome.

Shortly after the PCs arrive, a small party of pechs arrives to investigate them. Expecting more hobgoblins, the scouts are thrilled to see strangers apparently unaffiliated with the Ironfang Legion. Their leader introduces herself as **Saard** (N female pech rogue 4) and asks the PCs if they know the “Iron Fangs of Azaersi.” If the PCs give any indication that they oppose the Ironfang Legion, Saard excitedly asks the strangers to accompany her back to her village, where her master is very concerned and needs assistance.

C. STONEHOME

Stonehome is a relatively large pech settlement—a little over 100 individuals—though very little of it is immediately obvious. Only a stone dock on nearby Pech Lake indicates the presence of intelligent creatures in the vicinity. Stonehome itself is built into a hill that rises from the rolling fields. The pechs hollowed out a large cavern within the hill and constructed smaller sleeping huts for 3–5 individuals each inside. The pechs mine the region for ore and gemstones, then trade these materials with other friendly vault dwellers and visiting shaitans, or float them down the river to the Onyx Citadel.

The pechs were brought here long ago by the xiomorns as a workforce. Even after most of the xiomorns departed and those that remained became more withdrawn, the pechs remained staunchly loyal. They chose this particular hill as the site of their village due to the presence of a xiomorn archive there; protecting the location made them feel useful to their distant masters even in the absence of direct orders. When Azaersi and the Ironfang Legion assaulted the Onyx Citadel years ago, many pechs died trying to stop her. When the last surviving xiomorn, Ziguch the Seventh Facet, fled, it came to Stonehome and the archive the pechs protected. The ancient being sealed itself within the archive, occasionally dispatching loyal pechs to spy on the Onyx Citadel or scout other locations, but in the past 2 years Ziguch's contact with its pech minions has grown more and more infrequent.

Stonehome is run informally by an old stooped pech named **Squinting Sebrenar** (LN male venerable pech expert 8), a liver-spotted elderly man with a thick pair of glasses and an exaggerated sense of humor. Sebrenar is happy to meet newcomers, provided they hate the

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

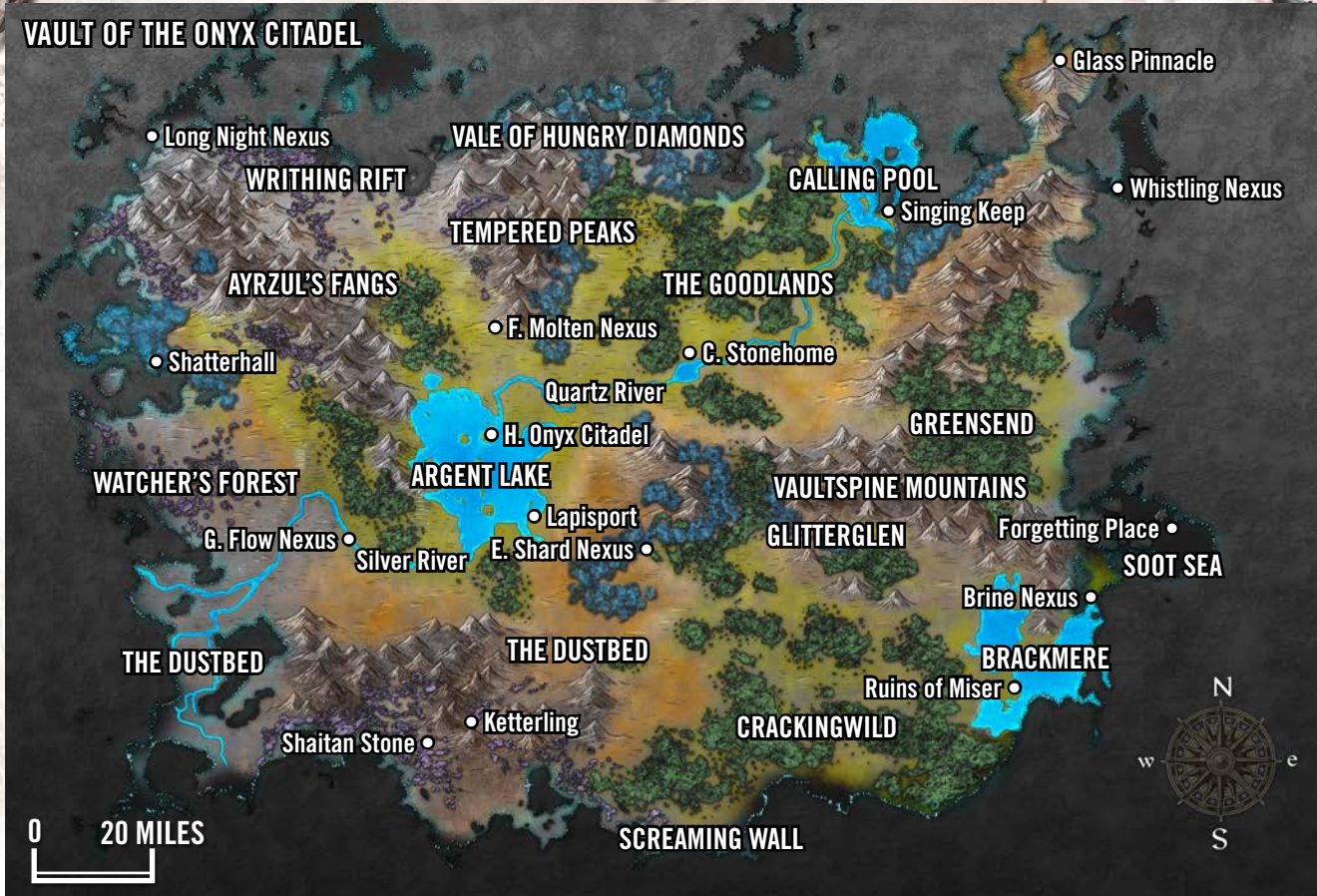
NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

Vault of the Onyx Citadel



Ironfang Legion as much as he's come to, and he explains as much of what's going on as he knows.

Where are we? "Oh, well, you're in the vault, child. Lovely little spot of land carved out of the Plane of Earth for us by the Old Masters. Our family has lived here for 318 generations, and we like it fine."

What do you know about the Ironfang Legion? "The Iron Fangs of Azaersi? Vile creatures. They came pouring in through the Stone Road two years back. Must've cut down a hundred of my kinfolk before the Old Masters stepped in to stop them. Laid a lot of 'em out, but that Azaersi stepped in, all spinning blades and swearing. Didn't figure you could kill an Old Master, but damned if she didn't do it three times over. Only Ziguch escaped. The Fangs have been holed up in the citadel ever since—make some trips off the island for ore and gems or to fuss with the nexuses—but mostly keep to themselves up there."

How did you escape the slaughter? "Oh, well, that's where I got lucky. Y'see, I'm a coward. A damn good one, too. When the fighting started, I hid in a wall and waited it out. Course, that was before they learned how to make the walls burn us."

What are nexuses? "Oh, see that's one of the nice things about the vault, friend: it's got a pile of geomantic nexuses. It's old magic—funny stuff. Rebuild your home, make your home lucky, make everyone in your home

sturdy as stone. Their snake lady has been rejiggering them into something new, though. Got the vault shaking sometimes; the vault don't like whatever's a-doing."

Who are the Old Masters? "If they're not gods, they're close enough to gods to share trousers. The Old Masters made places all over, testing out magic back before it was magic, and then they'd move on. Born right here in the Plane of Earth, though, and smart. Smart enough to make us pechs do the heavy lifting, at least, which is plenty smart for me. Most of 'em moved on long before I was born, though. Left the Four in charge, but now they're down to one."

Which of the Old Masters is left?/Where is Ziguch? "Ziguch? The Master Ziguch the Seventh Facet, long may its name be known? Lives in the hole now. When the Old Masters left, they stored a bunch of their things under this hill in the hole. It's why we built here—good location, very auspicious. When Ziguch escaped, it came here to find items the Old Masters left behind. It used to pop out to tell us what to do, but I don't reckon it was quite right the last time. Ain't been seen for weeks now."

Sebrenar knows where only one of the geomantic nexuses lies—the Shard Nexus to the south—and the pechs have been trying to shut it down, worrying that this unusual geomantic alignment is responsible for the quakes the vault has been experiencing lately. Sadly, the

pechs don't have the knowledge to manipulate a nexus. They have tried entering the archive to ask Ziguch for guidance, but so far no messengers have returned.

Sebrenar can describe in great detail the effects the geomantic nexuses have had on the Ironfang Legion: "Skin like iron, blades of flames, spells roll off them like water. Damnedest thing. If'n you want to take them Iron Fangs down a peg, you'd best address their geomancy first." More than that he doesn't know or care to understand, hoping his lack of knowledge will encourage the PCs to delve into the archive below the village and investigate Ziguch's absence.

The pechs are welcoming and curious about the PCs, having met very few humanoids beyond the murderous Ironfang hobgoblins. They ply the newcomers with questions about the Material Plane and humanoid cultures. These fey are friendly and welcoming, and they invite the PCs to stay as long as they like, offering two sleeping huts and all the fiddlehead stew the PCs care to eat.

Treasure: If the PCs agree to help them discover what happened to their beloved leader, Ziguch, the pechs offer the PCs what little ore they currently have: raw adamantine worth 16,000 gp.

Story Award: If the PCs learn about the situation in the Vault of the Onyx Citadel and the geomantic nexuses protecting the Ironfang Legion, award them 38,400 XP.

EVENTS AT STONEHOME

Stonehome is hardly the sleepy little village it wants to be. Azaersi has long known that the last remaining xiomorn in the vault fled here to hide, but she left the settlement alone so long as the pechs didn't interfere with her plans. Now that the pechs have discovered the nearby geomantic Shard Nexus, however, she assumes the xiomorn has finished recuperating and is leading a resistance effort against her.

At some point soon after the PCs arrive—perhaps even as Saard and the pech scouts guide them to the village—the first Ironfang response to this tampering arrives.

EVENT 1: THE IRON ULTIMATUM (CR 17)

Shortly after the PCs make contact with the pechs, a face familiar to the fey arrives to deliver an ultimatum. Azaersi and Zanathura are watching this development via the Onyx Citadel's *crystal ball* (see area H35); PCs can notice the ball's scrying sensor with a successful DC 24 Perception check.

Creatures: The shaitan Shaakhib has been a longtime fixture in the Vault of the Onyx Citadel. A trader,

mercenary, and thief, he frequently dealt with the pechs and xiomorns of the vault, acquiring various rare metals and gems they mined and breaking legs on their behalf. When the Legion took over the vault, he happily signed on as an advisor on vault denizens and how to keep them cowed and pliable. While Shaakhib hopes to supplant Zanathura as Azaersi's closest advisor, he has none of the traits the general desires beyond an easily manipulated ambition.

Shaakhib arrives alongside his shield guardian iron golem and delivers a simple ultimatum: the pechs will renounce any loyalty to the xiomorns and pay the Ironfang Legion a tithe of 1 ton of adamantine—far more than they have available—or Shaakhib will exterminate them. He tolerates no negotiation, though he doesn't expect the fey to have any sort

of support beyond a single Vault Keeper.

If combat begins, Shaakhib activates his shield guardian's shield other ability. The shield guardian stores a single *wall of stone* spell, which it uses as soon as possible to seal itself into a one-on-one fight with a single opponent. While the *wall of stone* remains, Shaakhib's preferred tactic is using his stone curse ability to bull-rush opponents into the wall. The pechs don't engage in combat, but neither do they wish to see their new allies slain, and they use their own spell-like abilities to free anyone trapped in stone by the shaitan's attacks after 1 round.



SQUINTING SEBRENAR

SHIELD GUARDIAN IRON GOLEM

CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 129; fast healing 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 158, 162)

SHAAKHIB

CR 16

XP 76,800

Male shaitan fighter (free hand fighter) 9 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 143, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 105)

LE Large outsider (earth, extraplanar)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.;

Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 10, flat-footed 30 (+10 armor, +1 Dex, +11 natural, -1 size)

hp 251 (18d10+153)

Fort +19, **Ref** +7, **Will** +13

Immune electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft., burrow 60 ft., climb 20 ft.; stone glide

Melee +2 adamantine scimitar +28/+23/+18/+13

(1d8+12/15-20) or

2 slams +20 (2d6+4)

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

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

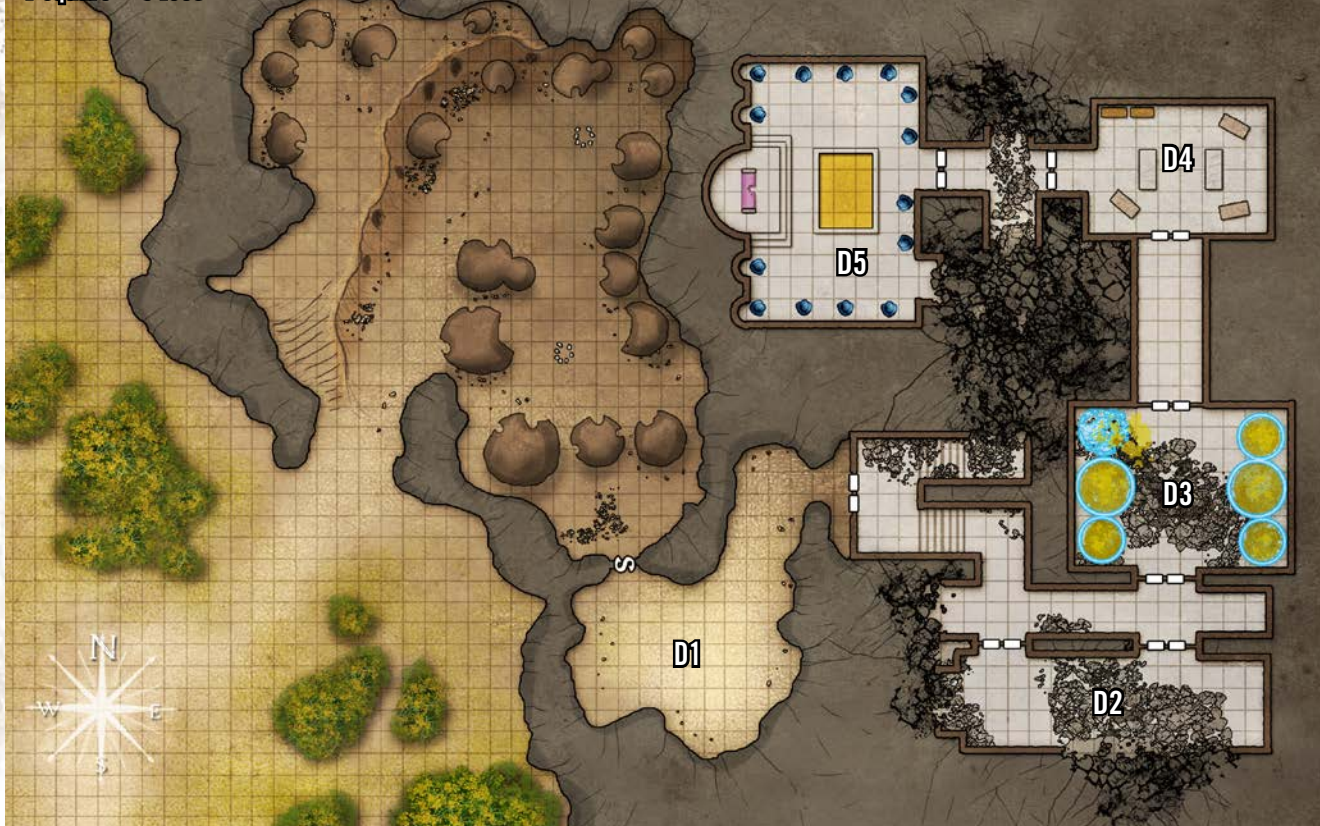
CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

C. STONEHOME

1 square = 5 feet



Special Attacks deceptive strike +2, earth mastery, metalmorph, singleton +1, stone curse, timely tip

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +12)

At will—*meld into stone*, *plane shift* (willing targets to Elemental Planes, Astral Plane, or Material Plane only; DC 20), *soften earth and stone*, *stone shape*, *veil* (self only; DC 19)

3/day—quicken *glitterdust* (DC 15), *rusting grasp*, *stone tell*, *stoneskin*, *wall of stone*

1/day—*transmute mud to rock*, *transmute rock to mud*

TACTICS

During Combat Shaakhib's favorite tactic is to transform the ground beneath a group of opponents into mud via *transmute rock to mud*, then reverse the effect a round later to entomb them. Otherwise, he attacks gleefully with his scimitar, using his Bull Rush Strike feat and his stone curse ability to imprison enemies whenever possible.

Morale If his golem is destroyed or he is reduced below half his hit points, Shaakhib uses his burrow speed to flee back to the Onyx Citadel, where the PCs may encounter him again (see area H16).

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 12, **Con** 24, **Int** 16, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +26 (+30 bull rush, +28 disarm); **CMD** 37 (39 vs. bull rush or disarm)

Feats Blind-Fight, Bull Rush Strike^{APG}, Combat Casting, Greater

Bull Rush, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Initiative^B, Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will, Persuasive, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*glitterdust*), Toughness, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar)

Skills Acrobatics -2 (-10 when jumping), Appraise +15, Bluff +15 (+17 to feint or create a diversion to hide), Climb +24, Craft (gemcutting) +15, Diplomacy +25, Intimidate +28, Knowledge (engineering, planes) +15, Perception +14, Sense Motive +23, Spellcraft +15

Languages Aquan, Auran, Common, Goblin, Ignan, Terran; telepathy 100 ft.

Gear +4 breastplate, +2 adamantite scimitar, figurine of wondrous power (ivory goat), pearly white spindle ioun stone, 6,000 gp

EVENT 2: REDOUBLED EFFORTS (CR 19)

This event takes place at any point after the PCs have encountered Shaakhib. Having learned of the PCs' presence at Stonehome, Azaersi wastes no time dispatching her trusted military commander and a unit of his greatest riders to kill these long-standing foes.

Creatures: Kraelos is a proud hobgoblin warrior and unparalleled rider, but his mind for tactics is what proved his value to Azaersi. She has allowed him to train an elite mounted unit, and he now rides at the front of

this military force to lay the foes of the Legion low and return with their heads on pikes for all hobgoblins to see and celebrate. Like Shaakhib, he demands the pechs of Stonehome bow to the Legion and renounce their xiomorn masters, but unlike the greedy genie, he offers protection rather than demanding payment. All he requires is that the pechs turn over the enemies of the Ironfang Legion.

If the pechs refuse his offer and the PCs do not leave Stonehome to engage him, Kraelos simply departs. He recognizes the pechs' cavern as an excellent defensive position and prefers to wait until they exit to travel somewhere else in the vault before attacking. His troops have a far greater advantage in open terrain, and he's not foolish enough to give that up. If the PCs don't leave within 24 hours, he calls upon Azlowe (see page 58) to summon a team of four greater shadows (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 245) to quietly execute the pechs in their beds. The shadows can kill 2d6 pechs before panic erupts and the PCs have a chance to drive the undead away, but Kraelos expects this insult will overcome the PCs' caution and push them into taking rash action.

KRAELOS CR 16

XP 76,800

hp 217 (see page 60)

IRONFANG YZOBURIDER TROOP CR 18

XP 153,600

hp 300 (see page 89)

D. THE ARCHIVE UNDER THE HILL

With the Ironfang Legion's conquest of the Onyx Citadel, the xiomorn Ziguch the Seventh Facet retreated here to recuperate, but Azaersi quickly learned of this second lair and sent a small assault force. During the battle, collateral damage cracked a strange vessel and unleashed an ancient entity: the remaining essence of a long-dead god slain by the xiomorns in an age long before Golarion's creation. Known as an immortal ichor, the essence seeped from its containment and quickly assumed mental control of the wounded xiomorn. Ziguch has long since succumbed to the dead god's influence and now studies how to use the vault's various geomantic nexuses to restore the slain deity to its former power.

The archive lies beyond a hidden door in the village of Stonehome. The walls of this complex are 1 inch thick and made

from a strange white stone native to the Plane of Earth (hardness 28, hp 1,080). The ceilings tower to a height of 30 feet, but a thick coating of sand and rubble covers portions of the structure's floors. Treat these sand-covered areas as difficult terrain. Domes in each ceiling glow brightly, providing normal light in every room. Doors within the complex are made of oval-shaped crystal and are unlocked. Some parts of the archive have collapsed from age, but most of the damage was caused by the Ironfang Legion's raid.

D1. LABORATORY ENTRANCE (CR 16)

Swirling black-and-white sand covers the floor of this grand cavern. A large crystalline oval is set in the only worked surface of the cave: a smooth white wall at the eastern end. Paintings of stylized insects and tiny people



SHAAKHIB

Vault of the Onyx Citadel

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

APPENDIX

cover the walls, depicting scenes of construction, planting, and worship.

The paintings on the walls here were created by pechs, when they transformed this entrance cave into a sort of shrine to the xiomorns. The pechs in the images are easily identified, while a PC who succeeds at a DC 32 Knowledge (planes) check identifies the other depicted entities as xiomorns.

Creatures: Four ancient sandmen guard the archive, blending into the sands of the cavern floor until disturbed. They recognize xiomorns and pechs as allies but rise up to attack any creatures they deem to be trespassers.

SANDMAN SLEEPERS (4)

CR 12

XP 19,200 each

Sandman rogue 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 236)

LE Medium outsider (earth, elemental, extraplanar)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft.;

Perception +20

Aura sleep aura (DC 16)

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, +4 shield)

hp 157 each (15 HD; 11d8+4d10+86)

Fort +11, **Ref** +15, **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +3; **Immune** elemental traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +16 (1d8+4)

Special Attacks sleep, sneak attack +6d6

TACTICS

During Combat The sandman sleepers rise from the sands of this room during the surprise round to catch foes unawares. If they manage to put any targets to sleep or knock them unconscious, they focus their attacks on any other enemies that are still awake.

Morale The sandmen sleepers fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 18, **Con** 19, **Int** 8, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 30

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (slam), Iron Will, Shield Proficiency, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Acrobatics +22, Climb +21, Knowledge (planes) +9, Perception +20, Sense Motive +20, Stealth +22 (+26 in sand), Use Magic Device +18; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth in sand

Languages Terran

SQ compression, rogue talents (camouflage^{APG}, combat trick, fast stealth, improved evasion, surprise attacks), sand form, trapfinding +5

Gear +3 animated mithral buckler

Treasure: If any PC searches the sand near the eastern door, with a successful DC 36 Perception check, he uncovers a necklace of malachite beads with a charm that resembles a strange, spindly, four-armed creature set amid several gemstones. The malachite necklace functions as a *necklace of fireballs* (type VII), except the detonations deal acid damage rather than fire. The charm on it functions as a *scarab of protection*.

Development: If the sandmen render all the PCs unconscious, they lock the PCs within the alchemy vats in area D3 so the xiomorn can continue its research. Due to the absence of an opening mechanism on the vat's interior, a successful DC 45 Disable Device check is required to open it from within. PCs who awake within these vats find themselves stripped of their possessions, wearing only modest tunics. Any removed gear is stored in the footlockers in area D4.

D2. SOUTHERN EXHIBIT HALL

In this room, the xiomorns stored a variety of lesser curios collected from across the Plane of Earth. Scattered upon steel tables are tools and laboratory equipment, though age has rendered most of them useless.

Treasure: Among the remains, some of the more exotic specimens are a calcified xorn (5,500 gp), a dragon's tooth encased in protective resin (6,000 gp), a partially buried quartz tortoise shell (3,500 gp), and seven pickled earth mephits in jars (500 gp each). The laboratory paraphernalia that can be salvaged includes an adamantite drill (3,001 gp), an alchemist's lab (200 gp), and a *hammer of seismic assault* (see the sidebar on page 32).

D3. REJUVENATION VATS (CR 16)

Five cylindrical vats occupy most of the floor space in this chamber. The remains of a sixth vat lie shattered on the floor.

The five intact vats are made from 1-inch-thick translucent crystal (hardness 15, hp 10, break DC 32), allowing their contents to be viewed from the outside. Four of the vats are filled with only an olive-hued fluid. A strange unlocking mechanism adorns each vat, requiring a successful DC 35 Disable Device or Use Magic Device check to open from the exterior. If the vat's unlocking mechanism is activated, the fluid drains through a grate in the floor before the door swings outward. Three of the vats are each large enough to hold one Medium creature or two Small creatures, while the remaining two can each accommodate a single Large creature (or two Medium creatures or four Small creatures). If a living being is placed within one of these vats, the olive fluid fills the receptacle 1 round later. Creatures immersed in the fluid gain the effects of a *regenerate* spell (CL 18th). Dead creatures placed inside a vat for 24 hours are instead restored to life as if by

a *raise dead* spell (CL 15). There is currently enough fluid in the chamber's reservoir to activate the *regenerate* effect 12 times; using a larger vat or restoring a dead creature to life consumes twice as much fluid.

Currently, only one vat is in use, preserving a goblin-shaped void in the green fluid—in actuality a goblin that has been rendered alchemically invisible as part of Ziguch's experiments. In a bid to recreate a suitable host body for the immortal ichor, Ziguch has modified this chamber and performed several unsuccessful experiments on a variety of subjects—one of whom has recently escaped (see Creature below).

Creature: The most recent test subject—the Ironfang Legion's master chymist Lieutenant Oktar—reawakened a day ago in one of the fluid vats and managed to break free. As the Legion's ranking munitions officer and an expert on matters of alchemy and natural philosophy, he lead the Ironfang Legion's initial assault on the archive and was captured along with most of his soldiers. Though terribly injured, he survived and has since been transformed by Ziguch's alien alchemy.

Though he knows he should flee, Oktar is fascinated by the science on display in this laboratory and is studying as much as he can before he returns to the Onyx Citadel. He fully expects Azaersi to punish him for his failure, but he hopes that by returning with valuable secrets of xiomorn alchemy, he can persuade the general to spare his life. He has already developed a mutagen based on the olive-colored fluid, granting him fearsome claws and teeth.

Initially, Oktar considers anyone entering this room an enemy (treat his starting attitude as hostile), but he is reluctant to start a fight. If the PCs can convince him that they share an enemy, he can be persuaded to join them in a temporary alliance. If the PCs attack Oktar, he defends himself with zeal but flees as soon as possible.

OKTAR

CR 16

XP 76,800

Mutant hobgoblin alchemist 16 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 180, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 26)

LE Medium aberration (humanoid, goblinoid)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 34, touch 16, flat-footed 28 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 235 (16d8+160)

Fort +18, **Ref** +15, **Will** +7

DR 5/—; **Immune** poison, radiation

Weaknesses vulnerability to fire



OKTAR

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +17 (1d8+5), 2 claws +17 (1d6+5)

Ranged bomb +18 (8d6+2 fire)

Special Attacks bomb 18/day (8d6+2 fire, DC 20)

Alchemist Extracts Prepared

(CL 16th; concentration +18)

4th—*air walk*, *cure critical wounds* (2), *greater invisibility*
3rd—*beast shape I*, *cure serious wounds* (2), *haste*, *remove blindness/deafness*, *water breathing*

2nd—*alter self*, *barkskin*, *false life*, *owl's wisdom* (3)

1st—*cure light wounds*, *enlarge person* (DC 13), *expeditious retreat*, *jump*, *reduce person* (DC 13), *shield*

TACTICS

Before Combat Oktar has been drinking extracts of *owl's wisdom* as a sort of nerve tonic. He drinks his feral grand mutagen and extract of *barkskin* if he expects trouble.

During Combat Oktar prefers to remain back in a fight, hurling bombs while others engage in melee.

Morale Oktar tries to retreat if reduced below 150 hit points. If encountered in the Onyx Citadel, he fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without his extracts and mutagen, Oktar's statistics are **AC** 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17; **hp** 203; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +12, **Will** +6; **DR** 0; **Melee** dagger +13 (1d4+1/19–20); **Ranged** bomb +15 (8d6+2 fire); **Str** 12, **Dex** 14, **Con** 22, **Int** 16, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12; **CMB** +13, **CMD** 26; **Skills** Craft (alchemy) +21, Heal +17, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (engineering, nature) +19, Perception +17, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +6, Use Magic Device +19.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 20, **Con** 26, **Int** 14, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 33

Feats Brew Potion, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will, Throw Anything, Toughness

Skills Craft (alchemy) +20 (+36 to create alchemical items), Heal +18, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (engineering, nature) +18, Perception +18, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +9, Use Magic Device +18; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Goblin, Infernal

SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +16), deformities (vulnerability), discoveries (dispelling bomb, eternal potion, extend potion, feral mutagen, grand mutagen, greater mutagen, infusion, precise bombs [2 squares]), mutagen (+8/+6/+4/–2, +6 natural armor, 16 hours), mutations (armored, fast healing, increased speed, mental armor, rugged), poison use, swift alchemy

Gear dagger

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

HAMMER OF SEISMIC ASSAULT

The head of this warhammer is a solid chunk of rough crystal that hums constantly.

HAMMER OF SEISMIC ASSAULT

PRICE
80,000 GP

SLOT none

CL 15th

WEIGHT 5 lbs.

AURA strong evocation

This *+3 impact^{UE}* warhammer deals 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage when it hits. As a swift action, the wielder can will the hammer's crystalline head to grow jagged spikes, switching its damage type to piercing for a single blow. When the bearer confirms a critical hit with the *hammer of seismic assault*, a concussive blast emits from the hammer in a 10-foot-radius spread, causing a tremor to rip through the ground. Any creatures standing on the ground in this area with a CMD equal to or lower than the result of the confirmation roll are knocked prone. This damaged area is considered rough terrain for 10 minutes.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 40,000 GP

Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *earthquake*, *lead blades^{APG}*

Development: If the PCs enlist Oktar's aid, he adheres to the agreement, and once the immortal ichor is destroyed, he simply asks to leave. Unless they double-cross him, the PCs may reencounter him again (see area **H18**).

Story Award: If the PCs form an alliance with Oktar, award them 76,800 XP as if they defeated him in combat.

D4. NORTHERN EXHIBIT HALL (CR 16)

This room holds the victims of the xiomorn's recent, failed bid to create a host body for the immortal ichor. The corpses include a human with six mouths, three tumor-riddled bugbears, and a hobgoblin with insectile legs sprouting from her head. All five corpses are fresh and wear the regalia of the Ironfang Legion.

Creatures: The xiomorns installed a clockwork angel to guard over the gallery beyond (area **D5**), in particular to ensure nothing ever released the immortal ichor. Now that the ichor has been released, Ziguch has instead commanded the angel to protect its experimental results. Supporting the clockwork angel are two sandmen sleepers who keep its mechanism wound.

CLOCKWORK ANGEL

CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 210 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 58)

SANDMAN SLEEPERS (2)

CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 157 each (see page 30)

Treasure: Several pieces of Oktar's equipment are stored in a footlocker in a corner of the room, including a *+3 dagger of venom*, a *ring of evasion*, and a *vest of stable mutation^{UE}*.

D5. HALL OF THE FORGOTTEN GOD (CR 18)

Crystal statues line the walls of this rectangular room, ringing a large sandbox recessed in the chamber's center. The only gap in this ring is at the chamber's western edge, where a cracked glass cylinder rests atop a raised dais.

The crystal statues are the petrified remains of various extinct creatures, preserved by the xiomorns' crystallization ability. The statues are obviously damaged, so any attempt to use the *stone to flesh* spell fails.

A large sandbox (treat as difficult terrain) fills the room's center. The sands begin to animate and swirl into shapes whenever anyone stands adjacent to the box, but this complex display system cannot be accurately accessed until combat ends (see Development on page 34).

Creatures: When Ziguch escaped Azaersi's assault on the Onyx Citadel, it fled here with Ironfang troops close behind. The ensuing battle cracked a stasis jar containing a very dangerous sample: an immortal ichor. The ancient deity cajoled and dominated Ziguch. Now fully subservient to the immortal ichor, the xiomorn works tirelessly to create a suitable host body to restore the deity to life.

While a member of the lesser caste of xiomorns—the Vault Keepers—Ziguch has managed the Vault of the Onyx Citadel for millennia and wields more power than its peers. This fact is not lost on the immortal ichor, which believes it can use knowledge gained from Ziguch's failed experiments to form the xiomorn itself into a suitable host. The ichor sees the PCs potential recruits. It attacks mercilessly with its telekinesis, but it tries to avoid slaying any of them for fear of wasting resources.

IMMORTAL ICHOR

CR 17

XP 102,400

hp 270 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 156)

ZIGUCH THE SEVENTH FACET

CR 15

XP 51,200

Advanced xiomorn Vault Keeper (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, *Pathfinder Module: The Emerald Spire Superdungeon* 158)

LN Medium outsider (earth, elemental, extraplanar)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 120 ft.;

Perception +25

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 21, flat-footed 21 (+10 Dex, +11 natural)
hp 232 (16d10+144); fast healing 5

Fort +14, **Ref** +20, **Will** +16

DR 10/adamantine, 10/bludgeoning; **Immune** elemental traits; **SR** 25

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.; climb 40 ft.

Melee 4 claws +26 (2d4+8/19–20 plus crystallization)

Special Attacks crystal burst, crystallization (DC 27), rend (2 claws, 2d4+12)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +25)

At will—*dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *shatter* (DC 21), *statue, stone shape*, *stone tell* 3/day—*command stone* (DC 28), *flesh to stone* (DC 25), *spike stones* (DC 23), *wall of stone* 1/day—*summon monster VII* (earth elementals only), *symbol of scrying*^{UM}

TACTICS

During Combat Ziguch relies on *flesh to stone* and its *wand of enervation* to subdue rather than kill, reverting to its claws and crystal burst attack only if overwhelmed.

Morale Ziguch fights because it is compelled to. If the PCs slay the immortal ichor first, or break the *dominate monster* effect over Ziguch, the xiomorn parleys for peace.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 31, **Con** 29, **Int** 31, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 28

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +24 (+26 sunder); **CMD** 45 (47 vs. sunder)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Sunder, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +22 (+26 when jumping), Climb +32, Craft (alchemy) +29, Craft (sculpture) +17, Disable Device +26, Heal +22, Knowledge (arcana, planes) +29, Knowledge (dungeoneering, engineering, geography, nature) +26, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Spellcraft +29, Stealth +29, Use Magic Device +28

Languages Terran; telepathy 300 ft.

SQ item mastery

Combat Gear *wand of enervation* (13 charges)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Command Stone (Sp) This ability functions as *dominate monster*, equivalent to a 9th-level spell, but only on creatures with the earth subtype or constructs made of stone. When used against a construct, this ability overcomes any spell resistance, but these effects last 1 round per caster level.

Crystal Burst (Su) As a standard action once every 1d4 rounds, a xiomorn can create an explosion of razor-sharp crystals at a range of 120 feet. These crystals fill a 30-foot-radius burst and deal 12d6 points of piercing and slashing damage (Reflex DC 27 half). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Crystallization (Su) A creature struck

by a xiomorn's claw must succeed at a DC 27 Fortitude save or take 1 point of Dexterity drain. On a critical hit, the claw deals 2 points of Dexterity drain on a failed save. As long as the creature suffers any of this drain, portions of its body appear as living green crystal and it gains the earth creature subtype. A creature whose Dexterity score is drained to 0 in this manner transforms into a green crystal statue, as if affected by *flesh to stone*. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Item Mastery (Ex) A xiomorn can always activate spell trigger and spell completion items as if the spell were on its class list. For the purposes of crafting magic items or constructs, it is treated as though it had all item creation feats.



ZIGUCH THE SEVENTH FACET

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

PC GAMES

CONTENT

THE CA

ACQUISITION

THE VAULT

FOUNDERS

THE CS OF

VAULT

BUILDERS

BESTIARY

Treasure: Three statues remain in good-enough repair to be worth a small fortune (10,000 gp each) if the PCs can locate a buyer. The xiomorn collection also includes several significant magic items, including *bracers of armor +5*, a *pearl of power* (7th level), and a *rod of thunder and lightning*. Removing the rod from its niche on the wall immediately shuts off all the lights in the complex.

Development: The sandbox in the room's center is an interactive display for the vast knowledge stored within the archive. If a sentient creature stands next to the box, the sands swirl to life, forming a model of the entire vault. Once the model activates, creatures can ask the sandbox questions about the vault, and the sands answer to the best of their ability—highlighting specific regions, zooming in on various locations, and showing the flow of water or magical energy through the valley. The archive can reveal the location of all the geomantic nexuses in the vault, and it shows the thread linking three of them—the Flow Nexus, the Molten Nexus, and the Shard Nexus—to the Onyx Citadel.

The sandbox's understanding and ability to communicate is limited. It can demonstrate how to unattune each geomantic nexus (a simply matter of rotating the nexus or removing crystals from its structure), but it can't predict the effects of any given alignment, nor can it track creatures within the vault. It can display a detailed model of the Onyx Citadel, reflecting the castle as it was long before the Ironfang Legion overran it. If any PC focuses on the quakes occasionally shaking the vault or the long-term effects of the geomantic alignment, they are treated to a horrifying scene of the vault ripping itself apart. Afterward, the sands reform into a map of Nirmathas and Molthune, which detonates again, dropping a model of the Onyx Citadel and the vault's terrain onto a 50-mile-radius expanse of the center of the map. If the PCs ask for a timeline of this effect, the sandbox reforms itself into an hourglass, ticking down 24 hours. They can also see that by unattuning the nexuses, this timeline extends: for every nexus unattuned, the time until transposition doubles. Visiting all three nexuses extends the PCs' working timeline to 8 days.

PCs can interact with the sandbox to learn other details as well, studying architecture, deities of the Elemental Planes, earth-shaping magic, engineering, and any of the flora and fauna found within the vault; by spending 10 minutes consulting the sandbox, a creature gains a +5 bonus on a single Knowledge check related to these areas of expertise.

Any sand removed from the sandbox becomes inert, ordinary grit.

If Ziguch survives, it can communicate many of the same concepts telepathically and will not cause further problems for the PCs, but it is unwilling to engage the Ironfang Legion again after watching the hobgoblins

slay three of its kin. Ziguch expresses little gratitude if freed from the immortal ichor's control—in its mind, the PCs are lesser, subservient beings, and so it is their natural obligation to free a greater creature from such an unnatural state.

THE GEOMANTIC NEXUSES

Having gleaned the locations of the three geomantic nexuses defending the Onyx Citadel and powering the Legion's transposition engine, the PCs can travel to each location and undo Zanathura's careful alignments. Unattuning a site requires a successful DC 32 Disable Device check or DC 35 Use Magic Device check, with each attempt taking 10 rounds. Alternatively, a character can spend 5 rounds to attempt a DC 30 Strength check; if successful, she turns the dais supporting the nexus, which also unattunes the nexus. Finally, characters can simply sunder one of the crystals channeling the geomantic power (hardness 12, hp 100).

Each nexus is detailed below.

E. SHARD NEXUS (CR 17)

In the midst of a forest of blue-white crystal formations, a large quarry serves as the home of the elder xorn Cragcrusher and his tribe. The xorns are selfish, but they are eager traders, and they deal regularly with the vault's pechs and shaitans—and recently, with the Ironfang Legion.

When the PCs enter the excavation, read the following description aloud.

Crystals sparkle within the cavern's walls, creating a kaleidoscope of colors that dance throughout the cavern. A collection of cave paintings depicts squat, three-armed beasts polishing gemstones, which seem to float in the air. A circular dais in the quarry's center, some thirty feet across, supports a standing circle of stones and glittering crystals.

With a successful DC 26 Knowledge (planes) check, a PC identifies the three-legged creatures depicted within the paintings as xorns.

Creatures: As part of their recent dealings with the Ironfang Legion, the xorns have allowed the hobgoblins' "snaky lass" to fiddle with the ornate arrangement of rocks and crystals that serves as a central ornament and shrine in their community, and they have agreed to protect the arrangement from any outsiders trying to change it.

When the PCs first arrive here, the xorns stand sentry within the ground, using their tremorsense to watch for intruders. They pop up from the ground to warn the PCs away. While Cragcrusher is hesitant to attack—largely because he and his kin are lazy—his initial attitude towards the PCs is unfriendly. If Cragcrusher's attitude shifts to friendly or better, then the elder xorn is willing to accept a hefty bribe to look the other way while the PCs make their changes to the nexus. He wants a bribe worth



VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

60,000 gp, but he'll accept half as much if the PCs' bribe is in the form of gems or crystals (such as the crystal statues from area D5).

The remaining xorn of Cragcrusher's tribe are average members of their kind (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 284) and pose little challenge for the PCs. They pelt the intruders with rocks and harsh words but otherwise have little impact on the fight.

CRAGCRUSHER

CR 17

XP 102,400

Elder xorn druid 12 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 284)

N Large outsider (earth, extraplanar)

Init +4; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; **Perception** +30

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 9, flat-footed 32 (+22 natural, -1 size)

hp 313 (19 HD; 12d8+7d10+221)

Fort +20, **Ref** +11, **Will** +20; +4 vs. fey and plant-targeted effects

DR 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, fire, flanking, poison;

Resist acid 20, electricity 10

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.; earth glide

Melee bite +26 (6d6+10), 3 claws +25 (1d6+10)

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

Special Attacks wild shape 5/day

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +19)
10/day—acid dart (1d6+6 acid)

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 12th; concentration +19)

6th—*mass bull's strength*, *move earth* (2), *stoneskin*^o

5th—*call lightning storm* (DC 22), *cure critical wounds*,
transmute rock to mud (2), *wall of stone*^o

4th—*air walk*, *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *flame strike* (DC 21), *spike stones*^o (DC 21)

3rd—*call lightning* (2, DC 20), *greater magic fang* (2),
spike growth (2, DC 20), *stone shape*^o

2nd—*barkskin*, *bull's strength*, *fog cloud*, *lesser restoration* (2), *soften earth and stone*^o, *stone call*^{APG}

1st—*ant haul*^{APG}, *expeditious excavation*^{APG} (2), *jump* (2),
longstrider, *magic stone*^o

0 (at will)—*create water*, *guidance*, *mending*, *virtue*

D Domain spell; **Domain** Earth

TACTICS

Before Combat Cragcrusher casts *barkskin*.

During Combat If combat ensues, Cragcrusher sinks into the earth and casts *call lightning storm*, using his tremorsense to target the PCs. Once the spell elapses or his lightning proves ineffective, he emerges to engage in melee.

Morale The xorn retreats into the earth to heal himself if reduced below 100 hit points.

Base Statistics Without *barkskin*, Cragcrusher's statistics are
AC 26, touch 9, flat-footed 26.

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 10, **Con** 30, **Int** 14, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +27 (+29 bull rush); **CMD** 37 (39 vs. bull rush)

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Acrobatics +0 (–4 when jumping), Handle Animal +22, Knowledge (nature) +23, Knowledge (planes) +21, Perception +30, Sense Motive +29, Spellcraft +21, Stealth +16, Survival +28

Languages Common, Druidic, Terran

SQ nature bond (Earth domain), nature sense, trackless step, wild empathy +15, woodland stride

Gear *headband of inspired wisdom* +6

Treasure: If the PCs manage to bribe Cragcrusher, he invites them to stay for a friendly wrestling competition. He allows the PCs up to three chances to either pin him or push him outside of a 40-foot circle in the quarry's center before he can do the same to them. If they win, he belts out a croaking laugh and rewards them with his *headband of inspired wisdom* +6, insisting he can always make another.

Development: If the PCs defeat Cragcrusher or convince him to let them tamper with the geomantic nexus, doing so removes the damage reduction from the denizens of the Onyx Citadel and doubles the amount of time before the transposition engine activates.

Story Award: If the PCs deal with Cragcrusher peacefully, award them 102,400 XP as if they had defeated the xorn in combat.

F. MOLTEN NEXUS (CR 18)

A range of volcanic mountains, called the Tempered Peaks by locals, stretches south from the vault's northern wall, powered by planar seeps and portals connecting the range to the Plane of Fire. The range heats much of the vault and provides a home for azers, magma elementals, and thoquas.

A series of natural stairs on the range's southernmost mountain reaches a shelf of cooled magma that looms 400 feet above the vault's floor. This entrance is part of an old lava tube that connects to the volcanic mountain's magma chamber—a 500-foot-wide cavern with 100-foot ceilings. The magma chamber can also be accessed from the cauldron at the mountain's peak, 2,000 feet overhead.

When the PCs enter, read the following aloud.

A circular dais topped with an arrangement of stones and crystals stands just above the smooth floor of this round cavern. A soft, orange light suffuses the cavern, emitted by rivulets of magma running down the walls. Tidily stacked metal coffer surrounds the dais, overflowing with gold and gems.

Much of the volcano's power is contained, channeled into the Molten Nexus by xiomorn engineering long ago, though the area is still hazardous (see Hazard on page 37).

Creature: Irigibel has roosted here ever since the xiomorns altered her as a hatchling, some 900 years ago. Due to their meddling, the magma dragon's belly is covered in glittering orange, red, and yellow crystalline scales that, when harvested, act as powerful material components for various spells related to fire and earth. Drawn to this cavern by its extreme heat and the comforting pulse of the Molten Nexus's magic, Irigibel spends her time gazing at the patterns that ripple across her body.

When the PCs arrive, Irigibel is lamenting the loss of several of her brilliant underbelly crystals—stolen by the Ironfang Legion as she slept. She views the PCs as obnoxious children, annoying her in this hour of mourning, and is ready to respond with violence unless approached with utmost deference. Treat Irigibel's initial attitude toward the PCs as unfriendly, though gifts and praise grant the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy and Bluff checks against her, while restoring her missing scales (which requires a *regenerate* spell) instead grants a +5 circumstance bonus. If any PC can make the magma dragon's attitude helpful, she reluctantly agrees to allow the PCs to investigate the geomantic nexus in her lair, provided they touch nothing in her hoard.

Like a volcano, Irigibel is hot tempered and unstable, prone to sudden mood swings and destructive outrages. While the PCs manipulate the nexus, the dragon continually questions them about their meetings with the other vault denizens, and those who fail to make note of Irigibel's cunning, majesty, or power during their replies might notice the dragon growing increasingly irritated and hostile toward them (Sense Motive DC 20). If at any point 2 rounds pass without the PCs mentioning something positive about the magma dragon or addressing her with an honorific, she becomes offended and attacks this second wave of "plebeian rascals." If Irigibel catches the PCs in a lie, sees them touch anything in her hoard, or suspects them of looking overlong at her hoard, she likewise roars in outrage and attacks.

In combat, Irigibel's favorite tactic is to use her *stone shape* and *transmute rock to mud* spells to shatter the stone floor above her magma lake (see Hazard on page 37). If feeling especially cruel toward those who disrespect her, the dragon follows this up by capping the hole she created with a *wall of stone*, sealing opponents beneath the magma's surface. She uses *passwall* to duck below the stone herself if enemies close in, taking a moment to rest and recharge her breath weapon.

IRIGIBEL THE ILLUMINATED

CR 17

XP 102,400

Female ancient magma dragon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 101)
hp 310

OFFENSE

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 15th; concentration +20)

7th (4/day)—*prismatic spray* (DC 22), *spell turning*

6th (6/day)—*chain lightning* (DC 21), *greater dispel magic*, *sirocco*^{APG} (DC 21)

5th (7/day)—*cloudkill* (DC 20), *teleport*, *transmute rock to mud*, *wall of stone*

4th (7/day)—*ball lightning*^{APG} (DC 19), *confusion* (DC 19), *fire shield*, *stone shape*

3rd (7/day)—*arcane sight*, *displacement*, *fireball* (DC 18), *major image* (DC 18)

2nd (7/day)—*acid arrow*, *continual flame*, *glitterdust* (DC 17), *pyrotechnics*

1st (8/day)—*alarm*, *feather fall*, *grease*, *shield*, *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound* (DC 19), *mage hand*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*

Hazard: The entire floor of the magma chamber is a 1-foot-thick platform of stone over a boiling lake of magma. The temperature within the chamber counts as extreme heat (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 444), and while the stone floor can support creatures of up to Huge size, it collapses under the weight of heavier creatures and can be shattered by powerful spells or deliberate attacks (hardness 8, hp 90), dumping unfortunate creatures into the magma below. This hazardous terrain is especially beneficial to Irigibel, and it increases the CR of this encounter by 1.

Treasure: Irigibel's hoard consists of the following, organized fastidiously within and around 12 adamantine coffers (themselves each worth 500 gp): 591 pp; 11,925 gp; 24,355 sp; 7,200 cp; a suit of *mithral full-plate of speed*; a +3 *returning boomerang*^{UE}; a *chime of interruption*; a darkwood harp that when struck once continues to play a haunting melody until struck a second time, providing a +2 bonus on music-related Perform checks (500 gp); an alabaster tea set (700 gp); a heart carved from ruby (2,000 gp); a 10-foot-tall-by-5-foot-wide mirror with an exquisite ivory frame depicting elephants (850 gp); and seven large fire opals (250 gp each).

In addition, Irigibel allows the PCs to harvest her iridescent scales so long as they've shown her consideration and respect. These scales can be used as substitute material components for the following spells: *call construct*^{UM}, *continual flame*, *fire trap*, *forcecage*, *nondetection*, *raise dead*, *simulacrum*, *stoneskin*, *unbreakable construct*^{UM}, *wall of iron*, and similar spells that manipulate or create earth or fire. Any listed spell whose material component cost is entirely replaced with Irigibel's scales is extended (if appropriate) as if by the Extend Spell feat. The PCs can harvest a total of 1d4 × 1,000 gp worth of these specialized scales from Irigibel. The scales take a full year to regrow once harvested. Defeating the magma dragon in combat destroys these delicate gems.

Development: If the PCs disable this geomantic nexus, either by defeating Irigibel or by convincing her to let them tamper with it, the denizens of the Onyx Citadel lose their bonus fire damage and the amount of time before the transposition engine activates doubles.

Story Award: If the PCs deal with Irigibel peacefully, award them with 153,600 XP as if they had defeated her in combat.

G. FLOW NEXUS (CR 19)

When the PCs approach the encounter area, read the following aloud.

A great hill rises above the bend in this river. Streams of quicksilver flow through the cerulean waters, glittering like diamonds and dappling the grassy hillside with sparkling patterns of light. A circular dais topped with an arrangement of stones and crystals stands at the hill's peak.

This portion of the vault consists of rolling, grassy hills that give way to rugged, rocky desert. The river here runs with thick currents of quicksilver in addition to water, making the water extremely toxic; creatures drinking from the Silver River must succeed at a DC 19 Fortitude save or take 1 point of permanent drain to a random mental ability score. Creatures wading or swimming in the river must attempt this saving throw after 1 minute of exposure but gain a +2 bonus on their Fortitude saves unless they breathe underwater.

Creature: No guards appear to monitor the hill supporting the Flow Nexus—because the hill itself is the guardian. The hillock and surrounding mounds are actually a colossal elemental creature known as a zarxorin, which naturally seeks out and bathes in lines of energy. The xiomorns tapped into the creature's natural ability in an effort to create mobile geomantic nexuses, but now the strong ties to the Plane of Water within the menhir on the titanic beast's back prevents it from wandering far from flowing water. Over the centuries, grass and shrubs have grown over the zarxorin's back, and to the casual observer this colossal being looks like nothing more than a small hill or rise.

The zarxorin is simpleminded and territorial. Though normally not aggressive, it endured a terrible attack by the Ironfang Legion, who unleashed Azlowe and his witcher cultists on the elemental in order to align the nexus on its back, and it now responds with deadly force to any smaller creatures attempting to climb it.

Slaying the zarxorin alone does not disrupt the nexus on its back. Instead the hill settles back in place and begins the long process of gestating a new zarxorin.

ZARXORIN

CR 19

XP 204,800

hp 350 (see page 90)

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

Development: If the PCs defeat the zarxorin and misalign the geomantic nexus on its back, the denizens of the Onyx Citadel lose their energy resistance and the amount of time before the transposition engine activates is doubled.

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

Once the PCs have misaligned the three geomantic nexuses, the Onyx Citadel's defenses will be substantially weakened and the transposition engine's activation will be delayed, giving them time to travel to the Onyx Citadel. Locating the fortification is easy: it stands atop a large island in the glimmering Argent Lake and is usually visible when scouting from clearings or the tops of giant mushrooms throughout the vault.

ARGENT LAKE (CR 17+)

Argent Lake is one of the largest natural features in the Vault of the Onyx Citadel; it's nearly 30 miles across at its widest point and dotted with islands, and the valley's two major rivers flow into it. The lake's depths plunge nearly 500 feet down, but after the first 150 feet the lake bed is filled not with water, but with a thick layer of quicksilver. This taint lends the lake its name and also renders the lake's waters poisonous; while the water is not as toxic as the Silver River (see area G), consuming it or the fish that live within can cause many long-term health problems, including permanent weakness, muscle spasms, and hallucinations. Creatures with the earth subtype are immune to these long-term effects.

Creatures: Many strange creatures have adapted (or have been modified) to survive Argent Lake's poisonous waters, including giant gar (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 128), visiting fire whales (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 128), goezspalls (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 139), a metallic kraken, and various giant jellyfish (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 170), as well as—according to legend—a terrifying kaiju created and then imprisoned by the xiomorns as a living weapon beyond their control.

Players regularly plying the waters of the Argent Lake may have to deal with any or all of these threats, but their first time traveling on or under the lake's surface they encounter one of the more common dangers: hungry aberrations called targothas. These 30-foot-long serpents have long since adapted to the lake's toxic waters and lie in wait for months for curious visitors or large fish to disturb their territory. Larger vessels or disturbances could even attract entire packs of the creatures, at your discretion. Once roused, they fight to the death.

TARGOTHAS (2) **CR 15**
XP 51,200 each
hp 253 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 261)

RED SKIES (CR 18)

The vault's ceiling above the Onyx Citadel is the highest point within the enormous, geode-like cavern, arching over 2 miles overhead. While most of the citadel only rises to a height of only about 100 feet, the black spire of onyx that focuses the Stone Roads soars another 500 feet.

Creatures: The Vault Builders long ago engineered the vault's native gargoyle population into obedient guardians. The xiomorns spliced some of their own crystalline anatomy into the stony humanoids, fashioning faster, smarter, stronger gargoyles who share their masters' petrifying touch. These ruby-wing gargoyles are far more loyal to the Onyx Citadel itself than to any particular master, and though many of them died defending it from the Ironfang Legion, those who remain have since bowed to Azaersi and pledged to defend her as they did their xiomorn creators.

The ruby-wing gargoyles patrol the skies around the Onyx Citadel in units of four, warding off vault inhabitants and attacking any obvious intruders.

RUBY-WING GARGOYLES (4) **CR 14**

XP 38,400 each

Advanced gargoyle barbarian (elemental kin) 9 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 137; *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 78)

LN Medium monstrous humanoid (earth)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 13, flat-footed 21 (+6 armor, +5 Dex, +7 natural, –2 rage)

hp 234 each (14 HD; 5d10+9d12+149)

Fort +17, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge; **DR** 10/—

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee 2 claws +24 (1d8+10 plus 1d6 acid), gore +24 (1d4+10 plus 1d6 acid), sting +24 (1d3+10 plus crystallization)

Ranged +2 *returning javelin* +21 (1d6+10) or mwk javelin +20 (1d6+8)

Special Attacks rage (28 rounds/day), rage powers (elemental rage^{APG}, lesser elemental rage^{APG}, moment of clarity, surprise accuracy +3)

TACTICS

During Combat The gargoyles pepper land-bound opponents with javelins but quickly charge into melee against opponents who can cast spells, fly, or make ranged attacks.

Morale Ruby-wing gargoyles fight to the death.

Base Statistics When not raging, a ruby-wing gargoyle's statistics are **AC** 28, touch 15, flat-footed 23; **hp** 206; **Fort** +15, **Will** +13; **Speed** 40 ft.; **Melee** 2 claws +22 (1d8+8), gore +22 (1d4+8), sting +22 (1d3+8 plus crystallization); **Ranged** +2 *returning javelin* +21 (1d6+8); **Str** 23, **Con** 26; **CMB** +20, **CMD** 35; **Skills** Climb +15.

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 20, **Con** 30, **Int** 10, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 35

Feats Hover, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Fly)

Skills Acrobatics +18 (+26 when jumping), Climb +17, Fly +24, Perception +17, Stealth +20 (+26 in stony areas), Survival +17; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Stealth, +6 Stealth in stony areas

Languages Common, Terran

SQ elemental fury, fast movement, freeze

Gear +3 studded leather, +2 returning javelin, mwk javelins (5), amulet of mighty fists +2, belt of thunderous charging^{UE}

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Crystallization (Su) A creature struck by a ruby-wing gargoyle's sting must succeed at a DC 17 Fortitude save or take 1d4 points of Dexterity damage. On a critical hit, the sting deals 1d6 points of Dexterity damage if the target fails its save. As long as the target creature suffers any of this damage, portions of its body appear as living red crystal and it gains the earth creature subtype. A creature drained to 0 Dexterity in this manner transforms into a red crystal statue, as if affected by *flesh to stone*. Every day, a petrified creature can attempt a new DC 17 Fortitude saving throw to break free from its petrified state, but if it fails two of these saving throws in a row, the petrification becomes permanent. The save DC is Charisma-based and includes a +1 racial bonus.

Treasure: The gargoyles' wings are made from genuine (if impure) ruby and are worth 4,000 gp per pair.

ISLAND IN THE SILVER LAKE (CR 19)

A 50-foot-wide bridge of tourmaline stands over Argent Lake, connecting the lakeshore to the large island supporting the Onyx Citadel. An Ironfang camp on the island numbers thousands strong, but the overwhelming majority of these troops are typical hobgoblins, minotaurs, trolls, and low-level combatants reflected in earlier volumes of this Adventure Path. Because these gathered masses pose little challenge for the PCs even when gathered into troops, their exact numbers are left up to you. The PCs can assault or ignore the hobgoblin camp as they see fit—the ultimate battle lies within the fortress itself, and only by defeating both Azaersi and Zanathura can the PCs halt the Ironfang Legion's threat once and for all.

Creature: Before the PCs can assault the Onyx Citadel or the Ironfang camp on the island, they must first bypass the bridge's guardian: a massive construct called a warmonger. This towering defender was crafted by

the xiomorns and is one of six constructs that defend various points in the vault. Even the Ironfang Legion has not yet figured out how to take control of the massive construct, electing to move to and from the lakeshore with magic rather than confront the bridge guardian. The warmonger does not pursue opponents beyond the bridge, but it responds to ranged attacks with its own automatic crossbow.

WARMONGER

CR 19

XP 204,800

hp 344 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 274)



RUBY-WING GARGOYLE

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

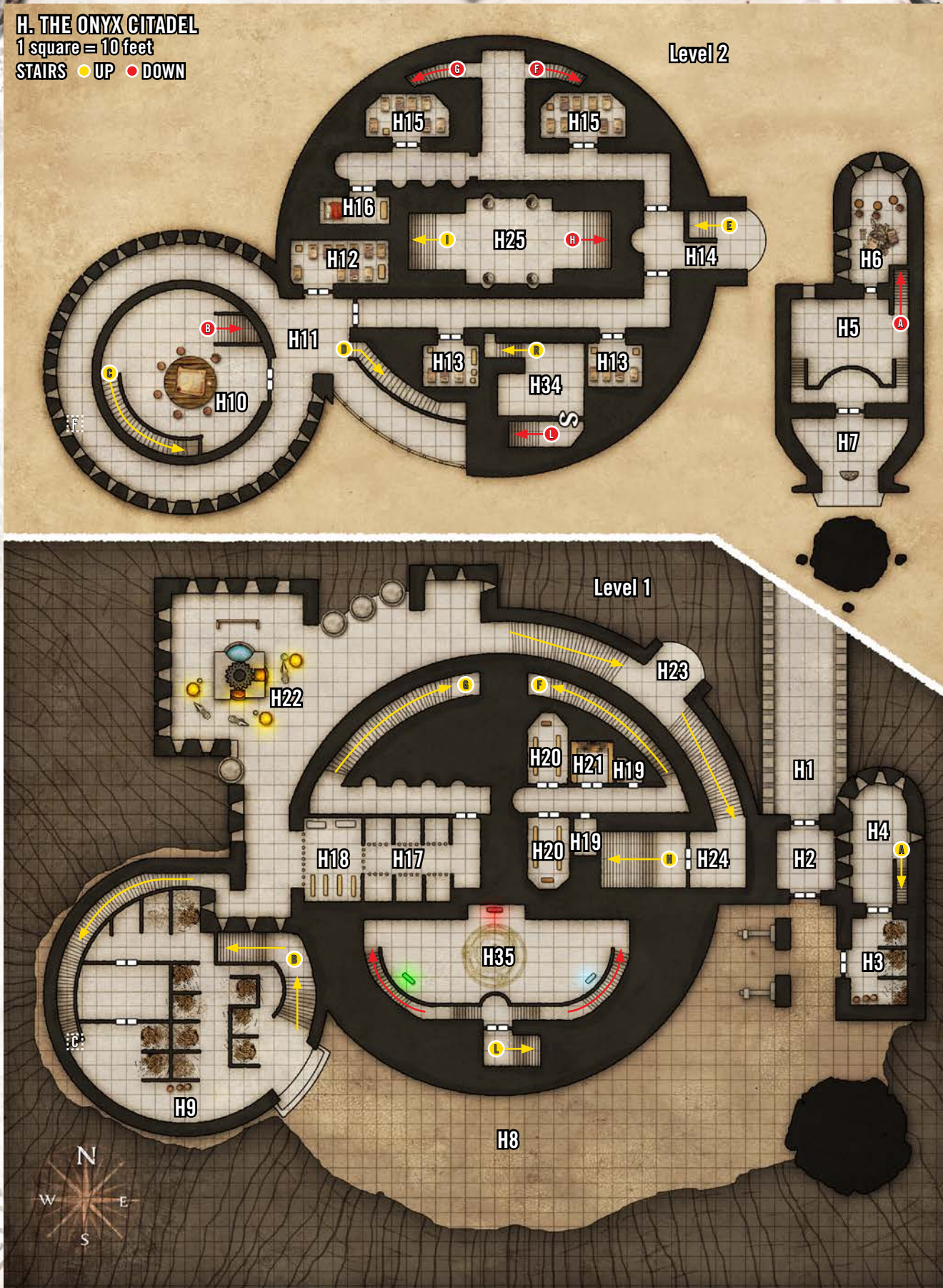
ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

H. THE ONYX CITADEL

1 square = 10 feet

STAIRS ● UP ● DOWN



H. THE ONYX CITADEL

Built from a titanic deposit of onyx, the citadel stands atop a large island in the vault's picturesque lake of water and mercury, rising to a towering 600 feet. More than just a simple building, this citadel is an anchor, connecting a vast web of extraplanar tunnels. Eons ago, the xiomorns discovered the strange connection this deposit of onyx had to the natural lines of power—ley lines—that wove their way through the Plane of Earth and the multiverse, and transformed it into a highway to and from new worlds.

A winding path—rarely used by the xiomorns but often employed by their various servants and visiting traders—twists its way up the craggy island to the citadel's gatehouse (area H1). Alternately, the PCs might notice a sizable ledge along the citadel's southern edge (area H8), as well as several balconies and overlooks (such as areas H11, H14, H23, H26, and H28), guarded by Ironfang siege engines or used by the ruby-wing gargoyles as they come and go (see page 38). The Citadel's exterior is glassy and smooth, increasing the difficulty of any Climb checks by 10.

The walls of the citadel are made of magically reinforced onyx (hardness 16, hp 1,080). Inside the citadel, ceiling heights average 10 feet, and rooms are lit by the soft green glow of a geometric pattern carved into the ceilings. The doors are made from an opaque sheet of crystal (hardness 8, hp 60, break DC 28, vulnerable to sonic damage), but they shutter open automatically whenever a creature approaches, unless otherwise indicated.

The eastern gatehouse is a two-story complex that rises 60 feet. The main-floor ceilings reach 20 feet, but the second-story ceiling returns to the uniform 10-foot height found throughout the fortification.

H1. CRYSTAL GATE

A scintillating barrier of polished crystal cuts off ingress into the citadel. To the west of the sparkling entrance towers the bulk of the citadel, casting a dark shadow on the much smaller gatehouse to the entry's east.

The polished doors are each 1 foot thick (hardness 8, hp 90, break DC 35), but due to their crystalline structure they are vulnerable to sonic damage. They are locked with a superior-quality lock.

Creatures: PCs approaching this entrance are fired upon by Grimhorn and his archers (see area H6).

H2. QUICKSILVER GATE (CR 17)

A fine silvery film covers the pitted walls of this otherwise drab chamber, interrupted only by a trio of arrow slits in the eastern wall.

The chamber's ceiling rises 30 feet and is capped by a steel grating, above which stand a pair of large cauldrons (area H14). Squeezing through the grating overhead requires a successful DC 36 Escape Artist check (Small creatures gain a +8 circumstance bonus on this check). The walls of this chamber are coated with quicksilver and require a successful DC 35 Climb check to scale. Besides the doors between this area and area H1, a second set of doors to the south exit the room. These doors are identical to the doors in area H1.

Creatures: Three siege alchemists stand watch in the adjoining guardroom (area H4). Their first action upon noticing intruders is to yank on a chain in the guardroom, activating a boiling mercury trap. Afterward, they attack with bombs.

Trap: The cauldrons overhead contain quicksilver dredged from the lake and brought to a boil. Anyone pushing on the cauldrons from above or pulling a chain in area H4 causes the cauldrons to upend their scalding contents over those unfortunate enough to be standing in the room below.

In addition to the heat and crushing weight of the liquid metal, toxic fumes threaten to overwhelm anyone caught inside. Creatures in the heated mercury take 20d6 points of damage—half fire and half bludgeoning—per round of immersion. After an hour, the mercury cools and drains through the porous onyx floor.

BOILING MERCURY TRAP

CR 17

XP 102,400

Type mechanical; Perception DC 15; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger manual; Reset manual

Effect boiling mercury floods the room; multiple targets (all creatures in area H2); 20d6 damage (half fire, half bludgeoning; Reflex DC 18 half); secondary effect (8d6 fire damage 1 round later; Fortitude DC 18 half); secondary effect (for 1d6 rounds, the room is filled with insanity mist, *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 560).

H3. OFFICER STABLES

A horrible stench pervades this stable.

The warlord Kraelos and a few of his officers cared for their yzobu mounts in these stables. If the PCs have already defeated the cavalier and his army, only a single foul-tempered, yak-like beast remains; otherwise, each of the three stalls houses one. The mounts aren't especially dangerous, aside from snapping or kicking at anyone reaching out to touch them, but they are impossible for non-hobgoblins to tame.

Treasure: Hidden within the northernmost pen (Perception DC 36 to notice) is a set of +2 *axiomatic horseshoes of crushing blows*^{UE}.

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

You've never caught Azaersi asleep because she no longer sleeps. There is a passage in her wardrobe leading down... somewhere, and she spends her evenings there with that accursed witch-worm. I could not bypass the guardian below; it is tireless and brutal, but it fears the red shard. If you can steal Azaersi's red shard, I believe you can cow the brute! I shall attempt to do so and report additional details to you.

—V. Sebine

HANDOUT #2

H4. GUARDROOM (CR 16)

Bunks and a table covered with books and playing cards suggest a normal guardroom, but bubbling glassware in one corner hints at its inhabitants' true passions.

This guardroom affords a watch over the citadel's front gates. A pair of levers in the western wall control the gates in area H2, allowing visitors entry, while a newly added chain allows guards to activate the trap in that area.

Creatures: Because this guardroom now sees very few visitors, it has become one of the quietest assignments available to Ironfang soldiers. A trio of munitions officers have assigned themselves essentially permanent guard duty here, turning the room into a private drug den.

IRONFANG MUNITIONS OFFICERS (3)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 178 each (see page 16)

H5. EMBARKATION HALL (CR 18)

A raised balcony overlooks this large chamber, with stairs leading up to it on the east and west. A dozen massive hooks dangle from iron chains overhead, clinking softly in the breeze.

This area served as a mustering hall for Ironfang units preparing to disembark through the Stone Road back to Golarion. Commanders shouted orders and rousing speeches from the balcony above. Four human corpses in Molthuni uniforms dangle from the hooks overhead—all that remain of the human masters who once ordered the Legion into battle.

Creatures: Much to Azaersi's delight, the agonizing deaths she condemned her former masters to—hanging them from hooks to die slowly of exposure—resulted in two

of their tortured souls rising as exceptionally brutal undead creatures called gallowdead. Now these Molthuni officers serve her without question, and the general takes no small pride in forcing the once-proud humans to discipline her unruly troops and execute Molthuni agents she captures.

The gallowdead dangle lifelessly from their chains until strangers enter the embarkation hall, at which point they drop to the ground and attack.

GALLOWDEAD (2)

CR 16

XP 76,800 each

hp 228 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 119)

Development: One of the inanimate bodies dangling above belongs to Vetrigan Sebine, brother of General Lord Katra Sebine. He still wears a signet ring and a gold necklace bearing his family crest (worth 100 gp, or 1,500 gp to Katra). Tucked in his boot is his last attempt to undo the damage he has done in unleashing the Ironfang Legion: the final correspondence he was sending to a slave servant as part of a plan to assassinate Azaersi (see Handout #2).

H6. GUARD TOWER (CR 18)

A semicircle of arrow slits provides an impressive view of the valley beyond. A scattered mess of beds and tables fills much of the room, but a large weapon rack rests against the western wall.

This chamber serves as a barrack and guard tower. There is enough water in four barrels to last several weeks, along with two crates filled with dried foodstuffs (cheeses, fruits, and jerky). The mess in this chamber counts as rough terrain.

Creatures: This chamber houses several hobgoblins and Sergeant Grimhorn, the minotaur commander of the citadel's guards. Grimhorn is a believer in Azaersi's vision of conquest and a disciple of Kosseruk's warmaze philosophy. Determined and deeply loyal, he feels a particular passion about defeating the humanoids who slew the woman he believed to be the greatest philosopher of his kind. He commands two Ironfang shadows, who help keep his foes at range.

IRONFANG SHADOWS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 177 each (see page 17)

GRIMHORN

CR 16

XP 76,800

Male minotaur gunslinger (bolt ace) 14 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 206, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 9, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 94)

LE Large monstrous humanoid

Init +11; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +29

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 19, flat-footed 23 (+6 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +4 dodge, +6 natural, -1 size)

hp 244 (20d10+134)

Fort +19, **Ref** +19, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities nimble +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee pistol whip +25/+20/+15/+10 (2d8+6/20), gore +18 (1d6+2)

Ranged +2 *distance repeating heavy crossbow* +27/+22/+17/+12 (2d8+7/17-20/x3)

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

Special Attacks deeds (bleeding wound, dead shot, distracting shot, gunslinger initiative, gunslinger's dodge, inexplicable reload, pistol-whip, sharp shoot, shooter's resolve, targeting, vigilant loading, vigilant shooter), grit (2), powerful charge (gore, 2d6+6)

TACTICS

During Combat Grimhorn prefers to snipe intruders with his repeating crossbow as quickly as possible, using his Deadly Aim and Rapid Shot feats and trusting the Ironfang shadows to keep opponents from closing in to melee range with him. He has inherited the hobgoblin mistrust of spellcasters and aims for arcane magic users first, targeting divine spellcasters second.

Morale Grimhorn fights to the death to avenge the death of his mentor, Kosseruk.

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 20, **Con** 22, **Int** 9, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +25 (+27 bull rush); **CMD** 46 (48 vs. bull rush)

Feats Deadly Aim, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (repeating heavy crossbow), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (repeating heavy crossbow)

Skills Intimidate +4, Perception +29, Profession (soldier) +25, Stealth +6, Survival +23; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception, +4 Survival

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ crossbow maven, natural cunning

Gear +2 *chain shirt*, +2 *distance repeating heavy crossbow* with 6 cases of bolts, *mwk longsword*, *belt of physical might* +4 (Dex, Con), *ring of protection* +2, 1,220 gp

Development: If the PCs bypass the guard tower, Grimhorn and his shadows come to investigate should they hear a disturbance in area **H8**. They arrive 2d4 rounds after combat with Ziatakra Bicker-Tongues begins and continue to pursue any intruders they spot until either they or the interlopers are slain.

H7. CONTROL ALTAR

A spire of black onyx stretches from the ground below, rising several hundred feet into the sky above and vibrating with a regular thrum. The balcony here overlooks this massive antenna, presenting a stone altar set with a variety of gems and black, floating rods.



GRIMHORN

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

This platform holds the control array for the Stone Roads, allowing a creature to connect the Onyx Citadel to any onyx tower created by the *Onyx Key* with a successful DC 35 Use Magic Device check. From this side of the portal, the *sardonyx shard* isn't needed to open a portal across the dimensional barrier.

Those arriving through such gates normally find themselves standing at the spire's base, on the eastern end of area **H8**, but with so much of the citadel's magic being drawn in and twisted by the transposition engine, gateways to the Stone Road are instead opening to random points in the vault, making the controls far less useful as a means of transit to and from the Material Plane. Once the transposition engine is deactivated, anyone operating the altar can once again open the Stone Road portal at the spire's base.

If the PCs currently have the *sardonyx shard*, it begins vibrating when brought within 20 feet of the spire or the control altar.

Treasure: Four 18-inch shards of onyx float over the controls of the altar. Each rod that is positioned correctly with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check provides a cumulative +2 bonus on Use Magic Device checks to activate the Stone Road. These shards function as *immovable rods* if removed from the altar.

H8. PARADE GROUNDS (CR 17)

A jagged crystal field runs along the south side of the Onyx Citadel—the only significant landmass on the island not incorporated into the fortification. A massive spire of black stone rises from the eastern end of the field and reaches into the sky. To the west, another short series of stairs leads into the citadel.

This landmass links the gatehouse entry to the Onyx Citadel and is normally used to muster troops before they are dispatched to the Material Plane. The spire at the eastern end acts as a focus for the Stone Road, and portals to and from onyx towers created by the *Onyx Key* normally exit here when the vault's magic isn't in flux. The spire's controls are found in area **H7**.

Creatures: Most of the Ironfang Legion's trolls owe their allegiance to the self-proclaimed Troll Queen, Ziatakra, a massive jotund troll. Azlowe nicknamed the queen "Ziatakra Bicker-Tongues" after her tendency to argue among her various heads, and the queen took the appellation with pride. Powerful and vicious even by the skewed standards of jotund trolls, she holds her court here—the only corner of the Onyx Citadel large enough to house her bulk—from atop a throne made of oversized quartz crystals, teaching her daughter Zaoma the family art of bullying smaller trolls. Her dozen mundane troll retainers and petitioners scatter when the PCs arrive, leaving only Ziatakra and Zaoma.

If Ziatakra is slain first, her daughter flees immediately, but if Zaoma falls first in combat, Ziatakra flies into a rage, gaining DR 10/— and a +2 bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws until slain.

ZIATAKRA BICKER-TONGUES

CR 16

XP 76,800

Advanced jotund troll (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 290, 272)

hp 248

ZAOMA ZIATOCHTER

CR 14

XP 38,400

Young jotund troll (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 291, 272)

hp 184

Development: If the PCs bypass the guard tower (area **H6**), Grimhorn and his Ironfang shadows come to investigate any disturbance they hear—most likely in this courtyard. They arrive 2d4 rounds after combat with Ziatakra Bicker-Tongues begins.

H9. YZOBU STABLES

This area is largely empty, with most of the yzobu cavaliers having ridden out with Kraelos to confront the PCs. However, this area houses several stalls plus a cordoned-off room which acts as a barrack, all of which are rarely checked by other members of the Legion. The southeast side of the room opens onto area **H8**, while a wide, curving stair on the northeast side of the stable ascends to area **H10**.

H10. WAR ROOM (CR 16)

A giant diorama in the center of the room has had a basket-sized boulder dropped onto its center, crushing several model towns, toppling other models, and cracking the sturdy wooden frame. Several painted sculptures that depict troops and major locations lay scattered around the destroyed diorama near a small lantern that provides dim illumination to the room.

A large door at the eastern arc of this circular chamber exits to area **H11**. Two sets of stairs exit this chamber. The first set, at the chamber's eastern end, descends to area **H9**, while the second stairway spirals up to the gargoyles' rooftop (area **H26**). Bookshelves line the walls, filled with field records logging the enlistment and deaths of soldiers, locations and resources seized, and the names of slaves taken.

Despite its shattered condition, the broken mass under the boulder can be identified with a successful DC 28 Knowledge (geography) check as a diorama portraying the nations of Molthune and Nirmathas. If the PCs have learned of the transposition engine, they realize the Legion has been trying to predict the scope of the damage Azaersi's final plan will inflict.

Creatures: Four of Azaersi's lieutenants have been discussing how to convince their general to abandon her extreme plan to bring the Onyx Citadel crashing down in Avistan. None of them particularly want to rule an empire of rubble, and they worry about the response from larger nations who have, until now, ignored the regional threat the Legion poses. The most dominant voice comes from the boisterous bugbear tyrant Noxil, who proposes assassinating the general and screams down any attempt from the other three to suggest a different course of action. Her tactic has worked thus far, as the remaining three figures, all similarly dressed hobgoblins, feign interest in the more intimidating bugbear's ravings rather than confront her.

Already wavering in their loyalty, these NPCs are some of the few who can be convinced to turn against the Legion—provided they believe the PCs will leave it intact enough for them to rule. Their attitude begins as hostile, but should the PCs try to speak, they are willing to listen for at least a few moments before attacking. If persuaded to talk, they admit they have little idea how Azaersi is planning to accomplish her grand scheme, only that she apparently vanishes for hours at a time from the Onyx Citadel. Noxil comments that while Azaersi is nowhere to be found half the day, the “witch-worm” she adores so much slithers out of its hiding place whenever something goes wrong with the mana battery at the citadel's pinnacle (area H32).

HOBGOBLIN COMMANDERS (3) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 141 each (*Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 123)

NOXIL CR 13

XP 25,600

hp 136 (*Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 27)

H11. TERRACE (CR 17)

A broad terrace is well protected by a crenellated outer wall that rings this tower of the citadel before spilling out onto a wide balcony. Three sets of doors provide access into the structure: the doors to the east and north provide access into the main body of the citadel, and the doors to the west access a tower. A narrow set of stairs just off the balcony ascends to the citadel's third level.

The three sets of doors that exit the terrace are all locked with superior-quality locks; Azaersi's commanders each carry keys to these doors. A trapdoor in the floor of the western rampart leads down to area H22.

Creatures: A trio of ruby-wing gargoyles roost on the balcony here to keep watch. If the PCs do not take measures to mask their presence at the Onyx Citadel, these creatures can detect them as they explore and interact with

the creatures found in areas H8 and H22. The ruby-wing gargoyles have little love for the trolls and dwarves in those areas, and they take some amusement in watching the PCs slay them, should they attack these areas first.

RUBY-WING GARGOYLES (3) CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 234 each (see page 38)

H12. OFFICER QUARTERS

Recently this room, crammed with bunk beds and little space left over for anything else, housed several members of the Ironfang Legion. However, when the golem left unattended at area H16 began to harass the hobgoblins, they abandoned this area. Due to this area's neglect, the PCs can rest and recuperate here without worry of being discovered.

H13. BARRACKS

These immaculate rooms offer a resting place for the various legionnaires who serve under Azaersi's banner. Each holds four bunk beds, four footlockers (currently empty), and a chamber pot.

H14. VIEWING PLATFORM (CR 17)

A balcony offers a splendid view of the regions to the east of the citadel. A stairway leads up to area H28, and two sets of doors (one to the north and one to the south) are each locked with a superior-quality lock and warded with a permanent audible *alarm* spell.

Creatures: Three Ironfang shadows stand guard on this balcony day and night.

IRONFANG SHADOWS (3) CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 177 each (see page 17)

H15. BARRACKS

Neat and orderly bunks fill these rooms, and alongside each is a footlocker with standard military equipment.

H16. THE SHAITAN'S QUARTERS (CR 16 OR 18)

An opulent chamber crammed with fine rugs and comfortable furnishings contrasts with the more austere chambers found elsewhere within the citadel.

While the Ironfang Legion espouses an austere lifestyle, their genie mercenary, Shaakhib, sees acts of self-denial as ridiculous. A veritable vault of comforts, this room gaudily displays excess in every corner, and with the genie missing in action, several opportunistic Ironfang legionnaires look to claim his chambers as their own. However, due to the automaton that still guards this area, their attempts to take the chamber have horribly failed.

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

Creatures: Shaakhib's shield guardian was not his only golem—the genie has something of a fascination with constructs as companions, and he stores his true treasure, a semifluid mithral golem, here in his quarters to defend his treasures from hobgoblin snooping.

If the shaitan managed to escape the PCs after their encounter in Stonehome (see area C), he has retreated here to lick his wounds.

MITHRAL GOLEM

CR 16

XP 76,800

hp 172 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 139)

SHAAKHIB

CR 16

XP 76,800

hp 251 (see page 27)

Development: Buried underneath a ridiculous number of layered carpets is Shaakhib's personal journal. A PC who succeeds at a DC 36 Perception check notices a slight lump in the carpets, which reveals the journal upon investigation. Within its pages, Shaakhib details his quiet search for a powerful golem within the citadel that the xiomorns created but refused to sell him. All he knows is that it guards the true heart of the citadel.

H17. PRISON CELLS

Six large, straw-lined cells in this room hold five captives each—mostly humans and dwarves. Each iron gate (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 28) is locked with a superior-quality lock and swings outward from the cell. The door to the north is also locked with a superior-quality lock and is warded with a permanent audible *alarm* spell that draws investigations from the creatures in areas H18 and H22.

Creatures: There are five Nirmathi prisoners (treat as prisoners; *GameMastery Guide* 270) in each cell, plus one pech named Pandruck who is heavily restrained with iron chains. These prisoners can tell the PCs about the general numbers and types of creatures found at areas H8, H10, H11, H22, and H26. The pech can fill the PCs in on any information pertaining to Stonehome (area C) and the xiomorn laboratory (area D) if they have yet to explore those regions. As soon as they are freed, the prisoners look to escape.

H18. ALCHEMY LAB (CR 15 OR 17)

Four tables covered in bloody linens rest against the southern wall opposite a table holding glassware in this gated chamber.

An iron grating (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 28) stands at either end of this large room, providing both protection and ventilation. Each is locked with a superior-quality lock. Each table holds a partially invisible corpse concealed under bloodstained linens. At first glance it looks as if these

bodies are butchered, but any tactile interaction or ability to see invisible objects reveals that the “missing” bits are still there, but invisible. All of these remains are human.

Creatures: If Oktar escaped the xiomorn laboratory (area D3), the Legion's chief alchemist returned here to conduct research into the invisibility process he observed the xiomorn use. After four attempts, Oktar felt confident enough to perform the experiment on himself. He was only partially successful, creating an unstable effect that conceals him unreliably and uncontrollably. Oktar now works to perfect the procedure with the assistance of a munitions officer.

If the PCs killed Oktar in the xiomorn archives, this room holds two munitions officers preparing explosives.

ALCHEMICALLY INVISIBLE LIEUTENANT OKTAR

CR 16

XP 76,800

hp 235 (see page 31)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Unstable Invisibility (Ex) Oktar's newfound invisibility is unstable. At the beginning of any given round, roll 1d20. On a result of 1–10, he is visible. On a result of 11–15, he gains a 20% miss chance as parts of him vanish. On a result of 16–20, he is completely invisible that round.

IRONFANG MUNITIONS OFFICERS (1 OR 2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 178 each (see page 16)

Treasure: This room functions as an alchemist's lab and includes masterwork tools for any alchemical or medical tasks. A jar on one shelf contains 10 applications of *dust of illusion*. The munitions officers here also carry keys to the cells in area H17.

H19. STORES

These areas are crammed with bags of flour, salt, sugar, and strange spices, as well as dried and salted animal carcasses hanging from the ceiling. Rounding out the victuals are strings of humanoid ears and jars of pickled brains. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check while searching the stores discovers a heavy, black, iron key hidden in a 50-pound sack of flour. This key unlocks the Black Maw doors in area H24.

H20. MESS HALLS

Long tables take up much of these irregularly shaped rooms. On the far wall, a draped tapestry depicts the Ironfang Legion's heraldry. These areas see activity for only 3 hours a day—1 hour each for breakfast, lunch, and supper.

H21. KITCHEN

Knives hang from hooks filling the walls of this otherwise barren room. A pit chiseled out of the onyx floor serves as a crude cooking hole, but is in serious need of cleaning.

H22. FORGES OF WAR (CR 17)

A great forge dominates this crenellated promenade, surrounded by three anvils and crafting tools. Several iron cauldrons teeter on well-oiled hinges, bubbling with molten fluid. A slightly sloped ramp coils around the outer citadel wall leading to two viewing platforms.

One of many platforms used in defending the Onyx Citadel from invaders, this overlook acts as a defensive position and offers an excellent view, but it also leaves defenders more vulnerable. As such, the Ironfang Legion staffs it with expendable slaves. The forges here see constant use and churn out magic armor, weapons, and the odd siege engine for the Ironfang Legion's war machine, exploiting the abundance of quicksilver in the area to rapidly mass-produce various lower-level magic items, such as protective cloaks and rings.

A curving stairway runs along the outer citadel wall in the southwest corner of this area, leading to a trapdoor in the ceiling that connects to area H11.

Creatures: Twenty slaves (treat as prisoners; *GameMastery Guide* 270) toil here; they flee at any sign of conflict. If the PCs try to interact with them, they can learn that all of them are captives from Nirmathas forced into servitude.

Three broken slaves oversee these prisoners. Once noble dwarven artificers, Daffana, Marcin, and Tograd have endured a decade of imprisonment and torture, stripping the trio of all compassion and filling their heads with loyalty to the Legion. Their commitment is further ensured by one of Azlowe's witcher cultists at all times; while the Legion has use for the dwarves' arcane spellcasting, they have no trust for it.

WITCHEATER CULTIST CR 14

XP 38,400

Hobgoblin cleric of Hadregash 15
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175)
LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.;
Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 29 (+9 armor, +5 deflection, +2 natural, +3 shield)
hp 188 (15d8+117)



WITCHEATER CULTIST

Fort +17, **Ref** +8, **Will** +18; +4 morale vs. poison and fear

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +2 *unholy wounding light flail* +18/+13/+8 (1d8+5 plus 2d6 vs. good and 1 bleed)

Ranged +1 *unholy heavy crossbow* +13 (1d10+1/19–20 plus 2d6 vs. good)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 5/day (DC 19, 8d6), scythe of evil (7 rounds, 2/day)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +18) 6/day—battle rage (+7), touch of evil (7 rounds)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 15th; concentration +18)

7th—*blasphemy*^D (DC 20), *destruction* (DC 20),
greater restoration

6th—*greater dispel magic* (2), *heal*, *heroes' feast*

5th—*break enchantment*, *dispel good*^D, *flame strike* (2, DC 18), *true seeing*

4th—*blessing of fervor*^{APG} (DC 17), *cure critical wounds*, *dismissal* (DC 17), *divine power*^D, *restoration*

3rd—*dispel magic* (3), *invisibility*

purge, *protection from energy*, *vampiric touch*^D

2nd—*aid*, *bear's endurance*, *death knell* (DC 15), *hold person* (DC 15), *silence* (DC 15), *spiritual weapon*^D

1st—*bless*, *entropic shield*, *protection from good*^D, *sanctuary* (DC 14), *shield of faith* (2)

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *resistance*, *stabilize*

D Domain spell; **Domains** War (Blood^{APG} subdomain), Evil

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 10, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 29

Feats Channel Smite, Destructive Dispel^{UC}, Dispel Synergy^{UC}, Greater Channel Smite^{UC}, Improved

Initiative, Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (light flail)

Skills Acrobatics

–4 (–8 when jumping), Knowledge

(religion) +16, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +16, Stealth +0; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ wounding blade

Gear +3 breastplate, +1 heavy steel

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

shield, +1 unholy heavy crossbow, +2 unholy wounding light flail, amulet of natural armor +2, cloak of resistance +3, ring of protection +1, gold holy symbol of Hadregash^{UE}

TARNISHED SMITHS (3)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Dwarf fighter 3/transmuter 5/eldritch knight 6
LE Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 11, flat-footed 29 (+12 armor, +2 deflection, -1 Dex, +2 natural, +4 shield)

hp 173 each (14 HD; 5d6+9d10+104)

Fort +14, **Ref** +5, **Will** +13 (+1 vs. fear); +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

Defensive Abilities defensive training; **DR** 10/adamantine; **Resist** fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +2 flaming warhammer +17/+12/+7 (1d8+7/x3 plus 1d6 fire)

Special Attacks hatred

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +12) 5/day—telekinetic fist (1d4+2 bludgeoning)

Transmuter Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +12)
5th—*cone of cold* (DC 17), *elemental body II*, *permanency*
4th—*minor creation*, *stone shape*, *stoneskin*, *wall of fire*
3rd—*greater magic weapon*, *lightning bolt* (DC 15),
protection from energy, *versatile weapon*^{APG}
2nd—*bear's endurance* (2), *blur*, *false life*, *protection from arrows*

1st—*ant haul*^{APG}, *endure elements*, *protection from good*,
shield (2), *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*,
resistance

School transmutation **Opposition Schools** enchantment,
illusion

TACTICS

Before Combat The tarnished smiths employ *endure elements* and *bear's endurance* routinely throughout the day. If they detect trouble approaching (such as the sounds of combat or *alarm* spells), they cast *false life*, *shield*, and *stoneskin* as well.

During Combat If attacked, the tarnished smiths use their bonded objects; one casts *cloudkill* while the others cast *telekinesis* to hurl enemies back into the deadly cloud. Once opponents close in, they cast *elemental body II* on themselves to become Medium earth elementals, increasing their Strength by 4 and their AC by 5 (not reflected in the statistics above). They then alternate between hammer blows and offensive spells such as *cone of cold* and *lightning bolt*.

Morale The tarnished smiths fight to the death.

Base Statistics Without their spells, the tarnished smiths'

statistics are **AC** 25, touch 11, flat-footed 25; **hp** 144;
Fort +13; **Con** 18.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 8, **Con** 20, **Int** 15, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 25 (29 vs. bull rush or trip)

Feats Arcane Armor Mastery, Arcane Armor Training, Arcane Strike, Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms & Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Craft [armor, weapons]), Toughness, Weapon Focus (warhammer), Weapon Specialization (warhammer)

Skills Acrobatics -5 (-9 when jumping), Appraise +2 (+4 to assess nonmagical metals or gemstones), Craft (armor, weapons) +23, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Perception +2 (+4 to notice unusual stonework), Spellcraft +19; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Appraise to assess nonmagical metals or gemstones, +2 Perception to notice unusual stonework

Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin, Terran

SQ arcane bond (+2 flaming warhammer), armor training 1, physical enhancement (+2 Con)

Gear +3 fire resistance full plate, +2 flaming warhammer, amulet of natural armor +2, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +2, adamantine manacles

Treasure: In addition to the defenders' equipment, the forges contain masterwork tools for any possible smithing and metalwork. Two dozen completed masterwork martial weapons stand in weapon racks around the room, while a +1 adamantine greataxe, three +1 longswords, a +3 spiked chain, and 40 +1 human bane arrows can be found in a locked stand in one alcove (Disable Device DC 40).

H23. THE BLACK STAIR (CR 17 OR 18)

These massive stairs arc to one side and open up midway onto a balcony offering a commanding view of the vault.

The balcony here hosts a constant watch over the bridge and road leading up to the citadel, and any combat in the area (such as confronting ruby-wing gargoyles in midair or attacking the warmonger on the bridge) alerts lookouts here that hostiles approach the stronghold.

Creatures: Four Ironfang shadows stand guard on this balcony day and night, watching the valley and reporting news at regular intervals. There is a 20% chance that when the PCs arrive, only three shadows stand watch, as the fourth is delivering an update to commanding officers.

IRONFANG SHADOWS (3 OR 4)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 177 each (see page 17)

Treasure: The Ironfang shadows keep three spyglasses on the balcony for use while on watch.

H24. THE BLACK MAW

A grand door made from 2-inch-thick iron hammered into the visage of a snarling face leers at all who stand before it. These doors are locked with *arcane lock* and a superior-quality lock (Disable Device DC 50) and are warded with a permanent audible *alarm* spell. Azaersi, Azlowe, Kraelos, and Zanathura all carry keys to this door. Using a key to unlock the door prevents the *alarm* spell. Unknown to anyone, one of the slaves taken by the Ironfang Legion stole an additional key to these doors as part of a never-realized assassination plot in conjunction with the now-dead Vetrigan Sebine. This key is now hidden in a flour sack in a storage room (area H19).

H25. THE CRYSTAL HALL (CR 19)

This grand hall is flanked by two sets of onyx stairs, and its glowing walls bathe it in a bright glow. Four crystalline statues depicting dour-faced, gem-encrusted warriors bask in the room's radiance. An altar—obviously a newer addition—holds a bloodied collection of manacles and animal fangs. Distressingly humanoid bones dangle from the ceiling as macabre ornaments.

This hall served as a place of reverence for the xiomorns—not a true temple, but the closest their alien minds acknowledged or needed. When the Legion took over the Onyx Citadel, their religious leader, Azlowe, recognized the hall's importance as a place of worship and rededicated it to Hadregash, the goblin hero-god of conquest and slavery. Here he trains his witch eater cult and leads Azaersi and her commanders in religious ceremonies—including the sacrifice of slaves. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the altar as dedicated to Hadregash.

Creatures: Commander Azlowe can be found here at most times, alongside a trio of his witch eater cultists—a sect of Hadregash worshipers dedicated to wiping arcane magic from the world and absorbing the power of their vanquished foes through ritual cannibalism, inspired by their barghest leader.

AZLOWE CR 17

XP 102,400

hp 271 (see page 58)

WITCHEATER CULTISTS (3) CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 188 each (see page 47)

TACTICS

Before Combat The witch eaters indulge in daily cannibalistic *heroes' feasts*. Before combat, they also cast *bear's endurance* and *shield of faith* and activate their scythe of evil domain power to make their weapons unholy, and gain the benefit of Azlowe's *mass bull's strength*.

During Combat The cultists unleash *blasphemy* and *blade barrier* spells at enemies, then turn to *destruction* spells and their Great Channel Smite feat when foes draw close. On any given turn, one witch eater targets enemies with *dispel magic* or *greater dispel magic* so long as any magic auras remain.

Morale Witch eaters fight to the death.

Hazard: This entire hall benefits from an *unhallow* spell, protecting all inhabitants with a *magic circle against good* and granting all lawful evil goblinoids the benefits of *freedom of movement*. These benefits have not been added to the creature statistics above.

Treasure: In addition to the cultists' equipment, the altar is set with 13 fist-sized sardonyx gemstones. Each gemstone is worth 200 gp.

H26. RUBY-WING ROOST (CR 18)

Crenellations enclose most of this tower, providing a commanding view of the entire vault. Several balconies near the ceiling hang over the room's interior.

This tower has served as the home for the citadel's guardian gargoyles for thousands of years, and the Ironfang Legion has seen little reason to move into the dingy, sparse accommodations of their tower. Creatures atop this vantage point gain a +5 circumstance bonus on Perception checks to observe creatures or events elsewhere in the vault. See the map on page 50.

Creatures: At any time, four ruby-wing gargoyles are resting here.

RUBY-WING GARGOYLES (4) CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 234 each (see page 38)

H27. SIEGE BATTERIES

Currently unoccupied, these twin chambers each house a huge ballista.

H28. UPPER TERRACE (CR 17)

A low balustrade skirts the northeastern arc of the citadel's third level.

This wide balcony overlooks much of the vault and allows lookouts to easily spot anyone approaching. At the eastern end of the terrace is a set of stairs that descends to area H14. A set of doors to the west is locked and barred from the other side and leads to a barren hallway.

Several scorch marks scar the surface of this onyx terrace, the result of recent explosions from the magical battle between Azaersi's forces and the xiomorns who

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

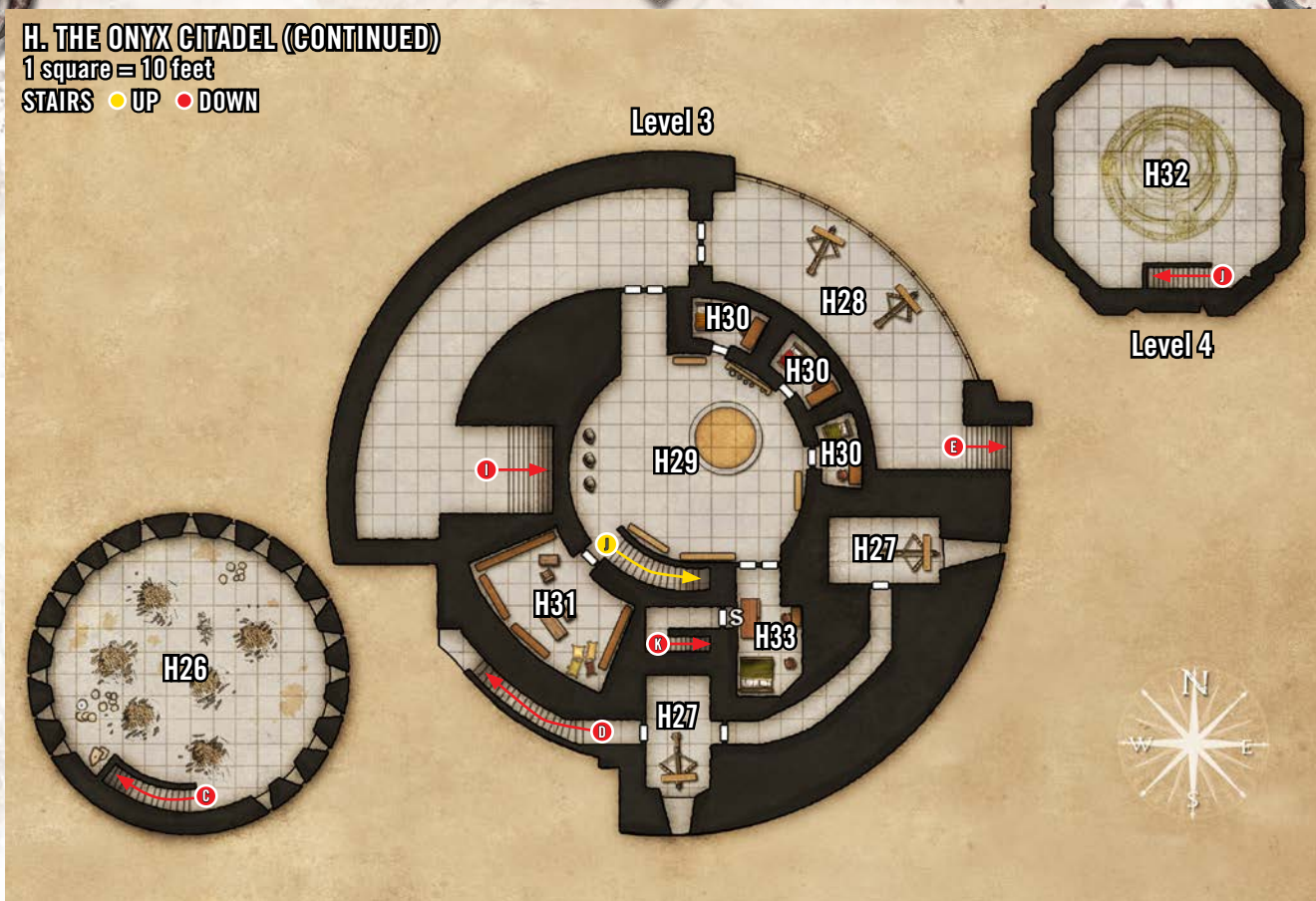
ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

H. THE ONYX CITADEL (CONTINUED)

1 square = 10 feet

STAIRS ● UP ● DOWN



once claimed the citadel. Two masterwork ballistae are loaded and ready to fire.

Creatures: Four Ironfang munitions officers watch for signs of invaders coming in from the north and east. However, due to their short attention spans and penchant for pyromania, they often shirk their duties in favor of detonating their bombs to liven up their shifts.

IRONFANG MUNITIONS OFFICERS (4)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 178 each (see page 16)

H29. IRONFANG DUELING ACADEMY (CR 19)

A grand, recessed dueling ring dominates this circular chamber. Skirting the ring is a five-foot path cordoned off from the ring via a flexible rope secured to several three-foot-tall posts.

Azaersi uses this ring to train her honor guards to defend the Ironfang Legion's command staff. The area is lit with five everburning torches.

Creatures: Six poorly equipped humans (use the statistics for prisoners on page 270 of *GameMastery Guide*) provide a pathetic resistance against a trio of hobgoblins. Azaersi's personal trainer, a wizened martial artist named Henra, taught the general many

of the finer points of combat when Azaersi was a young woman. Both survived the Goblinblood Wars, and Henra took the young soldier under her wing as they fled Isgar, teaching her a great deal about insight and self-control—lessons Azaersi later developed into her mastery of the blade. Henra presently demonstrates a variety of deadly techniques on the cowering slaves to a trio of newly trained honor guards.

HENRA

CR 16

XP 76,800

Female old hobgoblin monk (sensei) 17 (*Pathfinder RPG*

Bestiary 175, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 60)

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 25, flat-footed 25 (+4 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 insight, +4 monk, +4 Wis)

hp 182 (17d8+102)

Fort +18, **Ref** +17, **Will** +18; +2 vs. enchantments

Immune disease, poison; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +20/+15/+10 (2d8+4)

Special Attacks quivering palm (DC 22), stunning fist (17/day, DC 22)

TACTICS

During Combat Henra spends any encounter correcting her students' techniques, pointing out her opponents' failings, and otherwise inspiring courage in her allies, granting them a +4 bonus on attack and damage rolls and on Will saves against charm and fear effects. For the first 11 rounds of combat, she spends from her ki pool to grant herself and her students a +4 dodge bonus to AC. She prefers attacking with Spring Attack, using her Stunning Fist to blind opponents, and directing her students to finish them off.

Morale Henra feels she has lived long enough, and she is ready to die to defend Azaersi.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 38

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Gorgon's Fist, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Scorpion Style, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike) **Skills** Acrobatics +21 (+38 when jumping), Climb +14, Intimidate +18, Perception +22, Sense Motive +22, Stealth +25; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Goblin, Infernal; tongue of the sun and moon

SQ abundant step, advice 21 rounds/day (swift action; inspire competence +5, inspire courage +4, inspire greatness), high jump, insightful strike, ki pool (12 points adamantine, cold iron, lawful, magic, silver), maneuver training, mystic wisdom, slow fall 80 ft., timeless body, wholeness of body (17 hit points)

Gear *amulet of mighty fists* +3, *bracers of armor* +4, *cloak of resistance* +4, *dusty rose prism ioun stone*, *ring of protection* +2

IRONFANG HONOR GUARDS (3)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 176 each (see page 18)

Hazard: A portion of the ropes surrounding the ring is actually a *rope of entanglement* that lashes out at anyone who comes within 20 feet of it. The hobgoblins are well aware of this magical rope, which is on the western side of the ring, and attempt to maneuver their opponents toward it.

Treasure: The PCs can extract the section of rope encircling the ring that is actually a *rope of entanglement*.

H30. COMMANDERS' QUARTERS

Each of these well-appointed private rooms was assigned to one of the Ironfang Legion's commanders: Azlowe, Kraelos, and Taurgreth. They are sparsely furnished, but the few items here are of exceptional quality. The commanders have been dispersed to strategic locations and have taken their valuables with them.

H31. ZANATHURA'S LIBRARY

Honeycombed shelves stand crowded with scrolls in a rainbow of hues, filling all of this huge library save for a single corner with piled pillows and notes scrawled on the walls.

Zanathura claimed the xiomorn library as her quarters after the Ironfang Legion moved into the citadel. The notes here contain a wealth of information on conjuration and evocation magic, as well as the Vault Builders' experiments in creating artificial ley lines. Zanathura has only scratched the surface of this well of knowledge—the notes are dense, technical, and well beyond most mortal beings.

Development: Zanathura's notes are generally analyses and translations of some of the easier scrolls she has been studying, reworking the complex xiomorn magic into terms and rituals she understands. Though limited, her understanding has been enough to reconfigure the Onyx Citadel's network of Stone Roads into a engine capable of transporting the entire stronghold to Golarion—albeit with devastating effects—and much of the reason she has influenced Azaersi into this dangerous course of action is to test whether her theories are correct. If so, Zanathura believes that between her new mastery of geomancy and her experiments with simulacra and cloning, she won't have to simply pretend to be a goddess any longer.

Anyone who studies the naga's notes and succeeds at a DC 32 Perception check can find one corner of a journal page (see Handout #3), torn out and shoved under a shelf. This damning admission of mind control could be enough to shake the alliance between Azaersi and Zanathura, if presented carefully. See area H35 for details.

H32. THE MANA BATTERY (CR 17 AND CR 20)

Jet-black spines of crystal jut down from the vaulted ceiling of this massive chamber, massive bolts of blue, green, and purple lightning arcing between them. Ancient runes and diagrams trace across the room's floor and walls, with secondary additions made in glistening silver.

This chamber at the citadel's peak collects the magical energies that flow through the vault, storing the incredible amount of power required to operate the Stone Roads. Due to Zanathura's extensive modifications to the chamber's arcane diagrams to turn the Onyx Citadel into a transposition engine, the energies have grown increasingly unstable and now arc violently around the room. While this looks dramatic—occupants' hair stands on end—it is largely harmless so long as creatures don't touch the arcane "circuitry" of the room's diagrams (see Trap below). Creatures who detect magic while in this chamber develop colorblindness.

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

While disabling the massive energy charge here won't destroy the transposition engine, it will reset the charging process (which also resets the amount of time the PCs have before the device activates)—but it also alerts Azaersi and Zanathura that something has gone wrong in the process. A PC can learn how to depower the battery with a successful DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft check (see Trap below).

Creatures: If the PCs discharge the accumulated energy (see Trap below), the naga Zanathura leaves her secure chamber in area H35 to investigate, bringing three Ironfang honor guards with her. She arrives to investigate the sudden malfunction 2d6 rounds after the discharge. If the PCs have alerted the citadel to their presence, she expects to find them and prepares for combat accordingly, but if the PCs have

invaded quietly, she assumes a simple malfunction in her arcane diagrams.

ZANATHURA CR 19

XP 204,800

hp 262 (see page 62)

IRONFANG HONOR GUARDS (3) CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 176 each (see page 18)

Trap: The only way to discharge the massive amount of magical energy collected here is for a living creature to physically mar one of the metallic diagrams etched into the floor or walls, using her body as a conduit. Creatures bound by magic—such as summoned creatures, eidolons, and phantoms—and nonliving creatures (such as constructs and undead) can't be used as a conduit to discharge the gathered energy. Only a living, breathing creature can break this arcane circuit. Once the circuit is broken, the discharging energy strikes all creatures in the room.

BATTERY DISCHARGE TRAP CR 17

XP 102,400

Type magic; Perception DC 29; Disable Device —

EFFECTS

Trigger manual; Reset automatic (24 hours)

Effect spell effect (heightened lightning bolt; 2d6 acid damage, 2d6 cold damage, 2d6 electricity damage, and 2d6 fire damage; Reflex DC 16 half); multiple targets (all targets in area H32).

H33. AZAERSI'S CHAMBERS

A large bed, a plush chair, and an armoire fill this otherwise bleak room. The only item breaking the monotony of the onyx walls is a large tapestry with the Ironfang Legion's coat of arms woven into its thick fabric.

Currently empty, the bed is stuffed with griffon down and covered in silk sheets and a fine manticores pelt. It appears to have been unused for some time. The armoire holds a variety of outfits, from Molthuni uniforms to several finely tailored but austere suits and gowns. The rest of the room is very subdued and utilitarian, occupied mostly by bookshelves and a desk overflowing with military dispatches.

If any PC searches the armoire, she notices a switch with a successful DC 46 Perception check; PCs aware of



IRONFANG HONOR GUARD

the secret door (such as from Vetrigan Sebina's note in area H5) gain a +20 circumstance bonus to locate it. Pressing this switch causes the armoire to swing outward on cleverly hidden hinges, exposing a locked door (Disable Device DC 40). Beyond the door is a corridor that makes a U-turn, revealing a set of stairs descending to area H34.

Treasure: Azaersi's bed is worth 1,500 gp if the PCs can devise a way to move it. The manticores pelt is worth another 400 gp.

Development: The switch is difficult to operate without hands, and if Zanathura leaves the transposition engine to investigate a power outage in area H32, she leaves this secret door open behind her to more easily return.

H34. FALSE RITUAL ROOM (CR 19)

A single flight of stairs leads into this stark chamber. Several intersecting rings of black metal are set into the floor, forming a curling pattern, while three glass cylinders hold a bubbling, green fluid and slithering, serpentine forms. Several maps depicting the wilds of Nirmathas and Molthune hang from the walls.

The obvious stairs here lead up to the secret door in Azaersi's bedroom (area H33). This chamber is meant to appear as some sort of ritual chamber, and the naga Zanathura has used it for her cloning experiments, creating the slithering, immature nagas that now inhabit the glass cylinders. The naga occasionally dissects a serpent to learn where her research went wrong, but the infant nagas are mindless and harmless.

A secret door in the southern wall requires a successful DC 35 Perception check to notice, but it slides open automatically if the room's guardian is destroyed. Anyone carrying the *sardonyx shard* the PCs captured in the previous adventure, "Prisoners of the Blight," gains a +10 circumstance bonus to discover this secret door, as the shard quivers gently in its presence.

Creature: The rings on this chamber's floor are actually component pieces of the guardian: a formidable adamantine golem. If a creature enters without speaking the golem's passphrase ("earth endures"), the rings grind and turn within the floor for 1 round. On the second round, the golem uses a move action to assemble its body from the adamantine rings, then attacks.

The golem is vulnerable to the magic of the *sardonyx shard*. A character holding the *sardonyx shard* automatically overcomes the golem's damage reduction, and the golem will not attack a character holding the artifact unless attacked first. Touching the *sardonyx shard* to the golem (requiring a successful touch attack) deactivates the golem's fast healing for 1d4 rounds.

The adamantine golem is practically indestructible—if defeated, it reverts to its previous form as rings in the floor and remains inert for 24 hours.

Why must Azaersi be so frustratingly limited in sight? The one being in all this world who functions on my level, with such an astonishing breadth of knowledge and insight, and she is forever limited by such childish ambitions. Rule a nation? Of hobgoblins?! Why not run a kennel, for all the fulfillment that will give her! Godhood is the only true goal for those who mastered life as mortals, and I am So. Tantalizingly. Close.

I must test the transposition engine. I know it will prove all my theories on xiomorn geomancy and lines of power! I know it! But my general is so frustratingly limited in sight and so stymied by prudence. I fear that in the heat of argument last night I fell on old habits and shifted her opinion on the matter with magic. But what is the harm in one exercise of influence when one is correct, and she would have agreed with me eventually?!

She will thank me for helping her see reason when we are goddesses of this vault.

HANDOUT #3

ADAMANTINE GOLEM

CR 19

XP 204,800

hp 205 (Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 134)

H35. TRANSPOSITION ENGINE (CR 19 TO 21)

Large black jewels float through the air of this massive chamber, orbiting each other in an elaborate dance. Lines of silver metal highlight a diagram etched in the black stone floor—a map connecting three large altars.

Tucked away in the base of the citadel is a xiomorn artifact capable of tiptoeing through planar barriers—or ripping them apart. The device served as the central hub of the xiomorns' network of Stone Roads, connecting the Onyx Citadel to other outposts across the Plane of Earth and even other planes. The engine itself is a mathematical representation of the myriad planes that form the Great Beyond, and it channels immense energies generated by the vault's artificial ley lines into maintaining this reconfigurable planar gate. Zanathura's crude manipulations have rewired the device into a

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

massive teleportation circle, capable of ripping out the Onyx Citadel and everything it is leashed to via geomantic lines of power and sending them hurtling to Golarion with explosive force. While those within the citadel (including the bulk of the Ironfang Legion's forces) are protected, anything outside, whether in the vault or on Golarion, will be devastated by an impact unseen since Earthfall.

Climbing onto the array of floating gems in this chamber requires a successful DC 25 Climb check, while leaping to and from these floating platforms requires a successful DC 25 Acrobatics check. A character who takes more than a single move or attack action while riding one of these celestial representations must succeed at a DC 25 Reflex save or lose her balance and fall off, taking 2d6 points of falling damage (Reflex DC 20 half).

Creatures: General Azaersi, high commander of the Ironfang Legion, has ruled by edict from this chamber for several weeks, communicating with her subordinates via *sending* spells and the *crystal ball* in the room's center. The dark naga Zanathura originally discovered this chamber and studied its magic for months, as her interest in dwarven and xiomorn magic bloomed into obsession. She has spent weeks goading Azaersi into using the device to bring the Onyx Citadel to Golarion—despite the risks—to confirm her theories about its magic. Azaersi, in her legendary stubbornness, continually rebuffed her demands, however, and in a fit of anger, the naga unleashed a *dominate person* spell to force Azaersi's compliance. Zanathura has up until now refrained from abusing this control over her partner, and she is wracked with guilt for the first time in her life over the slip.

Azaersi now sees the transposition engine's effects as an appropriate punishment for those humans who destroyed her home and crushed her people's dreams of a nation in the Goblinblood Wars. Not only would the Onyx Citadel on Golarion serve as a formidable bastion to continue her attack on humankind, but its appearance would symbolically represent the resurrection of Grimstone Keep, lost at the end of the wars that shaped her childhood.

There is some chance the PCs can face General Azaersi alone here in her stronghold by luring Zanathura away (see area H32). In this case, Azaersi preemptively activates the chamber's defenses (see Hazard below), generating the maximum of four obsidian golem guardians.

If the PCs present General Azaersi with evidence of Zanathura's mind control, the hobgoblin is incensed, screaming at the naga for betraying her even after Azaersi elevated her to such power and offered her trust in spite of her army's reservations. After 1d4 rounds of berating (during which both parties are flat-footed), Zanathura uses *greater teleport* to flee into the vault's wilds. If the PCs haven't yet attacked, it's possible at this point to dissuade Azaersi from both destroying Avistan and continuing her war against humans. The PCs must succeed at a total of

five DC 35 skill checks, using any combination of Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Profession (soldier). The PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus on these checks if any of Azaersi's commanders—Azlowe, Kraelos, or Taurgreth—still live, and a +5 morale bonus if they point out that the Vault of the Onyx Citadel itself is a safe and secure homeland for her people. You can apply additional bonuses and penalties on these checks depending on how the PCs have conducted themselves over the course of this Adventure Path: General Azaersi respects bravery, honesty, and tactical genius, while chaos, cowardice, petty gloating, and subterfuge disgust her. If the PCs fail any of these interaction checks, Azaersi rededicates herself to the PCs' deaths and attacks. If the PCs succeed at all five checks, see the Development section below and Concluding the Adventure on page 55.

GENERAL AZAERSI

CR 19

XP 204,800

hp 274 (see page 56)

ZANATHURA

CR 19

XP 204,800

hp 262 (see page 62)

OBSIDIAN GOLEMS (4)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Advanced obsidian golems (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6 288, 141)

hp 157 each

Hazard: As a standard action, Azaersi or Zanathura can activate a security feature of this chamber to channel accumulated arcane power into the stone of the walls themselves, causing them to generate obsidian golems like those the PCs faced in Fort Phaendar. The walls can discharge a single golem immediately, and another golem every other round thereafter, to a maximum of four golems per day. These golems depend on the ambient magical energies of this chamber to maintain them and cannot leave without crumbling into useless rubble.

Treasure: Besides the gear of the Ironfang Legion's leaders, this chamber houses a *crystal ball* with telepathy.

Development: Shutting down the transposition engine requires three successful DC 30 Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (engineering), or Use Magic Device checks, each a full-round action. PCs who studied the transposition process in the xiomorn archival sandbox (area D5) gain a +5 circumstance bonus on these checks.

If the PCs successfully talk General Azaersi out of her crusade (see above), the hobgoblin warlord agrees to grant the PCs passage back to Golarion and cease her hostilities. She does not permit them to continue attacking her people in the vault and elsewhere, however, and any attempt to do so immediately ends any possibility for peace.



CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Ideas for what may come next appear in “Continuing the Campaign” on page 64, but by defeating Azaersi and Zanathura, the PCs have saved thousands of lives. If not for their heroics in stopping an immeasurable mass of rock from crushing the nations of Molthune and Nirmathas under its bulk, the death toll would have been grim indeed. They also potentially command a powerful extradimensional stronghold in the center of an alien wilderness, which begs future explorations or even settlement, should the PCs desire.

Any remaining hobgoblin forces see the defeat of Azaersi as a sign to retreat, though without the Stone Road her considerable forces remain trapped in the vault for now. If Azlowe or Kraelos survive, they can rally these ragtag forces into a guerrilla campaign against whoever claims the Onyx Citadel, but Zanathura—if she lives—remains an unpopular figure in the Legion, unable to gather any hobgoblin servants without magic.

As is tradition in Nirmathas, whoever holds the most merits commands the respect of the people, and it would not be a far step for the PCs to rally the scattered communities of Nirmathas under their banner. The PCs can easily see one of their own elected the new forest marshal to help further this goal of unity. Perhaps with

the defeat of a common enemy, the rift between Molthune and Nirmathas can finally begin to heal—especially if the PCs joined forces with Katra Sebine and avenged her brother’s death—with the PCs ushering in said peace. For this season at least, hostilities give way to a cold peace and tense communications, though whether armed conflict resumes depends on what actions, if any, the PCs choose to take.

Regardless of the outcome, the return of the glaistig Gendowyn coupled with the devastation of the goblinoid forces that ran rampant in the region promises an era of change in Nirmathas.

If the PCs successfully talk General Azaersi out of her crusade, she still loathes the PCs and humanity as a whole, but the cost of her victories begins to weigh on her, and she agrees to pull back her forces from Nirmathas and Molthune and instead settle her people in the Vault of the Onyx Citadel. This may bring about an age of relative peace, as the monstrous beings along the western shores of Lake Encarthan now have a homeland to retreat to. Alternatively, it may serve as the grim precursor to an even greater war, as these inhuman forces dig in, build their infrastructure, and prepare for a new war a generation down the line. Whatever options the PCs pursue, whether for the sake of peace or isolation, the ultimate destiny of Nirmathas has been permanently shaped by their actions.

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

AZAERSI

After the Goblinblood Wars, Azaersi forged an army to build an empire where others had failed. Her mind is as swift as her blade, picking out enemy weaknesses—whether physical, intellectual, spiritual, or tactical.

AZAERSI

CR 19

XP 204,800

Female hobgoblin swashbuckler 20 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 56)

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +25

DEFENSE

AC 37, touch 24, flat-footed 28 (+10 armor, +5 deflection, +4 Dex, +5 dodge, +3 shield)

hp 274 (20d10+160)

Fort +17, **Ref** +22, **Will** +16; +8 vs. mind-affecting spells and effects

Defensive Abilities charmed life 7/day, evasion, fortification 50%, improved uncanny dodge, nimble +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *Truth* +33/+28/+23/+18 (1d8+14 + 20 precision/17–20/×4 plus 2d6 vs. chaotic and 1d6 electricity)

Ranged +1 *axiomatic returning dagger* +30/+25/+20/+15 (1d4+4 + 20 precision/17–20/×3 plus 2d6 vs. chaotic)

Special Attacks deeds (bleeding wound, cheat death, deadly stab, derring-do, dizzying defense, dodging panache, evasive, kip-up, menacing swordplay, opportune parry and riposte, perfect thrust, precise strike, stunning stab, subtle blade, superior feint, swashbuckler initiative, swashbuckler's edge, swashbuckler's grace, targeted strike), panache (7), swashbuckler weapon mastery, swashbuckler weapon training +4

TACTICS

Before Combat Azaersi benefits from daily castings of *mind blank* from Zanathura. If she hears intruders, she drinks a *potion of heroism* to gain a +2 bonus on all attack rolls, skill checks, and saving throws (not included in these statistics).

During Combat Azaersi activates her *boots of speed* (not included in these statistics), and early in combat she relies heavily on disarm and dirty trick maneuvers to blind and entangle others while her allies engage. Upon taking damage, she switches to deadly tactics, leaning on her opportune parry and riposte, perfect thrust, and deadly

stab deeds to whittle down opponents as quickly as possible. Her favorite tactic is to disarm her way through martial defenders and close with the spellcasters they protect—especially arcane casters.

Morale Azaersi's life has lead to this pivotal moment. Once engaged, she fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 21, **Con** 22, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +19 (+23 dirty trick, +21 disarm);

CMD 44 (46 vs. dirty trick or disarm)

Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (falcata), Extra Panache^{ACG}, Greater Dirty Trick^{APG}, Improved Dirty Trick^{APG}, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Slashing Grace^{ACG}, Toughness, Weapon Focus (falcata), Weapon Specialization (falcata)

Skills Acrobatics +26, Bluff +13, Diplomacy +13, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (history) +22, Perception +25, Profession (soldier) +26, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +7; **Racial**

Modifiers +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin, Terran

SQ swashbuckler finesse

Combat Gear *potions of heroism* (3), *unfettered shirt*^{UE}, *smoke pellets*^{APG} (5); **Other Gear** +4 *elven chain*, +2 *moderate fortification buckler*, +1 *axiomatic returning dagger*, *Truth* (+3 *axiomatic shocking burst falcata*^{APG}), *belt of physical might* +4 (Dex, Con), *boots of speed*, *cloak of resistance* +5, *headband of mental superiority* +4, *ring of protection* +5, *swordmaster's flair* (blue scarf)^{ACG}

Aza came of age during the fiercest fighting of the Goblinblood Wars. Though bolder and more keen eyed than most, she was little more than a child when humans overran one of her people's last outposts in Iser and an Eagle Knight's spear pierced her gut. She awoke hours later in a mass grave—too stubborn to die—and limped away under cover of night while the humans celebrated. Once more among the living, she fled northward into Molthune, carrying with her a seething hatred for humanity.

Her travels in the Menador Mountains brought her into contact with other retreating hobgoblins—soldiers in need of a leader, and teachers who saw promise in the stubborn young woman. The Azaersi who emerged in Molthune years later was a very different woman than the Aza who died on that muddy battlefield.

In Molthune, Azaersi survived as a bandit in the Shrikewood. Though she never recovered her physical strength after her devastating injury, her experience honed her mind and reflexes into a vicious blade, and over time her magnetism attracted new warriors to her banner. Eventually, Molthune too took notice of the bandit-queen's success and dispatched a regiment of soldiers to end it. Even outnumbered and ill-equipped, Azaersi's Ironfangs nonetheless slaughtered the well-drilled Molthuni troops. In a pique, Molthuni commander Vetrigan Sebina offered the hobgoblin an accord: Molthune needed soldiers whose actions it could deny and would be happy to arm and train the Ironfangs and then turn them loose on Nirmathi targets. The Ironfang Legion was born, and now supplied with contacts and information as well as arms, Azaersi began to form a long-term plan in her head—one of domination and a homeland for her kind that was denied by the Goblinblood Wars.

Eventually discovering the *Onyx Key* and the arcane advisor Zanathura, Azaersi led an army of conquest into the Vault of the Onyx Citadel. To Molthune, it seemed as if the Ironfang Legion—and a dozen other monstrous regiments—had vanished overnight. All the while, the Legion first conquered, and then prepared for full-scale war out of sight of its targets.

Azaersi bears a very unhobgoblin-like willingness to trust arcane magic, born largely from the close relationship she has formed with the naga Zanathura. Each woman sees the other as a kindred spirit—wounded and cast aside, yet able to rise to glory by virtue of their own stubbornness and insight—and Azaersi has grown to trust Zanathura more than she trusts her fellow hobgoblins. This trust, however, would be shattered by the discovery of the naga's use of mind-influencing magic on the great general.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

General Azaersi is the ultimate challenge of the Ironfang Invasion Adventure Path. She is a cunning and insightful tactician, having learned a great deal from the failures of the Goblinblood Wars, her years as a bandit surviving by guerrilla raids, and her time spent as a disciplined Molthune soldier. Her mind quickly picked out the strongest tactics of each approach, and she has combined them into a heavily armed but rapid offensive strategy that has enabled the Ironfangs to roll through enemy positions with few losses—until the PCs' victory at Longshadow, she had begun to feel unassailable.

Accompanied by several of her most potent allies, the wily Azaersi pierced the trove that held the Onyx Citadel, despite its well-guarded position, and claimed it for her own. With the security of an otherworldly fortress, Azaersi cemented an immense tactical advantage over humanity.

Although destined to appear at the end of the Adventure Path as the final foil to the PCs, Azaersi can be introduced earlier in the campaign to taunt the heroes as they battle through the Ironfang Legion's rank and file. While an early encounter with Azaersi would make defeating her later more satisfying, remember that the hobgoblin swashbuckler could easily overpower a lower-level party that seeks her out prematurely.



AZLOWE

Azlowe serves as the head of the Ironfang Legion's faithful, answering to Azaersi herself—who he considers a sign from his god Hadregash. His fanatical devotion is tempered only by his suspicion of the naga Zanathura.

AZLOWE

CR 17

XP 102,400

Male greater barghest warpriest of Hadregash 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 27, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 60)

LE Large outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful, shapechanger)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +29

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 14, flat-footed 31 (+8 armor, +4 deflection, +1 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

hp 271 (19 HD; 10d8+9d10+179); regeneration 1

Fort +20, **Ref** +13, **Will** +21; +1 morale bonus vs. fear

Defensive Abilities sacred armor (+2, 10 minutes/day);

Immune bleed

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +30 (1d8+14), 2 claws +31 (2d8+15/19-20)

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

Special Attacks blessings 8/day (Evil: battle companion, unholy strike, War: battle lust, war mind), channel negative energy 5/day (DC 21, 3d6), fervor 11/day (3d6), sacred weapon (1d10, +2, 10 rounds/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +13)

At will—*blink*, *invisibility sphere*, *levitate*, *misdirection* 1/day—*charm monster* (DC 18), *crushing despair* (DC 18), *dimension door*, *mass bull's strength*, *mass enlarge person* (DC 18)

Warpriest Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +16)

4th—*order's wrath* (DC 20), *spell immunity*

3rd—*cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic* (2), *prayer*

2nd—*aid*, *resist energy*, *lesser restoration*, *shatter* (DC 18), *silence* (DC 18), *spiritual weapon*

1st—*bless*, *command* (DC 17), *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *obscuring mist*, *shield of faith* (2)

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 16), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *read magic*, *resistance*

TACTICS

Before Combat Azlowe gorges himself each day on a heroes' feast prepared by his witcheater cultists. Before combat, he casts *aid*, *mass bull's strength*, *prayer*, and *shield of faith*.

During Combat Azlowe is lazy and relies on his witcheater cultists to engage foes in melee while he casts *order's wrath* and *dispel magic* from a distance. Once he closes, he activates his sacred armor (improving his AC by +2) and uses sacred weapon to grant his claws an additional +1 enhancement bonus and the *flaming* weapon special ability before tearing into enemies with his bare hands.

Morale Azlowe is ultimately a coward, and he flees using *dimension door* if his cultists are slain and he is reduced below 75 hit points.

Base Statistics Without his spells, Azlowe's statistics are

AC 28, touch 10, flat-footed 27; **hp** 256; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +12,

Will +19; **Melee** bite +26 (1d8+11), 2 claws +27

(2d8+11/19-20); **Str** 26; **CMB** +25, **CMD** 36; **Skills**

Acrobatics +10, Bluff +26, Climb +17, Diplomacy +16,

Intimidate +26, Knowledge (planes, religion) +23,

Perception +28, Sense Motive +28, Stealth +16,

Survival +18, Swim +17.

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 13, **Con** 24, **Int** 20, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +29; **CMD** 42 (46 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Eldritch Claws^{APG},

Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (claw), Improved

Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural

Attack (claw), Lightning Reflexes, Rending Claws^{APG}, Stand

Still, Step Up, Toughness, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +27, Climb +20, Diplomacy +17,

Intimidate +27, Knowledge (planes, religion) +24,

Perception +29, Sense Motive +29, Stealth +16,

Survival +19, Swim +20

Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin, Infernal, Undercommon

SQ change shape (goblin or wolf; polymorph)

Combat Gear longarm bracers^{UE}; **Other Gear** +2 glamered

slick breastplate, amulet of mighty fists +3, ring of

regeneration, iron holy symbol of Hadregash

Azlowe achieved the dream of many barghests after a hobgoblin cleric of Hadregash conjured him from Hell as a guard beast many seasons ago. Stalking the wilds

for a year, he devoured enough explorers and traders to metamorphose into a greater barghest, and with his newfound power, Azlowe devoured his previous master, inheriting his writings, followers, and—as it turned out—some measure of his master's divine connection with the goblin hero-god. Azlowe's own cannibalistic tendencies mingled with hobgoblin superstitions, and over the course of 30 years, his tribe evolved into the Cult of the Witcheater, a sect of Hadregash worshipers focused on hunting down and devouring arcane spellcasters.

The cult's reputation throughout the Mindspin Mountains spread to Azaersi's ear as her plans first formed for growing a hobgoblin nation, and she entreated the barghest to meet with her on neutral ground. She presented the outsider with a Nirmathi sorcerer—trussed and stuffed with exotic drugs—along with the promise that many more such treasures awaited his palate if his cult threw in its lot with the Ironfang Legion. Azaersi's magnetism and candor quickly won him over, and Azlowe began to wonder if the woman's sudden appearance wasn't a sign from Hadregash, eventually leading to a fanatical devotion to her.

Now serving as one of Azaersi's three commanders of the Legion, Azlowe holds authority over not just his own witcheaters but all of the Legion's magical resources—save one. The dark naga Zanathura has shaken the barghest's faith in Azaersi's judgment. While Azaersi insists the “witch-worm” is a simple advisor, lending insight into unraveling the “elf magic” of their enemies, too many times Azlowe has caught the serpent tampering with the strange energies of the Onyx Citadel and swaying the minds of lesser soldiers. Thus far, only Azaersi's keen blades have stayed Azlowe's claws on the matter of Zanathura, and as a result, he and his most ardent cultists have grown increasingly withdrawn from Legion affairs.

In his goblin form, Azlowe is stooped and bent, but muscular. He prefers this humble form to his intimidating natural form, as it makes it easier to listen in on conversations easily halted by his towering true shape. In his greater barghest form, Azlowe's rags are revealed to be chains forged in Hell that thrum with divine power, and his razor fangs and teeth are larger than daggers.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Azlowe's role in the campaign is to provide spiritual direction to the varied races of the Ironfang Legion and help the army counter arcane threats and influence among its soldiers. He trains and assigns the faithful of Hadregash, as well as other divine casters with lower rank in the Legion, such as druids, oracles, and a few outsiders. Most importantly, however, Azlowe maintains his Cult of the Witcheater—a cannibalistic sect of Hadregash fanatics who

specialize in assassinating wizards and sorcerers. During Azaersi's early campaigns, the barghest found himself at his general's side as she looked to him to interpret the portents that would help her army succeed in the coming battles. Unfortunately, when Zanathura arrived, his position of advisor grew increasingly irrelevant, as Azaersi heeded the naga's poisoned words over his sacred advice.

If the player characters let Azlowe live, he shares his suspicions regarding Zanathura's mental control of Azaersi before taking his leave and returning to Golarion; he does not want to follow a leader who is subject to another's domination. Once back on Golarion, Azlowe begins to muster the surrounding goblin tribes into a new witcheater cult, hoping to take advantage of the PCs' brief absence and the region's descent into chaos in the wake of the Legion's withdrawal. During this turmoil, Azlowe's forces raid several settlements within both Molthune and Nirmathas and amass as much wealth as they can so he can settle in for a comfortable “retirement” amid his goblin lackeys.



KRAELOS

Rarely seen without his vicious war yzobu, Kraelos is a legendary dragonslayer among the hobgoblins of Avistan, and his reputation is well earned. He commands the Legion's cavalry with unshakable discipline.

KRAELOS

CR 16

XP 76,800

Hobgoblin cavalier (fell rider) 17 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 32, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Race Guide* 122)

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 36, touch 13, flat-footed 35 (+12 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex, +5 natural, +6 shield)

hp 217 (17d10+119)

Fort +20, **Ref** +11, **Will** +13

Resist fire 20; **DR** 3/—

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +2 vicious adamantine longsword +26/+21/+16/+11 (1d8+6/19–20 plus 2d6)

Ranged +20 mwk javelin (1d6+4)

Special Attacks challenge 6/day (+17 damage, allies gain +5 bonus on attack rolls), demanding challenge, master tactician 4/day (swift action, all teamwork feats)

TACTICS

Before Combat Kraelos quaffs his *potions of barkskin* and *heroism* before entering battle.

During Combat Kraelos fights from atop his yzobu mount, and he prefers to overrun and trample his enemies and then use his Terror ability and *maw of the red wyrm* to scatter groups. Kraelos targets the strongest-looking warrior present for his challenge or—on the off chance one is present—any dragons or dragon-like opponents.

Morale Kraelos fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without his potions, Kraelos's statistics are

AC 31, touch 13, flat-footed 30; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11;

Melee +2 vicious adamantine longsword +24/+19/+14/+9 (1d8+6/19–20 plus 2d6); **Ranged** +18 mwk javelin (1d6+4);

CMB +21, **CMD** 34; **Skills** Handle Animal +17, Intimidate +26, Perception +1, Profession (soldier) +9, Ride +22.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 12, **Con** 20, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 34

Feats Cleave, Dazzling Display, Furious Focus^{APG}, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Outflank^{APG}, Power Attack, Ride-by Attack, Shatter Defenses, Shield Focus, Shield Wall^{APG}, Swap Places^{APG}, Toughness, Trample, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Handle Animal +19, Intimidate +28, Profession (soldier) +11, Ride +22; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ act as one, aid allies, deadly rampage, dread rider, fell presence, mount (yzobu named Drakestomper), order of the dragon, rampage, strategy, terror

Combat Gear *maw of the red wyrm*^{UE}, *potions of barkskin* (2, CL 12), *potions of cure serious wounds* (3), *potions of heroism* (3); **Other Gear** +3 jousting adamantine full plate, +3 heavy steel shield, +2 vicious adamantine longsword, mwk javelins (5), belt of mighty constitution +4, cloak of resistance +3, major ring of fire resistance, ring of protection +2

DRAKESTOMPER

CR —

Yzobu (*Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 124)

N Large animal

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +24

Aura stench (30 ft., DC 20, 10 rounds)

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 12, flat-footed 30 (+7 armor, +3 Dex, +14 natural, –1 size)

hp 119 (14d8+56)

Fort +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +7; +4 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee gore +19/+14 (2d6+15)

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

Special Attacks stampede, trample (1d6+15, DC 27)

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 4

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 34 (38 vs. trip)

Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Improved

Natural Attack (gore), Iron Will, Medium Armor Proficiency, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness

Skills Perception +24

SQ devotion, multiattack, tricks (attack any target, combat riding, come, defend, down, guard, heel, seek, stay)

Gear +1 agile breastplate barding^{APG}, exotic military saddle

Born to the gladiatorial pits of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Kraelos grew to manhood amid the splash of blood and the roar of the crowd, and he never thought he'd know a life beyond killing for the entertainment of others. But when Kraelos's master purchased a new trainer for his gladiators—a strange, foreign hobgoblin captured while crossing the treacherous Crown of the World—the young warrior's life truly began. Lung Tag claimed to hail from a nation of hobgoblins on the far side of the globe, and he taught the eager youth the ways of honor, patience, and service—to be a leader and a warrior, rather than a mere killing machine. With Lung Tag's leadership, the gladiators rebelled against their master, putting the human's stable and his flesh to the torch before fleeing south. Soon, this ragtag band of escapees grew into a band of mounted raiders who tore a legend across the Storval Plateau.

Kraelos himself gained a reputation as a dragonslayer for besting drakes and dragons alike, and he continued to lead his riders back and forth between Ustalav, Lastwall, and Belkzen for years before his band drew Azaersi's attention. She desired both a fearless cavalry and the legend that came with Kraelos Dragonslayer. Kraelos recognized much of the confidence and poise of his old teacher in this young upstart and, after a brief duel, agreed to sign on with the Ironfang Legion.

Kraelos leans even further toward lawful than most hobgoblins, having learned the art of the warrior from a disciplined military veteran of one of the most powerful hobgoblin nations on Golarion. He obeys a strict sense of honor, valuing honesty and the strength that compels said honesty. He dispatches the weak quickly and cleanly. They are not at fault for their failings, but the wolf must prey on the rabbit; it is the way of the world.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Kraelos's role in the campaign is to confront the PCs on the open fields of the Vault of the Onyx Citadel. This may be a short-lived encounter if the PCs rush to meet him in the field, or it could be a more protracted

affair if they choose to test the mounted warrior and fall back repeatedly, relying on guerrilla tactics. Kraelos has grown increasingly reckless as his duties as a commander keep him away from the field for longer and longer periods. He is eager to charge into combat again alongside his riders and feel the hot spray of blood on his face.



ZANATHURA

From vermin to renowned scholar to aspiring goddess, Zanathura takes incredible pride in all she has accomplished by cunning and research. Only the powerful kinship she feels with Azaersi keeps her ego in check.

ZANATHURA

CR 19

XP 204,800

Dark naga sorcerer 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 211)

LE Large aberration

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., detect thoughts, tremorsense 30 ft.; **Perception** +27

DEFENSE

AC 38, touch 22, flat-footed 25 (+4 armor, +8 Dex, +1 dodge, +12 natural, +4 shield, -1 size)

hp 262 (21 HD; 11d6+10d8+179)

Fort +13, **Ref** +16, **Will** +21; +2 vs. charm effects

Defensive Abilities guarded thoughts; **Immune** poison

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +12 (1d4+1), sting +12 (2d4+1)

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

Special Attacks crystal shard, poison, tremor

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 18th; concentration +26)

9th (3/day)—*crushing hand*

8th (6/day)—*mind blank*, *polymorph any object* (DC 26)

7th (7/day)—*forcecage* (DC 25), *greater teleport*, *prismatic spray*, *simulacrum*, *spell turning*

6th (7/day)—*acid fog*, *analyze dweomer*, *forceful hand*

5th (7/day)—*baleful polymorph* (DC 23), *dominate person* (DC 23), *suffocation*, *spike stones* (DC 23), *telekinesis*

4th (8/day)—*acid pit*^{APG} (DC 22), *black tentacles*, *illusory wall* (DC 22), *shadow projection*^{APG}, *stoneskin*

3rd (8/day)—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *elemental aura*^{APG} (DC 21), *shifting sand*^{APG} (DC 21), *vampiric touch*

2nd (8/day)—*acid arrow*, *darkvision*, *glitterdust* (DC 20), *resist energy*, *spider climb*, *web* (DC 20)

1st (8/day)—*expeditious excavation*^{APG}, *identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *silent image* (DC 19), *vanish*^{APG}

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close* (DC 18), *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Bloodline deep earth^{APG}

TACTICS

Before Combat Zanathura casts *mage armor* and *mind*

blank on herself each morning. Before combat, she casts *displacement*, *resist energy*, *elemental aura*, and *spell turning* on herself as well.

During Combat Like her duplicate (see page 60 of “Siege of Stone”), Zanathura loves to immobilize others for slow punishment, using *forceful hand*, *crushing hand*, and *forcecage* to trap victims and then subjecting them to *acid fog* and *prismatic spray*. If opponents close in, she switches to *polymorph any object* to transform attackers into harmless pets.

Morale Zanathura does not share the hobgoblins’ zealotry. If reduced below 50 hit points, she attempts to flee using *greater teleport*.

Base Statistics Without her spells, Zanathura’s statistics are **AC** 34, touch 22, flat-footed 21.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 26, **Con** 24, **Int** 20, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 26

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 33 (can’t be tripped)

Feats Alertness, Arcane Shield^{APG}, Combat Casting, Deceitful, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Expanded Arcana^{APG}, Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Nimble Moves, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +8 (+12 when jumping), Appraise +13, Bluff +30, Climb +14, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +26, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +23, Perception +27 (+29 to notice unusual stonework), Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +29, Stealth +22, Swim +14, Use Magic Device +22

Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin, Infernal, Terran, Undercommon

Combat Gear *potions of shield of faith* +4 (3), *scroll of banishment*, *scroll of chain lightning*, *scroll of flesh to stone*, *scrolls of simulacrum* (3), *scroll of greater teleport*, and *scroll of wall of iron*; **Other Gear** *amulet of natural armor* +4, *belt of physical might* +4 (Dex, Con), *headband of mental prowess* +4 (Wis, Cha)

The so-called “witch-worm” of the Ironfang Legion began her life as little more than a worm, serving far more

powerful neothelids and seugathi in the alien depths of the Darklands. Enslaved as a guardian for the neothelids' extensive libraries, the dark naga alleviated her boredom reading ancient dwarven tomes and learning of the vast empires the subterranean people once commanded. She began launching clandestine expeditions into dwarven ruins. There, she encountered lesser beings—kobolds, darkfolk, and drooling morlocks—who regarded her with much the same fear she paid to the neothelids who guided her destiny. The heady mix of deference and discovery drove Zanathura to escape her life of servitude and gather a clan of morlocks, delving first downward into the Vaults of Orv, and then following in the footsteps of clan Kraggodan's Quest for Sky to the surface, where she and her band of mutants settled in nearby ruins. Zanathura found the title of high priestess fitting for a time, but soon she came to prefer "goddess."

The dark naga ruled her clan as a petty tyrant for a time, scouring the long-abandoned Valley of Aloï in Nirmathas for dwarven relics and tomes and studying the dwarven people's magic, but the toil of leadership began to bore her, and she once again felt the urge to travel and explore. Her reputation as a scholar and antiquarian had spread through Nirmathas's criminal networks and eventually brought the ambitious hobgoblin Azaersi to her lair. Having grown tired of her lordship over her assembly of morlocks, Zanathura eagerly joined the Ironfang Legion's expedition to Kraggodan to recover the *Onyx Key*, which she had long suspected the dwarves protected. With access to the power and magic of those beings who first shaped the Vaults of Orv so long ago—the Vault Builders—Zanathura hoped she could ascend beyond the fictitious title of "goddess" and instead become a true deity.

Rather than ascension, however, Zanathura found a friendship and support she never knew before in a woman whose ambitions, cunning, and vision challenge her constantly and drive her to better herself. Now at Azaersi's side, Zanathura has heavily influenced the general's thoughts and plans, but so too has the hobgoblin shaped her own worldview, and the pair together have become a devastating double threat. Azaersi understands tactics and the mortal mind, while Zanathura understands the world unseen and the wants of the spirit.

Zanathura usually maintains a guise around the Onyx Citadel as a spindly, violet-hued hobgoblin woman, keeping the troops somewhat at ease by hiding her serpentine form. Only Azaersi, her commanders, and a select handful of their subordinates know Zanathura for what she truly is—a revelation that could easily ignite riots and desertion among the more superstitious hobgoblin troops.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Zanathura is egomaniacal and insatiably curious, wielding incredible arcane power with little discretion, honor, or respect. While her years with Azaersi have curbed her worst tendencies, she remains prone to destructive tantrums when her arcane and historical projects are left unfulfilled. Her most recent episode ended in a poorly timed *dominate person* spell compelling servitude from General Azaersi—an action that now fills Zanathura with an uncharacteristic regret. More than anything, though, Zanathura needs to know that she is every bit as clever as the Vault Builders, betraying a shred of self-loathing that has haunted her since childhood.





CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

“Evil? Evil, they call me? Do they deem the storm malicious as its winds topple trees and its lightning sets fire to dry grass? Or the river, as it makes its yearly sojourn beyond its banks? Is the spider wicked for devouring the fly? Do they name the wolf a scoundrel as it circles its frightened and defenseless prey? Does the mighty glacier hold malice in its heart when it slowly grinds mountains into plains? Do the tides make the moon into a villain for exerting its force upon the seas? No, I think not. But put a pretty face on the dangers of the world, on the power of nature, and on the laws of the multiverse that not even the gods can alter, and mortals trip over themselves to brand it the villain. Perhaps if mortals were more wary of where they found their... adventures, they wouldn’t see so many evils in the world.”

—The Green Mother

The Ironfang Invasion concludes with “Vault of the Onyx Citadel,” but the potential for many new adventures lies within the destruction the PCs leave in their wake. Over the course of this Adventure Path, the PCs have united many disparate militias into a mighty army, broken the command of the largest monster army to grace the Inner Sea region since the Goblinblood Wars, explored a lost world buried deep within the Plane of Earth, and taken the first tenuous steps toward peace with neighboring Molthune. But many avenues of adventure remain open for such legendary heroes: confronting familiar threats that survived these events, as well as new dangers set in motion by their own actions.

In addition to the adventures listed here, *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Lands of Conflict* introduces several potential adventure locations around Nirmathas and Molthune and provides additional information about both nations’ politics and geography.

As a Blight upon the Land: Simply slaying the corrupt dryad Arlantia in “Prisoners of the Blight” does not eliminate the demonic disease from the Fangwood—nor the threat it poses to Golarion at large. Instead, it has shattered the blighted forces and infestations, spreading them across the Fangwood as a half-dozen powerful disciples of the dead dryad now compete for her resources and domain against a weakened Accressiel Court. Many of Arlantia’s blightguards remain, some with additional class levels or experimental new hybrids incorporating other, more dangerous fey. In addition, the blighted versions of more powerful fey—ankous, hamadryads, and a norn—that were acting as Arlantia’s regional barons in distant corners of the Fangwood now prepare for war to establish themselves as the true inheritors of Arlantia’s domain.

Clone Attack: Zanathura’s interest in duplicating herself was not limited to her handful of simulacra. With the science and magic of the xiomorns at her disposal, she can easily create duplicates using the *clone* spell as well. This not only gives the cunning naga a realistic means of surviving the Adventure Path’s climax, but it also potentially grants her a veritable army of Azaersi’s lieutenants to lead. While none of these duplicates command the same tactical genius or life experience of the original, they remain deadly combatants—and unlike the original, they are unwaveringly obedient to their petty naga queen.

Dragons of the Fangwood: The black dragon Ibzairiak (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #116: *Fangs of War* 58) was only one of many lovers courting Naphexi (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #119: *Prisoners of the Blight* 56), many of them far older and more dangerous than the Ironfang Legion’s drooling pet. If Naphexi herself escaped death at the PCs’ hands, she has a grudge to bear, but if she perished by their blade, then a circle of nine angry dragons from the surrounding region—elder specimens of forest, green, umbral, and underworld dragons—have broken hearts and wounded pride to avenge

against the PCs. Each dragon commands its own cunning resources and has every interest in destroying that which the PCs have fought to protect.

Kraggodan and Consequence: With the history of the Onyx Key revealed at last, Kraggodan wishes to launch an expedition to the original Darklands Vault discovered by the legendary dwarf explorer who lent his name to the city. Royal Archivist Karburtin Lightbrand (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #118: *Siege of Stone* 58) believes he has found the route of his clan’s original Quest for Sky, and retracing it would provide a wealth of historical knowledge—and treasure—for anyone who can brave the aberrations, duergar, and ghoulish wizards that prowl the Darklands. At the bottom of the world lies Kraggodan’s Vault deep in Orv—still laden with xiomorn technology and now ruled by the vile conqueror worm (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 664) Xolchez.

The Molthuni Front: The PCs conclude “Vault of the Onyx Citadel” at 18th level, far more powerful than the most of Molthune’s defenders, should they choose to turn their attention to ending Molthune’s war against Nirmathas. Instead, their challenge becomes one of monitoring the extensive border between the two nations, especially with much of the border region devastated by hobgoblin occupation. If the PCs allied with General Lord Katra Sebina, they may have a foot in the door for a political end to the war or to simply annex the Mindspin territory of Molthune. If they decide to turn to violence to end the war, Molthune grows increasingly desperate, eventually taking a page from Cheliox’s playbook and recruiting otherworldly assistance, summoning inevitables and the shadow giants of the Umbral Basin to enforce their borders.

A Nirmathas for All: A far greater challenge than subduing hobgoblins is unifying the vigorously independent denizens of Nirmathas into a common people and nation. After saving them from this latest threat, the PCs are ideally positioned to rally the populace into developing a common identity. The politics of forging a nation could serve as a fun series of background encounters as the PCs pursue other events in the continuing campaign.

What If the PCs Lose?: If the characters fail to stop Azaersi, the Onyx Citadel comes crashing down onto Golarion, destroying a large swath of territory in the calamitous transposition—the exact region depends on how many of the geomantic nexuses remain aligned with the Onyx Citadel. With the Ironfang Legion well protected and the region devastated, Nirmathas and Molthune fall to the hobgoblins within months, and Andoran, Cheliox, and Lastwall begin a campaign of isolation to limit the borders of the newborn hobgoblin nation. Alongside the Legion and its monstrous allies, the transposition releases a number of unaligned threats from the Plane of Earth, ranging from elementals and xorns to forgefiends and shaitan warriors. Now a new generation of heroes must fight just to survive in the dust-choked empire the Ironfang Legion has birthed upon the world!

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

A GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND

With the Ironfang Legion defeated and Molthune either cowed or preoccupied with rebuilding, peace would seem poised to settle on Nirmathas, but even as two great powers fade, a third rises. The druids of Crystalhurst and the fey courts grow increasingly hostile to outsiders within the Fangwood. These are the growing pains of the newly returned Accressiel Court, which struggles to reclaim its land and authority after such a long absence. The glaistig Gendowyn (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #119: Prisoners of the Blight* 54) is willing to hear input from the heroes, who have proven themselves allies, but she is only partially responsible for the actions of the forest fey. The Accressiel Court has become divided between two potential inheritors: Gendowyn and the mysterious figure Argwyn, who wields similar divine might and claims to be the glaistig's daughter, dispatched from the First World to rule where her mother failed.

The reality is—as ever, regarding fey—a complex blend of truth and lie. Argwyn arrived from the First World and indeed bears Gendowyn's blood, but her home is deep within the Fangwood itself. This unusual fey is Arlantia's greatest abomination: a fusion of her own dryad spirit and the near-divine essence stolen from Gendowyn over her centuries of imprisonment. Arlantia had hoped their “daughter” would be able to walk through the wards placed by the dwarves of Kraggodan and carry a new version of her Darkblight—deceptively beautiful blood-red flowers and vines—to new regions of the forest, but human greed destroyed the wards without requiring her involvement. As with many of her schemes, Arlantia eventually forgot about this project and left her bastard child sealed within the fungal heart of Arhlantu—until the PCs' arrival removed Arlantia from the picture and shattered the heart.

Argwyn is manic and chaotic, having inherited snippets of memory from both of her mothers but without any context. She also wields the full power of a glaistig as well as her own refined breed of the Darkblight, allowing her to reshape the world around her, infect new fey servitors, and grant divine spellcasting to loyal servants (such as corrupt dryads). She is frenetic—as much an embodiment of dryads' boundless life as of glaistigs' reserved grandeur—and she blesses her followers with health and beauty contrary to Arlantia's cruel deformations. Fittingly, Argwyn's variation of the Darkblight is a more subtle and elegant disease that preserves its hosts' attractiveness and passion; it is a parasitic flower rather than a deforming fungus.

In the few months she has known life, Argwyn has wasted little time gathering followers. While Arlantia spread her influence like a plague, creeping unbidden into minds and souls, Argwyn's vivacity has brought outsiders to her willingly. She commands a small legion of her own blighted fey swathed in the red blossoms

she commands, including rose-hued ankou guards (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 10). A trio of normally solitary taninivers (*Bestiary* 4 258) have likewise embraced the bastard princess, eager for her blight to ease the pain of their hereditary malady. Most terrifying of all, however, the dwarven druid Caargus—whose magic sealed away the Darkblight 4 centuries ago—appears to have returned from death, corrupted and vile, to serve as Argwyn's right hand (use the statistics for an earthfather on page 79 of the *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*).

The great line that divides Argwyn's evil from Arlantia's is that the newborn fey was born into villainy, while Arlantia embraced it willingly. This makes Argwyn more casually cruel, but it also gives her more potential for redemption. Her spirit never rejected goodness; it is simply a foreign language unknown to her tongue. Patient and kind heroes able to curb her potential for destruction with compassion and empathy may find themselves positioned to build a true dynasty for the Accressiel Court—one that owes them favors without end.

SUCCESSION AND THE ACCRESSIEL COURT

Simply slaying Argwyn is not enough to settle the chaos consuming the Fangwood any more than slaying a ruling family would bring peace to any human nation. Instead, the PCs must prove Gendowyn is the more fitting ruler—a near-impossible task with the earth goddess's divine powers currently sapped as they are—before finally confronting Argwyn. Restoring the glaistig's stolen power requires traveling to the fey realm known as the First World (see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The First World, Realm of the Fey*) and finding a patron among the Eldest—deific, ancient fey who rule this chaotic realm. Player characters can expect a mind-bending wilderness and confrontations with powerful fey such as the wild hunt (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 278).

Whatever Eldest the PCs hope to beseech, only one is willing to hear them out: the personification of the wild duality between majesty and cruelty known as the Green Mother. Though widely regarded by mortals as a fertility figure, she is better known among her kind as matron of the wildest fey, and seeing one of her children hobbled and drained as Gendowyn has been is nearly enough to inspire pity in the goddess.

Nearly.

Nature is merciless, and a single mistake costs many a beast its life in the wild. So too is it with the Green Mother's children. She gave Argwyn her blessing to supplant Gendowyn as ruler of the Accressiel Court—the hybrid child approached her months ago—content that the more powerful inheritor should rule. But if Gendowyn (and her champions) can prove the elder glaistig is still the stronger hand for the throne, the Green Mother is willing to expend the divine energy to restore Gendowyn's lost mythic power so the two

scions can settle the issue themselves. The deity simply demands a fitting test of valor, such as dragging the legendary jabberwock before her in chains—a task made all the more complicated by the tampering of the fickle Argwyn and her assorted bootlickers.

ARGWYN**CR 23/MR 10****XP 819,200**

Female blighted glaistig (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 46, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 124)

CE Medium fey (earth, mythic)

Init +27; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 120 ft.; Perception +39

Aura reveler's rapture (30 ft., DC 34)

DEFENSE

AC 47, touch 35, flat-footed 34 (+12 deflection, +13 Dex, +12 natural)

hp 472 (25d6+385); regeneration 30 (air)

Fort +20, **Ref** +27, **Will** +25; second save

Defensive Abilities fungal rejuvenation;

DR 15/cold iron and epic; **Immune** daze, disease, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorph, staggered, stunning; **Resist** acid 30, cold 30, electricity 30, fire 30, sonic 30; **SR** 34

Weaknesses airborne

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., burrow 60 ft., climb 60 ft.; earth glide

Melee earth blade +23 (10d6+34/19-20/×3 plus hex)

Ranged earth blast +38 (10d6+34/19-20/×3 plus hex) or leaf blast +38 (20d6+44/19-20/×3 plus hex) or thorn throw +25 (1d4+11 plus parasitic bond)

Special Attacks infusions (deadly earth, entangling infusion, extended range, extreme range, flurry of blasts, fragmentation, grappling, impale, kinetic blade, pushing infusion, snake, wall), mythic power (10/day, surge +1d12), parasitic bond, terrakinesis, witch of the fey

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 25th; concentration +37)

Constant—*freedom of movement*, *pass without trace*

At will—*confusion*, *create water*, *know direction*, *purify food and drink* (DC 22), *transport via plants*

3/day—*clashing rocks*^{APG} (DC 31), *flesh to stone* (DC 28), *move earth*, *summon nature's ally IX*

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 36, **Con** 34, **Int** 28, **Wis** 28, **Cha** 34

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 71

Feats Combat Casting, Deadly Aim^M, Improved Critical^M, Improved Initiative^M, Improved Precise Shot, Iron Will^M, Point-Blank Shot^M, Precise Shot, Skill Focus (Diplomacy, Intimidate), Stealthy, Toughness^B

Skills Acrobatics +41 (+53 when jumping), Bluff +40, Climb +19, Diplomacy +46, Escape Artist +45, Intimidate +46, Knowledge (nature) +39, Knowledge (planes, religion) +34, Perception +39, Perform (sing) +40, Sense Motive +37, Sleight of Hand +41, Stealth +47, Survival +34, Use Magic Device +40;

Racial Modifiers +2 Knowledge (nature), +2 Perception, +2 Stealth

Languages Common, Elven, Goblin, Sylvan, Terran

SQ blighted unity, divine source (*Pathfinder RPG Mythic Adventures* 51), sylvan grace, tainted blood

**VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL****FOREWORD****PART 1:
ALLIES AND
ENEMIES****PART 2:
HOMECOMING****PART 3:
ENTERING THE
VAULT****PART 4:
SIEGE OF THE
ONYX CITADEL****NPC GALLERY****CONTINUING
THE CAMPAIGN****ECOLOGY OF
THE XIOMORNS****RELICS OF
THE VAULT
BUILDERS****BESTIARY**

SECRETS OF THE VAULT

The events of this adventure take the PCs across only a small portion of the Vault of the Onyx Citadel, leaving hundreds of miles of extraplanar wilderness to explore.

MASTER OF THE VAULT

Far beyond the vault itself—unknown to the PCs and the Ironfang Legion—the circumstances of the Ironfang Invasion have set new events in motion. The dwarves' rediscovery of the *Onyx Key* so many millennia ago piqued the interest of the citadel's creator, an ancient, ferocious, and short-tempered Vault Builder named Xulchuwath. Brilliant even by its own people's standards, this ancient creator developed the vault's artificial ley lines and used their power to build the Stone Roads so that xiomorns could travel the cosmos. While Xulchuwath left eons ago to investigate new wonders, Azaersi's assault on the Onyx Citadel alerted the distant creator, and it began the slow process of returning in order to wipe the vault clean of the vermin now infesting it.

VAULT GAZETTEER

While this gazetteer marks a few key locations within the vault, many more exist, whether relics of its creators or more recent additions. See page 26 for a map of the vault.

Argent Lake: This lake is so named due its to consisting primarily of quicksilver—a potentially priceless treasure to anyone who can brave the lake's countless predators and withstand the mind-warping poison of its waters.

Brackmere: Brackmere is a brine lake so thick with salt that its crushing density is deadly to most ocean life, but a small population of deep sea serpents (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 240) guard the lake bed, where their militant cultists of siyokoys (*Bestiary* 3 246) and deep merfolk (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 172) gather around xiomorn ruins.

Calling Pool: The waters of this icy, clear lake plunge half a mile before meeting a seemingly endless layer of silt. Once part of a large xiomorn network of portals, it remains a thin spot in the vault's planar boundaries, allowing occasional visitors from the Plane of Water.

The Crackingwild: The lands of the southeast are an ever-changing smattering of islands, each less than a mile across and sporting landscapes as diverse as forest, hills, plains, and swamps. They grind constantly against their neighbors with a deafening roar. An island moves between 1 and 10 miles per day and confounds any attempts at mapping or navigating the region. Ruins left by shaitans, sun giants, and xiomorns mark the varied landscape. Whatever force constantly shifts these massive earthworks, and why, remains unknown.

The Dustbeds: Two expansive deserts of powder-soft sand mar the southern vault, where unseen energies sap the life out of creatures that wander into them. Some pechs scavenge the deadly dust so they can resell it as a material component, claiming the wastelands are the final

mistake that drove the xiomorns from the vault, while others insist the deserts are functioning as intended. A few forgotten xiomorn strongholds dot the wastes.

Forgetting Place: Built into the crystalline walls of a soot sea, this stronghold is protected by a bevy of animated siege engines and a bone ship (*Bestiary* 5 44) that pechs call the *Last Command*. Within, cold basalt walls shift into a deadly labyrinth, filled with traps and clockwork guardians, and the innermost bailey is wreathed in crystals that function as a *mirror of opposition*. These dangers exist not to keep the curious out but to contain the most heinous mistakes created by the xiomorns in their quest for knowledge.

Glass Pinnacle: The vault's tallest peak is a shard of glittering glass as hard as steel. While it is remarkable on its own, the sight is all the more impressive courtesy of the many magical blades sealed within the unbreakable, multicolored peak. A unique, magic-devouring golem stands at the mountain's apex and offers challengers their choice of the trophies it guards if they can unseat the construct. Those who fail see their blades added to the mountain before they are cast down from its heights onto the jagged glass foothills below.

Glitterglen: Unlike many of the vault's crystalline forests, Glitterglen mimics terrestrial plant life to a startling degree, growing thick with ferns, oaks, and pines all apparently carved from delicate quartz crystal. Druids visiting the glen report strange whispers and giggles, as if a very unusual spirit—akin to nature itself but far younger and more alien—were trying to reach into their minds.

The Goodlands: The clean water of the Quartz River feeds the lush northern half of the vault's ecosystem. This land of forests, gentle hills, and plains hosts an earthly paradise, home to a dozen tiny pech villages similar to Stonehome. Many communities built and maintained by planar castaways lie forgotten across the landscape, including some made by refugees from Golarion who flourished for a dozen generations before fading away.

Greensend: Surrounded by volcanic peaks, Greensend is a swelteringly hot jungle filled with titanic insects. Three formian queens—Mother of Apathy, Mother of Love, and Mother of Pain—take turns holding court in an organic temple somewhere within the jungle depths. Sterile and bereft of formian servants, the trio has learned to grant sentience to the insects of the jungle.

Ketterling: Ketterling is the only permanent shaitan settlement in the vault. The caravansary boasts a population of fewer than 50 genies, and no one has seen the pasha Vatatar since the advent of the Ironfang Legion.

Lapisport: Established to take advantage of the quicksilver reservoir in Argent Lake and once a flourishing marid colony, Lapisport now stands empty. Its residents succumbed to the lake's poisonous water, leaving countless treasures behind—but also deadly magical traps as their increasing paranoia set their genie magic to terrible purpose.

Ruins of Miser: Miser stood as a dwarven citadel for 2,000 years. Constructed by trapped explorers from Kraggodan with the aid of local pechs, the settlement flourished for a time, but its small number of inhabitants—fewer than 200 dwarves—led to inbreeding and degeneration. Undead steeped in forbidden magic now prowl the ruins.

Screaming Wall: The noise of the Crackingwild reverberates from the crystals in the southern wall, creating an endless high-pitched shriek. Though agonizing to most creatures, the sound attracts an enormous breed of yrtak (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 290) imported eons ago.

Shaitan Stone: This 500-foot-tall statue of a great shaitan is actually a massive tower that served as the stronghold of Xeb, the pasha who lent her face to the exterior. An arcanist and conjurer who used her magic to manage a huge trade network, Xeb reportedly left treasure untold sealed within her tower, guarded by only a single xorn.

Shatterhall: For millennia, dwarves of Kraggodan have occasionally lost their way after death, following the Stone Road to the vault rather than flowing with the River of Souls. Trapped here instead of being judged and sent to their ultimate reward, the lost of Kraggodan gather in the endless chambers of Shatterhall, a mysterious structure that grows on its own. Most of the dwarves are now petitioners (*Bestiary 2* 208), content to drink and feast on the sustenance that appears unbidden, but a few have evolved through force of will into a lawful variety of valkyrie (*Bestiary 3* 277).

Singing Keep: The xorns of the vault have long maintained this xiomorn archive. They believe it houses the secret origins of their race, though they refuse to research those details stored within the lyrical jewels or allow anyone else access to the knowledge cached there. Over the centuries, they have used the Calling Pool to conjure several powerful inevitables to guard the archives.

Soot Seas: The caverns in the vault's north and east walls are marked by soot seas—"lakes" of fine black dust that support boatlike vessels piloted by native pechs. The seas are soft enough that almost any creature setting foot on them vanishes into the soot, never to be seen again, but a race of earth-infused krakens calls the seas home and somehow manages to avoid death in the petal-soft depths.

Vale of Hungry Diamonds: Huge, dinosaur-like beasts formed of living translucent crystal battle for supremacy in this jungle of massive mineral growths. These predators

are gladiatorial beasts and beloved pets among shaitan nobility, and occasional hunting expeditions arrive in the vault hoping to take the strongest of the jewel-beasts alive.

Watcher's Forest: This woodland of towering mushrooms and lichen supports a hardy population of myceloids who worship a god they call the Watcher—actually a vishap (*Bestiary 5* 270) imprisoned by Xulchuwath after confronting the xiomorn over the blasphemy of meddling with artificial ley lines. Its blood poisons the land, allowing only the fungus to thrive, and while the myceloids worship the ancient dragon, they fear its wrath should it ever escape.

Writhing Rift: This long, gem-studded canyon is actually the digestive tract of a kingdom-sized elemental beast slain by the xiomorns eons before they settled the vault. The beast was so powerful that its death throes persist, undulating through the valley. Few details of the creature are known, however, as a powerful tzitzimilt (*Bestiary 3* 276) called Last Witness has stood sentinel over those final moments for over 8 millennia.



VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE XIOMORNS

RELICS OF THE VAULT

ADVERSARIES

APPENDIX



ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

STONE... INSPIRING GREAT AWE, CALLED FORTH FROM PURITY
STONE... PLANNED WITH DIVINE INTENT, HOLDER OF PERFECT
SYMMETRY
STONE... POSSESSING GREAT POWER, PROVIDING THE SEED OF LIFE
STONE... GIVING WISDOM TO THE TRUE, STRENGTH TO THE FAITHFUL
STONE... REPOSEFUL DWELLING FOR THE SPIRITS OF THOSE BEFORE
STONE... UNDERPINNING WORLDS, FOUNDATION OF THE VAULTS
STONE... EVEN YOU DO NOT ENDURE FOREVER

—Translation of ancient Orvian inscription discovered in the
Vault of Ilvarandin

A primordial race tracing its roots back to the earliest reaches of time, the xiomorns (the true name of the race known colloquially as the Vault Builders and the Vault Keepers) have spent the span of their existence in creation and experimentation, leaving their footprint on countless developing worlds. When discovered, the strange ruins and eponymous vaults left behind by the xiomorns never fail to prove an impenetrable mystery to younger races.

Whatever theories are put forth as to the true reason for the Vault Builders' ceaseless acts of creation—whether they are cast as timeless experimenters, accidental creators, the agents of gods, or even gods themselves—none comes close to the truth of their motives. For the xiomorns are a species of desperation-driven architects of life, and fear has been their eons-long companion.

GENESIS

Xiomorns are born of the elemental essence of earth and originally hail from the Plane of Earth itself. However, unlike earth spirits given form (such as elementals) or manifesting as living beings (such as shaitans), xiomorns are a created race, brought into being at the dawn of time with the aid of the elemental lord Sairazul the Crystalline Queen. Most xiomorns believe the advent of their race to have been a spontaneous event of elemental fecundity, for even they do not know of the guiding hand of Sairazul. While even a being as powerful as Sairazul could not have formed the xiomorns from nothing without the assistance of a more powerful deity or some primal urge of the Plane of Earth itself, it is certain that Sairazul fashioned their insectile form after her own image. Her inspiration for the xiomorns came from a supernaturally sublime crystal she found deep in the Plane of Earth, and she created exactly 65,536 of them after the perfect number of the jewel's facets, intending that exactly that number should exist, and never more.

Most xiomorns never learned of Sairazul's role because of her subsequent imprisonment at the hands of the evil elemental lords. Thus, when they first encountered the elemental lord Ayrzul, they had no reason to fear or distrust him. Ayrzul the Fossilized King came to them from the stone itself and awed them with his power and wisdom, and he then granted them a moment of awful prescience—a vision of a future in which they saw themselves as a race ceasing to exist, their entire collective conscious obliterated by a mental invasion of alien mind-swapping creatures. In the vision, these creatures, called yithians (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 286), translocated their minds into the bodies of the xiomorns and the minds of the xiomorns into their own bodies, abandoning them to ultimate annihilation at the hands of whatever destruction the yithians themselves faced. The xiomorns saw their fate and knew despair for the first time.

Ayrzul was not done with his manipulation of the xiomorns yet; they had something he wanted. Even Ayrzul was not mighty enough to destroy the entire xiomorn race, for Sairazul had imbued them with mythic properties, but Ayrzul craved their mythic essence and wished to add it to his own divine power. He knew that he could not hope to take their essence by force, but he thought he might convince them to turn it over to him of their own free will.

Ayrzul promised to teach the xiomorns the secret of creation, which they could use to forestall their own demise, but he lamented that he lacked the ability to do so without a greater concentration of mythic essence than even he possessed. He explained that if the xiomorns would willingly sacrifice the essence of a quarter of their number to him, it would grant him the power to teach them how to save themselves—an opportunity for the few to sacrifice themselves to save the many. The xiomorns were naturally appalled by this suggestion but believed the words of Ayrzul. In the end, they chose another option: rather than sacrificing the entire life essence of a quarter of their number, the xiomorns sacrificed a portion of the essence of half of their number. Ayrzul received the same influx of primordial power, and no xiomorns were destroyed in the process, but half of the xiomorns had lost their mythic essence, creating the differentiation between mythic and non-mythic xiomorns—the Vault Builders and the Vault Keepers (*Pathfinder Module: The Emerald Spire Superdungeon* 158–159)—as well as the first roots of schism within the species.

In return for the essence of the Vault Keepers, Ayrzul gave the xiomorns knowledge of the *Vault Seeds*—a secret actually stolen from Sairazul—each of which is a powerful artifact capable of creating an immense underground cavern and then infusing it with a magically supported ecosystem. The xiomorns decided to experiment with the creation and cultivation of life, with the hope of saving their species from its foretold doom. With their newfound power to create and the knowledge of their own destruction firmly in mind, the Vault Builders began to use the *Vault Seeds* to craft magically enhanced, cavernous vaults within the Plane of Earth in which to bring forth new forms of life and modify existing ones. The Vault Builders used their mythical power to master the *Vault Seeds*, creating vaults that supported particular kinds of life, while the now-reduced Vault Keepers were set in charge of maintaining and overseeing these vaults to ensure that the cultivation of this life did not go awry.

Though they established many marvelous works of creation, the Vault Builders soon came to realize that their creative activity on the Plane of Earth was limited, preventing them from experimenting with the different kinds of ecosystems and life-forms that were needed in order to find the salvation of their race. They used their

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS BESTIARY

elemental mastery to form powerful elemental gates that allowed travel to worlds on the Material Plane, where the diversity of life and habitat allowed them to greatly expand their vault-building activities, and they began to form vaults within the mantles of multiple planets across the multiverse.

Among the first of their experiments in crafting life on the Material Plane was the harnessing of benign fey earth spirits that they found deep beneath the crust of certain worlds. To these they gave form and purpose, creating the race of pechs (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 206), which the Vault Builders then produced in great numbers on many worlds. They soon determined that the pech race did not hold the secret of their salvation and quickly moved on to new experiments. The Vault Builders gave the pechs to the Vault Keepers as laborers to assuage the

loss of mastery that resulted from their great sacrifice to Ayrzul. The Vault Keepers all but enslaved the pechs, and many still live in servitude on worlds where the xiomorns continue their work. On some worlds, the race of derro spawned from degenerate descendants of pechs that fled to inhospitable caverns to escape their overbearing masters.

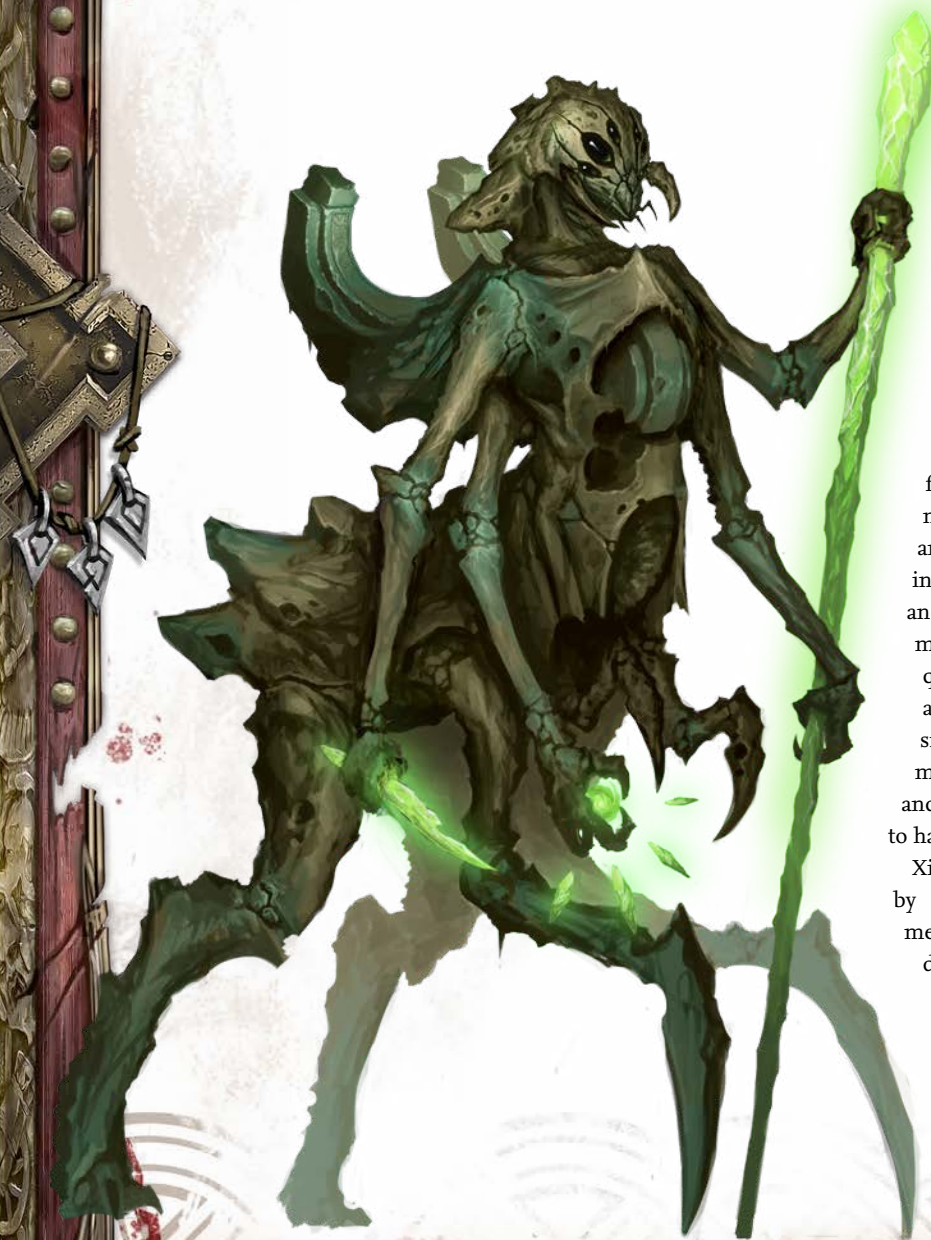
For countless years the Vault Builders have continued to seed planets across the multiverse with their vaults, creating entirely self-contained and magically sustained ecosystems where they can support the myriad forms of life and conditions with which they experiment. Even though the Vault Builders sometimes build vast cities or entire artificial geographies in these vaults, all tend to follow the same pattern; after a few millennia, the

Vault Builders and Vault Keepers deem a given experiment a failure and move to another world to create new vaults and begin the experiments anew. The few races aware of the existence of the xiomorns are often perplexed by their seemingly capricious practices, but in a unified front, the entire race of xiomorns has refused to divulge the details of what they are attempting to do and why, for fear of tipping their hand to the distant yithian menace too early.

ECOLOGY

Xiomorns are a primordial race of elemental outsiders and are one of the oldest races in the multiverse. Though they exist in two separate forms, the mythic Vault Builders and the non-mythic Vault Keepers, they remain a single species and share a similar ecology. Both share some insectile characteristics in the shape of their head and thorax and the structure of their upper limbs. The mythic xiomorns are physically larger and possess a quadrupedal lower body, whereas the Vault Keepers are smaller and have a bipedal lower body. The most significant difference between the mythic and non-mythic xiomorns, however, is in their relative power and mastery of earth magic—especially in their ability to harness the power of *Vault Seeds*.

Xiomorns are genderless and do not reproduce by procreation. They live exceptionally long lives measured in the thousands of years before natural death overtakes them. However, even in death a Vault Builder does not necessarily truly die. During the last few months of a Vault Builder's natural life, a calcification forms within its heart. After the Vault Builder's death, this crystalline formation can be retrieved and, if properly cared for, stored indefinitely while the body itself crumbles to dust. Such crystals are called *Generation Stones* and hold the entire



personality and experiential existence of the deceased. Vault Builders can use their mastery of elemental earth to fabricate a new Vault Builder body, and if a *Generation Stone* is placed within the abdomen of such a body, a new Vault Builder arises with all of the memories and knowledge of the previous Vault Builder. In this way, if a Vault Builder's remains are recovered and properly tended, it can essentially live forever through a series of new bodies. Generally, after a Vault Builder dies, its *Generation Stone* is stored until there is a need for more Vault Builders to be active, at which time a new Vault Builder form is constructed and the *Generation Stone* implanted to create anew the dead Vault Builder.

Vault Builders that die a sudden death by violence or misadventure do not have the time to properly form their *Generation Stones* and are truly dead. In this way, the total number of Vault Builders in existence has slowly but surely diminished over the eons. In addition, because of the loss of their mythic essence, Vault Keepers do not possess the ability to form *Generation Stones*. The life span of a Vault Keeper is shorter than that of a Vault Builder (usually no more than a couple thousand years unless extended by the magical support of a *Vault Seed*), and when a Vault Keeper dies, it crumbles to dust and is permanently dead. Vault Builders can use *Vault Seeds* to create more Vault Keepers as needed, but these do not possess the memories of previous Vault Keepers. Strangely, the number of Vault Keepers can never exceed 32,768—the number of Vault Keepers that came into being when half of Sairazul's original xiomorns gave up their mythic essence to Ayrzul. Attempts by Vault Builders to create more than 32,768 invariably fail.

The vision that Ayrzul granted to the xiomorns revealed that even the Vault Builders' unique life-span-extending ability would be insufficient to save them from the coming yithian cataclysm. In fact, it may be this very resilience that will someday attract the yithians to the xiomorns as a host race.

SOCIETY

The xiomorns exist as two distinct castes: the mythic Vault Builders and the non-mythic Vault Keepers. The loss of the mythic qualities of the other half of their species has placed the Vault Builders in a natural position of rulership over the Vault Keepers. The lawful xiomorns believe their society represents perfect order as they work together toward their shared goal of deliverance from the threat of racial extermination.

Despite this veneer of harmony, fractures exist just below the surface. As a whole, the xiomorns work toward their goal through the building of vaults until a perfect race is crafted for their needs. However, not all xiomorns agree on the actual purpose of this created race: is it to battle and defeat the yithians, to serve as a host body into which the xiomorns' own consciousness can retreat

ahead of the extinction, or to serve as a servitor race to hide and protect a tiny remnant of surviving xiomorns after the yithian cataclysm? In addition, not all Vault Keepers are ambivalent about the sacrifice of their mythic essence and have ideas of their own.

The xiomorns have divided their society into a number of sects, each serving a different function.

Creators: This sect comprises the majority of xiomorn society and is composed of both Vault Builders and Vault Keepers in great numbers. These are the xiomorns that labor to create and maintain vaults both within the Plane of Earth and in numerous worlds of the Material Plane. One of the Creators' primary duties is to defend any vault experiments threatened by the incursions of other races. Usually a few Vault Builders and Vault Keepers are sufficient to defend a vault against external threats, but on occasion, major military actions or prolonged warfare has required auxiliary forces called in from elsewhere. Perhaps most infamous of these was the millennia-long war that was waged between the xiomorns and the aboleths in the primeval ages of the world of Golarion. The great loss of potential *Generation Stones* in that conflict is still felt keenly today, and it caused the xiomorns to rethink their entire doctrine on engaging other sentient species in all-out war.

Venerators: Composed of Vault Builders and Vault Keepers, this is the second-largest sect of the xiomorns. Venerators dwell almost exclusively in Ayrzul's Blistering Labyrinth on the Plane of Earth where they serve as mystics and go-betweens for the elemental lord. While xiomorns in general do not worship Ayrzul, instead seeing him as a patron and ally of their race, this sect comes closest to performing obeisance to the Fossilized King. They seek greater favor with him in hopes of gaining greater insight regarding the threat to their race.

Cogitators: This small sect composed entirely of Vault Builders contemplates the deep mysteries of the multiverse to gain a fuller understanding of their race's foretold fate and the surest means of their preservation. Ayrzul despises this sect and fears that it may someday learn of his treachery. He uses the Venerators sect to persecute the Cogitators at every opportunity.

Agitators: This relatively small sect of Vault Builders and Vault Keepers is composed of some of the most warlike members of the race. Many are veterans of the war against the aboleths of Golarion and have experience in military campaigns. This sect pushes for a preemptive strike against the yithians.

Indagators: Made up entirely of Vault Builders, this sect is a little-known subset of the Cogitators. These xiomorns seek signs of the legendary lost Crystalline Queen, Sairazul, and believe that she may have some means of saving their race if she can be found and freed. Ayrzul is unaware of the existence of this sect, and if he

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

did know would likely have his Venerators purge such dangerous heretics.

Unalloyed Dissent: This small sect's numbers are entirely composed of Vault Keepers who are in open rebellion against the Vault Builders over the theft of their mythic heritage in the bargain with Ayrzul and believe the Vault Builders have sullied their very nature by association with the elemental lord. They kill Vault Builders whenever they are able and attempt to capture Vault Keepers to either convert to their cause or kill. Dissenters exist in multiple independent cells across the multiverse, and some of these have begun to seek divine patrons for their cause, beseeching archdevils, daemon lords, and other powerful entities for their aid. Only a few Vault Builders are aware of the existence of this sect, and they attempt to keep knowledge of it from spreading so that few xiomorns are even aware that such sedition exists.

As a whole, xiomorns are relatively peaceable but more as a matter of avoiding contact with other races. They have no qualms about wiping out an entire indigenous species if it encroaches on their laboratory space. Few races have regular interaction with the xiomorns, though large numbers of pechs still serve them on the Plane of Earth and in vaults on multiple worlds. Xiomorns generally get along with earth elementals and other elemental creatures, but they maintain a watchful truce with the shaitans of the Peerless Empire, with oreads (*Bestiary* 2 205) occasionally serving as envoys between the two races. Xiomorns despise the mephits of the Plane of Earth, and the Venerator sect frequently goes on genocidal rampages when too many of the pests have intruded upon Ayrzul's Blistering Labyrinth.

LAIRS

Xiomorns are usually found in a vault either within a world on the Material Plane or in the depths of the Plane of Earth, tending to their latest experiments. Occasional outcasts or sect cells might be found in long-abandoned vaults. The Venerators dwell in caverns within the Blistering Labyrinth, where they spend much of their time in meditation and supplication to their patron.

The vault lairs of the xiomorns can take forms as diverse as the ecosystems the *Vault Seeds* create: anything from a subterranean desert or mountain range to a more traditional dungeon complex to an entire city composed of architectural styles stretching across the entire history of the world it occupies. The construction techniques and technology introduced by these progenitors often finds its way into subsequent mortal cultures.

The occupied vaults of the Plane of Earth contain as many as 4,000 *Generation Stones* held by the Vault Builders until such time as they need to increase their numbers. Meanwhile, more than a thousand *Generation Stones* have been hidden in the Blistering Labyrinth by

the Venerators. These crystalline stones represent the future of the entire race and are kept sealed away from creatures unable to easily pass through stone, and they are always well guarded.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RACES

True to their reputations as ancient, inscrutable world-shapers, xiomorns have impacted numerous races across the multiverse. While some view them as legendary near-demigods, others consider them arrogant manipulators with dangerous agendas. Those races with the strongest connection to xiomorns are noted here.

Aboleths: The xiomorns have long found their experiments hindered and corrupted by aboleth machinations. Whether the aboleths seek to repurpose xiomorn efforts to effect their own insane designs or wholly turn the Vault Builders' schemes against their masters, their interference has marked them as being among the xiomorns' most loathed enemies. While neither race is known for its trophy taking, xiomorn corpses have occasionally been found in aboleth holdings and vice versa, suggesting both enmity and a shared curiosity between the two species.

Anunnaki: Just as xiomorns shape the course of worlds, the aloof anunnaki (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 28) shape the course of life. Unfortunately—or, perhaps fortunately for extant life on the Material Plane—nearly every time the anunnaki and xiomorn have crossed paths, misunderstanding and circumstance have resulted in violent outbreaks. While this might be an incredible series of cosmic coincidences, it's also conceivable that some farsighted race might actively work to prevent these two manipulative forces from allying.

Crysmals: These scorpion-like natives of the Elemental Plane of Earth are often found in close proximity to xiomorn vaults. Crysmals' (*Bestiary* 2 61) appearance seems to be more than just happenstance, leading some to believe that the xiomorn might have had a hand in the original creation of this race—and perhaps still exert some control over them. A related hypothesis suggests that some breeds of crysmals might be a side effect of the vault-building process and that any role the xiomorn have in the crystalline beings' creation is entirely accidental.

Xorns: Most xorns have little knowledge of or opinion about the Vault Builders. However, some xorns of the Plane of Earth's Opaline Vault claim to have uncovered evidence of great crimes the xiomorns committed against their race in the distant past. Some even posit that the xorns' taste for gems and crystals might be a result of ancient xiomorn attempts to tamper with their kind and harness their abilities. As a result, some xorn scholars meet the Vault Builders with great suspicion or even violence.

Yithians: The Vault Builders collectively dread and loathe no race more than the yithians. Knowing of

these elusive beings' crimes against their kind—past, ongoing, and future—xiomorns actively seek greater insight into their foe's abilities and weaknesses, as well as any glimpse they might steal of the impending yithian cataclysm.

XIOMORNS ON GOLARION

While the Vault Builders played a huge role in the development of Golarion's early history, especially in the Darklands, their direct influence today hardly extends beyond the few remaining fragments of their past. The Vaults of Orv and the development of the Orvian language are the most direct evidence of their lingering influence, but even these are hidden far from where most of Golarion's inhabitants would have any knowledge of them. Their greatest investment was in their eons-long conflict with the aboleths, but eventually the cost proved too much, and they abandoned their Vaults of Orv and departed from Golarion to seek other, less hostile worlds for their experiments. Now all that remains are the deep-buried Vaults and the enigmatic ruins and inscriptions from their bygone era.

Any xiomorns encountered are likely lone Vault Keepers, left behind to continue tending their posts when the rest of the race withdrew from Golarion—or they are deserters. The long-abandoned Vaults of Orv remain as mute testimony to their creators, with empty cities such as Ilvarandin and strange magical constructions such as the jade islands of the Sightless Sea serving as tantalizing hints of what has gone before.

XIOMORN MAGIC

Several Vault Builder works of magic have been described in various sources.

Crystal Womb: This vortex of endlessly growing, collapsing, and regrowing crystals serves as a portal into the heart of the Plane of Earth—though it is not specifically identified as such—where lies the means by which the Vault Builders create connections between that plane and worlds on the Material Plane. See page 47 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Into the Darklands*.

Generation Stones: These crystals hold the souls and memories of deceased Vault Builders (see pages 72–73 for more information). Unbeknownst to the Vault Builders, members of the Unalloyed Dissent have discovered a way to divide one of

these crystals to create four new Vault Keepers without the need for a *Vault Seed*. These newly made Vault Keepers are able to exceed the limit of 32,768 and fall outside the very nature of the xiomorns' creation. The Unalloyed Dissent is attempting to build an army of seditious Vault Keepers in this way at the expense of the destroyed essences of deceased Vault Builders. A rumor has arisen among the dissenters that when these Vault Keepers outnumber the remaining Vault Builders, the Vault Keepers' mythic heritage will be returned and they will regain their rightful place. This rumor is probably untrue, however, and was likely started by one of the dark powers whom the Dissenters have been courting.

Ioun Stones: While ioun stones were not created by xiomorns, the Vault Builders are intensely interested in these magical gems, with some collecting them in vast numbers. Xiomorns rarely use the stones, though. Instead, they seem especially interested in breaking them for entirely mysterious reasons.

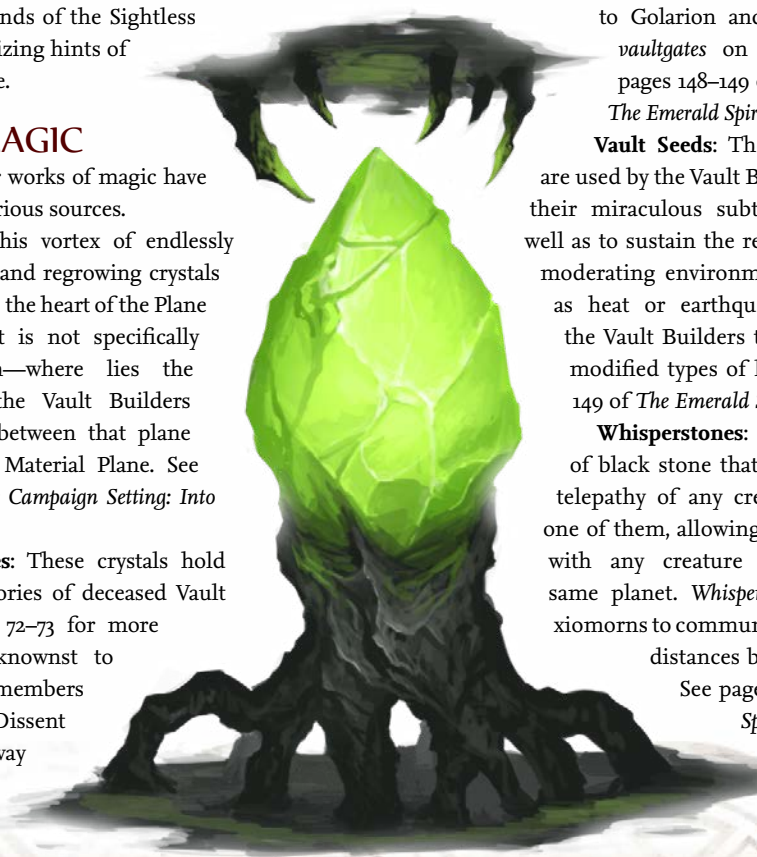
Jade Islands: Constructed during the Vault Builders' long-ago war with the aboleths, these islands found in Golarion's Sightless Sea served as psychic weapons to entrap the aboleths. See page 38 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Darklands Revisited*.

Orvgates: These machines are composed of stone, metal, and crystal and have a green crystalline, weblike funnel atop them that serves as a gateway between the different Vaults of Orv. These devices are not exclusive to Golarion and are simply called *vaultgates* on other worlds. See pages 148–149 of *Pathfinder Module: The Emerald Spire Superdungeon*.

Vault Seeds: These potent artifacts are used by the Vault Builders to construct their miraculous subterranean vaults as well as to sustain the resultant ecosystems, moderating environmental hazards such as heat or earthquakes and enabling the Vault Builders to nurture new and modified types of life-forms. See page 149 of *The Emerald Spire Superdungeon*.

Whisperstones: These are pillars of black stone that enhance the racial telepathy of any creature that touches one of them, allowing it to communicate with any creature it knows on the same planet. *Whisperstones* are used by xiomorns to communicate across the vast distances between their vaults.

See page 148 of *The Emerald Spire Superdungeon*.



Vault of the Onyx Citadel

Foreword

Part 1: Allies and Enemies

Part 2: Homecoming

Part 3: Entering the Vault

Part 4: Siege of the Onyx Citadel

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Ecology of the Vault Builders

Relics of the Vault Builders

Bestiary



RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

From the Keeper's Vaults came they, say I,
From the Keeper's Vaults down deep.
Though eager hands might stretch with greed,
The centuries of sleep
Do draw from blackest Orv
What mortals shan't perceive.
Be twice wary of the tears
From eyes that cannot weep.
Of hope, place naught, place naught, say I
On seeds you cannot reap.
And of such gifts, it's best, say I,
To let the Keepers keep.

—Azlanti verse written during the Age of Destiny, author unknown



In the primordial ages before the dawn of humanity, the ancient and alien races that stole upon Golarion wove potent magic into numerous artifacts whose sheer grandeur and immense power provided them the capability to shape the world. While the *Onyx Key* plays a vital role throughout the Ironfang Invasion Adventure Path, and in this adventure in particular, it is just one of many strangely magnificent relics hidden away by the enigmatic xiomorn race. The xiomorns transformed immense subterranean caverns into fantastic new realms known as Vaults, forging artifacts from rare materials that existed only in the most isolated regions deep below Golarion's surface. The most powerful xiomorns are therefore known as the Vault Builders, and they used these powerful relics themselves or passed them down to the lower xiomorn caste, the Vault Keepers. These artifacts gave sentience to stone, threaded biological properties into water and crystal, and transformed darkness into various forms of useful energy. Formed of multidimensional shapes perceptible to few races other than the xiomorns, the true structures of these artifacts are still incomprehensible to the younger humanoid races.

Many xiomorn artifacts are massive in size. The xiomorns constructed huge mechanical apparatuses with the appearance of alien insects; their spindly limbs, fitted with chisels, picks, shears, and other tools, aided the xiomorns in growing and sculpting the realms within the Vaults. When these gigantic devices outlived their initial purposes, met with some mishap that caused them to malfunction, or simply proved too inconvenient to relocate, the xiomorns abandoned them. Virtually none of these titans still function. Other races that encounter these long-immobile mechanisms usually mistake them for bizarre insectile statues or the decaying exoskeletons of titanic, long-dead mantises.

To aid navigation of their expansive subterranean empire, xiomorns erected numerous way stations in the form of towering three-sided obelisks. These obelisks projected long-range psychic beacons, which the xiomorns believed that they alone could perceive. The stations also provided visitors with basic provisions, healing, magical transportation, and temporary bio-enhancements. Xiomorn operators could manipulate the obelisks' psychic auras to send complex messages, enabling a vast communication network throughout the planet. The xiomorns did not anticipate that the other advanced race to inhabit Golarion, the aboleths, could eavesdrop on these psychic communications. After the xiomorns realized the extent of aboleth psychic power, they also discovered that the aboleths had been secretly raiding the obelisks for supplies. The xiomorns permanently shut down the way stations, but a rare few still sputter with psychic energy or contain forgotten caches of treasure.

A significant number of early xiomorn artifacts focused on either manipulating their crystalline seeds

or providing additional means of expanding their vast empire. As with the *Onyx Key*, abstruse devices allowed xiomorns to establish gateways to realms hidden deep beneath the surface or sequestered within the Plane of Earth. Such artifacts provide GMs with numerous opportunities to draw the PCs into long-term explorations of the midnight depths of Orv or the Inner Planes.

As the xiomorns expanded their subterranean empire and broadened their experiments to incorporate other creatures they encountered, conflict with other races increased. To assist in the skirmishes that the xiomorns seemed to be facing on every front, as well as with the wide-ranging wars against the aboleths, the xiomorns turned away from building artifacts that helped to improve their Vaults or assisted with travel. Instead, they focused on artifacts designed to control and defend passages from invaders, gather intelligence on their enemies, and demonstrate overwhelming might in key clashes. These artifacts were often hastily created by the Vault Keepers; without the wisdom of the Vault Builders to guide their design, these artifacts were frequently as dangerous to their creators as to their enemies. One of these devices, a doomsday device that triggered prematurely, created the poisonous radioactive wasteland in the Vault now known as the Black Desert.

The xiomorns were constantly stretched thin between warring with the aboleths, maintaining control over their immense Vaults, and keeping their unstable artifacts from slipping into enemy hands. In the end, when the xiomorns were forced to flee Golarion or risk extinction by the aboleths, they left many of their dangerous artifacts behind. Although the xiomorns once protected these artifacts with powerful wards and traps, the long march of years has weakened these safeguards.

Not all Vault Keepers fled Golarion, although far too few remain to continue the vast experiments into life and evolution established by the Vault Builders ages ago. The remaining Vault Keepers use the artifacts created by their forebears to maintain their Vaults as best they can. Other artifacts have been stolen away by the aboleths or discovered by the more recent races to occupy Orv, such as drow, urdefhans^{B2}, and even fortunate explorers from the surface. The wonders created by the Vault Builders permeate any adventure in Orv, whether in the nature and shape of the Vaults, the carefully established evolution of its denizens, or the fabulous artifacts used to shape life and wage war there.

The four artifacts below typify artifacts of xiomorn origin. While their construction seems strange by contemporary standards, each item has a comprehensible purpose and provides its owner with remarkable powers. These items can be used to draw PCs deeper into the mysteries of Golarion's ancient past or to assist them in their goals for the future.

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELIQS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

CUBIC SPIRAL

This towering, blocky formation of gleaming semitranslucent crystal spirals up to a height of 20 feet. Six narrow holes of different diameters pierce the crystal spiral: three on one side of the artifact and three on the opposite side. A third face contains jagged stripes, and the fourth side sprouts several tiny clusters of minerals.

CUBIC SPIRAL		MINOR ARTIFACT
SLOT none	CL 20th	WEIGHT 20 tons
AURA strong (all schools)		

The *cubic spiral* regulates the environment around it when directed by a knowledgeable operator. Shallow gouges on one side of the block serve as a bed in which up to 20 tiny clusters of cubic minerals blossom and grow. Plucking a cluster is a standard action, and plucked clusters regrow on the relic in 1 month. Plucked clusters have no powers of their own, but inserting a cluster into one of the six holes in the *cubic spiral* as a standard action activates one of the artifact's functions. Once a user activates a function of the *cubic spiral*, the function remains active until complete (if a limitation is specified below), until the user commands the artifact to cease its function, or until the user is no longer within 1,000 feet. Except for the diminution function, the *cubic spiral* can engage in only one function at a time.

Diminution (front facing, smallest hole): The *cubic spiral* shrinks to any size between its full size and 1 foot in height, as commanded. The weight of the artifact decreases proportionally with its height; at its smallest size, it weighs 150 pounds.

Drill (front facing, middle hole): This function activates only if the *cubic spiral* is at its smallest size. The *cubic spiral* spins and pushes its way relentlessly in an indicated direction, boring an 18-inch-diameter hole into solid objects at a rate of 10 feet per round. The *cubic spiral* can bore through any material with a hardness of less than 20. Creatures can move easily out of the way of the spinning artifact, but those that don't take 20d6 points of slashing damage (no save). The user indicates a maximum distance when this function is activated, up to 1,000 feet. Once it has reached this distance, or if it cannot proceed to the full distance, the *cubic spiral* returns to the user through the borehole.

Slide (front facing, largest hole): The *cubic spiral* slides rapidly in an indicated direction at a speed of 100 feet per round. This movement need not be along the ground, as the artifact can slide through the air or across water. The *cubic spiral* deals 20d6 points of bludgeoning damage to creatures and objects in its path (Reflex DC 20 negates). If it's not at its full size, reduce the damage dealt by 1d6 for each foot smaller than its full size. The user indicates a maximum distance when this function is activated, up to 1,000 feet. The *cubic spiral's* slide stops at the end of this distance or if it encounters a wall or other impassable object. If airborne at the end of its slide, it falls but takes no damage regardless of the distance fallen.

Temperature Regulation (rear facing, smallest hole): The *cubic spiral* radiates waves of heat or cold to adjust the temperature within 1,000 feet. The user indicates a temperature between -20° F and 140° F, and the artifact maintains that temperature within the area.

Tornado (rear facing, middle hole): The *cubic spiral* spins quickly in place, creating an effect like a stationary tornado (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 439) within 100 feet and creating severe winds within 1,000 feet.

Vacuum (rear facing, largest hole): The *cubic spiral* destroys all air adjacent to it each round. Creatures adjacent to the artifact can't speak, use breath weapons, cast spells with verbal components, or do anything else that requires breathing. If the *cubic spiral* is in a sealed chamber, air-breathing creatures in the chamber eventually suffocate.

DESTRUCTION

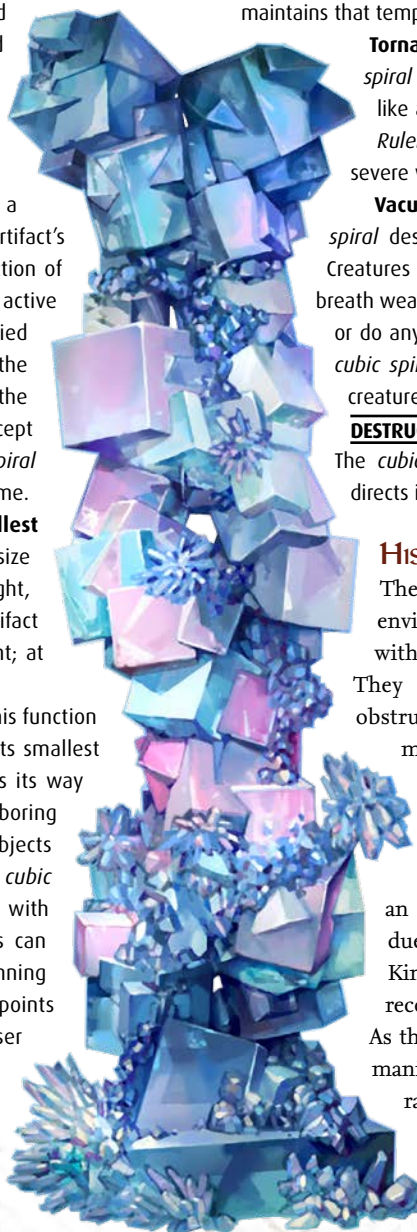
The *cubic spiral* is destroyed if a mindless user directs it to use its drill function on itself.

HISTORY

The xiomorns used *cubic spirals* as environmental regulation mechanisms within their underground realms. They also employed the relics to create obstructions in subterranean tunnels to manipulate their enemies' movements.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The *cubic spiral* could be devastating if it falls into the wrong hands, such as an expansionist urdefhan clan, tyrannical duergar, or agents of Ayrzul, the Fossilized King, and the PCs might be asked to recover the artifact from hostile forces. As the *cubic spiral* is ancient, it might begin manifesting its powers spontaneously and randomly, even when still lost in the depths of Orv, requiring the PCs to reset it in order to save endangered allies or the entire ecosystem of Golarion's expansive Darklands.



EARTH'S EYE

This small, circular geode is about the size of a gold piece and broken open on one side to reveal azure and amaranthine layers of crystal. These strata scintillate with a faint glow.

EARTH'S EYE		MINOR ARTIFACT
SLOT headband	CL 18th	WEIGHT —
AURA strong transmutation		

The *earth's eye* is a small geode that resembles a crystalline eye that sparkles brilliantly. When the *earth's eye* is worn on a headband and positioned in the center of the forehead, it creates a mental bond between the wearer and all natural, unworked stone within 200 feet. By concentrating, the wearer can alter this stone in the following ways. These changes are permanent but are too gradual to damage most creatures and objects.

Calcific Alterations: The wearer pulls mineral-rich moisture through the stone to create stalactites, stalagmites, and similar rock formations. These formations are the same type of stone as the surrounding area, and they appear to be seamless, natural growths. This change requires 1 full round of concentration for each 5-foot square affected.

Create Habitat: The wearer draws forth a natural spring or pool of clear water, causes edible molds or fungi to sprout, or opens narrow vents that bring in fresh air from elsewhere. This change requires 1 full round of concentration for each 5-foot square affected.

Crystalline Forms: The wearer transforms stone into translucent crystal. Sighted creatures can see through up to 30 feet of translucent crystal; thicker crystal is too cloudy to see through. The wearer can also transform nonmagical crystal into ordinary stone. This change requires 1 minute of concentration for each 5-foot square affected.

Reduce Stone: The wearer can remove stone entirely, but the resulting open space appears natural. Anything previously supported by stone that was removed entirely—such as a cavern ceiling—collapses. This change requires 1 minute of concentration for each 5-foot square affected.

Stone Tell: The wearer can cause a 5-foot-square area of stone to ripple slightly, displaying momentary images of creatures and objects that have touched, used, or passed by the stone. This functions as *stone tell* but works only on natural stone. This requires 10 minutes of concentration.

The *earth's eye* does not function when in natural sunlight.

DESTRUCTION

A mortal wearer must use the *earth's eye* to entomb herself entirely within stone, with no open space within 200 feet other than the space the wearer occupies. The wearer

must then cast *flesh to stone* on herself to merge with the surrounding earth, destroying herself and the *earth's eye*.

HISTORY

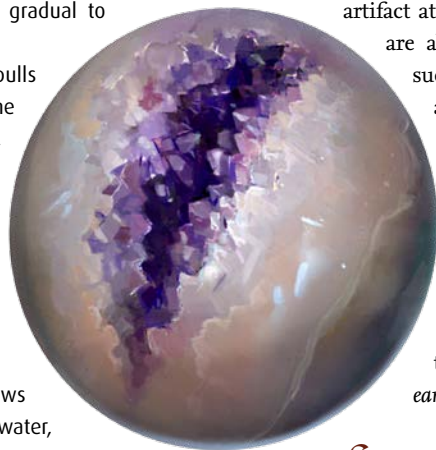
The *earth's eye* is an old xiomorn artifact used to shape the earth and create various habitats before the race discovered the *Vault Seeds*. Even in the distant past, when the xiomorns first came to Golarion, they already considered the *earth's eye* to be embarrassingly primitive, much too slow and crude for their expansive experiments. They have since made efforts to collect all primitive artifacts of this type and destroy them, as well as to hunt down any existing records of the existence of *earth's eyes* and eliminate them.

Although the terrain created by the *earth's eye* appears to be natural, xiomorns can identify stone modified by the artifact at a glance. It is unclear how xiomorns are able to perceive this difference, since such alterations don't radiate a magical aura and are not apparent to most other means of detecting such changes. While few creatures ever come across even one of these artifacts, xiomorns postulate that there are likely still several *earth's eyes* in existence, as they were common in the early days of xiomorn planar exploration. For those who know of their existence, *earth's eyes* are a tempting quest object.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Though the *earth's eye* produces gradual benign effects, unscrupulous users can cause trouble with it, creating adventure opportunities for the PCs. For example, PCs operating in a large city might be asked to investigate recent surges of monsters arising from the sewers. The PCs find that the sewers have been extensively transformed into natural caverns, displacing the prior sewer residents. The changes have been wrought by a clan of wererats using the *earth's eye* to tunnel beneath bank vaults in the city to prepare for a single night of robbery. Alternatively, the PCs might uncover the entrance to an ancient tomb in subterranean caverns but require rest or supplies before venturing in. A band of rival adventurers learns of the discovery and enters the tomb before the PCs. This group finds the *earth's eye* within the tomb and immediately begins using the artifact to turn the area into a death trap of concealed pits and dangerously unstable stalactites.

Recovering the *earth's eye* causes the PCs only more difficulties, particularly if they are careless or flagrant in its use. As xiomorns consider the artifact to be something of an embarrassment, one of the few remaining Vault Keepers might send its servants, such as elementals or pechs^{B2}, to recover it so that it can be destroyed.



VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

TENTACLE OF THE VAULTS

This thin rubbery tentacle is 8 feet long and reeks of an alchemical preservative. The base of the tentacle appears to have been torn from a living creature, and both ends are fitted with decorative crystals.

TENTACLE OF THE VAULTS		MINOR ARTIFACT
SLOT none	CL 20th	WEIGHT 8 lbs.
AURA strong (all schools)		

The *tentacle of the Vaults* is an artifact fashioned by the xiomorns from an aboleth tentacle to aid in their wars against the piscine masterminds. The tentacle is 8 feet in length and too rubbery and flexible to carry comfortably; humanoids find it more convenient to wear the *tentacle of the Vaults* wrapped around the waist like a belt or over the shoulder as a sash, but no matter how the tentacle is worn, it does not occupy a magic item slot. The tentacle's owner can cast *dispel magic* and *remove disease* each five times per day.

The tentacle's primary power activates when its owner tosses it onto the ground and speaks a command word as a standard action. The tentacle animates, transforming into a construct with the statistics listed in the paragraph below until the owner commands the construct to return to an inanimate tentacle as a free action. The construct obeys and serves its owner. It understands all languages spoken by its owner but does not speak. If the construct is destroyed, the artifact reverts to an inanimate tentacle that can be used again at a later time. The *tentacle of the Vaults* can be animated for up to 1 hour each day. This time does not need to be consecutive, but it must be used in 1-minute increments.

When animated, the *tentacle of the Vaults* has the statistics of a Medium animated object (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 14) with a hardness of 20, the grab special attack, and the following special abilities.

Aboleth-Bane Aura (Su) A magical aura extends in a 20-foot radius centered on the construct. All creatures within the aura, including the construct, gain a +8 bonus on attack rolls and melee damage rolls against aberrations. Any creature subject to a compulsion effect immediately receives another saving throw to break free from the effect (if one was allowed to begin with) when it enters the aura and at the start of its turn each round that it remains within the aura.

Dispel Illusion (Sp) As a swift action, the construct can cast *dispel magic* (CL 20th) on an illusion spell within 100 feet. This ability does not count against the number of uses of *dispel magic* granted by the artifact.

DESTRUCTION

If the *tentacle of the Vaults* is soaked in the necromantic fluids from the Vault called the Land of Black Blood and then used to cast *remove disease* on a mythic aboleth (*Pathfinder RPG Mythic Adventures* 178) within 1 day, the mythic aboleth permanently loses its slime ability and the artifact is destroyed.

HISTORY

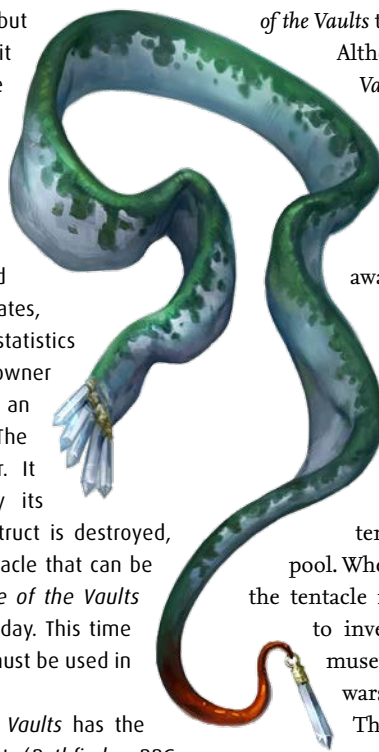
When the Vault Builders first came to subterranean Golarion to construct the Vaults and begin their experiments, they were geographically distant from the ancient aboleth empire, and the two groups rarely interacted. As the xiomorns expanded their massive Vaults to include entire oceans, however, conflict with the aboleths was inevitable. The xiomorns created a number of devices to aid in this struggle, including the *tentacle of the Vaults* torn from the body of a mythic aboleth.

Although the xiomorns used the *tentacle of the Vaults* against their aboleth foes for many years, it was eventually lost. While few humanoids understand the power and history of the artifact, aboleths remember the hated weapon and strive to recover it so it can be hidden away or destroyed.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The PCs might hear about the *tentacle of the Vaults* from a refugee from a besieged dwarven mining colony; she explains that skum overran the colony after an odd rubbery tentacle was discovered at the bottom of a pool. Whether or not the PCs help break the siege, the tentacle is gone. The PCs might later be hired to investigate a series of break-ins targeting museums and libraries with collections about wars between prehistoric inhuman races. The PCs can discover that the perpetrators are minions of a powerful aboleth seeking information about an artifact called the *tentacle of the Vaults*. Ultimately, the PCs hear of a secret auction involving a rubbery sculpture of mysterious origin in a coastal town, such as Riddleport. The auction is a hoax organized by an infamous criminal, although the criminal genuinely has the *tentacle of the Vaults* and does not realize that she is setting herself up as a target for the aboleth and its minions.

Should the PCs obtain the *tentacle of the Vaults*, their lives are likely to become considerably more fraught, as both the xiomorns and the aboleth are highly motivated to get it back—the aboleth pursues it out of pique that such a humiliating weapon against its race exists, and the xiomorns out of desire to reclaim this powerful tool that might help them subdue and humble their ancient foes.



SPEAR OF SHARDS

This weathered spear of lightweight metal is topped with a slender shard of pale crystal that pulses with a soft amber glow. Set underneath this crystal head is a ring set with seven small teardrop-shaped crystals that glow with a similar amber light; five settings on the ring are empty. The haft is engraved with a complex pattern that seems at times to shift and reform itself.

SPEAR OF SHARDS		MINOR ARTIFACT
SLOT none	CL 18th	WEIGHT 10 lbs.
AURA strong divination		

The *spear of shards* is a +6 returning wounding spear created by the Vault Keepers to guide them through the convoluted passages between Golarion's Vaults and to keep dangerous subterranean creatures at bay. The large crystal composing the spear's head is mounted on a 5-foot shaft of lightweight metal that swirls with a complex pattern that every so often appears to shift. A ring designed to fit a dozen smaller teardrop-shaped crystals connects the base of the spear's head to the shaft, although only seven of the 12 sockets contain a crystal. Each of these smaller crystals is about an inch long and angles slightly outward on one side of the ring to act like barbs when the spear is lodged deeply in flesh. Each of these crystals pulses with a warm amber light. Any xiomorn within 1 mile of the *spear of shards* is automatically aware of its presence, as well as the distance and direction to the artifact.

Each of the smaller crystals is attuned to a different Vault beneath Golarion. When the wielder of the *spear of shards* rhythmically taps one of these smaller crystals as a full-round action, the spear identifies the path to the attuned Vault and can direct its wielder unerringly to the Vault, as per *find the path*. This effect lasts until the spear reaches the attuned Vault or until the crystal at the head of the spear is tapped in the same manner. The five missing crystals are lost but, if rediscovered, could be attached to the *spear of shards* and reveal the way to their attuned Vaults as well.

The *spear of shards* has sufficient intelligence to remain staunchly loyal to its xiomorn creators. If wielded by a non-xiomorn, it either refuses to provide directions or intentionally provides erroneous directions to keep the wielder away from the Vaults. If used by a non-xiomorn in combat, the *spear of shards* damages the wielder rather than the target on any attack roll that is a natural 1, as a *cursed backbiter spear*. When the *spear of shards* is used by a non-xiomorn in combat against a xiomorn, any attack roll other than a natural 20 results in an attack against the wielder instead. A non-xiomorn can use the Use Magic Device skill to emulate a xiomorn and trick the *spear of shards*, but the DC of this check is increased by 10 (to DC 35) to reflect the spear's suspicion.

DESTRUCTION

If a creature born in sunlight convinces the *spear of shards* to guide him to all 12 of the Vaults represented by the crystals ringing the spear's head (which would require discovering and reattaching the missing crystals), the artifact is destroyed.

HISTORY

Although the Vault Builders are powerful, they are not omniscient and did not automatically know the path from one Vault to another. Working together, 12 high-ranking Vault Builders created the *spear of shards*, each affixing a single crystal to the spearhead's ring and attuning the artifact to the location of those Vaults over which they held charge. The politics over who was to keep the spear and how its use was to be allotted immediately became fraught, and five of the creators removed their crystals from the artifact in protest. In the ensuing upheaval, these five stones were lost—or perhaps intentionally carried elsewhere. The seven remaining creators managed to come up with an alternate solution to make the *spear of shards* function, but the solution drained the life force of one of the creators each time it was employed. The Vault Builders used it only three times before deciding to lock it away and keep its existence and history secret.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The PCs might learn that an unknown entity has been murdering and mutilating xiomorns, hoping to use pieces of the rare creatures to activate the *spear of shards*. These murderous actions incite turmoil throughout Orv, and the PCs must stop these attacks before the xiomorns decide to respond with long-dormant doomsday weapons within the Vaults to eradicate the assassin. Killing the assassin puts the *spear of shards* into the PCs' hands, but with the xiomorns already on edge, the PCs might make further enemies by keeping the fickle and arrogant artifact.

Instead of finding the *spear of shards*, the PCs might come across one of the crystals lost from its ring and not realize they hold the key to finding a lost Vault. The PCs soon become the targets of a cabal of drow assassins who want to murder them and steal the crystal. These drow either have the *spear of shards* or know where to find it, and they understand how to use it. If the PCs can turn the tables on these wicked assassins and compel the *spear of shards* to provide them with directions, they open the way to a new Vault with its own adventures.

Should the PCs succeed in retrieving the *spear of shards*, the xiomorns are unlikely to allow the relic to remain in the hands of lesser creatures—especially given their records of its activation without the five missing shards, which might cause it to draw on the xiomorns' life force. If the PCs obtain one or more of the shards, ambitious xiomorns will most likely attempt to seize them.

Vault of the Onyx Citadel

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY



BESTIARY

“The scholars tried to warn us. From their parchment-filled chambers at the university, they told us stories about lizard-giants whose crystalline towers marked their cliffside territories. Ancient Thassilon besieged these giants’ clans, but did the giants surrender to the waves, their reign finished? They did not. The monstrosities instead embraced a dark power. They fed from it and followed its siren song deep into the seas and through a passage to Orv. Here the clans dwell still, hunting and blasting their enemies’ minds with psychic might. Our expedition, the scholars warned, would take us into a lizard-giant demesne. How we scoffed! Surely we seasoned adventurers could avoid a few spear-throwing lizards, we thought. We were wrong. The giants knew of our intrusion the moment we arrived. They dragged the others away in chains, and here I cower, hidden, waiting for a chance to sneak away. I fear it will never come.”

—Excerpt from an adventurer’s journal recovered in Orv

In the final installment of the Ironfang Invasion, the PCs venture into the Vault of the Onyx Citadel to put an end to the Ironfang Legion once and for all. This bestiary provides additional threats to augment such extraplanar exploration, including two new creatures native to the Plane of Earth, three hobgoblin troops representing the most elite forces in the Ironfang Legion, and a reptilian giant native to the deepest layers of the Darklands.

ADDITIONAL ENCOUNTERS

The Vault of the Onyx Citadel is a self-contained demiplane rife with adventure, and it provides plentiful opportunities for exploration beyond the adventure's scope. While the PCs are assumed to travel directly to the locations in the adventure, they may linger in the vault or undertake independent expeditions there. The Vault Encounters table features dangers the PCs can confront beyond those in the adventure. During the course of their travels, the PCs have a 30% chance of a random encounter every hour they spend exploring the Vault of the Onyx Citadel. They should have at most three random encounters per 24-hour period. Additional information on the earthen demiplane can be found in the "Continuing the Campaign" article on page 64.

Since the adventure spans a range of character levels, some random encounters might be too simple or too difficult for the PCs, depending on where the party is in the course of the adventure. If the result rolled is outside the Challenge Rating range appropriate for the PCs, roll again on the table or choose a different encounter. Additionally, if the result rolled is inappropriate for the terrain the PCs are traversing, roll again or choose a different encounter.

Keep Guardians (CR 18): Although the xiomorns struggle to keep it secret, one of the jewels from the archives of the Singing Keep has gone missing. Several powerful inevitables have guarded these archives for millennia, but none have any memory of intruders infiltrating the keep, nor do they know exactly when the jewel went missing. Rumor has it that the xiomorns suspect some powerful mindwiping enchantments were involved in addition to the actual heist.

It remains unclear what information is housed within the stolen gem—or whether the xiomorns even know what they've lost—but the xiomorns have spared no effort in trying to retrieve the jewel. They have sent a recovery team made up of three marut inevitables (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 166): Morantha, Rikothe, and Warvord.

If the PCs encounter these keep guardians, the inevitables are short about their motivations for traveling across the Vault of the Onyx Citadel. However, if the PCs can earn their trust, the inevitables reveal they are tracking a pair of pit fiends (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 80) they suspect are the thieves. The inevitables offer the PCs a great treasure from the Singing Keep if they aid them in this solemn mission.

VAULT ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–6	4 elder mud elementals	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 121
7–11	Noble Shaitans	16	See below
12–17	1 grootslang	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 144
18–22	1 hollow serpent	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 149
23–28	1 plasma ooze	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 220
29–34	Mother's Emissaries	16	See below
35–40	1 onyx scourge	16	See page 86
41–48	1 bhole	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 18
49–54	1 plankta	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 195
55–60	1 vault giant	17	See page 84
61–66	1 adv. formian queen	18	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 110
67–71	Keep Guardians	18	See below
72–78	2 mithral golems	18	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 139
79–86	1 thunder behemoth	18	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 39
87–92	1 adamantine golem	19	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 134
93–97	1 tzitzimitl	19	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 276
98–99	1 sard	19	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 237
100	1 jinushigami	20	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 160

Mother's Emissaries (CR 16): Most in the Vault of the Onyx Citadel believe that the three formian queens of Greensend have no lesser formian servants, but that's not quite the case. Each of the queens—who call themselves the Mother of Apathy, the Mother of Love, and the Mother of Pain—has myrmarchs serving her in secret. Each queen tries to hide her servants' existence from her sisters even while she sends them throughout the vault on missions to gather allies. Not content with merely sharing courtly duties for a kingdom of sentient insects, each formian queen hopes to gain the loyalty of more powerful creatures and eventually become the sole matriarch of Greensend.

Six advanced myrmarchs (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 288, 109) are en route to one of the more formidable locations in the vault when they stumble across the PCs. They typically initiate combat with the PCs on sight, but if the PCs handily defeat the formians, they attempt to surrender and offer a place of great power beside their queen should the PCs return with them to Greensend. Of course, if the PCs agree, they find much more than they bargained for once they discover the matriarchs' secret war.

Noble Shaitans (CR 16): As prone to roving as they might be, the shaitans of the Vault of the Onyx Citadel also value a good camping place. As such, the PCs may encounter three noble shaitans (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 143) who are on the lookout for another place for the realm's shaitans to stay—preferably one with plenty of resources and as little danger as possible. If the PCs can point them toward a suitable locale, the shaitans reward them handsomely.

VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

GIANT, VAULT

This saurian giant's body is covered in pale aquamarine scales, and a dark, rigid crest runs from its head to the tip of its thick tail. Its blue eyes give off a soft glow.

VAULT GIANT

CR 17



XP 102,400

LE Gargantuan humanoid (aquatic, giant, reptilian)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +29

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 8, flat-footed 30 (+2 Dex, +24 natural, -4 size)

hp 270 (20d8+180)

Fort +15, **Ref** +10, **Will** +20

Immune cold, mind-affecting effects; **SR** 28

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., swim 60 ft.

Melee +1 *returning spear* +26/+21/+16 (4d6+20/19-20/×3), bite +19 (2d8+6), or bite +24 (2d8+13), 2 claws +24 (2d6+13)

Ranged +1 *returning spear* +15 (4d6+14/19-20/×3)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Special Attacks tail swat

Psychic Magic (CL 19th; concentration +24)

20 PE—*anticipate thoughts*^{OA} (2 PE, DC 17), *greater synaptic pulse*^{OA} (5 PE, DC 20), *mental barrier* IV^{OA} (5 PE), *mindlink*^{OA} (1 PE), *mind probe*^{OA} (4 PE, DC 19), *mind thrust* V^{OA} (5 PE, DC 20), *riding possession*^{OA} (4 PE, DC 19)

STATISTICS

Str 36, **Dex** 15, **Con** 29, **Int** 20, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +32 (+34 bull rush); **CMD** 44 (46 vs. bull rush)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (spear), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (spear)

Skills Acrobatics +12 (+20 when jumping), Climb +36, Knowledge (arcana, local) +15, Perception +29, Sense Motive +26, Spellcraft +20, Survival +24, Swim +44

Languages Aquan, Common, Draconic, Giant, Undercommon

SQ amphibious

ECOLOGY

Environment any coastal (Sightless Sea)

Organization solitary, pair, hunting party (3–9), or war band (10–18 plus 1 mesmerist^{OA} or psychic^{OA} of 3rd–6th level)

Treasure standard (Gargantuan +1 *returning spear*, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Tail Swat (Ex) As a swift action once every 1d4 rounds, a vault giant can use its tail to swat all creatures in a 30-foot cone extending from an intersection on the edge of the giant's space in any direction. Creatures within the area are affected if they are three or more size categories smaller than the giant. Affected creatures take 4d6 points of bludgeoning damage and are knocked

prone (Reflex DC 22 negates both the damage and being knocked prone). The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Vault giants are gargantuan, bipedal lizards that live on the coast of the Sightless Sea of Orv, the lowest level of the Darklands. Their hands and feet are webbed, affording them great mobility in water, and they have powerfully built bodies capable of great feats of strength. In addition to their great size and physical power, vault giants are quick, logical thinkers who employ powerful psychic magic to study and overcome their foes. Despite their formidable natural weapons, vault giants prefer to wield massive, ornamented spears, which function effectively both above and below the surface of the Sightless Sea. Vault giants engage in great hunts, capturing and observing any new creatures they encounter before either consuming or releasing them, as dictated by their leaders.

Vault giants adorn their scales with glowing, waterproof paint brewed from luminescent fungi. The painted markings come in a dizzying array of shapes and colors, displaying clan affiliation, status, and noteworthy personal deeds. A vault giant takes both individual and clan pride in these glowing designs, and mocking or defacing them is certain to earn a vault giant's ire.

Vault giants are 42 feet tall and weigh 25,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

In the mysterious Age of Serpents, the vault giants' civilization spread across the shores of Golarion. Each vault giant clan raised mighty, translucent crystalline spires along the sea cliffs bordering its territory. Like the ancient xulgaths, vault giants were hard-pressed by usurper civilizations, most predominantly Thassilon and its rune giant servants. The divided nature of vault giant clan structure made them ill-prepared to resist a united empire. Thus, to this day, rune giants are hated foes in vault giant legends, and the reptilian giants attack rune giants on sight (though rune giants are rarely found in the deepest layers of the Darklands).

When the vault giant clans were brought to the brink of extinction by Thassilon, their leaders struck a bargain with unnamed dark powers promising salvation. The clans surrendered their spires to the waves and journeyed deep into the sea. There, a passage led them to the shores of the Sightless Sea of Orv, where the vault giants made their new homes. They have adapted well to subterranean life and hunt the great beasts that roam the depths of the Sightless Sea for sustenance. Modern vault giants do not differ physically from their surface-dwelling ancestors, except that their once-vibrant aquamarine scales have faded over time. To compensate, vault giants paint themselves with glowing designs that show clan affiliation and personal status.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Vault giant clans build strongholds on the shores of the Sightless Sea. While most reside on the outer shores, some powerful clans claim steep, rocky islands. From the outside, vault giant clanholds resemble natural stone, with cunningly concealed openings for lookouts. The main entrance of a vault giant clanhold is always underwater, although the interior has portions both above and below sea level. On the inside, the structure is carefully designed to accommodate the entire clan, with defensive structures near the entrance to resist attack from rival clans or other creatures. Vault giants use the same glowing paint with which they adorn their bodies to decorate and mark the rooms inside a clanhold, including the communal heated baths where the giants sleep.

Vault giant society is strict and ritualistic. A giant's role within the clan is established by his actions, and each giant knows the rituals and tasks that will cause his status within the clan to rise or fall. Each clan is led by a circle of powerful female psychics. The circle communes with the dark entities they serve and consults with the governing circles from other clans to decide the direction for vault giant raids and expeditions. A female vault giant who hears the psychic call to join a circle dives deep into the Sightless Sea. She returns changed many years later, with psychic abilities surpassing those of her ordinary kin—if she returns at all. Members of the circle do not age like others of their kind, but are eventually drawn back into the depths of the sea, never to be seen again.

Beyond the ruling circle, vault giant clans assign roles to their members according to individual talents, regardless of gender. Vault giant culture places the unity of the clan above familial ties. The clans decree who mates with whom and when, and females lay their eggs in a clan's communal hatchery. Vault giant eggs mature slowly, taking a year to hatch; offspring that hatch too quickly usually have deformities and are destroyed. The whole clan is responsible for guiding healthy children to adulthood—which they reach at the age of 30—and for teaching them combat and psychic magic along the way. Vault giants can live for several hundred years.

Vault giants place the survival of their clan above all else, and self-image is closely tied to status in the clan. The worst punishment a vault giant can receive is exile. An exile's markings of status are erased, and the individual is sent alone away from the Sightless Sea. Vault giants deprived of their clan become psychotic and usually seek out a group of smaller creatures to bully into

submission—often, a tribe of degenerate troglodytes. This leadership is a pale shadow of the sense of belonging the giant felt within the clan, and these giants often vent their frustrations in mighty rages.

In their interactions with other intelligent denizens of the Sightless Sea, such as aboleths, munavris (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 197), and urdefhans (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 276), vault giants seem to operate according to an inscrutable agenda. They might raid one settlement, lavish gifts upon another, or raze yet another to the ground and take all of its inhabitants as prisoners. Intelligent captives receive equally erratic treatment: they might be eaten in a communal feast or set free in a distant corner of Orv. Vault giants are cautious when they meet unfamiliar intelligent creatures for the first time, preferring to take them captive until they receive instructions from their leaders. Vault giants know only that they loyally follow the orders of their psychic circle; few realize that these powerful psychics take their commands in turn from unknown masters far below the Sightless Sea.



Vault of the Onyx Citadel

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

ONYX SCOURGE

This gigantic creature's stony body is laced with veins of deep red and black minerals that pulse with dark energy. Its face is a mask of rage with glowing red eyes and a pit of pitch blackness for a mouth.

ONYX SCOURGE

CR 16



XP 76,800

CE Huge outsider (earth, elemental, extraplanar)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness, tremorsense 60 ft.; **Perception** +27

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 10, flat-footed 28 (+2 Dex, +20 natural, -2 size)

hp 231 (22d10+110)

Fort +18, **Ref** +11, **Will** +15

DR 10/—; **Immune** death effects, elemental traits, energy drain, negative energy

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.; earth glide

Melee 2 slams +32 (2d12+12/19–20 plus 3d6 negative energy)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks channel negative energy (8d6, DC 19, 4/day), entropic strikes, negative energy capacitance

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +17)
3/day—*waves of exhaustion* (DC 18)

STATISTICS

Str 34, **Dex** 14, **Con** 21, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +22; **CMB** +36 (+40 bull rush, +38 sunder); **CMD** 48 (50 vs. bull rush or sunder)

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Greater Bull Rush, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Intimidating Prowess, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Sundering Strike^{APG}

Skills Appraise +26, Climb +37, Intimidate +38, Knowledge (dungeoneering, planes) +26, Perception +27, Stealth +19

Languages Terrain

ECOLOGY

Environment any underground (Plane of Earth)

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Channel Negative Energy (Su) As a standard action, an onyx scourge can channel negative energy in a 30-foot burst as a 16th-level evil cleric. This ability requires no divine focus. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Entropic Strikes (Ex) An onyx scourge's slam attack deals an additional 3d6 points of negative energy damage. When used against an object, its slam attack ignores the first 5 points of hardness.

Negative Energy Capacitance (Su) An onyx scourge's body stores negative energy, making it immune to death effects, energy drain, and negative energy. Additionally, if an onyx scourge is targeted by a negative energy attack, the next time it channels negative energy within 1 minute, it deals 50% more damage, as though this were an empowered spell.

Onyx scourges are vicious brutes from the Plane of Earth that revel in their deadly power. They resemble elder earth elementals with striations of red and black onyx. Negative energy pulses and flows through the streaks of onyx like blood through exposed veins. The hollows and depressions that serve as an onyx scourge's eyes and mouth are deep voids warped into expressions of rage and hatred.

Negative energy flows through each strike an onyx scourge makes, disrupting living and unliving matter alike. Onyx scourges can also unleash this energy in a devastating blast, which they enjoy using to inflict damage on multiple opponents at once. They gleefully wade into battle whenever given the opportunity.

An onyx scourge is 40 feet tall and weighs 70,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

The endless tunnels on the Plane of Earth are home to wondrous creatures. Elementals dwelling there are formed from the plane's very substance, displaying limitless variations in combinations of different ores, minerals, and materials. In most cases, elementals gain no special benefit from their constituent minerals other than distinctive coloration. In rare situations, however, an elemental encounters a phenomenon that interacts with its physical makeup in strange and terrible ways. Legends circulated among the shaitan posit that one such occurrence gave rise to the first onyx scourges.

Shaitan tales say that, in the distant past, the elder earth elemental Ozusteg discovered a strange anomaly: a sphere of black onyx the size of a small mountain exuding wisps of chill, dark power. Curious about the object's nature, Ozusteg entered the sphere to explore its interior, but discovered too late that the onyx sphere surrounded a breach between the Plane of Earth and the Negative Energy Plane.

Planar scholars theorize that the onyx sphere formed around the breach as a defense mechanism, to contain the destructive power of the Negative Energy Plane. Ozusteg should have been annihilated by its exposure to the negative energy of the breach, but its body absorbed the onyx to likewise contain the negative energy. The elemental survived the ordeal but emerged from the sphere radically changed—a twisted elemental creature infused with the essence of entropy and filled with the desire to destroy.

Ozusteg gathered other elementals through coercion, trickery, or promises of power, and then forced them to enter the onyx sphere just as it had done. Only the most powerful elementals survived, similarly transformed into creatures like Ozusteg. Infused with destructive energy and feeling no loyalty to each other nor to Ozusteg, these creatures spread ruin across the Plane of Earth and eventually into other planes. They came to be called onyx scourges, after the pulsing energy in their onyx striations and the devastation they leave in their wake.

No shaitan claims to know how many onyx scourges exist, or if they were all created by Ozusteg. Explorers have never

found Ozusteg's planar breach on the Plane of Earth or even definitive proof that Ozusteg existed at all. It is possible that more than one breach exists, each with the ability to create onyx scourges from elementals that venture too close yet are powerful enough to survive the exposure.

Tracing the origin of onyx scourges is difficult for several reasons. First, onyx scourges are truculent, prone to answering questions with lies if they deign to answer them at all. Second, the creatures are by nature powerful and incredibly destructive; they generally attack any creatures in their path and are disinclined to leave survivors. Finally, the creatures constantly wander until they find a territory to call their own and so are likely encountered far from whatever their point of origin might have been.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Onyx scourges are most often found on the Plane of Earth. They are generally solitary creatures that lay claim to a certain region of the plane—usually several miles wide—and viciously attack elementals and other denizens of that region. After dwelling in one area for a time, a scourge moves to a new area and wages war on whatever creatures happen to reside in its new chosen territory. If a scourge's domain encompasses a major trade route on the Plane of Earth, shaitan merchants soon dispatch agents to destroy or relocate the creature.

Although some scholars dispute the details of the story of Ozusteg, others believe there is a grain of truth within the tale and seek the fabled onyx sphere. Necromancers desire the negatively charged onyx to enhance their vile experiments or to create powerful new undead monsters and constructs. Forbidden tomes theorize that the black onyx can be used to unlock greater powers from the legendary *Shadowstaff* and other necromantic artifacts. The promise of such power has led many wizards to spend their fortunes and their lives to find Ozusteg's domain.

Onyx scourges on the Plane of Earth make terrifying predators. Although their primary motive is to wage war against all creatures in the territories they have claimed as their own, onyx scourges sometimes venture into other earth elementals' territories to capture prey, which is very rarely seen again. Ayrzul, the Fossilized King of the Plane of Earth, is mostly indifferent to his elemental subjects but appreciates

the destructive power of the onyx scourges and plots ways to use them as weapons against his rival, Ymeri, and her minions on the Plane of Fire. However, Ayrzul hasn't yet figured out how to compel the cruel and chaotic creatures to help him in any significant way.

On the Material Plane, onyx scourges present an even greater danger to mortals. Their destructive power is compounded by their ability to bolster nearby undead, creating devastating juggernauts that would be prized weapons in a necromancer's army. Onyx scourges can heal undead forces while annihilating living troops and their defensive fortifications. Thankfully, only the most powerful spellcasters can bring an onyx scourge through a gate, and the creatures are too strong to be magically controlled by normal means. That doesn't stop ambitious spellcasters from making the attempt, and the cleverest of them might even use the onyx scourges' love of destruction to convince one to join a campaign.



VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

TROOPS, ELITE IRONFANG LEGION

The Legion utilizes a variety of specialized soldiers.

IRONFANG MAGEHUNTER TROOP

This grim band of hobgoblin hunters is equipped with sturdy armor and well-used weapons.

IRONFANG MAGEHUNTER TROOP CR 14

XP 38,400

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid, troop)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 23 (+5 armor, +5 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 199 (19d8+114)

Fort +16, **Ref** +13, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities stalwart, troop traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee troop (4d6+3 plus distraction)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks arcane hunter, distraction (DC 24), magic weapons, volley

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 20, **Con** 20, **Int** 11, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 32

Feats Combat Reflexes, Diehard, Disruptive, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Spellbreaker, Step Up, Toughness

Skills Knowledge (arcana) +10, Perception +12, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +9; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Goblin

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or division (3–6)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Arcane Hunter (Ex) A magehunter troop deals an additional 2d6 points of damage with its troop attack to creatures with levels of any arcane spellcasting class or that use spell-like abilities not derived from a divine spellcasting class.

Magic Weapons (Ex) A magehunter troop's attacks count as magic for the purpose of bypassing damage reduction.

Stalwart (Ex) When a magehunter troop succeeds at a Fortitude or Will saving throw against a spell or spell-like ability that has a partial effect even on a successful save, the troop is completely unaffected by it.

Volley (Ex) A magehunter troop can fire a volley of crossbow bolts as a standard action. This attack takes the form of up to four lines with a range of 100 feet. These lines can start from the corner of any square in the troop's space. All creatures in any of these lines take 4d8 points of piercing damage (Reflex DC 24 half). The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Most hobgoblins in this troop are equipped with +1 mithral chain shirts, +1 scimitars, and +1 heavy crossbows.

IRONFANG SIEGE ALCHEMIST TROOP

A wild-eyed band of hobgoblins cluster tightly around fortified carts containing hoses and reservoirs brimming with strange fluids.

IRONFANG SIEGE ALCHEMIST TROOP CR 16

XP 76,800

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid, troop)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 24 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural)

hp 241 (21d8+147)

Fort +20, **Ref** +15, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities troop traits; Immune poison

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee troop (5d6+4 plus 3d6 fire)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks alchemical bombardment, firedrake spout

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 22, **Con** 23, **Int** 16, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 36

Feats Dodge, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firedrake), Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Siege Engineer^{UC}, Throw Anything, Toughness

Skills Craft (alchemy) +27, Craft (siege engines) +17, Heal +14, Knowledge (engineering) +24, Perception +22, Stealth +8, Survival +25; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc

SQ alchemical revitalization

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Alchemical Bombardment (Ex) As a standard action, a siege alchemist troop can target up to 3 squares within 40 feet with a barrage of alchemical bombs. This attack deals 10d4 points of acid or fire damage (as selected by the troop) to all creatures in a 10-foot-radius burst (Reflex DC 26 half). A creature within the area of more than one burst must attempt separate saves against each. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Alchemical Revitalization (Su) Three times per day as a swift action, this troop can grant itself fast healing 15 for 3 rounds.

Firedrake Spout (Ex) As a standard action, the siege alchemist troop spews forth large gouts of fire from its incendiary siege engines. This attack takes the form of a 120-foot line or a 60-foot cone (as selected by the troop). Targets in the area take 20d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 26 half); those who fail their saves also catch on fire. A siege alchemist troop produces enough alchemical ammunition to use this ability 10 times each day. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Most members of this troop are supplied with chain shirts, longswords, and bandoliers of acid and alchemist's fire. As their creations are jury-rigged spontaneously, capturing a usable firedrake (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 163) after defeating one of these troops is rare.

IRONFANG YZOBURIDER TROOP

These hobgoblin knights ride atop brutish stinking yaks that paw the ground angrily.

IRONFANG YZOBURIDER TROOP

CR 18



XP 153,600

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid, troop)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

Aura stench (DC 30, 10 rounds)

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 11, flat-footed 31 (+10 armor, +1 Dex, +8 natural, +3 shield)

hp 300 (24d8+192)

Fort +22, **Ref** +15, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities troop traits; **Immune** fear

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee troop (5d6+10 plus bleed)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks bleed (2d6), magic weapons, mounted terror, mounted troop, volley

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 21, **Con** 26, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +28 (+30 bull rush, +32 overrun); **CMD** 43 (45 vs. bull rush or overrun, 47 vs. trip)

Feats Animal Affinity, Charge Through^{APG}, Combat Reflexes, Endurance, Greater Overrun, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mounted Combat, Power Attack

Skills Handle Animal +15, Intimidate +36, Perception +16, Ride +30, Stealth +3; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Giant, Goblin

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or division (3–6)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Magic Weapons (Ex) A yzoburider troop's attacks count as magic for the purpose of bypassing damage reduction.

Mounted Terror (Su) Once per round as a free action, a yzoburider troop can attempt an Intimidate check to demoralize a single foe that has been damaged by its troop attack. If the troop succeeds at demoralizing a shaken or frightened foe, the foe's fear level increases by one step.

Mounted Troop (Ex) A yzoburider troop deals triple its troop damage if it moves at least 10 feet before making a troop attack. The hobgoblins in this troop are Medium creatures,

but the troop can fit only through areas that would accommodate their Large mounts.

Volley (Ex) A yzoburider troop can fire a volley of arrows as a standard action. This attack takes the form of up to four lines with a range of 100 feet. These lines can start from the corner of any square in the troop's space. Creatures in any of these lines take 8d8 points of piercing damage (Reflex DC 27 half). The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Members of this battle-yak-mounted troop are equipped with +1 full plate, +1 lances, +1 composite longbows (+4 Str) with 20 arrows, and gory trophies of past victories. Their yzoburider mounts (*Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 124) wear military saddles and chain barding.



VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

ZARXORIN

This titanic earthen creature is humanoid-shaped with a hunched, pugnacious posture. The enormous hump of its back bears a ring of standing stones that crackle faintly with energy.

ZARXORIN

CR 19

XP 204,800

N Colossal outsider (earth, elemental, extraplanar)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +31

DEFENSE

AC 34, touch 2, flat-footed 34 (+32 natural, -8 size)

hp 350 (28d10+196)

Fort +18, **Ref** +16, **Will** +18

DR 15/—; **Immune** acid, elemental traits; **SR** 30

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +36 (6d8+16 plus grab), 2 slams +36 (4d6+16/19–20)

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.

Special Attacks joggle, menhir focus pool, swallow whole (6d8+24 bludgeoning damage, AC 30, 70 hp), trample (4d6+24, DC 40)

STATISTICS

Str 42, **Dex** 10, **Con** 25, **Int** 7, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +28; **CMB** +52 (+56 bull rush, grapple); **CMD** 62 (64 vs. bull rush)

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Critical Focus, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Greater Bull Rush, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lunge, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Staggering Critical

Skills Appraise +29, Intimidate +31, Perception +31, Stealth +21 (+29 in rocky terrain); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in rocky terrain

Languages Terran

SQ freeze, hill retreat, stony stomach

ECOLOGY

Environment any hills or underground (Plane of Earth)

Organization solitary

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Freeze (Ex) A zarxorin that has used its hill retreat ability appears to be a large earthen mound with a ring of standing stones around its crown, and it can take 20 on its Stealth check to hide in plain sight as a hill or rock. A zarxorin that has spent at least 10 years within its hill becomes covered with vegetation and nests for wildlife, gaining an additional +10 bonus on this Stealth check until it ends its hill retreat.

Hill Retreat (Ex) As a move action, a zarxorin can withdraw its body into the hump on its back to protect itself from danger and increase its connection to deep power within the earth. The zarxorin gains a +8 bonus on saving throws and to CMD against drag, bull rush, pull, or push attempts and against any other effect that would physically move it from its position. The zarxorin also gains a +8 enhancement bonus to its natural armor, although this benefit does not apply

against attacks made by creatures that the zarxorin has swallowed whole. While in its hill retreat, a zarxorin cannot take any action except to end the retreat or to use its joggle ability. The zarxorin recovers 1 point in its menhir focus pool for each year it spends using this ability. The zarxorin can end its retreat as a move action.

Joggle (Ex) As a full-round action, a zarxorin can rapidly shake its bulk to scatter its foes and churn the ground; all creatures in the zarxorin's space or adjacent to it that are at least three sizes smaller than the zarxorin take 5d6 points of bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 40 negates); creatures that take damage from the zarxorin's joggle are pushed to the nearest unoccupied square and fall prone. The zarxorin's space and all adjacent spaces thereafter become difficult terrain. The save DC is Strength-based.

Menhir Focus Pool (Su) The standing stones on a zarxorin's back gather latent power from the earth into a menhir focus pool that the zarxorin can use to create a variety of powerful effects. The pool contains a maximum number of points equal to the zarxorin's Hit Dice (28 for most zarxorins), although a zarxorin is typically encountered with only 1d10+10 points in its menhir focus pool due to the slow rate at which they are recovered. A zarxorin can spend these points as noted below, but cannot spend more than 2 points from its menhir focus pool each round. A zarxorin can recover points in its menhir focus pool only through use of its hill retreat ability. The save DCs are Strength-based.

- As a free action, a zarxorin can expend 1 point from its menhir focus pool when it strikes an opponent with a slam attack to stun the opponent for 1d6 rounds (Fortitude DC 40 reduces the duration of the stun effect to only 1 round).
- As a swift action, a zarxorin can expend 1 point from its menhir focus pool to calcify a creature that it has swallowed whole, as per *flesh to stone* (Fortitude DC 40 negates).
- As a move action, a zarxorin can spend 2 points from its menhir focus pool to unleash a blast of power that deals 20d6 points of electricity damage to all creatures in a 300-foot-radius burst (Reflex DC 40 half) other than the zarxorin; creatures that take damage from this effect are slowed (as per the *slow* spell) for 1d6 rounds.

Stony Stomach (Ex) A zarxorin's stony interior makes it difficult for creatures it has swallowed to escape. Its stomach gains a +4 bonus to AC and has double the normal hit points when determining the success of a creature attempting to cut its way free.

A zarxorin is an immense, humanoid-shaped elemental with a vast hummock of rock and earth across its back like an enormous shell. Several weathered menhirs protrude from its back, resembling a circle of standing stones. The creatures are prone to long bouts of hibernation, during which they connect to the ley lines and energy sources of

the deep earth and slowly gather power in their standing stones. A hibernating zarxorin is often mistaken for a hill, its standing stones believed to be evidence of some ancient, sacred site. Humanoids can live peacefully near one of these “druid hills” for decades, only to be flabbergasted when the hill suddenly rises up and lumbers away.

Zarxorins engage in short stretches of exploration between their long rests, treading doggedly across mountain ranges or through underground caverns. They are by nature pugnacious, likely to swat away anyone in their path, and they rarely back down from a fight. Although zarxorins have no need to eat, they have a vast, stony stomach and can swallow smaller creatures whole, grinding them up within their cavernous bellies.

A zarxorin is 75 feet tall and weighs more than 10,000 tons.

ECOLOGY

Zarxorins originate in the Plane of Earth, but many have migrated to the Material Plane through planar breaches. They prefer to inhabit hilly regions on the surface or massive caverns underground, where their titanic bulk can nestle within sunken valleys along ley lines. Zarxorins pull their bodies into the massive humps on their backs to rest, becoming indistinguishable from an ordinary hill capped with standing stones. When in this pose, zarxorins feel a peaceful connection to the energy sources that flow deep within the earth, restoring their energy. Once the zarxorin can draw no more energy—often after decades—it rises up to find a new resting place.

Although its heavy tread shakes the ground, knocking over trees and setting rockslides in motion, a zarxorin has very little further impact on its environment. While at rest, it serves as a place for plants to root and animals to nest; when it wakes, it simply shakes these creatures off before moving on. Despite featuring an enormous mouth with jagged stones for teeth and a belly filled with grinding rocks, a zarxorin does not need food and generally only swallows troublesome attackers who won't get out of its way or who wake it from hibernation.

An angry zarxorin can discharge the energy stored within its back-menhirs against its foes, either by channeling power through its stony body or by blasting the energy through the air. A zarxorin's menhirs cannot be removed without causing the creature great

pain, as with pulling a healthy tooth, but they grow back after several centuries if removed.

Zarxorins are effectively immortal, and some have been wandering through the Darklands and across Golarion for millennia.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Zarxorins prefer to be left alone, particularly while they are hibernating. Despite their connection to ley lines and natural forces, zarxorins feel no particular connection to druids, shamans, or powerful nature spirits. When zarxorins encounter one another, they share stories of their travels slowly, over many days, and then depart peacefully. Zarxorins are not particularly bright, and might be convinced to ally with another creature in exchange for directions to a magic-rich place to rest. They are generally too powerful to fear any other creatures, but great elemental rulers have been known to bully zarxorins into temporary service, creating an army of towering hills.



VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

FOREWORD

PART 1: ALLIES AND ENEMIES

PART 2: HOMECOMING

PART 3: ENTERING THE VAULT

PART 4: SIEGE OF THE ONYX CITADEL

NPC GALLERY

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

RELICS OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

BESTIARY

NEXT MONTH

THE LOST OUTPOST

By Jim Groves

The Ruins of Azlant Adventure Path begins with the adventurers on a ship deep in the Arcadian Ocean, ready to make landfall at their new home of Talmador's Bounty. However, dread settles in as they realize the colony has been abandoned. Can they survive long enough to discover what happened to the previous colonists?

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ECOLOGY OF THE ALGHOLLTHU

By Greg A. Vaughan

Since long before the advent of humanity on Golarion, the scheming alghollthu have ruled the world from the shadows deep beneath the ocean floor. From the insidious veiled masters, who infiltrate the upper echelons of surface-dwelling civilizations, to the arcane mastermind aboleths, this aquatic race has manipulated the culture, politics, and evolution of countless lesser beings. Explore the culture, history, and schemes of one of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game's most iconic monsters!

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IRONFANG RECRUIT MANUAL

ENTRY 22-1: THE STONE ROAD

You've survived this long, so you might just survive your first day in the field, but there remains one last truth of the Ironfang Legion that you must understand to serve as its blade: the Stone Road.

The Stone Road is ancient, and it was rediscovered and unlocked by our glorious General Alaersi as part of her five great deeds on behalf of all hobgoblins. You will hear rumors that it is magic, that it was made by the accursed dwarves. These are lies, meant to stir dissent, and those caught with such filth on their lips can expect to have them wiped off!

The Stone Road is the ancient way of things, as natural as teeth or gods, and just as useful in making war.



ALWAYS REMAIN ON THE PATH

A worg will as soon take your hand off as call you a friend. Likewise, the Stone Roads are fearsome beasts, even if they are part of the underpinning of the world. The one true rule of the Roads is this: NEVER STRAY FROM THE PATH. Unless you're promoted a hell of a lot further than you can realistically expect, you'll never tread the Roads without a full unit, and you better stay with that unit, or they'll tell tales of you as that damned fool who was never seen again. Things worse than hobgoblins lurk in the dark.

Despite the danger, the Stone Roads are the fastest and quietest route to move troops, all unseen by squinty little human eyes, and they're the key to dusting the humans from a world that should by all rights be ours! Respect the danger, but never let fear set in. Cowards are executed, no matter what they're running from.

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For months, the merciless Ironfang Legion has struck out against humanity from its impenetrable, otherworldly Onyx Citadel! But now in possession of a key to this stronghold, the bold adventurers must rally their allies, breach the barrier between worlds, tame an alien wilderness, and finally bring the fight to their hobgoblin conquerors! Can the heroes best the Legion's most devious commanders, including the unparalleled warrior-general Azaersi, or will they fall as readily as their homeland before hobgoblin blades?

This Pathfinder Adventure Path volume concludes the Ironfang Invasion Adventure Path and includes:

- "Vault of the Onyx Citadel," a Pathfinder adventure for 16th-level characters, by Larry Wilhelm.
- Suggestions for continuing the campaign beyond the adventure's end, including a gazetteer of the Vault of the Onyx Citadel, by Crystal Frasier.
- An ecology of the Vault Keepers and the mythic Vault Builders, who together compose the xiomorn race, by Greg A. Vaughan.
- Details on the powerful xiomorn-crafted relics adventurers may find when exploring the Vault of the Onyx Citadel, by Tim Hitchcock.
- A bestiary packed with elite Ironfang Legion troops and denizens of the Plane of Earth, by Paris Crenshaw, Kalervo Oikarinen, and Larry Wilhelm.



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