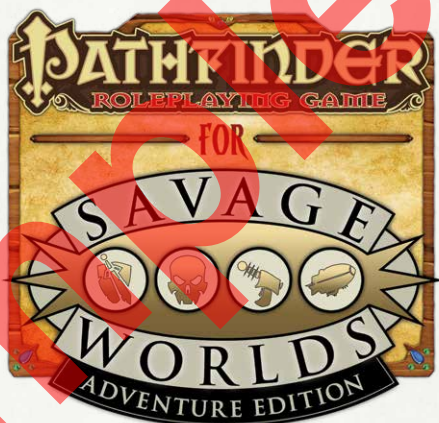


RISE OF THE RUNELORDS

BOOK 6: SPIRES OF XIN-SHALAST



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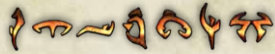
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BACKGROUND



AT THE HEADWATERS OF THE SACRED RIVER AVAH ROSE A MIGHTY CITY ON THE SLOPES OF A LEGENDARY MOUNTAIN—A TESTAMENT TO THE GREED OF RUNELORD KARZOU. THIS IS XIN-SHALAST, FESTOONED WITH THE PLUNDER OF A THOUSAND CAMPAIGNS. IT HAS REMAINED HIDDEN FOR MILLENNIA IN ITS NARROW VALLEY IN THE SHADOW OF MHAR MASSIF—A MOUNTAIN OF MYTHOLOGICAL PROPORTIONS AND SINISTER HISTORY. ATOP THIS PEAK, BEARING THE UNSETTLING CARVEN VISAGE FOR WHICH IT WAS NAMED, STAND THE FABLED SPIRES OF XIN-SHALAST, RISING ABOVE THE CITY LIKE THE PINNACLES OF A CROWN. THUS DID KARZOU SHOW HIS MASTERY OVER BOTH THE EARTH AND THE REALMS BEYOND.

Over 10,000 years ago, the Thassilonian empire was ruled by seven tyrants known as runelords—powerful wizards whose magic was aligned on what have become known as the seven mortal sins. When the empire crumbled, they escaped death (or worse) by various methods, entering states of hibernation from which their loyal followers would revive them. Yet the fall of Thassilon was far more complete than even the most pessimistic runelords anticipated, and none survived who could free them in the centuries to follow. In time, they were forgotten by the world.

Karzoug ruled Shalast, and as the lord of greed, his realm was the most decadent. His capital city, Xin-Shalast, lay nestled in a valley in the mountains, a place of golden streets and silver roofs sprawled in the shadow of volcanoes and watched over by one of the tallest peaks in the world—Mhar Massif.

When the end drew near, Karzoug charged his agents in Runeforge with developing a method for him to escape the fall of the empire, and they responded by taking the location of his palace into account. For the Spires of Xin-Shalast, as his palace was known, were perched at the summit of Mhar Massif, where the boundaries between worlds are thin.

Karzoug's agents transformed the source of his eldritch power, a device known as a runewell, into a portal of sorts into the void between these worlds. When the end came, Karzoug stepped through this portal and

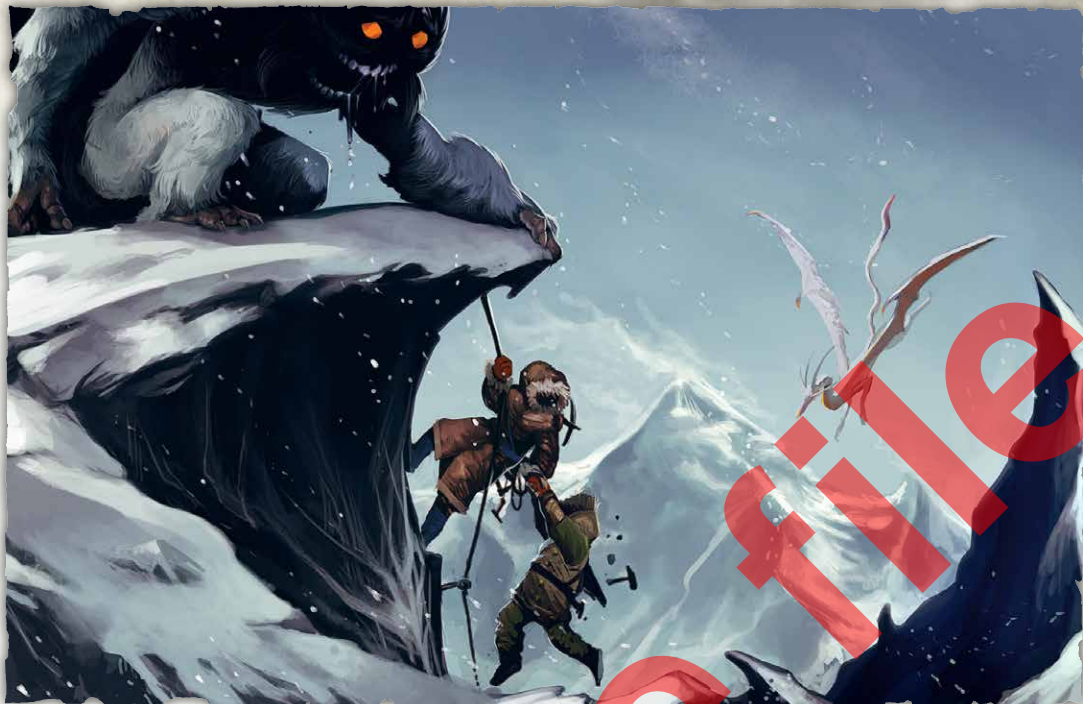
into a state of suspended animation in this extradimensional vault, caught between the Mhar Massif in this world and the terrible dimension known as Leng in another. Without surviving apprentices to revive him, Karzoug remained there for millennia.

The tale of Karzoug's awakening, of his slow return to Golarion, has been told over the past five books. Karzoug is now nearly ready to step back into this world, his powers restored and his city resurrected, to raise Thassilon from the ashes. Yet there is still time.

Karzoug is awake, but though his mind has been hard at work, he cannot yet leave the demiplane hidden between this world and Leng—a place known as the Eye of Avarice. While Mokmurian was his primary agent in Varisia, in Xin-Shalast Mokmurian would have been but a captain in his army.

The denizens of the ruined city have aligned themselves to Karzoug's banner, and though they bicker and fight among each other, they are ready to serve. Among these minions are devils, dragons, tribes of lamias, creatures culled from the madness of Leng, and armies of giants led by rune giants. With their aid, Karzoug's influence over the giants of Varisia will become complete.

These are not Karzoug's only agents. He has selected new generals, champions, and even an apprentice to serve him. The stage is set for Karzoug's return, and only the heroes stand between him and Varisia.



RECURRING VILLAINS

Though *Rise of the Runelords* assumes that the majority of the villainous leaders confronted are slain at this point, if any of them escaped the punishing blades and spells of your party, this book is the best and most logical point to reintroduce them.

While some villains have their dooms all but written into the text of their encounters, others (like Xanessa and Lucrecia, some of the masters of Runeforge, Arkhryst, or even Nualia) could conceivably survive and harbor long-lasting grudges against the party.

If you do wish to have escaped villains come back to vex the party one last time, the best place to use them is in the Pinnacle of Avarice.

Nualia, for example, may seethe with such fury that she could seek out the heroes' enemies and volunteer her aid against them, eventually reaching the Spires of Xin-Shalast herself to pledge her support of Karzoug.

In all cases, you should take the time to advance these villains to something appropriate to challenge the party. At this point, you know the strengths and weaknesses, so plan the rematches accordingly.

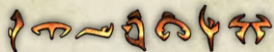
CHAPTER SUMMARY

With the magic and lore retrieved from Runeforge, the party is ready to seek out Xin-Shalast and confront the rising runelord. The best chance the heroes have to find Xin-Shalast is a pair of dwarven brothers who claimed to have discovered the city and set off into the Kodar Mountains to plunder its riches.

In the Kodar foothills, the heroes find more than a map to Xin-Shalast — they find the brothers' ghosts, still tormented by the supernatural creature that slew them. By defeating it and appeasing the ghosts, they can finally discover the secret route to Xin-Shalast and learn several important secrets that will aid them in their final quest.

Braving the Kodar Mountains, the heroes face challenges both natural and unnatural in the ruined Lower City, now being slowly reoccupied by Karzoug's army. Finding unexpected allies in the city, the party learns a secret way to surmount the incomparable heights of the face of Mhar Massif, atop which stand the very spires of Karzoug's citadel. Finally, they confront Karzoug within the Eye of Avarice, where the fate of the ancient runelord — and Varisia's future — is decided.

PART ONE: SEEKING XIN-SHALAST



XIN-SHALAST IS LOCATED HIGH IN THE KODAR MOUNTAINS, CLOAKED IN AGELESS MAGIC THAT PREVENTS ITS APPROACH BY MOST WHO SEEK ITS LEGENDARY STREETS. THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN WORLDS ARE TRANSITORY HERE, A FACET THE CITY'S FOUNDERS SOUGHT PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT SUCH CONDITIONS MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO REACH WITHOUT KNOWING THE WAY. AN IDLE SEEKER OF XIN-SHALAST COULD WALK UP ONE SIDE OF MHAR MASSIF AND DOWN THE OTHER WITHOUT EVER FINDING THE CITY—THOSE WHO SEEK IT ACTIVELY CAN SPEND THEIR ENTIRE LIVES LOOKING WITHOUT SUCCESS.

Mokmurian discovered Xin-Shalast's location with the aid of books and maps he recovered from the hidden library under Jorgenfist, and he destroyed those sources after committing them to memory. Yet traces remain. A character who researches Xin-Shalast in the library of Thassilon under Jorgenfist and succeeds on an Academics roll can learn much of the city's location.

Likewise, interrogating prisoners from Runeforge or perhaps studying their notes and spellbooks can reveal much. As this chapter begins, the pathfinders should have learned the following about Xin-Shalast—if they've not yet learned this information have one of the adventurers discover the missing clues while studying a recently acquired spellbook, or perhaps after they speak to an expert on Thassilon, such as Sandpoint's own Brodert Quink.

- **XIN-SHALAST IS LOCATED ON THE TOWERING MOUNTAIN OF MHAR MASSIF, IN A VALLEY THAT LIES AT THE HEADWATERS OF THE RIVER AVAH.**
- **MHAR MASSIF IS SAID TO SERVE AS A BRIDGE TO STRANGE REALMS BEYOND GOLARION.**
- **ANYONE WHO CAN FIND THE RIVER AVAH CAN FOLLOW IT DIRECTLY INTO XIN-SHALAST.**

The problem arises from the fact that this entire region, from the River Avah to the summit of Mhar Massif, lies in a realm where reality has frayed at the edges. In order to

reach Xin-Shalast, the heroes need a guide of some sort—or at the very least, detailed notes left behind by someone who has been to Xin-Shalast before.

CONSULTING BRODERT

The adventurers have likely spoken to Brodert Quink, Sandpoint's local expert on all things Thassilonian, about their discoveries. This adventure assumes he's the one they go to for advice again when they seek answers to finding the hidden city of Xin-Shalast, though they could just as easily consult other experts, ranging from Pathfinders in Magnimar to extraplanar oracles to their own sages and scholars within the party.

Assuming the party has stayed in contact with Brodert since his help back during *The Skinsaw Murders*, the old sage has begun to see the adventurers as his own personal field research team.

Certainly, if they share with him confirmation that the Old Light of Sandpoint was once a weapon and thus validate his own educated guesses as to the ruin's original purpose, he is very friendly indeed.

Unfortunately, Xin-Shalast is as much a legend to Brodert as to any other scholar of things Thassilonian. Yet if they ask him about Xin-Shalast, he grows thoughtful for a moment, then snaps his fingers as he remembers an old account of a pair of

HANDOUT 6-1

Salutations, Mr. Quink!

*Thank you again for the kind words and drink. It's always a pleasure to speak with readers of my work, especially those well read and civilized enough to know of my writing beyond *Eidolon*. Alas, I was unable to procure a copy of the early draft from my personal files. It would seem that it has gone the way of so much of my early work, lost forever to the gulfs of time and narrow-minded publishers unable to grasp the import of a young Pathfinder's work.*

Fortunately, my mind is as quick now as it was in those early days of my explorations of your fantastic homeland. I recall the evening I first heard the story of Xin-Shalast, while seated on a log in a Varisian camp, sharing ruby mead with an enchanting young woman. Ah, but that's a story for other times.

I was intrigued by the tale, though. All peoples have tales of "cities of gold," yet with Xin-Shalast, the Varisians had no tradition of explorers seeking it. They viewed the place as one of evil, a place to be feared and forsaken. As far as I could tell, none of your indigenous people ever sought out the ruins before the advent of Chelish rule. But there was mention, come to think of it, of two dwarven brothers. Vekker, I think their names were. Claimed to have found the route to Xin-Shalast and convinced several tradesmen in Janderhoff to support and supply their plan to establish a base of operations in the low Kodar Mountains along the Kazaron. Their vanishing into the Kodars bankrupted all but one of their investors, I hear, and even today, the Vekker name is generally accompanied by a litany of rousing dwarven profanity when it comes up in Hoffian taverns.

*In the stead of enclosing a copy of the early, complete draft of my work, though, please find a signed copy of *Eidolon* with this missive. I trust it will look quite handsome on your shelf.*

*In good health,
Redwing*

dwarven brothers who claimed to have discovered the route to the fabled city.

After rooting through his books and scrolls for a few minutes, he emerges triumphant with a letter he received from the author of the definitive cyclopedia on the region of Varisia and the Storval Plateau: Cevil "Redwing" Charms's well-known (and well-criticized) volume, *Eidolon*.

He allows the heroes to read the letter but won't let them keep it — Redwing is one of his favorite authors, and the letter is a personal treasure. The letter is reproduced as Handout 6-1.

The letter concerns the escapades of two dwarven brothers, Silas and Karivek Vekker, who journeyed into the Kodar Mountains and supposedly discovered the route to Xin-Shalast. Brodert has done his own research and can confirm that Silas and Karivek Vekker did indeed abscond with a fair amount of invested capital into the mountains.

The common theory in Janderhoff is that the dwarves used the "discovery of Xin-Shalast" as a cover for a con, but those who knew the Vekkers personally held them in quite high regard. Brodert suspects that they did indeed discover Xin-Shalast, and their secrecy was

one born of necessity rather than malice. For if they had discovered the great city, until they could return with proof, it would only be wise to guard the discovery.

Brodert theorizes that the Vekkers met some sort of foul end in the Kodars, and that if their base of operations could be found (along the banks of the Kazaron River, according to Redwing's letter), perhaps clues to the city's location could be found therein.

USING MAGIC

Even if there aren't characters in the group who can cast divination spells, they can certainly seek out spellcasters or scrolls in Magnimar to use magic to aid in their search for Xin-Shalast. Unfortunately, most divination spells are somewhat reduced in effectiveness due to the reality-altering region in Mhar Massif's shadow.

Use the results of *divination* to steer the heroes in the right direction, but don't feel bound to answer questions precisely.

If the characters are stuck, *divination* can reveal all the bulleted information on page 6, as well as the fact that most recently two

LOCATING THE CITY

At this point the characters have access to some pretty powerful spells through advances or by purchasing scrolls and wands.

Powers such as *divination* can put the heroes on the right path, but powers such as *locate* and *scrying* are unable to give an exact location of the city.

dwarven brothers named Silas and Karivek Vekker claimed to have discovered the route to the city, but after establishing a base of operations in the Kodar Mountains, they were never heard from again.

THE WORLD'S ROOF

The Kodar Mountains are one of Golarion's most intimidating and massive mountain ranges. Few places in the world are more inhospitable to life than these mountains, yet life endures here. The extremes make for equally powerful monsters and denizens, of course — only the strongest survive for long in this region, known to the Shoanti as the World's Roof.

This adventure assumes the adventurers come seeking Xin-Shalast by first traveling up the Kazaron River in search of the vanished Vekker brothers and, possibly, the River Avah, said to show the route to Xin-Shalast. How the heroes reach the Kodar Mountains is left to them. *Teleport* is unlikely to be useful until the party actually reaches the Kodars and know where they're going.

Certainly, speedy methods of magical travel can come in handy once the heroes reach the cabin or even Xin-Shalast, but on their first trip up into the forbidding mountains, chances are good that they'll have to make that journey the old-fashioned way.

Assuming the adventurers are traveling up the Kazaron River, it is at the point labeled "A" on the map on page 26 that they transition between rugged foothills and

truly intimidating mountains. As long as the heroes continue to travel along the riverbank, they find the overland journey somewhat easier — but eventually they need to head into the mountains themselves.

Make sure to be familiar with the possible dangers when adventuring in high mountains, such as **Hazards** in *Pathfinder for Savage Worlds*. The physical dangers presented by mountain climbing, extreme cold, and high altitudes are, in many cases, as dangerous as the monsters the characters are destined to face in this adventure, and enforcing these hazards can help to drive home the fact that they are exploring a truly inhospitable range.

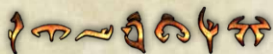
More to the point, if the players feel the Kodar Mountains are dangerous, they can better understand why Xin-Shalast has remained hidden from the world for so long.

THE LONG GAME

The heroes may have magical means of transportation, however it is inevitable they will need to do some traveling the old fashion way. Look at the **Travel** rules in *Pathfinder for Savage Worlds* for ways to spice up these long stretches.

In addition to these encounters, you can have players participate in an Interlude or give them a chance to prepare themselves with some Downtime (See **Interludes** and **Downtime** in *Pathfinder for Savage Worlds*). The heroes are in the final stretch of the adventure path and they will need every advantage they can get.

PART TWO: WHISPERS IN THE WIND



THE DWARVEN BROTHERS SILAS AND KARIVEK VEKKER CAME TO THE KODAR MOUNTAINS 70 YEARS AGO, FOLLOWING UP ON RUMORS OF AN EXTENSIVE VEIN OF GOLD IN THE HIGH MOUNTAINS. WHEN THEY FOUND GOLD IN SOME NEARBY ALLUVIAL GLACIER DEPOSITS, THEY STAKED THEIR CLAIM AND OPENED A PLACER MINE. AS IS OFTEN THE WAY OF DWARVES, THEY WERE VERY SECRETIVE ABOUT THEIR MINE'S LOCATION, GOING AS FAR AS TO BUILD A CABIN AND MINING HEADQUARTERS SEVERAL MILES FROM THEIR CLAIM. NEITHER COULD IMAGINE HOW CLOSE THEY WERE TO THE RICHEST SITE IN ALL OF VARISIA — XIN-SHALAST.

Silas and Karivek worked their placer mine for several decades but knew it would soon play out, so they scouted deeper into the surrounding mountains, searching the streams and cliff faces for a show of color where they could potentially find new deposits for mining. Their skill at mountaineering and their dwarven stubbornness paid off — they accidentally found the headwaters of the River Avah, and beyond that, Xin-Shalast.

The dwarves only explored the very edge of the city before they were forced to flee from a group of enraged giants. Yet the wealth they saw in the city had done its work — all thoughts of mining for gold had been banished from their minds.

Why bother pulling gold out of deep holes in the dirt when you could just pick it up off the ground? Yet Xin-Shalast was far from a safe place, and in order to harvest it properly, the dwarves realized they needed support.

They returned to Janderhoff, where they approached several mining consortiums and secured supplies and financing to begin deeper exploration of Xin-Shalast, proving their claim with the relics they'd brought back.

The investors asked the Vekkers to keep their discovery quiet and put vast amounts of money at the Vekkers' disposal. The brothers returned to the north with a small army of miners, explorers, and mercenaries, all eager to make a fortune exploring Xin-Shalast.

Yet the Vekkers' army never made it to the City of Greed. Only a day after reaching the glacial site of their first mine, an avalanche struck their convoy and carried off all of their supplies. An attempt to retrieve the supplies resulted in the deaths of seven more dwarves.

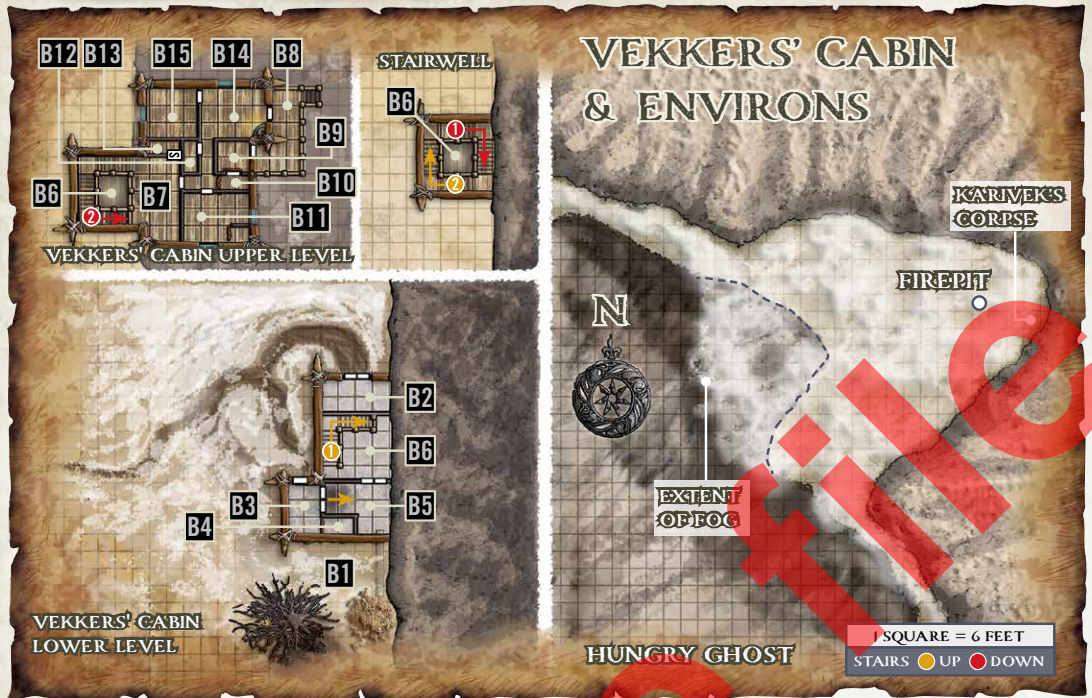
Their return route blocked, the survivors made their way on, hoping to find solace, shelter, and — above all — more food in the storerooms of the Vekkers' cabin, but upon arriving they found the place had been raided by the abominable snowmen that dwell in the Kodars. No food remained.

It didn't take long for starvation to drive the dwarves to desperation and then to madness, and when Karivek suggested cannibalism as a route to regain their strength for the journey back out of the mountains, his brother Silas and a few other dwarves objected.

The dissenters were outnumbered, and with a fury born of madness, Karivek and the rest of the starving dwarves fell upon their companions and fed well for the first time in a month.

Then a curious thing happened. The dwarves found the feast strangely invigorating. Their minds cleared and their strength returned, and with it their greed. The dwarves decided to continue on into the Kodar Mountains to find Xin-Shalast.

As they traveled, those who fell behind or complained or merely had the disadvantage of being the largest among them became new



meals, and with each meal, the dwarves felt their strength growing. They paid no attention to the strange whispers on the wind, or to feet blackened by frostbite and falling to pieces, or to the fact that they had been wandering the mountains for days without aim.

Eventually, only one dwarf remained — Karivek Vekker. With nothing left to eat, he sat down upon a lonely mountain ledge overlooking the Kazaron River, and as starvation set in once more, he noticed for the first time the whispers in the wind. A shape congealed in the mist before his eyes, and as the source of the cannibal cravings took form in the air before him, Karivek looked upon the wendigo that had brought the doom upon them all and attempted to hurl himself off the ledge in despair.

The wendigo caught him and dragged him through the sky with such speed that the dwarf's frostbitten feet were blasted away, and at the end, the evil spirit dropped him from a staggering height. Karivek had nearly a minute to despair and regret before he hit the ground.

VEKKERS' CABIN

Though the placer mine was long ago lost in an avalanche, the brothers' cabin still survives to this day. Anyone who travels this far up the Kazaron River can't miss the cabin built of split logs cemented with a rough mortar and a shake shingle roof.

The logs and shingles are decades old, and a profusion of lichens growing on these walls gives it a strangely organic look. Each window is two feet high by two feet wide and has double shutters to aid in keeping out the cold. The cabin sits low in a valley in the Kodars, at an altitude of merely 4,500 feet.

No strangers to the dangers presented by the local fauna (especially the abominable snowmen, with whom the Vekkers had countless run-ins), the somewhat paranoid brothers constructed their cabin perched defensively at the edge of a 60-foot-high cliff. The dwarves then constructed a spiraling stair and pulley-and-bucket system leading directly up to the cabin from the base of the cliff.

This they encased in a wooden shaft made of the same mortared logs, and built a small storage shed and an addition at the base of the stair where the mined ore could be

separated from the worthless gangue before going through all the trouble of hauling it up to the cabin.

Today, the abominable snowmen and other regional beasts avoid the cabin for a singular reason: the place is haunted by the spirits of the dwarves eaten by their kin a decade ago. These haunts aren't evil, but neither do they welcome visitors to the cabin.

Driven by the pain and horror of their deaths, these haunts lash out at anyone trying to enter the cabin. Only one spirit among them, the shade of Silas Vekker, retains his mind and wits, but to reach him and learn how the haunted cabin can be put to rest, the heroes must brave the wrath of the rest.

Most of the haunts in this section of the adventure don't provide much of a challenge for Legendary characters, but that's not really their purpose. These haunts are included more to help build on the themes and mood of the adventure, teaching how greed can lead to terrible ends if not kept under control. Further, haunts are an excellent way for an adventure to give the players some backstory to events in the area.

By the time the heroes finish their initial exploration of the cabin, they know most of the gruesome details of what happened here, and they learned of those details in an interactive way that, ideally, immerses them more in the adventure's story than would simply reading aloud some text.

Though unlikely to matter initially, the strength of the cabin's walls likely comes into play later in this adventure (see **The Wendigo Siege** on page 23). The cabin's walls are Hardness 14. Doors are hardness 10 (most doors open easily, but some are stuck and must be forced open — A Strength roll to not only force the door open but to completely smash it from its hinges). The double-shuttered windows are Hardness 8.

WATCHER IN THE WASTES

The wendigo who brought ruin to the Vekkers and destroyed their hopes for fame still dwells in the surrounding region, and it does not suffer intruders into its territory well. Though powerful, the dangerous outsider prefers to

wage its war against intruders in more subtle and harrowing methods, saving physical attacks as a last resort. For the duration of this part, the wendigo becomes increasingly aware of the adventurers' intrusion into the region, resulting in the following escalation of minor events.

MYSTERIOUS HOWL: Soon after the heroes first sight the Vekkers' cabin, the wendigo's forlorn howl carries over the region, a mournful, drawn-out shriek not unlike the cry of a dying elk. The monster is farther than a mile away when it makes this initial howl, and thus it has no other effect on any adventurer who hears the sound with a Notice roll.

Those who hear it can attempt an Occult roll at -2 to identify the sound as supernatural and likely from an outsider (the howl can be correctly identified as a wendigo's howl with a raise).

RISING STORM: After the first haunt is activated, the wendigo senses the heroes' intrusion into the area and uses its control weather ability to cause a rising snowstorm. For 20 minutes after the first haunt is triggered, the weather steadily worsens, eventually reaching snowstorm status after the 20 minutes.

The snowstorm lasts for 4d12 hours — the wendigo "recharges" the snowstorm every 24 hours with control weather as long as it suspects the heroes remain in the area.

NIGHTMARISH REST: The wendigo observes the Vekker cabin region from a distance — unless the party takes particular care to stay stealthy, the monster learns enough about them that it soon retreats to deeper in the mountains to use Dream Haunting, targeting one of the heroes at random.

Not only does this infuse a sleeping adventurer's dreams with nightmares of being a cannibal, it exposes the character to wendigo psychosis.

THE WENDIGO DRAWS NEAR: As soon as the party defeats Karivek Vekker's ghost (see **Event 3** on page 21), the wendigo howls again. This time, it's within a mile, and the entire party can hear (and must test Fear). This close, an Occult roll correctly identifies the howl as that of a wendigo.

BLIZZARD: After the second howl, the wendigo uses control weather to create a blizzard—it maintains this blizzard as constantly as it can for the next several days in an attempt to drive the party to seek shelter in the Vekkers' Cabin, whereupon it lays siege to the cabin as detailed on page 23.

BI THE TAILINGS

A split-log tower abuts the cliff face and rises from a workshop on ground level to a larger cabin perched on the cliff's edge sixty feet above. The rough wooden structure is so overgrown with lichen as to almost appear an extension of the rock face.

The ground to the south of the lower structure is a steep embankment, over which a chute protrudes from the structure's southern wall. At the base of the embankment is a large pile of fine, black sand that spreads out in a deposit striated by years of erosion.

The ground surrounding the pile is barren of any plant life, with the exception of a single sagging pine tree. Faint traces of a footpath lead to the workhouse doors, though it is obvious none have come this way in many years.



THE HORROR
TREE

The mound of sand under the chute is composed of the leavings from the act of processing gold ore in area B5. To separate the gold from the rock matrix, the dwarves used an arsenic solution. Over the years, this debris has leached into the surrounding ground and destroyed all plant life in the region, with the exception of the lichens and fungus that grow so well on the cabin.

Anyone coming in contact with the fine black dust risks arsenic poisoning (Lethal) unless they succeed at a Vigor roll (at -2 if ingested).


Two years ago, a guardian of the upper treeline sensed the presence of poison and pollution here as it leached into the Kazaron and flowed downriver. This guardian, an ancient treant, came upon this area and sought to clean up the flora-killing tailing.

While it managed to move many of the contaminants away from where they were leaching into the river, its own exposure to the pollution weakened and eventually killed it—while plants are normally immune to poison, long-term exposure to this particular form of pollution kills plants just as well.

The death of the noble creature gave the spirits haunting the cabin a convenient corpse to focus upon. This, combined with the corruption and pollution now concentrated in the region, caused the treant to rise the next night as a horrific undead creature. Its once-kindly soul has been replaced with one of eternal hunger and wrath, and it is content now to slaughter any creatures that happen by.

After killing them, it flings their shattered carcasses upon the tailings pile and awaits new victims. Now it stands beside the tailings, looking like nothing more than a dead pine tree on the verge of collapse, and does not attack unless adventurers come down the embankment to examine the area of the tailings.

Later, though, if a lone or pair of heroes exits the bottom floor of the cabin, it immediately tries to slay them before they have a chance to escape. It buries its victims shallowly in the tailings pile, where they can be discovered with a Notice roll.

 **The Horror Tree:** See below.

THE HORROR TREE

Type: Evil Undead (Treat)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 18 (3)

Edges: Block (Imp), Brave, Iron Jaw, Iron Will

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Bark skin.
- **Bash:** Str+d6, AP 2.
- **Destroy Objects:** Treants do double damage when attacking objects.
- **Environmental Weakness:** Fire, slashing.
- **Fungus:** Anyone Shaken or Wounded by a Slam attack suffers Energy Drain (Agility) as they contract a virulent fungus that rips through their bodies. A Vigor roll (at -2 with a raise on the attack) resists this effect.
- **Immunity:** Cold.
- **Plant:** Ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination; immune to paralysis, poison, puppet, slumber, Stun, doesn't sleep.
- **Size 5 (Large):** This creature is 30ft tall and weighs over 4,500lbs. It has one extra Wound due to its size.
- **Rock Throwing:** Treants are good at throwing rocks, and can even throw at Extreme Range. Damage Str+d12, Range 20/40/80, Heavy Weapon.
- **Trample:** Str+d6.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison; ignore penalties for Illumination.

TACTICS

The horror tree has an uncanny knack for sensing druids, rangers, gnomes, and other creatures with ties to the natural world. It targets these foes over others.

The horror tree pursues foes as long as they remain in sight but not into the cabin.

The horror tree fights until destroyed.

TREASURE

A hollow in the trunk hides some treasures it has gathered over the years. These can

be found with a Notice roll of its body and consist of a large black opal worth 2,000 gp, a cracked leather backpack containing a broken rock hammer and 43 gp, 12 crossbow bolts (Distance), and a sealed pocket flask holding an elixir of the peaks, listed on page 92.

B2 STORAGE ROOM

This room has a steeply sloping roof. A lock bars the doors, but is so badly rusted it could be easily broken (Hardness 6). Within are the remains of a once-thriving mining enterprise.

The rotten remnants of wheelbarrows, shovels, picks, ore sacks, plates for panning, and sluices for separating placer deposits are stacked in a jumble. These are all covered in a thick layer of frost and have deteriorated to the point of uselessness.

B3 LOWER ENTRY

This room has a bare plank floor. A wide double door stands to the east, and next to it a shabby curtain closes off another opening. The room's dry boards still appear to be stout, having successfully remained sealed from the elements over the years.

The outer door to this room is locked. The lock has corroded but is still strong — in fact, the corrosion has made it even more difficult to pick (Thievery roll at -4, Hardness 10).

This room served as the secure entry where the brothers could bring the ore they recovered from their mine for processing. The doors to the east are also locked, though they are not corroded (Thievery roll at -2).

B4 SACK ROOM

Beyond the curtain is a small, barren chamber. A wood-frame cot rests against the far wall with a rough, straw-tick mattress and a threadbare blanket. A pair of old work boots, crusted with the dried remains of old mud, still sits under the cot.

When a new load of ore was brought in from the mine, the Vekker brothers were loath to leave it unattended until it had been stored away in their strong room. To this end, they

worked night and day in the separation chamber, but even their hardened dwarven constitutions required occasional breaks.

When this occurred, one of the brothers slept in this chamber to ensure that thieves would be unable to make off with the gold.

TREASURE

An enchanted dagger (Str+d4, AP 1, Accurate, Damaging) is hidden in the left boot. The poison that once coated the blade has long since dried and flaked away, leaving only a harmless discoloration on it.

B5 ORE SEPARATION

The air in this long-sealed chamber is putrid. The back wall is the solid rock of the cliff face. A ramp rises from the western door to a height of five feet, which is the elevation of the rest of the plank floor.

Mounds of dust and rocky debris clutter the floor, while rusty mechanical equipment, large copper tanks, and several rock-crushing and chipping tools sit upon sagging wooden tables.

The handle of a shovel sticks up from a debris pile immediately below this aperture. Two pairs of elbow-length, thick leather gloves, stained from long use, hang from hooks beside the north doors.

The Vekker brothers carted their placer deposits into this chamber to remove the gold ore from the gangue. They used an arsenic solution to chemically separate the minerals. Raw gold was carted into the next chamber to be stored safely in their cabin.

The leftover debris was then shoveled through a grating in the southern wall that opens into a chute that deposits waste near area B1. The grate is latched from this side and can be easily opened, but the iron bars cannot be removed from the frame, blocking access from outside.

This entire room is heavily tainted with arsenic deposits, especially the mounded dust and rubble on the floor. Anyone entering the room is exposed to a high concentration of arsenic poisoning (see area B1).

The Vekkers had enough gold to buy food to last them years, but nowhere from which to buy any, a powerful irony that Silas obsessed on in the final days before he was murdered by his brother. His spirit, still driven by hunger, manifests in this room as he appeared in life in healthier times, as a balding dwarf with a few facial scars and a full beard separated into two lengths by gold rings.

When the adventurers first enter this room, a shadowy form shifts and moves in the room's corner. As the haunt manifests, the shadows fade and Silas appears to be squatting in the southeast corner of the room, his back to the doors as he scoops up handfuls of gold dust from the ground near the chute.

As Silas turns around, gold dust thick in his beard and dripping in slobbery strings from his lips, he says, "You! You have to try this! It's so... delicious!" He stuffs another handful of gold dust into his mouth and swallows. Of course, the "dust" he's eating is in fact arsenic-tainted grit.



GOLD-EATING DWARF

Type: Haunt (all of area B5);

Notice Roll: No (Everyone sees the shadow image of Silas crouching in the corner);

Trigger: Proximity; **Wounds:** 1; **Reset:** 1 minute

Effect: Silas's words function as major puppet; anyone who hears him must make a Spirit roll at -2 to resist the compulsion to scoop up and eat a handful of the arsenic-tainted dirt on the room's floor.

The haunt enhances the deadly effects of the arsenic in this case — anyone who eats the stuff must make Vigor roll at -2 against the effects of arsenic poisoning (Lethal).

Silas watches as anyone eats, and as the victim feels the poison flowing through his system, the haunted character sees Silas suddenly shrink in on himself, grow emaciated, and then fly apart in a red explosion of bite-sized morsels of flesh and bone. An instant later, he is gone — After a minute, he appears again and the haunt resets.

B6 ORE SHAFT

The description of this area depends on whether the heroes enter from the bottom or the top. The following description assumes the party enters from the bottom. Modify it accordingly if they enter from area B7.

The wooden walls of this musty shaft abut the natural stone of the cliff face to the east. A sturdy-looking wooden stair and rail starts at the bottom of this shaft and circles up into the heights, running clockwise.

Above, its passage is lost in the gloom, like the musty interior of an ancient silo. A thick length of chain hangs down the shaft in loops, its links swaying and clanking softly to the periodic gust of wind that penetrates the walls.

No windows pierce the wooden walls. Propped against the east wall near the door is an upended wheelbarrow.

The Vekker brothers built this enclosed stair to create a secure way to access their cabin above. A great ore bucket hangs at area B7, which they lowered via chains with a winch to load the gold gleaned from the separation chamber. The wheelbarrow was used to cart the gold to the ore bucket.

The stairs rise 72 feet to area B7 and are sturdy and in good repair despite their age. A trap is set 60 feet up the stairs. The Vekker brothers deactivated this trap in area B11 or just jumped over the trigger steps.

Once as the tipping stairs are triggered, the spirits haunting the cabin manifest, animating the chain hanging from the ceiling here.

The chain twists like an immense snake as it animates, coiling over and across itself and grasping at a victim with deadly effect. Though the chain only takes up a six-foot square, its reach accounts for much of its size.



TIPPING STAIRS

Type: Mechanical; **Notice Roll:** Yes, at -2; **Thievery Check:** Yes, at -4

Trigger: A section of trapped stair stands 60 feet above the floor of area B6. Placing any amount of weight on one of these three steps causes that section of the step and rail to

A LETHAL COMBO

Depending on how many characters fall when the trap is set off, a hero grappled by the haunted chain could be left hanging for a while.

Even if the chain is destroyed, the victim still needs to survive the sudden fall that their allies had to deal with.

If the party has already encountered several other Haunts, consider having the grappled character make a Fear check.

collapse outward, dumping anyone on them into the central shaft of the stairwell (Evasion roll to grab onto the rail when dropped) where they take 6d6 + 6 damage from the fall. The collapsed steps and rail can be reset by a lever hidden in area B11.

Haunted Chain: See below.

HAUNTED CHAIN

Type: Neutral Construct (Animated Object)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Occult d8, Stealth d10

Pace: —; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12 (5)

Edges: —

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +5:** Solid steel.
- **Bash:** Str+d6, Reach 5.
- **Constricting:** The haunted chain gets a free reroll when attempting to grapple an opponent and does Str+d6 when crushing.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; does not breathe or suffer from disease or poison.
- **Night Vision:** The haunted chain ignores penalties for Illumination.

TACTICS

The haunted chain lifts anyone it constricts to the top of the shaft, attempting to strangle them as their allies fall to the ground below. On the next round it crushes the victim.

The chain remains animated and fights until destroyed or its victim falls out of reach.

FRIGHTFUL WEATHER

At this point, the wendigo has already begun stirring up a powerful snow storm. One side effect is the limited visibility outside.

It should not be impossible for the party to find its way back to the cabin or locate their lost allies, though it may take some effort. There may be worse effects if they're not dressed for such cold temperatures.

B7 TOWER LOFT

No windows open into this dark, plummeting shaft. A heavy winch bolted to the balcony supports a rusty chain that runs up through a pulley mounted in the roof of the shaft and from which hangs a heavy iron bucket.

The front wheel of a wheelbarrow rests against heavy wooden chocks that have been nailed to the floor at the edge of the balcony.

Here, the Vekkers hauled up the gold from their mine for safe storage. The winch is still functional, though extremely rusty, and can be used to raise or lower the ore bucket between here and the floor of area B6—provided that the haunted chain has not been destroyed yet (raising or lowering the bucket does not activate the haunted chain).

A full bucket can be raised at a rate of four yards per round. Lying nearby is a 10-foot pole with an iron hook at the tip. This was used by the dwarves both to open and close the shuttered windows and to drag the ore bucket over to the balcony, where its contents could be dumped into a wheelbarrow. The windows, unlike most of those in the rest of the cabin, are shuttered from the inside.

A Notice roll reveals the skillfully disguised secret door to area B13.

B8 FRONT PORCH

A rough porch with crudely crafted handrails extends from the front of this cabin. A short stair descends to the ground at its north

end. The eaves of the overhanging roof are festooned with dozens of animal skulls, including bears, deer, and other animals.

The posts supporting the overhang and the outside edge of the handrail are hung with racks of antlers. A chimney rises next to a door on the porch, and a couple of split logs have been set on the raised porch as furniture.

The Vekker brothers supplemented their carefully hoarded supplies with whatever game they could hunt. There is nothing of note among the many trophies here. A signboard mounted above the front door bears faded but still legible print in Dwarven naming this the “Vekker Mining Co. Headquarters.”

The front door is not locked but is stuck in its frame, requiring a Strength roll to open.

Have everyone make a Notice roll. The players with the highest result feel strange here, as if being watched.

You can even tell this player he might have seen a humanoid shape in the distance, staggering in the snow just at the edge of vision to the east. This is a manifestation of Silas Vekker as he attempted to escape his hunger-mad kin by racing into the snow.

One round later, the haunt manifests in force as Silas notices the heroes.



Type: Haunt (Northern 18 feet of area B8);
Notice Check: No (everyone notices the distant humanoid shape turn to face the party);
Trigger: Proximity; **Wounds:** 1; **Reset:** 1 day
Effect: A dwarven man (recognizable as the same one from the haunt in area B5) staggers out of the snow. His eyes are wild with fear, his clothes in tatters, and blood drips from several cuts on his exposed flesh. When he sees the party, he cries out, “Run! Run for your lives! They’re going to eat you!” With that, the dwarf flees into the snow.

Everyone in the area makes a Spirit roll at -2 to avoid being overcome with the conviction that the other members of the party are cannibals and are about to attack them—those who fail become panicked (see **Fear Table** in *Pathfinder for Savage Worlds*) for 1d6 rounds.

Adventurers who race blindly into the snow in this manner have a flat 50% chance each round of running off the edge of the cliff, in which case they fall 70 feet (7d6 + 7 damage) to the ground below.

B9 ENTRY

This simple chamber has a worn hide rug covered with muddy stains before the door, next to a rickety chair. A thick blanket covers the opening to the south.

The door can be locked and has brackets for a bar, though no bar is present.

B10 COATROOM

This tiny chamber is stuffy and lightless. Heavy blankets hang as curtains across two archways. A wooden bench rests against the south wall under which is arrayed an assortment of shabby foot gear. Above it is a row of hooks, a number of which hold dusty garments.

The dwarven miners removed their dirty clothing here to create some modicum of cleanliness in their cabin. Beneath the bench are six pairs of dried and cracked leather boots of various types, all sized for dwarves.

They include everything from rough-soled climbing boots to hip-high waders for panning cold mountain streams. The various garments include oiled leather raincoats, fur-lined winter coats, and mud-stained dungarees and coveralls.

These are all proportioned for a dwarf and are largely ruined from moths and dry rot.

TREASURE

Concealed beneath the raincoats, an enchanted maul (Damaging, Bane (Construct)) leans against the wall.

B11 BUNKROOM

A large, worn elk hide is spread across the floor of this bunkroom. Another old, moth-eaten hide covers the entry into a small closet. A window looks out to the south. A

crack runs through the thick panes of the southern window.

A set of rough-made bunk beds stands against the north wall next to the door, an old coat with holes in its elbows hanging from one post. The bunks themselves have flat straw mattresses and layers of heavy blankets piled at their feet. An old metal coal box rests on one for use as a foot warmer.

A rack on the west wall holds a crossbow, two axes, and a light wooden shield. Beneath it is a large leather chest. A hooded lantern hangs unlit from a rafter.

The Vekker brothers shared this bunkroom. Nothing in it is of any value, and the weapons and shield are warped and useless. The leather trunk holds only mundane articles of rough clothing, a few grooming items, and various small trinkets of Shoanti manufacture.

One of the unoccupied pegs on the weapons rack is actually a lever that resets and deactivates the trap in area B6. It can be discovered with a Notice roll at -2. The curtained closet is actually a privy with a wooden bench and an old rusty bucket.

Hanging from a small hook are a number of torn papers. If examined, these turn out to be broadsheets from Korvosa, dated about 70 years ago. The Vekker brothers were not avid readers, but they saved every scrap of paper they could find to serve other purposes.

B12 STORAGE CLOSET

This chamber contains heavy shelving and still holds the detritus and debris accumulated over decades of habitation.

All manner of odds and ends for the maintenance of the cabin and the mining venture can be found herein under a thick layer of dust and ancient rodent droppings.

There is nothing of particular value, but feel free to throw in any mundane items you see fit, such as a pair of snowshoes or a tinder box.

B13 STRONG ROOM

The walls and door of this chamber are reinforced with double thickness. The secret door is locked and requires a Thievery roll at

-2 to open. Otherwise, the walls around this room have Hardness 12, requiring an hour of work with each roll.

Seven large burlap sacks sit against the northern wall of this small room, while to the west sits a small desk and chair. A leather-bound ledger lies atop the desk.

The ledger on the desk contains several detailed maps of the regions the brothers were mining, and locates all of their assay points and mines. Notes on the payout of each mine are listed — it appears all of them have played out without imparting any particularly rich lodes.

Several pages near the end of the ledger have been torn out — these once contained the brothers' notes on the location of Xin-Shalast. Silas tore them out when he realized how important the discovery was, committed them to memory, then burned the pages.

TREASURE

Here, the Vekkers stored the gold from their mine after the ore was separated in the building below and hauled up through the shaft. The door creaks loudly when opened.

Within are seven burlap sacks. Five are stuffed with gold dust and are worth 1,000 gp each. The last two actually hold gold nuggets and are worth 2,500 gp each. Each sack weighs 40 pounds. Hidden behind one of the sacks is a small coffer holding 14 uncut gems the brothers found, worth 50 gp each.

B14 LIVING AREA

This room obviously doubled as the main living quarters and kitchen for the inhabitants of the cabin. A stone hearth and chimney occupy the southeast corner, with an iron hook holding a cauldron above the grate.

The rest of the room is in a horrific state — firewood, cooking utensils, pots and pans, and even the furniture lie in scattered heaps. A painting of two dour-looking dwarves standing in front of an enormous elk hangs askew on the northern wall.

Ancient bloodstains mar the walls and floor and bits of overturned furniture here and there, but there are no bodies.

This is where the Vekker brothers took their meals and spent most of what little leisure time they had. The painting depicts two dwarves with a family resemblance; they are Silas and Karivek Vekker. Characters who've seen Silas's manifestation in the haunts in the cabin will recognize the dwarf immediately.

The disarray and blood are all that remains of the terrible fight that broke out when Karivek and his dwarves turned to cannibalism. The fight spread onto the porch relatively quickly, but scavengers have long since removed the results of that fight.

As the heroes investigate this room, they begin experiencing subtle twinges of hunger. Without much warning, those twinges erupt into full-blown pangs of painful starvation and unholy urges to feast on their companions. While these hunger pangs pass quickly, the damage to the mind is more persistent.



Type: Haunt (all of area B14);

Notice Check: No (Everyone feels the sudden twinges of unnatural hunger);

Trigger: Proximity; **Wounds:** 1; **Reset:** 1 day

Effect: When the hunger pangs strike, all characters in the room must make a Vigor roll at -2 to resist taking one Fatigue from starvation, from the sudden phantom hunger.

Accompanying this ravenous sensation is the conviction that only the flesh of the other heroes can sate the hunger. Any character who took Fatigue also takes Energy Drain (Spirit) as the cannibal urge overwhelms him. A Spirit roll resists this effect.

B15 LARDER

The door to this room is heavy and requires a Strength roll to open.

This bare-floored room has a series of iron hooks suspended from the rafters. The window in the far wall looks out over the edge of the cliff and, unlike others in the cabin, has no glass or shutters — only a tight lattice of iron bars. Against the far wall sits a four-foot-tall mound of bones — dwarven bones, by the look of them.

The dwarves used this room for their cold storage. In all but high summer it remained cooler than the rest of the cabin and allowed their meats to last a little longer. The close-set bars on the windows kept out vermin, except for flies and mosquitoes in the warmest months, and the toughened dwarves were not overly picky about the condition of their meals.

These are the remains of the four dwarves, including Silas Vekker, who were killed and eaten a decade ago. An investigation of the remains followed by a Healing roll reveals that the bones have been picked clean and are, in many places, scraped and gnawed by what would appear to be dwarven teeth.

The first person to examine the bones is in for a rough surprise — on one of the bones, he recognizes his own jewelry: a ring on a skeletal finger, a necklace draped over a ribcage, or a belt dangling over ivory hips.

With this discovery comes the conviction that the gnawed bones are, in fact, that character's own. The character is immediately surrounded by a whirling storm of shadowy forms as the ghosts of the cannibalized dead attempt to add that hero to their number.



THE HUNGRY DEAD

Type: Haunt (all of area B15);

Notice Check: No (They hear the whispers and slobbering grunts of the hungry dead);

Trigger: Proximity; **Wounds:** 2; **Reset:** 1 minute

Effect: To observers, the haunted character suddenly begins thrashing wildly, as if dozens of invisible hands were tugging and pushing him about the room. At the same time, bloody wounds from invisible teeth appear across the victim's body.

The haunted adventurer perceives that he has suddenly been surrounded by a dozen emaciated but fantastically strong dwarves, all of whom are attempting to eat him alive. The ghosts make five attack rolls against the hero, with Fighting d10; each hit deals 2d6 damage ignoring Armor.

A hero who is Incapacitated by these bites and begins bleeding out, is torn apart so that nothing remains but a red, well-gnawed skeleton draped in his gear.

EVENT I: CANNIBAL FURY

As the heroes finish exploring the cabin, they should be able to piece together some of what occurred here more than a decade ago, but unfortunately find the place to be devoid of any real clues as to Xin-Shalast's location.

The true source of this information, the ghost of Silas Vekker, has yet to properly show itself — but before it does, the unquiet spirits haunting the cabin have one final cacophonous assault in mind. If the heroes look outside while exploring the cabin, they find the snowstorm has intensified.

This final haunting event is more complex than the haunts keyed to specific rooms — this is a multistage haunt that should play out, to a certain extent, like a highly scripted combat. It can begin at any point you wish — preferably after the heroes have experienced most or all of the other haunts the cabin has to offer, but before they feel that they have exhausted all of the possibilities in the cabin.

If the adventurers decide to spend the night in the cabin, this event plays out shortly after they bed down. Powerful spellcasters have access to teleport and other effects, though, so it's unlikely you will get the opportunity to have this occur in the dead of night.

In that case, try to time the haunt so that it occurs at a natural climax to the exploration of the Vekkers' cabin, perhaps just after the heroes have experienced the last haunt, or after they discover the secret room in area B13.

This haunt starts innocently enough, with strange sounds from elsewhere in the cabin indicating that they aren't alone. These sounds rapidly grow in power, until it seems as if an army of invisible, shrieking lunatics is on the loose.

This haunt plays out over 11 rounds, following a scripted series of actions. Allow the heroes to act as they wish each round.



CANNIBAL FURY

Type: Haunt (Vekker Cabin and environs 12 yards out from its outer walls);

Notice Check: No (Everyone hears the sound of knocking somewhere in the cabin);

Trigger: Timed; **Wounds:** 5; **Reset:** none

Effect: This haunt adheres to the following round-by-round schedule. Note that until the haunt begins to act in force on the fifth round, it cannot be affected. These first four rounds are, in effect, an extended warning.

Rounds 1–3: The heroes hear faint knocking from the lower portion of the cabin, probably the outer door at area B3, as if some lost traveler were seeking shelter from the storm.

The knocking continues for three rounds, during which time heroes might head down to see whom it might be. Attempts to see the ground outside the cabin are fruitless due to the whirling snow flurries. Even if the adventurers are within six feet, they still see nothing that could have caused the knocking.

Round 4: The strange knocking grows silent for one round.

Round 5: A loud crack followed by a mighty hammering sound suddenly fills the cabin as its walls begin to shake and groan, almost as if the structure were giving up its purchase on the cliff edge and sliding off.

On each turn a hero remains in the haunt's area, he must make an Athletics roll; failure indicates he cannot move for a round, a Critical Failure indicates he falls prone. Anyone in area B6 at this time falls off the stairs if they fall prone.

Round 6: The hammering continues, but now the faint images of starving dwarven ghosts can be glimpsed out of the corner of the eye. Each character suddenly experiences painful hunger pangs and must make a Vigor roll to resist taking one Fatigue.

Round 7: Voices can now be heard, in most cases wordless cries of pain, but now and then snatches of sentences like "eating us..." or "don't let him..." or "so hungry..." The hammering continues, but now the starving ghosts notice the heroes for the first time.

Each hero must make a Spirit roll, and the haunt possesses the hero with the lowest roll, as the ghosts themselves flow into the hero's body. Possession causes Energy Drain (Spirit), and has additional implications in rounds 8–10.

Round 8–10: For the last three rounds of this complex haunt, the shaking and hammering continues. The possessed character does not need to make Athletics rolls to move and takes

whatever actions they can to render non-possessed characters unconscious or helpless.

If a possessed hero is adjacent to a helpless, non-possessed character and is not threatened by any other non-possessed heroes, he attempts to kill the helpless victim. If a possessed hero is adjacent to a dead character, he feeds on the body, taking no other actions unless he is attacked by someone else.

Round 11: With a sudden lurch, the haunting stops. The possessed character immediately regains control of his faculties. If he successfully fed on an ally, he must make a Spirit roll at -2 upon realizing what he's done — failure results in the character being Paralyzed from the revelation.

At your option, the previously possessed could develop various Hindrances. The cabin shows no signs of damage from the violence aside from anything the heroes have done to it. A few rounds later, Silas Vekker finally manifests before the heroes (See Event 2).

EVENT 2: A GHOST'S PLEA

The Cannibal Fury haunt ends abruptly not because the spirits have had their say, but because Silas Vekker retains fragments of his sanity. Just as it takes the angry ghosts several rounds to ramp up to the fury evidenced at the height of the climactic haunting, it takes him about a minute to finally gather the energy to quell these spirits. When he does, the ghosts vanish in an instant, save for one.

Silas Vekker is the same spirit the heroes might have encountered elsewhere in the cabin — a balding dwarf with a dark brown beard. His facial features are curiously indistinct — he has no eyes, for example, and when he speaks, his lips barely even move.

Maintaining this manifestation is tremendously draining for the spirit, and he can do so only for a short amount of time. As he speaks, bite-sized bits and pieces of him tear loose and fade, leaving him a growing patchwork of red, until finally, not enough of him remains and the entire thing fades away.

"You... you are alive? You do not hunger? Ah... that is what I sense in your blood. Greed. You seek the City of Greed. You should abandon your quest, lest you end up

like me. Cold. Dead. Eaten. But I suspect you can't be swayed.

I know the way to Xin-Shalast. I can show you the way, but only if you bring me my brother. He died on a ledge in the mountains a mile's walk north from this cabin. I can feel his soul out there, still hungry, still insane.

Bring his bones to me so that I might reconcile with him. Once he is at rest, I will show you the way so that I might rest as well..."

Silas's spirit doesn't have enough energy to maintain rational discourse for long — certainly not long enough to speak much more than his tale above. After delivering his message to the heroes, the ghostly dwarf is gone — eaten away to nothing.

All haunts in the cabin remain quiet for a full week. If after that time Karivek's bones have not been returned, the haunts resume.

EVENT 3: HUNGRY GHOST

Karivek's body lies on a high mountain ledge overlooking the final mine the brothers worked before discovering Xin-Shalast. Discovering this location via divination spells is one option, otherwise, heroes will likely need to recover the ledger from area B13.

The location of the final Vekker mine is indicated in that book — at the base of a 2,000-foot-tall cliff in the mountains, a mile north of the cabin. The remnants of a well-worn trail between this mine and the cabin still exist — this trail can be followed with a Survival roll. Otherwise, the journey is one through trackless, rugged mountains.

The cliff is sheer, and for the purposes of searching for the proper ledge, thankfully free of many areas that qualify. Unfortunately, this means the sheer cliff face also presents a difficult obstacle for characters unable to fly, teleport, or otherwise bypass the climb.

The winds around the cliff are strong and the cliff face icy. It's a multi-person

Dramatic Task to climb the cliff, requiring 12 task tokens. This task has no duration, but each round is four hours spent in a harsh environment (see **Cold** in *Pathfinder for Savage Worlds*).

The ledge in question is near the mountain's peak above. Trailing to a six-foot-wide shelf to the northwest and southeast, the ledge deepens into a large flat area in the middle. The ground is rough and uneven, covered with rubble and rocks and counting as difficult ground. Further, the presence of Karivek's spirit causes a layer of thick fog to obscure the ground to a depth of one foot.

This fog extends out over the cliff and down 30 feet from the edge, so a character unable to see through the fog, who moves through a square adjacent to the edge must make an Athletics roll to avoid stumbling and falling 2,000 feet into the mine digs below.

Near the eastern end of the ledge, a small number of gravestones protrude from the mist. As Karivek neared the end, guilt and remorse for his heinous acts of murder and cannibalism faded in the stark face of starvation, and the gravestones, each marked with dwarven names (including that of his brother, Silas), were a last-minute attempt to atone. Despite the grave markers, there's only one body here, and it's not even buried.

Karivek's body lies near a long-dead fire pit in the eastern portion of the ledge, frozen solid and preserved by the cold mountain air. The corpse still wears its padded armor, but is in frightful shape. Not only is it broken and mangled, as if it had fallen from a great height, but the body's legs end in charred, blackened stumps where the feet had been.

Among the powers Karivek gained as a ghost is an ability to manipulate creatures native to the cold. Currently, a frost worm,



attracted by Karivek's supernatural control, serves as a guardian. The beast lies in wait under the packed ice and snow in the middle of the ledge, and erupts to attack as soon as it notices any creatures approaching the ledge.

Karivek's ghost remains hidden until his corpse is touched or the frost worm attacks, at which point he flies up out of the mist to attack. In death, Karivek's mouth is filled with fangs that drip streamers of blood. Though incorporeal, his freezing temperature leaves a rime of ice across any surface he travels near.

☞ **Karivek:** See below.

☞ **Frost Worm:** See below.

☞ KARIVEK VEKKER

Type: Evil Undead (Ghost)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Notice d10, Stealth d10, Survival d8

Pace: —; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (4)

Edges: Frenzy

Gear: Thrown objects (Str+d4), leather armor (+3, Aegis, Energy Resistance (cold)).

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claw:** Str+d8+d6 (cold), AP 2.
- **Command the Frozen:** Karivek can use puppet on any non-outsider native to a cold environment, he can only control one creature at a time.
- **Darkvision:** Ghosts ignore penalties for Illumination up to 10'.
- **Eater of Flesh:** When Karivek hits with a bite attack, he tears away a chunk of flesh and consumes it—this causes Energy Drain (Vigor). A Vigor roll resists this effect.
- **Environmental Weakness:** Fire.
- **Ethereal:** Ghosts can become invisible and immaterial at will and can only be harmed by magical attacks.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Karivek may attempt a natural healing roll every round, unless his Wounds were caused by fire.
- **Fear (-2):** Ghosts cause Fear checks at -2 when they let themselves be seen.
- **Flight:** Pace 6.
- **Immunity:** Cold.
- **Rejuvenation:** Until his bones are returned to the Vekkers' cabin, Karivek's ghost rejuvenates 2d4 days after it is destroyed.

- **Unstoppable:** Karivek can't suffer more than one wound from a single attack (after Soak rolls are made).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

☞ FROST WORM

Type: Neutral Magical Beast (Frost Worm)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+6, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d10, Notice d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 16 (2)

Edges: Sweep (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Frozen carapace.
- **Bite:** Str+d8, AP 2
- **Burrow:** Pace 6.
- **Death Throes:** When killed, a frost worm explodes in a 120-foot radius, dealing 3d6 cold damage. This can be Evaded.
- **Environmental Weakness:** Fire.
- **Icy Breath:** Once per hour, a Frost worm can breathe a Cone Template of intense frost for 4d6 cold damage (see **Breath Weapons**).
- **Immunity:** Cold.
- **Night Vision:** Frost worms ignore penalties for Illumination.
- **Size 6 (Large):** Frost worms are around 35' long and weight 8,000 lbs. They have one additional Wound due to their size.
- **Trill:** As a limited action, a frost worm can emit a strange trilling sound that affects all creatures within a 40-yard radius. Creatures must make a Spirit roll at -2 or be Stunned for as long as the worm continues to trill (the frost worm can maintain this trill as an action). Once a creature has resisted or broken the effect (by taking damage), it cannot be affected again by that same frost worm's trill for 24 hours.

TACTICS

Karivek reveals himself, causing fear on the first round of combat, then he focuses on victims with the most meat on their bones. If the frost worm is nearly dead and surrounded by enemies, he'll attempt to kill the worm in order to trigger its death throes.

Karivek fights until destroyed, knowing he will just rejuvenate in a few days.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the heroes defeat the ghost, the wendigo howls and starts a blizzard (see **Watcher in the Wastes**).

EVENT 4: THE WENDIGO SIEGE

Once the pathfinders secure Karivek's remains, they need only return them to the Vekkers' Cabin. Unfortunately, doing so is made more complicated by the wendigo. The horrific outsider is displeased with the heroes' meddling in its cannibal tableaux and steps in to punish them and, ideally, induct them into its monstrous ways.

As they return to the cabin, the wendigo howls once again, then creates a blizzard to hinder movement and ideally catch the party in an open area on their way to the cabin with Karivek's remains. When the party returns to the cabin, a strange sense of calm fills the structure. Even the howling sounds of the blizzard outside seem muted and quiet. As soon as they bring the bones to area B14 (or wherever Silas manifested to them), Silas Vekker appears again, an expression of sadness and forgiveness on his face.

Yet Karivek is not yet quite ready to accept his brother. The cannibal ghost manifests as well, his bones crumbling to dust and reforming his ghostly incarnation. The two ghosts silently face off against each other, seemingly caught in a struggle of wills as wispy strings of ectoplasm and wafts of ghostly presence lash out and coil about.

All Silas needs to calm his brother's spirit is time — 10 minutes is enough. Unfortunately, the wendigo can sense the reconciliation and the impending loss of its masterpiece, and it quickly takes action.

The wendigo does not initially attack directly, preferring to wage a psychological war of terror. If the party is caught outside in the blizzard, it follows them while flying, turning solid now and then to make flyby attacks against stragglers.

Once they return to the cabin, the wendigo's tactics become more physical. The monster lays siege to the cabin, smashing its walls and roof with its powerful claws in an attempt to tear the place apart.

Left to its own, the wendigo can use dream haunting against the brothers, infusing them both again with cannibal urges and madness.

This overwhelms Silas after 10 minutes, transforming him into a cannibal ghost as well (use the same stats as Karivek) — if this occurs, the heroes must slay the wendigo, then defeat both ghosts before Silas can attempt to heal the rift between himself and his brother.

🗡️ **Wendigo:** See below.

🗡️ WENDIGO

Type: Evil Outsider (Wendigo)

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d10, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Occult d10, Persuasion d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 14 (5)

Edges: Arcane Resistance

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +5:** Wendigo hide.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6 (cold).
- **Blindsense:** Wendigos ignore *invisibility*, *illusion*, and all Illumination penalties.
- **Control Weather:** A wendigo can concentrate for 10 minutes to summon a snowstorm or blizzard in a two mile radius. This creates Dim Illumination and extreme cold throughout the area.
- **Dream Haunting:** Once per night, a wendigo can enter the dream of any sentient target, causing intense nightmares. The victim must make a Spirit roll at -4 or suffer Fatigue. The Fatigue can't be removed until the victim gets a full night sleep without suffering nightmares.
- **Environmental Weakness:** Cold iron, fire.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Wendigos may attempt a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated, unless their Wounds were caused by fire or they're put to the torch afterward.
- **Fearless:** Wendigos are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Flight:** Pace 12; can become intangible as a limited free action while flying.
- **Howl:** Three times per day, a wendigo can emit a forlorn howl that can be heard up to a mile away. Creatures who hear this must test Fear at -2.
- **Immunity:** Cold.