



"You can judge a civilization by the behavior of its prisoners."

-Tolstoy

Framed by the Covenant of the Knife and thrown in the notorious Blackmaw Prison, Karl Manderholm awaits execution at the hands of the deadly assassins' guild. In order to save him, the PCs must enter Blackmaw in the guise of lowly prisoners and expose the one man who can clear Karl's name, the Shadowmaster of the Covenant himself.

"Chains of Blackmaw" is an adventure for four PCs of 10th level, set in a penitentiary mining complex. It's easily adaptable to any campaign setting. This adventure

denies PCs the use of their trusted weapons and gear by forcing them into incarceration in order to complete a mission of grave importance. Monks, spellcasters who can Eschew Materials and don't depend on spellbooks, and resourceful characters of any class are especially useful in this adventure.

Adventure Background

According to legend, the Covenant of the Knife was founded by three thieving back-alley killers of extraordinary skill that

met one night in a dry riverbed outside of the town of Dramis. Decades later, the Covenant has blossomed into a powerful criminal organization that masterminds the activities of theives' guilds throughout the land. Most thugs and bandit gangs under the Covenant's dark influence are unaware of who they really serve. The Knife manipulates the politics of towns, trading companies, and armies from behind the scenes. Extortion, blackmail, and assassination are the Covenant's weapons. Over the past thirty years, the

organization became one of the most deadly forces in the land—and yet few even realize it exists. A shadow within a shadow, the Covenant is a myth to some, a rumor to others, but a deadly reality to any who uncover its secrets.

To date, none have succeeded in exposing the dreaded Shadowmaster of the organization. Time and time again, the suspected head of the Covenant has been slain, but like a hydra, a new head springs up in an instant whenever one is cut off, and the Covenant continues to grow in power.

The Shadowmaster hides himself where no lawbringers think to look—exactly where they seek to place him. The real power behind the Knife is locked tightly away inside the bleak penitentiary mine of Blackmaw. Named for the cavernous mine shafts that claim the lives of dozens of inmates each year, Blackmaw is guarded by an order of monks called the Sentinels. The Shadowmaster and his trusted associates have the real run of the prison, using it as a secret headquarters from which they mastermind their treacherous plots and rule a criminal empire.

The current Shadowmaster of the Covenant, Jarrett "Old Man" Muros, handles business on the outside through his younger brother Tamm. On Jarrett's orders, Tamm recently approached a successful merchant and tailor named Gregor Manderholm. Manderholm Textiles is fast becoming one of the largest clothing suppliers in the region, and the Covenant wants to use the business as a front for a smuggling operation, concealing small but valuable (and highly illegal) contraband in hidden pockets sewn into clothing.

Gregor Manderholm proved too scrupulous to agree to their proposal, and the Covenant explored their standard methods of persuasion to weaken the old merchant's resolve. After sabotage failed to convince the man to enter into their agreement, the Covenant pursued more drastic measures. Last month they framed Manderholm's eldest son, a decent, upstanding young man, for the murder of a rival in his courtship of a young maiden in Dramis. The Covenant ensured that Manderholm's son, Karl, received a less-than-fair trial by strong-arming local

magistrates and conjuring up "witnesses" to the crime. The youth was sentenced to life incarceration inside Blackmaw.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs arrive in Dramis and seek out Gregor Manderholm. The party shows up at his offices where Gregor, afraid for his son's life, offers to pay the PCs handsomely if they will infiltrate Blackmaw as prisoners to protect Karl and deal with the Covenant.

After becoming incarcerated in Blackmaw, the PCs face a den of villainous scum, corrupt guards, and the elusive Shadowmaster of the Covenant. In order to protect Karl, the PCs must foil assassination attempts on the young man's life.

Too make matters worse, the former warden of Blackmaw, a powerful monk named Vaden Kiang (now a crazed lycanthrope and an inmate himself) is planning his escape. Vaden has enlisted the aid of the prison's single most dangerous charge, a blackguard in the service of Erythnul named Sedakas Crane, to arrange a breakout.

The PCs must protect Karl while attempting to ascertain the mysterious identity of the Shadowmaster of the Covenant. Finally, they must survive the bedlam of a prison break and prevent the release of some of the most dangerous villains in the land.

Adventure Hooks

Any of the hooks listed below may be used to involve the PCs in the plot of "Chains of Blackmaw."

- The PCs are hired by a lawful organization to seek out and eliminate the insidious Covenant of the Knife. The organization received a secret missive from Gregor Manderholm concerning his recent troubles and his suspicions concerning the Shadowmaster's concealment inside Blackmaw.
- A friend or relative of one of the party members (or a PC) has been framed for a terrible crime by the Covenant and the PCs are trying to clear his name. In their investigation they learn that Gregor's son shares a similar fate and head to Dramis to pool their resources with the merchant.

- The PCs have attracted the Covenant's attention by interfering with their business interests on one of their last adventures. Now the party is hunted by assassins and other agents of the Knife. In order to put a stop to the attacks, the PCs have only one choice: take the fight to the Covenant. The party's investigations yield info on Gregor's troubles and they come to Dramis to learn what the merchant knows about the Covenant.

Chapter One: Guilty Until Proven Innocent

The PCs' adventure begins in Dramis, a small mining town in an arid climate set among sloping hills that hide valuable iron ore. Dramis has grown in recent years from a humble mining community to a bustling township filled with commercial opportunities and its fair share of dangerous rogues (most of which answer to Tamm Muros and the Covenant of the Knife). Whatever adventure hooks brought the party here, they find themselves seeking out Manderholm's Textiles and the merchant Gregor.

Dramis (small town): Conventional; AL LE; 1,000 gp limit; Assets (42,000 gp); Population 1,872; Isolated (human 90%, dwarves 6%, gnomes 2%, other 2%).

Authority Figures: Magistrate Lucius DeVries, LE male human aristocrat 6/rogue 4.

Important Characters: Tamm Muros, NE male human rogue 8 (Head of the Local Business Council), Gregor Manderholm, LG male human expert 6 (aspiring textiles merchant).

Notes: Arcane magic is frowned upon inside the town walls, and any obvious spellcasters receive mistrustful glances by the folk they pass on the street. In addition, some shops and inns may refuse to offer their services to conspicuous wizards and sorcerers.

Manderholm's Textiles

Located in Dramis's Silver District, Manderholm's Textiles is a large two-story building on the west side of a cobblestone road. The exterior is freshly painted a bold red hue, with bright white lettering spelling "Man-

derholm Textiles." A wooden sign marked "closed" hangs from the large oaken double doors leading into the building.

As the party approaches the building, they pick up the smell of dye and the various alchemical agents used in treating cloth. By this point, Gregor is willing to try just about anything to free his son. The Covenant has been harassing him non-stop ever since the arrest three days ago, and gave him several ugly bruises the night before. Manderholm is happy to relate his sad tale to the PCs, beseeching them to aid his son before the Covenant eliminates him. He tells the PCs about the Covenant's plan to use his business as a smuggling front, the framing and imprisonment of his son Karl, and the presence of numerous high ranking Covenant members inside Blackmaw. He swears that no matter what they do to him or his family, he will never consent to working for such evil men.

Once Gregor reveals his situation to the PCs he offers a reward of 10,000 gp, nearly all the profits his garment business has made over the past ten years, if the PCs can prevent Karl's death. The merchant is a canny bargainer and will agree to pay them 15,000 gp only if the PCs succeed in a DC 25 Diplomacy check and eliminate the Covenant of the Knife once and for all. If the PCs agree to take the job, they must get themselves incarcerated inside Blackmaw in order to carry out their mission. Gregor tells them that they must either help Karl escape from the prison or expose the thugs behind the Covenant of the Knife, obtaining proof that they were responsible for Karl's unjust imprisonment.

This presents the opportunity for an entertaining side trek. If the PCs have a bone to pick with an untouchable enemy who has the law on their side, this is the perfect chance for a little payback. The PCs may decide to play Robin Hood and commit a series of robberies of wealthy nobles, clergy, or the like and then redistribute their ill-begotten treasure (or hide it away for when their term at Blackmaw is up). Let the PCs' imaginations run wild with just how they would like to end up on the wrong side of the law.

If you wish to advance the adventure as expeditiously as possible, Gregor offers to tell the local constabulary that the PCs were behind the recent ransacking of his textiles mill. This offense is enough to earn the party a year-long stint in the Maw.

After being sentenced, all of the PCs' obvious weapons, gear, and armor are taken from them (Gregor offers to keep them safe during the PCs' stay in the prison). Sneaking items into the Maw is no mean feat, as each criminal is subjected to a thorough search before being picked up in Dramis and transported to the Maw by Sentinel guards in caged wagons.

People of Blackmaw

The Maw is home to 82 inmates, counting among its population some of the vilest souls not yet confined in Hell. Here is a description of the prisoners, guards, and organizations that the PCs will have to deal with inside Blackmaw prison.

The Sentinels

Founded fifty years ago, the Sentinels began as an order of monks devoted to the apprehension and rehabilitation of criminal offenders. Twenty years after the order was created, the Blackmaw prison mine was constructed with tax monies from the Dramis region and the order was invited by the authorities to take up permanent residence in the Maw as wardens of the inmates held there.

The monks reside in spartan quarters little better than those of the inmates, and eat in the same mess hall as the criminals they guard. The Sentinels see it as their calling to rehabilitate the dangerous offenders sent to the Maw with hard work and enforced periods of meditation and contemplation. Their efforts are occasionally successful, and several members of the Sentinels are reformed convicts.

Until three months ago the order's abbot was a disciplined fighting monk named Vaden Kiang. Vaden was one of the founding members when the order was established over thirty years ago, and is personally responsible for the rehabilitation of dozens of convicts. Three months ago a new arrival to the Maw, a human convicted of slaying

an entire family in a remote mining community, proved particularly unruly. On the night of the full moon the convict transformed into a wereboar and wreaked havoc on the population. Vaden slew the lycanthrope, but not before receiving several wounds.

A month later, when the full moon rose, Vaden Kiang flew into a bestial rage and transformed. It took the entire garrison of Sentinels and the efforts of Kiang's senior student, Rao Chang, to subdue the abbot. Vaden has since been placed in solitary confinement on level three of the prison.

Rao Chang is acting abbot until the order is able to cure Vaden of his curse. Chang is a hardy half-orc, whose panther-like movements and lithe frame indicate he is a force to be reckoned with. His dark, piercing eyes scrutinize anyone he speaks to as if searching their soul for misdeeds or malicious intentions. Rao was forced into the role of abbot by circumstance, and though he exudes a veneer of cool confidence he is wholly unsure of himself. On edge since Vaden's hideous transformation, Rao tends to err on the side of severity in dealing with any new problems that arise and trusts too much in his lieutenant, Duncan DeVries.

At present, Rao Chang has 20 Sentinels under his command.

RAO CHANG

CR 10

Male half-orc monk 10

LN Medium humanoid

Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +13,

Spot +13

Languages Common, Orc

AC 21, touch 18, flat-footed 13

hp 79 (10 HD)

Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +10 (+12 vs. enchantment); improved evasion

Spd 60 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +14/+14/+9 (2d6+6)

Ranged shuriken +9/+9/+4 (1d2+4)

Base Atk +7; Grp +11

Atk Options flurry of blows, ki strike (lawful and magic), Stunning Fist 10/day (DC 18)

Special Atks wholeness of body 20/day

Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 10, Wis

16, Cha 11

SQ purity of body, slow fall 50 ft.

Feats Deflect Arrows, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Balance +6, Climb +10, Diplomacy +2, Jump +10, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +13, Profession (warden) +5, Sense Motive +9, Spot +13, Tumble +8

Possessions bracers of armor +3, amulet of mighty fists +2, monk's belt, simple red robes and black sash, sandals.

SENTINELS (20)

Male and female human monk 5

LN Medium humanoid

Init +2; Senses Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Common

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 14; Dodge

hp 26 (5 HD)

Fort +4, Ref +6 Will +7 (+9 vs. enchantment); evasion

Spd 40 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +5 (1d8+1) or unarmed strike +4/+4 (1d8+1)

Ranged shuriken +5 (1d2+1)

Base Atk +3; Grp +4

Atk Options flurry of blows, ki strike (magic), Stunning Fist 5/day (DC 15)

Combat Gear potion of barkskin, potion of cure moderate wounds

Abilities Str 12, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10

SQ purity of body, slow fall 20 ft.

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Unarmed)

Skills Balance +9, Climb +4, Escape Artist +8, Jump +6, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +9, Sense Motive +7, Spot +9, Tumble +7

Possessions combat gear, 10 shuriken, simple red robes and black sash, sandals.

The Crooked Sentinel

Duncan DeVries became an inmate of Blackmaw three years ago after he was convicted of assaulting a wealthy young couple in Dramis. Duncan's father is a powerful magistrate in town (the same magistrate responsible for Karl's sentence), and he pulled strings to ensure his son would be elevated from inmate to a member of the Order of Sentinels as quickly as possible. Duncan has grown to enjoy his power over the other inmates, cultivating a profitable relationship with the Covenant

of the Knife. DeVries accepts bribes regularly and ignores Covenant activity. Since Vaden's imprisonment, Duncan has enjoyed unprecedented freedom in his mistreatment of the inmates and shady dealings with the Covenant.

An ugly man with a crooked nose and low sloping brow, Duncan lumbers more than walks and is quick to strike any inmate that gets in his way. He wears his spiked chain across his chest to intimidate any convicts who get ideas about eliminating this detestable sentinel.

DUNCAN DEVRIES

Male human fighter 8

LN Medium humanoid

Init +2; Senses Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 13; Dodge, Mobility

hp 79 (10 HD)

Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +2

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +2 shocking spiked chain +13/+8 (2d4+7 plus 1d6 electricity)

Base Atk +8; Grp +10

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack

Combat Gear potion of barkskin, potion of haste

Abilities Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 14

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (spiked chain), Weapon Specialization (spiked chain), Whirlwind Attack

Skills Bluff +8, Climb +13, Intimidate +15, Jump +22

Possessions +2 shocking spiked chain, +3 ring of protection, ring of improved jump, simple black robes and red sash, leather boots

The Shadowmaster

Jarrett "Old Man" Muros is the true power behind the Covenant of the Knife. The only surviving founder of the Covenant, he killed off the other two rogues who helped him create the guild. As far as the world at large is concerned, Jarrett died in an attack by agents of a rival guild five years ago. In order to hide from further attempts on his life Jarrett disguised himself as an elderly carpenter named Corrin Treadwell. As Corrin, he killed a wealthy man in Dramis and allowed himself to be captured

and sentenced to life imprisonment in Blackmaw. From the safety of the Maw, he has pulled the strings of his operatives in the Covenant for five years, slaying his enemies and confounding the authorities. The only current member of the Covenant who knows Jarrett Muros lives is Midnight, his decoy Shadowmaster.

Muros plays the part of an elderly infirm carpenter well. Nearing his sixtieth winter, Jarrett has cultivated a hunched posture and a limp. He wears simple leather breeches and a ratty torn up tunic about his twisted frame. His keen eyes seem weak and blurry, and he often pretends not to notice sounds that his hearing picks up. His façade of weakness and age is difficult to see through and any character who suspects he is more than an aged carpenter must make a Spot check opposed by Jarrett's Disguise check to confirm their suspicions by noticing slight details in Corrin's movements that betray his deadly skills.

JARRETT "OLD MAN" MUROS

CR 13

Male human rogue 10/assassin 3

NE Medium humanoid

Init +8; Senses Listen +16, Spot +11

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Orc

AC 23, touch 18, flat-footed 19; Improved uncanny dodge

hp 61 (13 HD)

Fort +5 (+6 vs. poison), Ref +14, Will +9; evasion

Spd 30 ft.

Melee assassin's dagger +15/+10 (1d4+2/19–20)

Ranged mwk dagger +14/+9 (1d4/19–20)

Base Atk +9; Grp +9

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Quick Draw, death attack (DC 19), sneak attack +7d6

Combat Gear dark reaver powder (DC 18), deathblade (DC 20) (2), potion of invisibility

Assassin Spells Known (CL 3)

2nd (1/day)—invisibility, undetectable alignment

1st (4/day)—feather fall, ghost sound (DC 16), true strike

Abilities Str 10, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 16, Cha 18

SQ skill mastery, trapfinding, trap sense +3

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +15, Bluff +20, Climb +9*, Diplomacy +14, Disable Device +14*, Disguise +22*, Escape Artist +20*, Gather Information +19, Hide +14*, Jump +12, Listen +16, Move Silently +14*, Open Lock +21*, Profession (carpenter) +7, Search +11, Sense Motive +13, Sleight of Hand +16*, Spot +11, Tumble +16
*skills to which Jarret has applied his skill mastery special quality

Possessions +2 greater shadow studded leather armor, assassin's dagger, ring of protection +4, 6 masterwork daggers, masterwork thieves' tools, leather breeches, tunic

Jarrett Muros



The Decay

Members of the Covenant of the Knife believe the Shadowmaster to be a raven-haired beauty known as Midnight. An orphan, Midnight was taken off the streets by Jarrett Muros, who saw her potential even at the age of six. He trained her in the arts of theft, deception, murder, and survival. Jarrett is the only family Midnight has ever known and she is more devoted to her adopted father than most children are to their true parents. When Midnight reached maturity Jarrett arranged for her to study the art of the knife with dozens of the best teachers and back-alley knife fighters the world over. Midnight proved an apt pupil and grew into a lethal killer.

She returned to Dramis a few weeks after Jarrett's "death" to assume control of the Covenant, and was contacted in secret by her adopted father. Since then she has ruled the Covenant as his agent.

Midnight is beautiful woman who inspires lust and fear among her followers in the Covenant. She has jet black eyes to match her hair, a shapely figure that sways alluringly as she moves, and a wicked half-smile she reserves for those about to meet their death on her blade. Although she normally keeps her weapon concealed, she has been known to wear it openly at times to flaunt her power in the prison.

MIDNIGHT CR 12

Female human rogue 4/
fighter 3/invisible blade 5
Complete Warrior 44

NE Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +13

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Orc
AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 10; uncanny dodge
hp 58 (12 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +14, **Will** +4; evasion

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +2 shocking kukri +19/+14 (1d4+4/15-
20 plus 1d6 electricity)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Quick Draw, dagger sneak attack +4d6, feint mastery, uncanny feint

Abilities Str 14, Dex 20, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 16

SQ trapfinding, trap sense +1, unfettered defense

Feats Combat Expertise, Far Shot, Improved Critical (Kukri), Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (kukri)

Skills Balance +14, Bluff +15, Climb +14, Craft (metalworking) +19, Escape Artist +17, Hide +13, Intimidate +13, Jump +14, Listen +8, Move Silently +16, Sense Motive +13, Spot +13, Tumble +19

Possessions +2 shocking kukri, masterwork kukri, leather boots, prison tunic, leggings

Bleeding Wound (Ex)

Sacrificing 1d6 worth of sneak attack damage on a successful sneak attack allows Midnight to give her opponent a bleeding wound, causing him to take 1 point of damage per round. Multiple wounds result in cumulative blood loss. The bleeding may be stopped by a DC 15 Heal check or the application of any cure spell or other healing spell. Creatures immune to sneak attack damage are immune to this ability as well.

Dagger Sneak Attack (Ex) This damage only applies to sneak attacks made with a dagger, punch dagger, or kukri, and stacks with normal sneak attack damage.

Feint Mastery (Ex) Midnight may take 10 on all Bluff checks made to feint in combat.

Uncanny Feint (Ex) Midnight may feint in combat as a free action, but only when attacking with a dagger, punch dagger, or kukri.

Unfettered Defense (Ex) Midnight receives 1 point of her Intelligence bonus toward her AC per Invisible Blade level as long as she is wearing no armor and is armed with a dagger, punch dagger, or kukri. If she is denied her Dexterity bonus to AC, she loses this bonus as well.

The Little Giant

Golos Granitebourne committed horrible offenses against the elders of his clan and was cast out by his stone giant kin. Since then he has perpetrated horrific crimes against humans and dwarves in the Dramis region. The first few deaths Golos caused were accidental, as he did not understand his strength's effect on humanoids. The scores of deaths that followed were completely

intentional, as Golos grew to revel in his physical superiority. After a failed raid on Dramis, the stone giant was captured alive. A powerful wizard who was passing through the region cursed the giant to be reduced to the size of those he tormented as per a permanent *reduce person* effect (CL 12th). Though he stands only a smidge over six feet, his massive grey-skinned frame is still prodigiously strong.

After being confined to Blackmaw, Granitbourne became the muscle of the Covenant and has served Midnight well. No other inmate in Blackmaw can hope to match the giant's physical might, and all fear his wrath.

GOLOS GRANITEBOURNE

Male stone giant fighter 3	CR 11
NE Medium giant	
Init +7; Senses Listen +0, Spot +0	
Languages Common, Giant	
AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 21	
hp 168 (17 HD)	
Fort +17, Ref +10, Will +8	
Spd 40 ft.	
Melee* slam +18 (1d3+13)	
Ranged rock +16 (1d10+8)	
Base Atk +13; Grp +21	

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Improved

Bull Rush, Power Attack, Precise Shot

*Includes adjustments for a 5-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 26, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Bull

Rush, Improved Initiative Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Climb +17, Hide +20 (+28 in rocky terrain), Jump +12, Listen +8, Spot +7

Possessions leather breeches

The Wereboar Warden

Vaden Kiang was apprenticed to the Sentinels in infancy. His family lived in utter poverty and was already burdened with eight children when Vaden was born, so his parents left him at the gates of a Sentinel monastery. He grew into an enlightened senior disciple of the Sentinels and took up the mantle of warden and abbot of Blackmaw ten years ago.

After his run-in with a wereboar criminal a few months ago, the former abbot now finds himself an inmate of his own prison. He has spent two months in solitary confinement in the bowels of the Maw since his first full-moon transformation. His mind and spirit have been afflicted with the lycanthropic curse and plunged into inner turmoil, and he alternates between hours of meditation and pacing his steel cell like a caged animal. Every shred of his essence is bent on two thoughts: freedom and vengeance.

VADEN KIANG

CR 14

Male wereboar human monk 11
Monster Manual 170
N Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger)
Init +7; Senses low-light vision, scent; Listen +16, Spot +16

Languages

Common

AC 22, touch 20, flat-footed 19; Dodge
hp 94 (14 HD)
Immune poison

Fort +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +15 (+17 vs. enchantment); improved evasion

Spd 60 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +12/+12/+12/+7 (1d10+2)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +12

Atk Options Improved Trip, Stunning Fist

11/day (DC 20), Snatch Arrows, flurry of blows, ki strike (lawful and magic)

Special Atks

wholeness of body 22/day

Abilities Str 14, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 20, Cha 10

SQ alternate form, purity of body, slow fall 50 ft.

Feats Agile, Alertness, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Escape Artist), Snatch Arrows, Stunning Fist

Skills Balance +12, Climb +6, Control Shape

+9, Escape Artist +22, Jump +2, Listen +16, Profession (warden) +15, Sense Motive +14, Spot +16, Tumble +9

Possessions tattered red robes and black sash, sandals, masterwork manacles

Alternate Form (Su) Vaden's statistics in hybrid form are the same as above except as follows:

AC 28, touch 25, flat-footed 20

hp 136 (14 HD) DR 5/silver

Fort +14

Melee unarmed strike +14/+14/+14/+9 (1d10+4) and gore +9 (1d8+2)

Abilities Str 18, Con 19
Skills Climb +8, Jump +6

Alternate Form (Su) In animal form, Vaden has the same statistics as when he is in hybrid form, except that he also gains the boar's ferocity special attack.

The Clandestine Cleric

Talorn Urgos has long been a devoted follower of Erythnul, reveling in slaughter and paying homage to his deity with the blood of his enemies. After years of proving his faith, he has finally been given a task worthy of his talents. In a vision from his dark god, he learned that he would free one of Erythnul's favored servants to once again bathe the land in blood and fire. Sedakas Crane, blackguard of the slaughter god, has long been imprisoned in the Maw, and Talorn plans to unleash this madman on the world.

In order to free Crane, Talorn allowed himself to be imprisoned in the Maw. The half-orc arrived in Dramis three weeks ago in the guise of a traveling mercenary. He slew a helpless man in a tavern in Dramis in plain view of the patrons and felled several constables when they came to collect him. In this battle, he made no use whatsoever of his divine abilities, giving no hint that he is anything more than a warrior. After being sentenced to thirty years, he was placed in the general population instead of in solitary confinement (where inmates with potent magical powers are held). Talorn now plans a prison break in order to free Sedakas Crane and win greater favor with Erythnul.

TALORN URGOS

CR 11

Male half-orc cleric 11 (Erythnul)

CE Medium humanoid

Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Orc

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 64 (11 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +11

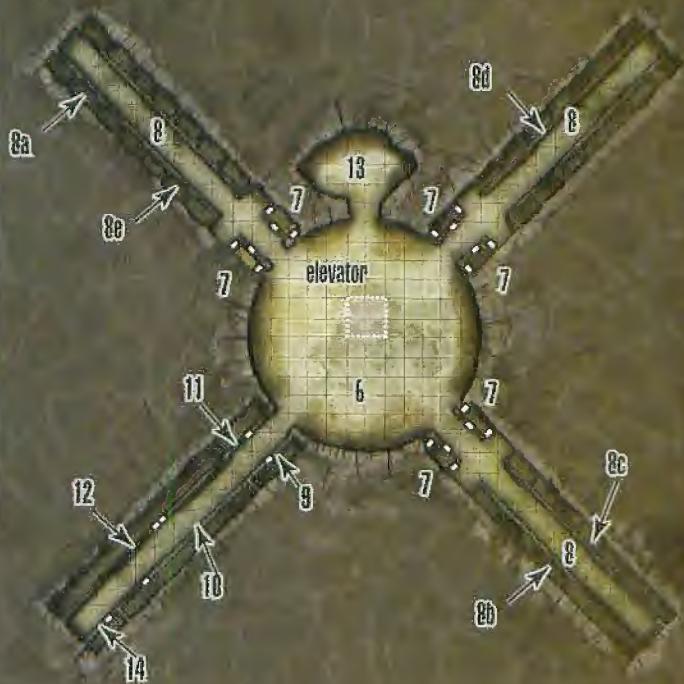
Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk morningstar +13/+8 (1d8+3)

**Blackmaw Prison Mine:
Surface Level**



**Blackmaw Prison Mine:
Level 1**



**Blackmaw Prison Mine:
Level 2**



**Blackmaw Prison Mine:
Level 3**



One square = 5 feet

Base Atk +8; Grp +11

Atk Options Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack

Special Atks rebuke undead 3/day (+2, 2d6+11)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 11 [CL 12 for chaos spells], +11 melee touch, +8 ranged touch)

6th—*harm* (DC 20), *mislead*^D (DC 20)

5th—*break enchantment*, *dispel law*^D (DC 19), *righteous might*

4th—*air walk*, *chaos hammer*^D (DC 18), *freedom of movement*, *poison* (DC 18), *sending*

3rd—*cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *magic circle against law*^D, *meld into stone*, *protection from energy*, *remove curse*

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *cure moderate wounds*, *darkness*, *invisibility*, *shatter*^D, *silence* (DC 16)

1st—*command* (DC 15), *comprehend languages*, *detect good*, *detect law*, *disguise self*^D, *obscuring mist*, *shield of faith*

0—*create water*, *cure minor wounds*, *detect magic* (2), *light*, *mending*

D domain spell; Domains Chaos, Trickery

Abilities Str 16, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 10

SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar)

Skills Bluff +14, Concentration +11, Disguise +16, Hide +10, Knowledge (religion) +7, Spellcraft +5

Possessions masterwork morningstar, prison tunic, leather breeches

The Fallen Paladin

Once a devout paladin of Pelor, Sir Sedakas Crane championed the weak and destroyed the wicked, earning a reputation as the kingdom's greatest hero, a bright light in the darkness. Now he is the single most feared man in the realm, a killer, and a blasphemous stain on Pelor's brilliant visage.

Many years ago, an evil cleric who had long opposed Pelor repented and gave up his sinister ways. Crane refused to believe the dark priest's sudden turnaround, and slew the cleric in cold blood. Cast out of the church and stripped of his divine powers, Sedakas became a man filled with seething rage. It did not take long for the former

paladin to find a new patron. Crane now devotes himself to Erythnul with the same fervor he once dedicated to the Radiant One. Crane has spent the last six years of his life in solitary confinement in Blackmaw. He escaped several times before, earning himself three *marks of justice*, which authorities hope will prevent him from breaking loose again. He has been in contact with Talorn Urgos for the past month via his fiendish bat Shadowfang. Crane awaits the cleric with great anticipation, giddy over the prospect of once more soaking the realm in blood.

Crane is a handsome blond man with deep blue eyes that glimmer with insanity. He speaks pure blasphemy, cursing his former god, and faces enemies with an unnerving polite coldness. If not for his words, his victims might think he was addressing them with courtesy.

Sedakas bears three *marks of justice* on his body to ensure he does not escape again to bring slaughter and death to the innocent. The first is a black spiderweb across the left side of his face. This *mark of justice* activates if Crane attempts to call upon his dark powers (cast a spell, command undead, or smite good). If he does so he suffers a -4 penalty on all attacks, saves, and skill checks thereafter. The second *mark of justice* takes the form of a cross on the back of both of Sedakas's hands. This mark activates if Crane touches a weapon, at which point he immediately suffers a -6 penalty to his Strength until the *mark of justice* is removed. The final *mark of justice* is a cage with a coal-black heart depicted inside. This mark appears on Sedakas's right breast and activates if he harms another living creature, after which the blackguard suffers a -6 penalty to his Constitution.

Erythnul has supplied Crane with a fiendish bat named Shadowfang. The devoted servant acts as the blackguard's eyes and ears inside Blackmaw and has thus far escaped detection by the sentinels. Shadowfang spies on any newcomers and carries messages between Talorn and Sedakas in order to plan the blackguard's escape.



Karl Manderholm

SEDAKAS CRANE

CR 15

Male human fallen paladin 5/blackguard 10

CE Medium humanoid

Init +1; Senses Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Elven

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10

hp 117 (15 HD)

Fort +17, Ref +9, Will +12

Spd 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +19 (1d3+4) or +2 wounding greatsword +22/+17/+12 (2d6+8/17-20 plus wounding)

Base Atk +15; Grp +18

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, Improved Sunder, smile good 5/day (+4 attack, +15 damage), sneak attack +4d6

Special Atks rebuke undead (+4, 2d6+12, 8th)

Blackguard Spells Prepared (CL 10)

4th—*freedom of movement*

3rd—*cure serious wounds*, *protection from energy*

2nd—*bull's strength*, *shatter* (DC 14)

1st—*cause fear* (DC 13), *cure light wounds*, *magic weapon*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)

At will—detect good

Abilities Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 19

SQ aura of evil, fiendish servant

Feats Cleave, Eschew Materials, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Sunder, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Concentration +12, Diplomacy +10, Hide +9, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (religion) +3, Ride +6

Possessions leather breeches, tunic, adamantine shackles and manacles

SHADOWFANG

CR —

Male fiendish bat

Monster Manual 107, 268

CE Diminutive magical beast (extraplanar)

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense 20 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10

AC 19, touch 16, flat-footed 17

hp 18 (4 HD) DR 5/magic

Resists cold 5, fire 5 SR 9

Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +6; improved evasion

Spd 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)

Space 1 ft.; Reach 0 ft.

Base Atk +4; Grp -12

Atk Options smite good 1/day (+4 damage)

Abilities Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 4

SQ empathic link, share spells, speak with master

Feats Alertness, Stealthy

Skills Hide +18, Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Spot +10

The Merchant

Karl Manderholm is a naïve young man with a good heart, forced into a terrible situation by fate. He is well educated but humble and courteous. He has golden blond hair, now dirtied from a week's stay in Blackmaw, and bright blue eyes.

KARL MANDERHOLM

CR 6

Male human aristocrat 7

LG Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Common

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; Dodge

hp 38 (7 HD)

Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +7

Spd 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +5 (1d3 nonlethal)

Base Atk +5; Grp +5

Abilities Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 14

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

Skills Appraise +10, Diplomacy +17, Listen +10, Sense Motive +10, Spot +10

Possessions leather breeches, gray tunic

Chapter Two: Life and Death in the Maw

Blackmaw lies 10 miles outside of Dramis, nestled in the dusty black rock hills surrounding the mining town. Atop a flat mesa, a few plain stone buildings surround a narrow elevator shaft. A mournful wind blows across the midnight-black rock mesa, creating a low, spine-tingling howl as it sets the elevator chains dancing. The distant din of hammer on stone echoes eerily from within.

The prison complex consists of the surface described above and subterranean levels. Level one is the general population level of the prison, where convicts are quartered in three cellblocks of 10-foot-by-10-foot cells. The mess hall, laundry, workshop, and several guard chambers are also located on this level. Level two is the mining facility where most of the inmates toil. A large cavern filled with deep mining shafts and metalworking chambers make up this level. Level three is solitary confinement, where the most fearsome charges of the Maw are sealed in antimagic cells.

The prison's lower levels are accessed via a large steel elevator platform controlled by a series of winches and pulleys. The elevator moves 30 ft. per round up or down, but can only be controlled from the surface. The chains are all greased regularly, forcing anyone trying to ascend to make a DC 25 Climb check.

Chains: 1 inch thick; Hardness 5; hp 25; Break DC 22.

It is 100 feet from the pit opening on the surface level to the floor of level one below, 50 more feet to level two, and 100 more down into the bowels of the earth to level three.

Natural steam vents and volcanic activity in the region heat Blackmaw. This

Lagorn the Bloodfang

This black iron greatsword's hilt guard is fashioned into a pair of jagged bat-like wings. *Lagorn* is an intelligent chaotic evil +2 wounding greatsword that can speak Common and Abyssal and can communicate telepathically with its wielder. Bloodfang's voice is guttural, as if it were gargling on its own blood. Whenever it speaks aloud, fresh blood drips from its hilt guard and blade. The blade has Bluff +15, and Listen +14, and continuous deathwatch. Its wielder can grow a pair of bat-like wings, granting him a fly speed of 40 feet with average maneuverability once per day for 1 hour. *Lagorn*'s special purpose is the destruction of any infidels who do not pledge their lives to Erynnul, giving them to the Slaughter God in death instead. While pursuing this end, *Lagorn* may use confusion (DC 19) at will. Any non-evil creature foolish enough to pick up *Lagorn* must contest with its Ego. If the blade wins, it delights in forcing its thrall to attack friends and allies so that *Lagorn* may drink deeply of their blood.

Lagorn the Bloodfang: +2 wounding greatsword; AL CE; Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 20; Speech, telepathy, 120 ft. darkvision and hearing; Ego score 20.

Lesser Powers: continuous deathwatch, Item has 10 ranks in Bluff (total modifier +15) and Listen (total modifier +14).

Greater Powers: 1/day the wielder grows wings, giving him a fly speed of 40 ft. (average) for up to 1 hour.

Strong evocation and transmutation; CL 1st; Craft magic Arms and Armor, creator must worship Erynnul, confusion, deathwatch, Mordenkainen's sword, overland flight; Price 120,050 gp.

heat, combined with an unavailability of clean air, can be hazardous to living creatures. Level one is already uncomfortably warm, and level two is sweltering. The vile scum confined on level three suffer blistering heat that leaves less hardy souls exhausted or even dead. Every hour of exertion on level two inflicts 1d6 nonlethal damage (Fort save DC 15 +1 per previous check negates). Every round of exertion spent on level

Blackmaw's Prisoners

Besides the NPCs listed in the "Prisoners" section, Blackmaw is home to all sorts of despicable outlaws. Roll 1d10 and consult the following chart to generate a random prisoner. Consult the standard creature of this type from their entry in the *Monster Manual*. Note that these inmates do not have any weapons or equipment except possibly a concealed dagger. For more colorful prisoner ideas, check out "Behind Bars" in DUNGEON #130.

1. Orc (*Monster Manual* 203)
2. Hobgoblin (*Monster Manual* 153)
3. Drow (*Monster Manual* 101)
4. Dwarf (*Monster Manual* 91)
5. Bugbear (*Monster Manual* 29)
6. Covenant Thug (see page 45)
- 7-10. Human rogue 1

three inflicts the same damage as above. The criminals confined in solitary spend most of their time resting in their cells in order to avoid being overwhelmed by this damage. Exertion includes any activity that expends more energy than walking slowly or sitting comfortably.

1. Watch Towers (EL 5)

These 20-foot-tall adobe towers stand at the four corners of the exterior of Blackmaw. No ladders or stairs ascend to the tops. Sentinels are expected to climb up as part of their training, and without ladders it is difficult for encroachers to take these positions.

Creatures: A sentinel keeps watch in each tower at all times.

Sentinel: hp 26; see page 38, except that this sentinel is also equipped with two sunrods, a thunderstone (to raise the alarm), and a spyglass.

2. Gardens

These spacious gardens are more practical than aesthetic. Tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, and other vegetables grow here for consumption by the sentinels and inmates. In addition, several wooden chicken coops are kept in this area. The chickens raised by the sentinels are not eaten, but their eggs are valuable in feeding Blackmaw's population.

3. Training Hall

This large chamber contains several weapon racks and wooden fighting dummies. Windows overlook the gardens outside.

Creatures: There are always 1d6 Sentinels present here, honing their martial skills in sparring drills and training dummy exercises. Unless called below on important matters, Rao Chang is usually found here as well, practicing. In addition, the wooden training dummies (gifts from a clerical ally) are animated to provide sentinels with an extra challenge. They respond to simple command words from any ordained sentinel ("attack" or "stop," for example).

Rao Chang: hp 79; see page 37.

Sentinels (1d6): hp 26 each; see page 38.

Animated Training Dummies, Medium animated objects (10): hp 31 each; *Monster Manual* 13. These objects inflict only nonlethal damage.

4. Sentinel Quarters

This large room is completely bare save for rows of prayer mats and several bronze incense burners.

The sentinels sleep and meditate in these rooms when not on duty.

Creatures: There are 2d6 sentinels resting here at any given time.

Sentinels (2d6): hp 26 each; see page 38.

5. Secure Storage

This steel-reinforced 10-foot-by-10-foot vault is where important and dangerous items are kept. Rao Chang possesses the only key to this area. Amongst the other magical items contained within, Sedakas Crane's intelligent greatsword, *Lagorn the Bloodfang*, is sealed in a separate steel locked box to prevent any person from falling under its dark influence.

Steel Reinforced Door: 3 inches thick; Hardness 10; hp 100; Open Lock DC 30; Break DC 30.

Steel Locked Box: 2 inches thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Open Lock DC 30; Break DC 28.

Treasure: In addition to *Lagorn the Bloodfang* (see sidebar for details), the vault also contains 6 sacks of 1,000 gp each, three beads of force, a cloak of poisonousness, a horn of blasting, a clay golem manual, and a type III necklace of fireballs.

6. Yard (EL 13+)

The walls here are hewn jet-black stone. The steel elevator platform descends from the tower above to the center of the yard.

This large cavern is where prisoners spend their scant free time, and is also where work crews board the elevator to descend to the mining shafts and forges in level two every morning. The yard is the social nexus of the prison, and any dirty deals, vicious brawls, or other activities usually occur here.

Creatures: During yard time (1 hour every morning and 1 hour in the evening), there are usually about thirty inmates present here. Five of each type of inmate mill about. In addition, Midnight and her entourage are here. Duncan DeVries and two other sentinels patrol the area as well. Talorn only appears for a few brief minutes every evening to speak quietly to Midnight before returning to his cell. The half-orc is impatient for the delivery of some items he has ordered from her forge (a masterwork morningstar and a holy symbol of Erythnul). PCs should receive a Spot check (DC 25) to notice him if they are present here in the evenings. It's a DC 25 Listen check to overhear his conversation with Midnight.

Midnight: hp 58; see page 39.

Golos Granitebourne: hp 168; see page 40.

Talorn Urgos: hp 64; see page 42.

Duncan DeVries: hp 79; see page 38.

Sentinels (2): hp 26; see page 38.

Covenant Thugs (6)

CR 4

Male and female human rogue 4

NE Medium humanoid

Init +3; Senses Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common, Orc

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Dodge, uncanny dodge

hp 16 (4 HD)
Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +2; evasion
Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk dagger +7 (1d4+1/19-20)
Ranged mwk dagger +7 (1d4+1/19-20)
Atk Option sneak attack +2d6
Base Atk +3; Grp +4
Abilities Str 13, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ trapfinding, trap sense +2
Feats Dodge, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse
Skills Balance +10, Climb +8, Escape Artist +10, Hide +12, Intimidate +7, Jump +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +8, Spot +8
Possessions 6 masterwork daggers

7. Guard Rooms

Two of these stone-walled chambers stand at the entrance into each cellblock. Three steel doors seal these chambers, each secured from the inside to prevent access by the inmates. Carved into the stone on either side of the doors are 1-foot-by-1-foot windows from which the sentinels may hurl shurikens toward anyone rushing the chamber.

Creatures: There are always two sentinels on duty in each of these guardrooms, in case of a riot or large disturbance. These sentinels keep constant vigil over the cellblocks and the yard.

Sentinels, male human monk 5 (2): hp 26 each; see page 38.

Treasure: A table against the wall in each of these chambers has 50 shurikens stacked on it.

Area 8. Cellblocks

Each of these cell blocks hewn out of black stone contains 12 ten-foot-square cells in two rows of six, with a corridor running between them. Only a pair of sputtering torches lights this dark and dismal area. The cells are home to 3-4 inmates each, and contain nothing but four straw sleeping mats. Roll on the Random Prisoner Chart to determine the occupants of each cell.

8a. PCs' Cell

When the PCs are incarcerated in Blackmaw, they are placed in this cell.

8b. Covenant Lieutenants' Cell

This cell is identical to the others except that it is occupied by Golos Granitebourne and two covenant thugs, who are all present during relegated rest hours (from midnight until 6:00 in the morning). Although the door to this cell appears secure, the corrupt sentinels have constructed a hidden catch inside the door to allow the prisoners to open it. If they detect a threat to Midnight across the hall, they immediately respond.

Covenant Thugs (2): hp 16; see page 45.

Golos Granitebourne: hp 168; see page 40.

8c. Midnight's Cell (EL 13)

This is the cell of the Covenant's decoy shadowmaster, Midnight. She shares it with three female members of the Covenant of the Knife. All four are present here during relegated rest hours (midnight to 6:00 in the morning). This cell has been rigged with a hidden catch in the same fashion as area 8b.

Midnight: hp 58; see page 39.

Covenant Thugs (3): hp 16; see page 45.

8d. Jarrett's Cell (EL 13)

Jarrett Muros in his disguise of Corrin Treadwell resides in this cell. Because Corrin is advanced in years and has highly valued skills, the sentinels allow Corrin to keep this cell to himself. This cell has been rigged with a hidden catch in the same fashion as area 8b.

Jarrett "Old Man" Muros: hp 61; see page 38.

8e. Karl's Cell (EL 6)

Karl Manderholm resides in this cell.

Karl Manderholm: hp 38; see page 43.

9. Laundry

This chamber is filled with wooden casks of water, large bins of alchemical soap powder, and several long wooden troughs. Prisoners work here during the day, scrubbing clothing and blankets clean.

Treasure: The alchemical soap powder can blind a foe if hurled into their eyes. A handful of powder may be tossed at an enemy within 10 feet by making a ranged touch attack with a -4 penalty. If

the attack succeeds the target must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d3 rounds. There is enough alchemical soap here for 50 attacks.

10. Workshop (EL 14)

This chamber is filled with work benches and tables. Inmates learn honest trades here (taught by other inmates who possess these skills) as part of their rehabilitation.

Creatures: Jarrett Muros spends most of his time here teaching other prisoners carpentry. This chamber is always guarded by two sentinels who supervise the use of tools. The sentinels make certain that materials do not leave the workshop and ensure that tools and carving knives are locked in a secure iron box at the end of every workday.

Jarrett "Old Man" Muros: hp 61; see page 38.

Sentinels (2): hp 26; see page 38.

Treasure: Several masterwork quality tools (which could be used as thieves' tools) and 20 knives are locked in the iron box by the door to this room.

Iron Box: 2 inches thick; Hardness 8; hp 25; Open Lock DC 25; Break DC 25.

11. Pantry (EL 7)

This chamber is filled with shelves, tables, and sacks of vegetables and grain. This is where food is prepared for Blackmaw's population. A large iron oven on the west side of the chamber is where breads are baked and vegetable stew is heated.

Creatures: This room is guarded by two sentinels who oversee the inmate cooks' activities, checking that no poisonous or unhealthy substances are put in the population's food.

Sentinels, male human monk 5 (2): hp 26 each; see page 38.

12. Mess Hall

This long chamber is filled with stained, chipped wooden tables and low benches.

Two meals are served daily, one in the morning right after yard time and the other in the evening right before yard

time. At those times most of the population of Blackmaw passes through here to get a bowl of vegetable stew and bread.

13. Waste Pit (EL 8)

A black rock corridor leads to a simple rough-hewn chamber. At the center of this area is a deep pit descending into the blackness below. Foul-smelling vapors continually waft up from the darkness,

sometimes blasting forth when a pocket of heated air erupts from below.

Sardonically referred to as "the real Blackmaw," this is where the prisoners empty waste buckets.

Creatures: Deep in the waste pit a colony of carrion crawlers makes their home. The creatures' tunnels connect to the Underdark and their usual hunting grounds. On occasion, prey becomes scarce, and more than a few convicts of Blackmaw have gone missing when they went to empty their waste buckets. When the PCs come here on their first evening in the Maw, the carrion crawlers climb up and attack, seeking to paralyze a single victim and drag him into the depths below for consumption.

Carrion crawlers (4): hp 19 each; *Monster Manual* 30.

14. Storage

This area is nothing more than a storage room for extra prison clothes, shoes, and mining equipment. The PCs may retrieve light or heavy picks from this room if they require a weapon.

15. Elevator Landings

These chambers are used for the loading and unloading of the elevator platform and lead to other areas on levels two and three of Blackmaw.

16. Rail Tunnels

These long tunnels connect the areas on level two. Running the length of each tunnel are two sets of crude iron rails. Two large cast-iron carts are used to move the work crews from the landing to the mining cave, raw ore from the cave to the forges, and finished steel products from the forges back to the elevator landing. The tunnels all slope downward, allowing rapid travel by cart. A dumbwaiter chute rises 80 feet, connecting the forges to the tunnel leading back to the elevator landing. This tunnel is higher than the elevator landing, allowing smooth downward travel from the forge chute to the elevator.

Each of the carts is connected to a chain winch on the high end of the tunnels that is used to pull empty carts back uphill for another load of passengers, ore, or steel items. These chains also act as breaks for the carts, ensuring they stop at the end of the tunnel when they run out of chain. If the chains fail, the carts careen haphazardly into the area below the tunnel at a speed of 50 feet, inflicting 5d6 damage to anything in their path.

Chains: 1 inch thick; Hardness 5; hp 25; Break DC 22; Disconnect DC 20 Disable Device.

17. Mining Cavern (EL 9)

Large stalactites hang from the ceiling above like the fangs of a beast's gaping maw. The cavern floor is riddled with shafts painstakingly chiseled from the unyielding black rock.

This enormous open cavern complex is where most of the prison's population slaves away their lives in Blackmaw. Each shaft descends anywhere from 70 feet to 120 feet. Mining crews work day in and day out lowering men and buckets by ropes and hauling up ore.

Creatures: During work hours 60 inmates work here. The cavern is patrolled by 9 sentinels. During work hours and during the prison break detailed below, Golos Granitebourne is located here. If the PCs attempt to move through this cavern to the forges during the prison break (either to protect Karl or to face Midnight), Golos stops them. His tactics are simple: he hurls chunks of rock and ore at approaching foes and bull rushes any who get too close down the nearest shaft.

The mine shafts themselves are plagued by a delver who hunts prisoners for sport. The sentinels have tried on numerous occasions to destroy the creature, but it always escapes. At any time when the PCs' work crew is down a shaft, the delver attacks. The creature's arrival is heralded by a section of wall near the PCs suddenly hissing and melting away a split second before

Midnight



the delver's bulky form bursts through the wall.

Delver: hp 145; *Monster Manual* 39.

Golos Granitebourne: hp 168; see page 40.

Sentinels (9): hp 26; see page 38.

18. Forges (EL 13)

This large chamber, hewn out of the depths of black stone, sits over a vent of superheated air. This vent fuels the fires of the forges and gigantic smelting cauldrons located here. Steel tables and anvils are strewn about the forges where workers hammer red-hot metal into rails, horse-shoes, and cogs.

Metal catwalks crisscross the chamber 10 feet above the floor, from which inmates may tend the large cauldrons of bubbling iron slag. Molds lie beneath the cauldrons where the slag is poured to produce rails and girders. On the north side of the chamber is a dumbwaiter and pulley system which ascends 80 feet to the rail tunnel above. Finished steel and iron products are raised up to the tunnel there to be carted to the elevator landing.

Creatures: During work hours Midnight and 4 Covenant thugs work metal in this chamber. Midnight secretly forges masterwork daggers and throwing knives for the Covenant members here and also works on Talorn's special order (a masterwork morningstar and a holy symbol of Erythnul) until she finishes after the PCs' second day in the Maw.

Duncan DeVries is always assigned this post and has two corrupt sentinels also in the employ of the Covenant here with him at all times. On the morning of day three, Karl is also posted here, though he meets his death during the prison break in an "unfortunate accident" when he "falls" off the catwalk into a cauldron of iron slag (see Day Three below for details).

Midnight: hp 58; see page 39.

Covenant Thugs (4): hp 16; see page 44.

Duncan DeVries: hp 79; see page 38.

Sentinels (2): hp 26 each; see page 38.

Tactics: During the breakout, the corrupt sentinels posted by the door rush to attack anyone they detect approaching by the tunnel. This gives everyone time to prepare for the PCs' arrival. Duncan and the sentinels quaff their potions if they have time. Duncan, positioned on the catwalk above the door, lashes out at all foes that pass through his threat range with his spiked chain, leaping to the next catwalk once PCs move into the room. The Covenant thugs stand ready to push the smelting cauldron over toward any PCs entering the chamber (30-foot cone; 8d6 damage from hot steel slag, 4d6 on round 2 to anyone still in the area; DC 16 Reflex save half) and then immediately flank any PCs left standing. Midnight reveals herself last, flanking an opponent and dealing death with her kukri.

The thugs fight to the death. Duncan is ultimately a coward, and if reduced below 10 hit points he flees either out the tunnel or up the dumbwaiter chute. Only if the fight appears lost does Midnight flee, hoping to find Jarrett in the chaos of the prison break.

19. Solitary Confinement Access (EL 12)

A tunnel leads from the elevator landing on level three to this large chamber that contains the five solitary confinement cells of Blackmaw.

Creatures: Standing watch over solitary are two clay golems carved in the likeness of the founding father of the Sentinels, a broad-shouldered, bald-headed monk named Argen Tang. The golems attack any intruders they detect unless they are escorted by the abbot of Blackmaw. The abbot may order the golems to stand down or attack. Unfortunately, these guardians will not attack Vaden Kiang, as they still recognize him as an ordained abbot of the Sentinel Order, and the lycanthrope can even order the golems to stand down and not attack Sedakas Crane or Jarrett during the prison break (see below for details on this encounter).

Investigating the Covenant

The PCs may use their yard and mealtime to Gather Information by talking to other prisoners. If a character makes a name for himself by Intimidating other inmates, cultivating an air of danger and mystery with a good Bluff, or picking fights with other inmates and winning, add another +2 to his checks. If the PCs make it obvious to the prison population that they are of good alignment, impose a -5 on all Gather Information checks they make.

DC 15: The PCs learn the backgrounds of Jarret, Midnight, and Golos, except for any information pertaining to the fact that Jarrett Muros still lives. In addition they learn of Vaden Kiang's lycanthropic curse.

DC 20: The party hears rumors that Sedakas Crane is held in solitary confinement in the Maw. A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check reveals Crane's dark past, his conversion into a champion of Erythnul, and the fact that he bears three marks of justice.

DC 25: The PCs hear a couple of inmates mention that they know Talorn from the outside, and that Talorn is actually an unholy cleric of Erythnul.

DC 30: Midnight is not the true Shadowmaster of the Covenant; she reports to another unknown inmate who is in fact the leader of the organization.

Clay Golems (2): hp 90; *Monster Manual* 134.

20. Solitary Cells

These 10-foot-square cells are where the most dangerous felons are housed deep in the bowels of Blackmaw. Each of these cells is under a permanent antimagic field effect, which stops spellcasters from using their gifts to escape. Any PC with obvious spellcasting prowess is detained and placed in solitary for their period of confinement. The doors to these chambers are made of thick steel and the locking mechanisms are extremely complex. Rao Chang has the only key to these cells.

Steel Doors: 5 inches thick; Hardness 15; hp 100; Open Lock DC 30; Break DC 30.

20a. Vaden's Cell (EL 14)

This cell is identical to those described above. It is occupied by Vaden Kiang, former abbot and warden of Blackmaw.

Vaden Kiang: hp 94; see page 40.

20b. The Blackguard's Cell (EL 15)

This cell is identical to the other solitary cells except that it houses the dark evil that is Sedakas Crane.

Sedakas Crane: hp 117; see page 42.

Day One

The PCs' caged wagon arrives at Blackmaw in the dark early hours of the morning. Upon reaching the prison, they are thoroughly searched three times by the sentinels and once by Rao Chang himself. The Sentinels like to be certain no one smuggles magic items or weapons into the prison. Weapons, armor, spellbooks, spell components, valuables, tools, and magical items discovered here are taken from the PCs and placed in area 5.

After their search, Rao Chang scrutinizes the PCs and interrogates them concerning their abilities and skills. Any PCs who appear to be potent spellcasters are immediately hooded in black eyeless masks and sent down to solitary confinement with an escort of 3 sentinels. PCs who claim to be skilled in any Craft or Profession skills may be given special assignments in the pantry, workshop, or forges. Otherwise all the PCs are relegated to mining detail. During this interview Rao Chang explains to the PCs that they may either treat the Maw as a prison where they are nothing but caged animals, or as a temple where hard work and meditation will lead them to salvation and a new life as a member of the Order of Sentinels.

After the interview the PCs are stripped of their clothing and given drab prison garb of leather breeches, work boots, and simple gray tunics. The PCs are then escorted to the elevator for their first descent into the dark depths of Blackmaw. Once they are shown their cells, the PCs are informed that they have one hour of yard time before their morning meal and their first day of hard toil in the sweltering furnace of the mines below.

Event 1.**Meeting Corrin Treadwell (EL 9)**

The first day of hard toil in the mines passes uneventfully (with the possible exception of a delver attack, see area 17), and the prisoners are brought up the elevator back to level one to eat their evening meal. After the characters stand in line for a bowl of stew and a crust of bread and find seats in the Mess Hall, read or paraphrase the following:

An elderly convict with a slumped frame and a pronounced limp steps away from the stew line. His unfocused eyes seek an empty seat and he stumbles as he walks past a table of convicts, careening into one of the men who is eating with relish. The convict's stew spills down his front, and he pushes the offending old man, knocking him to the floor. The elderly inmate's stew splatters upon the ground, and one of the convicts at the table snatches his fallen bread.

Creatures: Unless the PCs intervene, the five convicts at the table laugh and then encourage one of their number to beat the old man, who is actually Jarrett Muros in his disguise as Corrin Treadwell.

Jarrett "Old Man" Muros: hp 61; see page 38.

Covenant Thugs (6): hp 16; see page 44.

Development: This whole incident is staged in order to supply Jarrett with a proper introduction to the PCs. If any characters come to his aid, the thugs back down and Corrin Treadwell thanks the PCs for their timely assistance and offers to help them with anything he can during their stay. "I have been a resident of the Maw nearly all my life, I know it inside and out," he tells the PCs. Of course Jarrett uses this opportunity to feed the PCs false information about the Covenant and learn the party's capabilities and weaknesses for later use.

Day Two

During the evening of day one the Covenant plans their first attempt on Karl's life. At night after the evening



Sedakas Crane

meal, Corrin Treadwell cleans out cells while others are at the yard. Every evening he slips a note into Midnight's straw mat, and retrieves any messages she has left for him. On the evening of the first day, he informs her of his plans.

Event 2.

Poison For Breakfast (EL varies)

The first attempt on Karl's life comes during the morning meal. Jarrett orders Midnight to arrange for some Covenant thugs to harass Karl and any PCs who are guarding him. Corrin Treadwell, gets in the way of the thugs, trying to convince them to "leave the youngin be!" One of the thugs punches Corrin, who falls across the table. Jarrett uses Sleight of Hand to spill his dose of dark reaver powder into Karl's food, while the thugs distract the PCs and Karl by entering combat. Any PC directly involved in the fray takes a -5 on their Spot check to notice Jarrett's poisoning of Karl's stew.

Creatures: Midnight is probably well aware of the PC's capabilities by now and dispatches 8 thugs to this task in order to create a large enough diversion for Jarrett. They are under orders not to draw daggers and to back down from the fight quickly (after two rounds of combat), to ensure that the sentinels do not intervene and Karl goes back to his food.

Covenant Thugs (8): hp 16; see page 45.

Jarrett "Old Man" Muros: hp 64; see page 38.

Development: When the PCs and Karl go back to their meal, allow any PCs present a DC 25 Spot check to notice a strange powdery substance dissolving in Karl's stew. A DC 20 Heal check reveals the powder to be poison.

Ad-Hoc Experience: If the PCs stop Karl from being poisoned, grant them a CR 8 experience point award.

Event 3. Going Down?

Whether the poison succeeds or not, Jarrett's backup plan goes into motion either to finish off Karl or eliminate the PCs from the equation shortly after the morning meal when work crews are loaded onto the elevator. Yesterday evening, Jarrett sabotaged the elevator to cause it to malfunction when it first descends from level one to level two. As Duncan DeVries is in charge of loading the work crews, he orders Karl and the

PCs into the elevator first. Give the PCs a DC 30 Spot check to notice that something is wrong with the elevator before they board.

A few seconds after the elevator platform begins to descend, the loud grinding of metal on metal fills the air and the platform pitches suddenly. The characters have one round to react before the floor gives way. Everyone on the elevator must make a DC 20 Reflex save or plummet down the Blackmaw, crashing to the floor on level three of the prison 150 feet below. Anyone making their save may attempt to catch another person within their reach with a second Reflex save (DC 20). Two rounds after this first violent pitch, a chain snaps and the elevator platform falls vertical, only secured by one chain. Anyone on board must secure themselves with a DC 15 Climb check or slide off to their doom.

If a PC falls, the 150 foot drop deals 15d6 damage. The character may attempt a second save or Tumble check (player's choice, DC 20 for either) to land on level two instead of falling all the way down to level three. In this case the character only falls 50 feet, sustaining 5d6 points of damage.

Event 4. Special Delivery

Shortly after the evening meal, a Covenant thug pushing a hand cart of clean blankets makes his way to Talorn's cell to deliver a masterwork morningstar and a holy symbol of Erythnul to the half-orc. Any PCs present in the yard should get a DC 20 Spot check to notice that the thug skips the closest cell block, going straight toward Talorn's cell. A character who moves close to the cart may peek inside and with a DC 20 Search check notices objects hidden amongst the blankets.

Development: If the party somehow intercepts this shipment, Talorn seeks them out immediately to obtain his items. The half-orc tries to steal the items back through use of *invisibility*, but if this fails he attacks the party.

Day Three

The third day of the party's incarceration starts bright and early with news

Scaling the Adventure

As most of the opposition in "Chains of Blackmaw" is made up of NPCs with character classes, scaling the adventure is simply a matter of adjusting their level to fit the party's.

8th- to 9th-level: Subtract two levels from each enemy in the adventure.

11th- to 12th-level: If every NPC is played as cunningly as possible, no adjustment is necessary to run this adventure. Use the Covenant's connections to give them full knowledge of the PCs' activities ahead of time and allow them to prepare for any plans the party concocts.

from the sentinels that Karl is to be transferred to the forges, effective immediately. Right after the morning meal, the young merchant is loaded onto the newly repaired elevator with Midnight and the other members of the forge work crew and sent down to level two, escorted by Duncan DeVries and two sentinels.

Event 5. Break Out! (EL Varies)

Talorn worked out an arrangement with Midnight. The Covenant agrees to aid Sedakas Crane's escape in exchange for favors from Erythnul's followers on the outside. The following timeline details the occurrences that lead to a full-on prison riot. The timeline does not take into account interference by the PCs, so it should be altered according to whatever actions the party takes against the convicts.

5:30 PM: In the late afternoon of Day Three, shortly before the evening meal, Corrin Treadwell goes to close up the workshop. Jarrett silently kills the two sentinels on duty there and snatches up the tools he needs to pick the locks of the solitary cells' doors.

Meanwhile, instead of stopping work and heading up to the mess hall, Midnight and Duncan barricade themselves in the forge (area 18).

5:40 PM: Jarrett disguises himself in the black robes of one of the sentinels he killed and then descends to level two,

where he slips below the elevator as it comes to rest and climbs down 100 feet to level three.

5:50 PM: Once he reaches bottom, Jarrett casts *invisibility* on himself to avoid detection by the clay golems and moves to area 19. From there, he first picks Vaden Kiang's lock. Once free, Vaden immediately orders the golems to stand down. Next Jarrett picks Sedakas Crane's lock, unleashing the sinister blackguard on the prison. Crane orders Shadowfang, his fiendish bat companion, to inform Talorn of their success.

6:05 PM: Talorn is hard at work in area 17 when Shadowfang arrives. The half-orc signals to Golos Granitebourne, who immediately begins slaughtering the sentinels in the mines. Talorn rushes to the elevator landing on level two to await Sedakas Crane. In the meantime, Vaden Kiang climbs up to the surface level seeking Rao Chang. Jarrett Muros returns to his cell as Corrin Treadwell.

Midnight begins to mock Karl, scoffing at his father's attempts to resist the Covenant.

6:10 PM: As soon as the blackguard arrives, Talorn begins casting *remove curse* on him, expunging the *marks of justice* one by one. After this is accomplished the half-orc and the blackguard ascend to the Surface Level via Talorn's *air walk* spell. Vaden Kiang and Rao Chang duel to the death in area 3.

6:15 PM: Sedakas and Talorn rush to area 5, slaughtering any sentinels in their path. They use *shatter* spells to open the vault and the lock box containing Lagorn the *Bloodfang*. The two arm themselves and commence the wholesale slaughter of the sentinels to the last monk (except for Duncan). They kill any inmates (and PCs) who cross their path just for the sheer joy of it.

In the chaos of the prison break, Midnight disposes of Karl. She callously dumps him into a cauldron of molten slag.

Event 6. The Shadowmaster Strikes (EL 13)

If the PCs survive the initial mayhem of the jailbreak, they prove themselves worthy of Jarrett "Old Man" Muros's personal attention. If he has earned and maintained the party's trust up until now, Corrin approaches the PCs begging for their protection from the rioting prisoners. He immediately begins studying the most obvious threat for a death attack, which he tries to deliver when the group is distracted by another foe (fleeing prisoners, sentinels, or Sedakas Crane and Talorn). If he succeeds in downing a PC while the rest of the party is distracted, he hides and tails the group, preparing another death attack. He continues striking from the shadows for as long as possible before facing the PCs. If Muros is felled by a rogue, the Shadowmaster's final act is to shove the

hilt of his dagger into his killer's hand with the words "the Covenant is yours."

Concluding the Adventure

Midnight and Jarret's exposure is enough to clear Karl (and the PCs) of all charges. Alternately, the PCs may choose to simply get Karl out of the prison during the mayhem caused by the prison break. While this does achieve success and lead to a reward, the consequences may be dire for the PCs, as they are now outlaws. If the PCs save Karl's life and return him to his father, Manderholm is overjoyed and pays the party their reward after a tearful reunion with his son.

Loose ends and springboards to further adventure abound at the conclusion of "Chains of Blackmaw." Any of the villains detailed above who escape may turn up later to plague PCs as they pursue other adventures. If a rogue PC keeps Muros's dagger, that character soon finds himself hunted by up-and-comer assassins and rogues seeking to challenge the character for the title of Shadowmaster. ■

Nicolas Logue has observed that gaining a level takes much longer at high levels, and is still a monk 5/thespian 6/freelance writer 6. This adventure holds a dear place in his heart, as he only barely escaped a stint in a Chinese prison after a drunken brawl in Beijing. This is Nick's sixth adventure in DUNGEON, and he would like to dedicate it to Big J.F. Esau and Brendan Victorson, the finest Sentinels he has ever met.

THE PORTENT



PETER BERGTING