

LEGENDARY ADVENTURES



HARROWING HEIGHTS

*A DDD Legendary Adventure
by Daniel McDonald*

The Holgath Highlands beckon,
will you heed the call?



Ah, adventurers. Welcome, welcome, come in and take a seat by the fire. I do so admire your kind, that drive to shatter the shackles of mediocrity and blaze your own trail through this world strikes close to my own heart. Though I share not your wanderlust, I too find it... difficult to settle for the humdrum dreariness of everyday life. I'm Lloyd by the way, Lloyd Spelloyal. Perhaps you've heard of me?

Lloyd Spelloyal, greeting the party

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harrowing heights

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Foreword

When **Paizo**® released their inaugural **Adventure Path**™ for their **Pathfinder**® roleplaying game system, the unquestionably seminal **Rise of the Runelords**™, they accomplished a great many wondrous things. Not least of these, they succeeded in taking one of the most beloved and, consequently, clichéd creatures of the fantasy genre, the humble goblin, and redefine it masterfully in the first book of that six-part series, **Burnt Offerings**™.

Goblins are, of course, hardly a recent phenomenon, originating in European folklore as far back as the middle ages. However, to a large extent the modern take on these beings has been defined by the work of J.R.R Tolkien.

Tolkien's influence, even to this very day, is so strong that frequently when and where goblins feature in fantasy literature, video games, or similar mediums (along with other tropes that he introduced), they tend to feel like they are either directly derivative of his work or, conversely, that they are aware of this unspoken lineage and desperately trying to get away from it.

In either case the result tends to be the same; half-baked creatures that feel an afterthought - either a willing monument to Tolkien's legacy, or a decidedly unwilling one by virtue of their arbitrary contradictions of the medium.

In fact, even in relation to **Dungeons & Dragons**®, it's no secret that many of the early monsters that Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson created for the game were heavily inspired by the **Hobbit**™, **Lord of the Rings**™, and the **Silmarillion**™.

One or two notable exceptions notwithstanding, I think most would agree, or at least concede, that ever since Tolkien left his imposing mark on the world, goblins have been decidedly Tolkien-esque. Of course this isn't necessarily a bad thing, after all he was a master craftsman by any measure and his creations have stood the test of time for a reason.

With **Rise of the Runelords**, **Paizo** decided to take a risk and deviate from the norm by tackling the iconic, stereotypical goblin head-on, reinventing the wretched, dark, and despicable creatures as pumpkin-headed, trash-loving, dog-and-horse-fearing little miscreants, every bit as hilarious as they are horrifying - and, in doing so, inspired a whole new generation of roleplayers, myself included.

It would be a huge disservice to insinuate that **Paizo** pinned their new incarnation of the goblin on **Burnt Offerings** alone. You only have to glance at **We Be Goblins**™, the **Monster Codex**™,

or any one of a dozen other products (far more even) to find further evidence of the brilliant intricacies and eccentricities of these despotic little tyrants.

Still a mere student of the genre, with **Harrowing Heights** I set out to attempt something similar but on a wildly smaller scale, with dramatically lower expectations, and with another creature that our team agreed could use some love of late - the humble kobold.

To that end, we're excited to present a range of new options for kobolds that should make them fun and memorable adversaries for game masters and players up to at least 5th-level; as well as expanding on their culture, traditions, traits, and motivations.

Lastly, for a certain duality with **Rise of the Runelords' Burnt Offerings** adventure, we've opened proceedings with **10 Fun Facts About Kobolds**.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this homage to the outstanding work of **Paizo** for what it is, a tongue-in-cheek nod to, and celebration of, one of the greatest roleplaying adventures of modern times.

And, if you've never experienced **Rise of the Runelords** as a player or game master yourself, I strongly urge you to go check it out. It's still one of the most captivating adventures around and the anniversary edition **Paizo** released in 2012 really is the best way to enjoy it.



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10 Fun Facts About Kobolds

HATCHED, NOT BIRTHED

Kobolds are oviparous, procreating through the laying of eggs. A female lays approximately a dozen eggs roughly three months after being inseminated by a male and these in turn hatch after a three-month incubation period. Usually all fetuses survive to maturation unless interfered with, however depending on nearby predators and other environmental factors, most hatchlings do not live to see adulthood.

Providing her nutritional needs are met, a female is fertile again around the time her current clutch hatches. This means that a single female can birth around twenty-four infants (or wyrmlings) each year.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

As small creatures that lack in physical strength but are able to breed rapidly and in vast quantities to achieve swelling populations, kobolds tend to group together in large numbers to ward off predators, defend their territory, and accomplish their goals.

While larger groups of kobolds generally have leaders and a hierarchical structure, there are exceptions to this and it is not uncommon for even a large tribe of kobolds to have an unspoken shared-purpose but no real leader overseeing things. In these instances, most kobolds might consider themselves in charge.

ACCOMPLISHED ENGINEERS

With their natural savvy, practical smarts, and applied cunning, kobolds make for gifted engineers. They often use their inherent talents to build functional, utilitarian places for themselves to live, to create unusual and bespoke traps for nosy adventurers, or to make their dragon overlords more comfortable.

In fact, an old saying in the southern kingdoms regarding kobolds sums this point up nicely, it goes: "A kobold only requires three things to create mischief and mayhem the like of which bares remembrance; his mind, a claw full of objects that might be considered junk under any other circumstances, and a grudge—and he has at least two of these at any given time".

LAZY

While some might eye their brothers and sisters with scorn or derision for being idle, almost all kobolds are lazy to some degree. The small reptilians always choose the easy route if such a path presents itself unless they suspect that it leads to more trouble in the long term - kobolds might be lazy but they're neither foolish nor short-sighted.

This trait of idleness interacts with the kobolds' love of engineering in an interesting way. When starting a new project their excitement and enthusiasm is at an all-time high, however this doesn't last and they quickly lose motivation. Rather than leading to an endless string of inventions half-invented, or contraptions half-constructed, kobolds have adapted to fold this inherent character flaw into their methodology. They employ remarkable guile and savvy when approaching any project with a view to minimizing the time and effort involved - giving them the best chance of seeing a task to completion.

For example, kobolds prize traps that rely on simplicity, the efficacy of nature, or take advantage of environmental factors to function. They revel in a minimalist design ethos, and kobolds that are able to produce results or achieve goals while doing the least amount of work possible are lauded and celebrated in their culture. In short, making something work is good, making it work with less effort is better. In this way, laziness is a prized trait.

WORSHIPPERS OF DRAGONS

It is well-known that kobolds respect and venerate dragons. This is true, although many also erroneously believe that the scaly reptilians worship all dragons, which is simply not the case. The vast majority of kobolds do treat dragons of the material plane with deference but, generally, they do not believe that Gods dwell amongst them. They also don't perceive all dragons to be their overlords, usually just the specific dragon to whom they swear fealty (if one exists).

Another common misconception is that kobolds favor chromatic dragons over metallic ones. Left to their own devices, a tribe of kobolds might be just as likely to throw its lot in with a good dragon as an evil one. Such instances of this taking place are very rare however because benevolent dragons are not wont to rule over humanoids. Despite this, there are several historic examples of a metallic dragon assuming dominion or lordship over a kobold tribe in order to get it to turn its back on its wicked and destructive ways.

ADAPTIVE BEINGS

Kobolds are neither especially robust nor durable individually, however despite this they prove to be unusually resilient when they come together as a tribe - able to endure repeated attempts to exterminate them in much the same way that an infestation or infection cannot be easily repelled or destroyed.

This talent for survival as a species is definitely partly down to the speed with which kobolds are able to reproduce, but it runs

deeper than that. The real cornerstone of the kobolds' resilience is their versatility and their ability to rapidly adapt to changing environmental factors.

For example, within a couple of generations, a tribe of kobolds that lives in a desert might develop yellow or sand-colored skin to match their surroundings, while a tribe that lives in snow plains might take on a whitish or light blue hue. They might also undergo much more pronounced physiological changes, such as gaining gills, special vision, or the ability to endure extreme temperatures. The most notable way that these traits present relates to dragons. When a tribe of kobolds follows a specific dragon, the members of that tribe take on more and more of their overlord's physical attributes with each passing generation.

COVETOUS HOARDERS

Possibly taking their cues from the dragons they idolize, kobolds are famed for their desire to stockpile items of worth, usefulness, rareness, sentimental value, or that bears some other special significance - even if they don't personally share the appraisal of such objects. A kobold might, for example, prize a picture of a stranger's loved one if he is able to get ahold of it, even if he has never met the person depicted, so long as it can see the value that the item has to its former owner.

One type of object that kobolds universally love and covet are those blessed with magical properties. A kobold that possesses a magical item, even if its use is limited or impractical, has status amongst its brethren. Consequently, it isn't uncommon for a kobold to knowingly wield or attune to a cursed item, despite the inherent foolishness in doing so.

KOBOLDS AS NPCs

The image of a band of small reptilian aggressors charging into some sleepy hamlet somewhere and plundering its goods and wares—or simply razing it to the ground—while barking orders at each other is growing increasingly iconic. However, this lazy reductionist approach to characterizing kobolds as little more than flat, two-dimensional caricatures of themselves does them a disservice.

In reality, kobolds are neither bland or mindless. They are instead bright, lively, and opinionated creatures with distinct personalities, interesting quirks and affectations, and an astounding capacity for rational thought and reason. *Some of the time*. They can, of course, be irrationally emotive as well, however this is usually when they've been swept up in the furore surrounding local events, an extreme ideology, or the will of an magnetic personality.

At any rate, kobolds cannot be easily dismissed as bestial or savage, and make for interesting NPCs if you take the time as game master to flesh out their motivations and the current factors holding sway over them.

EYES FOR THE SKIES

In addition to their other traits, it is often noted that kobolds share a deep love for the skies. Individual kobolds can often be found staring skyward, while many tribes settle in mountains or at high altitudes. There are two prevailing theories as to what prompts this behavior, the first of which is simply emulation of dragons, while the second is a little bit more complicated.

One kobold out of every hundred or so hatched is special. These kobolds are gifted with fragile wings which allow them to glide or, in even rarer cases, fly. This infrequently-occurring genetic abnormality has given rise to a secondary theory that kobolds have descended from birds or even dragons themselves, and their desire to soar is simply a latent instinct relating to that.

DRAKE HANDLERS

Most kobold communities breed and domesticate drakes through an innate, almost-symbiotic system of animal husbandry. They train these beasts for a multitude of purposes, respecting and revering them for the similarities that they share with true dragons.

The kobolds charged with breeding, training, and handling drakes are also treated with great respect by their peers. Wild and adolescent drakes can be temperamental and it isn't unusual for a kobold that works with them to be injured in the course of carrying out his work. Such sacrifices are not soon forgotten.

LETHARGIC DRIFTERS

Another aspect of kobold behavior that has been hinted at already is their general lethargy when left to their own devices. Although kobolds can be quickly whipped up into a frenzy and rallied behind a cause or, more often, a charismatic leader; they're quick to lose focus and motivation if the underlying factor polarizing them lessens its hold over them for any reason.

Consequently, although a kobold or group of kobolds can adapt to a certain set of circumstances quickly, they return to the norm just as swiftly. This can be seen evidenced within the life of a single kobold—where its motivations, ideals, and alignment swing wildly across the spectrum—and also within a group of kobolds over successive generations—where the unusual traits they've inherited from the dragons they follow (or other factors) fade rapidly back to something more generic and homogenized within a few lifespans.



PRELIMINARY MATERIALS

Legendary Adventures: *Harrowing Heights* is an adventure and rules supplement for use with the *5e OGL* ruleset that expands on existing options for kobolds and drakes in its appendices; as well as adding additional magical items to the game. It has been designed, playtested, and balanced with an ideal group size of 4 players and a game master in mind, however slightly smaller groups (3 PCs) or larger ones (5 PCs) should still find the difficulty threshold both challenging and rewarding. If your group features an unusually low or high number of players, you should plan ahead and adjust the challenges that the party will face to better reflect the group's capabilities, particularly with regards combat encounters.

It is assumed that PCs start *Harrowing Heights* at 1st-level and they should attain 5th-level by its conclusion. As with any adventure, with a little work, you could adjust these parameters to better suit your groups needs.

USING THIS BOOK

As with other products in the *Legendary Adventures* series, *Legendary Adventures: Harrowing Heights* offers much more than just a linear, paint-by-numbers adventure. How so?

Firstly, the narrative of *Harrowing Heights* itself is intentionally open-ended, actively encouraging game masters to modify, customize, and expand upon the basic premise of the adventure in order to create something bespoke and wonderfully tailored to the players at their table.

More than this, *Harrowing Heights* is a rules supplement every bit as much as an adventure module. The materials contained in its appendices are perfect for reuse elsewhere, enabling you to construct an incredibly detailed and nuanced kobold tribe with relative ease using the creatures from *Appendix A* and the NPCs from *Appendix B* (reskinning them as necessary). Additionally, the 24 brand new magic items found in *Appendix C*, will always prove useful in a pinch. Who doesn't like magic items right?

Adventure Introduction

H*arrowing Heights* takes place in the Holgath Highlands, a territory that resides in the extreme north of a landmass known as Orkneyjar. The people who call this region home are known as the Holgathi (pronounced Hol-Gah-Thee) and their civilization draws inspiration from real world, Viking-era nordic and scandinavian cultures, locales, and folklore.

Although the PCs' role in this adventure functions similarly to how it might in any other, they actually take on the role of housecarls—personal bodyguards to the lord or jarl of the settlement where they reside—rather than that of adventurers, mercenaries, or heroes, as you might more traditionally expect. Their jarl is a man called Orm Holmgavtsson and the hold he rules is known as Skalaholt.

Prior to the events of *Harrowing Heights*, the PCs will have demonstrated their fealty to Orm by guarding him within Skalaholt and by escorting him to nearby settlements when the need has arisen. However, when Orm's only daughter, Dalla Holmgavtsson, is abducted by forces unknown - the jarl requires them to discharge their duties and demonstrate their loyalty in a wildly different fashion to what they're used to.

Several alternative adventure hooks have been presented later on in this section that allow your players to join in on the adventure without having to hail from Skalaholt or work for Orm Holmgavtsson as housecarls, if that is their preference.

A Grand Journey

The narrative of *Harrowing Heights* centers around a journey that the PCs undertake which leads them through the wilds north of Skalaholt. That said, lots of additional lore and information about the Holgath Highlands has been provided and these materials can be used as a foundation for building an even grander campaign beyond the scope of this adventure.

Adventure Background

Orm Holmgavtsson has been the jarl of Skalaholt for more than two decades, a hereditary position that he inherited from his father upon his passing. There is little doubt that in time he too would have passed this role to his own heir; his eleven-year-old daughter Dalla Holmgavtsson.

'Would have'. However, at the start of the adventure, Dalla's future is cast into doubt when her caravan, returning from the city of Krossavik by way of the village of Myrka, fails to arrive back in Skalaholt at the appointed time. Since departing the village there has been no word and she is now several days overdue without explanation. Skalaholt is abuzz with gossip and idle speculation her fate, however Dalla's present whereabouts and condition are unknown.

The Horned Holt Road that runs between Myrka and Skalaholt is relatively safe and the journey should only take four days at the most. Understandably, Orm is beside himself with worry and fearing the worst. As it happens, his concerns are well-founded and Dalla's procession has indeed been waylaid by malevolent forces. For the moment, she remains alive and well, unharmed by her captors, however her handmaidens and bodyguards haven't been quite so fortunate.

A KIDNAPPING

Dalla's caravan was set upon a little over a day's travel from Skalaholt by a group of kobolds. Although the reptilian aggressors were frail by comparison to the veteran protectors that accompanied Dalla—hand-picked by her father for their dedication, loyalty, and martial prowess—they had superior numbers in their favor, as well as the element of surprise.

The kobolds quickly overwhelmed Dalla's entourage, putting everyone but the young girl herself to the sword, as per their orders. Then they snatched up Dalla, despite her indignant protests, and fled back towards their territory with their mission complete; leaving a meager rear guard behind to deter anyone who might come looking for her.

At a glance—and in light of the events that are to follow—the kobolds' decision to leave several of their number behind to watch over the ambush site might appear foolish. After all, if they hadn't left such an obvious clue as to their involvement behind, there is a strong possibility that they might never have been identified as the true culprits of Dalla's kidnapping.

Which begs the question, why did the kobolds act so foolishly? Well, to understand this, we first need to understand their motivation for kidnapping Dalla in the first place - because her abduction was carefully planned ahead of time, and anything but an accident.

THE KOBOLD'S GOAL

Though the free peoples of Orkneyjar are not aware of the presence of a dragon near Skalaholt, the tribe of kobolds now in possession of Orm's daughter is secretly loyal to an adult red dragon named Salvaschon who has resided to the north of the hold for many years. Unlike others of his kind, Salvaschon is not particularly territorial or militant, and has no desire to conquer the humans that dwell nearby. Consequently, the kobolds that follow him have adopted a similar outlook and were, until recently, mostly neutral creatures.

Under Salvaschon's watchful eye, the kobolds that follow him have been peaceable and remained within their borders. Encounters between the kobolds and the Holgathi have been so infrequent and inconsequential that establishing dividing lines between their territories has never been a pressing issue, and the people of Skalaholt aren't exactly sure where it is that the kobold tribe resides.

Unfortunately, the winds of change are at work in Jinzirga, the kobolds' main settlement in the mountains above Skalaholt. Mighty Salvaschon has not been seen outside his lair for six months and the priestly kobolds who tend to him are remaining tight-lipped about the cause of his absence.

More recently, an ambitious kobold named Jirgix Jackjaw has risen to prominence amongst the kobolds, espousing claims that Salvaschon is sickly and dying. Though Jirgix has offered no evidence whatsoever to back this up, the growing uncertainty and lack of a contrary voice denouncing him and his opinion has allowed Jirgix to sweep up many of his compatriots with his rhetoric, and he has quickly become the tribe's de facto leader.

It was Jirgix who arranged for Dalla's abduction. Knowing there to be some truth to tales of dragons' purported weakness for princesses, Jirgix was able to persuade several others that if they could kidnap a princess and bring her to Salvaschon as a gift, it might somehow cure whatever was ailing him, or at least provide some temporary relief.

From a human perspective, the notion that snatching up Dalla could somehow solve all of the kobolds' woes might seem somewhere between irrational and outright insane, especially given that it could so easily spark a

war between themselves and the neighboring Holgathi and the fact that Dalla isn't even a true princess. However, from the perspective of an increasingly-desperate kobold, such a suggestion made perfect sense, especially coming from the right person - in this case Jirgix.

And so, a small crack team of kobolds set out from Jinzirga to grab Dalla. Jirgix told them where to wait, what to do, and when to strike. He may have orchestrated the whole thing, however he did not mastermind it, for there is yet more to the story.

KOBOLD POLITICS

While Jirgix Jackjaw has been able to effectively assume leadership of the tribe, his position as leader remains tenuous because he has no official mandate, nor has his rule been tested under fire. How firmly entrenched his dominion is at this time is difficult to gauge since no one has made any real effort to resist him. That said, Jirgix knows the fickleness of those he leads and that it wouldn't take much for this to change, hence he is proceeding cautiously with his plans.

Many kobolds have fallen in line under Jirgix and pledged their allegiance to him, including Kaydesh Kroll. Kaydesh is a significant and influential kobold who holds great sway over the tribe due to his connections to Salvaschon. Although Jirgix currently enjoys Kaydesh's support, he also knows that it could be retracted at any time. The ambitious young kobold is also aware that there are those in the tribe who actively oppose his leadership and spend their days plotting his downfall.

Two of the Jirgix's most significant opponents are Fazne Tussu and Zeke Rethis, a pair who have found a kindred spirit in each other, bonding over a shared hatred of their mutual enemy; Jirgix. Fearing the strength of their union, Jirgix has attempted to split the pair up, dispatching Zeke to Vriska's Top, an outpost that the PCs are likely to pass through during the adventure. Unfortunately for Jirgix, her temporary displacement has done more to stoke the fire of resentment that burns in Zeke than quell it, and she's found another ally in Vriska's Top in the form of Elzald Dhurmok. Meanwhile, Fazne Tussu remains in Jinzirga rabble-raising and attempting to garner support in her own ambitions of overthrowing Jirgix.

Kobold politics can be as large as component of Harrowing Heights as you desire. More information on the power struggle taking place within the tribe can be found later, where it is expected to become more relevant to the running of the adventure.

THE TRUE MASTERMIND

Troubled by Salvaschon's unexplained absence and feeling powerless to do anything about it, Jirgix recently set out to meet his friend Kox Quipper at Quipper's Roost to talk through the myriad of dark thoughts plaguing him. However, he unexpectedly stumbled into an old washerwoman in the mountains shortly after setting out from Jinzirga. Frustrated, and appreciative of the company, he shared his baleful tale with her while she listened with rapt attention.

This woman's name was Cordelia Tenebris and, though she didn't reveal it to Jirgix, she already knew all-too-well of Salvaschon's status. Her meeting with Jirgix was no chance encounter either. In truth, Cordelia was a powerful witch who had been carefully orchestrating events for months in order to arrive at this precise moment in time.

Cordelia identified herself as a fortune teller, psychic, and spiritual healer to Jirgix - a gypsy of sorts, although Jirgix wouldn't understand the term. Using her guile, she masterfully manipulated the despairing kobold into believing that Salvaschon was ill and that the only way to cure him would be to follow her instructions, all of them, to the letter.

It was Cordelia who convinced Jirgix that bringing the jarl's daughter to Jinzirga would alleviate some of Salvaschon's suffering. And that, if he kept doing what she asked, even if the instructions were unusual, the red dragon would eventually make a full recovery.

Earnestly, and with a sincerity born of desperation, Jirgix swore that he would do what Cordelia asked of him. Unfortunately, the kobold has quite misjudged Cordelia and her true intentions.

CORDELIA TENEBRIS

As it happens, the woman who identifies herself as Cordelia Tenebris is a powerful witch with a chip on her shoulder. She was formerly a citizen of Skalaholt—a steward at one time, a thane at another—however she departed the hold many years ago after her affair with Orm's grandmother (Dalla's great-grandmother), Bethesda, was revealed. This revelation caused quite the stir and became one of the more infamous scandals in Skalaholt's mostly benign history.

Bethesda was the serving jarl at the time—hence Cordelia's interest in her—and was married to Ivar Hallmundottir; the patriarch of another very powerful and influential household within Skalaholt and beyond. Ivar did not take the news well and, in a fit of violent rage, attempted to murder Cordelia.

It was not the first time that someone had attempted to do Cordelia harm and she survived Ivar's attempt just as she had those that had come before—and those since—however where she had expected loyalty and protection from her lover, she received none. With her reputation in tatters and her marriage threatened, Bethesda turned on Cordelia completely and ordered her banished from Skalaholt for good. And so, scorned and betrayed, Cordelia fled into the mountains, determined that she would have her revenge a thousandfold on those who crossed her.

Despite Bethesda's best efforts, she and Ivar divorced a short time later, leading to an animosity between house Holmgavtsson and house Hallmundottir that lasted several generations - although it was not able to outlast the bitterness of Cordelia. While the people of Skalaholt have buried the hatchet, Cordelia is just now putting her vengeful plan into action.

CORDELIA'S PLAN

Cordelia's plan, although utterly reprehensible and directed at the innocent descendants of her long-deceased enemies, isn't actually very complicated and, without the timely intervention of the PCs, is certain to succeed.

Playing on centuries of distrust between humans and the savage beast tribes of the world, Cordelia intends on manipulating the kobolds into triggering a war with the people of Skalaholt. She knows how easily the kobolds can be influenced and believes that by making them go after Dalla Holmgavtsson, the jarl's retribution will be swift, brutal, and poorly considered.

Given that the population of Skalaholt is almost a thousand—and that Orm could easily summon allies from Krossavik and elsewhere—while the kobolds only number around six hundred or so, one would expect any conflict between the two factions to be short and bloody. However, Cordelia is betting that if Orm acts too hastily, he'll strike at the kobolds without putting them all to the sword, leaving those that survive embittered. The vengeful witch believes that the surviving reptilians could bounce back with sufficient numbers to give the old bastard a run for his money if properly motivated, given a little time to breed, and mobilized in force.

Since Cordelia has no real stake in the survival of either side of any such war, she figures she might as well pull the trigger and see what happens. In her twisted mind, she wins so long as everyone else loses. Moreover, she stands to gain a lot should her designs on Dalla go as planned (see *Secondary Objective: A Vile Ritual*).

THE DRAGON DILEMMA

The greatest obstacle to Cordelia in all of her scheming was Salvaschon. As manipulative as she can be, she could never hope to gain a greater sway over the kobolds than that of their imposing, winged overlord.

And so, Cordelia began poisoning Salvaschon's food source, ensuring that many of the kills that the kobold hunters brought him were tainted with Old Hag's Broth, a poison of sorts. Once Salvaschon was sickly enough, she undertook the riskiest part of her plan by far, slipping into his lair and inserting a Sickle of Pestilence (see *Appendix C*) between two scales of the dragon's natural plating while it slept weakly.

The kobolds have investigated and changed the dragons diet as the days and weeks have passed in the hopes of weaning him off whatever has been making him poorly, but so long as the sickle remains buried within his flesh, Salvaschon has remained near comatose - barely able to maintain a conversation for more than a few minutes. And he's growing weaker by the day.

With Salvaschon out of the picture for the moment, Cordelia has been free to act with impunity through Jirgix. It's her plan to escalate things and actually kill the dragon around the time that forces from Skalaholt arrive to rescue Dalla, compounding the worst of the kobolds' fears and frustrations into an Holmgavtsson-shaped target.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVE: A VILE RITUAL

In addition to killing Salvaschon, sparking a war between the Holgathi and the kobolds, and seeing Skalaholt burn, Cordelia had another objective in mind when she sent Jirgix Jackjaw after Dalla Holmgavtsson.

Cordelia is extremely old, in fact she would be considered venerable even by elven standards, but she is also dying; her body starting to age at an ever-increasing pace. That said, the witch knows of an unusual ritual, or rather an unusual recipe which can delay her inevitable demise by another five, or even six, decades if she's lucky.

In order to make that happen though, Cordelia needs to harvest Dalla's pituitary gland and consume it as part of a very special soufflé - a process she's undertaken several times in the past in order to achieve her astonishing lifespan. In fairness, the pituitary gland of any human girl would suffice, as long as she's prepubescent, but Cordelia feels inexplicably drawn to Dalla given the intimacy she shared with a close relative of hers. She also senses the opportunity to kill two birds with one stone since Dalla is also a target for her vengeance.

Cordelia's plan was to feed Jirgix some cockamamie story in order to get him to retrieve Dalla and then turn her over afterwards, but he's proving resistant. Unfortunately for Cordelia, although young, Dalla is far from stupid. She's asked her new kobold 'friend' a lot of questions about this strange woman and hasn't much liked the answers. And so, Dalla has asked to be allowed to stay close to Salvaschon in his lair, insisting that she likes being close to the sleeping giant at all times. Alone, Jirgix might have relented but his ally Kaydesh has also met Cordelia, doesn't fully trust her, and has been able to convince him not to do anything too rash. For his part, Salvaschon simply continues slumbering, dead to the world.

As Cordelia's own condition worsens, her urgency to get ahold of Dalla is growing, however, for now, she remains content to continue plying Jirgix, rather than risking venturing back into the dragon's lair herself. Plus, knowing she convinced the idiotic kobold to leave a rear guard at the abduction site, she knows that her opportunity to retrieve Dalla may yet be approaching.

Adventure Overview

At the outset of Harrowing Heights, the PCs are tasked with investigating Dalla Holmgavtsson's disappearance by her father, Orm. Doing so quickly leads to the revelation that a nearby tribe of kobolds are responsible for her abduction.

Once Orm learns the truth, he temporarily steps down as jarl so that the kobolds cannot blackmail him, as he believes that is their intention, and Freydis Hallmundottir, his trusted second-in-command, takes over the running of Skalaholt. Fearing that the jarl intends to go after Dalla himself and, in turn, end up being used as leverage against Raudebjorn Hallkelsson, the much more influential and powerful jarl of Krossavik, Freydis places him under house arrest for his own good until the situation is resolved.

In their capacity as housecarls, the PCs initial instinct might be to remain at the side of their charge, especially if they expect or fear a coup by Freydis, however the jarl instead asks them to undertake an unusual and important mission - to find his daughter, rescue her, and bring her home safely. Or, failing that, to avenge her.

The trouble is no-one knows where the reprehensible reptilians lair. Skalaholt is surrounded by miles of untamed highlands and mountains, and the kobolds could be down any one of a hundred passes, trails, and canyons. If the PCs are to fulfill their lord's unusual

request, they'll need more information in the form of directions and a destination.

THE DRUID; VILMARK

Although no one in Skalaholt knows where the kobold tribe resides exactly, Orm can think of an individual who might. He summons the party and requests that they journey northwest, deeper into the wilds, and seek out Vilmark, a powerful and dangerous druid, in order to seek his council. It is Orm's hope that Vilmark can direct the PCs towards the kobolds territory and perhaps provide aid in other ways if the party is to find his daughter and bring her home safely.

Freydis has reservations about Orm's plan, but she doesn't stand in the PCs way. Reaching Vilmark requires the party to overcome a number of challenges and, once they find the druid, he refuses to help them until they've proved their worthiness by completing several errands for him. Once the players have won Vilmark over, he does indeed reveal the path to them, allowing them to continue on their journey.

THE WIZARD: LLOYD SPELLOYAL

Following Vilmark's directions, the party makes its way northward and eastward, continuing its ascent into the mountains and penetrating kobold territory for the first time. Unfortunately, Jirgix Jackjaw quickly becomes aware of their approach and dispatches some of his people to slow the PCs advance, or, with any luck, waylay them altogether.

Despite overcoming a number of inconvenient setbacks, the party eventually reaches an impasse. Unable to halt their progress through other, less-extreme means, the kobolds opt to destroy a crucial bridge that the party needs to utilize to pass through Vriska's Top to avoid a lengthy detour. Faced with the option of wasting time and energy finding another way around, the party likely seeks the aid of a reclusive wizard whose tower resides nearby.

This individual, Lloyd Spelloyal, proves to be an unusual character - somewhere between eccentric and genuinely mad, but a decent sort. If the players manage to convince him to throw his energy into helping them by completing several errands and tasks, they can use his expertise to circumnavigate the obstruction that lies before them and expedite their journey to Jinzirga in the process. Plus, they might be rewarded for their trouble in other ways too.

THE WITCH: CORDELIA TENEBRIS

After battling their way through tougher, even more entrenched and determined kobolds, the PCs find themselves nearing Jinzirga when they stumble across an elderly woman living in the mountains. She offers them a place to rest, as well as some answers to some of the questions that might have been troubling them over the course of the journey. Of course, Cordelia has an agenda all of her own, and sets the PCs on a course to storm into Jinzirga with their weapons raised and murder in their hearts, assuming they fall for her trickery.

According to Cordelia's version of events, the previously-peaceful kobolds have been swept up into a rabid mania by Jirgix Jackjaw and Salvaschon. She explains that the dragon is dying and would see the highlands fall with him, leading to his desire to kidnap Dalla and incite a war with the Holgathi that reside in the highlands below.

Cordelia insists that, by now, Dalla is almost certainly dead. However, she believes that all is not yet lost. She suggests that if the PCs are able to assassinate Salvaschon while he's frail and ailing, and execute Jirgix Jackjaw at the same time - the remaining kobolds will almost certainly see sense before escalating things with further acts of violence.

In truth, Cordelia knows that if agents acting on behalf of Orm Holmgavtsson and Skalaholt perpetrate such acts, the war she longs for is all but certain.

REVELATIONS & RESOLUTIONS

Depending on how things play out, the PCs may be utterly swept up in Cordelia's web of lies and carry out her twisted mission. Or, if cooler heads prevail, they may realize the truth while in Cordelia's company or, more likely, learn it in Jinzirga; either from Dalla Holmgavtsson, Salvaschon himself, or else one of the kobold NPCs that can be found there.

Whatever happens, Cordelia still needs Dalla and won't allow the party to return to Skalaholt without making a play for the girl. This final confrontation could involve Cordelia alone, or she might make a desperate stand alongside Jirgix and several of his most trusted agents.

One thing is certain, whether the kobolds and Holgathi of the highlands end up as closer friends and allies than ever or as mortal enemies, things in the Holgath Highlands will never be the same again.

Running the Adventure

At its core, *Harrowing Heights* is a fairly typical adventure. That said, there are several things that you should be aware of before proceeding with running it for a group.

USING THE APPENDICES

While running *Harrowing Heights*, the adventure text will periodically call for the players to encounter specific adversaries. In each instance these will be creatures taken from either *Appendix A: Bestiary*, *Appendix B: NPC Gallery*, or *SRD 5.1*. Those found in the latter two appear in much the same way as you might expect having read any other supplement or adventure module, however the creatures found in *Harrowing Heights'* bestiary are handled a little bit differently.

While you might traditionally see references to antagonists presented as - **5 Kobolds** - *Harrowing Heights* differs in its approach. The monster entries presented here, specifically with regards kobolds, are instead presented with subtypes that allow for us to present much more bespoke, iterations of them. With this in mind, you might expect to instead see - **3 Kobold (Adult) Conscripts** and **2 Kobold (Adult) Skulkers** - used within the pages of this adventure.

With this approach, the information presented in parenthesis ('Adult' in the above examples) indicates which kobold statblock from the appendices is appropriate to use, while the information that follows just after it ('Conscripts' or 'Skulkers') indicates what modifications to make to this core kobold statblock. This more nuanced approach allows us to quickly and easily create a wide array of varied kobolds without devoting a significant portion of the book to presenting an unnecessary volume of overly similar or repetitive statblocks.

Additionally, all of the new varieties of kobold that you'll find in *Harrowing Heights'* appendices are featured alongside randomized equipment, possessions, and treasure. This enables you to customize and modify each kobold very efficiently the moment it enters play.

MAGIC ITEMS

As has been mentioned elsewhere, kobolds love magic items. Should you decide to introduce any of those found in *Appendix C*, it's a safe bet that a kobold will have attempted to wield or attune to them.

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SOME SLIGHTS ARE NEVER FORGOTTEN

When the Holgathi first set out to conquer the snowcapped highlands looming over their domain, no one expected an easy time of it. However, in place of hardship and danger, the proud, warrior people were instead blessed with decades of peace. Until, that is, the daughter of the local jarl is abducted and her entourage slaughtered, leaving everyone to reflect on the identity of her kidnappers, their intent, and just how fragile their peace really is.

Legendary Adventures: Harrowing Heights Offers:

- An adventure module for use with the 5th edition of the world's most popular roleplaying game for 3-5 players of 1st-level and a game master, spanning 5 full levels of gameplay.
- 40 pages of appendices, providing original creatures, NPCs, and magic items, as well as new variant rules for winged kobolds, drakes with breath attacks, and magic item creation.
- Numerous textboxes with advice to help GM's get the most out of the adventure, hooks to help players ground their characters in the narrative, random encounter charts and modular content, and suggestions and guides for expanding the adventure.
- Stunning full-colour artwork and cartography throughout.

