The shadar-kai came to the Shadowfell before any of the other civilized races that dwell there, and they long ago became one with the place. Many choose to dwell inside the walls of Gloomwrought, but others continue to live as all shadar-kai did when they first arrived. These shadar-kai are organized into war tribes that compete fiercely for meager resources and take refuge inside heavily defended enclaves.

Thyrin Gol is one such enclave, a network of mountain caves that can hold out against an invading force ten times greater than the number of its residents. Two hundred or so shadar-kai dwell here, along with another hundred slaves. Thyrin Gol has never faced a full-scale invasion, but it continually fends off roving bands of nightwalkers and other undead, as well as the concerted efforts of rival shadar-kai looking for supplies and slaves.

History of Thyrin Gol

The Thyrin tribe has survived because the Gol Mountains are uniquely suited to its needs. Not only are the caves defensible, they connect to natural springs that provide more than enough water to support the inhabitants. Over the last few decades, the shadar-kai have begun to raise livestock in the caverns and cultivate edible fungi. If necessary, the enclave could withstand a siege for several years.

Because they need constant action to keep from fading into nothingness, shadar-kai often fight among themselves and thus grow naturally paranoid. Those of the Thyrin tribe are no exception, and it is a tribute to the strength of their leader, Yxir, that they didn’t destroy themselves long ago. Each shadar-kai must take care to elude the tricks and traps set by his or her fellows, and no two in the enclave fully trust one another. However, the caverns beneath the enclave lead to the Shadowdark, whose horrific underground dwellers are a constant threat. Battles against Shadowdark monsters help to keep the shadar-kai from succumbing to shadow, and growing external threats have united them against common enemies, thus keeping the tribe’s infighting to a minimum.

A few years ago, a band of Doomguard (a planar faction of anarchists devoted to destroying tightly ordered societies) seeking one of the pieces of the Rod of Seven Parts wandered through the wrong portal and ended up in Thyrin Gol. After a long conflict, the shadar-kai and the nihilists settled into an uneasy peace based on mutual respect and the need to cooperate against an even greater threat: a seemingly endless undead horde.

Thyrin Gol Today

Thyrin Gol exists in a state of perpetual tension. Between the threats from above and below, the Doomguard in their midst, and their own natural inclination toward infighting, the shadar-kai of the Thyrin tribe remain constantly on guard. Winning the trust of these shadow warriors is no easy task, nor is keeping it.

The tribe survives on cultivation, mining, and trade. Slaves—mostly shadowborn humans, dwarves, and elves—farm the luminescent fungi that grow in the caves and raise animals to feed the tribe. Also relegated to slaves are such tedious assignments as construction and repair, extracting ore, and low-security guard duty. Occasionally, shadar-kai of the tribe must perform these tasks as punishment. Such monotonous activities invite the shadow that is part of every shadar-kai’s life to grow.

By contrast, the shadar-kai’s day-to-day activities are extremely violent. They use warfare to stimulate their senses and stave off apathy. Cadres of shadar-kai waylay travelers and raid caravans that pass into their territory, mount offensives against rival shadar-kai enclaves, and defend themselves against the horrors that dwell below. The adventurers might run into one of these groups in Shadar-Kai Death Dealers, on page 22 of the Encounter Book.

DEATHSTEEL

Thyrin Gol is set in the Gol range of gray-black mountains, forbidding to outsiders but rich in deposits of death ore, a blackened form of iron. This metal is the key to producing deathsteel, which is used to craft weapons and armor used in battle against undead and other creatures of shadow. Traders out of Gloomwrought make the long journey into the Gol Mountains to acquire this mineral from the Thyrin tribe at considerable cost. Shadar-kai raiders often ambush approaching caravans and steal their supplies.
Recently, the attacks from the Shadowdark have increased in scope, and for this reason the shadar-kai negotiated a treaty with the anarchists in their midst. In exchange for standing with the shadar-kai against the creatures of the Shadowdark, the Doomguard are free to remain as long as they wish in Thyрин Gol and share in the community’s resources. This arrangement isn’t a bad trade-off for the Doomguard; the alternative is to wander off into the Shadowfell with no supplies, allies, or directions—possibly with a vengeful tribe of shadar-kai in pursuit.

The twelve remaining Doomguard members cannot defeat the shadar-kai’s superior numbers, so they bide their time until they see a chance to rebel against the founders of Thyрин Gol. Until then, they lend their steel and magic to aid the shadar-kai, silently learning the race’s fighting skills as they fight beside their temporary allies.

**Deathsteel Weapon**

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Lvl 2</th>
<th>Lvl 7</th>
<th>Lvl 12</th>
<th>Lvl 17</th>
<th>Lvl 22</th>
<th>Lvl 27</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2+</td>
<td>520 gp</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
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<td>27</td>
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**Deathsteel Armor**

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Lvl 2</th>
<th>Lvl 7</th>
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**Armor:** Chainmail, scale, or plate

**Enhancement:** AC

**Property:** You gain resist 5 necrotic and a +2 item bonus to saving throws against effects that include ongoing necrotic damage.

- Level 12 or 17: Resist 10 necrotic.
- Level 22 or 27: Resist 15 necrotic.

**Critical:** +1d6 damage per plus of the enhancement bonus

**Property:** When you deal damage with a weapon attack using this weapon, the damage ignores necrotic resistance.
Important Figures in Thyrin Gol

As chief of the Thyrin tribe, Yxir the Vaunted rules in Thyrin Gol, where his word is absolute. A cunning shadar-kai with many scars, Yxir has held off numerous challenges to his rule by ruthlessly wielding his twin curved blades, staying one step ahead of the competition. Stoic and unforgiving, he is highly respected and admired by the other shadar-kai of the tribe, any of whom would die for him—except for those who plot to undermine his rule.

A shadar-kai called Svyn provides for the tribe’s religious needs in addition to lending her magical talents to their efforts. Known as a seer, she shares her visions only in cryptic language meant to serve her own purposes. Called by some a priest, others a witch, Svyn ventures far from Thyrin Gol on her nightmare steed, Sear, perpetually seeking mysteries she keeps secret from others.

Limea Deathbringer, the human leader of the Doom from others. Poses. Called by some a priest, others a witch, Svyn twin curved blades, staying one step ahead of the com­ tative fighting style, which utilizes showy, dirty tricks.

Shadow Witch (Hook): Even if they’re nowhere near the enclave, the adventurers might encounter Svyn on one of her mysterious journeys. Such meetings are rarely coincidental, or so Svyn claims. She requests assistance from people she meets to help her complete her prophetic quests. One of these prophecies might involve one of the characters and might be necessary to save him or her from certain doom.

Sites in Thyrin Gol

Thyrin Gol is challenge enough, but dangerous locales surround it, so that the task of getting there can occupy an entire adventure. Heroes might have to deal with threats from the shadowy depths as well as those within the enclave.

Gol Mountains
The mountains seem to blur in the muddy Shadowfell light, as though distorted by waves of heat. Gazing into the gray-black monoliths brings a wave of dizziness.

Rich deposits of death ore cause the Gol Mountains to radiate an illusory effect that distorts the air, making one’s surroundings difficult to perceive. Those who dwell here have learned to withstand the effect, but newcomers are unable to look at the mountains for long before becoming disoriented.

No one can remember the source of the mountain range’s name, but paintings in the deepest caverns indicate that a tribe of creatures living in this land worshiped a death goddess of some sort. Raven Queen imagery and iconography is notably absent from these painted scenes, but that hasn’t stopped the resident shadar-kai from claiming the mountains to be sacred to the dark goddess. Only the Thyrin tribe’s witch, Svyn, knows (or at least suspects) the truth, and she seems content to allow her tribemates to believe what they will.

Aside from the shadar-kai who call the mountains home, numerous monsters lair here, including a number of ogres led by shadow-warped oni, a band of medusas, a herd of nightmares, and a territorial black dragon called Vhereghast. Such dangers claim many lives, but the corpses of creatures that die in the range disappear quickly. In truth, they are dragged underground by even darker forces that lurk below (see “Deep Shadow,” page 75).

Servant of a Dark Maiden (Hook): Travelers passing through the Gol Mountains report sighting a jet-black unicorn that seems to have seized leadership of the herd of nightmares known to lair here. The shadar­kai of Thyrin Gol have tried to capture this beast, to no avail. Some believe it to be a sign of the Raven Queen’s favor, others a harbinger of her wrath.

Cytus, the River of Tears
The chilly waters of Cytus slowly twist out of the Gol Mountains and down into the Shadowdark. Except in the immediate vicinity of rapids and waterfalls, the salty river glides in silence. None can say for certain where its headwaters lie, but some tales suggest that the river starts in a place called the Lake of Lament, where it’s said that the world’s sadness is collected.

Slick ice and roving banshees make the shores of the Cytus treacherous, and the saltwater itself is like poison for the soul, for those who drink from it are overcome with despair. Yet, desperation drives some to cross the river. Legends claim that any who manage to ford the river without drinking its waters or being submerged gain power over despair and misery. No sadness can touch their souls unless they cross the river again.

Catacombs of Withan
Beneath the Gol Mountains are the Catacombs of Withan, the remains of one of the first shadar-kai settlements in the Shadowfell. The shadar-kai of Withan were some of the first to learn how to resist the gloom of the Shadowfell. They embraced hedonism to such an extent that the Raven Queen eventually forsook them. Without the Raven Queen to guide them, their practices became increasingly violent and depraved until the city collapsed in on itself.

The catacombs are a labyrinth of rooms and passageways. Many of the walls are made from bones tightly packed together with mortar. The remains of Withan are haunted by the souls of the city’s former residents, which linger as ghosts and death knights. Withan is a profane site to the shadar-kai of Thyrin Gol, a symbol of what unfettered debauchery can lead to.
Thyrin Encampment
The tunnel opens into a reinforced encampment. Cries of joy and pain echo from within—some uttered by the same throats.

The shadar-kai of the Thyrin tribe dwell in a series of caves protected by four interlaced defensive caverns, each designed to stop an invading force in its tracks. Using steel, traps, and natural chasms and choke points, the shadar-kai can fend off a vastly more numerous force while their tribemates flee into the caves. A dozen entrances scattered throughout the mountains lead to winding tunnels that connect to the encampment. Only the Thyrin know them all.

The shadar-kai dwell apart from their slaves, though exceptions have been made for the most appealing specimens—those who are especially attractive or aggressive. The shadar-kai enjoy watching slaves romance or fight among themselves.

Escape or Revolt (Hook): The Thyrin slaves crave freedom but tolerate their captivity, since venturing forth into the greater Shadowfell would be far worse. However, they jump at any chance to escape under the protection of sympathetic adventurers. The slaves are loath to challenge the shadar-kai directly, but heroes could muster them to action and tip the balance in their favor. Several slaves have significant connections in Gloomwrought, and returning them home could net a sizable reward.

Tame the Nightmare (Hook): The members of the Thyrin tribe, like all shadar-kai, prize nightmares as steeds. They will pay an excellent price for nightmares brought to them for training, preferably alive and undamaged. Characters receive 1,000 gp or more for each nightmare they can deliver unbloodied (perhaps through a skill challenge involving Arcana, Endurance, and Nature), or 250 gp apiece for those rendered unconscious.

Shattered Cavern
This cave must have been beautiful once, but its stalactites and stalagmites have been shattered and its stone walls defaced with cuts and crude paintings. A number of armored warriors stalk about the chamber, shouting and cursing.

Hateful of order or of anything beautiful, the nihilistic Doomguard have reduced their home cavern to a cracked ruin. Here they lurk, constantly brooding and scheming to escape their bad situation. They take comfort in delving into the Shadowdark, where they can forget their current woes as they indulge in their favorite pastime: destruction.

The predominantly male Doomguard members compete for the favor and affection of their tough-as-nails captain, Limea. A shrewd leader, she plays the warriors’ desires into rivalries just strong enough to make them perform their best, but not overwhelming enough to drive them to the same infighting that plagues the shadar-kai.

Lost Favorite (Hook): Unknown to the shadar-kai, the Doomguard captain Limea is the niece and favorite Lord Nariche, leader of the order, and returning to her homeland Kalandurren in the Astral Sea has long been an important goal for her. Limea has so far kept this information a close secret; if the shadar-kai suspected she were as important as she truly is, they would seek to ransom her. The adventurers might have been retained by the Doomguard of Kalandurren to find Limea, or they might encounter Thyrin Gol during their explorations and entertain a request from Limea to help her escape and return home. If they succeed, they can expect a substantial reward—or at least protection from the Doomguard’s rampages.

Deep Shadow
The sounds of gnashing teeth and unnatural cackling fill the darkness that lies deep beneath the world. There are terrors here that no sane traveler can even begin to imagine.

The Shadowdark is a reflection of the Underdark, just as the Shadowfell is a reflection of the mortal world. And in the same way, the Shadowdark emphasizes the dangers of an already terrifying realm. Here, the darkness seems deeper, the creatures fiercer, and the stakes far higher. The caverns beneath the Gol Mountains become a perilous maze for the unwary or unlucky, filled with undead and other horrors. Ironically, this deadly environment keeps the shadar-kai alive and sane: By risking themselves against its hazards, they maintain their grasp on existence.

The greatest threat in the caverns known as Deep Shadow is Algagor, an undead beholder eye tyrant. The creature has existed here since before the Gol Mountains came to the Shadowfell, and has spent that time building an army with which to seize as much territory as possible in and around the mountains. The Thyrin tribe represents its biggest obstacle, so Algagor is courting the Doomguard exiles to end their uneasy alliance with the shadar-kai and fight for the beholder’s cause.

Algagor commands its servitors (particularly wights and zombies) to claim the corpses of creatures that fall prey to the Gol Mountains’ dangers. For this reason, the bodies of the dead disappear quickly from the surface or the caves in this area. The beholder’s ultimate purpose in this endeavor is known only to itself.

Extraction Mission (Hook): An associate of the characters has gone missing during an expedition to the Gol Mountains, or a noble family in Gloomwrought hires them to recover a lost relative. The adventurers arrive at the scene of a desperate battle and find personal belongings of the missing person but no corpses. However, distinctive tracks in the dirt suggest that the bodies were dragged away. If the adventurers decide to follow, they enter winding tunnels that delve far underground. After overcoming Algagor’s undead servants, they can reach the beholder’s lair and discover what dreadful plans it is fueling with the stolen corpses.