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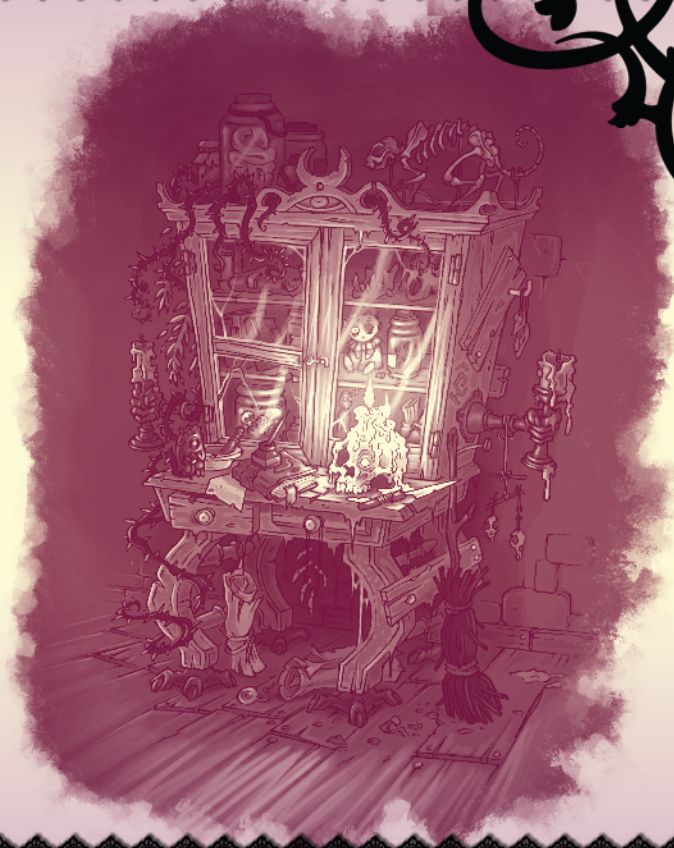
Carrion Crown

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

By Richard Pett

Cabinet of Calamities

Throughout Ustalav, many wealthy families subscribe to the tradition of assembling cabinets of curiosities, repositories of exotic treasures, unusual specimens, and natural oddities. While most hold little more than fakeries and folk art, the most exceptional might contain objects of hidden value, relics possessing mysterious properties, or clues hinting toward greater mysteries. Some inheritors have gained fortunes by selling off parts of such collections, while others rightly fear what's been locked away in the family cellar.



Hunters under the Moon

Widely avoided and feared as dark creatures and emissaries of disease, bats hold a notorious place in Varisian folklore. While similar to the birds and butterflies holy to the goddesses Pharasma and Desna, these winged rodents are commonly associated with Urgathoa and are blamed for the spread of maladies from rabies to vampirism. Superstitions hold that the sick may be cured if they eat the hair of the bats that spread ailments to them, making various parts of these night hunters common ingredients in folk medicine.





ADVENTURE PATH • PART 2 of 6

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

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“Trial of the Beast” is a Pathfinder Adventure Path scenario designed for four 4th-level characters.
By the end of this adventure, characters should reach 7th level.

This product makes use of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, and *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*. These rules can be found online as part of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Reference Document at paizo.com/pathfinderRPG/prd.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Trial of the Beast by Richard Pett	6
Pharasma by Sean K Reynolds	64
Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye by Brandon Hodge	70
Pathfinder's Journal: Guilty Blood, 2 of 6 by F. Wesley Schneider	76
Bestiary by Rob McCreary, Patrick Renie, and Sean K Reynolds	82
Preview	92

Carrion Crown



We Belong Dead

Want to know a secret? We're time travelers. That's right. We are transmitting from the year two, zero, one, zero. By the time this reaches you, the world will have changed, awash in wonders and horrors the merest hints of which would shatter our primitive decennary minds. Likely when next I write to you—should we have not evolved the means to simply blast your mind with a barrage of virtual heroics and adjective smells—I will do so from my hovering tank of posiGoo, soaking in its nutritious snack-tastes and ultra-corp-approved subconscious affirmations. But until the Ioshian corsairs crash their phase tanker into the mantis-gnawed ruins of Seattle on Valentine's Day 2011, I have carried on developing the *Carrion Crown Player's Guide* in a paltry three dimensions. "What!" you say. "You've had that intro guide for weeks now, before even

'The Haunting of Harrowstone,' perhaps? How could a thing you've cherished for so long have been created after the thing you just got?" Well, I've already told you. We're time travelers.

That said, terrifying future entity, our vision of your epoch is sometimes imperfect. Gazing into the secondhand kaleidoscopic time twister that allows us to presage your days, I have just learned that the plague of nano-revolts anticipated to mark the new year has a 23% chance of being delayed until 2012. Should that occur, there's a possibility that instant-update liqui-pages won't be invented for months to come, throwing some of our assumptions about content already in your steely cybernetic pincers right out the airlock doors. It's not a likely possibility, but I prefer to account for every potential future with a greater than 0.5% PoO ("probability of occurrence").

FOREWORD

So, as you've known for weeks—though I still haven't written it yet—the *Carrion Crown Player's Guide* includes a system by which the Harrow deck might be utilized in a kind of variant hero point system. Genius, I know. But, in addition to that, for the most nobly masochistic GMs, there is an alternative system by which you might reward your players for accomplishing specific tasks vital to the adventure, thematically heroic, or that we simply think would be keen hoops to have thousands of PCs jump through. While we've taken steps to ensure that the details of that system appear in this and every volume of the *Carrion Crown Adventure Path* to follow (just as they do on page 44 herein), I'd like to make doubly sure—should we not have the power to manipulate matter as we plan to in your bleak reality—that this content for “The Haunting of Harrowstone” finds its way into the world. Thus, on page 49 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #43—a book that doesn't exist in my time—users of this campaign-specific Harrow deck reward system should recalibrate their sensory organ replacement units to see the “Using the Harrow” sidebar on the adjacent page.

So there it is. Likely you won't need this, as you'll be able to just turn on your info-faucet and drink the most up-to-the-nanosecond *Pathfinder* slurry. But as you guzzle your new adventure, spare a thought and raise a holo-cup to the less fortunate sobs in those primitive alternate timelines who will be getting this info for the first time, and know that the temporally unfettered staff of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* remain dedicated to getting you the best RPG experience, indiscriminate of the variability of technology, terrestrialism, or time.

FOR SCIENCE!

Continuing our auditory journey through the macabre, this month we take a turn down Pretorius Row and find music for mad science. Although “Trial of the Beast” is more about courtroom drama and investigation, there's still plenty of room for bubbling beakers and brains in jars. The album lists presented in last month's foreword should serve you well for much of this month's mystery and encounters with the unquiet dead, but as things turn toward creepy laboratories hidden in gothic castles, you might want to check out some of the following works to set your nefarious scenes.

Alwyn, Kenneth: *Bride of Frankenstein*

Ashkenazy, Vladimir: *Prelude in C Sharp Minor, Op.3, No.2*

Aufort, Cyrille: *Splice*

Band, Richard: *Reanimator*

Beltrami, Marco: *Mimic*

Bergeaud, David: *The Outer Limits*

Burwell, Curt: *Gods & Monsters*

ON THE COVER

Artist Dave Rapoza reimagines the Beast of Lepidstadt, the dreaded defendant in this month's courtroom shocker, “Trial of the Beast.”

USING THE HARROW DECK

If the PCs return the warden's badge found in the torture chamber (area U8) to Vesorianna in area S11, award each player a free draw from the Harrow deck, as outlined in the *Carrion Crown Player's Guide*. If you are using the other optional system presented in the *Carrion Crown Player's Guide*, the entire party receives the card known as The Uprising instead. This specific card can be played to grant all of the PCs a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls for the duration of one battle. If the PCs are outnumbered, the card instead grants a +2 bonus on attack and damage rolls for one battle. The Uprising can only be used once, and the entire party must agree to use the card.



Davis, Carl: *Frankenstein Unbound*

Doyle, Patrick: *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*

Shore, Howard: *The Fly*

Next time around we've got werewolves and zombies, so get ready for a terror two-for-one coming up in “Broken Moon,” the adventure in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #45.

Wes

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Trial of the Beast

Burghers of Lepidstadt, rejoice! The Beast has been captured! Soon the abomination will be tried for crimes against the good people of Vieland. The Punishing Man now rises in the square outside the courthouse! The logs have been stacked against his flanks and the oil has seeped into his veins. The Punishing Man waits to take his passenger to the depths of Hell! And soon, he shall have his feast...

—Lepidstadt Town Crier



TRIAL OF THE BEAST

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For years the people of Lepidstadt have feared traveling the lonely roads surrounding their secluded city at night, for in the dark hunts the Beast of Lepidstadt, a devil who preys upon the innocent and unwary. Over the years, dozens of murders have been attributed to the Beast, and hundreds of sightings have painted ever more terrible portraits upon the canvas of public fears.

But the Beast of Lepidstadt, as told of in folktales and urban legends, is more myth than monster. While the Beast truly does exist, it has slain fewer than 10 people in its 20 years of existence, and been sighted only a few dozen times at most. The legend of the Beast dominates local nightmares, but the people of Lepidstadt are far more adept at stirring their own fears and telling tales of the Beast's predations than the creature is at murder and mayhem, so it serves as both bogeyman and scapegoat for all the wrongs, accidents, and unexplained crimes that plague a city as large and old as Lepidstadt.

In actuality, the Beast of Lepidstadt is a flesh golem, albeit one that some accident granted true sentience and more than rudimentary intelligence. The Beast is the creation of Count Alpon Caromarc, an alchemical genius, and Vieland's aged and reclusive former ruler. The creature was an act of passion for the count, and early in its life it served as a weapon of Caromarc's outrage at being forced to abdicate—an act he performed voluntarily, though he saw no other choice at the time. Today, however, the Beast is a disappointingly secret masterpiece at best, and at worse, a living regret. Caromarc's interest in his creation has largely passed, and all of his attempts to explain its intelligence have failed, leaving him to view the Beast as a fluke and a dead end not worthy of further research. The Beast spends most of its time in a rude hovel in the middle of the Dippelmer Swamp, occasionally visiting the libraries of Schloss Caromarc, its master's castle home.

The count pays little heed to his creation these days, but should he need the golem for some purpose, Caromarc possesses a device called the *Bondslave Thrall*—an object attuned to the Beast that allows the count to control the golem's mind and command it to perform any act he desires. This tool, like the count's decades-old notes on the Beast's creation, lie in his tower laboratory collecting dust, discarded long ago in favor of more promising investigations into alchemical golems and other stranger experiments. Until recently, at least.

Several years ago, agents of the Whispering Way became aware of Count Caromarc's profane experiments into the creation of life and his connection with the Beast of Lepidstadt. Under the leadership of a necromancer named Auren Vrood, the cult proceeded to Lepidstadt after finishing their dealings in Ravengro, and sent ominous word to Caromarc that they knew his secret and

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

Characters should be 4th level when they begin "Trial of the Beast." If they haven't quite reached 4th level, consider giving them a few more encounters in Ravengro itself, or on the road before they meet the Crooked Kin. By the time the PCs reach Schloss Caromarc, they should be 6th level, and should reach 7th level before the end of the adventure. "Trial of the Beast" uses the medium XP track.

sought to make a deal with him. The count, anticipating a blackmail attempt and seeking to be rid of those he perceived as dull-witted extortionists, agreed to meet them at midnight at the ominous standing stones outside the city known as the Spiral Cromlech. In his place, though, he sent the Beast. The Whispering Way, expecting exactly this reaction to their treachery, took the opportunity to invade Schloss Caromarc, subdue the count and his lesser creations within, and take control of the *Bondslave Thrall*. Vrood had expected to just use Caromarc as leverage to control the Beast, but the device proved even more useful to his aims.

With control over the greatest horror in Vieland, Vrood commanded the golem to break into the antiquities department of Lepidstadt University and steal an enigmatic and grotesque statuette of murky green stone known as the Seasage Effigy. The caper went off without a hitch, and the Whispering Way absconded with the statue. Abandoning Schloss Caromarc, the cultists headed east into the Shudderwood toward their next target, leaving the count trapped inside a castle of his own crazed creations.

Having no more use for the Beast, the Whispering Way left the dazed golem to be found at the scene of the crime. The Beast of Lepidstadt has finally been captured, and the entire city is in an uproar over its upcoming trial. It is almost a foregone conclusion that the Beast will be found guilty and executed for its many crimes. But one of the three judges presiding over the trial, Embreth Daramid, is unconvinced of the Beast's presumed guilt. As the trial begins, Judge Daramid (also a member of the mysterious society known as the Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye) looks for a way to gather more reliable evidence—to prove either the Beast's guilt, or its innocence.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs complete the task set before them in Professor Lorrिमor's will by delivering his books to Doctor Montagnie Crawl and Judge Embreth Daramid in the

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city of Lepidstadt, where they discover the infamous Beast of Lepidstadt is on trial. Judge Daramid hires the PCs to carry out what seems to be an impossible task—to proving that the Beast of Lepidstadt is innocent. As the PCs investigate the Beast's alleged crimes, they can learn that others are responsible for the spate of murders attributed to the Beast—a body-snatching skin stealer and dark creeper are operating a gruesome but highly profitable business in a chymic works while using the Beast as a scapegoat for their crimes. As the PCs try to clear the Beast's name, it becomes clear that the locals are not interested in a fair trial, and the PCs are placed between the Beast and those who would carry out the sentence before the verdict.

After the trial, the PCs follow the Beast back to Schloss Caromarc, the home of the former count of Vieland and the Beast's true creator. In search of the eccentric count, the PC explore his curious castle, now turned into a deadly deathtrap by the Whispering Way. When the PCs finally find the imprisoned Caromarc, they must also face his darkest secret—and only by taking control of the Beast of Lepidstadt can they defeat Caromarc's greatest and most dangerous creation to learn the Whispering Way's next move.

PART ONE: JOURNEY TO LEPIDSTADT

The adventure begins with the PCs still in the town of Ravengro in Canterwall, intending to travel to Lepidstadt to the north to complete their errand for Professor Lorremor—delivering his sinister collection to Lepidstadt. Before they leave, the PCs may be able to learn a little about their journey, and about the burghers of Lepidstadt, from local people in Ravengro. A Diplomacy check to gather information or a Knowledge (local) check reveals the following information about Lepidstadt.

DC 10: The distance from Ravengro to Lepidstadt is about 100 miles. No journey in Ustalav is without risk, but the old Mountain Road is generally regarded as the best route. This road follows the southeastern foothills of the Tusk Mountains, passing through the towns of Tamrivena and Courtaud before following the Lesser Moutray River up to Lepidstadt.

DC 15: The city of Lepidstadt is currently the scene of intense local excitement. The dreaded Beast of Lepidstadt—a terrifying abomination that has terrorized the people of Vieland for years—has been captured. Hundreds of people have flocked to the city hoping to catch a glimpse of the horror and watch it burn for its crimes.

The early part of the journey to Lepidstadt passes without event; the PCs see fewer and fewer people and

more and more ruins, trees, and marshes as they go. GMs who wish to develop this part of the journey may wish to utilize the details presented on page 81, or in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Rule of Fear*. Roughly a third of the way to Lepidstadt, having passed through moorland and dark, dismal foothills, the PCs encounter the caravan of the Crooked Kin at the roadside as dusk begins to fall.

THE CROOKED KIN

The Crooked Kin are a troupe of performers and sideshow freaks who travel through Vieland and Lozeri entertaining the good burghers of Ustalav. The entire show travels in a caravan of nine covered Varisian wagons pulled by nags. The wagons are gaudily painted and depict the show's performers beneath the legend, "The Crooked Kin—Ustalav's Greatest Traveling Cabinet of Curiosities!" Each wagon has a front and back door opening onto cramped living accommodations inside.

Hearing rumors of the large number of people drawn to Lepidstadt to witness the trial of the Beast, the Kin have been making haste to reach the city to take advantage of the crowds. The group stopped by the roadside to rest earlier in the day, but one of their members, the pinhead Aleece, heard some strange noises off the trail, went off to investigate, and hasn't returned. The Kin, worried that she has now been gone for several hours in a strange and dangerous place, are desperately trying to decide what to do.

MEETING THE KIN

The Crooked Kin consists of 13 performers, all people with a variety of physical handicaps or deformities, plus a handful of additional sideshow attractions. Though they all have exotic (or in some cases, frightening) appearances, the Kin are just honest performers trying to make a living, and are concerned for the life of one of their friends.

The following people make up the Crooked Kin.

Hap Tarvin, the Flea Man (CN male human expert 1): A short, hunched man with a distorted appearance, Hap performs with his flea circus, the Magnificent Carnival of Miniature Wonders.

Kaleb Hesse, the Ringmaster (N male human expert 3): An albino man with red eyes and long, white hair that hangs below his knees, Kaleb wears a tall red top hat, a long red coat with gold buckles, and striped trousers. He is the de facto leader of the Crooked Kin.

Lidia Gerod, the Bearded Lady (NG female human commoner 3): Standing nearly 7 feet tall and possessed of a fine beard down to her waist, Lidia acts as a sort of "mother hen" to the other members of the troupe.

The Pinheads: Aleece (CN female human commoner 1), **Lettie** (NG female human commoner 2), and **Poppo** (N female human commoner 1) are sisters, all of whom have

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

microcephaly. Aleece recently wandered away from the caravan and has gone missing.

Prince Zar, the Human Caterpillar (CN male human expert 2): This Mwangi man has no arms or legs. Prince Zar was once enslaved in a Chelish sideshow, but earned enough money to buy his freedom. He joined the Crooked Kin, where he is billed as an exiled prince of the “Lost Cities of Darkest Garund.”

S’jeer, the Vudrani Princess (N female human aristocrat 2): Born with four arms, S’jeer dresses in exotic silks and speaks with a thick accent, but she is actually from Galt and the daughter of a fishmonger.

The Swarm of Clowns: These three men, **Gerik**, **Josef**, and **Tam** (all N male human expert 2), each have an extra limb (Josef has three legs, the others have three arms). Besides their skill in clowning, they are also accomplished acrobats and jugglers.

Trollblood, the Giant Man (N male human expert 2): A shockingly ugly Ulfen man nearly 8 feet tall, Trollblood entertains the crowds with fire-breathing and his feats of strength.

The Wolf Child (N male child human commoner 1): Supposedly raised by wolves in the Shudderwood, this 10-year-old boy is covered in hair. He is unfortunately insane, but the three pinhead sisters treat him like a younger brother.

In addition, the show also includes a pair of caged goblin dogs, a morlock, and a giant frog.

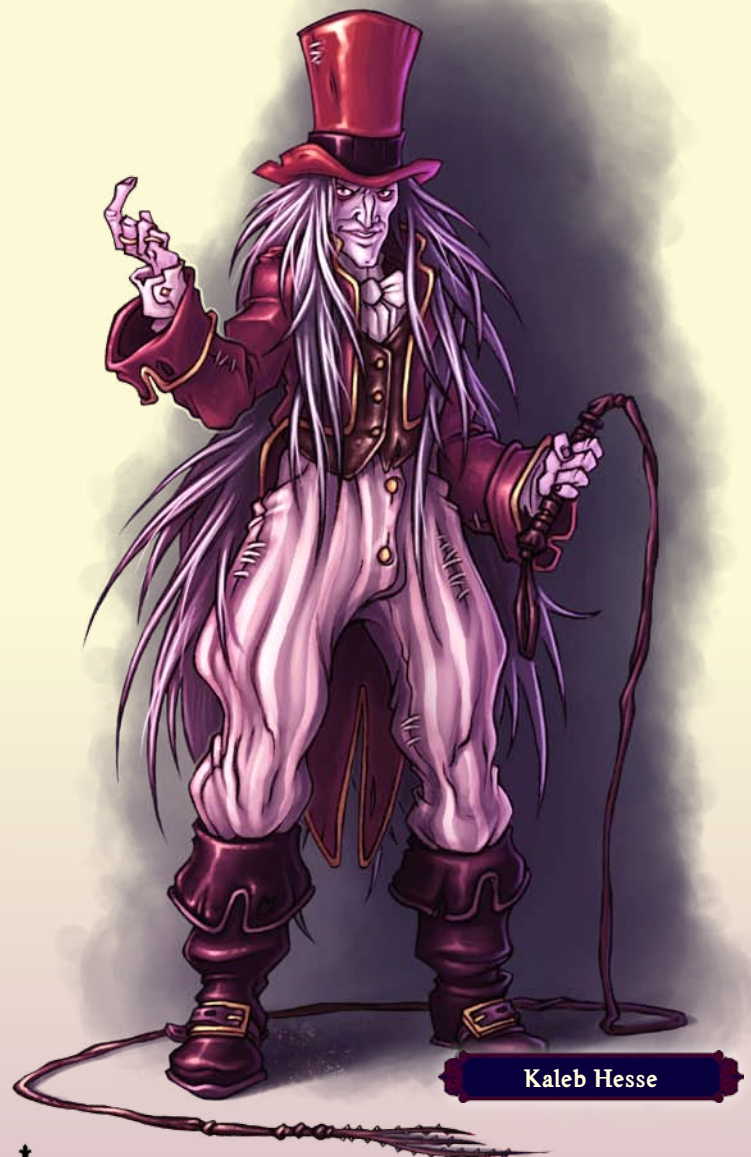
When the PCs arrive, the various members of the troupe are milling aimlessly around the stopped caravan. Aleece’s sisters Lettie and Poppy are crying and distraught, which in turn is causing the Wolf Child to howl inconsolably. Lidia and S’jeer are trying to comfort them while the others argue over the best course of action to take. Trollblood and Prince Zar are in favor of mounting a search party to find Aleece, but Hap and the three clowns are reluctant to venture into the nearby fens for fear that whatever happened to Aleece might happen to them.

As soon as the Kin realize that strangers have arrived, Kaleb emerges from his wagon to greet the PCs. Though the Kin are naturally reluctant to trust strangers, Kaleb does not want to risk the lives of his troupe in a foolhardy search in the fens at night. Several travelers have already passed the caravan by, repulsed by the freaks’ appearance, and despite his somewhat sinister appearance, Kaleb honestly needs help. In all his finery, he approaches the PCs and explains the situation, assuring them that his troupe are harmless performers who have lost one of their own. He begs the PCs for aid, and promises to reward them with a magical dagger if they can find the missing Aleece. It should be immediately obvious to the PCs that the Kin are ill-prepared to go venturing into the

fens, and that any rescue party they mount would likely deteriorate into a disaster before the night is over.

ALEECE’S FATE (CR 5)

Aleece’s tracks are fresh, and may be found with a DC 10 Survival check. The tracks run for about half a mile as they head down into a boggy river valley, and then into a densely vegetated, midge-infested marsh. The marsh is a shallow bog (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 427), with high reeds between 6 and 8 feet high that affect abilities and movement in the same way as heavy undergrowth in dense forest (*Core Rulebook* 426). Aleece’s tracks soon all but vanish under water (DC 20 Survival check to follow) as they continue for another hundred yards or so



Kaleb Hesse

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USING THE CROOKED KIN

If the PCs help the Crooked Kin and become friends with them, the members of the freak show can be useful allies during the PCs' investigations in Part Two. As performers, the Crooked Kin meet lots of people and have the opportunity to hear many local rumors and other information. Their travels have also taken them all over Ustalav and introduced them to people around the world, giving them a wide range of knowledge on esoteric topics. At any time during the trial of the Beast and their investigations, the PCs may question the Crooked Kin and gain a +2 bonus on any skill check to learn information, hear rumors, track down leads, or deduce the importance of clues. The Kin do not grant any bonuses on Diplomacy checks to gather information or present evidence at the trial, however, as their grotesque appearances actually hinder such interactions with locals.

In addition, you can use the Crooked Kin to direct the PCs' actions or to provide helpful clues if the PCs are stuck or seem to be going off course. They will not assist the PCs in combat, but they can serve in numerous other roles to help the PCs in their investigations and interactions in Lepidstadt.

to a cramped clearing filled with dismal-looking gray flowers. It was here that a phase spider ambushed Aleece, who soon succumbed to the spider's poison and died. The spider dragged her body away to feast on later. Aleece's pale, broken body lies half-submerged in the bog a few yards past the clearing—it can be found with a DC 20 Survival check to notice the tracks the body made as it was dragged away, or with a DC 20 Perception check made while conducting a general search of the area.

Creature: A phase spider has made this clearing its lair and lurks nearby on the Ethereal Plane. The spider, who calls herself the Feaster in Watery Shadows, has developed the skill of mimicking human cries and voices, and used it to lure Aleece away from the caravan and to her death. The phase spider delights in mimicking its last victim's screams, but a DC 15 Perception check can identify these cries as curiously inhuman.

When the PCs first enter the clearing, the Feaster ethereally jaunts onto the Material Plane outside the clearing and cries out, mimicking Aleece's last screams, then moves away before jaunting back to the Ethereal Plane. She does this four times—hoping to split the group up so that they move in different directions to follow

the cries—before finally lying in wait in the cover of the thick undergrowth to strike from ambush.

THE FEASTER IN WATERY SHADOWS

CR 5

XP 1,600

Female phase spider (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 226)

hp 51

TACTICS

During Combat The Feaster ethereally ambushes her prey and bites them, then ethereally jaunts to wait for her poison to take effect. She uses this method of attack as many times as she feels is safe to do so.

Morale The Feaster flees if reduced to 10 hit points or fewer.

Treasure: The bog is littered with the remnants of the belongings of previous victims. A DC 20 Perception check locates a *potion of fox's cunning*, a magnifying glass with a gold handle (worth 100 gp), a small wooden box containing a set of brass weights (the box has a false bottom noticeable with a DC 25 Perception check, which conceals three silver ingots worth 100 sp each), a walnut traveling case with a pair of superior locks and their keys sealed in wax, and a jar of pickled garlic cloves among the unsettling skeletal body parts left behind.

Development: If the PCs return with news of Aleece's fate or with her body, the Kin are saddened by her loss but grateful for the PCs' assistance. True to his word, Kaleb gives the PCs a +1 *humanoid (shapechanger) bane dagger* as a reward. Though the Kin are normally reluctant to travel with strangers, after the incident with Aleece, they are afraid of what other horrors may lurk ahead, and so invite the PCs to travel with the troupe if they wish. If the PCs accept, Kaleb asks the PCs to scout the road ahead for difficulties or dangers. The Kin have little to offer the PCs in the way of wages, but they do offer the use of one of the caravan's wagons, and any bards or performers in the group have the chance to work with the show. If the PCs do not want to travel with the Kin, the troupe thanks them again, wishes them luck, and bids them farewell, but the PCs may still encounter them later in Lepidstadt.

LEPIDSTADT

Upon their arrival in Lepidstadt, the PCs find an almost carnival atmosphere in the city. The trial of the Beast of Lepidstadt has already commenced, and things don't look good for the creature. A huge pyre in the shape of a man—Lepidstadt's famous Punishing Man—has been erected in the main circle outside the courthouse, and locals eagerly add fuel to the effigy in preparation for the Beast's execution.

Lepidstadt is a small city on the banks of the Lesser Moutray River, most famous for its university and the strange standing stones outside the city called the Spiral

TRIAL OF THE BEAST



Cromlech. Recently renovated, Lepidstadt is a bustling, lively city of students and academics, with newly bricked streets, wide plazas, and grandiose structures built from imported wood and stone. Away from the university and city center, however, the narrow, winding streets of Lepidstadt show the signs of its age, with dilapidated hovels, crumbling stone walls, and cramped courtyards.

LEPIDSTADT

N small city

Corruption +1; **Crime** +1; **Economy** +3; **Law** -1; **Lore** +3, **Society** +4

Qualities academic, prosperous, rumormongering citizens, tourist attraction

Danger 5

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government council

Population 9,780 (9,600 humans, 80 dwarves, 50 elves, 30 gnomes, 20 other)

Notable NPCs

- The Beast of Lepidstadt** (N flesh golem barbarian 6)
- Dean of Lepidstadt University Acciani Viacarri** (LN male expert 6)
- Former Count Alpon Caromarc** (N male human alchemist 13)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 6,000 gp; **Purchase Limit** 37,500; **Spellcasting** 7th
Minor Items 4d4; **Medium Items** 3d4; **Major Items** 3d4

When the PCs arrive in Lepidstadt, they have two tasks to complete to fulfill the final wishes of Professor Lorrिमor—returning the tomes from Professor Lorrिमor's chest to Dr. Montagnie Crowl at Lepidstadt University, and delivering the curious *Manual of the Order of the Palatine Eye* to Judge Embreth Daramid at her townhouse in the city. It doesn't matter which task they complete first—details of the meetings with both contacts are outlined below. If the PCs for some reason don't contact Dr. Crowl or Judge Daramid when they arrive, Judge Daramid soon learns of their presence in Lepidstadt. She sends them an invitation to meet her at her townhouse, reminding them that she has the remainder of Professor Lorrिमor's bequests for them once they deliver his books.

DR. MONTAGNIE CROWL

Lepidstadt University is quite easy to find, and PCs enquiring about Dr. Crowl are directed there. A DC 10 Diplomacy check made to gather information about Dr. Crowl reveals that the eccentric professor is well known

Carion Crown

in town, particularly in light of the recent theft from his department that famously led to the capture of the dreaded Beast of Lepidstadt, who now sits on trial. When the PCs arrive at the university, they are greeted by the sight of several builders and craftsman working to repair the damage to the Antiquities Department caused by the Beast during the theft.

Dr. Montagnie Crowl (N male human expert 6) is Professor of Antiquities at the university. An eccentric but likeable man, he is prone to waving his arms about enthusiastically. He meets the PCs in the department's combination library and workshop. The workshop is slowly being cleaned up, but it is still a mess. Dr. Crowl is saddened to learn of his old friend and colleague Lorremor's death and accepts the bequeathed objects with sad gratitude. If asked about the damage to his

department, Crowl relates the tale of the Beast's break-in and the curious fact that only one item was taken—a strange statuette called the Seasage Effigy. Crowl is frankly baffled by events—he admits that the statuette was very singular, but it was hardly valuable. Although the stolen statue has not been recovered, he is pleased that the Beast was caught, though he understands the poor creature cannot explain its actions and is clearly mad.

If the PCs wish to undertake their own investigation of the theft, Dr. Crowl is happy to discuss the theft and allows the PCs to explore the scene of the crime. Otherwise, the PCs will return to the Antiquities Department later at the bequest of Judge Daramid. This investigation is detailed on page 17.

JUDGE EMBRETH DARAMID

Judge Daramid lives in a fine townhouse surrounded by art in the center of Lepidstadt. A DC 10 Diplomacy check made to gather information about her relates that she is well respected for her even temper and fairness. **Embreth Daramid** (NG female old human aristocrat 3/expert 4) is one of the justices of Vieland and a magistrate of Lepidstadt, but she is also a member of the Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye, a secret society of elite thinkers and scholars with a tradition of mysticism (more details on the Order of the Palatine Eye can be found on pages 70–75).

Judge Daramid invites the PCs into her home when they arrive. She is in her sixties, with gray hair pulled back tightly into a bun and icy blue eyes. She is a stern, no-nonsense woman who appears to be all business, but a DC 15 Sense Motive check reveals that Lorremor's death has affected her more than she lets show, hinting that perhaps their relationship was, at one time at least, more than professional. She asks the PCs if they have completed the tasks in Lorremor's will, and graciously accepts the book left to her. If the PCs question her about the purple book bequeathed to her, she does not reveal anything other than confirming its title, if the PCs have translated that. If the PCs have already delivered the other tomes to Dr. Crowl at the university, she hands over the agreed upon sum of 100 platinum pieces to each PC.

Once the business of Professor Lorremor's will is concluded, Judge Daramid asks the PCs to stay for moment, adding that she is in need of some assistance, and if Petros trusted them, then she might be inclined to trust them as well.

Judge Daramid explains that she believes there is a cancer in Lepidstadt, a darkness lurking behind the shadow of a scapegoat. For many years the people of Lepidstadt have laid all their ills at the door of a creature known as the Beast of Lepidstadt—murders, thefts, and terror have all been attributed to the Beast, but Judge Daramid knows that many stories are exaggerations or simply



Judge Daramid

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

untrue. She also knows that some people have different stories to tell about the creature—about its kindness and humanity, of how it has rescued loved ones or helped those in distress. Now that the time has arrived for such kindness to be repaid, however, no one dares to step forward and challenge the Beast's reputation.

As a judge, Daramid has a keen sense of justice, and she fears the Beast will not receive a fair trial. The people of Lepidstadt have blamed the Beast for too much and for too long, and they want it to pay for its crimes, whether those crimes are real or imagined. In addition, the judge has some concerns about the crime for which the Beast was finally apprehended—the break-in and theft at Lepidstadt University. She is also convinced that the Beast's capture at the university was not all it appeared to be, for why would a creature that is intelligent knowingly enter the university, where it was certain to be trapped? However, to publicly announce her suspicions could put her at great risk, both professionally and politically. As one of the three justices presiding over the Beast's trial, she is unable to openly intervene, other than insisting that the Beast be properly defended in court.

What Judge Daramid really needs is a group of people without local bias to uncover the real truth about the Beast and its alleged crimes. The Beast's legally appointed advocate, a barrister named Gustav Kaple, is hopelessly over his head and needs help—ideally someone to gather evidence about the Beast's alleged crimes and stand up in court to be questioned by the prosecution. Such speakers must have bravery in spades and silver tongues to match, to ensure that if there is more to the Beast's story, justice will be done. If the Beast is indeed guilty, then Daramid can rest easier at night knowing that she gave it a fair trial.

Daramid bluntly offers to double the PCs' bequest from Lorremor's will (100 platinum pieces each) if they investigate the Beast of Lepidstadt on her behalf while expressly keeping her out of the equation, as any hint of collaboration in their investigations would put her legal objectivity into question. She tells the PCs that she will deny any involvement in the matter if pressed, but that if they do get to the bottom of the matter, she will be very grateful indeed.

If the PCs accept, Judge Daramid directs the PCs to the Lepidstadt Courthouse (area A), instructing them to register with the court clerks as volunteer defenders for the Beast and then meet with Barrister Gustav Kaple, to offer their assistance in gathering clues to help the Beast's defense.

INFORMATION ON THE TRIAL

If the PCs are interested in finding out more about the Beast's trial thus far, they can make Diplomacy checks to gather information or Knowledge (local) checks to hear the following widespread rumors about the trial.

DC 5: Burn the Beast!

DC 10: I hear the trial's first day detailed a long list of crimes against the Beast, three of which are to be used as the basis of its execution—burned alive in the Punishing Man, a giant pyre that is even now being raised outside the courthouse!

DC 15: Ha! That fool barrister Gustav Kaple is defending the creature—he can't even get a whole sentence out without stuttering! The Beast is as good as dead! I've heard that the prosecution's case is watertight—murdering those poor children in Hergstag, killing all those swampers in Morast, and burning down good Doctor Brada's hospice. Hurrah for Prosecutor Otto Heiger!

DC 20: Yes, I've heard stories that the Beast has done some kind things too, but it's plagued Lepidstadt for far too long. Even if it did do those things, that's just proof that the creature is mad and deserves to be burned!

LEPIDSTADT COURTHOUSE

A large, squat building dominated by an enormous clock overlooks the town square. A huge figure of wood, roughly man-shaped, stands in the square in front of the building.

Designed primarily as a fortification, the Lepidstadt Courthouse is built of dark stone, with walls of reinforced masonry (Climb DC 20). The building is three stories high, with narrow, open windows only a foot wide. All exterior doors are strong wooden doors (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25), while interior doors are good wooden doors (hardness 5, hp 15, Break DC 18). The exterior doors have good locks (Disable Device DC 30), and the acting sergeant has the keys.

In the square immediately outside the courthouse stands the Punishing Man, Lepidstadt's traditional method of executing murderers and other criminals guilty of capital crimes. The Punishing Man is a gigantic, man-shaped conglomeration of cut timber standing over 30 feet tall. Convicted criminals are placed within the figure's hollow chest cavity and the entire structure is then set on fire in a public ceremony. As the trial progresses, eager workers pile more timber against the figure's legs and oil its wooden limbs, while children play games at its side and throw grass, flowers, and rubbish onto it.

Creatures: Twelve guards ward the courthouse and keep watch over the prisoners held inside, operating in 12-hour shifts of six guards each. Their former sergeant drank himself to death 3 weeks ago, and has yet to be replaced, leaving one of the guards, Acting Sergeant Dun, in charge. Dun has the same statistics as the other guards. He holds the keys to all of the doors in the courthouse, and is reluctant to give them up without orders from higher up. The guards are enjoying their newfound fame as the jailers of the infamous Beast of Lepidstadt, and delight in tormenting the Beast.

Carrion Crown

The only other person permanently in residence at the moment is Barrister Gustav Kaple, who has been charged with defending the Beast during the upcoming trial.

COURTHOUSE GUARDS (12)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

Human warrior 2

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; Senses Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor)

hp 15 each (2d10+4)

Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee halberd +5 (1d10+3/x3)

Ranged heavy crossbow +2 (1d10/19–20)

TACTICS

During Combat The guards are badly organized and have no grasp of tactics, simply attacking the closest opponent.

Giving them instructions during combat requires a DC 12 Intimidate check to get them to follow orders.

Morale If reduced to 5 hit points or fewer, the guards seek cover or try to flee.

STATISTICS

Str 15, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8

Base Atk +2; CMB +4; CMD 14

Feats Intimidating Prowess, Weapon Focus (halberd)

Skills Climb +2, Intimidate +5, Perception +1, Swim +2

Languages Common

Gear scale mail, heavy crossbow with 10 bolts, halberd

The courthouse's main rooms are summarized below.

A1. Main Entrance: Ornate pillars support a balcony 15 feet above (area A15). Beneath the balcony, wide steps lead up to a huge, ironbound door. Printed public notices are posted on a wooden board next to the door. Presently, these notices detail the upcoming trial in long-winded legal language.

A2. Entry: This room provides access to most of the other rooms on the courthouse's ground floor. A heavy iron trapdoor covers a stone stairway that leads down to the jail in the cellar below.

A3. Storage: A DC 15 Perception check made while looking through the assorted buckets, mops, ropes, torches, and other sundries in this tiny storeroom uncovers the parts of a ballista, lying unassembled in a trio of cases, along with 20 bolts. The ballista (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 435) may be assembled with a DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) or Profession (engineer) check, or a DC 20 Disable Device check. Each attempt takes 4 hours.

A4. Common Room: A battered table and chairs stand in the middle of this room, in front of a large fireplace in the

east wall. The six on-duty guards spend most of their time here, between hourly patrols of the jail and the courthouse.

A5. Barracks: A dozen cots and trunks and a washstand fill this room, where the six off-duty guards usually sleep. A stone staircase leads up the courtroom above (area A18).

A6. Privies: The privies are currently unoccupied.

A7. Sergeant's Cupboard: A small cot is rammed into the only available space in this cramped storeroom, which currently serves as the lodgings of Barrister Gustav Kaple.

A8. Public Entrance: Two heavy oak doors to the north and south allow the public to enter the building. Inside, two narrow, iron spiral staircases climb to the public gallery 30 feet above (area A22).

A9. Kitchen: Meals for the guards and prisoners are prepared in this dirty and unpleasant place. The cook, **Celia** (N female human commoner 2), works here during the day but goes home in the evening.

A10. Pantry: This room holds assorted foodstuffs, including a few barrels of excellent local wheat beer.

A11. Well: A 50-foot-deep well, its cover broken a long time ago, provides a fresh water supply for the jail.

A12. Jail: A steep stone stair descends into this large cellar, its ceiling some 15 feet above the flagstone floor. A narrow, iron spiral staircase stands in the center of the cellar, leading up to the prisoner holding room (area A16). A cupboard along the southern wall contains numerous small torture devices such as thumbscrews and choke pears.

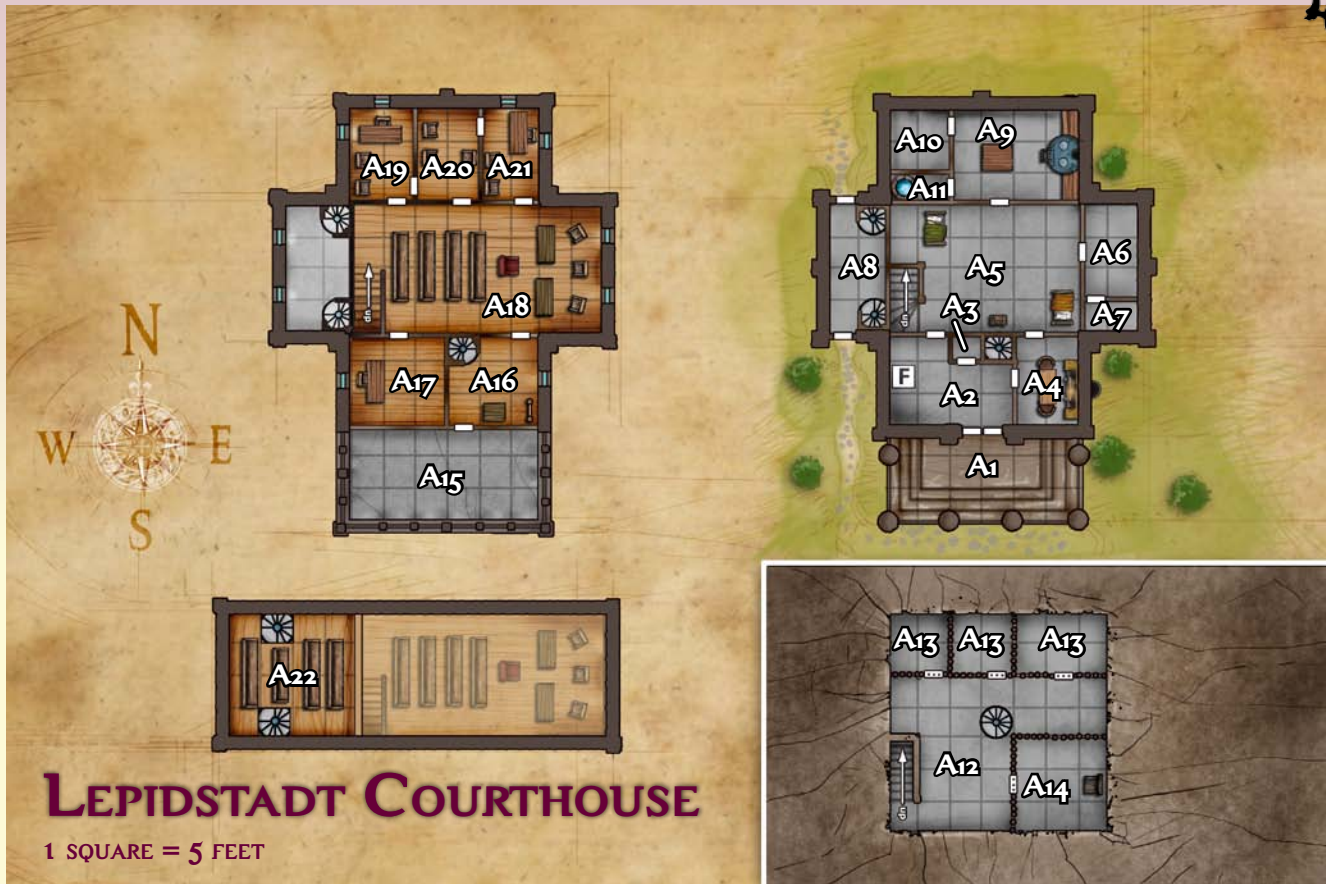
A13. Empty Cells: Three iron cages line the jail's northern wall. Each has a good lock (Disable Device DC 30) and a small cot, but the cages are all presently empty.

A14. The Prisoner: This large cage normally holds groups of prisoners, but it is currently home to just one special guest, the Beast of Lepidstadt, bound with 12 sets of masterwork manacles with superior locks (hardness 10, hp 10, Break DC 28, Disable Device DC 40) to a huge iron chair bolted to the floor.

A15. Balcony: A grand balcony overlooks the town square 15 feet below, surrounded by a low, 4-foot-high stone railing. A huge brass and wooden clock dominates the balcony's rear wall. Known locally as "Father Time," the clock is plain but enormously noisy; its huge bell (suspended in a small tower above area A16) strikes every hour and can be heard throughout Lepidstadt.

A16. Prisoner Holding Room: Three sets of masterwork manacles with superior locks hang in this bare room next to the door to the courtroom (area A18). The keys to the manacles are in their locks. The narrow stair from the jail (area A12) emerges here, enabling prisoners to be brought into the courtroom without passing the public. A hefty oak cupboard fills a large space within this room, containing the workings of the Father Time clock and the turnkey used to wind it. A ladder in the southeast corner leads up to the clock's bell tower.

TRIAL OF THE BEAST



LEPIDSTADT COURTHOUSE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

A17. Office: This small, neat office contains a mahogany desk and leather chair. Three more chairs stand against the southern wall. This room serves as neutral ground for any meetings that the justices may deem necessary.

A18. Courtroom: This grand room is paneled in dark oak and its vaulted ceiling is 25 feet high. Three throne-like chairs with built-in lecterns for the presiding justices stand in front of the east wall. The witness stand is directly in front of them. Two polished mahogany desks, one for the defense and one for the prosecution, stand facing the justices' chairs. An iron restraining chair with six sets of masterwork manacles for the accused stands in the center of the room, specially created for this trial. Behind the accused, two rows of a dozen seats each face the front of the court. To the west, the public gallery (area A22) overlooks the room 10 feet above.

A19. Prosecution Chamber: This small, simple office is for the use of the prosecution. It contains two chairs and a desk, with a writing set and paper in one drawer.

A20. Justices' Chamber: This sumptuous chamber contains three luxurious leather chairs, a wardrobe, and an ornate enamel washstand. The wardrobes contain the justices' gowns and collars, powdered wigs, and a great wooden gavel for the chief justice.

A21. Defense Chamber: This small chamber is identical to area A19. Barrister Gustav Kaple currently uses this room as his office.

A22. Public Gallery: A sloping gallery with a low rail overlooks the courtroom from 10 feet above. The gallery can only be accessed from the steep spiral stairs at the public entrance (area A8).

THE BARRISTER

Barrister Gustav Kaple (NG male human aristocrat 3/expert 2) meets the PCs in the Defense Chamber (area A21). When wearing his huge court wig, Gustav cuts an impressive figure. Unfortunately, looks can be deceiving—Gustav has had several recent failures in the justice system and seen his last six clients hanged. In truth, the down-at-the-heels barrister was chosen to represent the Beast precisely because of his inability to defend anyone and for his stutter, which manifests itself when he is stressed.

Although Gustav has no doubt that the Beast is guilty, he plans to defend the creature to the best of his ability, but he is struggling to find any kind of evidence in support of the Beast's innocence. Gustav is happy to tell the PCs the circumstances leading to the Beast's capture at the University (see page 17), and outline the legal process

Carion Crown

involved in the trial (see page 37). He informs the PCs that the prosecution is using three recent crimes attributed to the Beast to convict the creature of murder: the murder of 10 citizens of the village of Morast a year ago; the slaying of six children in the farming community of Hergstag 7 months ago; and the arson attack 4 months ago at the Sanctuary on Karb Isle, which resulted in the deaths of Doctor Brada and his patients and the blinding of the doctor's assistant, Karl.

Gustav has interviewed the main witnesses from each of the three cases to be discussed at the trial and has found that their stories are very plausible. He wishes to see justice done, however, and he is certain that without evidence in its favor, the Beast will be convicted. To that end, he is willing to assist the PCs with their investigations (unless he is at court). His role in court is to present evidence, cross-examine witnesses, and clear the Beast of any wrongdoing. Because of his stutter, however, he suggests that if the PCs find any evidence that can help the Beast, it might be better for one of the PCs to present it.

Gustav is very concerned about time. He informs the PCs that the trial has already commenced, and preliminary evidence has been presented to the three justices. The trial begins in earnest tomorrow, however, as the majority of the evidence for the three crimes will be presented over the next 3 days. The PCs must act fast if they hope to find evidence in support of the Beast's innocence. Gustav suggests that the PCs investigate the events in Morast first, as that evidence will be presented tomorrow. They can then investigate the other two crimes over the following two nights.

If the PCs have no further questions for him, Gustav recommends that they go meet the Beast for themselves.

MEETING THE BEAST

Gustav Kaple escorts the PCs into the courthouse's cellar jail to meet the Beast of Lepidstadt, currently held in area **A14**. Read the following when the PCs get their first look at the legendary Beast.

A towering abomination sits in an iron chair, bound with no less than a dozen sets of manacles. Stitching holds together this grotesque patchwork of flesh and bone, beast and man, though the wires are so taut they look as though they may fly apart at any moment. Its mouth is twisted in a permanent sneer, and a shock of lank, dark hair clings to its scalp. The creature slumps in its chair, a despondent expression upon its monstrous face.

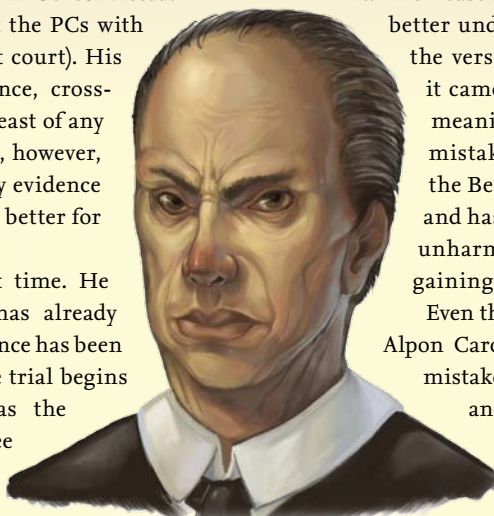
The Beast of Lepidstadt is ugly, kind, angry, and gentle. It is also noble, terrible, incredible, and frightful. But the Beast has been given its name erroneously. While the creature looks like a monster, it is an intelligent creature, and beneath the surface it is a pitiable thing with a soul. Although it has killed before, the Beast possesses a childlike innocence, and in each case the killings were brought on by the victims themselves, who taunted or attacked the Beast, causing it to fly into a berserk rage.

Over the years, the Beast has learned to control its rage somewhat, though the stress of battle inevitably causes it to lose control and go berserk. After it kills, the Beast is filled with sorrow and tries to understand why people hate it. The Beast realizes it's not human, and seeks to better understand humans, even memorizing the verses in an old book of Taldan poetry it came across in an attempt to find some meaning. Although it no longer makes the mistake of trying to join human society, the Beast desperately wants to be accepted, and has returned children lost in the forest unharmed to their homes in the hope of gaining some measure of tolerance.

Even the Beast's creator—the deposed count Alpon Caromarc—now views his creation as a mistake; the Beast could never be the son he and his dead wife had sought. The Beast is aware that it has disappointed its creator, but does not know why. It has forgiven the count, although at times it forgets what it has forgiven.

When the PCs first meet the creature—chained and beaten by the cruel guards—it truly is a beast. It is dirty and miserable, covered in flies, and more likely to roar and strain at its bonds than to speak at first. If the PCs can somehow calm the Beast down and befriend it, they find communication with the creature difficult at best. The Beast doesn't fully comprehend its predicament, and struggles to understand why the humans have imprisoned and tortured it. If questioned about its alleged crimes, the Beast only repeats, "I didn't do it," over and over again. The only incident it has any knowledge of are the events which transpired in Hergstag, the only location where it was actually present. More details of the Beast's memories of that place are detailed in *The Children of Hergstag* on page 22. Under no circumstances does the Beast reveal the name of its creator until after the trial. If pressed, it remains silent on the issue.

Play the Beast as a child in a monster's body—it can be amazingly gentle, insatiably curious, and a true friend, but it can also be incredibly dangerous, uncontrollably wild, and impossible. If treated with any degree of kindness, the Beast soon develops a childlike, innocent



Barrister Gustav Kaple

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

love for its “friends,” but if treated cruelly, it becomes a raging beast worthy of its name. Do your best to portray the Beast in a way that leads the PCs to feel sympathy for the creature, eventually understanding that while it looks like a monster, it most certainly is not.

THE BEAST OF LEPIDSTADT

CR 13

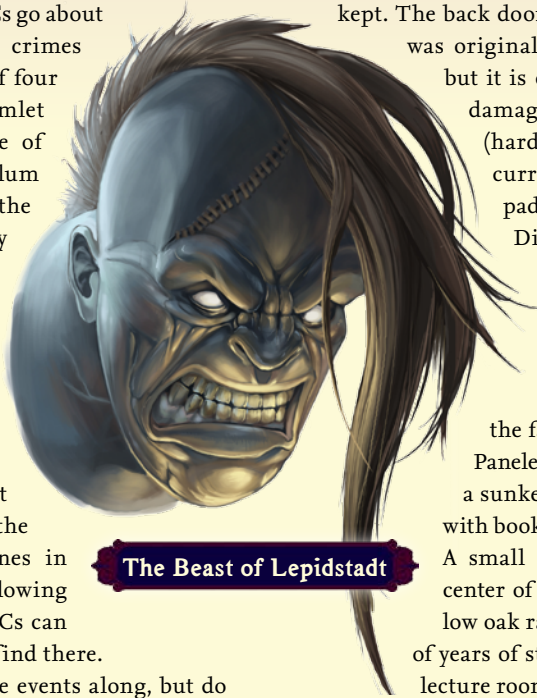
XP 25,600

hp 118 (see page 62)

PART TWO: THE BEAST ON TRIAL

Once they have met both the Beast and its barrister, Gustav Kaple, how the PCs go about investigating the Beast’s alleged crimes is up to them. There are a total of four locations to explore: the swamp hamlet of Morast, the abandoned village of Hergstag, the burned-down asylum of Sanctuary on Karb Isle, and the break-in at Lepidstadt University where the Beast was finally apprehended. In addition, clues at these locations may also lead PCs to a fifth location—the lair of the true culprits at Vorkstag and Grine’s Chymic Works in Lepidstadt. While the incident at Morast will be discussed first at the trial on the following day, the PCs may explore the crime scenes in whichever order they wish. The following sections detail the locations the PCs can investigate and the clues they can find there.

Use the trial as a means to move events along, but do not become a slave to keeping exact times for everything. The emphasis should be put on the PCs acting quickly, requiring them to stretch their abilities and reducing their chance to fully rest. Adventuring at night and fatigue from lack of sleep can heighten the atmosphere of horror. Familiarize yourself with the rules on light (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 172–173) and fatigue and exhaustion (*Core Rulebook* 567). You might also consider using a variant rule where characters who do not get a full night’s sleep may suffer the effects of fatigue. If a PC does not get at least 6 hours of sleep, she must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be fatigued and take a –1 penalty on all other checks and saving throws against sleep effects. A second night without sleep requires another DC 15 Fortitude save. A failed save results in the character becoming exhausted and the penalties increasing to –2. A third failed save on the next night increases the penalties to –3.



The Beast of Lepidstadt

THE THEFT AT LEPIDSTADT UNIVERSITY

If the PCs have not yet delivered Professor Lorremor’s bequest to Dr. Montagnie Crowl at Lepidstadt University’s Antiquities Department, they can do so while investigating the location where the Beast was captured. Details of the meeting with Dr. Crowl can be found on pages 11–12.

Crowl is quite willing to allow the PCs to investigate the scene of the crime, although he warns them that a good deal of cleaning up has already taken place. The trail of the thief is easy to follow—the thief broke in through the back door, then passed through the auditorium on his way to the workshop where the Seasage Effigy was kept. The back door to the Antiquities Department was originally locked with a superior lock, but it is clear that the door was recently damaged. The 1-inch-thick iron door (hardness 10, hp 30, Break DC 26) is currently locked with a makeshift padlock (treat as a simple lock, Disable Device DC 20) and only crude repairs have been made.

The simple wooden door leading from the back door foyer into the auditorium has been broken off its hinges, as has the far door leading to the workshop. Paneled in oak, the auditorium contains a sunken, 5-foot-deep central area lined with books, tribal fetishes, and curiosities. A small stage and lectern stand in the center of this area, which is edged with a low oak rail, worn smooth from the touch of years of students gazing into the Master’s lecture room below.

The high-ceilinged workshop/library is lined with mostly empty shelves, and a trio of great leaded windows looks out over the university lawn. A staggering array of books, scrolls, maps, and curios, including shrunken heads, tribal masks, and bits of pottery, lie scattered all over the floor, apparently pulled from the shelves. The room is otherwise crowded with overturned tables, desks, and cabinets.

Clues: A DC 5 Perception check shows that the back door was clearly forced open from the outside, while a DC 15 Perception check discovers the remains of fine silver wire and a tiny bell attached to the door, which can be identified as the material components of an *alarm* spell with a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check. While several people have walked through the area since the break-in, a DC 20 Survival check reveals the tracks of a large, heavy creature in iron-nailed boots.

A DC 10 Perception check notices the smell of beeswax lingering in the air in the auditorium. A DC 20 Perception

Carion Crown



or Survival check notices a few deep scratches on the wooden rail. An additional DC 20 Perception or Survival check made while searching the tiled floor of the sunken central area immediately under the scratched rail above determines that something heavy landed or fell here.

Despite the mess in the workshop, a DC 15 Perception check notices that one area in the room appears to be untouched, in stark contrast to the damage seen elsewhere in the department. Indeed, the pedestal that once held the Seasage Effigy is crowded with small fetishes and delicate mother-of-pearl fish carvings that are undamaged. The workshop's windows have clearly not been opened for many years, as evidenced by the build-up of grime around them. However, a DC 15 Perception check reveals that the center window, though now shut, has no such grime.

Deductions: When the back door was forced open, an *alarm* spell alerted the guards in a nearby guardroom, who arrived 6 rounds later to overpower the Beast. These guards, if interviewed, remember finding the Beast rampaging through the workshop, but they did not see any accomplices. The tracks in the foyer match the boots worn by the Beast.

Questioning the department staff reveals that the smell in the auditorium is from the polish used by the cleaners on all the wood in the university. The scratches on the rail

and impressions in the floor could easily have been made by the Beast's iron-shod boots.

The workshop's center window, though stiff, opens easily, but opening the other windows requires a DC 25 Strength check. If questioned about the windows, the staff states that the window was shut when they arrived after the crime.

Though all of the clues found in the Antiquities Department point to the Beast of Lepidstadt as the culprit, there are still some unanswered questions. What was the Beast's motive for stealing the Seasage Effigy? Why did it rampage through the workshop but remove the statuette with such care? And what did it do with the stolen statue before it was captured?

In fact, the Beast was not here of its own accord. After invading Schloss Caromarc, the Whispering Way used the *Bondslave Thrall* to control the Beast and directed the golem to break into the university. Having previously scried the area, they made immediately for the Seasage Effigy, which the Beast then passed through a window to a waiting homunculus, who carried the statuette to the cultists. Their work done, the Whispering Way fled with the effigy and abandoned the creature to its fate. Freed of the *Bondslave Thrall's* control, the Beast became enraged and began mindlessly demolishing the antiquities department until

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

the university's guards managed to overpower the Beast with the help of the city watch, who threw the Beast into jail. Unfortunately, the Beast has no memories of its time while under the control of the *Bondslave Thrall*. If interrogated, it only says that it was in the Dippelmere Swamp, and the next thing it knew, it was being led from Lepidstadt University in chains, with no memories of the intervening time.

If questioned about the stolen statue, Dr. Crowl happily discusses the Seasage Effigy. He is unsure of where the statuette originally came from, but he knows it's been part of the department's collection for many years. Physically, the effigy is a murky green statuette depicting a grotesque creature writhing with tentacles. Dr. Crowl admits that he found the effigy fascinating, as it appeared to be an anomaly, an idol of some sort that did not seem to correlate to the worship of any known divine being. He privately suspects that the statuette depicts something only whispered of in the ancient legends of Golarion—some sort of creature from the mysterious Dark Tapestry. Regardless of such idle speculation, however, Dr. Crowl believes the Seasage Effigy's distinct appearance will make it easy to recover, and he expects the statuette to be found soon.

THE SWAMPERS OF MORAST

The first crime the Beast is charged with is the killing of 10 people in Morast, a small hamlet in the Dippelmere Swamp about 8 miles east of Lepidstadt. A narrow trail leads from Lepidstadt to the village. Morast is a miserable collection of 20 or so wattle-and-daub hovels built on stilts above the swamp and connected by soggy wooden boardwalks. The villagers make their livings fishing and occasionally bringing in a blood caiman (a variety of crocodilian with a red-scaled head that is native to the north) to eat or sell.

MORAST

N hamlet

Corruption -1; **Crime** -2; **Economy** -2; **Law** -3; **Lore** -2;
Society +2

Qualities insular

Danger -5; **Disadvantages** impoverished

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government council

Population 62 (60 humans, 2 other)

Notable NPCs

Old Mother Corl (LN old female human witch 2)

Village Elder Lazne (N male middle-aged human commoner 4)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 100 gp; **Purchase Limit** 500 gp; **Spellcasting** 2nd

Minor Items *potion of protection from evil*, *ring of swimming*

The swampers of Morast are a curious group. Local rumor claims that somewhere in their somewhat inbred ancestry, they mingled with strange swamp creatures, tainting their

THE TRUTH

Of all the crimes attributed to the Beast of the Lepidstadt, the creature itself played a role only in Hergstag, though it did not commit the crime it is charged with. The other two incidents were the handiwork of Vorkstag and Grine, two alchemists in Lepidstadt, who used the Beast as a convenient scapegoat for their own crimes.

Using their innocent chymic works in the city as a cover, Vorkstag and Grine ply a darker trade—trafficking in stolen bodies and body parts, which they supplied to eminent physicians across the region for over a decade. At first, the pair contented themselves with using their unique talents for simple body snatching. Greed soon took over, however, and as the demand for fresher parts increased, the supply of corpses dwindled. It wasn't long before the alchemists turned to murder to obtain fresh subjects—but in such a way that the Beast of Lepidstadt was blamed for the killings.

In fact, Vorkstag and Grine are much more than simple alchemists. Vorkstag is a skin stealer, a creature able to wear the skins of bodies he has slain, while Grine is a murderous dark creeper who disguises himself as a gnome. Whenever they commit a murder, Vorkstag dons a particularly gruesome skin—that of a hulking freak called the Shambling Man, whose vile appearance makes an excellent Beast of Lepidstadt, causing terror in all who see it. By means of such deception, the true culprits have escaped suspicion at the expense of an innocent scapegoat.

blood and marking them with queer countenances. No one knows how or why, but the people of Morast have legendary constitutions—sickness is rare among the swampers, and the villagers live long, healthy lives. While admired for this fact, they are also shunned for their strange appearance. However, the swampers' very hardiness and isolation made them interesting targets for Vorkstag and Grine.

The body snatchers first exhumed a corpse from Morast's boneyard a year ago, and were amazed by its condition. Even after spending a week underground, the corpse showed few signs of decay. Their client was most pleased, and soon came back requesting more cadavers. Vorkstag and Grine stole a total of six bodies from Morast's boneyard before they ran out of fresh corpses. Vorkstag killed a poacher and stole her face, using the woman's appearance to move in and out of the swamp. Operating from the boneyard, Vorkstag then used the Shambling Man skin to terrorize the village, pretending to be the Beast of Lepidstadt. Vorkstag snatched 10 more victims before finally being driven away by a mob

Carrion Crown

of villagers. They chased the “Beast” into the swamp, where they saw it attacked by a blood caiman and assumed it was killed. The vigilance of the swampers, plus the blood caiman attack, were enough to convince Vorkstag not to return to Morast, and he never returned to collect the belongings he left in the Boneyard.

The Witness: The villagers only realized that the “Beast” had escaped when the village elder, Lazne, was called as a star witness by the prosecution for the Beast’s trial, since he led the mob that drove the Beast away. Lazne is a grizzled, middle-aged man with dirty gray hair and skin the color of swamp mud. He chews on a foul-smelling swamp weed and punctuates most of his sentences by spitting weed-juice onto the ground. Lazne doesn’t much like “cityfolk and furriners” (by which he means anyone not from Morast, or, to a lesser extent, from Lepidstadt) and his starting attitude is unfriendly. If the PCs wish to talk to Lazne about the Beast’s alleged crime, they must change his attitude to friendly or better with a DC 25 Diplomacy check. If they are successful, the village elder relates his story.

Lazne claims that at first the Beast only took lone villagers who were outside at night, but soon became bolder and began to attack houses. These attacks only ended when Lazne organized the villagers and set a trap for the Beast. He recalls that night well. The villagers were lying in wait for the Beast, who attacked just after nightfall. Armed with torches, the locals attacked and wounded the creature—a huge, hulking brute about 7 feet tall. The Beast took to the water, but the swampers gave chase in their boats, pursuing it to the village boneyard, where it was attacked by a blood caiman. Lazne grins as he recalls how the Beast yelled oaths and curses that even the worst whore in Lepidstadt would blush to say as the gator attacked it, and describes the deep bite wound the gator made on the Beast’s shoulder as it dragged the Beast under the water. Although the Beast’s blood tainted the villagers’ burial ground, forcing them to abandon it and build another, the swampers thought it a small price to pay for the thing’s death. Hearing that the Beast actually survived was all that Lazne needed to tell his story to the authorities, and he’s looking forward to seeing it burn.

If asked about the villagers’ supposed health and longevity, Lazne remains close-lipped. If made helpful, Lazne will only say that the swampers just have “strong blood.” In fact, there is no real secret. The water drawn from the village well is infused with minerals, and this, coupled with their healthy diet of fish and relative isolation, has made the villagers less susceptible to sickness and disease, which results in overall longer lifespans.

Lazne knows nothing about the strangely “incorruptible” bodies of Morast’s dead that first attracted Vorkstag and Grine to the hamlet in the first place. In fact, it has nothing to do with the villagers’ health. The preserved corpses are

a natural byproduct of the boggy burial ground where they were interred—the combination of highly acidic water, low oxygen, and low temperatures staves off decay, creating mummy-like “bog bodies.”

The abandoned boneyard where the Beast was attacked can only be reached by boat. The swampers use small coracles to navigate the swamp, and will rent the tiny boats to the PCs for 5 gp per boat per day. If Lazne was made at least friendly, the swampers will agree to pilot the boats for the PCs. If Lazne was made helpful, he agrees to take the PCs to the boneyard himself. Each coracle can hold a maximum of two Medium-sized creatures, including the boatman.

B. ABANDONED BONEYARD (CR 5)

A tiny, miserable island rises from the swamp, a tangle of trees covering its dour, reed-choked surface. Hundreds of fetishes hang from the trees—simple, roughly humanoid figures made of sticks and bound with twine. Larger fetishes are planted in the ground on various parts of the island, leaning drunkenly in the soft mud. A large nest built of sodden swamp wood sits high in the boughs of a trio of tangled trees on the northwest side of the isle.

The old village boneyard lies about a mile north of Morast on a low, wooded isle (see map on page 23). Some 40 graves, each marked with a simple wooden fetish man, lie on the island.

Creature: A manticore is the most recent visitor to the burial ground since the villagers abandoned it. This heavily pregnant female is building a nest in which to raise her young, which sits about 20 feet up in the trees (area B1). The manticore hunts the marshland nearby, but stays away from the village side of the swamp for fear of attack. There is a 50% chance that the manticore is in her nest when the PCs first come to the boneyard. Otherwise, she is out hunting, but she returns to her nest 1d6 minutes after the PCs arrive. The manticore views anyone on the island as a threat to her nest, and immediately attacks.

MANTICORE

CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 57 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 199*)

TACTICS

During Combat The manticore begins combat by launching spikes at approaching foes, then makes Flyby Attacks. She avoids landing to prevent opponents from surrounding her.

Morale The manticore flees if reduced to fewer than 20 hit points, loosing a final volley of spikes at her enemies to discourage pursuit.

Treasure: The manticore’s nest is obviously a recent construction, and contains the corpse of a dwarf traveler

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

who unfortunately was boating through the swamp a few weeks ago. The corpse wears a colorful patchwork coat with numerous pockets holding an *oil of keen edge*, a package of bodybalm (*Adventurer's Armory* 9), a silver hip flask still containing brandy worth 30 gp, and a crimson felt purse containing 31 pp and 22 gp. A masterwork shortsword and a *wand of ghost sound* (22 charges) lie on the ground nearby.

Clues: A DC 25 Perception check identifies six graves in the boneyard that appear to have been tampered with, sagging into the ground as though they had collapsed from below, and leaving wide depressions in the muddy earth. These six graves are empty, but the other graves are undisturbed.

PCs who make a DC 15 Perception check while searching the southern end of the boneyard come upon the remains of Vorkstag's old camp (area **B2**). Around a small firepit are a waterskin (still half full of wine), the aged remnants of some trail rations, and a curious glass vial. The bottom of the vial contains the dried remains of a green substance that smells vaguely of carrots. A DC 20 Craft (alchemy) or Knowledge (arcana) check identifies the substance not as a potion, but as an alchemist's *darkvision* extract.

A DC 20 Perception check finds Vorkstag's coracle hidden in the trees and brush along the southwest shore of the island (area **B3**). Dried blood can be noticed in the bottom of the boat with a DC 20 Perception check. The coracle contains an oar, a moldy leather travel bag with a damp artisan's outfit (a shirt, breeches, shoes, and a cloth apron) inside, and a vile object—what appears to be a detached human face (Vorkstag wore this face as a disguise whenever he entered the swamp).

In addition, a length of rope stretches from the boat into the waters below. The rope is attached to a heavy sack, requiring a DC 10 Strength check to haul up. The sack is very large (big enough to hold a Medium-sized humanoid in fact) and has dried blood soaked into its fabric, noticed with a DC 15 Perception check. The sack holds some rope, a gag, a rusted lantern, a trio of heavy knives, and a rusted shovel.

A DC 30 Perception check finds a leather-bound case filled with fine tools, made of silver with amethyst handles, lost in the undergrowth nearby. The set is worth 300 gp. A DC 20 Heal check deduces that this is a surgical tool set used by physicians and surgeons. A DC 25 Perception check is required to notice a small symbol on the handle depicting a raven. These tools were also Vorkstag's, though he is unaware that he lost them here, and so never returned to reclaim them.

Deductions: PCs examining the clues found above can make the following deductions. First, someone stole six bodies from the boneyard (1,200 XP). A DC 15 knowledge (nature) check realizes that the blood caiman attack should have left scars, but the Beast has none (1,200 XP). A DC 17

CLUES AND DEDUCTIONS

As the PCs investigate the crimes attributed to the Beast and explore the crime scenes, they have the opportunity to unearth clues that support the Beast's innocence and may also point to the true culprits of the crimes. In order to realize the value of these clues, the PCs must deduce their importance to their investigations. Many of these deductions earn the PCs experience points for successfully recognizing their value. The exact XP total is listed in parentheses after each deduction. (Note that the PCs earn no XP for deductions made at Lepidstadt University, as these clues only confirm the Beast's presence at the crime scene, and do nothing to prove its innocence.) The PCs will also have the opportunity to earn additional experience points by presenting their evidence at the trial.

knowledge (arcana) check recognizes that as a flesh golem, the Beast has *darkvision*, so it would not need an extract of *darkvision* (1,200 XP). The face in the coracle, little more than a ragged mask, is tricky to identify, but if anyone from Morast sees it, they can identify it as the face of Nan Klebem, a poacher who used to visit Morast about once a month, but who has not been seen in the village for about a year, since the time of the Beast's attacks in fact (1,200 XP).

The surgeon's tools provide no evidence of the Beast's innocence, but they do point to the real culprit. The tools are somewhat unusual, but not uncommon in Lepidstadt. If the PCs decide to follow up on this lead, they must return to Lepidstadt. Tracking down the owner of the tools requires multiple skill checks, each leading to another clue that must be unraveled (see below). These checks can be made by the PCs, or even by loyal henchmen or other NPCs. All of the clues can be followed by using the Diplomacy skill to gather information, but remember that each such check takes 1d4 hours. Alternatively, the PCs can follow the clues with other skill checks, which take less time, but might be more difficult. In addition, these clues rely on working businesses, which are only open from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. each day.

Where the tools are made: The skills required to make surgeon's tools are rare, but because of the presence of Lepidstadt University, some 20 such artisans work locally. A DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information or a DC 15 Knowledge (local) check reveals that all of these craftsmen operate within an area called the Surgeons' Flats.

Who made this set of tools: A DC 20 Diplomacy check to gather information or a DC 20 Appraise check identifies

Carion Crown

the raven symbol on the tools as a maker's mark used by Zbraslav Hora and Sons, who have a workshop on the tiny Anatomists' Alley.

Who bought the tools: Zbraslav Hora is a bookish, taciturn man who wears thick spectacles. He frequently deals with various tinkers and itinerant peddlers who sell his wares, and keeps a ledger of all of his sales. Zbraslav noted down the purchaser as Vladka Kostel, a red-haired Varisian woman who wears a green silk scarf depicting a swan. Zbraslav knows she works for an auction house, but he doesn't remember which one. A DC 25 Diplomacy check to gather information or a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check locates Vladka and her employer, Ledov's Chirurgery Merchants.

Who the auction house sold the tools to: Vladka Kostel remembers the buyer of the tools as wearing an unusual high hat and green-tinted reading glasses. The Auction Master, Ollo Klud, is a stuffy, pretentious man with a bald head and tufts of hair above his ears. He is not about to release information on his clients to just anyone who comes in off the streets. A DC 25 Diplomacy check to gather information using Vladka's description, or a DC 20 Bluff check to trick Master Klud into revealing the identity of the buyer, leads to a chirurgery supply shop in the Surgeons' Flats, operated by a shopkeeper called Radniche.

Who purchased the tools from the shop: Radniche's cramped shop is piled with skeletons, pickled things in jars, and alchemical components. He prides himself on keeping his customers' identities confidential and volunteers no information on who bought the tools. A bribe (or purchase from the shop) of at least 20 gp convinces Radniche to recall the buyer—a striking fellow, very dapper in black from head to toe, who said he owned a chymic works somewhere nearby. A DC 25 Diplomacy check to gather information using Radniche's description, or a DC 20 Intimidate check against Radniche, reveals the name of the man who purchased the surgeon's tools—Master Vorkstag, of Vorkstag and Grine's Chymic Works (see page 28). Award the PCs 1,200 XP for tracing the tools to Vorkstag.

XP Award: The PCs can earn a maximum of 6,000 XP for deducing the importance of the clues found in the village of Morast.

THE CHILDREN OF HERGSTAG

The Beast's second alleged crime is the murder of six children in Hergstag, formerly a small, religious farming community in the Dippelmere Swamp. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) check reveals that the village has been abandoned since the attacks 7 months ago. Until that time, the villagers of Hergstag lived quiet lives and made passable livings farming and hunting. Unknown to most of the townsfolk, the Beast of Lepidstadt was living by a small lake near Hergstag at the time and had befriended

one of the local children, a girl named Ellsa. The young child saw nothing wrong with the Beast's terrifying appearance and the two became friends. The Beast found Ellsa to be a gentle, kind friend but begged her to keep his presence secret for fear of what her family might do.

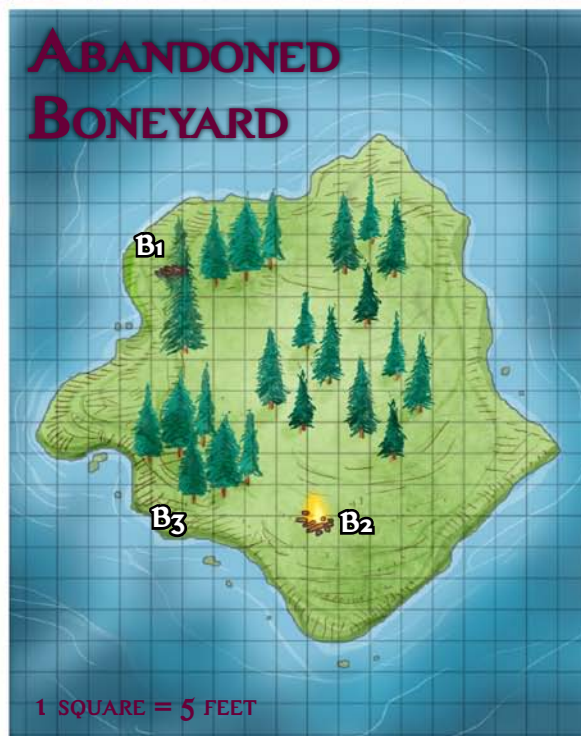
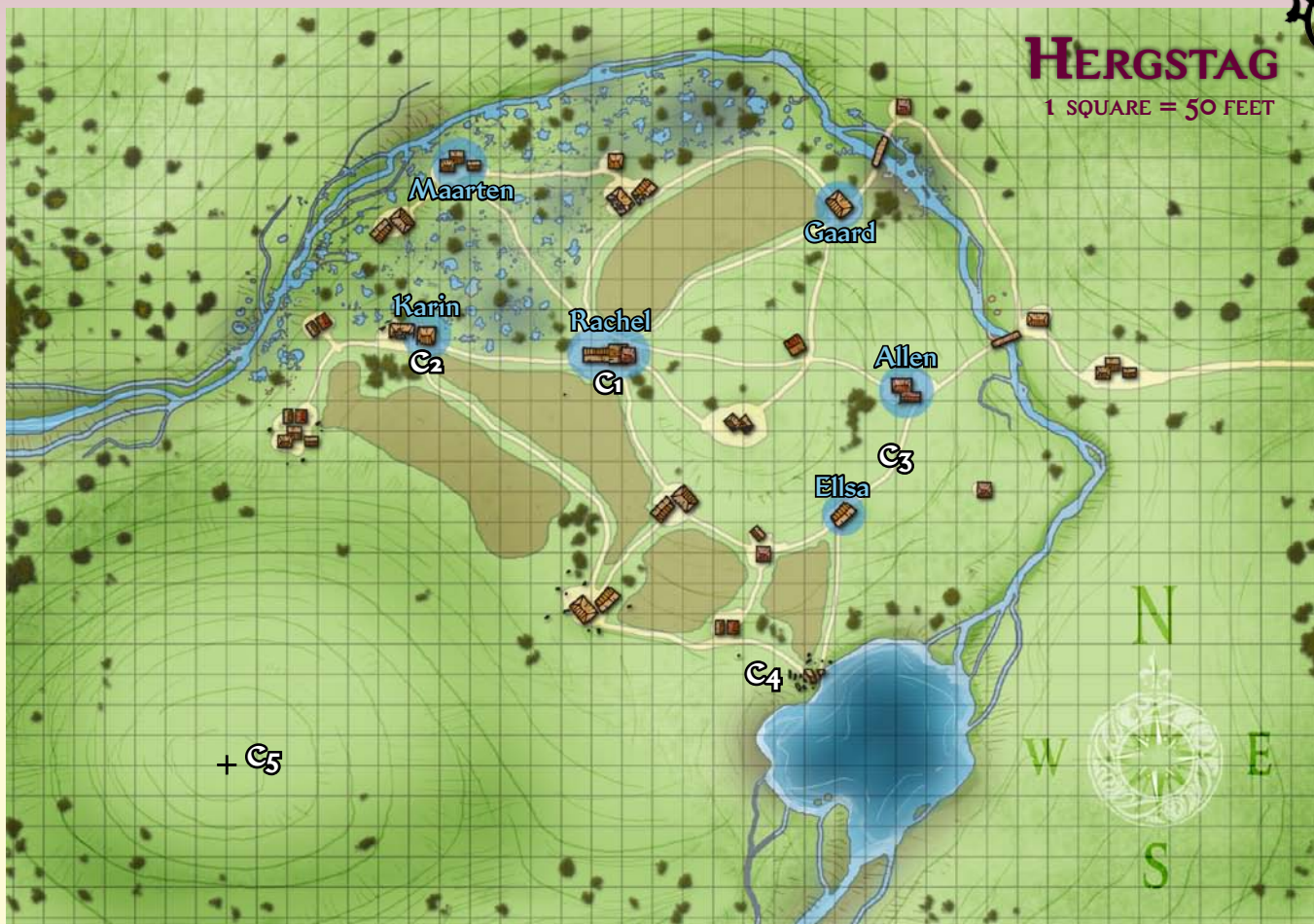
And then Brother Swarm came to town. In life, Brother Swarm had been a child-killer who was caught by vigilantes and horribly executed—covered in honey and stung to death by hornets. Returning as a wraith, Brother Swarm wandered the Dippelmere Swamp until he found Hergstag, taking up residence in small hilltop cave outside of town. A young boy named Maarten had the misfortune to fall into the cave while he was playing on the hill, and was quickly slain by Brother Swarm. Maarten soon rose as a wraith spawn, and Brother Swarm sent him out in search of more of the village's children to lure to the hill to make into his spawn. To the villagers, it seemed that the children simply vanished, then returned as ghosts haunting the village.

When Ellsa was lured to the hill by one of her "ghostly" friends, the Beast tracked her to Brother Swarm's lair, but it was unable to touch the killer's incorporeal form, and Ellsa was slain. The Beast rescued Ellsa's pale body, and tried to return it to her father, but the villagers attacked the Beast and drove it from the village. Mad with grief, the Beast fled back to its lair in the Dippelmere Swamp and vowed never to have anything to do with people again. Haunted by the ghosts of their lost children, the locals abandoned the village shortly thereafter.

The Witnesses: A DC 10 Diplomacy check to gather information or a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check reveals that of the former inhabitants of Hergstag, only three remain in the area. Three sisters named **Garrow**, **Starle**, and **Flicht** (N female human commoners 2) now own a small windmill on the outskirts of Lepidstadt and are witnesses for the prosecution. All in their late forties, the three lived their entire lives in Hergstag. Each remembers the deaths. The village's children vanished one by one, only to return as ghosts. Then one day the culprit was found—the Beast of Lepidstadt. It boldly walked into the village with one of the dead children, a girl named Ellsa. The witnesses all recall seeing the Beast laughing as it carried the child's broken body. As soon as the locals saw the Beast, they set upon it with pitchforks, but try as they might they couldn't catch it, and the Beast escaped into the swamp. The poor innocents it killed continued to haunt the village, and before long became too much for the locals, who soon abandoned the cursed village.

While not bluffing, the three witnesses are giving a condensed version of events. Anyone speaking to them can make a DC 20 Sense Motive check to notice they are concealing something. A DC 15 Diplomacy or Intimidate check convinces them to reveal that of the six children who died, one—a girl named Karin—died in her own

TRIAL OF THE BEAST



Carion Crown

bed 2 days after the Beast was driven from Hergstag. Her father heard her screaming but by the time he reached her she was dead, without a mark on her and with no signs of entry. The three villagers can also give directions to the house in Hergstag where Karin died (area B2).

Of the three crimes the Beast is charged with, the Beast was only present in Hergstag during the time of the killings. If questioned about the case, the Beast remembers Hergstag. It quietly mutters Ellsa's name and becomes visibly upset. Its face tightens, the stitching pulling back its jaw into a grimace, making it look almost like the Beast is laughing. In fact, the Beast is crying, though its eyes are incapable of producing true tears.

Although very simple, the Beast can tell the PCs the basics of what it remembers—that it lived in the hermit's tangle by the lake (area B4) and it befriended a local girl, Ellsa. The Beast claims the children were killed by a “ghost who stole their souls and walks at night.” The Beast goes on to describe the day it found Ellsa's dead body and how it took her back to the villagers to try to explain about the ghost, but was driven away.

C. HERGSTAG (CR 4 OR 5)

Now abandoned and overgrown, the village of Hergstag lies some 10 miles northwest of Lepidstadt (see the map on page 23). The farmland has fallen to ruin, and now even the well-trodden pathways around the area require a DC 15 Survival check to follow. The crops have gone to seed and high corn grows everywhere, affecting visibility and providing concealment as light undergrowth (*Core Rulebook* 426). The village's farmhouses have all been abandoned, and while some furniture such as tables and washboards remain, the homes have been given over to termites and cockroaches unless otherwise indicated. In the northern portion of the village, the land turns to deep bog (*Core Rulebook* 427). The paths here are even harder to follow (DC 20 Survival check), and if PCs stray from them for any distance, they quickly encounter quicksand (*Core Rulebook* 427).

Traps: Before they abandoned the village, the locals left behind a number of bear traps, hoping to catch the Beast should it return. There are a dozen such traps in the region, hidden by grass and overgrowth. When the PCs first approach the village, they automatically encounter one of these traps. As they continue to explore the village, the PCs have a 20% chance of encountering another trap whenever they move between buildings.

BEAR TRAPS (12)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect Atk +10 melee (2d6+3); sharp jaws spring shut around the creature's ankle and halve the creature's base speed (or hold the creature immobile if the trap is attached to a solid object); the creature can escape with a DC 20 Disable Device check, DC 22 Escape Artist check, or a DC 26 Strength check

BROTHER SWARM AND HIS CHILDREN

The grotesque wraith Brother Swarm and his six wraith spawn “children”—Allen, Ellsa, Gaard, Karin, Maarten, and Rachel—wander the village by night, though each of the children is anchored to a point that was dear to him or her in life. Allen haunts the eastern portion of the village, Ellsa wanders near her family's house to the southeast, while Gaard lurks near the village's northeastern fringe. Karin stays near her house (area C2) to the west, Maarten haunts the northwest, and Rachel lurks in the chapel (area C1) quietly humming hymns to herself. Only Brother Swarm moves about freely, but he is generally encountered near his lair, a moldering scarecrow atop a low hill to the southwest (area C5).

Creatures: The wraiths only appear at night; during the day, they lurk within their old homes (or in Brother Swarm's case, his lair) to avoid the sunlight. At night, Brother Swarm wanders near the hill containing his lair and immediately attacks any intruders approaching the area. Otherwise, he should appear at some climactic moment while the PCs are exploring the village, perhaps after they have fought a few of the wraith spawn or have just found their final clue. A tempest of shadows given form, Brother Swarm looks like a cloud of glowing red eyes (one for each child he killed in life), with ghostly hornets buzzing among the dark shadows of his spectral form. He arrives with the drone of a hornet swarm and the sickly sweet stench of decay.

Meanwhile, his wraith spawn “children” wander within a 150-foot-radius of their respective houses (see map on page 23). The wraith spawn look like shadows twisted into children's bodies and wreathed in black fire. Have each wraith spawn make a DC 16 Perception check every minute the PCs are in its region. A successful check assumes the wraith spawn comes within 60 feet of the PCs and notices them with its lifesense ability. The wraith spawn know the locations of the bogs and bear traps in their regions, and try to get the PCs to wander into them by calling for help and appearing in fleeting glances. The spawn attack any characters trapped in bear traps or quicksand, as well as any PCs who enter one of the wraith spawn's homes (marked in blue on the map).

BROTHER SWARM

CR 5

XP 1,600

Wraith (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 281)

hp 47

TACTICS

During Combat Brother Swarm uses the terrain to his

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

advantage, vanishing into the cornfields or mires and then returning to attack a lone target at the edges of combat.

Morale If reduced to 25 hit points or fewer, Brother Swarm flees back to the rotting scarecrow upon the hill. If cornered there, he fights until destroyed.

BROKEN CHILDREN (6) **CR 4**

XP 1,200 each

Wraith spawn (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 281)

LE Small undead (incorporeal)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., lifestense; Perception +8

Aura unnatural aura (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+3 deflection, +1 Dex, +1 size)

hp 37 each (5d8+15)

Fort +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2, incorporeal;

Immune undead traits

Weaknesses sunlight powerlessness, wraith spawn

OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee incorporeal touch +5 (1d4 negative energy plus 1d2 Con drain)

TACTICS

During Combat A wraith spawn concentrates attacks upon individual PCs, such as those caught in traps or at the edges of the group. If attacked, a wraith spawn flees and returns again to attack the same foe when it is safe.

Morale A wraith spawn flees if reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, but if encountered in its home, it attacks until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 16

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative

Skills Diplomacy +8, Fly +5, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (planes) +5, Perception +8, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +13

Languages Common, Varisian

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Constitution Drain (Su) The save DC for a wraith spawn's Constitution drain is 15. On each successful attack, the wraith spawn gains 2 temporary hit points.

Wraith Spawn (Su) The broken children are spawn of the wraith Brother Swarm and are under his control. As such, they are smaller and weaker than normal wraiths. If Brother Swarm is destroyed, they become full-sized, free-willed wraiths with no penalties.

Development: If Brother Swarm is destroyed, his spawn become full wraiths and flee screaming into the marsh. They play no further part in this adventure.

Story Award: Once Brother Swarm is destroyed, award the PCs XP as if they had slain all of the wraith spawn, even if the PCs did not encounter all of the spawn.



Brother Swarm

C1. THE CHAPEL

A small, whitewashed timber building stands in the center of the village, surrounded by gravestones.

The village's chapel was dedicated to Desna, but it already shows the signs of its abandonment. Within, the simple chapel is falling victim to rot, its pews are already overgrown, and some of its windows are smashed. Mice nest in the altar, the holy water in the font is turning green, and the once-beautiful frescoes depicting Desna and the heavens have begun to flake.

Treasure: The villagers took the truly valuable religious items from the chapel when they left, but the water in the font is still holy water, enough to fill five flasks.

Clues: The graves of the six murdered children in the chapel's graveyard can be easily identified with DC 5 Perception checks, as they are named and dated, but only Ellsa's and Karin's bodies are buried here. The graves of the other four children are empty, as their bodies were never recovered.

C2. KARIN'S HOUSE

This house appears to be in better condition than others in the village. Its door is shut and barred.

Carion Crown

Karin's father always meant to come back here, and he secured his home just in case. The good wooden door has been nailed shut (hardness 5, hp 15, Break DC 18). The house is neat and tidy, consisting of a kitchen and dining room downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs.

Clues: Karin's bedroom upstairs holds the true clues. The room's single window stands 15 feet up from the ground. PCs examining the window can make a DC 10 Perception check to see it is unmarked in any way and shuts from the inside with a stout latch. Another DC 10 Perception check outside reveals that the house's slatted timber walls are difficult to climb and also show no marks.

C3. THE FALLEN MAN

What at first appears to be a fallen scarecrow lies at the side of the path, bones jutting from its tattered rags.

The scarecrow is actually the withered body of a man, his leg still clamped in a bear trap. This petty thief should never have come here, but he thought the abandoned houses might have something valuable in them. Hearing children's voices, he followed them until he put his foot in the bear trap he still stands in. The wraith spawn children enjoyed playing with and tormenting the trapped man for days until he stopped moving, but it took him many days to die.

Treasure: The thief still carries all his belongings, though his clothes are now little more than rags. He wears a turquoise worth 100 gp on a leather thong around his neck, and carries 12 gp, 22 sp, a small silver pocket knife worth 25 gp, and a set of masterwork thieves' tools in his pockets.

C4. THE HERMIT'S TANGLE

A tangle of willow trees grows by the shores of this small lake, many of them scarred by fire.

This odd dwelling, which once resembled a house, was the Beast's former lair. The villagers ransacked and burnt the lair when they found it, as evidenced by the remains of spent torches on the ground. A DC 20 Perception check finds the burnt remnants of a Taldan poetry book lying in the ruins.

C5. THE ROTTING SCARECROW

A rotting scarecrow leans on a scythe at the top of this low hill. Its pumpkin face is carved with a leer and a sheep's jaw hangs flaccidly below.

Brother Swarm lairs in a small, 10-foot-diameter cave beneath the scarecrow. The entrance is concealed, but can be found with a DC 20 Perception check.

Clues: Inside the cave, the skeletal remains of four children lie where they fell.

Deductions: PCs who examine the clues found in Hergstag can make the following deductions. If the Beast killed the children, why did it bring Ellsa's body back and not the others? By questioning the Beast, the PCs can learn that the Beast was crying, not laughing, when it brought Ellsa's body back (1,200 XP). Karin died 2 days after the Beast was driven away, so the Beast could not have killed her (1,200 XP). In addition, whatever killed Karin did not climb the house's walls (1,200 XP) or force entry into her room (1,200 XP), so if it was the Beast, how did it get in?

The PCs can also recover the bodies of the four missing children from Brother Swarm's lair (1,200 XP). *Speak with dead* has no effect on the children's bodies, unless the PCs first destroy the wraith spawn the children have become. Once this is done, however, the PCs can learn the truth about events in Hergstag. Ellsa's body in particular gives very strong evidence, as she categorically states that the Beast was her friend and would never hurt her or the other children (1,200 XP).

XP Award: The PCs can earn a maximum of 7,200 XP for deducing the importance of the clues found in Hergstag.

THE KARB ISLE SANCTUARY

The third crime the Beast is accused of is the arson attack on the asylum of Sanctuary on Karb Isle, which resulted in the fiery deaths of Sanctuary's administrator, Doctor Brada, and all of his patients, and the blinding of the doctor's assistant, Karl.

Sanctuary started as a noble idea. Doctor Brada founded the institution to cure those unfortunate individuals afflicted with madness and physical deformity. His motives were born of his own horror at the fate of his uncle, who was burned by a mob because of his monstrous features. Unfortunately, Brada's treatments were a frustrating failure. He began researching darker and less ethical cures, which soon led him to experiments on body parts provided by Vorkstag and Grine. Brada's relationship with Vorkstag and Grine was a mutually beneficial one—the good doctor provided the body snatchers with physically deformed victims from the asylum and with a list of contacts throughout Ustalav to expand their business. In exchange, Vorkstag and Grine supplied Brada with more exotic parts and a cut of the profits.

A disagreement over money led to a falling out among three, and the nervous Brada became concerned for his life. In his terror, he threatened to unmask the pair unless they agreed to increase his cut. It was his last mistake. Vorkstag, using the Shambling Man skin, came to kill Brada one night 4 months ago. During the fight, lanterns were knocked over, spilling flaming oil, and eventually Sanctuary burned to the ground, taking Brada and his

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

patients with it. Only Vorkstag and Karl survived the fire, but the heat of the flames permanently blinded the doctor's assistant. The bodies of Brada and most of his patients were never recovered, and their graves, which lie close to the hospital, are empty.

The Witness: A DC 10 Diplomacy check to gather information or DC 20 Knowledge (local) check finds that **Karl** (NG male human expert 3) now lives in a small cottage by the river in Lepidstadt. Although blinded, Karl prides himself on his independence. He rarely gets visitors, and if the PCs call upon him, his initial attitude is friendly. He makes a great show of hospitality, insisting they break bread with him and help him drink a bottle of wine.

If questioned about the events 4 months ago, Karl describes the last image he saw before the fire took his sight—a shambling beast escaping the burning hospital while he tried to save his beloved master. He believes that creature was none other than the Beast of Lepidstadt. Karl's description of the Beast is actually that of the Shambling Man, but his description is vague enough to fit the Beast. Karl knows that Brada's body was not recovered from the fire, and if made helpful, he also reveals that ghosts are known to occupy the region of the Dippelmer Swamp around Karb Isle.

D. SANCTUARY

Sanctuary lies some 3 miles north of Lepidstadt along the Lesser Moutray river. A narrow track follows the western shore of the river, passing through depressingly gray marshland before arriving at the lonely ruins of Sanctuary on Karb Isle.

The sad remains of a broken building lie on a spur of land jutting into the river. The burnt timbers of a large house sag into the undergrowth of nettles and thistles. Nature is taking back this charred ruin, as if trying to erase dark memories. Nearby, a small cluster of gravestones jut from the weeds.

Though called an island, Karb is actually an isthmus and is connected to the mainland (see the map on page 23). There are a total of 12 graves along the cobbled track to Lepidstadt. If exhumed, all of the coffins are empty. The ruins of Sanctuary (area **D1**) are choked with fallen debris and count as dense rubble (*Core Rulebook* 428). The entrance to Sanctuary's cellar was buried at the time of the fire but the cellar's current inhabitants have subsequently reopened it. A DC 15 Perception check is enough to notice the 3-foot-wide hole on the south side of the ruins (area **D2**). The entrance opens into a 15-foot-deep stone-walled shaft (DC 15 Climb check to traverse) which enters the cellar through its ceiling.

Clues: A DC 25 Perception check made while searching the ruins turns up a charred metal strongbox, warped by

the heat of the fire. The lock is fused, but the box can be broken open with a DC 23 Strength check. Doctor Brada stored his incriminating papers for blackmailing Vorkstag and Grine inside the box, but unfortunately the heat of the fire was enough to char most of the papers beyond recognition. However, a DC 20 Linguistics check is enough to decipher the words "Vorkstag and Grine's Chymic Works," which appear multiple times in the documents.

D3. THE CELLAR (CR 6)

The hospital's damp cellar, which contained Dr. Brada's private workshop, escaped the fire remarkably unscathed. A pair of large water casks sits beneath the entrance shaft to climb upon. The cellar itself is some 15 feet high, and is a mess, as the remains of Brada's workshop have been flung about and otherwise thrown into disarray. A ghostly trophy made of burnt heads dangling on chains from an iron candelabrum hangs from the ceiling near the shaft.

Creatures: A gang of four ghosts lives in squalor in the cellar during the day, venturing forth to wander the swamps by night. They attack intruders on sight.



Ghast

Carion Crown

GHASTS (4)

CR 2

XP 600 each

Advanced ghouls (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146, 294)

hp 17 each

TACTICS

During Combat The ghosts attack as a group, attempting to outflank their opponents. They continue to bite paralyzed victims until they are dead, making coup de grace attacks if they can safely do so.

Morale A ghost flees if reduced to 5 hit points or fewer. If two of their number are slain, they flee as a group.

Treasure: Buried among the debris in the cellar are 12 silver crossbow bolts in a quiver, a slightly melted gold belt buckle worth 15 gp, and an iron bracelet with silver filigree work depicting a moon eating an owl worth 75 gp.

Clues: The ghosts have explored the ruins many times, and came across several burnt bodies of the patients and Brada himself. PCs who examine the charred heads and make a DC 20 Perception check can see that while most of the heads clearly display physical deformities, one does not. Also among the ruins are numerous shards of charred, broken glass, but a DC 15 Perception check finds one unbroken vial that has rolled into a corner. The label on the vial is very damp, but the words “Vorkstag and Grine, Chymickal Bleach” are still clearly visible.

Deductions: PCs examining the clues found at Sanctuary can make the following deductions. Both the papers in the strongbox and the vial in the cellar point to Vorkstag and Grine (1,200 XP each for the papers and the vial). The doctor’s assistant Karl knows nothing of Brada’s agreement with Vorkstag and Grine. If asked about the two alchemists, Karl can only state that they were occasional visitors to Sanctuary (1,200 XP). If nothing else, the PCs might wish to question them about the circumstances of their business with Doctor Brada. Vorkstag and Grine’s Chymic Works is detailed below. Should the PCs acquire the Shambling Man skin from the chymic works (see area E8) and describe it to Karl, he can identify it as the creature that attacked Sanctuary.

The single head without deformities is that of Doctor Brada, and is a useful clue for the PCs. Though only his head remains, the PCs can still cast *Speak with Dead* on it. Brada’s answers are difficult to discern as his words are whispered without air, but the PCs can still learn from him what really happened at Sanctuary that night (1,200 XP).

XP Award: The PCs can earn a maximum of 4,800 XP for deducing the importance of the clues found at Sanctuary.

VORKSTAG AND GRINE’S CHYMIC WORKS

The true culprits of the crimes attributed to the Beast are Vorkstag and Grine, the two alchemists-cum-body-snatchers, who operate out of a mundane chemical factory

in Lepidstadt, staffed by enslaved mongrelmen. Grine discovered the mongrelmen living in the sewers near the chymic works and decided they would make a perfect captive workforce. Slaying the mongrelmen’s leader—a giant, twisted specimen—the two alchemists intimidated the survivors into working for them, and Vorkstag used the mongrelman leader’s skin to create his Shambling Man disguise. The mongrelmen work the factory and provide security, and the fact that Vorkstag has the Shambling Man skin to wear often comes in handy to remind the mongrelmen who their master is. As a result, the cowed mongrelmen rarely attempt to escape, and the chymic works’ alchemical acid and bleach production has never been better. Vorkstag and Grine are keenly aware of the value of their goods, however, and have recently made arrangements with a pair of intelligent chymickal zombies and purchased a flesh golem hound to guard the premises.

By day, both Vorkstag and Grine usually stay in the works, either overseeing production, experimenting, or otherwise occupied in their own rooms. At night, Vorkstag often goes out on various missions, and has several skins he uses to do so. PCs watching the works by night (if they have time) may see several people come and go over a period of days, and assume more people are within, but all of those people are actually Vorkstag in different disguises. Grine rarely leaves the building.

PCs who wish to find out more about Vorkstag and Grine may make Diplomacy checks to gather information or Knowledge (local) checks to discover the following information about the two alchemists.

DC 10: Vorkstag and Grine are well-respected merchants. Grine is a peculiar-looking fellow, though gnomes are that way, you know.

DC 15: No workers are ever seen going on shift at the chymic works, but the smoke from the chimney never stops. Odd that.

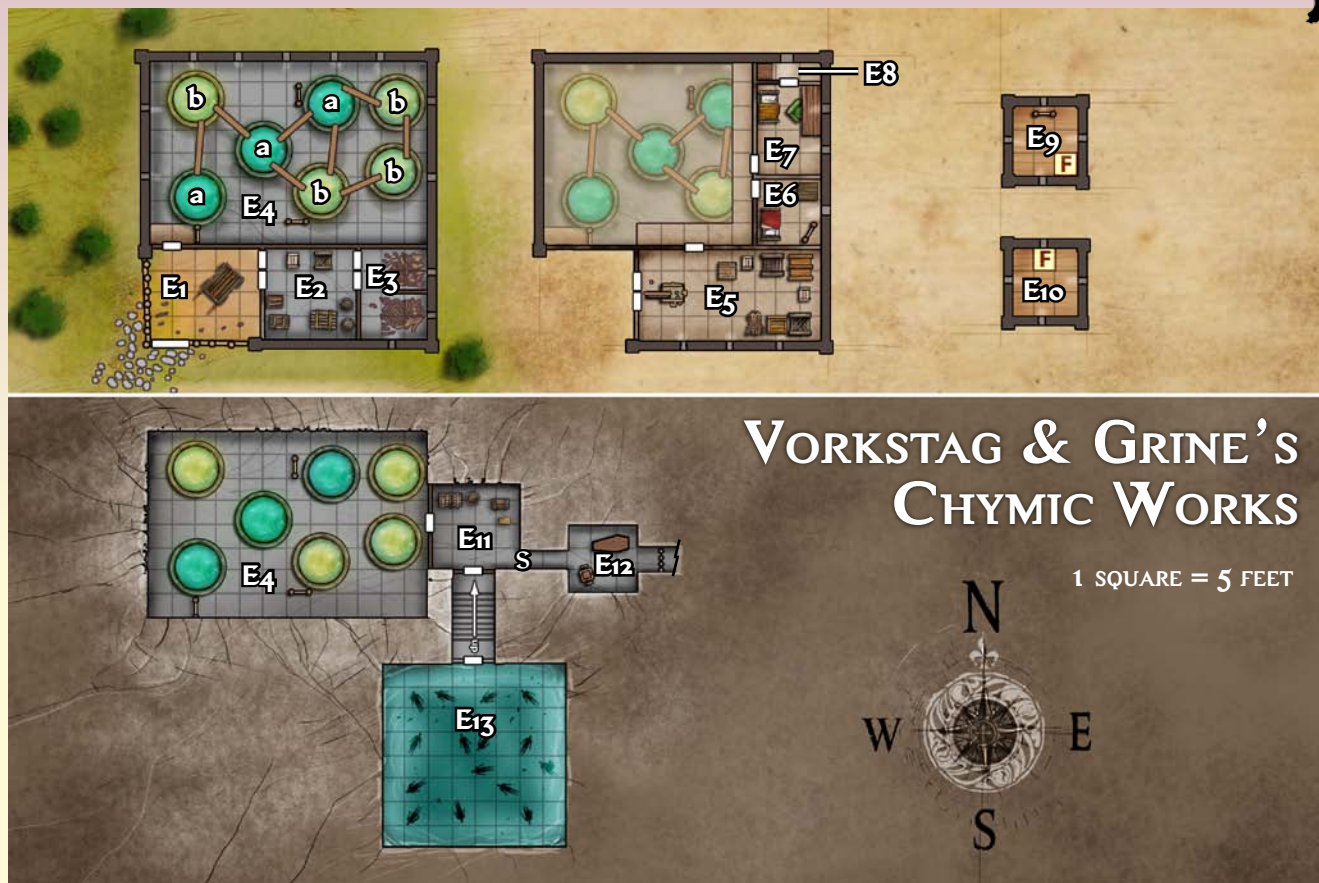
DC 25: Master Vorkstag has a great many friends in high places, and whenever any minor trouble comes his way, someone is always ready to speak up on his behalf.

Once the PCs locate Vorkstag and Grine’s Chymic Works, read the following description.

A tall, iron chimney belches yellow clouds into the sky from this small brick factory. Large leaded windows arch in a dozen places on its outer walls, but they are so begrimed as to be opaque. A large gate opens onto an inner courtyard beneath a sign proudly proclaiming “Vorkstag and Grine, Chymic Works.” The building has two floors and a tower, topped by a lightning rod.

Characters coming within 60 feet of the chymic works can smell the acrid fumes coming from the chimney. A DC 10 Craft (alchemy) check identifies the smoke as a byproduct of acid and bleach production. The iron

TRIAL OF THE BEAST



VORKSTAG & GRINE'S CHYMIC WORKS

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

chimney is very difficult to climb (DC 30 Climb check) and rises 40 feet from the roof above the vats (area E4). The outer walls of the building are masonry, made of local brick (DC 25 Climb check). All of the windows in the building are so blackened they cannot be seen through, and all doors are good wooden doors (hardness 5, hp 15, Break DC 18 if locked). The floors are stone, except for the upper levels, which have wooden floorboards supported with iron beams.

E1. COURTYARD (CR 6)

A twenty-foot-high stone wall, topped with broken glass, surrounds a small courtyard before the workshop. A heavy oak gate bars entry beneath a sign proudly proclaiming "Vorkstag and Grine, Chymic Works." A bell hangs by one side of the gate.

The strong wooden gate is barred at all times (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25) unless a collection or delivery is expected. All such collections and deliveries are carried out by agents well known to the duo and always take place at specific times. The wall is made of brick (DC 25 Climb check) and topped with broken glass. Each PC climbing over must make a DC 18 Reflex save or take 1d6 points of damage.

If anyone rings the bell, either Vorkstag or Grine appears at the upper entrance to the loading bay and asks what the visitors want. They do not like unwelcome visitors, and have more than enough clients to keep them busy, so they are uninterested in discussing business with strangers.

An iron-wheeled cart sits in the courtyard, ready for deliveries. A locked door (Disable Device DC 25) to the north leads into the workshop, while double doors to the east open into a storeroom (area E2). Above these, a large set of doors opens onto the loading bay (area E5).

Creature: A flesh golem hound guards the courtyard. By day, it is fitted with a muzzle and chained to its kennel in the southeast corner of the courtyard with a 20-foot-long chain (hardness 10, hp 5, Break DC 26). At night, Grine removes the chain and muzzle and lets the creature run loose. If the golem is wearing its muzzle, it can only make slam attacks. Grine or Vorkstag can remove the muzzle as a move action that provokes an attack of opportunity. If attacked with missile weapons or spells from a distance, the hound slinks back into its kennel and hides until it can attack.

FLESH GOLEM HOUND **CR 6**
XP 2,400

Variant flesh golem (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 160)

Carion Crown

N Medium construct

Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+10 natural)

hp 64 (8d10+20)

Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2

DR 5/adamantine; Immune construct traits, magic

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +13 (2d8+7) or
slam +13 (2d6+7)

Special Attacks berserk

TACTICS

During Combat The flesh golem hound attacks anyone entering the courtyard other than Vorkstag or Grine.

Morale The flesh golem hound fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 11, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Base Atk +8; CMB +13; CMD 23 (27 vs. trip)

E2. STORAGE (CR 4)

This chamber contains numerous boxes, crates, and bales of straw for packing.

Creatures: Three mongrelmen are working in this chamber. They attack anyone entering the room.

MONGRELMEN (3)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 15 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 191)

TACTICS

During Combat The mongrelmen bludgeon any intruders they see with their clubs.

Morale The mongrelmen flee if reduced to 5 hit points or fewer.

Treasure: Boxes in this room hold 12 vials of alchemist's fire, 12 vials of liquid ice*, 10 smoke pellets*, 10 smokesticks, and six bottles of bleach (worth 5 gp each) with the same labels as the one found in area D3 of Sanctuary. In addition, a DC 20 Perception checks finds a bottle of port intended as a gift to a client, worth 100 gp.

* See the *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*.

E3. STABLE

This simple stable contains two stalls filled with straw, one of which holds an ancient horse one step away from the knacker's yard. When not working, the mongrelmen sleep in the stable as well, where the flesh golem hound in the courtyard (area E1) prevents them from attempting to escape.

E4. THE VATS (CR 4)

This chamber occupies a whole side of the building, from the cellar level below up to the roof high above. Seven iron vats, each ten feet across, occupy the majority of the room. Furnaces fuel the vats at cellar level, while at the ground floor level a series of planks have been laid across the vats to allow passage to a ladder that leads to an iron walkway on the level above. Two ladders also allow access from the planks to the floor below. The air in the chamber is cloying and acidic.

The door from area E1 opens onto a narrow stone platform 15 feet above the floor. The ceiling is another 20 feet above ground level. At cellar level, a locked door (DC 25 Disable Device) to the east leads to area E11. Three vats (marked a) contain acid, while the other four vats (marked b) hold bleach. All of these chemicals are still being processed, and are not yet concentrated enough to be used as weapons.

The planks between the vats are 10 inches wide and a DC 10 Acrobatics check is required to cross them. Remember that if any PCs take damage while balancing on the planks, they must make another Acrobatics check to avoid falling into the vats or onto the floor below.

Hazard: The PCs must make a DC 12 Fortitude save every round they spend in this chamber or be nauseated by the acidic fumes for 1 round. Holding one's breath or



Flesh Golem Hound

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

breathing through some sort of filter (such as a scarf or one of the mongrelmen's masks) negates the need for a saving throw. Creatures that fall into the acid vats take 3d6 points of acid damage per round of immersion. Creatures falling into the bleach vats take 1d6 points of acid damage per round of immersion, and must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d6 minutes. Climbing out of the vats requires a DC 25 Climb check.

Creatures: Eight mongrelmen wearing cloth breathing masks attend the vats in this chamber. Heavily scarred by acid, they are even more horrid in appearance than most mongrelmen. Three of the eight are trusties and are also charged with security. They attack anyone entering the chamber. The other five try to avoid combat and continue their work, only fighting if attacked first.

MONGRELMEN (3) CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 15 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 191)

TACTICS

During Combat The mongrelmen bludgeon any intruders they see with their clubs.

Morale The mongrelmen flee if reduced to 5 hit points or fewer.

Development: Combat in this chamber has a chance of attracting the attention of Grine (area E6) and Vorkstag (area E7) upstairs. At night, Vorkstag is usually out, and Grine is asleep in his room. During the day, Grine is awake and Vorkstag is usually asleep. Make Perception checks for the two alchemists—the DC is 10 if they are awake, and 20 if they are asleep (including penalties for distance, distraction as each focuses on his own work, and the sound of the noisy factory floor). However, the mongrelmen laborers are a fractious lot, and the three mongrelmen trusties frequently resort to force to keep their compatriots in line. As such, Vorkstag and Grine tend to ignore the sounds of fighting if it lasts 4 rounds or less. If combat goes on for longer (and they make their Perception checks), Vorkstag or Grine or both come to investigate, first preparing themselves as listed in the tactics section of their stat blocks. You should use Vorkstag and Grine as you see fit to best challenge the PCs—if the PCs are easily handling the mongrelmen, both Vorkstag and Grine can make an appearance, but if the PCs are wounded or having trouble, you can have them encounter the alchemists one at a time.

E5. LOADING BAY

This room overlooks the courtyard and has a retractable timber and iron crane to lower goods into wagons below through a sliding wooden door. Presently the room has only a few wooden cases in it.

Vorkstag and Grine do not have any deliveries currently scheduled, so most of the boxes in this chamber are empty of all but packing straw.

Treasure: Among the empty boxes in this room are cases containing 12 vials of acid, 12 vials of nushadir (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*), five tanglefoot bags, and three thunderstones, all packed in straw.

E6. GRINE'S BUTCHERY (CR 4)

As much an abattoir as a bedchamber, this room contains not only a four-poster bed, but also numerous workbenches and alchemical gear. The walls are lined with shelves and strange-looking objects in jars of liquid. Bits of rags litter the floor, and the air is heavy with the stench of spoiled food mixed with acid chemicals. A ladder leads to a trapdoor in the ceiling.

This room is part alchemy lab, part slaughterhouse, and part bedroom. The many jars about the room contain alchemically preserved body parts from a variety of creatures. One bell jar full of liquid contains a small gold key at the bottom. The liquid is acid, and anyone reaching into the jar to remove the key takes 1d6 points of acid damage. This key opens Grine's strongbox (see Treasure, below). When he needs it, Grine fishes the key out of the jar with a length of gold wire. The ladder in the southeast corner leads to the tower above (area E9).

Creature: The dark creeper Grine lives in this chamber. Besides his position as a priest of Norgorber, god of poison and murder, he is also an alchemist, body snatcher, poisoner, and amateur vivisectionist. Many of his experiments and samples lie about the room, some preserved in jars of chemicals, some rotting away on tables in the open. Swathed in filthy rags, Grine normally disguises himself as a gnome, but he takes no such precautions when at home. He responds to any intrusions with a snarl and a poisoned blade.

GRINE CR 4

XP 1,200

Male dark creeper cleric of Norgorber 1/rogue 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 53*)

NE Small humanoid (dark folk)

Init +8; Senses see in darkness; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+2 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 size)

hp 38 (6d8+12)

Fort +5, **Ref** +10, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities evasion

Weaknesses light blindness

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.; climb 20 ft.

Carion Crown

Melee mwk handaxe +9 (1d4+1/x3 plus poison)
Ranged mwk throwing axe +9 (1d4+1 plus poison)
Special Attacks channel negative energy 2/day (DC 9, 1d6), death throes, sneak attack +2d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +2)

At will—*darkness*, *detect magic*

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st; concentration +3)

5/day—*bleeding touch* (1 round)

5/day—*copycat* (1 round)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +3)

1st—*command* (DC 13), *disguise self*^P (DC 13), *shield of faith*

o (at will)—*bleed* (DC 12), *detect magic*, *read magic*

D Domain spell; **Domains** Death, Trickery

TACTICS

Before Combat Grine casts *shield of faith* and imbibes his *potion of spider climb*.

During Combat Grine prefers to attack opponents in the Vats (area E4). If encountered in his room, he tries to retreat into that area to have better maneuverability and options. He

uses *darkness* to conceal himself to make sneak attacks with his poisoned throwing axes, and attempts to draw enemies onto the dangerous planks above the vats.

Morale If reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, Grine retreats to area E9 to collect his homunculi before escaping the factory through the tower using *spider climb*.

Base Statistics Without his spells and potion, Grine's statistics are AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 13; **Skills** Climb +10.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 15, **Int** 10, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 19

Feats Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Sleight of Hand), Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +4, Climb +14, Craft (alchemy) +7, Disable Device +8, Disguise +8 (+18 with *disguise self*), Perception +12, Sleight of Hand +14, Stealth +18

Languages Common, Dark Folk

SQ poison use, rag armor, rogue talents (lasting poison*), trapfinding +1

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of spider climb*, acid (2), antitoxin; **Other Gear** rags, masterwork handaxe, masterwork throwing axes (3), disguise kit, holy symbol of Norgorber, black smear poison (6 doses), spell component pouch, thieves' tools

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) *Black Smear*: injury; save Fort DC 15; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Str; cure 1 save

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

Trap: Grine's strongbox (see Treasure, below) is trapped. Anyone who attempts to open it without the proper key sets off the trap, which releases a cloud of poisonous ungol dust.

UNGOL DUST TRAP

CR 4

XP 1,200

Type mechanical; Perception DC 15; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset repair

Effect poison gas (*Ungol Dust*: inhaled; save Fort DC 15; frequency 1/round for 4 rounds; initial effect 1 Cha drain; secondary effect 1d2 Cha damage; cure 1 save); never miss

Treasure: The room is packed with curios and medical oddities, including a complete alchemist's lab and four vials of antitoxin that Grine has recently crafted. Altogether, the contents of the room would be worth 750 gp to the right collector. Under the bed is a small metal strongbox. The box is both locked (Disable Device DC 30 to open) and trapped, but the key to its lock rests in a nearby bell jar (see above). The chest contains 200 gp, four vials of antitoxin, and a small purple velvet purse containing 4 small, cloudy diamonds worth 300 gp each.



Grine

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

E7. VORKSTAG'S STUDY (CR 5)

This room appears to be the study of a scholar. A roll-top desk with a leather chair stands against one wall, holding a variety of alchemical equipment and surrounded by hundreds of books piled on every available surface. A narrow cot is crushed into one corner behind a wall of books. A door stands in the north wall.

A combination alchemy lab, library, and bedchamber, this room is almost fastidiously clean except for the heaps of books everywhere. A large bell jar atop the desk contains the alchemically preserved head and shoulders of a human man (a swamper from Morast). The door to the north leads to area E8 and is locked with a superior lock (DC 40 Disable Device to open). Vorkstag has the key.

Creature: The other half of the body-snatching duo, the skin stealer Vorkstag, lives in this room. A sinister fey creature capable of stealing a victim's skin and wearing it as his own, Vorkstag is an accomplished alchemist as well as a student of anatomy and chirurgery. At night, Vorkstag is usually out on inscrutable errands in Lepidstadt wearing one of his stolen skins, and he spends the days sleeping, studying his books, or crafting alchemical items. If encountered here, he leaps to his feet and attacks any intruders.

VORKSTAG	CR 5
XP 1,600	
Male skin stealer alchemist 4 (see page 88)	
NE Medium fey	
Init +7; Senses low-light vision; Perception +11	
DEFENSE	
AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +2 natural, +4 shield)	
hp 72 (8 HD; 4d6+4d8+40)	
Fort +10, Ref +11, Will +7; +2 vs. poison	
Defensive Abilities <i>blur</i>	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft.	
Melee mwk heavy mace +11 (1d8+5 plus poison) or 2 claws +10 (1d4+5)	
Ranged bomb +9 (2d6+4 acid or fire)	
Special Attacks bomb 8/day (2d6+4 acid or fire, DC 16), sneak attack (+1d6), steal skin	
Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 4th)	
2nd— <i>blur</i> , <i>fire breath</i> * (DC 16)	
1st— <i>bomber's eye</i> *, <i>jump</i> , <i>shield</i> , <i>true strike</i>	
TACTICS	
Before Combat Vorkstag drinks his mutagen and <i>potion of bull's strength</i> , then his extracts of <i>blur</i> , <i>jump</i> , and <i>shield</i> .	
During Combat On the first round of combat, Vorkstag drinks his extract of <i>bomber's eye</i> . Vorkstag prefers to meet opponents in the Vats (area E4), where he can use his bombs to greater effect, excluding himself and any allies with precise bombs, if necessary. He attempts to draw opponents onto	

the planks between vats to make things more dangerous for them. If forced into melee combat, he drinks his extract of *fire breath* and continues throwing bombs, attacking with his poisoned mace or claws only as a last result.

Morale If reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, Vorkstag retreats from combat, drinking his *potion of invisibility* if possible. If pursued, he tries to lure enemies to the Cadaver Pool (area E13) where his chymickal zombie allies are waiting.

Base Statistics Without his mutagen, potion, and extracts, Vorkstag has **AC** 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; **hp** 56; **Fort** +8; **Melee** mwk heavy mace +9 (1d8+3 plus poison) or 2 claws +8 (1d4+3); **Str** 17, **Con** 16, **Cha** 18; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 21; **Skills** Acrobatics +14, Bluff +15, Disguise +17 (+27 with stolen skin), Use Magic Device +15.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 16, **Con** 20, **Int** 18, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23

Feats Brew Potion, Deceitful, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Throw Anything, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +14 (+24 jump), Bluff +14, Craft (alchemy) +15 (+19 to craft alchemical items), Disguise +16 (+26 with stolen skin), Escape Artist +10, Heal +13, Knowledge (local) +13, Perception +11, Sense Motive +9, Sleight of Hand +10, Stealth +18, Use Magic Device +14

Languages Aklo, Common, Elven, Undercommon, Varisian
SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +4, identify potions), discoveries (acid bomb, precise bombs [4 squares]), mutagen (+4 Con/−2 Cha, +2 natural, 40 minutes), poison use, swift alchemy
Combat Gear *potion of bull's strength*, *potions of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of invisibility*, *potion of spider climb*, *potion of water breathing*, *wand of acid arrow* (21 charges); **Other Gear** masterwork heavy mace, *dust of tracelessness* (2 doses), alchemist's kit, formula book (contains all prepared extracts, plus *bull's strength*, *cure light wounds*, *darkvision*, *endure elements*, *invisibility*, and *spider climb*), keys (to all locked doors in the chymic works, including the Cabinet of Skins and Faces [area E8], and the grille beyond area E12), poison (black adder venom [2 doses], blue whinnis [2 doses], and deathblade [1 dose])

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

Treasure: Vorkstag's collection of books (mainly dealing with anatomy and surgery) would be worth 500 gp to the right scholar or a university. In addition, a complete alchemist's lab sits on the desk, along with three packets of flash powder* and five pots of alchemical grease* Vorkstag had recently created.

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

Clues: If the PCs examine Vorkstag's body after he is defeated, a DC 10 Perception check notices the scars of a blood caiman bite on his shoulder.

Deductions: Vorkstag's scars place him in Morast when the swampers drove off the "Beast" (1,200 XP).

Carion Crown

E8. THE CABINET OF SKINS AND FACES

Beyond the locked door, a tiny room holds a single object—a large oak cabinet.

The cabinet contains the skins Vorkstag has stolen over decades of crime. Nearly a score of flayed skins—the answers to several of Lepidstadt’s unsolved crimes, some of which have been attributed to the Beast of Lepidstadt—hang within the cabinet like empty sacks of flesh. Notable skins include the missing Miller of Hargen; Olga Sloveh, the scandalous “Harlot of Cerny Brothel” in Lepidstadt; Borgo Znojmo, a respected and reclusive Lepidstadt merchant; Doctor Katarina Vilt, an esteemed lecturer at Lepidstadt University; and countless others both missing or still occasionally seen. Most importantly, hanging at the front is Vorkstag’s Shambling Man disguise—the grotesque, deformed skin of a 8-foot-tall mongrelman, made up of flesh, fur, and scales and covered with fungal boils and hideous puss-filled eruptions—which the skin stealer wears to impersonate the Beast of Lepidstadt.

Treasure: A DC 30 Perception check notices the cabinet has a false back, which slides out to reveal Vorkstag’s treasure—500 gp in assorted coins, a silver drinking cup inlaid with obsidian worth 400 gp, and a syringe of six

vials of necromantic alchemical elixir. Vorkstag gives the two zombies in area E13 weekly injections of this elixir to preserve their brains and ensure their loyalty. In addition, the secret compartment also contains a ledger detailing customers who have purchased stolen cadavers and anatomical parts from Vorkstag and Grine. Many of the names are local doctors and scholars, but two names stand out: Doctor Brada of Sanctuary, and Auren Vrood, the Whispering Way necromancer who killed Professor Lorremor in Ravengro and who orchestrated the Beast’s theft of the Seasage Effigy from Lepidstadt University. Brada’s name is likely immediately recognizable to the PCs; Vrood’s name is probably not notable at this point, but the PCs may recall seeing it here when they finally encounter Vrood later in the Adventure Path.

Story Award: Award the PCs 1,200 XP if they discover the Cabinet of Skins and Faces and the Shambling Man skin inside.

E9. TOWER OF CURIOS (CR 4)

Strange art and artifacts from distant lands fill this tower room. Another ladder rises upward to a trapdoor in the ceiling.

Grine is an obsessive collector of curios from around the world. He stores his collection in the tower above his room.

Creatures: Grine keeps three leathery things with bone and metal jaws—tiny constructs known as snapjaw homunculi—as both security and entertainment, delighting in watching the creatures tear flesh from prey. Although he did not make them himself, the homunculi were created using Grine’s blood, so he does possess a telepathic link with these minions. They attack anyone except Grine entering the tower, but are not drawn by combat below.

SNAPJAW HOMUNCULI (2)

CR 2

XP 600 each

Variant advanced homunculus (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 176)

NE Tiny construct

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +4

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 size)

hp 16 each (3d10)

Fort +1, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

Immune construct traits

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)

Melee bite +5 (1d6/x3 plus poison)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks dislocating jaw

TACTICS

During Combat The snapjaw homunculi attack intruders with their bear trap jaws. If an opponent succumbs to their



Cabinet of
Skins and Faces

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

poison, they switch to a new enemy.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 8 hit points, the snapjaw homunculi flee through the trapdoor to join their master, Grine.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 15

Feats Dodge, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Fly +11, Perception +4, Stealth +14

Languages Common (cannot speak); telepathic link

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dislocating Jaw (Ex) A snapjaw homunculus's jaws can open very wide, giving its bite attack a x3 critical multiplier.

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 13; *frequency* 1/minute for 60 minutes; *effect* sleep for 1 minute; *cure* 1 save.

Treasure: Among the curios and artifacts in this chamber are an ebony tribal mask from the Mwangi Expanse worth 175 gp, a silver torc from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings worth 200 gp, and a mammoth tusk scrimshaw from the Realm of the Mammoth Lords with several spells carved on its surface. The tusk weighs 20 pounds and functions as a magic scroll containing the spells *bull's strength*, *ice storm*, and *phantom steed*.

E10. TOP OF THE TOWER (CR 5)

Slatted timber openings cover the windows of this tower-top room, 60 feet above the ground.

Creature: Grine posted a final snapjaw homunculus in this dirty chamber to guard against theft and intrusion through the chymic works' tower.

SNAPJAW HOMUNCULUS CR 2

XP 600

hp 16 (see above)

TACTICS

During Combat The homunculus focuses its attacks on intruders stunned by the trap (see below).

Morale The homunculus fights until destroyed.

Trap: The trapdoor leading to area E9 bears a magic trap that goes off when the trapdoor is opened. Note that while the homunculus might take sonic damage from the trap, it is immune to the trap's stun effect.

SOUND BURST TRAP CR 3

XP 800

Type magic; **Perception** DC 27; **Disable Device** DC 27

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Effect spell effect (*sound burst*, 1d8 sonic damage plus stunned for 1 round, DC 13 Fortitude save negates stun); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft. spread)

Treasure: The roof above this chamber is topped with a copper lightning rod in the form of a raven eating a wolf, worth 100 gp.

E11. LOWER STORAGE

This underground room contains several dozen crates, a few coffins, lots of straw, and several huge bell jars.

This chamber is used as a storage area for packaging secret goods from the works. The door to the west leads to the vat room (area E4) and is locked (DC 25 Disable Device to open). The secret door to the east is used frequently and may be spotted with a DC 20 Perception check.

Treasure: The crates in this room hold five pots of bladeguard*, 10 doses of bloodblock, 5 applications of silver weapon blanch*, 5 applications of cold iron weapon blanch*, and a single application of adamantine weapon blanch*.

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

E12. SECRET DISTRIBUTION ROOM

This room contains grisly things in jars, two complete skeletons of monstrous creatures, a coffin, and a handcart.

The jars contain various preserved specimens waiting to be shipped, including a preserved drow head, a pickled pair of hill giant eyes, the half-changed head and spine of a wererat, and a trio of chuul tentacles. The skeletons are both owlbeats, while the coffin holds the body (preserved with *gentle repose*) of a recently slain traveler from Tamrivena named Jakob Terrell who Grine poisoned and is sending to a buyer for dissection. A narrow corridor to the east ends at a locked iron grille (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 25). Vorkstag has the key to the lock, or it can be picked with a DC 25 Disable Device check. Forty yards beyond the grille, the tunnel joins the local sewer, which Vorkstag and Grine use to move cadavers and merchandise through the city unseen.

Treasure: A ledger sits in the handcart, listing the objects in the room, their buyers, and delivery



Snapjaw Homunculus

Carrion Crown

destinations. All of them are destined for scholars in Caliphaz and have commanded high prices. A *wand of gentle repose* (28 charges) rests on top of the ledger.

E13. CADAVER POOL (CR 4)

The floor of this large chamber is hidden beneath the murky water filling the room to just below the bottom of the door. Dozens of pale cadavers silently float in the ice-cold waters, bumping into each other or against the damp walls. The air is still and quiet, broken only by the sound of water lapping against stone walls.

An iron door (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28) stands at the bottom of the stairs leading to this room. A 10-foot-long gaff hangs on the wall beside the door, used to hook bodies and drag them to the door. In all, 36 cadavers float in the water, all of them preserved with *gentle repose*.

The water in the room is only 4 feet deep. Most Medium-sized creatures can wade through the water without making a Swim check, but the entire room counts as difficult terrain. Small creatures or those shorter than 5 feet tall must make DC 10 Swim checks to move through the room.

Creatures: Two zombies that were created through alchemical processes rather than necromancy inhabit this room. Known as chymickal zombies, these two monks retain the intelligence, skills, and abilities they possessed in life, but require regular injections of a rare alchemical extract to preserve their brains in working order. In exchange for the zombies' help in guarding the chymic works, Vorkstag and Grine supply them with weekly doses of this extract to stave off the natural decay of their brains.

When the PCs open the door, the two zombies hide themselves among the floating bodies using Stealth. They wait until most of the PCs have entered the water before revealing themselves. They attack anyone other than Vorkstag or Grine who enter the room.

CHYMICKAL ZOMBIES (2)

CR 2

XP 600 each

Variant human juju zombie monk 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 291)

LE Medium undead

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

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +2 Wis, +3 natural)

hp 15 each (2d8+3)

Fort +2, **Ref** +6, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, evasion; **DR** 5/magic and slashing; **Immune** cold, electricity, *magic missile*, undead traits; **Resist** fire 10

Weaknesses alchemical dependence

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +5 (1d6+6) or

flurry of blows +4/+4 (1d6+4)

Special Attacks flurry of blows, stunning fist (2/day, DC 13)

TACTICS

During Combat The zombies use their Nimble Moves and Acrobatic Steps feats to move without hindrance through the room. They attack with flurries of blows, and use stunning fist to stun opponents and drag them beneath the water to drown.

Morale If reduced to 5 hit points or fewer, the zombies try to flee and warn Vorkstag and Grine.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 20

Feats Acrobatic Steps, Combat Reflexes, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative^B, Improved Unarmed Strike, Nimble Moves, Stunning Fist, Toughness^B

Skills Acrobatics +8, Climb +16, Escape Artist +8, Perception +7, Stealth +8, Swim +8

Languages Common

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Alchemical Dependence (Su) Chymickal zombies are dependent on an alchemical elixir to keep their brains preserved and functioning. A chymickal zombie must inject itself with this elixir at least once per week. Failure to do so results in the loss of 1d4 points of Intelligence per week. This Intelligence loss is permanent and cannot be restored, but further Intelligence loss can be prevented with a new injection of the elixir. Once the chymickal zombie's Intelligence reaches 0, it loses all of its chymickal zombie abilities and becomes a normal zombie in all ways.

Development: The zombies only work for Vorkstag and Grine out of necessity, not from any sense of duty or loyalty. If shown proof of Vorkstag and Grine's demise, the zombies immediately break off their attacks and attempt to negotiate with the PCs for the rest of the alchemical extract they need to preserve their current forms.

THE TRIAL OF THE BEAST

The Trial of the Beast is presented as a series of scenes and events. While the course of events for each day of the trial is detailed, the PCs take no direct part in the general running of the trial. Their role is to investigate the Beast's crimes for Barrister Kaple, and if necessary, present any new evidence they find at the trial. The trial itself can be as simple or as detailed as you wish. If you and your players enjoy acting and roleplaying and are interested in a more detailed trial, feel free to play out the trial as an elaborate courtroom drama, full of witness testimonies, impassioned speeches, and probing cross-examination.

However, the adventure assumes that the trial serves as more of a background for the PCs' investigations in and around Lepidstadt. At night, the PCs can investigate

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

the scene of the crime to be presented the following day. Their role in court the next day is to present new evidence, represented by skill checks, as detailed below. How much evidence the PCs find and how well they present it to the court determines the Beast's guilt or innocence at the end of the trial.

The trial proceeds as follows. The first day concerns the killing of the villagers of Morast. The second day presents evidence for the deaths of the children of Hergstag. On the night of the second day, a mob of townfolk decides to take justice into its own hands and assaults the courthouse, attempting to get to the Beast and lynch it. The third and final day of the trial involves the burning down of Sanctuary and the deaths of the doctor and his patients within, followed by the final verdict.

PRESENTING EVIDENCE

If the PCs have evidence to present, they may do so, likely after consultation with Gustav Kaple so they can agree on what questions he will ask based on their evidence. The trial process is steeped in the history and traditions of Ustalav, however, and any new evidence must be submitted to the Clerk of the Court before 10 A.M. of the day it is to be brought before the court. Extraordinary evidence (such as any findings in the chymic works) may also be submitted for consideration and inserted into the proceedings (giving the PCs chances to bring new evidence into the trial), following the same restrictions.

Once evidence has been submitted, the PCs are kept in the Defense Chamber (area A21) until called to the stand, where they are questioned and subsequently dismissed. While multiple PCs can be called to the stand, only one PC can present each piece of evidence. The trial works as a series of DC 20 Diplomacy checks made by the PC presenting the evidence to the court in response to Kaple's questions and the prosecution's cross-examination. The Diplomacy checks are modified by the quality of the evidence. A tenuous piece of information may offer no bonus on the check, whereas presenting Vorkstag's Cabinet of Skins and Faces grants a +20 bonus on the check (generally an automatic success). The PCs must have a piece of evidence to make a Diplomacy check. Only one PC can make the check for a specific piece of evidence, and only one check can be made for each piece of evidence presented. If a player roleplays an impassioned plea about the evidence presented or adds colorful descriptions about how it was found and the perils encountered in doing so, he gains an additional +2 bonus on the check, at the GM's discretion. If the PCs succeed on at least 12 Diplomacy checks during the course of the trial, the Beast is found innocent. If not, the Beast is declared guilty. For more information on the verdict, see page 43.

While all notable clues are addressed in the sections below, the PCs may uncover unexpected clues or take

actions not listed below. If this is the case, use your best judgment and the rules above to incorporate these extra clues or actions into the trial.

Gustav Kaple cautions the PCs about any attempts to deceive the court through the use of subterfuge or spells, which are forbidden in the courtroom (see page 39). Kaple never knowingly takes part in any such deception, and he refuses to cooperate if he becomes aware of such trickery.

MEMBERS OF THE COURT

Notable people present in the court during the trial of the Beast are outlined below.

The Three Justices: The Justices are three judges who preside over the trial and decide the verdict. The decision need not be unanimous—a majority verdict is acceptable. They make imposing figures, dressed in voluminous black robes with starched ruffs, and wearing enormous powdered wigs that tower over their heads. The Justices for this trial are Chief Justice Khard, Justice Aldaar, and Justice Daramid.

Chief Justice Ambrose Khard (N male human aristocrat 8): A dour man in his eighties, Chief Justice Khard speaks with a deep, commanding voice and suffers no nonsense in his court. The Chief Justice carries the court gavel—a mallet of black ebony the Justice uses to keep order—and wears a huge cartwheel ruff to make him look even more imposing. He has the power to have people removed from court, discount evidence, and issue punishments (up to hanging) for lying to the court. Any levity in the court is punished by a fine (up to 1,000 gp) or overnight imprisonment for those who take his court too lightly.

Judge Kasp Aldaar (LE male human aristocrat 2/fighter 4): Judge Aldaar is a figure of terror for criminals on trial. He is a hard-liner in the extreme, and his merciless justice is feared throughout Ustalav. A former military general, Aldaar is infamous for his impalement of four score deserters under his command who fled a battle.

Judge Embreth Daramid (NG female human aristocrat 3/expert 4): Judge Daramid is a magistrate of Lepidstadt and a member of the Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye. Judge Daramid is already known to the PCs (see page 12).

The Holy Sister of Justice (N female human cleric of Pharasma 3): This gray-robed priestess is present to ensure that no magic is used at the trial unless requested or approved by the justices. Unless otherwise instructed, the Holy Sister watches for unauthorized spellcasting and constantly scans the room with *detect magic*, recasting the spell as necessary. The Holy Sister also has *comprehend languages* and *zone of truth* spells prepared should the court require them.

The Herald of the Court (N male human warrior 7): Clad in black half-plate armor with a full-face visor, the Herald keeps his identity secret. The Herald calls out official announcements with the striking of a great gong, calls witnesses, and keeps order in the court. He also acts as

Carion Crown



the justices' protector, and has a ceremonial masterwork greatsword at hand at all times.

The Clerks: Five elderly, pale, and bookish clerks with ink-stained fingers legally accept and record new evidence for the trial, document the proceedings, and ensure procedure is followed to the letter. They tend to speak in legal jargon, which in essence means that whenever they say anything, they use 10 times as many words as necessary.

The Prosecution: The appointed prosecutor for the Palatinate of Vieland is **Otto Heiger** (N male human aristocrat 2/expert 4). Although well educated and intelligent, Otto is not immune to the bigotry of Lepidstadt and believes the Beast is guilty. Together with his trio of legal advisers, he aims to see the Beast burn, and fights tooth and nail to prove his case.

The Defense: Barrister Gustav Kaple (see page 15) has been appointed as the Beast's defender. Gustav believes the Beast is guilty as well, but he feels honor-bound to give the creature the fairest trial possible. Unfortunately, when standing in front of the full courtroom, Gustav's nervous stutter makes his speeches almost unintelligible.

The Accused: The Beast of Lepidstadt (see page 16) stands on trial for three specific crimes against the people of Vieland, but it is common knowledge that these offenses are just representative of the many crimes attributed to the Beast over the past 20 years.

In addition to the notables listed above, members of the public are permitted to watch the proceedings. The public gallery overlooking the courtroom (area A22) is packed with spectators during every day of the trial. Made up of locals of various backgrounds and skills, the crowd wants to see the Beast burn for its "crimes," and bays for the Beast's blood, cheering and clapping at everything that affirms the Beast's guilt, and jeering and booing any evidence that alleges its innocence. Three nervous courthouse guards (see page 14) are posted in the courtroom to keep the crowd in order and ensure the Beast does not escape.

THE TRIAL BEGINS

The following sections provide a timeline of each day of the trial for the GM's reference. For the most part, these details can be glossed over, and you can simply have the

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

PCs make the required Diplomacy checks to present evidence in between their investigations, but they are provided for GMs who want a more detailed description of events. Assume that the trial lasts at least 4 hours each day, adding time for any elaboration of evidence accordingly.

Following each day's timeline is a list of evidence the PCs can present, based on the clues they might have found and the deductions they made while investigating the crime scenes. Each clue provides a bonus to the PCs' Diplomacy check for that piece of evidence, followed by the XP award gained by the PCs for a successful check. If the PCs fail a Diplomacy check, they get no additional experience points.

Regardless of the evidence presented (even convincing evidence in favor of the Beast's innocence, such as confessions from Vorkstag and Grine), the trial runs as follows, as all evidence against the Beast must be presented in an orderly fashion to satisfy the public that the trial was thorough. For the Beast to be safe and for justice to be done, the trial must run its course.

DAY ONE: MORAST

A significant crowd gathers around the Punishing Man at dawn, and a carnival atmosphere engulfs the courthouse. The clerks arrive early to prepare the courtroom and chambers. Other members of the court arrive as the time approaches 10:00 A.M. The three justices arrive in black coaches with several guards in attendance.

10:00 A.M.: The Trial of the Beast begins. A trio of guards leads the Beast into the court and shackles it to the large iron chair in the center of the courtroom to the jeers of the crowd.

10:10 A.M.: Opening of the Trial. Chief Justice Ambrose Khard commences proceedings by laying out the rules of the court in a lengthy speech, interspersed with gong-strikes by the Herald. Khard concludes his speech by announcing that the good people of Lepidstadt have suffered many acts of terror and barbarity at the hands of the Beast of Lepidstadt for many years, and that while the Beast is doubtless responsible for numerous murders, the prosecution will focus on three recent cases to prove the Beast's guilt during this trial.

10:30 A.M.: Opening Statements. Prosecutor Otto Heiger outlines his case. He alleges that the Beast is responsible for the murder of 10 people in the village of Morast a year ago, in addition to two other horrendous crimes that will be described as the trial continues. Barrister Gustav Kaple then makes his case for the Beast's innocence, a half-hearted attempt full of stutters and awkward pauses, all the while being jeered and booed by the baying mob in the gallery.

11:00 A.M.: Witnesses for the Prosecution. Otto first brings three locals from Morast, two young women and a man, to the stand. The trio describes events as they saw

SPELLS AND OTHER MAGIC IN COURT

The use of magic is forbidden in the court, whether in the form of spells or magic items. Most courts (including this one) retain a cleric of Abadar or Pharasma to ensure the sanctity of the court with repeated castings of *detect magic*. While magic such as *discern lies*, *zone of truth*, and *charm person* is available to the court, these spells are not normally used in court except under exceptional circumstances. Lepidstadt, and the Palatinate of Vieland as a whole, prides itself on its egalitarianism and feels such means of coercion and divination have no place in a fair trial.

However, the PCs may wish to use spells such as *speak with dead* to present first-hand evidence from the victims of the alleged crimes. In such extraordinary cases, the PCs may petition the court for permission to use such magic with a DC 20 Diplomacy check. Remember that if *speak with dead* has already been cast on a corpse in the past week, the spell automatically fails. If the PCs used the spell to converse with victims during their investigations, they will have to present the evidence of what those victims said themselves.

Should the PCs be discovered attempting to pervert the court's justice through spellcasting or any other tricks, any evidence presented for that day's session is summarily dismissed and any Diplomacy checks made for those pieces of evidence are considered to have failed. In addition, a fine of 1,000 gp is levied on the offending PC. If this happens more than once, the PC is fined 2,500 gp and barred from court for a year and a day.

them happen—that over a series of nights, the Beast came to the village and took people away; that a trap was finally laid for the Beast; that the Beast was driven into the swamp, and, they assumed, killed. Otto then calls the village elder, Lazne, who led the mob that drove the Beast off. He confirms the events related by the other three villagers.

12:30 P.M.: Witnesses for the Defense. Gustav calls the PCs to present any evidence they found in Morast.

2:00 P.M.: Court Recess. Chief Justice Khard brings the first day of the trial to a conclusion. As the Beast is led away, emphasize the baying crowd, who bring their hatred to bear on anyone defending the Beast. At present, such abuse is merely vocal. After the trial, Gustav Kaple is available to meet with the PCs in the Defense Chamber. If they have not yet done so, he suggests the PCs investigate the scene of the crime in Hergstag before tomorrow's trial.

Carion Crown

EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE

If the PCs find additional clues in Vorkstag and Grine's Chymic Works, they can introduce them as evidence into the trial on any day, provided they follow the same procedure as for other evidence. The evidence, bonus on Diplomacy checks, and XP award for each of these clues are listed below.

- Tracing the surgeon's tools found in Morast to Vorkstag (+0 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Displaying the Shambling Man skin (+15 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Displaying Vorkstag's blood caiman bite scar (+10 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Presenting Vorkstag's Cabinet of Skins and Faces (+20 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Getting Vorkstag to confess (either in person, via *Speak with Dead*, or even by having a PC take the stand to report his confession) (+20 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Getting Grine to confess (either in person, via *Speak with Dead*, or even by having a PC take the stand to report his confession) (+20 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).

Evidence: Based on their investigations in Morast, the PCs may wish to present the following as evidence to the court.

- Six of the graves in Morast's boneyard have been robbed (+0 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- The Beast can see in the dark, so it does not require an extract of *Darkvision* (+5 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Although the Beast was clearly seen to be bitten by a blood caiman, it has no scars from such an attack. (+10 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Displaying the removed face of the poacher Nan Klebem (+0 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).

DAY TWO: HERGSTAG

If anything, the crowd is larger today, and is alive with talk of yesterday's events. The clerks arrive early to prepare the courtroom, and as the time approaches 10:00 A.M., the other members of the court arrive. Today's events whip the crowd into a frenzy. They are angered at the deaths of the children, and are even louder than yesterday. Be sure to emphasize the crowd's feelings as the day progresses.

10:00 A.M.: The Trial of the Beast resumes. Chief Justice Khard asks the prosecution to outline the details of the alleged events in Hergstag.

10:30 A.M.: Witnesses for the Prosecution. The prosecution describes the events that transpired in Hergstag 7 months

ago, alleging that the Beast slew six children and, when caught, was driven from the village. Otto calls three former residents of Hergstag, the sisters Garrow, Starle, and Flicht, to give their eyewitness testimony of events in the village.

12:30 P.M.: Witnesses for the Defense. Gustav calls the PCs to present any evidence they found in Hergstag.

2:00 P.M.: Court Recess. After the trial, Gustav suggests that the PCs investigate Sanctuary before tomorrow's trial if they have not yet done so.

Evidence: Based on their investigations in Hergstag, the PCs can present the following as evidence to the court.

- Raising the question of why the Beast brought Ellsa's body back and not the others (+0 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Making the Beast cry by mentioning Ellsa's name and demonstrating that he is not laughing (+15 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Pointing out that Karin died 2 days after the Beast supposedly fled and was in her bed at the time (+20 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Pointing out that Karin's bedroom window was not forced (+0 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Observing that the wall outside Karin's bedroom is almost impossible to climb (+0 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Recovering the bodies of the four children from Brother Swarm's lair (+10 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).
- Using *Speak with Dead* on any of the children's bodies (or reporting the results of such) to learn the truth about events in Hergstag (+10 on Diplomacy check or +20 if the PCs speak with Ellsa; 1,200 XP). If the PCs use *Speak with Dead* on the slain children, however, the crowd views this as a desecration of the bodies (unless Ellsa testifies as to the Beast's innocence). This outrage manifests in the mob that attacks the courthouse later that night (see below).

Development: As day two of the trial progresses, the crowd grows more and more angry. At the end of this day's trial, allow the PCs to make a DC 20 Sense Motive check to notice the growing discontent of the crowd, and recognize that the mob might very well decide to try and take justice into their own hands. Most of the justices and even Acting Sergeant Dun refuse to recognize any possible danger or take action, but if the PCs bring their suspicions to either Judge Daramid or Gustav, they ask the PCs to stay at the courthouse that night to protect the Beast in case the mob does attack.

DAY TWO (NIGHT): MOB JUSTICE (CR VARIES)

On the second night of the trial, a local mob decides that the Beast is guilty and that there is no need for any more trial. Fired up on anger and strong cider, the mob gathers torches and other equipment, and begins marching toward the courthouse to see justice done and to burn the Beast alive in the Punishing Man. In the minds of the

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

mob, anyone who gets in their way is no better than the Beast itself, and deserves to burn too.

This encounter should be run sometime during the night, when the PCs have returned from investigating another crime scene or are otherwise present in the city. If they are not staying at the courthouse, an ally or other contact (perhaps one of the Crooked Kin) can inform them of the gathering mob and urge the PCs to intervene. Alternatively, if the PCs are out of town, or recovering from other battles, this can be an optional encounter—it's not strictly necessary for the mob to attack the courthouse, but the events of this night can have an effect on the trial's final verdict.

Creatures: The size of the mob depends largely upon the PCs' actions within the city and the friends and enemies they have made. Rational people, such as the Crooked Kin, may spread word of the PCs' good deeds, just as enemies might spread bad rumors. In particular, Vorkstag and Grine are well versed at spreading misinformation, and the mere fact of anyone defending the Beast (which might lead to discovery of their own dark deeds) demands a response from the body snatchers. The default size of the mob is 50 townsfolk and 5 ringleaders, modified as shown in the table on page 43.

The angry mob assaults the courthouse in three waves, but takes approximately 5 minutes to organize and get up the courage to actually attack the courthouse. During this time, the PCs may attempt to disperse the mob before it attacks (as described in Dealing with the Mob below), but any hostile action on the PCs' part (such as attacking any members of the mob) causes the mob to immediately begin its first assault. If the mob manages to get inside the courthouse and get to the Beast, the members try to overpower it, grappling as a group (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 201), and take it to the Punishing Man. In addition to the weapons members are carrying, the mob also possesses four 20-foot-long ladders, four portable rams, 30 feet of rope, and a grappling hook.

Assault 1: Most of the mob chants, calling for the guards inside the courthouse to hand over the Beast to the mob's justice. Meanwhile, 10 townsfolk move in and attempt to break into the jail at the main entrance (area A1) with portable rams. The ringleaders move into firing positions from cover and attack any of the courthouse's occupants (including the PCs) with their crossbows. This attack is repelled when five members of the group attacking the door are overpowered or dispersed. The second attack occurs 1d4 rounds later.

Assault 2: Still covered by the ringleaders with their crossbows, the main mob continues to chant, but begins to walk around the courthouse. At the same time, 10 townsfolk try to break into the public entrance (area A8) with portable rams while 10 more townsfolk rush up with ladders and attempt to climb onto the balcony (area

A15). This attack is repelled when at least five members of each group assaulting the courthouse are overpowered or dispersed. The final assault begins 1d6 rounds later.

Assault 3: For the final attack, those armed with crossbows move closer to the courthouse, firing at anyone they can see in the jail, while the rest of the mob makes a half-hearted attempt to burn down the courthouse. The townsfolk throw torches into the building, while ringleaders hurl vials of alchemist's fire through the windows. These attacks have little effect on the stone walls of the courthouse, but if the PCs have had an easy time repelling the mob so far, you can use the simplified rules in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #43 to add the threat of fire spreading through the courthouse. These attacks continue until the mob is dispersed, or until the local militia finally arrives (see Development below).

Dealing with the Mob: The angry mob gives you the chance to voice the locals' fury at the Beast. How the PCs respond to the mob's attacks is up to them, but it should be made clear to the players that the mob is (mostly) made up of ill-armed townspeople, and a heavy offensive response (such as a few well-aimed *fireballs*) could quickly turn this into a massacre.

While the courthouse guards quickly lock all the doors leading into the courthouse when the mob first appears, they take no direct action against the mob themselves. PCs who want to command the guards during the attack must succeed on a DC 12 Intimidate check to get them to follow orders in combat.

Besides brute force, the PCs can try other means to disperse the mob. A DC 15 Diplomacy check or DC 20 Intimidate check (opposed by a similar check from any of the mob's ringleaders) convinces 1d4 townsfolk per check to disperse and not return. Ringleaders cannot be dispersed in this way. Spells such as *calm emotions*, *cause fear*, *charm person*, *enthrall*, *hold person*, *sleep*, or the like can also be used—townsfolk affected by spells such as these flee if commanded or disperse when the spell effect wears off. The mob finally disperses when 25% of its total number have been overpowered or removed (killed, knock unconscious, or driven away), or once the militia arrives.

The PCs can also choose to do nothing to defend the courthouse or the Beast. If this is the case, the mob breaks into the courthouse in 10 rounds, and the frightened guards hand the Beast over to mob justice. Before the mob can place the Beast inside the Punishing Man, however, the Beast goes berserk, rampaging through the now-terrified townsfolk. The Beast kills several citizens before the militia arrives on the scene and manages to subdue and imprison the Beast once more.

LEPIDSTADT TOWNSFOLK (50)
XP 200 each

CR 1/2

Carion Crown

Human commoner 2
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +0; **Senses** Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
hp 9 each (2d6+2)
Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** -1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee club +2 (1d6+1) or
torch -3 (1d3+1 plus 1 fire)
Ranged stone -3 (1d2+1)

TACTICS

Morale A townspeople flees as soon as he or she takes any damage.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 11, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 10
Base Atk +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 12
Feats Animal Affinity, Skill Focus (Profession [any])
Skills Climb +6, Handle Animal +7, Knowledge (local) +1,
Perception +3, Profession (any) +7, Ride +2
Languages Common
Gear club, stones, torches (3)

RINGLEADERS (5)

CR 2

XP 600 each

Human expert 2/warrior 2
CN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +1 Dex)
hp 20 each (4 HD; 2d8+2d10)
Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee club +5 (1d6+2) or
torch +0 (1d3+2 plus 1 fire)
Ranged heavy crossbow +4 (1d10/19-20)

TACTICS

Morale Ringleaders flee if reduced to 5 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 11, **Int** 11, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12
Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 16
Feats Iron Will, Persuasive, Throw Anything
Skills Climb +8, Diplomacy +10, Disable Device +5,
Intimidate +10, Knowledge (local) +7, Profession (any) +7
Languages Common
Combat Gear alchemist's fire (2); **Other Gear** studded leather,
club, heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, jug of cider, torches (6)

Development: It takes a suspiciously long time for the beleaguered defenders of the courthouse to get help. Three minutes after the mob begins its final assault, 40

members of the Lepidstadt militia (N human warrior 1), led by a sergeant-at-arms (LN female human fighter 5), finally arrive at the courthouse. This is because senior watch officers are not only convinced that the Beast is guilty, but are also angry that outsiders have come into town to defend the Beast's side. The watch captain therefore deliberately delays intervention until the last possible moment, hoping to rid the city of trouble. If the mob somehow manages to set the courthouse on fire, the militia arrives sooner, however, as they are unwilling to let the mob endanger the city as a whole. Regardless of when the militia arrives, they quickly restore order and disperse the mob. If the PCs have captured any of the perpetrators, the militia takes them into custody, but they make no additional arrests.

How the PCs handle the mob attack has a direct effect on their success at the trial. While no one is going to blame the PCs for defending themselves, neither will significant loss of life or destruction of property be overlooked. If the PCs callously massacred the mob (if more than 50% of the total number are killed), they are arrested by well-armed militiamen and thrown into jail. The Order of the Palatine Eye (on the secret orders of Judge Daramid) bails the PCs out the next morning before the trial, but the PCs will now need 18 successful Diplomacy checks during the trial to gain an innocent verdict for the Beast. If the PCs were not at the courthouse, if they did nothing to defend the Beast and the courthouse, or if they allowed the courthouse to catch fire, they will need to make 15 successful Diplomacy checks, as the court (somewhat irrationally, perhaps) blames the Beast itself for what transpired. If the PCs successfully defended the courthouse and the Beast without a significant loss of life (fewer than five deaths), their chance of success is unchanged (12 successes). If the PCs managed to repel the attacks and disperse the mob without killing a single townspeople, they need make only 10 successful Diplomacy checks during the trial. Regardless of the outcome of events, however, the trial continues as scheduled the next day.

XP Awards: How many experience points the PCs earn for defending the courthouse depends upon how they conduct themselves against the mob. Award the normal XP for defeating the ringleaders, though these awards should be halved if the ringleaders are killed. The PCs gain no experience for defeating or killing townsfolk. If the PCs dispersed the mob on their own before the militia arrived, award them an additional 1,200 XP. If the PCs managed to disperse the mob without killing a single townsfolk or ringleader, award them an additional 2,400 XP instead. These awards are for primarily good or neutral characters—a predominantly evil party might get full XP for violently repelling and destroying the mob after the first attack instead.

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

LEPIDSTADT MOB SIZE

PCs' Actions	Mob Size Modifier
PCs befriended the Crooked Kin	-10 townsfolk/-1 ringleader
Vorkstag has yet to be unmasked	+20 townsfolk/+2 ringleaders
PCs used <i>Speak with Dead</i> on the children of Hergstag	+30 townsfolk/+3 ringleaders
PCs used <i>Speak with Dead</i> on Ellsa to prove the Beast did not kill the children of Hergstag	-30 townsfolk/-3 ringleaders (cancels out penalty for using <i>Speak with Dead</i> in the first place)
PCs recovered the bodies of the dead children	-10 townsfolk/-1 ringleader

DAY THREE: SANCTUARY AND THE FINAL VERDICT

After the events of the previous night, the crowd still seems angry, but members are allowed access to the trial even if PCs try to prevent it. The atmosphere on this final day is frenzied, with the locals determined to see the Beast burn. The clerks arrive early, with other members of the court arriving as the time approaches 10:00 A.M.

10:00 A.M.: The final day of the Trial of the Beast begins. Chief Justice Khard reminds the crowd of the penalties of violence, and tells them that he will clear the entire court if they do not behave. He also warns them that mobs do not rule Lepidstadt, and that should anyone threaten violence to any of the defense, he will have the person whipped out of town or hanged. He then requests the prosecution to describe the alleged events at Sanctuary.

10:30 A.M.: Witnesses for the Prosecution. The prosecution details the arson attack on the hospital of Sanctuary on Karb Isle 4 months ago. Otto alleges that the Beast set fire to the building, murdering Doctor Brada and his patients in the process, and states that only Brada's loyal assistant Karl survived. Otto calls Karl to the stand to give his evidence.

12:30 P.M.: Witnesses for the Defense. Gustav calls the PCs to present any evidence they found at Sanctuary.

2:30 P.M.: Closing Statements. The prosecution asserts that the Beast is guilty of the murders in Morast, Hergstag, and Sanctuary. Otto claims that the Beast is a danger to society, and is a monster that should be destroyed. He recommends punishment in accordance with traditional law—execution by burning in the Punishing Man. Assuming the PCs presented evidence for the Beast's innocence (and made at least some of the required Diplomacy checks), Gustav asserts that the prosecution's evidence is not enough to prove the Beast guilty of any of the crimes in Morast, Hergstag, or Sanctuary. He recommends the Beast be freed immediately.

3:00 P.M.: Close of the Trial. When both prosecution and defense have made their closing statements, Chief Justice Khard announces that the trial is over, and he and the other justices depart to deliberate.

Evidence: Based on their investigations at Sanctuary, the PCs may wish to present the following as evidence to the court.

Getting Karl to admit that Vorkstag and Grine were occasional visitors to Sanctuary (+5 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).

Describing the Shambling Man skin from Vorkstag's Cabinet of Skins and Faces to Karl (+20 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).

Establishing that Brada knew Vorkstag and Grine, either through his papers or the bleach vial (+10 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).

Using *Speak with Dead* on the head of Doctor Brada (or reporting the results of such) to learn the truth of what happened at Sanctuary (+20 on Diplomacy check; 1,200 XP).

THE VERDICT

An hour after the justices leave to deliberate, they return looking grim. The Herald calls for order, and the crowd immediately hushes. Chief Justice Khard stands and announces the verdict. If the PCs did not achieve enough successes during the trial, the verdict is guilty. Read or paraphrase the following text.

"We have deliberated upon the evidence we have heard and are shocked by it. It is our verdict that the Beast of Lepidstadt is guilty of multiple counts of murder. The Beast shall be taken to the Punishing Man at dawn tomorrow, where it shall be burned to death, and may Pharama have mercy upon its soul, if it has such a thing."

If the PCs achieved enough successes during the trial, the verdict is innocent. Read or paraphrase the following.

"We have heard the evidence presented before us, and thank Pharama that we did so, for without this trial there would have been a most terrible miscarriage of justice. There are many cruelties in the world, but to lie and blame another for one's crimes is the most terrible of sins. We have asked ourselves a question—who is the monster here? Is it this creature before us, with its broken body and terrible form, or is it we, the people of Lepidstadt, with our bigotry and lies? The Beast is innocent!"

Carrion Crown

USING THE HARROW DECK

If the Beast is found innocent because of the evidence the PCs presented, award each player a free draw from the Harrow deck, as outlined in the *Carrion Crown Player's Guide*.

If you are using the optional system presented in the *Carrion Crown Player's Guide*, the entire party receives The Hidden Truth card instead. This specific card can be played to give the PCs an automatic success on any one Diplomacy check to gather information or Knowledge check (in effect, they get the maximum result for such a check). The Hidden Truth card can only be used once, and the entire party must agree to use the card.



If the Beast is found guilty, the crowd bays and cheers, rushing out into the streets to spread the news. Within moments, church bells across Lepidstadt begin ringing in celebration. If it's found innocent, the crowd screams its anger at the verdict, and the guards must draw weapons to keep them at bay. Within minutes, a mob forms outside the courthouse, chanting, "Burn the Beast! Burn the Beast!"

AFTERMATH OF THE TRIAL

If the Beast is declared guilty, it is led back to its cell sobbing. Before it is dragged away, it looks pleadingly at the PCs and roars, "Help me! Go to Caromarc. He can save me! He can prove I didn't do it!" ADC 15 Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility) check can identify "Caromarc" as the former count of Vieland, or his ancestral castle north of Lepidstadt, but not its connection to the Beast. Later that night, the Beast goes berserk, finally breaking loose and smashing its way into a neighboring sewer tunnel. Following the sewers, it escapes into the swamp north of the city.

If the Beast is found innocent, it thanks the PCs for their help, calling them its "best friends in all the world." The Beast confides that it wants nothing more than to go see its "father," who lives at Schloss Caromarc. The Beast tells the PCs that "Father doesn't usually like visitors," but invites them to visit it there in a few days. The guards escort the Beast through the baying crowds to the edge of the city, and release it into the Dippelmere Swamp.

Regardless of the outcome of the trial (provided the PCs did a reasonable job of defending the Beast), Judge Daramid

requests that the PCs meet her the next morning to receive their payment. When the PCs arrive at Judge Daramid's house, she gives them their promised reward, telling them they have earned it, as the Beast was able to receive a fair trial. But she asks them to complete one more task for her. If the Beast was found guilty, Judge Daramid informs the PCs of the Beast's escape the previous night. The guilty verdict notwithstanding, Daramid believes that the PCs found enough evidence to put the creature's guilt into question, at least in her mind. But she is curious about the Beast's final statement, and asks the PCs to find out why it said what it did, and what it meant. If the PCs have not already made the connection to Schloss Caromarc themselves, Daramid asks the PCs to go to Schloss Caromarc and try to shed some light on the Beast and its alleged crimes. Daramid also tells the PC that the townsfolk are forming a mob to recapture the Beast, and suggests that the PCs hurry to avoid further unnecessary violence.

If the Beast was declared innocent and released, Judge Daramid still asks the PCs to go to Schloss Caromarc in search of the Beast and its creator. She is interested in the Beast's history, and thinks the Beast might still be dangerous. If the PCs can find its creator, perhaps they can learn how to control the Beast, or convince its creator to keep a tighter rein on the creature. But Daramid has also heard rumors that the townsfolk are planning to track down the Beast and overturn the court's verdict on their own. If the PCs want to protect the creature, they should hurry.

On their way back from Judge Daramid's house, the PCs notice a large number of people gathering on the streets with torches and various weapons and farm tools. If asked, the townsfolk tell of their plan to go into the swamp, find the Beast, and "give it the justice it deserves, once and for all." Whether the Beast is guilty or innocent, the PCs must get to Schloss Caromarc before the mob does.

Story Award: If the Beast was found innocent, award the PCs 3,200 XP.

PART THREE: RESCUE AT SCHLOSS CAROMARC

Schloss Caromarc lies some 24 miles north and east of Lepidstadt in a rocky gorge at the edge of the Dippelmere Swamp. The Beast heads straight through the swamp to get to the castle, but a road also follows the western bank of the Lesser Moutray River, leading directly to Schloss Caromarc. The road is slightly longer, but several trails exist for those traveling the swamp by foot, so it takes the same amount of time to reach the castle, regardless of which route the PCs take.

The Beast stopped by its lair in the swamp to collect its gear, then went to the castle in search of its "father,"

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

but it turned away when it discovered the trolls guarding the gatehouse, and has been wandering through the swamps ever since. The Beast makes a final appearance once the PCs activate the *Bondslave Thrall* (see area L5 for more details).

If the PCs want to find out some details about Schloss Caromarc and its eccentric resident before they leave, they may make Diplomacy checks to gather information, Knowledge (local) checks, or Knowledge (nobility) checks to learn the following information.

DC 10: Schloss Caromarc is the dwelling of Count Alpon Caromarc, the former ruler of Vieland who abdicated his position when the Palatinates threw off the heavy yoke of the aristocracy.

DC 15: An eccentric recluse, Count Caromarc has built a dwelling that both attracts and deters visitors. Known as the Hanging House, Schloss Caromarc lies to the northeast of Dippelmere Swamp, and is actually several buildings built into the walls of a gorge above a waterfall. Although the lower parts of the house are as luxurious as one might find in any city, the further up the gorge one goes, the more treacherous and inhospitable the buildings become.

DC 20: Paranoid about his experiments and discoveries being stolen, the eccentric Count Caromarc has, it is rumored, trapped parts of his castle to prevent theft, and constructed numerous guardian creatures to serve and protect him.

SCHLOSS CAROMARC

The fens give way to a deep, rocky gorge at the northern edge of the swamp, where a peculiar building, or rather group of buildings, clings to steep cliff edges above half a dozen plummeting waterfalls. Beyond a fortified gatehouse, a stone bridge arches gracefully over the raging torrents below. Perched precariously beyond this is a fine, fortified manse and a ruined building that appears to have partially collapsed into the river below. A slender rope bridge, replacing the fallen remnants of a stone bridge, links to a strange tower pierced with beautiful stained glass windows depicting bizarre beasts. A further building teeters to the north of this, but how it is reached is impossible to see from here. Far above, a great tower rises from an isle of stone to the sky, ending in a great steeple topped with a huge lightning conductor.

While it is true that visitors to Schloss Caromarc are usually rare, Alpon Caromarc has had more than his fair share lately. The first group, a trio of eminent engineers from Caliphas, arrived 2 months ago to oversee proposed repairs to the Alchemy Wing (area H) and the destroyed bridge leading to the Living Museum (area J), ruined by Caromarc's recent experiments with boiling alchemist's

fire under pressure. Unfortunately for the engineers, they were still here when the second group of visitors, the Whispering Way, assaulted the castle and put their plan involving the Beast into action.

After securing the Seasage Effigy from the Beast, the Whispering Way sabotaged the castle on their way out, leaving the place an even worse death trap for those entering it than it was when they arrived. After the cultists left, a group of local trolls attempted to raid the castle themselves, but they have only managed to infiltrate the gatehouse so far, as the golem hound Caromarc employs to guard his manse has kept them at bay.

SCHLOSS CAROMARC GENERAL FEATURES

The exterior walls of Schloss Caromarc are constructed of superior masonry. A DC 25 Climb check is required to climb the walls, while a DC 30 Climb check is needed to scale the slippery natural rock walls of the gorge. Inside, unless otherwise noted, walls are of wooden construction, with good wooden doors. All windows are 6 inches wide with leaded glass, unless otherwise stated. Areas F, G, and H are 100 feet above the upper river, while areas I and J are 150 feet above the lower river below the falls. Areas K and L are built 200 feet above the churning waters. Creatures that fall into the water ignore the first 20 feet of a fall but must contend with the roiling waters below (DC 20 Swim checks). Characters that fall into the upper river may also be swept over a waterfall and suffer further damage from the 50-foot fall to the lower river.

GATEHOUSE

Schloss Caromarc's gatehouse is wide enough to contain any carriages Caromarc's visitors might arrive in. Until recently, a pair of homunculi watched the gatehouse and fed information back to Caromarc, but the Whispering Way slew these creatures. A small group of trolls now occupy this area; they hope to break into the castle once they have defeated the golem hound (area G1), an act that is presently beyond them. Although healed, the trolls and their pets bear the ugly scars of their recent battles with the hound.

F1. OUTER GATE (CR 5)

A two-story stone gatehouse leads into the castle, topped with a crenellated tower at each corner. The main gate is closed.

The strong wooden gate is bound with iron and barred from within (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 30).

Creatures: The trolls left two trollhounds on guard outside the gate. Large, troll-like canines with oversized jaws, the trollhounds howl balefully and attack any creature they see other than a troll or goblin.

Carion Crown

TROLLHOUNDS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

N Medium magical beast (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #32 88)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 30 each (4d10+8); regeneration 3 (acid or fire)

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d6+6 plus disease and trip)

Special Attacks disease

TACTICS

During Combat The trollhounds continue attacking any opponents they trip. They do not pursue fleeing foes out of sight of the gatehouse.

Morale The trollhounds fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 13, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 19 (23 vs. trip)

Feats Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +5, Survival +1 (+5 scent tracking); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Survival when tracking by scent

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) A trollhound's saliva is an infectious brew of contagion. Creatures bitten by a trollhound are often afflicted with bloodfire fever.

Bloodfire fever: Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 14; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d3 Str damage, 1d3 Dex damage and target is fatigued; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Development: If the trolls are alerted to the presence of attackers by the trollhounds, those inside the gatehouse (area F2) move to the gatehouse towers above and attack with large thrown rocks, while their leader Gork (area F5) uses his crossbow.

F2. GATEWAY (CR 7)

The gates open on a broad chamber with a vaulted roof. Two large fires burn in the room, and spiral stairways climb up in each corner toward the ceiling. The gate on the far side of the room is barricaded with timber and furniture.

The trolls have barricaded the inner gate (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 23) against the flesh golem hound guarding the manse on the other side of the bridge, and any of Caromarc's other beasts. The barricade is composed of a number of cots, tables, and other furniture previously used by Caromarc's guards, six of whom were posted here. When the Whispering Way arrived, they slew the guards, throwing two of them into the river, and subjecting the other four to a much worse fate (see area K6). A DC 10 Perception check while examining the barricade reveals a stained and ragged gray tunic with blue trim. If repaired in some way (such as with a *mending* spell), this spare guard's uniform will enable the PCs to bypass the golem hound and other guardians of the castle as listed in their descriptions.

Creatures: Two trolls and their three goblin slaves rest inside the gatehouse. The trolls rush to defend the gatehouse if an alert is sounded, heading to the towers to throw rocks. If the PCs break into this room, the trolls engage them, falling back to the terrace beyond the inner gate



Troll and Trollhound

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

(area F3) if reduced to 35 hit points or fewer. The goblins make a lot of noise and throw rubbish at combatants (trolls and PCs alike), but otherwise do not attack, and try to flee at the earliest opportunity if attacked.

GOBLINS (3) CR 1/3

XP 135 each

hp 6 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 156)

TROLLS (2) CR 5

XP 1,600 each

hp 63 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 268)

Ranged rock +1 (1d8+5)

Development: The goblins hate the trolls and are happy to see them killed. If released from their masters, the goblins happily tell of the flesh golem hound at area G1. As they have not been beyond the gatehouse, they have no further information about the rest of the castle. They also impart that a group of humans left the area some time ago (goblins are not so good at counting days). If asked what these people look like, they simply shrug and say that all humans look alike.

In addition, one of the goblins carries a small amulet depicting a gagged skull, which he found in the gatehouse and pocketed. A DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) check identifies the gagged skull as the symbol of the Whispering Way. One of the cultists accidentally dropped the amulet, and this serves as the PCs' first clue that the Whispering Way has been here before them.

Treasure: Hunks of dubious meat (mostly local mountain goat) hang from meat hooks attached to an old staff among piles of timber. The staff is actually a *staff of swarming insects* with 7 charges, though the trolls are totally unaware of its value. The trolls have collected several sacks of plunder, including a pair of bellows, a shovel, a sledge, a battered tankard, several pretty (but valueless) stones, 208 gp, and 345 sp.

F3. INNER GATE AND TERRACE (CR 6)

This broad stone terrace has no rails at its edge. To the north, a stone bridge arches above a waterfall that drops into the river two hundred feet below.

Creatures: A troll and his trollhound stand on the terrace watching the manse for signs of trouble. While the golem hound at area G1 is not tethered, the trolls know it won't attack them unless they attack it first, so the troll posted here makes sure to steer clear of the hound. If attacked, the troll and trollhound fight to the death, as the flesh golem hound blocks their only route of escape.

TROLL CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 63 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 268)

TROLLHOUND CR 3

XP 800

hp 30 (see page 46)

F4. GATEHOUSE TOWERS

Each of these three towers has battlements, providing cover from attackers below. The trolls have piled large, pointed stones in all three towers to throw.

F5. SOUTHWEST GATEHOUSE TOWER (CR 6)

The battlements around this tower provide cover from attackers below. The trolls didn't think to stockpile throwing stones in this tower.

Creature: The trolls' leader Grork loiters in the southwest tower, using a stolen spyglass to watch for intruders. Unfortunately, he is obsessed with the manse and the golem hound and takes a –5 penalty on Perception checks to notice anything approaching from any other direction. Once he becomes aware of intruders, he attacks with his heavy crossbow.

GRORK CR 6

XP 2,400

Advanced troll (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 268, 294)

hp 75

Ranged Large heavy crossbow +5 (2d8/19–20)

Gear Large heavy crossbow with 20 bolts

Treasure: Grork wears the mummified hands of 20 of his victims, and has thrust several needles through his flesh, three of which are actually fancy hatpins ending in tiny rubies, worth 75 gp each. He also carries a magnificent spyglass bound in gold worth 1,000 gp.

THE MANSE

The manse serves as a comfortable residence for Count Caromarc and is luxuriously furnished. Six permanent *unseen servants* are on hand to attend to visitors' needs, though Caromarc finds their inability to cook frustrating. The servants may be encountered in any room of the manse tidying up, but they respond to any simple instructions given to them. Doors within the manse are good and fitted with latches, walls are paneled oak, and rooms have sconces with torches (lit at night by the servants). Once they had imprisoned Caromarc and murdered his few living servants, the Whispering Way ignored the manse for the duration of their visit. They left no guardians or traps behind in this building, and as a result, the manse is a safe place for the PCs to rest while they explore the rest of the castle.

Carion Crown

G1. THE LOW BRIDGE (CR 6)

A slender stone bridge arches gracefully over a roaring waterfall here, linking the gatehouse to a fortified manor house clinging to the cliff on the far side.

The bridge is 10 feet wide and has no guardrail. The arch is sufficiently high to provide cover for creatures on either end of the bridge.

Creature: A flesh golem hound guards the bridge. It has been instructed to stop intruders by initially barking loudly enough to raise the alarm. The hound attacks anyone stepping onto the center of the span, trying to bull rush the intruder off the bridge. But if it sees a guard's uniform (such as the one found in area F2), it ignores trespassers and lets them pass, assuming the visitors are known.

FLESH GOLEM HOUND CR 6
XP 2,400
hp 64 (see page 29)

G2. THE GREAT DOOR (CR 7)

The arched bridge ends at a small cobbled terrace with a curious-looking iron door depicting a scowling sun being devoured by ravenous clouds. To the left, two hundred feet below, a huge waterfall plummets into the depths.

The iron door is locked (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28, Disable Device DC 30) and trapped. A DC 20 Perception check notices a hidden bell pull hanging by the eastern side of the door. The pull sounds the bells in areas G8 and G10, alerting an *unseen servant* that comes to the door and looks out a concealed viewing port. If it sees a guard uniform, or if Caromarc has instructed it to allow visitors in, the *unseen servant* disarms the trap on the door and opens the door. Otherwise, it leaves and ignores the bell pull for an hour.

Trap: The door is trapped, and goes off if the door is opened without bypassing the trap with the switch inside, summoning a Huge air elemental to repel intruders.

GUARDIAN OF AIR TRAP CR 7
XP 3,200
Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** none; **Bypass** switch in area G3
Effect spell effect (*summon monster VI*, summons Huge air elemental for 11 rounds)

G3. GREAT HALL (CR 5)

A huge portrait hangs above an enormous, lit fireplace in this large entry chamber. A set of steep stairs rises to the right.

A small switch next to the door disables the trap on the main entrance (area G2). The stairs lead up to a second-floor landing (areas G11 through G13).

Creature: One of Caromarc's guardians, a strange animated object of metal and flesh, lurks under the stairs. The guardian immediately attacks intruders, but ignores anyone accompanied by someone in a guard's uniform. Although predominantly a thing of metal and wire, this loping construct has some organic parts that seem more for decoration than for a purpose. It takes awkward, hobbling steps and frequently rests itself upon two huge, scythe-like forearms.

THE HOBBLING HOOK-CLAWED APPARATUS CR 5
XP 1,600

Large animated object (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 14)

N Large construct

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** -5

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 8, flat-footed 16 (-1 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 52 (4d10+30)

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** -4

Defensive Abilities hardness 10; **Immune** construct traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +9 (1d8+6)

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

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 8, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 20

SQ construction points (additional attack, metal [iron])

Treasure: The portrait above the fireplace is of Count Caromarc, and shows him as a deeply curious man, surrounded by objects in his museum. PCs making a DC 20 Perception check can see through a painted window behind the figure how the bridge connecting the Alchemy Wing (area H) to the Living Museum (area J) looked before it was blown up a few months ago. A DC 35 Perception check reveals a figure in a mirror behind Caromarc, a four-armed white ape with clearly visible stitching—the flesh golem girallon encountered in area L1. The portrait is worth 500 gp.

G4. LIBRARY

Shelves crammed with books line the walls of this room. A comfortable leather chair sits in the room's center.

A DC 30 Perception check discovers a secret door in the north wall, formed by a bookcase that swings inwards.

Treasure: The books here are all about engineering and grant a +2 bonus on Knowledge (engineering) checks made here. The books are worth 500 gp in total.

TRIAL OF THE BEAST



Carion Crown

G5. SMOKING ROOM

Two plush chairs sit around a small lit fire in this cramped, tobacco-stained room. Numerous tobacco jars stand on a shelf next to a pipe rack filled with strange pipes. A DC 30 Perception check finds a secret door in the north wall.

Treasure: The tobacco jars are filled with various exotic tobacco mixtures, worth 200 gp in total. Among the mundane pipes are a calabash set with six small jets (worth 75 gp), and a long churchwarden with a gold tooth-guard (worth 50 gp).

G6. TROPHY ROOMS

Treasure: These two rooms are crammed with taxidermied animals and stuffed heads. While interesting, the numerous trophies in these rooms are low in value; the entire collection is worth perhaps 300 gp.

G7. BILLIARDS ROOM

Treasure: A billiards table fills up most of this chamber, and a rack of cues on one wall. A brass and gold score checker worth 90 gp hangs by the door.

G8. DINING HALL

The vaulted ceiling of this large room is adorned with gilt. A pair of halberds hang above a huge lit fireplace in the far wall. A great dining table and twelve chairs take up the center of the room.

Guests at Schloss Caromarc are rare, and despite regular dusting, a DC 30 Perception check notices a build-up of dust around the chair legs. A large bell hangs near the fireplace, connected to the bell pull at the main entrance (area G2). Secret doors in the south wall lead to the library (area G4) and smoking room (area G5), and may be found with DC 30 Perception checks. Although the secret door in the west wall is very well made, a DC 15 Perception check locates the door from the slight draft and the sound of water rushing over the falls outside.

Treasure: The two halberds above the fireplace are masterwork. In addition, hooks next to the outside door in the secret corridor hold several coats, a walking cane, and a sealskin cloak worth 120 gp.

G9. STOREROOMS

These four rooms are crammed with items in boxes and on shelves, and the smell of beeswax lingers in the air. Area G9a is a household storeroom containing furniture polish, mops and brooms, torches, and other simple tools for the use of the *unseen servants* in their daily chores. Area G9b is a well-stocked wine cellar, and area G9c is a larder stocked with excellent foodstuffs. Both rooms are linked with

pipes to the waterfalls below, lowering the temperature in these two rooms to better preserve their contents. Area G9d is full of coal for the manor's fireplaces, brought by wagon from Lepidstadt only 2 months ago.

Treasure: Caromarc likes his wine, and has several fine vintages in his cellar. The entire collection is worth 1,200 gp.

G10. KITCHEN

This large kitchen contains a roaring stove, several workbenches, and a spice cabinet. While Count Caromarc occasionally brings in chefs from Lepidstadt to cook for him, he generally cooks his own meals here. A bell hangs above the stove, connected to the main entrance bell pull (area G2).

Treasure: The spice cabinet is of Tian design and crammed with an outstanding collection of spices. In total, the collection is worth 300 gp.

G11. GUEST BEDROOMS

White sheets cover the four-poster bed, wardrobe, and dressing table in these luxurious guest rooms that are rarely used. A locked door (DC 25 Disable Device check to open) in the southern room leads out to a narrow stone balcony (area G11a) with no handrails, which affords a spectacular view over the falls.

G12. ENGINEERS' QUARTERS

Three simple cots are arranged within this chamber. Numerous drawings and books litter a nearby table.

The engineers Caromarc hired to repair the damaged Alchemy Wing (area H) resided here. The drawings on the table are various attempts at plans for rebuilding the bridge between the workshop and museum (area I).

Treasure: The engineering books on the table are technical manuals worth a total of 100 gp. Also on the table are a magnificent jade and gold writing set with several jars of valuable inks worth 150 gp, and a small portable ink jar with a silver clasp worth 20 gp.

G13. MASTER BEDROOM (CR 6)

This neat bedchamber holds a resplendent four-poster bed surrounded by oak furniture.

This is Count Caromarc's bedroom, though it is obvious that no one has slept here in days. The furniture consists of a wardrobe, a dressing table, chest, and a tall dressing mirror. A DC 35 Perception check finds a small hidden cupboard behind the chest.

Trap: The hidden cupboard's door is trapped with a poison arrow, which launches when the door is opened.

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

WYVERN ARROW TRAP

CR 6

XP 2,400

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect Atk +15 ranged (1d6/x3 plus wyvern poison—injury; save Fort DC 17; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d4 Con damage; cure 2 consecutive saves)

Treasure: The wardrobe is crammed with fine men's clothing—10 noble's outfits, six scholar's outfits, and one royal outfit. One of the dressing table's drawers contains a jewelry box holding a silver chain worth 50 gp, a gold snuffbox set with a topaz worth 400 gp, a platinum-handled magnifying glass in a leather case worth 600 gp, and a monocle with a silver chain ending in a diamond pin worth 800 gp. The secret cupboard contains several chests of coins totaling 2,000 gp, and a *figurine of wondrous power* (ivory goats).

THE ALCHEMY WING

Count Caromarc practiced most of his alchemical experiments in this building until an accident blew up the workshop and destroyed the bridge connecting it to the Living Museum (area J).

H1. NARROW WALKWAY

A narrow stone bridge without a handrail lies above the roaring river waters as they are drawn over the edge of the falls.

The bridge, created by a *stone shape* spell, links the manse to the alchemy wing. The bridge is 3 feet wide, and though it looks precarious, it is easy to cross, unless the PCs attempt to do so at full speed, in which case a DC 10 Acrobatics check is required. The bridge ends at a narrow stone terrace with a wooden door.

H2. PRECARIOUS ALCHEMY WORKSHOP (CR 6)

This large workshop is crammed with alchemical equipment, but an explosion of some kind has ripped away the western wall, leaving a large gap in the floor and wall open, now wreathed with scaffolding. It looks as if a stone bridge once connected this building with another on the far side of the gorge, but only a slender rope bridge now hangs between the two.

A few months ago, Count Caromarc began experimenting with boiling alchemist's fire under pressure in an attempt to increase its potency, and the resulting explosion nearly destroyed his workshop. As a temporary measure until

they could rebuild the demolished bridge to the Living Museum, engineers from Caliphas constructed timber scaffolding around the damaged workshop and installed a rope bridge to allow them to cross over the waterfall below. The arrival of the Whispering Way halted their repairs, however, and the cultists imprisoned the engineers in the Drowned Menagerie (area K10).

When the Whispering Way explored this wing, they inspected the iron support beams beneath the workshop and decided to release the trio of rust monsters Caromarc kept as curiosities into the workshop. As a result, the beams are now in danger of collapse.

Although most of the alchemy equipment here is of masterwork construction, a DC 10 Perception check is enough to notice that rust has gotten into nearly everything in the lab, making the equipment effectively useless.

Hazard: The iron beams beneath the workshop have been dangerously rusted by the ravenous rust monsters, but the PCs will only realize this fact if they look beneath the building, in which case they can spot the danger with a DC 5 Perception check. A DC 20 Knowledge (engineering) check reveals that even with the damage, however, the beams are unlikely to collapse unless subjected to strong force or a heavy weight. A Large-sized or bigger creature entering the room has a minimum 10% chance of causing the section of floor beneath it and a further 5-foot-square adjacent section to collapse each round (20% for Huge creatures, 40% for Gargantuan). Likewise, spells that inflict damage in a burst or subject the room to greater than normal stresses (such as *fireball*, *gust of wind*, *sound burst*, and the like) have a 10% chance of causing a collapse. Creatures in a collapsing square must make a DC 15 Reflex save or fall into the water 100 feet below.

Creatures: Three rust monsters remain in the workshop. The creatures have plenty of cover from the alchemical equipment throughout the room, and gain a +5 bonus on Stealth checks to hide among the debris. The monsters immediately attack any new sources of metal (such as armored PCs), but try to flee beneath the building through the gap in the floor if reduced to 10 hit points or fewer.

RUST MONSTERS (3)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 27 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 238)

Treasure: A DC 25 Perception check turns up a *rod of flame extinguishing* under the debris, which unfortunately was of little use when the lab exploded.

I. ROPE BRIDGE (CR 7)

Beyond the scaffolding, a slender rope bridge swings out toward a two-story building with a tower across the gorge.

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The swaying rope bridge requires a DC 15 Acrobatics check to cross safely. Creatures that fail their checks or that are knocked off the bridge may make a DC 15 Reflex save to catch hold of the ropes before falling 150 feet to the waters below.

Trap: The Whispering Way have trapped the bridge with a trap that summons an erinyes as soon as anyone reaches the midpoint of the bridge. The erinyes flies above the gorge and attacks creatures on the bridge with flaming arrows. (Remember that taking damage while balancing on the bridge requires another Acrobatics check to avoid falling.)

TRAPPED BRIDGE

CR 7

XP 3,200

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*alarm*); Reset noneEffect spell effect (*summon monster VI*, summons erinyes for 11 rounds)

THE LIVING MUSEUM

Count Caromarc's private museum is cluttered with thousands of objects, from fossils to the entire skeleton of a sea cow. Every inch of wall space and most of the floor space is given over to boxes, cabinets, display cases, and stuffed or skeletal creatures. The museum smells musty but is resplendently decorated, with stained glass windows depicting various beasts and monsters. The walls are paneled oak, and each room has torches in sconces (lit at night by *unseen servants*).

J1. BROKEN ABUTMENT

One end of the demolished bridge clings to the cliff beneath a large building. A statue of a beautiful nymph stands next to a pair of double doors. Above the doors is a stained glass window depicting a unicorn.

The remains of the bridge on this side are very secure. The doors open easily, but doing so triggers a permanent *alarm* spell that mentally alerts the museum guardian in area J7 below, which stalks through the museum in search of intruders.

J2. LOBBY

This room is crammed with cabinets full of weird, alchemically preserved creatures, including a pair of ice mephit wings, several large spiders, parts of a dissected giant slug, and the digestive tracts and proboscises of three stirges.

Treasure: A DC 30 Perception check discovers three vials that have fallen behind one cabinet near the door. The vials are labeled and each contains 1 dose of violet

venom (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 274) that Caromarc extracted from his fungi in area K5.

J3. THINGS OF THE SEA

The skeleton of a sea cow dominates this room, hung from the ceiling on a set of iron rungs and held together by a steel frames. Numerous jars sit on shelves within the room, containing alchemically preserved octopuses, tubeworms, the head of a skum, a curiously repellent eel-like creature with fangs, and a strange, mermaidlike creature with the upper body of a monkey and the tail of a fish. A DC 16 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the creature as a ningyo. If the PCs enter the room during the day, the ningyo appears quite dead in its jar. If they venture into the room at night, however, the ningyo becomes an animated corpse, clawing and pounding on the glass walls of its jar. The ningyo is trapped within its jar and is little threat to the PCs. If you wish to have your PCs interact with the ningyo, its stats (both living and undead) are presented in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #37's bestiary.

A spiral staircase leads up to the second floor, hidden behind a secret door (DC 20 Perception check to find).

J4. THINGS OF THE LAND

A stuffed bulette faces the door to this room. Cabinets along the walls contain a partially dissected bugbear, a partially transformed doppelganger, and a complete goblin dog, all preserved in alchemical fluids.

J5. BEASTS OF DARK REPUTATION (CR 7)

This room is filled with weird-looking preserved creatures. Two elaborately carved and painted sarcophagi stand against the east and west walls. A pile of chains lies in the center of the floor.

Among the more unsavory creatures on display in this room are the tentacle of a froghemoth, a pickled intellect devourer, and a desiccated darkmantle. A trapdoor opens onto the Hanging Stair below (area J6), and a door in the north wall opens onto the Stretching Way (area J11).

Creatures: The western sarcophagus holds an undead mummy. Caromarc acquired the Osirian relic at great cost, intending to study it to learn how some undead spontaneously come to life and then apply such knowledge to his own researches. The mummy had been securely bound within its sarcophagus by strong chains, but the Whispering Way removed the chains and released the mummy when they left the castle. The mummy waits within the sarcophagus until it is opened, or 1d4 rounds after the mummy hears movement inside the room.

The eastern sarcophagus is not a coffin at all, but rather a mimic in disguise. Another creature acquired by Caromarc for study, the mimic was also freed by the

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

Whispering Way. Trapped inside this room with the mummy, the mimic has been unable to leave or eat since. It remains in disguise until the PCs encounter the mummy, at which point it attacks unsuspecting opponents.

MIMIC **CR 4**

XP 1,200

hp 52 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 205*)

MUMMY **CR 5**

XP 1,600

hp 60 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 210*)

Treasure: The mummy's sarcophagus is of ancient Osirian make and is worth 2,000 gp. In addition, the mummy wears a *ring of the ram* under its wrappings, noticeable with a DC 25 Perception check once the mummy is slain.

J6. THE HANGING STAIR

A spiral iron stair literally hangs above the valley beneath the museum, connecting to a small stone terrace and a wooden door. Although the view is dizzying, the stair and terrace are stable and safe.

J7. THE SECRET CURIOS (CR 7)

Caromarc stores some of his more dangerous, valuable, and outré objects in this basement room. In addition, he also used this room to temporarily store living creatures for his menagerie. Three large crates sit in the room, now empty after the Whispering Way released the creatures contained within them (the rust monsters in area H2, the mimic in area J5, and the vargouilles in area K4).

Hazards: Three large, sealed, opaque black glass jars sit inside the room. The first contains the alchemically preserved head of a sea hag (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 243*), the second contains yellow mold (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook 416*), and the last jar contains hallucinogenic spores from a basidirond fungus (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 28*). Anyone opening one of the jars is exposed to either the hag's horrific appearance, yellow mold, or basidirond spores.

Creatures: The museum's guardian, a faceless flesh golem, resides in this room. If alerted by the *alarm* spell in area J1, the

golem and its helpers slowly and quietly move through the museum looking for intruders. The golem is blind, hunting by scent only and sniffing at the air as it does so. It is assisted by its "eyes," six homunculi that are chained to the golem or flit around its head. Although the golem is mindless, the homunculi were created using the golem's blood, and their telepathic links with the golem allow it to see through their eyes. In combat, the homunculi try to stay out of harm's way, keeping combatants in sight but trying to hide and use cover as they do so. Each homunculus that is slain deals 2d10 points of damage to the golem. If all of the homunculi are slain, the golem is blinded.

FACELESS FLESH GOLEM **CR 7**

XP 3,200

Senses scent

hp 79 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 160*)



Faceless Flesh Golem

Carion Crown

THE GUARDIAN'S EYES (6)

CR —

Homunculus (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 176)
hp 11 each

J8. THINGS OF THE AIR

The secret stairway from area J3 ends in this room. Three dissected, preserved harpies sit in huge bell jars in this room, along with jars containing four stuffed bats, the skeletal front legs and head of a griffon, and the preserved wing of a roc which is slowly losing its feathers. A ladder leads up to a trapdoor in the ceiling.

J9. ATTIC STOREROOM (CR 6)

This large room is crammed with crates and boxes. The cases all contain curios like animal bones, stuffed birds, and more mundane preserved creatures.

Creatures: One of the large chests in the southern portion of the room contains the animated severed heads of two medusas. If the chest is opened, the medusa heads fly out and attack any living thing they see.

SHRIEKING MEDUSA HEADS (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Advanced screaming medusa heads (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #43 83, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294)



Ningyo

NE Small undead

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +5 natural, +1 size)

hp 34 each (4d8+16)

Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee bite +8 (1d4+4 plus petrifying bite)

Special Attacks scream

TACTICS

During Combat On the first round of combat, one of the medusa heads screams while the other bites the closest opponent. They alternate screaming to affect as many foes as possible while trying to turn foes to stone with their petrifying bites.

Morale The medusa heads fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 16, Con —, Int —, Wis 15, Cha 19

Base Atk +3; CMB +6; CMD 19 (can't be tripped)

Feats Flyby Attack^B

Skills Fly +11

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Petrifying Bite (Su) Creatures bitten by a shrieking medusa head must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or turn to stone for 1d4 rounds. Targets immune to poison are immune to this effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Scream (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, a shrieking medusa head can open its jaw and emit a bone-chilling scream. Each creature within 30 feet must make a DC 16 Will save or be shaken for 1d4 rounds. This is a sonic mind-affecting fear effect. Whether or not the save is successful, an affected creature is immune to the same head's scream for 24 hours.

J10. THE HIGH ATTIC (CR 7)

Trap: This high attic room is empty except for a trap the Whispering Way left behind. The trap is triggered when a creature passes through the trap door, conjuring an acid fog that fills both this room and area J8.

ACID FOG TRAP

CR 7

XP 3,200

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*alarm*); Reset noneEffect spell effect (*acid fog*, persists for 11 rounds); multiple targets (all creatures in areas J8 and J10)

J11. THE STRETCHING WAY

The Stretching Way is an exposed, winding, narrow pathway that climbs the bare rock face to the Drowned

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

Menagerie (area **K1**) 50 feet above. A DC 10 Climb check is required to ascend the Stretching Way, as there are no handrails or guide ropes. A failed Climb check results in a fall into the lower river 150 to 200 feet below.

THE DROWNED MENAGERIE

Made up of four interconnected towers, this building stands 200 feet above the falls. Caromarc designed this private zoo to contain and study living creatures, and built iron catwalks above the containment chambers to view his specimens in safety. After they imprisoned Caromarc, the Whispering Way blocked the stairwell to the upper level and destroyed the catwalks to force those who might come looking for Caromarc to move through the actual containment rooms. Diverting a high mountain stream, the cultists also flooded the lower level to make passing through the menagerie even more difficult. The entire lower level is flooded to a depth of 3 feet unless otherwise noted, filled with floating debris. Flooded rooms are considered difficult terrain; Small-sized or smaller creatures must make DC 10 Swim checks to move through the water.

The four containment chambers have ceilings 40 feet high; the iron catwalks originally hung 30 feet above the floors. All of the interior walls are slippery with moisture, and require a DC 25 Climb check to climb. Unless otherwise noted, all doors opening onto the containment rooms are bound in iron and barred from the outside (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25).

K1. THE NARROW VISTA

The Stretching Way ends here at a small stairway that descends 10 feet to a recessed iron door. The door is rusted shut and blocked by the pressure of the water behind it. A DC 28 Strength check is required to open the door.

K2. BLOCKED STAIRWELL

This stairwell previously connected the two menagerie levels, enabling Caromarc to view his collection, but the Whispering Way deliberately collapsed it. Some 20 feet of broken rock now blocks the stairwell.

K3. PIT OF LEECHES (CR 6)

Trap: Caromarc placed a flooded pit trap here and filled it with leeches. Creatures that trigger the trap don't fall into the pit, but they must make Swim checks to stay afloat in the deeper water.

UNDERWATER PIT TRAP

CR —

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect 20-ft.-deep water-filled pit (targets must make DC 10

Swim checks to stay afloat); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

Creatures: The flooded pit contains two leech swarms eager for prey. They immediately swim up to attack any living creatures in the water.

LEECH SWARMS (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 39 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 187)

K4. DESCENDED FROM APES (CR 6)

A rotting stench comes from a trio of headless, apelike creatures inside heavy iron cages. The waters lap against these corpses, while the twisted remnants of an iron walkway lie half-submerged in the water. Two doors sit high in the north and east walls, thirty feet above the floor.

The stench of rotting flesh is so strong here that any creature entering the room must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or be sickened for as long as the creature remains in the room.

Creatures: When the Whispering Way arrived, the cages here held three girallons. The cultists removed a trio of vargouilles from captivity in the museum and released them in this room shortly before they left. The vargouilles, eager to feast, found the girallons challenging prey, but the tight confines of their cages hampered the apes. The girallons were subsequently slain, became vargouilles themselves, and ate the original vargouilles. The girallon-headed vargouilles now lurk in the darkness near the ceiling, close to the remains of the iron walkway that once traversed the room.

GIRALLON-HEADED VARGOUILLES (3)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Giant vargouille (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 272, 295)

hp 25 each

TACTICS

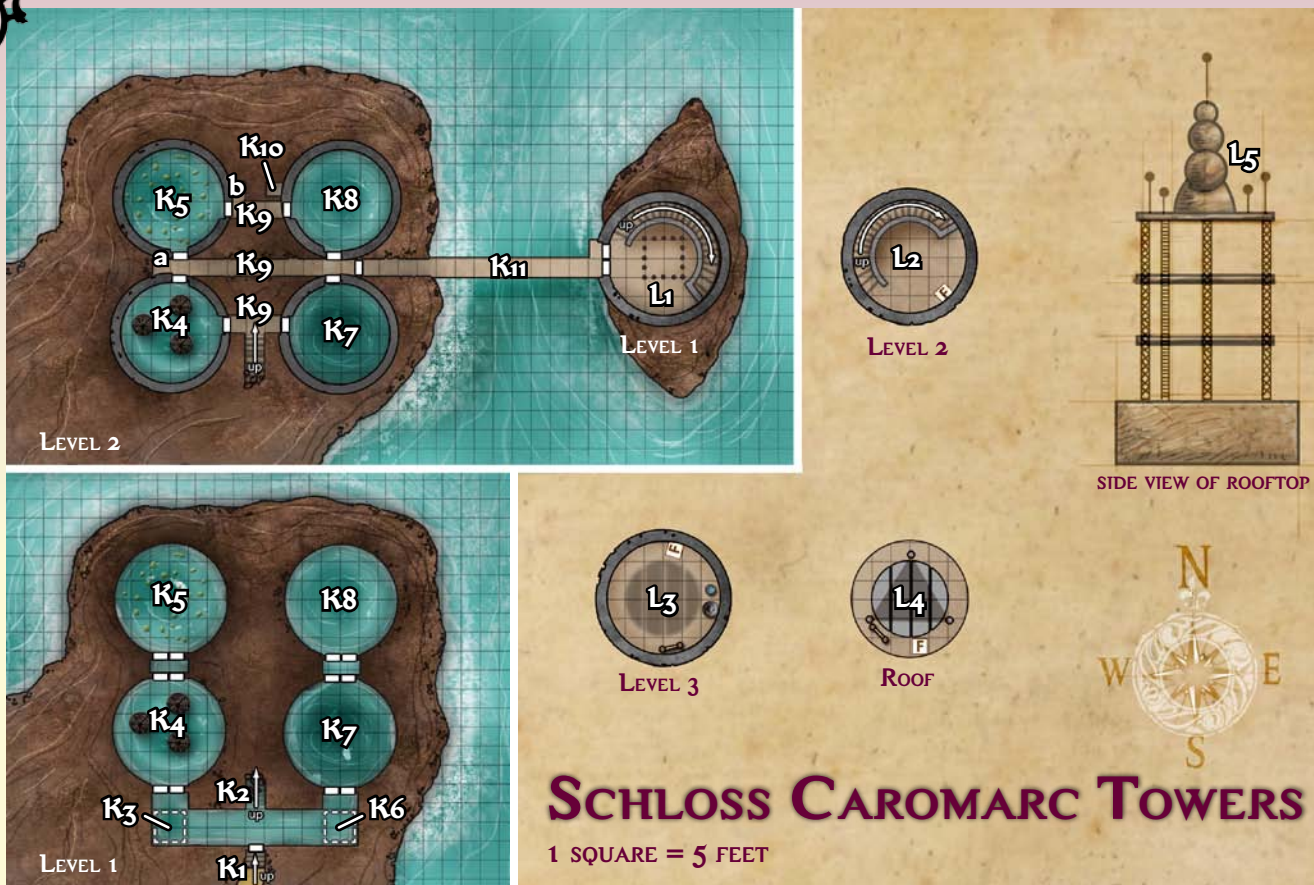
During Combat The vargouilles attack as a group, shrieking before entering combat. The vargouilles attempt to bite as many opponents as possible, hoping to breed more of their kind.

Morale Trapped in this chamber, the vargouilles fight to the death.

K5. THE INFESTATION (CR 7)

This room seems to be infested with various fungi that cling to every surface. The broken remains of an iron walkway juts from the water, also now infested with fungi. Two doors stand high up on the walls.

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Creatures: Among the more mundane varieties of fungus Caromarc raised, he also kept a basidiron and two violet fungi here to harvest their spores and poison. The fungal creatures move to attack any living creatures entering the chamber.

BASIDIRON **CR 5**
XP 1,600
 hp 52 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 28)

VIOLET FUNGI (2) **CR 3**
XP 800 each
 hp 30 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 274)

K6. PIT OF DROWNED GUARDS (CR 7)
Trap: Caromarc placed another simple pit trap here. When the Whispering Way flooded the menagerie, they placed additional guardians in the flooded pit.

UNDERWATER PIT TRAP **CR —**
Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 20
EFFECTS
Trigger location; **Reset** manual
Effect 20-ft.-deep water-filled pit (targets must make DC 10

Swim checks to stay afloat); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

Creatures: The Whispering Way threw four of Caromarc's guards into the pit and reset the trap. When the cultists flooded the menagerie, these guards drowned as the pit filled with water. The residual necromantic energies left by the cult's presence caused the guards to animate as undead draugrs. When the trap is triggered, the vengeful drowned guards immediately swim up and attempt to pull any swimming PCs underwater to drown.

DROWNED GUARDS (4) **CR 3**
XP 800 each
 Advanced draugr (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 110, 292)
 hp 25 each

K7. THE TRANSPARENT BASILISK (CR 6)
 This circular chamber is empty save for dark water. Two doors sit high up the walls to the north and west.

The floor of this chamber is actually 20 feet lower than rest of the level, which is noticeable with a DC 15

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

Perception check. Characters who step unaware into the room must make a DC 10 Swim check to stay afloat. As in the other containment chambers, the iron catwalk that once passed above this chamber has been knocked down, and now lies at the bottom of the room, beneath the dark waters.

Creature: At great expense, Caromarc acquired a rare basilisk that had been infected with aboleth slime and placed it here for study (the catwalk above was just out of range of the creature's gaze attack). Caromarc further altered the creature through alchemical experimentation, effectively giving it the aquatic subtype. The basilisk now has transparent skin, which gives it a bonus on Stealth checks in the water. It uses this advantage to attack unsuspecting creatures.

SLIME-INFECTED BASILISK CR 6

XP 2,400

Variant advanced basilisk (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 29, 294)

N Medium magical beast (aquatic)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+1 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 52 (7d10+14)

Fort +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +12 (1d8+7)

Special Attacks gaze (30 ft., DC 15)

TACTICS

During Combat The basilisk ignores opponents petrified by its gaze (who sink to the bottom), instead biting those still moving about in the water.

Morale The basilisk retreats to the bottom of the room when reduced to fewer than 13 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 12, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 23 (35 vs. trip)

Feats Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Perception +12, Stealth +12 (+16 underwater), Swim +13;

Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth (+8 underwater)

K8. THE THING ON THE CEILING (CR 7)

Other than the two stone doors high on the walls, this room seems bare save for the dark waters covering the floor.

All of the doors in this room are stone (hardness 8, hp 60, Break DC 28) to keep this chamber's occupant inside. There is no trace of the iron catwalk that once hung above, as the creature within the room destroyed it some time ago.

Creature: A black pudding clings to the stone roof of this chamber. The pudding is starving and attacks any creature that enters.

BLACK PUDDING CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 105 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 35)

K9. UPPER CORRIDORS

These corridors once connected the blocked stairwell to the iron walkways 30 feet above the containment chambers, but since the Whispering Way destroyed the catwalks, each hallway now stands by itself.

Treasure: The alcove marked **a** in the central corridor contains shelves holding a *potion of displacement*, a *potion of gaseous form*, and two vials of alchemically preserved basilisk blood (considered fresh for the purposes of restoring petrified creatures to flesh; see *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 29). The alcove marked **b** in the northern corridor contains a *potion of nondetection* and a *wand of charm monster* with 44 charges.

K10. BURIED ALIVE (CR 7)

The Whispering Way entombed the three eminent engineers hired by Caromarc in this alcove with a *stone shape* spell, but perfected their cruelty by sealing them in with a wight. As the PCs approach this area, they can become aware of a faint scratching and knocking from behind the wall with a DC 10 Perception check. A further DC 15 Perception check identifies the curiously smooth wall, although no further noise beyond weak scratching and pathetic knocking can be heard. The wall (hardness 8, hp 15, Break DC 25) collapses if breached.

Creatures: The unfortunate engineers were quickly slain by the wight and became its spawn. Once the wall is breached, the four wights burst out and attack any living creatures in sight. The creatures have been driven to madness by their confinement, and they do not flee from combat.

WIGHTS (4) CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 26 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 276)

K11. THE HIGH BRIDGE

A grand stone bridge arches over the gorge to a stack of rock on which perches a high tower topped with a lightning rod.

The bridge is 3 feet wide and has no handrails, but is not otherwise dangerous, unless the PCs attempt to cross it at full speed, in which case a DC 10 Acrobatics check is required.

Carion Crown

THE LIGHTNING TOWER

A great stone tower perches atop a sheer stack of rock above the river. The tower climbs to an elaborate iron steeple, from which a huge lightning conductor calls out to the skies.

This tower is Caromarc's secret laboratory and contains his greatest, and perhaps most tragic, experiment—a creature called the Aberrant Promethean, which Caromarc kept confined within the tower after his failures with the Beast of Lepidstadt. But when the Whispering Way had finished with the Beast, they turned the creature loose and imprisoned Caromarc within his own laboratory. The cultists left Caromarc's final guard, a flesh golem made from girallon parts, to guard the tower's ground floor. The superior masonry walls of the tower require a DC 25 Climb check to scale.



Guardian of the Tower

L1. THE INSANE GUARDIAN (CR 8)

A curving stone staircase winds along the wall of this circular chamber up to a trapdoor in the ceiling some thirty feet above. The room is in chaos, with books, alchemical equipment, and curiously twisted metal everywhere. A huge, broken cage stands in the center of the room, its bars bent and door smashed open.

The stout, iron-bound door leading into the tower has been sealed with an *arcane lock* (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25 or Disable Device DC 20). Among the torn pages and books in this room are Caromarc's instructions for using the *Bondslave Thrall*, which were pinned to the back of the entrance door by the Whispering Way (DC 30 Perception check to notice them, or automatically if the door is closed from the inside). The cultists studied Caromarc's abstruse notes and made their own notations and diagrams in the margins in red ink and with a different hand.

Unfortunately, the notes have become so soiled and torn that they are virtually illegible. However, a DC 30 Linguistics check or *comprehend languages* spell can decipher enough of the notes to learn of the existence of the *Bondslave Thrall* and its ability to control the Beast of Lepidstadt, but not its location or how to actually activate it.

Creatures: One of Caromarc's experiments was a fearsome, four-armed flesh golem made from dead girallons, but he was so wary of his creation's savagery that he kept it in a huge cage in this room. As they left the tower, the Whispering Way unlocked the cage and released the construct. The golem attacks anyone entering this room of the tower. It pursues fleeing foes out of the tower, but it cannot pass through the trapdoor to the next level.

GUARDIAN OF THE TOWER CR 8

XP 4,800

Advanced variant girallon flesh golem
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 160, 294)

N Large construct

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 23 (+1 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size)

hp 79 (9d10+30)

Fort +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

DR 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee 4 claws +15 (1d4+7 plus rend)

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

Special Attacks berserk, rend (4 claws, 1d4+10)

TACTICS

During Combat The golem madly attacks anything that moves. It focuses all of its attacks on single opponents, tearing and rending with its claws.

Morale The golem fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 13, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 28

Skills Climb +15

Languages none

Treasure: The trapdoor is a solid block of adamantine worth 3,000 gp. The block serves as a ward against the golems in the tower, which instinctively avoid touching the metal.

L2. THE EMPTY PRISON (CR 1)

This circular room is choked with webs. A stone staircase curves along the wall to another trapdoor in the ceiling.

The Aberrant Promethean (see area L3) used to be kept in this chamber, until released by the Whispering Way. It created the webs that fill this chamber, which function as those created by a *web* spell (DC 17). A DC 25 Perception check discovers a number of faint chalk marks on the east wall of the room. The Whispering Way made these marks when they were trying to work out how to activate the *Bondslave Thrall*, and though they wiped them clean when they were done, enough traces still remain that a DC 35 Linguistics check or Perception check can reveal much of what the cultists wrote. A crude chalk diagram depicts the iron spire atop of the tower, and two strange apparatuses at its pinnacle. An arrow points to the larger of the two devices, next to the words “The Storm Caller must be activated to energize the *Bondslave Thrall*.”

Creature: Caromarc’s crippled homunculus Waxwood hides near the top of the stairs wearing a *ring of invisibility*. The homunculus has been hiding in the tower since the Whispering Way attacked, struggling valiantly to keep its master alive with rats and insects it catches and tiny handfuls of collected rainwater. Although it can communicate telepathically with Caromarc, the creature cannot speak. When the PCs enter this room, Waxwood lurks out of sight, watching the PCs until it has judged their intentions. As soon as it detects any desire by the

PCs to save Caromarc, or at the very least determine what happened to him, it appears and attempts to drag one PC to the chalk markings on the wall. It points to the ceiling above and pantomimes both the imprisoned Caromarc and the rampaging golem in the room above. Waxwood attempts to convey to the PCs, as best as it can, that Caromarc is trapped inside the constricting iron doll and that he needs rescuing as a matter of great urgency, but that the Aberrant Promethean is a fearsome and dangerous foe. Waxwood shows the PCs the Whispering Way’s notes in this room and the one below, trying to impart to the PCs that they can call the Beast of Lepidstadt to their aid using the *Bondslave Thrall* on the roof and use it to fight the Promethean for them. Waxwood doesn’t actually know how to activate and use the *Bondslave Thrall*, only that it can be done. If necessary, the PCs can make a DC 30 Sense Motive check to try to understand each bit of information the homunculus is trying to convey. The DC is reduced by the result of Waxwood’s Perform check (the homunculus has a total Perform modifier of –2). As a last resort, if the PCs are unable to understand it, Waxwood tries to write out the information for them—it may not be able to speak, but Waxwood can read and write, albeit in a tiny, cramped hand. If attacked, Waxwood puts on its ring and flees, returning an hour later to try again.

Waxwood

CR 1

XP 400

Homunculus (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 176)

hp 11

L3. LABORATORY OF CREATION (CR 11)

This tower room, clearly once a laboratory, is choked with huge webs. Two curious objects—a large iron idol and a glass bell jar of the same size—stand against the eastern wall. The jar is filled with fluid and contains a human woman, while the idol has only two openings for eyeholes, through which blink a pair of terrified human eyes.

This chamber is a mess—the remains of an incredible laboratory and workshop have been smashed and destroyed. Huge chains ending in hooks dangle flaccidly from the ceiling 60 feet above. An iron ladder against the south wall climbs up to a trapdoor in the ceiling. Next to the ladder is a metal lever. Like the chamber below, this room is filled with the Aberrant Promethean’s cloying webs, which function as a *web* spell (DC 17). Above the webs, huge iron shutters close off the central portion of the ceiling (hardness 10, hp 50, Break DC 28). The lever next to the ladder retracts the shutters, revealing a circular, 20-foot-diameter hole in the ceiling open to the sky above and the iron framework atop the tower (area L4).

Carion Crown

The large bell jar contains the alchemically preserved body of Count Caromarc's wife, Ceryse. She died many years ago in childbirth, and Caromarc has dedicated his entire life and much of his fortune to regaining the wife and son he lost. Although he created the Beast as a surrogate "son," Caromarc has been unable to bring Ceryse back to life, though he occasionally speaks to her via *Speak with Dead*.

Creatures: Once they had the means of using the *Bondslave Thrall* to control the Beast, the Whispering Way cultists sealed **Count Alpon Caromarc** (N male human alchemist 13) into a curiously cruel object—a misery idol. Appearing much like a fat doll, engraved with sewn lips and a representation of a man being crushed to death, the misery idol is an iron casket bound in adamantine, a terrible execution device that tightly grips the unfortunate person trapped within it and makes it impossible for its victim to move. The adamantine bindings keep the Promethean from attacking the idol, leaving Caromarc to slowly die of thirst and hunger. Trapped within the idol, and with his bombs, elixirs, extracts, and mutagens destroyed, Caromarc is nearing madness. Perfectly aware of his predicament, Caromarc has tried desperately to think of a way for Waxwood to help, but is fast approaching death, and the clumsy attentions of the homunculus are, he fears, merely prolonging his sufferings. While he can see and call out feebly, Caromarc is of little other use until released from the misery idol (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28). Before the PCs can do so, however, the PCs must face the guardian left behind by the Whispering Way.

Having been freed by the cultists, Caromarc's greatest creation, the Aberrant Promethean, broods near the top of the room in its webs. A stitched abomination made from the parts of at least half a dozen creatures, the Aberrant Promethean is primarily a mixture of choker, chuul, cloaker, and ettercap, blended together into a disgusting mass of unlife. Able to climb through its webs like a spider, the Promethean goes berserk when anyone enters the room or opens the shutters above, attacking anything that moves.

A DC 17 Knowledge (arcana) check is enough to recognize that the Promethean is no ordinary flesh golem, and that the PCs are likely no match for it themselves. The monstrosity is far more powerful than they can safely defeat, but the PCs do have access to a secret weapon—the *Bondslave Thrall*. If the PCs can activate the device and take control of the Beast of Lepidstadt, they can use the Beast to fight and defeat the Promethean. See area L5 for details of this strategy. If the PCs don't want to face the Promethean to get to the roof, they

can also fly or climb up the outside of the tower, completely bypassing the golem until the Beast arrives.

THE ABERRANT PROMETHEAN

CR 11

XP 12,800

Advanced variant flesh golem (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 160)

N Huge construct

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 8, flat-footed 25 (+17 natural, –2 size)

hp 117 (14d10+40)

Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6

DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee 2 slams +21 (4d6+9 plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks berserk, constrict (4d6+9), moan, paralytic tentacles, strangle, web (+12 ranged, DC 17, 14 hp)

TACTICS

During Combat The Promethean attacks the closest moving target, lashing out with its limbs and trying to inflict as much damage as possible.

Morale The Promethean fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 11, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +25 (+29 grapple); **CMD** 35

Languages none

SQ quickness

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Moan (Ex) The Promethean can emit an infrasonic moan as a standard action, with one of two effects.

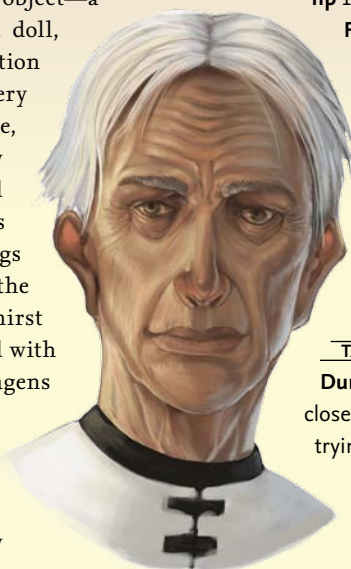
Fear: All creatures in a 30-foot spread must make a DC 14 Will save or become panicked for 2 rounds.

Nausea: All creatures in a 30-foot cone must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or fall prone and be nauseated for 1d4+1 rounds.

A creature that successfully saves against the Promethean's moans cannot be affected by that same moan effect for 24 hours. Save DCs are Charisma-based.

Paralytic Tentacles (Ex) The Promethean can transfer a grappled victim to its tentacles as a move action. The tentacles grapple with the same strength as its slam attacks but deal no damage, instead exuding a paralytic secretion. Anyone held in the tentacles must succeed on a DC 17 Fortitude save each round on the creature's turn or be paralyzed for 6 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based. While held in the tentacles, paralyzed or not, a victim automatically takes 2d4+9 points of damage each round.

Quickness (Su) The Promethean is supernaturally quick. It can take an extra move action during its turn each round.



Count Alpon Caromarc

TRIAL OF THE BEAST

Strangle (Ex) The Aberrant Promethean has an unerring talent for seizing its victims by the neck. A creature that is grappled by the Promethean cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components.

Treasure: Caromarc's *wand of speak with dead* (31 charges) sits on a shelf next to the jar holding his dead wife.

Development: If the PCs are able to defeat the Aberrant Promethean and free Caromarc, see Concluding the Adventure on page 62.

L4. TOWER ROOF

The tower opens onto a flat platform high above the raging waters. A spire of twisted iron rises from the tower's roof in a series of three triangular iron platforms. Perched at the very top stands a huge lightning conductor and numerous lightning rods.

The tower roof is 350 feet above the river below and has no guardrails. The triangular iron structure rises a further 30 feet above the tower, each of its three levels connected by an iron ladder (DC 5 Climb check to climb because of the strong winds). The center of the roof is blocked by iron shutters (hardness 10, hp 50, Break DC 28), which can only be opened with the lever in area L3.

L5. THE BONDSLAVE THRALL

A peculiar brass device, studded with dials and protrusions and filled with a strange purple liquid, stands high atop the tower, attached to a huge silvery conductor by thick, rubber-coated cables.

At the very top of the iron structure sits the *Bondslave Thrall*, the device the Whispering Way used to control the Beast and steal the Seasage Effigy, and which the PCs must now use to control the Beast to fight the Aberrant Promethean. Mounted on the spire next to it is the *Storm Caller*, a huge lightning conductor and the power source for the device, surrounded by numerous lightning rods.

The *Bondslave Thrall* is a large brass apparatus that weighs almost 250 pounds. It is attached to the *Storm Caller* by four inch-thick, rubber-coated copper cables (hardness 10, hp 20, Break DC 26). If any of the cables are severed, or if the *Bondslave Thrall* is otherwise detached from the *Storm Caller* (even if the whole device is removed), it ceases to function, and any control over the Beast ends immediately.

To use the *Bondslave Thrall*, the PCs must first power it using the *Storm Caller*. Activating the *Storm Caller* is relatively simple—a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check or DC 25 Use Magic Device to blindly activate the device is all that is required to turn it on. One round later, the *Storm Caller* emits a deep hum and begins sending out myriad sparks and bolts

of electricity that act as a *call lightning* spell. Lightning lashes the area, and a lightning bolt strikes a random creature on the roof or the iron platforms (or in area L3 if the shutters are open) each round for 3d6 points of electricity damage (DC 16 Reflex save for half). Any creature in contact with the *Bondslave Thrall* is considered to have evasion (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 68) with regards to these lightning bolts. During this lightning storm, anyone touching one of the lightning rods atop the spire automatically takes 3d6 points of electricity damage per round (no save). Remember that these lightning strikes may also heal the Promethean and the Beast if these creatures are struck. The lightning storm lasts as long as the *Storm Caller* is activated (deactivating it is a standard action).

Once the *Storm Caller* has been turned on, the *Bondslave Thrall* can be activated. This requires a DC 25 Use Magic Device check to activate blindly (PCs who deciphered the notes in both areas L1 and L2 get a +2 circumstance bonus on the check). Once activated, the *Bondslave Thrall* adds its own high-pitched whine to the deep hum of the *Storm Caller*, and the purple alchemical liquid inside it begins rapidly boiling. At this point, anyone touching the *Bondslave Thrall* becomes aware of the Beast of Lepidstadt, and can even feel some of its pain and misery. They also become aware that they can call the Beast to them and control its actions.

CONTROLLING THE BEAST

Once the *Bondslave Thrall* is activated, the humming machinery attracts the attention of the Aberrant Promethean in area L3 below. It immediately attempts to reach the roof, breaking through the shutters that close off the roof if necessary. The PCs need to call the Beast of Lepidstadt to them to help fight the Aberrant Promethean. At this point, the Beast of Lepidstadt is 2d4 rounds away.

Up to four creatures can use the *Bondslave Thrall* at one time, but only one character can control the Beast's action each round. If two or more characters each try to exert their influence over the Beast in the same round, they must make opposed Charisma checks, with the highest result winning control for that round. As a full-round action, a character using the *Bondslave Thrall* can completely control the Beast's actions, using its attacks, feats, skills, and other abilities.

In addition, the mental link through the *Bondslave Thrall* enables a controlling character to use her own abilities to assist the Beast. While controlling the Beast, a combat character (such as a fighter) can grant the use of one of her feats to the Beast for 1 round. A character with sneak attack (such as a rogue) can grant the Beast her sneak attack ability for 1 round. An arcane caster can channel arcane energy through the *Bondslave Thrall* to grant the Beast a deflection bonus to its AC equal to the caster level of the character for 1 round. A divine caster can likewise channel

Carion Crown

divine energy through the *Bondslave Thrall* to grant the Beast fast healing equal to the caster level of the character for 1 round. A character can only grant these abilities to the Beast while actively controlling the Beast, so the Beast can only use one of these abilities per round.

If no character actively controls the Beast in a given round, the Beast can act on its own (see Tactics below).

THE BEAST OF LEPIDSTADT

CR 13
XP 25,600

Flesh golem barbarian 6

N Large construct

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 6, flat-footed 24 (+6 armor, -1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 rage, -1 size)

hp 118 (15 HD; 9d10+6d12+30)

Fort +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2,

DR 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic

Weaknesses open mind

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee ogre hook +21/+16/+11 (2d8+10/x3) or
2 slams +21 (2d8+7 plus 1d6 electricity)

Ranged double crossbow +9 (2d6 and 2d6/19-20)

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

Special Attacks berserk, rage (15 rounds/day), rage powers
(knockback, moment of clarity, renewed vigor [1d8+2 hp])

TACTICS

During Combat If not under the control of the *Bondslave Thrall*, the Beast rages and attacks the Aberrant Promethean so that it can free Caromarc from his imprisonment.

Morale While under the control of the *Bondslave Thrall* or if berserk, the Beast fights until destroyed. On its own, the Beast flees from battle if reduced to fewer than 30 hit points.

Base Statistics When not raging, the Beast's statistics are **AC** 26, touch 8, flat-footed 26; **Will** +7; **Melee** ogre hook +19/+14/+9 (2d8+7/x3) or 2 slams +19 (2d8+5 plus 1d6 electricity); **Str** 21; **CMB** 21 (+23 bull rush); **Skills** Intimidate +14 (+18 against Medium or smaller creatures).

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** 7, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +23 (+25 bull rush); **CMD** 30

Feats Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (double crossbow), Improved Bull Rush, Improved Iron Will, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Disguise +6, Intimidate +16 (+20 against Medium or smaller creatures), Perception +4, Stealth +13

Languages Common

SQ fast movement

Gear battered masterwork breastplate, Large double crossbow* with 20 bolts, Large ogre hook (see the

Pathfinder Player Companion Adventurer's Armory), boots of the mire (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #3; wearer can move with no cost to speed in swamps and leaves no tracks in that terrain), cloak of elvenkind, shock amulet of mighty fists, ragged and torn explorer's outfit

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Open Mind (Ex) Unlike other constructs, the Beast is susceptible to mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects).

Rage (Ex) The Beast does not gain a bonus to its Constitution while in a rage, nor does it gain any extra hit points.

Likewise, it is not fatigued after rage.

* See *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide*.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs manage to defeat the Aberrant Promethean and free Caromarc, this adventure reaches its conclusion, but there are still some issues that need to be resolved.

First, the PCs are now aware of the twisted experiments Caromarc has been carrying out in his laboratory—the tragic existence of the Beast of Lepidstadt is only one among many. With his castle in ruins and his secrets revealed, Caromarc would prefer for the PCs to go on their way quickly and quietly—any gossip could have a devastating effect upon his reputation, and should the residents of Lepidstadt learn that he was responsible for the creation of the Beast, his position in Vieland would become very difficult indeed.

Because of this, Caromarc instructs his bankers in Lepidstadt to release 3,000 gp as a reward to the PCs for freeing him and for having the courage to defend the Beast (regardless of the outcome of the trial), and asks the PCs to avenge the wrongs against him and the people of Lepidstadt by unmasking and thwarting the Whispering Way's plot. If the PCs need further encouragement, Caromarc is willing to increase the reward up to 4,500 gp, but only if he gets the PCs' promise to go after the cultists.

Caromarc is happy to tell the PCs what little he knows of the Whispering Way's plot—they used the *Bondslave Thrall* to force the Beast to steal the Seasage Effigy (though he does not know why), and once they had it in hand, they immediately departed. Caromarc's homunculus Waxwood overheard the cultists talking in hushed tones about the Shudderwood, the dark forest to the south and east, and Caromarc suspects that they may be heading for Ascanor Lodge, since that is the only island of civility in its deadly depths. Caromarc directs the PCs to the Silent Path, an ancient hunting trail through the Shudderwood, now little more than a memory marked in places by strange bone fetishes. Caromarc often used the trail himself when he was younger and had more energy to seek out rare plants and toxins, accessing the old trail about a mile downstream from Schloss Caromarc. If

TRIAL OF THE BEAST



the Whispering Way did go into the Shudderwood, that is most likely the path they took. If it survived, the Beast thanks the PCs for defending it and being the only friends it has ever known, and sobs bitterly when they leave.

While some characters may view Caromarc's actions as understandable—his experiments were simply an expression of his love for his wife and his desire for a son and a normal life—others may wish to see the former count stand trial for the abominations he created. Caromarc is in no shape to defend himself when the PCs first encounter him, and they should have little difficulty delivering him to Lepidstadt. If the PCs turn Caromarc over to Lepidstadt's legal system, Judge Daramid promises the PCs that he will receive a fair and just trial.

Daramid also personally congratulates the PCs on their exploits, and tells them the fate of the Beast of Lepidstadt is no longer their concern. If the Beast was found guilty and still lives, she assures the PCs that as far as she and the court are concerned, it died in the Schloss. She later contacts Caromarc to ensure it never leaves his care again, whether guilty or innocent.

She adds that one final loose end about the Beast still exists, however—the stolen Seasage Effigy, the very reason all this trouble began. Daramid confides to the PCs that she is a member of the Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye, a secret organization that, among other things, seeks to defend Ustalav from threats both within and without. Now that they know the Whispering Way was involved in the theft, the Order is greatly concerned with what the Whispering Way might be up to, as it is a death cult that reveres undeath as a means of transcendence, and has disturbing connections to the Whispering Tyrant, Tar-Baphon. If the PCs are not ready to pursue the Whispering Way on their own, Judge Daramid bluntly offers the PCs the substantial reward of 6,000 gp to track down and investigate the cult. She hints that helping the Order in this way might pave the way for the PCs' own initiation into the mysteries of the society, should they prove loyal and able.

The journey through the Shudderwood to Ascanor Lodge is detailed in "Broken Moon," the next volume of the Carrion Crown Adventure Path, where even more of the Whispering Way's sinister plans will be revealed.

Carrion Crown



Pharasma

Pharasma (fah-RAZ-mah) is the stern observer of life and death, scrutinizing the tangled webs of fate and prophecy, mercilessly cold in the administration of her grim duties. Having seen infants die, the righteous fall too soon, and tyrants live to advanced age, she makes no judgment about the justness of a particular death and welcomes each birth with equal severity. At the moment of birth, she knows where a particular soul will end up, but she reserves her official verdict until the last possible moment, as she knows prophecies can be wrong or fail completely. She believes in fate and predestination but understands the need for vagueness and misinterpretation to allow for the illusion of free will.

PHARASMA

Legends claim that Pharasma knew the death of Aroden was fast approaching and even judged him as she did all those born as mortals, but did nothing to warn her followers, many of whom were driven mad by the event. Though prophecy is no longer reliable, prophets continue to be born, and most of these are driven mad by their confusing and contradictory visions—and the church has taken it upon itself to care for these poor souls, devoting portions of major temples to be sanitariums.

In art, Pharasma is depicted as the midwife, the mad prophet, or the reaper of the dead, depending upon her role. Her visage usually has gray skin and white eyes. As the midwife, she is efficient and severe, hair pulled back and arms bare from hands to the elbows. As the prophet, she is wild-eyed and tangle-haired, her words echoing like thunder. As the reaper, she is tall and gaunt, with a flowing, black-hooded gown and an hourglass with fast-flowing red sand—moving with deliberate care rather than aggressiveness. Pregnant women often carry small tokens of her midwife likeness on long necklaces to protect the unborn and grant them good lives.

Sitting atop an impossibly tall spire, Pharasma's realm in the afterworld—the Boneyard—awaits all mortals. Once there, they stand in a great line, waiting to be judged and sent to their final reward. Those who die before experiencing their full fate may be lucky enough to return in this life or the next, though in some cases their fate is merely to die an ignoble or early death. The Lady of Graves opposes undeath as a desecration of the memory of the flesh and a corruption of a soul's path on its journey to her judgment.

The church works much like a strong, predominantly matriarchal family, though some have compared it to a severe, conservative nunnery. Though neutral as a whole, the church has many traditions passed down by the goddess and her prophets, and members of the church follow these teachings stringently. However, different branches of the church give some rituals and practices more weight than others; though this is never enough that church factions war on each other, it is easy for one of the faith to recognize a member of his own sect, or realize a visitor is unfamiliar with local practices.

Pharasma manifests her favor through the appearance of scarab beetles and whippoorwills, both of which function as psychopomps and serve to guide recently

departed spirits to the Boneyard. Black roses are thought to bring good luck, especially if the stems sport no thorns. Pharasma will also sometimes allow the spirits of those who have died under mysterious conditions to transmit short messages to their living kin to comfort them, to expose a murderer, or even to haunt an enemy. Her displeasure is often signified by cold chills down the spine, bleeding from under the fingernails, an unexplained taste of rich soil, the discovery of a dead whippoorwill, or the feeling that something important has been forgotten.

Pharasma is neutral and her portfolio is fate, death, prophecy, and birth. Her weapon is the skane, a special dagger with ritual significance. Her holy symbol is a spiral of light, representing a soul, its journey from birth to death to the afterlife, and the confusing path of deciphering prophecy. Her domains are Death, Healing, Knowledge, Repose, and Water. Most members of her priesthood are clerics, with a significant number of diviners, oracles, and adepts. Roughly two-thirds of her clergy are women, though the gender mix may vary regionally.

Pharasma's followers are midwives, morticians, so-called "white necromancers," expectant mothers, and (though much less so since Aroden's death) Harrowers, palmists, oneiromancers, cloud-readers, and others who use non-magical forms of divination. In smaller

communities, a Pharasmin priest may assume several of these roles, or a wife-and-husband team might split the duties between them. Of course, as the goddess of birth and death, Pharasma has many lay followers as well, and even in lands where her faith is not large or organized, commoners pray to her for guidance or protection, much as farmers everywhere pray to Erastil for good crops.

Worshippers of Pharasma—as well as most commoners—trace the goddess's spiral-symbol on their chests, typically as a form of prayer when hearing ill news or a spoken evil, in response to blasphemy, and before or during an event that is dangerous or has an uncertain outcome. Different lands perform this gesture differently—in Ustalav, it is with a closed fist, while in Osirion it is with the first two fingers extended. Especially devout folk see or repeat this gesture in everyday activities, such as stirring soup or scrubbing a floor.

Prayer services to Pharasma are a mixture of somber chants and joyous song, with local celebratory or somber music mixed in. Services usually end on a positive or



*"Birth and death are written in the bones,
but bones can be broken."*

—The Bones Land in a Spiral

Carion Crown

uplifting note, for while death comes to all, there are new generations of life to praise (at least, until the end comes, which they will deal with at that time). Each temple keeps a record of births and deaths of its members, and priests speak their names on anniversaries of these events (while those close to the departed light candles to honor them).

Pharasma is in favor of marriage, as it leads to births, but is not against having children out of wedlock, or childless couples adopting, or children being raised in orphanages. Church weddings may be simple or ornate, depending on the social status and wealth of the participants. Though she is the goddess of birth, she does not oppose contraception, and her temples have been known to provide this assistance to women with a history of stillbirths and deformities. However, she believes killing a child in the womb is an abomination, for it sends the infant soul to the afterlife before it has a chance to fulfill its destiny; thus, the goddess's midwives refuse to aid in such matters, even if bearing the child would be a great risk to the mother. Some church midwives, called *casarmetzes*, are so skilled in a combination of medicine, magic, and surgery that in dire circumstances they can cut a living child from its mother's womb and save both. Curiously, the church does not frown upon suicide, though individual priests may debate whether taking one's own life is the natural fate of some souls or a means to return to the goddess for a chance at a different life.

A traditional bread associated with the church is kolash, made from braided dough and bent in a tight spiral until it forms a round loaf. Often, the dough is filled or topped with diced fruit, and eaten with sweet cheese. For the winter feast, the center portion of the spiral is left open to allow for a wax candle, lit at the start of the meal and extinguished when the bread is to be eaten.

The church has a tradition where a family calls a gathering on the third day after a child's birth, to welcome it as a new soul in the world. Superstition holds that the child must be given a name before this gathering, else the child will be unlucky. Visitors bring small cakes, seeds, salted peas, and watered beer to share with the family and other guests. A priest or family elder lists the names of the child's maternal or paternal ancestors (matching the child's gender), calling for the child to be named and grow up with good health, and for the parents to live to see the child married and grandchildren born.

When a member of the faith dies, the body is cleaned, immersed in water, and dressed in a special multi-part shroud (consisting of 5 pieces for a male, 9 for a female). A prayer written on parchment, bark, cloth, or stone is tucked into the shroud, and the corpse is sealed in a casket (if one is to be used). A guardian sits with the body the night before the burial—sometimes to honor the dead,

sometimes to guard against body thieves, sometimes to watch that the body does not rise as an undead.

Those who can afford it usually pay to have their remains interred on holy ground by priests. The cost varies by the local economy and the nature of the burial; a tiny burial cell in a catacomb or ossuary is inexpensive (especially if shared with other bodies), whereas a room-sized private tomb may be something only a wealthy merchant or noble can afford. Disinterring a buried corpse is considered a violation of the dead, and the church normally refuses to do this—even when a city government has sought to break ground for a sewer, aqueduct, or other vital construction, the church has refused to permit it. However, if a priest discovers a worshiper's corpse that has been buried improperly and exposed, he or she usually arranges for a proper burial in accordance with church teachings.

Those mourning for the recent dead (typically the father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, and spouse) traditionally mark their eyelids with black ash or an herbal paste for five days after the burial. The faithful honor the deceased by burning a votive candle on the anniversary of the death. This squat candle lasts 24 hours; many tombstones have niches to protect soul candles from the wind. The church allows the dead to be cremated, though burial in earth is preferred; disposing of a corpse at sea, sky burial, and funerary cannibalism are generally considered disrespectful. The church does not mourn apostates, and priests refuse to give rites to those who turn their back on the faith.

In Ustalav, a belief called the Pharasma Penitence has taken hold in the minds of those who worship the Lady of Graves. It is their understanding that the pains and trials of life add a certain weight to the soul, and when Pharasma judges that soul, she counterbalances that weight with rewards in the afterlife. Though most who share this belief merely take on ascetic-like restrictions in their diet and what meager pleasure they can find in life, some sacrifice more by blinding, deafening, or flagellating themselves, or by wearing hairshirts to limit or counter what would lighten their souls, hopefully guaranteeing greater rewards in the afterlife. In some counties, extremists view enduring pain as a condemnation of pleasure and change, and hunt those who alter the world to satisfy mere mortal whims—specifically, users of arcane magic.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

Pharasma's temples are often gothic cathedrals, usually located near a town's graveyard, although a single bleak stone in an empty field or graveyard can serve as a shrine. Large temples usually have catacombs underneath, filled with corpses of the wealthy and former members of the priesthood, as burial under the goddess's temple is believed

PHARASMA

to raise her opinion of the deceased when it is time for judgment. Even a remote Pharasmin monastery has a large area set aside for burial, and may be the final resting place of generations of wealthy and influential folk—as well as an uncountable accumulation of tomb treasures.

Each temple has a high priest or priestess for each aspect of the faith—birth, death, and fate. In theory they are equal, though the high priest of prophecy has assumed a secondary role in recent decades (and the position is often held by a strange or unstable person), and in smaller locales a single priest serves all three functions. Temples that include a crypt also have a cryptsmaster or cryptsmistress in charge of that facility. Ranking within a temple is usually based on seniority of service—those who have been in the priesthood longer outrank those who have served for a shorter length of time.

Hierarchy between churches depends on the size of the populations they serve; a large city temple has greater influence than a smaller town's temple. Pharasma's faithful dress in funeral clothes for religious ceremonies, always black (regardless of the local custom, though other colors and styles may be underneath a black outer garment) and accented with silver and tiny vials of holy water. Clergy living in monasteries dress in black or gray, depending on local custom; many of these take vows of silence to show their devotion to the Lady of Graves.

A PRIEST'S ROLE

Members of the priesthood are usually clerics, diviners, or “white necromancers” (wizards who study forms of necromancy other than the creation of undead and the destruction of life), though especially skilled midwives and hedge wizards have been known to gain authority in some areas. Priests oversee births, and having a Pharasmin priest at childbirth almost always ensures that the mother and child will live. They are the stewards of the dead, and most are familiar with funeral customs from their own and nearby lands. They are the protectors of graveyards and the memory of those who have died, guarding sites from robbers and corpse-animators and memorizing or recording what they know about anyone who dies in their presence. The church despises the undead as abominations to the natural order, and all priests follow the church's teachings about undead without question; creating undead is forbidden, and controlling existing undead is frowned upon, even by evil Pharasmin priests.

A typical priest earns a meager living tending to women in labor, speaking words at funerals, or even digging graves or building tombs for wealthy patrons. Adventuring priests avoid entering tombs for the purpose of looting, though if a tomb is known to hold undead, they accept this transgression with the intent of dispatching abominations



Carion Crown

(though they still oppose desecrating non-undead corpses in such places). Followers of Pharasma tend to be brusque, as they spend much of their time dealing with the dead (who do not talk back and don't get their feelings hurt) or folk under extreme duress (such as women giving birth). When their services are needed, they give orders and expect to be obeyed, as a mortal soul (either recently departed or about to arrive) is at stake.

All priests carry a skane, a double-edge ceremonial dagger with a dull gray blade, often with a stylized depiction of the goddess's face and hair on the pommel. The dagger is used to hold open prayer scrolls, to touch parts of a corpse when performing death rites, to cut shrouds for the dead and the umbilical cord of newborns, and to slice kolash on feast days. It is not forbidden for a priest to use a skane to draw blood or take a life, but some refuse to do so, and carry a different weapon if they must fight. A casarmetzes carries a special skane, bearing Pharasma's likeness on one side of the pommel and a crying child on the other.

HOLIDAYS

The first month of spring, Pharast, is named for the Lady of Graves—a month of new life and renewal for the world. The church has two common holidays shared by all temples.

Day of Bones: On the fifth day of Pharast, priests carry the

enshrined corpses of the recent dead through the streets of the city in an honored procession. These corpses are interred at no cost in a church graveyard, tomb, or sepulcher, which is considered a great honor to the departed.

Procession of Unforgotten Souls: Practiced in lands where the Lady of Graves is a prominent deity, this ceremony is a nightly ritual for weeks leading up to the harvest feast in which the faithful ask the goddess to delay when she takes them to the afterlife. Priests wear thin, black robes over their festival clothes, and carry lit candles in a procession into a large fountain, pool, lake, or quiet river. As they enter the deeper water, the candles go out, but as the priests reach the other side, the candles re-light, and the water makes the black robes transparent, revealing the festival colors beneath.

APHORISMS

Given its abundance of rituals, ritual objects, and ritual clothing, it is not surprising that the church has developed many habitual phrases. In most cases, a member of the faith makes the sign of the Lady over the heart when speaking one of these locutions. The three most common are as follows.

Not this year, not yet: This is a brief prayer, spoken in response to hearing a tragedy or bad rumor, asking that Pharasma delay when believers are sent to her realm, for they have much to do before that time. The devout speak it at each morning's prayers and when they pray before bed.

All who live must face her judgment: This is a promise that another person—typically an enemy, but often just a flippant or disrespectful person—will suffer whatever fate is in store for them, even if it takes longer than the speaker would like.

The Lady shall keep it: This is an oath to bear a secret to the grave, telling no one, swearing that only Pharasma shall hear it in person (and only once the oath-maker has died), or that she will claim the oath-maker early should he break his promise of secrecy.

HOLY TEXT

Pharasma's holy book is *The Bones Laid in a Spiral*; much of it was written long ago by a prophet, and many of its predictions are so vague that there is much debate about what events they foretell or whether they have already passed. Other sections were added later and deal with safe childbirth, disposal of the dead to prevent undeath, and so on.



PHARASMA

In many temples, especially older ones, the holy book exists as a collection of illuminated scrolls organized by topic. Created with rare inks and metal filigree, some of these collections are historical artifacts worth thousands of gold pieces. As each scroll has particular prayers needed for various temple ceremonies, in many cases a priest only needs to bring the appropriate scrolls to the service, leaving the remainder in a safe place. Each scroll is held in a gray silk sleeve called a mantle to protect it from wear and mishaps. As mantles wear out after years of use, they must be disposed of, but church doctrine says they cannot merely be discarded, and a used mantle is either walled up in a tiny compartment within a temple, or (preferably) sewn into a burial shroud of a priest or other notable member of the faith who is about to be buried. Corpses fortunate enough to bear a Pharasmin mantle as part of their shroud are said to be especially resistant to the predations of the undead, including being animated or turned into spawn.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

All deities deal peaceably with Pharasma, for their agents must have access to her realm to escort souls to their respective god-homes. She has no true enemies or allies, though Iomedae views her with some resentment for keeping Aroden's approaching death a secret. Even Zyphus treats her with respect, though many believe he and she are at odds over whether certain souls are taken from the mortal world too quickly. Her relationship with the enigmatic Groetus is a mystery. The Lady, however, is disinclined to bargain with fiends, for she knows too well of their predations on unsorted souls as they pass through the Astral Plane to her realm and the harassment of her psychopomp servants.

NEW DIVINE SPELL

Adepts, bards, rangers, sorcerers, and wizards of Pharasma may learn *augury* as a 2nd-level spell, *death knell* as a 2nd-level spell, and *speak with dead* as a 3rd-level spell. Clerics and oracles who serve Pharasma may prepare *false life* as a 2nd-level spell, *clairaudience/clairvoyance* as a 3rd-level spell, and *moment of prescience* as an 8th-level spell. In addition to *defending bone* (see *Gods and Magic*), her priests have access to the following spell.

SMITE ABOMINATION

School evocation; **Level** cleric 5 (Pharasma)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, F (a holy symbol of Pharasma)/DF

Range personal

Target you

Duration 1 round/level

Drawing upon positive energy, you emulate some of the powers

CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

Pharasma's priests can use *summon monster* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spells. Her priests may use *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* spells to summon whippoorwills as if they were eagles (using the same game stats as eagles).

Summon Monster III

Yanakeion psychopomp (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #44*)

Summon Monster XI

Amzranei psychopomp (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #44*)

of a paladin smiting undead. Choose one undead creature. Your melee attacks against that undead add your Wisdom bonus to hit and add your caster level to damage. Your attacks bypass the undead creature's damage reduction. These bonuses do not stack with the bonuses from a paladin's smite.

PLANAR ALLIES

Pharasma's divine servants are usually strange creatures, though those whose destiny was especially bright or whose fate was unusually dark may come to the mortal world to carry a message on her behalf, even if they went to another deity or realm as part of their final judgment. The appearance of such a spirit usually relates to their activities in life or what god they served. For example, to warn her followers of a bloody battle, she may call forth the spirit of a mighty warrior of Gorum or a fallen champion of Iomedae. Her herald is the Steward of the Skein (see page 88), a ghaelelike creature that appears sometimes as a suit of shining white and blue armor, others as an incorporeal figure of flickering orange flame. Among the servitors that obey Pharasma and no other are the following.

Echo of Lost Divinity: This spectral soldier wears fine clothes in green and gold. When his face is visible, he resembles an Azlanti man, and looks much like depictions of Aroden as a god. As he has only appeared in her service since the death of the Last Azlanti, some believe he is a remnant of that god. Echo of Lost Divinity denies this, however. He prefers to heal and support those who call him rather than attacking their foes directly.

Endless Gravestone: This being resembles a circular, rotating tombstone, bearing writing in many languages that is hard to read because of his constant movement. He is an excellent messenger and is not adverse to charging through enemies or breaking defensive lines, though he is more suited to protecting mortals than destroying them.

Carion Crown



Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye

They are the true masters of the old world and the powers behind thrones. In secret they meet to judge the fate of Ustalav in strange whispered tongues. In ritual are they reborn, and in mystery they forever remain. Engraved in keystones of buildings old and new, the Order's blazing eye sees all. We do not understand their bizarre contemplations, but we know without them all would be lost, as they are the saviors of our lands.

—Professor Breverius Trusdale, *On Secret Societies*

ESOTERIC ORDER OF THE PALATINE EYE

In paneled salons and dark catacombs, the secret elite of Ustalav assemble in exclusive social clubs known collectively as the Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye. What began centuries ago as a cabal of mystics exploring forbidden knowledge has given rise to an organized network of gentleman philosophers who almost universally rise to the most influential stations of Ustalav society as judges, deans, landed aristocracy, and even high-ranking clergy of Pharasma's church. The Order promotes divine enlightenment through participation in secret meetings involving mysterious philosophies and strange rituals.

Western Ustalav's bloodless shirking of aristocratic rule is of course attributed to the benevolent machinations of the Order, and Palatine Eye arcanists are widely credited for their part in the legendary defeat of the dragon Kazavon in Scarwall. But power has its detractors, and such malevolent occurrences as the inexplicable disappearances in Canterwall and the attacks of Lozeri's Devil in Gray have been attributed to the Order by conspiracy theory broadsides. The elusive Order's refusal to dignify the stories with responses only exacerbates the rumor-mongering among Ustalav's superstitious citizens.

HISTORY OF THE ORDER

Squandering fortunes on safaris and archaeological expeditions into the dark heart of Garund, Aldus Canter was among the most famous gentleman adventurers of his age. Rumored to be cursed after the disastrous looting of Thutmoset IV's tomb in 3985 AR, the future count was given up for lost when a pyramid-plundering expedition in Osirion's Parched Dunes disappeared later that year.

Aldus reappeared in Vieland 3 years later a changed man, claiming knowledge of lost esoteric rites and ancient mysticisms learned from an angelic mentor. According to his accounts, Aldus discovered a stone sepulcher uncovered by a raging sandstorm, and within found immortal sages who venerated a desiccated angel named Tabris, the possessor of torn scrolls Aldus claimed held the mysterious annals of creation. For 3 years, Aldus learned the cabal's secret language and communed with the angel, absorbing the knowledge and philosophies of the mystics. Aldus claimed the sages sent him forth, newly enlightened, to act as their mortal messenger on Golarion. Some conspiracy theorists contest that his story of these "secret masters" is an imaginative fallacy concocted by the count to bring fortune to his ailing estate. Others believe the "angel" was instead a clever devil sent to corrupt mortals with diabolical influence, or that Aldus poisoned a divine warden to claim guarded secrets for himself.

Regardless of the truth of such criticism, Aldus attracted a devout following of young nobles hungry for his esoteric ramblings, and finally published his coded theories in a folio

RECITATIONS

Order members who subscribe to the society's philosophical beliefs benefit greatly from the mental disciplines. Depending on her station, a member in good standing may recall the following meditative recitations, presented in the Ancient Osiriani parlance of the Order. These recitations serve as commonly repeated maxims, passwords, and methods for members to identify one another.

Ab Sek, Abet Sahu: *Once mine, always yours* refers to the sharing of knowledge between members and the philosophy that knowledge held by one is transitory, but when committed to the society's charge, lasts forever.

Het Aaru Muut: Reflecting the Order's belief that *avored is brevity*, this phrase summarizes the teaching that adherents live minutes ahead of plebeians ignorant of their society's philosophy.

Khu Ba Heteph: An Order motto meaning *seek and you shall find* suggests not just the society's endless search for knowledge and enlightenment, but also the pervasiveness of the group's influence and members' commitment to aid one another.

Nib Imnet Hem Maa: An ancient Osirian recitation meaning *remember what is learned*, this motto teaches that all knowledge is valuable, and worth recording and sharing. What might be meaningless trivia to one might further the research or save the life of another.

Sek Ahmet Thul Khof: The moral *secrets kept remain mine* reminds members of their vows of secrecy. This sacrosanct mantra is repeated at the end of every gathering of Order members, but takes on a more ominous meaning to those expelled from the society, as this is the only phrase members are allowed to speak to such exiles.

known as the *Lost Gospels of Tabris*, a curious amalgamation of Osirian mysticisms, Pharasmin catechisms, and Varisian occult traditions. The text outlined the first of nine stations, or paths, to nurture one's inner divine spark in preparation for a holy communion upon death. Further revelations were carefully disseminated based on a member's financial contributions to the cabal, and membership was restricted to landed gentry under Aldus's sway. Many noble sons fled as public sentiment turned against the Order in 3999, when a mob of angry citizens interrupted an orgiastic new year rite at the mysterious ruins known as the Spiral Cromlech, thwarting what some said appeared to be Aldus's impending sacrifice of a celestial being.

Carion Crown

THE LOST GOSPELS

The original Osirian scrolls Aldus recovered centuries ago endlessly fascinate conspiracy theorists. Exiled Order members claim they are the lost gospel of the outcast angel Tabris, who dared to record the secret history of the multiverse—and in so doing created volumes known in part as the *Book of the Damned*. According to the Order, Tabris charged Aldus with a divine mandate to reunite this lost chapter of eternal truths with that vile book, in hopes that the merger would purge the unholy tome from Golarion. Instead, Aldus selfishly extracted secret biographies and hierarchies of primordial divine entities from the pages, and parceled out the revelations to tempt wealthy followers into funding his further research into the manuscript. While some scholars speculate they are simply another accursed chapter of the fragmented *Book of the Damned*, the Order's philosophers maintain the words vindicate the exiled angel and guide mankind toward a divine path. In his later years, Aldus became convinced the scrolls held the key to the rebirth of some primordial being, and members of the First Throne's intense interest in diabolical lore lead many to question the Order's true ambitions.

The original manuscripts are a powerful artifact in their own right, and the Order guards them in a hidden cathedral. Other society tomes, especially those containing excerpts from these texts, are always written in secret code and steeped in elusive allegory, often heavily warded with *secret page* or *sepia snake sigil* spells. Some important tomes require the presence of magical scarab brooches to diffuse the wards, and more than one over-curious initiate has fallen victim to a carelessly misplaced tome that exploded in a fiery conflagration when attempts were made to reveal the secret writings within.

Membership in the Order soon withered, as did the mental stability of Aldus, who grew increasingly erratic and consumed with repeated retranslations of his original manuscripts, and was forced to abdicate his title as count of Vieland in favor of a distant cousin. But the Order's philosophy was now cemented, as devotees tied allegorical lessons into every moment of the manuscript's discovery and assimilated the tenets of Pharamasma's church into the celestial hierarchies outlined in newly penned "lost gospels," forming the basis for the Order's teachings of ascension from the motes of base human desire toward a perfect angelic state.

The shrunken and exclusive Order persisted until 4028, when Aldus disappeared under mysterious circumstances. His nine most devout apostles then gained control of both their founder's manuscripts and the dwindling organization. This event, known as the Elect of Nine, marked a new era, and under this new leadership the Order opened its doors to invitees willing to follow the organization's philosophies, and wealthy enough to afford the society's annual dues. The Order began quietly funding the construction of temples, libraries, colleges, and asylums for war-scarred veterans. With this new benevolent facade, worthy nobles once more flocked to the philosophical teachings of the semi-secret society, and its wealth and influence spread across Ustalav.

MEMBERSHIP

Since its inception, Esoteric Order members have enjoyed the benefits of an influential social club with powerful connections. While not all members are landed gentry, all are expected to behave themselves as polite, respectful citizens and contribute meaningfully to society. Weekly meetings are held on Oathday and are known as cathedrals, the term referring to both the assembled group and their meeting hall, whether it be a former church, a hunting lodge, or a tavern cellar. Members are also expected to attend services of Pharamasma and pay her homage, although a member's worship of other gods is not precluded.

To those rare non-members granted audience to Esoteric Order ceremonies, the strange rites, bizarre trappings, and unusual call-and-responses from the assembly can be bewildering. These rituals are elaborate affairs where even mundane business such as tithing, dues, reading of minutes, and regular correspondence with other cathedrals involves a great deal of ceremonial pomp, with each action following strict bylaws related to metaphorical lessons about personal salvation. The rituals have enlivened rumors of occult associations, an observation bolstered by the rule that all members attend in full regalia—fanciful embroidered accoutrements such as elaborate robes, gloves, aprons, and headgear. Meetings are followed by lectures from respected members, such as professional surgeons performing an autopsy on a dead manticores or alchemists demonstrating the Order's principles through metaphysical experimentation. Typically the cathedral then adjourns to a prepared feathall or smoking salon where members congregate and trade favors with an understanding of guaranteed reciprocity, no matter what a member's profession may be.

During the week, cathedrals host a variety of activities for members, such as philosophical workshops, study groups, or social dinners marking Pharamasma's holy days. Most cathedrals have attached private taverns for the

ESOTERIC ORDER OF THE PALATINE EYE

exclusive use of members wishing to socialize. Seances are a popular pastime, as are mummy unwrapping parties, where Osirian mummies are slowly unveiled, their dried skin afterward ground into a delicate powder and brewed as an intoxicating tea served to attendees.

Members in higher standing hold secretive, private meetings based on an esoteric calendar cycle meaningful only to those well-steeped in the Order's history in undisclosed locations, such as the dark catacombs of persecuted and burned cathedrals or the crypts of founding families. Such meetings delve deeper into the Order's hidden mysteries and guide these elect members toward some divine communion or celestial ascendancy.

CODES & PHILOSOPHIES

Central to the Palatine Eye's theology is an ordered path of learning, divided into nine steps of ascendancy, known as stations, emulating a supposed celestial hierarchy of angels. The separation between stations exists to encourage ambition and obscure motivations as well as to conceal the group's activities in the eyes of conspiracy theorists, unsympathetic religions, and occasionally the law.

While the original gospels recovered by Aldus Canter are only accessible to high-ranking members, the tracts have inspired myriad writings espousing the Order's beliefs. Aldus's original *Lost Gospels* outline immortal philosophies and hierarchies, creating a system for members to seek divine knowledge, prepare their bodies to contain that knowledge, and nurture their lives to release their illuminated souls upon death. Texts such as the *Cromlech Catechisms* and *Issachar's Mysteries of Order* further promote this philosophical self-awareness, and adherents believe that within the human vessel lies a divine spark that craves reunification with the primordial celestial motes of the upper planes. Only through an ordered life path can members ascend to higher stations, both in their mortal lifetimes and their afterlives. Of course, the influence of membership alone is often enough to promote the idea that a member's successes are due to these beliefs, further encouraging the member's continued financial contributions to the Order.

These teachings are often illustrated through metaphor and allegory, and the untrained find it almost impossible to understand these writings without initiation in the Order's ways, even with the use of language-deciphering magics.

The metaphorical path to enlightenment is displayed in cathedrals on 18 tiled mosaics known as Stations Above and Below, nine of which are mounted above eye-level, with the remaining nine worked into the floor. The stations above depict an everyman figure growing in power, wealth, and adornment as the mosaic sequence continues and the character follows the Order's teachings. The nine stations below begin their sequence with this idealized, enlightened everyman straying from the true path; as the stages progress, he is stripped of powers and gifts, demonstrating the ignorance of the uninitiated, or dire warnings to those who would betray the Order.

APPEAL & INITIATION

Membership in the Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye is by invitation only, with aspirants well-vetted both socially and magically—their potential peers investigate embarrassing dalliances or past transgressions that might reflect badly on the society. Recruits must display a willingness to defer to higher stations, and a desire to learn universal truths of the celestial realms. As a lawful neutral organization, the Order recruits members of sympathetic lawful mindset, although opinions on good and evil vary between cathedrals. Clergy of Pharasma are accepted without exception.

An aspirant spends his first 3 years as an acolyte, regardless of outside social station, representing the trial of Aldus Canter in the desert. Acolytes pay the annual dues of the Order's first full station, and learn the Order's cryptic codes and the secret language of sphinxes in order to properly converse in the meeting's intricate preambles. After indoctrination, acolytes are inducted into full membership in an elaborate ceremony, ascend to the Third Throne, and receive the common title of Most Worthy Angelic Prince, the Order's first station.

A cathedral's highest-ranking master orchestrates initiations, also presided over by the sarcophagus-bound, mummified corpse of a respected deceased member. After exhaustive scripted exchanges between the master and the acolyte, members spin the blindfolded apprentice about so he may "wander the desert of ignorance" seeking a pair of loosely-chained doors that must be ceremonially opened. The initiate, master, and sarcophagus pass through the portal, where the presiding master uses the corpse as the target of a *ventriloquism* spell with a ceremonial bone rod



Carion Crown

and speaks as though he were the corpse. The initiate then asks three scripted questions of the “corpse,” receiving whispered replies. The last question asked is always, “What shall I be called?” and the corpse grants an extravagant society name of dubious Ancient Osirian origin such as “Alexdrandantalus,” “Nebuzaradan,” or “Seaxolomeus.” The final rite involves breaking off the corpse’s lower jaw, then cremating it in a sacred crucible before the assembled congregation to forever silence the corpse. The acolyte is then clothed in full regalia and rises to take a seat among his new brethren.

The first station affords the Order’s full benefits, and thereafter ambition within the society is limited only by enthusiasm to pursue the Order’s philosophy and the amount of dues the member might afford, although members rarely rise in station more than once annually. The highest levels have reserved membership, with the number of seats fixed and openings occurring only when a seat is vacated by ascension, expulsion, or death. Such is the complete indoctrination of the Order’s members that any who betray the group by teaching the Order’s codes, secrets, or sigils to outsiders immediately lose any organizational benefits gained due to their membership. Expulsion from the Order is swift, and former treacherous members are known to have mysteriously disappeared.

Cathedrals & Congregations

Some imposing, others unassuming, the Esoteric Order’s cathedrals are the grand meeting halls where members congregate. While varying in size and opulence, cathedrals typically share common elements of metaphorical significance. Stone sphinxes often flank the entrance, and imposing, golden-chained wooden doors bar entry to meeting chambers by the uninitiated, with the Order’s prominent symbol sometimes serving as a *glyph of warding*. Members arrive for meetings led by the highest-ranked member, and the doors are opened from within by a member performing a vigil known as a wake, who is locked within to guard the cathedral between meetings. Blinding light bathes the assembly, who are greeted with the phrase, “Who seeks knowledge within this sepulcher?” The members then enter and begin their congregation.

Historically, the Order held meetings in Pharama’s churches, and tradition dictates cathedrals do all they can

to follow similar floor plans—though many are restricted by the confines of existing structures and subterranean spaces. When created to the Order’s preferences, a large, central nave known as the Grand Congregation is a cathedral’s most prominent chamber. Tessellated floors lined with stepped wooden pews give way to nine steps that lead to an imposing, judicial-style bench, behind which preside the cathedral’s nine highest-ranked members. Stout doors lead to the meeting chambers, archives, and wood-paneled salons that lie beyond, and to the crypts that inevitably lie below.

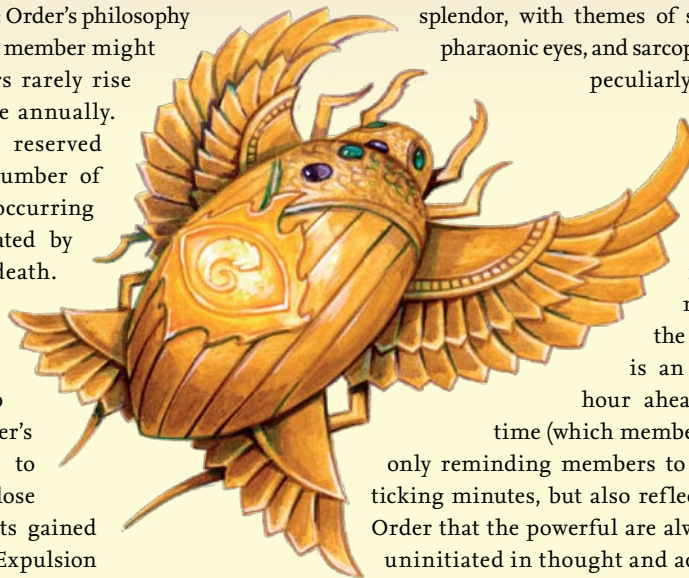
The Esoteric Order’s symbolism decorates every flat surface of the meeting halls, typically in gaudy, faux-Osirian splendor, with themes of scarabs, pyramids, blazing pharaonic eyes, and sarcophagi being most prevalent, peculiarly mixed with the symbols of Pharama. Everywhere the blank stares of moldering taxidermied shapes loom, including the stuffed and mounted familiars of noted deceased members. Displayed above the presiding members’ bench is an imposing clock, set one hour ahead of the outside world’s time (which members call plebeian time), not only reminding members to make the most of time’s ticking minutes, but also reflecting the mentality of the Order that the powerful are always one step ahead of the uninitiated in thought and action.

Cathedrals of Note

The Order’s tremendous wealth has resulted in the establishment of cathedrals across the breadth of Ustalav and beyond, and the society’s philosophies have even subtly inspired the architecture of entire cities, such as the sweeping curved streets of Lepidstadt. Lacking a central meeting hall, members assemble in noble estates, catacombs, crypts, and even taverns.

Haraday Theater: When the Ustalavic capital moved from Ardis to Caliphass, the Order quickly shifted its resources and established a cathedral in Ustalav’s new seat of power. Housed inside a disused theater, the Caliphass cathedral also contains a library of obscure and recondite lore in its basement, known as the Esoteric Archives.

Necropolis of the Faithful: The sprawling catacombs surrounding the High Temple of Pharama in Sothis host an extremely secretive sect of the Order led by high priest Inebni Andabar, a seraph in the Order. The sect gathers at dusk among the limestone crypts housing the remains of the Order’s founders; these catacombs are said to house a source of divine power.



ESOTERIC ORDER OF THE PALATINE EYE

Ventriloquist's Pulpit: The seat of the Palatinate of Vieland's ruling council, this domed administration building in Lepidstadt once served as the offices of the region's ruling counts, including Aldus Canter himself. Although the building was publicly scheduled for demolition after the land's move from aristocratic rule, the Palatine Eye halted its destruction, thus saving one of their oldest cathedrals, hidden beneath the foundations. Aside from the meeting halls common to most cathedrals, Ventriloquist's Pulpit holds numerous hidden chambers constructed to the unusual and exacting specifications of the Order's founder, with some members even claiming that whole floors lie beneath the currently used cellars, including vaults of scroll-wrapped mummies and a prison for holding creatures with no need for food.

SYMBOLISM BY DEGREES

The Order's mysterious symbols represent metaphorical keystones along members' ascendancy toward divine truth. Clever PCs might learn to spot a member in outside society by the recognition of subtle sigils embroidered onto everyday clothing or worked into jewelry. The most important and pervasive symbols follow.

The Apostolic Tome: This symbol of a large book represents concealed knowledge, a direct representation of Canter's original gospels. The book's decayed state represents the inevitable decay of secrecy as time progresses and people's souls weather. Shown open, this symbol represents shared fellowship, while a closed book represents ignorance or forbidden mysteries.

The Chained Door: Usually depicted as chained doors burst from within by the blinding flames of enlightenment, this symbol serves as an invitation for all seeking knowledge to enter for guidance. Chained or shut doors represent closed-mindedness, and mark locations unfriendly to the Order or hint of concealed knowledge within.

The Palatine Eye: The most pervasive of the society's symbols, the blazing Palatine Eye gazes from the back of a golden scarab upon the breadth of Golarion, piercing all shadow to seek the light of truth. Only with wise scrutiny can hidden knowledge be unveiled, and the staring eye represents the search for fellowship in the desert of ignorance and the ascendancy toward truth. A closed eye represents death and ignorance.

The Sepulcher: Often marking secret archives or storehouses of knowledge sympathetic to the Order, the sepulcher represents the holy houses of information and buildings sympathetic to the gathering of divine insight. A symbol of a ruined sepulcher represents mysteries destroyed by treacherous revelation.

The Withered Hand: Typically shown with various numbers of extended digits, the withered hand reminds members that secrets should be taken to the grave,

and symbolizes the trials of learning the Order's path. Different numbers of outstretched digits denote various stages in the acquisition of forbidden knowledge, and can convey different meanings to members who correlate the number of digits with allegorical lessons, allowing the conveyance of secret messages.

THE ORDER IN THE CAMPAIGN

The Order's mysterious machinations rarely play out in public, and the society can serve as either an aloof protagonist or a subtle antagonist. So secret are the group's ambitions that adventurers may be working for them and never know it, or may be aided by the society one day only to find their efforts mysteriously thwarted the next. GMs should strive to keep an air of secrecy around the Order's ambitions and true motives.

Characters as Members: Adventurers are a valuable commodity to Ustalavic aristocrats more interested in court intrigue than sullyng their hands with such base tasks as dangerous explorations. Important members might approach parties to trade information or money in exchange for performing tasks necessary to the Order. While initiation is long, and entire adventuring careers can begin and end before a PC is approved for membership, GMs who wish to allow PCs membership may begin the game with characters on the precipice of initiation, or allow for exceptions to this rule or honorary memberships for those who show devotion to the Order with especially dangerous tasks.

Enemies of the Order: The Palatine Eye opposes or has designs upon numerous competing organizations. Among these are diabolic cults, which the Order remains vigilant against, as several high-ranking members of the Order have fallen victim to temptation and turned to the worship of devils. In Ustalav, where the cults of Dispatar, Lorcan, and the malebranche Alichino prove especially tenacious, the Order seeks to bring such blasphemous worship to light where it might be stamped out. The faith of Norgorber and his preoccupation with secrets contradicts much of the Order's philosophy. In most cases the society avoids members of this religion, but it has lost multiple members and valuable discoveries to a lethal group of secret-hoarding assassins known as the Anaphexia. Given the society's interest in guarding the lands and people of Ustalav, the Order also opposes groups and nations that might bring the homeland to harm, such as the hordes of Belkzen, fanatics of Razmiran, necromancers of the Whispering Way, and even overly ambitious knights from Lastwall—to say nothing of countless other menaces within the country's borders. At any point, members serving as the eyes and instruments of the Order might hire or manipulate adventurers to further the society's goals.

Carion Crown



Guilty Blood; 2 of 6

Decay by Degrees

What had been a blood smear began to run, dribbling down the whitewashed door, trailing a sticky shadow. Whatever scrape was accentuating my banging with bursts of pain hardly registered as I railed upon the author's darkened porch. I was shouting, but only caught snippets of my own pleas as they rebounded off the solid door, echoing with the same hollow, desperate inefficacy as my bursts of frantic knocking. The question of how long I would go on banging at a probably empty house began to form in one of the few still lucid districts of my mind. Gradually it dawned upon me, the sickening depth of the desperation that brought me howling like a lunatic to the threshold

of a stranger's home. I knew I had nowhere else to go, and the first twinge of a shrinking, helpless sensation began to crowd my fear. I felt it coming at last, a chill panic. I was going to scream.

The faintest creak of a door latch being withdrawn spared the final tattered remnant of my composure.

The door opened no more than the finest crack, revealing nothing but a column of absolute dark and the slight glint of multiple door chains. No sound issued forth—no greeting, no challenge, nothing.

"Miss Kindler?" I hazarded, straining to see inside. "I'm so sorry to... call... at such an inexcusable hour. I'm Laurel Cylphra. I need—"

DECAY BY DEGREES

“Something terrible,” interrupted a voice like a rusty, slowly drawn knife. I halted, momentarily unsure of what was said.

“Excuse—” But I was cut off again.

“You were blithering about ‘something terrible.’ You wouldn’t be referring to your manners, mayhap?”

“I’m sorry to wake you, ma’am, but—”

“But still you’re going on. You’ve gone to greater lengths than a drunk would, and if you’re a thief you’re going about it all wrong—so what is it? And be brief.”

I understood that I had roused the woman, but this reception was not quite what I expected. Somewhat sobered by the chiding voice rasping from the dark, I tried to be both concise and reasonable-sounding—goals very much at odds.

“Yes, ma’am. I was at Evercrown earlier tonight, with others. We trespassed upon one of the resting places... the countess’s family’s mausoleum. We woke something there accidentally, something lingering from one of the crypt’s residents. When we tried to flee it... it was terrible. It cut down two I was with. I ran. There was nowhere else....” I had done well keeping the tremble out of my voice, but choked on the memory of that final horror—of Sayn and Garamand death’s and the terror in Liscena’s eyes as I fled, leaving her to the apparition.

“Two with you, eh? Quite a minx. I suppose you’ve learned better for future trysts, hum?” A dusty chuckle followed from inside.

I gaped. She was making a joke. I was retelling the most terrifying incident of my life, still shuddering from it in fact, and the only person I could think of to help me, a stranger and a spinster, was making quips at my expense. Certainly I was imposing. Certainly I was trying to cast my plight in a sympathetic light—or, at least, trying to avoid presenting myself as too much of a criminal. But I expected my reception to be met with something other than dismissal. Perhaps I’d been deluding myself.

“Oh, come now girl, show some spine,” the disembodied voice chided. “You’ve had a bad turn and come through it. I’m sorry about your friends, but obviously the Lady has more in store for you. Count yourself lucky and go home. You’ll be more thankful for your luck come the morning.”

That said, the door crept shut by the slightest degree. Immediately I slid the toe of my boot into the gap, jamming it open. Did she seriously take me for some churl, some stranger come to her doorstep by accident, hoping for a pat on the head as she prayed to Pharasma for a brighter tomorrow?

The beginnings of annoyance helped steady my resolve, and I hoped my voice as well. “Ma’am, I came to ask your help, I thought you might—”

She cut me off again. “If it’s help you want, or a crime you wish to report, I can direct you to the Carpenter

Street Watch garrison. Otherwise I don’t know how you think I can be of service.”

My brows furrowed as a frustrating possibility came to mind. “You *are* Ailson Kindler, correct?”

There was a long pause, and a sound that might have been a sigh.

“Yes. Though I favor being held at such a disadvantage nearly as little as I favor being awake at this hour,” came the eventual retort. At least she was talking; you don’t ask the name of someone you’re going to slam the door on. I withdrew my boot.

“I’m Laurel Cylphra. This isn’t how I’d preferred we meet, ma’am, but I’m familiar with your writing and your expertise in matters... extraordinary. I’d hoped you might help me figure a way to right what I had a part in putting wrong tonight.”

“Cylphra,” she seemed to test the name, searching for its place in some mental file. “Perhaps you should start by telling me what actually happened tonight.”

The “accidental” clatter of the tea salver on the marble-topped end table next to me startled me awake. It took a moment to remember where I was, and I took in Kindler’s disarming sitting room again. It was what one might expect the tearoom of a spinster in her seventies to look like, with the collected knickknacks and curios of a lifetime displayed amid copious lace and porcelain. Yet, at the same time, it was obvious Ms. Kindler was more than some widow enjoying a slow, melancholy slide toward death. Rather than the portraits of lost loved ones or chintzy collectables, her shelves bore the wildest range of oddities, rarities, and grotesqueries. Upon a shelf laden with heavy books—several bearing Ms. Kindler’s own name as author—leered a fierce tribal totem, while above it a stand for test tubes supported several slender vials of fluids, gnarled lengths of wood, and silken flowers. Over the mantle hung an old but quite sharp-looking black spear, along with a faded portrait of four eclectic travelers in the rose garden of a sinister chateau. A sideboard displayed the skull of some fanged monstrosity between pieces of painted flatware, and an ancient tome supported a bowl of dried leaves and fruit. Even the tea set from which Kinder absently poured was a weird sort of treasure, bearing the knotting shapes of wingless golden dragons upon porcelain finer than eggshell.

I remembered retelling Ms. Kindler my story—twice, in fact, after all the questions she’d had—before dozing off. I had the feeling of being interrogated while recounting the evening’s incident, not so much because she seemed to blame me for anything or even disapprove of my actions, but more because with each questioned nuance I felt as though I were giving away more than I’d meant. By the end my plays for sympathy had come to little, and I felt

Carion Crown

like I'd unintentionally presented myself as nothing more than a girl who'd run scared when she'd gotten beyond her depth. That idea pissed me off—mostly because after my actions I couldn't say it wasn't true. The past evening, its recounting, and my hammering conscience had exhausted me so that I'd fallen asleep on Ms. Kindler's stiff settee when she'd stepped out for a moment.

She was more fully dressed than she'd been earlier, her hair pulled back in a loose iron-gray bun, her dress's high collar and long sleeves accentuating her thinness. There wasn't much to distinguish her from any other old maid. She seemed worn and nearly used up. Her conservative, stiffly starched clothing hid most of her skin, but what did show seemed less a part of her and more like wrinkled sheets festooned upon a drying rack too small for them. At some point a sour look had pinched her face and held tight, giving her the perpetually disapproving



“Altogether, not the imposing adventuress I'd imagined.”

countenance of a Pharasmin priestess. Altogether, not the imposing adventuress I'd imagined. But the details gave me some hope. Her insistent questioning and even her unappreciated humor revealed a mind still very much active and alert, and through her silver-rimmed spectacles, her gray eyes seemed undulled by the tarnish of nostalgia and regret.

She put one of her delicate teacups into my hands. It wasn't filled with tea, but rather thick black coffee. I muttered thanks, brushing the sleep from my eyes and taming a few stray hairs.

“It's well after dawn,” she said pointedly, filling her own cup, half from the matching teapot and half from a crystal decanter of brown liquid on the table. The decanter was nearly empty. “Probably best to be up and about.”

Daintily taking a seat across from me, she scrutinized me patiently, watching me like an opponent in some game or—perhaps more aptly—like an unwelcome guest. I returned her look. A long moment of tea-sipping passed.

“Well?” I finally came to it.

“Well, that's it, it seems.” She took a long swig from her cup. “It's been lovely to chat with you, dear, but now it's time to be on your way home. Do call again—perhaps during more respectable hours.”

“Ms. Kindler!” I straightened in my seat, momentarily thinking I'd mistaken my impression of her shrewdness. “What about what I've told you? What of the spirit at Evercrown?”

“Exactly what I'm thinking of, dear.” Neither her tone nor her manner changed. “Best to be off. There's nothing to be done.”

“Nothing to be done?” I repeated, incredulous, the already forgotten teacup in my hands clattering, spilling a bit into the saucer.

“If you're truly that concerned, I might suggest taking a bit of a holiday,” she continued, unvexed. “Do you have family in Caliphas? Or Karcau? Both are really quite lovely this season, and I find a bit of time along the water often soothes my nerves.”

“A holiday!? How can—” I began, and the sound of my own shrill voice in the close room halted me. Pulling in a long breath, I paused and tried again, swift but not frantic. “Ms. Kindler, I apologize, but you don't seem to understand. My concern hasn't been for myself, but for others. I saw a terrible thing last night. A terrible thing that by all that is right shouldn't be. It's about in the cemetery at my fault, and who knows what hurt it might cause. I came for your advice, as I've heard tell you've faced down such things before. I need to know how so I can do the same.”

From her look I wasn't sure that she'd comprehended. She didn't seem sour or insulted, but rather disappointed,

DECAY BY DEGREES

or perhaps slightly sad. The look was gone with a shift of her posture as she set down her cup.

“Ms. Cylphra. I think it’s you who doesn’t understand.” Her voice was even, her gray eyes like silver through the sheen of her spectacles. “I am giving you my advice—advice from a long life that’s seen many sad things. Leave this be and go. Go home, or if your conscience won’t let you, go far away. In either case, let this drop.”

I’d had enough. This surely wasn’t what I’d come for, and I’d obviously mistaken my hostess completely. I stood and bit my lip to keep back my words—but didn’t bite hard enough. “You know, you’re nothing like what they say about you. I’d heard all your stories were based on your life, but—” I looked at the very old woman and gave my most withering scoff. She watched me, seemingly unperturbed—what discouraged amorous barflies apparently held little insult for her. I made my way to the door.

She stood properly, coming to see me out, “Quite true, Ms. Cylphra, but there it is, and there’s nothing to be done about it.”

The door was open and I was back on the porch with the morning’s early rays spilling sidelong through the cool mist. With the night dispelled, I considered other options aloud. “I should have gone to the church to begin with. They’ll know how to handle something like this.”

A sharp laugh pursued me. Looking back, Ms. Kindler was standing in the door.

“Oh, they’ll know. But I doubt they’ll believe a stray cat like you,” she chuckled dismissively. “And even if they check into your story, they’ll hold you for a graverobber while they do—and they’d quickly find they were right to. The Pharasmins deal mercifully with the dead, but tend to be less so with the living.”

I halted on the steps for only an instant, half turning and throwing up a hand in frustration. “What, then? Just run off like you say? Feh!” Doing my best to look like I had a direction, I marched down the remaining steps, “I’ll handle this myself. Good day, Ms. Kindler.”

I hardly heard her response, but something in her tone, something wistful, halted me. “You’re not going to let this drop, are you?”

“I think I’ve been clear about that,” I shot back.

“Well, I can’t help you—” she started distantly, but it was my turn to cut her off.

“You’ve made that more than obvious.” I took another step.

“But if you’re not going to be satisfied until you’ve had a lick at this,” she said evenly, an eyebrow raised archly, “I know someone who might.”

When I was a child, they still called the neighborhood Merridweigh Gardens. I remember attending a lawn

party at one of the estates there—wandering off with my brother, staining our hands and faces amid a patch of wild blackberries and upsetting mother mightily. I was embarrassed at the time, but returning I kept a lookout for any hint of that berry patch.

There was nothing. The life had drained out of the community along with the snooty manor owners and their money. What had been Merridweigh Gardens, a cluster of the wealthiest, most envied addresses in Ardis, was now just what folks called “Mud Way.”

No doubting that the name was apt. With none left to defend against it, the Vhatsuntide River had sought to reclaim the grounds along its banks, conspiring with the frequent rains to drench the earth and undermine anything that stood without roots. Puddles sprawled into entire muddy lakes, fueling a marshy degeneracy as once-manicured lawns and bordering woods degraded into fields of weeds and snarls of tangled shade trees. Patches of irregularly scattered cobbles suggested the routes fine carriages once rolled along, leading inevitably to the picked-over carcasses of manor houses and the remains of attendant structures. Over it all hung the pervasive musk of wet earth and rotting leaves, making things seem older, and I felt as though I walked among ancient ruins rather than properties abandoned only recently.

Abandoned, but perhaps not deserted. I’d heard too many stories of Mud Way not to be wary. Stories of homes turned into the courts of cruel gangs and used as the settings of crimes too raucous to commit within city walls. There were also rumors of looters seeking to scrape the last flecks of gilding from overlooked banisters and high molding, only to meet terrible ends at the fangs of beasts and hungry bogeymen. On hearing most of these tales far from their setting I’d cynically dismissed them. Now, here, alone, I chose my path carefully, as though even the most fanciful rumors might be true.

Keeping to the thin tree lines that once separated estate from estate, I prowled as swiftly as I could, hoping not to encounter anyone else along my way. The Watch didn’t patrol Mud Way anymore, and anyone I might run into likely had a purpose more nefarious than my own. That didn’t speak well of the one upon whom I was calling, but I knew how nobles were with their homes and to what lengths pride would drive some to keep up even the most easily contradicted appearances. I had no doubt that my host, the Mr. Barttley that Ms. Kindler had suggested I call upon, would be an eccentric, but to resist the rot that permeated the area—both the vegetative and human varieties—his home must be a fortress.

It was nearing noon when I came to “Barttley Manor,” a wreck of especial decrepitude threatening to topple into the Vhatsuntide. The estate grounds had transformed into a morass, soggy earth weakening the ground and the

Carion Crown

grip of trees, fence posts, and foundations alike, giving everything an unnerving, off-kilter appearance. The manor house was the greatest victim, losing its footing and resettling unevenly. The whole structure looked as though it were undertaking an impossibly slow drunken reel, staggering backward before its inevitable pitch to the ground.

But what marked the ruins among the others were its furnishings, the ones scattered about what of its yard hadn't fallen away into the river. Not garden furniture, but carved tables and a pile of sturdy dining room chairs, a dry sink spilling shattered ceramics, a mossy divan, and more, all scattered upon the weedy lawn as though partially carried off but discarded with frantic haste. Where every other home I'd circled was a wreck, they were deliberately emptied wrecks. Something here had kept the looters at bay.

With each step toward the sagging house my boots sank slightly deeper into the soggy earth and I indulged speed over caution, imagining myself sinking into the swampy lawn if I tarried too long. I reached a front corner and the house leaned above me, its weathered timbers scaly with the scabby remnants of flaking paint, facade riddled with shadowy cracks welcoming all manner of beetles, worms, and earwigs. Especially earwigs—an infestation of the ugly brown bugs swarmed in mindless whorls, poking antennae and clawed anuses from seemingly every split panel and dark gap.

Doing my best to avoid touching the house itself, disgusted by what thrived inside its moldy walls and the suggestion of even fouler things within, I made my way to the remains of the porch and with a single high step mounted the platform. The sturdy front door remained trustworthy, settling in its frame only slightly and holding a good lock. Not a great lock, though—some inexpert prowler had obviously been at it, leaving the broken end of a metal pick within the keyhole. It took some convincing, but lending my shoulder to it, the door reluctantly ground open.

With the sun still high in the sky, gray light filtered into the house through myriad cracks and crusty windows. The invasion of air through the opened front door sent unaccustomed eddies through the entry hall, throwing heavy motes of dust through the room, filling it with a cloud of must and old mold smells. The entry had been emptied, with only a stained stairwell reaching to a second-floor balcony above. Empty doorframes opened off the hall, the rooms beyond either empty or littered with the wreckage of toppled furnishings. Although shadows clung to the ceiling high above, the house's interior still managed to feel claustrophobic, as though the stale air were decaying along with the memories of past lavishness.

The creak of an upstairs floorboard whined through the stillness, the noise muffled by the thick dust. The second floor coveted its shadows more than the first, hiding everything behind a row of rounded balusters. If the noise was anything more than just the complaining of the old house itself, I decided it was probably just some small animal—a rat or raccoon—or perhaps a squatter, nothing more dangerous. Or maybe even Mr. Barttley himself. I smirked. My errand was growing more ludicrous by the minute, and from the state of things it was obvious nothing more discerning than scavengers or transients still made a home of the place. But regardless, I hadn't come all this way to leave my curiosity unsatisfied.

I'd halfway climbed the creaking steps, reaching a wide landing at its midpoint, when a mangy hunting dog surprised me, appearing from around the corner at the stairs' summit. It didn't so much pad onto the balcony as tumble, pitching like a marionette mastered by a manic child, shuddering and threatening to collapse with every awkward motion. Its filthy head lolled toward me, though what gazed down squirmed in the dog's eye sockets.

Sick? Crippled? My mind recoiled though the possibilities, dismissing each for more uncanny explanations as disgust seized my limbs. Had I been cursed? Did nothing lie dead in this damnable city anymore? The bug-eaten remains of the dog carcass's muzzle peeled back, revealing rows of shattered fangs. A dry rasp issued over its limp, dusty tongue, a noise that might have been a growl had the thing been whole. For the second time in as many days, the primitive demand for blind flight shrieked through my mind. Had I not spent the past hours reliving my retreat from the Venacadahlia crypt, I might have fled again, but the built-up frustration and indignance fought it back. If I was to be murdered, it would be for pride, not cowardice.

The corpse flung itself—a patchwork of fur scraps, dangling ligaments, and flaking bone shards—down the stairs. Dodging against the landing's banister, I reeled for an instant as the railing gave against my weight, threatened to collapse, but ultimately held. The canine tangle of knotted hair and broken limbs landed at my heels with a clamor of sickening snaps, its teeth and exposed ribs scoring the wood with equal ferocity. It didn't bother to regain its footing, and in an instant was lunging at me sidelong, as though whatever foulness enlivened it still saw no difference between gnashing fangs and the jagged split in its side. Its wild spill had given me just enough time to vault halfway up the next flight of steps, and when its gnashing rot lurched toward me I held the high ground. My shout of revolted anger punctuated the impact as I spun my boot in a sweeping kick. Its body gave overmuch, my boot sinking into its splitting hide,

DECAY BY DEGREES

overbalancing it. Wildly flailing limbs went out from under the thing, sending it toppling backward into the landing's heavy wooden banister. The railing balked at this second abuse and, in a cacophony of splintering wood and scraping bones, collapsed, spilling the hound to the ground a half-story below.

I rushed up the remaining steps and turned, preparing an even more forceful kick, expecting to find the creature already loping up after me. The house's heavy silence had returned like a blanket of smothering smoke. Over the second floor railing I looked down upon the dog carcass, which now resembled a trod-upon tomato more than an animal. Several furious joints and ravenous organs twitched amid the mess of bones and dog fur, but those broken bits had lost the coordination to pursue me. For a too-long moment of morbid curiosity I tarried to watch the thing die, but its mindless struggles didn't cease. I almost pitied it as I thought of the life, whatever it was, trapped within the abomination below, condemned to wait for decay's slow release rather than death's sympathetic end.

A door's echoing slam startled me back to the moment. Cursing myself for not expecting something worse after seeing the dog-horror—and for not fleeing of my own volition when I'd had the opportunity—I snapped my attention down the hallway, hand quick for my dagger. Slits of dusty light streaming weakly through the patchy ceiling lit the corridor, revealing facing rows of rotted portraits and sunken doors, but otherwise blessed emptiness. Except there was something more: the simple waver of light, that of a lantern or candle, flickering from the hall's end.

The house couldn't be on fire—the tinderbox would have gone up in moments had even a spark strayed across its floorboards. Someone was actually here. I'd given up on finding Mr. Barttley shortly after laying eyes upon the manor, entering only to see what kind of jest Ms. Kindler had sent me upon. Expecting a fool's errand and finding a deathtrap, I shocked myself by again coming to wonder if someone might in fact be living in this wreck.

Although the complaints of the long-untrod flooring countered any attempt at stealth, I gingerly made my way down the narrow hall. When the flickering light fell upon my boots, I stood before a solid oaken door, its lower portion carved halfway through by endless clawing. Could the dog corpse have been a guard imprisoning Mr. Barttley? Or even some roaming monstrosity that had found the manor's decay to its liking, trapping the place's careless owner within? Such possibilities seemed improbable, but I'd witnessed more than my fair share of improbabilities in the past few hours. With good manners seeming a distant and potentially dangerous liability in

this ruin, I gripped the door handle and shouldered my way into the lit room without knocking.

Dozens of eyes pinned me in place, and for a startled moment I thought it'd walked into some sort of ambush. A grotesque perfume unlike the wet must that permeated the rest of the house washed over me, the malodorous twin of the stench that exploded from the kicked dog corpse. Once this room had been a library, though a leaky ceiling had ruined whole shelves and rotted out parts of the flooring, pitching much of the collection onto the floor. The trove had included more than just books, with tarnished figurines, the chipped busts of stern scholars, and stranger objets d'art scattered along the shelves, strewn across the floor, and lolling crookedly upon the walls. Yet there were new additions, inexpert taxidermies and morbid folk art worked in palettes of fur, flesh, and viscera, nailed upon exposed walls and suspended from toppled shelves by the weight of heavy albums. It was their eyes, the hollow gazes of rats and snakes and caught pigeons by the dozens, that had transfixed me, and the smell of their decay—many of the creatures had clearly been rotting for months or more—that offended my senses.

I staggered back into the hall in disgust, trying to steal a half-clear breath. At first I mistook the noise for the grating of something being drug in short, unsteady bouts across the splintering wood floor. Then the hiss exploded in insane intensity, filling the room and echoing down the hall, spilling through the manor's cracked timbers in a riot of shrill, maniac cackling.

“Did nothing lie dead in this damnable city anymore?”



Carrion Crown



Bestiary

Leaves like claws grasped me around the throat, face, and limbs, harsh fibers biting deep. In an instant I was ripped off my feet. I had the briefest glimpse of vines writhing around me, hoisting me into the canopy of mossy fronds. Then my eyes fell upon it: a thing with splinters for teeth, mold for flesh, and eyes that smoldered. Slipping soundlessly through the muck, it drew close. “My domain will be your killing ground no more,” came a voice like grinding bark. It touched my face with a touch as slight and soft as mold, and I felt the swamp invade my flesh—and begin to grow.”

—Account of the Eshirwood Warden

BESTIARY

This month's entry into the Pathfinder Bestiary takes a look at just a few of the freaks and abominations that lurk in the shadows of the supposedly enlightened city of Lepidstadt. While science and learning preoccupy many in this beacon of learning on one of Ustalav's most dangerous frontiers, beneath the veneer of scholarship lurk creatures of superstition and grim faith made flesh. Yet research into secrets humanity was never meant to know unlocks its own terrors, with monsters of science and profane magic leaping to horrifying life from the laboratories and arcane sanctums of maniacs who dare intrude upon the dominions of gods.

DOOM BETWEEN DESTINATIONS

As much as the Carrion Crown Adventure Path is about gothic vistas and facing down the terrible creatures of the night, "Trial of the Beast" reveals another component that all of the following adventures feature: travel. That's right, Carrion Crown is a road show. To aid GMs who'd like to add details and danger to their PCs' journeys, starting this month and for each of the campaign's adventures hereafter, this page will include a bit of a travel guide to the dangers along the routes the PCs are mostly to travel. This month's focus is on the route from Ravengro in the moors of Canterwall to the hilly, monolith-studded countryside of Vieland and thence to the lowlands of the county seat, Lepidstadt. Noted below are a pair of encounters that appear on the nearby encounter tables and are common to these regions of western Ustalav.

Border Guards: The western border of Ustalav abuts the savage region known as the Hold of Belkzen, leading the western counties to finance border guards to patrol their roads and frontiers for dangers. While these guards have noble mandates, some are no better than bullies empowered by wearing the nation's livery and quick to harass or extort even the most innocuous passersby. The guards near the xenophobic town of Tamrivena are most likely to be corrupt, unwarrantedly suspicious, or openly hostile—especially toward half-orcs, but also toward other non-human races and Varisian wanderers.

When encountering border guards, there's a 75% chance of the group being predominantly lawful neutral, and a 25% chance of them being neutral evil bullies. These percentages change to 50% for patrols near Tamrivena. Use the statistics for caravan guards from page 282 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* to represent patrols of border guards.

Varisian Wanderers: Though the majority of Ustalav's population consists of settled Varisians, many still embrace the wanderlust of their ancestors and cousins in Varisia to the west, with some even making seasonal journeys between the two countries. And while many are

ENCOUNTERS IN CANTERWALL

d% roll	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–18	1d6 farmers	2	GMG* 309
19–24	1 assassin vine	3	Bestiary 22
25–28	1 doppelganger	3	Bestiary 89
29–35	1 dire wolf	3	Bestiary 278
36–40	1 yeth hound	3	Bestiary 286
41–43	1 barghest	4	Bestiary 27
44–53	2d6 bandits	4	GMG* 258
54–63	1d4 bat swarms	4	Bestiary 30
64–68	1d4 yellow musk creepers	4	Bestiary 285
69–75	1d4 Varisian wanderers	4	GMG* 290
76–84	2d4 border guards	5	GMG* 282
85–87	1d6 dire bats	5	Bestiary 30
88–95	2d12 orcs	5	Bestiary 222
96–100	2d8 wolves	5	Bestiary 278

ENCOUNTERS IN VIELAND

d% roll	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–5	1 dryad	3	Bestiary 116
6–9	1 wight	3	Bestiary 276
10–17	1d4 boars	4	Bestiary 36
18–21	1d4 bugbears	4	Bestiary 38
22–30	1 owlbear	4	Bestiary 224
31–39	2d6 wolves	4	Bestiary 278
40–46	1d4 assassin vines	5	Bestiary 22
47–55	2d4 border guards	5	GMG* 282
56–62	1d8 ghouls	5	Bestiary 146
63–68	2d8 stirges	5	Bestiary 260
69–72	1 troll	5	Bestiary 268
73–78	1d4 wolverines	5	Bestiary 279
79–82	1d6 worgs	5	Bestiary 280
83–87	1d4 grizzly bears	6	Bestiary 31
88–90	1 shambling mound	6	Bestiary 246
91–93	1 will-o'-wisp	6	Bestiary 277
94–95	1 wyvern	6	Bestiary 282
96–100	1d8 Varisian wanderers	6	GMG* 290

* *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*




little more than free-spirited travelers, some are the scam artists and thieves known as Sczarni.

When encountering Varisian wanderers, there's a 30% chance the group's alignment is predominantly chaotic good, a 50% chance it's neutral, and a 20% chance the group comprises neutral evil Sczarni. There's also a 30% chance any group might include a member adept at reading the Harrow. Use the statistics for wanderers from page 290 of the *GameMastery Guide* to represent groups of traveling Varisians.

Carrion Crown

BORUTA

Piercing yellow eyes gaze from the mossy skull of this ivy-covered skeleton. Where bones should be, gnarled roots grow, and tangles of vines hang from its moldering chest like spilt viscera.

BORUTA	CR 9			
XP 6,400				
N Medium plant				
Init +6; Senses low-light vision; Perception +20				
DEFENSE				
AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural)				
hp 105 (14d8+42)				
Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +7				
Immune electricity, plant traits				
OFFENSE				
Speed 30 ft.				
Melee 2 claws +13 (1d4+3 plus grounding curse)				
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +10)				
Constant— <i>pass without trace</i>				
At will— <i>entangle</i> (DC 14)				
3/day— <i>command plants</i> (DC 17)				
1/day— <i>summon nature's ally V</i> (1 shambling mound only)				
Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +10)				
4th— <i>spike stones</i> (DC 17)				
3rd— <i>call lightning</i> (2, DC 16), <i>plant growth</i>				
2nd— <i>fog cloud</i> , <i>soften earth and stone</i> , <i>tree shape</i> , <i>wood shape</i> (DC 15)				
1st— <i>calm animals</i> , <i>detect animals or plants</i> , <i>goodberry</i> , <i>magic fang</i> , <i>speak with animals</i>				
o— <i>create water</i> , <i>detect magic</i> , <i>detect poison</i> , <i>know direction</i> , <i>mending</i>				
STATISTICS				
Str 17, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 17, Cha 16				
Base Atk +10; CMB +13; CMD 26				
Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Mobility, Natural Spell				
Skills Perception +20, Stealth +19, Survival +17				
Languages Common, Sylvan				
SQ treespeech, wild shape				
ECOLOGY				
Environment any				
Organization solitary, party (2–4), or band (2–4 borutas plus 1–3 shambling mounds)				
Treasure none				
SPECIAL ABILITIES				
Electric Fortitude (Ex) Borutas take no damage from electricity. Instead, any electricity attack used against a boruta temporarily increases its Constitution score by 1d4 points. The boruta loses these temporary points at the rate of 1 per hour.				
Grounding Curse (Su) Any living creature that takes damage from a boruta's claws must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or have hundreds of tiny seed pods injected into its body.				

These seeds grow rapidly; they explode through the victim's skin on its next turn, dealing 1d6 points of damage and entangling it as runners and vines grow from its flesh and root themselves in the ground. The victim cannot move unless it makes a DC 10 Strength check to tear the plants from the ground, but doing so also deals 1d4 points of damage to the victim. This effect lasts for 10 minutes.

Remove curse, *blight*, *diminish plants*, and similar spells instantly end this effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Treespeech (Ex) A boruta has the ability to converse with plants as if subject to a continual *speak with plants* spell, and most plants greet them with an attitude of friendly or helpful.

Wild Shape (Su) A boruta can wild shape three times per day as a 7th-level druid. In any form a boruta takes, its appearance remains plantlike, with wooden features and leaves rather than fur or feathers.

A distant cousin of shambling mounds, borutas are powerful wielders of natural magic that make their homes in marshes or wetlands, where their mysterious control over the natural environment is most useful.

Though none are sure of the specific relationship between borutas and shambling mounds, the connection is clear when comparing the two, their powers and affinity for the marshlands being the most obvious similarities. Borutas—or “swamp lords,” as they're sometimes called—resemble mossy, skeletal humans at first glance, with bonelike wooden frames, viny covering, and vivid yellow eyes. Considerably more intelligent than their shambling mound cousins, they claim wide territories—typically swamps, forests, jungles, or other lands thick with plant-life—and brook no insult to their realm. Highly defensive of the life within their lands, especially plants and thinking plant creatures, borutas view themselves as the avengers of those that can't defend themselves, and mercilessly repay destructive invaders with verdurous force. On the rare occasions when they deal peaceably with non-plant creatures, borutas cover their frightening forms with thick veils of grass or peat moss.

Borutas generally stand about 7 feet tall and weigh just over 200 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Surfacing from the dark waters of bogs and marshes, borutas are birthed from swamps and forested caves in isolated pods. Cocooned in a thick shell of reeds and swampy grasses, a boruta grows inside its own chamber until it reaches maturity, about 2 years after the emergence of the pod. Upon reaching this stage of maturity, a swamp lord breaks out of its protective shell fully grown.

Though formidable upon emergence, infant borutas are incredibly vulnerable while developing in their cocoons. If the shell-like pod is ruptured before development is

BESTIARY

complete, the boruta within ceases to grow, usually causing it to simply wither away. Few can say where borutas come from, though some claim that natural lands threatened with destruction or with strong ties to the First World produce them.

A boruta's viny flesh typically takes a greenish hue, though these colors change with the natural progression of the seasons or to otherwise blend in with the foliage of its homeland. As a boruta ages, its leaves continue to darken, and the most ancient swamp lords possess foliage almost as black as the murky waters from which they emerge. How long a boruta might survive, no one knows, as the reclusive creatures sometimes vanish into their fecund homes and aren't seen for decades. Some propose the creatures are immortal—or at least have life spans on par with the oldest trees—so long as the territory they watch over remains healthy.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Borutas hold plant and animal life in the same esteem as humans typically hold members of their own race or other sentient creatures. As sentient plants, borutas share kinship with the oldest trees and slightest blades of grass in their territories, viewing all as members of their extended family and watching over all. Their manner of thinking and philosophies differ wildly from these of humanoids, being far more fundamentally tied into the cycle of seasons and the mysterious rhythms of the earth. Borutas understand that nature is rarely calm or peaceful, and that the mere act of moving can often be disruptive or outright destructive to other organisms, yet do what they can to keep forces outside of nature from disturbing or destroying the environments of their homes. Left to their own devices, they tend to plants and vulnerable animals, commune with the oldest growth and natural creatures of their territories, and encourage new growth. Should their homes be violated, however, whether by the axes of enterprising humanoids or the depredations of rampaging monsters, borutas do all they can to prevent future

harm. Sometimes this might mean slaying a dangerous interloper, but in more extreme cases their vengeance might launch an extended campaign of natural violence against an entire community. Borutas try not to harm the innocent, but if they view certain neighboring creatures as fundamentally destructive, or are forced to choose between the lives of invaders and those of their plants, they will always side with nature. Such decisions often put borutas at odds with expanding humanoid communities, leading to tales of violent swamp monsters or evil spirits of the forest, though rarely do such stories consider the plants' points of view. Borutas are intelligent enough to reason with, but are stolid in their defense of their lands and will no more accept partial loss or brook lessened defilement of their homes than a community might assent to the murder of a mere fraction of its populace.

Borutas rarely encounter others of their kind, being born alone and never leaving their territories of their own accord. They typically find themselves at odds with humanoids, and even the most nature-sensitive elves often find them disagreeable or alien enough to bear avoidance. Druids who know of a boruta in a region typically go out of their way to placate it and serve as peacemakers between the swamp lord and the communities of other humanoids; they often preach avoidance to all who would pass through the proud plant creature's lands. Despite their similar interests in watching over nature, treants rarely share territories with borutas, preferring highly forested lands while the swamp lords tend to favor darker lands and the meaner plants of the forest. When members of the two races do share lands, they might briefly cooperate in defense of their forest, though treants typically disfavor boruta tactics, which they view as shortsighted and provocative. Fey, too, have mixed opinions of borutas, with goodly fey avoiding them, while the more neutral hold them in high regard. Yet borutas share a special alliance with shambling mounds, treating the wild plants as primitive cousins, often assembling and guiding tribelike communities of the mounds and cooperating with them to drive off those who threaten their lands.



Carion Crown

SKELETON

Bones rattle against cracked bones as this ancient, fleshless corpse clatters forth.

FOUR-ARMED MUDRA SKELETON CR 1/2



XP 200

NE Medium undead

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 4 (1d8)

Fort +0, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

DR 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword +1 (1d6+2/19–20), 3 short swords +1 (1d6+1/19–20) or 4 claws +3 (1d4+2)

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +0; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 15

Feats Improved Initiative^B, Multiweapon Fighting^B, Weapon Finesse^B

Gear 4 short swords

Sometimes called “whirlwind skeletons,” a mudra skeleton’s Dexterity increases by +4 (instead of +2), and it gains Multiweapon Fighting and Weapon Finesse as bonus feats.

SKELETAL MOUNT CR 1

CR 1



XP 400

Advanced heavy horse skeleton

NE Large undead

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+2 armor, +4 Dex, +2 natural, –1 size)

hp 9 (2d8)

Fort +0, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

DR 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee bite +5 (1d4+5), 2 hooves +0 (1d6+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 22 (26 vs. trip)

Feats Improved Initiative^B

Gear broken chain shirt barding

Skeletal mounts are normal skeletons made from combat-trained heavy horses. They often serve as mounts for necromancers or skeletal champions.

ARMORED OGRE SKELETON CR 2

CR 2



XP 600

NE Large undead

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19 (+8 armor, +2 natural, –1 size)

hp 18 (4d8)

Fort +1, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4

DR 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. base)

Melee greatclub +7 (2d8+7) or 2 claws +7 (1d6+5)

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

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 19

Feats Improved Initiative^B

Gear half-plate, greatclub

Armored skeletons are normal skeletons given heavier varieties of armor and weapons to serve as elite troops in undead armies.

SKELETAL MAGE CR 5

CR 5



XP 1,600

Human skeletal mage necromancer 3

NE Medium undead

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 38 (5 HD; 2d8+3d6+18)

Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, **DR** 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +5 (1d4+1/19–20), claw –1 (1d4) or 2 claws +4 (1d4+1) or *spectral hand* +6 touch (by touch spell)

Ranged ray +4 ranged touch (by spell)

Special Attacks channel negative energy (DC 13, 6/day, command undead only)

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +6) 6/day—grave touch (1 round)

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; concentration +6)

2nd—*ghoul touch* (DC 17), *scorching ray*, *spectral hand*

1st—*chill touch* (DC 16), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 16)

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *mage hand*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 15)

Opposition Schools Enchantment, Illusion

STATISTICS

BESTIARY

Str 12, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 16, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15

Feats Combat Casting, Command Undead, Improved Initiative^B, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell^B, Spell Focus (necromancy), Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (religion) +11, Perception +8, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +11, Stealth +10

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Undercommon
SQ arcane bond (skull)

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure NPC Gear (masterwork dagger, *cloak of resistance* +1, skull, spell component pouch, spellbook, 348 gp)

Skeletal mages are minor spellcasters (typically 5th-level or less) who have retained both their intelligence and their spellcasting abilities. These variant skeletal champions gain Silent Spell as a bonus feat. Like skeletal champions, skeletal mages cannot be created with *animate dead*—they only arise under rare conditions or through ancient, esoteric rituals.

MULTIPLYING T-REX SKELETON

CR 9



XP 6,400

NE Gargantuan undead

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0**DEFENSE****AC** 14, touch 8, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +6 natural, -4 size)**hp** 81 (18d8)**Fort** +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11**DR** 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft.**Melee** bite +20 (4d6+22)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.**STATISTICS****Str** 32, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +28; **CMD** 40**Feats** Improved Initiative^B**SQ** multiplication, powerful bite**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Multiplication (Su) When a multiplying skeleton is reduced to 0 hit points, its bones reform 1d4 rounds later into two smaller multiplying skeletons with half the Hit Dice of the original. Each resulting multiplying skeleton continues to reform into smaller and smaller sizes. A multiplying tyrannosaurus skeleton reforms into two Large skeletons with 9 HD each, each of which then reforms into two Small skeletons with 4 HD each. When these four Small skeletons are killed, the skeleton no longer multiplies and is finally destroyed.

Powerful Bite (Ex) A multiplying tyrannosaurus skeleton applies twice its Strength modifier to bite damage.

A multiplying skeleton reassembles itself into smaller skeletons when it is destroyed. As these smaller skeletons are themselves destroyed, they continue to multiply into even more skeletons. Once the skeleton's Hit Dice can no longer be halved or the resulting skeletons would be Tiny or smaller, the skeletons are finally destroyed. Multiplying skeletons can be created using *animate dead*, but they count as twice their normal number of Hit Dice per casting.



Carion Crown

SKIN STEALER

Dark pink flesh drawn tightly across its emaciated body, this being resembles a gaunt human stripped of its skin, its pulsing muscles completely exposed.

SKIN STEALER

CR 2



XP 600

CE Medium fey

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 18 (4d6+4)

Fort +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4



OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +5 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks sneak attack (+1d6), steal skin

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 17, **Con** 13, **Int** 16, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 16

Feats Deceitful, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +12, Disguise +16 (+26 with stolen skin), Escape Artist +10, Heal +8, Perception +7, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +10, Stealth +14; **Racial**

Modifiers +4 Disguise, +4 Heal, +4 Stealth

Languages Aklo, Common, Elven, Sylvan

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Steal Skin (Su) As a full-round action, a skin stealer may steal the skin of a creature of Small, Medium, or Large size with a roughly humanoid shape. The target creature must be dead, helpless, or willing. If the target creature is alive, the skin stealer must make a successful coup de grace attack to steal its skin. The skin stealer can don or remove a stolen skin as a move action. When wearing a stolen skin, the skin stealer takes on the likeness of the skin's original owner, including the victim's voice, build, and size, but gains none of the creature's abilities. The stolen skin grants the skin stealer a +10 bonus on Disguise checks, with none of the usual penalties for different gender, race, age, and size. Stolen skins are preserved and remain as supple as living skin. A skin stealer may only steal and use a number of skins equal to its Charisma score. The skin stealer may choose to discard unwanted skins to make room for new ones at any time; discarded skins rot and decay normally.

A sadistic being from the realm of the fey, a skin stealer is a terrifying sight to behold. These blood-red creatures resemble horrid, emaciated humans without skin, their yellowish eyes and teeth suggesting malnourishment or disease. Skin stealers suffer from no ailment, however, except for their insatiable lust for chaos and their hunger for flesh.

Hailing from the First World, skin stealers are fey bent on destruction and gruesome murder. When left to their own devices, these gangly beings are unpredictable and spontaneous; when assigned duties from some higher, stronger power, however, skin stealers prove adept at performing complex assassinations and spy work.

A skin stealer is a little over 6 feet tall and weighs about 100 pounds, though it can adjust its size to inhabit many different creatures' skins.

BESTIARY

ECOLOGY

Nightmares can come true just as readily as dreams in the First World, and the skin stealer is proof of this. A manifestation of inhabitants' fears and disdain, a skin stealer's primary desires are to deceive, murder, and rob. In a world where inconsistency is the law and little can be trusted anyway, these evil denizens only add to the overwhelming sense of paranoia many travelers feel when thrust into the magical realm of the fey.

When a powerful inhabitant of the Material Plane experiences intense feelings of distrust and maliciousness, she can unintentionally draw out a skin stealer from the First World—often whilst sleeping—under the guise of a nightmare. Thus, an unwitting evoker of such a dark being awakens cold and sweaty, unaware of the chaotic fey now causing mayhem outside her chamber walls—assuming the bandit hasn't already made off with her flesh yet.

Skin stealers possess few items of their own, as they derive absolutely no pleasure from material goods, and often times the only thing one will carry is a sharp object. Though their claws—thick and unsightly as they are—are formidable weapons, they are not ideal tools when it comes to flaying victims. Thus, many skin stealers use rusty knives or crude blades as their scalpels. Most skin stealers would revel in the agony that skinning victims alive would cause, but the simple fact of the matter is that stripping a subject's flesh is too difficult while the victim is still alive. It is out of convenience, rather than any sense of mercy, that a skin stealer slays a target before performing its barbaric reinterpretation of surgery.

Though most think of skin stealers as nothing more than mindless killing machines with a quirky habit of peeling the skin off victims, the truth is grimmer. In addition to their affinity for grisly murders, skin stealers also possess a love of trickery, delighting in the chaos they can create through impersonating political leaders they have slain or the havoc they can wreak while wearing the flesh of a trusted guard or advisor. Where a skin stealer goes, there is not only death, but confusion as well.

The techniques skin stealers employ while preparing a hide for use would inspire the envy and admiration of fur trappers if the act were not so heinous. Even more remarkable than their style of flaying, perhaps, is their supernatural ability to preserve the flesh of victims for lengthy periods of time. Skin stealers fold the fleshy suit of a victim into an impressively compact pouch that they can fit into any fist-sized pocket or pouch. Realizing the benefits of possessing multiple hides, skin stealers tend to wear clothes with numerous compartments, making adventurers and traveling merchants particularly susceptible to having their skins and outfits stolen.

Skin stealers' own flesh looks similar to the muscular layer beneath most humanoids' epidermis. This outer

layer is so taut that it allows skin to perfectly adhere to it. The malleable vocal cords of a skin stealer are located on the outside of its throat—when it dons the flesh of another being, it captures that creature's voice's tone and inflection by shaping its own neck muscles so as to fit its host's perfectly. The slightest bump or agitation may disturb the sensitive vocal lining, however, and one of the most common giveaways of a skin stealer in disguise is an abrupt crack in its speech or a shift in register.

A skin stealer does not die of old age; instead, it continually wanders whatever plane it may have found itself upon until it is slain, at which time it returns to the First World to be reborn into the cosmic energy comprising its native realm.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Often used by powerful entities of the First World as spies, assassins, and agents of havoc, skin stealers excel at espionage as well as cold-blooded murder. On the Material Plane, skin stealers are much more difficult to partner with, their lust for flesh only heightened by the plethora of new available suits. However, if one can garner the respect of a skin stealer (usually only possible through intimidation or coercion), one has found a powerful ally.

When a skin stealer emerges from the First World onto the Material Plane, it immediately tries to find a host for its horrid form, knowing full well that exposure could lead to its swift eradication. Fortunately for the wretched fey, it usually arrives via the unhindered emotions of a hapless dreamer rapt in torturous visions or night terrors. This helpless subject makes for an easy first target, and a skin stealer may inhabit this individual's flesh for several days while it gathers its bearings and studies the immediate world around it.

Skin stealers rarely stay in one spot long, however. Their love of mayhem often turns a place of peace into one of bedlam, and it behooves a skin stealer to continue alternating between different suits of skin, both to perpetuate chaos and to mask its identity. When people begin to suspect the gruesome bandit or catch it in its gory work, it hastily leaves the area in search of new, unsuspecting victims.

Skin stealers do not collaborate or work together unless a higher power forces them to do so. Their selfish predispositions and individualistic tactics make teamwork difficult, and planned assassinations tend to go better when performed by a lone skin stealer. Just as useful, though, are skin stealers who remain at their master's side, so adept are they at identifying doppelgangers and other skin stealers. As skin stealers are masters of disguise as well as flaying, few can bypass their perceptive gaze.

Carion Crown

STEWARD OF THE SKEIN

This plate-clad woman has large bird wings augmented with overlapping pieces of metal. Her armor is adorned with skulls, and her open-faced helm reveals nothing of her features but a pair of intensely-glowing eyes.

STEWARD OF THE SKEIN
CR 15

XP 51,200
N Medium outsider (extraplanar, shapechanger)

Init +7; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., *detect chaos/good/evil/law*, lifesense 60 ft., low-light vision, *see invisibility*; Perception +27

Aura fate aura

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 23, flat-footed 27 (+4 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 insight, +8 natural)

hp 199 (19d10+95); fast healing 5

Fort +15, **Ref** +20, **Will** +22

DR 10/cold iron; **Immune** electricity, death effects, petrification, **Resist** cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 26

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)

Melee 2 slam +26 (2d10+7 plus gaze)

Special Attacks gaze, tug the strands of fate

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 19th; concentration +25)

At will—*aid*, *augury*, *charm monster* (DC 20), *continual flame*, *cure light wounds*, *dancing lights*, *death ward*, *detect thoughts* (DC 18), *disguise self*, *dispel magic*, *hold monster* (DC 21), *greater invisibility* (self only), *major image* (DC 20), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)

3/day—*breath of life*, *chain lightning* (DC 22), *globe of invulnerability*, *greater dispel magic*, *heal*, *limited wish* (DC 23), *plane shift*, *prismatic spray* (DC 23), *undeath to death* (DC 22), *wall of force*

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 16, **Con** 20, **Int** 18, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +19; **CMB** +26; **CMD** 44

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spell Penetration

Skills Bluff +19, Diplomacy +16, Fly +16, Handle Animal +16, Heal +24, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (history) +26, Knowledge (nature) +11, Knowledge (planes) +26, Knowledge (religion) +26, Perception +27, Sense Motive +27, Stealth +16

Languages Common, Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic, Infernal

SQ *fateful resurrection*, *incorporeal form*, *lady's blessing*

ECOLOGY

Environment any (extraplanar)

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fate Aura (Su) The Steward's aura gives her a +4 deflection bonus

to AC and a +4 resistance bonus on saves. The aura makes her immune to possession and attempts to exercise mental control over her, as *protection from evil* (though it blocks these effects from non-evil sources as well). If a creature successfully strikes the Steward with a melee attack, it is blinded or takes 1d6 Strength damage (Steward's choice, DC 25 negates either effect). The fate aura also acts as *consecrate*, although this does not interfere with altars or other fixtures relating to deities.

Fateful Resurrection (Su) As the herald of the goddess of death and birth, the Steward quickly recovers from being killed. She remains dead for only 1d4 rounds unless her body is completely destroyed by an effect such as *disintegrate*. Otherwise, she rises again 1d4 rounds after death, as if brought back to life via *resurrection*, and is fully healed. The Steward gains 1 permanent negative level when this occurs (though Pharasma typically removes it as soon as the herald returns to the Boneyard). The Steward can self-resurrect only once per day. If she dies a second time before that day passes, she is permanently dead (barring intervention by Pharasma or magic that can resurrect an outsider).

Gaze (Su) In humanoid form, the Steward can use a 60-foot-range gaze attack that dazes creatures for 2d6 rounds (Will negates, DC 25). Creatures who make their save are merely staggered for 1d6 rounds. Creatures of 5 HD or less who fail their save are stunned instead of dazed. Undead who fail their saves are held immobile (as *halt undead*) for 2d6 rounds rather than stunned or staggered. A creature that saves against the Steward's gaze cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours. The Steward is immune to her own gaze. This is a mind-affecting effect (or a necromancy effect against undead). A creature struck by the Steward's slam attack must save or be affected by her gaze attack. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Incorporeal Form (Su) The Steward can become incorporeal or return to her normal form as a standard action. When incorporeal, she can use her spell-like abilities and gaze attack but can't make physical attacks against corporeal creatures. Her appearance changes radically when she is incorporeal, looking like a burning orange spirit of darkness (this duality has led some to believe Pharasma actually has two heralds).

Lady's Blessing (Su) This special blessing is normally only given to important heroes of the faith or children with a significant destiny. The touched target gains a +1 luck bonus on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saves, and skill checks, and foes take a –1 penalty on such rolls directed against the target. This blessing lasts one year. The Steward can use this ability at will, but only does so at the direction of Pharasma, and never on herself.

Tug the Strands of Fate (Su) The Steward can influence a creature's fate, forcing a creature within 100 feet and line of sight to reroll any one roll that it has made before the result of the roll is revealed. The result of the reroll must be taken, even if it is worse than the original roll. The Steward can use this ability 3 times per day.

BESTIARY

The Steward of the Skein is Pharamasma's foremost agent in the mortal realm, a mighty warrior sent to restore the balance of fate, announce a particularly auspicious birth or death, or deliver a world-shaking prophecy. Many times her presence on Golarion is as an incorporeal shade, making a pronouncement and then fading away, though countless creatures over the eons have felt the stunning impact of her armored fists. No mortal can recall seeing her in relation to the death of Aroden, and her role as messenger of prophecy has all but disappeared since that time.

The Steward is emotionally distant, and seems to have difficulties relating to mortals. Some speculate that she was driven slightly mad by the Last Azlanti's death, and others believe she sees the past, present, and future simultaneously, leading her to treat mortals as temporary objects in the skein of fate, much the way a beekeeper has little regard for individual bees. When viewed by a Medium or Small creature, she always appears to be exactly the same height as the viewer, though her size does not change, and the few documented sightings of her by larger creatures describe her as no more than 6 feet tall.

ECOLOGY

The Steward is timeless and ageless, and capable of patiently waiting hundreds of years for a particular event to occur. She has been found deep underground, standing silently like a golem, only to snap to attention when a particular individual approaches, delivering her message and then vanishing. She has likewise appeared in cities or remote areas, ignoring all who speak to her, stunning those who try to harm her, and waiting for the right time to speak. It is unknown why Pharamasma has her act this way rather than appearing at the necessary time, but her priests believe the herald's presence is enough to align the strands of fate to suit the goddess' will, much as standing in a stream can change the course of a floating leaf. On at least two occasions she has waited in a prominent Pharasmin temple, rarely reaching out to bless the faithful, and in one case a loyal member of the church found her standing in a field and built a temple around her.

The Steward only kills when it is Pharamasma's will. She prefers to use her stunning gaze, her charm and hold magic, and similar

nonlethal methods for dealing with opponents, giving them ample opportunities to flee. She is sparse with her healing, only using it to save those who Pharamasma needs for future events—when present at great battles in history, she healed only a few, and restored but one or two who had recently died. The herald is ruthless when dealing with the undead, however, blasting them with her full power.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

The Steward is a loner and has little interest in the desires of mortals. She is more personable with other planar servitors of her creator, but her unique role places her above them in the religious hierarchy, and she does not like fraternizing too much with her underlings lest she distract them from what Pharamasma has planned for them. Conversely, she is extremely interested when one of the goddess's other servants is due to give birth or die. Though the Steward has no interest in procreating on her own, any celestial or half-celestial birth is especially interesting to her, from both a physical and a spiritual standpoint—perhaps as proxy to Pharamasma herself, whose presence would certainly overwhelm the newborn and confuse its role in the tapestry of fate. Likewise, she has an almost morbid curiosity about one of her fellow servitors dying, and has an almost-precognitive sense for such things, making her sudden appearance next to other servants of Pharamasma in the Material Plane slightly worrisome. Occasionally she is called to testify in Pharamasma's Court about the deeds or fate of a particular soul. When not following a direct order from the goddess, the Steward has been known to travel the planes slaying undead, following the Rivers of Souls and protecting them from greedy daemons and other soul-devouring creatures. She relishes the opportunity to chase and slaughter the outsider minions of Urgathoa, and has torn apart her herald (a flying fanged skull called Mother's Maw) several times.



NEXT MONTH

BROKEN MOONby *Tim Hitchcock*

Among the shadows of the infamous Shudderwood lurk deadly beasts, savage madmen, and monsters that blur the line between the two. Into this fearful wilderness the PCs follow the path of the Whispering Way, intent on ending their mysterious machinations. But when the cultists' passage throws the forest's tenuous peace into chaos, the adventurers find themselves in the midst of a war between deadly lycanthropic tribes. Can the PCs escape the fearful wilderness and unveil the death cultists' true plot at last? Or will the lycanthropic blood curse claim them as well?

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AND MORE!

The hunt for a ghostly murder is on in the next entry into the *Pathfinder's Journal*. Also, an army of new horrors take on unnatural life in the *Pathfinder Bestiary*.

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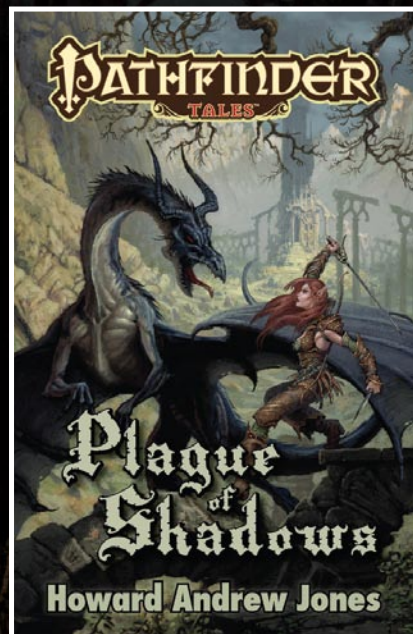


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The All-Seeing Eye

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Death's Mask

When the Bleak Breath came to the city of Kavapesta in 4249 AR, Pharasmin healers were overwhelmed. Burdrumar Roltz, a butcher turned doctor, joined the city's few physicians, demanding high prices for outlandish treatments. For a time, Roltz's practices proved popular, and numerous healers adopted his dubious precaution of wearing a mask stuffed with herbs and Pharasmin holy symbols. Although Roltz was later dismissed as an empiric who infected more people than he aided, today his masks are still used throughout Ustalav and beyond by both doctors of dubious skill and cultists of Urgathoa.

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