

Pathfinder[®]
ADVENTURE PATH™



SHATTERED
STAR

THE ASYLUM
STONE

By James L. Sutter

W&A.12

INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE

The Golemworks has the market cornered in the mercantile arena of constructs, yet others do try to make names for themselves as well. Morgamer Pug, owner and proprietor of Pug's Contraptions in Ordellia, is one of the more successful competitors of the Golemworks. Pug's work focuses less on construct creation and more on clockwork fancies, such as toys, devices, and entertainments, but he's always looking for an edge in the market.

One of his long-standing requests at Heidmarch Manor is for any agents who may be visiting distant Kaer Maga to investigate the constructs of the Ardoc family.

Unfortunately, the Ardocs aren't all that willing to share their secrets, so if anyone can procure bits and pieces of their creations and smuggle them back to his shop, Pug will pay handsomely!

Reward: If the PCs deliver at least 5 pounds of scrap harvested from no fewer than three different constructs from the Hanging Manse, they earn 6,400 XP and a lump-sum payment of 6,000 gp from a delighted Morgamer Pug.



ORDELLIA



BOUNTY HUNTING IN THE CITY OF STRANGERS

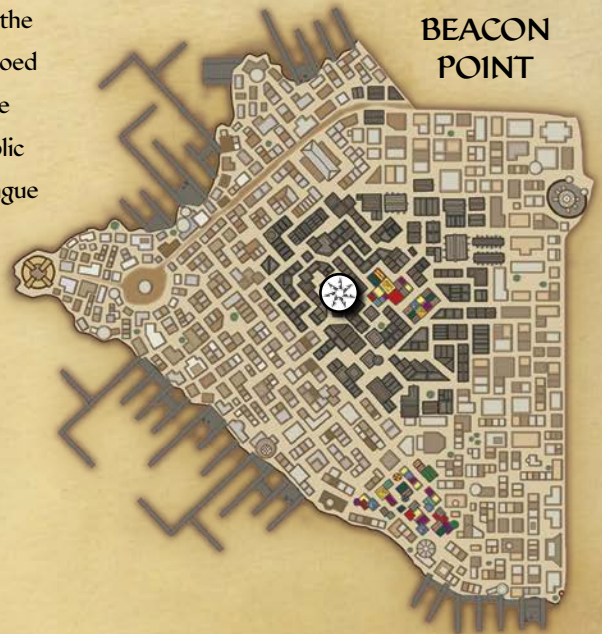
Magnimar's oldest thieves' guild, the Night Scales, has a problem. A member was recently caught siphoning funds to an ally in Kaer Maga's Commerce League. Guildmaster Therhyn Raccas has no desire to antagonize the League, but nor does he wish to remain silent. Since he doesn't want to directly involve the Night Scales, he asks the PCs to deliver a short message to the League in the form of a severed, tattooed hand harvested from the thief—all the PCs have to do is leave this hand in a public place in Kaer Maga. The Commerce League will understand the message.

This side quest works best if a PC has some ties

to Magnimar's underworld. If no PC has these ties, you can have Therhyn contact the PCs through someone like Natalya Vancaskerkin.


Reward: 6,400 XP for leaving the hand in a public place, and upon return to Magnimar, further payment in the form of 10 vials of purple worm poison.

BEACON POINT



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SHATTERED STAR

ADVENTURE PATH  PART 3 OF 6

THE ASYLUM STONE

SHATTERED STAR

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SHATTERED STAR



RETURN TO THE CITY OF STRANGERS

James Jacobs tricked me into writing this adventure. Don't get me wrong—I'm glad he did. But it's been a long time since I've written an adventure, and even longer since Wes and I collaborated on "The Lightless Depths" for the Savage Tide Adventure Path in *Dungeon*, back when we were still figuring out how APs worked. Jacobs had been prodding me to write a Pathfinder adventure for years, and while the appeal was always there, other things—the chance to write a plane-hopping novel (*Death's Heretic*), or to detail Golarion's solar system (*Distant Worlds*)—always got in the way.

It wasn't until *Shattered Star* and our return to Varisia that Jacobs finally figured out my weakness. When it came

time for him to present the Adventure Path outline to the editorial staff, he looked straight at me with his up-to-mischief grin and said, "We're also going to set one of the adventures in Kaer Maga. Sure hope nobody messes it up..." By the next morning, I had my outline finished.

You see, while we all work together to build Golarion, it's no secret that everyone at the office has his or her particular favorites, and Kaer Maga is my baby. I created it out of whole cloth more than 5 years ago as the setting for the Pathfinder Module *Seven Swords of Sin*—a module that started out as a Gen Con delve, with employees at Paizo competing to see who could build the deadliest room. In addition to handing me a bizarre menagerie of encounters

FOREWORD

to somehow weld together, Erik Mona opined that, along with my vague ideas of a Mos Eisley-style hive of scum and villainy, our newborn campaign setting really needed a Castle Greyhawk sort of megadungeon. No pressure, right?

Kaer Maga only got one page in the back of that module, but it was a dense one. In an effort to make the city seem bizarre and diverse, I dropped in all sorts of names and references that caught folks' attention. What was a wormfolk? Who were the lip-sewing Sweettalkers, or these bloated magic-users with their leech jars?

I had no idea. Yet a few months later, I needed a setting for the Pathfinder's Journal in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #3—my first story featuring Eando Kline, and the one that would set me on the road to ultimately becoming Paizo's Fiction Editor. Again, Kaer Maga sprang to mind, and this time my story came up short, requiring the addition of several sidebars. What better way to fill space than to present an overview of the city's districts and the weird groups that live there? When I was finished, I realized I had more than just an outline for a city. I had an outline for a book.

Pathfinder Campaign Setting: City of Strangers was the first sourcebook I wrote completely on my own, and it was a true labor of love. After getting permission from Erik and copious advice from my fellow developers, I wrote it quietly and at its own pace, doing everything I could to make sure each entry in the gazetteer was fun and adventure-worthy. Following in the footsteps of Wes and Jacobs—whose maps I remain in awe of to this day—I also spent countless hours drawing tiny building shapes on a giant city map.

The book was finally published in 2010, to a surprisingly warm reception. In the years since, I've been privileged to lay the groundwork for many different parts of the setting—the solar system, the First World, Kyonin, Hermea, the Hold of Belkzen—but Kaer Maga will always be the city nearest and dearest to my heart.

Which is why writing this adventure was like coming home. It was fun to flip through *City of Strangers* once more and try to figure out how many different faces and factions I could slip in here. Yet I don't mean to imply that writing this adventure was self-indulgent—rather, it was *extremely* self-indulgent. Because I didn't just seed things from *City of Strangers*. If you're a long-time Pathfinder reader, you'll find all sorts of tie-ins and cameos, with continuity Easter eggs from the early days of Pathfinder Adventure Path right up through *Distant Worlds*. You'd best believe that when this one hits subscribers and stores, I'll be lurking on the messageboards, waiting to see who recognizes what!

EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

For me, one of the problems with writing an adventure set in Kaer Maga is the feeling that for every toy you play with, you're leaving two or three still in the box. Fortunately, if you're looking to make the adventure bigger—either to

ON THE COVER

On this month's cover, Wayne Reynolds introduces us to the Dark Rider, Varisia's answer to the Headless Horseman. In his cavern forest deep beneath Kaer Maga, the PCs will learn many ancient secrets—as well as the wisdom of not riling up a nest of wyverns.

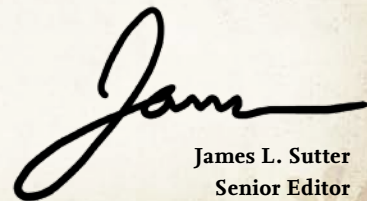
make up some extra experience, or simply because your party isn't quite ready to leave the Asylum Stone behind—there are a number of options.

The adventure is primarily a series of dungeons, yet Kaer Maga is at its heart a political city, with a seething mass of different families and factions all precariously holding each other in check. The article "Gangs of Kaer Maga," beginning on page 60, presents three of the groups most tied to this adventure, along with details on how they're organized, their leadership, potential membership for PCs, and ways in which they can be incorporated into the adventure. These, combined with the wealth of setting details in *City of Strangers*, should give GMs plenty of fodder for political maneuvering and roleplaying encounters, from simple information gathering and shopping expeditions to full-blown turf wars.

If dungeons are more your thing, the Kaer Maga module *Seven Swords of Sin* is conveniently the same level range as this adventure, making it easy to slot those encounters and additional Thassilonian workshop levels into this adventure to create a gigantic megadungeon.

Last but not least, if you or your players are particularly intrigued by the Bone Sage or the otherworldly landscapes viewed through the enchanted window in the Dark Rider's castle, *Distant Worlds* provides extensive gazetteers of the other worlds around Golarion's sun. It might be fun to turn that window into a transporter, dropping the party onto another planet for as long as you like before yanking them back to the Dark Forest to finish the job. Or maybe those strange arcane engines hidden in the castle can be reprogrammed to take the whole structure to some other world, plane, or time...

Of course, Jacobs might not approve of sending the campaign totally off the rails in this manner. But that's what he gets for going around tricking authors.



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SHATTERED STAR



THE ASYLUM STONE

PART ONE: UP A RIVER

In search of the next shard of the Sihedron, the heroes travel up the Yondabakari, encounter more troublesome boggards, and make a new friend in the approach to the legendary city of Kaer Maga.

PAGE 7

PART TWO: CITY OF STRANGERS

As the heroes piece together clues to the Shard of Gluttony's location, their quest puts them in conflict with a member of Kaer Maga's golem-crafting clan.

PAGE 12

PART THREE: THE UNDERCITY

Finally, the prize is in sight! The shard lies in the depths below Kaer Maga, in the dungeon realm known as the Undercity. Yet are the strange allies who offer the heroes aid in their quest trustworthy?

PAGE 28

PART FOUR: THE BLACK KEEP

At the heart of a strange demiplane known as the Dark Forest rises the Black Keep, home and lair of the Dark Rider. What final trials and terrors await the heroes within this legendary building?

PAGE 41

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The Asylum Stone" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.

8 The PCs begin this adventure at 8th level.

9 The PCs should be 9th level by the time they begin exploring the Undercity in Part Three.

10 The PCs should reach 10th level at some point during their exploration of the Black Keep.

The PCs should be well into 10th level by the end of the adventure.

THE ASYLUM STONE

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Already inhabited when Xin first founded the empire of Thassilon, the wall-city of Kaer Maga—sometimes called the Asylum Stone or the City of Strangers—has been many things to many people. For Karzoug, the last Runelord of Greed, it was the perfect site for a prison colony. Karzoug was fascinated by the series of ancient labyrinths and catacombs winding their way down beneath the cliff-top city, and added to the warrens by building several facilities of his own, including workshops where he could conduct some of his stranger experiments.

When the *Shard of Gluttony* fell into Karzoug's hands (one of several triumphant strikes against Runelord Zutha), he knew he needed a safe and secure place to keep the artifact. Unwilling to trust his primary servitor race in the city—the eerie, thought-consuming sages known as the caulborn—Karzoug ventured into one of the least-accessible regions beneath Kaer Maga, an ancient extraplanar cavern called the Dark Forest. There he bargained with the realm's undying master, a strange dullahan called the Dark Rider. He charged the headless horseman with guarding the relic until Karzoug himself came to retrieve it, and in return linked the shard's own magic to that of the cavern itself. When Earthfall shattered Thassilon and sent Karzoug fleeing into stasis in Xin-Shalast, there was no time for him to recover any of the shards he controlled, including the *Shard of Gluttony*. The Dark Rider remains loyal and keeps his bargain to this day, guarding the shard against all others—including the caulborn, who covet its mysteries.

Above all of this, the Asylum Stone has continued and grown. Today, Kaer Maga is its own city—one of the most unusual in all the Inner Sea region. Here, blood-addicted sorcerers and self-eviscerating oracles rub shoulders along streets that never see the light of day, and the strangest of Varisia's merchants and artisans can come to market without fear of persecution. Yet for all its acceptance of the exotic, Kaer Maga is anything but a safe haven—and when the PCs come to the Asylum Stone to seek the *Shard of Gluttony*, they would do well to keep this in mind!

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Fresh from their battles within the Lady's Light, the PCs travel the Yondabakari River to Kaer Maga, and are repeatedly forced to protect their barge from various threats native to the Mushfens. The last leg of their journey to the top of the Storval Rise follows the subterranean Halflight Path, during which time they help their Duskwarden guide battle a monstrous Darklands denizen, thereby earning his trust.

Once in Kaer Maga, the party searches for information about the shard and is told to talk to the notorious troll information brokers known as the Augurs. In payment for

their assistance, however, the Augurs demand that the PCs rescue a member of their faction who's been kidnapped by an insane artificer from another powerful gang. The PCs make their way through a cliffside manor filled with deadly constructs, defeat the golem-crafter and his associates, and rescue the troll oracle. Once the troll is returned to his comrades, he delivers a cryptic clue, and the Augurs take the PCs to the great city library known as the Therassic Spire.

With the trolls' help, the PCs manage to get into the ancient library and discover that the resident librarians are themselves looking for the shard, and have made a deal with a race of monstrous scholars who live below the city—the caulborn. Unfortunately for the librarians, the group they assembled and sent off through a secret door into the dungeons below their library has failed to report back. After striking a deal with the librarians, the PCs follow the doomed adventuring party down into a magical research facility once used by the Runelord Karzoug himself, fighting their way past strange monsters and discovering the remains of the previous party.

Once the PCs pass through the workshop, they come to the arranged meeting with the caulborn, who agree to send the PCs through a magical portal stone into a legendary extraplanar realm called the Dark Forest, where Karzoug hid the *Shard of Gluttony*. There, the PCs interact with local residents and travel to the ever-changing castle in the realm's center, ruled by a headless horseman of Varisian legend called the Dark Rider. After they've fought their way through the undead-haunted fortress and defeated the shard's defenders, the PCs are ready to claim the shard and proceed to the next adventure—provided they can overcome the magical betrayal of the memory-eating caulborn.

PART ONE: UP A RIVER

After the PCs recover the most recent shard of the *Sihedron*, communion with the *Shard of Lust* grants them visions of a singular sight: the city of Kaer Maga. See page 70 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #61 for more information about how the PCs can examine and activate a shard in this manner. Assuming they meet with Venture-Captain Sheila Heidmarch in preparation for the trip, she supplies the PCs with her latest acquisition: a *pink rhomboid ioun stone* with which the PCs can activate the *Shard of Gluttony* when they find it and thus defeat its curse. Sheila also tells the PCs about another Pathfinder agent's journey to Kaer Maga. This was a man named Eando Kline—currently in exile (although, Sheila quickly points out, she doesn't agree with the Society politics that led to his banishment). He succeeded in uncovering a valuable *ioun stone* in Kaer Maga, bolstering the place's reputation as one filled with ancient Thassilonian artifacts, so it comes as no great surprise to Sheila to learn that one of the fragments of

SHATTERED STAR

the *Shattered Star* lies within the ancient monument-city. Of course, as the PCs draw near to Kaer Maga, the visions that led them there will grow indistinct, just as before with the shards that lay below the Crow and within the Lady's Light. Once they arrive at Kaer Maga, they need to seek local aid in determining where exactly the *Shard of Gluttony* resides.

The easiest route from Magnimar to Kaer Maga is by river, joining with the extensive traffic that heads east up the Yondabakari River to trade with towns like Wartle, Whistledown, and the other settlements of Lake Syrantula and beyond. Most cargo barges being towed up the river stop at Whistledown—itsself a journey of at least 2 months—but a few make the roughly 600-mile trek to the foot of the great cascades where the Yondabakari comes streaming down from the Storval Rise, depositing goods and passengers just a few miles from where Kaer Maga perches on the side of the cliff.

Fortunately for the PCs, the Society doesn't expect them to spend months riding a slow, donkey-pulled raft up the river. Instead, they've arranged for the PCs' passage aboard the *Lucky Jenny*, a halfling trading vessel whose magical paddle wheel is capable of propelling the riverboat up the wide, sluggish river at an astonishing 50 miles per day, getting them to Kaer Maga in just 2 weeks. The captain, one **Othlo Janke** (NG male halfling expert 5), is a middle-aged halfling with a bewhiskered chin, a face weathered from hours of reflected glare off the water, and a penchant for wide-brimmed hats. Having extracted a rather exorbitant sum from the Society for the party's passage, Captain Othlo is a jolly fellow, and a useful source of information regarding the Yondabakari and everything along its length (his help grants PCs a +2 bonus on related Knowledge [local] checks regarding the region). His crew of three halfling sailors (N halfling experts 2) are all escaped indentured servants from Korvosa, and thus more reserved, communicating almost exclusively in Halfling. Halfling PCs or any others capable of speaking their native tongue, however, find the sailors pleased to encounter passengers friendly toward their kind. The *Lucky Jenny's* speed allows the vessel the luxury of traveling only during the day, and Captain Othlo is fond of stopping at night to camp on solid ground when possible.

The *Lucky Jenny* (named for the donkeys that used to pull the barge before its enchantment) is 60 feet long and

blunt-nosed, with several forward cabins for the PCs and Othlo's stateroom aft. Most of the middle is left open for cargo, and the crew sleeps there or on deck when not on duty at the helm, taking soundings or maintaining the huge magical paddle wheel that extends off the stern. Though the ship is large, all of its rooms and facilities are designed for halflings, leaving human-sized passengers feeling cramped and confined or constantly playing limbo with the ship's various lines and spars—much to the halflings' loud amusement.

THE JOURNEY UPRIVER

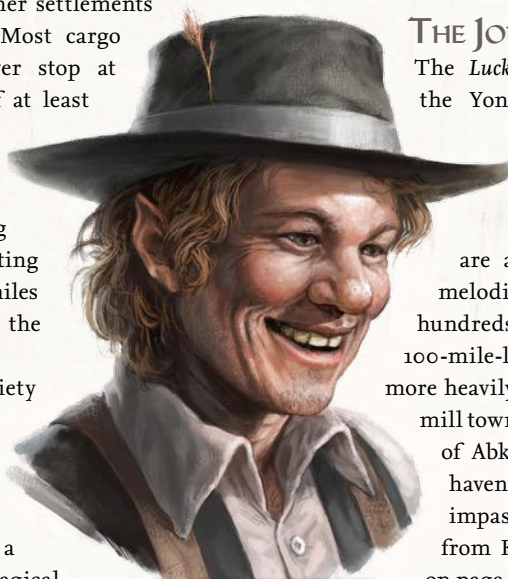
The *Lucky Jenny's* route takes the PCs up the Yondabakari to the swamper's stilt town of Wartle, then on to the more bourgeois gnome town of Whistledown on the edge of Lake Syrantula, whose friendly residents are at odds with the weird, haunting melodies played at night by the town's hundreds of wind chimes. Once across the 100-mile-long lake, the river twists through more heavily settled farmlands, the toll-levying mill town of Melfesh, the communist enclave of Abken, and the Korvosan secessionist haven of Sirathu before finally becoming impassable at the Storval Rise, just miles from Kaer Maga (see The Halflight Path on page 10).

Though Lake Syrantula and the eastern ports are relatively safe (save for perhaps the occasional giant gar attack—*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 128), the first 8-day leg of the journey from Magnimar to Whistledown takes the party along the edges of the notorious Mushfens, a massive swamp that remains wild and dangerous to travelers. Though the *Lucky Jenny* is capable of anchoring midstream against the river's flow, Othlo prefers to put in to shore and tie up to trees when possible, and thus he knows the value of placing a guard and watching out for the various monsters that hunt the river's edge.

Presented below is an optional encounter that can take place at any point along the journey before the PCs reach Lake Syrantula. Once the PCs move past Lake Syrantula, they should have no dangerous or notable encounters until they reach the base of the Storval Rise.

CLASH WITH THE SOREBACKS (CR 8)

Creatures: This portion of the Mushfens is home to a small but dangerous tribe of boggards called the Sorebacks, named after a particularly distressing form of swamp rot that afflicts their skin and causes their moist backs to fester and boil. Though not as prominent



OTHLO JANKE

THE ASYLUM STONE

as other boggard tribes in the Mushfens, the Sorebacks prey upon unwary travelers of the Yondabakari and on swampers and trappers from Wartle. Lately, however, they've been having trouble keeping the prisoners they capture locked up. Feeling somewhat shamed after the recent loss of another adventurer, the tribe's priest-king, Krugulk Throatcaller, has decided to step up their raiding and lead a war party personally.

This event occurs late at night, with the boggards either springing from the bushes and rushing the ship (if the *Lucky Jenny* has tied up to the shore) or swimming out and creeping over the gunwales. The boggards attempt to remain silent until combat is joined, after which Krugulk sings croaking prayers to Gogunta at the top of his voice, with his troops echoing the refrains. The boggards prefer to keep their prey alive if possible—the better to parade before their families back in camp—but Krugulk's giant red dragonfly pet Choggi has no such compunctions. Othlo and his crew know they're no match for the boggards, and attempt to hide behind the PCs when they're attacked. If one of the boggards finds herself the last member of the raiding party left standing, she immediately flees into the swamp, running back to the Soreback camp a mile from the river's edge.

KRUGULK THROATCALLER CR 4

XP 1,200

Male boggard cleric of Gogunta 3

(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 37)

CE Medium humanoid (boggard)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +2 armor, +3 natural)

hp 26 (3d8+9)

Fort +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee mwk morningstar +6 (1d8+3), tongue –1 touch (sticky tongue)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 4/day (DC 12, 2d6), terrifying croak (DC 14)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +5)

5/day—bleeding touch (1 round), touch of evil (1 round)

Cleric of Gogunta Spells Prepared

(CL 3rd; concentration +5)

2nd—*bull's strength*, *death knell*^P (DC 14), *spiritual weapon*

1st—*bane* (DC 13), *doom* (DC 13), *inflict light wounds* (DC 13), *protection from good*^P

o (at will)—*bleed* (DC 12), *guidance*, *resistance*, *virtue*

D Domain spell; Domains Death, Evil

TACTICS

Before Combat Krugulk casts *protection from good* on himself in the last few seconds before starting combat if he can.

During Combat The boggard chief starts by casting *doom*, then *spiritual weapon*. He prefers to hang back and cast spells like *bull's strength* and *guidance* on his giant dragonfly, and singles out particularly effective PCs for his *bane* spell. He doesn't hesitate to cast *death knell* on a fallen ally if the opportunity presents itself.

Morale Krugulk knows his position in the tribe is dependant on shows of strength, and fights to the death as long as other boggards are still alive to witness it. If all the other boggards are struck down, he immediately flees for the



KRUGULK THROATCALLER

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tribe's camp, preparing tales of how he "heroically defeated the monsters that ambushed his group" to explain the suspicious loss of his hunting party.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14

Feats Toughness, Weapon Focus (morningstar)

Skills Acrobatics +2 (+18 when jumping), Perception +6,

Stealth +2 (+10 in swamps), Swim +11

Languages Boggard

SQ hold breath, swamp stride

Gear leather armor, masterwork morningstar, *belt of incredible*

Dexterity +2, amber necklace worth 300 gp

BOGGARDS (4)

CR 2

XP 600

hp 22 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 37)

CHOGGI

CR 4

XP 1,200

N giant dragonfly

hp 45 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 105)

Treasure: Krugulk is vain and paranoid, and believes in keeping most of the tribe's treasure on his person. In addition to a ceremonial crown of reeds and stone fetishes, he also wears a thick slab of amber worth 300 gp on a shell necklace. Incongruously, he also constricts his massive belly with a straining human-sized belt with the Glyph of the Open Road embossed on the belt buckle—a prize left behind when a previous victim, a Pathfinder named Eando Kline, escaped from the camp's prison pit. This is a *belt of incredible Dexterity* +2, and still has Eando Kline's name scratched into the back of the belt buckle.

Development: If the PCs decide to follow the boggards' back trail or pursue fleeing enemies, they can do so with a successful DC 20 Survival check. They find the rest of the Sorebacks—another six boggards, both male and female—in a muddy encampment that's little more than a reed-covered island, with Krugulk's throne of alligator bones and a half-filled prison pit containing the bloated corpse of a drowned trapper and several live eels. Clearing out the encampment is a CR 7 encounter.

THE HALFLIGHT PATH

After many days on the water, the *Lucky Jenny* finally arrives at the bottom of the great cataracts that come pouring down the Storval Rise, a thousand-foot-tall cliff face that slices Varisia nearly in half and separates the fertile lowlands from the rough and craggy Storval Plateau. Othlo and his crew can go no farther. The barge moors to one of the piers alongside several other ships that have traveled up the Yondabakari to visit the Asylum Stone. Once on foot, most

of these travelers head east, taking the long, steep road that follows the Yondabakari up through the narrow crack the river cuts in the cliff wall. A few brave souls even portage canoes and other small boats up the trail.

Othlo, however, points the PCs toward a smaller, less traveled road that breaks away and trails northeast along the bottom of the Rise. He informs them that this is the fastest way to Kaer Maga, and leads just a few miles to the Twisted Door and the bottom of the Halflight Path. Once the PCs are ashore, Othlo and his crew wave and thank them for their business, then quickly turn the riverboat around and speed away with the current back toward Magnimar.

The Halflight Path is the most famous entrance to Kaer Maga, used primarily by those who value speed over safety. From a door in the foot of the Storval Rise, this subterranean tunnel winds its way up through the cliff to emerge near the city entrance called Meatgate. Originally part of the mysterious and extensive dungeon complex beneath the city, the path has had its many branchings carefully bricked up in order to create a single passageway usable by merchants and travelers. This route is maintained by the Duskwardens, Kaer Maga's elite society of rangers and spelunkers dedicated to keeping the path open and safe, and to keeping the dangerous creatures of Kaer Maga's Undercity from getting out and terrorizing the city proper. The path is open each day from dawn to dusk, as night is when the Duskwardens cease guiding groups and focus on patrols, explorations, and maintaining the defenses. For more information on the Duskwardens, see page 66.

The trail from the piers soon terminates in an open field nestled up against the cliff face. Several corrals, hitching posts, and other amenities stand in a rough circle, and a small group of traveling merchants sit queued up in a line at the clearing's edge. In the center of the clearing, a huge set of bronze double doors stands embedded in the rock face, the portals embossed with strange runes. The runes are in no known language, and anyone who stares for more than a moment at the door discovers that the apparently simple construction plays tricks on the eyes—the gate's edges subtly twist and warp, so that while all the edges seem straight and simple, anyone attempting to follow one with her eyes or fingers finds herself somehow at a different one, the outer edge becoming the inner one without seeming to twist, and so on.

Creatures: Standing next to the door is a small knot of authoritative-looking figures carrying weapons and wearing light armor. All are dressed in brown and gray uniforms with a sigil on the right breast—a golden arch against a midnight blue background. These are the Duskwardens. They nod politely to the PCs, and motion them toward the other travelers waiting in line, though they don't approach unless a PC seems about to try opening the door (in which case they move quickly to intervene).

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After a few minutes of waiting, one of the Duskwardens breaks from the group and approaches the PCs. Looking about 30 years old, with a thick brown beard and hard but handsome features, the man introduces himself as Abra Lopati, a member of the Duskwardens. He shakes the PCs' hands and jovially informs them that as a bunch who look like they can pull their weight, they get to jump to the front of the line. He then waves over several more people waiting in line—a fat merchant named **Bolgar Grumm** (NG male commoner 2/expert 1) and his strapping but dull-looking teenage sons **Tuggus** and **Marl** (NG male commoners 1). Once the merchant family has hauled its cart of trade goods over, Abra lays out the rules for the ascent.

Each of the PCs is charged 2 gp to use the Halflight Path—the bare minimum allowable, Abra assures them—while the merchant with his cart is charged significantly more. Once they pass through the Twisted Door, there is to be no talking unless absolutely necessary, and absolute silence when Abra signals for it. Bolgar, stinging from the fee, looks inclined to object, but Abra emphasizes that while the Duskwardens attempt to keep the path safe, there are still things in the Undercity that they don't want to risk meeting, and that the whole reason they operate in small groups is to maintain a certain level of stealth, as well as to make it easier to fight in cramped quarters if necessary. At that last addendum, he looks significantly at the PCs.

After answering any questions the PCs may have, he hands each one a small crystal on a thong—items he calls *halflight charms*. These small magic items glow as bright as a torch but without the smoke and hassle, and in case of emergencies or if a traveler becomes separated, the wearer can use it to call for help. Once everyone is wearing one, he nods, swings open the great bronze gates of the Twisted Door, and leads them through.

ABRA LOPATI

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 57 (see page 52)

SCREAMS IN THE DARK (CR 9)

Beyond the Twisted Door, the Halflight Path is a roughly 15-foot-wide, 15-foot-tall tunnel that winds up through the cliff at a steep but manageable slope. The tunnel begins as a natural-looking cave, with minimal work done to widen it, but as it climbs, it passes through numerous distinct regions—places where the tunnel has been painted with crude pictographs or decorated with elaborately carved pillars and frescoes, or where it becomes a mirror-smooth tube or a square-walled path filled with right angles, like a labyrinth in which every wrong turn has been blocked off. Sometimes it emerges briefly onto narrow ledges along the cliff face, and at one point the tunnel even opens up into a larger chamber where both walls are carved with elaborate

porticos and balconies, its many doors and archways all carefully locked and barred or bricked up completely. Abra explains that maintaining the barricades that separate the Halflight Path from the rest of the passages below Kaer Maga is one of the Duskwardens' chief jobs.

Passage through the Halflight Path takes 2 hours, with the limiting factor being Bolgar Grumm and his hand cart, which takes up most of the tunnel (filling a 10-foot-square) and is pulled by his two sons. All three Grumms are noticeably nervous in the tunnel, and flinch at every distant roar or shriek that filters through the walls.

At some point during the journey, the PCs enter the following stretch of tunnel.

The tunnel here is long and straight, maintaining its fifteen-foot diameter. On the right wall, elaborate carvings depicting a falling star wreaking havoc on a humanoid populace flank an enormous archway carved with twining vines that almost obscure leering skulls. The space inside the arch has been crudely bricked up, with many of the bricks broken or sticking out at right angles.

As the party passes the archway, Abra pauses to look at the poor brickwork on the barricade and mutters, "That isn't right." At that precise moment, the unmortared brickwork explodes outward as a trio of slithering horrors come barreling through.

Creatures: The attackers are seugathis, subterranean worm-monsters spawned by neothelids in the depths of the Darklands and programmed with strange and unknowable directives. As soon as the three creatures reveal themselves, they activate their auras of madness, forcing Abra and the PCs to save three times or be confused (you can assume Bolgar and his sons automatically fail one of these saves and, for sake of ease, assume they spend the combat babbling incoherently). The creatures attack whichever PCs pose the most danger, using commanded confused creatures and the bulky cart to isolate and debilitate PCs with their deafening and stupefying poison and attacking those they can't reach with *wands of magic missile*. Every round, each seugathi commands the most able-bodied slave of its particular aura of madness to attack his companions or turn his weapons on himself. Although the seugathis are intelligent, none have demands, and they fight until slain.

SEUGATHIS (3)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 67 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 243)

Development: Beyond the archway is a long tunnel leading down into the dungeons below Kaer Maga—where exactly it leads is beyond the scope of this adventure, and GMs whose parties choose this direction should see

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Pathfinder Campaign Setting: City of Strangers. If he survives, Abra argues vehemently against exploring the tunnel, citing the need to reach the end of the Halflight Path and warn the rest of the Duskwardens so that the tunnel can be closed and a full team can be sent to investigate it. Any other surviving NPCs beg the PCs to accompany them to the surface.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to keep Bolgar and his sons alive, award them an additional 2,400 XP.

ARRIVAL

The Halflight Path terminates in a stone bunker just outside the city walls, near the district called the Warren. Upon the PCs' arrival, Abra immediately informs the other Duskwardens of their encounter with the seugathis, then recovers the *halflight charms* from the travelers. Grumm and his sons, now adding anger to their terror, take off for the city at a run, shouting insults over their shoulder regarding the Duskwardens' competence. Before the PCs can leave, however, Abra takes them aside and thanks them for their assistance in fighting the seugathis, praising their skills. To whichever PC contributed the most, he hands a *greater halflight charm* (see page 58), instructing her in its use. He also notes that the PCs would be well served to find a local guide in the Gap, and that if they ever need him during their stay in the city, they can contact him either here or at the Duskwarden Guildhouse in Bis. He may even confide in them a bit more about his past (see information on his Side Quest on page 53). With this small speech finished, he turns and disappears back down the Halflight Path.

PART TWO: CITY OF STRANGERS

Once the PCs enter Kaer Maga, they have nearly unlimited options regarding where to go and who to contact. For GMs who want a more sandbox-style adventure, an in-depth exploration of the city and its people can be found in *City of Strangers*, with further information on several key groups and how they can affect the PCs presented in "Gangs of Kaer Maga" on page 60 of this book. GMs less interested in the urban elements of the adventure can skip straight to Acquiring a Guide, below.

CITY OVERVIEW

Kaer Maga is possibly the oldest settlement in Varisia, and is certainly one of the most mysterious. Rather than being constructed as a typical city, the structure is instead an enormous hexagonal stone ring many hundreds of feet thick, with its citizens living in the vast hollows and stacked empty chambers inside the stone walls themselves rather than in the open space in the ring's center. Diverse and cosmopolitan, with no centralized government, the City of Strangers has become famous throughout the region for its acceptance and anonymity, creating an anarcho-capitalist

paradise of escaped slaves, thieves, heretics, marginalized social groups, and anyone else seeking to reinvent herself.

No one knows Kaer Maga's true origins, yet a few of the most learned sages believe the monument was already standing when Xin founded the Thassilonian Empire. The first Runelord of Greed, whose territory the structure stood in, found the place inhabited by a strange eyeless race he dubbed the caulborn—eerie extraplanar scholars who claimed not to have founded the structure, but rather to be studying it. Recognizing the creatures' great potential as well as their hunger for intelligent minds to feed upon, the runelord gained their servitude, in exchange turning the monument into a penal colony where he could send those dissidents and servants who had outlived their usefulness. When the fall of the *Starstone* at last cut short the reign of Thassilon, the caulborn and their vampire prison wardens retreated deep underground, leaving the inmates to fend for themselves—as they have for thousands of years.

Today, the city is a hub of commerce, a laissez-faire enclave of rival gangs and sects that protect their own while balancing each other out to ensure that no single faction ever gains too much power. The citywide motto of "Your business is your business" means that organizations like the abolitionist Freemen can exist alongside orc slave-traders from Urglin, and priests of Pharasma alongside the zombie servitors of Ankar-Te. The city is rife with both monstrous residents—such as the "wormfolk" nagas and self-mutilating troll Augurs—and disturbing humanoid citizens, such as leech-covered bloatmages and lip-stitching Sweettalkers. For more information about Kaer Maga, see *City of Strangers*.

KAER MAGA

CN small city

Corruption +5; **Crime** +7; **Economy** -1; **Law** -6; **Lore** +2;
Society -3

Qualities magically attuned, notorious, prosperous,
strategic location

Danger +35

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government anarchy

Population 8,000 (5,500 humans, 500 halflings, 400 dwarves,
400 half-elves, 400 half-orcs, 200 gnomes, 100 elves, 100
orcs, 75 trolls, 50 centaurs, 50 goblins, 50 nagas, 175 others)

Notable NPCs (various; see *City of Strangers*)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 7,600 gp; **Purchase Limit** 55,000 gp; **Spellcasting** 8th
Minor Items 4d4; **Medium Items** 3d4; **Major Items** 1d6

ACQUIRING A GUIDE

From the exit of the Halflight Path, the most obvious entrance to Kaer Maga is through the Gap, a massive break in the ring of Kaer Maga's walls where an ancient explosion

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tore away thousands of pounds of stone. This carnage has been mostly filled in by the district called the Warren, a many-storied shantytown of rickety scaffolding and makeshift shacks, yet a wide corridor still runs through the center and plays host to a constant stream of traffic in and out of the city.

This is also the best place in the city to find local guides. As soon as the PCs enter the Gap, they're swarmed by mobs of local children offering themselves as guides (and doing their best to quietly pick the PCs' pockets while they're distracted—Sleight of Hand +6). One, however, immediately distinguishes himself by locking eyes with one of the PCs and hailing them as Pathfinders. Perhaps 16 years old, the boy is skinny and wears ragged clothes, yet carries himself with a confidence his compatriots recognize, getting out of his way and leaving the PCs to him. He introduces himself as **Gav Nahli** (N male human rogue 1/expert 3; Knowledge [local] +11), the self-proclaimed "best guide in the city," who congratulates the PCs on "having the perspicacity to engage his services for the laughably low price of 5 gold coins per day." If the PCs ask how he recognized them as Pathfinders, he either cites the Glyph of the Open Road on the *belt of incredible Dexterity* +2 if it's being worn, or winks and tells them it must have been a lucky guess. If one of

the PCs mentions the name Eando Kline or asks about his dealings with Pathfinders, Gav becomes suddenly and uncharacteristically quiet. He doesn't speak much of those days—for more information on his relationship with the ex-Pathfinder, see the Pathfinder's Journal in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #3 or *Pathfinder Tales: The Compass Stone*.

Gav is indeed as talented a guide as he claims, and can easily give the PCs the rundown on the city and how it works, as well as finding them anything they need, from magical items ("The Wheel Unbroken is good for custom work, gov, but if you want cheap, it's Gadka down at the corner of Fever Street and Half-a-Chicken Walk") to the most exotic of brothels ("If you want 'em cold, it's the White Lady up in Ankar-Te—there's some things you just can't do with a live girl, neh?"). If the PCs explain they're seeking a specific magic item said to be hidden somewhere in the city (even if they're exceptionally vague about it), he immediately comes up with two avenues of inquiry: the great library called the Therassic Spire, and the mysterious troll oracles called Augurs.

Unfortunately, there are problems with both of these. The Therassic Spire is currently locked tight, and nobody knows why—the doors closed several days ago, and the resident librarians have refused to open up for anyone.

Gav explains that it wouldn't be an issue, except that his first choice, the Augurs, have also gone on strike because of a conflict with the powerful Ardoc family of Bis, and as of yet have been unable to find someone to resolve the issue. It would have to be someone from outside the city, with no previous ties and affiliations—someone like the PCs, in fact. Before the PCs can object, Gav darts into the crowd, dragging them through Hospice to a rathole of an inn called the Sorry Excuse.

Development: The adventure presumes the PCs meet with the Augurs first, and use them to get into the Therassic Spire. If the PCs decide to break into the Spire instead, skip directly to Part Three, but be warned that the party may not be prepared for its challenges. In addition, once the PCs enter the city, any character who used the *Shard of Lust* to divine the location of the *Shard of Gluttony* knows that the latter shard seems to be somewhere downward, indicating that this next fragment lies in the Undercity. As with other shard visions, unfortunately, now that the PCs are in relatively close proximity, the visions become frustratingly vague.

MEETING THE AUGURS

As Gav eagerly explains, the Augurs of Kaer Maga are one of its most famous and influential factions. The all-troll ascetic group practices a strange form of haruspicy in which members cut open their stomachs and read their own entrails to divine secrets about the future, trusting their regeneration to heal them up again after each reading. Of course, in the Age of Lost Omens, prophecy is chancy at best—yet fortunately for the Augurs, this matters little, as very few of the Augurs have any real magical abilities. Instead, their insights come from the fact that in Kaer Maga, most everyone consults them before undertaking any major business deal or political power play, thus making them possibly the most informed group in the city. This information is then turned around and dispensed to others who ask relevant questions—never directly or in a biased fashion, but rather in cryptic koans that are correct just often enough to keep the cycle going. For more information on the Augurs, see page 64.

At the Sorry Excuse, an inn that appears to cater exclusively to travelers and newcomers to the city—and thus charges double what anything should cost—Gav quickly locates an Augur sitting alone at a wooden table filled with troll-sized mugs of ale. He respectfully greets

the oracle and indicates that the PCs should do the same. The troll takes them in with a glance, then motions for them to sit.

The troll introduces herself as **Vargun** (LN female troll rogue 2/expert 3). To PCs who have interacted with trolls before, this one appears incongruously civilized, with careful mannerisms, a thoughtful look, and a long purple toga with a horizontal slit in the stomach covered in old bloodstains. After asking the PCs a bit about themselves and what they seek, Vargun explains her situation, speaking in Common.



“I presume the boy has already explained the nature of our organization. While it's something of an open secret that many of our divinations are, shall we say, more logical than magical, this is not always the case. There are those among us who still retain the old gifts.

“My brother Augustille is gifted. His visions are unique and frequently unmarketable, which is why he rarely leaves the temple. Yet someone wants to harness that ability.

“The Ardoc brothers are artificers and golem crafters—the most powerful family in Bis. They run everything in that district, and we have long-standing relationships between our factions that must be maintained. Yet one of their younger members—an arrogant little tinkerer named Berkanin—has gone off on his own and arranged the kidnapping of Augustille from the very foot of the temple steps, and holds him hostage even as we speak, ‘studying’ my brother like one of his machines.

“The Ardocs have ignored our requests to rein in their rogue brother. We cannot engage them within their own territory, nor can any of our usual agents. But you are different. Bring back my brother, and we will bring you the information you seek.”

Vargun has little interest in bargaining, but at the GM's discretion may offer additional concessions or payment in order to convince the PCs to rescue her lost sibling.

THE BALCONIES OF BIS

The district called Bis is one of the most storied vistas in Kaer Maga. Here the usual honeycomb maze of chambers inside the city's great ring wall gives way to a single enclosed, cavernous space. While the floors are cluttered with shops and boarding houses, many of which stand several stories tall, the true elite of the city have gradually crawled up the great walls of the chamber to distance themselves from the rabble. These are the Balconies of Bis, enormous buttressed

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ledges that stick out from the walls like shelves and support the manors and workshops of the wealthy, with the higher balconies being harder to reach and thus more prestigious. The lights of the balconies cascade down the walls like a glowing waterfall, while the primary light sources at the district's center are great lanterns that hang down from the ceiling 80 feet above, illuminating streets packed with residents, construct servitors both large and small, and the occasional Ardoc brother who walks through keeping the peace, offering opinions or passing sentences on criminals with his bloodstained chisel of office.

Gav knows all about Bis and the operations of the Ardoc family, and can happily relate any of the general information found in *City of Strangers*. He also easily follows Vargun's instructions to the balcony where Berkanin lives and works. (If the PCs attempt to contact the Ardoc family directly, see page 62.)

A. THE HANGING MANSE

Berkanin's mansion-turned-laboratory is situated on the southwestern wall of Bis, a prominent balcony 40 feet above the floor of the district, with no other structures beneath it. From below, all that's visible is the extensive

stone buttressing that supports the massive weight of the complex above. The two most obvious ways up are an arched entrance in the wall leading to an enclosed stone staircase (area A1) and a complex affair of ropes and pulleys attached to a wooden platform that currently rests on the ground (area A3). Scaling the stone wall leading up to the balcony requires a successful DC 20 Climb check.

Gav is happy to wait for the PCs beneath the balcony, but isn't interested in accompanying them up to the manse itself—he has little desire to be “squashed by something that shouldn't be moving in the first place,” but then quickly assures the PCs that he's sure they'll be fine.

Unless otherwise noted, all ceilings in Berkanin's manor are 10 feet high, and doors are made of strong wood. Constructs stationed in a particular area tend to remain there even if they hear fighting elsewhere, as Berkanin's orders failed to include tactics beyond guarding particular points, and the Ardoc brother didn't want his guards falling prey to simple distractions.

The bulk of the denizens of the Hanging Manse are constructs or monsters—Berkanin recently let many of his servants go. Only his harpy majordomo Herifax and his lover Kanya still live here along with the wizard.

SHATTERED STAR

A1. STAIRS

A five-foot-wide stairway is situated inside the wall of Kaer Maga itself, accessed through an arched opening at ground level whose surrounding stone is perfectly smooth save for many tiny lines or slits carved haphazardly along its length. The stairs wind upward inside the wall toward the Hanging Manse on the wide, buttressed balcony forty feet above.

As soon as any creature approaches within 5 feet of the entrance to the stairs, the dozens of lines carved into the archway twist and snap open, revealing blankly staring eyes of the same gray stone. A chorus of high, discordant voices calls out: “No solicitors, petitioners, inquisitors, or social calls! This is your only warning.” With a sound like shuffling cards, all of the eyes swivel to focus on the closest figure. A single tiny voice then sings out, “This means yooo-oo...”

The eyes’ message is preset (similar to a *magic mouth*), and though they repeat it if all creatures move out of range and then approach again, they cannot say anything else. As long as there’s someone within their range, the eyes move to track that person. They do nothing to prevent entrance,

but triggering their warning causes a chime to ring and a view of the scene to appear on the mirror in area A19. The arch radiates an aura of moderate divination magic.

A2. VISITOR’S ARCH

The staircase emerges onto a cobblestone path leading through a well-landscaped garden. Five feet from the top of the stairs, the path passes through a freestanding stone arch carved into the form of two angels facing away from each other and blowing trumpets, backs arched and great wing tips touching at the apex.

The archway radiates an aura of moderate divination. Whenever a creature passes through the arch, a brief fanfare peals out, followed by a majestic disembodied voice announcing, “Visitors have arrived!”—loudly enough for anyone in the garden or the western half of the Hanging Manse to hear with ease. There’s easily enough space to go around the arch on either side.

A3. ASCENDER (CR 8)

Resting on the stone floor of the district below the balcony above is a ten-foot-square wooden platform. Thick ropes run from each corner along pillars that rise up to the balcony above. A pair of lattice-like doors sit in the southwestern and northeastern walls of the platform. One corner of the platform holds a small mechanical box with a lever currently set in the down position. A number of gears, counterweights, and other mechanical components is housed within a ten-foot-square hollow stone pillar under the balcony and just southwest of the lift.

This elevator is primarily used by Berkanin’s servants to deliver items too heavy or awkward to haul up the staircase. Flipping the lever into the upward position causes the platform to begin creakily ascending at a rate of 5 feet per round—flipping the lever down again makes it descend at the same rate. When the lift platform reaches the level of the balcony, the southwestern lattice doors swing open to allow access into the garden.

Creature: Berkanin’s clockwork familiar Petey spends the bulk of its time hiding amid the machinery that powers the lift platform, watching for intruders. Petey knows who is and isn’t supposed to be visiting, and if any strangers attempt to use the lift, the construct does nothing until the platform is 30 feet up. At that point, it yanks out several key pins in the winch, activating the trap. Once Petey has activated the trap (or once it’s been spotted), the construct flees to warn its master in area A23.



PETEY

PETEY

CR —

XP 0

Clockwork familiar (see page 86)

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hp 16

Item Installation (Ex): Petey is currently installed with a *wand of magic missile* with 23 charges. The construct gains the ability to spit a gobbet of acid up to 30 feet as a ranged touch attack, dealing 1d4 points of damage. Draining a charge from the wand increases the damage to 2d4 points for a single attack. The acid disappears after 1 round. Alternatively, Petey can drain a charge to heal itself for 1d6 points of damage.

Trap: When Petey pulls the pins, the lift immediately drops into free fall, crashing down onto the stones below. At the same time, a number of spinning gears fly loose from their housing, spiraling down onto the plummeting platform from above to crush and impale anyone within a split second of landing. The only hope of any non-flying PC caught on the plummeting platform is to leap for one of the support pillars and then climb that (with a successful DC 30 Climb check) to safety. Once the trap has been sprung, the lift is destroyed and must be repaired.

FALLING LIFT

CR 8

XP 4,800

Type mechanical; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

EFFECT

Trigger manual; **Reset** repair; **Bypass** spotting Petey and scaring it off (Perception check opposed by Petey's Stealth check)

Effect 30-foot fall (3d6 falling damage); falling gears (Atk +15 melee, 3d6 damage); DC 20 Reflex save negates, provided the save is immediately followed up with a successful DC 30 Climb check); multiple targets (all targets on the platform or directly beneath it)

Treasure: Petey has only the *wand of magic missile* installed in its body.

A4. TWILIGHT GARDEN (CR 8)

This large balcony has been sculpted and landscaped into a wide garden that runs all the way to the unfenced edge, where short vines trail off into empty space. The plant life that clusters in low mounds is a mixture of shade-loving forest undergrowth and brilliantly colored mushrooms and other fungi. The entire garden is lit to a soft twilight by eight-foot-high lampposts with glowing yellow-orange globes at their tops, and neat stone footpaths carve winding trails around and between them.

The entire garden is considered an area of dim light. The garden is clearly artificial; the dirt and plants were dragged up here by servants when Berkanin first built the place, and the plants are sustained by the meager but continual light cast by the lampposts. The view from the edge is fantastic, taking in the whole twinkling vista of the

cavernous district, and the garden itself is quite pleasant. Unfortunately for the PCs, it's also guarded.

Creatures: Berkanin recently acquired a pair of hulking plants to protect his garden—a pair of tendriculoses. Each of these monstrous tentacled plants patrols the garden tirelessly, but usually spends hours at a time sitting motionless among the other plants and fungi here (this counts as undergrowth and improves the tendriculoses' chances at hiding). The creatures are smarter than animals, but not smart enough to really think for themselves—they recognize Berkanin and his servants as allies but immediately move to attack anyone else they notice moving through the garden. Both tendriculoses have learned to avoid the western portion of the balcony (area A6) and they will not pursue foes up into that region, nor into the manse itself.

TENDRICULOSES (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 76 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 259)

A5. STORAGE GAZEBO (CR 8)

This gazebo is built of unpainted wood lattice with a rounded roof that's covered in growing vines. The southern wall is open, revealing an interior that's been used to store an impressive number of levers, bars, gears, cogs, glass containers, rope, pulleys, and other mechanical parts and strange tools.

Originally intended to be a place for Berkanin to relax, this gazebo soon became a place for the wizard to store many of his building components and other pieces of leftover machinery. The sheer amount of material kept here may look like a cluttered mess to the casual observer, but Berkanin knows where each and every piece of equipment stored here can be found.

Creature: Although the clutter here appears to be left unguarded, in fact, it has become the lair of a monstrous ray-like creature—a lurker above. Many of these creatures cling to the inner ceiling within Kaer Maga's walls, where they sometimes swoop down from above to attack passersby in the streets below. This lurker above is a particularly strong specimen. It drifted down from the ceiling above to lurk within this gazebo and quite likes the snugness of the place. Were Berkanin to learn about this unwanted visitor, he would doubtless run the lurker off, but he visits the gazebo so infrequently that the monster has been able to dwell here for several months in peace so far.

ADVANCED LURKER ABOVE

CR 8

XP 4,800

N Huge aberration (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Misfit Monsters Redeemed* 50)

SHATTERED STAR

Init +7; **Senses** blindsense 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+3 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)
hp 105 (10d8+60)

Fort +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities amorphous; **DR** 10/piercing or slashing;

Resist cold 10, fire 10

Weaknesses light sensitivity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor)

Melee slam +17 (3d6+18)

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

Special Attacks constrict (3d6+18), smother

TACTICS

During Combat The lurker above has to squeeze while it's inside the gazebo, and as such takes a -4 penalty on attack rolls and a -4 penalty to its AC as long as it remains within. It remains in the gazebo until it's no longer grappling a foe, at which point it squeezes out to attack and chase the nearest foe. Canny PCs might be able to get the lurker above to fight the tendriculoses or other creatures in the region.

Morale The lurker above flees back up to the Asylum Stone's ceiling far above if reduced to 20 or fewer hit points—it does not return to this region.

STATISTICS

Str 34, **Dex** 16, **Con** 23, **Int** 2, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 34 (can't be tripped)

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Climb +24, Fly +0, Perception +14, Stealth +8 (+16 in rocky areas)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Smother (Ex) When a lurker above grapples a target, it forms an airtight seal around its prey. A grappled target cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components, and must hold its breath (see the rules for suffocation on page 445 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*).

Treasure: While the gears, ropes, pulleys, and other machinery kept here are of some value (there are 1,200 pounds of parts here worth a total of 450 gp), the most valuable objects hidden amid the tools are a pair of *immovable rods*. Without *detect magic*, a successful DC 30 Perception check is required to notice the items amid the rest of the clutter here.

A6. SCRAP HEAP (CR 8)

This mound of detritus is several feet high and stretches almost to the edge of the balcony. Decomposing kitchen scraps, pieces of metal and wood, broken bottles, half-finished

clockwork limbs, and stranger things lie jumbled together in no particular order.

This garbage pile started when the irritable artificer took to flinging his broken creations or faulty components out rather than disposing of them properly. Over time, the other residents of the house took to throwing their trash here as well. Normally, servants came every week to haul the waste away, but since Berkanin ordered the manor sealed off, the mound has steadily grown.

Creature: One of Berkanin's latest failed experiments was an alchemical golem constructed to stand guard over his workshop. Though the golem ended up functioning, unexpected weaknesses and the kludged-together look of the thing frustrated Berkanin, and in a fit of pique he shoved the thing out the window and into the scrap heap. There it's lain for weeks, slowly being covered in refuse, following its last instructions, which were to maintain its position, protect the house's residents, and destroy all others. As soon as the PCs approach the scrap heap, the golem bursts forth from the pile and attacks, fighting until it's destroyed. The golem itself is still a dangerous foe, despite the fact that its hit points are lower than they should be because of the unfortunate defects in its construction. Further, defects in its bomb creation components cause it to take 1d6 points of damage each time it uses a bomb ranged attack—the golem prefers to make slam attacks, but is unintelligent enough to not care about the damage it does to itself whenever it makes ranged attacks.

ALCHEMICAL GOLEM

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 70 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 135)

Treasure: Along with 300 gp worth of adamantite slag, the scrap heap also contains a pot of *sovereign glue* stuck permanently to a Small buckler (the mess was discarded when an enraged Berkanin realized his servants hadn't brought any *universal solvent*) and a *feather token (tree)*, which Berkanin was temporarily fascinated with but ultimately decided was useless for his purposes.

A7. ENTRY HALL (CR 8)

This hall has ornate wooden double doors on opposite walls to the east and west. A third door made primarily of opaque glass stands in the northern wall. On the southern wall, a huge clock ticks off the seconds, its exposed gears and whirring pulleys spread out across the entire wall in a single artistically arranged layer. Over the western double doors, a tiny mechanical eyeball with wings and arms is mounted on the wall, its limbs pinned out in a majestic pose. To either side of these doors, a marble podium holds a small potted plant.

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This room is the receiving room used for servants, merchants, and others who have business with Berkanin but are not invited in as guests. The clock on the southern wall is unnecessarily complicated and designed to impress and intimidate, counting off everything from seconds and minutes to days, years, the phases of the moon, and more esoteric measurements. A successful DC 10 Perception check is enough to notice that the plants seem out of place with the rest of the decor—they're a halfhearted attempt to "brighten up the place." A successful DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (planes) check identifies the construct above the door as not a creation, but an outsider. It's a type of inevitable from Axis called an arbiter; these outsiders are sometimes used as familiars by spellcasters. The tiny inevitable is long dead, and today serves as nothing more than a decoration.

Creatures: Two mechanical figures made from brass and steel—clockwork soldiers—stand at attention in the center of the room, on alert for intruders. As soon as anyone other than Kanya, Berkanin, or Herifax enters the room, gears inside the armored constructs whir to life, and the soldiers simultaneously level their halberds and attack.

CLOCKWORK SOLDIERS (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 64 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 57)

Treasure: Both of the clockwork soldiers carry +1 *halberds*, which can be easily removed once the creatures are destroyed.

A8. PRIVY

This is an ordinary privy, with a stone seat and a small standing washbasin with a copper faucet and drain.

Though the running water (fed by gravity from a cistern on the roof) is something of a luxury, this rest room is otherwise nondescript. Anyone who looks past the seat notices that it opens not onto a pit—as there's no ground on the balcony—but rather a small, surprisingly clean space with a foot-wide tunnel that descends northward at a shallow angle. Warmth radiates up from the tunnel.

Development: The bathrooms in the manor are serviced by tiny constructs that haul excrement down to a central incinerator beneath the building, a 5-foot-square room constantly lit with magical flames. Anyone who squeezes through the tunnel and enters the incinerator takes 3d6 points of fire damage each round he remains. The constructs are currently in area A22, and characters who pass through the incinerator could conceivably climb up to that area with a successful DC 15 Climb check on the last 15-foot leg of the tunnel.

A9. HALL OF JUDGMENT

The ceiling and two outer walls of this room are made entirely of panes of glass. The light coming through the windows seems amplified, and the room is as bright as noonday. Several tables and racks stand covered with green, leafy plants in pots, as well as four identical marble busts of the same young, clean-shaven man. A plain wooden chair sits in the center of the room, facing a small desk with a mechanical arm protruding from the top. Part of the wood is scarred and stained.

When Berkanin was still interested in his familial role as one of the governors and peacekeepers of Bis, this was the room he used to hear grievances and try criminals. The stain on the desk is where he meted out judgment (a successful DC 12 Knowledge [local] check reveals that Ardoc brothers pass most of their sentences in terms of finger joints, removing the prescribed number of joints from criminals' hands with their chisels of office).

If anyone sits in the chair in the middle of the room, the marble heads (all modeled on Berkanin) immediately swivel to face it and enclose the chair in a 5-foot-wide *zone of truth*. The mechanical hand on the desk also immediately comes to life and begins acting as a stenographer, writing down anything anyone in the room says on a stack of paper. The magic is integral to the room, and individual pieces cease to function if removed.

Development: Of late, the only person who visits the room is Kanya, who sometimes gets tired of life in Bis and uses the increased light and multitude of plants to pretend she's somewhere brighter and more natural. She has also taken to using the truth chair to resolve internal conflicts, speaking statements aloud to see if they're what she actually believes. She's careful to remove the papers when she's done, but a successful DC 15 Perception check shows clear depressions from the stylus on the paper beneath, and the writing reveals that while Kanya loves Berkanin, she's been feeling neglected and useless, and has grown worried about his obsessions, thinking that perhaps she's made a mistake in moving in. She's also simultaneously jealous of and attracted to Herifax. If any of this information is used against her, either to manipulate her mood or to distract her in combat, she takes a -2 penalty on any attack rolls or saving throws due to inner turmoil, and PCs get a +10 bonus on Diplomacy or Intimidate checks made against her.

A10. PARLOR (CR 8)

This large room has a staircase in the corner and several overstuffed armchairs facing each other on a large and ornate rug. Along the walls stand various cases or hangers displaying an assortment of strange trophies, such as a spear with a glass reservoir at the end, a small mannequin elaborately carved

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from bone or ivory, a marble lion head, and a number of framed schematic drawings.

This is Berkanin's main sitting and entertaining room, and when he still allowed guests, he enjoyed bringing them here so that they could marvel at his trophies, all taken during a youthful adventure in lands far to the east. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals that the marble lion head is actually the severed head of a powerful construct called a taotieh (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 260).

Creature: The little bone carving of the small humanoid figure is a type of scrimshaw construct called a tupilaq, bound to guard this room by Berkanin. It waits until the PCs have entered the room to use its *invisibility* spell—have PCs make a DC 15 Perception check to see whether they notice the disappearance. Once it's invisible, the tupilaq enjoys inspiring terror, popping into visibility just long enough to savage a character with its oversized jaws before going invisible again and repositioning itself. If dropped below 10 hit points, the tupilaq turns invisible and follows the PCs, appearing when they're otherwise compromised to try to take its revenge.

ADVANCED TUPILAQ

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 77 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 275, 290)

Treasure: The carpet the chairs are sitting on is from the Empire of Kelesh, and is worth 1,000 gp, though it also weighs 30 pounds. The spear is a +1 *injection spear* (see page 64 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #61). The schematic drawings range from revelatory illustrations regarding the construction of a dangerous, fire-bellied guardian called a tophet to partial instructions for building an Alkenstar firearm. Each of these schematics is worth 2,000 gp to the right buyer.

A11. STORAGE

The storeroom is packed with crates and bins filled with bolts, cogs, chains, tubes, bricks of clay, and other supplies seemingly suited for an artist or mechanic. On a table in the middle of the room lies a pile of three round, eyeball-shaped constructs with spindly arms, all of them broken and battered.

This room holds the raw supplies for Berkanin's various crafting projects and experiments. The three construct creatures piled on the table are all arbiter inevitables like the one hanging over the doorway in area A7, save that these have been partially disassembled and had their wings removed. Berkanin vivisected several such creatures in his attempts to design his *lesser wings of flying* (see page 59).

Treasure: A search of this room and a successful DC 15 Perception check reveals an adamantine dagger, a mithral chain shirt, and 200 gp worth of random cogs and other finely machined clockwork parts. There are also 3 doses of clearly labeled *universal solvent* sitting on a small side table, purchased by Berkanin's servants after the mishap with the *sovereign glue* now in area A6, and quietly left here when it became apparent that reminding Berkanin of the incident would be unwise.

A12. HALLWAY

One wall of this hallway is covered in an elaborate mural of a pastoral landscape in which every object—trees, animals, and even people—is its own clockwork mechanism of exposed gears and belts.

Berkanin believes that constructs are inherently better than natural creations, and this mural encapsulates his ultimate vision for the world.

A13. LIBRARY

This room is lined with bookshelves, each packed to bursting with tomes, folios, and scroll tubes. A stuffed chair upholstered with a bear pelt sits in the corner, the bear's head rising from the top of the high back and holding a glowing glass orb in its jaws.

The orb in the bear's mouth is a simple glass bulb with a *continual flame* spell cast on it, which Berkanin uses as a reading lamp. The books in this room are almost entirely devoted to the crafting, programming, philosophy, and ethical issues involved in creating constructs and intelligent machines. Many are very old and close to falling apart.

Treasure: A search with a successful DC 15 Perception check reveals a cache of pornographic poetry on a bottom shelf, along with a flipbook in which several animated clay golems couple with their creator—a handwritten note on the back reads: "Copied from a student at the Arcanamirium—quite diverting." The flipbook is worth 50 gp. The collected books in this room are worth at least 5,000 gp as a whole, yet unlike most of the possessions in this house, these are claimed by the Ardoc family as a whole, and the brothers take exception to anyone refusing to turn them over immediately. One particularly valuable item they don't know about is hidden behind the poetry cache: a *clay golem manual*.

A14. KITCHEN (CR 6)

This kitchen appears partially automated, with several spindly mechanical arms extruding from counters and holding rolling pins or chef's knives. To the northwest, a window looks out over

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a scrap heap and the edge of the balcony. A smaller door stands in the southern corner. By far the largest feature in the room is a potbellied iron stove along the western wall, its several extruded arms holding pots and skillets.

As soon as anyone enters the kitchen, the various mechanical arms snap to attention and await orders. If given basic instructions regarding food preparation, the arms quickly set to work mincing, mixing, or doing whatever other functions are asked of them. More complex requests are ignored with a small buzzing sound.

Trap: PCs may fear attacks from the many arms in this room, but in truth the appendages are too weak to pose much of a threat. Instead, Berkanin has rigged the stove to explode in a tremendous plume of fire if anyone other than him or his designated servants moves into either of the two squares directly in front of it.

EXPLODING STOVE CR 8

XP 4,800

Type mechanical; Perception DC 28; Disable Device DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset none

Effect 12d6 fire damage, DC 17 Reflex save for half damage; multiple targets (all targets in room)

A15. PANTRY

This small closet is packed tight with sacks, jars, and crates of foodstuffs.

Treasure: Herifax, being a bit paranoid, believes in always keeping this pantry stocked with several weeks' worth of food. Most of the jars and bags hold little more than grains, vegetables, and salted meat, though a careful search (and a successful DC 20 Perception check) uncovers 200 gp in exotic spices from Tian Xia and Casmaron.

A16. DINING ROOM (CR 8)

The ceiling in this room rises to fifteen feet, and a single enormous picture window takes up most of the northeastern wall. A long, elegant wooden dining table and eight high-backed chairs stand in the center of the room. The only decorations are two life-sized clay statues of soldiers in exotic armor, one standing at attention to either side of the doors leading in from the garden.

Creatures: The two statues are terra-cotta soldiers, constructs whose animating secrets Berkanin learned during his time in Tian Xia. Both soldiers are dressed in Berkanin's half-remembered idea of what samurai armor looks like, and have distinctly Tian features. The soldiers wait until the PCs have entered the room, then draw swords

and attack, working as a team and staying close together to gain the advantage of their rank fighting ability. Both constructs fight until destroyed.

TERRA-COTTA SOLDIERS (2) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 64 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 262)

A17. SHRINE

Against the far wall of this small chamber stands a small shrine made out of interlocking gears, topped with an artistic mask of a female face formed from metal plates. The two walls to either side hold long tapestries, one of a naked clockwork woman reaching down from a cloud to lift up a young man in robes, and another showing the same man standing triumphantly on the shoulders of an enormous humanoid machine as it stomps across a crowded marketplace. A mat sits on the floor before the shrine, a bowl of incense overturned in front of it. Both the tapestries are ripped and askew, and the shrine itself is dented.

A successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check identifies this as a shrine to Brigh, the Whisper in the Bronze, goddess of inventors and constructs. One of Berkanin's previous schemes for the quick acquisition of power involved finding religion—the man depicted in both tapestries is him, as he commissioned the works from an artist at the Lyceum in Oriat. Berkanin's flirtation with spirituality didn't last long, though, quickly turning to rage and disgust—hence the damage to the tapestries and shrine. A quick examination shows that the incense in the bowl has only barely been burned, perhaps for half an hour in total.

Treasure: The incense in the bowl is *incense of meditation*—Berkanin asked Kanya to bring back the best incense she could find, and she did so, but neither of them considered the fact that the magic would be useless to him. Though singed, the incense still retains all its power.

A18. SERVANT'S QUARTERS

This air in this room is a heavy mix of perfume and animal stink. In one corner lies a mass of fine blankets and pillows that have been slashed and raked into a crude nest. In another stands a vanity with a tall mirror and an impressive array of crystal perfume bottles. Between the two, a wooden trunk sits against the wall. Feathers and streaks of white litter the floor.

This is the bedroom of Herifax, Berkanin's recently acquired majordomo. An only marginally civilized harpy, Herifax hasn't quite figured out how to overcome her natural harpy instincts—hence the room's disheveled condition—but a newly acquired sense of shame has led her to attempt to cover up her stench with pungent perfumes. Herifax

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oversees the daily operations of the manor, ordering about the various cooking and cleaning constructs.

Treasure: The perfumes on the vanity are worth 50 gp in total. The trunk is locked (a successful DC 30 Disable Device check or the key carried by Herifax opens it), and inside are the harpy's most treasured possessions: the human skull from her first kill (back when she lived in an aerie on the Lost Coast), a masterwork ukulele for accompanying her singing, a *golembane scarab* wrapped in cloth (kept as insurance against betrayal by Berkanin), and a leather-bound journal. The journal is filled primarily with the harpy's mundane thoughts and rants, written in scrawling Common, but anyone who spends a minute flipping through it quickly realizes that the harpy took the job primarily to be close to Kanya, with whom she's hopelessly infatuated and wants to become "nest mates."

Development: If any PCs reveal they know Herifax's romantic secret, the harpy flies into a rage and focuses all her attacks on those particular PCs.

A19. OFFICE

This is a small office with a window looking out over the garden and district. A desk holds stacks of documents, blank paper, and other writing materials. A large silver mirror hangs on one wall.

Kanya takes care of most of the manor's paperwork, a situation that forces her to work closely with Herifax (which only adds to their mutual awkwardness). The papers here mostly cover various purchases demanded by Berkanin's experiments, including the sourcing of several expensive components by someone named Dakar.

Treasure: A locked cash box (a successful DC 30 Disable Device check or the key carried by Kanya opens it) stashed in the desk holds the manor's petty cash—500 gp. The rest of Berkanin's funds are secured in various banks and repositories around the city. The looking glass on the wall is magically linked to the eyeball arch in area A1, and touching it causes the eyes to open, transforming the mirror's surface into a view of the area in front of the arch. This magical mirror only looks out into area A1—it is worth 2,500 gp.

A20. CATWALK (CR 7)

A wide masonry catwalk with railings on either side slopes upward from an open archway in the manor's southern tower to a balcony and a closed door in the smaller northern tower. Above, open windows in the northwestern tower flicker with flashes of colored light.

Below the catwalk, the roof is flat. The catwalk is 5 feet above the roof at its southeastern end, and 10 feet above at the northwestern end.

The catwalk itself is built on a long series of cleverly designed supports controlled by a lever in area A21. When the lever is down, the catwalk is stable, but when this lever is put into the up position, the supports loosen and slide, transforming the catwalk (including the balcony that runs along the southeastern side of areas A21 and A22) into a wobbly platform that shifts and twists with each step placed upon it. While the catwalk is wobbling, any characters on the catwalk must make a successful DC 12 Acrobatics check each round to avoid falling prone. Remember that while making these checks, characters are considered to be flat-footed.

Creature: Herifax, Berkanin's harpy majordomo, hides here waiting to defend her employers. Though she likely notices any scuffles in the garden, she does not engage until PCs actively reach here or attempt to climb the northwestern tower, preferring to let Berkanin's automated defenses do the dirty work. Herifax is quite the sight, as beneath her armor the harpy has taken to wearing a patchwork of clothing items that she's been told are all individually quite alluring, ranging from a torn evening gown to mismatched stockings and a large, exotic hat.

HERIFAX

CR 7

XP 3,200

Harpy ranger 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 172)

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+3 armor, +1 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural)

hp 82 (11d10+22)

Fort +8, **Ref** +14, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)

Melee longsword +13/+8/+3 (1d8+2/19–20), talons +8 (1d6+3)

Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +18/+13/+8 (1d8+3/x3)

Special Attacks captivating song (DC 17), favored enemy (humans +2)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +2)

1st—*resist energy*

TACTICS

Before Combat Herifax casts *resist energy* against any form of energy she's seen the PCs wield, defaulting to fire.

During Combat Herifax alerts Kanya with a shriek once she engages in battle, and the catfolk emerges from area A21 on the second round of combat to join the fight. The harpy then attempts to stay well out of range of the PCs, flying high above them while peppering them with arrows. She's particularly fond of using *Deadly Aim* to deal additional damage to easy targets, and goes for spellcasters and other archers first. If she ever spots a PC wandering alone in the garden, she uses her captivating song to try to get that PC to walk off the edge of the balcony or to stumble into the trash heap and anger the

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alchemical golem, but otherwise she avoids using this ability, preferring to focus on her arrows in combat.

Morale If Kanya is reduced to negative hit points, Herifax swoops down to stand over her body and try to stabilize her wounds, ignoring any actions taken by the PCs until she's sure the catfolk woman is not dying. Herifax may well beg the PCs to save Kanya (or at the very least allow her the time to try to bind Kanya's wounds) in return for surrendering to them—if the PCs accept this surrender, the harpy sees this as her chance to get Berkanin out of the picture and promises to aid the PCs in killing the master of the house, provided they heal her up and promise Kanya comes to no harm. Herifax only makes this offer if she thinks Kanya is unconscious—otherwise, if she's reduced to fewer than 10 hit points, she flees into the city to nurse her wounds and make plans to return to rescue Kanya later.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 20, **Con** 14, **Int** 9, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 30

Feats Deadly Aim, Dodge, Endurance, Flyby Attack, Manyshot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (composite longbow)

Skills Bluff +13, Diplomacy +4, Fly +19, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (local) +1, Perception +15, Perform (sing) +4, Perform (string) +4, Stealth +9, Survival +5

Languages Common

SQ favored terrain (urban +2), hunter's bond (companions), track +2, wild empathy +6

Other Gear +1 leather armor, +1 composite longbow with 40 arrows, longsword, ring of protection +1, key to trunk in area A18, 240 gp

A21. MASTER BEDROOM (CR 7)

This bedroom is large and airy, with thick, expensive rugs and windows overlooking the district. A massive bed sits against the northeastern wall, next to a wardrobe and a metal staircase that twists up through a hole in the ceiling. In an entryway to the southeast, one door stands ajar, while in the southeastern wall, a lever protrudes from a mechanical box by another door.

This is the bedroom shared by Berkanin and Kanya. As his workshop sits just above it, Berkanin has rarely left these two rooms in weeks, and often doesn't even bother coming down to sleep. The lever near the door to area A20 controls the catwalk's supports—while the lever is in the down position, the catwalk is stable; when switched to the up position, the catwalk is unstable (see area A20 for details).

Creature: Kanya is a catfolk, a rare and beautiful strain of humanoid from southern Garund who's exotic even by Kaer Magan standards. Berkanin met her when she



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was brought before him to stand trial for a burglary gone wrong, and the arcanist was instantly taken by the thief's long, lithe limbs. Kanya, for her part, was equally impressed by the artificer's mechanical servants. Blatantly flouting the law, Berkanin pardoned Kanya and brought her home to live with him, beginning a steamy affair that lasted until a new obsession—the power of the troll Augurs—gripped the Ardoc wizard. Since then, Kanya has been increasingly displeased with her situation, but is neither ready to give up on her love nor entirely sure that her pardon will last if she leaves Berkanin.

Kanya currently waits here, fuming at Berkanin and feeling conflicted and pent up. As her frustrations with Berkanin have grown, her feelings for his majordomo have been growing as well, and the catfolk is both ashamed and intrigued by these desires. She's kept them hidden, but if she hears Herifax call for help, she's swift to answer the call and emerges from this room to join the fight.

KANYA ISMAHE

CR 7

XP 3,200

Female catfolk rogue 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 47)

CN Medium humanoid (catfolk)

SHATTERED STAR

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 15 (+3 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural)

hp 71 (8d8+32)

Fort +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *short sword* +11/+6 (1d6+2/19–20)

Ranged shortbow +10/+5 (1d6/x3)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

TACTICS

Before Combat If she hears Herifax call the alarm, Kanya pulls the lever that transforms the catwalk in area A20 into a wobbly surface.

During Combat Kanya knows her primary strength lies in sneak attacks. If she hears the alarm from Herifax, she enters combat on the second round, favoring her shortbow at first and firing on foes from the doorway. She won't hesitate to clamber onto the wobbly catwalk—her Acrobatics skill is high enough that she can move around on it at full speed and still never fail her check to avoid falling prone. She evades melee with those she suspects can make sneak attacks while on the catwalk, while simultaneously taking advantage of her enemies' flat-footed conditions while on the wobbly surface to make sneak attacks of her own. If she's confronted elsewhere (such as by stealthy PCs who make it to area A21 without raising an alarm), she drinks her *potion of invisibility* and seeks out an ally (either Herifax or Berkanin) to fight with rather than fight the PCs alone, although she certainly takes a moment to open the door to area A22 so the constructs within can swarm out to attack.

Morale If she's reduced to fewer

than 10 hit points, Kanya flees upstairs to area A23, where she fights to the death to protect Berkanin.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 23

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Acrobatics), Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +18, Climb +12, Disable Device +15, Perception +14, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +17, Survival +11

Languages Catfolk, Common

SQ cat's luck, rogue talents (bleeding attack +4, combat trick, fast stealth, finesse rogue), sprinter, trapfinding +4

Combat Gear *potion of invisibility*; **Other Gear** +1 *leather armor*, +1 *short sword*, shortbow with 20 arrows, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *ring of protection* +1, key to lockbox in A19



KANYA ISMAHE

A22. MASTER BATHROOM (CR 4)

This bathroom is large and elaborately tiled in white and forest green. In addition to two immaculate porcelain privy seats, the room contains a standing washbasin and a claw-foot tub big enough for several people at once, both with copper spigots and drains for running water. A large silver mirror takes up most of the eastern wall.

Creatures: Like the privy in area A8, the toilet facilities are attended to by tiny constructs who shepherd offal into the incinerator via a long tunnel—these simple constructs, along with countless other tiny mechanical servitors, scrub the house and keep things clean. Since Berkanin kidnapped the Augur, Kanya has grown nervous, and has ordered the tiny servitors to remain close and protect her—yet she also finds the unwavering attention of their tiny mechanical eyes disturbing, and thus has instructed them to remain out of sight. As a result, the swarm waits inside the privy for an intruder to enter the bathroom, at which point the constructs burst forth from the holes and attack.

Though relatively harmless individually, with their tiny insectlike legs, pinching manipulators, and spinning brushes and buffers, the little cleaning bots are surprisingly effective en masse, acting as a swarm. What's more, days spent hiding in the privy rather than

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attending to their normal duties has left them encrusted with waste, exposing those they damage to filth fever.

Although it is nonintelligent, the cleaning construct swarm recognizes Kanya, Herifax, and Berkanin—when other visitors come to the manse, the constructs are generally locked away in area A23 to keep them from attacking intruders.

CLEANING CONSTRUCT SWARM CR 4

XP 1,200

N Tiny construct (swarm)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 12 (+5 Dex, +2 size)

hp 44 (8d10)

Fort +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities half-damage from piercing and slashing, swarm traits; **Immune** construct traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee swarm (2d6 plus disease and distraction)

Special Attacks disease (filth fever, Fort DC 12), distraction (DC 14)

STATISTICS

Str 5, **Dex** 21, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +8; **CMB** —; **CMD** —

A23. BERKANIN'S WORKSHOP (CR 10)

This large room has walls fifteen feet high, with tall, narrow arches for windows. The chamber has no roof of its own, and instead the walls are freestanding, with a five-foot gap between their tops and the stone of the district's ceiling. Papers and diagrams cover the walls and several work benches, and half-finished meals and pieces of machinery lie in haphazard piles on the floor. Against the northwestern wall stands a huge metal apparatus, upon which hangs the limp and bloodied body of a troll.

This is Berkanin's workshop, and the place he's been spending most of his time recently, sleeping in his chair rather than interrupting his work. When the PCs arrive, he looks up at them with a disturbingly calm smile and says, "Ah, more toys! Let's take you apart and see how you work."

Creatures: Berkanin Ardoc is a tall, thin man in his early thirties, with clean-cut good looks and finely tailored, close-fitting robes festooned with pouches, bandoleers, and strange, mechanical devices. His chisel of office as a member of the Ardoc family hangs prominently from his belt, but perhaps the most unusual thing about him is the leather harness across his chest that secures a pair of golden, mechanical wings to his back. As soon as he's greeted the PCs, the wings extend with whines and clicks, and Berkanin flops awkwardly into the air, ready for a fight!

Berkanin is accompanied in this room by a pair of clockwork soldiers. Like many of the constructs in this manse, these creatures were constructed by a number of wizards among the Ardocs working together with secret techniques, but despite that fact, the soldiers treat Ardoc as their master and follow his spoken commands to the letter. Berkanin's familiar Petey is here as well, unless the PCs encountered the clockwork familiar earlier and destroyed it.

BERKANIN ARDOC CR 8

XP 4,800

Male human wizard 9

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural)

hp 85 (9d6+51)

Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor)

Melee chisel -1 (1d4-1)

Ranged light crossbow +7 (1d8/19-20)

Special Attacks hand of the apprentice (6/day), metamagic mastery (1/day)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 9th; concentration +12)

5th—*dominate person* (DC 18)

4th—*black tentacles* (DC 17), empowered *scorching ray*

3rd—*fireball* (DC 16), *haste*, empowered *magic missile*

2nd—*blur*, *invisibility* (2), *protection from arrows, web* (DC 15)

1st—*comprehend languages*, *feather fall*, *mage armor*, *magic missile* (2)

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *mage hand*, *message*, *read magic*

TACTICS

Before Combat As soon as Berkanin realizes enemies are approaching, he casts *mage armor* and *protection from arrows*. He uses his *wand of false life* on himself as well.

During Combat Berkanin uses his *lesser wings of flying* to stay aloft and out of melee, occasionally perching on the top of his walls or window casements. At the start of combat, he casts *invisibility*, then keeps moving while he casts *haste* and *blur* the next few rounds. He prefers to lock down opponents with spells like *black tentacles* or *web*, then hammer them with area of effect spells. He may also choose the most imposing foe and target her with *dominate*, turning her against her party. He commands Petey to use its acid spit to the greatest effect, and has no problem sacrificing his familiar to save himself. He has even less regard for the two clockwork soldiers he keeps here as bodyguards—they're difficult to replace, but if they run interference and make the difference between him surviving or even just being able to cast a spell without being disrupted, they're serving their purpose.

SHATTERED STAR

Morale Berkanin knows that he's crossed several lines with his family, and won't bother trying to flee to them if things get grim. Instead, he begs for his life if brought below 10 hit points. He certainly gives up Augustille if the PCs ask, but the troll might not be interested in honoring any surrenders that Berkanin establishes with the PCs. If spared, Berkanin is willing to give his most valuable possession—his *lesser wings of flying*—to the PCs as a bribe for them to take Augustille and leave him alone.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 16, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 18

Feats Combat Casting, Craft Construct, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Empower Spell, Improved Familiar, Scribe Scroll, Toughness

Skills Disable Device +12, Fly +11,

Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (engineering) +15, Knowledge (local) +15, Spellcraft +15

Languages Celestial, Common, Elven, Tian

SQ arcane bond (clockwork familiar [Petey])

Combat Gear *wand of false life* (CL 10th, 7 charges); **Other Gear** chisel (improvised weapon), light crossbow with 10 bolts, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *lesser wings of flying*, *ring of protection* +1, spell component pouch, spellbook (contains all spells prepared plus 2d4 more spells of your choice for each level from 1st to 4th), 81 pp, 123 gp

PETEY

CR —

XP 0

Clockwork familiar (see page 86)

hp 16

Item Installation (Ex): Petey is currently installed with a *wand of magic missile* with 23 charges. The construct gains the ability to spit a gobbet of acid up to 30 feet as a ranged touch attack, dealing 1d4 points of damage. Draining a charge from the wand increases the damage to 2d4 points for a single attack. The acid disappears after 1 round.

CLOCKWORK SOLDIERS (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 64 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 57)

Development: Since Augustille is restrained and only partially conscious, he's presented separately (see Releasing Augustille, below). If the PCs release him during the fight with Berkanin, refer to that section—his tactics remain the same.

RELEASING AUGUSTILLE (CR 8)

The strange mechanism (and its numerous reinforcing struts) that restrains Berkanin's captive troll Augur takes up almost an entire wall of the workshop. In the center, Augustille hangs spread-eagled from deep spikes driven through his wrists and ankles. His stomach is flayed open, the skin held that way with hooks, and ropes of his innards and organs are held in front of him by a metal basin that protrudes from the apparatus on extendable arms. Long tubes run from painful-looking ports in the troll's skin to clear glass alembics and sealed vessels of steel and copper. Sparks leap sporadically between contact points on the rack, and a fan of tubes like pipes on an organ rises up to almost the top of the wall. Several styluses on mechanical arms scribble on sheaves of paper, while the apparatus as a whole constantly cuts and tugs and adjusts to offset the troll's regeneration, maintaining the tormented creature in an equilibrium of torture.

This apparatus is Berkanin's masterpiece: an attempt to simultaneously enhance the "reception" on the troll's



BERKANIN ARDOC

THE ASYLUM STONE

oracular abilities (the tubes are designed to capture and amplify “divine resonances”) while gauging and recording the prophecies in hopes of reproducing the phenomenon mechanically. The whole mechanism is an incredible work of engineering and art, but so far what it’s best at is keeping the troll in constant pain.

Creature: Augustille has been hanging on this scholarly torture device for more than a week, and though Berkanin has fed him, the arcanist refuses to let the troll’s wounds heal completely via his natural regeneration. Furthermore, he’s attempted to facilitate the troll’s predictions by feeding him a blend of powerful psychoactive drugs that leave Augustille confused and hallucinating, his regeneration and the tugging of the machines keeping him at 100 hit points (the machine is effectively doing a constant 5 points of damage per round to him at this point). If the PCs attempt to talk to him, he’s unresponsive save for muttered ravings. As long as he’s attached to the device, he speaks and understands only Aklo—if the PCs can communicate with him and succeed at a DC 32 Diplomacy check or a DC 24 Intimidate check, they can break through his madness and restore rational thinking for 1d4 rounds. *Restoration*, *heal*, or a more powerful similar effect can immediately cure his madness (although if he’s not released from the contraption within 8 hours, he reverts back to insanity). Charm and compulsion effects can get him to remain calm as well, but only as long as the effect lasts.

If Augustille is released while still under the throes of his insanity, the sudden freedom allows his regeneration and triggers something in his brain, and he immediately begins howling and attacking anyone in the room, screaming gibberish as well as occasional questions in Aklo, such as “Who are you?” and “Who am I?” He immediately attacks the party, focusing on physical attacks and attacking the nearest foe each round. If he’s knocked unconscious, he stabilizes mentally as soon as he wakes—otherwise, it takes 2d4 hours for the drugs and hallucinations to work their way out of his system. Augustille can’t travel far from the Manse in this condition, so the PCs could simply hang back and wait for him to recover naturally if they wish.

AUGUSTILLE

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp currently 100 (see page 54)

Treasure: Berkanin’s apparatus itself is worth little, as it only barely works as anything other than a torture rack. Stacked at the machine’s foot are several hundred pages of Augustille’s ravings and moanings, dutifully recorded by the machine. Though all of it is nonsense—the machine’s attempt to phonetically spell out the troll’s screams of pain and frustration—the Augurs will pay 2,000 gp for the documents, if only to ensure that they never see the light

of day. In addition, players who search the machine and make a successful DC 20 Perception check discover a sticky hunk of *incense of meditation* lying unburned in a censer—Berkanin hadn’t yet gotten around to experimenting with its effects on Augustille.

RETURNING AUGUSTILLE

Once the PCs subdue Augustille or allow the drugs to leave his system, he is exceptionally thankful and apologetic. Augustille is a cultured troll, though with a haunted look in his eyes and a tendency to stare off into space or break off mid-sentence as mystic visions take hold of him. He does everything he can to assist the PCs in safely leaving the manor and returning to his people at the Augur Temple in Downmarket.

Vargun and the rest of the Augurs are ecstatic to see their friend alive, and walk quickly down to meet him and the PCs at the steps of their white, columned temple. In return for this aid, Vargun has already employed her network to discover a promising lead regarding the lost shard of the *Sihedron*. Before she can relate it, however, the crowd of trolls steps back as Augustille falls to the ground in the grips of what looks like a seizure, his back arched and lips frothing. In a hoarse bellow, he cries out the following prophecy in Aklo (which Vargun promptly translates if none of the PCs can speak the language).

*The owl will seek but will not find,
but spire of knowledge pays in kind
in secret kept in secret keep
in forest dark and cavern deep.*

*The abbey of the glutton moon
will flow with blood, the wind in tune
to finish that begun before
and open wide the doomsday door.*

*The shattered star with seven shards
for seven lords with seven swords
the queen of blue in distant skies
will kindle new the ancient wars.*

*The seas will rise and men will drown
And what was lost shall claim the crown.*

When Augustille is finished, his body relaxes and he returns to his senses. The other Augurs nod sagely and help him up, leading him into the temple. Vargun informs the PCs that they’ve witnessed a genuine prophecy, and that she suspects this one is for them.

Using the Prophecy: Augustille’s prophecy is indeed true, and foreshadows events still to come in the Adventure Path. The first stanza refers to the present adventure—the

owl is the Council of Truth, the Spire of Knowledge is the Therassic Spire, and the last two lines refer to the Black Keep at the center of the Dark Forest. The second stanza foreshadows events in the next adventure, “Beyond the Doomsday Door,” in which Windsong Abbey is revealed to be located above an older shrine to Groetus (“the glutton moon”). The third stanza refers to the seven runelords and their legendary swords of sin, as well as the blue dragon Cadrilkasta who also searches for the *Shattered Star* and is encountered in the fifth adventure. The last couplet refers to the tsunami caused by the rise of Xin’s former capital in the final adventure. What the PCs have no way of knowing now is that their future selves may well be the cause of this strange couplet. Augustille has received this message from the future and relates it to the PCs in the form of convoluted, cryptic clues. (See the last adventure in the *Shattered Star* Adventure Path, “The Dead Heart of Xin,” for more details.)

GMs are free to explain as much or as little of the prophecy as they see fit, whether through Vargun or PC Knowledge checks, though certain elements like the *Shattered Star* and the seven lords should be easy allusions for PCs to figure out. By introducing the prophecy now, the GM can make later events feel that much more epic when they finally come to pass—but it’s a fine line between ominous foreshadowing and spoilers!

Regardless of how much the PCs puzzle out on their own, Vargun is positive that the prophecy is a true one—because, as she explains, the first two lines match the information she was about to give them as their reward.

Story Award: If the PCs return Augustille to the Augurs alive, award them 9,600 XP.

PART THREE: THE UNDERCITY

While the PCs were rescuing Augustille, Vargun was putting together some pieces of information that have been puzzling her of late. The word on the street is that the Council of Truth—a powerful order of scholars, engineers, and arcanists that vanished without a trace many years ago—has either returned or has been reformed, and people have been seeing the Council’s wide-eyed owl sigil showing up in strange places. Now the Therassic Spire has shut its doors—an unheard-of event for the great institution—and isolated itself from communication with the outside world. Realizing the two might be connected, Vargun called in some favors, and was able to discover that the two organizations have quietly put together a team of adventurers to illegally enter the Undercity in search of a powerful artifact—something they refer to as “the Runelord’s Shard.”

Once the PCs have had a chance to rest up (or sooner, if they insist), the troll takes them to pay a visit to the ancient library.

THE THERASSIC SPIRE

Often called simply the Great Library, the Therassic Spire is believed by many to be the oldest repository of written knowledge in Varisia. A circular tower eight stories tall, the structure is rumored to extend an equal number of stories belowground. The librarians who run it are a reclusive sect that lives within its walls, and part of the library’s fame comes from the fact that all knowledge is welcome, no matter how trivial, dangerous, or profane—though finding it in the twisting, bizarrely organized stacks is another matter entirely.

When Vargun and the PCs approach, the huge iron-bound doors of the library are shut tight, a small, meticulously lettered sign announcing that the library is closed until further notice. Vargun ignores it and pounds on the door with a meaty fist, keeping it up for a full minute. At last, a panel in the doors slides open, and a pair of beady eyes stare out through ornate metal grillwork. “If you can’t read the sign,” a prim voice says, “then there’s nothing in here for you anyway.”

Vargun lets the PCs take the lead in the conversation. The librarian does her best to heap abuse on them, but as soon as someone mentions the *Shattered Star*, the *Sihedron* or the Council of Truth (which Vargun does if the PCs don’t), the eyes behind the grating go wide, and then the door cracks open. A hunched human woman in red robes ushers them inside quickly, closing and barring the doors behind them.

THE FAILED MISSION

The librarian’s name is **Koifa** (N female old human expert 12). Once she has asked enough pointed questions to ensure that the PCs actually know what they’re talking about, she sighs irritably and explains the library’s situation.

Unbeknownst to most people, the librarians of the Therassic Spire are not the first scholars to take up residence in Kaer Maga, nor are they the best. Far below them, in a subterranean realm called Xavorax, dwells a race of extraplanar researchers and historians known as the caulborn. Much like the giant monument-city itself, the caulborn predate the empire of Thassilon, and even served the runelords for generations before finally being driven below the surface by the calamities of Earthfall.

In recent years, the librarians of the Therassic Spire have occasionally made telepathic contact with the caulborn in order to answer specific esoteric questions, though always at a price. (Koifa attempts to brush past the matter, but if pressed, she reveals that the caulborn consume thoughts and memories, and that their payments always take this form.) Weeks ago, however, the caulborn contacted the librarians directly, offering to help the surface-dwellers recover an artifact of great power—a shard of Xin’s great *Sihedron*—from another legendary realm below the city

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called the Dark Forest. In doing so, the caulborn revealed to the librarians something none of the scholars knew: that their own tower contained a secret door, hidden for thousands of years, which leads down into a hitherto undiscovered portion of the Undercity that contained one of Karzoug's many workshops. The caulborn informed the librarians that if they could send a band of adventurers or mercenaries to meet emissaries from Xavorax in "the chamber of the *black menhir*, beyond the River of Memory," the caulborn would aid that band, using the *black menhir* to transport the adventurers to the heart of the Dark Forest, where the blind creatures' research has indicated the *Shattered Star* fragment rests.

Ever enigmatic in their ways, the caulborn had little more to say on the topic, but what they had said was enough. Greedy for the chance to study the item and chronicle its recovery, the scholars agreed, and under the pretense of resurrecting the great Council of Truth, the librarians recruited an adventuring party to travel into the hidden dungeon below to meet the caulborn emissaries. The entire endeavor—to send the recovery team down through the lost workshop to the meeting point with the caulborn, then into the Dark Forest for a quick snatch-and-grab—was supposed to take only a few days at most.

Yet something has gone wrong, and the team hasn't returned, nor has it apparently reached the rendezvous with the caulborn. Fearful of what they may have awoken in the city's depths, the librarians set up a constant guard around the secret door, and dare not let anyone into the library for fear that visitors might notice something amiss and contact the Duskwardens. (The whole operation is highly taboo, as unauthorized expeditions into the city's depths put the whole populace at risk of increased monster activity, and the library wants to avoid responsibility for any death or damage their hubris may cause.)

At this point, Koifa really just wants the whole problem to go away. She fears a possible scandal, and is desperate for someone competent to fix whatever's gone wrong. The PCs give her hope—if they can delve into the chambers beyond the secret door, find out what happened to the team the librarians sent down there, ensure that the caulborn emissaries haven't been harmed or otherwise betrayed, and then continue the mission to retrieve the fragment from the Dark Forest, she agrees to let them keep whatever treasures they find in the chambers below, including the so-called Runelord's Shard. Opportunistic or greedy PCs can certainly pressure Koifa for a more significant reward in return for their aid and silence on the matter. This makes the librarian snarl in frustration, but she's willing and able to offer the PCs a reward of 4,000 gp if they can handle the problem with stealth and speed.

Assuming the PCs agree, Koifa gives them whatever time they need to make preparations (including searching

SIDE QUEST: FATE OF THE FIRST EXPEDITION

Before the PCs leave for the Therassic Workshop, Koifa gives them a list of the adventurers that comprised the first, and now missing, expedition: a female human monk named Hasari, a male halfling rogue named Perotus, a male gnome bloatmage named Luonim the Vast, and a female dark naga named Silasni. Koifa would like to learn what happened to all four of these mercenaries, and would like to have their bodies returned to her care so she can at least see that they're returned to their people for burial. Koifa knows the ways of adventuring and does not press the matter if some of these bodies return missing pieces of their equipment.

For each body returned to Koifa (provided the body is recognizable as the missing adventurer in question), the librarian promises to pay 1,000 gp. For each living mercenary returned safe and sound, this reward doubles to 2,000 gp per rescue. Likewise, returning a dead adventurer earns the PCs a 2,400 XP award, but returning a living one doubles that to a 4,800 XP award.

through the library's stacks for new spells or other information—what they may find and how long it takes are left up to GM discretion), then takes them down through several cramped, tome-filled levels to the secret door.

THE THERASSIC WORKSHOP

The dungeons connected to the Therassic Spire—presumably positioned here for convenient access to the library—have been sealed for millennia, and thus the librarians' adventuring party has left clear trails in the dust. The dungeons themselves, however, are connected to deeper regions in the Undercity via a tunnel from area **B15**, so the chambers are far from deserted. Unless otherwise stated, the dungeon is unlit, all ceilings are 10 feet high, and doors are made from strong wood magically preserved against decay.

Note that many of the guardians in the workshop are bound to the rooms they inhabit, and thus are unlikely to venture into other areas even if they hear fighting. These *binding* spells function at CL 20th, and as with all *binding* spells, they can only be removed with antimagic or a *mage's disjunction*.

B1. BARRICADE

The maze of cluttered bookshelves has been cleared away from the wall in this deep storeroom far under the Spire's ground floor. In its place, several wooden reading tables have

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THE THASSIC WORKSHOP

1 square = 5 feet



been overturned and stacked to create a curved barricade surrounding a portion of the stone wall. A lighter patch shows where a tapestry once hung—now crumpled and forgotten on a nearby shelf—and a stone door, so perfectly made that it would be almost invisible when shut, hangs slightly ajar.

A full dozen librarians—old and strangely stunted humanoids of various races, all in red robes—sit on cushions and chairs around the barricade, keeping watch against anything that might come through the door. Several have wands or staves close at hand. No one makes any protests when Koifa explains the situation, nor does anyone try to stop the PCs from clambering over the barricade and passing through the door. If Vargun is still with the PCs, she leaves them here, wishing them luck and telling them to send word to the Augur Temple if they survive.

B2. PASSAGE

This long stone hallway is only 5 feet wide, and curves frequently as it leads steadily downward, at times turning into a staircase. The passage extends for hundreds of feet before finally reaching a stone door similar to the one in the spire, hanging open and leading into area B3. The secret door is very well hidden when closed (Perception

DC 35 to notice), but Koifa can show the PCs the door when they reach this area. She goes no farther into the dungeons than this passage.

B3. RESEARCH ASSISTANT (CR 8)

This chamber is bare save for a single ornate, high-backed wooden chair against the wall. In the room's center, a head-sized blob of condensed purple fluid slowly pulses and warps, like a drop of heavy oil suspended underwater.

This room was built by Runelord Karzoug to help him conduct his magical research (although he had help in building the research assistant trap within from allied spellcasters capable of incorporating the enchantment effects into the defenses). In addition to having the blob act as a sort of automatic secretary, recording whatever new facts he told it in a far-off hidden library, the magical servitor also has the power to fetch information on command—though Karzoug was careful to install some safeguards in case his underlings succumbed to temptation.

Trap: When the PCs first enter the room, the blob pulses and a pleasant female voice asks them (in Thassilonian), “Please state your query.” If a PC responds with a question,

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that PC must immediately make a DC 22 Will save. If the save is successful, the blob responds with a short answer to the question—treat this as the blob making a Knowledge check with a +20 bonus (in which case it answers with a single sentence). Simply speaking the word “disarm” in Thassilonian causes the trap to deactivate for 10 minutes.

If the PC's save is unsuccessful, if the PC asks a question in any language other than Thassilonian, or if no one asks any question at all, the blob instantly reshapes itself into an arcane rune that acts as one of four symbols. The symbols cycle through their four effects each time the trap is triggered—it is currently set to trigger a *symbol of weakness*. The symbol disappears after 1 round, reforming into a sphere of purple fluid that once again activates in 2 rounds if anyone remains in the room, asking for a query once more.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

CR 9

XP 6,400

Type magical; Perception DC 33; Disable Device DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger question; **Reset** automatic (after a 2 round delay);

Bypass speak the word “disarm” in Thassilonian

Effect spell effect (*symbol of weakness*; Fort DC 20 negates); if the trap is triggered multiple times, it cycles through the following symbols in order, restarting the pattern with a *symbol of weakness* after it finishes this progression: *symbol of fear* (Fort DC 19 negates), *symbol of pain* (Fort DC 18 negates), *symbol of insanity* (Will DC 21 negates)

Development: The emissaries from the would-be “Council of Truth” were undone almost immediately by this room. As soon as they discovered the blob, Luonim the Vast asked, “What the hell is that?”, failed his save, and subjected all of them to the *symbol of insanity* (with more interesting effects than simple confusion—see the specific areas following for how each team member was affected). Several of the members failed their saves, and the former team is now scattered throughout the dungeon in various states of lucidity. Marks on the floor and a few fresh bloodstains suggest there was a scuffle here.

B4. SUMMONING CHAMBER (CR 10)

Dusty, decomposing red drapes hang from this room's ceiling, and tall iron candle holders stand in each of the chamber's corners. Inlaid into the floor in wide, iridescent lines is a circle of runes, its center filled by a seven-pointed star.

The design on the floor is a powerful summoning circle. Anyone who prepares conjuration spells while sitting in its center may treat each conjuration spell as if it were enhanced by an Extend Spell metamagic feat without increasing the spell's level. Though spells prepared in this

manner can be saved and cast later, the benefit disappears completely the next time the caster prepares spells, even if the caster never used the enhanced versions. A successful DC 30 Spellcraft check made as if to identify a magic item reveals the summoning circle's power.

Creature: The disembodied head of a long imprisoned couatl floats in the center of this room, weeping multicolored tears. Its name is Tsikinal, and it's been bound to this room for millennia, kept from doing good works and forced to protect this particular portion of Karzoug's workshop. The *binding* spell that holds Tsikinal in place here is a metamorphosis variant—as soon as any intruders (set by the spell's magic to mean anyone who isn't obviously wearing robes of the Therassic order) enter, the binding temporarily fades, forcing the couatl to attack the intruders. Interestingly, if one of the PCs appears as Runelord Sorshen (because of being resurrected in her clone in “Curse of the Lady's Light”), the couatl is free to ignore the compulsion to attack—even once it learns that the woman who appears to be Sorshen is someone else in her body.

When the PCs enter, the couatl ceases its weeping long enough to gasp out, “I'm so sorry, my friends,” in Celestial before it manifests in the flesh to attack, blasting them with a *scorching ray*. Tsikinal clearly hates what it's doing, but has no choice in the matter—its only comfort is that if the PCs leave the room, its *binding* won't allow it to follow them. Otherwise, the couatl fights to the death.

TSIKINAL

CR 10

XP 9,600

Couatl (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 49)

hp 126

Development: There are two methods by which Tsikinal may be freed from its bondage. First, it can be freed with an *antimagic field* or *mage's disjunction*, but both of these solutions are likely out of the PCs' reach. Tsikinal knows the effect can also be ended if a powerful Thassilonian artifact is pressed against the center of the summoning circle while the phrase “By the power of Thassilon, I release you!” is uttered. Karzoug included this escape clause to aid in making the binding spell more potent, but assumed (incorrectly) that only a runelord would possess artifact-level items. Any of the *Shattered Star* shards work to aid in Tsikinal's release in this manner. Of course, unless the PCs bypass the command to attack by appearing as a Therassic monk (perhaps using one of the ancient robes in storage in area B5) or as Runelord Sorshen, they'll need to use mind-controlling magic to seize control of the couatl while it fights them to allow it the chance to reveal this information.

If the PCs free the couatl instead of killing it, Tsikinal thanks them profusely and rewards them with 1d4 of its brilliant feathers, which can be used to conjure the couatl at

a later date if used with a *planar ally* spell. If the PCs are eager to learn more about life during Thassilonian times, they are disappointed, since Tsikinal spent all of its time imprisoned here—further, it was trapped over 10,000 years ago, and even though it was shielded from the ravages of time by the *binding* spell, that's a long time to remember fine details.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to release Tsikinal rather than killing it, award them experience as if they had defeated the couatl in combat as well as an additional 4,800 XP.

B5. DISSECTION ROOM (CR 9)

This chamber contains several grooved stone tables of various sizes, and the floor slopes gradually toward several large drains. The ceiling is obscured by what appears to be a woven mesh of spiked metal chains suspended eight feet overhead, while a few gray robes and cloaks still hang on the wall to the east of the door.

Some of Karzoug's more gruesome experiments involved carefully taking creatures apart or combining them in unique ways, and he sometimes found it useful to have assistants specialized in such matters. Toward this end, he summoned a trio of kytons and bound them in this chamber.

Creatures: Nili, Nezi, and Nahi, the self-proclaimed Sisters of Torment, have been trapped in this chamber for millennia. Though they once enjoyed their roles as artistic butchers for the runelord, the lack of entertainment since then has left the beautiful outsiders bored to tears. When PCs enter, the kytons greet them warmly and enthusiastically, then call down their chains to flay and eviscerate the newcomers.

The ceiling of this room is a grid of long spiked chains secured to the ceiling every 5 feet, ensuring that the sisters can jointly bring their maximum number of chain attacks to bear on any given square. Chains not in use are left next to the ceiling to increase visibility, only snaking downward when commanded to attack. The sisters fight to the death.

SISTERS OF TORMENT

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Kytons (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 185)

hp 60 each

Treasure: The cloaks and robes that hang on pegs nearby are magical, remnants of the Therassic order that once dwelled here. These items (two *cloaks of protection* +2 and a *monk's robe*) are still functional (although covered with a thick layer of dust), and can be used to calm the couatl in area B4.

B6. THE ORRERY (CR 9)

Almost every angle in this roughly circular chamber is smooth and curved. Though its walls and 20-foot-high ceiling are flat,

the flat planes all curl to meet each other—even the doors are curved, making a total lack of hard edges or corners, save for two broken sections on the western and eastern walls where long cracks have marred the perfect surface.

In the center of the room rests an elaborate clockwork construct of spheres. At its heart is a barrel-sized representation of the sun, while around it, metal struts suspend much smaller metal balls. Just north of it, a smooth four-foot-tall podium rises like a stalagmite, its top bearing a small brass wheel and a lever.

A successful DC 15 Knowledge (arcana, geography, or nature) is enough to recognize the apparatus in the center as an orrery, a model of Golarion's solar system. A successful DC 20 check with any of those skills is enough to recognize that, though the celestial bodies are not to scale, their positions represent their relative positions in their orbits for the current date.

This entire room is a powerful magical artifact that was once used by Karzoug to experiment with the manipulation of time, and exudes a strong aura of transmutation. Manipulating the spheres by hand does nothing, nor does turning the wheel on its own. Once the lever is pushed, however, any planets that have been moved snap back into their current-date positions, and hidden projectors transform the walls, ceiling, and floor into a panoramic view of Kaer Maga and its surroundings, as seen from several hundred feet in the air. The illusion is picture-perfect, with the PCs, podium, and orrery appearing to float in midair, though PCs can still feel the stone floor beneath their feet and the walls under their fingers. Only the two long cracks in the wall remain visible, marring the projection.

The view is a live feed, and though PCs cannot alter their position or "zoom in," they may recognize particular people or locations in the city. If the wheel is turned counterclockwise, the various celestial bodies move backward in their orbits, and the projected view changes accordingly, rewinding backward through time. Turning the wheel slightly causes the view to rewind slowly, while turning it all the way causes years to shoot past in seconds. Turning it clockwise causes years to progress forward at a similar rate—in this case, living creatures and some structures become translucent and flicker, representing the uncertain nature of the predictions, with the flickering spreading to more objects and becoming more erratic the farther into the future the device attempts to peer.

Unfortunately, the magic controlling the orrery is old and failing. If the wheel is used to turn the view more than 100 years into the past or more than 1 year into the future, it becomes stuck and accelerates to the point where centuries suddenly flash by in eyeblinks, offering only tantalizing glimpses of events. The entire machine shakes and rattles for 1 round, after which it comes apart, exploding in a burst of whirling metal that causes 6d6 points of bludgeoning

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damage and 6d6 points of piercing damage to everyone in the room. A successful DC 20 Reflex save halves this damage. A character in the room who observes the orrery's motions while it nears this point of no return can make a successful DC 25 Spellcraft check to correctly note that the device is nearing a point of catastrophic failure, allowing the user a last-second chance to cease rotating the wheel before it's too late.

Creatures: Shortly after the wheel is first turned in either direction (preferably long enough for the PCs to figure out how the device works), a dark spot appears in the sky above the city. Over the course of 3 more rounds, the spot grows steadily larger, until on the last round it suddenly splits and becomes recognizable as two horrible, long-limbed quadrupeds with toothy maws and enormous, alien eyes. The creatures emerge from the illusion (or, if the PCs have already turned off the machine, from one of the long cracks in the walls) and attack.

These are hounds of Tindalos, strange entities from beyond reality that dwell upon the angles of time. They

became interested in the powerful temporal magics in this room as early as the orrery's construction, and while Karzoug kept them at bay by designing this room without corners specifically so that they would have no angles by which to enter, the damage done to the walls and the orrery now render the room open for their visitation once the device is activated.

The hounds attempt to destroy every creature in the room, and pursue PCs relentlessly if they flee. Though most of the room is smooth, the cracks in the easternmost and westernmost points on the walls allow them to use their angled entry ability to teleport to the adjacent squares. Repairing these cracks, either through magic like *stone shape* or simply filling or plastering over them, denies them this ability. The hounds will not leave this room so long as there are still other creatures present.

HOUNDS OF TINDALOS (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 85 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 158)

SHATTERED STAR

B7. THE HIVE (CR 9)

The walls and ceiling of this stone chamber are partially covered in a strange, organic-looking honeycomb of papery material, as are several long workbenches.

This ancient workshop has been taken over by a body-snatching monstrosity—a hellwasp swarm, escaped from captivity in ages past and trapped here until the Council's scouting party opened the door, at which point it attacked and killed one of their members, the halfling Perotus. It has since infested his corpse, and uses its limited wit to whisper to Hasari, the halfling's grief-maddened wife.

Creatures: On the far side of the room, a woman with her lips stitched shut kneels over the still body of a halfling man, making a wordless keening noise. The woman is Hasari, a former member of the Brothers of the Seal. Hasari grew up among Kaer Maga's Sweettalkers, a group whose members believe themselves to be unworthy of speech and thus sew their own mouths shut. She later joined the Brothers of the Seal and trained with them for many years, leaving the society only when she fell in love with the halfling scholar Perotus, a relationship somewhat taboo even in Kaer Maga. Both Hasari's Sweettalker and Brothers of the Seal ties are recognizable with a successful DC 12 Knowledge (local) check.

Already afflicted by the slow insanity of area B3, Hasari lost her mind completely upon Perotus's death and infestation. Unable to tear her from the halfling's corpse, the rest of her party was ultimately forced to leave her behind. Since then, the swarm has been whispering to her, and she's come to believe that Perotus's spirit has simply taken a new, insectile form. When the PCs enter, she immediately attacks, whistling her rage through stitched lips, while the hellwasp swarm issues droning commands for her to protect her husband. Once Hasari is defeated, or once any attempt to harm or even approach the twitching, crawling halfling corpse is made, the hellwasps swarm up out of the animated halfling's body, leaving it a dead corpse on the ground while they attack the PCs.

HASARI

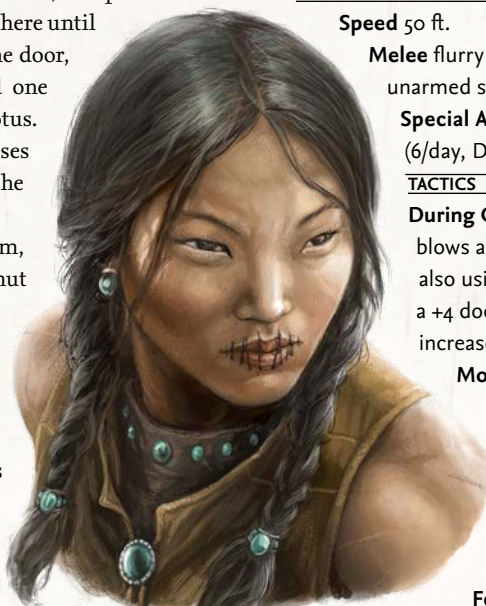
CR 5

XP 1,600

Female human monk 6

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; Senses Perception +13



HASARI

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 18, flat-footed 17 (+2 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 monk, +4 Wis)

hp 48 (6d8+18)

Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +9; +2 vs. enchantment

Defensive Abilities evasion; **Immune** disease

Weaknesses insane (psychosis)

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee flurry of blows +6/+6/+1 (1d8+1) or unarmed strike +7 (1d8+1)

Special Attacks flurry of blows, stunning fist (6/day, DC 17)

TACTICS

During Combat Hasari uses her flurry of blows and *ki* strikes to full advantage, while also using her *ki* pool every round to gain a +4 dodge AC bonus, as well as using *ki* to increase her speed as needed.

Morale Driven insane by magic and the death of her partner, Hasari fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8

Base Atk +4; CMB +7; CMD 23

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +11 (+17 when jumping), Bluff -1 (+9 to hide insanity), Climb +10, Knowledge (history) +7, Knowledge (local) +4, Perception +13, Stealth +9

Languages Common

SQ fast movement, high jump, *ki* pool (7 points, magic), maneuver training, purity of body, slow fall 30 ft., still mind

Gear bracers of armor +2, elixir of truth, 150 gp

HELLWASP SWARM

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 90 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 146)

Treasure: Perotus was a scholarly rogue, and carries several annotated volumes of Thassilonian lore, with tabs and bookmarks conveniently placed for information that might pertain to Kaer Maga's Undercity. These books grant a +2 circumstance bonus on any Knowledge (history) check related to Kaer Maga, Karzoug, or the Dark Forest. The collection weighs 10 pounds and is worth 400 gp to the librarians in the Therassic Spire. His body still wears his *studded leather armor* +3 and his *boots of striding and springing*.

Development: The insanity that affects Hasari has transformed her into a seething ball of hatred for all other

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forms of life—among other things, this has resulted in her alignment shifting to chaotic evil. If the PCs manage to defeat her without killing her, she could in theory be cured of her madness (thus restoring her to her proper lawful neutral alignment) using powerful magic like *greater restoration* or *heal*. Even simply capturing her alive and delivering her back to her people above in Kaer Maga is enough to save her from her madness.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to rescue Hasari and see that she's returned (alive) to her people, grant them 6,400 XP.

B8. TESTING CHAMBER (CR 9)

The floor of this large chamber is covered with sand and littered with weapons and pieces of armor. Halfway up the eastern wall is a small balcony with a railing and a single ornate chair, like a box seat at a theater. A small, empty metal cage hangs by a chain from the ceiling, just a few feet below the twenty-foot-high ceiling.

Karzoug sometimes used this chamber to test his latest creations or acquisitions against each other, having them fight each other in the room proper while he watched from the balcony seat.

Creature: This room has recently become the den of a strange creature from deeper under Kaer Maga—a horrible ooze that takes the shape of a brain with two long, slimy tentacles. The caulborn regard brain oozes as particularly hideous creatures, disgusted by the oozes' careless, sloppy ravening as they feed upon the thoughts of living creatures. This particular brain ooze fled up into the Therassic Workshop after being pursued here by several caulborn. The horrid ooze has spent many weeks nestling on the throne here, entertaining itself with and periodically feeding upon the thoughts of the two gibbering mouthers it has charmed and keeps here as guardians and playthings.

When PCs arrive, the brain ooze telepathically orders its pet gibbering mouthers to attack the PCs, while it hangs back and uses its mind-controlling spell-like abilities to try to force the PCs to fight each other for its own twisted entertainment. The brain ooze isn't particularly fond of the flavor and content of the memories it has been feeding on from the gibbering mouthers, and is looking forward to consuming the PCs' thoughts.

BRAIN OOZE CR 7
XP 3,200
hp 75 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 43)

GIBBERING MOUTHERS (2) CR 5
XP 1,600 each
hp 46 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 153)

Treasure: The various weapons and pieces of armor lying on the floor are almost uniformly rusted and worthless. A successful DC 20 Perception check, however, reveals a +1 *seeking light crossbow* lying in a corner, along with a jumbled pile of 10 +1 *human bane bolts*.

B9. CENTRIFUGE (CR 9)

This chamber is a squat cylinder with perfectly smooth walls, ceilings, and floors. In the center rises a stepped dais like a five-foot-high ziggurat, with a flat platform on its top.

This room is an enormous centrifuge, created by Karzoug for a series of arcane experiments and then promptly abandoned. The machinery governing it still works, however, and if the lever at the top of the ziggurat is pulled, gears beneath the room scream into life and the whole room begins spinning clockwise around the dais, remaining horizontal. Each round, the spinning room makes a bull rush attempt (with a +15 CMB) against all creatures standing anywhere but on the center of the room's stable platform. Flying creatures are not affected. While the room is spinning, the three openings in the walls align with the exits only fleetingly—passing through one of these exits requires a successful DC 20 Reflex save. If the save is failed, the character is crushed by the moving walls, takes 8d6 points of bludgeoning damage, and is knocked prone in the square in which he was attempting to exit. Pulling the lever again stops the rotation. (Note that, since the whole room is rotating, there's no need to simulate the rotation by moving figures on the map—from the PCs' perspective, the only effect is a strong, unseen force seeming to push them toward the wall.)

Creature: Luonim the Vast, a grotesquely fat gnome bloatmage (a sorcerer who enhances his magic by bloating his body with extra blood) who signed on with the "Council of Truth" adventuring group as heavy artillery, has taken up residence in this room. Driven mad by the trap in area B3, he has become convinced that his "magic lever" controls not just the spinning of the room, but the spinning of Golarion itself. As soon as anyone enters the room, he begins shouting his own praises, waiting until as many intruders as possible are in the room before he throws the lever and starts the room spinning.

LUONIM THE VAST CR 9
XP 6,400
Male gnome sorcerer 6/bloatmage 4 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: City of Strangers* 60)
CN Small humanoid (gnome)
Init +0; Senses low-light vision; Perception +4
DEFENSE
AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +2 natural, +4 shield, +1 size)

SHATTERED STAR

hp 91 (10d6+56)

Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +9; +2 vs. illusions

Defensive Abilities corpulence

Weaknesses hemophilia

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +5 (1d3–2/19–20)

Gnome Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +14)

1/day—*dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *prestidigitation*, *speak with animals*

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +14)

7/day—*laughing touch*

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 10th; concentration +14)

5th (3/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 22)

4th (6/day)—*fire shield*, *poison* (DC 18), *shout* (DC 21)

3rd (7/day)—*deep slumber* (DC 21), *fireball* (DC 20), *fly*, *summon monster III*

2nd (7/day)—*flaming sphere* (DC 19), *glitterdust* (DC 16), *hideous laughter* (DC 20), *invisibility*, *web* (DC 16)

1st (7/day)—*burning hands* (DC 18), *comprehend languages*, *entangle* (DC 15), *identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*

o (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*

Bloodline

fey



LUONIM THE VAST

TACTICS

Before Combat Luonim casts *mage armor* at the start of each day, using a point from his blood pool that he then regains by applying his *fortifying leeches*. He uses a charge from his *wand of shield* as soon as he fears combat is nearing.

During Combat The gnome bloatmage starts combat by casting *invisibility* using 2 points from his blood pool, then casts *fly* to move about the room while the PCs deal with the centrifuge. While invisible, he casts *fire shield* on himself, then casts *summon monster III* spells for a few more rounds to summon lantern archons to harass the PCs. Once he's confident the PCs have their hands full, he begins hammering the PCs with *shouts*, *fireballs*, and *cones of cold*. He makes use of his blood pool each round to maximize his spells available.

Morale Luonim is out of his mind, and fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 6, **Dex** 10, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 13

Feats Bloatmage Initiate, Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Spell Focus (evocation), Toughness

Skills Craft (alchemy) +9, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (local) +4, Linguistics +3, Perception +4, Spellcraft +14

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Gnome, Sylvan, Thassilonian

SQ bloat (2/day, 4), blood pool, bloodline arcana (+2 DC for compulsion spells), woodland stride

Combat Gear *potions of cure moderate wounds* (3), *wand of shield* (CL 10th, 11 charges); **Other**

Gear masterwork dagger, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *fortifying leeches*, *ring of protection* +1, spell component pouch

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bloat (Su) Luonim can exert himself as a free action to gain 1d6 blood points twice per day (see Blood Pool, below).

Bloatmage Initiate By undergoing elaborate rituals and gruesome rites to increase the amount of blood in his body, Luonim can draw upon additional magical reserves. This feat allows Luonim to cast evocation spells at +1 caster level, but the resulting bloating encumbers him as if he had a medium load.

Blood Pool (Su) Luonim has 4 blood points, representing his capacity to draw upon excess blood in his body to fuel his sorcerous magic. He can spend blood points at the time of casting to cast a spell without using that spell's spell slot. Retaining a spell slot in this manner costs a number of blood points equal to the spell's level. Luonim can push himself via his bloat ability in order to gain a number of extra blood points, but such exertion is a dangerous gamble. If his current number of blood points is

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greater than 4 blood points but less than or equal to 8 blood points, he gains the sickened condition. If he exceeds 8 blood points, he immediately flies into a homicidal rage, striking out randomly with his most damaging attacks and abilities at friends and foes alike for 1d6 rounds or until his blood points are reduced to 0 (whichever comes first). At the end of the rage, his blood points drop to 0 and his hit points drop to -1.

Compulence (Ex) Luonim is so fat that his rolls of blood-laden flesh grant him a +1 natural armor bonus.

Hemophilia (Ex) Bloatmages are particularly susceptible to bleed effects, and the DC of any Heal check made to stop a bleed effect is 5 higher than normal. Anytime Luonim suffers a wound that causes bleed damage, he loses 1 blood point, but he does not lose additional blood points for taking ongoing bleed damage.

B10. MOON GARDEN (CR 8)

This ceiling of this room seems to be open to the night sky, yet one that features two moons. Alcoves along the walls appear to have been barred or glassed-in cages, but all are empty, the bars bent and glass shattered. The floor of the room is covered in a twisting carpet of vine-like plants.

This room was once used to study creatures from other worlds, and succeeding at a DC 30 Knowledge (geography) check or other appropriate skill check identifies the unfamiliar starfield as what could be a view from the green planet Castrovel. The ceiling above is 40 feet high and features a complex, quite realistic *permanent image* (CL 15th) of the night sky above this alien planet. The room itself infuses the chamber with a sustaining magic that keeps plant life within well fed.

Creature: A 25-foot-tall flowering plant, its trunk bulging with pulsating pods, looms in the middle of the room. This is a moonflower, a carnivorous vegetable not native to Golarion. Its progenitor was accidentally allowed to escape from its cage, and quickly consumed the room's other prisoners—hundreds of years and many generations later, the latest moonflower scion lies in wait for new prey. As soon as the PCs enter, the plant attacks.

MOONFLOWER

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 104 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 192)

B11. SUN ROOM (CR 8)

This small, octagonal room blazes with light—each wall is seemingly made of glass that glows like noonday sun.

This room was used to study the strange light-blending effects of certain alien entities associated with light, such

as the room's current occupants. The room is treated as bright sunlight—if four of the panels are broken (hardness 1, hp 2), the room is reduced to dim light, and if all are broken, the only light comes from any sources the PCs may have brought with them.

Creatures: The shimmering light-bending panels on the wall have an unusual effect on the fey creatures known as lurkers in light—the extraplanar ripples the panels send out into the First World attract the fey creatures like moths to a flame. Just recently, a trio of lurkers in light sacrificed several prisoners to open a portal from the Ethereal Plane to this chamber to investigate the room, only to discover that they'd become trapped in a dungeon after their portal closed. The lurkers have scouted out some of the nearby rooms, but the denizens within have, to date, proven too much for the fey to safely sacrifice to open a return portal. If the PCs don't defeat them on their first pass through this dungeon, though, the three lurkers finally grow brave enough to move up into the Therassic Spire above—whereupon they immediately start seeking out victims to sacrifice so that they can open a portal back to the First World. The ramifications of this development are left to you.

LURKERS IN LIGHT (3)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

hp 44 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 180)

B12. DROWNING CHAMBER (CR 9)

A pair of large archways provide access to this circular room, its recessed floor covered in two feet of clear standing water. Glowing runes adorn the walls just above the water-level. Near the middle of the room stands a metal cage.

Creature: Karzoug sometimes found it useful to have an aquatic environment for his experiments, and rather than leaving one constantly flooded, he captured a grodair, a species of intelligent, fey fish from the First World. The grodair is a 7-foot-long, four-eyed fish. Trapped in the cage, its spines and tentacles sticking out awkwardly between the bars, the creature has been sustained by the magic of the room for over 10,000 years, and in that time has become little more than a living vegetable. On its head is a curious metal cap, with long wires that trail down and disappear beneath its body. Through a combination of magic and technology, Karzoug managed to turn the poor creature into a half-mindless servitor, programmed to raise or lower the water level in this room at his command, as well as to defend it against all others. In addition, the grodair's life energy—sustained magically for thousands of years—is also partially responsible for powering the magic glyphs and doors of this room.

SHATTERED STAR

The grodair itself is locked into the operation of the dungeon, and has no free will of its own. The bars of its cage are a foot apart, offering the creature little protection. If the PCs kill the grodair or can remove its metal cap (via a successful disarm, sunder, or grapple combat maneuver), the water in the room immediately vanishes.

GRODAIR CR 5
XP 1,600
hp 66 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 143)

Trap: As soon as the grodair believes that it has as many PCs as possible inside the room, it triggers the trap. Steel doors slam down from the arches, sealing the chamber, and the water rises quickly, flooding the room halfway in the first round, and completely in the second. In addition, the runes begin blasting electrical current through the water, targeting everyone touching the water except for the grodair. The trap itself governs the electrical discharges, but the rise in water is controlled by the grodair—disabling the trap prevents the electrical damage but not the room's flooding. To stop the flooding, the grodair must be slain or it must be detached from its cage.

SHOCKING POOL TRAP CR 9
XP 6,400
Type magic; Perception DC 28; Disable
Device DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger manual; **Duration** 4 rounds; **Reset** automatic (after 1 hour)

Effect electrical shock (4d6 electricity damage per round, Reflex DC 15 for half damage each round)

Development: If the PCs manage to free the grodair from its hellish imprisonment by removing its metal cap without killing it, the creature recovers its senses after 1d4 rounds of twitching and thrashing. If it still lives after this, the creature proves to be quite intelligent and capable of talking in Aquan or Sylvan. If the PCs can communicate with it, it introduces itself as Hummelgau, and bears the PCs no ill will even if they attacked it. If they break the bars to free it from its cage (hardness 10, hp 30, Break DC 20), Hummelgau thanks them profusely, and offers to accompany them if they wish (though it

abandons them as soon as it reaches the subterranean stream in area **B14**). Hummelgau won't fight for the PCs, but it will use its *control water* ability upon request. It's a naturally jovial creature, though with very little short-term memory, which sometimes leads it to make unfortunate decisions (usually involving inopportune uses of *control water*).

Story Award: If the PCs release Hummelgau, reward them with additional experience as if they had defeated it in battle.



RUNE DOOR

B13. RUNE DOOR (CR 10)

This small room contains two intricate black-and-gray mosaics covering the north and south walls. To the north, the mosaic shows a curving, forested valley with a small black castle in the center, its sky cut off by a great arch of twining leaves and peering, childlike faces. The other wall shows a subterranean city of great domes, spires, and soaring bridges, populated by humanoids with no eyes and two mouths. The eastern wall is unadorned, and contains only a heavy metal door whose face is adorned with an etching of a seven-pointed star surrounded by runes. The center of the star is a polished seven-sided polygon of shiny onyx.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (local) check identifies the valley depicted to the north as the legendary realm called the Dark Forest, home of the Dark Rider, and the southern mosaic as a depiction of Xavorax, City of Silence, a mythical city of vampires and eyeless scholars as old as lost Thassilon. A successful DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check recognizes the eyeless figures as caulborn.

Creature: The final member of the previous adventuring party is a naga (often derisively called "wormfolk" in Kaer Maga) named Silasni. Unlike her comrades, Silasni was unaffected by the insanity trap in area **B3**, and is still intent on finishing the mission (having managed to get past the water trap in area **B12** by reading the grodair's thoughts and using *silent image* to show herself being escorted by Karzoug). The naga has spent the past few days carefully musing on how best to open the door without triggering the trap. When the PCs arrive, she greets them courteously as "reinforcements," explains what happened

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to his party, and asks for their assistance in solving the door's puzzle, using her *detect thoughts* spells to help her assuage any concerns they might have. In reality, however, Silasni has no intention of letting the PCs usurp her glory, and as soon as they manage to open the door for her, she thanks them for their aid and invites them to leave the dungeon so that she may complete her mission. She has no interest in allying with the PCs, and if they persist in such talk or even try to move ahead into area **B14**, the naga rolls her eyes and attacks. The naga tries to escape back to the Therassic Spire, retracing her way through the dungeon, if reduced to fewer than 15 hit points.

SILASNI

CR 8

XP 4,800

LE female dark naga (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 211)

hp 85

Gear ring of mind shielding (worn on the tail tip)

Trap: The door leading to area **B14** is secured with an elaborate magical lock. The *Sihedron* carved on the door has at its center a polished disc of onyx. If the onyx disc is touched with a fingertip, the point of contact glows a bright blue before fading after 1 round. Experimentation reveals that simple shapes may be drawn on the disc with a fingertip, including any of the runes on the door itself. Drawing the rune of greed (the topmost rune on the carving) causes the door to open silently—it closes automatically after 1 minute. Drawing anything else causes the other six runes on the door to flash with blue light before the central onyx disc fires a blast of *chain lightning* into the room.

The door (hardness 8, hp 60, Break DC 28, Disable Device DC 30) can be forced open as well if the PCs are too impatient to figure out the lock, but any attempt to force the door open triggers the trap as well. The opposite side of the door is featureless, but opens safely at a simple touch.

SHOCKING DOOR TRAP

CR 8

XP 4,800

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset automatic

Effect spell effect (*chain lightning*, 12d6 electricity damage, DC 19 Reflex save for half damage, CL 12th)

Treasure: The onyx disc can be pried from the middle of the door (this automatically triggers the trap if it hasn't been disabled), and is worth 900 gp, but once it's removed from the door, the portal no longer functions. Placing the onyx back into the center of the carving restores the door's functionality, but without the onyx disc, the door must be forced open in order to pass through it.

B14. RIVER OF MEMORY (CR 8)

Unlike the chambers around it, this cavern appears to be natural, with a rushing ribbon of dark water running through its bottom half. A stone bridge arches across the torrent to a wide ledge on the other side that leads into another cavern. The bridge is sculpted rather than natural, with low railings on either side that show distorted faces, their expressions utterly blank.

The river is 15 feet wide and 15 feet deep and considered rough water for purposes of swimming—yet it is no ordinary subterranean stream. While the water has always been here, briefly touching air as it runs between subterranean aquifers, Karzoug carefully split off a tiny portion of the mythical River Styx and mingled the waters for this particular stretch. Many additional branches of this river manifest elsewhere in the Undercity, but using the river to navigate the dungeons is dangerous and, in many places (because of the narrow confines) all but impossible for Small or larger creatures.

Anyone touching this water must make a successful DC 15 Will save or become sickened and confused for 1 round—a character who rolls a natural 1 on this saving throw is exposed to a particularly potent eddy in the water and gains 1 negative level (DC 15 Fortitude save in 24 hours to remove).

Creatures: In keeping with the room's theme, Karzoug bound a pair of hydrodaemons into the room (using the hedged prison *binding* to keep the daemons locked in this room). In the Great Beyond, these froglike monsters lurk in the waters of the Styx and prey upon those who come too close to the banks. Their hunting patterns are the same here—the creatures lurk in the water, splashing up and out of it to attack anyone who comes within 5 feet of either bank. In addition to the fiends' normal attacks, the waters dripping from these hydrodaemons can affect anyone struck by their bite or claws—as with the waters of the River Styx itself, the two hydrodaemons are immune to its effects. The daemons do not pursue foes around the corner into area **B15** unless provoked into doing so by PCs who torment and vex them at range.

HYDRODAEMONS (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 95 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 67)

B15. THE BLACK MENHIR

This small natural cavern has a wide opening on the side leading to the bridge, and a much smaller passage opposite it. The only feature of note is an eight-foot-high square pillar of black stone, each of its clearly ancient sides etched with thin lines depicting a dense forest beneath an eclipsed sun.

SHATTERED STAR

This pillar is one of the few entrances to the extradimensional realm known as the Dark Forest, and was once used by Karzoug to access the pocket dimension. The tunnel on the far side leads down through several levels of Kaer Maga's Undercity before eventually reaching Xavorax, City of Silence—GMs who wish to take parties deeper should see *City of Strangers*, as such exploration is beyond the scope of this adventure.

Creatures: Three creatures wait patiently next to the pillar and make no move to approach. Two are emaciated humanoids wrapped in flowing robes, with flat patches of skin where their eyes should be, large crests of bone sweeping back from their skulls, grotesquely overlong fingers, and two mouths each. The third floats in the air between these two—a bloated sack of what appear to be numerous brains, its flesh curded and whorled like brain matter.

These are the emissaries from Xavorax—two caulborn and one of their living libraries: a chrestomath. As soon as the PCs enter, one of the two caulborn uses telepathy to whisper directly into the adventurers' minds, its voice like the drone of a million insects.

"We sense that you fear us. Do not. We know you are not the original agents from the City Above, yet your politics do not concern the Quivering Palace. Our offer still stands. If you would recover the Sihedron fragment from the Black Keep in the heart of the Dark Forest, we will send you to it, for this goal aligns with our needs as well."

The caulborn have no wish to fight (at least not yet), and only defend themselves if they're attacked. If the PCs attempt to push past them and enter the tunnel in the opposite wall that leads deeper into the Undercity, they warn the PCs, "What lies below is none of your concern." If the PCs persist, the emissaries attack.

The caulborn are patient—they are eager to explore the Dark Forest, but know that the PCs may have questions or may wish to rest and recuperate before continuing their quest. You can use this opportunity to give hints to the PCs as to what they can expect in the Black Keep and the Dark Forest (both in a sense of what combats they're likely to have—lots of undead—and what the nature of the realm is like). The caulborn are evasive when asked questions about their home, but can certainly tell the PCs about the legend of the Dark Rider. The caulborn wish to investigate the Dark Forest themselves, but an ancient warding effect placed by Karzoug prevents them from even entering the demiplane as long as the *Shard of Gluttony* remains within. The caulborn see no issue with revealing this, their reason for wanting to help the PCs, to them if they ask.

The *black menhirs* normally send travelers to the fringe of the Dark Forest and create one-way portals, but the caulborn know how to refocus the menhirs so that they

don't send the PCs practically to the front porch of the Black Keep. As long as they remain in this room, focused on the *black menhir* found here, the PCs will be able to return to this point simply by touching the stone in front of the Black Keep. The caulborn are comfortable holding the portal open for the PCs for many such back-and-forth journeys if they need to retreat and regroup, but warn them that returning through the portal will be painful and debilitating—the *black menhirs* were never meant to allow return travel, after all, and so the PCs should do their best to minimize return trips. Worse, travel through the menhirs by those composed of living flesh has a strange side effect—masses of ravenous worms hungry to feed on the living often wriggle out of the menhir in the Dark Forest in the wake of such travel, so the PCs should be ready for a fight as soon as they use the stone.

When the PCs are ready, the two caulborn place their hands on the pillar and begin to make a disconcerting, telepathic crooning (being caulborn, contact with the *black menhir* can't transport them). The pillar begins to glow blue, and they instruct the PCs to touch the stone—recommending all PCs touch at once so they all arrive at the same time. Any PC who touches the glowing stone is immediately transported to area C1.

CAULBORN (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 76 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 48)

CHRESTOMATH

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 105 (see page 84)

Development: If the PCs slay the caulborn, the menhir in this room remains charged with magical energy for 48 hours. During this time, anyone who touches the menhir is teleported to area C1 before the Black Keep—after this time, touching the menhir leads the PCs to a point along the edge of the Dark Forest, and they'll need to make their way through the realm to reach the Black Keep. If the caulborn are slain, the PCs will not be able to return to this room via one of the *black menhirs* in the Dark Forest, and instead must find their own way back to Varisia once they have secured the *Shard of Gluttony*. *Plane shift* is one option, as is defeating the treacherous caulborn at the end of the adventure.

If the caulborn remain alive, they can hold open the portal between the menhirs as long as needed. Traveling to the Black Keep is a painless affair, but returning to area B15 is a grueling experience. PCs who make the journey must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save to resist taking 1d4 points of Constitution drain and 1d4 points of Charisma drain from the agonizing, mind-shattering trip.

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Story Award: If the PCs achieve a peaceful interaction with the caulborn, award them experience points as if they had defeated the creatures in combat. If the PCs manage to learn a fair amount of additional information about the Black Keep by asking the right questions (and learn at least half of the information listed above), award them an additional 4,800 XP.

PART FOUR: THE BLACK KEEP

As soon as the PCs touch the *black menhir* in area **B15**, they suddenly find themselves on a sharply sloping hillside covered with grass so dark it's almost black, standing near a menhir almost identical to the one they touched, but far more weathered and leaning precariously to one side. All around them, a black forest of strange trees looms, save for in one direction, in which rises an eerie structure that climbs at an angle into the air.

When the PCs appear, they must appear in one of the eight adjacent squares surrounding the menhir itself at area **C1**.

C1. WRIGGLING HORROR (CR 9)

The world has changed. While the nearby presence of a black stone menhir similar in shape (although more weathered and leaning to one side) to the one touched in the previous room provides a sense of familiarity, everything else about this place is different from the dungeon rooms. This world appears like nothing so much as a roughly spherical bubble of stone measuring miles across. Above, the vault of the ceiling glows softly, casting the whole realm into an eerie kind of twilight. The lower hemisphere is an enormous bowl-shaped basin, its sides wooded with green fir trees and gnarled, naked snags. Thick fog blankets the realm, and the entire place seems leached of color, tending toward grays and blacks. Closer at hand looms a strange structure. This towering black keep rises up into the air, each new wing resting upon nothingness and creating a strange, stepped structure of towers and domed roofs that carries within its facade an almost palpable sense of menace.

Creatures: The caulborn's warning to the PCs to be prepared once they travel to the Dark Forest is good advice, for only 1 round after the PCs arrive, the menhir begins to glow with a nauseating yellow shimmer. A heartbeat later, a hideous outpouring of ravenous rot grubs writhes and wriggles out of the sides of the stone, spilling out onto the ground to the north and south of the stone itself. Each PC should roll initiative—roll for the two rot grub swarms as well. The swarms pour out on their initiative ranks into the eight squares surrounding the menhir. Once the swarms appear, they slither out to attack the closest foes.

These wriggling horrors can only manifest from a menhir once every 24 hours.

ROT GRUB SWARMS (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 85 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 215)

C2. MAIN DOORS

These ten-foot-tall, arched double doors are made of thick slabs of black iron.

Development: If the PCs have been particularly noisy in their approach to the Black Keep, or if they attempt to walk around the structure's perimeter, there's a 50% chance that one of the wyverns from area **C6** notices them as they approach. In this case, the wyverns swoop down to attack the PCs, retreating to area **C6** as soon as one of their number is slain.

C3. GREAT HALL (CR 10)

This enormous, rectangular hall has a thirty-foot-high ceiling. Taking up the entirety of the long northern and southern walls are identical bas-relief sculptures of a headless knight riding a horse whose eyes and nostrils trail goutts of flame. In alcoves



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THE DARK FOREST

The basics of reality function identically to the Material Plane in the Dark Forest. Air is constantly refreshed, and water constantly flows into the realm via many streams, only to be recycled back to its source. If the PCs wish to explore the Dark Forest, feel free to have them meet other creatures similar to those that dwell in the Black Keep. The primary denizens of the woods surrounding the Black Keep are the strange creatures known as the khæi—these folk do not approach the Black Keep, but if the PCs delve for long into the surrounding forest, it won't be long before they find a small khæi settlement. Statistics for khæi appear in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Bestiary*. The Dark Forest itself is 3 miles in diameter, with the Black Keep itself sitting at the lowest point in this sphere, so that directly above, the ceiling arches to a height of just over 15,000 feet.



at each of the room's four corners stand imposing suits of black armor. Both the northern and southern walls hold doors, and the room's eastern end is taken up by a sweeping marble staircase leading up to an open landing a story above.

One of Maligast's *spy eyes* (see area C11) is positioned on the center of the northern wall, allowing the bone sage to observe comings and goings into this room.

Creatures: A few moments after the PCs enter the hall, the doors slam shut behind them and a thick green mist begins pouring out of the two easternmost suits of armor to spill into the room, each cloud filling a 15-foot space blocking the eastern stairs. At the same time, a hideous bat-winged head atop the torso of a middle-aged woman flops out from her hiding place in the northwestern alcove to move to the center of the hall below the landing. Her long, black tube of a tongue writhes as she addresses the PCs in accented Common.

"Did you really think the master wouldn't notice your arrival? This is his realm, children—nothing passes here without his notice. We know why you're here, too—oh, yes. But fear not—all will be forgiven in time. Now come give mother a kiss."

The speaker is a manananggal, one of the Dark Rider's many exotic undead servants, and the soupy, pulsing mist seeping into the room is actually a pair of strange vaporous oozes known as hungry fogs that have been conjured into the chamber by the Black Keep itself. As soon as the manananggal's announcement is complete, all three creatures swoop in to attack. The manananggal is particularly cognizant of the fog's healing abilities on undead, and often swoops by one of the fogs to provoke an

attack of opportunity from the opportunistic but mindless oozes in hopes that it hits and heals her of damage.

If the PCs manage to enter the room stealthily, the hungry fogs do not manifest and the manananggal can be encountered lurking patiently in area C7.

MANANANGGAL CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 85 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 190)

ADVANCED HUNGRY FOGS (2) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 73 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 152)

Treasure: The four suits of black armor are all +1 *full plate*.

C4. STABLES (CR 10)

This stable could accommodate several horses, though none appear to be in residence at the moment. The room smells dusty and unused, and the straw strewn about is old and brittle. Beneath the sprinkling of straw, the paved floor is charred with what appear to be hoofprints burned into the stone.

The hoof marks in the floor were burned there by the Dark Rider's mount, a fiendish horse, as well as the nightmares he uses to pull his carriage. The smaller door to the north leads out into the Dark Forest—it's kept locked, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 35 Disable Device check picks the lock and provides an alternative entrance into the keep other than via the main doors at area C2.

Creature: A tall, thin, and obviously deceased woman stands in the center of the stable, looking confused. She wears a wide-brimmed hat, boots, and has two pistols slung low on her hips. When the PCs enter, she's staring at the ground, muttering to herself about a missing horse. When the PCs arrive, she looks up, and an eerie blue light comes into her eyes as she yells, "Rustlers!" and draws her pistols.

The creature is a pale stranger—the shade of an expert horseman from another world, which the Black Keep has pulled in from beyond to replace the previous stable master (an unfortunate who was eaten by the wyverns in area C6). The pale stranger has dwelled in this stable for many years, but in her undead state, those years have passed in the blink of an eye—when she spots the PCs, he assumes they're here to rob her of her horse, Buckeye. No such horse is in evidence, but if, while the fight is continuing, a PC manages to convince the pale stranger that Buckeye is not in the keep (and supports this by succeeding at a DC 30 Diplomacy check made as a free action), the pale stranger suddenly ceases attacking, holsters her pistols, and tips her hat in apology before

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1 square = 5 feet



wandering out of the keep and into the Dark Forest to search for her nonexistent steed. Any further attack against the pale stranger results in her unwavering wrath.

PALE STRANGER

CR 10

XP 9,600

hp 127 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 214)

Treasure: The pale stranger's two masterwork pistols function as +1 pistols (see *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat*) in her hands. She carries enough ammo for 20 shots with each. The pistols are of a strange design that does not match that of guns produced by distant Alkenstar—as such, each masterwork pistol is worth 2,500 gp.

C5. CARRIAGE HOUSE

This room is almost entirely filled by a jet-black carriage, its sides embossed with eerie depictions of skeletal angels bearing scythes.

This carriage is used by the Dark Rider on those rare occasions when he enlists the aid of nightmares in his hunts. The nightmares themselves are not currently present. As with the side door in area C4, the double doors

leading outside are locked, and can be picked from outside with a successful DC 35 Disable Device check.

C6. BROKEN TOWER (CR 10)

This tower is a single enormous, hollow stone cylinder. A spiral staircase winds up against the southern wall, but what lofty vantage the stairs may have led to is no longer discernible, as the tower's top appears to have been broken off sixty feet up, leaving the whole place open to the sky. The tower's upper rim is mostly jagged and broken stone, though a jumbled mess of lumber spans and partially covers one side of the opening. The paved stone floor is covered in several inches of stinking muck.

The staircase leading up the inside wall has no railing, and though relatively safe to traverse, it makes for a dangerous place to fight.

Creatures: A brood of three wyverns, all siblings, have adopted this tower as their own, sustaining themselves on game from the forest, the occasional khaei, and raw meat that the tower spontaneously generates for them. They live in the nest of broken crossbeams at the top of the stairway, and immediately attack anyone who enters this area. Any wyvern that's reduced to fewer than 15 hit points attempts

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to flee the tower to hide out in the Dark Forest—it will not return to this lair until it has healed its damage.

ADVANCED WYVERNS (3)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 96 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 282)

Treasure: Though they know better than to attack the Dark Rider or his more powerful guests, the wyverns have managed to collect a small hoard by killing other creatures conjured or generated by the Black Keep over the years. Along with numerous bones and bits of shiny scrap metal that might once have been a suit of plate mail before it was ripped apart, the nest contains a suit of +1 *shadow leather armor*, a *wand of mount* (37 charges), a leather bag containing *horseshoes of a zephyr*, and a *phylactery of positive channeling*.

C7. LANDING

This wide marble landing leads from the western stairs to an equally majestic ascending set to the east, at the top of which is a wide set of bronze double doors. Three other smaller, more normal-looking wooden doors stand at intervals around the walls.

Development: If the PCs manage a stealthy entrance to the Black Keep, they can find the manananggal that normally attacks in area C3 in this room. In addition, the Black Keep's current seneschal, a porcupine-like creature known as a pukwudgie fears confronting the PCs directly, and thus is hiding in area C8 and watching the landing through the keyhole. If the PCs enter areas C9 or C11, he's happy to let the keep's other residents take care of them. If they move to open the doors to area C12, however, his sense of duty overtakes him, and he rushes out to attack with his pack, shouting about how the intruders "mustn't interrupt the feast!"

C8. LIBRARY (CR 10)

This room is lined with bookshelves that stretch all the way to the ceiling, broken only by several doors and tall glass windows to the west. In the center of the room, leaned up against an immaculate armchair, are a woman's clothed legs, her body apparently severed at the waist and its entrails scooped out.

The severed legs in this room belong to the manananggal from area C3, left here when she changed forms.

Creatures: Abroget, the current self-declared seneschal of the Black Keep, lurks in this room, intent on spending some "quality time" with the manananggal's lower half. The stuffy, officious creature is a pukwudgie—a malicious, porcupine-backed little humanoid whose poisonous quills can cause those he slays to rise as

zombies. With his natural command over undead, he's proven surprisingly effective at marshaling and ruling over the lesser undead that arise in the Black Keep, and thus the Dark Rider has so far tolerated his presumption. Abroget goes through his zombies with astonishing frequency, and while he currently has no such minions, he's commanded the obedience of four deformed wraiths who were once khæi. These wraiths look vaguely humanoid, but have hunched backs and twisted visages with misshapen eyes.

As soon as the PCs enter this room or try to open the doors to area C12, Abroget attacks. He allows his wraiths to engage in melee against the PCs while he hangs back, turning invisible, shouting insults, and then making a sneak attack with his quills at range. If all four of his wraiths are slain, Abroget's true colors shine through if he's below 35 hit points—he drops to his knees and begs for his life. If mercy is granted, the sniveling pukwudgie can easily offer information about the layout and inhabitants of the Black Keep, though he knows little of their history as he arrived relatively recently. He tries to flee from the PCs as soon as possible, in any event, and does his best to avoid talking about the Dark Rider at all.

ABROGET

CR 7

XP 3,200

NE pukwudgie (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 223)

hp 85

WRAITHS (4)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

hp 47 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 281)

Treasure: The books in this room are a completely random assortment generated by the keep, and highly disorganized, ranging from Varisian fairy tales to cookbooks to ancient primers on field tactics and stories of the Taldan Armies of Exploration. If anyone removes a book from the keep, its covers begin to softly weep blood. One item of actual worth can be found here with a successful DC 30 Perception check—a *manual of bodily health* +1, left undisturbed and forgotten on a bottom shelf.

C9. HAREM (CR 10)

This opulent bedchamber is covered in pillows and hanging silks, yet the whole place reeks of death and decay. A large mound of cushions and comforters piled high into a bed dominates one wall, while a shallow wallow of murky brown water is inset into the floor opposite it.

One of Maligast's *spy eyes* (see area C11) is positioned on the northern wall, allowing the bone sage to observe

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Olanna's activities. A secret door is hidden in the south wall (Perception DC 20 to notice).

Creature: This room belongs to one of the more powerful creatures pulled in from another reality by the keep: Olanna the nuckelavee, currently the chief consort of the Dark Rider. A manifestation of disease and filth, the nuckelavee—whose body is that of a conjoined and skinless horse and rider—was initially extremely attracted to the Dark Rider. Though disappointed by the discovery that, in the dullahan's case, horse and rider were two separate entities, that knowledge hasn't stopped her occasionally successful attempts at seduction. These days, the fey spends much of her time in this room, working on her secret project in area C10. If the PCs enter her room, she leaps up from where she lounges in her bed of pillows and attacks. If reduced to fewer than 20 hit points, she attempts to flee to the Dark Rider's side to beg him for protection. The Dark Rider has little interest in cowards, and if the PCs aren't swift in following the fleeing nuckelavee, they merely find her twice-beheaded carcass at the Dark Rider's side when they reach him.

OLANNA

CR 10

XP 9,600

CE advanced nuckelavee (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 203, 290)

hp 126

C10. SECRET CLOSET

This small stone closet is almost a shrine, its stone walls painted with dark, dried filth to form crude pictographs of a headless horseman. A jet-black longsword and a helm adorned with ram horns stand displayed in a vertical wooden rack in the chamber's center.

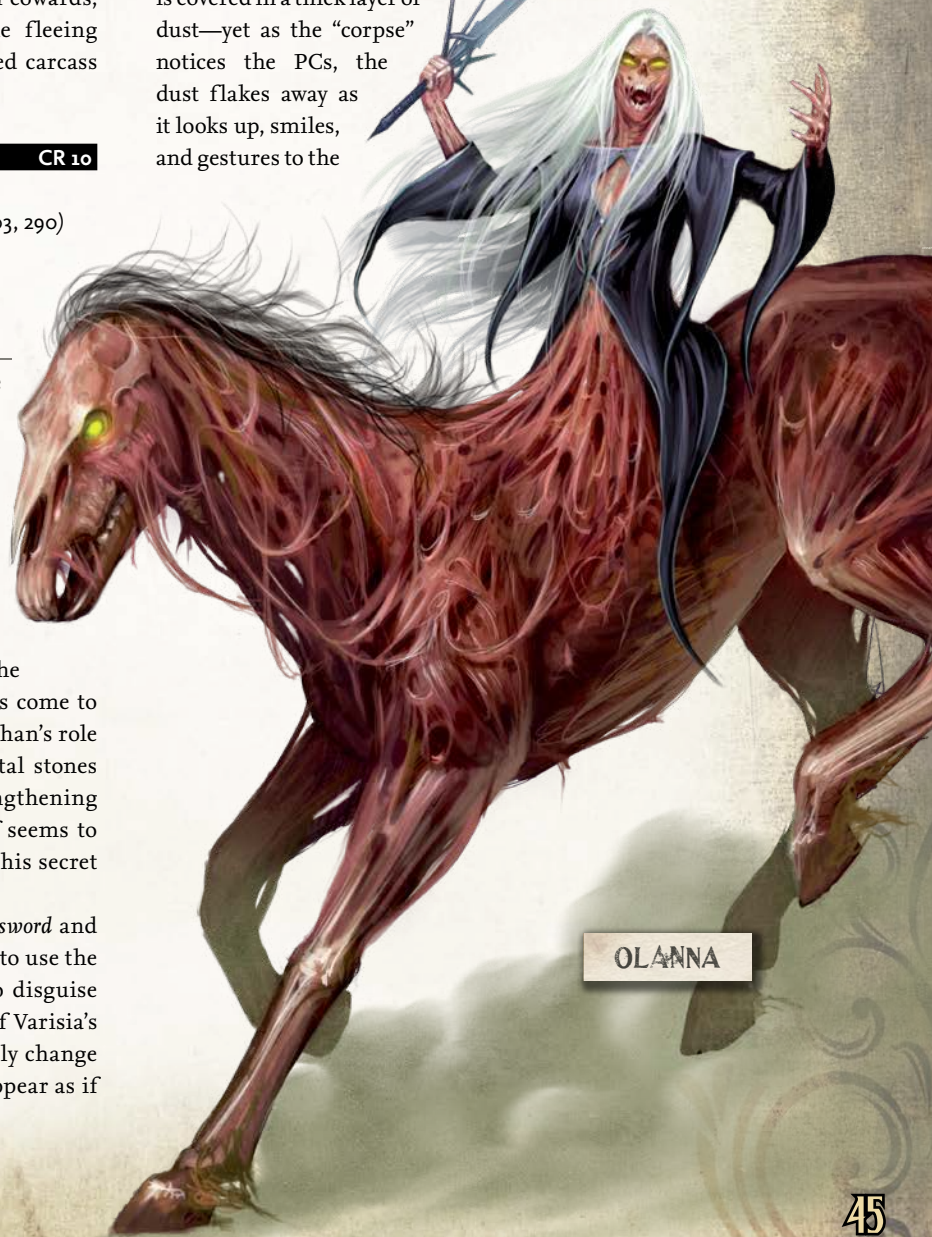
Over the years she's lived here, the capricious nuckelavee has grown somewhat dissatisfied with her lot and her limited influence over the Dark Rider. In her boredom and madness, she's come to believe that she's destined to take over the dullahan's role herself, so that she can leave through the portal stones and spread corruption across the world. Strengthening her belief is the fact that the Black Keep itself seems to be encouraging her, having gradually gestated this secret room for its own unknowable reasons.

Treasure: The sword is a +1 *undead bane longsword* and the helmet acts as a *hat of disguise*. Olanna plans to use the former to kill the Dark Rider, and the latter to disguise herself in his shape and take his place as one of Varisia's most sinister legends (although she can't actually change her monster type with the hat, it does let her appear as if she were the Dark Rider).

C11. BONE SAGE'S QUARTERS (CR 11)

This tidy chamber is a combination workshop and living space. A workbench containing alembics, retorts, and other vessels filled with a variety of unknown substances decorates the room. Along the northeastern wall runs a triptych of paintings showing an intimidating vessel that's all flames and dark barbed spines sailing through the star-studded void of space.

Creature: When the PCs enter, a skeletal, withered corpse with an oversized, bulging forehead is seated in the armchair reading a book. He wears a long blue cape and flattering, tailored black clothes with silver embellishments and a three-eyed bird skull hanging from a chain around his neck. The corpse seems to have died while reading the book, and is covered in a thick layer of dust—yet as the “corpse” notices the PCs, the dust flakes away as it looks up, smiles, and gestures to the



OLANNA

SHATTERED STAR

cushions at his feet as it addresses the PCs in Thassilonian: “So you’re the intruders. Well. Come, come—sit down. I suspect we have much to discuss. You may call me Maligast of Eox.”

Maligast is one of the legendary bone sages of the dead planet Eox. With a successful DC 30 Knowledge (arcana or history) check, a PC can recall the ancient stories of Eox’s doom. When Eox’s environment was destroyed millennia ago in a great cataclysm, its few surviving residents took to undeath as a way of saving their race. Today, the bone sages are ageless and peerless scholars—and also dangerously paranoid.

Unlike most of the residents of the Black Keep, Maligast was not spontaneously generated here or called in from another reality, but rather brought here personally by Karzoug. In return for the opportunity to study the *Shard of Gluttony*, Maligast agreed to send Karzoug a gift—a simulacrum of himself that would serve Karzoug as a guardian and ally in the Black Keep while simultaneously being afforded the chance to study the shard and other topics for many centuries, with the understanding that the simulacrum would eventually return to Eox to report to its creator.

Although Karzoug has been gone for thousands of years, Maligast’s simulacrum remains relatively content with his posting. He still gets bored sometimes, and thus happily welcomes a chance to talk with the PCs, particularly if any of them are also arcane scholars. He knows most of the history given in the Adventure Background, as well as all about Golarion’s solar system (see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Distant Worlds*), and may be able to offer the PCs interesting tidbits about the Dark Forest, ancient Thassilon, the Dark Rider and his *Naming Pool*, or anything else they ask. He also suspects (mostly correctly) that since both Karzoug and his creator are long dead, he’s more or less stuck here with no prospect for anything new to do, and (as a simulacrum) no ability to gain power. Despite this somewhat depressing situation, the simulacrum remains ambivalent toward its fate.



MALIGAST OF EOX

Maligast is an odd conversationalist—enthusiastic, but a little insane, often stopping short in the middle of sentences or shifting focus suddenly. If the PCs deliberately offend him, he attacks. Otherwise, he’s content to talk as long as they are. When the PCs express intent to leave, however, he shakes his head apologetically and says, “I’m afraid that won’t be possible—I have no orders about conversation, but rather specific ones regarding those who seek to explore this place further. I apologize for your imminent deaths, but as creatures of intellect yourselves, I’m sure you understand the necessity.” Maligast then immediately attacks.

MALIGAST OF EOX

CR 11

XP 12,800

Male human necromancer 10

NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., life sight (10 feet, 10 rounds/day); **Perception** +23

Aura fear (60-ft. radius, DC 19)

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 12, flat-footed 25 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +7 natural, +4 shield)

hp 120 (10d8+75)

Fort +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 15/bludgeoning and magic; **Immune** cold, electricity, undead traits

Weaknesses simulacrum

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee touch +5 (1d8+5 plus paralyzing touch)

Special Attacks channel

negative energy (DC 19, 8/day), paralyzing touch (DC 19)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +15)

8/day—grave touch (5 rounds)

Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +15)
5th—*dismissal* (DC 20), quickened *magic missile*, *summon monster V*, *waves of fatigue*

4th—*detect scrying*, *dimension door*, *enervation* (DC 19, 2), *scrying* (DC 19)

3rd—*dispel magic*, extended *false life*, *fireball* (DC 18), *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *vampiric touch* (DC 18)

2nd—*command undead* (DC 17), extended *mage armor*, *scorching ray* (3), *see invisibility*

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1st—*identify*, *magic missile* (3), *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 16, 2), *shield*
o (at will)—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *read magic*, *prestidigitation*

Opposition Schools enchantment, transmutation

TACTICS

Before Combat The bone sage casts extended *mage armor* and extended *false life* every day. Upon noticing the PCs approaching (either by hearing battle or seeing their approach via a *spy eye*), he casts *see invisibility* and, as soon as possible before confrontation, *shield*.

During Combat Maligast relies on his damage reduction to blunt most physical attacks, and casts *summon monster V* on the first round to conjure up 1d3 Medium air elementals. He follows that up by trying to dismiss the most heavily armored PC (remember, here in the Dark Forest, the PCs are extraplanar creatures!), following that up with his combat spells.

Morale Maligast has little alternative but to fight until destroyed, at which point his nature as a simulacrum becomes clear as he melts into a shapeless heap of ice and snow.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 20, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 22

Feats Combat Casting, Command Undead, Defensive Combat Training, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Toughness

Skills Craft (alchemy) +14, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana, engineering, planes) +18, Perception +23, Sense Motive +23, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +19

Languages Aklo, Draconic, Elven, Eoxian, Necril, Thassilonian, Undercommon

SQ arcane bond (amulet)

Gear *amulet of natural armor* +2, *spy eyes* (page 59), spellbook (contains only spells prepared, since as a simulacrum, Maligast cannot learn more spells than that)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Eoxian Although the race itself is effectively extinct (all the remaining Eoxians are now undead), when they lived, the Eoxians were essentially humans who had a +4 racial bonus to Intelligence and a -4 penalty to Constitution—they were incredibly intellectual but rather frail, a disadvantage ultimately negated by their embrace of undeath.

Simulacrum As a simulacrum, Maligast can only repair damage to himself using the alchemical reagents in this room, over the course of 24 hours—negative energy does not heal him.

Treasure: Painted by Maligast himself, the triptych is of a great Eoxian space vessel—the unique subject matter alone makes the paintings worth 300 gp. The alchemical supplies on the various workbenches and shelves are for the use of repairing damage to simulacrums, and are worth 8,400 gp in all. Finally, three forked metal rods worth 100 gp apiece sit amid the supplies; a successful DC 20 Spellcraft check

identifies these as foci for *plane shift* spells: one rod is attuned to the Material Plane, one to the Dark Forest, and one to another extraplanar realm associated with ancient Thassilon—the demiplane of Runeforge (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path: Rise of the Runelords Anniversary Edition*). If you wish, you can change the planes to which these rods are attuned, but you should keep one associated with the Material Plane in case the PCs need it to use *plane shift* to return home.

C12. DINING HALL (CR 10)

This grand dining hall is in complete disarray. Huge steaming roasts vie with festering carrion on two long tables with elegant cloth table-runners. Several chairs lie knocked over and chunks of half-gnawed food are strewn all over the room.

The Dark Rider enjoys occasionally directing the keep to provide lavish feasts for his pack, both as a reward and to cruelly remind the hounds of the civilization they once enjoyed before they were transformed into their current state. The food on the table is a mixture of normal dishes and horrific murder, the latter including a plucked and broiled tengu trussed into the shape of a turkey; a ratfolk with its chest cavity spread wide and its innards jellied; and the centerpiece, a decaying centaur with a cherry in each empty eye socket. The bronze double doors at the north end of the room are locked (DC 30, Disable Device, Break DC 28)—keys can be found hidden in area C13.

Creatures: The Dark Rider's pack of shadow mastiffs is here enjoying itself—some are sitting in chairs and eating sedately, while others frolic and tear the place apart. As soon as any of them spot the PCs, they bay and attack as a unit, working together to flank and take down opponents.

SHADOW MASTIFFS (6)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

hp 51 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 241)

Development: If this combat lasts longer than 1 round, the Dark Rider (see area C16) comes to investigate.

C13. DULLAHAN'S GLORY (CR 10)

This stone room is almost completely bare of furnishings, the walls and floor simply blank gray stone. In the center of the room stands a statue of a headless armored man holding up a whip of linked vertebrae and seated astride a rearing horse that bears an expression of fiendish ferocity. On the western wall hangs the only other decoration in this room: what appears to be a harp or lyre made entirely from the corpse of a small humanoid.

The statue depicts the Dark Rider—a work carved by talented artisans and given to him by Karzoug so long ago.

SHATTERED STAR

Trap: The harp on the wall is a magical treasure (see Treasure, below) protected by a battery of arrows hidden in the walls to either side. Anyone touching the harp causes a storm of arrows to fill that portion of the room.

HAIL OF ARROWS TRAP

CR 10

XP 9,600

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger touching the harp (*alarm*); **Reset** repair; **Bypass** twisting the end of the statue's spine whip disarms the trap for 10 minutes (Perception DC 30 to notice)

Effect Atk +20 ranged (9d6); multiple targets (all targets within 5 feet of the western wall)

Treasure: The instrument on the wall is a *skin harp* (see page 58), sometimes used by the Dark Rider to help control the keep's spontaneous creations. In addition, a successful DC 30 Perception check reveals a narrow niche on the statue by the horse's rear left foot in which is hidden a platinum key worth 900 gp—this key unlocks the doors to area C16 from the dining hall (area C12).

C14. BATHING POOL (CR 11)

This curving room is almost completely taken up by a recessed bath in the floor, the pool leaving only a narrow lip of stone around the edges of the dark water. From the door, steps lead down into the pool, and the whole chamber is only half-lit by tiny, flickering flames near the ceiling.

Unlike many other rooms in the keep, this chamber is dimly lit. The pool itself is warm and 4 feet deep, thus making it difficult terrain for Medium creatures, and forcing Small or smaller creatures to swim. In addition, the water in the pool is infused with negative energy, dealing 1d6 points of damage each round to any living creature standing or swimming in it, while healing any undead in it for an equal amount every round. Many of the castle's other undead servants often come here to relax and soak away their troubles, including the room's current occupants.

Creatures: A trio of mohrgs spontaneously generated by the Black Keep dwell here, lying on the pool's bottom such that they are somewhat difficult to spot beneath the water's dark surface (this grants both mohrgs a +8 bonus on their Stealth checks). When the PCs enter the room, the three creatures rise silently from the pool and attack, attempting to drag living characters into the pool and using the unholy water to damage their foes while healing themselves.

MOHRGS (3)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 91 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 208)

Treasure: Hidden behind a loose stone just below the waterline on the western lip of the pool (Perception DC 25 to notice) is a +1 *undead bane disruption club* bearing a permanent magic aura that masks its actual magic aura. It was hidden here long ago by Karzoug's servants as a sort of insurance policy, kept close at hand should their master ever need to punish the Dark Rider with something that would be particularly painful and effective against the undead being.

C15. OVERLOOK

This curved sitting area is adorned with huge solarium-style windows. Yet rather than overlooking the rest of the Dark Forest, it stares out on a harsh moonscape—a blasted world of rocks and dust burned black, where twisted spires of bone and metal rise into a sky filled with stars.

Karzoug spent many years crafting this powerful magic window in order to keep an eye on events elsewhere in the solar system and to communicate with several allies on the distant planet of Eox. The current view is of this dead planet Eox, as seen from the original Maligast's home in the necropolis city of Orphys. Touching the centermost window causes the scene to shift between worlds, showing points on all the planets of the solar system save for Aucturn and Apostae, eventually showing the unobstructed natural view of the Dark Forest outside before starting the cycle again. For information on these worlds, see *Distant Worlds* or page 209 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide*—these views are merely depictions of regions in those worlds in the nature of a magical, animated painting.

C16. NAMING POOL (CR 12)

A raised, circular pool like a well ready to overflow stands in the center of this room, the blue liquid inside too vibrantly colored to be water. The rest of the room is blank and empty, and the whole place hums with a barely heard vibration.

Before the coming of the *Shard of Gluttony*, this chamber was the heart and focus of the Black Keep, as old and unknowable as the Dark Rider himself. The standing font in the room's center is the *Naming Pool*, the mysterious mechanism by which the Dark Rider gets the names of those he specifically searches out on his hunts each year, for reasons known only to the long-gone original architects of the Dark Forest.

The secret doors to the north and south can be located with a successful DC 25 Perception check.

Creature: The Dark Rider spends much of his time in this room, guarding the approach to the Shard Chamber (area C18) and waiting patiently for the next time the *Naming Pool* sends him into Varisia on a mission of murder and horror.

THE ASYLUM STONE

He appears to be a tall man dressed in night-black plate mail and holding both an ice-dripping longsword and what appears to be the barbed spine of a humanoid. All that's missing is any sign of his head, as the neck of his armor ends in inky blackness. The Dark Rider sits astride his mount, a fiendish warhorse.

The dullahan is the master of his realm, and has been expecting the PCs. As soon as they enter, he charges them. During the ensuing battle, in which he thunders through the room as if it were an open field, the Dark Rider does not speak, save to name those he's about to kill or use his death's calling ability. Note that chances are good that the PCs are confronted by the Dark Rider before they enter this room, for if the PCs defeat his mastiffs in area C12, he immediately moves into that room to seek revenge.

THE DARK RIDER

CR 11

XP 19,200

hp 142 (see page 57)

THE DARK RIDER'S MOUNT

CR —

hp 85 (see page 57)

C17. ENGINES

The rooms hidden behind the concealed doors are cramped, claustrophobic affairs. An obvious humming emanates from inside these narrow stone closets: enormous machines formed from mazes of curving pipes and sealed orbs and cylinders, their metal disappearing seamlessly into the stone floor.

These mysterious, arcane engines are of a type totally unfamiliar to even Maligast, and are part of whatever mechanism gives the Black Keep its strange malleability and ability to create and conjure creatures into its halls—perhaps even maintaining the Dark Forest itself. Though whirring and ticking can be heard from inside the vessels, the machine is sealed, and any damage to the mechanisms causes them to weep black ichor before regenerating almost instantly.

A successful DC 25 Perception check in area C17b reveals a small loose stone in the wall behind one of the pipes. Hidden in the hollow behind it is Maligast's emergency kit: a box of blackened, rune-carved stone from Eox containing two scrolls of *plane*

shift—one divine and one arcane. Maligast secured them here in case he or a messenger ever need to flee or report to Karzoug.

C18. SHARD CHAMBER

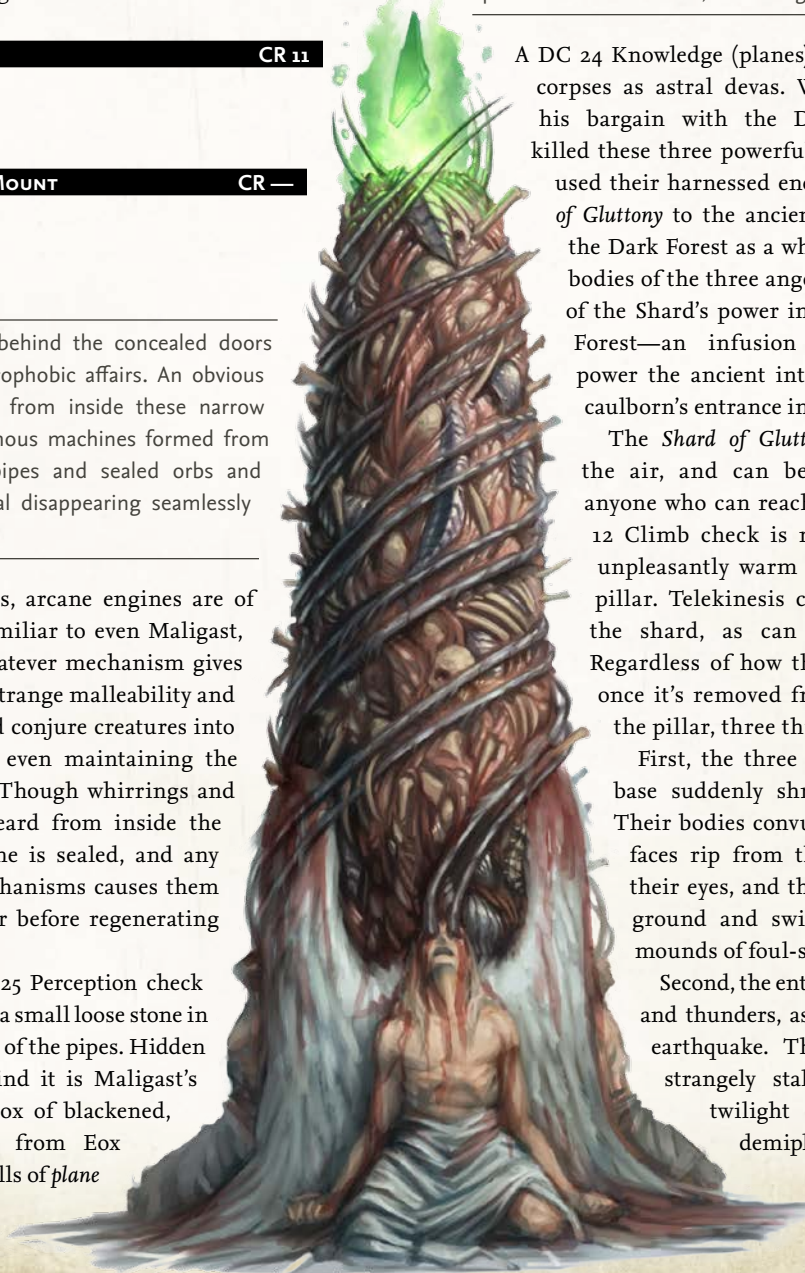
This long chamber is completely sealed, its walls of bare stone. At the far end, the domed ceiling rises above a twenty-foot-tall pillar that is part organic, part horribly mechanical. Half-emerging from the marble of the pillar, set back to back with each other, are the kneeling, desiccated corpses of three angelic beings, their wings spread and mouths open in silent screams. From their eye sockets run articulated metal shafts that curve up to the top of the pillar, where their pointed ends emit a soft glow. Floating in the air above the pillar, seemingly suspended in the radiance, is a triangular shard of metal.

A DC 24 Knowledge (planes) check identifies the corpses as astral devas. When he first struck his bargain with the Dark Rider, Karzoug killed these three powerful celestial beings and used their harnessed energy to join the *Shard of Gluttony* to the ancient magic that powers the Dark Forest as a whole. It is through the bodies of the three angels that a tiny portion of the Shard's power infuses all of the Dark Forest—an infusion that continues to power the ancient interdiction against the caulborn's entrance into the demiplane.

The *Shard of Gluttony* simply floats in the air, and can be removed easily by anyone who can reach it—a successful DC 12 Climb check is required to scale the unpleasantly warm and wet sides of the pillar. Telekinesis can certainly retrieve the shard, as can conjured creatures. Regardless of how the shard is removed, once it's removed from its position atop the pillar, three things occur.

First, the three angels at the pillar's base suddenly shriek in mortal pain. Their bodies convulse and thrash, their faces rip from the metal fixtures in their eyes, and then they slump to the ground and swiftly decay away into mounds of foul-smelling corruption.

Second, the entire Dark Forest shakes and thunders, as if struck by a minor earthquake. The air quality grows strangely stale, and the glowing twilight outside dims as the demiplane's wards against the caulborn fail.



Finally, all living things in area C18 suddenly feel a wave of coldness pass through them as a pulse of potent necromantic energies momentarily wash out through the room. Each living creature in the chamber must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or gain the curse of living death.

CURSE OF LIVING DEATH

Type curse; Save Fort DC 20

Effect creature's flesh grows pale and gangrenous in appearance and exudes a foul-smelling stench of decay (–6 penalty on all Charisma-based skill checks opposed by or made against living creatures); the creature reacts to positive and negative energy as if it were undead—positive energy harms it, and negative energy heals it; against spell effects and magic item effects that have different specific effects on undead (such as an undead bane weapon or a searing light spell), the creature is treated as both undead and its original creature type (taking the least advantageous choice in resolving effects)

Story Award: Award the PCs 19,200 XP for securing the *Shard of Gluttony*.

CAULBORN REDUX (CR 10)

Once the PCs have the *Shard of Gluttony*, they've accomplished their primary objective. They can certainly continue to explore the Black Keep—its residents still defend themselves, but most can tell that something has changed and are more fearful and eager to retreat. Unfortunately for the PCs, their onetime caulborn allies have their own plans for the *Shard of Gluttony*.

Creatures: As soon as the PCs claim the *Shard of Gluttony*, the caulborn in area B15 sense the change. They immediately use the *black menhir* to travel to the Black Keep—the rot grub swarms do not manifest, as they were linked to the powers of the shard itself. The caulborn at once move toward the Black Keep and immediately begin seeking the PCs out. If the PCs immediately leave the Dark Forest via their own means (such as by *plane shift*), they can avoid a final confrontation with the two caulborn and their chrestomath companion—otherwise, they're likely to encounter the group as they're leaving the Black Keep to return to activate the portal in area C1. When the PCs encounter the group, one of the caulborn greets them telepathically.

“Greetings again, humanoids. You've accomplished great deeds in opening the Dark Forest to our explorations, and should be very proud. Unfortunately, we cannot allow such a powerful artifact as the Runelord's shard to remain in the hands of younger races—it must be studied by those best suited to the task. We regret the fact that you cannot be allowed to remember your triumph, but rest assured that we will

remember it for you. Your praises will be sung in the Quivering Palace until the end of days.”

The caulborn then attack the PCs, attempting to render their prey helpless or fascinated so that they can use their consume thoughts ability to excise the PCs' memory of their triumph, in its place instating false memories of how there was never a shard in the Dark Forest at all, and the whole excursion was a mistake. If the memories are successfully altered, the caulborn retreat to their hidden city and leave the PCs to return to the world above. If forced to do so, they do not hesitate to merely slay the PCs. The caulborn fight to the death in pursuit of their mission, knowing that their own memories have already been backed up in the living libraries of Xavorax.

CAULBORN (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 76 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 48)

CHRESTOMATH

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 105 (page 84)

Development: If the PCs lose this encounter but survive with missing memories, it's not necessarily the end of the campaign. Instead, once they return to the surface, someone—possibly Augustille, Vargun, or one of the party's Pathfinder superiors—notices inconsistencies in their stories, or something strange about the way they tell them, and pays to have the memory-modifying effect magically reversed. In this case, the PCs will need to retrieve the shard from Xavorax, the City Below, before continuing on with the next adventure. The details of this desperate mission to regain the stolen shards are beyond the scope of this adventure—for more information on the caulborn's city, see *City of Strangers*.

In any event, the *black menhir* at area C1 remains linked to area B15 for the foreseeable future—the PCs can return to that area and thus to the Material Plane by merely touching the menhir. With the Dark Forest's wardings released, they suffer no ill effects from this return trip.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs have resolved the encounter with the caulborn and made their way back through the Therassic Workshop, the adventure is effectively over. The librarians of the Therassic Spire are thrilled at even a brief chance to study the *Shard of Gluttony*, but they do not press the PCs to grant them this luxury. They immediately set about sealing the secret door, this time walling it up permanently and setting magical wards over it—news of the caulborn betrayal disturbs the librarians greatly as they realize they

THE ASYLUM STONE



may need to take steps to protect themselves from possible caulborn aggression in the future. While happy to fill in the PCs on any points of ancient history they can, as well as to purchase any rare texts the PCs may have found over the course of the adventure, the reclusive scholars quickly begin to revert to their normal reserved state, and once their chance to study the shard ends, they politely but firmly let the PCs know that it's time to move along.

Any other allies or enemies the PCs may have made in Kaer Maga are sad to see them go, but unlikely to pursue or accompany them—to most folks living in the Asylum Stone, the city is a world unto itself. Depending on the PCs' interactions with Berkanin and the other Ardocs, the leaders of Bis may be positively inclined toward them or after their blood. Both the Augurs and the Duskwardens let the PCs know that their contributions have been appreciated, and Abra may make one last attempt to secure a promise that some of the PCs will return and join the guild. With the "Council of Truth" revealed as a sham, interested parties may try to get the PCs to take up the mantle for real.

Yet all of these local ties are ultimately irrelevant, for when the PCs place a *pink rhomboid ioun stone* into the corresponding cavity on the *Shard of Gluttony* and then use the shard to seek the next shard, they are granted a vision of a seaside abbey notable for its tall lighthouse. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (geography) check identifies the sight as Windsong Abbey—yet the vision seems strange, for the abbey, normally a small but thriving community, seems to be in ruins!

Whether the PCs decide to head directly to Windsong Abbey and thus begin the next adventure in the Shattered Star Adventure Path, "Beyond the Doomsday Door," or whether they choose to first return to Magnimar to report their success to Heidmarch Manor and the Pathfinders is up to them. Once the PCs provide a detailed report and maps of their adventure to the Pathfinders (a process that should take no more than a day's work writing), the Fame scores of PCs who are members of the Pathfinder Society faction increase by 12 and the PCs earn 12 Prestige Points for their accomplishments.

ABRA LOPATI

A highly trained member of the Duskwardens, Abra Lopati is completely devoted to protecting the people of Kaer Maga from the horrors that slumber in the caverns beneath it, and can be an invaluable ally for those determined to explore the Undercity.

ABRA LOPATI CR 6

XP 2,400

Male human ranger 7

LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; Senses Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+5 armor, +3 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 57 (7d10+14)

Fort +6, Ref +10, Will +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 longsword +9/+4 (1d8+3/19–20), +1 short sword +8/+3 (1d6+2/19–20)

Ranged shortbow +10/+5 (1d6/x3)

Special Attacks favored enemy (aberrations +4, undead +2)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 4th; concentration +5)

1st—*alarm, resist energy***TACTICS**

During Combat Abra is a front-line fighter. He wades into the fray with a flurry of melee attacks, hoping to shield allies with a wall of steel—and his body, if need be. He fights strategically, always helping allies to flank, using his hunter's bond, and calling out advice to those less used to fighting in his chosen terrain.

Morale Though willing to retreat if overmatched, Abra insists on being the last one out of any combat, and never leaves a fallen comrade behind.

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 10

Base Atk +7; CMB +9; CMD 22

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Endurance, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Acrobatics +3, Climb +11, Diplomacy +3, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nature) +6, Perception +13, Sense Motive +3, Stealth +12, Survival +11

Languages Common

SQ favored terrain (underground +2), hunter's bond (companions), track +3, wild empathy +7, woodland stride

Combat Gear *potions of cure light wounds* (2); **Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, +1 longsword, +1 short sword, shortbow with 20 arrows, *greater halflight charm*

Abra Lopati is the bastard son of a traveling Varisian father and a Chelish mother from a middle-class family in Korvosa. Their dalliance was never intended to be more than a fling—the two met at a festival, spent several nights together in the Varisian caravan's camp just beyond the city limits, and parted ways with a kiss and an acknowledgment that both would treasure the memories. Yet just a few months later, it became clear that more had come from their union than either had expected.

Abra's illegitimacy was already a mark of shame for his mother's family, yet it wasn't until he was born and his Varisian features were revealed that things truly went sour. His maternal grandfather, deeply prejudiced toward the traveling folk, flew into a rage and cast Abra's mother out onto the street, where she was forced to take any menial jobs she could find just to get by. At last, when Abra was 8, she fell sick and died, leaving him alone in a city that had little time for a half-blood orphan.

Abra knew nothing of his father except the man's surname—Lopati—and harbored a deep resentment over his mother's unfortunate situation, and so it never occurred to him to seek shelter with either side of his family. Instead, he learned to work Korvosa's streets, panhandling and stealing, living on rooftops and under merchant carts. Here he honed his reflexes and discovered his deep and abiding love of urban exploration—the thrill of seeing the sun rise from a previously undiscovered rooftop in the Shingles, mapping the secret corridors of the city's sewers, reading the patterns of rat migrations, and convincing pigeons to stand guard while he slept. Though his need was great, it was this joy in uncovering hidden things that led him to a career as an underage burglar, slipping into the rich houses of South Shore plutocrats and rummaging through their possessions.

The day before his tenth birthday, Abra fell victim to a silent magical alarm, and was hauled before the magistrate and sentenced to life in a workhouse. After 2 months of hard labor, little food, and cruel discipline, Abra decided he'd had enough. He escaped through a third-story window, clambered down a sheer wall and exited the city, then headed upriver toward the legendary refuge of all fugitives: Kaer Maga.

Once in the City of Strangers, Abra quickly found himself back in the same situations he'd known in Korvosa, grubbing for scraps and fighting with other gangs of street kids. It was during one of these brawls that he first met a Duskwarden. High in the rickety scaffolding of the Warren, Abra had been backed up to the edge of a plank by a group of older children, leaving him weighing the merits of a 40-foot drop against the beating he was sure to suffer from this gang. He'd just decided to fight when a figure in brown and gray dropped down lightly between them. At the sight of the tall half-elven woman with the blue-and-gold badge of a Duskwarden, the gang melted away, and Abra was in love.

The Duskwarden's name was Lincora Yier. Introducing herself as another orphaned half-breed, she praised Abra's fighting spirit and offered him a chance at a new life as a city defender. Utterly smitten, Abra agreed, and from then on was Lincora's shadow. The half-elf was his teacher, his best friend, and eventually his lover. Through her, he rediscovered his love of exploration for its own sake, and devoted himself with gusto to the various tasks she set him to. When he turned 22, he passed the final tests and was inducted into the Duskwardens as a full member, swearing himself to the city's defense—and to Lincora, as her husband. For the next 5 years, the two ventured deeper into the secret tunnels beneath Kaer Maga than most of their comrades, making extended tours through forgotten dungeons and caverns. Then one day the couple's luck turned, and a weeping Abra stumbled into the Duskwarden Guildhouse bearing the broken body of his wife—the latest victim of one of Varisia's most sinister legends, the Dark Rider.

In the 3 years since Lincora's death, the now 30-year-old Abra has lost much of his carefree attitude. Where once he explored the ruins for their own sake, now he does so primarily out of duty and a need for vengeance. His superiors, fearing he may embark on a final suicide mission and never return, have assigned him to ferrying travelers up the Halflight Path, a relatively safe and stable posting. The stoic Abra doesn't complain—and indeed, of late he's come to believe that the best way to honor Lincora's memory would be to recruit new Duskwardens, just as she once recruited him. Since having this revelation, Abra has become noticeably more personable, and is eager to talk with outsiders who he feels might have what it takes. The Duskwarden is a staunch friend to those who deserve it, and an implacable guardian of his adopted city.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Abra's role in this campaign can be as large or small as a GM desires. After the PCs win his trust in Part One, he can easily be convinced to accompany them on their subsequent subterranean explorations, and might be able to use his

influence as a Duskwarden to help them acquire supplies or information from the society's famed Map Room. He could even attempt to recruit the PCs into his organization

SIDE QUEST

If he befriends the PCs, Abra tells them a bit about his history and his lost wife, perhaps confiding to a female PC that she reminds him of Lincora. Among his many laments is the fact that he had to bury her body headless.

While Abra doesn't expect the PCs to confront the Dark Rider, fate certainly does. When the PCs encounter the Dark Rider, one of the heads he carries is the long-preserved remains of Lincora Yier—this should be a fourth head that the Dark Rider never gets a chance to use with his ability to hurl heads, so that when the Dark Rider is defeated, the PCs can claim Lincora's head and return it to Abra.

Reward: Returning Lincora's head to Abra not only earns the PCs 12,800 XP, but also staggers Abra so much that he gifts the PCs with his *greater halfflight charm*.



AUGUSTILLE

Augustille is a rarity even among the troll Augurs of Kaer Maga—an actual oracle, whose cryptic visions of the future help inform his kindred, but also make him a tempting target for other powerful factions within the city.

AUGUSTILLE CR 8**XP 4,800**

Male advanced troll oracle 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 268, 294;

Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide 42)

N Large humanoid (giant)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+5 Dex, +7 natural, –1 size)

hp 125 (10d8+80); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +14, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +12 (1d8+6), 2 claws +12 (1d6+6)

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

Special Attacks rend (2 claws, 1d6+6)

Oracle Spells Known (CL 4th; concentration +4)

2nd (3/day)—*augury, cure moderate wounds, tongues*

1st (6/day)—*command* (DC 11), *cure light wounds, identify, sanctuary, shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*detect magic, detect poison, guidance, read magic, resistance, stabilize*

Mystery lore

TACTICS

During Combat Having focused his studies on prophecy and diplomacy, Augustille knows few combat spells. Instead, he relies on his natural troll abilities, roaring dramatically (as he imagines his savage brethren might) and charging in with a show of berserk rage, clawing and biting anyone who comes within range and hoping to do enough damage that his opponents lose heart and run. His tongues curse also kicks in during combat, and he shouts in Aklo like a madman.

Morale On his own, Augustille fights only until it's clear his opponents won't back down, then casts *sanctuary* and attempts to flee. If defending his friends or under the effects of Berkanin's drugs, he fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 20, **Con** 27, **Int** 12, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 29

Feats Alertness, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Iron Will, Persuasive

Skills Diplomacy +19, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Perception +18, Sense Motive +21

Languages Celestial, Common, Giant

SQ oracle's curse (tongues), revelations (automatic writing, focused trance)

Though every bit as large and ferocious-looking as his wild kindred, and more than able to take apart the average thug with a sweep of his claws, Augustille abhors violence, believing it to be the last resort of the mentally deficient. Raised among the legendary troll mystics of Kaer Maga, Augustille is rarely forced to engage in such lowbrow scuffles. Yet he is plagued by something far more disconcerting than the usual rough-and-tumble existence of a troll—a question that haunts his every waking moment.

Augustille was born in the famed Augur Temple, a troll-only compound in Kaer Maga where the powerful faction lives communally when not out working the streets. As a child, he took naturally to the Augurs' practice of selling information through the grotesque farce of self-haruspicy, in which the trolls slice open their abdomens and "read the future" in their own entrails, trusting their natural regeneration to heal the wounds in minutes. Always a clever child, Augustille immediately understood that the show was as much about gathering information from petitioners as providing answers—then using the knowledge he gained to turn around and answer others.

A decade ago, all that changed. While in the Warren district, advising clients from the Halfway Houses, Augustille was almost killed by the explosion of an alchemist's workshop. He suffered terrible burns, and was thrown dozens of feet, directly into the center of the mysterious monument called the Pillars of Dream. The pillars, twin black crescents adorned with strange patterns of stars and rising 20 feet into the air, have long been famous for their ability to put any creature that touches them to sleep and sustain the victim while it dreams. Augustille was asleep before he even landed.

Once the chemical fires were put out, Augustille was pulled from the center of the monument with long hooks locals keep for precisely that purpose. Yet where most who succumb to the pillars' effects report strange and colorful dreams whose details can never be remembered, Augustille

woke screaming, babbling in an unknown tongue and clawing at his own flesh. His kindred were called, and the weeping troll was sequestered in the temple.

Augustille has little idea what he experienced during his slumber between the pillars, and remembers only bright lights and a sense of unbelievable vastness, quick snatches of worlds and stars being born and dying. He doesn't know how he suddenly came to understand the tongue he woke up speaking—a language he's since determined to be Aklo—but it still comes forth during times of stress, or when one of his prophetic seizures comes upon him.

On that fateful day, Augustille ceased to be an information broker and instead became a true oracle, one whose poorly understood ravings have a startlingly high rate of accuracy. Without the ability to control when and how these outbursts arrive—and thus, unable to charge for them properly—Augustille no longer works the streets. Instead, he remains in the temple almost constantly, followed by assistants ready to attend to him and capture the products of his “mindfires.” These prophecies, when deciphered, provide the Augurs with even greater resources with which to conduct their business, and Augustille is respected rather than feared by his comrades.

Nevertheless, the troll is not content. His inability to control his prophecies scares him deeply, as does the fact that he has no idea where they come from. He's studied the Pillars of Dream extensively, but with no results. The fact that his predictions often come out in Aklo also worries him, as what he's learned of that ancient language is far from comforting. Many of his cohorts consider his prophecies gifts from the gods, divine rewards for the Augurs' temperance and judiciousness. Yet in his heart, Augustille fears that their true source may be something older, colder, and far more alien.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Augustille is initially encountered as an unwilling adversary in Berkanin's workshop, but once the PCs rescue him, he's extremely grateful. He might disappear back into seclusion in the temple, use his influence to help the PCs acquire magical supplies, or take a more active role in events. If you think the PCs need additional assistance, Augustille might decide that their investigations into ancient magic might shed light on his own situation and elect to accompany them into the Undercity (over the objections of his kin). In this case, he provides as little combat support as possible, instead using his magic to heal PCs. In addition, Augustille's uncontrollable prophecies offer the GM an easy way to foreshadow coming events, provide hints about the history and nature of locations,

and help develop PC backstories with new revelations. Augustille flatly refuses to leave Kaer Maga unless he can be convinced that doing so is the only way to solve the mystery of his oracular nature.

SIDE QUEST

Augustille suspects that the PCs will be heading into the Undercity soon. Before the group leaves for the Therassic Spire, he takes them aside and asks them a favor—he's heard rumors of a river that winds through the Undercity that has properties similar to the River Styx. If the PCs bring him a vial of this water, he'll trade them a magic fly for it. Augustille hopes that an alchemist friend can use the water to blunt or perhaps remove the horrific dreams he periodically suffers.

Reward: If the PCs deliver Augustille a vial of water from the River of Memory in area **B14**, they earn 9,600 XP as well as a *figurine of wondrous power* (ebony fly).



THE DARK RIDER

The Dark Rider has lived beneath Kaer Maga for as long as humans have inhabited Varisia, and ventures forth once each year to terrorize the countryside for his own inscrutable purposes, killing those whose names appear in his mystical pool.

THE DARK RIDER**CR 12****XP 19,200**Male unique dullahan (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 111)

LE Medium undead

Init +7; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Perception +21**Aura** frightful presence (30 ft., DC 22),**DEFENSE****AC** 27, touch 11, flat-footed 26 (+12 armor, +1 Dex, +4 natural)**hp** 142 (15d8+75); fast healing 5**Fort** +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +4; **Immune** undead traits; **SR** 22**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** *spine flail* +17/+12/+7 (1d8+7/19–20 plus 1d6 cold),
+2 *handaxe* +17/+12 (1d6+7/19–20/x3 plus 1d6 cold)**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Special Attacks** behead, chilling blade, death's calling (DC 22),
hurl head, recruit hound, summon mount**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 15th; concentration +20)Constant—*air walk, tongues***TACTICS**

During Combat The Dark Rider prefers to fight from horseback, making frequent use of Mounted Combat and Spirited Charge to lash at foes with his spine flail. If forced to dismount, he maneuvers so that he can make full attacks. He uses his hurl head ability against foes who cluster or try to stay at range.

Morale The Dark Rider has no fear of death. He fights until destroyed, at which point his body disintegrates and sinks into the ground, leaving behind only his armor and gear. His mount immediately dies and fades into nothingness.

STATISTICS**Str** 23, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 21**Base Atk** +11; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 30**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Double Slice, Improved Initiative,
Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Mounted Combat, Ride-
By Attack, Spirited Charge, Two-Weapon Fighting**Skills** Intimidate +23, Perception +21, Ride +13, Sense Motive +21,
Stealth +16, Survival +18**Languages** Thassilonian, Undercommon; *tongues***Gear** +3 *full plate*, +2 *handaxe*, *spine flail*, three severed heads**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Behead (Ex) Any creature reduced to negative hit points by one of the Dark Rider's weapon attacks must succeed at a DC 23 Fortitude save or be beheaded. Beheading instantly slays the victim, and its head automatically tumbles down to the Dark Rider's side to attach to his armor via a stained leather cord. The Save DC is Strength-based.

Hurl Head (Su) As a standard action up to once every 1d4 rounds, the dark rider may hurl any severed head up to 30 feet. The head explodes on contact into a 20-foot burst of negative energy, dealing 10d6 points of negative energy damage (Reflex DC 22 half) to all creatures in the area of effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Recruit Hound (Su) Any creature slain by the Dark Rider must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or be immediately returned to life as a shadow mastiff—one of the dullahan's hounds. The creature's soul remains trapped, cognizant of its fate and able to recognize former companions but unable to directly defy the dullahan's orders. As long as this shadow mastiff lives, the soul cannot be restored to life via *raise dead* or other effects. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Summon Mount (Su) As a standard action, the Dark Rider can summon a unique mount with the statistics given below.

THE DARK RIDER'S MOUNT

Fiendish warhorse animal companion

LE Large animal

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent;
Perception +14**DEFENSE****AC** 25, touch 13, flat-footed 21 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +12 natural,
–1 size)**hp** 85 (10d8+40)**Fort** +10, **Ref** +12, **Will** +6**DR** 5/good; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 17**OFFENSE****Speed** 50 ft.**Melee** bite +12 (1d4+6), 2 hooves +7 (1d6+3)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** smite good 1/day (+10 damage vs. good foes)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 15th; concentration +20)Constant—*air walk*

NPC GALLERY

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 17, **Con** 17, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6
Base Atk +7; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 28 (32 vs. trip)
Feats Dodge, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Toughness
Skills Perception +14
SQ combat trained

In Varisia, he's known as the Dark Rider. In Ustalav, he's the Black Huntsman. To the orcs of Belkzen, he's the Houndmaster. Yet wherever he appears, the lord of the Dark Forest is recognized as a bearer of ill fortune.

While few know of the Dark Rider's lair, many have heard his legends. Roughly once each year on a cold, moonless night, the dullahan goes riding through the forests of northwest Avistan with his baying pack of shadowy hounds. No one knows by what criteria the dullahan chooses his victims, but the hunt never ceases until the rider reaches his quarry and calls the mortal's name, after which he slays his prey, sometimes adding the victims to his hunting pack. To nearly everyone, how the rider knows these names or manages to track his quarry remains completely mysterious, but as the fable of "The Orphan and the Rider" attests, even those without proper names are subject to his powers.

When the Runelord of Greed first discovered Kaer Maga, he found the Dark Rider already in residence in a strange subterranean realm. Unlike the caulborn, the Dark Rider was never pressed into service, yet neither did he object to the runelord's presence. Many years later, however, a change began to overtake his realm. The glowing fungus on the ceiling grew dimmer, and the portal stones ceased to operate reliably. Bound to the demiplane, the Dark Rider swallowed his pride and approached the Runelord Karzoug for assistance. Karzoug agreed, shoring up the Dark Forest's magic with the power of the *Shard of Gluttony* and turning the Black Keep into a palace of undeath. In return, he asked that the Dark Rider protect the shard from those who seek it.

The Dark Rider is a cold, alien entity. Some believe he was once a servant of Pharasma—a reaper who became far too fond of his profession and was cursed. Others think the Dark Forest is a relic of the Vault Builders of Orv, and the Dark Rider a tool by which they

culled inferior workers. Still others believe that the Dark Rider and his realm were sent from some distant future, and that the *Naming Pool* is the work of a vast intelligence that, like Norgorber's Skinsaw Men, steers the world toward a particular future through assassination.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The Dark Rider is the ultimate villain of this adventure. The PCs are intended to defeat him, allowing the Inner Sea region to breathe a temporary sigh of relief—but the eerie magic and otherworldly desires of the Dark Forest and the Black Keep do not rest. In time, a new Dark Rider will rise from the *Naming Pool* or some other element within this demiplane—and this new rider may seek revenge against those who slew its predecessor!



SHATTERED STAR TREASURES

The following unique treasures can be found in “The Asylum Stone.” Player-appropriate handouts appear in the GameMastery Shattered Star item card set.

FORTIFYING LEECHES

Aura faint transmutation; **CL** 3rd
Slot none; **Price** 6,000 gp; **Weight** 2 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This ornate glass jar is filled with greenish fluid and the slick, writhing forms of many large black leeches. Though bloatmages often use leeches to help them regulate their overloaded circulatory systems, this particular batch adds additional benefits usable by anyone. To attach this jar’s leeches, the user merely needs to open the jar and upend the contents over his head and torso as a standard action—the leeches do the rest, attaching to the user’s body almost instantaneously. These leeches impart a +2 enhancement bonus to Constitution, but also a –4 penalty on Diplomacy checks against creatures that might find such a practice grotesque (such as most civilized races). Once applied, the leeches persist for 8 hours before they die. The leeches are immediately destroyed if the wearer takes more than 20 points of damage from any area-effect energy damage. The jar automatically refills with a new batch of *fortifying leeches* after 24 hours.

While the *fortifying leeches* are applied, a bloatmage immediately regains 2 bonus points to her blood pool—this cannot increase her blood points to higher than her normal maximum. In addition, whenever the bloatmage uses her bloat ability to gain extra blood points, she may roll her bloat dice twice and take the more favorable result.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *bear’s endurance*; **Cost** 3,000 gp

HALFLIGHT CHARM

Aura faint divination; **CL** 3rd
Slot none; **Price** 2,500 gp; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

This amulet is a small crystal at the end of a simple leather thong. It glows brightly from within, shedding light equivalent to that of a torch. Once per day, the amulet’s bearer can clutch the object and call for help. Doing so immediately contacts the three closest Duskwardens and gives them intimate knowledge of the pendant’s location, as per the *locate object* spell, out to a distance of a mile.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *light*, *locate object*; **Cost** 1,250 gp

HALFLIGHT CHARM, GREATER

Aura moderate conjuration; **CL** 9th
Slot neck; **Price** 20,000 gp; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

While regular *halflight charms* are temporarily issued to anyone traversing the Halflight Path under Duskwarden guidance, *greater halflight charms* are given to those who have saved a Duskwarden’s life or performed a great service for the organization. They thus carry great social cachet with the Duskwardens, who consider selling or purchasing one to be a grave insult.

A *greater halflight charm* is a dark blue crystal amulet embossed with a golden arch and suspended from a black cord. When worn, it grants the wearer darkvision 60 feet. It also grants a +2 bonus on all initiative checks made while in underground areas. In addition, once per year, the wearer can call on the amulet to summon the specific Duskwarden on whom the charm was imprinted at its creation, who is instantly teleported to an adjacent square along with his standard adventuring gear, provided the wearer is on the same plane. The Duskwarden is not bound to the caster’s will in any way.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *darkvision*, *teleport*; **Cost** 10,000 gp

SKIN HARP

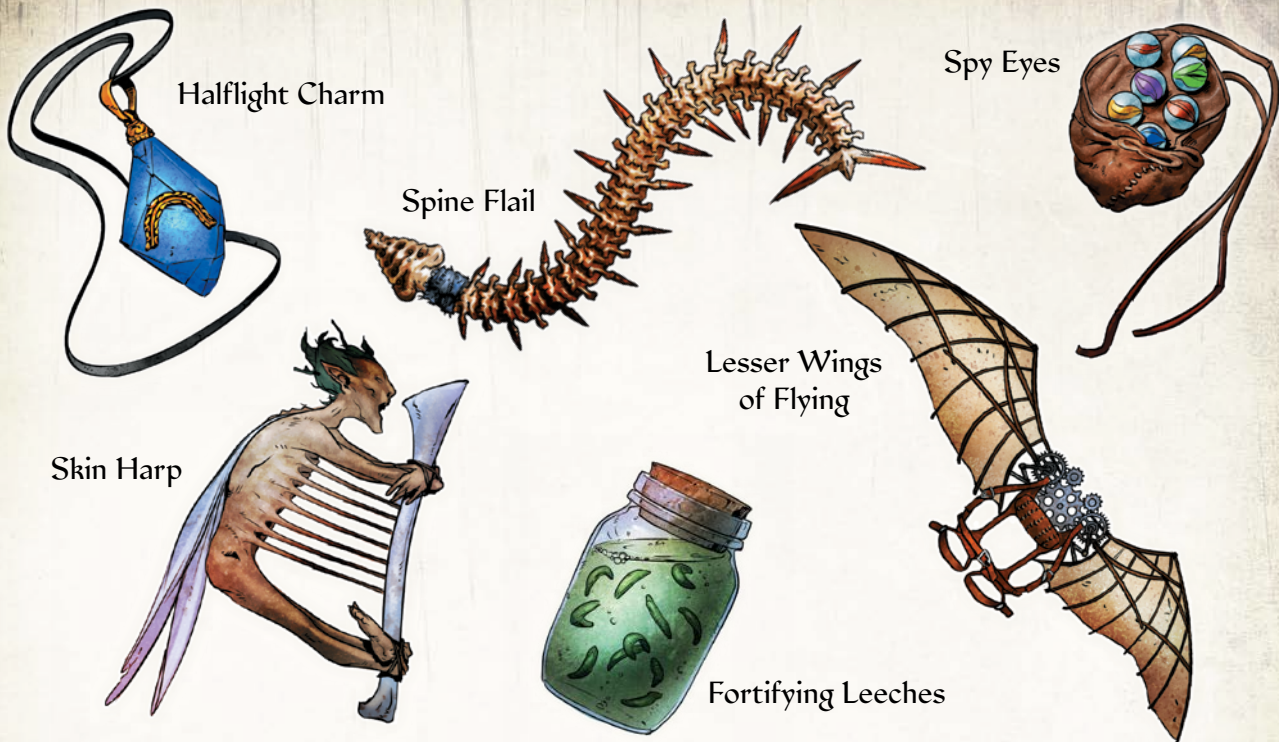
Aura moderate enchantment and necromancy; **CL** 9th
Slot none; **Price** 16,500 gp; **Weight** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This small harp is made from a sprite’s twisted, leathery corpse, its arms and legs arching up to hold the crossbar along the instrument’s top. The strings are made from thin strips of twisted flesh flayed from the fey’s torso and strung between their anchor points on the corpse and the crossbar. Though the corpse’s chest cavity is clearly visible, all viscera have been removed.

A *skin harp* functions as a masterwork harp. In addition, once per day, it can be activated to cast either *command undead* or *dominate person* (Will DC 19 negates). With a successful DC 20 Perform (string instruments) check, the save DC for this effect increases by +2. When used in this manner, the harp animates and plays itself, the corpse freeing one hand from the crossbar in order to strum its flesh strings.

SHATTERED STAR TREASURES



CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *command undead*, *dominate person*; **Cost** 8,550 gp

SPINE FLAIL

Aura faint necromancy; **CL** 4th
Slot none; **Price** 13,308 gp; **Weight** 10 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This weapon looks like the barbed spine of a humanoid. A *spine flail* functions as a +2 *flail* that deals slashing damage and has reach. Unlike most weapons with reach, a spine flail can be used against adjacent foes. On a critical hit from a spine flail, the victim must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save to resist being permanently blinded by the blow.

Spine flails are favored by powerful dullahans, who harvest the spines from their first victims. The undead riders have a particular affinity for their personal *spine flails*, and often maintain a supernatural control over their weapons, causing them to appear or disappear at will.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Arms and Armor, *blindness/deafness*; **Cost** 6,808 gp

SPY EYES

Aura moderate divination; **CL** 9th
Slot none; **Price** 15,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

At first glance, *spy eyes* appear to be cat's-eye marbles. When activated, each comes to life and blinks, transforming into an

eyeball. When pressed against an inanimate surface (such as a wall or article of clothing), the eyeball absorbs into it, leaving a magical sensor of the same size on the surface. Anyone holding an eye from a particular cluster of *spy eyes* can share the view from any other eye in the cluster as if that eye were her own, provided she is within 10 miles of that sensor. To recover a sensor, she can press a *spy eye* she holds from the same cluster against the one that's in sensor form to make the sensor emerge and return to marble form.

A single bag of *spy eyes* contains five marbles (meaning that up to four may be deployed at any given time). *Spy eyes* in sensor form can be detected via the normal means for detecting scrying.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*; **Cost** 7,500 gp

WINGS OF FLYING, LESSER

Aura moderate transmutation; **CL** 10th
Slot shoulders; **Price** 22,000 gp; **Weight** 10 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This mechanical backpack is a mess of gears and cogs, with two large canvas wings extending out from it to rise over the wearer's shoulders. When the wearer touches the button on the pack's chest harness, the wings whir to life and begin flapping rapidly, hauling the wearer awkwardly into the air.

Lesser wings of flying grant the wearer a fly speed of 30 feet (poor maneuverability).

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *fly*; **Cost** 11,000 gp



GANGS OF KAER MAGA

PEOPLE SAY THE CITY ISN'T FRIENDLY, BUT THAT'S JUST NOT TRUE. KAER MAGA RUNS ON FRIENDSHIP. WITHOUT FRIENDS, YOU WOULDN'T LAST TWO MINUTES HERE. YOU'D LOSE A FINGER PINCHING FROM THE ARDOCS, OR SHINE OFF SOME WORMFOLK AND END UP DEAD AND STACKING CRATES IN ANKAR-TE AS A TWICE-BORN. IT'S FRIENDS LIKE THE FREEMEN THAT KEEP YOU OUT OF CHAINS, AND PAYRIDES LIKE THE TALLOW BOYS THAT GET YOU INTO THEM. IF YOU GOT A COLD BED OR A HOT TIP. WITHOUT FRIENDS, A GAWK LIKE YOU'S GOT NOTHIN'.

"BUT DON'T WORRY YOURSELF, GOV. I'M YOUR FRIEND. AND AS LONG AS YOU'VE GOT COINS IN YOUR POCKET, I'M WITH YOU TILL THE END."

—GAV NAHLI, FREELANCE COMPANION

GANGS OF KAER MAGA

Kaer Maga is not a normal city. Instead of an official government, the City of Strangers is ruled by an anarcho-capitalist morass of competing gangs and factions, each of them pursuing its own concerns but determined not to let any particular sect gain total power. It's a chaotic system, yet one that's worked for thousands of years, and helps perpetuate the city's reputation as a place where society's outliers and undesirables can go to lose themselves or start again. It also makes the city a perfect place for political campaigns and roleplaying encounters.

This volume's adventure, "The Asylum Stone," is primarily a dungeon romp, full of room-to-room fighting and very little in the way of social encounters. While many GMs may prefer such a straightforward approach, the following pages flesh out the three Kaer Magan factions PCs interact with most in the adventure, and offer ideas on how you can expand PCs' escapades in the city.

Each of the three gang write-ups presents an overview of the group's composition and activities, its organization, and its headquarters. The Campaign Role section of this article describes how the group is likely to interact with the PCs, and lists several opportunities for additional encounters or side adventures. The Favor and Benefits section notes character traits that please or repulse members of that group, along with some of the benefits of allying with that group. In addition to the specifics listed, a public alliance with any of the factions offers the PCs significant protection against other gangs in the city—though it may also provoke them if the PCs wander off their patrons' home turf.

OTHER FACES AND FACTIONS

This article only covers three of Kaer Maga's many gangs. Listed below is a selection of some of the other most powerful or recognizable groups in the city. For more information on all of them, the conflicts currently brewing in the city, and the leadership of the various districts, see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: City of Strangers*.

Arcanists' Circle: This faction is Kaer Maga's most powerful collective of magic-users, an elite group of spellcasters who pool knowledge and resources to advance their research while also growing fabulously wealthy by working together to produce magic items in a systematic (and thus cheaper) fashion.

Bloatmages: Though not truly a faction, Kaer Maga's hemotheurges—also called bloatmages—are synonymous with the city in the minds of many. Believing that magic truly "runs in the blood," bloatmages overload their own circulatory systems, increasing their power by increasing the amount of blood in their veins—a dangerous practice that leaves them hideously swollen and blimp-like.

Brothers of the Seal: For generations, the monastic order called the Brothers of the Seal was sworn to defend an ancient doorway far beneath the artists' district of Oriat.

Recently, however, a schism has arisen between those men and women who believe that the time has come to open the seal, and those who still cling to its traditional defense. The result is violent sectarian conflict, with the monks bitterly divided into groups called the Faithful and the Scions.

Commerce League: Not everyone in Kaer Maga believes in a free market, and this union of local merchants and traders theoretically fosters peace and goodwill in the market districts by allowing merchants to work together to keep prices down. In reality, the Commerce League is a mafia-style coalition devoted to price fixing, protection rackets, and predatory lending, and isn't afraid to back up its economic policies with violence.

Council of Truth: A group of exceptional sages and magic-users devoted to unlocking the mysteries of the multiverse, the Council of Truth made exceptional breakthroughs, often selling off the results of their discoveries to the highest bidder, before disappearing mysteriously many years ago. Rumors of their return periodically surface (as in this volume's adventure and *Pathfinder Module: Seven Swords of Sin*).

Freemen: Originally a gang of escaped slaves, the Freemen have expanded greatly over the last decade, becoming a powerful abolitionist force within the city. Though they know that other gangs won't tolerate outright raids to free all the slaves in the city, the Freemen (a group that encompasses both men and women) still shelter those slaves who manage to make it to their stronghold in the Bottoms, and purchase the freedom of many through traditional means at the Flesh Block in Downmarket. As the group continues to grow and train militarily, many slavers fear that the Asylum Stone may not welcome their profession for much longer.

Iridian Fold: The men of the Iridian Fold are an enigma, having shown up in the city at various points over the years, always in pairs and apparently hailing from the distant east. The men are always chained together in a manner that suggests slavery and subjugation, one of them swathed completely in veils and wrappings, while the other wears elaborate lacquered armor. Though it would seem that one might be the bodyguard or plaything for the other, which partner takes charge depends on the situation, and the veiled man may sometimes be bigger and more physically imposing than the presumed bodyguard. The handful of Iridian Fold men in the city keep to themselves, never joining another faction, and many have tried in vain to discover what motivation the group has in coming to the city.

Tallow Boys: This secretive alliance of information brokers exists within the ranks of the city's young male prostitutes, collecting information from their customers while their guard is down and then selling it to those willing to pay exorbitant prices. The Tallow Boys are quick, smart, and highly organized, maintaining their anonymity by making potential information buyers jump through elaborate hoops.

ARDOC FAMILY

Leader Merriman Ardoc (LN male human wizard 9)

Headquarters The Kiln in Bis

Turf Bis

Focus Construct crafting, district administration, protection rackets

While Kaer Maga has numerous organizations that might loosely be referred to as “crime families,” the Ardoc brothers actually are bound by ties of blood and marriage. Within their home district of Bis, this loosely democratic organization of brothers, fathers, uncles, and cousins rules with an iron fist—yet one that protects and shields as much as it imposes.

The root of the Ardoc family’s power lies in its status as the foremost collection of construct crafters in the city. Every full voting member of the family—the official “brothers”—is an accomplished arcanist, and together they produce the wealth of constructs that help them run their district, from brutish enforcement golems to efficient construct servants and tiny spies and messengers. Not all of these constructs stay in the district, and their sale to interested customers has made the Ardocs quite wealthy, both personally and collectively.

The Ardoc family structures itself as a government, yet it remains a gang at heart. Those who live under the family’s protection pay for the privilege, and while the Ardocs are careful to never push their community members into undue hardship, those who attempt to flaunt their authority or deny the brothers payment or favors may quickly find the district closed to them, or may take a quick and unexpected plunge from one of the district’s higher balconies. In return for this authority and wealth, however, the Ardocs do an extremely effective job of mediating disputes, protecting their citizens, and in general fostering wealth and prosperity in their communities. Acting as much as wandering magistrates as crime bosses, the Ardocs are renowned for their tough but fair rulings, and public attitudes toward them among their subjects range from cautious respect to outright filial devotion.

In addition to an inevitable array of magical implements and a parade of servitor constructs, an Ardoc brother can be recognized readily by the ornate belt chisel that is the family’s badge of office. These chisels are most commonly used to mete out corporeal punishments on thieves and other criminals, by removing a number of finger joints appropriate to the severity of the crime.

ORGANIZATION

While the Ardocs often present a unified face to their enemies, the structure within the family is less homogenous. With the family traditionally dominated by

the men, wives and daughters are relegated to a lower status: still above the city’s general populace, but without any official say in family politics or the running of the district, even if their own magical talent equals or surpasses that of their brothers and husbands. For this reason, it’s not uncommon for dissatisfied women in the family to run off and join other organizations within the city. Those who stay and have a taste for politics generally manipulate events through subtle control of their husbands and sons, sometimes attempting to recruit powerful independent wizards into the family. It should be noted, however, that power is the operative term—despite their patriarchy, the Ardocs have little time for those without magical ability, and male Ardocs without the knack for magic share roughly the same status as Ardoc women.

The family’s current patriarch is Merriman Ardoc, and while all brothers may speak their piece and vote on matters within family meetings, it is his will that inevitably carries the day. Referring to the rest of the brothers as “his boys,” Merriman is a surprisingly genial father figure who seems to legitimately care about the welfare of both his family and his subjects—though this doesn’t stop him from being as cold and hard as ice when his authority is challenged.

HEADQUARTERS

Positioned in the heart of Bis, the Kiln is part factory, part fortress. From here, the Ardoc brothers rule over their district, sometimes gathering in the great meeting hall on the top floor called the Judgment Seat, where the whole family can discuss policy, hear particularly important trials and appeals, and otherwise guide the district. Much of the rest of the building is devoted to workshop space, where many of the Ardocs work singly or together to advance their magical research and production. Squat and utilitarian, the Kiln is far from beautiful, yet it remains a symbol of the Ardocs’ power and an impregnable redoubt capable of housing the whole extended family should war ever break out between the city’s gangs.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Depending on how a GM chooses to spin things, the Ardoc family can be either a powerful ally or an intractable foe for the PCs. It can even be both, with certain members of the family seeing the PCs as an asset for handling the touchy issue of Berkanin, while others resent the party’s violation of their turf and authority. This sort of political maneuvering with the PCs trapped in the middle is exactly the sort of thing Kaer Maga is famous for, and could lead to even further battles against deadly constructs. Below are several adventure hooks involving the family.

GANGS OF KAER MAGA

- Instead of heading directly to Berkanin's manor in Part Two of the adventure, the PCs may seek to open diplomatic relations with the Ardoks first. In this case, Gav leads them to the Kiln, where the Ardoks are initially reluctant to discuss the matter, but eventually give in and offer the PCs an audience. If the PCs succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy check, the brothers in attendance admit that Berkanin has ceased responding to their directives, and that only internal politics has kept them from dealing with the increasingly erratic wizard themselves. It is strongly hinted that, should the PCs handle the situation, the family will happily look the other way. Indeed, if they can capture Berkanin alive and return him to the Kiln for judgment, the Ardoks will reward them with up to 3,000 gp worth of constructs or custom magical armor. If the PCs secure the blessing of the Ardoks before handling Berkanin, award them a CR 5 story award. If they later turn Berkanin over to the group alive, increase this award to CR 8.
- Even if the PCs secure the blessing of the Ardoks first, not everyone in the family is happy about the idea of outsiders looting Berkanin's Hanging Manse. Sometime after the PCs finish their exploits in Bis, they're confronted by an angry young Ardok named **Hersig** (LN male alchemist 5) and several of his wood golems, come to claim the treasure "for the good of the family." Even if the PCs defeat Hersig, this new affront may be more than the Ardoks can allow.
- Few Ardok women appreciate being ignored, but Luciana Ardok is angrier than most. Having fled her oppressive family and joined up with the powerful Arcanists' Circle, she's since made a name for herself as an artificer of some renown. Depending on the PCs' interactions with the Ardoks, Luciana may recruit the PCs to help cause trouble and foster gender rebellion within her former family, or the Ardoks may decide that the PCs are the perfect way to finally handle the nagging problem of Luciana, who they believe is using and teaching Ardok family secrets in her work for the rival magical guild.

FAVOR AND BENEFITS

The Ardoks are an insular clan, naturally wary of outsiders, yet they also make extremely useful allies once their trust is won. In addition to manifest dedication toward aiding the family's goals, traits that the Ardoks like to see in potential allies include a focus on arcane magic and item crafting (especially constructs), the ability to manipulate or intimidate others, and a generally lawful nature and magisterial mien. Women who refuse to defer to male counterparts of equal social status, however, are viewed with great distaste and suspicion (at least

by full Ardok brothers). Similarly, those who make a living brawling or conducting other physical labor are rarely seen as more than tools. To an Ardok, such tasks are meant for golems and constructs, not people.

Those PCs who succeed at suitably impressing the Ardoks have acquired powerful patrons. Male arcanists may be invited to join the family formally through marriage, while others can potentially expect magical and mechanical backup as needed during subsequent adventures, plus substantial discounts on all magic items created by the family. The Ardoks are also happy to purchase any arcane magic items the PCs uncover in their adventures at 10% more than the normal sale value, and potentially more for truly unusual items (such as Maligast's spy eyes).



MERRIMAN ARDOC

SHATTERED STAR

AUGURS

Leader Luga Farseer (N female troll bard 6)

Headquarters The Augur Temple in Downmarket

Turf Entire city (primarily central Core districts)

Focus Information brokering and prophecy

For as long as anyone can remember, the Augurs have been a part of Kaer Maga. Unlike most trolls around the Inner Sea, who tend to be bestial, savage creatures with little use for the society of other humanoids, the troll Augurs of the City of Strangers are the lubrication that helps keep the social machinery of the city running. Through their guidance, both overt and subtle, deals are mooted, business ventures steered in beneficial directions, and internecine conflicts turned toward truce rather than open war.



LUGA FARSEER

The tool the Augurs use to accomplish this feat is prophecy—in particular, an ascetic form of haruspicy. When a citizen of Kaer Maga is about to embark on some bold or significant endeavor, it's common to engage the services of an Augur. The troll listens to the client's situation, then drags a knife across its own stomach, spilling forth its entrails. In this steaming mass, the troll “reads” a cryptic prophecy, which it delivers without explanation before accepting payment and shuffling away. Thanks to the trolls' natural regenerative abilities, a single Augur can perform this service dozens of times per day.

Since the death of Aroden in 4606 AR, prophecy is anything but straightforward, yet this has had little effect on the Augurs' business. In truth, there are few actual oracles and prophets within the ranks of the Augurs, and these are generally kept within the temple rather than allowed to work the street directly. Instead, it's tradition itself that gives the trolls their powers. Since most factions in the city consult the trolls, the Augurs are perhaps the best-informed group in Kaer Maga, and they use this wealth of knowledge to provide advice and ensure that their quixotic koans ring true often enough to keep the cycle going. What motivates the trolls may harbor on their own account is anyone's guess, but as they've been honest in their dealings for hundreds of years, few have reason to doubt them, and even their cryptic information can prove exceptionally useful. On those occasions where it doesn't, the trolls tend to fall back on the standard dodges of fortune-tellers, twisting words and citing misinterpretations. Few of those burned by their prophecies are bold enough to press complaints against the 14-foot-tall tusked giants.

When working, Augurs can often be found wandering alone through the city, particularly the stalls and shops of the Core districts, waiting for passersby to engage their services. Downtime is usually spent at the trolls' so-called temple, where they can enjoy the community of their fellows in private. Unlike most gangs, which carefully maintain turfs and treaties, the Augurs are free to travel anywhere they choose, and anyone who attacks one and survives is likely to be regarded as a pariah, plagued by bad luck (which is aided in part by other trolls' prophecies). Towering over most other humanoids and wearing togas of white linen and crusted brown bloodstains, Augurs are nearly impossible to miss in the crowd, and join bloatmages as one of the images most associated with Kaer Maga.

ORGANIZATION

While everyone in the city knows who the Augurs are and what they do, the inner workings of their society are almost completely occluded. Most Augurs live within the walls of the temple, and even those who reside elsewhere return there frequently for their mysterious meetings, to which outsiders are never allowed access.

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In truth, the Augurs' social structure is less bizarre than one might suppose. Elders raise the younger generation and are respected for their experience, yet decisions pertaining to the whole group are made in a democratic assembly called the Forum. Individual Augurs are recognized for their abilities first and foremost, and as the relatively small population means that most trolls are directly related, the overall attitude is familial and communitarian, with squabbles and backbiting between individuals immediately put aside in the face of outside threats. The trolls hold most wealth communally, with even those who bring in the highest earnings from their street work keeping only a small percentage for themselves, and the rest going to the temple treasury to be spent as all see fit.

At the moment, the strongest voice in the Augur community is that of Luga Farseer, a middle-aged troll who, though possessing little oracular ability of her own, is peerless in her facility with deft wordplay, creating captivating and cryptic prophecies that never fail to leave clients feeling they've learned something of great value. Though she technically casts only a single vote in the Forum, Luga's power is indisputable, and it's she who most often sets policy.

HEADQUARTERS

From the ever-changing riot of temporary tents and market stalls that is Downmarket, the Augur Temple rises like a boulder in the surf. Troll-sized marble stairs march up to the colonnaded and covered porches that ring the building—this open-air ledge is as far as outsiders ever get into the temple, joining the trolls to conduct business or socialize. Beyond the porch, vast doors bar entrance to the main temple complex. Past those doors, in the safety of the temple's depths, the Augurs sleep, mate, hold debates in the Forum, and practice those other private traditions that keep the group strong and cohesive. The only information that escapes this general secrecy comes from the residents of Highside Stacks, who are able to look down from their towers into several roofless yards in the temple interior. Local legend has it that during the Storval Plateau's rare rainstorms, these open areas play host to large groups of cavorting trolls who welcome the cleansing storms with prayers and orgies. Yet even during the dry seasons, the Augur Temple resounds with strange chanting and roars that make its neighbors uneasy.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The plot of this adventure makes it easy for the PCs to ally with the Augurs, yet making friends with such a powerful faction may make life more complicated rather than less.

- Now that the PCs are clearly in the trolls' good graces, other groups seek to exploit them. In particular, the wormfolk gangster **Dakar** (NE male dark naga), who runs

the Commerce League, is quick to insinuate himself. He'd be willing to pay a hefty sum to anyone who's willing to break into the private sections of the temple's complex and steal the trolls' most valuable secrets.

- Not everyone is content with Luga's leadership. When the troll suddenly falls comatose, it's a toss-up whether the new de facto leader will be stolid Old Kanus, bloodthirsty Gullenbraug, or Vargun herself. Can the PCs ensure that the right troll comes to power, and is it possible that Luga's condition is the result of foul play?
- The Augurs don't prophesy for free, and their massive treasure vault is overflowing with wealth. When the PCs are granted the unheard-of honor of entering the temple, will greed overcome their new friendship?
- While the Augurs are careful to dispense only informed "prophecies," the Tallow Boys sell their information outright. **Elias Sayer** (N male human expert 2/rogue 5), the group's leader, has always maintained a friendly relationship with the Augurs. Yet of late, some of his boys have begun feeling like the trolls are cutting in on their turf, and tempers are running high. Elias contacts the PCs and asks them to root out the cause of the problem before the city erupts in a bloody troll-on-catamite brawl.
- The trolls of Kaer Maga have lived inside the city for generations, and need occasional influxes of new blood. Luga has heard of several wild-born trolls dwelling nearby, and would like the PCs to capture them and bring them to the temple as gently and quietly as possible. She's sure she can convince them of the benefits of civilization, but it would be extremely embarrassing if the operation were made public.

FAVOR AND BENEFITS

The rescue of Augustille is a great service, and the PCs can expect to be hailed as friends by most Augurs, and perhaps even allowed inside the Temple. As knowledge of these events spreads, PCs may gain a measure of the untouchable status that protects the trolls. Further, if any of the PCs are gifted with prophecy or adept at spinning half-truths, the trolls may adopt them as honorary Augurs, allowing them to make money practicing the Augurs' craft (though they still requires non-troll Augurs to deal 1d6 points of slashing damage to themselves before each announcement).

The trolls value knowledge, a quick tongue, magical power, and the ability to think on one's feet. They pride themselves on keeping their word, and look harshly on those who break theirs or make promises too freely. They value logic and cunning, and frown at irrational emotions, impulsiveness, unnecessary theft, or violence except as a last resort. PCs in the trolls' favor may find it easier to gather information (+10 bonus on Diplomacy checks in the city), or receive access to Augur financial resources if the Forum rules that a particular venture is in the trolls' best interests.

DUSKWARDENS

Leader Warden Rogard Hammerfell (LG male dwarf ranger 11)

Headquarters Duskwarden Guildhouse in Bis

Turf Entire city (primarily the Undercity)

Focus City defense and subterranean exploration

Kaer Maga is renowned for its dangerous, anarchic nature and its cramped streets filled with strange sects and monstrous denizens—yet that's just the civilized parts. Beneath the city proper lies a vast network of catacombs, dungeons, and natural passages threading down like roots through the cliff face and beyond. This is the infamous Undercity, and it's here that the true monsters—brute predators and ancient evils locked away for millennia—make their homes. In generations long past, these subterranean horrors would periodically emerge into the city above to wreak havoc, forcing the citizens to beat them back with armed militias. Over time, however, it became clear that a small, highly trained and dedicated group could be far more effective in defending against such incursions.

Thus the Duskwardens were formed. Sworn to defend the city and to place their duty above all other bonds of blood or loyalty, these expert delvers maintain the barricades that block off all but a select few entrances into the warrens beneath the city. In addition, the Duskwardens run the Halfflight Path—a well-traveled underground road connecting the city above to the cliff's foot below—and are the only group officially charged with exploring and mapping out the dark reaches beneath the city.

While shows of affection and gratitude may be generally lacking in Kaer Maga, few can deny the invaluable service the Duskwardens provide, often at the cost of their own lives. As a result, Duskwardens receive respect and deference from almost everyone in the city. Rather than attempting to collect taxes or protection money, the Duskwardens rely on this unspoken support, and city tradition is for individuals to provide a Duskwarden with whatever she might require at a given moment. To refuse a Duskwarden supplies she might need, a meal, housing, or any other reasonable request is one of the few citywide taboos, and while Duskwardens never get rich off this support, they need never worry about anything but their work.

Duskwardens come in all shapes, sizes, and races, yet are easily recognized by their brown-and-gray uniforms (designed for camouflage in the underground tunnels) and the badge of their order: a golden arch representing the Twisted Door on a blue background, normally worn on the right breast.

ORGANIZATION

The Duskwardens follow a loose military hierarchy, with rank based on experience and expertise. Within the broad strokes of this hierarchy, there's plenty of room for debate

and suggestion, but when it actually comes time to issue orders in the heat of combat, individual Duskwardens know their place and follow superiors' orders with absolute trust and alacrity. Patrols can range from daily work ferrying travelers up and down the Halfflight Path (one of the Duskwardens' few sources of actual cash) to long-range scouting missions requiring weeks belowground. The group is filled predominantly with rangers, but the Duskwardens understand the value of versatility and are happy to accept recruits of all classes, provided they're hardy enough to handle the rigors of underground adventuring.

The current head of the organization is Rogard Hammerfell, a gruff but brilliant dwarf who's been with the Duskwardens longer than many of its human members have been alive. Though seemingly tireless and extremely demanding of his underlings—whom he trains personally in such arts as tunnel fighting, spelunking, and stone-reading—any possible resentment on the part of his troops is overwhelmed by their respect and admiration, as the old dwarf believes wholeheartedly in their mission, and has a knack for spreading his sense of self-sacrificing righteousness.

HEADQUARTERS

The Duskwarden Guildhouse in Bis is a solid and unprepossessing structure distinguished by a placard over the door bearing the group's sigil. Inside are offices, barracks for new recruits and those Duskwardens who prefer to sleep among their comrades, armories and other supply stores, and the legendary Map Room, where the Duskwardens keep charts and written documentation of their discoveries. As the group sees keeping people out of the Undercity as one of its responsibilities, anyone who wishes to gain access to the Map Room must pay exorbitant prices for the privilege.

The Guildhouse basement also holds what Duskwardens affectionately call the Hole—one of the few open entrances to the Undercity. Beyond the tunnel's mouth—which is secured by an enormous steel screw-plug when not in use—lie specially maintained rooms for the training of Duskwardens, as well as further entrances to the Undercity proper.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

This adventure presumes that the PCs assist Abra against the seugathi, and that he then vouches for their abilities and character. The adventure hooks below are predicated on that trust, but should the PCs somehow come into direct conflict with the Duskwardens, they may instead find many doors closed to them. The Duskwardens have little time for political conflict, but they won't allow the PCs to place the entire city at risk. This may mean that the Duskwardens attempt to bar them from entering the Undercity via the Therassic Spire, or demand to send along

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an escort. (Even if the PCs maintain friendly relations, Abra may insist on chaperoning them if he learns of their plans to enter the Undercity.)

- Even though the PCs can't stay in the city, the Duskwardens are eager to recruit them as honorary members in the hope they'll return after the campaign's completion. While the PCs have already proved some of their abilities, any who wish to join are taken through the Hole and subjected to tests of physical fitness, combat abilities, spelunking, subterranean survival, and more, culminating in a simulated cave-in in which each PC is left alone in the dark for hours and forced to free herself.
- Abra's been tapped to check out reports of unlawful delving in Ankar-Te: necromancers who've opened a sealed entrance to old catacombs in order to harvest corpses and spontaneously generated undead. He'd like the PCs' help, as handling the issue will require a delicate dance of diplomacy with the powerful necromancers and all-out combat with whatever might have been awakened beneath the district.
- The PCs' Pathfinder superiors have long been interested in the Duskwardens' famed Map Room, and the PCs provide a perfect chance at some friendly espionage. Will the PCs follow orders to break into the Guildhouse's heart and copy or steal the Duskwardens' maps, or will new friendships trump old allegiances?
- The Citizens' Council of Widdershins has decided that, given the lack of monster activity in recent years, they no longer have any reason to give the Duskwardens the traditional discounts and deferential treatment. The Duskwardens are suddenly in an awkward position—the sentiment, if it spreads, could be disastrous to their order, and some in the group argue that perhaps they should arrange a “reminder” incursion for the bourgeois council. The PCs are asked by Abra to help quiet dissension within the Duskwardens and potentially act as intermediaries between the guild and the haughty Council.
- The Therassic Spire's adventuring company (see page 28) isn't the only rumor that's cropped up lately about the Council of Truth. The wide-eyed owl sigil has also been spotted down around an old water mill in Cavalcade, leading some to believe that another lost workshop has been reinhabited—but by whom? The Duskwardens would like the PCs to investigate—for a complete side-adventure for levels 7th–9th, see the Pathfinder Module *Seven Swords of Sin*.

FAVOR AND BENEFITS

Whether the PCs elect to formally join the Duskwardens or not, affiliating with them brings a host of rewards. While allegiance with any faction offers a certain degree of protection, the Duskwardens also garner respect, and PCs

may find themselves receiving a measure of that deference, including discounts and other special treatment. The Duskwardens can also provide access to the Map Room—a priceless opportunity to learn about the Undercity and plot further adventures—as well as combat-ready backup and supplies particularly suited to dungeon exploration. The Duskwardens also aren't above purchasing maps made by those who've explored new areas of the Undercity, even as they attempt to discourage unauthorized ventures.

The Duskwardens are driven first and foremost by honor, and though they may attract independent individuals to their ranks, they have no time whatsoever for those who break their word or can't be trusted to do a job—after all, the safety of the city rests on their shoulders. Similarly, while they have no problem with members earning fame and wealth by telling stories (and selling loot) from their exploits underground, they don't believe that either activity is a worthy end in itself. As a result, they tend to look down their noses at most Pathfinders and adventurers in general, even as they seek to recruit the best. Loyalty is highly prized, as Duskwardens need to be able to trust each other in all situations, and displays of such in the face of adversity can win their admiration.



ROGARD HAMMERFELL



MISSIONS IN MAGNIMAR

IT'S NOT MY IMAGINATION. SOMETHING'S WATCHING ME... WATCHING THE ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD. DON'T LOOK AT ME THAT WAY—WE BOTH WALK ON THE WOOD FLOOR IN THE DINING ROOM EVERY SINGLE DAY, AND IT NEVER CREAKS. DOES IT? YET YOU CAN'T TELL ME YOU HAVEN'T HEARD IT—THE SOUND OF SOMETHING HEAVY WALKING AROUND THIS HOUSE AT NIGHT. IT COMES AND GOES, BUT I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'S HEARD IT. LETTIE AND HER SERVANTS HAVE HEARD IT TOO, AND FELT ITS EYES.

NONE OF THIS HAPPENED UNTIL THOSE RIFFRAFF MOVED INTO THE KAIJITSU PLACE. THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A NICE NEIGHBORHOOD!"

—LADY FLORIMEL, SPEAKING TO HER HUSBAND RHONDO

MISSIONS IN MAGNIMAR

INTRODUCTION

For GMs running campaigns, the struggle between sandbox-style adventures and a linear story is as eternal a struggle as that between good and evil, or law and chaos. Both styles of games have their benefits and their shortcomings, but ultimately using elements of both helps create a campaign that is rich in opportunities for players to explore, but doesn't leave them floundering and wondering what to do next.

Presented here are several plot hooks and three full encounters that can be altered, expanded, and adapted to the campaign or woven into any Varisia-based Adventure Path where Magnimar is a frequently visited location—such as this one. Most of the ideas presented in this article are inspired by material detailed in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Magnimar, City of Monuments*, an excellent resource for expanding any Magnimar-based campaign. The *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide* stats mentioned are all available free online in the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Reference Document at paizo.com/prd.

PLOT HOOKS

The following plot hooks can be used whenever the PCs return to Magnimar throughout the course of the Adventure Path.

Castle Donjon: A crusty old sailor offers the characters a chance at vast riches in exchange for a cut. Years ago, she used to work for a pirate captain who lost his ship at a Sczarni gambling table to the young Rassimeri Jaijarko. The captain was killed in a fight later that night, and Rassimeri sailed away with his winnings. Rassimeri returned weeks later, after scuttling the ship, and started buying up tenements to create Jaijarko Castle in Beacon's Point. It was then the old sailor realized Rassimeri must have discovered her former captain's treasure cache. The pirate treasure now languishes in the rathole that is Jaijarko's hidden pleasure den. It took years, but the salty corsair managed to enter Rassimeri Jaijarko's service as a petty smuggler, and now she needs help stealing a king's ransom in jewels. Use burglars and street thugs for the tenement lord's cronies (*GameMastery Guide* 265) and include a selection of traps (*Core Rulebook* 420).

The Fog or the Frog: Captain Karros the Far-Sighted has been commissioned by the city to investigate why three to four ships vanish in the fog every year. The wily mage-turned-sea-captain doesn't fear the fog, as her *lens of the sea* reveals underwater navigation hazards. Yet no one believes these ships are just crashing on the reefs, since there are never any survivors or wreckage. Karros is hiring capable adventures to help solve the mystery, and even has some magic items at her disposal to aid

in fighting whatever watery ghosts or sea monsters wait in the mist. No one is aware that boggards wrecked the ships and dismantled them before dawn, leaving no trace behind. Should the PCs accept, the boggards of the Seafoam tribe (some with class levels; see *Bestiary* 37) and their will-o'-wisp allies (*Bestiary* 277) might be exposed as a threat to Magnimar's sea trade and finally meet their match.

Good Clean Fight: A foreign competitor intends to cheat at the annual Golem Battles held at Serpent's Run by hiring agents (battle mage and tomb raider, *GameMastery Guide* 256 and 257) to sabotage or subvert the Golemworks contenders for this year. Their tactics include rigging accidents, abducting or murdering golem operators, or swapping out a construct control device for a faulty one. The cheater's goal is to place well in the tiered brackets in order to win lucrative work contracts and access to exotic building materials like Irespan stone. The PCs must investigate before someone gets hurt or the reputation of the games is ruined. If knowledge of the investigation is made public, the cheaters plan to frame the dwarven team from Janderhoff.

Greater Boons: A drunk adventurer claims strange and powerful boons are bestowed upon anyone who completes several of the ritual tasks of Magnimar's monuments in a specific order. The adventurer insists a book of brass sheets, bound with covers of Irespan stone and written in Celestial, lies hidden in a cave accessible through one of the statues. Its pages detail the different sequences. However, the index detailing which sequence produces which particular effects was missing. The adventurer claimed a voice told him to seek it through the sequences themselves. The story could be true, a hoax, or part of an elaborate plot by infernal powers to damage the monuments' power with accidental arcane sabotage. Depending on the agenda of the adventurer, use the storyteller or conjurist stats (*GameMastery Guide* 272 or 279, respectively).

Snatched from the Jaws: Believing the *gem of brightness* within the Wyrmswatch Tower to be a bauble of immense value, a brazen thief (use the tomb raider, *GameMastery Guide* 257) scaled the lighthouse and stole the crystal that keeps Magnimar's harbor safe. The whole of the city watch and the top squad of the mercenary Derexhi family now search for the fabled jewel. When the thief realized the magnitude of his theft, and that it was being investigated with divinations, he stashed the gem in the pack of an unsuspecting adventurer—one of the PCs. Now identified to every sellsword and bounty hunter (*GameMastery Guide* 283) in Magnimar, the characters need to infiltrate the lighthouse and restore the gem or otherwise clear their names. Yet with a reward this high, not everyone is interested in the truth.

THE SCARLET FOG (CR 8)

The city is terrorized by a series of killings perpetrated in the name of Sir Aeryn Darvengian. The PCs visit the Hells only to become privy to a terrible secret: Magnimar's most infamous serial killer is alive and well, and in control of the three lowest levels of the prison. Yet the confined Aeryn cannot be responsible for the murders, so the PCs must barter with the mad lord to gain his insight into how to stop this self-appointed apprentice.

BACKGROUND

Prior to the heinous mass murder that led to his conviction and consignment to the Hells beneath the Pediment Building, Aeryn Darvengian maintained a secret life as a worshiper of the demon lord Socothbenoth. Yet what many did not know is that he did not act alone, but rather maintained a small cult following. Tomall Ciola was an impressionable 13-year-old son of house servants on the Darvengian estate, and one of the many innocent people to be swept up by Sir Aeryn's powerful personal magnetism. Darvengian paid the youth to act as a lookout, and occasionally spared him some attention; whether this was to spread his corruption, instill loyalty, or simply amuse himself is unclear. When brought to trial, Lord Darvengian neglected to mention the boy's role in his crimes, so Tomall was never implicated in any wrongdoing. A decade later, Tomall has grown into a capable killer, and is eager to please and impress the one man who gave him a sense of self-worth. Tomall does not murder for Socothbenoth, but for Sir Aeryn himself, and his methods are less sophisticated. Down in the depths of the Hells, Sir Aeryn has heard rumors concerning copycat murders and now patiently waits for the inevitable questions to come.

INTRODUCTION

How the PCs become embroiled in the investigation influences how they approach Sir Aeryn. Darvengian's status as the ruler of the lower Hells is a state secret, but one the PCs are sure to uncover if they try to interview him or request to go through his personal effects. If they have a positive relationship with the city watch (or one of the many groups who act in that capacity, as described on page 28 of *Magnimar, City of Monuments*), they might be granted access to the lowest level still under the control of the authorities. Otherwise, if they act on their own, they might need to pay bribes to enter lower levels, or swear oaths to keep Darvengian's real status a secret from the public.

Lord Darvengian is delighted to converse from a safe distance or with magic. He claims no knowledge of the murders in order to encourage the PCs to share information so he can provide them with "some logical assumptions." In fact, he can guess the killer's identity immediately, which the PCs can discover with truth-revealing magic or

successful Sense Motive checks. Tomall has left a signature clue that Lord Darvengian identifies from the PCs' description. In the end, Darvengian does betray Tomall, but requests something in return. The PCs must promise to retrieve a portrait he painted of an adult daughter of one of Magnimar's other noble families, a woman for whom he always maintained an unctuous fondness.

DESCRIPTION

Not having grown up in a life of privilege, Tomall imitates Sir Aeryn but lacks his sense of style, perverse humor, and—when necessary—self-restraint. The public fear and outrage excites him, and he has accelerated his behavior. He's seized control of a bordello in the Naos district called the Scarlet Fog, once a favorite of Sir Aeryn. The establishment is completely closed and locked when the PCs investigate, which is unusual.

B1. Front Entrance: The front door requires a successful DC 20 Disable Device check to unlock. The door isn't trapped, but Tomall has placed an empty wine bottle on the inside door handle which, if it falls and shatters, alerts him to the presence of intruders. If the PC opening the door succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check, she notices it before opening the door further. If she also succeeds at a DC 25 Disable Device or Dexterity check (whichever is better), she can catch the bottle before it strikes the floor.

A large bar dominates the room, and to the west are several stools where the entertainers can sit while speaking with prospective clients. The area is oddly empty, but tucked behind the bar is the corpse of the barkeep. A locked metal cashbox (Disable Device DC 25) is still here, untouched, containing 200 gp in various coin denominations.

B2. Semiprivate Cells: These beds, separated by red curtains, offer minimal privacy for a reduced price. Some couples are still alive, but paralyzed—frozen in a rictus of horror and passion. Several wine bottles found nearby are poisoned with a paralytic agent similar to what Sir Aeryn used on his original victims. Tomall disguised himself as a servant and delivered "complimentary refreshments," after quietly securing area B1. The poison used is similar to oil of taggit, but instead of inducing sleep, it has a paralytic effect.

B3. Small Cells: These small rooms are lit by candles, and each contains a single stool so a guest might have a few private moments with one of the prostitutes. Some of the entertainers might be located here, bound, gagged, and condemned to wait for Tomall to return for them.

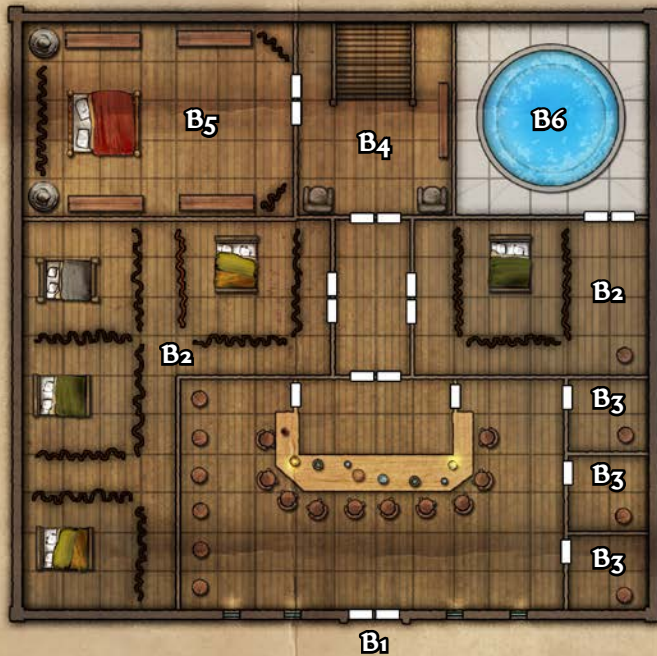
B4. Back Foyer: This is the primary station for the bordello's bouncers, who normally stay out of sight unless required. A stool sits on either side of the double doors that are open to the hallway to the south. Both guards are dead, their bodies still warm.

B5. Revelry Room: This room is reserved for private parties and acting out more lurid fantasies. Scarlet curtains

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THE SCARLET FOG

1 square = 5 feet



hang between faux pillars along the west wall and in the northeast and southeast corners to add a sense of space to the décor. (These also serve as places to hide.) Four wardrobes that sit against the walls contain numerous costumes, as well as various implements and devices. An oversized bed dominates the room, with chains and silk cords attached to the bedposts and discreetly tucked underneath. Dead victims and living hostages create a macabre tableau.

B6. Bathing Room: The large sauna and bathing pool in this room give this establishment its name. The large, tiled bath is a minor magical fixture that fills itself with water which can be heated, filling the room with steam. The natural steam affects vision as an *obscuring mist* spell and dissipates in 30 minutes. The pool's magical controls are a set of symbols just to the side of the eastern entrance. The walls are painted red, and pegs on which to hang lamps, towels, and clothing are set in the walls. The pool is 3-1/2 feet deep.

B7. Private Rooms: These rooms on the upper floor cost a modest premium over what is available downstairs. In each, a curtained window opens to the south. Every room contains candles or an unlit lamp. Some contain more of Tomall's victims or hostages, while others are empty.

ENCOUNTER

Use the slayer stat block for Tomall (*GameMastery Guide* 267). Tomall has a variety of different tactics available in this setting. His natural skills and magical cloak permit him to move around the bordello to stalk the party. In the pool room, his potion of *gaseous form* enables him to hide or stage an ambush for PCs coming in or out of the steam. A potion of *disguise self* allows him to pose as a surviving victim. If he fails to defeat the party but escapes, he can follow the PCs to wherever they're quartered to strike back.

ADDITIONAL PLOT HOOKS

Obtaining Darvengian's prized portrait from whoever confiscated it is another potential complication that can add to this encounter, expanding this hook into a longer adventure. The portrait is made of two thin canvases glued together. Their inside surfaces have been painted over with a lead-based paint, which blocks *detect magic*—sandwiched inside are new spellbook pages. Tomall's murderous spree could have been ordered by Darvengian in order to manipulate someone into petitioning him for help, so he could force them to retrieve the portrait on his behalf.

FOUR FACES OF THE FATHER (CR 12)

The mysterious cult of Norgorber that venerates the god as the Reaper of Reputation manipulates the other three Norgorber cults, operating from the sewers below Magnimar. The PCs investigate a subterranean sewer temple where worshippers from two different cults of the same deity interact.

BACKGROUND

The worship of Norgorber in Magnimar is divided into four separate cults, each devoted to a different aspect of the god of secrets. Not all of the cults are truly aware of the others, but the shadowy, unnamed cult that reveres Norgorber's aspect as the Reaper of Reputation secretly guides the other three without getting directly involved or even letting the other cults know they exist. The situation is made more complex because the cults are hierarchical, and information is usually provided on a "need to know basis" and flows from the top down—along with the authority to act upon it.

The leaders of the secret fourth cult decided they needed to place some controls on the other three groups in order to stay aware of their activities and prevent them from straying from what the fourth cult perceives to be Norgorber's true plan for his faithful. To forward this goal, they have selected certain members of the other sub-cults to be indoctrinated into their own, then placed back into the groups they came from. Specifically, three members of the secret cult have disguised themselves as Skinsaw Men in order to lead an unsuspecting candidate to their underground temple, where the truth can be revealed and the candidate's indoctrination started.

INTRODUCTION

This mission requires the PCs to explore Magnimar's extensive sewer network. This encounter works best if it is part of an existing investigation into the Skinsaw cult ordered by a benevolent church of the city or a member of the city guard. Alternatively, rumors and strange reports of nefarious activities in the sewers or the murder of a friendly NPC could lead the PCs to explore the sewers on their own.

Another possibility, requiring more staging in advance, is that the PCs are already spying on the Skinsaw Cultists. They discover one cultist has been invited to a special gathering, of which the rest of the Skinsaw Cult is unaware. The adventurers may track that cultist through the sewers, or perhaps use disguises or magic to replace the cultist with a PC. (In this case, add one more cultist to the encounter to replace the one who would have been in the PC's role.) The cultist or impostor is led to the underground temple while the party follows behind.

DESCRIPTION

The sewers were actually designed by the founder of the cult of the Reaper of Reputation, a Taldan architect who secretly served as a priest of Norgorber during Magnimar's founding. He designed an elaborate system of sewers to deal with Magnimar's drainage, but also built in means for his cultists and thieves to move about the city. Numerous other criminal groups exploit the network of tunnels, as do creatures like sewer goblins. The sewers themselves are constructed to require as little maintenance as possible, giving city authorities few reasons to venture into them.

S1. Main Sewer Channel: A small, westbound sewer channel connects here to another large channel heading south and then west. A series of bridges grants access to either side, and steps descend to a lower level to the north. Along the northwest wall sections, the wall has crumbled away in two places, exposing a natural cavern. A ceiling panel 10 feet above the western passage grants access to a building above, but there is no easy way to reach it from below. Sewer passages flow at a brisk pace to the north, east, and west (toward the sea). The channel is no more than 10 feet deep, but a DC 15 Swim check is required to keep from being swept down the channel at a rate of 10 feet per round. A grating (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 25 to break or lift) blocks the channel from the north. There are three sets of well-crafted secret doors requiring a successful DC 30 Perception check to notice—though if the cultists are being successfully tracked, their footprints going through a wall makes this easier.

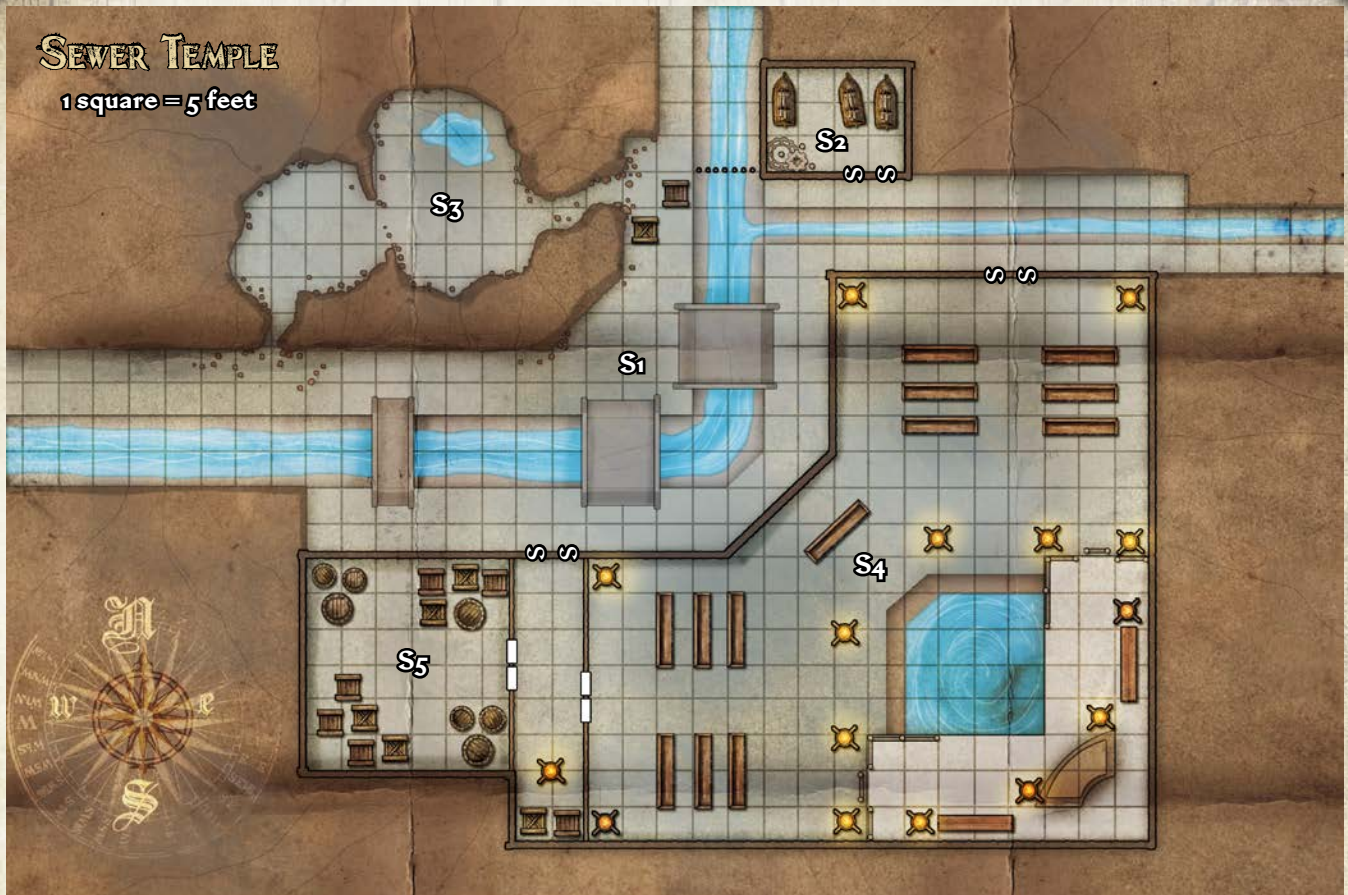
S2. Mechanical Room: This small room contains three rowboats and oars, which enable the cultists to travel through sections of the sewers where there are no walkways. In the corner is a winch mechanism that allows the grating in S1 to be raised or lowered.

S3. Cavern: This natural cavern was built around and walled off during the sewer's construction. The places where the walls have crumbled away to expose the cavern appear as if something had dug its way out. Stagnant water pools at the northern end of the cavern. This area is empty, but could be used to add an additional creature or encounter.

S4. Hidden Temple: The ceiling of this temple rises 20 feet in height, making it seem almost a cathedral in the subterranean gloom. A series of wooden benches are arrayed around the central altar to the southeast. Situated throughout the temple are 4-foot-tall brass stands, each holding a single long taper. The candles fill the area with no more than dim light. A set of unlocked double doors leads to the west. The altar stands on a raised platform 5 feet above the rest of the temple, and is accessible by two short sets of steps on either side.

Dominating the platform is a large, swirling whirlpool. A 3-foot-tall guardrail runs along the side of the pool where it faces the temple floor, but there is no railing

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around the rest of the pool or platform. The pool is nonmagical, and is created by a sewer pipe underneath the temple. The pipe opens at an angle to a fresh water main, forcing the two torrents of water to churn. A third sewer pipe at the bottom drains down, then turns to lead out of the area underneath the temple. A creature knocked into the whirlpool must succeed at a DC 15 Swim check to stay above water. Any movement through the whirlpool requires a successful DC 20 Swim check, including getting out of the south and east sides—failure by 5 or more means the creature is pulled down the pipe. A creature can hang on the guardrails indefinitely until it makes a successful Swim check. Creatures that are pulled under do not automatically drown, but end up in shallower and slower-moving sewer channels within a few rounds (usually many city blocks away). The cult of Norgorber uses this pool to dispose of the bodies of victims they sacrifice as part of their rituals.

Behind the whirlpool is an altar of black marble covered by a simple gray altar cloth. Flanking the altar along the south and east walls are polished tables of red wood covered with carefully arranged sacrificial daggers and razors.

S5. Storage: Here the secret cult stores stolen goods and supplies. As the arm controlling the finances of the four

cults, it uses this space to house goods until they can be diverted elsewhere.

ENCOUNTER

A total of five cultists are currently meeting in the temple in this encounter. For the head cultist, use the stats for the cult leader (*GameMastery Guide* 279). Replace the Healing domain with Trickery, and substitute the *elemental gem* (earth) for one associated with water. Water elementals (*Bestiary* 126) are perfectly appropriate summoned creatures for this encounter. Optionally, the elementals could have the Improved Bull Rush feat instead of Great Cleave.

The torturer stats (*GameMastery Guide* 271) can be used for the remaining cultists. All four of them are dressed as Skinsaw Men, and at least one of them actually belongs to that cult of murderers.

ADDITIONAL PLOT HOOKS

This mission can also be used as a follow-up to “The Skinsaw Murders,” the second part of the Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path. The cult leader intends to give the indoctrinated Skinsaw cultist a *ring of mind shielding* to prevent the group from being uncovered.

SHATTERED STAR

URBAN BLIGHT (CR 14)

A powerful and sophisticated gang of bandits from Korvosa has moved into the vacant Kajitsu Villa, with assistance from the shadowy Rushlight Society. They've managed to dupe city officials so far, but the neighborhood itself has become suspicious. The PCs must determine the real situation and drive the bandits off if possible.

BACKGROUND

The Rushlight Society is a covert organization that operates just outside of Magnimar and is secretly funded by Korvosan officials with a mandate to undermine Magnimar's reputation as a safe trading hub. The society typically manipulates small groups of bandits and criminals without their knowledge, but in this case it has facilitated a group of operatives nearly as powerful as the society itself. Dubbing themselves the "Houseguests," this team of spies, thieves, and saboteurs is squatting in the abandoned Kajitsu estate. The Houseguests gather intelligence on Magnimar's nobility and defenses, then forward it to the Rushlight Society. They also perpetrate heists on high-profile deliveries brought in from the Lost Coast Road. This fosters the rumors that Magnimar is "every bit as dangerous as Riddleport, but twice as expensive."

Veratrix Mendora, a powerful cleric of Asmodeus who emphasizes her deity's Trickery domain, leads the Houseguests. Veratrix has an extended contract for the services of a bone devil named Zijillrik to assist in her espionage. Wilhelm Trannus, a mercenary, is the group's competent tactical operations leader, and is reinforced by four additional seasoned bandits.

The group has occupied the villa for approximately 2 months, and has been challenged by local authorities. The Rushlight Society provided the Houseguests with falsified documents from Ameiko Kajitsu which identify them as authorized caretakers. Thanks to Zijillrik and Veratrix's powerful illusions, the members of the city watch who were invited inside were forced to conclude the complaints were unwarranted.

The worst threat to the Houseguests might be each other. Wilhelm's bandits are in it strictly for the money and quietly wish larceny were a higher priority. They're aware the group has a magical ally, but they've not seen Zijillrik (who might send them into a panic). Wilhelm Trannus, for his part, believes it is inevitable the Houseguests are going to run out of luck, and in a big way, so he's been looking for a convenient exit strategy.

INTRODUCTION

The PCs can get involved in different ways. Perhaps the Houseguests are not as thorough in deceiving the district's residents as they are its leaders, and those residents appeal to the PCs to investigate.

DESCRIPTION

The southern side of Kajitsu Villa sits right up against the Seacleft, while a 15-foot-long smooth stone wall separates it from the street to the north and Deverin Villa to the east. A tall iron gate grants access to the grounds, but Wilhelm keeps it chained shut with a good lock (Disable Device DC 30). Only a portion of the villa is visible through the gate, but when illusions are not active the grounds look unkempt and overgrown. Except where specifically noted, most of the true valuables inside the villa were stolen or vandalized years ago.

K1. Front Entrances: These doors are kept locked (Disable Device DC 20), and lead to two hallways that wrap around the main family gathering room. Trash and refuse litter the floor. Where the two hallways meet, a pentagram is painted on the floor. A successful DC 18 Spellcraft check reveals it has been used as part of a *magic circle against good* spell before. The double doors to the southwest are typically unlocked, and the hallway splits again to a set of matching staircases to the second floor.

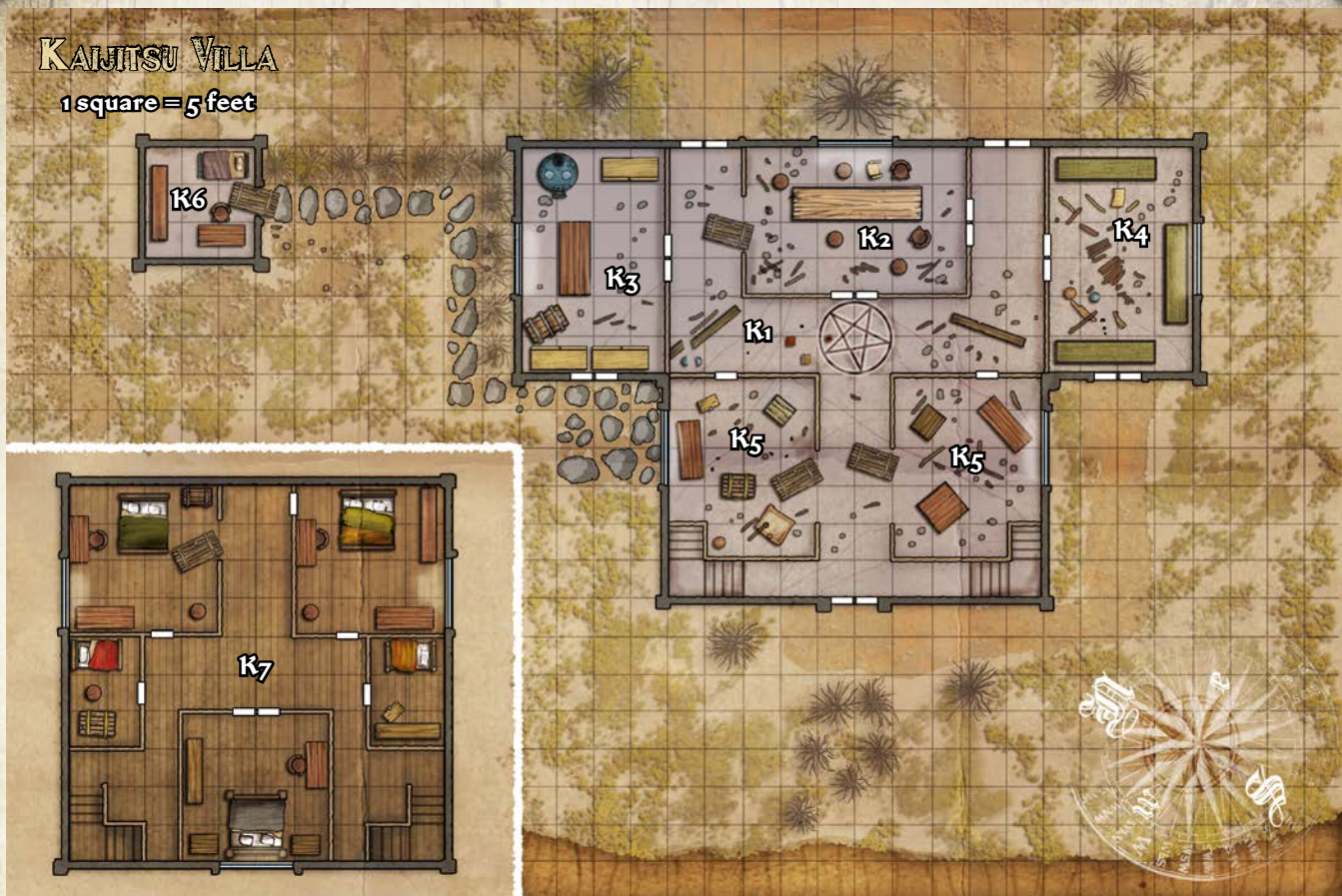
K2. Family Dining Room: The large window to the northeast is locked (Disable Device DC 20), and the curtains drawn closed. The dining table is Tian-style and low to the ground, with a series of rude names now carved in its surface. A number of discarded seat cushions are here, as well as footstools brought in from other rooms. The Houseguests sometimes have their meetings here.

K3. Kitchen: A window set in the northwestern wall has been left unlocked, and the curtains are partially open. Pantry cabinets and a stove are set against the walls, and a large food preparation table sits in the center of the room. Shattered porcelain, broken crockery, and a staved-in barrel are among the discarded refuse that litters the floor. The doors to the southwest are barricaded by tables and cabinets, and require a successful DC 23 Strength check to wedge open from the outside. If the roll succeeds by 5 or more, the doors become completely unobstructed; otherwise, only one Medium creature can enter at a time. The locks to the doors were broken by other burglars in previous years.

K4. Family Library and Study: As in the kitchen, the locks on the back door here have been busted. The Houseguests have barricaded the southwestern doors with a bookcase; breaking through requires a successful Strength check as described in area **K3**. Books are strewn across the floor, and the table and chairs in the center have been overturned. Several maps depicting sections of Varisia are nailed to wall with daggers, but otherwise undamaged. If collected, the maps are worth 100 gp combined.

K5. Family Rooms: The Kajitsu children were tutored in the northwestern room, while the adults practiced various arts or relaxed informally in the other. Both rooms have been marred by the same petty vandalism as the rest of the villa.

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K6. Caretaker's House: The door is locked, and gaining entry requires either the keys or a successful DC 20 Disable Device check. The inside is actually in better condition than the main house. Some of the gang members take turns living here when they want some peace and quiet.

K7. Upstairs Bedrooms: Aside from the remains of discarded food and drink, this area is less messy than downstairs—Veriatrix has a limit to the amount of squalor she tolerates. Most of the rooms are unremarkable, except the master bedroom to the southwest, where Veriatrix stays. In her room is a locked chest (Disable Device DC 25) lined with a thin sheet of lead to block *detect magic*. The outside of the chest is magically trapped with a *greater glyph of warding* (10d8 points of sonic damage, Reflex DC 23 for half). Finding and disabling this trap requires successful DC 31 Perception and Disable Device checks for characters with the trapfinding class ability. Inside the chest is a *stone of alarm* set to activate when the chest opens. The chest also contains 500 gp, 50 pp, various pieces of artwork stolen from other noble residences worth 750 gp, and a journal detailing several of the city's defenses, which can be turned in to the city watch for a 1,000 gp reward. Only Veriatrix and Zijillrik know the passwords, but the rest of the gang members are aware the chest is trapped.

ENCOUNTER

For Wilhelm Trannus and the four bandits, use the sellsword and highwayman stats (*GameMastery Guide* 283 and 259, respectively).

Zijillrik, the bone devil (*Bestiary* 74), is summoned temporarily by Veriatrix and gains the benefit of Veriatrix's Augment Summoning feat. Adjust its stats accordingly: **hp** 125; **Fort** 14; **Melee** bite +16 melee (1d8+7), 2 claws +16 melee (1d6+7), sting +16 melee (3d4+7 plus poison); **Poison** save Fort DC 22.

The high priest stats (*GameMastery Guide* 305) can be used for Veriatrix with the following changes: **Special Attacks** channel negative energy 5/day (DC 18, 7d6); **Domain Spell-Like Abilities** 13/day—master's illusion (DC 23); 10/day—copycat; 2/day—scythe of evil (6 rounds); **Skills** Replace Heal +11 with Bluff +11; **Cleric Spells Prepared** Remove the following spells: 7th—*repulsion*; 6th—*banishment*, *heal*, *heroes' feast*; 5th—*telepathic bond*; 4th—*discern lies*; 3rd—*magic vestment* (1), *searing light*; 2nd—*enthrall*; 1st—*divine favor*, *protection from chaos*. Add the following spells: 7th—*screen*^P; 6th—*greater glyph of warding* (DC 23), *mislead*^P, *planar ally*; 5th—*false vision*^P; 4th—*confusion*^P (DC 21); 3rd—*nondetection*^P; 2nd—*invisibility*^P; 1st—*disguise self*^P, *protection from good*; **Domains** Evil, Trickery.



THE CHAR STREET CLIPPERS

PATHFINDER'S JOURNAL: LIGHT OF A DISTANT STAR 3 OF 6

To think that lurking in the shadows of some moldering old casks with a con man, a wizard, and an Ulfen mercenary would feel like familiar, safe territory to me is a strange and, perhaps, wonderful thing. But after my fright with Gundsric that afternoon, this was exactly where I wanted to be.

Even Mordimor, generally on record as disapproving of these kinds of things, seemed eager to take part in the culmination of Kostin's big heist. Granted, all that the plan entailed was to wait for an invisible Shess to slip out of the Char Street Clippers' headquarters with the scepter, and

then for all of us to steal away into the dark. Our presence, Kostin assured me, was merely a form of insurance.

But, as I well knew, these things never go according to plan. The logic of our story demanded it, and as Master Shaine would say, even our simplest choices have the power of prophecy. I had chosen to live an adventure, and I knew somewhere deep in my bones that I was going to have one that night.

We were hunkered down between a sagging, tin-roofed shed and the upturned hull of an old skiff, positioned nicely in the dark space behind the aforementioned casks.

THE CHAR STREET CLIPPERS

The reek of tar was in the air, as was the ever-present salty stink of Riddleport's harbor. We were in the eastern section of the Wharf District, south of Rotgut and not very far from Gundsric's fortress of a house, almost up against the jagged hills that marked the city limits, smack in the center of a cluster of rundown buildings that had been abandoned once this little neck of the harbor had silted up. The shallow, almost stagnant water that still filled the channel was hardly enough to buoy a rowboat at high tide, and thus the docks and piers that lined the inlet had fallen into disuse and ill repair.

Of course, no building remains unoccupied for long, and the Char Street Clippers were only too happy to make a home in the derelict warehouse that bordered the northern tip of the inlet. The gas lamps that lined the more traveled byways of the city were but a distant glow this deep into the slums, and the moon was the merest sliver. But the stars were bright and clear, and Castrovel glittered like a faraway emerald directly above us. A single bat flapped in zigzag circles about the reeking inlet, no doubt having found a rich source of insect life. Mercifully, the night was a cool one, the wind blowing in from the gulf having banished the swelter of summer for the time being.

"I can wait no longer," Aeventius said, squatting uncomfortably along the edge of the shed rather than risk soiling his fine clothes by sitting on the street itself. "As it is, I will already be late for this evening's performance at the Sable Flag."

Kostin shot back with a choice Varisian curse. "You're seeing this through. Your 'play' can wait."

"Scaerelli is performing *Vestments Unseen*. I hear it is quite critical of House Thrune, and do not wish to miss it."

I looked at the fourth member of our group, the disheveled Ulfen warrior Gyrd, whom I had fought alongside in Magnimar. His bloodshot gaze met mine and I rolled my eyes at Kostin and Aeventius. Gyrd, expressionless as always, turned back to survey the dockhouse.

"You forget who you're talking to, Aevy." Kostin, voice rising in irritation, turned around and wagged a finger at the wizard. He was dressed in the black leather I had seen him in the day before, though with the addition of a fine matching set of longsword and dagger at his waist. "I know all the bookmakers in the Wharf. I know where the money goes, and you've got more than a few crowns going on Dashak in tonight's games. So don't try to tell me you're going to some theater instead of slinking off to Zincher's Arena."

Aeventius's eyes narrowed. "A man can have money on the games and still attend some other engagement. Where I go is none of your concern anyway, you trumped-up guttersnipe."

Kostin grinned. It was a smile I'd seen before, whenever he was about to fight. "I do have to wonder how obvious it is to all the bluebloods up on the Summit why the Reatés family doesn't have two coppers to pinch together. Maybe the heir has a gambling problem?"

"Abadar blast you!" Aeventius snarled, voice rising beyond all levels of caution.

"Not holding my breath on that one," Kostin said, smirking.

"This from a man whose devotionals sway between a drunken lout and a moth-winged wanton."

"You're just mad that Desna never smiles on your wagers."

I was about to say something to stop their bickering, but a warning bark from Mordimor drew our attention back to the Clippers' warehouse.

Six figures had approached the warehouse and hailed the guards. They moved with a lanky shuffle, hunched men and women hooded in black. Two of them bore a heavy sack between them, nearly dragging it along the street, each man holding a rope-end that bound the bag closed. In the weak light of the guard's lantern it was difficult to get an impression of the new arrivals, save that each had a lean and hungry aspect associated with criminals of the most dangerous sort.

"Shess never said anything about this," Kostin whispered.

Many of the Clippers were gone this evening, engaged in some work for one of the minor Rotgut bosses that didn't want to get his hands dirty or risk offending the real powers of the city. The strange thing about the Char Street Clippers, Kostin had explained to me, was that they had so far been able to flout the authority of Overlord Cromarcky and the other crime lords of the city. They had gotten away with overstepping their bounds again and again, their own power increasing at an unprecedented rate as a result.

"They're going in," Aeventius said, exhibiting no trace of his earlier petulance. "This may make things difficult for the gnome. We should observe more closely."

We agreed. Watching the last of the visitors enter the double doors of the warehouse, Kostin suggested we sneak in closer to the building and try to peer through one of the filthy, alley-side windows that were visible from our position. Backing away from the casks and making our way around the tangle of sheds that lined the approach to the warehouse, we moved as quietly as we were able, staying out of the single guard's line of sight.

My pulse quickened, and I was reminded of my escapade in Gundsric's house earlier in the day. But there I had felt an overwhelming anxiety and inexplicable sense of dread, whereas now I was enjoying a feeling of exhilaration. Almost of anticipation. At that moment, stalking quietly through the shadows, wincing at every creak and tinkle of Gyrd's chainmail or admiring the way Kostin placed his feet with such deliberateness, I had no trouble reconciling all the pieces of my life. Scholar and spy, explorer and chronicler, Pathfinder and thief. Perhaps it had been the banishment of the guilt I had felt over lying to Gundsric that had finally freed me to feel this way, to feel as if my life was a natural whole and not some play in which I merely portrayed all the parts.

Or perhaps it had been Gundsric's potion. For the hundredth time my thoughts went to the stolen vial in my pouch, every fiber of my being tingling with the desire to snatch it up and drink it down. It was an unwelcome feeling, and one I had prayed to Sarenrae to rid me of, though rarely do I feel the need to invoke the divine. In that respect, I suppose I truly am my father's daughter.

The first window we came to was dark, blocked by a wall of detritus on the other side. We slipped farther along the building's flank, Mordimor leading the way with his nose to the ground. The next window was glassless, being a thin piece of hide stretched and pegged into place, and the small room beyond was a blur. Kostin informed us that this was the likeliest route Shess would take to escape the warehouse once she had the scepter—a quick slash with a dagger would silently open a portal to the outside. We briefly discussed doing the same when we discovered the third window on this side of the building was completely boarded up.

"We now know less than we would have if we had remained in place," Aeventius said.

Gyrd grumbled in agreement. The taciturn northman had been growing more anxious by the minute, his concern for Shess palpable. The two had long been friends, having both served on the crew of a longship raider many years ago and worked as a team ever since. The big man's knuckles were white on the hilt of his blade.

"We have to keep going around, or we go up," Kostin said, frowning. "We can split up, try both. Or we can just trust Shess to get the job done and go back to waiting by the sheds."

I was about to suggest we continue our circuit of the building when a muffled shout from within the warehouse intruded on our conversation. For an instant we froze, looking at one another as if to confirm what we had just heard.

Then we heard it again: mixed in with the cries of deeper voices was an almost childlike voice raised in fear or anger. Shess.

Growling, Gyrd drew his sword and barreled past us, back toward the front of the warehouse. I hissed his name and tried to catch hold of him.

"You won't stop him. Aevy, follow him in. Tal and I will try this window."

Aeventius nodded with an exasperated sigh and cracked his knuckles. "They're probably just about to start the prologue to *Vestments*," he said, before turning to run after Gyrd.

"Starting the first bout, more like." Kostin dashed to the hide-covered window, Mordimor and I close behind. Drawing his long parrying dagger, he slashed the skin along two of the hide's edges before vaulting through the window. Mordimor went next, with my help, and then I slipped inside, the dry skin rattling as I passed through.

The commotion had grown louder, Gyrd's frontal assault no doubt having added to the mayhem. The room we were in was small and dim, illuminated by a single forgotten

candle stub guttering in a wall sconce. It was clearly the living quarters for four or five people, as bedding and filthy blankets covered much of the floor. We wasted no time, moving immediately for the door. Fitting a bolt to my crossbow, I nodded to Kostin that I was ready, and he threw the door wide.

A corridor ran straight, brightly lit at the far end. The noise of combat reached us and we raced down the hall toward it, all sensible caution lost in the need for swiftness. About the only thing we could count on now was the effectiveness of our surprise attack, and our own skill at arms.

A shape darkened the way in front of us. I stopped, raised the crossbow to my shoulder, and tried to line up a shot. But Kostin was in the way, and did not slow his approach. In the split second it took him to close on the figure, I saw more clearly that the man in front of us—one of the Clippers—had his back to the corridor and a bow trained on something in the large space ahead. Kostin never hesitated as he drove his dagger low into the man's back, then flung him aside as he charged into the room.

I followed, eyes locked on the dying archer. He was a small man, dirty, clothed in a ragged Varisian patchwork vest. I could see so much of him so clearly in the almost insignificant moment between entering the room behind Kostin and raising my weapon to shoot an approaching axeman. Insignificant, save that it was the small, dirty man's last. There was little blood left by Kostin's precise attack, but nevertheless there lay the broken man, crumpled like an insect, his limbs twitching in shock. He wore a simple silver ring on the third finger of his right hand, and his unkempt beard was flecked with gray. His short bow protruded from beneath him, and I saw that it had once been a fine weapon. He could have passed for Kostin's cousin, for in both men the Varisian features were strong. Had he been given a *kapenia* when he came of age? Did he swear to Desna in a million different ways, and had he traveled the wilds in a covered wagon? Had he seen this exact, final moment in a hand of harrow cards, the empty eye sockets of a skull staring back at him above a perfect smile?

His dark eyes met with mine for the briefest moment before I tore my gaze away. A man with a woodaxe was bearing down on Kostin's right-hand side, while Kostin himself was locked in combat with a swordsman wielding a combination of curved blade and buckler. Such a small interval of time: One second a man lives, the whole of his years stretching back like a winding and not-always-clear path through the forest of the past. The next he dies, his path to be traveled no more, blotted out and shrouded in a darkness that can never be seen through, save only by the gods themselves.

One second Taldara Meirlanel feels sorrow and regret at a thing fairly called murder; the next she raises her crossbow, sights along its length, and looses a bolt into the

THE CHAR STREET CLIPPERS

eye of man who dies before his body even hits the ground. She does it to protect her friend; she does it because that is why she is here; she does it because the story she has chosen for herself demands it.

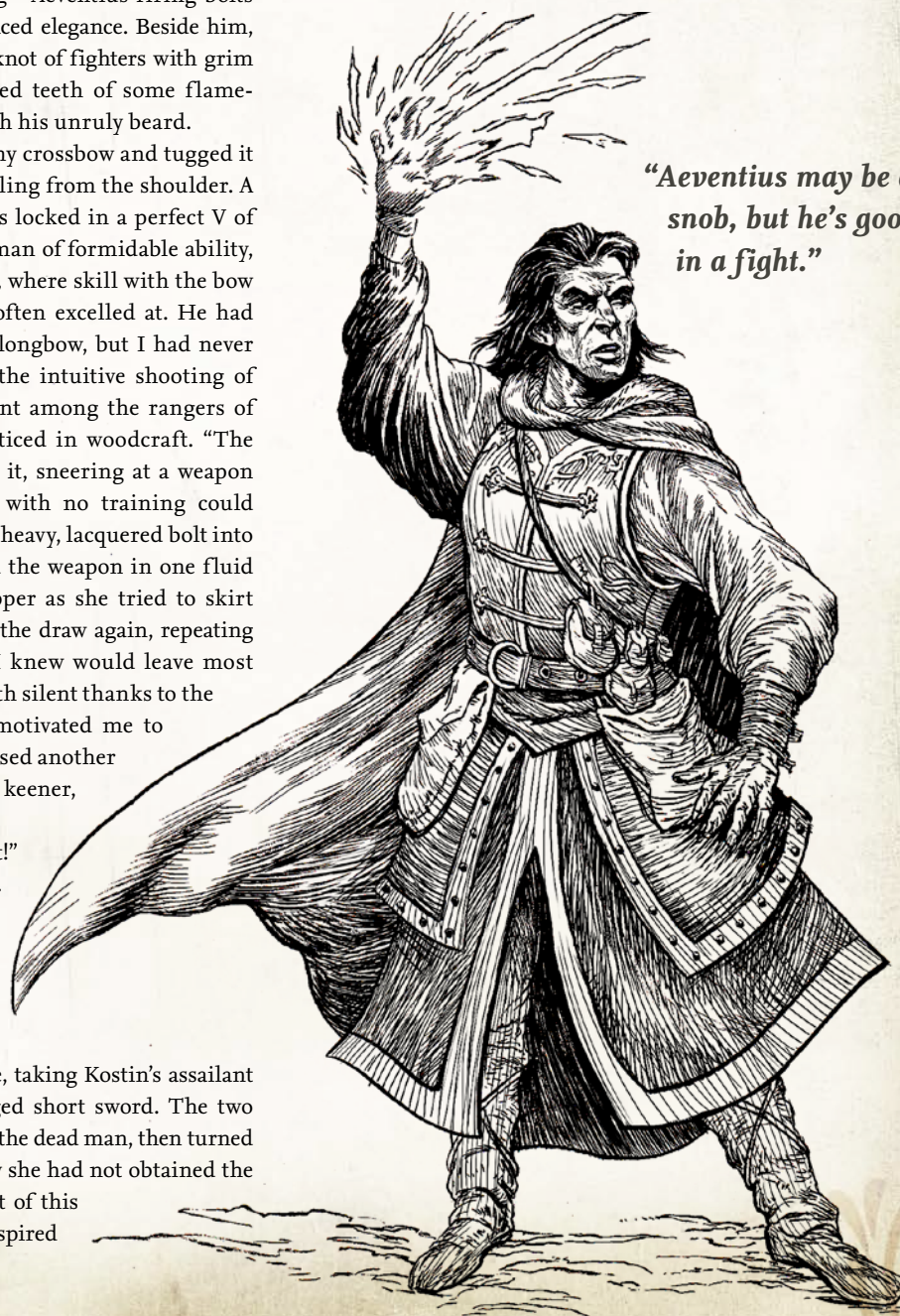
The room was large; we had come upon the warehouse proper. Where once crates and casks and the goods of a dozen port towns must have been stacked almost to the ceiling, now there was an enormous empty space, its far corners concealed by darkness, its walls reverberating with the sounds of killing. The Clippers were fighting the black-clad visitors, the combat thickest around the large sack the newcomers had brought with them, which now lay on the floor. A flash of light drew my attention toward the front of the building—Aeventius firing bolts from his fingertips with a practiced elegance. Beside him, Gyrd hacked his way through a knot of fighters with grim efficiency, a smile like the bared teeth of some flame-haired predator showing through his unruly beard.

I hooked the draw winch on my crossbow and tugged it back in one smooth motion, pulling from the shoulder. A click told me that the string was locked in a perfect V of tension. My father was a marksman of formidable ability, admired even among his people, where skill with the bow was a widespread art and one often excelled at. He had taught me the use of the elven longbow, but I had never taken to it, preferring instead the intuitive shooting of the crossbow, a weapon prevalent among the rangers of Nirmathas where I had apprenticed in woodcraft. “The machine,” my father had called it, sneering at a weapon even a stupid human peasant with no training could wield with some effect. Fitting a heavy, lacquered bolt into the crossbow’s channel, I raised the weapon in one fluid motion and felled another Clipper as she tried to skirt around Kostin’s flank. I hooked the draw again, repeating the motion with a speed that I knew would leave most archers fumbling to keep up. With silent thanks to the father whose disapproval had motivated me to perfect my skill, I loaded and loosed another bolt. My vision had never been keener, my mind never more focused.

“You need to teach me to do that!” said a familiar voice to my left. Materializing out of the shadows was the green and girlish shape of Shess, the chance sighting of whom had set me upon this whole adventure. Before I could respond, she raced past me, taking Kostin’s assailant from behind with her keen-edged short sword. The two exchanged a cheery greeting over the dead man, then turned to face separate attackers. Clearly she had not obtained the scepter that was the whole object of this heist, and what exactly had transpired

to turn a simple bit of burglary into a three-way battle was not yet clear.

The ranks of the Clippers and the black-clad strangers were growing thin, and it seemed our intervention had turned the tables on both. Gyrd and Aeventius had won through to the center of the room, leaving a trail of dead and dying behind them. Kostin and Shess each fought black-cowled swordsmen, and it was only then that I noticed the change that had come over the second gang. Hunched as they were, garbed and hooded in black, it had been difficult to spot at first. But beneath each cowl the pointed snout of a rat now chattered, yellow wedge-teeth gnashing together like pairs of dull-edged chisels.



“Aeventius may be a snob, but he’s good in a fight.”

SHATTERED STAR

“Wererats!” I cried out, rushing to close the distance with Kostin. Mordimor bounded along at my heels, barking and snarling, weighing his need to protect me with his deep instincts to fight. “Don’t let them bite you!”

“No shit!” Kostin shot back, turning aside a sword thrust from one of the shape-changers. The creature grew more ratlike by the second, even as it fought: its posture hunching, hands melding into claws, and a worm-skin tail snaking out from beneath its tunic. With a wild lunge, it fastened onto Kostin and bore him down, raking him with its back legs and snapping at his face.

I raised my crossbow and sighted along its length just as a voice like a clap of thunder echoed across the chamber.

“Cease this warring and obey your lord and master!”

It was as if every impulse, every instinct of mine toward obedience, had been pulled taut by the hand of a master

puppeteer. My arms trembled and my aim wavered. A voice deep inside of me demanded that I stop, that I obey. To disregard the command would be to fly in the face of everything I held sacred, everything I loved or cared about, to throw away whatever scrap of honor or shred of self-respect I possessed. To disobey would be a worse sin than that of a daughter who shirked her father’s expectations, a scholar who lied to gain access to the home of a dying dwarf, or a Pathfinder who spent more time consorting with thieves and cheats than doing her duty. It was an imperative I could not, must not, ignore.

But ignore it I did.

I loosed the bolt, hitting the wererat in the shoulder. It rolled off of Kostin, hissing and spitting. Kostin regained his feet, his leather armor hanging in rents from the wererat’s clawing attack.

“Seize those two!” The commanding voice belonged to a big man in rusty half-plate. He was dark-skinned and weathered like most of the pirate crews around Riddleport, as if he had spent a lifetime exposed to wind and sun. Around his neck hung a gruesome necklace of humanoid ears. All across the chamber the fighting had stopped, and only my friends and I and a handful of the Clippers and wererats remained. The pirate strode over the bodies of the fallen toward the center of the room, a scepter raised high in his left hand. It was magnificent, its mere possession seeming proof of the man’s authority, and even though I had resisted his command, I still felt compelled by the artifact’s inherent force. Here was the thing we had come to steal from the boss of the Clippers—no mere royal bauble but an artifact of enormous power.

“Yes, master,” rasped the wererat to my left as she locked her claws around my upper arm. I tried to pull away, clumsily striking at her with my crossbow. Her fur was black as night, and a crescent scar left a hairless patch of red flesh beneath one eye. The scepter had turned her into a servant of the Clipper boss as surely as if she been born into his service. She slapped my weapon from my grasp and it clattered to the ground.

“Sorry, Tal,” Kostin said, grabbing me by the other arm as I struggled. I stared at him in disbelief, my desire to resist draining away. He seemed hollow somehow, numbed with shock, but I could still see the pain in his eyes, the revulsion at his own behavior.

“Gotta do what the man says,” he whispered.

“Silence that wizard,” the Clipper boss roared, dim light refracting from the jewel-encrusted rod he brandished. Aeventius must have resisted the commands of the scepter as well, and I could hear him forming the harsh syllables of a spell over to my left. I strained in the grasp of the wererat and my friend, and turned to see the wizard.

Before Aeventius could finish his utterance, Gyrd—who already had a restraining arm locked around



“So this is the treasure that brought Kostin to Riddleport.”

THE CHAR STREET CLIPPERS

him—smashed a fist into Aeventius's mouth. One hammer blow was enough to drop the spellcaster in a heap at the northman's feet.

I cried out then, and renewed my struggle, pulling Kostin and the wererat with me. From the corner of my eye I saw Mordimor raise his head above the corpse of a Clipper and take in the scene, before he ducked back down again. The sight of him gave me hope, though the wererat I had just wounded with my bolt swiveled his head suspiciously in Mordimor's direction.

The Clipper boss was laughing, as were his underlings, all of them wholly absorbed in the spectacle of the warrior and the wizard. "Oh, and he was a friend of yours, yes? You two fought well together, really thinned out my herd. But that just means the cut from all this gleam will be that much bigger for the rest of us." At that, his men cheered and roared his name: "Garso, Garso, Garso!"

"Yeah, yeah. Enough!" Garso strode over to Gyrd. The Clippers quieted, and their boss looked the big Ulfen up and down as if pricing a horse. "You know, I wonder if I even need the rod for the likes of you. Bet a pouch full of silver would be enough to get you to knife everyone in the room.

"Shess," the gang boss continued, wheeling on the gnome and pointing the scepter at her like a liege lord commanding a knight. "If that is your real name. Drop that sword and come over here."

Shess obeyed, walking toward him with an unnatural, jerky gait.

"I don't have time to figure every damn thing that went on here tonight, but if you hadn't tried to steal *this*"—Garso shook the scepter at her as his eyes bulged in rage—"we would have never had this fight with Ziphras's rats in the first place. I don't know if I can ever patch this up again, or where I'm gonna get more gleam. You've ruined us.

The leering boss turned back to Gyrd. "You," he said, and tapped Gyrd's mailed chest with the scepter. "Bring me the head of this little thief—and the rest of you stay where you are!"

Kostin's hand clenched tighter around my arm, and I could feel his body tense as if straining against fetters of steel. I fought to get myself free, and my wererat captor dealt me a smack to the back of the head that sent me to my knees.

Gyrd, his wide-bladed Ulfen sword in his hand, looked at the Clipper boss through eyes like slits. He took a step toward Shess, close enough now to strike. The gnome stood passively, gazing up at her friend, looking so small and vulnerable in the shadow of that mountain of iron and muscle. On her cheek I could see the glint of tears, even through the blur of my own.

Raising the chipped, bloody sword, Gyrd stood frozen, his face as red as his blade, his mouth a rictus of pain.

"It's n-not your f-fault, Gyrd," Shess said.

"Do it!" Garso screamed, but not so loudly that all in the room did not hear the feral snarl of Mordimor as he launched himself against the boss's upraised arm.

The scepter was knocked from Garso's hand, and clattered to the floorboards.

At once all was chaos. Gyrd, bellowing in rage, wheeled upon Garso and buried his blade halfway into the man's skull. As the boss went down I saw Mordimor dart away, eager to avoid the murderous onslaught of the viking, who struck the Clipper again and again.

The wererats were quick to recover. Next to me, Kostin was bowled over by the charge of the wounded wererat, while the female who had hold of my arm wrenched me to my feet. I put out a hand to fend off her attack, but instead she drew me close, her vermin snout an inch from my face. Her hot breath smelled of sewer trash and raw meat.

She inhaled, taking my scent, inspecting me as if I were an intended meal. "The smell is strong on you. When the time comes, I'll pluck your pretty eyes myself." I pulled back just as she released me of her own accord, and I toppled backward. With a final hiss, she darted off, running down the hallway from which Kostin and I had entered, seeming to grow smaller and more ratlike as she vanished into the dark.

As I regained my feet I could see that the Clippers and wererats had all fled. Kostin was at my side, his arm red to the elbow with the blood of the wererat he had just slain. In the center of the room, Gyrd helped a groaning Aeventius to his feet. The wizard's face was already swelling, and he tore his arm away from the Ulfen and tottered over to lean against the large sack that seemed to have been the object of the fight. Shess sat not far away, dejected.

A gentle pressure against my leg announced Mordimor's presence. I bent down and scooped him into my arms.

"So that's why this thing is so important." Kostin, having walked over to where the scepter had fallen after Mordimor's attack, held the artifact up reverently. "Just think what the *kapteo* could do with this. Hell, just think what *we* could do with it."

Aeventius snarled, kicking over the heavy sack and spinning to shake a fist at Kostin. "I will not spend the rest of my life on the run from some pig-stinking Sczarni boss because you couldn't refrain from playing with that toy. Leave it alone."

They began to argue, but I didn't hear it. Instead, my eyes were fixed on the contents of the sack, the dozens of flat, rectangular boxes that had spilled out when the wizard had kicked the bag over. I had seen this exact sort of box before. This very afternoon, in fact.

I had seen it on a table in Gundsric's house, its lopsided, ten-pointed star the same as on the potions I drank daily—potions that now stared back at me from each opened box of gleam.



BESTIARY

BECAUSE OF THE REEDS, WE DIDN'T SEE THE CREATURE UNTIL WE WERE RIGHT UP ON IT, THE SMELL OF THE SWAMP MASKING ITS HORRID ODOR. WE INTERRUPTED THE WILD THING AS IT WAS TENDING WHAT LOOKED LIKE A GARDEN THAT HAD ROTTED AND MOLDED OVER MONTHS AGO. WHEN IT NOTICED US, THE CREATURE FLEW INTO A MANIACAL RAGE, RANTING IN SOME OBSCURE TONGUE AND THROWING BIZARRE FUNGUS BALLS AT US, GRENADES THAT EXPLODED IN A THICK MIST OF INFECTIOUS SPORES.

ALAS, WE HAD TO LEAVE MERCEL'S BODY BEHIND. BEFORE WE WERE HALFWAY TO THE MARSH'S EDGE, HIS BODY WAS ALREADY RIPE WITH PULSING MOLD...

—MUSHA KRINGLIM, ADVENTURER

BESTIARY

In this month's Pathfinder Bestiary we get a closer look at the strange caulborn, complex clockworks, and other weird creatures both menacing and benign that inhabit Kaer Maga and the surrounding environs.

CHANCE MEETINGS, MALCONTENTEDS, AND MONSTERS

In the Shattered Star Adventure Path, adventurers travel across Varisia in search of an ancient artifact that could spell destruction for Golarion—or could perhaps be the key to its survival. In deep dungeons and crumbling ruins, the PCs have ample opportunity to interact with some of the stranger denizens of Golarion. Here you'll find a random encounter table suitable for this volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path, as well as three encounter hooks to add to your Shattered Star campaign.

Some of the creatures on the table can be encountered in the City of Strangers, while others are found in the endless tunnels and corridors beneath Kaer Maga. If a random encounter roll doesn't fit the PCs' current location, roll again on the table or simply choose an appropriate encounter from the listed selections. The table and the following entries a selection of monsters potentially found in Kaer Maga and the dungeons below—for more details on Kaer Maga's plentiful threats and a greater variety of encounters, consult the encounter table on page 59 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: City of Strangers*.

Dark Scouts (CR 7): Creeping up from deep below, this troupe of dark folk scouts seems to be mapping parts of the labyrinthine tunnels and passages below Kaer Maga. Led by a dark stalker (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 54) named Alktrin, the group includes two dark creepers (*Bestiary* 53) who scout ahead 40 feet, acting as bait and point guards for Alktrin and his dark slayer servant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 75). When the creepers encounter a threat too great for them to handle on their own, they engage with poisoned daggers while backing away to meet up with the other two dark folk so all four can fight as a team. Alktrin puts great value on her own life, and doesn't hesitate to sacrifice the dark creepers or dark slayer to protect herself, using them as shields and retreating into the darkness so she can live to report another day.

Stargazers (CR 8): High in a tower in Kaer Maga's Highside Stacks district, a lunar naga (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 197) named Sreythil keeps her eyes on the starry sky. Her gaze in recent months has stared deep into the darkness between the stars, as she believes a portent will reveal itself and usher in a time of devastation—a time she eagerly welcomes. Sreythil has attracted a small cadre of cultists through the use of her diluted poison, which they ingest as a hallucinogenic drug. This group of nearly insane followers consists of three rogues (use the

KAER MAGA ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–5	1 caulborn	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 48
6–10	1 flesh golem	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 160
11–14	1 greater barghest	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 27
15–19	1 medusa	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 201
20–24	1 sceeduinar	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 239
25–29	1 animate dream	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 29
30–34	1 dark naga	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 211
35–39	1 deathtrap ooze	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 64
40–43	1d8 faceless stalkers	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 122
44–47	1 intellect devourer	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 180
48–52	1 mohrg	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 208
53–57	1d8 cloakers	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 47
58–61	1d4 driders	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 113
62–66	1 spirit naga	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 213
67–70	1d4 totenmaskes	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 269
71–74	1 vampire	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 270
75–79	1 witchfire	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 284
80–84	1 bogeyman	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 42
85–89	1d6 brain oozes	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 43
90–96	1 gug	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 151
97–99	1 carnivorous crystal	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 45
100	1 devourer	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 82

statistics for a burglar on page 265 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*) and an eloquent bard/rogue (use the statistics for a wanderer on page 290 of the *GameMastery Guide*). These followers are all addicted to Sreythil's poison, and fight fanatically to protect their source.

Moldy Meeting (CR 9): In a section of tunnels beneath Kaer Maga, a polevik (see page 90) hides himself away, feverishly working on what he thinks will be a particularly deadly strain of infectious fungus spores. He built his mold-infested laboratory in the middle of a small tunnel, using an ascomoid (*Bestiary* 3 20) to serve as a living door, blocking one end of the passage. Another ascomoid acts as his brutish protector—and sometimes even has to keep the polevik's prized pet violet fungus (*Bestiary* 274) from feasting on the rotting meat spread throughout the tunnel as a growing medium. The polevik is trying to distill the spores from a phycomid (*Bestiary* 2 210) he lured into his lab, and plans to release the result into the city above when he is done. The polevik's lair also contains shriekers and is lit with phosphorescent fungus. If attacked in his fungal lab, the polevik rips off a tentacle from the violet fungus and uses it as a whip, infecting those the whip touches with rot and violet venom.

SHATTERED STAR

CAULBORN CHRESTOMATH

This bloated, larval sack of green and pink flesh is wet and curdled, its brainlike wrinkles interrupted by transparent membranes showing dark fluid within.

CHRESTOMATH

CR 6



XP 2,400

N Medium outsider (extraplanar)

Init +0; Senses blindsense 60 ft., thoughtsense; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+6 deflection, -4 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 95 (10d10+40)

Fort +13, Ref -1, Will +14

Defensive Abilities psychic deflection; Immune sensory effects;

SR 17

OFFENSE

Speed fly 10 ft. (average)

Special Attacks mind flood

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +12)

Constant—*detect magic, detect thoughts, tongues*

STATISTICS

Str 2, Dex 2, Con 19, Int 25, Wis 21, Cha 22

Base Atk +10; CMB +6; CMD 19

Feats Ability Focus (mind flood), Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will

Skills Appraise +19, Fly +9, Knowledge (arcane, history, local, planes, religion) +32, Knowledge (dungeoneering, engineering, geography, nature, nobility) +29, Perception +18, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +19; Racial Modifiers +10 Knowledge (all)

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Infernal, Thassilonian, Undercommon; *tongues*; telepathy 1 mile.

SQ advanced hive mind, cooperative scrying, psychic deflection, racial memory, thoughtsense

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, catechumen (1 plus 2–4 caulborn), array (2–4 plus 4–12 caulborn)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Advanced Hive Mind (Ex) As long as there are at least two chrestomaths or caulborn within 300 feet of each other, if one creature in the group is aware of a particular danger, they all are. No creature in the group is considered flanked or flat-footed unless all of them are.

Cooperative Scrying (Sp) Three or more caulborn or chrestomaths who maintain physical contact can scry on a place or creature as if using the *scrying* spell (DC 20), but with no limit to the spell's duration so long as at least three of the participants involved continue to touch and concentrate. This ability functions at caster level 7th (or at the highest caster level available to the most powerful participant in the group). The save DC is Charisma-based, adjusted by the modifier of the participant with the highest Charisma score.

Mind Flood (Su) A chrestomath can target any creature it detects with its thoughtsense ability with a deadly psychic attack, flooding the target creature's head with so much obscure knowledge that it drives the target insane. Any creature affected by the mind blast must make a successful DC 19 Will save or take 1d6 points of Intelligence and Wisdom damage and be confused (as per the spell *confusion*) for 1d6 rounds. The save DC is Intelligence-based.

Psychic Deflection (Su) A chrestomath adds its Charisma modifier as a deflection bonus to its AC. In addition, all caulborn (though not other chrestomaths) within 300 feet of a chrestomath gain half of this deflection bonus as well, with the effects stacking with those from other chrestomaths and the caulborn's own psychic deflection ability. These bonuses cease when the chrestomath is unconscious.

Racial Memory (Ex) As a full-round action, any caulborn within 300 feet of a chrestomath may access the latter's racial memory to gain half the chrestomath's Knowledge skill bonus as a bonus on its own Knowledge check. In addition, the chrestomath instantly acquires any piece of information learned by any caulborn that comes within 300 feet of it. This information may then be shared by any other caulborn and chrestomaths with 300 feet.

Thoughtsense (Su) A chrestomath notices and locates living, conscious creatures within 60 feet just as if it possessed the blindsight ability. Spells such as *nondetection* or *mind blank* make an affected creature undetectable by this sense.

The caulborn are a race of extraplanar scholars that wander between worlds in search of esoteric knowledge, literally consuming the thoughts and memories of other races. While the most common caulborn are the humanoid versions (*Bestiary* 3 48), there exists a second kind as well: the bloated and blind intelligences called chrestomaths, sometimes referred to as living libraries, or simply "brain-sacks."

Though they appear to be little more than giant amoebas barely able to move themselves, chrestomaths are a vital part of caulborn society. From their fleshy prisons, these powerful psychic intelligences help to shield and organize their humanoid servitor-siblings, occupying a position in caulborn society somewhere between brute resource and honored elder—and sometimes something close to a living divinity. Even more importantly, however, chrestomaths are the keepers of a caulborn hive's massive racial memory, the living storehouses of everything its members have ever experienced, as well as the memories and concepts they've stolen from others. Indeed, it's possible that the memories contained within a single chrestomath may stretch back millennia, all the way to the race's mysterious origins.

A typical caulborn chrestomath is a wet, squishy sack of flesh roughly 5 feet in diameter, and weighs 500 pounds, though older and more advanced versions can grow far larger, taking up entire buildings with their fetid bulk.

These more advanced versions sometimes appear almost larval in form, and may possess levels in spellcasting classes, using spells such as *mage hand* to affect their surroundings.

ECOLOGY

Every caulborn colony has at least one chrestomath, but these creatures are made, not born. When a colony finds reason to split, or a small group becomes large enough to warrant it, the caulborn select several of their own members via criteria unique to each colony. These chosen individuals are promptly disassembled and rendered down in a solemn ritual, their living organs melded together into a single blob of curdled flesh. The resulting protoplasmic sack has no outside sensory organs or useful manipulating appendages, only a massive intelligence whose psychic abilities increase even as the world around it loses relevance, the isolation honing its intellect.

Once the brain sack is complete, the caulborn seed it with every fact and record at the colony's disposal, usually copying knowledge over from other chrestomaths. Though their psychic abilities give chrestomaths the ability to float sluggishly through the air, most caulborn consider this a waste of the organic thinking machines' time, and instead assign teams of humanoid caulborn to carry the living data centers around in palanquins or set them up in vast chapels.

Chrestomaths are completely dependent on their kin for survival. Just as normal caulborn consume the psychic energy of other races through stolen ideas and concepts, chrestomaths are unable to feed directly from the source creatures, instead requiring their less intelligent brethren to regurgitate the predigested knowledge for them, sometimes also injecting them with additional nutrients and magical concoctions.

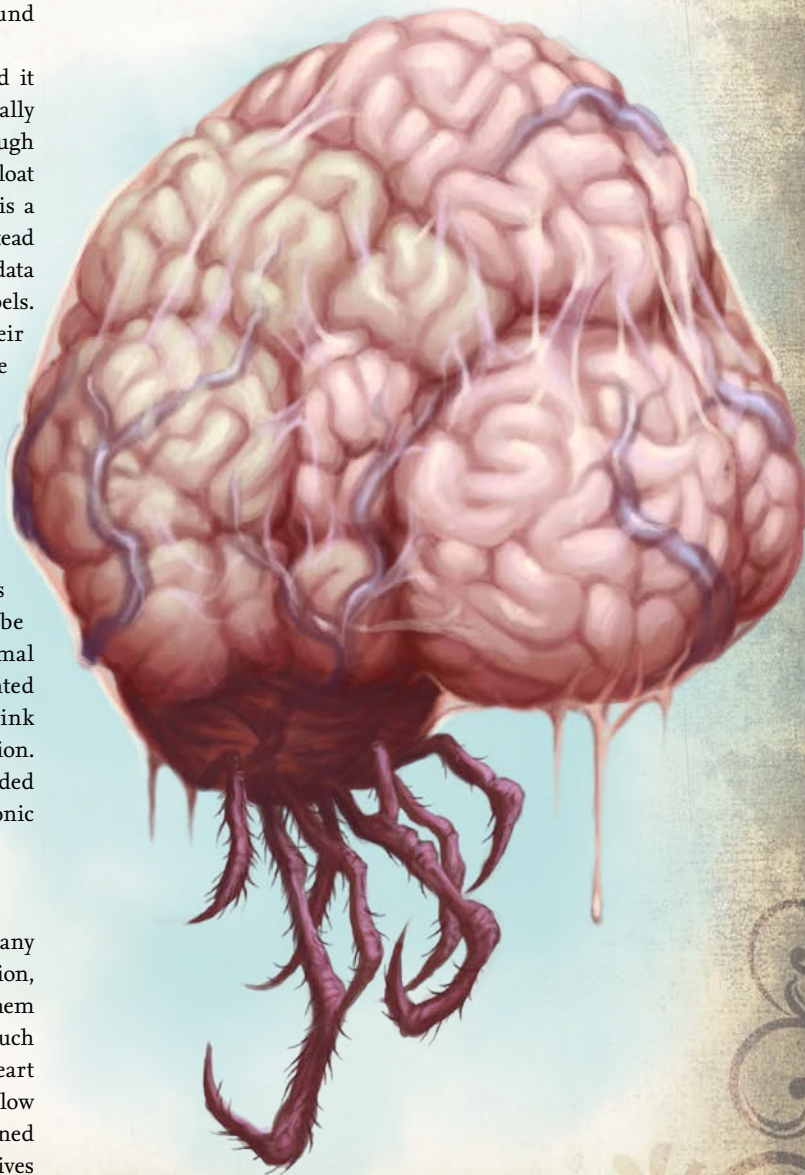
While any caulborn within range may access a chrestomath's memory, this information can be devastating to other creatures. In addition to its normal telepathy and mind-reading, a chrestomath confronted with dangerous creatures can establish a psychic link through which it pushes huge amounts of information. The recipients of this attack find their brains overloaded by the tidal wave of knowledge, rendering them catatonic or violently insane.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

While most chrestomaths have very little personality, any traces of identity being consumed by oceans of information, some eventually grow to control the data stored inside them and reestablish some semblance of self. One of the best such examples is Anamnesis, the One That Watches. As the heart of Xavorax, the city of caulborn and vampires deep below Kaer Maga, Anamnesis may well be one of the most learned entities on the face of Golarion, its thoughts and motives far beyond human comprehension. To outsiders, the

thousands of pounds of flesh might seem barely sentient, capable only of shifting its colors to reflect emotions. Yet whether it's slave or master—or perhaps both—the lord of the Quivering Palace influences all the residents of Xavorax, watching over them as the central relay of their hive mind and the repository of all their race holds dear.

While parasitic by nature, caulborn are not necessarily predatory, and aren't above trading for the sustenance they need. When they do so, it's often as prophets, a role in which chrestomaths are singularly important. Left with nothing but godlike memories and an ability to analyze information, chrestomaths are often able to extrapolate from trends and make logical connections that result in uncannily accurate predictions about future events.



CLOCKWORK FAMILIAR

This tiny metallic creature is shaped like a raven, yet beneath its shining, articulated plates whir gears and spinning belts.

CLOCKWORK FAMILIAR

CR 2



XP 600

N Tiny construct (clockwork)

Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +2 dodge, +2 natural, +2 size)

hp 16 (3d10)

Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +2

DR 5/adamantine; Immune construct traits; Resist cold 10, fire 10

Weaknesses vulnerable to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect)

Melee bite +7 (1d3 plus 1d6 electricity)

STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11

Base Atk +3; CMB +3; CMD 15

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative^B, Lightning Reflexes^B, Weapon Finesse

Skills Fly +19, Perception +5, Sense Motive +3, Stealth +12

Languages Common

SQ advice, item installation, swift reactions, winding

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Advice (Ex) Clockwork familiars have an innate

understanding of how things work, granting their masters a +2 bonus on all Craft and Use Magic Device checks.

Item Installation (Ex) Each clockwork familiar is made with the ability to carry a specific type of magic item inside its body. This item type is chosen at the time of the construct's creation, and cannot be changed. While the creature cannot activate or use the item for its original function, it gains certain constant abilities from the resonant magic fields, and can drain the item's magic as a free action in order to gain additional magical effects. In addition, any clockwork construct can drain a single charge or spell level from its installed item to heal itself 1d6 hit points as a standard action. Removing a spent item and installing a new one is a full-round action.

Potion: The clockwork familiar gains a constant *protection from good/evil/law/chaos* effect (one type only, chosen each time a new potion is installed). In addition, a clockwork familiar can drain the magic from the potion in order to gain the ability to include in the effect a single creature whose shoulder it's perched on. While perched on a character's shoulder, it acts like a worn object with no body slot. While the familiar can move from person to person, thus transferring the benefit, latching on or unlatching from a shoulder is a move action. This ability to include others in the protection effect lasts for 1 minute per spell level of the potion drained.

Scroll: The clockwork familiar gains a constant *detect magic* effect as a spell-like ability. Draining magic from a scroll allows the familiar to cast a single *identify* spell on behalf of its master for each spell level of the spell inscribed on the scroll—these castings may be stored and saved, though a scroll used in this manner becomes instantly useless, even if not all spell levels have been drained.

Wand: The clockwork familiar gains the ability to spit a goblet of acid up to 30 feet as a ranged touch attack, dealing 1d4 points of damage. Draining a charge increases the damage to 2d4 points for a single attack. This charge is spent before the attack is rolled.

When it comes to familiars, most arcanists satisfy themselves with mundane creatures such as rats and lizards. Those with the power to bind greater assistants often call forth helpers from the planes, turning minor fiends or celestials to their will. Yet for artificers and those who fuse magic with machinery, the best familiar is the one the caster creates herself, breathing life into a clockwork mechanism of her own design.

Clockwork familiars can take a variety of forms depending on the whim of the creator.



BESTIARY

Most popular are tiny metal dragons, birds (especially owls and ravens), faceless humanoids, and spiders that run on clicking, needlelike legs, though practically any shape and material can be animated in this fashion.

With its ability to generate electric shocks, a clockwork familiar can be useful in combat, yet it more often finds more use in the workshop, where its methodical thought processes and innate knowledge of mechanical systems allow it to offer valuable advice. In addition, each clockwork familiar has a unique relationship with a particular type of magic item, established at creation. When items of the chosen sort are slotted into the familiars—usually via a locking compartment, though some familiars simply drink potions, their metal stomachs becoming new receptacles—the familiars gain the ability to drain the magic back out of the items and turn it toward a different preset purpose, such as healing themselves or creating a specific spell effect.

A typical clockwork familiar is roughly 2 feet tall or long and weighs 10 pounds. While the stat block here represents a raven familiar, and hence has a fly speed, other forms may trade this ability for a different form of movement, such as a clockwork piranha with a swim speed of 40 feet or a mechanical badger with a burrow speed of 10 feet.

ECOLOGY

Clockwork familiars can be constructed from a wide variety of materials, the most common being adamantine, steel, and bronze. Though their bodies are often expertly crafted contraptions of gears, drive shafts, and even circuitry, a clockwork familiar is not simply a robotic wind-up toy, nor is its consciousness the result of elaborate programming. Instead, each construct is more like a vehicle for the tiny spirit that lives inside its heart. On their own, these flickers of consciousness—pulled from the fundamental animating energy of the planes—would have no real ability to affect their surroundings. Only through the specially attuned constructs created by arcanists do they gain the ability to truly live, and it's perhaps gratitude for this service that initially binds clockwork familiars to their creators.

Once called into being and installed in its new vessel, a clockwork familiar's animating spirit controls its mechanical manipulators through tiny bursts of magical or electrical energy. As a result, most such constructs have conductive metal parts, and thus an instinctive fear of water and corrosion. Unable to heal naturally, clockwork familiars know that if their systems fail, they may never again be granted the chance to interact with the world. As a result, most clockwork familiars tend to be slightly paranoid and demanding when it comes to getting their masters to keep them in good repair, and it's not uncommon to find a clockwork familiar left to its own devices busily scouring rust from its shell, performing maintenance on itself, or attempting to improve the resilience of its basic functions.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

As created creatures, clockwork familiars have little society of their own, and tend to take on mannerisms and speech patterns similar to their masters'. Most feel an instinctive affection for their masters, though as intelligent beings it's not unheard of for the little automatons to have existential crises if their masters mistreat or ignore them. Clockwork familiars are often fascinated by other construct creatures and may attempt to befriend or study them, the better to understand how their systems work. Though they rarely adopt religion on their own, familiars with religious masters may go through the motions of worship as a way of honoring their place in the great chain of creation—left to themselves, clockwork familiars tend to be more interested in the systems and logic by which the natural world and planes operate than in particular entities, including deities.

While clockwork familiars have little desire for treasure themselves, they understand its value in trading, and may snatch up worthwhile items either on behalf of their master or—if they're concerned about being provided for—as emergency funds with which to purchase information or repairs, or as fuel for their magic-draining abilities. Clockwork familiars value knowledge above all things, though they tend to focus on logic, mathematics, organizational systems, and new ways of seeing and interpreting the world rather than simple facts. In a clockwork familiar's eyes, an almanac is useless clutter, but a textbook on geometry or chemistry is worth more than a pile of gold.

As intelligent creatures, clockwork familiars have an ambiguous relationship with the lives of servitude they're inevitably born into. For some, the philosophical quandaries are small and easily managed, as their creators treat them well, ask their opinion, share their stores of valuable knowledge, and may even come to love them. For others, whose masters see them as slaves at best and irritatingly imperfect projects at worst, only fear for their continued existence keeps the constructs in line. Many fall somewhere in the middle, and are interested in all the world has to offer even down to the mundanity of fetching and polishing, and thus are content to experience life on their masters' terms. A spellcaster of at least 7th level who takes the Improved Familiar feat can select a clockwork familiar as a familiar.

CONSTRUCTION

The creator of a clockwork familiar must start with crafted clockwork pieces worth 500 gp.

CLOCKWORK FAMILIAR

CL 12th; Price 14,500 gp

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Construct, *geas/quest*, *make whole*, creator must be at least caster level 12th; **Skill** Craft (clockwork) DC 20; **Cost** 7,500 gp

SHATTERED STAR

FACHEN

This half-bodied monstrosity with an overly wide mouth and stringy hair hops about on a single leg, balancing in defiance of its awkward physical form. A single arm—centered on the creature's torso and formed of tightly corded muscle—and single eye round out the being's features.

FACHEN

CR 5



XP 1,600

NE Medium aberration

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9

Aura fear (30 ft., DC 15)

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +3 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 45 (7d8+14)

Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee battleaxe +10 (1d8+5/x3), bite +10 (1d6+7)

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 13, **Con** 15, **Int** 6, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 24 (28 vs. trip)

Feats Acrobatic, Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Acrobatics +13, Fly +3, Perception +9, Survival +6

Languages Common

Gear battleaxe

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate hills and plains

Organization solitary

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fear (Su) Each creature within a 30-foot radius that sees the fachen must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or be paralyzed by fear for 1d4 rounds. A creature that successfully saves is not subject to the same fachen's fear aura for 24 hours. This is a paralysis effect and a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Incredible Balance (Ex) Despite its strange anatomy, a fachen is adept at keeping itself upright and out of danger. A fachen gains a +3 dodge bonus to AC and a +4 racial bonus to its CMD against trip combat maneuvers.

The fearsome fachen's terrifying visage stops the hearts of all but the most intrepid. Reports disagree on just what it is about the fachen that turns one's blood to ice—the single leg and foot that somehow don't affect the being's balance or speed, the seemingly too-strong arm jutting out from the center of the creature's torso, or the lone bulbous eye leering maliciously at its would-be prey.

Though the fachen's grotesque approximation of a humanoid form could be enough to scare a traveler witless on its own, no single part of the abomination's

appearance induces fear like that of its mouth, which spans the creature's face and is filled with a full row of long, sharp teeth.

A typical fachen stands just short of 6 feet tall, and despite appearing to be half a person, weighs around 150 pounds because of its muscle mass. While it is not a very large creature, its fearsome composition increases its perceived presence.

ECOLOGY

It is unknown how the first (or subsequent) fachens were produced. The studies performed on the few viable specimens successfully collected showed no anatomical means of reproduction, leading to a theory of otherworldly intervention.

Fachens are carnivorous beings, and greatly prefer fresh humanoid meat over other, often more readily available fauna. Fachens will pass by a family of deer or a pasture full of cattle to sniff out and hunt a single humanoid. Fachens are not content with simply killing and eating their meal; they like to mutilate their prey as they ingest it, particularly if their food still holds on to the final traces of life and consciousness as the fachens' teeth pierce its flesh. Fachens' tendency to mutilate their victims and feed off the creatures' fear help to sate the rage simmering just beneath their surfaces—but only temporarily. Food alone will never sate this hatred. The source of the fachens' anger and hatred is unknown, perhaps even to them. Whether their eating habits actually alleviate the seething rage or merely cover it up, the fachens care not.

Though not very intelligent, a fachen is relatively skilled when it comes to tracking prey, especially if it failed to catch a meal using ambush and scare tactics. Rage and hunger focus a fachen so intensely that it relentlessly tracks down any being that manages to get past it.

Despite a physiology that should lead to problems balancing and getting around, fachens are accustomed to their weight distribution and single-appendage movement. They also have an instinctual ability to defend themselves by dodging. A fachen springs off with its single leg and foot at a high enough speed to keep pace with most bipedal creatures, and has an uncanny ability to jump. Fachens' movements add to the overall fear the creature exudes. Their strange but dexterous locomotion and the single-armed striking of their attacks frighten and bewilder those who engage the creatures.

A fachen is not particularly careful or perceptive in the midst of a meal. Unless battling multiple targets from the outset, once a fachen takes down its prey, it focuses solely on that meal until it's had its fill of food and fun. A fachen takes its meal right where its prey drops, be it

along some goat trail through the hills or in the middle of a high-traffic road. It takes no pains to hide the corpse of its kill after feeding, nor does it strip the body of valuables. It's content to leave the body in its final resting place and go off in search of water, more food, or a place to rest until its hunger and anger stir again.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Fachens are solitary by nature; they hold no fraternal love for their ilk, and are just as likely to view them as prey as they would any other creature. They possess no special defense against the fearsome appearance of others of their kind, and this knowledge keeps them apart as well. Unfortunately, only a few warning signs alert one fachen that another is in close proximity. A mutilated corpse on or near a path serves as a warning between the monstrous beings, which are able to identify another fachen's handiwork with just a glance. A felled orchard can also signify a fachen's presence, if the remaining boles show signs of damage from the axes fachens prefer to wield.

Fachens are most often found in areas of temperate climate, typically in hills or plains. They have no particular love or hatred for hot or cold climates, but find prey is easier to come by in areas with more moderate temperatures. Outsider of the moderate climates, more fachen are found in warmer climates rather than colder ones. A few may be found in truly harsh climates, but usually end up there after chasing prey for an extended time.

Fachens are more likely to drift than to settle in any permanent home or lair. They track food as necessary and find new places to rest in close proximity to their latest kills. They tend to make camp near natural trails or roadways frequented by travelers to ensure a steady supply of meals. However, if a fachen finds a location that ends up being particularly rich in prey, it might attempt to locate a small cave, rocky overhang, or copse of trees to set up as a more permanent residence. However, any would-be treasure hunter who locates the lair of a fachen finds only squalor—any trinkets or treasures carried by a fachen's meal remain with the corpse.

Rumors and myths about fachens are less prevalent in major cities than in small towns, villages, and farmlands. They know that the larger the population, the greater the chance of being put down by local authorities. Like with many other mythical monsters and beasts, tales of prowess and heroics in the face of fachens are

often shared over pints of ale and around campfires, and tales of sightings—though hardly believed—are often good for a few free rounds at the local pub. Parents use fachen stories to scare unruly children into behaving or completing their chores.

Despite the levity with which they tell tales or make warnings about fachens, residents of these outlying areas still make sure they aren't alone when traveling outside the known safe zones, especially if the trip requires passing through areas where there have been fachen sightings or activity. When the presence of a fachen is confirmed outside a town or village, the bravest members of that society often band together to kill it or drive it off, knowing the danger of the beast. Yet even so, fachen trophies are rare—even dead, the creatures are frightening to look upon.



SHATTERED STAR

POLEVIK

Toadstools, puffballs, and other bizarre fungal growths sprout from this small, hunchbacked man's mold-streaked body. His beady eyes burn with paranoia and malice.

POLEVIK

CR 5



XP 1,600

NE Small fey

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +12

Aura putrefying aura (30 ft., DC 18)

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+4 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)

hp 60 (8d6+32)

Fort +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

DR 5/cold iron; **Immune** disease, nausea, poison, sickened condition

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d6+3)

Ranged puffballs +9 (1d6 plus disease)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +9)

Constant—*speak with plants* (fungi and mold only)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 18, **Con** 19, **Int** 15, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Skills Acrobatics +8 (+4 when jumping), Craft (alchemy) +17, Heal +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Knowledge (nature) +13, Perception +12, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +19 (+23 in caves or swamps), Survival +7 (+11 in caves or swamps), Swim +7; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Craft (alchemy), +4 Stealth in caves or swamps, +4 Survival in caves or swamps

Languages Aklo, Common, Sylvan, Undercommon

SQ fungal alchemy

ECOLOGY

Environment any swamp or underground

Organization solitary

Treasure standard (alchemical items, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) Pulsing puffs is a disease characterized by small, blue-white spores sprouting within a creature's wounds. These spores quickly grow into phosphorescent, domed mounds that pulsate and throb, eating away at victims' connective tissue, severely impairing them. Additionally, once a creature takes 7 points of Dexterity damage from the pulsing puffs, the domed mounds burst, releasing a 10-foot-radius burst of diseased spores. This effect lasts for 1 round. Any creature caught within the burst radius or that moves through it is exposed to the pulsing puffs disease. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Pulsing Puffs: Puffball—injury; save Fort DC 18; onset 1 minute; frequency 1/day; effect 1d6 Dex damage; cure 2 consecutive saves.

Fungal Alchemy (Ex) As long as he has access to his fungus garden, a polevik can craft any alchemical item with a Craft DC of 25 or lower without needing to pay a cost in gold pieces for raw materials. Items function normally but may have a different appearance. For example, materials usually stored in glass jars instead fill rigid spheres of plant matter.

Puffballs (Ex) Poleviks have learned how to nurture myriad species of symbiotic fungi upon their bodies, and the most treasured of these are their deadly puffballs. Each 6-inch-diameter spherical fungus has a thorny internal stalk covered by a thin skin of spore-laden flesh. As a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, a polevik can pluck and throw a puffball with a range of 20 feet. On a successful hit, the thorns expand and pulsate on impact, bursting through the flesh of the puffball. This inflicts vicious wounds and releases fungal spores that infect the victim with pulsing puffs. As soon as a puffball has been plucked, another grows in its place. Once a puffball has been plucked, it decomposes after 1 round, becoming inert.

Putrefying Aura (Su) All unattended nonmagical food or liquid within the radius of a polevik's aura instantly rots or spoils. Attended nonmagical food or liquid within the aura receives a saving throw to resist this effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

The secretive and suspicious poleviks cultivate gardens of fungi in deep bogs and caves far from civilization, jealously guarding the secrets of their fungal alchemy from the rest of the world. Once natives of the First World, they retain some of that plane's potent life energy, which specifically encourages the growth of fungi and molds. This enables them to turn their own spry and twisted bodies into fertile ground in which to cultivate their signature puffball weapons.

Averaging a few inches shy of 4 feet tall and weighing approximately 115 pounds, individuals can vary in size depending on the number and size of fungal growths that they nurture upon their bodies. They rarely live beyond 300 years.

ECOLOGY

Poleviks are omnivorous but prefer decomposing meat that is already furred with fungus or ripe with mold. They rarely go to the trouble of actively hunting food; instead, they scavenge the remains of small creatures that find their way into their lairs and fall victim to the dangerous plants and molds they cultivate. Although poleviks could subsist on the mushrooms that they grow, they consider it a terrible waste to use these mushrooms for something as prosaic as food.

As with many creatures of the First World, their cycle of reproduction is somewhat bizarre; poleviks reproduce only after their death. As a polevik's body begins to rot, one of his unique fungal infestations begins to consume his flesh and eventually grows into a colony

of large toadstools. After a period of 1 year, the stalk of the largest toadstool bursts open and gives birth to a new, fully grown polevik. While already possessing all the skills and abilities of his race, the newborn carries none of the memories of his progenitor. As a result, a newborn polevik knows nothing about the world beyond his immediate surroundings, and his paranoid nature gives him little desire to learn more. Instead, he begins to enthusiastically cultivate the corpse-grown fungal colony that gave birth to him, adding it to the fungal garden of his long-decomposed predecessor.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Poleviks are solitary and reclusive creatures who consider fungi and molds to be both their closest friends and their most treasured possessions. Though they are able to communicate with all types of molds and mushrooms, poleviks occasionally find fungi's limited frame of reference frustrating. This sometimes leads poleviks to associate with intelligent fungoid creatures such as leshies and myceloids, although they treat the former as servants and the latter as rivals.

Most scholars agree that the poleviks were cast out of the First World, exiled for some ancient insult to one of the Eldest. Though scholars disagree on which of those unique beings the poleviks offended, evidence of polevik gardens has been discovered by travelers in the Hanging Bower of the Green Mother, leading to speculation that poleviks may have once been her servants. Exile may have stripped them of an unending existence in the First World, but the stability of the material world gives them ample opportunity to cultivate and experiment with their beloved fungal companions. It is for these experiments that they are widely hunted by wizards seeking obscure spell components, and by alchemists who wish to learn the secrets of the polevik's miraculous ability to mix fungi into concoctions that seem impossible to create outside of a laboratory.

Fearful of the outside world, poleviks rarely leave their lairs, but creatures that find their way into a polevik's gardens face vicious opponents. While poleviks are dangerous on their own, their usual tactic is to lead interlopers within reach of the deadly molds and fungi with which they share their lairs. Most who seek poleviks fall prey to ascomoids, brown molds, phantom fungi, phycoids, violet fungi, yellow molds, and others long before they face the direct attacks of these obsessive fey.

PUFFBALLS

The most treasured of a polevik's fungi is the puffball. In addition to the standard puffball, which is rife with the deadly pulsing puffs disease, poleviks cultivate certain other varieties, each with its own unique properties.

Deathrot Spores: Despite their name, these black puffballs are no threat to living creatures. When applied to a corpse, they quickly consume the necrotic flesh, stripping all meat from the skeleton over the course of a minute. This ability to easily conceal the identity of a murder victim makes deathrot spores prized by assassins. These puffballs can also be brought to bear against certain types of undead. When hurled as a ranged touch attack against non-skeletal, corporeal undead, deathrot spores inflict a -2 penalty to the creature's natural armor for 10 rounds.

Flamequenched Mushrooms: These dun-colored puffballs are grown from a species of brown mold. When thrown into a fire, the puffball releases spores that suck in the heat from their immediate area. This has the effect of completely extinguishing a 5-foot square of nonmagical fire.



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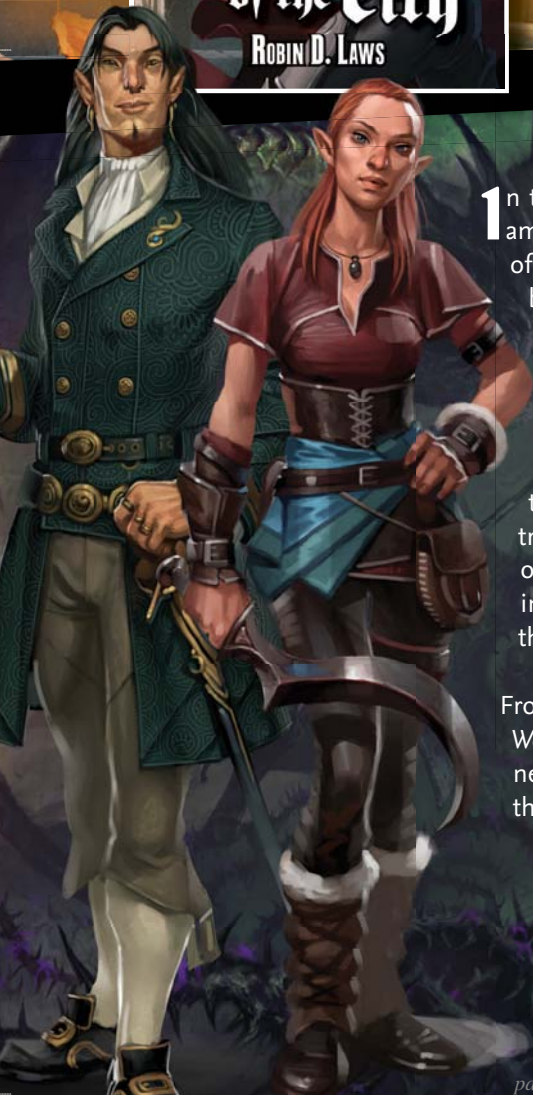
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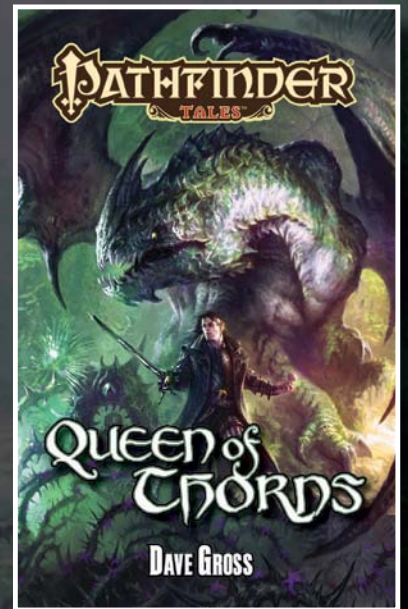
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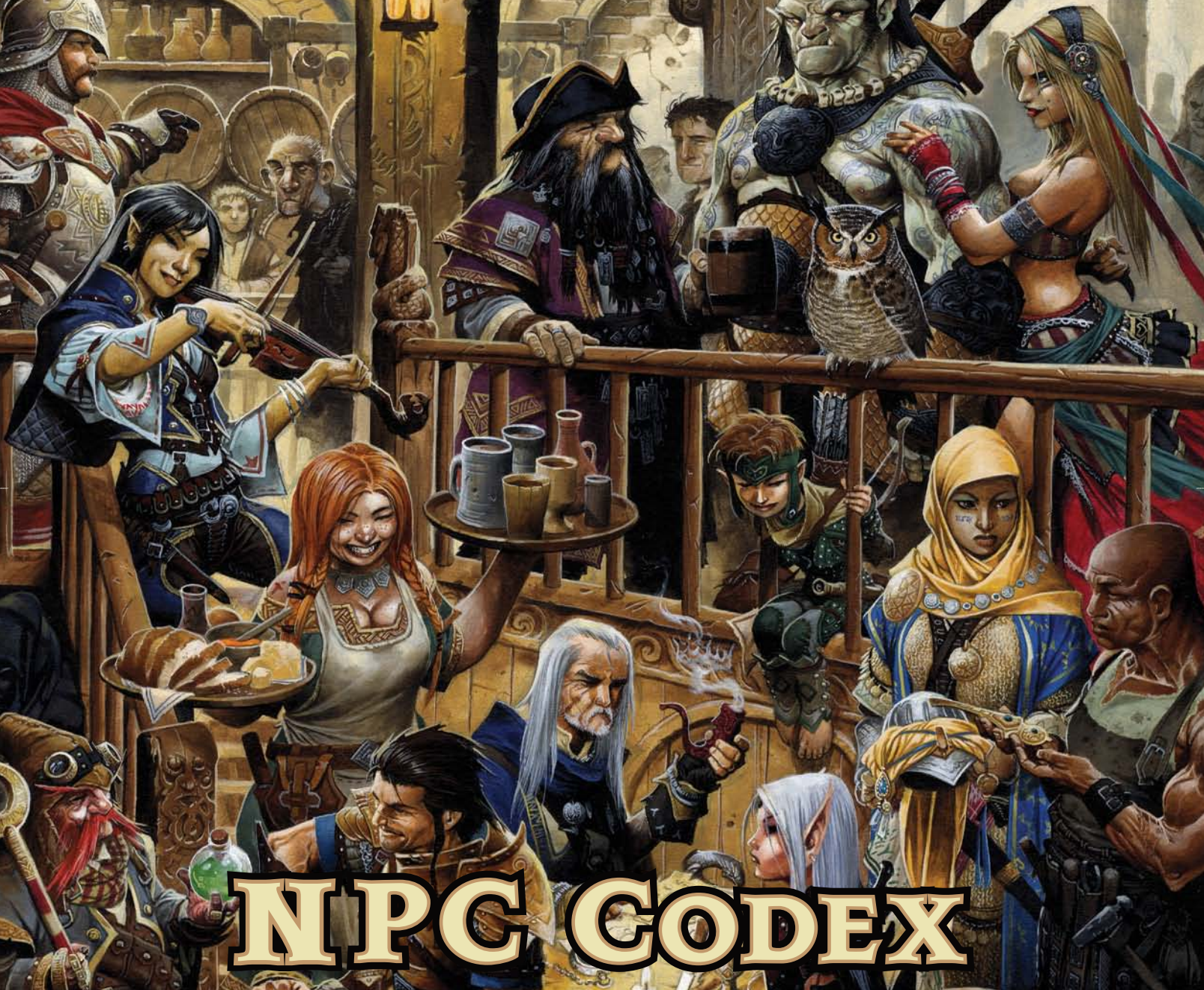
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THE CENOTAPH

One of the tallest structures in the city, this 10-story, cylindrical monument is called the Cenotaph. Created as a memorial to Magnimar's most beloved founder, Alcaydian Indros, the monument was meant to be an empty tomb honoring the local hero. As years passed and Indros's family members and friends passed on, residents began requesting to have their bones entombed near or within the monument. Originally an honor to the great man, then a vogue, the practice has become a tradition and postmortem status symbol for all who can afford burial beneath the stones of the surrounding Mourner's Plaza or in the later-constructed catacombs beneath the memorial.

Pharasmin priests patrol the Cenotaph and its catacombs frequently, striving to keep the monument free of undead, scavengers, and grave robbers.

Monument Boon: Pray for 10 minutes in Mourner's Plaza and make a successful DC 15 Knowledge (Religion) check to gain a +1 morale bonus on all Fortitude saves for 24 hours. This bonus increases by +1 for every 10 points by which you exceed the initial check.



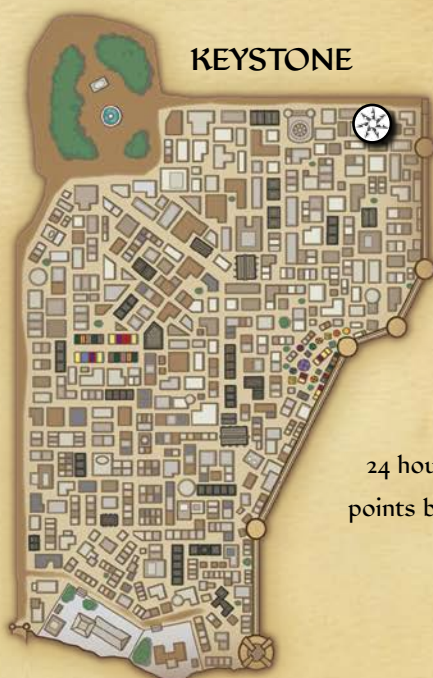
CAPITAL DISTRICT

FOUNDER'S HONOR

The visage of Alcaydian Indros is common enough in Magnimar, but this 50-foot-tall monument to the city's heroic founder is among its most iconic and well loved. Located near the city gate, this towering monument is the first significant sculpture that the bulk of those visiting Magnimar see.

Patriotic Magnimarians often leave offerings of fruits and flowers at the statue's feet, where a shallow alcove surmounted by an image of a snarling lion welcomes the offering.

Monument Boon: Place an offering of fruits or flowers at the statue's feet and then study the statue for 10 minutes before attempting a DC 15 Diplomacy check. Success grants a +1 morale bonus on all Diplomacy checks for 24 hours. This bonus increases by +1 for every 10 points by which you exceed the initial check.



KEYSTONE



CITY OF STRANGERS

The search for the *Shattered Star* leads the PCs to Kaer Maga, the legendary cliff-top city of criminals, refugees, and anyone else seeking to vanish into its cluttered streets. Enlisted to rescue a troll prophet from a mad artificer's hanging mansion, the PCs soon find themselves delving into the notorious Undercity. Here they must battle their way through a lost runelord laboratory before finally entering the mysterious cavern realm of the Dark Forest, where an ancient evil has guarded a lost shard for millennia. Can the PCs recover the shard from its unholy guardians and continue their quest, or will they simply be the latest souls lost to the City of Strangers?

This volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path continues the *Shattered Star* Adventure Path and includes:

- "The Asylum Stone," a Pathfinder RPG adventure for 8th-level characters, by James L. Sutter
- An overview of several prominent gangs in Kaer Maga, and how they can expand the adventure, by James L. Sutter
- New missions and adventure hooks for PCs spending time in Magnimar, by Jim Groves.
- Pirates and wererats in the Pathfinder's Journal, by Bill Ward.
- Four new monsters, by Shaun Hocking, Jason Klimchok, and James L. Sutter.



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