

PATHFINDER[®]

ADVENTURE PATH[™]



WHAT GROWS WITHIN

by John Compton



Despite nearly touching the sky, these tall towers lack any kind of window. What purpose do these structures serve? And what sort of feats of engineering (or sorcery) allowed them to be erected?

A CITY LOST

It took weeks of preparation and travel, but Rhutha and I completed the journey through the Parchlands to the ruins known as Neruzavin. My scholarly ally explained that the city is impossibly ancient, a decaying pile even in the Age of Destiny when it was discovered by Ninshaburian explorers (though she didn't say what happened to them). My head swam as I looked at the skyline, and Rhutha advised me that Neruzavin is not my final destination, but merely a passage to the place that haunts my sleep. I sensed an odd tone of predatory anticipation in her voice when she told me this, but perhaps exhaustion has affected my perceptions.

PATHFINDER ADVENTURE PATH

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ON THE COVER



It appears an old enemy has grown in power along with the PCs in this glimpse of the denizen of Leng Weiralai, provided by artist Michal Ivan.



STRANGE AEONS

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REFERENCE

This book refers to several other Pathfinder Roleplaying Game products using the following abbreviations, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Pathfinder RPG hardcovers can find the complete rules of these books available online for free at paizo.com/prd.

<i>Advanced Class Guide</i>	ACG	<i>Occult Adventures</i>	OA
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>Bestiary 4</i>	B4	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Horror Adventures</i>	HA	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM



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DELVING INTO THE MADNESS

Although the works of H. P. Lovecraft had always loomed large in the background of my childhood thanks to my obsession with fantasy roleplaying games, I never really cracked open one of his stories until I studied abroad in the hills of northwest Honduras, enjoying a memorable season of archaeological excavation. My roommate Thomas had brought several paperback volumes of dreadful and dreary tales of Cthulhu and beyond, made all the more poignant because so many featured the exploits of hapless archaeologists who dug up unfathomably dark truths before going irrevocably insane. What fun! When I returned for a second field season 2 years later, Lovecraft's works—"The Rats in the Walls," "Pickman's Model," "The Thing on the Doorstep," and more—traveled with me.

So what could be better than a combination of pulp archaeology, eldritch horror, and the crushing dread of self-doubt as a result of alien abduction? So goes *The Shadow Out of Time*, the tale of a professor who comes to the realization that he was on the receiving end of a yithian's mind swap ability. He travels to Australia to

confirm his suspicions by finding an accursed desert city—and, in the process, comes in close contact with the terrifying entities informally referred to as flying polyps. That story serves as a significant inspiration for "What Grows Within," down to the major roles played by both the Great Race of Yith and their flying polyp rivals.

Writing this adventure was even more challenging and exciting for two reasons. The first was the campaign outline, which introduced several endearing twists to the classic story. Flying polyps are but the tip of the cosmic iceberg in this adventure, with the imminent revival of a planet-eating parasite that only the PCs can prevent and the looming, malicious influence of the King in Yellow. The PCs are not just driven by their own curiosity about what befell them beyond their own control; they're hot on the trail of the entirely mortal yet utterly inscrutable Count Lowls, whose ambitions become ever deadlier to himself and others.

Even trickier is managing the expectations for the protagonists. In Lovecraft's work, narrators are entirely human in their vulnerabilities, fears, and abilities.

That runs counter to the spirit of self-determination and plucky heroism that underlies the Pathfinder RPG. After all, the implications of the game are that one's capabilities are quantitative and that the latest crisis will involve obstacles tough enough to challenge the protagonists without automatically reducing them to inelegant red smears on the flagstones. This really boils down to the psychological impact of numbers. One of Lovecraft's protagonists doesn't have the benefit of knowing that his +14 Acrobatics modifier should let him make that jump without trying, nor can that hapless scholar reverse engineer a mi-go's Armor Class based on seeing his own die rolls. No, he has only qualitative observations, and even those, the reader soon realizes, are filtered through the hazy thought processes of an unreliable narrator who went mad 3 months earlier. In such cosmic horror stories, there's no complaining that the opposition's CR is 10 higher than the protagonist's level; it's assumed.

Once you add numbers to the experience, though, a certain element of terror dissipates. Why run when you have a +3 *keen falcata*? When a monster appears in Pathfinder, the PCs usually hack it to pieces and steal its treasure because that's an underlying assumption of the game. Even so, I incorporated other methods to spook your players along the way. You can find some more targeted examples in a sidebar on page 15, but I'll make some broader recommendations here. If you haven't already, also take a look at *Pathfinder RPG Horror Adventures*, whose sixth chapter presents delightfully twisted ideas as well as critical advice on establishing out-of-game boundaries and consent before running a horror-based game.

Control the Atmosphere: Focus is key. At the minimum, secure your players' assistance in minimizing distractions by silencing phones and agreeing not to surf the web during the game. For an especially atmospheric experience, you might dim the lights and turn on some creepy music whose volume you adjust as danger approaches.

Show, Don't Tell: It's common GM and writing advice to demonstrate a subject's qualities rather than just state the facts. That is doubly important in a creepy RPG adventure, because key words convey familiar and ultimately comforting information. The moment you provide the listed name of a creature, there's inevitably that one player—I'm sometimes guilty of this—who thinks or even says, "Oh, that's only CR 11. We're fine!" Try describing the creature in an illustrative, informative, but slightly deceptive way, or make up a new name entirely. Re flavor one of its special abilities in a memorable manner that doesn't change how it operates. Trust me: nothing spooks a player who reads all of the bestiaries more than facing something he doesn't recognize. A successful Knowledge check should provide the players good information, but that doesn't mean it gives them everything. Try describing the next creature with energy drain as "capable of shearing away pieces of one's eternal

soul, forever damning a mortal to a haunted, hollow existence—if not oblivion itself," then watch them sweat.

Don't Show Everything: As the GM, you're the players' window into the game world, and they rely on you for information. In a spookier game, though, that doesn't mean you need to show them everything. That monster could just jump out and roll initiative, or it could make itself known gradually. Let the PCs find its tracks. Let them discover its latest kill. Let their high Perception check results enable them to catch the flash of a tail or the slithering of slime-slick tentacles before the beast escapes to continue tormenting them just beyond their reach.

The yithian Kaklatath presented a major conundrum in this regard because the presence of an all-knowing, ageless alien creature really takes away a major element of the unknown when exploring Neruzavin. Fortunately, recent events have severely hampered Kaklatath's cognitive recall, so it can instead provide the PCs just enough additional information and educated speculation to worry them without giving away all of the campaign's secrets.

A Player's Mind Is Its Own Worst Enemy: I bet you've run a game and mentioned something utterly unimportant that the players latched onto as though it were investigative gold or praised as the height of GM planning. You probably also nodded sagely and accepted their ill-founded suspicions as the truth, even going so far as to adjust the adventure based on the players' crackpot theory that far surpassed your original idea. In horror games, that phenomenon is even more effective, especially when the PCs are unable to see all of the puzzle pieces. In "What Grows Within," I made a point to emphasize the spread of Xhamen-Dor's fungal infection and its effect on local fauna, for these are prime opportunities for PCs to investigate and learn just enough to be a danger to themselves and others. "We fought fungus-infested creatures, and now we've found a fungus-infested corpse that seems to wriggle with unexplained vigor? We should burn all of the bodies—all of them. Maybe we're infected, too. Should we set ourselves on fire just to be sure? Does fire even harm this? I... I don't even know!"

But try not to chuckle under your breath as the players frantically speculate. You should also monitor the players' reactions as you apply some of these tricks, and know when to ease up on the dramatic obfuscation if it's proving more frustrating than fun. Learn from Lowls. It isn't worth sacrificing your friends' sanity to advance your own twisted ends. Down that way lies madness.

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 Upon entering the barren Parchlands, the heroes must overcome the wastes' merciless ash giant tribe, either through brutal violence or by earning their respect.

PART 2: THE CRADLE OF HEAVEN 12
 The heroes explore the alien ruins of Neruzavin, but to continue following Lowls's desperate expedition, they must find and activate the lost city's three ancient *Star Stelae*.

PART 3: DESCENT INTO NERUZAVIN'S DESPAIR 42
 Two ancient evils dwell in the city's depths; the party must seal them away forever lest the fiends awaken and lay waste to Golarion.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"What Grows Within" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.

13 The PCs begin this adventure at 13th level.

14 The PCs should be 14th level after attuning two of the three *Star Stelae* in Part 2.

15 The PCs should be 15th level before they face the Husk of Xhamen-Dor, or by the time they complete the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Unknown millennia ago during the Age of Serpents, a species even more merciless than the serpentfolk descended upon Golarion from beyond the stars. These invaders, known only as “flying polyps,” were immense, Hastur-worshipping aberrations that craved conflict and traveled through the vacuum of space within a shell of air stolen from their last conquered world. They laid claim to two sites and built a trio of nearly identical *Star Stelae* at each one to link them to Carcosa, domain of the King in Yellow. One of the sites would become Thrushmoor someday, but here the serpentfolk fought off the aliens in a battle that destroyed both factions and left only the three monoliths standing.

Far to the southeast, the polyps found greater success. In the deserts of southwestern Casmaron, the invaders built a nameless city of eerie towers and unsettling architecture, from which they launched a genocide against the indigenous races. They might have succeeded, had one of the victims not been host to the mind of a yithian scholar—eternal foes of the flying polyps—who escaped, reported the atrocity to its kin, and helped organize a counterstrike. The yithians arrived to do battle and prevailed, pursuing the fleeing enemy through time and space. On Golarion, only a handful of polyps survived, imprisoned deep beneath the nameless city and its *Star Stelae*.

For more than an age, the city remained abandoned, and even the most curious human nomads avoided it as if they instinctively sensed the cursed history of the so-called Parchlands. So it gradually eroded, until Earthfall ended the Age of Legends millennia later. Among the countless chunks of cosmic debris that fell from the heavens alongside the *Starstone* was the last surviving piece of the Great Old One Xhamen-Dor. Spawned by the mad dreams of Carcosa, the eldritch parasite Xhamen-Dor had traveled from planet to planet, gradually consuming each like a spreading fungus. As the parasite descended, the *Star Stelae* called to it, guiding it far from the *Starstone*'s devastation. The meteor plunged into the heart of the nameless city, leaving a crater that gradually formed a sterile lake. There, Xhamen-Dor slumbered for millennia, regenerating at an imperceptibly slow speed due to the lack of healthy minds and strong personalities upon which to feed.

At the height of the Age of Destiny, scholars from glorious Ninshabur embarked on a bold expedition to map the Parchlands. When they found the accursed city, they named it Neruzavin (or “Cradle of Heaven”). However, nightmares plagued the explorers, accosting them with visions of an alien city, a monstrous infestation, and a strange figure dressed in tattered yellow robes. One by one, they succumbed to the call of Xhamen-Dor and entered the lake to offer their minds to the Great Old One. The cosmic parasite had awakened once more, yet

the explorers had provided but a tiny fraction of what it required to return to its full power. The dead explorers found themselves reanimated by their patron's spores and sent back to civilization to begin acquiring new hosts. Infected victims then began traveling into the Parchlands to offer themselves to Xhamen-Dor, and the leaders of Ninshabur took note. They dispatched their greatest heroes to crush the burgeoning cult, but the adventurers soon discovered that the infectious dreams would persist so long as knowledge of Xhamen-Dor remained; the only way to contain the menace was to destroy all references to the Great Old One. These heroes toiled to erase the parasite's name from all texts—a task all but finished for them when the legendary Tarrasque laid waste to Ninshabur.

When Count Haserton Lowls IV rediscovered references to Xhamen-Dor, he inadvertently restarted the process of reviving the abomination. He has since sacrificed expendable mercenaries—the PCs, in fact—in exchange for the knowledge of how to find Neruzavin, which he believes contains untold historical lore that might cement his academic legacy. In truth, he is only a pawn destined to be consumed by Xhamen-Dor and mark Golarion's final days as the Great Old One awakens and consumes the world. Using rituals hidden within the *Necronomicon* stolen from the Mysterium in Katheer, Lowls has recently reactivated the *Star Stelae*, reestablished the link between Golarion and Carcosa, and entered Hastur's realm. As Xhamen-Dor stirs once more, the ancient seals that imprisoned the flying polyps weaken, and the city echoes with the aberrations' cries of rage.

Now the PCs must activate the *Star Stelae* in Neruzavin to open a portal to Carcosa and close down *Star Stelae* there to keep Thrushmoor from being drawn into that terrible parasitic city.

PART 1: ACROSS ACCURSED SANDS

This adventure begins in Okeno, where the PCs recently concluded their raid on a gnoll slaver compound. Here, they rescued the scholar Kaklatath (a yithian mind trapped in an elderly woman's body) and found an annotated map identifying Lowls's proposed route through the foreboding desert known as the Parchlands. Word spreads quickly of the PCs' exploits, and if they decide to rest in Okeno, most of the otherwise treacherous locals dare not give them any trouble, though they may be in danger if Biting Lash or any of her loyal servants seek revenge.

Depending on the PCs' capabilities and actions during their clash with the gnoll slaver Biting Lash, they may have multiple ways to reach the Parchlands. If they killed Biting Lash or otherwise choose not to rely on her aid, they need to secure their own passage on a ship to

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Katheer, acquire hardy mounts, purchase miscellaneous supplies, and hire a guide. These sundry expenses amount to about 250 gp per character, though at the GM's discretion, the PCs might reduce this price—or even eliminate it entirely—by summoning mounts, relying on their own survival skills, and conjuring their own food. So long as the PCs have sufficient supplies, the trek presents few problems beyond the encounters that follow; at this level, even the region's severe heat (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 443) likely presents a negligible threat. Due to the Parchlands' aridity, the DCs of Survival checks to find food and water increase by 5. Kaklatath is eager to assist the PCs, but having only visited Neruzavin millennia ago, it can provide meager assistance with navigation. If the PCs somehow haven't reached 13th level by the start of this adventure, consider adding a few random desert encounters as they traverse the Parchlands to Neruzavin.

The PCs could also elect to use teleportation magic, though they have only the most basic description of the site to which Lowls fled. Using *scrying* or other divination magic to find Lowls now reveals his location in Carcosa, and attempting to follow him magically based on this incomplete information likely results in a teleportation mishap. The best the PCs can hope for is to teleport to a landmark near the edge of the Parchlands and cover the remaining week's overland travel on foot.

If they spared Biting Lash and convinced her to assist in their journey to the Parchlands, she puts together the needed supplies and arranges for guides and porters for their voyage. However, she is constantly suspicious that the PCs will betray her in some way, and she takes measures to strike down the PCs at the first sign of treachery. Borrowing from the last of her remaining favors and capital, she hires a team of gnolls to accompany the PCs as guides. These four gnolls have orders to accompany the PCs for only the first 3 days' travel into the Parchlands before abandoning the group and fouling the PCs' rations. Biting Lash trusts that if they're deprived of guides and water, the PCs will perish and never trouble her again. If a PC succeeds at a DC 25 Sense Motive check (or DC 31 if the PC is human), he ascertains that Biting Lash intends to betray the PCs once they are far away. With a successful DC 23 Intimidate check, a PC can scare her enough that she hires honest, human guides instead; however, unless the PC exceeds the Intimidate check DC by 5 or more, Biting Lash later hires additional mercenaries to follow the PCs at a distance. If so, they strike only if the PCs attempt to turn back after entering the Parchlands. Otherwise, they are a menacing presence scarcely visible on the horizon.

TREACHEROUS GUIDES (CR 13)

If the gnolls travel with the PCs, they are foul-mouthed and share a morbid sense of humor, but otherwise

respect the PCs' orders. When they prepare to betray the PCs, they wait until nightfall to consume their *potions of invisibility*, sabotage the PCs' rations, and then slink away before anyone is the wiser. If caught in the act by one or two PCs, the gnolls attempt to kill the witnesses. If confronted by the entire group, they instead beat a fighting retreat.

GNOLL WARDENS (3)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 89 each (*Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 95)

Development: A captured gnoll eagerly explains Biting Lash's treachery if promised its life in return. If allowed to flee, the gnoll travels back to where the expedition began.

PARCHLANDS INFORMATION

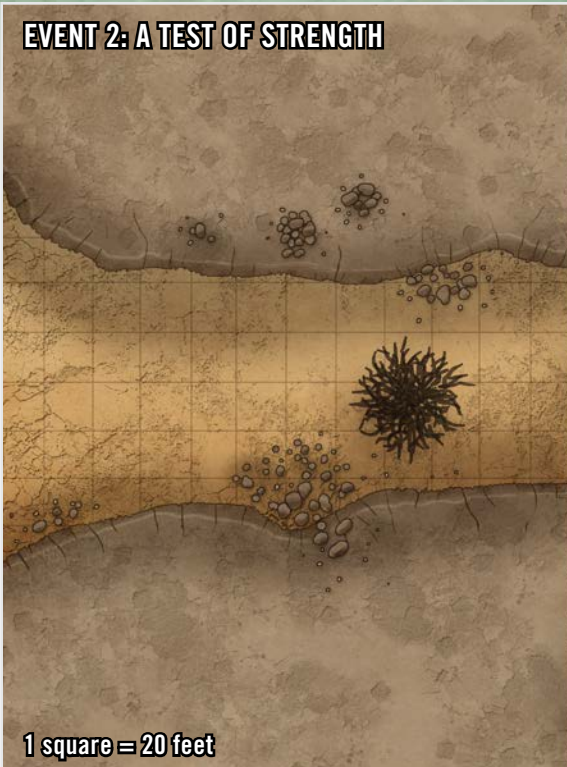
Before the PCs depart the Inner Sea region to pursue Lowls, they can try to recall information about the Parchlands with a successful Knowledge (geography or nature) check. The result of the check determines the information recalled, as detailed in the table below. If Biting Lash is alive—or otherwise able to be interrogated, such as with *speak with dead*—she knows information as if she had rolled a 25 on the check.

Result	Information
20+	The Parchlands is a broad expanse of desert that stretches for hundreds of miles south of Qadira's southern border. As the name suggests, the Parchlands is an exceptionally dry region, even for a desert.
25+	There are no formal settlements within the Parchlands, though several nomadic bands are known to frequent its perimeter. All avoid the region's interior, citing not only territorial girtablilu and giants, but also powerful taboos that have persisted for millennia.
30+	The nomads' tales speak of an accursed city built and abandoned by—depending on who's telling the story—either the Ninshaburians or some vile subterranean race. The girtablilu see themselves as guardians of the fabled city and have forcibly turned away all visitors, implying the pilgrims were unworthy. The ash giants are less principled and more warlike, harassing anyone they find, although they sometimes show respect for those they cannot bully.

EVENT 1: THE WARNING

Traveling from the northwest edge of the Parchlands to Neruzavin requires covering approximately 230 miles—nearly 2 weeks of travel by camel through the trackless

EVENT 2: A TEST OF STRENGTH



EVENT 5: SPORT AND SAVAGERY



desert, as the group winds between windswept mesas and through gulches carved by long-extinct rivers. The events presented below and their timing assume that the party has a movement speed of 50 feet, as if mounted. If they travel more slowly or quickly, the GM can adjust the pacing to match the PCs' speed.

Two days after the PCs enter the Parchlands, they spot the first sign of habitation: a pair of territorial markers atop a ridge. The first of these is a rough-hewn, pointed obelisk bearing numerous inscriptions. The largest inscription reads in Common, "These sacred territories contain a slumbering evil. Turn back. The wardens suffer no trespass." The other inscriptions are all written in Girtablilu and appear to show sequential dates scrawled by myriad hands. Each time a girtablilu patrol reaches this marker, its leader records the date. By the time the obelisk has nearly run out of room for more inscriptions, erosion has already worn away the oldest entries. If the PCs can read the entries, they can determine that patrols typically stop here every 5 days, though the last entry is from over 1 month ago.

The message conveyed by the other stone marker is considerably cruder: a decaying girtablilu is impaled upon the obelisk. The ash giants who skirmish with the girtablilu have triumphed of late, and several skewered one of their foes here as a warning to their ancient rivals. One giant inexpertly carved the word "weak" in Common into the monument before departing.

Development: Neither group has visited this site in days. Although these markers present no immediate

danger, they do signal that the PCs are not alone in this region. As the PCs continue to travel during the next several days, they might spot further signs of these two groups. With a successful DC 25 Survival check, a PC can find the tracks left by Large scorpions (possibly girtablilus) that run perpendicular to the PCs' route. With a successful DC 30 Perception check, a PC can occasionally sight between one and three humanoids watching from a distant outcropping before those figures slink away, only to appear from another vantage point hours later.

EVENT 2: A TEST OF STRENGTH (CR 14)

This event takes place early on the fifth day, as the PCs travel through a pass bordered on either side by a series of broad mesas. The steep slopes of the reddish mesas have few handholds (Climb DC 25) and average 80 feet in height.

Creatures: For several days, scouts from the Shatter Smile clan of ash giants have watched the PCs encroach upon their lands. Unlike the girtablilu, the ash giants never interacted with Lowls's expedition directly, and the grotesque humanoids are eager for entertainment (i.e., someone to subject to their cruel humor). At their leader Mother Grim Moon's direction, two warriors have coaxed a giant emperor scorpion to dig an ambush pit in the pass. The scorpion is well hidden in its pit (Perception DC 21 to spot the scorpion, or DC 32 from the west end of the pass due to the distance), but the ash giants have poorly attempted to hide the pit further by heaping withered

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brush around the pit. This does not make the pit harder to spot, but unless a PC exceeds the Perception DC by 5 or more, she mistakes the ambush pit for a conventional concealed pit trap—one easily avoided by walking around it, not the den of an ambush predator.

Two Shattered Smile giants named Kal and Pohup lurk nearby. Pohup hides atop the northern mesa near a pile of rocks. Kal waits at the far end of the pass near another pile of rocks, hoping to lure the PCs into the ambush. Neither cousin is especially good at hiding, but for their plan to work, they don't need to be.

KAL AND POHUP CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Ash giants (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 126)

hp 147 each

TACTICS

During Combat Kal lobs rocks at the PCs as they approach the pass, hoping to lure them in. He switches to melee attacks once the scorpion emerges. Pohup prefers to remain hidden until his enemies are already entering the pass, at which point he begins raining boulders down on the PCs. If confronted in melee, he attempts to bull rush his assailant into the pass. If the scorpion surprises the PCs, both giants laugh uproariously throughout the fight, and they cheer loudly anytime a PC falls unconscious or suffers a critical hit.

Morale The giants' orders are to test the intruders, and to kill them if they're too weak. If reduced to 35 or fewer hit points, a giant flees. If the PCs kill the scorpion and one giant, the remaining giant flees to report the PCs' victory, no matter how many hit points it has remaining. A cornered giant prefers to surrender rather than fight to the death.

EMPEROR SCORPION CR 11

XP 12,800

hp 142 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 232)

TACTICS

During Combat The scorpion remains hidden until a non-giant approaches within 100 feet or until it is harmed, at which point it emerges from its pit and rushes the PCs.

Morale The scorpion fights to the death.

Development: If the PCs manage to capture a giant, he laughs off the whole incident as a hilarious prank, even going so far as to offer heartfelt praise if the PCs killed his cousin in an exciting way. If beaten, intimidated, or otherwise coerced to take the PCs seriously, the giant becomes considerably more deferential and willingly discusses his clan, his orders to test the PCs violently,

and the ongoing battles with the girtablilu. Any discussion of the ruins where Lowls was bound makes the giant uneasy, and he insists on not talking about the "holy city of death" lest he suffer a curse. If the PCs insist on learning more, he insists that only Mother Grim Moon can speak of such things safely, and adds that she has entered the city and knows its secrets.

He knows that if his Shatter Smile kin learn that he was captured, they're likely to humiliate him, so he tries to make a deal: so long as they let him go, he's willing to tell his clan that the PCs are very mighty and not worth fighting. He is completely sincere, and he has enough respect for the PCs' strength to last him the

trip back to the main camp. If the PCs prefer, they can keep their captive as a guide. The giant is familiar with the region and tries to make light of his captivity by pointing out landmarks where he has pulled sundry violent—and sometimes lethal—pranks. He takes off his armor and hustles to keep up with a mounted group.

Should the PCs decide to pursue a fleeing giant back to his camp or coerce their captive to take them there, the remaining events play out in approximately the same way, albeit in slightly different locations.

EVENT 3: THE SCORPIONS' REVENGE (CR 13)

This event takes place on the ninth day, as the PCs cross a rocky field studded with weathered stone blocks as if some great building had once stood in the area. The blocks are immense and heavily weathered, though much of their mass lies buried beneath the dry, compacted earth.

Creatures: News spreads swiftly through the Parchlands, and a trio of girtablilus learned of the PCs' presence while patrolling for ash giants. These monstrous humanoids fan out and approach the PCs with bows held high as if in a salute, signaling their wish to parley. If the PCs have a giant captive, he growls a warning that the girtablilus are unforgiving and not to be trusted; the scorpion-bodied wardens independently warn the PCs that they travel with a treacherous murderer.

So long as the PCs are willing to talk, the girtablilu (and any giants) maintain an uneasy truce. The girtablilus' spokeswoman is **Ashkar** (N female girtablilu ranger 2), and she informs the PCs that they have entered territory claimed by the Ulkori girtablilu tribe. She acknowledges the PCs' endurance and persistence in traveling so far into the Parchlands, but she insists that they turn back and return whence they came. As a sign of goodwill, she



SHATTER SMILE GIANT

offers them enough food and water to retrace their steps out of the desert. She is willing to answer some of the PCs' likely questions (as noted below).

What right do you have to turn us away? "These lands are sacred to the Ulkori, and it is our duty to protect what lies within. By doing so, we protect the rest of the world."

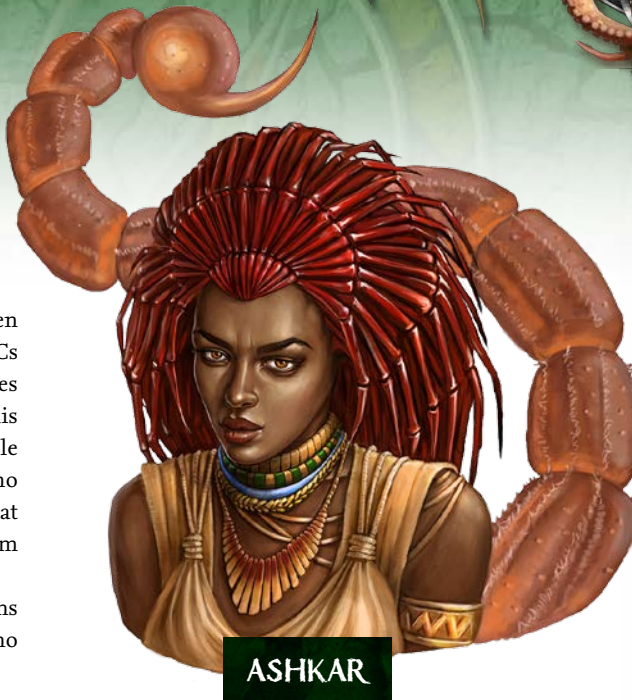
Have you always resided here? "The Ulkori have been and shall always be guardians of this desert." If the PCs travel with a giant, he snorts with laughter and shares that the girtablilus arrived only a generation ago. This is the truth, no matter how much the scorpion-people bristle at the notion. If no giants are present, a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Sense Motive check can sense that Ashkar is exaggerating but nonetheless takes her claim seriously.

What is hidden in the Parchlands? "There are ruins deep within. They hold no treasure, no adventure, no glory—only death."

Why do you hate the ash giants? "The giants are reckless and cruel. They care nothing for the history of this land, and they revere neither the past nor life itself." If the PCs travel with a captive giant, she adjusts her grip on her bow and adds, "When you depart, leave the giant here. We shall ensure he harms no others."

Have you seen other travelers pass this way? "One of our patrols tried to stop a group such as yours, bound along this same path. The trespassers did not heed our warnings but responded with violence. I found the corpses of my kin scattered across the stones, and we learned their story when our sandspeaker communed with their spirits. The trespassers' tracks led to the most sacred site where we are forbidden to travel. I hope they perished before they could do greater harm."

Although Ashkar insists that the PC depart the Parchlands, convincing the girtablilus to stand aside is difficult, but not impossible. The PCs can sway the girtablilus with tales of Lowl's villainy, his otherworldly allies, and the evil he might unleash. Doing so first requires a successful DC 34 Bluff or Diplomacy check to convey the PCs' sincerity, after which a PC must succeed at a DC 30 Knowledge (history, planes, or religion) check to demonstrate their respect for the past and the forsaken sites where evil dwells. Increase the DC of the Bluff or Diplomacy check by 10 if the PCs travel with an ash giant, though they can negate this penalty by killing their captive. If the PCs fail either check, Ashkar insists again that they depart swiftly, warning that Ulkori arrows will fell any who defy this order; if the PCs are accompanied by an ash giant, he scoffs and encourages the PCs to crush the weak scorpion people. If the PCs succeed at the two checks, Ashkar relents and offers them one last warning; she has no interest in accompanying them on their mad endeavor.



ASHKAR

"I shall tell my people that you are permitted—but not welcome—to travel our lands. Beware the cursed city that lies several days from here. Within it slumbers a terrible evil that we have watched for ages, and it stirs once more. It is best that none wake it entirely, lest it cast its shadow across other lands. Should you emerge from the shattered streets showing signs of its influence, know that I shall personally destroy you so that you do not spread its curse."

If the PCs are unable to win the girtablilus' cooperation and refuse to leave, the trio attacks. If able, any ash giant accompanying the PCs joins in to fight the Ulkori scouts.

GIRTABLILU GUARDIANS (3) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Girtablilu ranger 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 130)

N Large monstrous humanoid

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft.;

Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (+3 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 128 each (12d10+62)

Fort +11, **Ref** +16, **Will** +10

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee mwk spear +19/+14/+9 (1d8+10/x3), 2 claws +13 (1d6+3 plus grab), sting +13 (1d6+3)

Ranged +1 composite longbow +16/+11/+6 (1d8+8/x3)

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

Special Attacks combat style (archery), constrict (1d6+7), favored enemy (giants +2), poison

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +9)

1/day—*summon nature's ally V* (1d3 giant scorpions)

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TACTICS

During Combat The girtablilu guardians prefer to fight at range, peppering their enemies with arrows. If the PCs close on them for melee combat, one or two switch to their spears and natural weapons while the remaining girtablilu continues to fire on the PCs.

Morale These girtablilus are dedicated to protecting what they believe is a sacred site, and fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 19, **Con** 21, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +20 (+24 grapple); **CMD** 35 (43 vs. trip)

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Quick Draw, Rapid Shot, Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +4 (+12 to jump), Climb +19, Craft (bows) +9, Heal +10, Knowledge (geography, history, nature) +6, Perception +22, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +19, Survival +18; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Climb, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Girtablilu, Kelish

SQ track +1, wild empathy +1

Combat Gear *potions of cure serious wounds* (3); **Other**

Gear +1 leather armor, +1 composite longbow (+7 Str) with 40 arrows, mwk spear, masterwork artisan's tools, obsidian gems (6, worth 20 gp each)

Development: The three girtablilus represent the only scorpion-folk the PCs are likely to encounter; the other members of the Ulkori tribe are sufficiently distant that the PCs can reach Neruzavin and conclude their business there before another group of scouts finds them. If the PCs defeated the girtablilus in combat and travel with a giant, he raucously congratulates them and (unless stopped) messily finishes off felled enemies. If the PCs instead negotiated safe passage with the girtablilus, the giant regularly mutters aloud, questioning the PCs' conviction and strength for hours on end or until forcibly cowed. If the PCs left the giant captive with the girtablilus, the scouts swiftly execute him before continuing their patrol.

EVENT 4: AN ABERRANT OFFER

This event takes place on the tenth day, during the PCs' trek across a salt plain marred and broken by countless generations of ash giant travelers.

Creatures: A pair of ash giants named Oaag and Lurrohak openly approach the PCs from the south, waving and gesturing to parley. They are messengers from the Shatter Smile clan, the current host of the ash giant prophetess Mother Grim Moon and home of the two ash giants Kal and Pohup, whom the PCs encountered earlier. After the failure of Kal and Pohup to return—or in light of their fleeing home—the entire ash giant clan is impressed by the PCs' brutality in withstanding or annihilating their earlier skirmishers and the girtablilu heretics. Oaag and Lurrohak inquire

about the PCs' business, kicking and slapping any giant captive the PCs might have claimed if he tries to answer; as far as these newcomers are concerned, Kal and Pohup have lost face for having been defeated. Even if the PCs make mad claims about their goals, the giants nod and invite the PCs to meet with the other giants and Mother Grim Moon. At any mention of Neruzavin or the ruins, the giants excitedly explain that Mother Grim Moon has entered the city and returned, making her an expert.

Of course, the PCs can rebuff the giants and insist on traveling onward alone. Oaag warns them that those who do not choose to join the predators inevitably become the prey, inviting the PCs to reconsider their choice or face trouble later. If the PCs insist, the two giants withdraw to the south. They fight only if attacked, and even then they make a fighting retreat if possible.

OAAG AND LURROHAK

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Ash giants (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 126)

hp 147 each

Development: If the PCs accept the giants' hospitality, the pair leads them to the south (slightly off course from the route to the city), and reach the Shatter Smile camp about 2 days later. Transition to **Event 5**, and skip **Event 6**. If the PCs dismiss the giants and continue on their own, move to **Event 6** instead.

EVENT 5: SPORT AND SAVAGERY (CR 14)

Around the twelfth day, the PCs reach the Shatter Smile camp, the temporary dwelling of one of several ash giant nomadic clans that travel the Parchlands in a loose circuit in search of prey and raw materials. The PCs should travel here only if they accepted the invitation from Oaag and Lurrohak, or if the PCs let Kal or Pohup escape and then tracked them here. In any case, the ash giants tentatively acknowledge the PCs' strength for having fended off several of their warriors. The clan's ghastly smiles soon give way to worried glances as the giants realize that strange visitors like these should be brought before their leader and prophetess Mother Grim Moon. Read or paraphrase the following as the PCs enter the camp.

Several dozen broad tents of hides stretched across bone and chitin supports sprawl out in the shadow of a steep-sided hill. Glassy rivulets of broken obsidian slither down the dark slopes, and the entire peak is cleft in two as if split by some tremendous force.

Mother Grim Moon (CN female old ash giant cleric of Groetus 10; see page 56) has stayed with the Shatter Smile camp for the better part of a month, and during that time they have catered to her every mad desire

while restocking on obsidian cores to make new tools. The aging prophetess currently resides under a pavilion, where she stares east toward Neruzavin. Despite her declining sanity and portents of violence, Mother Grim Moon is an excellent source of information. She is able to answer the PCs' questions about the city and interpret any strange dreams they might have experienced on their journey south from Ustalav. Through her own dreaming experiences, she has a preternatural knowledge of some of the PCs' experiences as they explored the Dreamlands. This could be unsettling to the PCs and it might set the PCs off against her, thinking she is part of the plot that they have become embroiled in. As the PCs approach, she turns to face them.

Wrinkles radiate like cobwebs across the leathery mask that is the face of this aging ash giant. Her stare intensifies, and her smile twists into a rictus of delight. "At long last, the dreamers arrive. Survivors of Sarnath, delvers of darkness, seekers of the oasis, they who walked the sleeping forest and spoke to the Yellow King. You have walked upon the moon with footsteps that echo of the end times." Wheezing punctuates her cackles. "Yes, yes, I have awaited you. Tell me of what you would do before the world dies."

The giantess listens with great interest as the PCs explain their intentions, smiling knowingly any time they claim to be averting a disaster. She knows a great deal about Neruzavin but refuses to share it until she can witness their strength for herself. She acknowledges their pretty words but explains that speeches can't fell all foes. Creakily getting to her feet, she begins walking toward the cleft in the hill and waves for the PCs to follow. On the way, she explains.

"The Shatter Smile is proud and strong and has always taken stone from this hill. This time its people found one of the beasts the girtablilus stole from us, and even the clan's best claw-speakers cannot convince it to submit. This has made the Shatter Smile resent the beast, and had I not intervened, they would have thrown rocks until it crumbled—good, but not bold. The beast is too immense to risk getting closer, so they have trapped it in the hill.

"You are the dream-walkers, the city-seekers, the end-stoppers. You come to me seeking my counsel, yet you cannot command the true respect of this clan. Tame what they cannot—fight what gives them fear—and they shall honor you. The Shatter Smile is not strong enough to brave the holy city. If you cannot be stronger than them, why should I waste breath explaining that you are too weak to enter?"

The cleft is partly blocked by a jumble of boulders nearly 10 feet tall—enough to deter the immense vermin within from escaping, but not enough to trap it completely.

Creature: One of the largest scorpions ever seen in the Parchlands had found shelter from the sun here when the giants arrived, and it stubbornly resisted their attempts to calm it with vermin empathy. Frustrated, the giants chased it into the cleft with a rain of thrown rocks and dubbed the monster "Old Obsidian." The brief assault crushed one of the scorpion's claws, and its inability to hunt has left it slightly weaker than normal (effectively reducing the creature's CR by 1).

Mother Grim Moon pauses in sight of the ridge, calls out to the other giants, and challenges the PCs to prove their might. The trial excites the clan, and the ash giant adults use their bodies to form a roughly 100-foot-diameter ring around the cleft's entrance, with the PCs inside. Chanting and stomping the ground rhythmically, they use their vermin empathy to goad the scorpion to emerge and fight. Mother Grim Moon cautions the PCs to wait until the scorpion has emerged entirely before they strike; the giants value cunning, but they respect only strength.

OLD OBSIDIAN **CR 14**

XP 38,400

Variant black scorpion (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 240)

hp 228

OFFENSE

Melee claw +23 (2d8+13 plus grab), sting +23 (2d6+13 plus poison)

TACTICS

During Combat Old Obsidian demonstrates little finesse, grabbing and stinging a victim several times before dropping its target and attacking another creature. It attacks ash giants only if it cannot detect and reach any of the PCs.

Morale Old Obsidian fights to the death.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Weakened (Ex) Old Obsidian has not fed in weeks, and its body has expended its reserves on staying alive rather than creating venom. Reduce the save DC of the scorpion's poison to 25 and reduce the number of saves required to end the poison to 2.

Development: Once the PCs defeat the scorpion, the ash giants cheer and begin dismembering it to harvest its meat and chitin. Content with the PCs' prowess, Mother Grim Moon leads the PCs up the igneous hill and seats herself at its weathered summit. There she answers the PCs' questions, including the following likely queries.

How do you know about our dreams? "Some dreams are shared. Some dreams are spread. You carry one of the darkest dreams: dreams that would infect—perhaps already have infected—countless souls and condemn the world. How could I not hear your dreams?"

What did our dreams represent? "Many dreams reflect the waking world. You fought the madness that lives

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below ground (referring to the PCs' experiences in the Dreamlands' Underworld), and so too does madness sleep under the sand here. You awakened the madness that slumbers beneath the water, and so too is the water here home to the greatest fiend. You walked among the towering trees, and so too do buildings tower in the holy city. You seek the oasis from which oblivion is born? It lies within the holy city."

Did you see Lowls or his expedition? "The Shatter Smile saw him travel to the holy city from the west, but he had entered its sacred ground before our people could catch him. He was not alone. Many small folk kowtowed in his wake. He is a fool, yet even a fool can awaken the world-eater, and he has its taint upon him."

What is the world-eater? "It slumbers within the oasis, trading dreams for souls. Those who lack the spirit to understand its call are immune. Those of fecund mind become host to its evil and spread its seed across the world. If you seek it out, you will surely awaken it. You might have already."

What did you see in Neruzavin? "It is a dead city, abandoned by all but those who can gaze into the apocalypse and survive. Only the seeded—the world-eater's children—stir the dust with their feet. Stone buildings loom and twist, rising too high and at strange angles without windows. Three pillars stranger than all others are not half so tall. Instead they bear the language of other realms, inscribed with rituals and promises to bind this world to another. I slept beneath each pillar once, each night awakening with overwhelming urges to consume, doubt, or revel. Last, beware the sleepers below. They sing. They whistle. They whisper, promising to consume all that live. They can taste your very breath. One lies near the city's western edge."

Will you help us? "I shall not help that puny man condemn this world. I shall not stand alongside those who would prevent it. If the world ends, that is Groetus's will. I shall only offer you my blessing and my wisdom, that you might be heralds of this realm's salvation—or its damnation. The Shatter Smile shall remain here for many days more before traveling again. If my magic would delay your own deaths before then, seek me out once more."

As promised, Mother Grim Moon provides spellcasting services for the PCs over the course of their adventures in Neruzavin. See page 57 for more details.

If the PCs fail to defeat the scorpion in a suitably exciting way—likely by fleeing the fight or by killing the beast in some way where it has no chance to retaliate—Mother Grim Moon is willing to speak with the PCs as above but, after the conversation is over, she commands them to leave the Shatter Smile camp and never return. This allows the PCs to continue the adventure, but it costs them a rare ally in the region and source of divine spellcasting services.

EVENT 6: THE THIRSTY SANDS (CR 17)

This event takes place on the thirteenth day as the PCs travel into the gently sloping basin that contains Neruzavin. From this vantage, the city and its vibrantly blue lake shimmer like an undulating mirage against the party's lifeless surroundings. Run this event only if the PCs spurned the Shatter Smile clan's invitation or have otherwise offended the giants and fled. This encounter takes place in a relatively flat and featureless stretch of desert.

Creatures: Ash giants rarely take offense at violence from their kin, instead incorporating the pain and brutality into their culture. Those who don't fit into their social structure do not deserve the privilege of a nonlethal reprimand, and the Shatter Smile clan has determined that the PCs are little more than trespassing scoundrels to squash. Mother Grim Moon leads several of her warriors to smash the PCs, and they have goaded one of the Parchlands' rare and enormous titan centipedes to accompany them. The war party takes advantage of the heat distortion close to the ground to approach, and the encounter begins once they are about 400 feet away.

At this point, the giants no longer respect the PCs for past deeds; they are there to make an example of intruders. The PCs can desperately call for a ceasefire, but Mother Grim Moon and her cohort are willing to forgive the PCs' offense only if they surrender valuables worth at least 5,000 gp as a tribute. If appeased, Mother Grim Moon invites the PCs to accompany her back to the Shatter Smile camp, beginning **Event 5**.

MOTHER GRIM MOON CR 16

XP 76,800

hp 262 (see page 56)

ASH GIANTS (2) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 147 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 126)

TITAN CENTIPEDE CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 135 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 53)

Development: Should the PCs defeat Mother Grim Moon and the ash giants here, the rest of the clan avoids the PCs for the duration of the adventure.

PART 2: THE CRADLE OF HEAVEN

For much of the adventure, Neruzavin is a sandbox for the PCs to explore, though until the PCs inspect Count Lowls's camp (area **A10**), they have little context that could enable them to do more than meander aimlessly. By recovering his notes, the PCs learn of the three *Star Stelae* that must be activated in order to follow Lowls,

and pieces of the ritual necessary to attune them. In the process, they also discover signs of Xhamen-Dor and the evil that will afflict Golarion if the Great Old one is not stopped. Of course, a city with so haunted a history is host to numerous loose ends and afflicted survivors that the PCs can find and address at their leisure.

This adventure assumes that the PCs enter from the west, both because Mother Grim Moon recommends it and because it is the direction from which the PCs were traveling. Neruzavin has little obstructive geography, and lacks anything resembling city walls. As a result, the PCs can enter from virtually any direction.

NERUZAVIN GENERAL FEATURES

Before the flying polyps descended on southwestern Casmaron, what would one day become Neruzavin was an immense basalt pluton, a rare but natural outcropping of igneous rock weathered bare of all but the most stubborn lichens and shrubs. The extraterrestrial invaders scoured the stone with air and grit, carving out twisting towers, claustrophobic streets, and asymmetrical plazas in a cruel mockery of “civilized” life. Only three structures truly mattered: the eerie *Star Stelae*. Ages have passed since the yithians arrived to combat the flying polyps, chasing away many and sealing others beneath the unsettling city. Millennia of erosion and seismic aftershocks have gradually toppled some of its towers and senseless arches, but even so, many of the edifices remain. Averaging 400 feet high, they loom far taller than even Absalom’s impressive cityscape. When combined with the narrow roads—each carved with uncanny precision in mockery of humanoid trails—a creature can sometimes lose sight of the sky except when looking straight up.

Despite its enormity and former glory, Neruzavin feels utterly abandoned. Anemic clouds silently whip by overhead, far above lifeless streets practically untouched by the desert winds, as though any hint of motion would offend the barren terraces, towers, and tiles. Streets bend at irregular angles and end abruptly as if such mundane thoroughfares were never intended to be functional. Walls seem to retract inward out of the corner of one’s eyes, only to bulge uncomfortably upon closer examination, like malignant architectural tumors granted unholy animation by optical illusions. And yet, even these oddities are easily confirmed by touch. In all, the flying polyps’ city is an otherworldly masterpiece of chilling impracticality and illogically towering heights.

The sheer real estate of Neruzavin would easily classify it as a metropolis, were it fully occupied. Yet most buildings are uninhabited. Of these, a baffling number have no entrances or windows, and several attempts to break in by utterly fearless adventurers from past ages show that at least some of those towers are either solid stone or riddled with incomprehensible tunnels

of varying widths. When the wind does stir the dusty streets, these tunnels whistle with jarring harmonics. It’s almost enough to distract a sane visitor from the fact that the wind doesn’t originate from the east or west, but from somewhere below, like the exhalation of a buried titan.

The city’s streets are far cleaner than one would expect given their neglected antiquity. However, the maze-like layout reduces the PCs’ speed to one-quarter normal for the purpose of local travel. As a result, it takes a group traveling at a speed of 30 feet about 1 hour to travel 4,500 feet. Navigational magic such as *find the path* or flight increases the PCs’ speed to three-quarters normal, as even then they must dodge around improbably tall structures and angled streets. Only by combining such magic and flight can the PCs travel at full speed.

Collectively, the garden of towers has an unnerving effect on those who behold it, imposing the following effects on them.

- The unsettling geometry and lesser otherworldly signatures disturb animals, increasing the DCs of Handle Animal, Ride, and wild empathy checks to control them by 5.
- The sensory distortion makes it easy to miscalculate attacks, giving creatures a 20% miss chance against ranged attacks that originate from more than 60 feet away. Aberrations and undead ignore this miss chance, as do Neruzavin’s long-term residents. Only visitors such as the PCs and the excinder archons (see area A1) are affected.
- Despite the desert climate, the city itself remains relatively cool during the day. At night, the temperature drops to near freezing (see page 442 of the *Core Rulebook* for weather effects).

SEEDBORNE CONSUMPTION

Despite its dormancy, Xhamen-Dor represents a constant threat to intelligent life. Far more insidious than its undead minions is the infestation that emanates from the Great Old One. When spread by the seeded, this is known as the “seedborne consumption,” whereas those who experience it through dreams often refer to it as “star sickness.” Whether by supernatural evolution or as an expression of Xhamen-Dor’s alien innovation, the infestation slowly adapts to spread by other vectors. All forms of the disease manifest in the same way, causing few physical symptoms but afflicting the victim with ever-deepening dread and spiritual malaise. Shortly before dying, the victim typically sneaks away from its companions to find a secluded den. There it convulses violently as veiny, purplish roots burst from its body and reanimate its corpse as a seeded creature that can stalk and infect its former friends.

It’s important to remember that due to the PCs’ exposure to Xhamen-Dor’s influence during their

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previous ordeals and dreams, they show no symptoms—a successful DC 30 Heal check is required to uncover any hint of illness—and are effectively immune to its effects. Nonetheless, they harbor the infestation within their bodies and minds, and are treated as carriers of the affliction. The GM should track which of the PCs are infested by the disease, as the Husk of Xhamen-Dor can sense and manipulate this latent taint (see page 86). Also, the PCs’ immunity to the effects does not extend to anyone else who might travel with them, including animal companions, familiars, cohorts, and followers.

The following are common vectors and the rules for it appear on page 91.

Dreams: Every time a creature sleeps for at least 1 hour (or falls asleep due to a magical effect) within 5 miles of Neruzavin, there is a 50% chance that Xhamen-Dor’s evil invades its dreams and infects its body. The target contracts seedborne consumption unless it succeeds at a DC 20 Will save. Once afflicted, the victim must succeed at DC 20 Fortitude saves in order to combat the disease.

Seeded: The tendril attack of a seeded creature can infect a target, and the Fortitude save DC varies based on the creature’s statistics. A seeded creature can also accelerate the infection and transformation of a helpless victim.

NERUZAVIN’S RESIDENTS

Most of the forgotten city’s residents are the seeded (see page 90), mortals transformed into undead horrors by Xhamen-Dor’s corruption. Those few living inhabitants

survive only because they can evade the ghoulish gangs, or because they have secured some unholy truce. Many of the living creatures in Neruzavin are either outsiders or powerful monsters that can stand up to the threats that loom on the alien streets of the city. Furthermore, these survivors often have Charisma scores of 11 or lower, allowing them to avoid transformation into the seeded. Creatures that don’t dream—including mindless vermin—are likewise unlikely to contract seedborne consumption.

Collectively, the meager populace drives a virtually nonexistent economy overseen by a dozen solipsists, each of which fancies itself the sovereign of Neruzavin. Chief among these is Aeptolinu (see area B1), who once tried to guide southwestern Casmaron’s nascent civilizations, only to go utterly mad after the *Starstone* destroyed his work and Xhamen-Dor corrupted his sorrow. Far more pragmatic is the otuygh Hoshbagh (see page 19), who considers Neruzavin her personal scrapheap. In the absence of any shops or caravans, Hoshbagh presents the PCs’ best medium for trade during their adventures in the city.

While the PCs explore Neruzavin, be sure to use the following random encounters liberally. Intersperse these kinds of encounters along with the scripted encounters throughout Neruzavin, as they will help grant the PCs enough experience points to reach 15th level by the end of the adventure. At minimum, the PCs should experience one of these random encounters once every 2 hours that they explore the alien city.

Fungus: The most successful life form in Neruzavin is virtually imperceptible when the PCs first arrive: hair-thin fungal growths and alien rhizomes that extend throughout the city and can be found growing across many of the structures. The assimilation of most of Lowls's crew has granted Xhamen-Dor's remains sufficient power to begin growing once more, and Lowls's activation of the *Star Stelae* has driven the fibrous network to expand, pulsing with vitality. The PCs' familiar presence only encourages the fungus to expand further still. Each time they attune one of the *Star Stelae*, the patches of ropey fungus become thicker and more obtrusive. By the time the PCs are ready to perform the ritual necessary to follow Lowls, entire "blocks" of the city might be completely overgrown. This fungus is easily hacked through with slashing weapons or burned with fire, but there is a risk of contracting seedborne consumption (see page 13) from these foul tendrils that work their way through Neruzavin.

Giant Vermin: Effectively immune to Xhamen-Dor's corruption thanks to their low Charisma scores, vermin eke out a modest living by feeding on algae, fungus, and assorted detritus that blows into the city. Many vermin enter periods of dormancy during lean times, and the slow-growing arthropods have grown to immense size over their centuries-long lifespans. The most common giant vermin are immense millipedes known colloquially as "thunder bugs" for the faint, rumbling susurrus created by their many legs. Use the statistics of a titan centipede (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 53) with no bite attack or poison (CR 6).

Rift Drakes: In most badlands ecosystems, the mighty rift drakes are alpha predators that kill what they like, torment whom they please, and soar through the skies with impunity. However, such is not the case in Neruzavin. Here the drakes are merely a nuisance when compared to the site's true threats. As a result, while several flights of rift drakes frequent Neruzavin, these serve more as oversized vultures than as hunters. A typical group consists of 1d3+1 individuals, and the PCs are most likely to encounter them scavenging the mostly-stripped carcass of an ash giant or a thunder bug. Already made skittish by their surroundings, the drakes flee if the PCs land a few blows. However, the drakes know that all visitors to Neruzavin must eventually perish, and following their initial encounter, the PCs might spot a drake watching them from atop a nearby spire or a rampage of drakes lazily circling their position—as if anticipating some imminent tragedy—from hundreds of feet in the air.

STREET ENCOUNTERS

A number of set encounters take place in the streets of Neruzavin—ideally after the PCs have had a chance to explore Lowls's camp. Each of these helps to build

BUILDING FEAR

A cursed city presents an excellent opportunity to develop an unsettling atmosphere, and this adventure presents numerous opportunities to explore Neruzavin's calamitous past. Remember that it is possible to impart key information without revealing the entire truth; even the yithian Kaklatath has only a passing familiarity with the city. Instead, let the players worry about what you're not telling them and whether their actions are only making things worse.

Predicting Encounters: The otherworldly geometries and strange noises make spotting ambushes difficult, and the distorted echoes of creatures thousands of feet away might warble past the PCs at inopportune times, making them second-guess their own safety.

Fungus: The fungus that pervades the city grows as the PCs explore, expanding at terrifying rates when they attune any of the *Star Stelae*. You might have the best success if the PCs never see the fungus grow; they only see how in the course of an hour, an area they traveled is now spider-webbed with alien flora. As the phenomenon becomes stronger with each activation of the *Star Stelae*, they'll begin wondering if the *Necronomicon's* ritual is leading them astray—as if they needed the help.

Always a Bigger Fish: Showing is often stronger than telling in horror games, and what the PCs cannot see is more frightening than what they can shoot. Even Neruzavin's scavengers are powerful monsters. When the PCs see that even these beasts are jittery, they'll get worried. Should the PCs come across a scavenger clearly killed by something big, they'll start sweating. If the corpse is also swollen with a fungal blight they can't identify, the PCs might start burning every dead body—including their allies'—out of paranoia.

Doom: Some of the city's most sadistic inhabitants are content to converse with the PCs. Why? It's because these creatures already know that the world is doomed. Yet others are infected by Hastur's nihilism, driving them to fight the PCs despite knowing that nothing they or their victims do will avert the coming apocalypse.

atmosphere, establish the seeded creatures' dominance of Neruzavin, and impart the gravity of the PCs' mission (and the deadly tools they must employ). The first part of the adventure assumes that the PCs earn enough experience points to reach 14th level, but if they are ahead of this threshold you can use fewer of the encounters below before they descend into the undercity. Furthermore, consider interspersing these encounters throughout this part of the adventure, as the PCs should spend considerable time crossing the city in search of *Star Stelae* and clues.

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SEEDED RAIDERS (CR 14)

Lowl's expedition introduced over a dozen warm bodies to the flesh-starved city, and many of his hirelings have since succumbed to Xhamen-Dor's corruption and become seeded undead. Among the older undead are lamias from across Casmaron who found the lost city's aesthetic cruelly satisfying before they also were infected, drained, and transformed. These two groups have mingled and dispersed throughout the city, where they relentlessly hunt for new sacrifices for their dark master. They prefer to attack from multiple directions, either spilling into a plaza or rushing down either end of a steep-sided ally. In either case, the lamias use their extraordinary speed and maneuverability to harass the PCs while the seeded humans dispatch targets one by one.

SEEDED LAMIAS (3) CR 8

XP 4,800 each
hp 76 each (see page 90)

SEEDED PROPHET CR 10

Seeded human oracle 10 (see page 90, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 42)

NE Medium undead (augmented human)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 20 (+5 armor, +2 Dex, +3 deflection, +2 natural)

hp 58 (10d8+10); fast healing 5

Fort +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses transformed

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee +1 *spear* +12/+7 (1d8+7/x3), 2 tendrils +6 (1d6+2 plus grab and seedborne consumption)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tendrils)

Special Attacks death burst, entrapping tendrils, insidious mind, seedborne consumption (DC 20)

Oracle Spells Known (CL 10th; concentration +16)

5th (4/day)—*feblemind* (DC 21), *mass inflict light wounds* (DC 23), *true seeing*

4th (6/day)—*aura of doom*^{UM} (DC 22), *black tentacles*, *inflict critical wounds* (DC 22), *unholy blight* (DC 20)

3rd (7/day)—*bestow curse* (DC 21), *blindness/deafness* (DC 21), *inflict serious wounds* (DC 21), *invisibility purge*, *tongues*

2nd (8/day)—*bull's strength*, *dread bolt*^{UM} (DC 18), *dust of twilight*^{APG} (DC 18), *inflict moderate wounds* (DC 20), *shatter* (DC 18), *undetected alignment* (DC 18)

1st (8/day)—*bless*, *divine favor*, *entropic shield*, *inflict light wounds* (DC 19), *murderous command*^{UM} (DC 17), *ray of sickening*^{UM} (DC 19), *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 18), *create water*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *mending*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *spark*^{APG} (DC 16)

Mystery dark tapestry

TACTICS

Before Combat The seeded prophet casts *shield of faith*.

During Combat The seeded prophet first casts *aura of doom* and then *unholy blight* to weaken its foes. It then attacks from a distance with spells such as *feblemind* and *black tentacles*. If forced into melee, the seeded prophet attacks with its +1 *spear* and tendrils, attempting to infest its opponent with seedborne consumption.

Morale The seeded prophet has no concern for its own existence, and thus fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without *shield of faith*, the seeded prophet's statistics are **AC** 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +11 (+15 grapple); **CMD** 23

Feats Cleave, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Improved Initiative, Lunge, Power Attack, Spell Focus (necromancy)

Skills Climb +11, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +14, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (planes) +14, Knowledge (religion) +9, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +14

Languages Aklo, Auran, Common, Kelish; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only), tongues (understand)

SQ oracle's curse (tongues), revelations (cloak of darkness^{UM}, gift of madness^{UM}, wings of darkness^{UM})

Combat Gear *scroll of flame strike*, *scroll of major curse*; **Other Gear** +1 *chain shirt*, +1 *spear*, *cloak of resistance* +2, 548 gp

SEEDED SKULKERS (2) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Seeded human rogue (scout) 10 (see page 90, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 134)

NE Medium undead (augmented human)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+5 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)

hp 98 each (10d8+50); fast healing 5

Fort +4, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, evasion, trap sense +3; **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses transformed

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee +1 *punching dagger* +13/+8 (1d4+5/x3), 2 tendrils +6 (1d6+2 plus grab and seedborne consumption)

Ranged +1 *hand crossbow* +12 (1d4+1/19–20)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tendrils)

Special Attacks death burst, entrapping tendrils, insidious

mind, scout's charge, seedborne consumption (DC 19), skirmisher, sneak attack +5d6 plus 5 bleed

TACTICS

During Combat Seeded skulkers charge into combat using their scout's charge ability. Once in melee, they endeavor to deal sneak attack damage as often as possible either by staying on the move with Spring Attack and their skirmisher ability, or by flanking their opponents with one another or a seeded lamia.

Morale Seeded skulkers give no thought to self-preservation and fight to the death, knowing their destruction will help to spread Xhamen-Dor's infection.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +11 (+15 grapple); **CMD** 26

Feats Acrobatic Steps, Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility, Nimble Moves, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (punching dagger)

Skills Acrobatics +16 (+20 to jump), Bluff +17, Climb +24, Disable Device +23, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (dungeoneering, geography, local) +5, Perception +15, Sense Motive +15, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +16

Languages Common; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only)

SQ rogue talents (assault leader^{APG}, bleeding attack +5, combat trick, fast stealth, weapon training), trapfinding +5

Combat Gear *elixir of hiding*, *potion of barkskin* (CL 9th);

Other Gear +1 chain shirt, +1 hand crossbow with 20 bolts, +1 punching dagger, boots of striding and springing, cloak of resistance +1, masterwork thieves' tools, 296 gp

DEADLY FOG (CR 10 OR CR 14)

Floating through Neruzavin's unnerving streets like a horrific cloud, this advanced hungry fog hunts for living sustenance. Though it is larger and more powerful than a normal specimen, against sentient creatures the hungry fog doesn't pose a particularly strong threat as it is slow and unintelligent. The PCs could easily avoid it or attack it from afar. However, the hungry fog typically travels through the streets accompanied by two seeded skulkers and a seeded prophet (see page 16). These undead creatures benefit from the hungry fog by being able to receive healing from its negative energy touch attack. When encountered, the seeded creatures, since they are intelligent, remain within the hungry fog's reach, darting outside of that range only to attack before quickly moving back into a safe position.

ADVANCED HUNGRY FOG

CR 10

XP 25,600

Hungry fog (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 152)

N Gargantuan ooze

Init -3; **Senses** Perception -5

Aura bewitching brume (10 ft., DC 13)

DEFENSE

AC 7, touch 3, flat-footed 7 (-3 Dex, +4 natural, -4 size)

hp 179 (14d8+84)

Fort +10, **Ref** +1, **Will** -1

Defensive Abilities gaseous, negative energy affinity;

DR 10/magic; **Immune** acid, electricity, sonic, ooze traits;

Resist cold 10

Weaknesses vulnerable to wind

OFFENSE

Speed fly 15 ft. (perfect)

Melee +10 touch (8d6 negative energy)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Special Attacks enveloping mists

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 4, **Con** 22, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 21 (can't be tripped)

Skills Fly -1

SEEDED PROPHET

CR 10

XP 9,600

hp 58 (see page 16)

SEEDED SKULKERS (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 98 each (see page 16)

DARKENED SKIES (CR 12)

To the north of the Parchlands lie the Whistling Plains, a vast land famous for its herds of bison and horses. The seas of grass also attract titanic flocks of queleas, small weaverbirds that migrate vast distances in search of seeds. Several colonies fly across the Parchlands to reach food elsewhere on the continent, and although the individual birds lack the forceful personalities necessary for Xhamen-Dor's corruption to take root, as a group they can develop a more powerful temperament. Several decades ago, a storm blew a flock of dusk-throated queleas toward Neruzavin. Tens of thousands of the birds dove into the water to sacrifice themselves to the slumbering beast within, and shortly thereafter, a waterlogged swarm of undead birds took to the air. Since then, they have lurked throughout the city, and loud noises or signs of fresh prey can mobilize the entire flock.

The PCs likely spot the swarming queleas as an ominous, oddly moving cloud long before they encounter the undead birds up close. The queleas might even spend several hours amassing as the multitude twists and undulates with unholy intelligence, dipping below the skyline before emerging elsewhere in the city, possibly even spelling out strange symbols in their flight. Once the swarm descends on the PCs in earnest, the tiny one-time seedeaters turn their sharp beaks and inexhaustible numbers into lethal weapons that can prove difficult to defend against.

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SEEDED QUELEA SWARM

CR 12

XP 19,200

NE Diminutive undead (swarm)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +27

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 20, flat-footed 16 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural, +4 size)

hp 150 (20d8+60)

Fort +10, **Ref** +13, **Will** +15

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, swarm traits;

DR 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **Immune** weapon damage, undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft., climb 15 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)

Melee swarm (4d6 plus seedborne consumption)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks death burst, insidious mind, seedborne consumption (DC 22)

STATISTICS

Str 5, **Dex** 21, **Con** —, **Int** 2, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +15; **CMB** —; **CMD** —

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Lightning Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes, Lightning Stance, Mobility, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness, Wind Stance

Skills Fly +23, Perception +27

XHAMEN-DOR STIRS (CR 13)

As the PCs activate the *Star Stelae* and prepare to open a gateway to Carcosa, the Husk of Xhamen-Dor stirs in the depths of the crater lake. As it does, elements of Neruzavin begin to answer its call to destroy the PCs and shepherd their familiar minds back to the slumbering Great Old One. Among these manifestations is a pair of juggernauts, lumbering forth on a mass of dozens of ropey fungoid tendrils rather than on giant rollers.

This encounter should take place after the PCs have activated at least one of the *Star Stelae*, after which they likely start perceiving the increase of fungal growths across the city (see the Building Fear sidebar on page 15). Ideally, let the PCs first begin noticing signs of the juggernauts after the first activation—crushed fungal masses or strange trails in a street, or ominous sounds of grinding stone—and have the constructs strike only after the second or third. These particular juggernauts are especially terrifying in the tight streets of Neruzavin, which leave little room to escape the stampeding guardians.

XHAMEN-DOR'S JUGGERNAUTS (2)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

NE Gargantuan construct (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 162)

DEFENSE

hp 142 each

OFFENSE

Melee slam +24 (4d6+19)

Special Attacks soul-powered, vicious trample (8d6+38, DC 30)

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

3/day—*mirror image*, *wall of thorns*

STATISTICS

SQ keyed domains (Plant, Trickery), shrine

AERIAL ASSASSIN (CR 14)

Bored with slaying the undead that wander through Neruzavin, the aerial servant Sifressal was delighted when it noticed living creatures once again visiting the forgotten city. Sifressal slipped into Neruzavin over a decade ago, siphoned into the Material Plane through an unstable portal to the Plane of Air. Since it wasn't called by a spellcaster, the creature is free to pursue its own goals, and those goals involve murdering sentient, living creatures. In its



JUGGERNAUT

exploration of Neruzavin, it discovered the powerful enemies in the Snarl. Fearful that one of them might kill it or take control of it, Sifressal has avoided that area (and won't pursue the PCs into the Snarl except under extreme circumstances).

Not all of Lowls's entourage fell victim to seeded consumption. A few of them were picked off during the night by this stalking elemental. It has harried the group since they first stepped into Neruzavin, and now it has its sights set on picking off the PCs one at a time.

Once Sifressal notices the presence of the PCs in the city, it shadows them for at least an hour before attempting its first attack. It uses this first attack to test the strength of the PCs, careful to take note of any special tactics or abilities they might employ. If during this first attack Sifressal is reduced to fewer than half its hit points, it retreats to safety and doesn't attack until the next day. The second time the aerial servant attacks, it makes use of what it has learned to pick off the weakest of the PCs, preferably when that PC is isolated from the rest of the group or is in a precarious position that would hinder the character's defenses. Sifressal continues this approach until it has killed each of the PCs.

SIFRESSAL **CR 14**

XP 38,400

Aerial servant rogue 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5* 11)

N Medium outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 17, flat-footed 17 (+7 Dex, +7 natural)

hp 199 (16 HD; 3d8+13d10+115)

Fort +12, **Ref** +18, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities evasion, natural invisibility, trap sense +1; **DR** 10/magic; **Immune** elemental traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee 2 slams +26 (2d8+10 plus grab)

Special Attacks constrict (2d8+10), smother, sneak attack +4d6, wind blast

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 24, **Con** 25, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +23 (+27 grapple); **CMD** 40

Feats Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Following Step^{APG}, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Step Up, Step Up And Strike^{APG}, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Diplomacy +6, Fly +28, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (planes) +12, Perception +19, Sense Motive +7, Stealth +26 (+46 while moving or +40 while still vs. foes who can't see invisible creatures), Survival +23 (+33 to track); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Survival

Languages Auran, Common

SQ improved tracking, rogue talent (combat trick), trapfinding +1

Gear *amulet of mighty fists* +2

SCAVENGER AND SELLER

As an abandoned city that was never intended to accommodate mortal needs, Neruzavin lacks anything resembling a conventional economy. As a result, the PCs have almost no means to sell unwanted treasure or purchase new gear. There is one avenue open to them: Hoshbagh, an otyugh scavenger with a penchant for magic. Thanks to her innate immunity to disease, Hoshbagh has managed to survive in the city for more than a decade, following one of her first attempts to activate a magic text—a *scroll of teleport* that deposited her here, far from her sewer haunts beneath Cassomir.

Ever since, she has sustained herself on what little food is available. In her constant hunting, she has uncovered dozens of treasures, including gear from misguided adventurers and even the preserved tools from the original Ninshaburian expedition. Conditioned by years of evading the seeded and haggling with lawless neighbors, Hoshbagh has taken pains to hide valuables—many protected by *magic aura*—in tiny caches throughout Neruzavin. When she agrees to trade one of her treasures, she furtively sneaks away and hides her trail with her tome eater occultist resonance powers. If she suspects a customer is following her back to her stash, she does everything she can to shake her pursuer; if that fails, she abandons the deal and avoids her caches for several days. The otyugh is also an adept judge of an object's value, having supplemented her sewer refuse curating skills with the psychic talents she has developed while in Neruzavin. Finally, Hoshbagh believes that her most valuable treasures are secret sites where she can reliably find food and water, including a crevice where she has hidden a *wand of create food and water* with 14 charges remaining. All told, it's difficult for the PCs to cheat Hoshbagh out of her treasures by shadowing her, tricking her, or even just killing her and casting *create treasure map*^{APG}.

Once the PCs have secured Lowls's expedition camp (see area **A10**), Hoshbagh learns of them. She carefully approaches the PCs, and announces her interest in trading with them, hoping that they have delicious books. Her first exchange is very cautious, but the more she works with the PCs, the more comfortable and chatty she becomes, even going so far as to plop down in the middle of their camp and eat their food, perhaps without being invited. For all her adventures in Neruzavin, she pines for the lush bounty of Cassomir's Locker, and she listens with bated breath if the PCs share any news of the city from their time there seeking Miacknian Mun. In return, she might gossip about some of Neruzavin's most famous inhabitants, including "the screaming woman" Upianshe (see page 58), "the scarred man" Aeptolinu (see area **B1**), and "the deep thinker" Olkoshim (see area **C2**). It's unlikely that Hoshbagh ever agrees to accompany the PCs on their adventures, though. Large groups attract

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unwanted attention, and she's lived this long only by trusting her gut and minimizing her exposure to the city's deadliest inhabitants.

As a merchant, Hoshbagh possesses approximately 35,000 gp in coins, gems, and other wealth, allowing the PCs to sell magic items, fence gems, and liquidate other goods. She also barter using her own magic items (see below) to offset the cost of any gear she buys from the PCs. However, Hoshbagh takes a special interest in certain items. First, she finds valuable texts and magical writing irresistible, and she eagerly buys any magical scrolls, spellbooks, and the like from the PCs at 75% their market price (rather than 50%). It may dismay the PCs when she later messily chews the texts to pieces and swallows their contents to restore her mental focus. Second, Hoshbagh's occultist powers grant her extraordinary insight into each item's past and any psychic resonances. She can literally smell the deeds a PC performed while wearing or wielding a prized piece of gear for at least two volumes of this Adventure Path, and the instilled memories make that item all the more valuable; so long as a PC is willing to explain one or more of the feats she performed earlier in the campaign to create that psychic resonance, the otyugh pays 75% the item's market price (rather than 50%).

There is a 50% chance that Hoshbagh has any magic item worth 8,000 gp or less, though at the GM's discretion she might have more of some items (e.g., *potions of lesser restoration*) and lack especially obscure items altogether. In addition, the otyugh can reliably offer, retrieve, and sell the following specific items.

Armor: +1 *invulnerable Ninshaburian parade armor* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 120, 13), +4 *aberration-defiant breastplate* (*Ultimate Equipment* 116), *celestial shield* (*Ultimate Equipment* 131).

Weapons: +1 *speed whip*, +1 *shocking burst composite longbow* (+4 Str), +4 *warhammer*.

Potions and Scrolls: *Potion of heroism*, *potion of remove curse* (CL 14th), *scroll of banishment*, *scroll of earthquake*, *scroll of elemental body IV*, *scroll of ethereal jaunt*, *scroll of greater restoration*, *scroll of mind blank*, *scroll of sunburst*.

Rings, Rods, Staves, and Wands: *Lawful staff* (*Ultimate Equipment* 194), *lesser empower metamagic rod*, *ring of evasion*, *ring of protection* +3, *rod of escape* (*Ultimate Equipment* 181), *wand of cure serious wounds* (12 charges), *wand of death knell* (10 charges).

Wondrous Items: +2 *vicious bodywrap of mighty strikes* (*Ultimate Equipment* 214), *belt of giant strength* +4, *headband of mental superiority* +2, *lyre of building*, *scabbard of keen edges* (*Ultimate Equipment* 318), *tremor boots* (*Ultimate Equipment* 233), *vest of the cockroach* (*Ultimate Equipment* 223), and "Madman."

Madman is Hoshbagh's name for a grimy *ganji doll* (*Pathfinder Occult Adventures* 258) made of twisted strands of twine, resembling a seeded human creature with a

haunting smile and hollow eyes. Hoshbagh isn't sure where the doll came from but is willing to sell it to the PCs for its market price. Although it's not initially apparent, the *ganji doll* is attuned to Count Lowl's. Whenever its owner sleeps, she experiences vivid, violent dreams of Lowl's betrayal. When she awakens, the doll is always close by and positioned as if it had been watching the PC sleep.

HOSHBAGH CR 10

XP 9,600

Female otyugh occultist (tome eater) 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 223, *Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 46, 102)
N Large aberration

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17 (+8 natural, -1 size)

hp 113 (14d8+50)

Fort +10, **Ref** +4, **Will** +14

Immune disease

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee bite +12 (1d8+3 plus disease), 2 tentacles +8 (1d6+1 plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with tentacle)

Special Attacks constrict (1d6+1)

Occultist Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +9)
Constant—read magic

Implement Schools (9 generic focus)

Conjuration (book, 0 points)—Resonant casting focus; Focus servitor (summon monster III)

Divination (book, 0 points)—Resonant third eye; Focus sudden insight (+5)

Illusion (book, 0 points)—Resonant distortion; Focus minor figment

Occultist Spells Known (CL 8th; concentration +9)

3rd (2/day)—*arcane sight*, *major image* (DC 14), *sepia snake sigil* (DC 14)

2nd (4/day)—*create treasure map*^{APG}, *cure moderate wounds*, *invisibility*

1st (5/day)—*identify*, *mage armor*, *magic aura*

0 (at will)—*create water*, *detect psychic significance*^{OA}, *ghost sound* (DC 11)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 10, **Con** 15, **Int** 13, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +14 (+18 grapple); **CMD** 24

Feats Alertness, Extend Resonant Power^{OA}, Extra Focus Power^{OA}, Magical Aptitude, Skill Focus (Appraise), Toughness, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Appraise +20, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (arcana, history, planes) +8, Perception +20, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +13 (+21 in lair), Use Magic Device +15; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in lair

Languages Common, Undercommon

SQ bonded tome, devour books and scrolls, implements 4,

magic item skill +5, mental focus (9/day), object reading, word sense

Gear *scarlet and blue sphere ioun stone* (Stealth), spellbooks (2)

THE CRATER LAKE

When Xhamen-Dor crashed into the Parchlands just outside Neruzavin, the Great Old One's soft, fragmented body created only a modest crater, and its shockwave caused considerably less devastation than a denser meteorite might have. The desert rarely receives rain, but when it has, the water has pooled in the crater like a giant cistern. As if in defiance of its surroundings and the sun itself, the lake remains supernaturally chilly and seems unaffected by evaporation. Thanks to the minimal sediment and near absence of life, the water is a stunning ultramarine blue. The single factor disrupting its beauty is the water's mirrorlike reflection of its metaphysical surroundings, always showing a haunting skyline of metal, wood, and stone structures in all directions—a reflection of Carcosa, which the PCs visit in the final volume of this adventure.

At this point in the adventure, the PCs have little reason to explore the lake itself, except perhaps to find an alternate way into the Snarl, the jumble of fallen buildings on the lake's southern shore. See *Destroying the Star Seed* on page 52 if the PCs seek the remains of Xhamen-Dor.

A. THE HAUNTED TOWER

Neruzavin is a tangle of dark towers and illogical streets, and the PCs have little by which to navigate, much less knowledge of where to go next. Count Lowls and his expedition experienced similar difficulties, with his followers trailing after the increasingly frantic scholar as he babbled orders and exclaimed ill-founded certainties. Like a nightmarish echo chamber, Neruzavin has captured scenes from Lowls's mad perambulations, which now replay in fitful segments as the PCs travel through the city. At a crossroads, a PC might catch sight of a traveler turning down one of the paths. Elsewhere, a PC might hear the phantasmal proclamation, "We're turning right here; I have foreseen this path before," echoing several times. Later, the PCs might all hear the screaming of a delirious person from just out of sight and his comrades' worried observations that tendrils are growing from his skin and that they must burn the body. When the PCs reach

the likely scene, all they find is a charred stain on the ground, and once again, the hallucinatory travelers turn out of sight ahead. Until the PCs can reach Lowls's camp (area **A10**) and recover his notes, these haunting mirages are their only means to track the count.

A1. IN DEFIANCE OF HEAVEN (CR 14)

The visions lead to a dark, basalt tower 400 feet tall with severe corners and concave sides that nonetheless appear to bulge outward. Most notably, the tower has a broad set of stone double doors—an anomaly in the alien city. These doors are visible and accessible only to those infected with seedborne consumption (see page 13) or otherwise associated with the Great Old One Xhamen-Dor. Thanks to Lowls having sacrificed the PCs' minds at the beginning of the campaign, they are able to see and push open the doors with relative ease.

Creatures: Standing before the doors are two of the indistinct travelers. For once, they do not run. They speak to one another in distorted voices, seemingly unable to see the massive entrance nearby. From a distance, the shadow-shrouded travelers appear to be more of Lowls's phantom hirelings, but they are in fact the distorted forms of two powerful celestials; as the PCs approach, the outsiders' forms come into focus.

The Great Library of Harmonious Scripture on the fourth tier of Heaven is the authoritative archive of holy rites, angelic knowledge, and planar law. Within lies the Vault of Correction, a no less important but far less famous institution where archons keep guard over dangerous texts—and put the most impure



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to the torch in Heresy Ovens. Exscinder archons oversee this process, being specialists in handling and destroying blasphemies of all kinds. Upon hearing rumors that the vile *Necronomicon* might have escaped its mortal custodians, the forces of Heaven dispatched the archons Aumensilakos and Yrisolma to secure and obliterate the offending tome. They have tracked it to Neruzavin and are convinced that it hides somewhere within this tower. Unfortunately, they are unable to perceive the tower's doors, even with the aid of *true seeing*.

As the PCs approach, the Medium exscinders both turn to face them, leveling flaming swords toward the new arrivals. The two have starting attitudes of unfriendly, having lost much of their confidence in mortals' ability to handle their own problems. If any of the PCs is openly faithful to a lawful good deity, the archons' attitude is instead indifferent. They question the PCs' reasons for visiting this forsaken city, whether they are associated with the man who stole the *Necronomicon*, and if they have information that might assist in the recovery—and subsequent destruction—of that vile tome. Being good-aligned does not mean they are kind; in general, exscinder archons prioritize the curation and destruction of evils texts over the preservation of a few lives. The celestials latch onto any admissions that the PCs also seek the *Necronomicon*, demanding that the adventurers signal and deliver it to the two archons immediately once they find it. As the PCs might suspect (and will learn soon after reaching Lowls's camp), they need the tome to find Lowls and stop him. However, any

such pursuits are perversions of the archons' orders, and the two are adamant that Heaven's agents can address any peripheral threats in due time. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check can sense that beyond the *Necronomicon*'s recovery, the archons care little about Lowls and stopping his plans in a timely fashion. Despite their best intentions for the multiverse, the celestials represent an obstacle in the PCs' quest.

Unless the PCs are brazenly antagonistic or openly promote using the *Necronomicon* to doom Golarion, the archons see little reason to fight. They try to secure the PCs' cooperation in finding and then promptly surrendering the *Necronomicon*. The PCs can ensure that their next meeting with the archons goes more smoothly by succeeding at a DC 33 Bluff check to fake their promise to cooperate, a DC 25 Diplomacy check to avoid offending the outsiders, or a DC 30 Knowledge (arcana, dungeoneering, or planes) check to demonstrate an understanding of the *Necronomicon*'s dread power and show that they comprehend the dire consequences of the text being out in the world. Note that the archons can cast *discern lies* (DC 19), *detect thoughts* (DC 17), and *zone of truth* (DC 17) at will, making it difficult for the PCs to rely on deception. If the PCs speak respectfully of their encounter with the Keeper in the Mysterium, they gain a +5 bonus on this check to influence the archons. The archons are shocked to hear that the Keeper was corrupted, but honor their colleague's destruction in the line of duty and do not begrudge the PCs for ending the Keeper's existence.

AUMENSILAKOS AND YRISOLMA**CR 12****XP 19,200 each**Exscinder archons (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5 34*)**hp** 147 each

Treasure: The archons carry several treasures in the event they must pay mortals for compliance. Aumensilakos's satchel contains 80 platinum coins, each inset with a small diamond; each coin is worth 100 gp. Yrisolma carries the petrified heart of a Triaxian dragon-saint inlaid with minute verses of holy poems written in Draconic (worth 7,500 gp). The archons offer these treasures to the PCs only in exchange for the actual *Necronomicon*.

Development: If the PCs mollify the archons, they receive a +5 bonus on Charisma-based skill checks on future interactions with the exscinders, and the celestials depart to search other parts of the city. The pair assures the PCs that they will meet again before departing. Even if the PCs seem untrustworthy or ignorant, the archons withdraw for now.

Shortly after the PCs recover the *Necronomicon* and begin attuning the *Star Stelae*, they attract the attention of the archons once more. The pair revert to Huge size and descend in fiery glory before asking that the PCs report on what they've found, honor any deal they made with the archons, and surrender the tome in Heaven's name. The PCs can attempt to bypass the celestials' considerable lie-detection abilities, which requires a successful DC 38 Bluff check and successful Will saves against *detect thoughts*, *discern lies*, and *zone of truth*. Should either archon sense deception, they attack. If the PCs deceive them again, the archons scowl and depart once more. In this case, the PCs can complete most of this chapter without further celestial interference. However, near the end of this adventure, after the PCs attune all three *Star Stelae*, the exscinders attack invisibly and without mercy.

If the PCs have secured a *Necronomicon* forgery from Eshimal (see area **B6**) and succeed at their saves against the archons' lie-sensing magic, the celestials accept this tome as genuine. They thank the PCs and depart for Heaven. If the PCs wish to bargain, they can convince the archons to trade the treasures listed above for the *Necronomicon* with a successful DC 20 Diplomacy check.

A2. THE TWISTED HALL (CR 13)

So long as the PCs enter this area during the day, the scant sunlight that reaches this area provides dim illumination. Otherwise, this area is dark.

The walls of this hall bulge and curve with unsettlingly organic concavities. Thousands of sinuous etchings trace their way down the walls, as if the walls were scarred by roots or marred by burrowing worms fleeing some peril from above.

Three staircases arch, dip, and intertwine as they ascend dizzily to a series of hexagonal passageways.

Like much of the tower's interior, this chamber demonstrates eerily lifelike motifs and properties. In a PC's peripheral vision, the walls seem to flex and contract, as if the tower were breathing. The shallow, root-like conduits absorb any fluids like spilled blood and seem to channel it to some unknown source above by capillary action. The building's interior seems to bleed if damaged, oozing a viscous sap that smells like a rotting corpse. The stairs here ascend at inconsistent angles, sometimes climbing like ladders and other times descending several feet to weave underneath another staircase; ascending or descending is treated as traversing difficult terrain unless a creature has a natural climb speed.

Each staircase leads to a short hallway and a small, rounded chamber between 30 and 40 feet above the ground floor of area **A2**. Where the staircases cross, one passes approximately 10 feet over the other—a sufficiently modest distance that the seeded creatures here (see below) can harmlessly drop down from one or use one to clamber up to the staircase above.

Creatures: Before he departed Okeno, Lowls recruited more than a dozen mercenaries, cutthroats, and eldritch fanatics, including both those drawn to him by dreams and those lured to his side by the last of his gold. As the count explored Neruzavin and activated the *Star Stelae*, his hirelings gradually succumbed to seedborne consumption or fell prey to other seeded creatures that prowled the streets. By the time the PCs arrive, Lowls's latest cadre of minions has almost entirely transformed into seeded undead. Three of them lurk in this area.

KELSHAN**CR 10****XP 9,600**

Female seeded human fighter 10

NE Medium undead (augmented human)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12**DEFENSE****AC** 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)**hp** 99 (10d10+40); fast healing 5**Fort** +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5 (+3 vs. fear); +4 vs. mind-affecting effects**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +4; **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10**Weaknesses** transformed**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.**Melee** +2 *greataxe* +19/+14 (1d12+12/19–20, ×3), 2 tendrils +12 (1d6+3 plus grab and seedborne consumption)**Ranged** +1 *returning throwing axe* +15/+10 (1d6+11)**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tendrils)**Special Attacks** death burst, entrapping tendrils, insidious**WHAT GROWS WITHIN**

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mind, seedborne consumption (DC 18), weapon training (heavy blades +2, thrown +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Kelshan leads with ranged attacks with her throwing axe until opponents force her into melee. She then switches to her greataxe for melee combat, using Power Attack to deal additional damage if she isn't having trouble landing her attacks.

Morale Long unafraid of death, Kelshan fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 8, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +17 (+21 grapple); **CMD** 30

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (greataxe), Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Step Up, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Focus (throwing axe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (throwing axe)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Climb +13, Perception +12, Survival +9

Languages Common; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only)

SQ armor training 2

Gear +2 chainmail, +2 greataxe, +1 returning throwing axe, belt of giant strength +2, 130 gp

MAROK

CR 10

XP 9,600

Male seeded human sorcerer 10

NE Medium undead (augmented human)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural, +4 shield)

hp 117 (10d6+80); fast healing 5

Fort +5, **Ref** +9, **Will** +12; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10, fire 5

Weaknesses transformed

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee +1 *longspear* +7 (1d8+2/x3), 2 tendrils +1 (1d6+1 plus grab and seedborne consumption)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tendrils)

Special Attacks death burst, entrapping tendrils, insidious mind, seedborne consumption (DC 22)

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +17) 10/day—*minute meteors*

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 10th; concentration +17)

5th (4/day)—*lightning arc*^{UM} (DC 22)

4th (6/day)—*black tentacles*, *call lightning storm* (DC 21), *dimension door*

3rd (8/day)—*blink*, *fireball* (DC 20), *haste*, *lightning bolt* (DC 20)

2nd (8/day)—*eagle's splendor*, *flaming sphere* (DC 19), *glitterdust* (DC 19), *resist energy*, *scorching ray*

1st (8/day)—*ear-piercing scream*^{UM} (DC 18), *endure elements*, *grease*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *drench*^{UM} (DC 17), *mage hand*, *message*, *read magic*

Bloodline starsoul^{APG}

TACTICS

Before Combat Marok casts *mage armor* and uses his *wand of shield* on himself before entering combat.

During Combat Marok remains at a distance and rains down empowered offensive spells upon his foes, heedless of any collateral damage he may inflict upon his allies.

Morale With all concept of mortality lost to the seedborne consumption, Marok fights until destroyed.

Base Statistics Without his spells, Marok's statistics are **AC** 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +6 (+10 grapple); **CMD** 19

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Toughness

Skills Climb +9, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (planes) +11, Perception +13, Spellcraft +14

Languages Common, Kelish; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only)

SQ aurora borealis

Combat Gear *wand of shield* (34 charges); **Other Gear** +1 *longspear*, *cloak of resistance* +2, *headband of alluring charisma* +2, spell component pouch, 235 gp

SENDALA

CR 10

XP 9,600

Female seeded human ranger 10

NE Medium undead (augmented human)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 21 (+7 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 99 (10d10+40); fast healing 5

Fort +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, evasion; **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses transformed

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee mwk short sword +16/+11 (1d6+5/19-20), 2 tendrils +10 (1d6+2 plus grab and seedborne consumption)

Ranged +2 composite longbow +16/+11 (2d6+7/x3)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tendrils)

Special Attacks combat style (archery), death burst, entrapping tendrils, favored enemy (aberrations +2, humans +6, magical beasts +2), insidious mind

Day 20: Lowls has once again left to document the ruins. It amazes me that he can wander this "city" without running afoul of the monsters here. We have now suffered three different attacks in his absence, and the infernal whistling grows stronger every day. Why did he hire bodyguards if we were only going to sit around and sweat? Morale is low, and some are starting to desert. Jalhab left as soon as the count did. Good luck escaping without enough provisions.

Day 25: Screaming. We found Jalhab bound in bruise-colored fibers, and he kept screaming about the seeds within us all. He eventually passed out and refused food or water. It looks like deprivation and sunstroke.

Day 26: While Peera was checking Jalhab, he grabbed her by the throat and began strangling her. When we pulled them apart, part of Jalhab's hands were still attached to her neck. There weren't fingers, just bruise-colored fungus. Jalhab couldn't stop laughing, even though he didn't have hands anymore. When we confronted him, he threw himself from the tower and broke his body on the streets below. The corpse was gone less than an hour later, but nobody spotted any scavengers.

Day 30: The whistling's different. It's soothing, somehow. Maybe that's just how death seems a welcome end when suffering grows too terrible. We've lost another three: Iavos, Renal, and Peera. We burned Renal's body, but the smoke just made the others sick. Everyone has a haunted look, but at least two have told me I've the same expression. That's madness. Clearly they're the ones going mad. I can almost see their sickness as it stirs inside them. So thirsty. Just waiting to hatch.

HANDOUT

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +10)

3rd—*fickle winds*^{UM}

2nd—*versatile weapon*^{APG} (DC 15), *wind wall*

1st—*aspect of the falcon*^{APG}, *gravity bow*^{APG}, *longshot*^{UC}

TACTICS

Before Combat If she anticipates a fight, Sendala casts gravity bow.

During Combat Sendala prefers to provide ranged support to Kelshan from a distance, and favors her bow even if pressed into close quarters.

Morale Sendala fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without gravity bow, Sendala's statistics are **Ranged** +2 composite longbow +16/+11 (1d8+7/x3).

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +15 (+19 grapple); **CMD** 30

Feats Deadly Aim, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Master^{APG}, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Acrobatics +10 (+6 to jump), Climb +21, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +13, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nature) +8, Perception +16, Spellcraft +8, Survival +16

Languages Common; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only)

SQ favored terrains (desert +4, urban +2), hunter's bond (companions), swift tracker, track +5, wild empathy +13, woodland stride

Gear +1 agile breastplate^{APG}, +2 composite longbow (+5 Str)

with 20 arrows, mwk short sword, *ring of protection* +2, 840 gp

Development: The only surviving member of Lowls's expedition is **Havigan Krast** (N male human rogue 10), who is bound in a partial cocoon of seeded tendrils. Havigan has already been reduced to 0 Charisma by seedborne consumption (see page 13), putting him on an inexorable countdown to transformation into a seeded skulker. A PC who examines Havigan can easily assess that he is weak and delirious from starvation, but only by succeeding at a DC 30 Heal check can she note the nearly imperceptible symptoms of the disease. At this point, only powerful magic such as *limited wish* can save him.

Despite the gestating malevolence within his body, Havigan has enough motor control and will power to move without assistance, but he lacks the motivation to fight or engage in any task for more than a few minutes at a time. The only activities he partakes of willingly are keeping watch and babbling. Even then his contributions are minimal, as his crippling paranoia causes him to jump at the slightest movement, and his explanations often ramble into pessimistic predictions and warnings to run before it's too late.

Havigan can provide the PCs a disjointed account of Lowls's expedition into Neruzavin and his obsession with rune-inscribed columns (referring to the *Star Stelae* by name). He knows that one of the columns is near this tower, and the expedition's camp was set up

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“just outside, upstairs.” He once saw the *Necronomicon*, though being asked to remember anything about the book or hearing its title causes Havigan to shake uncontrollably with fear.

Ultimately, the doomed rogue serves as a lesson on what happens to Xhamen-Dor’s victims. When the PCs are resting or otherwise distracted later in this adventure, Havigan runs screaming into the city toward the crater lake. If the PCs prevent him from reaching the lake, he begins transforming into a seeded before their eyes. Putting him out of his misery is relatively simple at this point, but if they let him escape, he reappears later in the adventure as a seeded skulker.

A3. INVERTED ASCENT

This cylindrical room is empty, but is so tall as to have no apparent ceiling.

The ceiling is, in fact, 120 feet above the floor. Near the chamber’s lofty top is a short hallway that leads to an upper level (area A4), making this area seem much like an elevator shaft without any obvious or visible means of conveyance.

Hazard: The entire shaft has inverted gravity, equivalent to an ongoing (though nonmagical) *reverse gravity* spell (Reflex DC 20). One can reach area A4 by falling up, taking 12d6 points of falling damage in the process. Any effect that allows a more controlled descent—rope, a climb speed, a fly speed, or *feather fall*—can enable a PC traverse this area without taking damage.

A4. TEMPORARY CAMP (CR 12)

A few bedrolls, a handful of spilled grain, and the ashen stain of a long-dead fire occupy the center of this nearly triangular room. At one of the three vertices, a hole in the wall opens to the outdoors, well above the ground below.

Lowls first ordered that the expedition’s camp be set up outside in area A9. As the bivouac came under attack by local monsters and the mercenaries became increasingly ill and antsy, the company moved back inside and set up camp in here. Since then, Lowls has disappeared and his followers have become seeded, so nobody has had need of this camp’s food and gear.

Haunt: One by one, the mercenaries and fanatics succumbed to seedborne consumption here. Those who perished last lived out their final days in fear, waiting to see who would perish next.

SEEDBORNE TRANSFORMATION

CR 12

XP 19,200

NE persistent haunt (40-ft. radius)

Caster Level 12th

Notice Knowledge (religion) or Perception DC 25 (for affected creatures to sense a growing, unholy energy)
hp 54; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

Effect When this haunt triggers, the affected creatures can see a dozen of Lowls’s hirelings listlessly gathered around a small dung fire. Suddenly, one falls over and convulses as fungal tendrils emerge from his eyes. The others reach for weapons and begin striking their fallen comrade before heaving his corpse into the fire. The affected characters feel themselves being thrown to the ground and beaten before also being hurled into the fire. Affected creatures each take 4d6 points of bludgeoning damage and are then subject to a bull rush combat maneuver (CMB +15) that pushes them toward the center of the room. After the maneuver has resolved, the dung fire springs to unholy life, striking all creatures within 10 feet as per *flame strike* (Reflex DC 20). Any affected creature not damaged by the *flame strike* is instead exposed to seedborne consumption (Fortitude DC 20).

Destruction Destroying the vestige of Xhamen-Dor destroys this haunt (see Destroying the Star Seed on page 52).

A5. THE CONTORTION WELL

This cylindrical room is empty with a high ceiling.

This room stinks of sewage and filth, and the ceiling 80 feet above is thick with excrement and rubbish.

Hazard: Much like area A3, this room is subject to inverted gravity. For lack of a proper dumping ground, Lowls’s expedition threw their garbage and chamber pot contents in here. Anyone who takes falling damage from crashing into the ceiling is also subjected to filth fever (*Core Rulebook* 557).

Treasure: Among the refuse is a mercenary’s journal in which she records the sudden transformation and subsequent destruction of one of her comrades. Give the players the **Handout**.

A6. THE OUTER ASCENT

From the ground outside, this building did not appear to have any windows, doors, or other external features, yet this is clearly a walkway that wraps around the tower like a balcony without any railing. Like much of the tower’s architecture, it seems to defy common sense—including the perspective of the city. From the entrance looking east, the PCs can clearly see the city’s eastern quarter, but as they continue the path to the north, they instead see Neruzavin’s western skyline. Along the west side of the building, they see the east view again, and to the south it appears as though the tower were atop Neruzavin’s eastern mesa looking west. Attempting to reconcile these illogical scenes by standing at one of the corners causes feelings of vertigo, and attempting to fly around the tower clockwise or flying far away for a better perspective

results in the PC losing track of the walkway altogether, as if it were some optical illusion made real.

The path around the outside of the tower corkscrews up counterclockwise, leading to area **A7**. The walkway begins about 150 feet above the ground and ascends to a point about 250 feet off the ground.

A7. THE LOWER JUNGLE

Ropey strands of sickly fungus stretch across this rough-hewn chamber's walls. Vine-like growths hang down from the ceiling, some ascending through a ten-foot-wide aperture more than forty feet above.

As Xhamen-Dor stirs, growths such as these have begun sprouting across Neruzavin. For now, this is one of the few in existence, but as the PCs continue exploring the city, more and more appear. The infestation's heart is dozens of feet above in area **A8**. The PCs can climb up the fungus, which is relatively easy to scale (Climb DC 10), but the tight quarters and taut anchor lines that crisscross the area impose a –5 penalty on Fly checks for any creature that relies on wings or other nonmagical methods to fly. The fungus does burn when subjected to a steady source of fire, but it does not otherwise catch fire. It can also be hacked at using a slashing weapon.

A8. THE UPPER JUNGLE (CR 13)

Here the fungal growths are even denser, forming a thick mat of alien, organic matter whose many projections make for treacherous footing; movement along flat areas is treated as moving through difficult terrain for non-plant creatures. The same growths make for easy climbing and difficult flight—conditions identical to those in area **A7**.

The fungus obscures a staircase—the PCs can find it with a successful DC 20 Perception check—that leads up to area **A9**, and the doors to the east lead out to area **A10**, another part of the city where Lowl's original expedition camp stands.

Creatures: Portions of the fungus have attained otherworldly sentience and malevolence, and these hostile flora now lie in wait for suitable prey. Two of these are coils of fibers with immense mouthparts, which blend in with the surrounding “vegetation” partway up the east and west walls until they can strike. Much less subtle is the glowing, violet patch of fungus (a nulmind) that serves as a lure for prey. If the ambush goes awry, the animate fungus eagerly pursues prey into area **A7**.

ADVANCED MOONFLOWERS (2) CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 126 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 192)

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

NULMIND CR 11

XP 12,800

hp 142 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5* 184)

A9. THE ALAR STELA (CR 14)

The stairs from area **A8** ascend for nearly 200 feet to this room at the tower's summit.

The iron fittings here have crumbled to rust, and desiccated scraps of wood mark where furniture once stood in this nearly square chamber. Broad, short windows provide a commanding view of the city, indicating that this room is at the top of one of the tallest towers. At the room's center stands a twelve-foot-tall column with a single flat face inscribed with dozens of runes.

From here, the Ninshaburian scholar Upianshe oversaw the exploration of Neruzavin, and it was here she made her last stand against her infected colleagues before falling in battle.

The column is one of Neruzavin's *Star Stelae*, this one corresponding to the disorder of Alar.

Creature: The ghost of Upianshe haunts this area, though she spends much of her time staring out from the tower's roof at the barren city that is her tomb. She senses the intruders 3 rounds after they enter the area, at which point she casts several spells on herself and descends in a screaming rage to destroy the PCs.

UPIANSHE CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 140 (see page 58)

Development: Thanks to her spiritual rejuvenation ability, destroying Upianshe merely suppresses her rage for several days. As she recovers, she dismisses her blade, apologizes for any harm done, and inquires as to why the PCs have come to this accursed city. She is eager to assist in any pursuit that would avenge her long-dead colleagues' deaths, but she also recognizes that as a spirit she is bound to where she died until her tethers to the past are cut and her future purpose is clear. She has theories about how the PCs might help her—enough to guide them toward those goals without being painfully explicit—though she quickly becomes self-conscious the more she muses about her undead, subconscious limitations. See Upianshe's campaign role on page 58.

In order to perform the path to the black star occult ritual (see page 54), the PCs must perform the beckon the stars ritual here and attune this *Star Stela*. Both rituals appear in the *Necronomicon*, found in area **A10**.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully attune this *Star Stela*, grant them 51,200 XP. If they help grant Upianshe's soul rest by converting the sword *Teralindar's Honor* into

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an intelligent magic item, grant them an additional 38,400 XP. The sword can be found in area B5.

A10. Lowls's Camp (CR 14)

True to its inexplicable architecture, the tower's exit here opens into a different part of the city, despite the PCs having used an entrance hundreds of feet away. Even stranger is that the doors here appears to be at street level, despite the PCs having climbed hundreds of feet in and around the tower. There is no recognizable magic at work here, just the alien geometries of Neruzavin.

Four dun-colored tents stand in a crescent around a massive well covered with a cracked stone lid. Despite the audible whistling of wind, no air stirs the campsite.

Count Lowls chose this place to set up camp, though he spent few nights here. Instead, this is where his mercenaries and other followers stayed some days before seeking safety within the tower to the west. The tents are of water-resistant canvas (hardness 1, 3 hit points).

Creatures: As if attempting to track their former master, three of Lowls's hirelings have returned here as seeded husks. They listlessly search the area until Xhamen-Dor beckons with instructions. They are familiar with the valuables here, but what they long for are fresh victims to infect. Among the seeded is Thala of House Cato, a disenfranchised noblewoman who established herself as a merciless mercenary captain in order to reclaim some shred of her family's lost glory.

THALA OF HOUSE CATO CR 12

XP 19,200

Female human seeded fighter 12 (see page 90)

NE Medium undead (augmented human)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 11, flat-footed 28 (+11 armor, +1 Dex, +2 natural, +5 shield)

hp 154 (12d8+84); fast healing 5

Fort +15, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6 (+3 vs. fear); +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses transformed

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee +2 *light flail* +23/+18/+13 (1d8+12), 2 tendrils +13 (1d4+3 plus grab and seedborne consumption)

Ranged *spined shield* +14 (1d10+2/19-20)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tendrils)

Special Attacks death burst, entrapping tendrils, insidious mind, seedborne consumption (DC 21), weapon training (flails +2, thrown +1)

TACTICS

Before Combat If Thala anticipates trouble, she consumes her *potion of eagle's splendor*. She then bursts from cover, hoping to draw attention and lure foes to where she and her allies can coordinate their attacks.

During Combat Thala focuses on disarming, tripping, and dispatching melee threats, buying her subordinates time to attack and maneuver with impunity. She avoids grappling foes unless she can dedicate her full attention to pinning and infecting her victims.

Morale Thala fights until destroyed.

Base Statistics Without her potion, Thala's statistics are

Cha 16; **Skills** Intimidate +18.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +22 (+26 disarm and trip); **CMD** 33 (35 vs. disarm and trip)



THALA OF HOUSE CATO

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Greater Disarm, Greater Shield Focus, Greater Shield Specialization^{APG}, Greater Trip, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Lunge, Shield Focus, Shield Specialization^{APG}, Toughness, Weapon Focus (light flail), Weapon Specialization (light flail)

Skills Climb +26, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Profession (gambler) +9, Survival +15, Swim +18

Languages Common, Dwarven; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only)

SQ armor training 3

Combat Gear *potion of eagle's splendor*; **Other Gear** +2 full plate, spined shield, +2 light flail, cloak of resistance +2, gloves of swimming and climbing, rope of climbing, hammer, miner's pick, pitons (5), silk rope (100 ft.), 188 gp

CARSATHI CR 10

XP 9,600

Female seeded human cleric of Xhamen-Dor 10 (see page 90)
NE Medium undead (augmented human)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

Aura aura of decay

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)

hp 98 (10d8+50); fast healing 5

Fort +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +12; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses transformed

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor), climb 30 ft.

Melee +2 spear +13/+8 (1d8+6/x3), 2 tendrils +5 (1d6+1 plus grab and seedborne consumption)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tendrils)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 7/day (DC 21, 5d6), death burst, entrapping tendrils, insidious mind, seedborne consumption (DC 19), sudden shift, wooden fists (+5, 8 rounds/day)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +15)
At will—master's illusion (10 rounds/day)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +15)
5th—*flame strike* (DC 20), *true seeing*, *wall of stone*, *wall of thorns*^o

4th—*air walk*, *confusion*^o (DC 19), *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *inflict critical wounds* (DC 19)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 18), *blindness/deafness* (DC 18), *contagion*^o (DC 18), *dispel magic*, *invisibility purge*

2nd—*bull's strength*, *inflict moderate wounds* (DC 17, 2), *mirror image*^o, *resist energy*, *shatter* (DC 17)

1st—*command* (DC 16), *divine favor*, *doom* (DC 16), *entangle*^o (DC 16), *murderous command*^{um} (DC 16), *protection from good*, *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *resistance*

D Domain spell; Domains Plant (Decay subdomain), Trickery (Deception subdomain)

TACTICS

Before Combat When the PCs get within 30 feet of Carsathi, she activates her aura of decay ability.

During Combat Carsathi uses her spells to hinder opponents and bolster her allies.

Morale Carsathi fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Channel, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness, Weapon Focus (spear)

Skills Acrobatics –1 (–5 to jump), Climb +8, Knowledge (planes) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Perception +15, Spellcraft +13

Languages Common; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only)

Combat Gear *scrolls of flame strike* (2), *scroll of slay living*;

Other Gear +1 breastplate, +2 spear, 398 gp

KEETOS CR 10

XP 9,600

Male seeded human slayer 10 (see page 90, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 53)

NE Medium undead (augmented human)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)

hp 88 (10d8+40); fast healing 5

Fort +7, **Ref** +11, **Will** +5; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, evasion; **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses transformed

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee +1 short sword +13/+8 (1d6+5/19–20), +1 short sword +13/+8 (1d6+3/19–20), 2 tendrils +9 (1d6+2 plus grab and seedborne consumption)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tendrils)

Special Attacks death burst, entrapping tendrils, insidious mind, seedborne consumption (DC 19), sneak attack +3d6, studied target +3 (3rd, swift action)

TACTICS

Before Combat Keetos consumes his *potion of barkskin* and hides just inside the tent flap of the westernmost tent, waiting for a victim to walk close enough for him to launch an ambush.

During Combat Keetos maneuvers to play any creature disabled by Thala. If few visible targets remain, he attempts to pin and infect an opponent to prepare it for infestation with seedborne consumption.

Morale Keetos fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

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

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Base Atk +10; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 29

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-weapon Fighting, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Two-weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +17, Climb +11, Intimidate +17, Perception +15, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +16, Survival +15

Languages Common; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only)

SQ combat style (two-weapon combat), slayer talents (bleeding attack +3, evasion^{UC}, finesse rogue, poison use^{ACG}, ranger combat style^{ACG}), stalker, track +5

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin*, *potion of invisibility*;

Other Gear +2 *chain shirt*, +1 *short swords* (2), 580 gp

Treasure: The PCs have some time to recover and explore before a new calamity strikes (see Development on page 31). Among the tents, the PCs can find enough rations, feed, and water to sustain them for several weeks, plus 500 feet of hemp rope, ample writing supplies, and a modest amount of any other mundane equipment that the PCs might want. Lowls also left behind a *bag of holding I* that contains three noble's outfits of Ustalavic style, a sun-bleached parasol, several journals of his notes, and two dozen books covering an array of eldritch subjects. Most importantly, the PCs find the *Necronomicon*. Lowls cast this aside as he concluded the path to the black star occult ritual, having realized too late the cost of employing its darkest techniques. The ritual swept him to Carcosa moments later, leaving him at the mercy of that alien realm.

This camp represents an invaluable look into Lowls's insights and motivations, providing the GM an opportunity to convey any discoveries the PC might have missed earlier in the campaign, reveal Lowls's evolving intentions for coming to Neruzavin, and foreshadow what will occur if the PCs do not intervene. The count's journal entries after departing Thrushmoor grow increasingly frenetic, and his handwriting more exaggerated. He records with excitement his acquisition of the *Necronomicon*, abandonment of Miacknian Mun, and initial discoveries while setting forth for the Parchlands. Each morning, he records his dreams, expressing waning interest in scholarly discoveries and greater obsession with a being called Xhamen-Dor. According to Lowls, the eldritch terror known as Xhamen-Dor dwells within an accursed city in the Parchlands, where it gathers the strength and converts it needs to awaken and consume the world. Rather than express dismay, the count conveys his fanatic delight, writing of his desire to call to the black star and "make our two worlds one under the Yellow Sign."

By reviewing Lowls's notes both in his journal and on pieces of paper he slipped between pages of the *Necronomicon*, the PCs should learn the following key facts about the count.

- Lowls is obsessed with one or more eldritch masters, whom he seeks to serve by completing a number of occult rituals. He has planned to take Xhamen-Dor into his body and journey to Carcosa to offer himself to Hastur so that the King in Yellow can gain enough power to become an Outer God.
- Much like Thrushmoor, the accursed city of Neruzavin holds three *Star Stelae* that the count awakened in order to perform a ritual he learned from the *Necronomicon*: the path to the black star occult ritual.
- Upon completing the ritual, Lowls planned to travel to the unholy domain of the King in Yellow, where he hoped to attune its *Star Stelae* and offer Golarion to his new master.

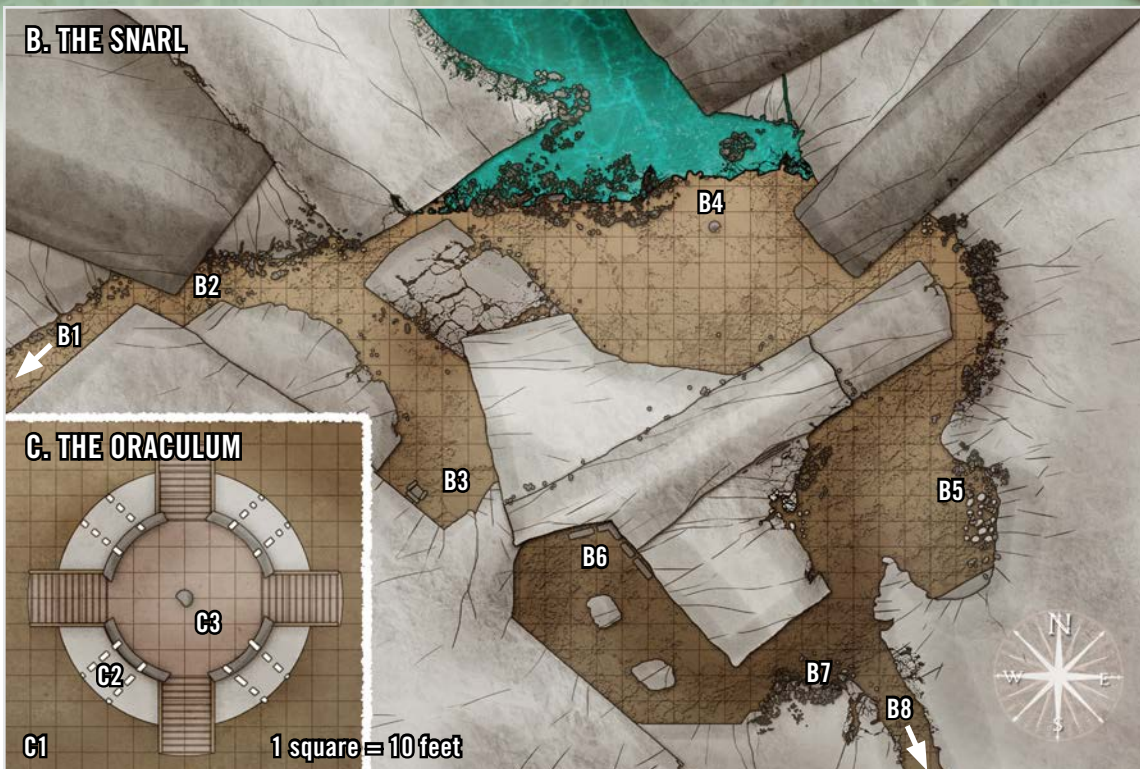
If Kaklatath is present, it expresses great dismay and corroborates everything the PCs have learned. As it explains, the King in Yellow is an immensely powerful demigod served by aberrant beasts of all kinds, and Xhamen-Dor was his most powerful weapon: a foul fungus entity that consumed entire worlds and siphoned their essence to grow the Unspeakable One's realm. The yithians have fought the Yellow King's servants throughout time and space since time immemorial, and believed Xhamen-Dor destroyed and its remains obliterated. If the name Xhamen-Dor is known on Golarion, Kaklatath believes it likely that the Great Old One may lie here dormant, yet still dangerous—perhaps in this very city!

It continues to explain that the Great Race of Yith won a victory on Golarion eons ago, when snakes strode on legs and humanity was young. They destroyed most of the King in Yellow's servants and sealed others deep beneath the earth. A few of the Great Race remained behind as guardians—among them Kaklatath—slumbering in wait should Golarion come under attack once more. That Kaklatath is unable to return to its natural body suggests something has destroyed the slumbering yithians. That leaves the PCs few allies in pursuing Lowls, whose scheme could corrupt this world.

In case Kaklatath does not travel with the PCs, they find an abridged but vaguer report by Lowls that conveys similar information.

If the PCs are to intervene, they will need to follow Lowls by performing the same ritual he did. The count's notes are sufficient to identify where the three *Star Stelae* in Neruzavin stand, and he has marked several pages in the *Necronomicon* that present occult rituals of note. Remember that this copy of the *Necronomicon* is written in Necril, so if the PCs do not have the means to translate the tome, they must find someone who can; the heresy devil Eshimal in area B6 is one such resource.

From his notes they also discover the only way to stop Thrushmoor from being forcibly drawn into Carcosa: they must activate three *Star Stelae* in Carcosa and defeat



whoever is in control of the reflection of Thrushmoor already forming in that alien city.

Development: As the PCs uncover the first hints of Lowls's plan and learn from Kaklatath of the yithians' mortal enemies, the whistling wind intensifies, and a powerful beast from deep below Neruzavin rushes to the surface. Begin the next encounter immediately.

Story Award: If the PCs recover the *Necronomicon* and secure some means to read it, grant them 51,200 XP.

THE SHATTERED WELL (CR 14)

The stone well cover shatters as a translucent worm covered in screeching maws and bloodshot eyes springs up from deep below the city. As it does, the tents begin to tear free of their anchors and papers fly about, blown by the intense winds that gutter from the well in the creature's wake.

Creature: Lowls's activation of the *Star Stelae* did not go unnoticed. In Neruzavin's undercity, the sociopathic flying polyps sensed the rituals of their patron, Hastur. Millennia of decay and seismic activity have weakened the yithians' seals, and the first of many flying polyps has resuscitated. Upon reaching the surface, it resumes what it began eons ago: wage war on Golarion, starting with the PCs.

FLYING POLYP CR 14
XP 38,400
 hp 207 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 106)

Development: As the dust settles, Kaklatath continues to express its alarm and the urgency of the PCs intervening, punctuating its statements by pointing at the dead polyp. The yithian posits that if one flying polyp is free, others are sure to follow in time. Kaklatath seems very concerned about this development and explains the various dangers that flying polyps present to the world as a way to convince the PCs to not ignore this development.

There are several major threats and goals facing the PCs, and it's up to them to decide what they do first; this adventure assumes they will explore Neruzavin's surface level. If they decide to explore belowground first, Kaklatath might suggest ensuring any surface dangers are not able to follow the PCs down.

ATTUNING THE STAR STELAE

In order to follow Count Lowls to Carcosa and prevent Thrushmoor from being drawn into the city, the PCs must master and perform the beckon the stars occult ritual to attune Neruzavin's three *Star Stelae*.

BECKON THE STARS

School conjuration (teleportation); **Level** 3

Casting Time 30 minutes

Components V, S, SC (up to 4)

Skill Checks Knowledge (arcana) DC 28, 1 success; Knowledge (dungeoneering) DC 25, 1 success; Spellcraft DC 28, 1 success

Range touch

Target one *Star Stela*

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Duration 12 hours/character level of the primary caster

Saving Throw none; **SR** no

Backlash The primary caster takes 4d6 points of damage, plus 1d6 points of damage for each secondary caster.

Failure Each of the casters is affected by *nightmare* the next time he or she sleeps (Will DC 20 negates).

EFFECT

The primary caster uses the *Star Stela* to call to distant worlds and entities, attuning the stone to those energies and subjecting all creatures within 60 feet to those distant entities' spying eyes for the ritual's duration. Once active, a stela's flattened face glows softly with several yellow, eldritch runes. This ritual has no other effect on its own, but it is an important preliminary step in preparing and performing the path to the black star occult ritual (see page 52)

B. THE SNARL

After its flying polyp creators had been sealed away, Neruzavin's haunting towers stood foreboding, silent, and unscathed by time for millennia. All that changed with Earthfall, the cosmic cataclysm that snuffed out the Azlanti Empire. As the *Starstone* struck far to the west, the last surviving blot of Xhamen-Dor plummeted toward Neruzavin, called by the *Star Stelae* and the city's own buried evils. Xhamen-Dor crashed just to the northwest of Neruzavin, obliterating dozens of buildings and causing dozens more near the crater to topple and crash into one another. This chaotic logjam of stone skyscrapers has remained little altered ever since, attracting a host of depraved tenants that reside in the network of irregular spaces between fallen buildings. The city's inhabitants know this region simply as the Snarl.

There are three entrances into the Snarl: one partway up the mound to the west (area **B1**), one near street level to the south (area **B8**), and a submerged tunnel that lets out about 30 feet below the surface of the crater lake to the north (allowing swimming access to area **B4**). The western entrance is the easiest to spot, but requires scaling toppled stone structures (Climb DC 15) to a height of about 70 feet above street level. The PCs

can find the southern entrance with a successful DC 20 Perception check attempted while walking the Snarl's perimeter, or they can learn of this entrance from Hoshbagh. The otyugh refuses to accompany the PCs inside, even though she occasionally makes forays there to sniff around the devil Eshimal's belongings (area **B6**) or to hide some of her own treasures. Finding the submerged tunnel requires the PCs to succeed at a DC 15 Perception check while exploring underwater.

The Snarl's interior is dark, and the irregular and broken surfaces create difficult terrain except where noted. With the exception of a few small branching tunnels that terminate in dead ends, both the southern and western routes are twisting jumbles of low caves connected by cramped passages. The tunnels are spacious enough for a Large creature to navigate, but a Huge creature must succeed at a DC 30 Escape Artist check, employ well-informed teleportation, or use the submerged entrance to the north to get into the Snarl's central caverns.

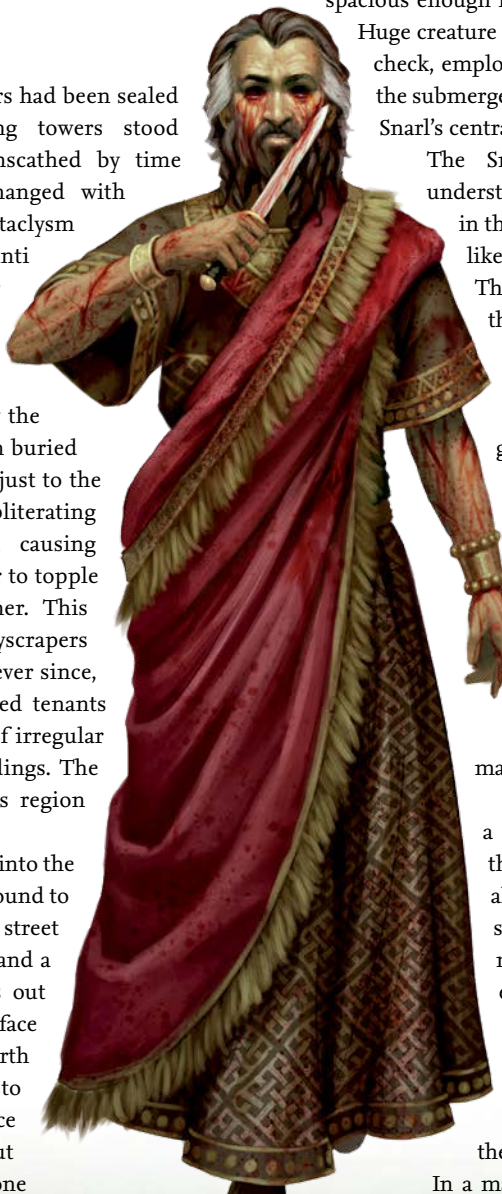
The Snarl's inhabitants have a mutual understanding that conflict among them is, in the grand scheme of things, pointless—like virtually everything else in this world. They occasionally commiserate about the inevitable collapse of civilization, the world, and the multiverse, but they spend most of their existence in solitary contemplation of the gods' failures, the rejection of moral principles, and the cynical dismissal of existence itself.

B1. THE WESTERN APPROACH (CR 14)

Approaching from the west involves treading over the slanting corpses of fallen towers for more than 300 feet before reaching the mapped area.

Creature: Although the aboleths were a primary factor in the rise of Azlant, the legendary human civilization also received guidance from less storied sources. Among these was the manasaputra Aeptolinu, who quietly encouraged the spread of many Azlanti colonies. Aeptolinu took considerable pride in his work and his charges' accomplishments, but like so many Azlanti, he was blind to the aboleths' plan to eliminate humanity.

In a matter of seconds, he saw the *Starstone* and the accompanying meteorites crash into Golarion and wipe out all he had helped create.



AEPTOLINU

Dismayed, he wandered the world, hoping to find somewhere the Azlanti could rebuild. Instead he found Neruzavin, and the horrors within revealed a future of terror and despair, shattering what was left of his faith. He now haunts the Snarl, unable to tear himself from the vestiges of the city that should be a sign of achievement, but is instead a legacy of madness.

As the PCs approach the Snarl's core from the west, Aeptolinu clammers up from deeper in the cave and greets them (if the PCs take the southern approach, he greets them in area **B8**). Aeptolinu appears to be a malnourished yet proud Azlanti man; however, if the PCs pierce his disguise, they can see his true form: a bronze-skinned Azlanti nobleman in bloodstained clothing with empty, scarred eye sockets and a body torn and bleeding from self-inflicted wounds. Despite his torment, he stoically masks his pain and introduces himself. If any of the PCs are human, he bows deeply to them, acknowledging them as the children of Azlant. Aeptolinu's spirit is fractured on a deep and virtually irreparable level, yet despite his crippling pessimism, it is his instinct to serve and enlighten.

If the PCs are willing to have him along by their side, Aeptolinu serves as a guide throughout the Snarl, sharing his disjointed memory of the past millennia and the claustrophobic region's inhabitants. In this way, the manasaputra can act as a mouthpiece for the GM, providing additional yet cryptic information to help explain Neruzavin's history and the background of any Snarl residents the PCs meet but quickly kill. At times he is especially quiet and distant, at other times engaged and talkative. Even when energetic, his most optimistic statements conclude in nihilistic statements. The following are several likely questions the PCs might ask and his answers.

How long have you been here? "I have survived only because oblivion has not yet won, and in that time I have seen empires rise, only to be crushed for the hubris of aspiring to be anything more than beasts. I shall remain until humanity learns to surpass these tragedies, yet even I know how it all must end."

How have you survived this long? "So long as the failures of history endure, so shall I. Follow. Learn."

Do you know where the Star Stela is? "The star-marked pillar is within the Snarl. I thought humanity wise enough not to seek Carcosa's blessing, but they have failed before and will fail many times more."

Are you friend or foe? "There are neither friends nor foes here—only truths that few are strong enough to endure. I can guide you and assist."

AEPTOLINU CR 14

XP 38,400

Male variant broken soul manu (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 24, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 163)

UNSPEAKABLE ONE'S VESTMENTS

As Carcosa appears in the night sky, its yellow light washes over Hastur's cultists and sometimes transforms their fine apparel into ritual vestments. These the cursed robes inevitably drive the chosen priests mad with power.

UNSPEAKABLE ONE'S VESTMENTS

SLOT body	CL 15th	WEIGHT 1 lb.
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AURA strong varied

This robe functions much as a *robe of stars*, granting its wearer the luck bonus on saving throws, astral travel, and ability to create shuriken made of magically hardened gold. In addition, the wearer gains a +4 armor bonus to his AC.

The robe's curse activates after 1 month of being worn regularly, or just as a creature whose patron is Hastur or Xhamen-Dor affects the wearer with a spell or special ability. The wearer loses his luck bonus on saving throws against such effects and instead takes a -4 penalty on those saves. While the curse persists, the wearer takes 1d4 points of Wisdom drain every time he uses the robe to access the Astral Plane, and the shuriken created are +5 *anarchic shuriken*. After another month of continuous use, the wearer permanently becomes chaotic evil and pursues increasingly delusional goals of domination, enrichment, or anarchy. Once donned, this robe can be removed only with a *remove curse* spell.

INTENDED MAGIC ITEM

robe of stars

LG Medium outsider (extraplanar, good, lawful, manasaputra)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +25

Aura unity (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 27, flat-footed 22 (+3 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 soul armor)

hp 178 (17d10+85)

Fort +11, **Ref** +14, **Will** +15; +2 vs. enchantment

DR 5/-; **Immune** calling, disease, poison; **Resist** adaptive 10, acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5, sonic 5; **SR** 23

OFFENSE

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

Melee torturous touch +18 touch (2d6 plus 1d6 Dex damage and convulsions) or

4 slams +18 (1d10+1)

Special Attacks agonized wail (DC 21), baleful gaze (DC 21), failed by humanity

Psychic Magic (CL 12th; concentration +7)

25 PE—*analyze aura*^{OA} (3 PE), *aversion*^{OA} (2 PE, DC 17), *enshroud thoughts*^{OA} (2 PE), *mind thrust* VI^{OA} (6 PE, DC 21), *psychic asylum*^{OA} (5 PE), *psychic crush* I^{OA} (5 PE, DC 20), *quintessence*^{OA} (1 PE)

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Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th; concentration +12)

At will—*greater teleport* (self only), *plane shift* (self only)

TACTICS

During Combat Aeptolinu's disguise melts away as a free action, exposing his foes to his baleful, bloody gaze. He then uses his agonized wail and psychic magic to scatter enemies before flensing and bludgeoning them into submission. He favors human opponents, berating them for their millennia of failures.

Morale Death would be a mercy to Aeptolinu, and he fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 19, **Con** 18, **Int** 14, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 45

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Diehard, Dodge, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Toughness, Whirlwind Attack, Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +18 (+14 to jump), Diplomacy +23, Fly +12, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge

(history) +20, Knowledge (local) +20, Knowledge

(planes) +20, Perception +25, Sense Motive +22; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Intimidate

Languages Azlanti, Celestial, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ creature bond, formless, no breath, positive energy affinity, subjective appearance

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Failed by Humanity (Ex) Aeptolinu holds a grudge against humans for their constant failures since Azlant's destruction, granting him a +2 bonus on attack and damage rolls against human opponents. Humans take a -2 penalty on saving throws against his special abilities. This ability replaces the broken soul's scar tissue special ability.

Development: All the Snarl's residents recognize Aeptolinu and are ambivalent to him, even if he indirectly assists the PCs. While traveling with the PCs, Aeptolinu stays out of combat but uses his aura of unity to help any human PCs; he does not assist humans with Will saves, instead using the results to shape his perception of his new charges. He is unaffected by all of the Snarl's haunts and therefore sees no reason to warn the PCs about them.

B2. FAILUREHALL (CR 13)

Chipped basalt towers form a hallway of jarring angles. Each of the dark, smoothed surfaces bears hundreds of chalky messages as if every wall, floor, and ceiling served as a blackboard.

Aeptolinu has filled this hall with thousands of statements of Azlant's lost glory and how it failed, though at times he has heard and recorded the failures of ongoing events throughout the world.

Haunt: Each PC has failed society somehow—including any crimes committed in service to Count Lowls. The PCs' misdeeds are recorded here as well.

CONDEMNATION OF FAILURE CR 13

XP 25,600

NE unyielding haunt (60-ft. radius)

Caster Level 13th

Notice Linguistics or Perception DC 25 (for affected creatures to be able to see the words begin to crawl and glow)

hp 26; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

Effect When this haunt triggers, dozens of



THE SAFFRON PRINCE

inscriptions begin to glow and project illusory vignettes of the failures they record. Each of the affected creatures sees one of its own failures, subjecting it to a crippling wave of regret and nihilistic despair. All creatures with an Intelligence score of at least 3 in the haunt's area gain 1d4 negative levels (DC 16 Fortitude half).

Special Unlike most haunts, the condemnation of failure resists its victims' attempts to neutralize it. It attempts a saving throw with a +15 bonus against any attempt to neutralize the haunt before it manifests. Any time the haunt succeeds at such a saving throw against an effect that would normally deal it damage, the haunt instead takes no damage.

Destruction The haunt is destroyed if Aeptolinu is dead and a nonevil creature casts *atonement* while inside the haunt's area to purge it of its guilt.

Treasure: The manasaputra's writings are all very disjointed and skewed with pessimism, yet there is still a wealth of information that would be valuable to a historian if properly catalogued. With 12 hours of work and several dozen sheets of paper, a PC can create a copy these inscriptions worth 2,000 gp to an ancient historian. If the PC succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (history) or Profession (scribe) check, she is able to filter out biases and make a more coherent record, doubling the manuscript's value.

B3. THE SAFFRON THRONE (CR 14)

A smoothed swath of rubble ascends in a lazy spiral to a large throne constructed of uneven basalt slabs.

Creature: Each inhabitant of the Snarl copes with the multiverse's cruelty in different ways, and none embraces those cold realities so wholeheartedly as the self-styled Saffron Prince. Like all dorvae, it is utterly selfish and without empathy. Its stubborn independence faltered when it first learned of Hastur, but unlike the King in Yellow's pawns, the dorvae arrogantly decided that it could amass the personal wealth and power necessary to surpass the Great Old One by feigning obedience and overthrowing its "master" later. Aiding the Saffron Prince is a powerful robe it stole from Hastur's cult. What the dorvae did not know is that the robe is cursed to feed the wearer's delusions of grandeur, making the Saffron Prince an unsuspecting puppet should the King in Yellow ever demand service of this puny protégé.

The Saffron Prince lounges across its throne, surveying its imaginary kingdom and devising intricate ways to torment its nonexistent minions. When the PCs arrive, the dorvae straightens and commands them to bow before their sovereign, the Saffron Prince. Signs of deference feed the dorvae's ego, and it briefly inquires

TERALINDAR'S HONOR

This sword hosts the spirit of her last wielder, the warrior-scholar Upianshe. She is utterly driven to destroy the aberrant villains that killed her expedition.

TERALINDAR'S HONOR

PRICE
48,535 GP

SLOT none **CL** 13th **WEIGHT** 6 lbs.

AURA strong conjuration and divination

ALIGNMENT chaotic neutral

SENSES 60 ft., darkvision, read magic

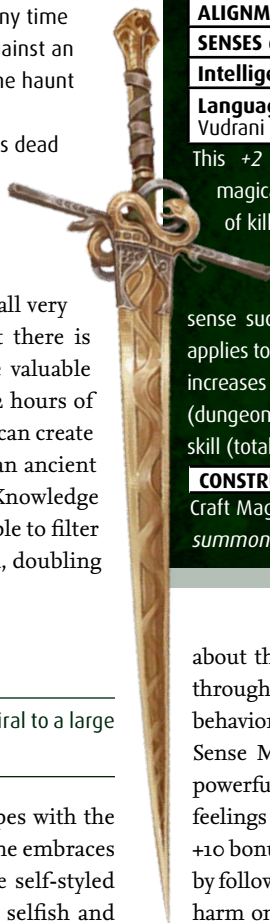
Intelligence 20 **Wisdom** 13 **Charisma** 14 **Ego** 17

Language Aklo, Azlanti, Common, Draconic, Kelish, Vudrani

This +2 *aberration-bane bastard sword* is made of magically hardened bronze and has the special purpose of killing aberrations and creatures intrinsically tied to Xhamen-Dor (including seeded undead and the dormant Star Seed). Upianshe's spirit can sense such foes within 60 feet, her bane enchantment applies to them, and against them her critical hit multiplier increases to ×3. Finally, she can attempt Knowledge (dungeoneering) checks as though she had 5 ranks in the skill (total +13 bonus).

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS **COST** 24,435 GP

Craft Magical Arms and Armor, *detect aberration*^{APG}, *summon monster I*



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about the PCs' motives before losing interest halfway through their explanation. After studying the dorvae's behavior for 1 minute, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check can determine that the fiend is powerful yet susceptible to anything that feeds its feelings of superiority. The PCs can gain as much as a +10 bonus on Bluff checks to deceive the Saffron Prince by following its depraved orders, such as instructions to harm one another, loudly profess their loyalty to their new monarch, destroy objects sacred to good-aligned deities, or even run bloodthirsty errands. The dorvae might task the PCs with slaying other inhabitants of Neruzavin and bringing back proof, though its increasingly depraved specifications could push PCs' alignment toward evil if they follow its orders to the letter.

Despite the dorvae's delusions, it is a dangerous opponent and an expert manipulator. It's very possible that the PCs and it might deceive each other without anyone knowing what is true. Ultimately, nothing the PCs do is enough to satisfy the fiend, and it is unconcerned about their feelings and wellbeing. Even if the prince's rewards (such as granting its champion a "blessing" in the form of *bestow curse*) or abuse (such as striking naysayers with *feeblemind*) don't convince the PCs to fight back, eventually it grows so hateful and paranoid that it seeks out the PCs and attacks them before they can betray it.

THE SAFFRON PRINCE CR 14

XP 38,400

Dorvae mesmerist 7 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 62, *Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 38)

NE Medium outsider (evil)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *see invisibility*; Perception +30

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 16, flat-footed 22 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 natural)

hp 209 (20 HD; 7d8+13d10+107)

Fort +12, **Ref** +19, **Will** +21

DR 10/good; **Immune** mind-affecting effects, poison; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee 2 claws +25 (3d8+6/19–20 plus grab)

Special Attacks bold stare (disorientation, psychic inception), hypnotic stare (–2), manifold tricks (2 tricks), mental potency (+1), mesmerist tricks 9/day (compel alacrity, mask misery, mesmeric mirror, spectral smoke), painful stare (+3 or +2d6), writhing snakes

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +17)

Constant—*see invisibility*

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 18)

3/day—*bestow curse* (DC 20), *dimension door*

1/day—*feblemind* (DC 21), *lesser geas* (DC 20)

Mesmerist Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +13)

3rd (2/day)—*crushing despair* (DC 19), *displacement*

2nd (5/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 18), *glitterdust*

(DC 18), *haunting mists*^{UM} (DC 18), *invisibility*

1st (6/day)—*color spray* (DC 17), *command* (DC 17),

mental block^{OA} (DC 17), *murderous command*^{UM}

(DC 17), *ray of sickening*^{UM} (DC 17)

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *detect psychic significance*^{OA}, *ghost sound* (DC 16), *mage hand*, *open/close* (DC 16)

TACTICS

Before Combat If it expects combat, the Saffron Prince casts *displacement* on itself.

During Combat The Saffron Prince uses its hypnotic stare and spells to disable dangerous foes before turning its deadly natural attacks against vulnerable enemies.

Morale If reduced to 40 or fewer hit points, the Saffron Prince attempts to escape via *dimension door*. Once it has recovered or spies the PCs in a moment of weakness, it attacks again and fights until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 21, **Con** 20, **Int** 19, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +23 (+27 grapple); **CMD** 40

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Sidestep^{APG}, Intimidating Glance^{OA}, Mobility, Sidestep^{APG}, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Acrobatics +28, Bluff +32, Diplomacy +29, Fly +22, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (planes) +27, Knowledge

(religion) +27, Perception +30, Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +17, Stealth +28

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Common, Infernal; telepathy 50 ft.

SQ consummate liar +3, touch treatment 9/day (moderate)

Gear *Unspeakable One's Vestments*, golden crown (worth 4,000 gp)

B4. THE CARCOSA STELA (CR 14)

More than a dozen immense stone towers crisscross messily above, forming a manner of roof for this large cavern. Broken basalt scree creates a beach that slopes gently into the water to the north. A nearly cylindrical pillar stands near the shore.

The impact of Xhamen-Dor fragmented the street and foundations that once stood here, but unlike the rest of the Snarl, the ground here is not treated as difficult terrain. The only light is what little is reflected up the tunnel from the sun outside.

The column is one of Neruzavin's *Star Stelae*, this one corresponding to the nihilism of Carcosa. Even as the towers toppled around it, by some dark miracle the stela survived unscathed, sheltered by the Snarl. The PCs can reactivate the stela using the beckon the stars ritual found in the *Necronomicon*.

Creatures: On the rare occasions that the Snarl's inhabitants wish to commune with Xhamen-Dor, they come here and convey their thoughts to the Star Seed's "favored" servant—a powerful seeded chuul that claims to speak for the Great Old One. In truth, Xhamen-Dor is hardly cognizant of the chuul's existence and has provided it no blessings beyond undead oblivion. The self-styled Speaker of the Deep lurks in the northern entrance tunnel with two fungoid sirens that tore themselves free from Xhamen-Dor's recuperating corpse and now follow the chuul's orders.

If the PCs approach from the north, the three guardians strike while their prey are underwater. If the PCs approach from other entrances, the fungoid sirens attempt to lure the intruders to the edge of the water using their mirage ability, where the Speaker ambushes its prey.

FUNGOID SIRENS (2) CR 9

XP 6,400 each

NE sargassum fiends (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 235)

hp 123 each

SPEAKER FOR THE DEEP CR 13

XP 25,600

Advanced variant seeded chuul (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 46)

CE Large undead (aquatic, augmented aberration)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +28

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 21 (+3 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size)

hp 189 (18d8+108); fast healing 5

Fort +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +14; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 5/
bludgeoning or slashing; **Immune** poison; **Resist** cold 10,
electricity 10

Weaknesses transformed

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee 2 claws +22 (2d6+9 plus grab and seedborne
consumption), 2 tendrils +16 (1d8+4 plus grab and
seedborne consumption)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tendrils)

Special Attacks constrict (2d6+9), death burst, entrapping
tendrils, insidious mind, paralytic tentacles, seedborne
consumption (DC 24)

TACTICS

Before Combat The Speaker for the Deep remains hidden
below the surface of the water until prey comes within
its reach or until one of its fungoid sirens is slain.

During Combat Intent on providing its master with
new minds with which to grow stronger, the Speaker
endeavors to grapple and infest its foes rather than
destroy them outright.

Morale Confident that it serves Xhamen-Dor's will and
wanting to make its master happy, the Speaker for the
Deep fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 29, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +23 (+27 grapple); **CMD** 36 (40 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved
Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Skill Focus (Stealth),
Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Climb +17, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (nature) +8,
Perception +28, Sense Motive +17, Stealth +26, Swim +30

Languages Common; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only)

SQ amphibious, seer of the Star Seed

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Seer of the Star Seed (Ex) The Speaker for the Deep has
a +10 racial bonus to its Charisma, representing ages of
unquestioned authority and self-delusion.

Development: In order to perform the path to the
black star occult ritual, the PCs must perform the beckon
the stars ritual here and attune this *Star Stela*. If Aeptolinu
is with the PCs, he perceives this as confirmation of the
PCs' failures and sins, and the manasaputra sheds his
human guise and attacks the PCs 3 rounds before they
conclude the ritual. Depending on which of the PCs is
performing the ritual and which ones fend off Aeptolinu,
the casters might have to pause the ritual, making it
harder to perform.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully attune this *Star
Stela*, grant them 51,200 XP.

B5. MONUMENT OF DESTRUCTION (CR 13)

Hundreds of boulders are piled here, creating a crude,
twenty-foot-tall altar that leans against the east wall like a
crumbling ziggurat. Expired candles and a variety of skulls
perch atop the stones, and designs of fearsome red ochre
decorate the facade.

Neruzavin has long attracted pilgrims who loathe
mortal happiness and achievement, and countless
generations of doomsayers, fiends, and lunatics have left
their mark here.

Creatures: The latest visitors include a ghawwas
div drawn to the deadly lake and a pack of druj nasus
delighted by the city's lethal reputation. The two kinds of
div view each other with suspicion, but they are quick to
ally against any strangers.

GHAWWAS**CR 10****XP 9,600****hp** 161 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 87)**DRUJ NASUS (4)****CR 8****XP 4,800 each****hp** 105 each (see page 84)

Treasure: Most of the trinkets atop the altar are of
negligible worth, such as broken holy symbols dedicated
to good-aligned gods from across Golarion. The most
noteworthy treasure is a bronze *+2 aberration-bane bastard
sword* that rests atop a small pile of boar ribs. This is the
ghost Upianshe's blade (see area **A9**), and recovering the
sword helps lay the ghost to rest.

B6. THE SNARLED ARCHIVES (CR 14)

Recesses carved into the basalt walls support a wealth of
tomes, treatises, and scrolls. Several dozen other volumes lie
open upon stone lecterns and improvised desks, amid which
hide an assortment of ink vials, quills, and styluses.

The uneven floor here has buckled at unpredictable
angles as the many towers gradually settled over the
millennia. The entire area is affected by *unhallow*.

Creature: Over the past 60 years, the aynghavhaul
(also known as a heresy devil) Eshimal has made this
his secret library. Here he can safely hide and study
his most treasured volumes away from the greedy eyes
of his peers before deciding which choice volumes to
duplicate and disseminate to unsuspecting minds. The
only threat to his collection to date has been the
persistent otyugh Hoshbagh, who dares not confront
the devil directly.

Eshimal is far less irrational than the Snarl's other
inhabitants. He sees most strangers as new minds

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to corrupt—especially if they're accompanied by Aeptolinu—and attacks only out of greed or if they are unwilling to trade for much-desired lore. As such, he inquisitively plies the PCs with questions about their motivation for entering Neruzavin.

In the event the PCs mention the *Necronomicon* and lack the means to read Necril, Eshimal offers his expertise as a scholar and translator. As a matter of course, he proposes writing up a contract to ensure a fair exchange in these lawless wilds. The heresy devil's primary goal is to get his hands on the *Necronomicon* for at least a day of uninterrupted work, giving him enough time to create a copy for his own use. As such, he initially asks for 3 days to create a copy translated into whatever other language he knows for the PCs' use, knowing he can bargain down to 2 days and still have enough time. In exchange, he desires either material compensation (at least 2,000 gp in coins or 1,000 gp of scrolls or books), a service rendered (specifically, killing Hoshbagh and delivering her body here), or the promise of a great heresy (e.g., a PC dedicated to a good-aligned deity destroying her place of worship or distributing blasphemous literature to 1,000 congregants). If the PCs tell Eshimal of the excinder archons, he scoffs and offers to create a convincing duplicate of the *Necronomicon* if the PCs pay double the price. If a PC succeeds at a DC 26 Diplomacy check, she can convince the devil to provide the fake *Necronomicon* for no additional cost—a small price to him, considering what he already stands to gain.

If Eshimal learns of the *Necronomicon* but cannot cajole the PCs to entrust him with it, he reluctantly resorts to combat lest he never have another chance to study the forsaken tome. In order to prepare, he feigns defeat, bids the PCs safe travels, then casts a few personal augmentation spells before using *greater teleport* to launch his attack.

ESHIMAL CR 14

XP 38,400

Male heresy devil diviner 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 80)

LE Huge outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness;

Perception +27

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 8, flat-footed 26 (+18 natural, -2 size)

hp 208 (17 HD; 4d6+13d10+123); fast healing 5

Fort +17, **Ref** +5, **Will** +19

DR 5/good; **Immune** fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10;

SR 22

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee bite +22 (2d6+9), 2 slams +22 (2d8+9)

Ranged 3 searing words +13 touch (4d6 fire and divine)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks blasphemous bile

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +20)

At will—*deathwatch*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *illusory script* (DC 20), *mage hand*, *major image* (DC 20), *message*

3/day—*contagion* (DC 21), *deeper darkness*, *dispel good*, *dispel magic*, *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against good*, *speak with dead* (DC 20), *stinking cloud* (DC 20), *telekinesis*, *unholy blight* (DC 21), *zone of silence*

1/day—*blasphemy* (DC 24), *legend lore*, *mislead* (DC 23), *summon* (level 6, 2 bone devils 100% or 1 contract devil 70%), *unhallow*

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +12)

11/day—*diviner's fortune* (+2)

Diviner Spells Prepared (CL 4th; concentration +12)

2nd—*bull's strength*, *command undead* (DC 20), *detect thoughts* (DC 20), *fox's cunning*, *mirror image*

1st—*charm person* (DC 19), *comprehend languages*, *floating disk*, *identify*, *shocking grasp*, *true strike*

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *mending*, *read magic*

Opposition Schools

abjuration, conjuration

TACTICS

Before Combat Given time to prepare, Eshimal casts *bull's strength* and *mirror image* before attacking the PCs.

During Combat In the first round of combat, Eshimal summons a pair of bone devils to engage the PCs directly. The heresy devil prefers to avoid melee, instead harrying the PCs from afar with his searing word and blasphemous bile abilities. Only if his opponents seem weakened does he engage in melee to finish them off.

Morale Eshimal values his existence more than the opportunity to study the *Necronomicon*, and uses *greater teleport* to flee if reduced to fewer than 50 hp.

Base Statistics If attacked before he can cast his preparatory spells, Eshimal's statistics are **Melee** bite +20 (2d6+7), 2 slams +20 (2d8+7); **Str** 24.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 10, **Con** 22, **Int** 26, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +24; **CMD** 44

Feats Ability Focus (blasphemous bile), Diehard, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Persuasive, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Linguistics), Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +0 (-8 to jump), Bluff +26, Diplomacy +30, Fly +20, Intimidate +28, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (history) +28, Knowledge (planes) +28, Knowledge (religion) +28, Linguistics +34, Perception +27, Perform (oratory) +20, Profession (librarian) +24, Sense Motive +27, Spellcraft +28

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Ancient Osiriani, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Common, Cyclops, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Girtablilu, Gnome, Halfling, Ignan, Infernal, Kelish, Necril, Orc, Protean, Sphinx, Sylvan, Terran, Undercommon, Vudrani

SQ arcane bond (amulet), corpulence, forewarned

Gear iron amulet, spellbook (contains all cantrips, all

prepared spells, and the following: *burning gaze*, *contact other plane*, *detect undead*, *dream*, *erase*, *finger of death*, *glitterdust*, *mage's lucubration*, *magic missile*, *misdirection*, *stone to flesh*, *true seeing*, *waves of fatigue*)

Treasure: Eshimal's library contains several tomes and anthologies of note, including a *book of infinite spells* on its sixth-to-last page (currently *lightning bolt*) and a *manual of quickness of action* +2. His collection also includes spellbooks that contain every wizard divination spell in the *Core Rulebook* of 5th level or lower. Finally, he has five of the original manuscripts for *Common Tongue*, a racy series of nine romance novels set during the Even-Tongued Conquest and depicting the dramatic exploits of one Viscount Allesande as he seduces his way across a crumbling Taldan empire. The author, Remaio Eround, perished in a duel before he could finish the tenth and final volume, and these preserved originals could easily fetch 5,000 gp from a collector.

B7. THE VANTAGE (CR 14)

Physically, this patch of fractured basalt is little different from the rest of the passage. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check spots a rusty greave pinned beneath an immense chunk of rubble. This armor fragment marks where the Casmar doomsayer Kakishari stood after she traveled to Neruzavin to witness the world's end, a prophecy she believed Rovagug had imparted to her. She perished in the blast of scorching air and caustic, cosmic ejecta from Xhamen-Dor's meteoric arrival, reanimating shortly afterward as a graveknight who now haunts the undercity. When she first awoke, though, she found her armored leg pinned beneath one of the fallen towers, forcing her to tear herself free and leave behind this memento. Kakishari herself can be found in area **D2**.

Haunt: Kakishari's death was a painful one, and this area still bears the scars of her unholy revival.

ECHOES OF EARTHFALL

CR 14

XP 19,200

NE haunt (40-ft. radius)

Caster Level 14th

Notice Perception or Survival DC 25 (for affected creatures to sense the sound of animals that fall silent in anticipation of an impending natural disaster)

hp 24; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 day

Effect When this haunt triggers, time seems to crawl to a stop as the collapsed buildings fade from view, replaced by intact towers with a desert plain beyond. A Casmar woman in a stylized breastplate steps into view on the stone street, plants her greataxe in the ground, and calls out to the god Rovagug. She receives no response, but as she turns away, the sky blazes with fire, and something

crashes into the ground. As one, the towers begin to collapse as a searing wave of fire and debris obliterates the woman. Each creature in the area experiences being buried beneath thousands of tons of rock and rubble, as per *mass suffocation*^{APG} (DC 23 negates).

Destruction This scene and haunt persist so long as Kakishari exists. Only by utterly destroying the graveknight in area **D2** can this haunt be destroyed.

B8. THE SOUTHERN APPROACH

The low ceiling of the southern entrance makes for slow going for Large creatures, but after about 100 feet the rough passage opens up considerably.

Creatures: If the PCs choose to enter the Snarl from this direction, the manasaputra Aeptolinu greets them here instead. See area **B1** for more details.

C. THE ORACULUM

The flying polyps that carved Neruzavin from the pluton left inexplicable towers with hardly any functional features, yet in the tens of thousands of years since, squatters have modified a few structures to fit their varied needs. The most elaborate of these is the Oraculum, a circular shrine that stands atop the eastern mesa. None of the current inhabitants know who first carved the Oraculum from the shapeless basalt and wrought its form with magic, but a trio of naga astronomers and soothsayers now call it their own and have decorated it with an elegant, columned facade that marks the passage of the stars.

Two major components make up the Oraculum: a round sanctuary situated below and an observatory above. A steep set of steps ascends to the observatory from each of the cardinal directions, climbing 20 feet up the sloping exterior. Four sets of stone doors stand open along each of the ordinal directions, leading into the sanctuary. The nagas spend their days in the sanctuary, emerging only at night in order to study the stars. The observatory they lend to the rare visiting scholars who share their same fervor.

C1. THE APPROACH

Massive staircases scale the sides of this short, basalt tower ringed with unadorned columns. Open doors at street level lead to a chamber below.

Hazard: The nagas who live here are extremely familiar with the various evils that dwell within Neruzavin, and they have created a *forbiddance* effect (CL 15th, Will DC 22) that wards the entire area within 20 feet of the Oraculum against creatures that are not chaotic neutral. The nagas provide the password only to those who pay them tribute, demonstrate a love of the stars, and show proper respect.

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Creatures: If the PCs attempt to hail the Oraculum's occupants, the moon giant Olkoshim (see area C2) answers their call.

C2. THE OBSERVATORY (CR 15)

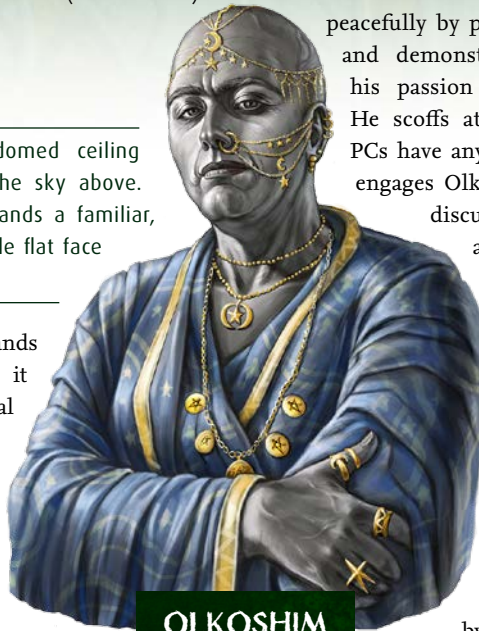
Eight broad skylights in the domed ceiling connect this spacious room to the sky above. At the center of the chamber stands a familiar, cylindrical monument with a single flat face inscribed with several runes.

The Yhtill *Star Stela* now stands here, where pilgrims moved it centuries ago from its original position hundreds of feet to the south. This relocation hardly impacted the stone's functions, and the nagas have maintained it as if it were a sacred relic that helps them interpret the stars.

Creature: The resident pilgrim is the moon giant Olkoshim, who arrived here almost 3 years ago in order to gaze upon the stars. He has found that the location, the unique observatory, the *Star Stela*, or some combination of the three seems to magnify the celestial voices that direct his divinations. His tenure has nearly come to an end, for he has little more to give the naga custodians as tribute in exchange for his exclusive access. However, Olkoshim fervently believes that he is close to a breakthrough and requires just a few months more to conclude his observations.

He might have accepted this with dignity were it not for several factors. First, the waxing moon has not only polluted his view of the stars, but also stimulated his instinctive aggressiveness. More importantly, he is in a foul mood because the nagas broke their contract with him, evicting him for a night in favor of the impudent scholar Lowls. To Olkoshim, the PCs represent another distraction and more possible usurpers of the observatory time for which he paid fairly and dearly.

If the PCs arrive during the day, Olkoshim is either dozing or reviewing his cosmic observations. If they arrive at night, he is seated in the observatory, staring out through one of the skylights and scratching notes on a tanned sheepskin. In either case, he is loath to be disturbed. Once he learns of the PCs' presence, he moodily tramps outside and calls on them to leave before he gets angry. If they prove curious, he bitterly recounts his recent grievances, punctuating the matter by lobbing a rock near the PCs as a warning shot. Should the PCs make demands, the giant aims for a target directly, and grimly engages in combat if the PCs prove especially stubborn.



OLKOSHIM

Despite the moon giant's foul temper—his starting attitude is hostile—the PCs can resolve the situation peacefully by providing him material assistance and demonstrating sincere appreciation for his passion for astronomy and divination. He scoffs at initial claims that he and the PCs have anything in common, but a PC who engages Olkoshim in an informed and lively discussion about his studies (requiring a successful DC 25 Knowledge [arcana, geography, nature, or religion] or a Profession [astronomer] check) improves his attitude by one step. But as much as he appreciates good talk, what Olkoshim yearns for is treasure—that is, any treasure with which he's willing to part to bribe the nagas. Offering him at least 5,000 gp in coins, art, or magic items improves his attitude by one step, by two steps for offering twice that, and by three steps by offering him quadruple that. If a PC makes a successful DC 28 Diplomacy check, she doubles the effective value of any tribute for the purpose of improving his attitude.

If the PCs improve his attitude to at least unfriendly, Olkoshim offers them a deal in Giant or Terran (not wanting his neighbors below to understand what he's saying): if the PCs chase off the capricious nagas who demand tribute and offer nothing but hollow promises in return, Olkoshim would be willing to share the observatory. If they agree, he conveys the password to pass the *forbiddance* unharmed.

OLKOSHIM **CR 15**

XP 51,200

LN male moon giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 122)

hp 220

TACTICS

During Combat Olkoshim uses the *forbiddance* effect to his advantage, and prefers to lob rocks to goad the PCs into approaching the Oraculum and the spell's area of effect. He activates his lunar aura in order to drive enemy spellcasters mad.

Morale Olkoshim is not willing to die defending an observatory he doesn't even own. He surrenders and agrees to cooperate with the PCs if reduced to 40 or fewer hit points.

Treasure: Olkoshim wears a broad belt studded with eleven platinum disks that depict the planets (the belt being worth 4,000 gp). He also wears a nosechain bearing mithral medallions (worth 3,300 gp altogether), and carried a Huge +1 dagger of snowflake obsidian with a

unicorn horn pommel (worth 5,308 gp). His years of star charts and observations are an academic curiosity but hold little value to anyone but the giant.

Development: By improving the giant's attitude to friendly or helpful, the PCs can convince him to let them study the observatory and perform any rituals there. Likewise, slaying the nagas earns his support.

In order to perform the path to the black star occult ritual, the PCs must perform the beckon the stars occult ritual here and attune this *Star Stela*. The nagas in area C3 have heard this ritual before, and unless the PCs have some means to prevent them from overhearing the process, the nagas stream out from the sanctuary to attack as the ritual begins. Unless his attitude is helpful, Olkoshim provides minimal help during combat, not wishing to jeopardize his access to the observatory if the PCs fail. If the nagas are already dead, the giant instead offers to help the PCs perform the ritual.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully attune this *Star Stela*, grant them 51,200 XP.

C3. THE SANCTUARY (CR 14)

Hundreds of stylized stars adorn the walls and ceiling of this chamber, many of them connected by lines to form a menagerie of constellations. The floor and ceiling both curve outward, forming a gentle bowl depression and domed arch respectively. A series of patterned silk cushions and warm bronze braziers provide unexpected comfort for such an inhospitable region.

Among the constellations on the walls are those in Golarion's zodiac. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana, geography, or nature) check also notes that the positions of the stars on the ceiling are unfamiliar, even for a different hemisphere. The ceiling instead depicts the night sky as seen from another part of the galaxy, and one of the stars (possibly Golarion's sun) is denoted by a simple "x."

Creatures: In –60 AR, the lunar nagas Tishiss, Leysauan, and Haweyas converged on Neruzavin at the same time from different directions, each called by an ineffable force. They found the sky perfect for stargazing, and each night the stars sang to them more beautifully than the last. The three sang back, promising to honor this sacred place as long as they lived. Despite the inhospitable environment, the nagas never hungered or tired. Some unknown cosmic force has sustained them ever since. Unlike most divine guardians, the nagas draw strength from an unidentified divine source—which they, of course, attribute to the stars; this grants them the chaotic subtype, and their sacred site is the Oraculum and the 500-foot-radius area that surrounds it.

When Lowls arrived seeking the *Star Stela* here, the nagas challenged him. He invited them to tell his future, and they divined that his actions would herald a great change to the heavens. Taking this as a sign of the stars' favor, the nagas evicted the giant Olkoshim and let Lowls perform his ritual. Thus far no change has affected the sky, but the nagas' magic urges patience. They view the PCs with suspicion, especially if the PCs want to perform more rituals before the first one has run its course. They strongly discourage any occult interference and chase off the PCs if they attempt any of the *Necronomicon's* rituals.

STAR-SWORN NAGAS (3) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Advanced divine guardian lunar naga (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 60, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 197)

CN Large aberration (chaotic)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, see invisibility; **Perception** +28

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 16, flat-footed 19 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural, –1 size)

hp 142 each (15d8+75); fast healing 5

Fort +9, **Ref** +13, **Will** +14

Defensive Abilities ability healing;

Immune disease, mind-affecting effects, poison

OFFENSE

Speed 80 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee bite +16 (2d6+3 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks hypnosis (DC 24), poison (DC 21), sneak attack +3d6

Spell-Like Abilities



STAR-SWORN NAGA

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THE FORBIDDEN NAME

After reforming in Leng after the PCs defeated her beneath Iris Hill, Weiralai stole this suit of armor from a moon-beast slaver.

THE FORBIDDEN NAME

PRICE
20,175 GP

SLOT armor **CL** 9th **WEIGHT** 20 lbs.

AURA moderate abjuration

Each of the yellow ribbons that spill from the joints of this jaundiced suit of +3 *studded leather* armor bears one or more haunting runes. Three times per day, a cleric (or other class with cleric domains) with the Rune domain can use her blast rune domain power to mark one of the ribbons rather than a square. Such blast runes last until the next time the cleric prepares spells and cannot benefit from other domain abilities such as spell rune. As a swift action while wearing this armor, the cleric can cause one of the ribbons to lash out and touch an adjacent creature, triggering the blast rune as if the target had entered the warded square. When marking a ribbon with a blast rune, the cleric can instead expend two daily uses of The Forbidden Name's ability to also apply the benefits of another Rune domain (or subdomain) power such as spell rune or warding rune to the blast rune.

Alternatively, any wearer can expend two daily uses when casting *glyph of warding* or *explosive runes*—or three uses when casting *greater glyph of warding*—on a ribbon to treat it much like a blast rune. As a swift action while wearing the armor, she can trigger the glyph as though she had stepped on it; however, she takes half damage from the effect on a failed Reflex saving throw or no damage if successful.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS **COST** 10,175 GP

Craft Magical Arms and Armor, *glyph of warding*, *secret page*, creator must possess the Rune domain

(CL 15th; concentration +21)

At will—*dimension door* (within sacred site only)

3/day—*alarm*, *knock*

1/day—*arcane lock*, *augury*, *banishment* (DC 23), *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *commune*, *dismissal* (DC 21), *forbiddance* (DC 22), *guards and wards* (DC 22), *hold portal*

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 9th; concentration +15)

4th (6/day)—*detect scrying*, *rainbow pattern* (DC 20)

3rd (6/day)—*fly*, *lightning bolt* (DC 19), *major image* (DC 19)

2nd (6/day)—*cat's grace*, *invisibility*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility*

1st (8/day)—*charm person* (DC 17), *comprehend languages*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 17), *true strike*

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*,

disrupt undead, *mage hand*, *open/close* (DC 16), *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*

TACTICS

Before Combat Ever watching for the universe to watch them back, the nagas cast *detect scrying* at the beginning of each day. If they expect imminent conflict, each casts *cat's grace*, *see invisibility*, and *fly*.

During Combat The nagas coordinate their attacks, using their magic and mobility to strike quickly and let poison and illusions take their toll.

Morale The nagas fight to the death until only one remains, at which point the survivor pleads for mercy so that at least one guardian might continue to defend the observatory.

Base Statistics Without their preparatory spells, the nagas' base statistics are **Init** +8; **AC** 24, touch 14, **Ref** +11; **Melee** bite +14; **Dex** 19; **CMD** 29; **Skills** Fly +8, Stealth +24.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 23, **Con** 18, **Int** 13, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 31 (can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Eschew Materials^B, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Skill Focus (Stealth), Spring Attack, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Fly +10, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (nature) +16, Perception +28, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +26; **Racial**

Modifiers +5 Perception, +5 Sense Motive

Languages Aklo, Common

SQ blessed life, divine swiftness, sacred site

Treasure: The cushions here cover recesses where the nagas hide the many tributes left here by pilgrims over the millennia. Among these are a *staff of heaven and earth*^{UE} with 7 charges remaining, a pouch of *lithomancy stones*^{OA}, a *scroll of sunburst*, nine cut sapphires worth 1,000 gp each, a mithral spyglass (worth 1,500 gp), and 7,430 silver pieces minted in Kelesh. Although the sapphires were Olkoshim's donation, he does not demand them back so long as he can finish his studies here.

PART 3: DESCENT INTO NERUZAVIN'S DESPAIR

By recovering the *Necronomicon* and attuning the *Star Stelae*, the PCs have what they need to perform the path to the black star ritual and pursue Count Lowls into Carcosa before he can commit yet greater atrocities by helping Hastur ascend into an Outer God. However, two ageless evils still dwell in Neruzavin, and the PCs' ritual can awaken them both. As soon as the PCs begin attuning the *Star Stelae*, the flying polyps that created Neruzavin and were trapped beneath it by the yithians countless millennia ago begin to stir, and as they sense the eldritch magic of the *Necronomicon* once more, they begin to break free and kill everything they find (see

D. THE UNDERCITY



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Performing the Ritual on page 54 for more details). If the PCs don't seal the aberrations back below ground, the flying polyps likely renew their war on Golarion shortly after the PCs depart.

Even more dire, Kaklatath can remind the PCs, is Xhamen-Dor, the wounded Great Old One that dwells within the crater lake. As its name spreads to new minds, Xhamen-Dor has gradually infected more victims. Unless the PCs destroy the cosmic horror now (see Destroying the Star Seed on page 52), it awakens completely and begins its insidious feast on Golarion.

D. THE UNDERCITY

Neruzavin's undercity runs beneath much of the surface structures in a series of 20-foot-wide passages interspersed with eerie galleries, subterranean plazas, and series of niches more evocative of a catacomb than an urban development. The passages don't lead anywhere in particular. They slope up and down in unpredictable patterns, and in places they are split by perilous chasms that plunge deep into Golarion's crust. The result is a maze with no rhyme or reason, where water seeps in from the crater lake and either pools in unseemly ponds or drains entirely into the Darklands. Except where noted, most tunnels are 20 feet tall with rooms that peak at about 30 feet at the apex of plainly vaulted ceilings. The only light here is that which the PCs provide.

There are three primary entrances that the PCs might use to access the undercity, including the well in area **A10** (Entrance 1). Each is a vertical shaft covered with a heavy, stone seal (hardness 8, 60 hp, break DC 28) from which any inscriptions or wards have long since eroded. Every hour that the PCs spend traveling Neruzavin's streets, they have a 10% chance of finding one of the other two entrances, and Hoshbagh is willing to guide them to Entrance 2 if they ask her how to reach the undercity. Each shaft descends 100 feet before reaching the ceiling of the chambers below. Entrance 1 leads to area **D1**, Entrance 2 to area **D3**, and Entrance 3 to area **D5**.

Each encounter area is connected to one or more neighboring areas by a series of passages not depicted on the map, as noted in each area's description. In general, traveling from one area to another takes 2d6 minutes.

Graffiti: The graveknight Kakishari has wandered the undercity for millennia, demolishing undefended artwork and carving grim predictions of catastrophes to come into the walls. These she writes in a mishmash of ancient Kelish and Taldane dialects or scrawls as crude pictures—sometimes over her past works, obscuring both inscriptions. Kakishari currently haunts area **D2**. Because she is not an especially talkative combatant, use her artistic expressions here and the haunt in area **B7** to provide context of who she is and how she became the undead monstrosity she is today.

Whistling: The doors that once sealed the flying polyps in here are flung open, allowing the aberrations to use tendrils of air to sense and influence creatures. The first sign of this is usually an eerie whistling sound, sometimes punctuated by feather-light tugs at the PCs' clothing by the wind. Those who understand Aklo can catch the occasional snippet of some malicious phrase. At least once during the PCs' exploration of areas **D1–D6**, a flying polyp uses its sucking wind special attack to sense and immobilize a PC at a dangerous time.

WEIRALAI RETURNS (CR 15)

Creatures: The denizen of Leng Weiralai has returned from her home world, having escaped enslavement by the moon-beasts that reign over vast swaths of Leng. She has grown ever more dependent on Hastur and the power the King in Yellow idly grants her, and in turn, she has become increasingly desperate to destroy the PCs before they can find Count Lowls and thwart her master's plans. While the PCs explored Neruzavin above, she shadowed them at a safe distance. Now that they have descended below ground, she stalks ever closer.

Weiralai attacks shortly after the PCs conclude an encounter in areas **D1–D6**. With her is the reanimated corpse of the moon-beast that nearly captured her. She barely managed to kill it, after which she used Hastur's magic to revive and enslave it. During combat, Weiralai verbally jabs at the PCs, vacillating between boasts of her immortality and painful threats. If they seem uncertain about who she is, she challenges them to remember the events of Thrushmoor. Should the PCs have difficulty recalling the denizen of Leng they killed there, she screeches in rage and abandons any pretense of banter.

MOON-BEAST ZOMBIE

CR 6

XP 2,400

Fast moon-beast zombie (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 288, 289, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 195)

NE Large undead

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +3 natural, -1 size)

hp 88 (16d8+16)

Fort +5, **Ref** +9, **Will** +10

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft.

Melee 2 claws +18 (1d6+7), slam +18 (1d8+10), 4 tentacles +13 (1d6+3)

Special Abilities quick strikes

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

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 19, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 34

Feats Toughness⁸

WEIRALAI**CR 15****XP 51,200****hp** 220 (see page 60)

Treasure: Among the other gear Weiralai carries (listed in her stat block on page 60) is a unique suit of armor Weiralai obtained in the Dreamlands before making her way back to the Material Plane (see sidebar on page 42).

Development: Once slain, Weiralai's body sublimates into sticky smoke that twists to form a jumble of letters, runes, and cryptic threats before it wafts away and dissipates entirely. Unless tracked back to where she forms in Leng, Weiralai might come back for revenge yet again, perhaps even making her way to Carcosa to attack the PCs there.

D1. THE SPOIL PIT (CR 14)

Entrance 1 descends into this area by an 80-foot-long vertical shaft with walls scarred by the recent, destructive passage of the flying polyp that attacked the PCs at Lowl's camp. The passage to the northeast leads to the southern end of area D2.

This cavern's stone ceiling dips and rises with undulating unpredictability as it worms through the undercity. The hewn walls likewise seem unfinished, and heaps of rubble and gravel lie scattered about the area.

This room is proof that the flying polyps who created these tunnels either had no grand design during their construction or simply ran out of time or inclination before the yithians defeated them. The coarse walls here exhibit none of the finely polished surfaces typical elsewhere in the tunnels, and the piles of debris are left over from excavations abandoned ages ago.

Creatures: The flying polyps' tunnels extend beyond the basalt pluton into bands of sedimentary rock nearby, and several of the larger rock piles are spoil from these digs. These contain ancient fossils of beasts virtually unknown to modern sages. Thanks to Neruzavin's accursed nature, these fossils have gained a life of their own, heaving themselves into staggering amalgams of extinct ungulates, carnivores, and even early forms of intelligent life.

FOSSIL GOLEMS (2)**CR 12****XP 19,200 each****hp** 122 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 136)**D2. DEFACED GALLERY (CR 14)**

The passage to the south leads to area D1, the north exit leads to the south entrance of area D3, and the eastern passage splits into two routes that lead to the west and northwest portions of area D6.

**LIGHTNING GUN**

Designed by yithians, this device can fire bolts of electricity. It looks like it has seen better days.

EXPENDED LIGHTNING GUN**PRICE**
15,000 GP**SLOT** none**CL** 17th**WEIGHT** 15 lbs.**AURA** strong evocation

This device is made of a strange metallic alloy. A bellows or tapered accordion structure protrudes from the box, with handles and controls at the wide end and a bright metal disk or lens at the other. The controls seem to have been designed for operation by large creatures with only two fingers, though the smaller but more agile hands of humanoids can manipulate them after some practice.

As a standard action, the operator can hold the device in front of herself with two hands and use the controls to unleash a blast

that deals 10d12 points of electricity damage on a successful ranged touch attack against a single target within 120 feet. The lightning blast sets fire to combustibles and damages objects that it strikes. It can melt metals that have a low melting point, such as lead, gold, copper, silver, or bronze.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS**COST** 7,500 GPCraft Wondrous Item, *chain lightning*

The tunnel broadens into a subterranean gallery carved from floor to ceiling with rudimentary depictions of beasts, volcanoes, comets, and bones. The three entrances all slope subtly downward into this area, causing stagnant, silty water to pool here.

The water here is thick with muck and organic matter in advanced stages of decay. The outermost 5-foot perimeter of the pool is grimy but not deep enough to impede movement. All other squares average 1 foot deep and are treated like a shallow bog (*Core Rulebook* 427).

Creature: Before the scholars of Ninshabur set out to explore Neruzavin, few knew about the accursed city, much less dared to travel there. One exception was Kakishari, a fanatic and independent follower of Rovagug's dogma of hatred and destruction. She traveled to the scar where Golarion had swallowed Rovagug, and there she had a vision that she interpreted as the divine will of the Rough Beast. Following this prophecy, she traveled to Neruzavin and waited, gazing from the city's edge in hope of some sign. That sign came from above: Earthfall. She saw the *Starstone* flash through the sky and disappear over the horizon, and as waves of dust, heat, and sound rolled toward her, a second celestial object struck nearby. The

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remnant of Xhamen-Dor crashed north of Neruzavin, blasted open a crater, and toppled dozens of towers in a shockwave of fire and fury. Although her flesh burned away, her armor and spirit survived the cataclysm as a graveknight. She has wandered the city since, reveling in the glory with which the Rough Beast struck Golarion—she assumes Earthfall was her god’s will—carving more prophecies wherever she found space and striking down the occasional trespasser.

Kakishari has spent the better part of a week here, reviewing her work and breaking pieces of her armor to earn the Rough Beast’s approval and visions once more. She likely hears the PCs’ approach, at which point she moves into a side tunnel to prepare for combat and then rides out on her skeletal horse, screaming battle paeans while cutting down all that lives. She craves violence, but the PCs might appeal to her to converse for a moment. Her patience wanes quickly, though, and she soon succumbs to bloodlust.

KAKISHARI **CR 14**
XP 38,400

Female human graveknight variant inquisitor of Rovagug 13
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 138, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player’s Guide* 38)

CE Medium undead (humanoid, human)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft. see invisibility; Perception +28

Aura sacrilegious aura (30 ft., DC 20)

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 26 (+9 armor, +3 deflection, +1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 179 (13d8+117)

Fort +17, **Ref** +12, **Will** +17

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, freedom of movement, rejuvenation, stalwart; **DR** 10/magic; **Immune** acid, cold, electricity, undead traits; **SR** 25

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +2 *greataxe* +24/+24/+19 (1d12+19/19–20/x3 plus 3d6 acid) or
mwk morningstar +23/+23/+18 (1d8+13 plus 3d6 acid) or
slam +17/+17 (1d4+9)

Special Attacks channel destruction (3d6 acid), deadly weather, destructive smite (+6, 7/day), devastating blast (8d6 acid, DC 20, 3/day), greater bane (13 rounds/day), judgment 5/day (2 simultaneous), the lone witness, undead mastery (65 HD, DC 20)

Inquisitor Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +17)
At will—*detect alignment*, *discern lies* (13 rounds/day)

Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 13th; concentration +17)
5th (1/day)—*resounding blow*^{APG} (DC 19), *righteous might*
4th (4/day)—*dismissal* (DC 18), *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *unholy blight* (DC 18)

3rd (5/day)—*burst of speed*^{UC}, *dispel magic*, *inflict serious wounds* (DC 17), *speak with dead* (DC 17), *ward the faithful*^{APG} (DC 17)

2nd (6/day)—*align weapon*, *invisibility*, *perceive cues*^{APG}, *see invisibility*, *tongues*

1st (6/day)—*burst bonds*^{APG} (DC 15), *divine favor*, *ear-piercing scream*^{UM} (DC 15), *expeditious retreat*, *shield of faith*, *true strike*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 14), *brand*^{APG} (DC 14), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *read magic*

Domain Catastrophe

TACTICS

Before Combat At the first sign of intruders, Kakishari summons and mounts her skeletal horse before casting *see invisibility* and *freedom of movement*. When she believes an encounter is imminent, she casts *ward of the faithful* and *divine power*.

During Combat Kakishari used her mounted mobility to strike her enemies and ride beyond their reach. If unseated, she wades into melee combat, where she remorselessly breaks her foes' favorite equipment before ending their lives.

Morale Kakishari has perished a dozen times and has always returned to haunt Neruzavin. She fights until destroyed.

Base Statistics If she's caught unprepared, Kakishari's base statistics are **AC** 24, **touch** 11, **flat-footed** 23; **hp** 192;

Fort +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +14; **Melee** +2 *greataxe* +20/+15 (1d12+14/19-20/x3 plus 3d6 acid) or *mwk morningstar* +19/+14 (1d8+9 plus 3d6 acid) or *slam* +13 (1d4+5);

Str 25; **Skills** *Climb* +9.

STATISTICS

Str 29, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +16 (+20 sunder); **CMD** 27 (29 vs. sunder)

Feats *Furious Focus*^{APG}, *Greater Sunder*, *Improved Critical* (*greataxe*), *Improved Initiative*, *Improved Sunder*, *Lightning Reflexes*, *Mounted Combat*, *Power Attack*, *Ride-By Attack*, *Sundering Strike*^{APG}, *Toughness*, *Vital Strike*

Skills *Acrobatics* -2 (-6 to jump), *Climb* +11, *Disguise* +13, *Intimidate* +34, *Knowledge* (*dungeoneering*, *planes*, *religion*) +14, *Perception* +28, *Ride* +10, *Sense Motive* +26, *Spellcraft* +17, *Stealth* +14

Languages Common, Kelish

SQ *deadly weather*, *graveknight armor*, *monster lore* +4, *phantom mount*, *ruinous revivification* (acid), *stern gaze* +6, *track* +6

Combat Gear *longarm bracers*^{UE}; **Other Gear** +3 *breastplate*, +2 *greataxe*, *mwk morningstar*, 1,822 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Lone Witness (Ex) Kakishari's millennia of solitude have excised what little empathy she once had. When she successfully confirms a critical hit while using her destructive smite domain ability, she can activate her deadly weather domain ability as a free action. She also gains an additional hit point per Hit Die. This ability replaces her bonus teamwork feats and solo tactics class feature.

Development: Unless the PCs destroy Kakishari's armor, she returns in a matter of days. Should she reform before they depart for Carcosa, she sets out to track them down wherever they are and destroy them. In the unlikely event that Weiralai is also alive at this time, the two might find enough common ground with each other to join forces and hunt the PCs together.

D2A. HIDDEN CACHE

This area's greatest treasure is not readily apparent because it is sealed within a secret room masterfully concealed by yithian technology. Further obscured by Kakishari's carvings, the passage into the hidden chamber requires a successful DC 35 Perception check to spot. Yithians' array of senses include one especially sensitive to the substances incorporated into the door and its seams, allowing such creatures to perceive the hidden door as if it were plainly visible. Unfortunately, Kaklatath lacks these senses while trapped in a human body, but it's aware that there should be caches of yithian weapons somewhere within the undercity. Should the PCs restore it to its own body, it can sense the signs that point the PCs here.

Treasure: The room has few decorations, limited to several inscriptions in Yithian identifying the musty bits of gear here and their functions. Despite weathering the years admirably, only a fraction of the gear is serviceable. The PCs can procure two handfuls of *dust of appearance*, a mantle of glistening metal that allows the wearer to grow a set of coppery wings (this functions as *winged boots* but occupies the shoulders slot), and a single set of 21 1-foot-wide silvery disks. These disks are a yithian invention designed to protect their adopted forms no matter what shape they take. Upon speaking a command word, the plates begins spinning, reshaping themselves, and binding to the user's body over the course of 1d4+1 minutes, afterward functioning as *mithral full plate of speed*. Repeating the command word causes the plates to detach and stack themselves; this process takes 1 minute to complete the process.

Perhaps the greatest prize is an accordion-like device constructed of metal alloys with handles and controls at one end and a bright metal disk at the other. This is a yithian *lightning gun* (see the sidebar on page 45), a powerful ranged weapon capable of firing bolts of electricity. Its long disuse has drained this gun of most of its power, but it is still capable of firing four shots before being rendered inoperable. Like most yithians, Kaklatath is versed in such weapons, and if the PCs have returned it to its alien form, it eagerly volunteers to aid them in battle with the gun. Kaklatath is also aware of how many shots the gun has left, and it uses the weapon conservatively except when fighting its archnemesis: flying polyps. In its current state, the *lightning gun's* effective market price is 15,000 gp.

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D3. TERROR HALL (CR 14)

Entrance 2 descends into this area by means of a 60-foot-long vertical shaft. The passage to the east leads to the northwest end of area **D4**, and the south exit leads to the north end of area **D2**.

Four massive columns of hewn stone tower up to the forty-foot-high ceiling of this hall. Twenty feet above the floor, a wide balcony overlooks the dusty basalt meeting room. Cut out from one corner is a cylindrical shaft that rises far beyond the boundaries of this chamber. On the ground level, a passage winds to the east, and from the balcony, another passage travels south.

Although most of the undercity's architecture is the plain yet imposing work of the flying polyps, the yithians made several alterations to key areas like this. The columns here bear images of alien cityscapes so exactly incised that the art almost seems to shimmer and dance when illuminated. Thanks to Kakishari's vandalism, deep axe gouges mar various columns near the ground and balcony where she could most easily reach them.

Creatures: Sakhils thrive on fear, yet the terrors that exist beyond the planes can be too much for even these fiends to comprehend. A pair of qoloks (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 217) made the voyage only to twist into bloated devourers, one of which cradles the soul of a hapless ash giant in its flapping maw. Xhamen-Dor's accelerated revival woke one of the yithians in area **D4**, which traveled here to investigate the disturbance. The devourers snatched it up and tormented its soul for months, toying with the sundry horrors it had witnessed while mind swapped over hundreds of lifetimes. Rather than consume the soul, the devourer released it into a cloud of screaming memories that now acts as a caller in darkness and hides among the columns. The undead find momentary joy in terrifying and killing any mortals they encounter.

CALLER IN DARKNESS CR 9

XP 6,400
hp 97 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 48)

FEARBORN DEVOURERS (2) CR 11

XP 12,800 each
 Variant devourers (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 82)
hp 133 each

STATISTICS

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th; concentration +23)

At will—*blink*, *blur*, *crushing despair* (DC 19), *detect good*, *dispel magic*, *eyebite* (DC 21), *fear* (DC 19), *phantasmal killer* (DC 19), *power word blind*, *see invisibility*, *sound burst* (DC 17), *tongues*, *unholy blight* (DC 19)

Trap: This was one of the known entrances to the undercity that the yithians sealed to contain the flying polyps they could not destroy. As a preventive measure, the yithians integrated fine circuits into the columns, creating a powerful electrical trap to stun or kill any prisoners that might try to escape. Kakishari's damage has left the trap less effective than it once was, but it can still prove lethal.

YITHIAN SHOCK MATRIX CR 9

XP 6,400
Type magic; **Perception** DC 30; **Disable Device** DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*alarm*); **Reset** automatic (1 hour)
Effect twisting bolt of lightning (6d6 electricity damage plus stun for 1 round, Reflex DC 19 half, Fortitude DC 19 negates stun); multiple targets (all targets within 30 feet of a pillar)

Treasure: The yithian's withered remains are more than 1 year old and lie among a handful of Ninshaburian trophies the devourers collected from throughout the city before retiring here. Among these is a *ring of djinni calling* bound to **Eamiran** (CG female djinni), a talented cloud-weaver and clothier from Armun Kelisk who had practically forgotten the ring's power over her. She knows little of Neruzavin, having been summoned here only once by the ring's former owner, an influential prophet-scholar named Ytil. The ghost Upianshe in area **A9** remembers Ytil fondly as a colleague, though Eamiran describes him with chiding irreverence. She tends to treat the ring's new owner with similar sass unless properly impressed with good intentions and responsible leadership.

D4. THE WARRENS (CR 14)

The northwest tunnel here leads to the eastern entrance of area **D3**. The northeast passage leads the southwest entrance of area **D5**. The southeastern route becomes a tunnel into the northeastern portion of area **D6**.

The passages here zigzag unpredictably, sometimes branching into side galleries or banks of rounded alcoves filled with broken glass, sickly vines, and other organic matter that stubbornly resists decomposition. These were where the yithian stewards entered stasis. The graveknight Kakishari destroyed many of these stasis pods in a fit of rage. Other pods have lost their functionality over the ages, slowly choking the yithians trapped within to death. Only a few pods survived completely intact until this last century, including the one housing Kaklatath.

Creatures: Unfortunately for Kaklatath, a different set of visitors took an interest in its pod. A trio of Leng ghouls found their way up into the Undercity here from the Darklands below area **D5**, and they began systematically

disabling, opening, or compromising the few remaining pods to better understand their function and role within the city. Most of the yithian inhabitants expired soon after or fought back, earning them a quick death. Kaklatath's body proved their crowning achievement, for it became infected by seedborne consumption and developed into a seeded monstrosity. Although the ghouls venerate Nyarlathotep, they find Xhamen-Dor's influence and proximity academically engaging, and have come to an unspoken truce with the vine-choked, pus-weeping animate wreckage of Kaklatath's body, within which the tortured mind of an aging Keleshite woman is trapped.

When the ghouls first spot the PCs, they're cagey but curious, musing aloud what might have brought mortals to these halls. If Kaklatath accompanies the PCs, it conveys to them that what they behold is its true body, bemoans that the undead form is why it couldn't end the mind swap, and implores that they help restore it to its rightful form. Should the ghouls infer that the PCs want their seeded pet, they try to trade it to the PCs in exchange for forgotten lore—and if they know of Kaklatath's mind swapping misfortune, they insist that the old woman's body be part of the exchange.

They consider 3,000 gp worth of magical scrolls and spellbooks a fair price, settling for 1,500 gp worth if the PCs can share truly novel lore; succeeding at a DC 40 Knowledge (arcana, dungeoneering, planes, or religion) check is sufficient for this purpose.

If they can't agree on a deal or are attacked, the ghouls fight, goading their hapless seeded yithian to join the fray.

KAKLATATH THE SEEDED CR 10

XP 9,600

Seeded yithian (see page 90,

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 286)

NE Large undead (augmented aberration)

Init +1; Senses all-around vision, blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 10, flat-footed 24 (+1 Dex, +15 natural, -1 size)

hp 105 (14d8+42); fast healing 5

Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +8; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 10/magic and bludgeoning or slashing; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10

Weaknesses transformed

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee 2 pincers +10 (2d8+12/×3 plus seedborne consumption), 2 tendrils +5 (1d8+4 plus grab and seedborne consumption)

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

Special Attacks deadly pincers, death burst, entrapping tendrils, insidious mind, seedborne consumption (DC 20)

STATISTICS

Str 26, Dex 13, Con —, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 17

Base Atk +3; CMB +12; CMD 23

Feats Animal Affinity, Endurance, Self-Sufficient

Skills Appraise +6, Craft (carpentry) +6, Diplomacy +8, Handle Animal +10, Heal +13, Knowledge (nature) +8, Perception +11, Profession (shepherd) +11, Ride +10, Survival +13

Languages Common, Kelish, Osiriani

SPECIAL ABILITIES

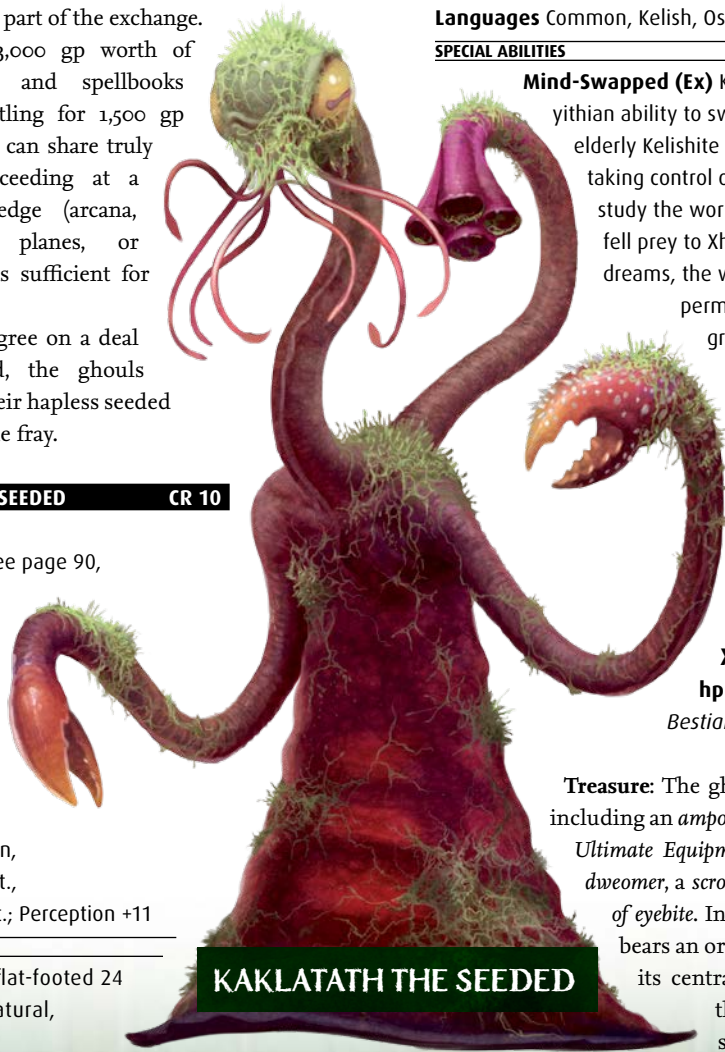
Mind-Swapped (Ex) Kaklatath used its innate yithian ability to swap bodies to transfer an elderly Kelishite woman's mind into its body, taking control of her body to more easily study the world. When the yithian body fell prey to Xhamen-Dor's infectious dreams, the woman's mind became permanently locked inside. This grants the undead creature the physical properties of the alien host and the mental faculties, Base Attack Bonus, skills, feats, saving throws, and languages of a 4th-level human expert.

LENG GHOULS (3) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 126 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 120)

Treasure: The ghouls have a few treasures, including an *ampoule of false blood* (aberration; *Ultimate Equipment* 254), a *scroll of analyze dweomer*, a *scroll of banishment*, and a *scroll of eyebite*. In addition, Kaklatath's body bears an organic torc wrapped around its central head stalk, obscured by the feathery fungus that sprouts from its body.



KAKLATATH THE SEEDED

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YITHINAN THOUGHT RING

While yithians have the natural ability to telepathically communicate with creatures up to 100 feet away, many of them use magic devices to enhance this ability.

YITHINAN THOUGHT RING

PRICE
35,000 GP

SLOT head **CL** 15th **WEIGHT** 1 lb.

AURA strong divination

Each *yithian thought ring* is attuned to a particular type or category of creature, and this decision is made at the item's creation. This can go beyond simple creature types—a *yithian thought ring* can be made to function for very specific conditions. For example, the one in this adventure is keyed into minds that have been exposed to Xhamen-Dor, which is how Kaklatath was able to reach out across great distances to the PCs. A yithian wearing one of these devices can also use its mind swap and amnesia abilities at the same range.

Once a *yithian thought ring* has been created with a particular parameter, it can be attuned again, but this process requires partially dismantling the original device and rebuilding it. This process takes 1d4 days and costs an additional 5,000 gp in materials.

A *yithian thought ring* can be used only by yithians.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS **COST** 17,500 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, telepathic bond, creator must be a yithian

This is a *yithian thought ring*, a simple magic item that allows a yithian to extend the range of its telepathy by several orders of magnitude and swap minds with distant targets. This is what allowed Kaklatath to reach out to the PCs from such a distance.

Development: The fungal corruption of Kaklatath's body makes restoring the yithian to its true body difficult. To achieve this, the PCs must destroy the undead yithian form, kill Kaklatath's human vessel, and then cast *resurrection* on its yithian body. Once properly restored, Kaklatath sincerely thanks the PCs and spends several minutes remembering its body's capabilities by experimentally climbing walls, telepathically contacting the PCs, and clacking its pincers. The woman Kaklatath mind swapped with might also be saved; however, because of the horrific corruption her mind experienced while trapped in the yithian body, only powerful magic such as a *wish* or a *miracle* spell can restore her to life.

If the PCs managed to trade peacefully with the ghouls, the three ghouls warn the PCs of Xhamen-Dor's growing power, and invite them instead to seek the Black Pharaoh. They then amble off into the city to study their new treasures.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to restore Kaklatath to its body, grant them 51,200 XP.

D5. THE WAY BELOW (CR 12)

Entrance 3 descends into this area by means of a 60-foot-long vertical shaft. The southwest route leads to the northeast entrance of area D4. The other two tunnels winds for about 100 feet before ending in dead ends or confusing twists that eventually loop back to this area.

The walls of this 50-foot-tall chamber jut and pivot at jarring angles, and no inscriptions or furnishings remain to suggest what purpose this space once served. The floor is a riot of cracks and larger crevices, some wide enough to swallow a horse.

Most of the cracks along the floor are narrow enough that a creature can step across with little difficulty, descending fewer than 20 feet into the ground and leaving creatures unlikely to slide more than 5 feet down before the gap is too narrow to descend farther. The largest fissure is an exception. It descends 60 feet to a small landing, then plummets hundreds of feet to Nar-Voth, the uppermost level of the Darklands. It is from here that several abominations—like the Leng ghouls in area D4—have arrived.

Creatures: The flying polyyps' whistling and command of winds have drawn a contingent of air elementals that delight in this demonstration of music and hate. They caper through the air, dancing to the faint tunes. The PCs' arrival interrupts their reverie, causing them to attack. A PC who quickly plays an equally compelling tune with a successful DC 30 Perform (sing or winds) check might manage to calm the elementals before they lash out.

GREATER AIR ELEMENTALS (3) **CR 9**

XP 6,400 each

hp 123 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 120)

TACTICS

During Combat One of the elementals turns into a whirlwind and attempts to snatch up several flightless victims and pitch them into the largest fissure. The other elementals swoop back and forth, attacking with their natural weapons.

Morale An air elemental fights until reduced to 15 or fewer hit points, at which point it tries to flee to the surface.

Treasure: Lodged in one of the smaller fissures is a bronze horn inscribed with scenes of a hero leading warriors against an armor-clad titan. This is the *Song of Peyhori-Han*, a variant *bronze horn of Valhalla* that summons 2d4 4th-level human fighters equipped with masterwork chainmail, masterwork heavy steel shields, masterwork throwing axes, and +1 *battleaxes*. Peyhori-Han was a distant legend even in the time of Ninshabur,

famed for having felled 15 monsters that plagued ancient Casmaron. This was the prized possession of one of the mercenaries who accompanied Upianshe's expedition.

D6. THE GUARDIAN GATE (CR 14)

The west and northwest tunnels lead to the eastern forked halls of area **D2**. The northeast tunnel leads to the southern entrance in area **D4**. The southeast hall leads to the west entrance of area **D7**.

The eight thin columns here seem insufficient to hold up the ceiling of this trapezoidal room. On one side are three alcoves in which stand statues of cone-bodied creatures with savage pincers. On the other, a set of battered two-foot-thick metal doors stands open at the top of a low dais.

The yithians introduced several safeguards meant to imprison the flying polyps, such as hardening their rocky prison and sealing the passage off with these massive doors. However, after tens of thousands of years and the initial rattling impact of Xhamen-Dor's crashing into Neruzavin, the yithians' magic has weakened and the doors at long last flung open as the first of the polyps have awoken and emerged.

Creatures: The yithians did not rely on heavy doors alone; they also left three guardian constructs. The statues depict idealized yithians, each of which represents one of the yithians' philosophical pillars: creation, knowledge, and travel. They begin waving their arms in warning when intruders enter the room, and they attack should anyone approach within 50 feet of the doors. For the purposes of their faith-bound weakness, these constructs treat any yithian as a holy symbol. Should the PCs restore Kaklath to its true form, it can shepherd them through this area without a fight.

LESSONS OF YITH (3) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Graven guardian (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 140)

N Large construct

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (+2 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size)

hp 107 each (14d10+30); fast healing 5

Fort +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +9

DR 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits; **SR** 22

Weaknesses faith bound

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee +1 keen punching dagger +21/+16/+11 (1d6+8/19-20/*3) or

slam +15 (1d8+10)

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

Special Attacks familiarity, magic weapon

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +8)

1/day—*haste* (self only)

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 34

Feats Mobility^B

SQ repair, threefold domains (Artifice, Knowledge, Travel)

Gear +1 keen punching dagger

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Threefold Domains (Su) Each of the three Lessons of Yith represents a core Yithian value represented by a single divine domain. So long as a Lesson of Yith begins its turn within a 120-foot emanation of another active Lesson, it gains the benefits of that construct's domain until the beginning of its next turn.

Development: Merely closing these doors is insufficient to keep the polyps from awakening. Barricading the doors may slow the flying polyps long enough for the PCs to complete their ritual and escape to Carcosa, but more of the aberrations inevitably escape over the next several weeks unless the PCs can return with a more definitive solution.

D7. NIGHTMARE ROOST (CR 15)

The west entrance here leads to the southeast approach from area **D6**. At the bottom of the chasm, the east tunnel leads to area **D8**.

Delicate, arching stone bridges and struts stretch between a network of large columns, creating a petrified web of nonsensical design.

This polyp-carved area serves no apparent purpose, for the aberrations have little use for bridges. Even the layout of this area is vertiginous, unsettling those who look too far down the 150-foot-deep chasm bridged by these stone spans. The architecture is sturdy enough to support several thousand pounds. Should a flightless creature fall, it can attempt a DC 20 Reflex save every 50 feet to catch itself on a lower bridge, taking falling damage as normal.

Creature: Called here ages ago by a corrupted cleric of Nyarlathotep as she explored Neruzavin's undercity, a hunting horror now claims this chamber as its own lair. Even though its caller has long since perished—transformed like many others into a seeded creature through infectious dreams of Xhamen-Dor—the hunting horror has remained and continues to explore Neruzavin's undercity. Too large to escape the undercity through the handful of smaller entrances, the abomination used magic to transport itself to the surface to explore the alien city. Drawn to the magical nature of Neruzavin's *Star Stelae*, the hunting horror spent every night for weeks studying them, finding them to be the most interesting things in the abandoned city.

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After growing bored with the *Star Stelae* and the city's alien architecture, it retreated back to the darkened safety of the undercity to explore the yithians in stasis and the slumbering flying polyps.

Ever since, it has haunted the twisting passages beneath Neruzavin, snatched up seeded creatures to sample, and watched with malicious delight—through the use of *scrying*—as Count Lowls traveled to Carcosa. The novelty has worn off, though, and it views the PCs as prey. The hunting horror has decided to confront the PCs here, where it can delight in their terror before flinging them to splatter on the cavern floor below or crushing them on the stone bridges.

ADVANCED HUNTING HORROR CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 325 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 294*, see page 88)

TACTICS

Before Combat The hunting horror waits at the bottom of the chasm for the PCs to begin crossing the bridges, and then quietly flies up into the cavernous chamber.

During Combat The hunting horror uses its crush attack against creatures on a bridge, collapsing the bridge and sending all creatures beneath it tumbling into the chasm unless they succeed at a DC 20 Reflex save. Otherwise, it uses its natural attacks and versatile magical abilities to messily tear the PCs apart.

Morale The hunting horror doesn't consider that it could lose against the PCs and only attempts to flee if it lacks any means to snuff out at least one more life before dying.

D8. THE INNER SEAL (CR 16)

Within this immense gallery, dozens of broad columns reverberate with a sickening chorus of whistling wind that echoes and clashes with itself.

This hall once resonated with the psychic enchantments of countless yithians, but seismic events have cracked the wards, allowing the flying polyps to answer the call of the King in Yellow. As Xhamen-Dor has gained strength, the polyps have gradually roused themselves from their eons-long hibernation, broken out from under the earth, and sought destruction. Most of the polyps still doze groggily in the caverns deep below this chamber, and the gaping fracture in the floor to the south descends 20 feet before reaching an equally large chamber where a dozen more polyps dwell.

Creatures: Two of the polyps are fully awake and slither about this area in sheathes of wind. They have experimentally sniffed out their surroundings using their sucking wind ability over several days, yet they linger here, perhaps expecting more of their loathsome ilk to join their raiding party before bursting forth into the world above.

FLYING POLYPS (2) CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 207 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4 106*)

TACTICS

During Combat The polyps dodge between columns, attempting to lure the PCs deeper and unnerve their prey. Once the PCs are deep within the room, the polyps attack, preferring to use natural attacks against isolated targets and their wind blasts against clusters of foes.

Morale Flying polyps stop at nothing to kill others. These fight to the death.

Development: The PCs can travel deeper into the undercity, but nothing awaits them there beyond innumerable flying polyps. Even if the PCs kill more of the creatures here, the violence only rouses dozens more that inevitably overwhelm the PCs should they continue the battle of attrition.

The only certain way to keep the polyps from pursuing the PCs is to seal them underground once more. Kaklatath observes that psychic wards left by the yithians long ago are still strong enough to subdue the polyps were someone to physically seal the fissure here. If the yithian has regained its body, it can also contribute its own magic to strengthen the wards. Closing the fissure requires an extensive act of earth magic, such as dozens of *stone shape* spells, several applications of *transmute rock to mud* followed by *transmute mud to rock*, or something even more dramatic like *move earth* or *earthquake*. Kaklatath also advises that expending the remaining charges from the *lightning gun* (see area **D2**) could allow someone to melt the nearby stone like wax, causing it to clog the rift. Failing any of these options, the PCs can rely on extensive physical labor, though in that time it is likely that another pair of polyps attacks.

Story Award: If the PCs permanently seal the polyps away, grant them 51,200 XP.

DESTROYING THE STAR SEED (CR 17)

Over the course of the adventure, the PCs learn of the recovering Great Old One that dwells within the crater lake and is the source of suffering in the region since Earthfall. Likewise, they have probably deciphered that Xhamen-Dor lured Count Lowls to Neruzavin, and is on the verge of awakening and threatening Golarion in earnest. Despite this moral imperative, they are not obligated to fight the husk.

The crater lake slopes gently from the edge toward its center, descending to a maximum depth of 550 feet. Thanks to the water's pristine clarity, the PCs have little difficulty seeing to the bottom of the lake from the proper vantage point, though while the Husk of Xhamen-Dor lies dormant, the PCs can do little more than note trails of sediment that suggest a quadrant in which they might begin their search. For a more active approach, although

doing so is morally questionable, the PCs can release a victim of seedborne consumption near the lake's edge, where the doomed individual instinctually locates the Great Old One and swims toward his new master.

Creature: Xhamen-Dor has barely recovered from its impact with Golarion and clash with the yithians long ago, and what remains of its battered body lies dormant upon the lakebed. Once it senses prey within 300 feet, it rouses itself, attempting to lure hapless minds closer to consume them entirely. Its natural camouflage makes it difficult to spot, likely preventing the PCs from engaging it directly until they are within range of its unspeakable presence effect.

HUSK OF XHAMEN-DOR CR 17

XP 102,400

NE Gargantuan undead (Great Old One)

Init +11; **Senses** blindsight 120 ft., darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 120 ft.; **Perception** +26

Aura unspeakable presence (300 ft., DC 27)

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 17, flat-footed 31 (+1 Dex, +10 insight, +15 natural, -4 size)

hp 253 (22d8+154); fast healing 10

Fort +13, **Ref** +10, **Will** +19

Defensive Abilities insanity (DC 27); **DR** 10/epic and lawful; **Immune** ability damage, aging, cold, petrification, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +25 (2d8+12 plus dread decay), 4 tentacles +25 (2d6+12/19-20)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (2d8+12), rend (2 tentacles, dread decay), trample (6d8+18, DC 33)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th; concentration +23)

Constant—*air walk*

At will—*dream*, *nightmare* (DC 21)

3/day—*demand* (DC 24)

1/day—*greater dispel magic*, *horrid wilting* (DC 24), *sympathy* (DC 25)

STATISTICS

Str 35, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 5, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +32; **CMD** 53 (can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Vital Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Staggering Critical, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Climb +20, Perception +26, Stealth +3, Swim +20

Languages Aklo; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ otherworldly insight

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dormancy (Su) The Husk of Xhamen-Dor has shielded itself from conventional detection while recuperating, which makes it difficult to find until it moves. As a full-round action, the husk can become inanimate, during which time it bends light and sounds around itself to disguise its presence. This grants it a +20 bonus on Stealth checks and the benefits of a *nondetection* spell (CL 20th). The husk can use its spell-like abilities and telepathy while in this state, but any other action causes this effect to end immediately.

Dread Decay (Su) The Husk of Xhamen-Dor's tentacles inflict a horrible affliction that withers the flesh, digesting the victims with sickening speed. This catastrophic withering begins when the tentacle deals damage and continues for 4 rounds thereafter. Each round the rot persists, the target must succeed at a DC 27 Fortitude save or take 2 points of Constitution damage and 2 points of Wisdom damage. If the target succeeds at two consecutive saving throws, the effect is cured. *Heal* also ends the effect.

Latent Great Old One The Husk of Xhamen-Dor is all that remains of the once-mighty Great Old One Xhamen-Dor. Until it recovers its power completely, it gains all the benefits from all of the Great Old One subtype (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 306) save for immortality and mythic.

Unspeakable Presence (Su) Failing a DC 27 Will save against the Husk of Xhamen-Dor's unspeakable presence causes the victim to capitulate to the husk's rotting attacks and become a seeded creature; the victim loses its Dexterity bonus to AC against the husk's attacks. If the creature is also infected with the seedborne consumption—even if it is otherwise immune to the disease's effects—a failed save also forces that creature to move at least its speed toward the husk each round; once a creature enters the husk's reach, the victim is staggered until the end of its next turn. This ends the compulsion to move closer but not the loss of Dexterity.

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HUSK OF XHAMEN-DOR

Development: Destroying the Husk of Xhamen-Dor rids the world of a slumbering evil and ensures that when the PCs follow Lowls to Carcosa, they do not leave behind an equally grave threat. All seeded undead remain animate but become listless and lose their ability to infect other creatures. Those suffering from seedborne consumption are cured immediately, though they must recover from any ability damage as normal. Should they linger in Neruzavin, the PCs gradually spot signs of life returning to the area, be it a small flock of birds that land near the lake to drink before migrating further, a refreshing cloudburst that showers the city with clean rain for several minutes, or several girtablilus or ash giants who wander near the city, marveling that its overwhelming sense of foreboding has somewhat abated.

PERFORMING THE RITUAL

Once the PCs have secured the *Necronomicon*, properly attuned the three *Star Stelae*, and learned the path to the black stars occult ritual, they can perform the path to the black star occult ritual and travel to Carcosa at any time. However, there are numerous reasons for the PCs to delay their departure until they have explored Neruzavin more thoroughly—not least of which so that they might earn valuable experience points and treasure that could prove instrumental once they enter Hastur’s realm.

First, the Great Old One Xhamen-Dor grows ever closer to reviving completely, at which point it could demolish large swathes of western Casmaron, infect countless thousands of innocents, and perhaps even consume Golarion. At present, the Star Seed is merely powerful, not unstoppable, but if the PCs don’t destroy the vestige of Xhamen-Dor that dwells in the crater lake, they might return from having thwarted Hastur only to find their home world in ruins.

In a more immediate sense, performing the ritual partway through the adventure attracts trouble. The energy gathered by the dangerous ritual acts as a siren song to the flying polyps that live deep below Neruzavin. Approximately 20 minutes after the PCs begin the ritual, two flying polyps emerge from the undercity and descend upon the PCs. Not only is this a difficult fight, but fending off the aberrations almost certainly requires pausing the ritual; each round the PCs delay the ritual increases the DCs of the associated skill checks and the likelihood that the ritual fails altogether. Only once the PCs seal the flying polyps away again (see area **D8**) can they perform the ritual without disruptions and heighten their chances of success.

Using the *Necronomicon*: The *Necronomicon* serves as a powerful focus and tool when performing the path to the black star occult ritual. Referencing the tome while performing the ritual grants the primary caster a +10 insight bonus on all associated skill checks and grants all secondary casters a +5 insight bonus on those checks.

A caster can increase his bonus on one of these checks by 5 by consulting even darker chapters of the *Necronomicon* and taking 1d2 points of Wisdom drain in the process. He can instead take 1d4 points of Wisdom drain to increase the bonus by 10.

Finally, the tome describes yet riskier techniques that allow the primary caster to automatically succeed at one or more of the skill checks, though the text neglects to explain that doing so irrevocably turns the caster into one of Hastur’s pawns. These methods helped Count Lowls complete the ritual, ultimately transforming him into a terrible beast that the PCs will confront in the next volume of this adventure.

If the PCs consider employing these blasphemous techniques to complete the ritual, Kaklatath or another companion fervently cautions against the proposal. If the PCs insist on doing so, apply whatever terrible possibilities best fit your story, such as causing the primary caster to fail all saving throws during key encounters with Hastur’s minions or to become an NPC with the nightmare lord template (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 205) that appears elsewhere in Carcosa and confronts the PCs at a later point.

PATH TO THE BLACK STARS

School conjuration (teleportation); **Level** 6

Casting Time 60 minutes

Components V, S, F (the *Necronomicon* and three attuned *Star Stelae*), SC (up to 4)

Skill Checks Knowledge (arcana) DC 40, 3 successes; (dungeoneering) DC 40, 2 successes; Knowledge (nobility) DC 40, 1 success

Range touch

Target primary caster, secondary casters, and up to one creature per character level of the primary caster

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw Will negates; **SR** no

Backlash The primary caster takes a –2 penalty on Will saving throws against the spells and special abilities of creatures whose patron deity is Hastur. This effect lasts until the primary caster fails a Will saving throw against such an effect and for 24 hours thereafter.

Failure All casters gain 1 permanent negative level and are exhausted.

EFFECT

The casters draw and stand within a ritual circle, tracing eldritch symbols within the air to attune their current location to Carcosa’s cosmic coordinates. Upon this ritual’s completion, the carved runes on each of the focus stelae glow with eldritch power and shine beams of energy toward the primary caster. These beams cast a circle of sickly yellow light in a 100-foot radius around the caster and teleport all of the targets to a random destination on the distant world that holds Carcosa. Performing this ritual in the same place always transports the targets to the same region of Carcosa.



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If a creature used this ritual to travel to Carcosa, performing it again always transports the target back to its original point of departure.

It is possible for this ritual to be performed without the *Necronomicon*, but only by substituting a trio of special components associated with the King in Yellow's portfolio: decadence, disorder, and nihilism. For decadence, the primary caster must sacrifice 500 gp worth of extravagant clothing, jewelry, and other material wealth for every Hit Die of the creatures to be transported, which is consumed utterly by the ritual. For disorder, targets must each shift their alignments one step closer to chaotic; chaotic targets instead shift their alignments one step closer to chaotic evil. For nihilism, each target must accept a permanent negative level that can be removed only by a *miracle*, a *wish*, or an equally powerful effect.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs successfully perform the path to the black star occult ritual, the building yellow light from the *Star Stelae* that surrounds each of them grows into a blinding flash. When they are able to once again see, they find that they have traveled to Carcosa, a city situated on a distant world corrupted by Hastur's madness. It is there that they will find their former employer Count Lowls at long last, though in the intervening months, he has all but become the monster he thought to study. He has been infested with Xhamen-Dor and has become

a foul merger of the two. Count Lowls is now in the slowly forming Thrusmoor nexus and is attempting to complete the process of drawing the town into Carcosa.

Until now, the PCs have merely dabbled in dream worlds and clashed with vile cultists, but at the end of the day, they were always within reach of Golarion's familiar comforts—able to find rest and recuperate in relative safety before moving on to the next stage of their plans. Now they take a bold step into another world ruled by decadence, disorder, and nihilism from which there is no true respite. If the PCs need to take care of anything on Golarion, that chance is now lost as they complete the ritual.

Hopefully the PCs have managed to lay Neruzavin's brewing troubles and festering evils to rest before abandoning the accursed city. If they did not seal away the flying polyps, the immense fiends note the ritual's completion and soon break free of the yithians' last seals to inflict untold horrors on the girtabilus and ash giants before waging war on the people of Qadira and Kelesh. If the PCs did not destroy the husk of Xhamen-Dor, this portion of the Star Seed rouses and continues to grow soon after the PCs depart, casting its insidious dreams for hundreds of miles and corrupting several large cities in the Padishah Empire. In time, it could overtake Golarion if it is allowed to continue to grow. Hopefully the PCs prevented both of these tragedies before departing Golarion to avert an even greater disaster: Carcosa's growth and Hastur's dark apotheosis!

MOTHER GRIM MOON

A grime-stained shawl of tattered leather drapes over the twisted, blistered form of Mother Grim Moon, who serves as the leader and spiritual guide for the Parchlands' ash giant tribes. She has been a devout worshiper of Groetus for much of her long life.

MOTHER GRIM MOON **CR 16**
XP 76,800

Female old ash giant cleric of Groetus 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 126)

CN Large humanoid (giant)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +18

Aura aura of madness (30 ft., DC 20, 10 rounds/day)

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 8, flat-footed 21 (-1 Dex, +13 natural, -1 size)

hp 262 (24d8+154)

Fort +22, **Ref** +6, **Will** +16; +2 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities rock catching; **Immune** disease, poison

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 *heavy flail* +24/+19/+14/+9 (2d8+11/19-20 plus disease) or

2 slams +18 (1d8+3 plus disease)

Ranged rock +12 (1d8+10 plus disease)

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

Special Attacks channel positive energy 6/day (DC 18, 5d6), disease, part the veil, rock throwing (120 ft.)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +15) 8/day—vision of madness (+/-5)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +15)

5th—*commune*, *flame strike* (DC 20), *overland flight*^o, *righteous might*

4th—*aura of doom*^{um} (DC 19), *chaos hammer* (DC 19), *confusion*^o (DC 19), *fear* (DC 19), *freedom of movement*

3rd—*cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *fly*^o, *invisibility purge*, *wind wall*

2nd—*lesser restoration*, *owl's wisdom*, *remove paralysis*, *resist energy*, *spiritual weapon*, *touch of idiocy*^o

1st—*bles*, *comprehend languages*, *divine favor*, *doom* (2, DC 16), *lesser confusion*^o (DC 16), *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 15), *create water*, *detect magic*, *guidance*

D domain spell; **Domains** Madness, Void^{HA}

TACTICS

Before Combat If she expects combat, Mother Grim Moon

casts *overland flight*, *aura of doom*, and *shield of faith* in that order.

During Combat When fighting alongside other ash giants, Mother Grim Moon uses her spells and domain powers to debilitate her foes and let her allies do the fighting. If her allies are struggling, she casts *righteous might* and wades into melee. She strongly prefers using Greater Vital Strike or Great Cleave to make one powerful attack, loudly praising Groetus's unstoppable might as she does.

Morale Once reduced to 80 hit points or fewer, Mother Grim Moon acknowledges her foes' power and offers a truce so that all might enjoy the imminent apocalypse in peace. If denied, she fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 9, **Con** 22, **Int** 13, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +25; **CMD** 34

Feats Catch Off-Guard, Cleave, Great Cleave, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Selective Channeling, Self-Sufficient, Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics -1 (+3 when jumping), Climb +16, Heal +22, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (religion) +14, Perception +18, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +11, Survival +13

Languages Aklo, Common, Giant

SQ oversized weapon, vermin empathy +17

Combat Gear *mask of the skull*^{UE}; **Other Gear** +1 *heavy flail*, *amulet of natural armor* +3

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Prophet of Oblivion (Su) Mother Grim Moon's meditations on the end times have granted her the unique means to substitute her own health and sanity in place of material components for her spells. As a full-round action before casting a spell with an expensive material component, Mother Grim Moon can open herself to the madness of the multiverse to ignore the required material component. However, for every 500 gp worth of material components she ignores, she has a cumulative 5% chance of developing a debilitating madness or physical

malady equivalent to the effects of *bestow curse*; these effects are permanent and can be removed only with *miracle* or *wish*. Mother Grim Moon already suffers from three such afflictions: one reduces her Strength by 6, another causes her to grow painful bone spurs that prevent her from wearing armor, and the third muddles her senses in combat, giving her a 25% chance each round of performing no actions. These afflictions reduce her effective Challenge Rating by 2. In place of sacrificing her well-being, she can instead destroy magic items or valuables whose market price is at least twice the cost of the material component. Such items crumble into nonmagical ash after Mother Grim Moon finishes casting the spell, and only *miracle* or *wish* can restore them.

Born under the full moon on the anniversary of Aroden's death, the young giantess Urnasp enjoyed only a slight respite from the violence of ash giant society thanks to her omen-rich birthdate. Neither especially strong nor fast, she protected herself by embracing bizarre rituals of her own invention, many of which spooked even the hardened hunters of her tribe. By the time she reached adolescence, she had mastered her own methods of haruspicy and star reading. The tribe's opinion split as to whether to dash the young witch against rocks before she called foul demons upon them or bow to her mystical skills. The giants nearly tore each other apart before she declared that she would enter the Parchlands' accursed city and divine her future there.

Years passed, and the ash giant tribes' war with the girtablilu raged. A flesh-ripping sandstorm heralded Mother Grim Moon's return at this time, and the whirling sands parted to reveal a full moon with skeletal features. Under this sign, the ash giants overwhelmed the girtablilu and acknowledged the twisted prophethood as their savior. The giantess lives with each tribe for a full month before traveling to the next. All of the ash giants live in fear of her power, for even as her senses dim and her madness grows, her fearsome magic commands obedience.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Mother Grim Moon is the spiritual guide and unofficial ruler of the ash giant tribes that wander the Parchlands. She is the PCs' best means of earning safe passage through the Parchlands. Thanks to her own pilgrimage to Neruzavin, Mother Grim Moon can also provide the PCs with a crude description of the city's layout and principal features.

Furthermore, the giantess serves as a rare source of spellcasting services in the remote region, and she offers the PCs her magic. Should the PCs need healing magic such as *break enchantment*, *remove curse*, *restoration*, or even *raise dead*, they can retreat to the relative safety of the wilderness and request her aid.

By casting any of these spells and touching a PC, she also exposes her patient to ash leprosy. Mother Grim Moon is delighted to provide her magic at the standard cost, though she refunds half the fee if she assesses that the PC contracted the disease. Thanks to her ability to ignore material components, she can remove ability drain and death at relatively low cost. However, after she acquires two more debilitating conditions as a result, she declares the PCs outcasts and forbids them from ever approaching the tribes or traveling through their lands again. Only by meeting her violent demands (such as the sacrifice of a PC before she agrees to cast *remove curse*) can they ever again secure her spellcasting services.



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UPIANSHE

Once an investigator of unusual events and the leader of an ill-fated Ninshaburian expedition into the Parchlands, Upianshe now haunts the city she named—the same city where infection born of the Great Old One Xhamen-Dor claimed her friends' minds and her life.

UPIANSHE

CR 14

XP 38,400

Female human ghost magus (kensai) 13 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 144, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 9, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 55)

CN Medium undead (augmented humanoid, incorporeal)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +25

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 19, flat-footed 18 (+4 armor, +4 deflection, +5 dodge)

hp 140 (13d8+78)

Fort +12, **Ref** +4, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities canny defense +5, channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee corrupting touch +9 touch (14d6) or *Teralindar's Honor* +12 (14d6+4/19-20)

Special Attacks arcane pool (+4, 11 points), corrupting gaze (DC 20), frightful moan (DC 20), improved spell combat, magus arcane (disruptive^{UC}, enduring pride, spellbreaker^{UC}), malevolence (DC 20), spellstrike

Magus Spells Prepared (CL 13th; concentration +18)

5th—*cloudkill* (DC 20)

4th—*dimension door*, *fire shield*, *wall of ice* (DC 19)

3rd—*dispel magic*, *force punch*^{UM} (DC 18), *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *slow* (DC 18)

2nd—*anticipate thoughts*^{OA} (DC 17), *cat's grace*, *glitterdust* (DC 17), *scorching ray* (2)

1st—*corrosive touch*^{UM}, *frostbite*^{UM}, *mirror strike*^{UC} (2), *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 16), *shield*

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*

TACTICS

Before Combat Upianshe casts *shield* and *fire shield* (chill).

During Combat Upianshe activates her enduring pride magus arcane and dives into melee combat. There she lashes out with her spectral sword and uses her spells to batter secondary targets or disable threats.

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** 20, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 18

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

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Disruptive, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lunge, Spellbreaker, Step Up, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword)

Skills Fly +20, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana, dungeoneering, planes, religion) +18, Perception +25, Profession (merchant) +6, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +21, Stealth +24; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Perception, +8 Stealth

Languages Aklo, Azlanti, Common, Draconic, Kelish, Vudrani

SQ chosen weapon, critical perfection +5, iaijutsu, iaijutsu focus +5, perfect strike, superior reflexes

Gear *ghost touch bracers of armor* +4, spellbook (contains all prepared spells plus *baleful polymorph*, *cone of cold*, *daylight*, *elemental touch*, *enlarge person*, *fireball*, *greater invisibility*, *ice storm*, *long arm*, *ray of exhaustion*, *shocking grasp*, *slow*, *stoneskin*, and *web*)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Enduring Pride (Su) Upianshe can expend 1 point from her arcane pool as a swift action to manifest a spectral version of her sword, *Teralindar's Honor* (a +2 *aberration-bane bastard sword*, see page 35). The sword exists for 1 minute and deals damage as though she had used her corrupting touch ability; however, she applies the sword's enhancement bonus, special property, and expanded critical threat range to her attacks. She also benefits from any feats and special abilities as if she were using a bastard sword. The sword otherwise behaves as a natural weapon that cannot be disarmed.

Spiritual Rejuvenation (Su) This functions as a ghost's rejuvenation ability, but once she's "destroyed," her violent despair subsides, and her starting attitude toward most creatures becomes indifferent. Her hatred of all life returns after 2d4 days, after which the PCs must defeat her again in order to secure her cooperation.

Upianshe's paternal family operated a caravan that traveled throughout Ninshabur in that empire's final decades. On the family's annual circuit between the great Ninshaburian cities, she noticed strange signs in three of them. She recorded everything she observed, and on the third year, she took her findings to the city of Teralindar's guards. She explained her theory of a subterranean mastermind who manipulated the markets for sinister purposes—an idea the authorities laughed off as playful fancies. Undeterred, Upianshe stole her mother's sword and descended into the labyrinthine tunnels beneath the city. Four days later, she emerged, dragging the body of a dark naga behind her.

In recognition for her service, Ninshabur's finest enchanted her family blade to strike down other threats to the empire. She continued to learn and question long-held assumptions—especially those superstitions of unexplored wonders within the empire's own borders. Intent on disproving these wild tales about the Parchlands, she and her staunchest academic supporters assembled an expedition deep into that forbidden desert.

At first they found no threats, merely an abandoned city on the banks of a small crater lake. Upianshe coined the name "Neruzavin" (or "Cradle of Heaven") while her team set up camp and began exploring the unsettling architecture. When the terrible dreams began afflicting her team, Upianshe at first dismissed the signs because no nightmares had visited her. Her team's behavior quickly became erratic, and she traced the source of their corruption to the lake too late. By the time she discovered signs of Xhamen-Dor, her entire team had been infected, and she was beset upon by her colleagues. When it became clear that they could not capture her alive, they tore her to pieces. She has haunted the city as a ghost ever since, constantly reexamining her findings, second-guessing her conclusions, and blaming herself for not sensing the slumbering madness within the city sooner.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Millennia of relative solitude and self-loathing have twisted Upianshe into a hateful spirit, and when first encountered, she is a terrible foe the PCs must defeat. Once subdued, she is willing to relate her life's accomplishments, explain what she knows of Neruzavin, provide an educated assessment of what dwells in the lake, and offer the PCs a relatively safe place to rest. She can travel no more than 500 feet from the *Star Stela* of Alar, whose exact purpose she doesn't know. If the PCs explain what they've learned about the stelae, what lies within the *Necronomicon*, and how they hope to avert a greater disaster, she commits herself to helping them and avenging her fallen comrades.

Unfortunately, Upianshe's despair and failure bind her to Neruzavin, and they inevitably goad her into madness once more. Only by cleansing Neruzavin of evil and restoring her family's legacy can she permanently regain her sanity and join the River of Souls. Doing so requires the PCs' assistance with three goals. First, they must recover her sword *Teralindar's Honor* from the monument of destruction (area B5). Second, they must defeat the flying polyps in the undercity and seal them away once more. Finally, they must swear to Upianshe that they will destroy the evil that lives within the lake. The ghost then nods solemnly and melds with *Teralindar's Honor*, awakening its full abilities and hosting her spirit for the rest of the campaign (see page 35).



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WEIRALAI

Weiralai has personally guided Lowls toward corruption, and it is now her profane duty to destroy any who would interfere with the count's role in Hastur's plans. Her setbacks have only driven her to accept more of Hastur's terrible power.

WEIRALAI **CR 15**

XP 51,200

Female denizen of Leng cleric of Hastur 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 82)

CE Medium outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +31

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 14, flat-footed 22 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural)

hp 220 (21 HD; 11d8+10d10+116); fast healing 5, planar fast healing

Fort +19, **Ref** +13, **Will** +17

Defensive Abilities unusual anatomy; **Immune** poison;

Resist cold 30, electricity 30; **SR** 19

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 *conductive rapier* +22/+17/+12/+7 (1d6+3/15-20), bite +16 (1d6+1 plus 1d6 Dexterity drain), claw +16 (1d4+1) or

bite +21 (1d6+2 plus 1d6 Dexterity drain), 2 claws +21 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 12/day (DC 24, 6d6), chaos blade (5 rounds, 1/day), Dexterity drain, sneak attack +5d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +19)

Constant—*tongues*

3/day—*detect thoughts* (DC 21), *hypnotic pattern* (DC 21), *levitate*, *minor image* (DC 21)

1/day—*locate object*, *plane shift* (DC 26, self only)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +18)

10/day—spell rune (1d6+5 energy damage or spell, 11 rounds), touch of chaos

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 11th; concentration +18)

6th—*animate objects*^o, *greater dispel magic*, *heal*

5th—*dispel law*^o, *greater command* (DC 22), *major curse*^{um} (DC 22), *true seeing*

4th—*aura of doom*^{um} (DC 21), *chaos hammer*^o (DC 21), *dismissal* (DC 21), *divine power*, *freedom of movement*

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 20), *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic* (2), *glyph of warding*^o, *invisibility purge*, *speak with dead* (DC 20)

2nd—*align weapon*^o (chaos only), *darkness*, *hold person* (DC 19), *resist energy*, *shatter* (DC 19), *sound burst* (DC 19), *spiritual weapon*

1st—*deathwatch*, *detect law*, *divine favor* (2), *obscuring mist*, *protection from law*^o, *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 17), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *read magic*

D domain spell; **Domains** Chaos, Rune

TACTICS

Before Combat After preparing her spells each day, Weiralai infuses her unique armor, *The Forbidden Name*, with one blast rune and a spell rune containing *bestow curse*. With her extraordinary senses, Weiralai is capable of detecting approaching danger with ease. She uses the forewarning to cast *aura of doom*, *divine favor*, *freedom of movement*, *shield of faith*, *true seeing*, and *resist energy* against whichever energy type she knows the PCs use most.

During Combat Weiralai *greater dispel magic* to soften up her opposition before wading into melee. She uses her rapier's *conductive* special ability to activate her touch of chaos domain ability without slowing her attacks, and she activates her armor's runes to debilitate a key target.

Morale Weiralai must destroy the PCs, but she is willing to retreat from an unbeatable fight in order to attack later when the PCs are more vulnerable. If she cannot reliably retreat, she fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** 21, **Int** 20, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 28

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 34

Feats Critical Focus, Deceitful, Dodge, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Persuasive, Scribe Scroll, Spring Attack, Staggering Critical, Stunning Critical, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +3 (+7 when jumping), Bluff +37, Diplomacy +26, Disable Device +22, Disguise +23, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (planes) +15, Knowledge (religion) +15,

Perception +31, Profession (sailor) +15, Sense Motive +31, Sleight of Hand +16, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +27, Use Magic Device +22; **Racial Modifiers** +4 disguise when disguised as a medium humanoid

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Gnoll, Kelish, Osirian; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only), *tongues*

SQ no breath

Combat Gear *potion of fly*, *potion of invisibility*; **Other Gear** *The Forbidden Name* (see page 42), +1 *conductive rapier*, *headband of mental prowess* +2 (Wis, Cha), Leng rubies (8, worth 500 gp each), tins of eye ointment (2, worth 250 gp each)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Touch of the Blot (Su) Weiralai has manifested a unique ability as a servant of Carcosa. Three times per day as a standard action, Weiralai can make a touch attack against a creature and infect it with a horrible affliction that withers the creature's flesh. The struck creature must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude save or take 2 points of Constitution drain. The save DC is Constitution-based. In addition, Weiralai gains the ability to telepathically communicate with seeded creatures within 100 feet as if she herself was a seeded creature.

Weiralai traces her origins back to the nightmarish world of Leng. There she toiled as a thrall of moon-beasts, slavishly cutting and grinding the infamous Leng rubies before eventually earning her masters' approval to sail off with her brethren in their black ships. When their vessel first slid into Katapesh, Weiralai disembarked, silently reveling in the abundant wealth and prosperity juxtaposed with enormous strife and unhappiness. When the ship departed, she stayed behind with a bag of rubies. From the shadows, she brokered deals and watched her greedy clients' lives descend into chaos.

Wherever depravity thrived, Weiralai was quick to follow. Inevitably this drew her to the iniquitous port of Okeno, where she used the last of her rubies to enter the slave trade. Yet no matter how much wealth she acquired, Weiralai could not forget that

she too was still a slave of the moon-beasts—at least, not without the divine help of Hastur. The Great Old One has never so much as acknowledged his servant, yet Weiralai has nonetheless reveled in her patron's gifts. She has eagerly awaited the King in Yellow's call, which arrived at last when Count Haserton Lowls IV sought replacements for his dismissed household staff. In Thrushmoor, she was Lowls's silent muse, subtly coaching him when he encountered obstacles and subversively guiding him down the road of occult scholarship that would facilitate Hastur's dominion of Golarion. When Lowls was at least ready to embark on his expedition, she remained behind to ensure none would follow.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Weiralai is the otherworldly beast that hounds the PCs in the flesh, just as the forgotten atrocities they committed haunt their consciences. Since the PCs first defeated her in "The Thrushmoor Terror," she has become utterly devoted to their downfall. She has spent the time since binding herself ever further to the King in Yellow. Her devotion has changed her physically, causing her horns to grow to enormous size and her mouth to become impossible to conceal beneath the layers of yellow silk that she usually wears. When the PCs reach Neruzavin and begin poking around the place, she believes that only their demise can maintain Hastur's favor. If the PCs killed her the first time they met, she reappeared in Leng and was narrowly able to escape back to the Material Plane. Next time, she won't be so lucky.

As the PCs navigate Neruzavin, Weiralai uses *locate object* to track an object she knows they carry. She is always several hundred feet away, patiently waiting to see if they might inadvertently hasten Xhamen-Dor's recovery. Once it is clear the PCs are poised to pursue Count Lowls to Carcosa, Weiralai prepares herself for a final, decisive battle and strikes without mercy.



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XHAMEN-DOR THE INMOST BLOT

And lo! I beheld a light in the depths of the lake below that pulsed to the very beat of my heart, and I knew that this was the selfsame flare in the firmament I beheld in my dreams. I felt the pulsing within my very soul, echoing back through my memories, and perceived this light had come to the world eons ago, when the stars themselves first took umbrage against those pathetic and unworthy creatures who dwelt below, scouring away the most unworthy. And I knew that what pulsed within me was growing, and that it was not my heart that was pumping within my breast, for I had long been a dead thing, and this instead was the pulse of the seed of God.

“Iä! Iä Xhamen-Dor!”

—Il-Asziph Mavmameniris,
Ninshaburian apostle of the Star Seed

The living cancer known as Xhamen-Dor has existed on numerous worlds across the immensity of time, and in most cases, its gestation on those worlds resulted in their doom—it consumed their inhabitants from within and transposed the worlds into the parasitic heart of the alien city of Carcosa. Xhamen-Dor first came to be in the sewers of this impossibly ancient city, and it always seeks to return to these tangled vaults and reservoirs, dragging with it the harvest of its latest devastation. It seems unlikely that such a malevolence could be merely the result of chance, especially considering the nature of Carcosa itself; in truth, Xhamen-Dor's source is nothing of the natural world at all.

Whether Carcosa or Hastur came first is largely irrelevant (and largely impossible for mortal minds to know), but Xhamen-Dor came to be as a result of Hastur's first journey through the deepest sewers of Carcosa. What scraped loose by that Great Old One's passage and left behind settled into the city's cracks and crevices, slowly festering but refusing to lay quiet. And upon Carcosa's first consumption of another city (the doomed metropolis of Alar), slivers of the victims' souls and minds were absorbed into these malignant scabs and forgotten fragments. They fused with the dregs of Carcosa's leavings there and wakened into the sentient infestation known as Xhamen-Dor.

The "why" of Xhamen-Dor is easier to grasp than the "how." The parasite city of Carcosa seeks ever to expand by absorbing cities and societies from other worlds, yet it often finds itself limited by available targets. Carcosa has no real method of extracting what it needs to grow from worlds where society has not yet advanced to a point where a decadent aristocracy can exist. Xhamen-Dor is the solution. For the Inmost Blot to grow, it needs only minds capable of dreaming, and when it discovers such, it can send its tendrils throughout any world it finds itself on and transform all life into its undead minions: the seeded. Once a world has been infested by the Inmost Blot and none but the seeded remain, Xhamen-Dor uses the final gasps of the decaying planet to return to Carcosa and excrete what it has gathered into the city's gluttonous sewers. Worlds consumed in this way increase Carcosa's size by only fractions of what it gains from parasitizing a vibrant city, yet each tiny portion is a step toward Hastur's inevitable ascension to Outer God.

Statistics for Xhamen-Dor appear on page 86.

PERSONIFICATION AND REALM

Although Xhamen-Dor has a physical body, and as such it must inhabit a physical place, to consider the ancient sewer or hidden lake or lost cavern it is found within its realm betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the Inmost Blot's nature. This insidious Great Old One does not truly live within the tangled mass of bone, hair, and fungus that one might mistake for its form, but exists deeper within the tortured dreams and agonized memories of those who have heard its name or know of its nature. When this corrupting knowledge infects a living host, it spreads within, planting itself in the unfortunate's flesh and mind alike. In time, these "seeded" are transformed wholly into undead servants of the Great Old One—slaves that then seek, above all else, to spread knowledge of the Inmost Blot to fresh flesh within which more of their kind may grow.

The exact appearance of Xhamen-Dor's physical form changes from incarnation to incarnation as it is born, dies, and reincarnates, yet its forms always share certain features. The corruption of the Great Old One can be seen in fungal blights that combine masses of mushroomlike growths and twisted tangles of fibrous tendrils that look like lengths of filthy, gritty hair. Typically, this foul matter emerges from the corpse of a massive creature or grows from the scattered bones left across a vast battlefield, and when it does, the fungal fibers incorporate

those bones into the whole. On Golarion, Xhamen-Dor's physical body incorporates the remains of what was once an immense dragon in a disturbing, serpentine form, although decay and the aberrant, supernatural change to the remains leaves the actual type of dragon from which the corpse came a mystery. On other worlds and in other incarnations, Xhamen-Dor has or shall take forms more akin to gargantuan cephalopods, scorpion-like horrors, a living and slithering network of spiderwebs, or a conical mass of fungal flesh that tapers to a massive, hungry maw of bones and tentacles. As a creature born in the sewers of Carcosa, Xhamen-Dor's physical form always seeks out areas of moisture, preferring remote lakes, underground caverns, or forgotten reservoirs as its lair.

Xhamen-Dor is neutral evil and its areas of concern are decay, parasites, and transformation. The favored weapon of its cult is the spear. Its domains are Death, Evil, Plant, and Trickery, and its subdomains are Decay, Deception, Murder, and Undead. The Great Old One's priests are primarily clerics, druids, sorcerers, and witches.



There, in the deepest vaults of Carcosa, did the spores of the Star Seed first quicken. There, in the lightless seeps of Carcosa were the first of its children seeded. And there, in the inky depths of Carcosa did the end of countless worlds begin.
—*Necronomicon*

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DOGMA AND WORSHIPERS

Worshippers of Xhamen-Dor typically fall into one of two categories: the nomads and the seeded. Of the two factions, the nomads are perhaps the more dangerous, for it is they who seek and choose the worlds for the Star Seed to harvest. Nomads are almost always alien entities with little to no ties to humanity, with mi-go and flying polyps being particularly common among this cast. The seeded, on the other hand, are almost universally indigenous creatures that have been transformed by Xhamen-Dor into undead slaves.

Beyond seeking to prepare worlds for transformation, the worshippers of Xhamen-Dor have very little interest in other pursuits apart from covertly spreading hints and whispers about Xhamen-Dor. As such, cultists of the Inmost Blot who still dwell within society tend to be diverse in their other lives, so as to prevent potential enemies from realizing the true threat they present.

One rather unusual and heretical offshoot of the cult of Xhamen-Dor should be mentioned as well: the sentinels. These worshippers do not seek to allow Xhamen-Dor to complete its goal; worshiping it out of fear, they instead seek to perpetuate its eternal slumber. As long as the Star Seed sleeps, it cannot destroy the world, and as long as it does not destroy the world, it cannot move on to threaten others. The sentinels understand that the more they know of Xhamen-Dor, the more they risk becoming seeded, and so they partake in regular rituals involving drug abuse, surgery, and magic to alter and control their memories so that they do not perpetuate more knowledge of Xhamen-Dor than is absolutely necessary to keep it and its cult secret. When one of their own learns too much, that member is usually sacrificed. The sentinels do not count clerics among their kind, and very few of them are any other type of divine spellcaster. In fact, they pride themselves in not knowing the name of their hated god, giving it descriptive names such as “The Enemy,” “Invader,” or “Ruin of Worlds.”

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

Xhamen-Dor’s worshippers see the site of the Inmost Blot’s current physical body as their greatest—and indeed only—temple. For a cult that exists with the sole purpose of destroying worlds and assimilating new members via dreams, the concept of shrines or other permanent buildings devoted to Xhamen-Dor’s worship is ludicrous. When the seeded do not dwell near their god’s lair, they dwell in homes and castles and manors and hovels as they did before they became the Great Old One’s puppets.

A PRIEST’S ROLE

Once Xhamen-Dor has fed Carcosa (or on those rare occasions where the Great Old One is defeated or banished), it launches a tiny core blot of its essence into the depths of space to seek a new world. Left to its own,

the blot can aimlessly travel through the vastness until it happens to be pulled into a planet's gravitational well—but here is where Xhamen-Dor's cult often steps in. When the nomads who serve the Star Seed find a world that would suit the Inmost Blot, they erect menhirs known as *Star Stelae* and infuse them with magic that Xhamen-Dor can sense. Often (as was the case on Golarion), these alien scouts are forced to erect multiple groupings of *Star Stelae* when they are opposed by local denizens or hostile environs, but eventually the *Star Stelae* draw their god to the planet. When Xhamen-Dor arrives with the sound of thunder, often creating a vast crater with his violent penetration of the world's crust, its nomad priests mostly abandon the world, leaving behind a few guardians to help protect Xhamen-Dor as it grows and establishes itself. The majority of its followers then hurtle back into the depths of space, always eager to find a new world to mark.

Once Xhamen-Dor lands on a world, it is a matter of time before its presence becomes known by that world's populace; once that occurs, it can begin to grow its second group of worshipers—the seeded. As sapient minds learn of Xhamen-Dor, they dream of it. And as they dream of it, they invite it into their dreams and become infested. It is fortunate that on most worlds, the sanity and structure of mortal minds helps to occlude and prevent the swift spread of Xhamen-Dor's influence, and most minds are eager to forget or ignore its presence without conscious act. Yet while this resistance often slows the time it takes for Xhamen-Dor's seeded to first rise in a world, it never stops this infestation. After the seeded are active, they can work to physically spread the Inmost Blot's influence, to sow their corruption, and to hasten their world's end. The seeded know that when the time finally comes, Xhamen-Dor will harvest and consume them, and when it excretes them in the bowels of Carcosa, they shall achieve immortality. They welcome the end, for the end of their world helps their god become all the stronger.

HOLIDAYS

Xhamen-Dor's cult is somewhat unusual in that it has no significant traditional holidays. To the nomad priests, there is only the task of marking the current world or hunting for the next. To the seeded priests, the singular day of import is when Xhamen-Dor finally achieves apotheosis, harvests a world, and returns to Carcosa. Of course, once such an event plays out, none remain on the world to celebrate.

APHORISMS

Xhamen-Dor's worshipers glory in the decay of a world, transforming the planet into something akin to their fungal god. They do not seek to convince newcomers to worship or join by persuasion or missionary work.

CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

As rewards for their servitude, priests of Xhamen-Dor can use *summon monster* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spells.

Summon Monster IV
Phycomid (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 210)

Summon Monster V
Basidiron (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 28*)

Summon Monster VI
Mi-go (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 193)

They need only spread the name of their god and the rest can take care of itself.

Know the Inmost Blot, for It Knows You: Once any dreaming sapient learns the name of Xhamen-Dor, they can potentially become infested in its dreams. The fact that many mortals are naturally curious about the unexplained or the mysteries of the world makes such tantalizing clues as the Great Old One's unexplained name so much more dangerous.

Your Dreams Are of God and for God: To the seeded, the dreams of the rest of the world are their farmlands, their hunting grounds, their marketplaces. Anyone who dreams is a possible recruit to the cult, and even before such a victim is selected, its capacity to dream just fattens it for the banquet.

HOLY TEXT

Xhamen-Dor's cultists keep no specific text of their own, for they view all texts as potentially sacred. They also know that information written down can be destroyed, but worse, to spread the lore of Xhamen-Dor too swiftly is to risk alerting the cult's enemies. And for a cult devoted to the destruction of life, all who live are potential enemies. As a result, the cult prefers to operate with stealth and subtlety, creating no single blasphemous text to carry the infectious lore of their god, but rather infusing that knowledge via metaphor or a trail of clues across many unrelated documents. This way, the truly curious (and perhaps more open and vulnerable) minds will do the work on their own, while the chances of alerting enemies remains minimized. This tactic results in increasingly lengthy "gestations" of the faith, but the seeded have no fear of the passage of time. They are patient, and they know those bound by the spectre of decrepitude at advanced age are not, and are well-practiced at using this fact and the mortal mind's natural curiosity as tools.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Xhamen-Dor's interests in decay and infestations might suggest alliances with deities like Ghlaunder or

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Cyth-V'sug, but its cult eschews all potential religious coalitions, viewing all other cults as food. Desna has long stood against Xhamen-Dor, and may well have attempted to destroy the creature that eventually became Ghlaunder in a case of mistaken identity, but she also knows that spreading lore of the Inmost Blot is to empower it. As such, very few of her cultists actively oppose Xhamen-Dor. Only Hastur's cult views Xhamen-Dor as an ally, but when his cult is active on a world shared by Xhamen-Dor, they often seek to slow or stop its growth, for if a world can be harvested directly by Carcosa, it is worth more than if it is consumed by the Star Seed. In cases like this (such as what has arisen on Golarion), the cult of Hastur walks a razor's edge, seeking to extract Xhamen-Dor and its cult and return it to Carcosa for redeployment to other worlds while also suppressing information about the Star Seed, for fear of quickening its transition and triggering an end time event before a society is ready for proper harvest.

NEW SPELLS

Clerics of Xhamen-Dor can prepare *wall of thorns* as a 6th-level spell, and *insanity* as a 7th-level spell. The following two spells are also often used by its worshipers—and while the first has spread far beyond its priesthood and can be found in use by explorers and adventurers, the second remains obscure, for enemies of the Inmost Blot's cult are tireless in preventing the insidious *what grows within* spell from spreading far.

PROTECTION FROM SPORES

School abjuration; **Level** alchemist 2, cleric 2, druid 2, ranger 1, shaman 2, witch 2

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range touch

Target creature touched

Duration 1 minute/level

Saving Throw Fortitude negates (harmless);

Spell Resistance no

With a touch, you bolster a creature's body to protect it from the harmful effects of spores and similar afflictions. While under the effect of this spell, a creature is immune to the effects of brown mold, green slime, russet mold, yellow mold, and any similar hazard, provided the hazard is CR 6 or lower. Similarly, the creature is immune to poison, disease, and infestation attacks from all fungal creatures of CR 6 or lower, including

effects such as basidiron spores, violet fungus rot, and the like. The target is immune to fungus-based toxins, such as striped toadstool. Against similar hazards or monsters of CR 7 or higher, the target gains a bonus on all saving throws against the effect equal to half your caster level. *Protection from spores* offers no protection against fungal infestations created by the seeded, by the spell *what grows within*, or by Xhamen-Dor.

WHAT GROWS WITHIN

School necromancy [evil]; **Level** bard 6, cleric 6, druid 6, mesmerist 6, psychic 6, sorcerer/wizard 6, witch 6

Casting Time 1 swift action

Components V

Range personal

Effect you

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw see text; **Spell Resistance** no

By speaking the name "Xhamen-Dor," you infuse yourself with the essence of the Inmost Blot and gain a +3 profane bonus on Will saving throws for the spell's duration.

When you prepare *what grows within* for the first time, or the first time you use it via a spell-completion or spell-trigger item, you can thereafter be targeted by Xhamen-Dor's infected dreams ability (see page 86). As long as you are under the effects of *what grows within*, your mind-affecting spells carry this supernatural taint within them and can infect those who succumb to those effects. Whenever you successfully affect a creature with one of your mind-affecting spells (this requires the target to fail its saving throw against the spell if the spell allows a save, but automatically affects a target if the spell does not allow a saving throw), that target must also succeed at a Fortitude saving throw against *what grows within* or it immediately becomes afflicted by a lesser version of Xhamen-Dor's seeded infestation. This infestation does not expose the victim to Xhamen-Dor's infectious dreams, but it can ultimately



result in that creature's transformation into one of the seeded. Each time you affect a creature with *what grows within* in this manner, the remaining duration of *what grows within* is reduced by 1 round. If you affect multiple creatures in a round, you choose the order in which they must save against the effects of *what grows within*, and reduce the spell's remaining duration by 1 round each time one of them is affected by the infestation.

Lesser Seeded Infestation—save Fortitude DC = spell's save DC; onset immediate; frequency 1/day; effect 1d4 Constitution drain; cure none. This infestation can be cured by magic alone. A creature whose Constitution is reduced to 0 by this infestation dies and rises from death in 1d4 rounds as a seeded creature (see page 90). This is an infestation effect.

OBEDIENCE

The following describes the ritual a worshiper of Xhamen-Dor must perform to take full advantage of the Deific Obedience feat, as well as the boons for the evangelist, exalted, and sentinel prestige classes found in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Gods*.

OBEDIENCE (XHAMEN-DOR)

You must ingest a toxic fungus, rotting flesh infested with parasites, or flesh harvested from a creature of your own species while the creature sleeps and dreams. Gain a +4 profane bonus on saving throws against effects that cause ability damage or ability drain.

EVANGELIST BOONS

- 1: Infesting Invocation (Sp)** *ray of enfeeblement* 3/day, *protection from spores* (see above) 2/day, or *fungus infestation*^{UM} 1/day
- 2: Seed the Unseeded (Sp)** Up to three times per day, as a swift action when you cast any mind-affecting spell, you can cause that spell to behave as if you were under the effects of *what grows within* (see above).
- 3: Extract Griegall (Su)** Twice per day, you can wrack a target with pain. The target must be within 30 feet and in line of sight. As a standard action, you deal 1d6 points of Constitution damage to the target, who then becomes nauseated for 1d4 rounds. This damage bypasses all forms of damage reduction, but can affect only living creatures. If the target creature succeeds at a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Constitution modifier), it negates the Constitution damage and is staggered for 1 round instead. Regardless of the success or failure of this saving throw, a monstrous parasite is expelled from the target's body, either from an orifice or from a wound. If the target succeeded at its saving throw, the parasite expelled is a single griegall (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 133). If the target failed its saving throw, advanced griegalls emerge instead; the number that emerge is equal to 1 + the amount of Constitution damage the victim took. The griegalls are not under your control, but they regard you as an ally.

EXALTED BOONS

- 1: Fester the Flesh (Sp)** *decompose corpse*^{UM} 3/day, *pox pustules*^{APG} 2/day, or *undead anatomy I*^{UM} 1/day
- 2: Festering Strike (Su)** As a swift action whenever you confirm a critical hit against a creature with a weapon or spell, you can forgo the additional damage that the critical hit would otherwise have dealt and instead afflict the creature struck with a rotting toxin. The creature can resist this effect with a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC = 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Constitution modifier), but otherwise it immediately takes 1d4 points of Strength damage and 1d4 points of Constitution damage as its flesh withers and rots away. On a successful save, the victim takes no ability damage but is instead sickened for 1d4 rounds. If your weapon has a critical modifier of ×3, the victim takes a -2 penalty on the saving throw to resist your festering strike, and if your weapon has a critical modifier of ×4 or higher, this penalty increases to -4. This is a poison effect.
- 3: Shed Life (Sp)** Once per day, you can cast *undead anatomy IV*^{UM} as a spell-like ability. If you are already undead, you also gain the effects of a *harm* spell as this spell-like ability takes effect, and adjacent living creatures are targeted by an *inflict serious wounds* effect as if you had cast that spell on them.

SENTINEL BOONS

- 1: Twisted Nature (Sp)** *entangle* 3/day, *alter self* 2/day, or *excruciating deformation*^{UM} 1/day
- 2: Transformation Mastery (Su)** The save DCs of polymorph effects you create increase by 2, and all polymorph spells that affect you are enhanced as if via the Extend Spell metamagic feat. When you are in a form other than your own, you exalt in your temporary body and gain a +2 profane bonus on saving throws. In addition, you gain the shapechanger subtype, and your attacks are particularly painful to other creatures with this subtype, since you use your mastery of transformation to twist the mutable elements of the shapechanger's flesh to cause additional harm. Add your Charisma bonus as a modifier to all weapon damage dealt to creatures with the shapechanger subtype or creatures under the effects of a polymorph spell. Increase the save DC of any spell that deals hit point damage by 2 when you affect a shapechanger or a polymorphed target.
- 3: Awaken Life (Sp)** Once per day, you can cast *polymorph any object* as a spell-like ability, but only to transform an inanimate nonmagical object into a living creature. The creature's physical ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution) become 20, and its mental ability scores (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma) become 10. The creature's alignment is neutral evil, and while you do not control it, the creature recognizes you as an ally. If the creature you create is a plant, the duration of the *polymorph any object* effect is doubled.

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THE NECRONOMICON

The nethermost caverns... are not for the fathoming of eyes to see; for their marvels are strange and terrific. Cursed the ground where dead thoughts live new and oddly bodied, and evil the mind that is held by no head. Wisely did Ibn Schacabao say, that happy is the tomb where no wizard hath lain, and happy the town at night whose wizards are all ashes. For it is of old rumour that the soul of the devil-bought hastes not from his charnel clay, but farts and instructs *the very worm that gnaws*; till out of corruption horrid life springs, and the dull scavengers of earth wax crafty to vex it and swell monstrous to plague it. Great holes secretly are digged where earth's pores ought to suffice, and things have learnt to walk that ought to crawl.

—H. P. Lovecraft,
excerpt from the *Necronomicon* in “The Festival”

Many blasphemous texts and monstrous tomes have been penned by lunatics, cultists, and fiends over the course of Golarion's history. Numerous answers to the Dark Tapestry's mysteries are supposedly hidden within the pages of *Secrets of the Dreaming Dark*. The *Emerald Codex of the Therassic Order* purports to reveal esoteric spells and rituals associated with the mysterious Peacock Spirit of old Thassilon. The religious texts of many evil cults contain blasphemies capable of shocking even the staunchest of souls. Perhaps most infamous of all of Golarion's evil texts is the notorious *Book of the Damned*, a multivolume text that catalogs the evil Outer Planes and the outsiders who inhabit—and rule—them.

But Golarion has hardly cornered the proverbial market on the composition of notorious texts. In the days before the Shining Crusade, one of creation's most dangerous grimoires came to the Inner Sea region from a world far distant from Golarion, yet in key ways not so different from it—for like Golarion, Earth has long been under the influence of the Elder Mythos, the alien gods that constitute it, and the deranged cultists who worship them.

It was on Earth, in what corresponded roughly to the year 3525 AR on Golarion, that a talented but mad poet named Abdul Alhazred wrote his blasphemous masterpiece, *Kitab Al-Azif*, after spending a decade alone in the desert. The book swiftly gained a sinister reputation, one that only grew after Alhazred was torn apart and devoured by an unseen beast before several horrified witnesses. The book would be translated centuries later into Greek by the scholar Theodorus Philetas, and then into many other languages over the years to follow. A copy of the first translation into Greek made its way via the Dreamlands to Golarion, where a necromancer named Geir, eager to impress his lord Tar-Baphon, took upon himself the task of translating the text from an alien tongue into Necril, the language of the Whispering Tyrant. Such a task was, of course, doubly blasphemous, for not only did it bring Alhazred's mad revelations to an entirely new world, but in using Necril to record the words, Geir directly disobeyed the Whispering Way's restriction of passing on its secrets via whispers alone. Paranoid that he would be found out—but certain the gift of the book would impress the Whispering Tyrant enough to earn a pardon for his actions—Geir took extensive steps to ensure the Necril translation of the tome would be difficult, if not impossible, to magically locate or transport. Unfortunately for Geir, destiny intervened in the form of the Shining Crusade, and he was divested of the newly translated tome in one of that conflict's first battles. Geir was, by then, a lich, and his rejuvenation at his phylactery ensured no lasting harm came to him as a result of his defeat, but the loss of the *Necronomicon* to the crusaders haunted him for

ages (it was as a safeguard against this precise eventuality that the lore of the Whispering Way was forbidden from being written down). With his own wards against divination preventing him from determining where the crusaders had taken the dangerous book, Geir was forced to abandon the text and hope the truth of its source never came out.

In this regard, luck was with the lich. The crusaders returned the Necril translation of the *Necronomicon* to Zimar in Taldor, but with the nation focused on the Shining Crusade, little effort was made to research the dangerous tome after an initial disastrous attempt resulted in the book being locked away in a vault. It remained there for years, forgotten amid the chaos of the Shining Crusade, until it was liberated during Qadira's attack on Zimar in 4079 AR. When the scholar entrusted with studying the tome committed suicide by leaping from Katheer's Zenith of the Dawnflower, the book was once again placed in a hidden vault, where it has languished for the past several hundred years, patient and potent, waiting for another set of curious and foolish eyes to gaze upon the secrets its pages ache to reveal.

The following timeline notes important events as they relate to Geir's translation of the *Necronomicon*, as well as other significant events involving various copies of the *Necronomicon* on distant Earth (which are presented in italics).

- **c. 3525 AR** *Abdul Alhazred writes Kitab Al-Azif, the original version of the notorious text that would come to be known more commonly as the Necronomicon.*

- 3533** *Abdul Alhazred is torn apart by an invisible creature on the streets of Damascus on Earth.*

- 3745** *A scholar named Theodorus Philetas discovers a copy of Kitab Al-Azif in the Imperial Library of Constantinople, then translates the book from Arabic into Greek and renames the volume the Necronomicon. He is later forced to recant and publicly burn his translation of the tome on the steps of a church, but before he does so, he hides a copy of the book in a library in Ulthar in the Dreamlands.*

- 3746** The necromancer Geir, an agent of the Whispering Tyrant, discovers the *Necronomicon* while searching the libraries of the Dreamlands for clues on a ritual to transform him into a lich. He returns to Ghashterhall in Ustalav and manages to transport the *Necronomicon* with him. He then begins work on translating the tome into Necril.

- 3747** Geir completes his initial work on the book that will become the Necril translation of the *Necronomicon*. To combat potential theft of his prize, he enhanced the book with

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potent abjurations that prevent it from being supernaturally located via divination magic or transported via teleportation effects.

3751 Geir's work on translating the *Necronomicon* helps him complete his transformation into a lich. He continues work on the translation, intending to offer the translated book to his master, Tar-Baphon, for great rewards.

3754 The Shining Crusade begins. Geir finally completes his translation of the *Necronomicon*, then destroys the stolen Greek version to ensure Tar-Baphon will retain the only copy of the book on Golarion. He sets out to hand-deliver the tome to the Whispering Tyrant, but is ambushed along the way by a group of paladins in one of the first battles of the Shining Crusade. Geir is slain during the battle, and while he rejuvenates a few days later back in Ghasterhall at his phylactery, his possessions, along with the *Necronomicon*, have been left behind. The crusaders recognize the *Necronomicon* as a dangerous tome, but not its true significance, as it is but one of several grimoires captured in the fight. The crusaders decide to send their captured spellbooks back to Zimar in Taldor for study and safekeeping.

3755 After spending several months mired in bureaucratic red tape, the *Necronomicon* finally falls into the possession of noted Taldan scholar Natharen Olatidar, who recognizes the *Necronomicon* as a potent spellbook and suspects that hidden within its pages are secrets that will help the Shining Crusade. He begins studying the tome in his quarters, and grows increasingly paranoid that hidden agents of the Whispering Tyrant may have infiltrated Zimar and are seeking to reclaim the tome.

3756 Natharen makes a fatal mistake and attempts to contact one of the entities mentioned in the *Necronomicon*—the Crawling Chaos—to aid his research of the tome. Unfortunately for Zimar, his attempt is successful, and the revelations Natharen receives from Nyarlathotep drive him mad. He becomes convinced that those in Zimar he suspected of being agents of the Whispering Way are in fact minions of something far more evil, and sets about slaughtering nearly a dozen innocent priests and scholars before he is himself killed. Investigations into the mad wizard's activities reveal the dangers in the *Necronomicon*, and the book is put into secure storage in a vault in Zimar to await a time when the Shining Crusade is over so that proper attention can be given to the dangerous tome.

3828 The Shining Crusade finally comes to a close after nearly three-quarters of a century. In that time, the *Necronomicon* has been forgotten in its secure vault, and the book continues to languish within Zimar for many decades more.

4079 Qadira invades Taldor and sacks Zimar. Among the invaders is a Qadiran scholar named Asea Imbandi, who is aghast at the destruction of so many rare tomes during the city's burning. She personally sees to the preservation of several hundred books from Zimar's vaults—among which is the Necril version of the *Necronomicon*. Returning to Katheer with her rescued texts, Asea begins to catalog them, but soon after she begins studying the *Necronomicon*, she is driven to suicide and leaps from the Zenith of the Dawnflower. A set of disjointed notes found among her belongings warns other scholars, and the *Necronomicon* is placed under magical wards in the special collections of the Mysterium, where it remains for many years.

Current Year Lowls and his allies secure the copy of the *Necronomicon* from the Mysterium. Lowls immediately sets off for Neruzavin, leaving the Mysterium and several allies in lockdown in his panicked haste.

THE NECRIL NECRONOMICON

As with many other editions of the tome, the Necril translation of the *Necronomicon* is bound in leather cured from the faces of several men and women, their agony forever preserved in the grimaces that now adorn the book's hideous covers. The text is several hundred pages long, and the leaves within are made of remarkably thin but resilient parchment that feels strangely cool and almost greasy to the touch.

For the remainder of this article, it is Geir's Necril translation of the *Necronomicon* that is detailed, and the book is referred to merely as the *Necronomicon*. The contents of this specific translation are generally similar to but in some cases differ wildly from those found in the first Greek translation, or even Alhazred's original *Kitab Al-Azif*.

THE NECRONOMICON'S DEFENSES

The *Necronomicon* is much more than a mere translation of an infamous book—it is, in fact, a magical item on par with an artifact. Other copies of the book (none of which exist on Golarion) aren't nearly as robust in their defenses as this unique translation, as Geir poured his soul and will into the book's creation, sacrificing much of himself as he wrote the words within. He gained a great deal from this devotion, and the act of translating the book aided his own transformation into a lich.

Divination Proof: Any attempt to use divination magic, such as *locate object* or *discern location*, to divine the exact location of the *Necronomicon*, as well as any attempt to use *sCRY* to spy upon a person carrying the dread book, is fraught with extreme peril. Not only does the attempt automatically fail, but the caster must also succeed at a DC 30 caster level check to avoid notice from the eldritch powers that watch over the tome. On a failed check, the caster's mind is assaulted with horrific visions that can cause madness. The caster must then attempt a DC 20 Will save; failure means the caster takes 1d8 points of Wisdom drain, while success means the caster takes only 1d4 points of Wisdom damage.

Teleportation-Proof: The book cannot be transported by teleportation effects. If carried by someone who teleports away, the book remains behind, and the fool who attempted to teleport must succeed at a DC 30 caster level check or the attempted teleportation effect sends him somewhere singularly dangerous that is associated with elements of the Elder Mythos or, barring any appropriate such location in range, to a site where undeath or necromantic energy is strong. The book can be carried safely through *gates*, portals, and other freestanding teleportation effects.

Method of Destruction: This copy of the *Necronomicon* is inexorably tied to the existence of two powerful beings: its translator, Geir, and the Dreamland duplicate of its original author, Alhazred. Before the *Necronomicon* can be destroyed, both of these beings must first be destroyed. Geir dwells on now as a powerful awakened demilich in the library of Ghasterhall in the nation of Ustalav while Alhazred can be found in the deserts of the Dreamlands (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #111: Dreams of the Yellow King* 53). Once both of these creatures are slain (acts that are monumental tasks on their own), the *Necronomicon's* anchor to reality is weakened and mere damage can destroy it, although it has a hardness of 30 and 50 hit points. Complicating this entire task, of course, is the fact that the book's otherworldly muse, Nyarlathotep, the Crawling Chaos, is likely to take note if either Geir's or Alhazred's dream incarnation is destroyed; once either is defeated, the Outer God may or may not take action against the book's destruction, by sending either agents, members of its cult, or a direct manifestation of one of his avatars to attempt a rescue of the tome, followed by relocating it to some new world.



THE NECRONOMICON'S LEGACY

The *Necronomicon* is likely H. P. Lovecraft's best-known creation—better known even than Cthulhu himself, to the extent that in Daniel Harms's excellent *The Cthulhu Mythos Encyclopedia*, the *Necronomicon* is the only thing to appear in its own appendix separate from every other entry. As with his other creations, Lovecraft encouraged his writing peers to use the *Necronomicon* in their own tales, but whereas one can easily discount the existence of Yog-Sothoth and Cthulhu, and can confirm no such place as Arkham or Innsmouth exists in Massachusetts (regardless of how often such names are repeated in stories over the course of decades), the existence of a supposedly forbidden evil book like the *Necronomicon* has more traction. Is the idea of a book so blasphemous that entire religions or nations would censure it so outlandish? Absolutely not, for such events have happened often throughout history. You can buy supposedly "real" copies of the *Necronomicon* in bookstores today, yet while all are fakes, the myth that the book is itself a real text persists.

In truth, the *Necronomicon* was indeed invented by Lovecraft (the name of which came to him in a dream). The book was first mentioned by Lovecraft in his short story "The Hound," but the eldritch tome went on to be quoted and to appear in his stories several times, most notably in the classic tale "The Dunwich Horror." The fact that the *Necronomicon* shows up today in movies and books and, of course, games is one of Lovecraft's most powerful legacies.

CONTENTS OF THE NECRONOMICON

The *Necronomicon* is a staggering 888 pages in length. While its individual pages are astonishingly thin, they are equally durable and allow for no bleed-through of the ink on the opposite side. The book's writing is entirely in Necril, although there are numerous diagrams and illustrations, many of which depict creatures of the Elder Mythos in astonishing detail. The book is staggeringly difficult to read and comprehend even for one who understands Necril; such a reader must study the book for 8 hours and succeed at a DC 30 Linguistics check to determine the 10 distinct sections found within the tome. Once this step is accomplished, the reader can then further study each of these sections individually, each of which requires 8 additional hours of study and another successful DC 30 Linguistics check. With each

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attempt, regardless of success or failure, the user must succeed at a DC 35 Will save or take 1d6 points of drain to Wisdom and Charisma; a successful save instead deals 1d4 points of damage to Wisdom and Charisma. This ability damage is as much a result of comprehending the book's contents as it is the alien feeling of the book itself imparting its knowledge to the reader at a rate much faster than mortal minds are equipped to learn—as if the *Necronomicon* itself were eager for its secrets to be known.

Once a section of the *Necronomicon* is successfully studied, the reader can make use of that section as detailed below without further need of Linguistics checks or the risk of ability drain or damage.

Pages 1–65: This extensive section consists of Geir's initial musings on the nature and origin of the *Necronomicon*, information about his servitude to the Whispering Way and Tar-Baphon, and notes on his own personal quest to achieve lichdom. There is very little information in this portion directly pertaining to the Elder Mythos, but once a reader masters this section, the discussion here of the remainder of the *Necronomicon's* organization grants the reader a +4 bonus on Linguistics checks to master further sections (but not on saving throws to avoid ability drain). While this section is of no use for anyone else desiring to achieve lichdom, the information contained in these pages does grant a +4 circumstance bonus on Knowledge checks pertaining to the Whispering Way or undead if the pages are consulted (this requires 10 minutes of reading).

Pages 66–131: These pages consist of the book's original introduction, and contain a detailed accounting of Alhazred's wanderings through the deserts of Earth. Successfully studying this section imparts similar knowledge to the reader, granting a permanent +4 bonus on Survival checks attempted in desert environments and a +2 bonus on Fortitude saving throws against environmental effects or against effects that cause fatigue or exhaustion.

Pages 132–257: This section contains information on contacting and interacting with various creatures of the Elder Mythos. Once this section is successfully studied, the reader can use the section once per day to cast any of the following spells as spell-like abilities: *contact entity I*, *contact entity II*, *contact entity III*, or *contact entity IV*. However, the reader must still provide the material component normally required by the spell, unlike with most spell-like abilities. All four of these spells are detailed in *Pathfinder RPG Horror Adventures*.

Pages 258–493: The largest and most formidable section of the *Necronomicon* focuses primarily on the Elder Mythos. The secrets revealed on these pages are particularly dangerous to mortal minds, and any ability damage or drain caused by an attempt to master this section is doubled. However, once the section is mastered, the reader gains a +4 bonus on saving throws

against the drain effect from studying further sections of the *Necronomicon*. This information also grants a +4 circumstance bonus on Knowledge checks pertaining to the Elder Mythos if the pages are consulted at a later time (this requires 20 minutes of reading).

Pages 494–591: A densely written section on magic follows the pages on the Elder Mythos. This portion functions as a spellbook that contains a wide range of spells—many of those Geir knew, but not all. The spells included are listed at the end of this article, but in addition, this section of the *Necronomicon* details a preparation ritual (see page 121 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* for rules on preparation rituals).

Pages 592–641: This highly detailed and extensively illustrated section focuses on the nature of the similarities between humanity and the deep ones. Once this section is mastered, the reader has the option to gain the deep one corruption (see page 18 of *Horror Adventures*). The corruption is always gained as a useful corruption rather than a vile corruption. This section of the book also helps one remove an existing deep one corruption, but only if that corruption came about via a method other than via the *Necronomicon*. When this information is used to remove a corruption, the target must be either willing or helpless. The character who mastered this section of the book then must spend 24 hours performing a simple ritual involving minor surgery and the administration of rare alchemical reagents worth 1,000 gp to the target's body to remove the deep one corruption. This imparts 2 negative levels to the recipient but removes all evidence of the deep one corruption from the body and mind and soul.

Pages 642–721: This section of the book switches from a more physical examination of the human condition to a mental one, focusing particularly on methods of transferring the mind of one body to another. Once mastered, this section allows the reader to cast *mind swap* or *major mind swap* once per day each, but when casting *major mind swap*, the user must still provide 10,000 gp worth of diamonds as material components. Both spells are detailed in *Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures*.

Pages 722–799: Formulae for contacting many of the Great Old Ones and Outer Gods can be found in this section. Once it's mastered, a reader can use this section of the *Necronomicon* to cast *contact other plane* once per day, save that rather than contacting another plane, the reader contacts one of the Great Old Ones or Outer Gods. The question to be asked must be one that fits into the category appropriate for the entity's areas of concern—for example, one would contact Atlach-Nacha for a question involving construction or Yog-Sothoth for a question about the nature of time or space. Certain questions could well fall under multiple areas of concern. See page 63 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #109: In Search of Sanity* for a full list of the Great Old

Ones and Outer Gods this version of the *Necronomicon* contains information about. Contacting a Great Old One uses the “Outer Plane, demigod” table entry for resolving the spell’s effects, while contacting an Outer God uses the “Outer Plane, greater deity” table entry (contacting an Outer God is even more damaging to a mortal mind than contact with most deities).

Pages 800–863: This section contains information on the Dreamlands, as well as methods to travel to and from that realm. Mastery of this section allows the reader to visit the Dreamlands at will when she sleeps (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #111: Dreams of the Yellow King* 16).

Pages 864–888: The final section of the *Necronomicon* notes that, despite this book’s length, more secrets remain untold throughout the universe. Rather than attempt to catalog them all within the remaining pages, the book instead presents information on how the reader can manipulate time and space. Once mastered, this section allows the user to cast *greater teleport* once per day, and also aids in the study and mastery of freestanding portals. If the *Necronomicon* is consulted while studying a portal, the reader gains a +10 circumstance bonus on the Spellcraft check to understand the portal’s function or destination. This also allows the user to examine and master the portal to Carcosa found at the end of the adventure in this volume.

THE NECRONOMICON AS A SPELLBOOK

Once a reader masters the fifth section of the *Necronomicon*, he or she can use the book as a spellbook with the following statistics.

THE NECRONOMICON (LEVEL 20 UNIVERSALIST)

This thick tome is bound in some kind of leather, which looks as if it might have actually been crafted from people’s screaming faces. The book gives off a distinct aura of foreboding.

Value priceless (artifact)

SPELLS

- 9th—*astral projection, major mind swap*^{*, OA}, *teleportation circle, time stop, weird*
- 8th—*binding, create greater undead, dimensional lock, discern location, symbol of insanity*
- 7th—*banishment, contact entity IV^{HA}, control undead, dream council^{OA}, ethereal jaunt, greater teleport, insanity, teleport object*
- 6th—*create undead, legend lore, mass suggestion, mind swap^{OA}, night terrors^{HA}, phobia^{HA}, symbol of fear, telepahty^{OA}, true seeing*

5th—*break enchantment, contact entity III^{HA}, contact other plane, dismissal, dream, impossible angles^{HA}, locate gate^{HA}, nightmare, sending, teleport*

4th—*animate dead, black tentacles, confusion, dimension door, dimensional anchor, fear, mad sultan’s melody^{HA}, phantasmal killer, scrying*

3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, contact entity II^{HA}, illusory script, oneiric horror^{OA}, secret page, suggestion, vampiric touch*

2nd—*command undead, contact entity I^{HA}, detect thoughts, hypnotic pattern, scare, see invisibility*

1st—*cause fear, endure elements, erase, hypnotism, identify, obscuring mist*

* This is a version of the spell usable by sorcerers, wizards, and psychics.

PREPARATION RITUAL

I Have Seen the Dark Universe Yawning (Su) When you complete preparing your spells from this book, your mind is bolstered with otherworldly secrets that even you don’t fully comprehend. You gain a +4 profane bonus on saving throws against mind-affecting effects except for those generated by creatures, items, worshipers, or other effects directly associated with the Elder Mythos.

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THE TOMB OF THE WINDS

This tale was included in the many books Rhvutha suggested I read. Though the climate in it differs from that of my objective, the story's warnings are pertinent. -JW

On the day he set forth upon his journey, Ujarak had four companions. We were the sons and daughters of misfortune.

I was the youngest, a runaway fled from the tent of Godru the Hand-Trembler. She bought me for the price of a hex nail. Three years later, she called it a poor bargain, as my voice broke in the midst of a song and she discovered I wasn't a girl.

Kunik and Auka were twins, cast out by their people with the red scars of initiation still healing on their cheeks. They wore fine leathers of caribou and seal, and moved like two ice leopards in the mountains, making no sound and leaving no trail—unless they wished to be found.

Miki was the last of our number, small and eerily beautiful, her long lashes rimed with frost. A sweet-natured girl, but the hillfolk feared her. They didn't like the way her lips moved silently as she gazed into the fire. Or the way spirits would clamor from a dry skull and laugh from the empty corners of a tent whenever she was near.

It was Miki's affliction that spurred us to seek the White Seeress. One winter, she began talking in her sleep, in a voice that was not her own. Kunik and Auka immediately hated the low, rasping spirit that possessed her, muttering to itself in a language none could understand. But even Ujarak became uneasy as the days passed, and Miki slept longer and longer while the stranger grew stronger, slowly repeating our words as if trying to teach itself to speak Hallit.

One morning, Miki did not wake at all. Ujarak's deep scowl emphasized his tusks, and he told us to make ready. We struck camp and raced toward the demon-haunted east. I rode upon one sled, while Kunik and Auka took turns running in the traces. Ujarak pulled the other alone, Miki lashed down with the gear behind him.

Spring was coming to the foothills. Twice we passed shepherds driving their goats to paddock, newborn kids romping beside their mothers. The taiga showed through in patches, and spears of blue crocus and lichfinger pierced the melting crust of snow. The closer we came to the home of the Seeress, however, the more the signs of spring receded. Where the Seeress dwelled, the seasons could never truly turn.

When we reached the center of her domain, the drifts were deep and unbroken. At the crest of a rocky rise, a woman of ice sat cross-legged upon a bare altar of stone, gazing forever toward the Worldwound.

"Ujarak, child of two peoples." Her voice was cold as a silver bell. "What would you have of me?" Only then did she turn to face us.

His red eyes did not quite meet hers. "Siku, child of the mysteries. One of my following needs your help."

"Show me."

Ujarak laid Miki gently before the Seeress and drew away the furs that wrapped her face. Miki's breath came in fast and shallow pants, as if she were running over hard ground.

"There is a darkness upon her," the Seeress agreed. "What would you have me do?"

Ujarak bowed his head. "Can you not cast out this evil spirit and free her?"

"It is her nature to be haunted, son of Mortok. All oracles bear a curse, and this is hers. She will never be free."

"Can you do nothing to help her?"

She shrugged. "The one that haunts her is strong, but it is no demon. Spirits come to her because they have unfinished business among the living. If the girl helps them, they will depart."

"But how can we know what the dead want? This spirit doesn't speak any tongue I know."

The Seeress gestured to me with her crystal hand. "This one is a bloodspeaker. Have him lend the ghost our language."

Ujarak scowled at me over his shoulder. "Yala. Can this be done?"

Hot blood rushed to my cheeks. "Yes, but I only know one way to—"

"Do it." Ujarak clenched a fist until the tendons creaked.

I stepped forward and bent low. "I'm sorry," I whispered to Miki's sleeping face. "I didn't want it to be this way." I pressed my lips to hers and murmured the Stranger's Greeting, joining our breath together.

When I drew away, the Seeress said, "Awake, spirit. Tell us your name."

"Impossible." The voice still had its familiar rasp. "My name cannot be pronounced by this mouth."

Miki's eyes snapped open. There was no light of human warmth in her gaze—this was not the girl I knew.

"Where am I?" the spirit asked. "Who are you?" It tried to lift Miki's head, but the Seeress seized it by the throat.

"You will answer my questions," she said. "And if you tell the truth, perhaps I will not cast you into the darkness beyond."

Fear showed for a moment, but then the spirit smiled. When it spoke again, the low voice dripped with fawning appeasement. "If it please you, Great One, you may call me Seven Sands. It is close enough in meaning to my true name."

"And what is your business among the living, Seven Sands?"

The creature paused, as if to collect itself. "I wish to make pilgrimage to the place where my master, the Lord of the Winds, lies buried. It was on that journey that my mortal body perished, many years ago."

Ujarak spoke. "And where was this lord's tomb?"

"Very near," the spirit said. "The crypt is carved into a mountainside. I tried to climb to it, but I fell from a great height, and my body was broken. When the snows covered me, I slept... and never woke again."

Kunik had been listening intently. "Such things can happen to anyone. The first rule of climbing the Tusks is not to climb alone."

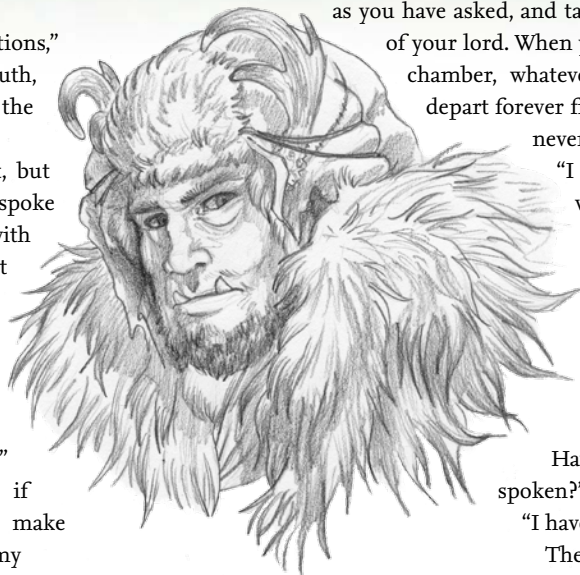
The spirit's smile widened into an ugly rictus. "Excellent advice. A pity it is... ill-timed."

"Tell us more of your lord, stranger." The Seeress still held Miki's neck in her icy grip.

Again it stopped to measure its words. "My master was the emissary of a great city. He came to Sarkoris long ago, bearing a gift for its people—a treasure meant to unite the two cities in eternal brotherhood." Miki's face twisted into a mask of rage. "But the masters of Sarkoris refused his gift, and cast him down instead. They buried him and his treasure far from the eyes of men."

"Sarkoris is many years gone, spirit." The Seeress spoke with a note of sadness. "What can the living do to ease your troubled soul?"

"Let me look upon him one last time!" it cried. "Carry me into his crypt, unite me in death with the one I served in life. I ask for nothing more."



Without a family of his own, the half-orc Ujarak treated his traveling companions like they were of his own blood. His loyalty to us is as strong and unbreakable as are his mighty thews.

"And nothing more you shall receive." The Seeress's eyes burned with white fire, which seemed to ignite the very air around her and Miki. "Hear me, stranger, for my geas is upon you. This girl and her friends will do as you have asked, and take you to the resting place of your lord. When you have entered his burial chamber, whatever its condition, you will depart forever from the girl's presence and never trouble the living again."

"I hear you, Great One!" Its voice held a terrible joy.

"You will do no harm to the girl, nor any other living thing. Nor will you talk to her friends, nor show yourself to them by any sign again, unless they command it.

Have you heard all that I have spoken?"

"I have, Great One. I thank you!"

The light became unbearably bright, and we shielded our eyes so as not to be blinded. When we looked up again, Miki's face was slack. Her chest rose and fell in peaceful sleep.

I looked up into the Seeress's eyes, blue as sea ice on a winter day.

"You say that all oracles bear a curse," I said to her. "What was yours?"

"Look around you." The winter plain was empty in all directions. "It is your friend's nature to be haunted; mine is to be forsaken."

Ujarak ran northwest for a night and a day, and we followed him into the most dangerous mountains of the realm. The Tusks are well-named here—upon them, careless hunters die.

As the sun set on the second day, Ujarak stopped at the base of a gray peak. "The light is gone. It is no longer safe to continue."

His knees buckled, the well of his great endurance finally run dry. Kunik and Auka helped him to the lee of a boulder, while I ran back to the sled.

When I turned with the stove in my arms, I found Miki standing silent behind me. I backed away in fear, thinking her evil passenger had roused.

"Yala! I fell asleep. I'm so sorry. Can I help make the tea?"

My eyes filled with tears to hear her true voice. "Yes! Come. Everyone will be so happy you're awake."

But when I led her to the boulder, our friends slept soundly in their parkas. Miki's smile was uncertain.

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"There's more." Auka led us up the steep path to a recess in the rock, a dark hollow the sun would never reach. Something was there in the shadow, frozen solid.

The twins hung back and let the three of us hunker down to look. Miki brushed dry powder from the chest and shoulders of a female orc. The corpse sat cross-legged in the niche, the shoulders and chest of its tunic black with blood. Its neck ended with a cleanly cut stump. Miki looked down into the orc's lap and scooped more snow away from a severed head, its bulging, frost-blinded eyes staring up into eternity.

Ujarak used the blade of his hunting knife to lift a heavy necklace from the armored chest. The beads were opaque amber, spaced with pierced coins, bird skulls, and fangs. "Cave bear. Human. Giant," he said, identifying the teeth. "This jewelry belonged to a shaman from a mountain tribe."

"There are more," Kunik said behind us. "I've seen three already—and they are not all orcs." As Ujarak straightened, he added, "I said you wouldn't like it, big brother. We should turn back now. This is a mountain of death."

"You were right. I don't like it," Ujarak said. "But we will not turn back."

Kunik took the lead on the climb, testing each step with the butt of his spear. Many times, he led us over the tumbled remains of a slide that had obliterated the trail, driving his steel pitons into rock and ice with a rawhide hammer. Once, we swung perilously one by one over a crevasse on his rope.

Headless figures sat in the shadows all along the path. The dead came from many peoples, mammoth riders and Erutaki, Jadwiga and Varki, all dressed for winter travel and sitting cross-legged with their heads in their laps. I glanced at each corpse as we passed, and saw that many bore mystic symbols—tattoos and fetishes, staves and drums.

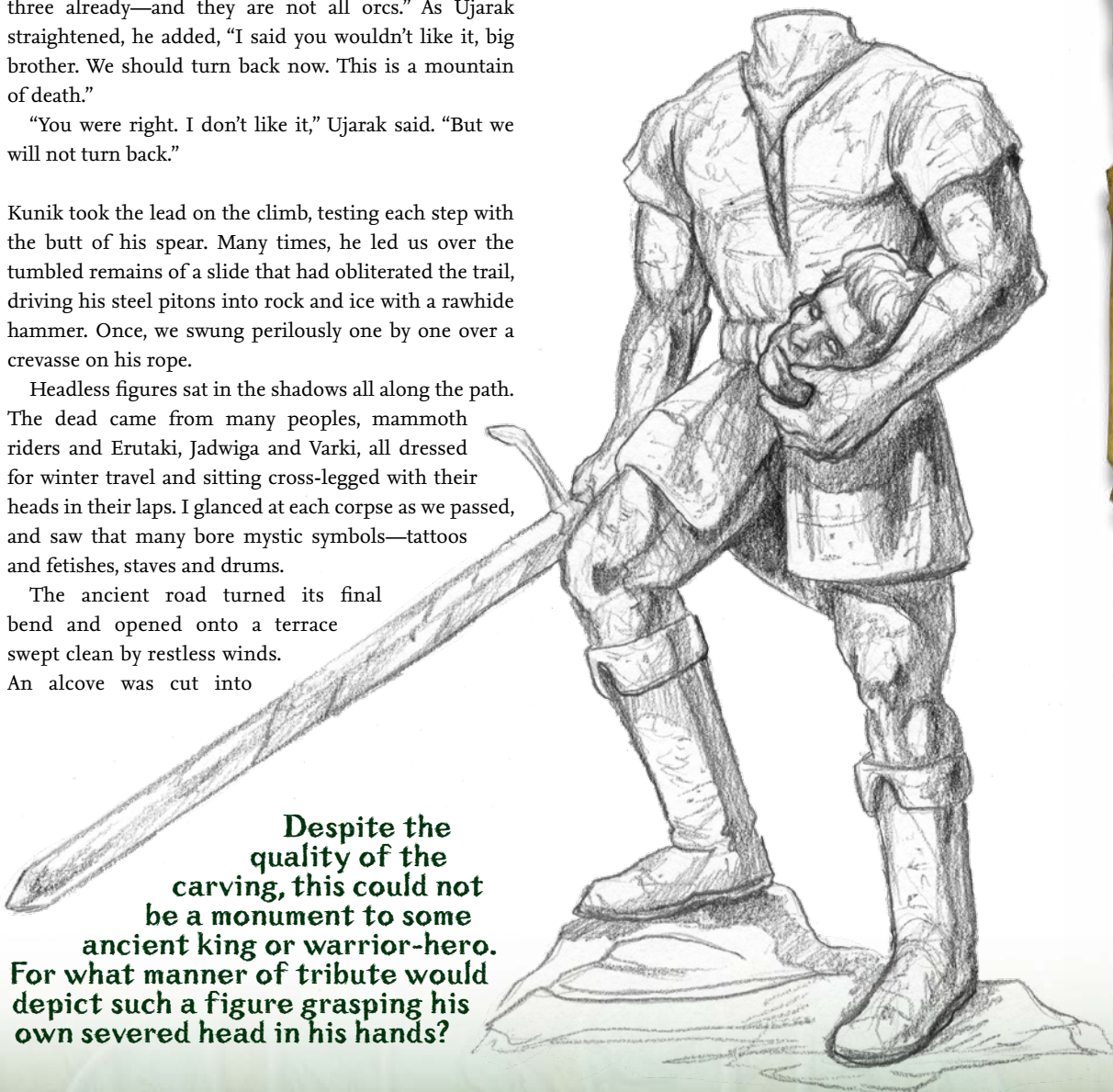
The ancient road turned its final bend and opened onto a terrace swept clean by restless winds. An alcove was cut into

the living rock, looking out onto a terrifying drop to the valley below. Opposite the cliff, set flush with the heart of the mountain, was a cyclopean capstone. The great plug of basalt was surrounded by a ring of runes, untouched by time and shining silver in the afternoon light.

Against the wall stood a statue of white marble. It was over ten feet tall, the image of a Kellid warrior. The figure was well rendered, dressed in a tunic and leggings. It held a massive greatsword in one hand; in the other, the man cradled his own severed head.

Kunik and Auka hurried to untie the climbing rope and then retreated to the far side of the statue, avoiding the runes on the wall with undisguised loathing.

"Whatever you mean to do, do it." Auka squatted on her heels to rest. "We can't camp on this ledge. If we can't find shelter inside, we must be down safely before dark."



Despite the quality of the carving, this could not be a monument to some ancient king or warrior-hero. For what manner of tribute would depict such a figure grasping his own severed head in his hands?

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Ujarak turned to Miki. "Seven Sands. How do we open this door?"

Miki's body jerked like a puppet. Her lips drew back in a leering smile. She pointed to the runes carved in the stone, and made a gesture of breaking with her hands.

We heard rather than saw the statue move, its blade sweeping down toward Kunik as he squatted at its feet. Quick as an otter, the hunter leaped aside, and the white blade struck the floor where he had been a moment before, ringing like steel.

The marble warrior raised its arm, the stone head turning its blind eyes toward us. I froze in terror, my heart as cold as lead; Miki collapsed to her knees, choking under its heavy gaze. It stepped down from its pedestal like a living man, the heavy edge of the blade swinging in a wide arc. The twins rolled aside as gracefully as dancers, moving like two halves of the same person as they ducked the stroke and crouched at the ready, hunting spears in hand.

With a roar, Ujarak drew the falchion slung across his back. The marble warrior turned toward him, raising its severed head to fix its gaze upon him, but the half-orc only shook his head and laughed, thrusting out his tongue in mocking defiance of its magic.

Auka's spear darted toward the severed head of the statue, striking one of its eyes. Although her aim was true, the head of her spear struck stone rather than flesh; the bone point shattered with a crack and she drew back nothing but a shaft.

The stone eyes turned toward her and Auka's body froze like a hare, twitching in helpless fear. The stone sword swept at her exposed neck.

Her brother leaped forward with a cry, shoving her out of the path of the terrible blade. Auka fell to her knees, safe. But the marble sword caught Kunik from behind, cutting through furs and flesh and bone as easily as it cut through the mountain air. Kunik fell, his spine severed, and blood splattered across the stone face. The statue stepped over her brother's fallen body to pursue Auka, cold and relentless as winter.

Ujarak charged at the stone warrior, bringing his heavy falchion down upon its extended wrist with all his great strength. His thick blade rang and shivered on the white marble, and though its steel edge fractured, the sword chopped through the stone like a mason's chisel, severing the hand that held the head aloft. The carved hand and head dropped to the ground, and Miki skipped forward, quick as a weasel, to kick it off the edge of the cliff.

Struck with inspiration, I called out to Ujarak. "Give our friend a push, big brother!"

Ujarak grinned. I sang the Song of Black Ice and the floor beneath the statue's feet was suddenly slippery and smooth as the runners of a sled. The half-orc charged, bowing his shoulder to throw his weight

into the rush. He struck true and the huge white feet skidded; the statue slid helplessly toward the cliff, swinging its great arms to regain its balance on the razor's edge.

Auka knelt in a pool of hot blood. Weeping she rolled her brother over to find his eyes wide open, sightless in death. With a hawk's scream of rage, she rose and flung herself at the stone warrior, its feet still poised on the brink.

The headless statue seemed to open its arms, as if to catch her in its embrace. She howled vengeance, planted both hands on its chest, and shoved with all her strength to send it toppling into the abyss.

In the stunned moment of silence that followed, Auka turned in a fury of grief, her face and hands still spattered with blood, and charged at Miki.

"Damn you to hell!" She lifted the smaller girl in both hands, shaking her body like a rag doll. "This is all because of you!"

Miki wailed wordlessly in Auka's grip. Auka took two steps forward, meaning to slam the smaller girl into the wall—but the nearest wall was the great capstone, still surrounded by its glittering ring of runes.

What happened next was almost too swift to be seen. Miki's back struck the capstone; nine of the glyphs exploded with arcane energy, lightning erupting from them to form a web of death in the center. Auka's body was reduced to white ash in a heartbeat. Miki screamed and fell, burning, and was silent.

I hurried to her side, numb with horror. "She's breathing," I told Ujarak. "But not for long."

"Then she will not die with an evil spirit for company." Ujarak picked up the fallen shaft of Auka's broken spear. With brutal efficiency, he smashed the rest of the glowing symbols. When the last glyph was broken, the massive stone seal groaned and toppled inward with a crash like thunder.

Beyond the entrance was a dark cavern. Ujarak bent and picked up Miki's smoldering body. I was beside him as he stepped over the threshold into the tomb.

We had not walked three steps before Miki's limbs began to shudder violently. Her lips parted, and the rasping voice of Seven Sands called out in a tongue that was ancient before the world began.

In the darkness within, something answered.

It was a terrible cry, like wind screaming through the peaks in a storm. Miki's face turned toward it, filled with unholy delight. I needed no spell to know the old ghost had called to its lord, and received a reply... just as I knew that whatever the masters of Sarkoris had buried in this mountain, it was nothing human.

Powerful winds blasted toward the mouth of the cavern, buffeting our bodies and tearing our clothes. Ujarak dropped to one knee, face bleeding, still holding Miki in his arms. Her body bent backward, and the cold



We lost much to get here, and for what reason I cannot truly say. I imagine the long-dead Sarkorians sacrificed even more to entrap that abominable thing within this rightfully forgotten tomb.

light of winter poured from her eyes, nose, and mouth. Seven Sands screamed in mingled pain and triumph, ripped from Miki's body and banished by the Seeress's magic, now that its mission was complete.

Miki fell limp. "Take her." Ujarak held her out to me. "Save her. Save yourself."

I looked into his red eyes. "What will you do?"

He grinned again, great tusks shining in the darkness. "Something very foolish."

I nodded and carried Miki out of the tomb. At the edge of the cliff, I looked back and saw Ujarak draw his blade and cry his challenge to the Lord of the Winds.

Something vast and terrible bellowed back, and reached for him with boneless arms. It was a thing made from hungry ghosts, a hundred mouths screaming and gnashing for living blood. One of its huge, writhing tongues wrapped around Ujarak's waist like the trunk of a mammoth, crushing him in its grip as he struck with his fractured blade.

In desperation, I cradled Miki's head in my hands and sang the Song of Healing to her, praying she would wake. Her lashes fluttered open, cheeks still smudged with the ashes of her burned flesh.

"Help me," I begged her. "The tomb is open, but we must close it somehow. Use your magic—please!"

She tottered to her feet and looked around, then to the slopes of the mountain above, still laden with spring snow. She raised a cupped hand to her mouth, as if to sound an invisible horn, and took a long, deep breath.

A fierce and beautiful sound burst from her, the ringing summons of a silver trumpet. As she slowly released her breath, it continued, echoing from peak to peak and gaining strength, as if to call down angels to her aid.

I raised my own cupped hand and joined her, using my magic to send out a deeper basso note. As the two spells joined, harmonizing, reverberating, the spring thaw above us groaned and shuddered, slipped free of the slope, and began to slide toward the valley below.

The avalanche grew louder and faster as it came, an oncoming rush of thunder ripping down boulders and slate from the crag above. It nearly drowned Ujarak's laughter and the raging scream of a dozen mouths as he wounded the Lord of the Winds.

I took Miki in my arms and jumped from the ledge, as far as I could out into the open air. We held each other tight as I sang the Song of Autumn, and drifted down together as light as falling leaves. My last sight of the tomb was the collapse of its entrance, buried by many tons of slate and ice.

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He came at me with his bare hands, the wild look in his eyes equal parts rage and resignation to some unavoidable fate. His fists and nails were no match for my blade, and I cut him across his chest and upper arms as I backed away from his onslaught.

“What emerged from his wounds was not blood, however. It was an oozing fungus, a rot and decay that flowed through his veins like sludge through a sewer trough. Small motes of noxious fluff belched into the air.

“I covered my mouth and nose with my left arm as I hacked even more ruthlessly at my attacker. My blade sliced true, opening the maniac’s throat in a wide gash above his filthy collar.

“As the man slumped to the ground, he smiled with the little energy that remained in him. In a calm, soft voice he spoke to me, weeping tearlessly, ‘The Inmost Blot will consume you too. Glory to the Star Seed.’”

—Account of Reinelle D’Oray, 3 weeks prior to her disappearance

This volume of the Strange Aeons Adventure Path takes the adventurers beyond the Inner Sea into the desolate desert region of Casmaron known as the Parchlands in search of the lost city of Neruzavin. Sure to challenge any party traveling through such terrain, this bestiary includes a new div, the Great Old One Xhamen-Dor and its infested seeded creatures, and the classic Lovecraftian monstrosities known as hunting horrors and children of Yog-Sothoth.

EXPLORING THE PARCHLANDS

The random encounter table presented here features dangers the PCs might face while they traverse the Parchlands on their journey to Neruzavin. During the course of the adventure, the PCs have a 30% chance of a random encounter every hour they spend in the Parchlands not dealing with the encounters written in the adventure. The PCs should have no more than three random encounters per day.

You should use your discretion when rolling a random encounter, and reroll when a result is inappropriate for the PCs' current location. For example, an encounter with the saguaroi tribe in Neruzavin makes little sense, as the nomadic cactusfolk try to avoid civilization, and would give a wide berth to the ruined city. If the PCs do encounter them in the ruins, you should provide reasons for their presence, or simply reroll or select a different result. Further, since this adventure spans a range of character levels, some random encounters might be too easy or too difficult for the PCs, depending on where they are in the course of the adventure. If the result rolled is outside the Challenge Rating range appropriate for the PCs, roll again on the random encounter table or choose a different encounter.

The following are descriptions of the relevant entries listed on the Parchlands Encounters table.

Amrivast (CR 11): The PCs are not the only visitors to the Parchlands seeking to rid the world of evil. The lammasu Amrivast (LG male advanced paladin lammasu; *Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 248, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 290, 175) is also on such a journey. The arrogant magical beast has not heard about Neruzavin specifically but has traveled to the Parchlands because of an ancient evil he believes to be found here. Amrivast can serve as a companion to the PCs if they convince him of their noble intentions to fight evil.

Gnoll Vision Quest (CR 15): The gnoll bouda **Grazella** (*Monster Codex* 99) leads a small contingent of her followers into the Parchlands seeking information on a strange dream she had, drawing her toward Neruzavin. She is accompanied by a gnoll ravager (*Monster Codex* 97) and six gnoll lieutenants (*Monster Codex* 96).

Saguaroi Tribe (CR 12): A nomadic tribe of cactusfolk consisting of 12 adult saguaroi (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 229) and four noncombatant children makes its way

PARCHLANDS ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1-4	1d6 desert drakes	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 105
5-11	1 advanced giant living mirage	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 288, 289, 159
12-16	Amrivast	11	See below
17-23	1 shira	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 90
24-28	1d6 rift drakes	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 106
29-33	1 gashadokuro	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 121
34-39	1d3 elder lightning elementals	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 117
40-45	1d4+1 Leng ghouls	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 120
46-51	Saguaroi Tribe	14	See below
52-57	1d4+1 sepses	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 237
58-64	1 sepid	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 89
65-71	Seeded Ones	15	See below
72-78	1 phoenix	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 227
79-84	Gnoll Vision Quest	15	See below
85-90	1d3 flying polyps	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 106
91-96	1 qolok	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 217
97-100	1 bhole	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 18

across the Parchlands. Traveling during the day and resting at night, the cactusfolk are likely to encounter the adventurers while one of the two parties is resting; the tribe is much more likely to avoid the resting PCs if they notice them ahead of time, preferring isolation and solitude rather than interaction with other races. The saguarois, while insular and suspicious of outsiders, are amenable to diplomatic resolutions to any misunderstandings, but if threatened, they fight ruthlessly to protect their way of life.

Seeded Ones (CR 15): In addition to the seeded creatures the PCs will face during the course of the adventure, many more of the infested people can be found in and around Neruzavin. The group of seeded creatures that is encountered randomly consists of two seeded prophets and three seeded skulkers (both on page 16), and may be found both in Neruzavin or elsewhere in the Parchlands making their own way toward the lost city. If you want to use this encounter more than once or vary the seeded enemies the PCs face during the course of the adventure, feel free to create your own seeded creatures using the template on page 90. If the party encountered the saguaroi tribe or the gnoll vision quest earlier in the adventure, consider throwing seeded versions of those NPCs at them later, evidence of their unfortunate fate at the hands of Xhamen-Dor's minions. For other quick base creatures, you can use any monster of an appropriate CR from any *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* volume or a character of an appropriate level from the *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*.

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CHILD OF YOG-SOTHOTH

This creature could almost pass for human from the neck up, but below that its scaly skin, tail, and animal-like legs, as well as the tentacles that droop from its belly, reveal its aberrant nature.

CHILD OF YOG-SOTHOTH

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male human child of Yog-Sothoth wizard 7

CE Medium aberration (augmented humanoid)

Init +5; **Senses** all-around vision, low-light vision, Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 76 (7d6+49)

Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +7; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Immune disease, poison; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 18

Weaknesses loathed

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *dagger* +6 (1d4+3/19–20), tail +5 (1d6+1)

Special Attacks blood drain (1d2 Con), hand of the apprentice (8/day), stench (DC 18, 7 rounds/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +12)

3/day—*comprehend languages*, *detect thoughts* (DC 17), *hypnotism* (DC 16)

1/day—*invisibility*

1/week—*contact entity I^{HA}*, *contact entity II^{HA}*

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +12)

4th—*black tentacles*, *dimension door*

3rd—*dispel magic*, *suggestion* (DC 18), *vampiric touch*

2nd—*acid arrow*, *mirror image*, *summon monster II*, *summon swarm*

1st—*charm person* (2, DC 16), *grease* (DC 16), *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement* (2, DC 16)

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *open/close* (DC 15)

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 13, **Con** 20, **Int** 20, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 20

Feats Combat Casting, Deceitful, Defensive Combat Training, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Toughness^B

Skills Bluff +7, Disguise +7 (+15 when disguised as human), Intimidate +5, Knowledge (nature) +15, Knowledge (planes) +15, Knowledge (religion) +15, Perception +7, Spellcraft +19; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Disguise (when disguised as human), +4 Knowledge (arcana), +4 Spellcraft

Languages Aklo, Common, Elder Thing, Mi-go

SQ arcane bond (+1 *dagger*), conceal features, magic savant

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or family (1 child of Yog-Sothoth and 1 spawn of Yog-Sothoth^{B4})

Treasure NPC gear (+1 *dagger*, spell component pouch, spellbook, other treasure)

Creatures born of mortal flesh infused with the essence of the outer god Yog-Sothoth, these deviant children are often tasked with preparing the world for further incursions from other dimensions or agents of the Elder Mythos. Traditionally, the process of creating a child of Yog-Sothoth involves a blasphemous ritual that uses a mortal creature (typically a human) as an incubator. For the purpose of this ritual, gender is irrelevant. Giving birth to a child of Yog-Sothoth is always fatal. In most cases, the ritual results in the birth of twins—one a child of Yog-Sothoth, which can pass for a time as a member of the race of the creature in which it incubated, and one that cannot. Those twins that inherit a monstrous appearance take more after the Outer God itself in form, and are known as the spawn of Yog-Sothoth (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 251).

CREATING A CHILD OF YOG-SOTHOTH

“Child of Yog-Sothoth” is an inherited template that can be added to any living corporeal creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature), but typically, humanoids and animals are those chosen by the cult of Yog-Sothoth to carry the Outer God’s gifts. A child of Yog-Sothoth retains all of the base creature’s statistics and special abilities, except as listed below.

Challenge Rating: Base creature’s CR + 1.

Alignment: Any chaotic. The vast majority of the children of Yog-Sothoth are chaotic evil. While a good-aligned child of Yog-Sothoth is theoretically possible, such a creature would be significantly unusual in that it would need to have been separated at an early age from the cult that caused its creation, and allowed to mature with the strong guidance of a good-aligned mentor or parental figure.

Type: The creature’s type changes to aberration (augmented). Do not recalculate its base attack bonus, saves, or skill ranks.

Senses: The creature gains all-around vision and low-light vision.

Armor Class: A child of Yog-Sothoth has either a +1 natural armor bonus for every 2 Hit Dice it has or the base creature’s natural armor bonus, whichever of the two leads to a higher result.

Hit Dice: Change the creature’s racial Hit Dice to d8s. All Hit Dice derived from class levels remain unchanged.

Defensive Abilities: A child of Yog-Sothoth gains cold resistance 10 and fire resistance 10. It has spell resistance equal to its CR + 11, and has a +4 racial bonus on saving throws against mind-affecting effects. A child of Yog-Sothoth is immune to disease and poison.

Attacks: While the abdominal tentacles of a child of Yog-Sothoth are merely unsightly sensory organs, the sucker-shaped mouth at the tip of its tail is a primary attack that the child can use as long as it is not concealing

its features (see Special Qualities below). A hit with the tail deals bite damage as normal for a creature of the child's size (1d6 points of damage for a Medium child).

Special Attacks: A child of Yog-Sothoth gains the following special attacks.

Blood Drain (Ex): A child of Yog-Sothoth can drain blood from a grappled or helpless foe via its tail mouth, dealing 1d2 points of Constitution damage per round it does so.

Spell-Like Abilities: A child of Yog-Sothoth gains the following spell-like abilities (the save DCs of these abilities are calculated using the child's Intelligence score as a result of its magic savant special quality, and its caster level equals its Hit Dice): 3/day *comprehend languages*, *detect thoughts*, *hypnotism*; 1/day *invisibility*; 1/week *contact entity I^{HA}*. A child of Yog-Sothoth with 5 Hit Dice adds *contact entity II^{HA}* to its 1/week spell-like abilities. A child of Yog-Sothoth with 9 Hit Dice adds *contact entity III^{HA}* to its 1/week spell-like abilities. A child of Yog-Sothoth with 13 Hit Dice adds *contact entity IV^{HA}* to its 1/week spell-like abilities. A child of Yog-Sothoth with 17 Hit Dice adds *gate* to its 1/week spell-like abilities.

Stench (Su): A child of Yog-Sothoth always exudes an unpleasant scent. As a swift action, the child can intensify this scent, causing it to become truly nauseating. All living creatures within 30 feet must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 10 + 1/2 the child's HD + the child's Constitution modifier) or become nauseated for 1 round. The child can exude this nauseating stench for a number of rounds per day equal to its total Hit Dice, but these rounds need not be consecutive. Each round the child wishes to maintain the stench, it must use a swift action to do so. The stench is a poison effect.

Special Qualities: A child of Yog-Sothoth gains the following special quality.

Conceal Features: A child of Yog-Sothoth gains a +8 racial bonus on checks to disguise itself as a typical member of the base creature's species (although it always appears as a particularly sizable member of that race) if it takes the time to don clothing or armor to hide its monstrous qualities. When it does so, it loses access to all-around vision and can't make its tail attack.

Magic Savant: A child of Yog-Sothoth's intrinsic understanding of magic allows it to modify the concentration checks and save DCs of its racial spell-like abilities (whether from the base creature or from this template) that are normally affected by Charisma to be modified instead by the child's Intelligence modifier. This doesn't affect actual spellcasting ability, such as that granted by sorcerer levels.

Weaknesses: A child of Yog-Sothoth gains the following weakness.

Loathed: Children of Yog-Sothoth are loathed by animals and psychopomps. Both types of creatures gain a +4 bonus on Perception checks and Sense Motive checks against a child of Yog-Sothoth, and receive a +2 morale bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls against such targets.

Ability Scores: Str +2, Con +4, Int +4, Cha -2.

Feats: A child of Yog-Sothoth gains Toughness as a bonus feat.

Skills: A child of Yog-Sothoth gains a +8 racial bonus on Disguise checks to appear as a typical specimen of the base creature when it is using its conceal features ability. All Knowledge skills and Spellcraft are class skills for a child of Yog-Sothoth; a child of Yog-Sothoth gains a +4 racial bonus on Knowledge (arcana) and Spellcraft checks.



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DIV, DRUJ NASU

A sickly smell of feral musk, rotting flesh, and acrid sweat surrounds this fly-like creature. Its wings fill the air with a dreadful drone even when the creature is still.

DRUJ NASU

CR 8

XP 4,800

NE Medium outsider (div, evil, extraplanar)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness, *detect good*, *detect magic*; **Perception** +21

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 16, flat-footed 18 (+6 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 105 (10d10+50)

Fort +8, **Ref** +13, **Will** +11

DR 10/cold iron and good; **Immune** fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10; **SR** 19

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee bite +16 (1d6+4 plus disease), 2 claws +16 (1d4+4 plus distraction)

Special Attacks disease, distraction (DC 20), droning

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +16)

Constant—*detect good*, *detect magic*

At will—*invisibility* (self only), *putrefy food and drink*^{APG}, *see invisibility*, *summon swarm*

3/day—*bestow curse* (DC 20), *command undead* (DC 18), *enervation*

1/day—*animate dead*, *insect plague*, *summon* (level 6, 1 pairaka [*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 88*] or 1d6 fiendish giant flies [*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 292, 124*] 50%)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 23, **Con** 20, **Int** 12, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 30

Feats Alertness, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +19, Bluff +19, Fly +22, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +9, Knowledge (planes) +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +21, Sense Motive +14, Stealth +19

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ swarmwalking, untouched by flame

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Abaddon)

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Su) Bite or claw—injury; *save* Fortitude DC 20; *onset* 1 hour; *frequency* 1 day; *effect* 1d3 Constitution damage plus sickened and shaken; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Droning (Su) As a standard action, a druj nasu can beat its wings in such a way that the sound they make resembles the droning of millions of buzzing flies. This sonic effect extends out to a 30-foot radius, though a creature can still hear the cacophony from a distance without being affected. Creatures in the area take a

–4 penalty on Perception checks involving hearing, and all creatures in the area have a 25% chance each round of being nauseated for 1 round. Any creature subject to the nauseating effect of this ability can negate the nausea with a successful DC 20 Fortitude saving throw.

In addition, any creature casting a spell in the area must succeed at a concentration check (DC = 15 + the level of the spell being cast) or lose the spell. After initiating this effect, a druj nasu can maintain the effect each round as a free action and can dismiss it as a move action.

Swarmwalking (Su) A druj nasu is immune to damage or distraction effects caused by swarms.

Untouched By Flame (Su) Any undead animated by a druj nasu or any swarm summoned by this div gains the druj nasu's immunity to fire.

Foul corruptors of the dead, druj nasus are divs that haunt funeral pyres, mausoleums, and burial sites to steal corpses. They represent the uncleanness of the body and corrupting forces that can prevent a creature's proper passage into the afterlife. Some scholars claim that in ancient times these creatures' interference caused numerous cultures to alter their practices regarding burial.

When a druj nasu was found near a body that was to be buried, the body would be considered unclean. An unclean body couldn't be buried and the sacred flames of a funeral pyre would only spread the taint to the winds, so some ancient people would then carry the corpse up the side of a cliff or mountain and have the birds and other animals clean the flesh from the bones before the deceased could be interred with the necessary rites to ensure a proper passage into the Great Beyond.

Unlike other corpse thieves, druj nasus don't take the bodies of the deceased in order to feast upon the rotting flesh. The divs do this to spite the survivors and bring greater grief and sorrow to the family and loved ones of the dead. After pilfering the bodies, the divs watch from afar as the grieving family sinks deeper into sadness. They then animate the stolen remains and, since they have no innate ability to influence these creations, use their *command undead* spell-like ability to send the shambling corpse back to prey upon its former loved ones. In this way, druj nasus disrupt polite society and commit one of the ultimate cultural taboos.

Because druj nasus, like all divs, are a scourge on humanity's accomplishments, these foul fiends are a constant target of good faiths. They are particularly hated by followers of Pharasma because of their treatment of corpses and proclivity for animating the remains they steal. Druj nasus generally ignore Pharasmins, however, and instead focus on their own mockery of the living. Because of an unknown, ancient conflict in Kelesh, druj nasus have a strong hatred for Sarenrae and her worshipers, going so far as to single them out in combat

and steal away the bodies of the clergy and faithful. Sarenrae's devoted find combating these divs frustrating due to their immunity to fire.

A druj nasu stands roughly 6 feet tall and weighs a slight 100 pounds.

ECOLOGY

All divs have some manner of esoteric weakness, and druj nasus have a strange negative reaction to common dogs. The divs flee from them in flight or ignore all other creatures and threats in order to kill them. Strangely, this reaction doesn't apply to supernatural doglike creatures like hell hounds or cerberis (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 51), but they are particularly hateful toward or frightened of hound archons. Morticians and priests who are aware of the predations of these divs often keep dogs around to help ward off the fiends. Though druj nasus have no weakness against the sun, these divs tend to do their hunting at night when there are fewer watchful eyes.

In combat, druj nasus use their droning ability to weaken and incapacitate their enemies, and then summon swarms of biting insects to wash over them, often doing so under the protection of invisibility. Once their foes are subjected to the distracting nature of the swarms, the div closes into melee range, taking full advantage of its swarmwalking ability. Against enemies that outnumber them or are more powerful, the divs make great use of flyby attacks, often paired with *invisibility*, to keep out of reach.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Druj nasus make their home in Abaddon, but, like most divs, they visit the Material Plane whenever they have the chance so that they can wreck the accomplishments and creations of humankind. These divs are most plentiful in Katapesh, Kelesh, Qadira, and Thuvia, but they can be found anywhere in the world. Druj nasus favor desert climates, but they don't spend much time in the open deserts, choosing instead to stick to places where people throng and plenty of dead bodies can be found and corrupted. These divs tend to stick to the outskirts of larger settlements, typically where the burial sites are located.

In regions where a druj nasu takes up residence, undead are a particular problem. These uncontrolled undead roam the countryside causing strife and danger to the area's inhabitants. These cruels divs also haunt nearby communities. They hide using their *invisibility* spell-like ability and spoil people's stores of food and communal water wells using their *putrefy food and drink* spell-like ability. For communities with large

stores of food and drink, divs continuously return until the settlements are on the verge of starvation. Druj nasus also use this ability to taint holy water fonts found in temples and shrines. These divs delight in sending plagues of insects to swarm through fields and towns to harass those living nearby.

Typically, druj nasus are loners, but they sometimes work in small groups to achieve a task before disbanding and going their respective ways. They are not particularly opposed to working with other divs, but when they do so they get along the best with pairakas, with whom they share a desire to spread disease and personal strife.

On the Material Plane, ghuls (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 125) frequently inhabit the same kinds of spaces that druj nasus haunt. This leads the two creatures to compete over the theft of corpses; more often than not, such conflicts are won by the divs. Since divs can tolerate the burning rays of the sun better than ghuls, these divs gain a greater advantage in successfully stealing corpses.



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GREAT OLD ONE, XHAMEN-DOR

A hideous tangle of hairlike fungal filaments writhes with nauseating purpose. Bones lie tangled in the wriggling mass, arrayed around a central draconic skull.

XHAMEN-DOR

CR 26



XP 2,457,600

NE Gargantuan plant (aquatic, evil, Great Old One)

Init +24; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +40

Aura unspeakable presence (300 ft., DC 31)

DEFENSE

AC 44, touch 26, flat-footed 34 (+10 Dex, +10 insight, +18 natural, -4 size)

hp 602 (28d8+476); fast healing 20

Fort +33, **Ref** +21, **Will** +20

Defensive Abilities all-around vision, amorphous, immortality, insanity (DC 31); **DR** 15/epic and slashing;

Immune ability damage, ability drain, aging, cold, death effects, disease, energy drain, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, petrification, plant traits, poison;

Resist acid 30, fire 30; **SR** 37

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 60 ft.; *air walk*

Melee 4 tentacles +35 (3d6+18/19-20 plus grab), bite +35 (4d8+18/19-20 plus dread decay)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (3d6+13), entangling shroud, infected dreams, mythic power (10/day, surge +1d12)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 26th; concentration +33)

Constant—*air walk*, *greater magic fang*

At will—*animate dead*^M, *control undead* (DC 24), *dimension door*^M, *dream*^M, *greater dispel magic*, *nightmare*^M (DC 22), *wall of thorns*^M

3/day—*control plants* (DC 25), *create greater undead*, *create undead*, *demand* (DC 25), quickened *feblemind* (DC 22), quickened *wither limb*^{HA} (DC 23)

1/day—*cursed earth*^{UM}, *microcosm*^{OA} (DC 26), *symbol of insanity* (DC 25)

STATISTICS

Str 36, **Dex** 30, **Con** 45, **Int** 19, **Wis** 28, **Cha** 25

Base Atk +21; **CMB** +38; **CMD** 68

Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Quickened Spell-Like Ability (*feblemind*, *wither limb*), Staggering Critical, Vital Strike

Skills Climb +21, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (geography) +18, Knowledge (nature) +32, Knowledge (religion) +32, Perception +40, Spellcraft +32, Swim +52

Languages Aklo; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ amphibious, compression, contagious lore, no breath, powerful tentacles

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary (unique)

Treasure triple

Original Source James Jacobs, "Cults of the Dark Tapestry"

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Contagious Lore (Su) Any creature that learns Xhamen-Dor's name and comprehends the Great Old One's nature as an insidious parasite (this typically requires a creature to be exposed to information in a book or to be taught the information, but also automatically affects any creature who succeeds at a Knowledge check to learn more about the Great Old One) is at risk of being targeted by Xhamen-Dor's infectious dreams. Every year, there is a flat 1% chance that such a creature can be targeted by the Great Old One's infected dream ability. If 5 years pass without being targeted, the victim "forgets" about Xhamen-Dor until taught of the Great Old One again. A *miracle* or *wish* can spell also cause someone to forget in this way.

Dread Decay (Su) A creature damaged by Xhamen-Dor's bite becomes afflicted by a fast-acting infection that swiftly rots flesh and bone into a foul-smelling gangrenous slop. The bitten creature must succeed at a DC 41 Fortitude saving throw or take 2d6 points of Strength drain and 2d6 points of Constitution drain. On a successful save, the victim takes only 2 points of Strength drain and 2 points of Constitution drain. A creature whose Strength score is reduced to 0 by this effect falls comatose and immediately experiences infected dreams (see below). A creature whose Constitution score is reduced to 0 by this effect is immediately absorbed into Xhamen-Dor's body, along with its memories, mind, and soul. Such a creature cannot be restored to life except via *wish* or *miracle*. Even then a creature brought back to life in this manner experiences infected dreams (see page 87). This is a disease effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Entangling Shroud (Su) Xhamen-Dor is surrounded by a writhing storm of fungal filaments that fills an area equal to his reach. While these filaments are almost microscopic in width, they are quite strong and capable of swatting aside ranged weapon attacks, granting Xhamen-Dor a 50% miss chance against all such attacks. In addition, any creature that ends its turn within Xhamen-Dor's reach must succeed at a DC 37 Reflex saving throw or become entangled as long as it remains in that area. An entangled creature can try to break free as a move action; the DC of the Strength or Escape Artist check is equal to that of the Reflex save to avoid becoming entangled in the first place. The save DC is Strength-based.

Great Old One Traits Rules for Xhamen-Dor's Great Old One traits like immortality, insanity, its mythic abilities, otherworldly insight, and the base rules for unspeakable presence can be found on page 306 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4*.

Immortality (Ex) If Xhamen-Dor is slain, its body collapses into a reeking pile of fungus, hair, and bones. The core of its being compresses down to a tiny blot of incorporeal fungal matter that is immediately expelled from the core of its mass and hurled out into the depths of space. All creatures within 120 feet of Xhamen-Dor when this occurs must succeed at a DC 31 Fortitude saving throw or take 2d6 points of Charisma drain as portions of their sanity and souls are pulled along with the blot. Xhamen-Dor's remains animate as a unique undead creature known as a seeded 24 hours after this event (see page 90 for statistics), but this is merely an echo of the Great Old One. Xhamen-Dor is reborn again when one of two events occur: the blot fired into space impacts a planet, or one of its surviving seeded returns to Carcosa and resurrects as the Great Old One. If the former, it can be centuries or even eons before Xhamen-Dor awakens again, but if the latter, the Great Old One can return within a matter of months or less. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Infected Dreams (Su) Any knowledgeable creature that has succumbed to the yearly 1% chance of Xhamen-Dor's contagious lore ability (see page 86) or whose Strength score has been drained to 0 by dread decay (see page 86) can be targeted by the Great Old One's *nightmare* spell-like ability, regardless of the distance between the creature and Xhamen-Dor. In order to use infected dreams against a target, Xhamen-Dor must successfully affect that target with its *nightmare* spell-like ability. If the victim fails its saving throw against the *nightmare*, it becomes infected with the following virulent fungal blight.

Seeded Infestation—save Fort DC 41; onset immediate; frequency 1/day; effect 1d4 Con drain; cure none.

This infestation can be cured only by magic. A creature whose Constitution score is reduced to 0 by this infestation dies and rises in 1d4 rounds as a seeded creature (see page 90). This is an infestation effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Powerful Tentacles (Su) Xhamen-Dor's tentacles are treated as primary natural attacks.

Unspeakable Presence (Su) Failing a DC 31 Will saving throw against Xhamen-Dor's unspeakable presence causes a victim to become nauseated for 1d4 rounds, and then sickened for an additional 2d4 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Spawned countless eons ago within the deepest tainted reservoirs hidden in the foul sewers of Carcosa, the fungal infestation known as Xhamen-Dor, the Inmost Blot, has traveled from world to world for ages untold, infesting reality and returning time and time again to its place of creation to expand the alien city's scope. Full details on

this destructive agency of parasitism can be found on pages 62–67.

Xhamen-Dor is an elephantine mass of fungus and hairlike tendrils capable of assuming any basic form, although its preferred shapes are that of a serpentine creature, a spiderweb-like tangle, or a shuddering carpet of filth.

XHAMEN-DOR'S CULT

Xhamen-Dor's cult is unusual in that once it becomes active, it spreads slowly until it reaches a tipping point. Then, its seeded minions quickly overtake entire populations. In most worlds where it is worshiped, its cult is small in number and isolated. Xhamen-Dor's places of worship are found in sewers, graveyards, and other shunned places within civilized realms, but in ruined cities they can expand to encompass multiple buildings. Xhamen-Dor grants access to the domains of Death, Evil, Plant, and Trickery and to the subdomains of Decay, Deception, Murder, and Undead. Its favored weapon is the spear.



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Primary

HUNTING HORROR

This vast draconic serpent has a pair of leathery wings that don't appear to be strong enough to allow the creature to fly.

HUNTING HORROR

CR 14



XP 38,400

CE Gargantuan magical beast

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect scrying*, low-light vision, scent, see in darkness; Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 11, flat-footed 24 (+5 Dex, +18 natural, -4 size)

hp 202 (15d10+120); fast healing 10

Fort +17, **Ref** +14, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities *freedom of movement*, no breath;

DR 10/magic and slashing; **Immune** acid, cold; **SR** 25

Weaknesses light sensitivity, susceptible to sunlight

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee bite +23 (2d6+12), tail slap +23 (2d8+12 plus grab), 2 wings +21 (2d6+6)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (2d8+18), crush, squeezing coils, swallow whole (2d6+18 bludgeoning plus 6d6 acid damage, AC 19, 20 hp)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +19)

Constant—*detect scrying*, *freedom of movement*

At will—*gaseous form*, *locate creature*, *locate object*, *telekinesis* (DC 20)

3/day—*demand* (DC 23), *limited wish* (to duplicate sorcerer/wizard spells of 6th level or lower only)

1/day—*discern location*, *ethereal jaunt*, *scrying* (DC 19), *vision*

1/year—*interplanetary teleport*^{UM}

STATISTICS

Str 34, **Dex** 20, **Con** 27, **Int** 15, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +31 (+33 bull rush); **CMD** 46 (48 vs. bull rush)

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch

Skills Fly +20, Knowledge (geography) +12, Knowledge (local) +12, Perception +19, Spellcraft +20, Survival +27;

Racial Modifiers +8 Spellcraft, +8 Survival

Languages Aklo, Common, Draconic

SQ answer beckoning, *contingency*, hunter, manipulate magic, powerful tail

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or pack (3-6)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Answer Beckoning (Ex) Although a hunting horror is not an elemental or outsider, it can be conjured via *gate*, *greater planar ally*, or *greater planar binding*, provided the caster of the spell is a worshiper of one of the Great

Old Ones or Outer Gods or specifically alters the words of the spell to invoke a hunting horror, and provided the spell is not cast in an area of direct sunlight. When invoking a hunting horror in this way, the spellcaster must succeed at a DC 30 Spellcraft check as part of the casting of the spell, or when the hunting horror arrives it is automatically free to act under its own will.

Contingency While the exact details of a particular hunting horror's *contingency* effect can vary wildly (as the monster has an immense range of potential spells to choose from due to its ability to manipulate magic), most settle for the simple but effective tactic of causing a *greater invisibility* spell to activate on the hunting horror as soon as it takes damage.

Crush (Ex) A flying hunting horror can land on foes as a standard action, and then use its lengthy coils to crush them. This attack is effective only against creatures three or more size categories smaller than the hunting horror (Medium for most hunting horrors), and affects as many creatures as fit in the hunting horror's space. Any creature in the affected area must succeed at a DC 25 Reflex saving throw or be pinned, automatically taking 4d6+18 points of bludgeoning damage each round it is pinned. If the hunting horror chooses to maintain the pin, it must succeed at a combat maneuver check as normal. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Hunter (Ex) Hunting horrors are efficient and talented at tracking prey, and Survival is a class skill for these creatures as a result. In addition, they gain a +8 racial bonus on Survival checks. When a hunting horror succeeds at a Survival check to follow a creature's tracks, the hunting horror can declare that creature to be its prey. If there are multiple sets of tracks from a group of creatures traveling together, the hunting horror can choose which specific creature becomes its prey if it knows the target is among those in the group; otherwise, its chosen prey is determined randomly. The next time the hunting horror begins a battle against its prey, it gains a +10 bonus on its initiative check. In addition, its prey takes a -2 penalty on all saving throws against the hunting horror's spell-like abilities. A hunting horror can have only one creature as its designated prey at any one time, and if 24 hours pass without the hunting horror succeeding at a Survival check to follow that prey's trail, that creature ceases being the hunting horror's prey.

Manipulate Magic (Sp) A hunting horror is gifted at manipulating magic to affect a wide range of spell-like abilities beyond those that it normally can access. In effect, this allows each hunting horror to use *limited wish* three times per day as a spell-like ability, but only to duplicate a sorcerer/wizard spell of 6th level or lower. Hunting horrors typically use this ability to deal with foes who manage to stay at a distance, favoring potent attacks like *chain lightning*, *disintegrate*, and *flesh to stone*. Most save the third and final daily use

for emergencies—*teleport* to escape from a battle gone unpredictably poorly, for example, or *break enchantment* or *greater dispel magic* to remove a debilitating effect. All hunting horrors use this ability to maintain a *contingency* effect on themselves as well.

Powerful Tail (Ex) A hunting horror's tail slap is treated as a primary natural attack.

Squeezing Coils (Ex) A creature that takes damage from a hunting horror's constrict ability after being struck by the hunting horror's tail slap attack must succeed at a DC 29 Fortitude saving throw or fall unconscious for 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Strength-based.

Susceptible to Sunlight (Ex) While the glow of a distant star does not inconvenience a hunting horror, this creature cannot abide the light of a sun in relatively close proximity—including sunlight on a typical habitable planet such as Golarion. When in natural sunlight (but not in an area of *daylight* or similar spells), a hunting horror can't attack and is staggered. In sunlight, its fast healing ability doesn't function, it loses its damage reduction, and it takes 2d6 points of fire damage per round. In areas of natural sunlight, a hunting horror's light sensitivity increases to light blindness.

Servitors of the Crawling Chaos Nyarlathotep, the serpentine hunting horrors excel at tracking and seeking prey, talents that often see them called on by cultists or spellcasters to hunt down enemies. They speak in great and powerful voices, when they deign to speak at all.

A typical hunting horror is 60 feet long but weighs only 2 tons.

ECOLOGY

A hunting horror abhors light, as it is a creature of inky blackness, some scholars theorize to be akin to the darkness that makes up the Dark Tapestry. Certainly these creatures seem uninterested in obeying the laws of physics in flight; their ability to fly is supernatural, rather than the result of physical exertion—some hunting horrors even have but a single wing that flops lazily as it slithers with great speed through the air. The material that composes their bodies is also supernatural, for although they burn like straw when exposed to sunlight, their hide is thick and difficult to damage with most weapons; only magical blades have a chance of fully penetrating it.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Hunting horrors are often called on to perform tasks for wizards or priests, but they are themselves notable scholars of magic. While very few ever bother to become actual spellcasters, their ability to manipulate magic allows them significant variety and alacrity when it comes to generating magical effects. Many hunting horrors take to the creation of magic items, but they are unconcerned with scaling their magical devices for other users, which reduces their utility for smaller creatures. A hunting horror that focuses on item creation generally replaces its Combat Casting feat with Craft Wondrous Item.

ORIGINS

As with many of the monsters that have come to be associated with the Cthulhu Mythos, like the byakhee, the dark young of Shub-Niggurath, and the gnoph-keh, the hunting horror's original incarnation in fiction was as a vague fragment and a few evocative words. Sandy Petersen ran with these scraps when creating the bestiary section for the Call of Cthulhu RPG, and fully fleshed out the hunting horror into an iconic monster in its own right.

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SEEDED CREATURE

This creature's lower body is that of a decaying lion, while its upper torso is that of a woman with ropey fungus for hair. A web of grotesque fibers sprouts from its body.

SEEDED LAMIA

CR 7



XP 3,200

NE Large undead (augmented monstrous humanoid)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 natural, -1 size)

hp 67 (9d8+27); fast healing 5

Fort +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +12; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses transformed

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., climb 60 ft.

Melee +1 *dagger* +15/+10 (1d4+7/19-20), +9 touch (1d4 Wisdom drain plus seedborne consumption), 2 claws +9 (1d4+3 plus seedborne consumption), 2 tendrils +9 (1d8+3 plus grab and seedborne consumption)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tendrils)

Special Attacks death burst, entrapping tendrils, seedborne consumption (DC 17), insidious mind, Wisdom drain

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +12)

At will—*disguise self*, *ventriloquism* (DC 14)

3/day—*charm monster* (DC 17), *major image* (DC 16), *mirror image*, *suggestion* (DC 16)

1/day—*deep slumber* (DC 16)

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 30 (34 vs. trip)

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack

Skills Acrobatics +3 (+15 when jumping), Bluff +11, Climb +14, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +8, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (religion) +4, Perception +16, Stealth +15, Survival +13; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Bluff, +4 Stealth

Languages Abyssal, Common; telepathy 100 ft. (seeded creatures only)

SQ undersized weapons

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate deserts

Organization solitary, pair, or cult (3-12)

Treasure double (+1 *dagger*, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Undersized Weapons (Ex) Although a lamia is Large, its upper torso is the same size as that of a Medium humanoid. As a result, lamias wield weapons as if they were one size category smaller than their actual size.

Wisdom Drain (Su) A lamia drains 1d4 points of Wisdom each time it hits with its melee touch attack (unlike with

other kinds of ability drain attacks, a lamia doesn't regain hit points when it uses its Wisdom drain). Lamias try to use this power early in an encounter to make foes more susceptible to *charm monster* and *suggestion*.

Though the Great Old One Xhamen-Dor lies half-dormant where its bloated body crashed millennia ago, virtually nothing can prevent it from seeking new hosts to infect. The most common means by which one might contract this infestation is through nightmares that brush against Xhamen-Dor's influence in the Dimension of Dreams, after which the Inmost Blot can track victims and infest their thoughts, slowly and painfully driving them mad. Less common is direct exposure to one of the Great Old One's vine-choked thralls: the seeded.

Xhamen-Dor feeds upon a victim's force of personality, and as a result, only a select few who meet its inscrutable criteria are even able to contract the seedborne consumption disease that turns one into a seeded. Those infected first become sickly and withdrawn. Weeks later, the germinating evil within begins sending fibrous feelers throughout the victim's body. When the host finally slips into a catatonic coma, these fibers quickly digest the organs and portions of the flesh before animating the corpse from within like a puppet. Most victims maintain painful recollections of their former lives, yet they are driven to hear and obey the commands of Xhamen-Dor and find new victims to spread their plague.

CREATING A SEEDED CREATURE

"Seeded creature" is an inherited template that can be added to any corporeal, living creature with a Charisma score of 12 or higher. A seeded creature uses the base creature's stats and abilities except as noted here.

CR: Base creature's CR + 1.

Alignment: Always neutral evil.

Type: The creature's type changes to undead (augmented). Do not recalculate class Hit Dice, Base Attack Bonus, or saves.

Senses: A seeded creature gains darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Armor Class: The fungal growths that appear on a seeded creature's body increase the base creature's natural armor bonus by 2.

Hit Dice: Change all racial Hit Dice to d8s. Class Hit Dice are unaffected. As undead, seeded creatures use their Charisma modifiers to determine bonus hit points (instead of their Constitution modifiers).

Defensive Abilities: A seeded creature gains channel resistance +4, damage reduction 5/bludgeoning or slashing, a +4 bonus on saving throws against mind-affecting effects, cold resistance 10, and electricity resistance 10, in addition to the defensive abilities granted by the undead type. A seeded creature also gains fast healing 5.

Weaknesses: A seeded creature has the following weakness.

Transformed: Although seeded creatures are undead, their bodies pulse with alien plant life. For the purposes of effects targeting creatures by type (such as a ranger's favored enemy and bane weapons), seeded creatures count as both undead and plants.

Seeded creatures are not immune to charms, compulsions, and mind-affecting effects from psychic sources, such as psychic spells or a creature's psychic magic ability. However, such effects have a chance to harm the source due to seeded creatures' insidious mind special attack (see below).

Speed: A seeded creature retains all movement types and gains a climb speed equal to its base speed.

Melee: A seeded creature gains two tendril attacks that each deal damage as per a tentacle of a creature one size category larger than the base creature's size. These tendrils are secondary attacks and also have the grab universal monster ability, and the seeded creature's reach with these attacks increases by 5 feet. Its natural weapons are treated as magic and evil weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Special Attacks: A seeded creature gains several special attacks. The save DCs are equal to 10 + 1/2 the seeded creature's HD + the seeded creature's Charisma modifier unless otherwise noted.

Death Burst (Ex): When a seeded creature dies, it releases psychic spores. All creatures adjacent to the seeded creature are exposed to its seedborne consumption infestation (see below). Due to the spores' psychic nature, any effect that would completely deflect gases and similar airborne hazards grants protected creatures only a +5 bonus on saving throws against exposure.

Entrapping Tendrils (Ex): When a seeded creature succeeds at a combat maneuver check to pin a foe, it can attempt a second combat maneuver check to tie up the foe with a tendril as a swift action. Doing so causes it to lose one of its tendril attacks as long as it is keeping a creature tied up in this way, and a seeded creature can tie up only two creatures in this way before it runs out of spare vines. Each round that a creature remains tied up in this way, it is exposed to the seeded one's seedborne consumption until it is affected. In addition, every full day a victim remains tied up in this way is instead treated as though a month had passed for the purpose of the seedborne consumption disease. The tendrils each have hardness 5 and 10 hit points. If a creature tears free or destroys a tendril, the seeded

creature regrows enough of the vines that make up its tendrils to regain its lost tendril attack after 1 minute.

Insidious Mind (Su): When a seeded one succeeds at a saving throw against a psychic charm, a compulsion, or another mind-affecting spell or spell-like ability that would otherwise affect it, its dreams infect the spellcaster's mind, exposing him to seedborne consumption.

Seedborne Consumption (Su): natural or touch attack; save Fort DC = 10 + 1/2 the seeded one's HD + the seeded one's Charisma modifier; onset 1 month; frequency 1/month; effect 1d2 Charisma damage (this damage cannot be healed while the creature is infected); cure 3 consecutive saves. When a creature's Charisma is reduced to 0, instead of becoming unconscious it falls into a feverish mental state where its mind is scattered and inattentive. The creature can still move and perform actions, but it can concentrate on only a single action, and for only a few moments. It takes a -4 penalty on saving throws; Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks; and skill checks. Within 24 hours of a creature's Charisma score reaching 0, it dies and rises as a seeded creature.

Ability Scores: Str +4, Wis +2, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a seeded creature has no Constitution score.

Language: A seeded creature gains telepathy with a range of 100 feet, but only with other seeded creatures. Seeded creatures benefit from the morale bonuses granted by other seeded creatures within range of their telepathy.



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BLACK STARS BECKON

By Jim Groves

The Strange Aeons Adventure Path draws to a stunning conclusion! Arriving in the alien city of Carcosa, the adventurers must sever the links that bind that metropolis to Golarion. In wandering the parasitic city, the characters navigate the frozen ruins of elder thing dwellings, deal with accursed partygoers in the reflection of an Azlanti settlement, and encounter a mute musician who can help them find their way. Can the heroes keep Carcosa from drawing Thrushmoor into its amalgam of stolen cities or do they risk waking the unspeakable nightmare that stirs in the depths of Lake Hali? If the PCs perish in their task, Golarion is doomed to greet the King in Yellow.

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

By James Jacobs

Keep your campaign going by battling against further threats from beyond the void! Learn about more places where the Elder Mythos influence is strong on

Golarion and foil the plots of other Great Old Ones. You can also choose to incorporate your Strange Aeons characters into a Call of Cthulhu game and take the adventure to Earth!

AND MORE!

An investigation of an unspeakable cult in the Pathfinder's Journal by Adam Daigle. Plus, a collection of unwholesome new monsters in the Strange Aeons Adventure Path bestiary.

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By all the same laws of nature, this massive pillar of flesh and mouths should not be able to fly. But it does. Perhaps this hideous creature has mastery over the air itself?



NIGHTMARE'S END

I must describe the final part of my recurring dream. An inky darkness rushes toward me and becomes a starless night sky. A sickly yellow light from a nearby city draws me closer to it. The illumination also reveals shapes drifting above the settlement, what appear to be huge, airborne worms flickering in and out of sight. As I step toward the metropolis, a blast of wind drives me back and scours my skin. Despite the pain, I try to continue forward, for something within the city calls to me. But then the air is suddenly sucked from my lungs. My legs grow too heavy to move. The light begins to fade. I wake with a deep sense of loss.



DEATH FROM BELOW

After finding the route to the lost city of Neruzavin, the adventurers must mount an expedition into the vast and deadly desert region called the Parchlands, where they hope to catch up to their treacherous former employer. Once they brave the heat-blasted wasteland, the heroes arrive in an abandoned city at the edge of a lake where a Great Old One slumbers. The adventurers must track Count Lowls's party, recover a vile tome, activate the city's *Star Stelae*, and perform a powerful ritual that allows them to follow the insane noble to Carcosa. Along the way, the heroes must be careful they don't wake the slumbering Great Old One or stir up the flying polyps sealed beneath the city!

This volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path continues the Strange Aeons Adventure Path and includes:

- "What Grows Within," a Pathfinder RPG adventure for 13th-level characters, by John Compton.
- Examination of the fungal blot that spreads through dreams in an article about the Great Old One Xhamen-Dor, by James Jacobs.
- An exploration of the blasphemous tome known as the *Necronomicon*, by James Jacobs.
- An icy tomb hides a terrible secret in the Pathfinder's Journal, by Arinn Dembo.
- A bestiary containing a new Great Old One and other hideous monsters, by John Compton, Adam Daigle, and James Jacobs.



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