

PATHFINDER™

A GAMEDMASTERY™ ADVENTURE PATH



CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE

ESCAPE FROM OLD KORVOSA

By Richard Pett



Koruosan Hierarchy

Magistrates

Commerce: Garrick Lann

Expenditures: Syk Gar

Regulation: Lolia Perenne

Tourism: Mercer Cucuteni

Arbiters

Senior Arbiter
Zenobia Zenderholm

Jesser Arbiters

Aristocracy



House
Arkana



House
Jeggare



House
Leroung



House
Ornelas



House
Zenderholm

Monarchy

King
Ared
Arms II



Senrschal
Nealandus Kalepopolis

Queen
Aleosa
Arabasti

Koruosan
Guard

Order of the Nail

Sable
Company

Safina
Merrin

Field Marshall
Cressida Kraft

Pietar
Severs
Diviri

Commandant
Marcus Thalassinus

Mistress of Blades
Maidrayne Vox

Paravicar
Acillmar

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ADVENTURE PATH  PART 3 of 6

CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE

**ESCAPE FROM
OLD KORVOSA**



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"Escape from Old Korvosa" is a Pathfinder Adventure Path scenario designed for four 7th-level characters. By the end of this adventure, characters should reach 10th level. This adventure is compliant with the Open Game License (OGL) and is suitable for use with the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game. The OGL can be found on page 92 of this product.

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TEARING DOWN KORVOSA

Mike McArtor designed Korvosa. He built it up from scratch in his *Guide to Korvosa*, and did a damn fine job at it. Now and then during office chats or meetings, he even slips into the Korvosan mindset when we talk about Varisians or “those stinky hippies in Abken.” It’s best not to mention Magnimar at all around Mike unless you’re deriding its citizens in some way.

So it’s natural that I’m taking great pleasure in watching the authors of *Curse of the Crimson Throne* tear the place apart.

Every time a riot runs rampant through the streets, an ottyugh bursts up from a sewer, or any of the nobles get badmouthed, I make sure to call out across the editorial pit to keep Mike updated. But even though the previous two adventures have featured riots and plagues, they were nothing compared to what I wanted Rich Pett to inflict upon Old Korvosa. This month, we’ve got burning buildings, ruined bridges, frenzied mobs of criminals, sinkholes and ruins, and even the opportunity to take

one of the city’s oldest noble families and crush them underfoot, bringing hundreds of years of tradition to an end. Mike won’t care that the “tradition” in question is one based on cruelty and murder, of course. He’ll just be sad to see the Arkonas go.

But at the same point, if Mike did his job in *Guide to Korvosa* (and I’m pretty confident he did), your players should be feeling about the same by now. They’ve been part of Korvosa for two adventures so far, and even though what they’ve seen are primarily riots and plagues, it’s still home for their PCs. What Queen Ileosa is doing should enrage them, and by the end of this adventure, they should finally have a plan for what to do with her. Unfortunately for them—there’s an awful lot of rakshasas in the way.

BETTER THAN DEVILS!

It’s no real secret that I’m a big fan of the game’s rich tradition of demons—I’ve just always preferred the chaos

of the Abyss to the rigidity of Hell, I guess. That's not to say, of course, that I don't appreciate the lawful evil end of things, but when it comes to lawful evil outsiders, devils aren't my favorite. My favorite scheming, plotting, law-abiding fiends have long been the rakshasas. To a certain extent, this was because they had a really interesting feel of unexplored history to me, but also, two additional sources served to up my rakshasa interest.

First, we have issue #84 of *Dragon* magazine, which had Scott Bennie's absolutely fascinating article called "Never the Same Thing Twice." Not only did this article reveal to me the fact that there was a lot more about the monster beyond its brief quarter-page entry in the *Monster Manual*, but it did something I hadn't really seen done yet. It provided an actual hierarchy of monsters based on this single entry. All of a sudden, there were rakshasa knights and lords where, a moment before, there had been only one. Furthermore, the article gave them some really intriguing flavor by embracing the traditional Indian mythology. It also revealed that they all have different animal heads, not just tiger heads. It even gave the rakshasas a god: Ravanna, a murderous immortal with multiple heads!

Second, there was F. Paul Wilson's excellent novel, *The Tomb*. This novel not only became part of his six-book Adversary Cycle, but also gave us Repairman Jack, a protagonist who's become Wilson's most popular character and the focus of his own line of novels. In any event, the creatures Jack faces in *The Tomb* are savage, brutal, and almost-impossible-to-kill monsters from India called (you guessed it) rakoshi. While the rakoshi are certainly different than this game's scheming animal-headed outsiders... they're very clearly based on the same myths as the rakshasas.

Both *The Tomb* and "Never the Same Thing Twice" were published in 1984, as it turns out (although, like Stephen King, Clive Barker, and Dean Koontz, my introduction to F. Paul Wilson and *The Tomb* wouldn't occur until the next year, thanks to my wonderful Grandma, who's probably as big a fan of the horror genre as I am!). It was the interaction of these two works that eventually culminated in my third published adventure, "Twilight's Last Gleaming," back in *Dungeon* #35, which featured a rakshasa maharaja I named Loliadac (after a friend in high school suddenly shrieked that name without cause or reason after he fell asleep during one of our late-night D&D games).

E. GARY GYGAX (1938–2008)

I'm writing this foreword only four days after the death of another author whose work has influenced my life—perhaps to a far greater extent than any other, in fact. I'm

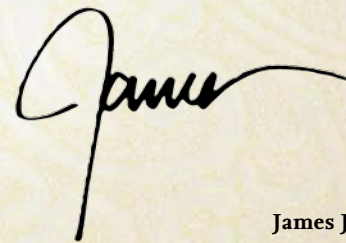
talking, of course, about E. Gary Gygax, the co-creator of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Gary was a guest at our booth at Gen Con 2007, but as my schedule worked out, I was not at our booth either time he was there signing books and talking to fans. As I returned to the booth, he was leaving for his next event. He seemed genuinely happy to be at Gen Con, to be talking to his fans, and to be a part of the hobby he helped invent and shape.

My first exposure to D&D was in 5th grade. My teacher, Spencer Brooks, divided the class up into groups and ran us through a dungeon he designed during alternating lunch breaks, and when a group finished an encounter, someone had to write up that encounter as a short story. My first actual D&D product was the red box, a reward I earned for going door to door selling gift cards to my neighbors. And the first time I realized Gygax was the type of guy I'd like to meet someday was when I picked up my copy of *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*. Down there on the map of the second level of the strange metal cave, the walls spelled out a word if you looked at that section of the map upside down: EGG. I can't remember how long it took me to figure out it was a hidden signature. That was when I realized the guy who invented my favorite game was probably really cool in real life.

Yet I never met him face to face. I exchanged a few emails with him during the course of various *Dungeon* projects, but that was about it. Nevertheless, his work has probably been the single most important influence on my life as a whole outside of my family. The majority of my friends today I met through a shared love of D&D, and I certainly owe my career to him. He seemed like a guy I could listen to for as long as he'd be willing to put up with me sitting there.

I never met Gary Gygax. But I miss him like I had.



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ESCAPE FROM OLD KORVOSA

CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE: CHAPTER THREE

The queen's madness grows. Her paranoia and anger blossom. Her newfound powers quicken, unlocked by the merging of her soul with a fragment of the great blue wyrm Kazavon. She sees Korvosa now as populated by two castes—slaves and enemies. The city, already weakened by anarchy after her husband's death, now staggers in the aftershocks of the plague. Korvosa's defenders have either shut themselves away or are so exhausted from recent events that it is a simple matter for Queen Ileosa's new army—the Gray Maidens—to establish martial law. Old Korvosa is the first of her victims, cut off and quarantined, left to die of its own internal strife. Yet in this dying district languishes the city's salvation—if only it can escape from Old Korvosa in time.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Korvosa was built over a foundation of evil. Although they remained sealed away in a hidden vault below the Castle until very recently, the *Fangs of Kazavon* have not lain quiet over the centuries. The fragment of Kazavon's spirit lodged in these relics knew that someday they would be discovered and released. Yet inside the hidden vault his spirit could do little to influence the minds of the thousands that it felt, so agonizingly close, in the growing city above. Now and then, though, a particularly susceptible mind rose in Korvosa, a mind whose thoughts and emotions were, for whatever cruel twist of fate, more open to the lingering presence of the ancient dragon. As these minds slept, Kazavon could whisper to them, and in so doing he hoped to lure one into the castle to release him, to become a vessel for his building power.

Yet time and again, Kazavon's whispers to these tortured, sensitive souls backfired. Instead of fostering a sense of loyalty, he fostered only madness. Left to their own devices, these impressionable victims would have developed in their own rights as talented artists or poets, but with Kazavon's influence, they became murderers, rapists, or suicides. Queen Illeosa's discovery of the *Fangs of Kazavon* was an unforeseen accident, one Kazavon took advantage of immediately. He abandoned his current "projects" in the city, seven sensitive men and women with whom he had slowly been making strides. The loss of their muse was a tragedy for these seven—living their lives at times comforted and others horrified by Kazavon's whispers, they had grown accustomed to his faint voice in their dreams. For six of the seven, the loss of that voice was too much to bear—they quietly killed themselves, becoming six more nameless victims in the wake of the anarchy and the plague. Only one lives to this day—a moody but talented painter named Salvator Scream.

Born Salvator Bevery, this struggling young artist was kicked out of his home by his father, a devout Abadarian who found the gruesome paintings created by his son sadistic and evil. Seeking shelter with several of his artist friends who dwelt in a flat in Old Korvosa, Salvator swiftly found regular work creating backdrops and other paintings for Pilts Swastel, purveyor of all things grisly and vile for the city's most notorious playhouse, Exemplary Execrables. It was at Pilts's suggestion that Salvator changed his surname to "Scream," since that helped Pilts market the man's violent art even better.

Salvator Scream's work drew many eyes and admirers, and not just among the regulars at Exemplary Execrables. His work became a favorite of many noble families and other prominent citizens, who found his subjects shocking and safely scandalous—among them the seneschal of Castle Korvosa, Neolandus Kalepopolis. Neolandus was more interested in the artist than the art, and after attending a

showing of "Tears of Abendego" at Exemplary Execrables (a performance he found distasteful at best), he met the young artist. The two formed a fast friendship, one of the few in Salvator's life, and their meetings at various eateries to discuss art, history, and religion became a weekly event in both their lives—one that Kalepopolis, always a private man, kept relatively secret.

So when he survived an attempt on his life by the Red Mantis and was forced to flee his home in the Castle, wounded and poisoned, it was to Salvator's doorstep Neolandus fled. With the aid of Salvator and his network of contacts in the Old Korvosan artistic underworld, Neolandus managed to both recover from his wounds and avoid the Red Mantis. Yet as things in Korvosa grew worse, and the Red Mantis grew closer to discovering him, Neolandus realized that he needed to find a new hiding place. Salvator had just the patron in mind—the Arkonas. Long a fan of his grisly work, Glorio Arkona (who was, in fact, actually a rakshasa named Bahor) gracefully agreed to hide Neolandus in his estate as a favor to Salvator. Of course, gaining control of the seneschal played perfectly into the Arkonas' plans to upset the queen, for according to Korvosan law, only the seneschal can legally depose a corrupt monarch. Neolandus has become little more than a caged pet to the Arkonas, an insurance policy they're waiting patiently to cash in while Old Korvosa grows more desperate.

Today, Old Korvosa is cut off. Quarantined and forgotten, the island has been left to fend for itself. The Arkonas have retained control over Fort Korvosa but the majority of Endrin Isle has fallen to the mob—a mob increasingly under the control of a man who calls himself the Emperor of Old Korvosa, and who, in his previous life, was none other than Pilts Swastel. His control over Old Korvosa grows by the week, and one of his most recent acquisitions is Salvator Scream, one of the only men in Korvosa who knows that Neolandus has a secret that could tear the city apart. That the seneschal suspects the truth behind Queen Ileosa's madness and what must be done to stop it is the seneschal's greatest secret—once this information spreads, Queen Ileosa will spare nothing to see him dead, and might well burn Old Korvosa to the ground to do it.

Adventure Synopsis

This adventure begins with the leader of the Sable Company attempting an assassination of Queen Ileosa—an attempt that backfires horribly as the queen reveals the extent of her power granted by Kazavon and the *Crown of Fangs*. In the aftermath of this event, the PCs receive word that, on quarantined Old Korvosa, their old friend Vencarlo might have discovered something of great import regarding the queen. The PCs brave the anarchic streets of Old Korvosa only to find Vencarlo missing and his home transformed into a Red Mantis ambush. Following a trail of clues, the

HARROW POINT USES

In “Escape from Old Korvosa,” the PCs are faced with numerous situations where reasoning, logic, and attention to detail can save lives. Disabling deadly traps, discovering hidden clues, and being able to recognize threats for what they are (and to know about the key weaknesses of certain monsters, like the rakshasas) can make all the difference. During this adventure, a character can spend his Harrow Points in the following ways.

Intelligence Rerolls: Spend a Harrow Point to reroll any one Intelligence-based skill check. You must abide by the new result (although if you have additional Harrow Points remaining, you can use them to attempt additional rerolls).

Flash of Insight: Spend a Harrow Point to be able to make a skill check in an untrained skill you don’t normally have ranks in. You gain a one-time +5 insight bonus on this skill check.

Arcane Wrath: Spend a Harrow Point to increase the strength of an arcane spell as it is cast. This spell gains a +2 bonus on its save DC, a +4 bonus on its caster level check to overcome spell resistance, and a +2 bonus on any attack rolls needed to strike the target.

THE CHOSEN

In addition, the card a PC draws during the choosing has special qualities during this adventure. Each of these cards is tied to a specific encounter in “Escape from Old Korvosa,” and when a PC who drew that card reaches that encounter, he gains a +2 bonus on all rolls modified by Intelligence, and all arcane spells cast by him manifest at +1 caster level. These bonuses last for the encounter’s duration.

The Hidden Truth: Combat with Vimanda

The Wanderer: Combat with Sivit the darksphinx

The Joke: Encounters involving Pilts Swastel

The Inquisitor: Combat with Senshiir the beatific one

The Foreign Trader: Encounters involving Laori Vaus

The Vision: Encounters involving Salvator Scream

The Rakshasa: Encounters involving Bahor/Glorio Arkona

The Idiot: Games of Blood Pig

The Snakebite: Combats against Red Mantis assassins

PCs learn that a strange artist named Salvator Scream likely knows where Vencarlo went, as well as what information sent the teacher into such a state in the first place. Unfortunately, Salvator is now securely in the hands of a petty warlord who calls himself the Emperor of Old Korvosa.

After dealing with the Emperor and interrogating Salvator, the PCs learn the secret—the seneshal of Korvosa still lives! He, and likely Vencarlo now, is in the clutches of the notorious Arkona family, the self-styled rulers of Old Korvosa. The PCs visit Palace Arkona only to learn that its patriarch has secrets of his own. In order to rescue

Vencarlo and the seneschal and learn the awful truth behind the queen’s mysterious power and rising cruelty, the PCs must brave the infamous Vivified Labyrinth below Palace Arkona and then escape from Old Korvosa alive.

The Third Harrowing

In “Edge of Anarchy,” the PCs gained a powerful magic item—*Zellara’s Harrow Deck*. As indicated in the previous adventure, this Harrow deck plays a recurring role throughout *Curse of the Crimson Throne*. “Escape from Old Korvosa” is tied to the suit of Books in a Harrow deck—and by extension, to Intelligence.

Zellara’s spirit haunts her Harrow deck, and at several points during this Adventure Path, she can perform a special Harrow reading to grant her chosen heroes, the PCs, advantages over what is to come in the adventure. Not long after the PCs defeat the cultists of Urgathoa and save Korvosa from the plague, Zellara senses Ileosa’s growing strength, but does not yet know what it signifies. She uses her empathic link to instill an urge to perform a Harrow reading in the mind of the PC who carries her deck. If that PC doesn’t comply soon by using her cards to perform a reading, she takes matters into her own hands once she sees the PCs are alone by creating a *major image* of herself and performing the reading. When you do this reading, take pains to interpret the cards from the past to dwell upon events (either of the campaign world or each PC’s life) that involved despotic overlords and cruel dictators. When you get to cards representing the present, focus on metaphors that relate to Korvosa’s current woes, particularly the growing sense of oppression, martial law, and the fact that the queen herself might be seeking the PCs’ deaths. For the cards representing the future, get grim—interpret the cards as ghosts and demonic animals (particularly tigers and mantises) who plague the living, metaphors that place life as a cruel and vindictive play or other work of art, and recurring themes of beautiful women with ashen skin and blank faces (to symbolize the Gray Maidens). As a particular note, if the Rakshasa card comes up in the reading, you might want to give the role that card plays in the reading particular attention—focusing on its interpretations of dominance or freedom from enslavement, depending on its alignment in the spread.

PART ONE: INTO THE DYING CITY

With the end of the blood veil plague, Korvosa settles into a wounded silence. At first, it seems as if the city is healing and recovering from the tragedies she has suffered, but it should soon become apparent that the damage done to Korvosa during the riots after Eodred II’s death and the plague itself might have been even greater than anyone feared. The streets are dull and muted, strangely empty

except for when markets quietly open. People seem to be more interested in staying home than going out, and when they do, they shamble quickly and quietly to their destination and conduct their business swiftly. The Order of the Nail has withdrawn from Korvosa, retreating to Citadel Vraid for the first time in Korvosa's history—some whisper the Hellknights are planning a full-scale invasion of Korvosa to seize control, but more knowledgeable sources know that dozens of Hellknights perished or failed to uphold their charges during the recent events, and that Lictor Severs has recalled his troops to punish them for these failures. City temples have their hands full tracking down the last remaining pockets of sick in the city or disposing of the dead, and the *Acadamae* has kept its doors shut and resources ensconced for the duration, apparently hoping to wait out these troubled times. Both the Korvosan Guard and the Sable Company took staggering hits to both their personnel and morale. The commanders of both organizations talk about recruitment drives to replenish their ranks, yet helping Korvosa recover remains their primary goal—a goal made difficult by Queen Ileosa's reduced support. Yet the queen is not ignoring Korvosa. The energy and support once lent to the Korvosan Guard is now funneled into a new order of peacekeepers—the enigmatic Gray Maidens. Even as the number of Korvosan Guards on the streets seems to dwindle, the presence of these armored warrior women increases. Regular patrols of Gray Maidens march along the major streets, and rumors of strike forces breaking into homes and buildings reputed to house those who voiced dissenting opinions of the monarchy are growing. Old Korvosa remains under tight quarantine, with troops of Gray Maidens stationed along the Narrows and patrolling the Jeggare in swift warships to ensure that no one gets off Endrin Isle—the plumes of smoke as buildings burn and the periodic roars of riots that echo down from Old Korvosa alone are enough to warn away the curious. No one mentions the words “martial law” yet, but they hover on every tongue.

Feel free to give the PCs as much time as they want to recover from the events of “Seven Days to the Grave” before starting this adventure. The *Pathfinder Chronicles Guide to Korvosa* can help fill out any adventures the PCs might go on during this time, but the atmosphere of oppression and fear that fills Korvosa should continue, making the city a very different place than the one presented in *Guide to Korvosa*. Furthermore, depending on how the PCs dealt with the Gray Maidens and the discovery of links between the plague and Queen Ileosa, they might not even be able to openly walk the streets of Korvosa. If they've publicly decried the queen and tried to prove she was responsible for the plague, the PCs quickly find that her hold over Korvosa is even stronger than it appears. Even if they've kept their suspicions quiet

(which is what allies like Field Marshall Cressida Kroft, Ishani, and Grau Soldado all suggest if consulted), the queen knows of their involvement in the disruption of the Queen's Physicians and the cult of Urgathoa, and it isn't long before she sends Red Mantis assassins after them.

The Crown of Fangs Revealed

This event is best handled off-stage. The PCs should certainly hear about the aftermath of this event soon enough, though. There's too much opportunity for PCs to get in over their heads if they're on site when Queen Ileosa makes her first public appearance since the botched attempt to execute Trina Sabor at the end of “Edge of Anarchy.”

Since that time, Queen Ileosa has been busy. Not only has she helped orchestrate the plague and establish a new order of the city's military, she collected the *Fangs of Kazavon* and, using her influence with certain high-ranking individuals in Korvosa's *Acadamae* (namely a powerful bloatmage wizard named Togomor: an obese and constantly sweating man who hides the leeches he uses to control his blood with voluminous red robes), and the fleeting memories of Kazavon in her mind, she bound the *Fangs of Kazavon* into a new badge of her office—the *Crown of Fangs*.

Her new crown complete, Queen Ileosa announces a public address when it becomes clear the plague is coming to an end. In attendance at this address at the queen's side are her bodyguard and lover Sabina Merrin (clad in her breathtaking and intimidating suit of Gray Maiden armor), her new advisor and ally Togomor (whom she announces has taken up the duties of castle seneschal), the commander of the Korvosan Guard Cressida Kroft, and the commandant of the Sable Company Marcus Endrin. In the days to follow, many speak of how ill-at-ease Marcus appeared, as if they knew at the time what the desperate commandant had planned all along.

Queen Ileosa announces triumphantly that the plague has been defeated, although unfortunately at the cost of Doctor Davalus's life. The good doctor's body, she goes on, has already been shipped back to Cheliox for burial in his family vault, and the order of the Queen's Physicians has been disbanded as well. Yet Korvosa remains wounded. She goes on to report that the Order of the Nail has showed its true colors and fled like cowards into Citadel Vraid. Worse, both the Korvosan Guard and the Sable Company have suffered terrible losses over the past weeks. Neither group is fully capable of continuing as Korvosa's protectors, and thus, to shore up this fault, Queen Ileosa names her newly created order of Gray Maidens as the new protectors of Korvosa, appointing Sabina Merrin as the new General of Korvosa. As a ripple of concerned whispers spreads, Queen Ileosa continues her speech, saying that she has decided to dissolve the Sable Company and that the remaining marines will be folded into the Korvosan Guard. At this



point, she asks Commandant Endrin to step forth to surrender his badge of office.

As Endrin does so, he trembles. He reaches for his badge, but instead of handing it over, he throws it at the queen, striking her in the cheek with it. Everyone (queen included) is shocked into paralysis for a few moments, long enough for Endrin to bellow out, “Your shameful reign ends now! Korvosa will be free again!” An instant later, his crossbow is in his hands, aimed at the still-shocked queen. Endrin pulls the trigger. His aim is true. The crossbow strikes Queen Ileosa in the temple.

Yet she does not fall.

With incredible speed, she regains her composure and yanks the bolt from her skull. Before the blood from the wound has time to run all the way down to her shoulder, she’s standing before Endrin. Her free hand whips out and seizes him by the throat, lifting him off the ground as she holds him up for all to see. An instant later, she buries Endrin’s own bolt between his eyes with a single powerful blow.

As Endrin’s lifeless body crumples to the ground and Ileosa imperiously shakes his blood from her hand, she cries out in a strong, clear voice—“This shall be the fate of all enemies of Korvosa! Mark well his death! It is only the first!” A moment later, Togomor steps forward, taking

Ileosa’s hand and teleporting her back into the Castle. The resulting riot is quelled quickly and brutally by the Gray Maidens. Shocked by the turn of events, Field Marshal Cressida Kroft flees to Citadel Volshyenek, stunned and horrified by what she witnessed, and knowing that things have indeed taken a turn in her city—a turn for the worse.

Whispers from Old Korvosa

Not long after the PCs hear about the failed assassination attempt, they receive an urgent request to meet from Cressida. If the PCs haven’t visited Citadel Volshyenek since the introduction of Doctor Davaulus and the Queen’s Physicians during “Seven Days to the Grave,” they might be shocked to see the place so understaffed. Only one guard stands at the Citadel entrance, and none train in the large inner courtyard. The halls of the Citadel are silent and empty, with refuse and trash scattered here and there, dust gathering in empty barracks, and an overall state of creeping neglect hanging like a pall over the place.

Cressida Kroft looks haggard and tired when the PCs arrive; she ushers them into the central keep quickly, leading them into a smaller meeting room in the depths of the keep, a plain-looking chamber with a single long table (on which

sits a small closed coffer) and enough chairs for the PCs and herself—a chamber protected by a permanent *private sanctum* spell. After everyone is seated, she speaks in a low voice.

“Korvosa is dying. No, strike that. Korvosa is being murdered. Killed by our queen. The evidence you’ve uncovered that links her to the plague is damning enough, but this recent display at her address... Endrin is dead. She’s more in control now than ever. I dare not move against her—my Guard would be executed to the last man by her Gray Maidens by sundown. She must be stopped. And I know of no one else but yourselves to do this deed.

“Whatever foul magic the queen has wrapped herself in is obviously of the highest order. Endrin’s aim was true—his shot should have dropped her. I had feared he was going to take matters into his own hands like this, but I had hoped he would find it within himself to find a better route. If only he could have waited.

“You see, just this morning, new information came to me. I have received a missive from my friend Vencarlo Orisini, the first I’ve heard from him since Queen Ileosa cut off Old Korvosa and put it in quarantine. A message that gives me hope. Vencarlo speaks of discovering something of vital importance regarding the queen—he mentions something about dark magic and a pact with a devil, but until the events of this morning, I found his claims difficult to believe. Yet now... if Queen Ileosa has entered an infernal pact of some sort, we must tread carefully indeed.

“Vencarlo asked for you in the missive. You’ve made quite the impression on him, it appears. He remains in Old Korvosa now, but has asked that I send you to him, to his home, to hear what he has discovered. Ironically, you should be safe in Old Korvosa—the queen’s quarantine has cut off the island entirely, and word on the street is that she plans on leaving it to rot. She won’t think to look for you there if you maintain a low profile and avoid confrontations with the Gray Maidens.

“Once you find him, you’ll need to escape Korvosa, I fear. This city is no longer safe for you, or for those associated with you. As Field Marshal, I suspect that as long as I comply with the Queen, I shall be safe—and I will do what I can to ensure those friends and family you might leave behind are protected. By remaining in this city, I fear that you put them into more peril. Go to Old Korvosa, find Vencarlo and hear what he has to say. He has contacts in Harse—he’ll be able to help you lay low. I shall be in contact with you when I can, at which point our plan, I hope, shall be clear.

The Citadel treasury is nearly empty, but Cressida does have a small cache of potions and a few wands that she wants to give the PCs to aid them in their mission into Old Korvosa; they’re contained in the wood coffer on the table. The cache consists of four *potions of cure serious wounds*, three *potions of lesser restoration*, two *potions of remove disease*, a *wand of invisibility*

(10 charges), and a *wand of cure moderate wounds* (30 charges). After handing them the gear, though, she urges the PCs to make haste to Old Korvosa and track down Vencarlo—the queen won’t take long to recover from the indignation of the failed assassination, and once she does, Cressida fears that martial law might make things very difficult for those who remain within the city walls. If asked how to infiltrate the quarantined island, Cressida suggests swimming or taking a skiff from the northern banks of the Jeggare, optimally under the cover of darkness to avoid notice.

Old Korvosa Today

The last few weeks have been the most terrifying the good people of Old Korvosa have known. The king’s death and the plague were bad enough, but it was the sudden destruction of the bridges linking the old city to the new that heralded the final breakdown in law and order in Old Korvosa. Abandoned by the government, Old Korvosa descended into anarchy. Where honest laborers once toiled in the streets, a mob now rules—a mob falling increasingly under the sway of the self-styled Emperor of Old Korvosa, Pilts Swastel. Yet in truth, even the Emperor of Old Korvosa is more of a symptom than a cause. The true architects of Old Korvosa’s rapid descent into madness are its supposed representatives to the city—the Arkona family.

In the eyes of many of Old Korvosa’s citizens, the Arkona family has acted as champions for the district, protecting as many good citizens as they can with their own house guards or representing the district in government gatherings. Yet no one openly discusses the fact that the Arkonas fund and support the vast majority of the criminal dealings in Old Korvosa. When the district was cut off from the rest of Korvosa and put into quarantine, the Arkonas withdrew their influence to the highest part of Old Korvosa, the ward known as Fort Korvosa, and abandoned the rest of the district to anarchy. Pilts Swastel used this as a major proponent to his platform, promising that eventually, the treacherous Arkonas will be ousted from Old Korvosa and the entire place will revert to the people. Of course, the Arkonas are wise—they know that Pilts is a momentary distraction. Once the mob has burnt itself out, it will be an easy matter for them to reclaim even greater control over Old Korvosa than before, giving the Arkonas a perfect place to make their next move—wrestling control of the entire city from the queen. Many of Old Korvosa’s inhabitants suspect the Arkonas of such plots and machinations, yet what none suspect is the family’s greatest secret—they are, and have been for hundreds of years, *rakshasas*.

Among the four wards of Old Korvosa, it is Fort Korvosa, the highest point of the district, that weathered the quarantine the best, in large part due to the Arkonas’ continued presence here. In the shadow of Fort Korvosa’s relative order, Garrison Hill has not had the benefit of the



Arkonas' protection. Several fires have destroyed buildings in this district, and the citizens here venture out only as necessary to scavenge for supplies. Bridgefront has suffered the most under the quarantine; the destruction of the bridges over the Narrows having a similar destructive influence on the morale and sanity of those living in this neighborhood. Yet Bridgefront is not the most dangerous place today in Old Korvosa—that honor falls upon Old Dock, for it is here that the mob rules; a mob ruled in turn by a lunatic who calls himself the Emperor of Old Korvosa.

Local Korvosans

As the PCs explore Old Korvosa, you should mention the hapless and forlorn and desperate who now live in this dying town. The following sample NPCs can help you get started if a PC stops to talk to someone on the street.

Children: A flock of incongruously happy children sing a rhyme as they gather around something in the middle of the street “Headless, headless, that’s what you’ll be, brand new dolls in the Emp’rer’s ceme’try! Choppy, choppy, chop, the tall knife calls, waitin’ for the day for Korvosa to fall.” One of the children has fashioned an odd object from sticks and pegs—a crude guillotine that the children are using to behead a collection of

dolls. If the PCs can gain the children’s confidence (by changing their initial unfriendly attitude to friendly) the children brag that they’ve been to see the Emperor’s real “tall knife” at his palace, when in fact this is just false bravado.

Foolhardy Hero: Tesh Zobberdin, a wild-eyed human wearing an ill-fitting suit of leather armor, strides purposefully down the street toward Old Dock, axe in hand. The last surviving member of a family executed by the Emperor for refusing to turn out their food stores and life savings, Tesh has murder on his mind. Unfortunately, he’s only a 1st level warrior, and thus no match for the Emperor or his goons. Tesh nonetheless could aid the PCs in navigating Old Korvosa if you wish.

Ranting Local: Olmere Bliversin addresses the mostly empty street from a balcony above his bakery—demanding to know what the queen’s going to do about the mob, when she is going to repair the bridges, and how long the quarantine will persist. The fact that Olmere does much of his ranting wearing his nightclothes and punctuates his rants with high-pitched giggles certainly undermines his arguments.

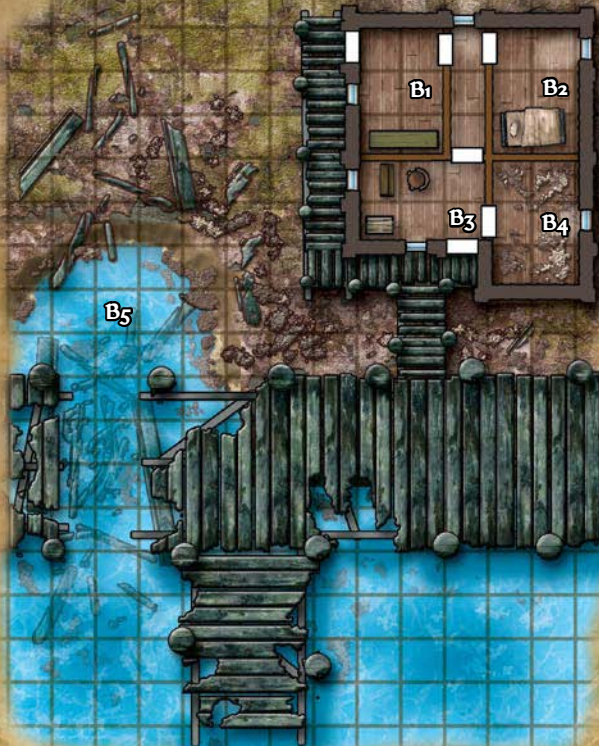
Sad Old Woman: Old Mother Mifeg shamles along the edges of the streets, doing her best to continue her

Vencarlo's Home



One Square = Five Feet

The Artist's Lair



One Square = Five Feet

living selling not-so-brightly colored fungi for pigments. She mutters and sobs periodically, worrying that she might not make enough coppers to support her six children—the truth is even more depressing, for Mifeg is the last survivor of her family's brush with blood veil, and the old woman simply hasn't admitted to herself that the rotting bodies she keeps so lovingly sheltered back home are anything but "sleeping off the sick."

Vencarlo's Home (EL 10)

Vencarlo lives in a small building just east of his Academy—or at least, where his Academy once stood, for the once-proud structure itself is no more, burned to the ground in a recent fire set by the Red Mantis as a warning to those who defy them. The fire aroused the Arkonas' wrath since the Academy was located in their territory, and the family's resulting hostility toward the Red Mantis and suspected Red Mantis agents has forced the assassins to continue their work here in a more subtle manner. Vencarlo's home still stands, nestled in the southern section of Fort Korvosa, although Vencarlo himself is not at home by the time the PCs arrive.

The only door into Vencarlo's home is closed but not locked. The interior of the building is warm but quiet.

Announcements of arrival, be they knocks on the door or calls out for Vencarlo, go unanswered. The contents of the house itself (with the exception of the hidden cache in area A8) speak of a man who lives a simple life despite his success as an instructor at an esteemed academy. As the PCs move from room to room, they may find hints here and there that something is amiss before things suddenly and swiftly get out of hand.

Once the PCs reach area A7 or A8, allow them a DC 20 Wisdom check to notice a strange tang to the scent of smoke in the air; characters with the scent ability gain a +10 circumstance bonus on this check. Those who smell the odor can identify it with a DC 15 Craft (alchemy) check as dried alchemist's fire—a DC 25 Spot check reveals that the walls, floor, and even the furniture are faintly stained in multiple places with the stuff.

A1. Entrance: An elegant Vudran throw rug covers much of the floor of this otherwise empty room.

A2. Workshop: This is a well-stocked workshop for decorating and repairing bladed weapons. Several partially repaired daggers and rapiers lie on the table—none are particularly valuable.

A3. Bathroom: This room contains a free-standing bathtub and a toilet.



A4. Study: A single leather chair sits at a desk, while two tall cabinets filled with books about sword fighting and philosophy stand to the east. The papers on the desk are mostly accounting documents and ledgers for Vencarlo's Academy. It appears that up until the death of King Eodred II, Vencarlo's Academy was doing rather well, but then things turned bad as students failed to show and Vencarlo himself took an increasing number of breaks from teaching.

A5. Pantry: Food and water are stored here, although the majority of the perishable food has gone bad. Vencarlo had no kitchen to speak of—he generally made and took his meals in the living room or in his workshop.

A6. Living Room: Two large sofas face a brick fireplace; a fire burns brightly inside the hearth, despite the fact that the building seems to be abandoned.

A7. Training Room: This is an open room used to train and practice sword fighting. Practice dummies stand in the western corners, to either side of a brick fireplace. A fire burns inside, as down below. The ceiling is 14 feet high, with exposed rafters giving the room an open feel.

A8. Bedroom: Vencarlo's bedroom appears well lived in, but the bed is made and unslept in. A desk and chair sit next to the bed, and a small clothes closet is to the north behind a narrow door.

Creatures: In truth, while Vencarlo hasn't been here since he fled the burning of his Academy (and shortly thereafter was captured by the Arkonas), someone else has been living in secret here—a pair of Red Mantis assassins. Stationed here in case Vencarlo should attempt to return, the assassins have waited patiently in hiding, eager to ambush anyone who enters the home.

Patient and professional, these red mantis assassins serve 8-hour shifts here before they are replaced by two others sent from their hidden headquarters elsewhere in the city. One Red Mantis hides in the nook behind the northern sofa in area **A6** (just under the rising stairs) while the second assassin lurks in the rafters above area **A7**. As soon as they hear anyone enter the building, they activate the +5 bonus on Spot checks, *see invisibility*, and *deathwatch* (or *darkvision*, if it's night) abilities of their masks, followed by their preparatory spells as they ready their ambush.

The Red Mantis is concerned with finding and finishing the job it started—it seeks Neolandus Kalepopolis, but since he's currently being held in secrecy by the Arkonas, and since Queen Ileosa has the Mantis's resources spread so thin, it's been slow going for the assassins. The lead the PCs receive that Vencarlo might know something about the seneschal's location took the Mantis weeks, if not months, to acquire, and when the PCs (and as a result, the Gray

Maidens) arrive at Vencarlo's Home, the delicate operation set into motion by the Mantis becomes threatened. Despite the fact that the PCs don't officially become targets of the Red Mantis until the next adventure, their involvement in Kalepopolis's fate quickly puts them at odds with the infamous assassin's guild.

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS (2)

CR 8

Human rogue 3/fighter 2/red mantis assassin 3
LE Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +11

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14

(+3 armor, +5 Dex, +1 Dodge, +1 shield)

hp 50 (6d6+2d10+16); fast healing 2

Fort +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1; **Resist** fire 10

OFFENSE

Spd 60 ft.

Melee mwk sawtooth sabre +11/+6 (1d8+1/19–20) and
mwk sawtooth sabre +11/+6 (1d8/19–20)

Ranged dagger +11 (1d4+2/19–20)

Special Attacks prayer attack (DC 15, see page 70), sneak
attack +3d6

Spells Known (CL 3rd)

2nd (1/day)—*cat's grace*, *hold person* (DC 14)

1st (3/day)—*expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *spider climb*

TACTICS

Before Combat As soon as the assassins realize someone's entering the house, they drink their *potions of resist fire*; cast *cat's grace*, *spider climb*, and *expeditious retreat*; then fully activate their masks (*deathwatch* at day or darkvision at night). They activate their red shrouds just before they begin combat, remaining hidden until they are spotted or until at least one PC climbs the stairs up to area A7.

During Combat The assassins are outnumbered, but they've got a deadly advantage: just as in their previous attempt to slay Vencarlo, they snuck into the ambush site early and prepared the place with distilled alchemist's fire. On the first round of combat, the assassins throw a vial of alchemist's fire at the fireplace, causing the fire to burst out and quickly light the room itself on fire. Note the 3 squares the fireplace takes up with bits of red paper or a red marker to indicate that those squares are burning—each round, the fire spreads quickly to 1d4 adjacent squares. Characters in a square that is on fire take 1d6 points of fire damage and must make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid catching on fire. The Red Mantis assassins need not fear the fire as long as their potions last, and use the fire to their advantage as they are able. Once the battle begins, the assassins make an effort to reach each other so they can team up and flank foes, but if they begin combat with only one PC in sight, an assassin attempts to use his prayer attack on that PC before starting his fire. If a

BECOMING BLACKJACK

With the gear hidden in Vencarlo's closet, a PC could effectively become the next Blackjack. An infamous folk hero of Korvosa, Blackjack's identity has passed down from hero to hero over the course of generations—Vencarlo is the latest Blackjack, although with his imprisonment in the Arkona Dungeons and the discovery of these clothes by the PCs, that mantle may shift.

As long as a PC wears Blackjack's cloak, mask, daggers, armor, boots, gloves, and rapier, he gains the Blackjack persona. With this persona comes the expectation of not only skill at wielding the weapons, but a fierce devotion to Korvosa's citizens. As long as a character does nothing to compromise these expectations, he gains a +10 circumstance bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate checks made against Korvosan citizens of non-noble status (this includes Pilts Swastel).

PC ends his turn in a burning square, a Red Mantis casts *hold person* on that PC to keep him from escaping the fire.

Morale The assassins are fanatics, and fight to the death.

Base Statistics **Init** +3; **AC** 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; **Ref** +10; **Spd** 30 ft.; **Melee** mwk sawtooth sabre +9/+4 (1d8+1/19–20) and mwk sawtooth sabre +9/+4 (1d8/19–20); **Ranged** dagger +9 (1d4+2/19–20); **Dex** 16; **Skills** Hide +14, Jump +12, Move Silently +14, Tumble +11

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 20, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7

Feats Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (sawtooth sabre), Stealthy, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre)

Skills Bluff +11, Climb +7, Hide +16, Intimidate +8, Jump +24, Listen +11, Move Silently +16, Spot +11, Tumble +13

Languages Common, Infernal, Varisian

SQ trapfinding

Combat Gear *potion of resist fire*, alchemist's fire; **Other Gear** +1 leather armor, 2 masterwork sawtooth sabres, 4 daggers, *mantis mask*, *cloak of resistance* +1

Treasure: A DC 30 Search check made in Vencarlo's closet reveals a hidden panel in the east wall. Opening it reveals a tiny compartment containing a metal iron lockbox. The box can be opened with a DC 40 Open Lock check (the key is now in the possession of Bahor), or bashed open (Hardness 10; hp 40). Inside is a *bag of holding* (type I) that contains a black hooded *cloak of elvenkind*, several black masks, a dozen masterwork daggers with a stylized "B" engraved in their pommels, a black leather suit of +2 *slick leather armor*, a pair of black leather *boots of elvenkind*, an *amulet of proof against detection and location*, a pair of black leather *gloves of Dexterity* +2 (with two fingers in the right

hand containing fake, posable wooden fingers), and an exquisite mithral +2 *keen rapier*. Characters who attended Trinia's execution attempt at the end of "Edge of Anarchy" recognize the clothes immediately—otherwise it's a DC 15 Knowledge (local) check to recognize Blackjack's signature armor and weaponry.

Development: If the PCs don't put out the fire, Vencarlo's home goes up in flames. Fire is one of the few things that draws Old Korvosa's citizens out, and they and brigades of Arkona agents do their best to contain the fire—without aid, they do, but they are unable to save the house. If the house burns, Vencarlo's iron coffer can be found in the rubble with a DC 25 Search check.

The Concerned Student

Hitting a dead end this early in the adventure might stump the PCs at first, but fortunately an ally with more clues approaches them shortly after the PCs visit Vencarlo's home. Drawn by the flames as Vencarlo's house burns, or perhaps by the sounds of combat or the sight of the PCs entering his teacher's home, a desperate and worried student named Amin Jalento approaches them not long after things in Vencarlo's home come to an end. This might not be the first time the PCs have met young Amin—they might have saved him from the mob back in "Edge of Anarchy," in which case his delight upon recognizing the PCs is apparent in his expression.

Once he has the PCs in a place where they can talk quietly (likely in the partially collapsed building across the street from the Academy where he's been squatting for the past several days), Amin tells the PCs his story. He was attending classes at Vencarlo's Academy when the quarantine hit, and after he was unable to escape back to the mainland and his home, Vencarlo was gracious enough to allow Amin to stay at the Academy as a guest. That stay ended not long after, when several Red Mantis assassins invaded the building. Vencarlo confronted them and took one of them down, but there were too many. The master was forced to flee, and Amin assumes that the assassins burnt down the academy as a warning as much as anything else.

Amin doesn't know where Vencarlo has gone, but he does suspect who might. In the days after the quarantine, while Amin was Vencarlo's houseguest, he noticed that his teacher seemed restless and distracted. Vencarlo regularly left his house at odd hours in the night, sometimes not returning until the morning. After one such return, Vencarlo's clothes were bloody—he said he had to fight off

a thief, but Amin is sure there was more to it than that. Furthermore, in the days before the Red Mantis attacked, Vencarlo had a singularly strange houseguest visit several times—a man with paint-stained hands, wild hair, and a jittery habit of looking about. Vencarlo introduced him as a friend, but Amin recognized him as a somewhat notorious local artist named Salvator Scream. Vencarlo and Salvator always met behind closed doors, three times in all, and on that last meeting Amin swore he heard Vencarlo's voice raised in anger. Unfortunately, he has little more information than that—he's been meaning to try to track down Salvator to ask him if he knows what happened to Vencarlo, but has not, of yet, worked up the courage to brave Old Dock, the place where Salvator's home is located.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: Grant the PCs experience as if they'd defeated a CR 8 creature if they escort Amin to safety.



AMIN JALENTO

Seeking Salvator

Amin knows that Salvator lives in Old Dock—he did enough asking around to confirm that the artist lived in a building located at 140 Wave Street. He also knows that Old Dock is under the control of the Emperor of Old Korvosa. Amin's heard plenty of rumors about the Emperor—that he's a cannibal, that he's beheaded more folk than have died to blood veil, that he's a devil hiding in the flesh of a man, and that his minions are almost as bad as him. Although Amin doesn't believe the rumors, he does believe that the Emperor deserves them, and wants nothing to do with Old Dock as a result.

A DC 15 Knowledge (local) or Gather Information check is enough to know that Salvator Scream is a notorious artist whose gruesome and often scandalous art was held in relatively high esteem by several of Korvosa's nobles. Certainly, his popularity could not be denied among the lower classes, who were most familiar with his work at the Old Dock playhouse known as Exemplary Execrables, where his paintings served as grisly backdrops to that venue's notoriously violent entertainments. Salvator himself wasn't a public figure, though, and beyond his name, few folk could say they knew him before the quarantine went up.

Of course, Salvator Scream hasn't been at home for some time now. Not long after his last meeting with Vencarlo, agents of the Emperor of Old Korvosa broke into his home, killed his fellow artists, and abducted him. The Emperor is eager to rebuild his collection of violence and mayhem after Exemplary Execrables burnt

to the ground—he’s managed to reacquire or salvage a lot from the ruined playhouse, and Salvator Scream is merely the latest of his acquisitions. The Emperor has kept Salvator’s capture relatively quiet, but *locate creature* could lead the PCs directly to Salvator.

Salvator’s home is a leaning, decrepit building located on the Narrows, not far from one of the many now-ruined bridges that once connected Old Korvosa to the mainland. Salvator continued to live in this home for some time after the quarantine, but after his last visit to Vencarlo (and well after he’d turned over Neolandus to the Arkonas for safekeeping), the Emperor of Old Korvosa sent a group of thugs out here to “collect” the artist. Yet the house is not abandoned. Its current inhabitant is Laori, a Forlorn elf and worshiper of Zon-Kuthon, a member of the secretive society known as the Brotherhood of Bones. Although she worships the same patron as legendary Kazavon himself, she might be one of the more useful allies the PCs meet.

B1. Front Room

The smell in this entry is of must and mildew, much of it coming from the mud tracked over the floorboards, as if a small army had marched through the room. To the south stands a single empty set of shelves.

The muddy prints on the floor were left by the Emperor’s thugs when they invaded the building several days ago. A DC 20 Survival check is enough to confirm not only that a half-dozen humans were involved, but that a seventh person was likely dragged back out of the building, the thin trails and scuff marks of his dangling feet hinting at the abduction’s tale.

B2. Bedroom

A single bed, the blankets and pillows atop it scattered and in disarray, sits to the south in this room. More mudstained bootprints mar the wooden floor here and a splash of dried blood decorates one pillow.

When they invaded, the Emperor’s thugs found Salvator sleeping here. One of them knocked him out with a blow to the head, and the others helped in dragging him back to Pilts’s Palace. A DC 20 Survival check confirms that the prints lead up to the bed and that the victim was likely abducted as he slept.

B3. Salvator’s Studio (EL 10)

Both of this room’s windows are tightly shuttered, yet the air inside seems strangely fresh and scented, no doubt from the six large candles that burn within. Each candle has been affixed

VENCARLO’S STORY

Vencarlo might hate the queen, but his personal code prevents him from even contemplating assassination as a way to get Korvosa’s government back on track. This leaves him with few options. When he first heard rumors that seneschal Neolandus Kalepopolis might still be alive, and furthermore, might be hiding out in Old Korvosa, Vencarlo grew more and more obsessed with finding the man. His investigations led him eventually to Salvator Scream, but the artist was particularly close-lipped in revealing anything; it took several meetings and bribes and reassurances on Vencarlo’s part to prove to Salvator that he wanted to help his friend Neolandus, but when the artist revealed to Vencarlo that he’d given Neolandus to the Arkonas for safe-keeping, Vencarlo nearly lost it. His rage frightened Salvator into fleeing, and not long thereafter, the Red Mantis attacked Vencarlo’s Academy as they themselves continued to search for Neolandus (their leads having led them along parallel lines of investigation that pointed to Vencarlo as being Blackjack and therefore the agent most likely to be hiding the seneschal). Vencarlo survived the ambush, but when he attempted to infiltrate the Arkona palace a day later, the rakshasas captured him. Vencarlo thus had found Neolandus—both were imprisoned in the same dungeon—but he is now as much a prisoner as his quarry.

by a glob of melted wax to the crown of a gleaming, polished skull, and each of these impromptu and grisly candleholders has been placed atop an otherwise clear desk to the west, arrayed in a gentle arc. A chair sits before the desk, and a careful stack of papers and scrolls sits inside the arc of skulls. To the south stands a nearly empty cabinet, its shelves barren save for a few paintbrushes and a cracked pottery urn.

This chamber served Salvator as his studio, and it was here that he spent the majority of his time, committing the visions of violence in his head to canvas. His painting supplies, finished art, and easel were taken from here soon after he was abducted, leaving behind only the room’s few furnishings.

Creature: This room’s current occupant is an elven woman named Laori Vaus, a priestess of the god of darkness and pain, a member of a sinister cult called the Brotherhood of Bones, and possibly one of the party’s greatest allies in “Escape from Old Korvosa.”

The Brotherhood of Bones consists of a group of Zon-Kuthonites from across Avistan—fanatics who seek a singular goal: the gathering of the relics of Kazavon so that the ancient warlord can be reborn. The Brotherhood of Bones has long suspected that one of these relics was located in Varisia, and with Kazavon’s recent awakening

here in Korvosa, the closest Brotherhood agent, Laori, came to investigate the signs and portents. What she found was the proof she sought—over half a dozen artists whose work incorporated Kazavon’s unmistakable influence. Yet even more incredible, his influence was the most potent in the city’s new queen. Laori contacted her allies and was ordered to remain in Korvosa to watch and observe, while the Brotherhood determined how to act. And ever since, those have been Laori’s standing orders.

As she waited and watched the queen, Laori tracked down the seven artists. Unfortunately, one after the other, they proved to be dead by their own hands, so Laori did the next best thing. She tracked down their bodies and collected their skulls—these six now sit on the table in this room. Periodically, Laori uses *Speak with Dead* to try to communicate with the skulls, but the results of these castings are generally too garbled to make much sense. From left to right, the skulls belonged to the following artists: Jeonia Chirco (a seamstress), Boathar Kaay (a toymaker), Velaka Hoon (a writer), Maxtel Erns (a sculptor), Yvos Tanguany (a tattooist), and Imon Vernell (a poet).

Laori saved Salvator for last in her search because she suspected the whisperings of Kazavon were strongest in this artist, judging by his work. Although she was disappointed to find that Salvator had gone missing by the time she tracked down his address, she tempered that disappointment with the discovery that the artist, unlike the other six, remained alive and was the captive of the Emperor of Old Korvosa. Laori has been trying to decide on the best route to confront the Emperor and gain access to Salvator to interrogate him, spending the last few nights here at Salvator’s home meditating and attempting to discover any remaining shadows of Kazavon’s influence in the area. She’s found none, but hopes to learn more by speaking with Salvator in person.

Although she’s a sadist and something of a lunatic, Laori is not the enemy. To a certain extent, the PCs and the Brotherhood of Bones will eventually share the same goals—they both want to remove Kazavon’s influence from Queen Ileosa and the city of Korvosa, after all. For now, Laori views the arrival of a group of adventurers as a sign from Zon-Kuthon—here she was trying to figure out the best way to confront the Emperor of Old Korvosa to gain access to Salvator. When a handy group of specialists showed up looking for the same thing. Assuming the PCs don’t immediately attack her, she greets them cheerfully, introducing herself as Laori and asking if they’re looking for Salvator as well.

While Laori doesn’t hide her allegiance to Zon-Kuthon, and openly admits (if asked) that she wants to speak to Salvator because his art has a lot of themes important to Zon-Kuthon’s faith, she remains close-lipped about the Brotherhood of Bones, never mentioning her group and

volunteering no information about her suspicions about Queen Ileosa. She certainly doesn’t mention anything about Kazavon. She hopes the PCs can help her secure an audience with Salvator, but isn’t sure how far she can actually trust them, especially if members of the group include paladins or priests of Shelyn. Only if magically compelled does Laori reveal this information—the fact that Queen Ileosa’s new crown is made out of the teeth of a notorious warlord of Zon-Kuthon is a revelation that the adventure expects the PCs to learn at the end when they rescue Neolandus Kalepopolis, but learning this a little early from Laori works just as well—the PCs still need to rescue the seneschal, if only to learn what he knows about defeating such powerful magic.

If the PCs voice concern that she might be planning to harm Salvator, she brushes the very concept off with a good-natured laugh: “Why would I want to hurt him? He’s a talented artist! I would just like to ask him where his inspiration comes from.” It shouldn’t be long before Laori proposes that she and the PCs team up to find Salvator. She mentions that she already found out who took him and suspects she knows where he is, and to further sweeten the deal, she insinuates that she found something here she suspects the PCs would be very interested to know about.

Laori is referring to a fragment of cloth she found in Salvator’s bedroom. When Neolandus staggered into Salvator’s home in the pre-dawn hours, dreadfully wounded and poisoned from his run-in with the Red Mantis, his uniform was in terrible shape. Salvator did what he could to tend Neolandus’ wounds, but was forced to tear apart the seneschal’s uniform to get a splint on the man’s broken arm. A fragment of the sleeve slipped down between the bed and the wall—a fragment Laori discovered and kept. She recognized the scrap as coming from a government official’s uniform, but has not yet deciphered its significance. She assumes that a blood-stained fragment of a politician’s uniform is of interest to the PCs, though. She hands it over to them if they agree to an alliance, and she also reveals that Salvator is held by the Emperor of Old Korvosa.

The bloodstained fragment is obviously from a high-ranking government official in Korvosa—the city’s coat of arms appears on the fragment, but it takes a DC 15 Knowledge (nobility & royalty) check to determine that the fragment is from a very singular source—the uniform of the seneschal of Castle Korvosa.

Laori displays her allegiance to Zon-Kuthon openly in her choice of weapon and armor (a spiked chain and hook-studded chainmail), yet her demeanor and attitude are anything but grim. Laori is chronically cheerful, always brimming with delight and quick to laugh. This affectation has somewhat damaged her reputation among

the church, as many of the more conventional worshipers of Zon-Kuthon find her attitude to be irreverent and even sacrilegious, yet none deny her contributions to the faith. Even when discussing the finer methods of skinning a living man, self-flagellation, torture, or her open admiration of all things diabolical, her plucky attitude remains. As a result, Laori can be unsettling to be around, for both her fellow worshipers of Zon-Kuthon and those who see her faith as a horror to be stamped out.

As with many Forlorn elves, Laori never knew her birth parents. She grew up on the rough streets of Riddleport, and although she suspects her family dwelt in the nearby town of Crying Leaf, she never bothered to contact them. It was in Riddleport that she first learned of Zon-Kuthon, and the Midnight Lord's teachings quickly grew into an obsession for her. Armed only with her indomitable optimism and an appetite for pain, she made the pilgrimage down to the shadowy nation of Nidal, and over the course of several decades became an accomplished priestess of Zon-Kuthon, despite her grating (to the other priests) attitude. The culmination of her work saw her induction into the Brotherhood of Bones, and her familiarity with Riddleport and Varisia made her a natural choice to take the search for Kazavon's relics there.

LAORI VAUS

CR 10

Female elf cleric 10 (Zon-Kuthon)

LE Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +5, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 20

(+7 armor, +3 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 88 (10d8+40)

Fort +11, **Ref** +5, **Will** +10

SR 22

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee +2 *spell storing spiked chain* +12/+7 (2d4+6)

Special Attacks smite 1/day (+4 attack, +10 damage), rebuke undead

Spells Prepared (CL 10th)

5th—*flame strike* (DC 18), *spell resistance*, *summon monster V*^D (only summons 1d3 shadows)

4th—*air walk*, *greater magic weapon* (already cast), *inflict critical wounds*^D (DC 17), *sending*

3rd—*contagion*^D (DC 16), *dispel magic*, *magic vestment* (already cast), *remove disease*, *speak with dead*

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *blindness*^D (DC 15), *bull's strength*, *lesser restoration*, *resist energy*, *silence* (DC 15)

1st—*command* (DC 14), *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *obscuring mist*^D, *sanctuary* (DC 14), *shield of faith*

o—*create water*, *cure minor wounds* (3), *light* (2)

D domain spell; **Domains** Darkness, Destruction

TACTICS

Before Combat Every morning, Laori casts *greater magic weapon* and *magic vestment* on her spiked chain and armor. If she has a chance before combat begins, she also casts the following spells as well: *air walk*, *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, and *spell resistance*.

During Combat Laori's first act in combat is to summon 1d3 shadows with *summon monster V*; on the second round, as her shadows appear, she hits the thickest concentration of her enemies with *flame strike*. She moves into melee against



LAORI VAUS

foes on the third round, using her smite and unleashing the *inflict serious wounds* from her *spell-storing spiked chain* on her first attack. As she fights, she hums or whistles as if she were merely doing some pleasant chore, periodically punctuating a particularly solid blow with a giggle or a wink.

Morale Laori enjoys pain, but would rather not give up her life before she has a chance to see Kazavon reborn. If brought below 20 hit points, she flees; if she escapes, she appears again in “Skeletons of Scarwall” as scheduled.

Base Statistics AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; **Str** 13, **Con** 14

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 14, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +10

Feats Blind-Fight, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Diehard, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain)

Skills Concentration +15, Knowledge (religion) +13

Languages Common, Elven

SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (11 charges), *wand of sound burst* (19 charges), *wand of death knell* (34 charges);

Other Gear masterwork hook mail (spiked chain mail), +1 *spell storing spiked chain* (contains *inflict serious wounds*), *phylactery of Wisdom* +2, scrap of Neolandus’s uniform, 68 pp, 24 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Darkness Domain This domain grants Laori Blind-Fight as a bonus feat.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs deal with Laori peacefully and form an alliance with her, award them experience points as if they had defeated her in combat.

B4. Fungal Incursion (EL 6)

This room appears to have once been a combination kitchen and storeroom, but is now a bewildering riot of brightly colored fungus and mold. The stuff grows everywhere and in every color, over tables, across cupboards, and in swaths along the floor and walls, but seems thickest to the southwest, where puffy sheets of yellow fungus cover several objects so completely that it’s impossible to make out what lies beneath.

In an effort to get just the right colors on canvas his visions required, Salvator eventually resorted to cultivating several brightly colored strains of fungus to craft his own pigments, an endeavor in which he met with some success. Since he was taken from his home, though, the fungus he normally kept well maintained here has run riot, covering much of the room’s otherwise mundane contents.

B5. Sinkhole (EL 7)

What once might have been a small house has been obliterated, collapsed from within by a twenty-foot-diameter sinkhole.

Water from the Narrows fills the hole, creating a muddy pit strewn with jagged bits of timber and flotsam. The edges of the hole are muddy and patchy with fungus. Immediately south of the sinkhole, the boardwalk has also collapsed, creating a dangerous tangle of timber and crazily tilted pilings.

The sinkhole isn’t quite as deep as it looks, although the 5 feet of standing water covers several more feet of mud. Moving through the mud on the bottom of the hole is considered difficult terrain.

Creature: With Old Korvosa going under quarantine, the soldiers normally in charge of keeping the island’s indigenous otyugh population contained have not been able to keep up their jobs, and the otyughs of Old Korvosa are slowly coming to realize that they’re free. The sinkhole here was created when several otyughs forced their way out of the sewers through a drainage tunnel. Barely able to fit, the otyughs’ struggles to escape caused the collapse of the small shack that once stood here, and their further thrashings caused the destruction of the boardwalk. Now, the monsters wallow in the water and mud of the sinkhole, periodically lurching out of the water to attack anyone who comes too close.

OTYUGHS (3)

hp 36 (MM 204)

CR 4

Development: If the PCs haven’t yet met Laori when the otyughs attack, she emerges from area **B3** a round after combat begins. She shrieks in delight at the sight of the battle, and rushes to provide aid to the PCs, hoping that by helping them the PCs become more disposed toward helping her contact Salvator.

PART TWO: THE EMPEROR OF OLD KORVOSA

Eventually, through conversation with Laori, magical divination, or DC 20 Gather Information checks, the PCs should learn that their quarry, Salvator Scream, has been taken by the self-styled ruler of the region—the Emperor of Old Korvosa. In his previous life, this Emperor was a man named Pilts Swastel, the owner and director of Exemplary Execrables, a notorious playhouse that specialized in violent, gruesome productions. Already a bit unhinged before Korvosa fell apart, the riots, a bout with blood veil, and the quarantine were enough to push Pilts the rest of the way. With his knack for showboating, organizing crowds, and his horrifying imagination, it was a relatively simple thing for him to make the transition from director to ganglord.

Today, Pilts’s position of power is growing. Every day, his mob absorbs or murders more of Old Korvosa’s remaining citizens, and his resulting influence grows.

The Emperor's imagination is one thing that has captured the admiration of his mob—from the gory but entertaining real-life plays he produces to new ventures, such as the extremely popular game of blood pig, his followers look to their Emperor as a source of entertainment to distract them from the horror of their new world. Yet the Emperor is also a primary source of that horror. His obsession with an extravagantly carved Galtan guillotine has created a constant need for new victims, and when the mob can't provide the Emperor with victims on whom to use his favorite toy, the Emperor is boundlessly creative in finding reasons to punish random followers for transgressions against his new laws.

After his playhouse partially burnt to the ground, Pilts decided to relocate his home to a group of buildings located a bit closer to the core of Old Dock. Once several tenements, Pilts has converted these structures into a palace. He managed to save many of his old props and gruesome backdrops, storing them for now in his new palace while he works on plans for a new, larger playhouse. He wasn't able to save it all, though his newest "acquisition," Salvator Scream, is the first step Pilts has taken to rebuild his assets.

The Emperor of Old Korvosa has rapidly become one of the most notorious figures in the quarantine zone. If the PCs take the time to use Gather Information, they can learn much of the man before they confront him. Consult the following table to determine the results of such checks.

DC Check	Information Gathered
10	The Emperor of Old Korvosa rules Old Dock from his palace on Silk Street. He's seized control of several tenements there, and rarely leaves the place. Mobs of his fanatics scour the streets of Old Dock seeking more conscripts to his cause. Those who resist are instead captured for other purposes.
15	The Emperor sees Old Korvosa as his stage. He forces some of his prisoners to take part in violent, deadly games or gruesome performances, pitting them against the most ferocious of his pets and followers. Others he simply beheads with his favorite toy—an extravagant guillotine imported all the way from distant Galt.
20	Those who seek to speak with the Emperor must first earn his respect by providing him with entertainment—of late, it is said that the Emperor's favorite entertainment is a violent game he invented called blood pig. He's converted a large rooftop inside of his palace into a playing field for this game, and the howls

and screams of those playing and watching can be heard throughout Old Dock every evening.

The Old Dock Mob

The streets surrounding the Palace are littered with bodies, rubble, and refuse; feral dogs, stirges, shingle spiders, and other vermin scuttle around with a bravery not seen in the city before the quarantine. The further one ventures into Old Dock and draws near the Palace, the fewer citizens appear behind boarded windows, and the more the signs of the Emperor's mob grow. Vandalism, brutalized bodies hung up on display, remnants of fires, and other evidence of public violence are everywhere.

Of the hundreds of people who lived in Old Dock, most have joined the mob, if only to avoid being branded traitors by the Emperor and then forced to take part in his violent entertainment. Those who revel in the chaos quickly find themselves ascending to the role of soldier in the mob, where they serve as leaders and commanders—the majority of the petty thugs under their control obey out of fear. Unless the PCs take pains to remain unobserved, they are noticed by members of the mob within minutes of entering Old Dock, and within a few more, they are confronted by a group of these thugs who loudly and brashly demand to know the meaning of the party's intrusion into the Emperor's domain.

Few have openly opposed the mob yet, and as a result, these groups of thugs wildly overestimate their own power and strength. Their attitude toward intruders is one of haughty and profane disdain. Lewd comments are hurled at female PCs, racial epithets howled at non-humans, and insults of all manner are levied against the rest. The mob leader demands that the intruders quickly explain their presence in Old Dock. Any response other than "We're here to join you," is met with laughter and disdain, swiftly followed by a demand to hand over their weapons. Characters who do so are escorted to area C4 to be judged by the Emperor; their gear, in this event, is stacked on the ground next to the Emperor's throne as an offering.

The mob's initial attitude is hostile. If the mob's leader can be made friendly, he agrees to escort the PCs to meet the emperor but doesn't demand their gear. If made helpful, he'll even agree to letting the PCs make their own way to the Palace with no escort (but there's still a 20% chance per 10 minutes of encountering another mob).

Attacking the mob is certainly a possibility. Word spreads quickly through Old Korvosa if the party adopts an offensive approach, and 3d6 minutes after defeating the first mob, two more arrive to confront the PCs. If the PCs defeat this second wave, a fourth mob seeks them out in 3d6 minutes to extend an invitation to speak with

the Emperor—in this event, the PCs are watched by four mobs from the surrounding streets but are allowed to keep their gear.

A single mob consists of 6 thugs and one captain who serves as the mob's leader—a single mob encounter is EL 7.

OLD DOCK THUGS (6)

CR 2

Male human warrior 2/rogue 1

CN Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +7

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14

(+3 armor, +1 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 19 (2d8+1d6+9)

Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee battleaxe +4 (1d8+2/×3)

Ranged throwing axe +3 (1d6+2)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

During Combat The Old Dock thugs are more brash and foolhardy than they are brave. They focus their attacks on less-armored foes if given a choice, and generally prefer to gang up on one target at a time.

Morale A thug flees combat if brought below 5 hit points. All thugs flee or surrender if their leader is slain.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Toughness

Skills Climb +7, Intimidate +6, Spot +7

Languages Common

SQ trapfinding

Gear studded leather armor, light wooden shield, battleaxe, 4 throwing axes

OLD DOCK CAPTAIN

CR 4

Male human warrior 2/rogue 3

CN Medium humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +8

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14

(+3 armor, +2 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 33 (2d8+3d6+10)

Fort +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk battleaxe +7 (1d8+2/×3) or unarmed strike +6 (1d3+2)

Ranged throwing axe +6 (1d6+2)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

During Combat An Old Dock captain attempts to Intimidate the apparent leader of the PCs, ordering his thugs to engage in melee while he takes the first few rounds to throw axes before entering combat himself.

Morale An Old Dock captain fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike

Skills Climb +9, Intimidate +7, Listen +6, Spot +8

Languages Common

SQ trapfinding

Gear mwk studded leather armor, light wooden shield, masterwork battleaxe, 4 throwing axes

Pilts's Palace

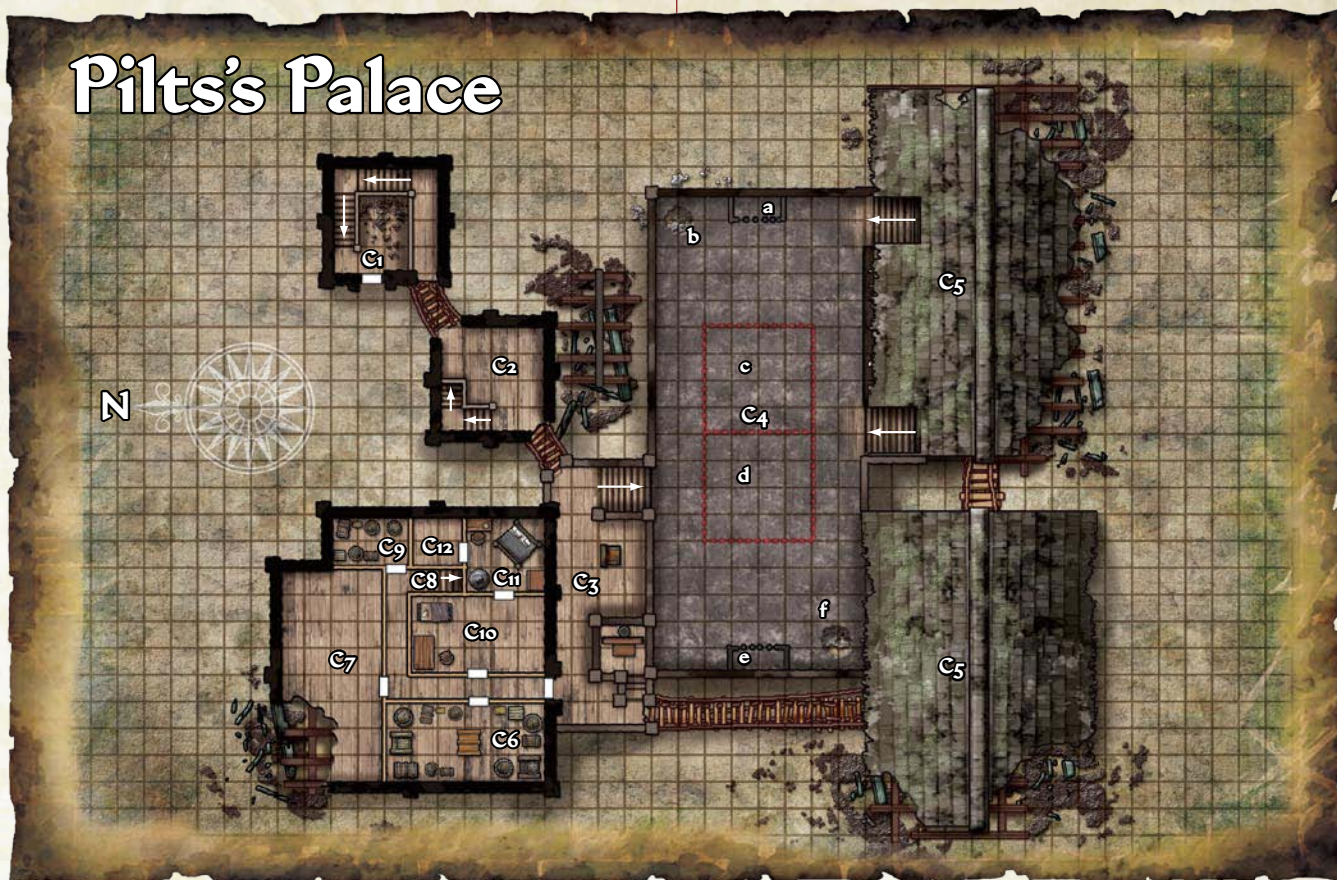
The Emperor of Old Korvosa's palace is located at 11 Silk Street in Old Dock, a collection of tenements and abandoned stores that barely escaped destruction during a recent fire that consumed much of the city block to the west. The palace consists of six buildings, although only the floors or roofs of immediate interest to the adventure are shown on the map. All of these buildings are wood and in relatively good repair, despite the large amount of cosmetic damage the mob has inflicted on them in the form of graffiti, scorch marks, and weapon damage.

Not all of the Emperor's citizens dwell in his palace—the vast majority live spread out through all of Old Dock. Nonetheless, the Emperor retains a small contingent of 18 captains in his palace as personal guards. The captains live in the abandoned tenements at area C5, but at any one time only a third of them are at rest in these buildings. The rest are stationed as indicated in the following encounter descriptions.

If the PCs are being escorted to the palace by a mob of thugs, the mob announces their arrival with yells and calls, forcing the PCs to enter at area C1 and then move up to area C4 to stand before the Emperor. In this case, all of the additional captains in the palace are on alert and ready to join in the defense of the place; the thugs and captains normally at rest are stationed on the roofs of area C5.

If the PCs aren't being escorted, they can pick their own route into the palace. As soon as any guards notice them, they raise the alarm and launch the attack. Battle with the guards could quickly turn into an all-out brawl spread across the entire palace, with the Emperor barking orders and aiding his minions from his throne as he can. In this event, the PCs need not defeat every single thug in the Palace. Defeating the Emperor is enough to cow the entire mob (see area C3).

Pilt's Palace



C1. Palace Entrance

The interior of this home has been gutted. A huge mound of rubble—broken timbers, bits of wall, ruined furniture, and more—lies heaped in the center of the room. Ricketty wooden stairs wind up to a splintered hole in the wall near the roof above.

Areas C1 and C2 are connected by a rope bridge suspended 15 feet off the ground.

C2. Guardroom (EL 8)

What once might have been an attic has been cleared of all clutter, leaving a large open area under exposed rafters and the roof above. Rope bridges lead to other areas outside of the room to the northeast and southwest, and a flight of stairs descends to a lower floor to the northwest.

While the northeast rope bridge is level, the southwest one climbs an additional 10 feet to area C3, turning the bridge into a somewhat unsettling (but still relatively safe) “rope stairway.” The stairs descend into a lower floor that has been filled almost completely with rubble to block entry from below into this area.

Creatures: If the alarm is not raised, four Old Dock captains stand guard in this room, leaning casually against the wall and deep in an argument about whether chokers have skeletons or not—as long as they’re arguing, they’re distracted and take a –5 penalty on Listen and Spot checks.

OLD DOCK CAPTAINS (4)

hp 36 each (see page 22)

EL 4

C3. The Emperor’s Throne (EL 12)

This open-air balcony is shielded from rain and sun by a brightly colored canvas roof that extends up over the area like a dome, held in place by a wooden framework. The inside of the canvas has been decorated in scenes of gruesome debauchery: battlefields, executions, torture chambers, and man-eating monsters all vie for space. The balcony itself contains two major features of note. The first is a high-backed throne that looks like a poor man’s version of the Crimson Throne itself, a thing of blood-red cushions and silks and spikes. Directly west of the throne stands an intimidating device, a tall guillotine of carved wood and bone, its base depicting grasping demonic feet and the housing that holds its glittering blade a leering demonic face.

This balcony is where the Emperor of Old Korvosa holds court, 25 feet off the ground and overlooking a large open rooftop. The guillotine itself is one of the Emperor's most valued prizes—a device imported at great expense from distant Galt, a land itself perpetually in the throes of revolution. Known variously as the Tall Knife, Jabbyr's Tongue, and the Demon's Maw, the guillotine was the first thing Pilts rescued from his old lair when the fire spread, and it remains his favorite method for disposing of unneeded prisoners. It takes 3 rounds to strap a character into place in the Demon's Maw—the character must either be willing or helpless during these 3 rounds, after which it's a DC 30 Escape Artist check (or another 3 rounds of undoing the straps) to escape. The guillotine can be triggered as a move action, at which point the serrated blade drops out of the housing above to shear through the victim's neck. Treat this as a coup de grace attempt delivered by a Large greataxe at Strength 26—the victim takes 9d6+36 points of damage and must then make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + the damage dealt by the blade) to avoid death. To date, none have survived the Tall Knife's kiss.

Creatures: The Emperor of Old Korvosa holds court here daily. After waking and taking his breakfast in his bedroom, he generally takes a seat here on his throne an hour after sunrise and remains until dusk. During this time, he hears reports from his mob and entertains pleas from citizens of Old Dock desperate for more food or shelter or safety, but most of his time is spent being entertained, be it by directing his latest grotesque play or observing a contest, game, or execution.

Pilts is a hideous man—a thin Chelaxian cursed from a young age by acne, made worse of late by his recent bout with blood veil. Pilts has an extensive collection of costumes and delights in mixing and matching them to create an endless array of variations on what he believes to be royal attire. That his costumes are generally threadbare and ratty gives him the look more of a vagrant king than actual royalty, but all who have pointed this out to him before have felt the Tall Knife's kiss. Despite his unsavory appearance, Pilts has an almost hypnotic speaking voice and a real talent for grandstanding and delivering compelling soliloquies—this alone is his greatest tool for gathering the desperate and cruel to his banner.

When he's holding court, the Emperor is always attended by four of his captains and his cohort, a deranged gnome named Jabbyr. Pilts found Jabbyr several years ago in a shipment of

torture devices he imported from Cheliah. Near death, tongueless, and with one eye burnt out by a hot poker, whether the gnome had accidentally been shipped in the gibbet or on purpose Pilts never determined. At first, he thought Jabbyr was dead, but when the tongueless gnome shrieked and began babbling when Pilts tried to extract him from the torture device, Pilts took the nearly dead gnome under his wing. Over those years, Jabbyr never quite recovered his mind from whatever nameless tortures he'd

PILTS SWASTEL



undergone, but he did indeed become a loyal minion of the man he now calls “Unca Pit.” Today, Jabbyr serves primarily as the operator for the Demon’s Maw, a role he has taken to with great delight, especially since Pilts dressed him as a court executioner. He even stitched up the eyehole in the hood that one-eyed Jabbyr has no need for.

PILTS SWASTEL, EMPEROR OF OLD KORVOSA CR 10

Male human bard 10

CE Medium humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot –1

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 19

(+5 armor, +4 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 51 (10d6+10)

Fort +4, **Ref** +11, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk war razor +12/+7 (1d4/18–20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +12 (1d8/19–20)

Special Attacks bardic music 10/day (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire competence, inspire courage +2, inspire greatness, *suggestion*)

Spells Known (CL 10th)

4th (1/day)—*dimension door*, *modify memory* (DC 18)

3rd (3/day)—*charm monster* (DC 17), *confusion* (DC 17), *displacement*, *glibness*

2nd (4/day)—*cat’s grace*, *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *hold person* (DC 16), *tongues*

1st (4/day)—*alarm*, *cure light wounds*, *undetected alignment*, *unseen servant*

0 (3/day)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *mage hand*, *open/close*, *resistance*

TACTICS

Before Combat Pilts casts *alarm* on the door to Salvator’s cell every morning, and *unseen servant* and *undetected alignment* as soon as he takes his throne for the day. As soon as he realizes he’s about to have visitors, the Emperor also casts *glibness* and *tongues* on himself. Before Pilts enters combat, he makes sure to drink his *potion of barkskin* +4 and cast *cat’s grace*. All of these effects are incorporated into his stats.

During Combat Pilts orders all available minions to the attack, augmenting them with inspire courage on the first round of combat. He then alternates casting spells like *confusion*, *charm monster*, and *hold person* with activations of his *rod of wonder*—each time he uses this unpredictable device, he shrieks in delight and offers impromptu (and sometimes witty) commentary on the rod’s results. As soon as it seems obvious that he’s about to be attacked, he casts *displacement* on himself and fights back with his war razor.

Morale The Emperor *dimension doors* into his bedroom (area C11) if brought below 20 hit points, then takes 3d6 rounds

gathering up his favorite prizes before making an attempt to escape through area C7 to hide in Old Dock and nurse both his wounds and plans for revenge against the PCs. If brought below 10 hit points and he’s unable to use *dimension door*, Pilts’s bravado crumbles. He drops to his knees and begs pitifully for his life—he offers up pretty much anything to the PCs in return for mercy. In either event, as soon as Pilts is killed or surrenders publicly (or 2d6 rounds after he flees), his mob falls to pieces and the thugs scatter, seeking a safe place to recover and figure out what to do next.

Base Statistics **Init** +2, **AC** 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; **Ref** +9;

Melee mwk war razor +10/+5; **Ranged** mwk light crossbow +10; **Dex** 14; **Skills** Bluff +19, Sleight of Hand +17

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +7

Feats Craft Rod, Craft Wondrous Item, Leadership, Persuasive, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +49, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +21, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +14, Listen +12, Perform (oratory) +17, Sense Motive +12, Sleight of Hand +19

Languages Common, Gnome

SQ bardic knowledge +11

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* +4, *rod of wonder*; **Other Gear** +1 *glamered chain shirt*, masterwork war razor, masterwork light crossbow with 10 bolts, *cloak of Charisma* +2

JABBYR

CR 8

Male gnome barbarian 8

CE Small humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +14, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 13

(+3 armor, +2 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size, –2 rage)

hp 97 (8d12+40)

Fort +11, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7; +2 vs. illusions

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2;

DR 1/—

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 *greataxe* +16/+11 (1d10+8/×3)

Special Attacks rage 3/day

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st)

1/day—*speak with animals*

TACTICS

Before Combat As soon as combat begins, Jabbyr rages.

During Combat Jabbyr follows Pilts’s orders exactly, attacking whomever the Emperor orders him to. Left to his own devices, though, Jabbyr tends to focus on whatever enemy is the closest. The only exception to this are gnomes—Jabbyr only attacks other gnomes in response to being attacked by one of them first. Pilts knows better than to order the insane barbarian to attack another gnome, in any event.

Morale Jabbyr fights to the death. If he discovers that Pilts has been killed, he freezes for 1 round in shock before continuing his rage. If, on the other hand, Pilts surrenders in Jabbyr's presence, something inside the gnome's dementia snaps and he focuses his wrath on the ex-Emperor. Surrendering is tantamount to treason in Jabbyr's mind, and he'd rather have his master slain at his own hands than live with the ignominy of such a defeat.

Base Statistics AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 15; hp 81, Fort +9, Will +5; Melee +1 greataxe +14/+9 (1d10+5/×3); Str 16, Con 16

STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 4, Wis 12, Cha 5

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +9

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (greataxe)

Skills Listen +14

Languages Common, Gnome

SQ fast movement, illiteracy

Gear +1 leather armor, +1 greataxe, gauntlets of ogre power, amulet of natural armor +1

OLD DOCK CAPTAINS (4)

CR 4

hp 36 each (see page 22)

C4. The Emperor's Stage

The large, flat roof of this long building has been converted into a strange sort of marshaling yard or game field. Two large square areas have been marked with what could be blood, while to either end to the west and east, small cages of wood have been set up to the side of a hole in the roof that drops into the upper floor of the building below. Flights of stairs lead up from the roof to a balcony to the north and the gently slanted roof of a building to the south.

Lately, the Emperor's favored distraction is a violent game he invented called blood pig, a game that requires an ever-increasing number of small animals to play.

The exact name of the game changes as needed (blood dog, blood cat, and blood rat are common), but the sound of a squealing pig delights Pilts the most—blood pig is his favorite. The roof's markings and additions are all set up to play this game—the rules for blood pig are presented on page 30.

C5. Rooftops (EL 11)

Two gently sloped rooftops overlook a flat roof to the north. The northern slopes of these roofs are littered with boards, shingles, and other impromptu chairs, transforming the area into a sort of arena-style seating. The southern slopes are falling into disrepair—it's obviously that the materials to build the northern sides' seating were harvested from there.

During performances and games, the roofs here quickly fill with thugs and captains, eager to see what new entertainments their Emperor has crafted for them.



Creatures: Once tenement buildings, this is where the the Emperor's personal guard of Old Dock captains dwell. Their rooms are small and cramped; access to them is from the ground below. At any one time, 12 captains are at rest here. After an alarm sounds, 1d6 of these captains respond per minute until all 12 have joined their companions on the roofs above.

OLD DOCK CAPTAINS (12)

CR 4

hp 36 each (see page 22)

C6. Storeroom

Crates, boxes, and barrels fill this long storeroom, making it difficult to judge the room's actual dimensions.

The majority of the props, tools, and other bits of salvage Pilts scavenged from Exemplary Execrables are stored here. There's little of actual value kept here, with most of the contents damaged by the fire in some way.

C7. Choker Nest (EL 8)

This large room might once have been an attic storage area, but the open rafters above now brood over an empty chamber. To the northwest, a large portion of the roof and floor below have collapsed entirely, leaving a void looking out over the sodden skyline of Old Korvosa.

This could serve as a possible entry point into Pilts's Palace, provided the intruder can navigate the 25 foot distance between the ground and this room. The area within 5 feet of the collapsed floor remains unstable as well. A Medium or larger creature that steps on a square within 5 feet of the collapse causes that square to crumble. He can make a DC 15 Reflex save to stagger back to more solid footing behind him—otherwise the fall deals 2d6 points of damage (and likely defeats any attempt at a stealthy intrusion).

Creatures: This room is the lair of four particularly well-fed and cruel chokers, creatures who once dwelt on the roof of Exemplary Execrables and with whom Pilts Swastel had nurtured something of a friendship. He often used these chokers to take care of victims from some of his shows, and has come to rely upon the efficiency with which the chokers dispose of bodies—the monsters generally eat the choice bits, then carry the remains out across Korvosa's rooftops to stash in nooks, hollows, and other hidden places in the Shingles for scavengers like spiders and rats to feed upon. When Exemplary Execrables burnt, Pilts offered to let the chokers dwell here—the monsters agreed, and have continued to serve Pilts as a disposal method. The chokers don't mind that most of the bodies they're asked to get rid of now are headless.

CHOKER BRUTES (4)

CR 4

Advanced elite chokers (MM 34)

CE Small aberration

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15

(+4 Dex, +4 natural, +1 size)

hp 45 (6d8+18)

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee 2 tentacles +10 (1d3+5)

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

Special Attacks constrict 1d3+5, improved grab

TACTICS

During Combat The chokers lurk in the shadows in the rafters up above, watching observantly if they notice anyone attempting to move through the room. They swiftly move to attack as soon as anyone entering from outside tries to open the door, or 3 rounds after intruders from the south have already opened the door and are moving about inside the room.

Morale The chokers fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 19, **Con** 16, **Int** 4, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 4

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +9

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Climb +16, Hide +13, Move Silently +9

Languages Common

Treasure: The chokers have amassed a small amount of treasure that they keep in a leather bag wedged between two high rafters in the southeast corner of the room—locating this bag requires a DC 15 Search check. The bag contains 44 gp, 3 pp, a single silk glove inset with tiny pearls on the back of the hand worth 250 gp, a masterwork hand crossbow, and a copper *wand of slow* (13 charges).

C8. Collapsed Stairway

This flight of stairs has been filled with rubble—clearing the stairs takes 1d4 hours to access the two empty floors of this building below.

C9. Art Supplies

Several barrels and crates sit against the walls here. Stacked on some are many blank canvases and what appear to be ceramic containers. A stack of paintings leans against the eastern wall, bound on wooden frames and covered with sheets.

The paintings leaning against the eastern wall are all brand new Screams, identifiable as such with a DC 20

Appraise check. If the Appraise check exceeds this DC by 10, it's also obvious that these paintings lack some quality that his previous work contained—they seem muddled, dull, and pedestrian compared to the brilliance of his work before the death of King Eodred II. In particular, the use of the color blue, a trademark in Salvator's work, seems sloppy and poor. The reason for this is simple—when Kazavon's spirit bonded with that of Queen Ileosa, it abandoned Salvator and the other artists. Salvator's muse has vanished.

Treasure: Salvator's paintings generally command a strong price among his fans—and each of these 11 paintings incorporate themes those collectors value: shadowy dragons, torture, violence, darkness, and scenes of pain and despair in vivid colors. These paintings, while maintaining the same themes, simply aren't as good—each of the 11 paintings are worth only 20 gp.

If Laori is with the party when these paintings are discovered, she gleefully goes through them all, but quickly becomes disappointed by their pedestrian nature and wants nothing more to do with them.

C10. Trophy Hall

The air in this room smells sickly sweet—a combination of flowers and vinegar. The unpleasant smell likely comes from the fourteen poorly preserved heads mounted on the walls of this grisly trophy hall. Most of the heads are human, although two are elves and one is from a dwarf. To the north, a small, child-size bed sits against the wall opposite a wooden table decorated with a magnificent set of silverware.

This room serves several purposes. The small bed is where the Emperor's cohort Jabbyr sleeps, and the table is where the Emperor takes his meals (generally served by one of his captains, who themselves usually bully these meals out of local citizens). The grisly trophies on the walls, preserved somewhat by a process of soaking in brine, perfume, and other herbs, are the heads of enemies who particularly vexed the Emperor. He sometimes carries on mocking conversations with these heads in the late hours of the night when he's having trouble sleeping.

The door to area C11 is generally warded by an *alarm* spell; if triggered, it creates a mental alarm, alerting Pilts that someone's intruding in his home.

Treasure: The silverware set on the table is the best that Pilts could steal—the full set is worth 500 gp. A platinum and crystal decanter filled with fine brandy sits on the table as well—this item alone is worth 750 gp.

C11. Emperor's Chambers

This extravagantly decorated bedroom would feel at home in the richest of noble villas or monarchs' castles—at least,

until one looks a little more closely at the sheets on the four-poster bed and notes how stained and frayed they are, or examines the tapestries and curtains and sees the patches of mold and threadbare edges. A tall, well-stocked bookcase to the south turns out to be leaning against the wall for support; the contents of its sagging shelves are poorly produced books with violent or erotic names on their mildewed spines. Everything is slightly musty, stained with age and well-beyond its prime. Only three paintings hanging on the wall hold up to closer examination, but their grisly subject matter might make them difficult to show in most public venues. To the north, a simple wooden door is secured with a lock and a heavy wooden bar.

Most of the furnishings in this room are well-used props from countless plays and productions—they've seen much use, but Pilts finds no fault in their threadbare natures. The Emperor can be found here after dark, either sleeping fitfully or reading one of his scandalous books of violence and erotica stored on the bookshelf. For about an hour each night, he unbolts the door to area C12 to speak with Salvator, give him his food, empty his chamber pot, and remove any finished works to put into storage at area C9.

Treasure: The three paintings are all original Screams—works produced before Salvator lost his muse—that Pilts salvaged from his previous home. The first depicts a full portrait of a thin humanoid wearing shadows as he stands framed by a dolmen of great size. The figure's brilliant blue eyes are the only true points of color in the piece, and they seem to almost glow with anger. This painting is worth 450 gp. The second picture depicts a rugged mountain range above a desert under a brilliant blue sky. In the foreground, a quartet of Vudran tusked camels ridden by N'darr tribesmen race across dunes that, upon closer examination, consist of tiny skulls. This picture is worth 1,100 gp. The final portrait is perhaps the most disturbing, for it depicts a handsome man in the process of peeling away the flesh of his arms as if he were taking off a pair of gloves—underneath, his arms are muscular and covered with glittering blue scales. The man's expression is one of delight, yet his eyes are empty pits of blackness. Half seen in the shadows beyond him are what can only be thousands of humans impaled on towering wooden poles erected in the shadow of an indistinct shape looming on the horizon—perhaps a castle, maybe a mountain, but likely something more. This last painting is worth a staggering 2,000 gp.

If Laori is with the PCs, she asks if it's okay for her to keep all three paintings. She'll settle on splitting the paintings evenly among the PCs and herself, but soon thereafter starts offering to buy them back.

C12. Salvator's Cell (EL 4)

The air in this room is an unpleasant mix of body odor and paint. A lumpy straw mattress lies on the floor in one corner of the room, partially covered by a few blankets, while in the other stands a large easel on which rests a nearly completed painting of immense fiends attacking a village.

Creature: This is where the Emperor has been keeping Salvator Scream—the artist hasn't left this room for many days, and his initial despair has fallen into a numb acceptance that this is his new life—painting for a madman when his muse is gone. Still, he works desperately to create and recapture his old inspiration, if only to produce a work that the Emperor enjoys. With each failed painting, the Emperor's frustration and anger grows, and he regularly beats Salvator after the ruined artist finishes a painting these days. Yet Salvator sees no chance at rescue, and so he continues to slave away at his easel, knowing with each brush stroke that all he has to look forward to at the end is a worse beating than the last one. Eventually, he hopes that the Emperor goes too far, solving the problem of his missing muse permanently.

Upon seeing anyone other than the Emperor, though, Salvator immediately falls to his knees and breaks into desperate sobs, begging for rescue between each heartbreaking shudder. He does or says anything to reward his rescuers, but his mind isn't so far gone that he just hands out all his information to anyone. Before he agrees to answer any questions the PCs might have, he demands two things—the death of the Emperor and to be escorted out of Old Korvosa to the mainland. His initial attitude is unfriendly; if made friendly, he agrees to talk if the PCs just help him escape. If made helpful, he spills what he knows immediately as long as the PCs promise to rescue him. Intimidation and magic can also serve to pressure him into revealing what he knows—routes that Laori, if she's with the PCs, encourages.

Salvator is a plain-looking man dressed in paint-stained rags. His skin is covered with flea bites and his eyes are sunken—he's barely been sleeping an hour or two at a time. The man is desperate, and wants only to escape the nightmare that has captured him.

SALVATOR SCREAM

Male human expert 6

LE Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +10, Spot +10

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10

(+1 Dex)

CR 4

hp 29 (6d6+6)

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

OFFENSE

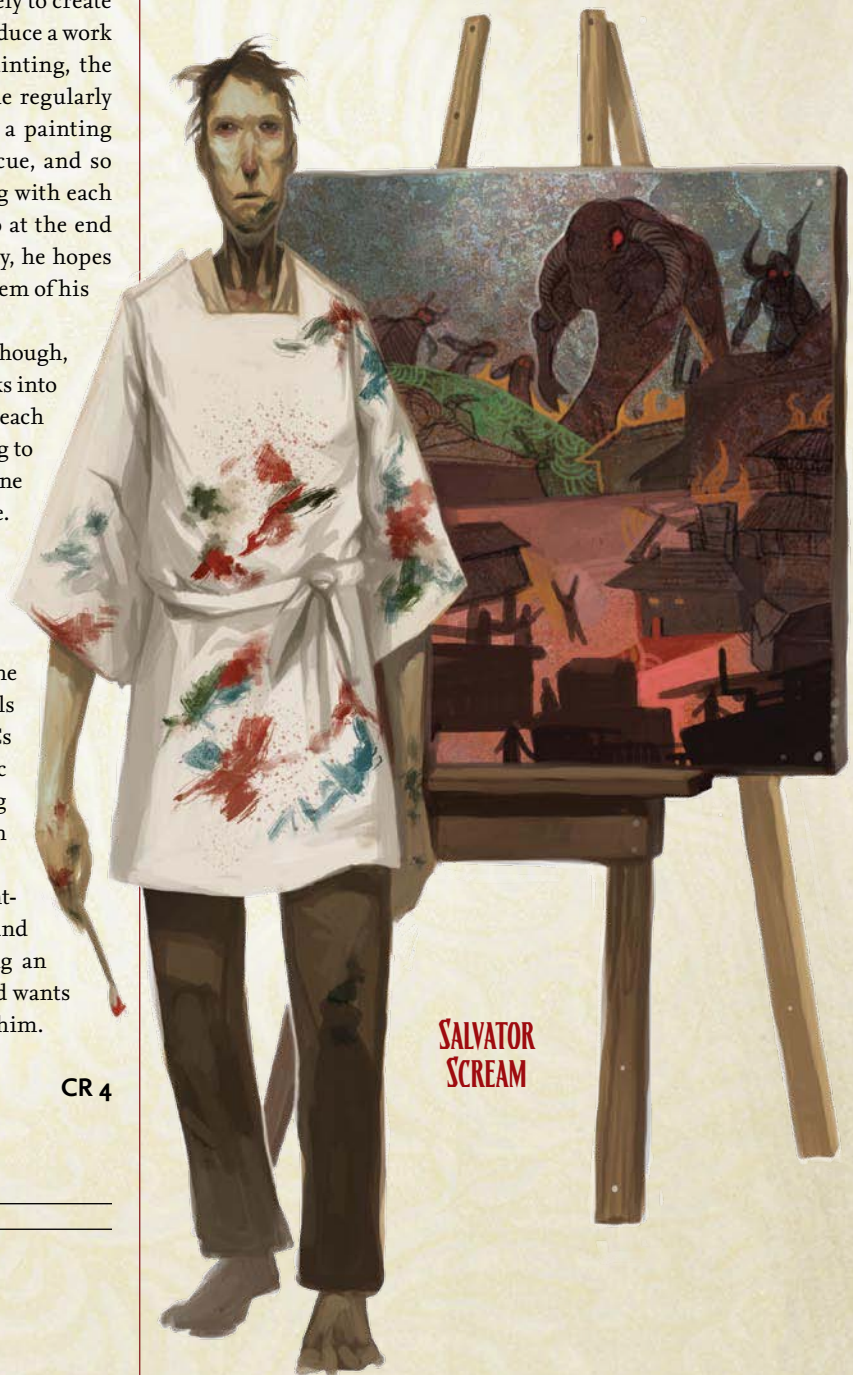
Spd 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +4 (1d3 nonlethal)

TACTICS

During Combat Salvator is no fighter, and he knows it. In combat, he covers behind his allies, throwing punches only when there's no other choice.

Morale Salvator flees if all his allies are defeated, or if reduced to less than 15 hit points. If he does so, his primary goal is to find a small dark place to hide, and he eventually works



SALVATOR SCREAM

his way back to his home only to be eaten by the otyughs if the PCs haven't defeated them.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +4

Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Craft [painting])

Skills Craft (painting) +13, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Profession (artist) +8, Search +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +10

Languages Common, Draconic

Gear stained clothes, painter's equipment

Development: If the PCs convince Salvator to talk here, the man has relatively little to say. He admits that he spoke with Vencarlo on several occasions, but if the PCs ask him what that subject was about, Salvator grows nervous. He'd rather not finish what he has to say unless he and the PCs are obviously in a safe place where he can't be overheard. Once these conditions have been met, he continues his story in a whisper.

Salvator explains his relationship with Neolandus Kalepopolis, going on to describe how the man showed up at his home, desperate, bloodied, and poisoned, early on the morning Eodred II died. Neolandus was delirious, but managed to convey to Salvator that he needed a place to hide. Salvator nursed him back to health, whereupon Neolandus confided in him that Queen Ileosa had murdered her husband, and that she'd entered an alliance with the Red Mantis. They were the ones who tried to assassinate Neolandus, and his escape was as much luck as anything. Worse, Neolandus said that there was something about Queen Ileosa that wasn't quite right—that she'd changed recently. Grown “worse,” whatever that meant. Neolandus refused to divulge more to Salvator, saying that “the less he knew, the safer he'd be,” and that the seneschal needed more time to think things through and do some research before he decided on the proper course of action.

Yet an artist's simple home is not a secure hideout—both Neolandus and Salvator knew this. Salvator had connections with the Arkonas (they were one of his greatest patrons), and when he suggested that Neolandus seek them out for asylum, the seneschal begrudgingly agreed. Salvator escorted his friend up to the Arkona Palace late one night, just a few days before the quarantine occurred, and hasn't seen his friend since.

Salvator says that the Arkonas seemed friendly enough, and at the time he felt they could be trusted to hide Neolandus from the queen. The artist even offers up the fact that they haven't given him up yet as proof that they were the best choice at the time. Yet after his meetings with Vencarlo, who revealed to Salvator his theories that the Arkonas were more criminal-minded than Salvator

suspected, the artist has come to believe that he might have just traded his friend's danger for a different one. He suspects that Vencarlo might have tried to infiltrate Palace Arkona to find out more, and if told that he's gone missing too, the artist grows pale before begging the PCs to find them both. “Korvosa's not a safe place for them—they need to escape the city!” he cries. “Myself too. And you as well!”

Laori has her own questions for him, but would rather not ask them in front of the PCs. If they give her no other choice, she begrudgingly proceeds. Her primary interest in Salvator is to determine where his ideas come from; when he reveals to her that, before Eodred II's death, his muse inspired him in vivid dreams and he merely painted these dreams, she grows excited and asks him to describe to her his memories of these dreams. When she asks him about why his current work doesn't hold the same power, she's disappointed to learn that Salvator's muse seems to have left him. She has no desire to punish; though, after all, if he's allowed to live, his muse might someday return. In any event, she volunteers to escort Salvator to the mainland, and even though she's a worshiper of the god of pain, she can be trusted to deliver on this promise. Once she learns what she can from Salvator, the strange elf takes her leave from the party (with Salvator if the PCs let her, but without if they don't trust her to see to his safety). She thanks them for their help, but says she must now report to her superiors. Before she leaves, she enigmatically predicts that she hasn't seen the last of the PCs, and tells them she looks forward to the next time they meet before slipping into the lengthening shadows of Old Korvosa.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: For learning what Salvator knows, award the PCs experience points as if they had defeated a CR 8 creature.

A Rousing Game

Stealth and violence are two possible methods to secure an audience with Salvator, but there is a more diplomatic approach as well. If the PCs can meet with the Emperor of Old Korvosa, be it as prisoners or as uninvited guests, they might just be able to convince the lunatic to let them talk with his pet artist. If asked about Salvator, the Emperor proudly admits that the artist is his “guest,” and that he won't be going anywhere any time soon. No amount of diplomacy or threat can convince the Emperor to grant an audience with the artist. Magic like *dominate person* or *suggestion* could work, but only if the PCs can do so without being obvious—and if their initial attempt fails, the Emperor realizes what the PCs are up to and orders their immediate execution. A battle against the Emperor, his cohort, and his 18 captains is an EL 12 encounter.

SQUIRMING PIG

A live pig does not enjoy being carried. Each round a live pig is held, roll a d6 and consult the following table to see how it reacts.

d6 Roll Pig's Action

- 1 **Limp:** Pig takes no action and simply hangs limp in the character's grasp.
- 2 **Squirm:** If the carrier doesn't make a DC 12 Strength check, he drops the pig.
- 3 **Squeal:** The noise draws a hearty round of laughter from the Emperor and his crowd.
- 4 **Bite:** The pig makes a +4 melee attack against the carrier, dealing 1d3 points of damage on a hit; this may cause the carrier to drop the pig (see Dropping a Pig).
- 5 **Kick:** The pig begins kicking. The carrier must make a DC 12 Dexterity check to avoid dropping the pig.
- 6 **Panic:** The pig explodes into a fury of action; apply the results of a squeal, a bite, a squirm, and a kick all at once.



Yet the Emperor isn't completely opposed letting people visit Salvator. After negotiations have gone on for a bit, the lunatic claps his hands as if to signal the end of discussion, but then gives the PCs a chance to "earn" the audience they so desperately seek. If they can win a game of blood pig against the Emperor's best players (eight of his captains who comprise the notorious "Shinglesnipes"), he'll allow them 5 minutes with Salvator—under his supervision, of course! If the PCs have given up their gear, he even promises to return it and grant the party an escort out of Old Dock after their interview if they can win this game.

If the PCs agree to his terms, he invites them to stand in the western square in the middle of the blood pig field (area C4d). As they do, another group of his captains take up position in the other square (area C4c)—eight of them in all—while the Emperor goes over the rules of the game.

Blood Pig!

The rules for blood pig are fairly simple; running the match uses standard combat rules, save that the PCs aren't in it to fight.

Goal: The goal of blood pig is to be the first team to reach five points.

Scoring Points: A player scores a point by throwing, kicking, dropping, or otherwise placing a pig in his team's pit. The PCs' pit is area C4f, while the Shinglesnipe's pit is area C4b. Each of these pits contains a starving wolverine. The pig's fate once thrown into a pit is a violent and swift death—all part of the entertainment for the Emperor. When a point is scored, a fresh pig is loaded into the cage on the opposite side of the playing field at the end of the next round.

Starting Points: Every member of a team must start the game within one of the 20-foot squares in the middle of the field. The PCs must start in area C4d, while the Emperor's team starts in area C4c. Exact positioning in these areas is left to the game players to decide. No more

than eight players can play on a team; if the PCs don't have enough players to round out their team, the Emperor shrugs and says, "At least you won't be as crowded when the game begins."

Limitations: No weapons are allowed in a game of blood pig. Casting spells before or during a match is also not allowed. Each time one of these rules is broken, the other team gets a point. The use of fists and other unarmed attacks does not count as the use of weapons—players are allowed (and expected) to throw punches during the game.

The Game Begins: Once all the players are in position, the Emperor flips a coin. If the result is heads, a trap door opens in area C5a and a frightened pig is raised up into the cage from a room below. If the result is tails, the pig is raised up through the trap door in area C5e. The game begins one round later as the Emperor cries out, "GO GET YOUR PIG!" At this point, each PC and each of the Shinglesnipes makes an Initiative check to determine when they act.

The Pig: Movement and fistfights between players is handled normally. The pig itself has an AC of 15 (+2 size, +3 Dex) and 4 hp. Retrieving, carrying, and throwing the pig is treated as follows.

- **Picking Up the Pig:** Retrieving the pig from a cage is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity. Picking up a live pig that has been dropped on the field requires a character to also make a successful touch attack against AC 15. If a member of the Emperor's team retrieves a pig from a cage and has the time, he spends the next round delivering a coup de grace attack against the pig.
- **Carrying a Pig:** A pig weighs 20 pounds. Each round that a character carries a live pig, roll 1d6 and consult the Squirring Pig sidebar to see how the pig reacts to being carried.
- **Dropping a Pig:** A character that takes damage while carrying a live pig must make a Reflex save (DC 10 + 1 per point of damage taken) to avoid dropping the squirming pig. (Damage taken does not incur a chance of dropping a dead pig.)



- **Passing a Pig:** A character can pass a pig to a teammate as a standard action if he is within reach of a teammate.
- **Throwing a Pig:** A pig is an improvised thrown weapon, and thus imparts a -4 penalty on attack rolls. It has a range increment of 10 feet. Catching a thrown pig requires a DC 12 Reflex check.
- **Into a Pit:** In order to throw a pig into a pit, the thrower must hit AC 6 with the thrown pig. Dropping a pig into an adjacent pit is a free action and is automatically successful.
- **Dropped Pig:** A pig that is dropped runs in a straight line away from the closest person on Initiative count o each round, moving at a speed of 20 feet.
- **Interceptions:** A character can attempt to intercept a thrown pig by successfully hitting it if it passes through a square he threatens.
- **Stealing a Pig:** A character can grab a pig out of another person's hands by making a successful disarm attempt. Roll 1d6 on the squirming pig table to determine how the pig reacts to the second person trying to snatch it away.

The Pits: Each pit contains a particularly hungry and aggressive wolverine. The pits are little more than holes that drop into a ten-foot-square room below; there are no walls to climb up to escape a pit, forcing those who fall into

the pit to fly or make a standing 10-foot-high Jump check to escape (for a Medium creature, this is a DC 16 Jump check to leap up and grab the edge above; for a Small creature, it's a DC 48 Jump check). Bull-rushing an opponent into a pit is a time-honored tactic to weaken the enemy team's resources. A character who kills one of the two wolverines automatically forfeits the game for his team, in which case the other team is declared the winner. The wolverines in these pits are free to attempt their DC 16 Jump checks to leap up and attack anyone standing at the edge of a pit.

WOLVERINES (2)
hp 28 (MM 283)

CR 2

Development: The Emperor is a sore loser. If the PCs win the game, he stands up and bellows, "**BEST OUT OF THREE!**" He also has his cohort Jabbyr join the Shinglesnipes for any additional games even if this is over the 8-man limit. If the PCs then go on to win two out of three games of Blood Pig, the Emperor cries out, "**BEST OUT OF FIVE!**" only to be told by a nervous captain that they've run out of pigs. For a moment, the Emperor seems ready to strap the captain into the Tall Knife. An instant later he regains his composure, congratulates the PCs on their victory, and invites them up

to the balcony to follow him inside his palace. Jabbyr and two captains accompany them. He bids the PCs wait in area C10 and then brings a nervous-looking Salvator out to speak to them. Of course, Salvator won't speak at all (unless magically compelled or successfully Intimidated) as long as the Emperor lives. How the PCs handle the situation at this time is up to them—but this may be the best chance to attack the Emperor, since the area's a relatively confined space and he doesn't have his 18 captains on hand to defend him.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs win their set of Blood Pig games and secure an audience with Salvator, award them experience as if they had defeated a CR 9 creature.

PART THREE: WRATH OF THE ARKONAS

The true goal of this adventure for the PCs should eventually become a double rescue from the Arkona family. Both Neolandus Kalepopolis and Vencarlo Orisini are being held prisoner in the dungeons below the Arkona Palace, and while they're certainly protected from Queen Ileosa there (for the time being, at least), they're far from safe. This adventure assumes that the PCs learn that their quarry is held by the Arkonas through discussion with Salvator Scream, but other methods like divination spells or alternate lines of investigation can certainly lead them to at least suspect the Arkonas at any point during this adventure. A friendly visit to the palace shouldn't be too dangerous, but once the PCs decide to take the Arkonas on in battle, they should be ready for a fight. For the Arkonas are more than nobility, they are rakshasas.

The Arkonas' Secret

That the Arkonas control crime in Old Korvosa is not their true secret. The government knows that the Arkonas are heavily involved with the underworld, but since this crime is kept behind the scenes and doesn't disrupt life in Old Korvosa, the government has traditionally looked the other way—the good the Arkonas do is held to outweigh the bad. This is only because the true depravities and evil they inflict upon the city are well-hidden indeed.

The Arkonas first fell victim to the rakshasas many years ago, when the family attempted to establish a trade route with distant Vudra. What they found instead was death. The entire trade ship was murdered, the captain and family members replaced by rakshasas and the crew replaced by charmed thralls. When they returned to Korvosa, they found an entire city ripe for their harvest. Building on the now-established trade route with Vudra, the new Arkonas—rakshasas disguised as humans—were able to build their stolen name into one of Korvosa's most powerful families. Over the decades, the rakshasas have had their own secret internal wars for power, but their continued control over the family has remained.

Currently, the Arkona family is ruled by two rakshasas, the children of the original rakshasas who replaced the Arkonas so long ago. Of these two, Bahor has assumed the role of patriarch Glorio Arkona, while his sister Vimanda has assumed the role of Melyia Arkona, his lover. In private, the two rakshasas are constantly embroiled in tiny power plays to gain an advantage over the other, yet neither has yet made a move so reckless as to threaten what they have accomplished as a family so far. Under these two, several other rakshasas dwell in the palace, most of them having traveled from distant Vudra to join the Arkonas on their grand experiment in Korvosa. Below the rakshasas are the "kept men" of the family, humans who are kept in line via magical control and honeyed words. These humans do not suspect the Arkonas of being anything other than criminal masterminds.

Securing an Audience

While the Arkonas have increased patrols of their human guards in Fort Korvosa, the portion of Old Korvosa they've kept under their own watch during the quarantine, they have not closed their doors completely to the outside world. During the day, visitors to Palace Arkona are generally intercepted by a patrol of six house guards who politely but firmly demand to know the party's reasons for approaching the palace. As long as the PCs respond with a believable request (including requests for an audience with Glorio Arkona), the guards nod and escort them through the manicured, immaculately landscaped palace grounds.

Palace Arkona is perched at the highest point atop Endrin Isle in Old Korvosa. The palace is home to the family alone; servants and guards dwell nearby in one of two outbuildings. The grounds are generally open, decorated here and there with tiny copses of trees, exotic topiary animals (elephants, cobras, and tigers being the most common), beautiful flower gardens, and exquisite fountains. The palace is a breathtaking structure built in the Vudran style, with golden pillars, high windows that rise to tapered points, minarets, and domes decorated with slender spires. Inside, walls are made of ebony and carved with depictions of elephants, tigers, monkeys, and peacock, all with shimmering mother-of-pearl eyes. Doors are made of mahogany and carved with images of the Vudran deity Chamidu, the God of Wild Beasts (identifiable as such with a DC 30 Knowledge [religion] check). Chamidu appears as a six-armed, four-faced giant who rides a tiger with human hands for paws. All rooms are lit at night by everburning torches. Exotic plants in clay pots are in abundance, and each room is rich with their scent, mingled with that of sandalwood incense burning in brass censers that hang from the ceiling here and there. The rooms inside the palace are spacious and grand—ceilings, unless otherwise mentioned, are 20 feet high.

The PCs are led into the entry, whereupon the guards return to their patrol and the PCs are greeted by a tall, pleasant man who wears an eyepatch. He introduces himself as Carnochan, the palace majordomo. Carnochan hears the PCs' request, and if they wish an audience with Glorio (Melyia is not available), they are taken to the visitor's lounge (area D2), where Carnochan asks them to wait while he determines if the master of the palace has time for them. Characters may suspect that they are still under observation even after they are left alone in the visitor's lounge, and they are correct. Carnochan shares a permanent telepathic bond with Bahor, and alerts his superiors telepathically as soon as the PCs arrive, giving Bahor brief descriptions of them.

BAHOR



Bahor then uses *clairaudience/clairvoyance* (using his *third eye*) to observe area D2. If the PCs don't wait and instead move out to infiltrate the palace, Bahor alerts the others at once and the palace goes on alert.

If the PCs decide to wait, though, they are rewarded in about 5 minutes with the patriarch himself. Bahor greets the PCs warmly as Glorio Arkona, gently reprimanding Carnochan for not supplying the guests with wine and cheese to enjoy while they waited. As Carnochan scurries off to rectify this faux pas, Bahor joins the PCs on one of the room's couches and asks them how he can be of service.

Bahor plays the role of a concerned noble, saying that he's done what he can with his limited resources to keep Old Korvosa from falling into complete anarchy, but he admits there could be more done. He has nothing but kind words and support to offer if asked about the queen, ruminating that quarantine really was her only choice and hoping that she'll be able to lift it soon. Throughout his discussion, though, Bahor drops hints that he thinks the queen is driving Korvosa into the ground and that she needs to be removed from power, using *Bluff* to communicate this innuendo. If confronted point-blank with these thoughts, he feigns shock and denies that's what he said, while still maintaining his *Bluff* to get across his true feelings.

Bahor does indeed want Queen Ileosa out of power, and he hopes to accomplish this goal by using seneschal Kalepopolis when the time is right so that he can step in to take her place. Maneuvering his agents and sycophants throughout the city government and other noble families to ensure that this end result occurs is a delicate procedure, though, and Bahor estimates that he won't be ready to make his move for several more months. Until then, he hopes to retain possession of Neolandus so that he can release him to do his job at precisely the right moment. At least, that was his plan until recently.

Queen Ileosa's shocking display of power at the start of this adventure has put Bahor ill at ease. He now suspects that the queen has gained a potent source of power, likely something to do with her new crown. His interrogations and mind readings of Kalepopolis have verified his fears. Currently, Bahor is unsure how to proceed—he certainly doesn't want to risk his own life directly opposing the queen, yet at the same time he knows something must be done before her power grows too great.

As it turns out, the PCs may be his salvation.

Bahor uses *detect thoughts* and the conversation itself to judge the PCs' position on things. He suspects they're here to rescue Vencarlo, Neolandus, or both, but he certainly can't just hand them over without appearing weak before his minions (an act he fears would give Vimanda the support she's seeking to seize control of the family). After speaking with the PCs for some time, Bahor hints (again using *Bluff*) that he knows that there's something more

to the queen than meets the eye. Furthermore, he hints that he can put the PCs in contact with someone who may be able to help them—if they can help him first.

Among his other plans, Bahor wants to regain control of Old Korvosa, and a major step in that direction would be the removal of the Emperor of Old Korvosa. At this point, Bahor drops all pretense of subtlety, stating flat out that if the PCs can assassinate the Emperor, he's certain that the mob in Old Dock will collapse and his agents will be able to step in and regain control of Old Korvosa. In return, he promises to do what he can to help the PCs find their friends. If the PCs have already done this, he smiles broadly and proceeds to aid them as detailed below.

Bahor has little more to say after this, and guides the PCs back to the palace entrance where they are escorted off the Arkona grounds by the guards. Bahor asks them not to return until the matter they discussed is handled, wishes them luck, and retreats back to the upper floor to continue laying his complex plans.

Bahor's Offer

Once the PCs have removed the Emperor of Old Korvosa from the picture, it doesn't take long for word to reach the rakshasa. When the PCs return to the Palace, they are greeted warmly and swiftly escorted upstairs into the Baths (area **D15**), where Bahor lounges in the water. He remains in the water as he congratulates them on their success. In compensation for their service to the family, he's ready to offer an additional reward—a *ring of evasion* set with a deep green bloodstone that sits on a nearby shelf. Of course, this bloodstone is also linked to Bahor's *third eye* (see page 43); the cost of giving up such a powerful magic item pales in comparison to the new viewpoint Bahor could gain if the PCs accept the gift.

Bahor then asks the PCs, point blank, what they wish of him. Assuming they ask for Vencarlo or Neolandus, he gives a rueful smile, then goes on to explain that simply handing over these guests to the PCs may be a "trifle complicated." He goes on to explain that both these guests have been sent into the Vivified Labyrinth. A DC 25 Knowledge (local) is enough to recall rumors of this notorious dungeon, a place said to be used by the Arkonas to torment and test prisoners and agents alike. Bahor apologizes for the complication, and won't retrieve either "guest" for the PCs, but he will do the next best thing. He tells them the secret of the elephant statue in area **D4**, how to access the caverns below the palace, and where to seek the secret door that leads down to the entrance to the labyrinth. He'll even tell the PCs that the labyrinth can be adjusted by pulling key levers to rotate the four sections, promising them that both the people they seek are hidden therein.

What he doesn't tell them is that he's also sending Vimanda into the labyrinth to ambush them. To Vimanda,



RAKSHASAS HAVE GLASS JAWS

For the most part, the CRs assigned monsters in the MM work out pretty well, but there are a few notable cases where the numbers don't quite match the creature's power. One such case is the poor rakshasa. While its damage reduction and spell resistance are formidable, it really can't do much damage for a CR 10 creature. Against PCs who can penetrate its defenses (perhaps by taking advantage of its relatively low AC with Power Attack, scoring critical hits, or using attacks that bypass DR and SR entirely, such as conjuration spells or plain old fire), it simply doesn't have the staying power a CR 10 creature should have.

For *Pathfinder*, we've reclassified the rakshasa's CR at 8. This is still a bit higher than his offensive abilities would seem to indicate, but when matched with his incredible defenses, the challenge works out about right. If, while running this adventure, you find that those two defenses really do make them dangerous, feel free to increase the CR of all rakshasas encountered in this adventure by two back to their SRD standard—but I suspect that as soon as your players hit one with a few arrows or crossbow bolts enhanced by *align weapon* (or get in a few critical hits with an axe, scythe, or other high-crit weapon), you'll see what I'm talking about.

—James Jacobs

he explains this away as a game, and by letting her finish off the PCs, he's giving her a great honor. Of course, Bahor's true hope is that the PCs kill his sister, allowing him to seize control of the family without resorting to the distasteful step of murdering one of his own blood.

Bahor certainly expects the PCs to react to his offer with anger, disbelief, and hostility, but he doesn't see that they have any other choice. If the PCs attack him, he fights back as detailed in his stat block (see area **D18**), but he hopes it won't come to that. It would be a shame to waste such excellent pawns, after all.

Infiltrating the Palace

Since Bahor hopes to use the PCs to help with his own goals, his response to an infiltration of his palace is unusual. When informed by his guards of the event, he commands them to repulse the PCs but does not step in to aid them. The rakshasa is somewhat curious to see how well his defenses hold up against the PCs—only when they finally confront him in his chambers or attempt to damage his treasury in area **D16** does he tempt them with his offer, as detailed above.

The following encounter areas assume that the Palace is not on alert, and give the standard locations and activities of the guards and rakshasas that dwell within. Once the

Arkona Palace

Ground Floor



Upper Floor



N



One Square = Five Feet

Upper Caverns



One Square = Five Feet

N



Lower Caverns



palace alarm is raised, all servants and human guards flee the building, knowing full well that their masters tend not to discriminate between intruders and the help when defending their lair. Bahor retires to his chambers in the event of an alarm, and sends Vimanda down into the Vivified Labyrinth to await the PCs should they reach that area. The four remaining rakshasas in the palace split into two groups of two; one pair goes to the garden (area D4) to take up guard positions, while the other pair patrols the remaining rooms (patrolling in encounter number order and spending a few rounds in each room searching for intruders).

AVISHANDU, CARNOCHAN, NUDHAALI, AND VENNASHTI CR 8
Male rakshasas
hp 52 each (MM 211)

D1. Palace Entrance

A black marble arch depicting dozens of elephants standing one atop the other frames a great ebony door in the south wall of this wide and airy entrance hall. Above the door, a single one-eyed elephant looks out over the hall, its eye a glittering bloodstone the size of an apple. Tall windows grant a commanding view of the palace grounds, and a rich red carpet, ten feet wide and luxuriously thick, provides a pathway between doors to the west and north, and around a corner to the east. Each of these doors, including a few smaller ones just west of the northern pair, are decorated with images of a six-armed, four-faced woman who rides a tiger with human hands for feet.

The palace doors are generally kept unlocked, even after dark—a manifestation of the Arkona arrogance and belief that anyone foolish enough to try to invade the palace shouldn't be detained from meeting his proper punishment at the hands of the palace guards.

A permanent *magic mouth* spell wards the door, triggering an audible alarm that sounds like a bull elephant trumpeting (including an illusion of the elephant head above the door's sudden animation) whenever anyone not visibly wearing the Arkona family crest walks into view of the effect. This alarm doesn't trigger if at least one person in a group wears the crest.

Treasure: The bloodstone set in the one-eyed elephant's eye socket is one of several differently sized bloodstones linked to Bahor's *third eye*. He can look through this stone as if it were his own eye, and does so if the alarm goes off. This bloodstone's faint divination aura, like all of the *third eye* bloodstones, is hidden by a *magic aura* spell cast at caster level 10th. The bloodstone is worth 1,000 gp.

D2. Visitor's Lounge

This comfortable room is warmed by a large fireplace, its marble sides and mantle carved into a parade of capering monkeys and tigers. A large sofa sits to the north, while a few comfortable-looking chairs sit to the south.

This is where the Arkonas meet with visitors to the palace, and likely where Bahor first meets with the PCs if they seek his audience.

D3. Statue of Chamidu

A fourteen-foot-tall marble statue of a six-armed woman with four faces on her head, one looking to each of the four cardinal directions, stands under a dome of colored glass. The statue wields numerous weapons in its six arms, and a small kneeler at its base gives a place to pay respects to whatever deity the statue represents. Each of the statue's eight eyes is a sparkling bright green orb.

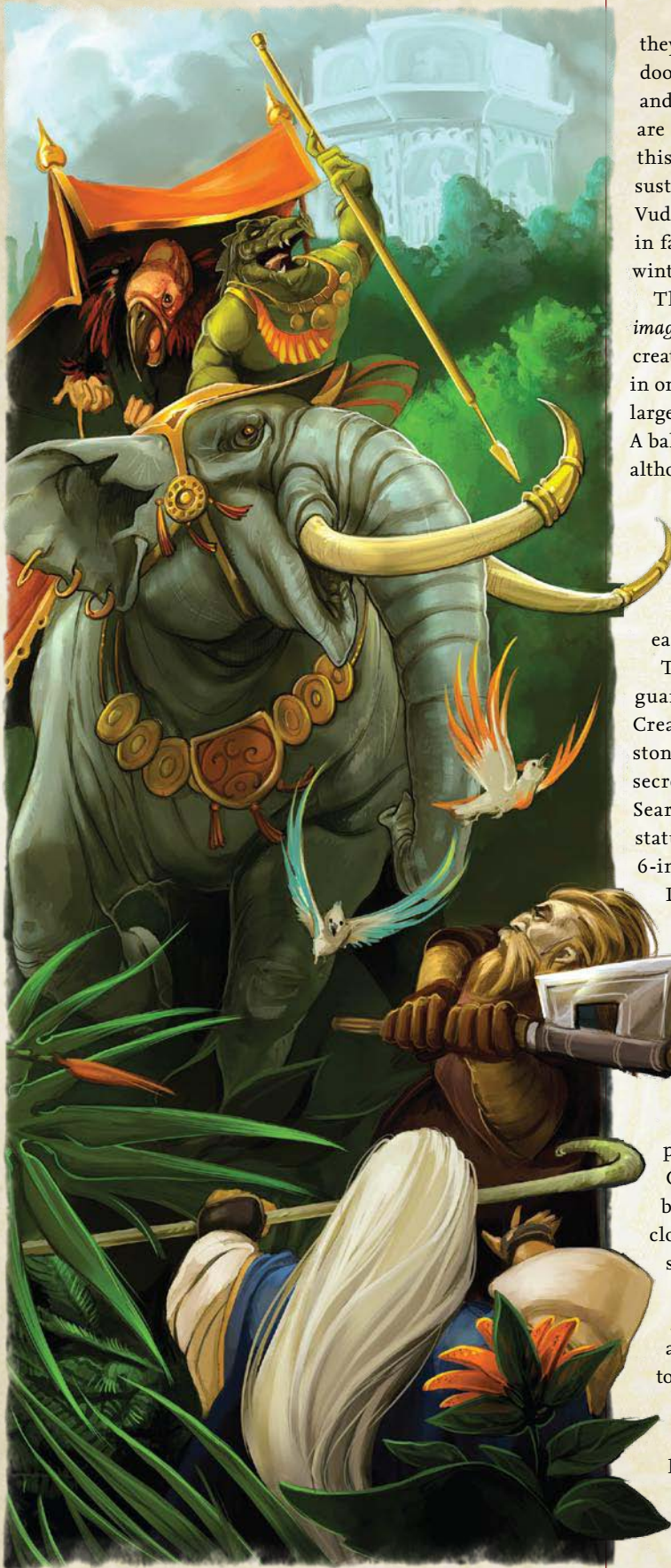
This statue is a depiction of the Vudran goddess Chamidu, a deity with an affinity for the beasts of the world. A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the exotic goddess.

Treasure: The left eye in the statue's west-facing face is a 200 gp *third eye* bloodstone.

D4. Garden (EL 8 or 11)

This chamber hardly seems to be part of a palace—it seems more like a clearing at the heart of a vast jungle, teeming with life. The sky above is a deep, cloudless blue, while in the distance, hazy towers of distant structures rise above the verdant canopy. Exotic bird calls fill the air, the scent of dozens of unfamiliar flowers and plants assault the nose, and everywhere a riot of color demands the eye, be it the wing of a tropical bird, the petals of a brightly hued flower, or the glittering multicolored tiles that make up a round fountain to the north, its central plume a stone pillar around which entwine two cobra statues that clutch green gems in their fanged maws. Opposite the fountain to the south stands an immense, life-sized jade statue of an elephant, a howdah perched on its back, its tusks and trunk raised high in greeting to the southeast doors—doors that, from inside the room, look more like gates set into a wrought iron fence that encircles the garden. Other gates set in this fence doubtless lead to other parts of the palace, and after a bit more observation the somewhat static nature of the jungle and landscape becomes apparent—the walls of this garden are in fact an incredibly realistic and clever painting of a Vudran junglescape.

The paintings along the walls bear minor illusions to enhance their realism, but close inspection reveals that



they, the “fence” enclosing the area, and even the gate- doors are little more than clever deceptions. The birds and small animals dwelling in the garden, though, are all very much alive. Temperature and humidity in this chamber are maintained by magic, creating a self- sustaining ecosystem that effectively duplicates the Vudran jungle—the Arkonas often come here to relax in familiar surroundings, particularly on cold Korvosan winter days.

The windows in the walls all bear permanent *silent images* that prevent them from breaking the illusion created by the room while still allowing sunlight to filter in on the plants. Skylights above do the same, including a large glass dome above the northern portion of the room. A balcony encircles the room as well at a height of 25 feet, although from ground level looking up, it takes a DC 15 Spot check to be able to tell the edge of the balcony apart from the upper walls and dome, so clever are the paintings and illusions. If a creature stands on the upper balcony so as to be visible to those below, this additional point of reference makes it much easier to see the balcony’s edge.

The elephant statue is in fact one of the room’s guardians—a variant *figurine of wondrous power* (see Creatures and Treasure below). The 10-foot-diameter stone platform on which it stands is a large circular secret trap door that can be discovered with a DC 25 Search check. This door can be opened even when the statue is standing on the platform by pressing a hidden 6-inch-diameter pressure plate at the disc’s center.

Doing so causes the entire disk to slowly rotate, as if it were an immense cap unscrewing from a container. The platform makes a 180-degree turn, and as it does so, a curved opening appears, granting access to a flight of spiral stairs that descend into the ground to area D19. From below, the secret trap door can be opened by pressing a second hidden switch in the wall, twenty steps down. Like the trap door itself, this panel can be discovered with a DC 25 Search check. Once opened, the door remains open for 10 minutes before closing automatically. It can also be manually closed by pressing one of the hidden pressure plates a second time.

Both of the double doors leading out onto the palace grounds are kept locked (DC 30 Open Lock to unlock), and each is warded with a *magic mouth* alarm similar to the one in area D1 save that these doors are not fitted with *third eye* bloodstones.

Creatures: The fountain itself constantly replenishes pure, cool water. The upward plume of water may appear to be created by pressure or a hidden pump, but is in fact generated by a huge water elemental bound to

the room. It recognizes the Arkonas on sight, but does not attack intruders unless they open the secret trap door or it sees intruders attacked by the Arkonas themselves.

The marble elephant remains passive until commanded to attack, or unless someone attempts to pass through the secret trap door without first uttering the passphrase, “Chamidu is blind.”

If the palace is on alert, two of the Arkona rakshasas (Avishandu and Nudhaali) lurk in the howdah on the elephant’s back, ready to ambush any intruders that wander into this room or who pass along the balcony in area D12 above.

LARGE WATER ELEMENTAL CR 5

hp 68 (MM 100)

TACTICS

During Combat The elemental does not start combat on its own, and remains hidden as water until an enemy in an existing combat comes within reach, at which point it attacks. Once it attacks, the elemental leaves its fountain to pursue enemies throughout this chamber but will not chase enemies into other parts of the palace or out onto the grounds, instead returning to this fountain.

Morale The elemental fights to the death.

ELEPHANT CR 7

hp 104 (MM 272)

TACTICS

During Combat Once activated, the elephant follows the commands of its activator. If it activates on its own, it attacks anyone who attempts to use the trap door, returning to this pedestal as soon as the trap door closes.

Morale The elephant fights to the death. If slain, it reverts to its small figurine shape.

AVISHANDU AND NUDHAALI, CR 8

ARKONA RAKSHASAS

hp 52 each (MM 211)

TACTICS

Before Combat The rakshasas cast *mage armor* as soon as they go on alert. Once they take position in the elephant’s howdah, they also cast *shield*, *bear’s endurance*, and *invisibility*, recasting these spells 7 minutes later when they expire if no one’s entered the garden yet. If no one’s entered the garden after the second 7 minute period, the rakshasas abandon their post to join the other two on patrol until they’re certain that whatever triggered the alarm has been dealt with.

During Combat When combat begins, Avishandu activates the elephant and orders it to attack the PCs, while Nudhaali casts *haste*. The rakshasas use *acid arrow* on the PCs from their howdah, or *suggestion* to go leap into the fountain to cool off from the heat present in this room.

Morale The rakshasas fight to the death.

Treasure: The two gems in the cobra mouths on the fountain are bloodstones, each worth 100 gp. The one facing west is a *third eye* bloodstone.

If the elephant is defeated, it reverts to its dormant *figurine of wondrous power* shape. This figurine has an additional power beyond those normally possessed by a *marble elephant*, though—it can be commanded to assume the form of a marble, life-sized statue of an elephant rather than its normal figurine form. Treat this effect as if the elephant were under the effects of a *statue* spell. Assuming statue form counts as one of its activations for the month, but it can remain in statue form for an indefinite period of time. This additional function makes the *marble elephant* a bit more valuable than most of its kind—it’s worth 26,000 gp.

D5. Garden Storage

Maintaining the garden in area D4 requires a lot of water, work, and landscaping. This room is used to store all the tools necessary, including five huge casks of water and dozens of buckets and other containers for the servants to use to do just that.

D6. Storerooms

These storerooms are used to house all manner of tools, firewood, food, and other necessities. There’s little of interest in these chambers, except the fact that the stacks of barrels and crates could provide lots of places to hide.

D7. Library

Two floor-to-ceiling bookshelves decorate the south and west walls of this chamber, facing a curved north wall on which hang a half-dozen grotesque paintings depicting torture, murder, cannibalism, and even necrophilia. Two glittering chandeliers hang from the ceiling, providing more than enough lighting for anyone sprawled on the dozens of cushions strewn about the room to read by.

The Arkona library is small, but well-stocked with a wide variety of books ranging in topic from poetry to philosophy to essays to fiction. Tawdry romances are shelved next to detailed explorations of the nature of conjuration magic in no apparent order. A fair number of the books are written in Vudran and are concerned with topics and themes common to that distant land, yet even these books cover a wide range of subjects.

Treasure: The six paintings on the wall are all Salvators—and among that body of work, these six are among the most stomach-turning and disgusting in

subject matter. As always, the color blue plays a prominent role in the paintings. Each painting is worth 800 gp.

D8. Smoking Den (EL 8)

A long couch and two stuffed chairs sit around an elegant rug on the floor of this room, the walls of which are carved in depictions of air spirits cavorting in the clouds. The scent of strange and exotic smoke lingers in the air, and four bejeweled hookahs sit in the room, two at either end of the couch, and one next to each chair. A flight of stairs leads up to the floor above, and a glass case built into the underside of these stairs displays a wide collection of cigars, pottery jars, and bundles of dried leaves in a range of colors.

The four hookahs are each valuable, but the real treasure in this room is the collection of exotic tobacco and cigars in the case. The case itself is locked (DC 40 Open Lock to pick; Bahor carries the only key), but it's a relatively simple matter to smash the glass to get to the contents.

Trap: This room and the expensive collection in the case are protected by a magical trap triggered by any attempt to damage the glass case or pick its lock. Doing so causes smoke to pour from the walls as two belkers are summoned to defend the chamber. The belkers appear near the 20-foot-high ceiling of the room. Their reach allows them to attack creatures on the floor but prevents most creatures on the floor from attacking them in turn.

HUNGRY SMOKE TRAP

CR 8

Type magical; Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** repair

Effect When the glass case is damaged or the lock is attempted with anything other than its proper key, two belkers are summoned into the room. The belkers remain summoned for 2 minutes, after which time they vanish.

BELKERS (2)

CR 6

hp 38 each (MM 27)

Treasure: Each of the hookahs is worth 350 gp. A *third eye* bloodstone worth 100 gp has been incorporated into the pipe of the hookah next to the southwestern chair.

The contents of the glass case amount to 10 pounds of exotic cigars, smoking weed, and other relatively minor narcotics. In all, the collection is worth 1,400 gp.

D9. Trophy Hall

Glass cases line the north and south walls of this hallway. To the north is displayed a wide collection of exotic weapons, many of which resemble swords, spears, or starknives, hanging on

the wall around a suit of bright blue leather and ivory armor. To the south is a somewhat gruesome display of a stuffed tiger feeding upon a very realistic sculpture of a dead Vudran man.

Both display cases are locked but not trapped; it's a DC 20 Open Lock check to get to the contents of either case. The tiger was once a real beast, but is now stuffed with sawdust. The human it's depicted as disemboweling looks realistic, but is nothing more than a wax sculpture. The body's exposed heart, though, is in fact a large carved bloodstone, identifiable as such from afar with a DC 20 Appraise check.

Treasure: The bloodstone heart is a *third eye* bloodstone worth 500 gp.

The weapons in the northern display case consist of six masterwork punching daggers, two masterwork sais, two masterwork sianghams, a dozen masterwork daggers, a masterwork falchion, two masterwork spears, and a +1 *ghost touch kama*. The suit of leather is a suit of +2 *light fortification studded leather*.

D10. Statuary

A gracefully curving wall lined with tall windows presents a commanding view of the western palace grounds. The room itself is empty save for three human-sized statues, each depicting a Vudran warrior holding aloft a glittering blue-green javelin with a head carved from bloodstone.

These three statues depict Vudran soldiers, yet another display brought here by the Arkonas to remind them of their homeland. Each of the the statues bears a *magic mouth* spell that activates if any creature draws or carries an unsheathed weapon into the room. Once triggered, the three statues begin to shout highly insulting oaths in Vudran, serving to alert the house guards (particularly those who may still be at rest in area D14 above).

Treasure: All three statues hold javelins that can be removed from the statue with ease (an act that, once the weapon is removed, triggers the statue's magic mouth). All three have bloodstone heads, but only the central statue is a *third eye* bloodstone. Each javelin head is worth 150 gp.

D11. Banquet Hall

A magnificent mahogany table dominates this room, the surface of which is decorated with an immense cover fashioned from the brightly colored skins of various great snakes.

This room is where the Arkonas take most of their meals, feasting on sumptuous banquets prepared by the small army of servants who dwell in the nearby outbuilding—no

servants are allowed in the palace during dinner, as part of a particularly restrictive Vudran custom. Of course, now and then the Arkonas prefer to feed in their natural forms, in which case their meals are much more living and loud and wet. These meals typically take place behind locked doors in the rakshasas' bedchambers (or barracks, in the case of the four guards), with use of prestidigitation to clean up afterwards.

The double doors leading out onto the palace grounds are kept locked (DC 30 Open Lock to unlock), and warded with a *magic mouth* alarm similar to the one in area **D1** save that these doors are not fitted with *third eye* bloodstones.

D12. Upper Balcony

This walkway overlooks the garden on the ground floor 25 feet below, and as such this area is generally warmer than the rest of the building as heated air rises up from the chamber below. The sound of birdcalls and the gentle babble of the fountain trickle up as well.

D13. Washroom

A large mirror hangs on the western wall of this washroom and latrine. The air smells remarkably fresh, and the water-filled seat of ease to the east seems unnecessarily comfortable-looking.

Several minor magical effects in this room keep the air fresh and the toilet clean. Waste placed into the water is immediately transformed into clean water that is then drained away by an ingenious set of pipes that feed into the garden below.

Treasure: The large toilet is something of a marvel, worth 150 gp but weighing nearly 300 pounds, making transport of the treasure both awkward and possibly embarrassing.

D14. Barracks (EL 12)

The floor of this barracks is thickly carpeted and strewn with numerous throw pillows and furs. The walls are carved with erotic depictions of men and women engaged in all manner of sexual acts. The only real furnishings in the room are the four beds against the western wall.

Creatures: This room is the home to four Arkona "cousins"—rakshasas who don't bear an actual blood relation to the Arkonas, having recently come to live here from Vudra. They are presented to Korvosa as distant cousins, and as a result are now generally thought of as members of the nobility. These four rakshasas are each tasked with two roles in the palace—to serve as guards, and to serve an additional role particular to that rakshasa's temperament. Although the rakshasas are careful to

retain their human disguises in public, they generally prefer to lounge in their true forms when they're off duty, often with a beautiful woman or four abducted for their entertainment and feeding. The quarantine has put a kink in their standard hunt, preventing them from gathering new "meals" with ease, and as a result the four rakshasas have grown quite short-tempered with each other. As long as the alarm isn't raised, their arguments and bickering gives them a –5 penalty on Listen checks to hear the alarms in areas **D1**, **D4**, **D10**, or **D11**.

Avishandu is a condor-headed rakshasa. His keen sight and eye for grace makes him ideal for tasks like landscaping and other types of delicate artistic maintenance on the palace. One-eyed Carnochan has an orangutan's head—his knack for knowing the right thing to say makes him an excellent choice as the palace's majordomo and the initial point of contact for visitors. Nudhaali has a lizard's head—his obsession with food makes him ideal for handling the complex task of keeping the kitchen staff in line (and in hiding the fact that much of the meat they prepare for the Arkonas comes from humanoids). And boar-headed Vennashti's knack for security makes him the best nominee to supervise patrol tactics and the overall security of the palace. When the alarm goes off, it's to Vennashti the other three turn to for guidance.

**AVISHANDU, CARNOCHAN, NUDHAALI, AND CR 8
VENNASHTI; ARKONA RAKSHASAS**
hp 52 each (MM 211)

D15. Bath

The air in this chamber is incredibly warm and humid, filled with steam rising from the bubbling oval bath set in the floor to the southeast. The walls, ceiling, and floor are set with polished marble tiles of alternating blues and greens, giving the entire chamber a pervasive aquatic feel. Three lacquered wooden benches sit just north of the bath itself.

The bath's temperature is maintained by several minor magical enhancements, keeping the water hot at all times and preventing the constant moisture from damaging the surrounding structure of the room itself. The temperature of the water can be controlled by the mental command of anyone in the water, ranging from cold to not-quite-scalding. Unlike the toilet in area **D13**, though, this minor magical marvel is not portable, and cannot be looted by greedy intruders.

D16. Leaves of Gold and Glitter (EL 9)

The door to this room appears to be made of ebony, but is in fact made of iron. The chamber beyond is the Arkona's treasury, one of the most secure rooms in the palace. The

door is locked physically (Open Lock DC 40) and magically (via *arcane lock* at CL 15th; Bahor used a powerful scroll to create this effect). The door is also warded by a permanent *alarm* spell—unlike the others in the palace, this one is a silent mental alarm that alerts Bahor if anyone enters the room beyond.

The plain ebony walls of this chamber seem to glisten with moisture. Above, the chamber rises forty feet to a domed ceiling set with eight wedge-shaped windows; to the north, east, and south three additional tall glass windows rise up from floor level to the dome. The room itself is empty, save for a thirty-foot-tall tree with sparkling gold and green leaves, its roots burrowing in and out of the floor. A breeze tickles the branches above, and as the leaves waver, the sound of crystal bells filters through the room.

Bahor spared no expense in building this vault—it’s somewhat ironic that the cost of the chamber itself may even be more than that of the treasures kept inside.

The “moisture” on the walls (and floor, windows, and ceiling) is in fact permanent *walls of force*; the only opening into this room is via the door. Furthermore, the chamber is warded by a *forbiddance* effect (CL 13th, Will DC 21) keyed to lawful evil. The third ward in place in this chamber is the “tree” itself. A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check correctly identifies it as the Tree of Eternal Dawn, a mythical tree said to grow on a lost island in northern Vudra, whose leaves are reputed to grant eternal life at a terrible cost (variously said to be the loss of all emotions, eternal life without eternal youth, or eternal life only after the seeker is himself turned into a tree in the surrounding grove). The tree in this room is an illusion generated by a persistent *screen* effect that masks the room’s actual contents: a single iron cabinet. A character who interacts with the tree can attempt a DC 23 Will save to see through the illusion.

Treasure: The iron chest in the middle of the room is locked (Open Lock DC 40) but not trapped. Sitting atop the chest is a single *third eye* bloodstone worth 100 gp, placed here so that Bahor can peer into his treasure as needed to secure his paranoia that all is well. The chest contains the majority of the Arkona family’s wealth. Unfortunately for would-be looters, the majority of this wealth consists of oaths of loyalty, debt, and servitude that show just how vast the Arkona’s influence over Korvosa’s crime scene actually is. This is the final level of protection—the Arkonas have effectively spread their fortune through dozens, if not hundreds, of different treasuries throughout the city. Even if their palace were completely cleaned out of valuables, they would be able to call in these various debts to replenish what was stolen with relative ease.

Sifting through these hundreds of documents reveals that the entire roster of the city’s thieves’ guild (the

Cerulean Society) is in the Arkona’s pocket. The most recent bit of correspondence between Glorio Arkona and Guildmaster Boule commands the Cerulean Society to “bottle up” during the quarantine, to let things unfold as they may, so that the citizens will be “properly desperate” when the Arkonas decide to make their move with “the fool seneschal” to usurp the queen and gain control over all of Korvosa. The letter closes with a promise from Glorio to gift all of Old Korvosa to the Cerulean Society to do with as they see fit. Even if the PCs don’t kill every rakshasa in the palace, this stack of papers is enough to politically destroy the Arkona family—once the situation with Queen Ileosa is handled, of course.

There are, nevertheless, some actual items of value kept in the chest, including three leather bags of coins (4,000 sp, 2,000 gp, and 500 pp), 5,500 gp worth of assorted gems and jewels, and a lacquered cherrywood and ivory *+1 holy light crossbow* that a would-be assassin who discovered what the Arkonas actually were once attempted to use on Bahor several decades ago. Bahor knows that the weapon is a danger, but its beauty was too much to bear destroying, so he locked it in here, the most secure of the palace’s rooms, for safekeeping on the theory that if his enemies made it in here, he’d either be long gone or dead already.

D17. Vimanda’s Room

This austere chamber is apparently the sleeping chamber of someone quite orderly. The bed is made, sheets drawn tight against the mattress and pillows arranged perfectly at the head, and a dressing table and chair at the bed’s side are both dust-free and polished to a shine.

This chamber belongs to Vimanda, Bahor’s sister. Publicly, the two play the role of lovers, yet privately, the two have slowly grown to despise each other, each maintaining the veneer of civility and cooperation out of little more than tradition. Vimanda has spent much of the last several years building her own contacts among Korvosa’s underworld in preparation for her takeover of the Arkona family. The death of King Eodred II threw these plans into chaos, and of late, Vimanda’s been spending an increasing amount of time in the dungeons below, venting her frustrations on prisoners.

D18. Bahor’s Room (EL 14)

The crowning glory of this dazzling chamber is, without a doubt, the four-poster canopied bed that takes up a full quarter of the room. Silk sheets, gossamer curtains, ebony bedposts depicting tigers and cobras chasing monkeys in an endless circle, and a half-dozen huge pillows combine to create a resting place fit for a king. Strange and ferocious animal heads are mounted on

the walls, their eyes looking almost alive. A towering redwood cabinet stands against the eastern wall, while to the west sits a massive desk covered with books and scrolls and a large green paperweight the size of an apple. An exotic-looking five-foot-long stringed instrument sits on display on a bronze stand near the desk, and a spherical birdcage containing several brightly colored songbirds hangs from the center of the ceiling above.

This, Bahor's personal quarters, is perhaps the most ostentatious chamber in all of Arkona Palace. The exquisite furniture in here is worth a combined total of 3,000 gp but is quite unwieldy—the more portable treasures in the room are listed below.

The papers on the desk are a combination of astrological charts, maps of the world (including several of Vudra), and various bits of non-incriminating paperwork involving the day-to-day business of running a noble family. The trophies mounted on the wall all bear names identifying them as Vudran animals—a Barakot Peacock, a Ukhrul Wolverine, a Khar Great Skink, a Kothar Great Bat, a Vimerian Tiger and a Johar Long Viper. A DC 25 Knowledge (nature) check is enough to note that these heads seem somehow “off,” and not really like real animal heads at all. A DC 30 Knowledge (the planes) check reveals the truth—these are all preserved rakshasa heads. Bahor enjoys keeping trophies of his predecessors and children (all of whom have, to date, disappointed the rakshasa).

Creature: Bahor has been spending more and more of his time brooding in this chamber, waiting patiently for the quarantine to end so he can get about with the business of displacing Queen Ileosa. News of the failed assassination attempt against her has somewhat rattled the normally confident rakshasa, though, and now his thoughts turn to desperate plans.

Bahor's plans for the PCs are detailed above under “Securing an Audience” and “Bahor's Offer.” If the PCs invade his palace, he patiently waits here in human form for them to confront him, at which point he calmly invites them to listen to his offer. If the PCs instead attack him, he sighs with regret and does his best to put them down. Bahor is a dangerous foe, easily the most dangerous enemy the PCs meet in this adventure—they would be well advised to listen to his offer.

BAHOR (AKA GLORIO ARKONA)

CR 14

Male rakshasa rogue 10

LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +20, Spot +20

DEFENSE

AC 36, touch 19, flat-footed 30

(+4 armor, +3 deflection, +6 Dex, +9 natural, +4 shield)

hp 168 (17 HD; 7d8+10d6+102)

Fort +14, **Ref** +18, **Will** +8

THIRD EYE

Aura moderate divination;

CL 11th

Slot —; **Price** 20,000 gp;

Weight —

DESCRIPTION

The practice of *third eye* magic has a long-standing tradition among a Vudran mystical organization known as the Daughters of the Blinding Night.

A practitioner of this mysterious sect visited Bahor and Vimanda some years ago to grant them this magic in return for a wealth of magic and secrets the Arkonas stole from the Acadamae.

As part of the process of gaining a *third eye*, the creator grafts an actual eye into the palm of the recipient's hand. Generally human eyes are used, but any eye harvested from a creature the same size as the recipient will do. Once an eye is grafted into a palm, it is undetectable while closed and doesn't hinder the user's manual dexterity in the slightest. When in use, the eye opens.

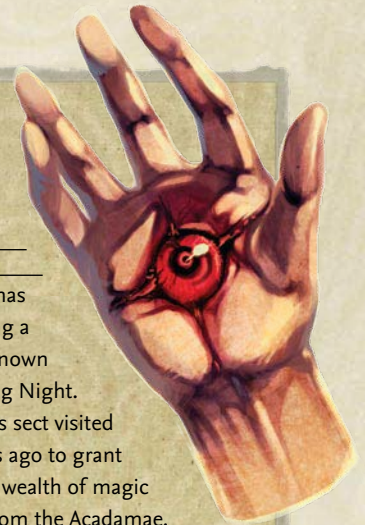
The owner of a *third eye* can use it to see through the donor creature's remaining eye. The *third eye* can also be attuned to specially prepared bloodstones, allowing the user to observe things in that stone's vicinity as if it were an eye as well. Preparing a bloodstone in this manner requires it to soak in a potion of *clairvoyance/clairaudience* for a week, at the end of which the owner drinks the potion and spits the bloodstone into the hand bearing the *third eye*. These bloodstones are often incorporated into magic items like phylacteries, rings, or amulets, allowing the user to gift such items to other creatures and thus gain a new viewpoint. This remote viewing ability functions at any range while on the same plane. It also allows the user to cast *clairaudience/clairvoyance* up to three times per day.

As long as the *third eye* is open in a hand that isn't holding an object, the creature gains all-round vision, granting a +4 bonus on Spot checks and making it impossible to flank them. Rakshasas, whose fingers bend backwards, can use the powers of their *third eyes* while holding an object since the eye effectively looks out of the “back” of their hand.

A *third eye* cannot be transferred between creatures—if removed from the owner's body, the *third eye* is destroyed. A *third eye* that remains in the owner's palm but is damaged or otherwise permanently blinded becomes useless until a *remove blindness* spell is cast upon it.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *clairvoyance/clairaudience*, access to obscure Blinding Night traditions and lore; **Cost** 10,000 gp, 800 XP



Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, slippery mind, trap sense +3; **DR** 15/good and piercing; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee +2 kukri +22/+17/+12 (1d4+4/15–20) and claw +15 (1d4+1) and bite +15 (1d6+1)

Special Attacks change shape, detect thoughts (DC 17), sneak attack +5d6

Spells Known (CL 7th, +20 ranged touch)

- 3rd (5/day)—*lightning bolt* (DC 17), *fly*
- 2nd (7/day)—*invisibility*, *scorching ray*, *web* (DC 16)
- 1st (7/day)—*charm person* (DC 15), *mage armor*, *obscuring mist*, *protection from good*, *ray of enfeeblement*
- 0 (6/day)—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

TACTICS

Before Combat Bahor casts *mage armor* as soon as the prospect of combat looms (such as hearing his alarms activated). He then uses his *third eye* to check the various rooms in his palace for intruders, using *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, if necessary, to watch them. As soon as his foes seem to be drawing near, he casts *shield* and *protection from good*.

During Combat Bahor favors the use of his spells in combat, since he only reverts to his true form if his enemies know of his true nature. Even then, he only relies on his melee attacks if his spells are exhausted or proving useless.

Morale Bahor has little interest in risking everything on bad luck—if reduced to less than 50 hit points, he attempts to escape by a combination of *invisibility* and his *boots of speed*. If he escapes, he retreats to the Cerulean Society guildhall elsewhere below Old Korvosa to wait things out—he does not return to vex the PCs. Bahor only stays behind to fight to the death if his enemies show that they know of his true nature—allowing anyone to escape his clutches with this knowledge is the thing he fears the most.

Base Statistics AC 32, touch 19, flat-footed 26

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 22, **Con** 22, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +14; **Grp** +16

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (kukri), Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +28 (+32 when reading minds), Concentration +16, Diplomacy +20 (+30 using change shape, +34 when also reading minds), Disguise +28, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (local) +21, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Listen +20, Move Silently +26, Sense Motive +10, Spot +20

Languages Common, Infernal, Vudran

SQ trapfinding

Combat Gear *wand of illusory script* (22 charges), *wand of shield* (34 charges); **Other Gear** +2 kukri, *amulet of health* +2, *ring of protection* +3, *boots of speed*, *third eye*, ring of keys (opens all locks in and under Arkona Palace)

Treasure: The bloodstone paperweight on the desk is a *third eye* bloodstone worth 500 gp. The exotic stringed instrument is a Jawassan Sitar. Decorated with gold filigree work depicting crocodiles eating storks, it is worth 350 gp. All of Bahor's other treasures are either carried or kept in his treasury.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs negotiate with Bahor and learn from him where Neolandus and Vencarlo are being held without resorting to violence, award them experience as if they had defeated him in combat.

D19. The Hidden Garden (EL 10)

The air in this vast grotto is cool. An iron-framed flight of spiral stairs winds up through a hole in the ceiling in the northwest section of the room from the top of a semicircular ledge. The ledge winds down along the cavern's inner wall to a series of rope bridges that descend even lower from ledge to ledge. The upper ledge, before it reaches the ropes, is a strangely breathtaking beauty—a garden of all manner of strangely colored fungi, lichens, and molds. The fungi have been cultivated, shaped into all manner of symmetrical patterns normally not seen in nature, transforming the ledge into a sort of underground fungal garden. Here and there, flickering torches burn in sconces above the fungi, while from somewhere in the darkness below comes the soft splash of water against an unseen shore.

This is the Arkonas' hidden garden, a natural cave that existed here before they built their palace above. In fact, the location of this cave and its access to the sea was the primary reason the Arkonas chose to live here.

At the point where the stairs lead up to area D4 above, the ledge is a 100-foot drop to the water of area D23 below. At the point where the first rope bridge descends to area D20 from the ledge's southern end, it's a mere 50-foot drop to the water.

The fungi, while colorful, is mostly harmless—the same cannot be said of the guardians that lurk therein.

Creatures: In Vudra, the use of genies is common—they are often bound to the service of kings, queens, or warlords as bodyguards, servants, or (with increasing frequency) as lovers. The majority of these genies are in fact janni, as they are the easiest to bind to servitude. While the Arkonas do not have the magical skill to bind even janni to their will, Bahor's made use of the next best thing. With the aid of several other scholars of all things fungal, he managed to transform four imported janni slaves into faithful guardians—that the janni had to die to create these fungal guardians was unfortunate—almost as unfortunate as the fact that the man responsible for creating them for Bahor, a wizard named Innachi Naven, accidentally discovered the Arkonas' true nature. Bahor turned the one-time ally

over to Senshiir for her entertainment (see area E20), but still wishes he'd kept the man around a bit longer to create a few more of these delightful garden guardians for him. Bahor's experimented now and then with the fungal creatures' ability to create spawn, but these new creatures uniformly lacked the ingrained loyalty to the family and Bahor swiftly gave up on these plans.

The guardians still possess many janni traits, but are at their core little more than masses of fungi that have grown over and through the bodies of their long-dead hosts. The fungus now animates these bodies and has access to their thoughts and memories, yet as part of their creation are bound to the will of the Arkonas. Appearing as fungus-encrusted skeletons with gelid ooze and tufts of mold where flesh once rode, the garden guardians attack anyone they don't recognize as an Arkona.

GARDEN GUARDIANS (3)

CR 7

Fungal creature advanced janni (*Advanced Bestiary* 131, MM 116)

NE Large plant

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +15, Spot +15

Aura info

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18

(+6 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield, -1 size)

hp 85 (9d8+45)

Fort +11, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities elemental endurance; **Immune** plant traits; **Resist** fire 10

OFFENSE

Spd 15 ft., fly 10 ft. (perfect)

Melee scimitar +13/+8 (1d8+6/15-20) and light shield spike +12 (1d6+3)

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

Special Attacks *change size*, create spawn, poison spore cloud

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

3/day—*invisibility* (self only), *speak with animals*

1/day—*create food and water* (CL 7th)

TACTICS

Before Combat The garden guardians become invisible as soon as they hear anything approaching this area. Once they determine that the visitors are in fact intruders, they change size to become Large just before they move forth to attack.

During Combat These fungal creatures open combat with their poison spore clouds, following that up with melee attacks.

Morale The fungal janni fight to the death, pursuing foes throughout the entire cavern (but not into area D24 or D25 or the palace above).

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 13, **Con** 20, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +15

Feats Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Initiative, Improved Shield Bash, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Skills Appraise +14, Concentration +17, Craft (armorsmithing) +14, Craft (weaponsmithing) +14, Escape Artist +13, Listen +15, Move Silently +13, Ride +13, Sense Motive +15, Spot +15

Languages Common, Terran, Vudran

SQ fungal metabolism, poisonous blood, rejuvenation, worldbound

Gear +1 chainmail, scimitar, spiked +1 light steel shield

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Create Spawn (Ex) A creature killed by Constitution loss



GARDEN GUARDIANS

from a garden guardian's spore cloud transforms into a fungal creature over the course of a day. *Plant growth* halves the time required, while *diminish plants* doubles it. *Blight* destroys the fungal spores and prevents the corpse's transformation, but spells that remove disease are ineffective against the spores. Once a body transforms into a fungal creature, the dead body from which it grew is completely destroyed. A new fungal creature lacks the class levels and memories of the creature from which it gained its form—if the base creature has 1 or fewer racial HD, use a 1st-level warrior version of it as the base creature.

Fungal Metabolism (Ex) The garden guardians do not breathe, eat, or sleep.

Poison Spore Cloud (Ex) Once per day, a garden guardian can release a 15-foot-radius spread of yellow spores that linger in the air for 10 rounds. This cloud functions as an inhaled poison—any creature that inhales the spores must make a DC 19 Fortitude save or take 1d2 points of Constitution damage and be fatigued for 1 minute, at which point the creature must save again to resist a further 1d2 points of Constitution damage and another minute of fatigue. A creature that continues to inhale the spores must make Fortitude saves each round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Poisonous Blood (Ex) A garden guardian's blood and flesh function as ingested poison. Any creature that makes a bite attack against a garden guardian, swallows one whole, or otherwise ingests part of one must make a DC 19 Fortitude save or take 1 point of Strength damage and 1 point of Dexterity damage. One minute later, the creature must make a second DC 19 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 minute and take 1d6 points of Strength damage and 1d6 points of Dexterity damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Rejuvenation (Ex) So long as a garden guardian is in contact with moist natural earth, it regains hit points as though it were experiencing complete bed rest and long-term care (3 hit points per HD per day of rest).

Worldbound (Ex) These janni have been bound to the Material Plane by Vudran magic—as a result, they do not have the ability to use *plane shift* or *ethereal jaunt* as spell-like abilities, but their close tie to the Material Plane does increase their health and endurance, granting them a +2 racial bonus on their Constitution scores.

D20. The Cat's Cradle

Three rope ladders descend even deeper into the cave, connecting three progressively lower ledges on the wall until finally reaching a stony protrusion at ground level. This protrusion rises from a rocky beach overlooking the sloshing waters of a sea cave.

Called the “Cat's Cradle” by the Arkonas, this sturdy rope bridge allows easy access between the palace above and the cave below.

D21. Avidexu's Room

This simple chamber contains a single bed and a number of shelves carved into the stone walls. All manner of animal figurines, some crude and carved of wood, others exquisite and sculpted from stone or even metal, decorate these shelves. A heap of raw materials for crafting more of the animals lies against the western wall.

This chamber belongs to the rakshasa Avidexu, the most powerful of the rakshasas who have come all the way from Vudra to join Bahor and Vimanda in their grand experiment in Korvosa. Avidexu has little interest in the politics of this experiment, though, and instead finds the local wildlife to be quite intriguing. He spends a fair amount of his time here, crafting sculptures of various Varisian creatures out of a wide range of local materials, but can currently be found in area **D24** tending to his pets.

Treasure: Although Avidexu carries the majority of his personal wealth, several of his sculptures are skillfully made. The most valuable are a 1-foot-long blue-coral gecko worth 300 gp, an exquisitely crafted firepelt cougar carved from redwood worth 200 gp, and a gold flame drake with tiny pearls for eyes worth 1,200 gp.

D22. Secret Dungeon Entrance

A secret door in the wall (DC 25 Search to locate) opens into a long, winding tunnel that leads 100 feet southeast to the Arkona Dungeons and area **E1**.

D23. Secret Pier (EL 10)

At the bottom of the vast cavern, a single wooden pier extends out into a gently sloshing pool of sea water. A shallow-draft barge is docked at the pier, a single unlit lantern hanging from its bow. Supporting timbers and brickwork line parts of the lower edge of the cave to the west and south, showing where the original sea cave has been artificially expanded. To the north, a twenty-five-foot-wide waterway provides an aquatic exit from the cave—the distant, muted sounds of the surf echo down from that direction.

The Arkonas use this sea cave to move sensitive cargos to and from the palace—cargos most often consisting of unconscious victims stolen off the streets of Korvosa and scheduled for an Arkona feast. The sea water in the pool is 15 feet deep, and winds approximately 120 feet to the northwest before ending at what appears to be a stone wall. This is actually an *illusory wall* (CL 11th) placed there

to mask the entrance from traffic along the Jeggare River. Anyone who interacts with the wall can attempt a DC 16 Will save to realize it's an illusion.

Creature: The sea pool is inhabited by an enormous reefclaw that serves as a guardian for this chamber. The monster was initially charmed by Avidexu, but over the years, the regular offerings of food the Arkonas have given the immense eel-like predator have caused it to adopt the chamber as its territory, and it now lives here and stands guard of its own accord. The reefclaw periodically leaves the cave to swim out to sea to hunt or just to enjoy the open water—the first time the PCs come through this area, the reefclaw is doing just that. If they return to this area, likely after having rescued Vencarlo and Neolandus and eager to effect their escape from Korvosa, the reefclaw has returned to present a final battle for the party.

ENORMOUS REEFCLAW

CR 10

Male elite reefclaw (*Pathfinder* #7 88)

CN Large aberration (aquatic)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 16

(+3 Dex, +7 natural, –1 size)

hp 136 (16d8+64)

Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12

Resist cold 5

OFFENSE

Spd 5 ft., swim 40 ft.

Melee 2 claws +20 (1d8+8/19–20 plus numbing poison)

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

Special Attacks death frenzy, constrict 2d8+8, improved grab, tenacious grapple

TACTICS

During Combat The reefclaw knows that the barge and pier belong to its Arkona allies, and does its best not to damage them. The same gentle touch is not extended to the PCs—the monster attacks anyone it recognizes as intruders with a ferocious rage.

Morale The enormous reefclaw gives up the fight if reduced to less than 20 hit points, swimming swiftly out to sea to seek new allies. It does not return.

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 6, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +32

Feats Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor (3), Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Swim +35

Languages understands Common

SQ amphibious, ferocity

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Amphibious (Ex) Although a reefclaw is aquatic, it can survive

indefinitely on land.

Constrict (Ex) On a successful grapple check, a reefclaw deals 2d8+15 points of damage.

Death Frenzy (Su) When a reefclaw is killed, its body spasms horrifically. Immediately upon dying, the reefclaw makes a full attack action against all creatures it threatens. If more than one creature is within reach, it makes each attack against a random target (even against other reefclaws).

Ferocity (Ex) A reefclaw is such a tenacious combatant that it continues to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a reefclaw must hit a creature of any size with both claw attacks, or a creature of no larger than Medium size with one claw attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Numbing Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 22, initial 1d8 Dexterity, secondary 2d8 Dexterity. This reefclaw's venom is much more toxic than its smaller, common kin. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Tenacious Grapple (Ex) A reefclaw gains a +8 racial bonus on grapple checks.

D24. Arkona Temple (EL 10)

Four lit braziers illuminate this vast chamber, a cathedral-like space made all the more immense by its lack of benches or other concessions to comfort. The floor is polished tan marble, with the walls rising up to form a domed ceiling sixty feet above. Alcoves line these walls, six in all, inside of which stand human-sized statues of a tiger-headed man. To the south, a few steps lead up to a pulpit-like area with three more statues of the same figure—the central one being twice as tall and holding out before him two lances from which hang flags. The left is the flag of Korvosa, while the right bears the coat of arms of the Arkonas.

While this large chamber may look like a temple, the Arkonas themselves do not worship gods. Rather, they (like most rakshasas) see themselves as the ones who should be worshiped. Deep under his palace, this room is a nod to Bahor's suppressed ego and pride—the statues represent him as the god-ruler of Korvosa.

Creatures: The rakshasa Avidexu petitioned to be placed in charge of defending this temple, and Bahor granted him this responsibility even though the eldest Arkona knew Avidexu was really only looking for a place to keep his favorite pets, a pair of immense emperor cobras imported from Vudra at great expense. The two 18-foot-long snakes dwell in this chamber, and Avidexu spends much of his time in here with them, admiring their beauty or watching them hunt and feed on animals

Arkona Dungeon

One Square = Five Feet



and vagrants the rakshasa supplies them with. When the PCs first come to this region, Avidexu can be encountered here—one of the cobras has just finished shedding, and the rakshasa is sharing the shed skin as a meal with his two pets.

AVIDEXU, ARKONA RAKSHASA **CR 8**

hp 52 (MM 211)

TACTICS

Before Combat Avidexu has already cast *mage armor* on himself.

During Combat The rakshasa's first act in combat is to order his snakes to attack the PCs while he becomes invisible.

He then casts *haste*, *bear's endurance*, and *shield* before re-entering combat with his offensive spells.

Morale Avidexu fights to the death.

EMPEROR COBRAS (2) **CR 5**

Eltie dire king cobra (*Gary Gygax's Necropolis 220, Tome of Horrors Revised 387*)

N Large animal

Init +10; **Senses** scent; Listen +6, Spot +11

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 16
(+6 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size)

hp 66 (7d8+35)

Fort +10, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +11 (1d8+9 plus poison)

Ranged spittle +11 (poison)

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

Special Attacks improved grab

TACTICS

During Combat Avidexu trained both cobras to attack creatures at his command. The cobras attack the closest target.

Morale The emperor cobras fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 22, **Con** 20, **Int** 1, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +15

Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Balance +14, Climb +14, Hide +11, Listen +6, Spot +11

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, an emperor cobra must hit a creature smaller than itself with its bite attack. It can then attempt a grapple check as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it establishes a hold, it can make a bite attack against the grappled foe as a free action.

Poison (Ex) Bite or Spittle, Fortitude DC 18, initial and secondary damage 1d8 Con. The Save DC is Constitution-based.

Spittle (Ex) An emperor cobra can spit venom as a ranged attack. In order to be effective, the venom must strike a foe's eyes, mouth, or an open wound—therefore, this is a standard ranged attack for the cobra and not a ranged touch attack. The cobra's spittle has a range of up to 20 feet.

D25. Tunnel to Dungeons

This winding tunnel leads to area E1 to the east.

The Vivified Labyrinth

The climax of this adventure takes place in the Vivified Labyrinth, a deadly obstacle course the Arkonas built for their own entertainment, used at times to train and test new recruits, and at others to punish or torment prisoners (Bahor is particularly fond of sending in a prisoner with a knife and a loincloth, poisoning him with slow-acting venom, and telling him that a pool deep inside the labyrinth can cure the poison if the victim can make it in time—so far, no prisoners have survived this challenge.) Making navigation of the dungeon difficult are the numerous obstacles and guardians bound within its walls. Making navigation even worse is the fact that the layout of the dungeon itself changes.

Four circular areas in the Vivified Labyrinth are actually built inside of giant gears. By activating various switches inside of the labyrinth, these four gears can be rotated in the direction of the arrow shown on the map, one-quarter turn per lever, to alter the labyrinth's layout. There are three levers in the labyrinth (plus a fourth trapped lever)—when one is switched, it locks in place and cannot be used for one minute. A DC 30 Disable Device check (made as a full-round action) unlocks a lever early so it may be used an additional time. The four dungeon sections rotate simultaneously, and take a round to rotate 90°, but openings between sections close very rapidly. A character that's standing in a transitional square between sections must make a DC 15 Reflex save; if he succeeds, he can adjust five feet in either direction to step out of the transitional square. If he fails, the moving walls scissor him, inflicting 10d6

points of damage and forcing him to adjust into a random non-transitional adjacent square. Anyone standing in one of the gear areas of the dungeon while it is rotating must make a DC 10 Balance check to avoid falling prone.

Since the central chambers of the Vivified Labyrinth are mobile, keeping track of what areas of the dungeon are accessible to others can be confusing. The dungeon effectively has four different orientations—the layout given on the map presents the first of these, and the only one where entrance into the dungeon itself is possible from area E2 without resorting to teleportation or other alternate forms of travel.

Vimanda

The second in command of the Arkona family, Vimanda has secret designs on displacing Bahor. Of course, Bahor suspects this, and although he tells Vimanda that he sent the PCs down into the labyrinth to give her a perfect opportunity to ambush and slaughter them, his true hope is that the PCs defeat her. In the ever-complex way that rakshasas work, Vimanda suspects this is her brother's desire, and hopes to show him up by either defeating the PCs or recruiting them to help defeat Bahor.

The true guardian of the labyrinth is the darksphinx Sivit, an outsider bound by tradition and magic to remain loyal to the current patriarch of the house. As such, Vimanda avoids the darksphinx—she doesn't want to involve blind allies of Bahor in her plans.

In her true form, Vimanda is an attractive humanoid woman with the head of a fox. Graceful, elegant, and confident, she exudes a dangerous sensuality that she's not afraid to use to leverage whatever advantage she can in combat or diplomacy—only in rare occasions (such as her current plan to deceive the PCs) does she take anything other than a shapely feminine form.

VIMANDA (AKA MELYIA ARKONA) CR 12

Female rakshasa monk 6

LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +12

DEFENSE

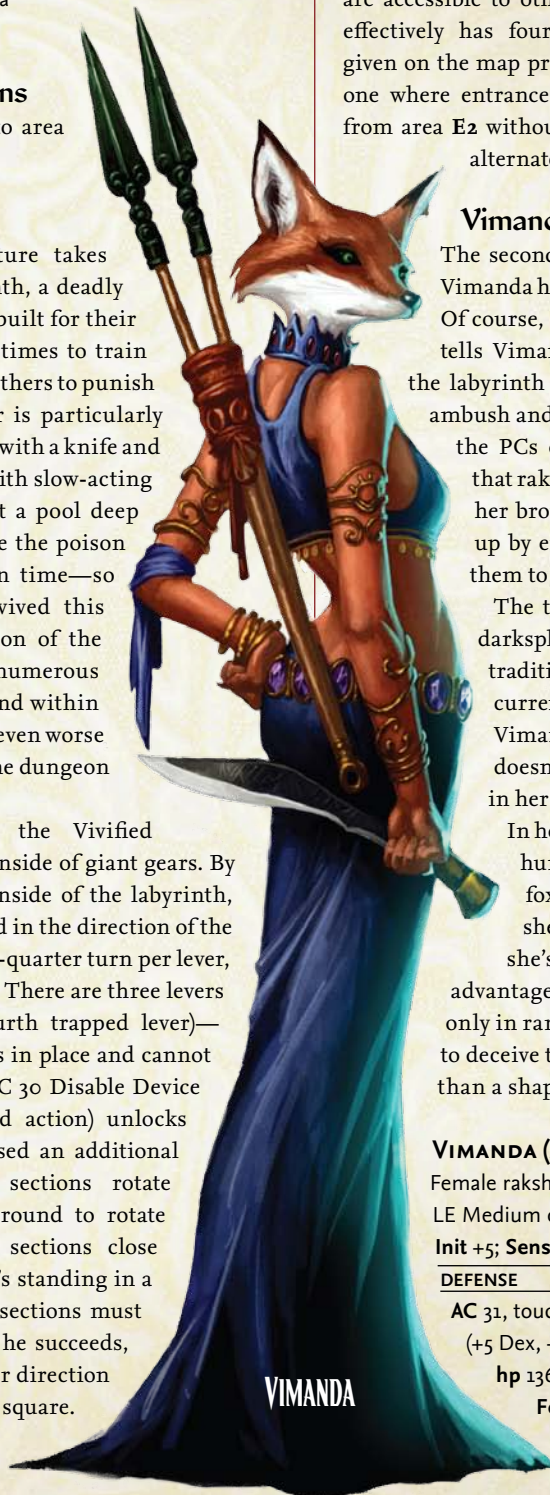
AC 31, touch 17, flat-footed 27

(+5 Dex, +1 monk, +9 natural, +4 shield, +2 Wis)

hp 136 (13d8+78)

Fort +15, **Ref** +15, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities evasion, slow fall 30 ft., still mind; **DR** 15/good and



VIMANDA

VIMANDA'S RAKTAVARNA

In “Edge of Anarchy,” the PCs may have unwittingly allowed a spy into their midst. The silver dagger in Verik Vancaskerkin’s chamber was in fact a shapechanging minion called a raktavarna that Vimanda created to keep an eye on her dupe. If the raktavarna has managed to remain in the PCs’ possession all this time, it continues to provide its mistress with information about them, giving her an excellent way to track them and prepare for battle. When the PCs finally confront her, Vimanda commands her loyal raktavarna to assume its true form and return to her—the dagger does so at once, attempting to bite its one-time owner at least once before it takes its mistress’s side.

piercing; **Immune** non-magical disease; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Spd 90 ft.; fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee +1 *ki focus shock kukri* +19/+14/+9 (1d4+4 plus 1d6 electricity) and
claw +15 (1d4+1) and
bite +15 (1d6+1)

Ranged *javelin of lightning* (120 ft. line, 5d6 electricity, Reflex DC 14 half)

Special Attacks change shape, detect thoughts (DC 15), flurry of blows

Spells Known (CL 7th; +17 ranged touch)

3rd (5/day)—*fly*, *suggestion* (DC 13)

2nd (7/day)—*invisibility*, *locate object*, *scorching ray*

1st (7/day)—*charm person* (DC 14), *magic missile*, *expeditious retreat*, *shield*, *ray of enfeeblement*

0 (6/day)—*acid splash*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

TACTICS

Before Combat Vimanda Arkona begins in area **E13**. As soon as the first rotation occurs, Vimanda dons a ragged suit of tattered leather armor (this ruined armor doesn’t impede her spellcasting, but neither does it grant an armor bonus) and changes shape to disguise herself as Vencarlo Orisini. She then casts *fly*, *invisibility*, *expeditious retreat*, and *shield*. If she knows the PCs carry an object familiar to her, she casts *locate object* on that item to help her track them. She then begins seeking out the PCs, either patrolling the dungeon in a generally clockwise fashion or beelining for them if she has *locate object* active. If she encounters Sivit, she retreats immediately. Vimanda knows that there are several symbols placed throughout the dungeon, and even though they don’t affect her since she’s lawful evil, she may decide to warn the PCs about a few of them in an attempt to gain their trust once she meets them.

During Combat When she first encounters the PCs, disguised as Vencarlo, Vimanda tries to convince them that Bahor

sent them down here to die. She warns them about Sivit, and tries to encourage the PCs to leave the labyrinth to return to the palace above to confront Bahor (she explains her *kukri* and javelins away by saying they’re the only weapons she’s been able to recover in this dungeon). If this works, she hangs back in any fight against Bahor—as soon as Bahor realizes what’s going on (which shouldn’t take long, especially if he successfully reads Vimanda’s mind), he tries to blow her cover to win the PCs back to his side. If, on the other hand, the PCs see through Vimanda’s deception, she snarls and attacks. In combat, she takes to the air and favors her javelins, *scorching rays*, and *magic missiles*. If pushed into melee, she switches to her physical attacks, delivering stunning fists with her *ki focus kukri* on her first attack each round.

Morale Vimanda attempts to flee the Vivified Labyrinth to recover in area **D17** if brought below 10 hit points.

Base Statistics **AC** 27, touch 17, flat-footed 23; **Spd** 60 ft.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +15

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Improved Critical (*kukri*), Improved Disarm, Multiattack, Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (*kukri*)

Skills Bluff +17 (+21 when reading minds), Concentration +15, Disguise +17 (+27 when using change shape, +31 when also reading minds), Hide +17, Listen +12, Move Silently +15, Perform (dance) +13, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12, Tumble +17

Languages Common, Infernal, Vudran

SQ *ki strike* (magic)

Gear +1 *ki focus shock kukri*, *javelins of lightning* (3)

Sivit, Lady of the Labyrinth

Bound into the dungeon by Bahor’s rakshasa predecessor via a *binding* spell, Sivit, the infamous Lady of the Labyrinth, is a darksphinx—a dangerous outsider called from one of the deeper circles of Hell. In the Outer Planes, the darksphinxes are keepers of hidden secrets and forbidden knowledge, yet here in the Vivified Labyrinth, she is little more than a guard.

She feels no loyalty toward Vimanda, but if Sivit learns that she’s attempting to betray Bahor (such as if she discovers she’s masquerading as Vencarlo and attempting to lead the PCs back up to the palace), she focuses her attacks on the rakshasa, bound by the same ancient magic that keeps her inside the Vivified Labyrinth to protect her current master. Sivit cannot leave the labyrinth—area **E2** and beyond are forbidden to her as long as the *binding* spell remains in effect. There is no release clause to the *binding*.

SIVIT

Female darksphinx (*Book of Fiends* 156)

LE Large outsider (evil, extraplanar)

CR 10

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +16, Spot +16

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 14, flat-footed 23

(+2 deflection, +3 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size)

hp 76 (9d8+36)

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

DR 10/good; **Immune** poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor)

Melee +1 kukri +13/+8 (1d6+7/15-20) and

+1 kukri +13/+8 (1d6+4/15-20) and

tail slap +9 melee (1d6+3)

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

Special Attacks pounce, rake 1d6+3, *symbol*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th)

3/day—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *darkness*, *detect magic*, *poison* (DC 19), *read magic*, *see invisibility*

1/day—*comprehend languages*, *desecrate*, *dispel magic*, *legend lore*, *locate object*, *remove curse*, *unholy blight* (DC 19)

TACTICS

Before Combat Sivit begins in area **E2o**. As soon as the first rotation occurs, she casts *see invisibility* and then *clairaudience/clairvoyance* on area **E8** to observe the PCs. She then casts *locate object* to track one of the character's more unusual items, and the next time either area **E18** or **E19** open up to her chamber, she moves in and begins making her way toward the PCs. Sivit knows the layout of the Vivified Labyrinth quite well, along with the four orientations of the dungeon—she activates rotations now and then to reorient the dungeon to her advantage and to try to split up the party. Sivit has placed multiple *symbols* into various chambers in the Vivified Labyrinth, and tries to time her attack on the PCs for a point where they're dealing with the effects of one of them.

During Combat Sivit opens combat with an *unholy blight*, then roars into melee with her kukris. She saves her *poison* spell-like abilities for spellcasters.

Morale Bound by ancient magic, Sivit has no real choice but to fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 16, **Con** 19, **Int** 22, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +19

Feats Improved Critical (kukri),

Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting

Skills Bluff +17, Climb +18, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +19, Heal +16, Hide +11, Intimidate +19, Jump +22, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Listen +16, Move Silently +15, Sense Motive +16, Spot +16, Survival +16

Languages Celestial, Draconic, Infernal, Sphinx, Vudran

Gear +1 kukris (2), *amulet of health* +4, *ring of protection* +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pounce (Ex) If Sivit charges a foe, she can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex) Attack bonus +14 melee, damage 1d6+3.

Symbol (Sp) Once each per week, Sivit can create a *symbol of fear*, a *symbol of insanity*, a *symbol of pain*, a *symbol of persuasion*, a *symbol of sleep*, and a *symbol of stunning* (caster level 14th), except that each symbol remains a maximum of one week once scribed.

E1. Dungeon Entrance

The tunnel curves sharply to the north here, ending at a pair of large bronze double doors, each carved with images of tigers chasing other tigers in four adjacent circles. At the center of each circle of tigers, a snarling tiger head looks out.

These doors are kept unlocked and well-maintained; they swing open silently at a touch. The dotted line across the passageway leading east is an *illusory wall* (CL 7th).

A character that





SIVIT'S SYMBOLS

The darksphinx presents an unusual situation for adventure design—her ability to create and maintain up to seven different *symbol* effects at a time, and to do so at CL 18th and relatively high static DCs is pretty ruthless for a CR 10 creature. I've lowered the caster level to 14th to match her other spell-like abilities, and have made the save DCs follow the standard rules for determining spell-like ability save DCs. I've also taken the liberty of removing *symbol of death* from Sivit's available *symbols*; this *symbol* is a bit too over-the-top even for this admittedly already deadly environment. If you'd rather keep this *symbol* on her list, I recommend placing it in the secret room in area E14 so that it triggers once it is seen.

Still, *symbols* can get old fast, especially if there's no one in the party who can dispel them, disable them, or fix the damage they do. Too many *symbols* can start to feel like arbitrary damage and penalties handed out by a lazy GM. You know your group better than I do—if you think that one or two *symbols* (or none at all) are your group's upper limit, you should adjust the number of *symbols* that appear in this part of the adventure.

—James Jacobs

interacts with the wall here can attempt a DC 16 Will save to recognize the illusion for what it truly is.

E2. Labyrinth Entrance

Two statues, each depicting a tiger-headed man, stand in alcoves to either side of the doors. Their arms are wide, as if to usher visitors forward into the room beyond.

A DC 15 Search check is enough to notice the gap in the floor, walls, and ceiling between this room and area E3. The statues both depict Bahor Arkona in his true form, and are thus recognizably the same figure from area D24.

E3. First Lever

Two alcoves adorn either side of this otherwise empty room. In one alcove, a long lever with an ebony handle protrudes from the wall.

This lever is one of the four that trigger a partial rotation of the four central sections of the Vivified Labyrinth.

E4. Corrupted Pool

A five-foot-diameter pool of crystal-clear water nearly fills this small circular room.

Hazard: The “water” in this 10-foot-deep pool is magical—anyone who drinks from the water is affected by a *poison* spell (Fort DC 16, CL 7th). A permanent *magic aura* spell cloaks the pool's aura of conjuration magic. Liquid taken from this pool in a container loses its magical properties immediately, becoming normal water. If combat with Vimanda occurs near this pool, she (knowing full well the pool's properties) might cast *suggestion* on a PC to force them to drink from it.

E5. Refreshing Pool (EL 7)

A five-foot-diameter pool of murky green water nearly fills this small circular room.

Although the water in this 10-foot-deep pool looks fouled, it is in fact enhanced with potent curative effects. Once per day, a creature that drinks from the pool gains the effects of a *heal* spell (CL 11th). Both Vimanda and Sivit know about this pool's properties, and if badly wounded or otherwise harmed, they could try to reach this pool to drink from it. Liquid removed from this pool reverts to nonmagical, gritty, foul-tasting water.

Trap: Sivit has placed a *symbol of fear* on the wall opposite the entrance to this room. The symbol activates as soon as it is looked at.

SYMBOL OF FEAR CR 7

Type spell; Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger sight; Reset no reset

Effect spell (*symbol of fear*; CL 14th, DC 21)

E6. Hall of Pain (EL 6)

Trap: Sivit has placed a *symbol of pain* on the floor of this room. The symbol activates as soon as it is looked at.

SYMBOL OF PAIN CR 6

Type spell; Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger sight; Reset no reset

Effect spell (*symbol of pain*; CL 14th, DC 20)

E7. Three Flavors of Venom (EL 7)

Three large wooden chests, their lids decorated with carvings of cavorting tigers, sit against one wall of this room. Some sort of message seems to be carved on each lid. The wall opposite the chests is carved to depict hundreds of tigers marching in widening circles around a single green gem the size of a fist, set in the wall and itself carved to resemble a tiger's head.

This is one of several rooms Bahor designed to give prisoners put into the Vivified Labyrinth a chance to

provide him a bit more entertainment than simply avoiding Sivit or the various active obstacles. The three chests are identical in appearance except for a short phrase engraved on each lid. This phrase is written in Vudran, a hint from Bahor to at least give some small bit of aid to those who speak his native tongue—of course, since these hints are at a certain level misleading, they're more like threats to those who dare speak his native tongue.

The left chest says, "By gentle caress shall truth be known." The right chest says, "Breathe deep your salvation." The middle chest says, "Life within but Death without."

Creature: Inside the middle chest are several potions (see Treasure) and a relatively cranky blood-red cobra. Bahor periodically feeds the cobra, but not nearly enough to keep it happy. The snake is furious, and immediately attacks the first person it sees.

BLOOD COBRA CR 1
hp 9 (MM 280; see Medium viper)

Trap: The left chest is coated in terinav root venom and is empty. The right chest is air-tight and filled with insanity mist and nothing else—opening it exposes everyone in the room to the effects of the poison. The airborne poison fades after 1 round.

TERINAV ROOT CHEST CR 7
Type mechanical; Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25
EFFECTS
Trigger touch; Reset no reset
Effect poison (Fort DC 16; 1d6 Dex/2d6 Dex)

INSANITY MIST CHEST CR 6
Type mechanical; Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25
EFFECTS
Trigger touch (opening chest); Reset no reset
Effect poison cloud (affects all creatures in room; Fort DC 15; 1d4 Wis/2d6 Wis)

Treasure: Bahor generally keeps a helpful item or weapon in the central chest to provide those exploring his dungeon a glimmer of false hope. The middle chest currently contains three *potions of cure serious wounds* and three *potions of lesser restoration* in addition to the cobra.

The gem embedded in the wall is a *third eye* bloodstone worth 750 gp.

E8. Hall of Madness (EL 9)

A lever to rotate the Vivified Labyrinth protrudes from the wall of this room.

Trap: Sivit has placed a *symbol of insanity* on the lever in this room. The symbol activates as soon as anyone triggers the lever.

EVOLVING THE REVOLVING DUNGEON

Running this section of the adventure can be complicated, for not only does the dungeon itself move about, so too do its two primary guardians. The following tips can help make running this dungeon a bit easier.

Tip 1: As the PCs explore the Vivified Labyrinth, have them roll initiative as they trigger the first rotation in area E3. Roll initiatives for Sivit and Vimanda as well, and track their movements through the dungeon secretly on their turns on your copy of the dungeon map.

Tip 2: Before the PCs reach the dungeon, prepare four 8-inch-diameter circles of paper and sketch out a grid on each so that you can place them on your gaming table. As the PCs explore the dungeon, sketch in the map of the dungeon, but since they're on separate pieces of paper, you'll be able to rotate each of them 90° each time the dungeon rotates.

Tip 3: If the PCs get completely trapped in an area where they can't access the levers, have an NPC elsewhere pull one.

Tip 4: Finally, don't be afraid to toss out the rotating gears aspect of the dungeon entirely if you think it'll just frustrate your group. It's an easy thing to attach areas E3 and E4, E14 and E15, and E17 and E18 with tunnels, at which point there's no need for confusing rotating dungeons at all.

SYMBOL OF INSANITY CR 9
Type spell; Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33

EFFECTS
Trigger touch; Reset no reset
Effect spell (*symbol of insanity* ; CL 14th, DC 23)

E9. The Biting Tigers (EL 7)

Both walls of this twenty-foot-long corridor are decorated with row upon row of tiger heads. Each head appears to be that of an actual, once-living tiger. The heads are remarkably well preserved—their gaping mouths and glaring eyes even appear to be moist.

This room is the first in a series of four rooms that serve as a perilous obstacle course. All four of these chambers were designed and created by Mapras, Bahor's father. Although Mapras died at Bahor's hands, Bahor never rebuilt these four rooms—they remain Mapras's only legacy in the Arkona dungeon, chambers too ingeniously cruel in their creativity for even a murderous son to ignore.

The secret door leading to area E10 can be discovered with a DC 35 Search check. If the biting tigers are slain, they no longer effectively hide this door, and it can be discovered with a DC 15 Search check.

All four of these obstacles can be temporarily deactivated by a hidden bypass switch. A switch is located on the wall

next to each entrance to room E9–E12; locating the switch is a DC 30 Search check. Once pressed, the trap or guardian in that room does not activate for the following 3 rounds—on the 4th round, the trap or guardian reactivates (but may be deactivated by again pressing the hidden bypass switch).

Creature: The tiger heads lining the walls animate and attack one round after the first person sets foot in the chamber, writhing out of the walls on long serpentine necks in a horrific storm of scales, fangs, and fur. Treat the biting tigers as a single Gargantuan animated object that has a speed of 0 feet and hardness 0.

THE BITING TIGERS

EL 7

hp 148 (MM 14—Gargantuan animated object)

E10. The Fangs of Diomazul (EL 8)

A ten-foot-wide, two-foot-tall well rises from the center of this circular room. Inky water fills the well nearly to its rim, obscuring its depths. A stone statue of a rearing snake rises from the center of the well. Along the length of the serpent's body are carved dozens of arms crossed over the creature's belly—each arm grips a long curved blade. The statue's serpentine head rises ten feet above the surface of the water, gazing down coolly to the northeast with amethyst eyes.

A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the many-armed serpent as a statue of the obscure Vudran deity Diomazul, the Serpent of Eighty Blades, a god noted particularly for its ruthless fury and cruelty in battle.

Trap: The well is in fact a shallow pool; the water is only four inches deep, but is dark enough to hide the fact that the lower section contains the workings of a deadly trap. Two rounds after the first person enters the room, a loud hiss issues from the statue as dozens of curved blades spring out of the well's base and spin furiously around the room, striking anyone standing on the ground within 5 feet of the well. As long as the blades continue spinning, this region around the well is considered difficult terrain.

THE FANGS OF DIOMAZUL

CR 8

Type mechanical; **Bypass** hidden switch (Search DC 30);

Search DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Onset Delay** 2 rounds; **Reset** automatic

Effect falchion blades spin around fountain (all targets on the ground within 5 feet of the room's walls; 8d6 damage per round; Reflex DC 15 negates one round of damage; blades continue spinning for 1 minute)

Treasure: Each of the statue's amethyst eyes can be pried out of the statue as a full-round action; each is worth 500 gp.

E11. The Wailing Maidens (EL 7)

Eight alcoves line this long, narrow hallway. Inside each alcove stands a human-sized upright iron casket, the image of a sobbing woman decorating its lid. The hallway's floor is smeared bright red, a mosaic of tiny red stones giving the appearance that the hall is awash in blood.

Trap: This is a cruel, two-stage trap that activates 3 rounds after someone steps on a square flanked by a pair of the iron maidens. When the trap activates, the five-foot squares not flanked by iron maidens suddenly rise, tipping up to a 45 degree angle that slopes to the south. Any creature on one of these squares slides back into a square between the iron maidens if he fails a DC 12 Balance check. A creature that slides into an occupied square falls prone. At the same time, the western iron maidens begin shrieking and wailing. Any creature adjacent to a wailing maiden must make a DC 15 Fortitude save to avoid being stunned and deafened for 1d4 rounds. On the round after the western maidens wail, the eastern maidens open to reveal an interior lined with spikes. These spikes shoot out on long shafts, nearly reaching the opposing iron maiden and impaling anything in the way. The spikes retract and re-fire once per round for the next 4 rounds, at which point the hall returns to normal. The trap takes 5 rounds to reset, during which time the area is filled with ominous clicking and grinding noises.

WAILING MAIDENS

CR 7

Type mechanical and magical; **Bypass** hidden switch (Search DC 30); **Search** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Onset Delay** 3 rounds; **Reset** automatic (after 5 rounds)

Effect stunning wail (stun and deafened for 1d4 rounds,

Fortitude DC 15 negates); spike barrage (Atk +12 melee, 1d6 spikes per target for 1d6+5 damage each); multiple targets (all targets flanked by iron maidens)

E12. The Stinging Wasps (EL 7)

The walls, floor, and ceiling of this chamber are decorated with a complex mosaic depicting an immense swarm of wasps.

Trap: This trap activates 1 round after someone enters the room. At this point, thousands of 6-inch-long needles stab out of the walls, floor, and ceiling of this room, jabbing in and out of tiny holes several times each round. The needles jab in waves, creating a beautiful rippling effect as they stab and stab. Any creature walking or climbing walls in this room is targeted by the needles. The needles continue stabbing as long as anyone remains

in the room; as long as they're stabbing, this room is difficult terrain. Each time a creature takes damage from these needles, he must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or take 2 points of Dexterity damage as magically generated toxins numb his arms and legs.

STINGING WASPS

CR 7

Type magical and mechanical; **Bypass** hidden switch (Search DC 30); **Search** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Onset Delay** 1 round; **Reset** automatic

Effect numbing needles (Atk +5 melee, 1d6 damage plus 2 Dexterity damage); multiple targets (all creatures in contact with walls, floor, or ceiling)

E13. Meditation Chamber

A six-inch-tall bronze dais on the floor in the middle of this otherwise empty room supports a polished column of black marble. The black stone seems to be vibrating softly, filling the air with a faint hum.

This pillar of black stone is another Vudran import—a large magic item known as a *sonorous stone*. The stone's magic is as much tied to its hexagonal chamber as the stone itself, and once created, requires a year to attune itself to its surroundings, at which point the stone begins to vibrate and hum softly. This vibration is soothing and relaxing—a creature that spends a minute standing within 5 feet of an active *sonorous stone* receives the benefits of a *calm emotions* spell. In addition, a creature that touches an active *sonorous stone* is targeted by a *restoration* spell that also allows him to recall up to three levels of spells he had prepared and then cast—the spells are then prepared again, just as if they had not been cast. A *sonorous stone* can be activated in this manner up to four times per month, after which it becomes dormant for one month while it rebuilds its charge.

E14. Hidden Lever

The floor of this empty room is strewn with bones and patches of mold.

The secret door in this room can be found with a DC 30 Search check. The alcove beyond the door contains a lever to rotate the Vivified Labyrinth's chambers.

E15. Threatening Murals

The walls of this oddly shaped hallway are decorated in a complex mural depicting a jungle brimming with hungry life. Predators of every sort stalk and maim and feed on dozens

of hapless men and women. In the canopy above, monkeys, snakes, and birds seem to chatter and mock the victims below.

Those who examine these murals swiftly find themselves among the victims represented. This relatively minor illusion has no further effect—it was created merely to unsettle and frighten any who view it.

E16. Transport Room

Four alcoves in the walls of this room contain floating spheres of mist, each floating three feet off the ground. Each sphere is a foot in diameter—one is black, one white, one green, and one gold. Just north of the strange floating spheres, two levers protrude from opposite walls.

This chamber serves as a way to relocate to one of four specific areas in the Vivified Labyrinth; to someone who knows the dungeon's pattern, it allows increased mobility, but to characters who don't, it could well trap someone in a room with no exit.

Each of the four spheres are in fact teleporters—merely touching a sphere is enough to send that person (or object thrown into the sphere) into another area of the dungeon, as if by *greater teleport*. The white sphere teleports anyone who touches it to area E2. The black sphere teleports anyone who touches it to area E13. The green sphere teleports anyone who touches it to area E20. The gold sphere teleports anyone who touches it to area E5.

The eastern lever allows for a rotation of the Vivified Labyrinth's chambers, but the western lever alters the destinations of the teleporters. When the western lever is in the up position, the teleporters work as detailed above. When the western lever is in the down position (as it is when the PCs enter the room), all four teleporters instead transport anyone who touches them into a random unoccupied cell in area E21; if there are no unoccupied cells, these teleporters simply won't function when this lever's in the down position.

E17. Disposal Room

The floor of this chamber is covered by a thick layer of rubble, bones, and other debris.

After victims succumb to the Vivified Labyrinth, Sivit generally disposes of the bodies in this room. Some time later, the remains are carried away by the Arkonas—typically for meals. There's currently nothing of interest in this chamber.

E18. Hall of Slumber (EL 6)

Trap: Sivit has placed a *symbol of sleep* on the floor of this room. The symbol activates as soon as it is looked at.

SYMBOL OF SLEEP

CR 6

Type spell; Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger sight; Reset no reset

Effect spell (*symbol of sleep*; CL 14th, DC 20)

E19. Hall of Stunning (EL 8)

Trap: Sivit has placed a *symbol of stunning* on the floor of this room. The symbol activates as soon as it is looked at.

SYMBOL OF SLEEP

CR 8

Type spell; Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32

EFFECTS

Trigger sight; Reset no reset

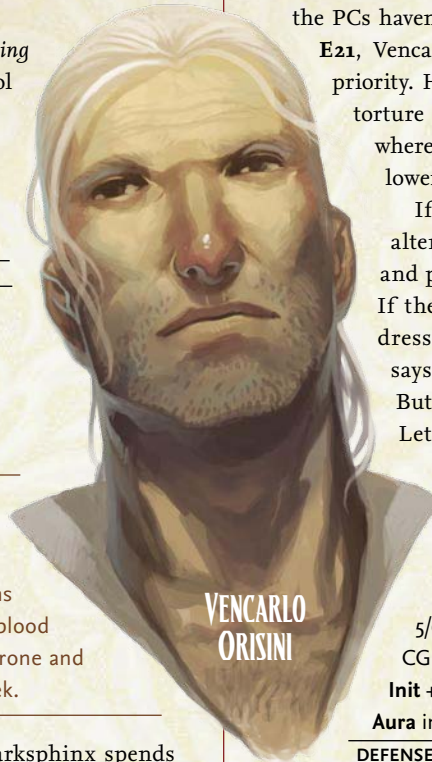
Effect spell (*symbol of stunning*; CL 14th, DC 22)

E20. Sivit's Throne

A great green throne sits atop a dais in the northern end of the room. To either side stand statues of a tiger-headed man—each holds aloft a pair of chains from which manacles dangle. Dried blood spatters the walls, floor, and even the throne and statues, filling the room with its stale reek.

This chamber is where Sivit the darksphinx spends the majority of her time, languishing on her green marble throne and daydreaming about the day she escapes her binding and sees her revenge on the Arkonas. The manacles can be unlocked with a key that Sivit keeps hidden under her throne's well-worn cushion (Search DC 20 to find), or opened with a DC 30 Open Lock check.

Creature: Often when a prisoner is placed in the Vivified Labyrinth, Sivit captures them alive and brings them back here, shackling them to one of the two statues of Bahor. She does her best to keep her playthings alive as long as she can—once they expire, she dumps the bodies in area E17. Her current victim is manacled to the western statue—dressed in tattered rags, his body a display of bruises and partially healed cuts and scrapes, head slumped, Vencarlo Orisini has languished here for days. He is currently unconscious, suffering from starvation and exhaustion, but awakens as soon as anyone heals enough damage. Although beaten and in pain, his expression brightens immediately upon seeing the PCs, and he even manages a smile as he says, "I see you got my note..." He eagerly tells the PCs that the key to his manacles is hidden under the throne's cushion if they haven't discovered this already.



Vencarlo is in a rough state. Badly wounded and without his gear, he is little help in a fight. Yet he still demands to help in every way he can. If the PCs can equip and heal him, he can be a valuable ally in the adventure's remaining fights. While Vencarlo is certainly curious to hear the PCs' story, he knows this isn't the best time to get caught up. If the PCs haven't already rescued Neolandus from area

E21, Vencarlo suggests this should be their first priority. Having spent some time himself in the torture chamber, Vencarlo can show the PCs where illusory walls hide the entrance to the lower level.

If the PCs confront Vencarlo about his alternate identity as Blackjack, he laughs and plays off the concept as if it were a joke. If the PCs present proof (such as by being dressed as Blackjack), he grows serious, then says, "Looks like you caught me—well done. But we don't have time to talk about this. Let's rescue Neolandus and get the hell out of Korvosa first—we'll have plenty of time to talk this over later."

VENCARLO ORISINI

CR 9

Male medium-age human rogue 2/fighter

5/duelist 2

CG Medium humanoid

Init +4; Senses Listen -1, Spot -1

Aura info

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 10

(+2 Dex, +2 Int)

hp 48 (9 HD; 2d6+7d10) (currently at 11 hit points and 43 nonlethal damage)

Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +0

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +10 (1d3-1 nonlethal)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

During Combat Vencarlo's favored melee weapon is the rapier, and his favored ranged weapon are thrown daggers.

In combat, he prefers to fight with Combat Expertise to full effect, both to aid in protecting his own hide and to draw out the thrill of the fight itself.

Morale Vencarlo never abandons an ally in a fight, but if alone, flees to safety if brought below 10 hp.

STATISTICS

Str 9, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 9, Cha 15

Base Atk +8; Grp +7

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Mobility, Skill Focus (bluff), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier),

Weapon Specialization (rapier)
Skills Balance +11, Bluff +12, Climb +4, Craft (weaponsmith) +7, Diplomacy +11, Disguise +7, Hide +7, Intimidate +9, Jump +8, Knowledge (local) +7, Move Silently +7, Perform (oratory) +7, Profession (teacher) +8, Sense Motive +6, Tumble +11
Languages Common, Elven, Varisian
SQ canny defense, improved reaction, trapfinding

Ad Hoc Experience Award: For rescuing Vencarlo, award PCs experience points as if they had defeated a CR 10 creature.

E21. Torture Chamber (EL 9)

This large room is lit by a heartily burning firepit in the room's center. Cages hang on chains dangling from hooks in the ceiling, while racks, strappadoes, gibbets, and other implements of torture fill the floor space. A pair of immense wooden doors stand in the wall to the north, while to the south stand several narrow cells.

Creature: This well-stocked torture chamber is where the majority of the Arkonas' prisoners end up. Although prisoners are allowed to languish for a time in a cell, the chamber's mistress eventually gets around to spending some quality time with each and every prisoner kept here. This being, named Senshiir, is a cruel outsider known as a beatific one.

Senshiir struck a bargain with Bahor several years ago, agreeing to serve him as a torturer as long as he keeps her in a regular supply of fresh victims to work upon. Although the majority of her kind seek enlightenment through brutal combat and mastery of life-ending weaponry, Senshiir has narrowed her focus a bit—she seeks enlightenment through the observation of pain and its effects on the mortal mind. She approaches her role with a sort of detached and emotionless curiosity that only a creature born in Hell could foster.

Currently, Senshiir has only one guest—since the quarantine and the Arkonas' resulting introversion, no new prisoners have come to this chamber. This, combined with Bahor's demand that the current guest not be subjected to any pain, has angered the beatific one, and she has recently decided to try her hand on some torture that doesn't leave any obvious marks on the exterior flesh. As the PCs arrive, she's just finished placing a sobbing Neolandus Kalepopolis into one of the stretching racks, but hasn't quite begun her sadistic work.



NEOLANDUS
KALEPOPOLIS

SENSHIIR, BEATIFIC ONE CR 9
 hp 85 (see page 82)

NEOLANDUS KALEPOPOLIS CR 5
 Male human aristocrat 3/ranger 3
 LG Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +11

DEFENSE

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

hp 26 (6 HD; 3d6+3d8)

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

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +4 (1d3–1 nonlethal)

Special Attacks favored enemy (giant +2)

TACTICS

During Combat Although Neolandus

trained as a ranger, he realizes his true skills are in diplomacy. As such, he only fights when there is no other choice, in which case he prefers to do so with the longbow.

Morale Neolandus won't abandon an ally, but if alone, flees to safety if brought below 15 hp.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 10, **Int** 15, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4

Feats Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Negotiator, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Track

Skills Bluff +8, Diplomacy +19, Handle Animal +8, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +8, Listen +11, Ride +9, Sense Motive +10, Spot +11, Survival +11

Languages Common, Shoanti, Varisian

SQ wild empathy +7

Development: If Senshiir is defeated, it's a simple matter to release Neolandus from the rack. He does not recognize the PCs (having been holed up in Old Korvosa during their entire rise to fame), and unless Vencarlo is with the PCs, he avoids revealing his true identity, instead claiming to be a thief named Velak who was captured by the Arkonas for robbing one of the merchants under the family's protection. As Velak, the seneschal begs to be rescued but also tells the PCs "a friend" has been sent to the Vivified Labyrinth, and that before they leave, they must rescue him as well.

Of course, even if the PCs don't know who he is initially, the rags and grime Neolandus wears are not an effective disguise. With a DC 15 Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility & royalty) check, anyone can recognize him for

who he really is. In this case, Neolandus comes clean, but continues to insist that the PCs rescue his friend Vencarlo from the labyrinth. Neolandus offers to help the PCs in any way he can, but can certainly be a greater help if he's first healed and outfitted with gear.

Once Neolandus is sure that the PCs aren't agents of the queen and that they can be trusted, he grows quite excited; here are the exact people he's been hoping to find—heroes who can act on the information he has about Queen Ileosa. Consult "Concluding the Adventure" to see what he can tell the PCs about the true peril facing Korvosa.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: For rescuing Neolandus, award PCs experience points as if they had defeated a CR 10 creature.

E22. Torturer's Home

A narrow bed, stool, and table are this room's sole furnishings—none appear to have been used in some time.

This room once belonged to a vile man who served Bahor's father as a torturer, but he was put to the sword not long after his previous master. The room has gone unused since, with the periodic exception of Senshiir, who sometimes retreats here to meditate on the floor.

E23. The Gizzard (EL 11)

This vast cavern stretches into the shadows, the true extent of its area difficult to discern due to a thick maze of wooden timbers that rises up to support the roof. A ledge winds along the eastern and northern sides of the cave, with the floor dropping away to a depth of thirty feet. Four immense stone pillars support the ceiling ten feet above. Where these pillars connect to the ceiling, a network of wooden braces and timbers radiate out in a wheel shape, forming four forty-foot-wide discs flush against the roof. Dozens of chains hang down from these beams to attach to the pillars themselves, many of which are decorated with rows and rows of bells.

The maze of support timbers is not shown on the map of this room, for the lowest 10 feet of the area are left quite open to give the chamber's denizens plenty of room to toil. Above the 10-foot-mark, though, a creature can move through this room on these tangled wooden beams with a DC 10 Climb check.

Creatures: This room is the source of the Vivified Labyrinth's power—the four pillars are in fact axles attached to the four large gears above—the Gizzard. Each of these pillars is attended by a single horrific beast, undead elephants known as rajput ambaris. Each rajput ambari is chained to a pillar, and as the levers in the Vivified Labyrinth above are triggered, chains affixed to the

labyrinth's workings cause the bells to ring and unlock the four gears, signaling the rajput ambaris to walk a quarter circle around each pillar—and in so doing, causing the immense gears above to grind and rotate. Once a rotation makes a 90-degree turn, the gears lock back into place and the rajput ambaris once again become motionless.

As long as no creatures attempt to damage them or damage the surrounding structure, the rajput ambaris remain passive. Once either of these conditions ends, though, the rajput ambaris trumpet and immediately move to defend the Gizzard. Each rajput ambari can move up to 15 feet from its pillar to attack intruders; as they fight, the chains that attach them to the pillars move and shake, causing the rooms above to shake as well, but as long as the gears remain locked, the rooms above won't shift. If at least two of the rajput ambaris are destroyed, the remaining rajput ambaris are not strong enough to rotate the chambers of the Vivified Labyrinth above and the rooms remain stuck in their current configuration.

RAJPUT AMBARI (4)
hp 104 (see page 84)

CR 7

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Although the order in which the PCs tackle the various situations and encounters in this adventure are quite fluid, the ultimate goal remains the same—rescue Neolandus and Vencarlo and then escape from the city. Even if the PCs haven't made public enemies of themselves and aren't on Queen Ileosa's growing list of "problems to solve," Neolandus certainly is. He can't stay in Korvosa—both he and Vencarlo know this. Vencarlo himself wants out of the city as well, if only to get some time to think things over and plan his next move. His recommendation to the PCs is the same.

Fortunately, Vencarlo has friends in the nearby town of Harse, the same friends to which he sent young Trinia Sabor to stay with at the start of "Seven Days to the Grave." He suggests that he, Neolandus, and the PCs find the fastest route out of the city, likely by stealing the barge in area D23. Once the fight with the enormous reefclaw there is over, this is a relatively safe way to head up the coast a few miles, as long as the PCs take care to do so under the cover of darkness or magic to avoid being spotted. Eventually, Vencarlo suggests they make their way inland to Harse, where they can catch their breath and plan their next moves.

During this voyage, Vencarlo and Neolandus ask the PCs about how they came to Old Korvosa, pumping them for information about what's been happening in the city over the past few days. When they learn about the incident involving Marcus's failed assassination attempt, their eyes grow large and Vencarlo curses under his breath—this is proof positive that Neolandus's fears have, in fact, come true. Queen Ileosa has become something more than



human—she has become the reincarnation of a draconic warlord long thought to be dead. And as long as she retains this power, as long as she wears the *Crown of Fangs*, there may be only one way to defeat her. Neolandus knows who may know the secret of defeating this evil presence and, perhaps, even saving the queen from her fate. For countless years before Chelias came to Varisia, the region known today as Korvosa had been the tribal land of the Shoanti. Although known by few, Neolandus explains that those who dwelt in the shadow of the pyramid that now serves as Castle Korvosa's foundation believed that a great evil was hidden within those ancient stones. Today, the keepers of this knowledge, if they still live, are hidden among the Shoanti tribes of the Cinderlands.

Unfortunately, the keepers of that secret are preparing for war, and Korvosa is their target.

Ileosa's Plans

As this adventure ends, the PCs are expected to flee from Korvosa—their home city is no longer safe for them, and if they hope to save Korvosa from her new tyrant, they must look for answers in the Cinderlands. Yet some PCs may balk at the thought of abandoning their home, and

may even wish to stay in Korvosa to continue the fight against Queen Ileosa there.

Unfortunately, this plan is a poor one at best. Over the days to come, Queen Ileosa's power grows. With Kazavon's tactical genius growing in her mind, she is no longer the petulant aristocrat she was when this campaign began. PCs who seek to directly oppose Queen Ileosa will face a very high-level bard with an artifact that protects her from death and a loyal band of followers who include high-level fighters, devils, and soon, even a black dragon. Things in Korvosa quickly go bad after this adventure. Taxes quickly eclipse the ability of the city's citizens to pay them, and slavery replaces honest work. Martial law enfolds the town, and every day the Gray Maidens grow more violent and brutal in their enforcement of the queen's edicts, which themselves become more and more strange and cruel as her madness grows. Through it all, Field Marshall Cressida Kroft continues to ride the delicate line between rebel and loyalist, and PCs worried about friends and family who they leave behind can rest assured that Cressida will do everything in her power to keep them safe. Yet she cannot do so forever—for as of the next adventure, Korvosa lives on borrowed time.



FACES OF THE EARTHBOUND EVILS

A PATHFINDER'S GUIDE TO RAKSHASAS

“None dared accept an invitation to the Palace of Emerald and Ivy, the home of Vanswati Jhonancore, called the Rani of Cloves or the Krait Queen. Thrice yearly the jade gates opened, admitting all who had not heard the tales. Within, silk and spices and slender ankles danced a dream of imperial luxury, of heady scents, and of stirred passions. Long into the night, the royal madam showered her visitors in coins and boascare gems, rewarding those who sung like olive thrushes and spun tales of glistening thread. And with the morning, when those who remained were drunk on honeyed wine, greasy quail, and spiced plantain, the bitter Lady of Coils would remove her face, don her scales, and make a feast of her guests.”

—Translated from *Histories of the Impossible*

Rakshasas are born on Golarion, but they are not of it. Although they possess the powers and shapes of fiends, their fates are inexorably tied to the mortal world, and there they seek to rule. The reincarnations of manipulators, traitors, and tyrants obsessed with earthly pleasures, they are the embodiments of the very nature of materialistic evil. After dying violent deaths, these spirits are so tied to worldly decadence and selfish concerns that they take shapes better reflecting the baseness of their lives and are reborn as rakshasas. Thus, in Vudra, sages have come to know these fiends as the “earthbound evils.”

HISTORY OF THE RAKSHASA

Rakshasas are not natural creatures, born of neither the gods nor the whims of nature. Rakshasa legend traces the fiends’ existence back to a single progenitor, an incredibly powerful and greedy Vudrani sorcerer-king who sought to enjoy an eternal existence of hedonistic comfort and control. Although the exact names, times, and details of this legendary figure’s actions vary among the epic poems rakshasas tell of his exploits, the broad strokes are similar enough to outline a history.

The most common name for the arcanist who became the first rakshasa is Mahka Abihcara. At some point in his life, the sorcerer became obsessed with his own mortality. Because of his great love of food, sleep, and other physical entertainments, Mahka was unwilling to become an undead creature or transform himself into some spell-crafted abomination. He also rejected any idea of paradise in an afterlife, for any such existence required subservience to a god or similar entities. Instead, Mahka conceived of an endless cycle, of living lives of pleasure and power over and over. He called this idea the *dhruva jivita*, or eternal rebirth. The philosophy of the *dhruva jivita* remains common among rakshasas.

To accomplish this, Mahka concluded he must absorb so much life that his death would not destroy all of it. As he was already ruler of a large stronghold, he set about expanding his territory through a series of violent wars. Mahka moved with his army so he could enjoy each new sight, new smell, and new cultural entertainment of the people he conquered. He also began the practice of eating the mightiest heroes of his defeated foes, in great feasts to which he invited his greatest generals and advisors. Those who refused to partake were themselves served at the next event. Each feast was a complex ritual as well, as Mahka absorbed the life force of those he ate and tied together the lives of himself and his generals.

After a long lifetime of consumption, depredation, and greed, Mahka became too frail for even his mighty spells to maintain him. He was reviled as one of the most evil beings in all Vudra, but was also honored as a great patron of the arts and collector of wisdom and knowledge. Mahka

called his generals to him, and offered each an animal, saying these would be their guides on a great journey. In most traditions there are twelve generals, but what animals they were offered vary too wildly to form a conclusion. What all stories agree upon is that Mahka himself took a tiger as his guide. Mahka explained that as long as even one of them remained alive, any of the others could return and be reincarnated as a new living creature. Then Mahka killed and consumed his tiger, eating himself to death.

Most stories agree the generals were horrified and thoroughly convinced Mahka had gone mad, but each took his animal guide and went about trying to take control of Mahka’s empire. Of course, they fought among themselves, and instead tore the empire apart. Only one, Gopa Citrasena, a spear-warrior given a mongoose guide, decried the laws of Mahka as evil and turned to building a new kingdom instead.

Thus the story would end, if not for Purusav Vagbha, a young sorcerer who became prominent 20 years after the death of Mahka. Purusav was immune to weapons, could shrug off spells, and was a master of deception. He began to reconquer the empire of Mahka Abihcara and to teach the philosophy of *dhruva jivita*. Whenever he captured one of Mahka’s old generals, Purusav killed him and his spirit guide. In time, people came to understand Purusav was Mahka, reincarnated as he had claimed. Many thought Purusav was destined to prove a greater evil than Mahka.

So he might have, if an aging Gopa Citrasena and his gray-furred mongoose had not slain him in a mighty battle atop the spires of his black, jungle-choked capital of Jayat-Von. At the end of their epic conflict, both were dead and only one of the city’s wooden spires remained standing. In his death, Purusav was revealed to be a tiger-headed monstrosity with backward-bending hands. Yet, by then, many of Mahka’s generals had been reincarnated, and it is believed Purusav was as well, shortly thereafter. According to rakshasas, so long as even one lives, all others will return in accordance with the *dhruva jivita*, and as knowledge of their foul philosophy survives and spreads, more wicked souls might be reborn as new and terrible rakshasas. Thus, like a disease upon the world, rakshasas are born and spread, the machinations of each bent on endless vice and domination of all Golarion.

ANATOMY OF THE RAKSHASA

Although the body of a typical rakshasa is essentially human in form, each has a head that takes the appearance of a creature native to Vudra. Great cats are common, especially the leopard, lion, and tiger. Snakes are equally standard, with cobras, pythons, and vipers being well represented. Canines are less common, but jackal-, fox-, and wolf-headed rakshasas are not entirely unknown. Most other rakshasas have heads in the forms of rhinos, elephants, ibex, or vultures,

although a rare individual might have a unique animal head or even—in rare cases—that of a creature foreign to Vudra. No rakshasa has a mongoose head, as mongooses instinctively hate the evil outsiders. Some rakshasas prefer to take the form of an animal-headed dwarf or elf, but their true forms have human bodies.

Rakshasas always have one reversed element of their anatomy, which gives away their fiendish nature. Common examples include having reversed hands (the most pervasive, with the palms being face-up when at rest rather than face-down), ears that face backward, elbows that bend outward, toes that go from the smallest on the inside to the big toe on the outside, or (rarely) even reversed knees.

Even when taking the form of another humanoid, at least one element of the rakshasa is backward from the norm, although they can control and change what this element is, and it need not match the reversal of their true form. Rakshasas are masters of concealing these characteristics, using body movements, loose clothes, and fake injuries.

Thus, only the most thorough scrutiny might reveal one of these deceptive outsiders' true nature.

Where their bodies are humanlike, rakshasas are always well formed and attractive. Similarly, any animalistic features they possess are always healthy and perfectly proportioned. Although rakshasas can take the shape of any humanoid, they very rarely choose forms that are less than amazing in tone and appearance. Rakshasas are not so foolish as to never use bent old men, scarred fisher-folk, or splotchy-skinned young women as disguises if they must, but when building a longer-term identity, they much prefer to be the most attractive person in a given village or city.

Older and more powerful rakshasas often have multiple heads. Each head is said to be a soul the fiend has subjugated completely, turning its eternal essence and spiritual vitality into just another tool. Such heads are grown as the rakshasa increases in power, summoned forth amid terrifying, soul-binding rituals.

Because rakshasas are the resurrections of evil mortals, they are forced outside the normal cycle of eternal fates, being neither sent to a final resting place nor returned to mortal life. Thus, they are outsiders, creatures of the boundless planes. Unlike those fiends that naturally exist in other planes of reality, rakshasas age, eat, sleep, and can be raised from the dead.

EARLY LIFE OF THE RAKSHASA

Rakshasas come into being in one of two ways: either they are born to a couple including a rakshasa parent or they are born to two non-rakshasas. It's not unusual for a rakshasa to be born to a single parent of its own species and one humanoid who has no idea she is in a mixed-species union. Such rakshasas are born appearing to be of the same species as their non-rakshasa parents, their natural gift for deception functional before they can even speak. As soon as they are old enough to understand their legacy, rakshasa children are told of their true power and form by their rakshasa parents. This rarely comes as a surprise to the young outsiders—rakshasas are the reincarnation of evil souls and come to understand their difference from their fellows at a very young age.

In the same ways, a foul soul that spontaneously resurrects as the child of unsuspecting, non-rakshasa parents fundamentally understands that it is different from its parents, yet—for a time—dependent on them for survival. Tragic tales of rakshasa young being born to innocent parents, mauling mothers as they feed or cannibalizing their brothers and sisters, fill Vudrani lore. As such, new parents in the Impossible Kingdoms are ever watchful of their newborns and rely on the prognostications of priests and wise women to determine if their children's souls are clean. Sometimes even these thorough divinations fail, though, leading to the



occasional stoning or drowning of innocents as paranoid communities mistake destructive or otherwise “touched” children for *parivaka*—devil children. Even worse, occasionally, young rakshasas are not detected at all, and like wolves raised by sheep, they invariably destroy the families that sheltered them.

Rakshasas mature quickly, but often hide this fact from any non-rakshasas they grow up with. By the age of 14, a rakshasa is fully mature, although it can continue to take the form of a younger humanoid if it chooses. Rakshasas otherwise age like elves, giving them lives of up to 5 centuries to build personal empires and acquire vast wealth. Unlike most outsiders, rakshasas can grow old and die of age, but their ability to change shape allows them to look young for their whole lives.

In families comprised of multiple rakshasas, the relationship between parent and child is surprisingly similar to that of a normal family. There are strict rules, and punishment for violating them is harsh, but a strong loyalty also exists between the two. A rakshasa child sees the advantage of an older guardian to protect both the family’s identity and its position, while the elder rakshasa gains a future ally and aide. As for the non-rakshasa family members, most rakshasas have little regard for those not of their kind and rarely reveal their true identities. They are sometimes possessive of these non-rakshasas, but they feel no love—the attachment being similar to a human and a useful work animal. When finally they do leave a community they’ve hidden in, the rakshasas often kill and consume their non-rakshasa family members as an honor.

A rakshasa raised in a community of its kind leads a somewhat different childhood. Rakshasas are ordered members of a caste system, knowing from birth their place among their own kind. While growing up, they are trained and watched by older rakshasas for any sign of mercy or disorganization, neither of which is tolerated. They are also taught about their destined right to rule over weaker races, and the natural blessings granted to them by fate to accomplish this. If non-rakshasas are present, the young are encouraged to emulate and fool them as preparation for hiding their identities as adults.

SOCIETY OF THE RAKSHASA

One cannot understand rakshasas without understanding their belief in castes. Rakshasas believe that each and every creature in the universe has a proper role to play, and that success comes from understanding one’s role and working to improve it. Rakshasas don’t see castes as good or evil, but rather in purely pragmatic terms. To them, victory comes through rigid application of their racial and personal superiority over the lesser creatures of the universe. Fighting against those of a different rakshasa caste is a pointless waste of time and resources. Rakshasas

RAKSHASAS IN REAL WORLD

Mention of these shape-shifting demon illusionists dates back to some of the earliest Vedic texts in Indian history. According to legend, central India and Sri Lanka was rife with rakshasas in the times of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Most rakshasas were forest-dwelling cannibals who raided villages and devoured people as they willed. Supernaturally strong, they were nigh-invincible to mortals, although one particularly mighty hero named Bhima once killed a rakshasa in single combat (he later married a rakshasa wife and begot a son by her).

According to the epic *Ramayana*, King Ravana ruled over a kingdom of rakshasas. Ravana was a Sanskrit sage who worshipped Shiva, the ravager god. Legend purports that Ravana feared beheading and beseeched Shiva for a special blessing. He grew several heads so that no one blow could strike him down. The center of Ravana’s power was the legendary Lanka city located on the Nuwara Eliya hills of present-day Sri Lanka.

A report from the *Ramayana* by the monkey hero Hanuman, who secreted himself in Lanka, tells: “The Rakshasas sleeping in the houses were of every shape and form. Some of them disgusted the eye, while some were beautiful to look upon. Some had long arms and frightful shapes; some were very fat and some were very lean; some were mere dwarfs and some were prodigiously tall. Some had only one eye and others only one ear. Some had monstrous bellies, hanging breasts, long projecting teeth, and crooked thighs; whilst others were exceedingly beautiful to behold and clothed in great splendour. Some had two legs, some three legs, and some four legs. Some had the heads of serpents, some the heads of donkeys, some the heads of horses, and some the heads of elephants...”

of higher caste should be respected for their great power and those of lower caste should be pressed into willing service to expand the holdings of their betters as they seek greater wealth and influence for themselves.

There are seven castes in rakshasa society (from lowest to greatest): *pagala* (traitors), *goshta* (food), *adhura* (novices), *darshaka* (servants), *paradeshi* (rakshasa-kin), *hakima* (lords), and *samrata* (lords of lords). The rakshasa caste system encompasses not just all of rakshasa society, but all of life—although only rakshasas can attain the greatest stations. While rakshasas believe individuals are born with a destiny for a particular caste, they accept movement between the castes. A rakshasa who becomes a *hakima* was born destined to be one, and a failed *samrata* who is reduced to a *hakima* had that as its fate from the moment it first drew breath. Being acknowledged as a member of a higher caste than one was born in is a great honor, while losing one’s caste is among the greatest disgraces a rakshasa can suffer. Of course, all rakshasas believe they themselves are fated to become *samrata*, even if it is not obvious to others. This system means rakshasas believe everyone is born into

a station, but they themselves can change castes as they move toward their “inevitable” final rank.

The most disgraceful rakshasa caste is the *pagala*, who have become either chaotic or good as a result of magic or some unthinkable upbringing. Rakshasas do not blame *pagala* for their unfortunate status but also cannot allow it to go on. If the *pagala* might be useful, another rakshasa may try to return it to a proper ordered and nefarious state of mind. Failing that, rakshasas see killing a *pagala* as a necessity, so it might be reincarnated as a “true” rakshasa.

Any non-rakshasa is seen as *goshta* unless it is one of the rare *paradeshi*. The closest translation for *goshta* is “food,” which is an important part of rakshasa thinking. Absolutely any thinking creature that is neither a rakshasa nor an evil leader worthy of having rakshasas serve it is food. That is the cosmic role of other creatures, and rakshasas see nothing whatsoever wrong with accepting a *goshta* family’s hospitality, sleeping under its roof, and eating it in the morning. To the earthbound evils, that’s what such creatures are there for.

All rakshasas who are not yet fully adult fall into the same caste, the *adhura*, or “novice.” These young rakshasas are typically loyal to a parent or older sibling, though if that family member has a lord, the *adhura* reveres that master as well. An *adhura* is expected to be as serious and ordered as any adult, as these are innate traits of the species and not learned behaviors. An *adhura* is given some leeway for making mistakes, befriending those who cannot further their conquests, and showing insufficient ambition—behavior unacceptable for mature members of other castes. Upon reaching age 50, the *adhura* sheds this station and joins the caste of his lower-ranking parent.

The lowest caste of true, adult rakshasa is that of the *darshaka*, or “servants.” These base rakshasas are expected to improve their wealth and power through any means necessary. Most *darshaka* begin laying out long-term plans while seeking a lord worthy of their service, but some decide to strike out immediately on their own. These are both seen as valid means of acquiring wealth, power, and material pleasures, with no bias toward those who seek to serve another, as long as whatever master they choose is able to expand both their own holdings and those of their servants. Even these lowest of rakshasas are formidable and are the most likely to be encountered preying upon communities, hunting for lairs and power in ancient dungeons, or cementing power bases in criminal underworlds abroad. *Darshaka* must obey the will of higher-ranking rakshasas—either their lords or those more powerful than their lords, although such acts often prove beneficial and include rewards for service. Among *darshaka*, rank is determined by a precise accounting of slaves and displays of magical prowess.

The rare non-rakshasa who is powerful, organized, and ambitious enough to attract rakshasa servants is considered

to be of the *paradeshi* caste, or rakshasa-kin. Just because one rakshasa sees a non-rakshasa lord as a *paradeshi*, though, does not mean all rakshasas accept the rank. If a higher- or lower-ranking rakshasa decides a rakshasa-kin is actually just food, that rakshasa feels duty-bound to prove it, defeat the imposter, and eat the creature. Doing so allows the killer to claim all of that *paradeshi*’s rakshasa servants as his own—one of the few ways a rakshasa can improve his caste. Rakshasa-kin are typically devils, although some particularly malevolent dragons, hags, efreeti, and mortal wizards or clerics sometimes claim the title.

Above the *darshaka* and *paradeshi* are the *hakima*—the rakshasa lords. *Hakima* measure rank among themselves by the number of rakshasa servants they control (*paradeshi* servants might be useful, but they bring no rank). These rakshasas typically dominate sizable territories, including several communities or an entire city. Their works often stretch to manipulating non-rakshasa governments, corrupting religious bodies from within, or engaging in shadow wars against other *hakima*, with their servants ranging as far as their whims dictate.

Even higher than the *hakima* are the rare *samrata*, the lords of lords, the most respected rakshasa rank. Rakshasa society expects *samrata* to take over kingdoms, lay waste to opposing empires, and make bids to control vast sections of the world. Failure to do so is proof the caste was not the rakshasa’s final fate, resulting in other rakshasas refusing to serve. Unsurprisingly, *samrata* are driven to expand far and fast, and often find themselves the foes of coalitions of neighboring rulers. *Samrata* are rare, and most keep the rank for only a year or two, but history has records of *samrata* who built vast, evil empires.

RAKSHASA RELIGION

While rakshasas are forced to admit the gods have powers greater than their own, most rakshasas scoff at the concept of divinity. The gods are among the most powerful beings in existence to be sure, but too many examples of powerful, ambitious, or merely lucky mortals attaining divinity exist for rakshasas to pay religious homage to such creatures. Rakshasas see their own transitions from mortals to otherworldly beings as marks of their own fathomless potential and the initial steps on the path to godhood. Thus, as a race, rakshasas deny the worship of deities, although they welcome alliances with the servants of such peerlessly potent beings.

Despite their racial heresy, some rakshasas are dedicated priests. Like many in Vudra, rakshasas often dedicate themselves spiritually to a concept or ideology rather than a specific deity. Unlike most others, rakshasas consider concepts such as greed, ambition, tyranny, and raw power to be worthy of religious veneration, and many meditate on the value of seeking such traits in themselves.

RAKSHASA WEAKNESSES

The skin of a rakshasa is remarkably resistant to physical damage, able to ignore or greatly reduce most weapon attacks. Even holy weapons only do significant harm if they can easily penetrate the rakshasa's skin and reach the less-resistant flesh beneath. Rakshasas are well aware of this, and target foes with bows, crossbows, or spears first. Of course, sages of Vudra—and, to a lesser extent, the world over—are aware of this as well, and more holy piercing weapons are created in this region than anywhere else in the world.

This "weakness," however, is only a removal of a rakshasa's extraordinary defenses. Unlike a vampire, rakshasas don't take extra effects from these weapon designs. Rakshasas often go to great lengths to disguise their true nature (easy enough given their shape-changing power) to prevent foes from seeking a weapon that can more easily hurt them. If a group of opponents seems particularly clever, a rakshasa might well take the form of some other evil creature, such as a fiendish humanoid, lycanthrope, or vampire, to misdirect efforts to discover its exact type.

The only other true weakness of a rakshasa is its ambition and greed. A rakshasa never has enough slaves, wealth, power, land, or magic. While other evil creatures can sometimes be satisfied with what they have, a rakshasa never is, and can sometimes be tempted into mistakes with the right material as bait. A rakshasa is not so foolish as to step into an area with gold scattered about, but it might be drawn to an old ruin with rumors of a recently discovered treasure, or enticed to lead its forces into a town supposedly rich with plunder. Taking advantage of rakshasa greed is a dangerous game, however, because the prize must be great enough to overcome their natural caution, and rakshasas are powerful enough that they often survive traps laid for them and walk free with the very lure that brought them, both richer and stronger as a result.

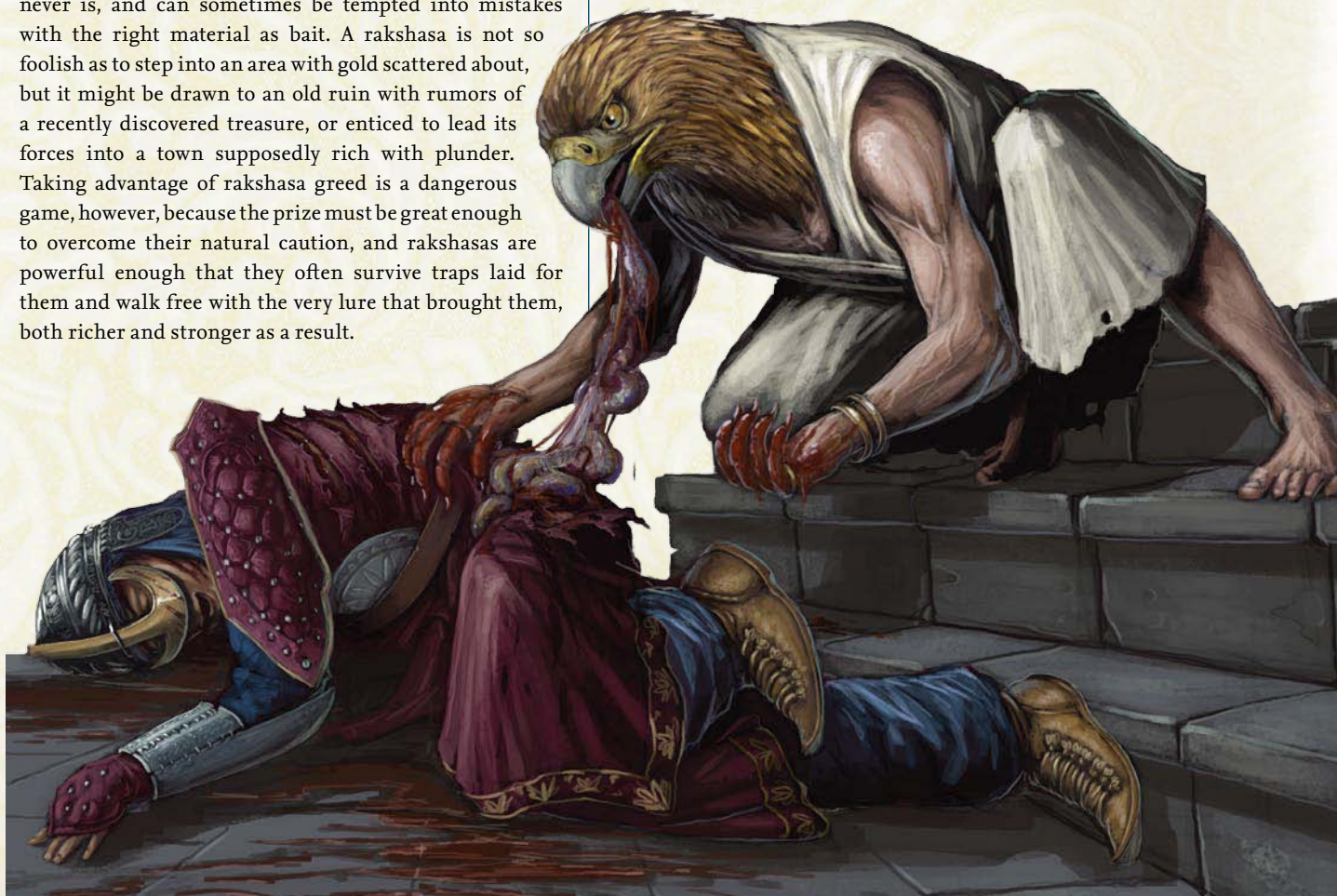
RAKSHASA ADVENTURES

Subtle and patient, rakshasas' quests for dominance and wealth can take them far from their native Vudra to nearly any land in Golarion. GMs interested in creating their own plots involving these earthbound evils might consider the following hooks.

Beachhead: A rakshasa *samrata* covets the exotic wealth of the west and sends his three *adhura* sons to establish individual bases there, funneling riches, magic, and exotic slaves back to his court in Vudra. When the artistic and beautiful scions of several noble families go missing—kidnapped gifts for the fiendish lord—the lesser local rakshasas must be discovered and dealt with before they send their captives all the way to the Impossible Kingdoms.

Betraying the Betrayers: A far-reaching rakshasa plot to topple a local government and replace its leaders is revealed—by another rakshasa. This turncoat claims to have turned from the malicious ways of his people, having even joined the church of Sarenrae, but can this tiger-headed menace truly change his stripes?

Faces of Evil: A local brigand lord puts out the call for skilled warriors to combat another underworld warlord moving in on her territory. In truth, those who answer become embroiled in a war between two disguised rakshasa rivals, each determined to claim the other's soul as its own.





THE RED MANTIS

THOSE WHO WALK IN BLOOD

“We assured Inabrin that he was quite safe with twenty Hellknights’ blades around him, but his unease continued through midmorning, and by noontime had spread among the wagon men and caravan regulars. He begged me to board the windows, reinforce the locks, and taste the water in the fresh carafe the servant brought, so I did, yet nothing set him at ease.

“The next morning we found Inabrin. He drowned in his own blood when they cut his throat. No sound in the night, no trace of a killer, nothing but a vexed detachment of Hellknights and a corpse they were supposed to keep breathing. That was the first time I believed the Red Mantises were more than myth. The first time I saw their deadly handiwork with my own eyes.”

—Savanda Thrice-Slain, Prologue of Lives Writ in Blood

All who have wronged, who have enemies, or who cling to coveted power fear the Red Mantis. For decades, this order of peerless assassins has stalked the nights and nightmares of their victims. Dutiful and discreet, professional and deadly effective, these killers' blades cull commoners and counts with equal ease, with no spell, secret safe house, or army of guardians comforting those taken as a mantis's mark. And for those with the gold and guile to attract the attentions of the Red Mantis, their coin buys the assassins' promise that those slain by their sawtoothed sabers do not just die, but will never rise again.

Some whisper the Red Mantis are death cultists, others murmur they are an insidious brotherhood of fiends for hire, but no one speaks of the Mantis without the tremble of fear on their lips. The scars of their murderous blades stretch through history, taking bloody prominence in modern times with the public assassination of the famed Chelioxian Duke Kotaros in 4609. History is fraught with mysterious demises of generals on the eve of key battles and heroes laid low in their beds by unseen knives. Thus, many believe the Red Mantis have murdered for centuries, not just for coin and profit, but to rework the world to suit ancient, mysterious, and doubtlessly blood-soaked ambitions.

THE WAY OF THE MANTIS

The Red Mantis operates throughout Golarion, although they hide their presence from the common people under veils of subtlety and shadow. In criminal circles the world over, they are known as the finest assassins for hire, whose zealous commitment to death exceeds professionalism. Those who hire the Red Mantis pay for annihilation, as the assassins guarantee not just a mark's death, but an absolute and permanent end. Through arcane and secret methods, the Mantis guarantees that those they kill are the correct target—not some clever magical duplicate or sacrificial lamb. In addition, they keep tabs on their victims even after death, and should a target return from the dead their mark is renewed, the assassins moving to eliminate their prey as many times as it takes.

Red Mantis assassins are purists. They do not dabble in other illegitimate enterprise to the extent that many of Golarion's shadowy guilds do, letting nothing distract them from the purity of the assassin's art. Consummate professionals, they kill by contract alone and choose not to muddy the needs of their order by allying with other criminal organizations. Their claws reach far, though, and

agents of the Red Mantis, whether furtive or overt, maintain ties with governments, religious orders, guilds, and merchant groups throughout Avistan and Garund. Thus, there is little they cannot obtain if a mission requires it.

PATH OF THE MANTIS GOD

Although few outside the Red Mantis realize it, the assassins' effectiveness springs not just from obsession and elitism, but true religious fervor. To a Mantis assassin, completion of a contract isn't about money or reputation, but rather furthering the goals of his merciless organization and doing honor to its enigmatic patron deity, the Mantis God, He Who Walks in Blood. Little is known of the Red Mantis's faith, but the *Book of Maan, Path of Ways*, and several other ancient religious texts mention Achaekek, a servant of the deities and the terrible assassin of the gods. It is said that he sleeps among the Outer Rifts of the planes, bathed in the blood of heretics and worshipers, a killer to fell those

who would rival the true gods or to destroy worlds past redemption. Thus, the leaders and highest-ranking initiates of the Red Mantis see their work and worship as one and the same. Every life claimed delights their dark god and spills blood into the pool of his immortal rest.

In homage to its deity, the Red Mantis refuses all contracts on rightful monarchs. Just as the Mantis God serves as the weapon of the gods, so too do members of the Red Mantis see themselves as agents of righteous death. They view the murder of kings and queens as blasphemy, honoring the right of rulers as the mortal world's parallel of godhood. Anyone else, though—even religious figures, princes, the leaders of non-monarchies, or the mightiest of generals—are food for He Who Walks in Blood. (More details on the Mantis God can be found on page 80.)

EMPLOYING THE RED MANTIS

Those who seek the deadly services of the Mantis do so at great risk. Word spread among the shadier personalities in any city eventually reaches the assassins, but more remarkable is the Red Mantis's ability to select their clients before they even know they have need of the guild's lethal services. Many a man betrayed by his brother or merchant cheated by a rival finds himself approached by a businesslike agent of the Red Mantis, able to recount every misdeed with uncanny accuracy and offering absolute vengeance for a price. This payment is often a sum set in gold, but the assassins also accept compensation in the





form of possessions, titles to land, and—as nefariously as any servants of Asmodeus—future favors. Stories also tell of Mantis agents leaving methods of payment vague until after their work is complete, forcing their employer to part with the things they value most, like athletic daughters or charming sons. The method of determining the price the Red Mantis requests for an assassination is known to the order's leaders alone. Where a fickle merchant-baron might be dispatched for a mere handful of coins, the price for killing a cheating landlord could cost the buyer his family's most treasured heirlooms. In any case, the assassins' fees are as much a factor of who wants the killing performed as who is marked for death. When the time to pay finally comes, those who renege are condemned. Although they might flee far and hide for years, the lives of those who cheat the Red Mantis are sure to end on sawtoothed blades.

LEADERS OF THE RED MANTIS

Beneath the Mantis God, agents of the Red Mantis answer to a cabal of deadly assassin lords known as the Vernai, the High Killers. Comprised of several dozen master assassins, tried in the field and with reputations written

in blood, the Vernai lead the organization and interpret the will of He Who Walks in Blood from their hidden island redoubt, the Crimson Citadel. The majority of these leaders are known as mistresses, although the rare master exists. Each mistress has a particular country or region of influence, deciding where to send agents, choosing what marks to act upon, and directing subordinates to further the order's will. Above these mistresses stands the Blood Mistress, the leader of the Red Mantis and most potent vassal of the Mantis God, a title currently held by the aging Blood Mistress Jakalyn. This deadly honor can only be held by a woman, and brings with it great influence—yet not absolute control—over the Vernai, command of any individual Mantis agent, unquestioned authority in interpreting the will of the Mantis God, and sole access to the Sarzari Library.

THE CRIMSON CITADEL

Although many believe this cabal of knives and death is based in Ilizmagorti, the scum-tide city of smugglers, demon whores, and degenerate pirates, the Red Mantis's true stronghold lies deep in the shadowy jungles of Mediogalti,

THE RED MANTIS

inland of the port city. A majestic castle shrouded by the tropical canopy of leaf and vine, borne on a crag of obsidian, is where the Red Mantis train its finest and pay respects to its inscrutable deity. The tales of those who claim to have seen the assassins' citadel describe it as a dream above the jungle—a sinister palace, both wondrous and terrible—where within a crimson waterfall of fresh gore flows over a towering idol to He Who Walks in Blood. This is the Crimson Citadel.

The lair of the Red Mantis holds dozens of floors and hides countless halls and traps, being divided into three areas. The mantises call the lower levels of the castle Ruvári, the Ruby Halls. These darkened corridors are filled with poisoned razors and countless lethal traps. Poisonous beasts and monsters collected from the world over also stalk the bloodstained labyrinth, rare terrors that hunt noiselessly and kill with venomous thoughts. This is the Red Mantis's training ground, where the finest of the order prove their worth against trials that murderously cull all but the most skillful initiates.

Matching Ruvári's level of lethality with unbridled opulence are the central halls of Sivlamlik, the Honeyed Gardens, a sprawling complex of pleasure groves where guardian slaves and mind-whirling narcotics flow as freely as the blood-bubbling fountains of this gory paradise. Here, the Red Mantis's elite rest among the rewards of a thousand nefarious deeds, collecting themselves for future missions and paying homage to their crimson god. While most members of the Red Mantis only visit these halls for a day or two—so as to not let their murderous edges dull—for the halls' warrior-slaves, the Honeyed Gardens are a lavish prison. Most of these deadly servants are men—paragons of physical beauty, strength, and fitness—for the predominantly female leaders of the Mantis to enjoy and dispose of afterward.

Collectively, the spires of the Crimson Citadel form the Odalis, the Lavish Heart, the living quarters, meeting halls, workshops, and treasuries of the Red Mantis elite. While most Red Mantises never even visit the citadel, the finest assassins, most cunning minds, and members of the Vernai make their home in this lofty assassin's refuge. From here, the work of every Red Mantis member is considered and coordinated, marks are selected and missions meted out, all carefully chosen to advance the organization's needs and mysterious goals. Somewhere within Odalis lies the Faynas, the Iron Heart, the hidden home of the Blood Mistress, the order's greatest treasures and weapons, and the Sarzari Library—said to be among the largest collections of lost knowledge in Garund.



MASK OF THE MANTIS

As much as they are veils to hide the assassins' identities, the insectile masks of the Red Mantis are tools of murder and death and symbols of dread to those they hunt.

The equally distinct weapon of the Red Mantis, the sawtooth sabre, appears in the *Curse of the Crimson Throne Player's Guide*.

MANTIS MASK

Aura faint divination; CL 3rd

Slot head; Price 6,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

Upon becoming a Red Mantis assassin, a new recruit is gifted a *mantis mask* by his superior. These masks cover the entire face, and give the assassin the well-known look fostered by the organization over the years—an assassin is expected to wear his mask at all times while on a job.

A *mantis mask* has three daily charges. The wearer can spend a charge to gain darkvision to a range of 60 feet, the effects of *see invisibility*, the effects of *deathwatch*, or a +5 competence bonus on Spot checks. Once a charge is spent, the effect granted persists for 30 minutes before fading. Multiple effects can be active simultaneously. Charges used replenish after 24 hours.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *darkvision*, *see invisibility*, *deathwatch*; **Cost** 3,000 gp, 240 XP

RED MANTIS ASSASSIN

Initiates of the Red Mantis begin their training as rogues or multiclassed fighter/rogues, as stealth and skill at arms are both prerequisites to joining the order. Initiates are subjected to rigorous brainwashing and indoctrination into the convoluted religion of He Who Walks in Blood, a regimen of trials and tortures that strips away fear of death and replaces it with fear of failure. Those who survive become the claws of the Red Mantis, elite killers who deal death with impunity born of unnatural skill: the sly and subtle Red Mantis assassins.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Red Mantis assassin, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Lawful evil.

Skills: Hide 8 ranks, Intimidate 5 ranks, Move Silently 8 ranks.

Feats: Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (sawtooth sabre), Weapon Finesse

Class Features

The following are class features of the Red Mantis assassin prestige class.

Red Mantis Assassin

Hit Die: D8

Base						Spells per Day				
Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Sneak attack +1d6, Weapon Focus	0	—	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	Prayer attack	1	—	—	—	—
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Red shroud	2	0	—	—	—
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Call mantis, sneak attack +2d6	2	1	—	—	—
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Resurrection sense, Weapon Specialization	3	2	0	—	—
6th	+4	+2	+5	+5	Mantis form	3	2	1	—	—
7th	+5	+2	+5	+5	Sneak attack +3d6, Greater Weapon Focus	3	3	2	0	—
8th	+6	+2	+6	+6	Blood mantis form, fading	4	3	2	1	—
9th	+6	+3	+6	+6	Mantis doom, Greater Weapon Specialization	4	3	3	2	0
10th	+7	+3	+7	+7	Death mantis form, sneak attack +4d6	4	4	3	2	1

Skills (6 + Int bonus per level) Appraise, Balance, Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Disguise, Escape Artist, Heal, Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (religion), Listen, Move Silently, Search, Spot, Tumble.

Spells: Beginning at 1st level, a Red Mantis assassin gains the ability to cast a small number of arcane spells. To cast a spell, the Red Mantis assassin must have an Intelligence score of at least 10 + the spell's level. Red Mantis assassin bonus spells are based on Intelligence, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + the spell level + the caster's Int modifier (if any). When the Red Mantis gets 0 spells of a given level, she gains only bonus spells. A Red Mantis assassin prepares and casts spells just as a bard does, and does not suffer arcane spell failure chance when wearing light armor.

At 6th, 8th, and 10th level, a Red Mantis assassin can choose to learn a new spell in place of one she already knows. The new spell's level must be the same as that being exchanged.

Sneak Attack (Ex): This is exactly like the rogue ability of the same name. The extra damage increases by +1d6 at 4th level, 7th level, and 10th level. This stacks with sneak attack bonuses from other sources.

Sawtooth Mastery (Ex): A Red Mantis assassin continues to improve at using the sawtooth sabre as she gains levels. At 1st level, she gains Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat. At 5th level, she gains Weapon Specialization (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat. At 7th level, she gains Greater Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat. At 9th level, she gains Greater Weapon Specialization (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat.

Prayer Attack (Su): At 2nd level, a Red Mantis assassin gains this deadly attack. The mantis must be within 30 feet of her victim and must be visible to her victim. While wielding a sawtooth sabre, the assassin can begin weaving her weapon in a hypnotic pattern, fascinating her victim. Her victim can resist fascination by making a Will save against DC 10 + the Red Mantis assassin's class level + the Red Mantis assassin's Charisma modifier. By concentrating, the Red Mantis assassin can maintain this fascination, and after 3 rounds of fascination, she may make a coup de grace attack against her fascinated target—if her victim is slain by this attack,

he is typically beheaded. A victim who survives the coup de grace is no longer fascinated, but the Red Mantis assassin can attempt a new prayer attack against the same victim if she so desires. Activating or concentrating on maintaining a prayer attack does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

The victim can escape fascination before this coup de grace attack if the Red Mantis assassin ceases to concentrate on maintaining the effect. Alternatively, the victim may attempt a new saving throw to resist the fascination each time a potential threat (other than the fascinating Red Mantis assassin) approaches him. Taking damage from any source automatically breaks the victim's fascination, as can a fascinated creature's ally who takes a standard action to shake the victim free of the effects. This assassination attack is therefore most effective against foes who are alone.

Red Shroud (Su): At 3rd level, the Red Mantis assassin gains the supernatural ability to create a veil of swirling red mist around herself a number of times per day equal to her Constitution bonus (minimum once per day) as a move-equivalent action. The red shroud persists for 1 round per Red Mantis assassin level. As long as the shroud is active, the Red Mantis assassin gains a +1 dodge bonus to her Armor Class and fast healing equal to her Constitution bonus (minimum of fast healing 1). The mist is supernaturally resistant to wind and cannot be dissipated by such before its duration ceases. When a Red Mantis assassin is slain, at the moment of her death, she can choose to remain corporeal or disintegrate into a cloud of red mist that disperses quickly, leaving behind no trace of the assassin's existence.

Call Mantis (Sp): At 4th level, a Red Mantis assassin may cast a specialized version of *summon monster IV* once per day to summon 1d4+1 fiendish giant praying mantises or 1d3 half-fiend giant praying mantises. Both types are blood red, and thus do not gain the typical bonus on Hide checks in foliage.

Resurrection Sense (Su): At 5th level, a Red Mantis assassin becomes supernaturally sensitive to the movement

of the souls of those she killed. This allows the Red Mantis assassin a chance to notice if anyone slain by her within the last year is brought back to life. If such an event occurs, the Red Mantis assassin notices the resurrection unless it takes place on another plane or in an area that prevents scrying effects, and even then, she can sense the previously assassinated life the instant it returns to Golarion or steps out of the protected area. The sensation does not tell the mantis where the resurrected victim is located, only which victim has returned to life. If a Red Mantis assassin senses such a resurrection, she is honor-bound to track down the previous target and attempt to kill him again.

Mantis Form (Su): At 6th level, a red mantis assassin may change into a giant praying mantis, as per the spell *polymorph*. She may make this change once per day. The mantis form is blood red in hue, and as such does not gain the bonus to Hide checks in foliage. While in mantis form, the Red Mantis assassin may cast a quickened still silent *fear* spell once every hour. She may remain in mantis form a number of hours equal to her class level.

At 8th level, the mantis form grows more powerful, and is known as the blood mantis. In this form, the Red Mantis assassin gains a +2 bonus to Strength and Constitution, and causes 2 points of Constitution damage when she makes a successful bite attack as she drains blood from her foe.

At 10th level, the mantis form gains distinctive black stripes and black eyes—this is the death mantis. She now gains a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution while in this form, and her first successful attack in a round also imparts a negative level. Each negative level inflicted heals 5 points of damage to the Red Mantis assassin. The save DC to remove this level is 10 + the Red Mantis assassin's level + her Constitution modifier. In addition, while in death mantis form, the Red Mantis assassin gains DR 10/good.

Fading (Su): At 8th level, the Red Mantis assassin gains the ability to momentarily and partially fade into the Ethereal Plane. This is a free action that can be used a number of times each day equal to the Red Mantis assassin's Constitution modifier (minimum once per day). Whenever the Red Mantis assassin is struck by a weapon or is forced to make a Reflex saving throw, she may choose to fade (she must choose to do so before damage is rolled for the attack, but after the hit is confirmed or the Reflex saving throw is made). This grants a 50% miss chance for that attack, or a 50% chance to evade all effects of the attack that forced the Reflex saving throw. Fading represents an additional miss chance; if the Red Mantis is currently protected by a second effect that provides a miss chance (such as concealment), opponents must check twice to determine if the hit strikes.

Mantis Doom (Su): At 9th level, a Red Mantis assassin may call forth a mantis doom as a full round action, targeting any one creature within 100 feet. This ability summons a swarm of fiendish mantises that quickly shroud the targeted creature

RED MANTIS SPELL LIST

Red Mantis assassins choose their spells from the following list:

1st Level: *animate rope, cause fear, change self, darkvision, detect magic, expeditious retreat, feather fall, ghost sound, inflict light wounds, jump, magic fang, obscurement, silent image, spider climb, true strike*

2nd Level: *alter self, blur, cat's grace, darkness, fog cloud, hold person, inflict moderate wounds, invisibility, keen edge, levitate, minor image, scare, see invisibility, summon swarm*

3rd Level: *clairaudience/clairvoyance, deeper darkness, fear, fly, gaseous form, giant vermin, inflict serious wounds, major image, rage, scrying*

4th Level: *dimension door, improved invisibility, inflict critical wounds, insect plague, modify memory, phantasmal killer, polymorph self, solid fog*

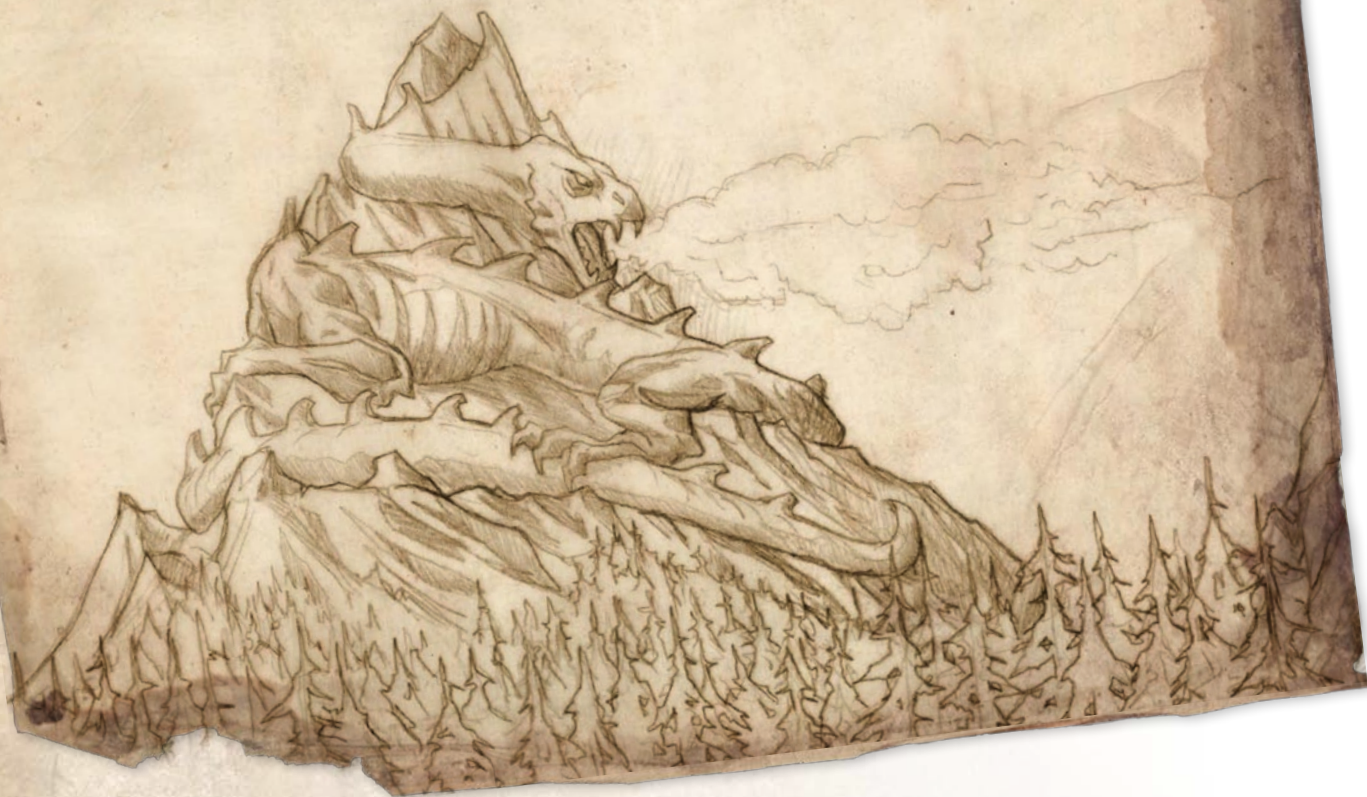
5th Level: *mark of justice, nightmare, prying eyes, slay living, word of recall*

RED MANTIS ASSASSIN SPELLS KNOWN

Level	Spells Known				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	2*	—	—	—	—
2nd	3	—	—	—	—
3rd	3	2*	—	—	—
4th	4	3	—	—	—
5th	4	3	2*	—	—
6th	4	4	3	—	—
7th	4	4	3	2*	—
8th	5	4	4	3	—
9th	5	4	4	3	2*
10th	5	5	4	4	3

*Provided the Red Mantis assassin has sufficient Intelligence to have a bonus spell of this level.

and begin biting and cutting away at exposed flesh. The Red Mantis assassin rolls 1d8 per class level and compares the result to the target's current hit points. If the result equals or exceeds the target's hit points, the target is immediately slain by the swarm of mantises and his body (but not gear) is devoured. If the result is lower than the target's current hit points, he takes nonlethal damage equal to the amount rolled and becomes panicked for 1d4 rounds. He can negate the panic and halve the damage with a successful Reflex save against DC 10 + the Red Mantis assassin's class level + the Red Mantis assassin's Charisma modifier. The swarm's attack is non-magical, so spell resistance does not apply. The mantis doom's damage penetrates damage reduction as if it were a magic and evil weapon. Each mantis only does one point of damage on a bite, so any damage reduction it cannot bypass grants complete immunity to this effect.



THIN AIR

26 Rova, 4707 AR

There's a comfort to the wilderness I don't find in cities. Everywhere I travel I see life of all different types, each creature thriving in its own particular environment. From bogs to forests, mountain slopes to grassy plains, every living thing in Golarion has a place to call home.

Except, perhaps, in the mountains of Belkzen. Never have I seen such an inhospitable place. Peaks seem to spring fully formed from the rocky plains. Sheer cliffs drop so suddenly that I keep an incantation to slow my fall always at the forefront of my mind. The lower mountains slope sharply into points as menacing as a row of spearheads. Not a shrub or bush grows in this rocky soil, and crags of razored stone jut from the rock walls, sharp enough to tear a hole right through my cloak and shirt and into my skin. I think the only way this place could be less hospitable is if it were actually on fire.

My mood darkened steadily this morning as Joskan and I climbed further into the hills. The sun beat down in the empty sky, and I saw no birds, no snakes—not even any insects. I almost would have welcomed a dragonwasp. The lack of any activity made me anxious, and the vastness of the empty sky made it seem as if the sun weren't moving at all.

By the time dusk finally settled we had covered a good deal of ground. I took out my wayfinder, and though we'd had to wind and double back a bit due to the restrictive mountain trails, I guessed we had made progress.

There was no wood with which to build a fire, but the night air wasn't too cold. Joskan volunteered the first watch and I found the least rocky patch of ground on which to sleep. As I drifted off, a crag of rock digging into one shoulder and gritty mountain-dust clinging to my face, I thought a person would have to be utterly, raving insane to try and make a home in this wasteland.

I woke in darkness with terror gripping my heart. I scrambled for a weapon without knowing what was going on. I knew only that I couldn't see, that I was cold and my shoulder ached, and that I was as frightened as I'd ever been.

"Shh!" Joskan's voice brought me back to reality. I crouched beside my guide, shivering and stiff, holding my blade in numb fingers. I scanned one direction, then another, but saw nothing but vague shapes in the blackness.

"What is—" I began.

Then a howling erupted that chilled the marrow in my bones. Not a scream, not a wail, but a vicious, wordless

howl that rose from a chorus of throats to rattle over the slopes and peaks. The cacophony carried with it promises of death—and not a quick and heroic one, either. I crouched motionless, paralyzed with fear, until the howl died away. More mundane shrieks and the bangs of fists on drums followed, but the sounds did not seem to be drawing closer.

“Joskan!” My voice shook, and I wondered if I could blame it on the cold. “What in this blasted land was that?”

I could barely make out Joskan’s features in the dark, but I thought I saw a look of revulsion and fear cross his face. “Mountain orcs,” he spat.

A high-pitched screaming overlaid the savage roars. A mountain cat, perhaps, or an unfortunate traveler. I started to rise to my feet, but Joskan put a hand on my shoulder and shook his head.

“They travel in packs,” he said, “and rip apart anything they find. When they can’t find anything else, they rip apart each other. We wouldn’t last a minute against a pack of mountain-dwellers. We’ll circle around them after dawn. Can’t risk moving in the dark.”

“That’s interesting,” I managed to whisper.

“What?”

“Apparently, you do have to be totally insane to live here.”

27 Rova, 4707 AR

Joskan told me more about the highland orcs the next day, as we ventured further into the mountains rather than risk exposure in the orc-infested foothills around the pass between Varisia and Belkzen. “Raving,” “bloodthirsty,” and “savage” were his favorite adjectives.

As always, Joskan was reluctant to provide details when asked direct questions. I inferred from his stories, though, that Joskan’s people were lowlanders and somewhat more civilized—or at least organized—than their bestial cousins. “Some of them don’t even enslave their prisoners before they eat them,” he noted with a sniff. “Some say they made their homes so high on the slopes that they went mad from the thin air and from staring too long at the empty sky.” I had noticed that the higher up we climbed, the harder I had to work to keep up with Joskan. I couldn’t seem to get enough air, thin and lifeless as it was this high in the tors.

Joskan also pointed out the stirrings of life in this seemingly unlivable wasteland. What I had taken for barren earth contained burrows for the small mammals that lived in the area. Scrubby brush the color of slate clung to the ground, and once I spotted mangy mountain goats leaping from rock to rock.

I watched for the highland orcs from the night before, but saw no signs of pursuit. When I said as much to Joskan, he grunted in his particular way that I’ve yet to interpret. “What do we seek up here?” he asked. “I’ve no wish to stay any longer than we must.”

The hard weight of the wayfinder swung inside my pocket. “Good question. I have a feeling I’ll know it when I see it.” I squinted up at the horizon, passed a hand in front of my eyes, and stopped. “Maybe that’s it there.”

Joskan looked up and also stopped.

Wrapped around the mountain peak ahead of us was a dragon.

It was so large that, had it hunched up between peaks, I might have mistaken it for another mountain. Its immense size allowed me to see the beast in exquisite detail, even at this distance. Scales as large as a man covered its sinuous body. Claws as long and thick as trees dug into solid rock, shearing aside the ancient stone as if it were flesh. Its mouth, large enough to fit a house in, was open, and its tongue unfurled as if tasting prey on the wind. White smoke drifted from its mouth as the monster breathed.

Its hide was stone-colored as if in a pitiful mockery of camouflage. Nothing could disguise this beast. Beside me, Joskan clutched fruitlessly at the haft of his axe.

We stood there for several breaths. Finally I relaxed, realizing that the great beast couldn’t possibly care about prey as small as we, and had not seemed to notice us. In fact, it didn’t seem to notice anything, not even the lone bird that circled near its head. Its gaze remained fixed and unblinking, its tongue still unfurled, and although the white smoke issued from its mouth, its sides did not move with each breath.

“It’s a statue,” I murmured.

Joskan grunted again, but it lacked the usual implied disdain. He pointedly released his axe and folded his arms, as if feeling more confident against a few thousand tons of rock.

I shook loose of my awe and took a few steps forward. “Come on!” I shouted as I resumed the climb. “I want to get a better view.”

With a final grunt and a shake of his head, Joskan stalked after me.

“That’s the spirit,” I said. “Just keep your eyes out for trouble and try not to think about golems.”

“I’m not thinking about golems,” Joskan said. He spat into a pile of scrub and joined me in the climb. “I’m thinking about what could have built something like that, and if the sculptor’s still here.”

He does have a knack for snuffing my enthusiasm.

28 Rova, 4707 AR

We spent most of the day climbing and camped another night without incident. Joskan found trails I admit I would have missed—steep, narrow, and rock-strewn, to be sure, but they eased our passage nonetheless.

I focused on the scenery as we passed, and the more I looked, the more I discovered. Belkzen came to life around me. Rust-red lichen blended into the rock face so perfectly, I only discovered it when I put my hand out to steady myself

FLORA AND FAUNA OF BELKZEN

Numerous plants and animals thrive in Belkzen. Although not unique to the area, they are indigenous.

Aurochs: The primary source of meat, wool, and leather in Belkzen, the great herds of Belkzen aurochs are of a breed distinct from their counterparts on the Storval Plateau, having thick, yak-like fur designed to keep them warm as they migrate back and forth from the Realm of the Mammoth Lords to Belkzen's southern tip, often following the Flood Road.

Belkzen Brambles: These twisted, thorny branches appear dead at first glance, but a closer inspection (DC 10 Spot or Search check) or prior knowledge (DC 12 Knowledge [nature] check) reveals supple wood and living sap. The sharp, tricorn thorns can be used as caltrops if harvested carefully (DC 15 Survival check), although the thorns are destroyed after use.

Belkzen Puma: These tawny mountain lions move with exceptional stealth and hunt the other native creatures of Belkzen. Smaller than regular mountain lions (use leopard statistics), Belkzen pumas rarely attack adventurers unless a pack comes upon a lone traveler.

Firemoss: This rust-red moss catches fire slowly and burns steadily. A fist-sized clump of firemoss burns for an hour, making it a favored substance for crafting torches.

Mountain Goat: The brown mountain goats of Belkzen possess razor-sharp horns and phenomenal dexterity, and are prized for their milk and flesh. Use statistics for a donkey but add a gore attack (+1 melee, 1d4 damage) and increase Dexterity to 16.

Pickpocket Shrew: These rodent-like creatures measure 6–10 inches in length and make their homes in burrows. Their name comes from the shrews' uncanny silence and penchant for gnawing their way into stores of food while travelers sleep (use statistics for a cat).

and felt its stiff-soft bristles. Dun-colored shrews huddled among the rocks and scurried off once we'd passed. My cloak caught on a thorny, dead bramble, and when I paused to untangle myself I saw the black wood oozing oily sap; what I'd taken for thorns were seed-pods, tightly screwed to pointy tips.

Every now and then I looked up and caught sight of the massive, fantastic dragon coiled on his mountainous throne. Each time, the sight sent a shiver running through me and refreshed my awe.

"I take back what I said before," I commented. We halted for a moment so I could catch my breath, and to allow a mountain cat the size of a sheep to prowl by. She snarled at us but had no desire to tangle with such large prey. "This place is beautiful, once you get used to it."

By this time, we had left the narrow, treacherous trail for the broader and more comfortable mountain slope. I felt nervous with no stone walls on either side. Although the slope was gradual and a fall would bring

nothing worse than a skinned knee, I couldn't shake the sensation that I was extraordinarily, dangerously high up. I looked up at the dragon again, at the stretch of sky above and around. No clouds marred the azure expanse, nor birds—only miles of blue nothing. For a moment I felt dizzy, and I could well imagine a man going mad with too much time staring up.

Then movement caught my eye. Another bird circled by the dragon. Even though I knew the monster to be a statue, I half expected it to come to life and snap up the intruder in its jaws.

I frowned. The bird was far away and indistinct, but it seemed to be the same type as the one I'd seen before. The enormity of the dragon skewed all proportions, but it seemed the bird was too large. It struck me, too, that I'd seen no other birds of any type, and now that I knew life indeed thrived in this barren place, their omission seemed odd.

I turned to Joskan to comment about the birds. He was stopped, body rigid, and looking over his shoulder with a face as gray as campfire ashes.

"Joskan?"

"We're being followed."

Joskan and I raced up the mountain slope with as much speed as we could muster. Unfortunately for us, our mustering was embarrassing.

"It's hard... to hurry... this high up," I panted. I leaned forward as I climbed, grabbing rocks and shrubs to pull myself higher and ease some of the burden on my legs and lungs.

"I've been away... too long," Joskan huffed. "Takes time to... get used to moving like this again."

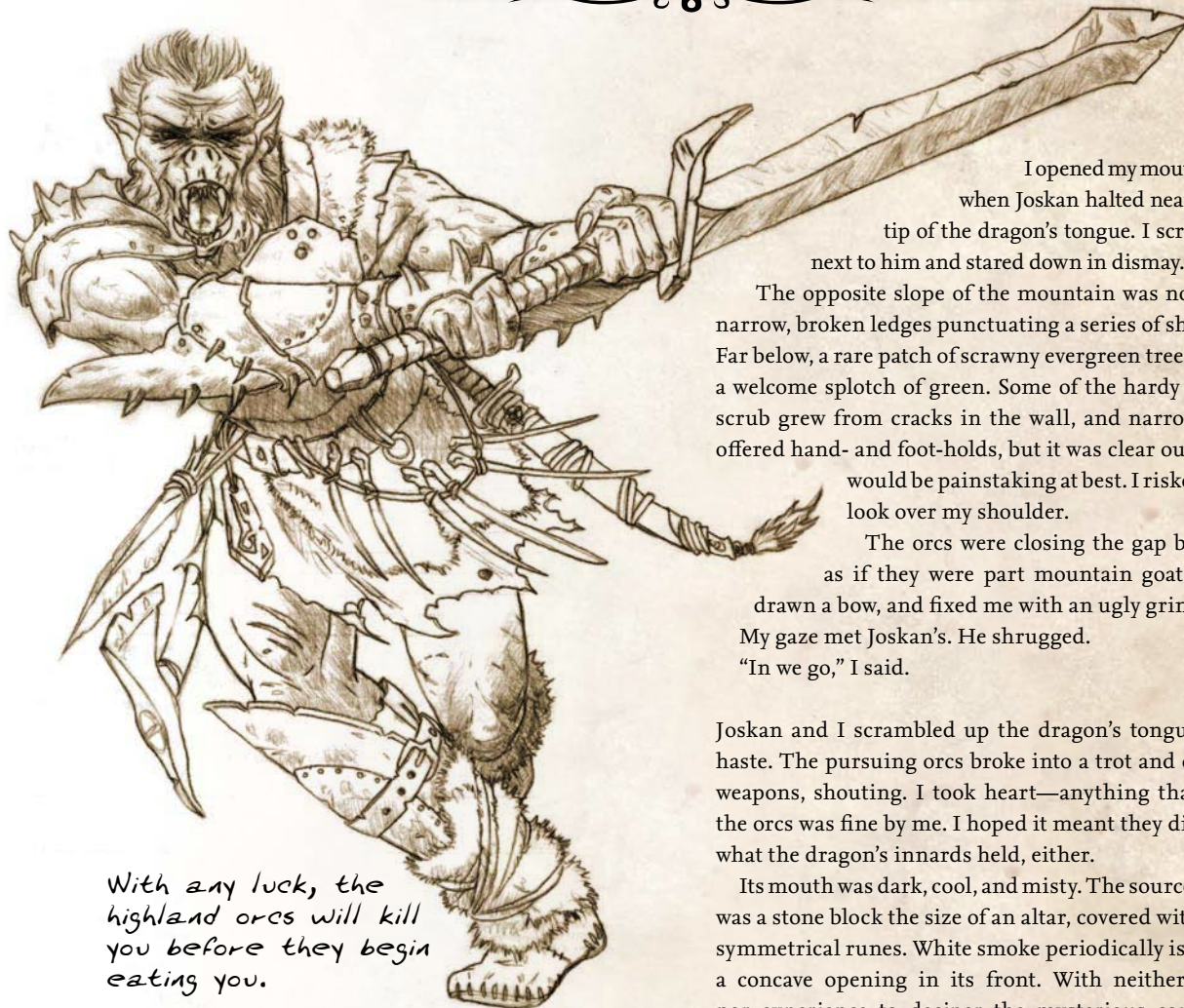
Retreat was impossible. The five orcs had waited until we were midway up the slope, exposed and trapped, before they ventured out from the rocks below. I glanced back only once, but that was enough.

Crude tattoos, brands, and scars covered their bodies in chaotic patterns. They wore tattered outfits that they must have assembled from mismatched bits and pieces of their victims' armor. Each bristled with as many weapons as he could carry. Bone and metal needles pierced their ears, nostrils, and cheeks. Now that they were in the open, they screamed and caterwauled with the same terrifying yells that woke me my first night here.

"Bad luck... we only notice them now," I gasped as we struggled onward. "Earlier we might have... doubled back... lost them..."

"No chance," Joskan said. "They chose now... to be seen. To trap us."

"There has to be a way forward." I breathed rapidly, panting, trying to draw enough of the thin air into my lungs to continue. "Maybe on the other side... of the dragon."



With any luck, the highland orcs will kill you before they begin eating you.

Above us, the massive figure of the stone dragon cast its shadow over the mountain slope. We climbed past one of its forelimbs. Its stone claws sank three or four feet down into the solid rock. Ahead, the stone ribbon of its tongue touched down on the rocky slope. A haze of white mist spurted from the dragon's mouth, but when the haze cleared, I noticed something.

"Joskan! Look at the dragon's mouth. It's not solid, it's hollow. I think we can get inside."

Joskan grunted as he heaved himself up. The angle of the slope grew steeper. "So?"

"Maybe we can hide there, lose the orcs in the fog and then double back."

Even as I spoke, though, I realized the flimsiness of the plan. I scanned the dragon and saw patches of stone scales ripped away in spots, and the blackness beyond suggested these holes were windows into some structure within the statue. But what laired there or how large (or safe) it was, there was no way to tell. Better to continue down the slope on the other side and lose ourselves in the twisting mountain trails.

I opened my mouth to say so, when Joskan halted near the stone tip of the dragon's tongue. I scrambled up next to him and stared down in dismay.

The opposite slope of the mountain was nothing but narrow, broken ledges punctuating a series of sheer drops. Far below, a rare patch of scrawny evergreen trees provided a welcome splotch of green. Some of the hardy mountain scrub grew from cracks in the wall, and narrow crevices offered hand- and foot-holds, but it was clear our progress would be painstaking at best. I risked another look over my shoulder.

The orcs were closing the gap between us as if they were part mountain goat. One had drawn a bow, and fixed me with an ugly grin.

My gaze met Joskan's. He shrugged.

"In we go," I said.

Joskan and I scrambled up the dragon's tongue with all haste. The pursuing orcs broke into a trot and drew their weapons, shouting. I took heart—anything that angered the orcs was fine by me. I hoped it meant they didn't know what the dragon's innards held, either.

Its mouth was dark, cool, and misty. The source of the fog was a stone block the size of an altar, covered with strange, symmetrical runes. White smoke periodically issued from a concave opening in its front. With neither the time nor experience to decipher the mysterious contraption's purpose, I left well enough alone.

Joskan and I paused but a moment in the dragon's mouth to catch our breath. I was prepared to make a light, but the occasional missing scale let in dusty yellow daylight, just enough to see by.

Rows of benches lined the walls of the cavernous mouth, and the dragon's teeth, which curved up and down like scimitars, formed a prickly barricade for any who might try to enter. "I think this used to be a guard post," I whispered.

Joskan nodded and ran a hand over one of the benches. Although wooden, it seemed as solid as if it were fashioned yesterday. Dust puffed in a cloud when he lifted his hand. "We can move these to form a barricade. Make a stand here?"

My fluttering heartbeat steadied, finally, and I felt as if my lungs were working properly again. I peered into the back of the cavern. A tunnel stretched on. "Let's go deeper. I'd rather not fight if we don't have to. Five raving orcs against two ordinary—albeit exceptionally brave and handsome—travelers sounds like poor odds."

We hurried through the mouth, and I longed to be able to stop and investigate the carvings on the wall—scenes of battles, mostly, in which I recognized the dragon statue

in several backgrounds—and a strange circular motif in the architecture that kept repeating. It might have been a calendar or record of events. With the orcs coming up fast behind us, though, I had only time for a longing look as we raced past.

From the mouth, a tunnel threaded through the dragon's curving neck. The floor was solid, but I noticed patches of scales chipped away above and thin cracks in the walls. How old this statue was I couldn't guess, but whatever enchantment held it together seemed to now be weakening.

A two-foot-tall opening ran the entire length of the tunnel. I had a breathtaking, panoramic view of the surrounding area as we raced past, and again I noticed elaborate carvings above and below it. These ones made me stop and risk a few precious seconds to look closer.

"Joskan, look at this!" I whispered. "The carvings—they match the scenery outside. See? This slope continues here," I traced where the landscape became the drawing. "And look, this waterfall must flow into a lake, you can see it on this—this map, I guess. Wait, the drawing shows a mountain here, but there's none outside. How old do you think this place is?"

"How old do you think we'll get to be if those orcs catch us?" Joskan snarled.

I tore myself away from the bizarre and beautiful panorama and followed Joskan, but couldn't resist sticking my hand through the window.

I heard the rustle of armor, the growls of the orcs, and the clash of their weapons beating together, distant but fast approaching, as we neared the end of the tunnel. A larger room opened up before us, probably the first of many chambers hidden in the dragon's abdomen. Years of experience led me to slow down and tug on Joskan's sleeve.

"Easy, now. No sense jumping out of the kettle and into the fire."

Joskan grunted but stopped. I stepped ahead of him and moved quickly and quietly to the next room.

The sight overwhelmed me. The large chamber held eggs—eggs of all shapes and sizes, from robin to roc, but each one fashioned from some precious material. Gold glittered in the dim sun. Sapphire flashed as deeply blue as the sky outside. Marble gleamed white as bone,

and obsidian glistened like the oily sap of the Belkzen brambles. For a moment, I forgot about the orcs chasing after us and stared in wonder at the collection.

Some eggs stood on pedestals, others in niches in the walls. Light that came from nowhere illuminated each, and I caught a glimpse of etchings on several of the larger ones. I couldn't look too closely, though, because something stirred deeper in the room.

Along one wall, a large patch of stone scales had broken away and left a jagged hole like a giant picture-window. On the floor next to the hole, two bizarre creatures slept.

I saw the nearest one most clearly. Its hind legs, those of an oversized mountain goat, kicked restlessly as it slept. Long, golden hair covered its hindquarters but gave way to sandy scales and a ridged spine further up its back. Its front legs ended in huge paws, from which I saw the tips of retracted black claws, each one probably as long as my dagger.

Two leathery wings wrapped around the creature's midsection, and I realized with a sinking feeling why there were no birds in this area. It would take a lot to feed a creature with three heads, I'd imagine.

The head nearest to me was that of a mountain goat, one with spear-like horns and unnaturally sharp teeth. The middle head was a mountain cat like the one Joskan and I had passed earlier, but three times as large. The last head looked like a miniature replica of the dragon's head through which we'd entered this strange place. Chimeras. I'd read of such creatures before, and from what I knew, they were as ill-tempered as they were ugly.

I backed up as quietly as I could and found Joskan waiting, muscles tense and axe in hand. The clatter of our pursuers grew louder, and I wasn't sure if the orcs would catch us before the chimeras awoke and devoured us.

"Well?" Joskan asked.

"Definitely the fire," I replied. "Don't worry. I've got a plan."

The hardest part was waiting until the orcs caught up to us. It took only a minute for the orcs to come around the curve, spot us, and charge, but it seemed much longer. Even though I expected it—anticipated it—the sight of the five orcs in their makeshift armor, spittle flying from their mouths as they gnashed their teeth, cast serious doubts on my scheme.



What possible function could these strange eggs fulfill?



With three heads, you'd think at least one would be friendly.

I had no time for insecurities, though; the chimeras were waking up. I grabbed Joskan's arm and we bolted into the egg chamber.

My heart sank at the sight of the lovely sculptures as we dashed through the room; how I wished I had time to come back and study them all! The chimeras pulled themselves out of sleep, and the one nearest to me lifted its goat head and blinked while its cat head yawned hugely. Heart in my throat, I leaped over the dragon head and pulled Joskan between the two sleeping beasts. My foot caught on the chimera's horn and I almost fell, turning my stumble into a sharp kick in the monster's flank. The beasts came fully awake and sprang up with roars and bleats.

The growls of the pursuing orcs turned to screams of rage as they realized the trap. Without pausing, Joskan and I pushed past the chimeras and flung ourselves out the jagged hole.

A sheer cliff dropped hundreds of feet. Joskan and I fell through the air; vertigo assaulted me as I struggled to complete the phrase on my lips. Joskan shrieked something, but the wind caught his words and tore them away. I reached out, my hand scraping the cliff face as we fell, and gasped the last syllable.

Instantly our fall was arrested. Instead of plummeting to our deaths, Joskan and I floated down at a steady, peaceful rate, light as feathers.

"How's that for a plan?" I grinned at Joskan, and he grunted back. From above us, the sounds of orcs howling and chimeras roaring drifted down the cliff.

"That should keep them busy for a while." I let us sink magically as long as I dared, then reached out and grabbed at the cliff until I found solid hand and footholds. Joskan stretched out a hand and grasped the edge of my cloak, and I reeled him in like a fish on a line. Together we inched our way down and west until we reached a ledge capable of taking the two of us abreast. In that one leap, we'd circumvented at least a solid day's worth of hard climbing.

I checked the wayfinder—still pointing due east, as always.

"Joskan," I said with a sigh as we picked our way down the slope, "we make a pretty good team."

He gave a brusque nod, which I interpreted as his version of a smile. "Dangerous. And foolish. We should be more careful from now on."

"If there's one thing I've learned," I said, "it's that trouble finds the prepared and unprepared alike. No matter how careful you are, something new is always coming." I inhaled as deeply as I could in the thin mountain air. "You can smell it on the wind." Joskan only grunted.

Side by side, we continued down into the darkening forest.



BESTIARY

ESCAPE FROM OLD KORVOSA

Legend tells of a terrible monkey god who sired a thousand young one night, and afterward he laid down to rest. In the dark, his pink idiot young were born, ever hungry and full of appetites worse than their father's. By the shadows they sniffed out their sire, wet and stinking upon the leafy ground, and with daylight they fed upon his bones and left naught but the skull.

“May you never meet the monkeys like the dead children, my son, and if you hear their screams on the wind, run—run for all you are worth, for I have seen these creatures take the flesh off an elephant and leave the bones standing”

—Rivani Dhatri, Shadows under Green

Far deadlier than the urban jungle of Old Korvosa, the impenetrable undergrowth and grasping vines of Vudra's vast and eldritch rainforests hide terrors unseen and unimagined in the supposedly civilized countries of Avistan. With Korvosa's connections to the Impossible Kingdoms of the distant east, the wealth and wonder of Vudra flow readily to the Jewel of Varisia—largely through the efforts of the unscrupulous Arkona family—bringing with them fantastic treasures and unbelievable tales.

This month's entry into the *Pathfinder* Bestiary unveils a handful of horrors from the humid jungles and spice-choked palaces of Vudra. The homeland of the earthbound evils, from these distant mahajanapadas the lords of the beast-headed fiends turn their multiple faces to the strange riches and uncouth countries of Avistan and Garund, eager to subjugate and enslave. With them they bring dread from the darkest jungles, the bones of behemoths given unholy life, and swarms of squealing, howling things insatiably hungry for flesh. Yet the wonders and terrors of the east pale in comparison to those of the planes, the domains of the deities and their unfathomable assassin known to mortals as the Mantis God.

Golarion is a deadly place, and those unwilling to brave its wonders had best stay at home.

WANDERING MONSTERS

With Old Korvosa consumed by chaos, those menaces that formerly hid in gurgling sewer drains and crumbling warehouses now stalk the street. Yet, as bad as the random monsters and human-hungry predators can be, the unscrupulous citizenry and agents of the city's cold-hearted queen are far worse. The following details a few of the local unfortunates and nefarious mercenaries one might randomly encounter wandering the blood-spattered streets of Old Korvosa.

Eccentric Local: Old Korvosa has always been a place where the unfortunate and uncivilized might hide away from the scorn of the everyday citizen. The events of the past weeks have made such outcasts even more desperate, with rambling beggars, zealous doomsayers, and the insane being common sights throughout the beleaguered slums. See page 12 for examples of Old Korvosa's more colorful unfortunates.

Gang: Whether men whose desperation has led them to alleyway banditry or members of a local thieves' guild, groups of dangerous residents wander the streets unchallenged. Such an encounter might involve young toughs up to no good, thugs shaking down their neighbors, or even heavies in the employ of Pilts Swastel. These encounters can range in EL from very low—requiring only a little sword rattling to disperse some skittish vandals—to very high, potentially employing the Old Dock Thug stats on page 21. The *Guide to Korvosa* might also prove helpful in fleshing out groups of Old Korvosan thieves.

OLD KORVOSA RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d%	Monster	Avg. EL	Source
1–4	1d4 otyughs	6	MM 204
5–12	1d12 pseudodragons	6	MM 210
13–18	2d4 rat swarms	6	MM 237
19–26	2d12 stirges	6	MM 236
27–32	2d4 chokers	7	MM 34
33–38	2d4 wererats	7	MM 171
39–40	1 succubus	7	MM 47
41–43	1 vampire*	7	MM 250
44–49	2d12 zombies**	7	MM 265
50–53	1 dark naga	8	MM 191
54–61	2d6 imps	8	MM 56
62–65	1d8 mimics	8	MM 186
66–67	1 rakshasa	8	MM 211
68–69	1d10 shadows	8	MM 221
70–71	1 night hag	9	MM 193
72–81	Eccentric local	—	See description
82–89	Gang	—	See description
90–94	Gray Maidens	—	See description
95–98	Plague victims	—	See description
99–100	Red Mantis	—	See description

* 5th-level human fighter.

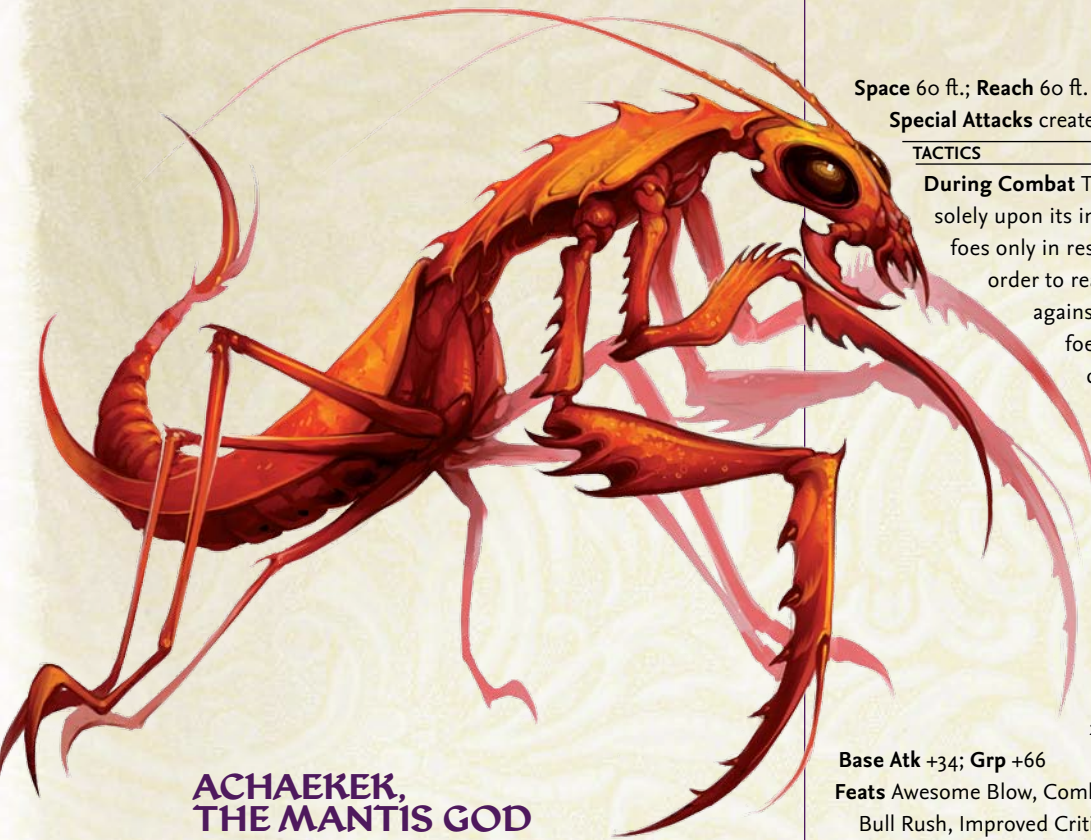
** Human commoner zombies.

Gray Maidens: Even though Old Korvosa chokes in the grip of a full quarantine, Queen Ileosa's ironclad elite conduct occasional forays into the area, abusing the locals, beating down the worst of the rabble, and seemingly searching for someone or something. Gray Maidens are female human 4th-level fighters, and an average patrol of 2d4 soldiers has an EL of 6. Complete stats for Gray Maidens can be found in *Pathfinder* #8.

Plague Victims: Although the blood veil plague has run its course in most of the city, in Old Korvosa, away from the ministrations of healers and basic sanitation, the disease still thrives. In reeking homes and huddled in alleys, victims of the plague still languish, their very touch being all the contagion needs to pass on to the next generation of victims. Most plague victims are simple 1st-level commoners with no EL.

Blood Veil—contact or injury; Fortitude DC 16; incubation 1 day; damage 1d3 Constitution and 1d3 Charisma.

Red Mantis: Agents of one of Golarion's most feared orders of assassins are at work in Old Korvosa. A party might encounter Red Mantis agents in the employ of Queen Ileosa either as the killers search for Neolandus Kalepopolis or as they attempt to assassinate the PCs themselves. A typical pair of Red Mantis assassins make an EL 8 encounter. See page 15 for complete stats for Red Mantis assassins and page 66 for further details on this lethal organization.



ACHAEKEK, THE MANTIS GOD

It is almost too enormous to comprehend: a titan nightmare clad in blood-red armor, a typhoon of grasping claws and toxic stings. Its legs are shuddering pylons, trees whose trunks bear bark of polished chitin. Its eyes are faceted crystal domes, lit from within by angry volcanic fire. Yet when the behemoth walks, its body moves with a silence made all the more horrific by the impossibility of its size.

ACHAEKEK, THE MANTIS GOD

CR 30

LE Colossal outsider (lawful, evil, extraplanar)

Init +21; **Senses** darkvision 240 ft., deathwatch, true seeing;

Listen +44, Spot +44

Aura unweaving aura

DEFENSE

AC 45, touch 15, flat-footed 32

(+13 Dex, +30 natural, -8 size)

hp 765 (34d8+612); regeneration 40

Fort +37, **Ref** +32, **Will** +28

Defensive Abilities freedom of movement, improved evasion; **DR** 20/epic; **Immune** ability damage, ability drain, blindness, death effects, energy drain, fire, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison; **Resist** acid 20, cold 20, electricity 20; **SR** 42

OFFENSE

Spd 180 ft.; climb 80 ft., fly 180 ft. (average)

Melee 4 claws +42 (2d8+16/15-20) and

bite +40 (4d6+8/15-20) and

sting +40 (2d8+6/15-20 plus poison)

Ranged 2 spikes +39 (2d8+16/18-20 plus poison)

Space 60 ft.; **Reach** 60 ft.

Special Attacks create gate, rend 4d8+24

TACTICS

During Combat The Mantis God focuses its fury solely upon its intended target, attacking other foes only in response to legitimate threats or in order to reach its primary target. Matched against a particularly dangerous foe, the Mantis God sometimes creates a *gate* and bull rushes its foe through it, then ceases concentration to strand the foe in a distant, inhospitable plane. It prefers melee attacks over ranged attacks.

Morale Achaek fights to the death, yet things have, to date, never progressed to this stage.

STATISTICS

Str 43, **Dex** 36, **Con** 46, **Int** 6, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +34; **Grp** +66

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Hover, Improved

Bull Rush, Improved Critical (claw, bite, sting), Improved

Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Wingover

Skills Climb +61, Hide +34, Listen +44, Move Silently +50, Spot +44, Tumble +50

Languages Infernal

SQ savage criticals

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization unique

Treasure none

Advancement 35+ HD (Colossal)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Create Gate (Su) Once per minute, as a move action, the Mantis God can create a portal between planes by raking one of its claws through the air. This duplicates the effects of a *gate* spell used for planar travel. The gate remains open as long as Achaek concentrates.

Deathwatch (Su) The mantis god can sense life and death, as if under the effects of a *deathwatch* spell at all times.

Freedom of Movement (Su) Achaek is constantly protected by *freedom of movement*, as per the spell.

Improved Evasion (Ex) This ability works like the rogue special ability of the same name.

Poison (Su) Injury, Fortitude DC 45, initial and secondary damage 1d4 negative levels. Creatures that are immune to poison can still be affected by this supernatural venom's secondary damage (not its initial damage), although they gain a +10 circumstance bonus on their saving throw to resist the toxin. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Regeneration (Su) Only damage dealt by a creature of

demigod or greater status deals lethal damage to the Mantis God. Achaekkek regenerates even if it fails a saving throw against a *disintegrate* spell or a death effect. If the Mantis God fails its save against a spell or effect that would kill it instantly, the effect instead deals nonlethal damage equal to the Mantis God's full normal hit point total +10 (normally 775 points of damage). The mantis god is also immune to effects that produce incurable or bleeding wounds (such as a clay golem's cursed wound or a wounding weapon). There are rumors of specific weapons or legendary monsters capable of dealing lethal damage to the Mantis God as well.

Rend (Ex) If the Mantis God hits a creature with two or more claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an extra 4d8+24 points of damage.

Savage Criticals (Ex) All of Achaekkek's natural weapons threaten a critical hit on a roll of 18–20 (and with its Improved Critical feats, these attacks threaten on a 15–20). Any creature the Mantis God strikes with a critical hit must make a DC 43 Fortitude save to avoid being stunned for 1 round from the force of the blow. The save DC is Strength-based.

Tail Spike (Ex) As a standard action, the Mantis God can hurl two poisoned spikes from its stinger. Spikes hurled are replenished immediately. This ranged attack has a range increment of 100 feet.

True Seeing (Su) Achaekkek continuously uses this ability, as the spell.

Unweaving Aura (Su) Achaekkek is surrounded by an invisible aura of abjuration energy to a radius of 360 feet. Each round, a creature in this area must make a DC 32 Will save. Failure indicates that a random ongoing magical effect on that creature is dispelled, as if by a successful *dispel magic* effect. If the creature has no applicable magic auras to be dispelled, it takes 2 points of Charisma drain instead on a failed save. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Achaekkek is known to only a very few by its name—most know of this legendary assassin by its more common (although somewhat misleading) name of He Who Walks in Blood, or the Mantis God. Yet Achaekkek is not a true god, but rather one of the first creatures given life by the gods. Even early on, long before mortal life came to dominate the Material Plane, some of the gods realized they would need an agent to carry out their divine justice, an agent they could send without compromising their own standing among the divine or dirtying their hands tending to immortals and demigods who could someday, if left alive, rise in power to a point to challenge them. Achaekkek was created to be an assassin, a creature the gods could use against nascent enemies. Yet the gods did not wish to create a creature capable of being used against them,

MANTIS CULTISTS

The Red Mantis venerate the Mantis God as their patron, and just as He Who Walks in Blood cannot kill a God, so have the Red Mantis adopted this tradition to their ways such that they never assassinate a king or queen. A small concession, yet one that nevertheless works well in their defense, for many are the kings and queens who would not be as moved to oppose the cult in knowing that they cannot be touched.

Most of the Red Mantis are rogues, fighters, or bards—many take levels in various prestige classes (the Red Mantis assassin being the most common). Yet a few of their number are actual clerics—particularly in their hidden fortress, the Crimson Citadel. A cleric of the Mantis God's favored weapon is the sawtooth sabre, and he has access to the domains of Death, Evil, Law, Trickery, and War.

and thus created the Mantis God with the fundamental inability to act against the gods themselves—it can only slay those of demigod status or lower.

The faiths of Golarion disagree upon which of the gods created Achaekkek. The churches of Asmodeus, Zon-Kuthon, Norgorber, Lamashtu, Rovagug, Gorum, Pharasma, and Calistria all have compelling arguments that point to their patrons as the source of the Mantis God. Others believe that it was not one god but a convocation of gods who gave the divine assassin its life. Still others believe that the gods who created Achaekkek are themselves now dead, in some cases victims of their own murderous creation after their powers caused them to lose enough of their divinity to merely become immortals. One thing seems certain, though—although not all of Golarion's deities approve of the Mantis God, none have yet stepped in to unmake it. And to date, none have openly admitted to ever issuing a kill order to the Mantis God. It's almost as if Achaekkek knows instinctually who or what must be slain, or perhaps is receiving its orders from a source beyond that of the pantheon itself. He Who Walks in Blood strikes only rarely, and its victims seem strange and inconsequential at times.

VICTIMS

In past centuries countless demagogues and would-be deities have perished at Achaekkek's scything claws.

Arrogant Marsis: Revered as the most beautiful man in the world during the early years of the Age of Enthronement, Marsis's beauty drew thousands of admirers away from revering the gods, finally drawing the ire of the gods and the claws of the Mantis God.

Yazanova: The murderous queen of the Tusk Mountains, Yazanova feasted on the hearts of a hundred rival chieftains, aspiring to the mantle of goddess of the North. She and her armies fell to the Mantis god in –212 AR.



BEATIFIC ONE

This tall, feminine figure has golden tanned skin and well-formed curves, suggesting years of activity and work toward physical perfection. Beneath her diaphanous robes, the creature's legs cross over one another, while six arms—two facing toward her back—wave in a continuous dance. Three fanged heads sit atop a sturdy neck, studying every direction.

BEATIFIC ONE

CR 9

Always LE Medium outsider (asura)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +14, Spot +21

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 17, flat-footed 18 (+7 Dex, +6 natural, +2 monk AC bonus)

hp 85 (11d8+33)

Fort +10, **Ref** +14, **Will** +14; +2 against enchantment spells and effects

Defensive Abilities improved evasion; **DR** 10/good; **Immune** disease, poison; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Speed 70 ft.

Melee temple sword +17/+12/+7 (1d8+6) and spear +17 (1d8+3) and kukri (1d4+3/18–20) or flurry of blows +11/+11/+11/+8 (1d10+6)

Special Attacks continuous barrage, flurry of blows

Spell-like Abilities (CL 6th)

At will—*disguise self*, *feather fall*, *see invisibility*, *ventriloquism*
3/day—*blindness/deafness* (DC 16), *blur*, *hypnotic pattern* (DC 16), *levitate*, *magic weapon*

1/day—*dimension door*, *hold person* (DC 17)

TACTICS

Before Combat Beatific ones are rarely surprised and use the moments before combat to cast *blur* and *magic weapon* upon themselves and their weapons.

During Combat Beatific ones hold their opponents in complete disdain and offer no quarter or honorable advantage. They enjoy tripping or disarming opponents, battering them with unarmed strikes, and using their foes' weapons against them.

Morale If foes present sufficient threats, beatific ones redouble their efforts, but under no circumstances flee the field of battle.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 24, **Con** 16, **Int** 16, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +21

Feats Deflect Arrows^B, Dodge, Improved Disarm^B, Improved Grapple^B, Mobility, Snatch Arrows, Spring Attack

Skills Appraise +17, Balance +23, Climb +20, Concentration +17, Escape Artist +21, Hide +14, Jump +22, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +14, Move Silently +21, Perform (dance) +11, Spot +21, Tumble +23

Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal, Vudrani; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ monk qualities, *summon asura*

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or band (2–4)

Treasure standard

Advancement by character class; **Favored Class** sorcerer

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Continuous Barrage (Ex) If a beatific one hits with the last attack of its flurry of blows, it may attempt an additional attack at a –2 penalty. If this attack hits, the beatific one may continue to make additional attacks, with a cumulative –2 penalty for each subsequent attack (–4 for the second attack, –6 for the third, and so on). If any attack misses, the barrage ends.

Flurry of Blows (Ex) The beatific one can attempt a flurry of blows as per the monk ability. It may use this ability whenever it has at least two of its six hands free or a special monk weapon equipped (see page 40 of the PH).

Monk Qualities A beatific one emulates many of the

VUDRANI WEAPONS

For centuries, Vudrani warriors and martial artists have crafted and cultivated a wide variety of weapons and fighting styles not seen in the lands of Avistan. Although rare, some of these unusual weapons might find their way west, either in the hands of foreign merchants or exotic fiends.

Bich'hwa: Also known as the waveblade or, literally “scorpion’s tail,” this short, double-curved blade has no hilt but features a knuckle guard and can easily be used in either hand. A bich’hwa provides a +2 bonus on any roll made to keep from being disarmed in combat.

This weapon is considered a special monk weapon for the use of flurry of blows and other monk abilities.

Katar, Tri-bladed: Although most katars (or punching daggers) boast a single long, thick blade, some feature a fan of three splayed razor edges.

Pata: An evolution of the standard katar, the pata is a short sword that ends in a full, fingerless gauntlet hilt. You punch rather than stab with the weapon, allowing you to put more force behind each strike. A pata provides a +10 bonus on any roll made to keep from being disarmed in combat.

Temple Sword: Typically used by holy men and guardians of religious sites, temple swords have distinctive crescent-shaped blades, appearing as an amalgam of a sickle and sword. Many temple swords have holes drilled into the blade or places on the pommel where charms, bells, or other holy trinkets might be attached.

You can use a temple sword to make trip attacks. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the temple sword to avoid being tripped.

Urumi: This terribly sharp longsword appears as a coil of steel, similar to a metal whip, but is capable of cleaving flesh and holding an edge as well as any forged blade. An urumi has reach and can strike opponents 10 feet away, but can also be used to attack adjacent foes.

With an urumi, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an enemy.

Built for flexibility, an urumi takes only half damage from attempts to sunder it.

Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Weight	Type
<i>Light melee weapons</i>						
Bich'hwa	5 gp	1d3	1d4	19–20/x2	2 lb	Piercing or slashing
Katar, tri-bladed	6 gp	1d3	1d4	x4	2 lb	Piercing
Pata	14 gp	1d4	1d6	x3	3 lb	Piercing
<i>One-handed melee weapons</i>						
Temple sword	18 gp	1d6	1d8	19–20/x2	4 lb	Slashing
Urumi	30 gp	1d6	1d8	19–20/x2	3 lb	Slashing

strengths of the monk character class. On top of its own racial abilities, the beatific one receives the AC bonus, unarmed damage, bonus feats, speed bonus, and weapon proficiencies of a monk with a level equal to its Hit Dice, along with the diamond body, flurry of blows, improved evasion, and still mind abilities. All of these benefits are included in the statistics above.

Summon Asura (Sp) Once per day, a beatific one can attempt to summon 1 beatific one with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell.

Scions of the vast and enigmatic pantheon of Vudrani deities, beatific ones torment mortal warriors, torture evil souls, and mete out the wrath of the gods. Paragons of physical perfection, these fiends are said to be masters of every weapon ever crafted and innately familiar with the forms and ways of every martial art imagined. When loosed upon the mortal world, these asuras—fiendish servants of the Vudrani deities—bring woe to warriors,

brutally test the philosophies of martial orders, and seek great battles in which to participate.

Beatific ones move with the grace of master martial artists and hone their fiendish forms through endless combat and morbid meditations. They stand 7 feet tall and weigh approximately 240 pounds.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Most beatific ones spend the majority of their time in Hell, specifically in the freezing and flaming domains of destructive Vudrani deities. The burning sand shores of Agniagon—the vast boiling lake of the three-headed serpent-god Vritra—attract numerous asuras and the corpse-strewn halls of dozens of beatific one ziggurat-like lairs. Left to their own devices, beatific ones either spend the centuries deep in meditative practice of cruel fighting styles or—like most asuras—sow strife and make trouble for mortals.

If killed, a beatific one reincarnates, typically as another beatific one or as another type of asura.



RAJPUT AMBARI

Standing motionless, this creature could easily be mistaken for a huge skeletal display of a long-dead war elephant. At further glance, its eyes burn a smoky black and pieces of stench-ridden flesh hang from crusty bones. Rusty barding drapes loosely over its skeletal spine, and ancient, rotten finery hangs over its skull and drapes flaccidly toward the ground.

RAJPUT AMBARI

CR 7

CE Huge undead

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 20
(+1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)

hp 104 (16d12)

Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +10

Defensive Abilities undead traits; DR 10/slashing

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee slams +14 (2d6+8) and 2 stamps +9 (2d6+4); or

gore +14 (2d8+8/×3)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks trample 2d8+13, war stomp

TACTICS

During Combat Rajput ambaris immediately attack anyone their creator or handler directs them to. They start by trampling the nearest enemy

and then use war stomp to knock down foes, following up with slams and gores to finish off opponents.

Morale Rajput ambaris fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 26, Dex 13, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

Base Atk +8; Grp +24

SQ undead servitor

ECOLOGY

Environment warm forests

Organization any

Treasure standard

Alignment neutral

Advancement 17–22 (Huge); 23–29 (Gargantuan)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Trample (Ex) Reflex half DC 26. The save DC is Strength-based.

War Stomp (Su) Rajput ambaris are trained to slam their skeletal front feet hard into the earth, creating a small shockwave that can knock nearby opponents prone. Any opponent standing immediately adjacent to a rajput ambari when it uses this ability must make a DC 25 Reflex save or be knocked prone. War stomp is a full-round action. The save DC is Strength-based.

Undead Servitor Rajput ambaris are completely subservient to their creators and any other creature capable of commanding undead. A rajput ambari is treated as an undead creature of half its Hit Dice for the purposes of being commanded and when counting the total Hit Dice of undead an evil cleric has under his control.

A rajput ambari always understands the language of its master and anyone controlling it.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a rajput ambari is up to 1,836 pounds; a medium load, 1,837–3,678 pounds; and a heavy load, 3,679–5,520 pounds. A rajput ambari can drag 27,600 pounds.

Horrors born from the depths of Vudra's endless jungles, rajput ambari are undead elephants granted terrible powers through necromantic rites. Massive and terrifying, many of these earth-shaking undead behemoths retain the exotic trappings and elegant finery of the Vudrani princes who once doted upon them. The glory of such beasts is long forgotten,

though, as most serve as unholy slaves and fearless beasts of war for uncaring necromancers and deathless masters.

ECOLOGY

The size of a rajput ambari varies widely depending on which part of the world the original elephant skeleton came from—Vudrani elephants typically near 16 feet in height, while Mwangi elephants grow up to 18 feet tall. Juvenile elephant skeletons are almost never used to create a rajput ambari. In Vudra, undead elephants are feared abominations, but terrifying rumors tell of lumbering mastadons from the distant north being animated in rituals akin to those that create rajput ambaris.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Rajput ambaris have no societal structure, functioning only as their creators command. Vudrani necromancers typically use rajput ambaris much like living elephants, though without the need for handlers. Thus, when encountered, most are found performing menial tasks, serving as guards, or transporting undead warriors.

Although rajput ambaris are unintelligent undead, necromantic scholars postulate that some facet of the rites used to create the undead beasts causes them to retain some vestige of instinct. The evidence of this theory rises in the rare cases in which a rajput ambari is left without a master. When no longer able to perform past orders or left without commands for weeks, a rajput ambari sometimes begins walking of its own accord. In these rare and seemingly impossible situations, the undead elephant tends to wander back to the lands where it was captured and might even readopt some of the motions and tendencies of life—much to the horror of local hunters and living elephants alike.

CREATING A RAJPUT AMBARI

A spellcaster of 18th level or higher can create a rajput ambari utilizing the *create undead* spell. In addition to the usual components required by the spell, though, the rite to animate a rajput ambari requires the full skeleton of an adult elephant and adornment of a regal bearing. At the very least, these additions add 400 gp to the spell's total cost.

ORIGINS OF THE RAJPUT AMBARI

Although none can say who created the first skeleton or raised the first zombie, the rajput ambari is an unusual undead in that its creation is well documented in Vudrani lore. In 4465 AR, the necromancer-priest Rajput Shivji Shashibhushan, known as the Vile Prince, gathered together his cult of followers in the mountains and jungles of northern Vudra and set about building a dark citadel, a temple to all the foul powers of Vudrani lore and a personal palace where his experiments would go largely unnoticed.

ELEPHANTS IN VUDRA

For more than just the people of Vudra, trained elephants make intimidating and reliable mounts. Capable of transporting numerous passengers, large loads, and even siege-scale weaponry, these titans are respected and coveted for the fortitude they exhibit in traversing vast distances, harsh environments, and raging battles. Held as symbols of wealth and prestige in many cultures, elephants often wear the finest trapping their owners can afford: fine silken coverings, precious jewelry, and gold-trimmed howdahs. They are equally coveted in battle, as their ability to transport warriors, crush opponents, and strike fear in enemies is second to none in the animal world. Elephant handlers are typically known as *mahouts*, who use a sharp hook called an *ankusha* to steer the beasts.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for an elephant with Strength 30 is up to 3,192 pounds; a medium load, 3,193–6,384 pounds; and a heavy load, 6,385–9,600 pounds. An elephant can drag 48,000 pounds.

Movement: An unencumbered elephant can travel 4 miles per hour and 32 miles per day. With a load between 3,193 and 9,600 pounds, it can travel 3 miles per hour and 24 miles per day.

Price: In Vudra, a young domesticated elephant costs 600 gp. An adult elephant trained to carry passengers costs 1,800 gp. An adult elephant trained for battle or other work—typically trained with four of its six possible tricks (see Handle Animal, PH 74)—costs 2,800 gp.

Shivji's first need was labor—labor that didn't need rest or sleep to realize his grand designs. Thus, his morbid imagination fell upon the great elephant graveyards of the Ajitesh Valley. In short order, he raised an army of undead elephants, which his followers took to calling rajput ambaris—a combination of their necromantic lord's title and the Vudrani word for the carriage house that living elephants sometimes carry upon their backs. With insight to see past his megalomania, Shivji left his minions susceptible to the commands of other worshipers of dark deities, bestowing his most trusted lieutenants with the knowledge to command them in his absence.

With the aid of his titanic undead, Shivji's fortress rose with frightening speed—a citadel of a thousand thousand skulls he called the Palace of Ivory and Bone. Once the fortress was completed, dozens of rajput ambaris were put to work pulling the massive winches required to open the heavy, elephant-tusk gates of the citadel.

Shivji Shashibhushan's war against the Vudrani mahajanapadas ended 40 years after the completion of the Palace of Ivory and Bone, with the necromancer slain at the head of his largest rajput ambari host. Even as his horror-filled castle eventually sank into obscurity and lore, Shivji's rajput ambaris—his greatest feat as a necromancer—linger on even as his name is slowly forgotten.



RAKSHASA MAHARAJAH

Floating serenely with legs crossed over one another, this exquisitely attired being casually examines the curved, long-handled blade in its hands. The face staring contemplatively ahead bears beautiful human features, but from the creature's neck emerge several fearsome animal heads, each considering a different direction.

RAKSHASA MAHARAJAH

CR 18

Always LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +11, extra initiative; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., all-around vision; Listen +27, Spot +31

DEFENSE

AC 35, touch 17, flat-footed 28 (+7 Dex, +18 natural); cannot be flanked

hp 207 (18d8+126)

Fort +18, **Ref** +18 **Will** +17

DR 20/good and piercing; **SR** 30

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 30 ft. (good)

Melee +3 *falchion* +26/+21/+16/+11 (2d4+10)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)

1/day—*dominate monster* (DC 24)

Spells Known (CL 15th)

7th (5/day)—*delayed blast fireball* (DC 26), *mass hold person* (DC 26)

6th (7/day)—*flesh to stone* (DC 25), *greater dispel magic*, *mass bull's strength*

5th (7/day)—*dominate person* (DC 24), *seeming* (DC 24), *teleport*

4th (7/day)—*dimension door*, *greater invisibility* (DC 23), *lesser globe of invulnerability*, *solid fog*

3rd (8/day)—*fireball* (2; DC 22), *slow* (DC 22), *vampiric touch* (DC 22)

2nd (8/day)—*darkness*, *misdirection* (DC 21), *resist energy*, *see invisibility*, *touch of idiocy* (DC 21)

1st (8/day)—*identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 20)

0 (6/day)—*arcane mark*, *daze* (DC 19), *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 19), *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 19)

TACTICS

Before Combat Most rakshasa maharajahs are

surrounded by loyal (or enchanted) servitors at all times, making it obvious when a threat is approaching. In addition to bolstering themselves with spells like *mage armor*, these creatures use illusions to confuse their foes.

Once confronted with enemies, a maharajah uses spells like *darkness*, *solid fog*, and *obscuring mist* to hide itself and attack from concealment.

During Combat Rakshasa maharajahs prefer to get the

maximum benefit from their extra initiative to hurl spells more than once per round. A favorite tactic is to hurl a *delayed blast fireball*, then a pair of *fireballs* the following round, hoping to overwhelm even the strongest of magical defenses.

Morale A rakshasa maharajah views itself as the epitome of its

kind—a rakshasa so powerful that no force, no matter how great, can ultimately succeed against its superior might. If faced with overwhelming evidence to the contrary (if the rakshasa is reduced to 20 hit points or less), it attempts to flee the battlefield—but only for long enough to heal its wounds using a hidden cache of potions or other stored magic. Thus restored, the maharajah begins combat anew, attempting to restore its honor and that of its species.

If even this becomes dangerous, a well-timed *greater invisibility* and *teleport* allows the maharajah to escape long enough to formulate a better plan.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 24, **Con** 24, **Int** 25, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 29

Base Atk +18; **Grp** +23

Feats Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Hover, Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Widen Spell

Skills Appraise +28, Bluff +30 (+32 acting), Concentration +28,

Decipher Script +28, Diplomacy +36, Disguise +30, Hide +28, Intimidate +32, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +28, Listen +27, Search +32, Sense Motive +27, Spellcraft +30, Spot +31, Survival +6 (+8 following tracks)

Languages Common, Vudrani, and five others

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure double standard plus +3 *falchion*

Advancement by character class; **Favored Class** sorcerer

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

All-Around Vision (Ex) A rakshasa maharajah's many heads allow it to look in any direction, providing a +4 racial bonus on Spot and Search checks. A maharajah rakshasa cannot be flanked.

Change Shape (Su) A rakshasa maharajah can assume any humanoid form, or revert to its own form, as a standard action. In humanoid form, a rakshasa maharajah retains all its powers, abilities, and spellcasting. A rakshasa maharajah remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the rakshasa maharajah reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form: a perfect human body with a single human head and a ring of three to five additional animal heads springing from the same neck.

Detect Thoughts (Su) A rakshasa maharajah can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 15th; Will DC 25 negates). It can suppress or resume this ability as a free action. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Extra Initiative (Su) At the beginning of an encounter, the rakshasa maharajah rolls twice for initiative. The rakshasa acts normally on the higher of the two initiative counts each round; on the lower initiative count, the rakshasa maharajah may take a single standard action.

Spells Rakshasa maharajahs cast spells as 15th-level sorcerers. The save DCs are Charisma based.

All rakshasas aspire to power, but there are those for whom this hunger is more than an obsession, it's a birthright. Legends among rakshasakind tell of the maharajahs—those rakshasas whose depredations and acts of cruelty have elevated them above others of their kind remaking them as embodiments of every myth, fable, and cautionary tale involving the beast-headed fiends. Accorded the respect and deference of their lessers, maharajahs inspire one emotion that few can in the race: fear.

ECOLOGY

A rakshasa maharajah emerges only after a rakshasa of great power and influence has spent several lives as

a member of the *samrata*, the height of the rakshasa's social-spiritual caste system. In a method not altogether understood even by the fiends, when rakshasas of legendary cruelty reincarnate, sometimes their new forms exhibit the increased powers and multiple heads of a maharajah. When a rakshasa ascends to maharajah status, others of its kind take notice, with rakshasas coming from far and wide to serve even a young maharajah—eager to curry its favor at an early age. The appearance of a maharajah denotes that great change is imminent: the maharajah will fulfill some terrible destiny, found a lasting nation of rakshasa, undergo some manner of divine ascension, or face some greater foe who breaks its domain into large-enough chunks for its lieutenants and servants to claim and still have room to expand. It is rare in the extreme for more than a handful of rakshasa maharajahs to emerge in the same century.

There are tales of even greater rakshasa forms than the maharajah, great beings with more heads than can be counted and more power that can be imagined. Such a state might be a further evolution from maharajah, or it might be a unique form created by the creature's destiny and ambition.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

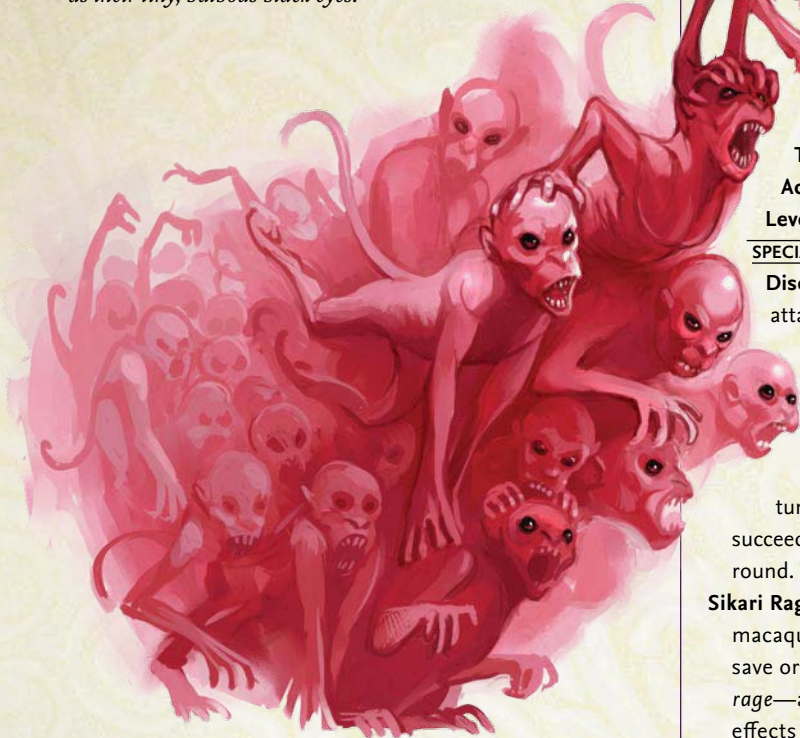
So great is a rakshasa maharajah's power and influence that it can spend most of its time enjoying the luxury of its years of toil. When not manipulating armies or the machinations of lesser rakshasas, it can often be found surrounded by the most beautiful of its servitors—often charmed or dominated humanoids, or, if the maharajah is powerful enough, good-aligned outsiders—lounging in opulence.

The lair of a rakshasa maharajah is typically a glorious, decadent thing. After decades or centuries of work, gold filigree decorates the columns, and great friezes of rakshasa myths and folklore decorate the walls. Rather than couches or divans, great pillows stuffed with exotic feathers—and crafted from the hides of even more exotic creatures—serve for furniture, and all about hang the trophies of a centuries-long life of tyranny: the crowns of defeated rulers, the wealth of ruined countries, and the heads of failed lieutenants.

A rakshasa maharajah's great experience and power, however, does not make it immune or ignorant to threats. Disloyal servants, powerful kings, ambitious rivals, and meddling adventurers all might step forth to challenge a rakshasa maharajah's rule. To that end, a maharajah employs devious methods to ensure its own safety, with assassination, false rumors, and illusory doubles serving as useful tools to ferret out threats. Wary of attack and often with wide territories to control, most rakshasa maharajahs have several secluded palaces and lavish redoubts, and travel among them endlessly.

SIKARI MACAQUE SWARM

Hundreds of tiny, hairless, reddish-hued monkeys burst from the thick jungle canopy. All at once, they're climbing every tree, swinging from every branch, covering every inch of the ground. Their mouths seem permanently open in a yowling shriek, a cacophony of rage only half as fearsome as their tiny, bulbous black eyes.



SIKARI MACAQUE SWARM

CR 5

N Tiny animal (swarm)

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +9, Spot +10

DEFENSE

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

hp 65 (10d8+20)

Fort +9, **Ref** +14, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities half damage from slashing and piercing weapons, swarm traits

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee swarm (2d6 plus Sikari rage)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** —

Special Attacks distraction, Sikari rage

TACTICS

During Combat Sikari macaque swarms attack as many foes as possible, attempting to induce their own horrific rage in their opponents.

Morale Sikari macaque swarms are filled with constant fury and always fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 5, **Dex** 21, **Con** 15, **Int** 3, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +7; **Grp** —

Feats Agile, Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +15, Climb +21, Escape

Artist +11, Listen +9, Spot +10

SQ diseased

ECOLOGY

Environment warm forests

Organization solitary, fury (2–5 swarms), frenzy (6–12 swarms)

Treasure none

Advancement —

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Diseased (Ex) Sikari macaque swarms are driven to attack as a symptom of a disease infecting their species. A *remove disease*, *heal*, or similar malady curing effect instantly halves a swarm's hit points, causing dozens of the normally benign primates to stop their attack and wander off.

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with a Sikari macaque swarm in its square must succeed on a DC 17 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Sikari Rage (Ex) When a creature is damaged by a Sikari macaque swarm, it must succeed at a DC 17 Fortitude save or be affected as if by the spells *confusion* and *rage*—a kind of blind fury known as Sikari rage. These effects last for 1d6 rounds, and the effects of multiple bites are cumulative.

While the fast-acting nature of this effect is similar to a poison, it is actually a disease, and the spell *remove disease* immediately ends the effects. Creatures that are immune to disease are also immune to this ability. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills Sikari macaque swarms have a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks. They can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. They use their Dexterity modifier instead of their Strength modifier for Climb checks.

Often called the Red Wind, a churning mass of Sikari macaques feels no fear, barely acknowledges pain, and destroys everything in its path. A species of monkeys native to the Sikari region of Vudra, Sikari macaques are small, hairless, and mean. Their appearance and temperament are not native traits, however, as within recorded Vudran history nearly every member of the species has fallen victim to a mysterious affliction known as Sikari rage. Thus, what was once a highly social and endearingly curious breed of tawny-furred monkeys has been reduced to gangs of

flesh-hungry brutes shrieking through jungle boughs, consuming and demolishing anything in their path.

A typical Sikari macaque stands just over 1 foot tall and weighs less than 5 pounds. Swarms of these deadly primates usually number from 30 to nearly a hundred.

ECOLOGY

For the overwhelming population of Sikari macaques infected with Sikari rage, life begins exactly as they live it: enraged. After a relatively short gestation period of 4 months, a Sikari macaque is born into a tumultuous world of spinning fur and gnashing teeth. Snatched up by its mother or another female and carried along with the swarming host, a newborn Sikari macaque is a naked, squealing thing, all thrashing limbs and snapping teeth. In only a few days' time, though, these infantile tantrums become the wild rages of a swiftly moving, sharp-clawed, and dangerously crazed member of the primate swarm.

Sikari macaques in captivity have lived nearly 20 years, but in the wild their lives are much shorter, usually no more than 5. The Red Wind doesn't just leave a sea of destruction and shattered plant life in its wake, it also leaves a path of twisted primate corpses. The monkeys might not feel pain when deep in the thrall of their rage, but the vicious, clawing mass of fellow macaques inevitably overwhelms sickly children and crippled or infirm adults. Those unable to keep up and fend for themselves—against both prey and the beatings of their fellows—are either consumed or tossed aside to bleed their last into the soft jungle soil.

The macaques subsist on meat from any creature they can pick off alone or overwhelm as a swarm. They're generally nocturnal, preferring to find perches high in the jungle canopy in which to rest while the sun slips across the sky. During mating season, however, Sikari macaques can be found awake and restless for weeks on end. Mating season seems totally random and many scholars believe that a family unit instinctually knows when it has room to grow and does so.

An individual Sikari macaque is gaunt, thin, and completely lacking hair. Their pale skin is splotchy and covered in patches of angry red welts—a symptom of the disease that infects their species. Bulbous onyx eyes stare blankly out of high eye sockets and their mouths seem to perpetually hang open, revealing thin rows of knife-edge teeth. Their hands and feet end in needle-like claws, and their grip is far stronger than one would expect from an animal of such small stature.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Even in their diseased rage, Sikari macaques form tight family units of up to a hundred genetically linked monkeys. These families are constantly on the move, their incensed natures driving them rabidly onward. Swarms of the

ravenous primates slow and finally rest only during the hottest hours of the day, and even then usually only for a period of 4 to 6 hours. Although rarely spied by outside observers, during these exhausted hours the primates nurture their offspring, although this extends to little more than mercilessly teaching their young how to hunt and fight, and where to best attack larger beasts.

Although interactions between Sikari macaques are typically violent, their disease-addled deadliness increases tenfold when directed toward prey or actual threats. Without warning, dozens of individual macaques merge into a single roiling mass of red-hued flesh, capable of shredding even a tiger as they tear their way through the jungle. Having no real attachment to any one specific location, Sikari macaques travel aimlessly and often far from their native breeding grounds, swarming over anything slow or stupid enough to cross their path.

Sometimes, swarms of Sikari macaques cross paths. Those members not killed outright in the resulting violence come together to form a larger swarm. In extreme cases, multiple swarms might collect and travel together, forming large, dangerous groups called furies or frenzies. Vudrani hunters have a special and rightful fear of Sikari macaque frenzies, with many paying monthly penance to Lahkgya of the Red Face, Patron of Monkeys, in hopes that he won't unleash his deadly children upon their hunting grounds or villages.

Sikari macaques can most commonly be found in the thick, vine-choked Sikari region of northern Vudra. Although they fear nothing, their swarms tend to stay far away from civilization, preferring vegetation-choked mountain slopes or deep river valleys.

SIKARI RAGE

Sikari macaques suffer from a deadly, highly virulent disease known in Vudra as Sikari rage. Symptomatically akin to stages of rabies, the disease is spread by scratches and bites dealt by infected monkeys. Although most animals are immune to Sikari rage, humanoids and other types of macaques have dramatic reactions to the disease, almost immediately falling into a furious stupor as the affliction attempts to gain purchase. This rage passes in mere moments, however, as the highly selective malady swiftly dies outside of its chosen host species.

The first case of Sikari rage appeared near the village of Bannaquet in 4679 AR, not far from the ruins of Reverchaldam, former home of the ousted society of insidious alchemists known as the Breathers of Ash. What began as isolated attacks by crazed monkeys turned into a siege that the village barely withstood. Even today, most of the citizens of Bannaquet live upon the bare slopes of Sadar Vosdeol, forsaking outcasts and the poor to the lower neighborhoods of Old Monkey Town.

EZREN

MALE HUMAN WIZARD 7

ALIGN NG **INIT** +3 **SPEED** 30 ft.

DEITY: Atheist **HOMELAND:** Absalom

ABILITIES

11	STR
9	DEX
12	CON
19	INT
15	WIS
9	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 26	
AC 13	
touch 10, flat-footed 13	
Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +8	

OFFENSE

Melee cane +3 (1d6)
Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8/19–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Spells Prepared (CL 4th, +2 ranged touch)
 4th—*ice storm, stoneskin*
 3rd—*dispel magic, fly, fireball* (DC 17)
 2nd—*bull's strength, invisibility, scorching ray, web* (DC 16)
 1st—*alarm, mage armor, magic missile* (2), *shield*
 0—*daze* (DC 14), *detect magic* (2), *light*

SKILLS

Appraise	+8
Concentration	+10
Knowledge (arcana)	+14
Knowledge (geography)	+14
Knowledge (history)	+14
Knowledge (the planes)	+7
Spellcraft	+14

FEATS

Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration

FAMILIAR

Sneak (weasel, MM 282)



Combat Gear alchemist's fire (2), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *scroll of scorching ray*, *wand of magic missile* (CL 3rd, 46 charges); **Other Gear** cane (as club), dagger, light crossbow with 20 bolts, *bracers of armor* +3, *cloak of resistance* +1, *headband of intellect* +2, *ring of protection* +1, backpack, rations (6), scroll case, spellbook, spell component pouch, diamond dust (250 gp), 100 gp pearls (2), 100 gp

The son of a successful spice merchant, Ezren's childhood was pleasantly safe. This changed when his father was charged with heresy by the church of Abadar. Ezren spent much of his adult life working to repair his father's ruined reputation, but when he discovered proof of his father's guilt he abandoned his family and set out into the world. Lacking the spry limbs of youth, Ezren fell naturally into the ways of wizardry, swiftly becoming a gifted self-taught spellcaster. While he often argues on the value of religion with Seelah, and his atrophied sense of humor often makes him the butt of Lem's jokes, his world experience and keen wit are quite valued by his younger traveling companions.



SEELAH

FEMALE HUMAN PALADIN 7

ALIGN LG **INIT** +0 **SPEED** 20 ft.

DEITY: Iomedee **HOMELAND:** Katapesh

ABILITIES

16	STR
10	DEX
14	CON
8	INT
13	WIS
14	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 57	
AC 22	
touch 10, flat-footed 22	
Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +5	

OFFENSE

Melee +1 *flaming longsword* +12/+7 (1d8+4/19–20 plus 1d6 fire)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +8/+3 (1d8+3/x3)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +10

Special Attacks lay on hands (14 hp/day), smite evil 2/day, turn undead 5/day (+4, 2d6+6, 4th)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th)
 At Will—*detect evil*

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd)
 1st—*lesser restoration, protection from evil*

Special Qualities aura of courage, divine grace, divine health, *remove disease* 2/week, *special mount*

SKILLS

Heal	+5
Knowledge (religion)	+6
Ride	+4
Sense Motive	+6

FEATS

Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

MOUNT

Aristide (heavy warhorse, MM 273)



Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *wand of cure light wounds* (42 charges); **Other Gear** +1 *full plate*, +1 *heavy steel shield*, +1 *flaming longsword*, dagger, mwk composite longbow (+3 Str) with 20 arrows, *cloak of Charisma* +2, *phylactery of faithfulness*, backpack, rations (4), silver holy symbol, 64 gp

Seelah's parents were slain by gnoll raiders within months of their settling in Solku. When a group of Iomedae's knights arrived to help defend the town, Seelah was taken with their beautiful, shining armor. She stole a helm from one of the paladins, but became overwhelmed with guilt. Worse, before she had a chance to return the helm, the paladin was herself slain during the Battle of Red Hail. Wracked with guilt, Seelah confessed her guilt to the paladins and vowed her life to their cause. Over the years, her guilt has transformed into a powerful faith and conviction. She values Ezren's wisdom and Harsk's conviction, but it is irreverent Lem who Seelah is most amused by, even if she sometimes feels his jokes go too far.



HARSK

MALE DWARF RANGER 7

ALIGN LN INIT +3 SPEED 20 ft.

DEITY: Torag **HOMELAND:** Druma

ABILITIES

14	STR
16	DEX
15	CON
10	INT
12	WIS
6	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 49
AC 19
touch 13, flat-footed 16
+4 against giants
Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +3
+2 against poison, spells, and spell-like abilities

OFFENSE

Melee +2 greataxe +11/+6 (1d12+5/x3)
Ranged +1 heavy crossbow +11/+6 (1d10+1/19–20)
Ranged +1 heavy crossbow +9/+9/+4 (1d10+1/19–20)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +9
Special Attacks favored enemy (giants +4; undead +2), +1 on attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids
Spells Prepared (CL 3rd)
 1st—*entangle* (DC 12), *resist energy*
Special Qualities darkvision 60 ft., stability, stonecunning, woodland stride

SKILLS

Heal	+11
Hide	+13
Listen	+11
Move Silently	+13
Spot	+11
Survival	+11
Wild Empathy	+5

FEATS

Crossbow Mastery, Endurance, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Reload (heavy crossbow), Rapid Shot, Track

ANIMAL COMPANION

Biter (badger, MM 268)



Combat Gear antitoxin, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), smokestick, tanglefoot bag; **Other Gear** +2 leather armor, +2 greataxe, +1 heavy crossbow with 30 bolts, screaming bolt (3), mwk silver dagger, amulet of natural armor +1, bird feather token, backpack, rations (4), signal whistle, tea pot, 12 gp, 30 pp

Harsk is, in many ways, not your standard dwarf. He prefers strong tea over alcohol (to keep his senses sharp), the wildlands of the surface world (where giants can be found), and the crossbow over the axe (which allows him to start fights faster). Yet few dare to mock him for his choices, for if there's anywhere that Harsk is dwarven, it is in his gruff and offputting attitude. Much of his anger stems from the death of his brother's warband. Slain to a man by giants, Harsk came upon the slaughter moments too late to save his brother. Harsk's hatred of giants has fueled him and shapes his life. His companions value his skill at combat even if they're somewhat afraid of him.

LEM

MALE HALFLING BARD 7

ALIGN CG INIT +4 SPEED 20 ft.

DEITY: Shelyn **HOMELAND:** Cheliox

ABILITIES

8	STR
18	DEX
13	CON
12	INT
8	WIS
16	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 34
AC 20
touch 16, flat-footed 16
Fort +5, Ref +11, Will +6
+2 vs. fear

OFFENSE

Melee +1 short sword +6 (1d4/19–20)
Ranged mwk sling +11 (1d3–1)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +0
Special Attacks bardic music 7/day
Spells Known (CL 7th)
 3rd (1/day)—*charm monster* (DC 16), *major image* (DC 17)
 2nd (3/day)—*alter self*, *c. moderate wounds*, *mirror image*, *sound burst* (DC 15)
 1st (4/day)—*c. light wounds*, *feather fall*, *hideous laughter* (DC 14), *silent image* (DC 15)
 0 (3/day)—*detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *light*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *summon instrument*

SKILLS

Bardic Knowledge	+8
Bluff	+13
Climb	+1
Concentration	+9
Diplomacy	+15
Hide	+8
Jump	+3
Listen	–3
Move Silently	+8
Perform (comedy)	+13
Perform (wind instruments)	+11
Tumble	+14
Use Magic Device	+13

FEATS

Dodge, Mobility, Spell Focus (illusion)



Combat Gear scroll of haste, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (50 charges); **Gear** +2 leather armor, dagger, +1 short sword, mwk sling with 20 bullets, cloak of resistance +1, gloves of Dexterity +2, ring of protection +1, backpack, masterwork flute, rations (6), spell component pouch, sunrods (3), 49 gp, 20 pp

Although Lem was raised in the lap of luxury, his childhood was anything but comfortable. Growing up a slave in the devil-haunted empire of Cheliox exposed Lem to a shocking range of decadence and debauchery. He rarely speaks of his childhood, but one can see its effects in his high disdain for law and order, and his intolerance for cruelty. Always quick to side with the underdog, Lem has learned that his most powerful trait is his optimism and sense of humor—skills that almost make up for his small stature and impulsive nature. Lem's reasons for traveling with his current companions vary upon the day and his mood, but he certainly values their strengths—and the never-ending supply of comedy material their antics provide him with.



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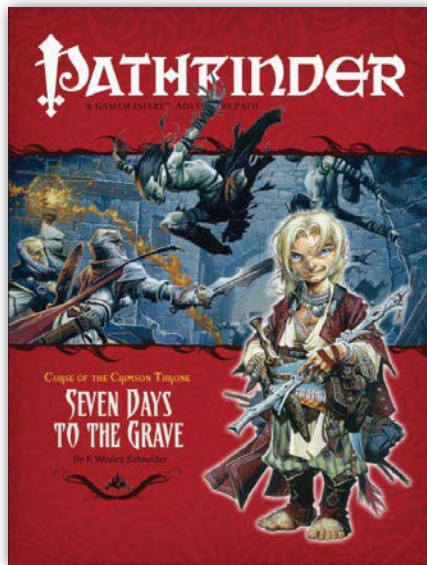
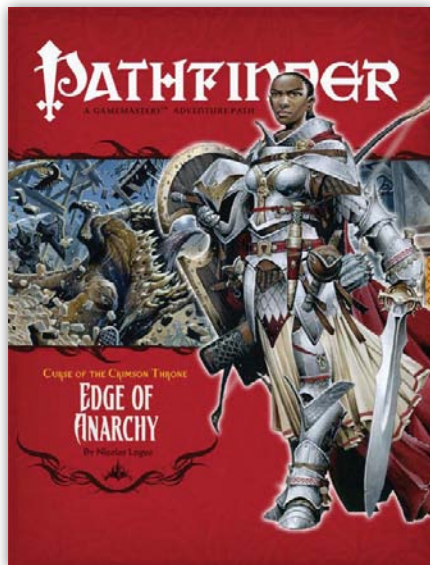
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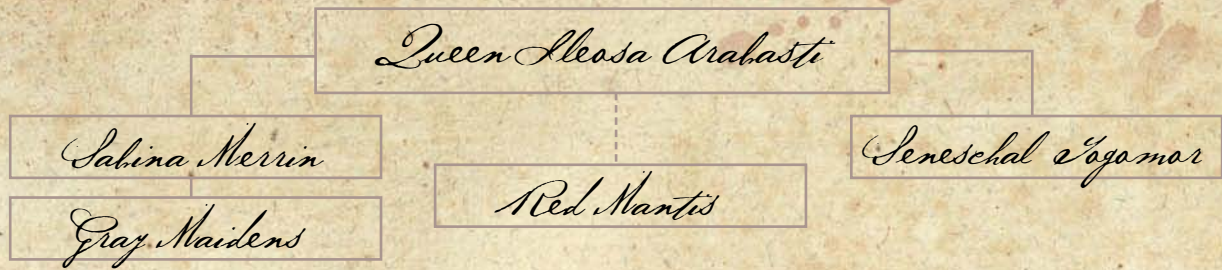
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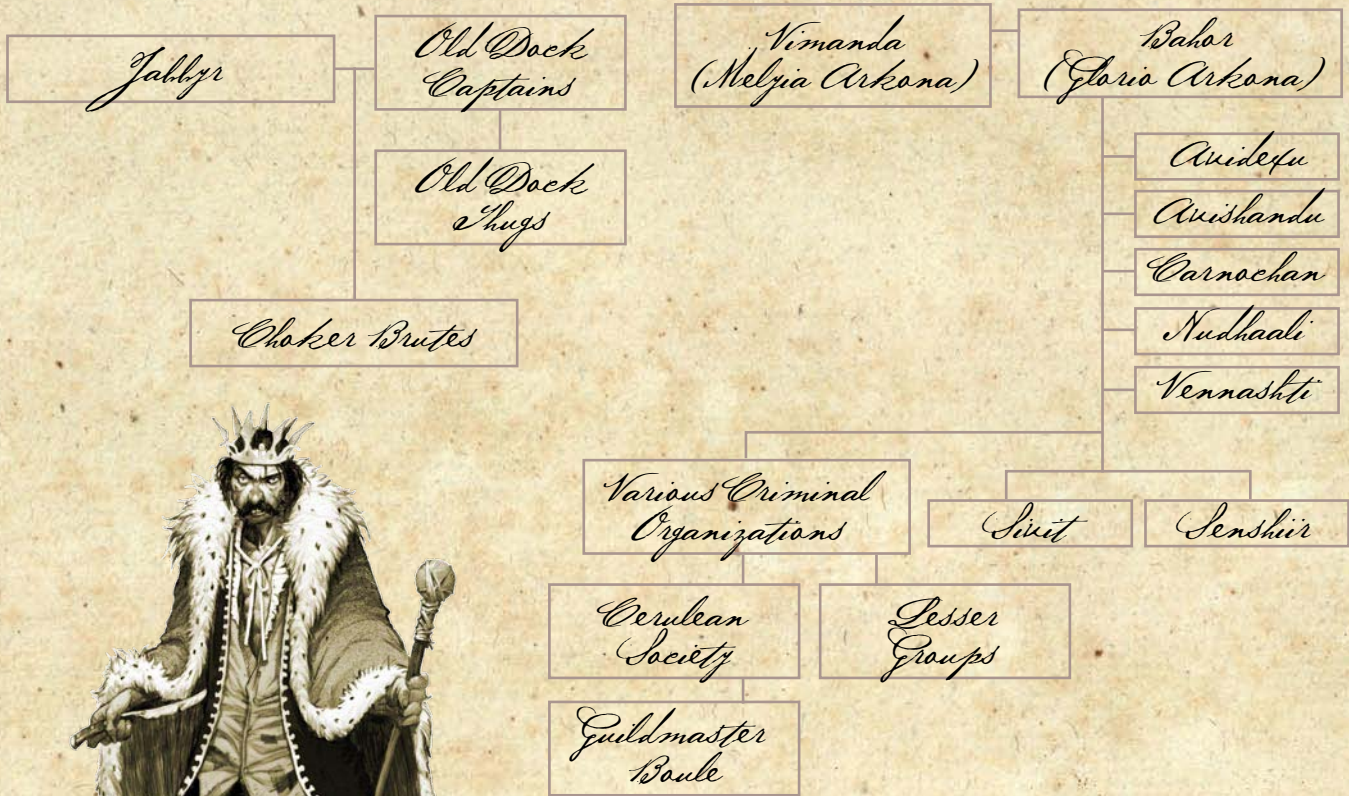
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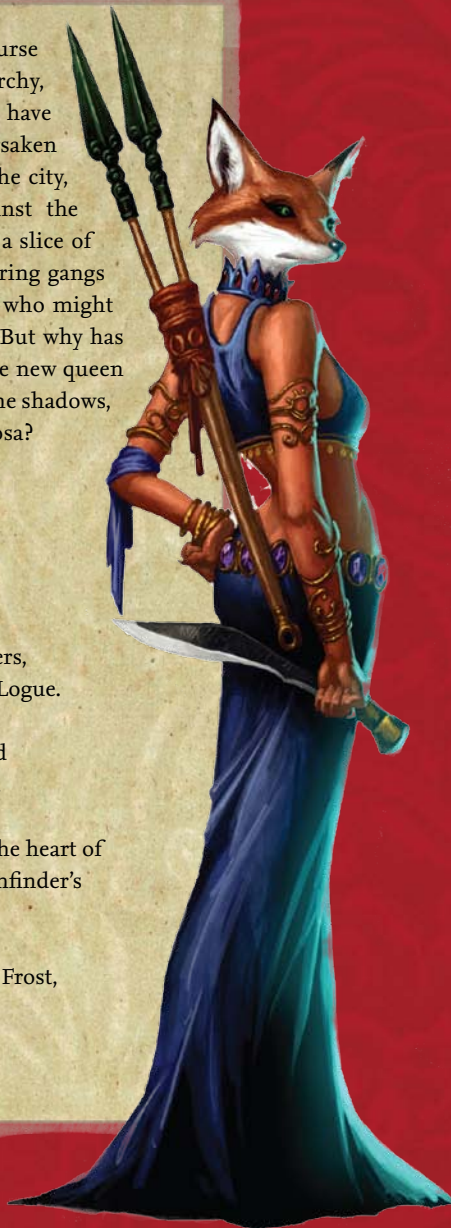


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