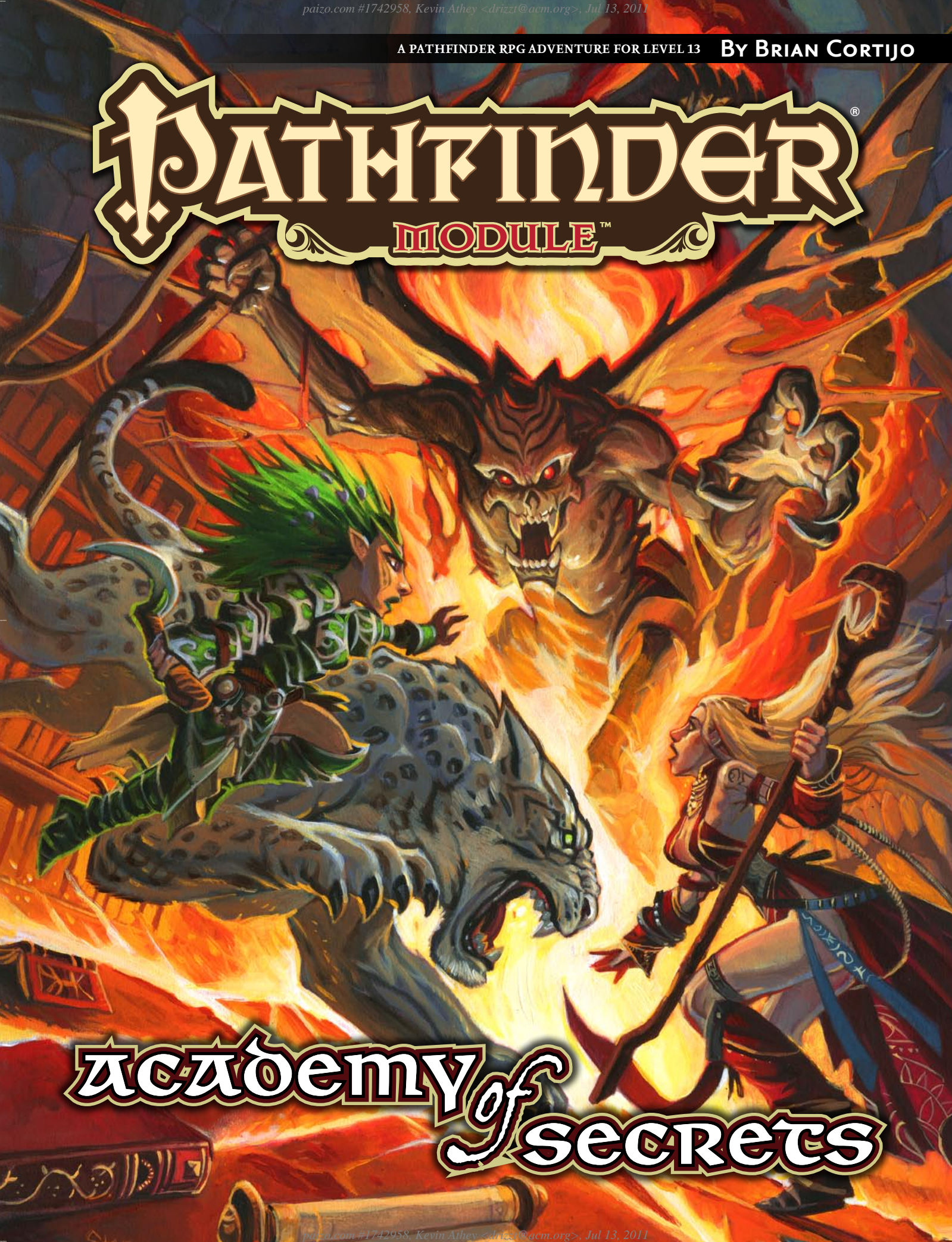


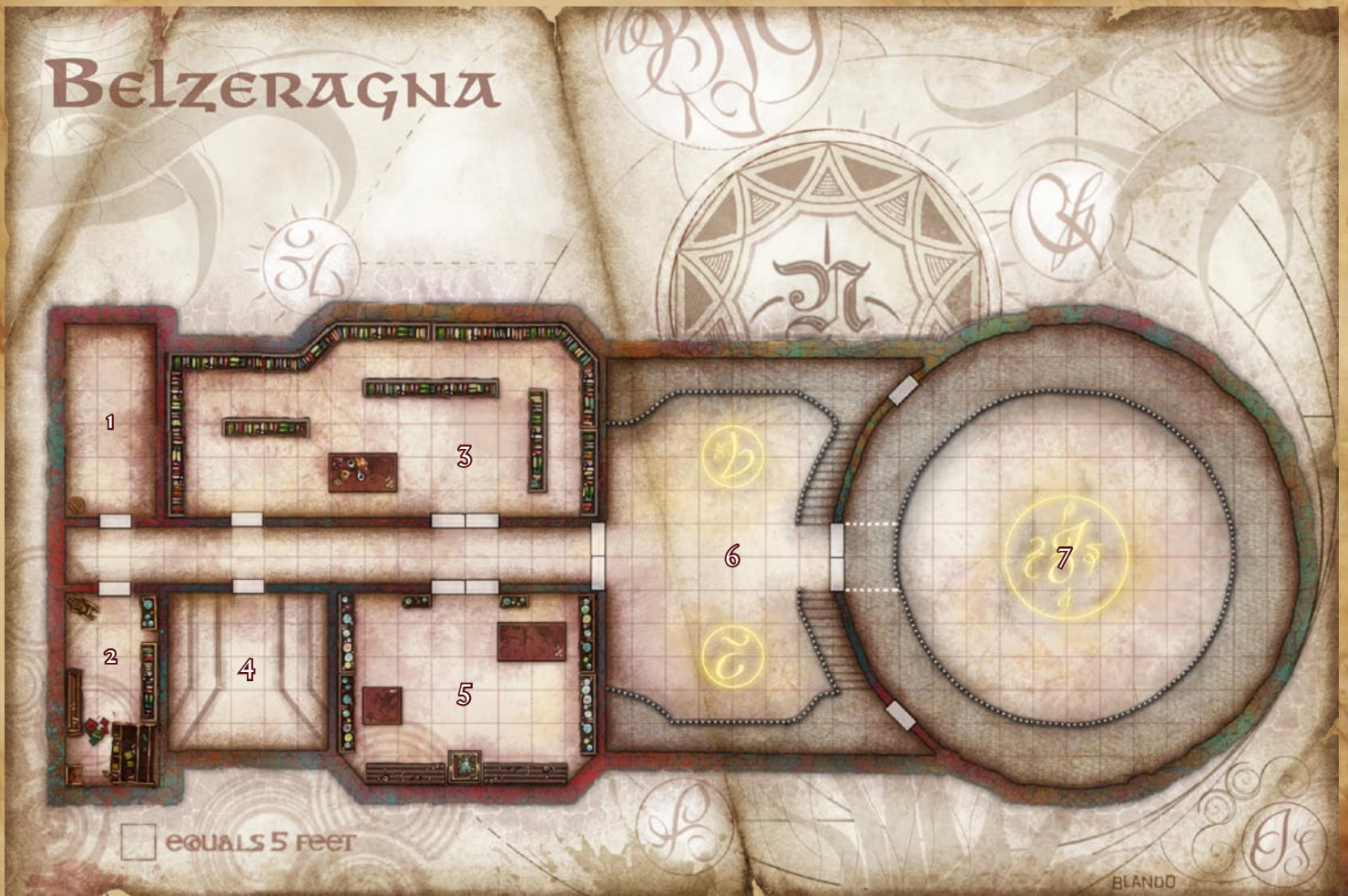
A PATHFINDER RPG ADVENTURE FOR LEVEL 13 BY BRIAN CORTIJO

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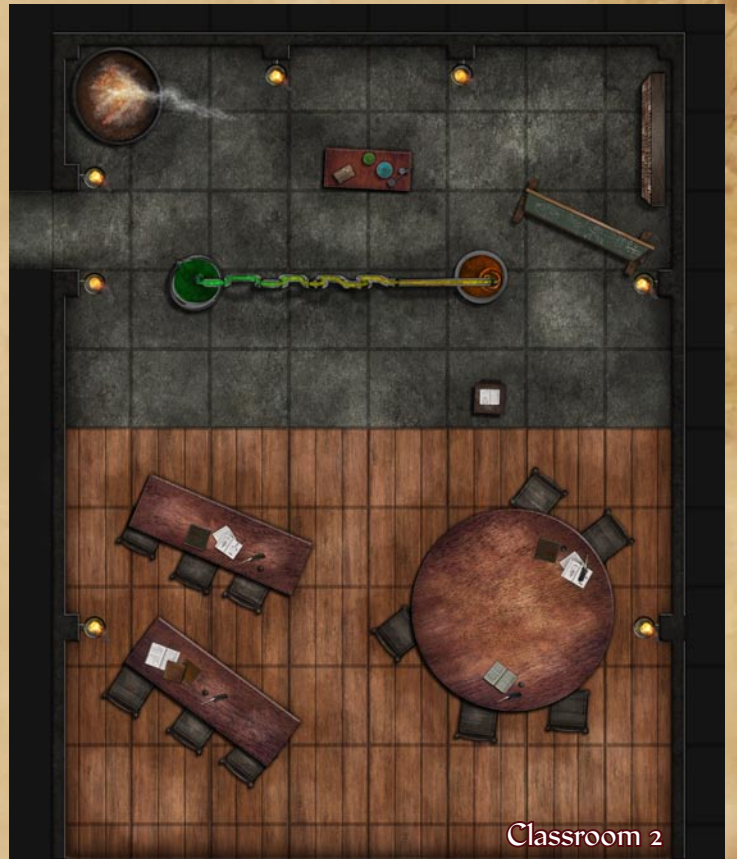
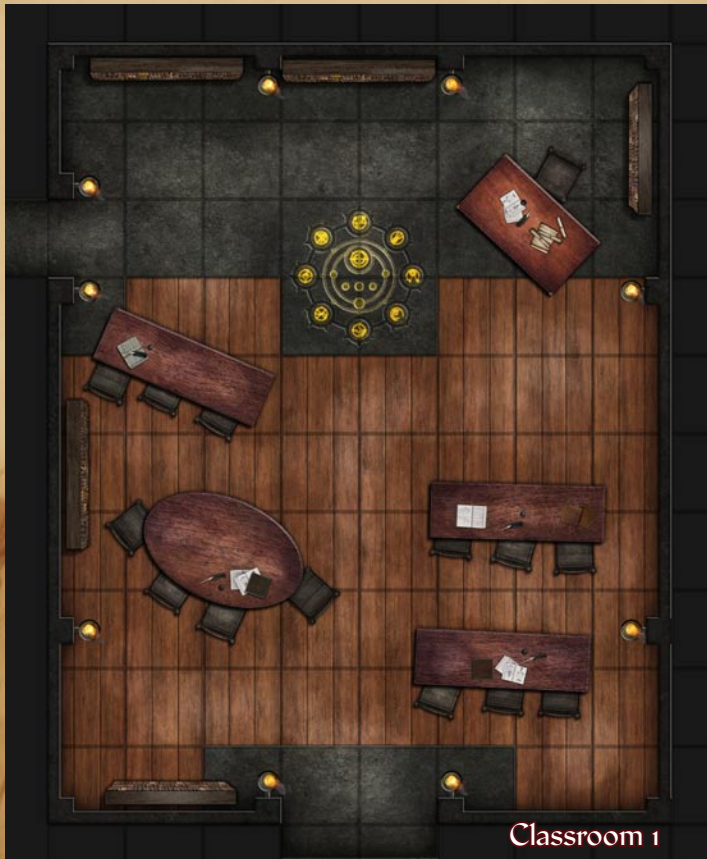
## MODULE<sup>™</sup>



# Academy of Secrets



— GAMEMASTERY MAP PACK: MAGIC ACADEMY —





# academy of secrets

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*Academy of Secrets* is a Pathfinder Module designed for four 13th-level characters and uses the medium XP advancement track. This module is designed for play in the Pathfinder campaign setting, but can easily be adapted for use with any world. This module is compliant with the Open Game License (OGL) and is suitable for use with the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game and the 3.5 edition of the world's oldest fantasy roleplaying game. The OGL can be found on page 32 of this product.

This product makes use of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*, and *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*. These rules can be found online as part of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Reference Document at [paizo.com/pathfinderRPG/prd](http://paizo.com/pathfinderRPG/prd).

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## academy *of* secrets

Each year, as spring turns to summer, the Acadamae of Korvosa holds the Breaching Festival: a carnival-like day on which a dozen hopefuls try to enter the famed magical university's Hall of Wards by whatever means they can, and in doing so earn extravagant wealth, magical might, and the praise and admiration of an entire city. Yet no one has emerged victorious from the Breaching in over a century and a half, and a great many contestants have gone missing entirely after bypassing the school's defenses. This year, the Acadamae's headmaster has invited non-student adventurers to participate in the contest as well. Is it possible that they will uncover the secrets of the Breaching's long stretch of years without a victor? Or will they simply fall victim to the Acadamae's unseen guardians?

# academy of secrets

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Acadamae is one of the oldest institutions in the city of Korvosa. Part university and part wizard school, the Acadamae has had numerous prestigious headmasters through the years, with its current one, Toff Ornelos, being one of Varisia's most powerful arcanists. Despite the power and prestige Toff enjoys from being the Acadamae's headmaster and an influential noble, he is also a bitter, weak-willed man who chafes at having to bear a family secret—that the Ornelos family has been ruled for the past century by a man who history believes to be long dead: Volshyenek Ornelos. Unknown to Toff, however, is the fact that Volshyenek really is dead, and has been for the past 218 years. In his place dwells an exiled infernal duke, the powerful devil known as Lorthact.

Forced to flee Hell after he aroused the wrath of Eiseth, queen of the erinyes, Lorthact abandoned the powers and prestige of being an infernal duke in order to take on the guise of a human being. He arrived on Golarion in 4260 AR, and over the course of a century of hiding and stealth finally managed to throw Eiseth and her agents off his trail. Yet in that time, Lorthact's position among Hell's aristocracy had vanished as well, and while he had survived the hundred-year wrath of a Whore Queen of Hell, he no longer had a position in Hell to return to. Without resources and allies, such a return would only result in his immediate destruction. And so for the next several centuries, Lorthact remained in bitter exile on Golarion.

For just over 2 centuries, Lorthact has posed as Volshyenek Ornelos, a real person beloved in the city of Korvosa for his role in helping found the city, protecting it from the savage Shoanti barbarians, and for establishing the magical college and wizardly school known as the Acadamae. When Volshyenek died, Lorthact stepped in to impersonate him. Under his influence, the Acadamae has become one of Avistan's most prestigious centers of arcane learning, yet its true purpose has become something of a sinister secret—it is now the means by which Lorthact hopes to collect enough mortal souls that he may someday bribe his way back into Hell's aristocracy.

While Lorthact staged Volshyenek's "death" in 4607 AR in a great conflagration of magic atop the Hall of Summoning, he did not relinquish his role, instead directing a succession of family patriarchs from the shadows. Although Toff has no idea that his ancestor Volshyenek is anything other than a powerful wizard who has used equally powerful magic to retain his youth and life over the centuries (possibly even making a deal with a devil, although this suspicion is as close as Toff has come to even guessing the terrible truth), he does know that Volshyenek keeps many secrets. What Toff doesn't realize is that one of the Acadamae's greatest traditions, the yearly Breaching festival in which eager adventurers and students alike are given a chance

## WHERE ON GOLARION?

*Academy of Secrets* takes place on the grounds of the Acadamae, a school of wizardry in the Varisian city of Korvosa. A former colony of Cheliax, Korvosa is a center of trade, culture, and learning. For more information on Korvosa and its inhabitants, plus the Acadamae, its grounds, and its students, check out *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Guide to Korvosa*, available from [paizo.com](http://paizo.com) and your local game store.



to prove their skill by breaking into the supposedly impregnable Hall of Wards on campus, is in fact an infernal trap designed to harvest mortal souls.

In his time as Volshyenek—both publicly and in hiding since his "death"—Lorthact has used the concentration of magic the Acadamae provides to increase his personal power, building vast reserves of captured souls. The Breaching Festival, founded in 4544 AR, has become Lorthact's most efficient and insidious method of soul harvesting. Unknown even to Volshyenek's succeeding headmasters, breaching the Hall of Wards doesn't actually grant entry to the building itself, but sends the unprepared competitors into a twisted, infernal demiplane called Belzeragna, where they suffer eternal torment for Lorthact's gain. As contestants perish on Belzeragna, their bodies manifest within the Hall of Wards as if slain by the deadly traps and magical protections in place within, but the victims' souls remain forever imprisoned within the infernal demiplane—or at least until Lorthact has need for them.

Hoping to harvest ever more powerful souls, Lorthact has over the past several years constantly urged Toff to make each year's Breaching Festival larger and more dangerous. Toff dutifully followed his ancestor's secret orders, but the knowledge that he doesn't actually rule the Ornelos family has been grating upon him for years as well. Toff has constantly sought ways to stealthily undermine

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Volshyenek's power, and hopes someday to orchestrate his ancestor's death so that he can truly rule the family and run the Acadamae in a way that befits his own desires and goals, not those of an ancient secret mastermind.

Toff decided to use this year's Breaching Festival to weaken Volshyenek's influence even further. If Toff can manage to produce a winner to this year's Festival, he will not only be able to raise his prestige as master of the Acadamae, but also may gain enough clout to stand up to Volshyenek's condescending manipulation. Of course, little passes in the Ornelos family or all of Korvosa that Lorthact cannot learn about. The exiled infernal duke knows of Toff's insubordination, but allows his puppet to twist the Breaching Festival rules nonetheless. Lorthact is confident that none can survive Belzeragna, and that, indeed, allowing more powerful contestants will merely bring to him more powerful souls. What neither Toff nor Lorthact fully realize, however, is what will happen if someone does manage to escape Belzeragna—for Belzeragna's doorway was not built to open in both directions. If anyone were to escape from the demiplane, it would disgorge all of its awful secrets into the world—an event that could well result in the greatest scandal in the Acadamae's history.

## CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE

Warning! If you hope to someday play in the Curse of the Crimson Throne Adventure Path, do not read this section! Significant secrets for that campaign are revealed in the paragraphs below. Skip ahead to the Adventure Summary with the assurance that we've quarantined all of the Crimson Throne spoilers in this section of the adventure.

Although *Academy of Secrets* is set in Korvosa, the same city in which the bulk of the Curse of the Crimson Throne Adventure Path takes place, the events portrayed in *Academy of Secrets* are not assumed to take place during that campaign. In fact, as with all Adventure Paths and modules produced by Paizo, *Academy of Secrets* is assumed to take place in your own game's continuity, and only the events presented in *The Inner Sea World Guide* are assumed to have taken place. This means that while King Eodred still technically rules Korvosa at the time of this adventure, he is (and has been for some time) on his deathbed, leaving much of the actual role of ruling the city in the hands of his beautiful young queen, Ileosa Arabasti. Queen Ileosa has not yet succumbed to the influence of the *Crown of Fangs*, nor has she taken the fateful final steps of poisoning her elderly husband—those events are essentially set to occur any day after this adventure concludes.

All that said, you could certainly run *Academy of Secrets* after the events portrayed in Curse of the Crimson Throne. In this case, Queen Ileosa obviously doesn't provide a "cameo" in the adventure—instead, it is her

successor who is present at the time. If you choose to run *Academy of Secrets* in this way, you can either run it as written for a new group of players, or you can adjust the power level of the encounters up as appropriate and run it as a sequel to Curse of the Crimson Throne, allowing the players to use the same characters they played in that Adventure Path. If you take this route, *Academy of Secrets* works quite well as the start of a brand-new high-level campaign—advice for where things can go from here can be found at the end of this adventure.

Running *Academy of Secrets* in conjunction with Curse of the Crimson Throne could be tricky, but wouldn't be impossible. In the continuity of that campaign, the PCs should be deep into the haunted castle of Scarwall when they're the appropriate level to play in this module, after all. The best time to insert *Academy of Secrets* into Curse of the Crimson Throne is right when the PCs return to Korvosa, having successfully explored Scarwall and liberated the sword *Seriththial*. After the PCs find Korvosa to be fully in Ileosa's control, they could be contacted by Toff Ornelos in secret (perhaps using Cressida as a proxy) to take part in the Breaching Festival, which Ileosa has demanded take place despite the dire situation Korvosa finds itself in. In this case, Ileosa herself isn't present at the Festival, but her simulacrum is—the PCs will need to disguise themselves in order to take part in the festival, with the theory being that upon emerging victorious, they'll win the support and admiration of the city's citizens and thus be poised to strike at the corrupt government with the full mandate of Korvosa's beleaguered populace. After completing this adventure, the PCs would move directly into the assault on Castle Korvosa, as detailed in "Crown of Fangs" in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #12.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Acadamae headmaster Toff Ornelos invites the PCs at the last minute to participate in this year's Breaching Festival, intending to use them as ringers to ensure a winner is crowned. The PCs have a night to meet the competition, and then the next morning, the Festival begins. The PCs navigate the initial portion, gathering the magical keys necessary to gain access to the Hall of Wards while several other competitors race them for the honor to be first into the notorious building.

The PCs finally get into the Hall of Wards, only to find themselves trapped on the demiplane of Belzeragna. There, the PCs encounter Lorthact's infernal minions and several damned souls, previous "winners" of the Breaching consigned to eternities of torment. Confronting Lorthact's lieutenant, the contract devil Chyvvom, the PCs are given a chance to bargain for their own freedom and unimaginable power or suffer an eternity of torment at the devil's hand.

# academy of secrets

With Chyvom defeated (or his contracts signed), the PCs emerge from Belzeragna, but in so doing shatter the tenuous bridge between the Material Plane and Hell, unleashing devils upon the unsuspecting crowds gathered on the Acadamae's grounds. The PCs must work quickly to defeat the devils before the fiends can do too much damage, after which they find themselves in a position to reveal the Breaching's scandalous history and change the balance of power within the university for good.

## PART ONE: AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION

The Breaching Festival is traditionally held on the last Sunday of the month of Desnus, when spring is in full bloom, though you should feel free to change this in individual campaigns to fit into existing timelines. Toff Ornelos, ever the coward at heart, waits until nearly the last possible moment before extending an unconventional invitation to the PCs to take part in the festival this year. As 13th-level characters, the PCs have doubtless already made names for themselves, and Toff selects them as likely candidates to win the Breaching Festival primarily on reports of their previous successes and exploits—the PCs need not be local to Korvosa.

If the PCs live in Korvosa, their invitation to join the Breaching Festival arrives in the form of an immaculately dressed courier wearing the livery of House Ornelos—she hand-delivers an invitation to take part in this year's Breaching Festival to each PC, along with a request from Toff himself to meet in his office in Ornelos Hall on the Acadamae grounds immediately to speak about the invitation. If the PCs are elsewhere in the Inner Sea, their invitations arrive via the same courier, save that she uses a *scroll of greater teleport* provided by Toff to arrive at the PCs' headquarters to deliver it. The courier has another *scroll of greater teleport* handy for the return trip, and offers to use it to transport the heroes to Korvosa immediately.

Among other things, Toff's invitation not only offers the PCs a chance to take part in one of Varisia's most talked-about yearly events, but also a chance to attend as this year's special guests of honor. The only catch is that the festival itself is scheduled to begin tomorrow—the invitation apologizes for the lateness, but promises the PCs that they will be well paid for their time even if they don't wish to take part in the Breaching Festival itself. Of course, Toff hopes that the PCs agree to take part in the contest.

A DC 15 Knowledge (arcana or local) check is sufficient for PCs to know the basic premise of the Breaching Festival and the reputation of its difficulty, deadliness, and potential rewards. Characters who have spent some time in Varisia gain a +10 bonus on this check, while those who have actually spent time in Korvosa gain a +20

## GETTING AROUND THE ACADAMAÆ

The Acadamae itself is presented in detail on pages 28–30 of this adventure—make sure that you're familiar with the school's layout before you run *Academy of Secrets*, as there are several points before, during, and after the Breaching Festival when the PCs are free to explore the school grounds.

The city of Korvosa itself is presented in great detail in *Guide to Korvosa*—access to this book can greatly enhance game play if the players wish to leave the campus grounds to explore the city itself.

bonus. A character who exceeds the DC by 10 or more notes some unusual elements—particularly, that invitations to the Breaching Festival normally come from the Dean of Abjuration, not the Acadamae's headmaster.

Headmaster Toff Ornelos himself is a highly regarded wizard whose reputation as headmaster of the Acadamae has secured his fame among arcanists throughout the Inner Sea. The chance to take part in the Breaching Festival is not only a great honor, it's an opportunity to secure a huge payout if the PCs can win. A DC 25 Knowledge (arcana or local) check confirms that, with the award money increasing every year the grand prize goes unclaimed, the current payout is approximately 153,000 gp.

## MEETING TOFF ORNELOS

However the PCs arrive at the Acadamae in Korvosa, they are escorted immediately to the headmaster's offices in Ornelos Hall once they present their personalized invitations to the campus guards. Toff's office is an austere, well-organized chamber with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and a large oaken desk. The wizened headmaster stands to welcome his guests, his long beard wagging slightly as he moves to shake their hands. Once the PCs' escorts have left the room and the characters are seated comfortably, Toff speaks.

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“Welcome, and thank you for answering my invitation. As I'm sure you well know, the Breaching Festival is a longstanding Acadamae tradition, with prizes both material and magical. You might also know that entry in the contest is traditionally reserved for only the best and bravest of our students and a select few representatives of other Korvosan institutions. This year, though, we're changing tradition and expanding the invitations further than ever—we want the most powerful, qualified individuals to compete, in other words. It has been a century and a half since the last—the *only*—winner of the Breaching Festival won the prize! One of you surely must bring glory to yourself and the Acadamae by enduring the traps and tricks in the Hall of Wards. I'm even willing to bend the rules to allow a team of allied competitors like yourselves to cooperate as a single unit—whatever it takes to get a winner tomorrow.”

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### The Truth about Dyson

The Breaching Festival has not seen a victor since the first and only successful contestant, Dyson Fordyce, won its prize in 4551, and even then he didn't actually win, though none have ever discovered the truth. A master illusionist, Fordyce skillfully employed a particularly potent casting of *mislead* to make it appear that he entered and returned from the Hall of Wards, when in fact he never set foot within its walls, and thus avoided Lorthact's trap. Whoever might win the contest this year by fully breaching the abjured building and then reemerging again could be a resourceful and powerful ally for Toff Ornelos, especially if Toff were the reason that contestant won.

The PCs likely have questions for the headmaster before they agree to join the competition. Here are answers to the most likely questions.

**“Why have you chosen us?”** Toff explains he's done plenty of research—use this moment to have the wizard recount several of your players' exploits in the past as reasons he thinks they'll have an excellent chance to succeed at the contest. He concludes with a shrug and a comment he hopes will cause the PCs to rise to the occasion: “But in the end, you're better judges of your own capabilities than I. If you feel that my research and estimation of your chances are overly generous, then I'll simply have to find a more capable team to make history tomorrow.”

**“What do you need us to do?”** Toff wants the PCs to join the Breaching Festival as contestants, and to do their utmost to win the grand prize. “No one's won the festival for over a century and a half, and that's far too long a stretch for a school that produces some of Golarion's most skilled wizards. Frankly, it makes us look bad.” A DC 20 Sense Motive check allows a PC to get the feeling he's holding something back—if pressed on this subject, Toff sighs heavily and admits that it would also be “more than nice to have someone win the damned contest while I'm still headmaster.”

**“Who was the last winner?”** Back in 4551, a man named Dyson Fordyce—who is the only winner to date—managed to step into the Hall of Wards and just as quickly step back out, winning on a technicality. Since then, the Breaching Festival has required entry into the Hall of Wards by one door and exit from one on the opposite side of the building.

**“What are the rules?”** The rules are simple. First, there can be but one winner—although the PCs are welcome to work together to help one of their team win and then split the money. (Toff notes that the winning prize, split among the PCs, would still be a significant payout.)

Second, while contestants are free to work together if they wish, they are not allowed to directly interfere with other contestants. Third, the contestant who first emerges from the front doors of the Hall of Wards is the winner. Finally, all contestants must sign forms that release the Acadamae of any liability for any misfortune suffered as a result of the contest.

**“What sorts of dangers can we expect?”** The Breaching Festival, which grew out of the Hall of Wards' claim that their traps and defenses were so great that no thief could breach them, is for real—the dangers contestants face are lethal. Each year, the dean of the Hall of Wards, with the aid of a handpicked group of talented spellcasters (most of whom are final-year students or graduates of the Acadamae), crafts a new series of traps and dangers. No one else knows what these wards are until the festival is underway. Toff can tell the PCs that in previous years, all manner of magical traps, particularly those that summon monsters or use glyphs and wards, have been used.

**“What's in it for us?”** If the PCs ask this question, Toff smiles as if he's a bit surprised that they don't already know the answer. The reward for winning the Breaching Festival is 153,000 gp. And that's just the monetary gain—the fame for being the first people in over 150 years to win the Breaching Festival is glory beyond any that can be bought.

**“If the Breaching Festival is too hard, why don't you just make it easier?”** Toff actually rolls his eyes at this, responding, “Then what would be the point of having the contest in the first place?”

### After the Meeting

After their meeting with Toff concludes and they leave the headmaster's office, the PCs are met by a lanky human wizard by the name of **Jandar Lilswin** (LN male human conjurer 7). He introduces himself, explaining that he's been selected as the PCs' guide during their stay on the Acadamae grounds. You can use Jandar to help guide the PCs wherever they wish, to answer additional questions they may have about the Breaching Festival, or otherwise aid or advise. Jandar is one of Toff's many assistants, a recent graduate of the Acadamae who expects to earn a post here as a professor himself. Although he's willing to escort the PCs around campus, he hopes to be able to finish his guide duties early, leaving the PCs to rest in their own rooms overnight. If the PCs wish to look around campus, refer to pages 28–30 of this adventure. Note that the eight halls of magic are closed this night, leaving only the school grounds, the dorms, Ornelos Hall, and the Halls of Crafting open for the PCs to visit at this time.

Before Jandar and the PCs can leave Ornelos Hall, though, something unusual happens—proceed with *Mayhem in the Basement*, below.



# Academy of Secrets

## UNSANCTIONED CONJURATION (CR 12)

This encounter is intended to give the PCs a quick combat at the start of the adventure and impress upon them that the Acadamae is far from a safe place. The encounter doesn't have to take place immediately after the PCs' talk with Toff, and it can happen at any point you wish while the PCs explore the Acadamae.

This encounter begins with a scream and a sudden thunderous crash coming from beyond a closed door—if the PCs are just leaving Ornelos Hall, the sound comes from a classroom on the building's ground floor. The door is unlocked—an investigation of the room beyond reveals a horrifying sight.

**Creature:** An ambitious student named **Seska Imintar** (CN female human wizard 5), hoping to impress a fellow student with her arcane prowess, made the foolish mistake of using a pilfered *scroll of greater planar binding* to summon a retriever. Woefully unprepared to handle the powerful magic, the wizard botched the casting. The spell went horribly awry, and the retriever, when it manifested in the classroom, mortally injured Seska with a blast of electricity from one of its eyes, creating the explosion and scream that catches the PCs' attention. Seska is 1d4 rounds away from dying of her mortal wounds—if the PCs immediately intervene, they distract the rampaging retriever from the dying wizard, but they'll still need to stabilize her soon if they wish to save her life.

The retriever is a particularly potent version of its kind. It's already used its electricity eye ray, but the other three eye rays, as well as its murderous claws and fangs, are ready for battle against the PCs. If Jandar is with the PCs, he panics at the sight of the creature and is effectively useless for the fight. If the fight goes on for more than 4 rounds, the horrific sounds bring Toff down from his office—in this case, the powerful wizard joins the battle (his stats can be found on page 25).

Use the map of "Classroom 1" on the inside cover of this adventure for this battle.

### ADVANCED RETRIEVER

CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 137 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 234, 294)

**Development:** If the PCs revive Seska, she thanks them profusely and shamefully admits her mistake in attempting to summon such a powerful creature alone. She states that she had hoped to impress a fellow student with her ability to bind a retriever, and also admits to stealing the scroll he used in the attempt. Unless the PCs intervene with some excellent Diplomacy rolls made on her behalf, Toff is enraged at the student's foolish act. He not only has Seska punished, but has her fined for three times the price of the stolen scroll to cover its loss as well as any damage done to

## Magic Academy Map Pack

Several of the encounter areas in *Academy of Secrets* appear in *GameMastery Map Pack: Magic Academy*. These maps are reprinted on the inside covers of this adventure, but if you want miniatures-scale versions of these encounter areas, look no further than this map pack!

the classroom—an amount Seska can't pay, forcing her to labor for the Acadamae for many years.

Toff apologizes to the PCs in the same breath he uses to thank them for defeating the monster before it caused any more damage, explaining that it's highly unusual for Acadamae students to attempt such foolish stunts, but that such attempts always spike in the days leading up to a Breaching Festival. He has the Acadamae pay for any healing, de-petrification, or even *resurrections* (although he tries to get by with *raise dead* and a few *restorations* if he can) to help the party recover from the battle, and throws in a reward of 900 pp as thanks for their quick thinking and swift action, noting that the retriever's defeat is all the proof he needs that they'll do quite well in the Breaching tomorrow.

## The Competition

Apart from the PCs, there are only four other hopefuls scheduled to take part in the Breaching Festival (several others backed out at the last minute because of nerves, political pressure, or outright cowardice as the date of the festival drew near). Whether or not the PCs can track down and talk to any of these competitors is up to you. The four competitors are presented below.

**Fatmire (N male halfling rogue 7):** Fatmire is a young-looking halfling with eyes that dart from side to side as he speaks and a somewhat rodentlike face. He seems nervous about participating in the Breaching, much less winning its prize. When he makes eye contact with anyone, he smiles widely, showing his perfect teeth, but is disinclined to talk to anyone about anything, preferring to keep to himself. A "freelance thief," he was hoping (perhaps somewhat naively) that Korvosa's thieves' guild, the Cerulean Society, wouldn't have a presence at the Breaching. When he realized Illia Ean was competing, he started having second thoughts. More than a little paranoid, Fatmire thinks that anyone who takes too keen an interest in him is secretly working for the Cerulean Society. His nerves get the better of him late in the night, and he abandons the festival entirely, slinking back into the slums of Old Korvosa instead of showing up in the morning.

**Illia Ean (CN female human rogue 13):** Korvosa's thieves' guild, the Cerulean Society, has a longstanding open invitation from the Acadamae to send one (and only

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MODULE™

one) member to participate in the Breaching Festival. The Acadamae security appreciates this “free” testing of their defenses, and the Cerulean Society would dearly love to claim the prize money. Guildmaster Boule doesn’t send a representative to the festival every year—but this year he sends Illia Ean.

Illia is a slim, homely Varisian woman with brown hair that looks like it’s been self-cut by a dull knife without a mirror. Her nose has been broken more than once in her thieving, but she’s both clever and quick, and makes quite a good living at her profession with ease. She dresses in loose-fitting clothes, and carries herself like one who knows her way around a fight.

Despite her general dislike of most people, Illia is polite enough to respond to questions. She avoids small talk as best she can, and answers in short, one- or two-word replies. Her scars come from “work,” she wants “to win” because of “the money,” and so on. All questions about her personal life are met with a sharp, annoyed stare, and perhaps some profanity.

With a DC 19 Diplomacy check, Illia’s defenses soften somewhat and she becomes willing to share a little more. She is a member of the thieves’ guild, which she freely admits, but is not interested in the suffering of her victims one way or another. “This is Korvosa, after all. Wizards truck with devils, our queen’s a spoiled brat, and every palm and wheel needs lots of gold grease just to keep things moving.” She enjoys tossing a bit of chaos into the orderly mix, but beyond that, she has few skills that would otherwise be of any use. She can’t sing, perform, or craft anything of value, and she’s not particularly charming. What she can do is steal things, and that lends itself to only one real career option. She’s pretty much okay with that.

If a PC exceeds the Diplomacy check to earn her trust by 10 or more, Illia confides in that PC that she has heard a rumor that the wizards who set up this year’s Breaching “got their hands on some sort of strange fire gargoyle thing—you might want to prep for fire-themed trouble, as a result. I’m just saying. Wouldn’t want your good looks to get messed up by a blast of flame to your pretty little face!”

**Knur of the Gilded Claw (CN male dwarf fighter 10):** Knur is a short dwarf, surly and scarred from years of work in Riddleport’s gas works. After quitting the gas works, Knur moved southeast to Korvosa, where he’s

spent most of his time moving from one gang to another, invariably working as a thug or muscle. He’s currently “between gangs,” but managed to secure an invitation to this competition after spending more money than he’s comfortable thinking about on bribes. Neither kind nor intelligent, Knur has but one motivation in the competition—to get the gold. He has a viselike grip (hence his nickname) to go with his keen ability to read people. He crushingly shakes the PCs’ hands when they meet, but otherwise says nothing to them.

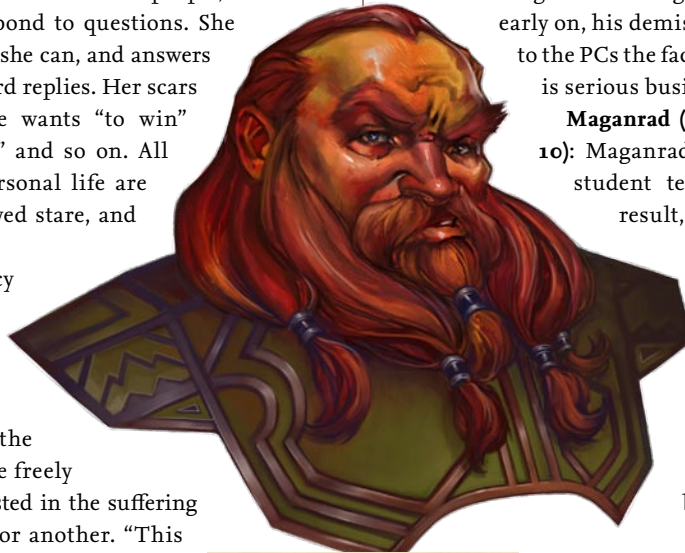
Knur’s role in the adventure is as an object lesson. Take pains to present him as a tough, capable, no-nonsense character who seems to think that he can take on any challenge. When he gets taken out of the contest early on, his demise should help to drive home to the PCs the fact that the Breaching Festival is serious business.

**Maganrad (LN male human enchanter**

**10):** Maganrad is an Ulfen wizard and a student teacher at the school—as a result, he’s a crowd favorite, since he’s the one who represents the Acadamae most directly. He’s tall, lanky, and kindly looking. He wears a tunic and breeches rather than more traditional wizards’ robes, and has a pair of leather bracers over his forearms.

If the PCs wish to speak to Maganrad, they find him much more willing to talk than the other three NPC contestants. He came to

Korvosa by ship as a young boy from Kalsgard in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, and quickly took to the local language and culture. When he discovered he had magical talents, he made arrangements to fund his entry into the Acadamae, where he has studied for the last 9 years. Although he is certain he could have passed the graduation tests years ago, he is mindful of the 10-year enrollment commitment at the school, and has not pressed the matter. Soon he will qualify to graduate and earn himself a place on the Acadamae’s prestigious staff. He hopes that adding “winner of the Breaching Festival” to his list of accomplishments will help secure this goal. Maganrad refuses to talk or even speculate about what’s to come in the Breaching Festival... but even if the PCs do somehow manage to get him to talk, he has very little to say. He’s deliberately avoided listening to rumors or researching previous competitions, since he feels like that might be “cheating.” He’d rather win the festival fairly and honestly.



**KNUR**

## Part Two: The Breaching Festival

When Sunday morning arrives, the Acadamae wakes to a single sharp ringing of the campus bells at the break of dawn. The Breaching Festival officially begins an hour after dawn, but eager spectators begin gathering on the surrounding walls and the campus's southern quad even before sunrise. Hundreds of common folk sit or stand atop the Acadamae's southern walls, while vendors of refreshments and souvenirs wander nosily and often through the mass. Important observers, such as aristocrats and other prominent locals and nobles, are allowed to gather at ground level among several large and colorful tents and pavilions erected overnight in the quad just south of the Hall of Summoning. It is in this area that the PCs and other contestants are expected to gather, waiting for Toff to begin the competition with his opening speech at precisely 7:00 A.M.

At 15 minutes before, a large group of nobles arrives to excessive fanfare—this is none other than Queen Ileosa and several royal attendants. The queen has no true interest in the Breaching's contestants—she's making an appearance out of tradition, and fully expects this year's festival to have the same result every year has, with another batch of hopeful adventurers vanishing and being forgotten by month's end. Certainly, her guards won't let the PCs approach. (If you feel that having Ileosa appear would be too distracting for your group, feel free to omit this cameo appearance, explaining that the queen had other, more important things to take care of than attend yet another Breaching Festival.)

Three of the four NPC contestants show up as well, giving the PCs a last chance to try to speak to the competition if they haven't before. The halfling Fatmire is nowhere to be found (having decided at the last minute to not compete), and as the hour draws near, Fatmire is officially recorded as having withdrawn from the competition.

At 7:00, the bells toll the hour and Headmaster Toff Ornelos arrives in a blast of multicolored smoke, teleporting into the staging area from his office. He lifts his hand to signal silence, and after the crowd quiets, he speaks aloud to the crowd, but especially to the contestants.

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"Welcome one and all to this year's Breaching Festival! I know the contestants are eager to begin, so I shall keep this introduction short. This year, as every year, one must enter the Hall of Wards via its eastern entrance after solving several minor conundrums our professors and spellcasters have set up at the other seven halls that surround us. The first contestant to emerge from these doors—" here Toff pauses to indicate the large doors in the Hall of Wards' western facade, facing the quad—"shall be declared the winner of the Breaching Festival. If no winner emerges by dusk, there can be no winner for this year's festival. Yet should one of these brave contestants accomplish what no

## Non-Competitive PCs

There's a chance that your players won't be interested in taking part in the Breaching Festival. If the lure of more than 150,000 gp isn't enough to get the players to take part in the festival, that doesn't mean that the adventure's over!

If the PCs elect not to take part in the Festival, Toff is visibly disappointed but still asks the PCs to watch the festival and attend as guests of honor. In this case, you can simply describe how the contestants move from building to building at the start of the festival, and how several of them managed to reach the Hall of Wards. As tensions rise and the crowd eagerly anticipates someone exiting, you can segue directly into Part Three of this adventure—one of the contestants (your choice as to whom) almost succeeds, but doesn't quite make it out of the Hall of Wards before the portal to the demiplane of Belzeragna collapses, killing the poor contestant and unleashing devils upon the Acadamae. The PCs get swept up in the panic, and once they've fought off a few devils, Toff desperately asks the PCs to step through the portal into the Hall of Wards to seek out an explanation for what's going on. In this revision to the adventure, killing or defeating Chyvom seals off Belzeragna and sends the PCs back to the now devil-free Acadamae, allowing them to use what they've learned to decide Toff's fate.

one has accomplished in over 150 years, that person will walk away with more than 150,000 gold sails!"

Here, the crowd erupts into cheers for several seconds. When the roar dies down, Toff places his hands inside the front of his robe and withdraws a glowing, fist-sized sphere of shimmering light that he holds aloft. The sphere dances and bobs an inch above his upturned palm.

"These glowing spheres are the keys to your fate and fortune, worthy contestants. This is a key-light—there are seven of them hidden among the seven other Halls on the grounds. Each contestant needs his or her own key-light to get into the Hall of Wards. So find yourself a key-light, use it to enter the Hall of Wards, and you will have your chance to enter history!"

With that, Toff bows to the contestants, then signals to several other students standing nearby. They aim fireworks into the sky, and with a touch of magically conjured flame to fuses, a colorful set of pyrotechnic fire bursts signal the start of the Breaching Festival!

## NPC Breaching Festival Tactics

When the Breaching Festival begins, the other three NPCs in the competition immediately race off to seek out their own key-lights. Where they go is up to you, but they should seek out their own sites separately from the PCs

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and each other. Since a key-light, once “harvested,” takes an hour to recharge, the PCs may find themselves at what might feel to them to be a disadvantage if they’re playing as a group, since they’ll need to harvest one key-light per PC, whereas their lone competitors only need to harvest one each before they can enter the Hall of Wards. Despite this apparent advantage, none of the three other NPC competitors are as well positioned to win as the PCs.

Meddling with other contestants is against the rules of the Breaching Festival. If the PCs try to sabotage an NPC’s efforts to gain a key-light, you should remind them of this rule—if the PCs persist, chances are very good that they’ll be caught by observers and disqualified. In this case, the adventure isn’t necessarily over—see the Non-Competitive PCs sidebar for advice on how to continue the adventure in the event that the PCs do not enter the Hall of Wards.

**Illia Ean:** Illia successfully harvests a key-light and enters the Hall of Wards before the PCs, but quickly falls victim to the perils within (see area 4 on page 17).

**Knur:** Knur grossly fails at harvesting whichever key-light he initially goes for. The trap or guardian for that key-light kills him outright. Try to stage this event at a point where the PCs can see the resulting mayhem, thus driving home the fact that the Breaching Festival is indeed quite deadly.

**Maganrad:** Like Illia, Maganrad makes it into the Hall of Wards before the PCs, but he dies soon thereafter; his soul becomes contested property between two of Belzeragna’s denizens (see area 6 on page 20).

### The Breaching Festival

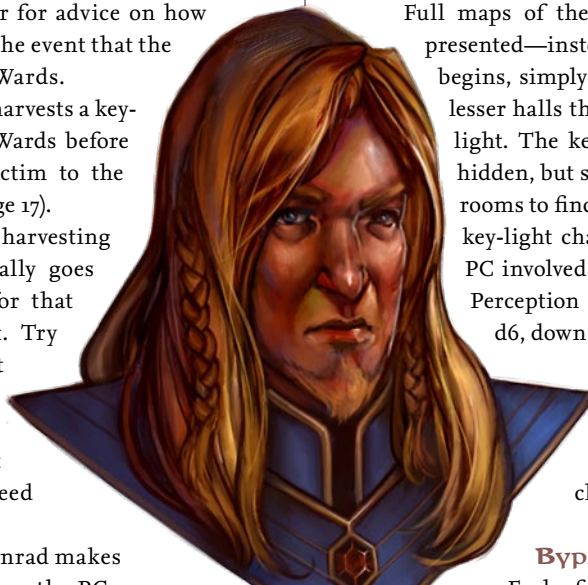
With the Breaching Festival officially begun, the PCs must gather a number of magical glowing orbs called key-lights. These objects are akin to the glowing motes of light created by *dancing lights*. A single key-light is located in a room in each of the various lesser halls, glowing softly but completely immobile. Once that room’s challenge is overcome or defeated, the key-light becomes mobile. At this point, the key-lights can even be passed from one person to another, although they cannot be easily thrown—a single key-light has mass and weight about equivalent to a small feather or dandelion seed. Once a key-light is taken, a new one manifests in that room after 1 hour—this also resets that room’s magical challenge.

While the tests the PCs must face in order to secure a key-light for each of their members are relatively

dangerous, the true tests await them within the Hall of Wards itself.

The following seven entries detail the various tests that each of the seven lesser halls in the Acadamae present to the PCs. The order in which the PCs attempt these tests is irrelevant—let the players decide which ones they will tackle. Once the PCs make their initial choice, you can assign Illia, Knur, and Maganrad to their own tests of your choosing. Illia’s and Maganrad’s become inactive for an hour after they’re solved, so make sure to pick the two tests you’re least interested in seeing your players attempt, since chances are good they won’t want to hang around long enough to let the tests recharge so they can make their own attempt!

Full maps of the various smaller halls are not presented—instead, when the Breaching Festival begins, simply ask the PCs which of the seven lesser halls they are going to search for a key-light. The key-lights aren’t particularly well hidden, but searching through the numerous rooms to find the one that contains that hall’s key-light challenge takes 5d6 minutes. Each PC involved in a search who makes a DC 15 Perception check reduces this time by one d6, down to a minimum of 1d6 minutes of searching with four successful checks. Once the PCs find a particular hall’s key-light, proceed with the appropriate challenge detailed below.



MAGANRAD

### Bypassing Challenges

Each of the challenges in the seven halls is essentially set up as a trap. Contestants can defeat these traps the standard way (via a Disable Device check made by a character with the ability to disarm magic traps), or by triggering the trap and surviving the trap’s effects. Yet canny characters with the right kinds of resources can bypass these traps in other ways.

Once a challenge’s trap has been successfully identified with a Perception check (DC varies by trap), a knowledgeable character who can examine magic auras via *detect magic* or other effects can study the trap’s energies. By making a successful Spellcraft check (DC varies by trap), the character can identify what sort of specific spell the trap’s fundamental mechanics work off of. By casting this spell on the trap as it is triggered, a spellcaster can use this spell (or *dispel magic* or *greater dispel magic*) to effectively counterspell the trap and deactivate it (no Spellcraft check is necessary, since the spellcaster just made this check to identify the spell in the trap). If the spellcaster uses *dispel magic* or *greater dispel magic* to

# academy of secrets

attempt this and fails to counterspell the trap, the trap triggers as normal.

## HALL OF SUMMONING (CR 12)

The Hall of Summoning's challenge is located in a classroom in the building's southwest corner (use the map of Classroom 1 for this encounter). Because of the size of this building, the actual time it takes to locate the challenge is increased by an additional 10 minutes.

**Trap:** This room presents an unexpected wrinkle—there are not one, but five glowing red key-lights in this room, each floating above the center of one of the five tables in the room. Only one of these key-lights is real (chosen by you)—the other four are magical summoning traps prepared to conjure four erinyes devils to attack everyone in the room as soon as any of the five spheres is touched.

### SUMMONING TRAP CR 12

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** 1 hour; **Counterspell** Spellcraft DC 26  
(*summon monster VI*)

**Effect** When this trap is triggered, it summons four erinyes devils in place of the four false key-lights—each functions as if summoned by a CL 11th *summon monster VI* spell, and fights until destroyed or the spell's effect ends in 11 rounds.

### ERINYES (4) CR 7

XP 4,800 each

hp 94 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 75*)

**Story Award:** The PCs should earn XP for a CR 11 encounter for navigating this challenge, whether they defeat the traps by successfully disarming them or by triggering them and defeating the four summoned erinyes devils.

## HALL OF SEEING (CR 11)

The Hall of Seeing's challenge is located at the central junction of the building's two main halls—an easy place to reach, so locating this challenge always takes only 1d6 minutes. No map of this challenge is necessary, as it doesn't involve combat.

The two long hallways meet in a 15-foot-diameter circular room with a domed ceiling above. The walls of this room between the four hallways are decorated with several tall mirrors—the orange key-light appears to float 4 feet off the ground in the center of the room, but only in the reflections in the mirrors, not in the room itself.

As soon as any PC approaches within 5 feet of a mirror, that PC's reflection smiles and beckons the PC to follow, turning around and appearing to approach the orange

light in the center of the reflected room. If a PC copies his reflection's motions, turning and stepping to the center of the room, he suddenly finds the orange key-light is now floating in the middle of the real room.

**Trap:** This room's challenge consists of a momentary but horrifying mental link to powerful forces from Hell that afflicts any PC who either touches one of the mirrors in this room or attempts to take possession of the key-light once it manifests in the real room's center.

### INFERNAL VISION CR 11

XP 12,800

Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** 1 hour; **Counterspell** Spellcraft DC 25  
(*contact other plane*)

**Effect** When this trap is triggered, every creature in the room is suddenly put in mental contact with an Infernal Duke—the identity of the powerful devil is irrelevant, as the contact lasts only for a moment. When this effect occurs, ask each player to get a scrap of paper and a pencil handy, then ask them to write down a single question on that scrap. Give them 10 seconds or so to write the question, then collect the papers. Any player who managed to write down an entire question gets to utilize this trap as a *contact other plane* spell to receive an answer to the question (using the "Outer Plane, demigod" line from the table on page 259 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*). You can assume that not finishing writing a question simply represents the player's character not being quick enough during the brief mental contact to think of forming a question. In all cases, successful question or otherwise, characters affected by this trap must make a DC 10 Intelligence check to avoid having both their Intelligence and Charisma scores reduced to 8 for 2 weeks, as detailed under *contact other plane*. Unlike the normal effect caused by *contact other plane*, this decrease can be removed with a *heal* or *greater restoration* spell.

## HALL OF INDUCTION (CR 12)

The Hall of Induction's challenge is located in a classroom in the building's northern side (use the map of Classroom 2 for this encounter).

**Trap:** The air in this room smells acrid, making the eyes water—the source is a large brazier of burning incense in the corner and a curious set of glass pipes connecting two vats of bubbling liquid (one green, one red). The key-light in this room is traveling back and forth inside of the glass tube—although the light itself is yellow in color, it appears variously green or red as it swims through the fluid, looking yellow in the middle. The glass and fluid apparatus is partially alchemical and partially an evocation-infused magical item, and in order to get the key-light, the glass tube must be shattered.

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Doing so is as simple as smashing the tube with a solid object, but also triggers the trap.

## ELEMENTAL STORM

CR 12

XP 19,200

Type magic; Perception DC 32; Disable Device DC 32

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** 1 hour; **Counterspell** Spellcraft DC 27  
(*prismatic spray*)

**Effect** When this trap is triggered, the red and green fluids mix and cause a blast of energy to fill the western half of the room (on the map, the explosion fills the darker-colored stone squares, leaving the lighter-colored wood squares unharmed). All creatures in this area of effect take 5d6 points of fire damage, 5d6 points of acid damage, and 5d6 points of electricity damage, for a total of 15d6 points of damage. A DC 22 Reflex save halves the damage. This energy damage does not harm any of the room's furnishings. Once the explosion occurs, the key-light floats unmoving at what was once the midpoint of the glass tube—when the trap resets, the glass tube magically reassembles.

## Hall of Lies (CR 11)

The Hall of Lies's challenge is located at the end of a dead-end hall in the middle of the building. No map of this challenge is necessary, as it doesn't involve combat or precise positioning of characters.

The Hall of Lies, where Acadamae students learn the art of illusion, is known to shift its appearance on a daily basis. Today its appearance undulates much more rapidly, making exploration of the rooms inside a maddening and confusing task. This challenge's green key-light dances and weaves about at the end of the dead-end hallway, yet approaching it is a weirdly disorienting and challenging task. As someone approaches the key-light, the hallway seems to grow impossibly long—the faster one travels along the hall's length, the longer it seems to grow. Every round someone attempts to navigate the hall toward the key-light, the character must make a DC 20 Will save to see through this confounding illusion. (This illusion is a phantasm—those observing the affected creature who try to navigate the hall from out of range of its influence see the affected creature simply standing in place.)

**Trap:** Navigating the phantasmal hall is only the first part of this challenge, for touching the key-light triggers a far more dangerous trap.

## PHANTASMAL KILLER TRAP

CR 11

XP 12,800

Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** 1 hour; **Counterspell** Spellcraft DC 24

(*phantasmal killer*)

**Effect** A *phantasmal killer* spell, heightened to a 7th-level spell (save DC 20), targets any creature that attempts to claim the key-light.

## Hall of Shaping (CR 13)

The Hall of Shaping's challenge is located in a currently unused office along the building's east side (use the map of the Office for this encounter).

**Creature:** This office isn't currently being used by any of the Hall of Shaping's teachers, but it's certainly not uninhabited. Three dangerous creatures—gargoyle-like outsiders known as garipans—guard the room. Conjured many months ago by one of the hall's professors, all three garipans have been ordered to stand guard in this room under the effects of their *statue* spell-like abilities. The monsters seem to lean almost casually against the room's walls, as if they were old trophies placed in this room and then forgotten.

This room's key-light bobs just off the floor at the center of the dragon carvings on the floor to the north, near where the garipans lie in ambush. The monsters wait until the PCs trigger the key-light's trap before they attack—they fight to the death.

## GARIPANS (3)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 133 each (see page 31)

**Trap:** The key-light in this room is warded by a powerful *baleful polymorph* trap.

## BALEFUL POLYMORPH TRAP

CR 9

Type magic; Perception DC 33; Disable Device DC 33

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** 1 hour; **Counterspell** Spellcraft DC 24  
(*baleful polymorph*)

**Effect** spell effect (*baleful polymorph* [heightened to 8th level, CL 15th]); target is transformed into a Tiny songbird [use stats for a raven familiar without the ability to speak a language], DC 22 Fort save negates, DC 22 Will save partial)

## Hall of Charms (CR 11)

The Hall of Charms's challenge is located in a large lecture hall in the center of the building (use the Lecture Hall map for this encounter).

This hall's blue key-light begins the encounter floating in front of the mirror on the lecture hall stage, but as soon as the first person enters the room, the key-light begins to fly at a speed of 40 feet (perfect) throughout the room, always attempting to put as much distance as it can between itself and any creatures in the room—the key-light can detect creatures as if it were using *true seeing*.

Although the key-light flies, it never moves more than 6 feet off the ground as it flits through the room.

**Trap:** This entire room is protected by a devious trap that immediately affects everyone who sets foot in the chamber, causing dangerous confusion in all who succumb.

## CONFUSION TRAP

CR 11

XP 12,800

Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** automatic; **Counterspell** Spellcraft DC 24 (*confusion*)

**Effect** Each round, as long as this trap remains active, all creatures in the room must make a DC 15 Will save to avoid becoming confused for as long as they remain in the room. Each successive Will save made to resist the effects of this spell takes a cumulative –1 penalty on the save—exiting the room for at least 1 round before reentering “resets” this penalty.

## Hall of Whispers (CR 12)

The Hall of Whispers’ challenge is located in a storeroom filled with old grave-digging equipment and crates of loamy soil. No map of this challenge is necessary, as it doesn’t involve combat or precise positioning of characters.

**Trap:** This room’s key-light is buried in one of the crates of loam, making it more difficult to discover than the others. It’s a DC 30 Perception check to find this key-light. A successful check is enough to note the light’s eerie violet glow seeping out of the cracks of the earth-filled crate. Once the crate of soil that the key-light is mostly buried in is opened and the key-light is reached, the moist soil in all the crates suddenly dries, crumbling away into dust that takes up less than a quarter of the soil’s previous volume. Simultaneously, a deadly trap is sprung upon the room’s occupants.

## HEIGHTENED HORRID WILTING TRAP

CR 12

Type Magic; Perception DC 34; Disable Device DC 34

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** touch; **Reset** none; **Counterspell** Spellcraft 28 (*horrid wilting*)

**Effect** spell effect (*horrid wilting* [CL 17th], 17d6 damage, DC 22 Fortitude save half); multiple targets (all creatures in the room)

## Hall of Wards

Entering the Hall of Wards requires possession of a key-light—the PCs are free to attempt to enter the hall with one light, but doing so when not every PC has a key-light in hand could cause an unfortunate splitting of the party, due to the distortion of time between the Material Plane and Belzeragna. You should therefore try to coax the PCs into waiting until all of them have a key-light in hand

## Looting the Acadamae

The PCs should have neither time nor, hopefully, interest in wasting resources by searching the various halls for anything other than key-lights. Certainly, any actual objects of value are either removed from the halls beforehand by their owners, or they’re hidden or locked away. If your players insist on searching the halls for “free treasure,” remind them that doing so won’t help them win the Breaching Festival, and indeed, if they get caught looting, they’ll be disqualified.

In the end, though, you know your players better than we do. If you think your PCs will be interested in searching the empty halls for quick and easy loot, you should take the time to build up some minor encounters with traps and other guardians (minor constructs, summoned creatures, and the like) for them to tangle with on your own—providing specific details beyond those listed in the seven key-light challenges in Part Two is beyond the scope of this adventure.

before they attempt to enter the Hall of Wards, but if they insist on entering one at a time (perhaps in an attempt to get to the interior before an NPC competitor), you might just need to run separate groups for a moment—see Part Three for advice on how to handle this.

Entering the Hall of Wards by any other means than using a key-light is impossible—the professors of the Acadamae might think this is due to the presence of *dimensional locks* and the numerous other wards they’ve put in place, but in fact, the demiplane of Belzeragna is the sole reason any attempt to enter the building without using key-lights is destined to abject failure.

Anyone who approaches the Hall of Wards without a key-light in hand is targeted by a *forceful hand* effect (CL 15th) as soon as she approaches within 10 feet of the building. The *forceful hand* attacks with a +24 CMB, attempting to bull rush its target as far away from the Hall of Wards as possible (to a maximum of 60 feet). The PC can attempt to push back against the forceful hand, but it has a CMD of 30. Destroying a forceful hand via *disintegrate* or *dispel magic* only brings a round of respite before a new hand lashes out at the intruder. The forceful hands are largely for show, of course—attempts to enter the Hall of Wards without a key-light all fail.

A PC who possesses a key-light can approach the Hall of Wards with ease. Placing the key-light on the eastern entrance to the hall causes the door to creak ominously open, revealing roiling darkness. A character who steps into this darkness may appear to be stepping into the building, but in fact, the character crosses over a planar boundary into the demiplane of Belzeragna, appearing in area 1 of that frightening realm. The portal makes

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### Belzeragna Planar Traits

Lorthact crafted Belzeragna to act as a surrogate Hell after centuries of exile. The plane has the following traits—see the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* for more details on how these planar traits work.

**Divinely Morphic:** Lorthact can alter this plane at will (although he does not make an appearance on Belzeragna in this adventure).

**Strongly Law-Aligned and Strongly Evil-Aligned:** Creatures of neither lawful nor evil alignments take a –4 circumstance penalty on all Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks. A creature with either any lawful or any evil alignment takes only a –2 penalty, while lawful or evil creatures take no penalty at all.

**Flowing Time:** Time passes much more slowly on Belzeragna than it does on the Material Plane. For every hour that passes on the Material Plane, 24 hours pass on Belzeragna.

**Altered Magic:** Magic also functions differently here than on the Material Plane: spells and spell-like abilities with the lawful or evil descriptors function as if their caster levels were 2 higher than normal. Conversely, spells and spell-like abilities with the chaotic or good descriptors require a concentration check (DC 20 + the level of the spell) to be cast. If the check fails, the spell does not function but is still lost as a prepared spell or spell slot. If the check succeeds, the spell functions normally.

**Locked Plane:** As Belzeragna is an extraplanar prison meant to house captured souls, mortals brought there may not leave by any means save as a condition in a signed contract made with Chyvnom, after killing Chyvnom, or with a *miracle* or *wish*. Belzeragna is considered the Material Plane for purposes of *dismissal* and *banishment* of creatures native to the Material Plane, but is otherwise considered an extraplanar realm from which summoned or non-native creatures may be expelled. All devils in service to Lorthact consider Belzeragna their native plane.

an automatic attempt to dispel any *dimensional anchor* or similar effects in place on a creature (CL 20th, *greater dispel magic*)—if it fails to do so, the creature attempting to enter the Hall of Wards simply bounces off the darkness as if she had tried to step into a solid wall. She can try again in successive rounds, but until the *dimensional anchor* effect is gone, she cannot actually enter.

On stepping through the portal, the PCs have breached the Hall of Wards—or so it seems. They fall through blackness for what seems like only a moment, and when their senses are restored, they find themselves in a small room, with little indication of where they truly are. In fact, they are in Lorthact's hellscape mockery of the Acadamae on Belzeragna, where the true challenge finally begins.

### Part Three: Belzeragna

When the unwitting contestants of the Breaching Festival enter the Hall of Wards, they are in fact transported to an infernal demiplane named Belzeragna. Controlled by a contract devil named Chyvnom, lieutenant and chief exchequer of the exiled infernal duke Lorthact, Belzeragna is a quite small demiplane, consisting of only a few chambers, as detailed on the map's inside front cover. Nothing else exists on the plane beyond these borders—there's nothing beyond the complex walls, so any attempts to burrow through them or otherwise travel beyond the borders of this room automatically fail.

The PCs are not the first visitors to arrive on Belzeragna—nor even the first to arrive today, having been preceded by both the wizard Maganrad and the thief Illia Ean. Previous years have seen additional victims as well—some years there might be no new additions to Belzeragna, while others might see a dozen or more. A new arrival on Belzeragna is allowed to explore the realm until he falls victim to Chyvnom or is killed. In the former case, the victim becomes an increasingly insane, tormented prisoner of the plane, destined for death, while in the latter case, the victim's soul becomes infused into the plane itself.

While the conditions of victory in the Breaching Festival are that the winner must emerge from the hall by sundown, the PCs have plenty of time on Belzeragna to fully explore the realm, and perhaps even “rest overnight,” as time advances much more slowly on the demiplane than it does on the Material Plane. Thus, parties with dwindling resources may rest for hours to replenish spells while on Belzeragna and still emerge onto Golarion again before sundown to claim victory.

Note that certain areas of Belzeragna assume that Maganrad and Illia have preceded the PCs onto the demiplane—if this is not the case, you should alter events as appropriate. If the PCs stay for several hours on the demiplane, feel free to have these two doomed contestants appear at some point later to meet their fates, as described in the following pages.

Finally, while Belzeragna's time flows much more slowly, the transition between the Material Plane and the infernal demiplane allows for a bit of elasticity—as a result, as long as a number of people (such as the PCs) enter Belzeragna within a few rounds or even a minute of each other, they all appear on Belzeragna at the same time—you can extend this feature as you wish to allow PCs who enter the demiplane separately to remain one group, or if you're up for a challenge, you can track the time difference and run the PCs separately through the dangerous realm. This option is not recommended, however, for the dangers on Belzeragna are significant—and because splitting a group up can make for awkward and boring game play for the portion of the group forced to wait while the others' actions are resolved.



# academy of secrets

## I. ARRIVAL CHAMBER

This stone room is nearly empty, save a sourceless, orange ambient light and a small table full of empty, stoppered crystal vials with peeling, faded labels. The outline of a door can be faintly seen in the north wall, though the wall is solid and seamless. A heavy iron door to the south looms ominously; a man's horribly mutilated body lies in a patch of dried blood on the ground before this exit.

The PCs arrive in this room with little idea how they got there or exactly where they might be. The tall ceilings and stonework are reminiscent of the Hall of Summoning, but different in subtle, almost imperceptible ways. A DC 15 Knowledge (planes) check identifies the current plane as Hell, while a DC 25 check reveals that this is actually a demiplane modeled on Hell, but not Hell itself. A character who makes a DC 35 Knowledge (planes) check can learn of Belzeragna's planar traits after 2d6 minutes of study and thought—although even this check does not reveal the realm's name.

The vials on the table are all empty, and their lead stoppers are still tightly sealed. Each has a discolored piece of parchment peeling from its side; most are completely illegible. Those that can be read all contain a single name. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check to search the entire collection finds a vial with her name on it. Each PC may locate her own vial, but none may ever discover one for another of her companions. Other than the labels, there is nothing extraordinary about the vials.

**Treasure:** The mangled body on the ground is the broken, bloody corpse of Maganrad—he made it only a few steps into this room before he was confronted and quickly slain by a devourer named Valshune. The devourer captured Maganrad's soul and then moved off elsewhere in the dungeon (see area 6). Unfortunately for the devourer, Maganrad's soul wasn't his to take, and it's now in a heated argument verging on a fight against a devil for control of the man's soul.

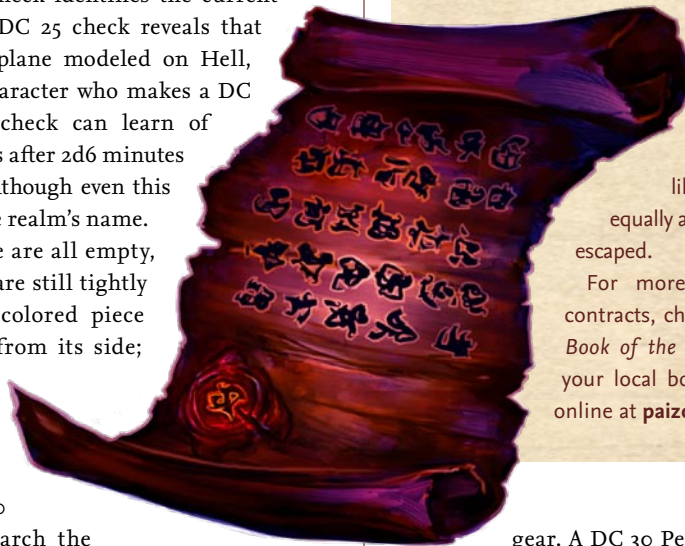
A search of Maganrad's body reveals that while his body is mangled, the damage to his corpse seems to have been inflicted *after* death, and that the actual cause of death is unclear (A DC 20 Heal check reveals this disturbing fact). As with his soul, most of Maganrad's gear has been claimed by the devourer and destroyed... but the devourer missed perhaps the most important of the enchanter's

## INFERNAL CONTRACTS

With the contracts between Lorthact and Volshyenek, between Maganrad and Nagxiv, and possibly between Chyvom and the PCs, infernal contracts form a great deal of the motivations in *Academy of Secrets*. Most often, infernal contracts involve the promise to a mortal of some worldly reward—youth, wealth, power—in exchange for the promise of that mortal's soul upon death. In any case, mortal is generally too desperate to care about his eventual fate, too wicked to expect anything other than damnation, or too foolish to realize the inescapability of the contract.

Infernal contracts can be broken in very few ways, but the primary means is by destroying both the devil's copy and the mortal's copy. This destruction not only releases the mortal from his eventual torment, but also from the benefits of the contract. Even those saved from a deal with a devil often find—too late—that this liberation only leads to a fate equally as grisly as the one they've just escaped.

For more information on infernal contracts, check out *Princes of Darkness, Book of the Damned, Vol. 1*, available at your local bookstore or hobby store, or online at [paizo.com](http://paizo.com).



gear. A DC 30 Perception check is enough to reveal a hidden pocket in Maganrad's blood-soaked robe that contains two items of interest. The first is a *scroll of break enchantment*, while the second is a nonmagical scroll that contains what appears to be some sort of contract.

The contract itself is written in Infernal. The writing is dense and complex to decipher, but a DC 30 Linguistics check is enough to correctly deduce that the contract is between Maganrad and a devil named Nagxiv. In return for bolstering his magical abilities (mostly in the school of enchantment—augmentations that didn't help Maganrad at all in his fatal fight with the undead devourer), a soul chosen by Maganrad at the time of the contract's signing was forfeit to Nagxiv for 101 years—although the wording of the scroll cunningly makes Maganrad's own soul the object of the contract. If no one can make the Linguistics check to decipher the contract, then only a few words stand out as unusual, in the following order: "Maganrad," "soul," "Acadamae," "servant," "eternity," "world," "contract," "blood," "Asmodeus," "willingly," and "Nagxiv."

# PATHFINDER

MODULE™

## 2. Office

This room resembles an academic's office, albeit the office of a very messy professor. Tattered books and broken furniture lie strewn across the floor. Some long-congealed dark liquid pools on the floor beneath a solid cascade of the same substance along the south wall, and what appear to be bone spurs protrude from the dark wooden wall surrounding an iron door on the opposite end of the small chamber. Bones from dozens of creatures rest in neat piles on the bookshelves, with the skull from each sitting atop its stack, staring into the room with vacant, hollow eyes.

Belzeragna has claimed hundreds of victims over the years, and while many of them were devoured entirely, some were left to succumb to madness until they died of starvation, thirst, age, or suicide. Most of their remains are here, piled neatly on the bookshelves lining the walls. Beneath each pile of bones sits a small iron plaque engraved with a short phrase in Infernal describing the victim in enigmatic and ambiguous poetry. If any of the PCs examine the bones, one of the largest has tiny writing scrawled over its surface in swirling text. It reads, "This is no Hall of Wards but a Hell of Magic. The Breaching is a sham. Flee, if you can, before the whispers drive you mad."

**Treasure:** A DC 25 Perception check reveals a small crack in the back of a bookshelf behind a pile of bones. The crevice contains a *scroll of banishment*, scribed and hidden here decades ago by a desperate captive of the realm. Although the devils already present on the demiplane treat it as their home plane, the devourer in area 6 and any summoned devils can still be banished with this scroll. No mortal native to the Material Plane may be affected by this spell.

## 3. LIBRARY (CR 14)

Floor-to-ceiling bookshelves cover the walls of this dimly lit library, with shorter stacks creating small dividers in the room's interior. A reading table sits empty and unused in the library's center. The shelves are a mass of fluttering pages, and books rearrange themselves and fly across the room constantly.

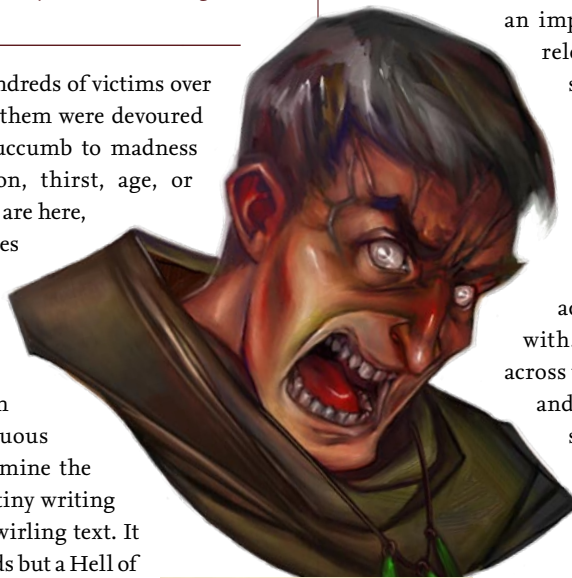
This room resembles a sizable academic library and houses thousands of bound volumes on overflowing shelves. The books rearrange themselves constantly, flying through the air and shifting about haphazardly.

**Creature:** This room is the prison of Terentius, a Chelish conjurer who was the sole contestant of last year's Breaching Festival to make it into the Hall of Wards. (If the PCs learn his name, a DC 25 Knowledge [history or local] check recalls this information.) Though he's been absent from Golarion only a year, nearly a quarter of a century has passed for Terentius on Belzeragna. While he initially refused Chyvom's offer of service, he eventually traded away his soul for a chance at release after the months of solitude and torment wore on.

Unfortunately for Terentius, Chyvom added an impossible task as a condition of his release—the wizard must retrieve his spellbook from the library, and cannot leave the room (much less the demiplane) until he does so. Terentius paid too little attention to detail in his contract, however, and did not ensure that his book would actually be in the library to begin with. In fact, Chyvom stored it safely across the hall, where Terentius cannot go, and employed a small band of invisible stalkers to constantly rearrange the library to further vex the wizard. Thus, Terentius has driven himself mad believing his spellbook is in the room, and is simply being moved out of his reach whenever he gets close to finding it. Unable to prepare additional spells, he has become increasingly wary about "wasting" these limited resources.

Though suspicious of the PCs, Terentius explains his predicament and begs for their assistance in freeing him from his ongoing madness. He fears what he is becoming, having been slowly twisted into "something" by Chyvom over the past decade. He offers to accompany the PCs out to battle the contract devil, but cannot leave the library under any circumstances. He allows the PCs several rounds to find his book, then madly claims that their presence is speeding up the shifting of the books. Assuming they are simply Chyvom's minions sent to further torment him, he demands that the PCs leave before attacking them 1 round later.

The half-dozen invisible stalkers are dedicated to maintaining their task of rearranging the library and do not stop unless the PCs interfere. In this case, they work quickly to dispatch the interlopers before returning to the task. If Terentius escapes Belzeragna or enters combat with the PCs, the invisible stalkers cease their activity and attack the PCs in earnest.



TERENTIUS

# academy of secrets



**TERENTIUS** **CR 12**

**XP 19,200**

Male fiendish human conjurer 14 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294)

NE Medium humanoid

**Init** +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 16, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+2 deflection, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

**hp** 93 (14d6+42)

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9

**DR** 10/good; **Resist** cold 15, fire 15; **SR** 19

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** mwk dagger +8/+3 (1d4/19–20)

**Special Attacks** smite good 1/day

**Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 14th; concentration +19)

At will—dimensional steps (420 feet/day)

8/day—acid dart (1d6+7 acid)

**Conjurer Spells Prepared** (CL 14th; concentration +19)

7th—*mage's sword*

6th—*chain lightning* (DC 21), *disintegrate* (DC 21), *summon monster VI*

5th—*cloudkill* (DC 22), *cone of cold*

4th—*black tentacles*, *greater invisibility*, *lesser globe of invulnerability*, *resilient sphere*, *shout* (DC 19), *summon monster IV*

3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *gaseous form*, *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *slow* (DC 18)

2nd—*acid arrow*, *knock*, *scorching ray* (DC 17), *summon monster II*, *web* (DC 19)

1st—*burning hands* (DC 16), *magic missile* (2), *obscuring mist*, *shield*

o (at will)—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *read magic*

**Opposition Schools** Divination, Necromancy

**TACTICS**

**During Combat** Terentius begins combat by casting *resilient sphere* around himself, inside which he casts *shield*, *displacement*, and *greater invisibility*, then casts *summon monster VI* to conjure a shadow demon. The following round, he dismisses the sphere, releasing the shadow demon to attack. Terentius uses his most powerful damaging spells each round thereafter, beginning with *mage's sword*, and he employs his *metamagic rod* as appropriate.

**Morale** Terentius is crazed and desperate to escape Belzeragna. If he must die to do so, then so be it.

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 17, **Int** 20, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 28

**Feats** Augment Summoning, Combat Casting, Craft

Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat, Greater Spell Focus (conjuration), Improved Counterspell, Magical Aptitude, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge [arcana]), Spell Focus (conjuration), Toughness

**Skills** Appraise +22, Bluff +5, Craft (alchemy) +22, Diplomacy +5,

Fly +19, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (history) +22, Knowledge (planes) +22, Perception +5, Spellcraft +26, Use Magic Device +3

**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Ignan, Infernal  
**SQ** arcane bond (familiar [currently none]), summoner's charm (7 rounds)

**Combat Gear** *lesser maximize metamagic rod*; **Other Gear** masterwork dagger, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of protection* +2, spell component pouch

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Unprepared** Because Terentius has roughly half his maximum number of prepared spells, and long ago used up his allotment of scrolls, potions, and wands, his CR is 1 lower than normal for a character of his level.

**INVISIBLE STALKERS (6)** **CR 7**

**XP 3,200 each**

**hp** 80 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 181)

**Development:** If the PCs locate Terentius's spellbook and return it to him, he is immediately teleported to area 7, where Chyvvom (if he still lives) grudgingly releases him from servitude through the summoning circle back to Golarion. Since in order to win the Breaching Festival a contestant must emerge on the same day he entered the Hall of Wards, Terentius's emergence into the Acadamae causes a great stir, but does not rob the PCs of the chance to win.

**Story Award:** If the PCs avoid combat with Terentius and help free him from his prison, award them 19,200 XP.

## 4. Lecture Hall (CR 13)

This room is dark, moist, and rank with the smell of sweat, mildew, and iron. Desks sit in even, tiered rows facing the southern end of the room, where thick metal chains hang from the slate-covered wall.

This mock lecture hall serves as Chyvvom's torture chamber, where his most skilled tormentors break new arrivals before he proposes a contract with them.

**Creatures:** A woman is chained to the wall opposite the entrance—this is Illia Ean, the Cerulean Society thief. She breached the Hall of Wards shortly before the PCs, but the different flow of time on Belzeragna allowed for her capture and thorough torture before the PCs' arrival. She has been badly beaten—it took very little infernal torture to break Illia's will, and she no longer cares about the Breaching Festival; she simply wants to escape, even if she must earn her freedom by killing fellow competitors. While she begs the PCs to free her, she secretly hopes that sacrificing them to her torturers will earn her freedom not just from her chains, but from Belzeragna altogether.

# PATHFINDER

MODULE™

If questioned, Illia is mostly incoherent, saying that a “tentacle woman” tried to “get it out of me.” Her voice cracks horribly, and she begs for mercy: if the PCs won’t free her, she asks that they at least kill her rather than leaving her to die. If the PCs free her from her manacles and chains (hardness 15, hp 20, Break DC 28, Disable Device DC 26), Illia is supremely grateful, but still mad with fear. The next time the PCs meet a devil, she attacks the PCs while shrieking phrases like, “Take these and let me go!”

Ever watching his prisoners via divination, Chyvnom dispatches one of his bone devil minions to the room on the first round of any combat that takes place here. The osyluth casts quickened *invisibility* before teleporting into the room, and fights whatever target it sees as most

vulnerable, including Illia, summoning additional devils to aid it should the PCs quickly get the upper hand.

## ILLIA EAN

CR 12

### XP 19,200

Female human rogue 13

CN Medium humanoid (human)

**Init** +10; **Senses** Perception +17

### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +6 Dex, +1 dodge)

**hp** 101 (13d8+39)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +14, **Will** +5

**Defensive Abilities** improved evasion, trap sense +4, improved uncanny dodge

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** +2 *keen short sword* +17/+12 (1d6+2/19–20)

**Special Attacks** sneak attack +7d6

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Illia relies on surprise to eliminate weak foes quickly, knowing she has few chances to sneak attack her enemies. In the first round of combat, she draws her sword as a swift action and uses Whirlwind Attack to gain as many attacks against flat-footed targets within reach, then moves into a position in which she cannot be flanked. She employs Whirlwind Attack and her rogue talents as often as possible when unable to gain sneak attacks.

**Morale** If reduced to fewer than 25 hit points, Illia gives up, admitting her desperation to escape this hellish plane led her to act rashly, and begging the PCs for mercy.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 22, **Con** 14, **Int** 13, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Whirlwind Attack

**Skills** Acrobatics +22, Appraise +17, Bluff +15, Climb +16, Disable Device +22, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +15, Knowledge (local) +13, Perception +17, Sense Motive +9, Stealth +22, Use Magic Device +15

**Languages** Common, Halfling, Varisian

**SQ** rogue talents (bleeding attack +7, defensive roll, fast stealth, finesse rogue, improved evasion, surprise attack), trapfinding +6

**Combat Gear** *potions of cure serious wounds (2), rod of cancellation, scroll of dispel magic, wand of knock (7 charges); Other Gear* +3 leather armor, +2 *keen short sword, belt of incredible dexterity* +2, masterwork thieves' tools, 335 gp

Illia EAN



## BONE DEVIL

CP 9

### XP 6,400

**hp** 105 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 74)

## 5. LABORATORY (CR 14)

The overpowering stench of potent alchemical and arcane reagents fills this room, the cluttered surfaces of which are piled with half-full beakers, alembics, and retorts, each holding what appears to be a different bodily fluid.

Lorthact created this room to resemble one of the alchemical labs where students of the Acadamae learn the art of brewing potions. The classroom on Belzeragna, however, is not actually used for this purpose. The alchemical apparatuses here instead contain various humors, organic acids, lymph, excrement, and other noxious fluids—materials used in the foul experiments of the room’s primary inhabitant: Chyvvom’s consort, a handmaiden devil named Marijkal.

**Creature:** Marijkal stands calmly at the center of the room, taking the form of a glamorous and delicate human female. Although she hates Chyvvom and all male devils, she respects his position as Lorthact’s lieutenant. Ever aiming to increase her own standing with the exiled infernal duke, Marijkal signed a contract to serve Lorthact as Chyvvom’s lover, though she is watchful for a way to supplant the contract devil. Chyvvom retains both copies of the document binding Marijkal to him.

Marijkal challenges the PCs to tell her why she should let them live. The handmaiden devil has no fear of mortals, so threats of violence do not sway her. If the PCs offer her a bribe, nothing is worth the penalty she will receive for disobedience; she matter-of-factly informs them that she is bound to her master, and through him to his. “Chyvvom brooks no disloyalty, and Lorthact no rebellion.”

If the PCs offer to free her from her service to Chyvvom, she considers it, and challenges them to prove their worth before she makes any agreement. She likewise attacks if the PCs have offered nothing of value, and defends herself in earnest if attacked first. Before initiating combat in either case, she reverts to her true form—the epitome of fiendish, feminine beauty. Fleshy tentacles trail from her head, and beneath her writhes a skirt of tentacles, pulsing and seeming to caress the stone floor.

When it becomes clear to her that the PCs can defeat her, Marijkal cries out for mercy, swearing to aid the PCs if they can help her bring down Chyvvom. If they acquiesce, she informs them enigmatically that “his contracts are his strength” and teleports elsewhere in the small demiplane to avoid further conflict. If the PCs continue their assault, the handmaiden summons erinyes allies and teleports away without another word. Belzeragna is a small plane, though, so chances are high that the PCs could encounter Marijkal again.

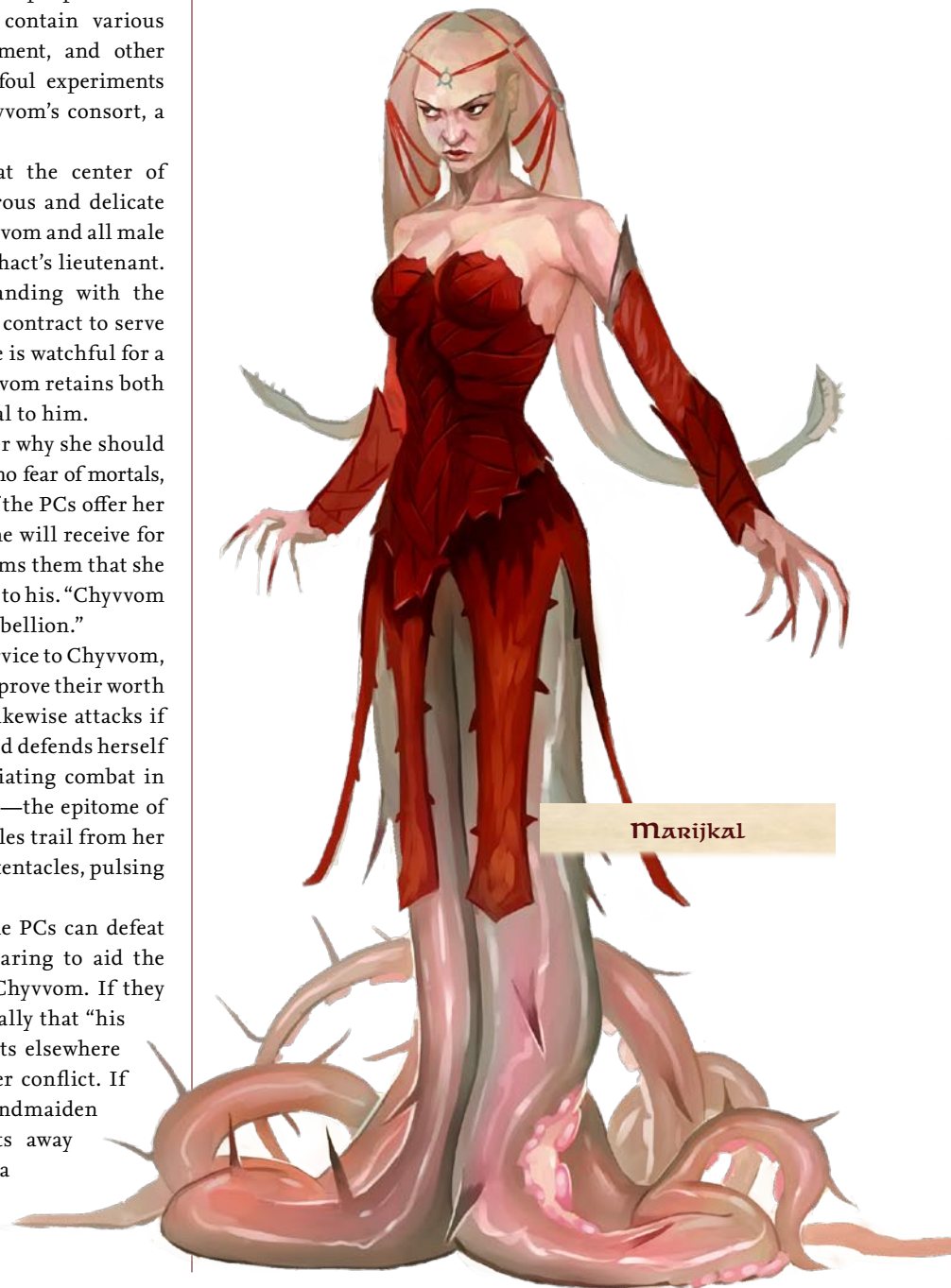
MARIJKAL, HANDMAIDEN DEVIL

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 187 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 86)

**Treasure:** Among the worthless vials and canisters of gruesome fluids, the PCs may find several mundane scrolls and Terentius’s spellbook with a DC 20 Perception check. The spellbook contains all his prepared spells, all 0-level spells, and any additional spells you wish to include.



Marijkal

# PATHFINDER

## MODULE

### Treating with Devils

If you want to maintain the mystery for your players—or if you feel like they might spoil the story by sharing their decisions—you can choose to roleplay the debate with Chyvom individually, or have each PC bargain with the devil by passing notes to the player. Take as little or as much time with the decision as you feel your group is comfortable with; after all, even the cleverest player may miss a loophole in her contract with Chyvom, and one of the PCs might be unknowingly swearing to betray the group at a later date.

In any event, Chyvom's contracts never allow for a character to exit Belzeragna—at least, not until enough souls have been “harvested” for Lorthact to bribe his way back into Hell. Repercussions for foolish parties that sign contracts with the devil are beyond the scope of this adventure—but in the meantime, such signings guarantee they won't be able to leave and thus win the Breaching Festival. If a PC goes against a contract she signed, feel free to automatically inflict potent curses and penalties akin to a *geas* or worse on her.

It's possible, but unlikely, for a PC to finagle a contract with Chyvom that will allow that PC to leave Belzeragna. Doing so requires the PC to at least succeed at five of nine opposed Diplomacy or Bluff checks against the contract devil—success should earn the entire party freedom (at some price you devise), and XP as if they had defeated Chyvom in combat.

## 6. DUELING ARENA (CR 13)

Two summoning circles dominate this high-ceilinged room. A pair of stairways flank a set of double doors on the east wall, each leading to a balustraded balcony overlooking the open central floor beneath.

This chamber is modeled after one in the Hall of Summoning that serves as an arena for summoners' duels, wherein called creatures may be brought forth from beyond and pitted against one another, while students and advisors look on from the relative safety of the balconies. Over this infernal replica's long history, Chyvom's minions have entertained themselves by placing mortals within these summoning circles, reversing the role of summoned and summoner.

**Creatures:** The barbed devil Nagxiv and a devourer named Valshune are arguing in Infernal over the fate of the devourer's most recently acquired soul, that of the wizard Maganrad. Nagxiv claims to have had a contract for the mage's soul, and demands that the devourer must honor its terms. The devourer, of course, sees no need to honor any such contract, since he managed to snatch the human's soul already. A DC 20 Perception check allows

a PC to recognize the twisted, screaming face of the wizard looking out from within the devourer's chest. The creatures are engaged in a verbal game of tug-of-war over the soul, and take a –10 penalty on Perception checks to notice the PCs.

### NAGXIV, BARBED DEVIL

CR 11

XP 12,800

hp 138 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 72)

### VALSHUNE, DEVOURER

CR 11

XP 12,800

hp 133 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 82)

**Treasure:** Valshune carries a small bag at his side—a type IV *bag of holding* he looted from Maganrad that contains the wizard's *staff of charming* (4 charges remaining), *cloak of protection +2*, and spellbook, along with about 400 gp in miscellaneous equipment and valuables. Nagxiv's only possession is a second copy of his contract with Maganrad.

**Development:** If the PCs discovered Maganrad's copy of this contract in the Arrival Chamber, they may be able to free the wizard from both creatures' grasps. To do so, the PCs must release Maganrad's soul from the devourer (likely by destroying the undead creature) and destroy both copies of the contract.

**Story Award:** If the PCs manage to free Maganrad's soul, award them 6,400 XP in addition to that gained from defeating his captors in battle.

## 7. Calling Hall (CR 15)

This grand, domed rotunda is ringed around its edge by a parapeted balcony. On the spanning dome, some eighty feet above the floor, images of an aged, bearded human signing a contract held by a massive, flaming devil seem almost to glow as if burning, and move as if alive. On the floor beneath the sweeping dome, a massive, luminescent summoning circle undulates and crackles with trapped arcane energy.

This opulent rotunda serves as Chyvom's center of operations, for here exists the only portal back to the Material Plane from Belzeragna, and the only egress for the mortal souls who end up within his realm. It is here that he conducts his negotiations, gaining souls for his master and permitting the lucky to leave. To date, none have outsmarted him when brokering a contract for their release, and all have been trapped here for a lifetime of torment despite the promise of freedom.

With a DC 15 Knowledge (history, local, or nobility) check, PCs investigating the intricate mural on the domed ceiling recognize the human pictured as Volshyenek Ornelos, founder of the Acadamae and ancestor of

current headmaster Toff Ornelos. The images depict him negotiating with a powerful devil (identifiable as an infernal duke with a DC 30 Knowledge [planes] check—and as the obscure exiled devil Lorthact with a DC 40 Knowledge [planes] check), signing a contract, and bowing before the fiend. Smaller scenes are spaced throughout the larger mural depicting Acadamae students partaking in the Breaching Festival, being drawn into a dark vortex, and themselves signing contracts with a great horned devil covered in layers of unfurled parchment.

**Creature:** A towering, rust-skinned devil smiles slyly at the PCs as they enter, a tangle of long infernal contracts hanging from the massive horns curving from his back and over his head. This is Chyvnom, first lieutenant to Lorthact, and the contract devil in charge of ensnaring powerful souls to increase Lorthact's influence in Korvosa.

The moment the PCs arrive in this room, Chyvnom speaks to them telepathically. Although more than capable of holding his own in most fights, Lorthact's lieutenant is still a contract devil, and thus averse to physical confrontation. He does not wish to fight when an ally or servant could instead be won for his master's glory.

Chyvnom offers whatever seems most appealing to each individual PC, be it riches, power, influence, magic, or even love—nothing is so great a prize that he will not promise it. The price he demands is not so steep as one's soul, or even the promise of another mortal's death. All he asks is that one day, sometime in the future, he or the almighty Lorthact will receive absolute obedience from the PC. Grant him such a boon, Chyvnom offers, and the PC can leave this place unharmed. Of course, Chyvnom builds layers of complexity into additional conditions by which the PCs are actually permitted to leave, as the contract devil would much rather have the PCs present on Belzeragna to torment for eternity than running loose on the Material Plane. Whatever an individual PC wants, Chyvnom promises to grant it, twisting the actual execution in the way calculated to most torment the mortal. In each case, his motivation is always to increase Lorthact's power and build his army to one day retake his position as a legitimate Infernal Duke.

Unless all the PCs have agreed to leave Chyvnom in peace and accept a contract with him, he eventually sighs in frustration, then initiates combat by summoning his more combat-oriented allies to serve as his front guard.

## CHYVNUM, EXCHEQUER OF CONTRACTS CR 15

### XP 51,200

Advanced contract devil (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #6 86)

LE Large outsider (devil, evil, lawful)

**Init** +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; **Perception** +30

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 23, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 natural,

–1 size)

**hp** 250 (20d10+140)

**Fort** +19, **Ref** +16, **Will** +15

**DR** 10/good; **Immune** fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 26

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** gore +26 (2d6+7), 2 binding contracts +21 (1d6+3 plus grab and impale)

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

**Special Attacks** grab, impale (4d6+10)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 15th; concentration +21)

Constant—*tongues*

At will—*bestow curse* (DC 19), *detect thoughts* (DC 18), *dimension door*, *erase*, *identify*, *major image*, *polymorph*, *produce flame*, *sending*

3/day—*arcane eye*, *break enchantment*, *greater teleport*, *hold person* (DC 18), *locate creature*, *private sanctum*, *scorching ray*, *silence* (DC 18), *shield of faith*, *vision*

1/day—*contact other plane*, *delayed blast fireball* (DC 23), *dismissal* (DC 20), *plane shift*, *summon* (level 4, 1d6 bearded devils or 1 bone devil, 50%), *symbol of pain* (DC 21)

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** If Chyvnom is aware of the PCs (and he is if they have interacted with either Terentius or Marijkal, both of whom have contracts with the devil), he casts quickened *shield of faith* prior to their entry into area 7.

**During Combat** Chyvnom much prefers to defeat his foes through trickery and cleverly worded contracts, avoiding combat in favor of negotiation. If combat is unavoidable, he summons a squad of bearded devils as bodyguards, using his spell-like abilities like *bestow curse*, *delayed blast fireball*, *hold person*, and *scorching ray* from distance. If forced into melee, he fights viciously with his natural attacks, as much out of anger at being so provoked as out of self-defense.

**Morale** Chyvnom's orders from Lorthact are precise: he is to retain the souls of all who enter Belzeragna or perish preventing their escape.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 25, **Dex** 18, **Con** 25, **Int** 24, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 22

**Base Atk** +20; **CMB** +28 (+32 grapple); **CMD** 43

**Feats** Deceitful, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will, Mobility, Persuasive, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (shield of faith), Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

**Skills** Appraise +30, Bluff +39, Diplomacy +39, Disguise +8, Intimidate +33, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (nobility) +27, Knowledge (planes) +30, Knowledge (religion) +27, Perception +30, Profession (scribe) +30, Sense Motive +30, Sleight of Hand +24, Spellcraft +27

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Ignan, Infernal, Sylvan, Undercommon, Varisian; telepathy 100 ft., *tongues*

**SQ** infernal contract, infernal investment

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## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Binding Contracts (Ex)** The long contracts draped over Chyvjom's horns and body are animated, and the devil can attack with two of them at a time as secondary natural attacks.

**Infernal Contracts (Su)** As a full-round action, Chyvjom can produce an infernal contract for a single living mortal creature. The mortal must sign its true name to the document of its own free will, gaining up to three *wishes*, as per the spell *wish*, usable immediately or in the future by calling on the devil. While the mortal chooses the intention of the *wishes*, Chyvjom decides upon the specifics, allowing for his own diabolical interpretation of the results should the mortal imprecisely phrase its *wish*.

**Infernal Investment (Su)** Chyvjom can *scry* at will upon any creature with whom he has a contract. The target creature always fails its save against Chyvjom's scrying attempt.

**Development:** If the PCs destroy Chyvjom, he bursts into a raging inferno (lasting 1 round) upon being reduced to 0 hit points, the flames consuming his many contracts. Any copy for which the duplicate has been destroyed is

fully immolated. Any contract for which a second copy exists is immune to the flames and remains after the fire dies. If the PCs signed any contracts with Chyvjom, those documents are mysteriously absent here; they were instantly transported to Lorthact's possession under a hidden subclause contingent on Chyvjom's destruction within 1 day of the contract's signing.

When Chyvjom is defeated, or if he agrees as part of an infernal contract, the summoning circle in the center of the room begins to glow brightly, thrumming with vast reserves of power. Any character standing on the circle may use it as a *teleportation circle* to return to the Hall of Wards and claim victory in the contest. If Chyvjom is alive, he only activates the portal when he cannot weasel his way out of doing so via a technicality in his contracts with the PCs.

If the PCs rescued Illia, she only waits 3 rounds after Chyvjom's defeat before using the portal herself; she may be scared of what's on the other side, but nothing is as frightening as what she has already experienced here.

The first mortal to step through the portal and return to Golarion is considered the winner of the Breaching



Festival—but the celebrations are destined to be delayed, for Belzeragna wasn't designed to allow mortals to escape.

## Part Four: Hell's Breaching

Whether the PCs defeat Chyvom or outthink him during negotiations, their exit from Belzeragna strains the demiplane to the breaking point. If Chyvom lives, he exerts his anger at them for tricking him and gaining their independence, and unleashes legions of devils through the portal after them only moments after the PCs exit. If Chyvom was destroyed, the many devils in service to Lorthact see the vacuum in their lord's ranks left by his primary lieutenant's defeat, and swarm into the Material Plane to desperately grab as much power as they can before order is restored. In either case, the result is similar—a small army of devils assaults the Acadamae.

The crowd is silent, waiting to see whether any of the hopefuls would survive to earn the prize—as the contestants emerge, they erupt into a roar of applause. Acadamae authorities on the edge of view begin scurrying about to implement procedures for crowning a victor that have not been employed in over a century. Before anyone can approach the PCs, however, devils of all stripes burst out of the Hall of Wards, streaming across the school grounds and attacking civilians, students, and faculty with reckless abandon. What was a cacophony of excited cheers only moments ago is now a chorus of panic, terror, and pain. Queen Ileosa, if she is present, swiftly teleports back to safety in Castle Korvosa with the aid of her bloatmage ally Togomor.

Most of the devils are beneath the PCs' notice and can be dispatched quickly by Acadamae students; only those encounters that represent an actual challenge are presented here. However, as the PCs move from encounter to encounter, reinforce the notion that ordinary civilians are in danger from even a minor devil such as an imp or lemur. If the PCs engage the lesser devils with spells or attacks, have them roll the appropriate checks and damage, but don't let them get bogged down in these fights; one or two attacks should be enough to get rid of the devils not detailed here, allowing you to focus on the real dangers ahead of them.

Each of the following encounters has a suggested location on the Acadamae grounds, but feel free to place them wherever works best to evoke a sense of chaos and danger for your party. Additionally, the nonlinear nature of these encounters makes it easy to add more bands of marauding devils, substitute creatures for other fiends, or leave some out entirely.

### Open War (CR 12)

In the open lawn in front of the Hall of Wards, the first wave of infernal invaders attacks the PCs, seeing them

as the closest and most threatening targets. This battle can take place on a blank battlemat, as there is very little terrain to get in the way.

**Creatures:** A group of warmonger devils scuttle forward upon heavy, beetlelike legs, their gore-slicked, spiked armor gleaming. These lumbering devils charge the PCs at full speed as a solid wall of clattering steel. They work with great precision, one devil entangling a PC so that another can make proper use of its trident attack.

### WARMONGER DEVILS (6)

CR 7

#### XP 3,200 each

LE Large outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful) (*Book of the Damned 1: Princes of Darkness 60*)

**Init** +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; **Perception** +16

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 19 (+3 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 84 each (8d10+40)

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

**Defensive Abilities** construct form; **DR** 5/good; **Immune** fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 12

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

**Melee** mwk trident +13 (2d6+7), 2 legs +7 (1d8+2) or 2 claws +12 (1d6+5), 2 legs +7 (1d8+2)

**Ranged** mwk trident +10 (2d6+7) or net +10 ranged touch (entangle)

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

**Special Attacks** merciless blow, trample (1d8+7, DC 19)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 12th)

At will—*greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)

1/day—*summon* (level 4, 1d4 lemures or 1 bearded devil, 40%)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 20, **Dex** 17, **Con** 19, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 15

**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 27

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness

**Skills** Acrobatics +14 (+18 jumping), Bluff +13, Climb +17, Craft (weapons) +9, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +9, Knowledge (engineering) +9, Knowledge (planes) +13, Perception +16, Stealth +12; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Perception, +2 Stealth (+8 when concealed amid metal objects or debris)

**Languages** Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

**SQ** hellstrider, phalanx, stability

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Construct Form** Warmonger devils are immune to ability damage, ability drain, death effects, death from massive damage, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, necromancy effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, sleep effects, and stunning. Upon being reduced to 0 hit points, they are immediately destroyed.

**Hellstrider (Su)** A warmonger devil is not impeded by rough terrain, and can move or charge through such squares

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as normal. It can also cross areas covered with deadly impediments (such as caltrops or thorns) without being damaged or hindered. In addition to being entirely immune to fire, the creature's legs are immune to acid and cold, allowing it to cross rivers of acid or lava as long as the material is less than 4 feet deep. This ability does not protect a warmonger devil against magical hindrances like *black tentacles*, *web*, or similar spells.

**Merciless Blow (Su)** Any trident attacks a warmonger devil makes against entangled creatures (including those entangled by its net) deal an extra 2d6 points of damage.

**Phalanx (Ex)** Devils gain a +1 morale bonus on attacks and to AC while adjacent to a warmonger devil.

**Stability (Ex)** Warmonger devils receive a +4 racial bonus to their CMD when resisting a bull rush or trip attempt while standing on the ground.

## The Hall of Whispers (CR 12)

A chilling scream echoes from within the Hall of Whispers, and a darkly clad student stumbles onto the quad covered in blood before collapsing into a heap on the grass. The

sound of destruction continues from within. Inside, a blood trail leads to a large lecture hall (use the Lecture Hall map). Remnants of the devils' victims are scattered everywhere within, making the school of necromancy seem more of an abattoir than its reputation already suggests.

**Creatures:** Three bone devils have corralled a scared band of onlookers here, and are relishing their misery and terror. They torment their prey by winking in and out of invisibility, moving about to obscure their true numbers and thus confuse their victims. When the PCs arrive, the devils divert their attention from the lowly commoners to take on the larger threat the PCs pose.

### BONE DEVILS (3)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 105 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 74)

### Ice Devil Ambush (CR 13)

As the PCs move from one encounter to the next, they draw the attention of a passing ice devil that teleports into their midst. This encounter can take place anywhere you see fit.

**Creature:** Among the most powerful of the devils to issue forth from Belzeragna, the gelugon sees the PCs' distraction by other events as an opportunity to eliminate the most adept of the mortals stopping him and his comrades from tormenting the folk gathered at the Acadamae.

**ICE DEVIL****CR 13****XP 25,600**hp 161 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 77*)**Pincer Assault (CR 13)**

A roar of panicked screams erupts from the student housing area, where a small throng of spectators have fled seeking shelter. Use the Dormitory map for this encounter.

**Creatures:** The source of the screams are several citizens trapped in a dormitory by a trio of erinyes and their two Nessian warhounds. The PCs should arrive just as the devils unleash their hounds on the victims.

**ERINYES (3)****CR 8****XP 4,800 each**hp 94 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 75*)**NESSIAN WARHOUNDS (2)****CR 9****XP 6,400 each**hp 126 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 173*)**Cleanup and Aftermath (CR 16)**

When the PCs have defeated the devils in the previous encounters, you can assume that the invasion of devils is complete—by killing the most powerful of the invaders, the PCs have saved hundreds of lives. In the aftermath, however, the staff and students of the Acadamae (and perhaps the PCs as well) are astonished to see that the bodies of the various devils do not disappear, indicating that these were not summoned fiends, but rather actually present on the Material Plane. An argument ensues between students of the schools of necromancy and summoning, each wanting to study the devils for their own purposes. After some contention, a great deal of shouting, and threats of magical violence, Toff Ornelos emerges from hiding to declare that there are more than enough corpses for both schools to study; the Hall of Whispers can experiment to determine what properties the fiendish bodies might possess, while the Hall of Summoning can perform its own tests to determine where so many devils came from, and why they appeared right on the heels of the first champions of the Breaching Festival since the contest's earliest days.

The PCs likely have an answer to at least the second question, having discovered and escaped from Belzeragna. Their account of the demiplane and its nature as a repository for the souls of Breaching Festival contestants

shocks all who hear it, especially authorities from the school. Master Cangri is horrified that she has been party to the deaths of so many students. Toff Ornelos, for his part, urges the PCs to keep quiet and does everything in his power to prevent a scene—though after the onslaught of devils from the best-protected building on the Acadamae's campus, doing so is nigh impossible.

If the PCs confront him directly, he is defensive and easily agitated. He truthfully claims no knowledge of Belzeragna, Lorthact, or Chyvnom, and rages at accusations that he knowingly orchestrated such terrible deals with devils to siphon Korvosa's strongest souls into the hands of powerful fiends. If his assertions of innocence continue, they may lead to claims by shocked faculty or city officials that he isn't the mastermind behind the operation, but rather was too incompetent as headmaster to know what terrible things were happening in his own school.

In either case, the PCs' information and the irrefutable evidence of the assault of Belzeragna's legions into the Material Plane mean rough times ahead for Ornelos, and almost immediate demands for his resignation.

**Creature:** Toff Ornelos may not be the best school administrator, but he is among the most powerful arcanists in Varisia, and evinces the pride and arrogance of one descended from a long line of influential nobles. If provoked or backed into a corner, the headmaster is not above exerting his dominance and defending his name with force. The loss of control of the Acadamae would both ruin him personally and greatly diminish the influence of his family, and he risks his safety if he must in order to mitigate the inevitable wrath of his great uncle Volshyenek.

**TOFF ORNELOS****CR 16****XP 76,800**

Male old human aristocrat 1/wizard 16

LN Medium humanoid

**Init** +4; **Senses** Perception +20**DEFENSE****AC** 26, touch 17, flat-footed 26 (+5 armor, +3 deflection, +4 *defending quarterstaff*, +4 shield)**hp** 97 (17 HD; 16d6+1d8+33)**Fort** +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +15**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +4 *defending quarterstaff* +11/+6 (1d6+3)**Special Attacks** hand of the apprentice (9/day), metamagic mastery (5/day)**Wizard Spells Prepared** (CL 16th; concentration +22)8th—*mass charm monster* (DC 24), *heightened prismatic spray* (DC 26)7th—*finger of death* (DC 23), *quicken fireball* (DC 21), *forcecage* (DC 25)6th—*quicken bear's endurance*, *chain lightning* (DC 24),

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*disintegrate, greater dispel magic*

5th—*cone of cold* (DC 23), *dominate person* (DC 21),

*heightened fireball* (DC 23), *quicken shield, teleport*

4th—*black tentacles, dimension door, enervation* (DC 20),

*shout* (DC 22), *wall of fire* (DC 22)

3rd—*fireball* (DC 21), *fly, heroism, slow* (DC 19), *vampiric touch*

2nd—*blur, detect thoughts* (DC 18), *fox's cunning, scorching*

*ray, see invisibility, spectral hand*

1st—*burning hands* (DC 19), *expeditious retreat, magic*

*missile* (2), *obscuring mist, ray of enfeeblement* (DC 17)

o (at will)—*detect magic, light, mending, read magic*

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### TACTICS

**Before Combat** If Toff is threatened with violence, he calls upon several students to him for assistance, but in the chaos and in the face of the PCs' accusations, none come to the headmaster's aid. If he sees conflict as inevitable or is pushed to his breaking point, Toff starts casting spells as outlined in *During Combat* below.

**During Combat** Toff is no war wizard, but he firmly believes that a mage of his stature should have the ability to end any fight with force. He begins combat by casting *quicken shield*, *quicken bear's endurance*, and *quicken fireball*, bolstering these spells with offensive spells as standard actions. He allocates the +4 bonus from his *defending quarterstaff* to his AC each round. While he has prepared several spells with metamagic applied, he may also quicken one spell of 4th level or lower or heighten any spell at will with his metamagic mastery ability.

**Morale** One doesn't become headmaster of a prestigious arcane academy without some sense, and Toff knows when he's beaten. If fighting without any support from his colleagues, he surrenders and acquiesces to his attackers' demands when reduced below 30 hit points.

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### STATISTICS

**Str** 9, **Dex** 11, **Con** 10, **Int** 23, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 20

**Feats** *Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Heighten Spell, Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Magical Aptitude, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Penetration, Toughness*

**Skills** *Appraise* +17, *Craft (alchemy)* +12, *Diplomacy* +20, *Fly* +11, *Knowledge (arcana)* +26, *Knowledge (history)* +25, *Knowledge (nobility)* +26, *Knowledge (planes)* +25, *Linguistics* +13, *Perception* +20, *Sense Motive* +21, *Spellcraft* +29, *Use Magic Device* +2

**Languages** *Abyssal, Aquan, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Sylvan, Varisian*

**SQ** *arcane bond (staff)*

**Gear** +4 *defending quarterstaff* (bonded item), *blessed book* (contains all 0-level spells, all prepared spells and 400 additional spell levels' worth of randomly determined spells), *bracers of armor* +5, *ring of protection* +3, *spell component pouch*

**Development:** Depending on how the PCs handle the situation, they could find themselves embroiled in a complex political web involving not only the Acadamae's administration, but also House Ornelos, and Queen Ileosa, who doubtless wants to see the Acadamae remain a status symbol for the city and would like the whole affair handled swiftly and judiciously.

If the PCs give Toff the benefit of the doubt and work with him to smooth things over with his academic rivals and city officials, he promises them high-ranking positions at the school, starting with master of wards, the title he plans to strip from Master Cangi as the member of his staff most intimately involved in the Breaching Festival.

**Story Award:** If the PCs navigate the fallout of their discovery without coming into conflict with Headmaster Ornelos, instead either siding with him or dealing peacefully with him as he transitions out of his role as head of the Acadamae, award them 76,800 XP. Feel free to adjust this value up or down as you see fit based on the PCs' ability to quickly form political alliances, maximize the effects of their knowledge, or avoid the situation entirely.

## Concluding the Adventure

Among all the excitement following the PCs' emergence from the Hall of Wards, Acadamae officials and the city as a whole nearly forget about the contest entirely. The following morning (or more immediately if the PCs remind someone), school officials hold a less ceremonious award banquet than they had planned. If Ornelos remains head of the school, he officiates at the ceremony, while Master Cangi does so in his place if no new headmaster has been named upon Toff's resignation or death.

If the PCs rescued Illia and she stepped through the portal before any of the PCs, she is the official winner of the Breaching Festival, and the first in over 150 years. The master of ceremonies informs her that she has won—a fact that brings a wide, gleeful smile to the rogue's face, until she realizes the debt that she owes to the PCs for their aid. She may be a thief, but robbing this particular group might be too big a score even for her. Before being ushered off, she whispers “We'll settle up later” to the nearest PC, and then heads off to collect her prize. In this case, the PCs are invited to a meeting with the headmaster the following morning to discuss “a private matter.”

It is most likely, however, that a PC is named the winner of the contest. The winner is publicly celebrated, and the headmaster speaks to the level of her accomplishment, and then escorts the entire party off to the headmaster's study in Ornelos Hall.

Once in the room and alone, the headmaster opens a hidden safe in the wall, spilling a number of gold coins, a great deal of jewelry, and a number of gems out onto the floor. If one of the PCs was the victor of the Breaching,

that PC is presented with the award then. If Illia was the official victor, the headmaster explains that she took only a quarter of the assigned prize, and insisted that the remainder be split among her rescuers—on the condition that no one from the Cerulean Society be told that she gave up even a single coin.

Given the size and sheer magnitude of the prize, which continues to pour out of the safe, the headmaster offers the PCs a simpler way of dealing with their spoils: they can count the total, appraise the value of any gems and precious items, and then receive the sum of their spoils in the form of gold. Should they so choose, the headmaster can also arrange for the Hall of Crafting to create items for the PCs—their full market value is then deducted from the prize. He additionally stipulates that the Hall can create no more than two items per character, and that the total value of all crafted items cannot exceed one-half the total sum of the prize. As GM, you may also limit which items are available; the headmaster simply states that the crafters lack the necessary expertise. Lying or not, his word in the Acadamae is law.

After the value of the prize is totaled, the proceeds amount to 98,230 gp in all (split among coins, gems, and jewelry). If asked about the magic items that rumor insisted were part of the ever-growing prize, the headmaster reminds the PCs that some rumors are merely that. If the PCs don't note the fact that this total is much lower than the supposed 153,000 gp the contest was supposed to award, others in the room quickly do. If Toff remains in charge, he delays a moment, thinking of the best answer, then finally admits that he's been funding certain operations from this cache for decades under the irresponsible assumption that no one would ever win the contest. If Toff is not available, it takes Cangi or other Acadamae officials only a few hours to discover this awkward truth. This fact provides even more ammunition for PCs who may wish to see the mismanaged institution change hands. Nevertheless, what remains is the PCs' to split up however they wish.

**Fame and Fortune:** Winning the Breaching Festival is a chance at instant fame in Korvosa; if the PCs were not already popular in the city, they certainly are now. For

weeks following the contest, the group is the subject of rumor, the focus of adoration, and the convenient target of robbery attempts large and small. If the party or any of the PCs individually use their damning knowledge of the truth behind the Breaching Festival in a power play to gain political or academic influence, the fact that they are local celebrities contributes favorably to their success in such efforts.

**Contracts with Chyvvom:** If any one of the PCs chose to promise anything to Chyvvom in exchange for *wishes*, an easier confrontation, or merely a straighter road home, that decision undoubtedly returns to haunt the group as a whole. If the PCs slew Chyvvom outright, the contract with the PC reverted to his master, Lorthact, who is sure to use it in the future as a means of leverage in his eventual confrontation with them, especially if that PC has aspirations of running the Acadamae.

**Dividing the Spoils:** Although the players should (hopefully) agree to split the prize from the contest equally, it's not guaranteed that the characters will stick to their arrangements. If the official winner of the Breaching insists that the prize is hers and hers alone, it may be an indication that the character has fallen under the sway of Chyvvom or one of Lorthact's other underlings. Note that not all groups want to deal with conflicts within the party, so exercise caution before introducing potential items of contention.

**The Devil's Due:** Whether the PCs or Illia officially won the Breaching, the PCs have gained the attention—and the enmity—of Lorthact. Although long exiled from Hell, Lorthact is still an immensely powerful being in his own right (a CR 23 unique devil), and has the full might of House Ornelos behind him in the guise of

their secretly living patriarch Volshyenek.

## Toff ORNELOS

While it is unlikely that Lorthact will act openly against the PCs so soon after their victory, his interest in them is sure to increase as they grow in power and influence, until he finally seeks retribution for their actions against him.



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## Appendix 1: The Acadamae

Among the oldest institutions in Korvosa, the Acadamae makes a bargain with its students: give 10 years of your life, and we will make you into a highly talented wizard. Of course, only seven in 10 of those students survive their full decade of instruction, and some of those who do swear off the use of magic entirely once they graduate, but many fledgling wizards take advantage of the expertise offered by the Acadamae's staff, and become rather adept mages.

Founded in 4473 AR by Lord Volshyenek Ornelos, the Acadamae has grown from a single structure surrounded by a forbidding wall of black marble to a city in its own right, capable of supporting the needs of its students and faculty without any need for them to leave the grounds. Visitors are not welcome on the grounds of the Acadamae except during the Breaching Festival or if they have direct business with the school. Messengers, deliveries, and even repairs are watched with the utmost scrutiny, for fear that the secrets of the school might somehow leave its grounds—or worse, that the many wards protecting the outside world from centuries of magic might somehow be damaged by the wrong person wandering into the wrong corner of the campus.

## Student Life

The first 3 years of a student's stay at the Acadamae are very much the slave labor of most wizard's apprentice tales—the apprentice mops, carries books, and performs other menial tasks for the staff and the senior students, who are only too happy to return the unkindness they experienced as apprentices themselves. Two of every 10 students at the Acadamae do not survive these first years, being slain by magic traps, wayward spells, or murderous imps, or simply dying from exhaustion or carelessness. The other eight then choose a school of specialization, and move on to their actual studies.

Students at the Acadamae are all wizards (or aspire to be), and all are specialized in a school of magic. Divination is considered a universal school, taught to all students but restricted as an area of focus. All students must likewise receive instruction in conjuration, and face a grueling examination in that field before they can graduate. No Acadamae student may choose conjuration or divination as a forbidden school.

The examinations that lead to graduation (both in conjuration and the student's chosen school) are potentially fatal. Although some wizards reach only a rudimentary

understanding of magic, the 10 years of enrollment hone the craft of a great many mages well beyond the skill displayed by low-level wizards; the most impressive of students can summon and control hell hounds, xill, or even erinyes as part of their graduation tests. These wizards usually apprentice themselves to senior faculty, serving as tutors to younger students and absorbing what they can from their masters. There is, however, no correlation between a student's year and her level; a graduate of the Acadamae might range anywhere from level 3 to level 11. All students, however, must successfully summon a devil in order to graduate—at least a lemure, summoned (through the casting of *summon monster II*).

### Campus Locations

**A1. Hall of Summoning (conjunction):** The primary building of the Acadamae and one of the largest structures in all of Varisia is the Hall of Summoning. Rebuilt only a quarter-century ago, the Hall of Summoning has only recently returned to full use as the primary locus of instruction for students specializing in conjuration. More than a dozen binding circles can be found throughout the massive structure, constantly reinforced to prevent the sort of catastrophic failure that destroyed the previous hall. Three larger circles surround the building itself, ensuring that a botched summoning—or worse, a calling of a terribly powerful being—will not endanger the rest of the school or the city itself.

All students receive at least some tutoring at the Hall of Summoning, and it is in the massive, central summoning chamber that students must face their graduation exam. To facilitate the instruction of so many students at once, the new hall's center is dominated by Ornelos Auditorium, a spacious, 333-seat lecture hall and demonstration area where beginning students receive their first lessons in conjuration, their orientation to the school, and the reminder that leaving the school is not an option—one graduates from the Acadamae, or one does not leave at all.

**A2. Hall of Seeing (divination):** Entry to this hall, which was constructed and arranged to evoke auguries and portents, is gained through a pair of doors displaying giant harrow cards, which change to reflect the past or future of the last person to touch the doors. Spheres, crystal balls, scrying pools, and mirrors litter nearly every corner of the hall, and corridors lead to cryptic answers of unasked questions as often as they do to the appropriate room.

As is true of the Hall of Summoning, all students receive instruction in the Hall of Seeing at some time during their study at the Acadamae. For some, this study leads them down the road to madness, but their fellows in the other schools—particularly those at the Hall of Whispers—can often find other uses for them even then.

**A3. Ornelos Hall:** The oldest building at the Acadamae, Ornelos Hall serves as the primary administrative building for the school, where meetings among senior faculty are held, records are stored, and interviews with prospective students are conducted. Until the rebuilding of the Hall of Summoning, Ornelos Hall was also the temporary home for classes in the school of conjuration, and a number of binding circles remain as a result of this temporary tenure.

**A4. Hall of Induction (evocation):** Known among the inhabitants of the school as the Cube, this building of iron—with smooth walls on three sides, and riveted plates forming the fourth wall—contains little more than a spiral staircase and five floors empty of classrooms, chalkboards, or even furniture. The only interior walls in the Hall of Induction are walls of force, erected by instructors to keep errant spells from obliterating unsuspecting bystanders.

Dedicated solely to the practical applications of the study of magic, lessons in the Cube are intended to teach students the proper way to cast their spells, gaining the most efficient benefit from their own spell energy. In addition to the Cube being the place where evocation magic is taught, many students also gain their knowledge of metamagic from practice in the Cube.

**A5. Hall of Wards (abjuration):** The best-guarded structure in Korvosa—and among the most secure on all of Golarion—the Hall of Wards is a nondescript building in which no visitor can reach any room, object, or person she is not intended to find. The hall is best known as the goal of contestants in the Breaching Festival, which has not been won in over a century and a half.

**A6. Hall of Lies (illusion):** Each morning, the ever-shifting school of illusion magic changes its appearance, though not by any conscious action of its inhabitants; the magic that cloaks the structure decides the appropriate look for the day. Within the building itself, one's own senses cannot be trusted, which is both a warning and a lesson to students of the school: trust nothing you cannot control, and control all you cannot trust. It is through this lesson that illusionists from the Acadamae become such adept schemers, ever seeking to influence any whom they are unable to control directly through the use of their magic.

**A7. Hall of Shaping (transmutation):** Over the years, hundreds of would-be graduates from the school of transmutation have altered the Hall of Shaping as part of their exit examination—the goal of which is to alter, in some way, the building without causing its collapse. Each attempt to create a uniform appearance has failed, but only damaging the building itself is grounds for the school's punishment: to live out one's life as a songbird in a large cage of fellow-failures on the top floor of the hall.

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**A8. Hall of Charms (enchantment):** Unintentionally drawing on the latent power that comes from the city of Korvosa having been built over the ruined stronghold of Sorshen, Runelord of Lust, the Hall of Charms has produced a number of surprisingly powerful enchanters over the years, and continues to do so roughly twice every 10 years, imbuing random students with power well beyond their instruction. Instructors at the school watch for such adepts, and try their best to keep them separated, fearing what would happen if two students with such potent influence were capable of joining their powers together.

**A9. Hall of Whispers (necromancy):** The dread school of necromancy is the final home for many students who were unqualified to graduate from the Acadamae—or so the legends state. While students of the Hall of Whispers are shunned by their fellows in other schools, they do not have claim to the bodies of any unfortunate victims of the “accidents” that often happen on school grounds. Instead, many of the bodies that come to the hall are those of students who promised their corpses to the school for study, should they die before they were able to recoup a certain sum toward their tuition costs. If the families of such useless mages are unable (or unwilling) to pay in order to claim the bodies, the bodies are donated to the Hall of Whispers for experimentation.

**A10. Staff Quarters:** The senior staff of the Acadamae—the masters of each of the schools, the chief instructors in the Halls of Crafting, and the leader of the tiefling guard—maintain their opulent residences here.

**A11. Halls of Crafting:** These fairly new buildings were constructed in the hope that students at the Acadamae who were not as adept at creating spells of destructive might, and who were less interested in the summoning and binding of powerful devils, could direct their magic skills toward the crafting of items of power or utility for the school. In truth, the Acadamae’s instructors jealously guard the secrets of creating items that can retain power, and seldom reveal how to craft items beyond scrolls, wands, and potions. Although they gladly accept—or demand—the assistance of skilled students in creating more powerful items, the rods, staves, and wondrous items the school’s most talented crafters create are hoarded for their own use, sold to other senior staff, or sold at a significant markup to nobles across the city.

**A12. Student Quarters:** Acadamae students have barracklike dormitories housed in the thick, imposing outer walls of the school. Food and other supplies are usually delivered from outside the campus grounds—and paid for by the enormously expensive tuition—but students are responsible for providing their own diversions and entertainment, which mostly consist of tormenting younger apprentices, engaging in formal and

informal duels with their fellow-students, and taking aim at the numerous imps on campus with spells.

### NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

Among the Acadamae’s many students, faculty, and other staff, the following NPCs are those most well known to outsiders or new citizens.

**Headmaster Toff Ornelos** (Male old human aristocrat 1/wizard 16): Toff Ornelos has served in his post for almost 30 years and is among the most skilled arcanists in Varisia.

**Dean of Abjuration Julaei Cangi** (LG female human abjurer 12): As head of the Hall of Wards, Master Cangi is ever concerned with the protection of the school grounds and the students, teachers, and staff within, and takes her job very seriously.

**Dean of Conjuration Messida Vost** (LE female human conjurer 12): Rumors that Mistress Vost takes great risks in summoning powerful demons are only partially false; the ambitious Chelaxian hopes to one day bind and subjugate a mighty qliphoth to impress the board of directors at the Egorian Academy in her homeland.

**Dean of Divination Norva Allesain** (NG female human diviner 9): The youngest currently serving dean, Mistress Allesain rose quickly through the ranks of faculty in the Hall of Seeing, ever seeming to be in the right place at the right time for promotion.

**Dean of Enchantment Heresta Tarlan** (LN female enchanter 11): The Hall of Charms’ homely headmistress has a reputation as many students’ favorite teacher, despite her gruff demeanor and her classes’ extreme difficulty.

**Dean of Evocation Salgar Irevotnin** (LN male human evoker 10): Dean Irevotnin has a reputation for ending arcane duels with deadly force, and uses this fact to maintain order in the classroom, threatening disobedient students with a single round of combat if they don’t behave.

**Dean of Illusion Rombastle Falgeringer** (CN male gnome illusionist 11): The only non-human among the Acadamae’s deans, Rombastle maintains an air of seriousness around his peers to avoid undue prejudice against his kind, but in private he enjoys making *persistent images* of his colleagues acting out elaborate and embarrassing charades.

**Dean of Necromancy Orianna Delmore** (LN female human necromancer 10): Rumors attribute Dean Delmore’s constant foul mood to failed attempts to attain lichdom, but these rumors are false; she abandoned such endeavors when her secret lover Terentius disappeared in last year’s Breaching Festival.

**Dean of Transmutation Elgin Remorri** (N old male human transmuter 12): An Acadamae institution, Dean Remorri has held his post longer than any of his peers. He grows uneasy when things remain static for too long, and in his old age has begun referring to students as “my little birds” when he becomes overly stressed.



## Appendix 2: New Monster

### Garipan

Batlike wings stretch behind this stone-faced creature with a wide, wild grin and fierce red eyes. The molten core in the creature's torso glows through rugged cracks in its dark stone skin.

GARIPAN	CR 10
<b>XP 9,600</b>	
NE Medium outsider (native)	
<b>Init</b> +2; <b>Senses</b> darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +19	
<b>DEFENSE</b>	
<b>AC</b> 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural)	
<b>hp</b> 133 (14d10+56)	
<b>Fort</b> +13, <b>Ref</b> +8, <b>Will</b> +11	
<b>DR</b> 5/—; <b>Immune</b> poison; <b>Resist</b> acid 5, cold 5, fire 5	
<b>Weaknesses</b> vulnerable to sonic	
<b>OFFENSE</b>	
<b>Speed</b> 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)	
<b>Melee</b> bite +17 (1d6+3 plus burn), 2 claws +17 (1d8+3)	
<b>Special Attacks</b> breath weapon (30 ft. cone, 8d6 fire damage, Reflex DC 21 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), burn (3d6, DC 21), rend (2 claws, 1d8+4)	
<b>Spell-Like Abilities</b> (CL 10th; concentration +11)	
At will— <i>statue</i>	
3/day— <i>meld into stone</i> , <i>scorching ray</i>	
1/day— <i>fireball</i> (DC 14), <i>flesh to stone</i> (DC 17), <i>wall of fire</i>	
<b>STATISTICS</b>	
<b>Str</b> 16, <b>Dex</b> 15, <b>Con</b> 18, <b>Int</b> 13, <b>Wis</b> 14, <b>Cha</b> 13	
<b>Base Atk</b> +14; <b>CMB</b> +17; <b>CMD</b> 30	
<b>Feats</b> Dodge, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Hover, Mobility, Skill Focus (Stealth), Wingover	
<b>Skills</b> Acrobatics +16 (+12 jump), Fly +23, Intimidate +18, Perception +19, Stealth +25	
<b>Languages</b> Common, Infernal	
<b>ECOLOGY</b>	
<b>Environment</b> any (Material Plane only)	
<b>Organization</b> solitary or brood (4–12)	
<b>Treasure</b> standard	

Vicious beings with little memory of who or what they might once have been, garipans know only two things: that they were once evils in service to the legions of Hell, and that they are no longer bound to that infernal hierarchy. With resistant, stony hides; sharp claws; and a flaming core to rival the inferno of Hell, garipans combine some of the worst depravities of devils with the freedom of beings with nothing at all to lose.

These hulking, winged creatures often masquerade as gargoyles, but are actually the final state of failed conjurations. If a summoning is cast incorrectly, pulling only a portion of a devil's essence to Golarion, unidentifiable

magical environmental conditions combine with the shard of the outsider's being to create a garipan.

Garipans are rarely aware of the full details of their previous existence; much in the same way that lesser devils can forget their lives when they ascend to more powerful forms, newly formed garipans are overwhelmed by unfamiliar sensations. Unfettered by conjuring magic, unrestricted by magic that protects against extraplanar intrusion, and free from the threat of banishment back to Hell, garipans experience freedom for the first time, and this freedom most often results in a break from their previous lives.

In combat, a garipan uses flight and the fire raging within it to its greatest advantage, swooping overhead with its breath weapon first, then closing in for a full attack with its bite and claws while its breath weapon recharges.



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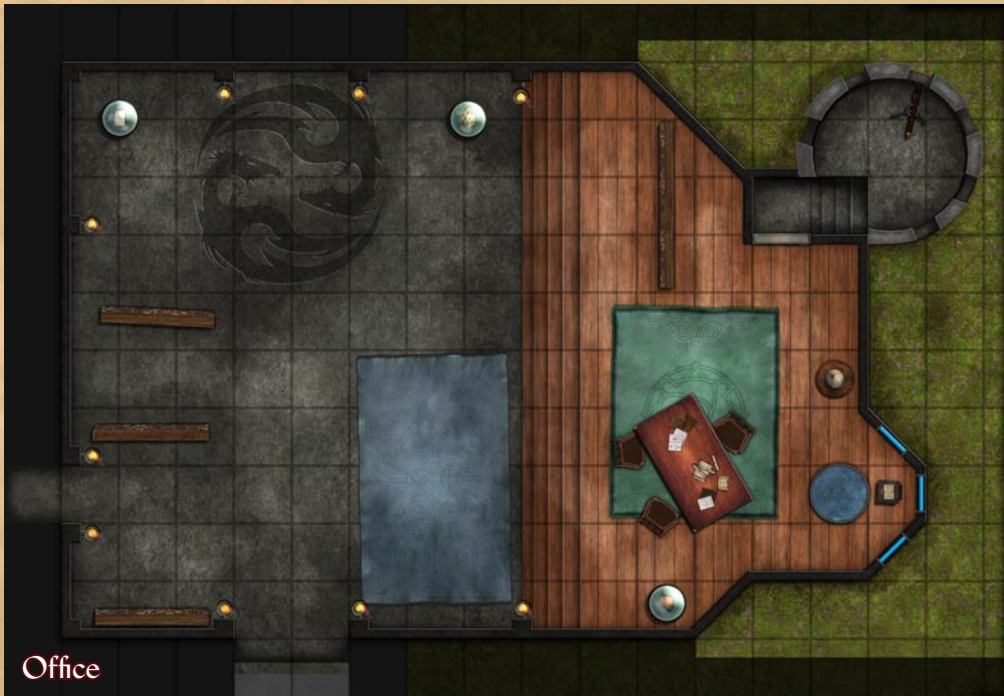
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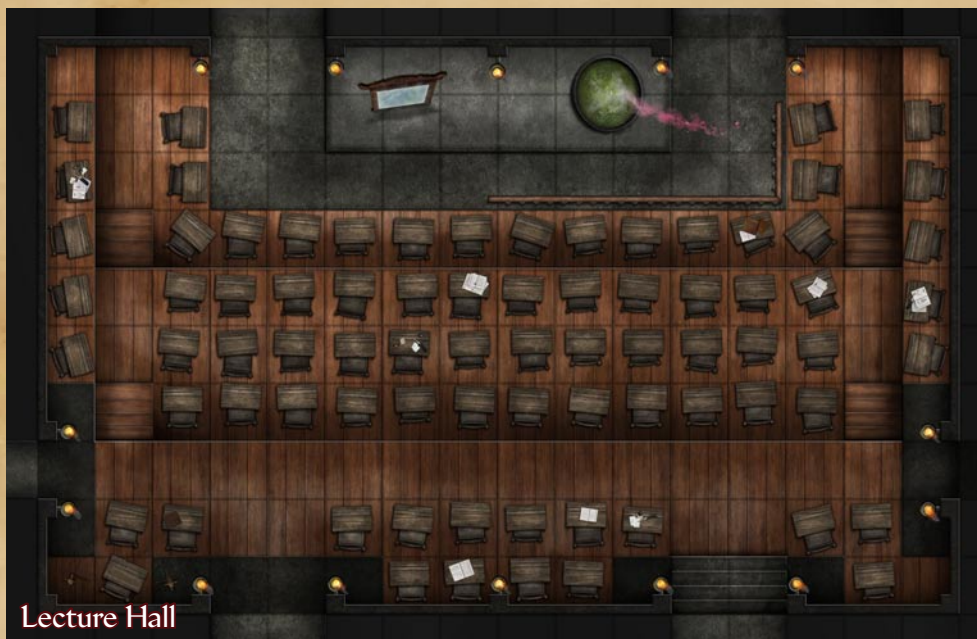
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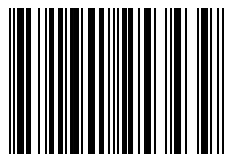
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