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ADVENTURE PATH[™]



WAR FOR THE CROWN

THE REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

by John Compton

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SUCCESSION LOYALTIES



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ON THE COVER



Hugh Pindur shows us First Emperor Taldaris in the afterlife on this exciting cover, while Merisiel has gotten herself and Quinn in more trouble than she realizes.



ADVENTURE PATH 5 OF 6

THE REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

by Crystal Frasier

2

The Reaper's Right Hand

by John Compton

4

NPC Gallery

by John Compton

56

Sayashto

by John Compton

62

Thamir Gixx

by Jason Keeley

68

Noble Lines of Taldor

by Crystal Malarsky

74

Bestiary

by John Compton, Nathan King, and Greg A. Vaughan

80

REFERENCE

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

<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>Bestiary 2</i>	B2	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Bestiary 3</i>	B3	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM
<i>Occult Adventures</i>	OA		



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I AM THE LAW!

I'm sorry. We couldn't write an entire book about going to the lawful plane of Axis without putting on that classic clip from the 1995 Sylvester Stallone classic, *Judge Dredd* (for certain values of the word "classic"). Nineties Stallone movies are my religion. But that's the last you'll be hearing about Joseph Dredd, Mega-City One, or Walter the Wobot, because despite the word "judge" in the title, the *Judge Dredd* comics are about as antithetical to the concepts and setting of Axis as you can get.

We don't like cities much here in America. We were originally conceived as a nation of farmers, and we still like to think of ourselves like that to some degree, maintaining our tidy lawns in our "it's not really a city" suburbs. For all their size and grandeur, our "big" cities like Los Angeles and New York are far from the biggest in the world. They aren't even in the top 20. I think that's why we generally look at cities with an air of suspicion. American cinema usually can't portray a large city

without emphasizing grim, foreboding themes, dripping with impersonality and imperfection.

While working on the original outline for this adventure, good inspiration for Axis, the Infinite City, was pretty hard to find.

Axis isn't perfect. It's not supposed to be Heaven. It isn't a land of infinite luxury and sensible transit options. It doesn't come with winged butlers and the instant gratification of burritos on every corner. Good people who like living by the rules don't go to Axis; they go to Heaven.

But Axis also isn't a dystopia; it's not *Brazil* or *Metropolis* or *Dark City*. It doesn't appear great while hiding a seedy underbelly of repression and abuse and surprise cannibalism. Bad people who play by the rules and skim a little off the top don't go to Axis; they go to Hell.

Axis is a city where the buses run on time, and everyone knows to walk on the right side of the

sidewalk—and a thousand other little gestures that don't really put you out but make living together in a crowded city easier on everyone. It's a place where your job might not be exciting or make you very happy, but it plays an important role in keeping things running, and maybe that's enough to keep you satisfied. It's a city where being late is as rude as not showing up, and you pay your parking tickets because you genuinely believe it's your bad and you inconvenienced other people. It's a city where everyone getting along and moving together is more important than what's right or wrong. It's a city where everything runs by bureaucracy, but *the bureaucracy actually works*.

Axis is a city built by and for nerds.

Still, it can be difficult for those of us who didn't grow up in city cores to wrap our heads around (I was raised in a swamp, about as far from urban as you can get), so we here around the office have assembled a recommended viewing list to get a feel for Axis before playing "The Reaper's Right Hand."

Avatar: The Last Airbender (2005–2008): Created by Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko, and arguably one of Nickelodeon Animation Studio's most sophisticated projects, Avatar presents a world in the midst of massive social and technological change alongside global war. Much of season 2 takes place in the massive city of Ba Sing Se, where order and maintaining the status quo are considered far more important than preparing for the coming war, and dissent is aggressively policed. The follow-up series, *The Legend of Korra*, embraces more mature themes in a rapidly changing urban environment as well, introducing many of the side effects of violence and living outside the law rarely considered by adventurers.

Babylon 5 (1994–1998): The titular space station of Babylon 5 hosts a wide variety of alien cultures, with a focus on order at the expense of what some of those races consider ethical. The series's minbari race in particular are a prime example of a culture built around the needs of the community, tradition, and group cohesion over personal wants and desires, providing you with a source from which to crib notes and personalities to portray the citizens of Axis.

Dark City (1998): I know I specifically said Axis wasn't Dark City back in paragraph five, but times change. Alex Proyas's weird, atmospheric, noir thriller perfectly captures what it can mean to live in an infinite urban landscape where you exist as a very small piece in the hands of powerful, alien forces. The inevitables and axiomites who run Axis are far less ominous than the film's Strangers, but no less dedicated to control and a vision of perfection.

Defending Your Life (1991): This Meryl Streep comedy from the early '90s depicts an afterlife that essentially serves as an institutional way station between reincarnation or moving on to a higher plane, built with the design aesthetics of Disney World. While the meat of the movie has a lot more in common with the Boneyard and Pharasma's courts, the setting itself is a well-maintained and orderly urban landscape that represents the quiet, small-neighborhood feel of many of Axis's districts.

Hero (2002): Zhang Yimou's stunningly beautiful wuxia/political film might be better remembered for its gorgeous staged fight scenes and camera work, but it also explores an idealized ancient Chinese bureaucracy and what honor and revenge look like in a society built around law rather than good or evil.

Law & Order (1990–2010): Television's longest-running fantasy show, *Law & Order* presents a world where law enforcement and the judiciary system function as intended, without the static of human bias and ineptitude. The series helped invent the modern police procedural format now ubiquitous in pop culture, and provides some insight into how law enforcement in a plane of law would function. Many shows, such as NCIS and the various CSI series, follow the *Law & Order* format.

The Truman Show (1998): The late '90s were a landmark time for ennui and dystopia in film, captured well in Peter Weir's *The Truman Show*, a movie about a man born into reality television. The entire setting—admittedly a small town rather than a fully realized city—exists to contain Jim Carrey's character and is maintained with precision timing and granular control.

Zootopia (2016): A surprisingly beautiful and touching movie about a cop learning the damage her own quiet racism can do even as she tries to overcome the prejudice of others, Disney's *Zootopia* is set in a surprisingly sophisticated and well-organized urban landscape built to accommodate a huge variety of body types and biological needs. It is easily the least expected addition to this list, but still very much worth a watch if you haven't seen it yet!

Have fun in the Infinite City. And remember: The law doesn't make mistakes!



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REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary



THE REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

PART 1: ATTAINING THE MANTLE.....6

The heroes locate the long-lost tomb of Taldor's first emperor in search of a legendary relic able to identify the nation's next ruler. Unexpectedly, the ritual designed to summon the emperor's spirit instead pulls the PCs toward him... into Axis.

PART 2: THE BURDEN OF TRUTH.....21

The heroes learn that someone has abducted the emperor's spirit. With Axis's police forces busy or unconvinced, the PCs lead the investigation by identifying clues, connecting fragmented visions, and stymieing the abductors' attempts to also influence a local election.

PART 3: INTO DUSKFATHOM 41

Having thwarted the villains in Axis, the heroes descend to the outskirts of Norgorber's divine realm, Duskfathom, to rescue the emperor and foil the ongoing schemes of the Reaper of Reputations.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Reaper's Right Hand" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.



The PCs begin this adventure at 13th level.



The PCs should be 14th level after they finish investigating Taldaris's home in Part 2.



The PCs should reach 15th level shortly after entering Duskfathom in Part 3.

The PCs should be 16th level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For all of Grand Prince Stavian III's stubbornness and all Princess Eutropia's maneuvering to shore up her bid for the crown, neither knew or fully recognized the damaging power that Stavian's chosen heir, the general Maxillar Pythareus, held in reserve: Grand Prince Stavian I was illegitimate, born of the reviled Adella family, casting doubt and a vile legacy on the already-troubled family's reputation and calling their legitimacy into question. Pythareus played the information close to his chest, both out of loyalty to Stavian III and in order to control this dangerous secret. Any supporting evidence quickly made its way into the general's hands, and he filed these documents with a handful of trusted agents. Thanks to the heroes' industrious meddling in Zimar that led to Pythareus's death, his agents no longer have any reason to keep this evidence secret. Now leaderless, they have published these records, and Eutropia's claim to the crown by virtue of her bloodline has fallen apart. Taldor now lacks an obvious inheritor, and the stakes in the War for the Crown have suddenly soared as dozens of nobles scramble to stake their own claims to the throne.

This is not the first succession dispute in Taldor's nearly six millennia history. Whenever two or more houses seemed poised to tear the empire apart with civil war, the senate would send a delegation to Taldaris's burial place, the Tomb of the First Emperor, and retrieve one of the empire's most sacred relics: the *Mantle of Kings*. Purportedly crafted by Taldaris from the hide of the legendary grogrisant and blessed by the Abadar, the mantle serves as the focus for a ritual to contact the departed emperor's spirit, empowering it to glow when donned by a worthy ruler. For all its wonder, though, the mantle spent most of the past millennia in Taldaris's tomb, for most rulers feared the consequences should the garment fail to shine. While the mantle represented a fail-safe means of identifying the next ruler, it also signified a threat to anyone who would claim the crown through subterfuge. The last time the *Mantle of Kings* saw sunlight was in 2702 AR, when Grand Prince Uirtamon II ordered it reinterred in the Tomb of the First Emperor—some say amidst rumors that Uirtamon was a well-disguised impostor.

The Tomb of the First Emperor long stood as a public monument, serving as a tourist attraction for Kazuhn prefecture, the backdrop for grand speeches, and a site of pilgrimage for the semi-official Cult of Taldaris Ascendant. However, when Aroden raised the Starstone more than a millennium after Taldaris's death, the people's admiration shifted from a dead ruler to a living god. By the time Uirtamon II reinterred the *Mantle of Kings*,

the tomb was already showing considerable neglect. The lavish beautification initiative that Uirtamon began in Oppara further distracted the public from the tomb, and after a few more years of fading prominence, the site was less known for its grandeur than it was for the rash of burglaries that had plagued its upper halls. Hoping to avert any further embarrassment to Taldaris's burial site, the senate voted to properly seal the tomb. Those who might have remembered its location died or fled the Choking Death that plagued the region a few decades later, and the terrible earthquake of 2920 AR left many other ruins to loot than the legendary tomb.

In the thousands of years since, the tomb's location has faded from memory, the prosperous town that once stood nearby has diminished into a humble farming community, and even references to the site are absent from all but the oldest records. With the help of Lady Gloriana Morilla and her allies in the Pathfinder Society, Princess Eutropia has at last identified the tomb's approximate location. If her agents could enter it, recover the *Mantle of Kings*, and perform a ritual to secure Emperor Taldaris's blessing, she could don the mantle and hopefully silence any doubts within her critics—or her own mind—that she is fit to rule.

Her plan has one very significant problem: Taldaris's spirit can no longer answer summons. After his death, Pharasma judged that his soul reside in Axis, the Eternal City and bastion of law. After more than a millennium of pleasant retirement and contemplation in the district of Sayashto, he earned admittance to the Adamantine Forges and emerged as an impariut, an inevitable dedicated to enforcing responsible rule in mortal kingdoms. Even as an inevitable he's maintained a modest estate in the district and answered the rare communion by his distant descendants to ensure a proper line of succession. But for all the Taldans who praise Taldaris, there are some who loathe or envy him. Among these is Norgorber, who passed the Test of the Starstone in 1893 AR and soon afterward established his divine realm in the dark recesses below Axis. Like most of his motivations, it's unclear exactly why the Reaper of Reputations took such an interest in the first emperor. Nonetheless, his agents have shadowed Taldaris on his sundry missions across the Material Plane for eons, snatching up blackmail and other intelligence every time. Led by a nefarious shadow known as the Secret Shade, this cabal of corrupted inevitables, fallen axiomites, and monstrous masterminds has grown more aggressive in the past several decades.

The Secret Shade learned of the Immaculate Circle's plot to rule Taldor by conspiracy after the Exaltation Massacre, largely through torturing the dead assassin Wyssilka the Fantabulous. A Taldor ruled by murder, secrets, and treachery is a Taldor utterly in the thrall of Norgorber, and so the Secret Shade dedicated many resources to quietly supporting this plot. The Secret

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom


NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary



Shade even coordinated the abduction of Taldaris. With the First Emperor securely locked away in Norgorber's divine realm, Duskfathom, the Secret Shade's agents devised a way to not only shield their captive from divinations but also to intercept messages and divinations bound for the Taldaris, effectively allowing them to impersonate the dead emperor beyond the grave; with the chaos following the unexpected revelation of the Stavian line's beginnings, the Secret Shade now plans to empower the *Manile of Kings* to confirm the Circle's chosen successor, Prince Carrius II, is chosen to sit upon the throne.

Although the shadow's agents performed a clean kidnapping, there are a few who threaten to unveil the crime. The first is the petitioner Eopal, a prominent citizen of Sayashto in Axis, friend of Taldaris, and until recently a political leader curious about the inevitable's long absence. The Secret Shade has coordinated a complex attack comprising blackmail, financial support, and political tampering to force Eopal to withdraw from the race and go into hiding. The second threat is the valkyrie Ohalia, born from the soul of Taldaris's leading general millennia ago. She felt his dismay and valor as he fought off his abductors, and the valkyrie now journeys to his tomb to learn what has befallen her old comrade. The last threat is the PCs, who are now poised to enter Axis and overturn so many carefully laid plans.

PART I: ATTAINING THE MANTLE

High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus has commanded the public spotlight ever since he announced that he was Stavian III's heir, and news of his death (or his arrest) spreads across Taldor with extraordinary speed. By the time the PCs conclude their business in Zimar and return to the capital, Oppara is ablaze with rumors of what's happened and word of the Stavians' illegitimacy. Depending on how publicly the PCs acted over the course of the campaign, the public views them either as the latest source of gossip from the south or as the daring operatives who felled Taldor's heir.

The PCs also receive a brief missive from Lady Martella Lotheed, conveying that numerous academics all happened to discover credible evidence that undermines Princess Eutropia's claim to the crown. Lotheed notes that she's dedicated her time to investigating these reports, their claimants, and their validity, and she's called in a close associate to meet with the PCs soon for a more formal debriefing in the next several days.

A PRINCELY AUDIENCE

Once the PCs have spent a few days learning more and reconnecting with their agents, they receive a missive from Martella Lotheed, asking them to meet her, along with Lady Gloriana Morilla, a member of one of Absalom's noble families with strong historic ties to Taldor, at the Palace of Birdsong.

Upon ascending the stairs toward Eutropia's office, a lean young man is lost in a book and chomping absentmindedly at an apple. He doesn't seem to notice anyone approach for several seconds, before finally sitting up with a start. He sets the book aside—choking down a mouthful of fruit—and jumps to his feet, wiping a hand on his trousers before offering it warmly.

"I remember you, don't I? You're my sister's friends?" His eyes light up after a few moments of awkward staring. "No! No, I do remember you! You were the ones who saved me in Yanmass! I'm so sorry for the trouble I must've caused you! I'm not sure we've formally met. I am Prince Carrius II, second born of Stavian III. Brother to the Grand Princess Eutropia..."

"Heh. That's a bit awkward to say, isn't it? I'm still used to just thinking of her as Eutie, my annoying elder sister.

"But yes. Thank you for rescuing me."

Carrius remembers only bits and pieces of his return—much of his memory has been deliberately suppressed, while other parts are fogged by trauma and the heavy sedatives used by the cult of the Twilight Child to keep him compliant. He still recalls almost nothing about the Immaculate Circle or how he returned from the dead, only repeating his earlier comment about "following the circle back to the beginning." He can answer a few questions, though, if the PCs are curious.

How are you feeling? "Good, considering I've been dead for twenty years. There are still a lot of gaps in my memory, but I'm feeling stronger every day."

Do you remember anything about being dead or coming back? "No, all of that is a blank. I remember being dead like... like the feeling of a breeze on a hot day, sitting in the sun, with the smell of leaves in the air. But coming back... I don't really recall any of it."

Do you remember anything about your death? "I... Yes, a little. I remember arguing with dad in the stables. I can't remember why. And then I remember falling, and then there was a sound like a branch breaking, but it sounded so far away. That's all."

Don't you want to be Grand Prince? "I didn't really want the crown even before I died. Dad and I used to argue about it a lot. But I think Eutropia's made good and grown up a lot since we were kids."

Do you have any embarrassing stories about Eutropia as a kid? Carrius smirks. "Lots. Did you know she used to be terrified of dogs? She was bitten before I was born; still has the scar on her arm. After that she would shriek and cry at any dog." He starts laughing. "One time—one

time Countess Talbot's little lapdog got loose and chased her all over the Imperial Palace. She was so scared, she wet herself!"

But she has a giant dog now. "Yeah, I guess a lot changed while I was gone. She said losing me made her grow up a lot; she didn't want other people to hurt like that when they didn't need to."

Carrius plays a much larger role in the next adventure, the *Six Legend Soul*. the goal in this encounter is to introduce his default personality to the PCs before they must deal with the monster the Immaculate Circle made him into. Barring any other questions, the excited young prince asks the adventurers about any exciting stories from the travels until the conversation slows down, at which point Martella arrives to escort them to her office.



LADY GLORIANA MORILLA

MEETING GLORIANA MORILLA

Lady Morilla is a longtime ally of Princess Eutropia, a significant contact for the Pathfinder Society, and the head of a clandestine organization known as the Sovereign Court, a network of agents endeavoring to replace regressive and destructive nobles with a new generation of constructive and responsible aristocracy. More personally, the PCs may have met her during the Exaltation Gala in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #127: Crownfall*. The missive directs the PCs to the senate building, where an allied agent leads them down several hallways, taking a circuitous route to shake any curious pursuers. A few minutes later they reach a rarely used meeting room painted with green and silver griffins, occupied only by a custodian polishing a candelabra. The agent departs, after which Martella closes the door, dismisses her custodian disguise, and uses a *scroll of zone of silence* to stymie eavesdroppers.

"The prince seems to like you," Martella comments. "He's been skittish since his return, so it's nice to see him opening up to someone besides Eutropia."

She guides you not to her office, but one of the servants' quarters, where a maid diligently polishes candelabra. As Martella closes the door, the maid nods and pulls off her bonnet, transforming her dingy uniform into an elegant but functional dress and her weathered scowl into the visage of delicate features and careful makeup.

"You may recall my guest from the Exaltation Gala, but if not please allow me to introduce you to the Lady Gloriana Morilla, member in good standing of the Pathfinder Society, and lover of the dramatic."

Gloriana shoots Martella a look of irritation before smiling and blowing a wisp of hair out of her face. "It is my pleasure

to congratulate you on your many extraordinary deeds from the last several months, but I'm afraid my visit isn't merely a polite social call."

"The last few days have certainly been... exciting," Martella remarks with chagrin.

Gloriana continues. "Your work deposing Maxillar Pythareus was decisive, yet he was no fool. Within the past decade he had uncovered evidence that the entire Stavian line was born illegitimately, beginning with Stavian I two-hundred years ago. Worse, their line seems descended from the long-lost Adella family, utterly reviled for their indulgence, treachery, and violence. Pythareus's closest agents held this damning information in reserve, and now that their leader is undone, they have verified and published the documents. This discredits the entire family and delegitimizes Eutropia's claim based on her parentage. Now more contenders than ever are circling

like vultures. We need a decisive sign.

"Taldor takes its name from its founding emperor, Taldaris," Gloriana continues. "His name's still uttered from the fields to the palaces, and although historical records of his policies are vague, that doesn't stop senators from claiming to act on his vision. In Taldor's past, the grand prince could call upon Taldaris's spirit for guidance, and it was said that Taldaris's legendary *Mantle of Kings* would glow when donned by the empire's rightful ruler. The First Emperor's blessing was practically sacred, and it would be equally decisive today."

"Unfortunately," Martella chimes in, "it's not as simple as it sounds."

"Indeed," Gloriana confirms. "The dubious Grand Prince Uirtamon II worried his rivals would use the mantle against him, so he had it reinterred in Taldaris's tomb, which he then ordered buried and its location scrubbed from public records. Thankfully, my Pathfinder Society agents are excellent archivists." Morilla picks up a leather folio from the seat next to her and places it on the table. "Together we have pieced together the approximate location of the Tomb of the First Emperor, as well as the rudiments of the ritual to call upon Taldaris's spirit to empower the *Mantle of Kings*. What we need now are capable operatives able to survey the area, locate the tomb, find the *Mantle of Kings* within, and contact the spirit of Taldaris to ask that he bless the garment."

"We need this—not just for Eutropia but for Taldor," Martella concludes. "If the mantle reappears and glows on her shoulders, it stands to prevent considerable bloodshed. Even if it does not select her, it will allow us a nonviolent means to identifying a worthy heir without the need for drawn blades."

Lady Morilla provides the PCs the leather portfolio, which contains written reports from 11 different

REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part 1: Attaining the Mantle

Part 2: The Burden of Truth

Part 3: Into Duskfathom


NPC Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines of Taldor

Bestiary



Pathfinder scholars. These trace the tomb's location to a roughly 25-square-mile area in Kazuhn with additional notes that the tomb's superstructure stood about 20 feet high (and so would form a small hill) and had an entrance facing north. The Pathfinders have pieced together significant parts of the ritual and secured a collection of aromatic oils, candles, and incense. However, the ritual is difficult to decipher because it uses extinct forms of measurement, cites ritual practices from millennia ago, references parts of the Tomb with unknown dimensions, and in some places is just incomplete with the Pathfinders' annotated best guesses.

Ladies Morilla and Lotheed are prepared to answer the PCs questions, including the likely queries below.

When was the tomb hidden? "Uirtamon II ruled slightly more than two millennia ago—that's plenty of time to forget a monument—and his administration took considerable pains to scramble the public records, and the Choking death hit Kazuhn particularly hard. Many families who may have known the tomb's location lost grandparents and parents, and with them much of their oral history."

How do we perform an incomplete ritual? "The Pathfinders pieced together most of it and translated old references where they could. I suspect, though, that there are some pieces you'll need to reinvent based on context. The more extravagant Taldan tombs boast considerable artwork, so see what further clues you can secure."

How do we locate the tomb? "Simple: archaeology. It's possible to trip over ruins in Taldor, but the Tomb of the First Emperor was a marvel of colorful marble, travertine, and alabaster. When attempting to find a site, one of your best resources is the local populace. See whether they've noticed anything amiss or can help. The area identified lies within the greater Piltshaven farming community and its neighboring hamlet of Breezy Creek. Just be aware that these settlements are off the beaten path and have likely received only fragmentary news about the succession conflicts."

Why are we doing this secretly? "Uirtamon II sealed away the *Mantle of Kings* because it was a political tool he thought others might use against him. According to legend, the mantle resolved matters of succession several times, and there are many pretenders whom the mantle would never recognize. That makes it a threat, and anyone trying to recover the mantle could attract very unwelcome attention."

Can we take anything from the tomb? Morilla takes a moment to formulate an answer. "The Tomb of the First Emperor was and still is property of the Primogen Crown. Assuming Princess Eutropia dons the crown, she would have full ownership of the tomb's contents, and she would want the more useful tools in her agents' hands—at least until she has consolidated her rule and can return or bequeath those items as she sees fit." She

pauses another moment then concludes, "You may take and use any magical items that could be of use in the coming days, and do so with respect. Leave any purely decorative items and currency."

Are you sure the *Mantle of Kings* will glow for Eutropia? "I'm not certain, given her ancestors' sins, but the Princess has insisted we follow this route. Historically, the cloak and Taldaris seem to prize honesty, camaraderie, and compassion as much as parentage."

Where is Eutropia? "She has retired from the public eye for the time being. She says she wishes to avoid being a catalyzing force in these tense times, but I suspect she also wants to spend some time with her returned brother."

How is Prince Carrius? "Well. His wits have largely returned, though he seems skittish. I never met him before his accident, so I'm not sure if it's a result of his trauma or simply his default mood."

Development: Once the PCs have finished asking any questions, they can depart for Piltshaven at their leisure. Ideally, the PCs should leave within one day, but this is also an appropriate point in the campaign to give the PCs as much as a week to craft magic items, meet with agents, train, and the like. Once the PCs are ready to depart, Lady Morilla disguises several of her agents as the PCs and has them overtly head southeast as though riding off on a daring mission. Minutes later, she sends the PCs northeast toward their real destination, which is about a three-day ride away.

It's possible that the PCs used their own resources to restore Kalbio of Breezy Creek to life following the events of Crownfall. If so, Lady Morilla arranges for him to meet with the PCs before they leave. The recent weeks weathering Oppara's political tensions have filed away some of Kalbio's naivete, and although he tends to startle at sudden movements, he's still quite folksy and warm. He offers to accompany the PCs to his birthplace, act as a guide, and provide introductions—he sheepishly insists it's the least he can do to repay their kindness. In fact, Kalbio's presence makes navigating rural Kazuhn much easier, as detailed in the following section.

OF LANDGRAVES AND LAND GRABS

Centuries of exploitation have left Kazuhn economically battered with its limited infrastructure maintenance dedicated to keeping the few key canals and warehouses able to export the prefecture's flax, fruit, and grain to Oppara. In Taldor's heyday, Kazuhn was a patchwork of small, family-run farms. Increasingly, nobles have consolidated these farms into massive estates with tenant farmers. It's largely due to some aristocrats' competing interests and overlapping domains that some farming communities remain independent.

Such is the case for Breezy Creek, a nonintegrated community northeast of the small town of Piltshaven.

For many generations the Avenlar family—most recently Viscount **Yemis Avenlar** (N male human aristocrat 4)—has merged the farms under its jurisdiction, in the process often leveling diverse family plots to make room for intensive production of a few crops. The Avenlars have profited off this change, though the tenant farmers have struggled under the rigorous taxes imposed. Even with their right to move and seek work elsewhere, many field hands have gone into debt to the Avenlars to make ends meet, tying them to the land in practice if not in name. The respected Landgrave Aldon Parcheau had maintained the ranching lands and agricultural hamlets that speckle the surrounding territory, including the village of Breezy Creek; however, the landgrave and the local baron perished during the succession skirmishes breaking out across the country. With no heir, the landgrave's lands are unsupervised, and higher-ranked aristocrats are too absorbed in bigger schemes to appoint a replacement. To Viscount Avenlar, that's been an opportunity to begin poaching more territory.

All of this might seem completely beneath the PCs, but securing the cooperation of the local folk is key to tracking down the Tomb of the First Emperor. As it stands, Viscount Avenlar employs many residents. The large fraction that don't like him have also learned not to trust the likes of the PCs, whom they likely perceive as aristocrats, noble bootlickers, or privileged adventurers. Unfortunately, the people who are most familiar with the countryside and its hidden secrets are the residents of Breezy Creek, who see the viscount as a profiteering vulture. Convincing anyone to stop fighting with the other side long enough to help the PCs very likely involves settling this dispute.

The following are likely approaches the PCs can take. As usual for each persona phase, a PC can choose to develop her persona or perform operations, though most of the approaches below rely on a special operation included below. Each strategy provides a basic framework to accomplish the objective while leaving room for PCs' often unique solutions.

A New Baron (No Persona Phases): If the PCs restored Kalbio of Breezy Creek to life and have him accompanying them, the PCs very quickly win the cooperation of Breezy Creek's inhabitants, all of whom turn out to see their hometown hero. Having been murdered within minutes of his becoming a baron, Kalbio never received land to match his title. Thanks to the recent deaths of the local landgrave and baron, Breezy Creek, Piltshaven, and several other nearby towns are in need of leadership. Viscount Avenlar makes a scene to protest this development, but the PCs should have no difficulty slapping him on the wrist and convincing him to recognize Kalbio as his superior.

Ignore the Conflict (0–3 Persona Phases): Although securing local assistance is ideal, the PCs aren't obliged

to get involved in local politics. Instead, they can survey the region with the help of their agents.

Archaeological Survey (Genius or Sagacity): With the help of their agents, the PCs map the landscape, dig test pits in promising places, and perform isolated interviews with local people to locate the tomb. The DC of this check is 20. If the PC casts a relevant divination spell, a spell that can compel a person's cooperation, or a spell that can excavate large amounts of earth, she gains a circumstance bonus on the Operation check equal to the spell's level (minimum +1).

Work with the People (1–3 Persona Phases): The commoners of Kazuhn have tilled their own plots for centuries, growing dozens of different crops and raising a variety of animals. As the nobles have consolidated massive farms, those working the land have been ordered to sow only a handful of more lucrative crops to feed Oppara's growing appetites. Having been ruled with a light hand for so long, the peasants find this relatively new organization distasteful.

The people of Breezy Creek are some of the most noteworthy holdouts, and among the most vocal protesters are Tramail and Edva, the late Kalbio's parents. The two took out a loan from the Avenlar family to pay for their son's apprenticeship and other aspirations, and they're in no position to leave until they pay off the debt. Tramail's especially distressed about the matter, for he knows that the viscount will demand he cut down his generations-old pear orchard. The middle-age farmer readily talks off the PCs' ears about pear cultivation, rants about how people don't appreciate pears enough—he repeatedly advises listeners to pinch the neck to see if a pear's ripe—and fiercely lectures anyone who has the gall to mention apples around him. Both parents are distressed at reminders of their son's death, though they try not to cry in front of the PCs.

The people of Breezy Creek, and many from Piltshaven, are only willing to help the PCs if the latter convince them of their good intentions. This is entirely possible just by dispersing agents throughout the outlying communities and farmsteads to garner goodwill. If the PCs are feeling more daring, though, they can infiltrate the Avenlar estate and arrange for a series of unfortunate incidents that thoroughly humiliate the viscount and shame him into abandoning his territorial aspirations.

Humbling Incident (Subterfuge, Risky): The PC sends her agents to coordinate a humiliating gaff or public accident, causing the populace (and perhaps even gossipy courtiers in Oppara) to disparage Viscount Avenlar. The DC of the Operation check is 20. Exceeding this DC by 5 or more counts as two successes for earning the people's support (see Development).

Rally Support (Any Facet): The agents disperse into the community to rally the people's support. The DC of the Operation check is equal to 15 + twice the number of previous successful rally support operations performed

REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part I: Attaining the Mantle

Part 2: The Burden of Truth

Part 3: Into Duskfathom

NPC Gallery

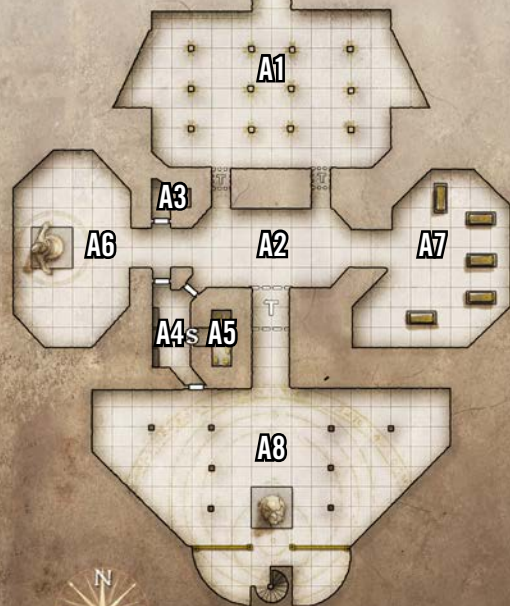
Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines of Taldor

Bestiary

A. TOMB OF THE FIRST EMPEROR 1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Upper Level



Lower Level

using that facet by any PC. Using heroism or sacrifice is especially effective, and Operation checks using these facets gain a +2 circumstance bonus.

Work with the Viscount (1–3 persona phases): The PCs can arrange a meeting with Avenlar to discuss their needs. The viscount is among the few local nobles who haven't sought the comforts of nearby Oppara, preferring the satisfaction of lording over peasants to the uncertainty of courtly life. In his 30s, he sports a carefully combed beard, speaks proudly of his five years commanding a company of the Taldan phalanx, and accidentally misquotes famous literature to seem more refined—all qualities that he has exaggerated over the past year to compensate for his failed marriage prospects.

The viscount is amenable to helping the PCs but has a few reservations. First, he's wary of Princess Eutropia, about whose aspirations he speaks with placating chauvinism. Second, he frames his gradual land grab as a case of the peasantry using the recent chaos to push back against the ruling elite. He wants the PCs' assistance in convincing the people of Breezy Creek to stop "rebellious." Alternatively, the PCs can secure the viscount an official writ that expands his territory and authority to include much of Landgrave Parcheau's former holdings.

Rally Support (Any Facet): The PC's agents disperse into the community to build sympathy for the viscount,

establish the PCs as trustworthy advisors to the outlying hamlets, and generally convince the population to accept the Avenlars' oversight without raising a fuss. This operation is nearly identical to the version in *Work with the People*, but in place of gaining a +2 circumstance bonus on Operation checks using heroism or sacrifice, the PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Operation checks when using charm or subterfuge.

Development: Once the PCs successfully complete a number of operations equal to the number of PCs for one of the strategies above, they have successfully secured the necessary help to pinpoint the buried tomb or have otherwise located it on their own. For each persona phase the PCs expended in this region, reduce the number of persona phases they have in Part 2 by an equal number (to between 7–10 persona phases). If the PCs still have not completed enough successful operations after three persona phases, they manage to cobble together enough leads to proceed but attract unwanted attention from Eutropia's rivals throughout the country. In this event, the PCs do not earn the story award below.

If the PCs helped establish Kalbio as the new baron of Breezy Creek (and its surrounding towns), he asks that the PCs help officiate ceremonies on his first official day managing his barony. He also names any willing PCs

baronets in his service, and the PCs can always secure a warm bed and home-cooked meals in northeast Kazuhn.

Story Award: For locating the Tomb of the First Emperor, the PCs earn 25,600 XP.

A. TOMB OF THE FIRST EMPEROR

Taldaris commissioned his royal tomb just beyond the borders of his fledgling empire. He claimed this was merely to give his remains a good view of Taldor's heartland, but this statement concealed a challenge to his successors: expand the empire so that Taldaris's tomb would sit deep in Taldor's core. Despite initial gains that claimed several more miles of territory, Taldor's borders didn't expand substantially until more than a millennium later with the first Army of Exploration. By the time Grand Prince Uirtamon II ordered the *Mantle of Kings* reinterred millennia later, the upper mausoleum had suffered considerable wear and looting. Shortly thereafter, the senate agreed to install considerable defenses and ultimately bury the superstructure to ensure no further desecration, though historians of the time posit this was more to eliminate the tomb and the mantle within as political tools. Through a combination of relocating peasantry, natural catastrophes, and the passage of many centuries, the exact location of the tomb disappeared from all but the most obscure and protected documents. For the past millennium, the Tomb of the First Emperor transformed from an imperial monument into a little-known legend.

Whether they secured labor from Viscount Avenlar, received assistance from the people of Breezy Creek, or simply dug it out with their own agents and magic, the PCs are able to excavate part of the hillside and uncover the tomb's entrance. Except where noted, the ceilings rise to 20 feet in height, the walls are plaster-covered superior masonry (Climb DC 30), and the rooms are dark. Many encounter areas note historical context for grave goods, artwork, and architectural features. In general, a PC can identify any of the listed academic details with a successful DC 20 skill check, most often Appraise, Knowledge (engineering, history, local, or religion), or a relevant Craft or Profession check.

A1. Entrance (CR 13)

Tall fluted columns line this spectacular hall, the floor of which consists of triangular and rectangular tiles of white and golden marble that fit together precisely. Weathered murals cover much of the south walls, and stocky gargoyles with human and avian heads peer toward the room's center from the room's corners and from the columns' capitals.

Although most of the tomb paintings boast the pre-imperial "flat" figures and symbolic still life illustrations

avored by Taldan artists during the first and second dynasties, the murals in this room display the feathered brushstrokes and subtle expressions favored thousands of years later during Taldor's third artistic renaissance. Renovations late in the tomb's public use involved repainting the entrance's murals, most of which were weathered beyond the point of restoration.

These images depict Taldaris in four scenes with a motto written below each. With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (history) check, a PC can identify one scene, plus one additional scene for every 2 points by which she exceeds the DC.

- Taldaris grips a golden lion by its mane and drives a sword into its throat. The motto reads "What raises us grants us strength." This image shows Taldaris slaying the beast Grogrisant, a supernatural lion that terrorized the Taldan city-states. According to legend, the *Mantle of Kings* is woven in part from its mane.
- Fallen soldiers lie around Taldaris, and he points at a skeletal angel that kneels before him and bears a trio of lilies. The motto reads "All things die, but his kingdom is forever." In this legend, an angel of death was said to visit Taldaris to claim his life, but the king convinced the angel to give him 90 more years in exchange for three lilies. The flowers have been commonly used in funerals ever since. What the PCs don't know is that this angel was in fact the shinigami Qarit, whom they meet later in Part 2.
- Taldaris kneels with a hand clasped over his chest as a bearded man resplendent in golden clothing presents a pair of keys atop a folded garment to him. The motto reads "Ordained to rule as a shining example." This scene depicts the god Abadar appearing to Taldaris and imparting to him the *Mantle of Kings* and the symbolic right to rule far and wide. A PC can also identify this image with a successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check.
- Taldaris raises one hand wearing a white gold ring to a crowd as he speaks. Many of the onlookers cheer, but some flee in panic. The motto reads "Truth emboldens the good and conquers the vile." This scene depicts Taldaris during a famous speech in which his voice miraculously reached an entire city, both rallying his people and compelling spies to throw themselves upon his mercy.

Traps: Each of the passages south contains a different trap. The east is the Cost of Greed, a trap that pelts the area with superheated globules of gold that embed themselves in the flesh and cause a survivor to decay slowly. To the west is Grogrisant's Maw, a lingering curse that causes a six-eyed spectral lion to follow the trespasser and tear at his flesh. Both traps' ongoing effects are curse effects that can be removed by *remove curse*, *break enchantment*, or similar effects. Any creature openly wearing a holy symbol of Abadar or Pharasma is

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

immune to either of these curse effects, but still takes damage from the molten gold.

COST OF GREED CR 11

Type magic; **Perception** DC 33; **Disable Device** DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger location (true seeing); **Duration** permanent; **Reset** automatic (1 day)

Effect rain of molten gold (5d6 bludgeoning damage and 5d6 fire damage, DC 22 Reflex save half; damaged creatures are affected by the rotting wealth curse, DC 22 Will save negates); multiple targets (all targets within 10 feet of the trigger square)

GROGISANT'S MAW CR 11

Type magic; **Perception** DC 33; **Disable Device** DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger location (true seeing); **Duration** permanent; **Reset** automatic (1 day)

Effect The target becomes cursed (Will DC 22 negates), causing the faint specter of a menacing, six-eyed lion to float behind him, illuminating him as *faerie fire*. The first time each round that a creature strikes the target at least twice with two separate weapons or natural weapons, the spectral lion latches onto the target, rends him for an additional 1d8+15 slashing damage, and gives him the shaken condition until the end of his next turn. This is a curse effect.

ROTTING WEALTH

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 22

Frequency 1/day

Effect 1d2 Con drain

A2. Tomb's Antechamber (CR 14)

Bold frescoes of geometric designs cover this room's walls and domed ceiling, and a quartet of bird-faced statues hold unlit braziers like offering bowls. A large passage leads south, and smaller passages lead east, north, west, and southwest.

This room connects to all of the other chambers in the tomb's superstructure, making it a natural place for the site's custodians and priests to gather visitors in sight of each of the four wondrous rooms that lie in each cardinal direction. The geometric patterns are intricate but bear no special symbolism, however the artists made heavy use of Icadium green, a dazzling and valuable pigment used to create paints and dye clothing during the Age of Destiny. It swiftly fell out of fashion around –100 AR, when scholars discovered the pigment could prove toxic from long-term exposure and likely caused the twitching madness of Grand Prince Pelanid IV.

Creatures: The four statues here are cryptguards, funerary constructs designed to defend tombs and

destroy any undead that rise and try to escape the location. Installed shortly before the tomb's decommission, this quartet attacks once an intruder either triggers the trap (see below) or walks through this area and attempts to enter any room but area A1.

CRYPTGUARDS (4) CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 111 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 68)

Trap: Any living creature that enters the marked area vanishes, thrown into an extradimensional maze reminiscent of the tomb shortly after its construction (complete with 15-foot-wide hallways). At the same time, an elder earth elemental appears elsewhere in the maze and begins stalking the target. It finds him after 1 round, plus 1 round for every 5 ranks of Stealth the target has. Running from the elemental only delays its arrival, and killing the elemental immediately allows the target to exit the maze.

THE STALKING LABYRINTH CR 11

Type magic; **Perception** DC 33; **Disable Device** DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger location (alarm); **Duration** special; **Reset** automatic (1 day)

Effect spell effects (*maze plus summon monster VIII*; see above)

A3. Storage

This small room stored many of the candles, formal outfits, cleaning supplies, and other tools necessary to maintain the site. After nearly 2,000 years, almost everything here has disintegrated to dust.

Treasure: Four vials of holy water survived the collapse of a storage shelf, landing in a pile of altar cloths. A dented tin contains a full eight applications of *unguent of timelessness*. Finally, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Appraise, Craft (alchemy), Knowledge (religion), or Profession (herbalist) check can identify the contents of one tin as Andoren pepperwood, a tree whose wood rarely warps and whose speckled bark was the foundation for incense. Zealous lumberjacks felled the last Andoren pepperwood trees around 3200 AR, making the fragmented incense sticks in this tin priceless. The incense is also one of the missing ingredients for which Gloriana Morilla provided a substitute reagent, and burning this incense during the ritual in area A13 lowers the DCs of all the PCs' ritual skill checks by 1.

A4. Sacristy

After his death and until the apotheosis of Aroden in 1 AR, Taldaris was deified and appeared in many homes and state buildings as a patron saint (though there's no evidence he ever granted spells). During that millennium, priests used this sacristy to prepare for

religious holidays and don formal clothing to perform services. After Aroden's faith overshadowed Taldar's, the sacristy underwent several changes before being closed up entirely. The once-beautiful pepperwood cabinets here are now delicate with age.

A secret door (Perception DC 25) leads into area A5.

A5. Secure Storage

The more valuable equipment employed by the site's priests remained here, away from the eyes of thieves.

Treasure: Numerous scrolls here have disintegrated entirely. Only a few treasures remain: a *wand of consecrate* (7 charges), a *prophet's pectoral*^{UE}, a *potion of remove blindness/deafness*, and an extremely fragile tome whose paper pages are so delicate that they easily snap when turned. This last item is a rare holy text associated with the imperial cult, and a PC can examine it either with a successful DC 20 Dexterity or Sleight of Hand check or piece together the fragmented pages with a successful DC 20 Appraise, Knowledge (religion), Linguistics, or Profession (librarian) check. Successfully examining the book takes 2 hours and lowers the DCs of the ritual skill checks in area A13 by 1.

A6. Hall of History (CR 15)

More than a hundred painted scenes parade clockwise along the walls of this room, showing people celebrating, fighting, traveling, and working. In the center of the room stands a mechanical humanoid with bronze wings embedded with lapis lazuli and a sword embedded in the sculpted form of a dead dragon.

While the Tomb of the First Emperor served as a public monument, this room operated as a place where visitors could learn more about Taldor's glorious history. Several clockwork humanoids refurbished from then-ancient Jistkan models were programmed to point to placards, gesture to the elaborate painted scenes, and even pantomime several now-extinct rituals and dances. The visual history progresses chronologically in a clockwise fashion beginning from the southeast wall, with most of the illustrations presented in the two-dimensional style common during the pre-imperial period. Understanding the basic ideas behind these images is fairly easy, but the PCs can also extract additional information and nuances by careful artistic analysis (see Development below).

First it shows the Azlanti exodus with purple-eyed people fleeing from ruins battered by fire, storms, and tsunamis. These refugees then meet people (a mix of Kellids, Keleshites, and Garundi) with different complexions and outfits, and in some places they fight and in others they exchange gifts. Several panels later, there are only olive-skinned people—the ethnically Taldan descendants of many bloodlines—wearing

clothing much like the Azlanti refugees, and these folk dance, farm, build temples, hunt, and war with one another. Along the western wall is an ancient map of the eastern city-states that later united to form Taldor, including familiar names like Cassomir, Oppara, and Zimar, as well as unfamiliar names like Iphria, Ralsagad, and Wayondas. Along the northern arc are tableaux of Taldor's earliest days and Taldar's unification of the city-states, culminating in his throwing several Azlanti relics into a pyre and hoisting a blue-and-green flag—his symbolic abandonment of a lost Azlanti past to unite the Taldan people under a new, vibrant identity.

A pair of candelabras hangs beneath concave mirrored plates that focus their light toward the walls and floor, leaving the ceiling shadowy. These fixtures gradually illuminate with flickering magical flames within a few seconds of the PCs entering this area.

Creature: When the senate ordered the tomb closed, the largest clockwork creature received new instructions to attack intruders. This clockwork angel still goes through the motions of showing off the room to visitors, pointing to a variety of images and inscriptions (some no longer extant) closest to where a PC has moved. Once it has gone through its entire routine, a process that takes about 5 minutes, the clockwork angel's defense programming takes over; it hefts the sword planted in the dragon sculpture and attacks.

CLOCKWORK ANGEL

CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 210 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 58)

Development: The clockwork angel's movements and numerous murals hide dozens of tiny details that can help the PCs refine the ritual performed in area A13. Properly deciphering these images requires a successful DC 20 Appraise, Knowledge (history), Perform (dance), or relevant Craft or Profession check.

A7. Hall of Heroes

Five stone sarcophagi with relief-carved covers rest in this irregularly shaped hall. Painted scenes of battle and construction wind around the room, spanning nearly from floor to ceiling. A sprawling floor mosaic portrays a map of the eastern Inner Sea region.

While the tomb as a whole celebrates Taldar, this room honors the thousands of civilians, heroes, and soldiers, who built a new empire during the Age of Destiny. A trio of mirrored candelabras similar to those in area A6 hangs in this room, providing normal light within moments after someone enters the room.

Of the five sarcophagi, four contain the first emperor's closest advisors, whereas the centermost one

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

commemorates the people of Taldor as a whole. Each sarcophagus's cover portrays the person to whom it's dedicated with detailed relief carvings that include short epitaphs and numerous symbolic images. Beginning at the north, these four depict Iamindra of Cassomir, high priest of Abadar and an unflappable minister depicted in clerical vestments and carrying a pair of keys; Akistair of Oppara, Taldaris's aide-de-camp and hero from the Day of Sundered Yews, depicted in chainmail and holding an empty scabbard; Ohalia of Zimar, Taldaris's fearless general depicted with a breastplate, helm, and spear; and Remall of Wayontas (an abandoned city-state near present-day Golsifar), the scholar who revolutionized Taldan architecture, depicted with a scale and a book.

Treasure: Each is empty but for a single item that was important to that person; the remains were relocated decades after interment. Iamindra's sarcophagus contains a *malleable symbol*^{UE} in the shape of Abadar's holy symbol, Akistair's contains a *scabbard of keen edges*, Ohalia's contains a non-magical horn made of iron and shaped like a roaring lion, and Remall's contains a *blessed book* that contains *dismissal*, *greater heroism*, *legend lore*, and *mage's sword*. Ohalia's sarcophagus once contained a special *horn of valhalla*, but after becoming a valkyrie, she returned here to recover it.

A8. The Public Tomb (CR 15)

This hall's ceiling soars to thirty feet high. The room tapers to a rounded point at the south, where a tall golden statue of a young, muscular man stands before a sarcophagus, one hand resting on the hilt of a sword at his waist and the other holding out a rolled-up scroll. Low wall partitions partly seal the southernmost area, where a spiral staircase descends.

This chamber marks the deepest anyone but the shrine's attendants were permitted to travel, containing the statue of the First Emperor that most traveled so far to see. The sarcophagus is elegantly carved to portray Taldaris's body in state on the cover, yet the sarcophagus is empty; his remains are sealed in area A13. Foot-wide slits run higher than 15 feet up the walls, where windows once let in sunlight. Before the tomb's burial, workers sealed these windows with plaster.

Creature: The statue is a gold golem built in the image of First Emperor Taldaris, though it poses no threat to the PCs at this time. The golem only attacks in self-defense or if the PCs begin taking any of the treasures in areas A9–A13.

GOLD GOLEM CR 15
XP 51,200

hp 156 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 140)

Trap: Descending more than a few steps down the stairwell transforms the trespasser into a tiny bronze

statuette version of himself, and only a split second later, the figure disappears. This trap teleports the statuette to area A11, setting it among the other figurines there. For one minute the following message appears on the upper steps in Common: "Those who would steal from Taldor shall serve it instead."

Any creature openly wearing a holy symbol of Abadar or Pharasma does not trigger this trap.

SEQUESTERED SHABTI TRAP CR 11

Type magic; **Perception** DC 33; **Disable Device** DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger location (alarm); **Duration** varies; **Reset** automatic (1 day)

Effect spell effect (*polymorph any object*; the target is turned into a foot-tall figurine version of itself and teleported to area A11, Fortitude DC 22 negates)

Treasure: A pair of silver offering trays worth 50 gp each lie just east of the stairs.

Development: The shabti transformation lasts a total of 3 hours, after which the PC returns to his original form in area A11. This likely triggers an encounter in that area.

A9. Gallery of Lions (CR 13)

The stairs from area A8 descend 40 feet to here. Other than the tomb's priests and later custodians, nobody was permitted in this room or beyond.

This octagonal room bears numerous murals showing First Emperor Taldaris and several companions slaying beasts, making offerings, and raising the columns of great buildings.

These paintings depict many deeds performed by Taldaris: Taldaris being raised by a pair of lions, his companions slaying a pair of green dragons and chopping down the towering forest beyond, Taldaris making an offering of a gigantic bull's head to Abadar, the general Ohalia driving a spear through the chest of a regally dressed giant, and many more. This art favors the two-dimensional pre-imperial style, and after six millennia with little maintenance, the pigments have faded considerably or sloughed off entirely in places.

Creatures: Two lions painted on the walls are animate, capable of watching the PCs or moving to other painted panels on the walls. These are a pair of foo lions named Luccaro and Myrllial, sworn to protect Taldaris and able to merge with the walls in this area much as if using *meld with stone*. The lions watch the PCs with interest, and if the PCs linger for more than a few minutes, begin stealing treasures, trigger a trap here, or otherwise seem suspicious, the lions emerge to confront them.

Myrllial is predatory and businesslike, pacing and staring judgmentally while inquiring as to the PCs'

intentions. Luccaro is more gregarious, approaching closer to sniff inquisitively at the PCs, ask who they are, and even sample any food they offer. Both take their guardianship seriously, though. Unless the PCs make a convincing argument that they are upstanding agents of Taldor sent here by one of the empire's highest authorities, Myrrllial insists the PCs depart. Convincing them requires a successful DC 35 Diplomacy check or a Bluff check opposed by the lions' Sense Motive checks (likely with a large bonus, depending on the lie). Any documentation the PCs can provide as credentials grants them up to a +5 circumstance bonus to the check, and every unholy symbol or overtly "villainous" feature visible among the PCs (such as tiefling horns, evil familiars, or excessively spiked armor) increases this DC by 5. If the PCs want the lions to let them take the treasures in area A10, increase the DC by 5.

LUCCARO AND MYRRLIAL

CR 11

XP 38,400 each

Advanced foo dire lions (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 290, 120; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 193)

LG Large outsider (augmented animal, extraplanar, good)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 10, flat-footed 24 (+9 armor, +1 Dex, +6 natural, -1 size)

hp 160 each (16d10+80)

Fort +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities paired protectors, stony defense; **DR** 10/bludgeoning

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft. (30 ft. in armor)

Melee bite +20 (1d8+9 plus grab), 2 claws +21 (1d6+9)

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

Special Attacks pounce, rake (2 claws +21, 1d6+9)

TACTICS

During Combat The foo lions use their stony defense liberally and pounce on different targets, willingly triggering a *glyph of warding* if it would catch at least one enemy.

Morale Myrrllial fights to the death. Luccaro fights to the death unless Myrrllial is defeated, in which case she melds with the paintings once reduced to 25 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 15, **Con** 20, **Int** 6, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +22 (+26 grapple); **CMD** 34 (38 vs. trip)

Feats Heavy Armor Proficiency, Improved Initiative, Iron Will[®], Light Armor Proficiency, Medium Armor

Proficiency, Power Attack, Run, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Acrobatics +8, Perception +15, Stealth +4 (+8 in undergrowth); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics, +4 Stealth, +4 Stealth in undergrowth

Languages Celestial, Common

SQ meld

Gear mwk full plate barding

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Meld (Su) As a standard action while in area A9 or A10, a foo lion can meld with the murals. This behaves as *meld with stone* except the lion is clearly visible and can move up to 30 feet along the walls as a move action.

Traps: Two greater glyphs of warding protect the south and west passages.

GREATER GLYPHS OF WARDING (2)

CR 7

Type magic; **Perception** DC 31; **Disable Device** DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger location (alarm); **Duration** varies; **Reset** none

Effect spell effect (empowered *order's wrath*, 5d8 damage plus 50%, Will DC 17 partial)



LUCCARO

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

Development: Killing the foo lions upsets Ohalia when she arrives in area A13. If the PCs successfully parley with the foo lions, the two advise the PCs that the room to the west is trapped to punish anyone who would aspire to steal the stars without first building a foundation of deeds upon which to stand. However, the cats weren't awake to see what happened to the one intruder who ever got that far; they only know that they awoke to a brief gasp before the mutilated body hit the ground. The lions otherwise don't interfere with any of the other encounters in the tomb, including the gold golem in area A8 or Ohalia as she passes through to area A13.

A10. Votive Halls

Low shelves line this room, collapsed in several places under the weight of precious ornaments and vases.

Treasure: For the first thousand years of the tomb's existence, pilgrims and mortal petitioners regularly visited the upper levels to offer prayers and make donations. Custodians regularly transferred these votive offerings down here for safekeeping when an offering area became too crowded. Later in the shrine's occupation, the caretakers had to sell off some of the treasures here to maintain the site. The remaining treasures include 24 scarabs and amulets delicately carved from semiprecious stone worth 50 gp each, a bronze and carnelian necklace with bottle-shaped beads worth 750 gp, seven wax-sealed pots of cosmetics (all ruined and worthless), a foot-tall faience lion statue inset with topaz eyes worth 1,200 gp, a pair of bull's horns carved with a processional scene worth 150 gp, a delicate cylix carved from a single piece of alabaster worth 800 gp, assorted Osirian coinage worth 457 gp, assorted ancient Taldan coinage worth 552 gp, and assorted dwarven coinage worth 120 gp.

Development: Removing any of these treasures from the area activates the gold golem in area A8.

A11. Servants' Tomb (CR 14)

This roughly rectangular room contains numerous inset stone shelves that host dozens of ceramic, stone, and wooden figures. The northwest wall bears a painted funeral procession with more than one hundred figures that proceed northeast.

Until the second dynasty, by which point Taldor had strongly cemented its own artistic and funerary identity, many burials borrowed from Osirion, which was near the height of its power. The statues here are ushabtis, ritual figurines said to serve the deceased in the afterlife. Although most of the figures depict humans, elves, and dwarves, there are also several domesticated animals and wild beasts. The painted scene shows Taldaris's body being prepared for burial, followed by Taldaris's spirit receiving blessings from both Abadar and Pharasma.

The scene then shows nearly a hundred figures carrying his casket and a host of grave goods to the northeast.

Creatures: Most of the ushabtis are mundane, but two house immortal spirits sworn to protect the First Emperor. These can sense when a creature moves their respective statues, and they watch intently for anyone entering this area who does not bear the holy symbol of Abadar or Pharasma. Unlike the foo lions in area A9, these beings are not talkative; they begin fighting nearly as soon as they emerge from along the southeastern wall, condemning any intruders in Celestial.

SHABTI TOMB WARDENS (2)

CR 12

XP 19,200 each

Shabti oracle 13 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 227, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 42)

LN Medium outsider (native)

Init +7; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 22 (+8 armor, +3 Dex, +4 natural)
hp 140 each (13d8+78)

Fort +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities immune to undeath, resist level drain

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *ghost touch halberd* +20/+15/+10 (1d10+8/19-20/x3)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +18)

1/day—*suggestion* (DC 18)

Oracle Spells Known (CL 13th; concentration +18)

6th (4/day)—*blade barrier* (DC 21), *mass cure moderate wounds*, *heal*, *greater heroism*

5th (7/day)—*mass cure light wounds*, *major curse*^{UM} (DC 21), *slay living* (DC 21), *telekinesis* (DC 20), *wall of stone*

4th (7/day)—*cure critical wounds*, *death ward*, *dismissal* (DC 19), *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *spiritual ally*^{APG}

3rd (7/day)—*cure serious wounds*, *daylight*, *dispel magic*, *heroism*, *invisibility purge*, *meld into stone*

2nd (7/day)—*align weapon*, *cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (DC 17), *make whole*, *resist energy*, *lesser restoration*, *spiritual weapon*

1st (8/day)—*command* (DC 16), *comprehend languages*, *cure light wounds*, *detect undead*, *remove fear*, *shield of faith*, *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 16), *create water*, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*, *read magic*, *stabilize*

Mystery Ancestor

TACTICS

Before Combat When a tomb warden emerges, it does so having already summoned its ancestral weapon and activated its spirit of the warrior and spirit shield abilities.

During Combat The tomb warden uses its first turn to cast combat enhancing spells such as *quickened shield of*

faith and *greater heroism*. It then uses a combination of weapon attacks and harmful spells to dispatch intruders.

Morale The tomb wardens fight to the death.

Base Statistics When not under the effects of spirit of the warrior and spirit shield, the tomb warden's statistics are **Init** +5; **AC** 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; **hp** 114;

Fort +8, **Ref** +7; **Melee** +1 *ghost touch halberd* +14/+9 (1d10+5/×3); **BAB** +9, **CMB** +12, **CMD** 23.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 17, **Con** 18, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 27

Feats Improved Critical (halberd), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (necromancy), Toughness, Weapon Focus (halberd)

Skills Diplomacy +13, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +15

Languages Celestial

SQ immortal, oracle's curse (clouded vision), past-life knowledge, revelations (ancestral weapon^{UM}, phantom touch^{UM}, spirit of the warrior^{UM}, spirit shield^{UM}), shattered soul

Combat Gear *bracelet of second chances*^{UE} (only one warden); **Other Gear** *cloak of resistance* +2, *headband of alluring charisma* +2

Treasure: Most of the figurines are mundane, with most of the collection worth 250 gp to a collector. However, a pair of lions is magical, functioning in most ways as *golden lions figurines of wondrous power*. When activating the figurines, though, the user can speak a special command word to transform the statues into a single dire lion with two heads and a golden key pattern on its chest (functions as a dire lion with two bite attacks and a +2 bonus on Perception checks). The figurines can only become this two-headed lion three times before they lose all their magical properties.

Development: The painted procession doesn't just dramatize Taldaris's funeral; it also provides some contextual clues that help viewers understand any ritual that would call upon the First Emperor's spirit. A PC can identify and decipher these hidden pointers with a successful DC 20 Appraise, Craft (painting), or Knowledge (arcana or religion) check. Doing so provides a +5 circumstance bonus on either the Knowledge (religion) or Spellcraft check when performing the ritual in area **A13**.

A12. The Heavens Below (CR 14)

This elliptical room has a magnificent domed ceiling painted to resemble the night sky with scores of different constellations.

The night sky depicted above contains many of the stars visible above Taldor in spring. However, by examining these stars and succeeding at a DC 20 Knowledge (geography or nature) check, a PC can

identify several constellations that are out of place: two different humanoids, a bird, and a serpentine creature, with one of the humanoids featured prominently at the dome's peak. With a successful DC 25 Craft (painting) or Knowledge (arcana or planes) check, a PC can identify that the artistic style was one used from 2350–2800 AR to portray the endless space of the Astral Plane, suggesting these constellations might instead represent legendary spirits (*Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 33).

Trap: Those entering the room and remaining there for more than 1 round trigger the trap here. Once activated, the trap flings affected creatures toward the night sky (*reverse gravity*). Simultaneously, the stars seem to emerge from the painting and begin swirling in a dangerous field of blazing light (*blade barrier*). Both spells function at CL 15th, but the *reverse gravity* effect only lasts for 5 rounds, likely dropping victims back through the *blade barrier*. However, anyone who purposefully looks away from the starry dome has a 50% chance to ignore the *reverse gravity* effect, much like averting one's eyes from a gaze attack.

CELESTIAL LURE TRAP

CR 14

Type magic; **Perception** DC 34; **Disable Device** DC 34

EFFECTS

Trigger location (alarm); **Duration** varies; **Reset** automatic (1 hour)

Effect spell effects (heightened *reverse gravity*, Reflex DC 23 negates; *blade barrier*, 15d6 damage, Reflex DC 19 half)

A13. The Inner Tomb (CR varies; see text)

Several rounded steps lead up to a low platform to the east, upon which sits a large stone sarcophagus draped with a fur-trimmed cape. Low stone benches and shelves support a wealth of grave goods, many brittle with age. Large chunks of plaster have fallen from the ceiling, leaving an uneven coating of white dust across the floor. Where the ceiling's plaster has survived are painted messages in a variety of languages.

This chamber houses the remains and surviving grave goods of First Emperor Taldaris. Although the tomb as a whole weathered the earthquake of 2920 fairly well, the event shook free many of the benedictions and testimonials painted on the ceiling's plaster. As was traditional at the time, these were messages for whichever supernatural entity arrived to escort the deceased to the River of Souls and Pharasma's judgment.

When the PCs first arrive in this area, they have some time to explore before beginning other encounters in this area (see *Valkyrie's Homecoming* on page 18 and *Contacting Taldaris* on page 19). Also, if the PCs have not already provoked the gold golem's ire in area **A8**, their recovering the treasures here would do so before beginning the other encounters.

REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part I: Attaining the Mantle

Part 2: The Burden of Truth

Part 3: Into Duskfathom

NPC Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines of Taldor

Bestiary

Treasure: The grave goods are numerous—including a bow, food, wine, fine oils, clothing on crumbling mannequins, lamps, a disassembled bed, and more—but only a few retain any worth. Among the treasures the PCs can recover are a carved jadeite rolling seal worth 200 gp, an amethyst-studded golden strigil worth 500 gp, an electrum trumpet inscribed with prancing gazelles worth 800 gp, a brass perfume pot shaped like a hedgehog worth 125 gp, a gold and lacquer scroll case encircled by a lapis serpent worth 1,250 gp, and a curved *wand of repel vermin* (6 charges) carved from hippo ivory.

The stone sarcophagus contains an inner coffin made of bronze. Inside this lie the disintegrating bones of Taldaris, a few surviving scraps of his funerary clothing, an assortment of torques and rings worth 2,000 gp, and a emerald carved into a prosthetic molar worth 2,100 gp. Finally, the cape atop the sarcophagus is the fabled *Mantle of Kings*, a fine garment of golden linen trimmed with gold-hued animal hair. The mantle's magic is limited to preservative enchantments, and without proper benediction and reactivation, it has no other powers.

Valkyrie's Homecoming (CR 14)

Once the PCs have had at least a few minutes to explore area **A13** and study its contents, another group arrives in search of Taldaris's tomb.

Creatures: Death claimed each of Taldaris's companions eventually, including his general Ohalia. Pharasma sent her soul to the Maelstrom, where her shapeless petitioner form eventually willed itself into a valkyrie. She retains only fragmented memories of her mortal life, mostly consisting of her leading victorious armies alongside Taldaris. For most of the past millennia she's traveled the planes to watch over battlefields and escort noble souls to the afterlife.

This is only her second appearance in Taldor since death, her first having occurred only a few years after her transformation into a valkyrie to seek closure and recover the horn interred in the tomb. She has only returned now after hearing her liege's desperate call for help as he was being abducted. Unfortunately, she's not entirely certain where his soul ended up after death, and with little more information, she's gathered *einherjar* to accompany her back to the tomb. With so much of the landscape changed and the tomb completely buried, though, she's struggled to find the site. Only after the PCs excavated the entrance has she finally found her way here. Now her intention is to learn whether the First Emperor's distress came from someone disturbing his remains.

The PCs have some explaining to do, for at first glance they look like looters. Though the *einherji* are itching for a fight, Ohalia would rather have answers. If the PCs are slow to talk, Ohalia introduces herself, which might help the PCs recognize her from her sarcophagus in area **A7** (she even has a similar breastplate, spear, horn, and helm to the ones she had in life). The valkyrie's disposition toward the PCs depends on what she finds as she follows in their footsteps. Having anyone breaking into the tomb is worrisome, making her starting attitude unfriendly. The DC of any Diplomacy check to improve her attitude increases by 2 for each of the following: the PCs looted one or more of the sarcophagi in area **A7**, the PCs fought the gold golem from area **A8**, the



PCs killed one or both foo lions in area **A9**, the PCs are visibly carrying treasures from the tomb worth at least 5,000 gp, the PCs have opened Taldaris's sarcophagus, or the PCs caused significant property damage in the tomb (e.g. breaking columns, defacing artwork, or excessive use of damaging area spells).

If attacked, the outsiders fight back. If the PCs call for a truce to withdraw or resume discussion, the now hostile Ohalia might give the PCs a brief reprieve.

EINHERJAR (2) CR 10

9,600 XP each

hp 123 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 84)

TACTICS

During Combat The einherjar clash with melee threats after casting *divine favor*.

Morale The einherjar fight to the death or until commanded to stop by Ohalia.

OHALIA CR 12

19,200 XP

Valkyrie (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 277)

hp 168

TACTICS

During Combat Ohalia uses her Mobility to close in on spellcasters and ranged threats. She monitors the flow of combat and her foes' valor, and if an especially brave enemy dies, she may disengage from her current enemy, cast *breath of life* on the fallen combatant, kick his weapon away, and urge him to fight again in later battles.

Morale Ohalia fights until reduced to 25 hit points, at which point she offers to surrender. If refused a truce, she fights until slain.

Development: If the PCs improve her attitude to indifferent (DC 26) and explain their purpose for being here, she commands the einherji to stand down. The trio of outsiders insists on remaining nearby as the PCs conclude their business, including the ritual (see *Contacting Taldaris* below). If the PCs improve her attitude to friendly (DC 31), Ohalia is willing to assist the PCs in their ritual and add her voice to theirs in contacting Taldaris; she also gives them Ohalia's horn (see sidebar). If she surrenders, Ohalia asks that she be allowed to observe the PCs' actions without interference and sends away any surviving einherjar. She leaves if ordered to do so, but not before repeating her request and offering her magical horn as recompense.

Story Award: If the PCs deal with Ohalia without violence, award the XP as if they defeated her and her einherji in combat.

CONTACTING TALDARIS

The ritual of Imperial Augury dates back to the empire's third century, and as a result, the motions, verses, and

OHALIA'S HORN

Infused both with mortal magic and a true valkyrie's blessing, this horn can summon mighty warriors.

OHALIA'S HORN		PRICE
		55,000 GP
SLOT none	CL 15th	WEIGHT 2 lbs.
AURA strong conjuration		



The bell of this slightly curved horn resembles the head of a roaring lioness. The horn functions in many ways like a *horn of valhalla*, but while held in one hand, the wielder gains the benefits of *deathwatch*. Once per year when the wielder sounds the horn, she can summon one sleipnir (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 248) with a saddle for 1 hour in place of summoning the barbarians. The sleipnir willingly serves as a mount or combatant.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS	COST 27,500 GP
Craft Wondrous Item, <i>deathwatch</i> , <i>summon monster VIII</i>	

reagents are quite difficult to translate or acquire; some movements reference long-extinct folk dances, once-common words are now baroquely incomprehensible, and at least one form of incense required comes from a now-extinct tree. Lady Morilla provided the PCs the best equivalents that her agents could provide on short notice, but that leaves some room for interpretation on the PCs' part.

The result is an imperfect ritual represented by skill check DCs that are 5 higher than normal. Fortunately, the PCs can gain numerous bonuses based on what they've uncovered in other parts of the tomb.

- By burning the incense found in area **A3**, the PCs can reduce the skill check DCs by 1.
- By successfully reviewing the tome's contents from area **A5**, the PCs can reduce the skill check DCs by 1.
- By identifying the mural details in area **A6**, a PC can gain a +5 circumstance bonus on either the Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (nobility) check.
- By identifying the mural details in area **A11**, a PC can gain a +5 circumstance bonus on either the Knowledge (religion) or Spellcraft check.
- By recruiting Ohalia's aid, a PC gains a +5 insight bonus on any one of the ritual's skill checks.

IMPERIAL AUGURY

School conjuration (summoning); Level 5

Casting Time 50 minutes

Components V, S, M (a combination of rare candles, incense, and oils worth 500 gp), SC (up to 4)

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

Skill Checks Knowledge (history) DC 34, 1 success; Knowledge (nobility) DC 34, 1 success; Knowledge (religion) DC 34, 1 success; Spellcraft DC 34, 2 successes

Range touch

Duration 1 hour

Saving Throw none; **SR** no (harmless, object)

Backlash The primary caster is exhausted.

Failure The primary caster loses the esteem of his colleagues, losing 1d2 facet ranks from his highest-ranked facet. This also causes twice as many of his agents to abandon his cause.

EFFECT

The primary caster begins by placing the *Mantle of Kings* atop Taldaris's sarcophagus. She then anoints three concentric semicircles around the sarcophagus, arraying seven candles along each of the semicircles, and then lighting the incense in a censor. While gently swinging the lit censor, the primary caster then recounts the deeds of First Emperor Taldaris and performs a series of measured steps that retrace his army's progress across the then-fractured city-states of the Inner Sea. Upon completion, an apparition of Taldaris appears, channeling his spirit from the Great Beyond to converse with those in attendance, though he focuses on addressing the primary caster's questions. The conjured spirit possesses Taldaris's judgment and charisma, but not all of his memories; he is more a counselor than a historical resource.

In addition to providing conversation, the apparition can provide any two of the following benefits at the primary caster's request:

- Provide military advice for an upcoming military engagement, treating all of the casters as though they had 5 additional ranks of Profession (soldier) when serving as commanders in mass combat for the next week (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Campaign* 239–240).
- Provide political insights that grant the primary caster a +4 insight bonus on one check attempted during the caster's next two persona phases. Any secondary casters gain a +2 insight bonus on one check during their next two persona phases.
- Grant Taldaris's blessing upon one relic that has strong ties to Taldor (including any relic found in earlier volumes of *War for the Crown*). The selected relic gains additional abilities as though its wielder had experienced a triumph, though this triumph cannot activate either of a relic's last two abilities (such as the fourth or fifth triumphs for *Dignity's Barb*). In effect, this allows a PC to make up for missing an earlier triumph in the campaign. Although it is not a relic usable by the PCs, the *Mantle of Kings* is a valid target for this benefit.

After providing these benefits and advice, Taldaris's spirit bids any observers farewell and fades away. The First Emperor strongly prefers that others lead by example and not rely on him, so he is loath to answer this ritual more than once per decade; performing it again increases the skill check DCs by 10, minus 1 for every year that has passed since it was last performed successfully. Performing the ritual a third time in a decade automatically fails.

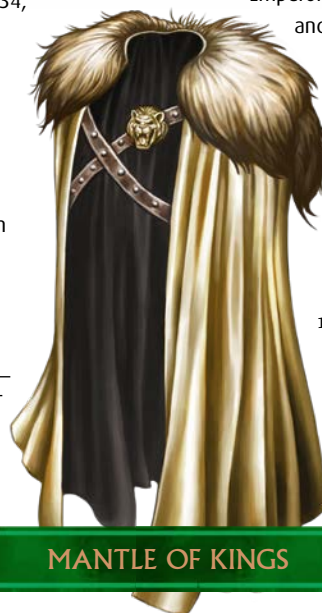
Development: Upon concluding the ritual, the PCs experience an unexpected series of visions as the ritual attempts to contact Taldaris, only to encounter interference from his captors in Duskfathom. Ultimately, in an attempt to reconcile these elements, the ritual shows the PCs images tied to Taldaris's disappearance and then concludes the conjuration—not drawing Taldaris to the PCs, but bringing the

PCs and the *Mantle of Kings* (and Ohalia, if present) to Taldaris's last known location as if they had just willingly cast *plane shift*.

The lights dim then fade into darkness, obscuring the tomb. The faint sound of plate armor shifting clacks nearby, followed by a deep voice whispering, "A visitor? I do not know how you are here, but it is not safe. You can do no good here—only attract harm." As the voice continues, a window seems to open into a dimly lit cell, blurry as if looking through a sleepy eye. Inside, a creature that seems as much machine as human sits on the ground and looks back with steely, featureless eyes. "I cannot give what you seek, only help you escape. Send a message to those who—" The speaker ceases abruptly, and the window snaps closed, only to reopen as a glaring yellow eye. Its pupil darts about, then more than a dozen similar eyes seem to snap open in all directions.

A hissing, feminine voice calls out in alarm. "Overseer! Something has slipped through. Meddlers. Schemers. Let us see who intrudes." A flabby, purple hand with a yellow eye in its palm reaches out of the darkness but falls short before it can grab hold. The speaker cries out in pain, the hand recoils, the eyes grow distant, and different scenes appear briefly as a wind whips up in all directions.

First the distant eyes briefly rearrange themselves into a starry constellation of a person, but these then slide about like pearls on a dark cloth before being poured into a bag. The bag appears at the belt of a man, featureless but for the spear he carries and the faintly glowing script that covers his body. He gazes down from a rooftop at the machine man from earlier before diving down into a dark pool. The pool's ripples become the contents of a mug held in a skeleton's hands as it blows to cool the liquid. A clatter distracts it, and



MANTLE OF KINGS

it gazes over to see a four-pointed crown toppled on the ground. As the skeleton crouches down for a closer look, the four points resolve into obelisks in a vast cemetery. The vision's perspective zooms toward a blank gravestone whose rocky texture fades to parchment that's folded upon itself several times, sealed with a glob of wax, and slipped through the mail slot in a wooden door. It lands inside a wooden-floored home with the letter's seal facing up, the wax imprinted with a watchful eye. The machine man stoops to pick it up, idly rubbing the base of his hand where a ring might rest. Then the machine man collapses, a spear in his leg and the tattooed figure visible just inside a nearby room. In a blink, both figures are gone, but at the same time the room feels all the more real.

It may take the PCs a moment to realize when their visions have ended and their own faculties have returned. However, the PCs (and Ohalia, if present) find themselves no longer in Taldaris's tomb but in his home in Axis. Many of these visions are unlikely to make sense to the PCs at this time, and they are instead intended to provide numerous leads to follow during Part 2—leads too ephemeral for the proper authorities to investigate.

Story Award: For exploring the Tomb of the First Emperor and performing the Imperial Augury, award the PCs 40,000 XP.

PART 2: THE BURDEN OF TRUTH

In attempting to summon the imprisoned Taldaris, the Imperial Augury ultimately pulls the PCs to the nearest and most relevant site associated with the First Emperor: his home in Axis. Unfortunately, he isn't home, and there are instead intruders destroying any last evidence of his abduction. The Secret Shade moved to kidnap the inevitable Taldaris several weeks ago but has been careful to arrange circumstances so he still appears to be tending his duties, preventing Axis's security forces from investigating.

B. TALDARIS'S HOME

As both a petitioner and as an inevitable, Taldaris maintained this two-story stone home, though he stayed here far less often upon transforming into an impariut. Broad windows let ample light into most rooms. Except where noted, the floors are made of smoothed hardwood planks, and the rooms are 15 feet tall.

If the PCs dealt with Ohalia peacefully, she is brought to Taldaris's home alongside the mortals. Her spells in particular may prove invaluable if the PCs have not rested after facing the tomb.

B1. Parlor (CR 13)

The PCs appear in this room after their vision concludes.

This parlor has broad windows that look over a flower garden and neighboring homes in a carefully manicured community. A large harp and several chairs stand about the room.

Creature: In addition to blackmailing citizens to serve as agents, Norgorber's faithful regularly find ways to subvert the Eternal City's constructs. The clockwork golem that stands in the middle of this room sometimes travels with undercover operatives to lend the appearance of authority. It's also programmed to attack any intruders.

ADVANCED CLOCKWORK GOLEM

CR 13

XP 25,600

hp 118 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 137)

Treasure: An artful, framed display of wands from the mortal world includes a *wand of cure moderate wounds* (22 charges), a *wand of enshroud thoughts*^{OA} (21 charges), a *wand of know direction* (38 charges), and a *wand of protection from energy* (3 charges).

B2. Entry Hall

This broad hallway connects all of the ground floor's rooms. The front door is made of aging wood with a brass mail slot about two feet off the ground. The door shows no sign of having been forced open. This is the same hallway the PCs saw in their vision.

B3. Formal Room (CR 10)

A rectangular table with legs carved like rearing lions stands in the middle of this room. The walls bear delicate painted designs of blue, green, and gold. A glass-fronted cabinet contains numerous elegant plates and goblets.

Taldaris's parlor and library sufficed for most of his needs. When entertaining guests, hosting a dinner, or receiving an important person, though, he preferred to use this room.

Creatures: The gnome Nibs (see area B6) ordered the pair of soul eaters here to search for valuables and any surviving evidence of Taldaris's abduction. These tasks bore the soul eaters, which have spent the time plotting the gnome's demise and breaking tableware. If they hear combat nearby, they spy on the fight and then maneuver to attack several rounds later if the PCs survived.

ADVANCED SOUL EATERS (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 104 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 254)

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

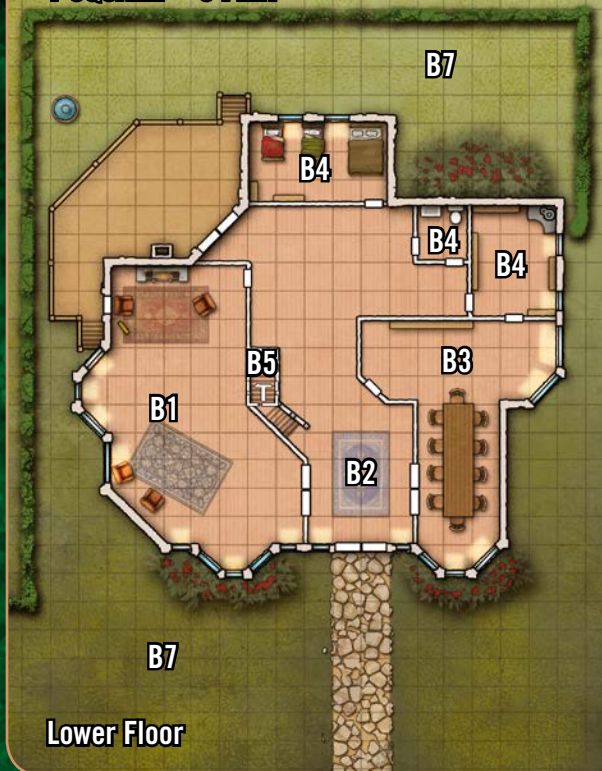
Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

B. TALDARIS'S HOME 1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Treasure: Only half of the gold-embossed porcelain dishes survive the soul eaters' boredom, worth 300 gp all together. If magically repaired, the collection would be worth 750 gp.

B4. Visitor Amenities (CR 8)

As an outsider, Taldaris had no need to eat or sleep. However, he maintained a small kitchen, water closet, and bedroom to accommodate guests with mortal metabolisms.

Creature: An additional soul eater searches these rooms. Like the soul eaters in area B3, it might attack the PCs in other rooms, though it prefers to slip out of the house and attack by crashing through a window.

ADVANCED SOUL EATER **CR 8**
XP 4,800
hp 104 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 254)

B5. Stairs (CR 13)

These stairs lead up to the library on the second floor.

Trap: Even when on a mission to remove evidence, Nibs struggles not to leave a lethal calling card. Any creature other than the soul eaters or her who enters the square at the top of the stairs summons a rain of writhing maggots that fall on the marked area. These hungrily

chew any creatures' flesh and wriggle into victims' ears, mouths, and nostrils, though a victim can keep the vermin from gaining a purchase with a successful DC 22 Reflex save. After 1 round, the maggots screech and explode into poisonous gas, which bypasses defenses such as *life bubble*^{APG} for any creatures that failed the Reflex save.

NIGHTMARE WRIGGLERS TRAP **CR 13**
XP 25,600
Type magic; **Perception** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 25
EFFECTS
Trigger location; **Reset** none
Effect swarm damage (5d6) and poison gas (concentrated *nightmare vapor*, Fortitude DC 22); never miss; multiple targets (all targets in the marked area)

B6. Library (CR 14)

Integrated shelves line most of this room, filled with books of all kinds. Tall windows open to the north, providing a stunning view of Axis's distant capital district.

This spacious library houses Taldaris's many books, detailed in the Treasure section below. It has seen considerably less use since he became an inevitable,

though he kept it tidy. Now that he's gone, dust has begun accumulating in wispy heaps.

Creatures: The gnome Nibs was always a voracious reader. In the Chelish city of Vyr, the library was her playground, and she reveled in reading over others' shoulders as much as choosing a book for herself. Her cunning earned her the attention of Norgorberite operatives who offered to buy whatever secrets she overheard, and with each year she became more daring and ruthless in what she'd do to earn her new employers' approval. As with many spies, she was eventually caught by equally merciless rogues who bound her behind the least visited shelves. As she slowly starved, her sinister willpower attracted bookworms from all across the library to consume and replace her body—a wretched sign of approval from the Reaper of Reputation.

Nibs is a loose cannon among Norgorber's faithful, who prefer giving her destructive missions far from their base of operations to avert collateral damage. She's currently the lead "cleaner" for her cell, tasked with removing all evidence of crimes from a scene. All was going well until she reached the library, and she's spent several days just nibbling her way through Taldaris's books, humming to herself, and maintaining the illusion that someone still lives here.

The gnome isn't quite alone. A floating eyeball that belongs to the hyakume Hamal Kai (see page 50) lurks nearby, observing Nibs's dubious progress. When combat begins, it wriggles its way among her verminous body and hides there. If it seems Nibs will be captured and questioned, Hamal Kai activates her drain memory ability to protect the conspiracy's secrets.

NIBS

CR 14

XP 38,400

Female gnome worm that walks druid (urban druid) 13

(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 286, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 101)

NE Small vermin (augmented humanoid, gnome)

Init +8; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +31

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 20, flat-footed 20 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +5 insight, +1 size)

hp 153 (13d8+91); fast healing 14

Fort +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15; +2 vs. illusions, divinations, and enchantment effects

Defensive Abilities defensive training, worm that walks traits; **DR** 15/—; **Immune** charm, compulsion, critical hits, disease, flanking, paralysis, poison, sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee slam +14 (1d4 plus grab)

Special Attacks disincorporate, grab (Medium), hatred, squirming embrace, tenacious, warding rune (6 rounds, DC 21), wild shape 3/day

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +18) 8/day—blast rune (1d6+6 energy damage, 13 rounds)

Gnome Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +13) 1/day—*dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *prestidigitation*, *speak with animals*

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 13th; concentration +18)

7th—*creeping doom* (DC 23), *lesser planar binding*^o

6th—*fire seeds*, *guards and wards*^o, *wall of stone*

5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 20), *fire snake*^{APG} (DC 20), *insect plague*, *lesser planar binding*^o (DC 21), *wall of thorns*

4th—*air walk*, *dimensional anchor*^o, *dispel magic*, *flame strike* (DC 19), *freedom of movement*, *rusting grasp*

3rd—*burrow*^{UM} (DC 18), *glyph of warding*^o, *greater magic fang*, *meld into stone*, *poison* (2, DC 18)



NIBS

REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part I: Attaining the Mantle

Part 2: The Burden of Truth

Part 3: Into Duskfathom

NPC Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines of Taldor

Bestiary

2nd—*aspect of the bear*^{APG}, *barkskin*, *bull's strength*, *fog cloud*, *resist energy*, *secret page*^D
 1st—*arcane lock*^D, *decompose corpse*^{UM} (DC 16), *feather step*^{APG} (DC 16), *longstrider*, *pass without trace*, *produce flame*, *ray of sickening*^{UM} (DC 16)
 0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *purify food and drink* (DC 15), *read magic*, *spark*^{APG} (DC 15)
D Domain spell; **Domain** Rune (Wards^{APG} subdomain)

TACTICS

Before Combat When Nibs first hears trouble, she casts *barkskin*, *burrow*, *freedom of movement*, *greater magic fang*, *pass without trace*, and *resist energy* (fire) on herself. She then lays a blast rune just north of the stairwell door and another four blast runes throughout the room.

During Combat Nibs activates her warding rune on the first creature that triggers a blast rune. She delights in flooding the stairs with vermin, such as with *creeping doom* and *insect plague*. Otherwise she uses her spells to blast foes and grabs hold of spellcasters to consume their scrolls.

Morale If reduced to 40 hit points or clearly outclassed, Nibs leaps out the window and tries to burrow to safety.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +8 (+16 grapple); **CMD** 31

Feats Combat Casting, Diehard^B, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Natural Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (conjuraton), Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Climb +10, Diplomacy +2, Knowledge (history, local, nature) +8, Perception +31, Profession (librarian) +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +16, Stealth +20, Survival +13; **Racial Modifiers** +10 Perception, +2 Profession (librarian), +8 Sense Motive, +8 Stealth

Languages Common, Druidic, Gnome, Sylvan

SQ a thousand faces, lorekeeper, nature sense, resist temptation, wild empathy +13

Gear +2 *leather armor*, *belt of mighty constitution* +2, *cloak of resistance* +2, *headband of inspired wisdom* +2, sapphire worth 1,000 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ravenous Appetite (Ex) Nibs can consume leather, paper, parchment, and wood at a phenomenal rate. Her natural attacks and swarm damage ignore the first 5 points of hardness on such materials. Each round she deals swarm damage to a creature, she can attempt a special grapple combat maneuver against that creature as a free action. If successful, she deals her swarm damage to one book, scroll, or similar object in that creature's possession, selected at random.

Treasure: Most of the books here are old biographies of rulers from at least four different planes and 27 different planets, including Golarion. Many are heavily annotated with very precise handwriting, noting likely signs of the authors' bias or important

moral lessons to remember. One volume is a tome of *leadership and influence* +2, again with copious notes in the columns. Finally, there are five notebooks that record Taldaris's exhaustive research as a petitioner to decipher the secrets written on his body—the great test most petitioners must over come before becoming inevitables or axiomites. A PC who spends at least an hour paging through these notes observes that Taldaris struggled to let go of his empire and move on after death. However, the rise of Aroden's faith seems to have convinced him that his time had passed, and he made his final breakthrough shortly afterward.

Development: If the PCs flee or do not confront Nibs, she takes their arrival as a sign that she needs to finish her job quickly. Over the next hour she demolishes the contents of the library and then flees to Duskfathom. If she flees from combat, she reports back to Duskfathom and avoids the PCs further until they find her in area **D2**.

If this is the last encounter, give the PCs a moment to breath before moving to The Proper Authorities below.

B7. Gardens

Taldaris maintained immaculate gardens as a petitioner, though the flowers and shrubs grew slightly unruly after he became an inevitable. However, on Axis even the untended weeds grow in a straight and orderly fashion.

THE PROPER AUTHORITIES

Shortly after the PCs finish exploring Taldaris's old home—or earlier if they make an exceptional ruckus—the detective **Lieutenant Fanalyx** (LN female advanced axiomite; see page 56) arrives on the scene accompanied by a pair of zelekhts (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 167). Local police divinations picked up the powerful signature of the ritual that brought the PCs here, and likely neighbors' complaints about any obvious combats only strengthened Fanalyx's suspicions that something dangerous transpired in the respected Taldaris home. She and her inevitable officers fan out to surround the building before she raps on the front door, waits a moment for a response, announces her intention to enter, then makes her way inside.

By this point Taldaris's home has hosted several combats, muddling much of the spoor and evidence that might have indicated that inevitable's abduction. Instead, the axiomite finds a gaggle of off-world adventurers under suspicious circumstances. Fanalyx insists on taking written statements from the PCs about why they're trespassing here and what they did upon entering this private property. She remains professionally skeptical of any dramatic claims, such as the PCs having been summoned here by Taldaris, Taldaris having been abducted, or any talk of conspiracies. In the event that Ohalia is present, Fanalyx takes special care in interviewing the valkyrie,

who chafes under the questions. Left to their own devices, the two grow increasingly antagonistic and passive aggressive as their lawful and chaotic natures clash, particularly since Ohalia insists the axiomite lacks any authority.

The results of the PCs' testimony is mixed. On one hand, there's not enough evidence to suggest that the PCs are here or caused damage with malicious intent, and beyond documenting the incident and advising the PCs to formally register with immigration authorities, she's willing to let them go with only a warning—unless the PCs caused exemplary property damage, in which case she also fines them 100–1,000 gp. On the other hand, most of the PCs evidence (a valkyrie's hunch, a vision, and fighting with shadowy interlopers) is highly suspect. Fanalix intends to finish inspecting the house and then file her report, but she isn't optimistic about this potential case becoming the precinct's top priority. Even so, she recommends the PCs rent lodging and spend the next day in the Sayashto district, after which they can meet with her at the police station. This provides the PCs an opportunity to recover, explore some of Axis, and shop for new equipment as needed. More information about Sayashto appears in a supplemental article on page 62.

As promised, Fanalix is ready to meet with the PCs the following day. All is as she predicted, and she calls the PCs into her office to explain the situation and go over her preliminary findings.

"There's no sign of Taldaris," states Lieutenant Fanalix with finality as she slides a folder across her desk. "Preliminary divinations turned up several different results that were ultimately inconclusive, including the most consistent result that he doesn't exist at all—at least not any more. That's more common for petitioners than it is for inevitables, but it happens under four main circumstances." She begins ticking fingers. "First, death scatters the outsider's essence back into Axis and destroys the creature's identity. The same is true for dissolution, the second option, which is when an outsider permanently retires. The latter's pretty common here; Sayashto's famous for its ritual funerary professionals. Third, the alleged victim might be in a shielded area that thwarts divinations. Fourth, he could have gone rogue and shielded his identity. Rogue inevitables are very rare, but they happen. If that's the case, expect your friend to be destroyed, not refurbished.

"That means there are a few possibilities. Either Taldaris doesn't want to be found, he was sequestered somewhere heavily shielded, he died on his own, or this has become a murder case." The axiomite leans back for a moment before continuing. "That's a lot of uncertainties, which means my superiors assigned this a fairly low priority. Worse, our precinct's understaffed right now thanks to Maelstromer sabotage in Districts Eighty-Five, One-Forty-One, and Six-

DIVINATIONS

There's a good possibility that the PCs can cast or commission numerous divination spells. However, Taldaris is currently in Duskfathom, which has an equal chance of hiding him entirely as *mind blank* or providing a false reading as *misdirection* (Will DC 25 to instead receive no result) thanks to Norgorber's secretive influence. PCs who repeatedly try to find Taldaris and fail can attempt a DC 35 Knowledge check to identify that such intervention would require incredibly powerful magic, at least on par with a demigod. That said, the PCs could use divination spells to assist directly in the investigation in Sayashto. The key is to balance providing good information to reward the PCs' resourcefulness without negating the investigation altogether.

Sixty-One. If you want to go through the system, expect to wait for results.

"Thing is that I think there's more to this case; the pieces just don't add up. I just don't have the capacity to investigate it full-time. There's not enough evidence to warrant more resources, and we lack the personal effects to run a proper divination regimen." She pulls out a short stack of paperwork and sets it on the desk. "Fortunately, most districts allow recourse like this. Anyone who feels inadequately served by law enforcement can petition for a legal pursuit visa—basically a writ allowing someone in good standing to investigate a grievance independently. It's pretty rare, but I think you're onto something important."

So long as she isn't constantly seeing warning signs in the PCs' behavior, Lieutenant Fanalix issues the PCs one legal pursuit visa. This document identifies the PCs as concerned entities investigating a grievance for later arbitration by a district representative. It does not provide the PCs any special immunity in performing criminal acts, nor does it serve as a universal warrant allowing the PCs to enter any building. That said, the law-abiding people of Sayashto largely respect this document and cooperate with the PCs if asked politely and provided a reason. This paperwork can also soothe players' consciences about performing detective work in the cosmos's most lawful realm. All that the axiomite asks in return is that the PCs behave respectfully and carefully document their findings to provide a more reliable record.

Furthermore, Fanalix can provide the PCs some leads based on imagery they report about their vision, which can help focus the players or provide clues during the investigation.

The Constellation: Fanalix recommends tracking down a local astronomer. With a little research she recommends finding Nabil, a scholar believed to live

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom


NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary



somewhere in Sayashto. See the encounter Unsanctioned Immortality on page 31.

The Ring: Fanalix didn't find any ring on Taldaris's premises, but her few interviews with neighbors found that Taldaris bequeathed the ring to Lord Squire Saip, an influential leader of the district's resident monkeys. A token with such personal significance could help divinations pinpoint Taldaris. See the encounter The Crowntop Coup on page 32.

The Skeleton: The undead are very rare in Axis and practically unheard of in Sayashto, so Fanalix believes the PCs might instead ask around about non-undead entities who resemble skeletons. See the encounter To Drink with Death on page 30.

The Script-Covered Man: Unfortunately, this description matches most petitioners on Axis, and these represent over half the district's population. However, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (planes) check can identify that the figure's markings included two forms of text: that which was part of the petitioner upon creation and text that someone added afterward. This figure is the petitioner Thousand Names, and the PCs confront him directly only in Part 3.

The Cemetery: Fanalix notes that Sayashto has one of the few cemeteries in this quadrant, and she can provide directions. See the encounter Inspecting the Graves on page 37.

The Letter: Beyond the neighbors whom she's already interviewed with few results, Fanalix recommends the PCs could inquire about Taldaris at the post office. The mail carriers should have record of whether Taldaris received any mail bearing the watchful eye wax seal. See the encounter Mail Fraud on page 39.

Of course, if the PCs withheld information from Fanalix earlier, she may not have performed preliminary investigations on some of the leads above or might not even intend to meet with the PCs at all. The PCs are entirely at liberty to perform their own investigation without coordinating with Sayashto's legal authorities. However, without this support, the PCs take a -2 penalty on Charisma-based skill checks to influence any law-abiding citizens to cooperate in the investigation, and NPCs at some sites (such as Post Station #7) might not let the PCs into restricted areas without a successful DC 32 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check. Furthermore, the PCs don't have access to any supplies Fanalix can provide. However, if at any time the PCs want to coordinate with her, they can do so and secure the visa without significant trouble.

Once the PCs are ready to begin their investigation, Fanalix voices one more possibility.

"The timing here is too convenient. The only local group that could overturn my superiors and assign this case more resources is the district council, and one of the members just

retired suddenly—too suddenly. Former Councilor Eopal's been holed up ever since. I recommend you drop by and have a chat. Convey my positive regards, and encourage him to run for another office."

She provides the PCs Eopal's home address and wishes them well.

Development: Unless the PCs' party composition particularly needs her skills, this is a good opportunity for the valkyrie Ohalia to step back from the action. The jarring orderliness of Axis and the worried stares she receives convince the valkyrie to pursue clues elsewhere. Alternatively, Fanalix is already short-staffed and could use an assistant to help her pore over any new information she receives about Taldaris, so the axiomite could invite Ohalia to help her directly and thus enable the group to more effectively investigate multiple leads at once. If the two outsiders are able to look past one another's deeply rooted alignments, this teamwork could be the start of a surprisingly effective partnership.

Story Award: For negotiating with Fanalix and defeating the threats in Taldaris's home, award the PCs 25,600 XP.

GATHERING INFORMATION

The PCs are free to explore Sayashto, providing them ample opportunity to speak with its inhabitants and learn more about the district (see the Sayashto gazetteer on page 62). In addition, a PC who spends 1d4+1 hours gathering information and succeeds at a DC 20 Diplomacy or Knowledge (local) check can learn one of the discoveries below, plus one for every 5 points by which she exceeded the DC.

- Taldaris was an active member of the community while he was a petitioner, having served in several elected and volunteer roles as a noteworthy leader. When he deciphered his personal script, he entered the Adamantine Crucible and became an impariut. He continued to visit the community with some frequency and maintained a rarely used residence.
- Nobody has seen Taldaris around for numerous election cycles (each is 2,000 days). Although he had disappeared for several long services in mortal realms. This latest stint more than doubles the longest time he's been gone.
- A swarm of cockatiels known as the Crowntop Coup has become a local nuisance. Their ongoing harassment and petty thefts are causing local authorities to loosen restrictions on citizens' methods of defense of themselves and their property.
- Ilkiston, a neighboring district, has experienced some difficulties with its sewers, particularly a series of clogging incidents that have caused foul overflows to seep onto the lower-lying streets or into the canals. Repairs have been slow going.

- The latest census report shows that the petitioner population has gradually declined over the past few election cycles. Although this is partly due to emigration to other districts and the natural transformation into inevitables, there's also been an ongoing rash of murders across the 55-district. Investigators are hard at work to catch the culprit and protect the Eternal City's citizens.

LEAD 1: THE PREVIOUS POLITICIAN

Each of Sayashto's election cycles lasts 2,000 days, so it shocked the community when **Eopal** (LN male petitioner) resigned with almost no explanation only 340 days into his term as the Councilor of Gates. He's retreated to his home for the several weeks since. Convinced that he's not going to reconsider his position, Sayashto's remaining councilors decided to hold an interim election.

Eopal's willing to receive guests, but he's very reticent to speak about why he left office. The more he hears about the PCs' investigation, though, the more sympathetic and talkative he becomes. Eventually he extracts a letter bearing a broken yellow wax seal stamped with an eye, holds it in his lap, and explains that he began receiving immoral offers of money in exchange for his voting a certain way. He refused. Soon after, the requests became demands, which became threats. The day before he resigned, he received this letter, threatening the lives of many local friends unless he either quietly complied or resigned without comment. He's willing to show the PCs the letter that conveys this ultimatum, though he's unaware of the trap (see below).

Only one candidate stepped up to take Eopal's seat, and he's worried for Sayashto ever since hearing that someone saw the medusa receive a letter sealed with the same yellow eye. There are some district policies that require a majority vote and others that require a unanimous council vote, so Eopal can't be sure whether any other councilors are under these coercive operatives' sway or if the group just needs a single dissenting vote ready for nefarious purposes. Either way, the petitioner knows that the district's at risk if Tsemani—whom he insists has always seemed like a good person—wins.

Instead, he proposes that one of the PCs could run for the office. The Councilor of Gates is restricted to any inhabitant who has lived on Axis for fewer than 20 years, and although the PCs don't have nearly as many allies as Tsemani, they have a chance to win the seat with a hard-fought campaign. Eopal can serve as an advisor and help a PC fill out the requisite paperwork, but he insists on staying out of the public eye until he's sure he and his friends can remain safe.

Trap: Eopal's letter bears a magic trap that triggers if it's opened or read by anyone other than the intended recipient. The trap mentally shocks the offending creature and erases the letter's contents.

THE CONSPIRATORS

There are several key figures who worked together to abduct, hide, and exploit Taldaris. All are detailed later in the adventure, but this list provides a brief summary of who they are and what they're doing. During Part 2, the PCs might uncover clues that foreshadow confrontations with these foes later in Part 3.

The Secret Shade (NE unique shadow): The Secret Shade masterminds the operation from within Duskfathom, preferring to operate through proxies and agents. As its plans unravel, though, it earns more of Norgorber's doubt and displeasure.

Hamal Kai (NE female hyakume): This large secretmonger lives within Duskfathom but regularly sends out tiny eyes to monitor the operation's progress, impart new instructions through transferred memories, and remind pawns not to misbehave. The hyakume plays an important behind-the-scenes role in the district's ongoing election (see *The Need to Lead*).

Thousand Names (LE male advanced petitioner inquisitor of Norgorber 13): This petitioner spends most of Part 2 scouting and visiting blackmailed pawns to ensure they don't misbehave.

Clacosic (NE male advanced slime naga): This naga considers himself far more important than he is, and the Secret Shade manipulates him into attacking Sayashto and destroying the PCs later in Part 2 (see area D4).

Nibs (NE female gnome worm that walks druid 13): Unless the PCs destroyed her completely, Nibs slinks back to Duskfathom to confront the PCs there (see area B6).

Uiyat (LE female intellect devourer assassin 6): This body thief has systematically taken control over postal workers and maintained the facade that Taldaris is still alive but away on business. She currently inhabits the body of the vortex dragon Eantrapidas (see area C).

WARDING EYE SEAL

CR 6

XP 2,400

Type magic; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger touch or sight (alarm); **Reset** none

Effect psychic backlash (1d6 Charisma damage, DC 19 Will half); spell effect (*erase*)

THE NEED TO LEAD

The PCs are complete strangers in Sayashto, but they're not without opportunities to make friends and develop a new network. First, the PCs can readily track down professionals who can relocate their agents in Taldor to Axis at the cost of 100 gp per agent. If a PC can cast *plane shift* or perform similar feats, he can instead relocate agents for only 10 gp each, covering the cost of transportation back to Sayashto from wherever in Axis the

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

TSEMANI'S CAMPAIGN

The medusa Tsemani is a competent candidate with ample leadership experience. Her starting Facet Points appear below.

Cha	Gen	Her	Sac	Sag	Sub
4	3	2	2	4	3

During each persona phase, Tsemani gains 3 Points that she distributes at random, though if the PCs have goaded her into showing who better embodies a facet, she adds at least 1 Point to that facet. She tries to run a clean campaign; however, the Norgorberite cabal furtively interferes, and special events can dramatically swing the election during certain phases below. Tsemani also tends to mirror the PCs' tone, and she can spend one or more earned Points each phase to reduce a PC's Point total as if performing the smear operation.

Phase 2: Norgorberite operatives sabotage the PCs' campaign infrastructure, destroying pamphlets, collapsing a stage, or worse. A few witnesses report seeing disembodied eyes floating nearby just before the accident. The candidate PC takes a -5 penalty on any Operation check attempted this phase.

Phase 3: The Grand Rotunda hosts a major street festival with food, music, and opportunities for the candidates to give speeches. Any Point gains and losses during this phase are doubled.

Phase 5: Norgorberite operatives distribute damning evidence about the candidate PC—ideally some shameful and true action performed earlier in the campaign. Alternatively, the operatives coax the PC's most uncouth, departed relative to visit and tell embarrassing stories. This narrative becomes the talk of the town, and the PC loses 1 Facet Rank and 2 Facet Points best associated with that event.

Phase 6: Tsemani receives a huge (and suspicious) contribution from an anonymous donor, allowing her to host a major gathering to attract votes. She earns 1 additional Point this phase.

Final Phase: After the penultimate persona phase, the Norgorberite naga Clacasic launches a daring attack to lure in and kill the PCs. See area C on page 37.

agent lands. Alternatively, a PC can perform the recover agents operation to recruit new agents, and due to the vast number of qualified candidates, a PC doubles the number of agents recruited when performing this operation.

The PCs need the help, too. Not only are there leads to follow, but as the PCs can discover by speaking with the former councilor Eopal (see The Previous Politician on page 27), one of them can run for office in order to secure considerable resources in their search for Taldaris. Any number of PCs can register as candidates for the

Councilor of Gates seat, though it's most effective if only one PC competes with the others supporting her. Running against the PCs is **Tsemani** (LN female medusa), who immigrated to Axis four years ago and now owns a successful landscaping business. She is unaware that a cabal loyal to the Reaper of Reputation—the same that abducted Taldaris—is actively fixing the election, having coerced her predecessor Eopal to resign and financed her campaign to install someone they can manipulate for political gain.

The election is an extension of the agents subsystem that appears in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #128: Songbird, Scion, Saboteur*, and it can take as much or as little of the spotlight as your group likes. The election lasts a total of 7–10 persona phases (depending on how many phases they spent in Piltshaven), which span the duration of Part 2. At the end of the final phase, Sayashto's citizens cast their votes.

Tracking Success: A candidate's success depends on her ability to appeal to her constituency, measured using the six facets from the persona system. Over the course of the election, a PC earns or loses points for these facets, and the candidate who has the higher point total in at least four of these facets at the end of the election wins. These Facet Points are separate from a PC's Facet Ranks, though Facet Ranks influence the points earned. In this way the PC can gain or lose points without dramatically affecting the number of ranks she has.

Starting Point Totals: A candidate begins with 1 Facet Point for each facet, plus 1 additional Point for every 2 Ranks she has for that facet (e.g. 3 Charm Points if she has 5 Charm Ranks). If the candidate has a lawful alignment, she gains 1 additional Point she can assign to any facet (2 if she has a strong lawful aura, such as a cleric or paladin). If the candidate has a chaotic alignment, she reduces the her highest two starting point totals by 1 Point (or all of her starting Point totals if she has a strong chaotic aura).

Tsemani's starting Points appear in the Tsemani's Campaign sidebar.

Gaining Points: A PC candidate can gain more Points in several ways. First, every time the PC increases her Rank for a facet, she immediately gains 1 Point for that facet. Second, whenever a non-candidate PC increases his Rank for a facet, there's a 50% chance the candidate gains a Point for that facet. Third, a candidate can gain or lose points as a result of the Smear and Stump operations below. Finally, special events during the election can change the Point totals.

Basic Operations: The following are additional basic operations available during the election.

Poll (Charm, Genius, Sagacity, or Subterfuge): Your agents systematically survey the voters to learn how they view the candidates. The DC of the Operation check to learn what each candidate's Point total is for a facet is 10. For every 5 by which you increase the DC before the check,



REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

you learn the Point totals for one additional facet. If the Operation check fails, the Point totals for one facet are higher or lower than their actual value by 1d4 for every 5 by which you failed (rounded up). The GM may choose to roll this Operation check in secret.

Smear (Charm or Subterfuge): You and your agents highlight an opposing candidate's failures and foibles, spinning even dubious evidence into damning news. The DC of the Operation check is equal to 15 + the number of Points the candidate has in the chosen facet. If successful, the candidate loses 1 Facet Point for that facet (minimum 0). If the Operation check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the candidate instead gains 2 points.

Stump (any facet): You and your agents make speeches, glad-hand crowds, and motivate voters by using the chosen facet. The DC of the Operation check is equal to 15 + the number of Points your candidate has in that facet. If successful, the candidate gains 1 Facet Point for that facet. If the Operation check exceeds the DC by 5 or more, the candidate instead gains 2 points.

Capital: Spending money on the campaign allows a PC to attract larger crowds and distribute more advertising. For every 100 gp a PC spends before attempting a Smear or Stump operation, she gains a cumulative +1 bonus on the check (maximum +5).

Politics: Many of the encounters in Part 2 include a Politics entry, which details ways in which the PCs' actions can contribute to their candidate's success. As the


PCs overcome challenges in Sayashto, you might grant them an additional +1 or +2 bonus on their Operation checks based on excellent roleplaying, shameless pandering, or other schemes.

Pacing: The election period is brief, with voting expected to occur in two weeks. This provides ample time for the PCs to perform their ongoing investigation, though it may be too much time for some groups. If you would rather compress or expand the timeline, holding the election in a week's time or a month's time is reasonable. Just keep in mind that the persona phases are equally brief as a result.

Scaling: For a group of five or six players, the PCs' gains can quickly outpace Tsemani's. With a larger group, consider awarding the medusa 4 Points per phase rather than 3.

Resolving a Tie: If the leading candidates are each winning in four facets, add up their total points across all facets; the higher sum wins. If this is also a tie, election officials conduct a careful recount and find the PC candidate won by a narrow margin.

Alternate Ending: If the PCs secure convincing evidence that Norgorber's faithful are tampering with the election, bring this evidence to Tsemani, have refrained from performing the smear operation, and succeed at a DC 25 Diplomacy check, the medusa recognizes the degree to which she's being manipulated and offers to drop out of the race. Convincing evidence includes



recovering the maximum amount of written evidence from Uiyat in area C and performing at least two DC 20 gather information operations to investigate Taldaris's disappearance or the election tampering. At the GM's discretion, other powerful evidence could qualify.

Treasure: If the PCs win the election, the winner receives the *rod of gates*. This magic rod functions as a *suzerain's scepter*^{UE} except that in place of granting additional benefits to a PC who has the Leadership feat, it grants the wielder a +2 bonus on all Operations checks.

Development: Winning the election vastly improves the PCs' ability to call on Sayashto's resources (for more information, see page 57).

Story Award: If a PC wins the election, award the PCs 51,200 XP. If the PC lost but led the election in at least two facets, instead award the PCs 25,600 XP.

LEAD 2: TO DRINK WITH DEATH

As Fanalyx noted, undead almost never appear in Sayashto. However, a PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Knowledge (planes) check or spends 1d4+1 hours asking locals can ascertain that the appearance of the one in the vision matches that of shinigamis: powerful and macabre heralds of death native to Axis, who often work alongside psychopomps. With a DC 25 Diplomacy check to gather information (DC 20 if the PCs succeeded at the Knowledge [planes] check), the PCs can identify one shinigami that frequents the yasht shop called Pakhtil's. The namesake proprietor Pakhtil is an industrious azer who prides herself on brewing the freshest yasht in the district (see the Sayashto gazetteer on page 62).

For more than 10 millennia, **Qarit** (LN male shinigami^B) has pursued dangerous fugitives, despoilers of the natural world, and those unnaturally overdue for death. About 6,000 years ago, news of an unstoppable warlord brought him to the eastern shores of the Inner Sea. Although Qarit expected to find a blood-soaked general and despoiled landscape, he instead found a thoughtful prince who responded to the shinigami not with fear but with philosophy. Taken aback, Qarit spoke with the man at length and determined that this prince wouldn't bring ruin to the world but rather a measure of peace. The two exchanged tokens of friendship, which Taldan lore remembered as a trio of lilies traded for 90 years of health and prosperity. Qarit remembers no such gift of longevity, but he finds the human mythology wryly amusing.

After Taldaris's death and arrival in Axis as a petitioner, he and Qarit reunited and became close friends who regularly met, debated, and shared news over cups of yasht. They met far less frequently once Taldaris became an inevitable, yet the two maintained a distant camaraderie. It's been years since their last meeting—a paltry amount of time for immortals—and Qarit assumes his companion has simply been consumed by his work

or may have been destroyed in the line of duty. Although the shinigami has no fresh leads to find Taldaris, he does have one of the last remaining relics of the First Emperor's mortal body: a strand of hair wrapped around the withered lilies that Qarit keeps in a stoppered crystal vial around his neck.

The PCs first find Qarit relaxing in a large chair toward the back of Pakhtil's café. Due to the cultural taboo of drinking yasht with strangers, he gently places a saucer atop his cup when the PCs approach in order to hear out their request. The shinigami has a somewhat dry sense of humor and is otherwise quite personable. The prospect of Taldaris's abduction concerns him, and although the two of them long ago came to a friendly agreement not to intervene in each other's business, Qarit's open to helping the PCs find the missing inevitable after he learns more about them. In general, he prefers to ask questions and prompt discoveries, believing such revelations hold greater meaning. First, he inquires why they need to find Taldaris. Then he asks what they've learned so far.

Finally, he hones in on one or two PCs, selecting someone who particularly intrigues him, the PC running for office (if any), or a PC whom he can sense has died and returned to life. In the latter case, he interviews the PC about her experience—death, the River of Souls, fear, pain, and more—knowing that the process can be both eye-opening and traumatic. While he takes a professional interest in the answers, he can also serve as a “death therapist” to help a PC grapple with one of the most extraordinary events in an adventurer's career. If none of the PCs have died, Qarit instead invites an intriguing PC to join him for a cup of yasht and a reading of the cup's grit to foretell her death. The shinigami has no special divinatory powers, and in flipping the grit onto a saucer and looking for symbolic images with the PC, he's more looking for that character's insights and level of self-reflection.

In general, Qarit can serve as a window into the First Emperor's life after death. He can also serve as an additional sounding board to help steer the PCs' investigation, should they become stymied. However, he is not interested in intervening directly, thanks to his fatalistic outlook and occupation.

Development: So long as the PCs are fairly polite and not especially thoughtless, Qarit entrusts them with his memento of Taldaris, which could serve as a powerful focus for divination spells. He also advises that the PCs gather as many clues as they can before striking off after his friend, for the more evidence they have, the less likely they are to be deceived by whatever is hiding Taldaris. Even if the PCs make a bad first impression, they can find Qarit here several days later and try again.

Politics: If one of the PCs is running for office, being seen conversing with such an impressive

figure as Qarit enhances her public image. So long as the candidate makes especially insightful remarks, discusses philosophy in an engaging way, or otherwise comports herself well, she gains a +2 circumstance bonus on any check to increase her Charm, Genius, or Sagacity rank during one persona phase in Axis.

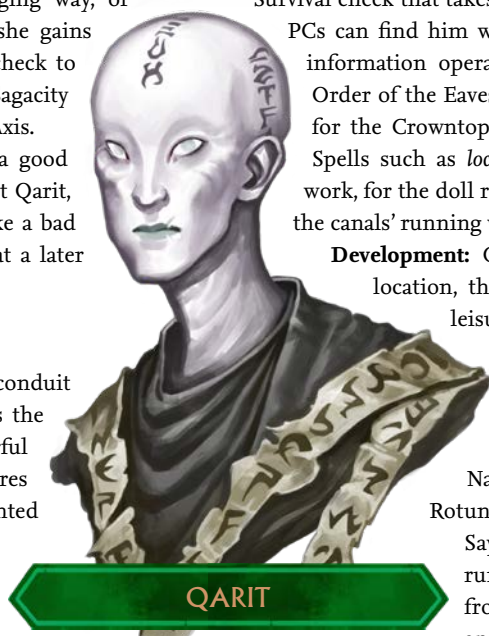
Story Award: If the PCs make a good impression the first time they meet Qarit, award them 19,200 XP. If they make a bad first impression but earn his aid at a later date, instead award them 12,800 XP.

LEAD 3: VANISHING LEGENDS

Just as the Ethereal Plane is a conduit for emotion and dreams, so too is the Astral Plane a matrix for powerful thought. As extraordinary creatures perform extraordinary acts recounted in extraordinary tales, the general public's conception of these figures imprint on the Astral Plane, creating an echo of that hero's greatness known as an astral legend. Most astral legends appear as minor constellations easily missed against the Astral Plane's other stars. When a medium reaches out to a spirit, though, the legend resonates with power. For millennia, Taldaris's astral legend drifted in astral space. Unrelated to Taldaris's abduction, his legend in the Astral Plane was likewise abducted by night hag agents of the Immaculate Circle, the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams. Those same agents contacted the Secret Shade, securing its aid in quieting investigations.

However, the Astral Plane is visible from key sites on the Outer Planes, much as one might view the starry sky on Golarion. The fragmenting constellation alarmed the astronomer **Nabil** (LN male advanced soulbound doll¹⁸), who suspected treachery. He began posing questions to distant colleagues by mail. At first he received validating responses, then suddenly all correspondence stopped; he had come to the attention of Hamal Kai (see page 50), who initially mistook his interest in the missing Taldaris as uncovering the First Emperor's kidnapping. Hoping to snuff out this overly curious academic, the hyakume sent an anonymous tip to a local marut named Yortraru, identifying Nabil as a construct artificially extending his own life. The marut rose to the challenge and has implacably hunted the doll for more than a month.

Nabil has attempted on several occasions to parley with Yortraru to no avail. Any attempts to find the soulbound doll's residence first lead to the demolished remnants of the row house unit in which he had lived. Neighbors can confirm that Nabil lived there but ran afoul of a marut, and everyone assumes that by now he's been captured. However, Fanalyx's files can confirm there is no record



of Nabil's capture. The PCs can track him down with a successful DC 30 Diplomacy, Knowledge (local), or Survival check that takes 1d4+1 hours. Alternatively, the PCs can find him with a successful DC 20 gather information operation or the assistance of the Order of the Eaves (see the Development section for the Crowntop Coup encounter on page 32). Spells such as *locate person* are very unlikely to work, for the doll regularly takes refuge in or near the canals' running water.

Development: Once the PCs identify Nabil's location, they can intercept him at their leisure and begin the encounter that follows.

Unsanctioned Immortality (CR 15)

Nabil lies low around the Grand Rotunda, the circular intersection of Sayashto's three main canals. The running water helps shield him from conventional divinations, and he regularly relocates to

one of the nearby warehouses or commercial districts whenever his pursuer gets too close. The PCs can readily corner him or flush him out of hiding in any of these areas.

Nabil is desperate for help. He never wanted to be a soulbound doll, but as best he can piece together, the soul fragment inside him once belonged to a spellcaster with vindictive enemies who sealed him inside this artificial body. He retains almost no memories of his past life beyond a love of astronomy. Now a marut's trying to destroy him for the crime of existing! Nabil wants protection, either convincing Yortraru that Nabil's been destroyed (he has a convincing fake soul focus to give the PCs) or destroying the pursuing inevitable. The doll insists that the PCs meet this demand, and in return he can interpret their astronomic puzzle.

Creatures: The PCs have a little time to negotiate and devise a plan before the marut arrives. Yortraru declares matter-of-factly that the fugitive doll Nabil is in the area and believes the PCs have information necessary for his capture. The PCs can try to trick the marut in any number of ways, though it's difficult to lie convincingly to such a creature. If it catches the PCs in a lie, the marut reminds them of the dire consequences of perjury and aiding a criminal. If it catches the PCs in another deception, it attacks.

It is possible for the PCs to turn over Nabil and still receive the necessary information. Doing so requires convincing the marut to let the PCs study and extract knowledge from the soul fragment before it is pulverized (DC 27 Diplomacy). This process requires a successful DC 20 Use Magic Device check followed by

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

the spells *suggestion* or *speak with dead*, allowing a brief interrogation. If the PCs are unable to perform the procedure, Fanalyx can find someone who can for 250 gp. However, she finds this methodology highly unorthodox and distasteful.

NABIL**CR 3****XP 800**

LN advanced soulbound doll (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 255)

hp 19**YORTRARU****CR 15****XP 51,200**

Marut inevitable (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 166)

hp 214

Development: Once the PCs have either tricked or defeated Yortraru, Nabil explains that several months ago he first noticed a disruption in the Lion Knight, a minor astral constellation invisible to the naked eye. Further study suggested its constituent lights were vanishing. His attempts to secure colleagues' insights were interrupted by his unexpected pursuit. If the PCs describe or draw out the constellation they saw, Nabil can confirm it is the same one and even show them the tattered constellation with his telescope. So long as they have the means to cast *plane shift*, Nabil's mathematical maps replace the tuning fork normally required for the spell, allowing them to investigate (see the Scavenged Stars encounter, below). If none of the PCs can cast *plane shift*, several local spellcasters convey travelers to and from the Astral Plane for 900 gp per group.

Nabil carries a small missive with a broken seal of yellow wax imprinted with an eye. Like the seals on other such letters (see the Warding Eye Seal on page 27), this is designed to erase the written words and rebuke the creature if opened, handled, or read by anyone else. He can relay its chilling message from memory, though: "Look elsewhere. If stars can die, toys can be broken."

The Scavenged Stars (CR 16)

As predicted, the PCs arrive about a few miles away from the constellation, which they can see in the distance. The formation consists of several points of light that resemble fading stars, though these motes are concentrated astral mass—powerful thoughts compressed by thought and faith until they flare with light. The pattern creates the image of a humanoid wearing a lion-skin cloak, and altogether the constellation covers about three square miles.

Creature: The Sisters of Indulgent dreams left a powerful agent behind to deter any investigation into their tampering with astral legends: an astradaemon that conceals itself in the dust of one of the larger asteroids

floating among the constellation. It tries to chase off anyone drawing near to investigate, and if pressed, attacks by teleporting into its enemies' midst.

ASTRADAEMON**CR 16****XP 76,800****hp 212 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 63)

Treasure: Nabil eagerly studies the astral legend up close, regularly pulling out a crystalline lens to get a better look. He notes that by attuning the lens to the legend's astral signatures, he might be able to better track Taldaris—not an infallible solution, he warns, but a helpful tool. He then takes more measurements and gives the PCs his *seeking lens* in thanks, already attuned with Taldaris as its quarry.

Development: The astral legend shows serious signs of degradation, which the PCs can analyze much as though it were a crime scene. With a successful DC 22 Knowledge (arcana or planes) or Spellcraft check, a PC can learn that someone purposefully vandalized this site, though due to the plane's timeless nature, it's difficult to tell how long ago that occurred. With a DC 25 Knowledge (planes), Perception, or Sense Motive check, a PC can find a fist-sized mote of coagulated thought left over from when the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams traveled here to steal key elements of the legend. By touching the mote and concentrating, a PC can sort through the jumbled memories left behind to see Estella, Illumia, and Magilla—the hag witches they faced in City in the Lion's Eye—muttering, "And one final emperor, for courage and awe"; sealing the motes of light in their heartstones; then proudly declaring, "Long live the risen king."

The astradaemon knows virtually nothing of the greater schemes on Golarion or Axis, being a mercenary paid handsomely in stolen souls.

Politics: Tales of the PCs jaunt to the Astral Plane and work to protect an enduring legend make them popular, granting each PC a +2 circumstance bonus on any check to increase her Heroism rank during one persona phase in Axis. However, this strategy also draws attention to Nabil. The PCs can instead ask Nabil to spread his side of events quietly, which instead grants each PC +2 circumstance bonus on any check to increase her Genius, Sagacity, or Subterfuge rank during one persona phase in Axis.

LEAD 4: THE CROWNTOP COUP (CR 12)

Due to their ingenuity, resourcefulness, and gregariousness, monkeys have long served as Abadar's sacred animal, and troops of primates live throughout the Eternal City. A troop of resolute^{B2} flameruff tamarins (use the statistics for a monkey) called the Order of the Eaves has long claimed Sayashto's roofs as their territory, both due to their posturing bravado and the leadership of

the venerable Lord Squire **Saip** (LN awakened resolute^{B2} tamarin cleric of Abadar 3). Despite the monkeys' occasional act of mischief, locals respect the Order of the Eaves and regularly leave out small offerings. In return, the primates help watch for criminals, deliver messages, and perform minor errands. The petitioner Taldaris found the monkeys charming, and even after becoming an inevitable, he regularly left offerings. As thanks for a great deed, he awarded the troop with the ring he wore as an emperor. Thoroughly humbled by this gift, each lord squire has guarded it fiercely.

This arrangement continued for generations, but a new rival threatens to ruin everything. A raucous swarm of resolute cockatiels known as the Crowntop Coup recently migrated to Sayashto, and even in the course of a month they've caused a mess by raiding yashtoma seeds left out to dry, cawing triumphantly at all hours, and defecating on their critics. The Order of the Eaves attempted to chase off the intruders only to be outsmarted at every turn, and in the most recent skirmish, the Crowntop Coup made off with Taldaris's ring. This has left the monkeys utterly flustered and defeated.

Although less ubiquitous than they once were, the monkeys are easy to find and hail. PCs can readily request an audience with their leader. Many citizens also know a few simple hand signals that the monkeys recognize, including "leader" and "talk." A tamarin observes attentively, and if given a snack, it runs off to deliver the message. The lord squire, accompanied by a large simian entourage, tracks down the PCs a few hours later to hear what they have to say. He knows that several figures had been spotted around Taldaris's home, but they hadn't seemed noteworthy. The thought that the troop's old friend Taldaris might be missing is an outrage, and Saip asks what his troop can do. The monkeys are happy to help patrol the town for clues. They'd also be amenable to giving the PCs Taldaris's ring, yet it's now in the clutches of the filthy Crowntop Coup. The mischievous birds are too formidable for the monkeys to fight. If the PCs can defeat them, though, the ring is theirs.

This encounter can take place anywhere in the city, depending on the PCs' preferences and preparations.

Creatures: The Crowntop Coup aren't just any flock of rambunctious parrots; they're a hivemind entity that's eager to establish itself as the unquestioned power of Sayashto's upper stories. Like other hiveminds, one of the cockatiels serves as the nexus that links the many animals together. Its acquisition of Taldaris's ring has kept the swarm thrilled for several days, and the nexus bird now wears the human-sized ring atop its head like a tiara. For all their recent successes, the cockatiels have few friends. Sayashto's council recently issued a decree

SEEKING LENS

This combination telescope and assayer's lens is Nabil's own invention suited for a variety of tasks.

SEEKING LENS

PRICE

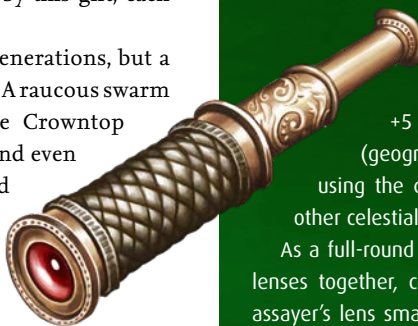
20,000 GP

SLOT eyes or none

CL 11th

WEIGHT 1 lb.

AURA moderate divination



This telescope is adjustable as a full-round action, allowing magnifications anywhere from $\times 2$ to $\times 250$. The user gains a +5 competence bonus on Knowledge (geography) and Perception checks when using the device to study planets, stars, and other celestial bodies.

As a full-round action, the user can press the two lenses together, compressing the device to a small assayer's lens small enough to occupy the eyes slot. In this form, the lens grants a +5 competence bonus on Appraise checks, Perception checks, and Survival checks to follow tracks. Once per week, after studying the possessions or tracks of a creature, the wearer may designate that creature as his quarry. This functions as the ranger's quarry ability. If the wearer already has the quarry ability, the lens instead allows him to designate a creature as his quarry even if it is not one of his favored enemies.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 10,000 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *true*

that excuses inhabitants in acts of self-defense against the birds, and enterprising hunters can secure a 250 gp bounty for chasing off or killing the birds. So long as the PCs don't catch innocents in the crossfire, they have lots of leeway to fight the Crowntop Coup.

Of course, the PCs don't need to harm the flock. The Crowntop Coup have a starting attitude of unfriendly and prefer to perch out of reach while speaking with the PCs. Any proposal that involves surrendering the ring or leaving Sayashto offends the flock, and any such check to convince the swarm to cooperate takes a -10 penalty. Furthermore, the flock uses *zone of truth* to study any deals that seem too risky.

Alternatively, the PCs could coordinate a raid with the Order of the Eaves in which the PCs identify the nexus bird and serve as a distraction for the monkeys to approach and steal back the ring. This is very tricky thanks to the Crowntop Coup's thoughtsense ability. For the purpose of this ploy, assume the monkeys have a Stealth modifier of $+16$, that the birds gain a $+10$ circumstance bonus on their Perception check to spot thinking beings within 60 feet, and that being invisible

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

doesn't help a monkey sneak any closer. Each PC can aid the monkeys' skill check with skills appropriate to the strategy, such as Perform to distract the swarm or Knowledge (engineering) to effectively position buildings between the two groups. Likewise, subtle conditions such as fascinated can reduce the birds' Perception modifier. If the monkeys succeed at the opposed check, they swipe the ring but anger the swarm. If the monkeys exceed the DC by 5 or more, they steal the ring without being noticed.

If riled, the flock screeches and fights mercilessly. If the nexus bird is slain, though, its "crown" drops to the ground, and the rest of the flock only remains to fight until reduced to 50 hit points before fleeing.

THE CROWNTOP COUP

CR 12

XP 19,200

Resolute hivemind cockatiel swarm
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 157, 289)

LN Diminutive magical beast (swarm)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, thoughtsense 60 ft.; **Perception** +18

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 27, flat-footed 24 (+3 Dex, +10 insight, +4 size)
hp 90 (12d10+24)

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

Defensive Abilities swarm traits; **DR** 10/chaotic; **Resist** acid 15, cold 15, fire 15; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee swarm (3d6 plus distraction)

Space 1 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks distraction (DC 17), psychic spellcasting, smite chaos 1/day (+12 damage)

Psychic Spells Known (CL 10th; concentration +15)

5th (4/day)—*ego whip* III^{DA} (DC 22)

4th (6/day)—*id insinuation* III^{DA} (DC 21), *shout* (DC 19)

3rd (7/day)—*helping hand*, *mind thrust* III^{DA} (DC 18), *slow* (DC 18)

2nd (7/day)—*calm emotions* (DC 19), *minor image* (DC 17), *silence* (DC 17), *zone of truth* (DC 19)

1st (8/day)—*ant haul*^{PG}, *color spray* (DC 16), *comprehend languages*, *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *entropic shield*

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *detect psychic significance*^{DA}, *flare* (DC 15), *ghost sound* (DC 15), *lullaby* (DC 17), *mage hand*, *message*

STATISTICS

Str 2, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 21, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +12; **CMB** —; **CMD** —

Feats Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Spell Focus (enchantment), Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +12, Bluff +12 (+22 when hiding the nexus), Fly +24, Knowledge (engineering, local, nobility, planes) +12, Perception +18, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +15 (+25 when hiding the nexus), Use

Magic Device +12

Languages Abyssal, Auran, Celestial, Common, Infernal, Sylvan; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ hivemind nexus

Gear *band of triumph*

Development: So long as the PCs recover the ring or chase off the Crowntop Coup, the monkeys are pleased. Lord Squire Saip formally gifts the ring to the PCs and offers his troop's services in their investigation. This allows the PCs to quickly locate any public location, track down any public figure, deliver messages, and otherwise make the PCs' lives a little easier. Any PCs who did not relocate their agents here or recruit new ones in Axis can readily adopt one or more

monkeys as operatives (there are 20 such monkeys ready to serve). The tamarins are not ideal agents, though, for they are unable to perform any Charm, Genius, or Sagacity operations.

The more the Order of the Eaves assists the PCs, the more likely the tamarins are to run afoul of Thousand Names or other threats. As a result, the troop periodically finds monkeys slain in the line of duty. The pace of these casualties can signal to the PCs that their true enemies are afoot, particularly as the PCs uncover more and more of the clues.

Politics: Most of Sayashto considers the Crowntop Coup a nuisance, so removing the birds impresses many voters. Each PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus on any check to increase a particular facet rank during one persona phase in Axis. To which facet this bonus applies depends on how the PCs handled the birds (e.g. Charm if the PCs convinced the birds to leave, Heroism if they used combat, or Subterfuge if they used thievery).

LEAD 5: MAIL FRAUD (CR 14)

Whether the PCs pursue a hunch from the ritual's vision or follow up on the several yellow-wax-stamped letters they find elsewhere in the adventure, the PCs' investigation takes them to Post Station #7, the central post office serving the greater 55-district division to which Sayashto belongs. The building is immense and employs hundreds of analysts, clerks, delivery people, sorters, and more. It primarily functions during daylight hours, but a smaller crew handles emergency business at night. Keep in mind that once the PCs begin investigating at the post office, they are on a loose timer



NEXUS OF THE CROWNTOP COUP

that tracks how much evidence they can recover. If the PCs become distracted very early on, it might be best to pause that timer until they can resume the investigation.

Unknown to the postal staff, a canny intellect devourer named Uiyat has infiltrated the facility for more than 40 years, gradually taking over higher ranked professionals until she took control of the axiomite postmaster Reschotpal. From there, she's intercepted sensitive letters of all sorts, passing this information along to the Secret Shade. This also allows her to forge letters to powerful figures from her position of power. Finally, she's able to slip Hamal Kai's missives into mail bags for delivery, allowing these threats to reach their recipients anonymously without registering with any of the mail sorters or magic-sensing safeguards (intended to minimize dangerous content like *explosive runes* from going through the system). Everything had operated smoothly until Hamal Kai informed Uiyat of the PCs' disruptive arrival at Taldaris's home and subsequent investigations. Plans changed, and the intellect devourer received orders to abandon her identity, destroy key evidence, and lie low. Thoroughly vexed, Uiyat discarded her axiomite body for that of a dragon courier.

Any direct inquiries about yellow-sealed letters turn up little information. The clerks don't recognize the seal and apologize for not being further help. If a PC displays the legal pursuit visa or succeeds at a DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, a clerk offers to schedule an appointment for the PCs to speak with a manager. About an hour later, a meek petitioner named Licarios meets with the PCs and listens to their theories and inquiries. He is happy to help, both allowing the PCs access to three rooms of cabinets filled with delivery records as well as arrange for the PCs to interview his mail-sorting staff about any wax seals matching the description.

The amount of data is immense. With 8 hours of work and a successful DC 25 Profession (archivist or librarian) check, DC 30 Linguistics check, or DC 35 Perception check, the PCs can track down several curiosities. First, mail carriers have delivered numerous parcels and letters to Taldaris's home over the past 50 years, and his home is still on record under his name as occupied. Second, letters with Taldaris's home as a return address occasionally travel through this office, suggesting he's been home as recently as two weeks ago. Third, the PCs can identify a spike in the office's inefficiency from 40 years ago, as recorded by several auditors and managers. Licarios nods sympathetically, noting that it was a messy year with numerous accidental policy breaches for which the postmaster Reschotpal ultimately accepted responsibility. Mandatory training courses followed for senior staff, after which there haven't been any further difficulties. By exceeding the skill check DC by 5 or more, a PC also notes that around the same time, the postmaster's handwriting and

BAND OF TRIUMPH

Taldaris wore this ring for many decades, and several centuries after his death, one of his tomb's custodians brought it to Axis hoping to curry favor and ask for advice.

BAND OF TRIUMPH		PRICE 50,000 GP
SLOT ring	CL 13th	WEIGHT —
AURA strong enchantment and evocation		

This white-gold ring bears the relief image of a roaring lion. Once per day on command, the wearer can point the ring and mentally designate one or more creatures or objects in a 60-foot cone as enemies, after which the ring roars triumphantly. Selected targets in the area are affected by *shout* (Fortitude DC 20). All other objects in the area are unharmed, and all other creatures in the area receive the benefits of the inspire courage bardic performance as performed by a 7th-level bard for 3 rounds. When activating the ring, the wearer can expend 1 round of her bardic performance ability to use her own bard level to calculate the performance's effect.

In addition, the ring grants the wearer a +4 enhancement bonus to Charisma; treat this as a temporary ability bonus for the first 24 hours the ring is worn.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS	COST 25,000 GP
Forge Ring, <i>eagle's splendor</i> , <i>good hope</i> , <i>shout</i>	

sentence structure became inconsistent before gradually returning to normal.

Interviewing mail carriers and sorters requires 8 hours of work (which can occur the same time other PCs are searching the archives) and a successful DC 25 Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Sense Motive check. This uncovers that none of the mail sorters knowingly handled any letters bearing the yellow seal. However, more than a dozen mail carriers remember delivering such letters, which they found among the other missives in their prepacked bags. This would indicate that someone slipped these into the bags after sorting, or that pickpockets planted the letters during the mail carriers' scheduled routes. The only person who regularly checks over the bags before delivery is the postmaster in the interest of quality control.

Each failed check increases the amount of time required by 8 hours (up to 24 hours expended) and gives Uiyat much more time to destroy evidence. The PCs' discoveries point toward the postmaster, and Licarios can escort the PCs to meet with her. However, the postmaster isn't present, despite being scheduled to work at this time. A review of the postmaster's directives

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

reveals only one in the past 24–48 hours, depending on how quickly the PCs investigated: she assigned an oversized delivery bag to be carried out by Eantrapidas, a young vortex dragon regularly employed for long-distance deliveries. Shipping employees can confirm the dragon's departure carrying a seven-foot-long bag with which he set off on foot to the south. It might not have seemed suspect at the time, but Licarios is now very concerned. The postmaster's home is to the south, and he encourages the PCs to check in on her while pursuing the dragon.

Although dragons do appear in Sayashto, they're rare enough that citizens can readily confirm Eantrapidas's path, which ends at the postmaster's home. The house is a single-story bungalow with wide doors, a broad porch, and a chimney belching a consistent plume of smoke. The curtains are drawn, and the strong wooden doors are locked (Disable Device DC 25). Numerous cabinets, curtains, rugs, and tapestries make the interior cheerful, homey—and quite flammable.

Creatures: The vortex dragon Eantrapidas, currently host to Uiyat, hunches beside the open delivery bag, which is partly emptied of hundreds of documents. These represent decades of stolen missives, false identities, and written instructions that the intellect devourer hastily cleared from the postmaster's office before escaping. She then crept up on the vortex dragon sleeping between assignments, took control of its body, and crammed the postmaster's corpse into the bag.

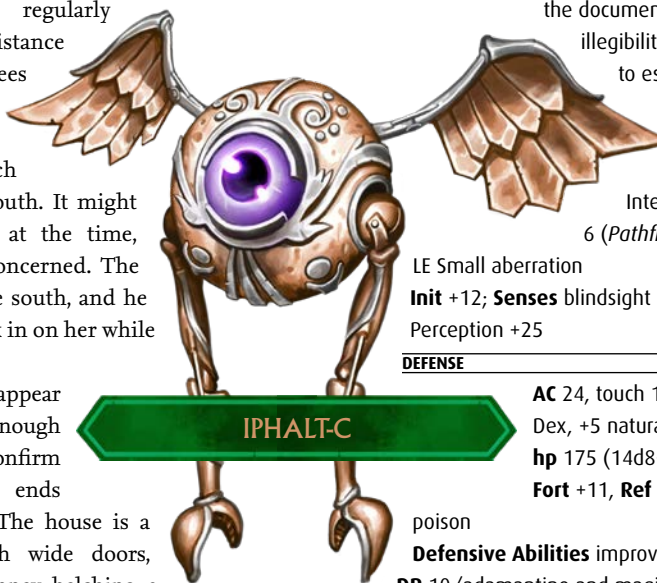
Depending on whether the PCs took approximately 8, 16, or 24 hours to conclude their investigation, Uiyat has finished reviewing and destroying one-third, two-thirds, or nearly all of the documents. In the event the PCs take more than 48 hours from start to finish, they might arrive to find Eantrapidas burning the dead postmaster or simply gone entirely.

EANTRAPIDAS CR —
hp 104 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 74)

TACTICS

Before Combat Uiyat makes only a passing attempt to explain away the situation before attacking, though it's possible for the PCs to use special abilities that counteract possession in order to expel the intellect devourer even before combat begins. If she has several rounds to prepare, she considers abandoning the dragon's body to launch a surprise attack from another room.

During Combat Uiyat uses her spell-like abilities and natural weapons to devastating effect.



Morale If reduced to 20 or fewer hit points, the dragon breathes fire on the remaining documents, setting them and the room aflame. If not extinguished within 1 round, the documents char to the point of illegibility. Uiyat then attempts to escape.

UIYAT CR 14
XP 38,400

Intellect devourer assassin
6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 180)

LE Small aberration

Init +12; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., detect magic; Perception +25

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 19, flat-footed 16 (+8 Dex, +5 natural, +1 size)

hp 175 (14d8+112)

Fort +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +10; +3 vs.

poison

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge; **DR** 10/adamantine and magic; **Immune** fire, mind-affecting effects; **Resist** cold 20, electricity 20, sonic 20; **SR** 23

Weaknesses vulnerability to *protection from evil*

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee 4 claws +19 (1d4)

Special Attacks body thief, death attack (DC 21), quiet death, sneak attack +6d6, true death (DC 21)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +12)

Constant—*detect magic*

At will—*confusion* (DC 18, single target only), *daze*

monster (DC 16, no HD limit), *inflict serious wounds* (DC 17), *invisibility*, *reduce size*

3/day—*cure moderate wounds*, *globe of invulnerability*

TACTICS

During Combat If expelled from the dragon, Uiyat attempts to slink off to another room and then launch a surprise attack.

Morale Uiyat attempts to flee if reduced to 40 or fewer hit points. If blocked off, she fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 26, **Con** 25, **Int** 20, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 27 (31 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Shadow Strike^{APG}, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +17 (+21 to jump), Bluff +25, Disable Device +15, Disguise +21, Escape Artist +17, Knowledge (local) +16, Linguistics +18, Perception +25, Sense Motive +17, Sleight of Hand +21 (+27 to hide weapons on body), Stealth +37, Use Magic Device +21; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Bluff, +8 Perception, +8 Stealth

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Draconic,

Dwarven, Elven, Ignan, Infernal, Sphinx, Sylvan, Terran, Thraie, Undercommon, Yithian (can't speak); telepathy 100 ft.

SQ hidden weapons, poison use

Combat Gear *wand of suggestion* (15 charges); **Other Gear** *ring of mind shielding*

Treasure: The axiomite's many tapestries and rugs hold more sentimental value than market value. However, in the northeast room is a *scimitar of the planes* (functions as a *sword of the planes*^{UE}) hanging on the wall.

Development: The postmaster and dragon are both dead, and with a DC 20 Heal check a PC can identify that the cause of death for the former was some parasite burrowing into her skull through her ear. That the postmaster might have been compromised for decades suggests a very dangerous conspiracy is afoot, and depending on how much of the paperwork the PCs recovered, it's increasingly clear that this operation spied on and steered local politics.

Politics: If the PCs resolved the post office investigation in about 8 hours, they recover several letters instructing the postmaster to take any necessary steps to ensure the medusa Tsemani wins the upcoming election, including tampering with the ballot system. Tsemani sincerely has no part in this, but the PCs can use this evidence to discredit her and automatically succeed at one Operation check to perform the Smear operation targeting the medusa's Heroism, Sacrifice, or Sagacity.

LEAD 6: INSPECTING THE GRAVES

Until the end of Part 2, Sayashto's graveyard presents no solid leads, but in the meanwhile it can shed more light on Taldaris's afterlife. More information about the graveyard appears in area **D** as well as in the Sayashto gazetteer on page 62.

Although the PCs are free to wander the grounds, they can learn the most by visiting the Hall of Final Deeds. There they can find both the Councilor of Graves **Jolmulk** (LN agender petitioner^{B3} alchemist^{APG} 5) as well as the chief custodian **Iphalt-C** (LN female arbiter^{B2} expert 8). The former is merely here in order to pay respects to those who have given themselves to Axis—either falling on the field of battle or melding with the plane to donate their quintessence—and they carry a large basket filled with flowers, several dozen tiny cups, and a gourd full of yasht. Jolmulk is a patient petitioner with deep green skin and copper-hued text written on their body. They know little of Taldaris's disappearance, but they're a font of knowledge about the district's attractions and politics (see page 63). They can also speak to Taldaris's political record, proudly noting the numerous times he held several different offices in Sayashto.

The winged sphere Iphalt-C has overseen the Hall of Final Deeds and coordinated the petitioner groundskeepers for more than 5,000 years. Despite her administrative job description, she spends more time counseling listless petitioners who contemplate dissolution, the process of melding with Axis, and a natural process of the cycle of souls. Even so, many view it with trepidation. The arbiter maintains client confidentiality, including her information about Taldaris. However, by showing her a legal pursuit visa or succeeding at a DC 25 Bluff or Diplomacy check, a PC can convince her to speak candidly. She remembers Taldaris as a petitioner, for he visited occasionally to grapple with his soul's relevance after death compared to his impact in life. With her help, he learned to detach himself from the past and accept his future in Axis. These lessons helped him translate the last of the puzzles inscribed on his body and become an inevitable, after which he rarely returned. His last visit Iphalt-C remembers was 116 years ago, which corresponds to the death of Aroden, the god whose worship reshaped Taldor.

Politics: If one of the PCs is running for office, helping Jolmulk pay respects at the graves can dramatically improve the candidate's public image. The candidate attempts a DC 15 Knowledge (planes or religion) or Perform (any but comedy) check. If successful, she gains a +1 circumstance bonus on any check to increase her Heroism or Sacrifice rank during one persona phase in Axis. For every 5 points by which she exceeds this check DC, the circumstance bonus increases by 1 (maximum +4).

C. THE HALL OF FINAL DEEDS

As the PCs grow closer and closer to tracking down Taldaris, unraveling the conspiracy, and winning the election, the Secret Shade contemplates increasingly drastic action. At last, it caved to the obsequious insistence of the slime naga Clacosic, the least respected of the cabal's conspirators. Having recently cornered and captured a powerful sewer blight and usurped its minions, the naga fancies himself the lord of this entire district's sewers. After stroking the naga's ego, the Secret Shade dispatched him to create a devastating distraction that would lure the PCs to their doom. Clacosic happily obliged, spending the past several days undermining the foundation of Sayashto's largest memorial building and gathering even more minions.

This culminates just before the last persona phase. That night, a tremendous clattering of collapsing stone echoes over the district, and the PCs quickly receive news that part of the cemetery collapsed. By the time they arrive, hundreds of inevitables and axiomites have surrounded the cemetery grounds. Fanalyx hails the PCs and explains that part of the Hall of Final Deeds sank into the ground, which coincided with a

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

supernatural presence that began spilling out of the ground and contaminating the area. Local forces focus on containment, for this contamination stands to poison the local waters and usurp part of the plane's quintessence. Her standing orders are to avoid contact with the enemy. Those same orders don't extend to the PCs, though, and she asks them to inspect the disaster's epicenter.

Four of Hamal Kai's eyes patrol the cemetery and sewer below. A PC can glimpse the movement of something watching them with a successful DC 36 Perception check, but only by exceeding this DC by 5 or more lets a PC see the eye long enough to attack it.

Hazard: The entirety of area D is subject to the plagued domain ability of the sewer blight in area D5. This moistens the grave soil to a sickly consistency, causes the myriad carvings to adopt a sinister appearance, and gives the entire area an evil aura.

C1. The Procession (CR 15)

A path leads up the gentle slope to the Hall of Final Deeds, winding past hundreds of gravestones and freestanding mausoleums.

The graveyard's lovingly maintained gardens have rotted and dissolved into a noxious mess.

Creatures: The sewer blight's cursed domain causes the plane's quintessence to warp and roil, and the cemetery has disgorged several mockeries of the outsiders who died here most recently. These risen abominations resemble ghastly assemblages of petitioners, inevitables, and other lawful beings congealed into a twisted whole. In addition, several of the open graves awaiting burials have developed a life and unholy hunger of their own.

BLIGHTED QUINTALS (3)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

Resolute festering spirit (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 98,

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6 289)

LE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13

Aura stench (30 ft., DC 17, 10 rounds)

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 13 (+3 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 67 each (9d8+27)

Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2, incorporeal; **DR**

5/chaotic; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 14

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee incorporeal touch +11 (1d4 Con plus slime)

Special Attacks create spawn, slime, smite chaos, trample (1 Con plus slime, DC 17)

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 25

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Mobility

Skills Fly +9, Perception +13, Stealth +17

SQ ghost touch

SLITHERING GRAVES (2)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Variant slithering pit (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6* 254)

N Large ooze

Init +2; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., breach sense; Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 21 (+2 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size)

hp 150 each (12d8+96); fast healing 5

Fort +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

Immune acid, ooze traits

Weaknesses breach vulnerability

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee 3 tentacles +16 (1d6+7 plus pull) **Space** 5 ft.;

Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks hungry pit, pull (tentacle, 5 ft.)

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 14, **Con** 24, **Int** 2, **Wis** 6, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 29

Feats Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception, Stealth), Toughness, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +22; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth

SQ transparent

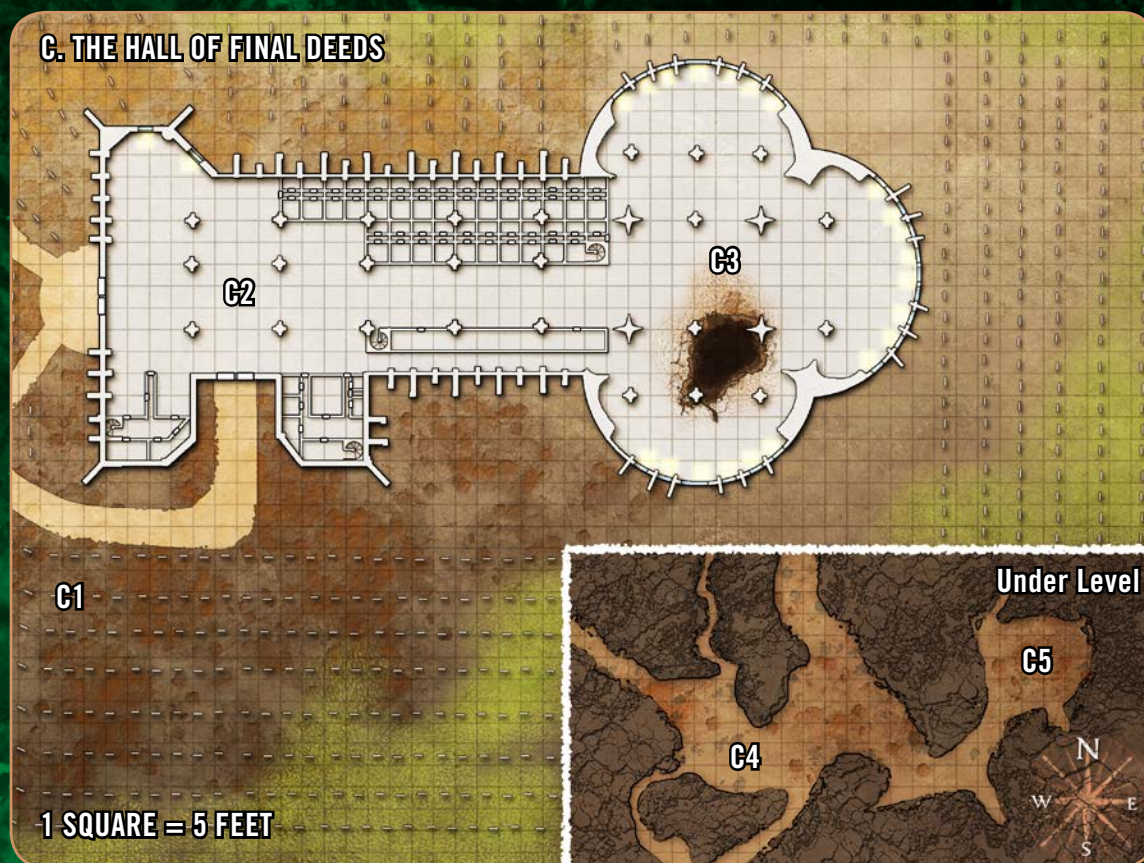
SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hungry Pit (Su) This ability functions as a slithering pit's pit ability with the following exceptions. The pit created is 10 feet in diameter and is 40 feet deep (dealing 4d6 falling damage), and the Reflex save to avoid falling into the pit increases to DC 23. The pit can hold one Large creature, four Medium creatures, or eight Small creatures. The Climb check to climb out of a slithering grave increases to DC 24. The slithering grave does not deal acid damage to trapped creatures; instead it deals 1d6+7 bludgeoning and slashing damage to each trapped creature each round as undead bodies reach out of the walls to claw at any creatures inside the pit. The walls have an AC of 11 and hardness 10.

C2. Memorial Nave (CR 14)

Interspersed between the many tall, narrow windows in this grand entry hall are rectangular plaques commemorating the last 2,000 creatures that underwent dissolution here to honor their memories. Each new plaque replaces the oldest one, which is sent to the forges of the neighboring district Halgrimard to be forged into weapons for Axis's armies.

C. THE HALL OF FINAL DEEDS



Creatures: Several blighted quintals pull plaques from the lower walls. Nearby, a gravesludge busily gnaws on the arbiter Iphalt-C, the latter which currently has –5 hit points. These enemies take a moment to examine any intruders before attacking.

GRAVELSLUDGE CR 12
XP 19,200
hp 161 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 145)

BLIGHTED QUINTALS (3) CR 9
XP 6,400 each
hp 67 each (see page 38)

Development: Iphalt-C is heavily damaged but can return to operating condition after any basic attention with the Heal or Disable Device skill. She was one of the few present when the building began rattling, followed by the north end of its foundation buckling. She relays that the catastrophe opened a gaping hole inside the north end of the building, after which putrid gases and hungry oozes poured out. Before the arbiter could seek help, a serpentine creature emerged, cackled, and struck Iphalt-C down with a spell.

The arbiter can provide little support for the PCs beyond casting *protection from chaos* on a few of them.

C3. The Wallow Pit (CR 12)

A series of private counseling rooms and meeting halls surrounded the large ritual apse at the building's north end. However, Clacasic's sabotage has caused much of this to collapse, creating a precarious ramp of rubble that descends into the sewers 60 feet below.

Creature: Although Clacasic relies on his intrinsic command of oozes to control most of his minions, the catoblepas here joined the attack thanks to Clacasic's many lies about the number of puny creatures it could trample and eat. When it reached the surface, there were only a few petitioners to entertain it. These corpses are now utterly broken and scattered throughout the room. As the PCs arrive, the catoblepas is idly bouncing a corpse on its snout. It tosses this aside and bellows, "At last, more weaklings," in Aklo before attacking.

CATOBLEPAS CR 12
XP 19,200
hp 161 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 52)

Development: When the sound of battle ends, the sewer blight in area C5 reaches out telepathically to a random PC, inquiring who they are and what their intentions are. It tries to convince them to free it by slaying its master, the naga, after which the blight claims

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

it will leave this area forever. Unfortunately, the blight is a poor liar. Even if the PCs agree to kill Clacoscic, the blight has no intention of leaving. Worse, the naga can still command the blight, which could combine several encounters into one devastating confrontation.

C4. Submerged Tunnels (CR 15)

As mortal cities expand and renovate, they build atop old foundations and slowly rise. Axis has existed for eons, and Sayashto sits atop hundreds of past construction levels that have gradually compressed into their constituent quintessence. The city's sewers carve through these old foundations in an orderly fashion, but countless passages snake off from the main thoroughfares. Clacoscic's minions dissolved a small complex of caverns beneath the cemetery. From here, several tunnels wind back to the main sewers hundreds of feet away.

Creatures: When the PCs first arrive here, the naga Clacoscic is away gathering reinforcements. He only returns shortly after the PCs defeat the sewer blight in area C5. With a successful DC 20 Perception check, a PC can hear his and the frogemoth's approach as he tells his new pet about all of his slimy minions—unaware the PCs have killed them.

CLACOSCIC CR 10

XP 9,600

NE advanced slime naga (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 288, 199)

hp 137

TACTICS

Before Combat Clacoscic casts *mage armor* on himself.

During Combat Clacoscic keeps his distance, preferring to launch ranged attacks and let the frogemoth do most of the work.

Morale Clacoscic is a coward at heart. If the frogemoth perishes, Clacoscic flees or surrenders if either he is reduced to 60 hit points or presented with foes that clearly outmatch him.

STATISTICS

Gear pale green prism ioun stone

FIENDISH FROGEMOTH CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 184 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 136)

Development: If Clacoscic surrenders, he is willing to bargain information if allowed to flee. He can explain that he works for Norgorber's agents, operating out of a secret hideout on the outskirts of Duskfathom. He can also provide directions for a reliable route to that region, and he can provide a basic description of his superiors (see the sidebar on page 27). Considering him a liability, his allies have told him little else, though he knows that they have captured many citizens of all kinds for indoctrination.

Once it's clear that the naga is giving up its secrets, Hamal Kai directs her nearby eye to drain the naga's memories, interrupting the interrogation. With a successful DC 36 Perception check, a PC can spot the eye as it weaves toward the naga, giving that PC a standard action with which to intervene. Otherwise, the eye makes contact, likely reducing Clacoscic to a blubbling, incoherent pile of slimy coils.

C5. The Blight's Domain (CR 16)

This 15-foot-tall cavern is messily carved from the subterranean rubble. It serves as the epicenter of the blight's cursed domain.



CLACOSCIC

Hazard: Hoping to lure the PCs into a trap, the blight here used *hallucinatory terrain* to fill this area with mats of illusory fungus, at the center of which lies a fungal node the size of a halfling that pulses like an evil heart. In fact, the area is filled with 5-foot deep, fetid water, which emits a toxic, opaque gas that fills the area within 5 feet of the water. This vapor functions as burnt othur fumes and grants concealment. This hazard and the favorable terrain increases the encounter's effective Challenge Rating by 1.

Creature: The blight lurks in the water, waiting to isolate a few targets and launch a surprise attack.

SEWER BLIGHT

CR 15

XP 76,800

hp 263 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 43)

Development: Once the PCs defeat the sewer blight, they have as much as a minute to explore and recover before Clacosic approaches within hearing distance (see area C4).

Politics: The PCs' bold strike on the blighted cemetery earns them the admiration of thousands, and any PC who attempts to increase her Heroism or Sacrifice facet during the next persona phase may substitute her die roll for a 20.

EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

The amount of evidence the PCs gather not only steers them toward the last part of the adventure but also determines how much direct support they can expect from Axis. Lieutenant Fanalyx meets with the PCs to review their findings when they're ready, seeking them out after the election concludes if they don't arrive on their own. The detective can help make any logical connections the PCs might have missed on their own. After cataloging any evidence, Fanalyx requests a day so that she and her divination resources can analyze these findings more closely and hopefully pick up on Taldaris's trail. The more evidence the PCs have acquired, the greater the resources that Fanalyx can requisition and the greater her certainty in identifying where the PCs should go next. Details for her support and tallying the PCs' evidence appear on page 57.

So long as the PCs' support total is 5 or higher, by the next day Fanalyx has assembled and presented the findings to her superiors, gaining a consensus that Taldaris appears to have been abducted and taken into Duskfathom, Norgorber's subterranean realm. Terrible as this fate is, the police analysts have identified the particular area where he was likely taken: Lost Silhouette, an outpost accessible by subterranean canals and tunnels. The department has launched 27 raids or other infiltrations on the larger area over the past millennium, during each of which the troublemakers there have

slipped away and inflicted considerable losses. Sayashto's council is unwilling to sacrifice numerous inevitables to save one, but it is amenable to a smaller group like the PCs infiltrating this outpost, eliminating the dissidents, and rescuing any abducted citizens.

If the PCs' support total is 4 or lower, Fanalyx is unable to draw strong connections to where Taldaris disappeared, but the information provides her a hunch: Lost Silhouette. Unfortunately, their weak case means that she doesn't have access to detailed records of past incursions and surveillance. If the PCs wish to travel there, they'll need to hire their own guide. The lieutenant can recommend a few of the less disreputable underworld experts, any one of which charges 2,000 gp—a steep but fair price for the risk—to lead the PCs to the entrance.

Story Award: The PCs might earn additional experience points based on their investigation (see page 57).

PART 3: INTO DUSKFATHOM

Once the PCs have secured their route (and guide, if necessary), they are ready to descend into Duskfathom, corner the Norgorberites behind the recent troubles in Sayashto, and rescue Taldaris. Fanalyx can secure several narrow skiffs (15 feet long and 5 feet wide) suitable for navigating the twisting sewers. The PCs can also secure spellcasting services such as *water walk* if they would prefer to avoid boats altogether. Fanalyx does warn that this incursion might last several days, though, so she recommends going in prepared.

D. LOST SILHOUETTE

More than 1,000 feet below Sayashto lies a large network of sewer flows and tunnels carved out from thousands of years of compressed building foundations. At a depth of nearly 700 feet, this network crosses into Duskfathom, the divine realm of the god Norgorber. There, the maze of tunnels becomes even more maddening, with only one route leading directly to the outpost of Lost Silhouette, the domain of a powerful shadow known as the Secret Shade. Unlike the vast cavern complexes elsewhere in Duskfathom, the Lost Silhouette is a comparably claustrophobic region marked only by the prevalence of vaguely humanoid relief carvings marking many of the walls. Using the intelligence provided by Fanalyx or the insights of any guide the PCs hired, they can navigate these waterways and steep portages safely, narrowly evading a patrol of hydrodaemons and fending off a pack of tumorous rats

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

DUSKFATHOM TRAITS

Norgorber's divine realm includes everything from isolated dungeons to dark caverns filled with structures that hang from the ceiling like stalactites. His divine power supersedes Axis's planar traits within these borders. Duskfathom has the following traits.

Divinely Morphic: Norgorber can alter the plane at will.
Strongly Evil-Aligned

Enhanced Magic: Spells and spell-like abilities with the evil descriptor are enhanced.

Impeded Magic: Spells and spell-like abilities with the good descriptor are impeded. Spells that produce light have their ranges halved.

Shrouded: Duskfathom is protected against outside divinations, as mage's private sanctum except that creatures within are not immune to detect thoughts. Teleportation directly into or out of Duskfathom is impossible, though such spells function normally within the realm.

that vainly attempt to clamber onto the PCs' boats. The journey takes 3 hours.

Except where noted, ceilings here are 15 feet high, doors are made of magically reinforced wood (40 hp, hardness 10, break DC 28), and the walls are reinforced masonry—threaded with metal bars under the surface once it became clear that Nibs could travel too freely through mere stone when transformed into an earth elemental. The DC of a Perception check to hear through doors increases by 15, rather than 5. The building materials favor dull grays and near-black tones.

Creature: The master of Lost Silhouette is the Secret Shade, a powerful shadow who freely traverses the outpost, spying on everyone who lives and works there. The Secret Shade is a wary combatant who far prefers striking once before absconding for long minutes until intruders drop their guard again. Over the course of Part 3, this undead mastermind plagues the PCs and warns a few other inhabitants at a time of the intruders.

THE SECRET SHADE

CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 210 (see page 58)

Carvings: Each room in area D has a relief carving of a blurred humanoid head, a representation of the Secret Shade. This provides it a target for its *enter image* spell-like ability. Dealing at least 10 points of damage to such a carving (hardness 8) defaces it enough that it no longer functions as a target.

Pipes: A narrow network of 2-inch-wide pipes runs throughout the outpost, leading from area D12 to areas D3, D4, D5, D7, D11, D13, D15, and several points in

Sayashto above. These provide the hyakume Hamal Kai channels through which to send her many eyes, and these conduits are equally accessible to anyone capable of squeezing through such a space.

Raising the Alarm: One of Lost Silhouette's primary purposes is surveillance, yet for all this, its greatest blind spot is within its own walls. The Norgorberites are as paranoid about each other as they are about outside interference, and the outpost's features are designed to muffle sound and stymie eavesdroppers. This means a typical encounter might only be audible in adjoining rooms for keen-eared listeners, and witnesses are more inclined to prepare for their own imminent attack than raise the general alarm and rush to each other's aid.

The outpost is large enough that the PCs likely need to rest several times during Part 3. They can do so safely by retreating out of Duskfathom, which takes about 1 hour of travel. Alternatively, extradimensional hideaways like *rope trick* or *mage's magnificent mansion* are sufficient. Lost Silhouette's inhabitants aren't idle during this time. They call upon distant reinforcements, reset traps, and begin relocating or destroying valuable documents. These creatures take the following cumulative steps, based on how many areas the PCs have fully explored.

2–7 Areas: The axiomite graveknights in area D15 relocate to the hall outside area D3 to guard the entrance to Lost Silhouette. They perform a fighting retreat to regroup with creatures in a nearby encounter area. Thousand Names begins patrolling the halls, stalking the PCs to pick off any stragglers. Inhabitants reset or repair any traps.

8–12 Areas: The inhabitants begin destroying key documents. This increases the skill check DCs to find, decipher, or understand any texts in area D by 4. The contract devil Phlagomi departs Lost Silhouette. An additional axiomite graveknight arrives to reinforce one of the remaining encounters.

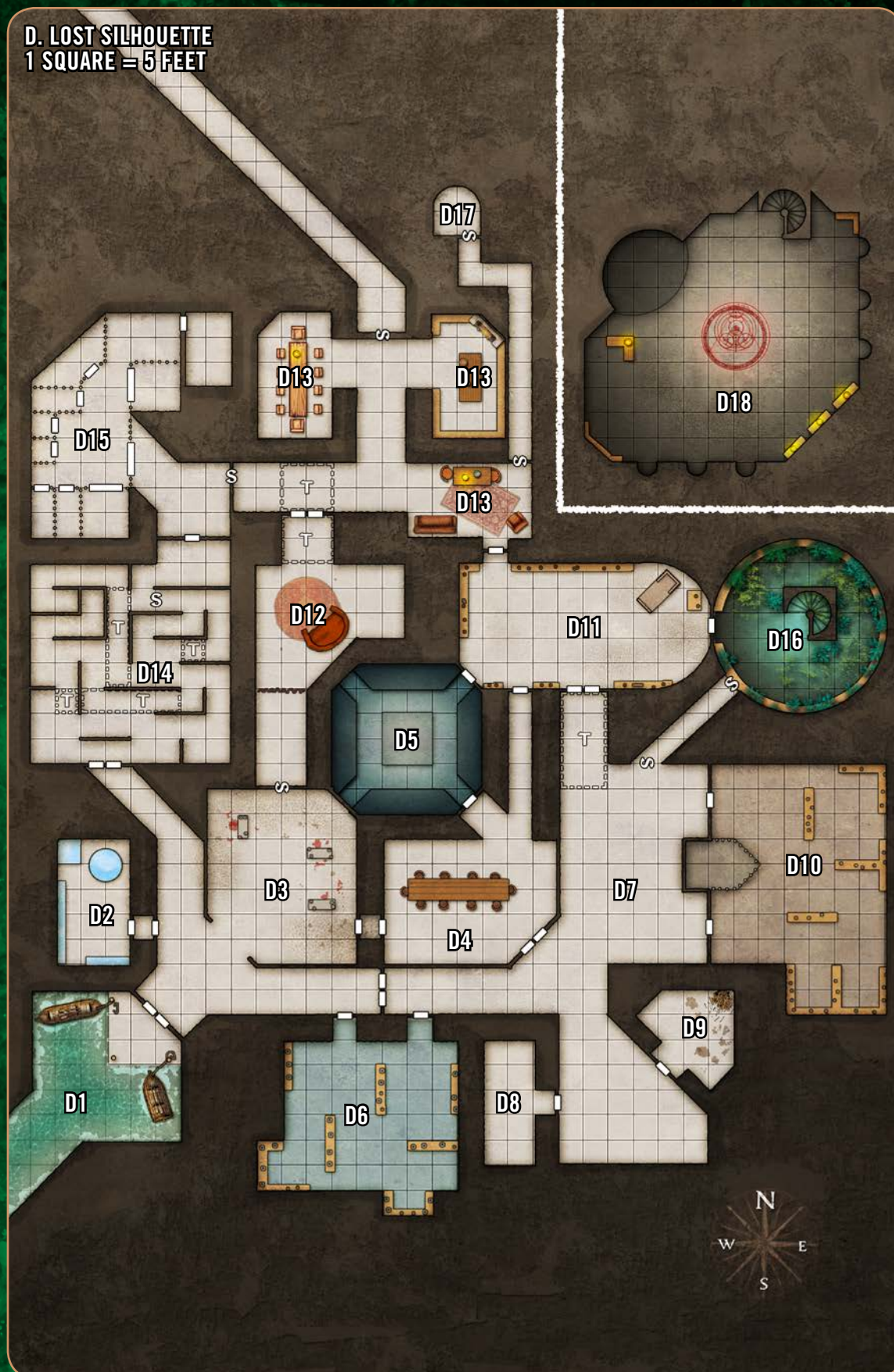
13+ Areas: The crucidaemon departs area D14 to wander freely and turn Lost Silhouette into its own trap-filled labyrinth, leaving *glyphs of warding* and *symbols of pain* throughout. The Secret Shade no longer flees from combat, instead fighting until destroyed. Karumzeks relocate *Inversions of Pentonometry* to an undisclosed location.

D1. Sewer Shore (CR 15)

The jagged sewer tunnel extends for 100 feet from the nearest branch before reaching this roughly square subterranean harbor. A stone stoop serves as the pier, from which is moored a long skiff.

Creatures: A pair of thanadaemons stoically guards this passageway, occasionally agreeing to ferry one of the outpost's inhabitants elsewhere in Duskfathom.

D. LOST SILHOUETTE
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

With their *true seeing*, they can easily watch the full length of the tunnel to the southwest. If they spot unidentified visitors, Tuorgm hides along one wall as Eeshri patiently waits to greet and question whoever approaches. Unless a PC succeeds at the far-fetched lie that they are expected guests, any negotiation here ultimately comes to blows.

EESHRI AND TUORG M

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Thanadaemons (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 74)

hp 172 each

Gear +2 quarterstaff (Eeshri only), +2 invigorating^{UE} quarterstaff (Tuorgm only), soul gem (Eeshri only)

D2. Vermin Lab (CR 14)

This room contains towering shelves bearing dozens of terrariums, each containing scores of arachnids, insects, or wriggling larvae. To the north stands a wide glass cylinder, inside of which thousands of beetles nibble at a heap of scrap metal.

This crowded entomology lab is the personal workshop of Nibs, the worm that walks sent to destroy evidence in Taldaris's home. The glass cylinder (10 hit points, hardness 2, break DC 18) has a 3-foot-square door through which Nibs introduces various corpses for the beetles to clean.

Creature: If Nibs escaped during the encounter in area B6, she is here furiously attempting to crossbreed a more ravenous form of borer beetle.

Hazards: The insects inside the cylinder are a particularly strong breed of dermistid, beetles normally famed for cleaning flesh from bones. These, however, are able to tear off and consume scraps of metal and other inorganic material. If released, they fly about for a few seconds before alighting on a surface (likely a creature) with a large concentration of metal equipment (Reflex DC 20 negates). Once there, they crawl inside the armor or under clothing, where they deal 1d6 points of damage to that PC's heaviest metal equipment per round, ignoring hardness less than 20. Dealing at least 10 points of area damage to the beetles or remaining completely submerged in water for 3 rounds scatters the insects.

Treasure: A low shelf beneath one bank of terrariums has several outfits, each carefully folded. Ever since her transformation, Nibs has had difficulty wearing clothing. These are the articles she nostalgically retained from her past life, including a cursed *robe of vermin* disguised as a *robe of eyes*.

D3. Interrogation Hall (CR 13)

This large room contains several metal tables with a plethora of straps for binding creatures. Arrays of torture implements and surgical tools hang from carefully

ordered displays along the west wall. More than 100 maps of different worlds and cities hang from the eastern wall. This space serves as a general-purpose workshop for questioning captives and infusing information into the petitioners from area D5.

Creatures: Roughly one-third of axiomites dedicate themselves to calculating the laws that underlie the multiverse. Rarely, these supernatural scholars uncover impossible computations that don't merely exist in a paradoxical state of truth and falsehood, but also reveal some of the terrible realities that lie beyond known creation—much like the discoveries thought to create devourers (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 82). Norgorber's agents are always ready to lure these axiomites to Duskfathom with the promise of erasing their memory of these blasphemous calculations. The process only exacerbates the axiomite's despair, melting away their visible flesh and twisting their soulstuff into negative energy, leaving only a core of hateful calculus within an armored shell. More on this process appears in area D11.

Three of these undead axiomites currently use this room to draw knowledge from a petitioner bound to one of the tables. This tormented creature is familiar to the PCs: Wyssilka the Fantabulous, once a jester and assassin before perishing at the PCs' hands (or as punishment for her failure, if the PCs spared her). The Secret Shade pried many secrets from Wyssilka after her death, learning of the Immaculate Circle's delightful conspiracy to take over Taldor, and it has since invested resources in supporting this attempt, confident that a Taldor ruled by a conspiracy will allow his master's influence to flourish. Wyssilka begins wailing for help upon seeing the PCs, and the graveknights rise to fend off the intruders.

AXIOMITE GRAVEKNIGHTS (3)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Axiomite graveknights (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 36,

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 138)

LE Medium undead (augmented outsider, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +28

Aura sacrilegious aura (30 ft., DC 22)

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 23 (+3 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural)

hp 155 each (10d8+100); regeneration 5 (chaotic or magic)

Fort +12, **Ref** +13, **Will** +18

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, rejuvenation;

DR 10/chaotic and magic; **Immune** acid, cold, electricity, undead traits; **Resist** fire 10; **SR** 21

OFFENSE

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

Melee +1 *adamantine short sword* +21/+16 (1d6+11/19–20 plus 2d6 acid), slam +15 (1d4+6)

Special Attacks channel destruction (2d6 acid), devastating

blast (6d6 acid, DC 22, 3/day), seditious weapons, undead mastery (50 HD, DC 22)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +16)

3/day—*dispel chaos*, *empowered order's wrath* (DC 21),
haste, *hold monster* (DC 22), *lightning bolt* (DC 20),
telekinesis (DC 22), *true strike*
1/day—*true seeing*

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 19, **Con** —, **Int** 23, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 33

Feats Dodge, Empower Spell-Like Ability (order's wrath),
Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Mounted Combat[®],
Ride-by Attack[®], Toughness[®]

Skills Bluff +20, Craft (calligraphy) +17, Diplomacy +20,
Fly +8, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (history, local, nobility)
+16, Knowledge (planes) +19, Perception +28, Ride +12,
Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +17,
Survival +20

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Common,
Draconic, Infernal, Undercommon

SQ crystalline dust form, graveknight armor, phantom
mount, ruinous revivification (acid)

Other Gear mwk parade armor^{UE}, +1 adamantite short
sword

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Seditious Weapons (Su) An axiomite graveknight can
infect others with its destructive mathematics,
treating any weapon it wields as a chaotic weapon
for the purpose of bypassing damage reduction and
negating regeneration.

WYSSILKA THE FAILED

CR 1

XP 400

NE petitioner (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 208)

hp 16; fast healing 1

DR 5/—

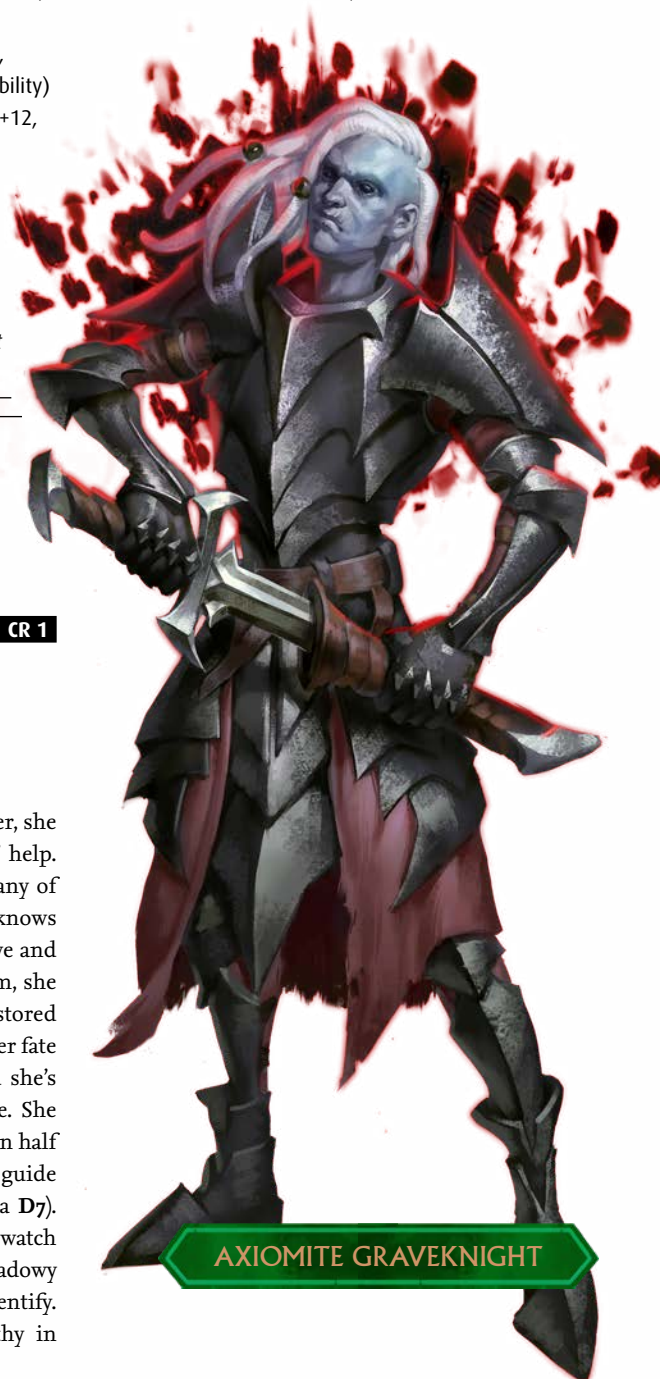
Development: If Wyssilka survives the encounter, she struggles futilely and piteously begs for the PCs' help. The process of becoming a petitioner blurred many of her memories, but she recognizes the PCs and knows that they were once enemies. She's happy to forgive and forget. After being judged and sent to Duskfathom, she lasted less than a day before being captured and stored in area **D5**. She believes herself deserving a far better fate than this for her lifetime of faithful service, and she's desperate to make any deal that helps her escape. She has a basic understanding of the outpost's southern half (though none of its secret passages), can act as a guide through areas **D1–D10** (including the trap in area **D7**). More importantly, she knows the Secret Shade can watch from any of the relief images, and that he weaves shadowy traps in his realm that she can teach the PCs to identify. Wyssilka may be evil, but she's fairly trustworthy in this context.

If Wyssilka never died, replace her with a different petitioner—ideally another person the PCs have killed—who is still eager to make a deal.

D4. Meeting Room (CR 14)

A large table stands in the center of this room, surrounded by eight Medium chairs and two Large seats. The entire room is supernaturally kept at a dim light level (CL 15) to afford visitors both basic visibility as well as a degree of anonymity.

Creatures: The contract devil Phlagomi is a regular visitor to Lost Silhouette, where she acts as a broker for



AXIOMITE GRAVEKNIGHT

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

scores of agents in Hell. However, she has also used her privileged status to sneak into areas **D5** and **D15**, where she sometimes makes deals with the damned to offer them freedom—if condemnation in Hell could be considered liberation—in exchange for seemingly paltry services. Her latest foray ran afoul of a bogeyman who serves the Secret Shade, who cornered her here for interrogation with the help of two axiomite guards.

Simply fleeing would ruin Phlagomi's professional connections, and she would rather wait for some opportunity to destroy the fey and rid herself of eyewitnesses. The PCs' arrival presents just such an opportunity. The guards turn their attention to the PCs, and the devil hangs back, hoping that by not assisting she can parley with the PCs afterward. If attacked in earnest, though, she defends herself.



WYSSILKA THE FAILED

AXIOMITE GRAVEKNIGHTS (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 155 each (see page 44)

ADVANCED BOGEYMAN

CR 11

XP 12,800

hp 127 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 290, 42)

PHLAGOMI

CR 10

XP 9,600

Female contract devil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 76)

hp 136

STATISTICS

Gear 500 pp

Development: So long as the PCs defeat the bogeyman without causing her considerable harm, the contract demon clears her throat audibly and introduces herself as a visiting infernal dignitary, familiar with the Lost Silhouette and many of its inhabitants. If it seems clear that the PCs are here to inflict irreparable harm to the facility, she resigns herself to making the most of the situation. For a simple fee of 5,000 gp, she is willing to provide a simple map of the outpost (except for areas **D12**, **D14**, **D16**, **D17**, and **D18**, which she's never seen), though she's willing to bargain as low as 2,000 gp if a PC succeeds at a DC 31 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check. She doesn't mind following the PCs at a distance to provide more context about a room's contents, but she refuses to participate in combat. Furthermore, she's

quite willing to handle any infernal contract a PC's willing to sign.

Otherwise, she teleports out of the facility to a distant portal connected to Hell.

Story Award: The PCs earn 9,600 experience points for negotiating with or otherwise resolving any encounter with Phlagomi, even if they did not defeat her.

D5. Flesh Locker

Several catwalks crisscross a deep pit in this frigid room. Along the walls are six vertical grooves, each fitted with a looped chain and each one controlled by a different nearby pulley mechanism. Dangling from these chains are columns of living bodies, some emaciated and others painfully bloated.

The ceiling here is 30 feet above the catwalks, and the floor is 30 feet below. Each of the looped chains functions like a curtain rope, allowing a creature to slowly lower or raise the bodies hanging from that chain.

Creatures: A total of 34 neutral evil "hunted" petitioners (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 208) dangle from hooks here. For those secrets too dangerous or too complex to keep within books, the Norgorberites here feed the knowledge to one of the bodies in this living library. When the Secret Shade demands a secret erased forever, it is ritually tattooed on one of the hunted who is then released into the razor maze (area **D14**) to die. On rare occasions, the Secret Shade feeds destructive information to one of the petitioners and then releases it into the wild, where it desperately seeks shelter and spreads its heartfelt lie to anyone who will listen.

Each of these petitioners worshiped Norgorber or Thamir Gixx in life and found themselves condemned to this fate for some moral or practical failing. Upon spotting anyone who they think is a visitor or otherwise sympathetic, the petitioners cry out for help. They promise anything in exchange for their freedom, from atoning for their crimes to the secret of where to find buried treasure. Most of their offers are lies, though they may have some useful tidbits to share about this dungeon's inhabitants or the plots of the Immaculate Circle, which the Secret Shade has taken some interest in since torturing their secrets from Wyssilka. If freed, a petitioner panders and fauns over its liberator before trying to scurry to safety.

Given their helpless state and lack of equipment, PCs receive no XP for slaying any of these petitioners.

D6. Serum Lab (CR 13)

Even though Lost Silhouette primarily serves Norgorber's aspect the Reaper of Reputations, his many alchemical gifts as Blackfingers play a valuable role in the Secret Shade's operations. This laboratory provides enough space for six technicians, and it has two broad copper awnings over the marked areas to vent dangerous fumes. Here teams of karumzeks—spidery outsiders who serve Norgorber's alchemical interests—gleefully concoct new truth serums, invisible inks, and hallucinogenic toxins to use in Norgorber's name.

Creatures: Two karumzeks busily work here, switching between the assigned work and personal projects as they please.

KARUMZEK ALCHEMISTS (2)

CR 11

XP 12,800

Advanced karumzek alchemist 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 288, *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Gods* 301, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 26)

NE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, shapechanger)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, sense poison; **Perception** +19

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 19 (+6 Dex, +9 natural)

hp 162 each (13 HD; 8d8+5d10+99)

Fort +17, **Ref** +16, **Will** +8

DR 5/good; **Immune** poison; **SR** 15

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +17 (1d8+7 plus poison)

Ranged bomb +18 (4d6+4 fire)

Special Attacks bomb 12/day (4d6+4 fire, DC 18), poison, sneak attack +1d6, web (+17 ranged, DC 19, 13 hp)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +6)

Constant—*negate aroma*^{APG} (DC 11)

At will—*bleed* (DC 10), *prestidigitation*, *stabilize*

3/day—*alchemical allocation*^{APG}, *death knell* (DC 12), *invisibility* (self only), *obscuring mist*, *vomit swarm* (spiders only)^{APG}

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 8th; concentration +12)

3rd—*gaseous form*, *haste*, *heroism*

2nd—*barkskin*, *bear's endurance*, *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *resist energy*, see *invisibility*

1st—*bomber's eye*^{APG}, *comprehend languages*, *expeditious retreat*, *shield*, *true strike*

TACTICS

Before Combat The karumzek consumes its mutagen at the first hint of trouble. It then consumes its extracts of *heroism*, *barkskin*, see *invisibility*, *resist energy*, and *shield* in that order. If no threats arrive, the karumzek casts *invisibility* then creeps out to launch a surprise attack against any intruder before scurrying back here to mount a defense.

During Combat The karumzek prefers to throw bombs before relentlessly biting lightly armored targets.

Morale The karumzek fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without its mutagen, the karumzek's statistics are **AC** 23, flat-footed 17; **hp** 136; **Fort** +15; **Con** 21, **Cha** 12.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 22, **Con** 25, **Int** 18, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 32 (44 vs. trip)

Feats Ability Focus (poison), Brew Potion, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Skill Focus (Craft [alchemy]), Throw Anything, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Climb +13, Craft (alchemy) +26 (+34 to create alchemical items), Disable Device +20, Heal +8, Knowledge (arcana, planes) +11, Knowledge (nature, religion) +20, Perception +19, Sleight of Hand +22, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +26; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal, Undercommon

SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +8), change shape (Diminutive spider; *vermin shape II*^{UM}), deft limbs, discoveries (frost bomb, precise bombs [4 squares], smoke bomb, stink bomb), mutagen (+4/-2, +2 natural armor, 80 minutes), poison use, swift alchemy

Gear formula book (contains all prepared extracts)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Deft limbs (Ex) A karumzek's front pair of feet are as nimble and dexterous as human hands. It takes a karumzek half the normal amount of time to create alchemical items.

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; save Fort DC 21; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d3 Str, Dex, or Con (karumzek's choice); cure 2 consecutive saves.

Sense Poison (Ex) As a free action, a karumzek can detect if a creature within 15 feet of it is poisoned. It can attempt to determine the exact type of poison, as if using *detect poison*.

Treasure: This lab contains raw ingredients for producing alchemical objects and potions, collectively worth 2,500 gp. One of the racks of lab instruments holds a *boro bead*^{UE} (4th level).

D7. Assembly Hall (CR 12)

This hallway has several projections and antechambers used as neutral ground to make announcements or give briefings. The northern double door leading to area D11 are kept locked (DC 40).

Trap: The hallway to the north is a decoy never used by the inhabitants. An array of tiny ports fire a hail of poisoned darts at anyone who approaches within 10 feet of the door.

DEATHBLADE DARTS

CR 12

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger visual (arcane eye); **Reset** repair

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

Effect Atk +20 ranged (3d6 plus deathblade poison); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-20-ft. area)

D8. Uiyat's Room

Due to her ongoing operations, the intellect devourer Uiyat traveled to Lost Silhouette infrequently. When she did, she resided in this room that catered to her vanity and epicurean delight with which she experienced the world through new bodies. A wide stone bowl filled with wood shavings was all she cared to use as a bed when outside a host, and an empty chamber pot sits nearby. A tall mirror hangs along the south wall. The chest of drawers contains several outfits of dramatically different sizes. The other drawers contain jars of pickled foods as well as an array of devices and objects to stimulate the senses—everything from vials of spices to a preserved square of shark skin to a lucky rabbit's foot to silver-plated back scratchers.

If Uiyat escaped the PCs during the Mail Fraud encounter, she can be found here.

Treasure: One drawer contains a *wand of gentle repose* (6 charges). The collection of preserved foods and myriad sensory devices is worth 1,000 gp.

D9. Clacasic's Room

Although he spent much of his time wandering Axis's sewers in search of new minions, the slime naga Clacasic sometimes returned here to rest and curry favor with Lost Silhouette's better-regarded operatives. His room is filthy, with a brittle crust of mucus nearly six inches thick along the floor.

If Clacasic escaped the PCs during the encounter in the sewers, he can be found here.

D10. General Lab (CR 15)

This laboratory hosts a variety of experiments in chemistry, flesh-grafting, and alchemical botany. Its numerous workbenches can accommodate up to 10 researchers, and its shelves hold a wealth of scientific texts and logbooks.

The ceiling here is 20 feet high, and the two entrances flank a 15-foot-tall platform.

Creatures: Two karumzeks are monitoring the progress on an engineered species of slime mold capable of mapping out neural pathways based on nearby creatures' thoughts. Atop the perch crouches a clockwork assassin programmed to aid in the defense of this facility and kill unauthorized individuals who try to smuggle out research data.

CLOCKWORK ASSASSIN CR 13

XP 25,600

hp 119 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 659)

KARUMZEK ALCHEMISTS (2) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 162 each (see page 47)

Treasure: The 1,600 pounds of logbooks, tomes, and reference materials catalogue more than a century of groundbreaking alchemical research, though knowing what's worth taking is difficult. By spending 1 hour flipping through these books and succeeding at a DC 23 Craft (alchemy) check or DC 30 Knowledge (arcana or nature) check, a PC can identify eight key texts collectively weighing 20 pounds that are worth 3,500 gp.

KARUMZEK ALCHEMIST

In addition, there is a *flesh golem manual* on the shelf and a *preserving flask*^{UE} (3rd level) on one of the benches.

D11. Oblivion Lab (CR 13)

Shelves line this reading room, whose ceiling bears thousands of calculations and mathematical symbols. The room's east end curves around a padded patient's chair and an iron lectern.

Here is where beleaguered axiomites are led when they come seeking either escape from or answers to the impossible calculations they have discovered. The Secret Shade's minions happily oblige, first allowing the visitor to peruse the texts here before introducing the reader to this laboratory's prize: *Inversions of Pentonometry*, a bronze plaque which contains proofs of geometric impossibilities from beyond the universe. Reading it mentally scars most creatures with the lawful subtype.

The patient's chair (known as the Nescient Cage) has numerous straps, clamps, and tiny tools mounted on articulated metal arms, all of which can be deployed to restrain a wide variety of body types. Now that there are at least four axiomite graveknights in Lost Silhouette, they regularly summon a zelekhtut here and subject it to their incoherent mathematics. Once returned to Axis, these inevitables are hardly cognizant of what occurred, yet they serve as carriers for this corrupting information that can infect others like a virus.

Creatures: Four herecites dedicated to Norgorber are united as a cabal to guard this laboratory and administer any of the teachings here. The summoned zelekhtut Pvarish-19 is currently strapped to the chair, its eyes pinned open so that it must stare at *Inversions of Pentonometry*.

HERECITES (4)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 138 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 154)

OFFENSE

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

Constant—*detect good*, see *invisibility*

At will—*cause fear* (DC 17), *charm person* (DC 16), *comprehend languages*, *disguise self*, *protection from good*

3/day—*align weapon* (evil only), *calm emotions* (DC 17), *death knell* (DC 17), *detect thoughts* (DC 17), *invisibility*, *nondetection*, *unholy blight* (DC 19)

1/day—*animate dead*, *confusion* (DC 19), *death ward*, *divination*, *heroism*, *inflict critical wounds* (DC 19), *magic circle against good*, *speak with dead* (DC 18), *suggestion* (DC 18)

TACTICS

Before Combat If they hear combat in a nearby area, the herecites cast *nondetection*, *protection from good*, and *invisibility* on themselves.

During Combat Two of the herecites fight in melee while the other two rain down spell-like abilities on their foes.

STATISTICS

SQ cabal, herecite domains (Charm, Death, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery), profane insight, unleash heresy

Hazard: The formulae and calculations inscribed on the chamber's ceiling are utterly discordant with known mathematical theory, yet they are alluring for their perspective. A creature of the lawful subtype that purposefully studies this writing is sickened for 10 minutes. Anyone studying the calculations also takes nonlethal damage equal to $1d8 \times$ her Intelligence modifier (minimum 0). A successful DC 25 Will save negates the sickened condition and halves the damage.

Treasure: *Inversions of Pentonometry* is a short and innovative mathematical treatise whose contents are virtually worthless to this version of reality; its effective price is only 500 gp. Even so, studying it closely can expand the mind, functioning as a *tome of clear thought* +1. However, unless the reader succeeds at a DC 23 Will save at the end of this process, she also gains a permanent –3 penalty on saves against illusions and effects that would confuse her.

The herecites document the unit identifications of each inevitable brought here for corruption. Currently, one logbook is open and details several different infection routines the cabal has already run. With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (planes) check, a PC can ascertain that Pvarish-19 may have been infected as a carrier for some destructive information that could pass to other inevitables—even as a summoned creature. Finding records of the herecites' other infections requires 10 minutes of searching and a successful DC 28 Heal, Knowledge (arcana or planes), Linguistics, or relevant Profession check, any of which turns up evidence of and identification numbers for more than 80 different inevitables over the past five years.

Development: Pvarish-19 is bound to the Nescient Cage and only somewhat aware of its surroundings following its exposure to the herecites' teachings. With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (arcana or planes) or Spellcraft check, a PC can determine that this zelekhtut was conjured here and will eventually return where it came from when the magic runs out after less than an hour. By the time the PCs enter this area, they have approximately 30 minutes before the summoning ends.

If allowed to return to Axis, Pvarish-19 could pose a threat to others. There are three likely ways to prevent this damage: first, the PCs can kill Pvarish-19, requiring a chaotic weapon or spell. Second, the PCs can purge the inevitable of this dangerous code with a *heal* or *modify memory* spell. Third, the PCs can find the full registry of infected inevitables (see *Treasure* above) and turn that over to Lieutenant Fanalyx.

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

D12. Ocular Den (CR 16)

Illuminated by red-flamed candles that cast dim light, this room contains several plush rugs, a well-stocked sideboard, and a large padded chair. Near the ceiling along each wall are several tiny pipes. A heavy curtain conceals the hall to the south.

This room is Hamal Kai's personal chamber. The pipes lead to a variety of locations in Lost Silhouette and Sayashto.

Creature: The corpulent spymaster Hamal Kai lives here, emerging only rarely to take care of anything that her diligent eye probes cannot perform. Despite her reclusiveness, the Secret Shade informally treats her as its second in command, and she has full authority to discipline anyone else in the operation. From here she tries to monitor the PCs' progress remotely with her eye probes, preparing herself to strike if they unwisely approach her room.

HAMAL KAI CR 15

XP 51,200

Hyakume (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 153)

hp 218

During Combat Hamal Kai combines her slam attacks and spell-like abilities to attack the PCs, draining the memory from a powerful combatant to further turn the tide in her favor.

Morale If reduced to 45 or fewer hit points, Hamal Kai flees through her secret door to area D3.

STATISTICS

Gear *mantle of immortality*^{UE}, *periapt of proof against poison*, *staff of stealth* (7 charges)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Distant Espionage (Su) Hamal Kai's eye probes can travel up to 10 miles before being destroyed.

Trap: An array of poisoned dart launchers in the ceiling are primed to fire at anyone entering the room. Hamal Kai can shut off this trap from her chair.

DEATHBLADE DARTS CR 12

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger visual (arcane eye); **Reset** repair

Effect Atk +20 ranged (3d6 plus deathblade poison); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-20-ft. area)

D13. Living Space

These rooms contain sitting space, a few beds, a basic kitchen, cupboards, and general storage for Lost Silhouette. These largely serve the needs of Hamal Kai when she is hungry, and the graveknights and karumzeks occasionally retire here. A PC can discover

the secret door to area D15 with a successful DC 25 Perception check.

D14. Bladed Maze (CR 16)

This room has numerous masonry partitions that turn the space into a maze. Slow-reacting smoke sticks fill the entire area with a haze of acrid cinders that grants concealment to creatures more than 5 feet away. Anything more than 15 feet away has total concealment. The few inhabitants who travel through here know to veer to the right and use the secret door (Perception DC 25).

Creature: Originally recruited to manage security in Lost Silhouette, the crucidaemon that haunts this area filled the entire maze with traps—much to the other inhabitants' painful discomfort. It still emerges periodically to maintain its few remaining traps, but most of its time's spent here, turning this tiny maze into a heinous deathtrap (see Traps below). Escaping captives often stumble into the labyrinth and perish only moments later.

CRUCIDAEEMON CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 212 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 62)

TACTICS

During Combat The crucidaemon uses its mobility to strike and retreat, luring enemies into trapped areas and then using fear to send them fleeing into new traps. It stands to fight isolated targets.

Morale Unless it has a clear advantage or opportunity to inflict lasting harm, the crucidaemon flees if reduced to 35 or fewer hit points.

STATISTICS

Gear *arachnid goggles*^{UE}

Traps: The crucidaemon has placed *glyphs of warding* to unravel the comforting abjurations of intruders. It has also painstakingly installed dozens of arcing blades that inflict countless tiny cuts before locking into place to slash out again.

GREATER GLYPHS OF WARDING (2) CR —

Type magic; **Perception** DC 33; **Disable Device** DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Effect spell effect (*greater dispel magic*, targeted dispel, CL 16th)

HALL OF RAZORS (2) CR 11

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

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Duration** 1 round; **Reset** automatic (1 round)

Effect Atk +20 melee (8d4+8); multiple targets (all targets in a 20-ft. line)

D15. Shielded Cells (CR 15)

The Norgorberites frequently capture prisoners for interrogation or detainment, each of which they store in these cells. Each cell maintains a muffling effect that reduces most sensory input from outside the cell to a muted whisper or a vague visual outline. The walls here also bear thousands of dissonant mathematical inequalities that suppress spellcasting as well as axiomatics' ability to assume an incorporeal form. Occupied cells are locked (Disable Device DC 40).

Creatures: Currently there are three captives here: **Alzem** (NE female tiefling rogue 5) who made the mistake of inspecting the large southern cell too closely and became mind-swapped with a yithian^{B3} who has since sneaked away with her body; **Imaro** (LN male petitioner^{B2}), and **Taldaris** (LN advanced impariut, see page 60). Alzem has worked as one of the Secret Shade's operatives before, finds her new body horrifying, and just wants to escape. Likewise, Imaro just wants to leave, though he knows he has no chance of reaching the surface without help. Taldaris's motives are more complex (see Development).

Early during the PCs' attack, the petitioner Thousand Names and a pair of graveknights are here to review the prisoners log and interrogate the captives. If they have forewarning that intruders are approaching, they fan out and even hide inside open cells to launch an ambush.

Thousand Names was once a "remade" petitioner of Axis, though he routinely struggled to decipher the riddles inscribed on his new body. With each colleague who unlocked their secrets before him, he became increasingly jealous, eventually accosting those enlightened petitioners on their way to the Adamantine Forge. He's now killed hundreds, each time writing the fallen's name into his flesh over one of his original inscriptions in the hope that he'll receive his just rewards once he steals enough of others' knowledge.

AXIOMITE GRAVEKNIGHTS (2) CR 10

XP 9,600

hp 155 each (see page 44)

TALDARIS CR 13

XP 25,600

hp 172 (see page 60)

THOUSAND NAMES

CR 14

XP 38,400

Human petitioner inquisitor of Norgorber 13
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 208, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 38)

LE Medium outsider

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

Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 21
(+7 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 118 (15 HD; 13d8+2d10+45)

Fort +15, **Ref** +10, **Will** +14

Immune transmutations, mind-affecting effects; **DR** 10/-; **SR** 25

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *returning harpoon*
+21/+16/+11 (1d8+11/19-20/x3) or
slam +18 (1d4+5)

Ranged +2 *returning harpoon* +21 (1d8+11/19-20/x3)

Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 13th; concentration +15)

4th (3/day)—*cure critical wounds*, *fear* (DC 16), *spell immunity*, *stoneskin*

3rd (4/day)—*dispel magic*, *magic vestment*, *nondetection*, *righteous vigor*^{APG} (DC 15), *speak with dead* (DC 15)

2nd (6/day)—*align weapon*, *detect thoughts* (DC 14), *invisibility*, *resist energy*, *see invisibility*

1st (6/day)—*comprehend languages*, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *expeditious retreat*, *protection from good*, *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 12), *brand*^{APG} (DC 12), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *sift*^{APG}

Domain Knowledge (Memory^{APG} subdomain)

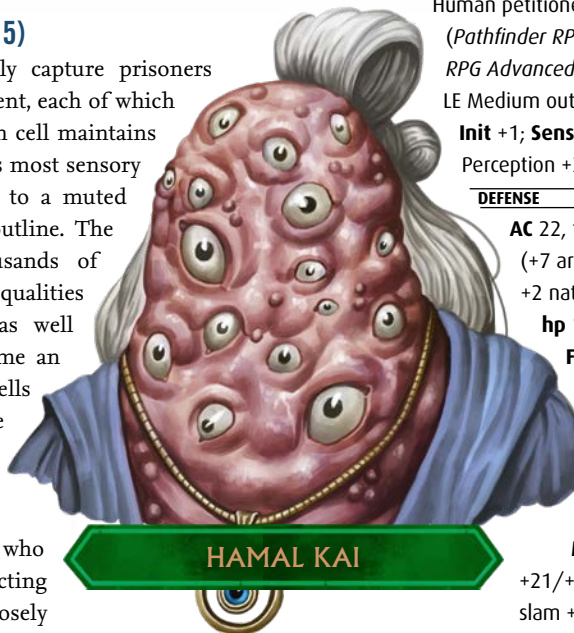
TACTICS

Before Combat Thousand Names casts *magic vestment* on his armor and *nondetection* each day. If aware of an impending combat, he drinks his *potion of barkskin* and then casts *stoneskin*, *spell resistance*, *divine favor*, and *righteous vigor*.

During Combat Thousand Names activates his justice and protection judgments (not included in these stats) and prowls the edge of combat while his servants engage. He targets one foe at a time to extract the maximum benefit from his *righteous vigor* spell, trying to drag them away from the main fight.

Morale Thousand Names retreats temporarily if reduced below half hit points, after which he heals his wounds and stalks his foes to attack from surprise.

Base Statistics Without his preparatory spells and potion, Thousand Names's statistics are **AC** 18, touch 13, flat-footed 17; **DR** —; **SR** —; **Melee** +2 *returning harpoon* +18/+13/+8 (1d8+8/19-20/x3) or slam +15 (1d4+2).



REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 28

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (harpoon), Furious Focus^{APG}, Improved Critical (harpoon), Iron Will, Lookout^{APG}, Outflank^{APG}, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Strike^{APG}, Swap Places^{APG}, Toughness, Weapon Focus (harpoon)

Skills Climb +14, Disguise +11, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Knowledge (planes) +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +18, Survival +20

Languages Celestial, Common

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* (2); **Other Gear** +1

warding^{UE} chain shirt, +2 *returning harpoon^{UE}*, *lesser belt of mighty hurling^{UE}*, *cloak of resistance* +2, *ring of protection* +2, 445 gp

Development: Taldaris patiently sits in his cell, waiting for his door to open. Once released, he waits for introductions or some other social cue. Failing that, he strides out and softly demands that the PCs identify themselves. The inevitable finds the PCs' mission intriguing and is willing to accompany them so long as they agree to bring his jail wardens—by which he means Thousand Names, Hamal Kai, and the Secret Shade—to justice and recover his halberd. He is particular about all of these points, insisting that compromising on them would only embolden their enemies. Beyond this, he trails after the PCs, constantly assessing their deeds and quietly judging their choices. More information about Taldaris appears on page 60.

Story Award: For finding and rescuing Taldaris, award the PCs 38,400 XP.

D16. Insidious Garden (CR 14)

Wall-mounted metal shelves support several dozen miniature potted trees, behind each of which hangs a different picture portraying some urban landscape. A spiral staircase descends through the floor, though it is choked with thick, flowering vines.

In the ever-evolving arms race to reliably monitor cities and communicate with extraplanar operatives, the karumzeks of Lost Silhouette have established this garden of plants, each of which tastes the political climate of a distant realm and then communicates that information by growing, withering, or blooming in particular ways. Likewise, carefully pruning a miniature tree in particular ways or feeding it special alchemical tinctures can effect minor changes in a particular plant species in the observed area, each change signaling local Norgorberites of new orders or developments. What the system lacks in speed, it makes up for in subtlety and a lack of any current countermeasures.

Six everburning torches here fill the room with normal light.

Creatures: A karumzek curiously pores over the various plants here, sketching their growth of new shoots and roots with painstaking detail. The vines clogging the stairway are in fact a viper vine, a carnivorous plant tasked with keeping unauthorized creatures from descending the stairs to area D18.

THOUSAND NAMES

VIPER VINE CR 13
XP 25,600
hp 190 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 279)

KARUMZEK ALCHEMIST CR 11
XP 12,800
hp 162 (see page 47)

Treasure: The mechanism providing sunlight for the plants in this room is built around a +3 *light steel shield of improved electricity resistance* etched with the sun-shaped holy symbol of a long dead god. Extracting the shield from its housing without creating arcane feedback is a delicate process, requiring a successful DC 29 Spellcraft or Use Magic Device check. Failure causes a shower of sparks and chars the shield, reducing it to a +2 *light steel shield of electricity resistance*.

D17. Shadow Sanctum

This cramped space is empty but for pages of notes and sketches. A pair of tweezers sits atop one of the drawings.

This humble area is the only place the Secret Shade calls its own. The shadow has virtually no recollection of its past life, and these documents represent the aging fragments and implicit clues of what it's pieced together over the centuries, arranged carefully using a set of *ghost touch tweezers* (worth 1,000 gp). Collectively, these pages suggest the Secret Shade was once a wanted man in the cities of Vyre and later Absalom. Underneath one of the pages sits a tiny, crank-driven music box that only plays part of a long-forgotten ode.

Finding the secret doors to this area requires a successful DC 35 Perception check.

Development: The Secret Shade rests here every 12 hours or so to mull over its past. If it notices anything stolen or out of place in the room, it seethes with anger. Its attacks become more frequent and less merciful.

D18. Receiving Room (CR 17)

Rounded alcoves line this large room, each niche marked by an ornate archway. A raised oval platform faces an inscribed circle at the center of the room. Several desks, shelves, and clothing racks filled with dark garments line the area.

This room contains several inactive portals to different portions of Duskfathom as well as to Abaddon, the Abyss, and Hell. It is here that the Secret Shade and select cohorts meet with Norgorber's most important servants and allies. From here, the operatives also intercept divine messages and summoning rituals aimed at the abducted Taldaris. The clothing racks hold a variety of

hoods, cloaks, and other obscuring garments to preserve some anonymity during delicate meetings.

Creatures: With the PCs' recent activities in Axis and interest in the abducted Taldaris, Norgorber himself has deigned to notice the insects scuttling through his divine realm and dispatched his herald—the Stabbing Beast—to resolve the matter and transport Taldaris to safer accommodations. The two corrupted kolyaruts normally guard this chamber and now serve as guardians for their god's agent. The herald arrived in its humanoid form. For at least 10 minutes since its arrival it has been interrogating the kolyaruts about the operation to better understand how to recoup the losses while he waits for lesser servants to bring him the long-dead emperor.

The PCs can listen in on this hissing tirade, though the Stabbing Beast's keen senses make it difficult for others to hide from it. It telepathically warns the inevitables to prepare for combat, and if the PCs retreat, the herald stalks them and considers an ideal place where it could teleport and attack by surprise.

CORRUPTED KOLYARUTS (2) CR 13
XP 25,600 each

LE fiendish kolyaruts (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 163)
hp 158 each

THE STABBING BEAST CR 15
XP 51,200

NE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, herald, shapechanger)
Init +16; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, see in darkness, see invisibility; **Perception** +26

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 23, flat-footed 18 (+12 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 natural)
hp 212 (17d10+119)

Fort +17, **Ref** +17, **Will** +14; +4 vs. mind-affecting

Defensive Abilities all-around vision; **DR** 10/good and magic; **Immune** poison; **Resist** acid 30, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 26

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee +1 *keen short swords* +28/+28/+23/+18/+13 (1d6+4/17-20 plus bleed), sting +24 (1d6+4 plus bleed and poison)

Ranged poison stream +29 touch (blindness 1d4+1 rounds)

Special Attacks bleed (2d6), poison, sudden strike

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th; concentration +19)

Constant—*see invisibility*

At will—*absorbing touch*^{APG}, *alchemical allocation*^{APG}, *charm person* (DC 13), *keen edge*, *poison* (DC 16), *true strike*

3/day—*false alibi* (DC 15), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *invisibility*, *modify memory* (DC 16), *suggestion* (DC 15), *summon* (level 6, 1 fiendish deadfall scorpion [*Bestiary* 3 237] 100%)

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

TRIUMPHS IN THE REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

If you are using the rules from the "Relics of Old Taldor" article in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128 to add a sense of historical weight to your campaign, "The Reaper's Right Hand" does not introduce any new relics.

This adventure includes two triumphs for the PCs: discovering the Tomb of the First Emperor, a wonder lost to history, and rescuing the inevitable that Taldaris has become. Each triumph allows a PC to unlock a new tier of power in one relic she carries.

TACTICS

Before Combat The Stabbing Beast casts *keen edge* on both short swords, then *invisibility* to launch a surprise attack.

During Combat The herald blinds ranged combatants and spellcasters with its poison before focusing on enemies at close range.

Morale If reduced to 45 hit points or fewer, the Stabbing Beast escapes using *greater teleport*. If unable to flee, it fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 35, **Con** 24, **Int** 13, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 43

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows^B, Dodge, Greater Feint^B, Improved Feint^B, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Mobility, Scorpion Style^B, Spring Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Appraise +12, Bluff +22, Climb +11, Craft (alchemy) +13, Knowledge (arcana, nature) +10, Knowledge (local) +13, Knowledge (planes) +12, Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +26, Sense Motive +13, Stealth +32; **Racial**

Modifiers +8 Bluff, +4 Perception

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Infernal, Protean; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ change shape (Huge scorpion or scorpion-tailed human; *shapechange*), murderer's reward

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Murderer's Reward (Su) If the Stabbing Beast's attack reduces a target to fewer than 0 hit points, the herald immediately gains 2d6 temporary hit points (or 3d8, if the attack kills the target), but no more than the target's maximum hit points. The temporary hit points last for 1 hour.

Poison (Ex) Sting—injury; save Fort DC 25; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d6 Str; cure 2 consecutive saves.

Poison Stream (Ex) As a ranged attack (or in place of a melee sting attack), the Stabbing Beast can fire a stream of poison up to 180 feet at an opponent's eyes. The target must succeed at a save against the Stabbing Beast's poison or be blinded for 1d4+1 rounds.

Sudden Strike (Ex) During a surprise round, the herald may act as if it had a full round to act, rather than just one standard action.

Treasure: The desks here hold incomplete records of a recent meeting the Secret Shade's conducted with the Immaculate Circle, posing as one of their members; to avoid leaking information, no complete account of the operations exists anywhere. However, if the PCs have unfinished business with various foes in Taldor from earlier *Adventure Path* volumes, the notes here might provide key intelligence that allows the PCs to tie up that loose end once and for all.

Leaning against one wall is a +3 *axiomatic mithral halberd* that belongs to Taldaris (see area **D15**).

Development: Once the PCs have concluded their encounter here, the ritual platform begins humming and projecting the image of a brilliant white ring. With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft check, a PC can identify that the circle seems to be constructed to intercept divine messages to and from Norgorber cultists in a specific region; succeeding at this check by 5 or more also reveals the circle is attuned to Taldor.

The single white ring divides into two smaller circles, each of which refines itself into the head and upper body of a distinguishable speaker. The first figure wears a distinctive black hood and mask, obscuring any features that would indicate race, age, and gender. The other figure is a pale, shorthaired half-elf woman with pronounced cheekbones and a circular scar on her chin.

The half-elf woman's features harden as she speaks: "Report! This chaos will not last forever, nor will her yapping lapdogs remain quiet much longer. I pray your brotherhood has not failed us again."

"So impatient for an immortal," the masked figure responds. "Your dame lies cold as morning dew, her soul spread to the winds. Shall we kill the child as well?"

The faces vanish, a reappearance a few moments later. "Leave the twilight child to us," the half-elf woman continues. "He will be too distracted mourning his sister to stop us."

The masked figure concludes. "As you wish. I trust the Immaculate Circle will not forget their loyal servants now that Taldor's throne is in your reach."

With that, the images vanish and the circle's glow fades.

A successful DC 29 Knowledge (local) check recognizes the distinct equipment of the Masked Marquis, leader of Oppara's Norgorber cult, the Brotherhood of Silence. The other figure is unidentifiable to the PCs—she is Nenareen Adella of the Immaculate Circle (See *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #132: *The Six-Legend Soul* for details). The Secret Shade's magic circle has tapped into a *sending* spell between the secret society leader and Oppara's master assassin.

In the PCs' absence, the Immaculate Circle accelerated their efforts, initiating a far-reaching plot the PCs will



learn more about in “The Six-Legend Soul.” For now, though, the most important takeaway is that Princess Eutropia is dead.

Story Award: For overhearing this information about Taldor’s fate, award the PCs 19,200 XP.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs have defeated the key ringleaders of Lost Silhouette (Thousand Names, Kamal Hai, and the Secret Shade), rescued Taldaris, and thwarted the foes in area **D18**, it is only a matter of days before any remaining threats in the outpost flee. Once he determines that justice has been served, Taldaris announces his willingness to return with the PCs to Axis, bequeaths his halberd to them, and empowers the *Mantle of Kings* as a sign of his blessing.

Lieutenant Fanalyx is impressed by the PCs’ accomplishments and eagerly debriefs them on everything they learned and accomplished, though she is understanding if the PCs feel pressed to return to Taldor given the grave news they may have overheard in the receiving room. Taldaris imperiously sits nearby and offers brief acknowledgment of the PCs’

accomplishments or corrections to their reports. Their report complete, Fanalyx dispatches a courier to take the report directly to Aktun, the capital district. Within an hour, an arbiter returns bearing a written statement of commendation from its superior for the PCs’ service and an *orb of pure law* to aid them. In addition, so long as the PCs fulfilled at least three of the following five conditions, they also each earn the Eternal Crown, one of the highest medals awarded to civilians for service to Axis: treat Taldaris with respect at all times; permanently destroy at least three axiomite graveknights; rescue Imaro from area **D15**; recover or destroy the *Inversions of Pentonometry*; or recover the inevitable corruption records from area **D11**.

That concludes the PCs’ business in Axis, but as they learned recently, the Immaculate Circle has killed Princess Eutropia. It is taboo for Taldaris to intervene in Taldor’s politics, but he is willing secure the PCs precise transport back to Oppara—providing them with tuning forks attuned to the Material Plane and Axis, as well as locating a spellcaster to cast *plane shift*, should the PCs lack the ability. If he has not done so already, he also asks the PCs—with a brief stutter of emotion—that they help his legacy, his people, and his empire thrive for another thousand years of peace.

Story Award: For shattering the Secret Shade’s operation at Lost Silhouette, award the PCs 38,400 XP. If they also earned medals, increase this to 51,200 XP.

REAPER’S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

LIEUTENANT FANALYX

Although utterly loyal to Axis and its principles, Fanalix is a detective willing to explore unconventional solutions and work with untested strangers to keep her district safe.

LIEUTENANT FANALYX

CR 11

XP 12,800

Female unique axiomite (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 36)

LN Medium outsider (extraplanar, lawful)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 19 (+2 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural, +1 shield)

hp 127 (15d10+45); regeneration 5 (chaotic or magic)

Fort +8, **Ref** +14, **Will** +16

DR 10/chaotic; **Immune** disease, electricity, mind-affecting effects; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

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

Melee +1 quarterstaff +21/+16/+11 (1d6+8) or

+1 quarterstaff +19/+19/+14/+9 (1d6+6)

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

At will—*detect magic*

3/day—*comprehend languages*, *dispel chaos*,

empowered order's wrath (DC 19), *haste*,

hold monster (DC 20), *lightning bolt* (DC 18),

telekinesis (DC 20), *true strike*

1/day—*summon* (level 8, 1 *zelekhut*), *true seeing*

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 36

Feats Dodge, Double Slice, Empower Spell-Like Ability (order's wrath), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting

Skills Appraise +15, Craft (drawing) +16, Diplomacy +23, Fly +9, Heal +15, Knowledge (arcana, engineering, geography, local) +15, Knowledge (planes) +23, Perception +23, Sense Motive +23, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +18, Survival +23

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal

SQ crystalline dust form

Gear +1/+1 quarterstaff, bracers of armor +2, collection of puzzle boxes^{UE}, crowbar, ink, inkpen, journal^{UE}, Large manacles, magnifying glass, manacles (2), silk rope (50 ft.), superior locks (3), 59 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Summon Inevitable (Sp) As a special privilege of her rank, Lieutenant Fanalix may summon a *zelekhut* inevitable once per day as a full-round action. This is in addition to the *zelekhut* she may summon by joining hands with three additional axiomites.

Like most axiomites, Fanalix emerged from one of Axis's crystal monoliths as the union of numerous lawful souls woven into a corporeal form. She initially served as a mathematician analyzing economic data and likely would have remained there but for her spotting what her colleagues had missed: seemingly extraneous data points that traced the path of a long-running smuggling racket within the Eternal City itself! With permission from her supervisor, she pursued the clues and built a watertight case, which earned her the right to coordinate and accompany the squadron of inevitables that executed the raid and shut down the illegal operation for good. Axis may have created her to decipher the universe, yet she had discovered that her true calling was solving life's smaller, more gratifying mysteries.

Most of Axis's law enforcement falls to inevitables, who have more specialized powers than an axiomite, but Fanalix's analytical mind lets her make deductions and follow hunches in ways that challenged the department's standards. Despite a few reprimands for stepping out of line, she's distinguished herself time and again—most famously in solving the century-old Erwyr Scythe Homicides—earning her the rank of lieutenant and significant oversight in the district of Sayashto.

However, Sayashto is a quiet district that attracts more misdemeanors than high-profile felonies. Lieutenant Fanalix still enjoys her work, but she misses the excitement of working at the department level. As heightened protean aggression over the past decade has drawn resources from her precinct, she's spent far more time filing paperwork than solving crimes. Her superiors still find her reckless willingness to bend the rules (by Axis's standards) disconcerting, and her current assignment is meant for her to practice the fundamentals and ground herself in good policing methodology.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

By the time the PCs arrive in Sayashto, Lieutenant Fanalix is already eager to take on an engaging case. However, the PCs' minimal evidence isn't enough for her to justify logging much time investigating Taldaris's disappearance—particularly not with her being short-staffed—and she knows that a band of strangers could uncover a lot with the appropriate authorization. She's unwilling to bend much farther than that, though; she is

still a creature of law, entirely respectful of the Eternal City's regulations.

During Part 2, Fanalyx serves as the PCs' primary point of contact with Axis's legal authorities. She's also an ideal mouthpiece for the GM to steer the PCs' investigation, particularly in the event that the players are struggling to interpret their findings. Keep in mind that her skill bonuses are fairly comparable to those of a 14th-level character, so for a group whose characters are ill equipped for investigations, she might step in on occasion to provide backup. However, be cautious about how often the lieutenant assists directly, lest it steal the spotlight from the PCs. This might be especially helpful when responding to the naga Clacotic's assault on the Hall of Final Deeds toward the end of Part 2, when having Fanalyx (and maybe even Ohalia) join the battles could help turn the tide on these difficult fights.

Ultimately, the PCs aren't trying to impress Fanalyx so much as they are help her build a sound case that she can send to her superiors. Only those superiors can order a deeper investigation, requisition more than basic supplies, or reschedule teams of criminal analysts to prioritize tracking Taldaris. To track this process, each of the PCs' major accomplishments during Part 2 earns them one or more points. At the end of Part 2, total these points to determine not only the strength of the case Fanalyx sends up the chain but also how much analysis returns as a result and how much material support the lieutenant can provide before the PCs descend to dangerous depths of Duskfathom.

Deeds	Support Earned
Studied Taldaris's astral legend	1
Recovered the <i>band of triumph</i>	1
Gain Qarit's memento of Taldaris	1
Each of the two wax-sealed letters recovered intact	1
Captured Clacotic for questioning	1
Prevented Hamal Kai from draining Clacotic's memories	1
Thwarted the intellect devourer Uiyat	1
Recovered one-third or two-thirds of Uiyat's documents	1 or 2
Won the election	3

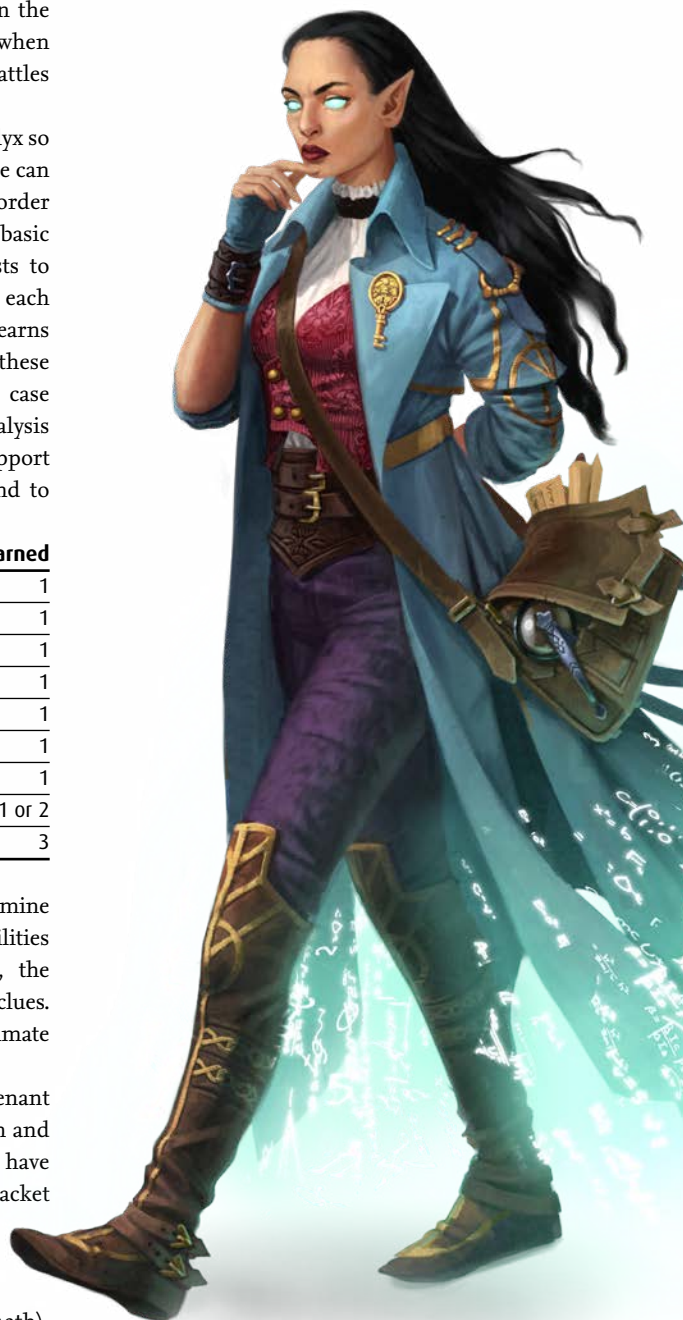
A Weak Case (0–4 Points): Fanalyx's superiors determine that there are too few clues and too many possibilities to authorize further investigation. Furthermore, the limited analysis only provides a few additional clues. These are enough for Fanalyx to identify an approximate destination in Duskfathom, but little more.

A Solid Investigation (5–7 Points): The lieutenant receives the go-ahead to continue the investigation and formally deputize the PCs. The precinct's diviners have traced Taldaris's trail to Lost Silhouette, and the packet provided includes summaries of past incursions into that portion of Duskfathom as well as reliable directions. Finally, the package contains several tools for the PCs: four *potions of shield of faith* (CL 12th)

and a *wand of dispel magic* (CL 13th, 6 charges). The PCs earn 38,400 XP.

A Clear Trail (8–10 Points): The results are especially clear, resulting in a similar response to that in Solid Investigation above. However, the PCs also receive a *scroll of resurrection* in the package. The PCs earn 51,200 XP.

An Infallible Investigation (11+ Points): The case provided by the PCs and Fanalyx earns the unanimous support of the lieutenant's superiors. In addition to the information and tools provided above, the PCs receive a *dark blue rhomboid ioun stone* embossed with the holy symbol of Abadar. The PCs earn 76,800 XP.



REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part 1: Attaining the Mantle

Part 2: The Burden of Truth

Part 3: Into Duskfathom

NPC Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines of Taldor

Bestiary

THE SECRET SHADE

The powerful incorporeal remnant of a master assassin, the Secret Shade oversees Lost Silhouette, using the outpost's resources to corrupt Axis above and take control of Taldor through proxies.

THE SECRET SHADE

CR 15

XP 51,200

Unique fiendish shadow (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 245)

NE Medium undead (evil, incorporeal)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., thoughtsense 60 ft.;

Perception +31

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 23, flat-footed 16 (+6 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 210 (20d8+120)

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

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal; **DR** 10/good; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 15, fire 15

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee incorporeal touch +21 (1d8 Strength damage/19–20)

Special Attacks confessing catatonia, create spawn, shadow trap

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +26)

At will—*comprehend languages*, *darkness*, *enter image*^{APG}

3/day—quicken *darkness*

1/day—*unholy aura* (DC 24)

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 22, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 38

Feats Blind-fight, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (incorporeal touch), Improved Lightning Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (darkness), Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Fly +23, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (planes) +12, Knowledge (religion) +15, Perception +31, Spellcraft +15, Stealth +35 (+39 Stealth in dim light, +31 in bright light);

Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth in dim light (–4 in bright light)

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal

SQ easy to summon, shadow tethers

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Confessing Catatonia (Su) If a creature would be killed by the Secret Shade's Strength damage, the shadow can instead leave the creature helpless, barely conscious, and in a highly suggestible state. For 6 hours the target must answer any questions as if subject to an *elixir of truth* (Will DC 26), though it can gain a +4 bonus on such a saving throw by choosing to take 1 point of Strength drain. This effect ends early if the target is healed of all of its Strength damage.

Create Spawn (Su) A humanoid creature killed by the Secret Shade's Strength damage becomes a shadow (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 245) under its control 1d4 rounds later. If the humanoid slain had 9 or more Hit Dice, it instead becomes a greater shadow.

Easy to Summon (Ex) The Secret Shade can be summoned with *gate* or *greater planar ally* despite its type and Hit Dice.

Shadow Tethers (Su) As a full-round action, the Secret Shade can weave a network of delicate shadowstuff throughout a 20-foot-cube area. So long as it is on the same plane, the Secret Shade can sense creatures (including incorporeal ones) passing through this area as if with blindsense, and it can target any suitable object in the area with *enter image*. As a standard action, the Secret Shade can travel to any space within one of its shadow tether areas within 400 feet, as *dimension door*. The Secret Shade can maintain up to 20 such areas at a time. Any shadow tether area is nearly imperceptible but can be detected as a trap and disabled as though it were a magic trap.

Shadow Trap (Su) As a full-round action, the Secret Shade can lay a trap within a shadow tether area, affecting a single 5-foot square. Each shadow tether area can only contain a single trap, and the Secret Shade can sustain only a number of shadow traps equal to its Charisma modifier.

Strength Damage (Su) The Secret Shade's touch deals 1d8 points of Strength damage to a living creature. Half of this damage is treated as a negative energy effect, and a creature immune to such effects (such as by *death ward*) takes only 1d4 Strength damage. A creature dies if this Strength damage equals or exceeds its actual Strength score.

If, as some of his faithful believe, Norgorber would be undone if his mortal identity ever came to light, the Secret Shade represents one of the religion's greatest threats. As a mortal, the shadow was a master assassin who killed with impunity. It seemed as though nothing could stop him, and with no foes to match his skills, he searched for the next best thing: a rival. He soon found a perfect competitor, making his introduction by stealing a kill. His rival easily rose to the challenge, outwitting, outrunning, and outperforming the assassin at every turn. Eventually, the assassin thought he had outmaneuvered his rival in Absalom, but the trail ran cold at the Starstone Cathedral. The rival killer had entered as a mortal, but emerged as Norgorber.

For the first time, Norgorber viewed the assassin as a threat—not for the latter's prowess, but because the assassin was the only mortal who could connect Norgorber's past to his divine anonymity. The god executed the assassin and kicked his body into the cathedral's moat, purging his memories and drawing forth the hateful spirit to serve as his first minion.

The Secret Shade endlessly hungers for the validation it never received in life, but remembers almost nothing of being a mortal other than this driving urge. Over the centuries, the Secret Shade has accumulated scattered information in a vain attempt to piece together its past, never connecting more than a few pieces. It spends the rest of its time overseeing Lost Silhouette, an operation that manipulates the political landscape across dozens of cities on Golarion and beyond.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The Secret Shade served the Immaculate Circle as a summoned assassin in the past, but it was unaware of the heights to which this arrogant, ineffectual conspiracy has grown in the last generation. Their machinations delight it, as does the prospect of a Taldor plunged into bloody disarray, and the Secret Shade abducted Taldaris to prevent the inevitable from aiding his former empire in any way.

The Secret Shade has spent millennia keeping secrets, so it serves more as a bogeyman who haunts the PCs' steps and less as a monologuing villain. Instead, the PCs should learn more about this unique undead and its role through its minions, many of who are far more willing to taunt the PCs about dire plans.

The Secret Shade can freely travel Lost Silhouette. There it performs hit-and-run ambushes on the PCs, striking multiple times over repeated trips to the outpost. The shade is very cognizant of spells that threaten its abilities, such as *death ward*, so it rarely does more than lay traps or make the occasional attack. It keeps watching the PCs through its shadow tethers and *enter image* spell-like ability, advising nearby creatures to prepare for the PCs' arrival or engage in ambushes. It's possible the PCs complete the adventure without ever slaying this shadowy killer, leaving it available to target them again later.

The Secret Shade's abilities create effects that can be detected and disabled as though they were traps. The DC to detect and disable these effects increases by 4 in areas of dim light, and the DCs decrease by 4 in areas of bright light. Failing the check to disable a

shadow tether area by 5 or more immediately alerts the Secret Shade as though a creature had entered the area.

SHADOW TETHER AREA

CR —

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset none

Effect special (see shadow tethers ability)

SHADOW TRAP

CR —

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset none

Effect Atk +16 melee touch (6d6 negative energy damage and fatigued, DC 22 halves damage and negates fatigue)



REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part I: Attaining the Mantle

Part 2: The Burden of Truth

Part 3: Into Duskfathom

NPC Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines of Taldor

Bestiary

FIRST EMPEROR TALDARIS

As a mortal, Taldaris founded one of Golarion's greatest empires. In death, he is an unshakable force of justice in service to Axis.

TALDARIS

CR 13

XP 25,600

Male unique impariut inevitable (see page 86)

LN Medium outsider (extraplanar, inevitable, lawful)

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

Perception +27

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 12, flat-footed 25 (+2 Dex, +15 natural)

hp 172 (16d10+84); regeneration 5 (chaotic)

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

Defensive Abilities constructed; **DR** 10/chaotic; **SR** 24

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *mithral halberd* +23/+18/+13/+8 (1d10+9/x3) or

2 slams +22 (1d8+6)

Special Attacks dethrone, kingslayer

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +22)

At will—*arcane mark*, *discern lies* (DC 20), *dispel magic*

3/day—*dimension door*, *hold monster* (DC 21), *invisibility*,
magic missile, *mark of justice*

1/day—*plane shift* (willing targets only), *true seeing*

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 15, **Con** 18, **Int** 15, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +22 (+26 reposition, +24 steal or trip);

CMD 34 (36 vs. reposition, steal, or trip)

Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Greater Reposition^{APG},
Improved Reposition^{APG}, Improved Steal^{APG}, Improved Trip,
Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack

Skills Diplomacy +25, Disguise +17, Intimidate +25,
Knowledge (history) +21, Knowledge (local) +13,
Knowledge (nobility) +21, Knowledge (planes) +13,
Perception +27, **Sense Motive** +27, **Stealth** +13

Languages truespeech

SQ change shape (Small or Medium humanoid, alter self),
royal gift

Gear +3 *axiomatic mithral halberd*

In the penultimate millennium before Aroden raised the *Starstone*, the eastern city-states of the Inner Sea regularly battled and sought every advantage against one another in culture and war. Yet for all that the city-states' grand princes tried to conquer each other, it was a hero of uncertain birth who united them all. Raised by lions on the Tandak Plains, Taldaris was already cunning, ferocious, and strong by the time Opparan soldiers found

him in the wilderness and adopted him. While among these warriors, Taldaris learned discipline, oratory, and skill at arms, and he quickly grew from a child mascot into a young captain who had won the childless grand prince's praise. When a mortal wound in battle laid low the grand prince of Oppara, he used his last minutes to name Taldaris his heir. Within 12 years, Taldaris united the scattered city-states through a series of brilliant battles and miraculous deeds, naming himself the emperor of the newly united Principalities of Taldaris. His most celebrated deeds include the following.

- Taldaris killed the grogrisant, an immense, six-eyed, fire-maned lion that had terrorized the region for centuries.
- Taldaris led his army to Cassomir but signaled they halt. Alone, he marched toward the gates amid a hail of arrows, and unharmed, he gave an impassioned speech to the entire city to evoke a united empire's grandeur. The city's grand prince abdicated within a day.
- Upon occupying the city-state of Iphria, Taldaris came under attack by loyalist assassins. After fending them off, he addressed the city so clearly that his voice reached every corner and alley. Overwhelmed, the remaining spies threw themselves before the conqueror, begging for his mercy. This legend is one of the common myths of how the Lion Blades began.
- Taldaris cast down the *bell of obedience*, insisting that the children of Azlant would rise above their crumbling heritage, not be bound by it.
- When ambushed by an angel of death, Taldaris convinced it to accept three lilies as a sign of peace. In return, the angel promised the emperor another 90 years of life.

While the reality of Taldaris's mortal life almost certainly does not live up to the legends his people spun after his death, he was ultimately one of the greatest tacticians and civic planners in Avistan's history, and even the steady march of time has only slightly weathered the ubiquity of his name. Exhibiting supernatural longevity, Taldaris ruled for 149 years before leaving his kingdom to a carefully groomed heir. Pharasma's judgment sent him to Axis, and as a petitioner he quickly made himself at home in the Eternal City, even sitting on the elected council that

leads the district of Sayashto. However, he found letting go of his old life difficult, particularly since his heirs regularly contacted his spirit for advice and blessings. Only with the ascension of Aroden did Taldor's people gradually forget their founder, and he in turn learned to separate himself from their fate. Only then did he finally solve the last riddles inscribed in his petitioner body, earning the opportunity to enter the Adamantine Crucible and emerge as an inevitable.

As an impariut, Taldaris has regularly departed Axis for the Material Plane, nurturing nascent kingdoms, mentoring struggling monarchs, and executing unredeemable tyrants. With each return to his home in Sayashto, he has gradually given away his few remaining mementos of Taldor's earliest years, confident that his legacy will live on without his interference.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Although the methods evolve over the course of the adventure, finding Taldaris is the PCs' goal for this entire volume. When the PCs find him, he is healthy, yet he shows little inclination to assist the PCs directly beyond what is absolutely necessary to effect his own escape and his captors' punishment. Part of this is duty: as an inevitable, Taldaris is forbidden from interfering in his own mortal accomplishments, up to and including saving the empire he founded. The other reason is deeply personal: Taldaris had to come to terms with his mortal empire growing as a child might, needing to find its way without his intervention. The PCs' exploits in Duskfathom are both an allegorical representation of this philosophy as well as a demonstration of how far Taldor has come—or how far Taldaris has slipped from his mortal priorities and empathy.

Taldaris still longs to see his old empire, but being forbidden from it, he would instead prefer not to talk about the matter. The subject is still painful at times, and the temptation to set things right proves shockingly strong now that the political reality of his empire has walked into Duskfathom to rescue him. While initially confused and taken aback by the idea of a woman emperor (he struggles to find the word "empress") of Taldor, he has encountered leaders of myriad genders since becoming an impariut, and once the two ideas meet and reconcile in his mind, he says nothing further on the matter.

While normally capable of casting *plane shift* himself to leave Duskfathom or send the PCs home, the Secret Shade inflicted a powerful anchoring curse that shuts down an outsiders' plane-hopping abilities. Commonly used by both enforcement agents and kidnappers, the curse requires several weeks' work to remove once inflicted,

limiting the First Emperor's ability to help the PCs escape or return home.

As one might expect from an inevitable, he is judgmental, obstinate, and proud without showing prejudice or cruelty. However, for those who impress him, he can be an excellent mentor, especially regarding the PCs' leadership skills. Whenever a PC earns his favor, such as through acting with respect, demonstrating leadership, accepting risk to save a comrade, or even just showing the ability to learn from Taldaris's critiques, Taldaris offers that PC his royal gift. Due to his increased Hit Dice, he can provide this benefit to up to four creatures. By the end of Part 3, he offers any remaining uses of this ability to the PCs, anointing them as his mortal agents to ensure corruption, evil, and greed do not destroy Taldor.



REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary



SAYASHTO

First-time visitors expect some parody of order—a precisely tuned machine world where the slightest disturbance sends the whole array into a death spiral. Make no mistake, those tourists could find what they're looking for in the clockwork matrices of Stelti-3 or the tireless Adamantine Crucible, but even the lawful purpose that drives these sites includes hundreds of safeguards and fail-safes. These visitors forget, though, that the Eternal City is exactly that: a city. And Sayashto's one of its most iconic districts. It's where the smell of clean canal water mingles with the grassy warmth of the yashtoma fields, cut through by the scents of perfectly pressed drinks from the nearby cafes. It's a home full of fresh faces, new ideas, and personal drive. It's also a home where, no matter where you've gone or for how long, everything's where you left it. Above all, it's a vibrant urban hub that embodies law's greatest gifts for all to enjoy.

—Trakt Imil, Councilor of Laws

Although casual scholars typically focus on Axis's centermost district, Aktun, thousands of metropolises, municipalities, and townships comprise the Eternal City. From a bird's-eye view, these districts appear to blend together, yet each has its own defining identity, personality, architectural flair, and industries. In all of this beautifully coordinated patchwork of urban grace is Sayashto—the 32nd district of the Zdareen, the 131st department—located entirely within Axis's third quadrant.

Canals are among the most popular means of moving heavy loads through Axis, and three major canals converge in Sayashto's core: Anticlockwise 22, Hub-Standard 31 (locally known as the Pralvania Underflow), and Zdareen Course 3. These cut through the plane's fairly level topography and convene at a broad artificial island known as the Grand Rotunda, which serves as a versatile fairground, marketplace, casual theater, and more. Those traversing these waterways are treated to a dazzling view of the area's clean streets, bustling markets, high-peaked roofs with sweeping eaves, plaster plazas covered in drying seeds, and countless rows of ivy-green fields brimming with the ripening yashtoma squash that is the district's namesake. This gourd's seeds are the basis for a hot beverage enjoyed throughout the district (see the Yasht sidebar on page 67).

Extraplanar visitors may find Sayashto simultaneously familiar and contrary to the stereotypes of Axis, which hold that the Eternal City is a perfectly sculpted urban landscape. By comparison, Sayashto's design seems disorderly, with entire neighborhoods composed of irregularly shaped buildings connected by asymmetrical alleys. Citizens are quick to point out that many districts have undergone thousands of years of intermittent renovations that redirect streets and reshape the urban landscape, particularly as new construction atop old foundations gradually raises the streets higher and higher. What's more, many of Zdareen's districts (and many more beyond) would rather celebrate civilization as an evolving enterprise than as some sterile, static representation of the ideal city. Indeed, Sayashto is a living, functioning, and vibrant municipality that experiments with and constantly improves on metropolitan ideals.

At least, that's the ideological explanation. The other source of Sayashto's relative disorganization is that it's a hot spot for planar expansion, much like a town sitting atop a fault line. Over the course of centuries or millennia, a petitioner can lose its sense of purpose and self, at last melding its quintessence with the plane. In sufficient quantities, these accretions cause the plane to expand, and thanks to its thriving mortuary industry, Sayashto grows by dozens of square feet each year.

SAYASHTO

LN metropolis

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

Qualities pious, prosperous, rumormongering citizens, strategic location, tourist attraction, upstanding

Danger +0

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government council

Population 34,075 (21,467 petitioners, 3,185 humans, 2,326 axiomytes, 622 inevitables, 6,475 other)

NOTABLE NPCs

Chacoom Vul Croafto, Councilor of Seeds (LN male advanced petitioner)

Hlati, Councilor of Canals (LN female azer cleric of Abadar 12)

Jolmulk, Councilor of Graves (LN agender petitioner⁶² alchemist^{APG} 5)

Trakt Imil, Councilor of Laws (LN male axiomyte wizard 7)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 25,600 gp; **Purchase Limit** 150,000 gp; **Spellcasting** 9th

Minor Items all available; **Medium Items** 4d4; **Major Items** 3d4

SETTLEMENT QUALITIES

Upstanding This settlement's inhabitants are largely law abiding, honest, and adapted to living alongside one another. (*Corruption* -2, *Crime* -2, *Danger* -10)

Still, Sayashto is an extension of Axis and its cosmic order. Laws cover nearly every aspect of city living; even recklessly walking against the flow of traffic can result in a fine. Its traffic is remarkably regimented and smooth. The streets are kept clean by a combination of communal responsibility and highly effective maintenance workers. Yet all of this is within the greater context of efficiency and pleasant living conditions. All told, Sayashto is a vibrant community that embodies the many virtues—and to a lesser extent the shortcomings—of urban life.

GOVERNMENT

As part of Axis, Sayashto recognizes all of the Eternal City's laws as well as all regulations passed by Zdareen's Axiomyte Assembly. Most of these laws cover a combination of property ordinances, zoning, and a host of personal protections (e.g., the criminalization of theft, fraud, assault, and the like). Although inevitables are authorized to suppress many of these protections in pursuit of justice, the outsiders' comprehensive training and intensely lawful nature ensure this occurs infrequently—and rarely without proper documentation.

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

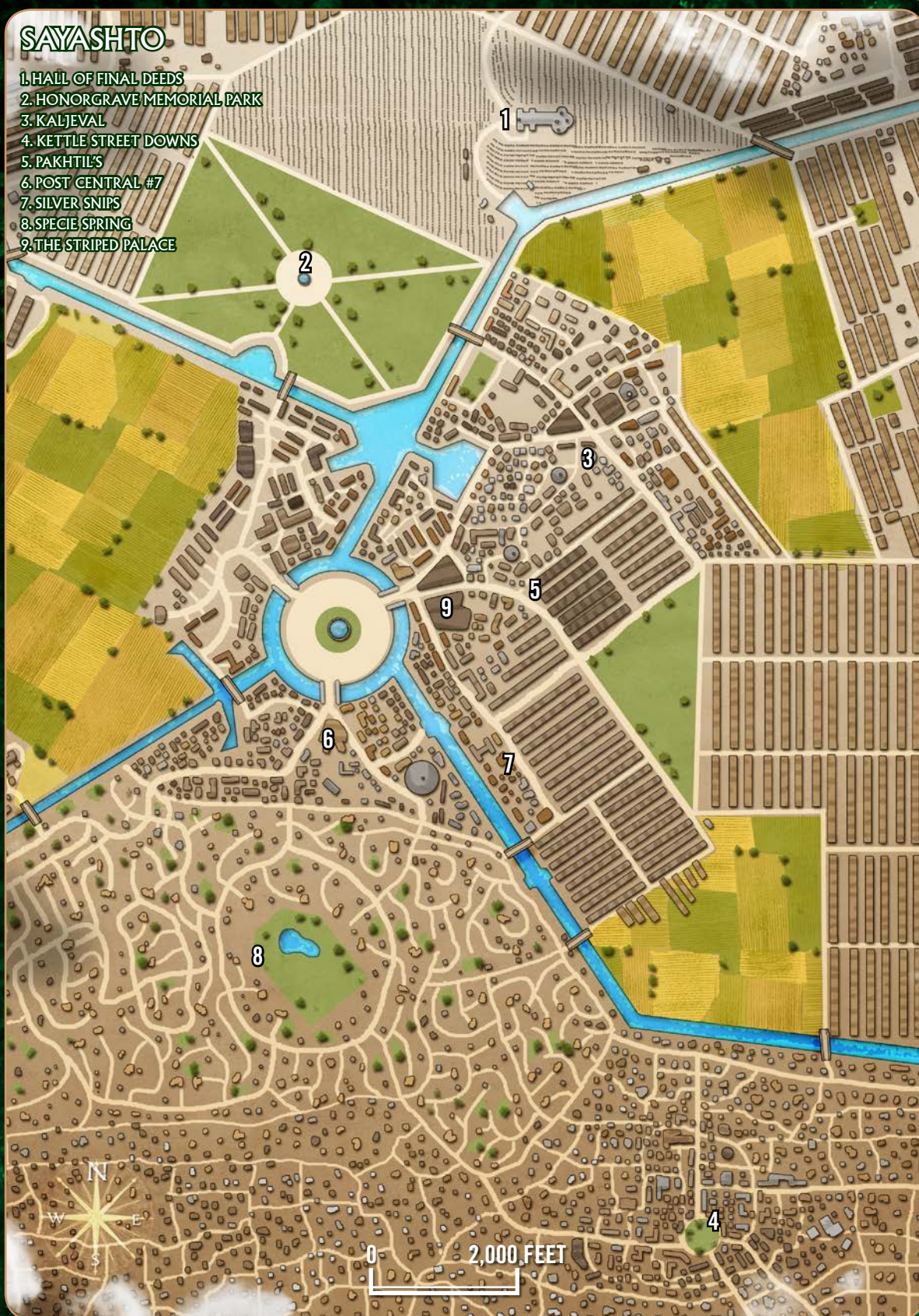
Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

SAYASHTO

1. HALL OF FINAL DEEDS
2. HONORGRAVE MEMORIAL PARK
3. KALJEVAL
4. KETTLE STREET DOWNS
5. PAKHTIL'S
6. POST CENTRAL #7
7. SILVER SNIPS
8. SPECIE SPRING
9. THE STRIPED PALACE



For everything else, Sayashto has been free to establish its own policies. The district manages its own tax collection and uses a significant portion of those contributions for a host of projects and programs. Unlike several neighboring districts, which are led by an individual leader such as a mayor or duke, Sayashto maintains a five-member council. One councilor is appointed to represent Axis as a whole, whereas each of the other four serves a 2,000-day term with staggered elections every 500 days so that the council changes gradually. Together, the councilors determine new policies and enact emergency measures. Each council seat comes with unique responsibilities and special criteria for office, the details of which appear below.

Councilor of Canals: Responsible for coordinating Sayashto's roads, bridges, and canals, this councilor also informally represents the interests of neighboring districts. A candidate must have lived at least 10 years in Sayashto and at least 10 years elsewhere in Axis to better understand interdistrict considerations and operations.

Councilor of Gates: Although sometimes viewed as a junior member, this councilor performs a key role in overseeing Sayashto's visitor policies, immigration, publicity, and deal making with centers of trade in distant districts and even other planes. Strangely, the only requirement is that a candidate have lived in Sayashto for less than 20 years, so even candidates who just recently arrived in the district are eligible to campaign for this position.

Councilor of Graves: This councilor oversees legislation for the local mortuary industry, serves as a symbolic representative for the district's long-term residents, and presides over major holidays. Only those who have lived in the district for at least 200 years qualify for this office.

Councilor of Laws: Unlike the four elected councilors, the Councilor of Laws is appointed by authorities in Aktun to represent Axis as a whole. Almost always an axiomite, this councilor fills a more advisory role and is the only member able to veto a measure entirely.

Councilor of Seeds: As representative of Sayashto's iconic yashtoma industry, this councilor deals with affairs of agriculture, parks, and pest control. To qualify, a candidate must have lived in Sayashto for at least 20 years and participated in at least 10 harvests.

RELATIONS

Sayashto maintains peaceful relations and good-natured rivalries with the four districts that border it: Blue Cobble, Halgrimard, Ilkiston, and Silver Hill. Blue Cobble is famous for its mills and bakeries. Halgrimard has a large dwarven population that specializes in clockwork and jewelry, and its civilian miners manage much of the department's sewers. Ilkiston's textiles

are famous across Axis, and the long, elaborate sashes worn by Sayashto's officials all come from here. Silver Hill attracts a disproportionate number of poets. This district is famous for the two-humped tleroga camels whose argent wool feeds Ilkiston's looms. Tleroga dung is spread over Sayashto's fields, and the beasts' appetite for yashtoma pulp is bottomless.

Thanks to its canals and portals, Sayashto maintains close connections with several other districts in Axis. The Hub-Standard 31 canal eventually makes its way through Pralvania, an elevated district that arches high above the surrounding territory and caters to flying residents. Through the southern canal portal lies Clangfallow, a far smokier district whose foundries smelt the sundry metals used to create new inevitables, which invariably travel through Sayashto on their way to the Adamantine Crucible. Through the northern canal tunnel is Gate 43, a hilly district that surrounds one of the 1,000-foot-wide tunnels that gently descend to Axis's sanctioned subterranean districts. Countless other warrens beneath the surface constitute Duskfathom, where Norgorber's faithful plot their next heist, murder, or coup.

In addition to its booming local economy, Sayashto maintains trade relations with at least 60 other worlds, including Golarion's neighbor, Castrovel. The lashuntas of Qabarat are a recent contact, becoming an increasingly significant market for yasht and Halgrimard's more esoteric devices.

NOTABLE SITES

Much of Sayashto's land is devoted to growing and preparing yashtoma. Enormous, orderly fields dedicated to growing the crop or to drying its seeds cover much of the district. Further, Sayashto's vast neighborhoods of row houses occupy a large portion of its land. These two-story residences house much of the district's population, with each building standing only a few feet from its neighbor. Although the houses have many structural similarities, residents personalize their abodes with bright colors and patterns. Wealthier citizens—or those desiring a bit more space than row houses provide—live in tidy but sprawling suburbs.

Information on key locations found throughout Sayashto follows, although many other sites of interest exist in the district.

1. Hall of Final Deeds: Outsiders don't die of old age, at least not in the same way mortals do. Instead, an outsider that grows weary or loses focus eventually melds into its home plane, lending its quintessence to that realm. Sayashto's famous mortuary industry provides these clients with a host of counseling services to help inspire the casually listless to find purpose and to help the truly languid set their affairs in order.

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

Surrounded by an expansive cemetery, the immense cathedral known as the Hall of Final Deeds celebrates its many visitors' accomplishments in the afterlife.

Deep within the hall lie meeting rooms and scores of isolated meditation chambers. Each meditation chamber contains a comfortable chair, a desk, and ample supplies for writing, drawing, and weaving, providing the occupant an opportunity to create a final testament before fading into the ground. These creations are displayed in several galleries in the building before being delivered to friends or sold to support the caretakers, as dictated by the creator's final wishes. Each room also contains a bell for the occupant to ring gently once a day, letting attendants know which chambers are still occupied. For all its grim connotations, the Hall of Final Deeds has a warm reputation for providing meaning and structure to what could otherwise be a confusing and fearful process.

2. Honorable Memorial Park: While most of Axis engages in peaceful trades, there's no question that the Eternal City is ready to make war to defend creation itself. This park—as marked by a 50-foot-tall bronze-and-marble statue of axiomites and demodands locked in combat, known as Daniava's Folly—commemorates the wars between the gods and titans, when Axis stood ready to repel the divine giants and end their coup. For all its somber message, the park attracts those looking to picnic, busk, or exercise. The statue attracts not only perching birds but also puckish gargoyles that harass passersby or commit worse crimes.

3. Kaljeval: Abadar's favored animal varies by planet, yet for those worlds that have them, monkeys best embody the god's ingenuity and love of hierarchy. Sayashto hosts a large colony of flameruff tamarins—monkeys with the resolute simple template (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 293)—that scamper across roofs and chatter to one another. Yet despite the occasional acts of mischief, these monkeys play an important role by delivering messages and performing other minor errands for those who ask nicely and supply a coin. Most of these tamarins nest in the nine-

tiered tower known as the Kaljeval, named for and built in honor of a stoic prosimian hero who warned a mortal city of approaching raiders and aided in its defense, even though those actions cost her her life. Sayashto's council appoints a leading tamarin to rule as lord squire and to see to Kaljeval's maintenance. Lord Squire **Saip** (LN awakened resolute^{B2} tamarin cleric of Abadar 3) has reigned for 4 prosperous years, and from here he directs his massive troop to patrol the yashtoma fields to scare off avian thieves. He also holds audiences with visitors and offers his blessings to those who provide a token donation. The lord squire acts as the district's chief almoner, tasked with coordinating the distribution of alms to the area's poorer residents.

4. Kettle Street Downs: As Axis has stretched and expanded, most of the growth left clean avenues that turned into canals or land for further development.

However, the neighborhood of Kettle Street Downs never stopped drifting and now extends more than 1,000 feet into neighboring Halgrimard.

The historical buildings leave no question as to the area's identity, and politically it remains part of Sayashto. Even so, it's developed its own subculture and industries, in particular tinsmithing and tile manufacturing. One of the side effects of the strange planar tectonics is that sinkholes are frustratingly common in this neighborhood, often opening into completely unknown tunnels of the undercity.

5. Pakhtil's: Although every street corner in Sayashto has someone serving yasht, the oldest yasht shop in the district, Pakhtil's, remains one of the most popular, having operated continuously for over 800 years. Its founding proprietor, **Pakhtil** (LN female azer expert 17), smugly insists that she sells the best yasht in existence, and based on the long lines that form during the morning rush, there are many who believe the same.

6. Post Central #7: Towering next to the Grand Rotunda like a cathedral stands the Post Central #7, which receives, sorts, and distributes mail to all of Zdareen. The massive post office stands 6 stories high, each floor brimming with offices, service



desks, archives, sorting rooms, and warehouses. The post office has hundreds of staff, including numerous couriers of dozens of species, most notably eight vortex dragons (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 74). Although deliveries are almost always timely, the office reports 17 percent more lost parcels than offices in other departments. For more than 5 years, Chief Postal Inspector **Omahn** (LN female mercane rogue 4) has revised quality-control procedures with little effect, and she's increasingly ready to hire freelance investigators to find who's been profiting off the postal service.

7. Silver Snips: Though slightly off the beaten path, the barbershop Silver Snips is never wanting for customers. The nine halflings who work here are famously nimble and work in pairs to groom clients in a coordinated dance of flashing shears and keen razors—even performing classic barber-surgeon feats like setting bones or cleaning teeth as needed. Just as popular are the three corked columns that stand inside the shop, where anyone is free to post announcements, advertisements, and work opportunities. The result is a jovial fixture of the community where many visit as much to gossip as get a trim. That's exactly how the owner, **Higgins Kuerel** (NE male halfling inquisitor of Thamir Gixx 10), likes it, for his entire staff is a cult of Thamir Gixx (see page 68) that gathers intelligence to sell to the thieves of Duskfathom, Norgorber's realm. Even the bulletin columns are subject to his ministrations, and he regularly curates the fliers and adds a few false leads of his own, many of which lead well-intentioned adventurers into ambushes.

8. Specie Spring: Sayashto's southernmost contiguous neighborhood is the vast suburb of Specie Spring, named for the natural spring that pools near the area's center. Popular legend claims that drinking from the pool while the sun gives the surface a silvery sheen grants the imbiber a vision of his future wealth. The water does contain a significant mineral concentration that tends to leave the drinker light headed, so in practice any visions tend to involve the magnificent homes visible in every direction (much to the local realtors' delight). However, **Jihtin** (LN male royal naga^{B3}), the head of the homeowners' association, recently took a sip and has since insisted that his neighbors adopt a curious aesthetic for their houses, as if to re-create the realm from his dreams. Were someone to decipher Jihtin's delirious vision, perhaps it could lead to fabulous wealth—or uncover the spring's supernatural influence once and for all.

9. The Striped Palace: Its exterior painted to resemble the district's chief crop, the Striped Palace is a museum dedicated to the history, cultivation, and processing of the yashtoma plant. The building includes classrooms, a functioning yashtoma garden,

YASHT

Sayashto takes its name from its chief export, the long-necked yashtoma gourd. When the yashtoma is dried, its husk can be used for storing liquid or cereals. The stringy flesh of fresh yashtoma serves as a nutritious supplement in animal feed. However, its greatest value is its seeds, which when properly dried, ground, and brewed create the popular beverage yasht. This hot drink's taste varies slightly by region and preparation, generally producing a somewhat sour flavor with crisp, sweet tones that enthusiasts compare to biting into a delicate pickle or sipping tangy fruit juice. Although the gourd is grown on numerous planes, connoisseurs generally agree that Sayashto's harvest produces the richest flavor—one that seems to noticeably pop with notes of salt, beets, and aged wine.

Preparing yasht is as simple as tossing a small handful of ground seeds into simmering water. Even so, yasht enthusiasts have developed elaborate preparation and consumption techniques, including a host of complex machines to better control the heat, pressure, and timing. Yasht consumption brings with it numerous traditions and games, many of which involve interpreting the gritty precipitate to tell fortunes, inspire discussions, or just bet on who's buying the next round. The drink carries with it connotations of intimacy in many cultures throughout Sayashto, so it's uncouth to serve yasht to a stranger as a sign of hospitality, whereas it's entirely appropriate to drink it with friends, family, or prospective business partners to mark a warming relationship.

A cup of yasht costs 2 cp. A pound of ground yashtoma seeds (enough to brew 50 cups) costs 5 sp, though high-quality varieties can easily cost 10 times as much. For 4 hours after drinking a cup of yasht, the imbiber reduces the result of any d% dice rolled to determine her actions when confused by 1d4. If she drinks yasht with one or more allies, she also takes a -1 penalty on attack rolls against those creatures while she is confused.

and a restaurant that serves a variety of dishes made from the plant. According to the museum, the gourd originated on the Material Plane planet Shaltrua, though it has evolved considerably after millennia of selective breeding. Somewhat disturbingly, Shaltrua is home to several varieties of carnivorous plants, including some that bear an uncanny resemblance to domesticated yashtoma. Unfortunately, the museum's collections have several significant gaps, and the head curator, **Zjali** (LN female petitioner^{B2} druid 6), has a generous budget with which to commission adventurers to retrieve high-quality artifacts from other worlds.

REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary



THAMIR GIXX

THE SILENT BLADE

Much as Norgorber was once a mortal human who ascended to godhood after succeeding at the Test of the Starstone, many believe the halfling deity of thieves and assassins, Thamir Gixx, was a mortal halfling who knew the Reaper of Reputation before he became a deity. The nature of Thamir Gixx's relationship to Norgorber is hotly debated among some religious scholars. Competing theories propose that they are friends or partners in crime, slave and master, or even lovers, but these theories are mere conjecture. The most common assumption is that Norgorber is Thamir Gixx's superior in some way, as some halfling followers of Thamir Gixx pay homage to Norgorber, but no followers of Norgorber reciprocate this respect to the small shadow at their god's side. In any event, when Norgorber erased the knowledge of his mortal existence from the collective memory of the world, all of what was known about his relationship to the halfling went with it. Now Thamir Gixx lurks silently as Norgorber's shadow.

Many clear parallels can be drawn between Norgorber and Thamir Gixx, as both are secretive gods of greed, murder, and thievery. One of Norgorber's aspects—the poison-focused Blackfingers—is worshiped by some unethical halflings in a manner similar to halfling worship of Thamir Gixx. Any deeper look, however, shows that the two deities have marked differences. While Norgorber and his followers strive to be subtle, those who worship the Silent Blade only hide their intentions as a prelude to bloody chaos. Norgorber hoards secrets, collecting them to use against his enemies, but Thamir Gixx finds secrets too ephemeral to be useful currency. The Silent Blade feels that the only secrets worth keeping are one's true intentions and physical position on the battlefield, but that these secrets must be revealed when the time is right to strike.

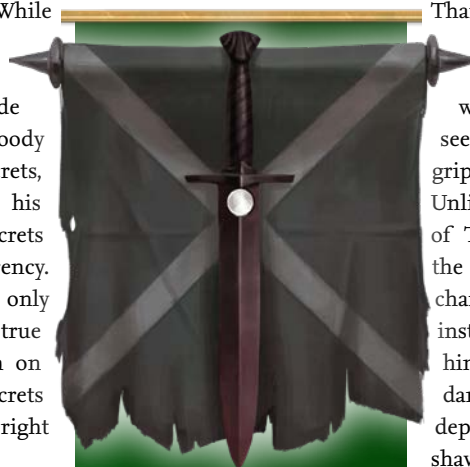
Aside from the nature of his relationship with the mortal Norgorber, the largest mystery surrounding Thamir Gixx is how he became a god. Religious historians note that worship of Thamir Gixx appeared shortly after Norgorber ascended to divinity, implying that the new god lent the halfling a fraction of his power either as repayment for an old debt or for a promise of a favor yet to come. Some halflings invert this relationship, theorizing that the Silent Blade is a secretive deity as old as their race who took on mortal form to aid Norgorber in passing the Test of the *Starstone*. Only once his protégé succeeded did the halfling god reveal himself as Thamir Gixx. Of course, both deities are silent on the matter.

Another mystery of the Silent Blade is the nature of his name. Thamir's surname always matches that of Absalom's current Primarch and has changed several times in the past. Although this is a source of confusion to worshipers who know little of Absalom or even of Golarion, Thamir Gixx's priests ensure that their deity's latest name is properly disseminated, even going so far as to rewrite histories and religious records to update it. Anyone able to identify what this parallel naming portends, perhaps including the Primarch himself, is keeping his own counsel.

When Thamir Gixx is satisfied, assassins and thieves find that their footsteps are muffled, surrounding shadows are darker, and guards turn away at just the right moment. When he is displeased, the same ne'er-do-wells stumble at just the wrong moment or their gear makes the smallest of noises—enough to attract the attention

of an otherwise unaware foe. Such circumstances might lead to that worshiper's capture or demise, but this worries the Silent Blade little. He sees his devoted as mere tools to increase the amount of darkness and chaos in the world.

PERSONIFICATION AND REALM



"The best way to silence a man is to cut his throat before he speaks."

—The Secret Stories

Thamir Gixx is depicted as a sinister halfling, often wearing black and cloaked in shadows. His favored weapon, the dagger, can always be seen somewhere on his person, usually gripped in his hand and raised to strike. Unlike artwork of Norgorber, images of Thamir Gixx often plainly show the halfling's face, though his features change from region to region. For instance, Chelish halflings illustrate him as a pale-skinned halfling with a dark goatee, while Absalom's halflings depict him as olive-skinned and clean-shaven with icy blue eyes. No matter his complexion or features, Thamir Gixx appears as the average halfling of the region, except grimmer and more menacing. These depictions invite disaffected halflings to feel a closer, more personal connection to the deity.

The Silent Blade's realm is only accessible via secluded side passageways within Norgorber's domain, which itself exists as a secret

warren of underground tunnels beneath the plane-city of Axis. Dubbed the Back Alleys, Thamir Gixx's domain is a twisting maze of dimly lit corridors and muffled sound, leading some to believe it has some connection to the Plane of Shadow. The layout of the Back Alleys changes from hour to hour, and visitors can only reach the center—the seat of Thamir Gixx's power—if the deity allows it. Cabals of Thamir Gixx's faithful conspire on the shadows of the Back Alleys, keeping out of sight and whispering their murderous schemes to each other. Though encounters with other creatures are rare, those who walk the Back Alleys constantly feel strongly like they are being watched, making sleep virtually impossible for them. A thick gray mist rolls through the halls whenever Thamir Gixx feels the urge for bloodshed, providing the perfect cover for the halfling to undertake a murderous spree, killing visitors to his realm regardless of their purpose or piety.

DOGMA AND WORSHIPERS

Thamir Gixx advocates that his worshipers must seize any opportunity that would benefit them, whether to steal a heavy purse to purchase much-needed food or to

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary



ambush a hated foe while he sleeps. This urge to reckless action can sometimes lead to short-term benefits that ultimately come back to haunt the perpetrator, but the Silent Blade teaches that such problems are further opportunities for mischief. Many who study Thamir Gixx's teachings, and particularly his halfling worshipers, believe that the Silent Blade wishes to elevate halflings above all other races. While Thamir Gixx isn't opposed to this result, any elevated station would only be a secondary effect of halflings sating their short-term greed and anger.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of Thamir Gixx's worshipers are halflings, though his faith thrives in communities of loose morals or where the weak are oppressed or enslaved. Non-halfling followers of Thamir Gixx usually come by their religion after being introduced to the Silent Blade's creed by a halfling mentor. These worshipers are often those of smaller stature who feel that the rest of society has placed its boot on their necks and see violence as the only way out. Gnomes desperate to stave off the Bleaching regardless of moral concerns, goblins who can control their more deranged urges, and downtrodden ratfolk are among such members of Thamir Gixx's church.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

Formal temples to Thamir Gixx are few and far between. When congregants gather to give worship to the Silent Blade, they usually do so in spaces reserved for other purposes that are currently empty: abandoned cellars, the backs of warehouses in the middle of the night, and darkened alleys. Even where dedicated temples to Thamir Gixx exist, they are often hidden out of sight behind or beneath other temples, such as temples to Norgorber or to common deities revered by halflings, such as Desna or Shelyn.

Shrines to Thamir Gixx are much more plentiful than temples, and are hidden in places where the faithful might leave a drop of spilled blood or a stolen coin as an offering. Each shrine contains an inconspicuous altar marked with a carving of a dagger, but few other trappings. This subtle marking makes shrines to the Silent Blade difficult for the uninitiated to spot.

A PRIEST'S ROLE

A priest of Thamir Gixx doesn't communicate her allegiance with ornate robes or an ostentatious holy symbol. By day, she often has a mundane job, perhaps working in a marketplace, clerk's office, or, in the case of halflings in certain regions, a browbeaten slave. Under the cover of darkness and shadow, the priest unveils her true calling. Some function as shepherds of other worshipers, leading them in prayer to the Silent Blade and organizing recruitment drives among oppressed halfling populations. Others venerate their deity simply

by performing acts of thievery and assassination, using their sharp and bloody daggers as holy symbols.

Worshippers of Thamir Gixx know better than to come to a priest of their dark religion when in need of succor. Priests of Thamir Gixx rarely provide healing or comfort, either to fellow worshippers or to anyone else. Instead, they promote self-reliance and preach about how violence is often the answer to any of life's many problems. Sometimes, a priest delivers this lesson with dreadful finality to a follower who has the misfortune of being wounded or exposed in the priest's presence.

HOLIDAYS

Being part of a secretive religion and often working alone in the shadows, the followers of Thamir Gixx don't usually celebrate festivals or holidays openly. However, a certain time of night is considered sacred to followers of the Silent Blade.

The Quiet Hours: Long after all law-abiding citizens are asleep but before the sun rises, a kind of stillness falls across most communities. These moments are precious to Thamir Gixx's worshippers, who refer to them as "the Quiet Hours." The Quiet Hours offer the perfect opportunity to creep about and perform underhanded deeds. Assassins are particularly fond of this brief period, as they skulk into their victims' bedchambers to deliver death. In areas where worship of Thamir Gixx is prevalent, dark-robed priests perform important religious services during the Quiet Hours, covering their faces out of respect for the secretive god.

APHORISMS

The followers of the Silent Blade say little and particularly avoid saying anything that might expose their beliefs to those outside the faith. Nevertheless, a few sayings are present in their common lexicon.

Hush Now: This terse phrase is often used to end conversations between Thamir Gixx's worshippers, most often when immediate silence is required to undertake a theft or a killing. Lone assassins devoted to the Silent Blade also speak this phrase to their victims as they loop a garrote or cut a throat, taking perverse pleasure in these words being the last ones their victims hear.

I Await the Night: A follower of Thamir Gixx who says this has incentive to withhold action under the current circumstances. She might be waiting for more information, the delivery of a certain item, or even the literal end of the day. However, she is telling the listener that she will be ready when the correct time comes, like a murderer staying her hand until the cover of darkness hides her wicked deeds.

HOLY TEXT

As the worship of Thamir Gixx often thrives in places where halflings are oppressed or even enslaved, the

teachings of the Silent Blade are almost never written down, but circulated orally. Collectively known as *The Secret Stories*, these parables and allegories deal with the darker sides of halfling life. At the culmination of each tale, a halfling—either a mortal guided by Thamir Gixx or the deity himself in disguise—enacts a bloody vengeance on those who wronged halflings, and does so in such a way that there are no legal or moral repercussions against the perpetrator. Often, the halfling protagonist ends up with an improved station, whether freedom from an oppressive master or simply greater wealth, as a reward for wicked deeds cleverly performed. Many of the details of *The Secret Stories* differ from region to region, and often evolve to incorporate local landmarks, local leaders, or historical figures that are unpopular with halflings. Each tale of *The Secret Stories* imparts a specific lesson, such as "stay hidden until it is time to strike," "no one foolish enough to expect mercy deserves to receive it," or "with cunning, you can trick your enemies into killing one another."

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Priests and followers of Thamir Gixx tend to be very taciturn, unless they have adopted a garrulous and cheerful public persona to hide the truth of their religion. Members of most other religions, even other evil religions, find adherents of the Silent Blade to be too dangerous or fickle to deal with on a regular basis. Halflings who worship Thamir Gixx are usually polite and accommodating to halflings who follow Norgorber (even paying homage to Norgorber's aspect of Blackfingers when their actions invoke poison or alchemy), but the reverse is far from true. Halfling Norgorberites are usually wary of worshippers of the Silent Blade, finding them far too eager to kill, even when murder would make matters much worse (which it often does).

Followers of Chaldira Zuzaristan—the halfling goddess of battle, luck, and mischief—might share a common love of trickery with Thamir Gixx's worshippers, but members of Chaldira's church are no friends of the followers of the Silent Blade. Chaldirans lament the unwarranted and often unprovoked violence performed by Thamir Gixx's adherents. They believe this violence does more harm than good to the halfling race's reputation, despite the seemingly noble goal of aiding downtrodden halflings. When Chaldirans encounter followers of Thamir Gixx, or even hear rumors of their presence, they quickly undertake errands of goodwill around the nearby community while working to expose assassins and thieves before they strike. Because of this frequent meddling, followers of Thamir Gixx particularly despise Chaldirans, and reserve particularly painful deaths for them.

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

SPELLCASTING

Clerics of Thamir Gixx can cast *invisibility* as a 2nd-level spell and *greater invisibility* as a 4th-level spell. In addition, worshipers of the Silent Blade have access to the following spells.

HALFLING VENGEANCE

School divination; **Level** antipaladin 1, cleric 2, inquisitor 2

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range touch

Target one Small or smaller creature touched

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

You grant the touched target the ability to ascertain the weaknesses of foes. The target deals an additional 1d6 points of precision damage on successful attacks with daggers or slings against foes within 30 feet, as long as the attacked foe is denied its Dexterity bonus to Armor Class or is flanked by the target. This additional damage increases by 1d6 for every 4 caster levels you have beyond 3rd, to a maximum of 5d6 at 19th level. This bonus damage is precision damage and stacks with other sources of precision damage, such as sneak attack. This bonus damage is not multiplied on a critical hit.

Once per round on a successful attack that deals this precision damage, the target can choose to forgo 2d6 points of precision damage (either granted by this spell or from other sources of precision damage, such as sneak attack) to inflict one of the following conditions on the attacked foe for 1 round:

- The attacked foe can't make attacks of opportunity against creatures smaller than it.
- The attacked foe is denied its Dexterity bonus to Armor Class against attacks made with daggers or slings.
- The attacked foe takes a -2 penalty on attacks against creatures smaller than it.
- The attacked foe can't take 5-foot steps.

A creature can benefit from only one *halfling vengeance* spell at a time.

HALFLING VENGEANCE, MASS

School divination; **Level** antipaladin 4, cleric 7, inquisitor 6

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target one Small or smaller creature/level, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

This spell functions like *halfling vengeance*, except that it affects multiple creatures.

WORD OF BECKONING

School conjuration (teleportation); **Level** psychic 7, sorcerer/wizard 7

This spell functions like *sending*, except the subject also receives knowledge of a command word that, when spoken, summons you to the open space nearest to the subject.

The subject must speak the command word within 1 round of knowing it to summon you, although the subject isn't obligated to speak it. You can be transported any distance within a plane but cannot travel between planes. You can bring along objects as long as their weight doesn't exceed your maximum load. You may also bring one additional willing Medium or smaller creature (carrying gear or objects up to its maximum load) or its equivalent per three caster levels. A Large creature counts as two Medium creatures, a Huge creature counts as four Medium creatures, and so forth. All creatures to be transported must be in contact with one another, and at least one of those creatures must be in contact with you.

OBEDIENCE

The following describes the daily rite Thamir Gixx's followers must perform for the Deific Obedience feat, as well as the boons for the prestige classes found in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Gods*.

OBEDIENCE (THAMIR GIXX)

Place a gold coin in the middle of a busy street and spy on it from a hidden position. If someone picks up the coin, you must silently follow that person for 1 hour. At the end of that hour, judge that person's social standing. If the person is fortunate or wealthy, steal the coin back. If the person is destitute or downtrodden, let him keep the coin and offer a silent prayer to Thamir Gixx on his behalf. If no one picks up the coin after an hour, you must dispose of the coin in a way no one might ever find it, such as by throwing it into the sea or burying it in a hidden location. You gain a +2 profane bonus on Sleight of Hand and Stealth checks.

EVANGELIST BOONS

1: The Unseen (Sp) *vanish*^{APG} 3/day, *chameleon stride*^{APG} 2/day, or *invisibility sphere* 1/day

2: Hidden in Darkness (Su) You can use the Stealth skill even while being observed. As long as you are within an area of dim light or darker, you can hide yourself from view in the open without anything to actually hide behind. You can't, however, hide in your own shadow, and you can't use this ability to hide from creatures that have darkvision or have the see in darkness supernatural ability (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 301).

3: Feed on Shadows (Su) Whenever you are in an area of dim light or darker, you can, as a standard action, regain a number of hit points equal to 4d8 + 1 per character level. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier (minimum 1).

EXALTED BOONS

1: The Unbowed (Sp) *remove fear* 3/day, *blessing of courage and life*^{APG} 2/day, or *remove curse* 1/day

2: Shadow Twin (Su) As a standard action, you can create a quasi-real duplicate of yourself using material from the Plane of Shadow. The double appears in a square adjacent to you. Your foes are unable to tell the two of

you apart, but a foe that succeeds at a Will saving throw (DC = 10 + 1/2 your level + your Charisma modifier) upon interacting with your double identifies the double as an illusion. Your double has your Armor Class and saving throws and 20% of your maximum hit points. As a move action, you can direct your double to move at your speed and to talk and gesture as if it were real for 1 round; it cannot attack or cast spells, though it can pretend to do so. If you do not direct your double, it stands still, granting a +2 circumstance bonus on any saving throw to disbelieve it that round. Your double provides flanking against foes that haven't identified it as an illusion, even when standing still. Your double lasts for a number of rounds equal to your character level. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier (minimum 1), but you can only have one double in existence at a time.

- 3: Quiet of the Grave (Su)** Three times per day, you can create a 20-foot-radius emanation of complete silence centered on yourself (as per the *silence* spell) that lasts for a number of rounds equal to your character level. When a creature is reduced to -1 or fewer hit points while within this radius of silence, but is still alive, you can attempt to kill it as an immediate action. That creature must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC = 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Charisma modifier) or it dies, you gain 2d8 temporary hit points, and your effective caster level increases by 1 for 10 minutes or until the next time you cast a spell, whichever comes first. Temporary hit points gained from this ability stack, but the effective caster level increases don't stack with each other.

SENTINEL BOONS

- 1: The Unbroken (Sp)** *chill touch* 3/day, *cat's grace* 2/day, or *locate weakness*^{uc} 1/day
- 2: Dagger of Night (Su)** As a move action, you can conjure a blade of darkness into your hand. This blade of darkness functions as a dagger, but deals an amount of damage equal to 1d8 + 1 point per 3 character levels + your Strength modifier; half of this damage is piercing and the other half is cold damage. The blade is considered a magic weapon for the purpose of bypassing damage reduction. The blade lasts for a number of rounds equal to your character level, though the blade immediately vanishes if it leaves your hand. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier (minimum 1); you can expend two uses of this ability with the same move action to conjure two daggers (wielding one in each hand) if you wish.
- 3: Umbral Form (Su)** As a standard action, you can weave strands of shadow-stuff into your physical form. You gain DR 10/— and cold resistance 15. When

CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

Thamir Gixx's priests can use *summon monster* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spell.

Summon Monster IV

Shadow (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 245)

Summon Monster VII

Greater shadow (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 245)

you take damage from a critical hit or sneak attack, there is a 50% chance that the critical hit or sneak attack is negated and damage is instead rolled normally. This does not stack with similar abilities that negate critical hits and sneak attacks (such as *fortification* armor). You gain the see in darkness supernatural ability (*Bestiary* 2 301) allowing you to see in areas of even magical darkness. In areas of dim light or darker, you can move as if affected by *air walk*. You can return to your normal form as a free action. You can use this ability a number of rounds per day equal to your character level, and these rounds need not be consecutive.



REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary



NOBLE LINES OF TALDOR

Foreigners love to portray us as buffoons, but they forget who we are. They forget what we did. We are the nation that dominated a continent and forged the greatest empire in Golarion's history. Our tongue is the common parlance. Our culture is the foundation other nations have built upon.

The blood of conquerors, explorers, and heroes runs through our veins. We've been forged by the greatness of our past, and while some might say we're now just ghosts of that past, I know the truth: that greatness is within us still.

They might mock the pride we take in our heritage, but it's easy to deride what you can never understand. No commoner can know us because we are so far from common. To be a Taldan noble means to be triumphant, and I see no fault in taking pride in that.

—From the letters of Duke Ambrose Xantrain VI

Nothing is as important to Taldan nobles as an impressive pedigree. In Taldor's confusing and convoluted hierarchy, careful documentation of lineage is essential for ambitious elites to establish their position and work their way up the pecking order. Proof of pedigree is paramount, as few nobles trust a stranger's claims to nobility on words alone.

A family's credentials—which include extensive genealogies, official proclamations, and title grants—are often locked away in the family's archives. These credentials are commonly overseen by a trusted steward specifically tasked with their maintenance and organization. This appointment is considered a great honor, and most stewards that serve in this capacity do so for life—in some cases, passing their expertise to their own children in a family line that parallels that of the noble house they serve. The best stewards have an encyclopedic knowledge of every piece of proof or history in the family collection, as well as the expertise to gloss over gaps (or even fabricate credentials) where the records are lacking. Many noble families spare no expense in seeing that their archives are protected with traps and guards, as destruction or theft of these materials might jeopardize ancestral claims.

In addition to these meticulously maintained archives, almost every noble estate maintains at least one hall or room dedicated to showcasing the owners' most distinguished family members. These displays are usually portraits, but might also include heirloom weapons or ornate tapestries illustrating a family tree. Unlike private archives, these treasures are exhibited for visitors and are sometimes opulently displayed. Noble families claiming blood connection to the royal line make no secret of it, and might put personal items such as marriage certificates or torrid correspondence on display to announce their pedigree.

From their childhood, noble youths are tutored in their ancestry and expected to recite lengthy, specific details about their family line. For many outsiders, these exercises in memorization and recitation seem absurd or tedious, but this information is critical to noble etiquette. Any aristocrat—even an adolescent—unable to quickly enumerate details of her heritage when prompted is an embarrassment. Further, these facts don't exist in a vacuum; they demonstrate which noble families have allegiances, grievances, or promises with others, allowing nobles to quickly ascertain their station among their peers.

Taldan noble houses each have an array of heraldic images, including coats of arms, colors, crests, and signets. Most symbolize important points in the house's history, but, in the oldest families, the origin of its earliest symbols might be conflicting or unclear. These colors and images are emblazoned on all manner of accouterments used by the family, from the stonework

to the servants' livery. The most portable symbol is a signet ring, which no proper Taldan noble would be seen without. Every noble symbol is registered in the royal archives in Oppara, but the dizzying array of symbols and their many variations means that manufacturing a symbol—or an entire noble identity—is much easier than Taldan nobility would like to believe.

Gatherings of the noble class occur regularly in the form of grand hunts, lavish ceremonies, and opulent balls. At these events, nobles don their finest and most elaborate attire with the intent of outshining one another. The Taldan drive to have the most opulent fashion sometimes leads to disaster: more than a few accounts tell of broken bones caused by falls from shoes with towering heels, drunken partygoers strangled by their own collars, and precarious wigs catching on fire. Commoners frequently quip that the only danger greater to Taldan nobles than their own backbiting peers is their love of fashion.

The *War for the Crown* Adventure Path offers the PCs a chance to interact with Taldan nobility firsthand. Below are some plot hooks you can use to further incorporate the intrigues of nobility into your game.

Long-Lost Relations: A married couple arrives at a noble's estate with the right credentials to display affiliation with the family, but no one has ever seen these distant relatives before. Worse, the archives of the estate were recently burgled and the documents that would confirm or refute the visitors' pedigree were the only items stolen. The PCs are asked to spy on the couple to determine their true motives and origin.

A Suspicious Acquaintance: A local lord is worried about his heir and requests the PCs' help. He claims his son started making regular visits to a nearby noble's estate. Although the lord is pleased his son is making the "right kind" of social connections, his maids have reported bloodstains on the young man's clothes after every visit. The lord entreats the PCs to discretely find out what his son is doing at the estate.

Unmasking an Assassin: A noble seeks out the PCs to investigate a sensitive matter. She has heard rumors of a rival house making plans to eliminate junior members of her family. The noble asks the PCs to investigate the assassination—not to prevent it, necessarily, but to determine which rival house sent the assassin.

NOBLE FAMILIES

The following pages present eight of Taldor's oldest and most prominent noble families. In addition to information about the family, each entry includes a story feat appropriate for a PC associated with that family. The full rules for story feats can be found on page 66 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Campaign*. Backgrounds mentioned as prerequisites appear beginning on page 16 of *Ultimate Campaign*.

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary



HOUSE CORCINA

Location Tandak Prefecture

Head of House Duke Quintus
Avellius Corcina

Primary Industry Foreign trade

Allies House Fahlspär

Enemies House Kastner

The ambitious members of House Corcina first made their mark on Taldan history during the time of the Second Army of Exploration. Founder Phaedrus Corcina's great success in aiding the expansion of Taldor's domination gained him not only a title and land, but also a bride of royal blood. House Corcina participated in every Army of Exploration thereafter, earning a reputation as brave explorers and ruthless conquerors. Their foreign involvement expanded their holdings and influence throughout the Inner Sea. The Corcinas used this clout to establish numerous merchant guilds and trade routes. At the height of their glory, they were one of the wealthiest Taldan noble houses.

During the Even-Tongued Conquest, the house lost its primary base of operations in Galt and retreated south to the Tandak Prefecture, working hard to maintain its foreign connections. Now under the shrewd leadership of Duke Quintus Corcina, the house continues to not only grow but thrive through its foreign trade networks. Corcina trade routes stretch the length of Avistan, but the duke seeks to extend them further still, including a bold expansion into Tian Xia.

PROSPERITY AND PRIDE (STORY)

Your family has raised cities and mastered trade, and you seek to do the same.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Corcina, or have the Craftsperson, Inheritance, Well-Connected Friend, or Worldshaker background.

Benefit: When in a settlement the size of a large city or smaller, you receive a +2 bonus on Appraise checks and Diplomacy checks. If you have 10 or more ranks in one of these skills, the bonus on that skill increases to +4.

Goal: Your actions must spur a settlement to grow to the next size category (*Pathfinder RPG Gamemastery Guide* 204); this usually involves decisively defeating a challenging foe or an appropriate number of foes preying upon or impeding the settlement's citizenry.

Completion Benefit: You teach others how to get the most out of their equipment. Three times per day as a standard action, you can increase the armor bonus provided by a suit of nonmagical armor, the circumstance bonus to a skill provided by a tool or skill kit (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 76), or the shield bonus provided by a nonmagical shield by 1. This bonus lasts for 1 hour and doesn't stack with other uses of this ability.



HOUSE DARAHAN

Location Whitemarch Prefecture

Head of House Grand Duchess
Vivexis Darahan

Primary Industry Stone quarries

Allies House Kastner

Enemies House Heskilar

House Darahan enjoys a prestigious reputation as a distinguished line of knights and monster hunters. Darahan is reputed to be among the most bold and gallant houses, if sometimes reckless on the battlefield. The Darahans were founded in the early days of Taldor when the hero Soratio Darahan slew a powerful medusa. The Darahans took the medusa as their symbol and the defeat of evil monsters as their charge.

The members of House Darahan have distinguished themselves in battle against Taldor's enemies many times. Among these victories, none are so well known as their victories against the forces of the Whispering Tyrant during the Shining Crusade. The family still maintains several holdings in Lastwall and many Darahans, including Grand Duchess Vivexis Darahan, have served tours of duty in Lastwall, testing their might against the evils along the land's borders.

Darahans are formidable warriors and frequent favorites in jousts and other tournaments. Though most famous for their martial might, House Darahan's quarries and mines provide the bulk of the family's income. Granite and marble are their primary industry, though they also have a productive silver mine, which is vigilantly protected by Grand Duchess Vivexis Darahan from scheming enemies who covet it for themselves.

WE ARE THE WALL (STORY)

You embody your family's legendary monster-hunters.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Darahan, or have the Champion of the People, Duty, or Raider background.

Benefit: Three times per day as a move action, you can declare a single dragon, magical beast, or monstrous humanoid within 50 feet and in line of sight to be your mark. You gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls and on Bluff, Knowledge, Perception, Sense Motive, and Survival checks against your mark. These bonuses last for 1 minute, until you designate a new mark, or until the mark is dead. After you have declared a creature as your mark, it can't be your mark again for another 24 hours.

Goal: Protect a settlement you have lived in for at least a year from an invading force consisting of an appropriate number of dragons, magical beasts, or monstrous humanoids.

Completion Benefit: The bonus provided by your mark becomes +1 for every 4 character levels you have, to a maximum of +5.



HOUSE DENZARNI

Location Kazuhn Prefecture
Head of House Grand Duchess Mellea Denzarni
Primary Industry Agriculture
Allies House Merrosett
Enemies House Fahlspar

House Denzarni traces its origin back to the union of Grand Prince Urios II's daughter and the heir of a tribal leader who claimed Azlanti descent. Whether the claim is fiction or truth, the Denzarni take pride in their purported heritage and teach Azlanti cultural traditions to their scions. In truth, these "traditions" are built on fragmented histories, speculation, and personal convenience. Among these inherited Azlanti teachings is a devotion to the ancient god, Scal. The destructive deity is considered dead and lost, but the Denzarnis revere Scal not out of genuine devotion but as an excuse to surrender to their debauched urges. They regularly hold clandestine gatherings with other elites under the pretext of "cleansing" their bodies and souls of wicked impulses. In reality, these meetings are little more than crazed binges of violence and lust. To ensure they don't become victims of these gatherings, the few household servants and retainers privy to the secret meetings eagerly supply sacrifices and help dispose of evidence.

Grand Duchess Mellea Denzarni focuses on these hedonistic pastimes and leaves her stewards to manage the household's bountiful orchards and lush plantations. Fortunately, these stewards are hard-working and talented; the Denzarnis are currently experiencing a surge in prosperity thanks to a gardener who has developed several hybrids of fruit varieties with particularly delicious results.

OUR BOUNTY, OUR GLORY (STORY)

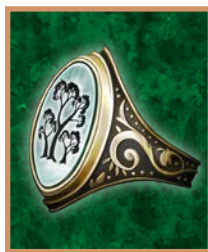
You can ignore privation and channel your emotions to prepare for a later bounty.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Denzarni, or have the Bloodthirsty, Omen, Tree Tender, or Unsuspecting Master background.

Benefit: You add 1 day to the time you can go without food or water before making Constitution checks and you add +4 to Constitution checks to stave off the effects of starvation and thirst.

Goal: You must succumb to your emotions and be victorious. Thwart an appropriate number of foes while you are subject to an effect with the emotion^{UM} descriptor, such as *rage*.

Completion Benefit: Once per day, you can use *heroes' feast* as a spell-like ability with a caster level equal to your character level, although your feast does not grant the effects of *neutralize poison* or *remove disease*.



HOUSE FAHLSPAR

Location Northern Tandak Prefecture
Head of House Grand Duchess Breateeza Fahlspar
Primary Industry Lumber
Allies House Corcina
Enemies House Denzarni

House Fahlspar is one of the earliest established noble houses and was named after its founder, the leader of a small tribe of Kellid hunters and druids. In exchange for submitting to Taldor's authority, the crown granted Comnaric Fahlspar a noble title and jurisdiction of a barony. What Fahlspar's friends saw as betrayal, he saw as a pragmatic choice to ensure the survival of his people.

The Fahlspars intermarried with the Taldan people and grew and harvested trees for lumber. Yet the house's fortunes waned as they forgot old family lore. Several generations after the family's founding, Baroness Cressida Fahlspar forsook her title and lands to train with the druids of the Wildwood Lodge. When she finally re-emerged, she did so with her family's long-lost secrets of woodcraft and quickly revitalized her family's waning fortunes. Her connections paved the way for the creation of the Treaty of the Wildwood between the druids and Grand Prince Adavarine II, and the Fahlspars were elevated to control of the Northern Tandak Prefecture. The family maintains sprawling holdings in the foothills of the Fog Peaks. Although the primeval forest that once covered their lands is mostly gone, their sustainable logging keeps the family's coffers full.

Grand Duchess Breateeza Fahlspar is the head of the family, although she prefers solitary hunts to courtly politics. She is increasingly vocal on the advantages of Andoran-styled freedoms and the vanishing Kellid lifestyle—subjects that the rest of her family wishes she would avoid as it places the family's standing in jeopardy.

STANDING TALL (STORY)

You can tap into your family's old ways to take on some of the traits of plants.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Fahlspar, or have the Hunter, Nature, or Tree Tender background.

Benefit: Once per day as a move action, you gain a +2 bonus on saving throws against mind-affecting effects for 1 minute.

Goal: Swear to protect a natural site and defend it for at least a year, including decisively defeating an appropriate number of invaders or despoilers.

Completion Benefit: You may now use the above benefit three times per day, and the benefit also applies on saving throws against paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, and stunning effects.

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary



HOUSE HESKILLAR

Location Krearis Prefecture

Head of House Grand Duke
Borand Heskillar

Primary Industry Mining (metal)

Allies House Zespire

Enemies House Darahan

In a nation where dragon-slaying has a proud tradition—and where memories of the devastating Dragon Plague still linger—House Heskillar remains curiously insistent that one of its earliest ancestors was a great bronze dragon. Their legends tell of a dragon who challenged the Grand Prince's nephew in the guise of a wandering knight. The dragon agreed to live with the nephew if she lost, but she would earn an extensive estate if she won. The fight ended in a draw; the nephew won a bride, the dragon won her land, and together they started House Heskillar. Though most regard the story of the Dragon Bride as a fairy tale, the Heskillars tell it with passionate sincerity, and the frequency with which dragon-blooded powers appear in the family is remarkably high.

Contemporary members of the house don't rely on myths to prove their worth. From gold to iron, House Heskillar manages a staggering array of metals and works closely with Taldor's official forges as well as its mint. Grand Duke Borand Heskillar is a capable administrator, although his recent marriage to a dwarven noble strains his family's relations with Taldan traditionalists.

NEVER CONQUERED, FOREVER FEARED (STORY)

You are dauntless in battle, and your lineage echoes with awe-inspiring power.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Heskillar, or have the Adopted by Dragons, Path of Righteous Rage, or Proud Heritage background.

Benefit: Your stern demeanor gives you a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks. If you have 10 or more ranks in Intimidate, this bonus increases to +4. You also gain a +2 bonus on saves against paralysis and sleep effects.

Goal: You must individually slay an appropriate number of significant foes in succession, without retreating or withdrawing from a fight.

Completion Benefit: You can display your imposing presence as a free action when you take an offensive action, such as an attack or a charge. Opponents within 30 feet of you must succeed at a Will save or become shaken for 3d6 rounds. The DC of this save is equal to 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Charisma modifier. This ability does not cause opponents that are already shaken to become frightened, and opponents with more Hit Dice than your character level are immune to the effect. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.



HOUSE KASTNER

Location Opparos Prefecture

Head of House (Taldor) Lord
Remilliard Kastner

Primary Industry Artisan guilds

Allies House Darahan

Enemies House Corcina

Originally the leaders of a major network of artisan guilds, the Kastners married into the nobility and swiftly worked their way up the political ladder. When Cheliox broke from Taldor in the Even-Tongued Conquest, most of the Kastner family sided with the separatists and re-established their holdings in the west. In the midst of the discord, rumors circulated that the Kastners in Cheliox had bolstered the family's fortune through espionage and diabolism. These reports left the Taldan Kastners scrambling to salvage their tarnished reputation and distance themselves from their Chelaxian relations.

The current head of the Kastner family in Taldor, Lord Remilliard Kastner, is a devout follower of Ragathiel who is attempting to redeem his family's reputation with his piety and integrity. Not all Kastners are as devoted as Remilliard. Whispers at court speculate that devil-worship remains hidden even in the Taldan Kastners, and even that Remilliard's piety is a sham, but these rumors are founded in desires to discredit rivals rather than to expose actual diabolism.

Though nobles first and foremost, Kastners are known for their remarkable craftsmanship. All scions of the family must study at least one craft, and many become experienced in several crafts and are accomplished artisans in their own right. This expertise not only honors the family's roots but assures precise appraisals of the artisans they oversee.

FORWARD FROM BENEATH (STORY)

You have vowed to infiltrate your wicked kin and redeem your family's reputation.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Kastner, be a good-aligned member of a family or organization whose secret evil has been publicly revealed, or have the Dishonored Family or Betrayal backgrounds.

Benefit: Your experience with infiltrating your own family or organization gives you a +2 bonus on Disguise checks. If you have 10 or more ranks in Disguise, this bonus increases to +4. If you are not evil, as a standard action you can choose to radiate a faint aura of evil for the purposes of spells such as *detect evil*. You can dismiss this ersatz aura as a standard action.

Goal: Redeem your family or organization.

Completion Benefit: You gain the benefit of *undetectable alignment* as a constant spell-like ability. You can suppress or resume this ability as a standard action.



HOUSE MERROSETT

Location Avin Prefecture

Head of House Count Cyprian Merrosett IV

Primary Industry Mining (gems)

Allies House Denzarni

Enemies House Zespire

According to the meticulous records of House Merrosett, the family's nobility began when a prominent wizard named Egnatia Merrosett seduced the Grand Prince's heir. The twin sons born from this affair received titles and lands to assuage their demands for validation of their birthright. Egnatia established strict practices of inbreeding to maintain their bloodline's purity. Numerous Merrosett tomes detail pairings that would make even the most insular of Taldor's nobility cringe, but the sallow-complexioned Merrosetts insist that strict maintenance of their lineage has created demonstrable nobility and unparalleled arcane excellence. House Merrosett is blessed with an expansive collection of gem mines, and none outside the family truly comprehend their true wealth. The elderly patriarch Count Cyprian Merrosett uses these gem mines to fund his family's magical experiments in genetic manipulation on all manner of creatures.

VICTORY THROUGH UNITY (STORY)

You have practiced your family's genetic experimentations upon your own familiar.

Prerequisite: You must have a familiar, and you must either be a member of House Merrosett or have the Initiated or Storied Lineage background.

Benefit: When you gain this feat, choose an animal aspect granted by the hunter's animal focus class ability (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 27) and apply it to your familiar. Your hunter level for this ability is 1st, and you cannot change this ability once you have selected it. If your familiar dies, it loses its aspect and you may choose a new aspect if you take a new familiar. Your familiar's form is altered by superficial changes appropriate to its aspect.

Goal: You must breed a new magical creature.

Completion Benefit: You may either choose and apply a second animal aspect to your familiar or apply an evolution from the 1-point evolutions available to a summoner's eidolon (*Pathfinder RPG Pathfinder Unchained* 35). The familiar must conform to any limitations of the evolution (such as being one size category larger than its rider to serve as a mount). Once selected, this decision cannot be changed, but if your familiar dies it loses these abilities and you may choose new abilities if you take a new familiar. If your familiar breeds with its original kind, it has the potential to pass on these extra abilities as permanent traits.



HOUSE ZESPIRE

Location Tandak Prefecture

Head of House Duke Felinax Zespire II

Primary Industry Wineries

Allies House Heskillar

Enemies House Merrosett

House Zespire is steeped in a strong affiliation with the Church of Abadar and the judicial workings of Taldor. From the early days of the Age of Enthronement, the Zespire were regarded as loyal, upstanding citizens with connections in the clergy and the justice system. House Zespire further produced several insightful and influential senators that argued against restrictions to the Grand Duke's authority. House Zespire's patriotic service earned the crown's attention and noble title as a reward for years of steadfast devotion.

The lands owned by House Zespire are ideal for grape cultivation, and the family operates immense vineyards. Generations ago, the Zespire developed a grape variety used to make a distinct and highly desirable wine known as Ligosi Red. Zespire lore maintains that their vineyards all originate from the family's first grape vine, a gift from the First Vault granted by a divine emissary of Abadar.

While the vineyards now provide the family's primary revenues, members of House Zespire continue to occupy careers in the Church of Abadar, the judicial system, and politics. Other members of the family—such as Count Orlundo Zespire—have distinguished military careers. Consequently, House Zespire ranks as one of the most influential families in Taldor, with the prudent and respected Duke Felinax Zespire sitting at the helm.

LIGHTING THE WAY (STORY)

You seek to lead others through your pious example.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Zespire, or have the Devoted, Exemplar, Marked by the Gods, or Righteous Mentor background.

Benefit: Once per day as a standard action, you can give all allies within 30 feet who can hear you a +1 bonus on attack rolls and on saving throws against mind-affecting effects for 1 minute.

Goal: Establish your religion in an existing settlement where it isn't present. You can do this by having a settlement gain the Holy Site or Pious quality for devotion to your deity (*Gamemastery Guide* 207), or change its government to a theocracy based on your religion.

Completion Benefit: You can spontaneously convert any 2nd-level or higher divine spell into *enthrall* and can spontaneously convert any 3rd-level or higher divine spell into *suggestion*.

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary



BESTIARY

Revolution was in the air. It was the first week of the new year and it seemed like a time for new beginnings. Osman and his crew wanted to shake up the old regime, pull the out-of-touch aristocrats from their gilded perches, and bring freedom to the downtrodden. He needed someone to open the gates to the parliamentary compound, and there are precious few people who can slip into that gatehouse through its narrow windows. So I went—all in the name of revolution—and I opened the gates to freedom and a new beginning.

It wasn't just Osman's crew that stormed in—it was half the city. Every dockworker, dung-slinger, and long-oppressed worker surged through the gates. The parliament guards didn't stand a chance. The mob might have torn the entire compound down if that monolithic creature hadn't suddenly appeared, radiating order and stability. It quenched the fires of revolution like a bucket of snow. And that was even before it raised its hammer.

—From the testimony of Diantha Manett, halfling burglar

This volume of the War for the Crown Adventure Path contains a representative of the forces of law in Axis, two inevitables to ensure the ongoing reign of law, an extraplanar dragon of civilized order, and a shimmering ooze.

OUTER PLANES ADVENTURE

"The Reaper's Right Hand" has the PCs exploring Axis, the Outer Plane of order and civilization. During their time in Axis, the PCs have a chance to encounter many foes in the sprawling, extraplanar metropolis.

The Axis Encounters table presented here features challenges the PCs might face beyond those in the adventure. Each hour the PCs spend traveling around Axis, they have a 30% chance of a random encounter. If a random encounter occurs, roll d% and run the encounter listed for the result. The PCs should have at most three random encounters in a 24-hour period.

Since this adventure spans a range of character levels, some random encounters might be too trivial or too difficult for the PCs, depending on their current strength. In these cases, roll again or choose a different encounter appropriate for the PCs' abilities.

Mercane Chaos Merchants (CR 13): The PCs encounter four mercanes (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 188), notorious extraplanar traders, along with three dancing dervishes (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 149) as hired bodyguards. The mercanes are having a hard time finding buyers for some of their items in Axis, due to a chaotic taint on the items that the mercanes only recently identified. The mercanes offer the following items to the PCs as "unique devices" or "planar curiosities." They don't obscure the items' chaotic properties, but they don't discount the items for being tainted, either. Each item radiates moderate chaos in response to spells like *detect chaos*.

Agathion's Raiment (25,100 gp): Any clothing created by this suit of *glamered celestial armor* has distinctly animalistic motifs: a hood might resemble a bird's head, a vest might be made of furry hide, and so forth. Although the wearer has control over the type of clothing created, she doesn't control the animalistic motifs that appear.

Cloak of Hushing (24,000 gp): If the wearer of this *minor cloak of displacement* speaks a word aloud, the cloak's magical properties are suppressed for 1 minute.

Necklace of Inverted Energy (8,100 gp): This item functions as a *necklace of fireballs* type VI, except that each time a sphere detonates, there is a 50% chance that it deals cold damage rather than fire damage. Make this determination for each sphere as it detonates; there isn't any way of knowing in advance whether a sphere will deal fire damage or cold damage.

Planefarer's Blade (8,315 gp): This +1 *scimitar* is embossed with a symbol that resembles a holy symbol of Irori, but a successful DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check determines that the symbol isn't correct, as though it

AXIS ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1-8	Mercane chaos merchants	13	See below
9-13	1 clockwork assassin	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 59
14-17	1 kolyarut and 1 zelekhut	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 163, 167
18-21	1 radiant essence	13	See page 90
22-25	2d6 theletoses	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 14
26-30	1d3 impariuts	13	See page 86
31-35	1d3 akhanas	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 9
36-39	1 ankou	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 10
40-47	2d6 axiomiters	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 36
48-52	2d6 denizens of Leng	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 82
53-57	2 clockwork golems	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 137
58-63	1d3 kolyaruts	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 163
64-67	1 mezlan	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 186
68-73	1 Axial monitor	15	See page 82
74-77	1 clockwork angel	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 58
78-82	1 gold golem	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 140
83-86	2d6 upasundas	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 27
87-91	1 adult edict dragon	16	See page 88
92-96	1 bythos	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 10
97-100	1 horned devil	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 76

was created by someone that only knew the symbol by description. When the sword is used to kill a chaotic outsider, it gains the *lawful outsider bane* weapon special ability for the next 3 days; if it is used to kill a lawful outsider, it gains the *chaotic outsider bane* weapon special ability for 3 days. The scimitar can't have both *bane* weapon special abilities at once; if it gains one while the other is active, only the recently gained weapon special ability applies.

Pretentious Aegis (8,500 gp): The shield-sized *wall of force* created by this *ring of force shield* functions as normal, but appears as an ostentatious portrait of the wearer, complete with gilded frame. Each time the ring is activated, the portrait is random and different, showing (for example), the wearer in an elaborate wig, the wearer astride a charging steed, or the wearer in spectacles holding an enormous book.

Stonebrother's Lockpick (1,800 gp): This sealed stone box is 10 inches square and mostly hollow, weighing only 5 pounds. An irregular rock inside the box rattles dully whenever the box is shaken. Shaking the box forcefully at a locked item or portal causes the lock to come undone; the *stonebrother's lockpick* functions as a *chime of opening* with only 6 uses remaining. It can't open any door, lid, or lock made primarily of stone.

Tattletale Bolts (14; 267 gp each): Creatures shaken by these *screaming bolts* do not hear the bolts scream, but instead hear the bolts shouting the creatures' most embarrassing secrets aloud.

REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

AXIAL MONITOR

This imposing creature stands on three legs, with a body like three torsos fused together. These torsos are topped with a single head bearing three faces, each set in a bland, serene expression.

AXIAL MONITOR

CR 15



XP 51,200

LN Large outsider (extraplanar, lawful)

Init +7; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 90 ft., *true seeing*; **Perception** +41

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 12, flat-footed 27 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size)

hp 210 (20d10+100); regeneration 5 (chaotic or magic)

Fort +17, **Ref** +11, **Will** +18

DR 10/chaotic; **Immune** disease, electricity, mind-affecting effects; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 26

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft. (30 ft. in armor)

Melee +1 *merciful greatclub* +26/+21/+16/+11 (2d8+10), tentacle +20 (1d6+3 plus grab), slam +20 (2d6+3 plus energized maul) or

+1 *axiomatic glaive* +26 (2d8+10/x3), +1 *merciful greatclub* +26 (2d8+10), tentacle +25 (1d6+3 plus grab), slam +25 (2d6+3 plus energized maul)

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

Special Attacks energized maul, tripartite assault, watchful faces

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +23)

Constant—*true seeing*

At will—*detect chaos*, *overland flight*

3/day—*detect thoughts* (DC 15), *dimension door*, *dimensional anchor*, *dispel chaos* (DC 18), *hold monster* (DC 18), *order's wrath* (DC 17), *sending*

1/day—*break enchantment*, *dictum* (DC 20), *mass hold monster* (DC 22)

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 16, **Con** 21, **Int** 14, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +27 (+29 disarm and trip, +31 grapple);

CMD 40 (42 vs. disarm and trip)

Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Great Cleave, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Acrobatics +23, Diplomacy +26, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (local) +25, Knowledge (planes) +25, Perception +41, Sense Motive +31, Spellcraft +22; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Perception, +4 Sense Motive

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common; truespeech

SQ interrogate

ECOLOGY

Environment any urban (Axis)

Organization solitary, patrol (2–4), squad (5–8), precinct (9–16), or academy (21–40)

Treasure double (Large mwk breastplate, Large +1 *axiomatic glaive*, Large +1 *merciful greatclub*, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Energized Maul (Su) As a swift action, an Axial monitor can add the *axiomatic*, *flaming*, *frost*, *ghost touch*, or *thundering* weapon special ability to its slam attack for 1 round, but it cannot add more than one ability at a time.

Interrogate (Su) When an Axial monitor questions a creature that is helpless or pinned, it can compel the creature to answer its questions truthfully unless the creature succeeds at a DC 23 Will save. A creature that fails its save is affected as though subject to *zone of truth*, except that the creature must answer questions if it is able and cannot refuse to answer or answer evasively. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same Axial monitor's interrogate ability for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Tripartite Assault (Ex) When it makes a full attack, an Axial monitor can choose to make a full attack with one weapon and secondary attacks with its tentacle and slam, or it can choose to make a single attack with each weapon it wields, including its tentacle and slam attacks, with no penalties to its attack rolls for fighting with multiple weapons.

Watchful Faces (Ex) An Axial monitor can make three additional attacks of opportunity in a round, one for each head, although it can make no more than a single attack for any given opportunity.

The Eternal City of Axis lies at the center of the multiverse, holding the very fabric of reality in some semblance of order through the constant calculations of the axiomatic Godmind. Yet even a city of order such as Axis, open as it is to visitors from across the planes, must deal with its own internal law and order on a daily basis. The Axial monitors are tasked with preventing disturbances of order and, when crimes do occur, investigating them to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Each Axial monitor has the same unusual form: its large, hairless head bears three faces set equidistantly around it, each expression the picture of bland serenity. These faces appear roughly humanoid but are completely smooth, without contours for a brow, nose, or mouth, as though its faces were painted on canvas. The creature's triangular torso has three shoulders, each with two powerful arms. Two pairs of its arms are humanoid, while the third set is mismatched, with one a long, undulating tentacle and the other an articulated limb of banded iron ending in a maul-like head. Below its waist, the creature's body divides into a tripod of legs, each ending in a long foot.

Axial monitors only attack those presenting a disturbance to Axis's order, whether through the commission of a crime or another civil malfeasance. They call for surrender before a fight and prefer to subdue opponents rather than slay them. Their mandate is to

bring prisoners into their dispatch stations so they can be examined and interrogated, and the reasons for their disturbance identified and measured in formal reports. These reports are provided directly to the Godmind, which calculates the mathematically ideal method to counteract and prevent any such future disturbances. After incarceration and calculation, an offender is either set free or transferred to one of the city's rehabilitative prisons under escort by Axial monitors. Although they follow this same process for nearly all creatures, the Axial monitors show no mercy or leniency to proteans and always attack these embodiments of disorder with lethal force on sight.

Axial monitors are 12 feet tall and weigh 1,200 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Axial monitors maintain a low profile unless in pursuit of a criminal or when investigating a crime. The city is so orderly than many visitors to Axis—and indeed, some residents—never see an Axial monitor or know they exist. Their rarity engenders several mysteries about their creation and their purpose. It is unclear whether Axial monitors are created by axiomites, are created from axiomites, or are incarnations formed by Axis itself to maintain its mathematically perfect conceptions of peace and order. Axial monitors do not seem to be a distinct species because they do not procreate or age. Axial monitors have never been observed to eat, drink, or sleep, and some speculate that their fortified dispatch stations must be where the creatures rest. The only non-monitors allowed inside these dispatch stations are criminals and rare axiomite specialists, but they are restricted to chambers near a station's arched entrance. No one, except perhaps the Godmind itself, knows precisely how many Axial monitors there are, which lends some credence to the theory that they are generated directly by the Godmind or the city itself as need dictates.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Inevitables served both as the original law enforcement in the city of Axis and as its shock troops in the first war between law and chaos when the Outer Planes were young. However, as inevitables have expanded their role to enforcing the will of law across the multiverse and to combating chaos in all its incarnations, Axial monitors assumed many of the inevitables' former law-enforcement duties within the city.

Axial monitors keep the peace in Axis in as harmonious a way as possible, and are never seen outside of Axis. They do not patrol the streets of the Eternal City, as peace officers in other cities do, but are dispatched directly by the Godmind. An Axial monitor's unflappable countenance and unusual appearance—bordering between bizarre and comical—is off-putting and alien to most creatures. Few creatures expect sympathy or kinship from the strange-looking Axial monitors, and it is likely that the Godmind purposely calculated their manner and appearance for precisely this effect.



REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfall

C

ry

ashto

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

INEVITABLE, HYKARIUT

This imposing anthropomorphic being comprised of stone and spiked steel armor hefts an intimidating hammer.

HYKARIUT

CR 18

XP 153,600

LN Large outsider (extraplanar, inevitable, lawful)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect chaos*, low-light vision, *true seeing*; Perception +30

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 13, flat-footed 33 (+4 deflection, +20 natural, -1 size)

hp 280 (20d10+170); regeneration 10 (chaotic)

Fort +23, **Ref** +10, **Will** +23

Defensive Abilities constructed, unimpeachable;
DR 15/chaotic

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 *axiomatic warhammer* +28/+23/+18/+13
(2d6+9/19-20/x3)

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

Special Attacks disperse the rabble, drastic measures, smite chaos 3/day (+8 damage), trample (2d6+12, DC 28)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +28)

Constant—*detect chaos*, *shield of law* (DC 26), *true seeing*
At will—*enthrall* (DC 20), *mark of justice*, *order's wrath* (DC 22)

3/day—*dimension door*, *dispel chaos*, *fly*, *greater command* (DC 23), *greater dispel magic*, *plane shift* (DC 23)

1/day—*dictum* (DC 25)

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 10, **Con** 24, **Int** 15, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 27

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +29 (+33 disarm); **CMD** 43 (45 vs. disarm)

Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Disarming Strike^{APG}, Great Cleave, Greater Disarm, Improved Critical (warhammer), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack

Skills Diplomacy +21, Fly +8, Intimidate +39, Knowledge (geography, history, nobility) +12, Knowledge (local) +22, Knowledge (planes) +15, Perception +30, Sense Motive +30, Stealth +9, Survival +20

Languages truespeech

SQ judicious

ECOLOGY

Environment any urban

Organization solitary, investigation (1 hykariut plus 4-8 arbiters^{B2}), or mitigation (1 hykariut plus 5-10 arbiters^{B2} and 2-8 kolyaruts^{B2} or zelekhts^{B2})

Treasure standard (Large +1 *axiomatic warhammer*, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disperse the Rabble (Su) As a standard action, a hykariut can attempt a single melee attack with its warhammer against one creature within its reach. If it hits, it deals

damage as normal and releases a suppressing shockwave centered on the target. This shockwave functions as *order's wrath* (CL 20th, Will DC 22) unless the attack roll is a critical hit, in which case the hykariut can instead have the shockwave function as *dictum* (CL 20th, Will DC 25).

Drastic Measures (Su) Once per day as a swift action, a hykariut can condemn one creature it can see. The condemned creature's alignment is treated as chaotic for the purpose of resolving the hykariut's abilities and spell-like abilities for 24 hours. If the creature is already chaotic, it instead takes a -2 penalty on its saving throws against the hykariut's abilities and spell-like abilities and it is treated as though it has an overwhelming chaotic aura for the purpose of the inevitable's smite chaos ability.

Judicious (Su) A hykariut can show considerable restraint when suppressing riots. The hykariut can deal nonlethal damage with its weapons without taking a -4 penalty on attack rolls. When using *dictum*, a hykariut can choose for the spell to treat each affected creature as though its Hit Dice were no more than 9 below the inevitable's caster level. When using *order's wrath*, a hykariut can choose for the spell to deal nonlethal damage to affected creatures.

Smite Chaos (Su) Three times per day as a swift action, a hykariut can choose a creature it can see to smite. If the target is chaotic, the hykariut adds its Charisma bonus as a bonus on weapon damage rolls against that creature, and its attacks automatically bypass any damage reduction the creature might have. If the target has a strong or overwhelming chaotic aura (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 266), the bonus damage increases to twice the hykariut's Charisma modifier on its first successful attack against that creature. The smite chaos effect remains until the target of the smite is dead or until 24 hours have passed.

Unimpeachable (Ex) Any weapon a hykariut wields cannot be disarmed or sundered by chaotic creatures.

Whereas most inevitables punish individual crimes such as oath breaking and murder, the mighty hykariuts quash rebellions and extinguish revolutions. These inevitables care little for petty uprisings, instead focusing on those upheavals that are at risk of spreading catastrophically, setting off a chain reaction of chaotic destabilizations. When such a riot reaches its critical mass, a hykariut stoically marches into its epicenter to scatter the rebellious citizens and crush the ideological leaders.

A hykariut is 14 feet tall and weighs 5,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

For all their outward appearance as indiscriminate hammers sent to bludgeon rebels into submission, hykariuts are equipped to operate with all the finesse of a surgeon's scalpel. Sometimes all that's necessary to convince a crowd to disperse is a reasoned argument by a supernatural being. If that is insufficient, a hykariut's feats of strength and booming voice can send

dissidents fleeing. When all else fails, the inevitable can strike the ground with its hammer, sending resonating waves of pure law to wash over the disorderly masses. Even if words fail and a hykariut must resort to weapons, it defaults to nonlethal tactics, endeavoring to merely subdue rioters rather than massacre them.

As with all inevitables, hykariuts are forged rather than born. Dozens of willing petitioners contribute to the construction of a new hykariut, by nature of the inevitable's sheer mass. The Adamantine Crucible's smiths emboss hundreds of oaths against corruption and chaos into each layer of the inevitable's armor as it is constructed, lending it an incorruptible defiance of the Maelstrom's influence.

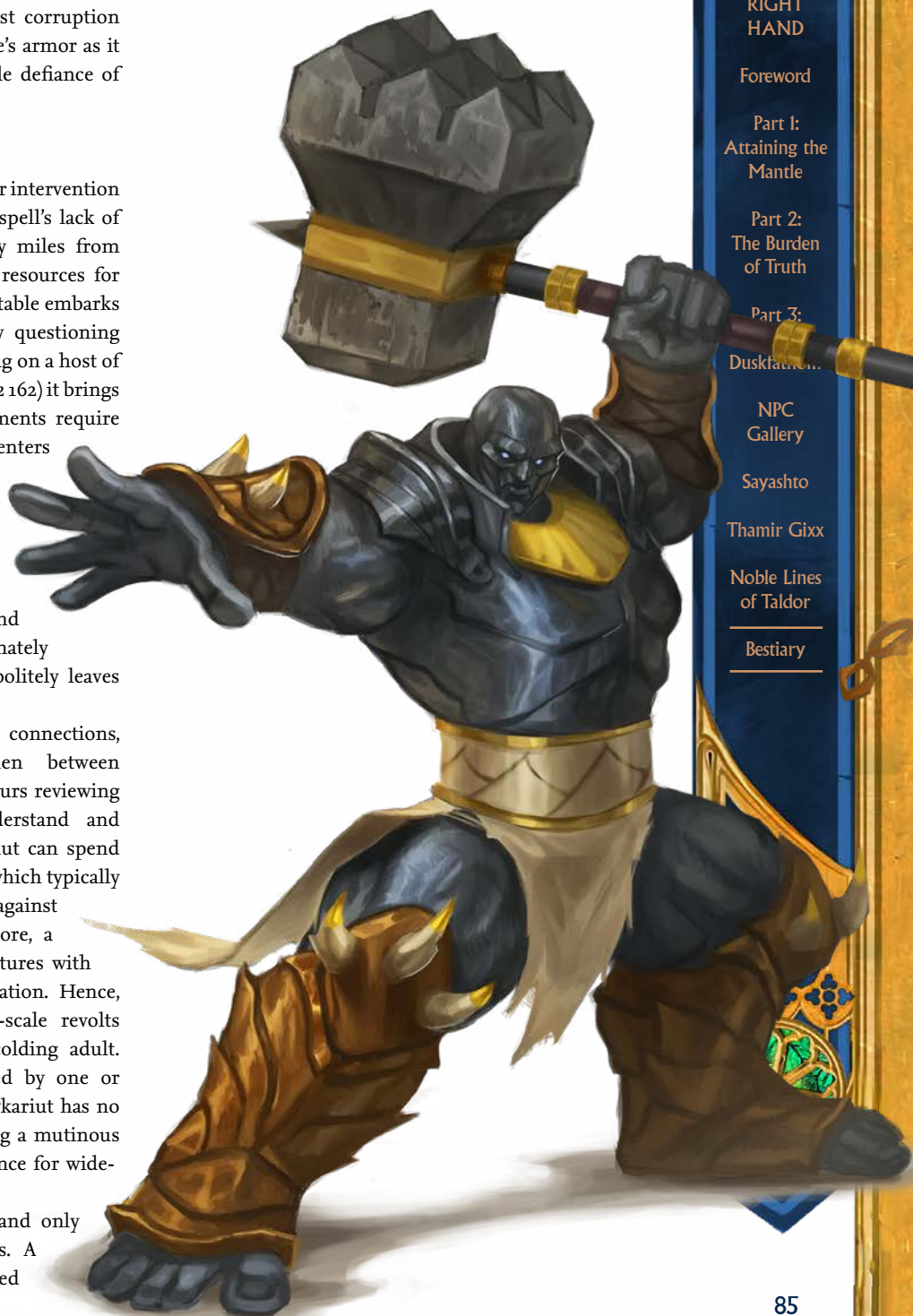
HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Hykariuts travel to locations requiring their intervention by using *plane shift*; however, due to that spell's lack of precision, a hykariut often arrives many miles from its intended target. Without noteworthy resources for moving great distances overland, the inevitable embarks along the most efficient route, regularly questioning wide-eyed travelers for directions or relying on a host of arbiter inevitables (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 162) it brings along to employ as scouts. Most assignments require additional intelligence to identify the epicenters of insurrection, so a hykariut often recruits teams of spies and informants to remain properly apprised. Although the inevitable might mentor some of these assistants—particularly if doing so would help steer them on the path to defend law in the future—these teams are ultimately temporary structures that the hykariut politely leaves once its mission is over.

Despite these ephemeral personal connections, hykariuts are fairly gregarious when between assignments. They spend considerable hours reviewing revolutionary literature to better understand and dismantle rogue ideologies, and a hykariut can spend hours engaged in “good natured debate,” which typically translates to its stubbornly arguing against unstable political philosophies. At its core, a hykariut views mortals as conflicted creatures with unpredictable moods that require regulation. Hence, the inevitables usually approach small-scale revolts with the firm but gentle hand of a scolding adult. Ongoing revolution, particularly that led by one or more demagogues, earns less mercy. A hykariut has no compunctions against publicly pulverizing a mutinous leader as an object lesson in civic obedience for wide-eyed onlookers.

Hykariuts work together only rarely, and only for far-reaching or tenacious rebellions. A pair of hykariuts has monitored Galt's Red

Revolution since its infancy, regularly meeting with and dispatching spies to measure scores of qualitative variables. Despite the immense amount of data collected over the decades, these inevitables haven't moved against the Gray Gardeners or Revolutionary Council—much to the hykariuts' mortal agents' distress. It may be that the inevitables believe the Galtan incident contained, or that they have calculated the frequent upheavals that replace each Revolutionary Council serve as a lesson to other mortal societies to avoid the same mistakes.



REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Duskfallen...

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

INEVITABLE, IMPARIUT

Dressed in noble regalia, this humanoid creature of metal and wood has a piercing gaze.

IMPARIUT

CR 10



XP 9,600

LN Medium outsider (extraplanar, inevitable, lawful)

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

Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+2 Dex, +12 natural)

hp 134 (12d10+68); regeneration 5 (chaotic)

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

Defensive Abilities constructed; **DR** 10/chaotic; **SR** 21

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *mithral longsword* +18/+13/+8 (1d8+6/19–20),
slam +12 (1d8+2) or 2 slams +17 (1d8+5)

Special Attacks dethrone, kingslayer

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

At will—*arcane mark*, *discern lies* (DC 19), *dispel magic*

3/day—*dimension door*, *hold monster* (DC 20), *invisibility*,
magic missile, *mark of justice*

1/day—*plane shift* (willing targets only), *true seeing*

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 15, **Con** 18, **Int** 15, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +17 (+19 reposition, steal); **CMD** 29 (31
vs. reposition or steal)

Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Improved Reposition^{APG},
Improved Steal^{APG}, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack

Skills Diplomacy +20, Disguise +17, Intimidate +20,
Knowledge (history, nobility, planes) +14, Perception +23,
Sense Motive +23, Stealth +8

Languages truespeech

SQ change shape (Small or Medium humanoid; *alter self*),
royal gift

ECOLOGY

Environment any urban

Organization solitary, pair, or intervention (3–5)

Treasure standard (+1 *mithral longsword*, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dethrone (Ex) An impariut can attempt a reposition or steal
combat maneuver in place of a slam attack.

Kingslayer (Su) Against any creature with a title denoting
leadership or nobility (such as a baroness, chief, or
lord), an impariut's attacks gain a +2 bonus on attack
rolls and deal an additional 1d8 damage. Against any
creature recognized as an autonomous region's head
of state (such as an empress or king), an impariut's
attacks instead gain a +4 bonus on attack rolls, deal
an additional 2d8 damage, and ignore any damage
reduction the target has.

Royal Gift (Su) Once per day as a full-round action, an
impariut can grant its blessing to a willing humanoid
creature by touching it for 1 full round. The target gains a

+1 sacred bonus on Will saving throws; a +2 sacred bonus
on saving throws against disease and poison; and a +2
sacred bonus on Knowledge (history), Knowledge (nobility),
and Sense Motive checks for 1 year. A single creature can
have no more than one royal gift from an impariut at a
time. As long as the royal gift lasts, the impariut can sense
the target's position and general condition, as per *status*.
The impariut can remove a royal gift as a free action, and
a royal gift can be removed by *dispel law*. An impariut can
only maintain one royal gift for every 4 Hit Dice it has (3
royal gifts for a standard impariut).

Monarchs, dictators, governors, and mayors may rule
under the pretense of sustaining lawful civilization,
yet those who abuse their power or harm their people
undermine the foundation of government. To the forces
of Axis, these bad actors represent a threat to cosmic
order and a means by which the chaos of uprisings and
revolution can take hold. The mortal agents of lawful
deities are responsible for encouraging responsible
governance; where they fail, an impariut must intervene.

Each impariut is a stern counselor sent to reform a
powerful leader, guiding that figure toward sustainable
policies that maintain order. Unlike many inevitables
that care only that the universal order is upheld,
impariuts exhibit slightly more patience and flexibility,
knowing that an iron-fisted response is as likely to
trigger riots as a negligent regime. As a result, impariuts
are capable diplomats and teachers, equally proficient
with incentives as with unflinching punishments.

An impariut stands precisely 7 feet tall and weighs
exactly 350 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Impariuts are armored advisors built from the
petitioners of mortal rulers in the Adamantine Crucible
of Axis. Whereas a petitioner's memories are all but
destroyed when creating most inevitables, impariuts
maintain a fundamental sense of their accomplishments
and failings during their mortal lives—all the better to
recognize these deeds in others. Each impariut also
bears a slightly different appearance that reflects the
designs and fashion of its former existence, such as
wearing the colors or regalia associated with its former
kingdom. That said, most of every impariut's appearance,
knowledge, and morality is standardized, infused into
its body upon its creation. This knowledge includes an
encyclopedic expertise on mortal history, law, methods
of civic administration, and social welfare.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Impariuts engage in extended assignments beyond
Axis, often infiltrating a royal court for several weeks
to learn about a disreputable ruler. After assembling
a proper profile of the target, the inevitable typically

approaches the wayward ruler in private to reveal its true identity, enumerate the ruler's foibles, detail the likely consequences of continued negligence, and provide an assessment of how best to correct the situation. In a typical case, the impariut offers the ruler its ongoing assistance as an advisor to help steer the leader back to a proper path. However, if at any point the inevitable ascertains that the ruler is beyond redemption, it is empowered to execute the head of state and shepherd the best suitable replacement. This replacement is usually the legal heir, but if that individual is also deemed to be dishonest, an impariut will balance public sentiment with legal entitlement to identify the best candidate.

When a ruler's deposition seems immediately necessary, an impariut might forego private counseling and cast off its disguise to condemn a wayward ruler before a crowd, snatch his crown, and hurl him from his seat of power. In rare cases in which corruption is widespread, an impariut might gather a local council of lesser leaders to establish a new government in as peaceful a way as possible. The only taboo for impariuts is that each avoids directly intervening in any nations it ruled during its mortal life. This does not prevent an impariut from answering a distant descendant's question if contacted directly, but impariuts view anything more than this reactive assistance as a conflict of interest.

As inevitables, impariuts are physically tireless and capable of working for centuries at a time. However, extended exposure to irresponsible governance sometimes erodes an impariut's judgment or causes it to take especially drastic measures when a lighter hand would suffice. These rogue impariuts are very rare, and each one rebels in its own way; one might become a serial killer of monarchs, whereas another might establish itself as the leader of a nation. Other inevitables or lawful outsiders usually neutralize these malfunctioning impariuts swiftly. To minimize these transgressions, senior inevitables encourage impariuts to return to the Eternal City between assignments. There these inevitables can bask in the perfect orderliness, grounding themselves and mentally preparing to guide another generation of imperfect nobles. Impariuts between assignments share information freely, evaluating and circulating the most effective leadership techniques, disciplinary tactics, and methods of avoiding any unintended consequences of their intervention.

Even though impariuts most often answer orders from Axis, a mortal spellcaster can petition an impariut to serve as a counselor for a careless king or tutor for an adolescent heir. So long as the inevitable's

proposed pupil seems able to learn and rule, an impariut might charge as little as 500 gp per month of nonhazardous instruction.

Those spellcasters who would instead force an impariut to obey can placate it by offering rare history volumes and noteworthy biographies, gaining a +1 bonus on the binder's Charisma check for every 100 gp worth of literature provided (maximum +4). At the same time, though, an impariut judges the conjurer, assessing whether the spellcaster might ultimately undermine the region's rule of law—and whether to destroy the conjurer at a later date.



REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part I: Attaining the Mantle

Part 2: The Burden of Truth

Part 3: Into skfathom

NPC Gallery

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PLANAR DRAGON, EDICT

Ridges run the length of this pale dragon's rune-inscribed wings.

EDICT DRAGON

LN dragon (extraplanar, lawful)

BASE STATISTICS

CR 8; **Size** Small; **Hit Dice** 10d12

Speed 60 ft.

Natural Armor +8; **Breath Weapon** line, 2d10 slashing

Str 17, **Dex** 12, **Con** 17, **Int** 14, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 14

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Axis)

Organization solitary

Treasure triple

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Commanding Breath (Su) A creature that fails its save against an edict dragon's breath weapon is affected by a single command (as *command*), as chosen by the dragon.

Hindering Shards (Su) An edict dragon can fill the area of its breath weapon with shards, as *spike stones*, for 1 minute.

Master Scrivener (Su) Each of an edict dragon's wings holds a single *symbol* spell activated only at the dragon's command as a swift action, affecting targets in a 60-foot cone.

Parapet Wings (Ex) An edict dragon gains a +2 shield bonus to AC, increases its spell resistance (if any) by 2, and cannot be flanked. If the dragon is flying or makes a wing attack, it loses this benefit until the start of its next turn.

Powerful Wings (Ex) An edict dragon's wings are primary natural attacks. The dragon can make two additional attacks of opportunity with its wings each turn.

Scrivener (Su) An edict dragon's tail slap is a touch attack that deals no damage but instead writes a rune on the target that imposes a -2 penalty to AC for 1 minute. A target may bear only one edict dragon rune at a time. The dragon can also use its tail as a mundane writing utensil.

Sweeping Scrawl (Su) An edict dragon's tail sweep marks each creature in the area as with its scrivener ability (Reflex negates). The scrivener penalty increases to -4.

Truespeech (Su) An edict dragon can speak with any creature that has a language, as if using *tongues*.

Unflappable (Ex) An edict dragon is immune to disease, fear, and poison. It also gains a +4 bonus to its CMD.

Age Category	Special Abilities	Caster Level
Wyrmling	Truespeech, unflappable	—
Very young	Powerful wings	—
Young	Parapet wings, scrivener	1st
Juvenile	Frightful presence, planar infusion	3rd
Young adult	DR 5/chaotic, spell resistance	5th
Adult	Hindering shards	7th
Mature adult	DR 10/chaotic	9th
Old	Sweeping scrawl	11th
Very old	DR 15/chaotic	13th
Ancient	Master scrivener	15th
Wyrmling	DR 20/chaotic	17th
Great wyrmling	Commanding breath	19th

YOUNG EDICT DRAGON

CR 12

XP 19,200

LN Large dragon (extraplanar, lawful)

Init +4; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 9, flat-footed 25 (+14 natural, +2 shield, -1 size)

hp 161 (14d12+70)

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

Defensive Abilities parapet wings; **Immune** disease, fear, paralysis, poison, sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +20 (2d6+10), 2 claws +20 (1d8+7), tail slap +15 (scrivener), 2 wings +21 (1d6+7)

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

Special Attacks breath weapon (80-foot line, 6d10 slashing damage, Reflex DC 22 half), powerful wings, scrivener

Oracle Spells Known (CL 1st; concentration +4)

1st (4/day)—*command* (DC 14), *comprehend languages* 0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *guidance*, *purify food and drink*, *read magic*

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 10, **Con** 21, **Int** 16, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +22 (+24 reposition); **CMD** 36 (38 vs. reposition, 40 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Hover, Improved Initiative, Improved Reposition^{APG}, Stand Still, Weapon Focus (wing)

Skills Diplomacy +20, Fly +11, Knowledge (engineering, local, planes) +20, Linguistics +20, Perception +22, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +20

Languages Common, Draconic, plus any 14 others; truespeech

ADULT EDICT DRAGON

CR 16

XP 76,800

LN Huge dragon (extraplanar, lawful)

Init +3; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +30

Aura frightful presence (180 ft., DC 25)

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 7, flat-footed 32 (-1 Dex, +23 natural, +2 shield, -2 size)

hp 270 (20d12+140)

Fort +19, **Ref** +13, **Will** +19

Defensive Abilities parapet wings; **DR** 5/chaotic; **Immune** disease, fear, paralysis, poison, sleep; **SR** 29

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +28 (2d8+15/19-20), 2 claws +28 (2d6+10), tail slap +23 (scrivener), 2 wings +29 (1d8+10)

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

Special Attacks breath weapon (100-foot line, 12d10 slashing damage, Reflex DC 27 half), crush, hindering shards, powerful wings, scrivener, tail sweep

Oracle Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +12)

3rd (5/day)—*bestow curse* (DC 18), *dispel magic*

2nd (7/day)—*calm emotions* (DC 17), *cure moderate wounds*, *resist energy*
 1st (8/day)—*command* (DC 16), *comprehend languages*, *detect chaos*, *remove fear*, *shield of faith*
 0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*, *read magic*, *stabilize*

STATISTICS

Str 31, **Dex** 8, **Con** 25, **Int** 20, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +32 (+34 reposition); **CMD** 45 (47 vs. reposition, 49 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Reposition^{APG}, Lightning Reflexes, Repositioning Strike^{APG}, Stand Still, Weapon Focus (wing)

Skills Diplomacy +28, Fly +14, Knowledge (engineering, history, local, nobility, planes) +28, Linguistics +28, Perception +30, Sense Motive +30, Spellcraft +28

Languages Common, Draconic, plus any 20 others; truespeech

SQ planar infusion (180 ft.)

ANCIENT EDICT DRAGON CR 21

XP 409,600

LN Gargantuan dragon (extraplanar, lawful)

Init +2; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +40

Aura frightful presence (300 ft., DC 31)

DEFENSE

AC 41, touch 4, flat-footed 41 (–2 Dex, +35 natural, +2 shield, –4 size)

hp 434 (28d12+252)

Fort +25, **Ref** +16, **Will** +25

Defensive Abilities parapet wings; **DR** 15/chaotic; **Immune** disease, fear, paralysis, poison, sleep; **SR** 34

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)

Melee bite +38 (4d6+14/19–20), 2 claws +38 (2d8+14), tail slap +33 (sweeping scrawl), 2 wings +39 (2d6+7)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks breath weapon (120-foot line, 20d10 slashing damage, Reflex DC 33 half), crush, hindering shards, master scrivener, powerful wings, scrivener, sweeping scrawl, tail sweep

Oracle Spells Known (CL 15th; concentration +22)

7th (5/day)—*dictum* (DC 24), *repulsion* (DC 24)
 6th (7/day)—*geas/quest*, *heal*, *symbol of fear* (DC 23)
 5th (7/day)—*dispel chaos*, *mark of justice*, *symbol of pain* (DC 22), *true seeing*
 4th (7/day)—*dimensional anchor*, *dismissal* (DC 21), *order's wrath* (DC 21), *sending*
 3rd (8/day)—*bestow curse* (DC 20), *dispel magic*, *glyph of warding* (DC 20), *stone shape*
 2nd (8/day)—*calm emotions* (DC 19), *cure moderate*

wounds, *make whole*, *resist energy*, *silence* (DC 19)
 1st (8/day)—*command* (DC 18), *comprehend languages*, *detect chaos*, *remove fear*, *shield of faith*
 0 (at will)—*create water*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*, *read magic*, *stabilize*

STATISTICS

Str 39, **Dex** 6, **Con** 29, **Int** 24, **Wis** 29, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +28; **CMB** +46 (+50 reposition); **CMD** 58 (60 vs. reposition, 62 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Crippling Critical^{APG}, Critical Focus, Greater Reposition^{APG}, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Reposition^{APG}, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Repositioning Strike^{APG}, Stand Still, Weapon Focus (wing)

Skills Diplomacy +38, Fly +15, Intimidate +38, Knowledge (engineering, history, local, nobility, planes) +38, Linguistics +38, Perception +40, Sense Motive +40, Spellcraft +38, Survival +40

Languages Common, Draconic, plus any 28 others; truespeech
SQ planar infusion (300 ft.)

These planar dragons (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 696) establish bastions of order and transform lawless towns into shining examples of urban grandeur.



REAPER'S
RIGHT
HAND

Foreword

Part I:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayasi

Thamir

Nob

RADIANT ESSENCE

Shimmering knots whirl and twist around a shining nucleus in this mound of golden-yellow slime.

RADIANT ESSENCE

CR 13



XP 25,600

NG Large ooze

Init -1; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., sense evil; Perception -5

DEFENSE

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

hp 187 (15d8+120)

Fort +13, **Ref** +4, **Will** +0

Immune ooze traits

OFFENSE

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

Melee slam +22 (6d6+18 plus 2d6 acid and grab)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks acid, constrict (6d6+18 plus 2d6 acid), divine ectoplasm

STATISTICS

Str 34, **Dex** 9, **Con** 26, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +24 (+28 grapple); **CMD** 33 (can't be tripped)

Skills Climb +20, Swim +20

ECOLOGY

Environment any land

Organization solitary

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Acid (Ex) A radiant essence secretes a corrosive substance that dissolves organic material and metal quickly, but doesn't affect stone. Each time a creature takes damage from a radiant essence's acid, its clothing and armor take the same amount of acid damage (Reflex DC 25 negates damage to clothing and armor). A metal or wooden weapon that strikes a radiant essence takes 2d6 points of acid damage, unless the weapon's wielder succeeds at a DC 25 Reflex save. If a radiant essence remains in contact with a wooden or metal object for 1 full round, the object takes 30 points of acid damage (no save). The save DCs are Constitution-based.

Divine Ectoplasm (Su) A radiant essence's attacks count as good-aligned for the purpose of bypassing damage reduction and deal an extra 2d6 points of damage against all creatures of evil alignment. Evil creatures that hit a radiant essence with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take 2d6 points of damage.

Sense Evil (Su) A radiant essence automatically knows whether a creature it detects with its blindsight has an evil alignment.

When a particularly powerful good-aligned outsider gives its life defending a holy location on the Material Plane, remnants of its pure spirit can be weighted down with worldly matter. Most good-aligned outsiders never

contribute to a radiant essence, as their holy energy is drawn back to the good Outer Planes in death, but the most righteous and powerful among them might leave behind a bit of their zealous spirit that hungers to continue its crusade against evil. When the remnants of several such outsiders pool and coalesce into a combination of spiritual residue and holy energy, an energetic, shimmering sludge called a radiant essence emerges. Unintelligent but driven to destroy evil, radiant essences are an enigmatic force for goodness. Some servants of benevolent deities actively collect radiant essences from the Material Plane, using their proto-matter in the creation of powerful celestial champions; but others allow these oozes to stay on the Material Plane as protectors of sacred areas. Alchemist-priests have long sought formulae to recreate these oozes but cannot replicate the process of their creation; devout scholars posit that the will of the divine prevents mortal creation of such holy matter.

Like many oozes, radiant essences are comprised primarily of caustic matter, but this substance is infused with holy energy that causes them to shine with a soft, glowing light. Radiant essences sense their environment by vibration and air pressure, supplemented by their instinctive knowledge of whether nearby creatures are fundamentally wicked.

A radiant essence is normally 8 feet in diameter and between 8 and 12 inches thick. It weighs approximately 1-1/2 tons.

ECOLOGY

Radiant essences are usually very similar in size, but each radiant essence's coloration is determined by the outsiders that perished to form it. Angels contribute a rich yellow, archons a shining silver, agathions a vibrant orange, and azatas a fiery red. Most radiant essences are formed from a multitude of types and are therefore a shimmering golden orange; however, radiant essences formed exclusively from one type of good outsider take on the corresponding color.

Regardless of their color, all radiant essences contain small, malleable globules of shimmering matter that surround a shining core. These masses float within a radiant essence's fluid form and contain the purest celestial energy. The golden, protoplasmic fluid in which they float is acidic, able to swiftly corrode metal and dissolve organic material. Radiant essences don't need to continually secrete this acid; they can stiffen their outer membrane in order to move around or over objects without dissolving them, although they rarely do so. Since the holy energy inside of them sustains their simple biology, radiant essences rarely take time to consume material they break down. Instead, a radiant essence secretes acid primarily to bypass obstacles that stand between it and evil creatures, but that it can't

overcome with brute force. Imbued with the creature's divine power, this fluid is particularly potent against evil foes, burning them with holy energy in addition to mundane acid.

Radiant essences don't reproduce as other oozes do, and always maintain the same size and coloration as when they were formed. If slain, a radiant essence quickly deteriorates. The globules within a radiant essence are particularly useful to anoint a holy relic or sanctify a sacred site. Although few good-aligned individuals have the power or desire to sacrifice a radiant essence for this benefit, pious heroes who discover a recently slain radiant essence might recover the globules for this use. If not utilized within a few days of a radiant essence's death, the globules evaporate, their spiritual residue dissipating forever. Death by violence is the most common end of radiant essences, due to their tendency to hurl themselves at evil foes without any sense of self-preservation. Barring death in combat, radiant essences are exceptionally hardy and incredibly long-lived. After several hundred years, a radiant essence's inner core begins to dim as its body draws upon the last of the celestial energy that sustains it. The final state of an elderly radiant essence has yet to be observed; it may ultimately break down into inert slime, or disintegrate in a final burst of dying holy power.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Because radiant essences are formed from the spiritual residue of good outsiders, they are a source of awe and fascination for many religious scholars. Many sages study the appearance and formation of radiant essences to better understand the complicated process of celestial destruction and rebirth. Lore about radiant essences is incomplete, as the creatures are so rare, spurring the most dedicated sages to seek out radiant essences to

study firsthand, although the oozes are indifferent to this curiosity. Sometimes, a priest or scholar must interact with a radiant essence not out of inquisitiveness but out of obligation; for example, benevolent powers may direct a devotee to transplant a radiant essence to another site where its mindless crusade against evil can be of more use. For the fortunate, the radiant essence complies with its relocation, following the agent like a loyal pet. Sometimes, however, the radiant essence is unwilling to go, forcing the agent to plead with the ooze or pray for some means to transport the obstinate creature.

Nearly all radiant essences inhabit a specific holy site and rarely stray far from it. Radiant essences are usually solitary, but a large sacred structure or angelic battlefield might host several. Radiant essences rarely create lairs for themselves, instead meandering around their specific holy sites, ever alert for evil creatures. Radiant essences are single-minded in their pursuit of any wicked creatures they find and might pursue such a creature far from their holy site. Lacking the intellect to retrace their steps but practically immortal, wandering radiant essences continue to seek out evil creatures indefinitely. If one of these radiant essences happens upon a different holy site in its travels, and there are no evil creatures within range to fight, it might instinctively adopt the site as its new home. To existing residents of that site, such as hermits or monks, the presence of a single-minded mass of luminous, acidic protoplasm is rarely a welcome one.

Angels and other good outsiders treat radiant essences with a mix of caution, pity, and sympathy. Aware that the oozes contain the residue of celestial heroes but none of their personality, some angels see radiant essences as a cautionary example of what they might become if they fall in combat. More practically, good outsiders know that radiant essences are mindless and can be unpredictable, so even they keep their distance as a sensible precaution.



REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

Foreword

Part 1:
Attaining the
Mantle

Part 2:
The Burden
of Truth

Part 3:
Into
Duskfathom

NPC
Gallery

Sayashito

Thamir Gixx

Noble Lines
of Taldor

Bestiary

NEXT MONTH

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

By Amber E. Scott

The War for the Crown Adventure Path reaches its stunning conclusion! With the validity of the Stavian royal line confirmed, the heroes return to Taldor to discover horrible machinations have transpired in their absence. They must now face the cunning secret society, the Immaculate Circle, to recover the soul of their departed benefactor. But as they return triumphant, they find themselves not celebrated but hated, hunted, and accused of regicide. To set the world right and end the War for the Crown, the heroes must confront not one but six of Taldor's greatest emperors, resurrected from the past by equal parts malice and hubris!

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

By Crystal Frasier

Although the PCs have placed Eutropia on the throne of Taldor, further adventures await. Taldor's enemies prepare to strike a nation recovering from internal turmoil while a powerful fiend plots its revenge. Most importantly, Eutropia's legacy as empress hinges upon the PCs' influence and their actions.

SPIRITS OF SIX EMPERORS

By Lyz Liddell

Taldan histories are full of heroic leaders whose stories have passed from truth into legend. Learn how mediums steeped in Taldor's traditions can access these legendary spirits and how any hero can follow in their footsteps.

ULFEN GUARD

By Ron Lundeen

Composed of fearsome warriors who guard the Lion Throne with grim honor, the Ulfen Guard has safeguarded the emperor of Taldor for centuries. This article presents the history, aims, and personalities of the emperor's imposing and incorruptible bodyguards.

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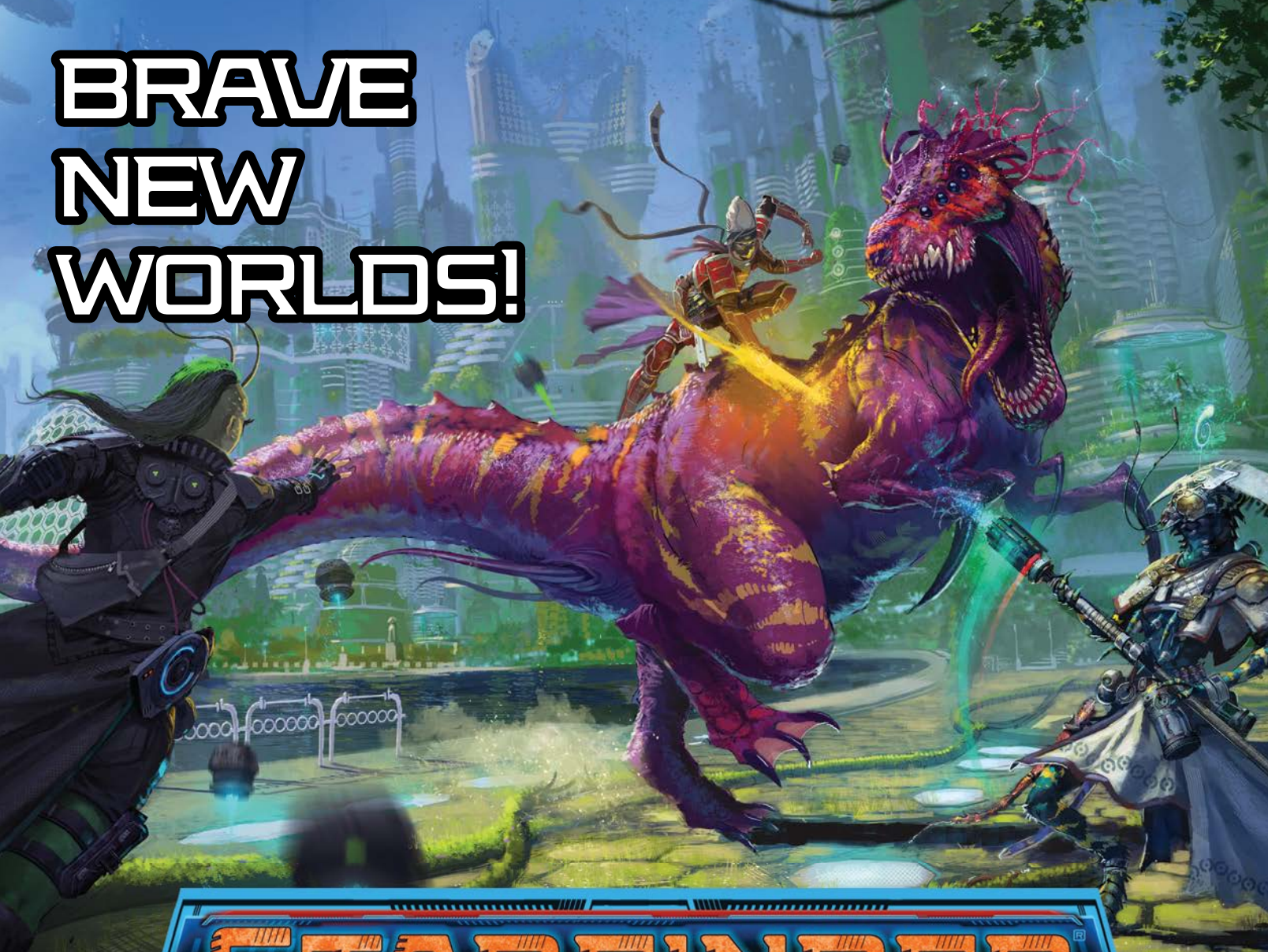
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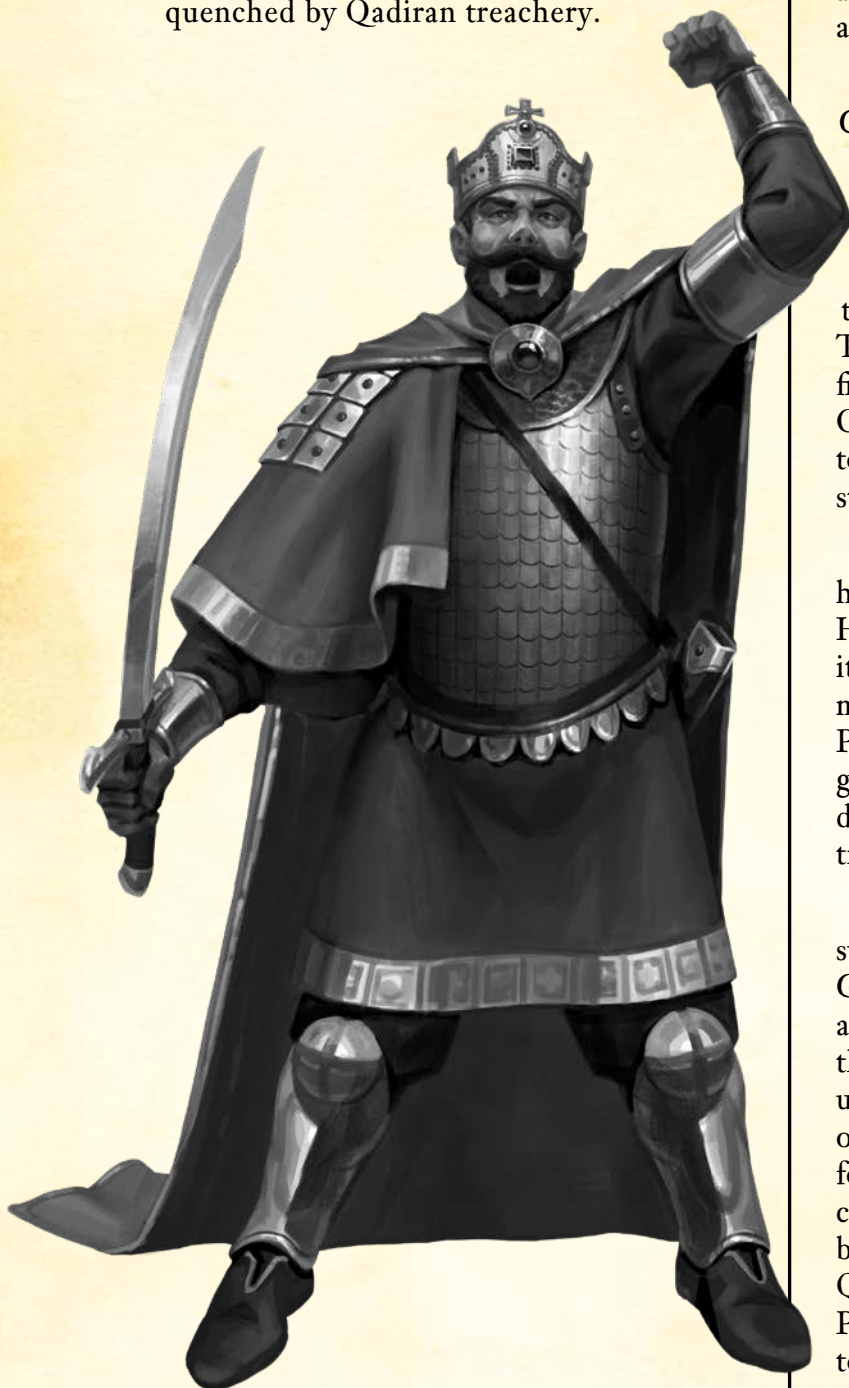
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GENNARIS III

BORN 21 ARODUS 4279 AR;
CORONATED 6 LAMASHAN 4322 AR;
MARTYRED 5 LAMASHAN 4328 AR

Surging refrains of victory are bittersweet when accompanied by tears over a hero taken from Taldor much too soon. Grand Prince Gennaris III was a shining light dimmed before his time, the fire of his valor quenched by Qadiran treachery.



During Gennaris's day, Qadiran forces had occupied Taldan soil for 2 centuries. At the head of the Taldan Phalanx, High Strategos Gennaris looked southward with his steady gaze and said, "No longer." Gennaris led his troops to victory after victory, pushing Qadiran forces farther south and reclaiming Taldan lands from the invaders. Soon known as the Conqueror to his soldiers and enemies alike, Gennaris fought to the Jalrune River.

Meanwhile, tragedy struck in the north. Gennaris's two older brothers died suddenly. Gennaris left his campaign on the southern border and returned to Oppara to wear the Primogen Crown, but courtly living did not suit him. Within 2 years, Gennaris returned to the front lines, once again defending Taldan lands against aggressors. Gennaris's field musicians composed the rousing "Hail Our Conqueror King" to celebrate his return to the front, and the song rightfully remains a staple for military marches today.

With Taldor's heart as well as its arms at his command, Gennaris planned the daring Heaven's Step Offensive to invade Qadira itself. In a series of brilliantly planned maneuvers on the Plains of Pares, Grand Prince Gennaris outwitted six Qadiran generals. He faced all six in personal combat, defeating each and taking their swords as trophies of his cunning and prowess.

The Qadiran forces broke, opening up vast swaths of Qadiran land to Taldan control. Gracious in victory, Gennaris refused to allow his troops to overrun and slaughter their fleeing foes. This benevolence was his undoing, for the delay allowed the Empire of Kelesh to reinforce the flagging Qadiran forces. Knowing the Qadirans held little chance against the fabled Conqueror in battle, Keleshite emissaries counseled the Qadirans to ambush the emperor. Grand Prince Gennaris was slain on a predawn ride to assess his troops, leaving Taldor poorer by one champion but richer one martyr.



THE GRACE IN YOUR EYES

When no one sits upon the Lion Throne, all shall try! As a final act of vengeance, High Strategos Pythareus's agents release evidence that the entire Stavian family line may be illegitimate, and now every noble in Taldor is willing to risk civil war to stake a claim to the crown. Can the PCs discover the remains of the First Emperor's tomb and seek his blessing to prove Eutropia's fitness to rule? And if the spirit of Taldor's founder cannot answer their prayers, can they answer his?

This volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path continues the War for the Crown Adventure Path and includes:

- "The Reaper's Right Hand," an extraplanar Pathfinder RPG adventure for 13th-level characters, by John Compton.
- A gazetteer of the district of Sayashto, an upscale neighborhood in the infinite city of Axis, by John Compton.
- A look at Thamir Gixx, the Silent Blade, the wicked halfling god of murderers and assassins, by Jason Keeley.
- An overview of the major noble lines of Taldor, by Crystal Malarsky.
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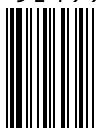
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