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ADVENTURE PATH[™]



WAR FOR THE CROWN

CROWNFALL

by Thurston Hillman

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ON THE COVER



The heroes investigate a lost library, never realizing they are actually the subjects of study—and gnawing hunger—in this atmospheric cover art by Hugh Pindur.



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REFERENCE

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

<i>Advanced Class Guide</i>	ACG	<i>Occult Adventures</i>	OA
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>Advanced Race Guide</i>	ARG	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Adventurer's Guide</i>	AG	<i>Ultimate Intrigue</i>	UI
<i>Inner Sea Intrigue</i>	ISI	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM



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Printed in China



WELCOME TO A CHANGING WORLD

Danger looms, and bold heroes must rise to the challenge and preserve the world's peaceful ways! How many campaigns revolve around this simple notion? An evil wizard rises to conquer the agrarian wonderland, an army of monsters marches on a pastoral village, nihilist cultists threaten to awaken their slumbering god—for all that adventurers' lives are full of action and are often lived outside of society's rules, adventurers generally face down death to maintain the status quo. The goal, aside from wealth and adoration, is generally to put the world back the way you found it, with no long-term changes beyond "not being destroyed." Which is a lovely goal... if you like where you started out.

But what about those campaigns where you carve out a new nation? Or reshape the legacy of a region? Or place a new monarch on the throne with the intention of moving forward after 6,000 years of stagnancy and blind tradition? What about those campaigns where you

reshape the world, crossing your fingers and hoping that it's for the better?

I like those campaigns.

I hope you like them, too.

Welcome to the War for the Crown Adventure Path, where the safety of the world, or even just a single nation, isn't necessarily at stake. Instead, the PCs will help shape history and determine the political course for Taldor, one of Avistan's oldest modern nations. Slowly suffocating under the weight of its own past glories and blind adherence to tradition, Taldor has ignored its internal problems for far too long. Crumbling infrastructure, a stagnant bureaucracy, and a ruling class steeped in the racism and sexism much of Golarion began discarding long ago—these all weigh down what was once perhaps the most ambitious, innovative, and tenacious nation of the Inner Sea. And now our heroes have a chance to change the course of that nation. The PCs are the agents

of change, battling the status quo. If they fail, no dark overlord arises—just another grand prince who pushes the same agenda of clinging to relevance.

And maybe war. But war has hardly been the end of Taldor in the past.

War for the Crown assumes that the PCs want to see Taldor improve, not merely endure, and that they're the sort of nontraditional thinkers who can love their past while acknowledging the ugly warts. Since her first introduction in the *Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign Setting* a decade ago, Princess Eutropia has been the figure poised to reform Taldor and bring it into the modern world—a symbol the PCs support in their own quests to help their homeland.

But a lot of players will ask: Why are we trying to put someone I've never met on the throne? Why can't my character be the emperor? There are a lot of reasons we went with "help someone become emperor" rather than "become emperor yourself," the most central of which is tone. Taldor is a land known for its backstabbing politics and noble posturing, and the overall intention for War for the Crown is a campaign filled with assassinations, conspiracies, and political intrigue. To get the most out of those elements, we wanted the PCs to play James Bond and Lorraine Broughton: fighting spies, matching wits with masterminds, and rescuing important figures. They don't become leaders because that's not their story. PCs who want to rally the people behind themselves have Adventure Paths such as *Kingmaker* and *Hell's Rebels* in which they can play out their rise to power. Options are lighter for backroom dealings and politicking. The PCs will still see themselves rise in prestige and power—backing a winner certainly has advantages—but won't need to spend the rest of their lives in the crosshairs of every assassin in Taldor.

All that said, you absolutely can play War for the Crown with the intention of placing one of your own on the Lion Throne. One or all of the PCs may be relatives of Grand Prince Stavian III, or even children of Stavian himself. In this case, Eutropia dies in the Exaltation Massacre alongside so many senators, leaving the same unfortunate questions about succession and no senate to answer them. In such a campaign, Martella acts more as the PCs' steward than their director, pointing them towards valuable leads to secure their own ascension. Of course, then there's the question of which party member actually gets to rule—in a campaign where the end goal can go to only one player, the in-game drama and backstabbing can easily spill over to the table.

Instead of ascending to the throne, the PCs may be more interested in overthrowing Taldor's current government and installing another system altogether,

such as an Andoran-style democracy or a ruling council. This presents a much bigger challenge to GMs, though adventures where the PCs infiltrate a senate party, undermine a local count, gain the support of whole provinces, and confront a rival candidate for the throne all still provide a framework with which to reach those goals. GMs will need some creativity to explain the purpose of the trip to Axis in "The Reaper's Right Hand," but otherwise most of the changes are cosmetic. In this model, Martella can be a fellow revolutionary providing the PCs with connections or a bitter noble willing to work with anyone who promises to tear her family down. The rebellion system found in the *Hell's Rebels Player's Guide* may prove a worthwhile addition to such a campaign, perhaps more so than the persona rules presented in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128.

However your group runs War for the Crown, just make sure everyone agrees and knows what to expect going in.

PREP YOUR FLASH CARDS

Crownfall has a lot of NPCs, with options for adding even more. Nearly half the adventure revolves around politicking and rubbing elbows with the who's who of Taldan society (with the obligatory brawl in the middle to shake things up). While each PC needs to interact with only two or three NPCs, you will need to remember them all on short notice.

To make things a little easier, you might want to copy down each NPC's important statistics on a note card, with space left to record how much influence the PCs garner with that NPC. You may even want to sketch out the senate building map, like a battle map (though not necessarily to scale), and use your favorite minis or Pathfinder Pawns to mark where the various important NPCs mill about. This can prevent arguments about who is where and help visually oriented players (and GMs) get more involved.

If your players enjoy more immersion, you could also add some appropriate background music (perhaps from our lovely partners at Syrinscape) and finger foods to reflect the festive party atmosphere, or even dress for a gala. If they're busy nibbling stuffed dates and gossiping in character to the tune of baroque masterpieces, they'll be more engaged, and you'll have more breathing room to track the busy first half of this adventure!



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The heroes hobnob nobles and senators—completing several secretive missions on behalf of their benefactor, Martella Lotheed—while the Taldan senate votes to abolish the ancient law of primogeniture. Things take a drastic turn when Grand Prince Stavian arrives and makes a move that could unravel the empire!

PART 2: LOST IN HISTORY 25

Magically whisked away at the onset of Stavian's bloodbath, the heroes must explore a forgotten sublevel of the senate building. With only brief surface updates from their benefactor, the heroes discover that very few secrets buried in Taldor remain hidden forever.

PART 3: THE SILENT BLADE..... 42

The heroes escape to the surface only to discover their benefactor, Martella Lotheed, has disappeared at the hands of assassins. They must find Martella's safe house, now held by death cultists seeking to ply secrets from Martella before executing her!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Crownfall" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.



The PCs begin this adventure at 1st level.



The PCs should be 2nd level by the time they end up in the levels that lie below the senate building.



The PCs should reach 3rd level before escaping the senate's lower levels.

The PCs should be 4th level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Every year, the empire of Taldor celebrates the Grand Day of Exaltation. On this prestigious day, the Grand Prince is empowered to elevate a commoner to the ranks of nobility. The event itself is the embodiment of formality, with the elevated commoner selected months or years in advance. What makes the day truly special is that the preceding week is a holiday throughout the empire. Nobles, senators, and hopeful petitioners fill the capital city of Oppara for galas, performances, and parades. This flood of visitors swells Oppara to almost double its size, and many view the lead-up to the Grand Day of Exaltation as harking back to the glory days of the empire. To the nobility, the week before the Grand Day of Exaltation is a time to conduct important business deals, issue noble proclamations, and hold private parties. With so many prominent politicians arriving from across the empire, the Taldan senate uses Exaltation Week to vote on matters of nationwide importance.

This year's Grand Day of Exaltation is poised to mark a historic shift in the governance of the empire. Princess Eutropia, daughter of Grand Prince Stavian III, has forged a powerful coalition of noble bastard children, reformers, and—perhaps, most importantly—senators to vote down the ancient law of primogeniture. The law states that royal power can pass only to a male heir—a succession that cannot be enacted due to Eutropia's status as the current Grand Prince's sole heir. Rumors have circulated about the princess's quest to strike down primogeniture for years, and the nation remains divided on the vote, with several nobles viewing it as a shameless power grab by Princess Eutropia. Others see Eutropia as a stabilizing force that could unify the empire and usher in a new golden age for Taldor.

Princess Eutropia is the firstborn child of Grand Prince Stavian III. She stepped forth into the political arena only following the death of her younger brother 20 years ago. Prince Carrius II, like Eutropia, was beloved by the people of Taldor, and many hoped the boy would succeed his ineffective father and usher in an era of change. When the prince died in what was reported as a riding accident, Eutropia's grief uncovered a deep well of empathy. More understanding of death and suffering, she became a crusader for the poor and for the basic rights of every Taldan citizen. As her work repeatedly ran up against the old-fashioned values of Taldor, Eutropia became a crusader for women's rights as well.

Unknown to Eutropia and the people of the Taldor, Carrius's death was an accident, but one dealt by human hands. Grand Prince Stavian's jealousy over his

children's popularity eventually gave way to paranoia and a growing suspicion that the still-teenage Carrius was plotting his overthrow. His contempt paved the way to an abusive relationship with his son. One dreary day in the castle garden, while beating his son over the matter of horse grooming, Grand Prince Stavian III accidentally shoved his heir down the stone stairs of the stable, a fall that snapped the boy's neck. The Grand Prince and an Ulfen Guard named Herog Svalkson—the only witnesses—insisted the boy was thrown from his horse, and a momentous week of mourning was held across the kingdom. As Eutropia, nobles, and commoners alike all wept for the young prince, Stavian quietly executed the only witness to his crime. Stavian forbade any attempts to resurrect the boy—arguing that so pure a soul belonged at Heaven's gate—ensuring none would learn of the filicide he had performed.

Only weeks after Carrius's death, an organization known as the Immaculate Circle interceded. One of Taldor's hundreds of aristocratic secret societies, the Circle fancies its members as being masters of life and death and inheritors of secrets carried to the grave. The Circle conjured the spirit of Svalkson, the murdered Ulfen guard, to tease out Stavian III's secrets and learned the true nature of the young prince's death. Knowing that such a secret could bend the Grand Prince to their will, but would be worthless once revealed, the Circle's members have sat on the terrible truth for decades, waiting for the perfect opportunity to leak this damning fact.

As the Adventure Path begins, the Grand Day of Exaltation approaches. Princess Eutropia and her allies stand poised to end primogeniture and pave the road to the first female empress of Taldor. But to Stavian's paranoid mind, Eutropia's bid for power can only mean that she is planning to kill him and usurp his throne. Unwilling to give up his power or his life so easily, Grand Prince Stavian III formed a secret alliance with various agents from neighboring nations—Andoran bankers, Chelish nobles, and Galtan royalists—to import a small private army. Rather than stop the senate's vote, Stavian intends to let the wheels of politics turn, and then execute his daughter and those who supported her actions as traitors to the empire as they celebrate their victory!

SECRET AGENTS

"Crownfall" begins with the player characters serving as the undercover agents of the Lady Martella Lotheed, the illegitimate daughter of the prestigious Lotheed noble family. The campaign traits detailed in the *War for the Crown Player's Guide*, available online for free at paizo.com, offer potential hints to both why the PCs are in attendance at the senate festivities and how they came to the attention of this burgeoning spymaster; if you don't use these traits, you may wish to provide your

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players with other options for how Lady Lotheed first contacted the PCs and why. They may be minor nobles looking to make their own impact in Taldor's social scene, similarly estranged members of the Lotheed family, or relative unknowns associated with Eutropia's various reformation campaigns, recruited specifically because the nation's pompous aristocrats don't know anything about them.

As Martella's covert agents, each of the PCs attends the Grand Day of Exaltation festivities at the senate building in Oppara with a specific mission. This adventure assumes the campaign starts on the Grand Day of Exaltation, and does not provide any dedicated time for the PCs to explore Oppara or to get to know one another. You are encouraged to include additional content before the adventure to further cement the ties between the PCs, as well as introduce the players to Oppara and the empire of Taldor. This also allows player characters to learn

what their missions and requirements are and still have time to shop for supplies. The week-long festival provides ample time for you to add in prior encounters or additional social scenes to establish the PCs' relations with one another. None of this is required, however, as "Crownfall" jumps straight into the action.

The campaign assumes the PCs have already met with Martella individually and may or may not be meeting one another for the first time as part of a premission briefing. Among other resources that may be listed in their campaign traits, Martella provides each PC a 30-gp line of credit at her favorite tailor shop, Thread Rare. This is enough to acquire a courtier's outfit at no cost to the PC, or the character can provide the remaining 45 gp for a noble's outfit for the senate festivities; in either case, Martella also arranges the loan of enough high-quality costume jewelry to complete each outfit.

Lady Lotheed plays off her interests—and her reason for hiring the PCs—as a scheming young noble hoping to topple and take control of the arrogant family who rejected her, a half-truth on the young engineer's part. What she will not reveal is her connection to Eutropia and that all her activities this evening are to help ensure the vote against primogeniture goes smoothly. Much of the War for the Crown Adventure Path continues this theme of the player characters staying out of the national spotlight and distancing themselves from Princess Eutropia. As the bright scion of the Stavian family line works to win the trust of the Taldan people, the PCs serve on the front lines of the shadow war raging out of most peoples' sight.

PART 1: ALL THE KING'S MEN

The adventure begins in the capital city of Oppara, heart of the Taldan empire. *Pathfinder*

Campaign Setting: Taldor, the First Empire provides additional information on the nation of Taldor, while the Oppara gazetteer on page 62 details the city itself. While neither of these resources is required to run "Crownfall," they do provide additional insight into Taldor's culture, geography, and politics that help shape the events of this adventure.

Visitors flock to Oppara in the days leading up to the Grand Day of Exaltation. The populace of the city doubles during this time, making

Oppara larger than any other city in the Inner Sea region, save Absalom. The self-importance of the already prideful Taldan people swells in equal measure. Street vendors sell traditional Taldan foods—anchovy skewers, anglebobs, canal crossings, clamguards, jubilee pie, honeyflake, long wine, yonder tarts, and more—including regional delicacies from separated provinces such as Andoran mince and Chelish raven cake. Family banners and provincial flags drape the sides of most buildings, with merchants hawking heraldry ranging from replica banners of the old Armies of Exploration to wooden swords and handheld Taldan flags for children. Taverns offer themed drink and food, with varying bars adopting well-known nobles from the long history of the empire as their mascot or self-declared patron.

Alongside all the pomp and circumstance filling Oppara is a noteworthy moment in history: the imperial senate is poised to hold a historic vote to end primogeniture. The potential end of the millennia-standing law of succession is the talk of the town. Streets and taverns are abuzz with conversations; some wish to see the law thrown down to pave a way for Princess Eutropia to ascend to the throne, while hardliners (especially elder nobles) believe the vote to be another wound in the great history of the empire, allowing not only the rabble-rousing Eutropia to inherit family power, but every ill-deserving woman. Regardless of the outcome, both sides of the debate agree that life will go on, and despite the serious ramifications of primogeniture's potential end, the streets of Oppara hold no signs of unrest during the jubilant celebrations of the Grand Day of Exaltation.



MARTELLA LOTHEED

MISSIONS

Martella Lotheed assigns each PC a mission upon first contacting the heroes before the adventure begins. This allows PCs to purchase any specialized supplies they may want as part of their initial character creation. Allow each player to select the mission that Martella will assign according to what best suits the skills and interests of that player's PC. Each mission mentions a suggested campaign trait in parentheses, which provides access to at least one of the skills required for the mission, but these are not required. Any missions the PCs do not undertake, Martella attends to herself.

She promises each agent a payment of 150 gp the next day for completion of their missions, in addition to the extraordinary access and prestige granted by attending one of Taldor's most exclusive and high-profile political events. In addition to asking them to complete their respective missions, Martella encourages the PCs to use this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make connections, make an impression on prominent guests, and otherwise try to kick-start their own political careers. From her perspective, any growth in the PCs' skills and reputation makes them more valuable agents in the future.

Missions: Martella Lotheed's missions are detailed below along with the requirements to fulfill each. Most of the listed checks require a character's full attention for 1 social round, preventing that PC from attempting checks to influence an area or individual during that time. A PC must succeed all the listed checks to complete the mission. A failed check represents poor timing, interruptions, or being similarly confounded, rather than being caught red-handed; PCs can attempt a failed skill check in later rounds unless otherwise noted.

Aide (Athletic Champion): In addition to spies, Martella legitimately needs a senatorial aide as both a cover for her other false aides and to run communications between allied politicians. This is by far the easiest job available, but also the most time-consuming, requiring the PC to run messages between various politicians.

Navigating the crowded senate floor to deliver messages quickly requires a successful DC 12 Escape Artist or combat maneuver check. Martella first tasks this agent with delivering a sealed letter to Count Orlundo Zespire in the archives, who asks the PC to wait 1 round and then deliver a follow-up message to Junior Senator Duo in the gallery. During Martella's first meeting with the PCs (see **Event 4** on page 20), she asks her aide to deliver a similar message to Lady Glorianna Morilla in the courtyard, who asks the agent to run messages to both Martella at her table in the gallery and Duke Centimus in the archives. Duke Centimus is content with the information he receives, but Martella then asks her aide to run a file folder she "borrowed" back to the archives as well. If this agent successfully delivers all this paperwork, he succeeds at his mission.

Discovery (Taldan Patriot): Martella is confident Eutropia has gathered the votes necessary for her cause, but she hates loose ends. She tasks this agent with uncovering the true dedication of two senators: Duke Centimus and Countess Abrielle Pace. It is unknown if either supports Eutropia's bid to end primogeniture, and while their votes will be apparent after the senate convenes, Martella wants the PC to discover their positions in advance, as well as the reasons each noble holds that position.

Divining each noble's motivations requires a successful DC 15 Sense Motive or Perception check after at least one member of the party has put the noble at ease with one or more successful Influence checks. See pages 12 and 13.

Fraud (Disgraced Noble): Martella needs to discredit a few prominent senators backing primogeniture—not necessarily to sway their votes, but to undercut their influence after the vote.

This agent must create a scandal surrounding one of the major opponents to the repeal of primogeniture. Doing so requires first identifying an opponent, either with a successful DC 15 Sense Motive check or by coordinating with another PC (such as one taking the Discovery mission), and then by spreading rumors with a successful DC 15 Bluff check and manufacturing or co-opting damning evidence on the fly with a successful DC 12 Linguistics check.

Politicking (Senatorial Hopeful): The orchestrations of Eutropia, Glorianna Morilla, and Martella Lotheed have swayed a great number of reluctant senators, and Lady Lotheed requires a vast web of influence to maintain that. To that end, she would like this agent to make a strong impression on Baron Nicolaus Okerra and remind him of certain debts he owes her. While Baron Nicolaus Okerra isn't a senator, his war record and general popularity make him an influential figure—one whose reputation helped sway a number of otherwise neutral votes.

The PC can accomplish this task by successfully influencing the baron as outlined in his NPC entry on page 12, or by succeeding at two DC 17 Intimidate checks to browbeat him.

Sabotage (Young Reformer): Some senators are too powerful or stubborn for the PCs to influence their votes, but that doesn't mean they're beyond some petty revenge. Martella would like to exact some retribution against her more powerful half-brothers, who have contributed a large bottle of rare, 150-year-old red wine from family holdings in the Opparos province, now held in the senate's kitchens. Martella provides a single syringe filled with a putrefying agent to render the wine embarrassingly undrinkable but warns her agent not to steal the bottle and to conceal any signs of tampering; it must be drunk at dinner and appear to be of terrible quality or—even more scandalously—a forgery.

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Recognizing the correct bottle in the crowded kitchen requires a successful DC 11 Appraise check or DC 15 Knowledge (nobility) check, while injecting the putrefying agent without leaving any trace of tampering requires a successful DC 14 Disable Device check. See area A7 on page 18.

Spy (Rising Star): Martella needs someone to keep tabs on political rivals and update her if they change their tactics, most notably High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus. This agent must stay close to the military commander, watching for unusual behavior or listening for snippets of conversation, and warn her if he takes any unusual actions, all while remaining unobtrusive.

Spying requires a total of three successful DC 14 Perception or Sense Motive checks, but to approach close enough to attempt one of these checks while remaining unnoticed requires the agent to first succeed a DC 15 Disguise or Stealth check (this check is not considered part of the PC's social action).

Theft (none): To further undermine the influence of the recently disgraced Earl Calhaddon Vernisant, Martella would like to see some of the historical artifacts that the earl donated to the senate vanish from the Arcade of Triumphs before it is unveiled prior to the evening's vote. Martella indicates that her agent is free to keep the item; she wishes only for its disappearance to further embarrass Earl Vernisant and his allies. The artifacts aren't secured; the senate assumes anyone sophisticated enough to attend this crowded gala would never dream of stealing anything on public display.

Stealing any single curio from Martella's list requires a successful DC 17 Sleight of Hand skill check. Martella's list mentions five items—a buckler, a dagger, a fan, a journal, and a spyglass—but she needs only three of them to go missing to disgrace the earl. See area A1 on page 16.

Treasure: As stated, Martella offers each of her agents 150 gp if they complete their tasks, to be paid several days after the gala. If all the PCs successfully complete their missions, she doubles each agent's payment to 300 gp as a reward for their extraordinary service.

Story Award: Award the PCs 200 XP each if they accomplish their respective missions.

GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

PCs interested in learning more about their employer or the political scene can learn the following details with either Diplomacy checks to gather information or Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility) checks. Any given player character may roll only once for each given subject. PCs interested in researching the details of any of the nobles they've been assigned to influence or spy on can learn the information from the Background entry in that NPC's social combat stat block with successful DC 12 Knowledge (nobility) or DC 15 Knowledge (local) checks.

THE GRAND DAY OF EXALTATION

Result Information

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 8+ | The Grand Day of Exaltation is the one day every year when the emperor can elevate a commoner of unusual skill or service to the ranks of nobility. |
| 12+ | Because people travel from all over the empire to witness the exaltation, many balls and political events take place in the preceding week, and the senate usually votes on matters of national importance immediately beforehand. |
| 15+ | This year's noble-to-be is a wide-eyed weaver from the village of Breezy Creek, whose beautiful tapestries have adorned the royal palace and many other royal homes for a decade. |

GRAND PRINCE STAVIAN III

Result Information

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 5+ | Grand Prince Stavian III is the emperor of Taldor. |
| 14+ | Grand Prince Stavian III has no male heir, and he has refused to have any further children since the tragic death of his only son, Carrius, in a riding accident 20 years ago. With the emperor getting on in years, some people worry how this will affect succession. |
| 18+ | The emperor has made no secret of his disdain for Princess Eutropia's social crusades, especially her efforts to overturn primogeniture so she can inherit the throne, but he has been uncharacteristically quiet about it this past year. Rumors abound that his health is slipping and he has accepted her efforts. |

MARTELLA LOTHEED

Result Information

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 11+ | The wealthy Lotheed family has been a strong supporter of the Stavians for almost 100 years. They have a long family tradition of arcane magic, adding to their wealth and prestige. |
| 14+ | Martella is the black sheep of her family, being a result of an extramarital dalliance with a Qadiran diplomat. She lacks her family's gift for magic as well, adding to their resentment. |
| 20+ | Despite her family's disdain, Martella still commands some wealth and has extensive contacts, having attended the Sinora Academia, Taldor's most exclusive girls' school. |

PRINCESS EUTROPIA

Result Information

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 7+ | Princess Eutropia is the adult daughter of Grand Prince Stavian III and has a scandalous reputation for making trouble and fighting in the streets. |
| 15+ | Eutropia is a social reformer, eager to establish schools and other public resources for the poor, and remove |

OPPARA RUMORS

d10 Rumor

- 1 "I hear tell the emperor's going to exalt another of his Ulfen bodyguards like he did for Baron Vinmark. Last thing we need is another barbarian lording it over us." (False; the emperor is exalting the genius weaver named Kalbio from the village of Breezy Creek.)
- 2 "Ah, I got to see Mr. Smiles at Duke Talbot's reception this week—the one where Baronet Jivarus got into a row with the servant—and that jester is delightful. Whimsical and biting all at once, and such grace. A tad off-putting, though." (True; this popular jester has a dark side, as the PCs discover in Part 3.)
- 3 "My uncle is a merchant. Says he's getting coins from all over the old colonies this Exaltation week. Maybe some of the colonies are starting to regret leaving the empire." (False; the foreign coins are mostly coming from Stavian's hired mercenaries.)
- 4 "I would love to be inside the senate gala. You know the building has been rebuilt five times? They have rooms they didn't even know they had!" (True.)
- 5 "My uncle is in the Lion Blades, and he says the Qadirans are planning to kidnap Princess Eutropia tonight to ransom!" (False, though the Lion Blades are concerned there may be an attempt on the princess's life.)
- 6 "High Strategos Pythareus is back in the capital. I guess that means the marriage between him and the princess is back on. He's so handsome; he'll make a lovely emperor." (Partially true; Pythareus is back in town, but not for any marriage.)
- 7 "People claim Duke Centimus is a gentleman, but he gave me the dirtiest look for asking about his accident." (True; Duke Centimus dislikes others focusing on his paraplegia.)
- 8 "Lady Morilla is back in town from Absalom. I wonder if she's performing for the Exaltation Gala." (True; Lady Morilla is back in town, but she is not performing.)
- 9 "The senate is taking on a bunch of new staff to prepare for the gala." (True.)
- 10 "Ugh, Eutropia brought that disgusting mutt of hers to the Elbistan Tournament last spring, and the wretched beast drooled on the silk table dressings. She'd never get away with such impropriety if her father weren't pulling strings to protect her." (Partially true; Eutropia brings her dog along whenever she believes it will annoy her fellow nobles, but the Grand Prince makes no effort to protect her from consequences.)

political or family restrictions for women and various minorities. Rumors have circulated for a decade that her ultimate goal is to overturn primogeniture—Taldor's ancient law stating that only male heirs may inherit the Lion Throne—and become the first empress of Taldor.

- 18+ The princess's reputation for "fighting in the streets" largely hails from her skill as a fencer, a sport she excelled at during her schooling at the Sinora Academia. Many times in her twenties she matched blades with chauvinistic politicians who would otherwise refuse to let her speak or act within political circles, and those early public duels helped her win unexpected support for her later social reforms—as well as a reputation as an impolite, unladylike brute.

Treasure: If the PCs succeed with results of 14 or higher on at least two lines of investigation, Martella Lotheed eventually hears of their initiative and resourcefulness. She rewards her new agents at the meet-up (see page 10) with two vials of liquid blade^{UE}, eight smoke pellets^{UE}, a single dose of soul stimulant^{UE}, and two vials of *dust of illusion* to use however they deem fit.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully investigate at least three nobles (including the three listed here or any of their potential targets), award them 400 XP.

WORD ON THE STREET

The Grand Day of Exaltation is an exciting time in Oppara. With so many far-flung visitors, rumors about any and all subjects fly fast and loose. With a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information, a PC can learn one of the rumors from the Oppara Rumors table above. At your discretion, PCs may simply overhear any of these during various points in the adventure as well, such as while waiting in line to get into the senate or mingling at the gala. Some of these rumors hint at events to come in the adventure, while others are merely entertaining tall tales.

SENATE RULES

The Taldan senate houses many of the most powerful politicians in the empire, and while the empire enjoys drama, dueling, and shows of power, certain rules are in place to ensure the safety of visiting nobles and occasionally even their staff. These rules are readily available if the PCs inquire.

- Breastplates, ceremonial armor, and light armor may be worn inside the senate building, but no other armor is permitted for anyone except guards.
- Potions, scrolls, spell component pouches, and wands are permitted inside the senate building, and in fact, many senators are themselves spellcasters. However,

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spellcasting is not permitted within the building without written approval (often issued to entertainers).

- Only light and one-handed weapons are allowed inside the senate building; ranged weapons and two-handed weapons are not allowed inside the building. All weapons brought into the senate building must be peace-bound—secured in a sheath with a length of decorative cord. Drawing a peace-bound weapon requires a full-round action. Guards do not need to peace-bind their weapons.
- Animals are generally not permitted inside the senate building, excepting familiars and service animals. Animals larger than an average member of the senate guard are not permitted within the building under any circumstances.
- While guests are free to roam the senate building when invited, individual senators' offices are off-limits and locked (Disable Device DC 40). No one but the senators and a single aide for each is permitted on the senate floor during a vote.

Anyone breaking any of these rules is quietly escorted outside by two guards (use the statistics for a guard officer on page 261 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*). Gaining reentry into the senate after being escorted out requires a successful DC 18 Bluff, Disable Device, Disguise, or Stealth check, or a bribe of 25 gp; each attempt counts as a PC's action during a social round.

THE MEET-UP

Martella requests that the PCs meet with her an hour before the Exaltation Gala begins to familiarize themselves with one another and answer any remaining questions. She arranges for an assortment of wine and fruits at a small, smoky cafe several blocks from the senate building. Once all the PCs arrive for the meeting, read or paraphrase the following.

Long, golden beams of the setting sun dance through the cafe's smoky interior, highlighting breads, cheeses, and wine bottles behind the only counter. Martella sips casually from a steaming mug, dressed in an elegant but reserved gown—at least by Taldan standards. A hand-sized brass cricket buzzes quietly on the tabletop beside her.

"I'm so pleased you could join me this evening," she begins. "Please order whatever you like; the fig jam is particularly lovely here. And feel free to speak candidly. I've taken measures to ensure our privacy."

Martella allows the PCs a few minutes to introduce themselves and order any food or drink they like—the café is small and the fare light but high quality, specializing in various Taldan breads, cheeses, fruits, wine, and charcuterie. The metal cricket beside Martella is a curious clockwork device—one of her many

mechanical experiments—that muffles the sound of conversations for those more than a few feet away.

Martella follows introductions by presenting each of the PCs with a *senate aide badge* (see the sidebar on page 11). The badges once belonged to the staff of the long-dead Senator Voritas, whose family line was involved in the senate for nearly a thousand years before dying out about a century ago. She explains the abbreviated history of the badges, as well as their purpose as magic items to identify the PCs as the attending staff of a senator; she further notes that senators and other politicians of note traditionally hand out *senate aide badges* of extinct or exiled family lines to guests they invite to senate events, identifying them at a glance as guests rather than sitting senators or staff. Guards are also more wary of visitors wearing the badges of extinct lines, given the ease with which a rabble-rouser or assassin could abuse this system; anyone wearing the badge of an extinct senator takes a –2 penalty on Bluff checks against guards.

These badges allow the PCs access to the senate during the historic vote set to take place tomorrow. The badges also allow for two-way communication with the *master senator badge* pinned to Martella's gown. She remains unaware of the *senate aide badges'* hidden transportation effect—something that comes into play at the end of this part of the adventure.

Once Martella hands the PCs their *senate aide badges* and explains their function, she changes the topic to discuss the missions each PC will undertake, making sure all of her agents realize exactly what they need to do. She also lets them know she intends to spend most of the evening in the senate gallery, should they need to find her, but she still keeps her true agenda—ensuring that the vote against primogeniture happens without any complications—to herself, and makes no mention of Princess Eutropia's attendance that evening.

Once the PCs have introduced themselves and received their *senate aid badges*, and Martella feels confident they know what to do, read or paraphrase the following.

"Overall, tonight promises to be a historic evening, but an evening of work nonetheless. And in the sort of work you're embarking upon, the line that divides success and failure is drawn by the people you know. You have your own tasks to accomplish, but I'm counting on you to support one another to ensure success and discretion. If you need assistance, kindly ask for it. If your assistance is required, give it. And if I'm to be blunt, I would like just once in my adult life to simply enjoy a gala I attend, rather than scamper about with clandestine busywork. If you all complete your work without need of me to clean anything up, I will happily double my promised fee.

"I trust your activities won't occupy your entire evening, so by all means, enjoy the party and make friends. This is an excellent opportunity for you to begin your own political ambitions, but do be discreet."

EXALTATION GALA

The majority of this part of the adventure takes place in the senate building itself during a large ball held to celebrate the exaltation happening that evening. This portion of the adventure requires the PCs to navigate several timed events while making headway on their respective missions (see Missions on page 7). To run this intrigue-driven series of events, this adventure provides three critical sets of information: *Dramatis Personae* on page 7 details important NPCs the PCs can interact with during the ongoing hobnobbing; you may also wish to consult the “Faces of the Senate” article on page 72 to introduce additional politicians the PCs can interact with or influence, even though they don’t necessarily play a part in later adventures. The Senate of Taldor on page 15 details information on the senate building and its constituent areas. Finally, Events in the Senate on page 19 is a timeline of events the PCs partake in, from getting in line to Stavian’s arrival and denouncement of the senate.

Social Rounds: The Events in the Senate section details the timeline you should use to run this social-focused portion of the adventure. Each event lists a number of social rounds that follow it. During these social rounds (considered to be roughly 15 minutes each), the PCs can attempt various skill checks to influence NPCs or to generally carouse a specific area of the senate. Descriptions of the areas and the NPCs list a variety of possible skills the PCs may use to influence the guests. A PC can attempt only one major action each round, including influencing an area, influencing a specific NPC, or attempting mission-related skill checks, but they can travel freely around the senate between rounds to investigate or influence new areas or characters.

Influencing an Area: A PC can attempt an appropriate skill check with a set DC for one of the areas of the senate, hobnobbing and impressing the general crowd in that area. Each area has two thresholds, which represent levels of influence over that area. Every point by which the PC’s result on one of these skill checks exceeds the DC is added to a pool of points specific to that area. When the number of points earned by the party as a whole exceeds the threshold of an area, then the GM provides the PCs with the information and story award associated with that area’s threshold value.

Influencing an NPC: A PC can attempt various skill checks to influence the NPCs listed in the *Dramatis Personae* section. These rules are a simplified version of the rules for influencing an individual presented in Chapter 3 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue*.

Each social round, a PC can move to any location on the map on page 16 and select a single NPC in that area



SENATE AIDE BADGE

Taldan senators require a large and proactive staff to administer their duties, sometimes taking their representatives to all corners of Oppara and beyond. *Senate aide badges* pin to armor or clothing easily and display one’s loyalty to a specific senator. Martella Lotheed presents the PCs with the *senate aide badges* that once belonged to senators of the Voritas family. As with many such badges, Voritas protected his staff by including additional contingencies that would teleport his aides to safety in the case of turbulence on the floor of the senate. This one-time effect is further detailed at the end of Part 1 of the adventure, on page 25.

SENATE AIDE BADGE

PRICE
1,500 GP

SLOT none

CL 9th

WEIGHT —

AURA moderate divination

This brooch features the heraldry of a Taldan noble family, marking the wearer as an aide to the associated senator. All *senate aide badges* are part of a set, attuned to a single *master senator badge* during their creation. A creature wearing the pinned brooch can receive telepathic communications sent from the wearer of the *master senator badge*. Once the wearer of the *senate aide badge* receives a message, she has 1 minute to send a telepathic reply of up to 25 words. Sending a reply requires a full-round action of concentration. The wearer of the *master senator badge* can send up to 10 telepathic messages per day, targeting either a specific badge or broadcasting to all badge wearers, and knows the approximate direction and distance to all wearers of *senate aide badges* attuned to the master badge.

Senate aide badges are often further enchanted with emergency effects that mimic the *contingency* spell, whisking endangered staff to safety or casting protective magic. The exact conditions and effects vary, and their cost is added the badge’s construction cost.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 750 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *sending*, *status*

as her target to influence. She then attempts either a discovery check or an influence check.

A discovery check allows a PC to learn either one of the skills she can use to influence the target or a weakness that grants her (and any other characters with whom she shares this information) a +4 bonus on future influence checks. The exact skill and DC required for a discovery check varies; learning an influence skill normally requires a successful Sense Motive or Knowledge (nobility) check with the DC listed in parentheses in the Influence entry

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of the target NPC's social stat block. Learning a target's weakness requires a successful skill check using the skills and DCs listed in parentheses in the target's Weakness entry; the GM can reveal the skills needed to recognize these weaknesses without need for a separate discovery check.

An influence check is an attempt to win the target's favor. PCs must attempt a skill check using one of the skills listed in the target's Influence entry, though discovering what these skills are requires a successful discovery check. A successful skill check against the listed DC counts as one success, indicating growing affection or respect for the PC. Each target lists the total number of successes needed to gain their favor. At the GM's discretion, PCs can attempt to use a skill not listed in an NPC's stat block, but doing so increases the influence check DC by 5. A PC earns one additional success if her influence check exceeds the listed DC by 5 or more.

A failed discovery or influence check can be attempted again in subsequent rounds with no penalty unless otherwise noted.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following is a list of major NPCs present for the Exaltation Gala. Each of these NPCs can be found in a specific section of the senate as listed in the area descriptions below. PCs should be encouraged to interact with these NPCs, spending their social rounds attempting to gain influence on them. Each NPC provides the PCs with information or some form of benefit when influenced. Many of the NPCs presented in this section are major characters throughout the remainder of the War for the Crown Adventure Path, as listed in their stat blocks.

In addition to the NPCs presented below, an additional cadre of Taldan nobles is presented in the "Faces of the Senate" article presented later in this adventure.

BARON NICOLAUS OKERRA

LG male human fighter 6

Background A noble and hero in the county of Meratt, Baron Okerra is as equally renowned for his good looks as he is for his combat skills.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance This handsome bear of a man stands a head taller than the crowd, and while starting to show his age with flecks of white in his black hair and beard, he retains a youthful smile and gentle eyes.



COUNTESS ABRIELLE PACE

Personality A celebrity in the tournament circuit and a kind but stern leader, Baron Nicolaus Okerra is considered one of Taldor's chief defenders of law and order. He has little time for pomp and circumstance, secluding himself in the noble courts of the senate building to debate with aspiring nobles on the importance of law. His charming demeanor is only somewhat mitigated by his staunch devotion to order, even when he defends the shadier aspects of a lawful society.

DISCOVERY

Weaknesses (Knowledge [nobility] or Linguistics DC 16) Baron Okerra harbors one shard of doubt in his heart: the impact of Eutropia's successful bid to end primogeniture. As a defender of law and order, he believes strongly in tradition, and worries that the princess's actions endanger the stability of Taldan law. Success at either check unearths this truth, either through discussions or by picking apart the "letter of the law" described by Baron Okerra, allowing PCs to capitalize on the baron's uncertainty.

INFLUENCE

Influence Check (Knowledge [nobility] or Sense Motive DC 15) Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge (local) DC 15

Successes Needed 2 checks

Benefit Once influenced, Baron Okerra comes around to whatever belief the PCs espouse. Befriending him offers advantages in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #128: Songbird, Scion, Saboteur*.

Story Award If the PCs successfully influence Baron Okerra, award them 600 XP.

COUNTESS ABRIELLE PACE

LE female human aristocrat 6

Background A countess and member of the senate from the western borders of Taldor, Abrielle Pace seeks to advance by any means available.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Only ridiculously gauche noble clothing and fine jewelry set Countess Pace apart from any other Taldan. Her face is usually in a smile, though it quickly turns to a sneer when she loses control of the conversation. She has short but well-kept brown hair locked back in a stylized bun.

Personality Countess Pace is agreeable and endearing to those she considers useful or empowering, but entirely dismissive of "useless people." Outwardly a firm ally of Princess Eutropia and the end of primogeniture, Countess Pace sycophantically trails political power like a wolf chases prey, allying herself with whoever offers her an advantage. She is likely to betray her allies (including Eutropia) should things turn against her.

DISCOVERY

Weaknesses (Bluff or Stealth DC 15) Silently trailing

Abrielle or engaging her in duplicitous conversation uncovers her obvious willingness to quickly shift her political stance depending on who she is engaged with. Discovering this weakness is not enough for a PC to complete the Discovery mission, but it is sufficient information to better influence her in future interactions.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks (Knowledge [nobility] or Sense Motive

DC 15) Appraise, Diplomacy, or Intimidate DC 15

Successes Needed 3 checks

Benefit A PC successfully influencing Countess Pace uncovers the countess's lack of commitment to Eutropia's cause—one of the objectives Martella Lotheed gave to PC with the Discovery mission. This tidbit grants the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus on skill checks to influence Baron Okerra, Lady Gloriana Morilla, and Princess Eutropia.

Story Award If the PCs successfully influence Countess Pace and uncover her plans to flip on Eutropia, award them 800 XP.

DUKE LEONARD CENTIMUS

N male half-elf aristocrat 5

Background An attending duke of Grand Duchess Cisera Tiberan of Tandak prefecture, Leonard Centimus is an intellectual and tinkerer whose head for systems makes him a good administrator, if a little awkward with people.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance With a round face and a few extra pounds, Leonard looks very different from the waifish ladies' man he was 5 years ago. He takes great pride in tinkering with his wheelchair, revising its design and paying artisans to embellish it.

Personality Duke Centimus lost the use of his legs in a riding accident, and while many of his contemporaries believe this makes him a less capable leader, Leonard has stubbornly refused to hire a divine spellcaster to heal the damage. The duke has a keen interest in the world beyond Taldor, and still hopes to visit Goka, where his great-grandfather originally hailed from.

DISCOVERY

Weaknesses (Disable Device or Knowledge [engineering]

DC 17) Leonard sees his paraplegia as another challenge to tinker with; he appreciates it when others notice to adjustments and personal improvements he's made to his chair, and enjoys discussing ideas for future revisions. He appreciates others who try to see things from his perspective. While he welcomes people who take his unique situation into consideration, he's equally weary of others who see that condition as the sum total of his life experience, and hates discussing the accident itself.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks (Knowledge [nobility] or Sense Motive

DC 15) Bluff, Diplomacy, or Knowledge (geography or nature) DC 15

Successes Needed 3 checks

Benefit Influencing Duke Centimus reveals his reasons for voting to abolish primogeniture. The duke believes that any person is capable of rule, regardless of the condition of his or her body. Uncovering this reasoning partially completes the Discovery mission.

Story Award If the PCs successfully influence Duke Centimus and discover his reasoning for voting to abolish primogeniture, award them 800 XP.

LADY GLORIANA MORILLA

CN female human aristocrat 2/bard 10

Background Leader of an international secret society known as the Sovereign Court, Lady Morilla is one of Princess Eutropia's staunchest allies, and a believer that members of Avistan's aristocracy must be held to their end of the social contract with those they rule.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Lady Morilla stands tall among her noble peers, sporting the finest of Absalom's fashion. Her attire is far less ostentatious than that of other present nobles, but she makes up for it with a grace of movement that allows her to easily shift between crowds.

Personality Gloriana mingles with the nobles of Taldor well enough, but she is never truly at home in such environments. She secretly seethes at the haughtiness of her fellow Taldan elite, occasionally staring in awkward silence or letting out raucous laughter at jokes she finds no humor in. Her motives at the Grand Day of Exaltation are simple: to discover the enemies of her longtime ally, Princess Eutropia, and to discover those seeking to advance in the political arena.

DISCOVERY

Weaknesses (Profession [any] or Spellcraft DC 16) Lady Morilla finds nobles with interest in more common arts such as physical careers or magic to be a welcome relief, and more readily engages with anyone displaying knowledge of spellcraft or manual labor.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks (Knowledge [local] or Sense Motive DC 15)

Diplomacy, Bluff, Intimidate, or Knowledge (nobility) DC 14

Successes Needed 2 checks

Benefit Successfully influencing Lady Morilla grants two boons. The first, and most immediately important, is that she offers to introduce the PCs to Princess Eutropia if they haven't already met her. This introduction occurs immediately after Morilla is influenced, allowing any PCs present a "free" social round to influence the princess with a +2 circumstance bonus due to Lady Morilla's glowing praise.

The second boon occurs in Part 3 of this adventure, when the PCs can request Lady Morilla's assistance in retaking Martella Lotheed's safe house from the Brotherhood of Silence (see page 43).

Story Award If the PCs successfully influence Lady Gloriana Morilla, award them 600 XP.

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HIGH STRATEGOS MAXILLAR PYTHAREUS

LN male human cavalier^{APG} 14

Background Nearly every Taldan recognizes commander-in-chief Maxillar Pythareus as Grand Prince Stavian III's right hand and a fanatical supporter of the throne. He believes in political might and economic stability through military supremacy, advocating for new wars of conquest against wayward colonies like Andoran and Cheliox, or even Qadira.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Maxillar is a muscular man in his early forties. Years under the elements have weathered his skin, and he keeps his silver hair closely cropped. He wears a green-and-blue tabard emblazoned with Taldor's official coat of arms, publicly declaring his loyalty to the nation more than anything else.

Personality The high strategos is direct and confident, cutting to the heart of any topic. He despises politics, preferring to focus on matters of military and strategic concern. His presence here is a formality; Maxillar would much rather be inspecting troops or training on horseback.

DISCOVERY

Weaknesses (Handle Animal, Ride, or Swim DC 16) The High Strategos is practical. As a honed equestrian, he lowers his social guard for any talks that involve animal development or riding tricks. He also shares a similar love of the hiking, mountain climbing, the outdoors, and otherwise challenging the elements to maintain his physical fitness. Discussing any of these more mundane topics can soften up the otherwise gruff Maxillar Pythareus.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks (Knowledge [nobility] or Sense Motive

DC 15) Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 22; Profession (soldier) DC 16

Successes Needed 3 checks

Benefit Successfully influencing Pythareus here gains the PCs a modicum of the high strategos's respect. Still riding high from his earlier meeting with Grand Prince Stavian III, the high strategos lets slip that all of Taldor's concerns over succession are finally laid to rest today.

Story Award If the PCs successfully influence Maxillar Pythareus, award them 600 XP.

KALBIO OF BREEZY CREEK

NG male human commoner 5

Background Kalbio is from the small hamlet of Breezy Creek, and he is the intended recipient of the noble elevation from Grand Prince Stavian. His parents scrounged copper pieces to pay for his education as a weaver's apprentice, and he showed remarkable skill. His

story inspired several local nobles to begin clamoring over his tapestries, and for nearly a decade the savant's work has decorated even the imperial palace. He serves in no official capacity, though the PCs can briefly interact with him.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Kalbio uncomfortably wears clothing of noble finery, constantly fidgeting with the cuffs or scratching at his neck. His calloused hands, simple hair style, and sun-beaten face all set him apart, as does his broad, genuine smile.

Personality Kalbio is a simple man from the simple hamlet of Breezy Creek. He is excited about the events and about visiting the "big city" for the first time in his life, and eagerly talks with anyone he thinks will listen about Opparan wonders most residents find mundane. He often speaks of his beloved mam and

papa when allowed or prompted to speak. Otherwise, he occasionally steers conversations into awkward discussions about his "purdy good" weaving skills.

INFLUENCE

Successes Needed (Knowledge [local] or Sense Motive

DC 15) Special; Kalbio can be influenced automatically with any show of kindness or genuine interest in his family or talent; he's so excited about the day and lonely and overwhelmed that he latches onto any positive attention.

Benefit Influencing Kalbio leads the impressionable man to follow the PC as his "big city friend." This accompaniment is endearing to Princess Eutropia and Baron Nicolaus Okerra, granting the PCs a +2 bonus to Charisma-based skill checks while Kalbio follows the PC around. The yokel's presence is a stain on the PCs' reputation with more traditional politicians, however, imposing a -2 penalty on Charisma-based checks against Countess Pace, Duke Centimus, and Maxillar Pythareus.

Story Award If the PCs successfully influence Kalbio, award them 100 XP.

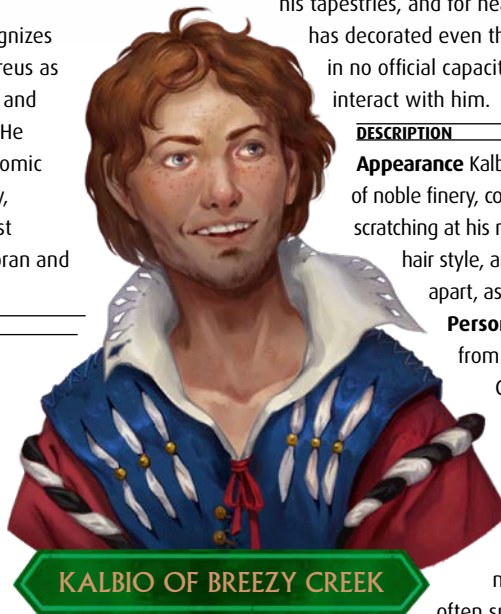
PRINCESS EUTROPIA STAVIAN I

NG female human aristocrat 7/swashbuckler^{ACG} 6

Background If the senate succeeds in repealing primogeniture, Princess Eutropia becomes Taldor's heir apparent. She has dedicated much of her life to helping her people and her nation when she can, occasionally even defending her philosophy and political participation in duels.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Slim and athletic, Princess Eutropia bears the distinctive cheekbones and nose of her Stavian father and grandmother. Despite the ostentatious jewelry she wears,



her gown and hair are more conservative than that of most of the gala's attendees.

Personality Having survived 20 years in Taldor's cutthroat political arenas, Eutropia is canny and observant, happy to toy with others and let others overextend themselves before making a play. She feels deeply for the people of Taldor, regardless of their status, and hopes to raise the standard of living even as she raises the nation's profile abroad.

Special Eutropia makes herself difficult to corner for long periods of time. Only one PC can attempt to influence Eutropia during any given social round.

DISCOVERY

Weaknesses (Handle Animal DC 15;

or Sense Motive DC 20) Eutropia Stavian I has honed her political skills, building up a lifetime of social defenses against unexpected influences. A successful Sense Motive check can reveal Eutropia's strong defenses and identify subtle social cues the PC can take advantage of when interacting with her. If Eutropia has one true weakness, it is her love of animals, especially her trusted canine, Taldogis.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks (Knowledge [nobility] or Sense Motive DC 17) Diplomacy, Perform (oratory), or Knowledge (local) DC 15

Successes Needed 2 checks

Benefit Influencing Princess Eutropia amounts to little more than the princess acknowledging the PC's presence. This minor acknowledgment alone is enough to impress every local present at the festivities. Each PC gains a one-time reroll that can be used on any skill check attempted during this portion of the adventure.

Story Award If the PCs successfully influence Princess Eutropia, award them 600 XP.

WYSSILKA THE FANTABULOUS

NE female halfling warpriest^{ACG} 5

Background A secret member of the Brotherhood of Silence (see page 60), Wyssilka adopts the role of children's entertainer for the Grand Day of Exaltation. The jovial halfling works to amuse noble children, whom she has discovered tend to overhear far more secrets than their parents realize.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Wyssilka is a halfling wearing standout black-red-and-white attire. She wears similar makeup, embellishing her childish face to resemble a raccoon. Despite her color choice, Wyssilka is abound with enthusiasm and smiles, showing off a set of immaculate white teeth.

Personality Notwithstanding being a secretive member of the infamous Brotherhood of Silence and a worshiper of



WYSSILKA THE FANTABULOUS

Thamir Gixx, Wyssilka presents herself as the children's entertainment for the gala. Along with a host of other halflings, she performs minor magic tricks, face painting, juggling, tumbling, and simple comedy skits to keep the younger attendees occupied while their parents hobnob. A lover of secrets, Wyssilka appreciates any attention, even trying to convince PCs interested in her actions to join her in entertaining the children.

DISCOVERY

Weaknesses (Knowledge [religion], Stealth or Spellcraft DC 18) It is

possible for a PC to spot one of Wyssilka's minor displays of magical aptitude. Succeeding any of the listed checks uncovers Wyssilka's use of divine magic, rather than the expected sleight of hand. Confronting the halfling does not persuade her to reveal where her powers come from, but it does increase her interest in the PCs.

INFLUENCE

Influence Checks (Knowledge [local] or Sense Motive DC 16)

Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, or Perform (any) DC 16

Successes Needed 2 checks

Benefit Influencing Wyssilka grants the PCs a measure of information on some of the attending nobles. The PCs can select one of the following NPCs: Baron Nicolaus Okerra, Countess Abrielle Pace, or Duke Leonard Centimus. The PCs gain a free attempt to influence that NPC, as the parent comes to check on one of the children (likely a present nephew or niece).

Story Award If the PCs successfully influence Wyssilka, award them 400 XP.

A. THE SENATE OF TALDOR

The Taldan senate, sometimes referred to as the senate building or simply the senate, is the seat of the senatorial branch of the Taldan government. The structure has existed in one form or another for millennia, though natural disasters, sabotage, and war have partially leveled it several times in the empire's grand history, leading to many large-scale repairs and revisions. The current senate building is a grandiose, T-shaped edifice constructed from white marble. Ostentatious columns carved with glorious scenes of the nation's history surround the building on all sides, while a pronounced flight of precisely 100 stairs ascends to the main entrance.

A1. Arcade of Triumphs

This entry gallery celebrates Taldor's abundant military and political glories. Banners and trophies line the halls of the arcade, some displayed openly while others rest behind intricate glass cases, while armor stands and

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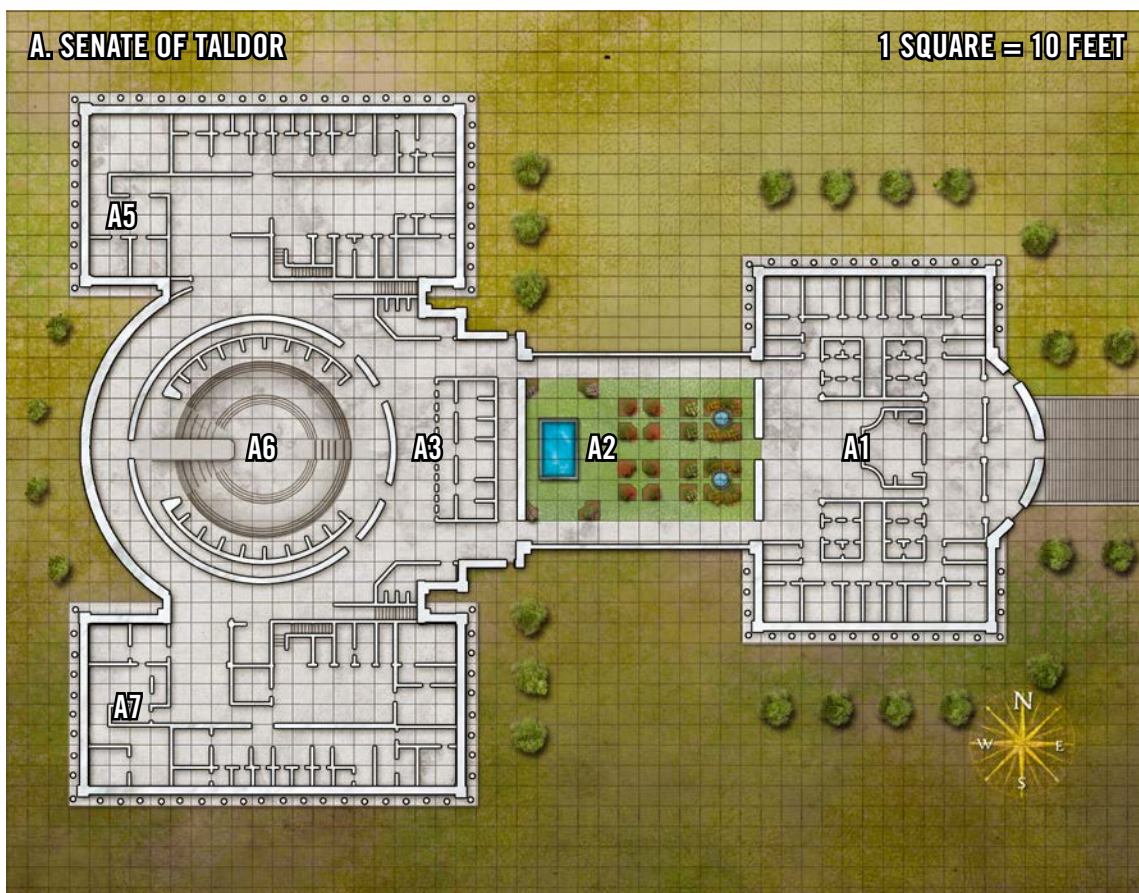
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1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



display cases present countless artifacts belonging to great heroes and soldiers. A score of Taldan Phalanx troops stand at attention, acting as both ceremonial honor guards for the senate and guides to some of the military assets on display.

NPCs Present: High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus.

Influence Skills: Appraise DC 11, Knowledge (history or nobility) DC 12, Perception DC 14, Spellcraft DC 14, or Use Magic Device DC 11.

Threshold 1 (10 points): At this threshold, a guest comments on the history of the crossbow resting in one case. She states that the crossbow *Dignity's Barb* (see page 33), a famed weapon of the Seventh Army of Exploration, was displayed in the case centuries ago, but it was lost and replaced with a reproduction. The guest goes on to detail the crossbow's history as a weapon that gloriously slew a raving Kellid warlord.

Threshold 2 (20 points): The senate's curator of antiquities, **Copernia Vau** (LN female middle-aged human expert 6), takes a shine to the PCs' obvious interest in history and offers them a brief tour of the adjoining restoration room, where artifacts are cleaned and preserved. As part of the tour, she offers the PC one bottle each of *universal solvent* and *unguent of timelessness* so they can practice the skills she describes. As long as a PC displays interest in Copernia's work, she is

distracted, and the PC with the Theft mission gains a +5 circumstance bonus on Sleight of Hand checks to steal valuables from the arcade.

Special Notes: A PC with the Theft mission must steal at least three of the five items donated by Earl Calhaddon Vernisant for the night's ball. The elaborate silk fan and spyglass are both mundane objects with historical significance, worth 300 gp and 1,200 gp, respectively. The journal belonged to Earl Vernisant's great grandfather and details his extensive genealogical work to connect their family line to the heroic Arnisant legacy. While the journal is worth only 100 gp, the details and handwriting samples within grant any character with the Fraud mission a +2 circumstance bonus on Bluff and Linguistics checks to start and confirm rumors. The buckler is of masterwork quality, and the dagger is an ornate +1 *silver dagger* that the earl claims one of General Arnisant's lieutenants used to slay the vampire Malageur (the dagger has in fact never been used as anything but a letter opener by his outrageously wealthy family).

A PC with the Spy mission should endeavor to stay close to the high strategos in this area.

Story Award: If the PCs reach the first threshold for influencing this area, award them 400 XP. Award the PCs an additional 200 XP if they reach the second threshold.

A2. Courtyard (Senate Exterior)

Breathtaking gardens surround the senate building. Catered patios segregated by short iron fences, coordinated military displays, and even a makeshift zoo of imported animals and magical beasts fill the few open spaces here, even including a small hive of bees busily pollinating the exotic flowers and making the honey used by the senate kitchens. Many of the senior nobles enjoy the breaks between ceremonies in this open space.

NPCs Present: Lady Gloriana Morilla and Princess Eutropia.

Influence Skills: Handle Animal DC 11, Knowledge (engineering, local, or nature) DC 14, or Perform (keyboard, percussion, sing, string, or wind) DC 12.

Threshold 1 (15 points): The PCs have ingratiated themselves enough into the political scene that tongues begin to waggle around them. Each PC immediately learns a single additional Influence skill of the NPC of their choice.

Threshold 2 (30 points): At this threshold, the PCs mingle enough to make themselves recognizable and entertaining to the elite of Taldor. Each PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks to influence NPCs during this part of the adventure.

Story Award: If the PCs achieve the first threshold for influencing this area, award them 400 XP. Award the PCs an additional 400 XP if they achieve the second threshold.

A3. Emperor's Hall

This gathering space before the senate chamber is set aside as the property of the emperor, and features countless statues and portraits of previous grand princes. While formally these chambers are for the use of the emperor, no grand prince has ever maintained an office within the senate building, and the space is understood to be public meeting rooms by silent agreement.

The Emperor's Hall sees rotating use throughout the night for various backroom deals, and serves as a private space where the PCs can meet quietly.

A4. Gallery

The second floor of the senate building (not shown on the Senate of Taldor map) acts as an observation deck to the events of the main floor, with offices for various senators lining the outer walls. This area of winding passageways is typically open to noble observers and senatorial aides. Much of the gallery is dedicated to entertaining the children of various nobles, with extravagant performances occurring throughout the upper balconies of the senate building.

NPCs Present: Countess Abrielle Pace and Wyssilka the Fantabulous.

Influence Skills: Acrobatics DC 14, Disguise DC 14, Perform (act, comedy, or dance) DC 12, or Sleight of Hand DC 14.

Threshold 1 (15 points): The PCs learn the general movements of the crowds within the senate by watching from the upper gallery. Thanks to their time in the area, the PCs can increase the number of social rounds between subsequent events by 1 each, so long as there is at least 1 social round between events. A PC with the Aide mission gains a +2 bonus on combat maneuver and Escape Artist checks to navigate the senate floor (if the PCs also reach the first threshold of the servant area, she can instead move freely, without the need for checks).

Threshold 2 (30 points): The PCs accumulate a number of donations from grateful parents, including 238 gp, a bottle of fine brandy (75 gp), and a *wand of eagle's splendor* (5 charges) from a particularly passive-aggressive earl.

Special Notes: A PC with the Discovery mission needs to learn Countess Pace's loyalties, but the woman does not open up enough to discuss such things unless at least one PC has successfully influenced her at least once.

Story Award: If the PCs achieve the first threshold for influencing this area, award them 400 XP. Award the PCs an additional 400 XP if they achieve the second threshold.

A5. Imperial Archives

The Imperial Archives could have been Golarion's greatest collection of transcribed knowledge, had any care been invested into its upkeep. Centuries of redirected funding and senate-sanctioned pruning of "sensitive information" has ruined the once immaculate reputation of the archives. This vast library now acts as a repository of haphazardly curated books, senate minutes, and genealogy records left open to the scrutiny of uncaring nobles. During the Grand Day of Exaltation, a host of rising aristocrats and aspiring courtiers here tout their knowledge of Taldan history.

NPCs Present: Duke Leonard Centimus.

Influence Skills: Knowledge (arcana, geography, or history) DC 14, Linguistics DC 11, Profession (librarian or scribe) DC 11, or Stealth DC 14.

Threshold 1 (10 points): As the PCs socialize with the crowd here, a guide leads a group of nobles over to an old blueprint of the senate building. The guide explains that the current structure was built atop the ruins of several older senate constructions. To keep the attention of the crowd, the guide goes on to describe how some levels of the old senate involved the intentional immurement of workers—a grim reward from the nobles of the time. This knowledge provides the PCs a +2 bonus on Perception and Initiative checks involving walcofinde undead (such as those in area C1).

Threshold 2 (20 points): The PCs' vested interest in Taldan history catches the attention of librarian

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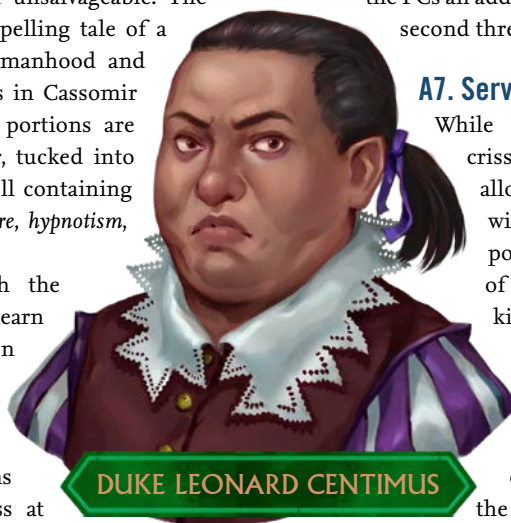
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Pabrus Telecoum (N old human expert 4), who offers one PC a dog-eared and crumbling journal donated to the library but considered unsalvageable. The text itself is a somewhat compelling tale of a young wizard's growth to womanhood and inheriting her family business in Cassomir 250 years ago. Though large portions are missing or damaged by water, tucked into the back of the book is a scroll containing *animate rope*, *blur*, *flaming sphere*, *hypnotism*, *mount*, and *web*.

Special Notes: A PC with the Discovery mission needs to learn Duke Centimus's position on primogeniture, but the distant gentleman does not open up readily on political matters—knowing his nuanced opinions usually alienate others—unless at least one PC has successfully influenced him at least once.

Story Award: If the PCs achieve the first threshold for influencing this area, award them 400 XP. Award the PCs an additional 200 XP if they achieve the second threshold.



A6. Senate Floor

Normally closed to non-senators, the vast, circular senate floor is open to special guests during the Grand Day of Exaltation, and myriad would-be nobles take the opportunity to duck in and live out a few moments of power fantasy, issuing mock legislation or engaging in lively debates.

NPCs Present: Baron Nicolaus Okerra and Kalbio from Breezy Creek.

Influence Skills: Bluff DC 14, Knowledge (local, nobility, or religion) DC 12, Perform (oratory) DC 12, Profession (clerk or barrister) DC 11, or Sense Motive DC 14.

Threshold 1 (10 points): The PCs successfully take part in one of many debates that occur in the area. Typical debate topics range from the validity of primogeniture and other traditional institutions to assessing the actions of previous noble leaders. By proving themselves, the PCs can select any one skill from the influence skill list for this area and use that skill to influence another area in the senate where that skill could not normally be used.

Threshold 2 (20 points): A PC wins a debate against a particularly odious young politician, to the entertainment of nearby Judge **Dartist Mercenian** (LN male half-elf aristocrat 6), who offers the PC a gold ring emblazoned with the Mercenian family crest (worth 300 gp) as a sign of his family's favor.

Special Notes: A PC with the Politicking mission will want to influence Baron Okerra here.

Story Award: If the PCs achieve the first threshold for influencing this area, award them 400 XP. Award the PCs an additional 200 XP if they achieve the second threshold.

A7. Servant Area

While several hidden corridors crisscross the senate building, allowing servants to come and go without disturbing the assembled politicians, this area houses most of the storerooms, workshops, and kitchens where the building's small army of servants bustle around to maintain the facade of opulence. Even this area, never meant for noble eyes, is of exceptional quality, though the gilt has worn thin on most corners, and here and there cheap repairs mar artistic furniture.

NPCs Present: None.

Influence Skills: Craft (alchemy, carpentry, jewelry, sculpture, or stonemasonry) DC 12, Heal DC 15, Intimidate DC 12, Profession (baker, butcher, cook, innkeeper, or porter) DC 11, or Sense Motive DC 15.

Threshold 1 (10 points): The PC earns some reputation for treating the servants well and gains some insight into the gossip. The PC learns the weakness of one NPC attending the gala. PCs with the Aide mission learn to use the servant passageways to move more efficiently around the building, gaining a +2 bonus on combat maneuver and Escape Artist checks to deliver messages (if the PCs also reach the first threshold of the gallery, they can instead move freely, without the need for checks).

Threshold 2 (20 points): The PCs leave a lasting positive impression on the senate building's staff, and head cook **Dedrien Nos** (N female human commoner 8) wishes them well in their political ambitions by donating two *potions of delay poison* in case they prove less popular with others.

Special Notes: A PC with the Sabotage mission must locate the expensive bottle of wine donated by the Lotheed family for the night's proceedings and sabotage it. The servants in this area are generally accustomed to nobles' backstabbing and look the other way if the PC succeeds at a DC 14 Bluff or Intimidate skill check, or do so automatically if the PCs have successfully reached the first threshold for influencing this area.

Story Award: If the PCs achieve the first threshold for influencing this area, award them 400 XP. Award the PCs an additional 200 XP if they achieve the second threshold.

EVENTS IN THE SENATE

The following section details the events that occur throughout the first part of the adventure. This is effectively a timeline for you to use when running the Exaltation Gala. Each event mentions how many social rounds the PCs have afterward to continue influencing important NPCs and the various locations of the senate building. These events break up the usual flow of social rounds, acting as unique encounters for the PCs to participate in throughout this part of the adventure.

Event 1: Standing in Line

While senators may enter the senate building with a minimum of fuss, the process for aides, staff, and other attendees to enter is long and tedious. The PCs get shuffled into an expansive line dedicated to senatorial aides, minor noble attendants, and various others deemed as “people useful to people of import.” The line progresses ponderously, and it takes several hours to finally reach the front. During this time, dozens of overeager merchants attempt to sell a variety of wares to the PCs and other staffers—mostly novelty Taldan flags and phony pieces of historical memorabilia. Several others in the line begin to bemoan the wait, touting their respective level of importance based on association with their affiliated nobles and senators.

The entire affair is quite tiresome.

Once the PCs get halfway through the line, **Kathann Zalar** (N female vishkanya^{ARG} rogue 5/Lion Blade^{ISI} 7) appears. A member of Taldor’s secretive Lion Blades, Kathann poses as one of the dreary inspectors making her way through the crowd, and hides her vishkanya heritage with makeup to pass as a Vudrani human. She pulls the PCs out of their place in the line, demanding they follow her for a “random inspection” at the base of the steps to the senate building.

It is possible that Kathann’s inspection agitates the PCs. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check recognizes that this inspection is far from random, and that Kathann has an obvious interest in the PCs. A PC attempting to question or negotiate with Kathann does little to impress her, though once away from the crown she offers her name as a gesture of respect, and alludes to a “common friend.” The spy is an ally of Martella’s, though she won’t say so; she does little to give away her affiliation with the Lion Blades, instead insisting that she is a member of the senate’s protection detail—not entirely a lie, given her role as a Lion Blade.

The inspection is a short affair, with Kathann quickly glancing over the PCs. If she identifies any truly volatile equipment, such as alchemist bombs or poisons, she provides the PC with tips on how to properly conceal the equipment, granting a +2 circumstance bonus on Sleight of Hand checks to hide such things for the remainder of the night. She then ushers them inside ahead of the line.

Event 2: Casual Gatherings

Once Kathann completes her inspection and ushers the PCs forward, they are free to ascend the hundred white marble steps to the senate of the Taldan empire. Hundreds of nobles, senatorial aides, and visiting dignitaries mingle within and without the grand halls of the senate.

Use this event as an opportunity to give the players an overview of the various areas and dramatis personae included in this portion of the adventure. Review each of the areas of the senate, including those not currently accessible to the PCs. You should also present a list of where each of the dramatis personae will about.

Otherwise, treat this event as a single social round in which the PCs can choose to influence a specific location. Each major NPC is predisposed with sycophants and senatorial matters, considering the coming deliberation; the PCs cannot influence them during this event.

Event 3: Eutropia’s Speech

This event occurs in the courtyard (area A2); a swelling of the crowd toward that area should give the PCs some indication that something of note is about to happen. Dozens of senators, well-wishers, and hangers-on have begun to gather around the newly arrived Princess Eutropia Stavian, who slipped into the gala unnoticed and unannounced. By the time the PCs arrive, Princess Eutropia has already attracted a large gaggle of several dozen nobles.

Lady Gloriana Morilla loudly clinks her glass and declares that Princess Eutropia would like to address the gathering. With the announcement, the crowd gives Eutropia some space, and Gloriana helps the princess climb onto the garden’s stone railing to be seen and heard above the throngs. Read or paraphrase the following.

“My friends, colleagues, and assorted enemies, it is wonderful to see you all out in your finery beneath the beautiful stars tonight. With any luck, the weather will be the only thing that refuses to change this evening.

“We have all gathered here tonight to honor Master Kalbio of Breezy Creek, a master artisan and true patriot, for his exquisite skill and service to our glorious empire. Master Kalbio demonstrates so eloquently that a heart may be noble regardless of the stature of one’s birth, and while it may be premature, I hope to be the first to congratulate you, sir, on the exaltation you will see tonight and welcome you into the ranks of Taldor’s long-lived aristocracy.

“But we gather here to discuss matters of state, as well. And just as the exaltation reminds us that our glorious empire must always look out into the world to refresh the greatness of its leadership, we must all look out into the world around us and see how it has grown. The child-nations our empire birthed—Andoran, Cheliox, Lastwall—have grown strong

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by examining the great traditions they inherited from our motherland, and embracing those relevant to this new world and discarding those that held them back. So too will we, this very night, examine one of Taldor's oldest traditions—primogeniture—with eyes wide open, to determine whether it has held us back from the glory and stability our wayward states have found.

"Our obligation tonight is not about one person or one vote in the senate. It is about the nation we love and about ensuring that nation does not fall behind the times. We are the inheritors of mighty Azlant, and I say that we must work together to avoid sharing that old empire's fate. Taldor endures!"

Eutropia's speech concludes. She hops down from the railing and is suddenly inundated with supporters and critics, but the PCs have other concerns.

Stinging Interruption: During the speech, one of the serving staff breaks off from the group and heads toward the apiary near the edge of the courtyard. The senate apiary consists of three wooden boxes, each housing a small beehive used to pollinate the garden's various exotic plants and make exquisite honey used in the kitchens. A PC notices the odd movement with a successful DC 13 Perception check, while a result of 18 or higher also reveals that the staff member holding onto a strangely colored alchemical wafer.

One of Eutropia's lesser political opponents instructed a subordinate to provide a server with an alchemical wafer. The server received instructions to place the wafer near the senate apiary. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Craft (alchemy) or Knowledge (nature) identifies that the wafer emits a scent that agitates bees. If presented with this information or any other demand from the PCs to stop, the server immediately acquiesces.

Unless stopped, the staffer places the alchemical wafer by the apiaries as instructed. He then heads back into the senate building to attend to other matters. One minute later, the beehive boxes begin to shake, as the bees furiously batter the insides of the boxes. Moments later, one of the boxes collapses, knocking the other two down. The massive swarm causes immediate panic in the crowd, and unless the PCs departed early, they must succeed a DC 14 Reflex save or take 1d6 points of damage from bee stings and the trampling crowd.

Development: Any PC who moves to stop the staffer takes a -2 penalty on influence checks for the next 2 social rounds, as his sudden departure from the in-progress speech is noted but nevertheless averts a small disaster. The staffer can report only that one of the Taldan Phalanx guards approached him to place the wafer near the beehives, telling him the scent would keep the bees calm for the evening and prevent any incidents. The staffer can't tell which guard gave him the order and seems entirely unnerved by the affair.

In the event that the PCs failed to notice or stop the staffer, the courtyard area is closed for the following 6 social rounds while security officials step in to clean up the mess caused by the swarming bees and subsequent exodus of attendees. During this time, the NPCs within the area are inaccessible.

Story Award: Reward the PCs 400 XP if they manage to stop the bee swarm from ruining Eutropia's speech.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 4 social rounds before the start of the next event.

Event 4: Check-In

Martella Lotheed contacts the PCs via her *master senator badge* and requests they join her in the gallery. When they first arrive, she is grinning and clapping gently as she watches one of the jugglers, but she hurriedly composes herself and dons her air of mystery once she realizes anyone is watching. She has sectioned off a small meeting point on the upper walkways with chairs and a pot of fresh coffee. With a successful DC 15 Perception check, a PC notices the same brass cricket that Martella set up at the café from earlier adorning the nearby railing.

Martella uses this quiet time to check in on the PCs' progress and see if they require any information. You can use this encounter to spell out the PCs' current effects on the gala, as Martella observes how much certain NPCs or areas seem to notice or like the PCs. She dissuades the PCs from interacting further with NPCs they have fully influenced or areas where they have reached the maximum threshold rewards.

Just before departing to let the PCs continue their evenings, Martella adds the following.

I didn't ask you here just to look over your shoulders. There's a young woman here: Malphene Trant, the daughter of Senator Trant. She's a belligerent, narcissistic ass, and a bully as well. If she's here, it's likely to intimidate one of more of the junior senators into backing her father. If one or more of you could keep an eye on her and... quietly intercede should she try, I would be quite grateful.

Malphene mills about the Arcade of Triumphs for the next 3 rounds, then does indeed move to confront a junior senator (see **Event 5**).

Development: If the PCs show any interest in her mechanical crickets, Martella explains that they create a soft buzz that makes it more difficult to eavesdrop on conversations around them, but given how frustratingly difficult they are to construct, she's reluctant to give them away. With a successful DC 18 Diplomacy check, a PC can persuade her to offer one of the two she brought to the gala, allowing them to talk (or later fight) without being overheard (see the sidebar on page 21).

Social Rounds: The PCs have 3 social rounds before the start of the next event.

Event 5: Dissenters (CR 2)

As Martella predicted, Malphene Trant eventually makes her way to the upper gallery alongside a few of her sycophants, corners the young Senator Dou, and shoves him into the Beldam II Waiting Room. PCs who have deliberately kept an eye on Malphene per Martella's request see this automatically. The cordon-off happens too quickly to intervene, but PCs who witnessed the interaction gain a +2 circumstance bonus on their initiative checks if they confront Malphene. Any PC not following Malphene but present in the gallery or the Arcade of Triumphs notices the altercation with a successful DC 12 Perception check. Otherwise, Martella alerts the PCs to the scuffle via their *senate aide* badges.

The Beldam II Waiting Room is located on the upper floor of the senate building, in the gallery area (area A4). Any of the attending servants or guards can point the PCs in the appropriate direction. The room itself is a 30-foot-by-30-foot area, with lavish white marble floors and sturdy wooden walls. The centerpiece of the room is a vast 10-foot-wide gold-trimmed window peering down over the city of Oppara. Chairs and tables are spaced throughout the chamber to promote socializing.

Creatures: Dame Malphene Trant is a towering, broad-shouldered, athletic young woman, and despite her recent coming out as a refined young lady among Opparan society, she remains happy to leverage her size and strength to intimidate her father's political rivals. Tonight her target is junior Senator Amadorian Dou, who had been a reluctant ally of Senator Trant's before Martella coaxed him into voting against primogeniture. The elder Trant responded by asking his daughter and a few of her young, high-society friends to shake down the young man and regain his obedience. The Trant family hails from Whitemarch, and its members are quick to use the threat of Qadiran aggression to maintain control of their holdings. While they don't care one way or the other about women's rights, much of their influence comes from supporting the staunchly traditional Maxillar Pythareus.

Malphene spends several minutes haranguing Senator Dou, then shoving him, providing the PCs with time to gather their numbers. She is incensed if interrupted, ordering the "help" to leave and taking special joy in tearing down anyone of obviously middle or lower class among the party. Three friends accompany Trant, all bored, bullying sons of local aristocratic families she befriended before becoming a debutante. They quickly join in on the mockery in hopes of currying her favor.

The PCs' objective here is to dissuade Dame Trant from harassing anyone else. This is harder than it sounds, as Trant is particularly angry and slightly drunk. Calming her requires a successful DC 25 Diplomacy or

BRASS CHATTERBOX

This elegant clockwork cricket, molded from brass and darkwood with a key in its back, is a clever invention of Lady Martella Lotheed to deter eavesdropping.

BRASS CHATTERBOX

PRICE
300 GP

SLOT none

CL 9th

WEIGHT —

AURA moderate divination



If wound as a full-round action, this elegant clockwork cricket clicks and chirps softly for 2 minutes. Though it's generally too subtle to be noticed, this noise obscures speech and similar sounds nearby; speakers within 5 feet of the brass chatterbox can hear one another without difficulty, but anyone beyond this space takes a –5 penalty on Perception checks to overhear details of the conversation. If attached to a door, the brass chatterbox instead imposes this penalty on Perception checks to hear noises through the door.

Intimidate check; otherwise, the noblewoman eagerly moves in to deliver a beating. She and her sycophants rely on their fists unless the PCs draw weapons or begin casting spells, in which case they draw their weapons.

DAME MALPHENE TRANT

CR 1/2

XP 200

Female human fighter (lore warden) 1 (*Pathfinder RPG Adventurer's Guide* 144)

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +3

DEFENSE

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

hp 13 (1d10+3)

Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +3 (1d3+2 nonlethal) or
mwk longsword +4 (1d8+2/19–20)

TACTICS

During Combat Trant engages with her fists, preferring to rough people up rather than kill them. She draws her family sword only if the PCs draw first.

Morale Trant surrenders and agrees to leave quietly if all her sycophants fall; otherwise, she fights until unconscious.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13

Feats Alertness, Improved Unarmed Strike, Persuasive

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Skills Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (history, nobility) +4, Perception +3, Sense Motive +4

Languages Common

Other Gear padded armor, mwk longsword, *senator's aide badge*, mulibrous tincture^{AG}, noble's outfit, 70 gp

SYCOPHANTS (3)

CR 1/3

XP 135

Human aristocrat 1

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +0



MALPHENE TRANT

DEFENSE

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

hp 6 (1d8+2)

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed +1 (1d3+1 nonlethal) or
improvised club +1 (1d6+1)

TACTICS

During Combat The sycophants start combat by attempting to demoralize foes, then attack with their fists. If the fight escalates, they grab chairs to swing as clubs.

Morale The sycophants fight until reduced below 3 hit points, at which point they surrender.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 9, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +0; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 11

Feats Catch Off-Guard, Persuasive

Skills Bluff +4, Diplomacy +2, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (nobility) +3, Perform (dance) +4

Languages Common

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*; **Other Gear** padded armor, noble's outfit, tacky jewelry (worth 100 gp), 30 gp

Treasure: If he escapes without a severe beating, Senator Dou eagerly thanks his rescuers, asking them to drop by his office in the morning for a reward. Dou survives the night, and if the PCs remember to track him down the next day, he awards them a *noble's vigilant pillbox*^{UE} to protect them in the future.

Development: If the PCs make too much noise, they attract the attention of two guards in 1d6 rounds. Soothing the guards requires a successful DC 18 Bluff or Diplomacy check. Given that Dame Trant is a known local aristocrat and the PCs are strangers, the guards are inclined to believe her account of events (or assume the worst, if she and her friends are obviously unconscious), increasing the skill check DC by 4. If the PCs fail to sway the guards, they're escorted back to the servants' area until Martella arranges for them to be released 2 social rounds later.

Actions that may attract a guard's attention include fighting adjacent to the door, shouting, or casting any spells with very loud effects, such as *hideous laughter*.

Despite the potential bloodbath that can occur in this room, the PCs' actions here should not end their socializing in the senate building. If the PCs slay Trant and her followers quietly, it takes some time before the room is checked and the bodies are discovered. Assuming the PCs take no additional actions to incriminate themselves, it is later assumed that Trant sought refuge in this chamber and was slain as part of Stavian's murder spree in the senate (see **Event 10** on page 24).

If Malphene survives this run-in, the PCs meet her again in area C2, as she keeps a *senator's aide badge* tucked inside her dress to communicate with her father.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 3 social rounds before the start of the next event.

Event 6: Stavian's Arrival

Late in the evening, a silence falls over the gala, and the crowd parts as servants unroll a red carpet through the Arcade of Triumphs and the senate floor. Grand Prince Stavian III and a host of his Ulfen Guard then arrive, ascending the 100 steps to the building. Guests quickly flock to catch a glimpse of Taldor's leader, who briskly moves toward the Emperor's Hall, which is closed for the remainder of the night.

Special: The arrival of the Grand Prince causes some turmoil among the assembled guests. Maxillar Pythareus retreats to convene with the Grand Prince in the Emperor's Hall, while Princess Eutropia recuses herself to partake in several private meetings before her father's expected speech. As a result, both NPCs cannot be influenced for the remainder of the adventure.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 2 social rounds before the start of the next event.

Event 7: Light Supper

Following the Grand Prince's arrival, servants begin to bring out a light supper, placing various expensive cheeses, fruits, pastries, and wines out on tables or carrying platters to offer momentary repast. The food placates the masses left confused by Stavian's abrupt arrival and sudden disappearance, and soon conversations return to normal. Socializing becomes easier, as interested parties jockey for positions in food lines to speak with important dignitaries.

Special: The PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus on all checks to influence an area or NPC because the food makes social encounters easier to engineer.

A century-old bottle of wine donated by the Lotheed family is opened and served at this point. If a PC with the Sabotage mission has succeeded in tainting the bottle, the senators sampling it react in disgust. If a PC with the Sabotage mission has not yet completed her task, the senators gather around, commenting appreciatively, and the mission can no longer be completed.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 4 social rounds before the start of the next event.

Event 8: The Senate Convenes

Finally, the Taldan senate convenes to vote on various issues while guests watch from the gallery above. The hall spends 30 minutes arguing and voting on formalities and spending bills before reaching the event all of Taldor has been waiting for: whether to abolish the long-standing law of primogeniture.

Read or paraphrase the following.

The political ruling body of Taldor spreads out twenty feet below the observation deck of the gallery. Dozens of senators and their immediate aides scurry below. The cacophony of voices is almost deafening, and it seems like the ceaseless chatter will continue endlessly. Suddenly, the magically amplified voice of the senate speaker interrupts the noise.

"Thank you all. I would ask that our observers please be silent and seat themselves. We will now begin voting on addendum number twenty-two thousand eighty-seven: the repeal of the ancient law of primogeniture, the issuance of inheritance and aristocratic title solely through male heirs."

Following this proclamation, the speaker begins calling on individual senators one at a time to support or oppose the repeal. Early declarations split evenly between the options, with many senators abstaining entirely, and only halfway through the process do votes begin to favor Princess Eutropia's bid to end primogeniture. By the end of the tabulations, the repeal passes with roughly 60 percent of the senate's backing. The speaker takes a moment to compose himself, seemingly shocked by the results, before continuing to formally announce the initial results in a distant monotone.

And so, the final tally for addendum twenty-two thousand eighty-seven, the repeal of primogeniture, with thirty-six abstentions, the final tally stands at one hundred and seven for, seventy-nine against. The addendum passes. Among other business tonight, the senate recognizes Princess Eutropia Stavian I as the new heir to the Primogen Crown, and the first heir the empire has seen in twenty years.

With the declaration made, the chamber explodes in a riot of applause and condemnation. It takes several minutes for the cacophony to die down. The speaker declares that a closed senate recount is to take place, an event signaled by the speaker declaring a temporary recess of the senate to outsiders.

Event 9: Final Meeting

Following the vote, Martella Lotheed summons the PCs for one final recap, just as ushers begin announcing Grand Prince Stavian's speech and exaltation to begin in 30 minutes. The meeting takes place in the same section of the gallery where the PCs last met Martella.

Use this opportunity to have Martella recount the PCs' numerous successes during this portion of the adventure. Martella congratulates the PCs on a job well done if most of the PCs completed their missions, and promises additional rewards for those PCs after the festivities. Finally, Martella surmises that Stavian's speech will be a concession to Eutropia's bid for the throne. While the vote does not replace Stavian, he has

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My boy,

Your mother and I are so damn proud of you and everything you've accomplished! Your apprenticeship was the greatest decision we ever made. Watching you grow into a fine man these last thirty years has been the greatest reward life could ever give me.

I'm sorry to say that we've kept a secret from you, though. You always thought we'd tightened our belts to pay for your apprenticeship, and we did, but that was never quite enough. Eventually, we had to take out a mortgage on the farm, and the money you give us every time you sell a tapestry helps so much, but it's never been enough to repay the debt.

Now that you're an important man, we'd hoped you could help us settle this mortgage and help us keep the farm, or at least find space in your new life for two doddering old farmers who love their son. I'm sorry we hid this from you for so long.

We love you,
Papa

HANDOUT #1

made no secret of his opposition to the repeal, and she expects the aging emperor to show no amount of restraint in lambasting his daughter.

Development: Before letting the PCs find their seats, Martella hands them a letter, neatly folded and sealed with wax embossed with a simple heart. She explains that it is a message for Kalbio of Breezy Creek—the peasant about to be exalted—from his parents who couldn't afford to travel into Oppara for the ceremony. She understands that the letter is “of a personal and emotional nature,” and so Kalbio's parents asked that it not be delivered until after the big day.

Social Round: Following this meeting, the PCs have 1 final social round to influence NPCs or areas.

Event 10: Empire's End (CR 4)

Hundreds of dignitaries, senators, and visitors cram onto the senate floor (area A6). A dozen hulking members of the Ulfen Guard, personal bodyguards of the grand prince, stand arrayed around a podium atop the central, circular stage of the chamber. A mix of senatorial staffers and Ulfen Guard assign people to positions within the chamber based on rank and influence, placing the PCs toward the outer wall of the room, well over 80 feet away from the grand prince's podium. Martella Lotheed stands 20 feet closer, while Princess Eutropia and several prominent nobles stand at the podium's edge.

Read or paraphrase the following.

Grand Prince Stavian III ascends to the tall stage that overlooks the hall from its center. He raises a single hand to calm the murmurs of the assembled crowd. A member of the prince's Ulfen Guard escorts a thrilled-looking man in noble attire—the soon-to-be elevated commoner, Kalbio—to stand several paces behind the prince.

“Quite the assembly we have here today,” the grand prince says. “I don't think I've ever seen the senate building packed so full; especially not for any of my previous speeches. Even my lovely daughter, now a woman, sits among the players of

Oppara's greatest game. Of course, none of you are here for me. No, today is about something else entirely. Today is about elevation. It is no secret that today is about exalting others to a new status in life.

“I'm sure many of you have had the opportunity to meet Kalbio here. He is a man of the people, elevated at the urging of all the ladies, lords, senators, and aides present in this chamber. I think we should all give him a rousing applause, to commemorate this momentous change in his life.”

The room erupts into cheers as Stavian pauses in his proclamation. The grand prince of Taldor smiles widely as he takes in the adulation of the crowd. At this point, allow each of the PCs to attempt a DC 20 Sense Motive check. A PC who succeeds notices subtle repositioning movements by armed, black-garbed personnel to block the exits. However the PCs react to this observation, whether trying to warn the crowd or taking other actions—let them. What happens next forever alters the history of Taldor, and working to make the PCs part of this event is important for keeping them invested in the campaign. If one of the PCs shouts a warning, then several attendees begin to look around, growing tense but unsure of what is happening.

Regardless of the PCs' actions or interruptions, Grand Prince Stavian III continues. Read or paraphrase the following.

As the applause abates, a hulking Ulfen Guard pushes Kalbio forward, almost knocking the commoner down as he awkwardly regains his balance beside Grand Prince Stavian. The leader of Taldor maintains his calm, placing a hand on Kalbio's shoulder without ever taking his eyes off the crowd.

“I understand your parents sacrificed everything to help you reach this day, my boy. Saving up for your apprenticeship and the tools you needed to achieve greatness. And today you are a grateful son, no doubt making them proud. I too understand what it is to sacrifice; I have given so much for the people of this nation: a brother, a son, a lifetime of service.

Even my own daughter's loyalty." He pauses, licking his lips and pulling the awkward Kalbio closer to his side. "But unlike you, Lord Kalbio, these Taldans—my children, truly—are not grateful. They scheme and plot, dream of hanging their dutiful father and placing a woman—a woman, sir!—on the Lion Throne! And they have seen fit this very day to induct you into their conspiratorial ranks. And that is why here, now, you, Lord Kalbio, will be the first among them to die."

And with that, the Emperor of Taldor plunges a jeweled dagger between the ribs of the astonished man in his clutches.

While Stavian's accusations stun the crowd, Kalbio's blood showers the front row of the senate floor. Kalbio mouths "Ma...ma...pa..." before he collapses to the stage in a heap. A red-stained Princess Eutropia defiantly stands among the nobility, staring up at her father in disbelief. Casting aside cloaks to reveal armor and blades, the unidentified soldiers in the chamber already begin moving to cut down the attending masses in a wholesale slaughter. A total of 50 armed soldiers surround the room.

After a moment's confusion from most of the Ulfen Guard, the viking warriors attempt to close ranks around their emperor, cutting down anyone—black-clad warrior and panicked senator alike—who approaches. Masked soldiers guard the doors and make wide-arc slashes with their swords to keep the crowds at bay. Within mere seconds, the senate floor becomes a killing field, as Stavian III looks around in deranged wonder at the butchery he has ordered.

As the conflict escalates, other members of the crowd pull hidden weapons from their clothing and engage the Stavian agents. These are members of Taldor's famed Lion Blades, a secret society dedicated to protecting Taldor and her people from interference by foreign powers—even those hired by the emperor himself. The PCs may recognize Kathann Zalar, the helpful guard who inspected them upon entry to the gala, as she leaps into combat, shouting, "Lion Blades! To your duties! Defend the senate! Defend Taldor!" Even Martella Lotheed and Princess Eutropia draw their weapons to fight back against the assassins.

Creatures: To maintain the intense pace of this scene, have each of the PCs immediately roll initiative. A single masked Stavian agent acts near the PCs, wading through the crowd to within 30 feet prior to combat. A PC acting before the agent can perform actions as normal, and even after closing, the mercenary takes a round to stab an adjacent servant before attacking the PCs.

The crowd and general panic makes every space in the hall difficult terrain.

This scene serves more as a cinematic scene rather than a true fight. While this battle seems sure to end the PCs' adventuring career, the development section whisks them away to safety.

STAVIAN AGENT

CR 7

XP 3,200

CN sellsword (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 283)

hp 80

Development: When Stavian's hired mercenary first successfully hits with an attack roll, each PC's *senate aide badge* flashes with blinding magical energy. Unknown to Martella Lotheed, each badge was enchanted with a *contingency* spell centuries ago, programmed to teleport Senator Voritas's staff to a safe room hidden far below the senate in the event of violence. A similar spell once protected Senator Voritas's *master senator badge* as well, but was expended a century ago during riots, leaving Martella Lotheed behind in the chaos. Read or paraphrase the following.

As the mercenary raises a gore-soaked sword and begins to swing, there is a blinding flash of light, and when it fades, only blackness and the smell of cold earth remain.

Story Award: Award the PCs 1,200 XP for their presence at this defining moment in Taldan history.

PART 2: LOST IN HISTORY

At the climax of the historic events in the senate, powerful magic suddenly transports the PCs away from Grand Prince Stavian's unleashed slaughter. The *senate aide badges* worn by the PCs each hold secret magical fail-safes, intended to activate in the event of any violence within the halls of the senate, which transport the PCs out of the abattoir of the senate floor and into a hidden safe room in a forgotten archive deep beneath the ancient seat of Taldan power. Quiet and long-abandoned, the PCs leap from a scene of pure chaos to one of darkness and silence.

During this segment of the adventure, the PCs attempt to escape the depths of the senate sublevels. After the teleportation effect, the PCs find themselves in a set of personal safe rooms for the late Senator Voritas and his long-dead staffers. The PCs need to pool their guile and intellect to figure out how to escape the safe rooms, all while receiving sporadic messages from Martella Lotheed, who is still located in the combat zone above.

Once the PCs successfully escape the safe rooms, they meet up with other attendees from the senate who were also magically transported down to the forgotten sublevels. From here, the PCs need to overcome forgotten guardians, undead haunts, and vicious traps to escape and reach the surface.

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MARTELLA'S MISSIVES

Martella Lotheed remains behind in the senate building and uses her *master senator badge* to maintain infrequent communication with the PCs, sporadically providing updates on the bloodshed above.

The following are brief communiqués Martella provides as the PCs escape the safe quarters and explore the rest of the sublevels. Her final communications should come shortly before the Brotherhood of Silence assassins turn on the PCs in area **C22**.

Message 1: "Where did you go?! I just saw you and several others in the senate vanish into thin air!"

Message 2: "Gloriana Morilla's allies from the Pathfinder Society secured us a way out of the senate building! This is an organized force."

Message 3: "Out of the senate. Stavian's soldiers still pursuing. Fighting throughout the entire senate building. Wherever you are, keep your heads down!"

Message 4: "Not all military are with Stavian. Assassins seem to be a collection of foreign agents. City guard is in chaos. Lion Blades and Eutropia's allies fighting back in the senate."

Message 5: "Stavian's forces retreating, military is divided. Maxillar Pythareus seen moving with impunity through Stavian's assassins."

Message 6: "Out of the senate building. Guiding a dozen or so of the servants to a safe haven..."

Message 7: "Reached safe house. It's located at the Dignif—"

B. SAFE QUARTERS

The sublevels of the Taldan senate contain dozens of forgotten archives, basements, and corners left over from previous buildings constructed on the site but destroyed in wars or natural disasters. As a result, the senate sublevels are a spiderweb of interconnected architectural pockets of Taldan history linked by haphazard hallways. Many senators over the years have used these forgotten corners to make sure embarrassing secrets remain hidden, for clandestine meetings or romantic interludes, or as hiding places in the event of violence or war.

Senator Albio Voritas's safe room was something radically different. During the chaos of the Shining Crusade, the omnipresent threat of assassins came from not only political rivals but also the Whispering Tyrant's loyalists. Voritas feared catastrophic damage to the senate and recognized the need for a long-term safe haven. He secretly contracted a talented transmuter to construct a set of chambers in which he and his staff could wait out hardships. Voritas knew that his aides might not share his desire to hide—panicky as the lower classes could be—and ordered the rooms to be cut off from the rest

of the sublevels, accessible only by a magically attuned wall, which only a Voritas family member could activate.

Luckily, Albio Voritas's architect recognized the many problems with senator's paranoid demands, and installed a secondary escape mechanism: several coins likewise capable of activating the magical secret exit. With the PCs' sudden arrival sans any members of the long-dead Voritas family, this alternative is the only escape route from the safe rooms.

ESCAPE ROOM

The sudden teleportation from the senate should disorient the PCs, and the party should have no idea where they have ended up or why. The dawning realization that each of the safe rooms (areas **B1** through **B4**) connects only with other safe rooms should also come as a shock to the PCs—they are trapped in a series of four rooms!

The PCs can escape through a secret passage that leads into the adjacent section of the sublevels (area **C**); however, there is more to these rooms than just finding a secret door with a successful Perception check. Senator Voritas demanded an exit method only he (and his descendants) could access. Thus the only exit from the area is a permanent *phase door* in the senator's bedchamber. The PCs' only way to access the magical doorway is to find a hidden cache of magical coins that trigger the use of the concealed doorway. To find these activation coins, the PCs need to accomplish several tasks. Presented below are the likely steps the PCs should follow in this area.

Step 1: The PCs spend time exploring and getting acquainted with the area. They should explore each room and learn about the unique features within. While searching the rooms, the PCs can locate light switches in each chamber. These switches control the lighting in each of the four rooms (itself a minor puzzle; see Lighting on page 28). During this time, the PCs likely also find the key to area **C4**—a red herring for this area, but useful once the PCs escape into the larger basement.

Step 2: Senator Voritas's notes in area **B3** are the first clue the PCs find. The notes provide enough information for the PCs to find the bar key hidden inside one of the servant's bed comforters in area **B1**.

Step 3: Inside the locked bar cabinet in area **B2**, the PCs find a magical device missing its power source. The power source is concealed inside one of Voritas's favorite books in area **B3**. Combining the power source with the device in the bar provides a scrying effect gazing at the box-obscured wall in area **B4**.

Step 4: By moving boxes in area **B4**, the PCs discover a wall fresco depicting a hero of the Fourth Army of Exploration. The PCs should eventually discover that the scrying device in area **B2** shows glowing portions of the fresco. The glow only appears when area **B4** is in

B-C. SAFE QUARTERS AND THE FORGOTTEN ARCHIVES

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



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complete darkness, requiring the PCs to use the light switches to illuminate area **B2** and area **B4**.

Step 5: The PCs need to coordinate across opposite rooms. One PC needs to touch the glowing areas of the fresco in sequence, while another PC needs to report on the correct sequence by using the scrying device. Successfully completing the puzzle reveals a hidden niche beyond the fresco containing a set of special coins minted with the Voritas family seal.

Step 6: With the coins in hand, the PCs just need to find the hidden phase door, located in the corner of Senator Voritas's personal chamber.

Lighting: When the PCs arrive, the entirety of the chambers are dark. In each room, a panel of brass and green glass in one wall activates magical lights set in the ceiling—one touch activates the lights, and a second touch deactivates them. Originally, these panels activated the lights in their corresponding rooms, but after centuries of neglect, the magic has decayed and cross-wired the switches as follows.

Room Switch	Lights Affected
Area B1	Areas B2 and B3
Area B2	Area B3
Area B3	Areas B2 and B4
Area B4	Areas B1 and B2

B1. Servants' Quarters

With no lights active when the PCs arrive, the room is pitch black and musty, though this doesn't prevent them from casting spells or lighting the candles on the table (if they can locate them by feel). Once the PCs illuminate the room, read or paraphrase the following.

Faded wallpaper lines the walls of this thirty-five-foot-by-thirty-five-foot room, peeling up at the seams. Six beds line the western wall, each pristinely made but caked in a thick layer of dust. Eight closed wooden lockers line the northeastern corner of the room. Two doors exit the room: one to the north and one to the east.

Senator Voritas intended for this single chamber to host any attending staff whisked away with him to safety. The doors here each lead into rectangular hallways that join up with the next chambers. A small bathroom still functions, the internal plumbing built to last millennia. One locker contains a grooming kit, a moth-eaten change of clothes, and a simple hand mirror, but the rest are empty.

Escape Component: A hidden key is sewn into the comforter of fourth bed from the north. This key is an inelegant brass key that opens the locked bar in area **B2** and can be located with a successful DC 28 Perception check. The clue in area **B3** lets the PCs find this key without a skill check.

B2. Social Room

A wooden counter juts from the northwest corner of this thirty-foot-by-thirty-foot chamber. Open cabinets of dusty liquor bottles stand behind the bar, while one cabinet remains tightly sealed with a visible lock. Three tables

with adjacent chairs fill much of the room. Portraits of posing nobles and historical scenes adorn the walls, all faded with age. Doors exit to the south and east.

The kitchen and tables here were meant to feed and entertain guests who found themselves whisked out of the senate. Senator Voritas recognized he would need to hide for some time if things turned to violence in the senate, so he ordered one of the safety chambers into a communal meeting area. Each of the portraits on the wall represents a notable figure or scene chronicled by Taldor's Fourth Army of Exploration, recognizable with a successful DC 14 Knowledge (history or nobility) check.

Escape Component: A strong lock bars entry to one of the cabinets here. The wood of the cabinet is magically treated (hardness 10, hp 60, Disable Device DC 30); the hidden key in area **B1** unlocks the cabinet. Inside the locked cabinet is something that resembles an immovable crystal ball built into the wall. The device is initially inoperable, requiring a missing power source—a rectangular piece of curved magical glass matching a hole in the top of the device. The PCs can find the missing power source in area **B3**.

This device does not operate in darkness; the PCs need to use the switches to light the chamber before they can use this device. Once the room is illuminated, any creature adjacent to the device can stare into the ball. The viewer sees a vision of the southern wall of area **B4**. If area **B4** has no active light sources and the boxes are moved to reveal the fresco behind, then the device here shows a vibrant magical glow around the correct area of the fresco to touch (see area **B4** for more information).

Treasure: Many of the liquors here have soured or evaporated away over the eons, but two bottles of whiskey remain sealed in wax and are worth 75 gp each. A wand of *create food and water* (14 charges) and a *sustaining spoon* rest in a drawer under the bar.



ESCAPE COINS

B3. Senator's Chamber

Heavy wooden bookshelves line the walls of this opulent bedchamber. A posh chair sits in the northwestern corner alongside a small circular table. A massive bed and an adjoining table rest along the eastern side of the room. An open bathroom fits into the southwest, with a bathtub matching the room's opulence, but adding an ignoble odor. Doors exit to the west and south.

Senator Voritas wanted a personal chamber that catered to his interests, namely history. Moldering books fill the bookshelves here, most of them detailing points of Taldor's long history. Despite a thick layer of dust, the high-quality bed and bedclothes here have aged much better than those in the servants' quarters. A hand mirror and a frayed brush rest on the sink in the bathroom.

Escape Components: An ornate gold key (worth 100 gp) lies on top of the circular table next to the sofa chair. The key is a red herring, but it does open the door between areas **C1** and **C4**. With a successful DC 13 Perception check, a PC notices a scroll case hanging from the railing of the bathtub. This bronzed and pitted case opens to reveal a tattered note that reads: "Fourth bed from the north. Comforter. Backup key." This clue points to the hidden key in area **B1**.

One of the dozen or so books that has not decayed over the years hides the power source for the crystal ball device in area **B2**. Finding this book without any clues requires a successful DC 18 Perception check and 1d3+1 hours of searching through the room. The power source is a small, curved piece of rectangular glass, fitted inside the cut pages of the book. Any PC uncovering the fresco in area **B4** or reviewing the portraits in area **B2** can attempt a DC 12 Wisdom check to recognize Voritas's fascination with the Fourth Army of Exploration, pointing the PC to the appropriate book automatically. Likewise, if a player notes this fascination, her character should be able to find the appropriate book with ease.

A permanent *phase door* is embedded in the floor, leading down to area **B5**. A circular, coin-sized niche is obvious on this wall, but it connects to no obvious mechanisms. A member of the Voritas family can touch this circle to activate the *phase door*, which seals itself again after 5 minutes. Anyone can place one of the magical coins from area **B4** into the niche instead to activate the door.

B4. Storage Chamber

Stacked wooden crates cover the southern wall, and more crates occupy the northwestern corner. Wooden shelves fill much of the eastern half of the room, each tier filled with dust-coated bottles, crockery, and glass jars.

A routine check of the chamber reveals changes of clothes, condiments, pickled vegetables, preserved delicacies, salted meats, and a well-stocked toolkit. The room is a storage area, meant to store excess equipment that the senator or aides would use while spending prolonged periods in the safe quarters.

The stack of boxes to the south takes 30 minutes for one humanoid creature to rearrange into something less hectic. Doing so reveals a beautiful fresco painted on the southern wall, depicting Galitian Maramaxus, hero of the Fourth Army of Exploration, battling the dwarves of the Five Kings Mountains. A brass plate identifies the fresco as "Noble Galitian Maramaxus, hero of the Fourth Army of Exploration, champion of Taldor." The fresco conceals a hidden crevice, detailed in the Escape Components section.

Escape Components: The fresco in this storage room hides a small secret compartment (Perception DC 25, Disable Device DC 40) that contains a bag of 20 magic coins necessary to escape the safe room. The PCs need to touch different sections of the fresco in a randomized pattern to access the hidden store behind. The only way to see the progression of locations to touch is to remotely scry this room via the device in area **B2**. This area must have the light sources turned off for the scrying device in area **B2** to show the correct section of the fresco. The pattern is random, preventing anyone from guessing the correct sequence.

Once the PCs figure out the trick behind the fresco, they can solve the puzzle in several unique ways. They might have one PC in area **B2** shout instructions along a chain of messengers to someone pressing the fresco in area **B4**, or a second character in an adjacent, lit room may use the hand mirror from area **B1** or **B3** to cast a beam on the appropriate spots.

Touching six correct areas in order causes the fresco to split open, revealing the hidden compartment beyond. A small bag lies inside the niche, holding 20 magically charged gold coins, each bearing the Voritas family crest. A PC can identify the coins as foci for a conjuration effect with a successful DC 16 Spellcraft check. Exceeding the DC of this check by 5 or more reveals the telltale sigils needed for a *phase door* spell. Area **B3** contains the associated *phase door*, accessible once the PCs obtain the coins.

Treasure: While all the foodstuff here has long since rotted, the toolkit is well stocked and in excellent shape, counting as a masterwork tool for Craft checks related to carpentry, metalworking, or stonework.

If the PCs spend at least half an hour searching the crates and shelves, they can find three daggers, two longswords, a halberd, a masterwork rapier, 12 masterwork darts, and a masterwork suit of studded leather armor.

Each escape coin is worth 5 gp.

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BUT I HATE PUZZLES!

The intention of this puzzle area is to provide the players with a challenge inspired by classic dungeon-crawl puzzles and modern escape rooms, but it may not entertain all players equally. Puzzles are often difficult to portray in an adventure, as every player has different comfort zones, tastes, and even perceptions about the situation described. If players get stumped with a puzzle, the mystery can easily lead to frustration.

The skills presented in this section are merely guidelines to run this encounter. If the PCs get creative, allow them to use other skills to escape this area. If the PCs do not understand the purpose of the device in area **B2**, grant a Wisdom check or Spellcraft check to divine that the device operates in darkness or how that might be pertinent. If the PCs have difficulty finding the key in area **B1**, don't stonewall a frustrated PC who tries to smash his way into the locked bar cabinet.

In the end, you know your players best. If they get frustrated, allow additional checks, provide in-game hints and clues, or even adjust how the PCs can access the escape door. Reward whatever satisfying and creative solution they come up with.

B5. Escape Tunnel

This tunnel connects to the rest of the escape rooms via the phase door in area **B3**. The magical door appears on the southern wall of this hall, but only to those capable of seeing it; otherwise, this hidden tunnel ends abruptly. A set of stairs descends into a briefly lowered hall, before a second set of stairs rises to the north. The northern end of this hall ends with an elaborate brass lever, which opens a secret door into the halls of area **C1**.

Treasure: A single hooded lantern rests on the ground here, flickering with a blue light. The lantern was the target of a *continual flame* spell 1,000 years ago and continues to glow.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to escape the safe rooms, award them 1,600 XP.

C. FORGOTTEN ARCHIVES

Long ago, a previous iteration of the senate building included a small education center for aides and young nobles, including a lecture hall, library, and extensive archives. After the building was damaged and rebuilt, the space was converted for storage of old records, props, and treasure from bygone parties and political rallies. Over time, these antiques were visited less and less frequently until they were all but forgotten. Once erased from the public consciousness, they became a safe place for senators to hide in times of crisis, and several politicians (in addition to Senator Voritas) built small safe rooms where they could wait out danger.

The last living soul to frequent the archives was Eros Glendower, an enterprising young aristocrat and wizard who used the library and forgotten workspace to experiment in granting himself immortality. His experiments unfortunately killed him, but somehow infused his familiar, Dagio, with life everlasting. A clever familiar, Dagio has read many books in the library and studied his dead master's spellbook, growing into a wizard in his own right, but his inability to understand the process that made him immortal drives him to obsession. All he can remember is "the circle at the center," but without context he has spent centuries studying geometry rather than cults and secret societies. Over the centuries, Dagio has grown to tremendous size, and he rules the other vermin and creatures of the basement as a tiny king, forgotten by the world above.

Until tonight.

Several people at the gala besides the PCs are carrying old *senate aide badges*, either to communicate or else as jewelry with no awareness of their magical properties, and have found themselves trapped in the senate building's sublevels.

The walls of the forgotten archives are made from reinforced masonry, and each room has a 15-foot-high ceiling. Unless noted, each of the rooms is shrouded in darkness. Doors are made from good wood.

C1. Hall of the Protected (CR 4)

Chiseled stone statues of Taldan Phalanx soldiers stand atop plinths in the outer corners, visible from any point in this ominous hall. Sturdy wooden doors line the outer edge of the hall: two to the east, two to the south, two to the west, and a single larger door to the north.

This rectangular hallway loops around a central conference room. Each of the doors along the outer wall leads to a smaller, less grandiose safe room than the one the PCs just escaped. The northernmost door leads to a secret passage into the attached archives, but the door requires a key to open. The key rests on the bedside table in Senator Voritas's bedchamber (area **B3**). Without the key, the old and rusted lock requires 2d4 rounds and a successful DC 18 Disable Device check to open. Beyond that door, the secret door into area **C4** is obvious from this side.

The fresh corpse of Lord Develin Manshum sprawls across the floor of the hall. The noble lord failed to escape the undead residents of the hallway, and the creatures tore him down as the other nobles escaped into area **C2a**.

Creatures: When the cabal of senators finished construction of these hidden safe rooms, they ordered the immurement of several workers into the walls to keep their bolt-holes a secret. Two dozen workers were

drugged and heaped into two partitioned chambers, cut off from the world by almost 5 feet of heavy brick. This horrendous deed led to the creation of two rare undead—one in each partition—called walcofindes.

It takes some time for the walcofindes to stir. One of the undead manifests along the inner wall 2 rounds after a living being enters the area. The second walcofinde manifests 2 rounds after the first. Both are bound to the inner walls of the hallway and are unable to follow victims into any of the adjacent safe rooms or into area **B5**. The undead remain active in the hall so long as any living creature remains; otherwise, they return to dormancy after 1 minute.

WALCOFINDES (2) **CR 2**
XP 400 each
hp 19 each (see page 88)

Treasure: The corpse of Lord Manshum wears a *ring of protection +1* on one of its bloody fingers.

Development: Two rounds after the sounds of combat end, Lord Wilfen Botoles peeks out from area **C2a** to determine what's happened. Once sure the danger has passed, he exits and calls out to the other civilians trapped by the undead (see area **C2**).

C2. Protection Chambers

Dusty tables and chairs fill this room, some of which have seen recent use.

Some senators lacked Voritas's zeal for safety measures, and constructed smaller safety rooms. Each of these rooms contain bare-bones amenities, meant to seat a senator and his staff for only a few hours.

Creatures: Lord Wilfen Botoles, Sir Gryphus Plastion, and Lady Gael Urbaen (all LN human aristocrats 3) were teleported to the safe room along with Lord Develin Manshum, and were attacked by the walcofindes. They immediately fled into one of the adjoining rooms while the undead tore Lord Manshum apart. The trio is skittish and has never been in genuine danger before.

Two additional newcomers arrived in area **C2d**: a visiting Sargavan cleric of Abadar named Jowuan Zubari, and (if she survived her encounter with the PCs) Dame Malphene Trant (see page 21). Jowuan is a guest of Senator Trant, and received the same *senate aide badge* as the senator's daughter, dropping them both in the same location. If the

PCs left Malphene alive, Zubari has restored enough of her health to rouse her, though she lost her sword in the scuffle above (unless the PCs already looted it). Both of these survivors are wary of the PCs, but Zubari is willing to offer spellcasting at market rates (10 gp for 1st-level spells), insisting the god of merchants demands compensation for all services provided. Zubari can be convinced to offer a 50% discount if a PC succeeds at an opposed Diplomacy check. Malphene is not pleased to see the PCs, but she has been cowed by the violence she witnessed above—including the death of her father. She can be cajoled into agreeing to protect the other survivors with a successful DC 15 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, or into joining the PCs to help them find a way out with a successful DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check.

A final newcomer takes cover in area **C2f**. The halfling Imistos Gulgend seems to be a confused attendant dressed as serving staff. In truth, Imistos is a member of the Brotherhood of Silence, a thieves' guild and cult dedicated to the murderous god Norgorber. Several of Grand Prince Stavian's hired agents employed the services of the Brotherhood of Silence to target specific troublemakers. Imistos is part of a team assigned to hunt down Martella Lotheed, and was provided with a *senate aide badge* to gain access to the gala. The badge's magic separated Imistos from the rest of the members of his team (who are in area **C2z**, tracking down their lost colleague). Imistos attempts to ingratiate himself with the PCs when he meets them, playing on the stereotype of halfling cowardice and servility to garner sympathy from taller races.



IMISTOS GULGEND

JOWUAN ZUBARI **CR 1/2**
XP 200
 LN acolyte (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 304)
hp 5

DAME MALPHENE TRANT **CR 1/2**
XP 200
hp 13 (see page 21)

IMISTOS GULGEND **CR 2**
XP 600
 Male halfling rogue 3
 NE Small humanoid (halfling)
Init +3; Senses Perception +7
DEFENSE
AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+1 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)
hp 26 (3d8+9)
Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +3; +2 vs. fear
Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1
OFFENSE
Speed 20 ft.

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INFLUENCING MALPHENE

Rather than evil, Malphene is a chaotic neutral bully, accustomed to throwing her weight around as her mother and father regularly do, but she isn't beyond redemption or persuasion, and her combat skills could prove useful to the PCs as they explore the archives. To overcome the noblewoman's family influences, the PCs must succeed at a total of five DC 22 skill checks using any combination of Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge (history), or Knowledge (nobility). Any character offering comfort or sympathy for the loss of her father gains a +4 circumstance bonus on future checks to influence Malphene. The PCs can first attempt to influence Malphene immediately after encountering her in the archives, and once after each subsequent combat encounter.

If the PCs succeed in influencing Malphene, she begins to feel some remorse for her bullying and expresses genuine gratitude for the PCs' help, ultimately rewarding them with her father's +1 rapier a few days after they return to the surface. She might make a good cohort for PCs taking the Leadership feat or a political contact for future schemes. If the PCs succeed at one or more skill checks to influence Malphene, but fewer than all five, she offers a gruff thanks once they escape and part ways, eventually delivering the same 300 gp reward the other nobles promised. If the PCs fail to influence Malphene at all, she joins Imistos in attacking them once they reach area C22.

Melee mwk rapier +7 (1d4-1/18-20)

Ranged dagger +6 (1d3-1/19-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Imistos prefers guile over combat, attacking opponents only when he has an obvious advantage.

If he sees a chance, he'll try to slip his dose of arsenic into something the PCs eat or drink, especially anything provided by another NPC. He claims his masterwork rapier is part of his serving costume, using Bluff to disguise his considerable skill with the blade.

During Combat Imistos flanks or strikes from hiding whenever possible. His rapier has already been coated with a dose of medium spider venom.

Morale Imistos is a fanatic and knows the rest of his cult will hunt him if he fails, so he fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 17, **Con** 14, **Int** 13, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 13

Feats Deceitful, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +11 (+7 when jumping), Bluff +10, Climb +1, Disguise +10, Knowledge (local) +7, Perception +7, Profession (innkeeper) +5, Sense Motive +5, Sleight of

Hand +9, Stealth +13; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Acrobatics, +2 Climb, +2 Perception

Languages Common, Elven, Halfling

SQ rogue talent (finesse rogue), trapfinding +1

Combat Gear *potion of neutralize poison*, arsenic, medium spider venom (2); **Other Gear** padded armor, dagger, mwk rapier, mwk thieves' tools, poison pill ring^{UE}, silver unholy symbol of Thamir Gixx, wrist sheath^{UE}, silk handkerchief (worth 5 gp), 7 gp

Development: The inhabitants of each chamber are not willing to leave until the walcofindes are defeated. Each inhabitant offers a reward for saving them: 300 gp if the PCs can get them out of the sublevels alive. In addition, the cowering nobles provide context to some of the museum pieces on display in the adjacent chambers, and securing their passage out of the sublevels results in additional XP rewards for the PCs.

Imistos offers his "favorite silk hankie" as payment (worth 5 gp) and asks not to be left alone. Feigning combat inexperience, the halfling instead follows and offers to provide services such as shoe shining and carrying lamps. This provides Imistos an chance to study the PCs, learning their combat capabilities and tactics. He turns against the PCs when they reach area C22.

C3. Common Room

A long table, its surface covered in green felt, stands in the center of this rectangular chamber. Silver trays dot the table's surface, each hosting a set of crystal glassware and a tall decanter of wine. Doors exit to the north and south.

Intended as a common gathering place for those teleported out of the senate, this chamber has seen no use since its construction. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notices several overlapping circles drawn on the floor under the table with chalk, though the symbols have no magical function or symbolism. They are simply scribbles Dagio (see area C20) drew in his growing fixation with geometry.

Creatures: If the PCs have not defeated the walcofindes, the undead attack in this chamber, able to manifest themselves along the interior walls here.

Treasure: The fine crystal glassware and silver dining sets are in good condition, though the wine has long since soured. The complete set weighs about 5 pounds and has a value of 700 gp. A document box on the table includes a *scroll of breath of life*, three scrolls of *cure light wounds*, a *scroll of invisibility*, a *scroll of summon monster II*.

C4. Museum of Conquests (CR 3)

Pristine glass display cases stand along the walls and in the center of this immense rectangular display room. The area

is more than sixty feet wide and forty feet long, with the outer walls covered in glass displays of armor, save near the two northern doors and along the southern wall. Two rusted and decayed suits of armor stand separate, protected in glass cases. Tarnished and discolored weaponry fills the cases in the center of the room. Circles of various sizes have been scratched into the glass and drawn on the walls with chalk and paint.

The weapons and armor stored here hail from a dozen different historical eras, and have been labeled with faded and crumbling tags tied to each with twine. Each of the glass cases is extremely fragile and breaks after taking a single point of damage. A secret door to area C1 is hidden within the wood paneling of the southern wall, requiring a successful DC 20 Perception check to notice from this side.

Dagio has spent some time searching through this chamber in hopes of finding a few trophies or hidden secrets stuffed among the banners and aging gauntlets, pausing on occasion to scribble down some geometrical musings. Like those in area C3, the circles here are mathematical notes, but ultimately meaningless.

One obvious case holds a finely crafted light crossbow whose brass fittings still glint like new. A simple brass plaque inside the case labels it “Dignity’s Barb.”

Creatures: Spirits of old Taldan soldiers inhabit the two sets of armor on the eastern and western cases. Centuries of neglect has pitted and rusted the armor, leaving it damaged beyond use. The spirits remain inert within their armor until a creature touches any of the displays. As soon as this occurs, the armor sets awaken with disjointed movements, shattering their glass prisons to attack any living creatures in the chamber.

DEGENERATE GUARDIAN PHANTOM ARMORS (2) CR 1 XP 600 each

hp 7 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 288, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 213)

Treasure: Most of the armor and weaponry here is rusted and neglected, but serviceable enough that you may include mundane equipment for any heroes under-equipped for the dungeon crawl. Among the display cases are a +1 *handaxe* and a +1 *heavy steel shield*. Another case contains the alchemical lab of famed natural philosopher Dumos Fatomax, including a portable alchemist’s lab^{UE}, three *potions of cure light wounds*, and a musty-tasting *potion of bull’s strength*. However, the relic weapon *Dignity’s Barb* is the greatest treasure in the entirety of the sublevels (see the sidebar).

C5. Wax Figure Storage (CR 1/2)

This rectangular room appears to host a celebration frozen in time. Gaudy nobles crowd the corners of this room, all of

DIGNITY’S BARB

Dignity’s Barb, like many other magic items the PCs might discover as they explore sites steeped in Taldan history, is a relic: a special magic item empowered by the zeitgeist and legend behind it. These once-grand items were powerful at the height of their legend, but time and ignorance have sapped the collective knowledge that charged them.

Full details on relics, including the full list of the abilities *Dignity’s Barb* can develop, appear in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #128: Songbird, Scion, Saboteur*. For now, *Dignity’s Barb* counts as a masterwork crossbow that reduces the miss chance from concealment by 5%, but once the PCs complete this adventure, their growing legends can grant it the powers listed under its First Triumph entry.

DIGNITY’S BARB

SLOT none	CL 12th	WEIGHT 2 lbs.
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AURA strong divination

Brass inlay and Taldan military symbols adorn this masterwork darkwood light crossbow. An inscription bears the name of General Gerefein of the Seventh Army of Exploration. In his most famous act, he turned the tide of a vicious battle with a Kellid warlord. Through a chaotic blizzard, General Gerefein shot practically blind, yet his bolt struck a lethal blow, dashing the warlord from his mammoth mount and breaking the enemy’s charge.

The crossbow gives its wielder a touch of the luck that bore the general to great victories. Anyone firing *Dignity’s Barb* reduces any miss chance from concealment by 5%.

First Triumph: *Dignity’s Barb* is a +1 darkwood light crossbow and reduces miss chances from concealment by 10%. In addition, once per day when the weapon threatens a critical hit, the wielder can roll twice to confirm the critical hit and take the better result.

which are dressed in ostentatious and pretentious fashions. Tremendous wigs soar toward the ceiling, each covered in thick layers of dust. A larger gaggle fills the center of the chamber, each aristocrat presenting a jovial or mocking leer as it stares out blankly. One of the figures is sprawled on the floor; overlapping circles cut into its waxen chest and face.

The figures here are wax sculptures used in various displays and dioramas in the senate above over the years. Each wears a haphazard variety of fashions from varying points in the empire’s history. The circles here are meaningless.

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One of the less sizable wigs on the wax figures is actually a *hat of disguise* (see *Treasure*). Sadly, any creature picking up the wig eventually discovers that it is home to a rather disgusting inhabitant.

Creature: An ooze known as animate hair infests the *hat of disguise* wig. Characters intentionally inspecting the wig can spot the camouflaged creature with a successful DC 18 Perception check. Any creature donning the infested wig counts as willingly accepting the animate hair for the purpose of its infestation ability. The hair is otherwise a patient creature, preferring to use its empathy and murderous whispers ability during inopportune moments in combat.

A PC can remove the animate hair from the *hat of disguise* by casting *animate rope* or *prestidigitation* once she identifies the presence of the hair. Similarly, albeit more extreme, subjecting the wig to any sort of fire damage causes the hair to untangle itself and flee.

ANIMATE HAIR

CR 1/2

XP 200

hp 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 26)

Treasure: A PC can collect the various bits of jewelry and smaller clothing articles off the wax figures by spending several minutes and attempting a DC 15 Appraise check. On a success, the PC identifies 450 gp worth of jewelry, while a PC who fails this check only manages to identify 200 gp as worth collecting. As mentioned above, the wig in which the animate hair nests is actually a *hat of disguise*.

C6. Artifact Storage (CR 3)

Lines of shelves run from north to south in this square room. Glass windows—some with handles and others bearing locks—cover the front of the shelves. Dozens of objects line the shelves, resting on satin pillows behind the protective glass covers. A door exits from each of the four walls.

This chamber houses numerous antiquities, most claimed from lands conquered or visited by the Armies of Exploration—orc scarificators, Kellid war drums, a ceremonial Brevan scabbard—all broken and faded from time. The items stored include dwarven mining equipment, a stone-and-gem chunk from an elven *aiudara* gateway, the bone totem of an Iseri shaman, and even an inert technological gadget from distant Numeria.

Trap: A magical trap covers the entirety of this chamber. Any creature attempting to open the glass cases without disabling the trap triggers it. Once triggered, the trap sends waves of electricity throughout the floor of the chamber. Intended to incapacitate targets, the trap deals only nonlethal damage.

SHOCKING FLOOR TRAP

CR 3

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 18

EFFECTS

Trigger location (opening glass cases); **Reset** none

Effect electricity arc (3d6 nonlethal damage, Reflex DC 15 half); multiple targets (all targets in area C6)

Treasure: Within the shelves are assorted cultural trophies worth 500 gp, weighing 10 pounds. Along with these items is a single magical item, a *figurine of wondrous power* (silver raven).

C7. Banner Room

Intricate banners hang motionless against a wooden pillar in the center of this room. Wooden racks line the south and west walls, each bearing up a unique banner of its own. Two additional banner racks lie on the floor in the northeastern corner of the room, their flags pulled away and inked with dozens of circles. Two doors exit this room, one to the east and the other to the north.

The banners in this room belong to old regiments of the Taldan Phalanx, various baronies, and a few foreign allies, and at varying times have been hung in the senate to welcome visiting dignitaries or war heroes. Most of the banners here belong to disbanded regiments and have little value beyond the historic purpose they still serve. Beyond their historical notability, the banners serve no purpose other than another pompous display of Taldan military supremacy.

Once again, the circles here are meaningless, but along with the circles are many other geometric notations. A PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Intelligence check identifies the work of a brilliant, if untrained, mathematical mind.

C8. Taxidermy Storage (CR 3)

A fearsome winged beast poses ferociously in the southeastern corner of this square room. Two wolves stand in similar poses in the northern corners, while an immense coiled serpent poises itself in the southwestern corner, ready to strike. A small elephant stands in the center of the room, its head drooping far too low, and the top of its neck torn open. Thick cords of rope hoist avian creatures of every size along the ceiling, with an impressive eagle taking up the most space above. Doors exit to the north and west.

This hall holds several taxidermy animals for display, along with hunting trophies donated by status-seekers. Dagio avoids the room at all costs, fearful of both the eagle and the griffon within.

Creature: The stuffed griffon and the two wolves stored here were enchanted to move and roar for their

display long ago. After a creature spends 4 or more rounds exploring this chamber, the wolves animate. They rise on clicking mechanisms, their bodies straining to stand on two legs. During this movement, however, one of the wolves' hind legs collapses, while the fur on the other wolf's back splits open, rendering them both inert. Following this horrific display, the griffon's wings begin to beat, only for one wing to tear off entirely. Moments later, it rips off the front foot attaching it to its display and moves to attack any living creatures in the chamber, as a spark of insight pushes it to inflict pain on others.

The damage to the griffon removes its fly speed and one talon attack.

ANIMATED GRIFFON

CR 3

XP 800

Taxidermic griffon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 240, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 168)

N Large construct

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, -1 size)
hp 58 (6d10+31)

Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Immune construct traits

Weaknesses defect (wire frame), vulnerability to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee bite +5 (1d6+2), talon +5 (1d6+2)

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

Special Attacks pounce, rake (2 claws +5, 1d4+2)

TACTICS

During Combat The construct attacks mindlessly and without strategy.

Morale The taxidermic griffon fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 13, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 3

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 18 (22 vs. trip)

Skills Acrobatics +5 (+1 when jumping), Fly -1, Perception +4; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics, +4 Perception

C9. Arterial Hallway (CR 3)

Several large doors line this 200-foot-long hallway. A large, metal door to the north is covered with chalk circles and mathematical notes.

This 200-foot hall connects the various areas of the archives: the seed vault to the west, the display storage rooms to the south, and the archives to the east. The ornate northern door provides access to a secondary hallway that connects to the old lecture hall (area C20) and additional rooms.

This hall is one of the oldest portions of the senate building, dating back to a time when Oppara was a city-state rather than the capital of an empire, and it looks far older than any of the surrounding rooms. Time has worn it so thin that it almost appears to be a natural—if perfectly straight—cavern.

Trap: Unlike most of the circles drawn around the basement, those marking this door have magical power. Dagio accidentally created a ward-like effect that warps the senses of unwanted visitors and infuses them with panic, making it seem as if the hall stretches endlessly in either direction with no hope of escape. The trap is dangerous but easily disabled by smearing or erasing the lines creating it.

ENDLESS HALL TRAP

CR 3

Type magic; **Perception** DC 18; **Disable Device** DC 13

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** automatic

Effect spell effect (*confusion*, 3 rounds, Will DC 14 negates); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft. square)

C10. Seed Vault (CR 2)

The wooden walls along the northern section of this room give way to natural stone. From the narrow entry alcove, the room expands into a vast area filled with rampant green vegetation. Thick briars and vines cover the eastern and western walls. To the west, the vegetation overruns several neatly arranged sets of patio furniture. Further south, past the morass of vegetation, a stone building looms, the top of it emblazoned with a brass-winged eye.

Once intended to store seeds and dried or preserved samples of various plants for study and preservation, a water leak has allowed the hardier plants—blackberries, kudzu, and mosses—to take root here, lit by several *continual flame* spells cast onto braziers hanging from the ceiling. Now the rampant growth forms thick tangles of briars and vines that hinder movement within 15 feet of the east and west walls, but also provide some steady meals for those residents of the sublevels who need (or at least enjoy) food.

Creature: A hideous, plantlike ooze congealed from lingering magic and rotting vegetation in this area. The garden ooze stalks the western edge of the chamber, shifting around the tables and cabinets. It attacks any creature disturbing the western briar patch.

GARDEN OOZE

CR 2

XP 600

hp 19 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 122)

Treasure: A *potion of cure moderate wounds* sits atop one of the worktables.

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C11. Chapel of Aroden (CR 2)

Three rows of pews stand before a stone altar. A human statue stands atop the altar, its face and right arm broken off and shattered at the floor around it. Two smaller statues of women—each wielding a sword and shield—stand in raised alcoves in the southeast and southwest corners.

With a successful DC 12 Knowledge (religion) check, a PC identifies this building as a temple of the lost god Aroden. If the PC's result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, she recognizes the two statues in the corners as depictions of Aroden's two former heralds: Arazni and Iomedae.

Creature: A nefarious fey lurks in the wooden rafters, 15 feet above the floor of the chapel. Calling himself Viecar, this monaciello gremlin found the remote chapel after accidentally wandering into the senate sublevels from a concealed tunnel connecting to Oppara's sewer system. He offers small tributes to Dagio and has been appointed "high priest" of the

rat's kingdom, but the two braggarts generally avoid each other.

Viecar enjoys naps measured in years, but perks up to any disturbance the PCs cause in the area. The gremlin uses a combination of *ghost sound* and *silent image* spells to create the impression of a spectral Aroden requesting tribute from the PCs, to be deposited in a small tithing box at the base of the statue. Viecar conjures an imperfect replica of Aroden, and a successful DC 18 Knowledge (History or Religion) check is sufficient for a PC to recognize the image of Aroden as a fake, with a face and clothing embellishments entirely alien to the Last Azlanti.

If the PCs fail to tithe, Viecar grows incensed. He casts *glitterdust* from the rafters to confound the PCs, claiming they earned "Arrow-dean's anger." Viecar then restates his demands for a tithe, hoping the PCs provide an offering of gold for him to abscond with.

VIECAR

CR 2

XP 600

Advanced monaciello gremlin (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 144)

hp 18

Languages Common

Gear magic bag (containing 350 gp worth of gems and two *potions of bear's endurance*), key to the door in area C19

Development: Viecar is a coward and immediately surrenders if discovered and cornered by the PCs. He offers up the contents of his magic bag, along with one of keys required to open the locked door in area C19, if the PCs agree to let him go.

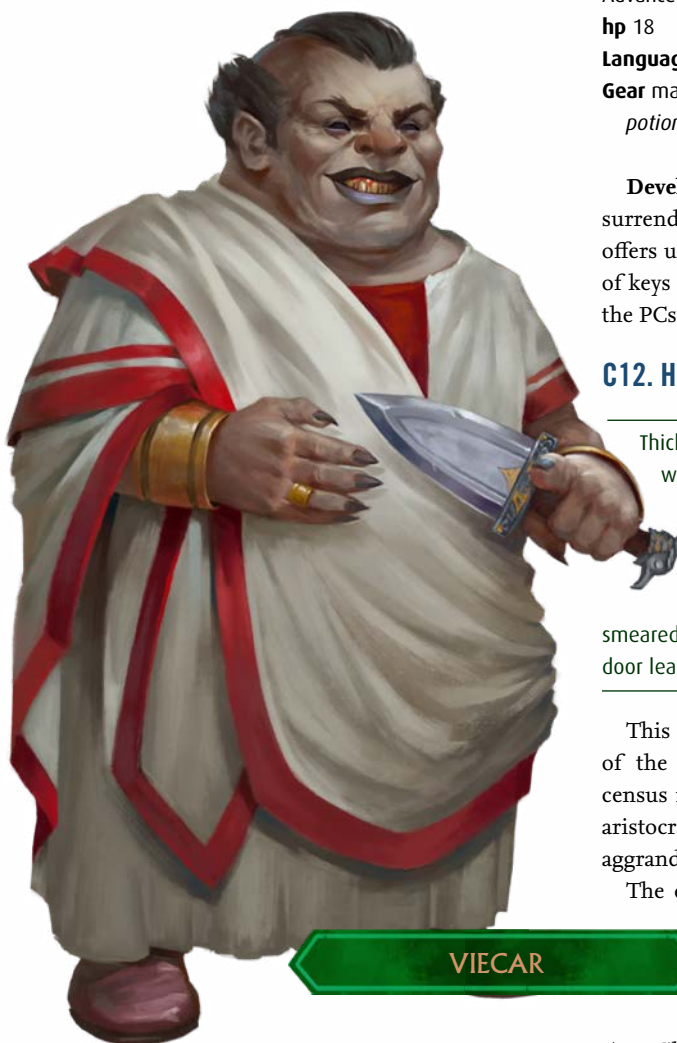
C12. Historical Archives (CR 3)

Thick wooden bookshelves jut out from the eastern and western walls. Bundles of paper, scroll tubes, and thick tomes cram these shelves nearly to bursting.

Layers of dust coat some areas of the chamber, but others remain suspiciously clean. Books and papers crowd one of the worktables in the corners, smeared with ink. Two doors exit to the south, while one door leads north.

This room is the first chamber in the library wing of the sublevels and mostly stores senate minutes, census reports, and textbooks. Donations from various aristocrats likewise ended up stored here—mostly self-aggrandizing journals, genealogies, and autobiographies.

The dire rat wizard Dagio uses the southwest table to study; most of the books scattered across the surface are mathematics and geometry texts, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Linguistics check finds the autobiography of Eros Glendower, a romantic, middling nobleman, and



VIECAR

wizard who lived centuries ago and became obsessed with immortality.

In the past decade, a crack in the eastern wall admitted vermin into the chamber, which nibble the moldering contents of the chamber, but are largely kept in check by Dagio's influence.

Creature: One of the intact scroll cases contains a sentient construct known as a guardian scroll. An aggressive senator planted the scroll in the tube, intending to deliver it to a rival senator. Instead, the scroll ended up misplaced and sent to this chamber for cataloging. As soon as a PC opens the scroll tube, the guardian scroll springs out and attacks.

GUARDIAN SCROLL

CR 3

XP 800

hp 27 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 138)

Treasure: In addition to the guardian scroll, the scroll case also contains a *scroll of dispel magic*, a *scroll of invisibility*, a *scroll of mirror image*, and a *scroll of mount*.

C13. Book Archives (CR 2)

Towering rows of bookshelves fill the center of this chamber, separated only by a low shelf and countertop running the room's length. A door exits to the south, while two doors exit to the north.

Many rare or obscure books were stored here to ensure the government of Taldor always had access to the sum knowledge of its people. Many tomes are immense dissertation on the flora, fauna, and history of Taldor. Chronicles from various Armies of Exploration to those on the political makeup of the senate in each decade are all on display within the immense archives. Almost all the books here crumble if opened.

Creatures: When the librarians of old conjured the guardian Factor 12 (see area C14), they left a crack behind in the cosmos, and as with all cracks, vermin crawled through. Four book-like creatures called gishvits—native fauna of the lawful plane of Axis—now nest in the library, aggressively defending their territory. These tiny creatures resemble simple books while resting, but they spring to life when intruders appear, rushing at any newcomers to siphon new knowledge from their minds. While not exceptionally aggressive, these gishvits are ravenous for new information and hope to pin intruders down for days or weeks and make them record new facts, anecdotes, and histories inside them, becoming violent only if these newcomers try to leave.

GISHVITS (4)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 4 each (see page 84)

C14. Rare Artifacts (CR 2)

Cold metal lockers line the open spaces of this room. Desiccated papers protrude from the few open units, while the rest of the lockers remain tightly shut. Thick metal bolts connect additional lockers to the walls here. Some of the lockers reach up to the ceiling about twenty feet above.

Unlike the previous libraries, this area contained sensitive information regarding Taldan history or forbidden magic. The senate ordered many of the most damning documents removed, but some remain within the stores here. A successful DC 30 Disable Device check is needed to open any of the lockers in the room. Otherwise, the keys held by Factor 12 can open the lockers here.

Creature: A small arbiter inevitable, designated Factor 12, floats gracefully in this chamber. It greets any creatures entering the chamber, introducing itself as the curator of the library archives. It then asks if the arrivals have come to make a withdrawal, or to investigate a requested item in the attached reading room.

The designers of the wing summoned Factor 12 to assist with the sorting and management of the archive, a duty the arbiter took to with the diligence associated with inevitables. It has spent centuries floating in the room, awaiting arrivals, and has not noticed any significant passage of time. Factor 12 is not concerned with exchanging pleasantries, instead doing its best to assist the PCs in determining what objects are available from the archives and what can be removed from the area. Dagio fought the inevitable many centuries ago to claim his amulet and wand, but has no interest in testing his immortality in a second confrontation with the (relatively) powerful outsider.

The Treasure section includes a full list of the items Factor 12 can provide.

FACTOR 12

CR 2

XP 600

Arbiter inevitable (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 162)

hp 15

Treasure: Factor 12 dutifully guards the remaining valuables still stored in the lockers, which include a +1 battleaxe, a +1 breastplate, a pair of boots of elvenkind, a wand of remove disease (5 charges remaining), and one of the two keys required to open the door in area C19.

Development: Factor 12 outlines the rules for the archives: only one item listed in the treasure section may be withdrawn from the area (it used to be two, the construct grumbles, but it has decided to "crack down" after recent thefts). If the PCs try to take any more, Factor 12 refuses to withdraw the item. If the PCs attempt to take the items by force, then Factor 12 attacks.

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C15. Reading Room

A circular wooden table and several chairs are arranged in the center of this room. The rest of the room is bare of distractions and utterly silent. A single door exits to the east.

This quiet chamber allowed readers to quietly study the texts of the adjacent library. It serves little purpose other than to be a quiet space, or to appease the rules of Factor 12 from the adjoining chamber.

C16. Ruined Hall South (CR 2)

This ten-foot-wide hallway leads north for roughly forty feet before abruptly ending in a wall of dirt and broken wood. A door exits to the west, while another door leads south.

This area once connected to a greater hall. A collapse ripped the hallway into two distinct areas.

Trap: Creatures inspecting the northern wreckage or opening the western door risk agitating the ceiling and triggering the nearby trap.

FALLING CEILING BOARDS

CR 2

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 17; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Effect 2d6 bludgeoning damage; Reflex DC 17 avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area in front of the western door)

C17. Greeting Room (CR 1)

A graying wooden reception counter extends from the eastern wall, overshadowed by a faded, curling portrait of a group of several Taldan nobles. Comical alterations adorn the portrait, with red and green markings adding in stink lines, ridiculous mustaches, and other odd embellishments. A door exits to the west, while other doors exit to the northeast and southeast.

This area was a reception desk for the archives. The defaced portrait is a painting of the assembled senate subcommittee that approved and oversaw the archives, its members' names long since lost to history. The markings—artistic additions added by the chamber's only resident—render most of the senators unidentifiable.

Creature: A kobold scavenger named Mimips stumbled upon the sinkhole in area C18 a week or so ago, and has returned several times to loot the reception desk. He has had middling luck exploring the rest of the tunnels,

having been temporarily confounded by the haunt in area C19. Mimips recognizes a fight he'll lose immediately, and rather than attack or try to run, he does what he does best: try to sell his scavenged goods and alchemical wares.

Mimips greets the PCs enthusiastically, though he is intelligible only to those who speak Draconic, Gnome, or Undercommon. He begins with a starting attitude of indifferent. Regardless of communication, Mimips does his best to highlight his numerous wares (see *Treasure* on page 39). The kobold is eager to trade for unique surface items. If questioned about his knowledge of the sublevels, he knows about the sinkhole to the west, the trap in the southern hallways, and the "ghost" guarding the locked door to area C20.



MIMIPS

CR 1

XP 400

Male kobold alchemist 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 183, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 26)

LE Small humanoid (reptilian)

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

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+2 armor, +1 natural, +1 size)

hp 14 (2d8+2)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +0; +2 vs. poison

Weaknesses light sensitivity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk shortspear +3 (1d4)

Ranged bomb +3 (1d6+2 electricity or fire)

Special Attacks bomb 4/day (1d6+2 electricity or fire, DC 13)

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 2nd; concentration +4)

1st—*ant haul*^{APG}, *crafters' fortune*^{APG}, *identify*

TACTICS

During Combat Mimips relies on his shock bombs to stun his foes.

Morale Mimips came prepared for scavenging, not a fight, and attempts to flee with his goods as soon as possible.

STATISTICS

Str 11, **Dex** 10, **Con** 10, **Int** 14, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 10

Feats Brew Potion, Skill Focus (Bluff), Throw Anything

Skills Appraise +7, Bluff +6, Craft (alchemy) +7 (+9 when crafting alchemical items), Diplomacy +3, Perception +7, Stealth +8, Survival +4; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Perception

Languages Draconic, Gnome, Undercommon

SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +2), crafty, discovery (shock

bomb), mutagen (+4/-2, +2 natural armor, 20 minutes), poison use

Combat Gear *potions of cure light wounds* (2), *potions of jump* (3), *potions of keen senses*^{APG} (3), acid (6), alchemist's fire (3), antiplague^{APG} (3), tanglefoot bags (2), thunderstones (2); **Other Gear** leather armor, mwk shortspear, formula book, mwk backpack^{APG}, 92 sp

Treasure: In addition to his listed equipment, Mimips's makeshift shop includes a *potion of barkskin*, three *potions of cure light wounds*, a *potion of remove disease*, a *wand of aqueous orb*^{APG} (1 charge), *bracers of armor* +1, and a *cloak of resistance* +1. Mimips recognizes he has no competition in these tunnels and demands 20% above market price for his wares. He can be talked down to market price with a successful DC 22 Intimidate check.

Development: If the PCs trade with Mimips, he decides to remain for a while, setting up a store of sorts behind the counter, and can even craft new alchemical items the party might request.

Story Award: If the PCs interact or trade peacefully with Mimips, award them 400 XP as if they had defeated the kobold in combat.

C18. Sinkhole

A wooden hallway suddenly gives way to a stony cavern. A series of two sharp slopes lead south, eventually ending in a sudden hole. Roughly half the width of an adult human, the hole descends into the darkness, winding off in a gentle western curve.

A small quake collapsed the hall connecting the archive to its western counterpart and opened a hole to an underground cavern. The hole here eventually connects to a tertiary tunnel in the Darklands, but exploring this area is beyond the scope of this adventure. Both Mimips and Viemar can tell the PCs about where the hole leads and how they used it to access the sublevels.

C19. Ruined Hall North (CR 1)

A leering statue stands atop a plinth in the northwestern corner of this L-shaped hallway. The statue holds a scepter, which it points toward a door to the east. The south end of the hall is a heap of collapsed dirt and wood.

This area once connected with area C16, but the blockage to the south prevents movement between the two parts of the hall. A complex locking mechanism seals the eastern door. The lock requires two keys to open, one found in area C11 and the other in area C14. Without these two keys, the door requires two successful DC 30 Disable Device checks to open.

Haunt: A unique haunt lingers in this hallway, altering the area with necromantic power as a result of Eros Glendower's failed attempts to grant himself immortality, and has helped fuel Dagio's paranoia and obsession over the centuries. Bloody circles quickly form on the walls here, enticing wandering creatures to look or interact with them. Any creature doing so takes damage and receives a brief flash of a terrible arcane ritual occurring in area C20—a momentary flash of the ritual that made Dagio immortal (see page 54 for more information on these events).

CURSE OF CIRCLES

CR 1

XP 400

NE haunt

Caster Level 1st

Notice Perception DC 5 (to see bloody circles form on the walls)

hp 1; **Trigger** touch; **Reset** 1 hour

Effect Bloody circles quickly appear on the walls and door of the hall. Anyone studying the circles intently for more than 1 round, or anyone touching the circles, takes 1d6 points of negative energy damage and 1 point of Strength damage. A successful DC 12 Fortitude save negates the Strength damage.

Destruction The haunt is tied to the magic sustaining Dagio the Great. Killing the dire rat destroys this haunt.

C20. Senate of Circles (CR 5)

Wide stairs descend into this tiered, circular chamber. Chairs stand in odd positions throughout the room, collected into circular patterns, even outside of the greater circular patterns of the hall itself. Circular gouges mar the surface of the wooden walls and floor here, some left to stand alone, while others are multiple circular scratches overlaying one another, joined by lines and scrawlings. The greatest concentration of circles gathers on the ceiling, some forty feet above, where multicolored circles inscribed with artistic fanaticism surround a five-foot-wide hole in the ceiling.

This area once served as a lecture hall hosting academic talks, spirited debates, and occasional classes for highborn children. After the archives were forgotten, the chamber found some use by the long-dead Senator Eros Glendower in his arcane experiments to grant himself eternal life. The senator enacted his utterly failed attempt at immortality (see page 30) in this room, passing on a shard of his intellect to his familiar, the dire rat Dagio.

Dagio's rearrangement of chairs and scratched circular markings only embellish the already circular form of the chamber. The interior reflects Dagio's fanatical obsession with understanding the "circle" that was so all-encompassing to his master.

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ENVOY RING

Like *Dignity's Barb* (see page 33), the *Envoy Ring* is a relic iconic to Taldan history, capable of growing as those who command it grow in prestige and import. When first donned, it provides only its baseline abilities; the PCs must achieve some glory on behalf of Taldor to unlock the additional abilities listed under the First Triumph entry. Full details on relics, including the full list of the abilities the *Envoy Ring* can develop, appear in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #128: Songbird, Scion, Saboteur*.

ENVOY RING

SLOT ring	CL 11th	WEIGHT —
AURA moderate enchantment		

This golden ring appears perfect on the outside, but the inside shows centuries of wear. A family crest adorns the front, depicting olive branches encircling two crowns, which seemingly indicates a house dedicated to ambassadorship and diplomacy.

The ring grants its wearer a +2 competence bonus on Diplomacy, Linguistics, and Perform checks. Once per day, the wearer can speak a command word to transform her appearance and clothing, as per *disguise self*. The appearance of her clothing automatically matches the customs of the dominant culture around her, typically that of the local nobility or ruling class. Her physical features don't match those of the local people, but features that would make her stand out diminish, such as elf ears in a settlement where no elves live. This lasts up to 24 hours, but can be dismissed at any time. The caster level of any spell effect generated by the ring is 1 + 2 per triumph attained.

First Triumph: The ring can be activated to cast *charm person* (DC = 15 + 1 per additional triumph attained) and *comprehend languages* each once per day.

Each tier stands 5 feet lower than the previous, granting every seat an excellent view of the speaker's platform in the chamber's center. A set of rising stairs leads to the east, locked with the same dual-key requirement as the door in area C19. A hidden trap door (Perception DC 20) opens into the tallest tier at the southeastern edge of the room. The crumbling stone and plaster walls of the lecture hall offer myriad handholds, requiring only a DC 15 Climb check to scale.

Creatures: Dagio the Great lives in a small crèche above this chamber, from which the long-gone chandelier was once maintained. The sound of the PCs' arrival attracts his attention, at which point he casts his preparatory spells and moves out to investigate. The awakened dire rat takes advantage of his climb speed and invisibility to

clamber along the ceiling, and take his measure of the PCs. He has no intention of letting them leave alive, as these humanoid newcomers represent his first chance to study how humans die, but he also wishes to make a careful study of their "default state" before beginning his terminal experiment.

Once he has watched for a few rounds, or the PCs attempt to leave, Dagio begins making sweeping proclamations while invisible. The echoing chamber and Dagio's invisible status give him an effective +20 bonus on his Stealth check, making it unlikely for the PCs to pinpoint his location until he finally attacks. Dagio condemns the PCs for intruding in his kingdom and interrupting his important research into the "will of the circles." He goes on to provide a long list of self-aggrandizing titles—Hierophant of the Arc, Archduke of Tangencies, the Beginning and the End—before formally sentencing the PCs to death. If any PC interrupts the awakened rat, he immediately ceases his proclamation and calls forth his hidden rat swarms to engulf the PCs.

Along with Dagio, a pair of ravenous rat swarms occupies several of the hidden cubbies within the descending tiers of the chamber. Dagio's familiar ability to communicate with his own kind allows him to direct the swarms with basic commands, and with a single word (typically "Kill"), he can order the swarms to burst out from their hidden cubbies and overwhelm enemies.

DAGIO THE GREAT

CR 2

XP 600

hp 26 (see page 54)

RAT SWARMS (2)

CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 16 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 232)

Treasure: Dagio's crèche in the roof contains the dire rat's treasury. Along with his spellbook (containing all Dagio's known spells, plus 2d4 random 1st-level spells), the small room contains four pristine rubies worth 100 gp each and a *pearl of power* (1st level) hidden within a pile of chewed and torn paper, as well as a scuffed jewelry box containing the *Envoy Ring* (see the sidebar), a family treasure that his master Eros inherited and the rat has jealously guarded ever since the human's death. Any PC wandering into the crèche is overpowered by the stench of Dagio's urine—also rendered into circular patterns—and must succeed at a DC 12 Fortitude save or contract filth fever.

Development: Defeating Dagio opens the way for the PCs to escape the sublevels. While Dagio's appearance may seem to be a distraction from the greater plot, the association between the awakened familiar and a sinister organization known as the Immaculate Circle becomes important as the Adventure Path progresses.



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C21. Lounge (CR 3)

Dust-covered couches cover some of the walls in this rectangular chamber. Three doors exit the area, one to the east, another to the west, and the final to the south.

This area acted as a waiting room for those intended to attend the political activities in the adjacent senate chamber. It has seen little use, though a PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Perception or Survival check notes that the room has seen some recent use by at least two humanoid creatures. These recent visitors, assassins from the Brotherhood of Silence, reside in the nearby security room (area C22).

Trap: The Brotherhood of Silence team in area C22 set up a portable trap to guard this room and alert them to intruders. Any creature opening the door triggers a blast of knives curtaining down from the ceiling. The whip-crack sound of the trap's activation alerts the assassins in area C22.

FAN OF DAGGERS TRAP

CR 3

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 18; **Disable Device** DC 16

EFFECTS

Trigger location (door to area C22); **Reset** none

Effect spray of daggers (Atk +12 ranged, 1d3 daggers per target that deal 1d4+4 damage each); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area in front of the door)

C22. Security Room (CR 4)

Two sets of lockers line the northern and southern walls here. A set of rusted swords stands on display in the opened southern lockers. Doors exit to the north and west.

The intended security detachment for the wing once operated out of this chamber, though the obscurity of the storage areas made it a very cushy assignment, and thus this room was often neglected. Rust covered the weapons in the lockers long before the chamber was abandoned, and centuries of disuse haven't helped. The area has seen no activity, beyond some recent arrivals in the form of the Brotherhood of Silence assassination team.

Creatures: A team of Brotherhood of Silence operatives arrived at the gala with the assignment to kill Martella Lotheed and any of her agents. While most of the assassins were directed to pursue Martella, Wyssilka instructed a pair of her assassins to investigate the sudden disappearance of fellow assassin Imistos Gulbend and Martella's agents. Like Gulbend, they are dressed as servants, and play the part of lost and confused halflings, asking the PCs for food, wine, healing, or other distracting assistance to momentarily divert their attention.

If Gulbend still accompanies the PCs this far, he quickly switches loyalties and joins his fellow assassins

Team Two,

Keep watch over Martella's stooges while we dispatch her Ladyship. They seem useless, but our contract specifies eliminating Lotheed AND anyone she is working with. If they're particularly noteworthy—say a senator or noble—keep them alive and we'll interrogate them along with Lotheed. Have Imistos bring any such targets to the Dignified Repository.

—The Fantabulous Killer of the Brotherhood of Silence

HANDOUT #2

in attempting to murder Martella's newest agents, increasing the challenge rating of this encounter to CR 5.

HALFLING KILLERS (2)

CR 2

XP 600 each

NE guttersnipe (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 238)

hp 17 each

Development: Each of the Brotherhood of Silence assassins carries a holy symbol of Thamir Gixx hidden in their coats. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the holy symbols as being dedicated to the obscure halfling god of assassins, greed, and opportunity, who serves Norgorber. They also uncover a set of orders provided by Wyssilka on one of the defeated assassins (see Handout #2).

C23. Escape

This area connects to the senate basement. The door at the top of the stairs was once plastered over, but the Brotherhood of Silence agents chipped it away to gain access to the sublevel.

A SOMBER ESCAPE

As the PCs return to the senate building, they discover the grounds of a charnel house: the bodies of civilians, Lion Blades, military personnel, and even the Ulfen Guard still lie where they fell. A few combat-fatigued soldiers wander the halls taking records of the dead, posing no real danger to the PCs and their allies. The soldiers calmly direct the PCs to leave the senate building, which is currently on lockdown due to the recent “political turmoil.” Official reports remain unclear; some insist foreign assassins struck out at Taldor, while others claim the infamous Pathfinder Society attempted a coup, and still others claim the grand prince himself attempted to execute the entire senate.

PCs can gather further information of what happened from the soldiers or from passersby on the street: surviving senators have fled to their respective strongholds, while the Ulfen Guard has secured the imperial palace and

refuses to admit anyone until the matter of succession is cleared. Both Grand Prince Stavian III and Princess Eutropia are missing in the aftermath of Stavian's attempted slaughter. The city remains in a tenuous state of peace, but the issue of succession is already beginning to divide the aristocracy into a dozen different camps, each insisting its candidate alone has a right to the throne.

Story Award: If the PCs escape the senate building, award them 1,200 XP. Award the PCs an additional 400 XP for every NPC from area C2 they save by bringing to the surface. In addition, each of the rescued nobles holds true to his or her word and provides the PCs with 300 gp as a rescue award.

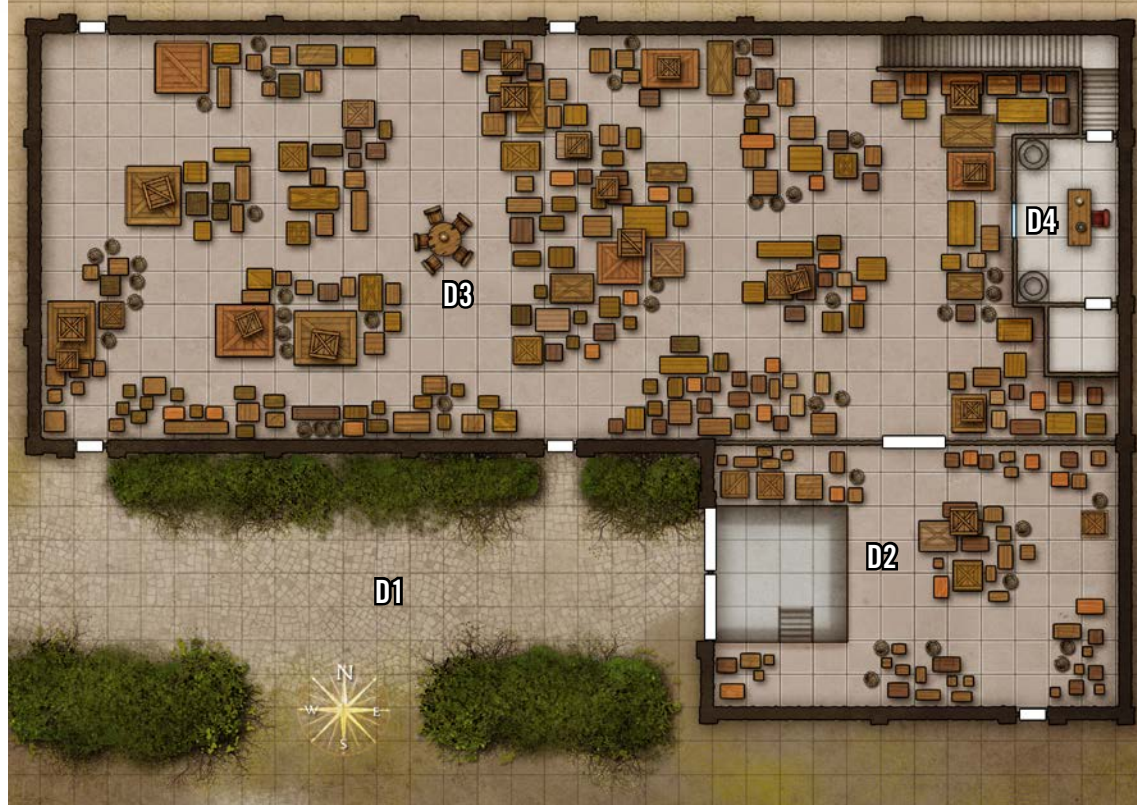
PART 3: THE SILENT BLADE

Stavian's bloody assault on the senate hurls Oppara into a state of shock. Where only hours before the city was jubilantly celebrating the Grand Day of Exaltation, the streets now stand empty. Instead of riots and chaos, an uncertain silence fills the air—citizens of Taldor are accustomed to pushing forward in times of crisis. Only the occasional pedestrian meanders about, many of them servants or attendants to nobles slain in the short-lived violence and unsure of where to go or what to do. The PCs can approach any of these aimless wanderers, and speaking with them gathers the same information presented by the senate guard (see A Somber Escape above).

If the PCs recovered the orders from the Brotherhood of Silence assassination team, their next goal should be fairly obvious. This letter points the PCs in the direction of the Dignified Repository, a storage facility in the Crownsgate district. The PCs' top priority should be rescuing Martella Lotheed, and while they may be interested in finding out what happened to Princess Eutropia or Grand Prince Stavian III, information on the

D. THE DIGNIFIED REPOSITORY

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



status and whereabouts of any specific noble is a jumble of conflicting rumors. The PCs need an expert spy to unravel the tangled political knot left in Stavian's wake, so they need to save Martella Lotheed—even if only to be paid for their earlier work.

If the PCs failed to recover the assassins' orders, a few clues still point toward their employer. Martella's final communication cut off at the name "Dignif—"; a PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Knowledge (local) check recalls only a handful of locations in Oppara with "Dignify" or "Dignified" in their names, and checking on each takes only a few hours. If all else fails, Martella may briefly secure her *master senator badge* while her captors sleep and send a more specific call for help.

FRIENDS IN NEED

If the PCs successfully influenced Lady Gloriana Morilla in Part 1 of this adventure, she approaches them shortly after they depart the senate building. Morilla learned of the PCs' location from one of her Pathfinder Society agents and immediately set out to find them, worried about the status of her ally, Martella Lotheed.

If the PCs share the information they have about Martella's whereabouts, Lady Morilla offers her support. She deploys the remaining Pathfinder agents she has in Oppara (many of them having already been smuggled out

of the country) to perform a hit-and-run strike against the Brotherhood of Silence guarding the warehouse. These inexperienced agents don't have the numbers or training to overwhelm the guards entirely, however, and retreat after dealing several severe injuries, leaving the PCs to finish the job.

D. THE DIGNIFIED REPOSITORY

The Dignified Repository is a large, glorified warehouse on a section of open grass in Oppara's Crownsgate district. The Deristov family from Porthmos prefecture officially owns the building, but any investigation into the family reveals they never existed. Princess Eutropia acquired the Dignified Repository, as well as a few other buildings in Oppara, through the use of pseudonyms and allied proxies. The warehouse serves as a massive storehouse for the princess's various projects, as well as a safe place to hide or employ down-on-their-luck allies, while ostensibly having an official purpose of catering to nobles with long-term storage needs.

Beyond its role as a storage site, the Dignified Repository also serves to disguise Martella Lotheed's primary safe house in Oppara. The safe house (area E) lies under the building in the ruins of a villa buried long ago, connected by a secret shaft leading down into the depths of the earth. Lotheed picked the location

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herself, and up until recently, no one ever suspected the warehouse's secondary purpose.

Now, operatives from the Brotherhood of Silence, directed by Wyssilka, have taken over both the warehouse and the safe house. Martella "saved" the jester and several Thimir Gixx cultists, escorting them to the warehouse. A larger team patrols the warehouse itself, while Wyssilka and her closest allies inhabit the safe house below.

The warehouse stands 40 feet tall, with windows lining the building only near the roof to light the interior. Two large metal exhaust pipes jut out from the top of the building. Investigation of the pipes from the roof reveals them to be filled in, preventing access into the building and raising the question of the pipes' purpose.

Sneaking Mission: The encounters within the Dignified Repository are difficult to overcome with brute force. If the PCs initiate combat, they run the risk of being overwhelmed by the numerous Brotherhood of Silence agents who defend the warehouse. The PCs have a few options to even the odds. First, the Brotherhood of Silence is not aware the PCs survived their assassins, and the PCs can use the element of surprise to their advantage. Engaging in a quick series of hit-and-run attacks to whittle down the Brotherhood of Silence agents in the warehouse is entirely appropriate. The PCs might instead quietly infiltrate the warehouse, using Disguise or Stealth skills or spells like *invisibility*, though reaching the secret door in area **D4** entirely undetected is incredibly difficult.

Pathfinder Society Assistance: If the PCs previously influenced Lady Gloriana Morilla, they receive additional support in this encounter. Lady Morilla employs Pathfinder Society agents to strike at the Brotherhood of Silence, reducing the number of agents stationed at the warehouse; you and your players can decide whether this assault happens before the PCs' own efforts or occurs simultaneously. Either way, the Society's efforts reduce the number of Brotherhood of Silence agents present in areas **D1**, **D2**, and **D3** by two each (down to two, two, and six, respectively). The assistance of the Pathfinder Society does not affect the presence of Mr. Smiles III in area **D4**.

D1. Entry Path (CR 3)

A twenty-foot-wide driveway leads through several bushes to a large pair of receiving doors in a forty-foot-tall, L-shaped warehouse. Five service entries along its sides provide access, in addition to the receiving doors.

Each of the five exterior side doors is locked (Disable Device DC 30). The large receiving doors to area **D2** are not, but require 2 full-round actions to open wide enough for a Medium creature to enter. Spending 3 full-round actions opens the doors completely.

Creatures: Four Brotherhood of Silence initiates patrol the outer grounds of the warehouse at all hours. They circle the building in pairs, questioning anyone approaching the warehouse. They claim to be hired guards, attending the grounds to ward off looters during the recent turmoil. If the PCs ask any obvious questions of these "guards," such as why they don't have swords or how they were hired so quickly, the initiates drop their facade and attack.

If one pair engages in combat, the other patrolling pair rushes to assist, arriving in 4 rounds.

SILENT INITIATES (4) CR 1/2

XP 200 each

Human rogue (knife master) 1 (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 72)

NE Medium humanoid (human)

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

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 10 each (1d8+2)

Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** -1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +3 (1d4+2/19-20)

Ranged dart +3 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d8/+1d4

TACTICS

During Combat The Brotherhood agents recognize their advantage is in numbers and surround opponents.

Morale An agent flees if reduced to 4 or fewer hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 17, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +0; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 16

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge

Skills Acrobatics +7, Bluff +5, Disguise +5, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +4, Perception +3, Sense Motive +3, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7

Languages Common

SQ hidden blade

Combat Gear smoke pellets^{APG} (2); **Other Gear** leather armor, darts (5), mwk dagger, silver unholy symbol of Norgorber (worth 25 gp), whistle, 3 gp

Story Award: If the PCs manage to bypass or trick the guards here, award them 800 XP as if they had defeated the guards in combat.

D2. Receiving (CR 3)

Stacked boxes and crates fill much of this enclosed loading dock. A massive set of entry doors to the west opens onto a two-foot depression along the western side of the chamber. A wide doorway leads to the north while a service door exits to the south.

This area receives larger shipments, which are then moved into storage. The crates here vary from 10 to 20 feet in height, and can be scaled with a successful DC 10 Climb check. Similarly, PCs can use the crates to assist with Stealth checks, gaining a +4 circumstance bonus on Stealth checks attempted while adjacent to crates.

Creatures: Two silent initiates guard this area, snacking while sitting at the edge of the western floor depression. Unlike the guards outside, these agents unhesitatingly attack anyone entering the warehouse.

An unusual Norgorber cultist joins the guards here. A wayang merchant and alchemist called Fair-Minded Efarni digs through the crates in the corner. Efarni wears a hooded robe and many scarves—usually passing himself off as a friendly gnome—and poses as an innocent merchant who was caught inside when the cult attacked. If rescued, he sings the heroes praises and offers them some of his best wine—carefully palming doses of belladonna into the mugs—before retreating to join Mr. Smiles in area D4.

FAIR-MINDED EFARNI CR 1

XP 400

Male wayang alchemist 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 274, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 26)

NE Small humanoid (wayang)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+2 armor, +2 Dex, +1 size)

hp 14 (2d8+2)

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1; +2 vs. poison

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee dagger +1 (1d3–1/19–20 plus poison)

Ranged bomb +5 touch (1d6+3 fire) or
stink bomb +5 touch (stench)

Special Attacks bomb 5/day (1d6+3 fire, DC 14)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 2nd; concentration +3)

1/day—*ghost sound* (DC 11), *pass without trace*,
ventriloquism (DC 12)

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 2nd; concentration +5)

1st—*expeditious retreat*, *reduce person* (DC 14), *shield*

TACTICS

During Combat If dragged into combat, Efarni relies on his stink bombs, trusting his robust fortitude to protect him.

Morale Efarni flees if reduced below 5 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 14, **Con** 10, **Int** 17, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +1; **CMB** –1; **CMD** 11

Feats Brew Potion, Extra Discovery^{APG}, Throw Anything

Skills Acrobatics +2 (–2 to jump), Appraise +8, Bluff +3, Craft (alchemy) +8 (+10 to create alchemical items), Knowledge (religion) +4, Linguistics +4, Perform (string instruments) +5, Profession (merchant) +6, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +8;

Racial Modifiers +2 Perception, +2 Stealth

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Gnome, Wayang
SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +2), discoveries (smoke bomb, stink bomb), light and dark, mutagen (+4/–2, +2 natural armor, 20 minutes), poison use, shadow magic

Combat Gear *potion of enlarge person*, *potion of hide from animals*, *potion of neutralize poison* (labeled “poison”), antitoxin (2), belladonna (4; labeled “curative”), bloodroot (3; labeled “styptic”), tanglefoot bag (3), thunderstone;

Other Gear leather armor, dagger, fine wine (2 bottles), formula book, masterwork fiddle, poison pill ring^{UE} containing one dose of oil of taggit, 6 gp

SILENT INITIATES (2) CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 10 each (see page 44)

D3. Main Warehouse (CR 5)

Barrels, boxes, and crates fill the vast space of this open warehouse floor. Paths zigzag through the mess. A set of metal stairs ascends to an office, whose large window overlooks the floor from twenty-five feet above. A pair of five-foot-wide metal pipes lead from the warehouse floor up into the base of the office.

The crates in this area provide the same cover as those in area D2. A table is set up in the center of the warehouse, currently covered in a mismatched deck of harrow cards being used as part of a makeshift game played by some of the room's occupants.

With a successful DC 14 Knowledge (engineering) check, a PC notes something amiss with the exhaust pipes: the pipes extending from the floor to the roof make no sense, as the building's construction and packed dirt floor imply there shouldn't be any basement or other level below in need of ventilation.

The crates here contain little of value; most hold seasonal decorations, old clothing, books, the stock of business ventures that never turned a profit, or out-of-fashion furnishings and drapery not valuable enough to store more securely.

Creatures: Eight Brotherhood of Silence initiates—all human cultists of Norgorber—keep watch in the warehouse interior. Two pairs patrol at opposite sides of the warehouse, while the remaining four guards smoke and play cards in the center, awaiting orders from below.

If Gloriana Morilla and her allies distracted the Brotherhood, then only two card players remain, alongside the two pairs on patrol. The initiates playing cards take a –4 penalty on Perception checks due to their focus on the game.

SILENT INITIATES (8) CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 10 each (see page 44)

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D4. Office (CR 4)

Two metal pipes ascend through the northwest and southwest corners of this room. A viewing window overlooks the warehouse floor to the west. An oak desk occupies the eastern side of the chamber, backed by an intimidating chair. An open door the south reveals an unused and empty storage closet, while the northern door exits to a flight of stairs.

The office manages most of the Dignified Repository's day-to-day business, accounting, and inventorying of what is stored where.

The pipe to the north is a secret passage that leads down to Martella Lothead's safe house (area E). A successful DC 18 Perception check is sufficient to uncover the hidden door; a PC who succeeded at the Knowledge

(engineering) check in area D3 gains a +4 insight bonus on this check. The door opens to the interior of the pipe, where a ladder descends down to area E1.

Creatures: Grand Prince Stavian's conspiracy made for strange bedfellows, and now working alongside the Brotherhood of Silence is a freelance agent identifying himself only as "Mr. Smiles III." The morose fetchling's clown motif meshed with Wyssilka's own eccentric sensibilities, and the two became fast friends.

As a fetchling, Mr. Smiles rarely operates in the open. His reclusive family adopted the guise of jesters and clowns upon settling in Oppara, providing a convenient excuse to don masks and makeup to conceal their heritage. His father and grandfather both had a gift for bringing laughter to others, but a darkness lurked in the latest family scion, and Mr. Smiles III saw no point in bringing happiness to a sick world built on lies and suffering. All things rot away, and the only real joke is how hard people work to convince themselves otherwise. While working by day as a celebrity, entertaining nobles across the city, he kills by night. His father always said, "Bring out the best in people," and so Mr. Smiles obliges... in the most visceral sense possible.

Working with the Brotherhood of Silence was a perfect opportunity; while not in any real position of authority, Mr. Smiles's spine-chilling demeanor and volatile sense of humor keep the young initiates on their toes. The fetchling rarely talks, but when he does, the agents stationed in the warehouse listen.

Mr. Smiles relaxes in the chamber alongside two Brotherhood of Silence agents. The group immediately abandons the chamber once an alarm is sounded, moving to join their comrades in the warehouse below.



SILENT INITIATES (2)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 10 each (see page 44)

MR. SMILES III

CR 3

XP 800

Fetchling bard 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 123)

CE Medium outsider (native)

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

Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +3 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 29 (4d8+8)

Fort +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic

Defensive Abilities shadow blending; **Resist** cold 5, electricity 5

OFFENSE

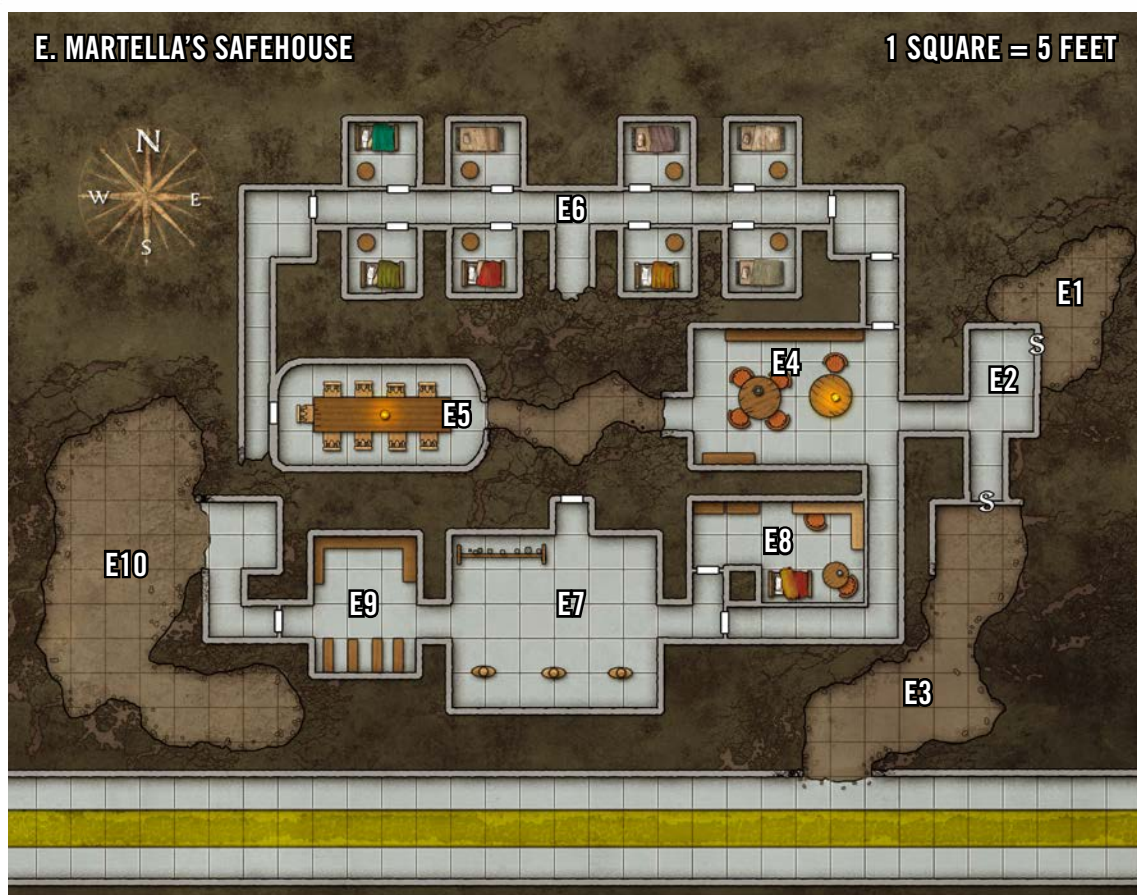
Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 sickle +6 (1d6+2)

Special Attacks bardic performance 14 rounds/day

E. MARTELLA'S SAFEHOUSE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



(countersong, distraction, fascinate [DC 16], inspire competence +2, inspire courage +1)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +8)

1/day—*disguise self*

Bard Spells Known (CL 4th; concentration +8)

2nd (2/day)—*mirror image*, *scare* (DC 16)

1st (4/day)—*lesser confusion* (DC 15), *grease*, *hideous laughter* (DC 15), *silent image* (DC 15)

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *daze* (DC 14), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *message*, *prestidigitation*, *resistance*

TACTICS

Before Combat Mr. Smiles prepares for combat by casting *mirror image* on himself.

During Combat Mr. Smiles knows his best role in combat is to use his bardic performances to inspire courage in his allies. He alternates melee attacks with spells such as *hideous laughter*, *lesser confusion*, and *scare* to sow chaos among his victims.

Morale Knowing his reputation is all that keeps him employed in Oppara, Mr. Smiles III fights until reduced to 7 hit points or fewer, at which point he attempts to flee out the office window and use his *disguise self* spell-like ability to blend in among the bodies of silent initiatives the PCs have already bested.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 16, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 17

Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +8, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +6, Perception +4, Perform (comedy) +11, Perform (dance) +9, Stealth +8; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Stealth

Languages Common

SQ bardic knowledge +2, versatile performance (comedy)

Combat Gear thunderstone (2); **Other Gear** studded leather, buckler, +1 *sickle*, entertainer's outfit

Treasure: The desk is locked (Disable Device DC 25) but contains several valuables belonging to Mr. Smiles III. The stash contains two *shadow hand smoke pellets*^{UI}, a silver cameo containing a portrait of Grand Prince Stavian I (worth 100 gp), a teak snuffbox (worth 20 gp), 1,207 sp, and 144 gp.

Development: Even if the PCs defeat the office guardians, Wyssilka does not leave this area unattended for long. If the PCs retreat to heal after defeating Mr. Smiles and the recruits, Wyssilka recruits three local toughs to guard the office. Use statistics for a wiseguy on page 239 of the *Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex*.

E. MARTELLA'S SAFE HOUSE

When Martella Lotheed assumed the role of Princess Eutropia's spymaster, she established several safe houses

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to retreat to. In the event of an inconceivable disaster, Martella needed a place where she and her agents could hide out but still be located within the capital. Martella's growing network of informants provided her information on a bootlegger's hideout underneath the Dignified Repository, the remains of a villa buried ages ago in some disaster or another. The safe house served Martella for many years, having the added benefit of connecting to the greater Opparan sewer network.

When Martella finally escaped the bloodbath in the senate, she thought she was also rescuing several halfling entertainers and servants, and brought the confused folk to her safe house for the time being—ironically worried she would be followed and targeted for violence. The Brotherhood of Silence has overrun the safe house and taken Martella Lotheed hostage. Their leader, Wyssilka, dallies in her mission to execute Martella, instead trying to tease valuable information out of the spy.

Unless otherwise noted, the ceilings here are 10 feet high, and each room has a natural light source in the form of a *continual flame* spell cast into a stone in the ceiling.

E1. Entrance Cavern (CR 2)

This excavated chamber links the warehouse above with the safe house below. The walls are embedded with several artifacts of a long-gone iteration of Oppara: bare scroll rods, broken pots, cobblestones, and various other bits of street garbage. The southwestern door is normally a closed secret door, but the door has been left open.

Trap: A small tripwire crosses the path to area E2, which activates a basic javelin trap.

JAVELIN TRAP CR 2

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 20;

Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Effect Atk +15 (1d6+6)

E2. Storage

This area is primarily used to store food, water, and other supplies to wait out a siege or manhunt, but it also contains a few basic tools.

E3. Sewer Access (CR 3)

Worked stone walls give way to the cracked walls of a natural cavern. A putrid rainbow of

fungus covers the eastern walls. To the south, the chamber opens into a worked stone tunnel. A slurry of foul-smelling liquid flows in the adjoining tunnel, its choking stench filling the air.

This area connects with Oppara's sewer system. The sewer tunnel runs for a half mile in either direction, connecting to much smaller pipes along the way, before connecting with other tunnels in the network. PCs can use this area to reenter the safe house without needing to use the warehouse above, should they need to retreat.

Creature: Martella Lotheed's casual disposal of alchemical goods in this area led to the creation of a single colony of violet fungus among the growing fungi. Rather than dispose of the aberrant plant creature, Martella kept it around to act as a guardian, in the off chance that sewer divers might discover the secondary entrance to her safe house. The unintelligent fungus attacks any creature coming within 20 feet of it.

VIOLET FUNGUS CR 3

XP 800

hp 30 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 274)

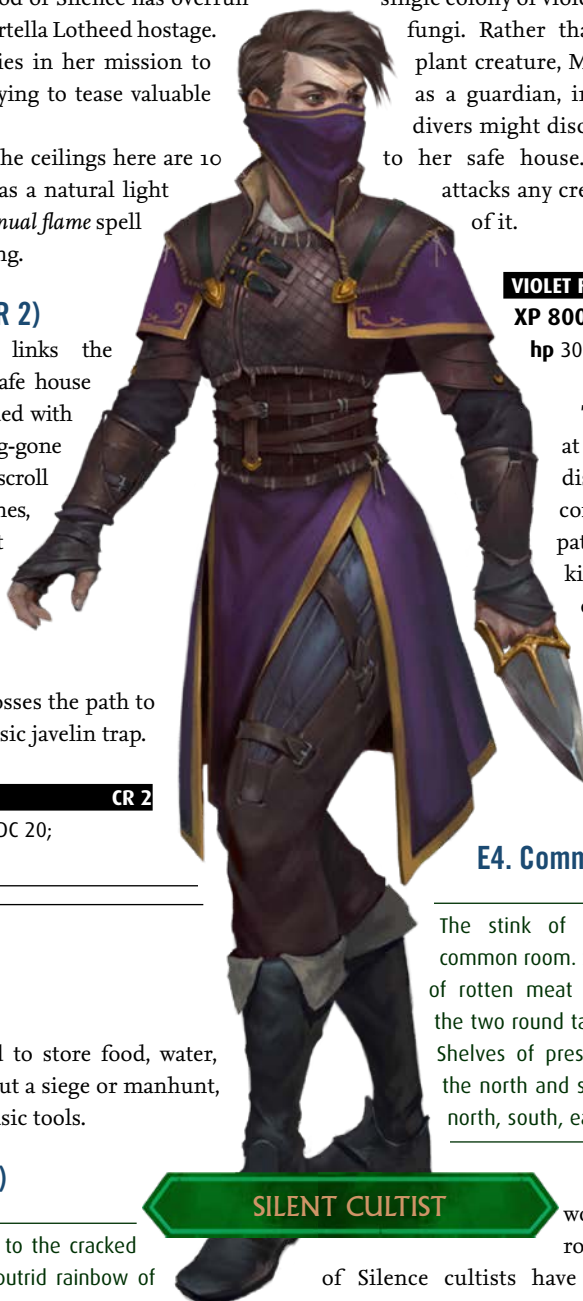
Treasure: A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check discovers a partially overgrown corpse in the thick fungus patch. The body is that of a guard killed by the bootleggers who operated from this refuge decades ago. The various fungi have consumed most of the corpse, leaving behind only a few metal buttons and a *belt of incredible dexterity* +2.

E4. Common Room

The stink of spoiled food permeates this common room. Several plates covered in scraps of rotten meat and spoiled vegetables cover the two round tables in the center of the room. Shelves of preserved foods line the walls to the north and south. Passages lead out to the north, south, east, and west.

SILENT CULTIST

Martella and visiting agents would take their meals in this room, and the Brotherhood of Silence cultists have helped themselves to the



provisions without bothering to clean up. Most of the preserved food remains intact, but otherwise this room has nothing of value.

E5. Meeting Room (CR 4)

A long table occupies the center of this dining room, surrounded by chairs. Maps of Taldor's many prefectures cover the walls here.

Martella used this chamber as a meeting and planning area, assigning missions or assisting Eutropia's other agents in their own complex plans. The maps display all of Taldor, noting Martella's various resources in secret codes and ciphers. Wyssilka hopes to break Martella's codes to undermine the web of agents Eutropia's spymaster has seeded throughout the nation.

Creature: The shadowy faith of Thamir Gixx deemed Stavian's plot such a delightfully ripe opportunity that they invested the resources to conjure one of the halfling god's unholy servants: a fantionette. These foul mockeries of human children or halflings delight in creating new opportunities for halflings in the world through murder and fear. One of these bizarre creatures guards this room, sitting at the head of the table and playfully spinning her chair. She stops her spinning when a PC enters and pretends to be the child of one of the Brotherhood agents above, describing the appearance of one of the guards stationed in the warehouse and asking after her "daddy." If someone approaches, she waits to see if that creature sees through the illusory aura. The fantionette attacks as soon as one of the PCs opens herself to a sneak attack.

While the fantionette normally remains in this room, if she hears the sounds of combat coming from the nearby sleeping quarters (area E6), she wanders out to investigate.

FANTIONETTE CR 4
XP 1,200
hp 37 (see page 82)

E6. Sleeping Quarters (CR 4)

Eight doors line the sides of this tiled hallway. The doors of several rooms are open, revealing ten-foot-by-ten-foot bedchambers, each with a single bed and nearby table.

The rooms here accommodate agents working for Martella Lotheed on prolonged missions. Since Martella's imprisonment, the Brotherhood of Silence has repurposed the rooms for their own agents.

Creatures: Wyssilka's elite agents use the sleeping quarters here. Four currently gather around the eastern

end of the hallway, where they discuss keeping the buried villa as a headquarters once they complete this job.

SILENT CULTISTS (3) CR 1
XP 400 each

Human cleric of Norgorber 1/rogue 1

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; Senses Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 15 each (2d8+3)

Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk short sword +3 (1d6+1/19–20)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 4/day (DC 11, 1d6), sneak attack +1d6, sudden shift

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st; concentration +3)
5/day—bleeding touch (1 round)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +3)
1st—*cause fear*⁰ (DC 13), *command* (DC 13), *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 12), *detect magic*, *read magic*

D domain spell; **Domains** Death, Trickery (Deception^{APG} subdomain)

TACTICS

Before Combat If the cultists notice the PCs approaching, they cast *shield of faith* on themselves.

During Combat The cultists cast *shield of faith* on themselves and hope to coax the PCs into the narrow hallway to surround them, even using *command* to make them approach. They make liberal use of their sudden shift ability to surround opponents and employ their smoke sticks to blind enemies while they rely on their Blind-Fight feat.

Morale The cultists fight to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +0; CMB +1; CMD 13

Feats Blind-Fight, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +5, Bluff +5, Disguise +5, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Perception +6, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

Languages Common

SQ trapfinding +1

Combat Gear *potions of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of hide from animals*, smokesticks (2), tindertwigs (5); **Other Gear** mwk chain shirt, mwk short sword, silver unholy symbol of Norgorber, 5 gp

Development: Combat here alerts the bored fantionette in area E5 if the PCs have not already confronted her, and she arrives to investigate 3 rounds after combat begins, still posing as an unfortunate child of one of the cultists.

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TRIUMPH

Rescuing a Taldan noble—Martella Lotheed—and laying low assassins who oppose the stable rule of Taldor is a powerful feat that ripples through the spirit of the nation, kindling the faded magic lying dormant in relics the PCs may carry. This action is enough to unlock the first triumph abilities of both *Dignity's Barb* and the *Envoy Ring*. See the “Relics of Old Taldor” article in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #128* for more information on relics and triumphs.

E7. Training Room (CR 2)

Three stuffed training dummies stand in the southern side of this stone room. Arrows and daggers protrude from the dummies, while weapon racks stand neatly along the northern wall. Passages exit to the east, north, and west.

Agents use the dummies here for practice. The dummies were originally used to train agents in sleight of hand. Now, the Brotherhood of Silence uses the room to hone their combat skills.

Creature: A single halfling adherent of Thimir Gixx stands watch by the western door. Wyssilka truly trusts only members of her own flock to stand guard while she works.

HALFLING KILLER

CR 2

XP 600

NE guttersnipe (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 238)

hp 17

E8. Martella's Bedroom (CR 4)

Two large bookshelves, an elaborate L-shaped desk, and a well-dressed bed decorate this lavish bedroom. A variety of springs, gears, and small tools clutter the desk alongside pages of sketches and designs.

Martella Lotheed often retired to the quiet safe house while in Oppara, and used this well-appointed bedchamber to rest and tinker with new designs. The bookshelves contain numerous treatises on mechanical engineering, acting as masterwork tools on Craft (clockwork) checks.

Trap: The device currently under construction on the desk is an unfinished and unstable gas bomb. Any creature searching or tampering with the equipment on the table detonates the device, which fills the 10-foot-by-10-foot area around the desk with insanity mist for 1 round.

INSANITY MIST BOMB

CR 4

Type mechanical; Perception DC 15; Disable Device DC 18

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** none

Effect poison gas (*Insanity Mist*: Poison—inhaled; save Fort DC 15; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d3 Wis damage; cure 1 save); multiple targets (all creatures in a 10-foot-by-10-foot area around the desk)

Treasure: Martella uses gold components in some of her gadgets to resist corrosion or harsh chemicals. In all, 150 gp worth of gold gears, springs, and valves can be found scattered on the table. In addition, two brass chatterboxes (see page 21) sit in one corner, ready to be used.

E9. Alchemy Lab (CR 1/2)

Beakers and vials cover a table spanning the entire northern end of the room, while four shelves containing alchemical ingredients extend from the southern wall.

Martella uses this chamber to store and concoct alchemical compounds for her allies to use in missions. The entire chamber serves as an alchemist's lab, granting a +2 circumstance bonus on Craft (alchemy) checks.

Trap: Wyssilka has strung a hair-thin wire across the hall and connected it to a bell on the other side of the door in area E10 to warn her of any unexpected guests.

DOORBELL TRAP

CR 1/2

Type mechanical; Perception DC 24; Disable Device DC 8

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** manual

Effect Passing through the indicated square alerts all creatures in area E10

Treasure: Martella's alchemical efforts were most recently focused on poison research, which the Brotherhood of Silence is keenly interested in. Several poisons cover the northern workbench, including 2 doses of black adder venom, 2 doses of medium spider venom, 2 doses of oil of taggit, 1 dose of blue whinnis, and 1 dose of giant wasp poison. Along with this trove of poisons are six vials of antitoxin, a *potion of delay poison*, and a *potion of neutralize poison* in case of accidents.

E10. Interrogation Room (CR 6)

The room here gives way to an open cavern beyond. Six sets of manacles, evenly spaced along the western cave wall, dangle down to the dirt floor. All but one set hang empty, while the final set secures the body of a beaten and bruised woman.

The bootleggers who dug out this ruin opened up this artificial cavern as a place to house their unwilling

workers, and Martella decided with some reluctance to retain the manacles. Sadly, the Brotherhood of Silence adapted the chamber into an interrogation room almost immediately after overtaking the safe house.

Creatures: Wyssilka the Fantabulous—who the PCs may have influenced in Part 1 of the adventure—jubilantly interrogates a barely conscious Martella Lotheed in this cavernous space, dosing her with various poisons borrowed from the alchemy lab. She enjoys toying with her beaten target, making light jokes about the situation and promising Martella a quick death if she reveals the location of Princess Eutropia or any of Stavian's other enemies. This torture does not come at the behest of Stavian or his allies, but instead is a result of Wyssilka's own twisted desires. The halfling sees the bound spy as a golden opportunity and intends to sell whatever information she coaxes from Martella Lotheed before killing the noble and completing her contract.

Three Norgorber cultists assist Wyssilka in her grim work, occasionally healing Martella whenever she falls unconscious. The trio grow increasingly agitated that their leader refuses to simply kill their target and end the job, but they don't voice their dissatisfaction.

If alerted to the PCs' approach, Wyssilka and her minions gag Martella and take to the shadows, hoping to catch the rescuers by surprise. Through her interrogation, Wyssilka has learned about the PCs' activities at the Exaltation Gala, and she is interested in testing her combat prowess against them. Once she enters combat, she makes a point of telling the PCs how her god, Thamir Gixx, will reward her for killing a group of would-be heroes.

If the PCs enter without setting off Wyssilka's door alarm or otherwise alerting her, she is surprised but greets them enthusiastically. Rather than immediately attack, Wyssilka enjoys bantering with the PCs for several rounds before engaging in combat while her clerics quietly surround them.

Manacles bind Martella to the wall here, preventing her from moving more than 5 feet in each direction. Without any of her normal equipment, she nevertheless uses her delegate class ability to lend the PCs her Outflank teamwork feat for the fight.

MARTELLA LOTHEED

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 60 (currently 4; see page 58)

SILENT CULTISTS (3)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 15 each (see page 49)

WYSSILKA THE FANTABULOUS

CR 4

XP 1,200

hp 41 (see page 60)

Treasure: Martella's equipment is stored in a chest in the southeastern corner of the room, along with the Brotherhood's down payment for Martella's assassination: 2,000 gp. Martella happily lets the PCs claim the coin as a reward for rescuing her (and politely overlooks any petty theft of her belongings in other rooms), but asks for the return of her personal equipment.

Development: Defeating Wyssilka sends any surviving Brotherhood of Silence agents in the area into disarray, and they retreat back into the city shadows to lick their wounds. With rumors already reporting Grand Prince Stavian's death in the senate, the Brotherhood of Silence calls off their contract against Martella Lotheed, instead waiting to see how the brewing civil conflict, already dubbed the "War for the Crown," plays out.

Given some healing or time to recuperate, Martella Lotheed offers her thanks for a timely rescue. She settles her debts with the PCs as well, paying each 500 gp for exemplary service and hazard pay at the gala. Martella notes that whether the PCs knew it or not, their actions in the senate have undoubtedly had a major influence on the future of Taldor—a future now in jeopardy with the rash actions of Grand Prince Stavian III.

Story Award: Award the PCs 1,600 XP for saving Martella Lotheed, defeating Wyssilka, and surviving through the turbulent events of this adventure.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With Wyssilka defeated and Martella Lotheed saved, the PCs are finally in a position to rest and take stock of the new political scene in Taldor. Martella offers to pay for accommodations at the Silent Horse—one of Oppara's more lavish inns—for any PC without a respectable home in the city. It takes another 2 days to take a final accounting of the dead: a total of 78 senators slain, alongside 102 aides, defenders, family members, and staff, as well as Grand Prince Stavian III himself, in what many Taldans are already beginning to call the Exaltation Massacre.

The attackers appear to have been an assortment of mercenaries and killers from Andoran, Cheliax, and Galt—though arguments rage over who brought these assassins into the heart of Taldor's government. While the Lion Blades believe Stavian himself hired these agents, much of the Taldan citizenry is less convinced, given the emperor's own death in the violence. Many suspect Princess Eutropia or High Strategos Pythareus. With the empire's central government in shambles, local governments are doing the best they can to fill the void.

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Eleven major claims have been made for the throne by various nobles claiming relations to the Stavian line. Two candidates in particular—Princess Eutropia and High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus—stand above the rest, and various nobles and politics have already begun arguing that their chosen scion is the true inheritor of the Primogen Crown.

A FINAL MEETING

After taking 3 days to rest, Martella comes to the Silent Horse to invite the PCs to a private meeting. A short carriage ride brings them to a tidy townhouse in the Aroden's View district. Inside, a cozy fire and the scent of tea warm a small library. A friendly catch-dog trots over to investigate, wagging its tail, and returns satisfied to its owner's side as she rises from the chair—Princess Eutropia. After a polite nod, she speaks.

"My name is Eutropia Stavian I, firstborn of Stavian III, and I thank you for coming. I wanted to express my gratitude in person for rescuing my old schoolmate, Martella. She is a dear friend, and I am in your debt.

"You are bold and resourceful, yet apparently relative unknowns on Taldor's political stage. Those are all incredibly valuable assets. Now more than ever I find myself in need of talented allies. My father—Pharasma rest his soul—seems to have been convinced my efforts at social reform were the precursor to usurping his throne. Some dear friends feared he would try to kill me at the exaltation; you may have noticed the Lion Blades on the scene in response. I had never imagined he could... That he had slipped so far."

Eutropia takes a moment to compose herself, and then she continues.

"Apparently, in his paranoia, my father formally adopted Maxillar Pythareus in a private ceremony to declare the general his heir. Or so Pythareus claims, and he has presented documentation to support his claim. There are even those nobles who believe the vote against primogeniture could not possibly have taken place, or was coerced by those same elements that attacked the senate.

"The Ulfen Guard has sealed the palace and refuses admittance to anyone until the question is resolved. Normally this kind of issue would fall to the senate, but with the senate decimated and no emperor to approve new members... this situation is entirely unprecedented.

"I don't know if I'm the best candidate for the throne, but I know Pythareus isn't. He's a warmonger and a regressive traditionalist. He preaches about waging war on the 'upstart colonies' and bringing them back into the empire by force. I won't let him march us back into endless war, and I need allies of uncommon skill to ensure our nation's future. I would be honored to have such noble allies as yourselves in this War for the Crown."

A successful DC 18 Sense Motive check is enough to determine that the princess is being genuine, though she seems to be choosing her words carefully; the PCs are unknowns to her, whether Martella trusts them or not. Eutropia is happy to answer questions within reason, though she keeps the identities of other agents and the full extent of her resources to herself. The PCs are still—for now—strangers.

Were you behind Martella's activities at the Gala? "Martella has been assisting me for quite some time, and yes, she recruited your help to ensure the night ran smoothly. Thank you for your services."

Why should we support you? "I've spent a lifetime studying Taldor and her people's needs. All her people. And I know they need internal improvements, education, new opportunities. Not war and empty promises of long-gone glories."

What will you do with the crown/throne? "I hadn't thought I'd be inheriting the throne for a decade or more, and I find myself embarrassingly unprepared. For now, I suppose my goals are to hold a wounded nation together and begin repairing centuries of neglect. My focus has been very narrow until now; I'll need some time to make these decisions."

Do you know who attacked the senate? "It seems my father reached out to his peers in other nations to recruit his... special forces. I understand the Lion Guards found evidence of Andoren, Chelish, and Galtan nationality among the dead; the old colonies where my father might still have loyal friends. Had. The Lion Blades heard rumors of father recruiting foreign agents and feared for my safety, but we vastly underestimated the numbers, or his true targets. This is why I clearly need new eyes in this endeavor."

Did you kill your father? Eutropia is taken aback at such a crass question, but eventually manages to say, "Certainly not! Father and I may have grown apart since Carrius's passing, but he remains my father, and the only true family I have left! Had left. He... My father may not have been what was best for Taldor, but he was my father, and for some of us, blood ties are still stronger than political ones."

Where is Maxillar Pythareus now? "He's retreated to the fortress city of Zimar, in the south, and has been refusing my requests for council. Rumors suggest he's already begun gathering a network of supporters calling themselves the Imperialists."

Where do we fit into all of this? "You would work as my loyal agents to secure resources and allies, ideally without raising too much of a fuss when it can be avoided. Martella will direct you toward more specific goals; I have a great deal of work to accomplish myself in the meantime."

Why select us to help you? "I haven't. I'm afraid you're still unknown factors to me. But Martella seems



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impressed with your abilities and I respect her judgment. You've obviously left her with quite the positive opinion of your skills and character, and I hope you'll honor me with the same impression."

What do we gain by supporting you? "I would hope the value of an empress's gratitude would be plainly obvious, but you will be paid, of course. I may be locked out of the treasury, but the Stavian family holdings are considerable. In the meantime, the opportunity for profits will abound: new allies and contacts, travel to the far-flung corners of the empire, favors from who knows how many nobles. The task before us is the sort that births legends, and legends, if nothing else, benefit from warm beds and full bellies."

What happens now? "Now we rally our resources and allies. This is not a war we can win by swords; Pythareus commands the entirety of the Phalanx, and much of the rest of the military is fiercely loyal to him. This is a war we must win with words and guile and allies. We need the people of Taldor to unite behind a single monarch to dispel the military's desire to settle this with force of arms. I don't want the blood of common Taldans spilled to slake some petty squabble between nobles."

What's your dog's name? "His name is Taldogis. Father hates it... Hated it."

Eutropia and Martella allow the PCs the choice to join those supporting her bid for the crown—the Loyalists—or to walk away. Should the PCs refuse, the adventure

ends here for them, though the princess bears them no ill will for their decision. If the PCs agree to join Princess Eutropia's Loyalists, she asks them to kneel and taps each shoulder in turn with her sword. While the Princess lacks the official authority to knight anyone at this point, she considers PCs' offer of loyalty a precious thing and offers the honorary knighting as a show of respect. Thereafter, both she and Martella affix the title "Sir" or "Dame" to the PCs' names.

The PCs are free to rest, sell equipment, shop, or conduct their own business for the time being while Eutropia and Martella determine the most valuable way to utilize their skills. Oppara itself never truly falls into chaos, despite the political violence and sudden lack of a strong government. Much of Taldor runs on routine, without the need for direct oversight, and while an eerie quiet falls over the city, the citizens maintain their daily lives with little disruption for now. Talk in the street focuses heavily on the Exaltation Massacre and the War for the Crown, with everything from accurate news to wild speculation making the rounds. For now, at least, all of Taldor seems to be holding its breath, waiting to see if civil war is inevitable.

Much of the ruler Eutropia will eventually become will be shaped by the actions she and her agents must take to assume the throne. Therefore, you'll want to keep track of how the PCs interact with her, and their general approach to problem-solving.

DAGIO THE GREAT

An accidental immortal, Dagio the Great proclaims himself king of the senate's sublevels. He believes his only salvation is through the mysterious force that granted him immortality—a mystery hidden in circles.

DAGIO THE GREAT

CR 2

XP 600

Male unique dire rat wizard 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 232)

CE Small magical beast (augmented animal)

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+1 deflection, +4 Dex, +4 shield, +1 size)

hp 29 (4 HD; 3d6+1d8+15)

Fort +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee bite +2 (1d4 plus filth fever)

Special Attacks filth fever, hand of the apprentice (6/day)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; concentration +6)

2nd—*acid arrow*, *invisibility*

1st—*comprehend languages*, *magic missile*, *shield*

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *read magic*

TACTICS

Before Combat Prior to combat, Dagio casts *invisibility* and *shield* on himself.

During Combat Dagio prefers to fight at range, using his climb speed to cling to walls while unleashing *acid arrow* and *magic missile*. Once those spells are depleted, Dagio uses his arcane-bonded ring to fire a second *acid arrow*. If injured, Dagio abandons the walls and rushes into combat, using his “regal rod” (his *wand of shocking grasp*) to strike down foes with blasts of electricity. He babbles about “circles within circles” and the “immaculate circumference” as he battles.

Morale Dagio refuses to acknowledge that the commoners who have intruded on his domain are superior. He fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without his *shield* spell, Dagio's statistics are
AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 12.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 19, **Con** 15, **Int** 16, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 15 (19 vs. trip)

Feats Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +4 (+8 when jumping), Climb +18, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (history) +10, Perception +6, Spellcraft +9, Stealth +14, Swim +12

Languages Azlanti, Draconic, Elven

SQ arcane bond (*ring of protection* +1)

Combat Gear *wand of shocking grasp* (24 charges); **Other**

Gear *ring of protection* +1

Before Dagio, there was Eros Glendower. A pampered youth, Eros easily unlocked the mysteries of magic, becoming a notable wizard within the aristocracy. He saw his familial appointment to Taldor's senate as a distraction from his mastery of spellcasting, and he nearly declined the offer. However, this all changed in a single day, starting when cloaked figures waylaid his carriage. The strangers effortlessly enchanted the guards protecting Eros and then, in the dead of night, brought the harried noble to a nearby manor.

The kidnappers revealed themselves as members of the Immaculate Circle, a secret cabal of elder Taldan nobles believing themselves to be the true power brokers behind the Taldan throne. The Immaculate Circle saw Eros as a pliable puppet and offered the aspiring wizard access to forgotten and forbidden magical texts so long as the noble accepted his appointment to the senate and voted on their behalf; the society also promised to handle all of Eros's political responsibilities, which he found particularly boring. Eros saw the offer befitting a man with his incredible talents. He accepted the bargain and joined both the Immaculate Circle and the Taldan senate in the same week.

As the Immaculate Circle kept true to its promise of handling Eros's most monotonous political responsibilities, the noble began researching the texts the society provided. He learned of powerful necromancy and transmutation rituals and spells. As time passed, though, it became increasingly clear to Eros that the Circle used him as little more than a servant and a pawn—a disgusting position for a man of his means and lineage. While threats and blackmail from the secret society kept Eros in line, it did nothing to sate his desire for self-determination. For that, he would need to not simply serve the Immaculate Circle but to rule it as one of the power brokers of the Inner Council.

Chief among the Immaculate Circle's tenets was the notion that death is a price for the common folk and that the nobility of the society's members placed such agents above judgment—even that of the gods. To join the Inner Council, members must demonstrate their own ascendance over life and death by discovering

their own unique roads to immortality. Eros's studies seemed to provide exactly that: the power to warp the flesh and spit in death's eye. He found a reclusive corner of the senate and began preparations for a grand ritual to replace his living essence with the arcane energy of the universe, rendering him ageless and deathless. His calculations consumed years, as he gradually declined into an unkempt and paranoid man, alienating friends and family.

The day finally came for Eros to enact his ritual, but it ended in disaster. The senator's patience, worn thin by years of research and political posturing at the behest of the Immaculate Circle, finally snapped. Eros faltered at the apex of the ritual, and in a desperate bid to survive, he shunted the uncontrollable arcane energies into the only other available receptacle: his loyal rat familiar, Dagio. The desperate move created a link between Eros and Dagio, shifting intellect and information into the rat's simple brain, effectively awakening the animal's mind.

The ritual's end reduced Eros to a pile of smoking ash, while Dagio somehow survived. The rat inherited much of his former master's incredible intellect and also a spark of magic that rendered him immortal. Dagio also retained his master's obsession with becoming a master of "the circle," though without any context. He decided to bide his time, conducting further research in the attached library while also investigating the other rooms of the sublevels. Decades passed, and Dagio grew enormous, nourished by arcane power. His explosive rebirth left him with a form of agoraphobia, and he refuses to venture out of the basement he knew to be abandoned.

Centuries later, Dagio remains in the chambers of the senate sublevels. Having long read the contents of the meager library, Dagio turned his mind to one of the few coherent memories of Eros's imparted intellect: the importance of circles. While unaware of his former master's association with the Immaculate Circle, Dagio believes that circles somehow hold the key to his immortality. He claimed the old lecture hall as his home, drawing and scratching circle symbols all throughout in an attempt to create a new language of magical geometry, whispering of their powers but utterly unable to understand the logic behind his obsession.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Dagio's role in this adventure is to confront the PCs prior to their departure from the senate sublevels. His presence as "king of the Underlevels" is known to a handful of NPCs who have encountered him, though it should be difficult for

the PCs to wrangle much information about those encounters. Most creatures in the sublevels give Dagio a wide berth and have encountered the dire rat only a handful of times. His presence should be mysterious, though he should be established as a clear gatekeeper to the PCs' freedom.

The secondary role for Dagio is to foreshadow the PCs' inevitable confrontation with the Immaculate Circle later in the Adventure Path. The repeated appearances of circles, as well as Dagio's obsession with geometry, are the first clue the PCs have about the nefarious secret society. While the PCs should not have any real inkling of the Immaculate Circle until much later in the Adventure Path, the significance of circles in this area may come to mind. By retracing their steps, the PCs could very well learn of the history of Senator Glendower and his reputed "pest pet," Dagio, which could in turn provide them with further information on the Immaculate Circle.



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GRAND PRINCE STAVIAN III

Grand Prince Stavian III is considered as ineffectual as the empire he rules. For all Stavian's faults, he has managed to hold the empire together through intelligent political maneuvering and a keen understanding of human nature.

GRAND PRINCE STAVIAN III

CR 11

XP 12,800

Male human aristocrat 8/enchanter 4

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** true seeing; Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, +5 deflection, +2 natural)

hp 70 (12 HD; 4d6+8d8+20)

Fort +11, **Ref** +8, **Will** +20

Immune mind affecting effects; **Resist** fire 20; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *Primogen Rod* +9/+3 (1d6+1)

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +10)
9/day—dazing touch

Enchanter Spells Prepared (CL 4th; concentration +10)
2nd—*bear's endurance*, *detect thoughts* (DC 18), *mirror image*, *oppressive boredom*^{UM} (DC 19)
1st—*alarm*, *charm person* (DC 18), *shield*, *sleep* (DC 18), *unseen servant*
0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *message*

Opposition Schools evocation, necromancy

TACTICS

Before Combat Stavian relies entirely on his Ulfen Guard for protection. His *ring of friend shield* is bonded to one worn by a member of his guard at all times.

During Combat Stavian casts *shield* and *mirror image* to protect him if combat begins, and he uses his enchantment spells to keep enemies at bay while he flees, trusting to Ulfen Guard to slay his enemies.

Morale Stavian retreats or surrenders after losing 10 or more hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 22, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 22

Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Persuasive, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Bluff), Spell Focus (enchantment)

Skills Bluff +28, Diplomacy +26, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (history, nobility) +21, Perception +22, Perform (oratory) +20, Ride +13, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +21

Languages Azlanti, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal, Osiriani, Skald

SQ arcane bond (*Primogen Rod*), enchanting smile

Combat Gear *ring of friend shield*; **Other Gear** *Primogen Rod* (rod of lordly might), *amulet of natural armor* +2, *bracers of armor* +4, *major ring of fire resistance*, *Primogen Crown*, assorted jewelry (1,200 gp total), spellbook

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Exceptional Resources (Ex) Grand Prince Stavian III has considerably more wealth than is normal for an NPC of his level. This increases his CR by 1.

Born in 4653 AR, Prince Stavian III was the second son of Grand Prince Stavian II. He lived for years in the shadow of his elder brother, Carrius I. Stavian III's father had little time for—in his own words—his lesser son. Carrius I's death in 4664 AR changed everything. A sudden citywide outbreak of influenza infected the heir apparent, and Carrius I passed away shortly after. Grand Prince Stavian II refused to mourn his lost son and instead spent incredible amounts of wealth to entice wayward, previously persecuted clerics of Sarenrae to wrest the Carrius's soul from death's embrace. The actions, which ultimately failed due to Carrius's desire to remain in Nirvana, touched the hearts of the Taldan people, but they only further embittered Stavian III toward his father. The younger Stavian saw the fruitless spending as the ultimate dismissal—his own father would rather burn a thousand fortunes than embrace him as a son and heir.

As death loomed many years later, Stavian II reached out to his resentful son. The two shared one of their few open talks, with an ailing Stavian II admitting his error in loving only one of his children, and Stavian III came to realize the aloofness he'd known wasn't the action of an infallible king but a tired, selfish, fragile old man. He vowed at his dying father's bedside to restore the glory of Taldor. Hours after the meeting, Stavian II passed quietly in his sleep, making way for his surviving son to ascend to the throne.

Stavian III set out to be a strong and wise king, but mental illness has long followed the Stavian family line. The stress of rule transformed his childhood anxiety and depression into paranoia and powerful mood swings. With court physicians unwilling to contradict the grand prince or question his stability for fear of losing their

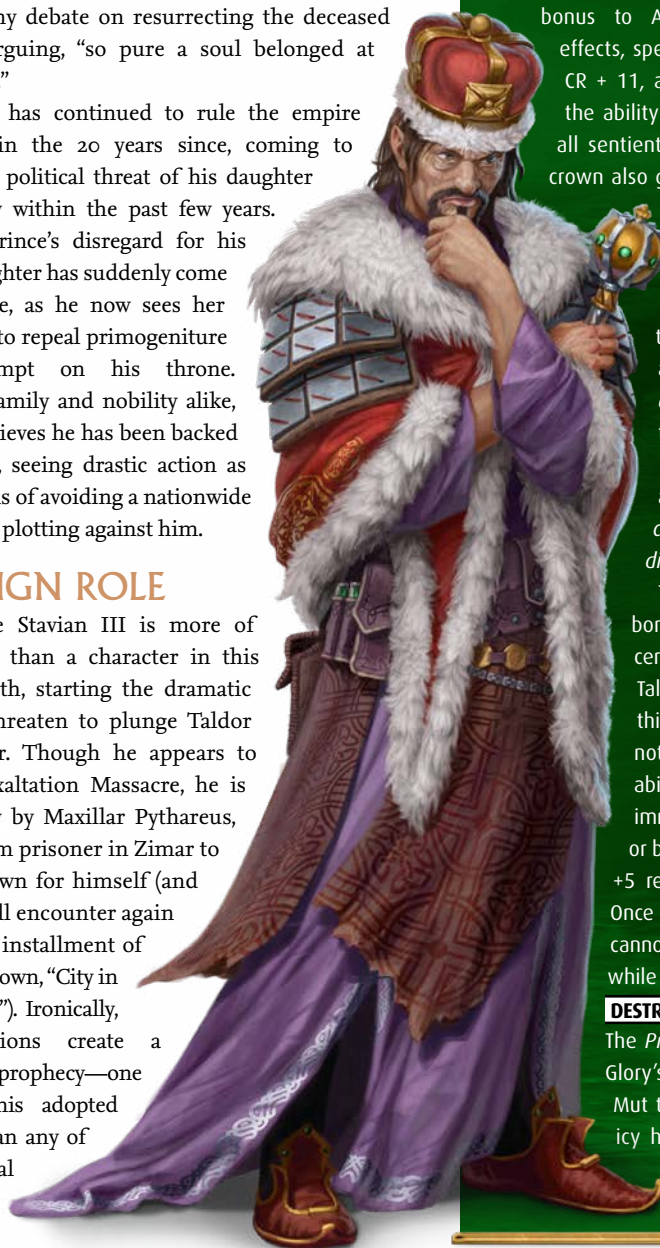
heads—or worse, status—Stavian’s commitment to his rule lapsed as he indulged in simple pleasures to manage his stress, leaving the responsibility of ruling Taldor to increasingly inept advisors.

The birth of his daughter, Eutropia, was a bright moment that seemed to lift the king’s illness, followed by the birth of his son Carrius II 2 years later. While Eutropia was the stereotypical princess, the public fawned over the young prince, who proved bookish, generous, and sensitive. This growing adoration fed Stavian III’s returning paranoia, and he came to resent the boy. Father and son argued at every meeting, until the dark day in 4698 AR when, in the heat of argument, Stavian III shoved his son down the stone stairs of the palace stables. Stavian III used the memory of the exhaustive attempts to resurrect his own elder brother to forestall any debate on resurrecting the deceased Carrius II, arguing, “so pure a soul belonged at Heaven’s gate.”

Stavian III has continued to rule the empire ineffectually in the 20 years since, coming to recognize the political threat of his daughter Eutropia only within the past few years. The grand prince’s disregard for his firstborn daughter has suddenly come to an impasse, as he now sees her campaigning to repeal primogeniture as an attempt on his throne. Betrayed by family and nobility alike, Stavian III believes he has been backed into a corner, seeing drastic action as the only means of avoiding a nationwide coup by those plotting against him.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Grand Prince Stavian III is more of a plot device than a character in this Adventure Path, starting the dramatic events that threaten to plunge Taldor into civil war. Though he appears to die in the Exaltation Massacre, he is secreted away by Maxillar Pythareus, who keeps him prisoner in Zimar to claim the crown for himself (and whom PCs will encounter again in the fourth installment of *War for the Crown*, “City in the Lion’s Eye”). Ironically, Stavian’s actions create a self-fulfilling prophecy—one enacted by his adopted son rather than any of his biological children.



THE PRIMOGEN CROWN

Taldan myth claims First Emperor Taldaris forged the *Primogen Crown* from the metallic mane of the mythical grogrisant, a lionlike beast of legend that stalked Taldor in the age before empire.

PRIMOGEN CROWN

MAJOR ARTIFACT

SLOT head

CL 20th

WEIGHT —

AURA strong abjuration and transmutation

This crenellated gold coronet, decorated with jewels and etchings of lions, seems heavier in the hand than expected. A single roaring lion’s head decorates the crown’s front. The *Primogen Crown* grants its wearer a +5 resistance bonus on saving throws, a +5 deflection bonus to AC, immunity to mind-affecting effects, spell resistance equal to the wearer’s CR + 11, a constant *true seeing* effect, and the ability to speak and be clearly heard by all sentient creatures within 1,000 feet. The crown also grants a +4 enhancement bonus to the wearer’s Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores (with ranks in Knowledge [history] and Knowledge [nobility] as well as the ability to speak and read Azlanti and Celestial, as per a *headband of vast intelligence*). Once per day, the wearer of the *Primogen Crown* can cast the following as spell-like abilities (CL 20th): *banishment*, *control weather*, and *greater dispel magic*.

The *Primogen Crown* must be bonded to its wearer in a coronation ceremony in the Imperial Palace of Taldor to access its full power. Without this ceremony, the crown does not grant its wearer any spell-like abilities, spell resistance, bonus to AC, immunity to mind-affecting abilities, or bonus to mental attributes—only the +5 resistance bonus on saving throws. Once bonded to the crown, the wearer cannot knowingly speak or write a lie while wearing the *Primogen Crown*.

DESTRUCTION

The *Primogen Crown* must be heated in Glory’s Flame, in the grand lighthouse of Mut to the east, and then cast into the icy headwaters of the Porthmos River to the west while still hot. The sudden cooling shatters it.

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LADY MARTELLA LOTHEED

The bastard half-Qadiran daughter of the respected Lotheed family, Lady Martella Lotheed lacks her family's natural magical aptitude, but nevertheless proves her worth as a gifted advisor, engineer, and spy.

LADY MARTELLA LOTHEED

CR 6

XP 2,400

Female human aristocrat 3/investigator (majordomo) 5
(*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 30, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue* 35)

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 60 (8d8+21)

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10; +4 vs. poison

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk rapier +8 (1d6–1/18–20)

Ranged mwk pepperbox +8 (1d8/×4) or
wrist launcher +7 (poison)

Special Attacks studied combat (+2, 3 rounds), studied strike +1d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Martella prefers to pick the battlefield whenever possible, luring opponents into areas she knows well or has rigged with traps. Before entering a fight, she uses her *potion of barkskin* to augment her abilities.

During Combat Martella Lotheed recognizes that her role in combat is to coordinate and protect her allies. She uses her delegate ability to provide allies with the benefits of Outflank and picks off troublemakers with her pepperbox pistol.

Morale Martella prefers discretion over valor, and retreats from combat when reduced below half hit points.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 16

Feats Alertness, Extra Investigator Talent, Gunsmithing^{UC}, Iron Will, Outflank^{APG}, Stealth Synergy^{UC}, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +13, Craft (alchemy, clockwork, firearms) +13, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +13, Knowledge (engineering, local, nobility) +10, Linguistics +10, Perception +10, Sense Motive +13, Sleight of Hand +10, Stealth +10

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Halfling, Kelish, Osiriani, Skald

SQ delegate (1 feat, noncombat tasks, 8 rounds, standard action, 2/day), inspiration (5), inspired manager, investigator talents (firearm training^{UC}, quick trapsmith, underworld inspiration^{ACG}), keen recollection, paper trail +2, poison lore

Combat Gear *elixir of truth*, *oils of magic weapon* (2), *potion of barkskin* (CL 6th), *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of eagle's splendor*, acid (5), antitoxins (3), blue whinnis (3), fuse grenades^{UE} (3), good invisible ink^{UE}, liquid blade^{UE}, oils of taggit (3); **Other Gear** +1 *studded leather*, mwk pepperbox^{UC}, mwk rapier, wrist launcher^{UI} with 10 featherweight darts, *cloak of resistance* +1, masterwork clockworking tools, masterwork gunsmithing tools, masterwork thieves' tools, sunrods (5), tindertwigs (10), Lotheed family signet ring (worth 100 gp), trap components (worth 2,000 gp), 160 gp

A short tryst between Count Mercater Lotheed and a visiting Qadiran emissary, Ammala Qusan, resulted in the birth of the half-blooded Martella, placing the child in a precarious situation even before her birth. While Ammala ultimately carried the child to term, the scandalized ambassador abandoned the infant to her father's family only days later. Like most nobles, Mercater felt some obligation to raise his bastard, though without any of the affection or resources lavished upon the children sired with his wife.

Martella spent her early years on the grounds of the family estate in Tandak Prefecture. Arcane magic runs thick in Lotheed blood, and every generation produces some of Taldor's greatest wizards. But despite a keen mind, Martella struggled with even the basics of spellcasting. Unlike her half-siblings, who excelled in their arcane studies, Martella could master nothing but the fundamental theories behind magic. This lack of aptitude only reinforced her outcast status among her already distant siblings. Eventually her family simply shipped her off to a private boarding school, the Sinora Academia, to remove the embarrassment from their sight. Away from her family's condescension and myopic focus on the arcane arts, Martella mastered countless different skills instead: mathematics, natural philosophy, alchemy, and eventually engineering. It was during her school years that Martella first encountered a young Princess Eutropia—several years her elder—and began looking up to the friendly girl as an adoptive sister. Their circle of friends found constant trouble and excitement between Eutropia's bravado and Martella's inventive gifts, and the two built a friendship they maintain to this day.

A terrible accident befell Mercater Lotheed one evening while the count worked in his study. A sudden heart attack struck, killing the middle-aged man. While authorities deemed the event natural, an insidious truth lay buried: Mercater had uncovered evidence that indicated his great-uncle, Duke Panivar Lotheed VI, was in fact Panivar Lotheed I and that the duke had somehow managed to cheat death for centuries. Panivar had discovered his nephew's meddling and unleashed an outsider known as a sahkil to cut Mercater's life short.

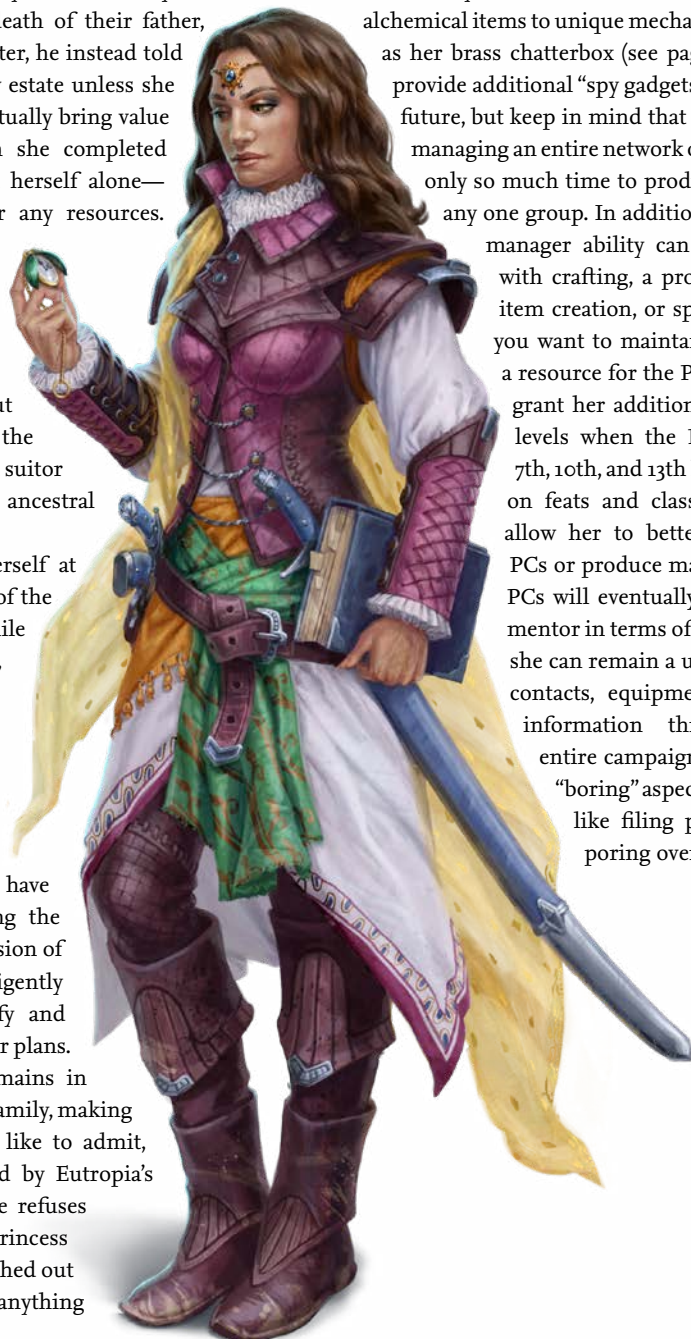
Martella attended the funeral, where she learned that her eldest half-brother, Bartelby, would take over the day-to-day management of the family lands. Bartelby visited Martella once following the death of their father, and rather than console his sister, he instead told her not to return to the family estate unless she brought a suitor who would actually bring value to the Lotheed family. When she completed her schooling, Martella found herself alone—without a home, a family, or any resources. Seeing Martella without anywhere else to go, Eutropia offered her a position within the growing political coterie she had assembled. Martella accepted the offer, not only out of friendship, but also because the alternative was to find a dullard suitor if she ever wanted to see her ancestral home again.

Martella Lotheed honed herself at becoming a spymaster worthy of the future monarch of Taldor. While she lacks magical aptitude, Martella makes up for it with skill in crafting mechanical devices and understanding alchemical reactions. The secrets she overhears, the papers she intercepts, and the agents she places in estate staffs have proven valuable in positioning the princess for an eventual succession of power, and she now works diligently behind the scenes to identify and block threats to Eutropia's life or plans. A great deal of bitterness remains in Martella's heart regarding her family, making her more ruthless than she'd like to admit, but much of that is tempered by Eutropia's charitable influence. While she refuses to admit it, she still sees the princess as the only family who ever reached out to her, and she is willing to do anything to keep Eutropia safe.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Throughout the War for the Crown Adventure Path, Martella Lotheed acts as benefactor and guide for the PCs, though she conceals her connections to Princess Eutropia until the end of Crownfall. Martella provides guidance and updates whenever necessary, and she can serve as a useful way to provide suggestions if the PCs stumble over a problem or miss a clue. By saving her from Wyssilka and the Brotherhood of Silence, the PCs set themselves up as Martella's most trusted agents in the coming conflict to decide the future of Taldor.

Beyond her role as mission handler, Martella Lotheed crafts a variety of devices useful to spies, from alchemical items to unique mechanical toys, such as her brass chatterbox (see page 21). She can provide additional "spy gadgets" to PCs in the future, but keep in mind that she keeps busy managing an entire network of spies and has only so much time to produce devices for any one group. In addition, her inspired manager ability can help the PCs with crafting, a profession, magic item creation, or spell research. If you want to maintain her value as a resource for the PCs, you should grant her additional investigator levels when the PCs reach 4th, 7th, 10th, and 13th levels, focusing on feats and class abilities that allow her to better support the PCs or produce magic items. The PCs will eventually outpace their mentor in terms of raw power, but she can remain a useful source of contacts, equipment, clues, and information throughout the entire campaign, handling the "boring" aspects of espionage like filing paperwork and poring over old records.



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WYSSILKA THE FANTABULOUS

A rising member within the Brotherhood of Silence thieves' guild, Wyssilka leads a team of assassins hired to hunt down Eutropia's allies as part of Grand Prince Stavian III's coup against the senate.

WYSSILKA THE FANTABULOUS

CR 4

XP 1,200

Halfling warpriest (cult leader) of Thamir Gixx 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 60, 128)

NE Small humanoid (halfling)

Init +4; **Senses** Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+5 armor, +2 deflection, +1 size)

hp 41 (5d8+15)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +8; +2 vs. fear

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +10 (1d6+4/19–20)

Ranged dagger +7 (1d6+4)

Special Attacks blessings 5/day (Evil: unholy strike, Trickery: double), fervor 5/day (2d6), sacred weapon (1d8, +1, 5 rounds/day), sneak attack +1d6

Warpriest Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +8)
At will—*enthrall* (DC 14)

Warpriest Spells Prepared (CL 5th; concentration +8)
2nd—*bull's strength*, *hold person* (DC 15), *spiritual weapon*
1st—*cause fear* (DC 14), *command* (DC 14), *divine favor*,
doom (DC 14), *shield of faith*
0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 13), *guidance*, *light*, *resistance*

TACTICS

Before Combat If alerted to the PCs' approach by the alarm in area E9, Wyssilka casts *bull's strength*, *divine favor*, and *shield of faith* before she and her minions hide in the room's shadows.

During Combat If she has a chance to hide, Wyssilka waits for the PCs to approach Martella before ambushing them. She hurls a dagger and activates her double blessing. Once in the thick of combat, she casts *spiritual weapon* before attempting to flank with her minions to take advantage of her sneak attack. If an ally falls, she casts *hold person* to even the odds. She heals herself whenever possible.

Morale Utterly devoted to the Brotherhood of Silence and her deity, Wyssilka fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without her spells, Wyssilka's statistics are
AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 16; **Melee** mwk dagger +6 (1d6); **Ranged** dagger +5 (1d6); **Str** 10.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 16

Feats Deceitful, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (dagger)

Skills Acrobatics +8 (+4 when jumping), Bluff +8, Climb +3, Disguise +12, Escape Artist +5, Knowledge (religion) +4, Perception +5, Perform (comedy) +7, Sleight of Hand +6, Stealth +9; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Acrobatics, +2 Climb, +2 Perception

Languages Common, Halfling

Combat Gear *oil of keen edge*, healer's kit; **Other Gear**

+1 *chain shirt*, mwk dagger, daggers (3), *concealing pocket*^{UE}, disguise kit, glass cutter^{UE}, juggler's kit^{UE}, puppet named Duke Squiggles, wrist sheath^{UE}, silver unholy symbol of Thamir Gixx (worth 25 gp), 12 gp

Left on the streets of Oppara when her family ran afoul of a minor noble, Wyssilka learned to hate the ruling class of Taldor at an early age. Jumping between businesses and families as a servant, she eventually found a permanent home: the Brotherhood of Silence. The prominent thieves' guild adopted Wyssilka as they adopted dozens of other wayward children from the streets of Oppara. Over the next few years, Wyssilka learned how to convincingly lie, blend in with a crowd, and disappear when detected.

Yet for all Wyssilka's training, she held little aptitude at actual thievery. The first time she embarked on a mission to steal a minor relic from a visiting viscountess, Wyssilka instead stabbed the woman 29 times with a dagger she smuggled in her belt. Two additional jobs ended with more dead bodies and Wyssilka returning bathed in blood but devoid of treasures. It took a fellow halfling, a long-serving Brotherhood of Silence handler named Mathira, to recognize the bloodlust that underlined all of Wyssilka's actions. Rather than cut off the organization's investment in Wyssilka—along with the halfling's life—Mathira stepped in to shepherd her. She recognized her considerable physical strength, as well as the darker impulses that compelled Wyssilka to act. What she saw in Wyssilka was an instinctive devotion to the halfling god of assassins and opportunity, Thamir Gixx, the Silent Blade.

Wyssilka followed in Mathira's footsteps, learning about Thamir Gixx and recognizing that the deity filled a void in her soul. She adopted Thamir Gixx as her god. While she remained with the Brotherhood of

Silence, and still devoutly worshiped Norgorber as well, her fanaticism for Thamir eventually attracted like-minded halflings, and she became an urban legend in Oppara: the Child Blade, named for the small wounds her weapons inflicted and the general assumption that a halfling could never be so vile. Even at the height of her killing, most of the city guard suspected various “troubled” children of different aristocratic families rather than the smiling jester.

When assassins came for Wyssilka in the dead of night, her god provided no warning and refused to grant his divine gifts to her. With only a dagger, Wyssilka executed her would-be killers, extracting the name of the person foolish enough to order her death. Somehow Wyssilka instinctively knew the name before the subjects of her torturous ministrations ever needed to speak: Mathira. Less than an hour after the confession, Wyssilka’s blade wrapped itself in her former mentor’s throat, releasing a crimson tide signifying Thamir Gixx’s approval. Wyssilka proved herself worthy of her god, and she seized control of Oppara’s small but loyal cult of Thamir Gixx.

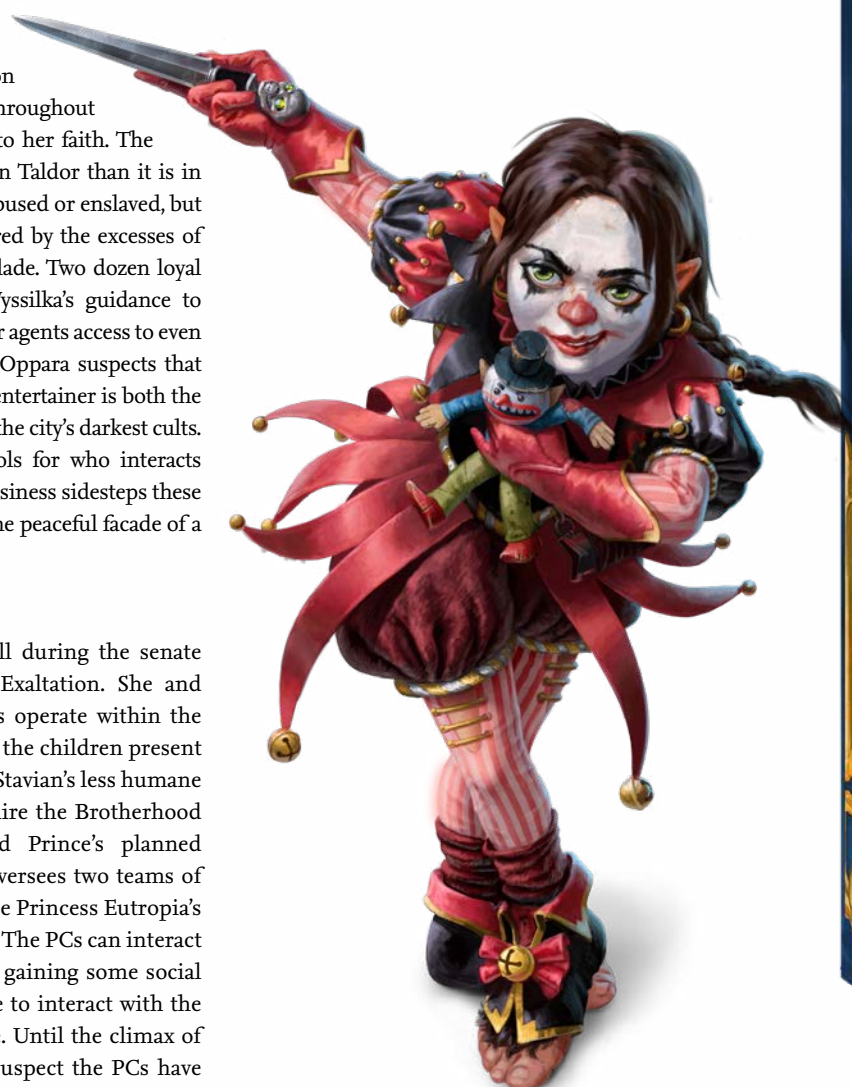
Wyssilka focuses her efforts on expanding a network of agents throughout Oppara and drawing new halflings to her faith. The worship of Thamir is less popular in Taldor than it is in nations where halflings are openly abused or enslaved, but enough of their people are embittered by the excesses of the wealthy to embrace the Silent Blade. Two dozen loyal halfling worshipers work under Wyssilka’s guidance to feed her secrets and grant her and her agents access to even the most secure homes. No one in Oppara suspects that the kindly and bumbling children’s entertainer is both the Child Blade and the leader of one of the city’s darkest cults. Many nobles maintain strict controls for who interacts with their children, but Wyssilka’s business sidesteps these security measures by hiding under the peaceful facade of a fun-loving halfling.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Wyssilka first appears in Crownfall during the senate festivities for the Grand Day of Exaltation. She and her troupe of halfling entertainers operate within the gallery, providing entertainment to the children present at the event. Some of Grand Prince Stavian’s less humane allies took it upon themselves to hire the Brotherhood of Silence to aid in the Grand Prince’s planned slaughter of the senate. Wyssilka oversees two teams of assassins meant to track and execute Princess Eutropia’s troublesome ally, Martella Lotheed. The PCs can interact with Wyssilka during these events, gaining some social benefits while also having a chance to interact with the eventual final foe of this adventure. Until the climax of the adventure, Wyssilka does not suspect the PCs have any association with her ultimate target.

The PCs again face Wyssilka in the climactic final encounter of the adventure. Wyssilka overtook Martella Lotheed, but rather than kill the spymistress, she instead kept Martella alive to extract further information out of her. The halfling’s fate is sealed if the PCs succeed: either these new heroes kill her, or the Brotherhood of Silence assassinates her for her failure. In either case, death is not the end of Wyssilka’s involvement in the War for the Crown Adventure Path, as the PCs will revisit her bitter soul in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #131: The Reaper’s Right Hand*. Keep some notes on the PCs’ interactions with Wyssilka and exactly how she died, as these may make for fun additions to this later encounter.

While the assumption is that Wyssilka fights to the death, if she manages to leave an impression on your group, she and her cult make excellent third parties to occasionally ruin the PCs’ best-laid plans, or even save them from trouble if the Silent Blades (or a wealthy employer) bids them take the life of the PCs’ enemies.



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OPPARA GAZETTEER

Life in Oppara isn't difficult to handle, once you've learned the rules: if a senator tells you that what you want to do is illegal, talk to a different one; if the district tax you pay is too high, move to the next house over; if you require a diplomat to get the upper hand in negotiations, hire your rival's out from under her; if you need an honorable noble, promote the nearest farmer; if you make a mistake, act like it never happened until people feel awkward and follow suit; if you don't like your past, pay a historian to write a new one; if your office needs more funding, buy a weapon and declare yourself a military branch; and if you need to keep something hidden forever, claim it's urgent and hand it to a government official.

—Baronet Solmon Menander, Taldan bureaucrat

Oppara is Taldor's thriving capital—a shining monument to the grandeur and majesty once common to the entire Taldan empire. Seated on the black cliffs of the River Porthmos in Opparos Prefecture, Oppara bears all the gravitas and extravagance that 6,000 years of history have conferred upon it. The roofs and domes of Oppara were once plated with gold, earning it the nickname “the Gilded City,” and though past rulers stripped the gold away long ago to pay for the empire’s follies, the wealth and decadence of Taldor’s capital keep the spirit of that name alive.

Oppara serves as Taldor’s primary trade center, with traffic coming both from Taldor’s interior via the River Porthmos and from the steady stream of international vessels sailing in from the Inner Sea. It is also the home of Taldor’s government, hosting both the Imperial Palace of the grand prince and the polished marble halls of the senate. As the economic and political hub of Taldor, Oppara is the beating heart of the empire and the center of Taldan culture. Twin harbors provide goods to the city’s thriving marketplaces and restaurants, and they’re often so crammed with ships that the river cannot be seen. Public fountains and marble statues can be found at many major crossroads and plazas. Columned villas and grandiose temples from every age of Taldor’s history line the streets, and even the humbler merchant districts are holdovers from an unparalleled age of glory. Most of Oppara’s buildings are made of carved stone, and the roads are paved with either intricate mosaics or well-fitted cobblestones. Much of the city’s advanced public works have withstood the test of time, including its labyrinthine sewer system and the network of stone gutters that keep the streets clear of summer rain. The Grand Bridge of the Empire, emerging from the southeastern shore of the city’s heart to cross the massive Porthmos, remains one of the most ambitious and impressive engineering marvels in the Inner Sea. Two magically animated lion sculptures stand sentinel atop Oppara’s main gate, offering a glimpse into the greatness that currently lies dormant within the empire. At night, the city is lit with tens of thousands of lanterns, causing it to shine like a beacon in the darkness.

HISTORY

Once a city-state built atop of the ruins of a settlement established long ago by the descendants of Azlanti refugees, Oppara became the capital of a newly formed empire when its first grand prince, Taldaris, began a 12-year campaign to unite the surrounding communities under a single banner. By the time the first emperor died in –1144 AR, the combined principalities had come to see themselves as a distinct nation. Next followed a slow and methodical conquest

of the surrounding wilds and territories, with Oppara serving as both the naval headquarters and economic financier of these expeditions. In 1 AR, Oppara rose to even greater heights when Aroden pulled the *Starstone* from the Inner Sea and became a god in the process. The organized worship of Aroden sprung up almost overnight, with Oppara building the first cathedral to the god and becoming the center of Arodenite adoration within Taldor. Even today, more than a hundred years after his death, countless monuments and smaller vestiges of Taldans’ dedication to the Last of the First Humans can be seen throughout the city.

Oppara has suffered many blows and setbacks over the long centuries, though it has so far risen from the ashes in the face of all adversity. In –632 AR, the spawn of Rovagug known as the Tarrasque leveled the city, and as Oppara and other prominent Taldan cities scrambled to rebuild, unscrupulous exploitation of laborers triggered rebellion, both in the city and across the empire. Despite this, Oppara eventually managed to return to its former glory, rebuilt with robust civic improvements that have lasted into the present day, and with a working class that held little contempt for their erstwhile oppressors. In 4606 AR, the death of Aroden shook the nation of Taldor to its core, but Oppara has found new faith in Iomedae, the Inheritor, along with new purpose for the abandoned churches of the Last Azlanti. War with the neighboring nation of Qadira and the blunders of several of the Armies of Exploration have cost Taldor’s capital a fortune many times, but it has remained a thriving urban center despite it all. And though the slow decay of Taldor has had no small impact on Oppara, and while internal intrigues threaten the city from within, it continues to embody the proud resilience and spirit of the ancient empire it symbolizes.

OPPARA

N metropolis

Corruption +9; **Crime** +2; **Economy** +9; **Law** +7; **Lore** +9;
Society +5

Qualities academic, bureaucratic quagmire, heart of Avistan, prosperous, strategic location, tourist attraction

Danger +10

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government overlord

Population 109,280 (100,000 humans; 9,280 other)

NOTABLE NPCs

Baron Oltar Vinmark (N male human expert 4/barbarian 4)

Dominicus Rell (N male human bard 3/rogue 3/Lion Blade 3;
Pathfinder Player Companion: Taldor, Echoes of Glory 22)

Grand Prince Stavian III (CN old male human aristocrat 8/
wizard 4)

Princess Eutropia Stavian I (NG female human aristocrat 7/
swashbuckler^{ACG} 6)

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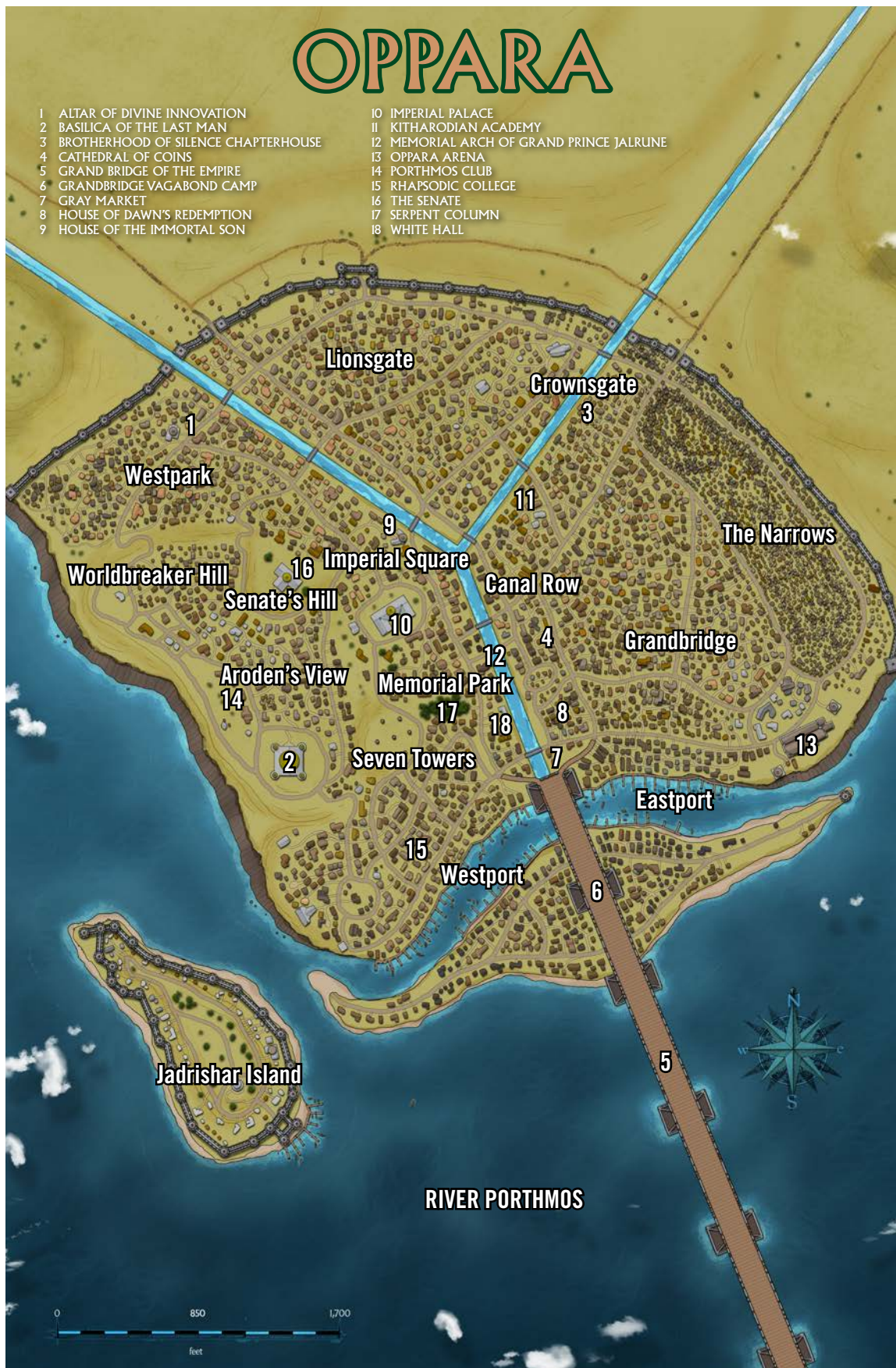
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| 8 HOUSE OF DAWN'S REDEMPTION | 17 SERPENT COLUMN |
| 9 HOUSE OF THE IMMORTAL SON | 18 WHITE HALL |



MARKETPLACE

Base Value 25,600 gp; **Purchase Limit** 150,000 gp;

Spellcasting 9th

Minor Items all available; **Medium Items** 4d4;

Major Items 3d4

QUALITIES

Bureaucratic Quagmire Taldor's obtuse system of governance is mitigated only by the tendency of those in power to ignore it. (*Corruption* +3, *Law* +1)

Heart of Avistan Though decadent and deteriorating behind its glorious facades, Oppara epitomizes the Taldan pride in 6,000 years of history and unparalleled influence on Avistani civilization. (*Economy* +2, *Lore* +2, *Society* +3)

SOCIETY

Oppara's current mix of glory and degradation stems from its past, as the city's triumphs and failures over thousands of years have left indelible marks that shape its present-day society. An excessive, even blind pride in one's heritage is a cornerstone of Taldan identity, and the empire's slow degeneration has only exacerbated the issue as nobles and commoners alike make desperate attempts to cling to their glorified, self-aggrandizing versions of the nation's history and its role in shaping civilizations across the continent. Though viewed as pompous folly by those from neighboring countries, this extreme national pride grants Taldor remarkable stability, with loyalty and patriotism bridging many of the gaps caused by the nation's extreme stratification of power and wealth. Yet this pride can also prove the bane of Taldor, and by extension its capital, as nobles convince themselves they rule over an empire at the height of its power and refuse to update the country's archaic social structures. Living in Oppara—an economic, military, and political powerhouse—adds fuel to these delusions, as the privileged few allow the heights of the city's decadence to mask the depths of its decline.

The presence of so many artists, clergy, merchants, nobles, and senators makes Oppara a flourishing and hectic society that can prove exceedingly difficult to navigate, especially for the uninitiated. Taldor is a complex nation, and its people are pulled in many directions thanks to the large gulf between the impoverished and wealthy, the competing forces of progress and tradition, and the influence of corruption on a chivalrous heritage. While the common people of Oppara are pragmatic folk who go about their daily lives without giving much thought to who is in charge and what their secret motivations might be, socialites find the Gilded City to be a roiling center of politics. Nobles and other elites live insular lives of excess, eternally concerned with gaining status through ostentatious displays of wealth and power, while sycophantic hangers-on rise and fall on their coattails.

The current mayor of Oppara, Baron Oltar Vinmark, was appointed by the grand prince himself, and he has been a source of consternation for much of the nobility; as a former member of the Ulfen Guard, he lacks Taldan cultural mores, but as a favored friend of Stavian III, he is essentially untouchable—at least politically. As is common whenever public allegiances clash with private interests, spies and intrigue abound in Oppara. Taldor's secret police, the Lion Blades, seek out dissidents and other serious threats to the empire, while nobles clandestinely plot reform, often to further their own self-serving interests.

Despite the abundant political strife, many of Oppara's commoners are relatively safe and well off, especially in comparison to those of neighboring cities and countries. Art and refinement remain rich traditions within Oppara despite Taldor's financial foibles, and Opparan citizens, no matter their socioeconomic class, are surrounded on all sides by brilliant music, magnificent architecture, public sculptures, and skillful paintings. This only further reinforces Taldor's national pride, engendering a sense of sophistication within even the most destitute dockworker. Most commoners have at least a few imported luxuries purchased from Oppara's legendary marketplaces, as well as treasured heirlooms from Taldor's prestigious past. Though some districts hold dangers in the form of thieves and cutthroats, most of Oppara is clean, well maintained, and patrolled by the city constables. Whatever the many flaws of the capital, citizens have little fear of major upheaval, trusting the might and traditions of Taldor to protect them no matter how chaotic the political situation becomes.

DISTRICTS OF OPPARA

Oppara is divided into 15 distinct districts, each of which is described in greater detail below. A de facto sixteenth district known as Grandbridge Vagabond Camp (see page 69) lies within Oppara's jurisdiction, but most Opparans do not consider the unsavory locale part of the city proper.

Aroden's View: Standing atop the highest hill in the city, Aroden's View is a small district, but one with great cultural importance—even taking into account that it is surrounded by a city full of Taldan touchstones. It holds some of the oldest buildings in Taldor, some of which even survived the destruction wrought by the Tarrasque (or so their current owners claim), granting the area immense historical significance. It is also one of the most beautiful sites in Oppara, with extravagant gardens filled with rare flowers and other flora, tree-lined avenues perfect for promenading in the latest fashions, and massive villas carefully arranged to take advantage of the breathtaking views the district provides its privileged residents.

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Canal Row: Packed with canal houses running alongside the central canal before transitioning into a more spacious residential district as it progresses further north, Canal Row is home to Oppara's wealthier commoners—merchants, professors, ship captains, and plyers of many other profitable trades. Though not as lavish as the noble districts in other parts of Oppara, Canal Row is brightly colored, clean, and safe, making it an attractive place to visit, as well as a spot that many of the city's more modest social climbers aspire to someday live.

Crowns gate: Named for Oppara's smaller secondary gate at the northeast edge of the city, Crowns gate is a poor district choked with old industrial buildings and warehouses. The district was long ago pilfered for anything desirable by the rest of the city—even the cobblestones in the streets have been pulled up and used elsewhere. Cutthroats, petty thieves, and desperate beggars lurk in the narrow, dirty alleyways at

night, and the constabulary rarely bothers to patrol the area, leaving any chance for justice in the hands of the district's residents.

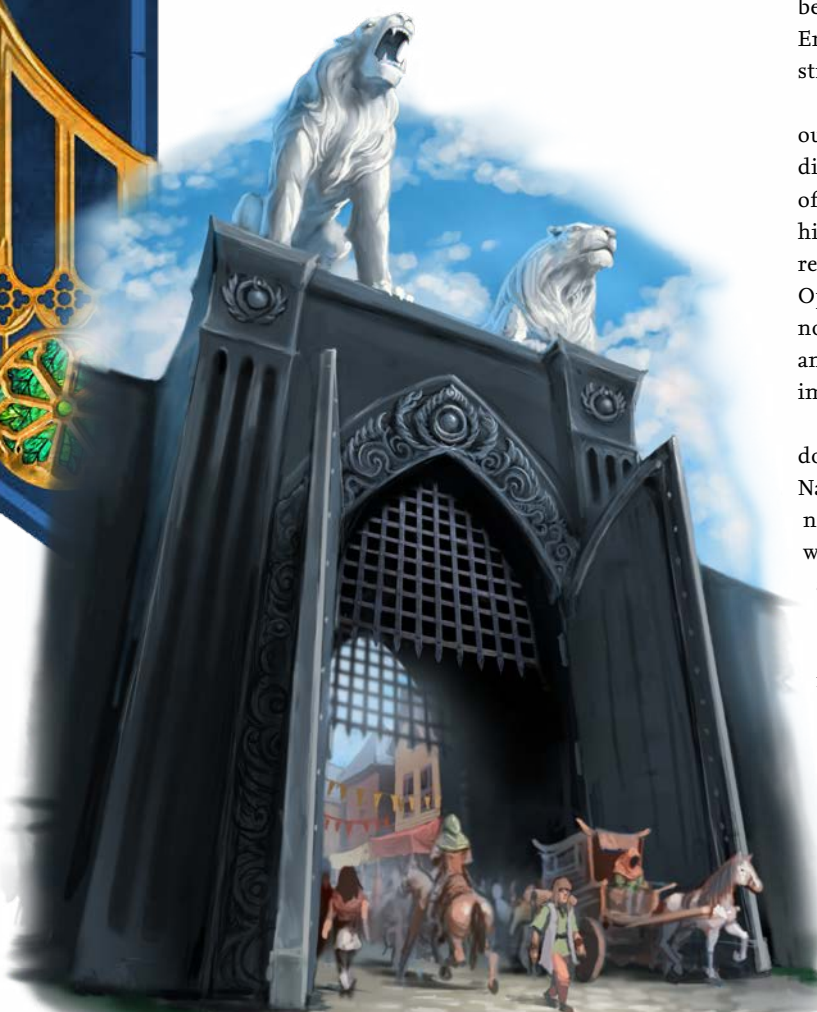
Eastport: The smaller of Oppara's two ports, Eastport occupies the area on the east side of the Grand Bridge of the Empire, and it receives most of the traffic coming from the inland portion of the River Porthmos. The district's buildings are primarily made of wood and have proven something of a fire hazard; twice in just the last century, large portions of Eastport burned to the ground under mysterious circumstances. Even more suspiciously, both of these most recent fires took place exactly 3 days after a Grand Day of Exaltation.

Grandbridge: Grandbridge is the largest district in the capital, spanning the central canal. A mercantile district of worldwide renown, it hosts the infrastructure needed to take advantage of Oppara's international trade, including currency exchanges, factories, import-export firms, open-air markets, shopping squares, and warehouses. The city's infamous Gray Market stands between the split rises of the Grand Bridge of the Empire, offering goods of questionable provenance straight from the docks.

Imperial Square: This exquisite plaza stretches out from the Imperial Palace for several blocks in all directions. Due to the plaza's proximity to the home of the Grand Prince and the constant stream of other high-status clientele, the surrounding apartments, restaurants, and shops are some of the best in all of Oppara—and by extension all of Taldor. Here, local nobles seek out lavish dwellings to impress their peers, and local businesses source the finest products to impress the nobles.

Jadrisar Island: This island southwest of the city is dominated by the headquarters of the Taldan Imperial Navy, including the navy's prestigious college. The naval base is a literal fortress, surrounded by thick walls of blackened stone and guarded day and night by an elite force of dedicated naval personnel. The shore establishment also contains the heavily protected source of Taldor's naval might: a shipyard that can mass-produce vessels, allowing a full-scale warship to be built in as little as a week. Dozens of Taldor's most formidable warships can be found docked here at any given point in time, swarming with maintenance crews working to clean and refit them with new equipment while students from the navy's college perform training exercises.

Lionsgate: Two spectacular, 50-foot-tall, magically animated marble statues of lions top Oppara's main gate. Until recently, a powerful spellcaster was charged with controlling and preserving the massive stone beasts, but—unbeknownst to all but a few bureaucrats—she quit her post and left the city under a shroud of secrecy. Fortunately, the



LIONSGATE

statues seem content for now to lounge most of the day, occasionally rising to let out a mighty roar. A sprawling market occupies the area just inside the gate, taking advantage of the proximity to the city's primary entrance. Small, ornately carved stone buildings are tightly packed together along narrow streets. These originally served as houses, but many have since been converted to shops that cater to the many visitors who arrive by land routes.

Memorial Park: This park serves as a memorial to Taldor's heroes, both real and imagined. Monuments from every era of Taldor's 6,000-year history can be found here, from a brass-plated obelisk in honor of General Arnisant to commemorations of each of the Armies of Exploration. While Taldans are usually quick to loudly and insistently celebrate their country's legacy and its famous figures at any opportunity, this district is a perhaps surprising exception, as its visitors often spend their time in silent reflection—a tradition so ingrained that anyone who makes excessive noise in Memorial Park risks sharp censure from the district's watchful guards.

The Narrows: Oppara's poorest district, the Narrows is more a health hazard than a city neighborhood. The constabulary refuses to patrol the area except rarely and in force, and residents of the neighboring Canal Row district have even gone so far as to request that a wall be built between the two areas. Basic public services do not exist in the Narrows—bodies and refuse lie openly for days in the muddy pits that serve as streets, and the ramshackle wooden buildings collapse into each other with scarcely a warning.

Senate's Hill: Home to the columned marble halls of the senate, Senate's Hill also contains the lavish villas of many senators, especially those who represent distant prefectures and require an official permanent residence for their tenure in Oppara—a much squabbled-over perk. The wealthy district is filled with shops that provide high-end goods and services to this exclusive clientele, with coffee houses, finery shops, luxurious inns (with discreet staff), and bespoke tailors providing anything the local senators might require.

Seven Towers: This district is named for a group of six crumbling towers arranged in a circular pattern around one central column. Dozens of ancient, interconnected dungeon complexes and vaults—remnants of the layered ruins atop of which Oppara is built—have likewise been discovered beneath the district at regular intervals during the city's long history. The government sealed the known entrances to these ruins long ago, without publicly stating a reason, though rumors abound of undead walking the streets of Seven Towers at night and of the namesake towers humming discordant low notes while the ground beneath seems to undulate.

Westpark: Oppara's wealthiest district, Westpark is home to much of Oppara's upper class. The constabulary

maintains several stations here and patrols day and night, while the enormous villas that grace the area are walled in to keep out any undesirables, though such barriers are more often a way for nobles to push the boundaries of their ever-increasing property lines and compete in ostentatious displays than they are a necessary security measure.

Westport: The larger of Oppara's two ports, Westport services all international traffic and all vessels providing supplies to the Taldan navy. The waterfront is crammed with businesses—official or otherwise—that vie for sailors' coin, with flashy brothels, hazy drug dens, chaotic gambling houses, jam-packed inns, unscrupulous moneylenders, ramshackle pawnshops, and rowdy pubs all clamoring for attention.

Worldbreaker Hill: Named for the famed magical siege weapon that once held a prominent place here (before it was removed for use by the Fifth Army of Exploration and subsequently lost in a disastrous battle by the Sixth Army of Exploration), this district now serves as home to many of Taldor's high-ranking military commanders and heroes.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Some of Oppara's most iconic sites are described below.

Altar of Divine Innovation: While the Imperial Palace and the senate building get all the glory of rulership, the civic center in the nearby Westpark district is where most day-to-day business of the state actually gets done. Formerly a temple to Aroden, the building was converted into government offices after the god's death, and it now contains a byzantine mess of overworked actors within the Taldan government, including bureaucrats, diplomats, military officers, agents lobbying for the pet projects of influential people, and even representatives from popular clothiers and jewelers.

Attempting to accomplish anything via strictly legal avenues is a source of extreme frustration for everyone involved; requests are redirected to departments that don't exist, while myriad redundant agencies work at cross-purposes in pursuit of their own notions of the country's aims. The once-orderly system has effectively devolved into a frustrating and chaotic melee in which independent political entities grab as much power as possible from one another in an attempt to accomplish their goals.

Even the seemingly simplest processes have become so opaque that one bitterly jaded noble, Baronet **Solmon Menander** (CN male human investigator^{AGG} 5), has gone so far as to set up a bureaucratic back channel in which he regularly employs means of blackmail, bribery, and forgery. While unquestionably corrupt, Solmon uses his misbegotten influence mostly to provide a means of recourse to nonnobles who get caught up

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in the dysfunctional and uncaring system. Solmon sometimes even goes out of his way to offer assistance to those in need—especially if helping them fulfill their requests is likely to make one of Solmon's fellow nobles suffer.

Basilica of the Last Man: An enormous domed building situated on a hill in Aroden's View, this basilica remains a magnificent structure despite its deteriorating state. The Basilica of the Last Man is the oldest known temple to Aroden on Golarion, and it is one of the very few that remain. The cathedral's archbishop, Father **Basri** (LN male venerable half-elf ex-cleric of Aroden 13), prevented the temple from being torn down by repurposing it as a tourist attraction. Most now see the once-proud basilica as a curiosity at best, though a few less secure Taldans see it as a constant reminder of Aroden's death and Taldor's decline, and therefore as an unbearable embarrassment to the glory of the empire. Those few faithful who remain in unanswered service to Aroden are usually pitied or held in contempt by the rest of Taldor; the aging and ever-dwindling devotees watch over their lifeless relics, displaying their sacraments to occasionally derisive sightseers in order to keep the basilica intact.

Unknown to the temple's keepers, one of the basilica's artifacts still has a spark of power within it—a holy longsword infused with an infinitesimal bit of the power of the *Starstone*. The sword is warded against detection, leaving its minders ignorant of the truth. Though the longsword has remained dormant since Aroden's death, some fluctuation in the weave of fate has awakened it again, causing it to reach out psychically to humans who spend a great deal of time in its vicinity. The museum's current apprentice caretaker, a young Taldan woman of Keleshite ancestry named **Cyr Amestrin** (LN female human expert 2), has fallen under the sword's influence due to repeated contact, and she finds herself increasingly moved to take up the blade.

Brotherhood of Silence Chapterhouse: Based in Crownsgate, this unassuming building is the main chapter house of the Brotherhood of Silence, a large and influential thieves' guild that is active throughout the Inner Sea region. The organization owns a great

deal of property and has chapter houses in most major cities. Their Opparan headquarters is made of black marble and has darkened windows, with two armed and armored guards stationed at the front door at all times. The Brotherhood operates with the tacit sanction of Taldor's government, as it is an open secret that nobles—and even the grand prince—occasionally commission the guild's services. Targets are usually other nobles, though guild members are believed to have stolen from elemental lords, distant dragons' hoards, and even divine servants. The full breadth of any secret agreements between the state and the Brotherhood is not known, but most nobles consider it common knowledge that the guild is not to be retaliated against unless the thief involved is caught in the act or causes physical harm; the crime is otherwise recognized as the responsibility of whoever commissioned the theft, rather than the particular thief or thieves who carried it out.

The presumed leader of the Brotherhood is popularly known as the Masked Marquis, a mysterious figure whose reported appearance, race, and gender seem to change with every sighting. The little information on the Masked Marquis that has been gleaned from defecting members is steeped in ritualism; the person such deserters describe is more akin to an ideal than an individual being—a mythic persona who lesser thieves aspire to become through the act of stealing. The well-kept secret of the Masked Marquis's identity and disparate or vague descriptions cause many to assert that the Masked Marquis is actually several people. Any goals the Masked Marquis has beyond profit are unknown outside the organization and, if the defectors are to be believed, perhaps even within the Brotherhood itself.

Cathedral of Coins: Part temple and part bank, Abadar's church in Oppara is a cathedral in Canal Row topped with a dome of silver and gold, with marble fountains decorating either side of the church steps. Inside, the clergy's sermons border on state propaganda, citing the wealth of the nobility and the stability of the countryside as signs of Abadar's favor. A growing faction of the church's worshipers has become discontent with this viewpoint, however, finding the absurdity of Taldan law to be an affront to their god's teachings. These separatists call themselves the Tare



SEFERI

and have begun to encourage victims of bad governance to carve their grievances into lead scale weights and place them within the collection boxes. The weights are then taken to the knight **Veneranda Cain** (LG female human paladin of Abadar 6), who attempts to determine whether legal measures can address the etched complaints. Despite this unsanctioned break from the church's public message, the cathedral's clergy has yet to either condemn or condone Veneranda's actions, turning a blind eye to the matter for the time being. In recognition of this, members of the Tare have taken to wearing a symbol of a two-headed eagle, as a representation of the two different outlooks within the church.

Grand Bridge of the Empire: Oppara's massive cantilever bridge is set atop enormous stone piles sunk deep into the Porthmos. Built 3,000 years ago to greatly increase the ease with which goods and people could be transported across the river, the Grand Bridge of the Empire remains an impressive architectural achievement even in the present day. The span's surface is paved with delicate mosaic tiles laid across a foundation of thin granite sheets. Two causeways, one on either side of the central canal, offer Opparans easy access to the bridge. The bridge has long been rumored to be a recruiting spot for subversives—especially those who wish to see an end to the Primogen Crown—with those wanting to declare their loyalty to the cause performing a series of subtle steps on a specific pattern of mosaic tiles.

Grandbridge Vagabond Camp: Oppara's unofficial sixteenth district sprawls under the northern span of the Grand Bridge of the Empire, though most citizens do not consider it a part of the city. This massive tent town is populated with criminals, refugees, runaway soldiers, and vagabonds. Oppara has made concerted efforts to clear these undesirables several times in the past, but each attempt has met with vicious resistance from the residents, and the Taldan government now chooses to ignore the camp's existence. While neither the safest nor most appealing place to visit, the vagabond camp can provide an effective place to disappear, one way or another. A few traitors to Taldor have used the camp as a hideout before escaping to Cheliah or elsewhere; it is also the covert refuge of **Samarag Nazres** (LG female human cavalier^{APG} 10), who was an up-and-coming military hero until she mysteriously abandoned her post and vanished 5 years ago.

Gray Market: An open-air square near the River Porthmos in the Grandbridge district, the Gray Market is filled with makeshift stalls hawking wares fresh from the docks. Though the name is supposedly in reference to the morning fog that rises off the river, most people consider it a nod to the dubious origin of the market's staggering array of offered goods. A number of Zimar

Corsairs are known to favor the Gray Market as a place to unload stolen Qadiran cargo; the captains claim Oppara pays better prices than Zimar, as the Opparan marketplace has yet to be saturated with plunder from Qadira. More skeptical citizens suspect the corsairs have an ulterior motive choosing Oppara as a port: namely, moving supplies to certain political factions under the lax scrutiny of those who monitor the Gray Market's ever-shifting merchandise. Suspicion falls in particular on one of the most frequent visitors, Captain **Seferi** (CN female human magus^{UM} 7), who makes no secret of her admiration of the grand prince's daughter, Princess Eutropia.

House of Dawn's Redemption: Standing in the heart of Oppara's Grandbridge district, the House of Dawn's Redemption is a soaring monument to Sarenrae's faith. Built in the Qadiran style and topped with gleaming rose-gold domes, this church is a center for healing and forgiveness, as well as a celebration of the Dawnflower's century-long presence in Taldor. The cathedral stands on the site of Sarenrae's original temple within Oppara, the land having been returned by the city as reparation for the slaughter and exile of Sarenite priests and worshipers under Stavian I. The House of Dawn's Redemption now serves as proof that faith cannot be so easily extinguished, and the church plays host to a great number of once-lost relics that have been returned to the care of the attendant Sarenites after being scattered by the Great Purge.

The current high priest of the temple, Dawnmother **Zenaida Tandleos** (NG female middle-aged human cleric of Sarenrae 9), has devoted herself to healing and welcomes anyone who wishes to join the church into her flock. Old prejudices die hard, however, and some Taldans still consider Sarenrae's faith untrustworthy due to its strong connection with the rival nation of Qadira. The temple's willingness to accept reformed villains among its members adds further fuel to this fire; rumors abound that Sarenites provide sanctuary to fugitives and enemies of the state. While the congregants of the House of Dawn's Redemption are patriotic Taldans and hand over foreign spies and unrepentant criminals to the constabulary, they have on many occasions harbored nonviolent political opponents of the grand prince.

House of the Immortal Son: Formerly the second-oldest temple to Aroden in the Inner Sea, the House of the Immortal Son has been converted into Taldor's most opulent and expensive opera house. Situated to the north of Imperial Square, this marble-and-granite building is constructed in the shape of a cylinder, and the sleek Azlanti-inspired architecture is surrounded by finely carved pillars. Aroden's holy symbol still adorns the roof—a complex work of stone that gazes into the heavens. Tickets to the performances here are one of the

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city's most precious commodities, at least for those of the wealthiest classes who are desperate to see and be seen, and there is no shortage of nobles who would go to great lengths to secure an evening's entertainment at the opulent theater.

Imperial Palace: This is the home of Grand Prince Stavian III, as it has been to every grand prince of Taldor since the empire's founding. From the exterior, the palace is a simple granite building, surrounded on all sides by the Imperial Square district (see page 66). The interior of the palace is extravagantly decorated with ornate arches of patterned stone and shining panels of gold. Stavian III is an indulgent, disinterested ruler, and his court consists mostly of sycophants with no real value to the state. The grand prince's daughter, Princess Eutropia, sometimes holds court in his absence, encouraging more robust debate. The exterior of the palace is often heavily guarded by regiments of the Taldan Phalanx and Taldan Horse, who march across the square daily and watch the palace entrances. Stavian III also employs a permanent detachment of Ulfen Guards to keep the palace secure.

Kitharodian Academy: The larger of Oppara's famed bardic colleges, Kitharodian Academy—also known as the Kith—is located along the northern edge of Canal Row. The school is a hallmark of Taldan culture, and people of all social classes regularly attend its student and alumni performances. Even the grand prince himself has been known to attend these events, providing one of the few opportunities for untitled citizens to see him in person. The Kitharodian Academy is less known for its other function: it is the primary recruiting ground for Taldor's enigmatic secret police and spies, the Lion Blades. The organization seeks out bards in particular due to their versatile skills and creative minds, scouting the most promising students for potential training in one of the many shadow schools hidden throughout Taldor. Nearly all of the school's teachers are former Lion Blades, including the school's administrator, Lord **Merriweather Stokes** (N male human bard 4/rogue 3/Lion Blade 3; *Pathfinder Player Companion: Taldor, Echoes of Glory* 22), who handles most matters of enlistment.

Hidden beneath the Kitharodian Academy is the Lion Blades' most prestigious shadow school, as well as a secret archive known as the Library of the Lion—a priceless collection of unmodified histories, contentious first-person accounts of famous events, and espionage dossiers. The head of the Lion Blades, Dominicus Rell,

is often found here training new recruits or improving the archive's considerable resources.

Memorial Arch of Grand Prince Jalrune: Spanning the width of the central canal, crossing from Memorial Park into Canal Row, this arch serves as a memorial to an assassinated grand prince of Taldor. The monument depicts a half-dozen famous scenes from Grand Prince Jalrune's life, beginning at the base of Memorial Park with his birth, ascending to his crowning at the center of the arch, and ending at the base of the monument in Canal Row with his assassination. His assassins are portrayed as plain and faceless, which curiously goes against the common view that Qadiran agents murdered Jalrune. Even so, his arch has become a meeting place and a covert symbol to those nobles and military officials who still press for war with Qadira. These like-minded thinkers draw inspiration from a doomed secret society that

attempted to start a war with Qadira and whose members were exiled after being stripped of all titles. For obvious reasons, present-day conspirators rarely announce these sentiments, instead using Prince Jalrune as a secret signal to others who share their beliefs. Several high-ranking military officials meet here surreptitiously, as well as Senator **Karthis** (N male middle-aged human aristocrat 5/bard 4), a thin-skinned demagogue who vocally advocates for the destruction of Qadira in both public orations and speeches to the Taldan senate.

Oppara Arena: Located in Grandbridge, Oppara's arena is among the oldest in the Inner Sea, and its massive stone stands hold up to 20,000 spectators. Both gladiator matches and battles between other less intelligent creatures are held frequently—the arena offers a handsome price for wild animals or more monstrous creatures that can be used as entertainment. On special occasions, the stadium can even be flooded to simulate naval engagements in miniature. Skilled (or foolhardy) warriors from abroad are frequently invited to compete for wealth and glory. Admission is a single copper piece, and it is not uncommon for nobles to provide food and drinks for the entire audience, though it is painfully obvious to all that they do so only in service of an ulterior motive.

The blood of generations of combatants has soaked the arena's sands, granting the stadium itself a malevolent, magical bloodlust. Spectators can remain caught up in the crowd's supernaturally enhanced frenzy for days afterward, with those most affected becoming more likely to torment animals or attack someone in



CARINA IGNATUS

a maddened fervor. Uncanny accidents are known to happen whenever blood has not been spilled in the arena for more than a few days, though the degenerate tastes of regular attendees mean that the coliseum rarely goes unfed for long.

Porthmos Club: Formerly a temple to Shelyn and still holding many books and artworks of the faithful, the Porthmos Club was converted into a high-class teahouse almost a century ago. The resplendent stone building looks over the city from Aroden's View, and only the highest strata of Opparan clientele are admitted. Membership is a highly pursued commodity, as it offers promises of wealthy contacts and the potential for social climbing. The Porthmos Club also contains a hidden basement chamber, which secret societies or conspirators can discreetly book with the teahouse's proprietor, **Trelorick Anstarza** (LN male human aristocrat 5). This private meeting room attracts everything from political dissidents to nobles with delusions of more influence than they actually have; it is also both used and carefully monitored by the Lion Blade agent **Lenorilia Callatarro** (N female human bard 3/rogue 3/Lion Blade 3; *Pathfinder Player Companion: Taldor, Echoes of Glory* 22).

Rhapsodic College: Hidden within the clutter of Westport, Rhapsodic College is easily overlooked by tourists, consisting of only a few small buildings around a performance and practice hall. While a smaller and lesser-known bardic school than the Kitharodian Academy, Rhapsodic College makes up for its size with quality. Many of the finest bards in Taldor have come from this school, so graduates are frequently in demand across the Inner Sea region and beyond. The Taldan nobility also regularly taps such bards to write histories of the empire—often with a heavy political spin. Many bards make a fine living in Taldor publishing accounts of past events that paint their employers in a favorable light. Politics can be a dangerous business, however, and these propagandists sometimes suffer ignominious ends to their careers or lives for supporting the wrong person.

One of the college's more successful history professors, **Carina Ignatus** (N female middle-aged human bard 6), has accumulated a small fortune—and no small degree of infamy—by secretly writing unflattering biographies of her patrons and their allies and releasing them quickly when one of them falls from grace. This recently backfired when her scathing biography of a well-loved noble was lost (or worse, stolen), leaving her scrambling to find it before she too falls victim to the axe of public opinion that she has so expertly sharpened.

The Senate: Immediately adjacent to Imperial Square on Senate's Hill, this striking hall of governance is carved from marble and surrounded by lavish columns.

Each evening, dozens of lanterns set the structure aglow. One hundred steps lead up to the main entrance; theoretically these remind senators of their duty to the people they serve, though most senators use the back entrance.

Older and cannier members of the senate are becoming increasingly troubled by the apparent succession crisis looming in Oppara, though their concerns have yet to spread throughout Taldor's halls of power. These lawmakers have instead begun making their own private preparations. One of Taldor's more unusual senators—a former wrestler named **Genethlia** (CG female old dwarf skald^{ACG} 8) who was appointed by Stavian I on the sole basis of her popularity—has even begun mustering a private army in case of trouble.

Oppara's senate building is built on top of the city's previous senate buildings, from the ruins of the chamber that was destroyed by the Tarrasque to the foundations of the structure destroyed in a massive earthquake in 2920 AR. As a result, the earth beneath the building is riddled with forgotten chambers, hallways, and tunnels that have been closed off and forgotten for centuries.

Serpent Column: Located in the heart of Memorial Park, the Serpent Column is actually two columns, apparently built side by side and twisted together. The structure rests on a base of green-hued stone, and its surface is perfectly smooth to the touch, bearing neither scratches nor deliberate carvings. Most assume the column is magical in some way, as it is harder than steel and untouched by age, but scholars have been unable to detect any magical auras or effects emanating from the pillars. The Serpent Column is a vestige of the ancient settlement that predated Oppara, and it is likely related to the ruins buried beneath the city in the Seven Towers district, leading some to wonder whether those ruins are far more extensive than historians admit. Residents and visitors alike find it curious that the column holds a position of pride within Oppara while the rest of the city's most ancient ruins remain buried and sealed off.

White Hall: A four-story marble structure in Grandbridge, White Hall is the headquarters of Oppara's constabulary. Residents who are familiar with the structure and its tenants are decidedly ambivalent about its existence. On the one hand, the city's constables have a long and proud tradition of serving and protecting Taldan citizens, and they treat their main station as an extension of that illustrious history. On the other hand, the White Hall has been quietly nicknamed the Screaming Pillars, as rumors abound of torture and political dissidents vanishing into the building forever after being hauled there on trumped-up charges. If an independent group of investigators were ever to confirm such rumors, the entire city could be thrown into chaos.

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As indicated by census one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, revision stroke fifty-two, the magnanimous decision of the senate stands with regards to this matter. The lands indicated as belonging to a portion of landscape seventy-nine in Tandak Prefecture are now forfeit at the enlightened request of our illustrious grand prince. Demolition and excavation are slated to occur within the week, with the full construction of the marble statue of Grand Prince Stavian III to be completed within the three months following. If the church of Irori wishes to further oppose these enacted measures, then an inquiry can be formed, though a senatorial prehearing on the matter cannot occur until six months and twelve days hence.

Now, on to the next issue...

—Transcribed Script of Taldan Senate Hearing Number 27,405

Taldor's senate has existed for millennia, guiding the nation's policies in both subtle and overt ways. While the grand prince maintains near-absolute authority over the nation, it falls to the senate to handle the day-to-day business of the Taldan empire by making decisions and proclamations that further the aims and glory of the nation. Traditionally, the emperor has tasked the 222 hereditary legislators with translating his commands into formal law, as well as with passing laws deemed beneath his notice. People across Taldor look up to the senate as a shining example of the good that a just and benevolent nobility can achieve, and while citizens often decry individual senators for being corrupt or ineffective, the greater political body has generally managed to avoid much of the shame recently associated with the stagnation of Taldor. Even as Taldor has failed to expand territorially in recent years, and although the empire has lost much of its former prestige, the wheels of governance continue to turn—in part a testament to the senate's ongoing function within the grand government of the nation.

A vast majority of the positions within the senate are hereditary, regularly passing from parent to child in a natural order that precludes political intervention. Despite the progress made in recent years, including that achieved through the subtle steering of Taldan politics by Princess Eutropia and her allies, traditional succession dictates that a retiring senator's position falls to his eldest son, skewing the senate's makeup heavily toward men.

On occasion, a member of the senate vacates his position without a replacement, usually either because he fails to produce an heir or because he commits some catastrophic political blunder that destroys his career. Senatorial seats opened by such a circumstance are filled pursuant to the machinations of the senate and the grand prince. Vacant positions can stay empty for any length of time, from hours to decades depending entirely on the cohesion of the current senate body and the interests of the ruling grand prince. Grand Prince Stavian III uses his authority to fill the senate only sparingly, with a few exceptions. Because of the current grand prince's lack of intervention in this political process, the senate currently has several vacancies ready to be filled by eager and willing nobles.

The role of the senate within the War for the Crown Adventure Path is primarily confined to the events of this adventure. The exact actions and roles of the various senators during the remainder of the Adventure Path are generally left up to you to determine. By the end of the campaign, Taldor should have a newly elevated emperor (or empress), and the senate should have retaken its position as an effective tool for administering the nation's affairs. Maintaining the presence of individual

senators and their interests throughout the Adventure Path can amplify the verisimilitude of the campaign, and it also helps create the potential for PCs to take on the roles of powerful and influential senators at the conclusion of the Adventure Path.

Incorporating the Senate: In this article, 12 unique senators are profiled. These NPCs are intended for use throughout the campaign, each offering services and side stories to pursue. The senators presented in this article range from conservative traditionalists to more outlandish personalities, and any one of them, or even a number of them, might attract the PCs' attention. You are encouraged to include one or more of these NPCs in Part 1 of "Crownfall." The senators are presented with abbreviated social stat blocks, including their personal preferences and the potential benefit each might provide to favored PCs, so that you can effectively incorporate them into the campaign. For more about social stat blocks, see page 107 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue*.

Any of the senators listed in this article are appropriate for inclusion in Part 1 of the adventure, and you can round out their social stat blocks by using the influence DCs and required number of successes from the existing senators. Keep in mind that adding more than a single NPC in this way makes it more difficult to influence the existing NPCs; you should therefore increase the number of social rounds available to the PCs in Part 1 to compensate—2 additional social rounds for every NPC added should be appropriate, as long as the NPC does not have excessively high influence DCs or a high number of necessary successes.

If you'd like to build custom social encounters with these senators later in the Adventure Path, you are encouraged to review and employ the guidelines in Chapter 4 of *Ultimate Intrigue*, especially Table 4–1: Freeform Check DCs by Level (on page 171). Using the table as a reference, you can scale each of these NPCs to be an appropriate challenge for PCs of any level. Similarly, the rules for social conflicts and verbal duels make for excellent additional content to use if the PCs form strong bonds—or rivalries—with any of the NPCs in this article (or with those of your own creation).

The NPCs described in the following pages also have listed classes, though specific levels are not given. This allows you to further flesh out these characters based on the needs of your campaign. If one of these NPCs later becomes a primary villain or enemy combatant, for example, it is entirely reasonable to give that NPC a high number of class levels so she can act as a suitable threat to the PCs. To generate basic statistics for less combat-oriented purposes, you can instead use the rules for creating NPCs starting on page 450 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*.

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GRAND DUKE AVERNATHUS

LE male human
aristocrat/magus^{UM}

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Any who acknowledge the role of luck in political change, and those interested in the fundamentals of the magical arts.

Detests Those dismissive of his proffered knowledge, and those who don't

balance their magical and martial prowess.

Benefit Grand Duke Avernathus has a wide array of contacts in the spellcasting community. He can easily arrange meetings for the PCs with some of the most powerful sorcerers and wizards in the Inner Sea region, as well as with renowned alchemists.

Well into his sixties, Grand Duke Avernathus is one of the nation's nominal grand dukes, holding the highest title but wielding little real power. Avernathus's senate seat and title are tied to the Porthmos Gap in the east of Taldor—an appointment he was mysteriously gifted by Grand Prince Stavian III. The bequeathal irritated many in the senate; they couldn't fathom why a minor noble such as Avernathus received such a prestigious, though admittedly impotent, role. The most widely spread rumors tell a damning tale of an ambitious young noble who traded his children for access to ancient magic buried under the Porthmos Gap. The young Avernathus, the story goes, then used his newfound power to strong-arm his way into his position.

In truth, the senator has little interest in the inhospitable territory over which he rules—and even less interest in butting heads with Grand Duke Thestro Briarsmith, the ruthless dictator of Porthmos Prefecture. Lacking a family and any ambition for his barren and dangerous territory, Grand Duke Avernathus focuses on passing his wealth of knowledge to newer generations. Despite his arrogance and abrupt personality, he sincerely cares for the futures of Taldor's young people. He is willing to take on apprentices, though his mix of martial and spellcasting aptitudes means he isn't specialized in either. Worth far more than his offerings as a mentor are the grand duke's many contacts throughout the Inner Sea region. Avernathus is acquainted with many of the most well-known high-level spellcasters in one way or another, and he can get the PCs in touch with many tutors and potential allies.



BARONET DURANIS CICATO

LN male human
aristocrat/fighter

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors The maintenance of order, and the ability to make a strong show of force when necessary.

Detests Signs of weakness in conversation, and the willingness to erode

one's position with continual compromises.

Benefit Baronet Cicato has numerous contacts along the coast of Taldor, especially near Cassomir, and thus can provide the PCs with improved transport throughout the Cassomir region and anywhere Taldor touches the Inner Sea.

Duranis Cicato is a battle-tested military man, having fought insurgents and threats all throughout the lands south of Cassomir. He earned a vicious scar across his face while fighting a group of Urgathoan cultists operating near Taldor's southernmost shores in a battle that ended with the cultists' defeat and several years of prosperity in the region. Upon his return to his familial holdings after that battle, Duranis found his elderly mother on her deathbed. Following his mother's death, he procured an honorable discharge from the military and assumed his mother's former seat in the senate.

Cicato is a dogged proponent for revitalizing Taldor's military, which he sees as languishing despite its ample funding. He specifically champions updating a military that he fears lags behind the innovations of other nations. While these beliefs are somewhat shared with High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus, the two often disagree about the best way to implement military reform. Cicato's willingness to accept Eutropia as his future empress is perhaps the strongest wedge between him and the high strategos.

To influence Duranis Cicato, one needs to be strongly dedicated to ensuring the ongoing defense of Taldor. The senator does not respond well to threats, and he prefers dealing with people who emphatically agree with his beliefs that Taldor needs a stronger military. Earning an alliance with the baronet grants the PCs access to the land trade routes along the Inner Sea. Exactly how this manifests in a campaign is up to you, but it should at least allow the PCs easier access to equipment via these roads.



LADY ZARIYAH CLEMENT

NG female human
aristocrat

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Decorous discussion of controversial topics, and meticulous attention to detail.

Detests Those who judge others based on appearances, and people who question

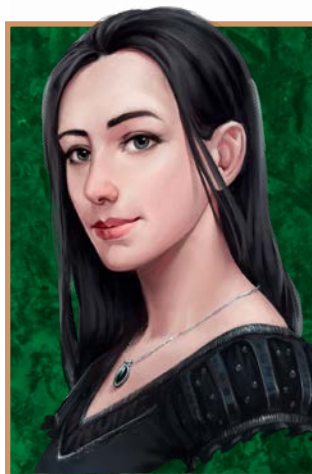
the validity of her station.

Benefit Zariyah can offer a safe house away from the capital and other highly populated areas of Taldor, for both the PCs and their NPC allies when they need to lay low or make plans in secret.

Zariyah Clement's ancestors immigrated to Taldor at the conclusion of the Sixth Army of Exploration's disastrous expedition into the Mwangi Expanse. These forebears had acted as guides for the Taldan army, battling side-by-side against the depredations of the Gorilla King. After decades of dedicated service and political marriages, the family won entrance into Taldor's nobility, along with a seat on the senate, which its descendants have been careful to protect in the centuries since. Zariyah is the lady of her household, balancing management of a relatively small estate just northeast of the Verduran Forest with her duties in the senate.

Given the current political climate, Clement does her best to maintain her family's position. She endorses Princess Eutropia's ascension to the throne but has yet to declare her support publicly, aware that the remainder of senate will ostracize her if the effort fails. In social scenes, the senator is sophisticated and impeccably mannered, though she has sharp words ever in reserve for those who aggrieve her or her allies. Lady Clement's greatest distaste is for those who immediately ask her questions about her about her ancestral homeland or bring up her heritage—she often rejects such inquiries by tersely answering, "I'm Taldan. I'm from Taldor."

If the PCs manage to impress the exacting noble, they can likely earn access to her personal manse near the Verduran Forest, far from much of Taldor's political turmoil. Senator Clement offers her well-appointed estate as a resting and regrouping point if the PCs are ever forced to evacuate Oppara or other metropolitan areas in the empire.



MARQUESS CHARLOTTE DESCHAMPS

CN female human
rogue/shadowdancer

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Bold, dry wit, and an appreciation for the finer things in life (caviar, exquisite dress, and the like).

Detests Discussions of trite subjects, and insensible requests.

Benefit Charlotte

Deschamps maintains several connections within the Pathfinder Society, including agents and items whose use might exceed the bounds of polite society. Charlotte can offer access to these potent resources to PCs she deems worthy.

Born in Oppara to commoners, Charlotte Deschamps seized social-climbing opportunities wherever they present themselves, even slipping into noble households disguised as a page to learn everything she possibly could of upper-class customs. After one such endeavor turned sour, she fled Taldor's capital and joined the Pathfinder Society. Over the course of her adventures, Deschamps's skills proved useful to the Society, and she became a well-regarded field agent with a penchant for neutralizing the Society's enemies. She earned the attention of two other important Pathfinders: Aurelius Cato and Lady Gloriana Morilla (for more information about Lady Gloriana Morilla's connection to Taldor, see page 23 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Pathfinder Society Field Guide*).

Through a long-standing relationship with the disgraced Aurelius Cato, Charlotte joined the Cato family, finally gaining the noble title she had sought for so long. Thanks to the considerable influence of Lady Gloriana Morilla and Princess Eutropia, Deschamps recently filled a vacated seat on the senate as a representative of the interests of House Cato. Even before her appointment was put into motion, the marquess recognized the virtue of Eutropia's goals and aligned herself with the princess. Now she uses her position to hasten the end of primogeniture and bring about a resurgence of noble glory.

Marquess Deschamps disdains colorful attire, dressing entirely in dark clothing. She is incredibly skilled with short blades, and she employs a shadowy companion, about whom little is known, to aid her in secretly dispatching at any cost those who would stop Princess Eutropia's ascent.

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LANDGRAVE OGVAI JARLBJORN

CN male human
barbarian

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Displays of strength, and the demonstrated ability to commit to a cause, especially in the face of long odds.

Detests Sexism in all forms, physical weakness, and

anything he considers “witch magic.”

Benefit Ogvai Jarlbjorn has many connections to the Ulfen Guard, and he can reveal useful information about the organization to PCs who impress him.

A decade ago, a rain-soaked Ulfen approached Grand Prince Stavian III's palace in the dead of night. Escorted inside by the Ulfen Guard, the man introduced himself as Ogvai Jarlbjorn and declared that Taldor would soon be under threat from the frost giants of the Fog Peaks. Stavian dismissed the Ulfen's warning and reprimanded his guard for the intrusion, but he later learned that frost giants did indeed assault several hamlets south of the Fog Peaks—and that the invaders were repelled thanks in no small part to Jarlbjorn's presence. Stavian presented Ogvai Jarlbjorn with the title of landgrave, charging him with the protection of the lands south of the Fog Peaks. While this seemed an obvious reward for service rendered to Taldor, another of Stavian's motivations for the appointment was no doubt to mend any potential political wounds the incident caused to his status with the Ulfen Guard.

Ogvai quickly became a practical and efficient ruler of his small allotment, earning the respect of the paltry population he governed. When word of the landgrave's effectiveness—and the envious discontent it was fomenting in neighboring regions—reached the grand prince, Stavian “promoted” Ogvai to a vacant position within the senate. Ogvai reluctantly acquiesced to the command, and he began spending more and more time in Oppara rather than the foothills of the Fog Peaks that he'd sworn to defend. Because of this forced detachment, he has come to resent the senate, and he hopes to see Eutropia quickly enthroned, as he believes she will value practicality over politics.

You can use Ogvai's presence to create diversions from this otherwise intrigue-focused Adventure Path—Ogvai could potentially request the PCs' aid in repelling a frost giant attack from the Fog Peaks, for example.



LORD REMILLIARD KASTNER

LG male human
paladin of Ragathiel

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Belief in the power of redemption, and the willingness to battle against evil.

Detests Talk of modern Cheliah or diabolism.

Benefit Remilliard is a shining example of his branch of the

Kastner line. Churches of good-aligned deities throughout Taldor have heard of his good works, and the senator's endorsement can grant access to the services of powerful clerics at reduced costs.

The Kastner lineage is one that traces back to the earliest days of the Taldan empire. Given that long history, it was only relatively recently that a major schism drove apart the bloodline: when Cheliah succeeded from Taldor, a fifth of the Kastner family remained loyal to Taldor, believing their kin to be wrong in departing. When the Chelish Kastners' long-standing practice of diabolism came to light in the Thrune-dominated nation, the Taldan Kastners felt their decision to remain supremely vindicated, and they managed to regain a sliver of their noble standing within Taldor.

Remilliard Kastner is the latest in the Taldan Kastner line to lead his household. A devout paladin of Ragathiel, he champions the cause of battling against devil-ensnared Cheliah and freeing the common folk from the oppression of devils and House Thrune. His appointment to the senate was a continuance of his family's generations-long presence in the government, which suffered only a brief lapse in the immediate aftermath of Cheliah's separation from the empire. Remilliard regularly uses his platform to pursue progressive reforms within Taldor, though he refuses to entertain the notion of a potential peaceful future with Cheliah.

Should the PCs make a good impression on Lord Kastner, they may well find him a staunch ally in their efforts to enthrone Princess Eutropia and battle the evil forces that emerge as the War for the Crown Adventure Path continues.

Special Note: The Chelish side of the Kastner bloodline is further explored in *Pathfinder Society Scenario #4-09: The Blakros Matrimony* and *Pathfinder Society Scenario #5-14: Day of the Demon*.



VISCOUNTESS OCTAVIA NICODEMIUS

LN female human
occultist^{OA}

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Occult lore, speculation on the potential contents of lost tomes, and acquiring (and disseminating) secret information.

Detests The belief that knowledge should be kept hidden, the taste of

vegetables, and anything involving the number seven.

Benefit Viscountess Nicodemius maintains a repository of knowledge known as the Endless Repository. She allows free access to its vaults, but she offers personal tours—and loans—only to those who have earned her trust. Information, magic items, and scribed spells are just some of the potential treasures the PCs can find in the Endless Repository if they have Octavia's assistance.

Well into her nineties, Octavia Nicodemius is one of Taldor's oldest and longest-serving senators. These days, she rarely leaves what she considers her life's work: a mysterious archive of objects and information known as the Endless Repository. Viscountess Nicodemius comes to Oppara only a handful of times each year, partly because of her advanced age, and partly because she strives to finish cataloging her repository before she chooses a successor for her senate seat—and possibly for stewardship of the repository. The Endless Repository is located in western Porthmos, though portals leading to it might exist in major cities, at your discretion.

Viscountess Nicodemius can help further explore this Adventure Path's occult-themed mysteries. She can serve as a great boon (or even a long-term foe) for any PCs who take levels in one of the occult classes presented in *Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures*. For non-occult characters, Octavia can provide useful snippets of a long life's worth of accumulated knowledge. Her stores of esoteric information can be especially useful in later adventures, such as those featured in "The Reaper's Right Hand" and "The Six-Legend Soul," both of which include extraplanar, historical, and even occult elements. Octavia can also take on the role of crafter in campaigns in which the PCs forgo such skills. Successfully earning the viscount's admiration grants the PCs access to her ability to craft most magical items, with the notable exception of arms and armor.



MARQUESS TANASHA STARBORNE

CG female gnome
aristocrat/sorcerer

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Excessive displays of magic, and pure expressions of joy.

Detests Pessimism, long speeches, boring periods of inactivity, and politics.

Benefit Marquess Starborne represents

the interests of the gnomes of Wispil and the fey of the greater Verduran Forest. While her ability to achieve real change in the senate is limited, she maintains strong connections with the fey. PCs earning her attention can gain safe access through the Verduran Forest, as well as potential access to fey boons (such as those detailed on page 72 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #119: Prisoners of the Blight*).

The noble and senatorial position held by Marquess Tanasha Starborne is one of the few in the senate that is not hereditary. Instead, the gnomes of Wispil, a city in the heart of the Verduran Forest that supplies much of Taldor's lumber, elect one of their own to take on the position, usually once their incumbent senator can't stand the drudgery any longer. Marquess Starborne is an energetic gnome who took up the position roughly 2 decades ago, but the monotony and rigmarole of her senatorial duties are starting to take their toll, so she does whatever she can to liven up her routine-ruled life in Oppara and the senate, including vexing her more staid colleagues.

Despite regular return visits to Wispil, Marquess Starborne always finds herself summoned back to Oppara for one reason or another. Wishing to fulfill her duties and to avoid being viewed as rude by her colleagues, the senator regularly attends social functions held throughout the nation, though she's aware that her fellow senators invite her to these gatherings primarily because they perceive her as a curiosity or amusing diversion, not because they have the due respect for her or her position. Many of these same senators are aghast at Tanasha's staunch and oft-stated intent to support both the end of primogeniture and the eventual enthronement of Princess Eutropia. Discomfiting old-guard senators has the added benefit of helping Tanasha stave off the Bleaching, a wasting disease that affects gnomes who become mired in mundanity.

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DUKE GEORGI BACKUS TALBOT II

LN male human
aristocrat

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Discussion of trade policies with other nations and trade in general, and those who help him grow his personal empire.

Detests Talk about family (especially his

own) or about adventurers and their accomplishments.

Benefit Talbot's personal trade empire stretch far beyond the borders of Taldor, extending as far as Varisia. PCs earning Talbot's affection can purchase goods (both magical and mundane) from cities beyond Taldor, often at a considerable discount.

Duke Georgi Backus Talbot II lives two lives. His first life is that of a senator and a political figure in the machinations of the Taldan empire. His second—the one he pours a majority of his energy into—is that of a business magnate. Georgi maintains a vast trade empire, exchanging all manner of mundane and magical goods throughout Taldor and the Inner Sea region. He uses his position on the senate to push for greater trade reforms, allowing him to make further inroads with former Taldan territories, such as Andoran, Cheliah, and Galt.

A bald man well into his fifties, Georgi's greatest shame is his family. His son, Howell Backus Talbot III, joined the church of Abadar at an early age. Soon enough, Howell set off to distant Varisia in search of adventure under orders from the Church of Abadar, leaving Georgi alone with his senatorial duties and business empire—a disloyalty he has never quite forgiven his son for. Because of this abandonment, Georgi refuses to talk about his family and hates hearing about the exploits of adventurers.

Those seeking Georgi's favor must first prove their use to him as a business asset, whether by performing personal favors or demonstrating the means to increase the prestige and wealth of Talbot's business empire. Earning such a favor results in access to a wide assortment of equipment from throughout the Inner Sea region and beyond. Transporting these goods may require additional agreements (particularly with Count Orlundo Zespire; see page 79), but the combined rewards should ensure that PCs with such allegiances rarely have trouble acquiring improved equipment.



EARL GAHEZ VARIMA

N male human
aristocrat/bard

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Long-lasting compromises, stability in the political arena, and support for importing goods from distant lands.

Detests Public disgrace, needless personal aggression and warfare, and those

who oppose religious freedom.

Benefit Unlike many nobles in Taldor, Gahez maintains a somewhat cordial relationship with the Padishah Empire of Kelesh. He can arrange meetings between the PCs and Keleshite contacts, which could prove especially useful in the fourth adventure of the War for the Crown Adventure Path, "City in the Lion's Eye."

Claiming to be a direct descendant of the earliest Vudrani immigrants to Taldor, Gahez Varima now represents the mountainous region northeast of Zimar. He inherited this senate seat from his aging father, who served in the political body for decades, all the while both teaching Gahez the intricacies of Taldan politics and instilling in him an abiding affection for Vudra and desire for closer ties.

Earl Varima speaks often of his ancestral homeland, and he has made a point of personally visiting the Impossible Kingdoms on two distinct occasions, both times in an official capacity as an ambassador for Taldor. In each instance, Grand Prince Stavian III is known to have publicly remarked on Gahez's visit, subtly communicating the emperor's expectation that formal overtures from Vudra should result from the senator's goodwill trips.

While the senator cherishes his connection with Vudra, he spends a majority of his time concerned with the ever-present threat of war with Qadira and the Padishah Empire of Kelesh. Because of his attention to this growing threat, Varima has many contacts within Qadira, and he has become a major proponent of peace between the two empires.

Winning Gahez Varima's favor requires social graces and a desire to see Taldor maintain peaceful relations with its neighbors—including its former territories. The earl is eager to assist in de-escalating any problematic or potentially war-triggering situations brought to his attention. He also has access to numerous allies in and around the city of Zimar, which could prove useful to the PCs in future adventures.



EARL CALHADION VERNISANT

NE male human
cavalier^{ACG}

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Proud discussions of family history or of crushing political enemies, and those seeking the return of Taldor's glory days.

Detests Those who support Princess Eutropia's bid for the

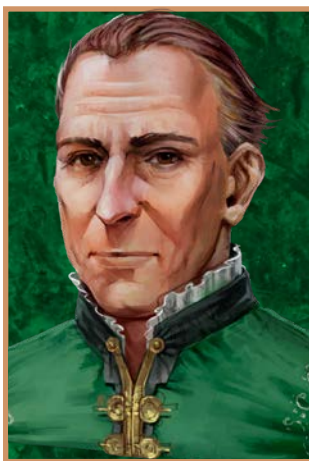
throne and those who believe that bloodlines and familial history are irrelevant aspects of leadership.

Benefit Calhaddon Vernisant is a powerful political ally, but a dangerous one. He can arrange for "unfortunate events" to befall political rivals, though making such a request is an evil act. Allying with Vernisant also requires forsaking allegiance to Princess Eutropia—or at least pretending to.

A proud man in his early thirties, Calhaddon Vernisant is the appointed leader of Greater Ridonport and a hereditary senator. His political ambitions are considerable, though he kept a low profile following the brutal dismemberment of Grand Duke Forath Bozbeyli (the former head of Tandak Prefecture). As Stavian III recently dismissed numerous officials, Calhaddon began to believe his opportunity to become one of the grand prince's close advisors is fast approaching. To boost his resume, he has played up his being a direct descendant of General Arnisant and used his pedigree to politically bludgeon his peers into submission, leveraging their fear of appearing unpatriotic against them.

This has gone on with increasing openness in the decade since Calhaddon became head of his household. He finds that most Taldans are willing to look the other way regarding the distant heir of such a grand general, even when the earl has used this aegis to promote criminal activity that ultimately benefits him. He has also begun removing pieces from the underfunded museum of Arnisant in Ridonport, replacing them with heirlooms more befitting his plans at any given moment.

Special Note: Earl Calhaddon Vernisant plays an active role in several Pathfinder Society Scenarios, including *Pathfinder Society Scenario #9–08: Birthright Betrayed*, *Pathfinder Society Scenario #9–11: The Jarlsblood Witch Saga*, and *Pathfinder Society Scenario #9–13: The Lion's Justice*. These adventures take place before the events of "Crownfall," and they can be played as a prequel to the Adventure Path.



COUNT ORLUNDO ZESPIRE

LN male human
swashbuckler^{ACG}

SOCIAL INFORMATION

Favors Competence and persistence overcoming limited resources, cooperation across political divides, and genuine interest in naval concerns.

Detests Needless complaining, the use

of political power for purely personal gain, and toothless posturing.

Benefit Count Zespire has connections that range from Taldor to the River Kingdoms. Earning an alliance with the count grants the PCs access to these contacts, which can facilitate trade on waterways throughout Taldor as well as other nations touched by the Sellen River.

Although he learned the fundamentals of governance from his parents and uncles, as the third-born son of his family, Orlundo stood little chance of inheriting much more than a title. He joined Taldor's military and traveled widely, first as an ambassador's guard and later as the leader of a pirate-hunting unit along the Jagged Saw, the most treacherous stretch of Taldor's coastline. His orders to track and capture a particularly nefarious pirate led him all the way into the River Kingdoms in pursuit, and it was there that his tenacity and sheer skill on the rivers earned him his nickname, "the Iron Gar." The expedition made him a minor hero back home, and Grand Prince Stavian III appointed him to a vacant seat in the senate, where he represents central Tandak's interests.

Orlundo is widely seen as one of the nation's more capable administrators, though he suffers from a lack of both resources and cooperation from Earl Calhaddon Vernisant. The earl's apparent negligence has allowed piracy to thrive in the canals of southern Tandak. Much to Orlundo's chagrin, the raw material he sends to Ridonport for export often falls prey to these pirates, only to resurface in Ridonport's markets for sale. The count believes Vernisant is to blame at least for poor maintenance of the canals, even if he's not outright complicit in the raids.

Special Note: Count Orlundo Zespire plays an active role in several Pathfinder Society Scenarios, including *Pathfinder Society Scenario #9–08: Birthright Betrayed*, *Pathfinder Society Scenario #9–11: The Jarlsblood Witch Saga*, and *Pathfinder Society Scenario #9–13: The Lion's Justice*. These adventures take place before the events of "Crownfall," and they can be played as a prequel to the Adventure Path.



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BESTIARY

"I'd just closed up for the day, later than I like, and was taking an armful of Edra's failed petticoat designs to the incinerator. Not that they were bad, mind you; Edra just has high standards. Suddenly, these awful, grinning brutes appeared out of an alley, rolling along on all fours like wheeled animals—and dressed with less fashion sense than Shelyn gave a shrew! Their disgusting, shrieking laughter made my skin crawl, and I don't mind telling you that I dropped that pile of clothes and ran just as fast as I could in my goldpebble shoes.

"They must have thought my pocketbook was in the pile, because they descended on it in a hurry, but one of the scoundrels wheeled after me for blocks before finally knocking me down and taking my favorite hat right off my head! Fortunately, a constable showed up just then and gave chase. I yelled after her to get my hat back, but I don't think she heard me..."

—Mora Terristane, Opparan clothier

This volume of the War for the Crown Adventure Path contains a spider-book outsider native to the lawful neutral plane Axis, a servitor of the evil god Thamir Gixx that disguises itself as a child, a wall-bound undead, and a monstrous humanoid with wheels for its hands and feet.

TROUBLEMAKERS AND TRYING TIMES

While “Crownfall” has several set pieces centered around intrigue, PCs might encounter more traditional kinds of trouble in the form of urban monsters and threats at several points during the adventure: before they reach the senate in Part 1, while escaping from its sublevels at the conclusion of Part 2, and during their search for Martella Lotheed in Part 3. The Oppara Encounters table presented here features challenges the PCs might face beyond those in the adventure. Each hour the PCs spend exploring the city or escaping the senate’s sublevels, they have a 30% chance of a random encounter; roll d% and run the encounter listed for the result (note that *Taldor, The First Empire* refers to the Pathfinder Campaign Setting book of that name). The PCs should have at most three random encounters in a 24-hour period.

Since this adventure spans a number of character levels, some results might be too trivial or too difficult for the PCs, depending on their current progress. Similarly, some results might not be appropriate while the party is in the sublevels of the senate, while other results might not make sense while the PCs are in the city’s streets. In any of these cases, roll again or choose a different encounter.

Library of Lineage (CR 4): This encounter is best used during or after Part 3 of the adventure. The PCs take a wrong turn down a quiet alley, stumbling across a dusty library full of genealogical tomes that contain details about the family lines of much of Taldor’s nobility, with information that stretches back centuries. The full rules for attempting Research checks to gain information from this library are presented in *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue*, starting on page 148. Three days after the PCs begin their research, the library mysteriously burns down (probably thanks to agents of a noble family attempting to hide its own past or discredit another’s claim to the throne), and no further research can be performed there.

LIBRARY OF LINEAGE CR 4

XP 1,200

Complexity 15

Languages Common

Research Check Knowledge (history, untrained), or Knowledge (nobility); **Knowledge Bonus** +2

kp 12

OPPARA ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–4	1 giant bee	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 43
5–9	1d6 beheaded	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 17
10–15	1d3 skincrawlers	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 252
16–20	1 akaname	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 16
21–25	2 hobkins	1	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 131
26–30	1 giant ant	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 16
31–34	1 choker	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 45
35–39	1 brown mold	2	<i>Core Rulebook</i> 416
40–45	1 slithering pit	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 254
46–53	1 redkind	2	<i>Taldor, The First Empire</i> 62
54–57	1d6 giant cockroach exoskeletons	2	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 124
58–63	1 raven swarm	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 240
64–68	1 allip	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 12
69–71	1 mobat	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 42
72–75	1 combusted	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 63
76–80	Library of lineage	4	See below
81–86	1d6 etaiinens	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 111
87–92	1d3 pipefoxes	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 215
93–98	Zimar opportunists	4	See below
99–100	1d3 onyvolans	5	See page 86

RESEARCH THRESHOLDS

kp 10 Nearly a dozen noble lines could make a plausible case for a connection to the Stavian line that could support a claim to the right to rule Taldor.

kp 5 Earl Yander Merkondus, a prominent merchant and noble in the Taldan city of Yanmass, has been married no fewer than 10 times—and divorced eight.

kp 0 The PCs learn a secret about the family history of one of the nobles (you choose) presented in the “Faces of the Senate” article on pages 72–79 of this book. This might be a shameful secret that the PCs use to blackmail the senator, or it might be a redeeming fact about the noble’s family that the PCs can share, earning them that noble’s gratitude. Either way, the PCs gain access to that senator’s listed benefit.

Zimar Opportunists (CR 4): A con-artist crew of 1d3 common swindlers (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 118), led by **Kaethra Solas** (N female half-elf bard 2; use the statistics for a merry minstrel on page 130 of the *Villain Codex*), came to Oppara from their home city of Zimar to take advantage of the crowds flocking to the nation’s capital for the Grand Day of Exaltation. Even in the gloomy and uncertain aftermath of what turns out to be a tragic day, the swindlers roam the city’s streets looking for marks, taking advantage of the confused atmosphere to lure unsuspecting victims into alleyways and relieve them of their possessions.

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FANTIONETTE

What appears at first glance to be a child or halfling has skin more akin to cracked porcelain barely covering a black, insectile carapace, and it has spiderlike legs where one would expect arms.

FANTIONETTE

CR 4



XP 1,200

CE Small outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +10

Aura revelation (10 ft., DC 15)

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+4 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)
hp 37 (5d10+10)

Fort +3, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

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

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +7 (1d4+1), 2 claws +7 (1d3+1)

Special Attacks rend (2 claws, 1d4+1), sneak attack +1d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +8)

At will—*bleed* (DC 14), *charm person* (DC 14), *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 14)

3/day—*darkness*, *dimension door*, *spiritual weapon*

1/day—*glitterdust* (DC 15), *scare* (DC 15)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 19, **Con** 14, **Int** 13, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 19

Feats Following Step^{APG}, Improved Initiative, Step Up

Skills Acrobatics +12, Bluff +11, Climb +9, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Perception +10, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +16

Languages Abyssal, Common, Halfling, Undercommon

SQ puppet strings

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Abyss or Axis)

Organization solitary, pair, or cast (3–12)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Revelation (Su) A fantionette appears as an adult halfling or a human child (its choice) to all creatures outside of its aura. This is an illusion (glamer) effect that can be bypassed only by *true seeing* or similar magic. A creature within a fantionette's aura that is studying or interacting with it can attempt a DC 15 Will save to perceive the outsider for what it truly is. A creature that succeeds at this save or that is attacked by a fantionette immediately sees the fantionette's true form for the next 24 hours, even while outside the aura. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Puppet Strings (Su) Once per day as an immediate action, a fantionette can relinquish control of itself, letting a higher entity (presumably Thamir Gixx) gain control. When it does this, a fantionette can perform one of the following special actions.

- Make an extra attack as part of a standard action.
- Move up to its speed. The fantionette loses its move action on its next turn.
- Reroll a single roll after it was made, but before the results are determined.

A fantionette is a servitor outsider for the halfling deity Thamir Gixx. It embodies the halfling god's association with assassination and opportunity, presenting itself to loyal followers of the Silent Blade both as a powerful assassin and as impressive support for established murderers. When left to its own devices on the Material Plane, a fantionette is a terrifying stalker of halflings and humans alike, positioning itself among large groups of human children or halflings and selecting adult targets to murder based entirely on whim and opportunity.

A fantionette stands between 3 and 4 feet high and weighs about 70 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Unlike other auras, a fantionette's aura of revelation serves as a weakness—a range at which creatures can see through its otherwise illusory guise. A fantionette combines its deceptive form with its ability to blend in to crowds, often positioning itself as part of a group of children or adult halflings. Sometimes a child sees through the fantionette's aura, only for the child to be scared away and attempt to warn her parents. The result is almost always the same: the warned parent glances over at the disguised fantionette, too far outside the aura to perceive its true form, and dismisses the child for being foolish. A fantionette thrives on the fear it generates from children—though it is clear from their patterns of attacks that these outsiders are either somehow forbidden from harming children, or simply prefer not to.

Once a fantionette is ready to strike, or when an unfortunate witness manages to pierce its illusory form, the fantionette attacks in a flurry of claws accented by vicious bites. In its true form, it has a pair of wicked claws, each made of black chitin and pieces of jagged porcelain. The fantionette also sports a similarly serrated bite; its mouth resembles disjointed spider mandibles with a second layer of chipped porcelain. Fantionettes often employ their claws to cruel effect, combining an uncanny knowledge of anatomy with savage rends that tear most opponents into a bloody mess within seconds. Even creatures attempting to flee an unrestrained fantionette soon discover the outsider is capable of instinctually following—in some cases relinquishing itself to its malignant puppet strings, letting an unseen force drag the fantionette to chase down the fleeing target.

A wide array of divinely granted powers assists the fantionette in its paired roles as assassin and deceiver.

These gifts most often manifest in a variety of spell-like abilities, which the fantionette uses as means to overcome targets or as a way of deflecting scrutiny in social settings. The hand of Thamir Gixx is said to hover invisibly over every fantionette in service to the Silent Blade. While fantionettes are free-willed beings, they can temporarily suspend their independence and allow other forces to guide their malignant claws. Such lapses in control manifest in odd last-second movements, such as a claw destined to miss a foe suddenly jolting upward into a disemboweling strike. Other times, a fantionette moves in an oddly contorted manner; these jerks and jostles reveal that it's being guided by its hidden puppeteer.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

First and foremost, fantionettes are servants of Thamir Gixx. Whether directly delivered by their god or summoned to the Material Plane by eager spellcasters using spells such as *lesser planar ally*, fantionettes seek only to spread the chaotic, murderous joy of their patron deity. Like their god, they also offer deference to the followers of Norgorber. Fantionettes are as likely to work alongside a worshiper of Thamir Gixx as they are to take on the role of plucky sidekick to a fanatical devotee of Norgorber. Of the divine servitor races, perhaps none are more closely aligned than fantionettes and their karumzek (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Gods* 301) counterparts. Where fantionettes prefer the eventual chaos of revealing themselves to a target, karumzeks prefer to act entirely behind the scenes. The two outsiders complement each other well, as karumzeks provide alchemical tools and poisons to fantionettes operating in service to Norgorber as part of Thamir Gixx's service to that deity.

A fantionette's patron will inevitably grow weary of its murderous presence and either destroy the outsider or release it into the wild. On their own, fantionettes often assist thieves and murderers—and disenfranchised halflings in particular—establish a violent reputation by grafting their own long trails of murder and theft that lead to these apprentices. In this way, Thamir Gixx's favored servitors create new worshipers for their patron deity, both by taking on new murderous servants and by using their own murderous actions to remind halfling communities of the presence of the Silent Blade.

When not acting on the Material Plane, fantionettes are found in equal measure in the Abyss and Axis. In the Abyss, they congregate around their deity's mysterious home, operating as guardians or entertainment, depending on the whims of their capricious master. In the lawful realm of Axis, fantionettes fall in line with the mysterious followers of Norgorber, acting in equal roles as assassins, entertainers, and messengers for the ascended deity in his hidden realm in Axis. Left to their own devices on either plane, fantionettes form horrific gaggles. These groups traverse the planes in search of new arrivals or otherwise weak prey, first presenting themselves as lost or stranded children or halflings. In the Abyss, this deception often surprises voracious demons, who see nothing more than a buffet of innocent humanity and are torn apart shortly after realizing the truth of their would-be meal. In Axis, fantionettes are far more cautious in their attacks. They always relocate to another distant portion of the plane after venting their bloodlust, striving to stay one step ahead of the axiomites and their inevitable enforcers.



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GISHVIT

A set of insectile legs emerges from this book, sharp teeth ring the tome's edges, and a ribbon bookmark protrudes menacingly from its open pages.

GISHVIT

CR 1/2



XP 200

LN Tiny outsider (extraplanar, lawful)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 size)

hp 4 (1d10-1)

Fort -1, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

Weaknesses vulnerability to *erase*

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +1 (1d4-2), ribbon +3 touch (grab)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft. (10 ft. with ribbon)

Special Attacks overwhelm, ribbon

STATISTICS

Str 6, **Dex** 15, **Con** 9, **Int** 11, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +1 (+3 grapple, +11 when maintaining grapple with ribbon); **CMD** 9 (11 vs. grapple, 17 vs. trip)

Feats Improved Grapple^B, Improved Initiative

Skills Climb +10, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (planes) +4, Perception +4, Sense Motive +4

Languages truespeech (can't speak)

SQ transcription

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Axis)

Organization solitary, pair, or curation (3-12)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Overwhelm (Su) A gishvit can transfer the information within its pages to a single target through its grasping ribbon. When a gishvit has successfully grappled a foe, it can force this information directly into the grabbed creature's mind, overwhelming it with an onslaught of facts and recorded information. The grappled creature must succeed at a DC 12 Will save or be staggered for 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Ribbon (Ex) A gishvit's tongue is a primary attack with reach of 10 feet. A gishvit applies its Dexterity modifier as a bonus on attack rolls with its bookmark ribbon. A gishvit's ribbon deals no damage on a hit, but it can be used to grab the target. A gishvit has a +8 racial bonus to maintain its grapple on a foe grabbed by its ribbon. A gishvit does not gain the grappled condition while using its ribbon in this manner.

Transcription (Su) A gishvit finds pleasure in being a repository of information. It can immediately transcribe information dictated to it and material it overhears. Alternately, a gishvit can spend an hour with a willing

subject, wherein it collects memories and experiences from the subject. This transcription process is not dangerous to either the gishvit or the target.

Information recorded and stored in this manner appears as filled pages within the gishvit's booklike body, and it remains there for up to 24 hours after the gishvit is slain (unless the gishvit was killed by an *erase* spell, see below). Another creature can research the pages of a willing or deceased gishvit. The text inside a gishvit is comprehensible to any creature that can read and knows at least one written language. Researching the information within a gishvit for 1 hour grants the reader a +4 insight bonus on any single Knowledge check in the next 24 hours, and the reader can attempt such checks even if not trained in that Knowledge skill.

Vulnerability to Erase (Su) An *erase* spell deals 2d4 points of damage to a gishvit and has a 50% chance of removing all written text within its pages (no save). A gishvit reduced to 0 hit points or below in this manner is slain, becoming a blank book.

Sometimes referred to as "lore roaches" by scholars familiar with the Outer Planes, gishvits are natural inhabitants of the lawful plane of Axis. Often associated with the native axiomites and scrivenites, gishvits occupy a mundane role on Axis, maintaining vast stores of knowledge within their booklike bodies. Transcribing knowledge from living creatures, a gishvit stores information in its body in the form of written text, preserving the acquired knowledge within itself. Because of this unique method of information gathering, gishvits are treasured by information brokers and spellcasters on the Material Plane.

A gishvit varies between 1 to 2 feet in length, often weighing no more than 8 pounds.

ECOLOGY

The booklike body of a gishvit is indicative of its ultimate purpose: the consumption and storage of knowledge. For as long as the ordered realm of Axis has existed, gishvits have clambered throughout its seemingly endless streets and meandered within its many archives of knowledge. Some scholars believe that these creatures first emerged from the quintessence of Axis as companions to axiomites and scrivenites. While axiomites tend to ignore the pesky little creatures, scrivenites associate with the booklike outsiders, sometimes even treating them like pets more than pests.

A gishvit has a set of razor-sharp teeth that emerge from the edges of its cover page and back page, though it lacks the strength to use them with great effectiveness. These teeth are visible only when the outsider opens its mouth. A set of similarly sharp insectile limbs emerge from within the gishvit's body, acting as legs that can be retracted at a whim to act as embellishments for the

gishvit's spine. A whipping, silken bookmark tongue that issues from between the pages of its body completes the gishvit's odd anatomy.

A gishvit absorbs knowledge from its surroundings and from individuals who wish to store their memories and experiences within the creature's pages. Once the small outsider has consumed a sufficient amount of knowledge, it darts off to digest the information. This digestion takes place over several hours, during which the gishvit's interior pages fill with the stored lore.

Gishvits understand all spoken languages thanks to their truespeech ability, though they lack vocal cords and the ability to speak. Only creatures capable of telepathic communication can engage a gishvit in conversation, and even then, such conversations are generally dominated by the gishvit's ravenous desire for new information or its hope to hibernate and mull over the stored information after filling its pages with stores of memories and experiences. Despite having considerable insight into numerous topics, even without ingesting any knowledge from other creatures, a gishvit finds little joy in relating such information through conversation. Negotiators find conversations with gishvits incredibly difficult, and though gishvits rarely have the chance to converse with other beings, they still find most conversations a detraction from their endless urge to transcribe knowledge.

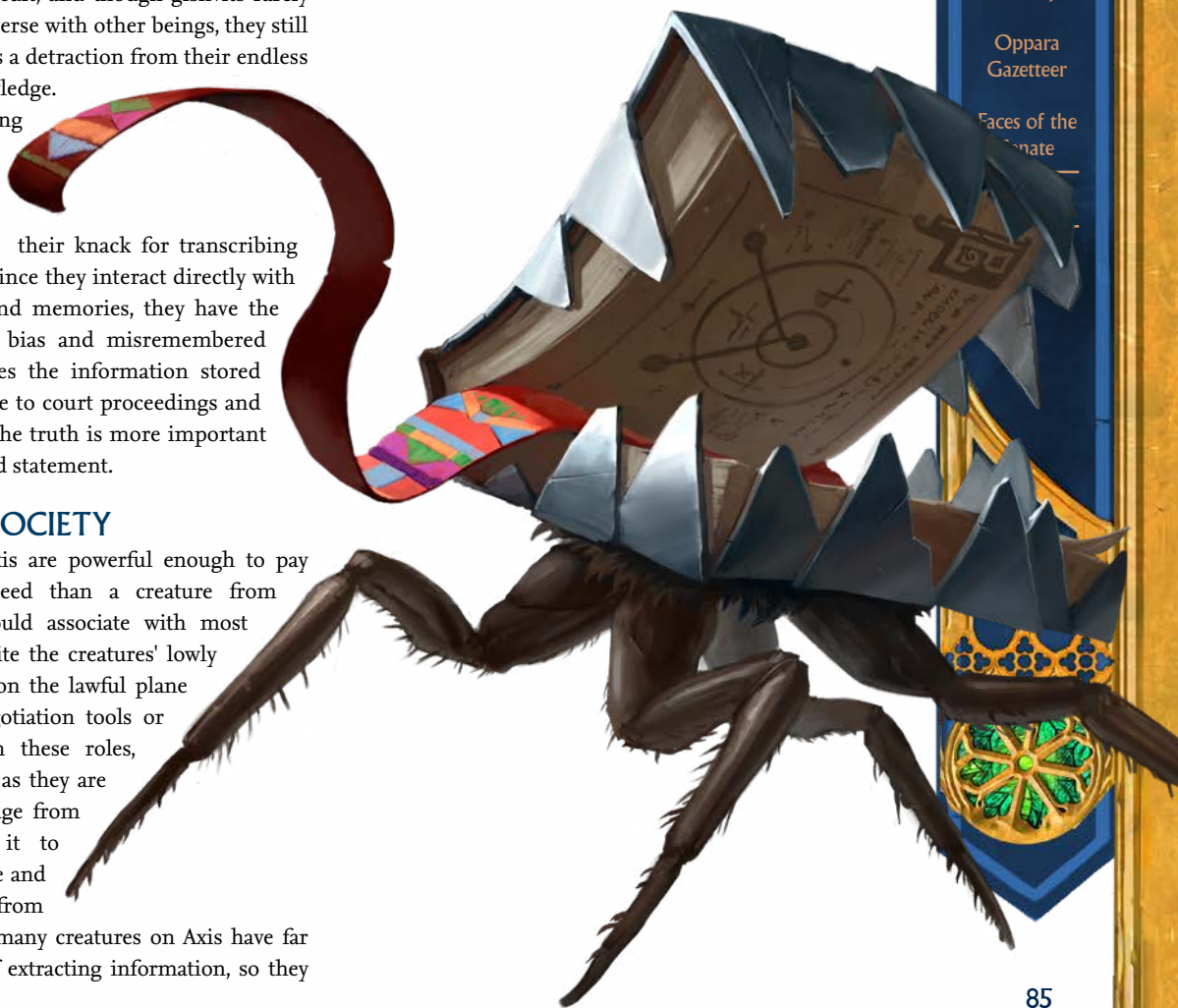
In addition to being able to collect a wealth of information into their small forms, gishvits are known for their knack for transcribing accurate information. Since they interact directly with subjects' experiences and memories, they have the ability to cut through bias and misremembered experiences. This makes the information stored within a gishvit valuable to court proceedings and other instances where the truth is more important than a potentially flawed statement.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Most inhabitants of Axis are powerful enough to pay gishvits little more heed than a creature from the Material Plane would associate with most common vermin. Despite the creatures' lowly status, several factions on the lawful plane employ gishvits as negotiation tools or unintentional spies. In these roles, the little gishvits excel, as they are able to extract knowledge from negotiators and put it to paper or collect valuable and accurate information from stationed guards. Still, many creatures on Axis have far more reliable means of extracting information, so they

instead relegate gishvits to a pitiable status as planar vermin. It is not uncommon for an eager gishvit to pester a creature enjoying a meal inside one of Axis's many restaurants to spend time with it in hopes of adding lore to its pages, or for a patron of the plane's many archives to find herself accosted by a whipping bookmark tongue when she picks it up by accident while the creature was resting on a shelf.

On both Axis and the Material Plane, a satiated gishvit quickly enters a state of gradual torpor, followed by a period of hibernation. Such gishvits often seek to rest in large archives or repositories, hiding among hundreds or thousands of similar-looking mundane books. They then wait for centuries at a time, content to rest with the knowledge they have digested. After several centuries, a gishvit willingly discards its digested knowledge. It is then instinctually compelled to repeat the process of acquiring and digesting new information. Sadly for the gishvit, it often finds itself trapped in a now-long forgotten archive, unable to escape. In these unfortunate circumstances, the next creatures to enter the gishvit's sealed-off home are immediately assaulted by the knowledge-ravenous creatures.



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ONYVOLAN

This humanlike creature is clad in gaudy clothing, and each of its spindly limbs terminates in a strange wheel-appendage.

ONYVOLAN

CR 3



XP 800

CN Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 10 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 30 (4d10+8)

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

Weaknesses cowardly, easily hampered

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee 2 slams +5 (1d8+1)

Special Attacks creepy cackle, nimble charger

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 17, **Con** 14, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +7 (+9 bull rush or overrun); **CMD** 19
(23 vs. trip)

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Dodge

Skills Acrobatics +7 (+11 when jumping), Intimidate +9,
Perception +8, Stealth +10

Languages Common

ECOLOGY

Environment any urban

Organization solitary, pair, clique (3–5), or gang (6–16)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Cowardly (Ex) Though onyvolans love scaring others, they are quick to cower in the face of real resistance. Creatures gain a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks against an onyvolan.

Creepy Cackle (Ex) As a free action, an onyvolan can let out a chilling laugh. Any non-onyvolan creature within 30 feet who can hear it must succeed at a DC 14 Will save or be shaken for 1 round. A creature that succeeds at the saving throw is immune to that onyvolan's creepy cackle for 24 hours. Each subsequent failed saving throw against this effect increases the duration of the shaken condition but does not cause the creature to become frightened. This is a sonic, mind-affecting fear effect.

Easily Hampered (Ex) For an onyvolan, each square of difficult terrain counts as 4 squares of movement (rather than 2), and each diagonal move into a square of difficult terrain counts as 6 squares (rather than 3).

Nimble Charger (Ex) An onyvolan receives a +2 racial bonus on bull rush and overrun combat maneuver checks and does not provoke attacks of opportunity when attempting such maneuvers.

Mischievous menaces of the streets, onyvolans are gangly, humanlike creatures with grotesquely long limbs that end in peculiar keratinous wheels, which the

creatures use to roll along at high speeds. Onyvolans enjoy creating mayhem by roaming around in gangs and terrorizing a city's residents, especially in older, run-down districts. Pure troublemakers at heart, onyvolans prefer mischief to actual violence, and they show their cowardly side whenever their quarry stands up to them. They trawl dump sites and trash piles in search of food and clothing, which is their primary means of obtaining both; however, they occasionally attack victims who seem to be carrying—or wearing—items of particular interest. Onyvolans love garish clothing that most people wouldn't wear, and they especially adore ostentatious hats.

Onyvolans' arms are roughly the same length as their legs, allowing the creatures to reach the ground easily with their front wheels and roll on all fours, which is their natural stance. Onyvolans are eerily pale-skinned, and their mouths are nearly always twisted into a disturbing grin that reveals their pointed teeth; they find that their frightful countenances aid in putting their targets on edge.

A typical onyvolan is about 7 feet tall from head to back wheel when upright and weighs about 170 pounds.

ECOLOGY

The most curious aspect of onyvolan physiology is the strange wheels the creatures have where one would expect hands and feet. These wheels are made of a hard, keratin-like substance, and they are connected to the onyvolans' arms and legs with an axle and fork composed of the same material. This substance makes the wheels extremely durable, and they typically withstand the onyvolan's rolling locomotion with surprisingly minimal wear and tear; most onyvolans' wheels remain in good shape for the creatures' entire lifespans. The hardness of the wheels also makes them useful as bludgeoning weapons in combat. An onyvolan usually rolls on all fours, but it occasionally uses just its back wheels when it needs its arms for other tasks. The wheels spin surprisingly smoothly, allowing for the onyvolan to move at high speeds on packed dirt and even well-cobbled streets without producing much noise.

Onyvolans typically wear garish, multicolored clothing, which the creatures tend to favor over all other garments. Due to their lack of hands, these creatures find it nearly impossible to create clothing for themselves; they scavenge what they can after it has been discarded by those with more conventional fashion sense. Since most humanoid apparel was not designed for such long-limbed wearers, clothing the onyvolans wear tend to be ill-fitting at best. The creatures do not seem to mind for the most part, and they wear their strange outfits with a misguided sense of pride. Onyvolans are particularly fond of hats, and gangs of the creatures are more often than not found wearing an eclectic set of headwear.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Onyvolans are nearly always found in cities, most often lairing in back alleys and sewers. The creatures establish bases that they consider permanent homes, which they use mainly for storing their scavenged spoils. Onyvolans spend little time in their home bases, however, as they are usually out and about either scavenging for clothing and food or otherwise causing trouble, returning home only when they have found sufficient supplies. Onyvolans are most commonly found in large metropolises—notably Oppara and Cassomir in Taldor, as well as in Absalom—but they have been seen in smaller settlements, especially those with an outsize number of clothiers and tailors.

Onyvolans rarely venture far from cities, as their wheels tend to get stuck in mud and undergrowth. However, rumors suggest that lone onyvolans may tough out treks into the wilderness to hide particularly desirable treasures from others of their kind. These would be exceptionally strong and resourceful members of their species, as navigating forests or swamps is nigh impossible for ordinary onyvolans.

Onyvolans traditionally form gangs that live and scavenge together. These gangs typically operate relatively close to the creatures' home base, and they send out individual scouts that venture to farther reaches of their city in search of new sources of clothing and food. The leader of an onyvolan gang almost always has the most stylish clothing of the lot, at least in the eyes of its peers, as they consider it an indication of exceptionally resourceful scavenging. When there isn't enough loot to go around—either because the gang has become too large or because of unsuccessful scavenging—unrest begins to stir. This often opens up opportunities for onyvolans to split off from the group to form a new gang, recruiting others to their side by filling potential recruits' heads with promises of fancy clothes and bountiful vittles.

Onyvolan gangs get in minor scuffles over clothing finds, food sources, and scavenging areas. The gangs' leaders are nearly always former members of other gangs, and because there is inevitably bad blood between the old and new groups, onyvolan gangs rarely coexist in complete peace. Nonetheless, fights between such groups rarely escalate to any substantial level of violence; instead, two quarreling clans scream and yell as the groups circle one another—much to the dismay of any residents of nearby buildings—until the onyvolans get bored or distracted and roll away in opposite directions.

Onyvolans tend to rove back alleys and darkened streets for fun, where they can terrorize

those unfortunate individuals who find themselves trapped in a corner with no help in sight. The bullies find particular joy in scaring pedestrians with their creepy cackles and eerie grins, knocking victims to the ground and rolling in circles around them while taunting them with grating voices. Although they are rather fearsome in appearance and their behavior is off-putting, onyvolans are more often than not looking to scare people for the fun of it rather than to inflict any actual major physical harm, although if an onyvolan gang spots someone vulnerable-looking wearing colorful clothing or a fancy hat (or transporting a large quantity of food), they may end up resorting to violence to claim such a prize. A target of an onyvolan attack can sometimes get out of trouble simply by standing up to the creatures and attempting to intimidate them, as the creatures are prone to cowardice. However, if a target has something the onyvolans strongly desire and doesn't prove overly threatening, the wheeled creatures gleefully attempt to bowl him over and take what they want.



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WALCOFINDE

The torso of a humanoid figure with jagged claws extends outward from a wall, its features patterned with the texture of the structure around it.

WALCOFINDE

CR 2



XP 600

NE Medium undead

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 19 (3d8+6)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +4 (1d4+2)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with claws while using structural possession)

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 9, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 15

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative

Skills Climb +6, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (engineering) +1, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Languages Common

SQ isolated restoration, structural possession

ECOLOGY

Environment any underground

Organization solitary or immurement (2–8)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Isolated Restoration (Su) A walcofinde in a sealed chamber, such as one closed with locked doors and windows, regains 1 hit point every hour. If the chamber is fully enclosed, with no intentional methods of exit, the walcofinde instead regains 3 hit points every hour.

Structural Possession (Su) As a full-round action, a walcofinde adjacent to a wall in a sealed chamber can merge part of itself with that wall. For as long as it maintains physical contact with a portion of the wall, the walcofinde can manifest through any part of that wall within 100 feet, including the opposite side of the wall. A walcofinde's manifestation occupies the same space as a 5-foot-long portion of the wall, appearing as if its torso were emerging from the wall but with the texture of the wall (such as wood or stone) instead of its normal decayed flesh. It cannot manifest from broken areas of a wall, nor can this manifestation separate from the wall at any time. The walcofinde can perceive creatures with all of its senses through this manifestation, and the manifestation can make claw attacks against creatures within 10 feet of the portion of wall from which it is manifested. As a move action that provokes attacks of

opportunity, the manifestation can reposition itself along this wall at a maximum speed of 15 feet per round. The manifestation can be attacked as though such attacks targeted the walcofinde, but it gains a +2 bonus to its AC due to partial cover from the wall it occupies.

While using this ability, the walcofinde is helpless. It can cease its manifestation as a full-round action that provokes attacks of opportunity from creatures threatening either the manifestation or the walcofinde.

If a walcofinde using this ability is moved 10 or more feet away from the wall it has merged with, it takes 1d8 points of damage and its manifestation immediately disappears. If the walcofinde is killed, its manifested body is immediately reabsorbed into the possessed wall.

Similar to the undead monstrosities known as immured, walcofindes are pitiful undead creatures that manifest when a living being is sealed within a structure and perishes there. These unquiet dead often rise after having been intentionally walled into a structure. This process is what many have attributed its name to, with some treatises on undead referring to them as “wall-coffined.” While both walcofindes and immured form from humanoids who were either sealed within a wall or victims of a collapse, their divergent abilities have led scholars of the undead to posit why the differences manifested as they have. Immured have the ability to displace life-giving oxygen, suggesting they perished through suffocation while trapped. Walcofindes, instead, ultimately succumbed to death by starvation while trapped. These latter transformed undead resemble the decayed appearance of zombies, albeit with vicious bony claws—the result of desperate escape attempts prior to the starvation that ultimately sealed their demise. It is rare for other creatures to ever see a walcofinde's true appearance, as these undead most often harry the living by possessing nearby walls.

ECOLOGY

Most adventurers stumble upon a walcofinde as it manifests from nearby walls, using its structural possession ability to move beyond its sealed chamber and unleash its rage against creatures traversing halls or caverns it possesses. In this manifested form, the walcofinde takes on the texture of the structure it possesses, appearing with the shape it had in life but made from stone, wood, or whatever substance makes up the wall from which it emerges.

A walcofinde's structural possession ability is its primary means of movement and interaction with the outside world. The walcofinde positions itself adjacent to a wall within its chamber and then touches the wall with both claws, entering a trance wherein it possesses and manifests along the wall. Prior to its death, a creature destined to become a walcofinde often

succumbs to the basest, most desperate attempts to escape its imprisonment. Desperately clawing at walls reduces the creature's fingers to ragged stumps of jagged and sharpened bone. To assist in its murderous capabilities, a walcofinde possessing a structure can elongate its vicious clawed arms while manifesting from a wall to strike foes who might have thought themselves safe.

Those startled by the sudden appearance of a walcofinde often believe the undead has the same structural makeup as the wall it emerges from, but the walcofinde receives only minor protection from the nearby terrain, and its manifested form is almost as vulnerable as its true body. In fact, defeating a walcofinde's manifested form also destroys the undead. Because of this, a walcofinde often retreats from combat, rather than risk destruction. The fact that a walcofinde exhibits supernaturally expedited healing while within sealed chambers likewise encourages a hit-and-run style of punishing intruders.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

For a walcofinde to rise, a living creature must die while trapped in a walled-in chamber. Sometimes this can be as mundane as a group of miners trapped in a collapse. In some cultures, immurement is a sign of favor, and rising as a walcofinde is considered a gift from the heavens that enables the creature to continue defending a site in death. Most often, though, this grisly event occurs during a construction project where secrecy is paramount and workers involved with important portions of the construction are intentionally trapped within the edifice. The often-flawed logic behind this method of murder is to prevent the bodies from ever being exhumed and interrogated.

Due to its relatively intact intelligence, a walcofinde can understand enemy tactics and even recognize different threats based on its observations over time. Many walcofindes are cunning enough to assess the appearance and equipment of their foes, allowing them to prioritize targets. As with most undead, a walcofinde endeavors to slay divine spellcasters as quickly as possible. Because of the effort required to cease manifesting, a walcofinde knows that it is particularly vulnerable to channeled positive energy, so it often hides

in order to surprise intruders in an opening assault before foes with such abilities can act.

Humans are the most populous progenitor species for walcofindes, simply a result of humanity's high population. After humans, dwarves and halflings are the most frequently encountered varieties of walcofindes. Old dwarven rituals, such as the Droskar-demanded rites common during Ordrik Talhrik's reign of the Five Kings Mountains, required fortresses to be regularly fortified by walcofindes at regular intervals—hundreds died to fuel these depraved rituals. Conversely, halfling variants (walcofindes with the young creature simple template; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 295) are found in the ruins of many Inner Sea empires, having died while serving as slave labor in construction efforts.



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WHAT CANNOT BE SAID WILL BE WEPT

Spoiler Alert! On these pages you'll find the background and outline for the War for the Crown Adventure Path. If you intend to play in this campaign, be warned! These pages spoil the plot for the upcoming adventures.

Bad habits accumulate so slowly as to be imperceptible, and sometimes the darkest courses in life begin from nothing but ignorance and exhaustion. Taldor has steeped in both for a hundred generations. The empire is crumbling and its relevance has long vanished—it is only a shadow of the empire that once stretched across a continent and defined the modern world. In the long years since, the nation has relied upon inertia, ignoring the slow decay of its infrastructure and culture and living on the inconceivable wealth won through its years as a true empire. Taldor needs real leadership, but at its highest echelons sit only a rotating cast of decadent aristocrats more concerned with personal politics than governance.

The current grand prince, Stavian III—the self-indulgent son of the stern and distant Stavian II—swore to be a better emperor than his father, but he never quite found the allies, resources, or strength of will to steer the course of Taldor's future. Most devastating to his psyche was accidentally killing his only son and heir, Prince Carrius II, in an argument. In the decades since, he has sought solace and escape in drink, drugs, and other pleasures afforded the emperor. But the same tragedy that finally broke Stavian III recast his daughter, Princess Eutropia. In short order, she matured from a friendly but spoiled princess to a rabble-rousing reformer, hell-bent on comforting and supporting all Taldans.

Despite Princess Eutropia's efforts at reform, Taldor frets. Each passing year without an heir increases the chances of a crisis of succession should the aging monarch die. This distress has grown to the point that some in the senate are even considering revoking primogeniture—the millennia-old law forbidding the passage of the crown to women—and naming Princess Eutropia as the official heir. Eutropia has aided these efforts, hoping that overturning the backward law will improve not only her fortunes but also those of many other Taldan women.

But to Stavian's paranoid and guilt-ridden mind, Eutropia's efforts stink of treason: an ungrateful daughter plotting to usurp power and inevitably assassinate him. Without evidence, he has responded by reaching out

to aristocrats in other nations—peers he can actually trust, in his own mind—and recruiting agents to protect him by slaying Eutropia and her supporters before they can kill him. When he realizes the Taldan senate has enough votes to overturn primogeniture, Stavian finally concludes that the entire senate is a coven of treason and murder. Mere hours before encountering his murderers, Stavian III secretly adopted Maxillar Pythareus, commander of Taldor's armed forces, and proclaims the conservative general his heir. Then, when the senate convenes, he unleashes hell. An orgy of violence leaves hundreds dead, including the emperor, and the legitimacy of the recent vote and order of succession are cast into doubt. Two of the most powerful politicians in the nation are left at odds, both claiming the vacant throne and both backed by powerful forces.

Their rivalry is only complicated by a secret society called the Immaculate Circle, aristocrats versed in magic and dedicated to the idea that nobility places them above all judgment, even that of Pharasma herself. Led by the centuries-old Duke Panivar Lotheed, the Circle learned of Grand Prince Stavian's accidental murder of his own child and has kept that knowledge in hand in the hopes of blackmailing the emperor. When Stavian dies and their bargaining chip vanishes, they hit upon a desperate plan: why blackmail an emperor when they can make their own obedient one from scratch?

Panivar Lotheed ordered his agents to steal the dead Prince Carrius's body from the royal crypt, and using the vilest magic, he dragged the boy's soul—long since judged and sent along to a joyous afterlife—back to the world of the living. Lotheed patched the damage his magic caused with bits of the Taldan zeitgeist pulled from the Astral Plane, creating an heir the Taldan people quite literally cannot help but adore.

Now Taldor stands on the precipice of civil war. Only respectability, lack of precedence, and millennia of tradition keep the players circling one another instead of battling, and as they circle, their agents must move quickly and quietly, in one of the greatest gambles ever made in the great game of Taldan politics.

CROWNFAALL

By Thurston Hillman

Pathfinder Adventure Path #127, Levels 1–3

As all of Taldor prepares to celebrate the Grand Day of Exaltation, the senate prepares to vote on whether or strike down the ancient law of primogeniture and allow Princess Eutropia to become Taldor's heir apparent. The PCs attend the senate gala as guests of a noble named Martella Lotheed, acting as her agents to conduct minor petty intrigues. But Grand Prince Stavian III is convinced the Senate's vote that night marks a turn to treason, and he unleashes his mercenaries to slaughter hundreds. The bloodbath triggers eons' worth of protective magic—most long forgotten—teleporting the PCs and several others into the forgotten sublevels below the capital. The PCs must brave long-lost dangers to free themselves and rush to the aid of Martella Lotheed. Upon saving her from more of Stavian's hired killers, the aristocrat reveals her true agenda as a spy in the employ of Princess Eutropia.

SONGBIRD, SCION, SABOTEUR

By Crystal Frasier and Richard Pett

Pathfinder Adventure Path #128, Levels 4–6

Now agents of Princess Eutropia in her bid for the throne of Taldor, the PCs must assist her in reclaiming her lands from her father's former allies. Chief among these are the members of Martella Lotheed's estranged family, who have managed the Stavian country estate for generations and now refuse to relinquish it. Without a military force to rely upon, Eutropia needs cunning agents to usurp control from the Lotheeds while undoing the damage their callous rule has done.

THE TWILIGHT CHILD

By Ron Lundeen

Pathfinder Adventure Path #129, Levels 7–9

With a base of operations secure, Princess Eutropia asks the PCs to forge an alliance with the fickle Avin Prefecture far to the north. In Yanmass, Avin's capital, the PCs discover a host of troubles, including an agent of Maxillar Pythareus—Earl Yander Merkondu—trying to woo the city to support the general's bid for the throne. The PCs must find and stop the source of mysterious Qadiran raids while investigating a strange new cult in the city that worships a young man with miraculous healing powers. The raids are false-flag attacks organized by Pythareus's agent Merkondu to once again inflame hostilities between Taldor and Qadira, but the cult is something else entirely. While the leaders of the Cult of the Twilight Child have their own nefarious agendas, the subject of their faith is none other than the long-dead Prince Carrius II, apparently risen and returned to Taldor in the nation's hour of need.

CITY IN THE LION'S EYE

By Mikko Kallio

Pathfinder Adventure Path #130, Levels 10–12

With the twin revelations that Prince Carrius II is returned from the dead and Maxillar Pythareus is trying to provoke a new war with Qadira, Princess Eutropia turns to Taldor's greatest intelligence agency, the Lion Blades. While Eutropia investigates her little brother's resurrection, the Lion Blades train the PCs in the arts of deception and disguise to help them infiltrate Pythareus's stronghold: the fortress-city of Zimar. In the end, with evidence of Maxillar Pythareus's betrayal of Taldor and attacks on her people to advance his own agenda, the PCs must fulfill their duties as newly appointed Lion Blades and bring this enemy of Taldor to justice.

THE REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

By John Compton

Pathfinder Adventure Path #131, Levels 13–15

Even with Maxillar Pythareus's bid for the Taldan throne crushed, a dire failsafe now bars the two remaining candidates—Princess Eutropia and her long-lost little brother, Carrius II—from ascending to the throne. Without an heir apparent, Taldor begins to unravel as every noble fights tooth-and-nail for the Primogen Crown. To find a legitimate ruler the nation can unite behind, the PCs must plunge into the myths and lore that surround Taldor's earliest founding and eventually pass into the Great Beyond to seek the blessing of Taldaris, First Emperor. But first the PCs must find the legendary figure, lost somewhere in the infinite city of Axis, and make their way back before assassins render their mission moot.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

By Amber E. Scott

Pathfinder Adventure Path #132, Levels 16–17

As the PCs attend a royal funeral, Prince Carrius reveals that his returning memories point squarely at a cult that brought him back from the grave and dispatched assassins to eliminate his sister. He directs the PCs to avenge his sister by wiping out the Immaculate Circle, but they return from their mission to find themselves labeled traitors and assassins, accused of murdering Princess Eutropia by Carrius—now Grand Prince Carrius II, emperor of Taldor! Carrius II does not sit on the throne of Taldor alone: six terrible, overwhelming legends of kings long past rule through his mortal frame, using the boy as a vessel to return their empire to glory through a path of blood and fire. The PCs must face Taldor's greatest champions—both the living and the legendary—to free Taldor from the rule of monsters and restore Eutropia's soul to her body.

CROWNFAALL

Foreword

Part 1:
All the King's
Men

Part 2:
Lost in
History

Part 3:
The Silent
Blade

NPC
Gallery

Oppara
Gazetteer

Faces of the
Senate

Bestiary

Campaign
Outline

NEXT MONTH

SONGBIRD, SCION, SABOTEUR

By Crystal Frasier and Richard Pett

As newly appointed agents in Taldor's escalating struggle for succession, the heroes must help Princess Eutropia build a power base by reclaiming her family's land from squatters—the debased Lotheed family, who feast as their subjects starve and their infrastructure crumbles. Can the heroes infiltrate the high society of the county of Meratt through its extravagant balls and tournaments while secretly undermining Count Bartelby Lotheed's authority, or will their clandestine attempts to repair the damage done and woo allies ultimately lead them to the executioner's blade?

AGENTS OF CHANGE

By Linda Zayas-Palmer

As word spreads of the PCs' heroic deeds and their stars begin to rise, they start to earn reputations for charm and genius—or subterfuge. If the budding heroes want to effect lasting change in Taldor, however, they'll need to cultivate these and other facets of their public image to attract loyal agents who can act on their behalf, allowing them to attain ever-greater heights.

COUNTY OF MERATT GAZETTEER

By Crystal Frasier and Richard Pett

Explore the county of Meratt, near the Verduran Forest in Taldor's northwestern reaches, where decaying bridges, disused canals, and half-abandoned towns lie within view of opulent estates bustling with pampered nobility.

RELICS OF OLD TALDOR

By Logan Bonner

A rare few magic items in Taldor are imbued with the might and spirit of the empire's glorious history. Though these relics have lain dormant for years, in the PCs' hands, they can be revitalized in service to Taldor, unlocking new abilities as the heroes grow in power.

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STAVIAN I

BORN 5 LAMASHTAN 4497 AR;
CORONATED 28 ROVA 4526 AR;
PERISHED 1 ABADIUS 4588 AR

Grand Prince Stavian I, Firstborn of Micheaux, First of His Name, was born during the harvest season, and for many years he was called the Bounty Prince by citizens of Taldor, who understandably took great joy in the birth of Micheaux



the Magnificent's son and heir. Stavian inherited his father's intense eyes, and between his comely features and his life of vigorous exercise, he is remembered as a handsome young man who was very popular in Opparan social circles.

Following Micheaux the Magnificent's sudden death in 4526, Stavian I and his five younger brothers fell into bitter squabbling. A Sarenite soothsayer had declared one of the six brothers a bastard, not descended of imperial blood—a bold claim given Grand Prince Micheaux's own adoption into the line of succession rather than blood descent. After a summer of unprecedented violence, Stavian calmed his brothers, demonstrating the nobility and leadership that mandated his princely blood, and ascended to the throne at the end of Rova, once again demonstrating his bountiful relationship with Taldor's fortunes and harvests.

Grand Prince Stavian I revitalized the Grand Campaign. Recognizing the soothsayer who instigated his family's infighting for the traitor he was, he declared all who proselytize on behalf of Sarenrae to be enemies of the state, invested only in lies and sedition. The Great Burning of Witches—now known as the Great Purge—saw treasonous foreign agents driven from Taldor's borders; despite its sobriquet, the Purge involved few pyres, ultimately burning fewer than 100 Sarenites.

Despite his marriage to the Countess Suteпа Mavrosenus in 4528, Grand Prince Stavian I remained a popular fixture in noble circles, and maintained 18 concubines of various genders to appease the sudden shifts of humor to which he grew prone in later years. He fathered a total of 12 children, and he was succeeded by his oft-overlooked third son, Dominus II, after the death of his eldest son, Gosse, and exile of his second son, Manderval.

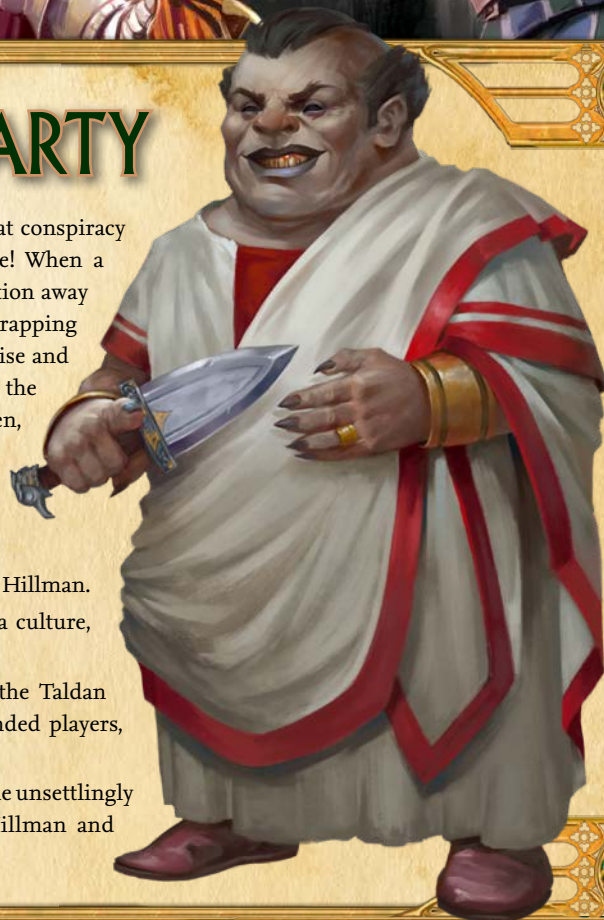


EVERYONE LOVES A PARTY

As Taldor's entire capital city gathers to celebrate, few realize that conspiracy and royal rivalries are about to shake the empire to its core! When a high-minded cabal of senators and nobles tries to steer the nation away from disaster, Emperor Stavian III orders a bloodbath in the senate halls, trapping neophyte spies inside layer upon layer of magical security. As tensions rise and the emperor falls, can the heroes escape the forgotten halls beneath the senate and save the heir to Taldor from an assassin's blade? And even then, can anyone prevent a civil war that will tear one of the Inner Sea's oldest nations apart at its rotting seams?

This volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path launches the War for the Crown Adventure Path and includes:

- "Crownfall," a Pathfinder adventure for 1st-level characters, by Thurston Hillman.
- A gazetteer of Oppara, crown jewel of Taldor and center of Inner Sea culture, by Eleanor Ferron.
- A closer look at some of the primary movers and shakers within the Taldan senate, who make for ideal allies, patrons, or rivals to politically minded players, by Thurston Hillman.
- A collection of some of Taldor's most exotic and unusual threats, from the unsettlingly doll-like fantionette to the freewheeling onyvolan, by Thurston Hillman and Adrian Ng.



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