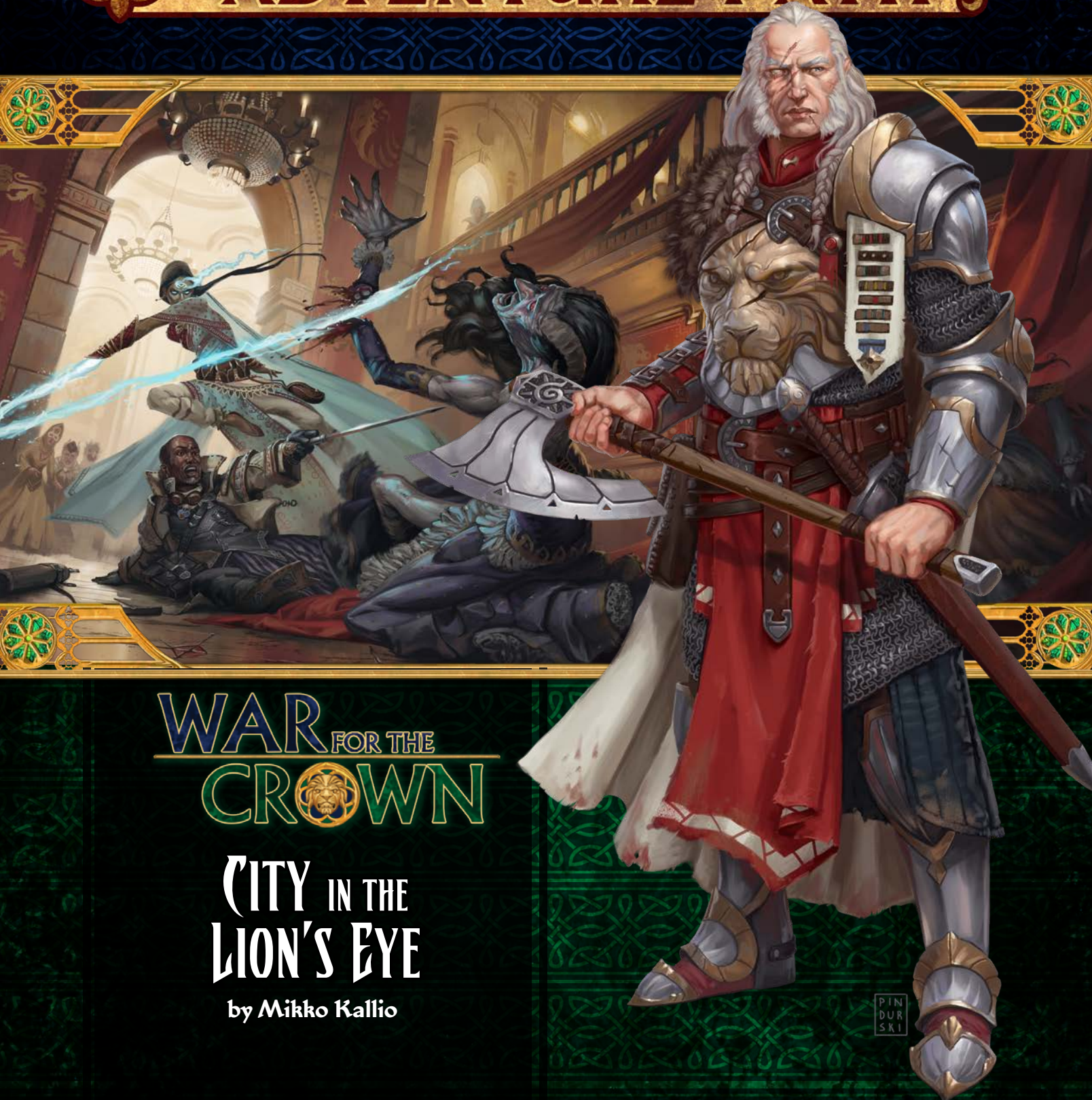


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ADVENTURE PATH[™]



WAR FOR THE
CROWN

CITY IN THE
LION'S EYE

by Mikko Kallio

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SUCCESSION LOYALTIES



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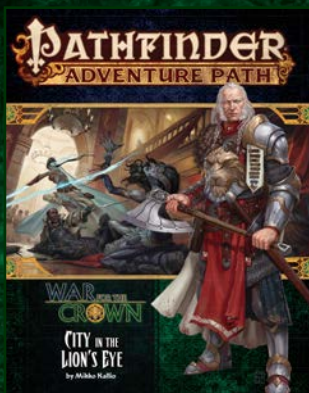
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ON THE COVER



The regal Maxillar Pyratheus graces the foreground of Hugh Pindur's magnificent cover art, while Quinn and Rivani clash against night hags in the background.



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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>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM
<i>Occult Adventures</i>	OA	<i>Ultimate Intrigue</i>	UI
<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC		

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THE TALE OF THE TIME-TRAVELING WRITER

I think I know how time travelers feel. I've experienced the steady, onward progression of time one way, while the rest of the world saw time flow another. This can create some weird discrepancies, like this: I wrote the previous installment in the War for the Crown Adventure Path, and now I'm writing the introduction you're reading now. In that time, I've gone from a being Midwestern corporate attorney to a full-time developer for Paizo in the Pacific Northwest. It all started when I turned in my final text for *Pathfinder Adventure Path #129: The Twilight Child*; at about the same time, I mentioned to Adam Daigle that I'd love to join his team of developers at Paizo. I politely lifted Adam's dropped jaw from the floor and assured him I was serious. (In this, I had practice: I'd previously mentioned to my wife that I wanted to try for a full-time job at Paizo, and I'd politely lifted her dropped jaw from the floor and assured her I was serious.) A few months of interviews and development tests later, I moved my family from Chicagoland to Seattleland to work at Paizo. Throughout this process, my wife went from surprised to supportive so fast that

it reminded me—as do so many other things—that I don't really deserve her. I've now been working at Paizo for over a month, hammering the articles in the back of this very volume (and the next one) into shape, and I'm putting pen to paper for this introduction now. For you, it's been only a month since our last chapter, but for me, it's been six very busy and exciting ones.

Fellow developer Joe Pasini has been showing me the ropes. His foreword in last month's volume talked a lot about what it is we do as developers, and as developers for the supplemental material in the back of Pathfinder Adventure Path volumes specifically. That was quite a bit like the discussion Adam and Joe had with me when I started, which I call What Developers Do, and How There's a Lot More to It Than You Expected, Ron. So, that ground's been covered for you. But since I've been a freelance writer for Paizo for many years, I thought I'd offer some insights into how the freelance writing side works—questions about freelancing come up quite frequently at conventions and on the forums, so let me give you my insights.

WRITING FOR PAIZO

The most common misconception is that freelancers get to pick what to write. That's not really true. Being a freelancer isn't like being an artist with a fresh palette, able to paint whatever you envision. It's more like being a house painter; the boss wants this side painted yellow with red trim, and if you paint it sea-foam with mauve stripes, you won't be asked back. Plenty of writers don't like those constraints, so they go write their own thing and publish it themselves. I appreciate that; I've done plenty of it myself (for adventures in particular, which are my favorite thing to write). But if you're writing for a company freelance, you'll need to work within its parameters.

It starts by getting noticed by the developers. Participating in RPG writing and design contests is a good way to do that, particularly when Paizo or its developers are involved. If you have a consistent, public portfolio of Pathfinder RPG-compatible work for developers to look at, this will also help a lot (although Paizo won't accept unsolicited work for publication). Polite inquiries regarding work availability are vital.

Good freelancers are professional. They keep emails brief and to the point, and they work to answer their own questions before coming to us by looking how Paizo has handled a similar rule or issue in previous products. They proofread, and ask others to proofread as well (for myself, see above with regard to supportive wife). They submit on time, and craft detailed comments to liberally explain their decisions to the developer, note gp cost calculations, and compare power levels to other Paizo rules.

For many of our new authors, the first writing assignment you'll get is a monster for an Adventure Path bestiary, just like the ones I now develop. I'll ask you to pitch a few monster ideas within a narrow range of CRs or in keeping with a few other parameters, and then ask you to work up the most appropriate of your pitches for that issue. You'll get a contract that specifies your total payment (which is a one-time, work-for-hire payment—no royalties), deadline, confidentiality obligations, and other legal terms that I personally find interesting, unlike nearly everyone else on the planet. I'm looking for a solid monster turnover with clear rules that doesn't create new rules subsystems and doesn't pull from a myriad of different sources (a monster with feats from seven different books, spell-like abilities from a dozen other books, and a bunch of skill unlocks doesn't demonstrate rules mastery; it demonstrates lack of focus). I have to order art to match your monster, so having an evocative description is helpful. We developers try to find the time to give feedback since we understand that's how writers improve, so if you haven't gotten any feedback after your work shows up in print, don't be shy about asking for it.

This is also the time to ask about the availability of other work. Future requests for work might come in an email query such as "Would you be able to write about 2,000 words for an upcoming book about jungles of Golarion, due the end of next month?" This is where professionalism is again important. You'll have signed a nondisclosure agreement not to talk publicly about unannounced projects or even the content of announced projects, so this isn't your cue to take to Facebook announcing, "Hey, Paizo's got a jungles book coming up, y'all!" Just as importantly, you should honestly consider whether you have the time for the assignment. If you're planning a wedding and honeymoon for that same time period, you have more important things to do. Developers don't mind hearing, "That timing doesn't work for me. Can you please keep me in mind for the next project?"

If you say yes, you'll get an outline. Sometimes, that outline is just for your particular article, but usually you'll get an outline for a complete product, with your name assigned to certain chapters or sections. This lets you see everything that's going into the book, and how your section will fit into the larger picture. Stick to your assigned word count and topic, do your research into the applicable rules and canon, and cover the topic fully. Communicating with other authors on the project is just fine, and often very helpful.

We developers talk and share names a lot; after a few projects, you'll build a reputation with us. That reputation often has both positive and negative components, such as, "great with evocative monster design but struggles a bit with world lore," or "can put together great spells and magic items but tends towards names that are too jokey." This is good! It lets us know how best to work with you and it lets you recognize where we'd like you to improve. As you build a positive reputation, you'll receive a wider variety of projects from us, up to and including high-profile projects like Adventure Path adventures or hardcover books. You'll be a lot more trusted, and begin to exchange your house painter overalls for an artist's smock. We'll still tell you what colors we need, but how you paint them will be up to you.



Ron Lundeen

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The heroes learn the fundamentals of infiltration from the Lion Blades before setting off for the militarized city of Zimar, now apparently poised for war.

PART 2: GAME OF MASKS16

The heroes learn the secrets of Zimar's intelligence community, leaving them with the difficult choice of either destroying that infrastructure and dismantling the harm it can do or working alongside some of Taldor's greatest monsters to undermine Maxillar Pythareus's support.

PART 3: ASSAULT ON ABADAR'S PILLAR39

With sufficient evidence of Maxillar Pythareus's violence against Taldan citizens, the Lion Blades authorize the heroes to arrest—or eliminate—the general in his stronghold.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The City in the Lion's Eye" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.

10

The PCs begin this adventure at 10th level.

11

The PCs should reach 11th level shortly after arriving in Zimar and confronting Sir Milon Jeroth.

12

The PCs should reach 12th level before they storm Abadar's Pillar.

The PCs should reach 13th level by the adventure's conclusion.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For as long as Qadira has stood at Taldor's southern border, the nations have been rivals and intermittent enemies, even as their peoples have traded or intermarried. The Taldan city of Zimar embodies this juxtaposition, blending Taldan traditions with Qadiran influences: the city's buildings are constructed in Keleshite styles, most of its population bears Keleshite blood, and even its food relies heavily on Qadiran spices. Yet, perhaps nowhere in Taldor do the common citizens so hate their southern neighbor and champ at the bit to pull the whole of the empire back into war. Zimar has been conquered and reconquered a dozen times in its history, making it one of the most militarized cities in the region, with formidable walls, a well-drilled defense force, and one of the wonders of Taldan engineering: Abadar's Pillar, a massive fortress rising above the city skyline that has only ever been broken by duplicity and espionage, never by strength of arms. Zimar now serves as the stronghold of High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus, supreme commander of Taldor's military forces and, by some estimations, heir to the throne of Taldor.

Coming from a long line of military commanders, Maxillar Pythareus knows in his heart that a weak ruler like Eutropia—soft-hearted and focused inward—would doom Taldor, first as international laughingstocks and then as subjects conquered by Qadira. Long ago, in his optimistic youth, he sought to court the firebrand princess and temper her overemotional leanings with sound, military insight; were they to wed, the princess could be allowed her social causes (within reason) and Maxillar, as emperor, would see to Taldor's safety and future. But the impetuous Eutropia refused his hand, and more insultingly spat in the eye of Taldor's glorious tradition by seeking the throne for herself—a woman! Maxillar remained close to the royal family, and as Stavian III began to suspect his daughter of treason, Maxillar could not in good conscience deny or refute his emperor's fears. On the eve of Eutropia's political victory in abolishing primogeniture, Stavian relented and named Maxillar Pythareus his heir. But even with Grand Prince Stavian's approval, Taldor refused to recognize Maxillar's claim to the throne and Eutropia refuses to stand down, tearing the nation in twain. Though the military overwhelmingly supports Maxillar, he has been reluctant to plunge the nation into civil war, and instead has relied on politicking and blackmail to win support.

But every day Taldor spends without a leader is another day closer to its conquest by jealous foreign powers.

And so it was that Maxillar's intelligence advisor, Sir Milon Jeroth, approached him with a plot to conduct false-flag attacks by fake Qadiran forces on Taldan targets—especially those compromising the nation's safety by supporting Eutropia—coupled with overt retaliations against Qadira. With minimal prodding, Sir Jeroth assured him, the tense peace between Taldor and Qadira would collapse and the nations would resume the Grand Campaign. Once embroiled in war, Taldor would rally to a strong military leader!

Though Maxillar Pythareus foolishly thinks Milon Jeroth is loyal to the Imperialist cause, the truth is quite different. Unknown to Maxillar, Sir Milon Jeroth is a rakshasa, and sits on the inner circle of the Immaculate Circle secret society, which is led by the immortal wizard Panivar Lotheed. The organization's goal is indeed to give Maxillar the throne, but to make his victory a costly one that strains his credibility and commits his strongest asset—the military—to another front, leaving him vulnerable so that they can easily topple him and replace him with their own puppet ruler, allowing their mystery cult to expand.

This puppet is none other than the returned Prince Carrius, whom the Immaculate Circle has forcibly resurrected using sahkil servants to rip his reluctant soul from Nirvana, heavily damaging it in the process. To patch these holes in the reclaimed soul, the society dispatched night hags to the Astral Plane to collect bits of legends—the memories and assumptions about major Taldan emperors created by the nation's zeitgeist. Panivar believes his amalgam, built with the willpower of Cyricas, the charm of Stavian, and the bravery of Taldaris himself, to be the perfect emperor, and one brainwashed, drug-addled, and dominated into utter loyalty. Even Prince Carrius himself remains ignorant of his recent past, his destiny, and the weighty legends of Taldan history that have been unnaturally stitched into his soul.

Yet whether the Immaculate Circle's grand plan succeeds or not, Pythareus's conspiracy threatens to cause deep rifts in Taldan society and ignite a war Taldor cannot win in its current divided state. In Zimar, Sir Jeroth presently leads a vast network of intelligence assets, both those loyal to Maxillar and those loyal to the Immaculate Circle. He counts three groups among his closest allies: a faction of assassins splintered from the Monastery of Seven Forms known as the Seven Forms of Sin; a band of rakshasa spies he has recruited over the centuries; and a night hag coven called the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams, who pry secrets from slumbering minds. This shadow network works hard to allow Pythareus just enough rope to hang himself, while positioning Taldor itself on a precarious enough ledge that its citizens will flock to their one remaining option: the twilight child, Carrius.

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ZIMAR OPERATIONS

PCs have a total of 8 persona phases over the course of this adventure. One takes place before the PCs arrive at the Kitharodian Academy, and another takes place before they arrive in Zimar. You can divide the remaining persona phases as you see fit, but it's appropriate to reward the players with a persona phase after significant encounters. The PCs receive 2 additional persona phases after the adventure's conclusion. PCs can also assign agents to the following new operations while in Zimar.

Deflect Suspicion (Charm, Genius): Your agents sow false rumors about your identity and activities. With a successful DC 15 Operation check, reduce your Suspicion Point total by 1. Reduce your Suspicion Point total by an additional 5 for every 5 points by which you exceed the DC. (See page 17 for the Suspicion Point system.)

Reinforce Cover (Sacrifice, Sagacity, Persistent): Your agents' good work and sound advice help the locals trust you more readily. While this operation remains in effect, you gain a +2 bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks to maintain a false identity. You can immediately end this operation to reroll a single Bluff or Disguise check and use the new result.

Scout (Heroism, Subterfuge, Risky): You dispatch agents to examine a location for you. Attempt an Operation check with a DC equal to 8 + the highest Perception bonus of any guards or defenders; if successful, you learn of any obvious defenders and hazards. For locations with multiple rooms, determine the exact room scouted randomly.

PART I: THE ROAD TO ZIMAR

The adventure begins at the Palace of Birdsong, Princess Eutropia's estate in the Tandak Prefecture. Having rescued the resurrected Prince Carrius II from a cult in the previous adventure, "The Twilight Child," and delivered him to Eutropia's custody, the heroes are assumed to have retired to their nearby estate to rest and recuperate. Once the player characters are ready to begin this adventure, read or paraphrase the following as they return to the Palace of Birdsong and meet with Princess Eutropia.

Princess Eutropia's mutt, Taldogis, bounds forward in greeting, wielding a deafening bark and nearly lethal wagging tail. The princess gently shoos him away before inviting you into her office.

"I want to thank you again," she begins, "both for your loyal service and more personally for returning Carrius to me.

I don't understand who would have the resources to raise him from the dead after so many years, but it seems obvious the plan is to disrupt both Pythareus's and my own claims to the throne. For now he's safe and recovering. He seems to be the same boy, but... haunted by this unfortunate transition. Hopefully Carrius can provide us with additional details once the cultists' drugs wear off and he feels more comfortable returned to his skin. In the meantime, it is an infinite kindness to see my brother again.

"I know normally Martella Lotheed would be offering you assignments, but she is presently in Qadira trying to prevent a war. After your encounter in Yanmass, you returned with evidence that Maxillar is conducting false attacks on Taldan border communities, disguising his soldiers as Qadirans. My follow-up investigations have revealed he has also conducted 'retaliatory' attacks against Qadiran targets in response. He seems to believe that a nation at war will select a general as its emperor, and he's probably right. But I don't need to remind you that the last time we went to war with Qadira, it lasted 500 years and cost millions of lives, not to mention half our empire.

"There is some good news: we're not alone in wanting to prevent this. Up until now, the Lion Blades have been reluctant to take a side in the succession debate, but with Maxillar risking the nation's safety, they have reached out to me for assistance. It seems all their resources in Zimar have suddenly gone dark, and they need new eyes in the city. You've proven yourselves my most loyal and reliable agents; I'd like you to proceed to the Kitharodian Academy in Oppara to meet a woman named Kathann Zalar. She'll provide you additional information, training, and resources for this joint venture. She also asked that you return an ocarina constructed by a master artisan of the Kitharodian Academy that has been housed here at the palace for the last few centuries, as a sign of good faith."

Princess Eutropia can answer a few questions for the PCs, but the Lion Blades have kept her at arm's length from their intelligence operations since the succession crisis began.

Why do we need more training? "As I understand it, you'll be infiltrating Zimar, a fortified city passionately loyal to Pythareus and wary of outsiders. The Lion Blades have done so many times before, and I presume they have insights unknown to the general public that may help you."

Are we attacking Pythareus? "I make no secret of my displeasure with the man, and he's certainly overextended his internal defenses as he maneuvers forces to the border, but it's not in my nature to settle disputes with assassination. Taldor is a nation of laws, and to stop Pythareus we need iron-clad evidence of his crimes against the nation, not brutal violence."

Why don't we make the evidence we found in Yanmass public? "Just because you have proof of a

major figure's wrongs, it doesn't mean they'll suffer the consequences. Defenders will claim the documents are faked, or more likely, that I am attempting to smear him. Some people, sadly, are entrenched enough that accusations require a mountain of evidence before decisive action can be taken."

Aren't the Lion Blades your allies? "Though I enjoyed a number of supporters within the Lion Blades' ranks during my crusade to overturn primogeniture—many in the organization felt advancing Taldor's internal unity would strengthen our security as well—the organization refuses to act beyond being an internal security force. Even my closest allies among them have removed themselves from me since the War for the Crown began. It's been frustrating, but I can appreciate their perspective; to ensure the nation's safety, they must be loyal to that nation and its tenets, not any one politician."

Who is Kathann Zalar? "Kathann is one of my few remaining contacts within the Lion Blades. She assisted me in my campaign to overturn primogeniture, and rushed to our defense during the Exaltation Massacre. I've quite literally trusted her with my life, though her sense of humor can be a bit... overbearing."

Why is this ocarina important? "I don't think it is, beyond serving as a gesture of trust. It seems one of my ancestors borrowed the piece from the Kitharodian Academy and it simply became part of the family collection. A troubling habit in Taldan history."

Princess Eutropia has little additional information as to the Lion Blades' actual needs or plans. While the organization has remained stubbornly neutral in the conflict so far, she hopes they can at least work together to prevent a war. The ocarina itself is remarkable in that it is expertly crafted from porcelain and inlaid with silver details, but it's small and has no magical properties. The remainder of the Blades' letter requests only that the PCs remain discreet in their association, and meet Kathann in the Academy's gardens, on a bench under the administrator's offices at sunset.

The trip to Oppara proves a quiet week's travel, though PCs traveling by carriage pass the site of a recent battle between Loyalist and Imperialist forces that took place in southern Tandak while they were in Yanmass. By this point the bodies have been cleared from the impromptu battlefield, but the freshly turned soil of recent graves remains visible from the road, and the faint stink of death lingers.

Treasure: Before the PCs depart, Princess Eutropia presents them with a package Martella Lotheed left for them. Inside is a clockwork spy (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 358), built in the shape of a large beetle with a single, jeweled eye. The unique construct has a 10-foot climb speed in addition to its other abilities, and has been built to obey the PCs' commands, offering them the ability to surveil targets and record short audio clips.



CLOCKWORK SPY

THE KITHARODIAN ACADEMY

Oppara's largest bard college, the Kitharodian Academy, is known for producing some of Taldor's greatest musicians and actors. What few locals know is that the academy hosts a secret shadow school for the Lion Blades, who walk among the faculty and recruit heavily from the academy's student body.

While the academy teaches the bardic arts to all its students, the most charming, innocent-seeming, and loyal are inducted into the Lion Blades and taught to listen, watch, and even kill for their country. Every lesson serves a dual purpose; dance classes teach the fundamentals of combat footwork and acting classes groom students to read and manipulate others. Students selected for special training by the Lion Blades see more advanced training building off these universal foundations.

Most of the events at the Kitharodian are conducted in a montage: several short events reflect the highlights of an intense week of study and training. The Lion Blades are interested in the PCs' ability to adapt and think laterally to solve problems with a minimal amount of attention, so you are encouraged to reward creative solutions to these challenges.

EVENT 1: INTRODUCTION, INTERRUPTED

As Princess Eutropia mentioned, the Lion Blades requested the PCs meet their representative discreetly in the Academy's gardens at sundown. The location is easy to find; the administrators' windows are a stained glass affair, propped slightly open in the warm evening, with a large, stone bench below. Kathann Zalar is late in arriving, however. Soon after the PCs arrive at their destination, two city guards approach them.

Two men wearing blue-and-green guard uniforms and armed with halberds approach. The taller of the two guards calls out, "Good evening. Stay where you are. We have a few questions for you."

The PCs can easily recognize these men as members of the Opparan city guard; the taller of the two wears the stripes of a sergeant. The sergeant is actually Kathann in disguise, testing the PCs' ability to remain discreet about their intentions. She asks the following questions, trying

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to determine how easily the PCs break under pressure. If the PCs try to ask questions, the disguised Kathann interrupts them by stomping the ground and insisting, "I'm asking the questions here."

If the group as a whole fails a total of four or more skill checks, the PCs fail the test.

"Who are you?" Each PC must succeed at a DC 20 Bluff check to tell a convincing lie. Alternatively, a clever PC can attempt a DC 20 skill check using a skill related to the profession of the person she claims to be; a PC who tries to wave off her presence as a visiting musician can attempt a Perform check, while a PC pretending to be a noble visiting the school can attempt a Knowledge (nobility) check. If a PC's clothes and general appearance don't match her description, the DC increases by 5. If the PCs give their real names, they automatically fail this test.

If the PCs' purported identities are wildly different from one another, the sergeant gives them an incredulous look and says, "Really? Now this is a story I want to hear," and DC of the next check increases by 5.

"Why are you loitering on the Academy grounds?" One PC must succeed at a DC 25 Bluff check to give a convincing excuse for being outside the academy.

"Someone reported a break-in at the Academy. I'm sure you don't mind if I have a quick look at your belongings?" The ocarina the PCs return bears iconography clearly associating it with the Kitharodian Academy, which would give it the appearance of stolen goods. The PC carrying the ocarina can attempt a quick Sleight of Hand check (DC 20) to hide the instrument. The PC can also object to being searched and convince the guards not to do so by succeeding at a DC 30 Intimidate check, DC 30 Knowledge (local) check, or DC 25 Profession (barrister) check. This part of the test counts as a failure only if the PC fails both checks. If the PC does fail both checks, increase the DC for the character to talk her way out of the problem in the next check by 5.

"I'm going to have to take you in for questioning. We'll sort this out in the morning." Regardless of whether the guards find the ocarina, the sergeant says he wants to arrest the PCs. At this point, each PC can choose whether to escape or talk her way out of the charges. To escape, a PC must succeed at a DC 25 Acrobatics or Escape Artist check, or a DC 20 Stealth check provided she can create some kind of distraction. A PC who wants to talk her way out of the charge must instead succeed at a DC 25 Bluff, DC 30 Diplomacy, or DC 25 Intimidate check. Alternatively, a PC who succeeds at a DC 35 Perception

or DC 30 Sense Motive check realizes there's something strange about the guards.

Development: Regardless of how well or poorly the PCs do with their skill checks, after the final question or if the PCs attempt to resort to violence, the guards break into laughter. The sergeant pulls at his neck, peeling off a disguise and revealing the face of a Vudrani woman the PCs may or may not remember as the "guard" who waved them through the search of the senate at the beginning of "Crownfall": Kathann Zalar. She says, "My apologies for having a bit of fun at your expense. We needed to test your ability to deflect nosy authorities. Welcome to the Kitharodian Academy, agents. My name is Kathann Zalar." If the PCs struggled with her impromptu challenge, Kathann offers them a few notes about playing to their strengths or else confusing curious guards by taking control of the conversation and asking leading

questions. She likewise praises the tasks they did well at, and then invites them inside for coffee and a brief tour.

More details on Kathann Zalar can be found in her NPC entry on page 56.

Story Award: If the PCs navigate their interaction with the guards without resorting to violence (at least not until the last question), award them 6,400 XP.

EVENT 2: THE LION BLADES

Kathann gives the PCs a quick tour around the campus and allows them to sit in on classes as they wish, introducing them to curious attendees as "visiting scholars." Once the PCs have seen the area, she escorts them to the faculty lounge where another familiar face awaits: **Cassaranda Florint** (NG female middle-aged human bard 3/rogue 3/Lion Blade 1; *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Intrigue* 36), who the PCs may have discovered in a cell beneath the Encircling Bower in Yanmass (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #129: The Twilight Child* 50). If the PCs released her from the cult's prison, she greets them warmly like old friends, but if they left her behind in their efforts, she is cold and critical, insisting to Kathann that Eutropia's chosen agents are an arrogant, selfish pack of jackals and not to be trusted.

Regardless of Florint's impressions, Kathann pours fresh cups of coffee, tea, or wine. PCs can attempt opposed Perception checks against Kathann's Sleight of Hand as she slips *elixir of truth* into each cup.

"Lady Lotheed seemed optimistic about your group back during the Exaltation Gala. I'm pleased to meet you in a more formal setting, and I'm quite pleased you didn't die. So please do tell me: what is your purpose in working for our princess?"



KATHANN ZALAR

At this point, any PC who drank the spiked drink offered by Kathann must succeed at a DC 13 Will saving throw or be compelled to answer her honestly. This is another test to see what information the PCs share willingly, especially if unprepared or “encouraged” magically. A PC succeeds at this challenge if he spots Kathann spiking his drink and doesn’t partake, if he succeeds at his saving throw to resist the elixir’s effects, or if his magically compelled answers are phrased diplomatically or creatively.

Finally, Kathann reveals some of her motivation for inviting the PCs to the Kitharodian Academy.

“I apologize for the examination, but in my career, paranoia is a survival trait. Normally, the Lion Blades would never consider working so directly with strangers, especially those with a political agenda, but recent events have forced our hand and we need new eyes in Zimar quickly. I’ll happily explain more... if you survive training.”

Story Award: Award each PC who succeeds at this challenge 1,200 XP.

EVENT 3: TRAINING

The PCs spend the next week undergoing intense training under the tutelage of Lion Blades, focused not on combat but on stealth, deflection, observation, and disguise. While true Lion Blade training requires months or years, the PCs’ training focuses solely on useful minutiae about Zimar and its people, drilling in just enough information for the PCs to get by for a few weeks.

Have each PC select one Charisma-based skill, one Intelligence-based skill, and three additional skills (which can include additional Charisma- or Intelligence-based skills) to focus her training on. Alternatively, combat-focused PCs can opt to focus on training their melee attacks or ranged attacks in place of a skill. Each PC can attempt at a single DC 22 skill check or an attack against AC 22 each day; success means that the PC has achieved 1 week (7 days) of training in that skill or type of attack. Once a PC succeeds at this check with at least four of her chosen skills or types of attacks, she succeeds at the training challenge.

Story Award: Award each PC who succeeds at this challenge 1,200 XP.

EVENT 4: THE FINAL CHALLENGE (CR 14)

After the PCs train for a week with different specialists, Kathann Zalar gathers the heroes in the Kitharodian Academy’s grand performance hall for one last test to see what they’ve learned. As the PCs arrive, read or paraphrase the following.

A wave of Kathann’s hand encompasses an enormous performance hall, which now stands empty and echoing.

TRIUMPHS IN CITY IN THE LION’S EYE

If you are using the rules from the “Relics of Old Taldor” article in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128 to add a sense of historical weight to your campaign, “The Twilight Child” introduces two new relics: the *Band of the Crusader’s Alliance*, kept as a trophy by Milon Jeroth and the *Ovetrian’s Plate*, worn by Maxillar Pythareus.

This adventure also includes two triumphs for the PCs: training with the Lion Blades and arresting or killing Maxillar Pythareus. Each triumph allows a PC to unlock a new tier of power in one relic she carries.

“The instructors have praised your progress this past week, so I believe it’s time for a final test of your skills.” She gestures to several ornate, lion-themed masks on the edge of the stage. “These masks are tools the Lion Blades use to discreetly simulate dangerous training scenarios. Once you don them, you’ll be able to see, hear, and feel opponents as if they were real. Your task is simple: eliminate the witnesses. And please be careful with the masks, as they are quite old.”

The lion masks radiate magic thanks to a permanent *magic aura* spell, but otherwise serve only as a focus for a unique spell the Lion Blades employ that functions as a combination of *phantasmal killer* and *shadow conjuration*, creating a phantasm that looks and feels real and reacts appropriately if attacked, but that can be controlled by the spellcaster. The same phantasm is shared by everyone who wears one of the focus masks, for all intents and purposes creating a perfectly real opponent as long as the characters continue to wear the lion masks. Phantasms created by this spell cannot reduce a target below –1 hit point, as once the target is rendered unconscious, it automatically slips out of the spell’s effect.

Creatures: As the PCs don their masks, they can see four guards milling about on the performance stage. Once all the PCs are wearing their masks, one of the guards points and shouts, “There! Arrest the traitors!” and the guards rush to attack. Once again, this is a test of the PCs’ ability to adapt and think laterally, and once the PCs defeat two of the guards, the images from the mask begin to swirl and heave. The remaining guards vanish, and the PCs hear a bone-chilling roar from behind them, where a crag linnorm now stands. The phantasm has statistics identical to those of a true crag linnorm, but lacks the legendary beast’s Death Curse ability.

If the PCs ask for assistance, Kathann simply says, “Are they malfunctioning again? Last week Cassaranda had to fight a two-headed goat. Stay here and I’ll fetch an artificer.”

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EXPERT BODYGUARDS (4)**CR 5****XP 1,600 each****hp 59 each** (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex 269*)**CRAIG LINNORM****CR 14****XP 38,400****hp 202** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 190*)

Development: The easiest route to success for the PCs is to simply remove their masks, eliminating the danger. If the PCs instead remain within the phantasm and actually defeat the linnorm, Kathann is too impressed by their display or martial ability to criticize their lack of subtlety or self-preservation. Her only feedback is “No one’s ever beaten the linnorm...”

Story Award: If the PCs succeed at the challenge by removing their masks, award them XP as if they had defeated the linnorm in combat.

EVENT 5: THE HAND OF THE BLADES

Once the PCs have completed their final challenge and received any necessary medical attention, Kathann invites them to her office for a final briefing. She offers drinks—this time free of any magical additives—and says the following.

“You’ve shown great promise, and I see why Eutropia relies on you. I’m sorry that the question of succession has soured the relationship between the princess and the Lion Blades, but ultimately our loyalty must always be to the nation and the Taldan people. To take sides in a political conflict is to dilute our power and purpose. But now it seems that political conflict is spilling over into national security. Lady Lotheed brought us the documents you recovered in Zimar, and they corroborate similar reports we’ve gathered from Sardis Township, Pol, and Demgazi. Maxillar Pythareus is rattling his saber for war, and he appears to be spilling Taldan blood to get it.

“For a time we shared the same uneasy peace with Maxillar Pythareus’s Imperialist faction that we share with Eutropia’s Loyalists. But all at once, as we began to receive reports of these ‘Qadiran’ attacks, our agents in Zimar were set upon and eliminated in a single, coordinated attack. I barely made it out of the city alive, and I appear to be the only one. Now I’m too well known in the area to keep a low profile. You’ll be the ones to continue the investigation in Zimar on behalf of the Lion Blades.

“This is not an easy task laid out before you. Many believe Pythareus is the Grand Prince of Taldor, and he is defended accordingly, not to mention that you will be attempting to prove him guilty of high crimes. Furthermore, he is obviously operating his own intelligence network, one run by Milon Jeroth, a former associate of the Lion Blades and one of the most ruthless and underhanded operatives I have ever encountered. We believe one of our agents, Gannaius, may have escaped the purge, and locating him will be your top

priority for now. We can provide you with false identities, and I can accompany you as far south as Panemona to act as an advisor, but you will be alone in the lion’s den. I cannot enter the city to protect you without alerting Pythareus’s diviner and bringing far more pain down upon you. Are you clear on what your nation needs from you?”

Before the PCs depart, Kathann can answer the following questions about the mission.

What happened to the Lion Blades in Zimar? “Most of our safe houses were raided simultaneously, and many of our agents and informants were killed before we knew we were under attack. How they were able to acquire the information on our safe houses is beyond me.”

Why have you stayed neutral in the War for the Crown?/Why are you aligning with Eutropia now? “Our cause is to protect to people and state of Taldor from outside threats, not to make emperors or decide the future. Were our hands not bound as they now are in Zimar, we would have preferred to remain neutral and simply defend the nation against opportunists while the people decide what they want.”

What should we know about Zimar? “Zimar is a fortified military city, more paranoid than most after centuries on the front line between Taldor and Qadira. Almost every citizen drills with the militia until becoming a parent, and almost everyone is fanatically patriotic. However, Zimar is also the heart of Taldor’s spice trade, and its people are happy to put their xenophobia on hold to make money. There are lots of suspicious eyes watching, but also lots of people coming and going.”

What sorts of trouble can we expect to face? “In southern Taldor, Maxillar Pythareus’s soldiers patrol all major roads, so it’s absolutely necessary to avoid them. I have a route planned that uses farm roads and old hunters’ trails. Once inside the city walls, you’ll be surrounded by soldiers, spies, and paranoid citizens who will report you if you give them a reason to. Pythareus’s personal support includes a powerful diviner named Avenna who studied at the Magaambyan, his spymaster Milon Jeroth, and his majordomo Baron Astor Roderus. Zimar is also home to a sect of Abadar worshipers called the Vault and Chain—law-and-order types who are almost certainly loyal to him.”

Who is Gannaius? “He’s a paranoid but very talented Lion Blade who prefers to work alone. Our divinations haven’t confirmed his death yet, so we’re hoping he survived. One of his favorite drops is a warehouse for Sunrise Spice Importers in the Adobe District, so we’ll have you start your search there.”

Who is Maxillar Pythareus? “Maxillar is the high strategos—the supreme commander of Taldor’s military—and according to him and a few select witnesses, he was formally adopted by Stavian III hours before the grand prince’s death. He comes from a long

line of commanders and war heroes who've always made Zimar proud, and he's all but a god to the locals."

Who is Milon Jeroth? "Sir Jeroth has never formally been a member of the Lion Blades, but he and his family have worked with us on and off for decades, infiltrating Qadira throughout the Grand Campaign. He's a master of disguise, an adept sorcerer, and an expert barehanded combatant who studied with the monks at the Monastery of Seven Forms, not to mention a stone-cold killer. He's difficult to find or track, so if you have even the slightest chance, hit him fast and hard."

Why do we need false identities? "Because I'm afraid you're too good at your jobs protecting Princess Eutropia's interests, and you're well known to Pythareus's forces. They expect you to attack him any day now, and they tell stories of you to frighten their children. Even without your reputations, Zimar is a paranoid city, and guards check identification regularly."

What was the Grand Campaign? "Basic Taldor history, but I suppose not everyone benefits from an Academy education. The Grand Campaign was a 524-year-long conflict between Taldor and her neighbor to the south, Qadira. Qadira has always coveted our southern lands and trade routes, but its Padishah masters normally keep it in check. During a succession dispute in the Padishah Empire, Qadira seized the opportunity to quickly invade Zimar and advanced all the way to the Porthmos River. It took our nation centuries to retake the lost territories."

Treasure: Once the PCs complete their training, the Lion Blades award them each a boon to help them in their mission. Each PC can select one from the following: a *belt of giant strength* +4, a *belt of incredible dexterity* +4, a *belt of mighty constitution* +4, a *headband of alluring charisma* +4, a *headband of inspired wisdom* +4, a *headband of vast intelligence* +4, or a *headband of mental prowess* +2.

TRAVELING TO ZIMAR

Zimar lies about 210 miles southeast of Oppara. The fastest way to get there is to travel 90 miles up the River Porthmos to the newly revitalized city of Elsekulp, then follow old trade roads across a vast expanse of grassland and scrubland to the isolated artisan town of Ortalaca, and finally press south 50 miles on the main highway or 75 miles on the winding back roads to reach Zimar.

During the reconstruction era that followed the war with Qadira, a paved road called the Zimar Highway was built between Ortalaca and Zimar, but Kathann suggests that the PCs use an older trade route once employed by local woodcutters, farmers, and artisans. The old trade route sees little use nowadays—not only has it fallen into disrepair due to centuries of disuse, but the many abandoned villages along the road have a reputation of being haunted. Thanks to the lack of patrols along the old trade route, more dangerous residents have claimed stretches of road. The PCs have a 25% chance each day

INFILTRATION INSPIRATION

The intensive training received by the PCs is not merely window dressing; it provides a real benefit to assist them in their infiltration of Zimar. For every event at the Kitharodian Academy a given PC succeeded at, that PC gains two uses of inspiration. All PCs automatically succeed at **Event 5**, giving each of them at least two uses of inspiration over the course of this adventure. A PC can expend one use of inspiration as a free action to add 1d6 to the result of a check he just made with one of the five skills (or attack check) selected during **Event 3**, or he can expend two uses of inspiration to add 1d6 to the result of any other skill check, saving throw, or attack roll.

The inspiration PCs gain from this training is of limited value—consisting of factoids, local names to drop, and jargon—and can be used only in and around Zimar. Unlike an investigator's inspiration, these uses never replenish; they are a one-time boon to assist PCs in their adventure. If a PC has additional inspiration from another source (such as the Investigator class or the Amateur Investigator feat), track these uses separately. If a PC has a larger inspiration die from a class ability, she can roll that die instead of 1d6 for this adventure's additional inspiration. This inspiration otherwise functions identically to the ability granted by the investigator class (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 30).

while traveling or encountering a hostile creature, and a 10% chance each night while they rest; roll for random encounters using Table 7–65: Temperate Plains in the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*.

The trip from Oppara to Zimar takes 10 days on foot or 6 days on horseback. Kathann warns against flying because it is easier for Pythareus's patrols to spot a flying character, and they are likely to investigate or report any such sightings.

PANEMONA

The tiny farming hamlet of Panemona lies 15 miles northeast of Zimar and produces a great deal of the grain and herbs the city uses. It's important enough to have a large inn but otherwise far enough out of the way to be easily forgotten, making it a favorite watering hole for spies and criminals.

Windmill Inn stands at the crossroads of four roads, easily spotted thanks to its red tile roof and small windmill, which operates a pump to supply water to the guests and stables. In addition to two dozen cozy rooms, it offers stables and a large tavern for locals and visitors alike. A sign over the entrance reads, "Windmill Inn," and the four signs on a nearby signpost read, "Zimar 15 miles," "Landarr 9 miles," "Zimar Highway," and "Old Trade Road."

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ENTERING BY OTHER MEANS

The adventure assumes the PCs use the identification papers provided by Cyricus and walk through the gates. However, there are a number of other ways to get into Zimar.

Zimar has a port on the Jalrune River, but anyone arriving by boat has to go through checks similar to those at the gates. Flying or climbing (DC 25) over the 60-foot-tall city wall is possible, but with guards stationed every 100 feet, it's virtually impossible to do so unnoticed. If the PCs teleport to Zimar, there is a 25% chance that a loyal citizen notices the PCs' sudden appearance and alerts the city guard, who report the incident and start investigating.

See the city gates encounter on page 14 for guidelines on the response the PCs can expect if they are careless or attract attention during their entry.

Kathann says, "This is the place. Cyricus will be here in a few hours. I need to push on to rendezvous with a contact east of town, but I should be back here in a few days. You should move on first thing in the morning. Remember, this isn't about any political agenda; it's about the security of Taldor. We need evidence of Maxillar Pythareus's wrongdoing. Gannaius at Sunrise Spice should be able to get you started."

Treasure: Before she leaves, Kathann gives the PCs a *wand of sending* and instructs them to not hesitate in contacting her should they need advice or discover anything important.

Meeting with a Smuggler

Ninety minutes after the PCs' arrival, Cyricus arrives and takes a seat in a worn old booth in the back of the tavern. The stubbly, nervous half-elf has been moving goods and people through Zimar illegally since the Grand Campaign, when he worked as a file clerk in the city's trade office, and he's familiar with the ins and outs of the city's bureaucracy. Once the PCs join him, Cyricus begins.

"You're the ones? All right. I'm Cyricus. I just got here from Zimar, and it's a bad scene. Guards checking your papers at the gates, more carefully than before. And there are lots of patrols in the city—sometimes they stop you for no reason and ask questions. Lots of people I know have been arrested for having a fake set of documents, which means I had dig up some genuine identification papers for you. These are the closest I could find to the descriptions Zalar sent. Have a look and see if there are any that are close enough. You'll just have to be creative with your disguises."

The smuggler has identification papers for the identities in the table below. If there are more than four

PCs in the party, consider adding more options to the table. To use the documents, the PCs need to disguise themselves to look like the people described therein, taking penalties for being disguised as a person of different gender, race, age category, or size category (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 95), as appropriate. The people are relatively unknown in Zimar, so no modifiers based on familiarity apply to opposed Perception checks. Most citizens and visitors in Zimar carry identification papers, so the PCs can later steal more accurate documents from people they encounter and assume new identities.

Name	Identity	Notes
Argentea	Female half-elf	Traveling singer from Oppara
Basilia Aconian	Female middle-aged human (Taldan)	Baroness from Oppara
Cadonia	Female human (Taldan)	Merchant from Demgazi
Karl Langbaen	Male old human (Garundi)	Farmer from Landarr
Marozia	Female human (Vudrani)	Healer from Elbistan
Zadim al-Hadir	Male human (Keleshite)	Blacksmith from Zimar
Zenobius Baccar	Male human (Taldan)	Knight from Lionsguard
Zifer Arpador	Male halfling	Baker from Ortalaca

Cyricus is also able to answer a few questions about the city for the PCs. He isn't affiliated with the Lion Blades, however, only working as a free agent from time to time with Kathann Zalar personally, so he knows little about the fate of the Lion Blades or the city's intelligence network.

How do we get into the city? "Best way's to walk through the front door, I've found. Whole lot less suspicious than climbing in a window. They'll check your papers and ask what you're doing, but if you keep a cool head and don't have any obvious weapons or contraband—and you look like your paperwork describes—you'll be fine. Probably."

What sort of things do they check at the gates? "They look at your documents and check that you match the description. If you're carrying a lot of valuables and items that look magical, you'll seem suspicious unless you're nobility or some kind of scholar. They also ask questions, things like what business you have in Zimar and if you're loyal to Taldor and Grand Prince Pythareus."

Why can't we just fly or teleport to Zimar? "They've got hundreds of guards on the walls. You have to play it cool. Besides, guards within the city might also check your papers, and so you're going to need them no matter how you enter the city. Maybe once you know a quiet

corner or two inside the walls it'd be safe to teleport in and out, but nothing looks more suspicious than a bunch of well-armed outsiders appearing in a puff of smoke."

Why can't we just use forged documents with descriptions of people who look like us?

"Here, have a look: silk thread and silver embedded in the cloth stock. Very elaborate calligraphy script. An official stamp from Demgazi. Hard to make a good counterfeit. Six months ago, a clumsy counterfeit wouldn't have raised an eyebrow, but since all this squabbling started, every guard thinks they're going to be the one to catch one of Eutropia's assassins, and they're looking closer than ever."

Can you help us with the disguises? "Yeah, I can sell you some things that'll help. I have disguise kits, some magic items, and all kinds of outfits in my saddlebags. The horse's in the stable."

Once the PCs have selected identities and formulated a plan—but before the PCs have a chance to test their disguises—the meeting is interrupted as guards arrive in the inn.

Story Award: Once the PCs have arrived in Panemona, received their new identities, and formed a plan to infiltrate Zimar, award them 9,600 XP.

THE INSPECTION (CR 11)

Just as the PCs have finished conducting business with Cyricus, a group of soldiers enters the inn's tavern and begins demanding traveling papers from the patrons. The half-elf immediately panics, whispering, "They're here for me! You have to help me hide! If they catch me, they'll torture the truth out of me!"

Creatures: Four Zimar Sentinels—elite city guards selected for their ferocious loyalty to Pythareus—have traveled to Panemona to confirm an anonymous tip of a smuggler meeting with clients. Two of the Sentinels check paperwork while the other two guard the front door. After 3 rounds of the guards checking other patrons, the inn's owner, **Papa Rasso** (CN male village elder; *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 258), yells at the soldiers for bothering his guests, creating a distraction for 2 more rounds before the Sentinels by the door escort Rasso back into the kitchen, leaving the front door unguarded for another 2 rounds. The PCs can clearly hear the sound of several punches.

The guards aren't necessarily looking for the PCs, just Cyricus, so they perform only the most casual inspection of the heroes' traveling papers. The PCs can easily satisfy the guards by handing over the panicked smuggler.

Barring that, they can quickly disguise the half-elf, or use the distraction created by Papa Rasso to sneak Cyricus out through the kitchen or conceal or transport him with a spell.

If the PCs are questioned by the soldiers (and Cyricus isn't obviously present), they can feign ignorance with a successful Bluff check or growl off the soldiers with a successful Intimidate check. However, the guards aren't easily swayed by Diplomacy, and the PCs take a –5 penalty on Diplomacy checks to convince the guards to simply overlook their presence.

If all else fails, the PCs can attack these soldiers without the risk of drawing more attention like violence in the streets of Zimar would. If the PCs do attack the soldiers, the sudden disappearance of a patrol puts other Sentinels on edge for 1d4 days, granting the soldiers a +2 circumstance bonus on checks to see through disguises or spot false documents.



ZIMAR SENTINELS (4)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

Human fighter 8

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+7 armor, +3 shield)

hp 88 each (8d10+40)

Fort +10, **Ref** +3, **Will** +7 (+2 vs. fear)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk longsword +14/+9 (1d8+4/19–20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +10/+5 (1d8+3/×3)

Special Attacks weapon training (heavy blades +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Sentinels train to fight in pairs, covering one another's weak spots. Their teamwork feats improve their AC and saving throw bonuses by 1 each while they're adjacent to another Sentinel. They use their Power Attack feat whenever possible.

Morale Sentinels fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 10, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 21

Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Paired Opportunists^{APG}, Power Attack, Shake It Off^{UC}, Shield Focus, Shield Wall^{APG}, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +8, Perception +10, Profession (soldier) +7, Ride +7, Sense Motive +10

Languages Common, Kelesh

SQ armor training 2

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Combat Gear *potion of barkskin*, *potions of cure serious wounds* (2); **Other Gear** +1 chainmail, +1 light steel shield, mwk composite longbow (+3 Str) with 20 arrows, mwk longsword, *bead of newt prevention*^{UE}, *cloak of resistance* +1, guard whistle, silver Sentinel badge (worth 50 gp), 240 gp

Treasure: Cyricus had planned to sell disguise supplies to the PCs to accompany their paperwork, but if they protect him from the Sentinels, he offers these supplies freely: a disguise kit, a healer's kit, four artisans' outfits, an entertainer's outfit, a noble's outfit, and three pocketed scarves^{UE}, as well as a *potion of invisibility* and a *cloak of the hedge wizard (abjuration)*^{UE}.

Development: Defeating the Zimar Sentinels offers the PCs another option for sneaking into the city: disguising themselves as Sentinels. The unit is large (more than 100 members), and contains a diverse array of genders and human ethnicities, albeit with few nonhuman members. If the PCs disguise themselves as Sentinels, don't need to try to match the descriptions in Cyricus's stolen paperwork, but other Sentinels gain a +4 bonus on Perception checks to see through the PCs' disguises, given the Sentinels' familiarity with one another.

A. CITY GATES (CR 12)

The massive wall surrounding Zimar has two large gates. The outer gate at each gatehouse is a large wooden double door (hardness 5, 40 hp, break DC 25) that can be barred from the inside. At each end of the gateway is a strong iron portcullis (hardness 10, 120 hp, break DC 30), which can be raised using a winch inside the gatehouse. The portcullis can be dropped as a move action by releasing a lever at the base of the winch. During the day, the doors are left open; they're closed at sunset until the morning.

There are many murder holes in the ceiling, allowing guards inside the gatehouse to fire on attackers. Both gates are closed from sunset to sunrise, and only military units can pass during that time. At night, *continual flame* spells illuminate the parapets atop the walls.

Creatures: Four Zimar Sentinels inspect visitors' papers and are overseen by an inquisitor serving the Vault and Chain sect of the church of Abadar. The Temple of the Vault and Chain is an ultraorthodox offshoot of the main church whose members believe that Taldor is crumbling because its citizens have grown soft and free willed, too obsessed with their personal causes and social advancement to focus on recapturing the glory and purity of their once-great nation. The sect yearns to return discipline and a strict social hierarchy to Taldan society. While somewhat popular in hypernationalistic Zimar, the cult has little sway beyond the city gates, but that may change now that its interests align with those of Maxillar Pythareus, and the templars have happily embraced him as their new emperor.

The templar is distracted by paperwork when the PCs arrive, leaving only the Sentinels to inspect the PCs' identification papers. After viewing a PC's documents, a Sentinel checks that the PC looks like the person described in the papers (+10 Perception modifier). The Sentinel also looks for any obvious contraband or unusual possessions, like obvious magic items or weapons. Unless a PC acts suspiciously, the soldier takes 10 on his Perception check.

If two or more PCs approach the gates at the same time, the guards ask if the PCs are traveling together. Because of Zimar's somewhat conservative gender roles, if a woman is traveling with a man of similar social class, the PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus on their Disguise checks, as the soldiers pay less attention. The same applies to a child traveling with an adult.

If a PC succeeds at her Disguise check, the guard waves her through. If she fails by more than 5, the guard tries to arrest her immediately. If a PC fails her Disguise check by 5 or less, or if she acts suspiciously or carries unusual goods for her cover identity (like a healer carrying heavy weapons), the guard insists she answer the following questions.

"What's the purpose of your travel?" The PC must succeed at a DC 15 Bluff or appropriate Profession check to improvise a believable excuse.

"Are you carrying magic items or illegal or dangerous goods?" If the PC's obviously magical items are hidden and the PC answers "no," the soldier doesn't inquire further. If the PC looks suspiciously well equipped, the soldier asks the Vault and Chain templar to use *detect magic* to confirm any suspicions. If the PC is clearly too wealthy for her false identity's social class, the guards attempt to arrest her. A PC posing as a noble, however, can carry any number of magic items without raising suspicion.

If the PC's appearance exhibits any aspects of Qadiran culture, or if the PC wears Sarenite symbols, is not human or half-elven, or otherwise looks pro-Loyalist, the guards also ask the following question.

"What is a citizen's highest calling?" A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (geography or local) check remembers that in Zimar, defending Zimar and the border are a citizen's highest calling. Any other patriotic or pro-Imperialist answer also suffices.

If a PC fails any check during her questioning, the soldiers opt to arrest her "and let a judge sort it out."

If combat breaks out, each Sentinel attempts to blow his whistle to summon aid (a move action). If a Sentinel raises the alarm, another group of four guards arrives within 1d6 rounds from the other side of the gate.

ZIMAR SENTINELS (4)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 88 each (see page 13)

VAULT AND CHAIN TEMPLAR

CR 9

XP 6,400

Human inquisitor (heretic) of Abadar 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 38, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 45)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +8; **Senses** Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+7 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 98 (10d8+50)

Fort +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee mwk spear +8/+3 (1d8/x3)

Ranged +1 *called light crossbow* +10 (1d8+1/19–20)

Special Attacks bane (10 rounds/day), judgment 4/day (2 simultaneous)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +12)

1/day—staff of order (5 rounds)

5/day—touch of law

Inquisitor Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +12)

At will—*detect alignment*, *discern lies* (10 rounds/day)

Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 10th; concentration +12)

4th (1/day)—*freedom of movement*, *order's wrath* (DC 16)

3rd (3/day)—*cure serious wounds*, *invisibility purge*, *prayer*, *searing light*

2nd (5/day)—*castigate*^{APG} (DC 14), *detect thoughts* (DC 14), *hold person* (DC 14), *knock*, *silence* (DC 14)

1st (6/day)—*bless*, *forbid action*^{UM} (DC 13), *forced quiet*^{UM} (DC 13), *interrogation*^{UM} (DC 13), *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*brand*^{APG} (DC 12), *daze* (DC 12), *detect magic*, *light*, *read magic*, *sift*^{APG}

Domain Law

TACTICS

Before Combat If a templar expects a fight, she casts *prayer* to bolster herself and any nearby allies (not included in this stat block).

During Combat The templar activates her justice and protection judgments to improve her attack bonus and AC by 3; her vambraces extend this bonus to her CMD and concentration checks. She uses Divine Interference to protect soldiers in her charge and spells like *silence* and *hold person* to shut down enemy spellcasters. Finally, she activates her bane ability and opens fire with her crossbow.

Morale A templar fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10

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

Feats Divine Interference^{UM}, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lookout^{APG}, Paired Opportunists^{APG}, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Swap Places^{APG}, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics –1 (–5 when jumping), Bluff +10, Climb +5, Diplomacy +13, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (nobility) +11, Knowledge (religion) +14, Perception +15, Profession (clerk) +10, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +9, Swim +5

Languages Common, Kelesh

SQ hide tracks, judgment of escape, solo tactics, stern gaze +5, track +5

Combat Gear *elixir of dragon breath*^{UE} (blue); **Other Gear** +1 *breastplate*, +1 *called light crossbow* with 30 bolts, mwk spear, *cloak of resistance* +1, *inquisitor's bastion vambraces*^{UE}, *ring of protection* +1, gold holy symbol of Abadar (worth 100 gp), 450 gp



ZIMAR SENTINEL

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Treasure: Unknown to Cyricus, one of the identities he stole (likely Baroness Aconian, Cadonia, or Sir Arpador, but whoever seems most appropriate from the identities your PCs select) for the Lion Blades left a wagon full of trade goods in storage with the guards. Once all the PCs pass through the gate—so long as combat didn't break out—a Sentinel runs after them, flagging them down and insisting, "You've neglected to pay your storage fees, and you'll need to pay a fine and move your wagon elsewhere!" The fine is 150 gp, and the wagon is a well-built but otherwise unremarkable cart with a canvas covering strapped over it. It contains a large tent, a crate of rations,

a barrel of water, and two locked chests (Disable Device DC 35). One chest holds several changes of clothing and grooming supplies, but the other contains five bolts of silk (10 gp each), a platinum ibex with ruby-chip eyes (800 gp), three *potions of gaseous form*, an *aegis of recovery*, a *candle of invocation*, a +1 *holy short spear* wrapped in a scorched bolt of silk, and a *strand of lesser prayer beads*. The PCs windfall is luckier than it seems, as the spear in the chest allows them a way to penetrate Milon Jeroth's damage reduction, should they realize his true nature.

Development: If the guards raise the alarm and the PCs fight or escape the guards, the rest of Zimar is soon alerted to the presence of suspicious outsiders, and the PCs take a -5 penalty on all Bluff, Diplomacy, and Disguise checks for 1d6 days.

Story Award: If the PCs all enter Zimar without fighting the soldiers, award them XP as if they had defeated the group in combat.

PART 2: THE GAME OF MASKS

While in Zimar, the PCs are on their own. Their task is to investigate Maxillar Pythareus's conspiracy and seek evidence against him to expose his treachery. Initially, their only clue is the location of the last Lion Blade safe house in the Adobe District, which wasn't compromised during raids organized by Maxillar Pythareus. There, the PCs may find clues that put them on a trail to find both a missing Lion Blade agent and Maxillar Pythareus's spymaster, Sir Milon Jeroth.

The PCs' most obvious lead is the Lion Blade Gannaius, yet to be reported dead and believed to be in hiding. Kathann directed them to investigate one of his regular haunts: the Sunrise Spice Importer warehouse in the Adobe District. This course of action leads the PCs into a dangerous trap. Unknown to the Lion Blades, Gannaius is the cause of the recent purge, not a victim of it. Always prone to paranoia and insecurity, Gannaius convinced himself that his lack of progress in the recent upheaval had negated his value to the Lion Blades and that they would soon eliminate him. He planned to sell a few secrets to Milon Jeroth in exchange for enough coin to flee the city and start over in Absalom. However, Milon is a man who takes rather than bargains; he kidnapped and tortured Gannaius to learn everything about Lion Blade operations in the city. Milon now leaves the Sunrise Spice warehouse unraided and unguarded as a trap to lure in any lingering agents who remain in Zimar or anyone the Lion Blades dispatch to investigate.

This section of the adventure pits the PCs against Milon's major assets within the city. His intelligence network

Vault and Chain Templar

primarily consists of thousands of paid or blackmailed informants across Taldor and Qadira who are low-level functionaries or servants with no role to play in combat or this adventure. However, Milon's core power structure is tight-knit. His primary agents are fellow rakshasas gathered from across the region; their ability to shapeshift makes his network of cutthroat spies—consisting of the half-dozen rakshasas currently staying at Waterhill Manor (see area D) and another dozen spread throughout Taldor—seem larger than it truly is. His enforcer arm is composed of the monks of the Seven Forms of Sin (see area F), an offshoot of the nearby Monastery of Seven Forms that Milon himself helped found a century earlier; the monks quietly assassinate his rivals and intimidate targets. Finally, it fell on Milon to shelter and employ the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams (see area E) on behalf of the Immaculate Circle while the night hags plied the planes to gather the spiritual flotsam the secret society needed to build its artificial soul. The coven has since remained in Zimar to help sway Pythareus's heart and feed intelligence on his enemies to Milon, though they grow increasingly ambitious in the city.

One way or another, the PCs will eventually face these forces, as Jeroth's forces, if undefeated, will rush to reinforce Maxillar Pythareus's defenses in Abadar's Pillar. The PCs' hopefully quiet presence in the city should allow them to learn about, eliminate, or even co-opt some of these factions. Each of these factions also holds scraps of intelligence about High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus, enough to prove his guilt to the Lion Blades and, ultimately, for the organization to ask the PCs to arrest—or if necessary, kill—the general.

The Lion Blades are wary of eliminating one of the most powerful politicians and military leaders in Taldor, both because it leaves the nation uniquely vulnerable and because such an attack would likely turn the small skirmishes of the current political situation into rioting and full civil war. Because of that, they require at least three strong pieces of evidence revealing the high strategos's treasonous behavior. The adventure provides several—Milon Jeroth's letter to the Immaculate Circle (see area C), the ledgers maintained by the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams (see area E4), the assassination order held by Sister Qan Dismaal of the Seven Forms of Sin monastery (see area F10), and the dagger used to kill Tae Amalon (see areas D12 and G)—but creative PCs may find additional evidence, such as magically interrogating Milon Jeroth after his death, spying directly on Maxillar and recording his own admission of guilt, or persuading certain agents like Baron Astor, Dame Avenna, or the deposed Stavian III (see page 49) to switch sides and testify against the general. Until the PCs secure at least three pieces of evidence of crimes committed by Maxillar Pythareus, they should understand that they are not authorized to take any direct action against the high strategos, and that doing so will make enemies of the Lion Blades.

Story Award: Once the PCs collect at least three pieces of evidence condemning High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus, award them 25,600 XP.

SUSPICION

Zimar is a city of nosy neighbors and sideways glances, where every action is viewed with suspicion—especially in the wake of Taldor's growing civil unrest. The PCs need to navigate the lion's den without attracting too much attention to themselves. Every suspicious action they take or question they ask in public raises eyebrows.

As the PCs draw attention to themselves, they accumulate Suspicion Points as a group. The group's Suspicion Point total imposes a penalty on all Bluff, Diplomacy, and Disguise checks the PCs attempt in and around Zimar as wary locals scrutinize them ever more intensely. It also grants Zimar Sentinels and Vault and Chain templars actively opposing or investigating the PCs a bonus on initiative checks, as they become increasingly on edge and reactionary. As the PCs' aura of suspicion increases, they also draw additional resistance, investigations, and even assassins. The PCs' Suspicion Point total represents a general pall over the city, rather than being tied to specific identities; the PCs maintain their Suspicion Point total even if they swap identities.

The activities listed in the table below add to the PCs' Suspicion Point total if they are public or otherwise witnessed. At your discretion, if relatively discreet activities are seen by only one or two witnesses, these witnesses can be captured, bluffed, bribed, or intimidated into silence before they can report the PCs' activities.

Activity	Suspicion Points Earned
Suspicious mundane activities (suspicious questions, disrespect toward authorities, Imperialist sympathies)	1
Suspicious nonviolent spellcasting (<i>teleport</i> , <i>alter self</i> , illusions)	2
Criminal activity (break-ins, fighting in public)	3
Fighting guards, Sentinels, or templars (provided anyone witnesses the attack, survives to report the crime, or discovers the bodies)	4
Violent spellcasting	4
Activity is witnessed by a guard, Sentinel, or templar	+2

The group's Suspicion Point total automatically decreases by 1 every week. The deflect suspicions operation (see the Zimar Operations sidebar on page 6) can also reduce this total.

As the PCs' Suspicion Point total increases, they experience the encounters in the table on page 18. The PCs should encounter each entry from the table at most once, even if they reach a given total multiple times. If an increase in Suspicion points makes them subject to multiple effects (such as if their total increases from

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4 to 8), space the encounters out over several hours. If the PCs have already eliminated or co-opted an organization listed below, they suffer no effects for reaching that level of suspicion.

Suspicion

Point Total Response

4	Five local toughs (use the statistics for a ruffian on page 258 of the <i>Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex</i>) don't like the PCs' accents, clothes, invasive questions, or general attitude. These locals try to intimidate the apparent foreigners. While the PCs can likely dispatch the toughs easily, resolving the situation with violence incurs 2 Suspicion Points.
6	Two Zimar Sentinels (see page 13) stop and question the PCs the next time they travel in the streets, recognizing only that they match the description of troublemakers. If the PCs can't deflect the guards' suspicion with skills or magic, the soldiers move to arrest them.
8	Two Vault and Chain templars (see page 15) and two Zimar Sentinels (see page 13) raid the Sunrise Spice warehouse, regardless of where the PCs are at the time.
10	A Vault and Chain templar (see page 15) and four Zimar Sentinels (see page 13) are dispatched to arrest the PCs for thorough interrogation, arriving to arrest them the next time the PCs appear in public.
12	Two of Milon's rakshasa agents, Chandar and Joneius (see area D8), are dispatched to attempt to extract whatever intelligence they can from the PCs.
15	Four monks from the Seven Forms of Sin monastery are dispatched to assassinate the PCs (see page 33).
18	Milon Jeroth marks the PCs for death and hunts them personally, accompanied by his two marai servants.
20	Baron Astor Roderus (see page 53) accompanies a unit of five Zimar Sentinels (see page 13) to eliminate the PCs.

B. SUNRISE SPICE IMPORTERS

Kathann mentioned the Sunrise Spice Importers warehouse in the Adobe District as the best place to connect with a potential survivor of Zimar's recent purge of Lion Blades. The warehouse—used only seasonally—saw little use even by the Lion Blades except storing emergency supplies there and occasionally using it as an emergency safe house. Since the owners are in town for only a few months every year, they weren't aware of their business's double life.

The large interior is left mostly empty in the off season, with only a few barrels of ancient peppercorns and allspice berries lying under a layer of dust in one corner and a stack of large supply crates in another, as well as a disused office filled with mundane ledgers and a calendar marking the owners' return from their trading expedition in 4 months. A successful DC 25 Perception check while searching the supply crates reveals that a few of the crates each contain a bedroll, rations, water, maps, and a few changes of clothes rather than goods. These are simple hiding places for compromised agents, where they can lie low or wait until dark before fleeing the city. Because there has been little political trouble in Zimar until lately, only one has ever been used, and that one disheveled unit has obviously not been used for at least several days.

Development: When the PCs finish searching all the rooms in the warehouse, they notice someone has slipped a note under one of the exterior doors: "If you and K are friends, meet me at her favorite place in two hours. —G."

If the PCs contact Kathann, she can confirm the intended location is probably a confection shop that she and Gannaius had used many times as a meeting place. If the PCs elect not to contact Kathann, they can instead track whoever left the letter back to Honey Kuneffe (see area C) with a successful DC 25 Survival check.

Treasure: A small, wax-sealed cask next to the supply crates contains dried dates, beef jerky, and other food items. In a pouch inside the crate are a *potion of vanish* and three *potions of misdirection*.

C. HONEY KUNEFFE (CR 13)

This small coffeehouse and sweet shop is completely ordinary; nothing distinguishes it from the many similar shops in every neighborhood across the city. It is precisely this anonymity that has made it popular with several Lion Blades, and Gannaius and Kathann have both used it for occasional meetings.

The interior is small but cozy and warm. Both owners—a halfling couple—lie dead in the kitchen, hastily concealed beneath old flour sacks.

Creatures: Milon Jeroth waits for the PCs, disguised as Gannaius (the true Lion Blade remains imprisoned in Milon's interrogation room, area D3), updating a portfolio and preparing a large pot of coffee. When the PCs arrive, he nervously asks if they were followed, then closes his portfolio, invites them to sit, and pours coffee for everyone, himself included. Milon spiked the coffee with a healthy dose of dark reaver powder (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 558), and hopes to extract as much useful information as he can in the 10 minutes before the poison begins to take effect. He takes the first sip himself, having already consumed a *potion of delay poison* an hour earlier.

"Gannaius" feigns outrage and terror if the PCs attempt to cast any spells, insisting they're going to

attack him—all to deflect any attempts to divine his true motives or the poison in the coffee. He likewise acts outraged if the PCs attempt to search the shop, worried they'll find the owners' bodies.

Milon asks pointed questions about the PCs' identities, what they're doing in Zimar, and Princess Eutropia's involvement. The PCs' reputations are widespread enough at this point that a man with Milon's connections can recognize them, though Gannaius probably wouldn't have, and there is certainly no way Gannaius would have known that the Lion Blades have agreed to start working with Eutropia—having heretofore struggled to stay out of the War for the Crown and focused on defending Taldor from foreign threats. A successful DC 20 Perception check also reveals a fine falcata under Gannaius's coat—an unusually flashy weapon for a slight and reclusive spy.

Milon refuses to believe the Lion Blades have no additional agents in the city, and he becomes increasingly aggressive in his questioning. Once the poison begins to take effect, or if the PCs refuse to answer questions, he simply attacks, expecting them to be no more prepared to defeat a rakshasa than Gannaius was. Milon's overconfidence and lack of preparation mean he is uniquely vulnerable in this encounter, even if the PCs are unprepared, and there's a good chance the PCs can end his threat here and now.

MILON JEROTH

CR 13

XP 25,600

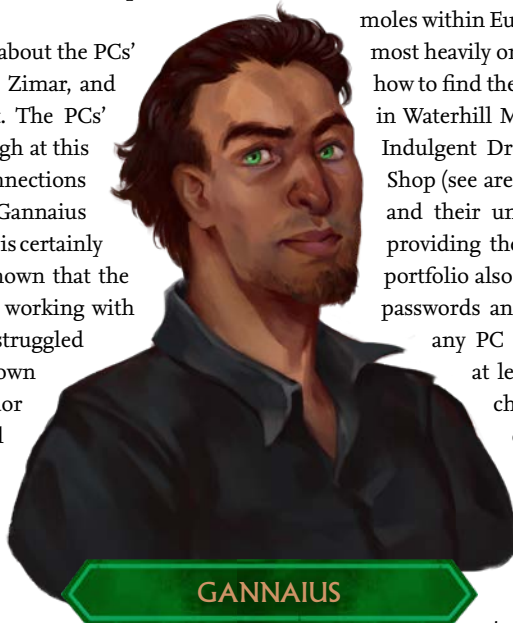
hp 200 (see page 60)

TACTICS

Before Combat Milon attempts to poison the PCs as described, but he does not employ his usual preparatory magic for fear that the auras will make his subjects suspicious or scare them off.

During Combat If the PCs have not yet succumbed to the dark reaver powder in the coffee, he targets several of them with castings of *accelerate poison*^{APG}; otherwise, he casts *chain of perdition* and closes in to melee combat with his falcata. He doesn't wish to reveal himself as a rakshasa yet, and so he refrains from using his claws or bite attack or assuming a new form unless the PCs deduce his true nature (requiring a successful DC 25 Knowledge [planes] check).

Morale Milon is cocky in this first encounter, but after 5 rounds he realizes the fight isn't as easy as he anticipated. At this point, he attempts to cast *vanish*^{APG} and flee. If the PCs have dealt him at least 75 points of damage, he leaves in such haste that he forgets his portfolio (see Development below).



GANNAIUS

Development: The portfolio Milon had been updating contains his notes about the current operations in the War for the Crown, including the identities of several moles within Eutropia's supporters, but it focuses most heavily on his resources within Zimar and how to find them, including his rakshasa agents in Waterhill Manor (see area D), the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams in the Sweet Dreams Tea Shop (see area E), and the Seven Forms of Sin and their undercity monastery (see area F), providing the PCs with a list of targets. The portfolio also contains a wealth of operational passwords and code names, enough to grant any PC who studies the paperwork for at least 2 hours a +5 bonus on Bluff checks to convince other agents of Milon that she is part of his organization.

If the PCs kill Milon, he reverts to his true form. They can also find a letter in his pocket, ready to be dispatched to the Immaculate Circle (see **Player Handout** on page 20). The

note details Milon's assets just as his portfolio does, but it also lists enemies of each faction who they can easily be set against—the rakshasas are eager to target Baron Astor, the Sister of Indulgent Dreams are prepared to eliminate Dame Avenna, and the monks of the Seven Forms of Sin are eager to assassinate Enumerator Iovinus. If nothing else, it provides additional insight into the forces Pythareus has arranged to protect him. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check recognizes the "King of Filth" as the title of a powerful otyugh rumored to live beneath Zimar, who sells secrets and lost treasures. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (local) or (geography) check knows the location of the Sweet Dreams Tea Shop and Waterhill Manor mentioned in both Milon's letter and portfolio. Finally, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) or (streetwise) check recognizes the Seven Forms of Sin as a rumored offshoot of the Monastery of Seven Forms dedicated to perfecting its initiates' physical form through indulgence, and the sect operates as an assassins' guild in Zimar.

If the PCs report their encounter to Kathann, she encourages them to follow up on Milon's known resources, saying, "Good work surviving. Follow up. Milon keeps several homes, but puts his agents up in a secret manor in the Golden District called Waterhill Manor." If the PCs mention the portfolio or the letter, she says, "Excellent. Cracks are appearing that you can exploit. Subtle trickery may win more battles than blades here. No intel on this Immaculate Circle. Will research."

Story Award: If the PCs claim Milon's portfolio after the fight or manage to steal it during the encounter,

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Esteemed Brothers,

The Immaculate Circle shall be victorious. The high strategos proves quite pliable and receptive to ideas that sate his desperation and ambition in equal measure. The citizens are ready to tear each other apart, and when Pythareus emerges victorious, it will take only the gentlest shove to topple him, and I have secured the ideal prod in my home, under guard of the Sarenites, with the killing blow in the mitts of the grubby King of Filth himself.

A few complications remain—agents loyal to Pythareus against all reason. They must be dealt with.

And there are still a few other hindrances on our path to victory. Pythareus's damnable diviner has blundered into the sisters' dealings and may soon locate the Sweet Dreams Tea Shop. Now that their research is completed, we should focus our efforts on relocating them to a more secure location. That diviner is too damned esoteric to give anyone her true loyalties, and her second sight makes her near impossible to blackmail. Perhaps it is better to simply let the sisters do as they will.

My own personal agents in Waterhill have had difficulty in swaying Pythareus's majordomo, Baron Astor, and now stamp and fume to replace him with one of my own. I feel the scrutiny the high strategos keeps him under makes this hasty course seem childishly impulsive. We shall bide our time.

Pythareus's little cult and its enumerator, Iovinus, have likewise proved intractable. Whoever would imagine an Abadaran would feel himself above a bribe. So be it. The Seven Forms of Sin are eager enough for my coin instead, and have places to stash his corpse. I await only your approval.

Immortally loyal,
Milon Jeroth

PLAYER HANDOUT

award them 9,600 XP. If they attend the meeting and survive but don't recover Milon's portfolio, award them 4,800 XP instead.

IMPERSONATING MILON JEROTH

With the information in Milon's portfolio, a reasonable strategy for PCs for the rest of Part 2 is to either impersonate Milon or pretend to be part of his organization, allowing them to wield the rakshasa's influence against Pythareus or disband it from within.

Disguising one of their number as Milon requires a successful Disguise check opposed by the Perception check of a given group representative's (Oaca for the rakshasas, Estella for the Sisters of Immaculate Dreams, and Sister Dismaal for the Seven Forms of Sin); Milon's agents are considered friends or associates, granting them a +6 bonus on Perception checks. Impersonating Milon also requires a successful Bluff check opposed by the representative's Sense Motive check; if a PC fails his opposed Disguise check, he can still attempt to impersonate Milon with this Bluff check, but the lie is considered impossible, imposing a -20 penalty.

If the PCs simply wish to pretend they are part of Milon's organization, they must succeed at two Bluff

checks opposed by the group representative's Sense Motive check—one to convince the group that they are a part of the organization, and one to convince the group they speak with any authority. Both lies are considered far-fetched, imposing a -10 penalty on Bluff checks. If the PCs recovered Milon Jeroth's portfolio in Honey Kune, they gain a +5 bonus on the check rather than a penalty, and the second Bluff check is only considered unlikely, imposing a -5 penalty. All PCs must succeed at the first Bluff check, but only one needs to succeed at the second.

If the PCs fail their skill checks, Milon's agents attack, but they don't automatically alert members of the other two faction the rakshasa controls, which allows the PCs to try again with different groups.

Assigning tasks to any given agent requires an additional Bluff check. Failing this check generates 1 Suspicion Point, but it can be attempted again.

If the PCs assume control of at least two of Milon's factions, they have enough clout to call for a meeting with High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus in Abadar's Pillar, though they will be searched for weapons, magic items, and spell components beforehand and the general will have his bodyguards on hand. Still, it provides the

PCs an opportunity to record a testimony of Pythareus's treason from his own mouth—enough to convince the Lion Blades that he represents a threat to the empire.

D. WATERHILL MANOR

Milon Jeroth maintains several homes and apartments, including his official residence—a townhouse in the Scrolls District—but the spymaster spends most of his downtime in an old manor in the Golden District called Waterhill Manor. The luxurious, hillside manor serves as a hostel and safe house for loyal rakshasa spies. The house's enchantments and traps allow inhuman spies some freedom to doff their disguises while they rest.

PCs who spend time gathering information about the estate can learn rumors of its undercity entrance (see area **D13**) with a successful DC 30 Diplomacy or Knowledge (streetwise) check.

Most of the manor has 9-foot ceilings and lighting provided by *continual flame* cast on sconces on the walls. The interior doors are made of good wood (hardness 5, 15 hp) but generally kept unlocked unless otherwise noted. The exterior doors are of strong wood (hardness 5, 20 hp, DC 25), with superior locks (DC 40) on the downstairs doors but only average locks (DC 25) on the balcony doors. Waterhill's greatest feature, however, is its privacy-enhancing windows. The windows are as hard as iron (hardness 10, 60 hp) and enchanted to make the interior always appear empty.

Use the Waterhill Manor map on page 23 for this location.

D1. Living Room (CR 12)

This large living room is built in three tiers, ascending from the area adjoining the front door to a large, semicircular wall of windows looking out over the city to the west. Plush blue sofas line the walls, intermixed with statuary and potted plants. A short flight of stairs rises to the north, steeper stairs leading up to the south, and a hallway lies to east. An ugly, gray ring sits on a red pillow under a bell jar between the two uppermost couches.

Each tier of the living room is 3 feet higher than the one before, with railings to prevent accidents.

Creatures: During the day, two servants and a butler—a fidgety halfling named Oaca Key—spend their time in the living room, chatting and exchanging stories. In truth, these are several of Milon's agents: two studious marais and a dandasuka bard Jeroth considers his current right hand, all between assignments. If the PCs enter, the rakshasas spend a few awkward moments staring before remembering their household roles, at which point they inquire as to the PCs' business and insist they wait while they "contact the master of the house." The marais ask a few probing questions and offer tea, and Oaca offers to entertain the PCs by playing the

flute—using a fascinate performance to put the PCs at ease—but if it becomes evident that the PCs will not be missed and aren't anyone of note, the rakshasas simply attack. Unlike Milon, these rakshasas are not shy about assuming their true forms.

If the PCs instead pose as Milon or his agents, the rakshasas impatiently ask for news and developments about the last of Zimar's Lion Blades, and whether the master spy has decided where to send them next, as they grow increasingly bored confined to the house.

MARAIS (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 94 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 228)

OACA

CR 10

XP 9,600

Agender dandasuka bard 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 225)

LE Small outsider (native, rakshasa, shapechanger)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 18, flat-footed 15 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural, +1 size)

hp 147 (14 HD; 8d8+6d10+78)

Fort +9, **Ref** +17, **Will** +13; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic

DR 5/good or piercing; **SR** 25

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +15 (1d6+2 plus bleed), 2 claws +15 (1d6+2)

Special Attacks bardic performance 27 rounds/day (move action; countersong, dirge of doom, distraction, fascinate [DC 17], inspire competence +3, inspire courage +2, suggestion [DC 17]), bleed (1d4), detect thoughts (DC 16), sneak attack +1d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +8)

1/day—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*

Bard Spells Known (CL 8th; concentration +11)

3rd (3/day)—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, gaseous form, jester's jaunt*^{APG} (DC 16)

2nd (5/day)—*minor image* (DC 15), *mirror image, sound burst* (DC 15), *whispering wind*

1st (5/day)—*charm person* (DC 14), *lesser confusion* (DC 14), *feather fall, hideous laughter* (DC 14), *unseen servant*
0 (at will)—*dancing lights, detect magic, lullaby* (DC 13), *read magic, resistance, summon instrument*

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 2nd; concentration +5)

1st (5/day)—*shield, vanish*^{APG} (DC 14)

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 13), *ghost sound* (DC 13), *message, prestidigitation, ray of frost*

TACTICS

Before Combat Oaca does everything to pass herself off as a harmless and nervous halfling, not because they don't want a fight, but because they love the look of surprise when they catch opponents unaware.

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During Combat Oaca prefers to open any fight by using *jester's jaunt* to throw one enemy outside before beginning their bardic performance of cruel jokes and barbs. The dandasuka prefers to attack with tooth and claw, but casts *mirror image* if reduced below 100 hit points.

Morale Oaca fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 22, **Con** 20, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 30

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Extra Performance, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Mobility, Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Bluff +20, Climb +10, Disguise +11, Escape Artist +19, Knowledge (local) +18, Perception +15, Perform (comedy) +20, Perform (wind instruments) +20, Sense Motive +15, Sleight of Hand +19, Stealth +29, Use Magic Device +16;

Racial Modifiers +4 Bluff, +8 Disguise

Languages Common, Infernal, Undercommon

SQ bardic knowledge +4, change shape (any humanoid; alter self), lore master 1/day, versatile performances (comedy, wind)

Combat Gear *silent metamagic rod*, *wand of acid arrow* (47 charges); **Other Gear** house keys, emerald brooch (worth 400 gp)

Treasure: The ring on display here is a minor piece of Taldan history: the *Band of the Crusader's Alliance* (see "Relics of Old Taldor" in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128). This impressive ring was designed by the dwarves of Kraggodan and used as part of a wedding to secure an alliance between their Sky Citadel and Taldor's own forces in the Shining Crusade, with mechanical bits for the notoriously anxious General Shae Varitan to fiddle with while she worked. The ring saved the bride's life twice on the day of the wedding: once when it caught on and tore a would-be enchanter's scroll, and again when the General's fidgeting accidentally knocked over a poisoned wineglass. Both the ring and General Varitan gained a reputation for fortuitous accidents that day that followed both ever after.

Development: Oaca carries the house keys, which unlock the exterior doors and the doors to areas **D3** and **D10**, as well as deactivate the trap in area **D9**.

If the PCs ingratiate themselves to Oaca here, as well as to Chandar and Joneius in area **D8**, the PCs assume control of the Milon's rakshasa spy network in Zimar. They can be used to gather information on the PCs' behalf or harass enemies, though they grow suspicious if asked to risk their lives. The PCs can also set the network on the task of undermining Pythareus's defenses; while the rakshasas can't kill every guard in Abadar's Pillar, they can provide basic intelligence on the building's layout and defenders after 1 week, and assassinate Baron Astor Roderus after 1d4 weeks of planning. The PCs must maintain their deception for this entire time, meeting with the rakshasas at least once per week.

Story Award: If the PCs deal with the rakshasas with disguise or guile, award them XP as if they slew them in combat. If they usurp Milon's spy network to assassinate Astor Roderus, award them XP as if they killed the local baron themselves.

D2. Dining Room

A large dining room overlooks the living room, separating only by a wrought iron railing. A long table of purple wood is set with porcelain tableware. Each plate is painted in intricate geometric patterns.

The dining room is used for gambling and conspiracy as frequently as it is for meals.

Treasure: The table itself is a treasure; worth 50 gp, it's made from a rich, purple wood from the Mwangi Expanse and weighs 400 pounds. The porcelain is also exquisite, and worth 300 gp as a set. An *oil of arcane lock* sits on a shelf near the kitchen.

D3. Interrogation Room

The door to this room is locked (Disable Device DC 30); the rakshasa Oaca carries the key. The walls and stone floor remain are and marred with dark stains from various body fluids. Milon uses the room to interrogate, torture, and finally kill captives.

Creature: The rogue Lion Blade Gannaius is bound to a simple wooden chair in this room, starved, beaten, and covered in shallow cuts. He originally hoped to sell a few Lion Blade secrets to Milon for the money to flee the city—mistakenly believing the Lion Blades had already marked him for execution—but he found himself kidnapped and those secrets stolen by rakshasa magic.

Gannaius initially assumes the PCs are the rakshasas in disguise, torturing him with the hope of escape, and he asks them to cease their cruelty, begging them to simply kill him or let him go. If saved, he's grateful but wary. He tries to stay close to the PCs and remain useful—possibly pointing them toward other elements of Milon's spy network if they haven't recovered the spy's portfolio—and never willing admits that he was captured while attempting to betray and flee the Lion Blades. His paranoia remains unresolved, especially after his weeks as Milon's prisoner, and at some point before the PCs' assault on Abadar's Pillar, he attempts to steal 4d6×10 gp worth of valuables and flee the city.

GANNAIUS

CR 6

XP 1,600

N male master spy (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 242)

hp 49 (currently 3)

Story Award: If the PCs rescue Gannaius, award them 1,600 XP.

D. WATERHILL MANOR

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



GROUND FLOOR



UPPER FLOOR

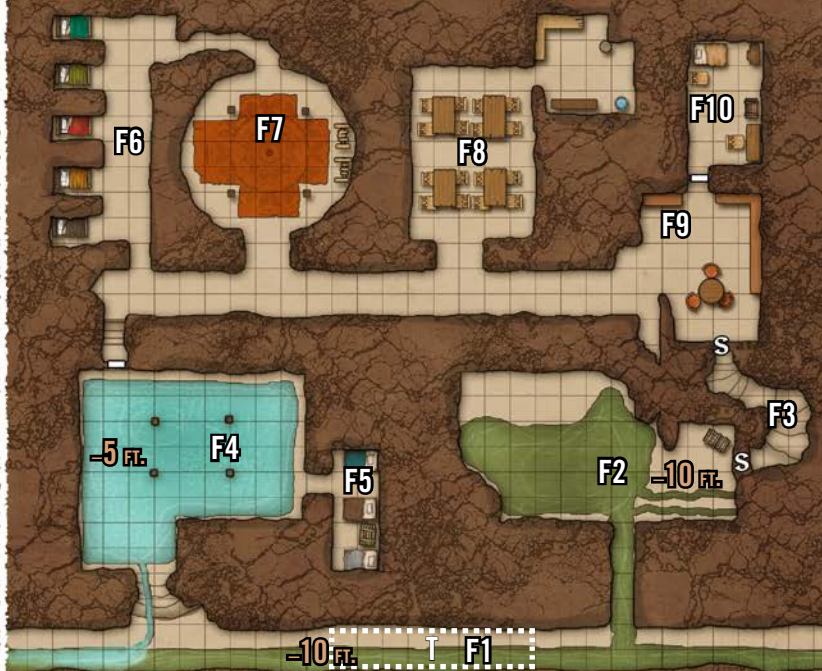
LOWER LEVEL



E. SWEET DREAMS TEA SHOP



F. SEVEN FORMS OF SIN MONASTERY



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D4. Servants' Quarters (CR 10)

This room holds little more than a posh bunk bed and stacks of books lining the walls covering subjects that range from magical theory and biographies of major spellcasters to astrology, astronomy, zoology, philosophy, and political history.

Creatures: By night, the two marais from area D1 retire to this room to read until late. They despise intruders and attack immediately if disturbed.

MARAIS (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 94 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 228)



Treasure: The library here consists mostly of interesting but readily available books, but a few stand out as valuable, including *Golden Blooms on Porthmos Shores* (150 gp), *Kirran's Alchemy in Theory and Practice* (200 gp), and a rare second printing of *Gods and Kings: A History of Taldor* that contains the misprinted date of Grand Prince Beldam I's birth (600 gp), as well as a *greater book of extended summoning*^{UE} (lawful).

D5. Kitchen (CR 10)

Decorative blue and sienna tiles decorate the walls of this large, well-appointed kitchen. The hearth burns day and night without the need for fuel, thanks to a bound elemental spirit created with Keleshite magic centuries ago, during the last Qadiran occupation. Milon normally relies on *unseen servant* spells to handle the cooking and cleaning, but increasingly the rakshasa Oaca can be found here, puttering away as they hone their skills.

The basement stairs here are unlocked, but using Oaca's key in the door lock deactivates the trap in area D9 for 30 minutes.

Creature: The rakshasa Oaca (see are D1) fancies themself a chef and retires to the kitchen at night to hone those skills.

OACA

CR 10

XP 9,600

hp 115 (see page 21)

D6. Bath (CR 10)

Tiles decorated with colorful patterns line the walls and floor of this exquisite bath, which holds both a tepid cooling pool to the north and a steaming-hot pool to the south, separated by a large planter of lush, tropical blooms that flourish in the humidity.

This elaborate bath sates the rakshasas' need for luxury like few other things can, and Milon spends much of his free time lounging in the pools. Keleshite elemental magic, similar to the effect binding the elemental spirit in the kitchen, helps fill the pools and maintain their respective temperatures—cool in the northern bath and hot in the southern.

The bath is also Milon's favorite means of disposing of failed agents and traitors. If the PCs fail to kill Milon at Honey Kunefe and confront him in his home, he begs them to parley and invites them to discuss the matter "like civilized folk" in the bath, with no weapons or armor or magic for anyone; he even offers to send his servants away for the afternoon. Once comfortably arranged in the bath, he casually activates the trap.

Creature: Milon corrupted the magic maintaining the southern bath, allowing him to transform its contents

into a greater water elemental at his command or when strangers enter the room. This cobbled-together elemental is less aware than an average example of its kind (Intelligence score of 5), but it understands the traps in the northern pool well enough that it tries to bull rush enemies back into the frigid waters.

GREATER WATER ELEMENTAL CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 123 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 127)

Traps: Milon corrupted the magic in the northern pool just as he did the southern, creating a magical trap that draws the warmth from anyone in the pool, leaving victims stiff and logy. A more recently added trap door then flushes the pool and its contents down to area D10 for Falak to deal with. The trap is activated by a level concealed in the planter. Once activated, the pool's magic refills it over the next 10 rounds.

NUMBING CHILL TRAP CR 5

Type magical; Perception DC 28; Disable Device DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** automatic

Effect spell effect (*slow*; Will DC 15 negates); multiple targets (all targets in the northern pool)

CONCEALED PIT TRAP CR 4

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** automatic

Effect 20-ft.-deep pit (2d6 falling damage); Reflex DC 20 avoids; multiple targets (all targets in the northern pool)

D7. Guest Rooms

Four comfortable bedrooms serve the house's rotating residents as they come and go, with ornate beds, carpeting, desks, and wardrobes. Each door has its own simple lock, as well as a concealed trigger (Perception DC 35) to release that lock from the outside, or secure it and seal the room's occupant inside.

Currently the rakshasas Chandar and Joneius (see area D8) claim the northern two, and their clothes, blankets, rugs, and other comforts are scattered around haphazardly, along with scattered notes from unwitting admirers. They hide any genuine valuables elsewhere in the city.

D8. Master Suite (CR 12 or 13)

A plush bed overflowing with pillows sits beneath a half-dome of windows looking west across the city. A wardrobe, a desk, bedside tables, and an overstuffed sofa fill out the rest of this massive bedchamber. Doors sit in the north and east walls.

Milon occasionally spends a night in this cozy suite, though he deliberately keeps his schedule unpredictable. The door to the north leads to a long, narrow balcony.

Creatures: If he escaped the PCs at Honey Kune, Milon spends time resting here, but he responds to any violence he hears elsewhere in the house. In such an event, the PCs instead encounter Chandar and Joneius lurking in area D11.

If Milon has been dispatched, two of his rakshasa agents—Chandar and Joneius—lounge on the bed here, awaiting his return. They appear as scantily clad Qadiran dancing girls. They accidentally devoured two of Milon's favorite human informants, who plied high-profile admirers with liquor to extract valuable secrets from them. Milon thought making the rakshasas take the women's place would teach the upstarts a lesson in humility, but so far they find the assignment uproariously fun. Joneius has the head of a crocodile, while Chandar's is that of a hyena, but both otherwise look like slender human women.

If strangers burst in, Chandar and Joneius pretend to be captives and beg one or two of the PCs to escort them to safety (separating the group and making victims easier to pick off), but if pressed or insulted, they simply drop their human guises and attack.

CHANDAR AND JONEIUS CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Rakshasas (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 231)

hp 115 each

Treasure: *Spectacles of understanding* sit on the bedside table. A hidden wall safe (Perception DC 30), Disable Device DC 40) holds a *bag of holding* (type II) with Milon's petty cash: 850 gp, 150 pp, and 5 small rubies (500 gp each).

D9. Basement (CR 9)

The kitchen stairs end in an unfinished basement stacked with dusty crates and broken furniture. A chest devoid of dust rests in an alcove by the stairs. The room is noticeably warmer than the kitchen above.

The crates contain nothing of value—old housewares, cooking supplies, clothing, and forgotten knickknacks. The heat comes from the adjacent enclosure (see area D10), the concealed stone door to which requires a successful DC 20 Perception check to discover. The door is kept locked (Disable Device DC 35) to prevent Milon's pet from wandering. Oaca in area D1 carries the key.

Trap: The locked chest (Disable Device DC 35) under the stairs is bait to attract would-be robbers and rivals, triggering a fusillade of arrows if the lock or lid is disturbed. Unlocking the already-unlocked stairway door in area D5 temporarily deactivates the trap.

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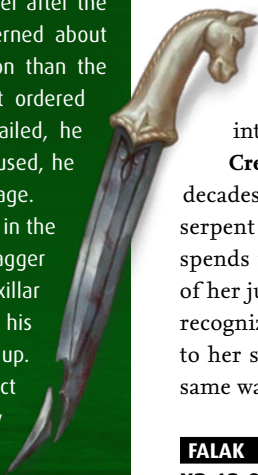
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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF TAE AMALON

In life, Amalon was a noted scholar and tutor often hired by noble families of Zimar to ready their children for entrance exams for officer's school. Most relevantly, she helped tutor a teenage Maxillar Pythareus in history and philosophy, and brought several concerns about the boy's moral compass to his father after the lad assaulted a female peer. More concerned about Maxillar's future and the family reputation than the woman's safety, the elder Pythareus first ordered silence from the tutor, and when that failed, he attempted to bribe her. When she still refused, he plunged a dagger into her back in a fit of rage.

Maxillar helped his father bury the body in the undercity and threw the now-broken dagger into the sewer. After a lifetime of war, Maxillar rarely if ever thinks about the murder his father committed and that he helped cover up. Even Milon Jeroth, with his ability to detect thoughts, learned about the murder only by accident from the ottyugh Gulreesh.

Amalon's husband died of a heart attack 5 years ago, but their children still live: both Aramatus and Quinn live in the city and work as tutors in the Scrolls District, and know only that their mother disappeared when they were young. They do recall that the elder Duke Pythareus was very concerned, as she was his son's "favorite tutor"; he contributed many guards to help search the city but they never found any trace of her.



HAIL OF ARROWS TRAP

CR 9

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger visual (*arcane eye*); Reset repair

Effect Atk +20 ranged (6d6); multiple targets (all targets in a 20-ft. line)

Treasure: The chest contains 3,286 cp painted gold (discernible with a successful DC 12 Appraise check) and a *flask of curses* that appears to be an *iron flask*, all intended to trick or weigh down thieves. Buried beneath the coins is a *flame tongue* forged from a scimitar rather than a longsword, taken from the fallen in the crypts (see area D12) as punishment for disobedience.

D10. Enclosure

A tropical jungle fills this large room, complete with thick plants, loamy soil, and a large pool. The stone walls are painted to appear as more jungle. Strange, white pebbles are scattered across the soil.

Milon created this chamber as a habitat for his beloved pet, Falak, utilizing a variety of magic effects, including *continual flame* spells in the ceiling and plates enchanted with *heat metal* beneath the soil to maintain the warm temperatures. The pond is only 5 feet deep. The white pebbles on the ground are crushed shards of bone—leftovers from Falak's meals—though their current state makes it almost impossible to identify their origin.

The secret door to D9 is obvious from this side, and both it and the door to D11 are kept locked (Disable Device DC 35)—more to prevent Falak (see below) from wandering than to keep intruders out. Oaca has the key (see area D1).

Creatures: Milon acquired a young giant anaconda decades ago on a mission in Sanmeshul, and named the serpent Falak after a beast from Qadiran legend. She spends most of her time sleeping in the warm waters of her jungle pond. The snake adores Milon and easily recognizes him regardless of his appearance thanks to her scent ability (she recognizes impersonators the same way). The snake immediately attacks strangers.

FALAK

CR 11

XP 12,800

Advanced giant anaconda (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 252)
hp 150

D11. Secret Sinkhole (CR 12)

This old sinkhole opened as levels of ruins below settled, and Milon discovered it while attempting to tunnel from his basement to the undercity. The rocky floor is largely backfill extracted while creating Falak's enclosure (see area D10). Milon uses this room, hidden from public eye and accessible by the undercity tunnels, as a storehouse for illegal goods and a temporary safe house for compromised agents.

Creatures: If Milon survives his encounter with the PCs, he dispatches his rakshasa agents Chanda and Joneius (see area D8) to guard this entrance to his lair; otherwise, the room is unguarded.

CHANDAR AND JONEIUS

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Rakshasas (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 231)
hp 115 each

D12. Crusader Crypt (CR 11)

Twenty-six human-sized niches run the perimeter of this dark, sandstone chamber in thirteen stacked pairs, between defaced carvings of the sun and a winged, feminine form. Nineteen forms wrapped in muslin cloth sit quietly, largely faded and covered in dust, but one is wrapped in colorful fabric and less dusty than the others. A broad, rough tunnel exits to the east and a double door seals the passage to the west.

When Grand Prince Stavian I outlawed the worship of Sarenrae 200 years ago, a band of Sarenite paladins called the Flame in Shadow secretly remained within Zimar's walls to help smuggle their fellow faithful to safety beyond the nation's borders. The order interred their dead in a secret crypt below the city they loved so dearly. When Taldan inquisitors uncovered the paladins, they put the three remaining members to the sword and defaced the crypt before sealing it up. With a successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check, a PC recognizes the marred carvings as iconography of Sarenrae.

Jeroth discovered the crypt during his excavations, and trusts both its unsettling atmosphere and undead residents to guard his home.

Creatures: The final three paladins—Zarya, Bek, and Akifayok—did not find peace after their murder and the desecration of their martyrs' crypt, and have since risen as powerful incorporeal undead fallen, hellbent on the destruction of Taldor and especially the Stavian line. The spirits are bound to this chamber, however, and cannot leave. They reluctantly serve Milon Jeroth as guardians, as he intends to end the Stavian line, but Milon has disciplined the willful undead repeatedly, most recently by taking their holy scimitar (the hidden blade in area D9) and promising to return it only after they “prove their commitment.”

The fallen attack any creatures they do not recognize, targeting divine spellcasters first. If offered their stolen scimitar, the fallen cease their attacks and simply stand aside, staring silently for 5 minutes before their supernatural rage overcomes them once again.

FALLEN (3) **CR 8**
XP 4,800 each
hp 93 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 126)

Development: One body here is noticeably newer than the others, and wrapped in an expensive curtain rather than a muslin burial shroud. In her pocket are identification papers for Tae Amalon, a scholar and tutor born in 4,659 AR. With a successful DC 15 Heal check, a PC recognizes that the body died around 30 years ago, rather than centuries earlier like the others, while a successful DC 20 Heal or Perception check reveals a knife wound in her back, with the tip of the blade still lodged in her ribs. The blade tip seems to be from a dagger of excellent quality, with a distinctive curve, though identifying it is impossible without tracking down the rest of the dagger.



ESTELLA

Amalon's corpse is half of Milon's damning evidence against Pythareus. Her death was traumatic enough to fracture her soul, binding part of it to her earthly remains and part of it to her murder weapon.

Even if contacted via *Speak with Dead* and similar magic, she is only vaguely aware of her life and that she was murdered after an argument, looking into a teenage boy's eyes as she bled out on the floor. She recalls additional details only if presented with the half of the murder weapon now in the possession of Gulreesh (see area G).

Story Award: If the PCs manage to deal with the fallen peacefully, award them XP as if they defeated the fallen in combat.

D13. Undercity Tunnels

These old tunnels weave in and out of old city ruins now long buried, and make up a part of the city's sewer system. Milon and many of his agents use the tunnels to come and go unseen, and most notable is the well-trodden path leading to the secret Monastery of the Seven Forms of Sin, a half mile away.

E. SWEET DREAMS TEA SHOP

Sir Milon Jeroth's night hag allies, the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams, use a tea shop as a front for their illicit activities, which include scouring people's dreams for useful information and tormenting enemies of the Immaculate Circle. Ironically, they sell charms, tea, herbs, and other things that people buy in hopes of being able to sleep better. The shop once belonged to Eudocia of Zeno, but the sisters killed the owner and with Milon Jeroth's help, the ownership was transferred to the owner's “niece,” Estella, an identity Milon fabricated for one of the sisters.

Recently, the three sisters studied the legends of the Old Kings, the legends of six of Taldor's most iconic emperors, as part of the Immaculate Circle's plot to resurrect the long-dead and unwilling Prince Carrius. The Immaculate Circle was able to pluck Prince Carrius from the afterlife and stitch his soul into an amalgam of the Old Kings, who now dwell within the resurrected prince and provide ready anchors for the inner circle's controlling magic. With the research concluded, the two older sisters, Illumia and Magilla, are now spying on Maxillar Pythareus in the castle of Abadar's Pillar and only Estella is at the tea shop.

The tea shop also includes a large storage area Eudocia used to rent out, as well as a small apartment. The doors are all simple wooden doors (hardness 5, 10 hp, DC 15) with good locks (Disable Device DC 30). Use the Sweet Dreams Tea Shop map on page 23 for this area.

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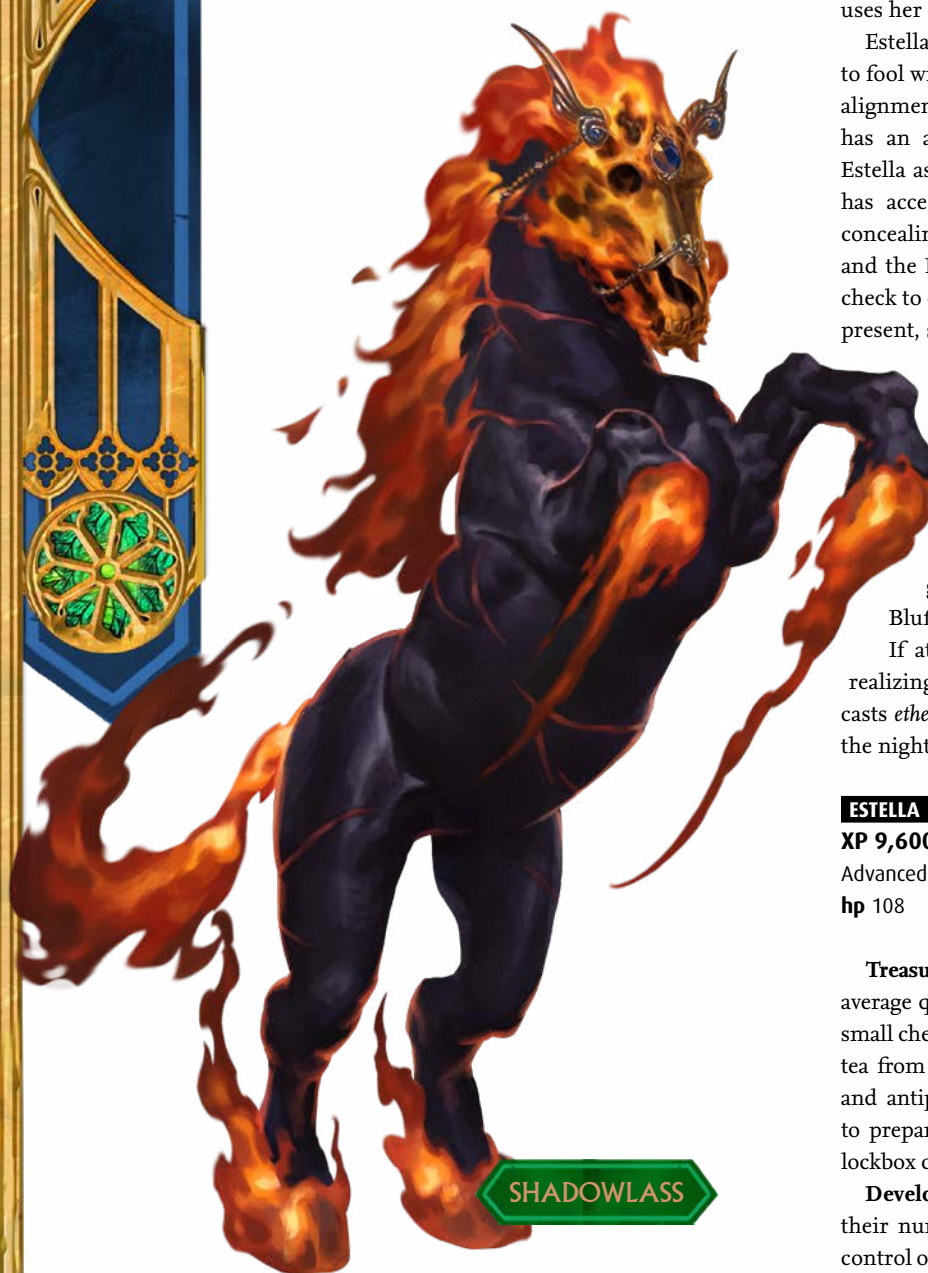
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E1. Tea Shop (CR 10)

The scents of dozens of tea varieties, herbs, and oils waft out from the countless jars and bottles on the shelves in this large room. A raised section of flooring near a sales counter supports several worn, water-stained tables and chairs. Various kinds of poppets, wooden charms, and silver hoops hang from the ceiling.

The products sold in the tea shop generally range in price from 1 gp to 10 gp. The teas, herbs, and oils are harmless, but the phony protective charms that the sisters make and sell, on the other hand, make it easier for the Estella's older sisters to locate possible victims using the *locate object* spell.



Creature: The youngest of the three night hag sisters poses as a young Taldan woman named Estella. She uses *detect magic* and her alignment detection abilities to evaluate customers as potential targets for her sisters or to detect threats. When Estella detects a chaotic or evil alignment in her customers, she tries to sell them charms, even giving charms away for free if necessary.

Estella tries to avoid a fight in her shop, but if attacked, she defends herself. If the PCs ask too many questions or carry a large number of magic items, Estella becomes suspicious but pretends to be oblivious to the threat (Sense Motive DC 26 to notice). If the PCs leave without incident, she informs her sisters about the PCs and continues spying on them ethereally. If she considers them her enemies and any PCs are chaotic or evil, she uses her dream haunting on them.

Estella is perhaps the most difficult of Milon's agents to fool with a disguise, thanks to her ability to recognize alignments on sight. If a PC posing as Milon Jeroth has an alignment other than his lawful evil nature, Estella asks about it pointedly. She knows the rakshasa has access to and must occasionally use alignment-concealing means, but the effect still leaves her wary and the PC must succeed at an additional DC 28 Bluff check to convince Estella of his identity. If other PCs are present, she demands that they leave before discussing business matters. If any of the other PCs are good-aligned, she demands an explanation once she is alone with the PC posing as Milon; a successful DC 30 Bluff check is enough to satisfy her.

If the PCs simply attempt to pass themselves off as Milon's agents but have a good alignment, they take a –5 penalty on their Bluff checks.

If attacked, Estella lashes out for 1 round before realizing the danger the PCs present, at which point she casts *etherealness* to escape to area E3 and wait alongside the nightshade Shadowlass.

ESTELLA

CR 10

XP 9,600

Advanced night hag (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 215)

hp 108

Treasure: Most of the tea sold at Sweet Dreams is of average quality. The stock behind the counter includes a small chest (Disable Device DC 40) of medicinal Red King tea from Vudra, each cup of which acts as an antitoxin and antiplague^{UE}. The chest contains enough loose tea to prepare 15 cups, worth a total of 2,250 gp. The store lockbox contains 35 gp, 816 sp, 12 cp, and a *hexing doll*^{UE}.

Development: If the PCs successfully pass off one of their number as Milon Jeroth to Estella, they assume control of the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams and can direct

them to perform arcane research or spy on people's dreams within the city. The sisters are also eager to kill the diviner Dame Avenna, though they see any other assignment to kill as an insult; they are powerful weavers of fate, not petty assassins. Arranging for the diviner's death requires 1d3 weeks as the sister slowly unravel her defenses and prognostications, during which time "Milon" must meet with Estella at least once per week.

Story Award: If the PCs deal with Estella through guile and trickery, award them XP as though they had defeated both her and Shadowlass in combat.

E2. Storage

While technically a loading dock, this wide hallway is also used as a ready storage space for shop supplies, including spare kettles and cups and barrels of loose tea and dried herbs. The double door to area E3 is kept locked (Disable Device DC 30), as the sisters and Shadowlass have little trouble coming and going via the Ethereal Plane.

E3. Warehouse (CR 11)

Shelves line the walls in the large, dusty space. The Sweet Dreams Tea Shop began long ago as a brewery and its fermentation tanks once stood here, but Eudocia had no need for the large vats and sold them off, instead renting out the space as storage to different parties across the city. After the sisters murdered her, they discovered the room provided ample space for their nightmare, Shadowlass, to live unseen, and so it has mostly become a smoke-choked stable. Soot from the supernatural horse's flames coats every surface and stains the clothes and hair of anyone who enters.

Creature: The Sisters of Indulgent Dreams work alongside a powerful cauchemar nightmare, most recently to travel across the Astral Plane to gather psychic energies for the Immaculate Circle. But now the sisters have found new tasks to occupy their minds in Zimar, Shadowlass grows increasingly restless with the restrictions placed upon her against killing or terrorizing the city. She happily attacks anyone other than the sisters who enter the warehouse, and uses her *ethereal jaunt* spell-like ability to join in on any fights she hears elsewhere in the shop.

SHADOWLASS **CR 11**
XP 12,800
 Cauchemar nightmare (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 216)
hp 147

Treasure: Searching the warehouse takes 6 hours thanks to the mess created by Shadowlass's soot, and many of the items here are average items fashioned to appear precious. With a successful DC 20 Appraise check, a PC identifies the valuables in the mess: six champagne flutes carved from smoky quartz (100 gp each), three

golden bowls etched with falcon iconography (300 gp each), a rose gold censer lined with a tarry residue of lavender oil (400 gp), an oil painting of the late Grand Prince Stavian II (1,500 gp), a music box carved from darkwood and wound with a permanent *prestidigitation* spell (3,000 gp), and *waters of transfiguration*^{UE}.

E4. Apartment (CR 9)

A cozy two-room apartment once housed the shopkeep Eudocia. The Sister of Indulgent Dreams now use it to hide their secrets and research. The outer room serves as a living room, office, and small kitchen.

Creatures: The sisters took a shine to four mangy stray cats that prowled the alley behind the shop, and they keep them here as pets and pest control. The cats hiss and yowl at intruders, alerting Estella to intruders (if she is still alive), but otherwise keep their distance. They happily chase PCs transformed into rats, however.

ADVANCED CATS (6) **CR 1/3**
XP 135 each
 hp 5 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 131, 294)

Trap: The apartment door leading in from area E2 is unlocked, but magically warded. Anyone who enters without first speaking the password "dreamless" triggers a night hag's curse, transforming intruders into rats.

NIGHT HAG'S CURSE TRAP **CR 9**
 Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30
EFFECTS
Trigger proximity (alarm); Reset automatic (1 hour)
Effect spell effect (*baleful polymorph*, Will DC 18 negates); multiple targets (all targets within 10 ft. of the door)

Treasure: There is also a dose of *flying ointment*^{UE}, and an *orb of heaven*^{UE} wrapped in three layers of black sackcloth on a shelf, alongside various half-burned candles, cracked animal bones, and feathers.

Development: Also on the bookshelf here are meticulous ledgers maintained by the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams on behalf of Milon Jeroth. The rakshasa still uses the night hags and their magic to deliver instructions and payments to Maxillar Pythareus's various false-flag operations attacking Taldan targets and framing Qadira. The ledgers on their own aren't enough to damn Pythareus—given their dubious origin—but provide another strong piece of evidence of his wrongdoings.

If the PCs contact Kathann, she responds, "Excellent find, though night hags may not be our most reliable witnesses. Still, you're doing excellent work."

E5. Bedroom

The bedroom reeks of decay and incense. In the far corner from the door lies a humanoid figure wrapped

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in sheets—the desiccated body of the former owner Eudocia, dried by the desert heat. A desk near the door includes writing implements and stationary, as well as a massive tome bound in leather.

Development: The tome is written in a curious combination of Abyssal and Infernal, and illustrated with terrifyingly vivid drawings of both great heroics and atrocities. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Knowledge (history or nobility) check recognizes that the book contains extensive research on Taldor’s history and a collection of stories—both true and larger-than-life legends—surrounding various former kings; anyone who can read both languages succeeds at this check automatically. The book’s curious style seems intended to serve as a focus for some kind of ritual, though no magic remains in it now.

If the PCs report their discovery to Kathann, she congratulates the PCs but admits she is unfamiliar with the book or its purpose.

Story Award: If the PCs discover the night hags’ research, award them 12,800 XP.

F. SEVEN FORMS OF SIN MONASTERY

Nearly 2 centuries ago, Milon Jeroth returned from the Monastery of Seven Forms with a profound understanding of combat and self-discipline, as well as a handful of eager followers who falsely believed his strength and prowess extended from self-mastery rather than his hidden rakshasa nature. He preached a self-mastery that came not from denying worldly pleasures, but from indulging them, and knowing how your body responds to every joyous stimulus. Partnered with an elf named Dismielle—who now calls herself Sister Qan Dismaal—he honed these followers into a martial cult, supplementing the traditional martial training of the Monastery of Seven Forms with wanton feasting, theft, and orgies, not to mention murder (at Milon’s behest, of course) to help fulfill their path to enlightenment. Calling themselves the Seven Forms of Sin, the assassins have served Milon ever since, as he rewards them with rare and wondrous luxuries.

The Seven Forms of Sin maintain a secret monastery in the undercity below the Adobe District, accessible through the city’s sewer tunnels and easily located if the PCs found the entrance to the undercity in Milon Jeroth’s own estate (see area D13) or recovered the spymaster’s portfolio in their first encounter. Failing these leads, the PCs could instead learn of the monastery’s location once Sister Dismaal dispatches assassins to eliminate them (see Suspicion on page 17) or from a recovering Gannaius, or Kathann could learn of the monks from one of her informants outside the city and provide the PCs with their location as an additional lead.

The monastery is built into long-buried basements and carved from bedrock, and most of its walls are lined

with wood paneling to reduce the chill and dampness of the city sewers. Its few doors are simple wood (hardness 5, 10 hit points) and unlocked. Lanterns with *continual flame* cast on them illuminate the interior. Use the Seven Forms of Sin Monastery map on page 23 for this area.

If the PCs impersonate Milon, they must still negotiate the hazards of the tunnel of death trap (see area F1) and the slime naga Squelsh (see area F2), but the entothrope guards and sin monks are accepting enough, provided the PCs’ disguises and lies hold up, and they ask the visitors to wait in the training hall while they fetch Sister Dismaal. The elf alone holds any suspicions, having known Milon for 2 centuries, and she asks that “Master Jeroth” demonstrate his prowess by utterly humiliating her two newest students (use the statistics for a Seven Forms of Sin devotee on page 33) on the training mat. If the PCs instead pose as Milon’s agents, she demands they instead face her monks, one on one, in a practice combat if they expect to work alongside her order. The fight is unarmed and nonlethal, and while she refuses to say so beforehand, she’s willing to work with these new agents so long as they take their lumps without complaint. The PCs can refuse these challenges, but doing so increases the penalty for all future Bluff checks against Sister Dismaal by an additional –5.

If a PC posing as Milon loses the fight, Sister Dismaal dismisses her students and any PCs accompanying “Milon,” waiting only moments before demanding to know what just happened. She is skeptical of most explanations (–5 penalty on that PC’s Bluff check), but finds any explanation related to overexertion or a recent combat encounter (especially against the PCs) believable.

Development: If the PCs successfully pass off one of their number as Milon Jeroth to Sister Dismaal, they assume control of the Seven Forms of Sin and can dispatch the assassins to intimidate or kill members of the Vault and Chain templars, with whom the order has a growing rivalry. While they can’t destroy the entire cult, the monks can assassinate Chief Enumerator Iovinus after 1d4 weeks of planning. The PCs must maintain their deception for this entire time, meeting with the monks at least once per week.

Story Award: If the PCs deal with the Seven Forms of Sin with disguise or guile, award them XP as if they had slain the monks and Sister Dismaal in combat. If they usurp the Seven Forms of Sin to assassinate Enumerator Iovinus, award them XP as if they had killed the antipaladin themselves.

F1. Sewer Tunnel (CR 10)

A four-foot-wide stream of stinking effluent flows through a deep channel in this ten-foot-wide tunnel, leaving a one-foot ledge to one side and a five-foot-wide walkway on the other. Side tunnels—one a hand-carved tunnel and the other



resulting from a collapsed wall—release more liquid from two tunnels leading north, while moldering water drips from the rough sandstone roof.

Most of the entrances that access the monastery (including Waterhill Manor) lie east of this stretch of tunnels; the masonry tunnel leads to area **F2**, while the actual entrance to the monastery lies beyond the collapsed wall further west. The sewage is 3 feet deep, and wading through it immediately exposes a character to filth fever.

Trap: A 40-foot stretch of hallway contains a sophisticated series of slashing metal blades concealed in the north and south walls, powered by submerged waterwheels in the sewage. The trap springs once a creature steps on the trigger plate halfway through the area indicated on the map, and the mechanism continues attacking all creatures in the affected area for 1d4 rounds. The trigger plate covers only the 5-foot walkway and is not triggered by people balancing on the smaller ledge or wading through the filthy water.

Activating the trap immediately alerts Squelsh in area **D2** and the assassin entothropes in area **F4** to intruders.

TUNNEL OF DEATH TRAP

CR 10

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Duration** 1d4 rounds; **Reset** repair

Effect Atk +20 melee (3d8+3); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-40-ft. tunnel)

F2. Cesspool (CR 10)

A huge pool of burbling, semisolid sludge fills most of the collapsed basement, fed by water trickling in from broken pipes. A mildew-coated chest sits in the northeast corner.

Once the basement of a fine tailor shop, this chamber has been buried and forgotten for centuries. It has served as a cesspit ever since a sinkhole partially collapsed the floor and walls a hundred years ago. The sinkhole is 10 feet deep, and the concentrated effluent is completely opaque. Creatures entering the pool are immediately exposed to filth fever and slimy doom, and take a –2 penalty on Fortitude saving throws against these diseases until they bathe thoroughly.

A secret door in the east wall requires a successful DC 30 Perception check to discover.

Creatures: A slime naga named Squelsh lives in the cesspool here, serving as a spy and occasional drug dealer for the sin monks in exchange for their protection. Squelsh maintains a few contacts in the city as well—mostly addicts and suppliers—but she is ultimately a monster and a flesh-eater. She happily plays the part of turncoat if the PCs attempt to parley with her, feeding them misinformation and coaxing them closer and closer to the edge of her pool before unleashing the black pudding she maintains as a guardian.

Squelsh knows she has the advantage in her pool, and she tries to remain out of reach while using her spit and

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stinking cloud spell to sow chaos, or her *hydraulic push* spell to knock anyone nearby into her pool, where she can drag the victim into the depths to drown them and eat them at her leisure.

SQUELISH CR 9

XP 6,400

Female slime naga (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 199)

hp 115

BLACK PUDDING CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 105 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 35)

Treasure: The treasure chest in the corner contains a dozen moldering bolts of once-fine silk. Squelsh hid the chest's original contents in her secret home at the bottom of her pool: a lacquered box containing 371 pp; 1,163 gp; and a magic golden needle etched with creatures of land, sea, and air. If a character spends 6 hours using the needle to embroider an existing nonmagical cloak or cape and succeeds at a DC 25 Craft (clothing) skill check, the needle's magic transforms the cloak into a *cloak of resistance +4* or else grants the cloak the abilities of any two of the following simultaneously: *eagle cape*, *cloak of the manta ray*, or *cloak of the scuttling rat*. Once the needle has been used successfully, it loses all magic.

F3. Secret Passage

The roughly carved stairs here wind up and around, leading to an apparent dead end. The secret doors at either end of the tunnel each require a successful DC 25 Perception to check to notice from this side.

F4. Cistern (CR 12)

Sturdy pillars support the arched ceiling twenty feet above the mirror-blue waters of this quiet cistern. Doors exit to the north and east, while a gaping hole in the southern wall slopes down to the reeking sewer tunnels beyond.

This long-forgotten water storage tank from a previous incarnation of the city long ago collapsed the southern wall, flooding the tunnels beyond. Today, the cistern feels more like a temple thanks to its looming ceiling and ominous silence. The water is just a foot deep—enough to drown only characters who fall (or are held) prone.

Creatures: Three years ago, a band of hopeful Seven Forms of Sin devotees crossed the Qadiran desert, only to lose half their numbers to an attack by giant assassin bugs—deadly, blood-drinking desert predators. Those who survived found themselves infected with entothropy, changing uncontrollably into predatory, insectoid monsters under the new moon. They sought

aid from Sister Dismaal, but she instead encouraged the afflicted thieves to embrace this “gift” and use the predatory instincts and abhorrent appetites they’d gained to grow closer to their perfect selves. The four remaining hunters serve the Seven Forms of Sin as scouts, guards, and assassins for hire, and prefer to dwell here next to the calm waters rather than with the fellow members of the monastery.

ASSASSIN BUG ENTOTHPROPES (4, HYBRID FORM) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Human afflicted wereassassin bug assassin 3/rogue 5

(augmented humanoid) (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 116)

LE Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural)

hp 68 each (8d8+29)

Fort +9, **Ref** +13, **Will** +7; +1 vs. poison, +4 vs. mind-affecting

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, insect mind, trap sense +1; **DR** 10/silver

OFFENSE

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

Melee dagger +10 (1d4+2/×19–20) or

bite +10 (1d6+2), 2 claws +10 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks death attack (DC 13), poison, sneak attack +5d6

TACTICS

Before Combat The entothropes spend most of their time in their hybrid forms these days, training and communing with their primitive insect instincts. If alerted to intruders, they fly to the tops of the room's pillars and study newcomers for 3 rounds so they can attempt to use their death attacks.

During Combat The entothropes spit poison whenever possible, but otherwise try and overwhelm one or two targets at a time, preferring divine spellcasters.

Morale The entothropes fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 21, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 23

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +13, Bluff +7, Climb +10, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +13, Fly +5, Linguistics +5, Perception +11, Sleight of Hand +13, Stealth +15, Use Magic Device +9

Languages Common, Kelish, Tien

SQ change shape (human, hybrid, and giant assassin bug; *vermin shape II*), curse of lycanthropy, entothropic empathy (+4 with vermin related to entothropic form), poison stream (ex), poison use, rogue talents (fast stealth, finesse rogue), trapfinding +2

Gear +1 studded leather, dagger, amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of resistance +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 17; *frequency* 1/round for 4 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Dex; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Poison Stream (Ex) As a standard action usable every 1d4 rounds, an assassin bug can spray poison from its mouth in a 15-foot line. Any creature caught in this area must succeed at a DC 19 Reflex save or be exposed to the assassin bug's poison. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

F5. Bunks

Three bunk beds and a chest hold most of the entothrope assassins' worldly possessions.

Treasure: Inside the treasure chest is a leather sack containing 1,300 gp and three large green sapphires (750 gp each).

F6. Monastic Cells (CR 10)

Five small cells—each with a feather bed and silk sheets—are accessible from this wide, stone hallway. A simple tunnel leads south, while a rough-hewn passage in the hallway's northeast corner heads east.

Each monk's cell is surprisingly lavish, with luxuries rarely found in other monasteries, as the Seven Forms of Sin laud indulgence. Only five monks at a time—usually the newest recruits—live in the monastery itself at any given time; the rest maintain homes in the city.

Creatures: Two monks linger in the northernmost cell in compromising positions.

If the Seven Forms of Sin devotees in area F7 hear the sounds of combat in this chamber, they drink their potions, then rush to join their comrades.

SEVEN FORMS OF SIN DEVOTEES (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Human monk 8/rogue 1

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; **Senses** Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 18, flat-footed 18 (+1 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 monk, +2 natural, +2 Wis)

hp 88 each (9d8+44)

Fort +11, **Ref** +12, **Will** +10; +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities evasion; **Immune** disease

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +12/+7 (1d10+5) or

unarmed strike flurry of blows +12/+12/+7/+7 (1d10+5)

Special Attacks flurry of blows, sneak attack +1d6, stunning fist (8/day, DC 16)

TACTICS

Before Combat If alerted to the presence of intruders, either by the activation of the trap in area F1 or combat with the

entothropes in area F4, the Seven Forms of Sin devotees drink their *potions of barkskin* and *bear's endurance* and prepare to ambush intruders.

During Combat Seven Forms of Sin devotees prefer to strike from hiding or flank opponents whenever possible to take advantage of their sneak attack. They intermix flurry of blows with stunning fist attacks, and if they manage to stun a foe, they immediately redouble their efforts by applying Power Attack to their flurry of blows attacks.

Morale The devotees fight to the death.

Base Statistics Without their potions, the Seven Forms of Sin devotees' statistics are **AC** 19, touch 18, flat-footed 16; **hp** 70; **Fort** +9; **Con** 12.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 28

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Furious Focus^{APG}, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist, Toughness, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +13 (+29 to jump), Climb +9, Disguise +10, Perception +11, Sense Motive +11, Stealth +13, Swim +9, Use Magic Device +11

Languages Common

SQ fast movement, high jump, ki pool (6 points), maneuver training, slow fall 40 ft., trapfinding +1, wholeness of body (8 hit points)

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* (2), *potions of bear's endurance* (2), *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Other Gear** *amulet of mighty fists* +1, *bracers of armor* +1, *cloak of resistance* +2, *ring of protection* +1

Treasure: A weapon rack in the north of the room holds the following: five masterwork kama, six masterwork quarterstaves, a +1 *handaxe*, and a +1 *shortspear*.

F7. Training Hall (CR 12)

Worn, red rugs crisscross this circular chamber, broken up by wooden pillars wrapped in heavy padding. A pair of weapon racks to the east hold a well-used collection of unusual and deadly weapons.

The Seven Forms of Sin monks train here against one another, but the monastery also uses the chamber for mission briefings and various group indulgences. The ceiling rises to a 30-foot-high dome at the very center.

Creatures: Four monks train here at any given time. If the Seven Forms of Sin devotees in area F7 hear the sounds of combat in this chamber, they drink their potions and then rush to join their comrades.

SEVEN FORMS OF SIN DEVOTEES (4)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 88 each (see above)

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F8. Dining Hall

Though this dining hall is far from clean or well appointed, the rich scent of spices fills the air. An adjoining room to the northeast serves as a kitchen.

The Seven Forms of Sin devotees prepare exquisite feasts using a wide assortment of expensive ingredients.

Treasure: The room contains a gilded porcelain tea set worth 500 gp, and Qadiran, Taldan, and Tian vases worth a total of 2,000 gp. The kitchen area contains rare spices worth a total of 1,200 gp and seven bottles of Chelish red wine vented in 4562 and worth 100 gp each.



QAN DISMAAL

F9. Library (CR 12)

A small library of scrolls of books includes volumes on history, medicine, and philosophy, but also recipes for preparing intelligent creatures and reams of erotica, which one would not expect in a monastic collection.

A secret door in the southern wall requires a successful DC 30 Perception check to notice.

Creatures: Sister Qan Dismaal, a forlorn elf who hoped to find peace in the Monastery of Seven Forms, spends most of her time reading and meditating in the monastery's library. Milon's variant teachings didn't alleviate her depression, but at least the indulgences it provided let her escape in short bursts, and her newfound life as a killer for hire provides ample targets to vent her frustrations on.

Two monk guards remain by Dismaal's side almost constantly. If the PCs reach the library first, via stealth or the secret passage, any sounds of combat here draw the monks from area F7 after 3 rounds, and the remaining monks from F6 1 round after that.

SEVEN FORMS OF SIN DEVOTEES (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 88 each (see page 33)

QAN DISMAAL

CR 10

XP 9,600

Elf monk (monk of the seven forms)

11 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Combat* 40)

LE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 23, flat-footed 20 (+2 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 monk, +2 natural, +4 Wis)

hp 108 (11d8+55)

Fort +12, **Ref** +13, **Will** +13; +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities improved evasion; **Immune** sleep, disease, poison

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +14/+9 (1d10+2) or unarmed strike flurry of blows +15/+15/+10/+10/+5 (1d10+2) or mwk temple sword +10/+5 (1d8+1/19-20)

Special Attacks flurry of blows

TACTICS

Before Combat If she suspects trouble, Dismaal drinks her *potions of owl's wisdom* and *barkskin*.

During Combat Dismaal immediately enters her *sirocco* fury, adding +3 to her attack and damage rolls, *Acrobatics* checks, and AC; she moves constantly, using her *Punishing Kick* feat to knock down opponents for her guards to pick off. If her guards fall, she switches to her *flurry of blows* and *lightning finish* to focus on one foe at a time.

Morale Unlike her monks, Sister Dismaal is a practical woman, and she attempts to flee if reduced below 20 hit points. She can return to harry the PCs during their attack on King's Pillar at your discretion.

Base Statistics Without her potions, Sister Dismaal's statistics are AC 21, touch 21, flat-footed 16; Will +11; **Skills** Perception +17, Sense Motive +15.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 32

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Punishing Kick^{APG}, Spring Attack, Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +15 (+38 to jump), Climb +11, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (religion) +12, Perception +19, Sense Motive +17, Stealth +15; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Perception

Languages Celestial, Common, Elven

SQ elven magic, fast movement, high jump, ki pool (9 points cold iron, lawful, magic, silver), lightning finish, sirocco fury (dance of a hundred cuts), slow fall 50 ft., wholeness of body (11 hit points)

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* (2), *potions of cure serious wounds* (2), *potions of owl's wisdom* (3); **Other Gear** *mwk temple sword*^{APG}, *amulet of mighty fists* +1, *belt of physical might* +2 (Dex, Con), *cloak of resistance* +2, *ring of protection* +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Lightning Finish (Ex) As an immediate action, Dismaal can make a single attack with a manufactured light or one-handed slashing weapon against any target she has hit at least twice with her unarmed strike during her turn. She can take a 5-foot step before or after performing a lightning finish so long as she ends adjacent to her target, though if she takes this step, she cannot perform a 5-foot step during her next turn. Dismaal can use this ability a number of times per day equal to her monk level, but no more than once per round.

Sirocco Fury (Su) Dismaal can spend 2 ki points as a full-round action to enter a meditative trance that replicates the spell *dance of a hundred cuts*^{UM}, using her monk level as her caster level. Unlike for the spell, she must both move 10 feet and make a melee attack each round after she begins this trance to prevent the effect from ending.

Treasure: A successful DC 35 Perception check reveals a *manual of gainful exercise* +1 tucked behind a shelf.

F10. Sister Qan Dismaal's Chambers (CR 12)

Sister Qan Dismaal forbids all members of the order from entering her personal chambers, a refuge she uses both to escape the stunning rapidity of human aging and as a place for her to review orders that other members of the order might balk at. The room contains a luxurious bed and desk, as well as an expansive wardrobe of exquisite

clothing reserved for evenings dining at high-class establishments, usually alongside Milon Jeroth.

Trap: A magic trap keeps unwanted visitors out of Dismaal's private chambers. Built with the aid of a long-dead wizard and an enchanted emerald set in pewter over the interior lintel, the mechanism triggers only when a non-elven humanoid crosses the room's threshold, and allows elves (such as Dismaal), outsiders (such as Milon), and other creature types to pass unharmed. The trap conjures a *crushing hand* spell that grapples the first creature to trigger it and continues to crush it for 5 rounds.

Removing the emerald over the lintel disables the trap but automatically triggers it if it has not already gone off, regardless of the offender's race.

CRUSH THE LIFE TRAP

CR 12

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

EFFECTS

Trigger magic (*blood biography*); **Reset** automatic (24 hours)

Effect spell effect (*crushing hand*, AC 20, 140 hp, CMB +30, CMD 40, 2d6+12)

Treasure: Dismaal's wardrobe contains three noble's outfits and seven courtier's outfits, as well as assorted jewelry worth a total of 1,200 gp. The emerald set above the door is worth 2,000 gp.

Development: A pewter brazier on the desk holds a half-burned order from Maxillar Pythareus. This is a vital piece of evidence for his illegal agenda: orders to execute Princess Eutropia and frame the PCs. What remains reads as follows.

—ill comely, despite her advancing age, and still within her childbearing years. I'd much prefer her argumentative nature curbed. This entire conflict would be so easily resolved with a wedding, were she not so demanding and selfish! It truly pains me to do this, but for the sake of Taldor she must be put down like the rabid animal she acts like. These new agents her fawning assistant seems to prefer—they are relative unknowns with a reputation for violence, are they not? Cut her throat and put the dagger in their hands; perhaps that will finally get the Lion Blades to obey. Return to me when the deed is done and your payment will be enough to establish your order as a legitimate force among the Taldan aristocracy.

—Pythareus

While certainly damning, the letter on its own isn't considered reliable enough evidence for the Lion Blades to move against Pythareus. Combined with evidence from other sources, however, it begins to form a pattern that will convince the Lion Blades to act—or more specifically, to allow the PCs to act.

Story Award: If the PCs discover the burned letter, award them 12,800 XP.

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G. THE COURT OF FILTH (CR 13)

One of Zimar's strangest information brokers is the otyugh Gulreesh, an atypically intelligent member of his race who spends his days shifting through the odds and ends people above throw away to learn of the city's secrets. The self-proclaimed "Lord of Filth" trades his secrets for information, treasure, and services, and over the last century has grown into a fairly benign crime lord. The PCs may learn of the otyugh's presence and secrets through Milon Jeroth's portfolio, or they may know a bit about the city's underworld when they arrive, and seek the otyugh out first.

Locating Gulreesh's lair, the Court of Filth, requires a successful DC 25 Knowledge (local) check or Diplomacy check to gather information from the city's criminal element. The ancient cistern is easy enough to reach,

thanks to a path cleared by decades of blackmailers, rogues, and spies traversing to the otyugh's realm.

Stairs descend into shallow, stagnated water in this massive underground reservoir, some eighty feet across, whose arched brick ceiling is supported by rows of wide but badly eroded columns. The air is thick with the smell of sewage and the sounds of running, dripping, and splashing water.

The cistern was built centuries ago under the Scrolls District to store water for bathing, consumption, and firefighting, receiving water from a branch of the Jalrune Aqueduct. An earthquake in 2920 AR nearly cut off the supply of water from the aqueduct, though smaller amounts of water still seep into the cistern. Centuries of neglect has turned the water filthy. Most of the chamber waters are 10 feet deep, but a 10-foot-by-10-foot ledge sits just a foot below the water by the entry.

Creature: The self-proclaimed otyugh king Gulreesh, Lord of Filth, rules the undercity of Zimar and holds court in the ancient cistern. Gulreesh has grown to massive proportions, far exceeding others of his kind in size. As soon as Gulreesh notices the PCs, he repeatedly announces in his groaning, deep voice, "Come closer!" until the PCs are within 20 feet of him. If the PCs attempt to come within 10 feet of him, Gulreesh shouts, "Stop!" and places one of his massive tentacles right in front of a PC's face.

Gulreesh is accustomed to deferential treatment and values the respect he feels he's owed. He makes the demands below before the PCs can ask him questions. If the PCs disobey his commands or fail a skill check, he asks once again more aggressively. If the PCs disobey (or fail a skill check) twice, Gulreesh simply attempts to devour them.

"Do you know who I am?" Any PC can attempt a DC 30 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Knowledge (dungeoneering or local) check to ingratiate herself with Gulreesh.

Mentioning his name or either of his two titles (Gulreesh, Lord of Filth, or Otyugh King) grants a cumulative +4 bonus (maximum +12) on the check.

"Then prostrate yourselves before Gulreesh!" Immersing themselves in the sewage automatically mollifies Gulreesh, but doing so exposes any PC to a virulent strain of filth fever (Fortitude DC 16 negates).

The PCs can refuse or beg off this gesture with a successful DC 30 Bluff or Intimidate check; this DC increases by 2 for every PC who refuses to bow in the filth.



"You may stand. Why have you come to disturb mighty Gulreesh?" If the PCs tell Gulreesh about their task to look for evidence against Maxillar Pythareus, he responds as follows.

Inhaling deeply, then exhaling heavily, the giant otyugh says, "Many kinds of things end up in my Undercity, and it is true Gulreesh has found something that would harm General Pythareus. But Gulreesh is king here! Gulreesh does not care what happens to the little general from the wasteland above!" After a pause, he continues. "Many souls seem interested in my little trinket, offering glory and gold. What do *you* offer Gulreesh for his favor?"

Gulreesh won't mention that Milon Jeroth offered him 15,500 gp for the broken handle of a dagger (see Development below) that once belonged to Maxillar Pythareus's father, Julian, hoping the PCs will massively outbid the rakshasa in their ignorance. A successful DC 23 Appraise check or DC 33 Sense Motive check provides some insight into Gulreesh's expectation, placing the item's value somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 gp; succeeding at this check by 5 or more narrows the range to 15,000 to 17,000 gp. He accepts coin, but also items at their full value, as well as political secrets from the world above (though evidence of a long-concealed murder by a prominent noble family is valuable indeed, so he demands an equally damning secret about a different noble). Gulreesh also accepts fine food, wine, and drugs (as well as magical equivalents, or items that create food) at twice their normal value, since these are rare commodities in his soggy home.

If the PCs don't wish to exchange coin, a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Diplomacy check persuades Gulreesh to offer to let her pay the PCs' bid in services, as he lacks the ability to cast spells. The otyugh feels his lair must reflect his importance as king of the undercity, and so it needs guardians and traps and ornamentation. To appease the otyugh, the PCs must provide him with a guardian, a magic trap, and some effect or trinket that praises his glory and intellect.

For a guardian, Gulreesh demands a long-lived and loyal monster. PCs with the appropriate feats may construct a golem or similar construct guardian, or hunt down a *clay golem manual* in the bazaar. Capturing and training a giant crocodile from upriver (or any other monster of CR 9 or above) also appeases the otyugh.

For a trap, Gulreesh wants something deadly and flashy. Almost any trap of CR 9 or greater sates him, but creating a magic trap (via either the trap creation rules or a permanent *symbol* spell) delights him and grants PCs a +5 bonus on any future Diplomacy checks against him.

To proclaim his glory, Gulreesh is satisfied with a *magic mouth* or similar illusion with *permanency*, or a *permanent image* spell, or jewelry worth at least 8,000 gp.

Trying to use a spell that isn't permanent requires a successful Bluff check, or else Gulreesh becomes enraged by the PCs' trickery.

GULREESH

CR 13

XP 25,600

Advanced otyugh (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 223)

N Gargantuan aberration

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 11, flat-footed 27 (+4 deflection, +1 Dex, +17 natural, -4 size)

hp 175 (14d8+112)

Fort +11, **Ref** +5, **Will** +14

Immune disease

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee bite +20 (3d6+14 plus filth fever), 2 tentacles +19 (2d6+7 plus grab)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (25 ft. with tentacle)

Special Attacks constrict (tentacle, 2d6+7)

TACTICS

Before Combat Gulreesh refuses to talk to any visitors unless they are within 20 feet of him—if the visitors anger Gulreesh, he can then reach them easily and use Combat Reflexes to make attacks of opportunity against anyone who acts before him.

During Combat Gulreesh prefers not to move around a lot. He prefers to use his bite to make attacks of opportunity except when he can reach the target only with a tentacle. When facing multiple creatures, Gulreesh usually releases any creature he grabs after dealing constrict damage.

Morale If the PCs attacked Gulreesh without provocation, he fights to the death. If the PCs attempted to negotiate with Gulreesh before the fight, he surrenders and agrees to help the PCs when reduced to 40 or fewer hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 38, **Dex** 12, **Con** 25, **Int** 9, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +28 (+32 grapple); **CMD** 42

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Iron Will, Lunge, Multiattack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Intimidate +16, Perception +23, Sense Motive +20, Stealth -5 (+3 in lair); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in lair

Languages Common

Gear ring of protection +4

Treasure: Gulreesh's special item for auction is a broken +1 *human-bane dagger* with a horsehead-shaped pommel, a symbol commonly associated with House Pythareus. Unless Gulreesh gives it to the PCs, finding it in its hiding place at the bottom of the pool requires 1d6 hours and a successful DC 20 Perception check.

Development: The dagger is a valuable piece of evidence; it was used by Maxillar's father Julian Pythareus to kill the family tutor, Tae Amalon, in a fit

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H. ABADAR'S PILLAR

FIRST FLOOR

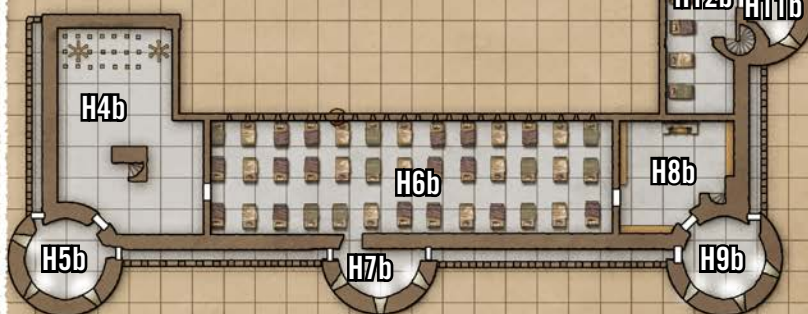
1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



KEEP SECOND FLOOR



SOUTH AND EAST WING SECOND FLOOR



KEEP THIRD FLOOR



KEEP FOURTH FLOOR



KEEP BATTLEMENTS



of pique. Uniting the dagger with its broken-off tip, still lodged in her body (see area **D12**), is damning evidence of the Pythareus family's crimes, and while it doesn't condemn Maxillar personally—since he only helped his father cover up the crime—it's useful evidence against him as far as convincing the Lion Blades and a damning reminder of what he has compromised, should the PCs engage him in debate rather than combat.

Reuniting the dagger pieces restores the jumbled memories of Tae Amalon, and the lingering magic in the blade briefly animates her spirit as if the PCs had cast *speak with dead* (CL 10th). In addition to recounting her life and death (see the sidebar *The Life and Death of Tae Amalon* on page 26), Amalon also knows of the secret entrance into the King's Pillar (see areas **H2** and **H3**), if the PCs think to ask about the fortress's vulnerabilities.

Story Award: If the PCs ally with Gulreesh, award them XP as though they had defeated the otyugh in combat. If they recover the dagger handle, connect it to the Pythareus family, and learn anything about the death of Tae Amalon, award them an additional 19,200 XP.

INFILTRATION ORDER

Once the PCs collect at least three pieces of evidence against Pythareus, it is enough for the Lion Blades to agree beyond a shadow of a doubt that Pythareus is a threat to the nation's safety. Kathann asks the PCs to meet her again at Panemona's Windmill Inn, outside the city. Once they arrive, read or paraphrase her instructions.

"Thanks to your efforts, we now have conclusive evidence against Pythareus. His actions—ordering unlawful attacks on Taldan settlements, murdering Taldan citizens, threatening rivals, and trying to drag Taldor into a war—constitute treason. He is unfit for command and must be arrested before he causes more damage to our nation. You've already done so much for the Lion Blades, but I must ask you for one more task: place High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus under arrest! He operates in the city's most fortified stronghold: Abadar's Pillar, on the river.

"If the situation demands it, you are authorized to kill him. But if there's a decent man left inside him, I hope you can persuade him to surrender."

Before commencing the mission, the PCs may ask the following questions about the stronghold.

What's the best way to get into the fortress unnoticed? "There are a number of ways to infiltrate the fortress, but none are easy. Disguise, perhaps, or cunning use of magic. The walls are watched day and night."

What can we expect to face there? "Guards and templars for the most part, but Pythareus has other loyal allies and guardians, and trophies taken from his campaigns abroad."

PART 3: ASSAULT ON ABADAR'S PILLAR

With a sufficiently damning pile of evidence and the blessing of the Lion Blades, the PCs are free to move on Abadar's Pillar, an enormous spit of basalt jutting from the sandstone bedrock of Zimar, which the Taldan army long ago crafted into an impregnable fortress. Both Taldor and Qadira further augmented the fortress's defenses over the centuries during their respective dominions over the city, and it is now one of the most unassailable fortresses in Golarion. (See area **H** on page 40 for further details.)

The PCs can attempt to enter the stronghold in a number of ways, each of which has both advantages and disadvantages. The following are the most obvious options, but at the GM's discretion, the PCs can use even more imaginative approaches. If the PCs spend 1d4 hours observing the stronghold and succeed at a DC 20 Perception check, they learn the possible risks involved with one of the following methods of entry.

Disguises: The most obvious option is to wear disguises and walk in (see area **H1**).

Flying: There are many guards on the keep's walls and battlements, and careful observation also reveals that birds in the area noticeably avoid the space above the fortress thanks to unnaturally strong winds. (See *Magical Defenses* on page 40.)

Getting Arrested: While ordinary prisoners are rarely held in Abadar's Pillar, military prisoners are stripped of any obvious weapons, armor, and magical gear and escorted to the fortress's oubliette to await questioning.

Stealth: The PCs can attempt to sneak past the guards using *invisibility* or similar abilities, though the fortress's magical defenses are designed to alert guards to such attempts, including those at the main entrance (see area **H1**). There is no cover or concealment near the entrance, so using the Stealth skill alone is impossible.

Swimming and Climbing: The PCs can try to swim across the moat (see area **H2**), though observation reveals something large moving beneath the water. After swimming, the PCs must climb the stronghold's outer wall (Climb DC 30), likely without the benefit of magical enhancements due to the fortress's defenses. The stronghold's outer walls are 40 feet high except for the keep, which is 80 feet high. Depending on where the PCs attempt to climb, they may have to simultaneously use Stealth or similar abilities to remain hidden.

Teleportation: The fortress is protected against teleportation and scrying thanks to a series of wards placed on the surrounding wall and the keep itself (see *Magical Defenses* on page 40). Teleportation effects function only if every creature to be transported carries a glyph attuned

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to the keep, with the only glyphs currently in service carried by Maxillar himself, Baron Astor Roderus (see area H40), Dame Avenna (see area H38), and the two Sisters of Indulgent Dreams currently staying in the keep (see area H20). If the PCs recruit Milon's rakshasa agents and dispatch them to assassinate Baron Astor, they can have the rakshasas steal his glyph, allowing one among them to teleport into Abadar's Pillar (if they can determine a location not observed by guards). If they recruit the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams, they can commission the night hags to create more teleportation glyphs; each glyph takes 2 days to fashion and requires 250 gp in materials.

Underground Passage: If the PCs learned of the existence of the secret passage from the spirit of Tae Amalon, they can swim from the moat (see area H2) through the passage to the stronghold's courtyard (see area H3), though the exit is in plain sight.

H. ABADAR'S PILLAR

Maxillar Pythareus's stronghold stands at a bend of the Jalrune River in the center of Zimar. The most striking feature of the stronghold is its keep, standing over 80 feet tall and carved from blue-green basalt in stark contrast to the limestone, marble, terra-cotta, and sandstone used in the rest of the city's construction. Each room in the keep and other buildings within the stronghold has an 18-foot-high ceiling. The fortress's spiral staircases are very steep; they count as difficult terrain, increasing the DC of any Acrobatics checks by 8. The low marble stairs in the courtyard (see area H3) do not affect movement. The doors are iron doors magically protected from corrosion (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 28) except where otherwise mentioned. The walls stand 40 feet high, are 3 feet thick, and are magically treated (hardness 16, 1,080 hp, Climb DC 30). The rooms are illuminated with *continual flame* spells cast on various fixtures bolted to the walls.

If guards or servants notice something suspicious, a patrol (two to four Zimar Sentinels or Golden Templars) is dispatched to investigate, while another patrol is kept on standby, ready to respond if the first does not return in 10 minutes. If the suspicion is confirmed to be an infiltration attempt (or the patrol doesn't report back in 10 minutes), an alarm is raised. All guards and servants who hear the alarm are required to shout "Alarm!" to alert others in the fortress. During an alarm, the drawbridge is raised and the portcullises are lowered (see area H1). All guards resting in the barrack (see area H6b) put on their gear and start patrolling the stronghold in groups of four. Servants seek a safe place to hide until the alarm is over.

MAGICAL DEFENSES

Special wards set in the outer walls and the keep shield the entire structure against extradimensional intrusions (as per *dimensional lock*) and spells of the scrying subschool.

The effect has a caster level of 20th; only *mage's disjunction*, *miracle*, or *wish* can remove the protection, though specially enchanted glyph necklaces allow specific individuals to ignore the *dimensional lock* effect for themselves (though not for any additional creatures or passengers). Manufacturing a new glyph requires extensive notes kept within Dame Avenna's library (see area H38) or assistance from the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams (see area E1).

The outer walls are enchanted with an *invisibility alarm*^{ACG} spell, and while they are not powerful enough to dispel invisibility spells

or effects, it immediately alerts guards to invisible intruders within 20 feet of the walls. Guards respond by releasing smoke into the air and pouring oil down the walls to locate trespassers.

A later enchantment further added a permanent *gust of wind* spell in the airspace over the fortress to rebuff flying invaders and creatures, imposing a -4 penalty on all Fly skill checks and ranged attacks from above, and possibly pushing Medium or smaller creatures beyond the edge of the moat.

Dame Avenna has further augmented the fortress's defenses by warding it against intrusion by known Lion Blade agents, alerting her immediately when and where any such agents enter the complex. This ward identifies the PCs only if Milon Jeroth still lives when they attempt their infiltration.

H1. Drawbridge and Gateway (CR 9)

A sturdy wooden drawbridge reinforced with steel provides access to the castle across a 15-foot-wide section of the moat. When the drawbridge is raised, it closes the entrance. Two portcullises can be dropped as a move action, trapping any intruders in the gateway, where the walls are lined with arrow slits and there are murder holes in the ceiling. The drawbridge is raised each evening at dusk, and lowered against dawn unless the fortress expects a siege or riot.

A permanent magical effect on the gatehouse causes anyone affected by an illusion spell to glow softly when passing through the gates.

Creatures: Night and day, two Zimar Sentinels stand at the entrance, examining paperwork and turning people without proper authorization away. Various vendors, servants, and staff work or make deliveries to the fortress each day but live elsewhere. The guards recognize most



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of the stronghold's regular visitors on sight, while other guards serving at Abadar's Pillar count as associates, increasing the guards' Perception check bonus to see through a disguise from +8 to +12 or +14, respectively.

If the PCs are disguised as Zimar Sentinels or Vault and Chain templars reassigned from elsewhere, the guards receive no bonus and take 10 on their Perception checks, but the PCs must also succeed at a DC 30 Bluff or Linguistics check to convince the guards that they were sent here to as reinforcements. If the PCs succeed, the guards say that the new recruits should check in with the sergeant in the guardhouse (see area **H4a**).

If the PCs attack the guards or attempt to enter the stronghold without their permission, the guards raise an alarm and order the portcullis closed. Four more guards arrive from the guardhouse (see area **H4a**) in 1d6 rounds.

Fresh guards relieve those stationed at the entrance every 4 hours.

ZIMAR SENTINELS (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 88 each (see page 13)

H2. Moat (CR 10)

Abadar's Pillar was built on the west bank of the Jalrune River, and a moat was excavated around it and filled with water from the river. The moat is 30 feet deep, and the water is calm (Swim DC 10). The muddy water limits visibility to just 5 feet; anyone beneath the surface is virtually invisible to guards above the surface. The moat's width ranges from 30 feet to 60 feet. On the east side of the fortress, the moat joins the river, and the water flows faster (Swim DC 15). Long metal nets stretched across this opening prevent creatures in the moat from escaping into the Jalrune River or creatures larger than a bass in the river from entering the moat. A 3-foot cast-iron railing surrounds the moat and the sides of the bridge, preventing people from accidentally falling in.

Twenty feet beneath the water's surface near Arthune's Tower (see area **H7**), a secret 50-foot-long tunnel leads to the stronghold's drain (see area **H3**), blocked by a locked iron grate (Disable Device DC 35).

Creatures: The rulers of Abadar's Pillar have introduced various "moat monsters" to the waters here over the centuries, to mixed effect. The most recent resident—a bloodthirsty river drake—was slain and devoured by one of Taldor's most invasive plants: blood algae. Now, two large swarms of the animate plants churn through the moat, feeding on leftovers and sewage from the fortress and aggressively attacking anything that invades their feeding ground.

BLOOD ALGAE (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 97 each (see page 86)

H3. Courtyard (CR 12)

Gray granite paving laid in circular patterns covers the floor of the stronghold's central courtyard.

A grate-covered central drain in the courtyard plunges down 30 feet into the darkness. Chamber pots and garbage pails around the fortress are dumped down this shaft, which empties into the moat (see area **H2**). Climbing up or down the slick stone shaft requires a successful DC 25 Climb check.

Creatures: An honor guard of three Zimar Sentinels stands at the keep's entrance day and night, led by Lieutenant Kane "Storm Bow" Phyros, the youngest son of a nearby earl, who hopes military service will raise his esteem in his father's eye despite the "tainted blood" that grants him his magical abilities. His fellow recruits in basic training gave him the nickname "Storm Bow" once they discovered his ability to infuse arrows with lighting, and today Kane prides himself on showing off this talent whenever possible.

Every 10 minutes, another four Zimar Sentinels patrol the courtyard, emerging from the gatehouse and walking clockwise along the courtyard's perimeter and checking that doors are closed and nothing seems out of place. The guards at the keep's entrance let no one enter unless a PC succeeds at a DC 35 Bluff check. If a fight breaks out in the courtyard, Sentinels and templars pour out from the gatehouse (area **H4**) and the templars' quarters (area **H13**) to join the fight.

ZIMAR SENTINELS (3)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 88 each (see page 13)

KANE PHYROS

CR 10

XP 9,600

Half-elf sorcerer 11

LE Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural)

hp 74 (11d6+33)

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

Defensive Abilities stormchild; **Resist** electricity 5, sonic 5

OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee shortspear +5 (1d6), slam +1 (1d6)

Ranged +1 longbow +13 (1d8+1/x3)

Special Attacks whirlwind (10–30 ft. high, 1d6 damage, DC 10)

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +15)

7/day—thunderstaff

1/day—thunderbolt (11d6, DC 19)

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Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 11th; concentration +15)

5th (4/day)—*elemental body II*, *lightning arc*^{UM} (DC 20), *overland flight*

4th (7/day)—*ball lightning*^{APG} (DC 19), *ice storm*, *shout* (DC 19), *solid fog*

3rd (7/day)—*elemental aura*^{APG} (DC 18), *haste*, *hold person* (DC 17), *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *wind wall*

2nd (7/day)—*cat's grace*, *elemental speech*^{APG}, *gust of wind* (DC 16), *protection from arrows*, *resist energy*, *see invisibility*

1st (7/day)—*alter winds*^{APG} (DC 15), *comprehend languages*, *mage armor*, *obscuring mist*, *shocking grasp*, *vanish*^{APG} (DC 15)

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *daze* (DC 14), *drench*^{UM} (DC 14), *flare* (DC 14), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *jolt*^{UM}, *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*

Bloodline Stormborn

TACTICS

Before Combat Kane maintains his *mage armor* and *protection from arrow* spells while on duty. If he expects trouble, he casts *haste* on the honor guard and *cat's grace* and *elemental body II* on himself, transforming into a darkly roiling air elemental.

During Combat Kane flies into the skies and activates his thunderstaff ability to grant his longbow the *shocking burst* special ability, then attempts to pick off enemies from the sky. Once this ability wears off in 2 rounds, he switches to *lightning arc*, *ball lightning*, and *lightning bolt* before reactivating it.

Morale Kane attempts to flee if reduced below 20 hit points.

Base Statistics Without his spells cast, Kane's statistics are

AC 12, **tough** 12, **flat-footed** 10; **Ref** +8; **Speed** 30 ft.;

Ranged +1 *longbow* +9 (1d8+1/×3); **Special Attacks** loses whirlwind; **Dex** 22; **CMD** 17; **Skills** Fly +2.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 22, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 21

Feats Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Fly +14, Intimidate +17, Perception +15, Profession (soldier) +9, Use Magic Device +13

Languages Common, Elven, Kelish

SQ bloodline arcana (+1 to save DC of spells with electricity or sonic descriptor), elf blood

Combat Gear *pearl of power* (2nd level); **Other Gear** +1 *longbow*, *shortspear*, *cloak of resistance* +3

H4. Gatehouse (CR 12)

The gatehouse's lower floor (area **H4a**) is a guardhouse, where a patrol of guards is always stationed. The upper floor (area **H4b**) has two winches for operating the drawbridge and two portcullises in the gateway below. Fully raising the 20-foot-long drawbridge requires four

full-round actions made by at least two creatures. The portcullises also require four full-round actions each to raise, but they can be dropped as a move action.

Creatures: Sergeant Valania Goen—a renown fencer and daughter of a prominent merchant family—oversees the general gate security and city patrols. She hopes her service will eventually lead to a title.

Valania and three Sentinels mind the gatehouse and supervise prisoners in the adjoining Azlanti Tower, aiding guards on duty at the gates and the honor guard in front of the keep according to schedule. At least one guard stands at the portcullis controls at all times.

VALANIA GOEN

CR 10

XP 9,600

Female human fighter (two-weapon fighter) 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 109)

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 25, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 19 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural, +1 shield)

hp 109 (11d10+44)

Fort +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7 (+3 vs. fear)

Defensive Abilities defensive flurry (+2)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *rapier* +17/+12/+7 (1d6+4/15–20), *mwk rapier* +17/+12 (1d6+2/15–20)

Ranged dagger +17/+12/+7 (1d4+1/19–20)

Special Attacks doublestrike, improved balance, twin blades (+2)

TACTICS

Before Combat Valania drinks her *potions of barkskin* and *cat's grace* if she suspects trouble.

During Combat A master fencer, Valania closes to melee with her twin rapiers, pushing the offense with her twin blades attack and blending ordinary attacks with disarm attempts.

Morale Valania is fiercely loyal to Maxillar and Zimar, and fights invaders to the death.

Base Statistics Without her potions, Valania's statistics are

AC 21, **touch** 16, **flat-footed** 16; **Ref** +9; **Melee** +1 *rapier* +15/+10/+5 (1d6+4/15–20), *mwk rapier* +15/+10

(1d6+2/15–20); **Ranged** dagger +15/+10/+5 (1d4+1/19–20); **Dex** 18; **Acrobatics** +11.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +12 (+14 disarm); **CMD** 28 (30 vs. disarm)

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Disarm, Improved Two-weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Mobility, Toughness, Two-weapon Defense, Two-weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier)

Skills Acrobatics +11 (+7 to jump), Climb +7, Handle Animal +12, Knowledge (engineering) +11, Perception +7, Profession (soldier) +13, Sense Motive +6

Languages Common, Halfling, Kelish

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* (2), *potions of cat's grace* (3), *potions of cure moderate wounds* (3); **Other Gear** +2 studded leather, +1 rapier, daggers (3), mwk rapier, *cloak of resistance* +2, *ring of protection* +1, 360 gp

ZIMAR SENTINELS (3) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 88 each (see page 13)

Development: A book lists all prisoners who have been imprisoned and when (if ever) they were released. According to the book, there are currently three prisoners in the upper floor and one in the oubliette. The sergeant's key ring holds a key to each of the following: the manacles in the upper tower and the oubliette's trap door (both in area H5), and all doors in the inner courtyard (area H18).

H5. Azlanti Tower

The Azlanti Tower, at the keep's southwest corner, serves as the stronghold's prison. The tower's lower level (area H5a) contains the oubliette, a 20-foot-deep pit accessed through a locked wooden trap door (Disable Device DC 30).

The upper level of the tower (area H5b) also holds prisoners. Ten sets of masterwork manacles are attached to the walls. Guards stationed in the gatehouse feed the prisoners and empty the waste bucket once per day.

Creatures: Three citizens—**Aran**, **Cadon**, and **Zora** (N human commoners 2)—were arrested earlier for “subversion” during a pro-Eutropia rally in the Rainbow Bazaar and are manacled to the wall upstairs. The protesters are worried the guards will hang them, and if released, they quickly leave. Downstairs, **Rafien**, a member of the Vault and Chain Templars, is imprisoned in the oubliette. **Rafien** has the statistics of a Vault and Chain templar (see page 15) except he has no gear and he has only 13 hit points remaining. He seems calm despite many bruises. If released, he tries to help the PCs.

Rafien was the lone dissenter among the templars when they backed Pythareus. While he shares his order's commitment to social hierarchy and profit over individual freedoms, he believes Maxillar Pythareus has let his lust for power and the throne blind him to choices to better the nation's economy.

Rafien can answer the following questions.

Who are you? “Does a man have a name without a people? Iovinus and my brothers once called me Rafien, but now it seems I'm an embarrassment and trash, not a man.”

Are you a member of the Vault and Chain? Rafien laughs. “It's men like Maxillar Pythareus who taint that name, placing his petty personal needs over the order

of society. I suppose that means I've left the order. Or the order left me.”

Do you know where Maxillar Pythareus is? “I see very little, given the lack of windows in my pit. I've heard rumors that he doesn't get out a lot these days.”

Can you help us? “If you release me, I'll help you any way I can.”

H6. Great Hall (CR 14)

The dining hall (area H6a) feeds the guards and servants, each of whom have assigned dining hours to avoid overcrowding the room. The upper floor (area H6b) serves as a barrack, where guards can rest, socialize, and play cards between shifts.

Creatures: A dozen off-duty guards rest in the upstairs barrack at any given time, and are among the last forces summoned to reinforce defenders in the event of an attack. There is only a 20% chance any given Sentinel wears his armor in the barrack. Guards summoned from the barrack need 5 minutes to don armor and secure their equipment, and generally serve only to replace fallen soldiers or supplement existing forces once the fort goes on alert, at your discretion.

ZIMAR SENTINELS (12) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 88 each (see page 13)

H7. Arthune's Tower

The guards use the base of this tower (area H7a) to store emergency supplies. From time to time, visiting entertainers instead use it as a backstage, where they can prepare for performances and enter the great hall without having to move through the crowd. The upper level (area H7b) serves as a guard tower for watching the river when scouts have reported an incoming naval assault.

H8. Smithy

The smithy's lower floor (area H8a) contains a forge, an anvil, and shelves and cupboards full of blacksmith's tools. The upper floor (area H8b) is an armory, where armor and weapons are stored on shelves and in weapon racks.

Creature: The stronghold's blacksmith **Faradia** (N female human expert 4) works in the smithy alongside a half-dozen apprentices. If the PCs enter the smithy, Faradia grunts, “Whaddye want?” but she otherwise doesn't pay too much attention to the PCs unless they bother her or her staff.

H9. Jalrune's Tower (CR 11)

The stronghold's blacksmith, Faradia, lives in the tower's lower level (area H9a); the upper level (area H9b) is a guard post.

Creatures: A pair of Sentinels is stationed in the upper level of the tower, led by a Vault and Chain templar

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named Bathmos. They patrol the ramparts on the southern walls.

BATHMOS CR 9
XP 6,400

hp 98 (use the statistics for a Vault and Chain templar on page 15)

ZIMAR SENTINELS (3) CR 7
XP 3,200 each
hp 88 each (see page 13)



H10. Kitchen

This kitchen (area **H10a**) has a large oven, large tables for preparing food, and many shelves full of utensils. The kitchen's large pantry (area **H10b**) contains many kinds of salted meat and fish, smoked sausages, large jars full of pickled fruit and vegetables, dozens of sacks of grain, and barrels of ale.

Creatures: The kitchen staff consists of a total of six cooks and serving staff led by Chef Andarr (LN human commoners 3). The kitchen is in use almost around the clock, though only 1d3 people are working there at any given time.

H11. Falcon Tower

The kitchen staff uses the lower level (area **H11a**) as a storage room, while the upper level (area **H11b**) serves as another guard tower for watching the river when scouts have reported an incoming naval assault.

H12. Servants' Quarters

The servants' accommodations are in the upper floor of the east wing. Male servants live in the southern room (area **H12a**), while female servants live in the northern room (area **H12b**).

H13. Vault and Chain Headquarters (CR 11)

Two statues sculpted to resemble centaur clerics of Abadar stand at attention in the entrance hall (area **H13a**). The adjacent barrack houses the fortress's Vault and Chain templars (area **H13b**).

Creatures: The statues of centaur clerics are in actuality two zelekhts Enumerator Iovinus conjured to help enforce Maxillar Pythareus's will once he was promoted to the general's high priest. The inevitables have scrutinized the adoption papers drawn by Stavian II and have committed themselves to remaining in the high strategos's service until he is crowned.

ZELEKHUTS (2) CR 9
XP 6,400 each

hp 115 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 167)

H14. Porthmos's Tower

Templars use the lower floor of the tower (area **H14a**) to train and drill with weapons and spells, as the gouges and burns in the plaster walls can attest. The upper tower (area **H14b**) serves as both a guard watch post and storage space for armor, ammunition, and other supplies.

H15. Enumerator's Apartment

Enumerator Iovinus of the Church of Abadar resides in this sumptuously decorated apartment.

The enumerator also owns a large mansion in Zimar's Golden District, but he rarely leaves Abadar's Pillar due to the turbulent political situation in Taldor.

Creature: Iovinus sleeps a few hours each night in his apartment, but he can more often be found in the chapel (see area **H16**), and after dinner, he visits Maxillar Pythareus in the war room (see area **H35**), returning to his apartment around midnight.

PALO IOVINUS **CR 11**

XP 12,800

hp 142 (see below)

Treasure: A *candle of invocation* (lawful neutral) with Abadar's holy symbol sits on one shelf.

H16. Abadaran Chapel (CR 14)

This large chapel hosts religious services, and until recently was overseen by Zimar's church of Abadar. When the church declared it would remain neutral in the question of succession, Maxillar Pythareus cast the mainstream branch out, and replaced it with a militant sect called the Vault and Chain. The templars of the Vault and Chain believe that true order comes from submission, deference to a firm hand, and financial acumen. Wealth is power, and so the god of wealth clearly rewards the righteous with coin and influence; consequently, poverty is a sign of personal failing and impropriety—a punishment meted out for the unworthy. To the Vault and Chain, Eutropia's charity efforts are an affront to Abadar, and so its members eagerly back the high strategos's claim to the throne.

In the daytime, the chapel receives abundant daylight through a ring of 17 windows at the base of the dome, shedding light on golden mosaics on the walls and floor. The apex of the dome rises to a height of 25 feet.

Creatures: A handsome and charming man, Palo Iovinus founded the Vault and Chain as a reflection of his family's philosophy coupled with an insatiable inferiority complex that demanded constant reassurance of his own superiority. He spends hours in the chapel, advising his templars and following business and political developments from across the nation as he decides what information warrants passing along to Pythareus. Four templars remain by his side as bodyguards.

VAULT AND CHAIN TEMPLARS (4) **CR 9**

XP 6,400 each

hp 98 each (see page 15)

PALO IOVINUS **CR 11**

XP 12,800

Human antipaladin (tyrant) 12 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced*

Player's Guide 118, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue* 64)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

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

WHAT HAPPENS IN AN INVASION?

The forces within Abadar's Pillar are well drilled and prepared to respond to intruders, rallying to support their allies if obvious combat breaks out inside the fortress. Ordinary soldiers attempt to blow their alarm whistles—a standard action that alerts combatants in adjacent areas, who usually split into two parties—one rushing to support the defenders while the other moves throughout the fort to raise the alarm. Within 10 minutes, the dozen off-duty Sentinels in area **H6** distribute themselves among existing defense forces while patrols—four Sentinels led by a single templar or named NPC—begin searching the grounds.

If the keep itself is invaded, Maxillar Pythareus makes his way to the roof and leaps down to the inner courtyard (area **H18**) to mount his horse, Honor, and rally the guards. Thanks to Honor's *horseshoes of the zephyr*, the general can confront intruders on the ground, as listed in the encounter *The Final Showdown* (see page 54), or move to reinforce Dame Avenna and the siege engineers on the battlements.

Aura cowardice (10 ft.), despair (10 ft.), vengeance (10 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 22 (+11 armor, +1 deflection, –1 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 142 (12d10+72)

Fort +17, **Ref** +10, **Will** +13

DR 3/–; **Immune** disease

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee +1 *light flail* +17/+12/+7 (1d8+5)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 5/day (DC 21, 6d6), smite good 4/day (+5 attack and AC, +12 damage)

Antipaladin Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +17)
At will—*detect good*

Antipaladin Spells Prepared (CL 9th; concentration +14)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 18), *dispel magic*

2nd—*bull's strength*, *darkvision*, *eagle's splendor*

1st—*bane* (DC 16), *command* (DC 16), *protection from chaos*

TACTICS

Before Combat If he detects trouble in the fortress, Iovinus casts *bull's strength* and *eagle's splendor* on himself.

During Combat Ever the egomaniac, the enumerator prefers to lecture opponents about their moral and intellectual inferiority as he delivers poison and staggered conditions via his touch of corruption. After two solid blows from opponents, however, he activates his diabolic boon to transform his +1 *light flail* into a +3 *vicious light flail* (not included in these statistics) and lashes out with his Vital Strike feat, his overconfidence and lectures suddenly gone.

Morale Iovinus attempts to flee if reduced below 20 hit

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points, using *his cape of the mountebank* to withdraw to Maxillar Pythareus's side.

Base Statistics Without his spells cast, Iovinus's statistics are **Fort** +15, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11; **Melee** +1 *light flail* +15/+10/+5 (1d8+3); **Special Attacks** channel negative energy (DC 21), smite good 4/day (+3 attack and AC); **Str** 19, **Cha** 20; **Skills** Bluff +14, Diplomacy +16; **SQ** cruelties (DC 21); **CMB** +14; **CMD** 24.

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 8, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 26

Feats Ability Focus (cruelty), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (heavy mace)

Skills Acrobatics -6 (-10 when jumping), Bluff +16, Diplomacy +18, Knowledge (religion) +14, Profession (clerk) +8, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +9

Languages Common, Kelish

SQ cruelties (fatigued, poisoned, staggered, stunned; DC 23), diabolic boon (weapon +3, 2/day), touch of corruption 11/day (6d6)

Combat Gear *oil of bless weapon*, *potion of protection from fire*, *potions of shield of faith* (3), *wand of cure moderate wound* (22 charges); **Other Gear** +2 *gold-plated adamantine full plate*, *mwk buckler*, +1 *light flail*, *belt of mighty constitution* +2, *cape of the mountebank*, *ring of protection* +1, Iovinus signet ring, gold holy symbol of Abadar (100 gp)

Treasure: A secret panel in the altar (Perception DC 30) conceals a lockbox containing 2,185 gp.

H17. Fletcher's Tower

This square tower serves as a storage space (area H17a), fletcher's workshop (area H17b), and residence (area H17c).

Creature: A fletcher named **Batzas** (LN male human expert 4) lives in the tower along with three apprentices, crafting ammunition for the stronghold's defenders.

H18. Inner Courtyard

On the north side of the inner court, stairs lead up to the parapets of the stronghold's outer wall. The high-quality reinforced steel doors to the main courtyard (area H3) and the Lion Tower (area H19) are locked (hardness 10, hp 100, break DC 30, Disable Device DC 35). The fortress's riding animals are kept and exercised here.

H19. The Lion Tower

The Lion Tower serves as the fortress's stable (area H19a), with living quarters for attendants and farriers upstairs (area H19b).

H20. Reception Hall (CR 13)

Royal lion emblems adorn the walls of this spacious ballroom. Three crystal chandeliers hanging from the 20-foot-high

ceiling bathe the room in brilliant sparkling light. A fine green-and-blue rug on the floor bears the embroidered image of a large grimacing lion wearing the Primogen Crown.

Maxillar Pythareus uses this large room for meetings and large-scale briefings, and to receive honored guests. The room also serves as a ballroom for sumptuous parties. The heavy double door can be barred from the inside (hardness 10, hp 150, break DC 35).

Creatures: Two courtiers lounge in the reception hall. The women—Illumia and Magilla—are the older sisters of the night hag Estella (see area E). The pair reside in the keep in human guises and spy on Maxillar Pythareus. Only Avenna suspects their true nature, but for now gifts of magical knowledge and spells have kept her quiet.

The sisters' raven familiars keep them abreast of Estella's well-being and activities, and so they know whether the PCs allied with Estella or attacked her. If the PCs allied with Estella, the sisters look surprised to see the PCs in the keep. Illumia asks why they've come. The PCs must succeed at a DC 30 Bluff check or the sisters realize something's wrong.

If the PCs attacked Estella in the tea shop, the sisters taunt the PCs, but they attack only if the PCs are alone and unaccompanied by guards or officials.

ILLUMIA AND MAGILLA

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Female night hag witch 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 65, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 215)

NE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 26 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +3 Dex, +11 natural)

hp 144 each (13 HD; 5d6+8d10+83)

Fort +13, **Ref** +8, **Will** +14

DR 10/cold iron and magic; **Immune** charm, cold, fear, fire, sleep; **SR** 24

OFFENSE

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

Melee bite +17 (2d6+7 plus disease), 2 claws +17 (1d4+7)

Special Attacks dream haunting, hexes (cackle, evil eye, flight, misfortune, tongues)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +13)

Constant—*detect chaos*, *detect evil*, *detect good*, *detect law*, *detect magic*

At will—*deep slumber* (DC 18), *etherealness*, *invisibility*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 16), *soul bind*

Witch Spells Prepared (CL 5th; concentration +11)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 19), *stinking cloud* (DC 19)

2nd—*augury*, *blindness/deafness* (DC 18), *hold person* (DC 18), *see invisibility*

1st—*charm person*, *ear-piercing scream*^{UM} (2, DC 17), *mage armor*, *obscuring mist*

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

Patron deception

TACTICS

Before Combat The sisters cast *mage armor* and activate their flight hex.

During Combat The sister work in tandem: one targets a single PC at a time with her evil eye hex while the other casts spells such as *bestow curse*, *blindness/deafness*, or *hold person*.

Morale The sisters flee to the Ethereal Plane if reduced below 25 hit points, reporting the PCs' activities to the Immaculate Circle's inner circle, but otherwise withdrawing from the adventure.

Base Statistics Without *mage armor*, the sisters' statistics are **AC** 25, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 22.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 17, **Con** 22, **Int** 22, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 31

Feats Ability Focus (slumber), Accursed Hex^{UM}, Extra Hex^{APG} (2), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack

Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +21, Disguise +21, Fly +23, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (planes) +22, Perception +20, Perform (dance) +11, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +22, Swim +11

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Ancient Osiriani, Azlanti, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal, Kelish, Sylvan

SQ change shape (any humanoid; *alter self*), heartstone, witch's familiars (ravens named Glimpse and Whisper)

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Other Gear** *ring of protection +1*, courtier's outfit, teleportation glyph, ivory ring (200 gp)

H21. Library

The many bookshelves of fine oak in this room contain dozens of leather-bound books both new and old.

For many centuries, the inhabitants of Abadar's Pillar have collected books on Taldan history in general, and on Zimar and past wars against Qadira.

Creature: A librarian named Loranus (NG male old human expert 7) takes care of the library. Loranus secretly loathes Maxillar Pythareus, but he still works for him because his family has always served Zimar's rulers. If he realizes the PCs are infiltrators, he pleads, "Spare the books! Please don't destroy them!" If the PCs succeed at a DC 20 Sense Motive check, they have a feeling that the librarian is not very loyal to High Strategos Pythareus. If a PC succeeds at a DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, that PC can persuade Loranus to reveal that he is sympathetic to Princess Eutropia's cause and won't tell the guards about the PCs. Loranus can describe the rooms on the second floor and their inhabitants, but he has never been to the two upper floors.

Treasure: The library contains the critically acclaimed volumes *The Lion and the Rose* and *The Land of Canals, Mountains, and Scrublands*. Consulting the books while spending at least 10 minutes studying a subject grants a +2 bonus on the following types of Knowledge checks pertaining to Taldor: geography, history, nature, and nobility. The books are worth 300 gp each.

H22. Lounge

Noble residents sometimes relax on the plush sofas in the lounge before or after a bath, and guests attending a social event in the Reception Hall (see area H20) can also withdraw to the lounge to have a quiet conversation. A statue in the room depicts a noblewoman in a toga with a harp in hand and an ornate comb in her hair.

The stairs lead up to the guard post (see area H24) on the second level of the keep.

H23. Bath

The nobility of Zimar enjoy bathing, and through incredible feats of engineering and architecture, the luxurious bath in this room automatically fills with heated water from the Jalrune River. The room's walls are nearly soundproof, allowing bathing nobles to engage in conversations without having to worry about eavesdropping—and allowing invaders to hide in relative peace if they can conceal themselves.

H24. Guard Post (CR 10)

This room is a checkpoint for visitors, who are normally not allowed to go beyond this point in the keep. The statue in the room depicts a soldier wearing a breastplate and taking aim with his crossbow. The door between this guard post and the adjoining trophy room is kept open.

Creatures: Two guards are stationed here. If a visitor has been granted an audience with one of the stronghold's officials or the general himself, the guards check the visitor's documents and collect any weapons, wands, and spell components. If someone attacks the guards, the warden (see area H26) comes to their aid as soon as he can. However, the royal guards upstairs (see area H28) remain at their guard post.

ROYAL GUARDS (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 90 each (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 154)

H25. Castellan's Room

Lavish tapestries line the wall in this large bedroom, depicting wilderness scenes from across southern Taldor. A large desk and various tomes of arcane lore clutter one corner next to a large straw mat and armor stand. The baron is rarely found here, however, instead accompanying the high strategos or else drilling soldiers on the battlements.

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H26. Trophy Room (CR 10)

Several magnificent beasts stand atop pedestals in this room: a large bird of prey with a lion's body, a gray winged horse, a bear with an owl's head, a dragon with a stinger-tipped tail, a large white wolf with ice-blue eyes, a giant ape with four arms, an armor-plated creature with a huge maw, and a lion-bodied creature with a woman's face. Save for their perfect stillness, the creatures look incredibly lifelike.

This room boasts an impressive collection of exotic beasts that have been preserved with magic that keeps them looking as fresh as they were while alive. These creatures include a griffon, a pegasus,

an owlbear, a wyvern, a winter wolf, a girallon, a bulette, and a sphinx.

Creatures: Sir Thrain Gavian is warden of Abadar's Pillar, and one of the few half-orcs in Taldor to hold a title—a legacy of his family's bravery in the Grand Campaign. He spends most of his time here sipping tea, tracking prison records, and reviewing reports of criminal activity throughout the city. He eagerly rushes to the defense of the keep if he hears combat.

THRAIN GAVIAN

CR 10

XP 9,600

Captain of the royal guard (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 155)

hp 109

H27. Warden's Quarters (CR 10)

The stronghold's warden resides in this relatively modest room, maintaining a collection of mundane weapons from across the world, though he spends most of his time in the trophy room.

H28. Guard Room (CR 12)

This guard room wards the entrance to the king's apartments in the upper half of the keep. Only Maxillar Pythareus's most loyal servants and guards are permitted to enter areas on the third floor beyond the guard room, and no one is allowed to enter the fourth floor without the general's permission.

A statue in the southern wall depicts an armored knight with a large sword, and a painting on the wall shows a battle scene from the Grand Campaign—a unit of the Taldan Phalanx breaking through Qadiran formations.

Creatures: Four royal guards stand at attention here, day and night. If the PCs attack the guards or otherwise cause trouble, the captain of the guard emerges from her room (see area H29) to sort out the problem, and the guards downstairs (see area H24) join the fray if still alive.

ROYAL GUARDS (4)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 90 each (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 154)

H29. Captain's Quarters (CR 11)

This room is a stylish but sparsely furnished residence for the practical captain of the guard.

Creature: The captain of the guard, Patrika Urba, is a taciturn engineer who spends much of her time alone in her room reviewing guard rotations, training schedules, and intelligence reports.



PATRIKA URBA**CR 11****XP 12,800**Spellmaster (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 12)**hp** 117**H30. Gallery**

Dozens of paintings adorn the walls of this gallery. The biggest painting depicts Maxillar Pythareus astride a white horse, wearing full plate armor and wielding a fine axe paired with a large steel shield.

Treasure: Some of the art in the room has great artistic and historical value. The paintings are worth a total of 5,000 gp.

H31. Servants' Quarters

Various cleaners and valets reside in this room. Besides their personal belongings stored in the drawers beside the beds, some cleaning equipment is stored in a cabinet placed against the west wall.

H32. Reluctant Guest Quarters (CR 6)

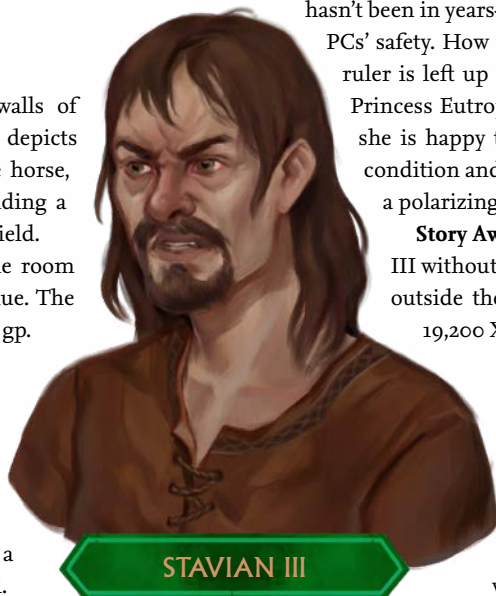
The door to this room is locked; only Maxillar Pythareus and Baron Astor Roderus carry a key.

This large suite reeks of human body odor and alcohol, and once-fine clothes lie scattered about.

Creature: Unknown to almost everyone, the former emperor of Taldor, Grand Prince Stavian III, survived the Exaltation Massacre despite his grievous injuries. He spent weeks hovering at death's door, due to his injuries and withdrawal from several long-standing addictions. By the time he awoke, the war over succession had already begun, and Pythareus found himself unable to reveal the Grand Prince's good fortune or presence to anyone. The injuries and withdrawal have only exacerbated Stavian's paranoia and fits of rage, and he has become very unstable, finding solace only in wine—the lone vice Pythareus allows the sad, deposed monarch.

Stavian spends several minutes berating anyone who walks in, demanding they clean up his room and bring him more wine, and occasionally asking questions like where he is and where his children are. When he realizes that Pythareus's enemies have infiltrated Abadar's Pillar, he changes his tune, ordering the PCs to execute the ingrate after they clean his room. If he sees any delay or refusal, he throws his goblet before starting to cry and finally charging at the PCs to club them with his cane.

Stavian tries to attack, but lacks any of his equipment or spellbooks; on his own, he's barely a CR 6 threat.

DEPOSED GRAND PRINCE STAVIAN III**CR 6****XP 2,400****hp** 89 (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #127: *Crownfall* 56)

Development: Stavian is an angry, bitter, shell of a man with the telltale signs of dementia setting in. He's no longer in a fit state to rule—and truthfully speaking, hasn't been in years—but he's hardly a threat to the PCs' safety. How the PCs deal with the deposed ruler is left up to them. If they return him to Princess Eutropia, the reunion is bittersweet; she is happy to see her father alive, but his condition and his horrible crimes make him a polarizing political figure.

Story Award: If the PCs subdue Stavian III without killing him and decide his fate outside the heat of combat, award them 19,200 XP.

H33. Upper Chapel (CR 13)

Holy symbols of Abadar, Aroden, Cayden Cailean, Norgorber, and Shelyn—the so-called Taldan pantheon—decorate the walls here, and a shrine with

elaborate brass statuary and filigree in the room's center serves as a place where commanders and visitors can pray before battle.

Creature: Maxillar Pythareus's personal bodyguard hides as part the shrine itself. This clockwork assassin was a gift to his father—a peace offering from a visiting Qadiran dignitary, ironically. The figure hides, draped in gold cloth and looking penitent, in standby mode, and awakens when strangers appear without the high strategos or his other commanders. If no authorized personnel arrive within 1 round, it launches a surprise attack, opening with a volley of blades from its wrist projector.

CLOCKWORK ASSASSIN**CR 13****XP 25,600****hp** 119 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 59)**P34. High Strategos's Chamber**

A statue of a knight astride a great stallion and a dozen marble busts of ancient generals stare across this extravagantly decorated room. A large four-poster at the north end of the chamber looks untouched, and books and other items sitting on shelves are arranged meticulously.

This room has served generations of high strategi, the supreme military commanders of Taldor, dating back millennia. It now houses Maxillar Pythareus, though on the cusp of seizing the throne, he finds little time for sleep. He normally meets with advisors in the war room (see area H35) or walks the keep's battlements (see area H40) to gaze upon his city. He barely eats anymore and

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usually retires to his chamber to sleep only 2 hours per night, though thanks to his *ring of sustenance*, he remains alert and energetic.

Treasure: A mahogany display stand holds the *Primogen Rod*, a unique *rod of lordly might*, but more importantly a symbol of the Grand Prince's office and rulership immediately recognizable to every citizen of Taldor (and impossible to sell inside the nation). The *Primogen Rod* is considered a relic of Taldor (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128 77), but because of its constant use and evergreen fame, it has already absorbed all the triumphs it can contain.

H35. War Room (CR 14)

Hanging from the ceiling, a black iron lantern shaped like the head of a roaring lion sheds magical light on a large oaken table in the center of the room. The table's surface is uneven, resembling a miniature landscape of plains, forests, rivers, and mountains, where Taldor is in the middle and northern Qadira, the Inner Sea, and Taldor's lost provinces are closer to the table's edges. Exaggerated towers, castles, and domed palaces carved from stone mark the locations of Zimar, Oppara, Katheer, and other cities. Small figurines shaped like lions and horses have been placed on various locations on the map.

Any PC who succeeds at a DC 17 Knowledge (geography) or Profession (soldier) check notices the positions of the horse and lion figures arranged on the map correspond to locations of units loyal to High Strategos Pythareus and Princess Eutropia, respectively.

Creature: Maxillar Pythareus can be encountered alone in this room only if the PCs manage to bypass all the keep's guardians, alarms, and magical defenses without alerting anyone. Otherwise, see the Final Showdown on page 54.

MAXILLAR PYTHAREUS

CR 13

XP 25,600

hp 165 (see page 58)

Treasure: The figurines made of silver and gold are worth a total of 800 gp. On the table, there is also a *silver raven figurine of wondrous power*, which Maxillar Pythareus uses to send messages to his allies.

H36. Treasure Vault (CR 14)

Maxillar Pythareus stores some of his personal wealth in this treasure vault. The massive steel door to the vault is locked (hardness 10, hp 120, break DC 30, Disable Device DC 40). Maxillar Pythareus's key opens the lock. Inside, dozens of coffers sit on shelves lining the walls.

Creature: A unique brass golem has been guarding the vault for centuries—the golden key that controls it was passed down from ruler to ruler, and Maxillar currently

has it. Constructed long ago by the church of Abadar as a gift for a long-dead Baron, the statue resembles a massive, androgynous human with four arms, four legs, and faces on the front and back of its head.

The golem remains inanimate until someone who doesn't look like Maxillar Pythareus enters the vault, at which point it animates to crush all intruders. The golem does not willingly leave the vault, tries to return immediately if removed, and moves to close and relock the door if opponents step outside.

GUARDIAN OF COIN

CR 14

XP 38,400

Unique brass golem (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 134)

N Large construct

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 9, flat-footed 30 (+1 Dex, +22 natural, -1 size)
hp 140 (20d10+30)

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

DR 15/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, fire, immunity to magic

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 2 claws +30 (2d6+11 plus 2d6 fire)

Ranged coin shot +20/+15/+10 (4d6/19-20)

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

Special Attacks breath weapon

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +15)
Constant—see *invisibility*

TACTICS

During Combat The Guardian is a straightforward and brutal combatant, closing to melee with its claws while unleashing bursts of shredded coins.

Morale The Guardian fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 13, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +32; **CMD** 43

SQ coin shot, death throes

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Su) As a free action once every 1d4 rounds, the Guardian of Coin can expel a cloud of smoke and cinders that fills a 20-foot cube. This functions as an *incendiary cloud* that persists for 1d6 rounds, dealing 6d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 20 half). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Coin Shot (Ex) A spinning wheel in the Guardian's chest can shred silver and gold coins from an internal hopper and project them at high speed. Once each round as a swift action, the guardian can either fire a single ranged attack at a creature within 60 feet or fire a spray of projectiles that strikes all creatures in a 15-foot cone. Resolve the ranged attack normally. All creatures in the cone take 2d6 points of damage and are blinded for 1d6 rounds;

a successful DC 21 Reflex saving throw halves the damage and eliminates the blinded condition.

Death Throes (Ex) The Guardian melts into a pool of molten slag when destroyed, dealing 15d6 points of fire damage to all creatures within 30 feet of the golem (Reflex DC 20 half). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Treasure: The treasure vault contains 699 gp, 13,812 gp, and 45,827 sp.

Development: A small, iron case contains a dozen parchments with various legal documents, letters, and historical records containing perhaps the most dangerous weapon in Maxillar's arsenal.

One of Maxillar Pythareus's personal duties—unknown even to Milon Jeroth—has been the suppression of unsavory rumors regarding Stavian III and the imperial family. For a time, his work involved quieting talk about Stavian III's various dalliances and outbursts, as well as the occasional assassination order. The most distressing details of the Stavian line, however, came to light only 7 years ago, when a team of adventurers located and plundered the Adella Necropolis. The burial complex, concealed in the Headwater Gap of the World's Edge Mountains, held the worldly remains and records of the now-extinct Adella noble family, who dominated Taldan politics for centuries until their internal squabbles lead to bitter civil war and violence. The bloodshed they engendered and their wanton indulgence alienated even their fellow Taldan nobles. Rumors persist of corruption, graft, murder, and devil-worship. Grand Prince Beldam II declared the family be stricken of their noble titles and erased from the nation's history, and by the dawn of the 46th century, those few Adellas who had not killed each other off were hunted down by rival nobles and put to the sword.

Except one.

Lucretia Adella gave birth to the last Adella in 4497 AR—the illegitimate son of nobleman and soon-to-be Grand Prince Micheaux I. Micheaux I reluctantly adopted the boy in secret and named him Stavian I, and in the process initiated the modern Stavian line, including Grand Prince Stavian II and Princess Eutropia. What this revelation means for the legitimacy of the current imperial line is vague at best—Micheaux was the adopted heir to Beldam II, rather than a blood heir, and while his illegitimate child still technically carries the mantle of rulership, the taint of Adella blood remains strong in the public zeitgeist. With most official records of them gone, the Adellas have become urban legends and cautionary tales, despised and not understood. While this revelation doesn't prove Stavian III or Eutropia unfit to rule by default—to say nothing of Stavian's adopted heir, Pythareus—it throws enormous suspicion and scandal on a family already under massive scrutiny.

Maxillar Pythareus dispatched assassins to eliminate the adventurers as soon as he caught rumor of their discovery, but the very fact that rumors reached his ear meant some of the information they uncovered had been disseminated. For the 7 years since, the high strategos has dispatched only his most trusted personal aides to execute anyone carrying documents these adventurers uncovered. All too aware of Stavian's fickle nature, Pythareus kept the documentation as leverage rather than destroy them, even disseminating a few pieces to loyal informants as a fail-safe. Should he die, the Stavian reputation dies with him!

The PCs have no way of knowing about Maxillar's fail-safe plan, but with a successful DC 25 Linguistics check when reviewing the documents, a PC confirms that Stavian I is indeed the son of Lucretia Adella—but also notices that these papers are more recent copies, suggesting that the originals may yet exist somewhere else. A successful DC 25 Knowledge (history) or (nobility) check reveals all the above details of the Adella family (and any additional material you may choose to add; see *Pathfinder Module: Tomb of the Iron Medusa* for the full biography of the Adella Family), as well as the damage this information could do not only to Princess Eutropia's bid for the throne, but Maxillar Pythareus's as well.

H37. Wizard's Antechamber (CR 12)

Maxillar Pythareus's court wizard Dame Avenna doesn't want anyone to disturb her work or rest, and a sign in the stairwell leading up to the antechamber reads, "Absolutely no admittance."

Creatures: Two tophets guard the antechamber. If someone other than Avenna approaches, they assume a menacing stance. If that isn't enough to deter intruders, the creatures attack.

TOPHETS (2)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 107 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 271)

Development: If Dame Avenna in area H38 hears sounds of battle, she joins the fight in 1d4 rounds.

H38. Wizard's Quarters (CR 11)

Placed against the walls of the chamber are six large bookshelves, each bulging with tomes both old and new. The only other furniture in the room is a modest bed and a tidy table near an old fireplace.

This is the chamber of Dame Avenna, the court wizard. A ladder leads up to an observatory (see area H39).

Creature: Dame Avenna serves the high strategos as a diviner and seer, scrying on enemies and making educated guesses about their next moves. She spends hours studying the stars in her observatory each night,

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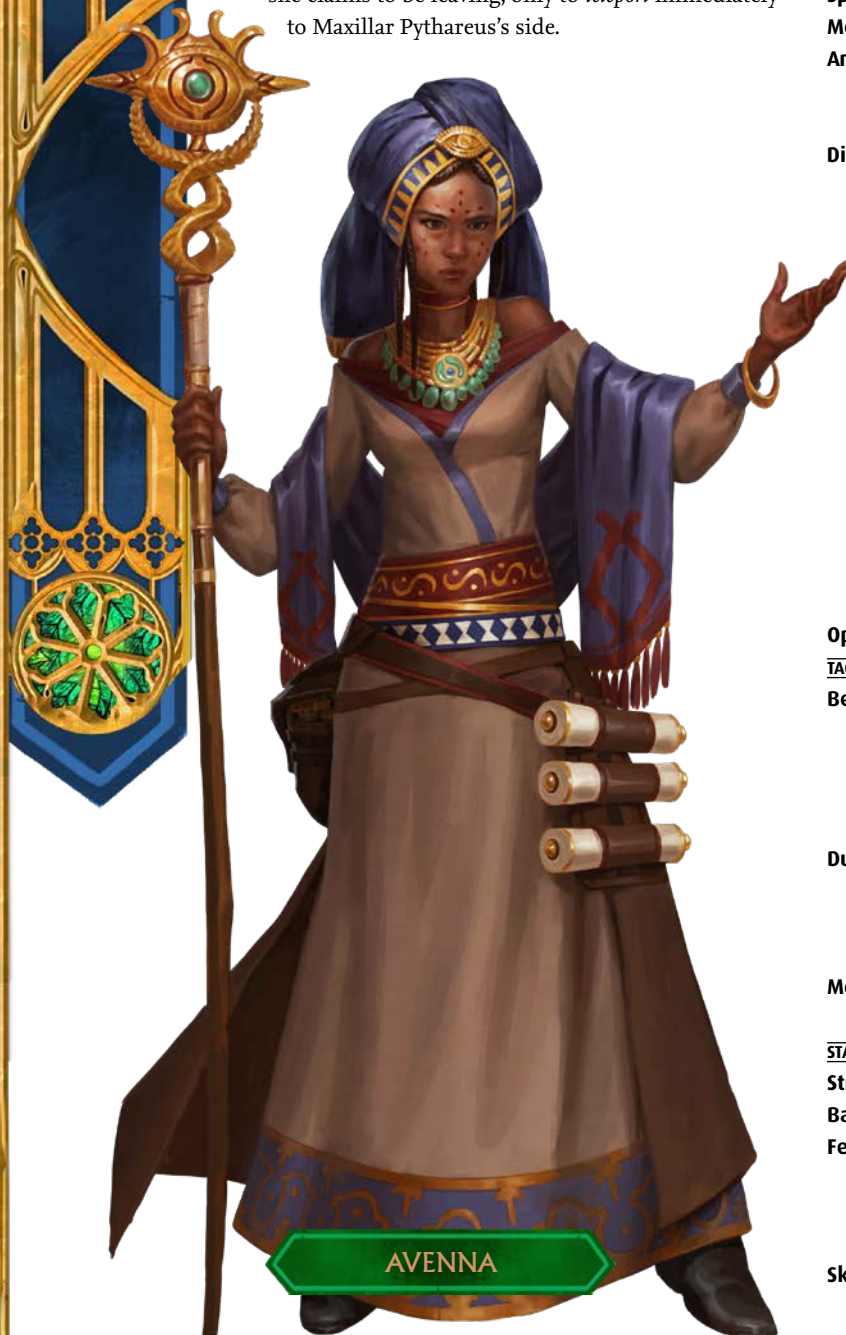
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then poring over the results after waking up around noon. If someone attacks her tophet guardians in the antechamber (see area **H37**), she joins the fight, all too aware that she stands little chance if confronted by assassins alone.

Ultimately, Dame Avenna isn't loyal to Maxillar Pythareus or his politics; she considers herself an academic and wants a luxurious enough life to pursue her research. If overwhelmed or caught alone, she asks to parley. Any mix of three successful DC 31 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks out of five attempts is enough to convince her to leave and lie low; otherwise, she claims to be leaving, only to *teleport* immediately to Maxillar Pythareus's side.



AVENNA

CR 11

XP 12,800

Female human diviner 12

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +13; **Senses** Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 21 (+5 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 shield)

hp 92 (12d6+48)

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

DR 10/adamantine

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *staff of authority* +7/+2 (1d6+1)

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

Constant—*detect scrying*

8/day—diviner's fortune (+6)

Diviner Spells Prepared (CL 12th; concentration +17)

6th—*disintegrate* (DC 21), *globe of invulnerability*, *true seeing*

5th—*contact other plane*, *interposing hand*, *lightning arc*^{UM} (DC 22), *overland flight*, *teleport*

4th—*fire shield*, *greater invisibility*, *resilient sphere* (DC 21), *scrying* (DC 19), *stoneskin*

3rd—*arcane sight*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *dispel magic*, *fireball* (DC 20), *haste*, *protection from energy*

2nd—*darkvision*, *glitterdust* (2, DC 17), *locate object*, *scorching ray* (2)

1st—*alarm*, *alter winds*^{APG} (DC 16), *identify*, *magic missile* (3), *shield*

0 (at will)—*detect poison*, *light*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Opposition Schools Enchantment, Necromancy

TACTICS

Before Combat Avenna casts *protection from energy*, *overland flight*, *see invisibility*, *shield*, and *stoneskin* on herself and her allies. Assume that her divinations allow her to predict the PCs' most commonly used energy type.

During Combat Avenna casts *haste* on herself and her allies, then targets the largest opponents with *interposing hand* before switching to offensive spells, starting with *disintegrate* and *lightning arc*.

Morale Not very loyal to the Imperialist cause, Avenna flees if reduced to 25 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 20, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 22

Feats Combat Casting, Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Toughness

Skills Fly +18, Knowledge (arcana, engineering, nature, planes) +20, Perception +7, Profession (astronomer) +16, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +20

Languages Ancient Osiriani, Common, Kelish, Osiriani, Polyglot, Sylvan

SQ arcane bond (*ring of protection* +2), forewarned, scrying adept

Combat Gear *scroll of dismissal*, *scroll of wall of fire*, *scroll of wall of force*, *staff of authority*^{UE}, **Other Gear** *belt of incredible dexterity* +2, *bracers of armor* +5, *headband of vast intelligence* +2, *ring of protection* +2, *spellbook*, *teleportation glyph*, 25 gp

H39. Observatory

A large telescope mounted on a brass swivel stands at the center of this domed room, under a shuttered opening. The walls are covered in star charts, arcane diagrams, and maps, and a stack of books sits on the floor near the telescope.

A diviner and astronomer, the court wizard, Dame Avenna, studies the secrets of the stars and planets in the observatory. The books stacked on the floor each discuss cataclysmic events, a topic that has consumed Avenna ever since she learned about Earthfall as a child. A trap door in the floor is a ladder that descends into Avenna's quarters (see area H38).

Treasure: The telescope here is masterwork quality and worth 4,500 gp, but weighs 800 pounds. Disassembling it without destroying it requires a successful DC 25 Knowledge (engineering) check.

H40. Battlements (CR 13)

A circular stairwell leads up to an otherwise flat roof of the keep. A 4-foot-tall defensive wall with rectangular crenels surrounds the top of the keep. The iron stairway door is kept locked (DC 40) in the event of infiltrators, or aerial assault.

Four ballistae are kept loaded and ready to fire atop the tower, and are the weapon of choice for defenders trying to deter flying attackers. The sentinels aren't trained siege engineers, and are more accustomed to firing on large targets like ships.

Creatures: The castellan of the fortress, Baron Astor Roderus, conducts drills of his soldiers here on the roof, or broods atop the wall while watching courtyard activity 80 feet below. Though a respected military commander and warrior, as the second son of the Roderus family he had tutored in arcane studies before his elder brother's death saw his family's military legacy fall to him. Now an eldritch knight, he uses his spellcasting ability—particularly abjurations—to shut down enemy defenses before charging into battle.

Baron Roderus is attended to by four Sentinels.

ZIMAR SENTINELS (4) CR 7
XP 3,200 each
hp 88 each (see page 13)

ASTOR RODERUS CR 11
XP 12,800

Human eldritch knight 6/fighter 1/abjurer 5

LN Large humanoid (human)

Init -2; **Senses** Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 24 (+10 armor, +3 deflection, -2 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 shield, -1 size)

hp 136 (12 HD; 5d6+7d10+78)

Fort +14, **Ref** +7, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities resistance; **DR** 10/adamantine; **Resist** fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft. (40 ft. in armor)

Melee +2 *warhammer* +17/+17/+12 (2d6+9/x3)

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

Abjurer Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +13)

5th—*break enchantment*, *teleport*, *wall of stone*

4th—*detonate*^{APG} (DC 17), *lesser globe of invulnerability*, *mass enlarge person* (DC 17), *stoneskin*

3rd—*dispel magic* (2), *fly*, *haste*, *vampiric touch*

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *false life*, *glitterdust* (DC 15), *resist energy*, *see invisibility*

1st—*alarm*, *feather fall*, *magic missile* (2), *shield*, *shocking grasp*

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

Opposition Schools enchantment, illusion

TACTICS

Before Combat If he hears the sounds of combat, Baron Roderus casts *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *false life*, *shield*, and *stoneskin* on himself, and *haste* and *mass enlarge person* on himself and his allies.

During Combat Roderus orders his Sentinels to attack, but holds back himself, waiting to counterspell enemy spellcasters. Afterward, he wades in with his warhammer, using *vampiric touch* after he takes 30 points of damage.

Morale Baron Roderus fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without his spell, Baron Roderus's statistics are **AC** 22, touch 12, flat-footed 22; **hp** 111; **Fort** +12; **Melee** +2 *warhammer* +14/+9 (1d8+6/x3); **Str** 15, **Dex** 8, **Con** 16; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 23.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 6, **Con** 20, **Int** 16, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 27

Feats Arcane Armor Mastery, Arcane Armor Training, Arcane Strike, Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Toughness, Weapon Focus (warhammer), Weapon Specialization (warhammer)

Skills Appraise +16, Fly +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (nobility) +12, Perception +11, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +16

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Kelish

SQ arcane bond (*ring of protection* +3), protective ward (+2 deflection, 10 ft., 3 rounds, 6/day)

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Combat Gear *potions of cure serious wounds (3), scroll of interposing hand, scroll of lightning bolt, scroll of polymorph*; **Other Gear** *+1 mithral full plate, +2 warhammer, cloak of resistance +3, ring of protection +3, keys to keep, Roderus signet ring, spell component pouch, spellbook, teleportation glyph*

THE FINAL SHOWDOWN (CR 15)

Maxillar Pythareus is a mobile and tactically minded figure who always seeks advantageous terrain. He is a moving target as the PCs storm the keep at Abadar's Pillar. He most likely faces his opponents in the courtyard (see area **H3**) or atop the battlements (see area **H40**), depending on the adventure's pacing and needs.

Creatures: By default, four Zimar Sentinels and two Vault and Chain templars accompany Maxillar Pythareus to confront the PCs, but he also gathers his most loyal supporters to his side, should they survive the PCs' raid. Dame Avenna (see area **H38**), Enumerator Iovinus (see area **H16**), and Baron Roderus (see area **H40**) all join the high strategos to confront the PCs if they have not been compromised or dispatched before this final encounter, potentially increasing the final challenge rating of this battle to CR 17!

Even at this late point in the adventure, the high strategos is not beyond reason, and he lectures the PCs for their naivete and betrayal of Taldor's legacy. The PCs can take this opportunity to engage Maxillar Pythareus in a verbal duel, with both the high strategos and his allies as separate audiences to win over. More information for verbally dueling Maxillar Pythareus can be found on page 59. As a multidirectional duel, PCs must decide with each exchange whether they target Maxillar's determination or his soldiers'. The soldiers have a bias against rhetoric and wit (–2) and a strong bias against mockery (–5), as well as a strong bias for allegory (+5), and a collective determination of 27, and the PCs can use the edges described in Maxillar Pythareus's NPC entry against either the high strategos or his soldiers. If the PCs eliminate the soldiers' collective determination, they withdraw their support and leave the general to fight alone (note that this does not include the three major NPCs who may join Maxillar Pythareus).

MAXILLAR PYTHAREUS **CR 13**
XP 25,600
hp 165 (see page 58)

HONOR **CR —**
Horse animal companion
N Large animal
Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +1
DEFENSE
AC 33, touch 14, flat-footed 28 (+7 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +12 natural, –1 size)

hp 102 (12d8+48)
Fort +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +7 (+4 morale bonus vs. enchantment spells and effects)

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.; air walk

Melee bite +14 (1d4+6), 2 hooves +12 (1d6+3)

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

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 3, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 31 (35 vs. trip)

Feats Blind-Fight, Dodge, Iron Will, Medium Armor

Proficiency, Mobility, Multiattack, Spring Attack

Skills Acrobatics +18 (+26 when jumping)

SQ air walk, devotion

Gear *+1 mithral breastplate barding, horseshoes of a zephyr, military saddle*

VAULT AND CHAINS TEMPLARS (2) **CR 9**

XP 6,400 each

hp 98 each (see page 15)

ZIMAR SENTINELS (4) **CR 7**

XP 3,200 each

hp 88 each (see page 13)

Treasure: The most notable item among Maxillar Pythareus's possessions is a relic: *Ovetrian's Plate* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128 81). The high strategos's own legendary deeds have already won the armor's first triumph for himself. However, anyone who claims the armor does not share the high strategos's triumph, and must begin repowering it anew.

Store Award: Once the PCs defeat Maxillar Pythareus and dismantle the core of his political machine, award them 76,800 XP.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Confronting Maxillar in his seat of power sends a clear message across Taldor about Princess Eutropia's own extensive power and influence, but even with the overwhelming evidence of Pythareus's wrongdoing the PCs accumulated, some supporters remain loyal to the now-defeated general—or at least remain opposed to Princess Eutropia. Still, without the high strategos's overbearing personality to bind it together, his own alliance of supporters begins to fracture, and the members seek to separate themselves from rumors of violence or preserve what power or wealth they threw behind the adopted heir. Many of these supporters



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reassert their own previous claims to the throne—Cyrus, Phaebe, and Tarq in particular—but without a unifying name or force, none show any real potential outside their immediate spheres of influence.

If High Strategos Pythareus survives his encounter with the PCs, the Lion Blades take him into custody and hold him while they continue gathering evidence of his actions. Any trial will wait until after the War for the Crown concludes, though if Eutropia succeeds in winning the throne, she recuses herself from the trial thanks to her own personal biases. Despite all he's done, however, Maxillar still has friends in high places, and even supporters among the Lion Blades, and should he survive the entire Adventure Path, his final punishment is banishment to Absalom.

If the PCs spare Stavian III's life and deliver him to Princess Eutropia, the reunion is bittersweet. Stavian curses Eutropia, and her mother for bearing her; while the princess is happy to see her father alive, she is deeply wounded after years of neglect and his failed assassination attempt. The PCs can affect Eutropia's decision on what to do with her aging, unstable father. The three most likely options are to execute him, exile him from Taldor, or imprison him for the remainder of his life. Whatever their choice, Stavian III is no longer in a fit state to rule, and returning him to the throne in his current state of confusion and extreme emotional outbursts would be a far greater disaster than his previous rule.

One unresolved issue that grows to define the rest of the War for the Crown Adventure Path is Pythareus's documents linking the Stavian family to the hated Adella line (see area H36). Once Maxillar began collecting this evidence, he spread much of it to trusted agents and information brokers as a safety net, preventing Stavian III from ever moving against him for fear that this ugly bit of family history might be revealed. In the next adventure, "The Reaper's Right Hand," the PCs discover too late that the general's defeat triggered a fail-safe: his various agents and provocateurs immediately begin releasing those documents wherever they can do the most damage!

Even as the PCs leave Zimar and begin returning to the Palace of Birdsong in the north, they may begin hearing gossip that a hundred new claimants to the throne have emerged, that the princess is not of royal birth, or that Stavian III was only ever a pretender to the throne, invalidating both his daughter's and his adopted son's claims on the crown, though no one seems to have details just yet.

The damage grows far worse in the weeks leading up to the next adventure, "The Reaper's Right Hand," as Princess Eutropia struggles to discover whether she truly is supposed to lead, and the Immaculate Circle struggle to adapt their plots for control now that one puppet is dispatched and their home-spun heir, Carrius, may no longer have a claim to the throne.

KATHANN ZALAR

One of the few ardent supporters of Eutropia within the Lion Blades, Kathann Zalar ran covert operations in Zimar until the organization's efforts recently suffered a serious blow.

KATHANN ZALAR

CR 11

XP 12,800

Female vishkanya lion blade 7/rogue 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 281, *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Intrigue* 36)

LN Medium humanoid (vishkanya)

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +1 deflection, +3 Dex)
hp 74 (12d8+17)

Fort +4, **Ref** +11, **Will** +8; +12 bonus vs. poison

Defensive Abilities evasion, poison resistance, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; **SR** 17 (vs. divination)

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 *glamered kukri* +12/+7 (1d4 plus poison/18-20)

Ranged mwk dagger +12 (1d4-1/19-20) or
mwk wrist launcher +12 (poison)

Special Attacks bardic performance 20 rounds/day (inspiring poise, dirge of misfortune), sneak attack +5d6

Lion Blade Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +11)
1/day—unexpected suggestion

TACTICS

Before Combat Kathann avoids combat at all cost, knowing that a fight means she has failed in her primary goals of stealth and subterfuge.

During Combat When she must attack, Kathann aims to strike first, strike silently, and then immediately fall back.

Morale Kathann is persistent in her goals, but she despises a fair fight. She adopts a hit-and-run strategy and isn't afraid to fall back and regroup if outmatched.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 21

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deceitful, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perform [act]), Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +21, Climb +5, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +21, Escape Artist +4, Linguistics +7, Perception +18, Perform (act) +15, Sense Motive +16, Sleight of Hand +15, Stealth +13, Swim +5; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Escape Artist, +2 Perception, +2 Stealth

Languages Common, Dwarven, Halfling, Hallit, Kelish, Vishkanya

SQ cloud the mind, crowd strike, hide in the crowd, master of disguise, move with crowd, perfect surprise, poison

use, rogue talent (bardic pretender [see page 76], coax information^{APG}), secret step, slowing strike, toxic, trapfinding +2

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* +2 (3), *potion of heroism*, *potions of invisibility* (3), *potion of neutralize poison*, age ointment^{UI} (2), blue whinnis (5), oils of taggit (3), smoke pellet^{APG} (5); **Other Gear** +2 *glamered chain shirt*, +1 *glamered kukri*, mwk daggers (3), mwk wrist launcher^{UI} with 10 darts, *cloak of resistance* +1, *quick-change mask*^{UI}, *ring of protection* +1, *slippers of spider climbing*, concealable thieves' tools^{UI}, concealment coin^{UI}, disguise kit, pocketed scarf^{UE}, reversible cloak^{UE}, subversive vest^{UI}, 550 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Cloud the Mind (Su) When Kathann's opposed Disguise or Stealth check is exceeded by one or more observers' Perception checks, she can trick the observers into thinking they imagined noticing anything wrong as an immediate action. She attempts a Bluff check opposed by the targets' Sense Motive checks. Each target who fails this opposed check ignores the fact that he saw her.

Crowd Strike (Ex) All crowd squares count as enemies threatening adjacent squares for the purpose of determining whether Kathann is flanking an opponent. She can use the Stealth skill to snipe even when making melee attacks as long as she attacks from a square containing at least one other creature within one size category of her.

Dirge of Misfortune (Su) While maintaining this performance, once per round as an immediate action Kathann can force a creature within 30 feet to reroll any d20 roll it just made. The opponent must use the result of the reroll, which takes a -2 penalty. Dirge of misfortune is a mind-affecting ability that relies on audible and visual components.

Hide in the Crowd (Su) Kathann can use the Stealth skill even when the only cover she has is that provided by other creatures.

Inspiring Poise (Ex) Kathann gains a +4 competence bonus on checks with a skill of her choice for as long as she maintains this bardic performance. The performance is ended by any condition that imposes a penalty to her Dexterity score or immobilizes her.

Master of Disguise (Ex) Kathann takes no penalties on Disguise checks to change the appearance of her age, gender, or race.

Move with the Crowd (Ex) When moving through groups of intelligent Small, Medium, or Large creatures that would

normally count as difficult terrain, Kathann instead moves normally. She gains a +5 competence bonus on Acrobatics checks to avoid attacks of opportunity to move through an enemy's square when moving faster than half speed.

Perfect Surprise (Ex) Whenever Kathann hits a foe with a sneak attack at the end of a charge, she can make the blow a perfect surprise as an immediate action. The target must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude saving throw or fall unconscious for 7 rounds. Once targeted by this ability, a victim is immune to perfect surprise for 24 hours.

Secret Step (Ex) Kathann's movement through crowds that would normally be difficult terrain costs only half as many squares of movement as normal.

Slowing Strike (Su) Once per round upon successfully hitting a target with a sneak attack, Kathann can choose to deal 1 fewer die of sneak attack damage and instead reduce one of the target's speeds by 5 feet. Once any of the target's speeds have been reduced to 0 feet, the target is immobilized (but not helpless). A target's fly speed can be reduced this way only if it uses wings to fly. The movement penalties imposed by slowing strike can be removed by healing the affected target to full hit points or by a *lesser restoration* spell.

Unexpected Suggestion (Su) Once per day, a Lion Blade can use *suggestion* on a flat-footed target. Her caster level is equal to her Lion Blade level.

Disguise and subterfuge came naturally to Kathann Zalar, as a vishkanya daughter of immigrants in a land where her people are unknown. In time, this gift led her to the service of her homeland, though she remains tight-lipped as to how. Instead, she focuses on the present. In Kathann's estimation, the largest threats to Taldor's stability are internal: crumbling infrastructure, out-of-touch elites, and increasingly frustrated citizens who turn to extreme measures to regain control in their lives. While she specializes in targeting these elements when they grow strong enough to threaten Taldor as a whole, the Lion Blade also hopes for a day when the root causes of these internal issues are finally addressed instead of ignored. Kathann began supporting Eutropia's reform efforts nearly a decade ago—violating the Lion Blades' traditional stance of political noninvolvement—and now that the War for the Crown has delivered a crushing blow to the organization, many of her fellow agents are reconsidering their dismissal of her efforts.

While the Blades provide her with access to many magical tools, Kathann prefers mundane disguises and deceit. Too many high-profile targets know to watch out for telltale magic auras, all while overlooking deceptions as simple as a cloak and an affected limp.

While she admits to being a cynical pragmatist, Kathann dreams of a new, different Taldor where those who stand outside of the human majority don't need to hide themselves in shame, though she worries she may be too broken to live in such a world herself.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The PCs first meet Kathann in War for the Crown's first adventure, "Crownfall," when she ushers the PCs inside the otherwise secure gala without a thorough search, and later rushes in to stop Stavian's massacre. Revisiting them now, Kathann serves as guide and advisor, offering the PCs hints or direction if their investigations stall out.

Kathann may decide to remain alongside the PCs for the rest of this Adventure Path as a cohort for a character with the Leadership feat, serving as an attaché between these agents of Eutropia and the Lion Blades.



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MAXILLAR PYTHAREUS

High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus is handsome, charming, and fearless—everything Taldans believe an emperor should be. As Stavian III's adopted heir, he is Eutropia's main rival for the throne.

MAXILLAR PYTHAREUS

CR 13

XP 25,600

Male human (Taldan) cavalier 14 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 32)

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 11, flat-footed 30 (+13 armor, +2 deflection, -1 Dex, +2 natural, +4 shield)

hp 165 (14d10+84)

Fort +17, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11; +4 morale vs. fear (+6 with some abilities)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee +1 lance +23/+18/+13 (1d8+11/x3) or +2 battleaxe +23/+18/+13 (1d8+9/x3)

Ranged +1 composite longbow +14/+9/+4 (1d8+5/x3)

Special Attacks banner +3, cavalier's charge, challenge 5/day (+14 damage, gain +4 AC), demanding challenge, for the king, greater banner, greater tactician 3/day (Shake It Off or Shield Wall, swift action, 10 rounds), mighty charge

TACTICS

Before Combat Maxillar seeks out his mount, Honor, and consumes a *potion of heroism* before confronting enemies (not included in these statistics).

During Combat Maxillar opens combat with his banner ability to rally all his allies, and activates his for the king ability whenever he can spare a swift action. He leads from the front, spurring Honor to charge opponents with his lance or axe.

Morale Maxillar fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 8, **Con** 18, **Int** 13, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 32

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Lunge, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Shake It Off^{UC}, Shield Wall^{APG}, Toughness, Weapon Focus (lance)

Skills Diplomacy +18, Intimidate +18, Perception +15, Profession (soldier) +18, Ride +10, Sense Motive +18

Languages Common, Kelish

SQ expert trainer +7, lion's call, mount (horse named Honor; see page 54), order of the lion

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potions of feather fall* (2) *potions of heroism* (3);

Other Gear *Ovetrian's Plate* (see "Relics of Old Taldor" in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128), +2 heavy steel shield, +1 composite longbow (+4 Str), +1 lance, +2 battleaxe, amulet of natural armor +2, belt of physical might +4 (Str, Con), cloak of resistance +4, headband of inspired wisdom +2, ring of protection +2, ring of sustenance, keys to keep Pythareus family signet ring, teleportation glyph, vault and golem keys (see area H36)

Born into a long line of military commanders and war heroes, Maxillar of House Pythareus grew up believing himself destined for great things. As a boy, Maxillar listened to his grandfather's stories about Admiral Arminus Pythareus, whose fleet attacked Absalom 800 years ago, and of Colonel Sarius Pythareus, who earned the moniker "Lion of Zimar" when he led the attack to liberate the oppressed people of Zimar during the Grand Campaign.

Maxillar's father was a harsh man, and Maxillar's childhood was one of both luxury and severe discipline. While some of Zimar's best scholars saw to his education, his father taught him to fight. But high expectations bred a sense of entitlement, both for the career he should have and the life he believed he was due. As a teenager, Maxillar threw himself wantonly at female classmates, insulting their ability while praising their beauty; he saw their discomfort as a sign of victory. His increasingly aggressive behavior stood out as a warning sign to his tutors, particularly the military scholar Tae Amalon, and when she brought the behavior to the senior Pythareus's attention and even threatened to withdraw her support of Maxillar's admittance to officers' school, the old man simply stabbed her and drafted his son to help dispose of the body. The encounter shaped much of the youth's perspective on the world, and his response when "servants" step out of line or speak above their station.

Maxillar went on to excel in officers' school, and as a battlefield leader, culminating in his appointment to the position of high strategos and nearly marrying the young princess Eutropia, who found his opinions of women, minorities, and foreigners odious, even if his compassion for fellow Taldans mirrored her own.

While many of his recent moral compromises—egged on by Milon Jeroth—have pushed him closer and closer to evil, Maxillar's nature is compassionate but heavily

colored by his staunchly traditionalist prejudices and his father's abusive discipline. He has refused orders that would sacrifice his men and has donated vast sums of gold to veteran groups, but he also relegates entire classes of people to specific roles and sees nothing wrong with responding violently when his "lessers" refuse to defer. He believes Taldor owes its decline to certain classes of people—commoners, foreign merchants, non-humans, and women—wielding too much social power, and that society would be better for everyone, including those "disruptive" classes, if all knew their proper places. In short, he is selfish, arrogant, and paternalistic, but infinitely capable of justifying those qualities and assuaging any lingering guilt through charity.

Now convinced of his own righteousness and that any actions against him are conspiracy, Maxillar hopes to rally and unify the nation—blind to the fact that he may destroy it in doing so.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Maxillar Pythareus serves as the primary antagonist for the first half of the War for the Crown Adventure Path.

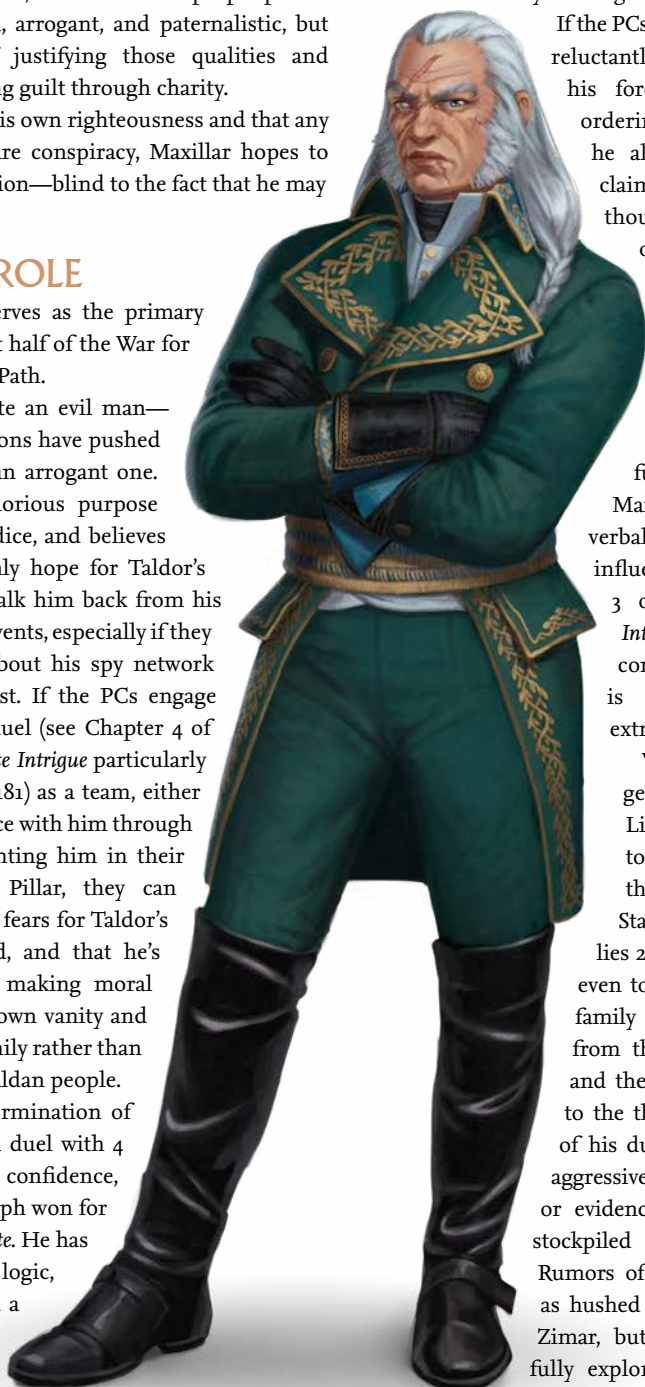
Maxillar is not quite an evil man—though his recent actions have pushed him far closer—just an arrogant one. He is polluted by glorious purpose and blinded by prejudice, and believes he is the last and only hope for Taldor's future. The PCs can talk him back from his dangerous course of events, especially if they collect information about his spy network or the sins of his past. If the PCs engage Maxillar in a verbal duel (see Chapter 4 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue* particularly Team Duels on page 181) as a team, either by securing an audience with him through trickery or by confronting him in their assault on Abadar's Pillar, they can convince him that his fears for Taldor's future are unfounded, and that he's spent his entire life making moral compromises for his own vanity and for the glory of his family rather than for the needs of the Taldan people.

Maxillar has a determination of 27 and enters a verbal duel with 4 edges thanks to his confidence, success, and the triumph won for his relic, *Ovetrian's Plate*. He has a bias against baiting, logic, and mockery (–2), and a strong bias against emotional appeal (–5), as well as a

bias for flattery and presence (+2). Each of the following bits of information revealed to the soldiers or Maxillar Pythareus grants the PCs 1 edge: Milon Jeroth's nature as a rakshasa, Milon Jeroth's letter to the Immaculate Circle, the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams' identities as night hags, the PCs' training and blessing of the Lion Blades, and Maxillar's letter ordering the Seven Forms of Sin to assassinate Princess Eutropia. Finally, if the PCs reveal the dagger Maxillar's father used to kill Tae Amalon, they automatically reduce his determination by 8 by shaking Maxillar's core confidence.

If the PCs win this verbal duel, Maxillar reluctantly stands down, calling off his forces' false-flag attacks and ordering the PCs to leave Zimar, he also agrees to abandon his claim to the Primogen Throne, though he refuses to surrender or acknowledge Princess Eutropia as the rightful heir—both activities that still embolden his allies' resistance and leave the military largely outside Eutropia's control. Winning further concessions from Maxillar requires additional verbal duels or winning influence with him (see Chapter 3 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue*) as you see fit, though convincing him to surrender is a major coup, requiring extraordinary events.

When the PCs encounter the general at the end of "City in the Lion's Eye," his defeat appears to determine who inherits the throne of Taldor. But the Stavian power base is built on lies 2 centuries old: and unknown even to Stavian and Eutropia, their family are bastards, descended from the hated Adella family line, and their ancestor Stavian I's claim to the throne is illegitimate. As one of his duties, Maxillar Pythareus has aggressively put down any such rumors or evidence for decades—and quietly stockpiled it as a political weapon. Rumors of this should haunt the PCs as hushed whispers even as they leave Zimar, but the ramifications will be fully explored in the next adventure, "The Reaper's Right Hand."



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MILON JEROOTH

Handsome, charming, and sadistic, Maxillar Pythareus's spymaster, Milon Jeroth, wields his influence with the same grace and deadly effectiveness as he wields a blade.

MILON JEROOTH

CR 13

XP 25,600

Male rakshasa ninja 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 231, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 13)

LE Medium outsider (native, shapechanger)

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

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 18, flat-footed 20 (+7 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural)

hp 200 (16 HD; 6d8+10d10+118)

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

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge; **DR** 15/good and piercing; **Resist** acid 10; **SR** 28

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 flaming falcata +18/+13/+8 (1d8+3/19–20/x3 plus 1d6 fire) or bite +11 (1d6+1), 2 claws +11 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks detect thoughts (DC 20), sneak attack +3d6

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +12)

3rd (5/day)—*chain of perdition*^{UC}, *suggestion* (DC 18)

2nd (7/day)—*accelerate poison*^{APG} (DC 17), *mirror image*, *resist energy*

1st (8/day)—*alarm*, *charm person* (DC 16), *hypnotism* (DC 16), *mage armor*, *vanish*^{APG} (DC 16)

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mage hand*, *message*, *open/close* (DC 15), *read magic*

TACTICS

Before Combat Milon prefers to strike from surprise, poisoning or otherwise debilitating targets before drawing his sword.

During Combat Milon is overconfident and brutal in combat, defending himself with spells like *mirror image* and *mage armor* while coaxing enemies to defending him with *suggestion*. He relies on *chain of perdition* to distract enemies while he feints with his beloved falcata whenever possible.

Morale Milon attempts to flee and recuperate if reduced below 30 hit points. If confronted in his home, he fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 24, **Con** 24, **Int** 13, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 34

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (falcata), Improved Feint, Improved Natural Armor, Mobility, Persuasive, Weapon Focus (falcata)

Skills Acrobatics +7 (+11 to jump), Bluff +22, Diplomacy +22, Disable Device +22, Disguise +28, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (local) +14, Knowledge (nobility) +14, Linguistics +8, Perception +16, Perform (oratory) +18, Sense Motive +16, Sleight of Hand +20, Stealth +20;

Racial Modifiers +4 Bluff, +8 Disguise

Languages Celestial, Common, Halfling, Infernal, Kelish, Ulfen, Undercommon

SQ change shape (any humanoid; alter self), ki pool (8 points), light steps, ninja tricks (charmer^{APG}, combat trick, honeyed words 2/day^{APG}), no trace +2, poison use

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of delay poison* (3), *potion of fox's cunning* (2), *unfettered shirt*^{UE}, hemlock (2), purple worm poison (3); **Other**

Gear +1 flaming falcata^{APG}, minor ring of acid resistance, masterwork thieves' tools, poison pill ring^{UE}, poisoning sheath^{UE}, Jeroth signet ring, 300 gp

As native outsiders, rakshasas live and dwell among mortals, and must eat, sleep, and breed as mortals do. The overwhelming majority of their kind are born from one or more rakshasa parents, but on rare occasion a particularly wicked human family may sire a rakshasa spontaneously. Such was the case 200 years ago when the wanton and corrupt Jeroth family found themselves parents to a lion-headed infant. Young Milon's features quickly morphed to a more acceptable human form, but his parents saw the birth as miraculous—the lion serving as Taldor's most divine symbol—and as proof of their noble blood. They showered the lad with affection and the best tutors even as they continued their cutthroat politics and manipulation, and young Milon, a smart child even as a toddler, watched and learned.

When the child's strength, temper, and unnatural appetites finally became apparent, the Jeroths thought to sweep their monster under the rug by sending him to the Monastery of Seven Forms to learn discipline. The Jeroths' plan backfired, and Milon returned a man with followers in tow: his Seven Forms of Sin disciples, who, like their master, sought to embrace divine purpose through overwhelming indulgence. Milon slew his parents and took their faces for his own, laying the foundation for his shadow empire in Zimar.

The young rakshasa posed as generations of Jeroths for 2 centuries—young and old, men and women—and

his business dealings and growing influence attracted the attention of many of Taldor's elitist secret societies. He found membership in many of these under various names, taking what he needed and consuming those who offended him. Only Panivar Lotheed's Immaculate Circle seemed to keep him content. Once he demonstrated his "immortality"—a trait he claimed to have perfected by mastering his own internal alchemy, but is in fact just his natural longevity as a rakshasa—the inner circle welcomed the schemer and manipulator who ruled the seat of Taldor's military.

Though handsome, insightful, dapper, and charming, Milon Jeroth is above all a predator, and he views all of southern Taldor as his savanna to stalk. He well remembers Maxillar Pythareus's occasionally troubled childhood, and—posing as the senior Jeroth—even helped encourage the young man's sense of entitlement. He now sees the current high strategos as a beautiful rose whose thorns he has diligently sharpened.

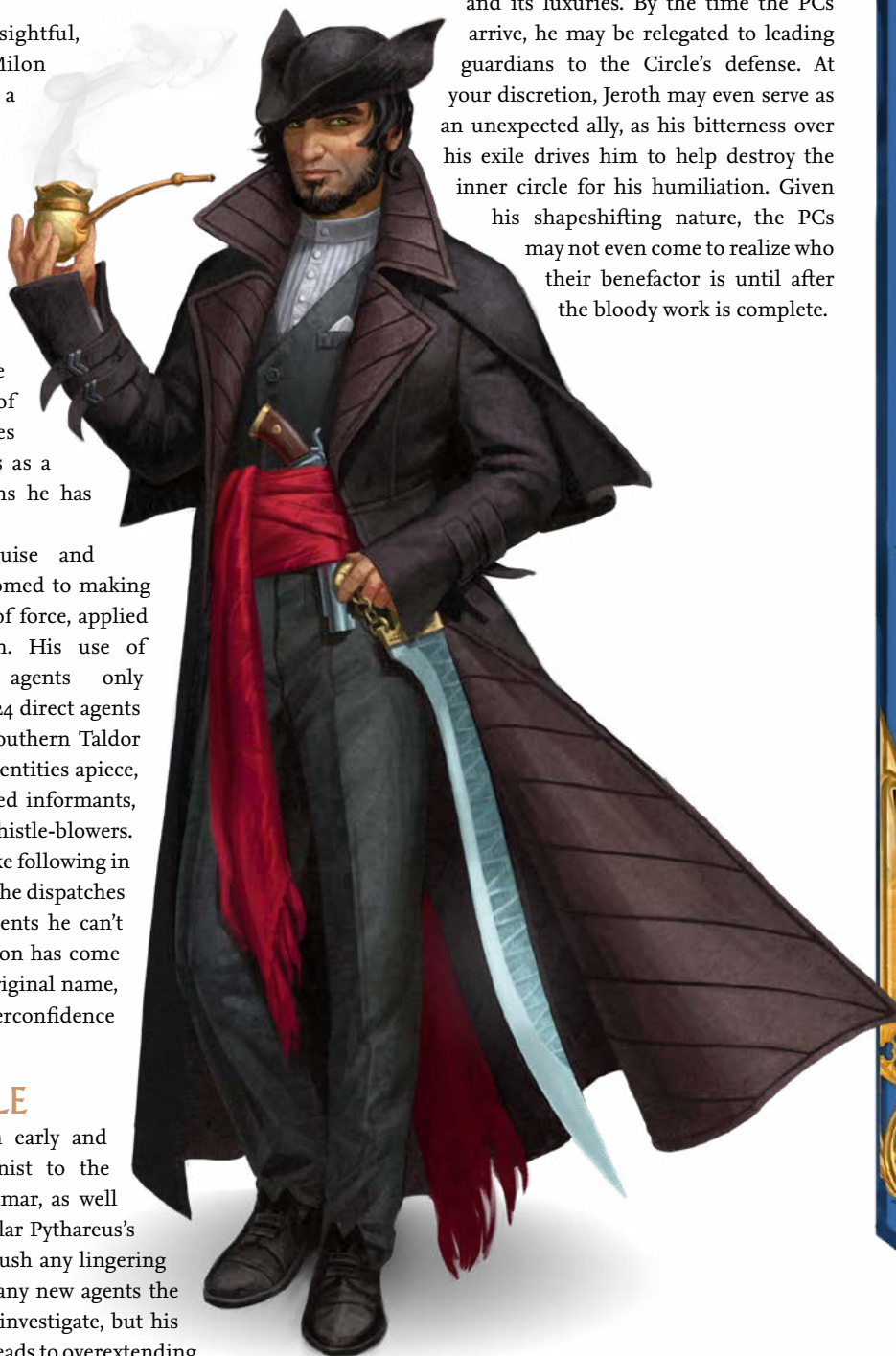
As a master of disguise and deception, Jeroth is accustomed to making do with a minute amount of force, applied with careful consideration. His use of shapeshifting rakshasa agents only magnifies this effect—just 24 direct agents serve him, spread across southern Taldor and maintaining a dozen identities apiece, and each juggling a hundred informants, loose-lipped lovers, and whistle-blowers. He still maintains his cultlike following in the Seven Forms of Sin, and he dispatches them to behead those serpents he can't tame. After 2 centuries, Milon has come back around to using his original name, a sign of his supreme overconfidence and comfort.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Milon Jeroth serves as an early and possibly recurring antagonist to the PCs in their mission in Zimar, as well as being the devil on Maxillar Pythareus's shoulder. He hopes to ambush any lingering Lion Blades in the city, or any new agents the organization dispatches to investigate, but his excessive confidence often leads to overextending

himself or vastly underestimating his enemies. Cautious PCs can take advantage of this trait by easily baiting the rakshasa into traps that a warier opponent would easily avoid. Milon sees himself as a lion in a land of gazelles, but he has yet to learn that sometimes the gazelle wins.

Should he escape, the rakshasa returns to the Immaculate Circle to lie low, and PCs may encounter him once again when they confront the secret society in "The Six-Legend Soul." His failure in this critical part of the plan, however, means exile from the inner circle and its luxuries. By the time the PCs arrive, he may be relegated to leading guardians to the Circle's defense. At your discretion, Jeroth may even serve as an unexpected ally, as his bitterness over his exile drives him to help destroy the inner circle for his humiliation. Given his shapeshifting nature, the PCs may not even come to realize who their benefactor is until after the bloody work is complete.



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ZIMAR

"I marveled at the height of the city wall as I rode toward Zimar. I was awed as I passed through the city gate: the sturdy doors, the serious guards, and the heavy portcullis. I smiled when I saw dozens upon dozens of houses with red clay tile roofs, domed palaces of deep blue and white marble, and minarets nearly a hundred feet tall. This city was bursting with life, and trade, and wonder. I adored the painstaking detail in everything I saw: the lions emblazoned on the soldiers' uniforms, the bas-reliefs on the walls of the houses, and the intricately carved fountains.

"At the same time, I had an inescapable feeling that something was terribly wrong with this city. Every word I heard felt calculated, every smile seemed feigned, and everyone looked at me as though they were sizing me up. I have never felt so alone as I did that day."

—Ulvar Bodilson, traveling merchant

Located on the west bank of the Jalrune River and a day's ride from the Qadiran border, Zimar is Taldor's southernmost major settlement and Taldor's third largest city after Oppara and Cassomir. Also known as the Aegis of Taldor, Zimar is a heavily fortified garrison town, acting as Taldor's first line of defense against the threat of a Qadiran invasion. However, during the centuries-long war commonly known as the Grand Campaign, Zimar was intermittently occupied by Qadiran forces, which left a lasting mark on Zimar's architecture—the cityscape dominated by Taldan-style red clay tile roofs and columned halls of white marble is interspersed by tall minarets, domed palaces, and tented markets reminiscent of Qadiran cities.

The long period of occupation also shaped the attitudes of the people in Zimar. Even though 2 centuries have passed since the end of the Grand Campaign, most residents of Zimar hate Qadirans and are determined never to let their southern foes humiliate Zimar again. It is said that Zimar has enough supplies to last 5 years if besieged, and it can field an army of nearly 10,000 soldiers when necessary. Many units of the Taldan Phalanx and the Taldan Horse are stationed in Zimar, and the city has hundreds of men and women who belong to elite paramilitary units—including the city watch called the Zimar Sentinels and the Golden Templar inquisitors of Abadar—who can bolster the ranks of the military in times of war. Lastly, every adult citizen in Zimar is at least nominally a member of the Blue Guard, Zimar's militia.

HISTORY

Following the expansion of the satrapy of Qadira toward Taldor's southern border, the first clash between Taldor and Qadira took place at the Battle of Urfa near the White Pass in -4 AR. Alarmed by its neighbor's expansionist ambitions, Taldor began fortifying its southern border. General Antilla Zimara, who commanded Taldor's southern army at the time, ordered her troops to build a large garrison that would serve as a headquarters for military operations in the south. Zimara chose a fertile piece of land adjacent to a long-standing independent city-state, whose craftspeople, laborers, and leaders quickly realized the plentiful opportunities to support the army—and the inevitable result if they resisted. The Taldan garrison became so influential to the existing city that the name for the garrison—Zimar—soon came to refer to the entire settlement.

For over 4,000 years, Zimar stood unchallenged as the indomitable aegis that Taldor relied upon to keep its southern border secure while its Armies of Exploration invaded and annexed land in the west, north, and east. During this golden age of Taldor, many small villages dotted the scrublands around Zimar, and trade was brisk not only between these new communities but also with settlements across the Qadiran border.

ZIMAR, AEGIS OF TALDOR

LN large city

Corruption +5; **Crime** -1; **Economy** +3; **Law** +7; **Lore** +4; **Society** -2

Qualities insular, memories of occupation, military base, rumormongering citizens, strategic location

Danger +10

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government overlord

Population 17,540 (15,630 humans, 560 dwarves, 480 half-elves, 330 halflings, 540 other)

NOTABLE NPCs

Archbanker Iovinus (LE male human antipaladin^{APG} [tyrant^{UI}] of Abadar 11)

Bazaar Master Miraia Idaican (CN female half-elf mesmerist^{OA} 7)

Duchess Lenia Talviala (LN female middle-aged human aristocrat 8)

High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus (LN male human cavalier^{APG} 14)

Inquisitor General Feradica Torcamay (LE female aasimar inquisitor^{APG} of Abadar 10)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 9,000 gp; **Purchase Limit** 50,000 gp;

Spellcasting 7th

Minor Items 4d4; **Medium Items** 3d4; **Major Items** 2d4

SPECIAL QUALITIES

Memories of Occupation Citizens of Zimar have lasting memories for the many atrocities—some real, but many exaggerated—of Qadiran occupation and therefore reject most foreign cultural contributions. (*Society* -1)

Military Base Many imperial troops are stationed in Zimar, prepared for the threat of war. The soldiers frequent the city's vice dens and underground arenas when their funds allow, but they also provide additional protection to the city. (*Corruption* +1, *Law* +1)

When Qadira invaded southern Taldor in 4079 AR, Zimar was one of the first Taldan settlements to fall into Qadiran hands. In the following year, Qadiran invaders burned most of the settlements surrounding Zimar in the Ember Night, an event many modern Taldans still bring up to justify anti-Qadiran sentiment. When Taldans managed to turn the tide of the war and began a counteroffensive in 4328, Zimar was liberated. A few decades later, Qadiran forces recaptured the city with reinforcements from the Padishah Empire of Kelesh. In 4599, after a long siege, the city was finally returned to Taldan control. This victory is often attributed to a young captain named Sarius Pythareus, who led a group of soldiers into Zimar during an armistice and opened the gates for the Taldan army waiting outside. Taking advantage of his newfound fame, the captain established

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12. SOVEREIGN SMITHY
13. RAINBOW BAZAAR
14. RUMSIDE
15. ABADAR'S GATE



House Pythareus as one of the wealthiest and most influential families in post-war Zimar.

After the Grand Campaign, Taldans spent a century rebuilding and fortifying Zimar. Although the city emerged stronger than ever before, the surrounding region never fully recovered. Villages that were abandoned or destroyed during the war were never rebuilt, and trade in the region has greatly diminished. Roads and bridges deteriorate as tax revenues no longer flow in from once-prosperous outlying communities.

DISTRICTS

Zimar is located on the west bank of the Jalrune River, deep in the scrublands of southern Taldor. The climate is warm and semi-arid; save for the fertile banks of the river, the terrain near Zimar is largely nutrient-poor and flat. Tall, stone walls protect Zimar from all directions, and the river forms a natural barrier that deters all but the most determined attacks from the east. The Jalrune River remains deep enough here for most Taldan merchant ships coming from the Inner Sea, providing an expedient method of travel. The roads that lead to Zimar, however, are old and in poor condition, making travel through the scrublands around Zimar an arduous endeavor.

Zimar has five formal districts (although residents recognize an unofficial sixth district), each with a different character and architectural features.

Adobe District: Named after the many houses in the district made of mud-brick, the Adobe District is the poorest district in Zimar. While foreigners are allowed to own property in any part of Zimar, bloated property prices, heavy taxation, and bureaucratic structures that favor native Taldan humans encourage foreigners and non-humans to settle in the Adobe District. Many of the denizens of the Adobe District have lived in the neighborhood for many generations; descendants of poor laborers who helped rebuild the city after the Grand Campaign. Roof-running is a popular pastime along the flat roofs of the Adobe District; criminals also take advantage of these navigable roofs to avoid capture. The Zimar Sentinels largely turn a blind eye to crimes in the Adobe District, so long as they don't affect people living in the wealthier parts of the city. Infrastructure is poorly managed here as well, and it has many easily accessible entrances to the Undercity.

Anvil District: The majority of Zimar's industry is concentrated in the Anvil District, which is located in the northeastern quarter of the city. Dozens of arsenals, forges, and workshops make armor, arms, and other equipment for the military and paramilitary units of Zimar. Day and night, smokestacks spew thick black smog, and the sound of hammering can be heard throughout the district. The largest of Zimar's districts, the Anvil District houses roughly a third of the city's population in working-class residential areas.

Golden District: The Golden District is primarily the residential area for Zimar's nobility and, as a consequence, it's the wealthiest of the six districts. The district is famous for its gilded street lights, geometrically sculpted gardens, opulent palaces, spacious plazas, and statues. Gold, jewelry, silk, and spices are bought and sold in luxury markets throughout the Golden District by those who have—or can fake—appropriate credentials.

Pike District: The Pike District is the location of the original garrison founded by General Zimara. Although it was long ago incorporated into the city, the Pike District houses the thousands of soldiers who live in Zimar. The district also has several training facilities and numerous taverns. Many middle-class and working-class families live in the Pike District, particularly those with a long Taldan pedigree who boast of living in the most historically “Taldan” district of the city.

Scrolls District: Known for its white marble houses with magnificent columned halls, the Scrolls District is located in central Zimar near Abadar's Pillar. It is the smallest of the city's districts, but nonetheless well known as the center of Zimar's education and lore. Administration buildings, archives, libraries, and schools crowd in the district, although the majority of the buildings are upscale residences for government officials, nobles, and the upper-middle class. The Scrolls District also includes several well-known shops specializing in antiques. Buyers travel to Zimar from afar to get their hands on artifacts dating back to Ancient Osirion, the Jistka Imperium, or even Azlant, and vendors pay well for items retrieved from ancient ruins.

Undercity: Beneath the streets of Zimar lies the so-called Undercity, which some citizens call “the sixth district.” This labyrinthine network of underground tunnels and chambers consists of abandoned basements, buried buildings, catacombs, and sewer passages. Entrances to the Undercity can be found hidden throughout all of Zimar, though the government works to block as many of the entrances as possible, particularly in the wealthier districts, so that the people can conveniently forget these places exist. Criminals, fugitives, monsters, and resistance groups live in the Undercity, using the passageways to store contraband and avoid the soldiers who patrol the streets above. According to rumors, all residents of the Undercity answer to a massive ottyugh king named Gulreesh (see page 36); in reality, though, the ottyugh wields relatively little power over the denizens here.

NOTABLE SITES

Information on key locations found throughout Zimar follows, although many other sites of interest exist in the city.

1. Lion's Gate: One of Zimar's two massive city gates, this gate and its stone frame are decorated with lion motifs. The gate and gatehouse are described in further

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detail on page 14. The road that runs south from the Lion's Gate leads around the Border Wood to Demgazi, 40 miles southwest of Zimar.

2. Falcon's Bridge: This impressive arched bridge over the Jalrune River is over 500 feet long. Farmers, travelers, and Zimar's patrols use the bridge to cross the river without relying on rafts or ferries. At its apex, the Falcon's Bridge is high enough to allow the Taldan Imperial Navy's ships to pass beneath it, although the current truce with Qadira forbids either nation from sailing its military vessels on the Jalrune River. While sturdy in its construction, the bridge was built so that engineers who know its secret mechanisms can quickly collapse the bridge to stymie an invasion from across the river. The road beyond the bridge—the Lion's Road—winds its way through the farmlands to the east and leads to the fortress and town of Lionsguard, approximately 100 miles east of Zimar.

3. Fortress Estates: Outside Zimar stand heavily fortified farms, manors, ranches, and wineries designed to keep the inhabitants protected against bandit attacks or enemy invaders. Most of the estates have hired guards, guard dogs, traps, walls, and other defenses to make intruders think twice about trespassing. These estates produce the majority of the food sold in Zimar, and they protect their shipments to and from the city from brigands and rivals. Representatives of the Fortress Estates are some of the loudest proponents for repairing the deteriorating roads around Zimar, but none of the estate owners want to fund repairs themselves, as road repairs benefit not only themselves, but their competitors as well.

4. Iron Garrison: Located in the Pike District, the Iron Garrison is the sprawling complex of barracks and training facilities where soldiers of the Taldan Horse, Taldan Phalanx, and Zimar Sentinels eat, sleep, and train. At least a thousand battle-ready troops can be deployed from the Iron Garrison at a moment's notice. The taverns closest to the Iron Garrison are some of the liveliest in all of Zimar, although non-military patrons tend to stand out and are sometimes harassed by hard-drinking soldiers.

5. House of Gold: By far the largest of Zimar's houses of worship, this gilded cathedral is surrounded by the largest garden in Zimar. Although primarily the center of Abadaran worship in the region, the House of Gold is famous for training Golden Templars, an elite paramilitary unit of Abadaran inquisitors informally called "taxmasters." The Golden Templars also work alongside the Zimar Sentinels to maintain order in the city and handle security in Abadar's Pillar. Archbanker Iovinus oversees the cathedral, but his tyrannical subordinate Inquisitor General Feradica Torcamay is responsible for training the Golden Templars, organizing their day-to-day operations, and many other responsibilities at the cathedral.

6. Quarter of the Dead: This cluster of buildings mainly consists of entrances to the catacombs beneath the streets of Zimar. In Zimar, rotting in the ground is considered vulgar, so it is customary for wealthy families to own subterranean family vaults for their dead. A network of tunnels connects the different parts of the catacombs, and less wealthy families inter their dead in niches along the tunnel walls. Most of the burial chambers are protected with deadly spells, traps, or even guards to keep grave robbers away. Amid the sepulchers stand a few shrines dedicated to Abadar, Pharamasma, Sarenrae, Shelyn, and other deities. Although the Quarter of the Dead was built separately from the Undercity, gradual expansion of family vaults and occasional structural damage from earthquakes has exposed new passages into the Undercity. As a consequence, some family vaults are now infested with criminals or monsters.

7. Zimar Archives: City bureaucrats store official records of all kinds in this aggregation of buildings in the Scrolls District, where Zimar's citizens must venture to obtain permits for civic endeavors such as land sales and filing tax disputes. The largest building is Zimar's High Court of Justice, a magnificent building of white marble facing the Grand Plaza.

8. Gennaris Academy: The most prestigious institution of education in Zimar, the Gennaris Academy offers a wide range of subjects in its curriculum. Thanks to its well-meaning but old-fashioned and stubborn headmaster, **Venarius Apillo** (LG male old investigator^{ACG} 9), the academy offers a far more comprehensive selection of courses in history, law, and military science than any other subject. Critics in other countries, particularly in Chelixa and Qadira, maintain that the academy teaches a one-sided version of history and that its lies and half-truths about Taldor's rivals are not conducive to building trust and revitalizing trade.

9. Docks: A bristling bank of docks juts into the Jalrune River from the western edge of the river near Abadar's Pillar. Piers intended for merchant ships and passenger ferries stand alongside sturdy docks reserved for the Zimar Corsairs, a fleet of "free" privateers that are known to target non-Taldan vessels but retain just enough independence that they don't violate the restriction against sailing Imperial Navy ships on the river. Many Zimar Corsairs also function as smugglers, using the docks to resupply and sell stolen goods between their patrol runs and raids. At the base of the docks are several warehouses where merchants can store their goods for a fee. Zimar's high wall separates the docks from the city proper, and anyone entering Zimar through the docks faces the same level of scrutiny as those who travel by land. Duchess Lenia Talviala owns the docks and works with trusted subordinates to ensure that goods move in and out of the docks area without delay and no criminal activities take place that can be tied to her.

10. Abadar's Pillar: High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus, a descendant of the war hero Sarius Pythareus, rules Zimar with an iron fist from the fortress known as Abadar's Pillar. Over 80 feet high, the fortress's keep is the tallest building in Zimar. Abadar's Pillar was built on a spot overlooking the Jalrune River, surrounded by a moat filled by diverting water from the river. Abadar's Pillar is described in detail beginning on page 40.

11. Baths of Dioclytus: Zimar is known for its many bathhouses, and the citizens of Zimar consider luxurious baths to have considerable health benefits. Some of the city's bathhouses cater only to the rich, while others are open to visitors regardless of station. Zimar's bathhouses are generally built of marble and receive water through an underground aqueduct heated with subterranean fire pits. The wealthy and the poor alike enjoy discussing politics and exchanging juicy gossip while relaxing in baths and sweating rooms. **Arraio Garicus** (N male human bard 7) runs the Baths of Dioclytus, the largest and most famous of Zimar's public bathhouses, which incorporates many other services, including a cafe, a massage parlor, and an upscale inn.

12. Sovereign Smithy: This state-sponsored forge employs the best blacksmiths in Zimar—perhaps in all of Taldor. The Sovereign Smithy makes weapons and armor for Zimar's aristocrats, elite military units, and even for Maxillar Pythareus himself. All weapons crafted at the Sovereign Smithy are of masterwork quality and etched with a sword-and-falcon mark known as the Falcon Seal. To protect the reputation of this elite mark, counterfeiters of the Falcon Seal are punished harshly, losing their right hand at the wrist; repeat offenders face the death penalty. Some of the finest weapons produced at the Sovereign Smithy are enchanted by clerics of Abadar at the House of Gold and delivered to high-ranking members of the imperial military. A small but well-trained force of veteran fighters known as the Battlesmiths guards the Sovereign Smithy and its valuable shipments, and a grizzled army veteran named **Hannicus** (NG female old human fighter 8) both runs the smithy and commands the Battlesmiths.

13. Rainbow Bazaar: Named after its colorful tents and bazaar stalls that sell a staggering variety of goods, the Rainbow Bazaar is located in the poorest part of Zimar. The upper classes see the Rainbow Bazaar as a cesspit of criminal activity, but a discerning shopper can discover items here unavailable anywhere else in Zimar, such as Qadiran antiquities, drugs, and magic items. The bazaar's unofficial manager is Miraia Idaican, whose hired guards provide security for those vendors who turn over a small percentage of their profits. While it's generally safe for anyone to browse the wares at the bazaar, wearing expensive clothes or carrying a heavy coin purse is certain to attract pickpockets or robbers.

14. Rumside: Most of Zimar's working-class pubs and bars are located in a neighborhood called Rumside. As beer, rum, and other cheap drinks are popular in this part of town, anyone with more than a few coins to spend on drink usually goes elsewhere. Rowdy entertainment, such as boxing matches and gambling, are also available in Rumside.

15. Abadar's Gate: Zimar's north gate is nearly identical to the Lion's Gate at the south end of the city, except the decorations depict cavalry soldiers bearing oversized religious icons rather than depicting lions. Zimar Highway, the road that extends north from Abadar's Gate, leads to the small but significant town of Ortalaca, 50 miles north of Zimar.



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RAKSHASA THREATS

“Ask yourself: If your eternal reward awaits you in the afterlife, what is the purpose of this world?”

“Ask yourself: If it is meant to be your choice that determines your fate, why does fate exist?”

“Labor for your promised paradise if you wish, knowing it can be stripped from you by divine whim. Be slaves for your little gods, or accept their punishments if you dare turn your back on their decrees and their judgments. Play by their rules if you truly think it fair. Not everyone is meant for more than servitude.

“But those of us who are willing to reach out and grasp what is owed to us have no need to bow before others in hopes of divine reward. Our rewards are ours to take. We carve our own eternity. We have a greater fate. We are immune to punishments that small-minded creatures would thrust upon us. We do not serve—we rule.”

—Narindal Nagaryana, rakshasa philosopher and recruiter

If some creatures live virtuous lives to find paradise in the world beyond, rakshasas might be said to have the opposite philosophy. Reincarnated from the souls of cannibals, manipulators, and tyrants, rakshasas seek to debase themselves in such sin and excess that their souls survive eternally. Weighed down by a lifetime of earthly corruption, their evil spirits unable and unwilling to find their way into the afterlife, rakshasas instead remain bound to the material world after death. They are reborn into mortal infants or the children of other rakshasas, constantly reincarnating to continue their uncontrolled consumption. All rakshasas, no matter their intelligence, power, or status, are ruled by their insatiable desire for more. Lower-caste rakshasas constantly strive to sate their restless appetites. Higher-caste rakshasas are more able to control their hunger, indulging it subtly so that they might plot for decades or even centuries unnoticed. Behind this facade of control, though, a rakshasa's every action serves its monstrous appetites. It is the nature of these earthbound evils never to find true satisfaction, and a rakshasa's greed can override its natural caution, luring it out to a violent death.

Rakshasas adhere to a system of castes, though they accept movement between castes upon being reborn as a sign of ascending—or falling—to a creature's destined station in life. This social mobility exists as a result of the rakshasa castes placing pragmatism over dogma, with an individual's caste serving as an indication of its current power in rakshasa society. Castes apply to all aspects of rakshasa life, encompassing rakshasas and all other creatures likewise, from the lowest in status (*pagala*, or rakshasa traitors) to the highest (*samrata*, or rakshasa lords of lords). Rakshasas relegate most non-rakshasas to the caste of *goshta*, meaning food or meat, though particularly powerful and crafty individuals may rise in a rakshasa's esteem and ranking. It is the worldly right of all high-caste rakshasas to exploit those of lesser caste for power or their own selfish whims, while lower-caste rakshasas are expected to gain as much influence and rise in caste as quickly as possible. Truly potent rakshasas ascend beyond the limitation of castes to skirt the boundaries of divinity.

The undying evil of a rakshasa grants it fearsome abilities, from powerful magic to the ability to shrug off physical blows. Holy arrows and other blessed weapons can pierce through a rakshasa's hide, however, and their weaknesses are well known in the lands where these creatures are most common. Concerned that their enemies might learn of this vulnerability, rakshasas are very careful to conceal their true natures, denying would-be monster hunters the advantage of knowing about this common trait. Most rakshasas use their natural powers of disguise and manipulation to avoid identification, while others use illusion and misdirection to cast the blame for their evil deeds onto scapegoats.

RAKSHASAS ON GOLARION

Though rakshasas are most common in Vudra, their long life spans and the nature of their reincarnation mean they can be found almost anywhere on the face of Golarion. They are scheming and patient, and their powers of deception and disguise allow them to insinuate themselves into whatever aspect of society best suits their machinations. The most cunning rakshasas are master manipulators, preying on victims' desires and controlling events from behind the scenes until their schemes come to fruition. Since rakshasas are nearly guaranteed to be reborn if slain, they often leave contingencies for their future incarnations, hoping their reborn selves will be able to recall enough dim memories of their past lives to pick up old plans or reclaim influence or inheritance left behind. Once a rakshasa has staked its claim over an area, it is nearly impossible to uproot so long as any scrap of the rakshasa's power network remains.

Several prominent rakshasas and their plots are listed below. The area where each rakshasa operates is noted in parenthesis following each plot. Additional rakshasa plots can be found on page 163 of *Pathfinder RPG Book of the Damned*.

Werebear of Wispil (Taldor): When the bear-headed rakshasa **Vakashtra** (LE female rakshasa) was discovered in Andoran and fled through the Verduran Forest to escape retribution at the hands of her victims, she had the ill fortune of running into a cabal of powerful druids. Vakashtra assumed the form of a trapper to pass by unnoticed, but the powerful druids saw through the disguise and cursed Vakashtra to retain her true shape for a year and a day. Having little experience at surviving in the wild, yet unable to openly walk the streets of any city, Vakashtra hovered at the edges of the logging town of Wispil, waiting for her curse to expire. The few woodcutters and explorers that caught sight of the reclusive bear-headed woman came to call her the Werebear of Wispil, and the exuberant gnomes of that town consider such sightings to be good luck. Vakashtra has recently let herself be seen by more travelers, some of whom she charms into believing they've been aided by the Werebear of Wispil. Vakashtra's curse recently expired, and she's taken a cottage in Wispil in the guise of a gnome historian named Ashtra. Ashtra actively preaches about the good works of the Werebear of Wispil and encourages troubled townspeople to seek out the reclusive werebear's aid. Vakashtra intends to manipulate the town's most influential citizens into seeking the aid of her alter ego, then use them to drain the town's fortunes before returning to Andoran for revenge.

Bound and Vengeful (Katapesh): The rakshasa Trishni began her immortal existence with a great deal of potential, but she quickly fell victim to the machinations of her kin. Cunning, indulgent, and ruthless, Trishni rose in power too quickly and too noticeably, attracting

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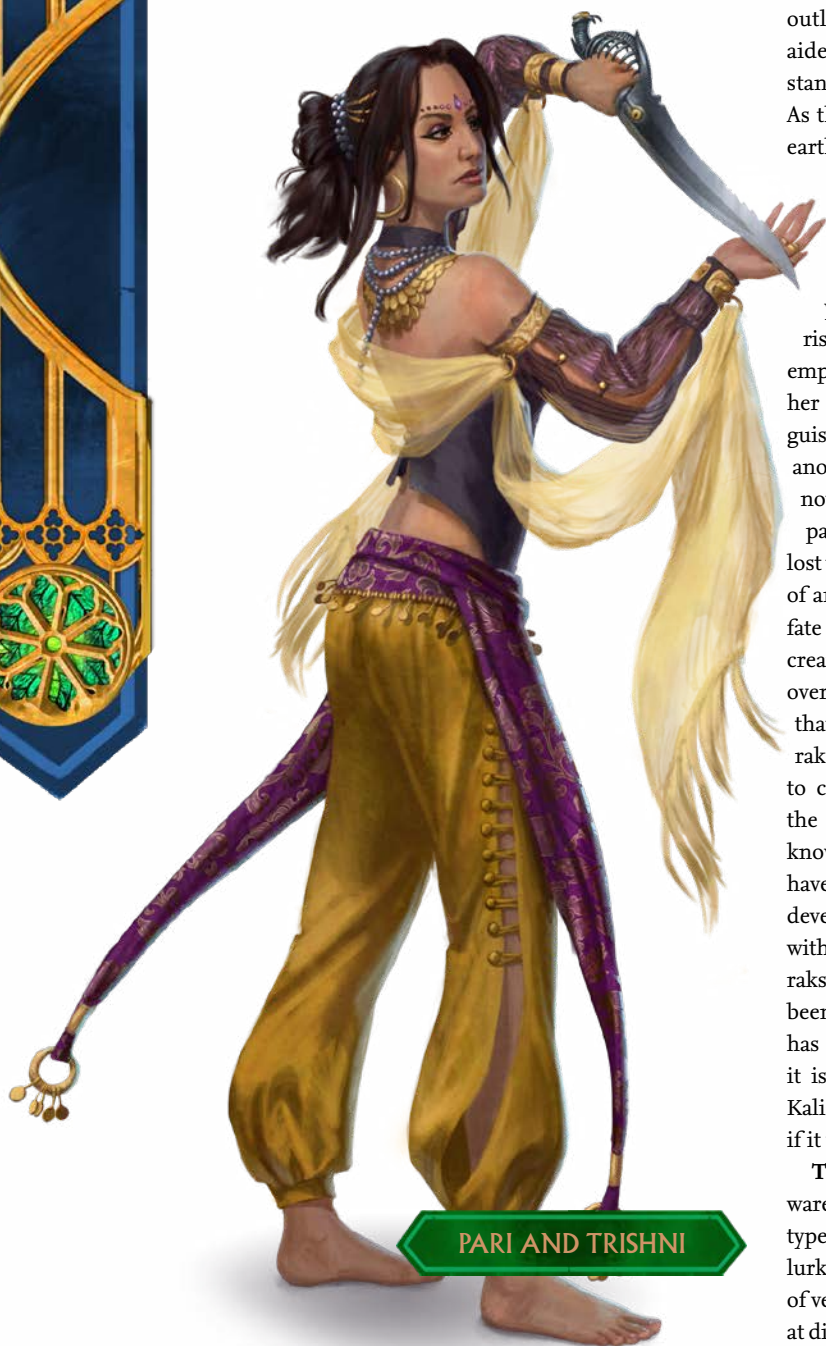
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the attention of her fellow rakshasas and prompting them to ally against her. The combined efforts of these united rakshasas utterly humiliated Trishni, dropping her to such depths of shame that she reincarnated in her current life as a mere raktavarna rakshasa (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 229). One of the rakshasas who had engineered Trishni's ruin hunted her raktavarna incarnation down and forced her into service, taking every opportunity to add to her disgrace. After decades of suffering, Trishni finally got her revenge: when her rakshasa master invited himself into a noble household, fully intending to indulge in the hospitality and then devour the hosts,

Trishni made her escape into the kitchens and warned one of the cooks about the plot. The cook, a woman named Pari, responded by poisoning Trishni's rakshasa master and all of his retainers; her erstwhile master's gluttony compelled him to devour enough poisoned food to kill an elephant. Lacking a master and any power of her own, Trishni pretended to be an intelligent magical dagger and convinced the cook to wield her, intending to dupe the mortal until she was no longer useful and then discard her. To Trishni's shock and secret delight, the woman was as vengeful as she was resourceful. Pari left the kitchen and began hunting other rakshasas, probing her raktavarna companion for information and taking outlandish risks to kill the monsters. Trishni gleefully aided the cook-turned-warrior, as she harbored a long-standing grudge against many of her fellow rakshasas. As the mortal woman eliminates more and more of the earthbound evils, however, Trishni worries about the destructive battle of wills likely to ensue if the hero discovers her seemingly helpful dagger is actually one of her vile foes.

The Long Arc of History (Vudra): Every 1,000 years, the maharaja rakshasa (*Bestiary* 3 226) Vasilhara rises to power, claims vast swaths of territory as her empire, and then vanishes overnight along with all of her subjects. Each time, Vasilhara rules in a different guise, so her empires seem to have no connection to one another. These disappearing kingdoms had remained nothing more than a scholarly curiosity for many years, particularly as most of the ancient records have been lost to the vagaries of time. Recently, though, a small group of archaeologists and academics stumbled upon the true fate of the maharaja's kingdoms: every single living creature in the lands that Vasilhara claimed dominion over, including Vasilhara herself, is sacrificed in a ritual that utterly consumes their bodies and life forces. The rakshasa maharaja has reincarnated every millennium to continue her eons-long ritual, though to what end, the scholars do not yet know. Without any firsthand knowledge of the magic used in the ritual, the academics have no means to determine the ritual's purpose or develop any way to stop it. Their only current lead lies with Vasilhara's rakshasa seneschal, **Kalishpali** (LE male rakshasa rogue 6), who has personally witnessed—and been killed by—every single sacrifice that Vasilhara has performed. Whatever the ritual's ultimate purpose, it is extreme enough to frighten even a rakshasa, and Kalishpali has indicated that he might be willing to defect if it will stop Vasilhara's millennia-long scheme.

The Reef Demons (Cheliox): The crumbling dockside warehouses of Westcrown cast shadows that hide many types of evil. A group of rakshasas called the Reef Demons lurks in the city, hiring on to merchant ships in the guise of veteran seafarers or able hands. With their peerless skill at disguise and ability to read a captain's mind to ascertain



PARI AND TRISHNI

just what type of sailor she's lacking, the Reef Demons can infiltrate any crew. When their vessel makes the tricky passage around the Rifardona, the massive sandbar that shelters Westcrown from ocean tides, the Reef Demons strike, killing everyone at the helm and running the ship aground. The Reef Demons might butcher or spare any surviving crew members at their whim, but in either case, the rakshasas disappear after the ship runs aground. Many sailors are thrown overboard during these wrecks, their bodies washed out to sea and lost, so determining which deckhands were disguised fiends and which were simply lost is impossible. Facts about the Reef Demons are difficult to discern from rumors—accidents on the treacherous Rifardona are common, and drunken or inattentive sailors at the helm might be tempted to blame their own blunders on some outside villainy. Old sailors assert that there are as many as nine Reef Demons, but in fact there are only two: a pair of rat-headed rakshasa siblings who plunder the choicest treasures from the wrecks they cause and murder any witnesses to their actions. The rakshasas enjoy the mounting paranoia and fear around Westcrown docks, relishing it even more than their growing cache of stolen treasures.

Tainted Wisdom (Jalmeray): The followers of Irori rarely fight each other over divine philosophy, understanding that the correct path for one adherent may not be so for another. Yet a growing sect of Irorans called the Exhaustive Path has begun causing concern within the church; this new faction claims that in order to truly free the self from all weakness and reach perfection, a follower must first commit and experience every sin possible. The Exhaustive Path has attracted many students who were otherwise put off by Irori's strict tenets, leading to an influx of self-indulgent and otherwise unsuitable acolytes into the church. Worse yet, the leader of this new sect is secretly a tataka rakshasa (*Bestiary* 3 230) named Ravtaki who encourages aimless young recruits to flock to his banner. While critics of Ravtaki's sect claim it is a blatant ruse to draw weak-willed adherents away from the proper path and flood the church's training schools with unsuitable reprobates, Irori's most powerful clerics have yet to formally disavow the new philosophy. In fact, many of the Exhaustive Path's members display divine powers that they attribute to Irori, and Ravtaki skillfully mimics signs of Irori's divine favor and claims to be a faithful follower of the god's message of self-perfection. Some among the church consider this a sign that Irori accepts this path to enlightenment, no matter how distasteful it is to others, and believe they should thus allow Ravtaki's sect to fester within the church.

Trapped with a Fiend (Mendev): The valiant crusader Rella Nellevestor and her husband were well-known demon hunters in Mendev. Rella's brother, Hadledar—lame from birth—nevertheless served the crusaders as

their squire and friend. When Rella bore a son, Ostaric, Hadledar cared for the boy as his parents made their forays to the front lines. One such trip ended in tragedy, as Rella and her husband were both slain holding a pass against a demonic horde. Hadledar retreated to the family estate outside of Egede to raise his nephew. Overwhelmed with grief and dejection, Hadledar mostly left the boy to fend for himself in the nearly empty manor. As Ostaric grew, Hadledar could not ignore troublesome clues about his nature: the boy was relentlessly cruel to local animals and displayed diabolical insights no child could know. Hadledar has become convinced that his nephew is a reborn fiend, and subtly seeks heroes to unmask and redeem him. Meanwhile, **Ostaric** (LE male young rakshasa) is now 9 years old and awaits the right time to kill his uncle and assume the family fortune. The question that weighs heaviest on Hadledar's mind is whether his sister was an innocent victim whose child was corrupted by the wicked battlefields on which she fought, or whether Rella made a horrific bargain with some evil power.

An Upstanding Merchant (Druma): The Aurora Trading Guild has skyrocketed from obscurity to prosperity in a few short years, leading to its fair share of slander and rumors from rival trading companies. Though most mean-spirited gossip about the trading company's meteoric success is eventually forgotten or dismissed, one particularly tenacious rumor is that the owner of the trade company, Suniti, is actually a rakshasa in disguise. **Suniti** (LE female rakshasa) seems to almost encourage these rumors, treating the suspicions as an inside joke among her close associates and remaining playfully mysterious about her uncanny ability to guess what her business clients are thinking. Suniti is always careful to ensure she never does anything to prove the rumors true, however, always keeping a veneer of plausible deniability about her true nature. Repeated investigations by competitors and governments have found the Aurora Trading Guild to be scrupulously aboveboard in all business matters, with precise records of every transaction and a solid history of leaving the businesses and communities with which it interacts enriched by its dealings. In fact, the most underserved or oppressed trade partners seem to be those most enriched by business with the guild. Those familiar with rakshasas and their long-ranging schemes fear what Suniti might be planning for the future by stockpiling these beneficial relationships, but they have found little support in their concerns among those who have benefited from Suniti's trades, while receiving too much support from openly corrupt merchants hoping to destroy a powerful competitor. Suniti plays the rumors masterfully while carefully marshaling her influence, and she is amused that no one can yet rightfully act against her business since it has committed no wrongdoing.

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The Void Star (Varisia): Rakshasas are bound by material desires and seek to rule upon the Material Plane, but there are those of their kind who dare to dream even higher. Iksha had always held a fascination with the night sky, from his original mortal life as a bandit girl to his ascension to a rakshasa lord. Infatuated by the endless stars and void, Iksha longed for the power to possess and control the empty space above. This untamed desire became something of a dark spirituality for the fiend's tainted soul. The rakshasa turned to astrology and vision quests, aiming to walk among the stars in his dreams since he could not do so in his waking life. He even risked trespassing on sites sacred to Desna, disguising himself as an acolyte and seeking any scrap of knowledge that could file the edge off of his obsession.

On the night of a lunar eclipse, a meditating Iksha inadvertently caught the trail of a divine current and experienced a vivid dream of floating amid the constellation known as the Stair of Stars. Mesmerized by the sight before him, Iksha opened his jaws to grasp a chunk of divine void and a single star, and then bit down.

This act of profound blasphemy drew quick retribution from the powerful empyreal lord Black Butterfly, who watches over the spaces between the stars. Black Butterfly emerged from the dark spaces in the Stair of Stars to strike down the intruder's body, but Iksha's spirit avoided her grasp, plummeting back to the waking world with his stolen prize in his gullet. When the eclipse ended, one of the lights in the Stair of Stars dimmed and vanished from the night sky.

Iksha no longer ventures outside except at night, having gained an unwholesome rapport with the darkened sky due to his blasphemous theft. After that taste of divinity, all of Iksha's machinations and schemes have come to revolve around gaining more. He frequently poses as a holy figure, using the oracular powers gained during his dream quest and slipping in and out of rival religions to further his own goals. In his true form, Iksha is a panther-headed rakshasa with fur so dark it resembles a hole cut in physical reality. His teeth and nails shine bright gold against the void, and his three opalescent eyes glow with power.

Iksha currently wanders Varisia, but he might be found anywhere in his wide-ranging pilgrimages. He seeks out any scrap of holiness, from sacred bloodlines to religious relics; no hint of spiritual significance is too small or too tenuous to be beneath his notice. Iksha hoards within his underground palace those items he thinks may prove useful later. Everything else he eats, relishing the consumption and destruction of priceless and irreplaceable sparks of the gods. While Iksha's fellow rakshasas find his obsession with divinity to be somewhat bizarre, he nonetheless commands a strange form of respect among his kin. It was a rakshasa samrata

who gave Iksha the title of Void Star, an honor to convey the pride that one of their own could swallow a star placed by the gods.

Iksha knows he is bound to Black Butterfly by his theft, and he knows it is his destiny to confront her once more. He intends to devour as much of the Stair of Stars as possible in preparation for this event, placing him on even terms with the empyreal lord so that he can ultimately consume her as well. Iksha's schemes do not end with confronting and consuming Desna's Shadow—once the Black Butterfly is gone, Iksha plans to consume Desna herself with his newfound power. Iksha will then turn his greedy gaze toward the other gods who hold dominion over the sky, glutting his hunger until only the lightless void and his own invisible star hover over the surface of Golarion.

IKSHA

CR 15

XP 51,200

Male rakshasa oracle 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 231,

Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide 42)

LE Medium outsider (native, shapeshanger)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 15, flat-footed 25 (+6 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 natural)

hp 217 (15 HD; 10d10+5d8+140)

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

DR 15/good and piercing; **SR** 25

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee +3 keen falchion +24/+19/+14 (2d4+13/15-20), bite +18 (1d6+3 plus grab)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +18/+13/+8 (1d8+7/+3)

Special Attacks detect thoughts (DC 22), grab (Small)

Oracle Spells Known (CL 12th; concentration +19)

6th (4/day)—harm (DC 23), mass inflict moderate wounds (DC 23)

5th (6/day)—flame strike (DC 22), mass inflict light wounds (DC 22), plane shift (DC 22)

4th (7/day)—cure critical wounds, divine power, freedom of movement, inflict critical wounds (DC 21)

3rd (8/day)—dispel magic, greater magic weapon, inflict serious wounds (DC 20), magic vestment, protection from energy

2nd (8/day)—bear's endurance, bull's strength, grace^{APG}, hypnotic pattern (DC 19), inflict moderate wounds (DC 19), oracle's burden^{APG} (DC 19), undetectable alignment

1st (8/day)—bane (DC 18), color spray (DC 18), divine favor, entropic shield, inflict light wounds (DC 18), protection from good, shield of faith

0 (at will)—bleed (DC 17), detect magic, detect poison, guidance, light, purify food and drink, read magic, resistance, spark^{APG}

Mystery heavens

TACTICS

Before Combat Iksha casts *freedom of movement* on himself and *greater magic weapon* on his falchion. He uses his *lesser extend metamagic rod* to cast *bear's endurance* and *bull's strength*.

During Combat Iksha begins each combat with the sickened condition, which is not reflected in his statistics above. If Iksha has the opportunity, he casts *divine power* and *quicken shield of faith* on himself at the start of combat. He then casts *quicken protection from good* and makes a full attack against any foe in melee range, using his bite attack first to remove the sickened condition caused by his oracle curse. If Iksha is caught off guard, he instead attacks the most dangerous foe with *harm* followed by *quicken inflict light wounds*.

Morale Iksha casts *plane shift* to escape if reduced below 30 hit points.

Base Statistics Without *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, and *greater magic weapon*, Iksha's statistics are **hp** 187; **Fort** +13; **Melee** +1 keen falchion +20/+15/+10 (2d4+8/15-20), bite +16 (1d6+2 plus grab); **Ranged** mwk composite longbow +18/+13/+8 (1d8+5/×3); **Str** 20, **Con** 24; **CMB** +18 (+22 grapple); **CMD** 33.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 18, **Con** 28, **Int** 13, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +20 (+24 grapple); **CMD** 35

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Weapon Focus (falchion)

Skills Bluff +29, Diplomacy +20, Disguise +33, Knowledge (religion) +14, Perception +20, Sense Motive +20, Stealth +21; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Bluff, +8 Disguise

Languages Common, Infernal, Undercommon

SQ change shape (any humanoid; *alter self*), oracle's curse (hunger), revelations (guiding star, lure of the heavens), speaker of the void

Combat Gear *lesser extend metamagic rod*, *scrolls of enter image*^{APG} (3), *wand of invisibility purge* (10 charges); **Other Gear** mwk mithral breastplate, +1 keen falchion, mwk composite longbow with 20 adamantine arrows, *cloak of resistance* +2, *headband of alluring charisma* +2, *boots of striding and springing*, royal outfit, 247 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Detect Thoughts (Su) Iksha can *detect thoughts* as the spell of the same name (CL 18th). He can suppress or resume this ability as a free action. When Iksha uses this ability, it always functions as if he had spent 3 rounds concentrating and thus he gains the maximum amount of information possible. A creature can resist this effect with a successful DC 22 Will save. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Hunger Oracle's Curse (Ex) Iksha gains none of the benefits from spells or magic items that provide nourishment, such as *goodberry*, *heroes' feast*, or a *ring of sustenance*. He begins each combat with the sickened condition until he deals damage with his bite attack. His bite attacks gain the grab extraordinary ability, as the universal monster rule, against any creatures smaller than he is. (The hunger oracle's curse appears on page 17 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Monster Codex*.)

Speaker of the Void Iksha loses his racial sorcerer spellcasting and instead treats his innate sorcerer levels as oracle levels.



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LION BLADES

We have our blades for war and our blades for kings, but Taldor has its blades too. Lion Blades, they call them, made for death and secrets. Spies, assassins that can walk up to a man in plain sight, kill him, and vanish again. That was how they took out our captain and left us back behind the border awaiting a replacement. First we heard that no replacement was coming. Then we heard that a new captain was coming to us, and we should wait for her arrival. Then we heard the new captain has been killed, or captured, or possibly defected. We had no way to separate truth from rumor, or to tell messengers from spies. The worst part of it all is that you can't tell these so-called Lion Blades from normal people. Searching for one is like trying to hold a fistful of dry sand and watching it slide between your fingers. Still, if it pleases the high command, we'll keep trying.

—Qadiran conscript, in a letter to her brother

Born and honed in the endless conflict with foreign powers, the Lion Blades are a secret organization dedicated to defending Taldor by subverting, misdirecting, or eliminating its enemies using assassination (both reputational and physical), espionage, and infiltration. Often, their devotion to Taldor means defending the grand prince, but the Lion Blades hold that the realm is more important than its ruler and have, in the past, toppled emperors to save the empire.

The Lion Blades recruit primarily from among the bards at the Kitharodian Academy, finding the students there smart and flexible enough to train, not to mention inclined to the life of duplicity and danger that a Lion Blade leads. Most of the teachers at the Kitharodian Academy are retired Lion Blades who keep an eye open for new talent, including the school's administrator, Lord **Merriweather Stokes** (N male human bard 4/rogue 3/ Lion Blade 3; the Lion Blade prestige class is presented on page 36 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Intrigue*). The Lion Blades teach their recruits for a year in their own secret academies, called Shadow Schools, and then turn them loose with the tools they need for the tasks they are assigned. One of the Shadow Schools' top graduates in recent years is **Lenorilia Callatarro** (N female human bard 3/rogue 3/Lion Blade 3), who now keeps watch over Oppara's elite from the posh Porthmos Club.

The Lion Blades have three general goals regarding the imperial court and its bureaucratic machinery: preventing political corruption from getting out of hand while allowing just enough corruption to be useful to their ends; keeping the factions of the imperial court in relative balance to prevent any one faction from gaining more power than the Lion Blades can rein in should it become necessary; and preempting any attempts by Taldor's neighbors to destabilize the current regime. Because these goals center on the imperial court and senate, most Lion Blades are active in Oppara, but others operate in remote regions of Taldor or even in neighboring countries in order to control the flow of information, infiltrate enemy networks, or work as double agents.

HISTORY

Grand Prince Goscelyn II (1597–1622 AR) fathered many children, both legitimate and illegitimate, and had all of his offspring inculcated in not only the niceties of noble society, but also the desire to serve and defend Taldor. Despite the even-handed education he provided, the grand prince failed to offer any kind of career to his children who couldn't inherit by reason of gender, illegitimacy, or both. Two of his children, Yanual (who was legitimate but nonbinary) and Izora (who was both illegitimate and female) lacked clear direction and took to pranks and disguises to fill their time. When one of Yanual's tricks revealed a Qadiran spy before an important diplomatic meeting, Yanual realized this

could be a way to defend the land they loved using the skills they'd honed. Izora was just as enthusiastic when they suggested it to her, and she proposed the name Lion Blades for their clandestine defense operation.

At first, Yanual and Izora recruited only like-minded siblings and cousins to their cause, but within a generation the Lion Blades found they needed to recruit from a broader swath of Taldan society. With that came the problem of finding sufficiently trained actors and spies. One of the pair's half-sisters, Arime, had inherited a small bard school from her mother, who had been dedicated to producing theatrical plays to show off the family's elaborate costume collection. Arime was more interested in music than theater, and she offered to support the Lion Blades by recruiting skilled actors if they would in turn support her in expanding the school to include musical education. The aging Yanual and Izora agreed immediately. The school moved to a new location and eventually grew into the Kitharodian Academy, with the first of the Lion Blades' Shadow Schools built below it.

For the next 1,500 years, the Lion Blades served both Taldor and the emperor equally. Once the Ulfen Guard formed, the Lion Blades began to leave the emperor's personal protection to the Ulfen Guard and focused on preserving the country and thwarting its many enemies. Late in 4081, a noble who had been provided an invitation to join the Lion Blades but turned it down visited his recruiter and requested her help in eliminating Grand Prince Cydonus III before he bankrupted the entire country. The senior Lion Blades were well aware of the current financial crisis and thoroughly debated whether they should support the grand prince or the nation. After much deliberation, the Lion Blades came down on the side of the nation. Six months later, Grand Prince Cydonus was dead by poison, and his successor blamed Qadiran agents.

As the Even-Tongued Conquest shrank the size of Taldor's holdings, some Lion Blades became trapped in rebellious nations declaring their independence from—and sometimes, significant hatred for—imperial Taldor. Most Lion Blades retreated into their carefully crafted disguises and eventually managed to return home, but many realized the benefits of their suddenly foreign posting and continued to protect Taldor's interests from abroad. A few Lion Blades, particularly those born and raised in the now-independent nations, forsook the organization to instead serve their new countries.

During these chaotic years, the Lion Blades and their Shadow Schools were forced to repeatedly change their codes, drop points, and safe houses to avoid discovery by foreign agents. Compounding the organization's troubles, this period of imperial unraveling was followed by the Yellowtongue Sickness, which killed more than half of the Lion Blades, including many of its leaders. Later Lion Blades had to reconstruct their operations

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ROGUE TALENTS

No two Lion Blades come at their training the same way. The following rogue talents are designed specifically for prospective members of the Lion Blades to reflect the flexibility and ingenuity that the Lion Blades value in new recruits.

Bardic Pretender (Ex): The rogue knows enough about music and performance to survive in a bardic college and can fake what she doesn't know. The rogue qualifies as having the inspire competence bardic performance class feature for the purpose of meeting prestige class requirements, although this talent doesn't grant her the bardic performance ability.

Sneak Training (Ex): The rogue counts as having the sneak attack class feature of a rogue of her level for the purpose of meeting prestige class requirements, although this talent doesn't improve the rogue's existing sneak attack ability or grant her the sneak attack class feature if she doesn't already have it. This talent is most useful for rogues that lack the sneak attack class feature, such as those with the phantom thief^{UI} archetype.

and rediscover their deep-cover agents by piecing together journals and reports from the time, stored in a secret archive called the Library of the Lion.

In time, the Lion Blades recovered to the same extent that Taldor itself did, repositioning themselves as a strong and secret defender of the empire. To this day, the Kitharodian Academy remains the Lion Blades' most fertile source of new recruits. In recent years, the academy has accepted many Taldan aristocrats seeking to earn their fame and fortune, talented outsiders seeking recognition, and penniless nobles fleeing the ongoing revolution in Galt. The Lion Blades drawn from these disparate sources have a wide array of skills and backgrounds suitable for any task.

CODES AND PHILOSOPHIES

The Lion Blades observe, maintain, and defend Taldor against those seeking to damage or destabilize it, regardless of the enemies' class, nationality, or title. Most Lion Blades serve and protect the grand prince from enemies; after all, losing a head of state is often the most destabilizing event a nation can experience. The charismatic leader of the Lion Blades' Shadow Schools, **Dominicus Rell** (N male human bard 3/rogue 3/Lion Blade 3), believes it is important to keep the current monarch in power, but most other Lion Blades agree that the emperor himself can be sacrificed, if necessary, to preserve the nation as a whole.

Lion Blades choose the most expedient option that suits their current mission. Sometimes, the best option is to eliminate an enemy, but they are well aware that a

noble could be replaced by an even more unpalatable heir, or a criminal overlord by a loyal lieutenant with an even more malicious agenda. In these cases, a Lion Blade might instead initiate several well-placed rumors to destroy the target's reputation. Lion Blades master disguises, learning which persona is best suited to slide into a situation without being noticed or stopped. The best disguises can sometimes be the most bold or outré; a gaudily dressed entertainer might stride confidently into a crowded salon to reach a target when stealth would likely fail. For certain infiltration missions, one gender might have an advantage in access over others. As a result, the Lion Blades welcome members of all genders, including nonbinary agents, and the organization has a higher-than-average proportion of nonbinary and gender-fluid members. Similarly, many Lion Blades also develop a habit of using gender-neutral speech, particularly when referring to other members or past missions they've undertaken.

The Lion Blades are strongly pragmatic and willing to inflict collateral damage as necessary for Taldor to remain strong and stable. They believe these ends justify the means used to obtain them and see themselves as the agents best poised to accomplish those ends. This same sense of pragmatism also compels Lion Blades to help each other in their missions as needed. Although Lion Blades in the field supposedly know only what is necessary for the task at hand and are expected to avoid other Lion Blades engaged in separate tasks, most Lion Blades are canny enough to identify other agents in the same area and reach out for help if necessary. A Lion Blade won't provide aid to another agent if it would expose her ongoing mission, so not all requests for help can be met, but most Lion Blades strive to assist each other wherever possible. Even so, any support provided is usually subtle and rendered in a way that can't be traced back to either agent.

The Lion Blades are an egalitarian organization, with decisions reached by discussion and eventual consensus. However, most Lion Blades are strongly individualistic and don't hold with following rules and orders to the letter. Even if a decision is backed by well-supported compromise, individual Lion Blades might take shortcuts or deviate from the decision to get the results they deem necessary. The Lion Blade most notorious for having this tendency is Dominicus Rell himself; although the charismatic leader might voice support for a broad decision or direction, he frequently gives his trusted agents different orders from those agreed upon by consensus. Other informal factions within the Lion Blades include the South-Facing Eyes (which insists that Taldor will never be safe until Qadira is eliminated as a national power), the Inward Step (which advocates for Taldan isolationism), and the Imperial Redeemers (which believes that the Lion Blades should focus on helping Taldor reunite the fragments of its empire and restore itself to its former strength and glory).

BECOMING A LION BLADE

In the first year at the Kitharodian Academy, students dabble in varied schools of acting, disguise, music, public speaking, and stagecraft; only in subsequent years can students focus on more specific areas of performance. This structured first-year curriculum allows the school's administrators to judge whether a student is worth approaching for a private interview about joining the Lion Blades (a handful of the best recruits infamously came into this interview already aware of the Lion Blades' existence and insisted upon membership). Many noble families take advantage of the broad, 1-year bardic program to give their scions a basic artistic education that will serve well in courtly circles; in fact, several families fund studies for only the first year. The resulting regular withdrawals from the academy help to provide cover for those trainees who join the Lion Blades in the Shadow Schools.

Most students invited to join a Shadow School do so. Those who do not—typically due to familial obligations that prevent a career as a spy—are sworn to secrecy and inducted into an underground network of support nicknamed the Lion Kith. The Lion Kith aren't required to undertake further training or any life-threatening missions, but they are often tapped to provide assistance to Lion Blades in the field, such as by providing a cover identity, sharing information about significant local figures, or leveraging social connections to obtain an invitation to an exclusive local event.

Once recruited, a Lion Blade transfers from the Kitharodian Academy to a Shadow School for training. Many trainees thrive on the new challenge, but some flounder when they find themselves among dedicated equals. Few of these trainees know anything more than the location of their own Shadow School and the identity of a few mentors and fellow students, to minimize the information they can give up if they defect or are interrogated. Trainees who can't handle the curriculum of the Shadow Schools are asked to leave and offered three choices: return to bardic training at the Kitharodian Academy with the Lion Blades paying their next year of tuition

fees, take employment in a permanent trade or position arranged by the Lion Blades and join the Lion Kith, or swear to silence and leave free of ties. Most failed trainees choose the security of the first two options.

A typical week for a Lion Blade in training involves the following lessons.

Ciphers: Trainees learn techniques for disguising, encoding, and decrypting messages. More advanced lessons include layering ciphers, creating an easier-to-break code with a false message and an actual message coded within it. Trainees also learn how to set up and operate dead drops, decoy messages, and other communication systems intended to misdirect and conceal actual information.

Crowd Training: Trainees run obstacle courses set up as crowd scenes, sometimes with mannequins standing in for people in the crowd and other times with fellow trainees and teachers forming a live, moving crowd. More advanced versions of the obstacle course drape the mannequins in bells and challenge trainees to get through the course without ringing one, or to practice moving quickly and surreptitiously while on an actual city street.



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Political Insight: All Lion Blades are taught Taldor's history from the organization's perspective, which involves a great deal of intrigue and secret histories of foiled plots, misinformation campaigns, and would-be assassinations. Lessons also cover political events of the present day, centered in general trends seething around the Lion Throne and other hotbeds of political intrigue. These lessons are carefully structured to avoid revealing any current Lion Blade activities, as such sensitive information is provided to trainees only as needed to assist with a specific mission. Experienced Lion Blades returning to Taldor after a long tour outside its borders regularly sit in on these political insight classes to refresh their knowledge and bring themselves up to date with current events.

Practical Anatomy: Lessons in pain centers, pressure points, and reflex responses allow trainees to hone their combat abilities and strike quickly and decisively. Lion Blades particularly value quick strikes that impede an opponent's movement, so this training focuses on joints and large muscle groups. Lion Blades also learn how to deliver debilitating strikes that slow a target's movement but do not cause lasting damage. Advanced lessons teach specific techniques for disabling the most common humanoid races.

Practical Disguise: In disguise lessons overseen by **Chezi Baken** (N gender-fluid human bard 5/rogue 3/Lion Blade 3), trainees are given a scene (such as "court of law," "marketplace," or "opera house") and are expected to turn up in a persona and costume that would be unremarkable in such a setting. Chezi grills trainees on their choices, with fine details presented for them to see where they can improve. For advanced lessons, Chezi identifies an actual location or social event, challenging trainees to appear in appropriate attire on their own, interact with a predetermined person or recover a particular item, and then leave without anyone present being aware that a stranger was among them.

Rumor Debriefing: Trainees are quizzed on what information they have picked up in the Shadow School and the surrounding community over the last week. Teachers spread false rumors throughout the Shadow School every few days and test trainees on the accuracy and thoroughness of the information they pick up. These quizzes allow the entire school to keep a close eye on local events, and they sometimes reveal genuine problems in the community before they become larger issues. Advanced lessons teach trainees how to start or spread a rumor without being pinned as its source.

Self-Hypnosis and Deprivation: Trainees learn meditative techniques and quiet chants to provide focus amid distracting crowds and to train their minds and bodies to exceed their normal capacities. Trainees are also taught techniques to handle fasting, pain, and sleep deprivation, to better prepare for difficulties that might

arise in the field. As many trainees come from privileged backgrounds, these lessons are often the hardest to learn, and teachers carefully judge the pace at which each trainee can handle these critical drills.

OPERATIONS

The Lion Blades maintain central leadership in the Shadow Schools beneath Oppara, although the specific members directing the organization's various operations change from year to year. The following examples show the breadth of the Lion Blades' operations inside and outside of Taldor.

Absalom: While the Lion Blades are not the only Taldan agents active in the City at the Center of the World, they form a good percentage of its spies and are often in key positions to control cells of less well-trained agents. Lion Blades operating secretly in Absalom mainly take up positions as bathhouse attendants, merchants, porters, or shopkeepers where a diverse array of people can approach them without seeming out of place. Although these agents transmit information from Taldan agents back to Oppara, they also attempt to intervene in other nation's espionage endeavors in the city, intercepting or redirecting vital communications.

Aelhill: This small town in the southern foothills of the Fog Peaks has, in recent years, given up on seeing even the most scant support from Taldan nobles more interested in court politics than in maintaining their distant holdings. The town has pulled itself out of a pit of heavy neglect by specializing in cleaning and restoring artifacts of the past, but a Galtan sentiment toward revolution has taken root there. The Lion Blades are sliding in to investigate and prevent this sentiment from turning to full-blown revolution, but as yet are not fully integrated into the town.

Cassomir: Every few years, the Lion Blades intervene to prevent bureaucrats from "expediting" the steaming process for timber to improve shipyard efficiency. Experienced shipwrights know that shortcuts in this process produce a ship that looks good but has flaws in its planks likely to shatter upon the first major stress; the Lion Blades heed this wisdom, whereas many shortsighted managers do not. The organization keeps an agent named **Vorkala Nemmit** (N female halfling bard 3/rogue 3/Lion Blade 1) in Cassomir as contact point and clerk handling the paperwork for Ethem Baler, Chief Shipwright of the Imperial Naval Shipyards. Sometimes Vorkala needs only a persuasive note to make an overeager bureaucrat back down; for more serious threats to Taldan shipping and defense, she arranges a team to infiltrate and explain forcefully—or even fatally—that producing ships quickly only to lose them is not in Taldor's best interests. Vorkala is perfectly content with letting Ethem take the credit for Taldor's high-quality vessels.

Cheliox: Long known for snapping up turncoat Lion Blades for its own use, Cheliox is also one of the nations the Lion Blades watch the most closely. To this end, a handful of double agents operate within Cheliox's borders, actively working against House Thrune. These brave agents pretend to be former Lion Blades, wait for Cheliox spymasters to recruit them, and then feed Chelish information back to Taldor. This is a particularly dangerous role, as Cheliox is known to preserve exquisite tortures for traitors.

Jondale: Twelve years ago, **Rytesh Cairnhand** (N male dwarf investigator^{ACG 7}) earned a title through his work for the Taldan senate, but he has recently started ascending through courtly circles at a rate the Lion Blades find suspicious. As Rytesh is a newcomer, the Lion Blades have less information on him than they do on more established nobles and families—an imbalance they are correcting as quickly as they can. While one aspect of the multi-pronged investigation leverages court connections in Oppara for more information, another team is digging into Rytesh's home and background in Jondale, a village approximately 2 days' travel south of Dalaston, but residents seem curiously unwilling to speak of the dwarf's past.

Maheto: Years ago, a feud between two noble families abruptly escalated from words to weapons, requiring the Lion Blades to set up a discreet chain of assassinations and blackmail to contain the conflict. The Lion Blades have since maintained a large, secret presence in Maheto, with agents in nearly every forge and foundry of the city. These agents primarily collect and transmit shipment information; as Maheto is the principal source of manufactured weapons in Taldor, they track weapons orders very carefully.

Oppara, Imperial Square: Numerous experienced Lion Blades constantly circulate among the courts and salons of the empire's nobility, infiltrating the social circles of junior members in the various factions vying for control. These junior members are the principal sources of information and influence that the Lion Blades leverage, as faction leaders rely on their trusted subordinates more often than outsiders. The most resourceful and talented of these junior faction members

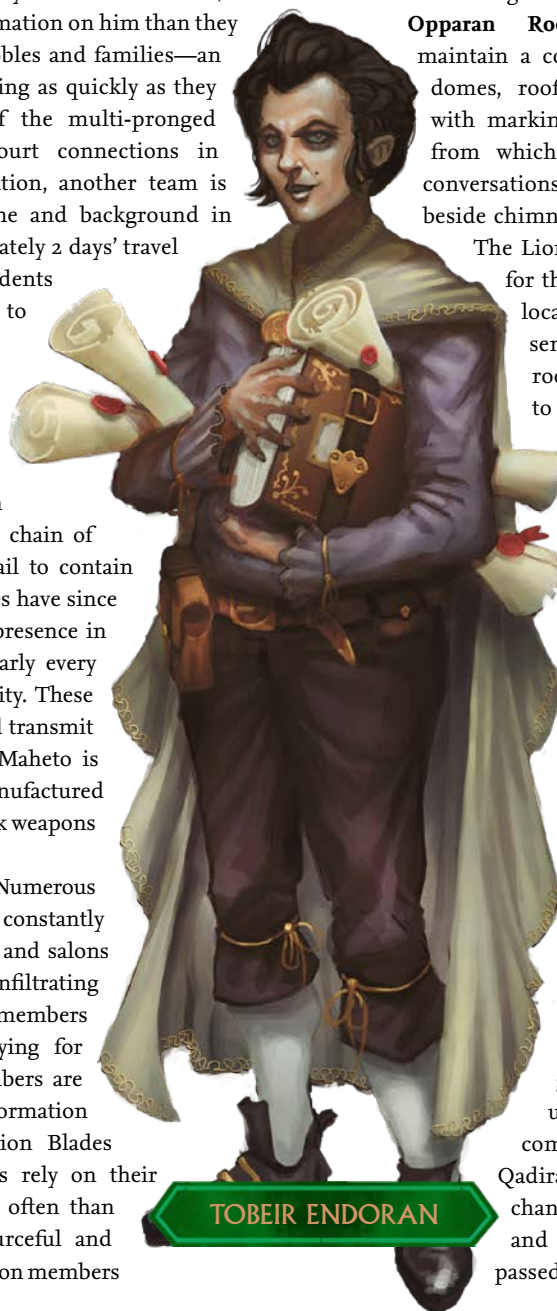
often make good Lion Blades themselves, and these promising recruits are encouraged to enroll for a year at the Kitharodian Academy for surreptitious observation.

Oppara, Westgate: The Lion Blades maintain a constant presence in Oppara's largest dock district, keeping a particularly close eye on international arrivals and departures. Lion Blades have infiltrated the dockworkers' and sailors' taverns posing as information brokers, sifting through the talk there for any hints of foreign spies. Some spies coming through Westgate simply vanish, others are warned away, and a rare few are courted as double agents. Although the Lion Blades don't expect to catch every foreign spy or assassin coming through the busy dock district, the information trade is brisk enough that missing a spy is rare.

Opparan Rooftops: The Lion Blades maintain a constantly updated map of the domes, rooftops, and spires of Oppara, with markings that detail the best places from which a spy can overhear private conversations or strike at a target, such as beside chimneys and below shadowed eaves.

The Lion Blades use this Topside Map for their own missions, as well as to locate rivals. New recruits are often sent to survey and map a section of rooftops without being seen, both to hone their observational skills and to keep the Topside Map up to date.

Zimar: A military stronghold with a constant eye on Qadira, Zimar is also the control center of the Lion Blades' border operations. **Tobeir Enodran** (NG nonbinary half-elf bard 3/rogue 4/Lion Blade 2), has made a friend and an ally of Gulreesh, the "otyugh king" of the city's sprawling Undercity, so that courteous message-couriers and spies have easy access to most points in the city. In addition to leading the local Lion Blades, Tobeir also serves as a high-ranking clerk in the Taldan Phalanx, giving the Lion Blades nearly unlimited access to military communiqués. Information from Qadira and along the border is channeled through Zimar, collated and summarized by Tobeir, and passed forward to Oppara.



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"I didn't know where Andra and Gammel had gone. They were supposed to be on watch until midnight and then wake me up for my shift. Midnight was two hours gone when I woke up myself, with neither of them in sight. I assumed they'd snuck off somewhere together and was glad the caravan master hadn't been the first to spy them gone or we'd all be in a world of trouble. I went off to find them on my own, but it had turned cloudy and there wasn't much moonlight. I saw what looked like a faint blue glow from a dense knot of vegetation, and then I heard a wailing cry of pain. I wasn't sure whether it was Andra or Gammel, but it sounded like it could have been either of them. Something moved in front of the light—something bigger than a horse, with a reflective black shell. Whatever it was, it made the same chilling wail, and I knew it wasn't anything that was hurt, and it sure wasn't either of my friends."

—Helgin Broadhand, caravan guard

The bestiary for this volume of the War for the Crown Adventure Path details a monstrous shrieking insect, an intellect-sapping aberration, two kinds of dangerous flora, the ghost of a vengeful arsonist, and a combat-hungry rakshasa.

DANGEROUS CITY

“City in the Lion’s Eye” has the PCs exploring a large, fortified city at the border between Taldor and Qadira. Although Zimar is currently under Taldan control, it rests on a sprawling series of subterranean chambers and passages that give assassins, monsters, and spies access to the city. During their time in Zimar, the PCs have a chance to encounter a number of enemies lurking in the shadows of the city.

The Zimar Encounters table presented here features challenges the PCs might face beyond those in the adventure. Each hour the PCs spend traveling around Zimar during the day, they have a 30% chance of a random encounter; at night, this chance increases to 40%. If a random encounter occurs, roll d% and run the encounter listed for the result. The PCs should have at most two random encounters in a 24-hour period.

Since this adventure spans a range of character levels, some random encounters might be too trivial or too difficult for the PCs. In these cases, roll again or choose a different encounter.

Desperate Ratfolk (CR 11): A large clan of ratfolk has been displaced from its warren in the undercity and needs to relocate. The PCs spot a ratfolk expedition leader (*Pathfinder RPG Monster Codex* 180), a ratfolk chemist (*Monster Codex* 182), and four ratfolk troubleshooters (*Monster Codex* 178) scouting for a new warren. The ratfolk want to ensure they aren’t discovered and initially want to eliminate the PCs as witnesses. The ratfolk aren’t evil; if the PCs try to negotiate, the ratfolk break off their attacks but insist the PCs keep the ratfolk migration to themselves.

Incendiary Agitators (CR 12): A dilettante (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 151) and two street artists (*NPC Codex* 31) have been stirring up anti-Qadiran sentiment with hateful graffiti in Zimar’s public spaces. The PCs encounter the agitators defacing a historic Qadiran building with racist caricatures. If the PCs intervene, the agitators become violent, attempting to “make an example” of the PCs.

Misinformed Assassins (CR 11): An operative (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 229) and two rutterkins (*Villain Codex* 227) are pretending to be a noble woman and her servants. The three are assassins from Oppara who have come to Zimar looking for their target, but the information they received is incomplete, and the assassins aren’t certain how to proceed with their mission. They mistakenly assume the PCs either are agents of their target (a miserly half-orc banker whose name is either “Pakk” or “Pokk”) or know where their target is. They attempt to extract the information from the PCs, with violence if necessary, and

ZIMAR ENCOUNTERS			
d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–4	2 roofgardens	9	<i>Taldor, the First Empire</i> 63
5–9	1d3 denizens of Leng	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 82
10–13	1 hyaleth	10	See page 84
14–17	1d3 ogre mages	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 221
18–23	1 pyrogeist	10	See page 88
24–28	Predator’s ruse	10	See below
29–33	Desperate ratfolk	11	See below
34–38	1 harionago	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 149
39–43	1d3+1 lamia matriarchs	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 175
44–48	Misinformed assassins	11	See below
49–53	1d6 xenopterids	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 283
54–59	1d4 dark nagas	11	<i>Bestiary</i> 211
60–65	2d3 baetrioivs	12	<i>Taldor, the First Empire</i> 56
66–70	Incendiary agitators	12	See below
71–75	1 sayona	12	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 231
76–81	Street performers	12	See below
82–85	1d4+1 alps	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 7
86–90	1 devilbound sorcerer	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 56
91–95	1 morrigna	13	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 219
96–100	1 zalyakavat	13	See page 90

they don’t believe any protestations that the PCs don’t know who they’re talking about.

Predator’s Ruse (CR 10): From a secluded lair in the undercity, a masked murderer (*Monster Codex* 85) and her two loyal ghoul stalkers (*Monster Codex* 82) sneak into the more heavily trafficked areas of Zimar to kidnap and devour the living. The masked murderer poses as a clueless visiting aristocrat lost in the city after dark. He offers 10 gp for getting him “un-misdirected” by helping him retrace his steps. The meandering route passes an isolated doorway where the ghoul stalkers lurk. The PCs might be the ghouls’ next target, or they might witness a kidnapping and pursue the ghouls through the crumbling undercity back to their lair.

Street Performers (CR 12): The PCs come across a group of street performers plying their trade in front of a small crowd; the performers have recently left a circus to embrace a life of crime. The stage magician (*NPC Codex* 204) and strongwoman (*Villain Codex* 34) work to keep the crowd’s attention, six acrobats (*Villain Codex* 36) caper among the distracted crowd, picking pockets. Recognizing the PCs as capable and canny onlookers who might pose them trouble, the stage magician and strongwoman incorporate the PCs into the act, inviting feats of showy magic or brute strength. These two grandstanding criminals try to keep the heroes distracted while the pickpockets do their work. If the PCs uncover the troupe’s crimes, the troupe becomes enraged and attacks in retaliation.

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CHITIKIN

Eighteen segmented legs support this long arthropod's jet-black carapace, the front two of which are scythe-like claws, and its slender antennae end in glowing green bulbs.

CHITIKIN

CR 4



XP 1,200

N Large vermin

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size)

hp 32 (5d8+10)

Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3

Immune mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

Melee 2 claws +6 (1d6+4), sting +6 (1d6+4 plus paralysis)

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

Special Attacks paralysis (1 round, DC 14), shriek

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** —, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 19 (can't be tripped)

Skills Climb +12, Perception +2

SQ compression

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or warm forests or underground

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Shriek (Ex) As a standard action, a chitikin can rub its antennae together to emit a terrifying scream. Each creature within 50 feet must succeed at a DC 12 Will saving throw or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. Whether or not it succeeds at its save, the creature is immune to the chitikin's shriek for 24 hours. This is a sonic, mind-affecting, fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Stalking the edges of civilization, this chitinous predator uses a unique strategy to attract prey: it mimics the screams of its intended victims. When a curious or valorous creature investigates, the chitikin erupts in ambush, amplifying its shriek to terrify its meal. Villagers near the Verduran Forest and World's Edge Mountains have countless stories revolving around a lonely traveler who hears someone screaming in pain, either in a cave or otherwise off the beaten path, only to investigate and find this horror waiting for him.

At a glance, a chitikin might be mistaken for a giant black centipede, with its 15-foot body resting on 18 spindly legs. But unlike its smaller, simpler cousins, a chitikin also has a stinger dripping with venom and two large scythe-like claws. Above its hinged jaw are two glowing bulbs on constantly flicking antennae.

A full-grown adult chitikin is 15 feet long and weighs 2,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

A larval chitikin at first appears to be nothing but a large centipede. It grows quickly, and within a few weeks it wraps itself in a cocoon-like casing, soon emerging several times larger. This process repeats periodically during a chitikin's life cycle, and at later stages, its cocoon might be mistaken for that of the rare giant blue moth; a potent alchemical ingredient. An alchemist who attempts to harvest such a chrysalis often finds he has made a fatal mistake when the chitikins emerges from its cocoon in a ravenous frenzy. The typical adult chitikin molts four times in its life, but there are rumors of a gargantuan specimen that underwent a fifth molting to grow to a fearsome size.

Chitikins lure their prey by rubbing their antennae together, producing a sound not unlike the incoherent wailing of an innocent in desperate pain. When their prey gets closer, chitikins rise up and emit terrifying screams intended to unnerve their victims. Sages debate whether this behavior evolved naturally, but many layfolk who have survived encounters with the monsters claim they recognized their loved ones' voices and therefore suspect something more sinister at work. Some scholars hypothesize that some of the folktales in small towns warning travelers not to stop to help an injured stranger are cautionary stories based on chitikin attacks.

Chitikins are careful hunters, preferring to ambush prey they have lured to their lairs. The creatures' multitude of legs and large claws grants them the ability to climb with ease, and they use this mobility to their advantage, clinging to cavern ceilings with most of their legs and reaching down to slash at prey below. In forests, chitikins scramble rapidly between tree trunks and sting targets with their tails, paralyzing the victims long enough to efficiently dismember them.

Despite their brutal hunting methods, chitikins seem to have a compulsion with cleanliness. They suck away every trace of blood and entrails from their kills, leaving bones that they then crush with their mandibles until even the bones disintegrate. When not hunting or lying in ambush, chitikins repeatedly groom their antennae, claws, and mandibles, and polish their carapaces until they are a bright, gleaming black.

This grooming behavior becomes more pronounced when a chitikin is ready to lay its eggs. First, it lays them on a wall, dangling off a tree, or in some other elevated location where they remain in stasis. At this stage the egg sac looks almost like a bag of marbles or gems, and the eggs emit a faint blue luminescence. The chitikin cleans the sac constantly, protecting it from scavengers and hunters. If the egg sac touches the ground, the chitikin flies into a rage, attacking any creatures nearby and sometimes chasing them for several miles, her brood forgotten. After this lengthy aerial incubation, the chitikin brings freshly killed prey to its nesting site and

carefully implants its eggs in the corpse. After about a month, the eggs hatch and the chitikin larvae feast on the liquefied remains.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Chitikins lead mostly solitary lives at the fringes of civilization, close enough to lure prey but not so close that they attract undue attention. Their nests are often in thick forest canopies, mountain crags, and shallow caves. It's not uncommon for towns near swaths of wild territory to be terrorized by a chitikin for months as it skitters around the periphery, luring unsuspecting townspeople to their doom.

While its appearance can be unsettling, the most terrifying aspect of this predator is its ability to emulate humanoid screams. The particular scream a chitikin produces is influenced by what it hunts; a chitikin that preys on human villagers sounds much different from one that scours caves for goblin victims. On rare occasions, chitikins living near larger cities learn to mimic the cries of domesticated pets or livestock rather than people, as imitating the latter has the undesirable consequence of summoning city guards, who often prove too troublesome as prey.

While chitikins are rarely found with others of their own kind, except for brief encounters to mate, they do appear to have an odd fondness for the giant spiders that frequently share their environs. Accounts exist of chitikins grooming such spiders, and the arachnids seem to tolerate the attention. Ettercaps have also been known to share larger lairs with a chitikin, though they do not appear to get the same attention—and when a chitikin is ready to lay eggs, it drives away or eats any ettercaps in the vicinity. Likely thanks to these uneasy truces, adventurers have found webs so often in chitikin lairs that it's widely believed the creatures are capable of spinning the webs themselves, but the closest a chitikin comes to making a web is vomiting up the sticky brown goo it uses to make its cocoon just before molting.

Chitikins prefer damp, dark places for their lairs. Caves are preferable, but they also

live in forests and jungles under the darkest parts of the canopy. The creatures' restless pacing eventually reduces any soil or dirt to very fine powder, and their fastidious nature means there is no blood or gore to betray their presence. A chitikin lair in a forest is often marked by a copse of trees whose trunks are marred by rings gouged into the wood at a variety of heights—a result of the creature's constant movement and a telltale sign of a chitikin's presence to the knowledgeable or wary.

Chitikin hunting methods inevitably cause the vermin's territory to become less and less fruitful as locals learn to avoid the paths and places from which few lone travelers return. As a result, chitikins move their lairs every few years, migrating by night until they find a suitable new location. Creatures sharing a chitikin's lair sometimes come along on these nocturnal migrations, forming a nightmarish convoy with spiders large and small that ride on the monster's back or scurble alongside. It is often during these migrations that chitikins encounter another of their kind. If the two are not a mating pair, they fight to the death in a vicious, screaming battle.



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HYALETH

This giant translucent leech has three squirming tentacles around an orifice on one end and a stinger on the other.

HYALETH

CR 10

XP 9,600

N Large aberration (aquatic)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., thoughtsense 60 ft.; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +11 natural, -1 size)

hp 127 (15d8+60)

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

DR 10/slashing; **Immune** acid; **Resist** cold 10

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft. (wet earth or saturated stone only), swim 30 ft.; aquiferous glide

Melee sting +16 (1d8+5 plus poison and probe intellect), 3 tentacles +14 (1d6+2 plus grab)

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

Special Attacks adaptive digestion, engulf (DC 22), poison

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 15, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +17 (+21 grapple); **CMD** 30 (can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Focus (sting, tentacle)

Skills Escape Artist +20, Perception +20, Stealth +22 (+26 when swimming), Survival +20, Swim +31; **Racial**

Modifiers +4 Stealth when swimming

Languages Aklo, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ compression

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate fresh water or underground

Organization solitary, squad (2-9), or colony (10-200 and 1 hyaeth queen)

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Adaptive Digestion (Ex) A hyaeth can alter the makeup of its digestive secretions to suit one of two different purposes. It can switch between secretions as a swift action, and each secretion has a different effect on creatures the hyaeth has engulfed with its engulf extraordinary ability. The hyaeth can choose one of the following effects, and it must apply the same effect to all creatures it has engulfed. A hyaeth can affect engulfed creatures with only one of the following effects per round.

Digest Body: Engulfed creatures take 2d6 points of acid damage and must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or take 1d2 points of Constitution damage. A creature reduced to negative hit points by this effect is dissolved entirely.

Digest Thoughts: Engulfed creatures that are awake must succeed at a DC 21 Will save or take 1d2 points of

Intelligence damage and fall asleep for 1 hour. Each time a creature fails its save against this effect, as a free action the hyaeth can retrieve one answer to a specific question as though sifting through the creature's surface thoughts with *detect thoughts*. Alternatively, the hyaeth can attempt one Knowledge check in a skill in which the engulfed creature has at least 1 rank, using the creature's current total skill modifier. This is a mind-affecting effect. The secretions used to digest thoughts are foamy and oxygenated, allowing engulfed creatures to breathe normally while it is in effect. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

Aquiferous Glide (Su) A hyaeth can travel through aquifers and sodden earth with ease, even while it has creatures engulfed within its body. This functions like the earth glide universal monster rule, except the hyaeth can move through only earth and stone saturated with water. While a hyaeth travels in this manner, creatures it has engulfed that are unable to burrow cannot escape except through magical means.

Engulf (Ex) A hyaeth can engulf Medium or smaller creatures, but it loses its compression special quality and its racial bonus on Stealth checks when it has a creature engulfed. Engulfed creatures are subject to the hyaeth's adaptive digestion.

Poison (Ex) Sting—injury; *save* Fort DC 21; *frequency* 1/round for 2 rounds; *effect* paralysis for 1d3 rounds (the duration of the paralysis is cumulative with each failed save); *cure* 1 save. The save DC is Constitution-based. When a creature fails its initial saving throw against the poison delivered by a hyaeth's sting attack, the hyaeth learns the creature's Intelligence score.

Hyaeths are translucent, tubular aberrations hailing from deep underground waters. They occasionally travel to the surface, usually during heavy downpours, emerging into lakes, streams, swamps, and sometimes wells. Inquisitive and aggressive, hyaeths come to the surface to explore and to hunt sentient humanoids. Despite their large size, hyaeth can swim and hide in surprisingly shallow waters, allowing them to remain undetected while approaching their prey. Once it closes in on a target, a hyaeth uses its stinger to deliver a paralyzing neurotoxin before engulfing its victim within its elastic body. Though hyaeths cannot breathe air, they can leave the water and slither along the ground for short periods of time.

An average hyaeth is 16 feet long and weighs about 1,300 pounds.

ECOLOGY

When not exploring the surface, hyaeths inhabit water-filled caverns and lakes deep underground. It is here that the strange creatures are spawned, hatching from soft-shelled eggs laid by hyaeth queens. In some ways, these caverns are like the hives of social insects, with

numerous hyaleths coming and going in a constant stream of activity. Some hyaleths are tasked with caring for the eggs, while others defend the colony or gather food and knowledge for their queen.

Hyaleths share a rudimentary hive mind and prefer to communicate telepathically, although other creatures find their strange and erratic communications difficult to comprehend. Hyaleths aren't evil, but their little-understood motivations and aggressive behavior frequently put them at odds with other races.

Hyaleths eat almost anything they can catch, as their digestive acids can break down nearly any kind of material. Even more than food, hyaleths desire knowledge, which they most often acquire by absorbing the thoughts of creatures they engulf. Hyaleths simply digest any unintelligent or dim-witted creatures they engulf, but they place intelligent creatures into a deep sleep, reading the victim's thoughts as it falls into slumber. A hyaleth derives great pleasure from drawing out this knowledge, and it subtly changes color while doing so, its transparent body rippling through several hues in delight. When a hyaleth identifies and engulfs a creature with exceptional intelligence, it returns to the deep to deliver the victim to a gigantic hyaleth queen.

Hyaleths over 40 years old gradually lose their flexibility, their translucent bodies becoming cloudy and opaque. Most aging hyaleths return to their colony to be devoured by their queen, but hyaleths prevented from doing so gradually solidify, becoming lifeless lumps of resinous flesh.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Hyaleths are social creatures, and few hyaleths enjoy being away from the comfort of a colony for long. Although hyaleth egg-tenders and guards are considered valuable to a colony, the colony's most successful scouts and explorers enjoy the highest status, second only to the queen.

When a thriving hyaleth colony grows beyond a certain size, the colony's queen lays a special egg that will hatch and grow into another hyaleth queen. A squad of specially appointed hyaleths then takes the egg to a new location many miles away to begin a new colony and serve as the new queen's guards and scouts.

Hyaleths have a strained relationship with algholthus. The two races aren't related, despite their similarities, and hyaleths aren't as tyrannical or scheming. Although hyaleths are eager to acquire even a fraction of the immense racial knowledge all algholthus share, aboleths are too large for hyaleths to consume and too imperious to

share knowledge as equals. Algholthus treat hyaleths with the same disdain as they hold for all other races, subjugating entire hyaleth colonies when it suits their inscrutable purposes.

HYALETH QUEENS

Hyaleth queens are larger than normal hyaleths and they have highly superior intellects. They can live for hundreds of years, constantly harvesting vast amounts of information from a continual stream of creatures brought to them by hyaleth scouts. Hyaleth queens are repositories of scattered bits of history and other knowledge surpassing most mortal sages, but given their species' strange nature and remote habitats, learning the secrets held by a hyaleth queen is extremely difficult.

A hyaleth queen is a Gargantuan hyaleth advanced by adding a +8 racial bonus to all of its mental ability scores, and at least 5 Hit Dice. A hyaleth queen can engulf Large or smaller creatures and can automatically engulf sleeping or helpless creatures expelled by an adjacent hyaleth. A hyaleth queen can selectively apply either option of its adaptive digestion ability to each creature it has engulfed, judging whether each can add to its eclectic store of knowledge or is suitable only as nourishment.



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PLANT MONSTERS OF TALDOR

Except for the Verduran Forest in northwestern Taldor, the country is largely covered in scrublands. Grasses, shrubs, and plants with underground stems, such as onions, dominate the local vegetation. Taldor also has several large rivers, with unique species of plants evolved to grow in and alongside the water. The following monsters are examples of dangerous plant creatures found in Taldor.

BLOOD ALGAE SWARM

An oily substance in the water surrounds this seething red mass of wormlike lumps of algae.

BLOOD ALGAE SWARM

CR 8



XP 4,800

N Diminutive plant (swarm)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +4 natural, +4 size)
hp 97 (13d8+39)

Fort +11, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities swarm traits; **Immune** weapon damage, plant traits

OFFENSE

Speed swim 20 ft.

Melee swarm (3d6 plus distraction)

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

Special Attacks algal bloom, cling (DC 18), distraction (DC 18)

STATISTICS

Str 3, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +9; **CMB** —; **CMD** —

Skills Swim +11

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or warm rivers

Organization solitary or colony (2–6)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Algal Bloom (Ex) Once every 2d4 rounds as a standard action while underwater, a blood algae swarm can release a cloud of red pigment in a 10-foot radius centered on the swarm. In this area, the water turns blood red and becomes opaque, blocking vision as *obscuring mist*. The pigment persists for 3 rounds before dispersing. The pigment colors the skin and clothes of any creature within the area a blood-red color for 1d4 hours, at which time the pigment fades. Scrubbing for several minutes with strong alcohol also removes the pigment.

Cling (Ex) If a creature leaves a blood algae swarm's square, several of the squirming creatures continue to cling to the victim. A creature with blood algae clinging to it takes 2d6 points of damage at the end of its turn each round. The creature can remove the algae with a successful DC 18 Reflex save as a full-round action. Any amount of damage from an area effect destroys all clinging algae, and the clinging algae also drop off automatically if the victim

leaves the water or moves more than 30 feet from the blood algae swarm. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Blood algae evolved from a species of river algae in the Jalrune River and has since spread to other rivers in Taldor and Qadira by adhering to the hulls of sailing ships. Individual creatures in a blood algae swarm consist of cells within a fat, gelatinous, wormlike matrix 4 inches long. A swarm of blood algae is at least 10 feet wide and consists of hundreds or thousands of these wormlike organisms.

Blood algae colonies form in river bends and places where the water flows slowly or forms stagnant pools seasonally. Multiple swarms make up a blood algae colony, which can spread across an entire river and writhe along its banks. Individual swarms rarely travel far from their colony unless flushed away by a flood or drawn away by a large log or river vessel—although a blood algae swarm may drift downstream when food is scarce to find a more plentiful area of the river.

Blood algae swarms are diurnal, floating toward the water's surface in sunny weather and sinking to the bottom at night. These creatures absorb some nutrients directly from the water, but to survive longer periods of time, they must feed on living creatures such as crustaceans, fish, or mammals. Blood algae attach themselves to their prey's skin, inserting needlelike protrusions in the flesh, through which they can feed.

Blood algae reproduce both sexually and asexually—although a swarm usually uses the latter method only when recovering from losses caused by environmental dangers or predation. A swarm of blood algae consists of a roughly equal number of male and female individuals, but members of the same swarm don't usually reproduce with one another. Instead, a swarm seeks out another swarm for a violent-looking mating ritual, which churns the water with blood-red pigment.

Because blood algae swarms can color the water red, there are many superstitious beliefs in Taldor about evil spirits that turn the water into blood to punish people.

CARRION CREEPER

This thick mass of vegetation has several sturdy tendrils studded with long thorns and rippling with strength.

CARRION CREEPER

CR 10



XP 9,600

N Large plant

Init +7; **Senses** low-light vision, tremorsense 30 ft.;

Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+7 Dex, +8 natural, –1 size)

hp 133 (14d8+70)

Fort +13, **Ref** +11, **Will** +5

Immune plant traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee 4 vines +17 (2d6+4/19–20 plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks brutal pull, efficient grappler, whirlwind of thorns

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 25, **Con** 18, **Int** 4, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +18 (+26 grapple); **CMD** 32 (can't be tripped)

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (vine), Skill Focus (Stealth), Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (vine)

Skills Climb +16, Perception +9, Stealth +14

Languages Sylvan (can't speak)

SQ freeze

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests or plains

Organization solitary or tangle (2–4)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Brutal Pull (Ex) When a carrion creeper successfully initiates a grapple and moves its target to an adjacent space, the target takes 2d8 points of bludgeoning damage for every 5 feet it moves.

Efficient Grappler (Ex) A carrion creeper takes only a –10 penalty on its combat maneuver check to make and maintain a grapple on a foe when using only a vine rather than its whole body to grapple. It receives a +8 bonus on combat maneuver checks to maintain a grapple rather than the normal +4 bonus granted by the grab ability.

Vines (Ex) A carrion creeper's thorny vines are primary natural weapons that deal piercing and bludgeoning damage and have a reach of 15 feet.

Whirlwind of Thorns (Ex) Once every 1d4 rounds as a full-round action, a carrion creeper can shake its body to launch thorns in a 20-foot-radius burst centered on itself. All creatures within the burst except carrion creepers take 8d6 points of piercing damage (Reflex DC 21 half). As part of the full-round action, the carrion creeper can also attempt to maintain its hold on a creature it has grappled. The save DC is Constitution-based.

These carnivorous plants developed from ordinary creeping vines and can scuttle along the ground or up trees and walls. Carrion creepers grow up to 10 feet long and weigh up to 500 pounds.

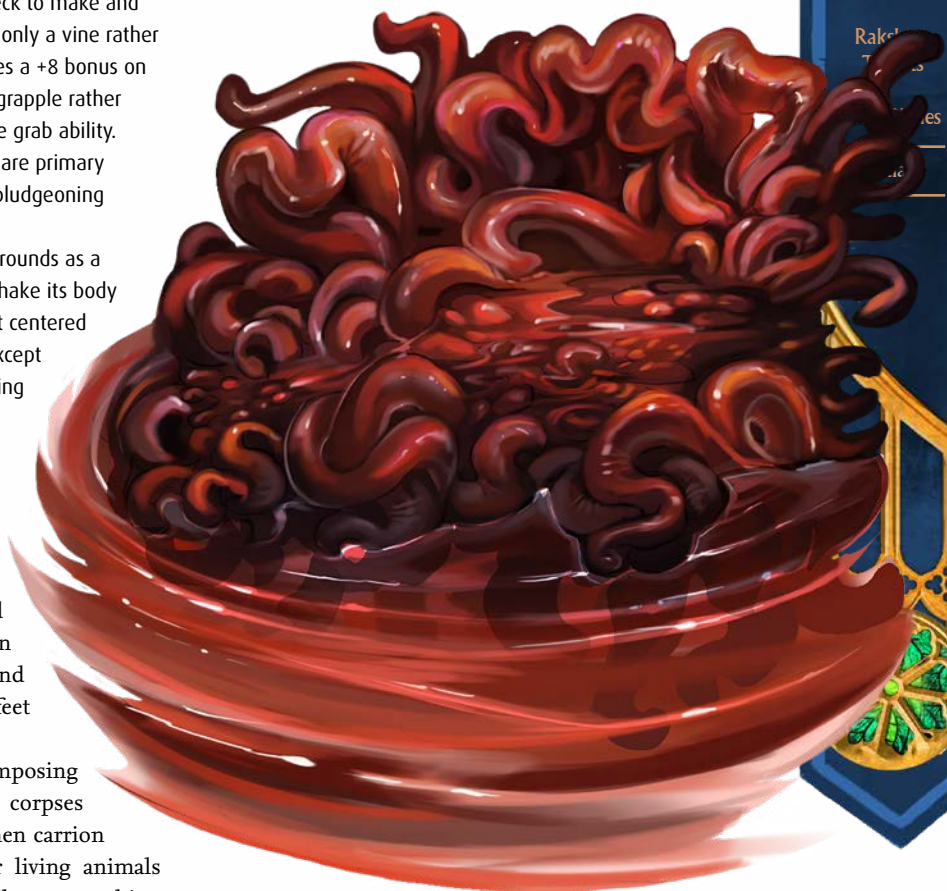
Carrion creepers feed on decomposing carcasses, sinking their tendrils into corpses and leaching liquids and nutrients. When carrion is unavailable, they set ambushes for living animals and even intelligent creatures, seeing them as nothing

more than sources of nutrition. Carrion creepers don't maintain lairs; instead, these nomadic creatures find trees, walls, or wells to cling to while resting or patiently waiting in ambush. When on the ground, they move by rolling along like a tumbleweed, and, when resting, they resemble thorny shrubs rather than vines.

Carrion creepers are genderless, which means they don't flower like many ordinary creeping vines do. Instead, as a carrion creeper consumes carcasses, it continues to grow until it splits into two or more smaller carrion creepers, which usually hunt together until a shortage of food forces them to separate.

Carrion creepers use their ability to sense vibrations in the ground not only to detect prey but also as a form of communication. Thanks to their rudimentary intelligence, they are capable of using simple hunting tactics, such as surrounding their prey.

Carrion creepers have little in the way of culture, but they are sometimes inexplicably drawn to great stone monoliths, jealously guarding them as if in some crude form of religious veneration. Such carrion creepers occasionally scratch symbols into nearby dirt or even stone, forming basic Sylvan characters for “go away” or “protected place,” but they seem otherwise unfamiliar with the concept of writing.



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PYROGEIST

A malevolent face emerges from within this roiling mass of ghostly fire. Several smaller faces writhe within the flames.

PYROGEIST

CR 10



XP 9,600

CE Large undead (incorporeal)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 23, flat-footed 16 (+7 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, -1 size)

hp 126 (11d8+77)

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

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; **Immune** fire, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 50 ft. (perfect)

Melee incorporeal touch +13 (10d6)

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

Special Attacks breath weapon (30-ft. cone, 10d6 negative energy damage, Reflex DC 22 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), pyrokinetic whirlwind (3/day, 10–30 ft. high, 10d6 negative energy damage, DC 15), soul consumption

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +18)

At will—*ghost sound* (DC 17), *hold portal*, *mage hand*

3/day—*major image* (DC 20)

1/day—*nightmare* (DC 22)

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 23, **Con** —, **Int** 17, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 33 (can't be tripped)

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Skill Focus (Intimidate)

Skills Bluff +18, Fly +26, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (engineering) +14, Perception +23, Sense Motive +23, Stealth +16

Languages Common

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Su) A pyrogeist can spit a cone of spectral fire that damages living creatures. When a creature fails a saving throw against the pyrogeist's breath weapon, the creature's flesh ignites in ghostly flames for 2d6 rounds or until the pyrogeist is destroyed. While the creature is affected by the flames, it is illuminated as though under the effects of *faerie fire* and takes 1d6 points of negative energy damage at the start of each turn. Subsequent breath weapon attacks don't increase this damage but can extend the duration. An affected creature can attempt a DC 22 Fortitude save as a full-round action to quench the flames. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Pyrokinetic Whirlwind (Su) A pyrogeist can transform into a spectral whirlwind (as per the universal monster rule) to

entrap its victims. Creatures caught in the whirlwind take 10d6 points of negative energy damage each round. A pyrokinetic whirlwind does not create a swirling cloud of debris when it touches the ground.

Rejuvenation (Su) A pyrogeist that is destroyed restores itself after 2d4 days, forming near its mortal remains. To permanently destroy a pyrogeist, its corpse must receive proper burial rites, including a sprinkling of holy water.

Soul Consumption (Su) The spirit of a creature that dies while subject to a pyrogeist's pyrokinetic whirlwind is trapped within the pyrogeist (as per *soul bind*) until the pyrogeist is destroyed or chooses to set it free. The spirit remains trapped whether or not the pyrogeist is in whirlwind form.

Pyrogeists are the burning ghosts of arsonists and pyromaniacs who were killed in the fires they started. Whether the pyrogeists' deaths were accidents or suicides, the horribly painful and often humiliating deaths create pyrogeists from the arsonist's or pyromaniac's soul. A pyrogeist is a mass of spectral fire that emits no heat and damages only living creatures. A large face floats upon its surface, resembling a twisted mockery of the person the pyrogeist was when alive. A pyrogeist haunts the area surrounding its remains and is consumed with a desire to immolate others. A pyrogeist most often haunts its victims with terrifying illusions before engulfing them and adding their souls to the creatures' perpetual torment.

ECOLOGY

The form of a pyrogeist flows and roils, its large face appearing and disappearing along with the faces of the other souls the pyrogeist has consumed. The ghostly inferno changes colors based on the pyrogeist's mood. Most often an angry red and orange, as of flickering flame, the pyrogeist's hues might shift to an envious green, a calm blue, or a haughty violet at a moment's notice. Although a pyrogeist rarely chooses to communicate with the living except when mocking or haunting them, when it chooses to speak, its voice sounds like roaring and crackling flames.

Pyrogeists are obsessed with sharing their torment with the living, but they are too clever and sadistic to simply immolate their foes. Pyrogeists prefer to first drive their victims into paranoia and insanity. When feasible, they first start with minor events that could be explained as accidents or unfortunate events, such as by using *mage hand* to push flammable items near open flames or *ghost sound* to emulate the crackling of a fire in another room. When the pyrogeist's victim starts to doubt its senses, the pyrogeist inflicts increasingly horrid nightmares that always involve fire. These nightmares usually culminate in people or places the victim loves being set ablaze, often by the victim's own hand. The pyrogeist then uses its *major image* spell-like ability

to bring these nightmares into the waking world, causing its victim to see charred corpses or dancing flames wherever it looks. Eventually, the pyrogeist moves in for the kill, destroying its victim with whirling spectral fire that annihilates flesh and bone but leaves clothing and other items intact. A pyrogeist can make its victim's torment endless by consuming the victim's soul, creating another face that flows across the pyrogeist's churning form. Pyrogeists are reluctant to release souls it has entrapped, usually doing so only as part of a bargain that ensures its ongoing existence or promises additional souls in exchange.

Pyrogeists draw pleasure from burning victims with their ghostly fire, but they are aware that this manner of death leaves distinctive clues for ghost hunters. As the pyrogeist's attacks deal negative energy damage, they cannot harm objects, clothing, or equipment. To cover its tracks, the most devious pyrogeists—especially those that have been destroyed and rejuvenated in the past—ignite normal fires to hide their tracks. Although a pyrogeist might knock over an oil lamp or shove a flaming fireplace log with its *mage hand* spell-like ability, it prefers to have its victims set the blaze on its behalf, perhaps promising an end to their psychic torment in exchange for an act of arson. Identifying a pyrogeist's supernatural burn marks is much more difficult after a mundane fire has swept through a location.

Pyrogeists choose their victims based on their proclivities in life and the circumstances of their death. Some pyrogeists prefer to target victims of certain classes or occupations, or by targeting buildings of specific architectural styles or colors. Pyrogeists that formed from murderous psychopaths often continue gruesome trends in undeath, such as collecting trophies from their victims or leaving certain calling cards at crime scenes. Other pyrogeists spend their time forcing victims to recreate the circumstances of their own deaths.

Putting a pyrogeist to rest permanently requires burial rites be performed with at least some piece of the pyrogeist's mortal remains. As those remains have usually been reduced to little more than ash and bone fragments, they often go unnoticed among the smoldering wreckage of a destroyed building. A pyrogeist senses when its mortal remains are disturbed and usually moves quickly to prevent anyone from disturbing them.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Pyrogeists most often form in heavily populated cities, where structure fires are more common and the anonymity of crowded streets allow arsonists and pyromaniacs to blend in as they do their wicked work. These pyrogeists have no contact with their former



families or friends, but they sometimes seek out their old acquaintances to become their first victims. Pyrogeists can also originate in remote villages or in the wilderness, usually during forest fires or other calamities triggered with malicious intent. Recent rumors place a vengeful pyrogeist along the Jalrune River in southern Taldor. There, a saboteur set fire to a laden merchant vessel belonging to a rival trade prince, only to be trapped within the burning ship. This pyrogeist now haunts passing ships, lairing in the blackened shipwreck that rests at the bottom of the river.

Pyrogeists are almost always solitary creatures, so consumed by their hunt for souls that they rarely interact with anything else, living or dead. On rare occasions, multiple arsonists die together and merge into a single pyrogeist, sharing a morbid coexistence. These pyrogeists are usually the most erratic, as different personalities vie for control.

Powerful necromancers sometimes attempt to create or control a pyrogeist, in search of an incorporeal assassin that prevents its targets from being brought back to life. Pyrogeists resent these attempts, making them highly dangerous minions; if the necromancer's control slips enough to allow the pyrogeist any amount of freedom, the incorporeal horror would surely focus its murderous attention on the one that enslaved them.

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RAKSHASA, ZALYAKAVAT

This sinewy humanoid with putrid green skin and a grotesque, shrew-like snout wears little more than a colorful silk sarong and a thin, flexible blade worn as a belt.

ZALYAKAVAT

CR 13

XP 25,600

LE Medium outsider (native, rakshasa, shapechanger)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +24

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 17, flat-footed 21 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +11 natural)

hp 178 (17d10+85)

Fort +15, **Ref** +16, **Will** +11

DR 15/good and piercing; **SR** 28

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +2 *urumi*^{UE} +24/+19/+14/+9 (1d8+6/15–20)

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

Special Attacks *detect thoughts* (DC 20), *urumi forms*

Spells Known (CL 10th; concentration +12)

5th (3/day)—*wall of stone* (DC 17)

4th (5/day)—*dimension door*, *ice storm*

3rd (6/day)—*dispel magic*, *lightning bolt* (DC 15),
protection from energy

2nd (7/day)—*blur*, *darkness*, *knock*, see *invisibility*

1st (7/day)—*expeditious retreat*, *identify*, *mage armor*,
magic aura, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 13)

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 12), *detect magic*,
ghost sound (DC 12), *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*,
open/close, *read magic*

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 22, **Con** 21, **Int** 16, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 38

Feats Acrobatic Steps, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (*urumi*), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Nimble Moves, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (*urumi*)

Skills Acrobatics +26 (+30 when jumping), Bluff +26, Disguise +30, Knowledge (arcana, local) +23, Perception +24, Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +26; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Bluff, +8 Disguise

Languages Common, Infernal, Undercommon

SQ change shape (any humanoid; *alter self*), inconspicuous *urumi*, *urumi affinity*

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or muster (3–6)

Treasure standard (+2 *urumi*^{UE}, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Inconspicuous Urumi (Su) A zalyakavat can wear an *urumi* in its belt slot and draw it as a free action. While wearing an *urumi* in its belt slot, the zalyakavat gains a bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks equal to the weapon's enhancement bonus, if any. If the *urumi* has an enhancement bonus of +2 or higher, the zalyakavat

also gains the benefit of *nondetection* with a caster level equal to the zalyakavat's caster level plus the weapon's enhancement bonus.

Spells A zalyakavat casts spells as a 10th-level sorcerer.

Urumi Affinity (Su) A zalyakavat doesn't drop its *urumi* when panicked or stunned, and it treats its reach with an *urumi* as 5 feet greater than normal.

Urumi Forms (Su) When holding an *urumi* in one paw and carrying nothing in its other, a zalyakavat can expend unused spell slots to activate a variety of special abilities and weapon modifications known collectively as *urumi forms*. Activating an *urumi form* is a swift action, and the zalyakavat cannot cast spells during a round in which it activates one. Whenever the zalyakavat activates an *urumi form*, in addition to the other effects below, the zalyakavat gains the benefit of *freedom of movement* until the start of its next turn. The zalyakavat can select from the following *urumi forms*, each of which last until the start of the zalyakavat's next turn.

Contingent Strikes: A zalyakavat can expend a spell slot of 1st level or higher to imbue an *urumi* it wields with a single magic weapon special ability. The special ability is added to any the weapon already has, but duplicate abilities do not stack. The zalyakavat can select from the following special abilities. 1st-level slot—*corrosive*^{UE}, *flaming*, *frost*, *ghost touch*, *shock*; 2nd-level slot—*axiomatic*, *corrosive burst*^{UE}, *flaming burst*, *icy burst*, *shocking burst*, *unholy*, *wounding*; 3rd-level slot—*speed*; 4th-level slot—*brilliant energy*; 5th-level slot—*vorpal*. Imbued magic weapon special abilities do not function for any creature other than the zalyakavat.

Deft Strikes: A zalyakavat can expend a spell slot of 2nd level or higher to gain Improved Disarm and Improved Trip as bonus feats, as well as a competence bonus on disarm and trip attempts equal to the level of the spell slot expended.

Dispelling Strikes: By expending a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, a zalyakavat can disrupt magic with an *urumi* it wields, causing any creature struck by the zalyakavat's *urumi* to be the subject of a targeted *dispel magic* with a caster level equal to the zalyakavat's caster level plus the level of the spell slot expended. A creature can be the subject of only one such targeted *dispel* per use of this ability, but if the *urumi* strikes more than one creature, each creature struck is subject to the dispelling effect.

Garrote Whip: A zalyakavat can expend a spell slot of 4th level or higher to make an *urumi* it wields longer and more flexible. The zalyakavat's reach with the weapon increases by 5 feet, and the zalyakavat can attempt to strike and strangle a single target as a standard action. The zalyakavat makes a melee attack at its highest bonus. On a successful hit, the attack deals damage as normal, and the zalyakavat can attempt a combat maneuver check against the target's CMD as a free action. This combat maneuver does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

If the maneuver succeeds, the target takes an additional 1d8 points of damage plus the zalyakavat's Strength modifier and must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or fall unconscious for 1d4 rounds. This ability works only on creatures that breathe and have a discernible neck. The save DC is Strength-based.

Whip of Many Blades: A zalyakavat can expend a 5th-level spell slot to cause extra blades to sprout from the hilt of an urumi it wields. When the zalyakavat makes a full attack with the weapon, it can make two extra attacks at its highest base attack bonus. This benefit is not cumulative with similar effects, such as *haste*.

Shrew-faced rakshasas with a lust for physical combat, zalyakavats are spiritually and magically bound to their weapon of choice, the urumi. Fueling their whip-like swords with arcane power, they perform astonishing feats of martial prowess. To sate their lust for swordplay, zalyakavats continually seek opponents to challenge.

A zalyakavat stands 6 and a half feet tall and weighs around 170 pounds.

ECOLOGY

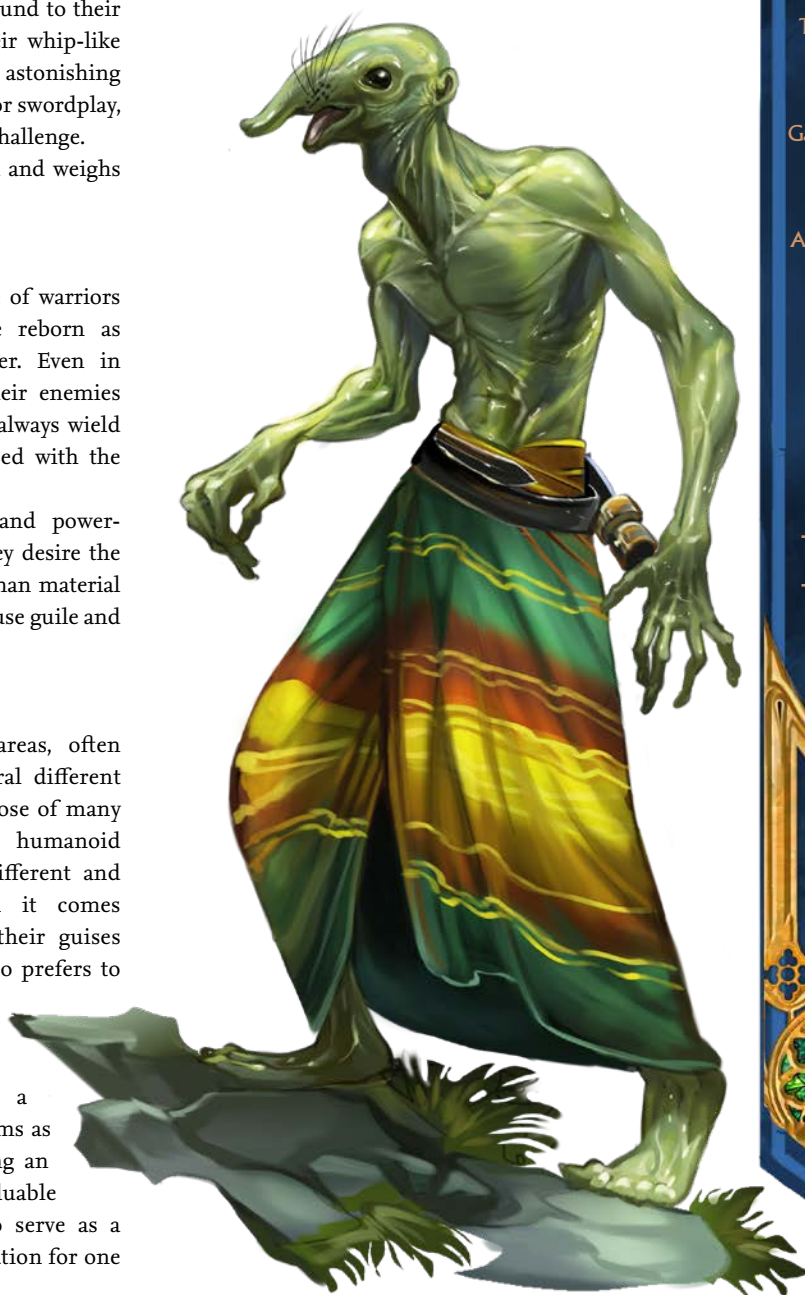
When the most ruthless and dishonorable of warriors dies in ignominy, their vile spirits are reborn as zalyakavats, usually to a rakshasa mother. Even in infancy, zalyakavats dream of slashing their enemies and drawing blood. In these dreams, they always wield an urumi, and zalyakavats become obsessed with the flexible blades as they mature.

As rakshasas, zalyakavats are selfish and power-hungry, but unlike many of their kind, they desire the thrill and frenzy of violent combat more than material wealth. They are not reckless, however, and use guile and magic to stack the odds in their favor.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Zalyakavats typically reside in urban areas, often maintaining homes or hideouts in several different cities. Their lairs are less opulent than those of many rakshasas, though still lavish by most humanoid standards. Individual zalyakavats have different and sometimes eccentric proclivities when it comes to selecting opponents, and they plan their guises accordingly. For example, a zalyakavat who prefers to victimize haughty nobles might operate as a silk merchant or purveyor of fine jewelry, while one who favors dueling with seasoned veterans might pose as a traveling noble to employ such men-at-arms as unsuspecting caravan guards. After slaying an opponent, a zalyakavat often plucks a valuable or gruesome trinket from the corpse to serve as a reminder of the encounter and as a decoration for one of its lairs.

Zalyakavats rarely interact with other types of rakshasas. When convenient or unavoidable, they might serve maharajas or rakshasa immortals as warriors or bodyguards, but a zalyakavat remains forever preoccupied with its desire for melee combat and is thus an unreliable soldier. On rare occasions, zalyakavats gather to participate in prearranged contests of arms. Zalyakavats almost never fight each other in these events, instead coercing or tricking unfortunate mortals into their hidden arenas to serve as opponents. From plush divans surrounding the arena, zalyakavats watch each other take turns fighting the unlucky souls as entertainment.



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NEXT MONTH

THE REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

By John Compton

The War for the Crown has mutated into a war of mutually assured destruction that may tear all of Taldor down. To save the nation—and perhaps their own consciences—the heroes must slip their mortal bonds and find the First Emperor of Taldor in the infinite planar city of Axis. But things are not as they should be in the First Emperor's resplendent halls. Can the heroes save Taldor along with the legend who founded it, or will they discover the hard way that even a city of light casts long shadows?

THAMIR GIXX

By Jason Keeley

Standing in Norgorber's shadow, the wicked halfling god of greed, opportunity, and thievery awaits his time to strike. Learn how Thamir Gixx whispers in the ears of the downtrodden, exhorting violence as the only way to gain an upper hand over oppressors. Explore Thamir Gixx's mysterious realm, hidden in the alleys and byways of the extraplanar metropolis of Axis. Watch the shadows carefully and do not drop your guard, lest the followers of the Silent Blade strike you down.

SAYASHTO

By John Compton

Explore Sayashto, a large urban district in Axis and the site of this volume's adventure. Orderly canals, farms, and markets present a regimented and serene landscape, but there is more to Sayashto than meets the eye.

NOBLE LINES OF TALDOR

By Crystal Malarsky

In Taldor, lineage and power are intertwined. This article presents in-depth details about several of Taldor's noble families, providing their areas of influence, histories, and prominent members. In addition, learn how your PCs can claim a noble lineage.

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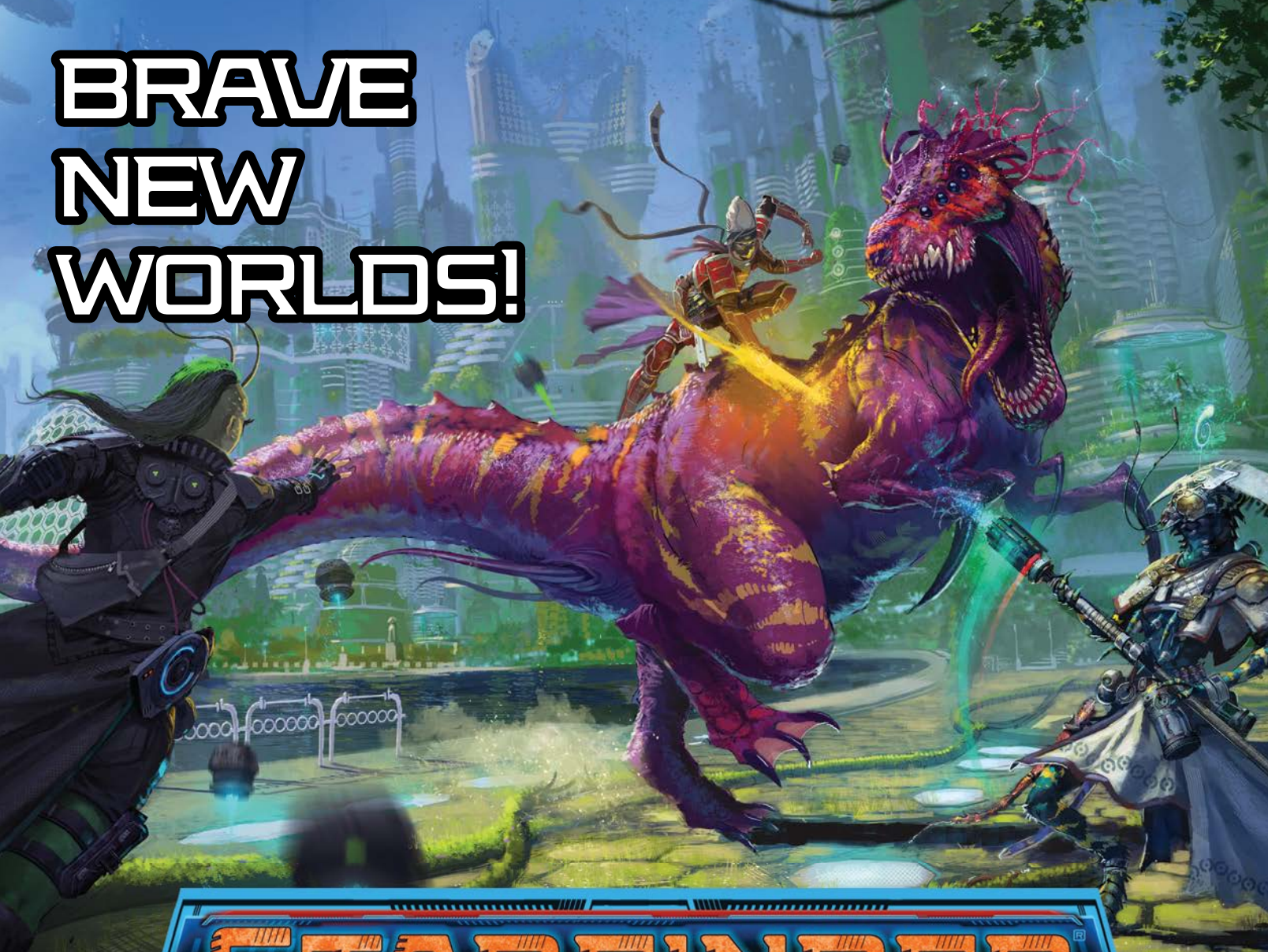
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CYRICAS

Born 29 Calistril 2048 AR;
Coronated 13 Rova 2087 AR;
Felled by the Gorilla King 8 Arodus 2089 AR

Born on the 29th day of Calistril—a day that comes but once every 8 years—the Leaping Lion was predestined for a greatness born of exceptionalism. As a child, the noble-born Cyricas suffered from a debilitating illness that mystified even the most skilled healers



of the land, each summoned by his mother, a prominent senator, who used her influence to gain their services. Cyricas spent much of his childhood in bed, reading about the great rulers of Taldor and dreaming about one day joining their ranks. On his eighth birthday, Cyricas leapt from his sickbed, proclaimed himself well, and embarked on a life of adventure—as all Taldans are told on their own eighth birthdays.

Cyricas spent much of his young adulthood traveling, taking special interest in the natural world. His love of hunting in particular eventually led him to the heavy jungle interior of Garund. There, his guides had chained a mighty gorilla, offering it as a trophy. Cyricas was horrified, releasing the beast and chastising his well-meaning hosts for debasing a free creature. Though Cyricas left the ape behind, it followed him for 8 days and nights, until the great adventurer accepted his new companion and named him Mardu.

Back in Taldor and approaching middle age, Cyricas held court with all manner of Taldans, from senators to commoners. He spoke to thousands in a series of popular public lectures, regaling them with tales of adventure and calling on all Taldans to overcome their circumstances and achieve greatness.

Upon the death of his father (may his corrupt and vile name remain ever struck from the record), Cyricas won approval for coronation over his elder brother, his will and abundant allies making him a stronger candidate to lead Taldor into a new era. The Leaping Lion could not be contained, however, and no sooner was he crowned—on the same day of the year as Taldaris himself—than he made plans to join the Sixth Army of Exploration in northern Garund. Countless often-contradictory tales tell of Cyricas's many great deeds in the 2 short years that followed, but the accounts agree that at the end, the mighty Leaping Lion fell in glorious battle with the vicious Gorilla King, fighting alongside his people.



THE WORST IN OTHERS

As the War for the Crown escalates, General Pythareus—Princess Eutropia's rival for the throne—plots to plunge the nation into war, threatening to kill thousands of people to rally others to him. From the fortress-city of Zimar, he commands the overwhelming army of Taldor, as well as one of the most ruthless spymasters the world has ever known. Even with the resources of the legendary Lion Blades to aid them, can the PCs hope to outmaneuver conspiracy and prevent the War for the Crown from becoming a war between nations, or will Taldor again descend into a thousand years of violence?

This volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path continues the War for the Crown Adventure Path and includes:

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- A gazetteer of the city of Zimar, the fortified heart of Taldor's military, by Mikko Kallio.
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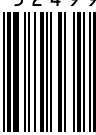
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