

PATHFINDER ADVENTURE PATH™



WAR FOR THE **CROWN**

SONGBIRD, SCION, SABOTEUR

by Crystal Frasier and
Richard Pett



SUCCESSION LOYALTIES



STARBORNE

PYTHAREUS

EUTROPIA

MERKANDER

NAZEZI

EUTROPIA

HESKILLAR

PHINI

PYTHAREUS

VORT

EUTROPIA

BRIARSMITH

TARQ

LAWSUS

EUTROPIA

SOLARI

PHAEBEN

PYTHAREUS

KIU

CYRIS

TALDOR

PATHFINDER ADVENTURE PATH

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ON THE COVER



More than just farms rots in the flooded fields of Meratt, and the ghouls who call this squalor home have no intention of letting the adventurers fix it, in this epic cover art by Hugh Pindur.



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REFERENCE

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

<i>Advanced Class Guide</i>	ACG	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Intrigue</i>	UI
<i>The Inner Sea World Guide</i>	ISWG	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM
<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC		



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TIGERS & TEACUPS

One of the big challenges with deciding to write an entire Adventure Path set in Taldor is that Paizo hasn't done a whole lot with Taldor to really flesh it out beyond the land of stereotypical out-of-touch, tea-drinking jerks we describe in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide*. Taldor was always a place to be from, not a place to adventure, and fighting that image of all Taldans being out-of-touch nobles who drink sherry with their pinkies out has always been a personal goal of mine.

TEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT TALDANS

As citizens of one of the oldest nations in Avistan, whose bravery and martial prowess forged an empire and whose canny wit helped them establish trade networks around the globe, Taldans are complex and multifaceted. While the amusing illusion of stuffed-shirted wealthy elites harrumphing as they look down their noses at

downtrodden peasants makes for an easy laugh, a campaign in Taldor means much more frequent contact with a vast array of citizens. To diversify your view of Taldor, here are 10 interesting aspects of the Taldan people.

10. Taldans Love Wordplay. As originators of the Taldane language, Taldans understand a considerable breadth and depth of the Common tongue that even their former colonies don't share, and fast-paced banter and clever linguistic choices are proud parts of their heritage. Even the flintiest of farmers love insightful plays on words, and a cleverly timed, crass pun can delight even the stodgiest of nobles.

9. Taldans Love Board Games. Every Taldan fancies herself a general, and so board games, strategy games, and war games are popular pastimes for everyone from gong farmers to emperors. While gambling can be fun, it leaves victory in the hands of fate—something few Taldans can stomach—and they prefer diversions that offer at least

the illusion of control. While many board games—the equivalents on Golarion of agon, backgammon, chess, Parcheesi, and rithmomachy—were either invented or adopted by Taldor, just as popular are war games played out with wooden miniatures using elaborate rules.

8. First Emperor Taldaris Is the Man. Taldans are a people suffused in patriotism and a love of history, but until we published *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Taldor, The First Empire*, they lacked the sort of founding myth typical of large (and especially old) nations. When we updated their history, we fleshed out their origins as a series of city-states united by a great leader: First Emperor Taldaris, Taldor's own Romulus or George Washington. Like similar figures, he's often invoked and exploited by residents: politicians insist they know what his vision for Taldor *really* was; tutors place him in all sorts of parables for bravery, honesty, and other virtues; and inns and estates advertise that "Taldaris slept here" to impress travelers—even though few, if any, structures in modern Taldor have survived since the First Emperor's day.

7. Taldan Hair Is a Big Deal. Even poor households invest in quality brushes, sheers, and oils from the tea tree and argan tree to keep themselves looking and smelling good, and every family has its own secret recipe for shiny, healthy hair. Many outsiders consider this yet another example of Taldan vanity, but the truth is more complex. Taldans' world travels have brought a wide array of parasites home over the centuries; clean hair is a simple comfort that also promotes health.

6. Taldans Will Eat Anything. You can't be a refugee or a soldier on the march and still be a picky eater. Since the founding of their nation, Taldans have embraced a philosophy of "whatever doesn't kill me makes me stronger," and that very much extends to their embracing of unusual and exotic foods. For nobles, this translates to eating almost anything that walks, crawls, flies, slithers, or swims, while for commoners it more often means making a meal out of whatever parts the rich won't eat.

5. Taldans Are Creative. Shelyn began as a Taldan god, and Taldor still reveres the arts in every form. "Anything worth doing is worth doing with a flourish," the Taldan saying goes, and almost every citizen of the empire pursues an art in her spare time, especially music and dance. Most families have a long tradition associated with a particular skill they may turn into a business—such as painting, weaving, or woodcarving—but just as many are farmers who pluck away at their lyres after work or sing reprises from their favorite operas to make the harvest pass more quickly. Illustrated or illuminated books are especially popular, and many families record their history in books passed down and doodled in over generations.

4. Taldans Love Dogs. Taldor claims it domesticated the first dog, but then again, Taldans claim to be the first to do a lot of things. Realistically, while dogs were rare in Azlanti society, they were common among the Kellid and Garundi societies that early Taldans filtered themselves through, and dogs became companions and workers in a culture hard up for extra hands. In those first unstable centuries, Taldor bred a hundred specialty dog breeds to assist with herding, pest control, physical labor, warfare, and even kitchen work, and as the Taldans' fortunes rose, they also bred dogs to serve purely as companions.

3. Taldans Love Pie. Since before the first Army of Exploration, Taldans have been sealing their tastiest treasures—and especially leftovers—inside pie shells to help preserve them, and that trend continues to this day. Sweet pies are the traditional breakfast, while farmers and laborers carry a savory hand pie or two with them for a midday snack. Taldans particularly love blending the sweet and the savory into pies, creating treats such as jubilee pie, a rich mix of currants, cherries, and fowl served at almost every major event.

2. Taldans Are Very Polite—Until They're Not. Taldans live by their politics and succeed through cooperation. Sometimes that means smiling politely and shaking the hand of the man who tried to kill you last week. Rudeness isn't just unseemly... It's un-Taldan! They instead couch insults in careful language, usually as unhelpful critiques and backhanded compliments, most notably the cold Taldan "Well, aren't you a treasure." Once Taldans decide to stop being polite, they take their outrage and insults up to 11, insulting, scolding, threatening, and yelling in tirades that usually end in duels.

1. Taldans Never Quit. While most of Azlant sank, the ancestors of modern Taldor dragged themselves onto a foreign shore and pulled their lives back together. Orcs attacked and they rebuilt. Kellids plundered them and they rebuilt. They founded a kingdom and ran into one natural barrier after another—from rivers to forests to deserts to more orcs—and every time they pushed forward again. Taldor's glories stem from bravery and skill, to be sure, but more than anything they come from the fact that Taldans never look at a challenge and say "maybe not this time."



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PART 1: SONGBIRD 5

The heroes pose as members of Taldan nobility and attend the Tanager Jubilee, which host to a jousting tournament, a grand hunt, and a masked ball, hoping to win over local aristocrats as they seek to bring the revolution to the county of Meratt.

PART 2: SCION.....19

The heroes move in to the Betony estate overlooking the nearby hamlet of Stachys. Here they employ their skills to undo the harm caused by apathetic nobility and show what the nation of Taldor could be like, attempting to earn the loyalty of the region's residents.

PART 3: SABOTEUR 46

The heroes besiege the Palace of Birdsong in the attempt to remove Lady Lotheed's squatting kin from the imperial estate and perhaps, by their courageous actions, win over the populace of the county of Meratt to the cause of Princess Eutropia.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Songbird, Scion, Saboteur" is designed for four characters using the medium XP track.



The characters begin this adventure at 4th level.



The heroes should reach 5th level soon after the Tanager Jubilee.



The PCs should be 6th level by the time they attack the Palace of Birdsong.

The PCs should be 7th level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Since long before the War for the Crown—very nearly since its founding—Taldor has been a hotbed of political intrigue and infighting. Boredom, greed, and power spin academics, the emperor, nobles, reformers, and revolutionaries into a complex web referred to by many Taldans as the Grand Dance. Secret societies and fraternities are especially popular among the nobility, wherein members quietly pool intelligence and resources to accomplish mutually beneficial goals. While every secret society of nobles imagines itself the true power behind the throne, few of them accomplish much beyond their preexisting spheres of influence. The Immaculate Circle is just one of many, but it has the advantage of favoring arcane spellcasters for membership. Founded in 4492 AR, the society holds the core belief that nobility—true nobility—places one above all morality and judgment, even that of the gods. While it admitted all manner of useful spellcasters and politicians, the society was founded on the ideal that death is a price paid only by lesser folk, and to wield any power within the Immaculate Circle, members must find their own, unique path to escape death.

In practice, this has left the Immaculate Circle with the same leadership—and all accompanying stagnancy—for 200 years. Its members scheme and collect politicians, but to little end: action would jeopardize their comfortable status quo. While the circle imagines itself one of the true powers in Taldan politics, in practice it is little more than a secret clubhouse for a few dozen wealthy aristocrats who sometimes trade in secrets and favors. Among its immortal Inner Circle sits Duke Panivar Lotheed I, who has maintained power for 200 years by posing as a rotating series of his own descendants.

Now the wizard is known as Duke Panivar Lotheed VI, and his greatest achievement has been securing stewardship of the county of Meratt—the imperial estate in Tandak prefecture—for his family. While the Lotheeds don't own the lands they administer on behalf of the crown, in all practical ways they are the ruling nobility over a large swath of the prefecture. The lands have rendered them far wealthier and more prestigious than their family lands in Ligos prefecture, though the Lotheeds are still a far cry from control of the crown. Duke Lotheed is notoriously reclusive and leaves most noble duties (and pleasures) to family, who ask few questions about their absentee patriarch. But the lands have suffered under the increasingly negligent Lotheed counts, with the county beyond the fabled Palace of Birdsong and its gardens falling into disrepair and its people overtaxed.

With Grand Prince Stavian's death, Princess Eutropia has asked the Lotheed clan to return her family estate. Thus far the current administrator, Martella Lotheed's half brother Bartelby, has refused to even grant her an audience, and has begun wooing Maxillar Pythareus at his great-uncle Panivar's request. While the county is impoverished and dilapidated, Eutropia needs a base of operations away from Oppara's intrigue and a source of income now that her fortunes are sealed within the imperial palace. Her only option is to discredit the standing Count Lotheed and rally the region's support behind her, ideally while improving the county as well. Her own presence is too polarizing, however, and would quickly draw Pythareus's attention and interference, while Martella—her usual choice for delicate spy work—is too well known in her family lands. Eutropia instead pins her hopes on the agents who recently rescued Martella.

PART 1: SONGBIRD

After the events of Crownfall, the PCs have established themselves as resourceful agents willing to support Princess Eutropia in the War for the Crown. Despite the chaos and violence that rocked the senate and the factionalizing of the nation's aristocracy, remarkably little violence has broken out across Taldor. Over a dozen nobles—mostly Eutropia's distant relations—have declared themselves the true inheritors, but for now the empire runs on momentum. Most of the populace waits nervously, unsure of what to do without a senate to declare an official heir or an emperor to appoint new senators. The open conflicts are small probes into opposing claimants' territories and dedication; Krearis, always a hub of conflict, has seen swift battles between opposing dukes, while in the south, Maxillar Pythareus has directed the Taldan Phalanx to crush any stirrings of competition from his neighbors.

CULTS OF PERSONALITY

The full rules for these growing cults of personality are detailed starting on page 71, but at this early stage, the PCs' reputations are still immature. They each begin with 2 Ranks: 1 Rank in Genius, Sagacity, or Charm, depending on the character's highest mental ability score (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma, respectively); and 1 Rank in a facet based on their deeds during the Crownfall adventure. PCs can apply this second increase to whichever facet they like, but players should justify it based on the actions their characters undertook during their ordeal. This may be sufficient for the characters to begin assigning agents to assist them.

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The week following the PCs' meeting with Princess Eutropia encompasses their first two persona phases, in which they can socialize, spread rumors, or uncover truths in the background to grow their own power base, or dispatch these new agents to assist them. Either the PCs' agents are assumed to follow them to the county of Meratt or the PCs have contacts in the area they can put to use. Benefits of the second persona phase (and any effects from operations the PCs assign their agents) last until after the end of the Tanager Jubilee.

DEPARTURE

After the PCs have had a week to rest and attend to their own matters, Martella sends word to meet her at the Porthmos Club—an exclusive teahouse in Oppara's Aroden's View district. She instructs them to pack for a long trip through the country, and to bring at least one fine outfit, a suitable hunting outfit, and at least one respectable mask or costume. After a light lunch and small talk, their coach departs north. Only after the city begins to vanish beneath the horizon does she speak about business, handing the PCs a sealed scroll case before speaking.

"I appreciate you agreeing to this trip on such short notice. Please, have an estate.

"I wish I could say this little gift didn't come with strings attached, but these are tangled times. As you may have heard, the Ulfen Guard—the emperor's personal bodyguards—have locked down the imperial palace, and they won't allow access to anyone until Taldor has an official Grand Prince once again. Keeps unreasonable sorts from looting the palace, I suppose, but it has also sealed away Eutropia's personal wealth. The Stavian family has another estate, though—the Palace of Birdsong—but the Stavians entrusted its care and maintenance to stewards two centuries ago. These stewards now refuse to leave and, I'm told, are courting Maxillar Pythareus's favor. It doesn't help matters that these squatters are my family, or that my half brother Bartelby has been squandering the estate's fortunes.

"While we technically have the authority to demand the estate's return, we lack the power. If we could weaken Bartelby's power base and woo some of his subordinates to support us, we could reclaim the Palace of Birdsong. That's where you and your lovely new homes come in.

"The Lady Allis Betony died nearly a decade ago, leaving no heirs. We purchased her estate at auction last week, and I have taken the liberty of drawing up a few documents listing you as Betony family scions. You'll be arriving just in time to make your debut at the annual Tanager Jubilee. The carriage and horses are yours to keep, as you can't very well be seen walking to the jubilee; I'll be riding on to Cassomir once we near the county border. Make friends, learn the lay of the land, and afterward do what you can to win the nobles' and citizens' loyalty. Undermine Bartelby, and wherever you can, try to improve peoples' lives and engender loyalty. For any

overt actions you take, you'll likely want to hide your identity to keep Bartelby from cracking down on you.

"I feel I must stress the importance of your task. The princess has sold her townhouse to fund this plan, and at this point her resources are perilously thin. If we're to stand any chance in this bid for the throne, we need a suitable base of operations and steady income."

The ride to the county of Meratt takes 5 days, giving PCs plenty of opportunity to further question Martella. Successful DC 15 Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility) checks reveal the same information, as appropriate.

What is the Palace of Birdsong? "It's one of the Stavian estates, but the Stavians haven't visited it in centuries. Fairly humble, as palaces go. A century ago, they appointed the Lotheeds as regents to oversee it and the county."

What is the Tanager Jubilee? "It's an annual sort of founders' day celebration. Local tradition claims that when Count Markolian Stavian broke ground for the palace some eight centuries ago, a scarlet tanager landed on his shovel and sang his praises. It's a day off for the lower classes, but the aristocracy celebrates with two days of feasting, games, dancing, tournaments, and a hunt. Making a good showing at the jubilee is an excellent way to win influence."

What is the county of Meratt like? "I've not seen it in over a decade, but it's quite the pastoral wonderland: olive orchards and vineyards, and hills and ample woods to hunt game. The largest town you'll find is Lotheedar, near the Palace of Birdsong, but there's a village the Betony estate is expected to oversee as well: Stachys. Overall, the county is perhaps not as well maintained as the locals would prefer, but Father was a competent administrator if nothing else."

What is Bartelby/the Lotheed family like? "We're an old-blood noble family, with genealogies tracing back to Azlanti settlers, and my siblings will rarely let you forget it. Bartelby himself is charming, graceful, intelligent, but arrogant and casually cruel. He excelled in his arcane studies as a child, and I have no doubt he's only improved since then."

They're your family. Can't you talk to them?/Why aren't you joining us? "I am... unwelcome among my family; the result of Father's indiscretions with a Qadiran woman. More scandalously, I lack the family affinity for magic. After Father's death, Bartelby explained in no uncertain terms what fates he would visit upon me if I ever returned to the estate. You are far safer without my presence."

Will we know anyone there? "Baron Nicolaus Okerra's lands stand at the edge of the county. I believe you met him during the senate festivities before the... unpleasantness. He's generally a fair-minded and compassionate man and would be a good ally. Hopefully you made a good impression on him."

Is there any news from the county of Meratt?/Do we have any potential allies? “My news is spotty, but I understand some shadowy figure calling themselves ‘Night Swan’ has been stirring up trouble—robbery and vandalism, but also some violence against Lotheed soldiers. They could be a valuable ally if they have some feud with my brother.”

Is there anyone we should watch out for? “Besides my half brother? My sister Cateline is quite shrewd, if she still lives there, and cousin Titus is little more than a bully. Beyond the family, Sir Gul Gusairne is a suspicious sort—he was father’s seneschal and I imagine Bartelby has kept him on in some fashion or another. And I suppose Sepsinia’s mother, Dame Crabbe, is a touch overbearing.”

What do we do with your half brother? “I am not certain. There’s little love lost between Bartelby and myself, but he is still my brother. If you can talk sense into him—and I very much doubt you can—or capture him alive, please do so. But if it becomes a question of his life or your own, do not hesitate to protect yourselves.”

Where will Princess Eutropia be? “Princess Eutropia is currently making a show of rallying support in Golsifar. Given the city’s military leanings, it is almost certain to support Strategos Pythareus in his bid for the crown, but more importantly, it keeps curious eyes far from you.”

Martella adds that as part of their rewards, the PCs can take what portable valuables the Lotheeds have at the palace—coins, jewelry, magical trinkets, and so forth—but that the furniture, libraries, portraits, and other family items should remain where they are (and relatively intact) for future generations.

Once the PCs are satisfied, Martella also offers them a boon; she has been experimenting with a memory-erasing poison she calls Styx oil, which should provide PCs a second chance to correct a social faux pas or escape notice. However, the drug is expensive and time-consuming to produce, and she can offer them only 3 doses for now.

Barring further questions, Martella brought paperwork to review, as well as several novels and sets of cards to share.

THE BETONY HEIRS

The paperwork Martella provides establishes at least one of the PCs (who must be human or at least human-descended, such as a half-elf or aasimar) as the second cousin, once removed, of the late Lady Allis Betony (implying their great-grandfather was grandfather to Allis). The documents are excellent reproductions, requiring a successful DC 30 Linguistics check to identify as forgeries. The PCs need not assume false names, given the distant relationship to “dear departed cousin Allis,” nor will they be expected to know many details of the family,

POISON

Styx oil is a carefully distilled combination of antitoxin, bloodroot, id moss, and various mushrooms. Styx oil renders its target unconscious and floods every sense with erratic hallucinations, overwhelming the mind and essentially wiping away memories. This chaotic mélange wipes away memories of the 5 minutes prior to the poison’s injection; occasionally, though, the drug fails to paralyze its victim, leaving the creature to flail violently and unpredictably in response to the hallucinations. If Styx oil is delivered by a weapon rather than injection or other subtle method, the victim gains a +5 circumstance bonus to resist the memory-erasing properties of the poison.

Note that Styx oil is a unique blend made available only to agents serving Martella Lotheed and is not available in most markets. A price is provided for crafting purposes.



STYX OIL

PRICE
600 GP

Type poison, injury; Save Fortitude DC 16

Frequency 1/minute for 2 minutes

Initial Effect unconscious for 1d4 minutes;

Secondary Effect confusion for 2d6 rounds;

Cure 2 saves

and therefore they can slip readily into local society. If there are no humans in the party, Martella instead falsifies documents appointing the PCs as stewards of the estate until an heir is located, but such “lowborn” caretakers take a –2 penalty on all Charisma-based skill checks when interacting with members of the Lotheed family.

The Tanager Jubilee is ostensibly an anniversary festival to celebrate the palace’s—and by extension, the county’s—founding, but it also serves to strengthen local alliances and bring together all the county’s subordinate nobles. Lady Martella wants the PCs to go to the event, use their charms to ensure an easy fit into local society, and then use their skills and alliances to subtly change the county for the better. Only then, once they are sure to have won over the hearts of the locals, are they to take the Palace of Birdsong back from the Lotheed family on behalf of Princess Eutropia. With secure alliances, they can then openly show their allegiances and invite their neighbors to join them, using Meratt as a template for what positive changes may await Taldor under Princess Eutropia.

The PCs’ new “title” also makes them tribunes of the neighboring town of Stachys—essentially investing them with the power and responsibility to act as the community’s mayor and judge. Martella briefly details the Betony family

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history dating back to the Shining Crusade, and reminds the PCs that they have rights as stewards to the Lotheeds, most notably the right to request audiences with Bartelby, but that their rule extends solely to their lands; openly taking any action outside their own demesne is dangerous and foolish unless done covertly.

Subterfuge is of the utmost importance—the Lotheeds might not be beloved, but old alliances can easily prove stronger than deeds. Lady Lotheed encourages the PCs to carry out any covert actions in some sort of disguise, perhaps using alter egos or masks—the sort of symbols common citizens rally to—while publicly playing the role of aristocrats. Finally, she adds, the PCs should not try to use magic to try to influence their new neighbors; the Lotheeds are a particularly magically aware family, and likely to spot such tampering (even if it weren't already considered grotesque).

Shortly after crossing into the county of Meratt, the PCs' carriage is waylaid by desperate beggars and traders offering them a variety of wares and asking for spare coins. This makeshift roadblock and market are opportunists from the nearby Beggarwood (area D), who provide some hint of how dire things are becoming for the common folk of the county, but they also provide the PCs with a final chance to sell or purchase goods before the Tanager Jubilee. The hodgepodge traders offer most common goods at a 10% increase over market value but will lower their prices to 10% below market value if the PCs can pay in common clothing, food, tools, and other daily necessities. In addition to mundane goods, the beggars offer a *potion of keen senses*^{APG}, a *scroll of chill metal*, a *scroll of entropic shield*, a *scroll of inflict moderate wounds*, a *wand of mage armor* (37 charges), and a *pyxes of redirected focus*, though they'll mention the magic items only if they believe the PCs won't punish them for selling luxury goods (having had many similar items seized by Sir Gul Gusairne).

THE TANAGER JUBILEE

The Tanager Jubilee takes place over 2 days, revolving around a jousting tournament on the first day and a grand hunt on the second, and finally ending with a masked ball. Forty-two guests attend the jubilee, including the PCs, but only a few are of any importance. Many are minor functionaries or visiting relatives. The PCs need to quickly establish who is local (and therefore useful) and who is not.

In running an event like this, it is crucial that each character is given a chance to shine, not just bards and

great communicators. This section presents many opportunities for PCs to impress the guests above and beyond Charisma-based skill checks. In addition, be generous with what PCs can do to leave a good impression, especially if they expend resources like equipment, spell slots, or wealth to do so; displays of magic and martial prowess are always appreciated among Taldan elites, as is gossip.

Some events allow the PCs to improve their standing across the whole group, while others allow individual influence. Some events may worsen onlookers' attitudes if the PCs react badly, let their agenda show, or fail skill checks.

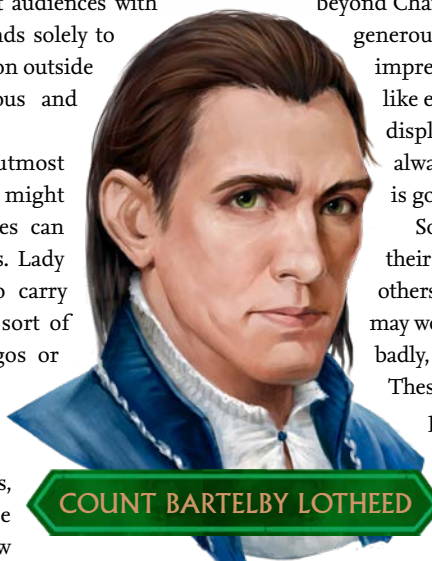
These checks are important not only for this part of the adventure—potentially making new friends and influences—but also into Parts 2 and 3, where the same aristocrats become the PCs' neighbors and potential allies (or enemies).

See Part 3 of this adventure for a map and full details on the Palace of Birdsong; for now, the palace serves primarily as a backdrop for intrigue, politicking, and sports. Unlike in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #127: Crownfall*, the PCs are not able to influence the general crowd of a room, due to the relatively small size of the gathering and the tendency of visitors to wander.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Several major NPCs have roles to play in this adventure and are presented here with social stat blocks. Both Baron Nicolaus Okerra and Count Bartelby Lotheed also have more traditional stat blocks presented in the NPC Gallery. Given the PCs' overall goal of making friends and winning support, the jubilee makes an excellent opportunity to meet their noble neighbors and make a good first impression.

The Tanager Jubilee, much like the Exaltation Gala from *Pathfinder Adventure Path #127: Crownfall*, uses a simplified version of the influence rules originally presented in *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue*. The event is divided into social rounds, during which the PCs can attempt to scrutinize or win favor from their new neighbors. Unlike the gala, where the PCs simply hoped to win NPCs' favor and leave a good impression, the PCs now hope to win friends and allies. To that end, each NPC's starting attitude toward the PCs is listed in the Influence section of the stat block, and each time the PCs accumulate the listed number of successes, the NPC's attitude shifts one step closer to helpful. The amount of time each social round consumes is much longer for this encounter than in the gala, but the PCs will have future opportunities to influence these NPCs—now their neighbors—as well. This extended time frame can also work against the PCs; for every week that passes



without interacting with an NPC whose attitude the PCs are trying to change, they lose one accumulated success toward influencing the NPC. This passage of time can't worsen an NPC's attitude; once an NPC is made friendly, for example, he won't revert to indifferent just because he hasn't seen the PCs in several weeks—though special events might impact these attitudes.

The social stat blocks here also include the various NPCs' biases and strengths in addition to their weaknesses. Biases represent a character's inclinations toward or distrust of others, and a PC who meets one of these conditions applies the modifier listed in parentheses to her checks to influence that NPC. Strengths represent topics or approaches they are particularly resistant to, imposing a -4 penalty on a PC's influence check when using this tactic. A PC can uncover a bias with a successful DC 20 Sense Motive check, and she can learn an NPC's strength with a successful discovery check, just as she would learn a weakness. These stat blocks also list each NPC's skill bonuses for common social skills, to account for any unusual actions the PCs might take.

COUNT BARTELBY LOTHEED

LE male human magus^{APG} 7

Background Steward of the Palace of Birdsong. See page 60 for additional details.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Bartelby is tall, thin, and handsome, with thick hair and expressive eyes.

Personality Bartelby is aloof, obsessive, and loyal to those he cares about. He is arrogant and charismatic in equal measure. He's exactly as courteous to others and the help as etiquette demands.

Goal Bartelby wants to maintain a tight grip on Meratt. Secretly, he hopes to build a stronger alliance with Baron Okerra to provide the extra soldiers and military expertise.

Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (arcana, planes) +11, Knowledge (history, nobility) +6, Perception +4, Sense Motive +9

DISCOVERY

Biases Bartelby despises fools, and has no time for anyone without an Intelligence score of at least 12 or ranks in at least three different Knowledge skills (-2). He admires fellow practitioners of the arcane arts (+2).

Strengths (Knowledge [nobility], Sense Motive DC 14)

Bartelby has only contempt for the common peasant and feels they should know their place and remain quiet. Invoking any sense of compassion for the downtrodden or sense of collective identity with peasants raises his hackles.

Weaknesses (Knowledge [arcana], Sense Motive DC 14)

Bartelby is greatly swayed by intellectual gifts. Anyone presenting him with an antique or spellbook worth at least 250 gp gains a +1 bonus on checks to influence him.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Indifferent. Count Bartelby rarely takes notice of nobles less important than himself or his family.

Influence Checks (Knowledge [nobility] or Sense Motive DC 14) Appraise or Knowledge (arcana or planes) DC 16; Bluff or Diplomacy DC 21

Successes Needed Shifting Bartelby's attitude requires 10 successful influence checks.

Benefit If the PCs shift Count Bartelby's attitude to friendly, he welcomes them to visit the Palace of Birdsong at any time to discuss the arcane arts and collaborate on arcane or historical studies. This allows PCs the chance to scout out the rest of the palace (except the royal apartments; areas **H31-H37**), and also allows them to use the Lotheed arcane laboratory, granting a +2 bonus on Craft (alchemy) checks and Spellcraft checks to learn a spell from a spellbook or scroll. If the PCs shift Bartelby's attitude to helpful, he "remembers" the taxes he's collected on their behalf—mostly timber and supplies—worth either 2,000 gp if sold, or 8,000 gp if put toward town improvements.

Story Award If the PCs successfully shift Count Lotheed's attitude to helpful, award them 1,600 XP.

BARON NICOLAUS OKERRA

LN male human fighter 6

Background Popular local noble and soldier, with a strict sense of honor. See page 58 for additional details.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Tall, handsome, and still very fit despite his advancing age, Nicolaus stands a head taller than most.

Personality Popular, brave, and practical, the baron speaks his mind and believes in straightforward action rather than political solutions. He's a hard-working man who often rolls up his sleeves to help his subjects.

Goal Baron Okerra has better things to do than hobnob with his neighbors, but he always holds out some hope that he can inspire other nobles in the area to behave responsibly.

Skills Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (engineering) +4, Knowledge (nobility) +1, Sense Motive +4

DISCOVERY

Biases Nicolaus respects integrity, and has a predilection for other lawful characters (+2).

Strengths (Perception or Sense Motive DC 15) Nicolaus is especially resistant to any discussions that suggest subterfuge or all-out revolution.

Weaknesses (Heal or Sense Motive DC 15) Baron Okerra has always associated goodness with obedience and service, but he's increasingly questioning the morality of his life since the Exaltation Massacre). Any expression of sympathy touches Nicolaus's heart.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Indifferent. If the PCs won Nicolaus's favor at the Exaltation Gala (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #127), his starting attitude is instead friendly. If the PCs made

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a poor impression or attempted to intimidate him at the gala, his starting attitude is instead unfriendly. If the PCs openly support or befriend the Night Swan (see page 62), the baron's attitude toward them immediately worsens by three steps.

Influence Checks (Profession [soldier] or Sense Motive

DC 17) Handle Animal, Profession (architect, driver, farmer, fisherman, midwife, porter, or soldier), or Ride DC 13; Diplomacy DC 18

Successes Needed Shifting Nicolaus's attitude requires 6 successful influence checks.

Benefit Baron Okerra is happy to help his friends improve their land and the lives of the peasants they oversee. If the PCs successfully shift his attitude to friendly, he sends

them building supplies, loaned artisans, and timber to improve their land in Part 2 of this adventure.

Special Baron Okerra believes in the rule of law, and if he learns that the PCs are trying to subvert Count Lotheed's rule, he will report as much, subtracting 2d4 Loyalty Points. If made friendly, he accepts Princess Eutropia's claim to the land as legitimate, but he can't bring himself to assist in such underhanded tactics and remains neutral in the conflict. If made helpful, he accepts the occasional need for the weak to embrace unsavory tactics to triumph over oppression and becomes a willing ally, adding 2 Loyalty Points.

Story Award If the PCs shift Baron Okerra's attitude to friendly, award them 800 XP. If they shift his attitude to helpful, award them an additional 800 XP.

DAME PARTHENA CRABBE (AND HER DAUGHTER, SEPSINIA)

N female human aristocrat 4

Background The opinionated Dame Mistress Crabbe deals with her unresolved grief of her late husband's passing by investing herself in everyone else's lives. Her latest obsession is finding a suitor for her daughter Sepsinia. Sepsinia (use the statistics for a princess on page 250 of the *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*) is quiet and pale. She stares silently or mumbles if approached without her mother present.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Parthena is a broad, middle-aged woman with a wide smile and expressive eyes. She smells overwhelmingly of camphor and sugar. By contrast, her daughter is rail-thin and pale, looking vaguely surprised or frightened by everything.

Personality Parthena isn't one for introspection, preferring to know everyone else's mind. She is the embodiment of Taldan aristocratic hypocrisy—she eats, moves, and even sleeps correctly, but without any consideration for why. Beyond her interest in local and national gossip, she loves discussing art, antiques, and fashion.

Goal Parthena's current obsession is finding a suitor for Sepsinia, and she makes no secret of it, but her daughter's depression, shyness, and apparent ill health have complicated her search.

Skills Appraise +6, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Perception +8, Perform (dance) +9, Sense Motive +8

DISCOVERY

Biases Parthena's shallow judgment of others means appearances are what really matter; she's predisposed toward anyone sporting at least 500 gp worth of jewelry (+2).

While she has a thick skin regarding her own physique, she is extremely protective of her

DAME PARTHENA AND SEPSINIA CRABBE

daughter and holds a grudge against anyone who insults the girl (–2).

Strengths (Knowledge [local] or Perception DC 18) Dame Crabbe is bored by anyone taking their noble responsibilities too seriously—one of the few reasons she hasn't tried to pursue Baron Okerra for herself.

Weaknesses (Sense Motive DC 12) Anyone who seems romantically inclined toward Sepsinia—or better yet, attempts to woo her—will find Dame Crabbe very friendly. Parthena hasn't noticed her own lack of love life and is easily flustered by anyone flirting with her.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Indifferent.

While she takes an interest in everyone, Dame Crabbe commits herself to few.

Influence Checks (Sense Motive

DC 16) Bluff, Knowledge (local), or Perform (any) DC 14; Appraise or Knowledge (nobility) DC 19; Diplomacy DC 22. A PC failing an influence check by 10 or more has made some grievous etiquette error, eliminating one accumulated success.

Successes Needed Shifting Dame Crabbe's attitude requires 5 successful influence checks. Sepsinia's attitude cannot be changed until later (see page 38).

Benefit So long as Dame Crabbe remains at least indifferent to the PCs, she later invites them to her estate for tea (see **Event 1** on page 20) to continue trying to arrange a marriage. If the PCs shift Parthena's attitude to helpful, she welcomes them with a housewarming gift: a gilded black marble bust of Parthena in her youth. The decorative necklace on the bust incorporates an *amulet of natural armor* +2 to protect the bust from wear and tear. Removing the amulet without damaging the statue requires a successful DC 15 Craft (jewelry or sculpture) check, or a DC 20 Disable Device check. Every failed skill check reduces the statue's value by 150 gp.

Special Dame Crabbe loves to tease any information she learns, even if she likes the PCs. If she learns of the PCs' true goal of undermining Count Bartelby, she readily shares this knowledge, subtracting 1d4 Loyalty Points. If shifted to friendly, she merely hints at what she knows, instead subtracting 1 Loyalty Point. Parthena will only keep such knowledge to herself if made helpful.

Story Award If the PCs shift Dame Crabbe's attitude to friendly, award them 200 XP. If they shift her attitude to helpful, award them an additional 200 XP.

HER GRACE BARONESS LEGATE ADELLA VOINUM

LN old female human aristocrat 4/cavalier^{APG} 2

Background A woman of wealth and discipline, Baroness



Voinum is a retired commander of the Taldan Phalanx. She is best known as the local grump—condescending, detached, and judgmental—but is also a font of knowledge regarding the region's history.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance A woman of legendary stature in her youth, age has finally begun to bend the baroness, and she now stands merely 6 feet tall. She still proudly displays the scar left when an Andoren spear pierced her face years ago.

Personality Clever and scathing, Baroness Voinum wields considerable influence. The Voinum family has been part of the county for a thousand years and proudly upholds Taldan ideals—harsh but fair by most standards. Unlike her fellow nobles, she recognizes the PCs as impostors—they lack any of the Betony family attributes—but decides to keep that knowledge to herself and see how things play out.

Goal Adella can see the social decay in Taldor, but she attributes it to a lack of discipline and respect for tradition. She wants to be an example of how

the social system is supposed to work, and cajoles or browbeats her neighbors into following her lead.

Skills Bluff +7, Diplomacy +9, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (history, local, nobility) +8, Profession (soldier) +7, Sense Motive +12

DISCOVERY

Biases Baroness Voinum dislikes the wanton ways of youth and has a bias against any character younger than 25 years old unless they are lawful (–2). She has a soft spot for wine and is far more amicable when drinking (+2).

Strengths (Diplomacy or Sense Motive DC 21) Adella sees flattery as shallow pandering.

Weaknesses (Sense Motive DC 20) Baroness Voinum respects those with regard for tradition and an interest in history of the county and the nation.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Unfriendly. The baroness is distant and cold, having met far too many useless people.

Influence Checks (Sense Motive DC 18) Knowledge (geography, history), Profession (brewer), or Ride DC 18; Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 27

Successes Needed Shifting Baroness Voinum's attitude requires 7 successful influence checks.

Special Baroness Adella quietly despises the Lotheeds, and if she learns of the PCs' agenda, she won't tell the count.

Benefit If the PCs shift Baroness Voinum's attitude to friendly, she admits to a certain fondness for the grapes the Betony vineyards once produced before the fields flooded and states that if they can restore the estate farms, she'll happily agree to a trade deal that provides them with extensive infrastructure repairs, granting 3,000 gp

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that can be spent only on town improvements. If PCs manage to shift Baroness Voinum's attitude to helpful, they immediately gain 1d3 influence successes each with Dame Crabbe and Baron Okerra.

Story Award If the PCs shift Baroness Voinum's attitude to friendly, award them 600 XP. If they shift her attitude to helpful, award them an additional 600 XP.

HONORARY TRIBUNE ONORA PISCUM

NG female half-elf expert 4/warrior 1

Background A commoner both uncomfortable and unwelcome in the noble halls of the palace, Onora fell into the job of tribune of Stachys after the death of the hereditary tribune, Allis Betony, 10 years ago and her husband, the acting tribune, 5 years later.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Onora is plain, muscular, and heavily freckled. A half-elf, she looks far younger than her actual 55 years.

Personality Onora is a no-nonsense country girl and rarely thinks about the world beyond her small town. The half-elf maintains her position with a keen attention to detail and appreciates thoroughness in others. She wants to do right by her community, but usually feels too overwhelmed and underequipped to manage most problems. As a result, she believes all nobles are opportunistic, thieving, and out of touch.

Goal Onora attends the count's events because she knows that the aristocracy will forget about her little town entirely if she doesn't, and they'll lose what minimal support they have. While she wouldn't mind staying on as sheriff, she would love to find someone else to handle the political aspects of her job.

Skills Bluff +8, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +9, Perception +12, Sense Motive +10

DISCOVERY

Biases Tribune Piscum despises anyone who flaunts their wealth and power (-2), but she warms up to anyone who clearly understands a practical skill or two, such as Craft, Handle Animal, Profession, or Survival (+2).

Strengths (Diplomacy or Sense Motive DC 17) Onora has a quiet hatred for Count Bartelby and is especially cold to anyone who tries to use his name or influence to persuade her.

Weaknesses (Sense Motive DC 17) Onora has a deep love for homespun metaphors and colloquialisms.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Unfriendly. Onora assumes most nobles are useless.

Influence Checks (Knowledge [local] or Sense Motive DC 17) Knowledge (local, nature) or Profession (farmer) DC 13; Perception, Perform (oratory), or Survival DC 18; Bluff or Diplomacy DC 22

Successes Needed Shifting Onora's attitude requires 4 successful influence checks.

Special Tribune Piscum wants nothing to do with noble

infighting, and if she learns of the PC's plot to undermine Bartelby, she keeps that knowledge to herself unless made hostile.

Benefit If Onora's attitude is shifted to friendly, the PCs' reputation in Stachys grows, improving the town's attitude toward them by one step. If her attitude is shifted to helpful, Onora helps provide alibis for the PCs' actions or absences, granting a +2 circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks to conceal their involvement in revolutionary activities.

Story Award If the PCs shift Onora's attitude to friendly, award them 200 XP. If they shift her attitude to helpful, award them an additional 200 XP.

Minor Attendees

The following are additional attendees the PCs can interact with and play some role in the story, but they do not need to (or cannot) be influenced.

EARL YANDER MERKONDUS

Earl Merkondus is a wealthy merchant from Moda who fancies himself a politico and presses everyone around him for information on their loyalties in the "recent unpleasantness." He can stay only for the first day of the jubilee, departing on the second morning before breakfast.

Earl Yander Merkondus plays a larger role in the next adventure, *The Twilight Child*, and his statistics can be found there. This appearance serves as a brief introduction to the agitator and rival spy.

LADY LUCRETZIA MARTHANE

This polite young woman announces herself as a cousin visiting from Cassomir, though she remains unspecific as to whose cousin. Dame Crabbe is eager to suggest tawdry affairs between the visiting young woman and any of the local nobles, but throughout the jubilee, Lucretzia keeps to herself, making the bare minimum of small talk. Unless the PCs deliberately mingle with additional guests, they are unlikely to even notice the plain young woman.

In truth, Lucretzia is the infamous Night Swan, a vigilante using the ball as an excuse to quietly case the Palace of Birdsong for future attacks. Additional details on the Night Swan can be found on page 62.

LORD TITUS LOTHEED-CASAVA

Titus Lotheed-Casava is a cousin to the family, currently availing himself of Bartelby's good fortunes. Titus is a braggart, a bully, and a slacker; moreover, he was a senate aide and present at the Exaltation Massacre. Luckily for the PCs, Titus is also a lush; he spent the night drunk, and while he knows he's seen the PCs before, he can't remember where. He takes an immediate dislike to the new "Betony heirs," and while he can't prove it yet, he immediately sees through their ruse. Thankfully, with nothing but his reputation as a parasite, Titus has little sway. While he's happy to assist others like Sir Gul Gusairne, most

of his efforts are spent harassing, insulting, and sabotaging the PCs whenever possible, hoping to goad them into a duel.

Titus is never without his hangers-on—Dame Carodd Hellebore and Syras Cocklebur, Esquire—who obey him without question. Additional details on all three NPCs can be found on pages 50–51.

SIR GUL GUSAIRNE

The half-elf Gul served the previous Count Lotheed with distinction as seneschal, both keeping the estate in order and also serving as head of the count's unofficial "secret police," ferreting out dissent against his power. Bartelby has retained Gul's services and offers him even greater leeway in investigating and suppressing the populace, leading to several brutal attacks on peasant gatherings. Sir Gusairne is a handsome and confident man, but quiet. He spends most of the jubilee managing the staff and keeping a careful eye on the guests—especially these unknown newcomers.

More details on Sir Gul Gusairne can be found on page 24.

Other Guests

Other guests are not detailed here, as they do not affect this adventure. Additional resident knights, tribunes, and/or landgraves round out the rest of the county's aristocracy, and additional nobles, merchants, and family friends visit for the festive occasion as well, possibly providing more personal intrigue or stakes appropriate to your PCs' backgrounds.

TANAGER JUBILEE: DAY 1

The following section details the major events that occur during the first day of Tanager Jubilee. Each event listed for this day (and for the second day in the next section) mentions how many social rounds the PCs have to continue influencing important NPCs before the next event.

Event 1: Arrival

As the PCs approach the palace in the morning, they meet with an astonishing array of guests, nearly 40 altogether, all being fussed over by an army of servants sporting bird masks. Bartelby has hired additional staff, and the normally quiet palace throngs with chatter and laughter. Numerous entertainers—ferret-jugglers, fire-breathers, stilt-walkers, and other amusements—keep guests occupied as they arrive.

Upon seeing new guests, Count Bartelby Lotheed approaches the PCs and introduces himself warmly while a servant unloads the PCs' baggage. Read or paraphrase the following.

"Well met, newcomers. I am Count Bartelby Lotheed, steward of the county of Meratt, landgrave of the Hyden Marches, and tribune of Lotheedar. We understand you are the new heirs to the Betony lands. It is quite the honor to be our new neighbors, we're sure."

The PCs have the chance to make a strong impression here. A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Bluff or Diplomacy check can convince Bartelby that the PCs are nobles of good breeding and wealth; PCs dressed well (a courtier's outfit or better), with expensive luggage or presenting a gift (an antique or spellbook worth at least 250 gp) gain a +2 circumstance bonus on this check, while shabby or informal-looking PCs take a –2 penalty. If the PCs seem well bred, Count Lotheed insists they stay in the palace apartments (area **GR**) rather than the outlying guest cottages; otherwise, he makes a polite, formal introduction before passing them collectively to Dame Crabbe.

The PCs are free to wander and chat while sampling fine local white wines, cheeses, and jellied calves' feet. Much of the early discussion is speculation about when or if the reclusive Duke Lotheed, Bartelby's uncle, will arrive. Unless they manage to attract Count Bartelby's attention long enough to chat, they are immediately set upon by Dame Crabbe, who proceeds to question them about everything she can imagine, from their own likes and dislikes to gossip from Oppara.

Shortly after the PCs arrive, the gong in the Grand Ballroom (area **H7**) sounds to gather attendees for an event. This first event is the Meratt tradition of assigning a personal assistant to each visiting group: a jester to act as the guests' guides and announcers, lead the guests to events, and attend to their personal needs. The PCs are assigned Purple Finch—**Alista Cragus** (N female human bard 1; use the statistics for a tavern singer on page 26 of the *NPC Codex*)—a flautist from Lotheedar trying her best to be funny—who leads them to their rooms where fresh linens are laid out. She explains the jubilee's schedule and informs the PCs that they have several hours to prepare for the afternoon's tournament. Purple Finch remains a companion throughout the jubilee to provide context, directions, and answers to simple questions.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 3 social rounds before the start of the next event. Consumed with his duties greeting guests, Count Lotheed is not normally available to socialize with during this time. However, if the PCs convinced him of their good standing upon arrival, they have a single opportunity to attempt to influence the count if they wish.

Event 2: The Tournament

The count's servants have erected a list, a tilt, and stands for a joust, complete with colorful flags and banners, and happily supply heavy horse mounts, jousting armor (a breastplate, helm, and padding), and a small metal shield for guests who wish to participate but neglected to bring appropriate equipment. They also provide blunted jousting lances fitted with metal sheaths (which inflict nonlethal damage) to all competitors. The stands slowly fill with spectators, many bribed with food to come from nearby Lotheedar.

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Running the Joust

The joust is open to any guest willing to participate. Competitors all go up against each other in pairs determined by Count Lotheed, accumulating points over the course of 5 rounds, at which point the top two challengers face off against one another in a final pass. The use of magical augmentation in a joust—except to compensate for a disability—is considered a gauche violation of the rules.

Scoring: Each round, contestants ride to opposite ends of the tilt, turn, salute, and then charge on horseback at one another with lances, hoping to strike their opponent and, ideally, knock them from their horses. Each participant attempts an opposed Ride check and an attack roll. The character with the higher Ride check result gains a +2 circumstance bonus on her attack and damage rolls for that pass. A character struck must succeed at a Ride check (DC equal to the amount of damage dealt) or be unseated from his mount. Characters with the Unseat feat can apply this feat if the initial charge doesn't unseat an opponent. In the interest of safety and thanks to the blunted lances, the attacks deal nonlethal damage.

Connecting with a lance scores 1 point, while unseating an opponent instead scores 2 points. A wielder who shatters her lance (which happens automatically if a single blow deals 20 or more points of damage) adds 1 additional point for the spectacle and the skill required.

If you do not wish to play out the various NPCs charging against one another, assume that Baron Okerra scores a total of 11 points over 5 rounds, and Titus Lotheed-Casava scores 8 points, making them the top two competitors who face off in the final round unless one or more PCs exceed these scores.

Treasure: The second-place competitor is awarded a silver chalice emblazoned with the Lotheed family's rampant owl heraldry (worth 100 gp). The winner of the joust is awarded a silver ferret (worth 1,000 gp), as well as a bouquet of hyacinths to give to a "spiritual companion" who inspired her in the trials. Giving the hyacinth bouquet to any NPC (except Bartelby, Gul Gusairne, or Titus) automatically improves that NPC's attitude toward the PCs by one step.

Social Rounds: As the joust takes the whole afternoon, entrants do not have a chance to interact with or influence any NPCs (but PCs who choose not to participate can do so; see **Event 2a: Trucco**). However, the general prestige and assumed bravery that accompanies the joust grants participating PCs a +2 circumstance bonus on skill checks to influence NPCs during the rest of the day and evening.

Event 2a: Trucco

For those of a more genteel persuasion, a field is set aside for trucco a short distance from the jousting

list, complete with sandwiches and tea. The game—essentially a combination of billiards and golf—involves skill and control, using long-handled spoons to knock hardwood balls around a field, through various rings, and into opponents' balls.

Players take turns attempting Dexterity checks. Characters proficient with light hammers gain a +2 bonus on this check, and characters with Weapon Focus (light hammers) gain an additional +1 bonus. A character scores 1 point with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, and 1 additional point for every 5 by which her Dexterity check result exceeds 15. The first player to reach 7 points wins the round. Dame Crabbe is a particularly skilled trucco player and typically wins in the fourth turn of each round unless another player wins sooner.

There is enough time to play 5 rounds. Any PC who can beat Dame Crabbe in at least 1 round gains a +2 bonus on checks to influence her for the rest of the evening, provided Parthena wins at least 1 round of trucco. If the PCs beat her every round, she spends the rest of the night sulking, and all PCs take a –2 penalty on checks to influence her.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 4 social rounds in which to influence NPCs if they choose to play trucco. Baron Okerra is participating in the joust, and Tribune Onora is too consumed watching the event; neither can be influenced during these rounds.

Event 3: The Night Swan Strikes! (CR 4)

Prior to dinner, Count Bartelby summons his guests back to the palace gardens for a short musical performance, accompanied by drinks and a short speech about the palace's history and the meaning of the Tanager Jubilee. The harpers play at the bottom of the veranda stairs, while Count Bartelby traditionally delivers his speech from the top of the stairs—a tradition being exploited by a would-be assassin!

Trap: Night Swan, a newly arrived freedom fighter dedicated to wiping out tyranny, has opted to use Bartelby's predictability and ego to launch a simple assassination attempt. When she snuck into the palace several days ago disguised as one of the countless servants hired to prepare for the jubilee, she installed a simple crossbow rigged to fire a poisoned bolt. Once installed, she merely needed to wait for everyone to be distracted with the joust to set the tripwire where Count Lotheed would stand—an errand taking only a few moments during a trip to relieve herself.

As Bartelby ascends the stairs, the PCs can notice the tripwire and concealed crossbow with a successful DC 18 Perception check. Any PC who succeeds at her skill check can act just as the crossbow fires, shoving the count out of harm's way (if the PC chooses) with a successful DC 18 Reflex saving throw. If a PC's Reflex saving throw is at least 13 but less than 18, she instead interposes herself

JOUST COMPETITORS

NPC Name	Ride Bonus	AC	Attack Bonus	Damage	Source
Baron Nicolaus Okerra	+8	18	+10	2d8+8	See page 58
Baronet Fi Paben	+6	15	+1	2d8+2	Squire, <i>GameMastery Guide</i> 268
Lady Mona Sittas	+6	17	+5	2d8+2	Noble scion, <i>GameMastery Guide</i> 288
Lieutenant Marina Gortius	+2	20	+7	2d8+6	Guard officer, <i>Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide</i> 261
Lord Titus Lotheed-Casava	+9	18	+7	2d8+2	See page 60

and is struck by the bolt. The bolt has been poisoned with a triple dose of black adder venom. If a PC wants to defend Count Lotheed with a more complex tactic, such as casting a spell, apply a –5 penalty on that character's Reflex save.

POISONED CROSSBOW TRAP CR 4

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 18; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** none

Effect Atk +15 ranged (1d8+1/19–20/×3) plus enhanced bladder adder venom (DC 15, frequency 1/round for 12 rounds, 1d2 Con, cure 1 save)

Development: If Bartelby is struck and poisoned, Sir Gusairne and several guards rush to his side, carrying him inside for medical attention. Not wanting to appear weak, the count returns to the festivities afterward, looking ill but insisting “the damnable Night Swan can’t long delay a Lotheed.” The delay reduces the number of social rounds the PCs have to influence other NPCs during the feast (**Event 4**) and during the dance (**Event 6**) by 1 each.

If a PC saves Count Lotheed, whether she takes the shot intended for him or not, Bartelby’s attitude toward the PCs immediately improves by one step. He orders Sir Gusairne to apply the antitoxin to an injured PC immediately, and offers to pay for a *lesser restoration* spell at the temple in town.

The crossbow is rigged beneath a window ledge from the observatory (area **H27**), but Count Bartelby insists only his own people investigate. If the PCs somehow circumvent his security or persuade the count to allow them to investigate, the only clue accompanying the crossbow is a single black feather.

Social Rounds: There are no social rounds in the wake of this attack.

Event 4: Feast of the Victor

The evening of the first night, the ballroom is laid out for feasting, the formal dining room being too small to accommodate 40 guests. The meat for the feast is first paraded live before the hungry guests by servants dressed as sheep, and any PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check notices Baroness Voinum’s well-disguised revulsion at the spectacle. Those who subtly support her

revulsion while interacting with her gain a +2 bonus on checks to influence her for the rest of the evening.

During seating, Titus Lotheed-Casava loudly chastises the PC’s jester, Purple Finch, for obviously not providing them a room with washing facilities or clean clothes. If the PCs ignore the obvious jibe, they gain 1 automatic success as if they had successfully influenced Count Lotheed. If they instead return a sharp barb of their own with a successful DC 15 Perform (comedy or oratory) or DC 20 Bluff or Intimidate check, they lose 1 success (if any) with Count Lotheed, but they gain 1 automatic success with Baroness Voinum and Tribune Onora.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 3 social rounds over dinner in which to influence NPCs.

Event 5: Great Halfling Dog Charioteers

After the feast, servants clear away the tables and chairs and—to a fanfare of trumpets—six halflings dressed as Taldan heroes of lore enter, riding in gaudily painted miniature chariots each pulled by dogs. Servants rush to lay out a race course as the drivers perform japes and buffoonery for the wildly laughing aristocrats.

The rules for the chariot race are very simple: the halflings race about the ballroom three times, dodging a series of obstacles on the way, while the guests look on and cheer their champions. To spice things up, each guest is given three silken sachets filled with brightly colored powder to hurl at racers in an attempt to blind them. Anyone who throws a sachet at a passing racer must make a ranged attack against AC 14 to hit the driver, or AC 18 to temporarily blind the driver; the sachets count as improvised weapons. Assume that each round other partygoers strike two random racers (roll 1d6 to determine which), while Titus and his two associates deliberately aim for any PC-backed racer each round. Characters can hurl only one sachet each round.

Roll 1d10 for each halfling chariot at the end of each lap to determine the order. Each time a chariot driver is hit with a sachet, reduce his lead by 1. Each time a driver is blinded, reduce his lead by 1d3. The charioteer who finishes with the highest lead wins.

Development: A PC who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check during the race notes Sir Gusairne’s disdain of the event. If the PCs refrain from abusing his servants as they drive, he takes note of their kindness and is more inclined to think better of them, taking a –2

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penalty on Perception and Sense Motive checks against the PCs for the remainder of the adventure.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 1 social round during the race in which to influence NPCs.

Event 6: Dancing and Cards

The evening concludes with dancing and several rounds of a card game known as last Azlant. You can find the rules for last Azlant on page 13 of *Pathfinder Player Companion: Harrower's Handbook*, should your players want to play a few hands.

As the dancing begins and dizzying music commences, partners are selected.

Creature: After the first dance, an attractive woman in her late forties arrives at the party. With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (nobility) or Perception check, a PC overhears the gossip identifying the newcomer as the Duchess Veleto Lotheed, Count Bartelby's aunt and the absentee Duke Lotheed's wife. After a few moments of genuine surprise among those at the gathering, she formally introduces herself.

The true Duchess Lotheed died over a century ago; this current incarnation is a trompe l'oeil—a portrait brought to life by Duke Panivar Lotheed's experiments. She is only vaguely aware of her nature, and even with a close inspection (Perception DC 35) she is nearly impossible to recognize as anything but a human woman.

She has no murderous intentions this evening, wanting only to make new friends and hopefully sate her carnal appetites. If a PC asks her to dance, she becomes immediately infatuated with this new “admirer”; otherwise, she sets her attentions upon a particularly attractive or charming PC.

Bartelby is clearly furious at his “aunt's” sudden appearance; he normally keeps her sealed in the royal apartments (see areas **H31–H37**), but every bit as resourceful as the original Veleto, she escapes regularly, especially to investigate new happenings around the palace. He quietly seethes if the trompe l'oeil dances with anyone, and he immediately shoos her back upstairs after her first dance, insisting his aunt is “aging and easily confused, and shouldn't be taken advantage of.” He quietly snubs whichever PC danced with her for the remainder of the jubilee, preventing him from being influenced by that individual (though that PC can still attempt discovery checks regarding the count).

At the GM's discretion, Duchess Lotheed can be wooed and cajoled into revealing useful information during her dance—perhaps pointing confused or lost PCs in the right direction—with a successful DC 20 Bluff or Perform (dance) skill check.

DUCHESS VELETO LOTHEED **CR 8**
XP 4,800
hp 91 (see page 55)

Development: Make a note of whichever PC attracts the duchess's attentions, as she will visit that PC again later.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 4 social rounds during the dancing and parlor games in which to influence NPCs.

INTERLUDE: NIGHTMARES

Guests retire to their rooms and cottages after dancing and games. During the night, one or more of the PCs (at the GM's discretion) is disturbed by horrible dreams in which some talent or traits the PC takes pride in (such as his talent, appearance, or intellect) fails him in front of a mercilessly abusive crowd. This is a side effect of the ichkoh sahil Ehlers (see area **H35**), wandering the palace ethereally and invisibly, watching guests sleep with its look of fear. The PC that Ehlers observes must succeed at a DC 21 Will saving throw or be fatigued the next day due to the haunting nightmares.

If the PC mentions his dreams to Bartelby, he tries to hide his discomfort at hearing the report.



DOG CHARIOTEER

TANAGER JUBILEE: DAY 2

The following section details the major events that occur during the second day of the Tanager Jubilee.

Event 7: Breakfast

Breakfast is spitchcock served in the garden; a large bowl of water filled with live eels is set before each guest, along with a miniature harpoon for them to spear their choice of fish. Once an eel is harpooned, servants split its belly and grill it beside the table. The head is left intact, mouth still gaping when the meal is placed before the diners, ready to be eaten.

During breakfast, the assembled nobles brag of their hunting or tracking prowess, and money changes hands as they bet who among those assembled will be the first to bring in an eel.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 2 social rounds over breakfast in which to influence NPCs.

Event 8: The Hunt (CR 6)

The main event for the second day is a mock hunt: peasants are dressed as animals and released from the estate to hide within nearby territories to which they have been assigned, and then the assembled hunters are allowed to track their quarries and bring them back to the palace. The use of fake quarries helps prevent accidental injuries (at least to the nobles) that might otherwise mar the grand event.

Titus—aware of the trouble his kin has been having with a mantichore the locals call the Iron Lash—has ensured that when Bartelby drew lots to decide which hunting parties go where, the PCs were assigned the Lash's hunting grounds: the Brashen Deepes. Bartelby, to his credit, has heard little of the beast lately and had assumed it moved on; in reality, peasants have been sacrificing their sheep to keep the cruel beast sated after begging the count to do something about it for months with no response. After hunt areas are assigned, Titus and his cronies gibe the PCs to "beware the vicious beast" they must hunt.

After assignments, the quarry is brought out—four local "volunteers" who are gashed across the cheek to give the hounds their scent before being sent on their way. Bartelby promises the captives that if they can evade capture until nightfall, they will be absolved and granted a handsome reward of 50 gp. In actuality, the peasants have been pressured to take part after various minor crimes. The PCs' assigned quarry, Moffis, was a dairy farmer arrested and placed in the stocks for selling the count sour butter, and is now dressed as a wild ox.

For the next hour or so, the hunters sit around drinking warmed brandy, eating, and talking, while their quarry is

given "a sporting chance." During this time, each team of hunters is assigned a local guide—generally the same jester they received the day before—as well as a pair of Taldan bloodhounds (use the statistics for a riding dogs on page 87 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*) trained with the come, down, fetch, heel, stay, and track tricks. Hunters are not only allowed but encouraged to bring whatever armor, equipment, and weapons amuse them. The PCs are free to refuse to take part in the hunt.

The Brashen Deepes are about an hour from the palace on foot, or 45 minutes by horseback. It's a hilly pine forest run through with rocky creeks and shallow caves, and covered in low-lying ferns, chicory, and wild asparagus—a challenging environment in which to ride,

let alone hunt. A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Survival check—with each attempt taking 30 minutes—uncovers a single set of fresh human footprints, while the dogs can pick up the scent automatically after 2 hours of wandering the terrain. Shortly after the PCs find the tracks, riding becomes impossible as they enter an area where trees have been blown down and the undergrowth thickens.

Creatures: Some 30 minutes after the PCs enter this thicker undergrowth, they hear a deafening roar, followed immediately by a scream for help. Some 150 feet ahead, they can see a man dressed as an ox bleeding and desperately dodging the swipes of a massive mantichore. Moffis can dodge for 3 rounds using the trees, but on the fourth round, a claw attack knocks him to the ground with a mangled arm.

The Iron Lash of Meratt is a mantichore of great size and uncommon brutality that has preyed upon the area every season for years before retreating to its mating grounds in the Verduran Forest.

IRON LASH OF MERATT

CR 6

XP 2,400

Unique advanced mantichore (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 199)

LE Large magical beast

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

Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+4 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

hp 69 (6d10+36)

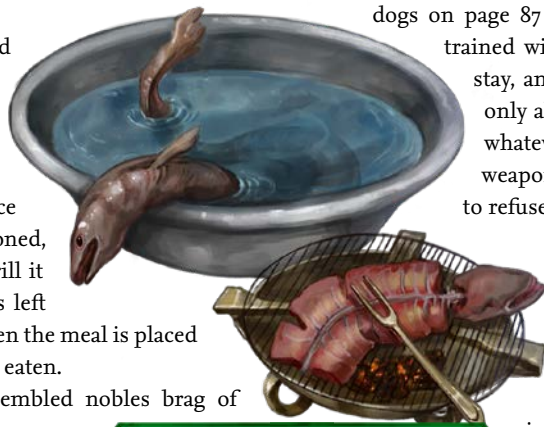
Fort +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities light fortification (25%)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (clumsy)

Melee bite +12 (1d8+7), 2 claws +12 (2d4+7), 2 wings +7 (1d6+3)



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Ranged 4 spikes +10 (1d6+7 plus 1d4 bleed)

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

Special Attacks pounce

TACTICS

During Combat While it would rather focus on the easy meal Moffis represents, the beast turns to engage the PCs upon taking any damage.

Morale The Iron Lash fights until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 19, **Con** 22, **Int** 11, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 28 (32 vs. trip)

Feats Flyby Attack, Hover, Weapon Focus (spikes)

Skills Fly +3, Perception +13, Survival +6; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception, +4 survival when tracking

Languages Common

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Deadly Prowess (Ex) The Iron Lash of Meratt is a formidable beast. In addition to having the advanced simple template, the manticore has spikes that carry a metallic sheen and cause bleed damage when they strike a foe. In addition, the creature can make two secondary attacks with its wings, has the pounce special attack, and has light fortification. All of these features increase its CR by 2.

MOFFIS OF CASCINA

CR 1/2

XP 200

Pig farmer (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 256)

hp 9 (currently 4)

Development: Even if saved, Moffis is petrified, fearing that the PCs' arrival means he'll end up back in the stocks to serve the rest of his 30-day sentence. If the PCs can calm him with a successful DC 14 Diplomacy check, he thanks them for saving him and offers free butter and cream when next they visit.

If the PCs return with proof of killing the Iron Lash, they cause a great commotion—if only because the results of their “harmless and fun” hunt was a truly impressive trophy. One PC can attempt a single Diplomacy check and compare the result to each NPC's influence skill DCs at once.

If the PCs privately tell Baroness Voinum that they captured Moffis—one of her citizens—and freed the man, they gain an automatic success toward improving her attitude, as if they had succeeded at an influence check. If they bound the farmer's wounds or offered any magical healing or other assistance, they gain an additional automatic success.

Titus wins the hunt by capturing his own quarry and a neighbor's as well, each hobbled by an arrow to the thigh. He receives a jade bear for his victory.

Special: The Iron lash of Meratt has killed countless citizens of the county. If the PCs display the beast's remains as a trophy in either their new estate or the town of Stachys, they earn 1 Loyalty point.

Event 9: The Feast of the Hunter

The evening's repast is a heartier fare suitable for mighty hunters. As before, all food is paraded before the guests before preparation. A small orchestra plays during dinner, performing a variety of popular symphonies from great Taldan composers like Richilo Sampolo, Gwenavive of Mut, and Nalappho. The meal concludes with large slices of jubilee pie.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 3 social rounds during dinner in which to influence NPCs.

Event 10: The Masquerade

After dinner, guests are dismissed for an hour to retire to their rooms so they can rest and change. The remainder of the jubilee is a masquerade, consisting of dancing, drinking, shows, and the count's favorite party game: coppers from heaven. If PCs didn't bring their own costumes for the event, the count has several he can loan them, though the locals have seen these outfits repeatedly for many seasons and grown bored with them, imposing a –1 penalty on the PCs' influence checks for the evening. At your discretion, especially expensive or innovative costumes for the masquerade can grant a +1 bonus on influence checks.

You can include as many or as few of the following events as you wish.

Social Rounds: The PCs have 5 social rounds during the masquerade in which to influence NPCs.

Entertainment

Much of the entertainment is simple fare, consisting of talented local musicians hired to play background music. Count Lotheed opens the evening's festivities with a fireworks display, created himself with a combination of the *prestidigitation* and *pyrotechnics* spells. A production of the popular *Taldor by Right* follows the opening ceremonies, a dramatic retelling of Taldor's founding by the legendary First Emperor Taldaris, performed entirely by halflings. After a few drinks, Dame Crabbe works up the nerve to contribute a surprisingly graceful Qadiran khaleegi dance popular in her youth. If the PCs have any relevant skills they wish to contribute, allow them to attempt a Perform check. A successful DC 15 check earns a polite round of applause, while a result of 20 or more genuinely impresses the guests, granting a +1 morale bonus on all influence checks the performing PCs attempt for the rest of the night. Failing this Perform check leaves the PC as a bit of a joke, imposing a –1 penalty on his influence checks for the night.

The Dance of the Phalanx

Midway through the evening, Count Lotheed announces that the ballroom has been invaded, and all guests must rush to its defense—the classic opening to a popular dance called the Dance of the Phalanx. Equal parts strategy game and formal waltz, the dance is performed

on a gridded floor, and partners are allowed to select the next dance steps from a predefined list related to the music played. Each pair of dancers cannot move into a square occupied by other dancers, and the object of the game is to force every other pair of dancers off the grid, leaving your “phalanx” in control of the “battlefield.”

Winning the Dance of the Phalanx requires both grace and strategy. To play, one partner adds their Intelligence bonus, while the other partner contributes their Dexterity bonus to determine the couple’s Dance Maneuver Bonus (or DMB; if a PC selects an NPC as a dance partner, assume each relevant bonus is equal to $1d6 - 2$). If one or both partners have skill ranks in Knowledge (nobility), they know enough of the rules and strategy to add 1 to their DMB per partner trained. If one or both partners have skill ranks in Perform (dance), they move with enough instinct and fluidity to add an additional 1 to their DMB per partner trained.

Once the music begins, partners attempt DMB checks against increasing DCs, beginning at DC 10 and increasing by 2 every turn. Partners who fail their check are forced off the dance floor and out of the game. The music continues until only one pair of dancers remains.

Treasure: The winners of the dance are awarded a pair of magnificent silver-and-rosewood masks depicting smiling faces (each worth 1,250 gp).

THE JUBILEE’S CONCLUSION

Breakfast the next morning—soft-boiled eggs, toast, and white wine—is delivered the guests’ rooms, and they are expected not to linger. If the PCs have improved the count’s attitude toward them by at least one step, he personally sees them off, inviting them to return any time. The remainder of the guests say their goodbyes politely, entreating the PCs to visit their estates in the future for more personal chats. The exception is Dame Crabbe, who insists the PCs visit her for tea 1 week hence and won’t take no for an answer, and even dispatches a messenger in 4 days to remind them.

PART 2: SCION

With their reputations as rising aristocrats hopefully secure, the PCs are free to move to their temporary home in Meratt, the Betony Estate (area A), and continue to covertly undo the harm the apathetic nobility have wrought. This part of the adventure is extremely open-ended, allowing PCs to tackle challenges in whatever order they like, or ignore some altogether, and come up with new or creative solutions that may not be listed in this adventure. Be flexible and work with

your players’ approach where reasonable, and consider allowing unconventional solutions (with caveats or extra challenges) rather than a flat “no.”

Throughout this part of the adventure, it is assumed the PCs will continue posing as nobles while secretly combating noble excess and abuse where they find it. Depending on how they approach solving certain dilemmas (such as battling Lotheed’s corrupt “tax” collectors), they may wish to don disguises like those the Night Swan uses, while other problems (such as the haunting of the Crabbe family) can be addressed in either their noble guises or as secretive heroes. This element is mostly a nod to inspirational material such as *Zorro* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, and not intended to be a “gotcha” to punish players if they choose the wrong guise for the wrong mission.

The ultimate objective in “Songbird, Scion, Saboteur” is to win the loyalty of the locals—both the nobility and the peasants—by performing heroic acts and by renovating their long-ignored infrastructure. The PCs will fight monsters, as well as repair roads and utilities. The general good will the PCs accumulate is tracked collectively as Loyalty Points and helps determine the support everyone in Meratt throws behind the PCs when they finally turn to confront Count Lotheed in Part 3.

Most of the actions the PCs take in this part of the adventure, from battling ghouls to befriending neighbors, generate Loyalty Points. At your discretion, completing an action with particular skill, minimal damage, or in a way that benefits the community, as well as additional acts of heroism, kindness, or pragmatism not listed here, can generate additional Loyalty Points. Track this total throughout the adventure and consult the table on page 47 to determine the final effects of the PCs’ hard work.

This section of the adventure is divided into events and locations, but it can generally play out in whatever order feels most appropriate.

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

In this adventure, the PCs’ neighbors live only a short journey away, and PCs can visit them with only a few days’ travel. This allows PCs to continue working to influence their aristocratic neighbors or investigate strange happenings in Meratt. As mentioned earlier, the PCs need to visit their noble contacts regularly or risk losing progress in befriending them (see *Dramatis Personae* on page 8). Nobles generally visit and expect to stay overnight for a single night before heading out the next morning, and while dropping by unannounced is not unheard of, it’s usually considered rude, imposing a -1 penalty on checks to influence the neighbor. Each visit provides PCs with 2 social rounds in which to influence the NPC present.

Travel “as the crow flies” is difficult, given the hilly terrain, rocky escarpments, and waterways that crisscross the county. As a result, PCs will usually need to

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travel via the established roads and highways; distances between Stachys and various Meratt locations are listed here for your convenience; shorter distances listed in parentheses on the table below are available once the Gold Canyon bridge is repaired (see area P).

Location	Distance (Miles)
Jambis (area M)	63 (37)
Lotheedar (area I)	22
Moost (area L)	55 (45)
New Towne (area O)	75 (25)
Pensaris (area E)	15
Voinaris (area K)	38

Messengers can be hired in any town and are accustomed to making quick deliveries; a messenger with a horse travels faster, but charges 2 sp per mile instead of the usual 2 cp.

Gossip flies freely around Meratt, and PCs can learn new rumors with a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information whenever they visit one of their neighbors, Lotheedar, or the public house in Stachys once they improve it (see page 28). Each rumor on the table on page 23 is a partially true bit of local news that points the PCs toward a specific encounter or location.

SUSPICIOUS MINDS

Unless faced with a confession or overwhelming evidence, NPCs are unlikely to think that the PCs are behind the recent troubles when they happen, being more inclined to believe the Night Swan or bandits are causing problems. The only NPC actively investigating the PCs is Sir Gul Gusairne, the count's seneschal, who pays the PCs a visit at their estate to ask probing questions every time they accumulate 10 Loyalty Points (see page 19). If the PCs have befriended Count Bartelby Lotheed, he dissuades his seneschal from bothering his new friends; if Bartelby's attitude is friendly, Sir Gul Gusairne comes by only once the PCs accumulate 15 Loyalty Points and each multiple thereof; if the count is instead helpful, Gusairne comes by only every 20 Loyalty Points accumulated.

If Bartelby grows suspicious of PCs, he sends Gusairne more frequently. If Bartelby's attitude is unfriendly, Gusairne visits once every 5 Loyalty Points they accumulate. If Bartelby is made hostile, he dispatches soldiers to seize the Betony estate and arrest the PCs, preventing them from making any further improvements to the estate or the town of Stachys and likely forcing them into hiding until they begin Part 3 of this adventure.

MERATT EVENTS

These events occur at various points in the adventure.

EVENT 1: TEA

As described in Part 1, Dame Crabbe doesn't allow the PCs to leave the Tanager Jubilee without arranging a visit

for afternoon tea a week after the party (whether the PCs agree to it or not), and she dispatches a messenger to remind them shortly afterward.

Tea itself is a quiet affair. Parthena is less overbearing and more informal away from major social events, and the visit grants PCs 2 social rounds to attempt to influence Dame Crabbe. Sepsinia remains her usual withdrawn, quiet self for the visit, though in her own home she's more willing to open up to strangers and can be coaxed into short conversations with a successful DC 25 Bluff or Diplomacy check—at least for a few minutes before her thoughts wander again. A PC engaging Sepsinia in conversation can recognize that she is under the influence of some kind of supernatural enchantment with a successful DC 25 Sense Motive or Spellcraft check—the cynic's bite of Opilio (see area L)—but since a lovelorn's bite doesn't radiate any magical aura, it is difficult to identify as anything but a vague, unnatural influence.

Whether PCs notice the unusual influence over Sepsinia or not, staying overnight at the Crabbe estate means they may witness Sepsinia's nighttime wanderings. With a successful DC 15 Perception check around midnight, a PC hears her wandering around the manor's creaky old floors and can see her stumble out into the garden and into the overgrown hedge maze behind the estate. See area L for more information on Moost and the Crabbe estate.

EVENT 2: JUDGING CRIMES

Once the PCs move into the Betony estate, they formally establish themselves as the tribunes of Stachys and must take over certain duties, the most notable of which is judging criminal cases. Onora Piscum brings criminals to the PCs' attention as she apprehends them, though she can hold them in the town "jail" (actually just the back room of her pub) for a few days while the PCs decide what to do. You can space out the trials however you like, but one every 1 to 3 weeks is appropriate.

Holding trial takes a day and takes place in Onora's pub, and most of Stachys comes out to watch. Each case is presented below and includes notes for the prosecution, the defense, and anything that may be revealed with investigation, along with a section of resolutions for specific verdicts. The listed XP reward is awarded only if the PCs resolve the case to the town's satisfaction; otherwise they earn half the listed amount. The acceptable punishments are generally a time in the pillory, a fine, dismemberment (especially for theft), or death; Stachys isn't equipped to imprison anyone, and with only one sheriff, the town can't oversee anyone performing community service unless the PCs deputize (and pay) someone for the task. Magical means of changing criminal behavior are beyond the PCs' reach for now, though clever solutions should be rewarded. *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Campaign* also includes suggestions for redeeming characters, should PCs want to take a compassionate approach.

LUCINIA MAG—ASSAULT, PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS, THEFT

XP 400

CN female human commoner 3

Prosecution Local drunk and troublemaker

Lucinia Mag has been causing problems for years. Most recently she started a brawl in Piscum's pub, punched the sheriff, and ran off with the night's take—22 sp—and a bottle of oldlaw whiskey worth 20 gp. Sheriff Piscum found her passed out drunk in Jo Sini's barn the next morning.

Defense Lucinia has little to say in her own defense, aside from her opinion on the PCs parentage.

Investigation A successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) or Diplomacy check to gather information reveals a long history of harassment, minor violence, and petty theft from Mag extending back to her childhood. She's been run out of town twice in the last 10 years, but both times she came back after a few months.

RESOLUTIONS

Banishment Locals are satisfied if Mag is banished.

Dismissal If Mag is released without punishment, the public attitude of Stachys worsens by one step.

Fine/Dismemberment There's no perfect solution here; Mag skirts a fine line of criminality—not violent enough for severe punishment, but never willing to reform—and most of the locals are sick of her. The traditional penalties for her crimes are a fine or removal of a hand; either way, she leaves town for a few months and locals are satisfied.

Pillory Locals are satisfied if Mag spends at least a day in the pillory, though Mag is furious at the humiliation and returns to make trouble after taking a few days to recover.

Public Service If the PCs hire a deputy to watch Mag, locals are satisfied so long as she works at least 2 weeks.

PORTIMER OF STACHYS—POACHING

XP 600

N male human expert 2

Prosecution Portimer was caught by several guards poaching the count's deer in the Abbeywood just north of the Stachys Spur, and after a severe beating has been returned to Stachys for trial. Local law demands execution for such a crime.

Defense Portimer insists he wounded a deer while hunting south of the canal and followed it to finish off the suffering creature, not realizing he'd trespassed on the count's land.

Investigation A successful DC 12 Knowledge (local) or

Diplomacy check to gather information reveals that Portimer was trained as a miller. He has struggled to get by as a farmer since the mill shut down in his youth, and he, his wife, and their child are all struggling to feed themselves. Investigating the area he claims he was hunting in requires a successful DC 18 Survival check and reveals no sign of Portimer hunting—nor even any signs of deer—south of the canal; he clearly shot one of the count's deer on the count's land. With a successful DC 18 Knowledge (local) check, a PC determines that the local population generally feels that Portimer was justified and that any punishments will likely anger the town.

RESOLUTIONS

Death If the PCs follow the letter of the law, the public attitude of Stachys worsens by one step.

Dismissal If Portimer is released without punishment, the public attitude of Stachys improves by one step and the locals are satisfied, but Count Lotheed's attitude toward the PCs worsens by one step, and the PCs lose 1 success they've accumulated to influence Baron Okerra.

Fine Portimer has no way to pay a fine.

Dismemberment/Pillory Using either of these punishments on Portimer angers both the town (for being overly severe) and Count Lotheed (for being too lenient), worsening both parties' attitudes toward the PCs by one step. The PCs can assuage Count Lotheed's wrath with a successful DC 20 Diplomacy, Linguistics, or Profession (barrister) check.

Public Service Perhaps the best solution is to give Portimer a job of some sort under the guise of public service, allowing him to support himself and his family. Doing so satisfies the town, but worsens Count Lotheed's attitude by one step unless the PCs also succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy, Linguistics, or Profession (barrister) check. Supporting Portimer as estate staff costs 1 gp a week, or it's free if the PCs repair the mill or pump house, or upgrade the public house.

ANLLEL OAKLEAF—BEWITCHMENT, TRESPASSING

XP 1,200

N female human druid 3

Prosecution Several local farmers report illness among their livestock causing frail animals and souring their milk. It began around the time locals started seeing a stranger moving among the fields at night. Sheriff Piscum caught this unknown woman poisoning the flock of the Gagrus family, who have now fallen ill with the same blight, and locals accuse the stranger of witchcraft.



LUCINIA MAG

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Defense Anllel refuses to speak to the superstitious locals, but a successful DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check identifies her as a Wildwood Lodge druid from the Verduran Forest to the north. She immediately opens up to anyone who speaks Druidic; otherwise, a successful DC 25 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check is required. If the PCs succeed, she reveals that a member of her lodge bought a strangely diseased goat from a Meratt merchant a few weeks ago, and the circle dispatched her to investigate, examine the animals, and try to formulate a cure in case the blight spreads.

Investigation Finding Anllel's campsite requires a successful DC 20 Survival check, and her notes reveal the same information she can share if coaxed (see Defense). If PCs investigate the Gagrus farm, they find the sheep have indeed contracted a strange disease; a DC 22 Heal or Knowledge (religion) check while examining an infected creature reveals small nodules usually associated with ghoul fever, though none of the sick animals have risen as undead. Simply asking around is sufficient to learn that all the sick animals have come from lands bordering the swampy terrain surrounding the broken pump house (area C). While the animals won't transform into ghouls, their growth is permanently affected by drinking tainted water.

RESOLUTIONS

Banishment Simply banishing Anllel angers the townsfolk, worsening their attitude by one step, unless the PCs also uncover the true cause of the illness. If the true cause is uncovered, the townspeople are instead satisfied.

Death Stachys initially calls for a witch-burning, certain Anllel's death will cure their sick livestock. If the PCs put the druid to death, the town is satisfied.

Dismissal Simply uncovering the connection between the tainted water and the illness doesn't end the bad blood and suspicion. The townsfolk are only satisfied with the PCs dismissing the case if the PCs uncover the true cause of the illness and succeed at a DC 22 Diplomacy or Perform (oratory) skill check.

Public Service Anllel can be put to public service improving the local farmland as "payment" for the sickened animals. The town is satisfied with this so long as the PCs uncovered the real cause of the illness, but convincing Anllel to go along with it requires a DC 15 Diplomacy or Intimidate check. Anllel's magic reduces the cost of one farm or market improvement by half.

PARTULLES MAYNE—MURDER

XP 1,200

LN male half-orc warrior 4

Prosecution Partulles Mayne owns an outlying goose farm west of town and has never liked the locals, who likewise keep the area's only half-orc at arm's length. He's known to skimp on deals and keep livestock that wander onto his land, and one of his recent arguments

with a local appears to have turned violent. A family driving their goats by earlier report seeing Mayne and Ershal Sutor arguing over a mule that had wandered on Mayne's land, and later Sheriff Piscum ran across Mayne trying to bury the body of Sutor. Sutor was killed by a powerful blow to the head.

Defense Mayne growls that Sutor's mule wandered into his garden and ate a fair supply of his turnips, so he intended to keep the beast to eat over the winter in the turnips' place unless Sutor paid him 6 gp for the animal ("Well below market price"). He has no idea how Sutor ended up dead on his property, but he knew he'd be blamed for it, so he decided to hide the body.

Investigation A successful DC 15 Heal check reveals that Sutor died from a blow to the head with something round, like a club or mace, while a result exceeding this DC by 5 or more reveals the wound is more hoof-shaped than weapon-shaped. A successful DC 15 Handle Animal check is enough for a PC to evaluate the mule—Chauncey—as ill-tempered and skittish. These facts combined suggest that Chauncey, not Mayne, killed Sutor with a kick to the head. If questioned magically, Chauncey confirms killing his former master.

RESOLUTIONS

Banishment Regardless of his guilt or innocence, the townsfolk are happy to see Mayne go.

Death The town—and Sutor's family—want blood for blood. If Mayne is put to death, they are satisfied.

Dismissal Unless the PCs can present some kind of ironclad evidence of Mayne's innocence—such as questioning Mayne in a *zone of truth* or testimony from Sutor using *speak with dead*—they are irate over the "miscarriage of justice" and "special treatment" the half-orc receives, costing the PCs 1d4 Loyalty Points. To satisfy the townsfolk, they must not only demonstrate Mayne's innocence, but also succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy or Perform (oratory) check.

Pillory If pilloried, Mayne is killed in the night by Sutor's vengeful sister, but the townsfolk are not satisfied that they had to take "justice" into their own hands.

Development: For every case the PCs resolve to the locals' satisfaction, they earn 1 Loyalty Point.

EVENT 3: THE HARVEST (CR 6)

At some point after the PCs have settled in, the harvest will need to begin (with the exact crop depending on the season, but likely beans, grapes, plums, or rye). During harvest times, the whole town comes together, working one farm at a time as a group until everyone's harvest has been brought in. If the PCs assist with the harvest, they lose 3 days to backbreaking labor but generate 1 Loyalty Point, or 2 with a successful DC 21 Knowledge (nature) or Profession (farmer) check. They finish each day fatigued.

COUNTY OF MERATT RUMORS

d10 Rumor

- 1 "Dame Crabbe's girl hasn't been the same since her beloved Opilio passed last year. Poor girl just won't let herself move on, and her overbearing mother isn't helping." (See area **L**.)
- 2 "The Night Swan struck a trade convoy from Cassomir! They say he robs from the rich and gives to the poor, but that sounds more like Galtan propaganda than reality. Can you imagine anyone giving away money?" (See **Event 5**.)
- 3 "The pump house feeding the Stachys Spur has been blocked for years—abandoned and haunted, they say. Blocked deliberately, is what I say." (See area **C**.)
- 4 "You kids today are too young to remember, but the Night Swan is clearly the spirit of Lauchlein Lake! Count Lotheed stopped sacrificing virgins to appease it like his father did, and now it's hunting in the county again." (see area **G**.)
- 5 "Baron Telus has stopped tending to his duties and lets his townsfolk loot as they please; it's disgraceful! Count Lotheed should've stepped in to put a stop to this years ago, but I guess he doesn't care so long as Telus's little bandit army leaves his lands alone." (see area **M**.)
- 6 "Sotto hasn't paid their taxes in over a year, from what I hear, and they always seem to have some new excuse. Baroness Voinum's been stepping in to cover them, as I hear it, but the old girl can't keep Lotheed's soldiers from collecting their due forever." (see area **J**.)
- 7 "I hear tell an angler over in Pensaris had the General on her hook for a good 8 hours last month, and almost landed him. Shame no one's heard from her since." (see area **F**.)
- 8 "The rirraff out in the Beggarwood are getting pretty aggressive in accosting travelers. Last spring they carried off everything but the wheels in a visiting viscount's caravan! Hopefully now that someone has claimed the Betony lands, they'll do something about these parasites before we lose all our visitors." (see area **D**.)
- 9 "Apparently Baronet Vort's gone native with a band of peasants southeast of Baron Telus's land; even destroyed the Gold Canyon bridge to keep outsiders away. I hear a witch got into his brain and stirred things up a bit. Positively scandalous!" (See area **O**.)
- 10 "Okerra is quite a lovable sort, but clearly it's all a front. His mother had quite the affection for stable boys, you see, and his claim to the family lands is only as strong as the bribes and gifts he keeps handing out to his peasants." (See area **E**.)

Creatures: On the afternoon of the third day, Giado Eta arrives with his wagon and guards. One of Count Lotheed's "licensed tax collectors," Eta is little more than a privateer, buying a license in advance from Count Lotheed each year, then carrying off with whatever he likes from local farms. He demands half of Sachys's harvest—equivalent to 50% of whatever gp budget the PCs currently have saved for town improvements!

The PCs can confront Eta, or allow him to take what he wants (and possibly ambush him later in disguise). If they confront him, he begins threatening the "upstart refugees" with his extraordinary magic, casting *prestidigitation* to scare the locals, but if the PCs don't back down, he turns to violence, confident the threat of Lotheed's wrath will protect him.

GIADO ETA CR 3 XP 800

Charlatan rogue (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 145)

hp 21

SUPERSTITIOUS MERCENARIES (4) CR 1/2 XP 200 each

hp 14 each (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 80)

Development: If the PCs attack Eta openly, rumors of the attack quickly get back to Count Lotheed, worsening his attitude toward the party by one step. If they instead

attack in disguise or under cover of night, the attack is attributed to the Night Swan. If Eta is defeated, the PCs earn 1 additional Loyalty Point.

EVENT 4: INVESTIGATIONS (CR 8)

The PCs' clandestine activities do not go completely unnoticed: Count Bartelby Lotheed's seneschal and enforcer, Sir Gul Gusairne, can't help but notice the uptick in strange activity since the arrival of the new Betony heirs and takes some time to snoop on their affairs as part of his normal duties keeping the peace. At certain intervals during the PCs' stay (see *Suspicious Minds* on page 20), Sir Gusairne drops in on the Betony estate to "check in with them."

Sir Gusairne's visits are usually a series of three opposed skill checks as the PCs attempt to conceal evidence of any wrongdoing or deflect his suspicions. Take note of how the PCs claim to be deflecting proof of their crimes or activities (if they do at all), and determine appropriate skill checks in response. Forging invitations to imply they were visiting another noble during an attack on a tax collector, for example, may require an opposed Linguistics check, while distracting Gusairne with the latest gossip may require a Knowledge (local) or Perform (oratory) check. PCs take a cumulative –2 penalty on each subsequent use of the same skill, as repeating the same lie thins it considerably. Sir Gusairne resists most deceptions using Linguistics, Perception, Sense

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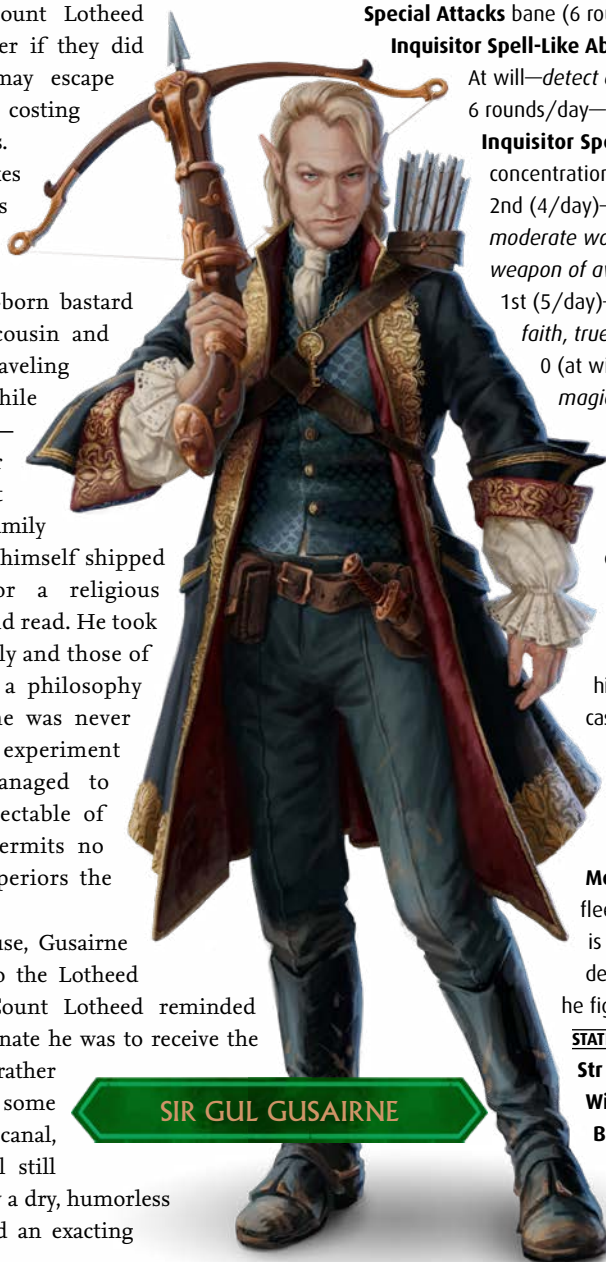
Motive, or the appropriate Knowledge skill, at your discretion. Attempting to use Bluff against Sir Gusairne is generally a poor choice, thanks to his inquisitor ability to detect lies; locals comment that the cunning half-elf seems capable of “smelling untruths.”

Sir Gusairne isn't a fool and trusts no one implicitly, but so long as the PC succeed at two out of three opposed skill checks, he is satisfied that they're either too inept or too distracted by local affairs to be actively scheming against his liege. If the PCs succeed at only one opposed check, Gul assigns a spy to watch them, costing the PCs 1d3 Loyalty Points. If the PCs fail all three opposed skill checks (or didn't attempt to defend their activities) during one of Sir Gul Gusairne's visits, he arrests them on suspicion of treason (though at your discretion, the PCs may convince Count Lotheed of their innocence later if they did not resist, or they may escape imprisonment later), costing them 1d6 Loyalty Points.

Gul Gusairne makes his patrols and visits with three soldiers.

Creatures: Sir Gul Gusairne was the low-born bastard of a minor Lotheed cousin and a charismatic, traveling elven merchant. While financially supported—barely—he was far from tolerated and not permitted to take the family name, instead finding himself shipped off to Lotheedar for a religious education once he could read. He took the lessons of his family and those of his faith and formed a philosophy of harsh discipline; he was never allowed an inch to experiment or fail and still managed to make something respectable of himself, and so he permits no one but his direct superiors the luxury, either.

Despite years of abuse, Gusairne is unflaggingly loyal to the Lotheed family. The former Count Lotheed reminded the lad daily how fortunate he was to receive the family's generosity, rather than being dumped at some orphanage or into the canal, and some part of Gul still believes that. He is now a dry, humorless man with little joy and an exacting attention to detail.



SIR GUL GUSAIRNE

SIR GUL GUSAIRNE

CR 5

XP 1,600

Male half-elf inquisitor of Abadar 6 (*Pathfinder RPG*

Advanced Player's Guide 38)

LE Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 42 (6d8+12)

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9; +2 vs. enchantments

Immune sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft. (30 ft. in armor)

Melee light mace +5 (1d6+1)

Ranged +1 *light crossbow* +8 (1d8+1/19–20)

Special Attacks bane (6 rounds/day), judgment 2/day

Inquisitor Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +9)

At will—*detect alignment*

6 rounds/day—*discern lies*

Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 6th; concentration +9)

2nd (4/day)—*castigate*^{APG} (DC 15), *cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (DC 15), *weapon of awe*^{APG} (DC 15)

1st (5/day)—*command* (DC 14), *shield of faith*, *true strike*, *wrath*^{APG}

0 (at will)—*brand*^{APG} (DC 13), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*, *read magic*, *stabilize*

Domain Travel

TACTICS

Before Combat Sir Gusairne casts *shield of faith* on himself if he expects trouble.

During Combat Gul orders his soldiers to attack while activating his judgment of protection and casting *castigate* on the nearest target. Afterward, he activates bane on his crossbow, casts *weapon of awe*, and begins firing at anyone giving his troops trouble.

Morale Sir Gusairne attempts to flee if all his soldiers are killed or he is reduced below 10 hit points. If defending the Palace of Birdsong, he fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 10,

Wis 16, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 18

Feats *Cosmopolitan*^{APG}, *Enfilading Fire*^{UC}, *Lookout*^{APG}, *Point-Blank Shot*, *Precise Shot*, *Skill Focus* (Linguistics)

Skills Bluff +5, Diplomacy +5, Heal +9, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (nature) +5, Knowledge (nobility) +2, Knowledge (religion) +5, Linguistics +10, Perception +10, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +6, Stealth +6;

Racial Modifiers +2 Perception

Languages Celestial, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Halfling, Hallit, Infernal, Osiriani

SQ agile feet (6/day), elf blood, monster lore +3, solo tactics, stern gaze +3, track +3

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (34 charges), antitoxins (2); **Other Gear** +1 *breastplate*, +1 *light crossbow* with 25 bolts, mwk light mace, *cloak of resistance* +1, golden holy symbol of Abadar^{UE}, mwk manacles, seneschal's badge, signet ring, 193 gp

LOTHEED SOLDIERS (3)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Human warrior 5

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 37 each (5d10+10)

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk halberd +7 (1d10+1/x3)

Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +7 (1d10/19–20)

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 17

Feats Endurance, Rapid Reload, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +6, Perception +6, Profession (soldier) +8

Languages Common

Combat Gear *oil of magic weapon* (2), *potion of barkskin*, *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *antiplague*^{APG}, *oil* (3); **Other Gear** mwk chain shirt, mwk halberd, mwk heavy crossbow, backpack, bullseye lantern, flint and steel, manacles, signal whistle, trail rations (10)

Development: If the PCs attack or kill Sir Gul Gusairne, even to avoid arrest, Count Lotheed's attitude immediately becomes hostile and he declares the PCs traitors. The PCs can no longer attempt to influence any nobles in the county of Meratt, and Part 3 of the adventure begins. If the PCs kill Sir Gusairne but manage to deflect suspicion away from themselves, they don't directly draw the count's ire, but Lotheed's immediate and mounting paranoia worsens his attitude toward them by one step. At your discretion, if the PCs take extraordinary measures to deflect blame for Gusairne's death (perhaps effectively framing the Night Swan, Baron Telus, or another dangerous resident of the

county), they may report the seneschal's death without suffering any loss of prestige in Count Lotheed's eyes.

EVENT 5: THE NIGHT SWAN CALLS

As the PCs gain a reputation among the local nobility, the Night Swan takes notice and assumes they are like the other fat, corrupt nobles that plague the county (doubly so if she had poor interactions with them during the Tanager Jubilee). One evening, shortly after midnight, she sneaks into the Betony estate when she expects them to be at home. She selects a few valuables to sell in Lotheedar, but her primary goal is to leave a note pinned to the wall with a dagger (see the handout on page 26).

Creature: Lucretzia isn't looking for a fight just yet, and she doesn't actively seek out a confrontation. She's happy to take a few cheap shots if one of more PCs notice her sneaking about in the dead of night, but this encounter mostly serves to introduce the PCs to the vigilante confounding the local nobility. After this event, you can use the Night Swan either as a stock villain trying to thwart the PCs' efforts—under the assumption that they have some sinister agenda—or make her a more sympathetic figure they can seek out as an ally.

THE NIGHT SWAN

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 56 (see page 62)

Development: If the PCs shift the Night Swan's attitude to helpful, they gain 4 Loyalty Points, but Baron Okerra's attitude toward them immediately worsens by three steps when he hears of the nobles working alongside a dangerous anarchist. Alternatively, if the PCs shift Baron Okerra's attitude to helpful, the Night Swan's attitude toward them immediately worsens by three steps as she watches them kowtow to a man more concerned with the letter of the law than human decency and freedom.

EVENT 6: DUCAL VISITATIONS (CR 8)

The trompe l'oeil of Duchess Veleto Lotheed, whom the PCs awkwardly encountered during the Tanager Jubilee, forms an attachment to whichever PC she interacted with during the dance, and though confined to the imperial apartments for the rest of the jubilee, she escapes during the PCs' adventures in Meratt to visit them again.

Creature: The duchess isn't malicious, but she is selfish and obsessed. She misses her absentee husband and wants to be wooed by an attractive, vivacious youth and feel alive once again... a task complicated by the fact that she isn't actually alive. Even if politely rejected, the duchess remains discreetly hidden at the Betony Estate, entering the faded frescos to remain close and watch her new paramour; this allows her to attempt Stealth checks while effectively remaining in plain sight.

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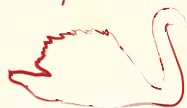
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Parasites, BEGONE!

This land has run out of teats from which your piggish lot may suckle! I bear this warning before I bear arms, for I am generous—LEAVE the county of Meratt, and take as many of your noble swine with you as you would see saved from slaughter. My next message comes on a spear's point.



HANDOUT

Veleto isn't a complete human being, being only a copy of the original duchess. As such, while she's quite sure of her feelings and emotions, they are superficial and fail upon closer examination. She knows she loves her husband Panivar, for example, but she can't remember how they met or even the names of their children. Likewise, she knows she is enamored of her chosen PC, but she can't describe why or what the passion means, growing increasingly hostile if pressed about it.

The duchess isn't hostile—at least not unless treated rudely—but still presents a threat thanks to her inquisitive nature and past as a spy. She is likely to see and hear things, and while she won't immediately turn the PCs over to her dullard nephew, she's all too happy to use that as a threat to get what she wants: attention, comfort, political influence, and the PCs' protection from her nephew when he invariably seeks her out once again. Duchess Lotheed will not return to the Palace of Birdsong willingly.

Note that even if the PCs destroy Veleto during this part of the adventure, they will still encounter her in the tower (area H32) thanks to the *trompe l'oeil*'s rejuvenation ability.

DUCHESS VELETO LOTHEED

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 91 (see page 55)

Development: To defeat Duchess Lotheed's advances, the PCs must destroy her or find a discreet way to return her to the Palace of Birdsong and Count Lotheed's care. Returning her unharmed, or tricking her into returning, earns the count's respect and 1 Loyalty Point.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to deal with Duchess Lotheed nonviolently, award them XP as if they had defeated her in combat.

EVENT 7: A DATE WITH THE BARON

Once the PCs have accumulated 40 Loyalty Points, Baron Okerra invites them to his estate, but he is uncharacteristically vague about why. Once they arrive, he politely but firmly demands they explain rumors he has heard of seditious activity. So long as the baron's attitude is at least indifferent, he doesn't alert Count Lotheed, but he does insist the PCs remain at his estate for 3 days—giving them each 3 social rounds to influence him. If the PCs can't manage to shift Baron Okerra's attitude to helpful, he is bound by honor to report their subterfuge.

The PCs may instead try to deflect the attention, convincing Baron Okerra the rumors are nothing but scandalous gossip. Doing so requires a series of three successful Bluff checks opposed by the baron's Sense Motive check results. If the PCs select this tactic and later win the baron's loyalty by shifting his attitude to helpful, they receive only 1 Loyalty Point instead of the normal 4, thanks to the seed of mistrust they've planted.

MERATT LOCATIONS

The locations in this section correspond to specific lettered locations on the county of Meratt map on page 66.

A. BETONY ESTATE (CR 5)

The Betony Estate stands atop a low hill overlooking the nearby hamlet of Stachys. A cobblestone road that switchbacks down the hill connects the estate to the settlement. As the PCs approach their new home, read or paraphrase the following.

Atop this low hill stands a fine, if faded, estate. Brambles and thick undergrowth crowd the gardens, while ivy creeps up the two-story marble facade. The building's windows are shuttered, and its main doorway barred and gripped by a great iron padlock. A tower—clearly far older than the main house—rises from the structure.

The palace is mapped, but its chambers are only named as the rooms are all generally empty. Fine features such as frescoes and statues in remarkably good shape adorn each room. Even after a decade sitting empty, the manor's roof doesn't leak, the interior paint hasn't peeled, and even the remaining furniture is fairly dust-free thanks to being draped in canvas. A single table of roses continues to prosper in the conservatory (area A15). PCs examining the house with any scrutiny and succeeding at a DC 18 Appraise or Knowledge (engineering) check can conclude that the house is clearly being maintained, though it is unclear by whom.



The iron padlock is average quality. The documents Martella provided include a key, and Onora Piscum carries a spare so she can inspect the house once every month or so to watch for looters or squatters—not that these have been a problem, as everyone in the area knows that the restless spirit of Lady Allis Betony still haunts her former home. The locals are happy to tell anyone who will listen about the ghost, and the haunting is a favorite topic of discussion in the tavern. As a child, young Allis was never entirely reliable. While she was sweet, she often spoke to people who weren't there, and this pattern continued as she aged. She never married, and in her last decade she became a recluse, living alone in the house. Locals still hear noises and see lights in the windows some nights, and the few people who tried to loot the house have been battered and beaten by unseen hands.

Creatures: Strange figures still lurk in the estate, but it's not Allis's ghost. Three domovoi—Blunk, Nodd, and Wink—have dwelled in the building since the original watchtower was constructed over a thousand years ago. Allis befriended the notably reclusive, cantankerous creatures while just a child, and they remained her lifelong friends, insulating her from the worst influences of Taldan high society. After Allis passed and no one inherited the house, they felt it their duty to protect their departed friend's home and even maintain it (as best they can with no raw materials). They dwell in a secret

room under the tower, accessible by a hidden door in the cellar (Perception DC 22 to locate).

The trio wander the estate looking like three mangy old cats and assume any newcomers are looters. At first, they try to scare them away with eerie sounds and moving furniture, or making trespassers fall asleep and then dragging them outside. If these tactics fail, they turn more violent after a few days.

The domovoi aren't evil, just territorial. A PC can identify the handiwork of fey with a successful DC 23 Knowledge (nature) check; locating their lair under the tower provides a +10 circumstance bonus on this check. Befriending the fey requires a successful DC 22 Diplomacy check, or DC 27 if either the PCs or the domovoi have resorted to violence; offers of bread, clothes, or whiskey provide a +5 circumstance bonus on this check.

BLUNK, NODD, AND WINK (3)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Domovoi (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 142)

hp 27 each

Treasure: The domovoi have concealed a legendary treasure for eons, since first stealing it from a courier a millennium ago: *Koriana's blade* (see page 79). They offer the sword as a gift if the PCs befriend them; otherwise, the PCs may find it if they locate the domovoi's secret room.

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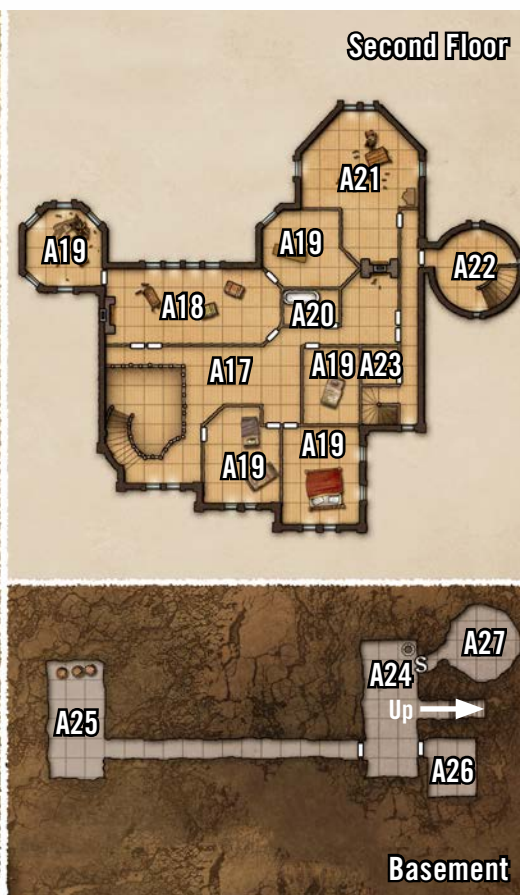
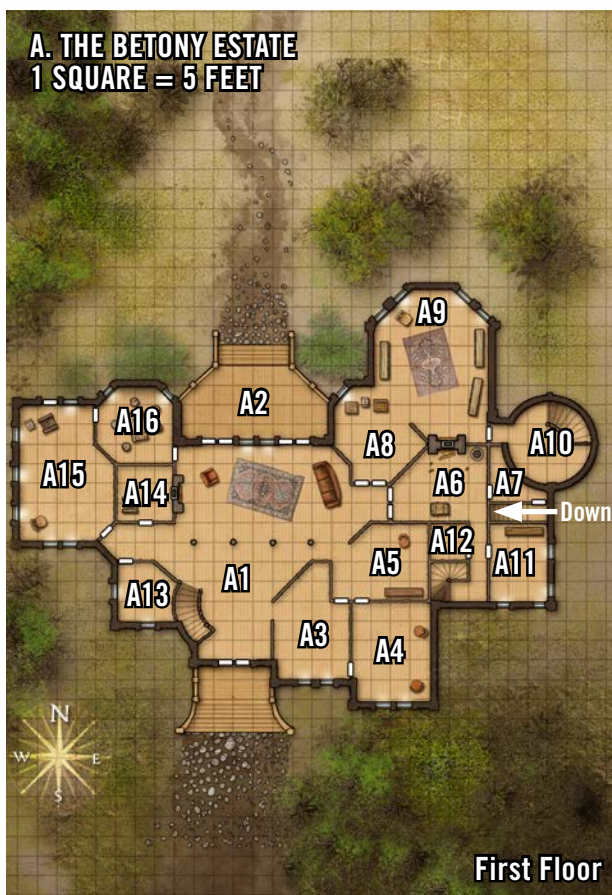
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Development: If befriended, the domovoi maintain their role as caretakers, and they are happy to have a new family to work with, especially if left regular offerings like cream, porridge, or sweet rolls. They don't gossip or interact with strangers at all, but they can help the PCs get the manor back in shape in a month, requiring only 500 gp worth of supplies. Without the domovoi, restoring the estate to its former glory requires 3 months and costs 1,000 gp. As long as the estate remains unrestored, the PCs take a -2 penalty on Bluff and Diplomacy checks when interacting with their aristocrat neighbors.

Story Award: If the PCs befriend the domovoi, award them XP as if they had defeated them in combat.

B. STACHYS

Stachys is a quiet little village on the edge of vanishing altogether. Locals haven't had any official leadership or infrastructure since the Lady Betony passed 10 years ago. Their official tribune, Roren Piscum, passed away 5 years later, and ever since Onora Piscum has shouldered most of the burden of protecting her neighbors and keeping people organized while still running her small tavern.

Stachys begins with an attitude of unfriendly toward the PCs; having been effectively abandoned by the nobles of the county for years, they aren't eager to be told what to

do or offer up yet more taxes they can't afford. The PCs can't adjust the community's attitude through Diplomacy checks; instead they need to apply hard work, good deeds, and local improvements to win the locals' trust and support.

Rebuilding Stachys

After a decade of neglect and heavy taxation, Stachys is a shell of what it could be. The town needs extensive (and expensive) improvements at this point to restore its economy. Listed below are the improvements needed around town, the cost of each, and the number of Loyalty Points the PCs gain by setting an example of competent leadership, as well as any other related benefits. At your discretion, relevant spells with long-term effects (such as *make whole*, *plant growth*, *stone shape*, *wood shape*, etc.) can defray some of the cost of improvements, up to an amount of gp equal to $50 \times$ the spell level per casting; this can't replace more than half the cost of any given improvement. The PCs can pay for these repairs themselves, but many encounters over the course of this adventure provide rewards that can go toward repairing their town. Improvements listed as "advanced" cannot be purchased unless the basic version has been purchased first; Loyalty Point awards for the basic and advanced versions of an improvement are cumulative.

Once the PCs have invested at least 10,000 gp in improving the town, locals actually start to believe the PCs are working for the collective benefit, and the town's attitude toward them improves by one step. Once the PCs enact at least 15,000 gp in town improvements, Stachys grows into a village as wayward farmers trickle back in (increasing its modifiers by 1 each).

Civic Improvements, Basic (1,000 gp): Repairing potholes, leveling the streets, repainting buildings, and patching roofs all help improve the quality of life and attract new visitors. The PCs gain 1 Loyalty Point.

Civic Improvements, Advanced (4,000 gp): Investing more money allows Stachys to renovate its waste systems, build new walkways, and construct new buildings. The PCs gain 3 Loyalty Points.

Farms, Basic (1,000 gp): Basic improvements include repairing irrigation, pulling stumps, and marking outlying roads. The PCs gain 1 Loyalty Point.

Farms, Advanced (4,000 gp): With more cash, the community can acquire hardier seed, fertilizer, and even magical renewal for the soil. The PCs gain 3 Loyalty Points.

Festivals (2,000 gp each): Festivals to mark special occasions and holidays are an easy way to win support and impress the neighbors, but PCs can't hold more than one festival every 2 weeks. A festival raises the town's opinion of the PCs to indifferent if it has fallen to unfriendly. Inviting a noble to visit during a festival grants the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus on checks to influence that noble during the visit. If the PCs hold at least three festivals, they gain 1 Loyalty Point.

Gold Canyon Bridge (3,000 gp): Rebuilding the bridge over Gold Canyon (see area P) allows PCs to travel more quickly to Jabris, Moost, and New Towne, and encourages new trade. The PCs gain 1 Loyalty Point.

Market, Basic (2,000 gp): By paving the village square, coordinating with local artisans and neighboring farms, and hiring a few messengers, the PCs can establish a weekly market to attract more wealth. This improvement helps Stachys become more self-sufficient, reducing the base cost of all future improvements by 10%.

Market, Advanced (2,000 gp): Lending some money to establish a new, permanent store in town helps bring new products and luxuries into the community. Completing this improvement grants Stachys the prosperous settlement quality.

Mill (1,000 gp): The windmill just outside of town broke down in a storm 20 years ago, and no local has the knowledge or money to fix it. With some small investments in repairing the mill, farmers will no longer need to cart their wheat to Pensaris and back. The PCs gain 1 Loyalty Point.

Public House (5,000 gp): Onora's original tavern is little more than an oversized home with a dirt floor. Constructing a true public house provides Stachys with a public gathering space as well as room for brewing.

BETONY ESTATE KEY

The following are the listing of rooms within the Betony Estate, though the PCs are free to rearrange or repurpose each space as they see fit.

A1. Foyer	A15. Conservatory
A2. Garden porch	A16. Guest room
A3. Drawing room	A17. Landing
A4. Game room	A18. Library
A5. Music room	A19. Bedroom
A6. Kitchen	A20. Upstairs bath
A7. Pantry	A21. Master suite
A8. Parlor	A22. Upper tower
A9. Dining room	A23. Lavatory
A10. Lower tower	A24. Cellar
A11. Servants' quarters	A25. Basement storage
A12. Lavatory	A26. Wine cellar
A13. Guest room	A27. Secret tower foundation
A14. Bath	

This investment automatically improves Onora Piscum's attitude toward the PCs by one step. At your discretion, this new pub may attract adventurers. The PCs gain 2 Loyalty Points.

Pump House, Basic (1,000 gp): Repairing the pump with a simple, animal-drawn mechanism is enough to start draining the adjoining marsh, solving Stachys's insect and mildew problems. This improvement cannot be purchased until the PCs eliminate the ghouls inhabiting the area (see area C). The PCs gain 1 Loyalty Point.

Pump House, Advanced (5,000 gp): Repairing the pump's full functionality with a magical or engineering solution and establishing a regular ferry service helps connect Stachys to the rest of the county via the canal system. The PCs can now travel along the canals to reach their destinations more quickly. The cost of this improvement can be reduced by 2,000 gp with a successful DC Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (engineering) check, representing 3 days of dedicated work. The PCs gain 3 Loyalty Points.

Statue (1,000 gp): Once the PCs have invested at least 10,000 gp into town improvements, they can erect a statue in town square, honoring the local culture, the local nobility, or themselves. If they choose to honor the local nobility, they gain 1 Loyalty Point. If they choose to honor the local nobility, they gain a +1 equipment bonus on Diplomacy checks to influence nobles of the county. If they choose to honor themselves, the statue becomes a minor tourist attraction, increasing the town's base value by 10%.

Temple, Basic (4,000 gp): Stachys has a small shrine to Abadar, Erastil, Iomedae, and Shelyn, and with expensive construction this can be transformed into a small temple to any one of these gods. This improvement grants the PCs access to the healing

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services of a 1st-level cleric while in town, free of charge. The PCs gain 2 Loyalty Points.

Temple, Advanced (10,000 gp): With a sanctified altar, expanded library, and charitable infrastructure, Stachys develops one of the nicest temples in the region, providing free education, food, and shelter for locals. This provides the PCs with free access to the spellcasting abilities of a 3rd-level cleric while in town and increases the community spellcasting level by 1 as more experienced clerics visit from neighboring communities. The PCs gain 2 Loyalty Points.

Development: If the PCs manage to shift the town's attitude to friendly, they gain 1 Loyalty Point and locals are happy to pitch in and help out, allowing the PCs to attempt Craft (bows, carpentry, cloth, clothing, leather, pottery, shoes, stonemasonry, or weapons), Knowledge (engineering, geography, history, local, nature, or religion), and Profession (baker, butcher, cook, driver, farmer, fisherman, gardener, herbalist, midwife, miller, porter, scribe, shepherd, stablemaster, tanner, trapper, or woodcutter) checks with a total +8 bonus, even if they don't have any ranks in the relevant skill. PCs cannot use these borrowed Profession skills to generate money for a week of dedicated work. If the PCs shift the town's attitude to helpful, they gain an additional 2 Loyalty Points.

C. STACHYS PUMP HOUSE

The original Stachys spur of the canal was constructed 1,200 years ago and outfitted with a groundwater pump to help transform the local marshes into useful farmland. The design helped maintain local fortunes for over a millennium. The original magically driven engine broke over a century ago, and the locals replaced it with a simpler mechanism pulled by oxen. Eventually the pump itself broke down, and by that time, the county lacked anyone with the know-how to repair it. Over the last 20 years, the marsh has returned, driving locals off their land and reclaiming a cemetery that had once occupied a nearby knoll. The cemetery hosted the Sandaris family crypt—predecessors to the Betonys who earned their noble title in the Shining Crusade—and dissolved the wards that once held the restless Marjorine Sandaris in her grave.

Thanks to Marjorine's hunger, the marshes now host a small population of ghouls who claim the old pump house as their "estate." Each infested with Marjorine's self-loathing and need to hide from the world, the ghouls spend months at a time sunken into the mud in torpor, springing into motion only to devour trespassers. The people of Stachys know some monster claims their old pump house and prevents them from attempting even rudimentary repairs, but thanks to the ghouls' reclusive nature, no one is exactly sure what.

Marshland and shallow, stagnant ponds surround the pump house for 2 miles in every direction, ringed with festering carcasses of livestock that wandered off only to

become stuck and drown. Reaching the pump house from Stachys by foot takes 7 hours, and the land is unsuitable for horses and other mounts. Locals have a few flat-bottomed, 10-foot-by-15-foot barges they use to travel or fish and are willing to loan them to PCs so long as the town has an attitude of indifferent or better toward the PCs; reaching the pump house by barge takes 2 hours.

Use the Stachys Pumphouse map on page 34 for area C.

C1. Pump House Exterior (CR 4 or 6)

As the PCs approach the pump house, read or paraphrase the following.

A sturdy stone building straddles the berm separating an algae-cloaked marsh from the stagnant canal waters. A long sluice looks as though it might have once accommodated a mill, while a stone walkway wraps around the southern portion of the building. Moss almost completely obscures the slate roof.

The marsh waters surrounding the pump house's southern half are only about 4 feet deep, with a strip of wetland (indicated on the map). The wetland is considered difficult terrain, while the deck of a barge is considered normal terrain and does not impede a PC's movement. The canal waters north of the berm are 10 feet deep.

The pump house doors rotted away years ago.

Creatures: The stench of rot sometimes attracts larval otyughs from the sewers under Lotheedar, most of which perish, but a single specimen has proven adaptable enough to survive. The ghouls tolerate the presence of the creature as a sort of watchdog, feeding it scraps of trespassers or fish from the canal. The residents of Stachys know only that some creature they call "the Lurker" lives in the stagnant waters around town, but they have no idea what it is, or that there are ghouls feeding it.

Three ghouls join the Lurker during the night, either dredging the canal or wading mindlessly in the marsh. Both the Lurker and the ghouls spend most of their time underwater and remain hiding in the murky waters if they detect anyone approaching. The ghouls slip back inside at sunrise, emerging during the day only if the PCs make an extraordinary amount of noise in their approach.

THE LURKER	CR 4
XP 1,200	
Variant otyugh (<i>Pathfinder RPG Bestiary</i> 223)	
N Large aberration	
Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +9	
DEFENSE	
AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17 (+8 natural, -1 size)	
hp 39 (6d8+12)	
Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +6	
Immune disease	
OFFENSE	
Speed 20 ft.	

Melee bite +7 (1d8+4 plus disease), 2 tentacles +3 (1d6+2 plus grab)

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

Special Attacks corpse spew

TACTICS

During Combat The Lurker is fairly thoughtless and spoiled. It attacks any intruders, and uses its corpse spew ability only if reduced below 20 hit points.

Morale The Lurker fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 10, **Con** 13, **Int** 5, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +9 (+13 grapple); **CMD** 19

Feats Alertness, Toughness, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Acrobatics +0 (–4 when jumping), Perception +9, Sense Motive +3, Stealth +2 (+10 in underwater); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth underwater

Languages Common

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Corpse Spew (Ex) The Lurker can vomit a shower of rotting meat and bones in a 20-foot cone. Each creature caught in this cone must succeed at a DC 14 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1d4 rounds. A creature caught in this cone must also attempt a save against the Lurker's ghoul fever (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146), as if the otyugh had bitten it.

Disease (Su) The Lurker's bite attack exposes creatures to ghoul fever, as if the target had been bitten by a ghoul.

GHOULS (0 OR 3) CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 13 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146)

Treasure: The Lurker picks through the nearby flooded cemetery for food and baubles, and occasionally dredges the length of the canal, finding a variety of strange treasures it keeps in a nook near the pump house stairs (Perception DC 16 to find). Its hoard includes 17 pp, 33 gp, an engraved silver compact (worth 250 gp), a platinum-and-diamond necklace (worth 850 gp), a masterwork trident, a +1 *arrow-catching buckler*, a *ring of jumping*, two *oils of obscure object*, and a *wand of protection from evil* (5 charges).

C2. Well Room (CR 4 or 6)

This large room once contained supplies and machinery for repairing the pump and cleaning the well, but these have long since rotted into mulch.

The well in the northeast corner of the room goes down 60 feet into the local water table, but the water within is stagnant and fetid. The pump mechanism has clearly been modified to accommodate a rope that once passed through a small slot carved into the wall; a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) or Profession (driver) check recognizes that the pump was modified to accommodate an animal-drawn power source.

STACHYS

The community of Stachys is in the PCs' hands once they move into the Betony estate. The neglected little farming community has scraped by without any official leadership or infrastructure for over a decade, slowly bleeding off the population. The statistics listed below represent Stachys as the PCs inherit it; their improvements can improve various aspects, add special qualities, change its government type, or grow its population.

STACHYS

N hamlet

Corruption –2; **Crime** –2; **Economy** –6; **Law** –2; **Lore** +0; **Society** –2

Qualities gone to seed

Danger –5

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government autocracy (Tribune Piscum)

Population 66 (48 humans, 6 halflings, 7 half-elves, 1 half-orc, 4 other)

NOTABLE NPCs

Honorary Tribune Onora Piscum (NG female half-elf expert 4/warrior 1)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 100 gp; **Purchase Limit** 500 gp;

Spellcasting —

Minor Items 1d6 items

SPECIAL QUALITIES

Gone to Seed: The neglect of the settlement has made locals apathetic and the place is run down. (*Economy* –4; *halve Base Value and Purchase Limit; no available spellcasting*) Once the PCs implement one civic improvement, one farm improvement, and the mill repairs, they can remove this disadvantage.

Creatures: The bulk of the pump house ghouls rest in this dank chamber during the day in a quiet, self-loathing fugue. Sounds of combat here rouse the Queen Without a Face (see area C3) from her own slumber, and she joins the combat after 5 rounds.

GHOULS (3 OR 6) CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 13 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146)

Treasure: When Marjorine Sandaris first roused from her warded crypt, she carried her blessed spear, *Godspike*, with her for months even though its touch charred her flesh. In a fit of misery and pain, she finally cast the spear into the well here, where it remains to this day, 60 feet below the water's surface and half-buried in muck. Reaching the bottom of the well requires Swim checks, while locating the spear by searching the muddy, lightless bottom requires a

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successful DC 25 Perception check. Anyone swimming in the well water before the pump house is repaired must succeed at a DC 12 Fortitude save each round or contract filth fever. *Godspike* is a +1 *holy spear*.

C3. Pump Room

A large, arcane mechanism fills much of this chamber: the remains of an ancient magical engine the likes of which were often built in Taldor's heyday for mundane tasks like canal maintenance. The device hasn't run in a century, and many of its valuable components have been scavenged, requiring extensive resources and specialized knowledge to ever repair (or alternatively, to replace with a mechanical equivalent).

The small office to the north was once used by the local canal maintenance official, whose responsibilities included logging the passage of ships, performing minor maintenance, and requesting larger-scale repairs. It now serves as the den for the Queen Without a Face, and she has lined most of it with rotting vegetation and the waterlogged remnants of her coffin. Holy symbols of the long-dead goddess Arazni are painted on the walls.

Creature: Cursed with ghoulish fever in the Shining Crusades and succumbing to the disease before returning home, Marjorine Sandaris arose as a ravenous undead at her funeral and attempted to devour her family before a cousin and cleric of Aroden laid her to rest with a burst of divine light that burned the face from the dead woman's skull. The cursed strain of ghoulish fever that afflicted Lady Sandaris would not let her rest for long, however, and she rose again under the next new moon. Eventually her family bound her coffin with wards and blessings from several good-aligned gods to keep the war hero in a blessed oblivion. This peace lasted for a thousand years until flooding washed and rotted away those protections, and Marjorine, now calling herself the Queen Without a Face, rose again to prowl the moors.

Enough of her former faith remains that Marjorine chooses to live in exile rather than hunt the good people of Stachys, but she cannot control her ravenous hunger when flesh presents itself to her. She longs for true death, but so far the touch of the Whispering Tyrant has proven far stronger than the comforting pull of the River of Souls.

Sounds of combat in this room quickly rouse any slumbering ghouls in area C2, who rush in to join the fight after 5 rounds.

QUEEN WITHOUT A FACE

CR 5

XP 1,600

Female ghastron ex-paladin 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146)

LE Medium undead

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13

Aura stench (10 ft., DC 16, 1d6+4 minutes)

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+6 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 65 (6 HD; 2d8+4d10+34)

Fort +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2;

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +11 (1d6+4 plus paralysis and disease), 2 claws +11 (1d6+4 plus paralysis)

Special Attacks paralysis (1d4+1 rounds, DC 16)

TACTICS

During Combat Most of Marjorine's paladin abilities no longer function, and she fights more like a wounded animal, lashing out with claw and fang.

Morale Marjorine fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 23, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 25

Feats Alignment Channel, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (spear)

Skills Acrobatics +8, Climb +9, Diplomacy +9, Knowledge (nobility) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Perception +13, Profession (librarian) +12, Stealth +13, Swim +10

Languages Celestial, Common, Halfling

Gear silver-and-agate holy symbol of Arazni (worth 250 gp)

Development: Even if slain, the Queen Without a Face will rise again under the next new moon unless cremated, completely dismembered, or laid to rest in consecrated ground. If the PCs return to Stachys with Marjorie Sandaris's holy symbol and tell of laying her permanently to rest, they gain 2 Loyalty Points.

C4. Sluice

This shallow trough directed pumped water out into the canal and was used at various points to power different mills for the nearby town.

D. THE BEGGARWOOD (CR 7)

Officially known as "Bugbear Wood" for the creatures that used to infest it, most locals refer to this old oak forest as Beggarwood, as it offers reasonable shelter and food for the poor, as well as easy access to the nearby Oppara highway so the desperate can ply trade goods to whoever passes by. Local nobility consider the forest and its occupants a blight, but not a big enough embarrassment to waste the resources trying to wipe it out (especially since the inhabitants are adept at hiding and have few permanent possessions or homes to destroy). Sir Gul Gusairne sends a few soldiers out to accost the roadside market the beggars establish from time to time, taking whatever goods or coin they like, but anything more thorough would require committed support from Barons Telus and Okerra, and neither cares to aid.

As mentioned when the PCs first encountered the Beggarwood residents, this community effectively

operates as a village marketplace. They sell most common goods—but not luxury goods—at a 10% increase over market value, but lower their prices to 10% below market value if the PCs can pay in common clothing, food, tools, and other daily necessities. Most of their supplies come from scavenged goods, trading directions and repairs to travelers, and retrieving cargo abandoned due to bad weather, breakdowns, or low profit margins. They rarely resort to open banditry, knowing that it draws the attention of the normally neutral Baron Okerra.

Creatures: The Beggarwood has about 25 permanent residents living in caves, tents, and tree houses mostly gathered around Bear Pond at its north end, with another 25 transients present at any given time. Most of these residents are commoners and experts who flee at the first sign of trouble. The community's defenders are the Four Hoods, exiles from Andoran who have banded together to live simply in the Taldan wilderness. Gurta Thresh was an apothecary in Triela whose secretive faith in Norgorber eventually came to light amid accusations of murder. She fled with her adopted sister, the troublemaking Ginnit, and as they crossed the border, they made fast friends with the sibling archers Malifort and Nani Truebow, border guards who had grown weary of their assignment. None of the Four intended to become leaders, but neither are they willing to let hungry refugees die on the road. They're standoffish and suspicious of well-dressed strangers (especially Gurta), watching traders from a distance rather than approaching.

The Four Hoods are firmly antiauthoritarian and unwilling to aid the PCs even if they reveal themselves as enemies of Count Lotheed; a princess is a bad as a count, by their estimation. The outlaws agree to help only if the PCs bring them the head of Sir Gul Gusairne, Lotheed's chief enforcer, and promise them amnesty for crossing the border and any crimes they committed up to this point. The latter requires either a successful DC 25 Diplomacy check against Princess Eutropia to grant the request, or a successful DC 25 Bluff check against each of the Four Hoods to assure them she has.

GURTA THRESH **CR 5**

XP 1,600 rebel friar (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 135)
hp 49

GINNIT **CR 3**

XP 800
Halfling filcher (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 133)
hp 29

MALIFORT AND NANI TRUEBOW (2) **CR 2**

XP 600 each
Outlaw archers (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 132)
hp 27 each

PERSONA PHASES

Over the course of Part 2, the PCs should have a total of eight persona phases to build up their reputations and recruit their own agents. This time can be divided up as you see fit, though this adventure's timeline assumes roughly one persona phase per week, as the PCs are expected to spend at least some downtime healing, studying, traveling, and crafting items rather than adventuring without pause.

PCs can also assign agents to the following new operations while in Meratt.

Ask Around (Genius, Heroism): Your agents subtly ply your reputation to learn what needs fixing and win resources. With a successful DC 15 operation check, you gain either a lead on a possible mission or reroll one randomly available magic item in a town before the start of the next persona phase (your choice).

Community Organization (Charm, Sacrifice): Your agents stir up hometown pride, encouraging citizens of Stachys to chip in. You attempt an operation check and generate a number of gold pieces equal to 10 × your check result in capital that can be spent only on town improvements.

Infiltration (Sagacity, Subterfuge): Agents inserted into a noble's staff report back on that aristocrat's attitude and habits. You can attempt an operation check in place of a skill check as part of a discovery check against the targeted noble.

Treasure: Most of the supplies the wood-dwellers keep are basic trade goods rather than valuable luxuries or magic items. What they do have is secreted away in caves or buried in oilcloth stashes. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Survival check finds 500 gp worth of trade goods, while a PC whose result exceeds this DC by 10 instead uncovers 1,500 gp worth. These stashes are worth twice as much if used for town improvements.

Each of the Four Hoods has a 1,500 gp bounty on his or her head.

Development: The PCs have several options regarding the Beggarwood. They can ignore it with no consequence. If they purchase from the residents with any regularity (especially if they purchase common goods from Stachys or Lotheedar to pay for specialty goods from the Beggarwood merchants), they draw the ire of Count Lotheed, worsening his attitude by one step and prompting a visit from Sir Gul Gusairne. If the PCs instead frequent the wood in some sort of disguise, they attract a raid by Sir Gusairne and a handful of soldiers, who take note of the sudden uptick in activity in the woods. The PCs may instead attack the wood, facing its defenders to earn Count Lotheed's favor. A simple raid disrupts the roadside market for a week, but appears amateurish, is ultimately ineffective, and grants no bonuses. Killing the Four Hoods is the only way to fully

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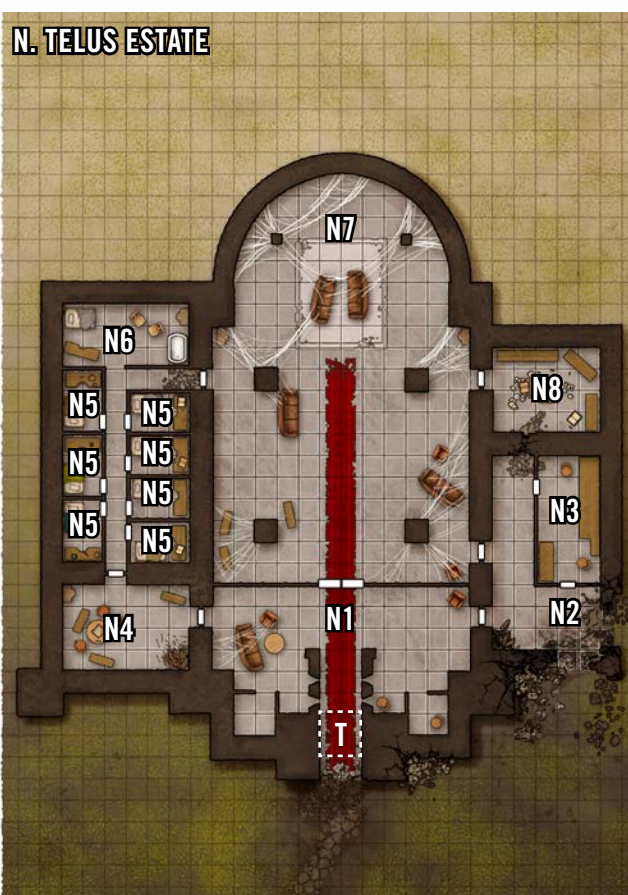
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C. STACHYS PUMP HOUSE



N. TELUS ESTATE



disband the free community; providing proof of the camp leaders' deaths earns the PCs 1 automatic success toward improving Count Lotheed's attitude per head delivered, but it costs them 1 Loyalty Point per death.

If the PCs instead win an alliance with the Four Hoods by neutralizing Sir Gusairne, they can convince the community to quietly disappear for a time, allowing the PCs to claim the benefits of killing the Hoods without suffering any loss of Loyalty Points. While the Four won't endanger their followers by dragging them into a fight, they themselves aid the PCs in attacking Lotheed's estate, granting 3 additional Loyalty Points (though with considerably more looting than the estate would suffer without their help).

Story Award: If the PCs forge an alliance with the Four Hoods, award them XP as if they had defeated the leaders in combat.

E. PENSARIS

The productive little village of Pensaris gets by mostly from processing goats, fishing the adjoining Lake Pensaris, and manufacturing salt from a mineral spring 3 miles southwest, ultimately providing salted fish and meat to the rest of the county and beyond for winter. Their relative wealth has allowed the community to develop a number of specialty artisans as well, especially shipwrights and

woodcarvers to support the anglers. It is also the closest neighbor to Stachys and the PCs' estate, making Baron Okerra the easiest neighbor to visit and influence.

Baron Nicolaus Okerra's estate is a small but cozy citadel overlooking the village.

F. LAKE PENSARIS (CR 5)

At 12 miles long and almost 2 miles wide, Lake Pensaris is the largest lake in the county; it's also unusually deep for the area—almost 200 feet at the center. Bass, perch, and trout are all abundant, as well as catfish that have migrated to the lake. Steep stone walls make most of the lake's eastern shore inaccessible. Like any lake of reasonable size, Lake Pensaris is home to countless "fish stories," though the most frequent are tall tales of the General, a sizable catfish that locals claim has eluded them for a century; the occasional disappearance of local anglers is usually attributed to the General "conscripting" men. One popular myth even claims it scuttled a visiting duchess's pleasure barge one summer 50 years back (alternative tales claim the fish was a drunkard, ambling up to steal the wine or was mesmerized by the young duchess's beauty). Anyone who could actually bring this beast to shore would become a local legend.

Fishing the lake requires Baron Okerra's permission, and doing so otherwise is punished as poaching, but the

baron is generous with his permission to anyone not looking for industrial-scale fishing. He is less willing to give permission to trap or hunt the lake's otters, which he has a secret fondness for.

Creature: Reports of the General's size vary, describing the catfish as anywhere from 6 to 10 feet in length. These local accounts fall considerably short of reality, however: the General is nearly 20 feet in length! The massive beast regularly feeds on deer, otters, and even the occasional angler, but the lazy beast spends weeks at a time buried in the mud of the lake bed.

Tracking the General requires a total of five successes using any combination of the following skills, though any given skill can be attempted only once each week: Handle Animal (DC 22), Knowledge (local; DC 17), Knowledge (nature; DC 15), Perception (DC 25), Profession (fisherman; DC 13), Survival (DC 20), or Swim (DC 20). After the fifth success, the PCs locate one of its favorite feeding spots: a deep, narrow channel between the eastern cliffs. At that point, actually hooking the General requires a successful DC 17 Profession (fisherman) check, which can be attempted untrained; each attempt represents 1 hour of fishing. Hooking the General does not land it, but instead makes the fish aware of its pursuers and piques its curiosity and hunger.

THE GENERAL	CR 5
XP 1,600	
N Large animal (aquatic)	
Init +6; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +11	
DEFENSE	
AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 18 (+2 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)	
hp 59 (7d8+28)	
Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +5	
OFFENSE	
Speed 10 ft., swim 60 ft.	
Melee bite +12 (1d8+12 plus grab), 2 fins +7 (1d4+6/19-20)	
Special Attacks swallow whole (2d6+8 bludgeoning damage, AC 14, 5 hp)	
STATISTICS	
Str 26, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 2	
Base Atk +5; CMB +14 (+18 grapple); CMD 26 (can't be tripped)	
Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack	
Skills Perception +11, Swim +16	
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Bad Attitude (Ex) The General is an unusually stubborn fish and has been exposed to druidic magic repeatedly in its 2 centuries of life. It has a +5 bonus on Will saving throws against divine magic.	
Sting (Ex) If the General confirms a critical hit with one of its fin attacks, it impales its target and injects a painful venom. An affected creatures must succeed at a DC 17 Fortitude save or be sickened with pain for 1d6 minutes.	

Treasure: The tale of the General scuttling a noble pleasure barge is surprisingly accurate; 80 feet below the surface of its hunting grounds, PCs can still find the remains of this once-beautiful ship (though the catfish proves incredibly possessive of its treasure unless slain). Searching the muddy remains turns up four bottles of bloodberry gin (worth 100 gp each), a ruby-and-sapphire wedding ring (worth 1,000 gp), and a *deck of illusions* in a teak box; decades of water damage have rendered the box into twisted garbage, but the cards within are in good condition, if slightly stained.

Development: If the PCs actually catch the General, they become local legends, gaining 1 Loyalty Point.

G. LAUCHLEIN LAKE (CR 6 AND CR 6)

Lauchlein Lake is shallow and choked with frogs and water plants, making it an ideal home to all sorts of aquatic birds. The lakeshore was also once home to an active fey court, long ago when the border of the Verduran Forest stood a hundred miles south; a stone circle still stands by the water's edge. Over the years, locals have alternately romanticized and feared the circle, using it for proposals and weddings as well as terrible rites. Nowadays, the lake is generally known to be haunted by an unquiet spirit many locals think is the Night Swan.

Creatures: A local myth, often repeated in taverns, claims a long-dead duke drowned his young wife in Lauchlein Lake after marrying her at the circle of stones. The maiden's angry spirit returned a year later as a swan who could walk as a woman under the moonlight to take revenge on her husband. The duke kept her sated and bound by pouring 6 vials of holy water into the lake on the anniversary of her death each summer—a tradition that continued until Bartelby Lotheed took control of the county—and now the restless drowned maiden of Lauchlein has begun exacting her vengeance as the fearsome Night Swan.

The truth is as strange as the myth. Lauchlein Lake is home to a supernatural swan named Atratus, but rather than a vengeful victim, she is a fierce warrior who remained with the lake after her fey court retreated in the wake of Taldan encroachment. She has steadfastly preserved Lauchlein Lake as a wild place, chasing off or destroying any mortal attempts to alter the lake. She considers the nearby Oppara highway an affront, but for years stewards of the county have appeased her wrath through yearly gifts. Bartelby saw the tradition as a waste of resources, and decided to resolve the ancient guardian by releasing an ochre jelly, augmented by his own magic, into the lake to devour the fey woman. Atratus has so far been unable to slay the ooze, and instead directs her wrath at Bartelby and the nearby highway, with many of her attacks being ascribed to the Night Swan.

PCs may encounter Atratus when she ambushes them on the Oppara highway, or they may seek her out at the

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lake, assuming she is the true Night Swan. While the swam maiden is not opposed to talk, her current outrage has very much left her in a “shoot first, talk later” mood. She assumes anyone—especially more local nobles—are here to kill her, and she angrily shouts about their many crimes as she casts spells or fires arrows. Atratus begins with an attitude of hostile, but if PCs can shift her attitude to indifferent or better, she explains her anger and that she never journeys into the human towns of the area. Alternatively, if the PCs encounter and slay the ochre jelly first, Atratus approaches them looking to talk.

The ochre jelly Bartelby released occupies the lake’s northern “hook,” gorging itself on birds and fish while

turning that portion of the once-resplendent waterway into a polluted mess. If not destroyed soon, it is likely to render the rest of the lake similarly barren in a year.

ATRATUS

CR 6

XP 2,400

Swan maiden (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 257)

hp 55

ADVANCED OCHRE JELLY

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 75 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 218)

Treasure: If the PCs ally with Atratus, she rewards them with a treasure she seized from poachers several years ago: a curious assortment of gears, mechanisms, oils, and tools. These supplies can be sold in Lotheedar for 1,000 gp or used for various town improvements, in which case they are worth 3,000 gp.

If they also slay the ochre jelly, the swan maiden rewards them with another treasure she has protected from a lover she took many millennia ago: the *Subtle Mask* (see page 79). She knows little of the mask’s history, only that it was once worn by “a singer whose voice left kings weeping and mountains low.”

Development: If the PCs ally with Atratus, they gain 1 Loyalty Point.

Story Award: If the PCs deal peacefully with Atratus and defend her lake, award them XP as if they had defeated her in combat.

H. PALACE OF BIRDSONG

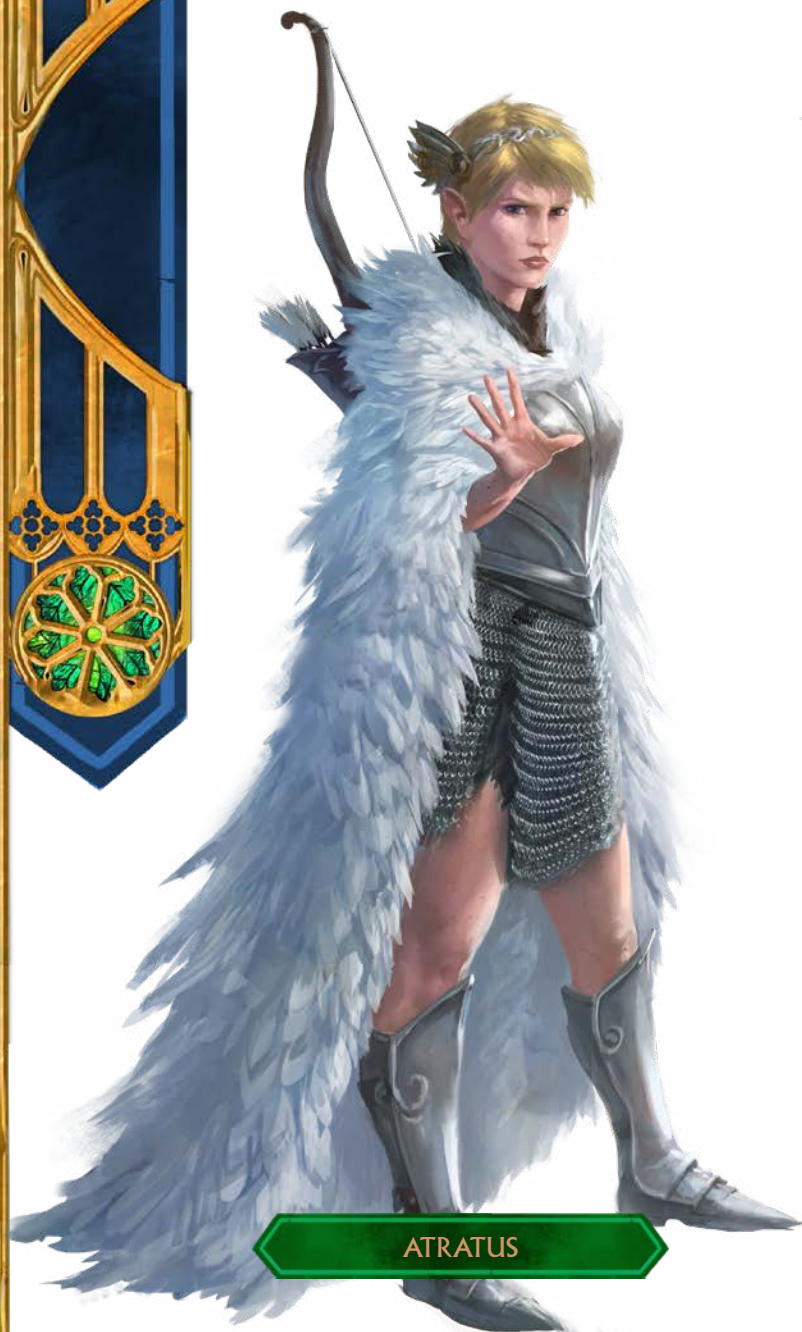
Count Lotheed’s palace remains open to the PCs throughout their stay. As local tribunes of Stachys and landgraves of the canal spur, they have the right to request audiences with the count each month. If the count is unfriendly or indifferent toward the PCs, they must make a formal request via messenger, which is approved 1d6 days later, but if Bartelby is friendly or helpful, they may drop by at their leisure. The rules for visiting the palace during the rest of this adventure are generally the same as those for the Tanager Jubilee.

Full details on the Palace of Birdsong can be found beginning on page 46.

I. LOTHEEDAR

Situated on the banks of Lake Stavian and named for the Lotheed family, Lotheedar is the largest town in the county of Meratt and supports a variety of industries, from timber and brewing to trade and smithing.

Lotheedar is home to the largest temple in the county: the Grand Bank of Abadar, overseen by **Archbanker Lady Paril** (LN female human cleric of Abadar 7). Whether the PCs seek spellcasting or banker services, the lady makes a point of introducing herself to the new local nobles,



ATRATUS

both as a function of her formal duties but also to inquire after two of her acolytes who seem to have vanished in the south. She dispatched Acolytes Mise and Maladus to investigate the silence in Jambis almost 2 weeks earlier and has heard nothing back, but she knows they took the southern highway to deliver several books to Stachys along the way. Asking about the acolytes in Stachys reveals only that they stopped overnight at Onora's tavern, delivering their books and paying for two meals before traveling west toward the old bridge at Gold Canyon (see area P). Lady Paril promises a rich reward of Abadar's favor if the PCs can recover her acolytes.

Creature: Lucretzia Marthane—the Night Swan—lives in Lotheedar under the guise of a landless noble living off the count's generosity much like his cousin Titus. Most of her harassment of the local nobles happens in and around Lotheedar, or on the highways to and from the city. Thanks to her training as a vigilante, Marthane is extremely difficult to locate, but if the PCs maintain guises of their own distinct from their apparent heroic identities, the Night Swan eventually reaches out to them in the hopes that she has an ally against the nation's aristocracy. If they make contact, the PCs have 1 social round each week to influence the Night Swan to aid them, though they must strike a careful balance if they wish to maintain a strong relationship with both the antiauthoritarian Night Swan and the honor-bound traditionalist Baron Okerra—their two most likely allies in their work.

While the PCs and the Night Swan share several overt goals in bringing the Lotheeds to task for their abuses, the Night Swan takes the philosophy much further. Influenced by Galtan ideals, she hopes to undermine the entire Taldan government and bring all the nation's aristocracy to its knees, just as Taldor's northern client state has done. Once the Night Swan learns the PCs serve Princess Eutropia—especially by way of another Lotheed—her attitude immediately worsens by one step.

The Night Swan's social stat block is presented below; her full stat block can be found on page 62.

NIGHT SWAN

CN female human vigilante 7

Background Born to wealth and educated by the best tutors, Lucretzia nonetheless gravitated toward a romanticized version of the philosophies of nearby Galt. Convinced she knows what's best for others, she is hardheaded and action-oriented, whether as an ally or adversary.

DESCRIPTION

Appearance In her social identity, Lucretzia is thin and pale—almost sickly—and walks with a bit of a stagger. As the Night Swan, though, she is lithe and agile, moving deliberately and gracefully. Her long, platinum-blond hair remains tightly bound—in a bun by day, and in a whipping braid in her vigilante guise.

Personality While her social guise is retiring and

deferential—almost invisible—the Night Swan is bombastic, confident, and stubborn. She is absolutely convinced of the righteousness of not only her goal, but her tactics as well, and unless coaxed carefully, she sees disagreement as disloyalty.

Goal An anarchist, the Night Swan wants nothing more than the end of all political structures and to instate total self-rule within Taldor, though she'll settle for a bloody end to any and all nobles.

Skills Bluff +8 (+12 as Lucretzia), Diplomacy +8, Disguise +11, Intimidate +8, Perception +10, Sense Motive +7 (+1 as Lucretzia)

DISCOVERY

Biases The Night Swan hates nobles and those who serve them (−2), but she has an immediate affection for anyone working to root out corruption and abuse (+2).

Strengths (Sense Motive DC 16) Lucretzia hates anyone implying she doesn't understand what she's doing or the needs of others—whether she does or not.

Weaknesses (Knowledge [geography, history] or Sense Motive DC 16) Lucretzia has a solid appreciation for Galtan history and writing, and couching new ideas in relation to revolutionary writers is sure to make an impression.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Indifferent. The Night Swan is curious but guarded about these newcomers.

Influence Checks (Knowledge [local] or Sense Motive DC 16) Knowledge (history) or Profession (librarian) DC 16; Acrobatics, Disguise, or Knowledge (nobility) DC 21; Bluff or Diplomacy DC 26

Successes Needed Shifting Lucretzia's attitude requires 5 successful influence checks.

Special Lucretzia's attitude toward the PCs immediately worsens by one step if she learns they are working to put Eutropia in power unless the PCs have shifted her attitude to helpful, imparting a cautious optimism that the system might be reformed. If the PCs shift Baron Okerra's attitude to helpful, Lucretzia's attitude immediately worsens by three steps.

Benefit If Lucretzia's attitude is shifted to friendly, the PCs gain 2 Loyalty Points. If her attitude is shifted to helpful, the PCs gain an additional 2 Loyalty Points.

Story Award If the PCs shift Lucretzia's attitude to friendly, award them 1,200 XP. If they shift her attitude to helpful, award them an additional 1,200 XP.

Treasure: If the PCs rescue at least one of her acolytes, Lady Paril follows through with her promised reward: a fully charged *wand of cure moderate wounds*.

J. SOTTO (CR 4 AND CR 5)

This settlement is little more than a dozen homes and barns built around a common well, with a dirt road winding south to Voinaris. Residents are stubbornly independent, paying their taxes but otherwise not having much to do with the rest of the county. From the

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outside, the hamlet of Sotto seems like a quaint little community on the woods' edge, its residents surviving through a combination of farming, herding goats, and timber. Under this veneer, however, Sotto is a town under quiet siege. The community has always fought against wolves from the Verduran Forest, and almost every family home features a few wolf trophies and every winter coat a wolf pelt.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Sense Motive check while visiting the hamlet notices that the locals are obviously hiding something, while a successful DC 15 Handle Animal or Knowledge (nature) check reveals that the goats are unusually skittish.

Creatures: Sotto's tradition of wolf-hunting offended Halmash, a worg who moved into the region last spring. Rather than feed on the arrogant villagers, he instead decided to teach them respect. He tore the heart from their greatest hunter and spent 3 days slowly devouring the woman's flesh and bones by Sotto's only well. Now, once a month under the full moon, Halmash dispatches three of his wolves to retrieve one goat apiece as "payment" for the valuable lesson he taught them, and for every goat not offered up willingly, the wolves take a child instead.

The situation was manageable at first, but Sotto's herds are quickly being depleted. Regardless of this, locals refuse to ask for help—in part from stubbornness, but mostly out of fear that Halmash's entire pack will retaliate. The elders all agree that if they are obedient, Halmash will simply move on once the goats are gone, though they aren't sure how they'll survive the winter without their herds.

If the PCs investigate, they can watch the elders lead three terrified goats out to the beasts and witness the wolves' arrival. If they interfere, the wolves attack. A wolf attempts to flee if reduced below 4 hit points, or if two wolves are killed or retreat, the remaining wolf flees.

WOLVES (3) **CR 1**

XP 400 each

hp 13 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 278)

Any violence from the PCs convinces Halmash that the fat times have ended, and it is time to simply wipe out the town. He and two of his wolves attack 1 week later unless tracked to their den (Survival DC 24).

Any wolves that escaped the first confrontation with the PCs are also present at the den or in Halmash's raid.

HALMASH **CR 3**

XP 800

Advanced worg (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 280)

hp 34

WOLVES (2) **CR 1**

XP 400 each

hp 13 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 278)

Treasure: Halmash's den contains the belongings of Amallah, the Sotto wolf-hunter he devoured, including the remains of a broken longbow, a masterwork chain shirt, 13 +1 *animal bane* arrows, and a weathered silver necklace with a hawk pendant (150 gp). If the PCs slew the wolves with little loss of life to Sotto residents, the elders ask them to return after the next full moon, whereupon they present the PCs with a *hunter's cloak*^{UE} fashioned from Halmash's pelt and teeth.

Development: If the PCs fight back only against the initial wolf attack and leave Sotto undefended, the community is wiped out, and the party loses 1d4 Loyalty Points as locals whisper that they made the situation worse. If they kill Halmash, though, they win Sotto's admiration and support, gaining 2 Loyalty Points.

V. VOINARIS

The center of Baroness Voinum's demesne derives from the family name and shares the tradition of military service, and many of the county's soldiers are drawn from this sleepy town. The pungent scent of wine and vinegar—the town's two main industries—taints the air for miles in every direction.

The Voinum estate stands 3 miles outside of town and features one of the most extensive wine cellars in Taldor, with vintage bottles dating back centuries and secret rooms storing various recipes, wines, and strains of yeast from across Avistan and Cassomir. Baroness Voinum is happy to host the PCs whenever they would care to visit—so long as they don't actively insult her or her proud little community—but she figures out what the PCs' motives and goals are by the time they accumulate 10 Loyalty Points. She's an old hand at Taldan politics, and while she'll occasionally drop misleading lines or arrange awkward circumstances to watch the PCs squirm, she has no intention of reporting them to Lotheed. In her estimation, the county has been too boring, and while she won't say so openly, she supports Princess Eutropia's effort to take throne.

L. MOOST

The village of Moost grew up around the Crabbe estate, largely to serve the family's needs and tend their extensive cranberry bogs, but it has matured considerably into a thriving little community only partially dependent on the noble family for support. Like Dame Crabbe, the town lives for gossip, and PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks in Moost to gather information about the county. The citizens' favorite topic is the young Miss Crabbe, Sepsinia, and her potential romantic futures. With so much of the town's fortune's tied to the nobles, they are keen to see her marry soon and continue the line (and avoid the atrophic fate Stachys suffered).

Crabbe Estate

Dame Crabbe is elated to host the PCs whenever they care to visit and goes out of her way to make them feel at home, in particular sharing the various desserts, tinctures, and wines the family's cranberry bogs produce. She shares local news and developments regarding her family in Cassomir and Yanmass (possibly allowing you to seed updates on Martella's actions or tease upcoming events from "The Twilight Child"), and offers a variety of parlor games. With any amount of forewarning, she also invites students from Moost's conservatory to perform for the PCs' enjoyment. Parthena goes above and beyond to welcome her visitors—especially those who could possibly rouse Sepsinia from her gloom.

While she refused to discuss the matter at the Tanager Jubilee, Dame Crabbe is very worried about her withdrawn daughter. Sepsinia's suitor, Opilio, took his own life last year, and while the girl seemed to handle the shock well enough at first, the joy and passion eventually drained from the younger Crabbe and has yet to return. Instead, Sepsinia simply wanders the house, staring out windows and occasionally reading random books for hours on end. Once a promising painter, she no longer takes any interest in art or beauty, and if asked about any topic, she simply sighs and asks to be left alone. While Sepsinia is polite enough to join her mother in entertaining guests, she remains withdrawn. She only shows any reaction if PCs ask about the hedge maze, or about her late fiancé, but she refuses to discuss either.

While her affliction is easy enough to recognize as severe depression, the truth is far darker than a girl heartbroken over lost love. While Opilio—a talented, confident student at the Moost conservatory—loved her deeply, Sepsinia couldn't stand the arrogant, spoiled young man. His love turned to loathing at the rejection, even as their parents kept pushing them together, and after several weeks, he attacked Sepsinia in the garden. Certain his reputation and future would be tarnished when Sepsinia reported the attack, Opilio took his own life, and the younger Crabbe never quite figured out how to reveal the boy's crimes to his mourning parents.

Opilio's secrets weren't the only thing to haunt Sepsinia. His seething, quiet hatred at his rejection tied his spirit to the living world, and his heart eventually animated as a rare, spiderlike undead known as a lovelorn. Opilio returned to the garden where he attacked Sepsinia and slowly transformed the Crabbes' hedge maze into a gloomy labyrinth to hide within. Now he calls Sepsinia to him every night, drawing her into the garden and using his cursed bite to drain her passion for life, hoping to destroy her future just as he destroyed his own, and perhaps drive her to suicide as well, binding them together forever as hateful, undead abominations.

The lovelorn's bite is subtle, and PCs are likely to understand what's going on only if they wander the

PERSONAL VICTORIES

Many of the PCs' actions in this adventure are large, heroic gestures that change lives, but small things have a way of making a difference, too. The following are four simple encounters the PCs may run into as they travel; you can introduce them as background flavor, but if the PCs respond in a way that demonstrates kindness, chivalry, or generosity, they gain 1 Loyalty Point for each. Any of these can be used to complicate another encounter that seems to be going too easily, especially as local nobles view helping the poor as anything from "quaint" to "disgusting."

Brother Against Brother: Two brothers, Tabo and Tumnus, begin loudly arguing over the purchase of a calf and eventually come to blows. Separating the young men requires success at either a DC 15 combat maneuver check or a DC 18 Diplomacy check, while finding a solution to their argument requires a successful DC 18 Appraise, Handle Animal, or Profession (farmer, merchant) skill check.

Hungry Veteran: The PCs encounter a hungry and unwashed man named Borget, who lost his leg in the Taldan Phalanx only to return home and find his family farm seized for back taxes. He asks for spare coin or a hot meal; feeding him helps for now. PCs can also give him a new farm (costing 2,000 gp), or ask around and find him good work with a successful DC 20 Diplomacy check.

Lost Child: The sobs and whimpers of a young girl named Trinnia attract the PCs' attention. Calming the panicked child requires a successful DC 18 Diplomacy or Perform check, but she only knows her parents' names are "Mom" and "Momma." A successful DC 17 Knowledge (local) Diplomacy check is sufficient to track down her equally hysterical parents: a pair of bakers from Voinaris who travel frequently and had thought their beloved daughter was finally old enough to join them without wandering off.

Mother-to-Be: The PCs encounter a young couple—Calia and Dratus—on the side of the road. They had hoped to reach the temple in Lotheedar before Calia began labor, but instead they now find themselves stranded in the middle of nowhere with a baby on the way. Assisting with the delivery requires a successful DC 12 Profession (midwife) or DC 17 Heal check, while keeping Dratus calm enough to not make things worse requires a successful DC 17 Diplomacy check.

estate at night and see Sepsinia stagger out into the garden and the overgrown hedge maze.

Crabbe Labyrinth (CR 5)

The hedge maze behind the Crabbe estate was once a local wonder, but it has been left neglected for a year now—the gardeners never seem to have time for it.

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The center contains a picturesque gazebo, overgrown with roses, from when Dame Crabbe used to love entertaining. Today, however, the maze is riddled with brambles, weeds, and a cold mist that never seems to lift. Sepsinia can navigate it easily to find the picnic of rotting food and dead bodies Opilio maintains for her at its center, but anyone following her must face animated vines and shifting illusions if they hope to reach the center.

Finding the labyrinth's center requires five successful checks using any combination of the following: combat maneuver (DC 15), Climb (DC 20), Knowledge (engineering; DC 18), Knowledge (nature; DC 20), Perception (DC 18), Spellcraft (DC 22), Survival (DC 18), or a Will saving throw (DC 15); a flying animal companion, familiar, or other guide grants PCs a +2 circumstance bonus on their checks to navigate. The same type of check cannot be attempted twice, and a failed check means the PCs have accidentally exited the maze and must start over. PCs can try to navigate the maze up to three times before Sepsinia returns to bed—unharmful and unaware of her night's activities—and Opilio scuttles back to his hidden den in an old rabbit warren.

Creatures: If the PCs reach the center, they see a ghastly parody of a romantic picnic, as the scuttling remnant of Opilio offers Sepsinia cold tea and moldering biscuits, surrounded by the bodies of gardeners who tried to clean out the lovelorn's gloomy lair. Heavily affected by illusions and enchantment spells, Sepsinia never remembers the gruesome nightly scene as anything but a nightmare. If disturbed, Opilio animates the three fallen bodies around him, then scuttles in to alternately attack and cast spells at the intruders.

OPILIO **CR 4**
XP 1,200
Lovelorn (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 182)
hp 37

ZOMBIES (3) **CR 1/2**
XP 200 each
hp 12 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 288)

Treasure: Opilio has gathered trinkets to show his "love" for Sepsinia, arranged around the gazebo: a pearl ring (worth 100 gp), a masterwork purple heartwood harp (worth 350 gp), a set of *bracers of armor* +2, and a bottle containing an *elixir of love*. The lovelorn stole the bottle intending to use it to compel Sepsinia's feelings, only to discover himself unable to navigate the ornate clasp on the bottle's top. Ironically, the *elixir of love* is one of the few things that can cure a lovelorn's apathy-inducing bite.

Development: If Opilio is destroyed, his abuse and control over Sepsinia fades, but the apathy his bite instilled remains until the curse can be lifted magically. If the PCs also manage to reverse the cynic's bite, Sepsinia

begins regaining the flush of life. Deep mental scars will remain for years, but she starts regaining her personality again within days—albeit more sarcastic and sardonic.

Dame Crabbe is appalled to learn the whole story of what transpired right under her nose and is infinitely grateful to the PCs for saving her daughter. She offers to adopt any interested PCs into the Crabbe family—though she very specifically stops offering her daughter's hand in marriage in light of recent events. Her attitude toward the PCs improves by one step, and after a week, she dispatches a small team of her gardeners, servants, and woodworkers to Stachys to help the PCs fix up their town, providing 5,000 gp worth of town improvements.

Story Award: If the PCs cure Sepsinia of the lovelorn's curse, award them an additional 1,200 XP.

M. RUINS OF JAMBIS (CR 5)

Once a prosperous trading town, Jambis has been all but abandoned since Baron Telus's curse claimed their leader and destroyed their economy. Some of the population traveled north to Moost or Voinum, while others resettled to the south to form New Towne. What remains now are leaning wooden buildings and bleached bones—some animal, some not—gathered in corners like autumn leaves.

Creatures: While Baron Telus's bandits sometimes use the town ruins to camp, they usually avoid the aging buildings to evade the giant spiders that now dwell within. Dozens of hand-sized jumping spiders skitter through the shadows like rats, scavenging flesh from discarded bones, but giving any humanoids a wide berth. The true danger is a pair of giant black widow spiders that prowl the ruins, leaving mats of sticky webbing on the ground to capture animals—and unfortunate travelers—who pass through.

GIANT BLACK WIDOWS (2) **CR 3**
XP 800 each
hp 37 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 256)

N. TELUS ESTATE

As the PC approach the Telus estate, read or paraphrase the following.

A fortress of sturdy stone, crumbling white plaster, and ragged banners overlooks the valley and town below. The once-sturdy wooden doors now lie on the overgrown lawn, half-rotted, while a tree has collapsed into the eastern bastion, partially caving in the wall.

Once a border fort, the Telus estate is a historical artifact unto itself, having stood almost as long as Taldor itself. Endless renovations have left the stonework underneath untouched, but over time the walls were covered in expensive paneling, gilding, and silk, rendering it an

opulent home ideal for extravagant parties... at least, until Baron Araig Telus's recent unpleasantness.

Three old women knocked on the estate's grand doors one stormy night a decade ago and asked for shelter from the driving rain. Araig ordered them to find an inn before slamming the door, unaware that the trio was the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams—a coven of night hags in service to Duke Lotheed and the Immaculate Circle—on their way to the Palace of Birdsong. The coven burst through the doors and declared that Baron Telus should have a form to match his verminous, lowly soul before disappearing back into the night. Araig thought little of the incident, unaware that the old women were anything but what they appeared, but over the coming weeks he grew increasingly disturbed: hiding in corners, chewing on insects, and becoming obsessed with weaving. Those servants who could left, and those who could not did everything they could to appease their increasingly eccentric master. After a year, Araig's skin began to slough off, revealing, bruised, stubbly flesh and claws beneath, beginning his transformation from handsome human baron into a prince of spiders.

With the largely modular, independent nature of local rules and the death of Allis Betony—Araig's only attending lord—no one in the county beyond his servants realize what Baron Telus has become. Even the citizens of Jambis know only that their lord became some sort of monster after crossing a witch—and having heard the tale second- or thirdhand, most of them believe it to be but an allegory describing a man losing his sanity.

The remainder of Baron Telus's servants have become bandits, robbing traffic on the nearby Cassomir and Ridonport highways to find enough gold and flesh to sate their lord's dual hungers. Despite his transformation—or perhaps more so because of it—they remain loyal to the monstrous baron. They see themselves as the keepers of a terrible secret and throw captives to Araig with a mingled sense of dread and obligation.

Use the Telus Estate map on page 34 for area N.

N1. Parlor (CR 3)

When the PCs enter this chamber, read or paraphrase the following.

A scattering of dead leaves covers most of the floor here, though much of the furniture has held up well, if a little faded and mildewed. The open hallway south leads outside, while wooden doors stand in the east and west walls. To the north, a massive oaken double door has been locked, chained, and barred from this side.

This main entryway once hosted guests and served as a simple guardroom. The eastern door is unlocked and slightly ajar, but the western door is locked (Disable Device DC 20). The northern door is locked with two different padlocks (Disable Device DC 25 and DC 30) and the door lock itself is locked (Disable Device DC 25). Master Mosle (area N6) carries all the appropriate keys.

Trap: Araig's bandits used to keep a few guard dogs here, but their master frequently slipped out of his enclosure to feed upon the poor animals. Now the parlor is protected with a simple pit trap instead.

CAMOUFLAGED PIT TRAP

CR 3

XP 800

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect 30-ft.-deep pit (3d6 falling damage); Reflex DC 20 avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

N2. Servants' Quarters

The former servants' area is open to the elements now after a terrible windstorm drove a massive oak through the southeastern corner of the building, providing easy access for various small scavengers. A door to the north once led to the library (area N8), but a collapse (and some deliberate



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burying to help keep Baron Telus contained) has sealed it, requiring several days' dedicated work to uncover.

N3. Kitchen (CR 4)

The former palace kitchen sees little use now, being overkill to feed a half-dozen bandits, and is largely untouched except as a place to store excess meat to throw to Araig later. The most recent—a draft horse named Verlin—has been ripening in the kitchen for over a month.

Creature: An infestation of centipedes, attracted to the scent of rotting horse meat—has overrun the kitchen. They immediately launch themselves at any fresh meat that presents itself.

CENTIPEDE SWARM

CR 4

XP 1,200

hp 31 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 43)

Treasure: The bandits overlooked Verlin's saddlebag after dumping him in the kitchen. The bag still contains the payroll for a Verduran lumber camp: 2,300 sp, 320 gp, seven bottles of ink, and a new leather logbook. With a successful DC 20 Perception check, a PC also discovers a *ring of protection* +2 in a greasy pile of bones in the corner.

N4. Lounge (CR 5)

The bandits spend most of their time here, reading, playing cards, and cooking over a simple hearth. Sounds of combat here draw Master Mosle (area N6) to investigate in 1d4 rounds.

Creatures: Four bandits camp out here at any given time. They hope to simply chase intruders off, but they aren't opposed to capturing trespassers to throw to Araig. They beg for mercy if reduced below 4 hit points.

TELUS BANDITS (4)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Street thug (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 265)

hp 16 each

Treasure: While most of their coin goes to Baron Telus, the bandits keep a few useful baubles for themselves, including an *elixir of tumbling*, a *fire elemental gem*, an *iron rope*^{UE}, and two *potions of cure serious wounds*.

Development: If the PCs present Baronet Vort's amulet (see New Towne on page 44) and ask to speak with Mosle, the bandits argue for a few minutes before finally asking the PCs to wait outside while they fetch him.

N5. Bedrooms

These were once well-appointed bedrooms, and though a little worn, they remain serviceable.

N6. Master Suite (CR 5)

Only threadbare bedclothes suggest any age in Baron Telus's former room. Books on genealogy, history, and magic line the walls, as well as maps of the county.

Creature: Baron Telus's former game warden is now his reluctant jailer. Master Frater Mosle grew up with Araig, and while he knew the young baron could be arrogant and thoughtless, he got to see the noble's curiosity, generosity, and ingenuity as well. Watching his friend lose himself and become a monster was painful, and Frater hates that he can't reverse the curse's effects—all he can do is keep his friend from wandering too far.

Frater is protective of his underlings and of Araig in roughly equal measure. He won't let the PCs into Araig's chamber to simply slay his friend, but it's unlikely the PCs have the magic necessary to cure him. Convincing Frater they can help the baron requires a successful Bluff check (and the PCs will face an enraged Frater afterward), while convincing the self-appointed guardian to let them kill his charge requires a successful DC 29 Diplomacy check; if the PCs present Vort's amulet, they gain a +5 circumstance bonus on this check.

MASTER FRATER MOSLE

CR 5

XP 1,600

Monster hunter (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 257)

hp 45

Treasure: In addition to his listed equipment, Frater carries all the keys necessary to open the door to area N7. Frater also keeps a small stash hidden under a loose stone in the bedroom (Perception DC 22 to find), containing 344 gp and a *figurine of wondrous power* (serpentine owl). If the PCs put Baron Telus out of his misery (or somehow manage to cure him), Frater offers them the *figurine of wondrous power* in thanks, but he keeps the gold to help his bandits start honest lives elsewhere.

Story Award: If the PCs somehow manage to deal with Master Mosle and his bandits peacefully, award them XP as if they had defeated them in combat.

N7. The Great Hall of the Spider Prince (CR 6)

This massive feasting hall was once an elegant entertaining space, but now the silk banners are frayed and the plaster crumbles from the walls. All the doors leading into this room, save for the southern double door, have been sealed with masonry to prevent Baron Telus from escaping and devouring his guardians.

Several couches and chairs have been dragged onto the dais at the north end of the hall and stitched together with webbing and bones, forming a warm nest. Araig hides inside this den from time to time, but often enjoys skittering about the ceiling, 30 feet overhead.

Creature: Baron Araig Telus has spent almost a decade sealed within this room, escaping on occasion only to

be tracked down by his former servants and sealed away once more. Once a decent—if out of touch—man, he now hungers constantly for flesh and finds human thoughts harder and harder to form. While he once felt guilt for the lives he took and the people he devoured, he now feels only hunger and a need to hunt and outwit his prey.

Already a powerful sorcerer, Araig has effectively been transformed into an ettercap by a hag ritual that functions as a *major curse* spell, requiring a *break enchantment* spell to overcome. Like most hag curses, Araig's fate can also be undone by fulfilling a specific action; in this case, true love's kiss will reverse the affliction, but this criteria is rendered almost impossible thanks to Araig's cannibalistic hunger.

Araig spends most of his time in a large web on the ceiling between the four pillars. If disturbed, he uses *ventriloquism* to throw his voice into his nest, demanding to know who dares disturb "the spider prince." There is no right answer here; he plans to eat these intruders no matter what, but he rarely gets to talk to anyone and wants to know what's become of his delicious citizens.

BARON ARAIG TELUS

CR 6

XP 2,400

Unique male ettercap sorcerer 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 129)
NE Medium aberration

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;
Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)

hp 67 (9 HD; 5d6+4d8+32)

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities fated (+1)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d6+3 plus poison), 2 claws +8 (1d4+3)

Special Attacks traps, web (+10 ranged, DC 15, 9 hp)

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +8)
6/day—touch of destiny (+2)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +8)

2nd (5/day)—*blur*, *summon swarm*, *web* (DC 15)

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *color spray* (DC 14), *mage armor*,
shocking grasp, *ventriloquism* (DC 14)

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*
(DC 13), *mage hand*, *ray of frost*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 13)

Bloodline destined

TACTICS

Before Combat Araig uses a pause in conversation to cast *mage armor* on himself with his Silent Spell feat.

During Combat Once combat begins, Araig casts *summon swarm* to conjure a spider swarm, then casts *web*. Once his opponents are scattered, he casts *blur* before skittering to the floor to attack with claws and *shocking grasp*. After a few rounds, he remembers he's still

TRIUMPHS IN THIS ADVENTURE

If you are using the "Relics of Old Taldor" article from this volume to add a sense of historical weight to your campaign, "Songbird, Scion, Saboteur" introduces two new relics: *Koriana's Blade*, held in trust by the domovoi of the Betony Estate, and *Subtle Mask*, held in trust by the swan maiden Atratus.

This adventure includes two major triumphs for the PCs to accomplish: restoring the common peoples' faith in Taldor by shifting Stachys's attitude to helpful, and delivering justice to nobles who exploit their power by ousting Count Lotheed.

wearing his *crown of blasting* and targets the largest opponent he can see.

Morale Araig fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without *mage armor*, Baron Telus's statistics are **AC** 18, flat-footed 12.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 20, **Con** 17, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 24

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Silent Spell

Skills Climb +15, Craft (traps) +12, Perception +10, Spellcraft +6, Stealth +10, Survival +6; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Craft (traps)

Languages Common

SQ bloodline arcana (gains luck bonus on saves when casting personal-range spells), spider empathy +11

Combat Gear *minor crown of blasting*; **Other Gear** *cloak of resistance* +1, Telus signet ring

Development: If the PCs defeat or cure Baron Telus, they gain 1 Loyalty Point. If they do so while sparing Master Mosle and his bandits, the bandits gladly support them and quietly sing their praises, granting another 2 Loyalty Points.

N8. Library

The Telus family's former library is now mostly a treasury. Baron Telus hoped to keep his mind together for a time by reading, but eventually he began just tearing at pages for fun. Frater saved what few books he could, which he now keeps in the master bedroom.

Treasure: All the wealth Master Mosle's bandits acquire they bring to Araig as "taxes." The sparkle of coins seems to keep his twisted, spiderlike mind complacent for long periods. The spider prince's treasure now includes 8,052 cp, 1,514 sp, 542 gp, 17 pp, a suit of +1 *full plate*, a *scroll of restoration*, a (slightly chewed) *wand of color spray* (42 charges), two amethysts (worth 50 gp each), a glass eye carved from moonstone (worth 65 gp), and a set of cold cutlery bearing stylized griffon talons (worth 500 gp as a set).

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O. NEW TOWNE

A desperate, hardscrabble little village situated in a gentle valley, New Towne is less than a decade old and struggling to continue on. When most of the residents of Jambis abandoned their town and their baron (see area N), 60 or so fled to the southeast, eventually settling in what seemed like a good area for farming. Like most of the Tandak prefecture, however, the soil in this region is overworked and poor quality, and with the limited supply of seed, tools, and livestock they brought with them, the town has yet to produce enough on its own to eat. Resources grow increasingly lean every season as the locals overhunt the surrounding area just to survive. Most residents still live in the same ramshackle timber-and-canvas homes they erected their first year.

New Towne's "tribune" is Baronet **Caphridius Vort** (NG male human aristocrat 4), formerly an assistant to Baron

Telus and a man far more interested in acting and opera than frontier living. Though miserable, he continues to work hard to lead his community, while quietly nursing a self-loathing for leading them to this miserable valley to begin with. He's a gregarious man, and happy to meet visitors, but he can't help but mention the community's struggles, lack of resources, and poor infrastructure. He's also happy to tell the sad tale of their origin, of how his dear friend Baron Araig Telus was cursed by a witch and transformed into a violent and paranoid man who preyed upon his own people, and how the population of Jambis fled in all directions, with his particular band following him south in hopes of settling better farmland. If the PCs express any interest in helping, Baronet Vort hands them his family amulet and explains that if anyone is left in Jambis or the Telus Estate, they'll recognize his family crest.

Stachys in its starting state is too desperate to absorb refugees, but PCs can convince other towns to help absorb the population; doing so requires successful DC 20 Diplomacy checks in Lotheedar, Moost, Pensaris, and Voinum, as well as a successful DC 20 Diplomacy check to convince the proud residents of New Towne to break up and relocate. PCs can instead help the town stay afloat until Stachys can absorb their numbers or until Jambis is safe to return to with at least five successful DC 22 skill checks using any combination of the following: Craft (carpentry), Handle Animal, Knowledge (geography, nature), Profession (farmer, trapper), or Survival; if PCs have shifted the attitude of Stachys to friendly, they can instead assign townsfolk to assist New Towne with these skill checks.

Once Stachys grows into a village, PCs can persuade the residents of New Towne to join them with successful DC 20 Diplomacy checks. Alternatively, once both Jambis and the Telus estate have been pacified, the residents of New Towne are happy to return to their old home (and its better soil) and begin rebuilding.

Treasure: The residents of New Towne have nothing to offer by default, but they are happy to share their meager meals with visitors. A happy side effect of the PCs freeing Jambis is that the residents discover in their cleanup that the webbing from the remaining cat-sized spiders is easily harvested and woven into all sorts of goods. After a month, they present the PCs with 500 feet of spider silk rope^{UE} in thanks and as a demonstration of the town's growing new industry. After another month, they make masterwork lassos, nets, scorpion whips, slings, whips, padded armor, and hide armor—all fashioned from spider silk—available for 50% of market cost.



BARON ARAIG TELUS

Development: If the PCs help the residents of New Towne settle somewhere more sustainable, they earn 1 Loyalty Point.

Story Award: If the PCs safely resettle the residents of New Towne, award them 1,600 XP.

P. GOLD CANYON (CR 5)

Gold Canyon not a natural canyon but rather the remains of a strip mine that followed a winding vein of gold and quartz for miles through rugged, rocky terrain some 4,000 years ago. For a few centuries after the veins played out, the canyon still served as a quarry, providing much of the granite used in local fortifications. All that remains today is a staircase-style ditch some 30 feet deep, 80 feet wide, and nearly 10 miles long. A stone bridge, left over from the quarry days, once crossed the canyon, providing the only easy travel between east and west portions of southern Meratt, but a small earthquake collapsed the long-neglected bridge decades ago, leaving only the watchtowers on either escarpment.

Locals can cross the canyon fairly easily on foot. Since steep stairs are carved into the rock next to the old bridge, all one has to do is descend; wade through the shallow, stagnant water in the canyon's bottom; and climb the opposite side. The path is completely inaccessible to livestock and wagons, however, and this isolation has only contributed to nearby Stachys's economic woes.

Because most of the gold mined here was used to mint Taldan coin, the site is a minor, unofficial pilgrimage destination for local worshipers of Abadar, who read their god's approval in finding flakes or even nuggets of gold in the water. A dead body dressed in gold and silver robes—lying facedown in the water and half-buried in the mud on the western shore—can be spotted with a successful DC 15 Perception check (modified for distance).

Creature: In addition to attracting Abadaran worshipers, the mineral-rich waters of the canyon breed a rare serpent called a goldpebble, which uses its golden scales to lure in curious animals and greedy humanoids. This particular specimen has discovered that human prey often crosses near the site of the old bridge and regularly feeds on lone travelers.

GOLDBEBBLE CR 5
XP 1,600
hp 51 (see page 88)

Treasure: The facedown body is that of Dradi Maladus, one of the missing Abadaran acolytes from Lotheedar. Her remains are half-devoured but identifiable. A shiny circle on her belt is in fact a +1 *returning chakram*, and the scabbard it is tied into is a fine example of Taldan leatherwork set with a grinning wolf face worth 100 gp.

Development: The other missing acolyte, **Festo Mise** (LN male cleric of Abadar 2), is huddled shivering in a

cave along the eastern wall, too weak from exposure and goldpebble venom to climb out of the canyon. He cries for help if he hears anyone nearby and tries to warn them about the serpent, though the rocks muffle his exact words. If the PCs rescue Festo and either return Dradi's body or give it a proper burial, Lady Paril grants her promised reward, and Festo asks to be reassigned to help modernize Stachys as a favor to the PCs. Festo's hard work and spellcasting contribute 5,000 gp worth of town improvements, which can only be spent on a temple. Rescuing Festo also earns 1 Loyalty Point.

WORD FROM CASSOMIR

As the PCs have worked to improve the county, their contact Martella has continued to seek out legal aid and allies in nearby Cassomir to help legitimize Eutropia's claim to the land and validate the agents' hard work. At any point during Part 2, but ideally after several weeks, they receive the following message, sealed with a modified Lotheed signet.

Well met, loyal friends. Word even in Cassomir is that your actions in Meratt have left a memorable impression on that stodgy old county; I can't wait to see what else you may yet accomplish.

I have met with various contacts and settled misunderstandings here in Cassomir, and I believe we have come to an agreement with Grand Duchess Tiberan. She is prepared to validate our seizure of the county but needs certain conditions to be fulfilled. First, you must obtain the original charter granting the Lotheed family stewardship of the land. It will be kept in the library, near my brother's office on the second floor, and I believe Gul Gusairne would carry the only key (or more likely, hide it near his room, the weasel). Grand Duchess Tiberan also requires both Count Lotheed and his acting seneschal to abandon the property. She was nonspecific as to how.

Unrelated to Duchess Tiberan's needs, I have also learned my Great Uncle Panivar has established a teleportation circle to come and go at will from the royal apartments in the tower. Panivar is an extraordinarily gifted wizard and a man utterly without remorse, and I cannot stress how vital it is to destroy his access to the estate *before* word of this seizure reaches him in the south. Once you begin your attack, I doubt you will have more than a week before he returns.

Good luck, agents. May Taldor endure!
Martella Lotheed

Martella's missive gives the PCs four simple objectives for the final leg of this adventure: secure the Lotheeds' charter from the archive (area H24), kill or remove Sir Gul Gusairne (area H27), kill or capture Count Lotheed (area H21), and finally destroy Panivar Lotheed's teleportation circle in the royal apartments (area H36).

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PART 3: SABOTEUR

In the final part of the adventure, the PCs attack and reclaim the Palace of Birdsong on behalf of Princess Eutropia. The description for the main bulk of the palace is generally bereft of occupants save for a few magical guardians. This is because the palace appears in at least two, and in all probability all three, parts of the adventure, and the location of those occupants change. The count's tactics also vary depending on his state of alarm during the adventure.

No matter how much support the PCs have won from various NPCs in this adventure, they must besiege the palace alone; active combat from other nobles could easily trigger a response from neighboring lands still loyal to the Lotheeds and High Strategos Pythareus, leading to an all-out war. So long as the fight remains an internal squabble between two rightful inheritors—the Lotheeds and the Stavians—even those nobles who would normally rush to the Lotheeds' aid are reluctant to cross the border.

What the PCs' allies can offer, however, is a safe haven. Baron Okerra and Baroness Voinum both reside closer to the Palace of Birdsong than the PCs' own estate and can offer shelter, healing, and supplies if the PCs shifted either's attitude to helpful. Other allies (such as Atratus or the Four Hoods) assist mostly by harrying troops and otherwise preventing the Lotheeds from reinforcing or resupplying.

REWARDS OF LOYALTY

All the PCs' efforts at improving the county of Meratt have not gone unnoticed, and slowly win even die-hard Lotheed supporters among the populace to their cause. As the PCs grow in popularity, servants and guards begin to abandon the Lotheeds; whether they believe in the reigning family or not, they refuse to fight against these local legends changing the world for the better. See the Loyalty Point Effects table on page 47. Accumulated Loyalty Points also provide a one-time bonus XP award at the start of this part of the adventure; this reflects the increased resources, insights, and training offered to the PCs by local experts, informants, and supporters.

PALACE OF BIRDSONG FEATURES

The entire palace is vast, rambling, and magnificent; one of the few places in Meratt preserved in its original splendor. The walls once featured elaborate frescos, though many of these have been whitewashed to prevent escape by the Duchess Veletto Lotheed. Paintings stare from every wall, depicting previous Grand Princes and

Lotheed family members, while chandeliers enchanted with *continual light* illuminate most rooms. Objects are garish and decorative. The place is designed to show, not defend.

The two-story palace is built around a central gallery containing entertaining space and offices, with the eastern wing outfitted for servants (along with the grand ballroom) and the west wing for noble apartments and visitors. In addition, a tower rising behind the west wing contains royal apartments exclusively for the use of the emperor and his family—in theory, at least. Unless otherwise stated, ceilings are 20 feet high, walls are magically treated superior masonry, and the good wooden doors are left unlocked. The windows are kept locked (Disable Device DC 30) and are made from magically reinforced glass (hardness 8, 1 hp).

The lush palace gardens extend for over a mile in every direction, consisting of flower gardens, low hedges, fruit and nut orchards, and vineyards. A number of swans and peacocks roam the grounds freely. These birds rarely attack visitors, but they tend to follow alongside people, honking and calling to demand handouts. This noise imposes a –5 penalty on Stealth checks. A dozen outlying cottages for guests line the western edge of the property, each a well-appointed, cozy affair with three rooms; these structures lack locks but are checked twice a day by guards.

RECURRING LOCATIONS

Some rooms fill recurring roles in the large palace, and while each has unique charms or decorations, the rooms are similar enough in function that they do not need detailed descriptions.

Entertaining Space (ES): These areas consist of a variety of drawing rooms, parlors, recital rooms, and solariums where guests gather to chat or for small events.

Guest Rooms (GR): These areas are well-appointed private rooms for visitors or extended family. Each guest room has a good quality lock, and the visitor is entrusted with the key, though Gul Gusairne's skeleton key opens every room's lock.

Servant Rooms (SR): These areas are more humble spaces, ranging from shared bunk rooms to relatively plush, private rooms for the head housekeeper and guard captains.

H1. Front Drive CR 8/7/5

Fine laburnum trees blossoming with yellow flowers flank the drive leading up to the palace, with a large fountain and several statues providing ostentation.

Creatures: Six guards normally stand at attention at the palace's front stairs. They rush inside if they hear a commotion but won't join the caryatid columns in area H4 for fear of being attacked.

LOYALTY POINT EFFECTS

Loyalty Points	Result
0-10	Local Villains: The PCs are glory hounds or incompetent nobles in the eyes of the locals, and word of their attack quickly makes its way to Count Lotheed, who augments his defenses by hiring a pair of doppelgangers (<i>Pathfinder RPG Bestiary</i> 89) to guard the servants' area (patrolling H9 and H30) and hiring a local fiend named Verda (advanced green hag; <i>Pathfinder RPG Bestiary</i> 294, 167) to pose as himself and confront intruders on the ground floor. Halfway through their assault of the estate, Baron Okerra arrives with four soldiers to assist in the palace's defense against the PCs unless the PCs have changed Okerra's attitude to helpful.
11-35	Squabbling Nobles: The PCs have enough local support to claim the palace without direct interference. Run Part 3 as written. <i>5,000 XP</i>
36-43	A Spark of Hope: Some locals believe the PCs represent a better future for the county. Remove two guards from each encounter that includes them. <i>13,000 XP</i>
44-50	Local Champions: The county of Meratt stands firmly behind the PCs in their revolt, with only a few stubborn souls remaining loyal to the Lotheed tyrants. Remove four guards from each encounter that includes them, and a helpful servant deactivates the trap in area H8 . <i>19,000 XP</i>
51+	Heroes of the People: All palace guards abandon the Lotheed estate, firmly believing the PCs and their masters are the rightful heirs, and the PCs can persuade Count Lotheed to surrender peacefully by means of a verbal duel (see page 52). <i>22,000 XP</i>

LOTHEED SOLDIERS (6/4/2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 37 each (see page 25)

H2. Carriage House

The garage stores Count Lotheed's rarely used carriage and includes a small apartment for his driver.

Treasure: In addition to the luxury carriage stored within (worth 500 gp, but difficult to sell), a small cabinet contains a set of *horseshoes of speed*.

H3. Veranda (CR 6)

A marble porch overlooks a garden of bushes, green grass, and hedges cut into rampant lions and owls, all arranged around a fountain. The tweeting, twittering, and hooting of songbirds arranged in gold cages around the porch is nearly deafening.

The Lotheeds pay a small fortune to maintain both the gardens as the myriad singing birds here. The cages are latched, rather than locked, and can be easily opened, though many of the captive species are not indigenous and will die in the wild.

Creatures: The Lotheeds acquired two living topiary lions from contacts in the Verduran Forest. The plants are docile, but they move to investigate newcomers unless chained to their pots, which the guards do for parties.

LIVING TOPIARIES (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 42 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 181)

Treasure: There are a dozen of the birds' large cages lining the porch, made from gold wire and decorated with gold and silver embellishments (100 gp each).

H4. Gallery (CR 7)

Unsettlingly white walls flank this otherwise opulent grand hall. The walls are decorated with portraits and four carved columns support the ceiling. A soft, plush carpet provides traction on the shiny marble floors.

This grand gallery welcomes most visitors to the estate. Four marble columns carved in the likenesses of Abadar, Aroden, Cayden Cailean, and Shelyn hold up the ceiling, painted with a fresco map of Taldor, representing the pillars of faith that support the nation.

Creatures: The four marble columns here are actually caryatid columns enchanted to protect the palace (and presumably the emperor) long ago. They remain active and aggressive, but the command phrase "Taldaris, glory in his name" shuts down the defenders for 24 hours for social events and parties.

CARYATID COLUMNS (4)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 36 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 46)

H5. Game Room

This well-lit room features a billiards table and walls lined with dart targets, scoreboards, and cabinets full of gaming supplies.

The Lotheeds do much of their personal entertaining in this cozy room, whiling away cold or rainy days playing billiards or cards. A small office in back serves as an art studio, with a half-finished family portrait featuring a much younger Bartelby and Martella with their then-living father.

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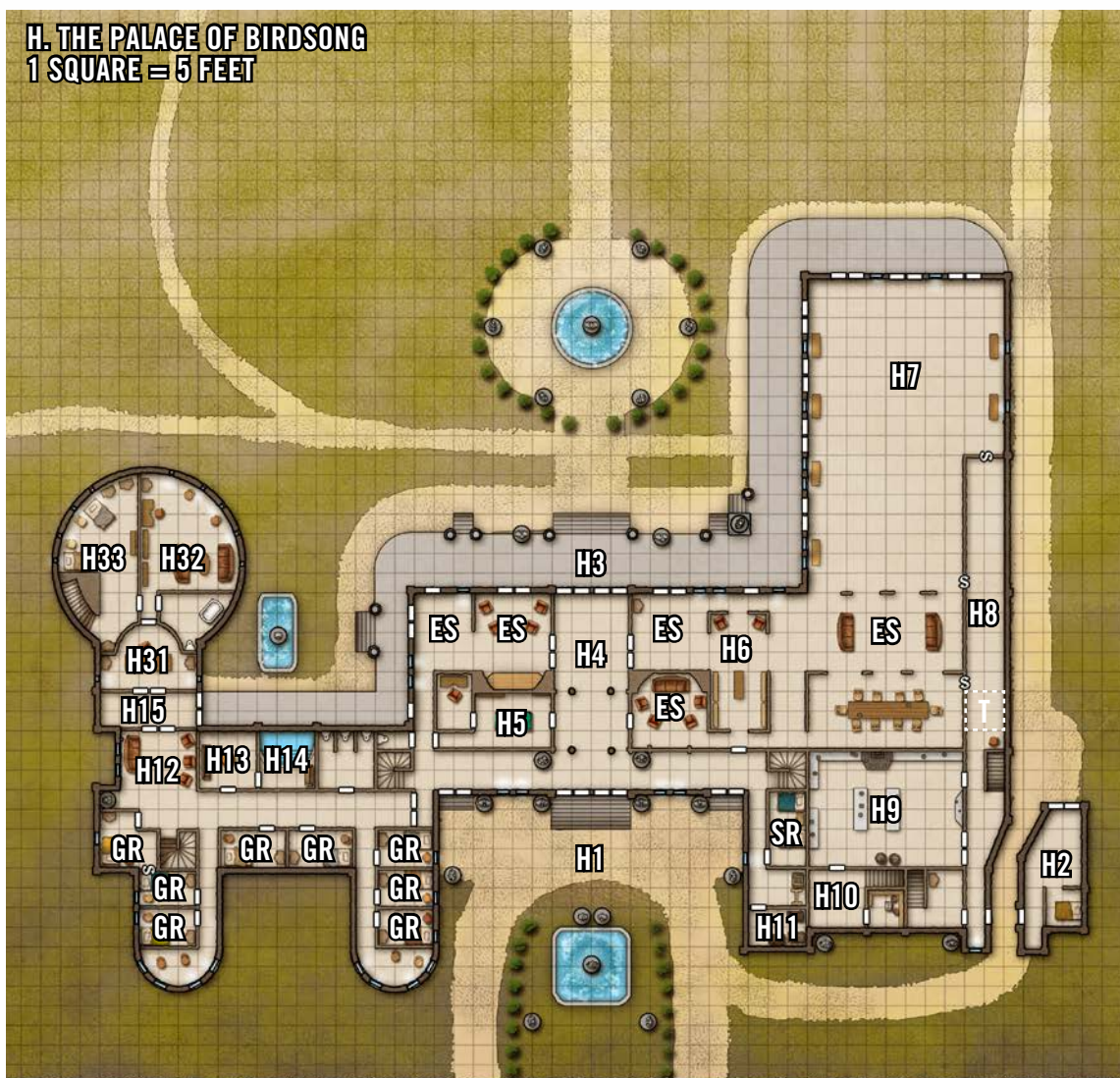
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H. THE PALACE OF BIRDSONG

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Treasure: A set of four ivory carambole balls (worth 50 gp each) sit on the table. A *minor extend metamagic rod* has been casually racked alongside the pool cues.

H6. Library

This rectangular room is a well-stocked library, containing detailed works on a wide variety of fascinating subjects, including many unique journals and dissertations from various historical figures from Taldor and elsewhere. Researching in the library for 1 hour provides a +2 circumstance bonus on a single Knowledge check and allows a character to retry a failed Knowledge check once even without improving her skill.

Treasure: The library features a number of antiques on display, including a functioning Jistkan timepiece (worth 1,200 gp), a teak-and-ivory globe (worth 400 gp), and the quill used to sign the Treaty of the Wildwood (worth 250 gp), all sealed in glass cases with permanent *alarm* spells. A locked drawer in the desk (Disable Device DC 35) contains a pair of *spectacles of understanding* and a *headband of vast intelligence* +2.

H7. Grand Ballroom (CR 7/5/0)

This massive, open space is tiled with marble and painted in rich, warm colors. Ten-foot-tall windowed doorways stand in the north, and plush benches line the east and west walls. The ceiling here is 40 feet overhead.

The ballroom is generally used only for large events like the Tanager Jubilee, though the Lotheed children often played sports in here over the years, much to the servants' chagrin. Secret doors along the eastern wall (Perception DC 20) lead to the service hallway (H8) and allow servants to come and go discreetly.

Creatures: Four guards normally watch this room, both to patrol the floor and also because its large windows allow them to watch the gardens as well. If trouble occurs in the back gardens, the soldiers wait 1d4 rounds to see if the topiaries can chase off trespassers before charging out to help.

LOTHEED SOLDIERS (4/2) **CR 3**
XP 800 each
hp 37 each (see page 25)

H8. Service Hallway (CR 6)

This long, rather plain hallway allows guards and servants to move about the entertaining spaces of the palace without disturbing guests. Though the doors accessing this space are concealed from the exterior, they are unadorned and obvious from this side. The southernmost door leading to the carriage house (area H2) is kept locked at all times and requires a successful DC 30 Disable Device check to open.

Trap: A magical trap wards the servants' area, using a *fabricate* spell effect to fashion iron bars below the flagstone into finished manacles restraining trespassers. Pressing an acorn in the carved decorations in the southern windowsill deactivates the trap, but servants are instructed to leave it active unless using the space. If shackled, a PC can escape with a successful DC 30 Disable Device or Escape Artist check, or with a successful DC 26 Strength check. Guards from area H7 patrol the hallway once every hour.

SHACKLING TRAP **CR 6**

Type magic; **Perception** DC 30; **Disable Device** DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity; **Reset** automatic (once the iron bars are replaced)

Effect spell effect (*fabricate*; all creatures within a 10-foot cube are shackled to the floor; Reflex DC 18 avoids)

H9. Kitchen

This large palace kitchen can provide enough cooking and baking to entertain up to 80 people at a time, but it is rarely staffed to handle more than 10.

H10. Pantry

The well-stocked closet includes enough beans, flour, rice, and water to feed the entire palace for 6 months, in addition to a huge collection of spices and pickled and preserved produce from all across Taldor and beyond. A small cabinet has been permanently enchanted to remain as cool as a late autumn morning, allowing the kitchen staff to store eggs, milk, and produce far longer than normal. A set of stairs descends down to the palace's considerable wine cellar (not shown on the map).

Treasure: A PC who attempts an Appraise check in the cellar discovers a number of rare and expensive bottles of wine (worth 100 gp each) equal to the check result. The true treasure remains in the pantry, however, and is easily overlooked thanks to its appearance and stench (Appraise DC 18 to notice): 5 pounds of imported cockatrice coffee in a tin in one corner is worth 1,500 gp to the right buyer.

H11. Vault

This secured room is sealed with a 4-inch-thick iron door (hardness 10, hp 120) and a superior lock (Disable Device DC 40). The interior walls are lined with lead to prevent snooping.

Treasure: Here lies much of the Lotheed fortune, including countless property deeds and stocks in different companies (mostly useful only for Martella in untangling her family's past associations). Three chests contain a total of 10,060 cp, 12,711 sp, 4,618 gp, 26 pp,

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an oil of shrink item, a jar of restorative ointment, a scroll of raise dead, and the star of Cassomir, a fist-size amber cut into a four-pointed star and containing a coiled snake (worth 750 gp).

H12. Waiting Room (CR 8)

This plush space is another place for visitors to mill about, especially those hoping for an audience with the grand prince when his highness is in residence. Now it serves as a hangout for the palace's lower class of visitor.

Creatures: Lord Titus Lotheed-Casava is a distant family cousin by marriage. After the Exaltation Massacre and a subsequent argument with his father, Titus was booted from his home in Oppara and decided to avail himself of his cousin, the wealthy Count Lotheed. A spoiled, lazy bully, Titus has found little to do in Meratt and alternates between kicking around the palace complaining of the lack of excitement and doing the same while drunk in the streets of Lotheedar. Bartelby considers the boy an annoying parasite but useful enough for intimidating others, given Titus's reputation as a duelist back in Oppara.

The PCs first met Titus during their time at the Tanager Jubilee and may have dueled with him then, but once they invade the palace, Titus considers it both

and honor and an exciting change of pace to lift his blade in defense of "his" family lands.

As always, Titus's hangers-on, Carodd and Syras, remain on hand to assist their friend (and meal ticket), but they flee if Titus is killed.

LORD TITUS LOTHEED-CASAVA

CR 5

XP 1,600

Human fighter 6

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7; Senses Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 55 (6d10+18)

Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +4 (+2 vs. fear)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 Aldori dueling sword +12/+7 (1d8+5/19-20)

Ranged dagger +9 (1d4+1/19-20)

Special Attacks weapon training (heavy blades +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Titus Lotheed-Casava is an excellent duelist but a terrible tactician and a reckless combatant. He simply charges forward into the fray, using Combat Expertise and Improved Disarm to frustrate opponents. If given a good opportunity (such as when an opponent moves to retrieve their weapon) Titus drinks his potion to heal any wounds he may have.

Morale Extremely overconfident, Titus fights to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +6; CMB +7 (+9 disarm); CMD 20 (22 vs. disarm)

Feats Combat Expertise, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Aldori dueling sword), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Aldori dueling sword), Weapon Specialization (Aldori dueling sword)

Skills Acrobatics +9, Climb +7, Intimidate +9, Perception +2, Ride +9, Stealth +6

Languages Common, Kelish

SQ armor training 1

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, +1 Aldori dueling sword¹^{SWG}, daggers (2), cloak of resistance +1, Casava signet ring, 71 gp

LORD TITUS LOTHEED-CASAVA

DAME CARODD HELLEBORE

CR 5

XP 1,600

Battle mage (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 256)

hp 33

SYRAS COCKLEBURR, ESQ**CR 5****XP 1,600**Tomb raider (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 257)**hp 45****H13. Sauna**

This sauna uses a bound elemental to maintain a sweltering temperature. If the brazier in the room's center is destroyed (hardness 8, hp 60, break DC 28), the Small fire elemental is released and, at your discretion, can cause a variety of distractions.

H14. Public Bath

A large bath for visitors utilizes the bound elemental from the sauna to maintain a comfortable water temperature amid marble and gold fixtures. The walls are carved with scandalous mermaid motifs.

H15. Guardroom (CR 7/5/0)

Brass fixtures and red walls line this austere chamber, emphasizing the size and importance of the darkwood double doors embossed with scenes of rampant lions.

This guardroom is the only entrance to the royal apartments beyond. The northern double door is nigh impregnable (hardness 15, hp 60, Disable Device DC 40). Count Bartelby Lotheed carries the only key.

Creatures: This guardroom normally contains an honor guard for the emperor when the royal family is in residence, but during the Lotheeds' dominion it is simply guarded by four family soldiers.

LOTHEED SOLDIERS (4/2)**CR 3****XP 800 each****hp 37 each** (see page 25)**H16. Family Suites (CR 7/5/0)**

An ornate, furnished hallway and small library create a simple space for residents of the palace to gather informally. Portraits of the various Lotheeds of the current generation line the walls, including a scowling Duke Panivar Lotheed VI.

Creatures: Four soldiers remain on guard in this area as personal protection for the count and his family.

LOTHEED SOLDIERS (4/2)**CR 3****XP 800 each****hp 37 each** (see page 25)**H17. Regent's Apartment**

Large and well-appointed suites are set aside for the county administrator—in this case, Bartelby Lotheed—and any especially prominent family or visitors.

Each includes a private bath and office in addition to lavish sleeping quarters.

Treasure: Bartelby keeps most of his important valuables in the vault (area **H11**) or on his person, but he keeps a *handy haversack* in his wardrobe for traveling. The haversack currently holds five noble outfits, two pairs of silk pajamas, a wolf mask, a bottle of absinthe, three bottles of wismuth salix, and a pocketed scarf^{UE} containing 34 gp and a used handkerchief.

H18. Seneschal's Office

The door to this office is locked when not in use (Disable Device DC 30). This is Sir Gul Gusairne's private office for administering the palace's finances, private meetings with various county nobles, and disciplining staff. Several whips and restraints decorate the wall, looking intimidating but covered in a thin layer of dust. Sir Gul Gusairne is most frequently encountered closer to his quarters (area **H28**).

Treasure: A lockbox in the desk (Disable Device DC 30) contains the palace's petty cash: 342 cp, 812 sp, 44 gp, and 18 pp, as well as a mummified pinky finger. Gusairne carries the only key.

H19. Accounting Office

The door to this office is locked when not in use (Disable Device DC 30). This is the office of Count Lotheed's accountant and moneychanger, **Zenobius Caal** (LN male human cleric of Abadar 2), who keeps the palace's books and arranges loans to local nobles and institutions. While the office is a treasure trove to detail-oriented administrators, there is little of value here for adventurers.

A secret door in the eastern wall (Perception DC 20) leads to a dusty, 10-foot-long hallway that ends in a second secret door (Perception DC 25).

H20. Panic Room

This isolated chamber, hidden behind two secret doors and decorated and painted in soothing colors, serves as a bolt-hole for the family in residence during times of trouble.

Treasure: A small wooden box labeled "emergency supplies" contains a bottle of gin, five *potions of cure moderate wounds*, two *scrolls of sending*, and a *sustaining spoon*. The spoon's enchantments are unique, producing not flavorless mush but a rotating assortment of rich soups; this unique adaptation increases its value by 1,000 gp.

Development: If Bartelby Lotheed flees his encounter with the PCs, he hides here until the palace quiets and he feels like he can safely escape.

H21. Upstairs Parlor (CR 8/6)

The bay windows here overlook not only the Palace of Birdsong's exquisite gardens, but also much of the

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county's most beautiful scenery beyond. Those seeking an audience with Count Lotheed are normally asked to wait here while servants provide coffee, tea, wine, and simple snacks.

Creatures: If the PCs invade the palace, they encounter the enraged Count Lotheed here, flanked by two soldiers and ready to kill. If the PCs managed to shift Bartelby's attitude to friendly or helpful and accumulated enough Loyalty Points, their reputation has reached and inspired even his cynical heart, and there is a chance they can talk the count into surrendering peacefully with a verbal duel (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue* 176).

In a verbal duel, Bartelby Lotheed is both the audience and the opponent. He has a determination of 19, a bias against allegory, a strong bias against emotional appeal, a bias in favor of presence, and a strong bias in favor of logic. Bartelby prefers to open with baiting, red herring, and rhetoric, but always falls back on logic once the stakes are raised.

If his determination is reduced to 0, Bartelby begins to question a great many decisions he's made in life and quietly surrenders, asking only that the PCs be merciful. He can order the rest of the palace to stand down, but he has no control over the forces inside the royal apartments in the tower.

COUNT BARTELBY LOTHEED

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 56 (see page 60)

LOTHEED SOLDIERS (2/0)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 37 each (see page 24)

Development: Count Lotheed's defeat doesn't necessarily force the rest of the palace defenders to stand down, but it leaves them shaken, granting the PCs a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks against the remaining defenders. The unnatural forces in the royal apartments couldn't care less about Bartelby, however, and are unaffected by his death or surrender.

H22. Count Lotheed's Office

Darkwood paneling reaches high up to a frescoed ceiling depicting First Emperor Taldaris's noble conquest of Cassomir. A desk, carved from dark purple wood to look like owls with their spread wings supporting the work surface, occupies the center of the room, while plush, burgundy chairs surround the remaining space. A family portrait on the western wall depicts a dozen scowling nobles—a teenaged Bartelby among them—and a single hound, though the dog is clearly a later and more amateurish addition to the otherwise high-quality artistry.

This opulent office overlooks one of the grandest gardens in Taldor and has served as the seat for the Lotheed patriarchs for 2 centuries. The family portrait was commissioned by Mercater, Bartelby's father, and once included Martella as well, but Bartelby had her replaced with a favorite hunting dog upon their father's death. A hidden compartment under one of the floorboards requires a successful DC 30 Perception check to locate, and the safe within requires a successful DC 35 Disable Device check to navigate its twin combinations. Watching the ghost of Mercater Lotheed (see Creature below) grants a +10 circumstance bonus on both of these checks.

Creature: Mercater Lotheed, father of Bartelby and Martella, was the former Count Lotheed and steward of Meratt. While arrogant and greedy, he was also a dutiful aristocrat of Taldor and competent administrator who resented his family's long history of abusing the county and their power. His many years spent correcting long-standing issues with county infrastructure eventually led him to uncovering records regarding his "uncle," Panivar Lotheed VI. In time, he came to suspect that Uncle Panivar was not the sixth man to bear that name, but rather the first, still alive after centuries and posing as a succession of descendants. His research soon attracted Panivar's attention, and the elder Lotheed dispatched his loyal sahkil, Ehlers, to literally scare the aging man to death.

As Mercater was slain in a pique of emotion, on the cusp of discovery, his soul refused to rest soundly, and he now remains tied to his office. His shame at his own undead state has prevented Mercater from appearing before his children, but he has attempted several times to point servants and visitors to the secret compartment in the floor, only to frighten them off.

The ghost of Mercater Lotheed desperately wants someone to carry on his work, but he can speak only in terrified shrieks. He appears each night, wailing as he floats over the secret compartment and mimes the dial-turning gestures required to open the safe. He is fiercely protective of his family, and if he has any reason to suspect the PCs may threaten (or have threatened) Bartelby, he attacks. Alternatively, if he realizes they are friends of Martella—likely by PCs trying to uncover her face on the family portrait, he resumes his frightful moaning.

MERCATER LOTHEED'S GHOST

CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 73 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 144)

Treasure: Bartelby keeps a few valuables in a locked desk drawer (Disable Device DC 20), including 127 gp, a *circlet of persuasion*, and a *wand of lesser restoration* (12 charges) used to eliminate fatigue after late nights working.

Development: If the concealed safe is opened, Mercater's ghost is finally free to move on. Inside are a variety of birth certificates, death certificates, newspapers, royal announcements, and travel documents dating back 300 years. A successful DC 20 Linguistics check identifies the birth certificates (for men named Panivar Lotheed II–VI) as forgeries, while the other papers all feature announcements and sketches related to six men bearing the same name and very similar description.

H23. Waiting Rooms (CR 6)

The chairs in this room are unusually sturdy and feature a motif of bear paws. This space serves as a waiting room for both Bartelby's office and the adjacent chapel, as well as a reading room for anyone visiting the archives. The archive door is magically reinforced (hardness 8, hp 60) and locked (Disable Device DC 40). Sir Gul Gusairne hides the archive key in his room (area H28).

Creature: A simple wood golem is hidden in plain sight here to protect the palace's archives, chapel, and office. If the golem is disturbed, one of the oversized chairs twists and rears up to reveal itself as a flat, wooden bear. The chair golem guardian is activated each night with a simple command phrase ("by my father's cane") and deactivated again in the morning, though Lotheed or Gusairne activate it immediately if the palace is attacked.

CHAIR GOLEM

CR 6

XP 2,400

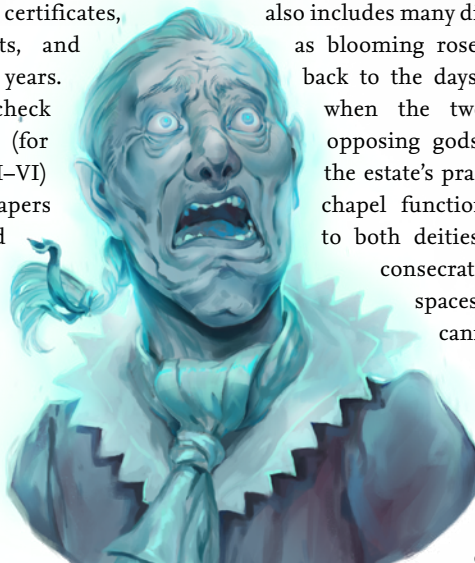
Wood golem (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 164)

hp 64

H24. County Archive

The shelves and files of the archive room contain a record of every major birth, death, contract, and financial transaction dating back centuries, with spillover shipped to Cassomir's provincial library for long-term storage. Finding any specific document in this mess requires a successful DC 18 Linguistics or Profession (librarian) check.

Story Award: The archives that are found in this room contain a copy of the original charter granting stewardship of the county of Meratt to the Lotheed family, which the PCs must provide to allow Princess Eutropia to reclaim the land without civil unrest. If the PCs recover this document themselves, award them 2,400 XP.



MERCATER LOTHEED'S GHOST

H25. Chapel

The palace's private chapel is dedicated to Abadar but also includes many distinctly Shelynite motifs, such as blooming roses and songbirds. This harks back to the days of the palace's construction when the two architects—worshippers of opposing gods—squabbled endlessly about the estate's practicality versus its beauty. The chapel functions effectively as a holy site to both deities and has been permanently consecrated, making it one of the few spaces in the palace the sahkil Ehlers cannot enter.

H26. Arcane Laboratory

The Lotheeds have a well-earned reputation for producing powerful arcane spellcasters, and generations of arcanists, magi, and wizards have studied their art here in the palace's arcane laboratory. Steel and lead panels cover most of

the walls to prevent accidental damage to the rest of the palace. Spellbooks within hold every 1st- and 2nd-level arcane spell, as well as a number of higher-level spells to be studied by advanced students. The space also includes an alchemist's lab.

Treasure: The spellbooks that can be found in this laboratory can contain spells of up to 5th level (at your discretion) for PC spellcasters to copy, though the spellbooks technically belong to the crown and should remain here. A glass case set in the wall contains a well-used *wand of dispel magic* (13 charges).

H27. Observatory (CR 6 or 8)

This large, window-lined room rises to a domed, glass ceiling, exposing the entire room to a spectacular view every night. It was originally constructed as an observatory for stargazing and astrological predictions, but with the power of divination gone from the world, the Lotheeds rarely visit. It has become primarily a training room for the palace guard.

Creatures: An ancient clockwork soldier has been kept here as a training tool for soldiers, and its is activated to defend the servants' areas during an attack. If Sir Gul Gusairne still lives, he is found here as well.

SIR GUL GUSAIRNE

CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 42 (see page 24)

CLOCKWORK SOLDIER

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 64 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 57)

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H28. Captain's Quarters

This spacious but sparse room is set aside for the palace's guard commander, Gul Gusairne. The room contains several books on elven history, organization, and psychology. A hollowed-out bedpost (Perception DC 18) contains spare keys for the palace, including the archive (area H24) and the royal apartments (areas H31–H37).

H29. Armory

The palace armory contains extra equipment for soldiers, as well as weapons various family members have trained with.

Treasure: The armory contains masterwork versions of the following weapons: an Aldori dueling sword, five halberds, five heavy crossbows, two rapiers, five short swords, and two shortbows. It also holds 240 crossbow bolts, 144 arrows, a masterwork large steel shield, and a book of crude, salacious drawings.

H30. Artisan's Loft

This warm balcony overlooks the kitchens below and is used for a variety of chores, particularly in the chilly winter months. Most of the palace's cobbling, sewing, and weaving happens here, where the head housekeeper can watch both the crafting tasks and the kitchen work below.

A ladder leads directly to the kitchen.

H31. Royal Office (CR 4)

This overstuffed, roughly triangular-shaped office is fit for a king, with every surface an example of expert artistry and all but dripping with gold leaf. A large desk of dark, fragrant wood decorated with golden candelabras fills most of the office, while carved cherubs dance among storm clouds all through the molding above.

This sumptuous office serves the grand prince while he is in residence—an event that has not transpired in many years.

Trap: The cavorting cherubs are part of a magical trap designed to protect the emperor, raining lightning bolts down around the southern half of the room on anyone entering without the permission of the emperor or the present steward of the palace.

ROYAL STORM TRAP

CR 4

XP 1,200

Type magical; Perception DC 28; Disable Device DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect electricity arc (4d6 electricity damage, Reflex DC 14 half); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-25-ft. room)

Treasure: The trap is powered by a *wand of lightning bolt* (21 charges) held in one cherub's hand (Perception DC 13) in the northern arch. If it is removed, the trap is deactivated. The two golden candelabras are worth 125 gp each.

H32. Royal Sitting Room (CR 8)

Alternating bookshelves and paintings line the walls in this large, warm space. Warm colors, plush carpeting, and overstuffed furniture all combine to give the illusion of warmth, while the scent of tobacco hangs faintly in the air. A large portrait of Veleto Lotheed stares down from one wall.

This private library and sitting room provides a quiet space for the grand prince to rest and study with his family. Pipe ash in an ashtray on one of the tables suggests the room has been used in the last several months.

Several oil paintings of past grand princes hang from the wall, alongside a large painting of the Duchess Veleto Lotheed. A small plaque on the Duchess's frame reads, "My Veleto, in loving memory. P."

Creature: The Duchess Veleto Lotheed was a woman of wit, guile, and uncanny insight in life, and a legendary infiltrator in her youth. As she married and became a mother, her role shifted from adventurous spy to manipulative grand dame of the Opparan social scene, making her one of the few women Panivar Lotheed considered his equal. She did not share the immortality of her husband, however, and though the old patriarch thought himself above the petty temptations of emotion, watching his wife age and die tore at his heart. Unwilling to accept her loss, he first attempted several techniques to resurrect her, despite the futility of such magic on those who perish of old age.

When his first attempts failed, Panivar turned to newer and more extreme methods of restoring life, and his experiments in crafting a soul from planar dust and memories left in loved ones' hearts created a reasonable, if alien, facsimile of his wife within a portrait she had commissioned years earlier. The resulting creation is a *trompe l'oeil*: a realistic, if hollow-hearted, duplicate.

The reforged Veleto lacks her original's passion, but retains her charm, cunning, and deadly skill with a blade. She likely formed an affection for one of more PCs during the course of the adventure; after all, she was designed to comfort and love the grieving Panivar, and companionship remains her purpose—but the violation of her sanctum and the discovery of her horrible secret drives her to a murderous rage (if the PCs haven't already "betrayed" her by attacking her on one of her earlier visits).

DUCHESS VELETO LOTHEED**CR 8****XP 4,800**Trompe l'oeil human rogue 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Horror Adventures* 242)

LE Medium construct (humanoid, human)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +11**DEFENSE****AC** 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)**hp** 91 (8d8+52)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +11, **Will** +2**Defensive Abilities** evasion, improved uncanny dodge, rejuvenation, trap sense +2; **Immune** construct traits**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +1 rapier +11/+6 (1d6+3/18–20)**Special Attacks** sneak attack +4d6**TACTICS****During Combat** This version of Veleto retains all the skill with a blade she built up as a young assassin, and she moves freely in and out of combat, trying to keep her opponents separated and off-guard.**Morale** Veleto fights until destroyed.**STATISTICS****Str** 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 16**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 22**Feats** Dodge, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)**Skills** Acrobatics +13, Bluff +3 (+8 to pretend to be Veleto), Climb +12, Disable Device +19, Disguise +3 (+13 to appear as Veleto), Escape Artist +13, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nobility) +5, Perception +11, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +13, Stealth +13 (+18 to appear as part of a painting), Use Magic Device +14**Languages** Common, Kelish**SQ** autotelic, enter painting, rogue talents (fast stealth, finesse rogue, powerful sneak^{APG}, surprise attacks), trapfinding +4**Gear** +2 chain shirt, +1 rapier, masterwork thieves' tools, platinum-and-diamond wedding ring (1,000 gp)**H33. Nursery (CR 4)**

Two small beds look over a soft blanket laid out on the floor here along with soft toys, wooden blocks, and various small musical instruments. Painted lions cavort along the walls, moving through simple patterns.

This smaller bedroom was intended as a nursery for princes and princesses. The moving wall decorations are a simple illusion, while the toys belong to the room's confused resident.

The stairs in the southwest lead up to area **H34**.

Creature: When Panivar Lotheed first learned of Grand Prince Stavian's death, he resolved to create

his own heir to the throne by resurrecting the dead Prince Carrius employing similar techniques to those he used to recreate his wife Veleto. New techniques in magic rarely function as planned, however, and his first attempt—assembled from Carrius's childhood memories and shreds of children's souls—resulted in an incomplete and confused abomination known as an attic whisperer, an undead child starved for love.

Panivar kept this misbegotten creation for future study, giving it the name Carr. He entrusted it to his wife's care, but the painted Veleto has no memories or understanding of child-rearing, and Carr is miserable and starved for affection. He sobs quietly under the bed in his nursery, trying not to disturb "auntie" in her frame, but he rushes to greet any newcomers. He begs

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PERSONA PHASE

Once the PCs conclude this adventure, they have two persona phases in which to build their reputations and scheming before the beginning of the next adventure. If they succeed at a DC 21 Diplomacy or Knowledge (nobility) check, they can get a sense that a new front in the escalating conflict is emerging to the north, near Yanmass, and that area will likely be their next destination.

them to take him with them even as he drains the breath from their lungs.

CARR

CR 4

XP 1,200

Attic whisperer (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 34)

hp 45

H34. Royal Bedchambers

A towering, domed ceiling that curves overhead in this room depicts the shimmering summer stars, with major constellations outlined in gold leaf. A massive bed trimmed with silk sheets and a darkwood vanity fill much of the space, while expensive bric-a-brac covers the waist-high shelf circling the room.

These chambers were intended only for the grand prince and his wife or concubine, but over the last 2 centuries it has been the infrequent home of Duke Panivar Lotheed whenever he feels the need to visit his family.

Treasure: The glitter of the stars overhead isn't magic, but wealth. Each of the 35 stars is a large, white pearl (worth 75 gp each), though this treasure notably belongs to the royal family.

H35. Arcane Lab (CR 7)

Plush, red carpeting has been cut away from the center of the floor here, and what remains is badly stained. Desks line the walls, covered in bones, brass instruments, glassware, and jars filled with bizarre collections. The stink of old peat and insect activity is rampant.

This was formerly a study intended for the visiting grand prince, but Panivar Lotheed has used it as his private magical laboratory for nearly 200 years. Here he has refined his techniques for pulling unwilling souls from the Great Beyond, and while his most important notes and equipment have long since been moved to his new sanctum (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #132: *The Six-Legend Soul*), enough remains here to damn his reputation.

A secret door in the west wall (Perception DC 20) leads to Panivar's conjuration chamber and teleportation circle.

Creature: Panivar's most trusted servant for many years was a despicable sahkil named Ehlers. An ichkoh, Ehlers embodies and feeds off the dread mortals feel as their bodies rot and fail, and so it made an excellent tutor in the ways of aging and death. Ehlers was brought to the Material Plane via a *gate* spell rather than a summoning, and it has remained bound to the Palace of Birdsong for centuries as a dirty secret kept by each subsequent count. The creature is forbidden from harming a Lotheed (by blood or marriage), but it delights in picking at the self-doubt and insecurities of visitors, driving over a dozen people to suicide in its long tenure.

Ehlers may have tormented the PCs during their earlier visits to the palace, inflicting horrible nightmares as they sleep. It is a creature of subtlety and patience, however, and is happy to let prey escape and return later, with subtle fears already implanted. A PC who was targeted for nightmares by Ehlers takes a –2 penalty to her first Will saving throw against one of its spell-like abilities thanks to these quiet manipulations.

Ehlers hides quietly on the Ethereal Plane, but once its sanctum is attacked, the ichkoh drops all pretense of subtlety and unleashes its most powerful spells to obliterate intruders, all too aware that the destruction of the conjuring circle in the next room will destroy it as well.

EHLERS

CR 7

XP 3,200

Ichkoh (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6* 243)

hp 85

Treasure: Several magical implements from Panivar's earlier experiments remain, including a set of *marvelous pigments*, a *scroll of alter self*, a *scroll of animate object*, a *scroll of deep slumber*, a *scroll of gentle repose*, a *scroll of speak with dead*, and a *scroll of summon monster IV*.

H36. Conjuring Chamber

This hidden chamber is decorated with the holy symbols of two dozen religions, as well as strange herbs and dried animals. Jars of colored powders are organized neatly along the northern wall. A large circle, etched in silver and decorated with intricate loops and swirls, fills most of the floor.

Panivar created this conjuring chamber long ago to further his communication with night hags, sahkils, and other foul creatures from beyond. As the Immaculate Circle gained some prominence, he moved most of his work to a secret facility and



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invested a considerable sum into transforming his conjuring space into a teleportation circle capable of transporting him to and from this hidden location for family business. The circle is keyed to a code phrase—a short, rambling speech in Infernal—which the duke keeps to himself, and the circle will not activate without it.

Destroying the circle requires a successful DC 34 Disable Device or Spellcraft check, destroying the stone floor it physically rests upon, or frying the silver inscriptions with a *lightning bolt* or *chain lightning* spell.

Treasure: The various bottles and jars here contain 1,500 gp worth of miscellaneous expensive spell components.

Development: Destroying the teleportation circle here is one of the conditions required for successfully seizing the Palace of Birdsong.

H37. Closet

This walk-in closet features dozens of suits and dresses a few centuries out of fashion.

Treasure: While the clothing here is useless, the closet also contains a shabby belt and stylish red boots that both radiate magical auras. The belt is a *belt of mighty constitution* +2, while the boots are mundane footwear left over from an era when it was fashionable to enchant clothing with a *magic aura* spell to make it seem more extraordinary.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the Palace of Birdsong is secure, Prince Eutropia and Martella Lotheed begin their journey to the county of Meratt from Cassomir. Their arrival a week later gives the PCs time to rest (or make special preparations, should they wish). The princess's exact reception depends on how many of the local nobility the PCs won the support of during their stay; arrangements could be awkward and tense, or they might be a warm homecoming with a hope for positive change in the future. Whatever the political situation, Princess Eutropia thanks the PCs personally for their bravery and resourcefulness. She offers payment of 1,000 gp apiece, in addition to letting them keep the Betony estate, if they like. If the PCs resisted the urge to loot royal property (such as the antiques in area H6, the candelabras in area H31, or pearls in area H34), Martella thanks them privately for their discretion and rewards them each with a *cloak of protection* +2.

For now, the PCs have time to relax and enjoy the fruits of their labor—a tidy estate, a thriving village, and the comforts of a nearby palace—for at least a few weeks before they are called upon once again to serve the crown in “The Twilight Child.”

BARON NICOLAUS OKERRA

Nicolaus Okerra's salt-and-pepper hair is the only suggestion that time may be beginning to slow him down. He lives to do right by those who depend on him: as a soldier, as a leader, and as a father.

BARON NICOLAUS OKERRA

CR 5

XP 1,600

Human fighter 6

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +2 shield)

hp 55 (6d10+18)

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4 (+2 vs. fear)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *gladius* +13/+8 (1d6+8/19–20) or

mwk boar spear +11/+6 (1d8+6)

Ranged mwk composite shortbow +7/+2 (1d6+4/×3)

Special Attacks weapon training (light blades +1)

TACTICS

Before Combat Baron Okerra prefers mounted combat whenever possible and generally demands that opponents face him in honorable combat in the field.

During Combat Whether Baron Okerra is mounted or on foot, his preferred tactic is to charge forward, attempting to bowl his opponents over or back them into corners. He fights with a strict code of chivalry and would never strike at an unarmed or unaware opponent.

Morale In general combat, Okerra asks for mercy and parley if reduced below 20 hit points, but when defending his people or his lord, he fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +10 (+12 bull rush); **CMD** 20 (22 vs. bull rush)

Feats Animal Affinity, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (*gladius*), Weapon Specialization (*gladius*)

Skills Diplomacy +4, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (engineering) +4, Knowledge (nobility) +1, Perception +1, Ride +8, Sense Motive +4, Survival +5

Languages Common

SQ armor training 1

Combat Gear *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2);

Other Gear +2 *breastplate*, mwk heavy steel shield, +1 *gladius*^{UC}, mwk boar spear^{APG}, mwk composite shortbow with 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance* +1, combat trained heavy warhorse named Valor, Okerra signet ring, wedding band (worth 100 gp), 220 gp

Nicolaus Okerra is the baron of a stretch of villages in the eastern portion of the county of Meratt, and he is a local hero of the people. Popular as much for his good looks as for his fair policies, he has slain several terrible beasts and helped organize community improvement projects like irrigation, roadwork, and wells, often rolling up his sleeves and chipping in with the manual labor. His staunch loyalty to order prevents him from standing against or even impugning the Lotheed family for their negligence, and instead he hopes to inspire his lackadaisical neighbors to action by showing the benefits of hard work and organizing charity for their peasants in lean times. Despite his action, he secretly worries he'll never match the organizational abilities and human insights of his late wife, Nirvenna, who ruled the barony in his stead during his military career.

Nicolaus is a man of action; he cares little for fine words and prefers fine wines. He is still readjusting to civilian life, having retired from the Taldan Horse to assume control of his barony and raise his daughter, Selli, after Nirvenna died confronting a troll. Nicolaus still prefers riding, sparring, and physical labor to elaborate balls and fine dinners, but he is beginning to learn the quiet joys of good company and a well-placed joke—though his own sense of humor remains appropriately blunt for a man of the people.

Nicolaus's greatest weakness and blind spot is his high-spirited daughter, Selli. The child inherited her father's zeal for adventure and grew up on tales of his heroism from Nicolaus himself as well as villagers and servants. She wants to be a great hero and warrior like her father, but at only 10 years old she still has a lot of learning to do before she can join the military. Before Nirvenna's death, Nicolaus assured his child she could join the military after coming of age, but having felt the pang of loss, he now regrets that promise and has been quietly trying to kindle an interest in academia in her heart before she dies on a battlefield far from home. Few of her studies have taken root, however, and Selli has become increasingly rebellious, often sneaking out of the estate into Pensaris or to explore the surrounding countryside. Her personal adventures occasionally end in disaster—most recently losing two fingers to a fox—but taking a note from the dramatic, larger-than-life tales her father inspires, Selli is already telling anyone who will listen that the fox won the fingers off her in a crooked game of cards.

Okerra has a booming voice more suited to a battlefield than a palace; his servants hear him coming from across Pensaris. Although fair, he is ruled by powerful humors that lend him a temper and occasional deep bouts of depression. Though neatly groomed during the Tanager Jubilee, he often forgets to shave for days at a time and prefers a comfortable tunic to his noble attire. He remains muscular and athletic, even if his figure hides under a little extra padding these days. Perhaps Okerra's greatest failing, aside from his unwavering devotion to order, is his lack of boating experience for a man leading a fishing community; locals joke that their "fearless commander" is terrified of the water, but Nicolaus insists it's merely a preference for land that doesn't buck like an unbroken stallion.

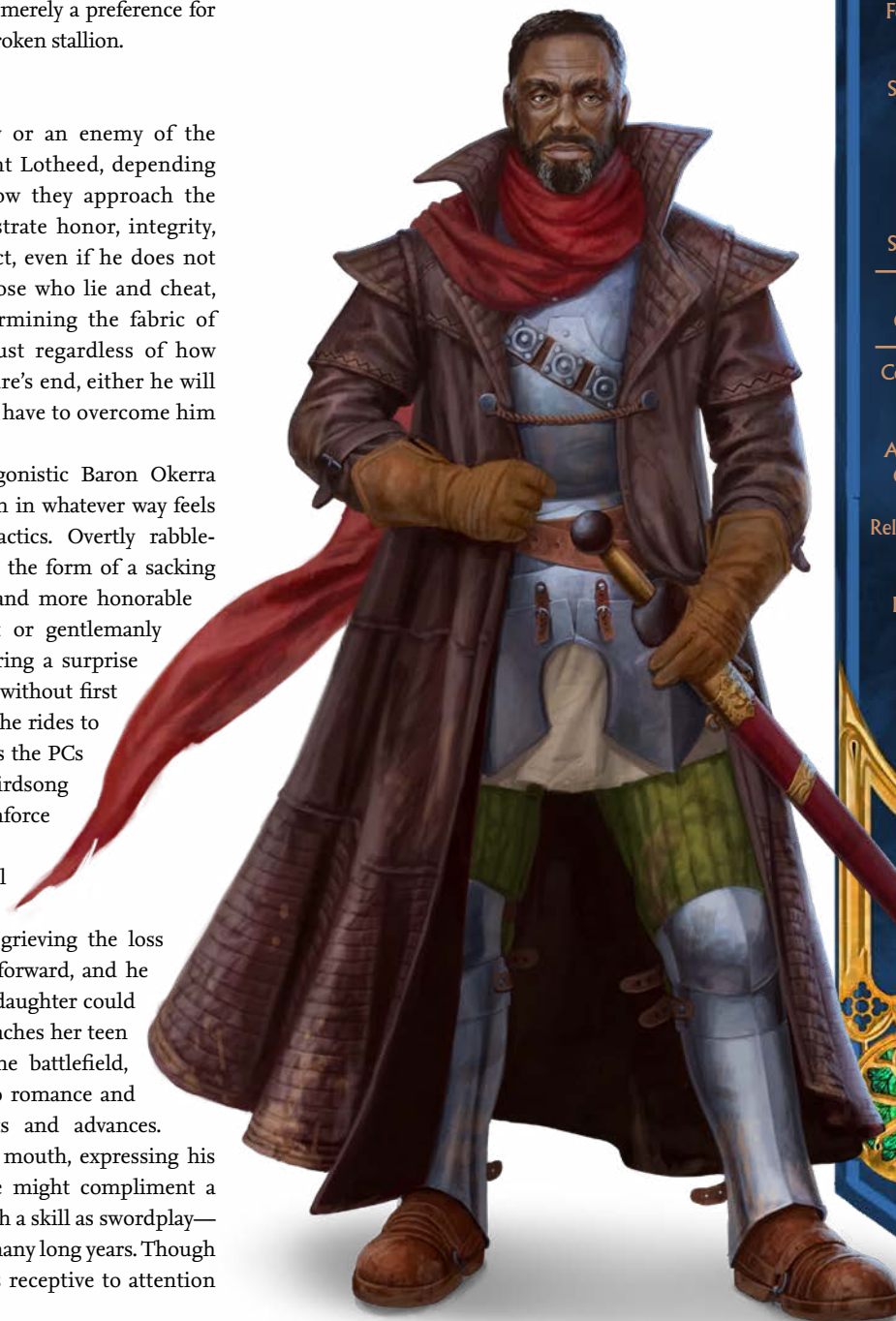
CAMPAIGN ROLE

Baron Okerra could be an ally or an enemy of the PCs in their quest to oust Count Lotheed, depending on the tactics they use and how they approach the baron. Individuals who demonstrate honor, integrity, and compassion earn his respect, even if he does not agree with their goals, while those who lie and cheat, resorting to trickery and undermining the fabric of society, earn the baron's mistrust regardless of how noble their ends. By the adventure's end, either he will be an ally of the PCs or they will have to overcome him as one of Lotheed's defenders.

The exact tactics of an antagonistic Baron Okerra are left vague, so you can use him in whatever way feels appropriate for your group's tactics. Overtly rabble-raising PCs may draw his ire in the form of a sacking of Stachys, while he might demand more honorable PCs face him in a tournament or gentlemanly combat on horseback. If PCs spring a surprise attack on Count Lotheed's estate without first winning an alliance with Okerra, he rides to Lotheed's aid and likely confronts the PCs somewhere within the Palace of Birdsong (and likely bringing guards to reinforce the count's own forces).

Okerra makes a great potential romantic diversion during this adventure as well. Though still grieving the loss of his wife, he's begun to move forward, and he especially feels like his vivacious daughter could use a second parent as she approaches her teen years. Despite his bravery on the battlefield, Nicolaus is shy when it comes to romance and easily flustered by compliments and advances. He frequently puts a foot in his mouth, expressing his interests and affections like one might compliment a fellow soldier. Romance is as much a skill as swordplay—and it's one he has neglected for many long years. Though his first love was a woman, he is receptive to attention from any gender.

If the PCs retain the Betony estate and Baron Okerra survives, he remains the PCs' closest neighbor, easily leading to new alliances or new troubles down the road. So long as the PCs succeed in their goals for "Songbird, Scion, Saboteur," he serves Eutropia loyally once she assumes control of Meratt, but he doesn't necessarily agree with her tactics and may later be influenced by allies of High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus. Alternatively, a tense early relationship with Baron Okerra can provide PCs with future adventure opportunities to win his favor—rescuing Selli or simply tutoring her is the easiest way to win Nicolaus's friendship.



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COUNT BARTELBY LOTHEED

Handsome but vaguely unsettling, Bartelby has the demeanor of a man comfortable in his superiority. His face is expressive of his ever-changing moods—warm one moment, cold and distant the next.

COUNT BARTELBY LOTHEED

CR 6

XP 2,400

Male human magus 7 (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 9)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 22 (+8 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 shield)

hp 56 (7d8+21)

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft. (50 ft. in armor)

Melee mwk sword cane +11 (1d6+4)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +9 (1d8/19–20)

Special Attacks arcane pool (+2, 7 points), magus arcana (empowered magic, wand wielder), spell combat, spell recall, spellstrike

Magus Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +11)

3rd—*vampiric touch*, *haste*

2nd—*bull's strength*, *frigid touch*^{UM}, *invisibility*, *mirror image*

1st—*burning hands* (DC 16), *shield*, *shocking grasp*, *true strike*, *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 15), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *ray of frost*

TACTICS

Before Combat Bartelby arranges whatever advantages he can before a fight. He casts *haste*, *shield* and *bull's strength* on himself if he expects combat.

During Combat Bartelby is a practical and brutal combatant. He casts *mirror image* on himself and his guards before attempting to drive a wedge through enemies. He hopes to end a fight quickly, combining his Arcane Strike feat with spellstrike to deliver *shocking grasp*, *frigid touch*, and *vampiric touch* if he's injured. He saves his arcane pool to recall *vampiric touch* to heal himself.

Morale Ever practical, Bartelby casts *invisibility* and attempts to flee to his panic room (area **H31**) if reduced below 20 hit points.

Base Statistics Without his spells cast, Bartelby's statistics are **AC** 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18; **Ref** +6; **Speed** 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor); **Melee** mwk sword cane +8 (1d6+2); **Str** 14.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 18, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 19

Feats Arcane Strike, Cosmopolitan^{APG}, Craft Wand, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (evocation), Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +6, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (arcana, planes) +11, Knowledge (history, nobility) +6, Perception +4, Perform (oratory) +9, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +12

Languages Azlanti, Celestial, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Kelish, Osiriani

SQ knowledge pool, medium armor

Combat Gear *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *wand of corrosive touch*^{UM} (12 charges), *wand of scorching ray* (23 charges); **Other Gear** +2 *glamered breastplate*, mwk light crossbow with 20 bolts, mwk sword cane^{APG}, *belt of incredible dexterity* +2, *circlet of persuasion*, keys to the palace and royal tower, Lotheed signet ring, spell component pouch, spellbook

Bartelby is the eldest son of Count Mercater Lotheed and runs the county of Meratt like a personal kingdom, with little regard for broader politics beyond his borders. Like most Lotheeds, he commands considerable arcane gifts as well as considerable contempt for anyone who does not—including his half-sister Martella. Bartelby is clever and strong, a combination that makes him arrogant. He is sure of his imperviousness, and his family's long association with arcane power has been bred into his bones along with overconfident self-importance. This is not to say Bartelby is cold; he is witty, incredibly well educated, and charming when he wants to be—all skills he studied as carefully as his spellcasting, because below it all lies an insecure boy trying to live up to an impossible legacy left by his overachieving father and an uncle with a savant-level mastery of wizardry. No matter what Bartelby accomplishes, his star will always be eclipsed by his ancestors, and so a part of him has given up before even trying, and he focuses on self-indulgence and ignores any task he is not confident he can excel at from the outset.

Bartelby is more aware of the Lotheed legacy than even Martella, as he became the custodian of Duke Panivar Lotheed's horrible secrets, locked away in the royal tower, upon his father's death. While unaware of the Immaculate Circle, he knows that his great uncle dabbles in the affairs of life and death and created a facsimile of his late wife, Veleto, to spit in the eye of Pharasma.

He also suspects, like his father before him, that his uncle Panivar has mastered immortality, but Bartelby is sensible enough to keep such thoughts to himself after his father's suspicious death. Most horrible of all is Ehlers, Panivar's "pet" sahkil, who stalks the palace by night and encourages the occasional servant or visitor to take his own life. Bartelby has succeeded in covering up these deaths—arranging "massacres" from bandit attacks or the newly arrived Night Swan—and he finds himself growing increasingly numb to these scenes each time. A part of Bartelby worries that Ehlers has set its eyeless sights on his soul, dragging out the corruption and pain despite his official restriction from harming or targeting a Lotheed (at least, without Panivar's permission).

Though Bartelby dearly loves his family, that affection stops abruptly at his half-sister, Martella. He considers the girl's birth an insult to his long-suffering mother and a stain on a great family legacy. He considers Martella's lack of magical aptitude proof that her spirit is broken and corrupt. Excising the youngest Lotheed from the family was the only thing that brought Bartelby joy in the wake of their father's passing, and in the many years since, he has completely lost track of her. The years have eased his childhood loathing considerably, but not enough that he regrets his decision or cares to seek her out.

Bartelby is a handsome man with sharp features and thick, dark hair. He remains athletic, but despite his wealth and good looks, he remains the last unwed Lotheed sibling, for reasons he's never quite managed to justify. He is pragmatic in most aspects of life, preferring the most efficient solution regardless of the real-world impact. He considers a "fair fight" to be a romantic concept, unrelated to reality. No two people are equal, in his estimation, and handicapping one to help the other is nothing but society punishing the best and brightest. Of course, that same philosophy doesn't apply to those who might best him; Bartelby is happy to take every advantage he can over others, whether their innate morality, skills, or talents are superior to his own or not.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Bartelby fills the awkward role of potential friend and ultimate villain of "Songbird, Scion, Saboteur," as the PCs likely grow close to him over the length of the adventure. Depending on how much the PCs focus on influencing Bartelby, they may even convince him to step down willingly.

For characters interested in tragic romance, Bartelby also makes an interesting lover. His brand of evil stems from selfishness and arrogance, rather than any deep vein of cruelty, and he is not beyond redemption if such a narrative suits a PC's interests. A relationship with the count requires a considerable investment

of time, however, and could easily end in tears without substantial effort made to sway both Bartelby and the county itself.

Should Bartelby survive this adventure, he becomes the prisoner of Eutropia—and of his estranged sister, Martella. With decades of resentment built up, the younger Lotheed is all too happy in her role at first, but soon finds playing jailer to her own flesh and blood is painful—she craves resolution and support from her family, not vengeance, so the PCs may have a role to play as intermediaries.



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NIGHT SWAN

Garbed in gold, silver, and white, this masked woman holds herself with both grace and strength, looking equally likely to suddenly take flight or leap to the attack.

NIGHT SWAN

CR 6

XP 2,400

Human vigilante 7 (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue* 9)

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural)

hp 56 (7d8+21)

Fort +3, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities unshakable (+7)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 chain spear +9/+4 (1d6+3) and +9 (1d6+2)

Ranged mwk dart +11 (1d4+2 plus poison)

Special Attacks startling appearance

TACTICS

Before Combat The Night Swan always makes surprise attacks if she can manage it, launching poisoned darts at her targets.

During Combat The Night Swan prefers to attack foes while under the cover of darkness, hoping enemies don't share her darkvision. She alternates between tripping opponents and making full attacks with her chain spear.

Morale The Night Swan knows she is fighting a one-woman war and happily retreats using her *cape of the mountebank* if reduced below 15 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +9 (+11 trip); **CMD** 23 (25 vs. trip)

Feats Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (chain spear), Improved Trip, Toughness, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (chain spear)

Skills Acrobatics +9, Bluff +8 (+12 as Lucretzia), Diplomacy +8, Disguise +11 (+31 to pose as Lucretzia), Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility) +7, Perception +10, Sense Motive +7 (+11 when as Lucretzia), Stealth +12

Languages Common

SQ dual identity, social grace, social talents (case the joint, gossip collector, mockingbird, social grace), vigilante specialization (avenger), vigilante talents (favored maneuver [trip], shadow's sight, signature weapon)

Combat Gear *oil of darkness* (3), black adder venom (4), smokesticks (5), tindertwigs (10); **Other Gear** +2 chain shirt, +1 chain spear^{APG}, mwk darts (5), *amulet of natural armor* +1, *cape of the mountebank*, disguise kit, noble's outfit, swan mask, traveler's outfit, 94 gp

The Night Swan was born Lady Lucretzia Marthane of Cassomir, and for much of her early life, she fulfilled the proper role expected of an aristocratic young lady. Her extensive education in economics and philosophy came to an abrupt end, however, when her family's fortunes were wiped out by a political rival, leaving the Marthane family destitute and landless. The few books she held onto as her parents sold her belongings were the most salacious—tales of daring bandits wooing love and fighting injustice, and banned treatises on Galtan philosophy—and eventually young Lucretzia's worldview and activities were formed around these frameworks. She began by stealing from those who had wronged her parents, but eventually her efforts spread out to targeting anyone with better fortunes than the Marthane family. Law enforcement and bounty hunters dogged her again and again, harassing her for the audacity of retaking the fortunes that rightfully should belong to her. In time, she resolved that all systems of authority were inherently corrupt, unjust not only for her, but for anyone who had to bend a knee to another. Authority was corruption and ownership theft, and the most corrupt thieves in Taldor were its decadent aristocrats, who feasted while others starved.

Lucretzia eventually donned a mask to protect her mother and father from reprisal and as a symbol for others to rally around. As the Night Swan, she began a one-woman war against Taldor, embodying the most extreme flavor of anarchy that most of Taldor assumes exists only in scary stories. The Night Swan focuses primarily on theft and destruction, investing most of her proceeds into improving her arsenal and living the comfortable life she remembers from her youth. She sees no irony in this use of funds; in her view, anyone could and should steal from the wealthy to achieve the same standard of living. To the Night Swan, it is only blindness to the shackles the aristocracy imposes that keeps the public from shaking free; thus she rarely tries to help others survive under corrupt systems, and instead hopes

to make their lot so obviously awful that they rise up themselves and take the better life they deserve.

Her radical philosophy has alienated many across Tandak Prefecture, but it has endeared the Night Swan to just as many others who consider her a romantic bandit. A small printer in Cassomir has helped her image considerably by distributing penny dreadfuls about the Night Swan's (wholly fictitious) adventures. She stands up to the strongest and most entrenched powers wherever she travels, bringing freedom in her wake and ushering in surges of rebellion and independence. While she won't fight systemic abuse on others' behalf, she's happy to step in and protect a lone victim or family from attack—after all, a dead citizen can't learn or grow, or ever find freedom in overthrowing tyranny—and those lives she has saved go on to tell stories of her bravery and prowess. Even with such focus, however, the Night Swan's ideals are not unwavering, and she can always adapt her philosophies as new information presents itself.

The divide within Lucretzia's psyche is so deep, it can be difficult to recognize that she and the Night Swan are the same person. Where Lucretzia is quiet and polite, the Night Swan is deliberately provocative; where one facet plays within the rules of polite society, the other sees rules as a prison imposed by cowards. Despite her rigid and destructive bent, the Night Swan is neither evil nor angel; she simply has a single-minded focus on her mission, and intends to see it through, by whatever means necessary.

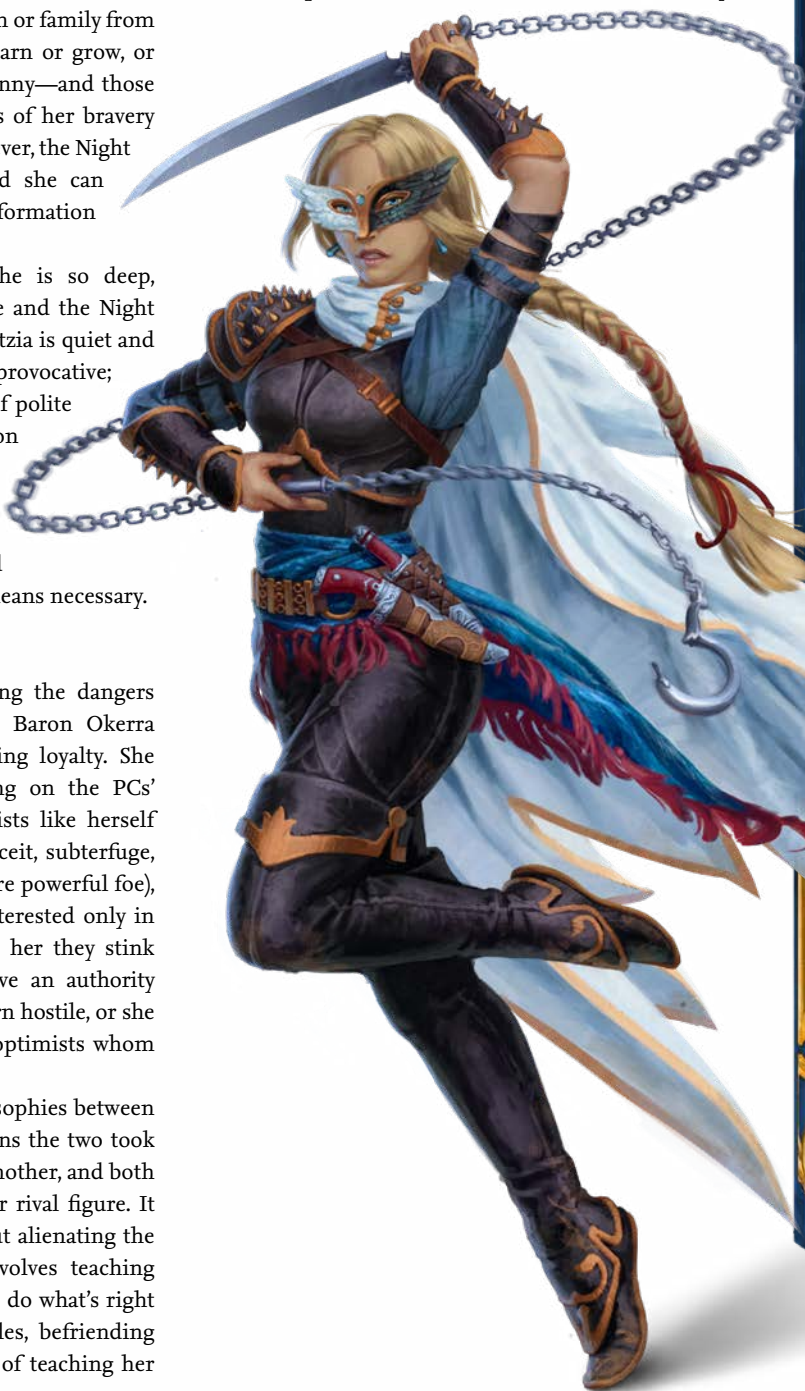
CAMPAIGN ROLE

Lucretzia is a complex figure, reflecting the dangers of unrestrained freedom as much as Baron Okerra represents the dangers of unquestioning loyalty. She may be a friend or enemy, depending on the PCs' approach, happily allying with anarchists like herself (or at least with others who employ deceit, subterfuge, and subtle tactics to outmaneuver a more powerful foe), but rejecting adventurers who seem interested only in working within the system because to her they stink of cowardice. Upon learning they serve an authority figure—and a noble at that—she may turn hostile, or she may instead see the PCs as delusional optimists whom she may one day cure.

The fundamental difference in philosophies between the Night Swan and Baron Okerra means the two took an early and immediate dislike to one another, and both have the side goal of taking down their rival figure. It is unlikely the PCs can woo one without alienating the rival. Just as befriending Nicolaus involves teaching him when to bend the rules in order to do what's right or preserve the intention of those rules, befriending the Night Swan involves a fair amount of teaching her

adaptability, tolerance for others, and willingness to organize for the overall goal of liberty.

While less inclined toward personal romance than some other characters in this adventure, the Night Swan remains a romantic figure in the public's eye, and she fills a certain stereotype from pop culture of the dashing lone warrior in the night. She's somewhat reluctant if pursued romantically, but more because her vision of her future never involved a second party; in the long run, though, sharing her life with another person—and all the negotiation that entails—may be one of the healthiest possible outcomes of her clandestine lifestyle.



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COUNTY OF MERATT

There's something about the air here—I wouldn't call it invigorating, but it's peaceful and calming. Were I a less-traveled woman, I might think Meratt quite the paradise. The stuffy senators and grand dukes of Oppara are nowhere to be found here, politics seem practically nonexistent, and the sleepy hamlets are filled with kind folk, even if most still try to claim a connection to one of Taldor's great families. I see through it all, though. This county is lovely and pastoral, but its greatness is long gone. Taxes have reduced its nobles to a threadbare facsimile of extravagance, and if you look closely, its well-manicured estates are plagued with leaky roofs and peeling paint. It's nice to get out of the city. But if you're looking for the height of opulence at a slower pace, the county of Meratt isn't the place for you.

—Excerpt from the travel journal of
Countess Carlotta Plenst of Oppara

Nestled just south of the Verduran Forest, the county of Meratt sprawls across the Tandak Plains, which stretch northeast of Cassomir. The land here is pastoral, with rolling hills and pockets of verdant forest. The World's Edge Mountains to the east occasionally rise into view, creating breathtaking vistas for travelers cresting the rising plains. Noble estates, hamlets and villages, and farmland of all sorts knit the countryside together like a familiar and comforting quilt.

Travel through the county might attract far more sightseeing Taldan nobles were it not for the area's pervasive pall of economic mediocrity. Meratt was once a shining jewel of peaceful, slow-paced luxury, but that was many centuries ago. Generations of greedy nobles' mismanagement has slowly bled the locals' pockets dry through bureaucracy, taxes, and tithes of locally produced resources sent to more voracious urban centers. As a result, when visitors examine the county closely, behind the beautiful scenery they find magnificent manors with drooping roofs, towns with broken cobblestones, canals with rickety pumps, and the farmers and herders wearing little more than darned rags.

GOVERNMENT

Many nobles have a legitimate claim to overseeing the county of Meratt, but the lion's share of its administration falls into the hands of the Lotheed family, even though the family's stewardship of lands not ancestrally their own is spotty. Regardless, Meratt is broken into four major baronies, each connected to one of the following families: Okerra, Stavian, Telus, or Voinum.

Taldor's ruling family has neither used nor put resources into its lands or estate here in many years. Instead, the Stavians have designated the Lotheeds as their administrators in Meratt. Additionally Baron Telus has been an extreme recluse for nearly a decade, and so the Lotheeds now nominally administer the Telus barony as well, though in practice Lotheed workers never even visit what is now a crumpling estate and the nearby ruins of the tiny settlement of Jambis. Baroness Voinum and Baron Okerra still live on and run their estates in much the same way as their ancestors before them, though the Lotheeds keep the county's taxes astronomically high to support their own unreasonably extravagant lifestyle. As a result, Baroness Voinum has retreated from the public eye. Baron Okerra maintains his family's truly successful fishing ventures, though he's sunk most of his earnings into supporting the local economy and its workers.

The rulers of Tandak Prefecture and Taldor at large pay little attention to the county of Meratt. A few nobles sometimes find it quaint to travel and visit here, though in truth most of them have relatives or other attachments to compel their trips. Certainly nobles who truly enjoy the county's atmosphere can pay good gold to stay in the

true lap of luxury at one of Meratt's few opulent, well-preserved estates, if they wish.

Higher-ranking governmental leaders occasionally impose upon the local fishers, horse breeders, olive growers, winemakers, and timber producers for shipments in support of some official claim or another. In most cases, the amount of supplies requested is small enough that the locals simply hand over the tributes to avoid spats. In others, though, the hard-working folk refuse to comply with demands they find burdensome and illegitimate. When this happens, the demanding nobles sometimes petition the Lotheeds for help collecting their bounty, hire less-than-scrupulous agents to retrieve it, or simply drop their entitled claims to avoid the effort of enforcing their demands.

CLIMATE

Geographically speaking, Meratt's location engenders a mild, inviting climate. The mountains to the east buffer the harsh tempests that roll through the region, and the sea to the far southwest moderates the seasonal temperature swings that affect regions farther inland. This temperate climate is ideal for farming a variety of crops, including grains, grapes, olives, and a variety of fruits. However, because of the overworked soil in many parts of this area of Taldor, such ventures are less fruitful in the county of Meratt than one might think.

In generations past, the county's wealthiest farmers paid druids to magically replenish the soil before each growing season. However, such ventures were costly, and as the county's economic fortunes waned, they became financially unviable. Now, Meratt's farms instead focus on livestock such as goats, horses, sheep, and occasionally chickens, all of which find the climate pleasant year-round if not always perfectly comfortable. Summers are warm, if a bit more humid than on the coast, and winters are more rainy than snowy, though a few recent winters have been harsher than the locals would consider normal. These early frosts, especially when the temperature drops to below freezing even for a single night, run the risk of damaging the grapes and olives that grow plentifully in this region.

GAZETTEER

Once, the county of Meratt was an elite holiday destination for high-ranking nobles who sought to escape the punishing rhythms of urban Taldan life. Estates were grand and well staffed, and a hum of activity belied prominent families' eyes toward improving their holdings and adding even more luxurious features. The towns and hamlets that grew around these elite estates had the most exquisite shops and the coziest taverns and restaurants, and farmers and artisans used the finest supplies—and even magic—to ensure that their crops and goods were of a quality to keep visiting

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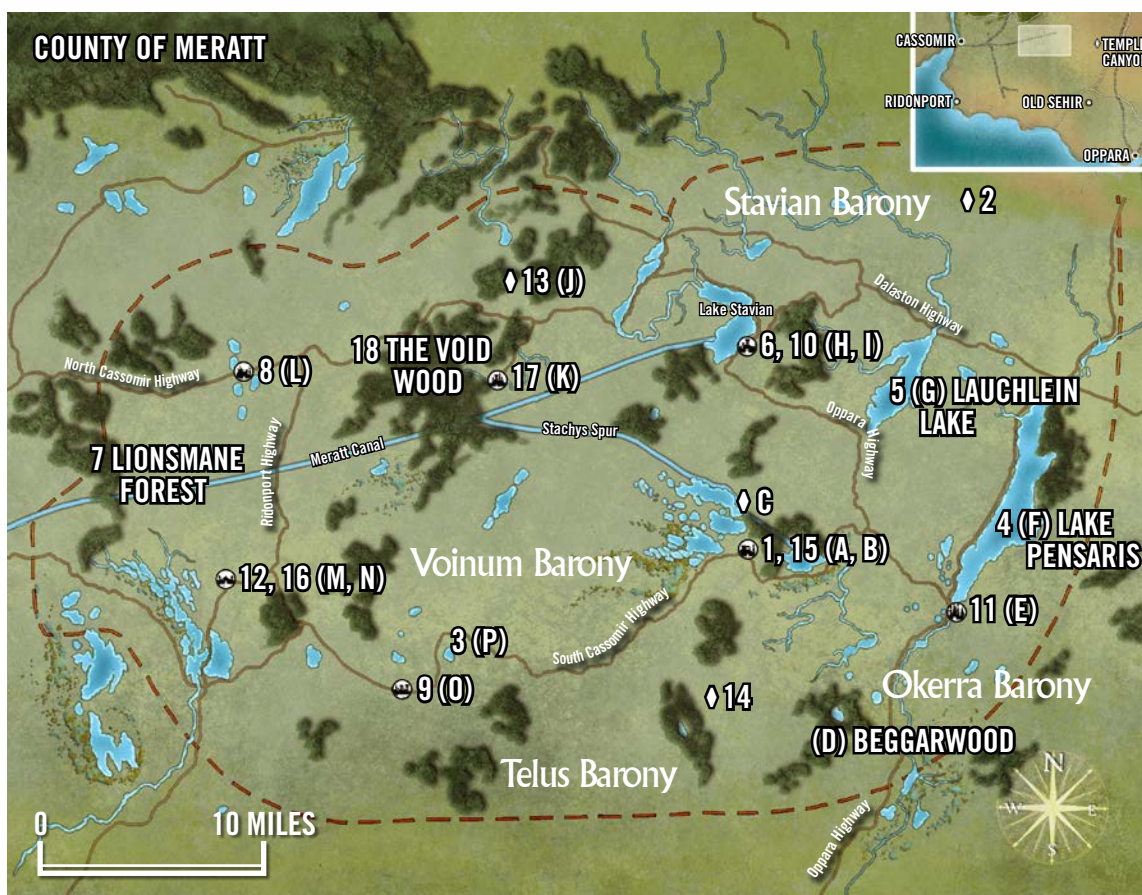
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customers coming back. Even the Stavians, Taldor's current ruling family, kept a gorgeous estate in the county. Life here was quaint, privileged, and sheltered, with all of the benefits of wealth balancing out the drawbacks of a rural locale.

However, hundreds of years ago, as Taldan fortunes in general began to wane, the county's opulence and economic success began to falter. The area stagnated as fewer and fewer of Taldor's richest came to visit, and the quality of the crops and goods produced here dropped as a result. Now, the county of Meratt is in an obvious state of decline, though glimpses of its former greatness are still evident in its once-grand estates, the care with which some nobles continue to cultivate their grounds, and the family recipes and techniques used to produce the county's exports. Some rare Taldans who live in the area haven't seen as hard of times, but they keep their wealth to themselves as to not draw too much attention. Visitors are generally welcomed here, though the locals are either a bit too eager to please or resentful of their presence, depending upon their take on the county's economic reality. Adventurers who travel in Meratt might find a plethora of rural political intrigue, and they could even discover valuable family treasures if they spend the time and energy to fix up one of the many neglected manors.

Below are notable places in the county of Meratt. The lettered locations on the map correspond to locations described on pages 26–45 of this volume's adventure.

1. Betony Estate: As with many Meratt estates, the Betony complex was once the grand home of a proud noble family. However, as the Betonys left their ancestral home for the cities and as Meratt's own prospects dwindled, fewer family members were willing to take responsibility for the estate. The last administrator of the home, Lady Allis Betony, died nearly a decade ago, leaving no heirs. Since then, the home has languished in a state of receivership, with the Lotheeds showing little interest in finding real administrators for the property. There are rumors that the estate's once-grand ballroom still contains magnificent oil paintings of the Taldan countryside as well as full sets of splendid flatware and other supplies geared toward the fantastic dinner parties of old. However, the late Allis Betony is rumored to have spoken with spirits even while still alive; no one cares to find out if they—or she—still linger.

2. Cascina: This tiny hamlet's population consists of a few families once in the employ of the Voinum barony. All told, about 30 souls live in the sleepy settlement, most of them simple goat, grain, or sheep farmers. Perhaps most notable is a resident named **Yarelle Towsine** (NG female old human aristocrat 1/wizard 2), a distant

Voinum cousin several times removed. As a youngster, Yarelle stole off to Oppara to study the arcane, but the city was expensive and she found that she missed the countryside. Now she performs minor helpful magic for the locals for a modest fee—which she often waives for those who appeal to her kindly nature—and helps the townspeople pay the Lotheeds' exorbitant taxes as she can.

3. Gold Canyon: Centuries of strip-mining, now long in the past, have left a deep ravine filled with stagnant water here. The stone bridge over Gold Canyon is left over from the quarry days; it collapsed in a small earthquake decades ago, and fixing it is at the bottom of Baron Telus's list of priorities. While the area is impassable to travelers on horseback or wagon, the fact that much of the gold used to mint Taldan coinage came from this land makes it a popular, informal holy site for Abadar worshipers, who throw coins back into the waters below.

4. Lake Pensaris: Northeast of the town for which it's named, this lake is natural and deep, with a good stock of edible fish. Many of the poorer locals use the lake as a primary source of food, though the nobles openly look down on them for such pedestrian practices. Still, some of the most downtrodden individuals consider the lake their own slice of paradise. A hermit who goes by **Jeke** (N male halfling expert 1/barbarian 2) once lived in Pensaris, but he grew tired of village life and has built a makeshift home into an old beaver dam on the northern side of the lake. He calls himself "the General's butler" and claims to speak directly to the monster rumored to live in Lake Pensaris. Most anglers believe that the General is simply a very large, old catfish and that Jeke is just an eccentric old halfling who tells tall tales. Others, though, believe that the General is some sort of malevolent fey creature and that Jeke might be the only person keeping it from rising out of the lake to attack.

5. Lauchlein Lake: Even more remote than the sprawling Lake Pensaris, Lauchlein Lake is the target of far more sinister rumors and legends. The entire body of water is shrouded in unsettling mist, and it's far shallower, with a much murkier, swamp-like quality, leading to poorer fishing prospects than Lake Pensaris. Local rumors claim a variety of stories about the lake, including that the Night Swan, a mysterious vigilante, makes her home here. Other stories alternately claim that a vicious serial killer and a trio of kelpies hide beneath the lake's mist.



ARCHBANKER LADY PARIL

6. Lotheedar: At the fork of the Dalaston Highway and the North Cassomir Highway is Lotheedar, the county of Meratt's capital as well as its most prominent trading

hub. The Lotheed family adjudicates the town's affairs, and owing to the nobles' historically solid stewardship of the Stavian family's land, they're generally respected here. Much of this is owed to the leader of the Lotheeds' day-to-day affairs, Sir Gul Gusairne (see page 68), a half-elf who has served as the Lotheed family's seneschal for two generations. Gul has long ensured that a hefty share of the taxes the family collects has gone into the town's upkeep, and as a result, Lotheedar is one of the county's most well-to-do settlements, although it's not exactly wealthy. There's a downside to this relative success, however.

Gul is a rather strict enforcer for the Lotheeds and also serves as the head of the county's secret police, ferreting out dissent and conspiracy against the family's power. Were it not for the steadying hand of Archbanker Lady Paril (see page 68), a respected member of the Abadaran clergy and leader of the town's largest temple to the Wealthy Father, Gul may have long ago turned into more of a despot than a seneschal. As it is, Gul's hardfisted nature leads some to whisper that Lady Paril would be a kinder, more egalitarian leader than the half-elf. Nowhere are those rumors spoken of more loudly than in Lotheedar's most popular tavern, the Count's Cravat.

7. Lionsmane Forest: This small forest straddling the county's northwest border is little more than a collection of copses that, due to its rather remote location, no one in the past several centuries has bothered to exploit for timber resources. As a result, the wood is much healthier than other forests in the county, with ancient trees, unkempt foliage, and no structures to speak of. Wanderers and ne'er-do-wells have always found shelter here. However, more recently, the Lionsmane has housed a few dozen locals whose failure (or refusal) to pay the Lotheeds' high taxes has led to the confiscation of their property and their reduction to beggars, hence the wood's name.

These outlaws have erected tents and sod shelters in various hollows through the wood, and they are known for accosting and robbing travelers and lone nobles in the area. In the past few years, the outlaws have united under the leadership of **Rena Winterall** (CN female human ranger 5), daughter of Deryk Winterall, a local man who worked his way from groundskeeper to homestead owner before losing his modest fortune to the Lotheeds' taxes and fines. Under Rena's leadership, the outlaws have become more discerning and less

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LOTHEEDAR

LN small town

Corruption +2; **Crime** -2; **Economy** +1; **Law** +3;
Lore +2; **Society** -3

Qualities rumormongering citizens, strategic location
Danger +0

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government overlord

Population 1,600 (1,200 humans, 200 half-elves,
150 halflings, 50 other)

NOTABLE NPCs

Archbanker Lady Paril (LN female human cleric of
Abadar 7)

Sir Gul Gusairne (N male half-elf aristocrat 2/fighter 5)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 1,100 gp; **Purchase Limit** 5,000 gp;

Spellcasting 4th

Minor Items 3d4 items; **Medium Items** 1d6;

Major Items —

violent in their attacks. Some locals even whisper that Rena might be planning a political uprising against the Lotheeds. Such rumors are hard to confirm, however, especially considering that almost no one has met Rena in person.

8. Moost and the Crabbe Estate: A hamlet of about 50 residents grew up around the adjacent Crabbe Estate, which is the abode of Dame **Parthena Crabbe** (N female human aristocrat 4). Moost is famous for hosting the largest and nicest coaching house along the Northern Cassomir Highway, while the Crabbes run a successful conservatory tutoring young musicians and dancers. In recent years, however, the number of students they've taken has dwindled. The business screeched to a halt when Borrgrame Crabbe, Parthena's husband, died of cancer, and grief limited his widow's interest in teaching. Now, the dame spends most of her time obsessively searching for a suitor for her recently come-of-age daughter, Sepsinia, though the young woman seems withdrawn and uninterested in her overbearing mother's plans after her last suitor's tragic suicide.

9. New Towne: Perhaps the most run-down active settlement in the entire county, New Towne houses the remnants of those who fled the ruined Jambis. All told, about 60 tenants live here in shockingly squalid conditions; most of New Towne's residents live in little more than canvas tents. These residents are still technically under the protectorship of the Telus family, though Baron Telus long ago disappeared from the public eye. Of late, a young upstart named **Felsha** (CG female half-elf brawler^{ACG} 3) has been advocating on New Towne's behalf to the Lotheeds, the outlaws in the Beggarwood, and anyone else who will listen. Felsha claims to be an

adventurer from Cassomir who was passing through the county and was attacked by unknown assailants, only to be nursed back to health in the hut of a New Towne woman she now calls Grandmother. Felsha remains cagey, however, about whom or what Grandmother might be.

10. Palace of Birdsong: This sweeping estate is nestled among beautiful vineyards and orchards heavy with apricots, olives, and plums. The estate belongs to the Stavian family, though it's been under the administration of the Lotheeds for some time. At first glance, the home is breathtaking, with graceful arches and domes made of expensive marble. However, behind this facade lurk hints of neglect: the marble is crumbling and the ivy creeping up its gates is uncontrolled. The Lotheeds have gone to the trouble to ensure that the estate's overall upkeep is handled, but no loving hands have seen to the estate's finer details in many years.

11. Pensaris: Nestled on the southern shore of Lake Pensaris, this fishing village of 200 residents grew up around the nearby Okerra estate. As such, it and the estate are the purview of the Okerra family, whose members hail from a long line of military veterans, including the current baron **Nicolaus Okerra** (LG male human fighter 6). Pensaris is one of Meratt's most prosperous and bustling villages, second in wealth and prominence only to Lotheedar. Much of this is due to the fairness with which the barony treats its residents and the no-interest loans Baron Okerra sometimes extends to young entrepreneurs who present a solid business plan and relevant skills. Of late, however, those loans have dried up, owing to Count Lotheed's harsher tax collection policies. It's said that Baron Okerra is furious about these policies and their effect on the residents, though his strict military upbringing means he doesn't criticize them in polite company.

12. Ruins of Jambis: This hollowed-out shell of a village was once the capital of the Telus barony, but its homes and buildings have been abandoned for nearly a decade. Residents first began trickling away from their holdings once Baron Telus disappeared from public view. However, the thorp truly became a ruin about a half year later, when a massive fire started in an abandoned tavern called the Rat's Nest and tore through the entire settlement. The fire began and spread under suspicious circumstances—the Rat's Nest was closed, no one should have been cooking in its kitchens in the first place, and the blaze spread far more quickly than a fire should. However, with few resources and the ruling baron nowhere in sight, the town's remaining residents opted to flee rather than rebuild. Some settled in Lotheedar, some started the sad camp now known as New Towne, and some left the county of Meratt altogether.

13. Sotto: With fewer than 20 residents, this tiny thorp is little more than a collection of a few houses occupied by two extended families of goat herders. The locals

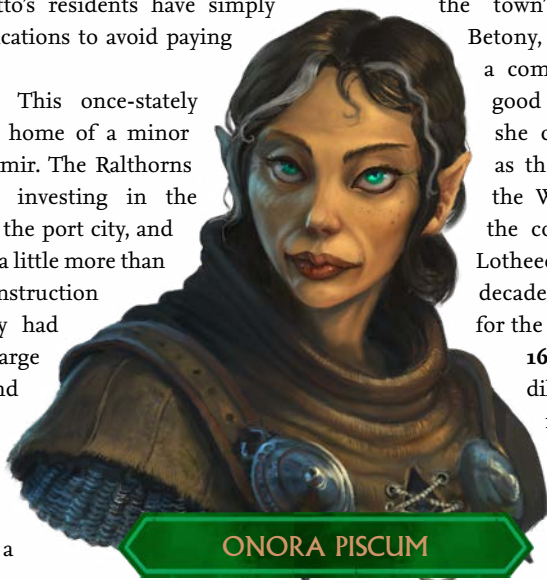
claim that the family is cursed, or at least predisposed to bad luck, for every few seasons wolves, mountain lions, and worse carry off a large percentage of the thorp's herds. Others claim Sotto's residents have simply created well-crafted fabrications to avoid paying the Lotheeds' taxes.

14. Ralthorn Manor: This once-stately manor was the summer home of a minor noble family from Cassomir. The Ralthorns made their money by investing in the shipbuilding industry in the port city, and they built this estate only a little more than a hundred years ago. Construction was swift as the family had plenty of gold to hire a large crew of stonemasons and carpenters, and they used their trade contacts in Cassomir to ship the materials and workforce to the remote estate for a fraction of the usual cost.

However, just 20 years after the estate's completion, tragedy struck the family while they were vacationing at the estate. An uncharacteristic earthquake shook this portion of the county one warm summer night. Its quick and violent tremor spared all other buildings in the region, but half of Ralthorn Manor collapsed, crushing the sleeping family beneath a pile of stone and timber. The family wasn't discovered for nearly 6 weeks when a business partner rode out to the estate after Berlan Ralthorn didn't attend an important meeting with her investors. Although the unfortunate family was removed from the rubble and properly buried in Cassomir, some say that their spirits still haunt the site. Hunters seeking shelter in the still-standing parts of the manor for the night or from a passing storm claim that their horses start and act panicky when they draw near, and others report that ghostly figures play in the overgrown orchards and a stern woman watches them, manifesting partially from a tangle of collapsed stone.

Those who knew the Ralthorns well claim that few of their personal items were retrieved from the wreckage, and others suspect that a large portion of the family's wealth might be buried beneath the ruined manor.

15. Stachys: This hardscrabble town is near the Betony estate and historically enjoyed the protection of that noble family. However, since the estate has languished in receivership for a decade, its population has dwindled and infrastructure quietly collapsed. Its residents are mostly commoners whose families have farmed the surrounding land for centuries, and once it became clear that the nobles had abandoned them, they portioned out the town's administrative duties to residents. Many such duties have fallen to



Onora Piscum (NG female half-elf expert 4/warrior 1), the town's honorary tribune—its mayor and sheriff. She followed in the footsteps of her husband, Royen, the town's previous tribune, and Allis Betony, the estate's last heir. Onora is a competent if taciturn woman and a good administrator, though she wishes she could return to her previous life as the proprietor of her public house, the Wolf's Whisker. She and most of the commoners in Stachys dislike the Lotheeds and nobles in general, whose decadence and incompetence they blame for the county's declining fortune.

16. Telus Estate: The state of this dilapidated home and its grounds is nearly as big of a mystery as exists in the county of Meratt. The popular Baron Telus suddenly turned paranoid and aggressive over the course of a few months, and then he sealed himself away from social engagements entirely; the servants and other workers who lived here either vanished or scattered into the woods, becoming bandits or wanderers. The fate of Baron Telus is one of the most gossiped-about topics in the county. Some claim he simply grew bored of his duties and fled, while others ascribe much more terrible fates to the baron. Superstition, as well as a lack of a formal investigation, has kept most everyone away from the abandoned estate; this became doubly true in the aftermath of the devastating fire that tore through Jambis, the only settlement nearby. In truth, Baron Telus was cursed by night hags and now languishes in his former home as an ettercap.

17. Voinaris and the Voinum Estate: The small settlement of about 150 folks is connected to the nearby Voinum estate, over which Baroness **Adella Voinum** (LN female old human aristocrat 4/cavalier^{APG} 2) reluctantly presides. Like her predecessors, the baroness cares for her lands and the estate's residents, but she has little love for Taldan politics or the meddlesome nature of the county's elite. Instead, she leaves adjudication of Voinaris in the hands of its most capable residents. A retired military commander, the baroness still enjoys riding across her lands and visiting with friends of all statures. She's as knowledgeable about the region's history as any in the county. In many ways, Baroness Voinum is also the social fulcrum of Meratt, since she knows who's who and wisely chooses the best opportunities to wield her considerable influence.

18. The Void Wood: The county's largest remaining forest is especially noteworthy for the light hand that Baroness Voinum takes with poaching, though its depths remain a haven for large beasts that are otherwise extinct in Meratt.

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AGENTS OF CHANGE

You should have BEEN there, Aurelia! Yanmass will be lucky to see a party like that for a long time, much less one thrown by Aric of Halvon himself! He even arranged for a chef from Oppara to serve larks' tongues in aspic! Oh, but you wouldn't eat that, would you? Well, even the leafy greens were WONDERFUL.

And, darling, you should have HEARD Aric speak. You'd see how brilliant he is if you spent five minutes in the same room with him—he really UNDERSTANDS what will make Taldor wonderful again!

I hope this won't sound like I'm bragging... but one of Aric's TOP aides asked a very select group of us to help spread his message in Skathen! Something about a dangerous secret mission we're not to tell anyone about. It's all very hush-hush, so as you can imagine, I'm QUITE honored to be chosen!

—Last known correspondence of Aubert Jourdain

Most player characters are exceptional people distinguished by extraordinary deeds. When it comes to bringing about lasting social change, however, PCs must rally others to their cause. The rules system presented below provides a framework for PCs to cultivate their public personas, gather loyal agents, and send those agents on missions on their behalf.

Beginning with the second adventure in the War for the Crown Adventure Path, the PCs will have many opportunities to build their burgeoning reputations and use that influence to further their goals; these opportunities are called out for GMs in the adventures' text. However, this system can be used in any campaign, especially ones that focus on intrigue and status; guidance for such use is provided in the following pages.

FACETS OF PERSONA

A wide variety of traits can inspire people to follow a budding leader, so instead of representing a PC's reputation as a single statistic, this system divides her public persona into six different facets: Charm, Genius, Heroism, Sacrifice, Sagacity, and Subterfuge. For each facet, a PC has a number of Facet Ranks ranging from 0 to 10, where 0 means the character is generally believed to lack that quality, and 10 means the character is seen as a paragon of it. The term Facet Rank is sometimes shortened to Rank, except in situations where it could be confused with skill rank. The meaning of each facet and its general effects on play are summarized below.

Charm: Charm represents a character's personal magnetism and force of personality. A character with a reputation for being charming has an easier time than most gaining access to social events, whether they're artistic performances or high-society balls. Charming characters have an easier time winning strangers' trust.

Genius: Genius represents a character's reputation for brilliance, whether measured in terms of knowledge or strategic vision. Characters with a reputation for genius have an easier time convincing others to follow their plans and trust them as intellectual authorities.

Heroism: Heroism represents a character's reputation for bravery and perseverance. It also captures the effectiveness with which a character earns admiration for her most exceptional deeds. Characters with a reputation for heroism are more likely to be asked to fight monsters or face seemingly insurmountable challenges.

Sacrifice: Sacrifice represents a character's reputation as an upstanding member of society who gives of herself to improve the lives of others and who is capable of persevering through great hardships. Characters with a reputation for sacrifice have an easier time convincing others of their righteousness and inspiring others to make sacrifices of their own.

Sagacity: Sagacity represents a character's reputation for having good judgment. Characters known for their

sagacity are more likely to be sought out for advice in complex matters, ranging from tangled interpersonal disputes to questions of morality, philosophy, or religion.

Subterfuge: Subterfuge represents a character's ability to operate effectively in the shadows, whether as a sly politician skilled in backroom dealings or a shrewd investigator who digs up dirt on her enemies. A character's skill at subterfuge is likely to be less widely known than the other facets of her persona, but it still helps her cultivate contacts in just the right places.

These six facets do not represent an exhaustive list of metrics that PCs can leverage to rally supporters. With small adjustments, a GM can replace any of these facets with other options to suit a particular campaign.

STARTING RANK

Before a character can become a true agent of change, she must build some personal clout. Generally, a character has the individual prowess to begin actively building up her persona upon reaching 4th level. However, a PC's persona does not necessarily begin as a blank slate at this point in time. Characters can begin using this rules system when they have 1 Rank in various facets based on their existing abilities or prior deeds. Characters whose mental ability scores are 14 or higher begin with 1 Rank in certain facets: a high Intelligence score grants 1 Rank in Genius, a high Wisdom score grants 1 Rank in Sagacity, and a high Charisma score grants 1 Rank in Charm. The GM can also assign a starting Rank of 1 in one or more of the other three facets based on a character's prior actions. For example, a PC who unflinchingly faced great challenges earns 1 Rank in Heroism. Meanwhile, a PC who engaged in charity or self-denial demonstrates her willingness to sacrifice and begins with 1 Rank in Sacrifice. Finally, a PC who acted outside the rules of law or society with cleverness and subtlety begins with 1 Rank in Subterfuge.

PERSONA PHASE

PCs leverage their influence in periods called persona phases, which are abstract representations of time spent building up their reputations or directing their agents to complete missions on their behalf. These phases take place separately from normal gameplay; a player typically makes all related decisions at the start of each persona phase, and those decisions stay in effect until the start of the next persona phase.

As a general guideline, PCs should experience about four persona phases per level. If you are running the War for the Crown Adventure Path, each persona phase is called out in the text of the adventure. On the other hand, if you are running a campaign in which leveling up is infrequent, or if you wish to condense persona-building into a limited portion of your campaign, consider increasing the number of opportunities the PCs receive.

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At the beginning of a persona phase, each PC chooses from one of two actions: developing her persona (see below) or launching an operation (see page 73). The phase ends when the PC has chosen her action and made the associated decisions and actions (such as an Operation check).

As the PC increases her Facet Ranks, she unlocks several benefits. Unless otherwise specified, each benefit can be used only once per persona phase.

DEVELOPING PERSONA

A PC might decide to spend her persona phase publicly demonstrating her prowess and character, giving her the chance to increase the Rank of one of her persona's facets by 1. To do so, the PC first selects one of the tasks from the list below (with the associated facet noted in parentheses), or she can work with the GM to create another appropriate task. Then she attempts a skill check associated with that task, with a DC equal to 15 + twice the Rank she is trying to achieve. If she succeeds at the check, her Rank in that facet increases by 1. Consider allowing PCs to attempt relevant Craft, Perform, or Profession checks in place of the listed skill checks.

The scope of a PC's persona is limited by her character level. Her Facet Ranks for a facet can't exceed her character level, and she can have a total number of Facet Ranks equal to no more than twice her character level.

Checks to increase a PC's Facet Ranks represent placing the PC's skills squarely in the spotlight. As a result, PCs can't take 10 on these checks or receive direct assistance in the moment, such as aid another from other characters. Effects that boost PCs' skills and abilities apply only if their duration is at least 24 hours.

Arrange Secret Meeting (Charm or Subterfuge)

You arrange a clandestine meeting between individuals who can't or won't speak openly.

Associated Skill: Bluff (Charm); Disguise or Escape Artist (Subterfuge).

Bask in Glory (Heroism)

You make sure that everyone knows about your own personal achievements.

Associated Skill: Perform.

Demonstrate Might (Heroism)

You show off your strength to impressed onlookers.

Associated Skill: Strength-based skill check.

Drive Legislation (Charm, Genius, or Sagacity)

You take a prominent role in drafting or promoting legislation or another form of governmental policy.

Associated Skill: Perform (Charm), Linguistics (Genius), or Sense Motive (Sagacity).

Give Lecture (Genius or Sagacity)

Whether you're delivering an academic lecture or a religious sermon, you draw a crowd to listen as you share your expertise.

Associated Skill: Knowledge check relevant to the lecture's topic.

Organize Party (Charm)

You put together a popular social event that is the talk of the town.

Associated Skill: Diplomacy.

Organize Protest (Heroism or Sacrifice)

You gather people to protest loathsome policies, either through rhetoric or doggedness.

Associated Skill: Fortitude save (DC = 15 + desired Rank), or Diplomacy or Perform check.

Perform Charitable Acts (Sacrifice)

You spend your time or money tending to those most in need of aid.

Associated Skill: Heal.

Sabotage Opponent (Genius or Subterfuge)

You cunningly set one of your opponents up for a fall, perhaps causing one of his shameful secrets to go public.

Associated Skill: Knowledge (local or nobility), as appropriate to the opponent (Genius); Sleight of Hand or Stealth (Subterfuge).

DIMINISHING PERSONA

At the GM's discretion, PCs can lose Facet Ranks for public acts that go strongly against one of the facets. For example, a PC who engages in cowardly behavior could lose a Rank in Heroism. Losing Facet Ranks should not be common, and a PC's Rank in a facet can't fall below 0.

PERSONA BENEFITS

As the PCs gain more Facet Ranks, they gain the following benefits, summarized in the table below.

PERSONA BENEFITS BY RANK

Facet Ranks	Benefits
1	Agents
2	Basic operations
3	Skill bonus (+2)
4	Admirers (indifferent)
5	Bonus feat

6	Advanced operations
7	Skill bonus (+4)
8	Admirers (unfriendly)
9	Friend in high places
10	Master of operations

Agents: When she first gains access to the persona rules, a PC gains a number of agents equal to twice her total starting number of Facet Ranks, reflecting her newfound renown. Each time a PC increases her Facet Ranks in a facet, she rallies two additional agents to her cause. These agents represent people who flock to the PC for a variety of reasons, whether they are ardent admirers of the PC's cause, members of the PC's staff, or even people the PC has blackmailed into assisting her. Agents are generally much less capable than the PCs and not strong enough to accompany the PCs on adventures. However, as a PC increases her Facet Ranks, she unlocks the ability to direct these agents to perform operations on her behalf (see below). Particularly dangerous operations can cause the PC to lose agents, which she can replace through the recover agents operation (see page 74).

Basic Operations: A PC who has at least 2 Ranks in a facet can send her agents on basic operations related to that facet. Basic operations are relatively safe and straightforward, requiring few agents to complete. For a list of basic operations, see pages 74–75.

Skill Bonus: A PC can sometimes leverage her persona to gain a bonus on a skill check. Once per persona phase, a PC can apply a skill bonus to a single check for one of the facets in which she has at least 3 Ranks. She can apply this bonus after rolling her skill check, but before the results are announced. The exact skills to which this bonus can be applied depend upon the facet (see below). The skill bonus begins at +2 and increases to +4 when she has 7 Ranks in the appropriate facet. For example, a PC with 7 Ranks in Heroism and 3 Ranks in Subterfuge can grant herself either a +4 bonus on an Intimidate or Perform check or a +2 bonus on a Disable Device or Stealth check, but she can still gain only one bonus per phase.

Charm: Bluff, Diplomacy; *Genius:* Knowledge (any); *Heroism:* Intimidate, Perform (any); *Sacrifice:* Heal, Survival; *Sagacity:* Perception, Sense Motive; *Subterfuge:* Disable Device, Stealth.

Admirers: The PC's persona has earned her fans and sympathetic souls. Once per persona phase, she can leverage her reputation to improve the starting attitude of one NPC with an attitude of indifferent or friendly. She can increase the NPC's attitude by one step as long as she has at least 4 Ranks in a facet related to that NPC (see below). When she has 8 Ranks in a facet, she can also use this ability to improve the attitude of NPCs whose starting attitude is unfriendly. The following list is incomplete; other categories of NPCs can be related to various facets at the GM's discretion.

Charm: Artists, merchants, nobles; *Genius:* Academics, arcane spellcasters, instructors; *Heroism:* Athletes, guards, soldiers; *Sacrifice:* Clergy of good deities, healers, philanthropists; *Sagacity:* Clergy, druids, philosophers; *Subterfuge:* Criminals, politicians.

Bonus Feat: Once a PC has 5 Ranks in a single facet, she gains the bonus feat associated with that facet in the list below, ignoring the feat's prerequisites. If a PC has 5 Ranks in more than one facet, she can select one feat from among the feats she has unlocked, and can change her choice at the beginning of each persona phase; she can benefit from only one of these bonus feats at a time. Feats from *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue* are noted with a superscript.

Charm: Persuasive; *Genius:* Brilliant Planner^{UI}; *Heroism:* Dazzling Display; *Sagacity:* Insightful Advice^{UI}; *Sacrifice:* Diehard; *Subterfuge:* Stealthy.

Advanced Operations: A PC who has at least 6 Ranks in a facet can send her agents on advanced operations related to that facet. Advanced operations can be far more complex and dangerous than basic operations. For a list of advanced operations, see page 75.

Friend in High Places: Once a PC has 9 Ranks in one of her facets, her network of contacts has grown to include a highly placed individual. The PC leverages this alliance to gain access to spellcasting services. If the PC succeeds at an Operation check (DC = 15 + spell level), she can arrange for up to 750 gp worth of spellcasting services to be used at any time before the beginning of the next persona phase as long as she would reasonably have access to an NPC spellcaster, even to cast *raise dead* (in this case, it is assumed the PC's agents arrange for her resurrection on her behalf). The PC must pay for any focuses or expensive material components used.

Master of Operations: A PC who has 10 Ranks in at least one facet can perform one additional operation per phase related to one of the facets in which she has 10 Ranks, so long as she has enough agents to do so and even if she has already performed an operation in that phase.

OPERATIONS

Instead of using her persona phase to develop her persona, a PC can send her agents to perform an operation on her behalf. A PC gains access to basic operations (see page 74) for a given facet when she has 2 Ranks in that facet, and she gains access to advanced operations (see page 75) when she has 6 Ranks in that facet.

A PC can initiate only one operation per phase. She must decide which operation she intends to perform at the start of the persona phase. To determine the outcome of the operation, the PC rolls an Operation check. An Operation check is a d20 roll with a bonus equal to the number of agents the PC sends on the mission, and its DC is set by the specific operation. A PC must choose how many agents to send before the roll, up

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VARIANT LEADERSHIP

In campaigns where gathering social clout is a central feature, players are likely to gravitate toward the Leadership feat (or toward archetypes that grant the feat). Consider replacing Leadership with the following feat, which is designed to interact smoothly with this system.

COALITION LEADER

You have a knack for attracting others to your cause.

Prerequisite: Character level 7th.

Benefits: You gain a cohort as described in the Leadership feat. Determine your leadership score as described in the feat's text but with the following exceptions: Instead of adding your Charisma modifier to your character's level to determine your base leadership score, you can add the Rank of any facet of your persona. Additionally, you can direct your cohort to send agents on an operation, instead of accompanying you. If you do so, you gain a +2 bonus on your Operation check, but your cohort is unavailable until the beginning of the next persona phase. Finally, you do not gain followers as listed in the Leadership feat. Instead, you can perform the recover agent operation (see below on this page) once per persona phase; this does not count as an operation.

to a maximum of the number of Facet Ranks she has in the relevant facet. Operations always fail on a roll of 1 on the die and always succeed on a natural 20.

Persistent Operations: While most operations conclude at the end of a persona phase, persistent operations begin the first time the PC succeeds at the DC 17 Operation check for that operation and continue until the PC calls back her agents. A PC can maintain only one type of persistent operation at a time, and she must send at least five agents; these agents are not available for other operations until the persistent operation ends. Persistent operations must generally be focused on one location (at the GM's discretion, though generally limited to one town or a large neighborhood in a city); a PC can maintain the same persistent operation in as many locations as she has enough agents to support.

Risky Operations: Some operations are dangerous to agents' safety or morale. If a PC fails a risky operation's check by 5 or more, or if she rolls a natural 1 on the check, she loses all of the agents she sent on the mission. These losses could represent the agents' imprisonment, their death, or their abandonment of the PC's cause.

Basic Operations

PCs gain access to basic operations when they have 2 Ranks in a facet.

Filter Rumors (Sagacity): Under your direction, your agents are skilled at separating fact from fiction.

Once before the next persona phase, after you or another PC receives the results of a Diplomacy check to gather information, you can ask the GM to roll a secret Operation check, using the number of agents you sent on this operation for its bonus. If the check results in a success, the GM tells you whether the information gathered is mostly true, has elements of truth, or is mostly false. If the check fails, the GM tells you that the information gathered is mostly true (regardless of its actual veracity). The Operation check DC is generally 15, but if someone is actively spreading false information, the DC increases to 10 + the CR of the rumormonger (maximum 20).

Gather Information (Charm): Your agents listen to the local gossip and ask pointed questions. Once before the next persona phase, you can use the result of your Operation check in place of the normal Diplomacy check when gathering information. You don't need to spend time to attempt this check, and there is no risk that you will be associated with your agents.

Last-Ditch Effort (Any Facet, Persistent): When you perform a risky operation while this persistent operation is in effect, you can gain a +2 bonus on the Operation check. If you do, you lose at least half of the agents you sent on the risky operation, even if it is successful. Beginning this operation requires a successful DC 17 Operation check.

Manufacturing (Any Facet): You can call on your agents' practical expertise to manufacture items on your behalf, allowing you to use the result of your Operation check in place of a Craft skill check to create mundane items. You do not have to expend the time crafting, but your agents do, and you must still pay the raw materials cost for any items your agents manufacture.

Provide Distraction (Heroism, Risky): Your agents may not be individually strong, but your example has inspired them, and they'd risk anything to help you, even in dangerous circumstances. At the beginning of combat near a populated area, roll an Operation check against a DC equal to 10 + the CR of the most challenging creature in the fight (maximum DC 25). On a success, each PC gains a +2 bonus on attack rolls or to Armor Class as if benefiting from the aid another action for the first round of combat.

Recover Agents (Any Facet): If a risky operation goes awry, a PC may lose the agents she sent on the operation. A PC who has fewer than the maximum number of agents her Facet Ranks would allow—that is, fewer than twice her total number of Facet Ranks—can launch an operation to rescue lost agents (or recruit new ones, if that flavor is preferred). To do so, she must attempt a DC 10 Operation check, using the facet of her choice. On a failed check, she recovers one agent. On a successful check, she recovers two agents, plus one additional agent for every 5 by which the result exceeds the Operation check's DC.

Research (Genius): Under your direction, your agents scour libraries for relevant information. You can use

the result of your Operation check in place of a single Research check. Your agents must spend the required time, but this research takes none of your time.

Smuggle (Subterfuge, Risky): Your agents smuggle a relatively small or innocuous object (such as a dagger or evidence to be used for blackmail) into a hiding place on someone else's property. The DC of the Operation check is equal to 10 + the CR of the captain or leader of any guards present.

Tend Wounds (Sacrifice, Persistent): Your agents help you tend to the injured, including you. If you succeed at a DC 17 Operation check, you receive one of the following benefits for the duration of the operation: either everyone in the tended community gains a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves against disease, or you receive the benefits of long-term care whenever you rest for at least 8 hours in the area in which the operation is in effect.

Advanced Operations

PCs gain access to a facet's advanced operations when they have 6 Ranks in that facet.

Bad Advice (Genius or Sagacity, Risky): You place agents among a target's advisors or messengers to feed him the information that will lead him to make wrong choices. At some point in this persona phase when your target must decide between two options, he must succeed at a Sense Motive check opposed by your Operation check result or choose the option you favor or that benefits you.

Bolster Courage (Heroism, Persistent): You send your agents to tell tales of your bravery, bolstering your own courage. If you succeed at a DC 17 Operation check, you receive a +2 morale bonus on saves against fear.

Guards (Sacrifice, Risky): You are accompanied by a guard who watches your back, and agents in the field listen carefully for any potential dangers. If an opponent tries to ambush or sneak up on you, that character's Stealth check result must exceed both your Perception check result and the result of your Operation check to catch you unawares. On a failed Operation check, your enemies eliminate your guards before engaging you.

Invention (Genius): Your agents help you create magic items and research spells. Select one spell or magic item. If you succeed at an Operation check, your agents find or create the chosen spell or item, and you can then purchase it for the standard cost. The DC of the

Operation check is equal to 10 + caster level for a magic item, or 10 + twice the spell level for a spell.

Poison (Subterfuge, Risky): Your agents slip a dose of poison or a potion (which you must pay for) into an NPC's food as it is being prepared and delivered. Attempt an Operation check with a DC equal to the CR of the target NPC. On a success, your agents deliver the substance without detection. The NPC attempts Fortitude saves against the poison as normal.

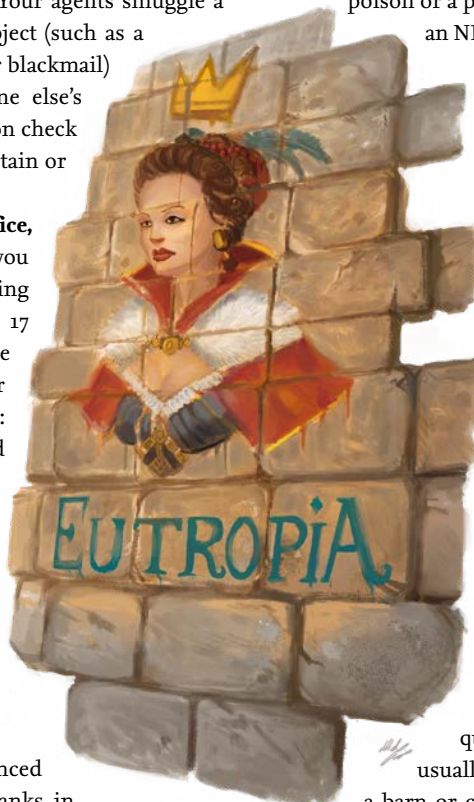
Rumormonger (Any Facet, Persistent): Your agents improve your cover by spreading false rumors, destroying evidence, and intimidating anyone who asks too many questions. If you succeed at a DC 17 Operation check, anyone trying to see through a disguise or false identity you've assumed takes a -2 penalty on Perception and Sense Motive skills checks to do so.

Safe Haven (Heroism or Sacrifice): Your agents find you a quiet place to rest in safe anonymity, usually somewhere out of the way such as a barn or cavern. Anyone trying to locate you must first succeed at a Diplomacy or Survival check opposed by your Operation check.

Sermonize (Sagacity, Persistent): Your agents spread your philosophical or religious beliefs. If you succeed at a DC 17 Operation check, you gain a +2 bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks against people who share your religion or philosophy, or who follow closely aligned practices, at the GM's discretion.

Spread Propaganda (Charm or Subterfuge, Persistent): Your agents spread propaganda on your behalf. If you succeed at a DC 17 Operation check, you gain a +2 bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks to either reinforce this same disinformation or deceive someone relying on it.

They're with Me (Charm or Subterfuge, Risky): You place agents inside an enemy's forces. Once before your next persona phase, when you encounter a group of low-level, unnamed enemy agents, the total number of which can't exceed the number of agents you sent on this operation, compare the result of your Operation check against a DC of 15 or a DC of 10 + the Sense Motive modifier of the agents' commander (whichever is higher). If you succeed, this "enemy" force is instead composed of the agents you placed earlier, allowing you to avoid combat and potentially resupply or rest. You can't use this operation to replace named NPCs.



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RELICS OF OLD TALDOR

“Take pride in every symbol you wear for our grand empire. Cherish your weapons and armor, yes. But also take pride in every band of silk, every careful stitch, every strap of leather. We are an old empire—the greatest that Avistan has ever seen. Our touch on this continent stretches back thousands of years, before most of these other nations were even a hopeful glimmer. Each of these symbols of the empire came from some corner of our great lands, and they came to us! The empire provides for us, and we must provide for the empire in return. New lands! New resources! What we claim on this expedition will supply the next: more fine, ambitious Taldans like yourselves, in a ceaseless wave that will wash upon every shore of the globe, in turn, until every land belongs to Taldor!”

—General Gerefein, Seventh Army of Exploration

Forged at the height of the Taldan empire, employed by heroes at the forefront of expansion, and gleaming brighter with every conquest, the relics of old Taldor are imbued with the glory of deeds no mortal now living bore witness to. But just like the empire that created them, these items have become diminished over the ages. They now lie dormant in dusty and forgotten corners, waiting for worthy heroes to retrieve them and take them up once again for the glory of Taldor.

RELICS

This article introduces relics: magic items that grow in power the more they are used in the pursuit of a specific cause. Each relic was once a typical magic item that played a central role in a massively important event, increasing dramatically in potency as it drew power from its shaping of fate. Relics occupy a space somewhere between normal magic items and artifacts. Unlike most magic items, relics can't be crafted. Unlike artifacts, however, they can be destroyed normally. Eventually, these extra-powerful items are misplaced, forgotten, or ignored, and their power wanes as a result—though it is not entirely lost.

When PCs find a relic, it has only the first set of base abilities listed in its stat block; to unlock a relic's full powers, its bearer must reawaken its latent energy.

PCs playing in the War for the Crown Adventure Path have the opportunity to discover two relics in each of the first four adventures (each of which is detailed in the following pages), and they can gradually increase the power of their relics by using them to perform bold deeds that help return Taldor to the resplendence of its heyday.

TRIUMPHS

As she adventures, the wielder of a relic might achieve great deeds, called triumphs, tied to the item's associated cause, which she can apply to the relic to increase its power. Each volume of the War for the Crown Adventure Path indicates which deeds qualify as a triumph for the relics of old Taldor. Each PC involved in achieving a triumph can apply that triumph to up to one of her carried relics, unlocking the next set of abilities for that item.

An individual relic can attain only the triumphs for which it is present, so if the PCs achieved two triumphs before finding *Koriana's Blade* (see page 79), the sword wouldn't gain the benefits listed under First Triumph until the PCs' third triumph. To be present for a triumph, a relic needs to be worn, held, or carried (as opposed to being stored in a *bag of holding*, for instance), and the PC carrying it must have been involved in the triumph in some way. Some triumphs improve on existing abilities, such as granting more uses of an ability per day or increasing a relic's enhancement bonus from +1 to +2.

All other triumph abilities are cumulative with the item's base abilities and with each other. For example, a relic that has attained two triumphs grants both its first-triumph and second-triumph abilities along with its base abilities.

Increasing DCs: Some effects have DCs that increase as the relic attains more triumphs; these are indicated by a note such as "DC = 15 + 1 per additional triumph attained." An effect with such a DC counts neither the triumph that the effect came from nor any previous triumphs. For example, if a relic's first triumph granted an effect with a DC of 15 + 1 per additional triumph attained, that DC would be 15. When that relic attained a second triumph, the DC would increase to 16.

Fading Glory: When the PCs discover a relic, the power of the item has faded significantly since it has gone many years without being used for its cause. In most campaigns, it's unlikely that enough time will pass for the discovered relic's power to fade again. However, if years pass without a relic being used for its cause, its triumph abilities begin to go dormant, starting at the highest level and descending from there. This can vary by item and is ultimately determined by the GM, but a good benchmark is one triumph entry lost per 1d4 years.

RELICS IN YOUR OWN CAMPAIGN

To implement relics in your own game, you can use the Taldan items presented here, adjusting their themes and details as necessary. Alternatively, you can adapt scaling items from *Pathfinder RPG Pathfinder Unchained* (as described in the sidebar on page 76 in that book) or create your own items to suit your needs.

You'll also need to set up potential triumphs the PCs can achieve to unlock the relics' abilities. These triumphs should happen every 2 to 3 character levels. A triumph should always be linked to the achievement of a major goal within the campaign's storyline. Include less frequent triumph events if the PCs are highly likely to succeed at all of them. If there's a high chance the PCs will fail to achieve a particular triumph, you might include another triumph event fairly soon after. You can always alter future triumph events if items are looking like they'll outpace the rate of one triumph every 2 levels. The theme of the relics you include should match the themes of the campaign. This doesn't mean their mechanics and powers need to correspond exactly, but the more history and flavor, the better.

Relics work best in a campaign that has clear goals and major events. These might be goals that you've built into the game, but it's also highly satisfying for players to define their own goals. If you make relics that are designed for a purpose that matches the purposes of one of the characters, you'll set up a stronger bond and unity of purpose for that character-relic pair.

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ADAPTING SCALING ITEMS

Relics work much like the scaling items introduced in *Pathfinder Unchained*, with the exceptions that they don't cost a share of your treasure and they scale up due to story events rather than at certain levels. This makes it easy to adapt the scaling items from that book to use as relics, either to replace ones listed here that don't suit your group in War for the Crown or to use in a different campaign. Doing so requires the following adjustments, in addition to adding thematic background elements to the items to tie them to the triumphs of your game.

Remove Cost, Price, and Scaling Category: Because relics can't be crafted and aren't typically bought or sold, they don't have cost or price entries. Similarly, the scaling progression (bauble, prize, or wonder) is not usually relevant for relics. However, you might want to restrict yourself to only prizes and wonders when converting scaling items, since baubles aren't as impressive as relics should be.

Determine Minimum PC Level: Since the abilities of a relic aren't explicitly tied to character levels, it's important to limit PCs' access to relics that would be too powerful for their level. In general, PCs should not gain access to a relic until their character level is at most 2 levels lower than the lowest-level ability of the scaling item on which that relic is based.

Combine Lower-Level Scaling Abilities: Determine what level the PCs will likely be when they attain the relic. If this is higher than one or more of the item's scaling levels, combine all those levels' abilities into the base abilities of the item.

Turn Unlockable Abilities into Triumph Abilities: Any remaining unlockable abilities can be unlocked by attaining triumphs rather than reaching a certain level. Look at your plans for what events will count as triumphs, because you might need to combine multiple unlockable abilities into one. This can happen if there's a long level gap between triumphs and you need to make each one stronger to catch up with the PCs' expected level.

RELICS OF OLD TALDOR

Throughout the War for the Crown Adventure Path, PCs can find the following relics, organized below by the volume of the AP in which they appear. To use these relics in other campaigns, consult the information on PC level in parentheses. A relic's stat block details its base abilities followed by the powers the relic gains when it attains one or more triumphs (see page 77).

CROWNFALL

The first adventure in the War for the Crown Adventure Path, "Crownfall," introduces *Dignity's Barb* and *Envoy Ring* (suitable for PCs of 1st–3rd level).

DIGNITY'S BARB

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

Brass inlay and Taldan military symbols adorn fine wooden stock of this masterwork darkwood light crossbow. The polished stock feels slightly warm to the touch when held. An golden inscription bears the name of General Gerefein of the Seventh Army of Exploration. In his most famous act, the general turned the tide of a prolonged and vicious battle with a canny Kellid warlord. Through the driving snow of a chaotic blizzard, General Gerefein shot practically blind, yet his bolt struck a lethal blow, dashing the warlord from his mount.

As the Kellid soldiers watched their leader fall, they broke their charge, leaving General Gerefein the victor on that day.

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

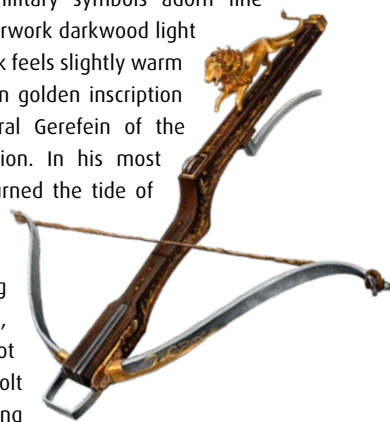
First Triumph: *Dignity's Barb* is a +1 darkwood light crossbow and reduces miss chances from concealment by 10%. In addition, once per day when the weapon threatens a critical hit, the wielder can roll twice to confirm the critical and take the better result.

Second Triumph: *Dignity's Barb* is a +1 seeking darkwood light crossbow.

Third Triumph: *Dignity's Barb* is a +2 seeking darkwood light crossbow. The wielder can use its ability to roll twice to confirm a critical hit twice per day (though he can use it only once on a given critical threat). In addition, the wielder can attempt a lucky shot to foil a ranged attack. Once per day when a ranged weapon attack targets a creature within 30 feet of the wielder, the wielder can shoot *Dignity's Barb* at the projectile as an immediate action. He rolls a ranged attack, and if the result exceeds the attacker's roll, that attack is negated. This ability can be used only if *Dignity's Barb* is loaded or if the wielder can use Rapid Reload or a similar ability.

Fourth Triumph: *Dignity's Barb* is a +3 seeking darkwood light crossbow. Its wielder can use its ability to roll twice to confirm a critical hit at will.

Fifth Triumph: *Dignity's Barb* is a +4 seeking darkwood light crossbow. At the start of each day, the crossbow's owner rolls a d20, rerolling any results of 1, 19, or 20 and recording the final result. For the rest of that day, when the owner rolls the recorded number on an attack roll with *Dignity's Barb*, the attack roll is a critical threat. This has no benefit for anyone other than the owner who rolled at the start of the day.



ENVOY RING

SLOT	CL	WEIGHT
ring	11th	—
AURA moderate enchantment		



This golden ring appears pristine on the outside, but the inside shows centuries of wear, leaving the inner band perpetually polished to a lighter hue than that of the ring's outer surfaces. A family crest adorns the front, depicting olive branches encircling two crowns, seemingly indicating a house dedicated to ambassadorship and diplomacy.

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

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

Second Triumph: The ring's competence bonus on Diplomacy, Linguistics, and Perform check is +3. When the wearer activates the ring's disguise, she can read, speak, and understand the most common language in the area that she doesn't already know for as long as the duration persists.

Third Triumph: The wearer can activate the ring to use *charm person* at will, though if a creature succeeds at its save, it can't be targeted again for 24 hours. The ring can also be activated to use *charm monster* (DC = 20 + 1 per additional triumph attained) once per day.

Fourth Triumph: The ring's competence bonus on Diplomacy, Linguistics, and Perform checks is +5.

Fifth Triumph: The wearer can use *mass suggestion* (DC 24) once per day.

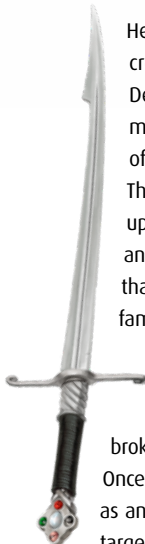
SONGBIRD, SCION, SABOTEUR

The second adventure in War for the Crown, "Songbird, Scion, Saboteur" (see page 4), introduces *Koriana's Blade* and *Subtle Mask* (suitable for PCs of 4th–6th level).

KORIANA'S BLADE

SLOT	CL	WEIGHT
none	17th	4 lbs.
AURA strong abjuration		

When the brave knight-commander Koriana of Zimar fell within the ranks of the Fifth Army of Exploration, her remains were returned home—along with her sundered steel shield.



Her brother Tadic, distraught, focused only on creating a fitting legacy for Koriana's daughter. Devoting himself to the study of metalcraft and magical crafting, he eventually turned a shard of his sister's shield into a protective longsword. Though records indicate that Tadic's niece took up the sword and joined the military, her full tale and the blade's fate were lost to history. Rumors that she went into clandestine service for the royal family still circulate.

Koriana's Blade is a +2 defending longsword.

It's strangely curved, betraying its origins, and has five gemstones in its pommel. Four are broken, but the white gem in the center is intact. Once per day, the wielder can trigger this gemstone as an immediate action to absorb and negate all darts targeting her from a *magic missile* spell.

When the wielder transfers at least 1 point of the weapon's enhancement bonus to her AC using the *defending* special ability, she also chooses one creature other than herself within 10 feet to gain a +1 bonus to AC until the wielder's next turn. This bonus is always +1, regardless of how much of the weapon's bonus the wielder transfers to her AC.

First Triumph: One of the gemstones on the sword's pommel (determined randomly) repairs itself. Once repaired, a gem can be activated as an immediate action once per day to make the sword's wielder immune to a single effect of a particular type, as described below, just before she would be affected by it. She must choose to activate the gem before attempting any save or other defense against the effect. The black gem protects against negative energy, the red gem protects against fire effects, the pink gem protects against mind-affecting effects, and the green gem protects against poison effects.

Second Triumph: *Koriana's Blade* is a +3 defending longsword. Another randomly chosen gem repairs itself.

Third Triumph: Another randomly chosen gem repairs itself. The wielder of the sword gains a +1 insight bonus on all saving throws against effects of any type corresponding to one of the sword's functioning gems.

Fourth Triumph: *Koriana's Blade* is a +4 defending longsword. The final gem repairs itself.

SUBTLE MASK

SLOT	CL	WEIGHT
head	11th	1 lb.
AURA moderate divination		



Fashioned to surround the wearer's eyes and cover the forehead and cheekbones, this mask is made of porcelain inset with blue and green gems and decorated with golden filigree. When donned, the mask seems to disappear, leaving its golden

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patterns as tattoos on the wearer's face and coloring one of the wearer's eyes green and the other blue. The wearer can remove the mask normally, causing it to appear as a porcelain mask once again.

The wearer gains a +2 competence bonus on Sense Motive checks and can use *comprehend languages* once per day.

First Triumph: The wearer can mentally activate the mask as a swift action while conversing with someone or observing a conversation to use *detect thoughts* (DC = 17 + 1 per additional triumph attained) on a single participant in the conversation. This requires spending the normal number of rounds to detect surface thoughts and can be used for a total of 9 rounds per day. These rounds don't need to be consecutive.

Second Triumph: The mask grants the wearer a +2 enhancement bonus to Charisma. When the wearer mentally activates the mask, she also detects magical effects as if she were using *arcane sight* and concentrating on the creature. This happens automatically during the first round of concentration.

Third Triumph: The mask's enhancement bonus to Charisma is +4.

Fourth Triumph: The mask's enhancement bonus to Charisma is +6. When the wearer mentally activates the mask, she also detects whether the target is lying throughout the concentration, as per *discern lies* (DC 22). Once per day, the wearer can speak a command word to use *true seeing*.

THE TWILIGHT CHILD

The third adventure in War for the Crown, "The Twilight Child," introduces *Scion's Dagger* and *Standard of Conquest* (suitable for PCs of 7th–9th level).

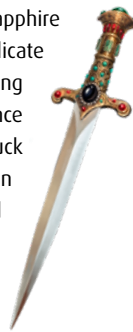
SCION'S DAGGER

SLOT none	CL 17th	WEIGHT 1/2 lb.
AURA strong necromancy		

This elegant, jeweled blade looks ornamental, but it is just as vicious as any weapon. A large black sapphire glitters in the dagger's pommel, and the delicate work along the blade's handle shows amazing artistry. The dagger was forged by Grand Prince Penticus IV to protect his son from a deal he struck with strange outsiders—trading his firstborn in order to win the crown. But Penticus V used the blade to take his own life, denying his father's benefactors their prize and securing the throne for his brother, Tralian V.

Scion's Dagger is a +3 *ghost touch mithral dagger*.

As a full-round action, the dagger's owner can designate up to four willing creatures in her presence as her bodyguards. As a standard action, each of these creatures can determine the owner's location and condition, as per *status*, as long as the owner is holding the blade. The dagger's owner can change the designated bodyguards as a full-round action, with each chosen creature beyond four replacing a prior choice.



If the owner of *Scion's Dagger* dies while carrying or wielding the blade, her body evaporates into smoke and her soul transfers into the black sapphire as per *soul bind*, except anyone holding the dagger can attempt to raise her as though they has access to her intact body. This effect fails if a soul already occupies the gem. Alternatively, a creature holding the dagger can instead speak a command word to release the trapped soul into the afterlife.

First Triumph: Once per day, the dagger's wielder can teleport any number of her bodyguards to her location, as per *teleport*. They must be willing and within 100 miles, and when they arrive, they appear within 20 feet of the dagger's wielder in unoccupied spaces chosen by the GM.

Second Triumph: *Scion's Dagger* is a +4 *ghost touch mithral dagger*. Once per day as a swift action, the wielder can gain DR 1/— and fast healing 3 for 1 minute.

Third Triumph: *Scion's Dagger* is a +5 *ghost touch mithral dagger*. When the wielder hits a humanoid with the dagger, she can activate the dagger as an immediate action to use *dominate person* on the creature (DC 23) with a duration of 1 round. After the domination ends, the target is immune to this effect for 24 hours.

STANDARD OF CONQUEST

SLOT none	CL 15th	WEIGHT 1 lb.
AURA strong transmutation		

This meticulously woven flag depicts a horse and an elephant, both about to charge. The tapestry's green and blue colors underscore the beasts' connection to Taldor's distinguished cavalry, the Taldan Horse, in which they have long been the most commonly used mounts. Though this particular piece of heraldry is rather rare in all reaches of the empire, those who know their Taldan military history know that this banner's design has been used for hundreds of years.

The following effects apply only if the standard is wielded or carried, and it must be attached to the shaft of a lance, polearm, spear, staff, or similar. The standard-bearer and all allies within 60 feet who can see the banner gain a +2 morale bonus on saving throws. They also increase their base speed or fly speed and the base speed or fly speed of mounts they ride by 5 feet. This is treated as an enhancement bonus and doesn't give a creature a base speed or fly speed if it didn't have one already. A creature determines whether it can see the banner for the purposes of speed increase at the start of its turn, and it keeps the extra speed even if it moves out of sight later in that turn.

Once per day when the wielder begins a charge action, the standard bearer can use a swift action to call for a battle



charge, causing the speed increase from the standard to become 20 feet for 1 round. Any affected creature that charges during this round also ignores the penalty to AC from its charge.

First Triumph: Once per day, the standard bearer can activate the banner to teleport himself and up to five allies who are within 10 feet of him. This functions as *dimension door*, and each transported creature must arrive within 10 feet of the *standard of conquest*.

Second Triumph: When the standard bearer calls for a battle charge, each affected creature gains a fly speed of 30 feet for 1 minute. The standard bearer can call for a battle charge twice per day.

Third Triumph: The standard bearer and allies within 60 feet who can see the standard gain a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls. When the standard bearer calls for a battle charge, each affected creature is also affected by *greater heroism* with a duration of 1 minute.

CITY IN THE LION'S EYE

The fourth adventure in War for the Crown, "City in the Lion's Eye," introduces *Band of the Crusaders' Alliance* and *Ovetrian's Plate* (suitable for PCs of 10th–12th level).

BAND OF THE CRUSADERS' ALLIANCE

SLOT	CL	WEIGHT
ring	11th	—
AURA strong abjuration		

Stylistic flourishes and a stout design suggest dwarves had a hand in forging this thick ring. The precise engineering of the small moving parts shows the fine artistry that went into creating the item. The ring features two carved symbols that flank a faceted onyx: one resembles the flag of Taldor, and the other depicts the eye of Aroden.

Each of these three elements can be activated once per day to use a certain spell: the Taldan flag for *hold person* (DC = 13 + 1 per additional triumph attained), the eye of Aroden for *prayer*, and the onyx for *stone shape*.

Encircling the ring is a second metal band that rotates in place and is studded with a single diamond. If the diamond is aligned with one of the symbols, the wearer gains a +2 luck bonus on certain saving throws: saves against enchantment spells and spell-like abilities if aligned with the Taldan flag, against evil effects if aligned with the eye of Aroden, or against earth and poison effects if aligned with the onyx. Aligning the ring with a symbol is a full-round action.

First Triumph: Each element can be activated one additional time each day to use a different spell: the Taldan flag for *sending*, the eye of Aroden for *death ward*, and the onyx for *wall of stone*.



Second Triumph: Each element can be activated one additional time each day to use a different spell: the Taldan flag for *mass suggestion*, the eye of Aroden for *disrupting weapon*, and the onyx for *transmute rock to mud*.

OVETRIAN'S PLATE

SLOT	CL	WEIGHT
armor	15th	50 lbs.
AURA strong enchantment		

This storied suit of +3 rallying^{UE} full plate was worn by General Ovetrian over the course of many conquests. It was recorded that General Ovetrian wore this armor when he was a part of the Fifth Army of Exploration, where he led a group into the River Kingdoms and places east. Plated in platinum with a slight wave pattern, the armor's surface bears a resemblance to white fur. The armor's visor is fashioned to look like a male lion's maned head, and it is hinged so it can be either worn up or pulled down to protect the face. Stories of the general's battles claim that entire lines of soldiers fled from the general when he rode into battle.

Once every 10 minutes, the armor's wearer can slam the helm's visor shut as a standard action, exposing the lion's-head design. When he does, he can attempt to demoralize all enemies within 30 feet, and he gains a competence bonus on his Intimidate check equal to the armor's enhancement bonus to AC. Once per day, instead of attempting to demoralize enemies, he can take this action to afflict all creatures within 30 feet with *fear* (DC = 20 + 1 per additional triumph attained).

First Triumph: *Ovetrian's Plate* is +4 rallying^{UE} full plate. A creature demoralized by the armor's ability is frightened for the first round of the effect's duration and is then shaken as normal for the rest of the duration (if any). Three times per day, the wearer of the armor can touch an adjacent ally as a standard action to affect that ally with either *break enchantment* or *greater heroism*. This ability can't be used more than once every 10 minutes.

Second Triumph: *Ovetrian's Plate* is +5 rallying^{UE} full plate. When the wearer uses the armor's ability to demoralize enemies, he gains a morale bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls equal to the number of creatures that were demoralized. He also gains damage reduction of the same amount, which can't be overcome. These effects last for 1 round, but if the wearer successfully hits a foe suffering from a fear effect, the duration is extended by 1 round.



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BESTIARY

“After our expedition through the Mindspin Mountains, we made our way east to Lake Encarthan. There we boarded a ship heading down the Sellen River to our final destination of Oppara to rest for a while before I started planning the next outing. Where the Sellen, cutting through the Verduran Forest, meets up with the Verduran River, I made the decision to disembark and make the rest of the journey on foot, much to the dismay of my crew, who were eager for the comforts of a soft bed. Looking over my notes, I realized that we were just days from a Taldan sage who knew about a lost ruin in Iobaria—a ruin I wanted to explore. Not one day off the boat, as we made our way through the forest to the Tandak Plains, our group was attacked by what looked like a giant snake that frightened and scattered the porters, leaving the remaining members of my crew to put down the strange beast.”

—Marliss Nalathane, explorer

This volume's the War for the Crown bestiary features a mysterious hybrid connected to the First World, a dangerous fungal creature, a river-dwelling magical serpent, and a devious fey with a penchant for plucking out eyeballs.

ANTAGONISTS AND ALLIES

During the course of "Songbird, Scion, Saboteur," the PCs spend time moving throughout the county of Meratt. During their exploration, they have the chance to stumble upon a number of threats not elaborated on in the adventure.

The County of Meratt Encounters table presented here features just some of the challenges the PCs might face. Each hour the PCs spend exploring the countryside, they have a 35% chance of a random encounter; roll d% and run the encounter listed for the result. The PCs should have at most three random encounters in a 24-hour period.

Since this adventure spans a number of character levels, some results might be too trivial or too difficult for the PCs, depending on their current progress. The aurumvorax is a particularly deadly foe; the PCs should be at least 6th level before encountering it unless they are well prepared. In the case of an inappropriate result, roll again or choose a different encounter.

Malonarin (CR 4): A subtle protector makes her home in the fringes of the Verduran Forest. This half-celestial unicorn (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 169) claims lineage from an azata and keeps her eye out for travelers in danger. She often keeps her distance from mortals, watching them from the thick foliage of the forest while determining whether they are kind or cruel. If the PCs are in trouble, Malonarin might reveal her presence and offer aid. She has the ability to heal wounds, treat poisoned characters, and protect characters from evil influences. The creature doesn't particularly enjoy getting embroiled in prolonged conflicts, but in particularly dire situations, she might even help the PCs fight against a powerful foe, though she leaves her forest only if the PCs present a strong case for her involvement.

Rueleaf (CR 8): While many treants (*Bestiary* 266) are stoic and slow with their words, Rueleaf is unusually somber. Perpetually dismayed by the encroachment of civilization and the devastating effects of logging, Rueleaf never passes up a chance to sadly complain to humanoids about the effect they have on its home. While not violent or mean, Rueleaf is in a terrible mood and quite despondent. If the PCs take the time to patiently listen to Rueleaf—and succeed at a Diplomacy check to shift his attitude to friendly—the treant warns them about an insidious tree in the forest nearby, the hangman tree called Struggle. The PCs can then actively seek out this menace, but the result should be rerolled if it comes up as a random encounter. If the PCs manage

COUNTY OF MERATT ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1-5	1 assassin vine	3	<i>Bestiary</i> 22
6-11	1 barghest	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 27
12-15	1 dire boar	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 36
16-19	1 giant stag beetle exoskeleton	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 124
20-26	Malonarin	4	See below
27-31	1 owlbear	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 224
32-37	1 silvercat	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 82
38-42	1d6 galluvixes	5	See page 84
43-47	1 winterwolf	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 280
48-50	1 delgeth	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 71
51-55	1d6 giant skunks	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 247
56-61	1 hodag	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 148
62-66	1 hungry fog	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 152
67-71	1d6 witchcrows	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 277
72-77	Struggle	7	See below
78-81	1 psychepore	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 198
82-87	1d4 leucrottas	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 178
88-92	1 maenad	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 191
93-99	Rueleaf	8	See below
100	1 aurumvorax	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 35

to convince Rueleaf that they mean only the best for the forest and fully understand his sorrowful state—and succeed at a Diplomacy check to shift his attitude to helpful—the treant might be convinced to assist them in a fight. Rueleaf is still reluctant, but he will join them in battle against an enemy that is also a threat to the forest. The treant won't follow the PCs anywhere near civilization, and when he fights, it's usually only from a distance using his rock throwing ability.

Struggle (CR 7): Nestled in a part of the woods near an old game trail stands a deadly enemy blending in with the neighboring trees. This hangman tree (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 152) is over 90 years old and has preyed on travelers and animals throughout the Verduran Forest since it grew to maturity. Struggle, as she calls herself in Sylvan, speaks with a wet, splintering voice that sounds like a waterlogged branch being twisted apart. She stands perfectly still until a desired victim passes by her trunk; the hangman tree used to eat anything she could grab, but now she selects humanoids and magical beasts as her victims, having grown pickier with age. When the PCs encounter Struggle, she has the corpses of two previous victims hanging from her vines, leaving only one vine available to grab a PC. During combat, Struggle releases the deceased victims. If the PCs inspect the bodies, they discover a *potion of heroism*, a *potion of resist energy* (fire), a *scroll of invisibility*, and a pouch containing 138 gp on the unfortunate travelers.

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GALLUVIX

This curious-looking creature has the body and plumage of a rooster but sports the cunning features of a fox from the neck up.

GALLUVIX CR 2   

XP 600

N Tiny magical beast

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 size)

hp 16 (3d10)

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

Weaknesses drift

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (clumsy)

Melee bite +3 (1d6–2)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +4)

At will—*ghost sound* (DC 11), *mage hand*, *open/close* (DC 11)

3/day—*blurred movement*^{ACG}, *calm animals* (DC 12), *sonic scream*^{ACG} (DC 13)

STATISTICS

Str 7, **Dex** 14, **Con** 11, **Int** 15, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 11

Feats Deceitful, Stealthy

Skills Bluff +6, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +4, Fly +2, Perception +5, Stealth +18

Languages Common, Sylvan, Undercommon

SQ change shape (chicken or fox; *beast shape II*), trickster's egg, unlikely form

ECOLOGY

Environment any land

Organization solitary, pair, or skulk (3–8)

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Drift (Ex) A galluvix flies in short bursts and can't use its fly speed to hover. When it flies, it must end its move action by landing or perching on a solid surface.

Trickster's Egg (Su) Once per week as a full-round action, a galluvix can vanish into the fey plane of the First World in search of a magical wooden egg that contains one of the following spells (the galluvix chooses): *cure light wounds*, *delay poison*, *lesser restoration*, or *remove paralysis*. After 1 hour, the galluvix returns to the spot from which it vanished (or the nearest unoccupied space), clutching a *trickster's egg* in its jaws. The egg functions as a potion of the contained spell, except it is cracked open rather than imbibed, and it functions only for the galluvix or a single creature of the galluvix's choice. A galluvix can have only one *trickster's egg* in existence at a time, and if the egg is not used within a week, the contained spell is lost and the egg spoils into rotten-smelling ash. The galluvix can't use this ability in

an area where extradimensional travel is blocked (such as by *dimensional lock*), and while it is in the First World, it can't be contacted or observed by any means short of a *miracle* or *wish* spell.

Unlikely Form (Ex) Galluvixes are treated as both chickens and foxes for the purposes of effects that target creatures based on type, and they gain a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks to follow tracks by scent.

A galluvix is a puckish magical creature that resembles a cross between a fox and a flamboyant rooster. Cunning, stealthy, and a bit slothful, galluvixes see no reason to hunt wild game when they can simply infiltrate nearby chicken coops and eat their fill. If confronted, a galluvix defends itself with a shrieking magical bark and then flees. When not on the prowl, however, they are social creatures that sometimes bond with humanoids who are willing to lavish them with attention and meals. A galluvix often rewards these individuals with the gift of a magical egg.

A typical galluvix is about 2 feet tall and weighs about 10 pounds. Galluvixes show great variety in both fur color and plumage, with the males displaying particularly showy tail feathers.

ECOLOGY

Galluvixes owe their existence to the machinations of some particularly mischievous fey, who looked upon humans' early efforts to domesticate wild animals as clumsy and comical—not to mention that the notion of keeping birds in coops and pens offended these First World creatures. Deciding to teach the fledgling humans a lesson—or at least play a fantastic joke—these fey tricksters introduced galluvixes into their midst: magical crossbreeds of fox and fowl that had an easy time mingling with and then devouring the humans' flocks. To these First World tricksters, the experiment was a success, and although the fey quickly lost interest in their voracious creations, galluvixes have since spread wherever unwary farmers leave their hens unguarded.

Galluvixes are predators that use their ability to adopt a fully avian appearance to get close to unwary prey. Their natural stealth and other magical talents aid them in slipping into farmsteads and sneaking past watchdogs. Skittish and somewhat cowardly, galluvixes usually prefer to flee from serious threats, flashing their rooster-like tails as they depart, which makes them hard to target. When alarmed or cornered, galluvixes let loose with screeching barks, laced with sonic force, that deter all but the most determined pursuers.

The galluvix's most unusual talent is its ability to vanish into the First World to search for a magical spell, which it retrieves in a vessel known as a *trickster's egg*. Sages debate whether this was a happy accident or a trait

bred into the fox-fowl by fey who wanted magical aid in their occasional battles against human encroachment. Theories also abound about whether galluvixes fetch these eggs from their own hidden supplies or steal them from one of the First World demigods, the Eldest; no galluvix will speak of the process.

If not felled by disease or injury, a typical galluvix can live as long as a human. Some galluvixes have been said to live close to 150 years, though whether this increased age is natural or the result of strange magic is unclear. While its fox fur grows more grizzled and its lustrous feathers fade with age, a galluvix retains an excellent memory of all that has transpired in its territory. Galluvixes in a region with plenty of action and intrigue can become a valuable source of information to adventurers who know where to look and don't dismiss the intelligence of these creatures.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Galluvixes tend to live on the outskirts of farming communities or in lightly wooded areas with plenty of game. However, they are adaptable creatures that can make do in wild or urban settings on almost any continent. Their ability to take the form of foxes or fowl allows them to blend into a myriad of locations.

In the Inner Sea region, they are most common near the Verduran Forest in Andoran and Taldor, in and around Qadira's Tapur Forest, and throughout Sargava and Varisia. Farmers and woodfolk in these lands generally regard galluvixes as nuisances, though with some degree of tolerance. On the other hand, citizens of more hardscrabble lands, such as Irrisen and Nirmathas, see galluvixes as threats to their livelihood and no better than wicked fey.

Despite their deceptive hunting practices, galluvixes are otherwise companionable, loyal creatures. They often mate for life, each pair digging a den to share. Once a year, a female galluvix lays a clutch of three to six eggs, with both parents taking turns to sit on the nest and raise the kits when they hatch. Kits remain with their parents for the first year of life, and it is their curiosity that is responsible for the shiny coins and baubles occasionally found in galluvix dens.

Humanoids who overcome a galluvix's instinctive wariness find it fond of conversation and gossip. Often these conversations blossom into true friendships, and it is such favored folk (especially those who have fallen on hard times) who most often receive a *trickster's egg* containing a curative boon.

Because of their intelligent natures, it is difficult to truly tame galluvixes. Nevertheless, some entrepreneurs have tried. The most successful galluvix breeders employ a combination of flattery, magical compulsion,

and regular offerings of extravagant meals. Individual breeders consider these regimens to be trade secrets, which often leads them to treat one another with great animosity and suspicion.

Galluvixes get along with most fey, particularly playful pixies, jovial grigs, and any liminal sprites within their territories. They find brownies to be stuffy and overprotective of the farms in their care, and particularly watchful over chicken coops. Galluvixes revile gnolls, goblins, and gremlins for their destructive ways—after all, when a farm is despoiled, not only humans go hungry—and they bear a special hatred for pugwampis, insulting them in fluent Undercommon.

A spellcaster can gain a galluvix as a familiar at 7th level by taking the Improved Familiar feat. The resulting arcane bond allows the spellcaster to direct the galluvix in the use of its trickster's egg ability. Also, when using that ability, a galluvix familiar can return to an unoccupied space next to its master instead of the spot where it vanished.



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GIANT DEVIL'S TOOTH

This enormous white fungus has sharp spines on its stalk, and its multiple caps are covered in blood-red globules that appear on the brink of rupturing.

GIANT DEVIL'S TOOTH

CR 6



XP 2,400

NE Huge plant

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft., low-light vision;
Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 6, flat-footed 19 (–2 Dex, +13 natural, –2 size)

hp 58 (9d8+18)

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities acid rupture; **Immune** plant traits

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee 2 slams +12 (1d8+8 plus paralysis)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks paralysis (1 round, DC 16), spine spray,
spore cloud

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 6, **Con** 15, **Int** 7, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 24

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes,
Lunge, Power Attack

Skills Perception +13

Languages Sylvan (can't speak)

ECOLOGY

Environment any forest

Organization solitary

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Acid Rupture (Ex) If a creature damages a giant devil's tooth with a bludgeoning or slashing weapon, some of its red globules burst, dealing 3d6 points of acid damage to creatures adjacent to the giant devil's tooth. An affected creature that succeeds at a DC 16 Reflex saving throw takes half damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spine Spray (Ex) Once every 1d3 rounds as a standard action, a giant devil's tooth can spray a barrage of spines from its stalk, dealing 6d6 points of piercing damage to each creature in a 15-foot-cone burst. A target that succeeds at a DC 16 Reflex saving throw takes half damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spore Cloud (Ex) Once per day as a standard action, a giant devil's tooth can release a cloud of noxious spores in a 50-foot-radius spread centered on itself. This cloud lasts for 1 round before dispersing. Each creature that enters or begins its turn in the cloud must succeed at a DC 16 Fortitude saving throw or become nauseated for 1d3 rounds; a creature that succeeds at its Fortitude save is instead sickened for 1d3 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based.

While mundane variations of this fungus exist in nature as small, fist-sized clusters that feed from the roots of host trees, the much larger, mobile giant devil's tooth seems to draw its powers from far darker sources. Some say the trees that give these fungi life contain the souls of ancient evil druids, imprisoned centuries ago for disgracing their circle. Others believe that devils themselves embedded infernal energy into the mushrooms while visiting the Material Plane, bringing these otherwise harmless hydroids to life.

A ruthless creature with many ways to incapacitate its prey, a giant devil's tooth often paralyzes its victims before slowly dissolving them for feeding. It crawls along the ground toward its quarry, and then rises up, revealing a large patch of jagged spines that it can eject in a devastating cone. When faced with multiple enemies, it releases a cloud of noxious spores before slowly moving in for the kill. The acidic globules that cover the surface of its cap provide it a self-defense mechanism against any would-be attackers that fight in close quarters.

A giant devil's tooth can grow as tall as 24 feet and weighs 3,300 pounds.

ECOLOGY

The giant devil's tooth is often found in densely forested areas, where it begins as a seemingly normal devil's tooth fungus engaged in a symbiotic relationship with a tree's root system. Rarely, however, such a fungus grows many times larger than normal, as it becomes infused with evil, turning into a parasite of its host tree. Once the creature grows to full size and has exhausted its host tree's resources, it detaches from the root system and crawls about the forest looking for more lively and nutrient-dense sources of food. While few forest animals are a match for the giant devil's tooth, the fungus seems to prefer to hunt intelligent humanoids, leading many to believe that it derives some of its terrible power from such prey. Whether this taste for humanoids developed over time or was imbued in them at their creation is an issue of debate among scholars.

Though not known to be a particularly intelligent creature, the giant devil's tooth is a tactical predator. First paralyzing or nauseating its victims to negate their most dangerous attacks, it then attempts to bludgeon prey into a nutritious paste with devastating slams. Clumps of forest-floor detritus stick to its pale flesh, which contains traces of a paralytic poison that can immobilize living creatures it touches, while the blood-red acidic globules covering its cap readily burst when hit, spraying nearby creatures.

Rumors abound of alchemical uses for the giant devil's tooth "blood": some say the substance can be mixed with other rare reagents to provide a source of great healing, while others believe its essence can be used as

a component for infernal rituals. However, the volatile nature of the liquid, along with the tremendous difficulty of obtaining it, makes rigorous testing all but impossible.

The origin of these creatures is still a source of great mystery to most, as few who venture into the heart of the territory of a giant devil's tooth manage to make it out alive. If this were a mere unintelligent fungus roaming about looking for food, similar to other living aberrant plants, there would be less speculation. Over the years, however, clerics, paladins, and other holy warriors who have come into contact with a giant devil's tooth have reported that the creatures radiate a definite aura of evil, thus lending credence to many of the dark theories surrounding their creation. In addition, numerous druidic and shamanic texts detail rituals in which dishonored members of a circle are put to death and fused with an element of nature, usually a tree, as penance for disgracing their fellow disciples. Such trees often exert an unnatural influence on their environs, including the fungi that feed from their roots, but it is unknown whether this is sufficient to produce a giant devil's tooth. The idea that devils have a hand in the creature's creation appears most often in stories told to children to keep them from wandering too far into the forest and eating suspicious mushrooms—few truly subscribe to the notion that the denizens of Hell have a hand in bringing the evil fungi to life.

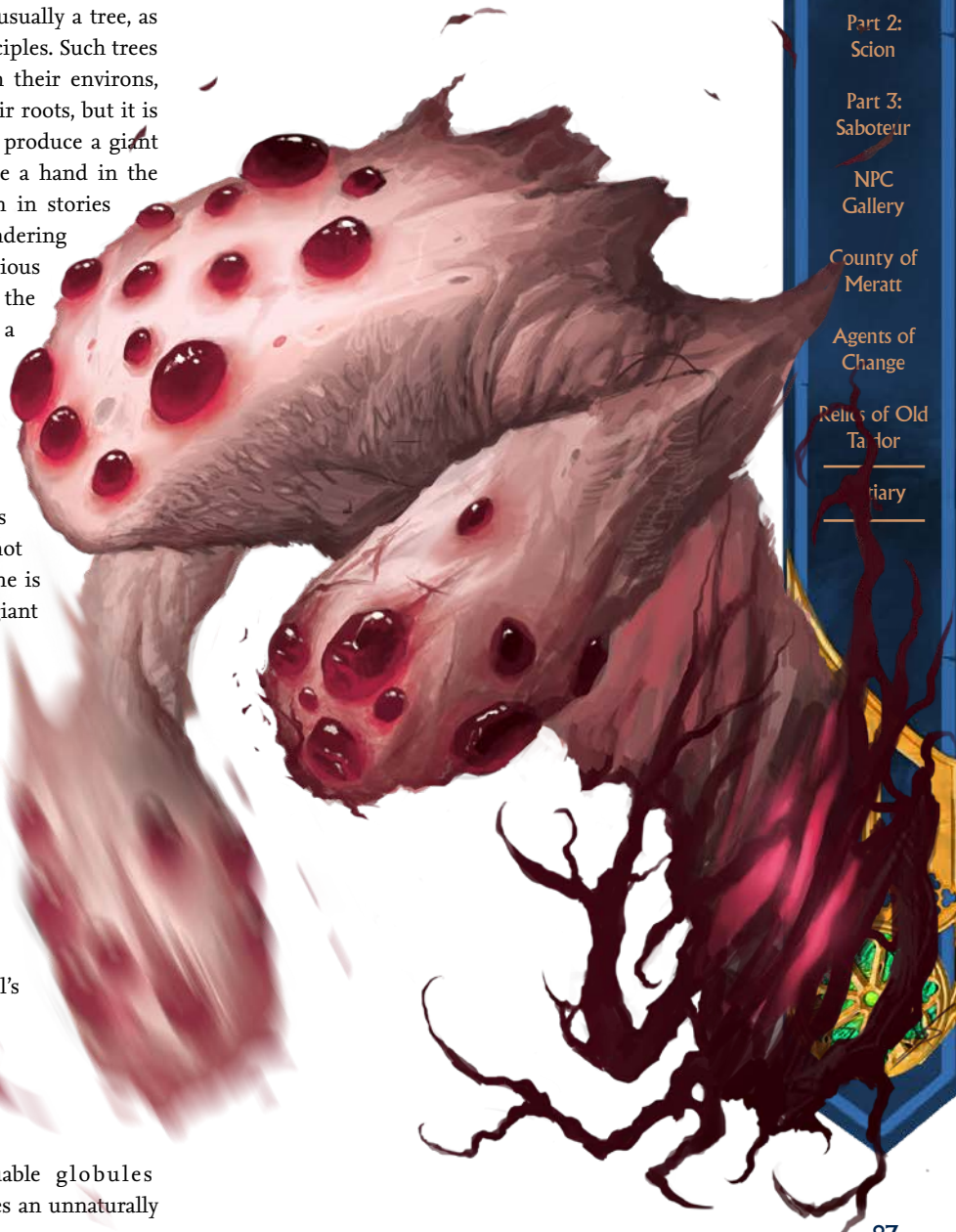
HABITAT AND SOCIETY

A giant devil's tooth is almost always a solitary predator, and while seeing a group of mundane devil's tooth fungi is rarely considered a good omen, it is not necessarily a guarantee that a larger one is nearby. The host tree that gives life to a giant devil's tooth ultimately becomes an eerie curiosity of nature; when the fungus finally detaches from the tree's root, the tree shrivels and turns gray, taking on an almost rubbery texture, as if the evil fungus imparted some of its essence to the tree as it grew. Some believe that felling the tree that spawned a giant devil's tooth will kill the fungus, but in truth, once the giant devil's tooth has detached itself, there is no remaining connection between the two.

In the rare instances that a giant devil's tooth is killed, any attempts to harvest its potentially alchemically valuable globules invariably fail, as the creature undergoes an unnaturally

sped-up process of decomposition. When the fungus dies, its mysterious pools of red liquid lose their surface tension and quickly seep into the cap and stem, all of which dissolves in a matter of minutes, leaving behind a large mass of noxious pink sludge.

Giant devil's tooth sightings are most common in the Inner Sea region, especially in the Fangwood, the Shudderwood, and the Verduran Forest in Avistan, but there have been sightings as far as the Forest of Spirits, far over the Crown of the World in Tian Xia. With its tolerance for a broad range of temperatures and a minimal need for water, a giant devil's tooth could potentially thrive in any forest where it is left unchecked by more powerful creatures.



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GOLDPEBBLE

The scales on this twelve-foot-long water snake's back appear to be nothing more than smooth river stones, a few of which glint with traces of gold.

GOLDPEBBLE

CR 5



XP 1,600

N Large magical beast (aquatic)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense; **Perception** +6

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +6 natural, -1 size)

hp 51 (6d10+18)

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

Resist cold 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +10 (1d8+5 plus grab and poison), tail slap +5 (1d8+2)

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

Special Attacks chilling currents

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 16, **Con** 17, **Int** 9, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +12 (+16 grapple); **CMD** 25 (can't be tripped)

Feats Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Stealth), Stealthy

Skills Escape Artist +5, Perception +6, Stealth +9, Swim +18

Languages Common (can't speak)

SQ amphibious

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or cold rivers

Organization solitary or nest (3-5)

Treasure incidental (10d10 gp)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Chilling Currents (Su) As a free action after it successfully grapples a submerged creature, a goldpebble can cause the temperature of all water within a 90-foot-sphere spread, centered on itself, to drop several degrees for 1 minute. For the duration of this effect, any creature attempting to hold its breath in the affected water has the DC of its Constitution check to do so increased by 2.

Poison (Su) As an unintentional side effect of the alchemical meddling that brought the creature about, a goldpebble's fangs inflict a dangerous venom that turns its victim's blood to water. Any creature with blood or a similar fluid that is hit by a goldpebble's bite attack risks being affected by this poison.

Pebblefang: Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 16; *onset* 1d4 hours; *frequency* 1/day for 8 days; *effect* 1d3 Con damage, and when the creature fails a save, all bleed damage it takes in the following 24 hours is doubled; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

The goldpebble is a stony-scaled water snake that came into existence thanks to a greedy Taldan alchemist of a forgotten time. This ambitious experimenter attempted

to create a fecund creature whose body would turn to gold after it died, ensuring an endless supply of wealth with little effort. She found a water snake that bred in shallow pools and produced dozens of offspring, and its biology responded well to her initial tests. The original snake's scales contained trace amounts of minerals and served as a clever camouflage in the wild, and the alchemist combined magical techniques with selective breeding to coax the species' scales into naturally producing nuggets of gold.

At first, the experiment seemed to be going well; early generations demonstrated traces of gold in their scales, and as they sloughed away their skin with age, the cast-off scales contained enough gold to justify the alchemist's efforts. However, the snakes grew in size with each generation, and soon the breeding pools the alchemist had created could not contain them. Worse, the amount of gold each snake produced didn't increase, but rather seemed to decrease until only glittering flakes remained.

Frustrated, the alchemist redoubled her efforts and saturated the breeding pools with transmutative alchemical reagents, mercilessly culling any snakes that failed to produce new growth. While this did little to increase the mineral content of the creatures' scales, it did invest them with a supernatural venom that causes victims' blood to slowly turn to water. When the overzealous alchemist next came to harvest her treasured pets, the goldpebbles struck, killing her and escaping into a nearby stream; they can now be found all across the Inner Sea region.

A fully grown goldpebble is about 12 feet long and weighs 250 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Goldpebbles are solitary creatures, except for when they gather during the twice-annual breeding frenzy for which the alchemist selected the original species as a test subject. They often lurk in rivers and streams, mimicking the smooth river stones along the bed and waiting for some unlucky wanderer to notice the shimmering traces of gold in their skin. Once the target is near, the creature ambushes the unsuspecting victim, sinking its narrow teeth into the target's skin and attempting to drag its target below the water. In addition, most goldpebbles have the unusual and instinctive ability to cause the water around them to grow extremely cold, making it harder for a surprised victim to hold its breath. Weaker prey will often succumb to this attack, drowning and settling to the river floor to serve as dinner for the goldpebble. However, even if the victim of the goldpebble's bite manages to escape, it's not yet out of danger. Hours after the attack, the victim's blood begins to transmute into frigid water. Symptoms of this transformation vary, though they often resemble anemia or frostbite, as vital nutrients and oxygen

have trouble reaching their destination and the victim's body temperature plummets from the inside outward. If condition is left untreated, the frigid water bleed into the victim's lungs, causing it to drown.

During the breeding season, goldpebbles are even more dangerous than usual. Gathering in shallow pools and lakes, they turn the water into a glimmering froth, laying and fertilizing eggs in the cold mud of the riverbed before returning to their usual streams. When the eggs hatch, hundreds of tiny snakes slither in every direction in search of territory. With little control over their ability to cool surrounding waters, the young goldpebbles sometimes unintentionally flash-freeze their nursery pool in this initial burst of activity. The tiny offspring that survive find their way into streams, wells, and even irrigation systems, sometimes striking at innocent passersby. Despite the juvenile snakes' diminutive size, the result for their victims is always the same: they end up gasping for breath on dry land, their skin turning chill and blue while their horrified loved ones look on.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Even though they are solitary ambush hunters, goldpebbles don't exist in an ecological vacuum. Several different creatures have adapted to the presence of goldpebbles, and the snakes have also learned to take advantage of the creatures that share their habitats.

In the mineral-rich waters of caves or the runoff from mining operations, a goldpebble sometimes deliberately nests upstream of a basidirond, a plant creature that causes powerful hallucinations that can enhance the goldpebble's glimmering scales in the eyes of its potential prey. Once the goldpebble has made its kill, the victim's blood flows into the basidirond's roots. Of course, if this blood is mingled with the goldpebble's transmutative venom, it can lead to an unfortunate end for the basidirond.

Another creature that benefits from proximity to the goldpebble is the giant dragonfly. These carnivorous insects take advantage of the water snake's ambush tactics, seeking out lurking goldpebbles and laying their eggs in the nearby shallows. When the giant dragonfly nymphs hatch, they swarm around the goldpebble, instinctively attempting to eat it but unable to break through its stony skin. When the goldpebble brings down a victim, though, the nymphs are often able to devour most of the kill before the goldpebble's transmutative poison can do its work. Goldpebbles in this situation have to be more aggressive in their hunting, since the nymphs consume a majority of their kills, and these goldpebbles tend to develop more brilliantly colored scales that better attract victims.

GEMPEBBLES

One of the side effects of its rapid breeding cycle is the goldpebble's ability to adapt to its environment. The alchemist's original manipulations of the goldpebble's mineral-laced scales have changed slowly over time in some subpopulations of the snake, meaning that some goldpebbles have scales that, instead of being struck through with streaks of gold, glitter like gems or other precious stones. There are clans of dwarves who attempt to capitalize on this adaptiveness despite the creature's dangerous poison. They harvest young goldpebbles and then pour them into crevices in deep caves, in locations where they suspect veins of precious gems exist but are too difficult or dangerous to mine effectively. When the surviving snakes are fully grown, they return to the more spacious caves of the mine as gempebbles, ready to be harvested—and just as likely as their gold-streaked cousins to attack their dwarven stewards.



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Bestiary

LAMP BLIGHTER

This creature looks like a tiny, stooped elf with gray skin, cruel claws, and glossy purple moth wings. Its mirthless grin exposes sharp teeth, and a bloody string of humanoid eyeballs adorns its neck.

LAMP BLIGHTER

CR 6



XP 2,400

CE Small fey

Init +5; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 11 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 size)

hp 45 (10d6+10)

Fort +4, **Ref** +12, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities invisibility; **DR** 10/cold iron; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +11 (1d8-2), 2 claws +11 (1d10-2/19-20 plus eye pluck)

Ranged +1 shortbow +13 (1d4-1/x3)

Special Attacks eye pluck, special arrows

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

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

At will—*darkness*

1/day—*dancing lights, deeper darkness, detect thoughts* (DC 14), *disguise self, dispel magic, entangle* (DC 13), *shield*

STATISTICS

Str 7, **Dex** 20, **Con** 12, **Int** 16, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 18

Feats Dodge, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (shortbow)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +13, Disguise +13, Escape Artist +16, Fly +20, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nature) +14, Perception +15, Sense Motive +13, Stealth +22, Use Magic Device +13

Languages Common, Sylvan, Undercommon

Gear +1 shortbow

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests and urban

Organization solitary, pair, or band (3-5)

Treasure standard (+1 shortbow, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bite (Ex) A lamp blighter's sharp-toothed bite is a primary natural attack that deals 1d8 points of damage.

Blighted Arrows (Su) When a lamp blighter fires an arrow from any bow, it can augment the arrow's properties by sprinkling it with dust from its wings as a free action. It can choose any one of the following effects when dusting an arrow. The lamp blighter can use this ability a number of times per day equal to its Charisma score (15 for a typical lamp blighter). The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Bleeding Wound: The target must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save, or it takes 1d4 points of bleed damage.

Blinding Terror: The target must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or become blind and panicked for 1d4+2 rounds. If the target succeeds at its Will save, it is instead shaken for 1 round.

Sleep: The target must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or fall asleep for 5 minutes.

Claws (Ex) A lamp blighter's pointed claws are primary natural attacks that deal 1d10 points of damage and threaten a critical hit on a roll of 19-20.

Eye Pluck (Ex) Once per round, when a lamp blighter confirms a critical hit with a claw attack, or when it hits a helpless creature with a claw attack, it can pluck out its target's eye as a free action unless the affected creature succeeds at a DC 13 Fortitude save. A creature that loses an eye this way takes a -4 penalty on all sight-based Perception checks until the damage is repaired (such as with a *restoration* spell). The save DC is Strength-based.

Invisibility (Su) A lamp blighter remains invisible when it attacks. This ability is constant, but the lamp blighter can suppress or resume it as a free action.

Twisted in mind and form, lamp blighters have been corrupted by their own hatred for civilization and its encroachment upon lands that were once wild. Named for their practice of darkening lamps to draw victims close and also their love of ripping out eyes with their vicious claws, they take out this hatred upon inhabitants of border villages and towns, amplifying fear of the dark in the places they bedevil.

Lamp blighters stand 2 feet tall fully when upright, though they are usually hunched over and flying at eye level of their victims, and they weigh about 20 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Lamp blighters were once pixies who chose to remain in their ancestral lands in the face of civilization's relentless expansion. Embittered and resentful of what they saw as an attack upon their way of life, these fey developed malice and anger that transformed their bodies: their bright colors faded, their teeth and claws elongated and sharpened, and their minds turned to vengeance. To those who study these creatures, such as scholars of the Sincomakti School of Sciences in Rozenport, lamp blighters are evidence of the pliant nature of the fey and how they can be shaped by both their environment and their personalities. Some such researchers go so far as to theorize that lamp blighters have internalized the corruption and change of certain declining civilized societies, a transformation that mirrors the physical and mental shift from pixie to lamp blighter.

Tales of lamp blighters are rare near well-established communities with a strong military presence, though should a once-prosperous settlement start to allow its

defenses to weaken and nature to reclaim disused districts, lamp blighters have been known to become bolder and bolder as they work to remove the longstanding source of their anger. In particular, lamp blighters frequently haunt the southern edges of the Verduran Forest, where entire towns have been abandoned thanks to their efforts.

In a lamp blighter's mind, nothing symbolizes the crushing pressure of civilization like fixed points of light. The stars glittering in the heavens, the glowing pulse of a firefly, and even forest fires brought about by lightning strikes—these are all in motion in accordance with some natural order. Torches fitted to walls, posts with *continual flame* cast upon them, and hanging lanterns, however, represent to lamp blighters the contrived attempts of civilization to control nature and to bring the assumed safety of light to all places at all times. By their own twisted logic, lamp blighters believe that by terrifying their enemies by extinguishing their lights and plucking out their eyes, they give their victims just what they think they desire: a world of perfect, orderly nothingness.

While they prefer to spend much of their time invisible, a favorite tactic of a lamp blighter is to become visible, use *disguise self* to take the form of a pixie, and then shyly introduce itself to a town's residents. After it manages to build trust with these residents over the course of days or even weeks, the lamp blighter viciously turns on them, attacking when they least expect it, like a friendly dog suddenly turned feral. Brutal attacks like these are often preceded by what appears at first to be simple accidents. Those near one of these subtle infestations notice streetlights snuffed and entire streets thrown into darkness at inopportune times, often leading to accidents such as cart crashes and falls down steps.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Lamp blighters prefer to live in wild areas just outside of frontier villages and towns, but they spend much of their time within those same villages and towns, working to spread fear. They build nests in hollow trees, decorating them with the eyes of the creatures they have attacked.

Lamp blighters are usually solitary, driven as they are by immediate desires to harm and terrify rather than establishing any long-term communities of their own. Occasionally a lamp blighter with a particularly strong will takes command of a group of gremlins, but those arrangements usually result in general mayhem rather than focused effort. Bogeymen sometimes partner for short periods with lamp blighters, though the more

brazen and direct approach of the lamp blighter means a bogeyman often uses the corrupted creature as cover and distraction for its own activities.

For their part, pixies look upon lamp blighters with a mixture of nervousness and pity: they worry that what has happened to their former kin could happen to them, but they also have deep compassion for their lost cousins. Although individually less powerful and dangerous than lamp blighters, pixies are rumored to sometimes organize raiding parties and set out to capture lamp blighters, restraining them as they attempt to turn them away from evil. Whether any lamp blighter has ever been redeemed in this way—or any other—is unknown.



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County
of Meratt

NEXT MONTH

THE TWILIGHT CHILD

By Ron Lundeen

After dealing with the Lotheed family of the county of Meratt, the PCs head to the city of Yanmass to learn that an imperialist merchant has begun a political campaign against Princess Eutropia. While there, the heroes discover that the city is plagued with other troubles, including the rise of a mysterious cult that worships a figure known as the Twilight Child. Can the adventurers solve the city's problems, or will they fall victim to knives in the dark?

YANMASS GAZETTEER

By Ron Lundeen

Discover the city of Yanmass, one of the most populous trade cities in northern Taldor. Learn about the people who rule the city and some of its most colorful inhabitants in this gazetteer.

ECOLOGY OF THE PSYCHOPOMP

By F. Wesley Schneider

Psychopomps are the multitudinous agents of death itself, serving Pharasma not only in her Boneyard but

also everywhere in the Great Beyond touched by the winding River of Souls. Learn how these creatures, who range from lowly bureaucrats to adjudicating demigods, maintain the multiversal cycle of life, death, and rebirth in opposition to those who would disrupt its flow.

CHEATING DEATH

By Patchen Mortimer

Every living creature on Golarion faces death eventually, whether natural or violent, glorious or ignominious. But some are ripped from the afterlife and returned to the Material Plane, their mortal stories merely interrupted. This article explores the myriad methods of resurrection—and its many attendant perils.

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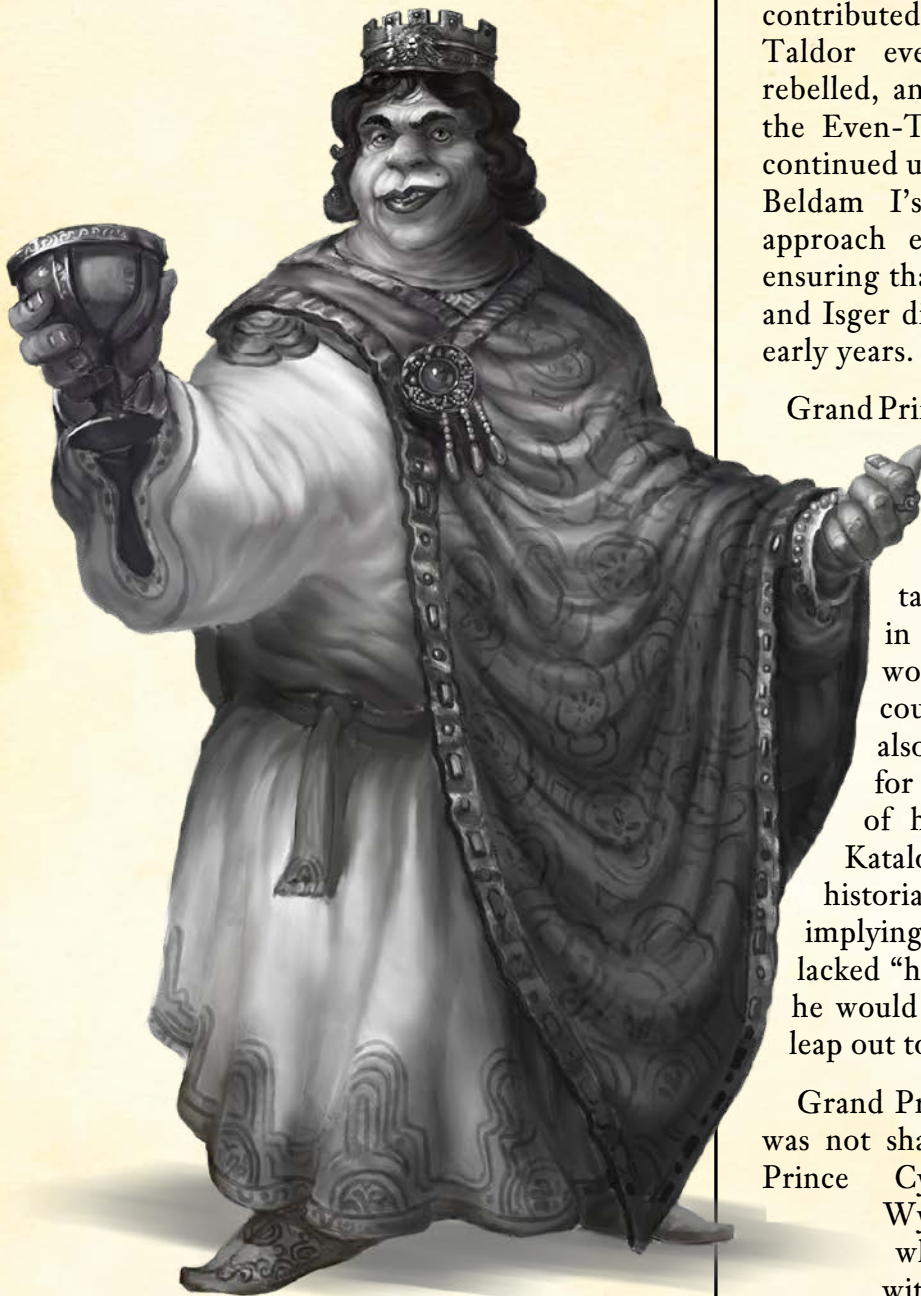
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BELDAM I

BORN 28 KUTHONA 4429 AR;
CORONATED 28 GOZRAN 4077 AR;
PERISHED 12 CALISTRIL 4098 AR

Born Ersazus Beldam, Grand Prince Beldam I came from humble roots as a mere earl and rose to the throne with the assistance of the Ballingar Accord, the same patriotic circle of nobles who exposed the treacherous Qadiran agents who poisoned the troubled



Red Prince Cydonus III. In the aftermath of the extreme deficit left by Cydonus's unorthodox building projects, the Ballingar Accord and the senate selected Beldam I for the throne because of his reputation for fiscal responsibility, and his thriftiness left him much beloved by the people, who were happy to contribute more in support of their new emperor and their suffering empire.

During his reign, Grand Prince Beldam I contributed greatly toward stabilizing Taldor even as its cherished colonies rebelled, and surely without his oversight, the Even-Tongued Rebellion would have continued until all of Taldor was torn apart. Beldam I's evenhanded and diplomatic approach eased much of the transition, ensuring that the newborn states of Cheliox and Isger did not fall into anarchy in their early years.

Grand Prince Beldam I spent most of his life deeply concerned that Qadiran agents would poison him, just as they did his predecessor, and so he employed more food tasters than any other emperor in Taldor's history. Despite this worry and his reputation as a coin counter, Grand Prince Beldam I is also fondly remembered by some for his delightful if esoteric sense of humor. He appointed a horse, Katalon, as a senator in what most historians agree was a quiet critique, implying the governing body of the time lacked "horse sense." On other occasions, he would hide in the palace curtains and leap out to surprise guests.

Grand Prince Beldam I's sense of humor was not shared by his young wife, Grand Prince Cydonus III's granddaughter Wynalia, and the emperor died when his startled wife struck him with a marble bust bearing the emperor's own likeness.



WORN WITH WOE I BE

The county of Meratt is Taldor in a microcosm: a once-glorious land left to decay by negligent nobles. But to help secure Princess Eutropia's bid for the throne, bold adventurers must now infiltrate her ancestral homeland and overthrow the corrupt Count Lotheed from within, gaining allies and solving problems left to fester far too long. Can they play idle noble by day and hero by night well enough to reverse the county's fortunes, or will the weight of history's sins be too crushing a burden?

This volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path continues the War for the Crown Adventure Path and includes:

- "Songbird, Scion, Saboteur," a Pathfinder adventure for 4th-level characters, by Crystal Frasier and Richard Pett.
- A gazetteer of the county of Meratt, a once-glorious country landscape rotting from within, by Amanda Hamon Kunz.
- A cult of personality subsystem so PCs can cultivate their public images and put their renown to work for their benefit, by Linda Zayas-Palmer.
- New rules for relics: magic items empowered by powerful historical events and improved by feeding their purpose, by Logan Bonner.
- A bestiary of monsters ranging from the spell-retrieving galluvix to the eyeball-plucking lamp blighter, by Tim Akers, Brian Duckwitz, Troy Lavallee, and Patchen Mortimer.



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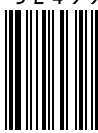
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