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WAR FOR THE CROWN

THE TWILIGHT CHILD

by Ron Lundeen

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ON THE COVER



Noble and spy Martella Lotheed adds her brand of intrigue to this cover art by Hugh Pindur, while Alain and Rivani take on a drake-riding bandit in the background.



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REFERENCE

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

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



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I'VE GOT YOUR BACK!

My name is Joe, and I've been one of the developers bringing you the War for the Crown Adventure Path for these first three volumes. This is, of course, the sensational Crystal Frasier's AP—I'm just living in it—but it has thus far been an honor, a privilege, and a real cluster of fun to be along for the ride.

Crystal wrote the description for the illustration above as part of an awesome thematic series for the AP's forewords (which I like to call Li'l Taldans—don't tell Crystal), each of which I have enjoyed immensely. This one in particular doesn't just portray a pivotal moment in the history of an important NPC in this adventure; it also happens to accurately depict my... let's say "trajectory" into my role as developer here at Paizo.

While wrangling ideas from whiteboard to delivered book is a team sport—one that involves every person you see named in the credits sidebar—in this volume's spirit of intrigue (and the infliction of nightmares on an

innocent populace), I'm hijacking this foreword to give you a closer look at what the development portion entails.

Developers at Paizo have a broad range of job duties, and even when I worked closely with them as an editor, I was unsure exactly what the role involved (other than putting up with my surprise visits and wide-ranging questions). Certainly the tech-company recruiters who fill my inbox with job opportunities have no idea. And since every developer at Paizo does things differently, even this account will be an incomplete picture.

WHAT'S THE (BACK) MATTER?

My primary role in working on the War for the Crown Adventure Path has been as the back-matter developer. Back matter includes pretty much everything that isn't the adventure or the NPC Gallery. These days, this usually comes out to two or three supplementary articles and a bestiary.

The first step in back-matter development is figuring out what to fill 30 pages with! Months ago, Crystal, Adam Daigle, and Amanda Hamon Kunz ~~dragged~~ invited me into a room with them, and we brainstormed article ideas for each of the six volumes of War for the Crown. As these masters of the craft painted verbal masterpieces of imagination—Impressionist landscapes, Gothic frescoes, Dadaist collages—I clumsily finger painted, more paint on my poorly tied smock than on the butcher paper.

After much patient discussion, we came up with a set of articles that we hope will interest you and enrich your campaign. For my part, I have a vested interest in creating content that speaks to everyone, from our most dedicated fans to those who are brand new to roleplaying games. And to their great credit, my colleagues, with their wealth of hard-earned experience, were open to changing up even the most established traditions. For example, the War for the Crown is a rare instance of an AP whose second volume does not feature a deity article; we opted to use the space to bring you two awesome subsystems instead.

With the broad ideas nailed down, my next step is to write outlines for the articles. An outline can be a two-sentence note sent to a longtime contributor who already knows the ropes (as with this volume's psychopomp article by my former boss, Wes Schneider). It can instead run quite long, with lists of useful resources for canon and references to mechanics, along with detailed notes on word counts and structure. (It can be hard not to get carried away; at least once, Adam helpfully pointed out that my outline for an article was itself approaching article length.) The outline's job is to communicate to the author what I'm looking for in the final piece while leaving plenty of room for the author's own creativity.

Once the article has been assigned and the outline sent, I wait. By which I mean I outline, assign, and develop everything else that needs it in the meantime. Upon the appointed due date, (or before, if the author is aware of this Secret Way to Please Any Developer), an email arrives, its precious cargo attached as a Word document: the turnover! And now, my friends, the development part of developing can finally begin.

Few turnovers survive contact with a developer unscathed, but this often has less to do with the quality of an author's work and more to do with the myriad overlapping goals we have for everything we publish at Paizo. Consistency with a decade of established canon is of primary importance, as is mechanical compatibility. New ideas that don't invalidate older ones, inclusivity and multidimensionality, making new players feel welcome without losing texture for the tenured—such is our

attention to detail (not to mention volume of output and number of games) that it takes, well, about a dozen full-time people to carry out this work. This, the main bulk of our efforts, is in part why each monthly Adventure Path volume alone warrants the attention of at least two developers.

With my development pass done (often surrounded by the corpses of beautiful sentences, sacrificed to the almighty Word Count), I send the text off to our fine editors, who take a couple passes at it and sometimes come to me with a list of grievances and why-would-you-do-this-es... that time and again save me from myself and greatly improve the product. (Though as a former editor, I very much enjoy alphabetizing things before the editors can, if only to rob them of the pleasure.)

Around this time (though often earlier) I also write an art brief, in which I choose elements from a given article to illustrate and write a brief visual description, throwing in reference images when helpful. Our art department magically transmogrifies these words into actual illustrations (thanks, artists!) and puts the edited text into an InDesign file, wrapping it around the art.

Now we reach the copyfit phase. While we have worked out solid word-count estimates for laid-out pages of text, even taking art into account, it's not uncommon for an article to be over—or short—by anywhere from a few lines to a column. At that point, I either cut words to fit or write words to fill, either of which can be daunting or delightful, mostly depending on how large the deadline looms. Finally, the much-massaged text returns to the kind, patient, stalwart editors for some final dusting off and shaping up, and after a few final checks, we send the volume off to the printer.

Part of the fun and challenge of being a developer (and of back-matter content in particular) is that all of these seemingly sequential steps are actually happening at the same time; in a given day I might end up doing any or all of these steps, for multiple volumes of an AP. Plus I get to write the bestiary intro and create the random encounter table.

Now for the shocking twist: This is my last volume as back-matter developer! I'm Starfinder bound, and as the inimitable Ron Lundeen is next in the line of succession, I will leave you in his capable hands. See you in the stars!



Joe Pasini
Developer

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The heroes must infiltrate a once-fine theater, expose the dark masters of a mysterious cult propping up the reincarnated Prince Carrius as a divine figure, and free the prince.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

“The Twilight Child” is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.



The PCs begin this adventure at 7th level.



The PCs should reach 8th level while investigating the troubles facing Yanmass.



The PCs should reach 9th level during their explorations of the Encircling Bower.

The PCs should be 10th level by the adventure's conclusion.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Yanmass is the largest and wealthiest city in the prefecture of Avin in northeastern Taldor, and is situated at the western edge of the Whistling Plains that adjoin the Padishah Empire of Kelesh. As Yanmass is the first stop in Taldor for Keleshite merchants bringing goods from the east and the last stop for Taldan merchant caravans taking their wares into Kelesh, the markets of Yanmass bring in substantial tax income for the prefecture. The city is protected by a city guard, with occasional assistance from the Taldan Horse cavalry regiment stationed in the city. The city's ostensible ruler, the elderly Baron Mauston Kustios, normally defers much of the civil administration to the city's Mercantile Council, a group of aristocratic traders whose specific numbers vary but currently consists of five principal council members and 14 associate council members. In the past few weeks, the Mercantile Council has taken a more active role in city governance, as Baron Kustios has all but retired due to a series of disturbing nightmares.

Politically, Baron Kustios has remained studiously neutral to preserve his frontier prefecture's wealth. In the latest political crisis, however, the baron has expressed sympathy to Princess Eutropia's Loyalist cause. The Mercantile Council, for its part, is split between Loyalists and Imperialists, but all members bow to the coin their trading houses bring.

Wanting to secure the wealthy town to his cause, Maxillar Pythareus sent an aristocrat named Earl Yander Merkondus to Yanmass. Instructed to secure the city's loyalty to the Imperialists, the crafty Yander came up with a plan to stir up trouble in the city, incapacitate the baron and the overtly Loyalist members of the Imperial Council, and then solidify his Imperialist influence by withdrawing his troublemakers, thus "saving" Yanmass.

Yander's first plan was to undercut the Taldan Horse, which has Loyalist leanings—and play upon the city's prejudices and fears. Yander bribed Jaliessa Staubel, the officer commanding the Taldan Horse regiment stationed in the city, to defect from the cavalry along with her troops, and then disguise her unit as Qadiran bandits. The "bandits" attack caravans crossing the Whistling Plains (primarily targeting caravans belonging to Loyalist members of the Mercantile Council, but preying on all types of caravans at least occasionally to conceal the scheme). The Taldans of Yanmass have turned a suspicious eye on Keleshite visitors, wondering whether any of them are secretly in league with the Qadiran bandits.

Yander's second scheme was more sinister and more direct. He commissioned a group of horrid outsiders

called pairaka divs to spread disturbing, lustful nightmares throughout the city. As the pairakas can assume animal form, they have virtually unlimited freedom to move around the city in disguise to implant their dreams. Baron Kustios was one of the first of their victims, but they have also targeted other prominent citizens and members of the Mercantile Council. Some of the dream's recipients have turned to suicide in order to escape the maddening visions, and everyone in Yanmass worries that the dreams are some sort of eldritch plague or curse.

Yet another strange event is taking place in Yanmass but is apparently independent of these other machinations. A popular cult has arisen in a once-grand theater in Yanmass. Overseen by mysterious and kindly aasimars, this cult has formed around the reincarnated Prince Carrius, Eutropia's younger brother who perished many years ago. The cult, known locally as the Cult of the Twilight Child, isn't forthcoming about how the young prince was reincarnated among them, but they have presented the prince as an oracle and miracle worker who can deliver Yanmass from its troubles. The cult is secretive but apparently not malign; its teachings are predominantly about community and self-reliance, and overlap with the teachings of the church of Abadar. Many common citizens of Yanmass are members of the cult—good, simple people looking for easy solutions to complicated troubles. The secret of the cult is far more sinister than its public face: the aasimar mesmerist at the center of the cult, Vaddrigan Pol, is a member of the Immaculate Circle, the secret society that intends to place Carrius on the throne as a puppet ruler.

The player characters arrive in Yanmass with instructions to win over Baron Kustios and the Mercantile Council to the Loyalist cause while investigating rumors about Princess Eutropia's reincarnated brother. Yander has already set his twin schemes in motion, and the Cult of the Twilight Child is gaining new members with each nightly service. The PCs must solve these crises, expose Yander, and rescue Prince Carrius from the cult's clutches.

TIDINGS FROM YANMASS

As "The Twilight Child" begins, the PCs receive an invitation to visit Martella Lotheed in the Palace of Songbirds, Eutropia's new base of operations. When PCs arrive, read or paraphrase the following.

The Palace of Birdsong is now bustling with activity as artisans work to restore its faded glory and visiting diplomats elbow one another in the halls. Martella Lotheed is waiting in her office, with a platter of honey cakes and a steaming teapot on her desk.

"Thank you all for arriving so quickly, and please help yourselves to refreshments. I hope you've all enjoyed a well-deserved rest. I'd offer more, but I've been giving the serving

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YANMASS OPERATIONS

PCs have a total of 10 persona phases over the course of this adventure. One takes place before the PCs arrive in Yanmass. You can divide the remaining persona phases as you see fit, but it's appropriate to "reward" the players with a persona phase after each significant encounter, such as facing the Kozan Bravos or defeating Aresphena, as word of the PCs' prowess spreads. The PCs receive one additional persona phase after the adventure's conclusion.

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

Canny Investment (Genius, Sagacity, Persistent): You insert agents in Yanmass's markets, feeding you details on market trends and shortages and granting you a +5 insight bonus on Profession checks to earn income while in Yanmass. In addition, while this operation remains active, you automatically earn 2d6 gp each week.

Competing Cult (Charm, Sacrifice): Your agents start rumors of or proselytize a competing cult or religion, drawing members of the Cult of the Twilight Child to investigate. If you succeed at a DC 20 Operation check, your agents draw one cult sentry (page 45) and one high cultist (page 47) to investigate a location you determine, allowing you to possibly ambush or question them or to draw forces away from the temple prior to an attack. You can successfully perform this operation only twice.

Infiltrate the Cult (Risky): You assign agents to observe the Twilight Child Cult ceremonies; if you succeed at a DC 15 Operation check, the agents report back to you with details of the ceremony described on page 41.

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

Watch Yander Merkondus (Persistent, Risky): Your agents quietly follow Earl Merkondus around Yanmass and report on his activities. He doesn't do anything incriminating, but you are not taken by surprise if he dispatches agents to accost you, and you are immediately aware of his location if he attempts to flee (see page 20).

staff a lot of days off in light of recent... traumas, and we've been a bit short-handed.

"Let me ask: How much do you know about Yanmass? If it isn't much, I have a few books you can read on your way, because that's your next stop. The city has been neutral up until now but commands considerable wealth and access to exclusive trade goods; its support would be invaluable, and

the princess and Pythareus have both sent delegations to win an alliance with the Mercantile Council that runs the city. But our agent, Sir Meir Dratavis, has gone missing. His last correspondence mentioned troubling recent events: bandit raids, cult activity, missing soldiers. He was working alongside Pythareus's representative, an earl named Yander Merkondus, to resolve the problems, but I haven't heard anything since, and I suspect foul play. Find Meir, or else continue his work of convincing Yanmass to formally back Eutropia.

"I have another reason to dispatch you quickly, though. This cult Meir mentioned, the Cult of the Twilight Child... they claim to worship a resurrected Prince Carrius, Eutropia's younger brother who died 20 years ago. Attempts to resurrect him shortly after his death failed. While it's possible for a powerful spellcaster to raise the dead after so long, it stills strikes me as suspicious that a potential claimant to the throne has just happened to appear. Eutropia hasn't yet heard these rumors, and I'd like them investigated quickly and quietly."

Martella is willing to answer whatever questions she can before the PC's depart.

Was Meir Dratavis a spy? "No, just a Loyalist and friend of Eutropia. I offered to send a specialist to protect him, but he insisted that Pythareus and the earl were honorable men who would let the strongest argument succeed."

Who is Earl Yander Merkondus? "The Merkondus family operates in sea trade. They're landed in Moda prefecture, but Yander works heavily in Oppara. I've had the dubious pleasure of working with him in the past, and he is charming, insightful, and ruthlessly efficient. He's the sort of man you watch very carefully, only to be struck down by a carriage you never saw coming."

Bandits? "Meir was a diplomat, not a soldier, and sent frustratingly few details on these matters."

Missing soldiers? "Yes, a regiment of the Taldan Horse has vanished—it normally works out of Yanmass to patrol the Whistling Plains and guard trade caravans. The Mercantile Council blames bandits, but it's unusual for an entire military force of two dozen or so soldiers to vanish without a trace."

What do you know about the cult? "Very little, except that its members seem friendly and it is popular with many locals. Meir claims the so-called Twilight Child has been healing the sick and injured with a touch, but he would hardly be the first self-proclaimed god I've seen claim the same."

"What do we do if the Twilight Child is really Prince Carrius?" "If you even suspect he may be genuine, return here and I will do more to confirm his identity before we approach Eutropia. The last thing she needs right now is to relive the loss of her baby brother."

Is Maxillar Pythareus connected to Prince Carrius? "I... have no idea. Maxillar Pythareus's Imperialists claim that the vote against primogeniture either

never happened, or else is invalid given the violent circumstances, meaning Eutropia, as a woman, cannot claim the throne. But by their arguments, Carrius would be a more legitimate heir than Pythareus, who was only adopted. If anything, this complicates both Eutropia's and Pythareus's claims."

PART 1: DARK DAYS IN YANMASS

The trip to Yanmass may be as eventful or uneventful as you wish. The journey takes 9 days by horseback or carriage, followed by 5 days via river and canal (or an additional 7 days by carriage or horseback), though player ingenuity or magic may shorten these times. Regardless of their travel time, the PCs arrive in Yanmass on the day of Baron Mauston Kustios's monthly meeting with the city's ruling Mercantile Council.

THE MERCANTILE COUNCIL

Normally, city business is private, but the PCs have been granted admission to the Mercantile Council's meetings per Lady Martella Lotheed's request. The PCs are to meet with these leaders, gauge their political leanings, and attempt to sway the city's leaders to the Loyalist cause. The PCs have scarcely enough time to wash off the road dust and dress in their best clothing before reporting to Yanmass's Commerce Hall.

The PCs have a secondary mission while in Yanmass: to investigate the activities of a group called the Cult of the Twilight Child. This mysterious cult is rumored to be harmless, but it takes as its central figure the resurrected Prince Carrius, Princess Eutropia's younger brother. Lady Martella Lotheed doesn't put much stock in these rumors, but since the PCs will be there anyway, she feels it's worth investigating the rumors.

Almost immediately, the PCs' mission appears to go awry. The liveried soldiers at the entrance to the opulent Commerce Hall inform the PCs that the baron is too ill to attend today's meeting and that the Mercantile Council is hosting another guest, Earl Yander Merkondus. The guards introduce the PCs to a liveried halfling official named **Gregor Hamble** (LG male halfling expert 4) to escort them into the audience chamber. Hamble is a gregarious and helpful sort; upon the slightest interest in discussion, he notes that the 19-member Mercantile Council consists of five principals and 14 associates who represent the wealthy interests of Yanmass, and that one of the associate councilors—a banker named Rhundle Navin—is unexpectedly absent. Hamble admits Baron Kustios's absence isn't surprising, as the baron has been ill at home for many days, leaving the

task of city governance entirely in the hands of the Mercantile Council. Hamble also mentions that Earl Merkondus is a wealthy aristocrat from southwestern Taldor who has expressed strong Imperialist leanings. A PC can confirm this to be the case with a successful DC 10 Knowledge (nobility) check. Politically, Hamble adds, the Mercantile Council doesn't lean particularly strongly either way—although certain members have their own opinions.

When the PCs arrive in the audience chamber, read or paraphrase the following.

Several chandeliers supplement the sunlight streaming in through high, stained glass windows to light the cavernous audience chamber of Yanmass's opulent Commerce Hall. An immense oval table takes up much of the room's space. A throne-like chair at the head of the table is vacant, but most of the other chairs are occupied. Seated in ornate, padded chairs are the five principals: a human man wearing ostentatious jewelry, a half-elven woman in well-tailored clothing, a handsome human man wearing the regalia of a high priest of Abadar, a proud halfling woman, and a narrow-faced, worried-looking human woman. Several other well-dressed people occupy less ostentatious chairs. At the foot of the table is a group of plain, sturdy wooden chairs, one of which is occupied by a fashionable, broadly smiling aristocrat.

This group is Yanmass's Mercantile Council, along with the visitor Earl Yander Merkondus. Several guards stand discreetly around the perimeter of the room, alert for trouble (if necessary, use statistics for a turnkey on page 271 of *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*). The five principals are described in more detail below. The less ostentatious chairs are occupied by 13 of the Mercantile Council's 14 associates. These 13 associates aren't detailed in this adventure, but you should feel free to invent names and personalities for them as necessary.

The PCs can introduce themselves to this assembly however they see fit; the council members are all polished and polite. Hamble stands near the PCs, ready to offer helpful guidance should the PCs falter. After the PCs' introductions, the Mercantile Council gets to business.

The man in ostentatious jewelry stands, gesturing to the empty seat at the head of the table. "Given Baron Kustios's continued absence, I'd like to call this meeting to order in his stead. We know that much of Taldor is currently in political turmoil, but we have pressing problems close to home. Yanmass suffers under the grip of several troubles, and our discussion today must confront these. First, terrible, unsavory dreams haunt many of our citizens; some of us here have had them, I understand, and their cumulative effect is crippling to morale and our economy. Second, the Taldan Horse cavalry regiment that protected our city has, in large part, vanished. This leads to the third issue, which is the rise of banditry on

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the eastern plains: Qadiran bandits, specifically, preying upon good Taldan trade."

"All trade, to be frank," interjects the narrow-faced woman, "Keleshite and Taldan alike."

The priest of Abadar speaks up, "There's another thing, although it's not a clear threat: the Cult of the Twilight Child in the Encircling Bower. Good citizens are joining this mystery cult. Perhaps it's as benign as rumors say, but we can't ignore a new philosophy that is ensnaring so many of our citizens."

"Religion ever reigns in your mind, Enumerator," says the half-elf woman, "but people aren't suffering from the cult as they are the other troubles."

The halfling woman sits up straighter and adds, "Our esteemed guest, Earl Yander Merkondus, assures us that he has a group of troubleshooters already acting to alleviate all of these concerns. But so long as Yanmass suffers, so does trade—and therefore so do we."

The PCs are then invited to speak, but obviously the most welcome comments they could make would be to offer to investigate the town's many problems. Earl Merkondus doesn't interrupt the PCs' address; he already had his opportunity to speak prior to the PCs' arrival.

After the initial discussion, the large group breaks up into smaller groups to discuss civic matters; the PCs are free to mingle and approach the council members during this discussion (if the PCs don't think to do so, Hamble subtly recommends that they do). The key pieces of information that the PCs can gain from each of the principals are as follows.

Lord **Rudig Autun** (LN male human aristocrat 9) is Yanmass's largest spice importer and one of its wealthiest citizens—hence his abundant jewelry. A vain and foppish man who believes himself an authority on culture and fashion, Councilor Autun makes no secret of his support for the Imperialist faction. In conversations with the PCs, he points out that the Loyalists have suffered more than Imperialists in recent events—he opines that the ill Baron Kustios has Loyalist leanings, the missing banker Rhundle Navin was an outspoken Loyalist, and even the Qadiran bandits have been targeting merchants with Loyalist leanings the most. (Councilor Autun is correct, but is too loudmouthed for Yander's liking; after this meeting, Councilor Autun is the next to suffer from the disturbing dreams delivered by the pairakas.) If the PCs can convince Councilor Autun that they share his sense of fashion and taste with a successful DC 15 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Knowledge (nobility) check, he observes that the troubles in Yanmass started shortly after a terrific new restaurant called Savories opened,

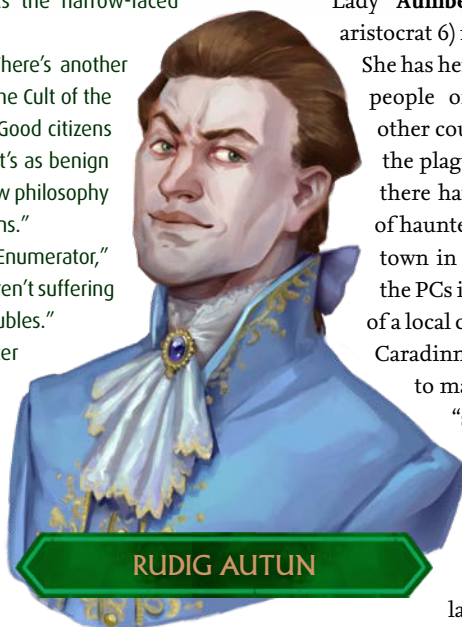
and perhaps the owner of that restaurant knows more (see area E).

Lady **Aumber Gewbell** (NG female half-elf aristocrat 6) is a clothing importer and exporter. She has her finger on the pulse of the common people of Yanmass much more than the other councilors do. She worries most about the plague of disturbing dreams, aware that there have been several suicides and bands of haunted-eyed townspeople wandering the town in a stupor (such as those who attack the PCs in area A). She also mentions rumors of a local conspiracy theorist, a woman named Caradinna Farkin, who has long been known to make erratic proclamations about the "secret masters" in town. Recently, Farkin had become increasingly strident and insistent, even accosting a few of the council members in the streets. However, Farkin hasn't been seen in the last 2 days, and Councilor Gewbell

wonders whether she didn't stumble onto some genuine clues (if the PCs follow up on this lead, see area D). If the PCs impress Councilor Gewbell with a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check, she passes along a rumor that someone is hiding out in Hedge Hill (area F), and that anyone lurking there must be hiding from something important.

Lady **Carmellio Rauls** (LE female human aristocrat 6/rogue 2) deals primarily in armor, weapons, and equestrian gear; she holds a lucrative contract to supply the Taldan Horse. Her greatest concern is the recent disappearance of the Taldan Horse regiment and the rise of the Qadiran bandits, both due to the impact on her contracts and for the lack of protection for her caravans. If the PCs impress Councilor Rauls with knowledge of smithing or horsemanship with a successful DC 15 Craft (armor), Craft (weapons), or Ride check, she suggests several good leads to hunt down the missing Taldan Horse regiment and find out more about the Qadiran "bandits." PCs who follow up on these leads automatically succeed at the Diplomacy checks to gather information in areas J and K.

Chief Enumerator **Abrun Palliettor** (LN male human cleric of Abadar 9) is the high priest of the church of Abadar in Yanmass. He keeps his opinions to himself, but he is suspicious of Yander and leans slightly toward the Loyalist faction. He speaks to the PCs guardedly, explaining that the Cult of the Twilight Child seems benign, but he's uncomfortable with the public perception that it's an offshoot of the Church of Abadar—he doesn't believe that to be the case and wonders whether the cult is hiding something sinister. If a PC impresses Councilor Palliettor with a successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion)



check regarding Abadaran lore, he suggests they meet with him later at the temple (area C).

Lady **Hallianna Cobbin** (LG female halfling fighter 4/aristocrat 4) owns several large orchards and ranches in the outskirts of Yanmass. Her father was the chief manager for an heirless human aristocrat who bequeathed both her lands and her title to her favorite employee, making the Cobbins the only halfling family to ever sit on the Mercantile Council. Councilor Cobbin is not particularly political, but she considers Earl Merkondus to be talented, urbane, and exceptionally handsome (she has a weakness for taller men). Councilor Cobbin can provide a great deal of gossip about Yanmass; even a cursory conversation with her reveals a random rumor from the Yanmass Rumors table on page 10. If the PCs ingratiate themselves with Councilor Cobbin with a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check, she provides another random rumor, and an additional rumor for every 5 points by which the PC's Diplomacy check result exceeds this DC.

Associate council members have little more to add, although they express concern at the city's troubles. Some of the council members can describe the disturbing dreams they have had. Although the dreamers don't go into lurid detail, it's clear that the dreams involve unbridled lust and cannibalism. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Sense Motive check while asking around the associates in this manner uncovers that the council members who have had these dreams are those who express the most vocal support for the Loyalist faction (which includes the missing Rhundle Navin). This should be a clue to the PCs that the dreams have a political motivation. A PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Diplomacy check among the associates learns that the Baron is absent because these disturbing dreams have incapacitated him. If this check result is 23 or greater, the PC also learns that the baron has not formally taken a position in the current political division, but rumors suggest he favors the Loyalist faction.

Earl Yander Merkondus (see page 56) also circulates among the room, primarily to assure the council members that his troubleshooters (the Kozan Bravos, described in area B) are actively working to solve the city's problems. If the PCs speak with Yander, he is imperious and rude, with comments such as "It's just like the Loyalists to be ignore the plight of good Taldan people; we Imperialists have this well in hand, I assure you," and "Perhaps your clumsy attempts at diplomacy would be better served in

a more effete city—you might find this one too rough and slanderous for your delicate ideals." If the PCs dislike

Yander after their interaction, or even suspect him of being behind troubles in town, so much the better. However, Yander and the PCs shouldn't come to blows, as the venue is too public and both sides are under the political protection of the Mercantile Council.

If the PCs ask after Sir Meir Dratavis, Princess Eutropia's representative, several council members appear distressed while Earl Merkondus removes his circlet in respect.

Eventually someone mentions that Sir Dratavis had grown increasingly despondent, and finally vanished. Some council members blame the plague of dreams gripping the city, but Yander says he fears the poor diplomat had started to realize Eutropia was a criminal and a fraud tearing the nation apart and fled out into the plains in shame. In truth, Meir was attempting to follow leads

regarding the missing Taldan Horse regiment and ran afoul of the medusa Aresphena (see area H3).

Once the PCs have learned all they care to, they are welcome to leave and pursue their investigations around the city. This adventure is deliberately open-ended, allowing the PCs to follow up on whatever clues they'd like in whatever order they choose. Rumors that the PCs might pick up are detailed in the table on page 10, and locations within Yanmass are set forth below.

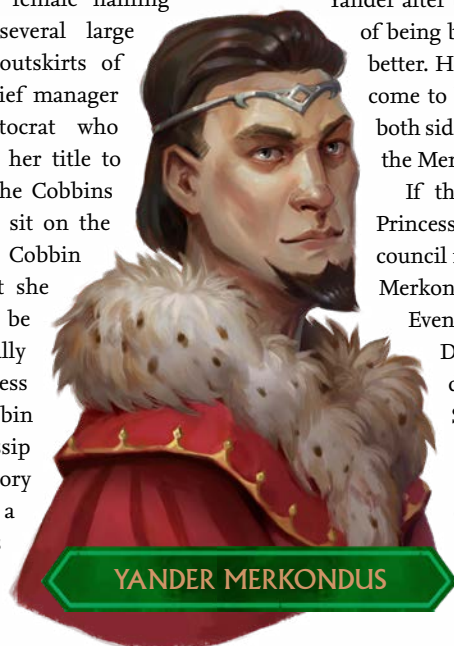
If the PCs later wish to meet with the Mercantile Council, they need only give a message to Hamble at Commerce Hall.

YANMASS LOCATIONS

Some of these encounters do not have a fixed location, and the PCs could come across them anywhere (such as the charmed townspeople in area A or meeting Xan in area G), while others are locations that the PCs must learn about during their investigations and actively explore. The inhabitants of Yanmass are on edge but willing to provide simple directions, so the PCs should have no trouble receiving directions to specific locations (such as Savories in area E or Hedge Hill in area F).

A. CHARMED TOWNSFOLK (CR 7)

On the PCs' first expedition into the streets of Yanmass, they are accosted by a group of townspeople. These townspeople have all suffered from the disturbing nightmares sent by the pairakas in Sanguine Brothers Fine Meats (see Part 2) and have been further charmed by one of the pairakas. As the townspeople approach the PCs with haunted, desperate looks in their eyes,



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YANMASS RUMORS

The PCs have many opportunities to question people in Yanmass about the current troubles. Any PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information automatically hears about the plague of disturbing nightmares (see area **I**), attacks by Qadiran bandits (see area **K**), or the strange cult at the Encircling Bower (see area **L**), and also learns one random rumor from the table below. For every 5 points by which the check result exceeds the DC, the PC overhears another rumor.

d6	Rumor
1	"I saw a couple of shady figures lurking around the temple of Abadar. They scattered as soon as they saw I saw 'em, but they didn't look up to any good." (True; see area C .)
2	"That Caradinna Farkin gets herself worked up, for sure. She's always yammering about the 'true powers in town' and how sheets of lead protect you from mind-controlling magic. She's locked herself in her house, I hear." (Partly true; see area D .)
3	"We got snubbed at that new restaurant, Savories, last night. It caters to the best of the best, and I've heard it's exquisite. They were too crowded even give me a table. Me! There's something unnatural about a restaurant becoming so exclusive so quickly." (True; see area E .)
4	"I saw the dryad of Hedge Hill! They claim she's just a legend, but I saw a woman dressed in green in the forest at the center of the park." (Partly true; see area F .)
5	"Have you seen the weirdo in the red bird mask? I have! Yesterday at sundown he was crouched at the top of a building over by that old theater, watching the street. Creepy fellow, but I guess if he was gonna do more that mope about, he'd have done it by now. I hope." (True; see areas G and N .)
6	"People wonder where the bandits might be hiding. I'd put my money on the ruins of Orvestikar Manor. It's isolated, and hardly anyone goes out there." (False; see area H .)

they draw daggers. The PCs can detect the charm effect on these townspeople with a successful DC 25 Sense Motive check or with spells such as *detect magic*. Use the Charmed Townsfolk map on page 12 for this encounter.

Creatures: The townspeople consist of two men and two women recruited from a nearby construction project; all have deep shadows around their eyes, as they haven't slept well in weeks. Even though none of them are evil or even particularly violent by nature, they all fervently believe that killing the PCs will end their terrible dreams. This urge is compounded by the pairakas' *charm* spells.

These townspeople attack in pairs, attempting to gang up on the least armored PCs. A townspeople reduced to fewer than 10 hit points comes to her senses and flees (or surrenders, if unable to flee).

CHARMED TOWNSPEOPLE (4)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Human commoner 5

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor)

hp 27 each (5d6+10)

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

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee club +5 (1d6+3)

TACTICS

During Combat The townsfolk are straightforward in their attacks, swinging at PCs with makeshift clubs.

Morale If reduced below 10 hit points, the townsfolk come to their senses and either beg for mercy or try to flee.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14

Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Light Armor Proficiency, Simple Weapon Proficiency (club), Weapon Focus (club)

Skills Handle Animal +6, Knowledge (local) +4, Perception +7, Profession (varies) +7, Sense Motive +1

Languages Common

Gear leather armor, club, 28 sp

Development: If the PCs capture and question any of the charmed townspeople, the townspeople admit to having terrible nightmares and are convinced that killing the PCs will put a stop to them. If pressed, the townspeople share that a "white ram" with black eyes (in truth, a pairaka in animal form) convinced them of this, though they're at a loss to explain why they believed the talking beast. Townspeople freed from the charm effect (such as by *dispel magic* or *protection from evil*) are effusively apologetic and helpful, but they can provide little information other than to describe the white ram and their nightmares in vivid detail (see area **I**). If the PCs think to ask, each of these townspeople had been inclined to support the Loyalist faction, but they have been ignoring politics since the onset of their bad dreams.

B. THE KOZAN BRAVOS (CR 9)

The PCs might be rightfully suspicious of Earl Merkondus's "troubleshooters," a group of adventurers

called the Kozan Bravos. Like Earl Merkondus (and the PCs), the Kozan Bravos are newcomers to Yanmass, having arrived only a few days before Yander himself.

The Kozan Bravos are led by a stern Taldan ex-soldier named Lieutenant Grammell Taychar and include a grimy warpriest of Gorum named Hulgra Neverhome and twin mercenaries named Cardello and Viaria. Yander also insisted on adding one of his protégés, a bard named Embla Hightune, to the group. Embla is a tall, severe-looking woman who is much more savvy and suspicious than anyone else in the Kozan Bravos. Although Grammell is the group's leader, he takes Embla's advice, as she knows their employer's mind best.

The Kozan Bravos understand that their role in Yanmass is to make some cursory investigations but not to take any further action without their employer's express approval. Each of them suspects—correctly—that Yander is in fact behind many of these problems and doesn't actually want them solved right now. They therefore wander the city most mornings, but spend the afternoons and evenings drinking in their favorite tavern, the Whistling Wyvern.

The PCs can easily observe the Kozan Bravos around town; a successful DC 15 Sense Motive check after observing them for a few hours reveals that they aren't actually making any genuine investigations. A successful DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information about them reveals this same result.

Creatures: The Kozan Bravos are generally content to rudely brush off inquisitive PCs. However, all of the Kozan Bravos—and Taychar and Hulgra in particular—are proud and arrogant. If the PCs are insistent, disrespectful, or violent, the Kozan Bravos attack, intending to teach the PCs a lesson. If this lesson results in a few PCs becoming incapacitated and the Kozan Bravos stealing and then selling off their gear, all the better.

Depending on the PCs' actions, the Kozan Bravos might be more aggressive, such as ambushing the PCs or intentionally provoking a fight. In particular, the Kozan Bravos ambush the PCs if Yander commands them to (such as if the PCs eliminate the pairakas in Part 2).

LIEUTENANT GRAMMELL TAYCHAR CR 5
XP 1,600
Male harsh lieutenant (*Pathfinder Villain Codex* 170)
hp 61



GRAMMELL TAYCHAR

HULGRA NEVERHOME CR 4
XP 1,200

Female grizzled healer (*Pathfinder Villain Codex* 169)
hp 36

EMBLA HIGHTUNE CR 4
XP 1,200
Female court poet (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 28)
hp 31

CARDELLO AND VIARIA CR 4
XP 1,200 each
Grizzled mercenaries (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 268)
hp 51 each

C. THE ENUMERATOR'S ASSASSINS (CR 8)

This encounter occurs at Yanmass's temple of Abadar if the PCs follow up with the Mercantile Council member who serves as the temple's high priest, Chief Enumerator **Abrun Palliettor**

(LN male human cleric of Abadar 9; use the statistics for a priest on page 305 of the *GameMastery Guide*, but remove the priest's armor and shield and replace his Healing domain with the Nobility domain). Abrun has made his own investigations into the Cult of the Twilight Child, as he is concerned that the cult is tarnishing his faith's good name; he can confirm that the Cult of the Twilight Child has nothing to do with Abadar's faith. Further, he's become worried that the cult's objectives are more ominous than they appear on the surface.

If the PCs don't approach the chief enumerator, he reaches out to them after their first visit to the Encircling Bower and asks to speak with them at the temple. He wants to discuss his suspicions and what the PCs have found. When the PCs arrive, Abrun has just dismissed the temple's three acolytes for the evening, leaving him alone in the building.

Use the Enumerator's Assassins map on page 12 for this encounter.

Creatures: The PCs' arrival to meet with the chief enumerator is timely, as the Cult of the Twilight Child has commissioned a pair of assassins to kill the nosy priest. The two rogues have been preparing for their attack all day. When the PCs unexpectedly arrive, they decide to go through with the attack anyway, underestimating the PCs' ability to protect their target. The rogues drink their *potions of invisibility* and sneak into the nave of the temple where the chief enumerator meets with the PCs, intending to sneak attack the priest. If the PCs intervene, the rogues attempt to murder them before finishing off Abrun. A rogue reduced to fewer than 15 hit points attempts to flee.

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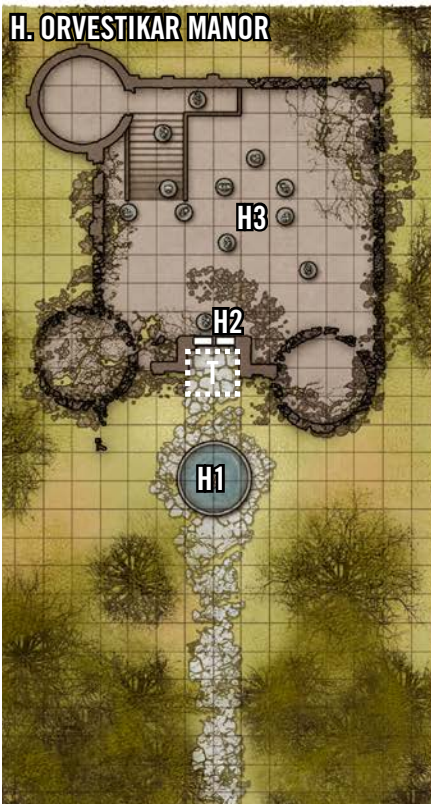
YANMASS



E. SAVORIES



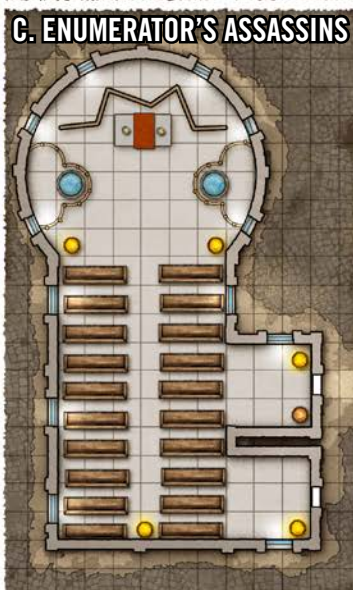
H. ORVESTIKAR MANOR



A. CHARMED TOWNSFOLK



C. ENUMERATOR'S ASSASSINS



D. CONSPIRACY THEORISTS



F. HEDGE HILL



M. CONFRONTING MERKONDUS



N. XAN STRIKES



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

HIRED BLADES (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Freelance thieves (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 147)

hp 42 each

Treasure: If the PCs defeat the assassins and save his life, Abrun offers to let them use *Scofflaw Hunter*, a weapon kept in his temple's care, for as long as they are in Yanmass. *Scofflaw Hunter* is a +1 lesser designating^{UE} heavy crossbow with a heavy wooden stock decorated with ornate golden filigree.

Development: If captured, the rogues offer information in exchange for their lives. They aren't worried about being arrested, as they are confident in their abilities to escape custody, but they don't want to be summarily executed by overeager adventurers. The rogues explain that they received their contract from a figure in one of their usual haunts (a seedy tavern called the Grand Uncle). If a PC interrogator succeeds at a DC 23 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, the rogues offer more information about their employer: their employer was cloaked and hooded, but the rogues realized that he was an aasimar, not a human. Further, they spotted their employer attempting to conceal a strange round cap with an attached veil. Although these clues strongly indicate that one of the aasimar high cultists in the Encircling Bower hired the rogues, the word of an assassin is insufficient for the authorities to move against the cult.

The rogues expected to hear from their employer when the job was done, in order to receive the remainder of their payment (their initial payment was the gear that each rogue carries on his person), but the high cultist doesn't actually intend to contact them again.

D. CONSPIRACY THEORIST (CR 8)

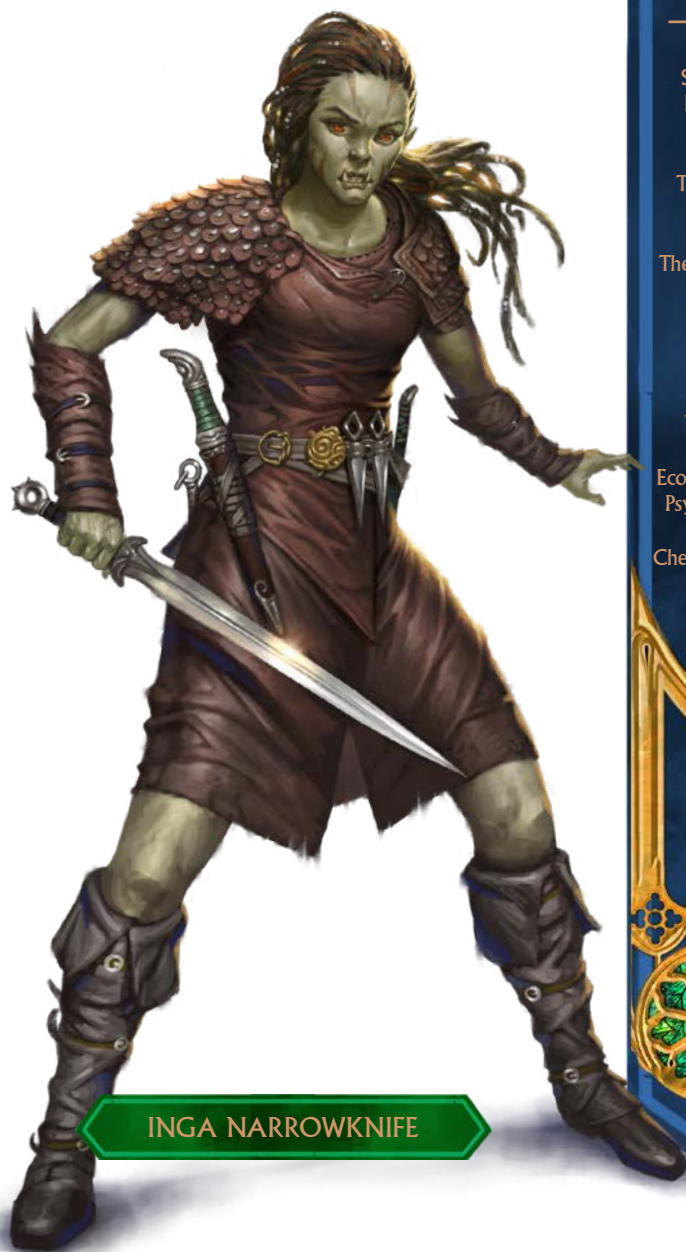
The PCs might seek out a local conspiracy theorist named Caradinna Farkin at her run-down house at the edge of Yanmass. Although Farkin hasn't been seen for 2 days, her home appears occupied. When the PCs arrive, read or paraphrase the following.

This tall but narrow house towers over a weedy yard. The house's shutters are all closed, but a thin trail of smoke issues from its crooked chimney. Thin sheets of metal are nailed to the front door along with a sign reading, "Absolutely NO solicitors or psychic manipulators!"

Caradinna Farkin had long believed that "secret masters" control Yanmass and all of Taldor. Although most of her conspiracy theories have been incorrect, she recently discovered that monsters using *charm* spells were living in the abandoned Sanguine Brothers slaughterhouse. Unfortunately for Farkin, the pairakas learned of her investigations and sent a charmed assassin to silence her.

Although the house appears inhabited, Caradinna Farkin is already dead. The pairakas at Sanguine Brothers charmed a ruthless murderer named Inga Narrowknife, a drifter with no connections to anyone in Yanmass, and convinced her to kill Farkin. Inga did the deed a few days ago and plundered Farkin's house afterward. While looking through Farkin's extensive notes, Inga became convinced that she'd been mind-controlled by the "secret masters" in Farkin's records. Inga believes that Farkin's house—lined with sheets of lead and hung with dreamcatcher-like "psychic defenses"—is the only safe place for her now. In truth, Farkin's defenses do little other than offer some chance to impede divination spells, while the pairakas consider their stooge's mission complete and have all but forgotten her.

Use the map on page 12 for this encounter.



INGA NARROWKNIFE

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Creature: Inga stays in Farkin's house and answers the door only to insistent knocks or claims of knowledge about the "secret masters" that run the city. She casts *disguise self* to match Farkin's appearance before answering the door. She attempts to keep conversations short, sending visitors on wild goose chases around the city by insisting, "Here's where you can find the truth!" and recommending locations such as Savories (area E), Hedge Hill (area F), or even the Encircling Bower (area L).

The PCs might detect Inga's ruse by penetrating the illusion or succeeding at a Sense Motive check opposed by Inga's Bluff check (+11). If the PCs confront Inga about her disguise, she becomes convinced they serve the beings who charmed her. Inga attempts to delay the PCs in conversation just long enough to study the nearest PC for a death attack before attacking.

INGA NARROWKNIFE

CR 8

XP 4,800

Sacred killer (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 208)

hp 68

TACTICS

Before Combat Inga casts *disguise self* to help disguise herself as Caradinna Farkin and applies greenblood oil to her short sword in case things turn violent. She attempts to study an opponent prior to combat, while engaging in discussion, to prepare for a death attack.

During Combat Inga attempts to keep herself from being flanked by fighting around corners or in doorways. She attempts to hide and make sneak attacks with Vital Strike.

Morale Convinced that defeat means future subjugation by the "secret masters," Inga fights to the death.

Development: Caradinna Farkin's house is in disarray, with maps, notes, and frantic ravings covering most surfaces. A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Perception check discovers Farkin's corpse stuffed in a trunk. A more thorough review of Farkin's notes requires separating fact from rambling theories; with a successful DC 20 Linguistics check, a PC discerns that Farkin suspected the "secret masters" occupied the abandoned Sanguine Brothers slaughterhouse.

If the PCs managed to restrain and question Inga, she has little information to offer beyond describing her recent mission to kill Farkin. She recalls that a large dog with black eyes (which she doesn't know was a pairaka in its animal form) used magic on her and then told her who to kill, but she doesn't recall where that occurred.

E. SAVORIES (CR 8)

Savories is a new, upscale restaurant in Yanmass that has the local nobles buzzing and vying for seats. The restaurant's popularity is magically induced; in truth,

the restaurant is merely average, but the restaurant's owner is a skilled enchanter named Argentus who uses magic to enhance his reputation. The PCs might hear that Savories is connected to some of the recent troubles in Yanmass. Argentus is an unethical self-promoter, but he's not behind any of the troubles facing the town.

Savories is open every afternoon and evening. At other times, it is locked up with no one on site except the ice golem guard. Assuming the PCs come to Savories while it is open, read or paraphrase the following.

This restaurant is tiny, with only four padded booths for diners. The wood of the structure is dark and embellished with gold leaf. An alcove to the southeast contains the restaurant's main entrance, while a similar alcove to the northeast contains a massive, graceful ice sculpture of an eagle in flight.

There are currently five patrons in Savories: an elderly married couple and a trio of wealthy human siblings (if statistics are necessary, use those for a princess on page 250 of *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*). There are also two cooks working in the kitchen to the west (if statistics are necessary, use the statistics for a barmaid on page 257 of *NPC Codex*, but with no gear). The oily-haired but impeccably dressed Argentus serves as host and server in order to hobnob with the elite dining at his establishment. Use the Savories map on page 12 for this encounter.

Argentus has charmed each of the patrons here using his *wand of charm person* to convince them that the food is exquisite, the restaurant is unsurpassed, and Argentus himself is the pinnacle of refinement and sophistication. The charm effect upon each patron can be detected with a successful DC 25 Sense Motive check.

Creatures: Argentus suspects the PCs might cause trouble, as he knows they're affiliated with the Mercantile Council. He tries to deflect the PCs' inquiries and get them out of his restaurant. If it seems easiest to provide them a complimentary meal, he does so, and attempts to cast *charm person* or *suggestion* spells as he serves them to get them to finish quickly and leave. Instead of *dimension door*, Argentus has prepared *forgetful slumber*^{ARG}, which he uses to cover up failed charm attempts. If the PCs confront Argentus about his enchantments, he panics and attacks.

In combat, Argentus uses spells such as *confusion* and *phantasmal killer* to incapacitate his enemies. Argentus's bodyguard is hidden in plain sight—the ice statue is an ice golem. Argentus attempts to flee or surrender if reduced below 10 hit points; the ice golem attacks at Argentus's direction and fights until destroyed.

ARGENTUS

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male seductive enchanter (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 183)
hp 40

ICE GOLEM CR 5
XP 1,600
hp 53 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 161)

Development: If given the opportunity to negotiate, Argentus offers information in exchange for the PCs letting him go. He has studied creatures that use enchantment effects, and he recognizes the plague of distressing dreams as the work of a type of outsider called a pairaka div. Argentus shares this information, and whatever basic information about divs that you choose, with the PCs in exchange for his release.

Story Award: If the PCs spare Argentus's life and obtain this information from him, award them XP as though they had defeated him in combat.

F. HEDGE HILL

Yanmass's largest public park, Hedge Hill, surrounds a remnant of primeval forest. Rumors hold that a dryad flits through the trees at the center of Hedge Hill, but only the very young or very inebriated claim to see her. The forest is certainly thick and wild—more than typically found in the center of a city—but no fey creature lives here.

However, the Hedge Hill forest is not uninhabited. A desperate Taldan Horse lieutenant named Gallindra Jonrek is currently hiding out in the forest. Gallindra was a loyal soldier in the Taldan Horse, serving under Commander Jaliessa Staubel (see Part 3). Jaliessa identified the good-hearted Lieutenant Jonrek and several other fellow soldiers as being unlikely to comply with her planned treachery, so Jaliessa assigned them the dangerous task of investigating Orvestikar Manor (see area H) in order to dispose of them. Gallindra willingly went as ordered, but she fled when she saw her companions and their mounts being petrified. She now knows Jaliessa was just trying to dispose of her, and she suspects—correctly—

that Jaliessa believes she's dead. The lieutenant has gone into hiding here in Hedge Hill while she plans what to do next. Use the Hedge Hill map on page 12 for this encounter.

When the PCs arrive at the forested grove at the center of Hedge Hill, read or paraphrase the following.

Hedge Hill is an orderly, well-tended park with rolling hills of cut grass and carefully arranged flowers. The center of the park is a wild tangle of vegetation, standing in stark contrast to the meticulous beauty of the rest of the park. This central forest is overgrown, with few paths, and the dense trees create deep shadows even on bright days.

F1. Trapped Path (CR 7)

Gallindra has used her knowledge of woodcraft to place two swinging log traps across the paths that lead into her hiding place. Each location marked as area F1 on the map has an identical trap.

Trap: A well-concealed tripwire triggers several swinging logs to sweep across the path. Gallindra sawed the logs off bluntly rather than carving the ends into points, so they incapacitate rather than kill. The trap also make a loud whistling noise when triggered, alerting Gallindra in area F2 that intruders are approaching.

SWINGING LOGS TRAP CR 7
XP 3,200

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location;
Reset manual

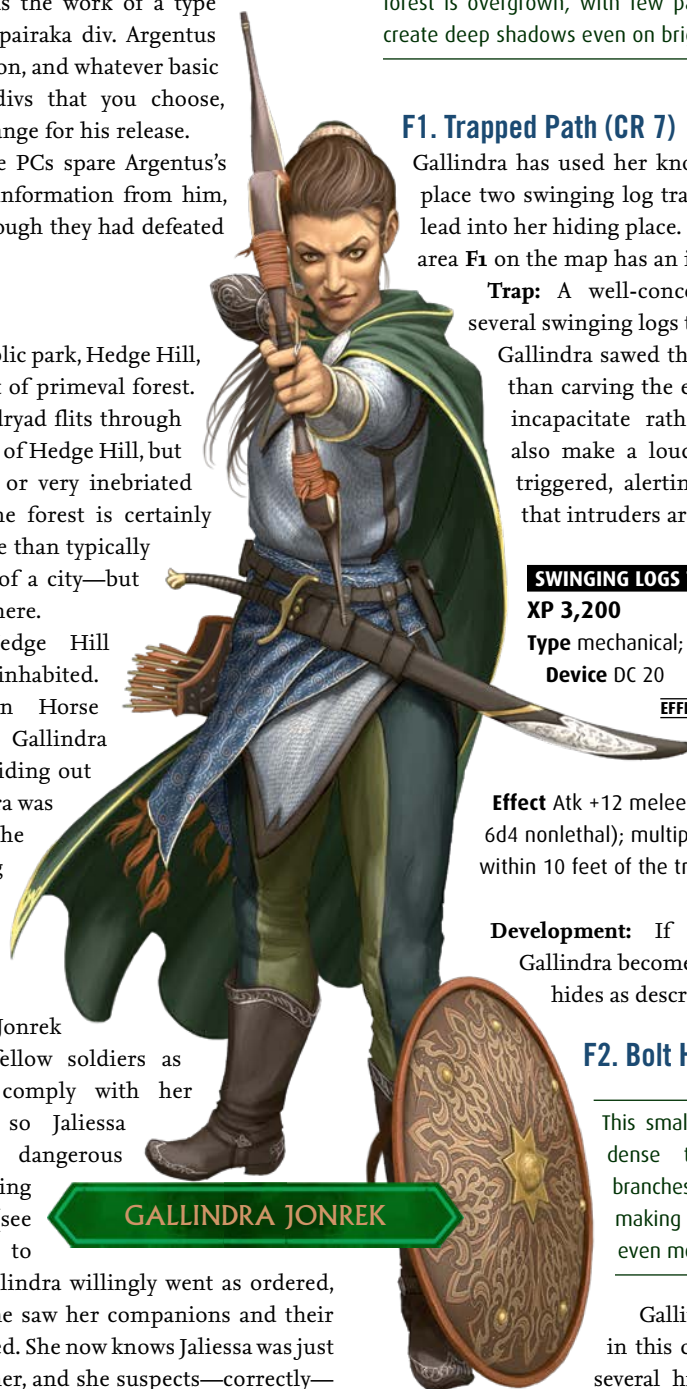
Effect Atk +12 melee (6d4 bludgeoning and 6d4 nonlethal); multiple targets (all targets within 10 feet of the tripwire's trigger)

Development: If either trap activates, Gallindra becomes aware of intruders and hides as described in area F2.

F2. Bolt Hole (CR 4)

This small clearing contains several dense thickets. Piles of leafy branches rest atop the thickets, making the dense undergrowth even more impenetrable.

Gallindra has been hiding in this clearing, and has formed several hiding places within the



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dense thickets that are just large enough for her to squeeze into.

Creature: Lieutenant Gallindra Jonrek is a lean, muscular woman with a haunted look in her eyes. She's seen good friends petrified and realized that her commander and comrades are engaging in treason. She believes that she can't trust anyone, and tends to respond to claims of friendship with violence. If aware of intruders in the forest—such as by either of her traps triggering—she retreats into one of her hiding places, taking 10 on her Stealth check to hide. If discovered, she draws her weapons and prepares for a fight.

LIEUTENANT GALLINDRA JONREK

CR 4

XP 1,200

LG mounted archer (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 130)

hp 42

TACTICS

Before Combat If enemies are near, Gallindra casts *resist energy* (fire) before hiding in the thicket.

During Combat Gallindra fights with her shortbow at a distance if possible. If she must fight in melee, she drinks her *potion of blur* and fights with her scimitar.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 20 hit points, Gallindra attempts to flee.

STATISTICS

Combat Gear *oil of magic weapon*, *potion of blur*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Other Gear** mwk chain shirt, mwk heavy wooden shield, mwk composite shortbow (+2 Str) with 8 arrows, mwk scimitar, *cloak of resistance* +1, 72 gp

Development: If the PCs convince Gallindra of their good intentions—which requires adjusting her initial attitude of unfriendly—she can provide substantial information about the terrain outside of Yanmass. Additionally, she knows that her commanding officer, Jaliessa Staubel, is preparing some kind of treachery and is encamped at an abandoned caravanserai called Tallgrasses. She also knows that Orvestikar Manor is not an abandoned ruin, but rather a trap Jaliessa is using to dispose of inconveniently loyal soldiers. Gallindra isn't aware of the medusa at the manor—she believes it is a spellcaster with magic powerful enough to turn people (and even her elephant mount) to stone.

If the PCs are able to make Gallindra friendly, then, at your discretion, she might join their group as a loyal retainer or as a cohort for a PC with the Leadership feat.

Story Award: If the PCs convince the lieutenant of their good intentions, award them XP as though they had defeated her in combat.

G. THE VIGILANTE

While the PCs are investigating the various disturbances in Yanmass (such as just after they finish an encounter

elsewhere in the city), the psychopomp Xan (see page 60) confronts the PCs in his disguise as a Taldan man with a red leather bird mask. He insists that the PCs are on the wrong track because they're not focusing on the abomination at the center of the Cult of the Twilight Child. Xan doesn't engage in further discussion except to answer the PCs' questions about the Encircling Bower's location, layout, or defenses (he knows about areas L1 through L5). Xan considers any other task an unnecessary distraction and is openly dismissive of any other priorities the PCs describe, insisting, "Your petty politics are but a momentary concern."

Xan believes that the risen Prince Carrius is the abomination at the center of the cult, but since he sees this as exceedingly obvious, he doesn't specify names to the PCs. This may well lead the PCs to believe that some other monster or evil is at the center of the cult (if the PCs have witnessed a cult service, they may incorrectly suspect that Xan is referring to Vaddrigan Pol). Xan doesn't know how powerful the cult around the prince is, or how best to break it. He therefore goads the PCs to investigate the Encircling Bower in the hope that they either weaken the cult or give him valuable intelligence about the cult's power. Xan doesn't stay long, and certainly doesn't stick around if the PCs provoke a fight. If the PCs are particularly receptive to his position, Xan may arrange another meeting with them, but he never sees the PCs as more than expendable dupes.

H. ORVESTIKAR MANOR

Constructed by a wealthy Taldan aristocrat who fell upon hard times in his dotage, Orvestikar Manor is situated at the edge of the Whistling Plains, 9 miles northeast of Yanmass. The manor was sold, but the buyer was killed in a duel and the property fell into legal limbo. It was untended for years and, after a series of particularly fierce winters, its roof and upper stories collapsed. The site has been abandoned for more than 200 years and serves only as a temporary camp for travelers or an occasional storehouse for smugglers. Orvestikar Manor has a reputation for ill luck among the people of Yanmass, who have shunned the site for generations.

About 6 months ago, a medusa witch named Aresphena discovered the isolated site. Aresphena fell in love with the ruined manor as soon as she saw it, as it reminded her of the ruined manor in her favorite gothic novel, Ailson Kindler's *The Broken House of Kriegmoor*. Aresphena decided to create an extensive tableau of petrified creatures within the ruin, recreating her favorite scene from the novel. Using honeyed words and magical compulsions, the medusa compelled itinerant travelers and smugglers to assume dramatic poses and then petrified them with her gaze. The recent influx of soldiers sent by Jaliessa at Tallgrasses has allowed

Aresphena to nearly complete her work. Aresphena lives in the ruins of Orvestikar Manor alone.

When the PCs arrive at the site, read or paraphrase the following.

This manor of stone and wood has collapsed into little more than rubble. The walls are mounds of stones fifteen feet high, while former towers are nothing more than slightly taller ruins. The only portion of the manor that appears intact—and the only readily identifiable passageway to its interior—is a wide gate on its southern side.

Orvestikar Manor was originally constructed of stone and wood, but the manor is almost completely destroyed. The manor's impressive entry alone remains intact. Although it's not apparent from outside the manor, the northwest tower is not wholly collapsed, and stairs lead up to a small landing. The former walls are mere mounds of stone 15 feet high. Climbing these mounds requires a successful DC 15 Climb check; failure at one of these Climb checks causes a small landslide of debris audible throughout the ruined manor. The map of Orvestikar Manor is on page 12.

H1. Petrified Elephant

A life-sized statue of a rearing elephant, complete with caparison and saddle, stands in the middle of an overgrown trail near the manor.

The heraldry upon the elephant's caparison can be identified with a successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility) check as the current heraldry of the Taldan Horse, much more recent than the manor's construction. This clue and the fact that the elephant stands in the middle of the trail both indicate that the statue is a recent addition.

In truth, the statue is a petrified elephant, once ridden by Lieutenant Gallindra Jonrek (see area F). The elephant reared up when Aresphena revealed her true appearance, shielding its rider from the medusa's gaze and allowing Gallindra the opportunity to flee, but it became petrified in its rearing pose.

H2. Trapped Entrance (CR 6)

The entry is the most intact portion of the ruined manor. Two weathered cedar doors lie fallen beneath the heaps of stone filling the chamber above the entry, providing a clear but shadowed passage to the manor's interior. On the other side of the passage, a lifelike statue of a human soldier stands with its arms extended and a welcoming smile on its face.

Trap: Aresphena rigged a thin tripwire just above the ground here. When touched, the wire causes the loose

stones above to shift and crash down on anyone in or near the passage. This trap also alerts Aresphena to the presence of intruders.

COLLAPSING RUBBLE TRAP

CR 6

XP 2,400

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset none

Effect Atk +10 melee (9d6 bludgeoning and piercing damage); multiple targets (all targets in or adjacent to the passageway to area H3)

H3. Aresphena's Tableau (CR 9)

Within the tumbled walls of the manor, an open space measuring roughly fifty feet square lies choked with stone and timber debris. A mostly ruined roof still clings to the corners, providing a bit of shelter over a wooden staircase in the northwest corner.

Among the debris, a dozen statues depict a gruesome tableau of staged death. In the center of the courtyard, two statues have fallen in a duel, amid a frozen circle of distraught onlookers dressed in improvised finery. On the staircase, statues fall over each other in apparent attitudes of grief. At the base of the staircase stand two statues in long, makeshift wedding coats. Most of the statues are half-painted, with vivid red paint representing bloody wounds.

The medusa Aresphena has painstakingly arranged this tableau using petrified soldiers. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Knowledge (local or nobility) check identifies the scene as the climax of Ailson Kindler's *The Broken House of Kriegmoor*, in which a wedding meant to settle a feud instead becomes a tragic scene of death. The participants here are all soldiers and vagabonds, rather than the aristocrats represented in the novel, because Aresphena had to work with the people at hand.

A close examination of the statues indicates that each is incredibly lifelike, and many are wearing costumes over armor and weapons. Some of the statues have genuine expressions of pain or fright. If the PCs received descriptions of the missing Taldan Horse soldiers, many of the statues here meet the descriptions. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Knowledge (nobility) or Perception check recognizes Sir Meir Dratavis, petrified, as one of the unhappy grooms.

Aresphena needs a few more statues to complete her opus. With a successful DC 22 Perception check, a PC can identify the spaces around the wedding couple in which an officiator and family members are missing. Any PC who succeeded at the check to identify the scene from Kindler's novel automatically notes the omitted characters, as they are important to the plot.

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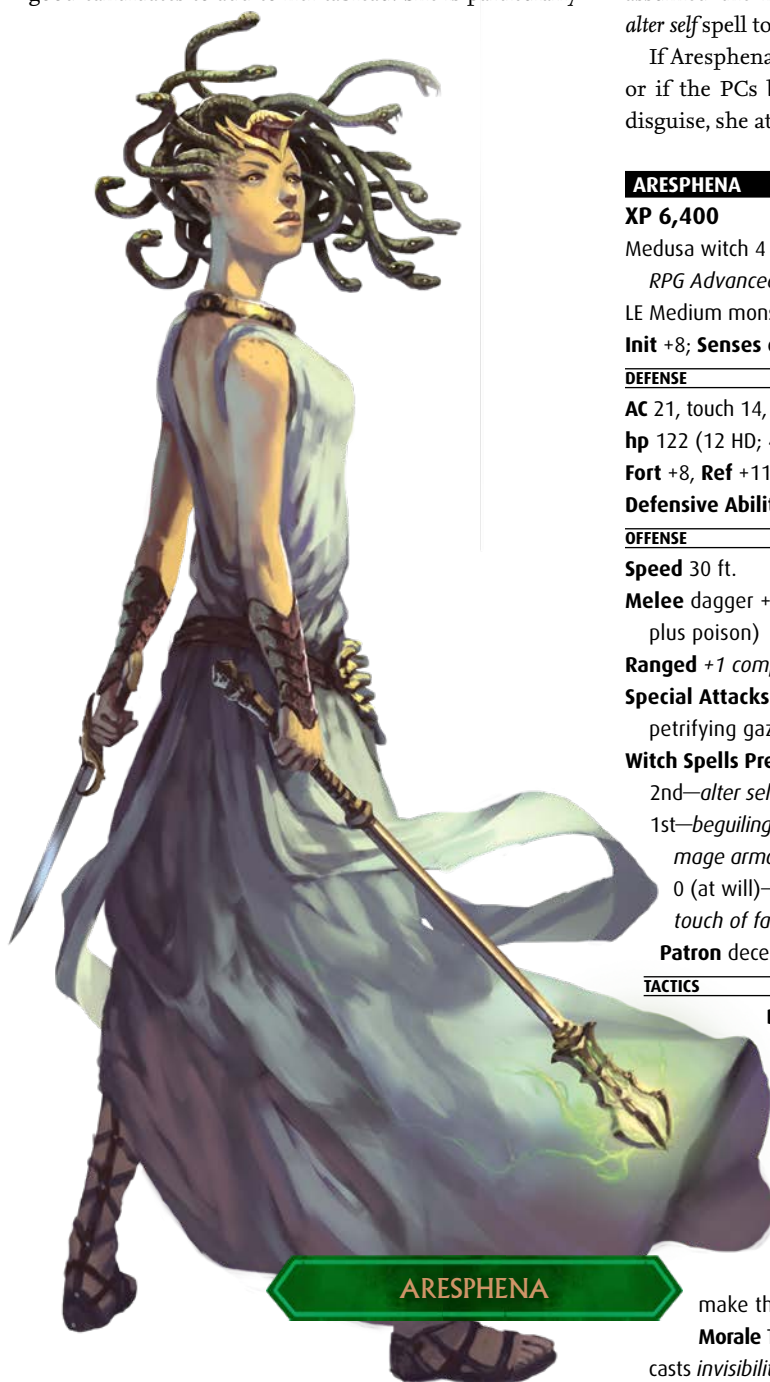
The wooden staircase leads to a surviving section of the manor, protected by a fragment of the shattered roof. Here, Aresphena sleeps and stores a few pots of paint and some materials to make costumes (such as the wedding coats worn by the couple).

Creature: Aresphena spends nearly all her time here, positioning and painting the statues of her masterpiece. If the PCs have alerted Aresphena to their presence (such as by triggering the trap in area H2), she disguises herself as a human using extended *alter self* and hides amid the rubble. Aresphena observes the PCs from hiding, looking for good candidates to add to her tableau. She is particularly

interested in any PC bearing religious icons to serve as the wedding officiant, but also seeks PCs of similar races to appear as part of a family group. At the very least, she'd like a few more horrified onlookers around the duel.

If Aresphena identifies good candidates for her tableau, she appears to the PCs with her hands in the air, claiming to be a traveler who recently came upon the ruined manor. She attempts to steer the conversation to have the PCs pose in a manner befitting the role she has planned for them (benevolent officiant, startled family members, or horrified onlookers). Once the targeted PCs have assumed the necessary pose, Aresphena dismisses her *alter self* spell to petrify them and attack any survivors.

If Aresphena decides that none of the PCs is suitable, or if the PCs begin to disturb her opus or pierce her disguise, she attacks.



ARESPHENA

ARESPHENA

CR 9

XP 6,400

Medusa witch 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 201, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 65)

LE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 122 (12 HD; 4d6+8d10+64)

Fort +8, **Ref** +11, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities all-around vision

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee dagger +14/+9 (1d4/19–20), snake bite +9 (1d4 plus poison)

Ranged +1 composite longbow +15/+10 (1d8+1/x3)

Special Attacks hexes (charm, disguise, evil eye), petrifying gaze

Witch Spells Prepared (CL 4th; concentration +7)

2nd—*alter self*, *detect thoughts* (DC 15), *invisibility*

1st—*beguiling gift*^{APG} (DC 14), *command* (DC 14), *ill omen*^{APG}, *mage armor*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 13), *daze* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 13)

Patron deception

TACTICS

Before Combat Aresphena casts *mage armor* as soon as she suspects danger. If aware she is likely to be interacting with humanoids, she casts extended *alter self* with her rod.

During Combat Aresphena counts on her petrifying gaze to incapacitate opponents, using her evil eye hex to lower her enemies' saving throws to

make them more susceptible to petrification.

Morale Though a brave defender of her art, Aresphena casts *invisibility* and flees if reduced below 30 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 18, **Con** 20, **Int** 16, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 24

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deceitful, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +20, Disguise +14, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Perception +19, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +19; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception

Languages Common, Elven, Kelish, Sylvan

SQ witch's familiar (a blind viper named Sarsen)

Combat Gear *lesser extend metamagic rod*; **Other Gear** +1 composite longbow with 20 arrows, dagger, spell component pouch, finely bound copy of *The Broken House of Kriegmoor* (worth 25 gp)

Development: If the PCs manage to question Aresphena, she doesn't know anything about Jaliessa or the plot in Yanmass; she simply considers herself fortunate that more travelers than usual—in this case, the Taldan soldiers—have been coming to “participate” in her tableau.

If the PCs free Meir of his petrification, he thanks them profusely and offers to assist them however he can. He isn't much of warrior, but he may be able to point the PCs at leads around town they've missed. If rescued, he repays the PCs' kindness with a *dark blue rhomboid ioun stone*. Should the PCs free any of the Taldan Horse soldiers, they know nothing of their regiment's disappearance and wish only to report back to the Yanmass for new orders.

I. CANNIBAL DREAMS

If the PCs follow up on the plague of lustful, cannibalistic dreams, they can get some disturbingly specific information: they learn that all nightmares feature the dreamer being shamelessly propositioned by someone the dreamer knows and loves—such as a spouse, sibling, or friend. In the dream, the two kiss and caress, but the dreamer is overcome with crippling hunger and takes enormous bites from the flesh of the dreamer's would-be lover. For some dreamers, this horrid cannibalistic scene occurs in a meat locker hung with carcasses and a single empty meat hook, and lit with four high, round windows. Few dreamers have recognized this as the meat locker of Sanguine Brothers Fine Meats.

These dreams are instigated by four pairakas who venture out at night in animal form and spread their disturbing dreams with their lustful dreams ability. Maxillar Pythareus's “occult advisors”—secret night hags who call themselves the Sisters of Indulgent Dreams—conjured the horrible creatures for Earl Merkondu as a tool to secretly invade Yanmass and torment those with Loyalist leanings. Yander hopes the Sisters will dismiss the pairakas once Yanmass is wholly under Imperialist

sentiment and the city is “saved,” as even he finds the pairakas disturbing.

With a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information about the plague of dreams, a PC learns the first of the pieces of information below. Each subsequent successful check, or succeeding at the Diplomacy check by 5 or more, reveals the next point on the list. The PCs might need several hours or even days to discover the connection to Sanguine Brothers Fine Meats (described in Part 2), and they might pursue other investigations around Yanmass while investigating these dreams.

- The dreams are lustful, cannibalistic, and extremely personal, involving close friends and family members of the victim. Victims awaken fatigued, and victims that have experienced successive dreams have been driven to suicide. Once the PCs learn this information, a successful DC 27 Knowledge (planes) check connects the plague to the lustful dreams ability of pairaka divs.
- Most, but not all, of the dreamers have publicly expressed Loyalist sympathies or otherwise support Princess Eutropia's claims.
- The setting of dreams is consistent for a number of dreamers: a meat locker hung with carcasses and lit with four high, round windows. With this detail, a PC can attempt a DC 25 Knowledge (local) check to identify the round windows as distinctive of the abandoned Sanguine Brothers Fine Meats slaughterhouse. If the PCs specifically look around Yanmass for slaughterhouses, the DC of this check drops to 15, but such investigations take 2d6 hours.
- The PCs encounter a dreamer who has recognized the windows in the meat locker as those of a long-abandoned slaughterhouse called Sanguine Brothers Fine Meats.

J. MISSING CAVALRY

PCs who ask around town about the missing Taldan Horse cavalry easily confirm that the local regiment seems to have disappeared entirely, and they gain good descriptions of several of the missing soldiers (one of whom is hiding in area **F2**; the others are either petrified in area **H3** or among the traitors in area **K**). Most of the Taldan Horse's mounts have disappeared as well, including their two massive war elephants. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information (or who gained Councilor Rauls's leads) uncovers a wandering gnome priest named Findleby who claims to have seen several members of the Taldan Horse riding to an old ruined manor outside of town. Findleby doesn't know anything about the ruin, but a little further questioning reveals that this is Orvestikar Manor, a ruin 9 miles outside of town that locals avoid. Although Findleby did indeed see Taldan Horse soldiers heading in that direction (this was Lieutenant Gallindra

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PLAYER CHARACTER DREAMS

Yanmass's plague of disturbing, lustful dreams has more visceral impact on the PCs if one or more of them are victims. The pairakas can target the PCs surreptitiously. A pairaka moving about the city disguised as an ordinary animal need only be within 100 feet of a sleeping PC to use its lustful dreams ability. PCs who fail their Will saves experience debased dreams that incorporate the victim's relatives or friends (perhaps including other PCs), but be sensitive of and respect your players' limits when describing such scenes. If in doubt, you might instead have a PC dream of being alone inside the round-windowed meat locker in Sanguine Brothers (area I4), providing the PC a clue to the location of the pairakas' lair.

Jonrek's group; see area F), that's not where most of the group is. See area H if the PCs follow up on this lead.

K. QADIRAN BANDITS

Several merchants in Yanmass can confirm that Qadiran banditry on the Whistling Plains is at an all-time high. These bandits wear masks, wield scimitars, and sometimes ride the distinctively small but clever Qadiran horses. The bandits attack from surprise—often hiding in the tall grass of the plains regardless of plunder to be gained. Qadiran merchants in Yanmass are being shunned by their Taldan peers out of concern they might be spies working for the bandits, although some Qadiran caravans have been attacked as well. With a successful DC 19 Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility) check, a PC discovers that most of the caravans that have been attacked are owned by or affiliated with traders with Loyalist sympathies.

Although several merchants have seen the bandits firsthand, most often from a distance, a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Diplomacy check to gather information (or who received Councilor Rauls's leads) learns that an elderly Qadiran merchant named Ramaat al-Nasan witnessed two separate bandit attacks recently, and noted that both of them originated near a caravanserai called Tallgrasses. Ramaat stopped at Tallgrasses many times in his youth, and he laments that such a grand and welcoming structure has become derelict.

Tallgrasses is described in Part 3.

L. CULT OF THE TWILIGHT CHILD

If the PCs investigate the area around the Encircling Bower Theater or seek out members of the Cult of the Twilight Child, they easily find open, honest, ordinary people who profess to be members of the cult. Although most members live near the theater, people from all over Yanmass have joined. Citizen cult members can

relate any or all of the following information, and their openness and honesty should be unnerving to the PCs.

- Services are held at dusk every day; well-behaved visitors are always welcome.
- The cult's headquarters is the former theater called the Encircling Bower. Any member eagerly provides directions to the theater. This once-grand place has become badly run down but is being gradually renovated. During ceremonies, congregants sit in the theater seats while the leaders administer the ceremonies from the stage.
- The high-ranking cult members all wear distinctive clothing: a sky-blue skullcap with a veil, and a tunic with a pattern of overlapping circles. Most of the higher-ranking members are aasimars, and so locals assume they're trustworthy.
- The most anticipated part of each service is the appearance of the Twilight Child, the risen Prince Carrius, who speaks prophetic statements and performs miracles during the service. He literally rises up from a hole in the center of the stage during the service.
- The ceremonies stress community, togetherness, and reliance on nobility. Many tenets of the church of Abadar are used within the cult teachings, so most cult members assume the cult is an offshoot of, or perhaps even sanctioned by, the church of Abadar. The PCs might already know that the chief enumerator has his own suspicions about the cult (see area C).
- The cult is entirely positive and benign, although some members have seen a strange figure watching them from rooftops or dark alleys as they come or go from the theater: a bald human man in gray and red robes wearing a red leather bird mask. All the cult members that have seen this man find him ominous and suspicious, but he's never spoken with anyone. This is Xan, whom the PCs may have met already (see area G).

With a successful DC 18 Diplomacy check to gather information, a PC uncovers additional information that might seem suspicious: attendees often leave services feeling unusually euphoric and eager to attend again. Cult members don't find this unusual or suspicious, and simply shrug off any accusation that the cult is anything other than it appears to be.

The Encircling Bower and the ceremonies performed there are described in Part 4.

M. CONFRONTING MERKONDUS (CR 11)

Even if the PCs suspect that Earl Merkondus is behind Yanmass's troubles, the aristocratic merchant is too well connected for the PCs to attack him without repercussions for their general mission of goodwill. Like the PCs, Earl Merkondus is a guest of the Mercantile Council, and he has ostensibly brought special agents to help Yanmass in its troubled time. To undermine Yander's support, the PCs must gather two specific clues that implicate him.

Neither clue is sufficient independently, but both together prove the earl's guilt, after which his public protection evaporates. These clues are the notes from Tallgrasses linking the treachery's funding to the "Gray Kingmaker" and the clues from Sanguine Brothers identifying Yander by the codename "Gray Kingmaker."

Once the PCs gather these clues, Yander doesn't wait around to be confronted and arrested. However the PCs corner Yander, whether alone or before the Mercantile Council, Yander attempts to escape using his *cape of the mountebank*, fleeing to his inn, the Gilded Baldachin, to collect his personal belongings and skip town. The PCs can either let Yander go or attempt to catch him before he leaves town. Catching Yander at the Gilded Baldachin after he has slipped away requires the following steps, in order. If the PCs complete the steps with no failures, they catch Yander alone at the Gilded Baldachin before his bodyguards arrive. If the PCs complete the steps with only one or two failures, they catch Yander and his bodyguards at the Gilded Baldachin. If the PCs accrue three or more failures, Yander slips out of town entirely before the PCs can catch up to him.

1. **Learn Yander's Destination:** If the PCs don't yet know where Yander is staying, they must succeed at a DC 20 Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility) check to learn that he has been residing at an upscale inn called the Gilded Baldachin. A PC can retry this check (or have other PCs try), but each failed check counts as a failure in catching Yander.
2. **Race through Yanmass:** The Gilded Baldachin isn't difficult to find, but the streets to the inn are usually crowded. The PCs must each succeed at a DC 19 Escape Artist check or DC 24 Acrobatics or combat maneuver check to move through the crowds. If the PCs saved Chief Enumerator Palliettor from the assassins in area C, acolytes of Abadar among the crowds recognize the PCs and assist this check by parting portions of the crowd, reducing the DCs by 5. If all the PCs fail, that counts as a failure in catching Yander. If at least one PC succeeds, the PCs who failed simply arrive at the confrontation with Yander 1 round after its start.
3. **Enter the Gilded Baldachin:** Although the Gilded Baldachin eschews conventional guards and bouncers as too pedestrian, its owners pay for discreet security services to intercept the "wrong sort" of potential patrons before they even get to the door, and this includes the PCs. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check encourages the security to stand aside instead of delaying the PCs. Certain allies the PCs have made in Yanmass might have spread word of the PCs to these lookouts, easing the PCs' passage. For each—Argentus (area E), Lieutenant Gallindra Jonrek (area F2), and Erdmond Navin (area I5) who has survived, is in Yanmass, and thinks favorably of the PCs—lower the DCs by 5 (to a

minimum of 15). The PCs can retry this check (or have other PCs try), but each failed check counts as a failure in catching Yander.

Use the Confronting Merkondus map on page 12 for this encounter.

Creatures: If the PCs catch Yander, he doesn't go without a fight. He has rendezvoused with his private bodyguards, two massively muscled sisters who are discreet and loyal to their employer. The bodyguards fight to the death to protect their charge, but surrender immediately if Yander is defeated.

EARL YANDER MERKONDUS

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 80 (see page 56)

BRAWNY BODYGUARDS

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Strongwomen (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 34)

hp 90 each

Development: If the PCs catch Yander after he has fled to the Gilded Baldachin, he's had time to collect several letters between himself and Maxillar Pythareus, which he has on him. Although these letters aren't enough to formally accuse Maxillar Pythareus of backing Yander's villainy in Yanmass, they make it clear that Pythareus was at least aware of, and perhaps even complicit in, the earl's schemes.

Story Award: If the PCs chase Yander off but don't encounter him, award them 4,800 XP. If the PCs recover the communications from Maxillar, award the PCs 6,400 XP in addition to the XP gained from defeating Yander and his bodyguards.

N. XAN STRIKES (CR 12)

Once the PCs have recovered Prince Carrius from the clutches of the Cult of the Twilight Child (see page 54), they may decide the best option is to deliver him to Lady Martella Lotheed or Princess Eutropia herself. If the PCs contact either figure, she asks the PCs to do so, protecting the prince with their lives if necessary. But the psychopomp Xan refuses to let the prince slip through his fingers. When the PCs leave the city, Xan decides the PCs are contravening Pharasma's judgment, and he needs to eliminate them personally in order to deal with the risen prince.

Use the Xan Strikes map on page 12 for this encounter.

Creature: Xan confronts the PCs as they leave Yanmass with Prince Carrius; this encounter assumes the PCs travel through one of the city gates, but Xan adjusts his plans as necessary to catch up with the PCs on the road should they take another route. The PCs might also expedite this confrontation, such as if they clearly opposed Xan in their previous encounters with him. In any case, Xan is the toughest opponent the PCs face in

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DUELING HANDS OF DEATH

The danger of using the servants of neutral gods as opponents is that PCs are far more likely to worship neutral gods than evil ones. If one any of the PCs are clerics or inquisitors of Pharasma, or even simply devout worshipers, having them battle one of her servants seems like a set-up for stripping the PCs of any spellcasting gained from their faith. In such an event, make it clear that Carrius's status as an "abomination" is Xan's opinion, not Pharasma's law, and that Xan is the aggressor. The vanth was dispatched solely to investigate Carrius's sudden disappearance from the Great Beyond, not to interfere, and certainly not to attack mortals.

Worshippers of Pharasma should be wary of Carrius, but Pharasma won't strip their powers for defending themselves from an overaggressive psychopomp or for saving the prince. And while Carrius is a unique and potentially dangerous being, the Lady of Graves is more concerned with how he came to be and ensuring no more beings like him are made than she is with destroying a lone victim of this spiritual abuse.

this adventure, so you should arrange for this encounter when the PCs are rested, rather than coming off of a long, draining expedition into a dangerous area—allow them to lie low somewhere quiet for several hours while the chaos from their actions dies down.

When Xan confronts the PCs, he sheds the pretense of his human form, appearing as a skeletal bird-creature with the same red leather bird mask he wears in his human guise. He accuses the PCs of having allied with an abomination and declares he has come to deliver Pharasma's wrath upon them. If the PCs turn over Prince Carrius immediately, Xan stays his attacks—otherwise, he attacks the PCs with righteous fervor, not relenting until he or the PCs are slain.

XAN

CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 147 (see page 60)

PART 2: SANGUINE BROTHERS

Several years ago, two wealthy halfling brothers opened a slaughterhouse catering to Yanmass's noble houses and elite restaurants. Although their sprawling operation was not much different from other large meat-processing enterprises, the brothers purchased higher-grade livestock and cultivated a peerless reputation

for quality and cleanliness. They called their business Sanguine Brothers Fine Meats, and it became well known throughout Avin Prefecture. Smiling, stylized versions of their own faces adorned the front of their slaughterhouse, and their visages and glass-window eyes have become a landmark in the neighborhood.

Although the brothers ran their business well for years, they had no other business partners or close confidantes. When both brothers died in 4699 AR, the slaughterhouse closed. The jolly logo faded as years passed, and the Sanguine Brothers slaughterhouse became another relic of a more prosperous age.

Yander's pairaka servants found the slaughterhouse while roaming the city, drawn to the ancient smell of death and disease that followed the building's closure. The pairakas were delighted by their new headquarters and wasted no time in murdering its few squatters and transforming it a domain of carnal horrors. From the slaughterhouse, the divs inflict their debased nightmares on Yander's opponents and twist the minds of common townsfolk with their fiendish magic.

The neighborhood around Sanguine Brothers primarily holds warehouses and tenements. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Diplomacy check there turns up a few clues. The locals suspect that the once-abandoned facility is now occupied, as they hear occasional howls or cries from the building, but they are too fearful to investigate. Residents have also seen strange animals in the area, including large rams, dogs, and ravens with unusual black eyes. These activities all originate from the pairakas, who are not as subtle in their occupation as Yander would like.

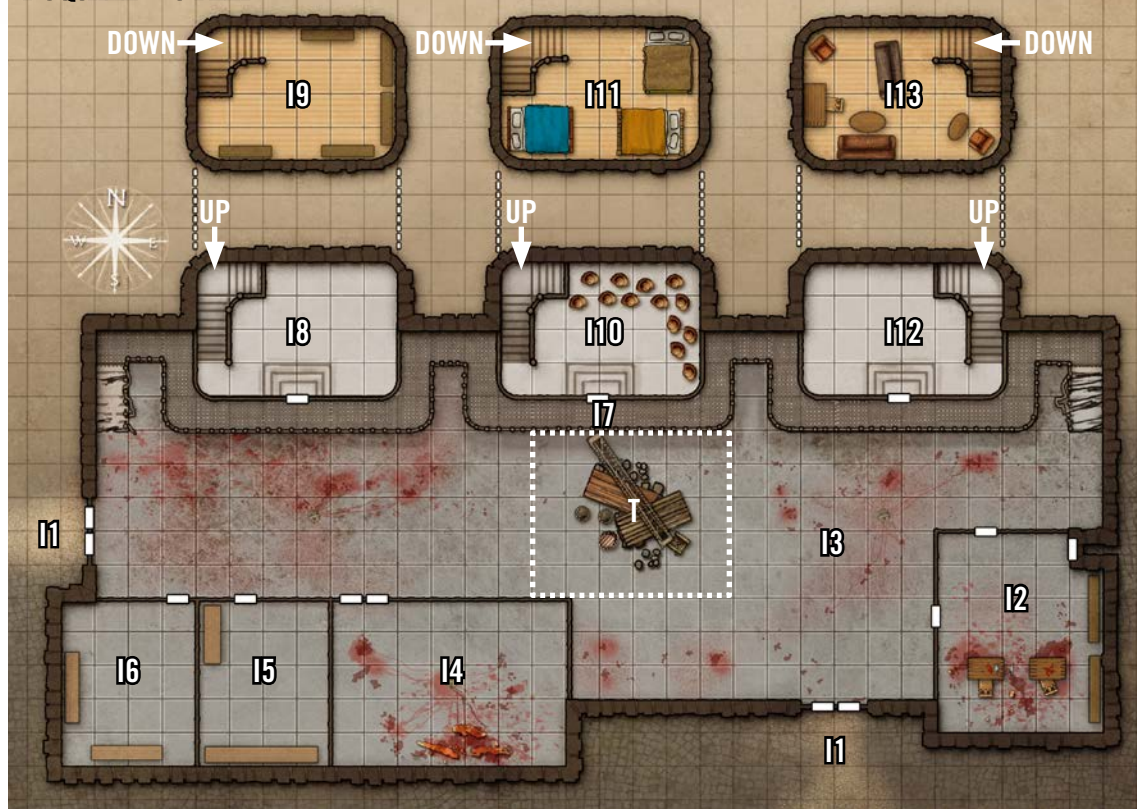
When the PCs approach the slaughterhouse, read or paraphrase the following.

This large building is made of brick and wood, both faded to the same drab shade of brown from years of neglect. The front of the building bears the words "SANGUINE BROTHERS FINE MEATS" in large, rust-red letters beneath the enormous painted faces of two halfling men with bushy sideburns. The eyes of the halflings are large, round windows, giving them vacant, surprised expressions. Three squat towers rise up from the rear of the building, and the building's massive doors are chained shut. An aura of long neglect hangs over the slaughterhouse.

The slaughterhouse is constructed of brick and wood. The exterior walls are 2 feet thick, and the interior walls are 1 foot thick. The ceilings of interior rooms on the ground level are 20 feet high, while the rooms in the towers have ceilings 10 feet high. Cracked, unlit lanterns hang in most rooms, but nearly all rooms contain high, narrow windows 3 feet wide but only 6 inches tall; the exceptions are the high, round windows in the meat locker (area I4), which serve as the eyes for the halflings painted on the building's exterior. All windows in the

I. SANGUINE BROTHERS FINE MEATS

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



slaughterhouse are covered with grime and provide no more than dim light, even on sunny days.

The doors within the slaughterhouse are strong wooden doors bound with iron bands (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 25), and are edged with cracked rubber to keep fluids and smells contained. Although the rubber edging isn't airtight, it muffles smells and sounds from behind closed doors; add 5 to the DC of Perception checks to notice sounds from behind doors in Sanguine Brothers. None of the doors have locks except where indicated in specific room descriptions. All the doors and furnishings have low handles and surfaces, as they were designed to be suitable for the slaughterhouse's halfling owners.

Although the slaughterhouse hasn't been in operation for nearly 2 decades, a pervasive odor of rotten flesh hangs in most rooms, as the pairakas have slaughtered many victims here. This smell is particularly intense in and near areas I2, I4, and I6. Areas I5, I8, and I9 are dusty and neglected by the pairakas. The rest of the slaughterhouse is swept and tidy, as the pairakas force their minions to keep the rooms they use clean.

11. Main Doors

A double door leads into the slaughterhouse floor, but is barred, chained, and locked. The heavy exterior

padlock on a chain is the most obvious impediment to using this entrance (hardness 10, hp 15, Disable Device DC 30), but it's also barred from the inside. A successful DC 30 Strength check is required to burst through one of these doors, but this DC is only 25 if the padlock is removed first. Manipulating the lock or the doors alerts the pairaka in area I3 to intruders; her response is described there.

12. Office (CR 7)

The pairakas come and go from the slaughterhouse through this office, so the doors here aren't locked.

This large office has two short desks at the south end of the room and a series of cabinets against the east wall. Narrow wooden doors stand in the north and west walls. The desks and floor are strewn with discarded scraps of flesh and cracked bones, giving the room a ghastly smell.

The eastern door in this room leads to a small alcove outside of the slaughterhouse, while the doors to the north and the west both open onto the slaughterhouse floor (area I3).

The cabinets contain decades-old ledgers and account books written in Halfling. Even a cursory review indicates that Sanguine Brothers was a profitable business.

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Creature: To protect their operations here, the pairakas hired a brutish barghest from the Whistling Plains named Obdog. Obdog is a stout, powerful barghest bristling with tiny barbs all over her body. These barbs have no mechanical effect, but hint at a barbed devil in Obdog's lineage. Obdog serves as a loyal guardian, since the pairakas keep her well supplied with vagrants snatched from the streets of Yanmass. If Obdog is aware of intruders, she uses her *mass bull's strength* and *invisibility sphere* spell-like abilities and attempts to ambush intruders. She pursues foes that flee to other parts of Sanguine Brothers, but she doesn't leave the slaughterhouse. If reduced below 15 hit points, she uses her *dimension door* spell-like ability to flee.

OBDOG **CR 7**

XP 3,200

Female greater barghest
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 27*)

hp 85

Treasure: Part of Obdog's payment from the pairakas, a small hamatula carving worth 450 gp, stands atop one of the cabinets in a place of pride. Additionally, a scrap of tattered pants contains a pearl worth 75 gp in a pocket; discovering this pearl requires a successful DC 15 Perception check.

13. Slaughterhouse Floor (CR 7 and CR 7)

This cavernous chamber has several doors leading out to the south, west, and east. Two of these are massive double doors with brackets so they can be barred. A catwalk high on the northern wall winds around three tall towers, but the stairs at either end of the catwalk are tumbled and mangled wrecks.

The barred double doors to the south and west lead outside, while the doors to the south lead to the storage rooms and meat locker (areas I4, I5, and I6) and the doors on the eastern side of the room lead to area I2.

Much of the machinery that once spanned this slaughterhouse floor has been pushed together into a pile in the center of the room. This mechanical conglomeration of conveyor belts, tables, and articulated hooked arms all jumbled together rises up to the level of the catwalk.

Although the machinery has been rigged as a dangerous trap (see Trap below), it also provides the easiest way up to the catwalk. Once the trap has been disabled, climbing up the machinery to the catwalk (area I7) requires a successful DC 10 Climb check.

Creature: A pairaka named Nazinina spends her time finessing the trap here. Nazinina is a voluptuous pairaka with disapproving expression and a pronounced underbite. She keeps her *misdirection* spell-like ability active at all times, taking on the aura of the jumbled machinery in the room; therefore, Nazinina does not radiate any aura for the purposes of most detection spells.

If Nazinina learns that intruders are present—such as from hearing activity at the doors (area I1) or combat in the office (area I2), she uses her change shape ability to assume the form of a white ram and lies amid the machinery, bleating helplessly. A PC who succeeds at a Sense Motive check opposed by Nazinina's Bluff check spots this ruse, but she hopes intruders are fooled long enough to get within range of her trap. As soon as an intruder falls victim to her trap or appears to see through her ruse, she attacks.



NAZININA

NAZININA **CR 7**

XP 3,200

Pairaka (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 88*)

hp 76

Trap: Nazinina has rigged the jumble of machinery to lash out with cutting saws and jagged hooks when a creature enters a square adjacent to the machinery. Although the trap resets immediately, it attacks only creatures that enter a square adjacent to the machine—it does not trigger again against characters who remain in an adjacent square on subsequent rounds or who retreat away from the machine. As the pairakas designed the trap, they can move safely around the machine without being attacked.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE MACHINERY TRAP **CR 7**

XP 3,200

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

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** automatic; **Bypass** hidden switch (Perception DC 30 to locate)

Effect Atk +10 melee (3d6+6); multiple targets (each target approaching within 5 feet of the machinery)

14. Meat Locker (CR 8)

The walls of this room are painted a stark white, and a single massive meat hook dangles from the ceiling in the center of the room. Although the room is large, its thickly padded

walls give it a close, claustrophobic feel. A heavy double door leads out of this room to the north. Four round, grimy windows pierce the south wall, twelve feet above the floor. Several humanoid corpses are piled on the floor beneath the windows.

The thick, insulating walls of this room once kept meat cool, but the room hasn't been used to store meat in a long time. The pairakas love the isolated, suffocating feeling of this room, and they use it as the setting for the disturbing dreams they are inflicting upon Earl Merkondus's opponents. If any of the PCs have experienced these dreams, they immediately recognize the room. You might require such PCs to each succeed at a DC 21 Will save upon entering or remain shaken for as long as they are in this room and for 1d4 minutes thereafter.

The bodies are all victims of the pairakas. All are naked and most have long ribbons of flesh stripped away. All bear disturbing mixtures of horror and delight upon their faces.

Creature: The psychic torment of the victims here has coalesced into a festering spirit. When any creature enters this room, the festering spirit rises from the pile of corpses and attacks. It attempts to remain out of reach near the ceiling, using its Flyby Attack feat to target foes. The festering spirit prefers to attack those who have suffered from the pairaka's lustful dreams ability, psychically sensing which PCs have had those dreams. The festering spirit pursues creatures that flee, passing through walls as necessary to reach its targets, and fights until destroyed.

FESTERING SPIRIT

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 58 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 98)

15. Storage

This room has been empty for many years; the pairakas don't have a use for it and therefore have left it alone. The dust is thick in this room, other than the tracks made by the room's recent occupant.

Creature: The pairakas' neglect has been a blessing for a man named Erdmond Navin, a junior banker charmed by the pairaka Soraya along with his father and brought to Soraya's chamber (area I13). Soraya used Erdmond and his father as playthings for several depraved days. Erdmond shook off the charm and escaped a day ago, barely avoiding the notice of Nazinina, the pairaka on the slaughterhouse floor (area I3), but suffering a serious wound while climbing down from the catwalk. Erdmond made it into this room, but he is now afraid to leave and is suffering from a disease contracted from Soraya's touch. Erdmond is quick to plead for help from the PCs: he would like to escape and wants his father,

Rhundle, rescued from Soraya's clutches. Erdmond can explain the general features and abilities of the pairakas in Sanguine Brothers, as well as the layout of the rooms between this room and area I13, but he won't accompany the PCs except to leave the facility.

ERDMOND NAVIN

CR 1

XP 400

LN male shopkeep (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 284)

hp 13 (currently 2, and 6 points of Dexterity damage from the shakes)

Gear none

Story Award: If the PCs rescue Erdmond from Sanguine Brothers, award them 1,600 XP.

16. Infested Corpses (CR 7)

Even with the cracked rubber edging, the smell of rotten meat is particularly strong outside the door to this room. Within, the smell is suffocating.

When the pairakas took over Sanguine Brothers, it wasn't entirely uninhabited. A gang of desperate drug addicts lived in this room, stricken by a contagious illness and trying in vain to recover. The three addicts were on death's door when the pairakas arrived, and it was a simple matter for the pairakas to kill them, close this door, and forget the three entirely. Unfortunately, one of the addicts had picked up a rot grub infestation, which expanded exponentially in the weeks of isolation. The corpses here are unrecognizable, reduced to rancid gobbets that harbor thousands of hungry rot grubs.

Living creatures other than vermin that approach within 10 feet of the open door must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or become nauseated for 1d4 rounds and sickened for 1d4 minutes thereafter. On a success, a creature is merely sickened for 1d4 rounds.

Creature: As soon as the door to this room is opened, a tide of rot grubs spills out onto the slaughterhouse floor. The swarm attacks any creature it can sense, and fights until destroyed.

ROT GRUB SWARM

CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 85 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 215)

Treasure: A waterproof satchel in this room still contains 4 doses of a drug called scour (*GameMastery Guide* 237) worth 45 gp per dose.

17. Catwalk

A narrow metal catwalk lines the north wall of the main slaughterhouse floor, twelve feet above the floor. The catwalk curves gracefully around three rounded towers set into the north wall and connects to a wooden door in

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each tower. A thin railing rises only a foot above the catwalk, offering little protection from a fall. At the east and west ends, the railing is gone, and the former metal staircases are merely jagged scrap.

The doors on this catwalk, which overlooks the slaughterhouse floor (area **I3**), connect to the lowest rooms in the three towers (areas **I8**, **I10**, and **I12**). Two metal staircases formerly led up to the catwalk on its far west and east ends, but the pairakas collapsed the staircases as an added security measure. The pairakas simply fly up to the catwalk when necessary or use their *dimension door* spell-like ability to access their rooms directly. The collapsed staircases are now dangerous, jagged scrap at either end of the catwalk. Climbing the walls up to the catwalk typically requires a successful DC 25 Climb check. At the ends, the DC is only 20, but here a fall onto the scraps of the stairs is treated as falling onto pit spikes (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 420). The easiest method to climb to the catwalk is to scramble up the jumbled machinery in the center of the slaughterhouse floor (see area **I3**) once the trap is disabled.

18. Lower West Tower

The door to this room has been locked for many years (Disable Device DC 25), and the key is long lost.

Dust lies thick on the floor of this empty room, except for a few footprints in the middle of the room that ascend the stairs in the northwest corner but do not return. A short set of stairs leads up to a door in the south wall.

The stairs in the northwest corner lead up to area **I9**, while the door leads out to the catwalk (area **I7**). When the pairakas moved into Sanguine Brothers, Soraya entered this room using her *dimension door* spell-like ability. Finding nothing of interest to her either in this room or the room above, she returned via the same means, and the pairakas haven't entered these rooms since.

This room is the bottom of the western tower, even though its floor is several feet above ground level. There is nothing below this room but solid stone and brick.

19. Memorabilia Storage

Dust swirls in the still air of this room, which is enclosed save for a few narrow windows near the room's ceiling. Shelves contain several rolled rugs, tapestries, and a few framed paintings and documents stacked carefully. Most of the documents stored here prominently bear the symbols of Taldor or Yanmass. One banner hangs unfaded and curiously devoid of dust. A set of stone stairs leads down from the northwest corner. Footprints in the dust ascend the stairs, reach the middle of this room, and disappear.

The only exit from this room is the staircase leading down to area **I8**, and the footprints belong to the pairaka who made a cursory examination and then left via *dimension door*. The halfling brothers who owned the slaughterhouse were avid collectors of political memorabilia and historical artifacts of Taldor's glorious past. Because their successful business left them with more money than time, they started purchasing memorabilia and storing it here until they could appropriately catalog and display it in their homes across town.

Treasure: The noteworthy banner here—acquired at an auction—bears the heraldry of Taldor and the Knights of Ozem and is perhaps the most valuable treasure in Yanmass: the *Standard of Conquest* (see page 80 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128). Also among the antiquities is a *belt of physical perfection* +2. The remainder of the memorabilia is worth 1,200 gp to political historians or collectors.

110. Lower Central Tower

Much of this room is crowded with human-size dressmaker's dummies, each wearing an elaborate gown, shawl, or cloak. The floor near the dummies is cluttered with pairs of nice shoes. The northwest corner contains a set of stone stairs leading up. A narrow door stands in the south wall at the top of a few steep steps.

As with area **I8**, this room is at the tower's lowest level despite being several feet above ground level. The door leads out to area **I7**, and the stairs in the northwest corner lead up to area **I11**.

Hazard: The stairs to area **I11** are covered with small fragments of a shattered ceramic jug. Although the shards are not sharp enough to cause damage, stepping on these fragments makes a snapping noise that alerts the occupants of area **I11** to intruders. Noticing the small fragments requires a successful DC 13 Perception check, and any creature aware of the fragments can avoid stepping on them by moving at half speed up the stairs.

Treasure: This room contains several ostentatious outfits that the pairakas living in area **I11** have stolen or charmed away from their owners. A variety of fashions are represented here, but the most valuable are four ball gowns worth 150 gp each, a string of pearls worth 100 gp, a bejeweled shawl resembling a map of Avistan worth 450 gp, and six pairs of elegant leather shoes worth 10 gp each.

111. Pairaka Boudoir (CR 9)

Three large beds are jammed into this room. Each is covered with silks and furs, as though each bed's owner were trying to outdo the others in opulence. Stone stairs lead down from the

northwest corner. Other than a few narrow windows near the ceiling, there are no other exits from this room.

The stairs in this room lead down to area **I10**. This room is the home of three of the four pairakas in Earl Merkondus's employ, but Nazinina spends most of her time tinkering with the trap in area **I3** rather than relaxing here.

Creatures: Two pairakas named Batu and Meregán currently occupy this chamber, plotting further lustful nightmares to inflict on the enemies of Earl Merkondus. If they are aware of intruders, they use their change shape ability to appear as waifish human women in rags and pretend to be prisoners until they can ascertain their visitors' motives. They attempt to charm intruders, but they attack if their ruse doesn't work. Each pairaka wants to prove herself superior to the other in combat, so they fight to the death.

BATU AND MEREGAN

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

Pairaka (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 88)

hp 76 each

Treasure: The silks and furs on the beds here are worth 800 gp in all, but weigh a total of 120 pounds.

112. Lower East Tower (CR 7)

Several elaborate rugs of Keleshite design adorn the floors here, with additional rugs hanging from pegs driven into the brick walls. A stone staircase ascends to the northeast and a door stands in the south wall atop a few steep steps.

The rugs here belong to the pairaka Soraya, who dwells above in area **I13**; she thinks the rugs give her "receiving room" a touch of class. The door leads out to area **I7**.

This room appears to be the lowest level of the eastern tower, but unlike areas **I8** and **I10**, this tower contains a crawl space beneath a hidden trap door in the floor. A successful DC 30 Perception check is required to locate the trap door. The trap door is currently covered with a rug; Soraya didn't notice it before

decorating this room. The crawl space beneath the trap door hasn't been accessed since its contents were left by the halfling owners of the slaughterhouse 2 decades earlier; see *Treasure* below.

Trap: The rug closest to the bottom of the stairs that lead up to Soraya's chamber is decorated with hundreds of tiny, stylized wasps. Any character stepping on the rug activates the trap, causing thousands of wasps to immediately appear from the rug. Although the trap is magical, the rug benefits from a permanent *magic aura* spell (CL 12th) to foil magical detection.

RUG-BOUND WASPS TRAP

CR 6

XP 2,400

Type magic; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (alarm); **Reset** none

Effect spell effect (*insect plague*; CL 12th; the wasp swarms follow creatures but do not leave this room)

Treasure: The rugs in this room are colorful but not particularly valuable; many bear bloodstains and the pervasive odor of rotten meat, and so cannot be sold for any significant value. The treasure here is concealed beneath the hidden trap door in the floor. The crawl space below contains an elegant silver vase adorned with images of foxes worth 120 gp, a chalcedony beetle worth 150 gp, a gold drinking stein set with emeralds worth 1,450 gp, and 34 pp.

113. Soraya's Chamber (CR 8)

An overstuffed divan and ottoman squat near the top of the stone stairs descending from this room in the northeast corner. Several low couches and benches, all cushioned and draped with rugs and tapestries, are scattered around the room. A low desk leans against the west wall, laden with papers and books.

This room is the bedchamber of the leader of the pairakas, Soraya. The stairs in this room lead down to area **I12**. There are so many plush



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RELICS AND TRIUMPHS IN THE TWILIGHT CHILD

If you are using the rules from the “Relics of Old Taldor” article in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128 to add a sense of historical weight to your campaign, “The Twilight Child” introduces two relics from that article: the *Standard of Conquest* unwittingly collected by the Sanguine Brothers and the *Scion’s Dagger* held by the Cult of the Twilight Child.

This adventure also includes two triumphs for the PCs: ejecting Earl Merkondus and ending his plots against the people of Yanmass, and rescuing Prince Carrius from the Cult of the Twilight Child. Each triumph allows a PC to unlock a new tier of power in one relic she carries.

benches and hassocks that the ground in this room counts as difficult terrain.

Creatures: Soraya is here toying with her current prisoner, an elderly banker named Rhundle Navin. Yander asked Soraya to target Rhundle specifically, as he was the most outspoken Loyalist on the Mercantile Council; Soraya kidnapped him and keeps him here. Soraya is thin but well muscled, with deep blue skin. Rhundle is a shallow, older man with haunted eyes and untidy gray hair.

Rhundle has proven particularly resilient to Soraya’s diseased touch (thanks to his *periapt of health*), and Soraya has enjoyed tormenting Rhundle with debased touches for far longer than most mortals can withstand. Rhundle is completely loyal to Soraya, his devotion compelled by repeated applications of *charm monster*, so he rushes into melee with his dagger to defend Soraya if she is attacked. If his charm isn’t removed, he fights to the death. Soraya uses her *insect plague* spell-like ability as soon as combat begins and thereafter fights in melee with her claws. If reduced below 20 hit points, Soraya decides to leave Yanmass for good, fleeing via *dimension door*.

SORAYA

CR 7

XP 3,200

Pairaka (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 88)

hp 76

RHUNDLE NAVIN

CR 5

XP 1,600

LN male successful merchant (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 263)

hp 31

Gear mwk silver dagger, bracers of armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, *periapt of health*

Treasure: The furniture in this room isn’t particularly valuable, but the eight gold medallions sewn onto the divan’s upholstery are worth 400 gp in total.

Development: The books on the desk are shockingly explicit erotic novels, but the papers mixed in with them are far more interesting: correspondence from Earl Yander Merkondus to unnamed recipients, in which he identifies himself as the “Gray Kingmaker” several times. The correspondence doesn’t include anything incriminating—Yander is too clever for that—but it’s damning in connection with the materials in Jaliessa’s chambers at Tallgrasses (see area K16).

If the PCs free Rhundle from Soraya’s charm, he recalls seeing the correspondence—in particular, he knows that Soraya calls Yander the “Gray Kingmaker” and suspects the correspondence is valuable evidence of wrongdoing. In gratitude, he gives all the gear he has on hand to the PCs.

Story Award: If the PCs rescue Rhundle from Soraya’s enchantment, award them 1,600 XP.

ENDING THE PLAGUE OF DREAMS

Once the PCs have defeated or driven off the pairakas in Sanguine Brothers, the plague of disturbing dreams ceases. The evidence here is insufficient to tie Earl Merkondus to the pairakas, despite the correspondence in Soraya’s chamber, but Yander is aware that the PCs are likely to be much more problematic than he initially assumed. If the PCs haven’t already dealt with the Kozan Bravos (see area B), Yander arranges for them to ambush the PCs, as described in that encounter.

The members of the Mercantile Council are quick to congratulate the PCs on their success, doing so in a public event in the square outside of Commerce Hall. Baron Kustios makes a short appearance at this event, marking his first public appearance in weeks. The elderly man seems haggard but regal and stays only long enough to personally thank the PCs and present each of them with a signet ring bearing his personal seal. No mere trinkets of favor, these rings are *rings of protection* +2. If the PCs freed Rhundle Navin from the pairaka’s control, the councilmember thanks the PCs for rescuing him in front of the entire Mercantile Council. He privately mentions to the PCs that he will endeavor to ignite Loyalist sympathies on the Mercantile Council.

Story Award: When the PCs end the pairakas’ terrible dreams and report their success to the Mercantile Council, award them 9,600 XP.

PART 3: TALLGRASSES

Tallgrasses is a large caravanserai about 15 miles west of Taldor on the Whistling Plains. Catering to Qadiran



travelers coming from the east and merchants leaving Taldor from the south or west, Tallgrasses has always occupied a tense position between the two nations. The original owners of the caravanserai were the Douniette family, Taldan aristocrats able to trace their noble lineage back for several centuries. For decades, they operated Tallgrasses with keen diplomacy. In the end, though, the caravanserai was doomed not by politics or violence, but by weather: a particularly hot series of summers 20 years ago caused the caravanserai's wells to dry up. The baron at that time seized the opportunity to drive out the "horselord sympathizers" by raising the price on exported water. The Douniettes had no choice but to close the caravanserai and move back to Yanmass. When the rains returned, the two primary legal claimants to Tallgrasses killed each other in a duel, leaving the caravanserai's ownership unclear. The site has remained shuttered since then.

Yet the caravanserai is now occupied. Commander Jaliessa Staubel was a high-ranking officer in the Taldan Horse with a loyal following among her troops. When she accepted an offer from a well-funded noble to turn traitor, she managed to bring many of her junior officers and soldiers with her. This group of traitors set up at Tallgrasses, where they disguise themselves as the Qadiran bandits they once hunted. Jaliessa and her troops have done their best to turn Tallgrasses into a military encampment, but the open and breezy

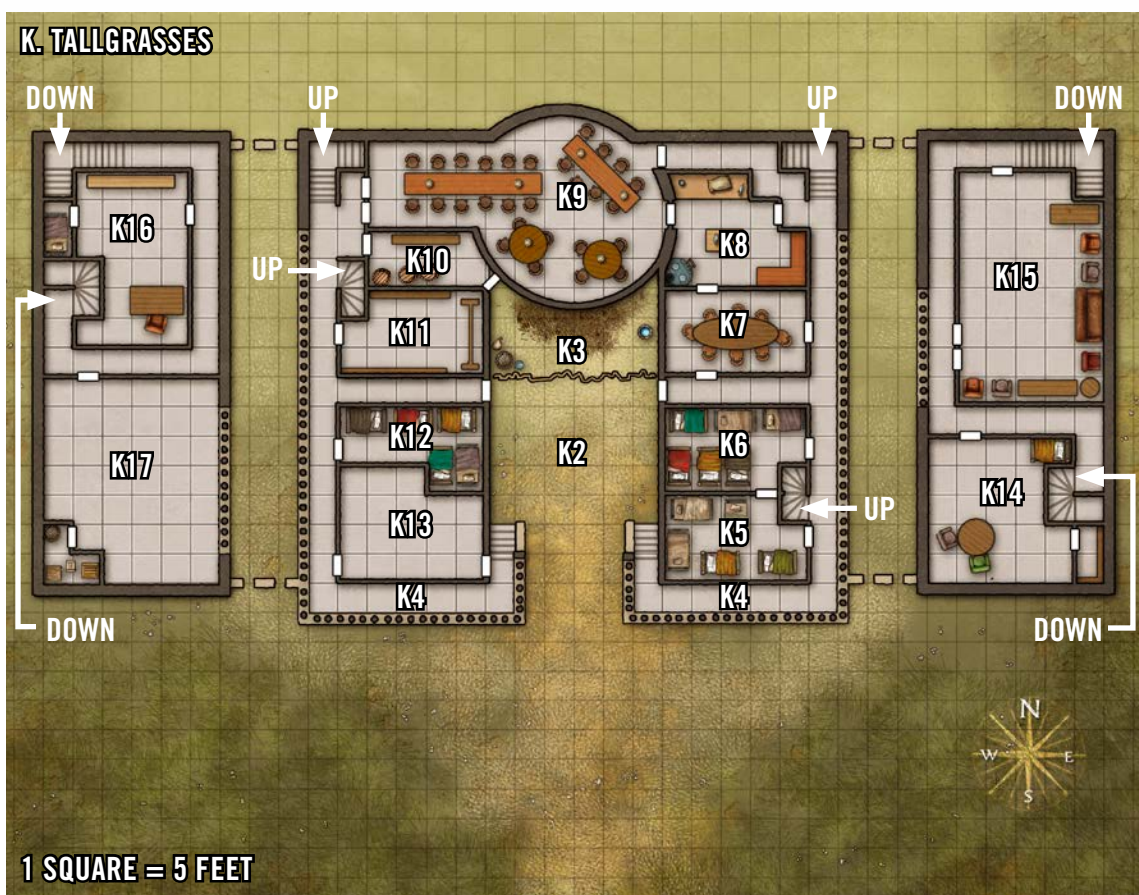
caravanserai was not built with defense in mind. As a result, a small group—such as the PCs—stands a good chance of infiltrating the site and eliminating the traitors.

Tallgrasses is situated in a shallow valley between high, rolling hills covered in vegetation. Although numerous soldiers occupy the site, they are under orders to keep their presence secret from other travelers. They rarely use the old trails leading to and from the caravanserai, so as not to leave tracks where they're likely to be found. The occupants also minimize cooking fires and foraging, so anyone that reaches the caravanserai would be surprised to find it inhabited when the surrounding area appears deserted.

Once the PCs catch sight of the caravanserai—which is likely after they have dealt with the scouts in area **K1**—read or paraphrase the following.

Tallgrasses is a sprawling structure made of smooth gray stone. A strange mixture of Taldan and Qadiran styles, the building bears several arches, a large dome between two balconied upper levels, and an encircling covered porch. Several small, wiry horses are hitched to the porch posts.

Tallgrasses is constructed from pale gray stone. The rooms within the caravanserai are 12 feet tall except for the domed mess hall, which rises to a vaulted height of 25 feet to help diffuse the heat from cooking. The



walls are 18 inches thick and solidly constructed, even so many years after the caravanserai's construction. Climbing any wall within the building requires a successful DC 20 Climb check. Climbing the stone banisters, such as those in areas **K4** and **K17**, is easier due to the numerous handholds and footholds, requiring only a DC 15 Climb check.

The interior of the caravanserai is clean and its furnishings functional. Despite being traitors, the occupants of the caravanserai cling to military habits regarding schedules and cleanliness. Still, the caravanserai was not built as a fortress; most rooms contain windows with simple shutters, and the doors are made of strong wood (hardness 5, hp 15). Interior rooms are lit with sturdy lanterns, unless its occupants are absent or sleeping. None of the doors have locks except where indicated.

K1. Tallgrasses Approach (CR 10)

The traitors at Tallgrasses aren't waiting idly to be discovered; they have a group of elite scouts patrolling the area around the caravanserai, keeping an eye out for intruders. They particularly watch the overgrown trail leading to Tallgrasses. Unless the PCs are remarkably stealthy as they approach (traveling invisibly, for example, and staying off the trail), this group spots them and prepares an ambush.

Creatures: The scout group consists of five bandits dressed in typical Qadiran clothing and two trained dire lions. All are particularly adept at hiding in the tall grass, attempting Stealth checks to remain hidden from the PCs. They attack when spotted or when the PCs approach to within 30 feet. The bandits break and scatter when seriously injured, as described in their tactics, but the vicious dire lions fight to the death.

TALDAN TRAITORS (5)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

Human fighter 2/rogue (thug) 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 135)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +9; **Senses** Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 shield)

hp 36 each (5 HD; 3d8+2d10+7)

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +2 (+1 vs. fear)

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk scimitar +9 (1d6+3/18-20) or dagger +7 (1d4+3/19-20)

Ranged mwk composite shortbow +10 (1d6+3/×3)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Each Taldan traitor drinks a *potion of cat's grace*.

During Combat The Taldan traitors work well together, attacking from hiding with their bows if possible before drawing their scimitars and moving into melee. Once in melee, the traitors attempt to flank their enemies and use their assault leader rogue talent to maximize sneak attacks.

Morale A traitor reduced to fewer than 15 hit points flees to get help. If flight seems impossible, the traitor fights to the death—the traitors all know that capture means execution for their crimes.

Base Statistics Without a *potion of cat's grace*, a Taldan traitor's statistics are **Init** +7; **AC** 18, touch 14; **Ref** +6; **Ranged** mwk composite shortbow +8 (1d6+3/×3); **Dex** 16; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 21; **Skills** Acrobatics +11, Escape Artist +5, Ride +7, Stealth +13.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 20, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 23

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Precise Strike^{APG}, Shadow Strike^{APG}, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Skills Acrobatics +13, Climb +7, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +7, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +7, Perception +9, Ride +9, Stealth +15, Survival +7, Swim +7

Languages Common

SQ brutal beating, frightening, rogue talent (assault leader^{APG})

Combat Gear *potion of cat's grace*, *potion of cure light wounds*; **Other Gear** mwk studded leather, mwk buckler, dagger, mwk composite shortbow (+3 Str) with 20 arrows, mwk scimitar, camouflage netting^{UE}, waterskin

DIRE LIONS (2) **CR 5**
XP 1,600 each
hp 60 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 193)

Development: Despite the dress of these “bandits,” they are ethnically Taldan and match the description of missing Taldan Horse soldiers. They are tight-lipped, but successful interrogation or mind-reading magic reveals that these soldiers abandoned the Taldan Horse to follow their traitorous commander, Jaliessa Staubel.

K2. Courtyard (CR 8)

This wide courtyard is open to the sky. To the east and west, the balconied upper stories of the caravanserai look down upon the courtyard.

Tallgrasses' courtyard is much too crowded to serve as an appropriate stable for all the mounts at the caravanserai. The soldiers therefore keep those they primarily use—their light Qadiran horses—tied to the porch that runs around the building (area K4), and they

keep their heavier Taldan horses hidden behind a thick sheet of canvas bisecting the courtyard (area K3). The southern half of the courtyard was converted to a stable for the remaining elephant mount in Jaliessa's unit.

The southwest corner contains a large pallet of hay, while the southeast corner contains a saddle and tack sized for an elephant.

This area is separated from area K3 by a heavy hanging canvas supported by thick ropes strung between the east and west balconies. Pushing past the canvas requires a move action. The two doors lead to the hallways on either side of Tallgrasses. Although cutting through the courtyard is the fastest way to get from one side of Tallgrasses to the other, the Taldan traitors usually go the long way around on the porch to avoid the ire of the elephant here.

Creature: The remaining elephant, named Grimtusk, is a surly veteran of several campaigns. Grimtusk's notorious temper was formerly soothed by the presence of the other elephant in the unit, but that companion has been gone so long that Grimtusk is back to his irascible manner. The Taldan traitors avoid this area except to leave him food and water. The DCs of Handle Animal skill checks for Grimtusk are increased by 10, and Grimtusk is treated as unfriendly for the purpose of wild empathy and related abilities. Grimtusk attacks anyone remaining in this area for more than 1d3+1 rounds. Fortunately for the PCs, Grimtusk's attacks don't generally raise the alarm, as the soldiers are used to the irritable elephant stomping about.

GRIMTUSK **CR 8**
XP 4,800
Male advanced elephant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 128)
hp 115

K3. Stable

The area of the courtyard north of the hanging sheet of canvas has been converted into a cramped, makeshift stable. Eight horses are tied up here amid piles of straw and buckets of feed and water.

The Taldan Horse traitors soon realized a flaw with their plan to masquerade themselves as Qadiran bandits: Qadiran horses tend to be lighter and faster than Taldan horses, and the muscular horses ridden by the Taldan Horse are well known in the region. Although the traitors could easily disguise themselves as bandits, they could not so easily disguise their horses. Yet if they'd simply turned their horses loose, skilled trackers might trace them back to Tallgrasses and discover the traitors' base.

Jaliessa knows that the best solution would be to simply kill the Taldan horses, but she knows her troops

have become so attached to their mounts over the years that such a decree might invite defection. Therefore, she had her soldiers stable all their horses in the north half of the courtyard, behind the canvas screen separating them from the irritable elephant in area **K2**. She has commanded her troops to release the horses only one or two at a time, in order to ensure a large herd doesn't return to Yanmass and give away their position. The soldiers have confidence in Jaliessa's plan. In reality, a few hours after each horse is released, she sends one of the desert drakes to kill and eat the unfortunate creature. This plan keeps the drakes fed and her position secret, although Jaliessa risks the ire of her soldiers should her plan be discovered.



TRAITOROUS OFFICER

This area is separated from area **K2** by a heavy hanging canvas. Pushing past the canvas requires a move action.

Creatures: Eight horses remain stabled here. Each is branded with the symbol of the Taldan Horse, indicating that they are military horses. All of the horses are hot and uncomfortable, despite the efforts of the Taldan traitors to keep them groomed and fed, and none have been exercised recently. They know their handlers well, and any other creatures moving through this tightly-packed area must succeed at a DC 15 Handle Animal or wild empathy check or the horses become so agitated that they whinny loudly and kick at the walls, alerting all nearby creatures to the presence of intruders. The horses don't attack unless they are directly attacked themselves, and they flee from Tallgrasses if given the chance.

HEAVY HORSES (8)

CR 2

XP 600 each

Advanced horses (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 177)

hp 19 each

K4. Porch

A wooden porch 6 feet wide runs around three sides of Tallgrasses, broken off in the middle by the entry into the courtyard (area **K2**). A stout wooden fence about 3 feet high provides cover from attacks originating outside the porch. The porch is covered and therefore protected from inclement weather. This cover is supported by thick posts 15 feet apart, with graceful archways of dun-colored wood between them.

Creatures: Fifteen light, nimble horses wearing Qadiran-style saddles and harnesses are tied to the porch. These horses are used by the traitors while out practicing banditry, in order to better fit their disguise as Qadirans. The horses are well treated and docile, and flee from obvious danger rather than fight.

HORSES (15)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 15 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 177)

K5. South Barracks (CR 7)

Several bunk beds are crowded into this room, with little space between them. Each bed is neatly made, with a pair of footlockers tucked underneath the bottom bunk.

Ten Taldan traitors bunk in this room, falling back on the military precision and communal habits of barracks life that they know well. Most of the inhabitants are usually away on raids or scouting missions, so the bunks here are mostly empty. The footlockers contain only mundane

gear used by the traitors, including several sets of Qadiran clothing used as disguises. Six of these bunks are plainly used by Small people; these are the bunks belonging to the halfling servants in areas **K8** and **K10**.

One of the doors leads out to the porch (area **K4**) and the other leads to the other barracks (area **K6**).

Creatures: Three Taldan traitors rest here. They spring up at the first hint of danger, grab their scimitars, and rush to attack.

TALDAN TRAITORS (3)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 36 each (see page 30)

Development: Noisy combat here alerts the inhabitants of area **K6**, who groggily come to investigate 1d4+1 rounds after combat begins, all crowding in through the door connecting area **K6** to this room.

K6. North Barracks (CR 7)

This room is a barracks similar to area **K5**. Like that room, this one is sparsely occupied as most of the residents are away on raids. One of the doors leads onto the porch, while the other connects directly to area **K5**.

Creatures: These traitors found a cache of spiced wine left by a former inhabitant of the caravanserai and are all nursing hangovers. They respond to danger reluctantly and are all sickened for the first 1d3 rounds of combat.

TALDAN TRAITORS (3)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 36 each (see page 30)

Treasure: The footlockers in this room also contain mundane gear and Qadiran disguises, but five bottles of spiced wine are wrapped in colorful shawls at the bottom of one of the footlockers. The bottles are worth 50 gp each. Three similar bottles—all empty—are stashed in the same footlocker.

Development: Noisy combat here alerts the three traitors in area **K5**, who rush to investigate 2 rounds after they hear a disturbance. One of the traitors from that room comes through the connecting door and the others circle around from the porch to attempt to catch intruders by surprise.

K7. Officer's Mess (CR 8)

A large, dark table occupies the center of this opulent dining room. Gilded fixtures on the walls dance with light, illuminating a ceiling mural of the Yanmass skyline. Thick, carved wooden doors stand in the east and south walls, while the north wall contains a much simpler wooden door.

This private dining chamber was where the wealthiest guests of Tallgrasses would dine. The officers among the Taldan traitors use it as their own personal dining room, insisting on the best vintages of wine and cuts of meat prepared in the kitchen.

The ornate doors to the south and east lead to the hall and porch (area **K4**), respectively, while the simple door to the north leads into the kitchen (area **K8**).

Creatures: The officers are usually here, enjoying the finest dining Tallgrasses can offer. They keep their banners on racks around the room where they are easily visible to everyone in attendance (and to any underlings who might disturb them). Against intruders, the officers gather up their arms to prepare a spirited defense of the caravanserai.

TRAITOROUS OFFICERS (3)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Human cavalier 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 32)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

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

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19 (+8 armor, -1 Dex, +2 shield)

hp 56 each (6d10+18)

Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities self-reliant

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk scimitar +11/+6 (1d6+4/18-20) or shortspear +10/+5 (1d6+4)

Ranged composite longbow +5/+0 (1d8+4/x3)

Special Attacks banner +2, cavalier's charge, challenge 2/day (+6 damage, +2 to hit and AC when challenging a challenger), tactician 2/day (Outflank)

TACTICS

During Combat The officers each identify a different target to challenge, attempting to defeat their opponents in one-on-one combat. An officer who has a hard time reaching his opponent takes a moment to drink a *potion of haste* for increased speed and accuracy. The officers pursue opponents that flee throughout Tallgrasses.

Morale An officer reduced below 15 hit points attempts to retreat and seek out aid from other forces in Tallgrasses. If cornered, the officers fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 8, **Con** 12, **Int** 14, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 19

Feats Cleave, Iron Will, Outflank^{APG}, Power Attack, Toughness, Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics -8 (-12 when jumping), Diplomacy +10, Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Perception +6, Ride +1, Sense Motive +9, Survival +9

Languages Common, Halfling, Kelish

SQ expert trainer +3, mount, order (knight errant^{UC})

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of haste, antitoxin*; **Other Gear** mwk half-plate, mwk heavy steel shield, composite longbow (+4 Str) with 20 arrows, mwk scimitar, shortspear, *cloak of resistance +1*, banner^{UE}

Treasure: The fine ornaments and dishes in this room are worth 900 gp in total.

K8. Kitchen

This tidy, functional kitchen contains an oven, several tables, and a pair of sinks. Shanks of dried meat and bunches of leafy herbs hang from hooks in the ceiling. Plain wooden doors lead out to the west, east, and south.

The kitchen of the caravanserai is old, but still functional, and the kitchen servants here keep it in good shape. The western door leads to the mess hall (area K9) while the southern door leads to the officer's mess (area K7). The eastern door leads to the porch (area K4).

Creatures: Four halfling servants are often found here preparing food. Surly but practical, these halflings defected with Jaliessa because they were disillusioned with life in the military, and they expect better pay now that their bosses are bandits. The halflings are usually found here in the kitchen, but they might also be in the countryside hunting rabbits or voles to supplement the dried-food stored here. They surrender at the first sign of trouble, but if their surrender isn't accepted, they fight back tenaciously.

SURLY SERVANTS (4)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Seasoned trappers (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 261)

hp 13 each

Gear studded leather, mwk light crossbow with 40 bolts, 14 gp

K9. Mess Hall

This long dining chamber rises to a dome high above. The tables and chairs are clean and arranged neatly.

The soldiers at Tallgrasses eat their meals in this room. As they eat in shifts when they return from scouting and "bandit" duties, this room is virtually never occupied to its full capacity.

K10. Feed Storage

This area contains feed, tack, water, and other items necessary for the care of the animals housed in the courtyard.

Creatures: The Taldan soldiers rarely pass through this room, so two halfling servants are currently napping here while shirking their duties. If awoken, they surrender or attempt to flee and hide.

SLEEPING SERVANTS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Seasoned trappers (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 261)

hp 13 each

Gear studded leather, mwk light crossbow with 40 bolts, 14 gp

K11. Armory (CR 8)

The door to this room is normally kept locked, but the grasslings in this room picked the lock to get in. With a successful DC 14 Perception check, a PC notes blades of sharp grass stuck in the lock.

Barrels of arrows, racks of armor, and shelves of weapons line the walls of this room, and a large trunk sits at one end. Severed bowstrings and broken arrows litter the floor. The room has only a single exit in the west wall.

The Taldan traitors keep unused weapon and armor in this room. All of the equipment was purchased or stolen from Qadiran traders and is distinctly Kelish in its style.

A large trunk at the eastern end of the room is closed and locked (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 20, Disable Device DC 25; Jaliessa carries the key). It contains the distinctly Taldan gear that the traitors brought with them, which Jaliessa doesn't let them use.

Creatures: Two curious grasslings are poking around in the armory, giving in to their destructive urges by cutting bow strings and snapping arrows. If confronted, the grasslings immediately attack; they know they aren't supposed to be in the armory and assume that they'll be in dire trouble if found. A grassling reduced to fewer than 20 hit points attempts to flee Tallgrasses entirely, abandoning its kin.

GRASSLINGS (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 65 each (see page 86)

Treasure: The armory contains six suits of studded leather armor, nine masterwork scimitars, eight composite shortbows, and only four intact arrows. The trunk contains three masterwork longswords, eight longswords, five suits of masterwork studded leather armor, and four masterwork breastplates, all clearly marked with the heraldry of the Taldan Horse.

K12. Officer Barracks (CR 7)

Several bunk beds stand against the walls of this room, each neatly made with a footlocker underneath. The room's only door leads out to the west. Against the east wall, a bulging leather pouch lies atop a footlocker with a few gold coins spilling out the top.

The officers of the traitorous soldiers share this bunk room, but it is unoccupied most of the time.

Trap: The officers have noticed small valuables going missing over the last few days. They assume that a disloyal member of their unit is to blame, but in fact, curious grasslings have been stealing from the officers. To catch the thieves, the officers rigged up a pouch of coins as bait and a tripwire that launches a poisoned arrow at anyone that moves more than 10 feet into the room. The officers all know where the tripwire is and simply step over it.

POISON ARROW TRAP

CR 7

XP 3,200

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

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Effect Atk +15 ranged (1d6×3 plus dragon bile poison)

Treasure: The pouch on the footlocker contains only 9 gp and 130 cp. The few gold coins are at the top to make it seem like the pouch contains nothing but gold.

K13. Training Room

This large room is furnished with padded mats and improvised training dummies that leak straw stuffing from several cuts. A rack containing padded Qadiran weapons stands in an alcove on the north side of the room. Doors at the south end of the room lead out to the west and east.

The Taldan traitors occasionally drill or spar with each other in this room. It received a lot of use while the traitors were practicing fighting with their new Qadiran weapons, such as their scimitars, but it is mostly unused now.

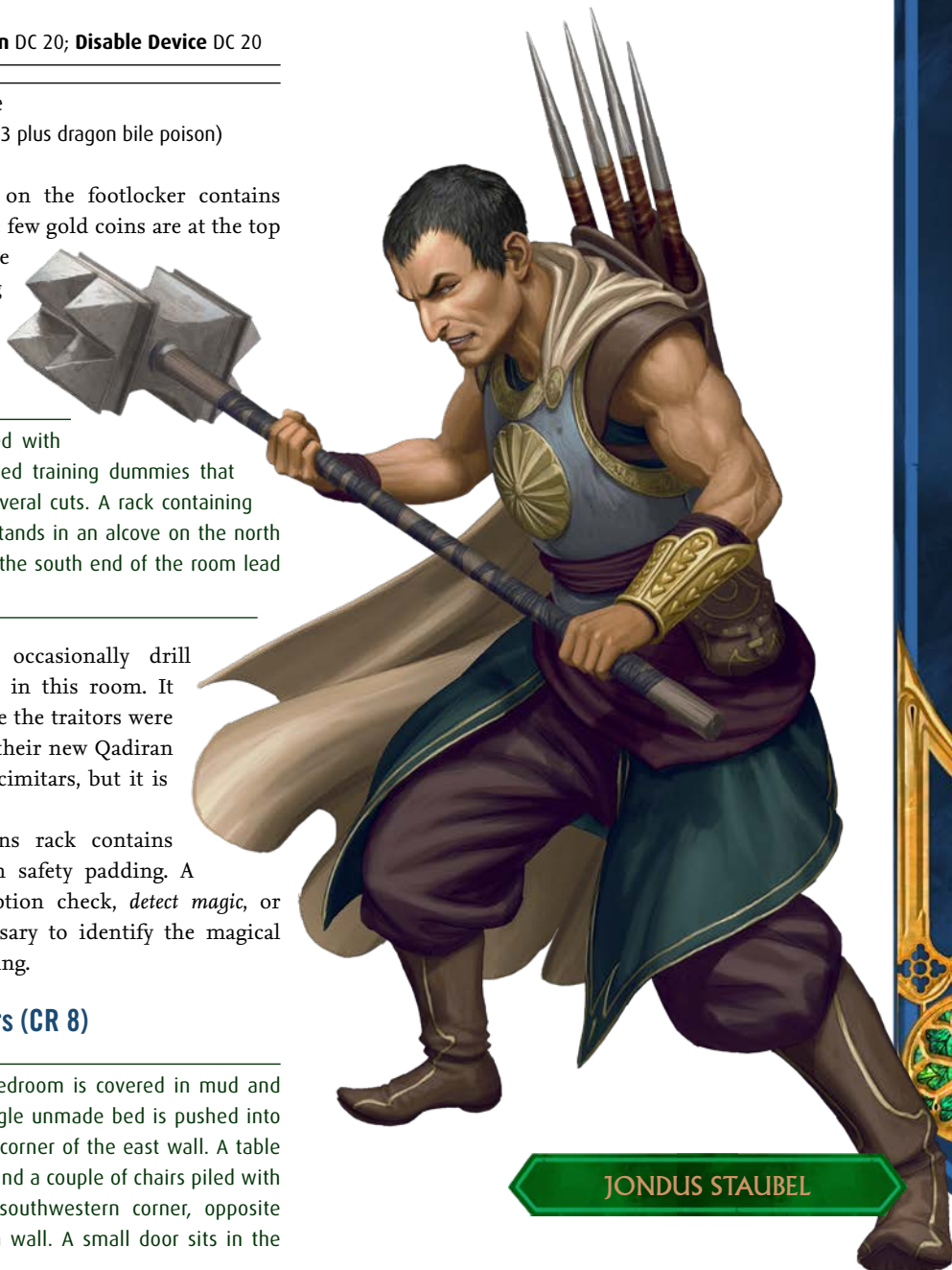
Treasure: The weapons rack contains a +1 *spear* wrapped with safety padding. A successful DC 15 *Perception* check, *detect magic*, or a similar effect is necessary to identify the magical weapon beneath its padding.

K14. Rangers' Quarters (CR 8)

The floor of this private bedroom is covered in mud and dried stalks of grass. A single unmade bed is pushed into an alcove in the northeast corner of the east wall. A table strewn with several maps and a couple of chairs piled with dirty clothes occupy the southwestern corner, opposite a larger door on the north wall. A small door sits in the southeast corner.

This room was once a meeting room, but Jaliessa has turned it over to her brother and sister-in-law as a bedroom. The rangers are much sloppier than the soldiers. Adding to the mess, the rangers let their grassling allies paw through the room whenever they like. The only items of interest in the mess are the maps on the table, which detail several popular travel routes through the Whistling Plains based on input from the far-ranging grasslings.

The door to the north leads out into the hall and a balcony overlooking the central courtyard. The door to the east leads into a small closet.



JONDUS STAUBEL

LOVER'S BANGLE

These simple magical devices allow two people to be aware of each other over great distances.

LOVER'S BANGLE

PRICE
750 GP

SLOT wrists

CL 3rd

WEIGHT 1 lb.

AURA faint divination

This thick copper bracelet bears rows of lightly engraved hearts. Once per week, when the bracelet is worn and touched to another worn *lover's bangle*, the two become attuned and remain attuned until one of the bangles is removed or attuned to a different lover's bangle, or until a bangle's wearer is reduced below 0 hit points, is slain, or travels to a different plane. The wearer of the attuned lover's bangle immediately knows that the attunement has ended, but doesn't receive any indication about the event that broke the attunement.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 375 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *status*

Creatures: The ranger Jondus Staubel is in this room, chastising one of the grasslings he convinced to come to Tallgrasses to help his sister's cause. The grassling is trying to convince Jondus that its fellows haven't been stealing from the rest of the caravanserai (although they have). Both are so deeply involved in their argument that neither is likely to notice other events in the caravanserai (such as combat).

Jondus is a lean, powerfully built man with a sharp nose, close-cropped black hair, and a forward hunch that makes him look a bit like a predatory bird. He knows all of the traitors on sight, so he's aware if confronted with intruders. Jondus immediately attacks, hoping that by eliminating intruders he'll avoid trouble with his sister for the grasslings' thefts. The grassling is loyal to Jondus and fights until slain as long as Jondus is alive. If Jondus has fallen and the grassling is reduced below 30 hit points, it flees.

JONDUS STAUBEL

CR 6

XP 2,400

Male human ranger 7

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; Senses Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 64 (7d10+21)

Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +5

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk earth breaker +13/+8 (2d6+6/x3)

Ranged javelin +8 (1d6+4)

Special Attacks combat style (two-handed weapon^{APG}), favored enemies (animals +2, humans +4)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 4th; concentration +6)

2nd—*cat's grace*

1st—*resist energy*, *summon nature's ally I*

TACTICS

During Combat Jondus first casts *cat's grace* while the grassling moves into melee. If there are humans among his opponents, Jondus also uses his hunter's bond ability to share his favored enemy bonus with the grassling. He thereafter wades into melee with his earth breaker, using Furious Focus and Power Attack to deliver devastating blows.

Morale Eager to prove himself by defeating intruders, Jondus fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8

Base Atk +7; CMB +11; CMD 22

Feats Cleave, Endurance, Furious Focus^{APG}, Improved

Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (earth breaker)

Skills Acrobatics -2 (-6 when jumping), Handle

Animal +9, Heal +11, Intimidate +9, Linguistics +1,

Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10,

Perception +12, Survival +12

Languages Common, Sylvan

SQ favored terrain (plains +2), hunter's bond (companions), track +3, wild empathy +6, woodland stride

Combat Gear *potions of cure light wounds* (2), alchemist's fire (2), antitoxin; **Other Gear** mwk breastplate, javelins (5), mwk earth breaker^{UE}, *cloak of resistance +1*, *lover's bangle* (see the sidebar), everburning torch, spell component pouch, 18 gp

GRASSLING

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 67 (see page 86)

Development: When the PCs defeat Jondus Staubel or remove his *lover's bangle*, his wife, Fathrie, is immediately aware of the event. Fathrie is currently on patrol with one of the desert drakes and several Taldan traitors, but she urges them to head back to Tallgrasses as fast as possible. It takes several hours for Fathrie to return, so the PCs are likely to be elsewhere when she arrives; see Fathrie's Revenge on page 39.

K15. Lounge (CR 8)

Several overstuffed chairs and small tables have been pushed up against the eastern wall of this room, leaving a wide space covered with a thin layer of soil and weeds. A double door opens to a balcony to the west. Two chandeliers dangle from the ceiling, broken.

This room has long been used as a comfortable lounge, but Jondus and Fathrie convinced Jaliessa to let their grassling allies stay here. Jaliessa was initially reluctant to give such a large room to the erratic fey creatures when the quarters for the rest of her forces were so cramped, but once Jondus produced several highly detailed maps of the trade routes through the Whistling Plains based on grassling intelligence, she relented.

To make the room more comfortable, the grasslings pushed the furnishings aside and transplanted heaps of dirt and field grasses into this room. Despite all their work to make it comfortable, the grasslings are rarely here; they prefer to be scouting out on the plains or poking around elsewhere in the caravanserai.

Trap: When the grasslings moved into this room, they secretly brought a strange bug-shaped token that originated in the First World. To keep the token safe, the grasslings buried it in the dirt of this room, which activated its latent connection to that bizarre plane. When a non-fey creature enters this room, unnaturally deep cracks appear in the soil and masses of colorful scuttling insects spill forth from the First World. The insects pursue any nearby mortal creatures, slipping underneath cracks in doors or climbing down walls to surround their prey. The strange cracks and scuttling insects vanish after 13 rounds.

SWARMING INSECTS TRAP CR 8

XP 4,800

Type magic; **Perception** DC 32;

Disable Device DC 32

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Effect spell effect (*creeping doom*, CL 13th, Fortitude DC 20 partial)

Treasure: Once the swarming insects trap has activated, the bug-shaped token pops up from the dirt. Its magic is mostly expended, but it can still be used thereafter as a *swarbane clasp*^{UE}.

K16. Commander's Quarters (CR 11)

The north wall of this once-opulent office contains a massive bookshelf filled with carefully folded maps, ledgers, and scroll tubes. A large desk fills the southern half of this room, with a chair of battered but neatly repaired leather. The only item that seems out of place in the office is a pallet of straw and grass in an alcove to the south. An ornate wooden door stands in the east wall and a simple wooden door stands in the west wall opposite it.

Jaliessa took the most luxurious room of Tallgrasses for herself. Her officers visit frequently to make reports and receive orders, standing nervously at attention as she sits behind the desk. The pallet of straw is where Jaliessa's ram companion, Anua, sleeps.

The door to the east leads out into the upper level corridor. The door to the west leads to a small closet containing only a neatly made bed, where Jaliessa sleeps.

Creatures: Commander Jaliessa Staubel is a stern, tall woman with angular features and arresting green eyes. Well-muscled and tough, she projects an air of easy confidence that makes her a natural leader.



JALIESSA AND ANUA

She has a gift with animals, and she raised her fighting companion Anua from a lamb; she cares for Anua more than any creature except herself. Despite her confident demeanor, Jaliessa now thinks that betraying the Taldan Horse was the wrong choice, despite the wealth it's brought her.

The two officers here are eager to prove their worth and fight valiantly as long as Jaliessa lives. If Jaliessa falls, any surviving officers realize that leadership of the troops is theirs for the taking, so they redouble their efforts against the PCs.

None here want to let intruders who know about their operation escape, so they pursue foes who flee.

COMMANDER JALIESSA STAUBEL

CR 10

XP 9,600

Female human hunter 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 26)

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** scent; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 21 (+5 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +4 natural, +1 shield)

hp 119 (11d8+66)

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

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee *shatterspike* +16/+11 (1d8+7/17-20)

Hunter Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +13)

At will—*raise animal companion*^{UM}

Hunter Spells Known (CL 11th; concentration +13)

4th (2/day)—*aspect of the wolf*^{APG}, *cure serious wounds*, *flame strike* (DC 16), *summon nature's ally IV*

3rd (4/day)—*greater magic fang*, *neutralize poison*, *quench* (DC 15), *strong jaw*^{APG}, *summon nature's ally III*

2nd (5/day)—*barkskin*, *bear's endurance*, *flaming sphere* (DC 14), *protection from energy*, *stone call*^{APG}, *summon nature's ally II*

1st (6/day)—*cure light wounds*, *lead blades*^{APG}, *longstrider*, *produce flame*, *resist energy*, *speak with animals*, *summon nature's ally I*

0 (at will)—*create water*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *light*, *stabilize*

TACTICS

Before Combat Jaliessa casts *longstrider* on herself and *greater magic fang* on Anua early each day. If she suspects trouble, she casts *aspect of the wolf* and *barkskin* on herself and *strong jaw* on Anua. She uses a swift action to give herself the aspects of the bear and mouse while giving Anua aspects of the bull and tiger.

During Combat Jaliessa casts *flame strike* on the largest group of opponents and then moves to flank the nearest opponent with Anua or her officers. Jaliessa attempts to sunder her opponent's weapons using Power Attack.

If her opponents remain out of reach, she relies on spells such as *flaming sphere*, *stone call*, and *summon nature's ally*.

Morale Jaliessa fights to the death. She does not accept surrender and pursues any foes that flee.

Base Statistics Without *aspect of the wolf*, *barkskin*, and *longstrider*, Jaliessa's statistics are **Init** +0, **Senses** Perception +16; **AC** 17, touch 11, flat-footed 17; **Ref** +10; **Speed** 30 ft.; **Melee** *shatterspike* +14/+9 (1d8+5/17-20); **Str** 18, **Dex** 10; **CMB** +12 (+14 sunder); **CMD** 23 (25 vs. sunder); **Skills** Acrobatics -1, Ride +7, Stealth +13.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +14 (+16 sunder or trip); **CMD** 27 (29 vs. sunder)

Feats Cleave, Coordinated Defense^{APG}, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Sunder, Lightning Reflexes, Outflank^{APG}, Pack Attack^{UC}, Power Attack, Shake It Off^{UC}, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Acrobatics +1 (+5 when jumping), Handle Animal +15, Heal +10, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (nature) +7, Perception +16, Ride +9, Stealth +15, Survival +16

Languages Common

SQ animal companion (ram named Anua), animal focus (11 minutes/day, double), bonus trick, hunter tactics, improved empathic link, nature training, speak with master, swift tracker, track +5, wild empathy +12, woodland stride

Combat Gear *potion of delay poison*, *potion of lesser restoration*; **Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, mwk light wooden shield, *shatterspike*^{UE}, *cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of protection* +1, keys to all locks in Tallgrasses, spell component pouch, 158 gp

ANUA

CR —

Male ram animal companion (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 154)

N Medium animal

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

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 19 (+2 armor, +6 Dex, +7 natural)

hp 67 (9d8+27)

Fort +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +5; +4 vs. enchantment spells and effects

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee gore +13/+8 (2d6+17)

Special Attacks powerful charge (1d8)

TACTICS

During Combat Anua fights as Jaliessa commands, as his master can speak with him directly. He always uses the Power Attack feat with his gore attacks, which is reflected in the statistics above.

Morale Anua fights to the death as long as Jaliessa is alive. If Jaliessa is defeated and Anua is reduced to fewer than 20 hit points, he flees.

Base Statistics Without *greater magic fang* and *strong jaw*, Anua's statistics are **Melee** gore +11/+6 (1d6+15).

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 22, **Con** 14, **Int** 2, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +12 (+14 bull rush); **CMD** 28 (30 vs. bull rush, 32 vs. trip)

Feats Armor Proficiency (Light), Coordinated Defense^{APG}, Improved Bull Rush^B, Improved Natural Attack (gore), Outflank^{APG}, Pack Attack^{UC}, Power Attack, Shake It Off^{UC}, Toughness, Weapon Focus (gore)

Skills Acrobatics +12 (+16 when jumping), Perception +8, Stealth +12

SQ animal focus, devotion, tricks (attack, attack any, come, down, fetch, guard, heel, seek, stay, track, work), woodland stride

Gear mwk leather armor barding

TRAITOROUS OFFICERS (2) CR 5

XP 1,600 each

hp 56 each (see page 33)

Treasure: Most of the books here are plodding military histories; a thick religious treatise is out of place. This treatise is hollow and contains a pouch with 150 pp. Discovering this cache requires a successful DC 22 Perception check.

Development: Once the PCs defeat Jaliessa and the officers, they can examine the records kept neatly in the bookshelves, including correspondence to the traitors signed by someone called the "Gray Kingmaker." Although these notes don't indicate who the Gray Kingmaker is, when connected with the notes in Soraya's chambers at Sanguine Brothers (area I13), they prove that Earl Merkondus is behind both schemes. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Linguistics check while perusing these notes also realizes that the Gray Kingmaker's source of funds is highly placed in the Taldan military, and seems likely to be Maxillar Pythareus himself.

If the PCs capture Jaliessa rather than kill her, they might discover that she regrets her treachery. If the PCs promise to speak on her behalf at her inevitable court martial, she agrees to tell them all she knows about this operation, though she is unaware of Maxillar's connection to it.

K17. Aerial Stable (CR 8)

Much of the eastern wall of this large room is gone, with only a low railing to prevent anyone from falling into the courtyard below. The west side of the room contains bedding made of dead grass and torn tablecloths. The room has a sharp reptilian reek.

This room was once used for overflow housing and social gatherings, but Jaliessa and her brother repurposed it as a stable for the two desert drakes her brother and sister-in-law brought to her forces. The railing looks down over the courtyard (area K2) below. In the southwest corner is a small closet filled with tack for the desert drakes.

Creature: One of the desert drakes is always out with either Jondus or Fathrie on patrol, so a single desert drake is present now. The creature spends most of its time napping fitfully. It does not awaken for the sounds of combat elsewhere in Tallgrasses, but creatures entering this area that do not succeed at a DC 15 Stealth check rouse the beast. It is only accustomed to the company of Jaliessa, Jondus, and Fathrie; it attacks anyone else who enters its stable.

DESERT DRAKE CR 8

XP 4,800

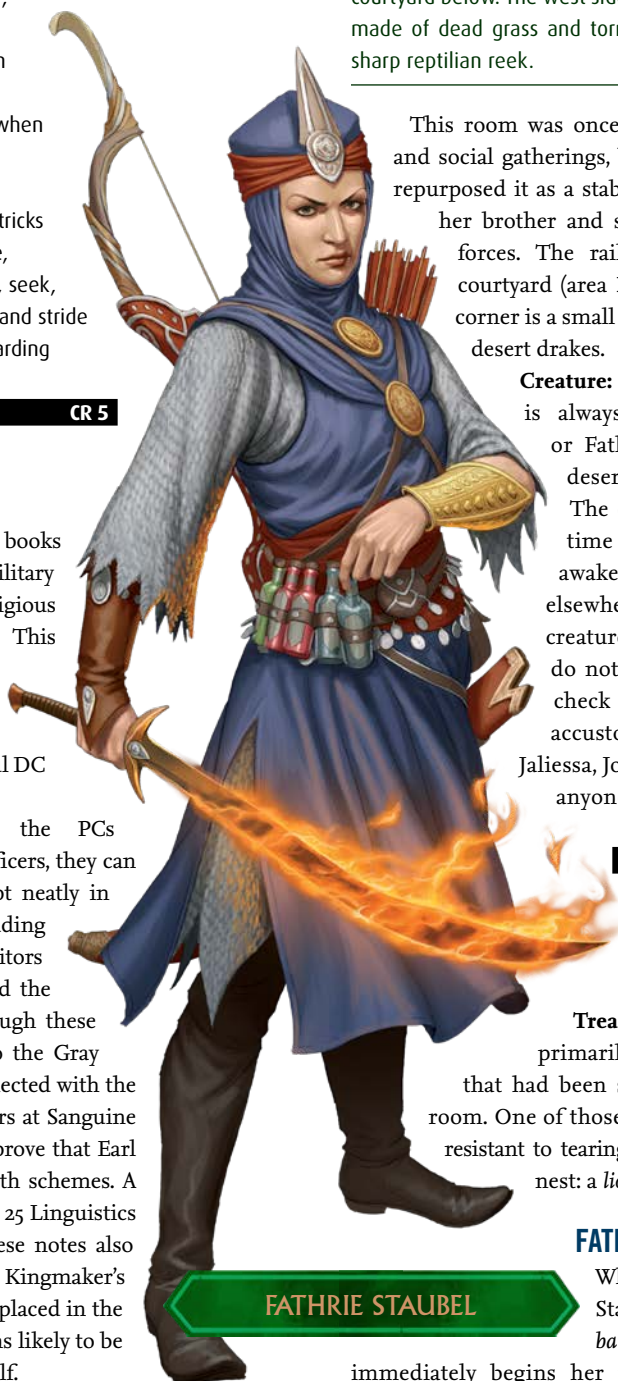
hp 103 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 105)

Treasure: The drake's nest is primarily made of straw and linens that had been stored in the closet in this room. One of those items has proven magically resistant to tearing and remains intact in the nest: a *lion cloak*^{UE}.

FATHRIE'S REVENGE (CR 10)

When the PCs defeat Jondus Staubel or remove his *lover's bangle*, his wife Fathrie immediately begins her return to Tallgrasses with

FATHRIE STAUBEL



her desert drake and two mounted traitors. From the time she is alerted, Fathrie takes 4d6 hours to return to Tallgrasses. The PCs are likely to be elsewhere in that time, and might even have left Tallgrasses altogether. Once Fathrie realizes Jondus's fate, she swears revenge on the PCs and tracks them down. Fathrie is likely to eventually catch up to the PCs—she suspects they will be returning to Yanmass sooner or later, and she is an exceptionally skillful tracker.

You should adjust this encounter as necessary for when Fathrie catches up to the PCs. It's most likely that Fathrie intercepts the PCs on the open plains, in which case the traitors accompanying her have dismounted in order to more easily ambush the PCs. However, the PCs might instead face her in Tallgrasses, or even on the streets of Yanmass if they hurried back to town. Whatever the circumstances, the PCs should be fully rested before you spring Fathrie's group on them, as this is a difficult encounter.

Creatures: Fathrie is a stout, powerful woman with short hair and large eyes. Like the Taldan traitors who accompany her, she is dressed as a Qadiran bandit despite being ethnically Taldan. Although Fathrie fights to the death as described in her Tactics entry, the drake and the traitors attempt to flee, leaving Fathrie behind, if reduced to fewer than 15 hit points.

FATHRIE STAUBEL

CR 6

XP 2,400

Female human ranger (skirmisher) 7 (*Pathfinder RPG*

Advanced Player's Guide 128)

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 71 (7d10+28)

Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *flaming scimitar* +8/+3 (1d6+4/18–20 plus 1d6 fire) and *mwk scimitar* +8/+3 (1d6+1/18–20)

Ranged *mwk composite longbow* +9/+4 (1d8+3/×3)

Special Attacks combat style (two-weapon combat), favored enemies (halflings +4, humans +2), hunter's tricks (4/day; hateful attack, uncanny senses)

TACTICS

Before Combat Fathrie drinks her *potion of barkskin*. If possible, she and her companions hide so they can ambush the PCs.

During Combat Fathrie rides the desert drake into battle with her +1 *flaming scimitar* held aloft. She directs her draconic mount to take her into the middle of her foes when possible to maximize the number of attacks she can make with a full attack.

Morale Fathrie stops at nothing to liberate or avenge her husband, fighting to the death.

Base Statistics Without *barkskin*, Fathrie's statistics are **AC** 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 13, **Con** 16, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 21

Feats Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Skills Handle Animal +10, Knowledge (nature) +8, Linguistics +0, Perception +11, Ride +10, Stealth +10, Survival +11

Languages Common, Sylvan

SQ favored terrain (plains +2), hunter's bond (companions), track +3, wild empathy +7, woodland stride

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* +3, *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Other Gear** *mwk chain shirt*, +1 *flaming scimitar*, *mwk composite longbow* (+3 Str) with 20 arrows, *mwk scimitar*, *lover's bangle* (see the sidebar on page 36), backpack, bedroll, flint and steel, mess kit^{UE}, waterskin, 6 gp

DESERT DRAKE

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 103 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 105)

TALDAN TRAITORS (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 36 each (see page 30)

ENDING THE BANDIT ATTACKS

Once the PCs have defeated or captured Jaliessa Staubel, the traitors scatter into the Whistling Plains and cause no more trouble for Yanmass. Jaliessa's notes—and even her testimony—aren't sufficient to implicate Earl Merkondus as being the paymaster behind the traitorous Taldan Horse regiment, but Yander is aware that the PCs are getting much too close to revealing his scheme. If the PCs haven't already dealt with the Kozan Bravos (see area B), Yander arranges for them to ambush the PCs, as described in that encounter.

The Mercantile Council congratulates the PCs on their success, but in private; the council wants to keep the connection between the Taldan Horse regiment and the "Qadiran" bandits under wraps, so as to not undermine the people's faith in the Taldan military. They are truly thankful, however, and reward the PCs with a *stone of good luck*. Publicly, the Mercantile Council announces that the organized bandit attacks are at an end, thanks to the PCs' skill and bravery, and reduces import and export taxes for a 60-day period to help stimulate trade in Yanmass and reverse the current economic downturn. If the PCs want to spread the word about the treachery of Yanmass's Taldan Horse regiment, the Mercantile Council won't stop them—but they are decidedly colder to the PCs in the future.

Story Award: When the PCs defeat Commander Jaliessa Staubel and report their success to the Mercantile Council, award them 9,600 XP.

PART 4: THE ENCIRCLING BOWER

Once an imposing circular edifice, the brick arches and stone ornaments of this large theater are now scarcely visible beneath climbing rose, grapevines, and ivy—and this jumbled mass of foliage may be the only thing preventing the venerable theater from simply collapsing. The stone marquee set between the two entrances bears the nearly illegible text: “The Encircling Bower Welcomes You into Its Embrace.”

L. THE ENCIRCLING BOWER

The circular building is 120 feet in diameter, 40 feet tall, and topped with a domed roof painted sky-blue with wispy white clouds. Other than occasional ornamental stonework, such as cornerstones and other accents, the Encircling Bower's walls are made of crumbling brick 3 feet thick (hardness 8, hp 270, break DC 35). The theater's small stage entrance is blocked with stone on the inside (see area L6), and its other two entrances are 15 feet wide. The entrances lead to aisles that bisect sweeping arcs of benches around the nearly circular stage. The auditorium is paved with well-worn brick, but most of the upper floor is made of wood. The theater's lower level is 15 feet high throughout, carved from stone, and floored with large, durable ceramic tiles.

The doors throughout the Encircling Bower are all strong wooden doors (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 23) and locked as indicated in the individual room descriptions. Braziers set into the walls and at the edge of the stage provide good illumination throughout the theater.

THE CULT OF THE TWILIGHT CHILD

The Cult of the Twilight Child is a resurrection cult gathered around a teenager the leaders claim is the long-dead Prince Carrius of Taldor, whose nobility and compassion for the Taldan people allowed him to resurrect himself during Taldor's greatest hour of need. The prince's “miraculous” ability to cure the sick and predict good fortune is taken as proof of his near-divinity, but the remaining tenets of the cult are specious, loosely defined, and largely circular, with many aspects demanding “faith” on the part of members to answer complicated questions. Anyone familiar with the worship of Aroden can identify many chants, symbols, and parables lifted from his faith. With the anxiety around Taldor's political upheaval and potential

civil war, many in Yanmass are eager to feel any sense of stability, and the cult provides exactly that with no apparent cost.

The real twist of the cult is that its core claim—that the Twilight Child is Prince Carrius returned to life—is absolutely true, though only Vaddrigan Pol knows this for certain. The young prince is kept in a highly suggestible stupor by the cult's drugs and Vaddrigan's own hypnotic powers, repeating only a few simple tenets on the rare occasions he is permitted to interact with outsiders. Vaddrigan refuses to let visitors meet with the prince, claiming that the holy child demands purity in his immediate presence so as not to stain his newly returned soul. If asked why Carrius hasn't come forward publicly to claim the throne or tried to contact Eutropia, the high priest scoffs, insisting that the Twilight Child did not return for worldly power or prestige, but to ease suffering, and clearly will move on once the suffering in Yanmass has abated.

The motivations of the cult are more clearly spelled out in Vaddrigan Pol's description on page 59.

OBSERVING THE SERVICE

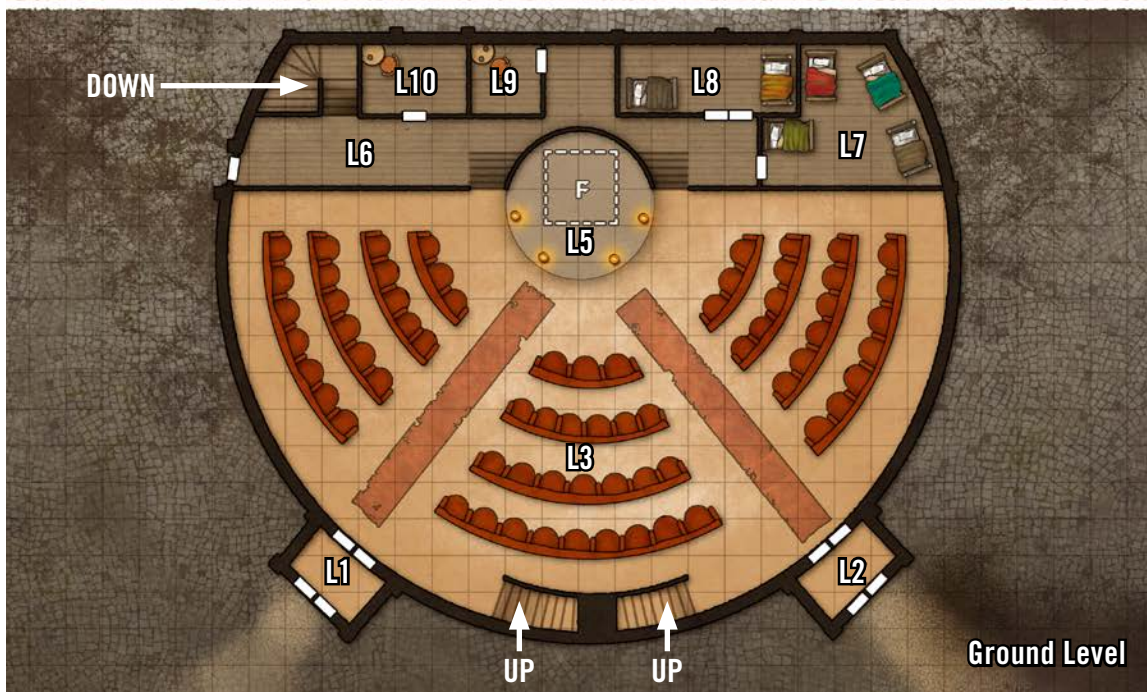
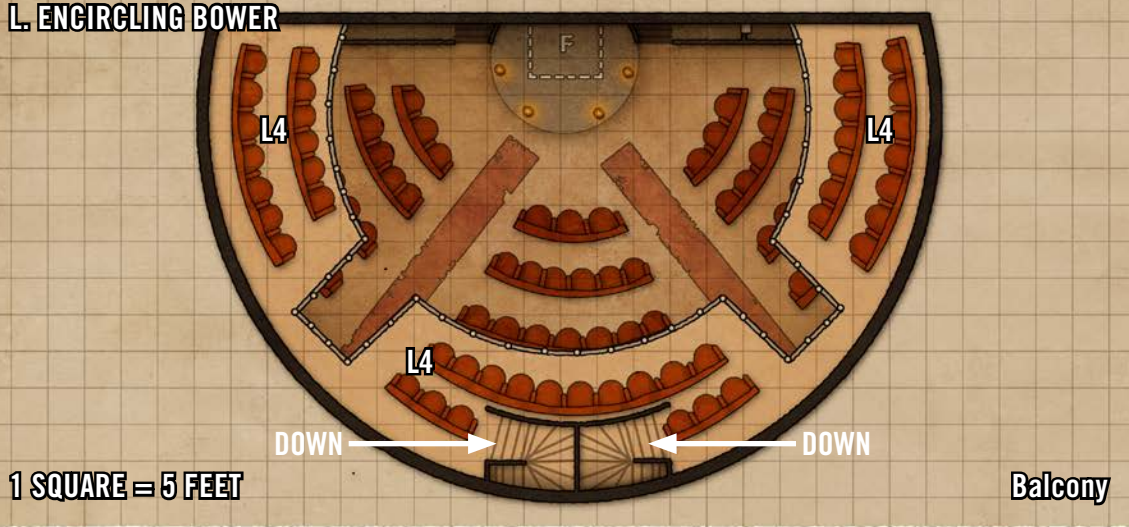
All visitors are welcome in the services at the Encircling Bower, so long as they are well behaved. PCs who interrupt a service are chided by the aasimar high cultists (see area L7) or ushered out by a cult sentry (area L1). If the PCs are overtly violent, all the high-ranking cultists attack to subdue and eject the PCs; they are refused entry thereafter.

10 Minutes before Dusk: An aasimar high cultist dressed in the standard cult outfit of a sky-blue skullcap, veil, and long tunic with a pattern of overlapping circles, quiets the guests and asks them to take their seats. She briefly acknowledges any attendees she doesn't recognize, pointing them out publicly and welcoming them to the Cult of the Twilight Child with a wide smile. The cult sentries lock the entrances and take their positions near the stage at this time.

Dusk: Vaddrigan Pol (see area L18) and three more high cultists come on stage. All are identically dressed and lead a simple chant in Celestial as they walk in circles around the stage. The chant is repetitive and easy to follow even for those who do not speak Celestial. Those who know the language understand it expresses a plea for focus and reverence for the eternity of the circle. Cult members in the audience chant along, and some ring bells or chimes they have brought with them.

10 Minutes after Dusk: Nozzles around the stage spray a golden mist that slowly covers the stage and the audience. While it appears to be a simple stage effect, the mist contains a very mild drug that causes slight euphoria and imposes a –2 penalty on Wisdom-based skill checks and Will saves for the next 1d4 hours. This is a poison effect; a character can resist this effect with a successful DC 12 Fortitude save, but she must attempt a

L. ENCIRCLING BOWER



new saving throw every 10 minutes she remains in the service. Vaddrigan, the high cultists, and the cult sentries have developed an immunity thanks to the cult's resident alchemist (see area L16).

15 Minutes after Dusk: Vaddrigan steps backstage and casts *detect anxieties*^{UI}. When he comes back out, he scans the crowd to pick likely targets for the next phase of the service, using his hypnotic stare to further reduce their Will saving throws; there is a 10% chance Vaddrigan selects a PC. Vaddrigan then gives a short homily about the value of the cult as a community or a similar theme. Cult members in the audience seem to hang on Vaddrigan's words, but his message is never political or controversial.

30 Minutes after Dusk: An aasimar cultist in the basement positions Prince Carrius beneath the trap door in area L18 and opens it, raising the mirror to reflect the prince. The mirror is hardly noticeable through the golden mist. From anywhere in the theater audience, including the balcony, it appears as though the Twilight Child is levitating up through the stage as the mirror rises, and he appears to hover just over the stage. Prince Carrius is a hollow-eyed young man dressed in golden robes with circle motifs. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check realizes that the prince isn't actually on the stage.

After the prince rises, Vaddrigan points out his targets in the audience. Prince Carrius identifies their "secret worries" or "inner thoughts" and provides assurances that their desires will be met soon. (For example, Vaddrigan might say, "Risen Prince, here is a man, a baker, whose neighbors owe him debts," which the response, "That which is owed to you shall be repaid, and shall multiply, as your dough rises beyond the pan."). The leading statements, though cleverly performed, are a common trick among grifters and false mediums; a PC can identify the simple trick with a successful DC 15 Sense Motive check.

If a selected target is suffering from a condition that Vaddrigan's touch treatment ability can cure (most commonly shaken or sickened), he asks for the individual to come up on the stage. Vaddrigan holds the target's shoulders while Prince Carrius's image makes dramatic but meaningless gestures over the target, and Vaddrigan silently uses his touch treatment ability to cure the condition, ascribing the restorative powers to the prince.

During this portion of the service, Xan appears in the shadowed balcony using *greater teleport* and observes Vaddrigan and the prince. The PCs can attempt Perception checks opposed by Xan's Stealth check to spot him.

40 Minutes after Dusk: The mirror is lowered and the prince "descends." The aasimars close the trap door. Vaddrigan asks the audience for those who have

previously received the prince's assurances to stand and testify to the prince's power. If only by fervent belief or mere chance, there are always at least a couple of previous targets who can attest to an improvement in their station, and they ascribe this to the miraculously risen prince.

50 Minutes after Dusk: The aasimar high cultists lead the attendees in a few hymns, mostly borrowed from the church of Abadar. Vaddrigan leaves the stage between the hymns to great applause. The service ends, the guards unlock the exits, and the cult members are invited to leave and go forth to spread the word of the cult. The high cultists retire backstage. Some cultists leave offerings of fine food, money, or other items on the stage as they leave. Still affected by the euphoric effect of the golden mist, the attendees chat good-naturedly as they exit.

One Hour after Dusk: The cult sentries usher out any lingering members and lock up the theater until the following evening.

L1. West Entry (CR 10)

A stout brick archway leads to a short passage into the theater ten feet wide. Stone ornaments on the brick are carved to look like leaves and branches, but an overgrown snarl of ivy makes the passage into a genuine leafy arbor.

This is one of two entrances into the Encircling Bower; the other is area L2 (the former backstage entrance into area L6 has been sealed with stone, as described in that area). This entrance passage has a double door at each end. These are strong wooden doors with good locks (break DC 23, Disable Device DC 30). For an hour before and 10 minutes after services at the Encircling Bower, these doors are unlocked but guarded. At all other times, they are locked.

Creatures: Two watchful dwarven sentries stand inside this passage while the doors are unlocked, close enough to touch visitors as they're coming and going. These monks are unarmored and dress in sky-blue skullcaps, veils, and long tunics with an overlapping circles motif. Well paid by Vaddrigan Pol, these monks aren't members of the cult and don't particularly care about the cult's activities; they're just doing their job. They are curt but polite, waving attendees into the Encircling Bower before meetings and ushering attendees out afterward. The sentries are under orders to freely admit strangers who seem genuinely interested in the cult, particularly if they seem wealthy. They turn away anyone with visible weapons, insisting that weapons aren't allowed in a peaceful religious service (the PCs can attempt Sleight of Hand checks opposed by the sentries' Perception checks to smuggle in light weapons).

At other times, these sentries might be elsewhere within the Encircling Bower. During services, they stand discreetly in area **L3**, on and next to the western stairs leading to area **L6**. Instead of watching the service, they scan the attendees, ready to intercept troublemakers. All other times, they are standing guard in area **L6** (or they are sleeping in area **L8**, while the other pair of sentries stands guard in area **L6** instead).

CULT SENTRIES (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Dwarf monk 9

LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 18, flat-footed 18 (+1 armor, +1 deflection, +1 Dex, +2 monk, +4 Wis)

hp 98 each (9d8+54)

Fort +10, **Ref** +7, **Will** +12; +2 vs. enchantments, poison, spell-like abilities, and spells

Defensive Abilities defensive training, improved evasion; **Immune** disease

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.



CULT SENTRY

Melee unarmed strike +9/+4 (1d10+2) or flurry of blows +10/+10/+5/+5 (1d10+2)

Special Attacks flurry of blows, hatred, stunning fist (10/day, DC 18)

TACTICS

Before Combat The sentries take no special preparations while guarding the doors, but they drink their *potions of bull's strength* if they expect trouble (not reflected in these statistics).

During Combat If these sentries catch anyone attempting to sneak in or start a fight, they try to incapacitate the interlopers with Stunning Fist and flurry of blows. The sentries might imprison incapacitated troublemakers in area **L10** for a few days for questioning. If the sentries meet with serious opposition, they attempt to flank foes together and use their Improved trip and Vicious Stomp feats to kill rather than incapacitate.

Morale Any sentry reduced below 20 hit points decides that the pay isn't worth it and flees.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +11 (+13 disarm or trip); **CMD** 26 (30 vs. bull rush, 28 vs. disarm, 32 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Mantis Style^{UC}, Stunning Fist, Toughness, Vicious Stomp^{UC}, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +13 (+30 when jumping), Appraise +0 (+2 to assess nonmagical metals or gemstones), Heal +7, Intimidate +7, Perception +16 (+18 to notice unusual stonework), Sense Motive +16; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Appraise to assess nonmagical metals or gemstones, +2 Perception to notice unusual stonework

Languages Common, Dwarven

SQ fast movement, high jump, ki pool (8 points, cold iron, magic, silver), maneuver training, slow fall 40 ft., wholeness of body (9 hit points)

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* +2 (2), *potions of bull's strength* (2), *potions of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of resist electricity*; **Other Gear** *bracers of armor* +1, *headband of inspired wisdom* +2, *ring of protection* +1, cult tunic, keys to areas **L1** and **L2**, 50 gp

Development: Although these guards are supposed to provide security in conjunction with the sentries in area **L2**, the two pairs come from slightly different monastic traditions and have a tense rivalry. They are unlikely to call for the sentries in area **L2** unless some problem has them seriously outmatched. In this case, only a single guard from area **L2** arrives, as the other won't leave her post unattended.

L2. East Entry (CR 10)

This entry is similar to area **L1** and is always either locked or guarded in the same manner.

Creatures: Two additional cult sentries stand inside this passage while the doors are unlocked, just like the sentries in area L1. During a service, they stand on guard next to the eastern stairs in area L3, blocking access to area L6. All other times, they are either pacing back and forth in area L6 or sleeping in area L8.

CULT SENTRIES (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Steadfast defenders (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 100)

hp 93 each

Gear In addition to the listed equipment, each cult sentry wears a cult outfit and has a key to the doors in areas L1 and L2.

Development: As described in area L1, these two sentries have a long-standing rivalry with the two sentries there and aren't likely to call them for help unless they get in well over their heads. If they do, only a single guard from area L1 arrives to help, as the other doesn't leave his post undefended.

L3. Auditorium

The ceiling of this round auditorium soars forty feet above the floor, but the theater's glory days are several decades in the past. Several rows of benches arc around a raised central stage, with four aisles providing easy access. The central aisles have runners of fresh, new carpet—just the barest beginning of necessary renovations.

Twenty feet above these seats are three large balconies, but they are in such disrepair that the flooring has fallen through in places. A thick rope and a placard reading "For Your Safety, No Access Permitted" block two staircases at the back of the auditorium leading up to the balconies.

The round stage juts into the center of this auditorium, flanked by two short staircases that appear to lead backstage. A green curtain obscures the backstage area completely.

This auditorium is where rank-and-file members of the Cult of the Twilight Child attend services. The roped-off stairs lead up to area L4, and the two stairs flanking the stage both lead backstage to area L6.

When a service is in session, 40 rank-and-file cultists occupy the benches. These are simple people looking for an easy answer to complex problems, and all have been taken in by Vaddrigan's showmanship. They are earnest believers and engage eagerly with any visitors who want to know more. Although loyal to the cult, they aren't combatants; if confronted with attendees who openly question the cult's teachings or make threats, they prefer to cast affronted glares. If their statistics are necessary, use an equal number of apprentice jewelers with varying Craft skills (*NPC Codex* 260) and shopkeepers (*GameMastery Guide* 284). None of the attendees have a

significant amount of money, as Vaddrigan long ago convinced the faithful to donate their funds to support the cult.


L4. Decrepit Balcony

Three balconies protrude over the auditorium seats twenty feet below, each connected by a narrow walkway and accessed by two sets of stairs against the south wall. The balconies are in terrible shape, with gaps in the rotted floors and seats falling apart or already in pieces.

Rather than risk a collapse, Vaddrigan simply roped off the balconies and expects no one to use them. Although cult members adhere to this prohibition, the central balcony is occasionally occupied; a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception or Survival check identifies several sets of recent boot prints in the dust covering the floor, although the prints stop and start suddenly. These are the tracks of Xan the psychopomp, who arrives and leaves via *greater teleport*.

Hazard: The balconies' floors are unstable and rotted, making footing treacherous. Any creature moving at greater than half speed across the balconies (or leaping onto a balcony) must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save or break partway through the floor, taking 1d8 points of bludgeoning and piercing damage as wood splinters lodge in the creature's foot and lower leg. A failed save also causes the creature's speed to be reduced by half for 24 hours or until the injured creature benefits from a cure spell. Another character can remove the penalty by taking 10 minutes to dress the injuries and succeeding at a DC 15 Heal check. If the PC rolls a natural 1 on her Reflex save, she instead falls all the way through a weak spot in the floor, avoiding the leg injury but instead taking 2d6 points of falling damage.

Development: During the public ceremonies, the psychopomp Xan lurks in the decrepit balconies in his human guise and wearing his red leather bird mask. Xan uses his *true seeing* spell-like ability and sticks to the shadows (with his +17 Stealth modifier, even the keen-eyed sentries near the stage don't spot him). If Xan notices the PCs in the balconies with him, he approaches them, hands visible, to have a short whispered conversation. Xan wants the PCs to focus on getting backstage, because there's an "abomination" at the core of the cult. He points out the backstage access and the trap door in the stage, but admits—honestly—that he believes the trap door to be both trapped and heavily guarded, so the backstage area is the best option for infiltration. As in area G, Xan urges the PCs to do the investigation so that he can better learn about the cult's defenses. He isn't interested in joining forces with the PCs and waves away any such suggestion on the PCs' part. If the PCs balk, point Xan out to the cult,



or attempt to restrain or attack him, Xan flees, using quickened *invisibility* or *greater teleport*; he doesn't stick around to fight the PCs. If necessary, Xan's statistics can be found on page 60.

L5. Stage (CR 10)

This large, round wooden stage is twenty feet in diameter and juts into the theater seating, allowing a good view of the stage from multiple sides. A heavy green curtain provides the backdrop, nearly obscuring two openings that lead backstage. The floor at the rear of the stage contains an obvious trap door ten feet wide by ten feet long.

The high, solid screen behind the stage was once used to display backdrops in days gone by. Now, only a tattered green curtain hangs here, obscuring the openings to backstage (area L6). This stage is now where Vaddrigan and the high cultists lead the cult's ceremonies. Not visible from the audience, several intricate patterns of circles and diagrams have been painted on stage with curiously dark pigment—with a successful DC 18 Craft (alchemy) or Knowledge (arcana) check, a PC can identify this as a silver-based ink often used to draw magic circles for spells and rituals, but the design is unique. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft check after determining the type of paint can determine that the circle seems to be a heavily modified summoning circle, meant to channel something other than an outsider into the circle's center.

The heavy trap door is locked except during services when Pol and the high cultists are present, requiring a successful DC 30 Disable Device check to open or a successful DC 28 Strength check to break through. In addition to being locked, the trap door is trapped, as noted below.

Several discreet nozzles stationed around the edge of the stage create special effects for the ceremonies, spraying a golden mist to give the proceedings a supernatural atmosphere (and help disguise the mirror used to make Carrius appear to float). The mist doesn't obscure sight, but it contains a mild inhaled hallucinogen that makes those who breathe it euphoric and suggestible, as described in the Observing the Service section on page 41.

Trap: In addition to being locked, the trap door at the center of the stage is also trapped. Several small nozzles concealed around the trap door spray nightmare vapor poison into the air if the trap door is disturbed without first releasing the hidden lock. The hidden lock is on the underside of the trap door, increasing the Perception DC to find it from above from 25 to 35. When the gas is discharged, it emits a distinctive piercing whistle in area L18 that alerts all creatures there to intruders.

TRAP DOOR GAS TRAP

CR 10

XP 9,600

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset repair; Bypass hidden lock

(Perception DC 35 to locate and Disable Device DC 30 to open)

Effect poison gas (nightmare vapor; *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 111); never miss; multiple targets (all targets in area L5); alerts all creatures in area L18

L6. Backstage

This backstage hall is ten feet wide and seventy feet long. Faded background screens and tattered curtains hang from rusted hooks and pulleys anchored into the brick walls. The hall is dizzyingly high, with catwalks and support beams twenty feet above the floor and another set fifteen feet higher, all barely visible in the darkness above. Several wooden doors lead off to the north and east, each with a small plaque so tarnished that any writing once there is entirely illegible. Four gaps in the south wall are shrouded with a curtain of tattered green velvet that extends from the support beams to brush the floor. To the west, a set of stone stairs winds downward, turning at a brick wall. Near the top of the stairs, a wide doorway has been completely sealed over with blank stone.

This backstage area is off-limits to casual worshipers. Only the cult sentries, high cultists, and other ranking members or guests of the Cult of the Twilight Child are allowed in this area, so any trespassers are immediately suspect.

Four of the doorways here lead to the theater's dressing rooms, some of which are used as bedrooms to accommodate the cult sentries and high cultists. The easternmost and westernmost gaps in the south wall lead to stairs to the main seating area (area L3), while the central two gaps lead to the stage (area L5)—the hanging curtain blocks vision but doesn't slow movement.

A backstage door to the west used to lead outside the theater, but Vaddrigan paid to have it sealed with a *stone shape* spell to prevent easy access. The steep stairs lead down to the lower hall (area L11).

Near the top of the stairs is a bank of levers and pegs that used to hold ropes that led up into the catwalks and support beams. The ropes are long gone, as are the ladders that led up to the catwalks. As a result, none of the cult members ever use the catwalks or even remember that they're there, making them a good place for the PCs to hide out. PCs who examine the catwalks and succeed at a DC 15 Perception or Survival check notice recent boot prints in the dust, although the prints stop and start suddenly with no evidence of how the person who left them reached these heights.

These are the tracks of Xan the psychopomp, who was spying on the cultists backstage.

When a service isn't in session and the doors at areas **L1** and **L2** are locked, a pair of dwarven monks patrols this area. These are the cult sentries described in either area **L1** or area **L2**; the other pair is resting in area **L8**.

L7. High Cultist Barracks (CR 10)

This large storeroom has been converted into a barracks, with several large and comfortable-looking bunk beds. Spirals and overlapping circles of various sizes have been drawn on the walls in blue and yellow paint. The room's only door is in the southwest corner.

The highest-ranking cultists of the Cult of the Twilight Child sleep in this room when not conducting ceremonies or assisting Vaddrigan Pol in the theater's basement. As the high cultists are all aasimars who can see in the dark and do little in this room but sleep, the braziers here are extinguished and the room is dark.

Creatures: Four aasimar cultists are currently resting in this room while the other four are elsewhere (one is in area **L13**, two are in area **L18**, and the last is conducting business in Yanmass in disguise). They immediately attack intruders in their room. If the high cultists were unaware of intruders backstage before entering combat, they are still groggy and treated as sickened for the first 1d4 rounds of combat.

HIGH CULTISTS (4) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Aasimar sorcerer 7 (*Pathfinder RPG*

Bestiary 7)

NE Medium outsider (native)

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

Perception +3

DEFENSE

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

hp 41 each (7d6+14)

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities fated (+2);

Resist acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. **Melee** sickle +3 (1d6)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +6 (1d8/19–20)



Aasimar Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +11)

2/day—*daylight*, *searing light*

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +11)

7/day—touch of destiny (+3)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +11)

3rd (5/day)—*lightning bolt* (DC 17), *protection from energy*, *unadulterated loathing*^{UM} (DC 18)

2nd (7/day)—*blur*, *demand offering*^{OA} (DC 17), *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *touch of idiocy*

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *cause fear* (DC 15), *charm person* (DC 16), *color spray* (DC 15), *mage armor*, *magic missile*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 14), *dancing lights*, *daze* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *message*

Bloodline destined

TACTICS

Before Combat The high cultists cast *mage armor* each day. A high cultist who anticipates combat casts *protection from energy* of a type that seems most helpful (usually fire).

During Combat Although high cultists prefer to turn enemies into pawns with *charm person*, they attempt to quickly dispatch powerful foes with *lightning bolt*, *magic missile*, and *searing light*. High cultists shun melee and cast *unadulterated loathing* to compel melee fighters to keep their distance, or drink a *potion of invisibility* to sneak away to a better tactical position.

Morale High cultists fight to the death.

Base Statistics Without *mage armor*, a high cultist's statistics are **AC** 12, flat-footed 10.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15

Feats Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Heavenly Radiance^{ARG}, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (enchantment)

Skills Bluff +14, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +14, Intimidate +14, Perception +3, Spellcraft +7, Use Magic Device +10; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Diplomacy, +2 Perception

Languages Celestial, Common, Halfling

SQ bloodline arcana (gain luck bonus on saves when casting personal-range spells)

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*,

potion of invisibility; **Other Gear** mwk light crossbow with 20 bolts, sickle, *cloak of resistance +1*, cult tunic, mirror, ritual bell^{OA}

Development: In addition to the tunics worn by the inhabitants of this room, tucked neatly under one of the beds are four more tunics and eight blue skullcaps with veils. These cult outfits may be useful in bypassing the guardian in area **L11** or tricking the inhabitants of areas **L13** or **L16**.

L8. Sentry Barracks

This room was once two separate dressing rooms, but the wall dividing them was demolished long ago to create a larger room with two entrances. The room now contains two bunk beds for the cult's four dwarven

sentries (see areas **L1** and **L2**). A thin curtain has been tacked to the ceiling between the two bunks in an attempt to partition this room into two halves, as the sentries don't get along well.

When a service isn't in session and the doors at areas **L1** and **L2** are locked, a pair of cult sentries from one of those areas is resting here. If the cult sentries detect intruders in their room, they immediately attack.

L9. Occupied Dressing Room (CR 8)

This dressing room contains only a vanity table and a single wooden chair. The vanity table contains a large mirror ringed with candles burning brightly. An overstuffed sewing basket sits on the vanity table, with needles and thread of many types and colors spilling out of the basket's top. A single door in the room's eastern wall is the only egress.

The cult didn't have an immediate use for this abandoned dressing room, so Vaddrigan gave it to its current denizen to use. Fortunately for the cult, the creature hasn't deigned to leave this chamber since, asking only for the sewing kit that currently sits on the table in this room.

Creature: A single gangly denizen of Leng sits in the chair before the vanity table, using the sewing kit to slowly stitch its turban to its head and its veil to its face. This creature provided substantial funding to Vaddrigan in exchange for a dagger provided by the Immaculate Circle (see *Treasure* on page 49) and three favors to be named later. For now, it is killing time here in the Encircling Bower until its inscrutable masters in Leng tell it what to collect and when. Due to the creature's unnatural calm, the cultists call it the Placid One.

The Placid One isn't interested in helping any of the other cultists in a fight, but it's aware that if Vaddrigan is defeated, it likely can't collect on its bargain. It therefore attempts to entice any PCs into leaving the Encircling Bower; failing that, it kills who enters its room then. When the PCs enter this room, the Placid One looks at them reflected through the mirror and says languidly in a strange accent, "You're not with the cult.

So I have something to offer you, if you're willing to converse like civilized beings." While the Placid One talks, it continues its slow stitching. The Placid One offers the PCs a flawless ruby the size of a hen's egg if they agree to leave the Encircling Bower. It even shows the ruby to the PCs, picking it deftly out of the sewing basket. The Placid One's offer is a trick, however. Although the ruby appears to be worth 10,000 gp even upon close inspection, it carries a curse that



THE PLACID ONE

activates once it is carried out of the Encircling Bower. At that time, the ruby functions as a *loadstone*. Once its curse is activated, all potential buyers immediately sense that the ruby is unnatural and refuse to purchase it or trade for it.

If the PCs are uninterested in parlaying, the Placid One deftly snips the thread it's currently using with a claw, stands, and attacks. Aware that it cannot truly be killed on the Material Plane, it fights to the death.

THE PLACID ONE

CR 8

XP 4,800

Denizen of Leng (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 82)

hp 95

Treasure: The denizen's ruby loses its shine if the outsider is slain, but a thin, jeweled dagger remains on the dressing table in a small, velvet-lined chest. This is the *Scion's Dagger* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128 80), a weapon commissioned by Grand Prince Penticus IV to protect his son after he struck a deal to sell his firstborn to mysterious outsiders in exchange for the crown of Taldor. In the end, the blade saved young Penticus V not by drawing his enemy's blood, but his own: the heir killed himself rather than be drawn to Leng, denying his father's mysterious business partners and paving the way for his younger brother, Tralian V, to ascend to the throne and inaugurate the Fourth Army of Exploration. The Denizens of Leng have desired to claim this relic ever since.

L10. Converted Dressing Room

The side of the door in area L6 has been recently fitted with a sturdy bolt, although the bolt isn't fastened. This dressing room is similar to area L9, but it's unoccupied and the candles around its mirror haven't been lit in years. The cultists use this room as a holding cell if taking prisoners down to area L14 is inconvenient or might reveal too much of the cult's inner workings. If the PCs are caught by the cult sentries after they've already been warned away, the cultists bring them here for questioning (and place the PCs' gear in area L8).

If the PCs lost any agents during Infiltrate the Cult operations, they can be found here.

L11. Lower Hall (CR 10)

This hallway connects the rooms beneath the Encircling Bower. It is made of mortared stone and durable tile in various faded shades of green.

Creature: A clay golem patrols this hallway at all hours. Commissioned by Vaddrigan as a loyal

guardian, the golem resembles a squat humanoid with blunt, bare features. It ignores any creatures wearing a cult outfit (consisting of a skullcap, tunic, and veil), stepping aside with a bow so that such creatures may pass. The golem immediately attacks any creatures that aren't wearing cult outfits and any creatures in cult outfits that directly attack it, unless Vaddrigan himself commands otherwise. The golem fights until destroyed, pursuing opponents who attempt to flee.

CLAY GOLEM

CR 10

XP 9,600

hp 101 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 159)



CLAY GOLEM



L12. Prop Storage

This cramped, unlit room is lined with shelves and filled with lumber, jars of paint, rolled tapestries, and other materials for constructing sets and props.

When the Encircling Bower was an active theater, props for the current production were stored backstage, while unused props and construction materials were stored here. These materials are old and useless—the wood is rotted, the paint is dried out, and the rolled tapestries are moth-eaten. Although Vaddrigan made an initial survey of this room to look for useful materials, he didn't find anything of value. As a result, the cultists rarely ever enter the storage, making it a good place for desperate PCs to hide out.

L13. Jailers' Room (CR 8)

This square room has a musty, unpleasant smell. A scarred wooden table surrounded by wooden chairs is shoved into the room's northwestern corner. The southeast corner contains several pallets of straw jumbled together like a nest. A target hangs on the back of the wooden door in the east wall. A wooden door in the south wall has a small barred window and a heavy bar to keep it closed.

The Cult of the Twilight Child usually deals with recalcitrant members or overly curious intruders via rigorous questioning followed by disposal into area L17, but sometimes the cult needs someone to disappear temporarily. As the cult members are too busy with day-to-day duties to serve as full-time wardens, Vaddrigan hired a gang of wererats to serve in this capacity. The wererats live here, paid well for nothing more than feeding any prisoners in area L14 and making sure they don't escape. Right now there is only one such prisoner, making the job particularly easy, and the wererats living here have grown lazy. They spend their days playing dice games around the table in the northwest corner or throwing daggers at the door leading to area L11.

The door in the south wall is barred from the north side to prevent any prisoner from escaping. The door isn't locked and opens easily once the bar is removed. The window in the door shows area L14 and its single despondent prisoner.

Creatures: Four afflicted wererats (Berta, Morbietta, Shastin, and Veskina) inhabit this room. A high cultist named Triellas is currently negotiating with the wererats; she wants one or two of them to spread some disinformation around the city, but the lazy wererats want to get paid more for what they consider "extra services." The wererats goaded the high cultist into playing dice for their bonus rate, but the game is going on a long time. The wererats are cheating, and Triellas is

drawing out the game to surreptitiously cast *charm person* on them (Berta and Shastin are currently charmed). As they are focused on their game, these opponents don't notice sounds of combat outside their room, but they immediately work together in order to repel any intruders that enter. The wererats fight to the death as long as the high cultist is alive, but once the high cultist is defeated, any wererat reduced below 10 hit points attempts to flee and warn Huddrigga in area L16 or, if unable to flee, surrenders.

WERERATS (4)

CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 20 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 197)

Gear one wererat has the key to the cell in area L14

HIGH CULTIST

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 41 (see page 47)

L14. Prison

This jail cell has floor-to-ceiling iron bars running from the west wall to the east wall to separate off the room's northern edge. A padlocked cell door in the bars is framed in iron. The cell is a gruesome affair, strewn with moldy straw and a leaky bucket overflowing with foul fluids. The wooden door in the north wall has a narrow, barred window.

The cult outfitted this room as a prison and hired the wererats in area L13 to serve as jailers. The wererats are lazy and rarely change the straw for bedding or the bucket for prisoners' sanitary use. The padlock on the cell door requires a successful DC 25 Disable Device check to unlock. The door to area L13 is kept barred from the other side, requiring a successful DC 30 Disable Device check to open or a successful DC 23 Strength check to burst.

This cell currently holds a single occupant: a frightened and seemingly innocent woman named **Cassaranda Florint** (NG female middle-aged human bard 3/rogue 3/Lion Blade 1; *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Intrigue* 36). Although Florint appears to be a baby-faced young woman barely out of her teens, she is in fact a talented spy in her late thirties. She heard of the Cult of the Twilight Child while passing through Yanmass on another mission and sought some preliminary information about them to report back to her superiors in the Kitharodian Academy in Oppara. Florint was captured and imprisoned here a week ago. She has insisted that she is nothing more than a too-curious local girl, but Vaddrigan doesn't believe her protestations. During her incarceration, Florint has fashioned crude lockpicks from splinters in the straw; she can open the lock on the cell but can't yet get past the

various guards. She keeps the padlock shut and locked for now as she waits for a better opportunity to escape.

Florint maintains her innocent facade with the PCs as well and pleads for release. If the PCs convince her that they are loyal servants of Princess Eutropia, however, Florint reveals her true nature and motives. She offers to share what she knows about the Cult of the Twilight Child with the PCs, although by this point they probably know more than she does. You can use this opportunity to fill in the PCs on any information they lack.

Whether or not the PCs learn Florint's true nature, they are likely to meet her again in the next chapter of this Adventure Path, *Pathfinder Adventure Path #130: City in the Lion's Eye*, where she remains grateful if the PCs released her.

L15. Bedroom

This simple bedroom has low dressers and shelves stuffed with reference books, scrolls, and bottles of alchemical reagents.

This room is where the dwarven alchemist Huddrigga sleeps when she's not at work in area L16 (she's working most of the time). The reference books here are all well used, and most are falling apart. The scrolls are notes about Huddrigga's failed experiments. Although none of them are valid formulae, Huddrigga keeps them around in case they prove useful someday. The bottles of reagents here are all excess reagents of little value.

The single door in the east wall has a large glass bottle tied to a string nailed to the back of the door. When the door is slammed hard, the glass bottle bursts, coating the back of the door with a gooey, foul-smelling concoction. This substance chemically interacts with wood to deter the black pudding in area L17; the black pudding won't pass through a closed door smeared with the concoction.

Development: Huddrigga can be found hiding out in this room if she has unleashed the black pudding, as is described in area L16.

L16. Alchemical Laboratory (CR 10)

This wide stone chamber contains several low tables, crates of equipment, and barrels of odd-smelling liquids. Beakers of bubbling liquids and translucent balloons of multicolored gases are scattered across the tables. Wooden doors stand in the north, east, and west walls; next to the east door is a large metal plate and a lever in the down position.

Vaddrigan Pol's alchemist ally, the inventive dwarf Huddrigga, uses this room for her experiments in hallucinogenic gases and other mind-altering substances.

The double door to the north leads into the lower hall (area L11), the west door leads to Huddrigga's bedroom (area L15), and the east door leads to the disposal vat (area L17). The lever next to the east door, when raised, causes the floor in area L17 to rise over the next 3 rounds; lowering the lever causes the floor in that room to lower at the same rate. If the floor is fully raised, the black pudding in area L17 escapes, as described there.

Creatures: Huddrigga is an inventive dwarven alchemist and a high-ranking member of the Cult of the Twilight Child. A lifetime citizen of Taldor, Huddrigga is in awe of the returned Prince Carrius, but she knows that most of Vaddrigan's posturing is showmanship and trickery. She helps Vaddrigan by perfecting hallucinogenic substances to affect the minds of visitors and rank-and-file cultists. Huddrigga is a startlingly unattractive dwarven woman whose greatest creation is a crystallization of hallucinogenic gases into an amorphous, incorporeal shape (unknown to Huddrigga,



she inadvertently infused her experiment with an ethereal creature called an animate dream). Huddrigga calls her creation Dreamrender, and relies upon the creature as an assistant, bodyguard, and confidante. Dreamrender is utterly loyal to the alchemist. Huddrigga and Dreamrender work together here over several delicate experiments and attack immediately if interrupted.

HUDDRIGGA**CR 7****XP 3,200**Female chemist (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 243)**hp** 72**DREAMRENDER****CR 9****XP 6,400**Advanced animate dream (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 29)**hp** 114

Treasure: The equipment that can be salvaged is equivalent to an alchemist's lab. In addition, the crates contain several doses of illegal hallucinogenic drugs: 100 doses of powdered flayleaf worth 10 gp each, 40 vials of opium worth 25 gp each, and 10 carefully packed doses of

shiver worth 500 gp each. Rules for drugs can be found starting on page 236 of the *GameMastery Guide*.

Development: If Huddrigga is aware of intruders in the lower level, she flips the lever and opens both doors to the disposal chamber (area **L17**) to release the black pudding, retreats to her bedroom (area **L15**), and slams the door firmly. Dreamrender stays here to attack intruders, aware that the black pudding poses no threat to her incorporeal state. Huddrigga intends to emerge after an hour or so, in the hope that the black pudding has taken care of any intruders; she emerges earlier if Dreamrender lets her know the danger has passed.

L17. Disposal Vat (CR 7)

This deep stone room has sides slick with stains. Wooden doors to the west and north are scarred and grooved, as though with acid.

This deep shaft was once used as a secret entrance to the theater from Yanmass's sewers, but the cult now uses it as a disposal vat for prisoners its leaders wish to permanently eliminate, as well as Huddrigga's failed alchemical experiments. The walls, floor, and ceiling are all made of stone. The floor is normally 30 feet below the doors, but the lever in area **L16** causes the floor to rise to a few inches below the doors or lower it back down. The floor can't be raised or lowered from within this room.

The north door leads to the lower hall (area **L11**) and the more frequently used west door leads to the alchemical laboratory (area **L16**).

Creature: A black pudding lurks on the stone floor at the bottom of this room, consuming any prisoners or alchemical components hurled down. Well-fed and placated by the alchemical slurry, the ooze doesn't climb the walls to the doors; however, if the floor is raised to the level of the doors, the ooze can easily escape. If a door is open when the ooze reaches the surface, the ooze surges out the door and devours any creatures it detects. If no doors are open, it dissolves one at random and begins seeking out prey. The ooze fights until destroyed. If pushed back into this room when the floor is lowered, it resumes its torpor at the bottom of the shaft.

BLACK PUDDING**CR 7****XP 3,200****hp** 105 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 35)**L18. Planning Room (CR 10)**

Lavish tapestries cover the walls of this large, stone-walled room. A simple altar stands in the center of the north wall, and a table with a few chairs occupies an alcove to the east. In the west end of the room is a large wooden platform beneath a trap door in the ceiling. Hanging on

**HUDDRIGGA**

a metal pivot arm near the trap door is an enormous, brightly polished mirror. Doors lead out of this room to the west, south, and east; the door to the east is barred.

This room is where Vaddrigan Pol schemes with his high cultists, planning services and building up a cult of personality around Prince Carrius. The altar is entirely for show; it bears a few burning candles in gold candlesticks embossed with a key symbol, as well as a holy symbol of Abadar.

The trap door leads up to the theater stage (area L5). From the underside, the lock on the trap door is obvious and can be opened by toggling a switch. The hidden lock on the gas trap in area L5 is also obvious from this side. The platform under the trap door once rose and lowered to bring items from this room to the stage above; although the platform is inoperable now, the cultists don't need it as they only pretend to raise Prince Carrius onto the stage using the mirror.

The table contains several notes outlining the services, including the mechanism by which Vaddrigan displays Prince Carrius during services via the mirror while keeping him safely beneath the stage in this room. The notes imply that Prince Carrius is, in fact, the risen prince of Taldor, although they don't indicate how the prince was raised or how he came under Vaddrigan's control. They make it clear that the Cult of the Twilight Child is Vaddrigan's brainchild, and that its aim is to create a popular cult of personality around Prince Carrius—initially in Yanmass but eventually throughout Taldor. The ultimate endgame of this strange goal isn't explained in these notes, primarily because Vaddrigan himself doesn't know—he's operating somewhat beyond the direction of his superiors in the Immaculate Circle.

The double door to the south leads to the lower hall (area L11), while the door to the west leads to Vaddrigan's bedroom (area L19) and the barred door to the east leads to Prince Carrius's cell (area L20). Although the barred door to area L20 is similar to the one to area L14, it doesn't have an opening to view the prison inside.

Creatures: Vaddrigan Pol is nearly always found here, along with two high cultists. If they are aware of intruders in the lower hall, they each consume their *potions of invisibility* in addition to the preparations described in their stat blocks. Vaddrigan also makes a quick attempt to burn the notes on the table using the altar candles. If he does so, most of the pages are damaged and discerning their contents from the surviving portions requires a successful DC 20 Intelligence or Linguistics check.

VADDRIGAN POL

CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 108 (see page 58)

HIGH CULTISTS (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 41 each (see page 47)

Treasure: The gold candlesticks are worth 50 gp each, and the gold holy symbol of Abadar is worth 100 gp.

L19. Pol's Chamber

An enormous, luxurious bed fills most of this small room. A narrow writing desk and chair stand next to the bed.

This room is where Vaddrigan Pol sleeps, although he does so only rarely and fitfully. A flat trunk beneath the bed holds his spare clothes and various valueless sundries. The writing desk is where Vaddrigan pens his updates to the Immaculate Circle, but he is too smart to leave anything incriminating here. The desk contains only a few sheets of plain paper, writing implements, a lump of red wax, and a metal seal with a symbol of overlapping circles.

Two books sit on Vaddrigan's desk: a stolen, handwritten book of notes entitled "Diverting the River of Souls" which includes a mix of theological musings on the nature of life as well as arcane scribbles related to the overlap between resurrection magic and summoning spells. While the book does not name its author, it includes a short passage about "fishing out some shred of her soul from the Beyond and in so doing, animating the most resplendent likeness of her youthful days—all at once wondrous and terrible," obliquely referencing Duke Panivar Lotheed's creation of the *trompe l'oeil* of his wife, Veletto, in "Songbird, Scion, Saboteur." The second book continues some of the first book's arcane notations in a new handwriting, surmising that someone "already blooded by the Beyond" could usurp mortal worship and channel it into himself. Diagrams later in the book mirror those painted on the stage above (area L5), hinting at Vaddrigan's efforts to gain immortality and win a seat in the Immaculate Circle's ruling council.

Treasure: The finely made metal seal is worth 15 gp. In addition, the luxurious bed coverings are worth 400 gp, but they weigh 30 pounds. Vaddrigan's journal has little value, but Panivar's old journal contains enough genuine revelations that any wizard would pay 150 gp for it.

L20. Carrius's Prison (CR 8)

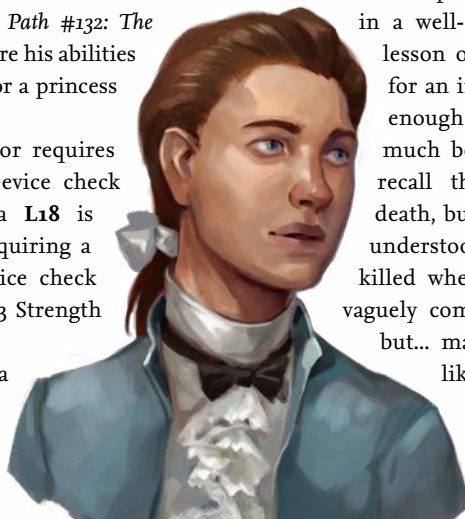
This room contains a jail cell with a simple bed and a small table with a tray of half-eaten food. Floor-to-ceiling iron bars running from the north wall to the south wall separate the cell from a small entryway on the west edge of the room.

This cell looks similar to the one in area L14, but it is much cleaner and has much better furnishings. The Cult

of the Twilight Child keeps the risen Prince Carrius here at all times except when he is in area **L18** on display to the cult in the theater above. Prince Carrius's stat block appears in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #132: The Six-Legend Soul*, but for now, before his abilities fully mature, use the statistics for a princess (NPC Codex 250).

The padlock on the cell door requires a successful DC 25 Disable Device check to unlock. The door to area **L18** is barred from the other side, requiring a successful DC 30 Disable Device check to open it or a successful DC 23 Strength check to burst from this side.

Trap: Vaddrigan doesn't trust a mere lock to keep Prince Carrius safe, so he placed a trap on the western edge of this room to hinder would-be rescuers. Anyone other than Vaddrigan or Prince Carrius entering any of the squares between the door and the cell bars triggers the trap.



PRINCE CARRIUS

BLINDING TRAP

CR 8

XP 4,800

Type magic; Perception DC 32; Disable Device DC 32

EFFECTS

Trigger location (western part of area **L20**); Reset none

Effect spell effect (*power word blind*)

Development: The Twilight Child doesn't trust Vaddrigan and isn't a willing prisoner, but Vaddrigan has used so much mind-affecting magic and hallucinogenic drugs on the young man that he doesn't willingly attempt to escape, either. He isn't sure how he came to be in Yanmass or how he met Vaddrigan in the first place, or even whether his name is actually Carrius. The PCs can convince the lad of their good intentions and desire to rescue him with a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check. If the PCs mention that they are working for Carrius's sister, Princess Eutropia, his face brightens and a few tears fall from his eyes, but he doesn't understand why. If the PCs fail this check, Prince Carrius isn't willing to leave with them and shouts for Vaddrigan to protect him, unsure what else to do. Once Vaddrigan and his allies have been dealt with, the PCs can retry this Diplomacy check.

If the PCs are able to convince Prince Carrius to come with them, he tries to answer their questions, but he remains still confused and slow to respond. His memories are thoroughly muddled, and he remembers only the last few days with any precision. He recalls someone telling him that he is Prince Carrius of Taldor, son of Grand Prince Stavian III and younger brother to

Princess Eutropia, but for now the only other things he remembers are momentary glimpses—a warm afternoon playing with his father and older sister in a well-appointed garden, his first riding lesson on a dappled white mare, a funeral for an important woman before he was old enough to understand its significance—but much beyond that is too hazy. He doesn't recall the specific circumstances of his death, but if the PCs explain the commonly understood (but incorrect) belief that he was killed when being thrown from a horse, he vaguely comments “no, I—there was a horse, but... maybe? I remember a shout.” Spells like *zone of truth* or *discern lies* reveal that he is being quite honest about everything he says.

If asked about the circumstances of his resurrection, he asserts, “I just followed the circle back around to the beginning,” but can provide no further details.

RECOVERING PRINCE CARRIUS

When the PCs rescue Prince Carrius from Vaddrigan's clutches, they should be anxious to return him to his sister. If the PCs reach out to Martella Lotheed, she encourages the PCs to bring the prince to the Palace of Birdsong right away. Xan doesn't let Prince Carrius leave so easily (see area **N**), but once the psychopomp is defeated, the PCs can leave Yanmass with the risen prince.

Although the Mercantile Council didn't ever consider the Cult of the Twilight Child a real problem, Chief Enumerator Palliettor thanks the PCs personally. If he had previously loaned the PCs the magical crossbow *Scofflaw Hunter* (see area **C**), he encourages them to keep it; otherwise, he presents it to the PCs as a gift. Further, he offers to send genuine representatives of the Church of Abadar to minister to the lay members of the cult and address their spiritual needs.

Story Award: When the PCs recover the prince and eliminate Vaddrigan Pol, award them 9,600 XP.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs have both earned the trust of the Mercantile Council and rescued Prince Carrius, their mission concludes. Yanmass's citizens are overwhelmed by the support Princess Eutropia offers as much as they're disgusted by Maxillar Pythareus's treachery, so they—and with it, most inhabitants of Avin prefecture—



throw their public support behind Eutropia in the War for the Crown.

Once the PCs return to the Palace of Birdsong, Martella wastes little time in examining Prince Carrius herself, asking probing questions about his childhood and comparing him to various sketches and descriptions made of the prince in his lifetime. The young man can't recall everything, but what he does remember is quite specific. Eventually she sends for Lady Paril, the high priest of Abadar in the nearby town of Lotheedar, to bring additional genealogy notes and cast divinations on her behalf, but the arrival of a priest catches Princess Eutropia's attention as well. Read or paraphrase the following.

Martella continues scrutinizing the lad even as she hands him another cup of tea, which disappears as quickly as the last. "We'll continue once Lady Paril arrives from town with the family records I requested. For now I want all of you to know you've done extraordinary work, even if I don't understand what exactly you've done just yet. If nothing else, we know that Pythareus isn't just playing dirty; it sounds like he's trying to fan the old flames of hatred with Qadira. Maybe even drag us into a new war. For now, though, go home. I'll contact you once I learn anything more about the High Strategos, or about the prince."

She pauses as the study door opens, revealing not one woman but two: Lady Paril and Princess Eutropia.

"Martella, why in Abadar's name would you need a cler—" The Princess's words catch in her throat as she looks at Carrius.

The princess rushes in to embrace her brother, and tears stream down both their faces.

The PCs might have gained important information or allies that will serve them well in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #130: City in the Lion's Eye*. First, the PCs may already suspect, or have learned from Jaliessa Staubel's notes, that Maxillar Pythareus is very likely behind Earl Merkondus's machinations, warning them that the popular general is ruthlessly stoking the flames of conflict with Taldor's ancient rival, Qadira. The PCs may have rescued the spy Cassaranda Florint from the Cult of the Twilight Child. As a member of the Kitharodian Academy, Florint can ease their entry into the academy in the first part of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #130*. Perhaps most importantly, the PCs can return Prince Carrius to his sister. Princess Eutropia is overjoyed to find her younger brother has been returned to life, despite the mysterious circumstances around his resurrection. Prince Carrius's fate is to be revealed as the War for the Crown Adventure Path unfolds.

Treasure: After a week, a messenger arrives from Princess Eutropia, bearing a letter and a *staff of healing* commissioned for the PCs in honor of the reunion they made possible. The letter simply reads, "You have the eternal gratitude of a sister. Thank you."

EARL YANDER MERKONDUS

A man of endless charm and twisted but brilliant intellect, Earl Yander Merkondus is an aristocratic merchant and Imperialist supporter from southwestern Taldor who serves as a constant thorn in the PCs' side.

EARL YANDER MERKONDUS

CR 8

XP 4,800

Male human bard (court bard) 9 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 81)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +4 shield)

hp 80 (9d8+36)

Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +10; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk rapier +6/+1 (1d6–1/18–20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +9 (1d8/19–20)

Special Attacks bardic performance 24 rounds/day (move action; countersong, distraction, fascinate [DC 18], glorious epic [DC 18], inspire greatness, mockery –3, satire –2, suggestion [DC 18])

Bard Spells Known (CL 9th; concentration +13)

3rd (4/day)—*crushing despair* (DC 18), *dispel magic*, *glibness*, *they know*^{UI} (DC 18)

2nd (5/day)—*detect desires*^{UI} (DC 16), *mirror image*, *shamefully overdressed*^{UI} (DC 17), *sound burst* (DC 16)

1st (6/day)—*charm person* (DC 16), *comprehend languages*, *disguise self*, *hideous laughter* (DC 16), *undetectable alignment* (DC 15)

0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *lullaby* (DC 15), *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

TACTICS

Before Combat If he expects a fight or is fleeing, Earl Yander Merkondus drinks his *potion of barkskin* and uses his *wand of bear's endurance* on himself (not reflected in these statistics).

During Combat Yander opens fights with a glorious epic to leave his opponents flat-footed, then switches to satire to impose a –2 penalty on their attack and damage rolls. He prefers to leave the fighting to his loyal bodyguards while sowing chaos among his enemies with spells such as *dispel magic*, *hideous laughter*, *sound burst*, and *they know*, *sound burst*.

Morale Earl Merkondus knows he is ineffective in melee. If his allies are defeated and he's unable to incapacitate his opponents with spells, he attempts to flee.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 20

Feats Defensive Combat Training, Iron Will, Lingering Performance^{APG}, Skill Focus (Perform [oratory]), Spell Focus (enchantment), Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +8, Diplomacy +19, Escape Artist +14, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (history, local, nobility) +12, Perception +13, Perform (act) +16, Perform (oratory) +19, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +8, Use Magic Device +16

Languages Common, Halfling, Kelish

SQ heraldic expertise +4, versatile performances (act, oratory), wide audience

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* (2), *scroll of cure serious wounds*, *wand of bear's endurance* (10 charges), *wand of shield* (30 charges); **Other Gear** mithral shirt, mwk light crossbow, mwk rapier, *cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of mind shielding*, noble's outfit, 50 gp

Yander Merkondus was born to a life of ease in Oppara—a precocious, intelligent boy whose aristocratic parents doted upon him and provided him with private tutors in composition, rhetoric, and science. Yander's closest confidant was his older brother Evrenett. The two spent many days shirking their lessons and exploring their parents' mansion. One rainy day when Yander was 8 years old, he and his brother slipped while climbing from one exterior balcony to another. Both fell to the cobblestoned walk three stories below. Evrenett died instantly. Yander survived, but his spine was injured badly in the fall.

Yander quickly realized that he received more treats and breaks from his lessons if he lied about how much his body actually hurt, even well after his injuries had healed. He acquired the habit of wincing and grimacing even when he felt fine, just to attract sympathy. He learned to walk with an elegant cane and used it frequently, despite the fact he was soon able to walk and even run unaided.

Yander's parents died in a carriage accident when he was 15, leaving him the family's extensive Opparan manor, several successful trading companies, and the title of Earl of the Western Rushing Marches—a large swath of land along Taldor's swampy Moda Prefecture. Curious about his ancestral holdings, the new Earl Merkondus went to visit.

Yander hated his land. The few hardy peat-cutters and fisherfolk who lived there paid their taxes on time, but grudgingly, and they grumbled incessantly about their “distant lordship.” They sheltered smugglers—and, it was rumored, revolutionaries—in their isolated homes and villages. Unintimidated by the feckless rabble, Yander decided that his land would be better empty than with these surly brutes. He ostentatiously established himself in the ancestral Merkondus estate in the region and sent invitations to the region’s most influential citizens. Using the rudimentary magic he’d learned under his tutors, Yander enthralled each of these leaders and goaded them into quarreling. The quarrels exposed old grudges and led to fistfights and threats of maiming and murder. Yander was thrilled to have orchestrated the destinies and deaths of others, and he knew he had found his life’s calling.

Word of the infighting in Earl Merkondus’s lands reached the ears of the Taldan military. The earl appeared before a young commander, Maxillar Pythareus, to account for the troubles in his lands. Yander attempted to enchant the cavalier, but the wily Pythareus was far too familiar with mind-influencing magic to fall for Yander’s tricks. He arrested the earl for the affront, but Yander fell back on the techniques he had practiced as a boy—playing up the mental fatigue of having lost his parents—as he pleaded for the commander’s mercy. Pythareus suspected that the immature earl could be useful if properly molded. Instead of imprisoning Yander, Pythareus took the young bard under his wing, sponsoring him in academies and colleges. Yander’s only punishment was to formally cede the Western Rushing Marches over to Pythareus.

To outside observers of Taldan nobility, Earl Merkondus grew into his abilities as an orator and merchant lord despite a childhood of incredible hardship. Pythareus and Yander remain close conspirators and good friends. Pythareus has learned to rely on Yander’s skills and discretion, deploying him whenever he needs to sow dissent or humiliate a rival. These tasks thrill Yander in ways his money and power never do; he loves charming his way into a community and causing it to tear itself apart from the inside out.

Earl Yander Merkondus is a small man in his early thirties. He has dark hair and wears a short beard that is neatly trimmed and well oiled. He overplays his reliance on a jeweled walking stick to earn sympathy and trick his opponents into underestimating his physical agility. He has a keen eye for fashion and is always clothed in the latest styles, preferring to wear furs and a simple but elegant silver diadem.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Earl Merkondus is the primary opponent in this adventure. Like the PCs, he enjoys the protection of the Mercantile Council, making it politically disastrous for them to come to blows. Yander knows this and spends time taunting the PCs into making mistakes. Once the PCs connect the clues linking the “Gray Kingmaker” to illegal activity, this political protection disappears and the PCs can finally face him. Yander’s inclination is to flee, and he might manage to escape. In this case, the heroes almost certainly encounter him again in the next adventure.



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VADDRIGAN POL

A tall, severe aasimar with a captivating stage presence, Vaddrigan Pol leads the Cult of the Twilight Child. He is also an agent of the Immaculate Circle, but none in the cult know they are being used to serve the Circle's inscrutable aims.

VADDRIGAN POL

CR 9

XP 6,400

Aasimar mesmerist 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 7*, *Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures 38*)

NE Medium outsider (native)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 22 (+5 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 108 (10d8+60)

Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +13

Resist acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk light mace +7/+2 (1d6–1)

Ranged hand crossbow +8 (1d4/19–20)

Special Attacks bold stare (disorientation, sapped magic), hypnotic stare (–3), manifold tricks (3), mental potency (+2), mesmerist tricks 10/day (astounding avoidance, compel alacrity, gift of will, mesmeric mirror, reflection of weakness [DC 20], shadow splinter), painful stare (+5 or +3d6+5)

Aasimar Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +15) 1/day—daylight

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

4th (2/day)—*dominate person* (DC 20), *mindwipe*^{OA} (DC 20)

3rd (4/day)—*aura alteration*^{OA}, *confusion* (DC 19), *dispel magic*, *synaptic pulse*^{OA} (DC 19)

2nd (5/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *detect anxieties*^{UI} (DC 17), *false life*, *hold person* (DC 18), *placebo effect*^{OA}

1st (7/day)—*cause fear* (DC 16), *charm person* (DC 17), *color spray* (DC 16), *mental block*^{OA} (DC 17), *undetectable alignment* (DC 16)

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 15), *daze* (DC 16), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

TACTICS

Before Combat Early each day, Pol casts *false life* and *undetectable alignment* on himself. He also implants a mesmeric mirror trick on himself and a compel alacrity trick on each of the high cultists who accompany him. He drinks his *potion of barkskin* and *potion of bear's endurance* as soon as he suspects combat is imminent.

During Combat Pol uses his bold stares against enemies, follows up with *mindwipe* to weaken a spellcasting foe and *dominate person* to bring a warrior under his control,

and then relies on *confusion* and *synaptic pulse*. He uses painful stare to wound and fatigue opponents resistant to his enchantment spells.

Morale Loyal to the Immaculate Circle and the cult he has founded, Pol fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without his spells cast, Pol's statistics are **AC** 17, touch 12, flat-footed 16; **hp** 88; **Fort** +5; **Con** 14.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 18, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 18

Feats Fatiguing Stare^{OA}, Improved Initiative, Intimidating Glance^{OA}, Spell Focus (enchantment), Toughness

Skills Bluff +23, Diplomacy +20, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (religion) +15, Perception +16, Perform (oratory) +13, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +10, Use Magic Device +18; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Diplomacy, +2 Perception

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Sylvan

SQ consummate liar +5, touch treatment 8/day (greater)

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* (CL 12th), *potions of bear's endurance* (2), *potion of cure serious wounds*, *wand of magic missile* (35 charges); **Other Gear** +1 mithral chain shirt, hand crossbow, mwk light mace, *headband of alluring charisma* +2, *lesser talisman of danger sense*^{OA}, *lesser talisman of freedom*^{OA}, *lesser talisman of healing power*^{OA}, *ring of protection* +2

From his earliest memories of an orphanage in Cassomir, Vaddrigan Pol was always told to be good. He never listened. The young aasimar never knew his parents, but he knew he was a shining diamond among the filth. With flawless skin and arresting silver eyes, Vaddrigan quickly learned how to influence others. He played the part of an angelic, innocent boy to the orphanage administrators, befriended the thick-necked bullies among the orphans, and demanded obedience from the smaller children.

Vaddrigan received a little religious training, but as he grew into a tall, gangly teenager, his psychic abilities blossomed and he learned to affect others with nothing but his mesmerizing stare. Vaddrigan was quick to leverage this power, ingratiating himself with his teachers and charming his peers out of their money, inhibitions, or whatever else he wanted.

As a young man, Vaddrigan visited the Everbright Circus, a carnival traveling through Cassomir, and was forever changed. He was captivated by their crude

stage magic—performed with wires and mirrors that Vaddrigan could plainly see—and simple confidence games conducted with the help of audience plants. Although most observers dismissed the stage magic as unsophisticated, they sat enraptured all the same, and Vaddrigan saw dizzying potential.

After several years performing with the circus, Vaddrigan traveled throughout Taldor, running scheme after scheme. Sometimes he operated alone, charming wealthy widowers or collecting money for imaginary business ventures; other times, Vaddrigan led a crew of grifters. The Immaculate Circle recruited Vaddrigan after he defrauded a lesser member, understanding that his unique skills would help mold rivals. Vaddrigan was eager to join, hoping that membership would provide him with the creature comforts he always knew he deserved. His reading in the circle's libraries led him to research conducted by founder Panivar Lotheed on the nature of souls and planar energies, and Vaddrigan struck upon an interesting theory of his own: if he could be worshiped just as gods are, perhaps that focus could kindle his outsider heritage into immortality, just as tinder and air can kindle a spark into a raging forest fire.

The Immaculate Circle dispatched Vaddrigan to Yanmass with their newly resurrected Prince Carrius in Earl Yander Merkondu's shadow. The Circle's leadership assumed (incorrectly) that Maxillar Pythareus would prove loyal to a male Stavian heir, and so they ordered Vaddrigan to bring their crafted prince to Yander's attention subtly, in a way that seemed like an outgrowth of local popular support. Vaddrigan saw a chance to test his theories and founded the Cult of the Twilight Child, contacting several other unscrupulous aasimars he'd met in his travels and spending his personal wealth on additional reference books to refine his own bid for immortality. Vaddrigan has perfected the ersatz religious services in the Encircling Bower theater, drawing upon his religious education and stealing liberally from elements of the church of Abadar. While his rituals haven't yet yielded any results in terms of increasing his own power or securing immortality, he still considers this scheme his magnum opus.

Vaddrigan is a tall, gaunt aasimar with a prominent chin. His severe features, deep voice, and penetrating gaze lend him an undeniable gravitas. His celestial heritage is obvious: his eyes are silvery orbs with pupils of darker silver, and his skin is pale and smooth. He wears the standard vestments of the cult: robes embroidered with overlapping circles. The latter is out of deference to the cult's origin as an arm of the Immaculate Circle, but also because Vaddrigan believes they help attract the energy of faith paid to the Twilight Child.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Vaddrigan Pol leads the Cult of the Twilight Child, and he opposes the PCs when they start investigating the cult—particularly when they start exploring the private chambers of the cult below the theater. Focused on keeping Prince Carrius out of anyone's hands but his own, Vaddrigan prefers to have his other agents move against the PCs, but he fights viciously once the PCs penetrate his inner sanctum. If the heroes spare Vaddrigan, he's likely to cut his losses, flee Yanmass, and set up his elaborate confidence games somewhere else.



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XAN

A gifted and ruthless investigator, Xan is a vanth psychopomp experienced in the deceit and ingenuity of the mortal world. He hunts the risen Prince Carrius, whom he sees as a dangerous abomination.

XAN

CR 12

XP 19,200

Unique vanth (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 221)

N Medium outsider (extraplanar, psychopomp)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, spsenses; Perception +25

Aura fear (30 ft., DC 20)

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 20 (+3 armor, +5 Dex, +7 natural)

hp 147 (14d10+70)

Fort +14, **Ref** +11, **Will** +15

DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** death effects, disease, poison;

Resist cold 10, electricity 10; **SR** 23

OFFENSE

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

Melee *Red Reaper* +21/+16/+11 (2d4+10/x4) or

2 claws +15 (1d6+3)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +12)

At will—*deathwatch*, *detect undead*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), quickened *invisibility* (self only), *sift*^{APG}

3/day—*bestow curse* (DC 17), *locate creature*,

nondetection, *rebuken*^{APG} (DC 17), *searing light*, *wrath*^{APG}

1/day—*true seeing*

TACTICS

Before Combat Xan prefers to strike from invisibility after spending time observing and evaluating his foes. He resumes his natural form and summons his scythe, if necessary, before attacking.

During Combat Xan prefers misdirection in combat, using quickened *invisibility* and moving to strike from unexpected directions using Power Attack and Vital Strike. He despises foes that use the same tricks against him, relying on *true seeing* to counter such tactics.

Morale Fanatical in his work, Xan fights until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 20, **Con** 21, **Int** 15, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 35

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Hover, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Quickened Spell-Like Ability (*invisibility*), Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +18, Disguise +15, Fly +13, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (local, planes) +13, Knowledge (religion) +16, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +18, Survival +11

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Infernal, Kelish

SQ change shape (any humanoid; *alter self*), reaper's scythe, spirit touch

Gear *Red Reaper* (+1 conductive mithral scythe), bracers of armor +3, red leather mask

Xan has loyally served Pharasma among the ranks of vanth psychopomps in the Boneyard for longer than Taldor has existed. When a strike force of proteans infiltrated the Lady of Graves's domain, Xan was the first psychopomp to discover the intruders. After dispatching a lesser psychopomp to raise the alarm, Xan dismissed his distinctive scythe—the badge of office that would plainly identify him as a vanth—and slipped invisibly into the ranks of the proteans. While among the enemy, Xan learned that the denizens of chaos sought to unmake the soul of a great mortal hero, appointed to become a great and powerful inevitable.

Outnumbered and isolated, Xan resorted to a desperate plan: revealing himself and announcing himself as a turncoat from Pharasma's justice. Xan convinced several of the proteans that he had been wronged during this mortal hero's trials, that his testimony of the mortal's crimes had been ignored, and that he deserved justice—a lie the proteans readily believed, given the chaotic nature of their hierarchy. By feeding the proteans misinformation, Xan led the invaders into a trap set by legions of psychopomps. Once this trap was sprung, Xan saw the fiercest of the fighting, as he was in the center of the protean forces at the time. During the battle, Xan was splashed with protean ichor that permanently stained his wings a dark red color; although this color has faded over time, his wings retain streaks of crimson that set him apart from the largely faceless horde of the vanth.

After the pitched battle, the few surviving proteans were ejected unceremoniously from the Boneyard, never to return, and Xan was lauded for his innovation and insight—traits much celebrated among psychopomps. His victory awarded him a measure of freedom regarding the criminals he hunted and souls he claimed on behalf of the courts, and over the eons the vanth learned many new tricks and skills to aid him in hunting his chosen prey. His freedom ostracized his fellow vanths—notoriously obedient and group minded as psychopomps go—and Xan found himself dwelling more and more

among the mortals of Golarion, learning about them even as he learned to despise their strange, short, and selfish little lives. A part of him adores the eccentricities and innovations of the living, but an equal part loathes himself for that affection.

Xan's current mission has brought him far afield. Originally assigned to investigate the disappearance of a petitioner from Nirvana, he followed the trail of Prince Carrius to Golarion. Along the way, he discovered disturbingly mutilated shadows in the Astral Plane. The eccentricity of mortals, he assumes, has given them the knowledge to forge souls from scraps, but not the good judgment to never use such power—an insight not too far from the crimes against creation the Immaculate Circle has committed in resurrecting Carrius against the soul's will.

Xan is too obsessed with his mission to surrender “his” prey to the courts even as the scope of his mission becomes increasingly world shaking, but his understanding of the situation is limited enough that he mistakenly believes the hype of the Cult of the Twilight Child: that Prince Carrius indeed resurrected himself by force of will, and in the process committed horrible crimes against creation. Xan will not rest until he can drag the mutilated soul of the young prince, kicking and screaming, before Pharasma herself. Stymieing his investigations are Vaddrigan Pol's magical circles, which have the unintended side-effect of warding the theater's basement against psychopomps.

Xan is bulkier and taller than most vanths, but still practically skeletal from a humanoid perspective. His large black wings contain subtle red streaks; among the somber vanths, Xan's coloration is practically garish. Xan's vulture mask fits tightly to his skull, causing his keen eyes to protrude from the eyeholes of his mask. In his preferred humanoid form, Xan is a burly, middle-aged Taldan man entirely devoid of hair except for large, dark, expressive eyebrows. In this disguise, Xan prefers to wear red and gray clothing, including a ragged cloak and a red leather bird mask with a short beak that fits tightly to his bald head.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The PCs likely cross Xan's path many times in this adventure, such as when they are investigating the Encircling Bower or when Xan prompts them to be more direct in their investigations of the Cult of the

Twilight Child. The PCs shouldn't be certain whether Xan is an enemy or an ally, and they might suspect that he's more than the bizarre human he appears to be. Xan plays up this misdirection, as he doesn't like anyone knowing exactly who he is or what he's doing.

Ultimately, the PCs' actions put them in opposition to Xan, and he is likely their final opponent in this adventure as they attempt to leave Yanmass with Prince Carrius. During this final conflict, Xan drops his disguises and ruses, intending to eliminate the PCs as a threat to Pharasma's order as efficiently as possible. He is convinced that if the PCs have witnessed the abomination themselves and not destroyed it, then they must be in league with the prince and are plotting foul crimes, and so shows no mercy or hesitation as he presses the attack, forcing a fight to the death, whether the PCs agree to hand over the young prince or not.

Even if the PCs defeat Xan and rescue Prince Carrius, they might meet the relentless vanth later in the War for the Crown Adventure Path. If Pharasma sees fit to resurrect her faithful servant, Xan might later seek revenge on the PCs with even more powerful abilities at his command.



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YANMASS

“They call it the mercantile heart of Taldor, or the last point to step off into the east, or the northernmost bastion of civilization. Hogwash. I was glad to leave the gold-painted buildings and squalling markets of Yanmass behind. It seems like a fine place, decently civilized and so forth, but there’s a nastiness just under the surface. Everybody in Yanmass hates everybody else, but no one has the guts to act on it. The Taldan merchants hate the visiting Qadiran caravan masters, who hate the city’s tax collectors, who hate the extraordinary number of halflings underfoot. But because everyone’s prosperity relies on getting along—visitors with locals, servants with their betters, bureaucrats with everyone—there are more fake smiles than anywhere else in the empire.”

—Earl Valiento Hammdel

Yanmass is the northernmost sizable settlement in Taldor, situated on a pair of low hills alongside the wide Verduran Fork. The only city of significant size in Avin Prefecture, Yanmass is the center of trade coming west from the Padishah Empire of Kelesh north of the World's Edge Mountains. Constantly filled with merchants arriving from across the Whistling Plains with wares from distant markets and caravans loaded with Taldan goods for shipment east, Yanmass is always bustling and lively. The long-established nobility of Yanmass keeps the peace with its own city guard and the elite cavalry known as the Taldan Horse, both funded from taxes levied on trade.

Visitors to Yanmass first notice the sea of tents surrounding the city's weathered stone walls. In pleasant summer months, this tent town sprawls larger than the city within the walls. At the center of the city rise two low hills. The smaller hill has steeper sides and supports the bureaucratic center of Yanmass, including the manor of elderly Baron Mauston Kustios and the city's gilded Commerce Hall. The larger hill is covered with ancient trees surrounded by well-tended grounds—this is Hedge Hill, a well-known park. The roofs of a variety of opulent inns, ornate homes, and sturdy warehouses rise above the city walls, reminding visitors that civilization and hospitality are available even in this distant outpost—but for a price.

HISTORY

Before the arrival of humans to the area, the plains that would eventually see Yanmass built were covered with dense, primeval forests. The first humans in the area found the nearby Verduran Fork and Fog Creek to be deep and navigable, ideal for floating lumber downstream to larger cities on the coast. With halfling assistance—sometimes conscripted—loggers and trappers settled in the area, founding a small town with the halfling name of “Yanmass” near two hills. Soon, however, the forests dwindled. Gradual climate change did the rest of the work, transforming the forest into a sprawling, grassy plain as the Verduran Forest retreated to the west. The plains made excellent ranch lands, so the humans and halflings of the area shifted, over generations, from loggers to ranchers.

Yanmass continued to prosper, bringing trade up the Verduran Fork and then to the canal dug from the river to the town. Smaller communities dotted the landscape around the city, and imperial engineers built roads and canals connecting the settlements. Although many of those settlements have since been abandoned—destroyed in the wildfires that occasionally sweep the plains or attacked in inter-empire confrontations—Yanmass remained tall and proud upon its hills, protected by thick walls. When the surrounding lands were incorporated into the Taldan empire as the

YANMASS, CITY OF COMMERCE

LN small city

Corruption +2; **Crime** -1; **Economy** +4; **Law** +4;
Lore +3; **Society** -2

Qualities prosperous, rumormongering citizens,
strategic location, trade over politics

Danger +5

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government overlord (hereditary baron)

Population 6,995 (6,050 humans, 790 halflings, 85
half-elves, 70 other)

NOTABLE NPCs

Baron Mauston Kustios (LN male old human
aristocrat 13)

Chief Enumerator Abrun Palliettor (LN male human
cleric of Abadar 9)

Lady Aumber Gewbell (NG female half-elf aristocrat 6)

Lady Carmellio Rauls (LE female human aristocrat 6/
rogue 2)

Lord Rudig Autun (LN male human aristocrat 9)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 5,720 gp; **Purchase Limit** 37,500 gp;

Spellcasting 6th

Minor Items 4d4; **Medium Items** 3d4; **Major Items** 1d6

SETTLEMENT QUALITIES

Trade Over Politics Yanmass's government and citizens
usually remain politically neutral to avoid disrupting the
city's vibrant economy. (*Corruption* -1, *Economy* +1)

prefecture of Avin, Yanmass was the best locale for the prefecture's administrative heart.

When Keleshite traders realized the scope of the markets to the west, they sought the best passages over and around the World's Edge Mountains. The vast Whistling Plains to the east of Yanmass are mostly level, but they are rarely safe; the plain is home to bulettes, worgs, and stranger monsters lurking in the tall grass. Still, brave scouts established the safest paths through the grassland, enabling trade across the Whistling Plains to Yanmass. Today, bandits pose as much a problem to travelers as beasts. Maps of the Whistling Plains showing secret paths, sheltered watering holes, and abandoned but safe shelters circulate in Yanmass. Although most of these are either minor variations on known routes or outright fabrications, they feed the hopes of finding a genuine map that leads across the plains safely and swiftly.

Although hostilities between Taldor and the satrapies of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh flare up from time to time, Yanmass has never closed its gates to merchants; trade to and from the east is too vital to the city's survival to ever have its markets close. The various barons and baronesses who have ruled

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3. AUTUN'S IMPORTS
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9. THE WASH
10. HEDGE HILL
11. WEALWIND PAVILION
12. GRAVA'S ENTERTAINMENTS
13. WHISTLING WYVERN
14. AZIZA'S HOUSE



Avin Prefecture over the past several generations have held differing opinions on open trade, but no leader has dared to oppose the merchant lords in the city. Over time, these merchant lords have assumed a stronger role in civil administration, writing the very laws applicable to themselves and to their competitors. Operating out of the ornate Commerce Hall, Yanmass's Mercantile Council has risen from a group of like-minded wealthy traders to the city's most influential arm of government.

YANMASS AT A GLANCE

The people of Yanmass are proud and hardworking. Although opinions about the distant Taldan government in Oppara vary among Yanmass's residents, most citizens display a strong civic pride in their wealthy city on the distant frontier. The town's long history also contributes to this sense of community pride. Many Yanmass residents occupy homes built by distant ancestors and work in business carefully tended and expanded over generations. Although Taldane is the official language of the city and by far the most commonly used, many residents also speak a smattering of Kelish—particularly those who deal with traders from across the plains to the east, such as innkeepers, merchants, and stable hands.

Yanmass's inhabitants are inveterate deal makers, and the Kelishite custom of haggling has influenced nearly all walks of life in Yanmass. Haggling over prices for meals or lodging is common, even between native Taldans, and large crowds gather when talented negotiators compete. This tendency to haggle doesn't extend to the city's bureaucracy, however, which rigorously enforces taxes to support the city's government and defense. In Yanmass, the phrase "bargain like a tax collector" means to refuse to negotiate or to otherwise be inflexible on a topic.

Buildings in Yanmass are predominantly stone, obtained from quarries in the World's Edge Mountains to the south. Upper stories and roofs are made of wood. Because forests have retreated over past generations and the city prohibits cutting in Hedge Hill at the city's center, wood has become increasingly expensive. As a result, residents and businesses are much more likely to renovate existing buildings rather than fund new construction. Outside the city walls, tents and thatch dwellings predominate. Usually these are temporary residences used by traders, although many are well constructed and festooned with so many pillows and tapestries that they are more luxurious than the most solid buildings within Yanmass's walls.

Two different forces keep the peace in and around Yanmass. The Firewatch is personally funded by the baron of Avin and reports to his household. Although originally established to combat fires in the city and on the nearby plains, the Firewatch also serves as the

police force in the city. Members of the Firewatch are distinctive in their red uniforms. The Taldan Horse is the elite cavalry arm of the Taldan military. Headquartered outside of Yanmass in various fast-response stations, the Taldan Horse primarily patrols the roads and plains around the city. Although the Taldan Horse has just as much jurisdiction within the city as outside it, members generally enter the city on official business only when requested by the baron or the Firewatch.

YANMASS GAZETTEER

Yanmass stands approximately 12 miles from the banks of the wide river called Brokenbridge and is protected by an ancient, crumbling stone wall known as the Avin Wall. A broad canal brings water to the city and connects with the river, enabling flat-bottomed barges to bring goods to and from the city. The plain outside the Avin Wall is almost always covered with tents and makeshift shops of visiting traders, particularly near the wall's three large gates. The hilly land within the Avin Wall is considered Yanmass proper and is divided into several districts. Hedge Hill, the forested eastern hill, is ringed with parks and amphitheaters. Backhill is a sleepy middle-class residential district east of Hedge Hill but within the city walls. Yanmass's other hill has no formal name, but residents often call it Gentry Hill because it is surrounded by upscale businesses and topped with the baronial manor and Commerce Hall. In Churchside, the area between the two hills and north of the temple of Abadar, several venerable establishments stand in outdated majesty. The neighborhood along the canal is known as Coinside; whereas many cities' dockside districts are low rent, Coinside is fairly pleasant, and trading houses headquartered here keep violent crime low. East of Coinside is a stagnant inlet called the Wash, surrounded by the Washfield neighborhood where the city's lower class lives. The newest district of Yanmass—relatively speaking, as many of the buildings there are at least a century old—is the large southern neighborhood of Bountiful. Lively and boisterous, Bountiful contains several inns and markets as well as less savory businesses such as tanneries and breweries.

The following section presents information on key locations found throughout Yanmass, although many other sites of interest exist in the city.

1. Yan Manor: The seat of the barony of Yanmass is an elegant manor built several centuries ago and tastefully maintained by generations of barons and baronesses. Baron Mauston Kustios is rarely seen in public, preferring the private life his manor affords him. Yan Manor shares the top of Yanmass's lower hill with Commerce Hall and is the more dignified, if smaller, of the two buildings. The wide lawn around Yan Manor

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is well tended but, by tradition, includes only flowers and grasses transplanted from the Whistling Plains so that the baron lives amid a reminder of the land he oversees.

2. Commerce Hall: Resembling an opulent manor house rather than a city-administration building, Commerce Hall has elaborate stained-glass windows, enormous chandeliers, and gold accoutrements throughout. Yanmass's Mercantile Council conducts its business in Commerce Hall on most days, although the council meets here in its entirety with Baron Kustios only once every few weeks. Commoners of Yanmass frequently grumble that Commerce Hall is closed to anyone but the wealthy and influential, and they whisper of secret decadent feasts and wild displays of excess, romanticizing the dull business of civic administration that actually occurs within the ostentatious building.

3. Autun's Imports: The largest and wealthiest of the many trading houses vying for influence in Yanmass, Autun's Imports occupies a large compound of offices, warehouses, and stables in the Coinside neighborhood. Lord Rudig Autun currently heads Autun's Imports, which has been in his family for several generations. Rumor holds that Lord Autun is amassing his fortunes in a bid for a significant title—a rumor the vain and foppish lord actively encourages to keep his true motives out of public scrutiny. Leveraging his connections on the Mercantile Council, Lord Autun has been secretly diversifying outside of the Kelish spice trade that has been key to his family's fortunes, and he is seeking agents to help him move in on his competitors' turf.

4. Gilded Baldachin: One of Yanmass's most opulent inns, the Gilded Baldachin is best known

for the fact that each of its beds is an enormous, thickly padded affair draped in silken canopies, providing the most comfortable rest in northern Taldor. Less well known are the intense security measures that the inn's owner, **Mirissin Halvelor** (LG female human rogue 6), takes to keep her guests safe and undisturbed. Halvelor employs discreet, sharp-eyed guards to mingle among the crowds outside the inn around the clock, intercepting troublemakers before they even cross the inn's threshold. Halvelor has been known to hire additional help when she expects guests that might invite excessive attention, such as celebrities or controversial political figures. In case these measures fail, Halvelor keeps several daggers concealed in her skirts.

5. Temple of Abadar: Although located in the low valley between Yanmass's two hills, the soaring roofs of the city's temple of Abadar tower over all others in the city. Designed by a renowned Taldan architect in an airy, elegant style, the temple took nearly a generation to build and almost emptied an entire quarry in the Fog Peaks of its rare, gold-hued stone. Acolytes ring the key-shaped chimes in the temple's tallest towers to signify holy celebrations, and the temple's canny high priest, Chief Enumerator Abrun Palliettor, is a popular figure and member of the city's influential Mercantile Council.

6. Wender Manor: A magic item shop popular with traders as well as traveling adventurers, Wender Manor was constructed as the private residence for an obsessive art collector. Custom built to protect the owner's extensive collection, the manor contains several secure vaults and hidden rooms. Several years ago,

Savina Onio (LN female human expert 5/rogue 3) purchased the manor and converted it into a shop



catering to high-end purchasers of magic items. Onio's refined staff welcomes prescreened guests into one of several sitting-rooms-turned-showrooms with wine and hors d'oeuvres, where Onio haggles tenaciously over prices. Although Wender Manor undoubtedly contains a fortune in magic items, no thieves have yet successfully overcome Onio's expensive defenses.

7. Clover Rest: A stately cemetery just inside the Avin Wall, Clover Rest has a tall wrought-iron fence and is filled with ornate mausoleums covered with clover and climbing ivy. Normally empty of anyone other than mourners or gravediggers, Clover Rest is a peaceful spot inside a bustling city. Rumors persist that a series of underground tunnels connects the larger mausoleums to nearby basements, creating a large network of smugglers' tunnels. While a few such tunnels actually exist, they are haunted by the spirits of unquiet dead.

8. Firewatch Headquarters: A combination of city watch and firefighter brigade, the Firewatch patrols the streets of Yanmass from this solid building covered in striking red paint. The headquarters not only acts as a jail and barracks but also contains stables and quarters set aside for members of the Taldan Horse to use while in town. The current chief of the Firewatch, **Milxena Ospher** (LE female human expert 8), is a skilled administrator but also an unabashed racist. Chief Ospher minimizes patrols in the Kelesh neighborhoods outside the city walls and often drops cases where Keleshite citizens have been victimized. Despite increasing public outcry for Chief Ospher's removal, her noble Taldan family connections have thus far preserved her position.

9. The Wash: Water from the termination of the canal that connects to the Verduran Fork fills a small channel between Yanmass's two hills. Too shallow for docks and too silty for any construction heavier than wood and thatch shanties, the surrounding marshy area is generally seen as an unsightly sump fit only for lower-class residences. Known colloquially as the Wash, this area also has a tendency to flood when heavy rains fall on the region. Attempts to drain or dam the Wash have never been successful; this enterprise is considered a thorny engineering challenge. A popular local figure in the Wash is the River Mother, an elderly druid whose race and powers are unknown, as she keeps her heavy hood over her face even when providing magical aid to the downtrodden of the surrounding poor neighborhood of Washfield.

10. Hedge Hill: The larger of Yanmass's two hills has long been considered the least defensible because of its gently sloping sides. The crown of the hill is a dense copse of tangled trees—one of the region's last vestiges of the primeval forest that once covered the landscape. The slopes of Hedge Hill have been gradually cleared and turned into a ring of popular public parks and outdoor amphitheatres, but the knot of trees on

the hilltop remains an island of wilderness in a sea of civilization. Rumors hold that a powerful, immortal dryad protects this forest at the top of Hedge Hill, but only the very young or very inebriated ever claim to see her. In truth, the dryad is no more than an urban legend, and the sightings might be attributable to the occasional lover meeting a partner for a tryst.

11. Wealwind Pavilion: By far the largest amphitheater on Hedge Hill, the Wealwind Pavilion has a frame of metal that supports an enormous canvas canopy that protects the structure from ill weather. Because it is sheltered from rain and harsh sun, the Wealwind Pavilion is a favorite venue of Yanmass's elite. Performers there can command exorbitant rates, and infighting for prominent positions is intense. Attempts to start a "Common Concerts" series open to all residents of Yanmass for an entry fee of a single silver piece has met with only moderate success due to machinations of the city's aristocracy, who detest the lower classes moving in on their preferred venue.

12. Grava's Entertainments: To outside appearances, Grava's sells puzzles and toys in a small shop abutting a large, abandoned warehouse. The foppish and gregarious **Drusilla Grava** (N female middle-aged human vigilante^{UI} 8) is good with children, quick to dole out sweets, and seemingly unconcerned that her toy shop doesn't get a lot of business. In truth, Grava's real business is arranging bloody duels in an arena erected in the adjacent warehouse—an open secret despite being technically illegal. The arena's best duelist is the popular Blackwalker, the alter ego of Grava herself.

13. Whistling Wyvern: A large tavern and inn popular with mercenaries and hired guards, the Whistling Wyvern gains its name from an enormous fluted weather vane resembling a wyvern atop the building's highest spire. One of the tavern's regulars is a gregarious and massive storyteller named **Conson Vatherial** (N male half-elf skald^{ACG} 7). Vatherial has a keen mind for who in the city is hiring and which of his acquaintances needs employment, and he enjoys suggesting good matches for work.

14. Aziza's House: One of the few stone structures outside of the Avin Wall, Aziza's House is a restaurant and coffeehouse run by the boisterous Keleshite merchant prince **Rashaid Beyamara** (LN male human sorcerer 10). Beyamara named the establishment in honor of his deceased daughter, and he is unfailingly polite to all guests. It is an open secret that Beyamara, a self-proclaimed "humble coffee poureer," orchestrates a staggering number of the caravans coming and going across the Whistling Plains. Beyamara commands enough wealth and influence to warrant a position on the Mercantile Council, if he were a citizen of Yanmass, but he embraces his outsider status. He prides himself on never setting foot within the city, due to a promise made to his daughter before she died, and instead relies on proxies to transact business in town.

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ECOLOGY OF THE PSYCHOPOMP

We make much of ancient slights, the zeal of ages turning quarrels to crusades. But these contests are childish squabbles in the eyes of true ancients. There are some who know, by experience or memory, the eyeblink that is eternity: the velstracs, the qlippoth. But chief among them are psychopomps, the host of the Lady of Graves. Psychopomps are the wardens of death and of life, of days reduced to ashes, and of every dawn to come. Their foe is eternity, and against that villain, they are bound to lose. The Spire grows, and even immortality will have its end.

—From the introduction to the Concordance of Rivals

In a glass case in Caliphas's Quarterfaux Archives lie the sapphire molars of Atterythna the Gilded Lich, a terror of ancient Sarkoris said to have stolen death from a thousand pious souls. Her viciousness was ended abruptly by a mythical figure: Niu the Spider Angel.

The saying "in every bird's mouth, an infant's revenge" remains common along the coast of Katapesh, a reference to when the mage Svalavir blocked souls from entering newborns within 100 miles of Tiven's Reed. When he appeared to collect his ransom, he was picked apart by a flight of tiny birds never before seen in the region.

Within the crumbling corridors of Kaer Maga, rogue Freemen promised salvation from both chains and the cycle of life and death. Few noticed when blood and fire washed away their saintly snake oil—and those who did marked them as just another strange sect unable to carve out a place in the City of Strangers.

In each of these cases, and countless more, when the balance between life and death was interrupted it was swiftly and summarily restored. Some might come to suspect that some beneficent steward takes a special interest in the guardianship of souls, but such superstitious sorts would be wrong. Death's guardians are too many to number, and a rare few indeed could be called beneficent.

Across the planes, beings called psychopomps serve as the guides of souls and mind the paths of death. Their shapes conjure forth the most primal fears of mortalkind: comfortless visages lurking behind life's last gasps. But neither reassurance nor terror means anything to these grim outsiders. For them, skulls and decay are symbols of progress, of the multiversal cycle of souls, and of the erosion of all existence, even their own.

Among the multiverse's most evasive inhabitants, psychopomps generally avoid the living, leading to significant misunderstanding regarding their agendas and roles. All living souls eventually come to know psychopomps and their vital functions, though—it simply requires an intimate, personal familiarity with death.

ECOLOGY

As beings not of the Material Plane, psychopomps have little impact on mortal worlds. In the spinning of the Great Beyond's semifathomable spheres, though, they serve a vital role. Psychopomps are the worms of eternity, without which creation would fall barren.

Of the great races of the planes, aeons and agathions are most often associated with natural order: the former of existential underpinnings, the latter of material naturalism. Psychopomps, too, are stewards of natural order, though they're rarely recognized as such. Their attention is focused upon the vital circulation of the multiverse, the passage of life to death and back to life again: a cycle known as the River of Souls (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path #84: Pyramid of the Sky Pharaoh* for a thorough exploration of the River of

Souls). They channel souls from life to their proper planes beyond, not out of any particular care for mortal souls, but to assure the fair and somewhat even shaping of the ever-eroding Outer Planes. They mind the paths of potentiality, assuring (along with aeons) that nothing disrupts the Antipode, the connection between the Maelstrom's depths and the Positive Energy Plane. They prevent proto-souls from being harnessed by any who would prey upon the unborn. They oversee the transition of souls from the realms of the living to their final judgment, the task upon which any mortals who give psychopomps consideration tend to fixate. And where psychopomps find disruptions to the natural order, they work to repair it, whether by correcting the course of spirits gone astray or stomping out the taint of undeath.

Ultimately, all psychopomps answer to a single will: that of Pharasma. She is the supreme arbiter of life and death—the unquestioned power over souls' final destinations and every action taken by psychopomps. While Pharasma is not the sole judge in every decision in the Boneyard (powerful psychopomps, such as psychopomp ushers and yamarajes, aid in prosaic business), her grand designs are unquestioned. Psychopomps are united in fulfilling the goddess's edicts and upholding her philosophies, which ultimately revolve around maintaining the proper ebb and flow of souls across the planes.

This might suggest that psychopomps are of a single mind, but they are not. For all Pharasma's unquestioned power, she rarely applies her influence directly. The goddess's voice is that of one of the multiverse's eldest inhabitants. She is a being knowable only insofar as she wills herself to be known, whose simplest utterances are puzzles and prophecies meant both for those who hear them and unfathomable others. While the Lady of Graves's servants leap to fulfill the immediate intention of her will, her meanings often result in starbursts of interpretation, inspiring revelations and deeds, sometimes for ages to come. As a result, Pharasma's intentions often become matters of interpretation, sparking lengthy conflicts as ancient psychopomps argue. Even as edicts crystallize into dogma, psychopomps working across the planes are often left to their own interpretations of these creeds, leading to divergent action and, rarely, psychopomps working at cross-purposes.

SOCIETY

Many mortals believe that, after they die, their souls will be judged by Pharasma. This is true, in a sense.

The Lady of Graves orders her home as near to the heart of the Outer Planes as metaphysics allow. Here, the Boneyard presents a balance of chaos and law, both an expanse of unordered monuments and a monolith of compounding courts. Throngs of souls drift in endless lines across bleak plains, eventually facing their

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judgment at the Boneyard's heart. Some might have their lives weighed by one of the goddess's psychopomp proxies, others might stand before Pharasma herself, and truly unusual cases might find their souls the topic of arguments by emissaries of planes beyond. Yet, whatever the circumstance, whoever the soul, the Boneyard has seen countless examples of the same and works toward smooth categorization and processing of the dead.

Psychopomps strive to facilitate these systems at every step of the way. Some oversee the flow of spirits in and out of the Boneyard, others serve as aides to councilors and administrators, and still others serve as judges in a hierarchy of increasingly influential courts. While Pharasma is the ultimate law in the Boneyard, her will is typically enacted via the society of magistrates she's created rather than by personal intervention.

For this purpose, every psychopomp is, to an extent, an expression of Pharasma's will. Functioning within a byzantine hierarchy of courts and libraries, podiums and prisons, and bustling throngs and lonely graves, psychopomps ensure the constant movement of souls through the Boneyard. Continual movement is seemingly prioritized over progress, however; while most souls are simple cases whose lives warrant clear judgments, some might become caught with the Boneyard's bureaucracy, winding up and down through courts while the philosophical ramifications of their precise circumstances mean they must wait in queues for psychopomp justices to debate their cases.

Beyond that majority of psychopomps who serve in the Boneyard, some venture across the planes. These emissaries of the court work to correct bureaucratic mistakes, police the length of the River of Souls, or investigate reports of disruption. While it's well known that remarkable undead risk garnering psychopomp attention, so do any entities that attempt to interfere with the Boneyard's work, magically or otherwise. As a result, daemons, night hags, sahkils, and soul traders of all stripes most often attract psychopomp ire.

Psychopomps are perhaps best known to mortals as guides. Should a soul wander from the River of Souls and become lost, psychopomps lead them back. Ultimately, this is the role of all psychopomps, but—as the bones and dust of their appearances make clear—psychopomps do not exist to comfort frightened former mortals, though neither do they intend to terrify them (however often their grim visages have this result).

PSYCHOPOMPS AND THE DEAD

All life is practice for death. The dead are fulfilling the culmination of a cycle spanning millennia, though this higher purpose in no way means that psychopomps see them as special. Rather, psychopomps consider the dead a responsibility—at times as a burden, and, taken as a whole, as a ceaseless amount of trouble. Those souls that

manage to reach the Boneyard in a somewhat orderly fashion are seen as less of a nuisance. Best that they quietly face the process of judgment and pass on to their final rewards or punishments, where they become something else's problem.

It's not that psychopomps bear any contempt for the dead; it's just that the dead are infinite in number, and each carries with it infinite potential for problems—problems left to psychopomps to correct, and problems these immortals have likely solved countless times before. Minding the dead is a mandate that is core to every psychopomp's being and bound to be fulfilled endlessly. Should a psychopomp go about its business with a smile, the expression is likely only an incidental result of its skeletal or bestial facade.

PSYCHOPOMPS AND THE LIVING

In the eyes of Pharasma's children, the living have two roles to perform: to live and, eventually, to die. So long as a mortal fulfills these simple functions, psychopomps have little reason to interact with them. Given the infinite time scale and unquantifiable numbers psychopomps work with, though, mortals manage to muck up this simple mandate quite often.

Psychopomps generally concern themselves only with mortals who interrupt the River of Souls in substantial, long-term ways: archmages who destroy souls in forbidden arcane processes, scholars developing methods to free mortals of their final judgments, and similar heretics risk attracting psychopomp attention. Necromancers, while not favorites of psychopomps, rarely attract their ire, so long as such magic-users' soul tampering is limited to the lengths of one or two mortal lives.

When psychopomps do take note of mortals interfering with their dominion, they're quick to snuff them out. Most psychopomps would prefer not to end mortal lives unduly, but some causalities are acceptable to protect the natural order. Mortal lives and experiences are, in their small ways, vital to the shaping of the planes. Recognizing this, most psychopomps would prefer not to interrupt the mortal experience. But all mortals die eventually, so hastening a few souls to the Boneyard is a small price to pay for spiritual equilibrium.

To the eventual dismay of Pharasma's mortal worshipers, most psychopomps have little interest in interacting with the living. When they must fraternize, psychopomps typically treat mortals with chilly regard and, at best, offer cold thanks for the latter's future death.

PSYCHOPOMPS AND THE UNDEAD

Regardless of their primary role in Pharasma's service, all psychopomps share a simple secondary directive: destroy all undead. The equivalent of stagnant pools in the River

of Souls, undead pervert the intention of multiversal nature and the needful progress of mortal souls. Should a psychopomp encounter an undead creature in the fulfillment of its duties, it typically destroys the creature outright (so long as doing so doesn't impede its other efforts). Should an undead threat prove too significant for an ad hoc effort, psychopomps do what they can to hinder the undead and then report their observations to the Boneyard. Yet psychopomps acknowledge that all things—good or evil, living or dead, unborn or undead—might have their uses. Individual psychopomps might even be persuaded to temporarily put their opposition to the undead aside to fulfill some greater work, but such compromises typically prove temporary and are clearly stated to be so; no psychopomp wishes to face claims of negligence from its watchful superiors.

Planar scholars, especially those seeking the absolute in the face of messy reality, often wonder at the inefficiency they perceive in psychopomps' efforts to thwart the undead, pointing to countless examples of the continued existence of the abominations in nearly every corner of the multiverse. But just as sweet and bitter fruit might grow on the same vine, so too do fundamental truths of the planes regularly defy expectation. Perhaps unpredictability is simply a rule of all nature. Perhaps consistency does exist, albeit only for minds that defy genius or sanity. Or, perhaps, consequence is a matter of perspective.

To an absolutist, psychopomps' opposition to undeath numbers among the multiverse's great failures. The mere existence of a single chattering skull—to say nothing of millennia-old lichs and empires peopled by the immortal dead—insults their stewardship of the River of Souls. The oldest and most intelligent undead seem almost universally unconcerned with otherworldly retribution. So, then, do psychopomps truly oppose the undead?

Should a psychopomp be persuaded to answer a mortal's questions on this topic—for, undoubtedly, the several-millionth tiresome time—most will confirm that, indeed, death's servants are united in viewing undeath as an abomination, but that analyses of time, scale, and circumstance beyond mortal ken always take into account a prioritization of action. Such an answer can seem cold, especially to victims of graveyard uprisings and undead tyrants. But as psychopomps see it, these petitioners should expect mortal defenders for their mortal concerns. The church of Pharasma is chief among such protectors, but it is not alone in its efforts to maintain a balance between life and death.

If relatively minor infractions in the natural order of the River of Souls don't generally concern psychopomps, one might assume Pharasma's host instead gathers in legions to battle nations of the ignoble dead, planar rifts to the Negative Energy Plane, world-scouring zombie plagues, and planet-collecting undead imperialists. But this is the other side of the same coin. In fact, any records of psychopomp legions are rarities, and those accounts that exist tend to be of dubious pedigree. Psychopomps generally avoid mass displays of direct action, instead moving behind the scenes employing lone agents or working through mortal proxies. Using the living to defeat the dead tends to result in useful object lessons for mortals, though few psychopomps would claim they choose their tactics for instructive reasons.



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In many cases, psychopomps don't act against even massive explosions of undeath, exercising temperance learned through eons of experience. Undeath, even in its most virulent strains, tends toward decomposition rather than proliferation and decay rather than ambition. Undead dynasties typically grow insular and decrepit within a few hundred years, while deathless empires collapse from ennui and lack of direction within millennia. Millions of mortals might die as a result, but that makes the tragedy no different than any other similar phenomenon across the countless worlds of the Material Plane. Psychopomps lay no claim that the mortal experience is fair, and they oppose undeath not out of a preference for life, but rather in pursuit of fulfilling the proper transitions between life and death set forth in the River of Souls.

Of course, this is not to say psychopomps won't act if they deem a matter to be of multiversal significance. Planar tears threatening to blast whole galaxies with negative energy, the rerouting or perverting of the River of Souls, pervasive immortality (via undeath or another cause) all might spark swift psychopomp intervention. Anything less likely brooks, at best, a response by a single psychopomp agent... in due time.

PSYCHOPOMPS AND IMMORTALS

With the exception of their obedience to Pharasma, psychopomps lack the reverence for the divine that other outsiders might have. Just like any other being in existence, gods can die, and when they do, they are processed and judged in the Boneyard much as any other soul. As a result, psychopomps have a strained relationship with religions and their faithful in general, understanding belief's role in shaping experiences, lives, philosophies, and eventually the contraction and expansion of the Outer Planes. But, like sleight-of-hand experts at an illusionist's performance, they know how all the tricks are performed. Most have the good sense (or utter disinterest) to keep quiet and let the awestruck enjoy the show—they have nothing to gain from interjecting but lengthy and fruitless philosophical debate, after all.

Psychopomps do not spare this skepticism even for their own kind. Psychopomp ushers, the greatest of death's wardens, enjoy not only the powers of demigods but also the responsibilities thereof. Some ushers oversee codified realms in the Boneyard or within the Spire below. Others hold responsibilities within the plane's courts, sitting as judges whose decisions are second only to Pharasma's hearing the most fraught, unprecedented arguments and deciding the fates of souls in droves. Despite their influence, though, the majority began their existences as rank-and-file psychopomps, rising in stature over untold eons. As a result, most of their kind afford them respect, but of a cold variety, never letting them forget where they came from.

PSYCHOPOMP ROLES

Numerous specialized types of psychopomps haunt the halls of the Boneyard or endlessly travel the River of Souls. Whether serving as chroniclers of court minutes or agents of due death, they all perform their work with a clarity of intent and the necessity of purpose, if not any especial zeal. Despite the array of psychopomp forms, many share similar goals and outlooks, the following being the most common.

GUARDIANS

Countless beings and extraplanar hazards threaten to bring harm to souls journeying along the River of Souls. Whether spirit-ensnaring daemons or violent rifts in reality, the newly dead have little hope of protecting themselves from—or even understanding—the perils of the planes. All that deters wanton predation upon these migrating souls are psychopomp guardians, beings assigned to roam specific jurisdictions between life and death. Such territories might encompass continents, worlds, star systems, or even broader expanses. Only rarely does a single soul receive a psychopomp escort on its way to judgment. But as the dead of dozens of worlds congregate in their exodus from the mortal realm, they become easier to mind. It's therefore during the first moments after death, when souls are often most solitary, that they prove the most vulnerable.

Among the most pervasive psychopomp guardians are the vanths, way watchers who manifest as raptorial skeletons as they mind heavily traveled routes between life and death. The more specialized memitim psychopomps gravitate toward places of mass slaughter, minding the transitions of numerous spirits at once.

But psychopomp watchfulness does not start at death. Experience, the development of philosophies, the way lives play out and alter the weaving of fate's grand tapestry—these are all parts of the necessity of mortal life. Olethros psychopomps are mindful of those who would unduly derail fate during their mortal existences, causing undesirable ripples in the destinies of countless others. Those who run afoul of these powerful guardians risk swift destruction, either by the psychopomp or a more potent agent of death called to contend with the offender.

GUIDES

Mortals who attempt to study psychopomps often identify psychopomp guides as the truest of Pharasma's servants. These outsiders are shepherds of souls, ensuring that the dead follow true routes toward judgment. While most souls are not greeted personally by a figure upon their deaths, when they reach the Boneyard, spirits are conducted through the eons-born bureaucracy with some measure of mindfulness. The colorful catrina psychopomps are the best example of psychopomps who perform this work, taking at least a momentary personal

interest in every soul. Genial in their own grim ways, they are perhaps the most personable of all psychopomps, and they have the most patience for answering the oft-repeated questions of those newly arrived to the Boneyard.

Some psychopomps have a more specific focus. Algeas, for example, mind those souls with an unusually high likelihood of being spirited away illicitly by some unauthorized entity. This isn't to say that algeas prevent souls from facing their rightful rewards or damnations or that the psychopomps protect those who forswore their spirits to other entities after death. Rather, when a soul's status might be in immediate question, algeas are quick to sweep in and make sure that the deceased faces proper consideration in the Boneyard's courts.

HUNTERS

Whether by mere happenstance or sinister plot, spirits on their way to judgment can become embroiled in all manner of mayhem. To correct such errant courses, rare, specialized psychopomp hunters work to free souls that have gone astray and assure that the same peril doesn't befall others.

When the undead pose a particular threat—or at the summons of Pharasma's servants—esobok and shoki psychopomps work to exorcise the unliving and free wayward spirits. But when the ire of the Boneyard is fully roused, its wrath typically comes in the form a morrigna psychopomp. These inquisitors of death have wide authority over identifying threats to the River of Souls and setting them to rights. More so than any other psychopomp, the work of morrignas has the potential to set a batch of fresh souls on their journeys to the Boneyard.

JUDGES

Cold and rigid, psychopomp judges guard the countless portals and planar passages that riddle the Boneyard, deciding who can pass through and why. They scrutinize spirits, evaluate lives, and hear the entreaties of those who would lay special claim upon a soul. These tireless psychopomps bear the responsibility of their positions with chilly distinction, valuing efficiency and unbiased rulings above all else.

Among psychopomp judges, the dragon-like yamarajes are second only to the gods of the Boneyard—particularly the ushers and Pharasma herself. They readily wield their fearsome presence to move souls swiftly through their courts and, if need be, use their considerable powers to defend the Boneyard's many paths.

SCHOLARS

No soul passes through the Boneyard without consideration, its life weighed as it faces its ultimate judgment. The judged are not

forgotten, though. Drove of psychopomps serve as the Boneyard's memory. They are the recordkeepers of what has come and gone and how the questions of the ages have been answered.

Nosois, masked avian psychopomps known for associating with the living, are the Boneyard's most numerous clerks. Their efforts to chronicle nearly all that goes on within Pharasma's court fill the plane's gothic halls with the flapping of countless wings as they endeavor to file information away.

Not all knowledge can be trusted to the masses, though. Lore to be kept but not shared is the scholarly domain of viduus psychopomps. While powerful psychopomps might request access to these scholars' secrets with only modest bureaucratic annoyance, any other being has little hope of wresting free the secrets of death.



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CHEATING DEATH

Throughout the Inner Sea, there are those who would defy death. Jumped-up baronets who imagine their title confers immortality. Soft-fleshed bishops too fondly loved by even softer gods. Ransacking sellswords with more luck than sense. These are the Returned, the sullied few who die and come back. Those who mock death, cheating the hereafter of its due.

But death is no idle retreat. It is not some hunting lodge that the rich can visit for a fortnight and then saunter away from unscathed. Death is the devouring maw of the Mantis God. And we are his claws. We will carve Achaekek's name into the hides of those who would defy him. We will rend their souls and send them howling back to eternity. For even the gods fear He Who Walks in Blood. What hope can mere mortals have against us, his children?

—Xilshan, Red Mantis assassin

For most, death is an inevitable fact of life. Luckily for many adventurers on Golarion, so is resurrection. Once a party is experienced and wealthy enough (or has won the favor of the right patron), death becomes more a trauma to be overcome—a new chapter rather than the story's end.

When a character returns from the dead, she awakens as if from a long sleep. She retains her previous personality and remembers nothing of her time in the afterlife. However, this does not mean she is not marked by the experience. PCs returned to life via *raise dead* often still bear the injuries that slew them, and nearly all forms of resurrection exact a cost (often represented by negative levels or Constitution drain)—a reminder of the stark toll the passage to death and back takes on both body and soul.

The effects of a PC's return shouldn't be confined to the character sheet; there can and should be in-game consequences as well. The average citizen of the Inner Sea hears about resurrection in tall tales and mummers' plays, but few ever witness it firsthand. If a character's death was in public view or otherwise well known, onlookers might be surprised, delighted, or outright horrified to see him strolling through the market square a few days later. If a PC has debts, his death may have legally discharged them or caused them to become due prematurely. Hirelings and servants may feel themselves freed of their obligations to the character. Upon hearing of his return, old enemies might come looking to settle old scores—after all, if the PC was murdered once, surely he can be slain a second time. And he may have even earned new enemies by his return, including those who oppose resurrection on principle or who covet resurrected souls.

Resurrection can also present out-of-game pitfalls, as noted on pages 67 and 92 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*. It's worth repeating that players are not obligated to bring characters back from the dead if they'd prefer to start fresh with new ones. Nor should resurrecting a deceased PC bankrupt or otherwise derail the rest of the party without the other players' consent. Sometimes it's just not possible to return a character from the dead, and that isn't a bad thing; the risk of loss is part of what makes gaming exciting, raising the stakes for all involved. But if a character is particularly beloved, most dedicated gaming groups can work with creative GMs to find ways to cheat death, ideally with a quest that's suitable for such an epic endeavor.

Meanwhile, GMs should only rarely resurrect NPCs, and never more than once, as noted in the *GameMastery Guide*. While the deathless villain is a staple of fiction, it can feel like a cheat at the table. The return of a supposedly vanquished foe should be (at most) a once-in-a-campaign shock that spurs PCs to greater heroism; it should never feel like a hackneyed sequel or GM fiat.

When handled well, death and resurrection can provide a springboard for new avenues of storytelling

and richer roleplaying experiences. The following pages explore some of the common and uncommon means of resurrection; reveal the cults, monsters, and otherworldly forces who oppose or prey upon the newly risen; and serve up a number of resurrection-focused adventure seeds ready to be dropped into your campaign.

METHODS OF RESURRECTION

The most common method of resurrection available to adventurers is divine magic, particularly *raise dead*. While undeniably effective, *raise dead* has many limitations: The conjuration requires a near-flawless diamond (worth 5,000 gp), which might equal the combined wealth of an entire low-level band of adventurers, and it must be cast within a relatively short time after a character's death. The recipient returns to life badly weakened, often with wounds only partially closed, spells lost, and the touch of the grave lingering on in the form of negative levels or Constitution drain. *Raise dead* also requires a mostly intact corpse, and an arm lost to a bulette remains lost. Bodies that have suffered massive trauma, disintegration, and the like do not offer enough of a vessel for the soul to return to.

As a healing spell that can also raise the dead, *breath of life* is an attractive solution, provided the spell's caster can reach her dead ally within 1 round of the fatal injury. While *breath of life* is an ideal triage option that avoids *raise dead*'s many costs, its strict timing requirements mean that the opportunity is often lost, and bringing back the character then requires more taxing solutions.

For corpses greatly damaged or dead for any length of time, *resurrection* and *true resurrection* offer the most hope. While costly even for wealthy PCs, *resurrection* works upon even the dust left over from *disintegrate*, and powerful casters can recall someone who has been deceased for up to 200 years. Meanwhile, *true resurrection* enables characters to evade even the tax in negative levels from *resurrection*.

Because resurrection magic is connected to the progress of souls, it is primarily the province of clerics. Other spellcasters' attempts to dabble in this area usually amount to workarounds and shortcuts. Powerful witches have access to *temporary resurrection* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 243), for instance, but it lasts only a day. A druid's *reincarnate* spell returns the deceased to life... but in a completely new body, which may not even be the same species!

Forward-thinking arcane spellcasters sometimes rely on *clone*. Using a bit of her own flesh, such a caster can grow a duplicate of herself over 2 to 8 months. Once the inert clone is fully grown, the caster can rest secure, knowing that if she is slain, her soul will be automatically shunted to a waiting body identical to her own. However, this requires her to store the clone in a secure location for years or even decades to come. It also means abandoning her old body, her gear, and any companions to whatever fate befell her.

As a last resort, desperate adventurers may turn to *miracle* or *wish* to revive a fallen friend. As with all

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CURSE: GRAVE LONGING

This curse is often employed, rather cruelly, in the protection of purported sources of immortality.

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 19

Effect The target constantly feels the tug of the grave. If she sleeps anywhere but on the ground outdoors, she must succeed at a Will save against the curse or she wakes up fatigued and remains so until the next time she sleeps. Furthermore, if she dies, she is difficult to resurrect. *Raise dead* always fails, and any other attempt at resurrection requires a successful caster check against the curse's save DC. Failure results in the resurrection having no effect. If the body resides in an unholy location, such as that created by the *unhallow* spell, the DC of this check increases by 2.

Cure In addition to the normal means for removing a curse, successfully resurrecting the victim ends it as well.

wishcraft, PCs must take care not to overreach the bounds of the spell, or they risk having their wish turn against them (*GameMastery Guide* 116). Provided PCs limit their wish to replicating *resurrection*, the attempt likely succeeds. But the more the caster pushes the wish's boundaries (for instance, attempting to restore a soul too long dead), the more likely it is the spell will fail or the result will be a distortion of the caster's intent.

Miracle avoids many of *wish*'s drawbacks, and the spell can achieve even more spectacular results if the caster performs the proper obeisance. But it comes with one serious caveat: the caster is quite literally asking for divine intervention. This is not a request to be made lightly or frequently. Should the request go against the deity's will, the spell fails. And even a successful *miracle* may obligate both caster and target to the deity's service in the future.

Obscure rituals or magical locations might also return a soul to life. This allows GMs to find in-game reasons to break the usual restrictions on access to spellcasting, offer resurrection to a party without a divine caster, motivate PCs to venture to distant locations, and otherwise encourage deeper player engagement with the game world. For instance, the ouroboros blood ritual (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 207) acts as *true resurrection*, with no limit to how long the body has been dead provided its soul has not been judged. Not only might this allow PCs the opportunity to resurrect a soul otherwise beyond their reach, but obtaining the freshly harvested blood of a CR 21 ouroboros is an adventure in itself. PCs might likewise chase rumors of a magical altar, a life-giving pool, or a millennia-old golden willow tree, all in the hopes of finding a location or ritual component that will mean the difference between life and death.

LIMITATIONS OF RESURRECTION

Souls are fragile things, made of the quintessence of the multiverse and shaped by a lifetime of experiences and moral choices. They are also valuable on a spiritual level to outsiders—as currency, planar building blocks, spell components, and even food. As such, a soul separated from its body can be damaged, traded away, stolen, or simply obliterated. Certain extraplanar monsters such as cacodaemons and devourers store or digest the souls of those they consume. Some greater evil outsiders stain souls via curses, magical infections, or a corrupting touch. So long as a soul is marked for damnation or used up in such a way, it cannot be resurrected by ordinary means.

A number of powerful spells and artifacts actively thwart attempts to raise the dead. Both *malediction* and *hellfire ray* (*Pathfinder RPG Book of the Damned* 184) corrupt the souls they affect, damning them to evil-aligned planes, while *destruction* incinerates characters killed by it, complicating resurrection. A priest harboring evil intentions might cast *false resurrection* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue* 214) to call a shadow demon to possess a corpse, locking out its original soul. The spell *create soul gem* (*Book of the Damned* 184) temporarily traps a soul, and only a deity can restore a soul trapped by *soul bind* or lost to a *sphere of annihilation*.

One of the most common obstacles to normal resurrection is a prior claim upon the soul by a planar entity. The infernal contracts offered by devils (*Book of the Damned* 202) are infamous for this, offering power in life but consigning the soul to Hell after death. Likewise, the feysworn (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The First World, Realm of the Fey* 8), who serve the mysterious Eldest of the First World, are destined to reincarnate at their patron's side. Even servants of the celestial powers are not guaranteed a return—lawful good outsiders in particular often begin their existence as mortal martyrs, and many a noble crusader has tried to raise a fallen friend only to find her deity has made other arrangements. No matter how well intentioned her original oath, a character who promises her soul to a planar power forever puts at risk any chance at a return from death.

THREATS TO THE RESURRECTED

Numerous creatures and groups oppose—or even prey upon—the newly risen. Splinter cults and fundamentalist sects may see resurrection as an affront to their gods, and those who participate in the soul trade or who hunger for souls may deem a resurrected soul to be a precious asset. As a result, a recently resurrected PC may find herself facing a whole new slate of enemies she never knew existed, some of which are detailed below.

Akhanas: Life must give way to death, and death to life. Such is the credo of these misty, four-armed aeons.

If an akhana deems that a resurrection has caused some universal imbalance, it seeks to right the scales by slaying the risen mortal a second time, potentially even trapping the errant soul within itself. What motivates these inscrutable aeons to target one victim and leave another untouched is a mystery.

Daemonkind: Powerful daemons often conduct blasphemous experiments on souls, harvesting them in gem form with their cacodaemon pets and then using them to power arcane trials. While for most purposes a previously resurrected soul is no different from any other, some especially exacting rituals call for nothing less, prompting daemons attempting them to hunt far and wide for appropriate mortal subjects. (For more on daemonic uses for souls and their value, see page 191 of the *Book of the Damned*.)

Ghoul Gourmands: Just as an early frost yields delicious ice wine, an untimely demise and resurrection adds an earthy bouquet to humanoid flesh—at least if the diner is a ghoul. In Nemret Noktoria, the Darklands capital of ghoulkind, undead epicures prowl the fleshmarkets, hunting for such delicacies. Powerful undead known as reviviphages dine exclusively on the flesh of the risen. Their selective meals quicken the ichor in their veins, allowing them to momentarily experience the sensations of life again.

Gray Gardeners: Galt's masked executioners are well known for their *final blades*: magical guillotines that trap the souls of those they behead. Of course, many victims of Galtan justice meet more ordinary ends, typically at the end of a noose or the point of a crossbow bolt. Should any of these reactionaries rise from the grave, a Gray Gardener is sent to end their unlawful parole.

Inevitables: The golden-armored maruts hunt those who have artificially extended their life spans. While the average resurrection does not warrant their attention, combining resurrection magic with wishcraft or spells that defy aging often does. Maruts also monitor life-granting esoteric rituals, particularly ones that demand mass sacrifice. Other inevitables occasionally hunt the resurrected: zelekhts chase those who use death and resurrection to escape justice, while kolyaruts hunt those who do so to break a contract.

Knights of Ozem: For generations, the Knights of Ozem have stood vigil over the death-haunted Gallowspire and the demon-tainted Worldwound. At both sites, some knights have come to fear the resurrected. Though nearly all crusaders

can rattle off a list of comrades returned to life by Iomedae's mercy, there are whispers of those who came back somehow... different, with the smell of grave dirt clinging to them, or walking as if tugged by an invisible puppeteer. The truth is that the corruption in these places can taint resurrection magic, and some knights are not willing to run that risk. Campfire rumors speak of the Wings of Night, a secret society dedicated to abolishing the practice of resurrection in and around Lastwall and the Worldwound by any means necessary.



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Nightmare Dragons: Resurrected mortals do not remember their time in Pharamasma's realm—not consciously, at least. But sometimes in sleep, their dream selves recall snippets of their brushes with eternity. Nightmare dragons find the taste of these dreams intoxicating, and some actively hunt the dreamscapes of the resurrected in hopes of feasting on their souls as well.

Passengers of Charon: By turns fascinated with and repelled by death, these cultists of Charon hope that a lifetime of service will buy them passage back to life when their shades reach the River Styx. To this end, Passengers hunt the recently resurrected, believing (incorrectly) that the Horseman of Death prefers these fugitive souls over all others. Passengers often pose as gondoliers, carriage drivers, or traveling surgeons, isolating their victims before capturing their souls via enchanted bottles or summoned cacodaemons.

Red Mantis Assassins: Most assassins find resurrection frustrating, but to worshipers of Achaekek, it is nothing less than heresy. Red Mantis assassins go to great lengths to prevent their victims from being raised, and many are even gifted with a supernatural sense that alerts them to a former victim's resurrection. A Red Mantis's pursuit of a risen target is a portrait of grim determination.


Shinigami: Supposedly impartial harbingers of death, shinigami typically dispose of those who would disrupt the delicate balance of life. The resurrected thus sometimes fall under a shinigami's purview, especially if the person's return upsets the natural or social order in some fashion. In truth, though, some shinigamis use their mandate as an excuse to simply dispatch risen mortals, particularly when bribed.

Sons and Daughters of the Mask: Worshipers of Norgorber, god of murder, take a very dim view of resurrection, as it has a way of exposing old secrets, fostering unanticipated forgiveness or vengeance, and unknotting years of carefully woven plots. Interestingly, it is the politically minded followers of Norgorber who most doggedly hunt the risen. Professional killers who serve Father Skinsaw see resurrection as merely an added challenge—and they rarely leave enough body to be raised.

The Soul Trade: Souls are a commodity traded throughout the multiverse, and those that have previously been resurrected—whether trapped in soul gems or still in their original bodies—can fetch high prices. Night hags are the most famous soul merchants, hunting in the Ethereal Plane and the Dimension of Dreams and then selling their catches throughout Abaddon.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following adventure seeds are just some of the many resurrection-themed scenarios your adventurers may find themselves in, both in the Inner Sea region and throughout the Great Beyond.



Azata's Last Meal: A crystal iceberg has washed up on the shores of Elysium's Boundless Azure Ocean. Frozen inside is an edifice that matches the description of the tower where the gancanagh azata Kitte Ilara tended his mortal lover, an elven queen dying of a wasting disease. A flood of raw chaos swept away the tower a millennium ago, and the lovers were presumed lost. Breaching the crystal cocoon is perilous, though, as the centuries spent floating at the edge of the multiverse somehow corrupted Kitte Ilara into a devourer. His beloved queen's soul writhes within his ribcage, yearning for freedom and a second chance at life.

The Blue Assassin: Sent from his monastery to experience life among mortals, a samsaran monk named Brother Jangtan journeyed from Quain to the edge of Avistan. Along Qadira's Golden Path, he watched in horror as gnoll raiders ambushed his caravan, killing several guards and a noted oracle. A passing Sarenite patrol drove off the gnolls, but Brother Jangtan's horror only grew when he witnessed a Dawnflower priest returning the slain oracle to life. To the samsaran, the priest's intrusion into the cycle of rebirth was as much a violation as the gnoll raid.

In the years since, the samsaran's attitude toward those who would resurrect the dead has only curdled. Brother Jangtan now actively hunts both the resurrected and the clerics who returned them to life, and his passion and unearthly appearance have attracted a cadre of followers.

The Galloping Gem: A magical emerald is rumored to have a remarkable power: it can be used as the focus of a *raise dead* or *resurrection* spell without being consumed. However, there is a cost, as the emerald traps a fragment of every soul returned to life in this fashion. Souls divided in this way are more vulnerable to divination; the current bearer of the gem can scry on any person the stone has previously resurrected, as per *scrying*, as if he had a lock of the target's hair. Worse yet, the gem allows its holder to use *magic jar*, and anyone resurrected by the gem automatically fails the saving throw against the holder's possession attempts.

The emerald is known as the *galloping gem* for its habit of escaping its current owner—often finding its way into the hands of the owner's nearest enemy, who may not realize what a prize she has stumbled upon. Some suspect a demigod of ill luck or a protean choir had a hand in the gem's creation.

Hell and High Water: Fearing for her afterlife, a Chelish solicitor seeks adventurers to help her renegotiate her contract with the phistophilus Miachelmar, after the usual conjurations failed to unearth the contract devil. But Miachelmar fled his residence in Dis after a rival's assassination attempt nearly succeeded. Currently he resides on a riverboat traveling up and down the Styx, in a stateroom warded against devils and summoning of any kind. Naturally, the riverboat's crew took note of a devil draped in scrolls, and they plan to sell Miachelmar and his

many infernal contracts to the first thanadaemon they happen upon.

Last Laugh: Jester Ainsley Holliday can be killed, but she returns to life unharmed the next day. Her talent has led to a unique and often stomach-churning career performing in courts throughout the Inner Sea region. Depending on who does the asking, the tiny half-elf credits her supernatural fortitude to a game of skill she won in an Osirian tomb, the phoenix feathers sewn into her motley, or her having swapped places with a pixie sorcerer and thus fooled Pharamasma—along with a half dozen other stories. Recently though, the typically unflappable Holliday has become convinced she is being tailed by a shadowy force. She worries she has attracted the attention of Nidal—the one nation in which she won't perform—or some otherworldly enforcer.

Reassembly Room: Some 30 miles south of the Numerian capital, heavy spring rains uncovered a relic from the Rain of Stars. Pathfinder Anforat Trev reports that the object, a chamber of sorts, is some kind of self-guided operating theater—a fact he discovered when the room's construct arms stitched up a wound he'd received battling brigands. Trev goes on to report that the room even restored his retainer Banjin to life after the alchemist fell in another battle against the same brigands. Trev was forced to flee the site but seeks fellow Pathfinders to reclaim the chamber. Privately, he is also concerned that Banjin's behavior has been cold, even mechanical, since his otherwise miraculous recovery.

Strands of Fate: Adventurers who fail to resurrect a friend might endeavor to track down the wayward soul, only to find the trail leading them to an auction house perched precariously near a portal to Abaddon. Attending a soul auction means rubbing shoulders with some of the most amoral merchants in the multiverse, including someone who has already purchased the sought soul in a private sale: one of the mysterious spinners of fate, a norn.

The Truant: A conjuror at Korvosa's prominent wizard's college, the Acadamae, believed she had found an arcane means of calling a soul back to its body. After promising early tests, she tried the technique on a student who had met with an "accident"—one that she had arranged. The attempt failed catastrophically, creating an unliving tangle of bone and viscera known as an unrisen (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 268) that promptly escaped into Korvosa's sewers. The conjuror has since learned the deceased student was a Thuvian princeling attending the school under a guise. She needs discreet adventurers to recover and slay the undead horror so that the student can be properly revived.

While He Yet Breathes: Dashell Brevin of Magnimar made a living loaning useful magic items to adventuring parties, profiting by charging outlandish interest and fees.

He financed his operation through loans from three Aspis Consortium representatives. The Aspis agents' long-term plan was to kill Brevin and seize his wealth, but they didn't realize he had inserted an escape clause into the loans. When Brevin was eventually murdered, a cleric of Abadar promptly raised him per a prearranged insurance policy. Meanwhile, the Aspis agents discovered that while they had each agreed to discharge the loans and assume Brevin's debts "in the event of the Borrower's death," he legally retained all of his assets "while the Borrower yet breathes." Legally declared deceased but very much still breathing, Brevin skipped town. Now in debt to each other and fearing the outrage of their superiors, the three Aspis agents are desperate to locate Brevin—and any adventurers they suspect of aiding him.



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I was three days off the main trail before I saw another soul—and barely, at that, the blasted fog was so thick. Just as I was about to catch up with the stranger, I found myself knee-deep in muck. I looked up, straight into a great green eye that was staring back at me from the mist. I was so afeared I couldn't even call for help, when suddenly I heard voices nearby. And a good thing, too! Come to find out, a couple of common thieves had been following me, and if not for my little detour in the fog, they'd've had me bleeding out for a few coins! I got out of there just as soon as I could, and I didn't even look back when I heard those same voices screaming behind me. Whatever that thing was, I owe it my life... but you won't ever find me in that stretch again.

—Brakus Fellbottom, amateur cartographer

This volume of the War for the Crown Adventure Path contains a fey prankster made of woven grass, a pressurized plant creature, a screaming vermin, a wind-wrapped outsider, and a magical mutt that favors foggy moors.

LIFE-THREATENING LURKERS

“The Twilight Child” has the PCs exploring a tumultuous city, untangling fiendish plots, and traveling through rolling hills to a nearby caravanserai called Tallgrasses. During their investigations and travels, the PCs have the chance to encounter a number of enemies lurking at the periphery of the main adventure.

The Yanmass and Tallgrasses Encounters table presented here features challenges the PCs might face beyond those in the adventure. Each hour the PCs spend exploring Yanmass or traveling to and from Tallgrasses, 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. Similarly, some results might not be appropriate while the PCs are in the city of Yanmass, and others might not make sense while they’re traveling to and from Tallgrasses. In any of these cases, roll again or choose a different encounter.

Dissenter’s End (CR 8): The PCs come across the site of the murder of Teren Fraichette, a soldier who served in the Taldan Horse under Jaliessa Staubel. Teren learned of Jaliessa’s traitorous scheme (the crux of Part 3 of the adventure) and refused to take part, and the other traitors killed her. The awful betrayal has manifested a haunt (for haunt rules, see page 242 of *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*). Feel free to add or remove details about the haunt’s manifestation so the scene can serve as foreshadowing, reinforcement, or closure for Part 3 of the adventure.

DISSENTER’S END

CR 8

XP 3,200

CE haunt (30-ft. radius)

Caster Level 7th

Notice Perception or Sense Motive DC 20 (to feel dawning dread and hear desperate pleading)

hp 31; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

Effect Dozens of figures that resemble Taldan Horse cavalry materialize at the edge the area, facing inward. They quickly close in on everyone within the haunt’s area, growing impossibly tall and terrifyingly fiendish as they do. Each creature in the area must succeed at a DC 15 Will saving throw or be frightened as per *fear*. Furthermore, each creature within the haunt’s area must succeed at a DC 15 Will saving throw to avoid being cursed. Until it is removed, this curse causes its victims to mistrust their allies, imposing a –4 penalty on initiative checks (as an affected creature waits

YANMASS AND TALLGRASSES ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–4	1 death worm	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 76
5–7	1 black shuck	7	See page 82
8–10	1 chaos beast	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 54
11–13	1 criosphinx	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 252
14–18	1 invisible stalker	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 181
19–23	1 soul eater	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 254
24–28	1 dire tiger	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 265
29–33	Dissenter’s end	8	See below
34–38	1 lammasu	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 175
39–43	1 polong	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 196
44–48	1 sishkanset	8	See page 88
49–56	Teeming mind	8	See below
57–64	1 bloodplate burster	9	See page 84
65–69	2d3 hieracosphinxes	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 253
70–74	1d4 lunar nagas	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 197
75–79	1d4 terra-cotta soldiers	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 262
80–85	1 blood bramble	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 48
86–90	Hound errant	10	See below
91–95	1 fext	10	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 115
96–100	1 vorvorak	10	See page 90

to ensure its allies act before committing to battle). *Remove curse* can remove this effect.

Destruction Teren’s spirit can rest only if incontrovertible evidence of her refusal to join Straubel’s plot is presented to her family in Zimar.

Hound Errant (CR 10): A wild hunt hound (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 281) is prowling Yanmass’s immediate environs, looking for worthy prey. This fey creature was until recently a black shuck (see page 82) that fell victim to an enigmatic group of fey known as a wild hunt (*Bestiary* 6 278). The dedicated fey chased the beast for sport for months before finally cornering and slaying it, and they chose to reincarnate their quarry as the newest member of their hunt. Now, the newly formed wild hunt hound must prove its skill in a solo hunt before it’s allowed to join the hunt proper, and a group of powerful adventurers would do quite nicely...

Teeming Mind (CR 8): The outbreak of nightmares in Yanmass is fueling a massive outpouring of errant psychic energy, which in turn has transformed a mischief of rats in the city’s sewer into a hivemind rat swarm (*Bestiary* 6 156). So far, the swarm has used its newfound abilities to coordinate and communicate only to procure food more easily and to protect itself from predators. But the verminous congregation is becoming more bold by the day, venturing out in the night to search for food stores and easily manipulated commoners.

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BLACK SHUCK

This enormous hound has a single, glowering green eye, and its flanks are matted with hair soaked in filth and gore.

BLACK SHUCK

CR 7



XP 3,200

CN Large magical beast

Init +11; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +12

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 13 (+7 Dex, +4 natural, -1 size)

hp 85 (9d10+36)

Fort +10, **Ref** +13, **Will** +5

DR 10/cold iron or magic

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., swim 15 ft.

Melee bite +13 (1d8+5 plus disease and trip), 2 claws +13 (1d6+5)

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

Special Attacks green-eyed gaze

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +11)

3/day—*blink*, *fog cloud*, *misdirection*

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 24, **Con** 18, **Int** 13, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +15 (+17 trip); **CMD** 32 (38 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Iron Will, Stealthy

Skills Acrobatics +7 (+11 when jumping), Bluff +11, Escape Artist +9, Perception +12, Stealth +17, Swim +13

Languages Common

SQ change shape (human; *alter self*)

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate coasts or marshes

Organization solitary

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) A black shuck's bite inflicts a wasting disease on those lucky enough to survive its initial attack.

Shuck's Kiss: Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 18; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1/hour for 6 hours; *effect* 1d4 Con and 1d4 Str damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Green-Eyed Gaze (Sp) Those who meet a black shuck's accursed eye can find themselves changed by the experience. Three times per day, a black shuck can cast its gaze upon a creature within 30 feet. The target must succeed at a DC 16 Will save or be struck with a curse as though affected by a *bestow curse* spell (CL 9th). The type of curse is fixed and unique to each black shuck, and once assigned, it can't be changed; thus, one particular black shuck's curse might reduce an opponent's Strength score by 6, while another's might inflict a -4 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks. Whether or not a creature fails its save against a black shuck's green-eyed gaze, that creature can't be affected

by that black shuck's gaze again for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Black shucks are monstrous hounds that haunt the countless footpaths and byways threading through lonely coastal regions and sweaty fenlands. Some say black shucks are grotesque children born of witches who consort with forest demons, while others believe them to be the remains of witches burned alive in marshy terrain. These theories are likely born of the undeniable affinity the dog-creatures have with witches, and the hounds often masquerade as lonely travelers, lost and afraid in the wilds, thanks to their ability to take on the form of such woebegone souls. However, some tales contradict this entirely, telling of black shucks that take care of travelers who cross wild places alone and take vengeance on those who would harm defenseless wanderers. Many suspect that these latter stories are spread by the monstrous canines themselves when in human form and desperate for a meal.

Many black shucks live lonely lives, shunning civilization and those who hunt at its fringes, but others are found in the company of hags and witches, and some are able to leech greater powers of witchcraft from long association. Sometimes a coven attaches itself to a black shuck and uses it as a guide or hunter, or it might unleash a black shuck on a small coastal village as a distraction from some grander scheme.

ECOLOGY

Often mistakenly identified as barghests, black shucks are magical beasts that are encountered in breeding pairs only in extremely rare circumstances. Habitual loners, they are foul and dirty; they resemble the most neglected of their mortal kin while embodying the most feral aspects of wild dogs. Dwelling for the most part in rank bogs or brine-soaked coasts, black shucks often drive out other animals with their mere presence, leaving their territories even more bereft of noise and life than would usually be the case. Black shucks have ravenous appetites and can readily clear a large area of prey, leaving only their own foul droppings and scent-marks behind.

Even well-coordinated efforts to drive a black shuck from an area often fail, as the creature can compound the difficulty most humanoids have navigating its favored terrain by using its ability to create dense banks of fog. Combining this with its intimate knowledge of its territory and a well-hidden lair, a black shuck can evade even the most determined militia for a nearly indefinite period, even picking off careless hunters who wander too far from their group.

A famous legend has it that an old shuck (see page 83) called Foul-Eye once single-handedly eradicated a contingent of elite Chernasardo Ranger scouts at the

edge of Nirmathas's Southern Fangwood. Unlikely as this tale is to be true, it is well-known enough that even the rumor of a black shuck's presence is often enough to scare travelers away from a path for months.

HABIT AND SOCIETY

Black shucks are natural loners; thus, barring the outside influence of a cover, they rarely form bonds with any other creatures, even of their own kind. However, black shucks develop a particular affinity—and even affection—for particular paths and byways, often using the same such routes over and over again, and sometimes even forming their own paths through gradual wear. So great is the creature's bond to its homeland that forcing it to leave its chosen territory often causes a black shuck to wither and die of homesick longing.

Black shucks maintain lairs that they return to during the day when they rest; they hunt only at night except in times of desperation or on the foggiest of days. A shuck's primary lair is almost always somewhere well hidden or difficult to reach, whether in the center of a tangled gorse patch, among the loose stones at the foot of gravelly cliffs, or within the briar-infested corners of long-disused graveyards. Occasionally a black shuck keeps several lairs spread across a larger territory, which allows it to prey on travelers for longer stretches of time without raising too much suspicion in any one community.

Black shucks often take advantage of the camaraderie of travelers, changing into human forms and luring lone wanderers further into a foggy moor with promises of a cache of food, a comfortable camp, or simple companionship. Once a victim is in a black shuck's preferred killing ground, the beast transforms into its true form and viciously ambushes the poor soul, whose picked-clean remains are almost never found, having sunk into the moist ground to join countless others.

Rarely, a black shuck develops a curious benevolent edge to its hunting, watching over lone travelers along a particular path or swampy stretch instead of attacking them. Such hounds prefer to prey on robbers and thieves who attempt to victimize those in their territory, and they sometimes even take on the form of vulnerable and lonely human travelers to attract villains to them. Those who have found themselves aided by such a shuck often claim its eye was colored deep blue, not green.

OLD SHUCK

The black shuck's close association with witches and witchcraft has led to countless local variants of the hound, as foul rituals have changed the already-fearsome creatures into even more nightmarish beasts. One of the most commonly encountered variants is that known as an old shuck, a beast often formed when a coven of witches or hags adopts a black shuck and adapts it to their needs. These leaner, more brutish versions of a black shuck have 13 Hit Dice and the ability to cause storms in their home territory. Once per day, by spending 10 minutes pacing its territory in a specific pattern, an old shuck can call forth a storm as per *control weather* (CL 13th). The type of storm created and its effects depend upon the prevalent climate and season. In addition, once per day when a target fails its save against the old shuck's green-eyed gaze, the target must succeed at a DC 18 Will save or perish. The save DC is Charisma-based. Old shucks are CR 10 creatures.



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BLOODPLATE BURSTER

Withered, fleshy leaves the color of dried blood lie like armored plates across the top of this imposing creature's bulbous form. Thick, serpentine strands run the length of its rigid, fibrous skin.

BLOODPLATE BURSTER

CR 9



XP 6,400

N Huge plant

Init +5; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., scent, tremorsense 120 ft.; Perception +24

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 22 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge, +14 natural, -2 size)

hp 119 (14d8+56)

Fort +12, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7

Immune acid, plant traits, sight-based effects

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

Melee 2 tentacles +18 (1d8+9 plus hydraulic surge and rupture)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks awlspines

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 13, **Con** 17, **Int** 4, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 33 (can't be tripped)

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Perception +24

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or warm deserts or plains

Organization solitary, pair, or frenzy (3-4)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Awlspines (Ex) Once per minute as a standard action, a bloodplate burster can supercharge its circulatory system to forcefully project keratinous dorsal spines, dealing 6d10 points of piercing damage to adjacent creatures (Reflex DC 20 half) and applying its hydraulic surge ability to creatures that take damage from the attack. Mud, soil, and similar materials do not block line of effect or provide cover from awlspines. When burrowing as a move action, a bloodplate burster can make an awlspines attack at any point during the move. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Hydraulic Surge (Ex) A bloodplate burster that deals damage to a target with an awlspines attack or a tentacle attack forces pressurized fluids into its prey, dealing 2d8 additional points of acid damage and sickening the target for 1d4 rounds (Fortitude DC 20 negates). Further applications of this effect extend its duration. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Rupture (Ex) A bloodplate burster's hydraulic assault can raise its prey's internal pressure to catastrophic levels. Creatures slain by the bloodplate burster's hydraulic surge ability explode, dealing 3d8 points of acid

damage (Reflex DC 20 half) to other creatures within a 15-foot-radius burst of the slain creature. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Fearsome subterranean predators, bloodplate bursters are naturally armored rhizomes that resemble long and tapered ginger roots. A hunting adult's bulbous back is covered by shingled layers of withered, spade-shaped leaves. Thick sheets of fibrous growth coat its lower body, from which sprout hundreds of pale, finger-width cilia. Vines like the rigging of a ship run from its sightless "head" toward its posterior, and fist-sized stomata peek from leaves and appendages across its form.

Bloodplate bursters are known for their sudden, terrifying appearances. The first sign of a burster is often a pack animal's panicked cry. The monster's hissing emergence is usually followed shortly by its target's viscerally explosive death.

An average adult bloodplate burster is over 6 feet tall and 12 feet long and weighs around 6,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Bloodplate bursters are ruthless predators at the top of their food chain. Acidic secretions allow quiet, cilia-driven passage through softened earth while the plants use their keen senses to assess the size and health of prey and threats from underneath the ground's surface. A bloodplate burster's lateral sensory nodes pick up vibration in a wide swath around it as it burrows, and its olfactory system is highly attuned to the smell of blood—injured prey attract particular attention, and a burster generally tracks and isolates the largest possible meal that is the easiest kill.

The plant maintains a complex internal system of pressurized caustic fluid, regulated by an internal gas bladder that aids in circulating the acid through numerous stomata. This exchange produces a constant, characteristic hissing that intensifies when the bloodplate burster first attacks its prey. In a wet, sibilant rush, the bladder can exert tremendous hydraulic force to push thick spines through the burster's opened dorsal stomata. The spines pierce flesh to inject pressurized fluid whose caustic nature cauterizes the wounds, causing pressure to build in the victim's body. The burster then surfaces to lash prey with its thick lateral vines. When brought into forceful contact, the vines' reinforced stomata adhere to flesh and inject further bursts of fluid that build up excruciating pressure over repeated blows. The burster relentlessly strikes its prey with its vines until its barrage of spines drives the victim's internal pressure to uncontainable levels and the victim explodes in a shower of gore and shredded flesh.

With its hunt complete, the massive plant settles into the ground beneath its kill to feed. The absorbed blood turns the burster's dozens of dry armored plates into ballooning leaves that remain above the soil and absorb the sun's rays, aiding the creature's metabolism.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

While most bloodplate bursters dwell on the Whistling Plains of Taldor's eastern border, the itinerant plants prowl deserts and grasslands throughout southeastern Avistan and western Casmaron. Vigilant shepherds, trade caravans, and army patrols—especially those mounted on heavy-footed elephants—listen carefully for bursters' trademark hissing and look for knee-high clusters of glistening ruby fins.

Though rightly feared, these creatures are infrequently encountered. Ingesting a kill's blood is a months-long process during which a bloodplate burster remains dormant unless roused. Its vital fluids are more caustic while feeding, but it exudes moisture and warmth. These secondary effects of blood metabolism can even make the burster the center of a temporary microclimate: birds adapted to its acidity feed on its engorged leaves, and the seeds they carry sprout into plants and wildflowers that attract other organisms—soon, what began as a blood-soaked graveyard flourishes with new life. Even in death, a burster becomes a home for other creatures as rodents carve dwellings from the remnants of its fibrous husk.

When not hunting or feeding, these territorial beings patrol their expansive holdings. They mark their perimeters with boluses of acid deposited in the soil. The enzymatic compositions of these clusters repel other bursters, and the slightest vibration near a marker triggers a seismic signal. Bursters react to this information according to their hunger or territorial need. Two juveniles may share territory thanks to a tacit instinctual agreement, or an elder burster may repel a younger creature's invasion. Those too weak to defend their territory use their flagging blood reserves to bud the next generation; the resulting dog-sized offspring consume the organisms attracted to the senescent burster.

Some daring opportunists find good reason to risk their lives with the aggressive plants; the creatures' untriggered perimeter markers eventually condense into pearlescent ovoids with supposedly wondrous properties, and the singular composition of bursters' plated leaves makes them well suited for use in crafting armor and durable textiles.

Despite a bloodplate burster's solitary, territorial disposition, travelers have occasionally had no choice but to face multiple bursters at once. The seismic disturbance of a marching army, wagon train, or herd of

migrating beasts can provoke multiple bursters, leading to the formation of a temporary, semicoordinated pack. Ashen-faced traders speak of hundreds of bison torn apart in a frenzy of cresting plants and rupturing hide, leaving clouds of bloody mist drifting for miles on prairie winds.

BLOODPLATE BURSTER VARIANT

While a bloodplate burster is hunting, its scalelike leaves serve as armor, but the plant's natural causticity is reduced. However, once a burster has set to feeding, its leaves expand and fill with its internal corrosive enzymes. A feeding bloodplate burster has only half its usual natural armor bonus, and the DCs of its hydraulic surge and rupture abilities are reduced by 2. A feeding burster also gains fast healing 2, and creatures that hit it with natural attacks or unarmed attacks take 2d6 points of acid damage.



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GRASSLING

This child-sized creature is made of long green stalks of loosely woven grass. It has four arms, each with fingers like long blades, and leaves circle its head like a crown.

GRASSLING

CR 6



XP 2,400

CN Small fey

Init +4; **Senses** greensight 60 ft., low-light vision;
Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+4 Dex, +4 natural, +1 size)

hp 65 (10d6+30)

Fort +5, **Ref** +11, **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities plant form

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 4 claws +11 (1d6+1 plus bleed)

Special Attacks bleed (1d6)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 15, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 19

Feats Combat Reflexes, Stealthy, Toughness, Weapon Finesse,
Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Acrobatics +17, Climb +14, Escape Artist +21,
Perception +14, Stealth +25, Survival +11

SQ thicket stride

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate plains

Organization solitary, pair, or tuft (3–10)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Plant Form (Ex) Grasslings have a number of immunities common to plant creatures, including immunity to paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep effects, and stunning.

Thicket Stride (Ex) Grasslings can move through any sort of undergrowth (such as briars, natural thorns, overgrown areas, and similar terrain) at normal speed and without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. Undergrowth that has been magically manipulated to impede movement still affects grasslings.

Grasslings are sneaky, inquisitive fey creatures that populate wild grasslands. Resembling a crude, four-armed doll made of long blades of green grass, a grassling's body contains virtually no flesh or muscle—just fresh, tough grass. Despite their fibrous construction, grasslings are made up of magic and whimsy as much as they are of vegetation; they are fey creatures, not plants.

Each of a grassling's four arms ends in a hand with grass blades that protrude like claws. These claws are supernaturally sharp and can slice flesh with ease, although grasslings prefer stealth and deception to direct combat. Their excellent reflexes allow them to twist away from danger with great agility and reach

hiding spots before an observer can blink. Grasslings are capricious and delight in playing pranks—which range from harmless to mean spirited—upon larger creatures.

A typical grassling stands about 3 feet tall and weighs 30 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Grasslings roam freely across the plains they call home, keeping out of sight of larger creatures and exploring as their whimsy strikes them. Grasslings value their freedom and mobility above all else and hate having their travels blocked or their lands curtailed.

Formed from small seeds sprouted by a mature grassling parent, young grasslings are carefully planted in areas with plenty of sun and wind. A grassling's parent monitors the region closely to protect the immature grassling from predators or natural dangers. A grassling must grow for one full spring and summer—a period called “rooting”—before it can step out of the soil and walk on its own, and young grasslings frequently perish if uprooted early. Hence, a grassling's parent will uproot and transplant its young in only the most dire of situations. A grassling parent considers these few months of tending its immobile young to be both boring and confining, and it abandons the new grassling almost immediately once its ward can move on its own.

Grasslings primarily subsist on small insects, which they skewer on their long claws and munch on at their leisure. When food is scarce, a grassling can bury its feet in the earth and draw sustenance from the soil, as when it was young, but this method of eating makes grasslings sluggish and cross.

Although their bodies don't provide sustenance for carnivores, grasslings are particularly appealing to many herbivores. Drawn by the small fey's nutritious scent, herbivores are likely to attempt to nibble at any grassling that ventures within reach, and it doesn't take a grassling long to realize the dangers such creatures pose.

Grasslings avoid direct confrontation with non-fey unless surprised or cornered. If a grassling expects trouble, it prefers to set simple traps or confound its opponents with trickery. Grasslings don't particularly care whether these tricks harm or even kill their opponents, so a blundering foe might stumble into a patch of poisonous thorns or pursue a grassling into the hunting ground of a vicious predator. Grasslings are good at tying knots quickly, particularly in vegetation, so tripwires and snares are common grassling traps.

Grasslings can live to be many centuries old, but they are susceptible to blights that afflict mundane grasses. Older grasslings begin to yellow along their stems and lose their ability to deal bleed damage; eventually, their claws weaken and become so flimsy that the grassling cannot feed itself. With no other option, these elderly grasslings plant themselves in the ground and await death.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Grasslings live in wild plains and rarely travel into other terrains. They sometimes venture into farms, pastures, or other civilized open spaces near settlements, but such visits are usually short. Grasslings are uncomfortable with the ordered design and straight rows that appeal to civilized humanoids. Furthermore, pastures are occupied by large herbivores such as cows, horses, or sheep—creatures that make grasslings nervous—and fields sometimes contain scarecrows, which grasslings see as abominable totems attempting to mimic the grassling form. Yet, despite their misgivings, grasslings can't seem to avoid occasional trips into settled lands. Driven by their relentless curiosity, grasslings want to know who would contort nature in such ways and what pranks or trouble would most vex such creatures. This curiosity extends to constructed mechanisms. While unfamiliar with the purpose of most mechanical devices, grasslings are good at taking them apart or rigging them to fail in catastrophic ways. This is more often due to mere inquisitiveness rather than a surfeit of maliciousness, although some grasslings become deliberate saboteurs when presented with the opportunity.

Grasslings enjoy the company of other fey and are sociable among their own kind. When they congregate together in groups, called tufts, they attempt to outdo each other with boasts and dares; invariably, these dares lead to reckless behaviors as the grasslings attempt to prove themselves braver, tougher, or more daring than their kin. As a result, permanent grassling communities are rare. With the exception of the minimal sentiment that connects a grassling parent to its child during rooting, grasslings aren't particularly attached to each other, and a grassling is likely to leave others to their fates if serious danger arises.

Humanoids are fixated with taming the unusual and dangerous environments that grasslings call home; as a result, grassling friendships with humanoids are rare. The most significant exceptions are druids, elves, and other folk who inhabit natural environments peacefully; grasslings find more commonality with such creatures and might even befriend them. These companions frequently learn—often through necessity—that keeping a grassling occupied with a puzzle box or a mechanical toy prevents it from getting bored and wandering into danger or casually disassembling vital equipment.

Most grasslings have a keen fascination with fire. Tales regarding the capricious creatures are relatively rare

because grasslings are so few in number, but the fairy stories about them that circulate among humanoids nearly always end with a grassling becoming entranced by fire, approaching it too closely, and burning up. While these stories aren't true—grasslings are too green to be particularly flammable and too clever to accidentally immolate themselves—grasslings do indeed enjoy watching the chaotic dance of open flames and aren't above creeping near a traveler's campfire or setting something ablaze just to watch the flames. Older grasslings know how quickly a brushfire can sweep across the wild plains they call home, however, and aren't prone to starting fires that could damage their territory (although damaging someone else's is less of a concern).



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SISHKANSET

This translucent, unnaturally tall humanoid figure sprouts dozens of long tendrils from its upper body.

SISHKANSET

CR 8



XP 4,800

NE Medium outsider (extraplanar, incorporeal)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 14 (+4 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 105 (10d10+50)

Fort +7, **Ref** +11, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities incorporeal; **SR** 19

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee chilling touch +14 (6d8 cold)

Special Attacks disorienting gale, whispering persecution

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +14)

Constant—*detect thoughts* (DC 16)

At will—*alter winds*^{APG} (DC 15), *invisibility*, *lesser confusion* (DC 15)

1/day—*cloak of winds*^{APG} (DC 17), *confusion* (DC 17), *river of wind*^{APG} (DC 18)

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 9, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 29 (can't be tripped)

Feats Dodge, Flyby Attack, Iron Will, Stealthy, Toughness

Skills Escape Artist +6, Fly +25, Intimidate +12,

Perception +15, Stealth +21, Survival +15

Languages Common

SQ eavesdropper's veil, insidious winds

ECOLOGY

Environment any land (Ethereal Plane)

Organization solitary

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Chilling Touch (Su) A sishkanset can make a melee touch attack that deals 6d8 points of cold damage.

Disorienting Gale (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, a sishkanset can create a 60-foot line of freezing, madness-laced winds. Creatures caught in the gale take 4d6 points of bludgeoning damage and 4d6 points of cold damage (Reflex DC 19 half). Creatures damaged by the gale must also succeed at a DC 19 Will saving throw or be confused for 1 round. The confusion is a sonic, mind-affecting, compulsion effect. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Eavesdropper's Veil (Su) A sishkanset can use its *detect thoughts* spell-like ability on any creature within 1 mile to which it has line of effect. Additionally, using *detect thoughts* or its whispering persecution ability does not end the sishkanset's invisibility.

Insidious Winds (Su) A sishkanset's presence suffuses local winds, causing natural light winds within 5 miles of the sishkanset to increase to moderate (11–20 mph).

Moderate or greater wind forces are unaffected. If the sishkanset is destroyed, natural wind conditions return within 1 hour.

Whispering Persecution (Su) Sishkansets temporarily relieve their anguish by driving others to madness. As a full-round action, a sishkanset can wrap susurrating currents of ethereal wind around a creature within 5 miles to which it has line of effect. The currents deliver maddening ramblings audible only to the target creature, and the sishkanset must maintain the currents by remaining within 5 miles of the target and concentrating for 1 minute each day. After every 24 hours that a creature is the target of this ability, it must succeed at a DC 19 Will saving throw or take 1d3 points of Wisdom damage. Damage caused in this way cannot reduce a creature's Wisdom score below 1. A sishkanset can affect only one creature at a time with whispering persecution. This is a sonic, mind-affecting, curse effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Creatures able to see invisible or ethereal objects perceive the currents as translucent gray threads that ultimately lead to the sishkanset.

Formed from the fabric of the Ethereal Plane, sishkansets are incorporeal reflections of mortal psyches. Born of the disorientation and despair of souls whose mortal vessels died isolated and buffeted by wilderness winds, sishkansets haunt sparsely settled frontiers. They wield the same winds that tormented their progenitors in their final moments; a sishkanset's presence disrupts the atmosphere for miles around, and though the natural winds they stoke are not inherently dangerous, they are maddeningly constant.

Sishkansets sift through mortal thoughts in the hope of reassembling their own fragmented personalities, but their fundamentally incomplete nature makes this an unattainable goal. When a sishkanset's suffering becomes overwhelming, it visits its condition on others, slowly driving its victims insane through unending wind and discordant whispers.

A sishkanset takes the form of an eerily tall and ghostly humanoid with dozens of tendrils trailing from the back of its head and shoulders. These tendrils reach into the Ethereal Plane, spreading the sishkanset's presence through the local atmosphere. A sishkanset's features are indistinct, but its elongated form often resembles the individual whose traveling soul incited the creature's formation from the Ethereal Plane.

A sishkanset is about 8 feet tall and unnaturally thin.

ECOLOGY

Sishkansets' progenitors are those who perish in the wilderness, lost and utterly alone with only endless, mocking winds to usher their spirits from their bodies. Such souls carry enough despair that their passage through the Ethereal Plane leaves a psychic impression. Powerful negative emotions whip the plane's mutable

substance into a roiling frenzy that eventually coalesces into a sishkanset. The creature maintains only a fraction of the mortal being's personality, culled from its last moments of disorientation, isolation, and desperate search for comfort and safety. The creature finds itself inexorably drawn to the Material Plane, where it seeks what its progenitor could not find in life.

Sishkansets most often dwell in sparsely populated frontier areas, border towns, and isolated homesteads. They are drawn toward landmarks that could have guided their progenitors to safety, twining their unnaturally tall frames around flagpoles, steeples, weather vanes, and other high places that allow an unfettered view of their surroundings. From such heights, they reach along the unnatural air currents they produce to sieve the minds of passersby.

A sishkanset clutches the emotions it pulls from these studied thoughts, hoping to fill the gaps in its persona, but its fundamentally fragmented nature means it will never achieve this goal. Over time, these tantalizing glimpses of mortal life drive the creature to frustrated despair. It relieves this torment by visiting its condition on others, wrapping its victims in winds that carry its anguished ramblings. Driving an individual to insanity soothes the sishkanset for a time, but its sense of fulfillment eventually fades.

Sishkansets fly against their assailants when aggressively confronted, wreathing themselves in restless currents and disrupting their opponents' minds with mental assaults and disorienting blasts of icy wind. Sishkansets that are banished rather than physically destroyed develop a focused hatred of their banishers. Sishkansets lack any inherent means of traversing planar boundaries, but they wait, howling their wrath into the void, until an unwitting extradimensional traveler creates a means by which the sishkansets can return to the Material Plane and pursue their targets.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Sishkansets are an infrequent menace and are often mistaken for incorporeal undead. They enter a keening frenzy in response to attempts to banish them with positive energy or similar means—such displays of faith are a reminder of mortal experiences forever lost.

Though their minds are fractured and their trains of thought mercurial, sishkansets are reasonably intelligent. Their fruitless attempts to fulfill themselves with the thoughts of others means they know much about the communities they haunt. Sishkansets relieved by recently driving a victim insane can

sometimes even be engaged in conversation. Their erratic desires often include requests for mortals to describe their lives and feelings. Individuals who are able to parse these demands from a sishkanset's ceaseless, whispering stream of consciousness and indulge the creature can sometimes ask for information in return, though they are wise to leave before the sishkanset fixates on them.

Objects bearing strong emotional impressions intrigue sishkansets. They hover over the psychically charged items, rambling about the memento's past like an academy's lecturer. Eventually, however, the creatures' inability to interact with objects or incorporate the emotions they store rekindles their existential anguish.



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VORVORAK

A crocodilian head surmounts this creature's draconic body. Thick scales cover its mottled brown and green hide, and a muscular tail sways menacingly behind it.

VORVORAK

CR 10



XP 9,600

N Huge magical beast

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

Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 22 (+2 Dex, +14 natural, -2 size)

hp 123 (13d10+52)

Fort +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +9; +4 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities confident; **Immune** poison; **SR** 21

OFFENSE

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

Melee bite +18 (2d6+7), 2 claws +18 (1d8+7), tail slap +16 (2d6+3)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks poison spit (60-ft. line, 8d8 plus poison, DC 20), sweeping tail

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +17)

At will—*decrepit disguise*^{OA} (DC 15), *major image* (DC 17), *quintessence*^{OA} (DC 15)

3/day—*control water*, *fog cloud*, *shadow conjuration* (DC 18)

1/day—*mirage arcana* (DC 19), *shadow evocation* (DC 19)

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 14, **Con** 19, **Int** 13, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 34 (38 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Casting, Flanking Foil^{UC}, Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack

Skills Climb +25, Intimidate +16, Perception +13, Stealth +10 (+18 in mud or water), Swim +25; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in mud or water

Languages Common (can't speak)

SQ canal walker, hold breath

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate plains or marshes

Organization solitary

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Canal Walker (Ex) A vorvorak ignores difficult terrain caused by deep or shallow bogs, and the DCs of its Acrobatics and Stealth checks are not increased for being in a bog.

Confident (Ex) A vorvorak is self-assured in its ability to take on any foe. It gains a +4 bonus on saving throws against fear effects.

Poison (Ex) *Poisonous Bile*: Spit—contact; save Fort DC 20; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d4 Str damage and 1d4 Dex damage; cure 1 save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Poison Spit (Ex) As a standard action usable every 1d4 rounds, a vorvorak can expel a stream of poisonous water

in a 60-foot line, dealing 8d8 points of bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 20 half) to creatures in the area and exposing them to the vorvorak's poison. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Sweeping Tail (Ex) A vorvorak's tail seems to have a mind of its own. If a vorvorak does not take a full-round action on its turn, it can make a tail slap attack as a swift action. In addition, the vorvorak can make one extra attack of opportunity each round, but this extra attack must be its tail slap. It can make this additional attack of opportunity (but not its normal attack of opportunity) even when flat-footed.

Vorvoraks are large, intelligent crocodilians with shadowy magical powers. These reclusive creatures most often make their lairs in the abandoned canals that crisscross the Taldan plains. More commonly known as "canal dragons" or "brown dragons," vorvoraks are unrelated to true dragons and lack the many abilities and resistances of those more famous creatures. Even so, vorvoraks present a danger to those who intrude upon their claimed territories.

A vorvorak's body is roughly the shape of a dragon, while its head is that of a crocodile. What can appear at first to be wings on its back are in fact a pair of hard fins. A vorvorak's scales are usually muddy brown in color, occasionally accented with moss-green spots or stripes.

An average vorvorak is 24 feet long from nose to tail and weighs around 3,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

The systematic extermination of nearly all of Taldor's drakes and dragons following the years of brutal draconic attacks known as the Dragon Plague left a gap in the region's ecosystem; in the roughly thousand years since, vorvoraks have evolved to fill that niche. Though vorvoraks descended from crocodiles native to the region, magical contamination has both accelerated the species' development and granted its members uncanny abilities. At the height of the Taldan Empire, magic was used both to beautify canals and to control and protect the water within them. Sages speculate that when remote canals were later abandoned, decaying magic leached into the water, where it was absorbed by the vorvoraks' predecessors. After many generations of exposure, the theory goes, vorvoraks developed magical powers—and the intelligence to control them.

A vorvorak has many superficial features of a crocodile, but also has a thick serpentine neck and elongated limbs that end in prehensile claws. Two fins extend from its back; though easily mistaken for wings at a distance, these are in fact enlarged scutes (akin to the bony upper scales of crocodiles). The purpose of these fins is unclear, but they may have evolved as armor or to regulate heat. The vorvorak's dull brown coloring allows the creature to better hide in its

preferred habitat and ambush prey. Patches of green sometimes add to its disguise. Each vorvorak's unique pattern helps differentiate individuals.

Vorvoraks exert power over the water around them, allowing them to raise or lower its level, produce mist, and, most impressively, eject large quantities of water mixed with their own poisonous bile. Vorvoraks also seem to demonstrate mastery of multiple manifestations of magic—such as altering matter, summoning creatures, and creating explosions of energy—but these abilities are mere illusions, containing the barest shadow of reality. Vorvoraks use their magic to attract prey, conceal their lairs, and deter trespassers in their territory. Though these shadowy illusions have a chance of damaging opponents in combat, they more often serve as distractions that allow vorvoraks to position themselves for full attacks.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Vorvoraks are solitary hunters, most active at dawn and dusk. Though generally associated with Taldor's disused canal system, a few make their lairs in natural gullies. A natural or burrowed niche provides the beasts a place to sleep and store treasure. Often the entrances to vorvoraks' lairs are partially submerged; otherwise, a vorvorak hides the entrance with an illusion when it leaves to hunt. Vorvoraks feed mostly on creatures that live in or near canals, as well as the occasional domestic animal that wanders into their range. Its few sentient victims tend to be unlucky lost travelers who attempt to follow the old canals back to civilization.

Like dragons, vorvoraks line their lairs with treasures. In addition to coins and jewels taken from humanoid victims, vorvorak hoards are likely to contain common artifacts of imperial Taldor. These treasures may come from nearby ruins of abandoned estates, but just as often the beasts find them buried in the sediment at the bottom of a canal. Vorvoraks keep even broken or tarnished treasures, using illusions to make these items appear new.

When vorvoraks meet, it's usually to fight over territory. The only time the creatures seek each other out is when driven to mate, which occurs only once or twice per decade, usually after a particularly heavy rain. The pair stays together only long enough

to conceive, after which the female lays her eggs in the deepest water in her territory. Young vorvoraks that survive their first 2 or 3 years are "encouraged" to find their own territory as soon as their mother's hunger or jealousy overcomes her maternal instincts.

Though they avoid active waterways, vorvoraks occasionally clash with humanoids. This usually occurs when a young vorvorak seeking territory moves too close to a civilized area or when enterprising Taldans attempt to reclaim lands around abandoned canals. In the centuries since the Dragon Plague, few Taldans have seen a true dragon, and they could easily mistake a vorvorak for one. Would-be dragon slayers, seeking to emulate the heroes of old, hunt vorvoraks for glory and treasure. A common (and likely apocryphal) story tells of simple villagers who mistook a vorvorak for a spawn of the Tarrasque—until a traveling priest subdued the monster and led it into the town square. Ashamed of their terrible judgment and cowardice, the villagers soon converted to the priest's religion (which varies according to the story's teller).



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CITY IN THE LION'S EYE

By Mikko Kallio

Princess Eutropia's rival for the throne of Taldor plans to plunge the nation into war to rally the people behind his cause, threatening to kill untold thousands in a battle not for ideals but for pure vanity. From the fortress-city of Zimar, General Pythareus commands not only the overwhelming army of Taldor but also one of the most ruthless spymasters the world has ever known. Even with the legendary Lion Blades beside them, can the PCs hope to outmaneuver a faceless conspiracy and end the War for the Crown once and for all, or will Taldor descend once more into a thousand-year orgy of violence?

ZIMAR GAZETTEER

By Mikko Kallio

Zimar, the Aegis of Taldor, stands at the nation's border with Qadira, its thick walls looming above the Jalrune River. In this in-depth gazetteer, learn of the long and troubled history of this strategically vital city, explore its marbled streets and opulent plazas, and experience adventure from the heights of the House of Gold to the dank chambers of the Undercity.

RAKSHASA THREATS

By Eleanor Ferron

Fiendish masters of manipulation, rakshasas spin out their evil schemes over many lifetimes. Learn the secrets and plots of rakshasas across Golarion, and meet a rakshasa whose evil plans stretch deep into the night sky.

LION BLADES

By Liz Smith

The Lion Blades serve as Taldor's secret police and intelligence community. This article presents the history and aims of this shadowy organization, exposes some of its secret operations inside and outside of Taldor, and shines a light on the skills these spymasters learn.

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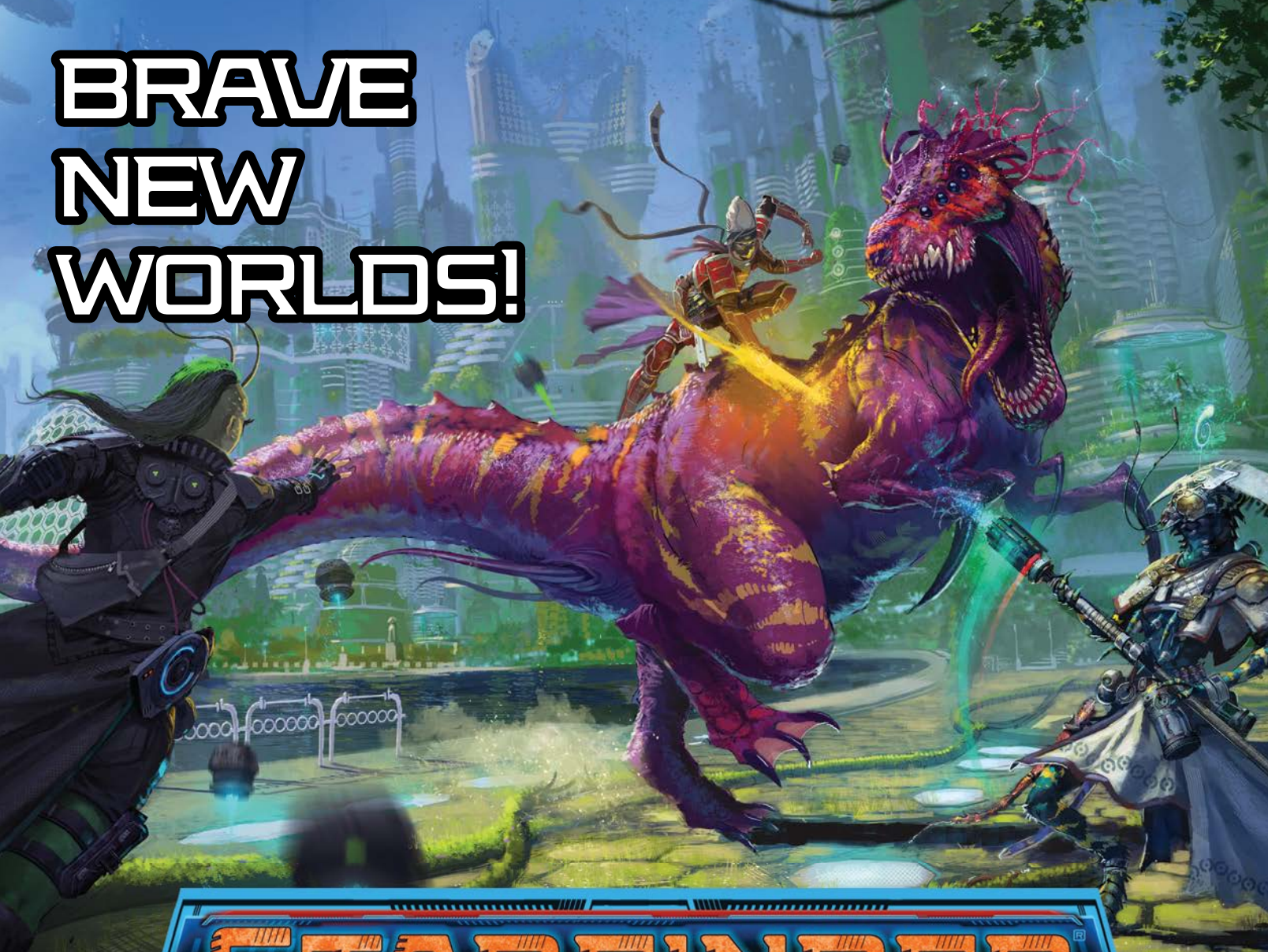
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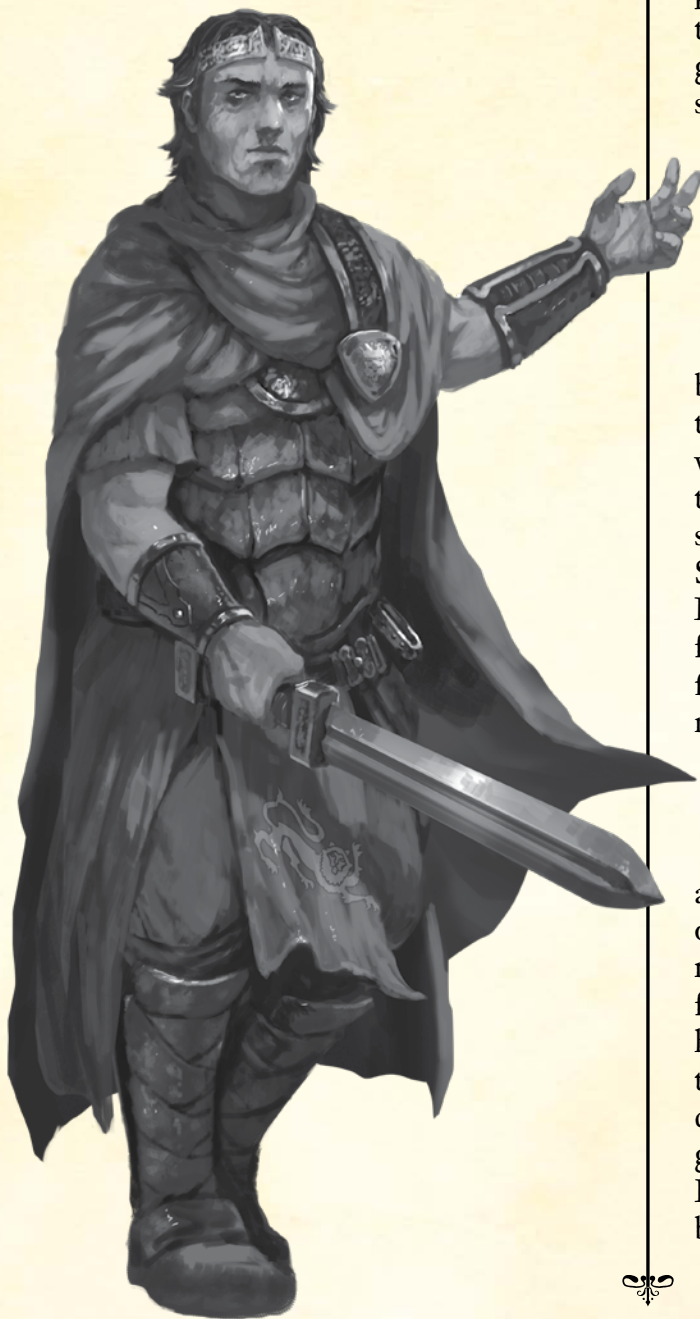
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TALDARIS

BORN 1 ABADIUS, -1312 AR;
CORONATED 13 ROVA, -1295 AR;
PERISHED 31 KUTHONA, -1144 AR

Much ado has been made over the life and accomplishments of our founder, the glorious First Emperor Taldaris of Oppara, who bound together frightened city-states into an indomitable empire. Legends, parables, and rumors of his heroic feats abound, and as Grand Prince Taldaris was an honorable man, we can only assume they



are all true. Taldor would not exist without the courage, integrity, and tactical genius of this extraordinary man, and so the least debt historians can reasonably owe him is benefit of the doubt on those stories surrounding and supporting his glory.

Taldaris's parentage remains unknown, but it is almost certainly divine. As a foundling raised by lions, Taldaris grew up to be a strong and savage survivor. Accounts suggest he beheaded a cockatrice that threatened his pride while he was still in swaddling clothes; this astonishing feat set the stage for a life of great deeds. When soldiers from the city-state of Oppara found the wild boy, they adopted him into their unit and taught him of politics and metalwork. Such was his ferocity and insight that he had risen to the rank of commander by the time the soldiers returned to Oppara.

Taldaris completed 12 great challenges on behalf of his adopted city—including hunting the deadly Sun Lion, the grogrisant—and was crowned Grand Prince of Oppara. From this seat of power, he united the Azlanti city-states lining the eastern shores of the Inner Sea to form the Principalities of Taldaris. In the process he claimed seven wives and four husbands, from whom he sired the first noble lines of Taldor, including—naturally—the resplendent Stavian line, which traces its ancestry directly back to our singular founder.

Grand Prince Taldaris lived to a venerable age, in an era long before the grand princes of Taldor routinely extended their lives by means of the wondrous sun orchid elixir, further pointing toward a potentially divine heritage. He passed away only after saving the people of Golsifar from the terrible dragon Verksaris the Kingeater, from whose gullet he pulled the gold used to forge the Primogen Crown, finally succumbing to the beast's legendary venom after 3 days.



THE WORST IN OTHERS

Dark shadows haunt the trade city of Yanmass, spreading chaos even as the city's leaders debate which royal heir to support in the growing civil war. Their soldiers are vanishing, bandits attack without fear, and a mysterious plague of nightmares rattles the populace—are these troubles random, or part of a larger conspiracy? And what role do the mysterious Twilight Child and the cultlike following he has attracted play in the chaos?

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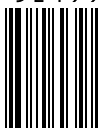
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