RETURN TO FREEPORT Part Two: The Abyssinial Chain

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silent threat grows in Freeport's streets, even as the city's newest heroes bring the terror of the Del Brine Witch to an end; a threat that spins many symptoms from its black and cancerous heart. One of the pirate city's own leaders, Captain Nathan Grymes, brings Freeport ever-closer to war, lining his pockets even as he plans for eventual invasion by the foreign power Mazin. This traitorous member of the Captains' Council first began meeting with his foreign coconspirators in the hidden city of Hangnail, a pirate's port in the Serpent's Teeth concealed by a powerful curse. While Grymes knew his ultimate goal-the usurpation of Freeport and his absolute rule of the city as a client state of Mazinthe exact process of wide-scale overthrow remained still eluded him. Luckily for his plans, his frequent visits to Hangnail introduced him to the local entrepreneur known as Miss Vee.

Born Veerona Salvinue, Vee was a daughter of the elven royalty who ruled the city-state of Silverus until its merchant princes overthrew the city twenty years ago. Most of the ruling powers were put to death in the bloody conquest, but a rare few were mutilated and cast out into the world as a grim reminder to any who opposed the merchant princes' new rule. Veerone's arms and legs were severed, leaving her in a nearhelpless state, with only a handful of loyal retainers

to crew her fleeing vessel as they escaped the city by night. Port after port refused to let the refugees dock, afraid of jeopardizing their trade relationship with Silverus, and after a decade of sailing Veerona's ship and three remaining servants found themselves in the near-mythical port of Hangnail. The bright-eyed young elf had grown bitter and hard in her ten years of exile, convinced it was her family's weakness and naïveté that allowed them to be so casually swept aside. In Hangnail she found similar weakness; a population of strong arms or strong backs who lacked ambition and will to seize what they most desired. Vee's bodyguard introduced her to a brutal chirurgeon named Chirdus, an exile from Mazin. Chirdus grafted mechanical replacement limbs into her wounded body, restoring Vee's mobility at the cost of constant pain-a truth of life Miss Vee has come to accept. With harsh words, keen social insight, and boundless will, she rallied degenerates to her side and whipped them into a serviceable mercenary company, eventually forming a criminal empire by slyly pitting the port's various criminal organizations and pirate crews against one another.

The subtle structure of Miss Vee's gangs—the cellbased system that kept any minions from understanding, or endangering, the larger organization, fascinated Grymes, and he recruited Miss Vee to help establish his own criminal operations in Freeport. Vee settled on forming a slaving ring-the endeavors' profits would raise foreign money to fund Grymes' other efforts, and would ensure their victims were removed from Freeport entirely. Calling their test organization the Abyssinial Chain, Miss Vee quietly recruited three of Freeport's most monstrous gangs-the mermaid Mollycoddles, the hobgoblin Cockspurs, and the choker family called the Candy Men-and swayed them with her personal philosophy of willpower. She convinced them that their lives were strained not because the ruling classes of Freeport hated and feared them, but because Freeport more readily accepted orcs, half-orcs, and similar peoples. Now firmly entrenched and built from a network of gangs, fleshpeddlers, and nightmarish beasts largely unaware of one another, the Abyssinial Chain provides a steady stream of income to Grymes with virtually no oversight.

In the past two years, Grymes has established additional gangs of slavers using Miss Vee's model, though the Abyssinial Chain remains the largest and best-organized. As a secondary source of income, disrupting the Chain would hardly cripple Grymes' plans or slow the Mazin invasion, but battling against it opens up the PCs' eyes to the far larger conspiracy already eating away at Freeport's rotten underbelly, and will make a difference in the lives of some of Freeport's lowest residents.

Part I

THOSE NOT MISSEP

With the Brine Witch slain and the PCs finally able to rest and give some peace of mind to the abominable creature's victims, they begin to earn a reputation in Freeport as problem solvers and champions of the common folk. With this smattering of fame to spread their names, the PCs attract the attention of a wealthy patron seeking her missing brother, and ultimately find themselves with far more missing persons on their hands than the Brine Witch ever could have killed.

The course of events in **Part I** and **Part II** are left somewhat vague, allowing GMs to tailor the experience to each group's needs and interests, though a few events do precede others. Abigayle Wynt knows nothing of the heroes' exploits until she reads about them in the paper, and so **Event B** won't take place until the PCs finish **Event A**. Similarly, the PCs are unlikely to approach any of the gangs in **Part II**—even if they learn about their kidnapping schemes—until contracted to save Jakob. Miss Vee won't send thugs to shut down any investigations (**Event I**) until the PCs have already begun asking questions (completing at least two of **Events D**, **E**, **F**, or **G**) or attack one of her gangs. And finally, Captain Grymes himself won't dispatch the pairaka Carmayne until the PCs have seriously impacted his slaver networks by taking down at least three of the Abyssinial Chain's gangs.

EVENT A

A BRUSH WITH FAME

LOCATION: Anywhere

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

With the Brine Witch slain and that unpleasantness behind you, life has slowly begun to return to normal. But nothing travels faster through Freeport than rumors. Casual onlookers crane their necks on the street when you pass, shopkeepers seem to smile extra wide when you drop in, and a small gang of urchins have taken to following your travels through the city streets, mimicking the way you stand and alternately sniggering or staring slackjawed at your every new activity.

Despite the people you saved and the bodies you counted, questions remain. Far more missing person posters crowd the city's notice boards than can be counted among the Brine Witch's victims, and more have disappeared since dispatching the monster, though no new curses have materialized. And for every twenty or so glad-hands eager to make your newly-renowned acquaintance, one passerby eyes you with suspicion from the hustle and bustle of Freeport's streets.

Days after the heroes' encounter with the aghash div once they've had adequate time to rest, sell treasure, make any major purchases, and possibly test the limits of their new status-a handsome enough man with dark, receding hair approaches them during their daily routine, introducing himself as Maldemer Drum (NG male human expert 4), field reporter for Freeport's local newspaper, The Shipping News. Maldemer will play a larger role in Part Four: The Freebooter's City, but for now this serves as a quick introduction to the character and grants all the heroes a chance to review their adventures up until this point. Maldemer believes the rest of Freeport, beyond the docks, would be interested in the player characters' victory, and invites them to his office (really just an overcrowded desk in the Shipping News' writers' pen) or the tavern of their choice to recount their adventures.

Allow the group to answer the following questions, in whatever tone or level of honesty they feel appropriate:



Who are you? When did you become aware of the Brine Witch's abductions? Why did you decide to become involved? What dangers have you faced? What was your impression of the Brine Witch? Is Freeport safe from this sort of supernatural threat?

Once they've finished answering his questions, Maldemer thanks them for their time, offers to pay for any drinks they've consumed, and hurries off to finalize his notes and begin typesetting. The heroes' story appears the next day.

Development Once the story runs, the PCs accumulated fame is enough to earn them either a free meal at the restaurant of their choice, or a 20% discount on a single, major purchase from a shop, artist, or trader within the city. Once per week, a hero can exploit their notoriety to gain a +2 circumstance bonus on a single Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check anywhere in Freeport.

Story Award Award each player who speaks to Maldemar 200 XP.

EVENT B

MEETING MISS WYNT

LOCATION: Anywhere

The day after their story runs in *The Shipping News*, the PCs are approached in their place of business or preferred watering whole by a tawny-haired and longlimbed young woman of obvious wealth. If they have taken to hanging out at the Torchlight Academy (run by Lady Jane, who hired them in *Curse of the Brine Witch* adventure) or Kafe Ilkin (*FCA* p.127) (the establishment run by by Arzu,m who the PCs rescued in *Curse of the Brine Witch* adventure), this encounter may occur there, or a message may be sent there to arrange for a meeting in some other public place.

She politely introduces herself as Abigayle Wynt; a successful DC 15 Knowledge (nobility) or DC 17 Knowledge (local) check reveals that she is the daughter of Myrtle Whitesmith—captain of the Bellweather Trading Company—and Martimus Wynt—one of the

WHO ABPUGTED JAKOB WYNT?

This adventure leaves the exact identity of the gang who kidnapped Jakob Wynt deliberately vague. He could just as easily have been nabbed off the docks by the Mollycoddles, earned an excessive debt to the Cockspurs, or been randomly abducted by the Candy Men in their nightly skirmishes. Not assigning him a pre-planned kidnapper prevents characters from investigating one line of inquiry, discovering the gang's involvement, and making a bee-line to the end of the adventure only to be frustrated when they lack enough information to locate the Abyssinial Chain's hideout. Instead, PCs must follow up on multiple rumors of strange gangs kidnapping orcs, half-orcs and other undesirables before learning enough to proceed.

GMs are welcome to decide for certain which gang kidnapped Jakob, and seed subtle clues into the PCs' investigations, or simply announce that the last gang the PCs break up were the unfortunate half-orc's kidnappers, but ultimately the reveal is moot, as Jakob has already been handed off to the Abyssinial Chain (see Part Three).

Merchant District's more bombastic entrepreneurs and, while not a true noble, her family is wealthy enough to make that fact a mere matter of semantics. Appearing distraught, she asks after the people the PCs saved from the Brine Witch's lair, and of the bodies they found, asking very pointed questions about race, gender, and physical features, appearing disappointed regardless what the adventurers tell her.

If pressed, or once Abigayle runs out of questions, she finally sighs and admits she is looking for her brother, a roguishly handsome half-orc named Jakob. She had hoped to discover his fate after reading of the PCs' exploits in the paper, as his vanishing coincided with the Brine Witch's abductions, but the PCs can confirm he was not among the div's victims. Hopeful that such resourceful individuals can aid her, Abigayle offers the group a reward of 1,000 gp apiece for any information on the whereabouts of her brother, and half again as much for his safe return. A successful DC 18 Bluff or Diplomacy check can persuade her to increase her reward to 1,500 gp each if Jakob is returned alive, and she promises to reimburse the PCs for any expenses they incur from paying bribes or contracting any additional professional services. While her family is wealthy, Abigayle is still young and controls relatively little of that wealth-selling off much of her jewelry to fund this rescue-and can't increase her reward much beyond that.

Can you describe your brother?

"He is a tall fellow, just over six feet in height, with thick, dark brown hair and a sallow complexion. Handsome around the eyes, and strong-jawed, and a mole on his left cheek. He has a noticeable bit of orcish blood, but hardly in a vulgar way—smallish tusks and none of those awful piercings and tattoos."

Your brother is a half-orc?

"Well, a quarter-orc, yes. Father is... an adventurous sort. And Mother is understanding of his indiscretions."

Shouldn't your parents be hiring someone to find him?

"I don't believe they will. Mother and father don't exactly hate Jakob, but he's far from their dearest child. And he's always been largely self-sufficient. They think he's gone on another of his journeys of self discovery, and will return home in a few weeks, but he always tells me when he'll be away, and sends me letters to let me know he's safe. I've not heard from him in over a week now."

Are you and Jakob close?

"Yes. I'm a quiet sort, so father could never relate to me, and I get rather seasick, so mother was at a loss for how to raise me. My other brothers get on well with one parent or the other, and so I always sort of fell into the shadows and passed my days reading. But Jakob liked to read, too. We'd talk about books and write our own stories ever since we were children. He's the closest family and dearest friend I have. I'm terribly worried about him."

Where was the last place you saw Jakob?

"In our home, in the Merchant District. He was preparing to go out, but wasn't dressed for travelling. He was wearing commoner's cloth—he'd been doing that a lot lately, whenever he wanted to 'get in touch with his roots,' as he'd say. He'd go out to the Docks, and out the Bloodsalt to meet other orcs and half-orcs. He always worried his comfortable life insulated him from 'his people,' and never seemed content when I'd tell him his family were as much his people as any strangers. He'd go to a half-dozen

Part Two

| FREEPORT RUMORS | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Diplomacy Result | Information | | | | |
| 10+ | Everyone seems to have a friend-of-a-friend who's vanished in the past few months. Most everyone blames the Brine Witch, but at least a handful of vanishings have occurred since the Witch's defeat. And certainly the PCs know the Brine Witch never took nearly as many victims as are being reported now. | | | | |
| 15+ | Every district has seen some disappearances, but most of the missing seem to hail from the Docks, Scurvytown and Bloodsalt, and the majority appear to be orcs, half-orcs, island trolls, and transients of various races. | | | | |
| 20+ | At least a few witnesses report companions literally vanishing while their backs are turned. These curious disappearances always occur at night, and always near Slippery Hitch, the curious tangle of streets, alleys, and shops found where the Eastern District, Scurvytown, and the Docks all meet. | | | | |
| 25+ | Slippery Hitch is known to be jinxed, between these strange vanishings and the predations of a nighttime strangler who murdered victims by night in the area several years ago, always leaving the smell of licorice root on the corpses of young women he killed. | | | | |
| Knowledge (local) Result | Information | | | | |
| 10+ | More and more people, especially the poor, worry about missing friends and loved ones lately. | | | | |
| 15+ | Other than the vanishings, crime hasn't seen any drastic shifts. There doesn't seem to be a gang war or anything else to explain the disappearance of hundreds of people over the past year or so. | | | | |
| 20+ | Dockworkers are blaming a siren, whose singing lures the drunk and foolish out to sea after sunset most nights up and down the water's edge. | | | | |
| 25+ | Mermaids—beautiful young women with fish tails—have also been seen spending time around the Docks, unusual for the normally reclusive creatures, and seem to move constantly, likely to avoid whatever has been snatching sailors and carpenters by night. | | | | |
| | | | | | |

different places around the Docks, but he always liked the same establishment in Bloodsalt: an unsavory drinking hall called Krom's Throat."

Do your parents have any enemies that might have done this?

"I don't think so. I mean, rather, they have enemies, but I don't think anyone sees Jakob as valuable enough to ransom."

Does Jakob have any enemies?

"I don't believe so. He likes to gamble on occasion, and he has been in and out with a few odd religions, but I don't think he's acquired any genuine enemies from those bad decisions. At least, he's never mentioned any enemies to me."

Abigayle doesn't know anything more than she shared with the PCs, and only wants he brother returned home safely. If they agree top take the job, she asks them to give her daily updates, and offers to pay for any couriers they use to deliver messages to her family home.

Story Award If PCs hear Abigayle out and agree to find her missing brother, award them 200 XP each.

EVENT C

FREEPORT RUMORS

LOCATION: Anywere

Even without political connections or searching for Jakob Wynt, PCs should notice something amiss. Notice boards across the Docks, Bloodsalt, Scurvytown, and even the Eastern District are crowded with missing person posters far more than normal even for a violent, transient city like Freeport. And certainly far more than were accounted for in the Brine Witch's lair. PCs may attempt a Diplomacy check to gather information, or make Knowledge (local) checks to learn more. Asking specifically after Jakob Wynt, or more generally after any well-dressed half-orcs provides few valuable clues. A successful DC 18 Diplomacy check to gather information reveals reports of a man fitting his description in the Merchant District near his home, as well as Bloodsalt, the Docks, Scurvytown, or the Eastern District over a week ago, but nothing recent.

Story Award If the PCs learn any leads from listening to word on the street, award them each 150 XP.

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EVENT D

Part Two

THE BLACK SANDS

LOCATION: The Docks

If the adventurers decide to follow up on the strange, black sands they discovered in the Chambers Asylum and the Brine Witch's mansion, their investigations are stymied by the obscurity of the substance. (Even if the PCs didn't take notice of the black sand in the previous adventure, it's sure to be mentioned if they renew their investigation of local disappearances.)

Few of Freeport's sages or wizards are familiar with the mysterious extraplanar black desert from which the sands hail, or the creatures they summon. PCs may spend a day cajoling, questioning, and bribing various magicusers in the city, and with a successful DC 21 Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Knowledge (arcane) check, they uncover the name **Miliander Savagash** (*N female half-elf wizard 3*), reputedly the only other person in Freeport to buy, sell, or otherwise research the black sands.

Already a little unbalanced, Savagash keeps a small collection of the sand—carefully divided among dozens of glass vials and bottles around her shop, and considers the study of the strange, extradimensional grit to be her specialty. She also sells a variety of magic potions and powders—Savagash keeps any potion, dust, or elixir worth 1,200gp or less on-hand, or else can manufacture or procure it within a few days. She offers consultations for a modest fee of 10gp, and for a larger fee, is willing to examine a sample the PCs provide—a process requiring several days' research and experimentation—and determine exactly where and when the div tied to their sample crossed over into the material plane.

If the PCs pay her consultation fee, the pudgy half-elf can answer the following questions. Much of this is revised from **Curse of the Brine Witch**, and stated from a wizard's perspective rather than Arzu's native folktales):

What is this sand?

"It's extradimensional grit from the Bleeding Oasis home of the divs. It is ruination made manifest, which drags down the lives of those who touch it, and in large quantities it can call those wretched outsiders into our world."

What are divs?

"Sometimes called the Outcast Ones, they're corrupt spirits of ruin and destruction. Originally genies—spirits of creation and power—divs fell eons ago, transforming into debased monsters of decay and corruption. They tore down their own world long ago, grinding their marvelous wonders into an endless sea of featureless, black dust. Unlike devils or demons, they were never mortal nor angels, and understand nothing of mortal needs or wants. Their presence drives a wedge between beating hearts and that for which they beat."

Why was there a div in Freeport?

CR4

"Hard to say. Divs are stubborn creatures, reluctant to leave their trackless home, but eager to ruin the lives of mortals. Most would prefer to drag a mortal soul back to the Bleeding Oasis rather than operate here. It may have been conjured by this abundance of black sand and found itself unable to return, but more likely some summoner or unnatural force bound it to Freeport or set it upon its path."

How did this black sand get to Freeport?

"I don't know. Those whose lives have been touched by a div sometimes weep or cough up more sand as their souls slowly erode, but a div must come to our world through the sands first, before it can spread such misery. If you leave me a sample, I can spend a few days examining and divining to learn where and when the div tied to these sands first crossed over into our world. For a paltry fee, of course."

If the PCs leave a sample of the black sand recovered from any of the Brine Witch's crimes, Savagash asks them to return in three to five days with 150gp to pay for her services.

Creature Should the PCs leave any of their own black sand behind to be examined, Savagash spends the first two days studying the strange properties of the sand and tracing it back to Captain Grymes' *black hourglass*, though many of the artifact's unusual properties confound her.

Sadly, as powerful a div as the Brine Witch cannot be permanently slain without leaving something behind, and in this case the div imprinted a powerful impression of aghash upon its remains. Surrounded by Savagash's own stores of sand for days on end, the remains eventually call out to the scattered dust while the wizard sleeps, forming a new aghash div. This newborn div slays the half-elf and claims her shop as its new lair, attacking anyone who enters (including the PCs, when they return to learn the results of Savagash's research).

AGHASH DIV: hp 42 (see Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3)

Development Though Meliander Savagash was slain by the aghash, her notes remain, and reveal that the Brine Witch was originally called the to Prime Material plane somewhere within Freeport itself, but she was unable to trace where. In the margins of her notes, the simple notation "Hourglass?" is underlined several times.

Treasure Left behind in Meliander's shop after her death is much of her stock not destroyed by the div, including dozens of powdered minerals. The more valuable remains include a small keg of powdered silver (350 gp), a vial of powdered rubies (1,000 gp), a six bags containing granite and diamond dust (250 gp each). Hidden in a false book (Perception DC 20) are her magical stocks: a bag of *dust of dryness*, two bags of *dust of illusion*, and three bags of *dust of tracelessness*.

Story Award Should the PCs learn anything valuable from Savagash or her notes, award them 150 XP each.

EVENT E

CR3

KROM'S THROAT

LOCATION: Bloodsalt

If the PCs choose to investigate Krom's Throat, one of Jakob Wynt's occasional watering holes, read or paraphrase the following:

The stink of stale sweat and rotting food threaten to strangle you within this smoky, dirt-floored tavern. Towering patrons—as much hair as flesh—crowd, threaten, and punch each other, competing for spots at the dripping beer spigots or the trough filled with squirming, apparently-edible foodstuffs. No friendly faces greet your arrival.

Krom's Throat is a rough and rough-hewn tavern exclusively for orc-blooded clientele on the southern border of Bloodsalt, and was among the favorite destinations for Jakob Wynt as he sought to understand his little-examined "savage side." He visited the bar at least twice a month to learn how most orcs in Freeport live, hoping he'd eventually work up the nerve to get into a fight. The rest of the patrons came to see the small, well-groomed half-orc as a joke and begrudging pet, shoving him to and fro alongside well-intentioned (and sometimes less well-intentioned) insults and bruises, so long as he knew his place and never tried to muscle in for a drink. From here, he also explored the rest of Bloodsalt.

PCs can convince a staff member or regular to answer a few questions about Jakob with a successful DC 17 Intimidate or DC 22 Diplomacy check. Non-orcs take a -5 circumstance penalty to any Charisma-based skill checks inside Krom's Throat. A failed check earns them a punch in the eye (1d3+3 nonlethal damage) and may escalate to further violence (see creatures, below).

Have you seen Jakob Wynt?

"Softie? Yeah, comes in once or twice a month stinkin' of soap and wearing slummer clothes he probably bought just for the occasion. When he first started showin' up, everyone thought he was a human in make-up, or maybe some crummy spell, and gave him a lot of pain for it. But nah, legit half-orc. Ain't seen him in a week."

Did he have any enemies?

"Well he sure as shit didn't have any friends! But nah, nobody here'd mess with Softie. He knew his place. Kept quiet. Very respectful to his betters. Some of us would shake him down for a few coins every time he came in, but he knew it was all funnin'."

Do you know where Jakob is now?

"Dunno. Came in here a week or so back. Spent a few hours over in his corner, takin' notes. Left a little after midnight sayin' how he was gonna 'explore,' like Bloodsalt is a damn jungle or something. He got to talkin' with Bluut about cockfighting and seemed excited, but I don't think even he'd be dumb enough to wander over to Bog Street." At the mention of Bog Street, the speaker and every orc within earshot spits on the floor.

What's Bog Street?

"Bog Street's where most of the hobgoblins kill time. Or live, if you consider them alive, sniveling little simps. One of the gangs out there, the Cockspurs, runs a pretty big cockfighting ring. They do dogs on the weekends, but mostly it's these mean, nasty birds they probably breed from dinosaurs in the jungles. Even a few of the dumber orcs will show up for the fights, but people who end up owing them too much coin bettin' on the fights end up disappearing. Probably ground into chicken feed."

A successful DC 18 Knowledge (local) check reveals roughly the same information.

Can you let us know if Jakob shows up here again?

"Sure. I'll have my dandy lil' halfing manservant just pop over with a message on perfumed paper."

Creatures The bar features no bouncer or security to exclude humans, elves, and other "pink skins." Instead, the clientele eagerly handle that role. Should the PCs fail four or more interaction checks, or respond to a failed check with violence, a gang of tavern patrons groups up to teach them some respect. Red Zugga—a mercenary and fearless

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mother of five—alongside a trio of onlookers jump the squishy outsiders, intent on beating them unconscious and dumping them back in the street, perhaps a few coins lighter. None of the orcs especially want to kill anyone; Zugga attacks with her fists (+9, 1d3+6 nonlethal) and the orcs wield saps (+4, 1d6+3) unless the PCs resort to lethal damage.

RED ZUGGA: hp 42 (Orc sergeant, see Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Monster Codex)
ORCS (3): hp 6 (see Pathfinder Roleplayng Game Bestiary)

EVENT F

CR4

SEPCEL THE GORPSE BEARER

LOCATION: Bloodsalt

After the PCs begin their investigation, word seeps out to the general public that they seek a missing half-orc. Within a few days (or whenever the PCs begin to feel stymied in their investigation), a foul-smelling man approaches their place of business and suggests he located the unfortunate Jakob Wynt. **Sedgel** (N male human commoner 5) is one of Freeport's corpse bearers, who has

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the unenviable task of retrieving the bodies of the dead be they the victims of gruesome crimes or simply the poor laid low by disease—left to fester in alleys and city streets. Sedgel makes a living selling the more intact of his finds to various chirurgeons and necromancers across the city, and cutting valuable spell components out of the rest, but on occasion he finds a person of interest and hopes to collect some reward from their family or business associates.

Sedgel explains he happened upon a well-dressed young half-orc on his morning rounds "wearing a pretty gold bracelet," and heard of the PCs' search through various contacts. He normally charges "looky-loos" 1 gp to see his "workshop," but invites the PCs to do so free of charge, but insists on 100 gp if they wish the claim the body.

Located on the eastern edge of Scurvytown, Sedgel's base of operations is little more than a clapboard shack built on an ancient stone foundation. It oozes the foul stench of human rot and caustic chemicals—some used to preserve valuable organs, others to help speed the rot in pits out back so he can eventually sell the bones. A sagging cart sits in one corner, while several bodies in grotesque stages of decomposition crowd a few shabby tables near a flea-infested bed. The overwhelming stench requires a successful DC 12 Fort save for character to not be sickened upon entering and for 3d6 minutes afterwards.



Creatures The smells from Sedgel's home sometimes attracts strange creatures from the jungle. Shortly after the PCs arrive, a tentacle reaches in from the back door and attempts to drag away the body of Hammiker Smith (see below). The tentacle belongs to a hungry otyugh. The creature originally came out to wallow in the lye pools, mistaking them for cess pits, and is now burned, and angry, and determined to not leave hungry.

ОТYUGH: hp 39 (see *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

Development Fortunately, Sedgel's newest "guest" isn't Jakob, but Hammiker Smith, an up and coming singer from the Eastern District (recognizable with a successful DC 12 Knowledge [local] or [nobility] check). None of his feature's match descriptions of Jakob, and he bears large tattoos of whales on either forearm. The "pretty gold bracelet" on his arm is actually a shackle with three links of chain still attached. A successful DC 12 Appraise or appropriate Craft or Profession skill check recognizes the metal as bronze, rather than gold; exceeding the DC by five or more also notes that the metal appears to have been filed through. A DC 10 Heal check is enough to conclude from the large bruises around his neck that Hammiker was strangled to death, probably with a large, smooth rope; exceeding the DC by five or more also indicates than Hammiker was suffering from some malnutrition and dehydration when he died, and had likely been held somewhere for two or three days before his death. The shackle still around his wrist bears the symbol of the Abyssinial Chain: A thornencrusted circle of chain surrounding a bent nail.

If the PCs ask Sedgel for any details, he mentions finding some spice-scented candy wrappers around the body. While the wax papers themselves aren't much of a lead, they're obviously of higher quality than anything found in Scurvytown—likely from somewhere in the Eastern District.

Hammiker is a victim of the Candy Men (see encounter J). Miss Vee's gang of chokers captured him four nights ago from Slippery Hitch—the area where Scurvytown, the Docks, and the Eastern District meet—and he was held in the Hotel Recherché for several days before using his wits (and cleverly concealed thieves tools) to escape. Confused and panicked, he paid little attention to where he came from or where he was running, and Vee dispatched the terrifying Mr. Licorice to kill the half-orc before he could find help. Spells such as *speak with dead* allow the PCs to learn some of this information, but Hammiker has no idea where he was held, having been unconscious when the chokers dragged him into his cell. He only knows that *"small, gray, bonedless men*

with long arms and black, strong hands" (chokers) captured him the first time, and a massive choker "who smelled like candy" finally ended his life, but he remembers hearing a commanding woman's voice—clearly humanoid and well-educated—giving orders from outside his cell.

Treasure While Sedgel has no valuables to offer in reward for the PCs battling the otyugh, the otyugh itself managed to collect 150 gp worth of gold and silver teeth from the lye pit before leaving. Wrapped around its eyestalk like a scarf is a filthy *cloak of human guise*. If the PCs treat Segdel kindly, he promises to bring them any news or rumors he hears, giving them a +2 bonus to Diplomacy checks to gather information for the rest of the adventure.

Story Award If the PCs examine Hammiker's body, award them 150 XP each. If they learn any additional information from Sedgel or by speaking with Hammiker's spirit, or if they offer to buy Hammiker's body to give it proper services, award them an additional 50 XP each.

EVENT G

CR4

A GLEAR MESSAGE

LOCATION: Anywhere

Once the PCs begin asking questions and making waves, their actions attract Miss Vee's attention. This encounter can take place at any point after the PCs begin their investigations; ideal times include after their visit to Krom's Throat (encounter E), outside Sedgel's workshop (F), or after encountering one of the gangs (see part 2).

Creatures Not eager to use any of her kidnapper gangs to take out interlopers lest they reveal the Abyssinial Chain's presence too early, Miss Vee spends a few extra coins to recruit a trio of corrupt Freeport city watchmen (recommended by Grymes) to rough up the PCs. She doesn't particularly care if her hired goons kill the PCs or not, so long as they stop (or at least delay) the adventurer's investigations.

If defeated and questioned, the watchmen admit they don't know who hired them, except it was some hooded, well-dressed woman with a foreign accent, who smelled of spices and rotting flesh.

SEASONED WATCHMAN (3): hp 19 (see FCA, p. 343)

Treasure In addition to their gear, the watchmen also carry a single bag containing 90 pp and a note describing the PCs in detail and the note "Dump the bodies in the bay. The Mollies will make sure they're never found."

PART TWO

THE HANDS OF BRASS

With a collection of dissimilar leads in-hand, the PCs have been able to track Jakob Wynt's abduction to one of three gangs, all of whom seem to have stepped into the business of kidnapping over the past eighteen months, and all of whom primarily target Freeport's homeless, halforc, and orc populations—people unlikely to be missed. As the PCs confront each gang, they discover them to be working for a mysterious mastermind, and only find a small clue to that mastermind's identity and location. They will need to confront all three of the Abyssinial Chain's cells to finally uncover the identity of Miss Vee, as well as her location.

Adventurers will likely move back and forth between encounters in Part One and encounters in Part Two. The Bog Street Cockspurs are the more manageable gang for a party of 3rd-level adventurers, while the Candy Men and the Mollycoddles feature more challenging, monstrous opponents in hostile environments. Gamemasters should

WHAT DO I KNOW: THE GOCKSPURS

After their initial investigations in Part 1, PCs should have a general idea of who they're up against, if not by name then at least by reputation. Here's what a Diplomacy check to gather information or Knowledge (local) check reveals about the Bog Street Cockspurs

| Result | Information |
|--------|--|
| 13+ | A hobgoblin gang called the Bog Street Cockspurs runs a large chunk of the gambling in Bloodsalt. |
| 15+ | The Cockspurs get their name from the vicious jungle fowl they breed and train to fight in the ring. They operate from an old bar called the Chickenscratch. |
| 17+ | A towering hobgoblin named Sackerson runs the gang. Anyone who owes them money tends to disappear. |
| 20+ | The Cockspurs have a trained cockatrice they use in special matches—and to deal with rival gangs |
| | |

encourage PCs to approach the hobgoblin gang first, perhaps even springing Encounter G on them as they set out to investigate the Candy Men or the Mollycoddles. Once the PCs reach 4th level, the order they approach the gangs is less important.

To locate Miss Vee's stronghold, PCs will only really need to visit the Mollycoddles to learn about the phosphorescent arrows in Freeport's sewers, and the Bog Street Cockspurs to recover a pair of glasses allowing them to see and navigate via those directions. The Candy Men provide no real clues to Miss Vee's location—they only return to the hotel every week or so, and do so via winding rooftop paths and staggering leaps of faith making them impossible to track—but do offer insight into her identity; Miss Vee may even dispatch her most loyal pets to seek out and eliminate the PCs when she learns her hired watchmen failed to do so.

EVENT H

CR VARIES

THE BOG STREET GOGKSPURS

LOCATION: Northern Bloodsalt

This hobgoblin gang runs Bloodsalt's premiere cockfighting ring. Founded and run by an especially brutal figure named Sackerson when he was still only an adolescent, the gang aspires to control more and more of Freeport's gambling, and show an uncanny gift for training the vicious, wild cockerels that populate the interior jungles.

The Cockspurs are Miss Vee's most recent addition to the Abyssinial Chain, and appreciate her philosophy of power through strength of will perhaps more than any other followers, making them exceptionally loyal. They refer to their employer as "Brass-Hands Vee," but say very little else about her—they find the elf's augmentations disturbing at best, especially after watching her rip Sackerson's lieutenant in half only weeks ago. They only make deliveries to her on moonless or cloudy nights, traveling alleys and nervously watching their backs. Sanderson himself brings the unfortunate captives, accompanied by four trainers. PCs are much more likely to find the gang in their stronghold, an old milk barn turned arena: The Chickenscratch.

THE GHICKENSGRATCH

The Chickenscratch is a difficult establishment to locate. Locals regularly direct suspicious seekers away from the establishment or even into other districts. Finding the building in the tangle of hovels requires a successful DC 15 Diplomacy or Knowledge (local) check. Alternately,



PCs can locate a regular attendee of the hobgoblin cock fights with a successful DC 13 Diplomacy or Knowledge (local) check, then cajole her into bringing them along (requiring a successful DC 15 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check) or else follow her from a discreet distance (requiring a DC 18 Stealth check). If all else fails, the PCs can pay one of the district's myriad hobgoblin urchins 15 gp to serve as a guide.

The leaning façade of weather-grayed wood may have once served as a milking barn judging by the cattle-sized ramps, but the city caught up with it and overwhelmed whatever livestock it may have once housed. Now it bulges with other sorts of life—gutteral chatter, the stink of cheap rum, and countless bootprints in and out, tracking white and red-black smears of questionable origin.

The Chickenscratch serves as a bar almost exclusively for goblinoids (occasionally including island trolls), and hosts cock fights three times a week. The owner, **Vaggerton** (*LE hobgoblin expert 3*) runs the bar up front and otherwise leaves the Cockspurs the run of the building. Unless they're running a fight, the building's interior remains dim during the day and dark at night, with the patrons relying on their darkvision and hoping the gloom keeps out curious humans. Being nocturnal, the bar's goblinoid patrons don't begin filing in until nearly midnight, and the establishment remains open until slightly past dawn each day. Anyone who isn't a hobgoblin, goblin, island troll, or bugbear immediately stands out in the crowd and earns dirty looks; patrons will bluster and snarl, but mostly hope to be left alone. On fight nights, a wider variety of races attend—mostly hobgoblins, but also half-orcs, orcs, and humans from the surrounding area, as well as the occasional slumming artisan or merchant with a few drunken friends. The Cockspurs charge every spectator a silver skull entry fee, and take additional wagers on the night's massacres.

PCs may patronize the bar or attend the fights, but the common patrons remain tight-lipped about the Cockspurs, and the gang themselves eagerly roughs up any busybodies. Asking after Jakob Wynt is met with furtive glances and silence.

H1. BAR

CR5

The front bar is a crowded mess. Patrons must provide their own cups or bowls, but Vaggerton pours generously, offering a fillup of his questionable, house-made brew for

FIGHTING GOCKRELS

The Cockspurs fight alongside their vicious jungle fowl—distant and mean ancestors of domesticated chickens—which also serve as their regular entertainment. Each member of the gang bonds especially closely with one bird, but trains several at a time, and while the fights aren't always to the death, the birds suffer horrible injuries and scars, worsening their already sour temperaments. Abused or not, the cockrels adore their hobgoblin masters, and are nearly impossible to turn against their keepers without magic.

Gogkerel Familiars

The gang's cockerel familiars use the statistics for archaeopteryx familiars (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 4*), but lose their bite attack and gain two claw attacks for 1d3 damage each, to which they add their Dexterity modifier 9rather than Strength modifier). They gain a +2 bonus to Strength, but take a -2 penalty to Wisdom and Charisma. The Cockspurs attach razor-sharp spurs to their birds' ankles which effectively make them masterwork claws, adding a +1 enhancement bonus to their claw attack rolls.

DIRE GOCKEREL ANIMAL GOMPANION

Sackerson himself commands Ursus, a vicious, feathered beast nearly as large as an eagle and trailing a magnificent tail of emerald green feathers. Sackerson's dire cockerel uses the statistics for a hawk animal companion, but reduces its flight speed to 40 ft. (poor) and gains the archaeopteryx's Weak Flier ability.

a single copper coin. From a few hours until after sunset until shortly after dawn, the bar is crowded, dark, smoky, and loud; filled with pickpocket goblins, bullying bugbears, and sour-faced hobgoblins sick of feeling crowded out of Freeport's available jobs by orcs and half-orcs.

Creatures The goblinoid patrons won't speak to investigators, but also won't start trouble unless the PCs start making threats. If things turn violent, a pair of bugbear patrons (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*) and the bar's unofficial bouncer, Kensing (hobgoblin sergeant; *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Monster Codex*) step in to escort the newcomers out of the building after removing any coins or attractive weapons first.

KENSING: hp 33 (Hobgoblin sergeant, see Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Monster Codex)
BUGBEARS (2): hp 16 (see Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary)

H2. THE ARENA

CR3 or 4

The Cockspurs hold their fights here three nights each week, in a sand-covered pit surrounded by a waist-high wooden barricade. Rough wooden risers, mostly assembled from old crates, provide an excellent view of the floor even from the back of the room. Most nights they pit the birds against one another, but for special occasions they pit their cockerels against dogs and creatures from the jungle, or else pit their pet cockatrice—The Commandant—against bears or even captured members of rival gangs. When not occupied, all the room's doors are locked (DC 20, hardness 5, 10 hp).

Newcomers are expected to gamble, and are watched closely by members of the gang. The Cockspurs also accept challengers from outside the gang, and pay a hefty reward of 250 gp to anyone whose pet can defeat one of their cockerels unassisted in the ring; PCs with familiars or animal companions (or shapechanging abilities) might persuade the Cockspurs to let them compete, leaving the gang far less suspicious about their presence (imposing a -5 penalty to all Perception and Sense Motive checks the hobgoblins make against the PCs). Far from angry if their birds lose, the hobgoblins are impressed, and invite winners into the back to the animal pens (area H3) for drinks to celebrate a victory.

If the PCs slip in during a fight, every square except the pit itself and the pathway leading to northern door are crowded with onlookers and considered rough terrain. PCs who succeed a DC 14 Diplomacy or Intimidate check as a move action can order people out of their way and treat these spaces and clear terrain; if they exceed the DC by five or more, the check only requires a swift action.

Creatures During fights, three Cockspurs watch the floor here, accompanied by their birds (CR 4), though

om. Most nig

PART TWO

COCKSPUR TRAINERS

CR1 XP 400

Hobgoblin rogue (carnivalist) 2 NE Medium humanoid (goblinoid) Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +2 Dex) hp 20 (2d8+8) Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +1 Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk sap +4 (1d6+2 nonlethal) **Special Attacks** distraction, sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

Before Combat If expecting trouble, or ambushing a potential captive, the Cockspurs dose their animal's spurs with blue whinnies poison.

During Combat The hobgoblins let their cockerels close with targets while they circle around to flank, taking advantage of both their and their birds' sneak attack.

STATISTICS

Str 15, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 10 Base Atk +1; CMB +3; CMD 15

Feats Mauler's Endurance

reats Mauler's Endurance

Skills Acrobatics +6, Appraise +3, Bluff +4, Handle Animal +5, Heal +1 (+4 to treat common animals, but +1 to treat other creatures), Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +4, Perception +5, Sense Motive +5, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +10; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ familiar sneak attack, pet performance, trapfinding +1

Combat Gear blue whinnis (2 doses); **Other Gear** mwk studded leather, mwk sap, training whistle, falconry gauntlet, veterinarian's kit, 22 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Distraction (Ex) A Cockspur Trainer may use the distraction bardic ability, substituting a Handle Animal check for a Perform check.

Mauler's Endurance (Ex) This feat grants the Cockspur trainer's familiar a two additional hit points per Hit Die

they only attack if outsiders start causing trouble. If PCs gain entry during off hours, when no fight is taking place, there is only a single trainer accompanied by two regular hobgoblins (CR 3): new members learning the arts of animal training, though they attack intruders without mercy.

COCKSPUR TRAINERS (1 OR 3): hp 20 (see above) FIGHTING COCKRELS (1 OR 3): hp 14 (see above) HOBGOBLIN (0 OR 2): hp 17 (see Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary)

| FIGHTING COCKRELS (1 OR 3) | | |
|--|--|--|
| Fighting cockerel (mauler)(see sidebar, page 12) | | |
| N Tiny magical beast (animal) | | |
| nit +2; Senses low-light vision; Perception +4 | | |

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+1 armor, +2 Dex, +1 natural, +2 size) **hp** 14 (1d8)

Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +0

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor) **Melee** bite +6 (1d4+2) **Space** 2 1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

STATISTICS

Str 5, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 5 Base Atk +1; CMB +1; CMD 8

Feats Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +6 (+10 to jump), Appraise -1, Bluff -2, Climb +10, Fly +2, Handle Animal -1, Intimidate +2, Perception +4, Sense Motive +1, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +14

SQ bond forged in blood, improved evasion, weak flier **Other Gear** razor spurs, tiny leather barding

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Sneak Attack (Ex) Fighting cockerels inflict additional +1d6 sneak attack damage as a rogue so long as they remain within 30 feet of their masters. However as tiny creatures, they cannot flank a foe.

Weak Flier (Ex) Cockerels can't hover or fly up at an angle greater than 45 degrees while flying.

H3. ANIMAL PENS

CR3 or 4

Two dozen cages here each contain a different bird, from fledglings still shedding their last bits of fluff to scarred up old roosters nearly ready for the stewpot. Appropriately enough, a large iron cauldron sits in one corner, opposite a wire-bound coop filled with ugly breeding hens and hobbling chicks.

The Cockspurs keep, breed, and train their spare birds here, to keep the ring filled despite the high mortality.

Creatures During fights, only one Cockspur trainer can be found back here, with by two regular hobgoblin assistants (CR 3), but most of the time, three Cockspur trainers can be found here (CR 4), while their junior members run errands or learn to rear birds in the unused arena.

COCKSPUR TRAINERS (1 OR 3): hp 19 (see above) FIGHTING COCKERELS (1 OR 3): hp 14 (see above) HOBGOBLIN (0 OR 2): hp 17 (see Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary)



Treasure Each hobgoblin and trainer has 100 gp worth of copper and silver coins, personal jewelry, and the occasional rare platinum piece.

H4. STORAGE ROOMS

These locked rooms store spare beer, food, animal feed, hay, and weapons. The doors are always locked (Disable Device DC 20), but Sackerson and Vaggerton both carry keys.

Treasure Concealed in a hay pile in the back of the room (Perception DC 15) in a lockbox with additional gang supplies, including three doses of blue whinnis poison, a masterwork sap, three *potions of speak with animals*, and an *oil of magic weapon*.

H5. HOLDING PENS

CR3

The animal pens in this grungy hall have been reinforced with chain, iron bars, and broken bits of furniture anything to transform the old cattle stalls into prison cells. A well-appointed animal pen fills one corner, filled with statuary of various small beasts. Each makeshift cell has a simple padlock (Disable Device DC 20) and a makeshift but sturdy door (hardness 5, 20 hp, break DC 25). Three miserable half-orcs—one still unconscious from poisoning—occupy one stall.

Creatures The statue-filled animal pen is the home of the gang's mascot: an ill-tempered cockatrice named the Commandant. Sackerson captured the beast in the jungle in his youth, and unleashes the cockatrice on all comers during special exhibitions. It otherwise enjoys the lazy life and frequent meals. The Commandant long ago learned to open his own cage, and steps out to attack any nonhobgoblins he sees.

THE COMMANDANT: hp 27 (Cockatrice, see *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

Development While none of the prisoners are Jakob Wynt, the trio can all describe the Cockspurs' techniques, poisoning their birds' spurs and siccing them on anyone they believe owes them money. **Zinse** (*CN male half-orc warrior 3*) even describes a previous batch of prisoners—a half dozen in all—the Cockspurs hauled off in chains tom "the tunnel" for someone named "Brass-Hands Vee."

Story Award If the PCs free the prisoners and learn any information from them, award them 200 XP each.

PART TWO

URSUS

CR —

Dire cockerel (see page 12) N Small animal Init +3; Senses low-light vision; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +3 natural, +1 size) hp 26 (+8) Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +5

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor) **Melee** bite +6 (1d4+2), 2 talons +6 (1d4+2)

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6 Base Atk +3; CMB +4; CMD 17

Feats Combat Reflexes, Iron Will

Tricks Attack, Come, Defend, Down, Fighting, Guard, Heel, Stay

Skills Acrobatics +3 (-5 to jump), Fly +5, Intimidate +1, Perception +6

SQ link, share spells, weak flyer

H6. COCKSPUR BUNKS

CR 5

Ratty bunks and lockers fill much of this room, with the remaining wall space dominated by average-quality drawings of various humanoids in different states of undress. Most of the Cockspurs live here at least part time, playing cards and sparring in between training their birds and watching the neighborhood.

Creatures At any give time the Cockspurs' leader, Sackerson, can be found here with a few other trainers, alongside his loyal dire cockerel, Ursus.

SACKERSON: *hp 42* (see at right) COCKSPUR TRAINERS (2): *hp 19* (see p. 13) URSUS: *hp 26* (Dire cockeral, see above)

H6. SACKERSON'S ROOM

The best-appointed room in the Chickenscratch, Sackerson's otherwise Spartan bed actually has sheets and a warm, wool blanket. A desk here is crowded with old bits of paper crowded with notes all taken in the goblin language. A good-sized cage is lined with stained satin sheets—Ursus' home—while a less elaborate cage nearby is filled with his snacks: live mice.

Development Sackerson's notes track the various debts and favors owed to the gang, as well as accounts they've paid off and notes about individual members. Lost in the

CR 3 XP 800

Hobgoblin ranger (falconer, urban ranger) 4 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide, Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat*)

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+5 armor, +2 shield) **hp** 42 (4d10+16)

Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee mwk battleaxe +7 (1d8+2/×3)

Ranged mwk throwing axe +5 (1d6+2)

Special Attacks combat style (weapon and shield), favored enemy (orcs +2)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +3) 1st—*magic fang*

TACTICS

Before Combat Sackerson occasionally has to break up brawls on fight nights, and heads towards the arena if he hears any unusual screaming or any of the Cockspurs blowing their training whistles. He arrives after one minute. Otherwise, he remains here with his bird, guards, and weapons nearby.

During Combat The hobgoblin is an inelegant warrior, stepping into combat with Ursus and using his Power Attack whenever possible. He hurls a throwing axe or tanglefoot bag at any obnoxious spellcasters.

Morale While self-serving and evil, Sackerson lives by some code of honor and won't give up his employer or surrender to what he views as "lesser" races. He fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12 Base Atk +4; CMB +6; CMD 16

Feats Power Attack, Shield Focus, Skill Focus (Handle Animal)

Skills Acrobatics -1 (-5 to jump), Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +7, Perception +6, Profession (gambler) +9, Sense Motive +5, Stealth +8, Survival +7; Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ favored community (Freeport +2), track +2, trapfinding +2

Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds, tanglefoot bag (2); **Other Gear** +1 armored coat, mwk buckler, mwk battleaxe, mwk throwing axe, 27 gp

pile is a ledger detailing the 73 men and women he has sold to "Brass-Hands Vee" so far—mostly debtors but six were distinctly enemies of the gang—and how much he received for each. The ledger also contains dozens of onepage advertisements for local bars and clubs, though a successful DC 13 Knowledge (local) check identifies that most of the businesses don't actually exist.

A pair of gold-framed glasses rest in a velvet case within the desk's drawer. The lenses-slightly tinged with green-magnify any text they examine. More importantly, the alchemically-treated lenses allow the wearer to immediately recognize a specific formula of invisible ink imported from Hangnail. While wearing the alchemical lenses, characters can read the missives on the back of Sackerson's fake flyers: secret communiqués between himself and Miss Vee, left posted on a public signboard to negotiate new arrivals and arrange for deliveries. Nothing hints to his employer's location, however, beyond "the usual place in the tunnels," referring to the route depicted by arrows painted in invisible ink in Freeport's sewers. Unfortunately, without knowing where to start following the arrows, PCs have no way of finding their way in the miles and miles of dangerous underground tunnels. Luckily, another of Miss Vee's gangs-the Mollycoddles (see page 17)—knows where to begin the winding route.

Treasure In addition to Sackerson's notes and the alchemical lenses, a locked strongbox (Disable Device DC 30) contains much of the gang's recent wealth: 812 gp, twelve small leather pouches each containing 150 sp,

WHAT DO I KNOW: THE GANPYMEN

After their initial investigations in Part 1, PCs should have a general idea of who they're up against, if not by name then at least by reputation. Here's what a Diplomacy check to gather information or Knowledge (local) check reveals about the Candymen:

Result Information

A serial murderer named Mr. Licorice stalked the junction of the Eastern 15+ District, Docks, and Scurvytown for yes, but apparently disappeared two years ago. People sometimes find new strangling victims in the area, but their bodies lack the smell of anise seed or licorice root that gave the original killer his 18+ nickname. Most everyone agrees it's a copycat killer, or a gang using his murder style to blame their own murders on the legendary killer. Locals are calling this copycat gang the Candy Men. They only seem to 20+ strike half-orcs and orcs (or at least those who look like them).

CR 6

three bandages of rapid recovery, (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Equipment), a ring of swimming, and a mithral statuette depicting two roosters leaping at one another (500 gp).

EVENT I

THE GANPY MEN

LOCATION: The Docks, Eastern District, or Scurvytown

For a decade, a serial killer stalked Slippery Hitch, the confusing tangle of streets, tenements, and shops where the Docks, Eastern District, and Scurvytown all meet. Strangling his victims and leaving behind the distinct odor of anise seed, locals began calling the mysterious murderer "Mr. Licorice." In reality, Mr. Licorice is a remarkably intelligent choker named Savrock, who committed his horrible acts both to sate an inner bloodlust and to sew an atmosphere of fear and criminal activity, making it easier for his home robberies and pocket-picking between murders to go unnoticed. Few within the city ever suspected the killer's true identity or even species. Two years ago his quiet reign of terror abruptly ended. Denizens of the area assumed the killer ran afoul of a victim he couldn't handle, but the truth is quite the opposite.

When Miss Vee arrived in Freeport two years ago, she assumed control of the derelict Hotel Recherché, specifically because she'd identified its lord and master as the Slippery Knot's strangler. She offered the choker the opportunity to work for her as a guard and kidnapper. When he refused, she beat him unconscious and extended the same offer to his duller, more cowardly children, who readily accepted.

The Candy Men earned their moniker thanks to their sweettooths—the only noteworthy trait they inherited from their father—and their loyalty is easily purchased with the exotic candies provided by their "Rock Candy Princess." They snatch victims from in and around Slippery Hitch, strangling their targets unconscious before dragging them up to the rooftops to carry home. When called for, they also act as Vee's enforcers, quietly killing escaped prisoners and anyone asking too many questions.

ENGOUNTERING THE GANPY MEN

Tracking the Candy Men proves difficult. They rarely touch the ground itself, dangling from drainage pipes, catwalks, and clotheslines overhead. Tracking their movements requires a successful DC 28 Survival check (before factoring in weather, visibility, or the age of the trail). More like, the PCs will confront the Candy Men one of two other ways.

They may begin searching the Slippery Hitch area for a kidnapper after investigating the body of Hammiker Smith (encounter F). While determining his cause of death as strangulation is simple enough, recognizing the work of an inhuman choker requires a successful DC 17 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check. Whether they know the identity of their kidnappers or not, the PCs may stalk the streets of Slippery Hitch by night, hoping to encounter the Candy Men. Every night, they have a 5% chance of being targeted by the choker gang; increase this by 10% in they have an orc or half-orc party member (or disguise themselves as such), or by another 10% if they appear to be vagrants or drifters unlikely to be missed. The Candy Men are bold enough to confront a group, but they'll try to nab a straggler or two from behind before making a direct confrontation.

Alternatively, the PCs may be targeted specifically by the Candy Men under Miss Vee's orders. This option works especially well if the PCs have confronted either of the Abyssinial Chain's other two gangs and still feel directionless; subduing and questioning a Candy Man could provide them whatever information they still need to put the pieces together and locate the Hotel Recherché.

Slippery Hitch is a tangle of small streets and alleys few are wider than 15 feet—and even during the day sunlight rarely reaches the ground through the tall buildings and haze of soot and clotheslines. The streets are dim most days, and dark at night aside from a few sputtering streetlights, and the constant twists and turns and unlabelled detours make it easy even for locals to get lost. Navigating through the district requires a successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) check.

Creatures Three Candy Men—Comfit, Gobstop, and Pastille—stalk victims at any given time. They only attack by night, using their darkvision to their advantage and attacking from the rear—one brother gags a victim, preventing them from calling for help, while the other two lift them into the air. They love picking groups off one-by-one until only one victim remains, terrified and running frantically through the maze of streets.

THE CANDY MEN (3): *hp 22* (Advanced Chokers, see *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

Development The Candy Men refer to Miss Vee as the "Rock Candy Princess" because of her never-ending supply of sweet treats, but otherwise fear her after the devastating brutality she unleashed on their father. They refuse to reveal anything about her operation and—in truth—know very little except that they have to kidnap people, who Miss Vee keeps for a time and then sends somewhere else. They know nothing about the other CR ??

gangs, except being told specifically not to bother them.

As tight-lipped and willfully ignorant as the group is, they do offer some valuable clues. The pockets of their vests are stuffed with expensive spice candies—an Ivory Ports specialty called iokma (identifiable with a successful DC 18 Knowledge [geography] check—as well as a few small paper bags from Confectional, an sweet shop in the Eastern District's west end-a location unlikely to sell to murderous aberrations. Questioning the shop owner-the jovial Corderly Qwain (male half-elf expert 4)-confirms he's never sold his wares to chokers. Qwain also recognizes the candies as a Silverus specialty and he only has one regular buyer: a haughty elven woman with a distinctly Silverus accent and the faint scent of spice and rotting flesh around her person. Qwain only knows that she's been a customer for about two years, that she stops in irregularly, and that she always pays well in gold.

Treasure Each of the Candy Men wears a well-crafted velvet vest mostly ruined by casual tears and sticky stains, but they stuff their pockets with a total of 112 gp, seven silk handkerchiefs (2 gp each), a diamond earring (200 gp), and six silver rings (50 gp each), and a bronze *ring of force shield* they don't realize is magical.

EVENT J

THE MOLLYCOPPLES

LOCATION: Varies

This circle of mermaids broke away from their undersea community in a simultaneous act of rebellion and banishment. Their exact crimes change with every retelling, but in short order the exiles became infatuated not with human men, but with human vice. Alcohol, tobacco, and various drugs have become regular and beloved parts of their lives. Originally obtained from passing ships, the gang has moved steadily closer to shore until finally taking up residence in Freeport's harbor. Despite the proximity to the authorities, Freeport's docks offer them a host of new victims and semi-dry hidey holes for their treasure, as well as introducing them to the luxury of tattoos. For three years, the Mollycoddles have robbed Freeport's dockside drunks and vagrants.

Miss Vee approached the gang for their excellent understanding of Freeport's storm drains and smuggling lanes, but found them to be gifted enforcers as well. The fish-women sometimes courier messages and small packages out beyond the Hulks to waiting vessels from Hangnail. More often they, like the other gangs the Abyssinial Chain employs, earn their keep by abducting anyone who won't be missed.

Part Two

The Mollycoddles maintain an air pocket in a sunken dogger (a kind of single-masted fishing boat around 50 feet long, with a maximum beam of 15 feet, and a draught of about 5 feet), where they take their halfdrowned victims until delivery. While the dogger houses a few of their more water-resistant items, it's a stretch to call it their home; instead they mermaids maintain a dozen hidden treasure troves of liquor, drugs, and cigars around the docks district, and sleep wherever they pass out for the night. They refer to Miss Vee as "Tin-Fins" when they're confidant they can't be overheard, or simple as "Miss Vee" if they think she's listening (essentially any time they're above the water's surface). Thanks to a quirk of their aquatic vision, all the Mollycoddles can see the Hangnail alchemical ink marking a clear path through the sewers to Miss Vee's headquarters, and consequently the gangs flops their way through the tunnels to deliver their cargo more often than any other gang. Gold in hand, they make their way back to the docs to trade with sailors and ne'er-do-wells for any vices they can discover.

WHAT DO I KNOW: THE MOLLYGOPPLES

After their initial investigations in Part 1, PCs should have a general idea of who they're up against, if not by name then at least by reputation. Here's what a Diplomacy check to gather information or Knowledge (local) check reveals about the Mollycoddles:

Result Information

14+

18+

21+

A circle of mermaids lives in the bay, but these are more the dragyou-down-to-your-death kind of mermaid than the granting-wishesand-kisses kind.

The mermaids call themselves the Mollycoddles, and apparently dabble in just about any vice they can find. They mostly make their money shaking down drunks on the boardwalk, and sometimes can be hired to rough up someone specific.

The Mollies haven't taken a private job since their leader—Ignacea—had her face slashed open last year by some big orc. She's probably got a hideaway somewhere under the bay stuffed with the gang's treasures.

J1. DOCKSIDE FIGHTS

CR4

Despite their lack of a permanent home, the Mollycoddles are probably the easiest of the Abyssinial Chain's gangs to locate thanks to their brazen attacks. The endless maze of docks and boardwalks works to their advantage, letting the gang members travel largely unseen and unhindered by their lack of legs. Their off-key singing can be heard in the Docks district every few nights while they celebrate a new payday, and can be followed with a successful DC 20 Perception check. (On a failed check the sound echoes so much through wharfs and piers it is impossible to locate). Alternatively, the mermaids set up outside different taverns every few nights, waiting until after midnight and then dragging lone drunks off the boardwalk.

The Mollycoddles are also very territorial, and if they feel another gang is trying to push into their territory, they arrange an ambush by night. In this case, Ignacea (see encounter L2) joins her girls, increasing the CR of this encounter to 6, and reducing the dogger encounter to a CR 4.

Creatures The Mollycoddles work in trios, with three of the tattooed, heavily-muscled mermaids preferring to attack from ambush.

MOLLYCODDLE THUGS (3): hp 23 (see p.19)

Development Each of the Mollycoddles wears a roughly-carved coral necklace with a distinct figurehead carved into it. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) or Profession (sailor) identifies it as the figurehead of the Scyla, one of the wrecks in the bay, which sits atop their sunken fishing boat home.

If the PCs convince one of the mermaids to talk (easy enough with lone captives), she can't explain much about the larger organization they work for, except that she came to them a year and a half ago and offered the Mollycoddles good coin and booze for the warm bodies they were already mugging. She also explains that the gang holds a few victims at a time—a half-dozen at the moment—in their old sunken dogger out in the bay where their leader Ignacea watches over them. The girls all know that to find Miss Vee's agent, they have to enter the right storm drain and follow the arrows, but don't realize that other creatures can't see the invisible ink and only Ignacea has ever paid attention to which of the city's hundred or so storm drains emptying into the bay is the right entrance to begin searching for the lair.

Treasure In addition to their personal treasure, each trio on the hunt carries three *potions of stabilize* to save any victims they accidentally drown, and a *potion of water breathing* (CL 6) in case of emergencies.

JESS

J2. THE DEEP BAY

CR4

Bits of sunken ships, trash, and tangle forests of seaweed and algae cover the silty floor of the bay. Much of the terrain matches the aboveground geography: Rolling hills and occasional rocky outcroppings. Most of the bay runs between fifty and two-hundred feet deep, though occasional "hilltops" skirt the surface, supporting the wrecks for which the city's bay is fames.

Creatures Many dangerous creatures live deep in Freeport's Harbor, and the Mollycoddles have subdued or driven off many from the area immediately surrounding their headquarters with one notable exception: a massive rock crab the mermaids have slowly trained with a combination of treats and harsh beatings. The seaweedlined crustacean appears to be another rocky outcropping from a distance, and acts as a watching to keep other creatures out of Mollycoddle territory.

ROCK CRAB: *hp* 42 (see below)

Treasure Embedded among the barnacles and seaweed on the crab's back in an ancient sea chest that requires a successful DC 20 Strength check to force open. Inside is a treasure of silver: 8,400 sp, twelve large nuggets (25 gp each), seven ornate bracelets (50 gp each), forty pieces of

ROCK CRAB

CR 4 XP 1,200

N Large vermin (aquatic) Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16 (+7 natural, -1 size) hp 42 (5d8+20) Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +1 Immune mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 20 ft.Melee 2 claws +9 (1d6+7 plus grab)Special Attacks constrict (1d6+7)

STATISTICS

Str 24, Dex 11, Con 18, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2 Base Atk +3; CMB +11 (+13 grapple); CMD 21 (33 vs. trip) Skills Perception +4, Swim +15; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception SQ water dependency

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Water Dependency (Ex) Rock crabs can survive out of the water for 1 hour per point of Constitution. Beyond this limit, a rock crab runs the risk of suffocation, as if it were drowning.

MOLLYCODDLE THUGS

CR1 XP 400

Female merfolk brawler 2 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Class Guide* 23, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Race Guide* 194)

NE Medium humanoid (aquatic)

Init +2; Senses low-light vision; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+3 armor, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 23 (2d10+8)

Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +0

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., swim 50 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +4 (1d6+2) or unarmed strike flurry of blows +2/+2 (1d6+2) or mwk whip +5 (1d3+2 nonlethal)

Special Attacks brawler's flurry, martial flexibility 4/day

TACTICS

Before Combat The Mollycoddles have never had any interest in using their feminine assets to attract anyone. Instead, they threaten and goad passersby into coming closer, or else wait for drunken fools to fall into the water without their help.

During Combat Once targets come within reach, the Mollycoddles lash out with their whips to trip them, then drag them back into the water (using their martial training class feature to gain the Improved Grapple feat). They hold victims underwater long enough to begin drowning, and do their best to resuscitate them afterwards, otherwise they pummel targets unconscious and hope not to kill them.

Morale The mermaids are tough and generally consider themselves immortal, but if only one is left alive and has fewer than 10 hit points, she offers to tell the PCs everything she knows in exchange for her freedom. Any other deal is rejected – these mermaids prefer death to servitude or capture.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10 **Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +4 (+6 grapple); **CMD** 16 (18 vs. grapple, can't be tripped)

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike

Skills Acrobatics +2 (-10 to jump), Climb +7, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Perception +5, Stealth +4, Swim +14

Languages Aquan, Common, Thieves' Cant

SQ amphibious, brawler's cunning, martial training

Combat Gear potion of cure light wounds, blue whinnies poison (1 dose); **Other Gear** mwk studded leather, mwk whip, obsidian dagger, alchemist's kindness* (3 doses), baijiu liquor** (one bottle), loaded dice, pipe, tobacco, waterproof bag, marching powder (1 dose), snake weed (10 doses), 22 gp

*Indicates an item found in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying* Game Advanced Player's Guide

**Indicates an item found in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Equipment*



silver flatware (10 gp each), a silver shoe horn fashioned to look like a seahorse (90 gp), and a vial of *silversheen*.

J3. THE DOGGER

CR6

Out among the Hulks, beneath a badly weathered mermaid figurehead jammed into a rocky reef, lies the sunken remains of an old fishing trawler the Mollycoddles use as their primary lair. The vessel's name long ago rotted away, and the Mollies have simply scratched the name "Hell" in its place.

The dogger capsized as it sank, trapping a sizeable airbubble within, which the mermaids periodically refill with waterproof bags (bags they also wrap around their victims'heads to haul them to and from the sunken vessel), making a nearly inescapable prison for those unfortunate sailors and drifters they snatch from the docks. At this depth, the water is dark and cold, counting a dim light and cold weather (creatures with the aquatic subtype may ignore this cold).

Creatures After suffering a vicious facial wound from an orc last year, the Mollycoddles' leader, Ignacea, primarily remains below the waves. Between her vices and her unclean environment, the wound has never completely healed, and only the cold and pressure of the deep water soothes the ache for any period of time, and at this point the vicious mermaid rarely ascends to the surface without copious amounts of liquor to dull the pain.

Three additional mermaids usually hang out here with their leader, and join in attacking any outsiders.

IGNACEA: *hp 52* (See p. 21) MOLLYCODDLE THUGS (3): *hp 23* (see p.19)

Development Four humans and two half-orcs are currently stored in the dogger's ten-foot by fifteen-foot air bubble, kept in place by the depths and fear of the Mollycoddle's pet. If they attempt to swim to freedom, they likely succumb to the pressure (see Hazard, below), and require rescue; The heroes will need an alternative solution (such as magic, or the Mollycoddle's waterproof bags) to return these unfortunates to Freeport's shore.

At least one of the prisoners—a handsome young human writer named **Diego Valdez** (*NG male human expert 3*) has been with the mermaids more than a week at this point, having been dragged to the Abyssinial Chain's dropoff point twice now only to be dragged back to the ship after the mermaids felt insulted over Miss Vee's unwillingness to offer them more coin for a "celebrity." If the PCs have yet to learn how to locate Miss Vee's headquarters, Diego

at least knows which storm drain the Mollycoddles enter to deliver their slaves, and he knows they followed some invisible markings on the walls, though he can't remember the way through the twisting labyrinth.

Hazards The dogger lies under 100 feet of water, hiding it entirely from the surface and placing it at the edge of survivability for its human prisoners. Humans who ascend from the ocean floor to the surface must take a full minute to do so or else risk the bends—painful cramping as the air in their blood sublimates into gas. Non-aquatic creatures who surface any more quickly (such as if fleeing aggressive mermaids) must succeed a DC 17 Fortitude save or suffer 1d4 Constitution damage. The Mollycoddles clap a waterproof bag over their victims' heads and tow them back and forth with little regard for any damage they may inflict.

Story Award If the PCs manage to return the Mollycoddles' victims to Freeport in relatively good shape, award them an extra 300 XP apiece.

Treasure Igacea wear eleven gold bracelets of various makes worth a total of 900 gp. In a locked cabin of the dogger (Disable Device DC 20) is her personal stash, including 633 gp, a dented gold and topaz tiara (650 gp), five bottles of century-old scotch (100 gp each), and a *handy haversack* containing a masterwork piccolo, a locket containing the image of two handsome young halfling men (50 gp), a *silver raven wondrous figurine*, and a set of *marvelous pigments*.

EVENT K

CR7

GARMAYNE

LOCATION: Varies

As the PCs begin dispatching Miss Vee's subordinates, Captain Grymes begins to worry at their meddling. His trust in Vee fading, he instead turns to the *black hourglass*, summoning the pairaka div Carmayne to quietly end their investigations.

Creature Carmayne approaches the PCs after they have dispatched at least two (and more likely three) of the Abyssinial Chain's gangs. He originally appears as an attractive, androgynous human, posing as an escapee from an underground slaving ring and feeding the PCs false information as he begs for a safe place and protection for a few days. Over time, the pairaka subtly alters his appearance and apparent sex to suite whatever the PCs' inclinations seem to be, and tries to infect each in turn with the shakes or slips into their dreams by night.

The div is a patient hunter, and feigns concern for the heroes' health and safety using *charm monster* and his

IGNACEA

CR 4 XP 1,200

Merfolk brawler 5 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* Advanced Class Guide 23, Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Race Guide 194)

CE Medium humanoid (aquatic)

Init +0; Senses low-light vision; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+5 armor, +1 dodge, +2 natural) **hp** 52 (5d10+20)

Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +3

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., swim 50 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +9 (1d8+5) or

unarmed strike flurry of blows +7/+7 (1d8+5) **Special Attacks** brawler's flurry, brawler's strike (magic), close weapon mastery, knockout 1/day (DC 15), maneuver training (dirty trick +1), martial flexibility 5/day

TACTICS

During Combat Vicious and clever, Ignacea understands that any surfacers bothering her at these depths are doing so on borrowed time, and she uses her superior speed and maneuverability to harass intruders, shouting invectives, threats, and taunts at any enemies until they can no longer hold their breath or their water-breathing magic runs out. She loves using martial training to acquire Improved Dirty Trick (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*) to blind foes or entangle them in seaweed and the flotsam littering the ocean floor. (Her CMB and CMD below assume she is using Improved Dirty Trick.) If the heroes manage to inflict more than 8 points of damage to her, Ignacea's playful façade disappears and she downs a *potion of bull's strength* before moving in to attack with flurries.

Morale If reduced below 10 hit points, Ignacea flees into the open ocean to lick her wounds and gather whatever remains of her gang, possibly returning to harry the PCs in a future adventure.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +8 (+9 dirty trick); **CMD** 19 (20 vs. dirty trick, can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Unarmed Strike, Persuasive, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Weapon Specialization (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics -1 (-13 to jump), Climb +8, Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +7, Perception +9, Sense Motive +7, Swim +14

Languages Aquan, Common, Sylvan

SQ amphibious, brawler's cunning, martial training

Combat Gear potion of bull's strength (2), potion of lesser restoration; **Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, cloak of resistance +1, obsidian dagger, alchemist's kindness* (5 doses), baijiu liquor** (four bottles), bloodblock** (2 doses), waterproof bag, 200 gp

*Indicates an item found in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying* Game Advanced Player's Guide

**Indicates an item found in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Equipment*

Part Two

considerable Bluff skill. He deflects any apparent illness the heroes develop as the work of another aghash div his "captors" must have set against him, and encourages them to revisit previous locations and other dead ends. Only when he can catch one or two creatures alone does the pairaka reveal his true form.

CARMAYNE: hp 76 (Pairaka div, see Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3)

Treasure Carmayne clothes are tasteful but otherwise unremarkable, except for his lavishly embroidered scarf, a gift from Grymes to aid his assassinations. The scarf acts as a *circlet of persuasion*, but fills the neck slot rather than the head slot.

GONGLUPING PART TWO

Once the PCs locate Miss Vee's headquarters, grant them a story award of 600 XP each.

PART THREE

THE GILDED GAGE

With enough of the Abyssinial Chain's gangs defeated, the PCs finally learn how to find the master of the Abyssinial Chain. Miss Vee sends communiqués to her agents and directs them where to meet using a special invisible ink formulated in Hangnail. Using the alchemically-treated glasses acquired from Sackerson (encounter H6) and starting from the correct storm drain entrance (revealed by Ignacea or one of her prisoners, encounter J2), PCs can easily follow a winding trail of invisible arrows painted on the walls of the city's storm drains. Alternatively, the PCs may track the Candymen back to their home on the hotel's roof only to discover the apparently-abandoned building is more active than it seems. Finally, if the PCs have defeated all of Miss Vee's gangs and still feel lost, the pairaka Carmayne may lead them into an ambush with Brazajer in encounter L3, though this extremely difficult encounter (a CR 8 challenge) may be overwhelming for unprepared groups.

Alternatively, any heroes defeated by one of the Abyssinial Chain's gangs may awaken within the holding cells of Hotel Recherché itself (encounter L10), a prisoner of Miss Vee's eventually bound for the slave markets of Hangnail. This option turns the adventure order on its head, with the PCs needing to escape the Chain's fortress rather than break in.

EVENT L

CR VARIES

THE ABYSSINIAL CHAIN

ASSAULT ON HOTEL REGHERGHE

LOCATION: Hotel Recherche

The Abyssinial Chain operates out of the derelict Hotel Recherché. Once an opulent holiday estate in a picturesque jungle glade, urban sprawl eventually overtook the building, slowly transforming it into a hotel, then flophouse, and finally the apparently empty derelict it is today. From street level it shows no signs of habitation; the gang uses paint and newspapers to blot out any light from the boardedup windows. The first floor is essentially abandoned, with the gang operating from the upper floors, and coming and going via the city's storm drains. Concerned with tipping their hand too early, Miss Vee and her closest agents rarely leave the hotel except to run their monthly slave stock out to smugglers bound for Hangnail.

L1. STORM DRAIN APPROACH

CR 1/2

This long, darkened tunnel of well-worn bricks branches away from the main trunk and curves gentle into darkness.

The Recherche's lower levels are the former basement and cistern of the estate, long ago connected to the city's sewers.

Hazard To warn them of visitors, the Abyssinial Chain have rigged this passage with nearly-invisible tripwires. The wires have no immediate effect, but sound several small bells in area N3 and N13, above, alerting Brazajer and Miss Vee of intruders.

TRIPWIRE ALARM CR 1/2

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 15

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual Effect Bells in the upper complex sound

L2. BASEMENT STORAGE

CR4

This large room stores wine and ale, preserves, and any other goods that can stand up to the moisture.

Creatures An unusual relationship has formed between Panterri, one of the Candymen chokers, and Gondalyn, one of the Mollycoddle mermaids. Marked primarily by heated arguments, mutual abuse, and a

PART TWO

THE HOTEL REGHERGHE













AREA L1. STORM DRAIN APPROACH AREA L2. BASEMENT STORAGE AREA L3. OLD CISTERN AREA L4. STAIRWELL AREA L5. BRAZAJER'S QUARTERS AREA L6. FALSE FRONT AREA L7. CASINO FLOOR AREA L8. GUARD ROOMS AREA L9. COUNTING ROOM AREA L10. UPPER HALL AREA L11. GUEST ROOMS AREA L12. THE WORKROOM AREA L13. FOURTH FLOOR LANDING AREA L14. THE PENTHOUSE AREA L15. THE ROOF

Part Two

passionate physical relationship, the pair take every opportunity to sneak away together. The relationship is tolerated (though not appreciated) by their mutual gangs, and Miss Vee allows them the use of this basement room if only to keep their distressing physical affection out of sight.

If the PCs enter the storage room, they catch the pair in repose, and the choker and mermaid are both staggered the first round of combat. If the PCs pass this room without checking it, allow the creatures within Perception checks to notice the intruders; on a success, they spend a round unraveling themselves and move to

BRAZAJER

CR 4 XP 1,200

Azhar fighter (weapon master) 5 (*Freeport, City of Adventure* 356, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide* 109)

LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +3 Dex) **hp** 47 (5d10+15)

Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; +2 vs. fire Vulnerable cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor) **Melee** mwk longsword +8 (1d8+2/19-20)

Ranged mwk pistol +11 (1d8+3/×4)

Special Attacks reliable strike (1/day), weapon training (firearms)

TACTICS

During Combat Brazajer downs a *potion of cat's grace* and opens up with his pistol, whittling away ranged opponents first using Deadly Aim. He lost his left eye to an evoker years ago, and preferentially targets arcane casters, usually holding an action each round to fire and disrupt spellcasting.

Morale If both his guards are dead and Brazajer is reduced below half hit points, he flees upstairs to report to Miss Vee.

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10 Base Atk +5; CMB +7; CMD 20 (21 vs. disarm, 21 vs. sunder)

Feats Deadly Aim, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms) ^{uc}, Point-blank Shot, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (pistol), Weapon Specialization (pistol)

Skills Acrobatics +5 (+1 to jump), Climb +6, Craft (firearms) +5, Profession (sailor) +6, Swim +4

Languages Ahzar, Common

SQ might of the efreet (1/day), weapon guard

Combat Gear fuse grenade (2), *potion of cat's grace* (2); **Other Gear** mwk breastplate, black powder (20), firearm bullet (20), mwk longsword, mwk pistol, *cloak of resistance +1*, gunsmith's kit, 50 gp

confront the heroes from behind (possible joining the fight in the cistern).

PANTERRI: hp 22 (Advanced choker, see Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary)
GONDALYN: hp 23 (Mollycoddle thug, see p. 19)

L3. OLD CISTERN

CR 6

A shallow pool of grimy muck dominates this circular room, though a stone walkway surrounds it and a rickety wooden pier crosses its center. Sturdy, untarnished iron rings stud the walls at regular intervals.

The Abyssinial Chain conducts most of its business here, meeting with the local gangs for slave deliveries and payouts, as well as staging their occasional clandestine trips to smuggling ships waiting in the docks. The grimy water her is only two feet deep—deep enough for the Mollycoddles to barely navigate without slowing them but is also rife with disease; any creature wading through the water must succeed a DC 11 Fortitude save or contract the shakes (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* 557), while any creature submerged in the water must succeed a DC 13 Fortitude save instead. The mermaids have all contracted and recovered from the disease in the past year, and are immune to future infection.

Creatures Miss Vee's most trusted lieutenant, Brazajer, resides here in the quiet tunnels. Brazajer first came to Vee's attention in Hangnail and served as her personal bodyguard when she first arrived in the pirate city. A lifelong native of Hangnail, the azhar finds Freeport too large, loud, and full of its own supposed glory for his liking; he prefers the relative quiet of the hotel's basement worth the smell, and it also places him as Miss Vee's primary contact with all her local talent. He is an expert in black powder and firearms, and ultimately his own connections with other technological afficianados brought Miss Vee and the surgeon Chirdus together.

Two guards watch the old cistern at all times, alongside Brazajer.

BRAZAJER: hp 47 (See at left) CHAIN GANGERS (2): *hp 34* (See p. 25)

Development A clockwork alarm bell is tucked near the ceiling on one wall, and can be triggered by Miss Vee (see area N12) in an emergency, signaling Brazajer to rush to her aid. It can be discovered with a successful DC 20 Perception check and Disabled with a successful DC 18 Disable Device check.

The Abyssinial Chain

L4. STAIRWELL

The stairwell here leads up to the second floor (area N7), bypassing the hotel's first floor entirely. A tapestry conceals the door to Brazajer's room (Perception DC 18).

L5. BRAZAJER'S QUARTERS

Equal parts home and workshop, Brazajer keeps a tidy living space that betrays his military origins. Though shabby, his bed is neatly made and his gunsmithing workbench is well organized.

Treasure A small chest by the bed (Disable Device DC 20) contains a gunsmithing kit and Brazajer's accumulated wealth: 12 pp, 185 gp, a coat pistol, and a gorgon longarm.

L6. FALSE FRONT

CR 6

Lack of attention and the march of time have steadily peeled away the fine workmanship and colorful paints of this expansive hotel lobby. Mold reclaims all but one of the plush chairs, while patches of white mar the threadbare carpet, dripped from the ceiling's crumbling plaster. A tarnished silver tea service rests atop the room's only unbroken table.

The Hotel Recherche's lobby is in dire disrepair, showing signs of a number of temporary hovels claimed by Freeport's homeless stretching back for years. The front door handles were stolen years ago, only a length of weathered gray rope ties them shut now.

Inside, the lobby and parlor flow into one large room. The stairwell leading up to the second floor was boarded up long ago (requiring four successful DC 15 Strength checks—each taking 2 minutes—to open up enough for a medium-sized creature to squeeze through), and a crude sign hangs from the barrier:

"DANGER; UPPER FLOORS UNSOUND."

Creatures The ground floor is not as abandoned as it seems. A pair of mimics claimed the lobby as their lair years ago, preying upon the vagrants and urban explorers who would break in. They serve Miss Vee now in exchange for regular feedings and a small hoard of their own to protect. One silently waits as the only posh chair yet to be overtaken by mold, while the other disguises itself as a table and wears a precious tea set like an attractive hat.

MIMICS (2): *hp 52 each* (see *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

CHAIN GANGERS

CR 3 XP 800

Human fighter 4 NE Medium humanoid (human) Init +6; **Senses** Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex) **hp** 34 (4d10+8)

Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +3 (+1 vs. fear)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk heavy flail +8 (1d10+4/19-20)

TACTICS

During Combat The Abyssinial Chain's premiere guards—imported from Hangnail—are fearsome foes, but accustomed to putting down unruly slaves more than pushing back outside attackers. They primarily fight to disarm and subdue attackers, then shackle them for later sale.

| Morale The chain gangers won't throw | their lives | away. |
|--|-------------|-------|
| They flee if reduced below 5 hit points. | | |

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8
Base Atk +4; CMB +7 (+9 disarm); CMD 19 (21 vs. disarm)
Feats Bludgeoner^{UC}, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack
Skills Climb +8, Intimidate +6, Perception +4, Sense Motive +4, Swim +8
Languages Common, Elven
SQ armor training 1
Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds (2);
Other Gear mwk chain shirt, mwk heavy flail, mwk manacles, prisoner cell keys (area L11), 5 gp

Treasure The slightly-dinged silver tea service is worth 250 gp. The remainder of the mimics' treasure is piled behind the reception desk: 1,412 gp and 5,652 sp, all of foreign mint (a successful DC 20 Knowledge [geography] check identifies the mint as the Ivory Ports), and a black glass faux "pearl" the size of a monkey's head (15 gp)

L7. CASINO FLOOR

CR 5

Several tables crowd one side of this large room, while a small desk dominates the center from behind a barrier of well-worn iron bars—a glowing bucket of embers and irons sits within. Scattered, time-worn playing cards litter the corners.

The Recherché's second floor was once given over to gambling and games of chance, and it continued to play a roll as a gambling den long after its glory days were passed. Most of the slave processing and branding happens here

GUILDMOTHER GOLD

CR 4 XP 1,200

Ratfolk oracle 5 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide* 42, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Race Guide* 150)

N Small humanoid (ratfolk)

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +2 Dex, +1 shield, +1 size)

hp 46 (5d8+20)

Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +8

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft. (15 ft. in armor)

Melee mwk sickle +7 (1d6), mwk sickle +7 (1d6), or Steel Scarf +8 (1d8+2)

Special Attacks swarming

Oracle Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +6)

2nd (4/day)—arrow of law^{UM} (DC 13), cure moderate wounds, darkness, heat metal (DC 13)

1st (7/day)—cause fear (DC 12), cure light wounds, divine favor, lead blades^{APG}, murderous command^{UM} (DC 12), ray of sickening^{UM} (DC 12)

0 (at will)—detect magic, detect poison, guidance, mending, read magic, virtue

Mystery Metal

TACTICS

Before Combat If she hears combat, Gold drinks her *potion of bear's endurance* and casts *divine favor* and *lead blades* on herself before moving out to the casino to investigate.

During Combat Gold begins any fight casting *darkness*; she and her clockwork assistants rely on darkvision. She then casts *murderous command* on the biggest opponent before finally engaging with either her steel scarf ability or her scythes.

Morale Guildmother Gold fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without her spells, Guildmother Gold has the following statistics: hp 36, Fort +4, mwk sickle +6 (1d4-1)

STATISTICS

Str 8, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 13 Base Atk +3; CMB +2; CMD 14

Feats Two-weapon Defense, Two-weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics -1 (-9 to jump), Appraise +8, Craft (clockwork) +10, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +5, Knowledge (religion) +6, Perception +5, Sense Motive +7; Racial Modifiers +2 Perception, rodent empathy

Languages Common

SQ oracle's curse (clouded vision), revelations (iron constitution, steel scarf)

Combat Gear potion of bear's endurance; **Other Gear** +1 chainmail, mwk sickle (2), cloak of resistance +1, cleric's vestments, masterwork thieves' tools, masterwork clockmaker's tools, stairwell keys (area L7), 83 gp

briefly before throwing them into cells upstairs, and most of the gang's guards rest or relax here. The desk enclosed by bars is the old cashier's desk, and its bars provide soft cover to anyone inside. The lock broke years ago; the door must now be forced open with a DC 12 Strength check to enter or leave.

The northern stairs lead down to the first floor (area L6). The southeastern stairs lead up to the third floor (area L10), but are barred with a newly-installed, heavy iron bars (Disable Device DC 35, hardness 10, 60 hit points); only Guildmother Gold and Miss Vee carry keys.

Creatures The Abyssinial Chain has recently brought on a small number of additional guards, recruited from the Cockspurs' ranks. The neophytes train here, under the watchful eye of one of the Chain's longtime guards. Two of the hobgoblins hide within the cashier's cage and attack with their longbows, while the remaining guards charge into battle.

CHAIN GANGER: hp 34 (See p. 25) HOBGOBLINS (4): hp 17 each (see Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary)

Treasure A hidden wallsafe, concealed under the room's wallpaper, has remained undiscovered for nearly a century. The safe requires a successful DC 24 Perception check to notice, and may be opened with a successful DC 30 Disable Device check or DC 24 Strength check. It contains 1,830 gp, 1,255 sp, a large black sapphire (850 gp), and stylized monkey figurine carved from teak (35 gp) that is actually a cleverly disguised vial (Perception DC 25 to notice) containing five doses of *restorative ointment*.

L8. GUARD ROOMS

Each of these spartan rooms contains two simple but comfortable beds and four a pair of footlockers, as well as some random furnishings and simple personal effects. Most of the Abyssinial Chain's guards and agents live in these apartments.

L9. COUNTING ROOM

CR6

These interconnected chambers once served as housekeeping and business offices, and now act as the Abyssinial Chain's record room and bookkeeping office.

Creatures The Abyssinial Chain's newest recruit—a ratfolk native of Freeport named Guildmother Reevava Gold—dwells here. A disciple not of any specific god but of the concept of wealth and profit, she fully endorses the

Abyssinial Chain's goals, and originally helped Miss Vee settle into the city's underworld when she first arrived in Freeport. The guildmother is well-versed in clockwork, and spends most of her days designing more natural-looking replacements for Miss Vee's existing mechanical limbs. Gold has already designed several rejected prototypes, and has cobbled the parts together into distressingly human-limbed clockwork servants to assist in her work.

GUILDMOTHER GOLD: hp 46 CLOCKWORK SERVANTS (2): hp 31 each (see Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3)

Development A clockwork alarm bell is tucked near the ceiling on one wall, and can be triggered by Miss Vee (see encounter N12) in an emergency, signaling Gold to rush to her aid. It can be discovered with a successful DC 20 Perception check and Disabled with a successful DC 18 Disable Device check.

Treasure A golden idol depicting a fat rat with rubystudded eyes (950 gp) sits in a small shrine in one corner of the room. The true item of value here, however, are Guildmother Gold's scribblings on market trends and economic predictions. Recognizable with a successful DC 20 Linguistics or Profession (merchant) check, these notes allow PCs to invest up to 250 gp, and collect ten times their original investment after 1d4 weeks. The notes may only be used once.

L10. UPPER HALL

CR5

A faded, threadbare red carpet covers the lonely hallway here, while sturdy, locked doors line ether wall.

The Chain keeps their captives here in between shipments. When they have too many prisoners for even these rooms, they chain them to the walls in the cistern (area L3).

Creatures A trio of doru divs—gifts from Captain Grymes—prowl up and down this hallway invisibly, using their enchantments to keep the prisoners docile by charming them into compliance or using *suggestion* to convince them escape is too dangerous. Miss Vee and the rest of the Chain are keenly aware that the divs serve as Grymes's eyes and ears, and have no great love of the creatures. The divs watch any intruders invisibly for a few moments, then create an illusory guard to see how these newcomers react before finally springing a surprise attack.

DIV, DORU (3): hp 16 each (see Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3)

PART TWO

WHERE'S JAKOB?

PCs hunting for Jakob Wynt may finally discover him in the Abyssinial Chain's slave cells on the third floor, but ultimately the halforc's location is left for each gamemaster to decide based on the tone of her campaign. In more traditional games, players should find him imprisoned alongside the Abyssinial Chain's other captives. In darker games, he may be dead by the time the PCs find him, and his body fed to the guard mimics (encounter L6).

If gamemasters want to provide players with additional motivation to travel to Hangnail in the next adventure, Jakob may have already been shipped to the hidden port. If the heroes report as much to Abigayle Wynt, she offers to double her reward if the PCs travel to Hangnail and bring her brother home.

L11. GUEST ROOMS

Each of these hotel rooms has been transformed into a small cell, holding multiple captives in between arrivals of Hangnail slaver ships in the harbor. The door locks aren't sophisticated (Disable Device DC 20), and each chain ganger carries a key.

Between five and fifty prisoners may be held here at any given time.

L12. THE WORKROOM

CR6

Beakers, gears, and surgeon's tools are all arranged carefully around a sturdy central table bedecked with bloodstains and leather straps.

Miss Vee converted the hotel's suite into a makeshift surgery for her personal physician, Chirdus. Here, the strange man makes the regular adjustments and cleanings required to keep his leader's augmented body in proper working order. The table's straps are to restrain unwilling test subjects, but also keep willing patients from writhing too much during the doctor's extensive procedures.

Creatures Chirdus is a twisted azhar man obsessed with improving the mortal form, though even his own people found his extreme body modification experiments disturbing and ultimately drove him penniless to the lost

PART TWO

CHIRDUS

THE ABYSSINIAL CHAIN

CR 4 XP 1,200

Azhar alchemist (chirurgeon, vivisectionist) 5 (Freeport, City of Adventure 356, Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide 26, Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic 18, 20) LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +2 natural, +4 shield)

hp 36 (5d8+10)

Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2; +2 bonus vs. poison, +2 vs. fire Defensive Abilities fortification 50%; Resist poison resistance Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 spiked gauntlet +9 (1d4+6)

Special Attacks sneak attack +3d6

Alchemist (Chirurgeon, Vivisectionist) Extracts Prepared (CL 5th; concentration +7)

2nd—bull's strength, lesser restoration, see invisibility

1st—cure light wounds, deathwatch, expeditious retreat, polypurpose panacea^{\rm UM}, shield

TACTICS

Before Combat If he hears combat outside, Chirdus drinks his strength mutagen and his extracts of *bull's strength* and *shield*, then opens the door to release Tinker upon intruders first.

During Combat Under the effects of his mutagen, the normally staid and cowardly surgeon becomes aggressive and bloodthirsty. He leaps into combat alongside his pet, always maneuvering to flank when possible.

Morale While affected by his mutagen, Chirdus fights to the death. Without his mutagen, he surrenders at the first opportunity.

Base Statistics Without his mutagen and extracts, Chirdus has the following statistics: AC 15 (touch 11), flat-footed 14), +1 spiked gauntlet +5 (1d4+2), Str 12, Int 16, CMB +4, CMD 15, Craft (alchemy) +13, Craft (clockwork) +9, Spellcraft +11

STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 10 Base Atk +3; CMB +8; CMD 19

Feats Brew Potion, Craft Construct, Craft Magic Arms & Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Skill Focus (Heal), Throw Anything

Skills Acrobatics +2, Climb +6, Craft (alchemy) +12 (+17 to create alchemical items), Craft (clockwork) +8, Disable Device +8, Heal +14 (+15 circumstance to treat wounds or deadly wounds), Perception +6, Sleight of Hand +8, Spellcraft +10, Use Magic Device +8

Languages Azhar, Common, Draconic, Elven, Ignan

SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +5), anaesthetic, discoveries (preserve organs x2), infused curative, mutagen (+4/-2, +2 natural armor, 50 minutes), swift alchemy

Combat Gear healer's kit, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (7 charges); **Other Gear** mwk chain shirt, *+1 spiked gauntlet*, alchemist's lab, su rgeon's tools, gold Mazin arm cuff (125 gp), 27 gp city of Hangnail. He spent years practicing his experimental techniques on desperate locals and even his own body before Veerona—then a quadruple amputee—contracted his services. In the decade since their first meeting, Chirdus has managed to restore the elven woman's agency and mobility, and become her indispensible aid and advisor.

Chirdus can be found in this workshop whenever not directly tending to his mistresses' wounds, dabbling with his literal pet project: a jaguar named Tinker whom he is slowly converting from flesh to completely mechanical. Despite the constant pain she endures, Tinker is hopelessly addicted to the painkillers her master provides, and remains ferociously loyal.

CHIRDUS: *hp 36* (See at left) TINKER: *hp 43* (See below)

Development In addition to his formula book, Chirdus keeps several log books—written in Ignan detailing the increasingly horrific surgeries he performs

TINKER

CR 4 XP 1,200

N Medium augmented leopard (*Pathfinder Roleplaying* Game Advanced Bestiary 35, Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 40)

Init +8; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 Dex, +4 natural) **hp** 43 (4d8+25); regeneration 5 (bypassed by electricity damage)

Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +1

DR 5/adamantine; **Resist** acid 5, cold 5, fire 5, sonic 5; **SR** 15 **Weaknesses** vulnerable to electricity, of two worlds

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d6+5 plus grab), 2 claws +8 (1d3+5) Ranged integrated musket +7 (1d12/[XXTS]4) Special Attacks pounce, rake (2 claws +6, 1d3+4)

STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 6 Base Atk +3; CMB +8; CMD 22

Feats Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Stealth) **Skills** Acrobatics +8 (+12 when jumping), Climb +17, Stealth +12; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics when jumping

SQ augmentations (advanced sensors [blindsight], enhanced Str +2, enhanced Con +2, enhanced Hit Die,

enhanced AC +3, faster +10 ft, integrated firearm [musket])

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Of Two Words (Ex) Tinker counts as both an animal and a construct for the purposes of spells targeting either, and only receives half the hit points restored from any healing or repair magic.

on Veerona, dating back to his first encountering her "in that wretched port some twelve years prior." His notes go on to detail their journey to Freeport two years ago at the behest of "our well-placed local benefactor," and his struggle ever since acquiring certain rare reagents for his work. His more recent notes include grumblings about the recent involvement of Guildmother Gold, and while he begrudgingly admits her knowledge of clockwork is superior to his own, he is disgusted at being required to share his notes. Nothing in his notes mentions Hangnail or their mysterious benefactor's identity.

A clockwork alarm bell is tucked near the ceiling on one wall, and can be triggered by Miss Vee (see encounter N12) in an emergency, signaling Chirdus and Tinker to rush to her aid. It can be discovered with a successful DC 20 Perception check and Disabled with a successful DC 18 Disable Device check.

Treasure Chirdus' lab is a mess, but a successful DC 18 Perception check uncovers a healer's kit, five doses of antiplague^{UE}, five doses of troll oil^{UE}, two vials of soul stimulant^{UE}, a potion of *cure serious wounds*, and an *anatomy doll^{UE}*.

L13. FOURTH FLOOR LANDING

This wide landing includes a small laundry service loaded with bloodstained sheets and bandages.

L14. THE PENTHOUSE

CR 8

Plush pillows and expensive, foreign furniture fill this room is a riot of colors, belying the hotel's dismal exterior. Burning brazier filling the room with cloying sweet and spicy scents, almost masking the stench of rotting flesh.

Miss Vee—Veerona Salvinue—makes her home here, managing the Abyssinial Chain's operations in Freeport. Most of the expensive accommodations are imported from her former home of Silverus—a subtle but constant reminder of the terrible price she paid for her former weakness. Brutally mutilated by the merchant princes who overthrew the city-state's royal family—her family in the Ivory Ports, she now exists as a hideous mockery of her former grace and breeding. Her amputated limbs have been replaced with ferocious brass arms and legs that seem more appropriate the a monster than an exiled princess, and what remains of her living flesh slowly rots from the intrusion of the mechanical parts that grants her mobility and agency once again.

As the PCs enter, Miss Vee greets them as expected and welcome guests, offering them coffee or tea as she would an old friend. Whethert hey accept of not, she tuts for a moment, then begins a prepared speech:

I can hardly say I'm happy with what you've done to my little operation, but in the end, power belongs to those strong enough to hold it, and clearly the crew I scraped from the bottom of Freeport's boot heels were never intended to be permanent assets. But you lot... Aren't you focused? Willful. Strong.

Make no mistake: What you've done over the past few days is impressive, but ultimately pointless. As you can see from my disfigured form, I have thrived in far worse. The Abyssinial Chain will tighten around this city's throat held sure by powerful hands—and resourceful sorts such as yourselves can choose to be links in the chain, or else be strangled in its coils.

This is a one-time offer. I like what I've seen from you, but my benefactor and I are not ones to grovel. Bow to me, and I will see you well cared for."

With so much of her infrastructure destroyed by the PCs' actions, Miss Vee fully stands by her offer. She knows she can rebuild, even if it takes a human lifetime, but she'd rather recruit the team resourceful enough to destroy her previous one, and she feels some genuine regret at having to destroy such powerful potential resources. It would be

THE GHAIN GANG

The benefit of the Abyssinial Chain's tight headquarters is swift backup in the event of attack. If the heroes skip over many of Miss Vee's forces on their way to confront her, they will rush to join the battle on the following rounds once combat begins in area L12:

- ROUND 3: Mr. Licorice (encounter L15)
- **ROUND 5:** Tinker (encounter N12)
- ROUND 6: Chirdus (encounter N12)
- **ROUND 8:** Guildmother Gold and her clockwork servants (encounter L9)
- ROUND 10: Brazajer (encounter L3)

Each of the listed areas has a corresponding alarm bell that observant heroes may notice and disable if they manage to bypass an area without confronting the creatures in it; if they do so, those guardians do not join in this final fight.

PART TWO

MISS VEE

THE ABYSSINIAL CHAIN

CR 7 XP 3,200

Female limbjack elf noble 5 (*Freeport: City of Adventure* 380, *Advanced Bestiary* 193) LE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +1; Senses low-light vision; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 21 (+5 armor, +1 deflection, +1 Dex, +5 shield)

hp 47 (5d8+25)

Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +6; +2 vs. enchantments Immune sleep

Defensive Abilities limb defense; Weakness metal body

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 mwk claws +11 (1d6+6), 2 mwk slam +10 (1d6+6) Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

During Combat Miss Vee doesn't broker an hesitation in her offer; he PCs seem hesitant or try to stall, she simply activates her potion reservoir to inject herself with a *potion of haste*, then leaps to attack, tearing into opponents with her claws and devastating kicks. The first time she suffers damage, she injects herself with a *potion of blur* as well.

Morale Miss Vee won't grovel or beg for her life, but likewise doesn't want to die. If reduced below 10 hit points, she'll barter any information she has (see developments, below) in exchange for her freedom, or else attempt to drink a *potion of invisibility* and flee.

a major departure from the assumptions of the adventure, but fi the PCs want to sign up with Miss Vee, she'll treat them as her right-hand servants. She might even send them to dismantle her superiors, allowing the next few adventures to take place, but with Miss Vee as the PCs' patron.

Creatures Miss Vee has been heavily reconstructed by Chirdus's experimentation, implanting mechanical limbs which grant her incredible strength and fearsome attacks. Despite the bevy of ointments, elixirs, and surgeries, she still exists in a state of constant pain and decay, blotching her once-porcelain flesh at her shoulders and thighs where living skin givens way to oil and brass.

A trio of guards attends to and protects Miss Vee at all times.

MISS VEE: *hp* 47 (See above) CHAIN GANGERS (3): *hp* 34 each (See p. 25)

Development Miss Vee keeps extensive journals explaining in detail how she discovered and approached each of the Abyssinial Chain's component gangs, and lists a dozen more she is preparing to approach in the

STATISTICS

Str 22, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 15, Wis 8, Cha 12 Base Atk +3; CMB +9; CMD 21

Feats Combat Expertise, Iron Will, Persuasive, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claws), Cosmopolitan^{ISWG}, Aura of Nobility1^{F:CoA}

Skills Acrobatics +4, Appraise +9, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +11, Disguise +6, Heal +3, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Perception +9, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +0 (+2 to identify magic item properties), Stealth +5, Use Magic Device +8; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Perception, +2 Spellcraft to identify magic item properties

Languages Aquan, Common, Elven, Goblin, Orc **SQ** area of expertise (scholarly novice, illicit student), influence (4), power base (iron will), elven magic

Combat Gear potions of blur (2), potions of cure serious wounds (2), potions of haste (3), potion of invisibility, , scrolls of animal messenger (3); **Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, belt of giant strength +2, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +1, platinum Salvinue signet ring (450 gp)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Limb Defense (Ex) Miss Vee's arms and legs are mechanical; they have DR 20/adamantine against any attacks targeting them specifically, and resist acid, cold, and fire 30. Against spells targeting her limbs directly (such as stay the hand or rusting grasp).

Metal Body (Ex) Miss Vee's metal limbs are vulnerable to spells that affect metal.

Potion Reservoir (Ex) Three large glass bulbs in Miss Vee's left arm may contain three different potions. Once per round as a swift action, she may inject one of these potions into her body, gaining all the effects of drinking the potion normally. Her reservoir currently contains a potion of blur, a potion of cure serious wounds, and a potion of haste. The bulbs may be sundered as if they were held potion vials. Refilling a potion reservoir requires a potion and requires fives minutes of work.

coming months, as her "silent benefactor" within the city prepares to step up their slaving efforts to begin undermining Freeport's infrastructure and sew panic. She only ever refers to this superior in writing a "G," leaving a clue to arouse the PCs' suspicions, but little evidence they can use to target an influential member of Freeport's government.

More personal journals explain many of the details of her past, leaving her childhood and the usurpation of Silverus deliberately vague, but detailing making her way in the world as a tortured invalid with only a handful of desperate retainers, who went on to form the foundation of her criminal enterprise once the surgeon Chirdus restored her mobility and confidence. Thereafter, he philosophical musings detail a twisted, utilitarian mind obsessed with taking anything within reach.

Her logs also keep track of every slave captured, killed, or sold, and for the first time tells the PCs where their human cargo's destination: The hidden city of Hangnail.



Treasure Miss Vee keeps her personal fortune in this room: 582 gp, 17 pp, +1 heavy shield, wand of endure elements (25 charges), three amber rings (40 gp each), a silver codpiece (375 gp), stock certificates for various trading companies worth 550 gp, and an oil painting of a well-dressed and staid elven family with a half-dozen soulful-eyed children (recognizable as the deposed royal family of Silverus with a successful DC 18 Knowledge [history] or [nobility] check; worth 650 gp).

L15. THE ROOF

CR6

Stained sheets—tattered by months or years of exposure to the climate, still dangle from clotheslines stringing across this rooftop. A bent iron railing surrounds the edge, and to the west sits a battered old pigeon coop.

The Hotel Recherché's roof stands fifty feet above street level—almost twenty feet taller than the neighboring buildings and ten feet taller than the building directly across the street. The hotel's brick walls require a DC 25 Climb check to scale. Leaping from a neighboring building may reduce the climbing distance, but requires a successful DC 15 Acrobatics check to clear the alleys or a DC 25 Acrobatics check to cross the gap over the street. The roof itself is stable with few leaks, but the weathered wood creaks and shifts constantly, imposing a -10 penalty on all Stealth checks; these creaks also alert anyone on the hotel's fourth floor of intruders (the chokers are too light to cause any disturbance). The ragged old sheets are enough to provide partial concealment to creatures on either side of them.

A locked trap door (Disable Device DC 30) leads down to the fourth floor landing (area N12). Mr. Licorice and Miss Vee each carry a key.

Creatures The pillow-strewn old pigeon coop on the roof here serves as the nest for the nasty family of chokers called the Candy Men. Their father, the midnight strangler known as Mr. Licorice, sleeps here day and night. His will broken by his defeat at Miss Vee's mechanical hands, he now serves as little more than a bloated watchdog. His two youngest sons rest by their father, alternately keeping watch as he snoozes. If anyone attacks, the younger chokers attack, but Mr. Licorice is staggered the first round of combat.

MR. LICORICE: hp 44 (See p. 32) CHOKERS (2): hp 16 each (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary)

Development A clockwork alarm bell is tucked near the ceiling on one wall, and can be triggered by Miss Vee

PART TWO

THE ABYSSINIAL CHAIN

MR. LICORICE CR 4 XP 1,200

Choker rogue 2 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary* 45) CE Small aberration

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+2 armor, +1 deflection, +1 Dex, +4 natural, +1 size) hp 44 (5d8+22) Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +4

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 10 ft.Melee 2 tentacles +8 (1d4+4 plus grab)Space 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (1d4+4), grab (Medium), sneak attack +1d6, strangle

(see area N12) in an emergency, signaling Brazajer to rush to her aid. It can be discovered with a successful DC 20 Perception check and Disabled with a successful DC 18 Disable Device check.

GONGLUPING THE APPENTURE

If Miss Vee is slain or driven away, her journals contain any information the PCs require to wrap up loose ends, such as detailing the final fate of Jakob Wynt and pointing to the hidden port of Hangnail as her starting point and the market to which she sells her kidnapped victims. Her notes also allude to similar organizations she has helped her silent partner "G" establish in other parts of the city, using her cell-style system of recruited criminal gangs who remain largely ignorant of one another, but her writings describe them as amateurish and unready to push forward with the next phase of the usurpation. Who exactly "G" is and what usurpation he and she have planned are left undetailed.

If Miss Vee survives her encounter, she flees the city. She understands all too well what Grymes is likely to do

TACTICS

During Combat Mr. Licorice and his children dart among the clotheslines, taking advantage of their reach to hit from afar. If one of his children manages to grapple an enemy, Mr. Licorice focuses his attacks on their victim.

Morale While his sons fight to the death, Mr. Licorice is more practical. If reduced below half hit points, he drinks his *potion of invisibility* and flees to Miss Vee's side below.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 9

Base Atk +3; CMB +6 (+10 grapple); CMD 18 Feats Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Stealth),

Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +8 (+4 to jump), Climb +16, Escape Artist +8, Intimidate +6, Perception +7, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +15

Languages Common

SQ quickness, rogue talent (fast stealth), trapfinding +1 **Combat Gear** potion of invisibility, potion of remove

disease; **Other Gear** leather armor, *ring of protection +1*, trap door key, 390 gp

when he learns of her failure, and she has no intention of continuing to live in his shadow.

Whether alive or dead, if Miss Vee cannot oversee the cells of the Abyssinial Chain, the subordinate gangs fall back to their small-scale schemes and petty fights over territory, and while they may remain local dangerous, the kidnapping epidemic all but vanishes.

So long as the PCs keep her informed, Abigayle Wynt is eager to hear any news they can provide and understanding of any bad news. She pays any agreed upon rewards without hesitation, and even if the PCs are unable to rescue her brother she may remain a valuable contact within Freeport's wealthy families so long as they handle her situation with respect.

Whatever the details, the PCs should complete *The Abyssinial Chain* knowing that the city's primary slaving operation has been shut down, but smaller faction may remains, and that the source of this growing cancer within the city lies somewhere in the near-mythical pirate port of Hangnail.

LIGENSE

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