

Campaign Guide

What Lies Beyond Reason

Adventure Path

by Micah Watt

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Campaign Guide

A Campaign Guide for the What Lies Beyond Reason Adventure Path

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How to Use this Guide

This is a GM resource and contains significant spoilers for the epic adventure *What Lies Beyond Reason*. If you are intending to play the Adventure Path do not read any further!

What is this Campaign Guide?

The Campaign Guide is a toolkit for GMs intending to run the *What Lies Beyond Reason* Adventure Path. None of this material is necessary for play, though it will add significant depth to the immersion and continuity of the campaign. The additional material presented here should allow for more freedom in choice for both players and the GM, with the provided advice hopefully assisting in avoiding complications or unintended results in gameplay.

Finally, it allows me, the author, to offer a more detailed examination of my intentions regarding the story, themes and interpretations for the Adventure Path. This is in no way meant to be a statement of the 'right' way to play. The 'right' way is the way you play that makes it fun for you and your group. This is merely a chance to help put it all together so you can get a sense of my perspective. How you use this information (if at all) is entirely up to you.

The Campaign Guide is divided into 6 sections;

Campaign Background covers the history and adventure path synopsis. This provides the abridged backstory for the campaign and the secrets and twists that will slowly be revealed to the players as the campaign progresses.

Running the Campaign offers advice and material on managing elements of the campaign play. This includes suggestions on managing the campaign themes and players, as well as how to use the unique NPC involvement and inserting the side trek adventures.

The City Setting continues on from the Player's Guide, adding material that the players and characters would not be aware of, but will offer the GM a depth of information to assist in bringing the city to life as a rich backdrop to the action.

Alternate or Adjusted Campaigns is a small section raising the possibilities for altering the campaign to suit different groups or play preferences, and the potential consequences of those changes. This section deals with subject matter that drastically alters fundamental premises of the provided material.

The Side Treks are a series of additional encounters or adventures designed to add peripheral content that of the main adventure line. These are purely optional although all offer something to the story.

The Bestiary includes creatures that are found in and around Anduria and feature in the Adventure Path. The Bestiary details several new creatures and a number of monsters previously seen in the adventure modules that require expanded statistics or extended explanations.

Micah Watt Pyromaniac Press



Campaign Background

Aether's Triumph

Thalanus - the last lord of Tarrelon – staggered briefly before he fell, his body pierced by his own greatsword.

Aether's eyes swept the across the carnage before him. Corpses were strewn about his cathedral, blood and gore splattered across the marble columns and soaking into the rich maroon carpet. All the assassins had fallen save one, a mousy looking wretch that cowered and crawled. Aether allowed himself a momentary smile of contempt. He didn't even bother to finish off the worm. After all, souls – even pitiful ones such as this – weren't to be wasted lightly. He'd need them all.

He took one last long look around the chamber, seeking any further sources of distraction. The only movement other than the cowering human filth and the slow slide of blood and viscera down the walls was his High Priestess Liviana. She stood nearby, seemingly transfixed by the scene of slaughter, her expression conveying a mixture of shock, horror and awe. He drank it in. Such things were the province of Gods. Mortals should never for an instant forget their place. Liviana was a useful servant, but arrogant, puffed by her prestigious position by his side. The brief and starkly brutal violence that ended this ill-conceived attempt to disrupt the ceremony would remind her again of the gulf between them. Her glory was a tiny, pale reflection of his - a mere token offered to favour the greatest among vastly inferior creatures. Her eyes slowly met his, flashed guiltily, and then darted to the floor. Fear emanated off her in palpable waves. Aether turned away, satisfied that his servant was suitably humbled.

The assassins had interrupted him momentarily, but the Ritual continued unabated. Energy gathered in the receptacles in the walls, arcing and dancing across the features of the bas relief carvings. The outer burgs of the city would be feeling the effects most keenly now as the Ritual worked through the complex lattice of the Machine. Its burgeoning power beginning at the furthest reaches and moving inward to Aether at the centre. He could feel the power slowly building, drawing life energy from the souls of the city's populous. Already it was enormous... and would grow greater still.

The first screams reached his ears. Millions of mortals crying out in pain and dread, as their souls were wrung from them to power his grand design. Liviana gasped in pain, and Aether spared her a moment's notice. She had dropped to her knees, clutching her chest. Her expression was one of disbelief, an almost comical realization of betrayal. It hadn't occurred to him she would be similarly affected as the rest of the sacrifices although he concluded that it mattered not. First among insects was still as nothing to him. She could always be replaced.

The soul energy was building to its apex, immense and unpredictable. It lashed out in flashes and arcs, scoring the marble surfaces. Cracks began to appear in the walls and stone chips began to break away, skittering across the chamber in a frenetically charged dance. The moment of his triumph was upon him. Aether reached out, drawing the energy to him, and thus through him. He slowly ascended into the air, borne up by the iridescent force suffusing his temple. It filled him to bursting and beyond. He exulted in it. He seized it, guiding it through the soul receptacle, then through the focal lens and into the Gateway at the edge of the city. With slow, deliberate precision he charged the magical conduits. He felt the gate begin to form - the portal to R'lyeh... and his salvation.

Pain, sudden and sharp, shot through him like a lance of lightning. He was momentarily stunned, unsure of its origin. Then it lanced through him again, radiating up from his kidney, as something was twisted sharply. The soul energy began to slip from his control and his body shuddered, wracked a third time by agonising pain. He fought to control it but it was like trying to hold water - it leaked dangerously, his will wavering. Weakness flowed through him. He turned his head, seeking the source of his torment. Behind him stood Liviana, bloody dagger in hand and a shocked, almost empty look on her face. He opened his mouth to say something, but only coughed, blood splattering his chin. The roiling soul energy rebelled, bucking and tearing at him like a caged animal. Aether's strength faded and his grip released. Then the world exploded in fire and darkness.

Adventure Path Background & Timeline

A narrative back story has been provided in Adventure 1 and added to in Adventures 2 & 3. By this point the GM should have a fairly complete picture of what has gone before and why. Rather than repeating this in full, this section serves as a condensed 'working' summary – a quick reference to refresh the major elements at a glance to assist in running the adventure path. **In the Beginning** – A race (known now only as the builders) creates the great machine at the heart of a city. The machine's function is to alter reality upon use, and its use is tied to a slow accumulation of energy. The machine can be activated once every 1000 years. The intent of the builders is unclear but the effective result is that every 1000 years or so the society inhabiting the city above the machine tends to suffer some form of calamitous upheaval due to poorly conceived or selfish changes wrought with its power.

1000 years ago (approximately) – Aether, a young and arrogant demi god, accidentally enters the chaos realm R'lyeh whilst exploring the universe. Encountering the slumbering Cthulhu, he is driven insane by the contact, and flees randomly into the dark places of creation.

700 years ago (approximately) - The Machine is activated resulting, predictably, in the fall of the current society inhabiting the Eternal City.

300 years ago (approximately) – Aether emerges from hiding, psychologically somewhat worse for wear, but recovered sufficiently to be coherent. His madness has become refined from absolute chaos to a fanatical desire to return and master the secrets of Cthulhu. However, in his frenzied flight, and his subsequent insane state he has forgotten the location of the Sunken City R'lyeh.

Searching in vain for answers, he turns to Asmodeus for a solution and learns of the Machine in the Eternal City. With its reality altering powers it can open a portal to R'lyeh. Unwilling to wait for it to recharge, he makes a deal with the King of Hell – an infernal refit of the Machine that allows it to be powered by sacrificing souls in exchange for his divine soul upon his death.

In order to accumulate sufficient souls to power the machine, Aether creates a religion with himself as the focal figure, granting power and miracles to his followers. The religion sweeps the world and millions flock to the city.

290 years ago (approximately) – The alterations to the machine are completed, and Aether enacts a ritual designed to draw the souls from the city's population. At the last moment Aether is struck down by his high priestess, and the gathered energy is released in a cataclysm, destroying much of the city and its inhabitants.

Aether is apparently slain, but his soul is not found, much to Asmodeus' disappointment.

Asmodeus founds the Seekers, a military organization dedicated to finding Aether's missing soul and delivering the Arch devil's due.

In the aftermath of the cataclysm, the remaining citizens of the city rebuild, turning their society from religion to self-sufficiency. Aether's high priestess – Liviana - was also slain in the conflagration, but continues to exist as a malevolent spirit. After an epiphany she determines the only method of redemption for her Deicide is to rebuild the Machine and complete Aether's vision. She renames herself 'The Echo of Faith' and slowly begins to accumulate power, wealth and influence and seeks to unearth the missing Machine components over the next few centuries.

38 years ago – Barrus Anthilas, a wealthy merchant, buys patents of nobility and makes the ill-fated decision to build a manor on land that sits above a tainted machine fragment. He marries a young bride and begins to raise a family.

37 years ago – Damien Anthilas is born to Barrus and Hellena. Coincidentally Triast Belmarr is born to Ainsley and Ferrah in the same year.

32 years ago – Eiria Valdorn is born, the culmination of product of a breeding program spanning generations, engineered by the Echo of Faith to be her final and most powerful host. The Echo sets Eiria on a path to becoming Guildmaster of the Explorer's Guild, and a tool to bring her plans to fruition.

29 years ago – The misfortune plagued Anthilas family suffer a pivotal loss – Barrus Anthilas is slain while abroad. This precipitates a series of events that shape the vulnerable Damien, including surviving an abusive step father, the discovery of the Machine artefact under the manor and his single-minded pursuit of dark arcane secrets in an effort to stave off a bleak future for the city. For the next three decades Damien grows in power and knowledge, but begins to lose his moral grounding in pursuit of 'the greater good'.

6 months ago – Damien's activities intersect with those of the Echo of Faith, and he discovers that the events that seem to be leading the city to a ruinous end are being

carefully orchestrated. Finally able to focus on a target, Damien crosses a line in his pursuit of this villain by stealing the memories of the Echo's slaves, and takes strides down a villainous path of his own.

Present day – A mismatched group of fledgling adventurers takes shelter from a storm in a ramshackle country inn.

Adventure Synopsys

What follows is a short synopsis of the adventures in the series, offering a quick overview of the major actions and players, and how each adventure advances the plotline.

Prologue - Difficult Circumstances

Forced together by circumstance, a desperate group of adventurers must escape the confines of an underground cavern complex made treacherous by severe storms and burdened by an eclectic ensemble of colourful bystanders. Escaping to the surface in possession of a strange object, the group is thrust into a nightmarish trek to the city of Anduria, plagued by madness and visions, and hunted by an unknown assailant. Succor within their reach, the characters must negotiate with several city factions for custody of an ancient and potentially devastating artefact.

This adventure introduces two NPCs of campaign significance – Damien the Alchemist and Triast the Seeker.

Part 1 - Into Fear;

Adventure 1 – A Simple Job

Recovering from their previous ordeal, the PCs are approached by an amiable stranger, who proposes a simple job – obtain and deliver a shipment of cargo from point to point. Seems simple enough.

What follows is a cascading series of errands taking the PCs across the entire city, to strange locales and meeting even stranger creatures in an effort to fulfil the conditions required to obtain their cargo.



Along the way the PCs may make a number of useful allies and develop resources to assist them in the future, introducing Thaddeus the Merchant and a number of other NPCs.

Adventure 2 – Ignorance is Bliss

People are turning up assaulted and left in catatonic states, alive but devoid of personality and memory. The PCs are drawn into the investigation when they stumble onto one of these unfortunates.

Following several leads, the PCs traverse the seedier side of Anduria, and discover that someone is stealing memories through the use of drugs and a unique creature 'grown' for the task.

The evidence leads to an ally, Damien, who turns out to be not as the PCs expected. In the final confrontation the PCs learn that there are greater events afoot, and are urged to look deeper as Damien makes his escape.

This adventure introduces the Echo of Faith, and continues the story of Damien and Triast.

Adventure 3 – From the Ashes

Delving into the motivation behind Damien's criminal actions, the PCs are drawn to his abandoned family home. Haunted by unquiet spirits and shades of past misdeeds the PCs discover the manor holds a tale of a twisted childhood that shaped the path of Damien from being well intended to dangerously obsessed with saving the city from an impending doom.

Deep underground they find another ancient artefact bound to the first, and slowly begin to uncover more details about the vast powers at work in the city.

This adventure continues the story of Damien.

Part 2 - Into Fire;

Adventure 4 - Sanitarium

The madness and hysteria associated with the machine artefacts begins to rise, strange occurrences and psychotic breaks becoming alarmingly frequent. The population of the city begins to panic and riot. In the midst of investigating disappearances and the nature of the Seekers, one of the character's friends is committed to the Sanitarium, a huge psychiatric facility run by the Guild of Peace and Healing (Healing Hands). Infiltrating the complex, the PCs uncover two shocking secrets – The Healing Hands have been harbouring (and cannibalizing) the still living body of the fallen god Aether to power their waning magic, and that this practice has left them shattered and rife for takeover by the Seekers, who now control the guild and bent it towards their will.

The PCs must extract their friend, and in doing so they discover a method by which they can protect the city. Unveiling the dark truths of the Healing Hands Guild, the party must face the City Council and answer for their actions as the trial of the century rocks the city's power structure to its foundations.

This story continues the story of Triast, and concludes the story of Thaddeus.

Adventure 5 – Seeking Silver

The key to saving the city is in a massively complex runic spell. This spell needs to be engraved on the city walls in silver, but the silver supplies have been secretly dwindling for almost a year. The nearby mining town of Silverton (the main supplier of silver for generations) has mysteriously ceased trade relations.

The PCs are dispatched on the Council's behest to reopen negotiations and obtain the required silver. On arrival they discover the town under occupation by humanoid forces, the population forced to work for their oppressors, producing weapons of war.

By force or subterfuge, alone or with newfound allies (and old enemies), the PCs must break the grip of the devilish overlord controlling the region and free the township from slavery and the machinations of the Peregrine Trading Consortium.

Once the silver again flows to the city, the PCs must find a way to create the mystic ward and pay its unthinkable price.

This adventure continues the story of Damien.

Part 3 – To the Edge;

Adventure 6 - World in Shadow



As the new wards take effect the citizens feel a reprieve from the rising chaos. Unfortunately all is not well for long. The ragged remnants of the Seekers have finally discovered the location of the object of their centurieslong obsession; the Soul of Aether.

In the great cataclysm the boundaries of reality were warped, allowing transition between the planes of existence. The thinnest of barriers was that to the Plane of Shadow, where exists a shadowy duplicate of the City of Anduria. Aether's soul was bound to a receptacle on the machine, and this was shunted to the Shadow Plane when the ceremony went awry, thrusting him, along with a large proportion of the city's population, into an umbral nightmare realm.

The PCs must follow the Seekers to the Shadow City where they race to reassemble the Soul Stone and free Aether's mind from a twisted and tormented existence, and offer the fallen god either redemption or eternal slavery.

This adventure concludes the story of Triast.

Adventure 7 – Doors Best Left Closed

Returning to the material plane, the PCs find in their absence that the protective wards have been breached, the machine restoration all but completed, and the Echo on the brink of opening the gates to R'lyeh. The city teeters on the brink of annihilation of the Andurian civilization.

The Echo is revealed, and the PCs must gather every ally and favour for a last stand against an implacable enemy bent on a destructive course. Fighting their way through otherworldly foes, the PCs must confront the Echo in the heart of the machine itself. Can they stop her before all is lost, or will the city suffer the consequences of Aether's ancient obsession?

Doors Best Left Closed offers players and GMs open options for campaign completion, including several potential climaxes, and options for complete salvation, total annihilation or a 'shades of grey' victory at a disturbing cost.

This adventure concludes the story of Damien and the Echo of Faith.

Running the Campaign

This section covers running the Campaign from both an in-game and out-game perspective.

Adventure Path Themes – managing difficult or uncomfortable themes

The What Lies Beyond Reason Adventure Path is a blend of thriller/horror and epic fantasy themes. It has been written to carefully adhere to the standards required under both the OGL and Pathfinder compatibility licences, both explicit and implied. There is also the matter of maintaining a level of 'good taste' for general consumption.

While I would not categorise the content as 'adult', I would definitely say it needs to be handled with maturity and care – particularly with minors and potentially sensitive individuals. To that end, I will discuss some of the difficult or uncomfortable themes that are presented in the AP so that GMs can assess ahead of time what is or is not appropriate for their group.

Horror/Gore & Violence

You cannot run a Lovecraftian themed adventure without some level of horror and gore. That being said, like violence in Fantasy, much of this can be assumed or glossed over without a detailed visceral description. In order to preserve the campaign tone, it cannot be avoided completely. Throughout the AP there can reasonably expected to be sudden injury/violence, prolonged injury/disability, parasitic infestation, death, anatomical elements (corpses, vivisection and dissection), aberrant creatures and the like. The supplied 'read aloud' text for any such scenes will offer a general overview at a glance, but not fine detail. Descriptive text (GM only) is likely to convey more information, allowing an assessment of how much or little extra detail can be presented. Some artwork may illustrate certain horror scenes, but will be carefully managed to imply more than is actually shown.

Drug Use

Adventures 2, 3 and 4 particularly deal with the concept of drug use, addiction and – to a lesser extent - the fallout of such behaviour. This is drug use in a fantasy environment, but like Mental Illness (below) has real world parallels that may be difficult for some players due to personal experiences. It is a central theme of these adventures however, and cannot be removed easily. The GM is encouraged to ensure that AP is suitable for the players before commencing this campaign.

Sex

As a theme sex will be touched on, but not explicitly used as a core concept. In particular, Adventure 1 introduces an unusual locale that is associated with the world's oldest profession. There is also a semi-humorous (but non graphic) encounter in that locale designed to reduce tension around the subject. Several NPCs are also presented as potential romantic interests throughout the AP. There may be some semi-suggestive scenes and some tasteful artwork. However, none of this is critical to the story and can be altered or ignored as desired.

An effort has been made to make the AP 'preference neutral', in that where sex or sexuality is raised, it is either not preference specified, or is general enough that the GM can apply or alter it as desired. Again, sexual preference is irrelevant to the story, and can be managed as the GM sees fit.

Madness / Mental Illness / Psychological Themes

Probably the most important of the potentially uncomfortable topics is that of madness and mental illness. This is core to the story and cannot be removed entirely. Unlike gratuitous Horror/Gore (which is an extreme departure from 'normal' life experience) mental illness and psychological themes (including pseudo-medical treatment) may reflect real world personal experience for some players. As such, it may cause as much (if not more) discomfort than the more extreme 'fantasy' themes for some players. The associated artwork is likely to be an abstraction at best, as madness and psychological themes are hard to represent in illustration.

Managing themes

Given the potential for discomfort or even genuine psychological impact on players from any/all the above themes, this is where as GM it falls to you to know, or warn, your audience. If anyone may be adversely affected by these themes, it might be worth running another adventure entirely. Some people may simply find this level of gratuity, or connection to real life events, too confronting to incorporate into their recreation. Others may find it cathartic. On a personal note, I lost my



father to complications associated with mental illness. While much of the material written for the Adventure Path predates this, the event was in many ways the galvanizing moment to the creation of this series of products. As difficult a subject as it was for me, I found the act of writing this story very freeing. Some players may feel the same way – but as GM you need to address this with them individually. For many it could have the opposite effect.

The GM is the final arbiter on how much detail and focus is placed on the campaign themes. With a little work all the above themes can be more or less detailed than presented in the Adventure Path material. The Madness theme cannot be fully removed, nor can various Horror aspects, but it can be dulled to ensure more limited impact on your group.

Divine Magic, Healing & Raising the Dead

Lacking religions, the city has a deficit of divine magic normally available to fantasy campaigns. This is critical to the nature of the campaign so that the growing threats to physical and mental health cannot easily be addressed by throwing magic at it.

As madness is a core theme it would fall flat quickly if there was an abundance of magic available to simply cure this. Part of the over arching story is predicated on the fact that the one organized group devoted to healing is agnostic, and extremely limited in its magical capabilities. This becomes pivotal to the story line of Adventure 4 – *Sanitarium*.

The PCs may have a dedicated healer. That is fine. As a single individual they cannot accomplish more than healing/protecting a small number of individuals – the PCs and maybe a couple of favoured NPCs. Both Thorgrim and Thaddeus are provided for this purpose as well. It won't derail the story to have personal healing, but it would to have readily available divine magic in the city (See Section 4 - Altered and Adjusted Campaigns for more detail).

Raise dead and similar magic is extremely rare (almost completely unheard of) even for those with wealth. Only a handful of individuals in the city are capable of performing such spells, and these do not do so lightly,

saving this ability for true 'miracle' status. Raising the dead cannot be bought, regardless of wealth, rank or position.

The PCs are likely to eventually be one of the few groups capable of such a feat. If ambitious players begin to see a profit turning exercise here the DM needs to remind them of potential consequences. Raising dead (if it becomes public knowledge) will open doors they may not be able to close.

Problems include being hounded by the public from various walks of life for raising services; some will offer money, but some will demand, threaten, intimidate, and plead or the like. People from all over the city will constantly be following and harassing the PCs, seeking to have the dead returned to them.

Similarly, The Guild of Balance exists to ensure balance in all things. One of those things is life and death. If Raising from the dead is common, it causes social and economic issues, and these are bad for city affairs. What becomes of legal contracts or wills that execute upon death? What about political succession? What about criminal sentences (are those raised considered to have paid for their crimes, or must they be slain again)? At first the PCs will be asked to refrain and their 'recipients' will be 'returned to their natural state' (ie assassinated). If the PCs continue, the Guild will contract to assassinate those in the Party capable of raising dead to ensure their means is removed.

A couple of adventurers quietly raising their own in a dungeon somewhere will not draw undue attention (it is unlikely anyone will be aware they died in the first place), but public use of such magic invites repercussions.

At the beginning of the Adventure Path there are exactly three individuals in the city capable of raising the dead – Eiria Valdorn (and the Echo of Faith), High Seeker Ranark (of the Seekers of Asmodeus) and Talus Redgrave (Guildmaster of the Healing Hands). Of these, none will be willing or able to provide such magic, either publicly or to the PCs.

High Seeker Ranark would not raise anyone that was not immediately useful to the Seekers cause, and even then would do so very carefully. Asmodeus is in the business of gathering souls, not granting them new freedoms. If a favoured servant (for example Triast) were to die with his mission incomplete, the High Seeker might raise him once, but not more than that (failure should not be rewarded, and while one death might be misadventure, two is incompetence).

Talus Redgrave doesn't remember who he is, let alone how or why to be resurrecting people. His condition makes that choice impossible, and he is under the influence of the High Seeker in any case (more on this in Adventure 4 – *Sanitarium*).

Eiria Valdorn is the only one capable, with the temperament to do so. Unfortunately she is aware of the Guild of Balance 'equalisation' policy, and (with a little prompting from the Echo) is not prepared to visit that upon anyone she might want to raise – she knows it would be futile as the assassins would quickly undo her efforts. The Echo will never consent (or allow Eiria) to raise any of the PCs.

Damien has made 'arrangements' for himself. He is undertaking a perilous mission that is likely to result in his death. While he doesn't fear this (in many ways he secretly hopes for it) he cannot rest until he succeeds. As such he spent a huge fortune tracking down a witch to clone him conceal and preserve the body against a time when he might need it. If Damien dies during the course of the AP he will return through this means. The clone is hidden well away from the city.

Religions and Rhion Barrakar

Religions are poorly perceived in the city. While the vast majority of the populous have come to believe that religions are provincial and dogmatic, not fit for an advanced and civilised culture that the city promotes, this is actually a slowly warped logical 'justification' from a deeply ingrained social prejudice. The true reason has to do with Aether's actions 300 years ago.

Aether's religion took the city by storm. Here was an actual, tangible god-like figure residing in the city, dispensing miracles and infusing faithful with amazing abilities. Faith does not require proof, but when proof is evident faith becomes unnecessary. Though essentially empty of spiritual fulfilment, Aether's church became vastly powerful and controlling with almost lightning speed, as the city and its people came to see their existence as a heaven-on-earth, complete with divine guidance. The

citizens were eager to give up their rights and freedoms to a divine emperor for the chance to exist in a utopian era. So when Aether's betrayal all but destroyed the city, the resulting disillusionment was total. All religions were tarred with the same brush. All religions were seen as suspect. All religions became taboo. The survivors began to see self-reliance as the epitome of existence, and the next age of Anduria was ushered in on that value more than any other.

The issue is that very few alive today know what occurred during that period. While some survived the cataclysm, most who did abandoned the city for other places in the world. The long lived races returned to ancestral lands, leaving a scattering of stubborn and proud human communities to reforge the city. Over time trade and travel brought new peoples in, and slowly the city began to grow again. The culture of self-determination and selfgovernance flourished, and the undercurrent of religious intolerance endured.

Today only a mere handful of scholars and scattered representatives of older races (elves and dwarves) know the truth, but the cultural identity of the city is so ingrained through the generations that dissenting views are simply dismissed as speculation, and the one city group that might be able to corroborate any of it – the Explorer's Guild – has not discovered any evidence to support it over any of the dozens of theories about the fall of the last civilization before this one (secretly the Echo is suppressing any such evidence from the public). In truth most of the Guild masters have some small information about the events in sketchy records from the era of guild establishment, but these are considered irrelevant to current times.

Practitioners of various religions do exist within the city, but attempts to establish organized churches have failed through cultural or financial pressures. The citizens do not want religious presence in the city, and between popular opinion and the machinations of guilds unwilling to share political power, no religion has gained any more than a token following. Most of the Gods have taken the stance that the city is to be left to its own fate if it cannot or will not accept divine presence.

Yet some religions are predicated on 'against the odds' existence. Rhion Barrakar is a demi-power of fool's errands and lost causes. He takes an interest in those that take chances and buck against overwhelming odds. He is also a deity that does not simply dispense aid, but rather nudges events and individuals from time to time, allowing fortune to occasionally favour those that desperately need it. Unsurprisingly, given the dire future in store for Anduria, he has taken an interest in current events and a few enterprising individuals.

Rhion Barrakar is offered to GMs as a way of introducing some divine elements into the campaign, particularly at low levels where the PCs may have limited access to spells or healing accepted as common in high fantasy settings. Until the PCs advance to the point of selfsufficiency in resources, NPCs like Thaddeus, and shrines like that found in the Anthilas manor (From the Ashes) can provide timely divine assistance. It also adds the sub-element that the PCs are not quite alone against the machinations of Deific Beings bent on eradicating reality as they know it.

Of course the GM is free to add or alter the presence and influence of other deities and religions, particularly if any player characters identify strongly with them. So long as the premise that any religion is small, has no significant cultural or political influence and does not have any casters that can generate higher than 4th level spells any religion can fit in with the campaign themes seamlessly.

Signs & Portents

An event of world altering significance is about to occur in the city of Anduria. Powerful beings and forces are in motion. Things like this don't just happen in complete secrecy do they? Surely someone, somewhere must know something about it.

Players are often interested in gleaning additional information about a campaign through divination, research or investigation, and as GM you may wish to add further information or use signs and portents as foreshadowing for future events.

And finally, as a lovecraftian themed series of adventures, there is a level of expectation that certain dangerous secrets will be revealed along the journey as befits the source material. Of course traditionally these 'discoveries' come with all sorts of horrendous fallout for those subjected to them. Knowledge comes at a very, steep price. The use of Signs and Portents is up to the GM. Throughout the campaign backstory great pains have been taken to illustrate that there is a lack of knowledge about the historical events, and that there are significant efforts to conceal the activities surrounding the campaign, not just from the primary villain (the Echo of Faith) but the other antagonists too (The Seekers and Damien). Despite all working against each other philosophically, each group has reasons for secrecy, and their efforts to conceal their own actions in many ways inadvertently assist each other.

A major part of the Adventure Path lies in the PCs discovering much of the various group's machinations as they progress, and essentially being too late to halt the events until the climax. Added to that is the twist that they have been unknowingly assisting several of these plots. Offering up too much information too quickly can take the surprise out of some of these climactic scenes and twists, but on the other side of the coin, just enough information can draw the players more deeply into the story.

Lastly, the final adventure offers both the GM and players several ways to end the campaign based on their interests and the actions to that point. Any use of signs, portents, divinations or clues should be careful to either avoid revealing too much about the outcome, or locking the GM into a particular choice of conclusion (unless as GM you have already determined the most appropriate ending for your group).

Some use of signs and portents may be desired, or inevitable as PCs gain greater access to magic that offers such information. Below is discussed several methods for adding information the GM desires.

As discussed above in Religions & Rhion Barakar the Gods have turned from the city of Anduria, a city that has all but rejected them. Despite the impending doom that will be visited upon this city in the near future, there is a distinct lack of divinely inspired information about it. The deities have imparted just enough information to their few faithful to have them depart the city, or personally prepare, but not enough to intervene. The Gods are not in the habit of helping or saving those who reject them.

Similarly, while Rhion has taken an interest, it is not his way to openly interfere. The point of long shots and fool's errands is that they succeed in spite of overwhelming odds. Rhion could no more work to change those odds significantly than a pig could fly. It's contrary to his nature. He has provided Thaddeus with enough information to contact the PCs, and has opened him up to just enough information about Cthulhu as is safe to do so (and by 'safe' it is meant not directly lethal. Thaddeus is not protected, nor is he likely to appreciate this information – see Adventure 4 *Sanitarium*). Rhion has also invested the shrine in Anthilas Manor with potent magic, and dropped a trinket or two in the path of those at the heart of events. That is as far as he is willing or able to go. The rest is up to the PCs.

The divine are not the only sources of information in the world, however.

In Adventure 2 – *Ignorance is Bliss* – a couple of divination sources are included for potential use. Firstly, there is a cryptic clue added in the investigation chapter for if the PCs seek out the Entity or use Divination magic. It is vague on outcomes, but reveals some adventure and over arching plot elements. There is also the art created by Phineas, and Damien's collection of notes in the Tower study that hints at certain aspects of upcoming events and/or cites signs around the city connected to Cthulhu's influence.

Secondly, Damien's star charts offer an open opportunity (or not) to include additional information either in the form of 'astrological divination' or an actual sighting of something in space relevant to the adventure. The former allows for the GM to add any information desired as a form of clue or prophecy, while the latter foreshadows one of the optional elements in the final adventure – a sighting of a Star Spawn of Cthulhu on its way to the city through space (a slow journey with its limited starflight power). The GM should only consider the latter if they want to hang a tangible 'sword of damocles' over the campaign. Once this device is used it can't be logically removed.

In Adventure 4 – *Sanitarium* – the PCs will receive another set of portents involving Thaddeus and an unfortunate arcane diviner that unwittingly tries to make contact with Cthulhu (always a bad idea!). If this is not enough for the Players, or the GM, below are a couple of completely optional signs and portents depending on the level of information you wish to impart, and if you want to reveal the lovecraftian influence or keep it mysterious.

The Angel Prophesy¹

This ancient scroll is unimpressive to look at. It is a rolled parchment some 4 feet in length and 1 foot wide, protected by a plain wooden scroll tube crudely engraved with a single symbol – a 5 branched rune.

The parchment has a series of verses written in an archaic form of common¹, in a bluish ink that defies identification, and the scroll radiates a faint divination aura if subject to detect magic. While the scroll seems to consist of a dozen unconnected verses of gibberish, a Knowledge (arcana) DC 30 (or Knowledge (geography) DC 20 if using it in conjunction with Damien's astronomy charts) can single out a specific verse that is related to current events;

In the 17th cycle of the eternal city, The serpent's eye blinks in the night, The snakes of hell slink around the heart of life And the coils of ambition crush the bones of mortality Wake to nightmare of the dreamer's creation The empty streets reverberate with the screams of the dead and dying

And the echo must be silenced

The serpent's eye refers to a single star within constellation shaped like a serpent, representing the 'eye' in the pattern. Currently an unknown phenomenon is causing it to fluctuate when viewed through a telescope, as if it were 'blinking'.

The prophesy names the 'snakes of hell' and the 'heart of life', with 'ambition crush the bones of mortality'. These are references to the Seekers and the Healing Hands, and the events of Adventure 4 – *Sanitarium*, which will significantly affect the city's political system now and in the future. The reference to 'wake to nightmare of the dreamer's creation' is the growing influence of Cthulhu in the city, which may – if not stopped – culminate in complete dominance if the R'lyeh gate is opened. The 'empty streets reverberate with the screams of the dead'

1 A character with Linguistics (DC 15) might catch a slightly odd spelling in the archaic common that actually indicates the title of the document is the Angell Prophesy (two LLs). This may be a misspelling or disused spelling for the celestial beings, or something else entirely.

is a reference to the Shadow City (detailed in Adventure 7 – *World in Shadow*), but also refers to the potential state of the eternal city and its inhabitants if the gate is opened. Finally 'and the echo must be silenced' is a direct reference to stopping the Echo of Faith before completion of her plans results in total annihilation of the city.

The parchment could be found in Damien's study in Adventure 2 – *Ignorance is Bliss* (if the GM wants to use the astrology angle), or it could be buried within the Celestial Scriptorium. If the GM wants to play up the concept of fate or balance the scroll could mysteriously appear at the PCs lodgings or in their gear one morning.

The Draken Tome

The PCs discover a large book bound in a green-grey scaled leather and edged in battered silver steel. The book has an ornate locking clasp that required a key (or can be bypassed by an Unlock DC 30, or Break DC 35, Hardness 6, Hp 12). The pages are a thick light grey skin (Knowledge local or Heal DC 25 to identify as hobgoblin) and inked in a strange brown-red ink (hobgoblin blood, same skills and DCs to identify).

Inside the book the script is in draconic, and details a number of dark rituals for empowering one's self for 'influence', 'potency', 'wisdom', 'protection', knowledge' and 'prognostication' almost all involving the sacrifice of a living sentient creature by vivisection whilst still alive, then burning and/or consuming various anatomical elements of the sacrifice whilst chanting arcane phrases. A DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check will indicate that almost all of these are completely fake, and will do nothing at all for the individual. However, part of the 'prognostication' ritual speaks about protecting oneself from 'the darkness behind the stars' whilst seeking visions, and offers an accurate representation of both the original Elder Sign (the 5 branched rune) and a newer warped pentagram and eye design. The book advises scribing in silver on a surface or into the flesh of the one to be protected, "Lest the madness of the great dreamer overcome and shatter your mind with it's rapturous truths". The book does not indicate exactly how the Elder Sign offers protection (or what kind of protection, for how long, range etc), and the specifics of any game statistical benefits are left to the GM - or could replicate the effects of the Runic Necklace found in Adventure 3 - From the Ashes.

The book could be discovered in a treasure cache in any

of the adventures, in the deepest recesses of the Celestial Scriptorium, or at an arcane antiquities stall in the Great Market (or the like).

The Abattoir Omen

The PCs are passing through the Lower Ward (or alternately the Trade Ward) when they hear screams of terror from a nearby building, and blood covered citizens flee onto the street babbling about demons. The blood isn't theirs, its cow blood and the building is an abattoir simply called "Thurston's". Inside the now empty business the PCs find the partially prepared carcasses of a dozen oxen leaking blood onto the floor. The blood snakes in flowing rivulets up the walls in defiance of the natural laws, and seems to gather and pool on the ceiling. It then forms into a complex version of the Elder Sign (an eye inside a warped 5 point pentagram inside a ring, with a runic inscription the ring itself). The omen remains for a few moments (hopefully just enough time for characters to get below it to try to decipher the runes) before gravity reasserts itself and the blood showers down to the floor below, erasing the symbol.

If the GM really wants to reveal the presence of Cthulhu allow the PCs to memorise and recall the inscription, and then a Linguistics check (DC 35) to decipher;

"That is not dead which can eternal lie, And with strange aeons even death may die"

Bear in mind this will instantly reveal the Cthulhu connection to most players who are fans of the genre.

The Unfortunate Soul

One or more of the PCs are walking through the city at night. The more upper class the better (Nobles Ward, Council Ward) to really demonstrate the contrast of the moment. Perhaps it is along a restaurant or nightlife strip where the wealthy are enjoying a lively evening, or in a crowded part of the Trade Ward.

From the darkness lurches a cloaked figure, staggering and dragging its feet, leaving behind a trail of blood and bodily fluids. On close inspection it is impossible to tell if it is a man or woman, so bloated and misshapen its features, covered in weeping lesions. A foot long purple tentacle protrudes from its chest, weaving and grasping with a will of its own. The individual grabs at one of the PC's as if in desperation, the gurgles out something incomprehensible before exploding in a shower of gore, leaving behind an Juvenile Crinisphaer (see Section 6 -**Bestiary**). At the GMs option the creature seeks to flee to the safety of the nearest sewer, or attacks the PCs or locals in an effort to feed.

Inspecting what is left of the body it shows them to be dressed in expensive clothing and accessories, like those you would expect to find on an aristocrat.

The GM can either allow the spouted proclamation to be nonsense, or can use the following, but bear in mind it will almost certainly reveal the Cthulhu connection to most players who a fans of the genre;

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn"

A successful Linguistics DC 35 check can translate this to "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming"

Reward Forethought & Punish Stupidity

Despite the evocative subtitle I am not suggesting that the GM 'take sides' or take a personal stance on player choices or character actions. However, this AP is set up with the premise that carefully thought out actions should yield better results than poorly planned choices. This is not a standalone 'monster bash', it is an immersive campaign in an urban setting, where character actions should have lasting consequences. The characters have to live in this world. They cannot expect to run roughshod through a city without ramifications. Similarly, the AP deals with ephemeral concepts such as madness and 'shades of grey' morality that need to be navigated. Finally, some challenges simply cannot be overcome with force. Characters, and by extension players, who think the answer to all problems lies at the pointy end of a sword are not going to do well in this campaign. As the GM it is up to you to set this tone early.

The Prologue and Adventure 1 have numerous encounters and set ups designed to instil this message

where the penalties for failure are not catastrophic. However, as the AP moves on, the consequences become may become dire. Close to the climax, character failure likely results in campaign failure.

The GM should encourage strategic and logical thinking, and it is suggested that whenever a significant effort is made on the player's part to plan out an action, that a circumstantial bonus (maybe +2 to skill checks, or the odd 'automatic' success) be awarded for that effort. Conversely, poor or rash action should result in the ultimate penalty – lack of GM coddling. Actions should reap logical consequences, and characters should not be shielded by plot armour². No one is irreplaceable. The elements that make the party uniquely qualified to resist the looming threat are earned during the AP. They are not born exceptional, they are made exceptional by their own hand.

Why? Part of what defines this campaign is that the characters are the quintessential small fish in a sea of overwhelming forces. They are playing with powers that can bring Gods undone, and they can (and will) succeed because they have virtues that the other antagonists (Aether, The Echo, The Seekers and even Damien) do not – humility, fortitude and the desire to act for selfless reasons³. Their lack of power, and their connections to each other (and expanding connection to the city and its inhabitants) are their strength, and because they don't have the sheer might to tackle such forces head on, they will succeed where direct action fails⁴. Cthulhu cannot be confronted or opposed directly, and this is not the object of the campaign. The events set in motion by the hubris and ambition of others can be halted, and that is the intended role for the characters.

While this Adventure Path is not intended to be deadly at every turn, it is also not intended to be forgiving of repeated mistakes. As GM you should not be afraid to let players 'reap what they sow' in terms of actions provoking reactions. In the end, the party has to cleverly navigate between challenges to be successful. Failures (and potential character deaths) along the way are part of the learning curve.

² Plot Armour is the concept that characters have a level of protection or immunity from consequence of their choices because they are significant to the plot, and their loss would derail or damage the story. At its worst, players can begin to think they can rely on this innate protection afforded by the GM to act as they will, against all logical outcomes or consequence.

³ Theoretically anyway. We all know players who consider their characters touched by manifest destiny.

⁴ It's a fairly standard, yet enduring, fantasy trope.



Redemption and Atonement

One of the main themes of the campaign is redemption. Further discussed in the NPC capsules, many of the villains of the adventure are not beyond saving. The Echo of course cannot be turned from her path, because she is pursuing her own twisted path of redemption. However, Damien and Triast can be redirected in their thoughts and actions, and if the PCs are very lucky or clever, they can save Eiria, Aether, and to a lesser extent Talus Redgrave.

Why should we try to redeem the villains?

Always a good question. These antagonists have been at odds with the party, some for the entire campaign. They may have injured or even killed party members. They have certainly committed villainous acts, if not downright evil ones. Plus, they have loot that the players are going to want for their characters.

This is a question for you as GM, and your players. The villains have been set up to be complicated individuals, with logical (albeit twisted or very narrow) reasons for their actions. You will note in their statblocks that most of them are not evil aligned. They have complex back stories to allow them to be seen as 'shades of grey' figures rather than clearly 'black and white'. Hopefully there is enough in them to be seen as worth saving.

If your players are a little on the mercenary side, you'll note that the villains either have limited or difficult to use treasure. For example, Damien's 'loot' is mostly tattooed onto his body, while Triast's axe (being a religious relic) will not accept a non-lawful, non-Asmodean wielder easily.

In a more practical sense, these villains are far from the worst thing coming to the city, and having them as allies at the Adventure Path climax could very well make all the difference.

However, if you or your players like your heroes and villains to be clear and uncomplicated, there is no reason that these subtleties can't be ignored or down played in favour of a more iconic Good vs Evil campaign. As always, this is your game to be played in a way that is fun for you.

How do we go about redeeming them?

The adventures provide 'climax moments' for each of the major NPCs. These will be clear and obvious to all that this is the make or break moment for this relationship, where the villain - if not redeemed - will either die (or be defeated) or they will step past the point of no return (potentially to be confronted again later).

However, these should be used as a culmination of everything that has come to pass to that point. The PCs have interaction with Triast and Damien for the vast majority of the AP, as well as Eiria to a lesser extent (While Aether and Talus are limited to their respective adventures). The Adventure Path provides opportunities for the PCs to learn about the villains and their values and drives, and occasions where they can interact and potentially influence them. In some adventures this takes the form of hard 'bonuses or penalties' to interaction rolls (Diplomacy, Bluff or Intimidate) but in others it offers a softer approach where role play can be used to engender (or damage) respect, or trust, or even friendship.

The GM is free to use both in synergy, or either (or none) of these options to build a logical relationship with the villains, and use this to inform these 'climax moments'. A party that has fostered trust and respect with Damien is far more likely to influence him to their way of thinking than simply delivering a good speech at the pivotal moment. Redemption is often more an erosion of dangerous values rather than an epiphany moment.

The Major Campaign NPCs

Damien Anthilas

A large portion of the adventures *Ignorance is Bliss* and *From the Ashes* are dedicated to Damien, his motivation, drives and history. His story will continue in future adventures.

His statistics are provided in *Ignorance is Bliss*, and will be updated in future products as needed, so will not be replicated here.

The one element of his character that is not touched on in detail is the nature of the runic magic he uses to create the wards on both the Machine parts and himself. Combined



with this is the use for Damien in the campaign.

The Rune Language

The runes are derived from those used by the Builders, the original creators of the machine and the city itself. Damien uncovered the runic magic in his studies of the city, its history and the machine, and has managed a poor adaptation of them for his uses. Astute observers can see the similarities in the runes found on the Ring (crafted by the builders) and those used by Damien (to ward the Keystone for example). The runes are both mystic symbols and a form of representative language (one of several) used by the Builders. As a language it has limitations, or rather it is an ineffective language for those without the comprehension levels required to make effective use of it. Each rune represents a concept or series of concepts, and these change in meaning and context when used in conjunction with other runes. The same rune can represent vastly different concepts based on the combination, orientation and layout of the runes it is linked to. The language is so vastly complex it eludes deciphering as a coherent form by the mortal minds of today (ie Characters will not be able to comprehend it as a language even through magical means - short of a Wish – it's simply too complex and alien. Even then the Wish does not grant the ability to read it so much as it alters the recipients thought processes enough to fathom them temporarily⁵).

The Runes themselves are part of a complex form of Creation Magic. Much of the Builder's works required the runes to be scribed into the physical substance of their creations to bring them to functional operation. The runes strengthened, refined, aligned and initiated their legendary crafts⁶.

Adaptation for Unintended Use

Over more than 2 decades of study Damien has grasped that the runes are a magically infused language, and can recognise some contextual themes in general, like schools of magic effect or intended application. Through his innate magical talents he has managed to combine the runes and his own raw power to create permanent effects on himself and objects (floor, walls etc). By the standards of the Builders these runic 'translations' are rudimentary, inefficient and ugly (the equivalent of 'baby talk') but convey enough power to be effective. Damien's entire body is covered in these runic clusters. A proficient Builder could produce far more powerful and varied effects with a mere handful of runes.

The one 'improvement' Damien has recently discovered is the successful inclusion of The Elder Sign in the workings of this magic. Not part of the Builder rune set, the Elder Sign exists as something else entirely (see below). Damien uncovered the older version of this rune in his studies (the 5 branched glyph). His breakthrough in combining the Elder Sign with the Builder's runes is effectively how he can use them to ward against the encroaching effects of R'lyeh. This will be the basis for the magic that protects the city, as elaborated on in Adventures 4 & 5.

The Terrible Cost

The considerable downside to the use of the runes as a magical conduit is that they need to be empowered. The Builders possessed a sophisticated understanding of leylines and planar energies, and carefully used these sources to charge the runes. Without such an understanding, the runes must draw their power from somewhere else. If the user offers no other options, the runes draw on the life energy of the caster, or of those creatures that exist nearby. The bigger the 'spell' or effect to be powered, the greater the drain.

This is the secret behind Damien's aged appearance. His true age is 37 years. His physical appearance is that of 47 years. The two major uses⁷ of the runes have cost him 10 years of his life force to power them. Unsurprisingly he is loath to continue to pay that steep price unnecessarily⁸.

5 If you are having difficulty visualizing this concept consider the Builder language to by highly complex computer code where the symbols change meaning based on context, but retain overall cohesion to the greater program. The 'computer' as it were can differentiate the contexts to discern the situational meaning of each symbol.

6 To continue the analogy, the Runes were the magical 'software' to the physical 'hardware' of the Builder's works.

7 The two major uses of the runes were to create the ward on the entry into the caverns in the manor basement (3 years of cost), and later ward the keystone itself (7 years of cost). The runes used to inscribe protections on his own body have not extracted 'years' of life. They are powered by his magical essence as a sorcerer.

8 This is why he was not interested in obtaining the Ring from the PCs in the prologue adventure. While the Ring represents a significant hazard he realizes that he simply cannot continue to burn away his life force on combating the symptoms of the situation. While reluctant to let the Seekers have the Ring, they have proven capable of containing one other machine part, though he has no idea how. He suspects infernal magic. The Healing Hands rely on more mundane magic (or so he though – see Adventure 4 *Sanitarium*) but he believed them capable of containment. As for the Vault, it has the kind of protections that can only be generated by near infinite wealth (see the **City Gazetteer** section of this *Campaign Guide* and the future side trek *Bank Heist* for more detail). In any case, Damien is prepared to sacrifice his life to end the threat, but only if it does so permanently.

If and when the Player Characters begin to use this runic magic (Adventure 5 – *Seeking Silver*), they too will need to contend with this cost.

The upside (if it is such) of powering the runes with life energy is that they become attuned to the being making the sacrifice. They will resist all attempts to damage, erase or magically dispel, unless the blood of the attuned being (or beings) is used as part of the process.

The Elder Sign

The Elder Sign is not associated with the Builders. It is in fact associated with Cthulhu and R'yleh. The Elder Sign's origins are unknown, but it tends to surface where activities related to the Great Old One begin to rise. The Elder Sign has the ability to protect one from, or dampen the effects of, the influence of Cthulhu. It is rumoured that a powerful inscription of the Elder Sign is what keeps Cthulhu asleep and imprisoned in his watery tomb in R'lyeh. The Elder Sign is depicted as either a simple runic symbol depicting a 5 branched glyph (older) or a warped 5 pointed pentagram star with a central eye (newer). The Pentagram Elder Signs can be either simple or quite complex in design and depiction. The true origin of the Elder Sign is a mystery⁹.

Campaign Use

Damien serves several purposes in the context of the campaign.

He is primarily a vehicle to hook the PCs into the story, but also provides (both actively and inadvertently) a lot of backstory, history and tools that help the PCs understand and combat the primary adversary (The Echo of Faith) and her plot. The AP does not allow a lot of time or opportunity for the PCs to become involved in protracted research or development of resources, and Damien's inclusion allows for this to have occurred in a logically consistent manner. He is a patron of sorts. It's his activities that draw attention to the Echo's plot, his research and crafting that offer the PCs solutions to problems (The Elder Sign and protective wards for the city), and his contingencies that provide needed resources (In Adventure 5 he is stockpiling a supply of the needed silver). The nature of the assistance, willing or unwilling, is largely determined by PC actions.

Secondly, he is the tragic anti-hero. He is what a hero might become if left without support. He is a cautionary tale, and what the PCs risk becoming if they allow themselves to develop an 'ends justify the means' attitude. Damien serves as a mirror to the PCs their moral choices, hopefully offering them the opportunity to reflect and make more heroic choices.

Finally, he is the first of the opportunities to redeem a villain. Damien has lost his way, but can be turned from a destructive path to a constructive one. Redemption being a major campaign theme, Damien's third role is mostly one of story significance, but offers a tangible reward of a powerful ally for the AP climax.

Triast the Seeker

Triast is introduced early in the Adventure Path as a means of setting up the Seekers as plot antagonists. They are the 'obvious' villains for the players to attach to. They follow an Evil deity, have an unknown agenda, and run callously roughshod over anyone who gets in their way. They are easy to dislike at a glance.

Triast himself is meant to initially reinforce and then eventually diminish this 'first impression' assessment of the Seekers. While the organization and those who run it go on to justify this initial assumption, Triast is intended to allow the PCs a level of interaction and meaningful influence over the actions and outcomes of this group while still maintaining a 'villain' to focus on.

Triast's statistics are provided in Ignorance is Bliss, and will be updated as required in future products, so they are not replicated here.

What is provided here is some insight to Triast's history, his personality, motivations and goals, and his intended use in the story. Statistically the relic weapon "The Last Command" will also be detailed.

Background and History

Triast Belmarr was raised in a middle class family, the son of two soldiers from the Guild of Civil Defence.

9 It is left to the GM to decide if the Elder Sign has any significant history in the context of their campaign. In this Author's humble opinion, it should be left as mysterious as possible. Like Cthulhu himself, some things are not meant for mortals to know.



His mother retired from active service with honours to raise him, and from an early stage discipline, personal sacrifice and the obligation to serve were instilled in him by their example. When his age permitted it, his mother returned to active service and left Triast in the care of his grandparents. Where his parents were strictly military, his grandparents were oddly intense about ensuring he had a strong academic focus to compliment his martial development, and included an unusual emphasis on arcane theory and religious history in his upbringing.

As he grew Triast began to feel as though there were deeper truths to the world, and that as noble as a career in military service was, it lacked opportunity to explore these concepts. Conversely, while in the Watch there was opportunity to become an investigator, the military aspects and scope for 'independent' inquiry seemed limited. His preferences swayed between the two for a number of years while never cementing, and he was disciplined enough to ensure that no aspects of his education fell behind in order to maintain open options.

He continued his education through one of the Shield's military academies, his physical and intellectual prowess continued to grow apace. He was enrolled in advanced classes, and soon exceeded the curriculum, adding to the body of knowledge with theoretical tactics and psychological warfare. He showed a gift for lateral thinking that even his teachers lacked, and was marked for officer training. Similarly, senior Watch officials had taken notice and made overtures toward luring him to the Investigations branch.

However, just prior to his 16th birthday, his grandparents revealed a third path to him. Despite the City's prevailing views on religion, his family held clandestine ties to the church of Asmodeus, dismissing popular views as short sighted and ignorant. The church offered what he secretly desired (and what his grandparents had been quietly cultivating) – a chance to use his natural talents in service of something greater. While he disdained the possibility of joining the religious arm of the church, their militarized investigative branch – the Seekers – was a perfect fit for his needs. While they lacked full authority and autonomy in Anduria, so long as they worked carefully within the confines of the law they could pursue their agenda.

In the last 20 years Triast has risen rapidly through

the ranks of the Seekers to the position of Captain, and currently holding a provisional rank of Commander of a Special Operations unit that investigates Arcane Malfeasance. Such is his exemplary record he has been granted use of a holy relic weapon - "The Last Command" - and is nominally in charge of liaising with the City Watch under the new powers granted to the Seekers by the City Council.

Personality, Motivations and Goals

Triast is disciplined, dedicated, loyal, honest and confident. He is intelligent, resilient and resourceful. He is also arrogant, ruthless and implacable when he is focussed on a goal.

He is a true Believer in that he believes in the mission of the Seekers. The City has suffered in the wake of Aether's actions. He believes that tracking down Aether's missing soul is key to returning balance to the city. He is also a true Believer in that he believes Asmodeus is both a deity and a force for order and discipline in a world that suffers from uncertainty and chaos. He respects Asmodeus, but does not worship him. In his mind worship is for men that doubt themselves, and those who need to be fulfilled from without. Triast draws his strength from within. He is careful to keep such opinions to himself in a semireligious order however. Men who follow the same path should not quarrel over their reasons for doing so.

Triast has encountered Damien several times in his career. He believes that Damien is guilty of the crimes he was accused of 10 years ago, and is angered that so far that the Alchemist has escaped lawful sanction. He has launched several investigations with Damien as the focus, but each time there has been insufficient evidence to bring charges. Ironically he finds himself inexplicably liking the roguish 'old man' but it will not interfere with his duty. He feels that eventually Damien will slip up and Triast will get the evidence he needs for a conviction. As the Campaign begins, Triast is at the height of his influence both within the Seekers and in the City hierarchy as well. Under the current climate, with the problems the emerging machine parts, the Seekers have been granted full Watch powers, and can act more openly than ever before. In the course of the adventures he may also have successes in obtaining the Ring and finally implicating Damien in a crime where evidence is abundant and the outcome unquestionable.

However, as the campaign progresses a number of events happen 'off stage' involving Triast that cause him to begin to question his conviction, and the role that the Seekers actually play in the city. Some of the events in the city, as well as the revelations gained from Anthilas Manor suggest to him that there is something deeper at work here, and that while Damien is a criminal, he may indeed be working for the city's benefit. As the events of Adventure 4 - Sanitarium take place, Triast comes to realise that the Seekers are playing politics and grasping at power in ways that are becoming more and more unpalatable to him. While he is untroubled by moralistic concerns of 'good' and 'evil' (which he sees as a matter of perspective) the infiltration and takeover of the Healing Hands is at least underhanded, if not illegal, and the growing pious justifications spouted by High Seeker Ranark are sounding more like religious zealotry and less like their core mission. For the first time Triast is beginning to doubt. It is at this point the PCs can either draw him away from or drive him deeper into the Seekers.

Campaign Use

Triast's primary role in the campaign is to give the PCs an initial antagonist to focus on, while slowly offering them some insight into the 'shades of grey' dichotomy represented by the antagonists (as he transitions from opponent to ally while Damien transitions in the opposite direction). He is a vehicle to hook the party into some story elements, but also represents the second, though less desirable, 'redemption' opportunity for the PCs.

In some ways Triast is the ultimate test of how 'good' or 'compassionate' or even 'heroic' the Player Characters are. In a story revolving around betrayal and redemption Triast is not immediately the most obvious choice as a target for player attentions along these themes, so why would he be a good test?

Because he is inherently unlikable. The players are not supposed to like him. Not in an arch villain way, but in a fairly shallow 'holding a grudge' way.

Bear with me here.

It's easy to want to redeem Damien. It's easy to want to like Damien. He has a tragic backstory and a lofty goal. He has obviously 'lost his way'. For players this is a role playing staple. But most importantly, he was nice to them in the beginning. Players are human, and take their cues as human do. Everything about Damien suggests he is worth saving.

Triast on the other hand has a less than tragic backstory, has no lofty inspiring goals the players can relate to, and is making logical and reasoned choices the players do not agree with. But most importantly he was mean to them in the beginning.

Being Heroic is easy when the options are saving or dooming the world. With so much at stake it's an easy choice. It's a hell of a lot harder to forgive hurt feelings. When nothing but pride is on the line, many players will give into little petty feelings because there is no significant consequence to doing so.

Players that can forgive his difficult personality and the slights thrown their way will likely gain a powerful associate. Those that can't will not. It's a small thing to forgive, and those that can rise above will be the better for it.

If the PCs do make the attempt to befriend Triast, they can earn themselves another ally for the climax of the Adventure Path. If they end up pushing Triast further away and deeper into the fold of the Seekers they will be forced to combat him. If nothing else it should be a satisfying conclusion to their relationship.

The Last Command

The Last Command is a powerful artifact that has been in the possession of the followers of Asmodeus for centuries. While it is not actually a religious relic, or one created specifically for the church, there is a synergy between the Asmodean ideals and the axe's purpose, so a relationship of sorts has formed over the years. So long as each continues to compliment the goals of the other the relationship is likely to remain intact.

It is worth noting that despite being the current favoured choice of the Asmodean's to wield The Last Command, Triast has only managed to reach Bond level 2 at this stage. He has possessed the axe for over a year, but he personally is beginning to doubt the Seekers as an organization, and secretly High Inquisitor Ranark has misgivings about Triast's long term commitment and resolve.



The Last Command Aura strong abjuration [Lawful]; CL 12th Slot none; Weight 12lbs

DESCRIPTION

This +2 *axiomatic, defiant* great axe has a large single bladed serrated head and a wicked looking spike for counter balance. When held it generates a sickly green glow that acts as *light* in a 5 ft radius.

The wielder can invoke powers based on the relationship with the axe (see below). These powers can be invoked once per day and include; Bond 1 - *Dispel magic* (12th level) Bond 2 - *Break Enchantment* (12th level) Bond 3 - *Greater Command* (12th level) Bond 4 - *Geas* (12th level)

Being a Lawful artifact, Last Command has a stringent set of conditions that need to be met in order for the wielder to access all of its abilities. Each of these bond levels is predicated on the last. If any of the earlier conditions is broken, all greater bonds are broken until the conditions are reinstated. The Last command is a very difficult artifact to master, and retain mastery of.

Bond 1 requires the wielder to be Lawful, and to have possessed¹⁰ the axe for 1 week.

Bond 2 requires the axe to be assigned to the wielder by a recognized superior¹¹, and have possessed the axe for 1 month.

Bond 3 requires the wielder to wholeheartedly and unwaveringly believe in his ideals (both personal and organizational) and command the confidence and faith of their superior, as well as have possessed the axe for 1 year.

Bond 4 requires the wielder to rise and be promoted to a position of supreme authority within their organization (legitimately being recognized as the group's leader by subordinates) as well as having possessed the axe for 10 years.

DESTRUCTION

The Last Command can be destroyed by a wielder who has currently achieved Bond level 4, who uses the axe to slay each and every member of their organization, then officially and legally disband the organization. At that point the axe will shatter on the very next time it is used to strike a sentient creature.

The Echo of Faith

A significant portion of the Echo's history, personality and motivations are conveyed in both the first adventure (under the Adventure Path background) and in the background of Adventure 2 – *Ignorance is Bliss*. An effort is made to avoid too much replication, but further detail is provided here, as well as a statistic block for game play.

Liviana Vale Doraan

Liviana existed 300 years ago as a pampered young noblewoman obsessed with control and station. She played the game of politics, and dabbled in the arcane, always seeking greater heights of power and influence. Ambitious and prideful - but brittle - she sought to fill a need she could never quite satisfy. No matter her achievements she was always insecure, and a little paranoid, that her power and position was fleeting and needed to be protected.

When the demi-god Aether appeared in the city she saw her opportunity to become immortal, and secure forever. She quickly converted and joined the faithful, climbing the ranks of the church by bending her significant talents to the effort. Within a short few years she was preeminent amongst his disciples, named his high priestess and wed to his will. But even this was not enough to fill the emptiness in her soul. It ate at her every day, even as Aether became the undisputed authority in the city.

It was this flaw, this dread, which Asmodeus saw and knew he could exploit. His agents, already infiltrating the priesthood, began to subtly work on these fears, sowing doubt as to Aether's true motives, particularly concerning his followers and their place after the

10 Possession means ownership. The wielder does not have to have the axe on their person at all times, but must have physical contact with it each day. If 24 hours passes without contact, the wielder loses 'ownership'. If 24 hours passes with the axe in the possession of another creature ownership passes to the new creature.

11 Recognised superior refers to a hierarchical superior within a formal organised group. This can be almost any group structure, but must be genuine (the axe cannot be fooled by sham organisations).

'Ritual of Enlightenment'. If everyone experienced true fulfilment, they argued, then everyone would be equal after it all. There would be no positions or station above any other. They eroded her sense of security, and her fears began to take hold. Then she was introduced to the Resistance, a group of pagans who had come to believe Aether's enlightenment would mean death and destruction to the city.

Initially, she thought to use this Resistance to her own ends, force a threat that Aether could not ignore, and then defend him, reasserting her value in his eves and maintaining her position. The plan was set. The Resistance warriors would be smuggled into the ritual to attack Aether, and they believed she would assist them. Instead she intended to expose them. But as the time of the Ritual grew close her doubts grew stronger and her paranoia stole her resolve. When the moment of the attack occurred she stood paralysed with indecision, watching as Aether destroyed his attackers and completed the ritual, drawing life force energy from the city's population to power the great Machine. As the screams of the dying reached her, Liviana realized her folly. To Aether mortals were nothing but a means to an end, and she would not be saved or exulted. Something in her snapped, and she drove her ceremonial blade into his unsuspecting back, disrupting the ritual and causing the cataclysmic energy release that utterly annihilated the temple and her with it.

Birth of the Echo

In time she became aware again. The temple was gone, the city in ruins, the vestiges of humanity barely surviving in the shattered remains of the once great civilization. She had no form or appearance. She seemed to be a consciousness floating in nothing. She could move freely, but was unseen and unable to affect anything. So she watched, and listened.

It was clear years had passed since the ritual. Some limited rebuilding had occurred, though most of the people lived a subsistence existence in tent enclaves amid the ruins. Wounds were now old scars, and the survivors spoke of events in the past tense, recently enough to impact their lives, but not so recently as to be an everyday concern. She sensed anger toward Aether, but this was the low embers of hatred rather than the white hot flames of rage. Time enough had passed that the people had begun to move on. She felt pity, but also envy for these souls. They had nothing, but they had a purpose, and each other. And she was alone in every way possible.

Decades passed, and she grew ever more resentful. She watched as the survivors rebuilt farms and industry, began to trade and travel. The city slowly began to pulse with life once more. Talk of Aether disappeared, and religions became an object of scorn. Irritation and self-righteous wrath flared in her. She had sacrificed everything to save them¹², and they simply moved on. She was condemned to eternal emptiness, and they simply moved on. She began to hate them and their insignificant lives. She reflected on her 'heroism'. Surely heroes are rewarded, yet she was punished. Betrayers get punished. The faithless get punished. As time wore on she came to realize the magnitude of her betrayal. She had slain a God. One whom trusted her implicitly. As crimes are ranked there was no greater. Her disembodied state was punishment eternal for this most heinous of crimes. After all, what are the lives of inconsequential mortals to that of a God? Millions are born, live pointlessly and die, but gods are unique. Irreplaceable. She had been damned.

Eventually her restless spirit found the remnants of her family line - surviving and beginning to flourish again. She found a fine and fragile link, an ability to affect minor disturbances and changes in their presence, and rejoiced that she could finally make a connection to the real world, even if it was through a 'haunting' of her bloodline. For the first few generations she was clumsy, a ghostly presence that plagued the house, causing fear and unrest. However as she refined her control and subtlety, she learned to mask herself better, and make tenuous contact with the more psychically receptive of her 'children' as she came to think of them. She began to possess the females of the line intermittently, though her initial control was weak. As her powers grew, she began to nudge and guide them into positions and marriages of power, for their own sake and hers, creating wealth, political influence and engineering genetic matches to breed more powerful and receptive 'hosts'.

But this wasn't enough. She wanted to end her punishment, and atone for her sins. As the decades

12 While not strictly true, as her motivations were selfish rather than altruistic, the fact remains her actions had saved the city's people (at least some of them) and she had internalized this sense of self-righteousness.



had passed her perception of events became fixed to new purpose. She could not undo her actions, but she could carry out Aether's final commands and complete his masterpiece. In this she hoped the universe would feel a balance was returned and end her suffering. She rededicated herself to Aether and his vision, calling herself the Echo of Faith.

Recent Machinations

The Echo was well aware of Aether's methods for the Ritual of Enlightenment, as she was intimately involved in its initial preparation. Theoretically simple enough, but practically quite difficult. The Machine was damaged, parts scattered and lost. The faithful were gone too, and the reputation of Aether ruined and all but forgotten.

Along with guiding her own bloodline, she began the slow process of cultivating new followers. Some mercenaries could be bought, but loyalty and secrecy were paramount, and money wouldn't guarantee this. Instead she turned to the Guilds. In the wake of the power vacuum created by Aether's total domination and then fall, a number of associations or groups had formed, bound together by need and philosophy.

While many governed practical activities such as defence, trade or sanitation, there was a fledgling guild of scholars dedicated to exploration, archaeology and history. Not well regarded, they offered the perfect cover to find and restore the Great Machine. She manoeuvred her 'children' into the Explorer's Guild and set them on a path to eventual control.

She then sought the few secret priests and believers left to Aether. Most were mad or degenerate, but they were loyal, and she tasked them to secretly convert and cultivate a new religious order. Over the next few centuries the secret society had successes and setbacks, (including an accidental exposure around 130 years ago that resulted in a devastating purging of the ranks) but ever so slowly progress was made. Restoration efforts through the Guild gradually gained acceptance and legitimacy, and machine parts were progressively uncovered and returned to the city.

Over that time the Echo also discovered that numerous creatures from R'lyeh had found their way into the city though weakening planar barriers, and she sought out and either bargained with or dominated these creatures to advance her plans. About 10 years ago, after a fire in an otherwise unremarkable noble house (Anthilas), she discovered not only a major machine component, but an entity with a useful ability to effectively drug-enslave a servitor cult. She arranged to let the creature retain 'custody' of the artefact in exchange for a steady supply of the drug. Drugged slaves were a poor substitute for true believers, but as her plans begin to culminate she has grown inpatient. Risk of exposure is at its highest, and she has noticed incursions and investigations into her efforts. The drug slaves are being used to exponentially expand her slave force with an 'endless' supply of disposable workers, and she is gambling that she can reach the point of completion before she is discovered. One way or another she is determined to see Aether's vision come to pass in this generation.

Eiria Valdorn

Eiria is the last host for the Echo. She is the last of the Valdorn line, the only child born into this generation. While technically the Echo could arrange for her offspring to continue on, she has been prepared as the ultimate host in both political and personal power. The Echo has never had a host she can control so completely. Eiria does not even remember the possession events.

Eiria believes her motivations and destiny are her own. She is a good person who wants to work for the greater good of the city and its people. She genuinely believes that she is doing so. The Echo has had 300 years to perfect her manipulations, and Eiria is a victim of this expertise.

As an Oracle, Eiria knows she is both blessed (lore) and cursed (haunted). She follows no deity, dedicated instead to the ideal of discovery of knowledge and history, and believes the curse is a result of her early adventuring days handling dangerous artefacts and arcane items. She has dark dreams and impulses (created unintentionally by the presence of the Echo) but she believes that this is a side effect of her Oracle calling.

Statistics for Eiria and the Echo of Faith are below. They are essentially the same statistics no matter which of them is currently 'in control', with the differences accounted for under the Possession entry in Special Abilities.



Campaign Use

The Echo of Faith is the ultimate villain of the Adventure Path. In addition to being the instigator of almost all the current issues and challenges the PCs face along the way, she will be the final challenge in to overcome if they are to close the gate to R'lyeh before irreversible damage is caused.

While the Echo is beyond redemption, Eiria represents one last possible chance for the PCs to save an innocent if they recognise the opportunity for what it is, and haven't squandered the resources to do so. The *Horn of Shackle Breaking* (introduced in the *Favours Called in* and *Bank Heist* side treks) can force the Echo from Eiria long enough to be slain, freeing Eiria from a lifetime of possession and servitude.

Eiria Valdorn XP 51,200

CR 1513

Human, Oracle 15 (Lore)

LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init+6; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 15, flat-footed 22 (+9 armor, +3 deflection, +5 Cha);

Hp 116 (15d8+45)

Fort +9, Ref +13, Will +14; OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 human bane morningstar +13/+8/+3 (1d8+2/ x2) or +15/+10/+5 (1d8+4+2d6/x2) vs Humans

Ranged none

Oracle Spells Known (CL 15th, Concentration +20, +24 casting defensively)

7th (4/day) - cure serious wounds mass, reverse gravity, summon monster 7, waves of ecstasy (DC 24), vision

6th (6/day) - antilife shell (DC 22), cure moderate wounds mass, heal, owl's wisdom mass, summon monster 6

5th (7/day) - cure light wounds mass, contact other plane, forbid action (greater) (DC 22), telekinesis, true seeing, scrying (DC 20), summon monster 5

4th (7/day) – aura of doom (DC 19), blessing of fervor, control summoned creature (DC 21), cure critical wounds, legend lore, summon monster 4

3rd (7/day) – cure serious wounds, dispel magic, locate object, prayer, protection from energy, summon monster 3

2nd (7/day) - cure moderate wounds, enthral (DC 19), hold

person (DC 19), levitate, silence (DC 17), summon monster 2, tongues, zone of truth (DC 19)

1st (8/day) – cure light wounds, clarion call, comprehend languages, divine favour, forbid action (DC 18), identify, minor image, murderous command (DC 18)

Oth (at will) – detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, guidance, light, mage hand, mending, read magic, resistance, spark, stabilize

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 12, **Int** 16 (18), **Wis** 11, **Cha** 20 (22) **Base Atk** +11; CMB +11; CMD 13

Feats Augment Summoning, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Toughness, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Focus (enchantment), Greater Spell Focus (enchantment)

Skills Appraise +16, Bluff +20*, Diplomacy +23, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (local) +16, Knowledge (nobility) +16, Perception +10, Profession (Politician) +13, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +14

Languages Common, Elven, Dwarvish, Draconic, Aklo SQ Favoured Class bonus (1hp/level of Oracle), Skilled (+1 skill point/level), Mystery (Lore), Curse (Haunted - standard action to retrieve 'stored' items, dropped objects land 10ft away, Revelations – Arcane Archivist, Brain Drain (15d4 Will DC 22 4/day), Mental Acuity (+3 Int), Sidestep Secret (Cha to AC/Ref saves), Spontaneous Symbology

Combat Gear Spellbook (containing multiple copies of *circle of death* (6th), *feeblemind* (5th), *globe of invulnerability* (6th), *mind fog* (5th), *overland flight* (5th), *stone skin* (4th), and any other spells the GM wishes).

Other Gear *headband of mental prowess* (+2 Int & Cha), *celestial armor* (chainmail +3, fly 1/day), *cloak of resistance* +3, *ring of protection* +3, *boots of teleportation*, +2 *human bane morningstar*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Possession (Su) – At any time - as a free action - the Echo may become dominant and take control of Eiria, or end control if she is currently dominant. When dominant she has access to all of Eiria's abilities, and uses the above statistics modified by the following;

- Alignment changes to Lawful Evil
- Her creature Type becomes Undead, including all immunities and vulnerabilities.
- She gains 60 temporary Hp and +3 to Fortitude Saves (reflecting the use of Cha instead of Con for Hp/ saves). If the Echo becomes dormant she loses these

13 Eiria's Challenge Rating reflects the additional abilities granted by the Echo, and a greater than average wealth level.

additional Hp.

She is cleansed of any ongoing conditions, effects or status changes (magical or otherwise), poisons or diseases, but not hit point or ability damage, or loss of limbs etc.

Tactics - Eiria prefers to find diplomatic solutions to confrontation, and only resorts to combat when all else fails. She uses her spells initially to protect and ward herself from attacks, then summons creatures to enter combat in her place. She them augments her summoned creatures whilst weakening her foes. She can draw on her Arcane Archivist ability to cast a wizard spell if needed (once per day).

The Echo of Faith tends to try to use a combination of Eiria's spells and summons with her own innate abilities for a more offensive and destructive outcome.

Reputation and Roleplaying

Using the introduced Non-Player Characters

One of the major elements to the Adventure Path is that selfish and ambitious actions have precipitated a series of events that - without intervention - will ultimately lead to the destruction of the city. The characters represent a 'balancing' force to undo that damage, either through their own actions, or to assist/direct campaign NPCs to do so. There is only one (1) campaign NPC that cannot be redeemed. All of the rest can be influenced, assisted or saved in some manner. The results will have varying levels of effect on the campaign, but all will be lasting.

As the characters progress through the Adventure Path there are numerous NPCs to interact with, and depending on how the characters act and interact (and of course GM preference) will determine their roles going forward. NPCs can become allies or enemies at the extremes, or simply fade into the background to become campaign 'colour'.

The following is a list of NPCs from the (Prologue and Part 1) likely to be influenced one way or another by the PCs, and some suggestions as to how to continue to use them as the campaign progresses. The GM is free to add any other NPCs they choose, or expand on those that become campaign favourites. Note that the story critical NPCs have not been included here - they will be dealt with through the main Adventure Path modules. NPCs that appear in the Part 2 & 3 or Side Treks will be covered in a later Campaign Guide expansion.

There are three suggested ways to continue to include these NPCs in the campaign. Any of these methods (or a combination of) can serve to maintain NPC relevance. Firstly, characters may wish to take the Leadership feat, and retain the NPCs as cohorts. This is a closest connection to the NPCs. It will give players control of them, but still allows the GM to offer insight or influence periodically.

The second is a tight relationship system, and there are numerous examples offered in Pathfinder core or 3rd party products. This is a robust system that allows players to forge strong and interactive relationships without gaining direct control over the NPCs.

Finally, the GM could institute a more passive acquaintance system where the NPC relationship offers bonuses or penalties in a more passive sense. An example of such a system would be Boons/Banes. These are an optional system of advantages or hindrances that the NPCs provide as story elements as the campaign advances. The GM is free to use or disregard these as they choose. If the PCs have fostered a strong positive relationship with an NPC, the NPC can provide them with advantages known as boons. If the PCs have generated a strongly negative relationship with an NPC might find that NPC goes out of their way to hinder the PCs.

The NPCs have a class listed next to them, which is the suggested class if the NPCs are taken as cohorts (through the Leadership feat). This suggested class is to be added on to the original statblock if the NPC gains any additional class levels. Some NPCs are not suitable as cohorts (they have campaign roles) and will be noted as such. NPCs that become cohorts do not grant Boons/ Banes. Unless taken as cohorts (or used as rivals) the NPCs should not appreciably level up over the course of the campaign (unless the GM wishes).

Melissa the Barmaid (Difficult Circumstances)

Melissa will start a new life in the Eternal City, working as a barmaid in one (or more) of the taverns of the city. She very quickly becomes popular with the regulars, and hears a lot of rumours and taproom talk.



Suggested Advancement Class – Sorcerer or Oracle

Boon – PCs always drink for free at Melissa's tavern, and on every visit they hear one rumour from the **Rumours and Whispers** table in this book that is both true and timely to the current adventure (or next adventure).

Bane – The popular barmaid spreads negative rumours about the PCs character, morals and reliability. Any social skill rolls (Diplomacy, Bluff and Intimidate) with lower class citizens in the city are incur a -1 circumstance penalty. In general this will affect interactions in the Pilgrimage, the Lower Ward and Northgate.

Lucious the Bard (*Difficult Circumstances*)

Lucious has come to the Eternal City seeking fame and fortune. Despite being young and callow, he is actually talented, and will go on to become a successful entertainer with a modest following in certain quarters.

Suggested Advancement Class – Bard

Boon – Lucious immortalizes the PCs exploits from the prologue in song and story. In addition to enjoying a low level of referred celebrity, the PCs gain a +1 circumstance bonus to social skill rolls with citizens of middle to upper class (but not as far as nobility). In general this will affect interactions within the Artisan's ward, Trade Ward and Council Ward.

Bane – Lucious crucifies the PCs in his art, lampooning their skills and tarnishing their reputations to his audience. The PCs incur a -1 circumstance penalty to social skill rolls with citizens of middle to upper class. In general this will affect interactions within the Artisan's ward, Trade Ward and Council Ward.

Thorgrim the Cleric (Difficult Circumstances)

While Thorgrim was not originally intending to remain in the city, he finds a place and purpose here amongst the Dwarven crafting community.

Suggested Advancement Class – Cleric

Boon – In addition to a source of low level curative magic, Thorgrim settles in well with the crafting community. Any custom crafted items the PC commission are at a 5% discount, though standard crafting times will apply.

Bane – Dwarves hold hard grudges, and are a stubborn, close knit lot. Thorgrim spreads the word amongst the artisans, and any custom crafted items incur a 5% mark-up, and take the maximum time to be completed. In addition, any social interactions (Diplomacy, Bluff or Intimidate) with dwarves in the city incur a -1 circumstance penalty.

Duran the Merchant (*Difficult Circumstances*)

Despite being an itinerant merchant, Duran is relatively successful, and well-connected in the trade community. As the campaign progresses, he rises in the Trade Guild and takes up permanent residence in the city, and passes on the travel legs to James or another apprentice.

Suggested Advancement Class - Rogue or Fighter

Boon – Duran is well connected, and can assist the PCs to find the right items at the right price. When buying mundane items in the Trade Ward or Northgate, the PCs enjoy a 5% discount. If the PCs seek rare or difficult items (GMs discretion) the PCs enjoy a +1/+5% bonus to chances to find if the GM uses such a system.

Bane – Duran's connections work against the PCs, incurring a 5% mark-up on anything bought in the Trade Ward or Northgate. Additionally, rarer items are often out of stock (GMs discretion) and unavailable at times throughout the campaign (mostly temporary inconveniences).

James the Merchant (*Difficult Circumstances*)

James has prospered under the tutelage of Duran, and will go on to run Duran's trade interests as the older man takes a more sedate position.

Suggested Advancement Class - Rogue or Fighter

Boon – James is particularly good at scrounging and making do, enabling small side deals and favours to ease the passage of their goods. James can point the PCs to the right people for Transport and Stabling within the city. Any time they need to pay for these services they pay 5% less.

Bane – James puts the word out that the PCs mistreat their animals and vehicles. Prices seem to be steep wherever they go as a 5% insurance fee is applied to Transport and Stabling services.

Rufus & Faldor the Mercenaries (*Difficult Circumstances*) The brothers go on as mercenaries for the rest of the campaign, and are potentially involved in further events at the GMs discretion. Their fate is left entirely to the GM.

Suggested Advancement Class - Fighter

Boon – In the unlikely event that the PCs do manage to foster a strong positive relationship with the brothers they find themselves with some mercenary and low level criminal connections. Hiring of mercenaries or thugs is around 5% cheaper and at the GM's discretion an occasional contact can be made with other underworld figures through them.

Bane – The Brothers can go out of their way to make things difficult for the PCs. Attempted robberies, thefts of horses or animals become a periodic nuisance, and fencing goods on the black market yields around 5% poorer than expected returns.

Thaddeus (A Simple Job)

Thaddeus has a major campaign role to play, which unravels through the Adventure Path story line. In most cases when not directly involved with the action, Thaddeus is conducting some amazingly elaborate trade deal that will end in fabulous success or catastrophic failure.

Not Suitable as a Cohort

Boon – Thaddeus encounters all sorts of weird and wonderful items in his outlandish deals. Every 1d4 weeks a random magical Wondrous Item comes into his possession that he would be willing to sell to the PCs at 5% less than the standard price.

Bane – Though Thaddeus wishes no one any harm, his trade deals can have unintended consequences. Periodically prices on potions, scrolls, wands or wondrous items (roll 1d4 or GM's discretion) are raised by 5% for a period of 1d4 weeks as a result of the flow on effects of a backfiring scheme (ie a shipment of potions are contaminated, or crate of scrolls accidentally lost in transit).

Radiant Soul (A Simple Job)

Radiant Soul has a consistent campaign presence as a source of information for the PCs. She will continue on as she always has, riding the tides of fortune as the city endures the events of the Adventure Path.

Not Suitable as a Cohort

Boon – If the PCs manage to develop a strong relationship with Radiant Soul the prices of the Celestial Scriptorium will be reduced by 5%. In addition, she will occasionally part with free advice in the form of a major campaign hint or clue if the party becomes genuinely confounded on a subject or course of action.

Bane – If the PCs manage to anger Radiant Soul sufficiently the Celestial Scriptorium will remain open to them (business is business after all) but their enemies will begin displaying a troubling knowledge of the Party's strengths and weaknesses, and altering tactics accordingly as Radiant Soul sells them critical tactical information.

Adamant (A Simple Job)

Adamant continues to explore his awakening and freedom. Despite being a thoughtful and intelligent being, emotion and choice are new concepts that occasionally create sharp 'outbursts' of behaviour in his otherwise serene existence. Aside from having a campaign role to play, he is far too powerful to be tied directly to the PCs.

Not Suitable as a Cohort

Boon – Adam is a childlike soul, naive and in many ways eager to please. He will happily assist the PCs in 'simple' tasks when he is present, such as lifting a wagon or demolishing a building. He will never stay around long however, and will wander off for extended periods to pursue or study the next thing that interests him. It falls to the GM to ensure he isn't exploited, though a fitting consequence if the PCs do try is to have another of Adam's 'friends' ask for a simple task that causes the PCs major setbacks (like accidentally demolishing their house). Having Adam's assistance should be a double edged sword.

Bane – Adam is extremely difficult to offend, but if the PCs somehow manage it, they will find his moods shift much like that of a child. He will on a whim destroy something (such as their wagon or a wall of their house) in retribution, then immediately be contrite, and he will believe that a 'balance' has been restored, acting as though the matter is settled. Adam will not stay displeased with the PCs for an extended period, but may react similarly if the PCs manage to provoke him (GM's discretion on the severity of the actions taken).

Lysenesse (A Simple Job)

Unless diverted from her course by PC intervention, Lysenesse will continue in her role at the Celestial Scriptorium for the duration of the campaign. If allowed to be taken as a cohort, Radiant Soul will find a suitable replacement with similar skills.

Suggested Advancement Class – Bard

Boon – The rates at the Celestial Scriptorium are set partly by the proprietor, and partly by the expert. In general prices remain fixed, but specialists are allowed to set discounts to a degree as they choose. Lysenesse may be inclined to reduce fees for her Knowledge services by 5% for her friends.

Bane – Specialists may refuse services of any kind as they choose. Lysenesse may choose to refuse access to her specialty Knowledge (local, history), removing a significant resource from the PCs. The PCs could still contract Radiant Soul (at a much higher price) or a generalist at the Scriptorium (at a lower skill level) for the same information.

Trevel (A Simple Job)

Trevel is destined to become a significant powerbroker in the Peregrine Trade Consortium. By the end of the campaign he will have risen to mid ranking and command a significant amount of influence in the guild.

Not Suitable as a Cohort

Boon - Trevel can access his network of associates to the PCs advantage. Any time they need to pay a toll, tax, fee or other official city tariff the party pays 5% less as they are pointed toward official loopholes or concessions.

Bane – Trevel can have his network of associates work against the PCs, holding them at checkpoints and delaying them with red tape and paperwork (GMs discretion, but mostly an annoyance). They are also hit with a 5% increase in official tariffs as obscure bureaucratic (but perfectly legal) fees are applied.

The Entity (A Simple Job)

The Entity does not care for any mortal creatures other than those that can be used to further its goals. It can however be bargained with for assistance and information. The Entity is a special case, and any 'relationship' should be carefully managed by the GM.

Not Suitable as a Cohort

Celendil (and Family) from The Drunken Pixie (*Ignorance is Bliss*)

Celendil and his family continue to manage the Drunken Pixie once the PCs have passed through, the events of the adventure becoming no more than an interesting event in a series of interesting events that occur at the establishment on a regular basis. Unless the PCs do something incredibly outlandish or memorable it is highly unlikely Celendil will regard them as noteworthy.

Not Suitable as a Cohort

Boon – Celendil offers a free round of drinks to the PCs each visit. If using the Drunken Pixie as a place to gather information and hear rumours, Celendil assists in cutting through the taller tales told by the patrons, ensuring that at least one true scrap of information is imparted (DM's discretion).

Bane – Celendil is not above taking their money, and will feign helpfulness, all the while ensuring that false information comes their way. On each visit, the PCs hear a rumour that is downright false, dangerously inaccurate or leads them into an illegal situation. On the latter, Celednil ensures the Watch is tipped off to their 'nefarious activities'. This is particularly appropriate if the PCs insist his youngest son is arrested for theft.

Berris the Masseur (Ignorance is Bliss)

Berris is a fine masseur and is strangely devoid of the



bloodthirsty urges felt by his kind. Berris is in fact a pacifist, and gains considerable personal fulfilment from healing and health practices.

Suggested Advancement Class - Oracle (Life)

Boon – Berris can offer his services free of charge. While the Soothing Stream frowns on this practice, they would not risk losing their most skilled practitioner by denying him the odd indulgence. Characters can still only benefit from his therapeutic massages once per day, for four hours after a 1 hour session.

Bane – Berris has little in the way of ability to negatively impact the PCs, save by denying them service and pressuring the Soothing Stream into denying them entry. In addition, Berris is well thought of in the community, and incurring his ire will result in the PCs incurring a -1 to social skills (Diplomacy, Intimidate, Bluff) when interacting with goods and service providers in the Artisan's Ward.

Saravel the Shady Dealer (Ignorance is Bliss)

Saravel is a typical street fixer, always looking to build relationships and connections to his own profit. At the time of Ignorance is Bliss, its profitable for him to pass word on about the PCs. He is not above a 'renegotiation' of their relationship if it seems to be worthwhile. The PCs would be foolish to trust him implicitly, however.

Suggested Advancement Class - Rogue

Boon – Saravel knows who to talk to get what is needed 'no questions asked'. Any time the PCs need to obtain a 'black market' item (Poisons, drugs and anything else the GM determines to be illegal yet available) Saravel can ensure they get a good deal (5% cost reduction).

Bane – Saravel can make 'black market' items harder to obtain with a few words in the right ears. In addition to being more expensive (5% mark-up) 1 in 10 such items is 'spoiled' and ineffective or unpredictable (i.e. poisons are not poisonous, drugs fail to work or turn out to be poisonous!)

Ezekial the Merchant (*Ignorance is Bliss*)

Ezekial is most likely dead or incarcerated after the events of *Ignorance is Bliss*, but there is a small chance that

he survives and is released by the PCs.

Ezekial is a marked man. Even if the direct threat on his life is removed (by thwarting Damien) too many traders and underworld dealers know of his associations for him to continue to do business in Anduria.

If able to do so, Ezekial flees the city at the first opportunity, focusing his efforts on rebuilding his fortune in foreign lands. GMs that wish to expand the campaign beyond the city could use him as a contact, facilitator or hook to do so.

Luther Mendel (the Botanical Society) (*Ignorance is Bliss* & *The Gourd*)

Like the Entity, Luther should be considered a special case due to his circumstances, which are covered in the side trek *The Gourd*.

If the GM wishes to allow the PCs to establish a relationship with Luther after the events of *The Gourd* it is likely to be unique.

Alluria the Ghost (From the Ashes)

Alluria's role is set in *From the Ashes*, and also in *Doors Best Left Closed*, but there is nothing stopping the PCs from revisiting the manor and developing a relationship with her in the intervening time.

Assuming she is set free of her supernatural anger, Alluria is friendly, if a little distant and mercurial. She can continue to inform the PCs about the minutiae of the life and times of the manor some 10 years ago, but she cannot grow or adapt, so developing a meaningful relationship with the PCs is impossible. She is mentally and emotionally mired in that time.

Additional NPCs

There are a number of peripheral NPCs that the GM may wish to develop into contacts that may or may not have a recurring presence in the campaign. In addition to anyone the GM themselves introduce, a number of others are possibilities, but only if the PCs actively choose to pursue it. Examples include;

Sir François Mercer – In *A Simple Job* one of the potential random encounters is with a Noble Scion. Depending on how the PCs handle the situation they may make a

potential ally or enemy of the young man. None of the other NPCs offer an aristocratic connection, so if the GM (or players) wish to develop such a relationship he could become a useful contact or social impediment.

Inspector James Sharpes – The inspector plays a role in *Ignorance is Bliss* and (if he survives) is mentioned in From the Ashes. Should he survive the PCs are likely to encounter him again in later adventures. While intended to be a recurring neutral NPC, having a positive or negative connection to a mid-rank watchman has a potential effect on the manner the PCs are seen officially in the city. This is something the GM or players may wish to explore.

Eric the Miller – an NPC introduced through the first Kickstarter, Eric is a wealthy businessman that owns several mills, and may be predisposed to view the PCs in a positive or negative light through their actions concerning his daughter. While several merchants are already amongst the PCs NPC connections, none have a stable mercantile network, nor carry the influence and reputation that Eric has. Developing this relationship could have strong trade influences if that is desired in the campaign, or offer the PCs a stable, wealthy benefactor. Eric is a member of the Trade Guild, but an outspoken opponent of the PTC. GMs or players may find this useful in the campaign.

Using Reputation Systems

While not required, it is highly recommended the GM consider using a reputation system for the Campaign. The PCs have the opportunity to make lasting changes to the setting through their actions, and that in itself is likely to gain them the attention of not only powerful or significant individuals, but the citizens of the Anduria as well.

How the PCs choose to act should have consequences – good or ill – and a reputation system allows for the tracking of and assessment of their actions. It also offers a non-monetary reward, in many ways balancing the tangible gains scale. Too often doing 'the right thing' is held up as its own reward, while taking the morally questionable path (looting the dead, grave robbing etc) has little to no consequence and is often directly rewarded with 'treasure'. This can at times lead to player

justification where alignment, morals or roleplaying are set aside in favour of a meta-gaming acceptance of otherwise unpalatable or 'out of character' PC behaviour. By using a tangible reward reputation system you are offering a genuine choice that does not disadvantage characters.

There are several Reputation Systems found in published products, including Pathfinder core and several 3rd party supplements. Or you could produce your own tailored specifically to the campaign style or play style of your group. Provided below is a simple system that might be useful;

The PC party starts with Fame 0 / Infamy 0. **Fame** is a measure of positive reputation while **Infamy** is a measure of negative reputation. It is possible (though unlikely) to have both Fame and Infamy to a certain point (see Reaping the Rewards below).

Each adventure has between 1 and 3 **Pivotal Moments** (GM's discretion, but chosen before play) where reputation points will be incurred. One of these moments should be the adventure conclusion. Pivotal Moments must be plot points where PC choice has an impact, and that somehow it can be conveyed or discovered by the populous (ie being incredibly self-sacrificing is all well and good, but if no one knows about it, it does not affect your reputation).

When a Pivotal Moment arrives, the GM weighs how the PC actions will be perceived by the public, awarding 0-1 points to either Fame or Infamy (but not both in a single Pivotal Moment). At the conclusion of the adventure the GM determines if their overall actions for the adventure would enhance or damage their public reputation and award a point to either Fame or Infamy accordingly (each adventure awards at least 1 point to either Fame or Infamy). If at any other time in an adventure the Party does something particularly virtuous or dastardly bonus points (1 per event) can be awarded.

For example, while running the *prologue* I determine that the Waterfall Cavern and the Crypt are Pivotal Moments, as is the Adventure Conclusion. I could just as easily swap these out for other moments, but for now we'll stick with them.

Running through the adventure, when the party (with

NPCs in tow) reaches the waterfall chasm, the players decide to put the NPCs in the middle of the group and assist them through from each side. When Lucious falls, dangling by a rope, the PC fighter heroically pulls him to safety. I determine this is a positive influence on reputation. When the PCs reach the Crypt, greed gets the better of them and they loot the sarcophagi, plundering every scrap of cloth. I determine this has a negative influence. Eventually we come to the end of the adventure, and the PCs have managed to save most of the NPCs and turned the Ring over to the Healing Hands. I conclude that overall they did well and would be publicly perceived well. As there are plenty of witnesses to their behaviour to spread the word, it affects their reputation. 2 positive and 1 negative influences results in Fame 2 / Infamy 1. Word spreads that the PCs are brave and resourceful, but a little greedy. As we continue through the adventures I add to this total. In some cases actions at Pivotal Moments may not offer reputation gains, but each adventure should at least 1 point to either Fame or Infamy at the conclusion (unless events are somehow kept secret).

Reaping the rewards

All roll modifications are considered to be circumstance bonuses/penalties. The GM may rule if they do or do not apply under any given situation or conditions.

FameFameScoreEffect

- 2 The PCs are occasionally recognized and hear the odd tavern tale or two about their exploits. They gain a +1 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy skill rolls when dealing with the general populous (ie not campaign significant NPCs).
 - 4 The PCs are generally recognized and are asked to tell their own tales in bars. They receive the occasional free drink, and gain an additional +1 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy (total +2), and +1 on Bluff when dealing with the general populous.

8 The PCs are recognized almost everywhere, and people hail them in the street. They are easy to find by anyone who asks after them. The PCs gain an additional +1 on Bluff (total +2), and a +1 to Intimidate with the populous. The PCs enjoy a 5% discount on goods and services within the city.

16 The PCs are local celebrities, approached on

the street and treated like friends by many. The PCs whereabouts is common knowledge, and citizens begin asking PCs for assistance at various times and tasks. Expectations on the PCs are high. At this level every Infamy point gained removes 2 Fame points. The PCs gain an additional +1 circumstance bonus to Intimidate (total +2), enjoy a 10% discount on goods and services in the city, and most citizens will acquiesce to reasonable requests from the PCs (ie "May I borrow your sword" not "may I have your first born son").

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The PCs are Heroes. The city claims them as their own, and treats them as honoured individuals in every sense. People crowd them on the streets, offer gifts (low value - 1-5gp) and vie for their attention. Their whereabouts at all times and hours is known. Expectations are high. The citizens and even the authorities turn to the PCs in times of crisis. At this level every point of Infamy gained removes 3 Fame points, and each time the PCs fail at a task (if it becomes public) removes a Fame point. The PCs gain preferential treatment at all public locations and most official locations. The City (or public figures) award the PCs for major successes with medals and/or lavish gifts (100gp). Most citizens will acquiesce to reasonable requests, and in many cases mildly unreasonable requests ("May I have your horse" not 'May I have your first born son"), though each such request removes 1 Fame point.

The PCs are Legends. They are not approached in the street. The people stand back in awe, point and tell tales of the time they saw the PCs. The expectations are enormous. Any trouble is referred directly to the PCs. Any failure on the part of the PCs (if made public) removes 2 Fame points. Every Infamy point gained removes 3 Fame points. The PCs do not pay for mundane items (of less than 300gp value), and can expect preferential treatment almost everywhere they go. They are occasionally showered with lavish gifts (100gp+ value) but as often as not these come with the expectation of favours in return. Most citizens will acquiesce to highly unreasonable requests, but not downright evil or dangerous ("May I have your house?" not "May I have your firstborn son"), though each such
request removes 2 Fame points. Finally the PCs can use their influence to negotiate cheaper magical goods or services, but for each 500gp worth of 'discount' they remove 1 Fame Point.

Infamy Infamy Score Effect

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- The PCs have a mildly harmful reputation. They incur a -1 circumstance penalty to Diplomacy rolls when dealing with the general populous. Infamy is reduced by 1 point for every 3 Fame points gained.
- 4 The PCs are occasionally recognized and have a poor reputation. They incur a further -1 penalty to diplomacy (total of -2) and a -1 to Bluff when dealing with the general populous. Local law enforcement make a point of observing the PCs activities periodically. Infamy is reduced by 1 point for every 3 Fame points gained.
- 8 The PCs are known to be disreputable and recognized in most places they go. They are treated with suspicion and mistrust by most. They incur a further -1 to Bluff (total of -2), but their reputation has the effect of making them more menacing, gaining a +1 bonus to Intimidate rolls. The PCs find that prices are steeper for them (5% increase) and a few businesses may refuse service. Local law enforcement regularly question PCs about their activities. Infamy is reduced by 1 point for every 2 Fame points gained.
- 16 The PCs are notorious. Regardless of actual activity, the PCs are publicly perceived as criminals. They begin to be shunned in public, and goods and services are more expensive (10% increase) if they are even available at all (GMs discretion). Actual criminal elements may attempt to contact or recruit the PCs, but local law enforcement begin to watch the PCs very closely for actual criminal activity, eager to arrest them. Their notoriety increases their Intimidate bonus by +1 (total of +2). Infamy is reduced by 1 for every 2 Fame points earned.
 - The PCs are villains. They are avoided in public, and most legitimate businesses will deal with the PCs only out of anxiety. Local Law enforcement set up a special task force to investigate the PCs, and any illegal activities likely result in rapid arrest. Citizens will acquiesce to reasonable and mildly unreasonable

requests out of fear (see Fame for reasonable and mildly unreasonable examples) but doing so will increase their Infamy by one point. Local criminal enterprises might begin to offer tribute (low value 1-5gp) and legitimate businesses might offer 'protection' gifts (same value). At this point earning Fame does not reduce Infamy as the populous questions the motives of such 'good' actions.

The PCs are seen as Tyrants. People flee in their presence, and businesses simply allow them to take any mundane items they wish to get them to leave (phrasing it as 'gifts'). Law enforcement is gunning for them, with round the clock surveillance. Any confirmed illegal activity results in swift and harsh response. They are actively courted by some criminal elements, though their notoriety works against being brought into any organizations. Most citizens will acquiesce to highly unreasonable requests, but not downright evil or dangerous ones, instead fleeing or begging for their lives. Good aligned adventuring parties may seek to confront the PCs.

Fame and Infamy are not opposite sides of the same coin. They are independent scales with overlapping effects. The reputation system has no bearing on either the Alignments of the PCs, nor does it account for the Alignments of anyone the PCs interact with directly. It is based on the perception of the PCs in the public eye. Bear in mind the above reputation effects are in reference to the greater city population, which is essentially good aligned, and does not have a direct influence on interactions with campaign significant NPCs or groups. These are handled independently of this system, though the GM may rule that the PCs reputation has some effect on these interactions.

The example Reputation System allows the PCs to effectively have tangible rewards in terms of game effects and a form of influential 'currency' that they may spend. Overuse of this influence can and will reduce their reputation. It also allows PCs with poor reputations to redeem themselves in the eyes of the citizens through better choices, though past a certain point no amount of good works will clean the tarnish from their reputation.

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Levelling and Challenging the Characters

The adventure path has eight 'official' adventures (including the prologue) but also incorporates a number of side treks of varying sizes and some other suggested compatible adventures and materials.

The campaign can be played with only the eight official adventures, but it is recommended for a broader and deeper experience that the side treks and additional material be used. Most of this material is peripheral to the main story, but offers both GM and player driven exploration of tangent themes and city features. Using this extra material will create a richer, more immersive story, and increase the character's connection to the campaign.

GM's are also encouraged to include any other adventures they see fit, or explore beyond the presented material if they wish.

In order to allow for this, the adventures need to flexible in both the level the characters need to be and the amount of experience that is generated from each. When looking through the adventures readers will see that the 8 main adventures are stated to use the Medium advancement track. This is true to a point. This fits with the approximate average experience point value of the adventure path as a whole, but does not fit perfectly exact XP that matches advancement neatly level by level (ie if XP points are used there will be some overlap past and into the next level rather than neatly giving enough XP to just reach a level). The use of the Medium advancement track is a guide rather than a railroad.

In order to get the most out of this flexibility, the GM is required to do a bit of work to smooth the challenges

and the levelling process. It is advised that the GM should control when and where levelling occurs rather than simply accumulate XP points until characters reach the next level. This can be achieved by either levelling characters at specific points in the campaign (Milestones), or by managing the XP tightly to ensure levelling occurs where needed. This becomes particularly important when adding or removing content.

Each of the adventures contains some basic information on adjusting difficulty for larger or higher level groups, but again, the GM is familiar with their own player's capabilities, the group play style and level of optimization. The GM is in a much better position to make appropriate adjustments to challenge their group than any generic suggestions included in the modules.

To assist in this process however, below is a couple of suggested progression lines using the available and/or recommended material, and how and where the side treks are intended to 'fit' the over arching story. These time lines only include up to the adventures in Part 1. Extended progression lines will be included in later products.

Path 1 - using just the core adventures, the difficulty level will be much harder, with characters having less resources in each adventure. If you have veteran players with highly optimized characters and want to present them with a real challenge this is the path for them. Using Path 1 you simply run the adventures as is, and the characters gain 1 level at the end of each adventure (either by Milestone or approximate XP).

Path 2 – Including the side treks written for the AP, this path offers more resources and levels characters within adventures, allowing a 'boost' before the final encounter

Suggested A	Advancement Paths	E. H. L. Main	
Character			
Level	Path 1	Path 2	Path 3
1	Difficult Circumstances	Difficult Circumstances	Difficult Circumstances
2	A Simple Job	A Simple Job	Key to Marina ¹⁵
3	Ignorance is Bliss	Under Eternity ¹⁴	A Simple Job
112	0	Ignorance is Bliss (lvl 4 during)	Under Eternity ¹⁴
4	From the Ashes	From the Ashes (lvl 5 during)	Ignorance is Bliss
5		The Gourd ¹⁴	From the Ashes (lvl 6 during)
6			The Gourd ¹⁴

14 - Side trek adventure featured in this Campaign Guide

15 - An adventure written by Richard Develyn previous to, and independent of, this AP, but with surprisingly similar elements. It makes a great slot in adventure, and if run contextually with the AP story, can add some further depth to the Asmodean Seekers.

area. This path allows for more story depth and more resources at critical times. Using Path 2, you level the character during *Ignorance is Bliss* before they approach Damien's Tower (Chapter 9). *From the Ashes* is a sandbox, but characters should level about halfway through the content, ideally before confronting the Lonely One in the Caves (Area C1-5).

Path 3 – Includes the purpose written side treks and the inclusion of *Key to Marina*. This path allows the PCs to start most adventures at a level higher than minimum, accessing resources and abilities not available in Path 1. This path is the most forgiving to newer players or less optimized groups, and offers more story depth. With the insertion of *Key to Marina* (advanced to level 2), the remainder of the adventures are simply run with the characters advancing at the end of the main adventure or its linked side trek.

If the group has the time and inclination to explore the campaign in depth, it is recommended to use Path 3 for the best immersion. It is worth mentioning that *Key to Marina* is not a **Pyromaniac Press** product, and will need to be sourced from **4 Dollar Dungeons**. As the name suggests it is a very reasonably priced adventure and one that comes highly recommended by both myself and Endzeitgiest¹⁶

In order to place Key to Marina in the Adventure Path a few cosmetic changes need to be made. A warning that the following advice contains spoilers.

- The locations can remain as is, but place them all within the Lower Ward of the city. References to the 'mayor' or 'city hall' can be replaced with 'burgomaster' and 'ward hall', reflecting the local ward governance under the city structure rather than that of the smaller town (Morphoton) featured in the adventure.
- The Asmodean Cult in the adventure is a religious institution developed underground due to the city's intolerance of religions, not of Asmodeus specifically. The Cult seeks converts, souls, and to corrupt and control elements or individuals of the city. The Seekers of Asmodeus are a military arm of the greater organization, with a mandate to investigate and claim (or reclaim) that which is the devil's due. Each 'arm' is aware of the other, but operate independently,

with different mandates. Damage to one does not directly harm the other, though if the Asmodean Cult is exposed it will cause some embarrassment to the Seekers. They will certainly take note of (and possibly umbrage with) those responsible.

Current Affairs, Rumours and Whispers

Foreshadowing future events allows the players to feel more connected to the story and uncovering rumours and whispers is a proactive way to allow the PCs to uncover information without divulging too much too soon. When characters seek information from various sources throughout the course of the adventures the GM can use the following table to pepper in interesting (though not always reliable) campaign information.

As much of the rumours pertain to current or future events, the GM is encouraged to divulge or withhold information at a pace that suits their campaign style. In principle, this table should be used throughout the course of the **Into Fear** (Adventure Path Part 1) adventures to help shape the tapestry of the state of city affairs. By the time the events of **Into Fire** (Adventure Path Part 2) occur, these rumours should mostly be borne out by character experience.

- 1. "Strange days in the city, no doubt about it. The riot in Pilgrimage was not the last of it, there's more to come I tell you" (True, oh so very True).
- 2. "I hear that it was some no good adventurers stirring up trouble in Pilgrimage and inciting the people to try to overthrow the Ruling Council" (False, obviously).
 - . "Those Seekers are everywhere in the city now. Skulking and sneaking about, and up to no good. I hear they snatch innocent folks in the night right out of their beds!" (False, while the Seekers presence certainly has increased, and their motives are not necessarily pure, they have not stooped to nocturnal kidnapping from residences...yet).
- 4. "They call the Seekers 'Reapers' behind their back. It's 'cause they steal the souls of children for their dark god" (False, the Seekers only take that which is owed to Asmodeus).
- 5. "I don't like that the Seekers seem to be able to openly walk the streets touting their religion. Churches can't be trusted, and were outlawed for good reason. Clerics are selfish

16 - For those of you who do not know who this is - Thilo is the most prolific reviewer of 3rd party Pathfinder material. He is widely respected for his reviews. His work can be found here - www.endzeitgeist.com

zealots that only care about building wealth and power for their Gods off the backs of the ignorant poor" (Mostly False. Clerics aren't necessarily zealots, and zealotry and selfishness is hardly restricted to religion. This is a fairly common opinion of religion in the city. Most don't remember why such prejudices exist, passing it off as a 'progressive' philosophy. That being said, the law against churches was originally established with some cause).

- "My Brother lives near the Sanitarium in the Dock Ward. He says you can hear the looneys cry out at night now. Something's got them all riled up lately" (True, they are more sensitive to the rising influence of the machine).
 "I hear that the Sanitarium's got more patrons these days, if you know what I mean. More folks losing their marbles each day" (True, though at this time the trend is pretty slow, the number of people being pushed over the edge by the influence of the machine is increasing).
- 8. "The word out there is there's something in the water that's driving people barmy, put there by the guilds trying to control the people" (False, this is conspiratorial nonsense).
- 9. "The guilds are locked in a secret conflict for control of the city, and the people will suffer for it" (Partially True, though not by nefarious design. The guilds play politics, as they always have, and often the people, particularly the lower classes tend to suffer for it).
- 10. "I hear there's a trade war going on between the factions within the trade guild, and the independent traders. Prices are going up" (Partially True, partially False. There is no doubt competition, trade being what it is, and there are certainly fluctuating markets, but in general this is driving prices down).
- 11. "The Trade Guild is withholding stockpiles of precious gems, silver and gold in an effort to manipulate the markets" (False, only silver prices are rising, and this is due to supply issues).
- 12. "The Trade Guild is strangling trade from outside sources, seeking to control freedom of trade. We haven't seen any traders from towns like Silverton for months. It's because the Trade Guild is keeping them out" (Partially True, Partially False. The Trade Guild is actually desperate to open new external trade options. The trade from Silverton has stopped due to their own issues, and the interference of the PTC, not the Trade Guild as a whole – this is detailed in **Into Fire** Part 2 of the epic adventure).
- 13. "The Explorer's Guild is putting a lot of money into restoring some of the older parts of the city. They say it's to preserve the cultural significance, but I think they are just trying to buy our goodwill" (Partially True. The

restoration efforts are in part designed to offset the negative reputation of the guild, but it's also to cover some of its other activities, and to legitimise them if discovered).

- 14. "The Explorer's Guild are a shifty bunch. Digging up treasures that don't belong to them, then claiming them as salvage. You can't trust 'em, thieves all!" (False, the guild serves a legitimate purpose, and in the main are not thieves. The Explorer's Guild has a poor reputation and though most have forgotten why that is, old prejudices die hard. However, that doesn't mean they are necessarily trustworthy)
- 15. "The Guild of Public Works are creepy sorts. I know they've got the tough tasks no one wants, but using undead for labour is just wrong! Imagine if you came face to face with your rotting grandpa!" (False, the Guild members are much like everyone else, and the undead labour force are obtained legally. The moral view of undead labour is a matter of perspective).
- 16. "I hear that there are monsters in the sewers snatching up and eating living workers, that's why the Guild of Public Works has resorted to undead labour gangs" (Partially True, there are monsters in the sewers, and they do eat the occasional worker. However, the Guild uses undead labour as a cheap method of accomplishing menial or dangerous tasks).
- 17. "The Psychic motes are all riled up lately. There's something weird going on with them. Do you know one of them spoke to me the other day? I clearly heard it utter the word 'death'" (partially True, and partially utterly False. The psychic motes are acting unusually agitated due to the effects of the machine, but they cannot speak in any language other than their own).
- 18. "The porters are the docks told me a tale. They said they found a man who was alive but like gone...mentally...you know. They say it isn't the first they've found" (True, this has been going on for months, and is explained in Adventure 2 Ignorance is Bliss).
- 19. "Strange creatures have been seen lurking in the city. Shadowy figures in cloaks watching people, like they are looking for something" (True, though it is only one creature, and is explained in Adventure 2 Ignorance is Bliss).
- 20. "Can't you feel it? The sense of impending doom on this city? We're all sliding into Hell for our sins. The presence of the Seekers proves that. They are here to usher us along" (False for the most part. The city is heading toward an impending doom, but this is not the work of Azmodeus or the Seekers, nor is it Hell having an influence – though R'lyeh it is probably indistinguishable from Hell for most citizens).

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The City Setting

This section is the Game Master's version of **Section 1 – The City** of the *Players Guide*. The information parallels the Player's Guide, but is expanded to include the statistical and secret information required to run a Campaign within the city. This information should be kept from the players until it is revealed as part of the unfolding plot (if at all). GMs should make themselves familiar with the player's version to ensure continuity.

ANDURIA, THE ETERNAL CITY

LN Metropolis

Corruption +4; **Crime** +4; **Economy** +5; **Law** +3; **Lore** +5; **Society** +7

Qualities Academic, Magically Attuned, Prosperous, Rumor Mongering Citizens, Strategic Location, Religiously Intolerant (all religions) Danger +10

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government Council

Population 195,000 (180,000 human, 4,500 dwarves, 2,500 halflings, 1,500 half elves, 1,000 gnomes, 500 elves, 5,000 other)

Notable NPCs

Lord Antony Reinwald (LN human male aristocrat 7) The City Council (see Government below) MARKETPLACE

Base Value 24,000gp; Purchase Limit 170,000gp; Spellcasting 9th

Minor Items All Available; Medium Items 4d4; Major Items 3d4;

City Features - Physical

Geography

Anduria occupies a prime geographical location for a number of reasons. From a trade and resource perspective, it sits on a sheltered section of coast, rarely troubled by significant storm or swell, and has good trade winds (naturally occurring weather patterns) that make it an almost required stopover for sea trade. It rests in a natural river basin, and is surrounded by lush farmland fed by rivers. To the north extensive forests provide lumber and hunting, and to the west two mining and smithing communities provide metals.

Despite these abundant natural resources, the vast majority of its goods are imported, meaning that the local

resources are rarely depleted.

From a magical perspective, it is well documented that the city rests on a nexus of ley lines, offering a connection to a powerful undercurrent of energy for any arcane casters and occult adepts who can unlock its secrets. Scholars suggest that there is more to the city placement than even this (if that were not enough), and that the city itself rests upon an esoteric mystery of staggering proportions, though no solid evidence to support this has been uncovered.

Architecture

The city is a patchwork of old and new architecture, as well as permanent and temporary. It has the dichotomous feel of both timeless and immovable as well as temporary and changeable, that many new arrivals find hard to reconcile.

The walls are amongst the oldest remaining structures. Crafted of a strange green stone of unknown origin, they stand a massive 100 feet in height, and some 20 feet thick, though they are not solid, harbouring an internal network of tunnels and rooms. There are 8 bastions spread evenly around the wall, and four titanic gates allow for ingress and egress. The walls are carved with colossal basreliefs of robed figures that stare balefully outwards like silent sentinels. The one blemish to this great feat of construction is that several generations ago the Guild of Trade sought, and received, permission to remove a large section of the harbour facing wall to facilitate traffic and trade (much to the chagrin of the Explorers Guild). Stone and sculpture from the walls can now be found all around the city, often repurposed into other buildings.

The other great feature of the city structure is the unusual canal system. Radiating outward from a central ring, each internal ward (except the Dock Ward) claims at least one 'arm' of the canals, which branch out in strange patterns before terminating at each of the wall bastions. No canal arm links with any other, so the canals have become almost exclusive methods of transport for within each ward, though other wards can be reached through the central hub. The canals do not connect to the sea, but are fed by an aqueduct carrying fresh water from inland. All day every day the canals teem with small craft taking advantage of the relatively open transport opportunities. The rest of the city is a mash of old and new architecture. It is not uncommon to see a single building with several generations of different styles and materials. The 'ground' level varies in elevation as new buildings are often simply built on the foundations of the last, and some areas of the city are near impassable warrens requiring local guides to navigate the blind turns and dead ends. With a limited footprint, the city has grown up rather than out, and while there are a number of carefully maintained and controlled 'open' areas that are limited to single or double stories, most of the rest of the city is commonly 3 to 4 stories high, with bridges and terraces connecting some blocks to others above the streets below. There are a number of buildings, particularly noble dwellings, guild houses or official city buildings that top half a dozen or more stories, some stretching far above the city walls. The tallest building in the city is the Council Chambers, whose central spire is a dizzying 300 feet high, while the Peregrine Trading Consortium air docks fall just short at 280 feet.

In contrast to this solid foundation is the intangible tent cities of the Great Market and the slums of Pilgrimage. While physically similar no two locations could be more different. The Great Market is a surging, breathing animal, where trade is conducted loudly and rapidly at all hours. Tent allotments are set out in the massive open square, and traders sell frenetically until stocks deplete, then pack up and move on, the next merchant setting up before the ground cools. Ambition, opportunity and excitement abound.

Pilgrimage is also a tent city, but it is a more sombre affair. Huddled outside one of the landward gates, it is the refuge of the desperate and disenfranchised, a place to go when all options are exhausted. If the Great Market breathes life, then Pilgrimage sighs the long, defeated breath of the conquered

City Layout

The city is divided into a number of sections, or wards. The wards are determined (and named) for their primary function or residents. The wards are not separated by anything as mundane as walls, though there are detailed maps in the Council Chambers and city archives as to the exact delineations (down to the foot). They are instead identified culturally, and policed socially as well as practically. Citizens are free to cross into various wards,

but those that appear to lack specific business (or in some cases the requisite social status) in a ward may be subject to a cold reception from the residents. Those that are clearly out of place or suspicious in nature will be questioned by the Watch.

The Internal Wards

The Artisans Ward - This ward is predominantly populated by the residences and businesses of many of the city's craftsmen, particularly the refined crafts. It also hosts various academies and institutions of learning and houses much of the middle class population. The Artisan Ward is the only ward bordering the wall that does not claim a city gate.

The Council Ward - Central in the city, surrounded by a circular canal, the Council Ward is accessible only by boat or bridge, or rarely by aerial means. The Council Ward houses the Council Chambers, and all of the connected services buildings. Most of the city administration is managed from this ward, and several of the major Guildhalls reside here.

The Dock Ward - The Dock Ward handles all of the sea traffic and warehousing, and tends to house the portion of the city's population closely connected to trade or maritime occupations. It is tightly controlled by the Trade Guild, and unlike dock areas in most other cities it is clean and relatively free of trash, waste and 'undesirables'. Travellers, sailors and vagabonds are ushered through to the Trade Ward or the Lower Ward. The Dock Ward extends out into the actual docks themselves, the city wall having been torn down generations ago to 'expedite' traffic flow. It still retains its gate (the Dock Gate), isolated in the centre of the ward, as a forlorn landmark.

The Lower Ward - The Lower Ward tends to cater to the 'lower' trades or crafts - metalwork, stonework, leather and clothing, as well as tanning, butchery and the like. It is cluttered and constantly covered in a layer of soot, ash and grime. It houses much of the city's working class population. The Lower Ward has some of the deepest and most convoluted foundations from previous eras, creating a maze like series of warrens and blinds. It is the least desirable locale for real estate inside the walls, and yet still sought after due to the limited nature of the city. The Lower Ward occupies a section of the wall that



maintains the egress to Pilgrimage, colloquially known as Pilgrim's Gate.

The Nobles Ward – As the name suggests, the Nobles Ward is home to the wealthy upper class, and the indulgent goods and services they expect and desire. It is the most open of the internal wards, with carefully planned promenades and small, but well-manicured parks and public spaces, though (like the rest of the city) it has elevated architecture and never entirely loses the cramped feel. Accommodation and other services are notoriously expensive in this ward, a carefully constructed social barrier to maintain its exclusivity. The Nobles Ward boasts a gate (dubbed the 'Golden Gate'), which is essentially a private entrance to the Retreat (see external wards below).

The Trade Ward – Home to the Grand Market, it is the mercantile hub of the city. The Trade Ward is the largest of the wards, and the most active. Every second or third building is a shop or service, and it has a greater collection of Inns, taverns and nightclubs than all the other wards combined. The Ward also houses a large proportion of the city's middle class population, particularly those that make a living through the ward's services. The Trade Ward hosts the North Gate, which exits the city into the ward of Northgate.

Newcomers to the city can find the distinction between the North Gate and Northgate confusing, but locals tend to pick the subtle inflections in speech that identify which is being referenced.

The External Wards

Northgate – One of the two true external wards to the city, Northgate is a mix of everything and anything, structures built with care but little overall planning. Most of the buildings are wood rather than stone, and it is populated with modestly successful merchants, shopkeepers, and working class who cannot afford to break into the expensive city locales. Northgate is also in proximity to the river delta north of the city, so it has become a haunt for small gangs of smugglers and other undesirables of late.

Pilgrimage – The other of the city's true external wards, **Pilgrimage** is a slum district consisting of those who cannot obtain entry to the city proper for various (and often nefarious) reasons. It is the poorest, and most dangerous of the city's wards, with criminal gangs effectively controlling 'territories' in the district, in spite of the efforts of the Watch. Despite having ample space to expand, the citizens of Pilgrimage cluster tightly together in their tent city in the shadow of the walls, and living conditions range from humble to atrocious in the press of humanity.

The Retreat – The Retreat is less of a ward, and more of a private estate for the city's wealthy and indolent. Space is not limited in the Retreat as it is in the city proper, so the aristocracy can indulge in extravagant and sprawling domains, with open parklands, artificially created lakes and waterways and an openness found nowhere else in the city. The Retreat is surrounded by a wall (though nothing close to the majesty of the city walls), and patrolled by a private mercenary company to deter trespassing.

Titan's Grasp Prison – A day south of the city, and set on an islet off the coat that suspiciously resembles a giant calcified hand, the prison is as isolated as any of the city's holdings. A small service town called Last Look resides on a nearby bluff, managing the ferries that move prisoners and provisions to the prison. As expected, both the prison and Last Look house a large watch contingent.

City Features - Thematic

What's in a name?

Despite being almost universally referred to as the Eternal City, the city has not only one name but several in fact. The nature of the city tends to mean that its associated civilization experiences 'setbacks' every millennia or so, for reasons covered in the Adventure Path Background & Timeline section. As each new civilization rises from the ashes of the last, knowledge of the name is either lost (if the city is depopulated), or deliberately changed as a means of political promotion (as a way to dismiss the old, and usher in the new). The city itself endures, no matter what befalls its occupants, and while specific names may fade, that concept somehow remains in the consciousness of the people. Over time scholars and Explorers (guildsmen) have uncovered ancient records, or found a member of a long lived race that remembers a scrap or two from previous ages. In order, the names of

the city that have been recovered are:

Equis Eltha; Sil el Thera; Therandur; Thera Anduria; Anduria (Current).

Scholars are divided on whether Equis Eltha was the name given by the original city builders, or just the oldest to survive on some form of record. There is also some debate that this list of names is complete, or that there might be some missing in the sequence. What is agreed upon is that the evidence suggests that this is the correct order of known names due to the relative ages of the sources found, and the fact that each seems to draw on something of the previous.

The reality is that the city is in its 17th incarnation. The recovered names are the five of the most recent (in correct order). The city's original name as well as the previous 11 are long lost.

For the everyday citizen, the city is simply referred to as 'the City' or 'the Eternal City', with its official name 'Anduria' being referenced in relation to geography or cartography, or in circumstances where formality is warranted.

Circular Civilization

The city is currently experiencing something of a renaissance, emerging from a period of civil turmoil. The city bears the marks of several time periods where civilization has risen and fallen, only to rise again. Anduria's foundations are ancient, with the outer walls, canals, and some city sections created from a non-native green stone and speculated to be tens of thousands of years old. Throughout the city and beyond, there is clear archaeological evidence of several major periods of sustained civilization, with carvings, buildings and artefacts indicating an advanced and prosperous empires that somehow fell or were destroyed. The Explorer's Guild has uncovered at least four such peaks in the city's history, but have repressed any evidence of why these societies failed.

The existence and function of the Machine is known to the members of the ruling council, and to key individuals in the city, but not to the general population. The Council (influenced by the Echo) has deemed such knowledge dangerous, even though the Machine is inactive. Knowledge of the Machine undercuts the current power structure, and opens up the possibility of dissent on how the city should be governed. The Council is concerned with maintaining the status quo for reasons of social stability (not to mention securing their own positions). The council members do understand the significance of the periods of fall and renewal, suggesting some sort of potentially predetermined circular pattern, but are determined to end the cycle and extend and maintain this current age of prosperity.

Transport - Getting around within the City

Given its unique layout (canals, cluttered streets and vertical construction) a number of methods for improving movement in the city have been pioneered, if in some cases not yet been mastered. In addition to the fairly standard land based transportation methods – carriages, rickshaws and palanquin chairs, not to mention ubiquitous foot or horse traffic – enterprising individuals have taken to both the canals and the air to get around.

The canals are plied with row boats, gondolas and even small sail craft, which flit in an out around the larger trade barges. An occasional unique craft is spotted – an enchanted skiff powered by bound elementals, a small sea chariot pulled by aquatic creatures, or even a technological boat propelled by large paddle wheels, though these are as often seen turning lazy circles than moving in any coherent fashion.

The aerial transport options are rarer, but just as varied. Dirigibles held aloft by balloons, and powered by sails, are the most numerous, and there are about a dozen in the city at any one time. Some are for hire, but most are merchant vessels. There are a number of other technological airships of 'cutting edge' design, meaning the potential for failure per trip is high. An example includes Fundo's Air balloon, which works well enough, but has no mechanism for steering beyond a basic rudder, and has a tendency to catch fire at inopportune times. Others can be seen from time to time, but most crash or explode spectacularly.

For the very brave there is Jotun's Sky Chariots, primarily a courier and messenger service that will also take occasional passengers for the right price. Jotun has a half dozen of the large open chariots, strung between teams of hippogriffs front and back. The flying beasts make for a swift, if hazardous, trip from place to place within the city.

Very rarely sleek magically powered (elemental bound) airships appear in the city, but these are never available for general hire and do not appear to carry cargo their ownership and purpose are unknown.

Extensive information on transport types, movement rates, costs and availabilities is covered in Adventure 1 – *A Simple Job* and is not reproduced here for the sake of brevity.

However, the GM should consider several things when managing transport, including how the events of the Adventure path (as it proceeds) and character actions affect the transport situation and availability. For example, Jotun has only 52 hippogriffs, enough to man 6 chariots (each requires 8 beasts), as well as a few extras that could be considered resting, injured, pregnant at any given time. Injury or death amongst the hippogriffs will lead to less chariots in the shy, as well as a reluctance to carry passengers. If more than half of his hippogriffs are slain or injured in the AP Jotun will ground his courier service until conditions become safer.

Similarly, if a number of airships are damaged or destroyed (encounters in both A Simple Job and future side treks) there will be less availability. If the PCs are involved in more than one of these events their reputation may proceed them, and captain's may be reluctant to take them aboard. The same applies to watercraft, though to a lesser extent (there are more of them, and a sinking boat doesn't tend to do spectacular and significant damage to buildings and or citizens, as a crashing airship tends to).

Finally, consider that the PTC has control of the major air docks, and the PCs are very likely to ruffle their feathers (to say the least) as the Adventure Path advances. The PCs may find PTC holdings closed to them, restricting their options.

Conversely, PCs that act to befriend or otherwise benefit those with Transport may find their options readily available, or permanently placed at their disposal. Saving or healing hippogriffs, for example, will go a long way to earning Jotun's thanks.

As with other aspects of the city and its people, the

actions of the Characters should have ramifications, for good or ill.

Psychic Motes - The 'Pest' Problem

The City (and local surrounding areas) have a unique 'pest' problem. The city is home to creatures that are essentially coin sized spheres of energy, which act in many ways like elemental insects. These creatures do not appear to eat or otherwise require anything, but flit lazily around the city and environs singularly or in small swarms. These creatures are known as Psychic Motes, because they emit a low level psychic emanation that disrupts concentration, and appear to be attracted to creatures in heightened emotional states. The Motes are annoying but relatively harmless unless provoked, at which point they can deliver a nasty shock. Swarms seem to be more purposeful than the individual Motes, and some city dwellers swear that the swarms seem to act with intelligence, but their actions and motivations (if any) remain a mystery. One thing all citizens agree upon, however, is that a riled up Mote Swarm can be dangerous or even deadly. The locals have learned to deal with them, mostly because the Motes have proven impossible to get rid of. They are considered a pest problem, though one worthy of respect.

The Psychic Motes are not actually insects, elemental or otherwise. They are the psychic manifestation of the souls that were drawn into the Shadow Plane along with Aether when the Machine went awry 300 years ago. The personalities of these citizens did not survive (at least not in full), and they now languish and elemental entities, trapped between two worlds. These creatures occupy a space in each reality simultaneously, appearing as ghostly figures in the Shadow City side, and elemental motes in the material world. Actions on one reality are mirrored in the other.

While the personalities of the Psychic Motes are gone, shreds of emotion remain, and in turn these creatures react to, and are drawn to, strong emotion or psychic disturbance. If Motes come into proximity to each other, they become attracted to the remnant emotions of the other Motes, and create a building resonance that effectively restores some cohesion to these lost souls. When bonded in swarms the Motes become more intelligent, and radiate a more powerful psychic field,



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but still remain without purpose or identity. Swarms are creatures of pure, capricious emotion, and if they grow angry or agitated can become dangerously aggressive, far more so than any single Mote could accomplish. This is where Swarms gain their reputation as predators from.

When running the campaign, GMs should include the Motes as an interesting feature of the city and cultivate the 'unusual insect and pest' theory. The revelation that these are actually twisted human souls will be a major plot point in Adventure 6 – *World in Shadow*, so the GM should try to conceal their nature until that point.

More information on the Psychic Motes (and the various sized swarms) can be found in the **Bestiary** section of this *Campaign Guide*.

Culture

The Eternal City is not defined by predominantly one culture, but draws its social norms and values from all cultures that pass through the city. It is a true melting pot, where an Elven silk merchant might be found adjacent to an Orcish blacksmith and a Dwarven brewery. While life in the city can't possibly erase cultural differences completely, it eases them by the fact that strange and exotic sights, sounds and smells are ubiquitous. Around every corner is something new and unexpected. With so many diverse sights and sounds, an open an accepting viewpoint is a necessity for living in the city.

There are some particular cultural elements that have become prevalent in the shared society of the city, however, and help define its unique social structure;

Philosophical tolerance and freedom – With so many differing views, perceptions and perspectives, the natural inclination in the city is that everyone is entitled to their personal beliefs and philosophies, so long as they are tolerant and respectful of others. These philosophies have led to the formation of groups, clubs, societies and ultimately Guilds, as like minded individuals share their ideas and concepts.

Strong and passionate belief and defence of belief is considered a desirable and admirable trait, as is the freedom to discuss and debate those beliefs.

Education and Innovation - Arising from free thought

and speech comes the freedom to act upon those beliefs, furthering education and advancement of both abstract and concrete application of those beliefs. This has given rise to an unprecedented leap in technology in the last few centuries. Rudimentary and experimental technology has begun appearing all over the city, though much of it is untested and dangerous.

Magic still holds sway in the race for efficient and comfortable existence, but is limited to those rare few with the latent skill. As technology begins to become more refined in time, and more widely available (in safe forms) it is likely to close the gap.

Religious Intolerance – Despite its strong culture of social tolerance, religious affiliation is poorly regarded in Anduria, derided as provincial and narrow minded at best and met with open hostility at worst. While most citizens believe this view is simply a reflection of an enlightened and free thinking society, it is of course born out of the genocidal intent of the Deity of the last religion to hold sway – Aether. While the true reason is not known, this (somewhat justified) prejudice brings with it a significant social stigma attached to the worship of gods in and around the City.

No Official Religious Presence

While religions are not banned outright, they are perceived poorly. No significant temples may be established, and the city has laws limiting the physical size, function and influence of religions. No religious figure may hold any appointment of political significance or influence in any city function. Religions are heavily (almost ruinously) taxed.

So what has replaced religions? In any complex society – particularly one with 'tangible' deities - belief in the divine is a powerful element in the social psychology of the population. In the Eternal City, religion has been replaced by the three pillars of personal philosophy, commerce and complex guild structures.

Personal philosophy is the first social pillar. Philosophical enlightenment 'untainted with divine influence' is the popular cultural norm, replacing religious spirituality with personal spirituality. Literacy and education levels are higher here than anywhere else in the world, with education accessible to the middle classes. The city boasts numerous schools and universities, as well as master craft and artisan academies. While the lowest classes still must eke out an existence without these advantages, widespread education is common in the rest of the populous. The City also boasts some of the most complete libraries and scriptoriums in the world, and invention and innovation is profuse. Free and open speech is a right taken for granted by most, though this attitude tends to give rise to intellectuals and pseudointellectuals in equal measure with the passionate and partisan public debate, occasionally inciting (generally well controlled) social demonstrations. A high social value and status is placed in those that are reasoned, articulate and passionate about their personal philosophy.

Commerce is the second social pillar. The city is the trade capital for the region, perhaps even the world. As a major port located where there are strong tidal currents and 'trade' winds, the city sees a staggering amount of travel and traffic, bringing with it goods and services from all over the world. While the city has a trade guild to assist in regulation, commerce is open to all with means, materials and desire. Travel and trade feeds philosophy and education and vice versa.

The Guilds of the city make up the third pillar. Managing - and in some cases limiting - this 'renaissance' of education and commerce is a complex political guild structure, formed in the vacuum left by the failed Divine Empire of 300 years ago. When the last power structure was overthrown, a significant decentralization movement spread power to citizen controlled groups. Simple initially, the guilds have become complex and murky organizations over the last three centuries and their values and tenets become less precise. Superficially, the guilds maintain a set of core interests, but commonly within the guilds there are factions, movements and power groups seeking to champion their own agendas and beliefs. While the guilds vie with each other for political influence in the city, almost all of them are internally divided to a greater or lesser extent. Guild membership for the general citizen in the city is as much about philosophical preference as tangible benefit, and membership has a direct influence on the wealth and position of each guild in the upper circles of governance.

No religious presence means less availability in divine based magic than many settings have, and less than many players might expect. The Guild of Peace and Healing fills this void with mundane healing and some low level divine magic, but overall the city does not have the luxury of high level healing or resurrection.

Government

The city is governed by an 11 seat Council, its representatives drawn mainly from the various guilds of the city. Nine seats are held by direct representatives from the major guilds (selected internally, but generally the leader – or Guildmaster – of the guild).

One seat is held by a representative elected to collectively speak for the minor guilds, and the final seat (the 'chair') and is nominally a neutral representative elected every 5 years by city wide vote (however only registered guild members may vote).

Current council members;

- Lord Antony Reinwald (Chair)
- Lord Roland Coralles (Guild of Aristocracy)
- Merchant Prince Varanion (Guild of Trade)
- Gideon Tibbett (Guild of Public Works)
- Domenica Ransford (Guild of Philosophy & Thought)
- Kerval Godwyn (Guild of Peace and Healing)
- Harbin Wingate (Guild of Justice)
- Dame Verity Astinus (Guild of Civil Defence)
- Corvin Walsh (Guild of Balance)
- Eiria Valdorn (Explorer's Guild)
- Frieda Redforge (Minor Guilds)

While the council deliberates and issues decrees and proclamations on significant matters, the day to day governance of the city is assigned to the major guilds themselves, with each managing a vital aspect of city affairs (law enforcement, administration, sanitation etc.). These run fairly independently, but are beholden to Council rulings, and subject to periodic audits.

The city has an aristocracy of sorts ('noble' families) but this distinction is historical fame, prestige and recognized social status rather than any connection to ruling authority. As would be expected, the aristocracy have their own complex 'pecking order' based on blood, history, reputation, wealth and political power. There is a constant social rivalry within the aristocracy to rise through this social order at the expense of the other families. The politics of the nobility are far reaching, and are both subtle and brutal. The one distinction that is unchangeable is that of Greater or Lesser house. The eight Greater houses are those that can establish their history and bloodline back to the survivors of the cataclysm three hundred years ago. These are considered the 'original' nobility and numerically never change. The Lesser houses, while being recognized as nobility, will always be seen as 'newcomers'. The numbers of the Lesser houses can change as recognized nobility immigrates to the city, or houses fall from favour or move on.

Lesser Houses

Bowdrey

Brilfan

Clayver

Coulding

Dawmyr

Gainshall

Jaerlir

Greater Houses Brinslee Corralles Gallover Olantyr Philstour Reinwald Ulstuwel Vellenhall

Disputed Houses¹⁷ Armatine Grandling Holbard

Lindcaster Mercer Sindrey Houses¹⁷ Valdorn Vestaan Zeensa

The Guilds

The city guilds play a major role in the social and political landscape of the campaign. Below is listed each Guild (including informal and slang nomenclature), their primary responsibilities and services, their Guildmaster, membership entry requirements and membership benefits at the citizen level. Individuals employed directly by the guild often have greater access or benefits as appropriate to the guild, but these are not generally available to the 'average' member. In addition to listed benefits, every member (of any guild) has city voting rights and is considered to have 'good standing' (unless convicted of a crime) in relation to civil duties and rights.

Characters can hold a guild membership and receive membership benefits if they can (or choose) to meet the membership requirements, though some Guilds may be deemed inappropriate for Player Characters at the GM's discretion. A typical guild hierarchy has four levels – Member, Agent, Broker and Guildmaster. In each guild there may be a slight variation in title or duties, but essentially most major guilds tend to adhere to this model. Smaller guilds or associations may have as simply a Guildmaster and members.

Member – This generally denotes the vast majority of guild membership, which are individuals that join the guild and share in its philosophy. Members pay fees and gain membership benefits, but are not employed directly by the guild.

Agent – These tend to be the advocates and functionaries of the guild, working directly for guild and managing menial or rudimentary guild functions. Sometimes also called Factors.

Broker – Short for 'powerbroker', these tend to be senior, influential members and decision makers for the guild, often having delegated authority on specific matters within a guild.

Guildmaster – The Guildmaster is leader or figurehead for the guild. The Guildmaster is elected from within, and serves a term in the position. Once the position is up, another election is held. Term lengths can vary from guild to guild (generally 1-4 years), and there are no term limits (essentially favoured guild leaders can be reelected ad infinitum). The relative power and authority of the Guildmaster depends on the dynamic of each guild, but most have final say or veto on guild decisions.

Major Guilds (the 'Nine' – referring to seats at the council)

The Guild of Aristocracy - the 'Golden Guild' (slang),

Despite its lofty title, The Guild of Aristocracy holds no more authority than any other guild, save of course the considerable power that extreme wealth provides. Membership in the Guild is restricted to those that can demonstrate 'noble' blood through complex lineage rules, and an internal 'pecking order' is established via these tangled connections. Most of the noble families in the guild are fiercely protective of their reputation and heritage, maintaining an 'appropriate separation' from the rest of the city's citizens, but take advantage of the opportunities afforded, particularly by education and trade, to maintain their wealth and position. Most members could claim membership in the Trade Guild,

17 - See the Hall of Lineage (in the City Gazetteer below) for details on the disputed status



but this is a far less prestigious. The Guild is fabulously wealthy in theory, though in truth the wealth is tied to its member's personal fortunes, the guild itself having little or no capital.

Primary services: Managing the Vault & City treasury, Hall of Lineage, Ward management (segregation and authorisation).

Guild master: Lord Roland Coralles (old human male, Aristocrat 7)

Location: The Nobles Ward

Membership requirements: Evidence of noble bloodline, Annual fee 100 gold pieces

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, access to ward 'passes' allowing 'guests' to enter the Retreat (see city locations) and other exclusive city areas (passes range from 1-10gp depending on access type and timeframe), preferential access to Vault services, free access to the Hall of Lineage.

Relationships: The Guild of Aristocracy has strained relations with the Explorer's guild because of their appropriation of sections of the city wall and substructure for use in their member family structures.

Secrets: Too numerous to count, the Guild of Aristocracy has the most wide ranging 'dirty laundry' of all the guilds, though it comes down mostly to petty crimes, frauds and machinations to gain or maintain wealth or prestige. There are always scandals and feuds amongst the Nobility threatening to tarnish the Guild, and the powerbrokers are kept busy trying to keep their members (and extended families) in check due to their selfish excesses. Current secrets of interest include;

Diner's Club – a small circle of elitists that host secret dinner parties to showcase the bounty of illegal hunts, dining on the flesh of rare and exotic creatures. As each tries to outdo the last, a sinister turn has seen sentient creatures such as Ghoran and Stryx end up on the latest menus.

The Cult of Cthulhu – Armed with far more money than sense, a small group of bored young nobles have uncovered an idol and ritual book, and are beginning to delve into things that they lack the sense to fear. A strange old woman has come forward and offered to hold a service for them, promising 'spectacular' results.

The Guild of Trade – the 'Merchants Guild' or the Trade Guild, the 'squeezers' or 'pinchers' (derogatory slang, short for coin squeezers or penny pinchers).

The guild members are generally business owners and operators, and as such the guild has 'healthy' level of internal competition. Position within the Guild is determined by net wealth. Almost 50% of the guild membership is in the Peregrine Trade Consortium (PTC), though the rest varies in interests through several hundred stakeholders. The PTC is a global spanning corporation, and is quickly gaining a stranglehold on the guild, buying out or squeezing out other guild and non-guild operators alike. The remaining 'independent' guild traders form temporary alliances and power blocks to blunt moves by the PTC to further enhance its 'share' of the guild, but these are at best stalling actions. Insiders maintain that the Trade Guild is close to fracture or total collapse, but such rumours have persisted for years.

Primary services: Managing city trade, as well as trade related permits, fees, tolls and taxes. It also administrates the city docks (sea and air) and regulates shipping and transport.

Guild master: Merchant Prince Varanion (Half-elf male, age unknown, Rogue 12) (Also High Executor of the PTC) **Location**: The Trade Ward

Membership requirements: Licensing and registration with the guild, Annual Fee 1% total income generated that year.

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, preferential access to trade locations (shops, market booths), preferential access to docks and portage services, 5% discount on trade permits (trade rights, import/export permits etc.), 5% discount on goods storage (at guild facilities).

Relationships: The Guild of Trade has an acrimonious relationship with the Explorer's guild for literally 200 years due to their lobbying (and ultimate success) to remove large sections of the sea facing walls to open up traffic from the docks. While the Trade Guild simply sees this as good business, it strikes at the very heart of the philosophy of the Explorers, and created a rift that has remained to this day.

Secrets: While it's no secret the PTC seeks to control the guild, their methods are becoming more direct, with their private security engaging in intimidation and stand over tactics to try to quash opposition. Several beatings have been administered to lesser merchants in pivotal positions. In reprisal, a faction within the Guild is seeking the services of the Guild of Balance to remove the PTC hierarchy (See **Guild of Balance** secrets).

Additionally, the PTC have begun secretly branching out, using Trade Guild resources to cover up some less than legal trade practices. One such case includes profiteering from the effective enslavement of Silverton (Adventure 5 – *Seeking Silver*).

The Guild of Public Works - the 'Guild of death' (slang), the 'garbage collectors' (slang).

The Guild of Public Works manages all of the roads, ditches, drains, sewers, internal water ways and sources, street and human waste, as well as maintenance of public building and spaces. This undesirable task is recognized as vital to healthy city operations, but the guild is afforded only the minimal resources (and respect) required to perform its tasks. These limitations have led to synergies and innovations such as the use of animated undead as work crews for dangerous, monotonous or unpleasant tasks.

Primary services: Managing sanitation, maintenance of public buildings/spaces, morticians and undertakers **Guild master**: Gideon Tibbett (old human male) **Location**: The Lower Ward

Membership requirements: Annual Fee 5 silver pieces.

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, preferential access to salvage auctions, preferential consideration on maintenance/repair submissions, preferential access to funerary services.

Relationships: Currently there is some tension between the Guild of Public Works and the Explorer's Guild over the Explorer's program of restoration of the city's oldest architecture. While the Explorer's claim that program is archaeological in nature, many in the Guild of Public Works see this as stealing credit for the unsung city maintenance they provide.

Secrets: Corruption is rife within the guild, and its functionaries have become swayed by the lure of wealth, or by the sinister allure of some of the dark objects uncovered from ancient chambers below the city. Unsavory practices such as organ harvesting, dark necromancy and grave robbing have become apparent, and several vile, unholy items have gone 'missing' from the Guild vaults recently.

The Guild of Philosophy and Thought – the 'Scholars **Guild**', the guild of sleep (derogatory)

The Guild of Philosophy and Thought is the primary body in scholarly knowledge in the city, controlling not only the greatest library but also the largest association of linked academies in the city. Each 'Faculty' is dedicated to a discipline, and each acts as an institute of learning for that discipline (see The Great Library and Archive in the **City Gazetteer** below). The Scholar's Guild, to hear them tell it (and they will tell you at length), deals in "knowledge unadulterated by agenda" (which is also the motto emblazoned in bronze above the administration block). They eschew the mundane concerns of political and social for the pursuit of intellectual legacy for the future, at least in theory. In truth the Guild is as entangled in the city's politics as much as any other guild, and in internal politics even more so. Each Faculty competes with the others for prestige and position, as something of a microcosm for the city itself.

Primary services: Managing the records, libraries, schools and sages of the city, as well as scribes, accounting and official census. Arcane spell casters requiring study (wizards, magus, alchemists) are generally members of this guild due to the unprecedented access members gain in the city library.

Guild master: Domenica Ransford (middle aged, human female)

Location: The Council Ward

Membership requirements: Contribution of one book or scroll to the guild (ceremonial), Annual fee 10 silver pieces.

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, preferential access to the city library limited or rare resources (ie rare tomes, scrolls or records for study), 5% discount for guild run services (scribing, accounting etc), official permission (but not endorsement) to practice as sage or scribe in the city.

Relationships: The Guild of Philosophy and Thought is relatively removed from much of the wrangling on the Council by benefit of having little in crossover with any of the other guilds. They have good relationships with the Guild of Peace and Healing, and the Explorer's Guild (who often share sources of new knowledge uncovered) and are fairly indifferent to the rest of the guilds.

Secrets: The Guild of Philosophy and Thought has its share of secrets, but for the most part these are to do with emerging fields of study, discoveries and the internal completion to unveil, publish or debunk their colleagues. At any given time there are dozens of rivalries that spill into heated debates, bitter social feuds and/or occasional academic sabotage. Aside from the "immortality advancements" made by a missing professor (see The Great Library and Archive in the **City Gazetteer** below) there are two secrets of relevance to the What Lies Beyond Reason adventure Path;

The Missing Books – recently several esoteric tomes have gone missing from the archives of the Faculty of Esoteric Mystery. These books delve into ancient and barbaric tribal rites seeking to contact entities from other planes of existence. As it turns out they are being sold by a minor clerk. One of these tomes was sold to a young nobleman in pursuit of dangerous entertainment (see Guild of Aristocracy secrets above), while the other was sold to Mistress Jasmine of Crystal Clear (See Trade Ward in the **City Gazetteer** below). Both transactions will have significant consequences for the buyers.

The Celestial Connection – The Scholar's Guild has always been suspicious and dismissive (and a little jealous) of the Celestial Scriptorium and its success as a library and scribe service. It has on several occasions sought to legally pressure the Scriptorium and so far failed. Recently a broker within the Faculty of Arcana has made a connection with one of the Scriptorium's specialists (Morrigan), offering rare arcane tomes and scrolls in an overture of 'friendship'. Eventually they hope to use this connection to discover secrets or incriminating evidence to have the Celestial Scriptorium shut down.

The Guild of Peace and Healing – The 'Healing Hands' In a city with few divine resources, the Guild of Peace and Healing manages all of the health services, both magical and mundane. The guild is one of the few with little to no internal division. The few magical healers are afforded a unique and rare position due to their scarcity, and are called on sparingly and treated as a finite resource. However, those who develop healing skills without the use of magic are just as respected, both within and outside the guild. The healing hands philosophically represent the social conscience of the city and its population, and enjoy popular support and drawing donations and volunteers.

Unfortunately, with the city population and constant influx of travellers, the Healing Hands have been at resource breaking point for some time. Now, strange and disturbing events are taxing them to even greater limits, with incidents of violence and madness climbing sharply in the last few months. Rumours have begun circulating that some members are burning out or snapping under the pressure. Worse still, their Guildmaster Talus Redgrave - a gentle and revered figure - has not been seen in over a month, with the undermaster Kerval assuming his council seat and other public duties. The Healing Hands insist the beloved elderly man is merely resting, but the excuse is wearing thin as time passes.

Primary services: hospitals, charities, orphanages, halfway houses.

Guild master: Talus Redgrave (elderly human male), Undermaster Kerval (old human male) **Location**: The Dock Ward

Membership requirements: Annual fee 1 silver piece or

volunteer 10 hours/month for guild services

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, 5% discount on divine spellcasting services (assuming surplus from subsistence needs)

Relationships: Superficially, the Guild of Peace and Healing enjoy strong and productive relationships with all of the other guilds, who see the value in assisting to maintain necessary health services in the city. However, just below the surface, all the other guilds chafe at being required to financially support the Healing Hands, who do not generate wealth enough to support themselves. Contributions have been slowly becoming more miserly, with the other guilds citing 'tough economic conditions' as reason for reduced support. This, in part, has contributed to the sorry state the Guild now finds itself in.

Secrets: The Guild of Peace and Healing teeters on the brink of internal collapse. Lacking any real magical power, the guild has been drawing on the divine essence of the fallen God Aether for the last three hundred years. Used sparingly, the guild had maintained this secret source of healing, but as the Machine influence continued to rise in the city they were forced to draw on it more deeply and more often. The effect on their healers has been pronounced – almost half of the guild healers have died or been driven insane, including their Guildmaster. In an effort to regain some stability, Undermaster Kerval has entered into a pact with the Seekers of Asmodeus to assist the Guild (See Adventure 4 – *Sanitarium*).

The Guild of Justice – 'Justicars' (slang), or skull thumpers (derogatory slang)

The Guild of Justice (like the Guild of Civil Defence) are administered differently to other guilds, more like a military organization than a community, with all members being directly employed as guild workers. Internal hierarchy is separated into their divisions, with the Courts, Prison and Watch run separately but answering to the Guild master. The Judges manage the courts, issuing orders through the Arbiters ('Inks' – clerks and functionaries), to the Watch (Watchmen) and the Prison (Turnkeys).

Primary services: Law making and enforcement. The Guild of Justice runs the courts (judiciary) the prison, and the Watch, and is responsible for 'internal' order and civil management.

Guild master: Harbin Wingate (old human male, Investigator 6)

Location: The Council Ward

Membership requirements: Annual Fee 5 silver pieces, No criminal convictions within last 12 months (suspension of membership for 12 months if convicted of crime while a member).

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, Preferential 'access' to guild services not involving direct criminal proceedings (ie visitation rights at prison, queue positioning for civil cases to be heard, non-criminal 'complaints' submitted to Watch etc.).

Relationships: In addition to frictions within the three internal divisions, there are rising administrative clashes with the Guild of Civil Defence, who – in the eyes of the Justicars – appear to be trying to extend their influence into the affairs of the city and its population.

Secrets: Like the Healing Hands, the Guild of Justice is becoming overwhelmed by the state of affairs in the city. Pulled between standard internal policing and enforcement, as well as the rise and influence of the Seekers, the meddling of the Guild of Shields, the rash of 'blankings', disappearances and murders, the manhunt for Damien, and accusations of illegal activities in other guilds (particularly the Trade Guild and the Guild of Public Works) the Guild is at breaking point. Harbin is forced into a position of trusting the Seekers to share the Watch duties, though he has significant doubts about their motivations. In an effort to wrest some control back he has used a holy relic to summon a celestial advisor, Nelvarion the Planetar. Unfortunately, unknown to Harbin, Nelvarion is a fallen exile, and the advice and assistance provided, while seemingly helpful and wise, are tainted with less than exemplary motivations on the celestial's part.

The Guild of Civil Defence – the Guild of Shields, Shields (slang)

The Guild of Civil Defence is in decline. While it provides a required service, the Eternal City has seen no external threats for hundreds of years, and the necessity of the guild is being called into question in the political arena by more than one source. The waning influence of the guild, and corresponding reduction in resource allocation, has seen the slow erosion of the defence forces to what some see as dangerously low levels should an external threat manifest. Much of the navy has been sold off to the Trade Guild, and the Guard numbers barely allow for skeleton wall and gate teams.

Primary Services: management of the city Guard, city defences administration and maintenance, and the navy.

Guild master: Dame Verity Astinus (old human female, Fighter 8) "Warhorse" ("Warcow" to her detractors). **Location**: The Dock Ward

Membership requirements: Minimum 1 year service in city armed forces, written agreement to 'recall' to service in crisis, Annual fee 5 silver pieces.

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, preferential passage through Guard checkpoints, access to Guild provided veterans services (as need basis), 5% discount on guild associated weaponsmith/armoursmith services (assuming surplus from Guild maintenance needs).

Relationships: Beyond the usual political manoeuvring, the Guild has a very fractious relationship with the Guild of Justice. Guildmaster Verity Astinus has become convinced there is a credible threat within the city itself that threatens the stability of the Anduria and the region, but all attempts to secure co-operation to investigate from the Guild of Justice have failed. Verity's frustration is clear, but many have dismissed it as paranoia or politics from a waning guild desperate to remain relevant.

Secrets: The Guild of Civil Defence is forbidden to operate within the city. Given the lack of options, Verity is attempting something desperate and - if discovered tantamount to treason. Despite being forced to reduce the standing armed forces and sell off a number of warships by the rest of the council, Verity is secretly funding construction of the largest Airship the city has ever seem, and is in the process of arming it heavily. She is also gathering a network of ex-enlisted personnel to be ready for 'reinstatement' at a moment's notice. Many of the high ranking officials within the Guild have doubts, but respect Verity too greatly to dissent, despite the fact that the guild is very close to bankruptcy thanks to these moves.

The Guild of Balance – 'Scales' (Slang), 'fence-sitters' (derogatory slang, not to mention any number of offensive terms for the Lawyers).

The Guild of Balance is a background presence in the city, the cogs of the social machine that is rarely given much thought by most citizens. While the other Guilds of the city represent a particular area of interest, the Guild of Balance ties them all together to form a cohesive government, ensuring all city functions are managed and coordinated for a (relatively) smooth existence.

Most citizens tend to see the Guild as having two primary functions – the bookish public servants that manage the 'behind the scenes' bureaucracy that no one seems to understand but all agree on its importance; and the lawyers, which gives everyone a focus for their social frustration, but also agree are a 'necessary evil'.

Primary services: ambassadors, mediators, lawyers, functionaries, notaries and public servants; City administrations and public service auditors.

Guild master: Corvin Walsh (human male)

Location: The Council Ward

Membership requirements: Annual Fee 5 silver pieces. **Membership benefits**: Internal voting rights, preferential access to available guild services (mediators, lawyers etc).

Relationships: The Guild of Balance is inextricably linked with all the other guilds, providing the civil service manpower to coordinate each guild's city responsibilities, and maintain the records and administrative paperwork of these undertakings. This leaves the guilds free to pursue their primary interests without becoming too entangled in the 'red tape' bureaucracy.

Secrets: Within the guild is a faction called the 'ID' that controls the city's thieves, assassins, spies and secret police, who believe that failure to regulate and manage 'base services' within the city would lead to anarchy. This is not known to many, including the majority of the Guild itself. While such things are carried out through the underworld channels, the ID is desperate to maintain its Guild cover. Recently a small sub-faction within the Trade Guild has discovered this connection and is seeking to leverage the knowledge to have the PTC hierarchy removed. Instead, the Trade Guild faction is slated for 'cleansing', which will likely have the follow on effect of the PTC gaining full control of the Trade Guild.

The Explorers Guild – the 'explorers', 'sifters' (slang) The Explorers Guild are dedicated to unearthing the lost history of the city. There is clear evidence that the city is ancient, and has undergone numerous periods of cultural rise and fall, and that much of the history of these periods has been lost or destroyed. The Guild's members seek to uncover, reclaim and restore as much of the lost past as possible, and establish a better preservation process for the future.

In the last few years a sub-culture has developed in the guild called the 'hedonists', dedicated to 'selfexploration' (mental, emotional, spiritual, sexual etc). A schism from the core philosophy of the guild, this faction is gaining support within the younger demographic of the guild's members due to its 'party' culture.

Primary Services: Exploration, cartography and dock

maintenance; maintains the city museum; recently expanded into city repair and restoration of 'historically significant' locales.

Guild master: Eiria Valdorn (human female, Oracle 15) **Location**: The Council Ward

Membership requirements: donation of a rare or culturally significant item, Annual fee 5 silver pieces.

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, preferential access to available maps/charts (copies, not originals), free access to the city museum.

Relationships: The guild has an acrimonious relationship with the Trade Guild over the damage to the city's walls, which has become a nasty grudge over time. It has recently developed a fractious relationship with the Guild of Public Works over its restoration programs. It maintains a cordial relationship with the Scholar's Guild due to occasionally intersecting interests and information sharing.

Secrets: As revealed in the **Adventure Path Background** and **Synopsis** in detail, the Explorers Guild is essentially a very well-orchestrated sham that has taken on a life and legitimacy of its own. While the guild functions and actually provides significant service to the city, it is at the core simply a tool for the Echo of Faith. Eiria Valdorn is possessed by the Echo, and the guild is a very effective cover to recover and restore the machine to open the gate to R'lyeh. This secret will play out as the main theme of the current Adventure Path *What Lies Beyond Reason*.

Minor Guilds (the 'Gallery')

The minor guilds do not provide city services. These are private associations of like-minded people. While they command no authority in the city (except the single council seat) they have some social sway in their areas of interest. The below are the most prominent minor guilds in the city, though there are dozens of minor guilds and associations for various interests (left to the GM to embellish).

The council seat is currently held by the Artisan's Guild Guildmaster Frieda Redforge.

The Adventurers Guild – Not highly reputed - mainly due to the fact the membership consists of cutthroats, mercenaries and thrill seekers - the membership numbers tend to fluctuate based on the number of recent monster sightings in the land. **Guild master**: Sir Warrick Crowhorn (middle aged human male, Barbarian 3/Ranger 2)

Location: Trade Ward

Membership requirements: Proof of worthy deeds (ceremonial – usually monster 'trophy' or the like), Annual fee 5 silver pieces

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, access to the Adventurer's Guildhall (essentially a private tavern & meeting hall for members only).

The current toast of the Guild is a dashing elf who has recently arrived in the city. Quick of wit and fair of face, with long ebony hair and ice blue eyes, he has rapidly become popular with almost all of the Guild regulars. Self-styled the 'Scarlet Shadow' (real name Dallorian Rainbeam, hence the pseudonym) this highly charismatic duellist is garbed in glittering elven chain and bearing a sabre and stiletto (Swashbuckler 10th), as well as a crimson cloak that seems to shimmer as he moves. At odds with the rest of his appearance, his left arm is encased in a rune engraved ornate plate armour that he claims is part of a legendary set of armour that has been scattered to the corners of the world. His lifelong quest is to collect and reassemble the suit, and thus far tales of his exploits have kept his glass full and his bed warm.

Dallorian is not here by accident. He is aware of the location of the next piece of the armour, which resides in the lair of an ancient umbral dragon not far from the city. The dragon is far too powerful to face alone, and the elf is quietly assessing the Adventurers Guild members for potential partners on his next venture (Credit: Eric Dunnett).

The Artisans Guild – A guild for craftsmen and experts of all kinds. While fairly large in numbers, and in many cases individually wealthy, artisans are generally too far removed from politics to form a major guild. Historically the Artisans Guild once held a council seat, but were squeezed out due to not providing a civil service to the city.

Guild master: Frieda 'Iceheart' Redforge (old dwarf female, Fighter 2/Expert 4)

Location: Artisan's Ward

Membership requirements: Demonstration of skills (Craft item requiring DC 12+ check), Annual fee 5 gold pieces

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, guild endorsement as a 'quality' craftsman.

The Entertainers Guild – As it sounds, a guild dedicated to artists and entertainers of all kinds, ranging from individual performers to troupes, and even 'adult' entertainers.

Guild master: Garlan Montgomery (middle age human male, commoner 4)

Location: Artisan's Ward

Membership requirements: Written agreement to preferentially fulfil guild contracts (availability permitting), Annual fee 5 gold pieces

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, guild endorsement as guild 'approved' entertainer, preferential access to guild associated services (ie musical instrument rent or repair, prop or equipment hire etc).

The Guild of the Four Winds – While registered as a guild, this is closer to an exclusive society for those that have or manage some form of aerial transport – be it magical, technological or biological (ie flying creature/s) Guild master: Jotun Bromwood (Half giant male, Cavalier 6)

Location: Northgate

Membership requirements: Own a form of aerial transport, Annual fee 5 silver pieces

Membership benefits: Internal voting rights.

The Inventors Guild – A 'niche' guild for those involved in the advancement of technology and invention. The membership is comprised of craftsmen and tinkers who sit on the fringes of artifice, pushing the boundaries (often dangerously) of current technology.

Guild master: Percival Lawson (old human male, Expert 5)

Membership requirements: Contribution of a unique invention of demonstrable potential (working prototype preferred but not required), Annual fee 5 silver pieces **Membership benefits**: Internal voting rights, guild endorsement as a 'quality' craftsman.

The Mariners Guild - A small guild of those that ply their living in waterborne ways that philosophically disagree with either/both the Explorers Guild and the Trade Guild. They present a 'third' choice for the nautically or aquatically minded.

Guild master: Jasper Santino (elderly human male, Expert 3)

Location: Dock Ward

Membership requirements: Participation (hire on) in one guild funded sea voyage, Annual fee 5 silver pieces. Membership benefits: Internal voting rights, preferential access to uncontracted guild related services or businesses (shipwrights, sail and tack, charter services etc.)

Crime and Punishment

In a cosmopolitan city with such high population, trade opportunities and traveller turnover, and as a cultural melting pot with diverse values and diverse wealth distribution, crime is an inevitability.

The Andurian judicial system is not unlike that based on present day common law, with accused being arrested, charged, arraigned, and then tried in a formal court in the 'adversarial' style. Courts are administered by a judge, parties (or the state) represented by advocates, and in most cases deliberation of facts by a jury of Andurian citizens. In extremely rare cases - particularly those with city spanning implications - the City Council acts as jury, with the Chair position as judge.

The Courts are run by the Guild of Justice, while advocacy is provided by the Guild of Balance. Unlike many contemporary societies, advocates are not automatically assigned, nor are they a right. If a defendant wants an advocate they must retain one or defend themselves.

Arrest and Detainment

Again similar to contemporary cultures, the City Watch, and any groups with Watch powers have the authority to arrest, detain, question and ultimately charge individuals in the city. The arrest must be able to be defended or justified under the law if necessary.

The Watch can arrest individuals on evidence of a crime, suspicion of a crime or even just as a method of compelling cooperation or removing individuals from an area or potentially escalating situation. Arrest without evidence tends to is limited to 24 hours, though often individuals will be released within 1-4 hours.

For the sake of ease, GMs should run the Watch and any form of arrest similarly to contemporary procedure, excepting of course where it suits them not to. Sticking to a 'known' system should make adjudication simpler for GMs and players.

Adventurers and the Law

Adventurers are reasonably common in the city, though most are either passing through or recuperating/ carousing between adventures (There is after all, an Adventurer's Guild in the city). Most of the issues with adventurers stem from disorderly conduct and/or trying to fence dangerous or illegal items. Few adventurers are actually 'active' within the city, so they are not generally waving weapons, assaulting citizens or otherwise running afoul of the law too often.

The PCs, however, are going to be almost exclusively adventuring within the city (with the notable exception of Adventure 5 - Seeking Silver). This means some discretion may be called for. A few of the encounters in Adventure 1 - A Simple Job are designed to instil in players that arrest and accountability are applicable to their activities (though in most cases it is others that are held accountable in this adventure).

The adventures themselves often incorporate ways to manage this. In Adventure 2 - Ignorance is Bliss, the PCs may be officially asked to proxy for the Explorers Guild, giving them a level of legitimacy and protection. There is to opportunity to develop something of a respectful relationship with both Triast and Inspector Sharpes, affording them perhaps a little leniency if and when they are caught in places they shouldn't be. Finally, any or all of the defences cited below might be exploited by clever players or any advocates them hire if they are arrested for their actions.

At the end of Adventure 4 - Sanitarium, the PCs come to the attention of the city council, and they have a potential to become legitimate agents of the city (if they so choose). Of course to get to that point in the adventure they are likely to engage in significant lawbreaking (see Adventure 4 for more details).

In any case the GM will need to be prepared for the PCs actions, including walking a fine line with the law.

Prosecution

While not a comprehensive list, below are some examples



of crimes and generally expected punishments upon conviction in ascending order of conviction or failure/ inability to comply. For example, Assault carries a fine of 1-10gp (based on severity), with subsequent offences or inability to pay incurring an imprisonment sentence of 1-6 months.

Murder High – (Aristocrat, Public or Political figure, Guild official, Citizen of high standing, Guild affiliated merchant) Execution

Murder Low (general citizen, traveller or non-guild affiliated merchant) – Hard labour (25 years), Execution **Destruction of Property** – Confiscation of assets to equal value and fines 1-100gp, Imprisonment (25 years) **Crimes against the City**¹⁸ Imprisonment (15 years)

Tax or Tariff Evasion (including Smuggling) – Confiscation of Assets to equal value and fines 1-100gp, Imprisonment (6 months+)

Burglary - Imprisonment (6 months+)

Assault – Fine 1gp10gp, Imprisonment (1-6 months)

Theft – Fine 1sp1gp, Hard labour (1-6 months)

Incitement to Riot – Fine 1sp-1gp, Imprisonment (1-6 months)

Disorderly Conduct / Unlawful Trespass – Fine 1sp-1gp, Imprisonment (1-4 weeks)

Many of the sentences for economic crimes in the Eternal City are harsher than many other urban centres, a reflection of the power of the Trade Guild and the reliance of the city on trade and travel.

Defences

The above notes the outcome if an individual is convicted of a crime. As part of the city systems, the Guild of Justice manage the courts, and the Guild of Balance offers services as advocates and barristers. Like any adversarial judicial system, a well-crafted defence strategy may mitigate the severity of a sentence in part or in whole. Some proven defence strategies include;

Ignorance of the Law – a long shot at best, successfully proving that an individual is new to – or from a culture significantly different from – the city norms can mitigate the conviction penalty by up to 75%. While ignorance has never (yet) resulted in avoidance of all penalty, it offers those who are genuinely ignorant (or exceptionally

convincing) a chance to avoid the harshest penalties for their first crime. This defence is allowable only once, if at all. A second offense of any kind (regardless or relationship to the first) does not allow for this defence.

Self defence

In relation to violent crimes, self-defence can be raised as a mitigating factor, but can only be effective if the individual can produce two witnesses of good standing (guild affiliates with no criminal record) that have no relationship to the accused, to state that the accused was acting in self-defence.

Such a defence, if successful, can reduce the resultant penalties by 50-100% depending on the severity of the 'defensive' actions.

Citizen's enforcement or arrest – In a city of such vast numbers and population diversity and variation, the city watch can (at times) be stretched to its limits. A clause in the laws allows for citizens to act reasonably in defence of those laws, and otherwise criminal acts (such as assault) can be mitigated if in the pursuit of upholding the city's laws (ie 'assaulting' a burglar by physically restraining him for arrest). Such 'accepted actions' must be seen as reasonable under the circumstances to be considered for defence (ie slaughtering a child for stealing an apple would not allow for this defence), and the burden of proof is on the accused. Again, the witness testimony of two unconnected citizens of good standing is usually the minimum required.

Action by proxy – Individuals can avoid (or potentially transfer) responsibility for fairly minor crimes by demonstrating they were acting as proxies for another party with the authority to allow such actions. This is most applicable to situations where status (permanent or temporary) is afforded to individuals under auspices of a guild to act in its affairs. For example, citizens can be 'deputized' by the Guild of Justice to have temporary 'Watch' powers, or agents for the Guild of Public Works may handle, transport and autopsy cadavers. This defence requires the accused to provide evidence of the proxy relationship, and that the actions are within the authority of the other party.

18 - Crimes against the City is generally a catchall for anything that attacks or damages the social or political structures of the city (espionage, terrorism, destabilization of economy or guilds, citizen rights suppression) or anything deemed a heinous affront to the fairly cosmopolitan moral sensibilities of the populous (slavery, dark necromancy, child exploitation or harm etc).



Additional Legal Outcomes

Adverse Action and Injury – Compensation Born out of the nautical tradition of salvage, and the concept of 'wergild' (or Blood price) from distant savage lands, compensation for those subject to criminal actions (i.e. victims) is upheld as a matter of 'balance'. Anyone who is the victim of a crime can apply to be compensated by the perpetrator based on the severity of the crime.

Often if a crime results in a fine, a proportion of that goes to the victim (while the rest goes to the city, or the various guilds involved). Demonstration of being the victim of criminal action (and thus entitlement to compensation) still requires proof.

Nobles – Duelling within the City

As always there are exceptions to any rule. One such exception to violence in the city is afforded to the aristocracy – the tradition of duelling to settle disputes and avenge insults. Duelling (as opposed to brawling or assault) is legal so long as very strict conditions are met.

- 1. The duel must be between two members of recognized noble houses.
- 2. The duel must have only two participants, and each must consent to the duel.
- 3. The duel must be over a singular point of contention, such as an individual insult or disagreement. At the conclusion of the duel the matter is considered settled.
- 4. The duel must be fought with hand held, bladed weapons only.
- 5. The duel must be fought in front of witnesses to monitor the activity and result.
- 6. Duels are to three touches, a significant wound or until one combatant surrenders. A surrender must always be accepted.

Duels are rare in the city, and almost exclusively limited to the younger generation. Occasionally rules are bent or broken, but these result in a forfeiture of lawful rights and the duel becomes illegal.

Technically, the duel offered to the PCs in *A* Simple Job is illegal, but as it is instigated by the noble, the PCs only bear responsibility if their actions are excessive.



City Gazetteer

The Artisans Ward

This ward houses many of the city's craftsmen, particularly the refined crafts, and houses much of the middle class population. The Artisans Ward is the only internal city ward that bounds the wall but does not claim a gate. Its layout is slightly different to the rest of the city, favouring curved and meandering streets rather than a straight and uncluttered layout. The Artisans Ward also has a large number of trees, gardens and public places, but these tend to be small and hidden grottos rather than large open areas due to the space limitations of the city. There are also a disproportionate number of small statues and other street art, but again these are often placed in and around structures and dwellings. Of all the wards save the Lower Ward, it is the easiest ward to get lost in, but it is also one of the most visually appealing.

Locations of interest in the Artisan's Ward;

The Academy of Natural Magic

The Academy of Natural Magic is a both a specialist academy and museum of natural history focussing on primarily on Botany. It is the headquarters of the Botanical Society, a small faction with ties to the Guild of Peace and Healing.

The Academy of Natural Magic is a large, 5 story square building that has most of its available surfaces taken up by windows, and the rooftop is a glass greenhouse. It has the effect of looking like a squared off diamond in direct sunlight. The Academy is surrounded by a small but meticulously kept grounds featuring a treetop walk and manicured gardens.

The Academy of Natural Magic is fully detailed in the side trek adventure *The Gourd* in Section 5 of the *Campaign Guide*.

The Drunken Pixie

The Drunken Pixie is a sylvan themed tavern, panelled in wood, with several live trees built in and around the structure. It is famed for its pixie population, who are



frequently drunk and always entertaining. The Drunken Pixie has a raucous, good natured atmosphere, and a Treant bouncer to 'politely' eject patrons causing trouble. The tavern is featured in Adventure 2 – *Ignorance is Bliss*.

Mino's Mummers

A small theatre located in a well-appointed district of the ward, Mino's houses a small acting troupe that is lead by Yasmin Mino (Neutral Good, Halfling Female, 46 years, Bard 7). The acting house has seating for 25 and a general admission standing floor which allows up to 50 more patrons. Admission per play is 1 silver for seats and 5 copper for standing room. There is a refreshment booth which offers cheap wine and good ale for outrageous prices.

The theatre has a secret basement, in which is a shrine dedicated to a pantheon of gods (GMs discretion of which are represented). This area is small but well appointed, with carpets, wall hangings and religious iconography. It has a few beds and a kitchen for those who need a place to lay low for a while. The Mummers assist those in genuine need, escaped slaves, or those fleeing religious persecution.

Yasmin herself is an affable and boisterous halfling in her late prime. She stands 3' 2" and weighs approximately 30 pounds. She wears her sun-gold hair in a bobbed cut just below her jaw. She is slight, and favours well-appointed clothing of which she has a huge selection from all around the world. She is a retired adventurer, and while she loves the theatre (and heads the acting troupe, which will do showings at the theatre itself, or perform in private residences or other venues) her true passion is to oppose slavers and other evil corruption where she can. She uses the troupe as cover to investigate the wealthy and corrupt of the city. (Credit: **Dexter C. Stevens**)

The Soothing Stream

The Soothing Stream is a bath house and massage parlour (legitimate) featuring a huge main pool fed by an artificial waterfall. It has a great reputation for service and discretion, and is a favoured place for indolent young nobles to play at 'secret' political meetings. It also has the distinction of employing the best masseur in the city, a huge half orc called Berris.

The bath house is featured in Adventure 2 – *Ignorance is Bliss.*

The Council Ward

Central in the city, the council ward houses the council chambers, and all of the connected services buildings. Most of the city administration is managed from this ward, and several of the Guildhalls reside here. Aside from the council chambers almost all the buildings here are recently constructed (within the last few hundred years), and have been added to time and again. Space is the most limited in this ward (as it is both the smallest and most central ward), so while the avenues have been carefully managed to maintain traffic flow, the rising architecture spreads as it climbs, keeping the streets in perpetual twilight except at high sun. Of all the Wards, the Council Ward has the highest average height of structures, with most more than 4 stories.

Locations of interest in the Council Ward;

The Andurian Museum (Explorers Guild headquarters) Against the norm of the ward, the Andurian Museum is one of the few structures that has only two stories of height, and is surrounded by open grounds. A broad avenue leads up to the main building, lined with historically and culturally significant statues, architecture and other larger items (for example a huge ship's anchor stands near the main entrance). The museum itself is a long rectangular building, the lower floor, open to the public, split into chambers displaying various time and culture period artefacts and lore. The upper levels house the Guild administration.

The museum also has a basement level, which is given over to vaults, laboratories and secured archives. Here the items unearthed by the Explorer's Guild factors are identified, dated, tested and catalogued. Dangerous items are placed in secure vaults, while significant items are categorized for display in the museum above.

The Museum is briefly featured in Adventure 2 – *Ignorance is Bliss.*

The City Administration & Hall of Records (Guild of Balance headquarters)

The City Administration is a huge square building of plain brick and shuttered windows. Inside the main doors is a massive waiting room where numbers are assigned for enquiry service. Beyond this (though few ever see it) are hundreds of offices – all identical – where



clerks and functionaries of the Guild of Balance perform the thousands of minute activities and details that keep the city running, and produce extensive records of every single activity related to city administration. The upper levels of the building are given over to The Hall of Records, an ever expanding archive of records, accounts and registers, all meticulously filed and ordered. Every decade or so, when available space is exhausted, another level is added to the structure. The building currently sits at 7 levels. It is a place of meticulous, efficient, monotonous bureaucracy.

Deep below the sub-basement long term archives (ordered by century) is a quiet complex, stark as the offices above, but lacking the frenetic ant-hill activity. Here, to the complete ignorance of almost all of the city residents, a small circle of sober faced bureaucrats wield the true power in the region. Known as the ID, the group dispassionately pulls the strings of power in Anduria, ensuring events fall in such a way as to keep the Guilds, aristocrats, merchants, powerbrokers, criminals and even heroes in balance, with no one allowed to tip the balance of power too far in any direction. An elite cadre of thieves, lawyers and assassins are maintained to carry out their will.

The Council Chambers

At the centre of the city is the majestic council chambers building, a complicated palatial building complete with sweeping towers and arched bridges. A massive complex that seems to get expanded with new 'wings' every few decades, it is virtually a city within the city. The Council Chambers houses not only the ruling council and several hundred functionaries, but ambassadors and visiting dignitaries, as well as the city courts and dozens of public service departments and sub-departments that manage the minutiae of city affairs.

The Great Library and Archive (Guild of Thought and Philosophy Guild headquarters)

This sprawling series of eight tower-like buildings are interconnected by bridges and walkways at various levels allowing easy access between them for the hundreds



of staff and students that frequent the complex. Each building, called a Faculty, is dedicated to a particular field (or series of interrelated fields) of study, and houses vast libraries, laboratories, lecture theatres and study halls dedicated to preserving and increasing the body of knowledge of significance in the world (significant as defined by the Guild of course). The Great Library is an institute for learning as well as a repository of knowledge. The eight faculties are;

- Arcana (Magic, Elements, Planes of Existence),
- *Geology* (including Alchemy, Metallurgy and Chemistry),
- Mortality (Anatomy, Ecology Psychology, and Sociology),
- *Physics* (Physical world fundamentals, Gravity, Forces, and Flight),
- Astronomy (Celestial bodies and Astrophysics¹⁹, Astrology, Extra-terrestrial Lifeforms),
- *Inspiration* (Art, Music, Creativity, Invention, History, Communication, Aspiration, Philosophy),
- *Esoteric Mystery* (Supernatural Phenomena, Religion, Prophesy) and;
- *Universality* (Essentially everything else that is not otherwise categorized).

The Great Library is run and maintained by the Guild of Thought and Philosophy. The Great Library is open to the public, but non guild members are charged fees and required to complete tedious paperwork to access the materials within. Guild members are free to use the services of Great Library as they desire, according to a complex hierarchy of access and authorisation. No materials are ever allowed to leave the library grounds.

In a hidden vault below the Faculty of Mortality, an old scholar has discovered the formula for lichdom. Once a teacher at the faculty, Klarus Mojare went missing years ago, and was presumed dead by his colleagues (who promptly fell into quarrelling over his offices). Instead, the ex-professor of anatomy sealed himself away and delved deeply into the secrets of immortality. Within the last decade he perfected his formula, and has transitioned from life to undeath. Past the initial stages of scientific discovery and catalogue, Klarus has begun to re-examine his existence and essentially infinite lifespan. He has made contacts with some underworld figures and less than reputable members of the Guild of Public Works, and begun acquiring dark artefacts and cadaver parts

19 - Rudimentary astrophysics – it's a fantasy setting after all.

(both humanoid and monstrous) for 'study', though he does occasionally pause to record the newest rotting sensation or congealing ichor produced by his decaying body, adding to his profoundly detailed notes on his slowly degenerating state. One day he plans to publish his thesis, if time permits around his burgeoning plans for world domination (Credit: **Bryan Bartrop**)

The Quarrelsome Quill

Favoured by the clerks and functionaries of the ward, sensible beige stone exterior belies the brightly coloured interior. Tapestries, banners and flags depicting heraldry of numerous families, societies and guilds from various historical periods of the city festoon the walls and hang from the ceiling. Newcomers might also be surprised by the lively atmosphere, as the typically officious public servants engage in banter, songs or debate after a long day of monotonous drudgery.

Amongst the 'revelry', in a bright corner, a portly, cheery fellow with ink stained hands and thick, hornrimmed glasses sit chatting amiably to any and all who choose to sit at his table. Introducing himself as Jasper Hasteller, he'll happily debate, joke and be a witty and entertaining companion. With the correct phrasing and exchange of coin he will also take names to be considered for 'processing' by the ID (essentially consideration of assassination services). Three days later the individual commissioning the hit either receives a small but unmistakable personal item as evidence of completion, or their payment is returned as a sign the contract is rejected (no other explanation is ever given). Jasper is capable of handling himself (Rogue 6th), but also has numerous 'specialists' at his immediate disposal with a subtle signal.

The Watchtower (The Guild of Justice headquarters) The Guild of Justice splits its personnel between the Courts (located in the Council Chambers), the Prison (located south of the city) and the Watchtower, which manages the city Watch (individual watch houses in each of the wards house the watchmen).

As it sounds, the Watchtower is so named because at 12 stories it is far taller than it is wide. The Watchtower is a bleak structure of grey-black stone, pierced with deep, narrow windows (not unlike fortress arrow slits). The

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Watchtower has a waiting room and public liaison on the ground floor, but the rest of the building is tightly secure with a detachment of elite tactical response watchmen on hand at all times to manage any immediate threats. Sub basements provide temporary holding facilities for criminals either pre-trial or awaiting transfer to Titan's Grasp prison. The upper levels are given over to records and archives, special operations task forces and Guild administration. Given the sensitive information held on premises each floor is independently secured and reinforced with magical traps and glyphs.

Despite multiple attempts to either infiltrate or forcibly breach, the Watchtower has never suffered a failure of security, a fact that the hard-nosed Guldmaster, Harbin Wingate, never fails to remind the council at least once a session.

The Dock Ward

The Dock Ward handles the sea traffic and warehousing for the city. It is tightly controlled by the Trade Guild, and is clean and relatively free of 'undesirables'. Travellers, sailors and vagabonds are ushered through to the Trade Ward or the Lower Ward. The Dock Ward technically has a gate, the Dock Gate, but the ancient walls have been demolished to open the area up to the docks (and the stone and statuary repurposed to the Nobles Ward and Council Ward), so the gate is more of a landmark than an actual gate. Seaward traffic is managed through The Jaws, a massive pair of seawalls that also serve as defence for the city from the ocean approach.

Locations of interest in the Dock Ward;

The Dock Gate

A major point of political contention to this day, the massive Dock Gate stands alone, the walls either side demolished long ago by the Trade Guild (with the approval of the city council) to open the docks to more efficient traffic flow. Up until recently the Gate still functioned as a method of egress into the city from the docks. It stood astride a major road, but recently the Explorers Guild gained permission to close it to public use to preserve its 'cultural value' and restore it to its original condition as a city landmark. The trade-off was that the Explorers Guild would alter the surrounding

traffic ways to assist traffic flow at their expense (the Trade Guild consider this a 'win' because they no longer need to maintain the decaying Gate, and they gain improved roadways at no cost). Today, a low ornamental fence a surrounds the edifice, and several bronze plaques have been erected displaying historical factoids turning the Gate into a cultural tourist attraction. Explorer Guild work crews can be seen restoring the facade and entering the internals of the Gate regularly. Several key sections of the Gate are missing or damaged, held together by newer construction and temporary iron braces. The most significant missing section is the original keystone of the main arch (currently a newer granite replacement serves in its place, while the original is in the caverns below Anthilas manor - detailed in Adventure 3 - From the Ashes).

Secretly, the Echo is restoring the Gate as it is the bounded space that serves as the planar portal to R'lyeh when the machine is in full operation. In its current state of disrepair opening the portal would tear the Gate apart. The feverish 'restoration' work serves her ends, and is one of the last remaining impediments to her plans.

The Lighthouse

On the south seawall, opposite the Seawall Fortress, is an ancient lighthouse made of dressed limestone blocks. The mechanism is an oil lantern amplified by a series or mirrors and crystal lenses, set on a rotating platform filled with mercury (for near frictionless movement). The lighthouse is manned by a wizened old man who goes by Jeremiah, a hermit that eschews company, and is always seen from afar heavily cloaked against the chill of the coastal winds. No guild takes responsibility for the lighthouse maintenance, or restock, but the light is always on from sundown to sun up every night, and it has been this way as long as anyone can remember. Several councils over the years have resolved to investigate and assign the lighthouse to a city service, but ultimately these resolutions have been derailed or distracted before fruition by various events or crisis. In truth, no one knows who or what keeps the lighthouse running day after day, year after year.

The Melted Man Statue

The Melted Man statue is actually just a pair of massive stone boots that end just below the knees of what must have been a statue around 50 feet in height. The boots are intricately depicted in green stone (like the walls) but



end abruptly in a jagged, melted mess. Speculation is rife about who or what the statue used to depict. Historians believe it may have once been an explorer, hero or prominent historical or aristocratic figure.

This 'statue' is in the centre of a junction of 4 roads in the Dock Ward. It is on a raised round dais 20 feet in height, a position of prominence, and once must have been impressive.

The truth is that this was once a statue of Aether, and an integral part of the altered Machine. He was depicted with both arms upraised, holding aloft a metal and crystal ring (part of which survives as the Ring artefact from the prologue *Difficult Circumstances*). This acted as a focusing lens for the machine to use the Dock Gate as a planar portal to R'lyeh. When the ritual went awry, the magical backlash tore the statue apart, melting the edges down to the boot tops.

The Melted Man statue is currently surrounded by a fence and some low scaffold. The Explorers Guild have petitioned the City Council to restore the statue, rebuilding it as a likeness of a scholarly merchant, symbolizing the 'spirit of the city'. Unbeknownst to the council, the Echo intends for it to be restored as a statue of Aether, and needs to reinstall the focussing lens to rebuild the machine configuration again.

The Melted Man is featured in Adventure 4 – *The Sanitarium*, and Adventure 7 – *Doors Best Left Closed*.

The Peregrine Trade Consortium

The PTC is the largest single trade entity in the city, and makes up almost half of the members of the Trade Guild, thus effectively having control of the guild on most matters, except those that are so extreme or are so polarizing that the entirety of the rest of the membership fall on opposite sides to them. The PTC compound is almost a small town within the city itself, comprised of both sea and aerial docks (the latter being the only commercially available air docks in the city), a massive warehousing and logistics complex, extensive offices and even a boarding block for those who are unable or unwilling to commute each day, or those awaiting



passage out on a PTC controlled vessel or dock. The entire complex is surrounded by a palisade wall and a small army of private security. Short of the Vault itself, the PTC compound is the largest and most well defended publicly available secure storage facility in the city.

More detail on the PTC compound can be found in Adventure 1 – *A Simple Job,* and the PTC itself in Adventure 5 – *Seeking Silver*.

The Sanitarium (Guild of Peace and Healing headquarters)

Once a fortress or keep for a long lost noble house, the Sanitarium is the guild house of the Guild of Peace and Healing, also doubling as the largest hospice in the city. Its original fortress like structure is daunting, but actually functions to keep many potentially dangerous patients controlled. Inside the dour walls, the grounds and gardens are expansive and pristine, softening the harsh stone walls with a rainbow of lush, colourful plant life, maintained by both staff and patients alike. The Healing Hands claim the beauty and serenity of the gardens is as therapeutic as traditional treatment. The Sanitarium itself has several wings, ranging from minor injuries and emergency surgery, to more long term wards for illness and infirmity. One wing acts as a mental facility, and has security that rivals that of Titan's Grasp prison.

While the Healing Hands motives and works are above reproach, illness, injury and mental infirmity have never been worse in the city, and the strain on the Guild members is becoming obvious to the citizens of Anduria. Secretly, the hierarchy of the Healing Hands is on the verge of collapse as their clandestine cannibalism of the body of the fallen God Aether to power their healing magic has rendered many of them insane – including their guildmaster. In an effort to stem this catastrophe, the remaining guildsmen have entered into an illconceived alliance with the Seekers of Asmodeus. The Seekers have relocated to the Sanitarium, and are subtly beginning to take control of the site, and the guild (The details are covered in Adventure 4 - *Sanitarium*).

The Seawall Fortress (Guild of Civil Defence headquarters)

Situated on the northern arm of the sea wall, this huge gothic fortification rises hundreds of feet above the waves. The Fortress consists of a main keep, several secondary bastions and a series of compartmentalized courtyards that have layered defences. An attacking force would need to capture the fortress in sections, and would pay an incredibly heavy toll in lives to do so. The massive war engines that line the walls and parapets can be seen from the city, designed to rain death on any sea based attacker. The fortress is the headquarters of the Guild of Civil Defence. In addition to serving as a defensive post, it is the main training and supply facility for the guild and the city soldiers (before deployment to one of the wall bastion barracks). It is rumoured that the Seawall Fortress has extensive catacombs full of supplies, weapons and constructs of war readied to defend the city in times of great upheaval.

Unfortunately, while this might once have been true, the catacombs are nearly empty. The Guild has slowly been starved of resources by the last few city councils due to the lack of external threats to the city. The Guild is close to bankrupt, and the current Guildmaster has been funneling the last of the guild wealth into a secret project – a massive flying warship – that is being built at a hidden location outside the city. Dame Verity is convinced that a great looming threat will bring the city to the brink of destruction, and she is gambling everything on this hunch.

The Trade Winds

Set literally just off the docks themselves, the Trade Winds is a two story tavern that is packed to the rafters at all hours of the day, with a patron range as vast and differing as the world can produce. The generally boisterous crowd is kept in check by a staff of intimidating half orc bruisers that have a habit of tossing badly behaved individuals into the bay.

The Lower Ward

The lower ward tends to cater to the 'lower' trades or crafts – metalwork, stonework, leather and basic cloth, as well as tanning, butchery and the like. It houses much of the city's lower class population. The lower ward wall has the Lower Gate, which exits the city into Pilgrimage. This gate is the primary gate for landward traffic. Significant rubble and debris choke the already narrow streets, with dead ends, blind corners and ramshackle structures making already difficult travel even more taxing.

Locations of interest in the Lower Ward;

The Cancer Pit

Not all the threats in the city stem from Aether's actions three hundred years ago. The Cancer Pit is a refuse pit that even the Guild of Public works avoid, for fear of what might lie within. So named because anyone who has ventured in has returned confused and mute, and riddled with cancerous growths that result in death within a week. Public Works undead workers instead return feral and uncontrolled, hungering for death and blood. Even the most hardened of the locals gives the cancer pit a wide berth.

The Foundry

Known by many names over the years, the only significant metal works in the city has become known as the Foundry for simplicity's sake (it's official name is actually Anderson's Metals Castings limited, under its current ownership). The foundry changes ownership every few years owing to the fact that despite providing a vital service to the city (casting raw metals to useful shapes) there is little profit in it due to the high prices of base metal's coming in, and low prices of products going out. Each owner scrapes by until they find another buyer, or cut their losses and close up shop. In the latter case, the city council steps in, buying back the Foundry at a rock bottom price, then reselling it along with providing several years trade concessions to a new entrepreneur (who inevitably folds once those concessions cease).

The Foundry itself is a cylindrical building over three stories high (the stacks peak out at 80 feet). Much like the city it is split into wedges, each managing the conditions required for castings of different metals. While iron is the primary material for final products, the foundry also casts in bronze, brass, copper, steel, and silver (though the silver section has been cold for months – See Adventure 5 – *Seeking Silver*)

A pall of thick smoke and soot falls over the foundry, and spreads for blocks in all directions, though truly most of the Lower Ward is touched by the clinging metallic residue from the Foundry. Respiratory illness and chronic poisoning is common in citizens that reside near the foundry, but it provides more or less stable



employment for hundreds of local workers, so this is seen as a necessary burden of life in the ward.

The Grinding Gear

A solid tavern with a jovial atmosphere, the Grinding Gear is the quintessential 'worker's tavern', and particularly favoured by foundry workers and tradesmen. Its furniture and fittings are always in good shape despite heavy use and wear, as the barkeep (a notoriously soft hearted fellow called Thirman) allows skint workers to pay their tab in trade from time to time. The Grinding Gear features in a number of the adventures in *What Lies Beyond Reason*.

Hamino Investigations

On the third floor of a run-down tenement, a sign painted on the door of an otherwise inconspicuous dwelling proclaims it to be "Hamino Investigations" under which a crescent moon and eye symbol is displayed. Belying its outward appearance the inside of the apartment is clean and modestly furnished, with an outer office that leads onto a personal living space. Concealed in the wall is a safe, and the door and window locks are all deceptively high quality.

Elly Hamino (Chaotic good, human female, rogue 5) is a tall, lean woman in her early thirties, with dark hair, tanned skin, and a few visible scars that highlight her beauty rather than detract from it. Outwardly professional to clients and utterly focussed while on a case, Elly is otherwise impatient, occasionally sarcastic (when called for) and struggles with substance abuse when not working. She is probably the finest investigator and 'procurer' in the city when sober, but her personal demons make her erratic and unreliable. (Credit: Eric John Mills).

Public Works Complex (The Guild of Public Works headquarters)

The public works complex is a large sprawling affair that combines a series of buildings, stockpiles and work yards, all within a fenced compound. The fence is rusted and collapsing in numerous places, and is more for screening the complex from the public than any real form of security. Several public services provided by the Guild of Public Works, are managed here - chiefly the garbage collection, city salvage and mortuary. A haze of smoke hangs over the Public Works complex at all hours, as the crematorium ovens slowly destroy the massive accumulation of waste. Powerful odors emanate from the site, and can spread across the ward depending on prevailing wind conditions. The odors can range from fetid rotting garbage to a disturbingly pleasant 'roast meat' smell of cremated cadavers.

The Ruins

The Ruins are a series of sections of the ward that have extensive ruins and foundations that are so deeply embedded that they have simply been left, and generations of structures simply built up over the top. The Ruins are the most cluttered and labyrinthine of all of the city districts, with dead ends and occasional collapses making traversing it without a guide difficult at best and deadly at worst. Added to this, The Ruins house some of the poorest citizens within the walls, and a number of competing and often vicious street gangs divide them up into 'territories'. Crime rates are high in the Ruins, and it's a rare day when a Guild of Public Works corpse cart is not seen in the twisting alleys collecting the latest casualties of these disputes.

The Nobles Ward

Home to the Aristocracy, and the services they require, the Nobles Ward is the least cluttered of the wards, save perhaps the Council Ward, and is home to some of the most ancient architecture in the city (much of the materials are repurposed from the Dock Ward wall and buildings). This ward practically screams opulent indulgence, and the residents go to great lengths to display that wealth. The city gate that falls in this ward is called the Golden Gate, and is essentially a private gate to 'the Retreat'. The Nobles Ward is the most open of the wards, with wide avenues, parks and spacious (at least by city standards) aristocratic manors.

Locations of interest in the Nobles Ward;

Aetrakas Blade Works

The most prestigious weapon smith in the city, Aetrakus (Fighter 6th) is a reclusive and mysterious Tiefling that has gained rare favour amongst the city's elite, who all strive to own one of his unique blades. While the forge employs many fine smiths, all who craft swords of surpassing quality and beauty, blades personally crafted by Aetrakus bear a strange green tinge in the metal and it is said are that these blades are stronger than steel (and whispers claim bear a curse). A green steel blade is never



for purchase (no matter how fabulous the sum), but occasionally one is gifted - seemingly at random - to an Andurian citizen. No one knows how many such blades are in circulation as all who have claimed to own one have either been exposed as frauds or turned up dead in suspicious circumstances. Aetrakus himself is rarely seen in public (except when bequeathing a blade) and refuses to discuss his works or address the supposed 'curse' rumours.

Devina's Diamond Palace

Often referred to as just Devina's, this ballroom and function centre is crowned with a crystal dome that accentuates the best features of the ambient light at any time of day, with internal lighting conditions ranging from sparkling prismatic rainbows, to smouldering sunsets or even subtle, pale starlight at night.

In a ward where status and position is played out in subtle power games, Devina (Human Female Wizard – Enchanter 7th) offers a breathtaking 'neutral ground' option for parties or functions where competing aristocratic families can attend without losing face to rivals.

The dome itself is magical, and Devina openly states that it is enchanted to provide guests with the finest spectacle wealth can buy. At her command it can create numerous illumination effects that appear to be purely aesthetic, but in reality it can be used to subtly influence observers, or used more aggressively to place them in a suggestible hypnotic state.

The Gilded Lady

Less a tavern and more a gentleman's club, the Gilded Lady is a lavish three story affair that boasts not only a tap room, but a smoking lounge, a small 'entertainment' room, and numerous private suites for hire. Admittance is limited, and enforced by a small army of well-dressed and impeccably polite bouncers who ruthlessly curtail 'uncivilized behaviour' with efficient, professional and above all discrete 'discussions' that have been known to result in hospitalization. The Hall of Lineage (The Guild of Aristocracy head quarters)

The Hall of Lineage is an impressive building as befits the station of its purpose - to demonstrate the glory of the Andurian elite. The huge rectangular edifice is dressed with marble and sports statues and columns all along its four sides. Internally the vast majority of the building is a single massive hall filled with all manner of historical items connected to the noble history of the city, banners and curios and odd personal items attributed to the famous ancestors of the current noble houses. Security is tight, with all items behind rope and glass displays, and overseen by a heavily armed private mercenary force. The furthest third of the hall is given over to a library of sorts, with massive bookshelves holding hundreds tomes and scrolls. It is here that the comprehensive history and genealogy of each family (and any offshoots) is recorded and managed. The clerks are all sober and stern, allowing no one to handle the records for fear of tampering.

Along each side of the vast hall is a series of arches leading to small rooms – one for each noble family. The walls of each is painted with intricately detailed frescoes of family trees and depictions of great and noble deeds. The centre piece of each room (also under glass) is an ornate copy of the patents of nobility of the subject family. There are 24 such chambers, and room for at least a dozen more with the proper renovations. Three of these rooms are currently barred shut, but the others are open to public access.

The restricted upper levels house the powerbrokers of the Guild of Aristocracy, generally older patrons or patriarchs of each of the Families, as well as favoured sons, nephews and the like. The entire organization is run like an urbane gentlemen's club, with decisions and deals made over spirits though a pall of pipesmoke.

Not to be officially discussed outside the nobility and council proceedings, three families have come under scrutiny and their noble status is in dispute. While under investigation their patents are locked away from public sight. Nobles tend to gossip, however, and rumours circulate about two of the three.

The Armatine family are being accused of forging several key documents that are required to prove a noble bloodline. While they maintain the documents are merely faithful recreations of damaged documents a number of investigating scribes have found 'irregularities' with the official process taken to preserve the originals.

The Grandling family is being investigated due to an unusual aberration in their history. A key nobleman in their past sailed abroad, returning years later to the family and an appropriate marriage. However, vastly differing accounts of his whereabouts and even alterations in his physical description during this period have been unearthed. There is a fear that the returning man was an imposter, and given the majority of the current Grandling family is descended from his line the Grandlings may have their noble status revoked if this bears out.

The Holbard investigation is blanketed in secrecy. If anyone knows anything nobody is talking. Whatever the cause of the investigation, clearly the details are so potentially harmful to the entire aristocracy that no information at all has come out, not even as speculative spiteful bickering and rumour mongering.

The Vault

The Vault is both the treasury for the city, and the repository of the most dangerous and damaging objects and secrets of the wealthy elite. Rumours suggest it has never been successfully robbed, and the few times it has been attempted, the perpetrators have simply vanished, never to be seen again.

An imposing marble structure, complete with colonnades and impressively menacing statuary, the Vault is famously quoted as being guarded by "men, monsters and magic". Casual visitors see only heavily armoured guards in the public access areas, but in the deeper vaults there are indeed powerful magical wards (and traps) and both living and animated monstrous guardians. The foundation of these mystical defences is that they are powered by draining the energy of elemental creatures, which must be replaced regularly as they are consumed.

Currently at least one Machine piece is being stored in a highly protected strongbox in the deep vaults (maybe two, depending on the actions of the PCs in *Difficult Circumstances*). The Vault, and the very first successful robbery of it, will be detailed in the forthcoming side trek – *Bank Heist* (Coinciding with Part 3 – To The Edge).

Northgate

One of the two external wards to the city, Northgate is a mix of everything and anything, though generally it is working class who cannot afford to break into the expensive city locales. Northgate, despite having a prime position near both the sea and the river has no commercial docks, all trade docking required to be through the Trade Guild controlled Dock Ward. Still, this position (along with a lack of walls or gates) invites smuggling, and a quiet war is being fought in the night with the illicit trade gangs against the Watch and agents of the Trade Guild. The ward is relatively peaceful and orderly near the gate, but slowly becomes rougher and run down toward the outer edges.

Locations of interest in Northgate;

Jotun's Couriers

Jotun's Couriers are active all throughout the city, with small depots and offices in more than two dozen locations. However, its main headquarters and stables sit at the very outer edge of the North Ward, its need for space the primary reason for its location. Jotun's compound is a sprawling series of stables, animal nurseries, stock and feed storage, secure property storage, chariot hangars, bunkhouses for the hands and a huge main house where Jotun lives and many of his drivers board. The whole place is run like a huge family farm - the family consisting of near-wild animals, heavy drinking teamsters and crazy, thrill seeker pilots.

Jotun (Cavalier 6) is a huge man (over 8 feet tall) with rippling muscles, long blonde hair, a booming voice and an infectious laugh. His age is indeterminate, and his mercurial moods change like the weather. No one doubts his claim that he is half giant, and no one ever asks about his parentage.

Despite being situated in a rougher neighbourhood, no trouble ever comes to Jotun, for if personal fear of the half giant was not enough, the 52 fully grown and dangerously semi-tamed hippogriff deter any would be troublemakers. The last burglar who tried his luck



stealing a hippogriff colt was delivered to the River Watch in a dripping sack.

The River Watch

On the very outer fringes of Northward, close to the River Prosperity, a Watch house of some of the city's most decorated veterans has been assigned to get to the bottom of the continued success of the city's smuggling rings. Despite their proven loyalty and resources they have yet to determine the means that these criminal gangs continue to operate and elude arrest.

There is continued speculation that the Watch is corrupt. While no evidence of such is forthcoming in internal investigations, and a continuous rotation of personnel, no progress is being made. The longer the situation continues, the more damage the reputation of the watch sustains in Northward.

The fault lies not with the Watch or its members. While the smuggling gangs continue their turf wars they do agree on one thing – they want to keep the Law out of it. At great expense the gang leaders have acquired a 'specialist' to handle it. While it appears human-like in most respects, no one believes the creature is even remotely human. This specialist, through means not understood, can alter perceptive reality in an area. Every time the watch investigations close on a smuggling operation they simply find nothing, even when evidence of criminal activity is plainly before them. However, greed almost always wins out, and at least three gang bosses are in negotiations with the specialist to turn its abilities on their rivals.

The River Rat

This infamous single story tavern is constructed of roughly finished timber, and sits on the very northern edge of the ward, closer to the river than the city proper. If the building is rough, the clientele are rougher. Teamsters, bargemen, mercenaries and drifters are the regular crowd, and the taproom is always one wrong look from a brawl or knifing. Rumours persist that it is owned and run by criminal elements, giving it a reputation as a place for making contact with 'resourceful' sorts.

Serene Grace

Serene Grace is a monastic dojo dedicated to achieving enlightenment through pursuit of physical and spiritual perfection. It is a round, two story building made of wood and stone, found in one of the rougher neighbourhoods in the ward. It caters to several dozen students and is superficially no different to the myriad of other dedicated academies in the city, save that as a recent addition it has a limited reputation, and thus draws few notable students.

However, Shi Rin Ja (monk 10), the master at the dojo, is an ex member of the ID (see Guild of Balance), escaped from the fold when he was left for dead after a particularly disastrous assassination attempt. He left the city for many years, but after deep personal reflection determined that the ID, if left unchecked, would eventually become corrupt in their actions. He returned to build a monastic tradition designed to counter the IDs assassins if and when such an event occurred.

Tempus Fugit

Tempus Fugit is a large storefront and artisan's workshop that produces and sells clocks and miscellaneous other clockwork items and curios. The shop has a large clocktower set into the building facade, which keeps perfect time and chimes on the hour every hour (much to the chagrin of local neighbours in the wee morning hours). The shop and clockworks are run by a dour middle aged man named Dameros Nirn and his six adult children (who are also his apprentices).

In addition to making clocks and curios, Dameros has learned the secrets of creating and animating clockwork creatures. At this stage he has not mastered anything more than a few unintelligent, harmless pets, but he is delving dangerously into trying to give 'life' and personality to his creations. He has recently taken up with an itinerant scholar – a charming middle aged woman by the name of Maisy Elderwen - who has been assisting him with research from the Great Library. Unbeknownst to Dameros, Maisy is actually a disguised devil, who is leading him slowly to the idea that sentient constructs requires the sacrifice of sentient beings.

Tempus Fugit is featured very briefly in Adventure 1 – *A Simple Job.*

Pilgrimage

The other of the city's external wards, Pilgrimage is a slum district consisting of those who cannot obtain entry to the city proper for various (and often nefarious) reasons. It is the poorest, and most dangerous of the city's wards. Locations of interest in the Pilgrimage;

Mourner's Vigil

The name refers to the street leading up to a Healing Hand's hospice tent, as well as the tent itself. The injured and ill are administered to here, but the conditions in the slums are so poor that few survive. The local Guildsman, Darius Redfen (Acolyte 2) is the single practitioner here, assisted by a few of the locals. With the limited resources available most understand that bringing a loved one to Mourner's Vigil is almost inevitably the last step before accepting death. Mourner's Vigil provides funerary services, and discreetly manages the remains after the bereaved depart.

As part of his ministrations, Darius performs surgeries, but few realise that there are a disproportionate amount of these for the types of injuries and illnesses seen. Citizens simply accept his word at the required treatment, and accept his explanation of the outcome. The truth is that Darius performs unnecessary experimental procedures on those given up for dead. Behind his sympathetic veneer, Darius is a cold and calculating individual with a twisted fascination with mortality. Similarly, the 'burial services' are not what they appear to be. Mourner's Vigil backs onto an abattoir, and the butcher always seems to have fresh meat, even when livestock numbers are low.

The Mad Preacher

A scorched and patched tent sits at the very edge of the Ward, where a wild haired, scarred, crazed old man holds sermons espousing a return to deific worship (to a range of gods) that are more public spectacle than might be wise. The desperate citizens are polarized, some vehemently against the teachings as it goes against the prevailing culture of the city they travelled to be a part of, while others, bereft of any hope, or disillusioned at the end of their travels, seek solace in religion. Several times the old man has been accosted in the night, or had his tent set alight, but in each case the attackers have left worse for wear (though none dead) and the fires always seem to gutter out before taking. Many of the locals are starting to come around, and the makings of a minor cult are beginning to form.


The Pilgrimage Watch

The Pilgrimage Watch is one of the most testing posts watchmen can be assigned to. The crushing poverty of Pilgrimage leads many citizens to crimes of desperation or frustration. Theft, burglary and assault are common. It is the least desirable post in the city. Watchmen in Pilgrimage are assigned a 6 month posting, then rotated out into other Wards. Even with this limit, many watchmen burn out and quit the Watch during this time. The Pilgrimage 'stretch' is seen as a testing ground amongst the force.

The current Pilgrimage watch commander is Captain Zareel Kirsh, a steely eyed veteran who is equal measures compassion and resolve (Human Female Fighter 4). She brooks no ill-discipline in the ranks, and believes that the role of the Watch is to not only protect citizens and enforce the law, but to support the citizens and assist where possible. Under her command the Watchmen spend more time performing public service than making arrests.

Tanner's Tavern

Generally just referred to as "Tanner's", this large patched red tent sits off the main boulevard on the approach to the city, a stone's throw from the Customs Station at the gate. The interior has a carpet floor, simple long benches and a bar made of arranged ale barrels. It is a subdued affair, but orderly, and a favoured watering hole for local watchmen when off duty.

Edmund Tanner (Fighter 3) is a powerfully built, middle aged man with a number of prominent facial scars and a pronounced limp. A veteran watchman of the Pilgrimage watch, he retired after a savage riot ended with him taking a boar spear to the knee. Instead of turning him from the Ward and its people, the incident galvanised his resolve to stay and help. He established Tanner's as a way of remaining to be a positive influence in Pilgrimage, and support the watchmen who work here.

The Retreat

Outside the Nobles gate is a semi-private domain where the noble families keep extensive 'retreats' – large sprawling holiday homes and estates that can't be achieved in the city due to its space limitations. These estates have only small buildings, concentrating mostly on the grounds and gardens.

While not technically exclusive (Andurian citizens are free to travel through all parts of the city as they please), the local Watch heavily scrutinise anyone seeking to enter the Retreat that has no connection or affiliation with the Noble Houses. The Guild of Aristocracy have even gone so far as to issue official 'passes' which read like invitations, proclaiming the holder to be invited to the estates of a particular family or another. Anyone who is not part of an aristocratic bloodline, and not carrying an official pass, are subject to harassment and intimidation. The official line is that those without specific business in the ward are likely up to no good and warrant the scrutiny, but in truth it is just another method that the aristocracy can enforce an exclusivity through use of wealth (by way of a largely corrupt Watch precinct).

Locations of interest in the Retreat;

The Hideaway

While the aristocracy vehemently deny the existence of this tavern, the Hideaway can be found if one has the right connections. Deep in the heart of the upstanding pseudo-ward of the Retreat, the Hideaway is hidden beneath one of the outermost buildings on the edge of the Vellenhall estate (to the casual observer it appears to be a well-guarded storage building). The basement establishment is part tavern, part gambling hall and part fight club, where bored nobility can indulge in professional or amateur blood sports away from prying eyes and pesky law enforcement.

The Gilded Grooms

The narrow and cluttered streets of the city make difficult going to the large and opulent carriages favoured by the nobility, yet the wealthy rarely wish to give up their comforts. The Gilded Grooms maintain a number of smaller carriages, palanquins and fine mounts, exchanging the less suitable vehicles for traversing the city, then house and maintain the larger carriages for the return trip. In this way the aristocrats get to maintain their comfort and ostentatious displays of opulence within the Retreat, but are able to procure more practical (though still impressive) transport within the city.

Noble Family Estates

Each of the city's aristocratic families maintain lavish





estates in the Retreat, and are favoured by the older generations of each, who's waning interest in politics and social positioning is overshadowed by the comfort provided by the more remote, less cramped feel of the Retreat. Most of the Estates have a similar layout, with a main manor house and support buildings surrounded by extensive grounds and gardens. Vast wealth has been spend on the various estates, in an effort not only to provide every comfort money can buy, but to display this opulence in a way that overshadows their neighbours if possible. Due to this, each family maintains a private security force on their estates.

The estates are left to the GM to expand on and detail if they wish. The noble families play only a peripheral role in this Adventure Path. The one estate of story significance – the abandoned Anthilas Estate – is fully detailed in Adventure 3 – *From the Ashes*.

The Retreat Watch (the Nanny Watch)

The Retreat watch house is a blemish on an otherwise exceptional city watch. Referred to as the Nanny Watch by the more dedicated watchmen, the Retreat Watch is little more than a largely ceremonial outfit going through the motions. The noble houses all maintain their own private security, and while they are willing to engage in cut throat trade and politics, very few petty or personal crimes occur in the Retreat. The Retreat Watch generally deals with minor social complaints, and the occasional drunken aristocrat.

The Retreat Watch tends to attract the social sycophants and aristocratic hopefuls, and is vehemently avoided by serious watchmen, so the calibre of the standing staff is less than exemplary. Almost every single watchman in the precinct is in someone's 'favour', and the corruption ranges from minor (warnings instead of charges for drunk and disorderly) to downright extreme (the destruction and cover up of evidence of significant criminal enterprise and conspiracy).

Harbin Wingate (Guildmaster of the Guild of Justice) is aware of the rumours of corruption, and an internal investigation is long overdue, but the Guild's resources are being severely tested by current events (Essentially the events of the entire Adventure Path).

The Trade Ward

Home to the Grand Market, it is the mercantile hub of the city. The Trade Ward has the greatest collection of Inns, and also houses some of the city's middle class population. The Trade ward also controls the North Gate, the city gate that exits north into the ward of Northgate.

Locations of interest in the Trade Ward;

The Celestial Scriptorium

Situated upon the raised foundations of an ancient ruin, with sweeping harbour views, this beautiful building is made of (or at least faced in) pink and white marble, with open galleries held up by angelically sculpted columns. It is a square, 2 story structure, with the centre being an open air garden. Its upper level is private chambers and secret hideaways threaded around a library of impressive size and depth, if a little convoluted in layout.

The Celestial Scriptorium is technically a festhall (as indicated on the city records), and boasts large and opulent entertaining areas. However, it has two particular services for which it is famous (or infamous). It is in fact the only library, sage and scribe business in the city not a member of the Guild of Philosophy and Thought (Scholar's Guild), and its services are comparable, if a little more expensive. The reason for the expense is its second service. Its sages and scholars are also some of the finest and most expensive prostitutes and escorts in the city, potently combining both beauty and talent with intellect. The Scriptorium trades in either, or both, service to those who can afford it, and generally draws its customers from the wealthy and elite of the city.

The Celestial Scriptorium is run by an achingly beautiful and enigmatic Asimaar hostess – Radiant Soul – and has a secret known to only a few. It is a hugely profitable front to an even more successful spy ring and information brokerage. Radiant Soul is an extremely influential figure in the city, but wields that influence from the shadows, behind factors and representatives that cannot be connected to her.

The Celestial Scriptorium is detailed in Adventure 1 – *A Simple Job,* and featured in several other adventures.

The Great Market

The Great market is a tent city set up in the massive open

square at the centre of the Trade Ward. Governed by the Trade Guild, it is a constantly moving sea of temporary or seasonal trade stalls and tents. On any given day new and exciting opportunities arise. It is the beating heart of the city, and attracts thousands of patrons each day.

Everyone that passes through the City passes through the Great Market at some point. Prices here are generally lower (around 5%) than any of the fixed shops/stores in the city, but stocks and supplies fluctuate. Anything that is not a common foodstuff has a 10% chance to be unavailable in the Great Market on any given visit (simply sold out), and the market rarely has anything (other than livestock) of a greater than 100gp value on sale. The more exclusive items (100gp or greater) tend to be found in the more stable specialty shops around the city (and the ones with better security). The watch presence is higher here than anywhere else in the city, but so is petty street crime (theft, purse-cutting and pickpocketing). Some of the longer term, or regularly reoccurring stalls include;

Rainbow Ribbons – a wildly coloured booth selling lengths of ribbon in every imaginable colour at 1cp per foot, managed by Esme Amberwin, a sprightly elderly lady who always wears lime green dresses and plaits ribbons into her long silver hair.

Rat on a stick – a weathered wooden food vendor cart, complete with hanging sign depicting a Rat on a stick. The spit is always turning, releasing the most wonderful roast aroma, and the meat is as delicious as it is as unidentifiable (the skewers are meat chunks and not whole animals – rat or otherwise). These tasty treats go for 1cp a skewer, and the cheerful halfling (Ruben 'the Ratcatcher') spicing the meat with various powders and leaves remains tight lipped on the actual meat origin. Whether or not it's a cheeky sales pitch or actually rat meat is a lively debate heard all around the city.

Chopper's Choppers – A scarred, one-eared goblin (called Chopper) runs this stall, bristling with a collection of the most wicked-looking rusty and misshapen knives, cleavers, shivs, shanks, and pokers. His most humble blade sells for 1cp (or a 'fair' trade) up to a range of 'genuine and traditional' goblin dogslicers and horsechoppers. All standard weapons bought from this vendor are half price, but have the fragile quality, and Chopper doesn't give refunds, but will trade back a broken weapon if it has even one sharp edge or a point that can be used to deal damage.



Grimsby's Carvings – This tan coloured tent has remained in place in the same spot for as long as anyone can remember. Inside, a trestle table is filled with amazingly lifelike wooden carvings of animals and monsters, ranging from a few inches in height (1cp) to small 2 foot statues (1sp). Grimsby is a young man who appears to be in his 20's, with sandy hair, plain features and a smile that defies his moniker. He sits behind the table, whittling as he talks to customers. He occasionally will whittle on request, carving a likeness of the customer and entertaining them with stories and jokes while they wait (around 1-2 hours, costing 1sp). *Crystal Clear* – A richly appointed royal blue tent that makes its way around the market, changing locations every week. Inside, shrouded in alchemical smoke and occasional pyrotechnics, Heavenly Mistress Jasmine (self-styled 'Seer & Oracle') dispenses fortunes (1 silver piece across her palm) and sells semi-precious stones and crystals (1cp-5gp) for 'aura cleansing, mental clarity and emotional reflection' (among other uses). Mistress Jasmine actually possesses some gifts despite all the pageantry (Wizard – specialist diviner – 4th level) and can produce accurate - if vague - pronouncements of fortune through minor magic. These are generally just useful enough to gull customers into purchasing the



more expensive crystals. Unfortunately for Mistress Jasmine, she has begun to delve into things best left undisturbed, and will soon become a pawn in larger events (See Adventure 4 – *Sanitarium*).

The Trade Guildhall (The Guild of Trade headquarters) The Trade Guildhall typifies everything one would expect of a Guild of Trade in a city founded on Trade. The Guildhall has a main building that is 4 stories in height, and several wings and annexes leading off that range from two to three stories. The main building is crafted of yellow stone, with numerous window piecing its walls to give light internally. The majority of the main building is one large open space, three stories high, with balconies overlooking the main floor from the second and third levels. Packed into the main floor, and jammed onto the balconies are hundreds of stalls, each with a trade representative from a different mercantile interest. At all hours of the night and day, swarms of traders and factors move through the area, making deals and agreements. No actual money changes hands here, but deals are done, promises made, documents signed, trade partnerships and ventures are conceived, and fortunes are won and lost at the stroke of a pen. The Guildhall is a chaotic anthill of activity as traders try to secure deals that make or break them or their competitors. The most prestigious agreements or partnerships are conducted in the annexes, where private conference rooms are filled with trade factors, and Guild of Balance arbitrators and lawyers, wrangling over complicated clauses and subclauses in contracts.

Above it all on the fourth floor, the Guild of Trade hierarchy spends its time in endless council sessions, deliberating over trade disputes, applications for the formation or dissolution of various corporations and or trade entities and the creation or alteration of trade rules and laws (later to be ratified by the city council).

Wondrous Wizardry

An expensively appointed 'magic' shop, the display front of Wondrous Wizardry mostly stocks mundane items dressed up to look interesting – pickled animal foetuses, shrunken heads, beads, feathers, various powders, robes, pointed hats, cloaks and scarves etc. There are a range of 'off the shelf' alchemical items (alchemical tools and remedies, but no poisons, weapons or volatiles like alchemists fire). Among the most expensive items are genuine crystal balls (non-magical) running at up to several hundred gold each. It is a quintessential fake magic shop. The proprietor, Fillious Falconfeather (the 'fifth') wears sparkling garb, a ridiculous pointed hat and cloak, and plays up the mystery like a great showman.

Those that are known (or proven) to actually be serious practitioners of wizardry can access the real magic shop, via a mirror in one of the fitting rooms (teleported, using a password). The real Wondrous Wizardry is an enclosed, mirrored version of the shop that is actually underground (the front door cannot be opened and the 'street' outside is an illusion) that has rare magical components, spell books (blank and full), scrolls, potions and a range of more significant magical items (3d4 in stock, price limited to 100,000gp). The proprietor (Twill Stillwater) is a plainly dressed middle aged man who is efficient and direct spoken. He provides spellcasting or scroll scribing at request (Wizard 12th, all spells of 1-6th known or available within 1-2 days), and for a reasonable fee provides magical item procurement/brokerage (5% of total gp value, 1-4 weeks for most items not in stock).

Other Locations Around the City

The Aqueduct – The aqueduct is a stone aqueduct that channels water into the city canals system. It runs under one of the defence towers and is heavily policed and patrolled to deter illegal entry or sabotage.

The Last Look Tavern

Situated in the village of Last Look, across from Titan's Grasp Prison, the tavern is a plain one story white stone building, with heavy shutters on the seaward side. The proprietor (a gruff dwarf and ex-convict named simply Grindle) claims that the ferry hamlet is named after the tavern, and not the other way around. The Last Look offers one 'on the house' to prisoners about to take the ferry across to the Prison.

Titan's Grasp Prison

A day south of the city, and set on an islet off the coat that suspiciously resembles a giant calcified hand, the prison is as isolated as any of the city's holdings. A small service town called Last Look resides on a nearby bluff, managing the ferries that move prisoners and provisions to the prison. As would be expected, both the prison and Last Look house a large watch contingent.

Alternate or Adjusted Campaigns

No adventure, adventure path or campaign setting will suit all gamers all of the time. The trick to a robust adventure or setting is to lay down a strong foundation and allow for some flexibility and innovation. The greatest immersion a group will achieve in a product is when a GM is excited to run it and players are excited to play it. This occurs best when it matches the tone and interests of those involved.

In this section we present a few methods to alter large elements of the presented material in such a way as to not lose the major themes, and have as little impact on continuity as possible for the story. As always, the GM is encouraged to make whatever changes necessary to enhance the experience for his group, and hopefully this section will assist if there are elements that may not fit the group style or interest, but the GM is unsure how making the changes might affect the overall adventure/ setting cohesion.

Hold the Cthulhu Please

One of the biggest thematic gambles of this adventure is to use the iconic figure of Cthulhu as the initial motivating force, the constant threatening influence and the ultimate campaign consequence of character failure. It is a gamble because Cthulhu is a well-established icon of a very different theme and setting than standard fare heroic fantasy, is the figurehead of a number of other roleplaying games products, and in many cases evokes strong (even polarizing) views in the roleplaying community. He is a brand unto himself. The choice to use (and the method of use of) Cthulhu in this adventure may not sit well with the expectations of many gamers. Added to that with the Lovecraftian Mythos appearing in Paizo's Strange Aeons it may simply be 'too much of a good thing'.

Cthulhu was chosen for several reasons, not the least of which is that I love the mythos and always wanted to marry it into a high fantasy setting where the characters actually have some resources to combat its influence on a less uneven playing field (given a fighting chance if you will). That being said, the beauty of this adventure is that despite being a pivotal theme, Cthulhu is not required at all to run it. At no point will the adventurers actually come into contact with Cthulhu directly. If the adventure is successful, the characters (and the world) may never know the 'source' of the madness that precipitated the

events that unfold.

The adventure doesn't need Cthulhu, but to run it as is, it does need an origin for Aether's psychotic obsession. Everything else stems from this, or can be explained away via other routes. If you intend to remove Cthulhu from the adventure the following needs to occur;

Aether still travels beyond the known universe. At the extreme edge of reality he encounters an entity or trigger resulting in a psychotic break. Suggestions include;

- He sees the face or touches the mind of the God of Madness (appropriate to the setting).
- He encounters an alien presence that he cannot comprehend (just not Cthulhu)
- He discovers that the universe is infinite and he is but an insect in a far greater tapestry. This 'epiphany' that - for all his power as a demi-god - he is essentially inconsequential is too much for his ego driven mind to bear.
- He reaches the actual end of the universe, where life and matter simply cease to be. A close call with utter annihilation, a taste of mortality to an immortal, is the catalyst for his psychosis.
- He reaches the end of the universe. There is a true spiritual revelation at the end, it may even be something better or beneficial to mankind.
- Aether's obsession may even come from an altruistic desire to bring peace and harmony to a troubled universe. His well-intentioned effort to force 'enlightenment' on mankind are misconstrued as evil.

Aether still embarks on his quest to consolidate power and use the machine to open the way to the source of his obsession. He still makes a deal with Asmodeus to override the normal function of the machine. Events still take place as written, with the city and machine damaged, Aether struck down and the Shadow City formed. The Echo is still an apostate, and Asmodeus is still owed his due.

The Machine parts still radiate madness and need to be controlled/contained. If there is no connection to a source of madness (Cthulhu, an Alien Mind or the God of Madness), they can be tainted by Aether's own powerful psychosis at the point of failure.

The rising madness can be a result of the re-connection to Aether's shattered psyche rather than any connection to Cthulhu.

The Elder Sign (used to ward first the characters, then the city) can be replaced with a runic ritual spell that must be inscribed on or around the location to offer its protection. While not as recognizable, or designed to combat a specific threat (Cthulhu), the runic spell functions much the same, and still needs to be scribed in silver.

Any scattered references to Cthulhu can be replaced by hints about the source, or simply removed altogether.

In the final epic battle the Star Spawn (already an optional encounter) can be replaced with a foe unconnected to the mythos (Corrupted dragon, Devil/Demon with the Shadow Creature template) and/or place the focus more on thwarting the ritual performed by the Echo than the type of combat threat provided.

Further information on removing the Mythos elements will be included in each Part of the Adventure Path where those elements are highly visible or have roles in critical scenes or events.

Occult Adventures & Horror Adventures

Thematically, the adventure matches up well with the *Occult Adventures* material from Paizo's official Pathfinder line. However, these rules were not considered in this product line for two reasons. Firstly, the bulk of the adventure plot was written before the availability of these rules, and aside from a handful of new monsters, abilities and rules 'tweaks' the Core Rules are more than sufficient to adequately represent the story being told. Secondly, not all groups will have access to, or would be interested in, the Occult Adventures material in their game. We want the adventure to be as broadly applicable as possible, and have tried to limit the use of supplemental rules.

If GMs and players are interested in incorporating the Occult Adventures material into the adventure, it should not present any significant complications to substitute your favourite classes or materials in place of those supplied. For example, Damien could be just as well represented as an Alchemist/Occultist rather than an Alchemist/Sorcerer, and the Echo could be a variant or unique Phantom to a Spiritualist host (Haunted Archetype).

Similar to the above, there are a number of elements in this Adventure Path that parallel the recently released Horror Adventures supplemental material from Paizo publishing. Horror Adventures is mostly rules clarifications around existing mechanics (such as haunts), and some additional and expanded content (curses, possession and the like). It is flavourful and could certainly add to the adventure. Like Occult adventures, it was not available at the time of the creation of this story, and has not been included specifically. Where there is overlap the AP tends to have its own application of such rules (for example the 'rules light' use of Haunts in Adventure 3 – *From the Ashes*). There is nothing stopping GMs from including this material but any use should be carefully examined to ensure none of the established game balance is broken.

High Divine Magic

As discussed in themes, the setting is low divine magic. This is partially story based, but it is also to ensure that the looming threat of insanity reaches across the city to citizens of all walks of life – rich or poor. It also adds to the prominence of the Guild of Peace and Healing, and is the vehicle by which they (as completely unsuited as they are to the task before them) make the fatal errors in overreaching that brings them to the brink of collapse.

In a high divine magic setting the campaign will still function unless there is an incredibly large number of divine casters for the population. In a 'standard' fantasy campaign full of various religions and churches there would still not be enough available casters to continue to cure the vast majority of the city's population as the madness spreads. However, the wealthy or influential would have much less to fear than the lower and middle classes.

Part of the tone setting is that the risk is equally shared by all citizens. The wealthy cannot 'buy' their way out of this, nor are they 'untouchable' with healing and resurrection on hand. Rich or poor, powerful or weak, no one can escape what is coming, unless the PCs can avert it.

If divine magic becomes more readily available that threat and theme will need to be adjusted. The wealthy will not be as blind-sided, nor as desperate, once the threat is revealed. The campaign can still be run as is, but the GM will need to adjust the attitude of the city elite accordingly, and may need to adjust the role of the Healing Hands also.

Low Fantasy vs High Fantasy

The adventure is definitely slanted toward the high fantasy end of the scale, with dragons, airships, devilish plots, shadow dimensions and magical machines capable of bending reality. While the story has dark and gritty moments, and characters are not afraid to get their hands dirty, it is certainly not a street-level survival adventure. For GMs and players that prefer a low fantasy slant, but still want to run this adventure, a number of the more outlandish elements could be altered to offer a grittier feel to the campaign, but in truth a lot of the intended flavour would be lost. The adventure is intended to be epic, taking the action to amazing locales and against fantastic foes. Groups seeking a low fantasy experience might be better off considering some of the existing quality Cthulhu/Elder Gods Mythos game systems.

Higher Technology

The campaign is set at a technology level slightly higher than the average fantasy campaign, but is designed to be reasonably flexible. The Eternal City is a metropolis, and a hub of trade and travel. It is the fantasy equivalent of ancient Rome at its height, and is itself reaching a pinnacle of civilization in this cycle. It stands to reason that the highest technology levels the world (whatever world you are using) has to offer would be represented in some form or other within the city.

As presented, the campaign technology is limited to basic steam and basic mechanics/clockworks, as well as alchemy and of course 'magical' technology analogues. The highest form of technology is currently steam powered airships, early firearms and simple machines (clocks, printing presses), though these are rare and generally considered unreliable. However, there is no reliance on any form of technology in the adventure. The adventure could be run with lower or higher technology levels with a little effort on the part of the GM.

Often technology is all about flavour. A jet pack is roughly equivalent to a pair of magical *winged boots* in terms of game effects. The Seekers of Asmodeus carry crossbows with special blunt bolts, designed to incapacitate rather than kill. In a higher technology setting these could just as easily be electrically charged 'stunners' for example.

GMs should be careful about introducing significant technology advancements or types that dramatically change available capabilities, or introduce them much earlier than characters would normally be able to access through the standard rules (ie allowing flight, teleportation or powerful explosive energy blasts at 1st level). The earlier abilities become available, the more likely an imbalance will be created in the adventure, and there is a risk the presented challenges will become trivialized.

Using a Different City Setting

The campaign assumes the vast majority of the action takes place in Anduria, the Eternal City. The city setting has a unique geography and history that is drawn on deeply in the adventure path. Certain elements are required to use the story 'as is'. However, GMs looking to place the campaign into an existing world (either Cannon or homebrew) can do so with a little effort to maintain or implant the essential elements.

The campaign setting requires the following elements;

- 1. A large city with a diverse population.
- 2. A magical and/or mechanical substructure to the city, including a machine that can be used to alter reality.
- 3. A connection to Aether (or similar deity) that used the machine unsuccessfully, resulting in severe damage (to the machine and to his faithful at least). This history should have all but erased the religion (including temples and the like).
- 4. A connection to other places/planes of existence (specifically R'lyeh and the Plane of Shadow or effective equivalent locations)
- 5. A robust political structure composed of disparate, competing elements. It may be possible to set the campaign in a location that has a monarchy for example, but only if there are aristocratic or mercantile bodies of significant social power (ie the King can't have pure, outright authority). The campaign must have a situation where groups like the Explorer's Guild, the Peregrine Trade Consortium and the Seekers of Azmodeus can gain power and position that is not easily removed).

The campaign setting would benefit from the following elements;

- 1. Low divine magic and/or religious presence
- 2. A western style adversarial legal system (complete with lawyers)
- 3. A strong trade focus in the culture
- A high level of 'fantasy' technology airships for example.

Most of the other elements are pure flavour or 'dressing' and can be altered fairly freely by GMs as desired.

The Side Treks

The Side Treks are a series of plug-in adventures that add to the overall story. They are by no means 'required' for the successful completion of the Adventure Path, but often fill in sub threads that would otherwise occur 'offstage' or assist in expanding on an element or feature of the campaign.

Favours Called In – Along the way through the events of the Adventure Path the PC's might trade future favours for current assistance. If they do, this is the favour called in. By way of 'facilitating a trade' the party can clear its debt. The side trek is variable based on who is owed, but ultimately they procure an object that will later be used to break into the Vault (future side trek).

Under Eternity – Under the city is a vast network that the Machine uses to gather energy. This side trek takes the characters through the conduits under the city to a reservoir pool under a wall bastion

The Centre of Eternity – This side trek is essentially a second part to the **Under Eternity** side trek. The heart of the Machine lies under the city in a central chamber. Any characters making their way here can uncover the ancient machine and the activities surrounding it.

The Gourd – A mysterious seed has been changing hands in certain botanical circles. A full length plug-in adventure by Richard Develyn

Favours Called In – Side Trek (CR 5)

This side trek serve two purposes – the first is to provide a short encounter that functions as a task the PCs can perform by way of a service, and the second is to foreshadow a necessary event in the campaign – a break in at the city Vault to liberate any and all machine pieces stored within. The side trek can take place at any time in the Adventure Path before Part 3 (ideally somewhere between Adventure 2 – *Ignorance is Bliss* and prior to leaving the city at the beginning of Adventure 5 – *Seeking Silver*). As a starting point the side trek has been set to challenge a 5th-6th level party with 4-5 members, but should be amended as appropriate if the group is higher or lower level (or significantly larger or smaller than the expected 4-5 PCs). At a couple of points within the Adventure Path the PCs might find themselves in a situation of 'owing' a favour to someone. One such situation might be in the adventure *Ignorance is Bliss* where they gain Saravel the Shady Dealer's assistance for a future favour. The PCs themselves might generate other such instances, or the GM might contrive of others.

In *Favours Called In* a deal is going down – two factions are doing a trade. One has a magical horn for sale and the other wants to buy it. A third faction has decided to disrupt the trade and steal it. The factions themselves are not specifically important, though the group that finally ends up with the horn are hired mercenaries that will ultimately (if not already) be working for the Echo of Faith. Factions *could* include;

Horn Sellers;

- A group of Collectors (Guild of Public Works) that either newly discovered the horn in a lost vault, or are corrupt and 'liberated' it from the Guild stores to turn a tidy profit.
- An out-of-town merchant (and guards) brought the horn into the city and are looking to move it quickly.
- A band of thieves stole the horn from its owner (an antiques collector, or a wizard or sage) and are looking to sell it before the law (or angry wizard) catches up to them.

Horn Buyers;

- A shady trader (and guards) have been contracted to acquire the horn for a private buyer through a third party (secretly the Echo of Faith). Once they have acquired it they are to deposit it in a lockbox in the city vault, where their payment awaits.
- Thaddeus has set up an interesting three way deal with two other merchants from the Trade Guild (or PTC, or one from each). These merchants are in a private little war and don't trust each other, but one wants to sell and one wants to buy. Thaddeus has set himself up as a neutral party to buy from one and sell to the other. Of course, the ultimate buyer has decided a double cross is in order, and has set an ambush. After all, why part with coin if you don't have to?

A private investigator (Elly Hamino) has been commissioned to find the stolen horn, and has managed to broker a deal to buy it back. She needs some muscle to ensure she isn't double crossed. (This could also be set up as an Ambusher group where Elly has tracked the stolen horn to this deal, and has hired some mercenaries to 'reclaim' it before the deal is done and the new owners vanish with their prize).

Deal Ambushers;

- A band of rogues has 'heard on the grapevine' about a clandestine deal that has the makings of a tidy profit if they ambush and take out both the seller and the buyer. In one action they will net both the item and the cash.
- A factor for the Explorers Guild has heard that a historical artefact is about to be sold. It belongs in a museum, and this particular factor hates thieves. They want to reclaim it and return it to its rightful place as a city treasure.
- The Watch have been tracking some illegal deals, and their investigations have lead them to this activity. A Watch squad is here to arrest the involved parties for questioning.

How the PCs fit in is up to the GM, and depends entirely on what fits best for the players, characters and circumstances of any individual campaign. The PCs can be part of any of the factions. The important element here is that the PCs see the Horn. Some suggestions include;

- Saravel, or another debtor (or benefactor), is buying (or selling) an undisclosed item from (to) some less than reputable characters, and wants to ensure that the deal goes ahead without any surprises or doublecrosses. The PCs are to provide 'protection' to their factor.
- The PC's contact or benefactor has learned that a deal is going down where two groups are trading a dangerous item. The benefactor wants the item for themselves or to turn it into the 'proper' authorities and has organized the PCs to disrupt the trade.

As an extra element for GMs wishing to use previously introduced NPCs, the Brothers Rufus and Faldor from the Prologue (assuming one or both survived) could be introduced as mercenaries (or thieves) in one of the groups. They could be enemies or rivals of the PCs, or even allies (including reluctant hired help). If they are in the same faction as the PCs a double-cross might be in the works (*oh the possibilities!*). If the Brothers are used the GM should make an effort to have them survive, either by getting away with the horn, or surrendering (or fleeing) when things go against them.

The Set Up

As Buyers/Sellers

It's the very early hours on a cold morning, and your find yourselves in the still darkness of a small side street in the Trade Ward. The shops and stalls are closed as reputable citizens are deeply asleep, while you and your counterparts skulk in the dim light of a street lantern.

The groups stand slightly apart, and armed men eye each other warily in the gloom. You both have a lockbox – one with a mysterious item and the other with golden coins, and you wait in readiness as the two factors haggle quietly between the two suspicious groups. Quickly a deal is struck, and you are called over to display the content your lockbox for the other side to prove your end of the bargain.

Suddenly men rush from alleys and rise from rooftops nearby. Someone yells 'Ambush!' and steel flashes in the lamplight.

As Ambushers

You crouch in the darkness, the fetid smell of garbage rising from the alley around you. Your breath steams in the damp cold of the pre-dawn morning, and you breathe shallowly, trying to limit any tell-tale signs of your presence. Cramped muscles protest, but you and your companions remain disciplined and still.

Sneaking a peek you can make out two skulking groups in the street nearby, their clandestine deal taking place as two cloaked men haggle and their heavily armed bands eye each other suspiciously. At a gesture the deal is done and lockboxes are brought forth by each group for exchange. That's the signal. Attack!

The Combat

The encounter is essentially a three way fight for possession of the horn and/or the cash. The outcome is not particularly important as (win or lose) the PCs should not be allowed to keep the horn. After all they have been hired by someone else who has claim to it. Somewhere during the combat, read the following;

Steel clashes on steel and men scream in rage and pain, and blood spatters the slick cobble stones of the street. In the confusion both lockboxes have been overturned, and you see a scattering of gold coins and a silver and ivory horn underfoot. You reach for the horn to secure it, trying to grab its white leather strap, but the tangle of boots gets in the way, and you watch it skitter away into the darkness, propelled by an inadvertent kick from a desperate combatant.

The Combatants

The combatants on all sides are mercenaries and thugs for the most part (or watchmen). The encounter CR accounts for a three way battle, and if the GM alters the composition, numbers or level of the combatants they should keep that in mind.

Each side should have 12 combatants, either mercenaries or watchmen. The Brothers can be substituted one for two (ie if they are with the mercenaries, the group would be 8 mercenaries and the two brothers). The factors are treated as non-combatant level 1 Experts.

Mercenary

CR 1/3

XP 135 N, Human, Male, Warrior 2 Init +0; Senses Perception +2 DEFENSE AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16 (+6 armour) Hp 14 (2d10+3) Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +1 OFFENSE Speed 20 ft. Melee heavy mace +4 (1d8+1/x2)**Ranged** light crossbow +2 (1d8 $19-20/x^2$) **STATISTICS** Str 13, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 11 Base Atk +2, CMB +3, CMD 13 Feats Toughness, Weapon Focus (Heavy mace) Skills Intimidate +4, Perception +2 Language Common Combat gear none Other Gear heavy mace, light crossbow, 20 bolts, chainmail armour

Rufus & Faldor, Mercenaries CR1 **XP 400** NE, Human, Male, Fighter 2 Init +2; Senses Perception +0 DEFENSE AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 armour, +1 shield, +2 dex) Hp 16 (2d10+4) Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0 (+1 vs Fear) **OFFENSE** Speed 30 ft. Melee longsword +6 (1d8+3 19-20/x2) or Power Attack w/longsword +5 (1d8+5 19-20/x2), Ranged dagger +4 (1d4+3 19-20/x2) or javelin +4 (1d6+3 x2)

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10 Base Atk +2, CMB +5, CMD 15 Feats Cleave, Endurance, Power attack, Weapon focus (longsword) Skills Acrobatics +2, Climb +7, Intimidate +4, Ride +6, Swim+7 Language Common SQ Favoured class (fighter +1 hp point/level), Bravery +1 Combat gear None Other Gear Longsword, dagger, javelin, leather armour, shield, money pouch (10gp, 3sp, 7cp) & (6gp, 13sp, 16cp) Watchman CR 1/3 XP 135 LN, Human, Male, Warrior 2 Init +0; Senses Perception +2 DEFENSE AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12 (+2 armour) Hp 14 (2d10+3) Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +1 OFFENSE Speed 20 ft. Melee shortsword +4 (1d6+1 / 19-20) or Sap +3 (1d6+1 nonlethal) Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8 19-20/x2) STATISTICS Str 13, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 11 Base Atk +2, CMB +3, CMD 13 Feats Toughness, Weapon Focus (shortsword) Skills Intimidate +4, Perception +2 Language Common Combat gear none Other Gear shortsword, sap, light crossbow, 20 bolts, leather armour

The Horn

Although the PCs should not be in a position to retain the horn (at least not now), there is a possibility – through circumstance or player cleverness – they may end up with it for a time. If they do not hand it over to an employer or the authorities, the GM should have it stolen away from them by agents of the Echo at a later time. In the interim, however, they may discover its functions.

Incidentally, the price of the horn is 5000gp (a pittance considering its powerful ability, but it becomes effectively worthless after one use). The coins will be scattered as the

read-aloud text above, but depending on the outcome the PCs may find themselves with time to collect them.

Horn of Shackle Breaking (Minor Artifact) **Aura** strong abjuration; **Slot** none; **CL** 20th; **Weight** 2 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This horn is made of carved ivory, with a sliver mouthpiece and sliver edging at the apex. A while leather strap is attached to either end via a silver clip.

When blown, all bindings (magical or mundane) that trap, confine, restrain or otherwise hold any creatures within 60 feet are automatically undone. Locks unlock, shackles slip off, doors open, magical wards are erased and so forth.

Creatures that are under magical control, charm or compulsions are automatically granted another saving throw (as per the original effect) or the effect is subject to a greater dispel magic effect (at 20th level) if it does not ordinarily offer a save.

Any creatures that are currently possessing another creature are automatically ejected from their host, and are barred from repossessing or exerting influence over the victim for 1 minute.

The Horn can only ever be blown once by any given

creature. Further attempts result in no sound or effect being emitted by the horn, and the user becomes *silenced* (as per the spell) for 24 hours. The silence effects only the user, and cannot be dispelled or counteracted short of another Artifact or *Wish*.

DESTRUCTION

The horn must be blown by a single creature at dawn each day for a year (effectively silencing the creature for a year). On the last day, the horn shatters forever.

Conclusion

The Conclusion is entirely dependent on how the GM has set up the encounter, and the choices the PCs make. Whichever side is left standing (likely the PCs unless they were forced to flee) will take custody of the horn, the payment and account for survivors (Watch groups will make arrests, mercenaries will run off surviving opponents).

Watch patrols will begin to arrive after a few minutes, arresting anyone they find not affiliated with the Watch. Characters that are simply hired to defend a transaction will likely be set free if they can put up a reasonable selfdefence case, otherwise they may face charges.

If the PCs are fulfilling a favour owed, the debt will be considered settled regardless of outcome.



Under Eternity

Expedition to the machine. A small encounter designed to flesh out an arc if the PCs choose to deliberately seek out the machine prior to the culmination of the adventure.

As part of the *A Simple Job* story line, the characters pass by a Machine conduit on their trek through the sewers. As time is a factor, they will not have the luxury of exploration until a later date. By the end of the adventure path the characters will visit the Machine (though the players will not be aware of it until then), but curious or motivated players may want to explore this element sooner.

While both parts of this side trek are featured together, they are intended (as much as possible) to be run separately. *Under Eternity* is readily accessible, and is almost expected to take place early, while *The Centre of Eternity* is entirely optional, far more difficult to access, and in many ways is offered only as an option for GMs with particularly resourceful or stubborn players, or those who wish to foreshadow the Machine in more detail. The Machine exists under the city, and is static. It defies logic that players absolutely cannot find it before the climax of the adventure if they truly put their efforts toward it (particularly as they level and gain more power and resources. *The Centre of Eternity* is a way to allow them to glimpse it without derailing the overarching plot.

The Conduit

The opening to the conduit is covered in a previous adventure, but in short, when the machine was last used the conduits were charged with energy gathered from the life force of the city's residents. When Aether was struck down, the magical backlash tore the machine apart, and 'blew out' several of the conduits. The opening from which the PCs descend is one such tear in the complex.

The tunnel is constructed of a black glassy stone not unlike obsidian, though it appears to be at least somewhat transparent. Under the surface you can see wires of various metals in twisting patterns that are impossible to follow. Some of the metals are recognizable – gold, silver and copper, but several seem to be made of metals of green and blue hues. There is an elegance about it, even if its purpose is unclear. Clinging to these clean surfaces are numerous tendrils or tubes. These tubes are rough and fibrous, and look far too organic to be part of the original structure. They run the length of the tunnel in both directions like veins, in clusters or singularly, branching and re-joining at seemingly random places. It reminds you of ivy clinging to a building, separate and yet inextricably intertwined at the same time. These fibrous veins pierce the otherwise pristine walls at intervals, and where they do, jagged holes are torn through the glassy stone. Scratching at the wall with a dagger you cannot make so much as a mark, yet somehow these tendrils have managed to penetrate it.

The walls are constructed of an unidentifiable stone completely impervious to anything except the **Tools of the Builders** (see page 92). Of course, certain undeniable forces (such as the cataclysmic energy release from the last attempted use of the Machine) can damage the stone.

Though the PCs aren't likely to know this, the 'veins' are a result of devilish tampering with the Machine to bend its purpose to Aether's (and ultimately Asmodeus') will. Unlike the walls they *can* be damaged. They have a hardness of 8, and 10 hp per foot length. If cut, they leak a brackish, foul-smelling black substance that acts like a weak contact poison if handled (Fort DC 12, Con 1 point, 1 save negates) that evaporates in air after a few moments. Damaged veins regenerate at a rate of 1 Hp per hour.

With a determined effort PCs could actually cut away enough veins at the piercing points to get at the metals below the surface of the wall. However, the wires are extremely thin, and only a few gold pieces (1d6) worth can be extracted. The unknown green and blue metals are very soft, will not hold shape and are only valuable due to their rarity as a curiosity. A scholar, alchemist or the like might pay a few gold for samples. Ultimately this is not an effective method of garnering substantial wealth. Any damage to the exposed wires will not 'selfrepair', but the devilish veins will creep in to fill the gap.

If the party decides to follow the conduit, it is essentially a straight run in either direction – one end leading toward the centre of the city and the Machine, the other to the 'collection reservoir' at the edge of the city. The conduits do have turns and 'dog leg' bends in them, in accordance with the inexplicable requirements of the Builders, but there are no branches or sub passages. It is one long, unbroken (mostly) tunnel between the two points. The tunnel stretches approximately East/West. To the East (toward the centre), about a hundred feet from the opening the tunnel has completely caved in, and is filled with rubble. It would take hundreds of man hours to clear to be passable, and without engineers would remain dangerously unstable. To the West the tunnel goes for about 20 feet, has a dog-leg turn and then continues on, but is blocked by a grillwork made of the same black stone (no circuitry). The grill work has apertures of 6 inches square, but it's unlikely that the party can bypass it at this time. If they do somehow managed to get through it the tunnel runs roughly straight to one of the Reservoirs (under the wall bastions) of the Great Machine (at the city centre).

Under Eternity (Going West - Planar Reservoir)

This 'side trek' assumes the party can attempt to access this area any time after *A Simple Job* and thus the encounters are set as a challenge rating appropriate to 3rd level characters. If the PCs do not attempt this until later, the GM will need to adjust the side trek to a suitable challenge level.

The side trek also offers around 12,000gp worth of treasure, which the GM should carefully vet to ensure it meets with the rate of advancement of the campaign.

The west tunnel has a grillwork that blocks the way. The 6 inch apertures cannot be squeezed through by medium or small sized creatures. However, tiny or smaller creatures could get through.

Methods of bypassing include using familiars or *reduced* small characters (as the *reduce person* spell) to get through, or more potent magic such as *gaseous form*, *dimension door* or the like. Getting through the grillwork is not overly difficult (unlike the East approach).

On the far side of the grill work, about 10 feet further down, is a recessed area that is almost impossible to see (Perception DC 20) until a character is level with it, due to the strange glassy reflective walls. Inside the recess is a panel with 3 levers (one of which opens the grillwork, one closes it, and the third has no obvious function). If the grill is opened, it melts silently into the floor with no trace. If closed, it rises just as silently. The conduit runs for approximately 2 miles of unbroken length, though it does occasionally dog leg or rise/fall slightly. Otherwise it is completely featureless except for the strange 'veins'. Eventually it comes to an end;

The tunnel becomes gradually bathed in a strange blue ambience, and after your long trek you can finally see what looks like a chamber up ahead. The blue light seems to come from there.

The tunnel gives way to a huge cylindrical chamber, its walls covered in glassy green tiles reflecting a pale blue light. The chamber itself extends far above, some 60 feet or so before reaching a similarly tiled ceiling. A rusted iron ramp circles the wall several times before disappearing into the ceiling. At floor level, the chamber is flat, and the centre portion drops away into a deep shaft. This is where the light appears to originate. Another metal ramp seems to descend into the shaft.

The chamber is littered with debris and broken tiles, and you can see innumerable places where the walls have suffered partial collapse revealing the solid rock behind. The fibrous veins that ran the length of the tunnel snake across the floor and into the pit.

The pit (which is also tiled in the strange green polished tiles) descends an unknown depth into the earth, but about 150 feet below it is filled with a blue liquid that emits the eerier illumination. The descent ramp only delves 20 feet or so (3/4 revolution) before ending in a jagged, rusted tear. The remainder of the ramp (if there was one) is nowhere to be seen. The veins descend the entire 150 feet and into the liquid.

The liquid is a distilled form of planar energy, and is highly destructive to anything it comes into contact with (save the tiles and apparently the veins). Anything in contact with the liquid suffers 10d10 points of damage per contact/round of contact. This is a *disintegration* effect. The liquid is not viscous, and leaves no residue on anything that survives contact. Tiles thrown in do not disintegrate, but they do sink out of sight almost immediately.

The rusted ramps (both up and down) are safe to traverse, though they do creak and groan alarmingly as they bear weight.



The debris is mostly dust and dirt, with some metal shavings and hundreds of broken tiles. The tiles themselves are of a polished green stone (not unlike the city walls, but polished to a high sheen). Intact, each tile is 12 inches square and ¼ inch thick, but they are highly brittle, and can be snapped in hand. They are a curiosity, but not worth anything.

Amid the debris is the desiccated remains of an adventurer who was ambushed by the strange creatures that inhabit the chambers above. His remains are oddly well preserved (like a mummy) and determining the point of death is difficult (Heal DC 25 – several years ago). The adventurer was human, and male, and wears a +1 *light fortification breastplate*, and carried a +1 *warhammer*). He also wears a +1 *cloak of protection* and a *belt of mighty constitution* +2. In his belt pouch he has 37 gp, 23 sp and 2 cp, as well as a *potion of cure moderate wounds* (CL 3rd, 2d8+3 healing) and some minor personal effects).

There is also a masterwork heavy steel shield (emblazoned with a device of a snake coiled around a lit candle) nearby. Knowledge (nobility) DC 18 indicates this is a personal crest (variation) of a minor aristocratic family of the city (House Vestaan, whose symbol is a dragon coiled around a candle). Returning the shield (and the story of its recovery) will allow the family to recover the body of their wayward son, and will net the party a favour and potential ally for the future (at the GMs discretion).



Actually returning the body would cement this relationship. Conversely, being seen in the streets of the city displaying the shield may earn the party an enemy for the future.

Finally, as the PCs walk around the chamber they will occasionally hit area where there seems to be a strange hum in the air and a shimmering visual distortion like a heat distortion. Approaching these areas increased this phenomenon, and moving away decreases it. A DC 15 Knowledge (planes) check will identify these as 'thin spots' between the planes of existence where the material plane and another are in close proximity. While these aren't gaps or openings between planes, there is definitely a closer connection at these locations, almost like worn fabric. Unbeknownst to the PCs these are the 'entry' points the Vixxzetiflux used to enter the material world.

The Chambers Above (CR 5)

If the PCs head up the iron ramp, they ascend 60 feet and through the ceiling into chambers above the reservoir. These chambers are long disused and forgotten storage below one of the Wall bastions. The current generation of the Guard are not even aware of its existence.

The ramp ascends into a stone chamber, some 20 feet across and 30 feet deep, with a ceiling height of 20 feet. Gone are the strange tiles, with this room resembling a much more familiar brick construction. There is an archway to the east and a large portcullis to the south, blocking your egress in that direction. You can hear a strange low buzzing sound, like hundreds of bees in the distance, but it's impossible to determine its origin.

The buzzing is the aura of the Vixxzetiflux in the next room, which are leaving a period of dormancy to attack the intruders to their lair. The creatures are not surprised by the presence of the party, and their aura has ruined any opportunity to ambush. They swarm from the adjoining chamber to attack.

Vixxzetiflux (3) – 19 hp each. This is a new monster. Their statistics can be found in the **Bestiary** on page 133.

The adjoining chamber (where the Vixxzetiflux were lairing), is empty save for three resinous cocoon like nests that the creatures were residing in.

5'

The portcullis is of heavy iron, solidly constructed (Hardness 10, 60hp, DC 25 to lift, DC 28 to break). The apertures in the portcullis are around 6 inches (essentially a low-tech version of what the PCs bypassed to get in here). If the PCs can pass through the mechanism for raising and lowering the portcullis is in the chamber beyond, and though old and rusted (Strength DC 13 to move) it is still in working order. The winch room is of similar brick construction, with a half dozen unlit torches in sconces and a plain stone ramp leading up to a locked sturdy wooden (metal bound) door (Disable Device DC 30, Hardness 5, 20hp, Break DC 25).

Beyond the door

Beyond the door lies a deep series of store rooms for the Guard. Mostly it houses non perishable siege supplies such as general equipment, rope, cloth and canvass, stretchers, tents, carpentry and engineering tools and materials, nails, bolts, hinges etc. By the time the PCs

Why are we always on the wrong side of the portcullis?

Smart players will realize that the two portcullises are set up in opposite directions. Aside from making things tough for adventurers, why is this so?

The 'Builder' portcullis was the original, and was designed to keep wanderers from the reservoir and the potential dangers of contacting the destructive energy. Its placement was near an exit from the conduit system (destroyed in the collapse).

On the other hand, this portcullis was installed much later by a generation of city inhabitants that ran afoul of creatures like the Vixxzetiflux emerging from the reservoir. It was built to keep those creatures in the chamber area and away from people.



start hitting the store rooms with weapons or portable items of any real value they will be discovered by Guard Sentries (or if they are really stealthy, they will spot heavy Guard activity).

Anyone caught in this area will be arrested and detained for trespassing, and questioned as to their presence (suspicion of spying and sabotage is the potential worst case for charges). A reasonable explanation (and some 'show and tell' evidence) will see the PCs eventually released to the Watch, receiving only trespassing charges (minor fines, up to the GM but no more than 5gp per character).

Conversely, the party could flee back the way they came, using the portcullis (or both) to hinder pursuit.

If the PCs are discovered, or report their find, word gets out rapidly – see **Conclusion** (below)

Centre of Eternity (Going East - the Great Machine)

The East is considerably more difficult to navigate than the west. The tunnel has fully collapsed and can't be traversed without extra ordinary means. The collapse consists of hundreds of tonnes of stone and dirt, and is around 50 feet in length before the tunnel on the other side is clear. The rubble is from below the canal on the surface (which is intact, so there is a pocket cavern created by the displacement).

If characters managed to get through (*gaseous form* or other incorporeal state, earth gliding or other movement through, or even excavation) or around (dimensional travel or literally finding or making another entrance past the blockage) they can continue deeper into the conduit complex.

The black glassy tunnel continues on in darkness. It is not cold, but the further east you travel the more a low mist begins to form around your boots. The strange fibrous veins continue onward as well, occasionally separating or diverting into the strange stone, only to re-emerge later and thread back into the twisting mass. They occasionally pulse or squirm in a very unsettling way. Odd atmospheric distortions appear in the air at points, like a faint heat shimmer in the air.

Approaching these areas increased this phenomenon, and moving away decreases it. A DC 15 Knowledge (planes) check will identify these as 'thin spots' between the planes of existence where the material plane and another are in close proximity. While these aren't gaps or openings between planes, there is definitely a closer connection at these locations, almost like worn fabric.

If the party consists of lower level characters (levels 3-6), use one of these locations to ambush them with an appropriate number of Vixxzetiflux (see statistics in the **Bestiary**). The creatures can appear and attack from any angle in the tunnel as they can adhere to the walls. If the Party is accessing at higher levels (levels 7+) change the encountered creatures to **Hounds of Tindalous** instead to represent an appropriate challenge.

After what seems like hours in this oppressive black tunnel, you see faint lights ahead. They flicker and change colours occasionally, from pale hues to red, green or purple. As you press on the slowly accumulating mist has become thicker, and reaches your knees. You occasionally stumble on the ropy veins concealed beneath it, as well as other softer, slimier objects you'd rather not contemplate. A low vibration can be felt in the walls and floor, and you hear a distant droning noise. Your ears begin to tingle from it, as if you could almost, but not quite, hear something. It gets more intense as you push forward, the pressure building to almost painful levels. It makes you feel mentally fatigued, like too long without sleep. Despite directing your focus toward the light, the tunnel ends *surprisingly abruptly, distance hard to gauge with the strange muted reflections given off by the polished black stone.*

You find yourself on a precipice as the tunnel cuts into an immense chamber deep within the earth. Mist obscures much of it, though it is thinner, more like a smoke haze. The thick mist in the tunnel pours into the cavern like an ethereal waterfall, spreading and swirling in waves. The darkness is mitigated here by irregular bursts of muted light in the distance, streaking in strangely sharp lines before disappearing, replaced by lights of different colours in different places. It takes a few moments to process what you are seeing.

The chamber is vast - too vast to accurately gauge size. Hundreds of feet, maybe thousands across and deep. You feel you are somewhere near the top and the bottom is lost in the mists. It seems to be constructed of the same glassy black stone as the tunnel, and interlaced with a web of similar coloured wires. It is these, pulsing with intermittent energy, which give off the erratic illumination. Out into the expanse there is a strange column that reaches vertically through the mist, from the limit of your vision above into the mist below. It could very well span the entire chamber, but there's no way to tell. Reaching from it in all directions are the fibrous veins. They anchor it to the tunnel you are in, and the surrounding walls. Hundreds more strands disappear from view, and it hangs there like caught in some immense nightmarish spider's web. The veins nearby glisten in the changing light, and shapes move here or there at the limits of your vision. A particularly large strand of red light runs up the pillar, illuminating it brightly, just for a moment. Hundreds of creatures crawl across its surface, undertaking actions or activities you can't make out. Some are humanoid, you think, but the vast majority appear to be the strange slug like creatures you encountered before.

Suddenly the droning noise and pressure makes sense. The slug-song resonates around the chamber like a demented orchestra in this misty cathedral.

This is the main body of the Machine, an 'engine room' of sorts. The slick stone, the pillar, and wire network are all part of the original Builder design, while the ropy veins make up the infernal retrofitting.

The Vixzetiflux are a necessary by-product of that retrofitting. Their slime serves to externally lubricate the infernal veins, and their dead carcasses eventually break down into part of the sludge that the veins carry (see **The Floor** below). They are drawn here by certain inclusions in the Machine retrofit, and remain because of the unique harmonic conditions created here. They traverse the web of veins and walls in patterns determined by the harmonic focus, which is seemingly random, but is actually an extremely complex patterns as befits an infernal design. The permutations are so numerous it would take years for an observer to determine there is actually a pattern, let alone what it is. The Vixxzetiflux eventually die, and their carcasses fall to the floor below. New Vixxzetiflux are constantly being drawn here through the planar rifts.

The size and shape of the chamber, as well as the sheer number of the creatures present has an exponential amplification effect on the Vixxzetiflux aura and cacophony abilities. At the outer walls where the tunnels intersect it is uncomfortable, but bearable. Anyone entering the chamber however begins to feel dangerous effects every round, and these get worse the further into the chamber one progresses.

Within 50ft of the outer edge, creatures suffer a -4 to Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma scores (treat as drain until they leave the area), and are subject to 2d6 sonic damage every round. A DC 16 Will Saving Throw will negate this ability drain. A new save must be made every minute, or upon delving into a more intense zone. The damage is lessened or negated by resistance or immunity to sonic, or if a creature is deaf.

Between 50'-150' feet into the chamber, creatures Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma scores are halved until they leave the area, and are subject to 4d6 sonic damage each round. A DC 18 Will saving throw negates the drain, but a new save must be made every minute. In addition, every minute spent in this area requires a creature to make a DC 16 Will saving throw or slip into a mild form of madness until they leave the area (GMs discretion on exact effect, but suggestions include paranoia, hallucination, bouts of mania, forgetfulness, confusion and/or aggression). Continue to make saves even after being affected. A second failed save renders the madness permanent.

Between 150' and 250' (approximately to the pillar) a creature's Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma scores are reduced to 3 until they leave the area, and are subject to 8d6 sonic damage each round. A DC 20 Will saving throw negates the drain, but a new save is required each minute. In addition, every minute spent in this area requires a creature to make a DC 18 Will saving throw or slip into a severe form of madness until they leave the area (GMs





discretion on exact effect, but suggestions include violent psychotic break, multiple personality disorder, catatonia or overwhelming suicidal impulse). Continue to make saves even after being affected. A second failed save renders the madness permanent.

If the PCs do manage to protect themselves from the effects long enough they might be able to explore and examine the area in more detail.

The Floor

Eventually everything ends up on the floor. Dead creatures, seep water, slime runoff, coalescing mist vapour, discarded equipment or damaged Machine components (both organic and inorganic) and anything else that finds it's way into the chamber.

The floor itself is made of the strange black stone, but it is covered in approximately 3 feet of a noxious liquid. The liquid is heavier than water, and is both acidic and poisonous to contact. Each round of contact causes 3d6 acid damage and causes creatures to become poisoned (see below). A DC 15 Fortitude saving throw will negate the poison. Even if the liquid is not contacted, the air directly above it (within 20' ft of the surface) is filled with fumes, which cause 1 point of acid damage per round to creatures that breathe it (a DC 12 Fortitude save negates). It is a highly corrosive environment which very little survives, as is intended by design. Anything dropped to the floor should eventually break down. There are pipes at floor level that pump volumes of this liquid into the machine. Since the stone is impervious, the liquid is used as both a coolant and cleaning agent to the retrofitted workings, since they tend to get fouled and corrupted by the infernal parts. Creatures at floor level can, for the most part, avoid the liquid by traversing the innumerable pipes, veins and stone 'islands', though none of these are more than a few feet across at any point, making it a treacherous way to travel.

Infernal Coolant—contact or inhalation; **save** Fortitude DC 15; **frequency** 1 round; **effect** 1d3 Con damage; **cure** 1 save.

The Tinker

A single creature makes its way on the surface of this acrid pool. On a raft built of lashed together fibrous veins, a dirty old man in a ripped and stained robe poles across the chamber, collecting things that fall from above before they are destroyed (or if they are immune). The raft is 20' by 30' and seems somewhat unstable (it dips alarmingly if walked on, but never seems to quite sink), yet he poles it with ease across the surface. He himself appears to be a human man of old age and small stature, yet is unaffected by the fumes and even contact with the liquid (he dips his hand to 'feel' the impacts of objects dropped from above, and reaches in to retrieve them without harm). He is also not deaf, or noticeably mad, yet suffers no ill effects from the cacophony of the chamber. The centre of the raft is piled high with all manner of objects, including builder knives, chunks of stone, odd green metallic cogs, arms or braces, nuts and bolts, bones, strange organic lumps etc. At the GMs discretion items (or even characters) that the PCs lose might turn up on the raft.

The use of the Tinker is really up to the GM. He is obviously not human (despite appearances) and probably not benevolent. He could be used as a shady trader, a way of recovering lost items or characters (or their corpses), or a way of introducing a new item. In any case Caveat Emptor applies.

The Pillar

The pillar does indeed reach from floor to ceiling. It is wider at the top and bottom than in the middle, and is very reminiscent of a cavern pillar made of joined stalagmite/ stalactite growth, but is clearly artificially created. It is about 50 foot thick in the middle and around 75 foot thick at the top and bottom. The pillar surface is engraved with a strange silvery runic language in intricate patterns, interlinking circles and seemingly infinite layers upon each other deep into the semi-translucent stone. The pillar surface is pierced in innumerable places with the fibrous vein strands.

The pillar itself is mostly hollow, it's internal space given over to the semi-magical mechanisms that drive the great engine (which itself exists at least partly on its own demiplane). The internals of the pillar are also choked with retrofitted infernal components such as the veins, and gears, pistons and other clockworks made of a green steellike metal which produces its own thick oily residue as the parts turn. In time, if not cleaned with the liquid from below, the parts slowly seize. The green metal is immune to acid, but can be melted with extreme heat (which is also generated, but cooled by the cleaning liquid. The interior is a nightmare of heat, unguarded moving parts and dripping poisonous, acidic liquid. Currently only certain parts move intermittently, and energy courses sporadically through the wire network, illuminating the pillar without and within.

In addition to the Vixxzetiflux, there are dozens of humanoids working here. Mostly they are oiling or placing parts, or cutting loose jammed gears to be replaced. Most carry green metal tools, but a few carry cutters or shaping goo (see below) to work the builder stone. They are ragged shells of individuals, scarred and burned horribly, often cackling madly, howling, screaming or working in eerie silence. They are also all deaf (and insane), which essentially protects them from the cacophony. These humanoids share a madness they are obsessed with the Machine, the Echo and the 'plan' (They only know their individual parts - ie repair this or that - in an effort to "make the Machine live again"). They are tough and fanatical, working through horrendous injury until death. They are fed with regular deliveries of Lonely One sap, and sleep in short fits, before being jolted awake (by their unseen nightmares, or by dripping coolant) to commence work again. These creatures are fanatics and cannot be reasoned with. They attack intruders on sight, fighting to the death, or grappling them and then hurling themselves off the pillar to the liquid below. Treat as Barbarians (3rd level or higher at GMs discretion) that wield improvised clubs (1d6 bludgeoning damage). They are fairly easy to avoid however, as they work alone, are fanatically focussed on their appointed tasks, are deaf, and the intermittent lighting and mist provides ample conditions for stealth.

The fanatics die regularly from cumulative wounds, slipping and falling to their death, crush or amputation by unexpected Machine movement or the occasional run in with a Vixxzetiflux. Bodies eventually make their way to the liquid below one way or another. Periodically a new 'batch' of devoted workers is introduced to the complex from somewhere above. Most die quickly, but the handful that survive become hardened to the conditions.

Tools of the Builders

The Machine Builders are a race long gone, and knowledge of the methods of construction, or even use, of their works have been lost for millennia. However, a number of their tools and devices have been uncovered over time, most of which are in the hands of the Explorers guild, or a number of wealthy 'art' collectors and nobles. The stone, metals and other materials of the ancient devices cannot be identified or duplicated, but can be manipulated via their discovered tools.

Cutters – simply named cutters, these tools are similar to exotic knives in design, with a short handle (8 inches) of bone, and a forward curved blade (12 inches) ending in a forked point. The blade is made of a non-reflective, non-metallic grey material. The blades aren't overly sharp (and cannot be sharpened), but cut through the glassy black stone as if it were butter. A cutter can be used as a weapon similar to a dagger, but is a poor one, dealing only 1 point of damage per strike. They are also quite fragile (hardness 2, Hp 5, *fragile* quality).

Shaping Goo – inventively named 'shaping goo', this viscous brown syrup looks and acts physically similar to honey, though it is not sticky and tastes terrible (it is not toxic). If applied to the glassy stone, it causes a softening effect, allowing it to be worked like clay. An ounce of 'shaping goo' can be spread across a 1 foot x 1 foot square, and effects the stone to an inch of depth. The softening effect lasts 1 minute, at which point the glassy stone becomes rigid and impervious again. 'Shaping goo' is generally found in wax sealed clay pots of up to 20 ounces. It rapidly dries out and becomes useless if exposed to air. Once opened pots can be resealed with melted wax to preserve the 'goo', but if not sealed within a few minutes the remainder will become inert.

Conclusion

The implications of finding the Reservoir or the Machine Chamber are in many ways determined by how much, if any, of the discovery is shared, and to whom. The Machine and it's infrastructure are known to most of the prominent figures and guilds of the city, but the full ramifications of its current inhabited state may not be. If the PCs keep the events to themselves, the Echo's servants continue to progress in secret until the adventure climax. If the PCs choose to try to report or reveal the Machine to campaign significant entities, their reactions are covered below. Similarly, if they discuss the Machine openly in public, word gets back to the major NPCs within a few days.

Guilds

In truth, some of the major movers in the guilds are aware

of the Machine, but as it does not function, and with no understanding of the technology or materials involved, it is seen as an interesting but ultimately useless curio of the city. At one time guilds fought for the 'prestige' of controlling it, but as it is randomly hazardous and provides a draw on resources from competition of running the city above, no guild has claimed it in over 50 years. It was sealed away and promptly forgotten about. If it's presence is brought to light it's 'discovery' is treated as an interesting archaeological find, and it's inhabited state a slightly disturbing one. After the usual amount of political wrangling custody is turned over to the Explorer's Guild.

Seekers

The Seekers are aware of the Machine, but as it had been examined and searched (and recorded) thoroughly several times in the first century it is viewed as strategically unimportant at this time. The Soul Stone is not there, and while there is a theory they may require the Machine once the stone is located, it's not going anywhere. When the guilds warred for control, the Seekers ingratiated themselves with each faction that held it, but once it was sealed up it suited the Seekers just fine. The discovery of 'workers' in the Machine, however, is of interest to the Seekers, who will attempt to 'acquire' one or more of them for interrogation if the opportunity presents itself.

Damien

Again, he is aware but not interested specifically. If the Machine stays inactive then so much the better. His concerns are over the pieces and the current events. One man cannot control it, and it cannot be destroyed, so his efforts are bent towards those factors than can be manipulated. He is convinced that his 'enemies' already know of it, so the discovery is not a revelation. If and when the Explorers guild officially gets custody, it serves only to cement his suspicions about them.

The Echo of Faith

The Echo not only knows about it, but is actively trying to repair it. She alone has the knowledge and means to do so. While she prefers to work in secret, once the 'discovery' comes to light, she manoeuvres control of it to the Explorers Guild in any case. At that point she can devote legitimate resources to its 'catalogue and restoration'.

THE GOURD By Richard Develyn

Sometime after the events presented in the adventure *Ignorance is Bliss*, the PCs will be approached by a nervous young man who works for the Academy of Natural Magic in the centre of the city's Artisans Ward, with a request. Luther Mendel, the Academy's head horticulturalist, and the young man's boss, has a small job for the PCs which he thinks will be of interest to them, and he would like them to meet up with him in the greenhouse that is perched atop the Academy's roof this afternoon.

It may well be that the PCs already know of Luther as there were a couple of opportunities for them to meet up with him during their last adventure. If they don't know him then they will have been recommended to him by some mutual acquaintance of theirs, probably also made during that adventure, which is why he has decided to approach them now.

Given the advantage of having such a prestigious ally in the city it is assumed that the PCs will be happy to accept the invitation. What follows next, then, is this sidetrek adventure, *The Gourd*, which starts with the rather extensive read-aloud text given under the section below labelled: "Part 1" below.

The Gourd is essentially a tale about betrayal. It was Damien's betrayal of the Ghoran druid Achechek which resulted in the gourd being given to Luther in the first place. It is not, now, the real Luther who meets the PCs in the greenhouse, as the real Luther has been betrayed by the doppelganger which grew out of the gourd. As the adventure progresses betrayal will follow betrayal until even the PCs will be tempted to betray one of their own.

Part 1 - A Seed is Sown

Arriving at the Academy early in the afternoon the PCs will be shown up to the greenhouse in the Academy's roof by the same apprentice who approached them earlier in that day. For a few moments, the PCs will be alone, then a voice will float out from somewhere in all the surrounding greenery and the adventure will begin:

"Isn't it enchanting to be surrounded by so much beauty?"

A Note for Game Masters

Richard Develyn has a grasp of the rules and their intricacies like no one else I have ever encountered.

Reading through this adventure I suspect you'll be struck, as I was, by the complex manner in which both the story and the mechanics are woven together.

It is worth highlighting that GMs will need to thoroughly read the statistics and capabilities of the antagonists in this adventure to get the most out of them.

Many of the encounters are predicated on specific use or overlapping abilities. Similarly, where information appears to be 'missing' it is likely just omitted as it serves no purpose - for example the Hound only ever fights in Wildshape, so his humanoid statblock doesn't contain combat information.

Micah

Given that you are standing in the middle of a massive greenhouse perched atop the roof of the Academy of Natural Magic, which is in itself a breath-taking structure four stories high dominating the whole of the Artisans Ward of the city of Anduria, you cannot help but wonder whether it's the architecture or the horticulture that is being referred to. A moment later when you perceive that the source of this statement is one Luther Mendel, a renowned figure in the world of Horticultural Magic, you realise for certain that it is the greenery and not the brickery that is being talking about.

Luther meanders his way slowly towards you through shrubs and flower beds as he speaks, not taking the most direct route but perhaps the most picturesque. A recluse who rarely seeks out or enjoys the company of other humanoids, even academics, you recall hearing how Luther helped out with Damien's attempt to control Anduria's drug problem, at least as he saw it, a few weeks back, and now it would seem that he has need of a group such as yours in order to help him out with a problem of his own.

Not that he's going to be in any hurry to tell you about it as he continues his soliloquy with barely a thought for his audience - in the manner of academics everywhere:

"You may have heard it said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder", he continues, drawing closer but still not visible, "but here I must let you into a little secret. What we have discovered in this very institute is that 'beholders' such as you or I are predisposed to find beauty in whatever form most resembles a suitable mate. It may sound strange, I know, but the magic that lies behind our instincts to reproduce interferes with our sense of what is or is what is not attractive." He pauses and you hear the sound of a slowly indrawn breath. "The evidence is compelling. Even humanoid races which are relatively similar in their outlook to humans, such as elves and dwarves, have variations in taste which can be traced down to their ideas of a perfect partner, whilst the wilder, more varied races, such as samsarans, ratfolk, catfolk, oreads and so on, have a connection between aesthetics and ideal physiology which is really quite pronounced."

Luther's angular form now emerges from behind a miniature palm tree as he pauses to gather his thoughts. "Ridiculous, don't you think, that we should think to appreciate beauty such as this", he says, gesturing around him at all the surrounding greenery, "by comparing it with something as crude as sex."

Luther turns to the right and sets off along a narrow pathway between a rocky garden to the left and a bed full of colourful snapdragons to the right, not glancing behind him as if convinced that you couldn't possibly do anything but follow. "The ghoran race, of course", he says, without turning around, "which are a species of humanoid plant about whom you may well have heard, are of particular interest in this matter because they don't reproduce in any recognizable way." Luther stops to admire a bell-shaped flower and your lead party member almost walks into him. "There are so few of this race around the city, alas, as they are a reclusive bunch on the whole." He turns to smile at you before starting to walk again. "Which is a shame, really, because their lack of reproductive cycle would make them the most suitable for appreciating nature in its truest form."

Luther continues through the greenery as a cloud obscures the

sun overhead, temporarily robbing the greenhouse of its light and heat.

"The real problem with the ghorans is that their psyches are somewhat tormented because normal anthropoid creatures such as you or I find them rather delicious to eat." A look of sadness crosses his face, or perhaps it's just a shadow crossing over him in the sudden dimness of the greenhouse. "This has rather skewed their perception of us as many of them have been forced to spend their miserable lives fleeing from poachers and other unscrupulous meat purveyors."

Reaching the far side of the greenhouse Luther pauses to look down at the city below. "Everything about them can be eaten, apparently," he says, shaking his head. "Even their bones, such as they have them, which can be boiled into gourmet stocks and soups." As the sun now once more emerges from the clouds Luther turns to address you directly but he drops his voice a little as if speaking conspiratorially. "Actually my belief is that their more antisocial predilections are entirely the fault of their extremist leaders who, as far as I can see, delight in promoting some sort of anti-humanoid radicalization. I mean which one of us really has any desire to consume sentient creatures however tasty they may be?"

Luther stops walking as he reaches a table, approximately three feet square and three feet off the ground, towards which he beckons you to take a look. On the table's surface is a planting tray, about half the table's size and six inches deep, filled to the brim with a strange mixture of loamy soil and some sort of strange multi-coloured botanical nutrient. On top of the soil sits a large gourd, or perhaps an egg, oval in shape, one-footlong by six inches wide at its widest point. Surrounding the gourd are three bright lamps bathing it in a warm, purplish light.

"A noble race, ignobly led," he finishes, sighing, "but such is the way of things. Please gather round."

When you have, he continues.

"The gourd that you see here is a case in point. After acquiring it from a gentleman called Damien, who I believe may have been of your acquaintance, in exchange for certain services which I provided to him in his fight against a criminal narcotics group led by a ghoran druid called Achechek, I have spent many weeks studying and feeding this gourd in an effort to try to understand its origin and purpose."

"That same ghoran extremist", he then says, "claims that the gourd belongs to him and to his tribe, or whatever it is that he

calls them, and is trying to get it back."

Luther adjusts the gourd's placement in the soil and repositions the lamps. "Despite the similarity that it has to the ghorans' own ghorus seed, something which they use in their own reproduction, or perhaps I should say perpetuation since the parent seed-laying ghoran dies as soon as the ghorus seed germinates, I am totally convinced that this gourd has nothing to do with their race."

He turns to address you directly once again. "It was, in any case, obtained fairly by me on behalf of the Academy and however much Achechek might disagree with what Damien did the gourd is rightfully mine."

"Unfortunately, I am expecting Achechek to cause me considerable trouble when I go public with my findings tomorrow."

Although that business with Damien may not have been exactly what was going on you allow Luther to continue.

"This is why I need your help. Tomorrow, in the afternoon, I intend to hold an open lecture to which I have invited a number of academic and arcane luminaries. I do not expect Achechek to attack them overtly however I do expect him to try to disrupt proceedings during the morning in order to try to either put people off from coming in the first place or to frighten them away once they're here."

Luther produces a small purse and empties it ruefully onto his hand. "The Academy isn't rich, I'm afraid," he says, "but I can offer you each 120 gp payment for the day, or twice that amount in value in either alchemical substances or magical potions if you prefer to receive payment in kind." He looks at you hopefully and makes a small shrug. "If you want to opt for gold then I can even give you some of it now – for expenses, I suppose. I know it's not a lot, however I would hope that the task won't be difficult or dangerous."

Luther stops and looks over to you expectantly. "We shall be opening our doors to the public in general during the morning, as well as to my guests, so you will need to keep an eye around the Academy whilst they wander around the exhibits, then in the afternoon I will need you to act as guards in the lecture hall so that Achechek is dissuaded from turning up and making any sort of nuisance of himself. What do you think? Are you happy to accept?"

On the table next to him the gourd seems to be sharing his

expectation, as if both of them are waiting to hear whether you will say.

And, of course, the PCs will accept – or there is no adventure!

If the PCs suspect Luther and succeed against his bluff skill then they will realize that he isn't telling them everything he knows. Although this should help make them a little wary of him Luther actually hasn't lied to them as such and it is not uncommon for people to hold things back when they communicate with others.

The gourd being shown to the PCs is not the same one that was given to the real Luther by Damien, though it is another of its type. Its true nature cannot be recognized with anything short of a DC 40 Knowledge (planes) check (hopefully impossible or the adventure could be over very quickly). A DC 25 Knowledge (nature) check will identify the gourd as being of a "foreign" origin, perhaps extra-planar or extra-terrestrial. A DC 30 Knowledge (nature) check will identify that it is very young, which would seem to be at odds with the time-line presented, as it was clearly in Damien's possession for some time before he handed it over to Luther.

The ghoran race is rare in Anduria. A Knowledge (nature) DC 15 check establishes that they are humanoid plants and provides all the information pertinent to the "plant" type. Beating the check by 5 or more provides additional information in the normal way for knowledge checks.

Assuming that the PCs are happy with the deal being offered to them then Luther will pay them any agreed amount now and leave them to acquaint themselves with the Academy for the rest of the day. If the PCs are to be in any way effectual in their guard duties tomorrow, then they will have to find ways to spread themselves out throughout the academy's halls and display areas and still be able to communicate so that they can quickly converge towards the source of any trouble that might start to happen.

As well as making plans and gathering their resources the PCs can also make gather information checks to find out more about Achechek and his ghoran enclave. There's probably only time for one such check to be made, and each PC can either investigate by himself (i.e. make his own roll) or aid another. Whatever strategy the PCs choose, the highest Diplomacy score achieved should be

cross-referenced against the table below, revealing every entry in that table up to and including that score:

DC Result

- 10 Achechek is a great hairy druid with personal hygiene issues, not someone you'd want to invite to dinner
- 15 It's unlikely that there are more than half a dozen ghorans in Anduria
- 20 There is at least one female ghoran in the city; quite the opposite of Achechek she's been seen openly arguing with the old druid on more than one occasion
- 25 The ghorans are a sinister bunch with underworld connections, still active to this day
- 30 The ghorans are all druids of one sort or another living together somewhere but nobody knows where

The Morning of the Seminar

The feature which is most arresting when one sees the Academy of Natural Magic is the size and quantity of its windows.

Although the building itself is made of a dull terracotta stone the windows, being at least 30' high and as much as 30' to 40' wide, closely placed and some over 100' up, create an effect when the sun comes up to make the whole structure look like a diamond shaped into a cube.

Most of the time these windows are kept open, presumably to allow for the circulation of air though this also allows for the constant migration of birds in and out of the Academy either to nest or feed on the huge collection of fauna and flora that is kept within. The Academy otherwise is mainly botanical rather than animal, notable exceptions being the giant sloth which is kept in a circular pen on the ground floor, a mated pair of giraffes in an enclosure to the south, a reptile house full of constrictor snakes, some quite large, on the fourth floor, and an aged grizzly bear called Boobaloo which is given overall run of the Academy by virtue of it being rather old and somewhat senile.

Outside there are gardens displaying trees and shrubs of all descriptions. Inside there are rooms devoted to the study of plant life from different parts of the world such as cacti from the desert, a rock garden, a water garden, a huge tank on the third floor filled with hydroponics and a somewhat alarming





"chamber of horrors" on the fourth floor where dangerous plants are kept sedated behind bars.

The massive greenhouse on the Academy's roof is out of bounds to visitors as this is where the Academy's rarest specimens are kept. Lecture halls are in the basement below.

The Academy opens its doors to the public just after 9 in the morning. The PCs can show up an hour earlier if they like to acclimatize themselves with the building and ask any questions they might like from the students that work here (Luther is not around until the afternoon, and the other lecturers are too aloof to be of much help).

People will arrive in dribs and drabs until, at about 10 am, the place will be pretty busy with humanoids of all sorts enjoying their free day at the museum. That's when the trouble will begin, as described below.

Achechek will wild shape into a thrush at about 9:30 am and fly into through one of the Academy's open windows soon after. Once he arrives he will cast extended barkskin (for protection), extended blend (for concealment), and greensight (for perception), though this will only last for half of his time here since he doesn't have that one extended. All in all, this will give him 3 hours to perform his mischief as detailed below before his two main spells cut out (he's currently acting at caster level 9, thanks to a negative energy level that he is carrying, and he is not choosing to use his Place Magic ability just yet). Achechek will time his attacks to maximize their demoralizing effect on visitors, however as soon as he spots that Luther has employed some sort of "protection" he will study the PCs carefully and try to aim some of his attacks at them instead. In thrush shape and with his various buffing spells cast his abilities (of relevance) are as follows:

Size: diminutive Init +4; Senses greensight AC 23, touch 18, flat-footed 19 (+4 Dex, +5 natural, +4 size) Ref +6 Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average) Melee bite +10 (1d2) Space 1 ft.; Reach 0 ft. Str 10, Dex 19 Base Atk +7; CMB +6; CMD 16 Skills Acrobatics +3 (-5 to jump), Climb +16, Escape Artist +3, Fly +13, Stealth +16 (+20 and usable without cover or concealment if moving less than half base speed), Swim +7

The following sections then cover the various challenges that the PCs will have to face as a result of Achechek's actions over the course of the morning. Each challenge has a particular success criteria associated with it which the PCs will have to satisfy in order to gain the experience commensurate with its rating. Additionally, if the PCs succeed, then more members of the public will have been saved death or injury and these grateful individuals will visit the PCs in the coming days in order to present them with some sort of reward by way of thanks.

Should Achechek be forced to escape he will try to fly away rather than use his *Walk the Lines* ability (i.e. Transport with Plants) if at all possible, since he knows that he needs to use that ability two more times when he comes to the academy tonight. If he is, indeed, forced to use it to survive, then he will have to change his tactics for the night-time visit (as explained later).

The Main Hall (CR 5)

The main hall on the ground floor of the Academy is a 100' square area filled with glass cabinets containing all sorts of rare stuffed animals. Everything form giant apes to albino tigers to tiny marsupials are presented here in vistas which are reproductions of their natural habitats. There are notes spread around the displays as well as samples of bones, fur and so on scattered about.

The centre of the hall is dominated by a huge circular pit, 50' in diameter and 40' deep, in which lives a giant sloth (Megatherium) in a verdant and, for it, pleasant environment. The walls of the pit are smooth, preventing it from climbing out, and though it views the gawping visitors in the hall above with some curiosity it is basically a slow ponderous herbivorous animal with little interest in harming others.

Achechek's first disruptive action for the day will be to cast *animal growth* on the Megatherium causing it to become big enough to clamber out and go for a wander. Needless to say, visitors will scatter in alarm, and the PCs will have to somehow or another try to herd the sloth back into its hole before it causes too much damage. The Megatherium will only attack if it is attacked and even then with only a 50% chance per round that it will continue to attack a previous attacker if it is subsequently left alone. It's large, placid and stupid, but unfortunately highly destructive in its clumsy way, and valuable to the Academy.

The best option for the PCs will probably be to try to exploit its low Will save and control it. If not, then they can attempt to herd it back into its home by intimidating it with fire. The DC to intimidate it, including allowance for its size, is 22. A success will force it back 30' but failure has a 50% chance of inciting an attack from it.

Animal growth lasts for 9 minutes. The PCs will succeed in this challenge if they send the Megatherium back to its hole before this time is up without killing it. If the time does run out and it's still out and about then the Megatherium will return to its home of its own volition as it will, by then, have had enough excitement for the day.

The Parkway (CR 4)

The walled gardens to the east of the Academy are known as The Parkway, an area of bushes and wild shrubbery which displays a riot of colour throughout the year either with its flowers or in the beauty of its variegated leaves. It's a popular place for visitors to take a peaceful stroll outside and picnic tables are provided for anyone who likes to take their lunch al-fresco.

Achechek's next attack will be to create a mini-hell for a dozen visitors or so when he creates a 30' square mass of thorns in this garden (as in the *wall of thorns* spell).

The people caught inside the thorny mass will be forced to stay completely still lest they rip themselves to pieces on the *wall of thorns'* needle-sharp spines. Given that the spell last for 1½ hours and that some of the trapped visitors are children, already beginning to get very upset at their predicament, the chances are that something terrible is going to happen unless the PCs can come to their rescue.

See the spell description for details on how to get rid of

this hazard but note that the option of chopping through 1 foot of wall every 10 minutes will not be fast enough to prevent injury to the trapped guests. PCs will succeed in this challenge if they free trapped visitors without any of them suffering any injury.



The Royal Oak (CR 3)

Up on the second floor of the Academy is a tap-room where visitors and staff frequently rest with a mug of ale brewed by students on the premises. All sorts of strange and experimental beers are served here including such delicacies as TreantDraught, TangleVine, ShambleFoot and Old Tendriculos. Wooden benches and tables surround a huge oak tree growing in the corner of the tap-room floor. The oak is old and gnarled, but clearly still alive. As the barman explains, the oak's roots extend down through soil which is enclosed by a 20' diameter stone pillar in the floor below, all of which pre-dates the Academy itself. Nobody knows its history, but the oak is considered to be a bringer of good luck.

Achechek will animate the oak using *arboreal hammer* at some point in the morning when at least one of the PCs is in here having a drink. Achechek will then direct the oak to attack whoever is within reach, which in this case will be a couple of students talking to one of their tutors. Combat will proceed as follows:

- 1. One student will be immediately knocked out cold in the surprise round.
- 2. The next round the PC(s) can act according to initiative, with the tree's initiative determined by Achechek and the tutor and the remaining student determining theirs with a bonus of 0.

The tree does not make Attacks of Opportunity, as it is not actually a creature, however whilst the tutor will move away on his turn the second still-conscious student will try to shield the first and be knocked out by the tree for his troubles.

Over the next 7 rounds, while the tree continues to hit, the PC(s) will have to act in such a way so as to protect the unconscious students. Achechek will direct the tree to attack conscious targets in preference to unconscious ones so the PC(s) will either have to put themselves in the path of danger or find a way to drag away the two unconscious students.

If the PC(s) do nothing to help, then the two students will be killed by the Oak! The PC(s) must prevent this if they are to succeed with the challenge.

The Tree Walk (CR 3)

The gardens to the west of the academy are given over to a number of rare trees and huge bushes many of which reach 40' or more in height. Interspersed around them are a series of wooden catwalks stretched between tall metal pylons. Ladders with handrails lead up the pylons onto the catwalks. The catwalks themselves have rope-based sides so that visitors wandering on them might admire the foliage without inadvertently falling off.

During one of the busiest times of the morning Achechek will use *rusting grasp* to compromise one of the pylons. It won't break the thing completely but it will cause it to tilt over alarmingly, making it perilous for visitors on the adjoining cat-walks.

Nobody will fall off straight away and most people will be able to climb to safety without assistance. Three visitors, however, a pregnant woman, a child and an on old man, will be stuck up on the catwalks and need help getting down.

Climbing up into this uncertain structure requires a DC 15 climb check due first of all to it having become somewhat wobbly thanks to the rust and secondly to the fact that the three stuck people mustn't be inadvertently shaken off. Once next to them, PCs will need to persuade them to co-operate, most likely against their better judgement (e.g. "let go and I'll cast Feather Fall on you"), by succeeding with either a DC 12 Intimidate check or a



DC 20 Diplomacy check (-5 DC for the child). Once so persuaded an adult can be carried down with a DC 25 check, the child with a DC 20.

Falling from the catwalk results in taking 3d6 points of damage. Each stuck visitor has 5 hp and a Con of 8 but any damage caused to the pregnant woman will cause her to miscarry.

PCs will succeed in this challenge if they get everyone down safely.

The Water Garden (CR 4)

A large hall on the third floor of the academy has been landscaped into a natural water garden. Small ponds, fountains and even a slow moving river support an aquatic ecosystem both within the water and without it. The whole place literally croaks with frogs and other wildlife.

Cunning water sprays placed around the vegetation, most of which grows quite tall, keep everything moist, including wandering guests. Despite the cacophony it is a tranquil place for those who like that sort of thing and there are always visitors sitting around the lily pads and willows dreaming their dreams to the sound of nature. Unfortunately, Achechek is about to put a mocker on this morning's relaxations. Starting by casting *entangle*, which is annoying enough, he will follow this up with a swarm of poisonous frogs courtesy of a *rain of frogs* spell. Although Achechek cannot personally direct the swarm he will sit up in a tree concentrating on it to maintain its presence.

(It is up to you, as GM, whether you wish to allow the swarm to be affected by the entanglement, as there are various schools of thought on this; if you follow it strictly by the rules then they should be, but common sense might suggest to you that they shouldn't).

In the confusion, visitors will not know which way to run and will keep tripping up and falling onto poisonous frogs and so on. If the PCs do not intervene, some of them might even be killed, though it's more likely that there will only be injuries as the swarm switches from one concentration of warm blood to another in a fairly random fashion.

Since Acheckek will have to be present for this effect to continue you might wish to allow the PCs to have a chance of spotting that strange thrush up in the trees which appears to be having a lot on its mind right now. Achechek's Stealth is +20 (in this form, including the effect of *blend*) with an extra +3 for the distance (at least 30' away). It's a long shot, but if the PCs spot and attack him then Achechek will fly away and not be seen again until the time of Luther's Lecture.

The PCs will succeed in this task if they either destroy the swarm or frighten Achechek away.

Boobaloo The Bear (CR 6+)

Prior to the Academy opening up for the day you were introduced to Boobaloo, an old grizzly bear that used to be the animal companion of one of the old druids that worked here but when the druid died reverted to its natural form.

It's a harmless creature, greying around the temples, slow and a bit docile. It's kept by the Academy as a sort of pet, has never hurt anyone and is viewed with some fondness by some of the Academy's staff and students.

As lunchtime approaches, however, Achechek will cast *atavisim* on Boobaloo.



Boobaloo needs a 15 on a D20 if it's to pass its Will save against the spell (or you can choose to make it fail automatically if you definitely want this encounter to happen). If the spell works, Boobabloo will gain the Advanced template and go wild!

Everyone around the Academy will realize, of course, that something nasty has happened to their dear old friendly bear, some sort of magic, no doubt, and the PCs will be pleaded with not to actually kill it. Unfortunately, *atavism* lasts for 9 minutes, so the PCs will have to do something if they are to prevent injury to innocent visitors or students.

This encounter can happen anywhere in the Academy. The PCs will succeed in this challenge if they are able to disable the bear without killing it.

Moonstruck (CR 5)

The final encounter will happen when the PCs stop for lunch.

Over the course of the morning, Achechek will have been studying their behaviour and combat tactics as they tackle one challenge after the other and as a result of this he should know by now who within the group is most likely to have the lowest Will save and the highest strength. Achechek will then target that person with a

Moonstruck spell (DC 17), waiting to see whether the PC is affected so that he can watch how the party deals with the problem.

If the PC makes their save, or once there is no longer a spectacle to be seen, Achechek will fly away to prepare for his appearance this afternoon. There is no special monetary reward for this challenge, however if the PCs are forced to fight one of their own then award them with the experience for defeating a CR 5 creature.

Part 2 - A Plant Germinates

Lecture

The area below the academy is a maze of offices, labs and lecture theatres. Though all the doors, stairwells and corridors are labelled with letters and numbers as far as you can see these have very little to do with their location or direction. Visitors and younger students wander about in a daze trying to figure out where they should be going. Tutors and lecturers who know exactly where they're going give directions which are about as useful as being targeted by a Confusion spell. Older students in the academy seem to have just the right combination of knowledge and attitude to be helpful so after a few false starts you manage to get yourselves guided to the large underground amphitheater where the lecture by Luther is to take place. As you wait around over the course of the next hour or so various academic looking wizards, clerics, alchemists and the like arrive in dribs and drabs to take their seats, looking distastefully around them at all the potted plants and other greenery which they probably wouldn't dream of having in their own sacred halls but which are hardly out of place in a lecture theatre belonging to a botanical institute.

There are a total of six entrances into the room – four at a high level at the top of the amphitheater's seats, two lower down at the level where the lecturer presides. All entrances give onto corridors which turn and twist and rise and fall like the roots of a particularly crazy tree. A large table in the lecturer's area is covered in old patches of soil and leaves - presumably where the gourd will sit. The PCs are welcome to position themselves anywhere they like around the hall, however the doors cannot be closed or held shut even after the lecture begins because it is clear that people will continue to come and go even after the talk has started.

Luther eventually enters through one of the lower doors of the lecture hall followed by a couple of students carrying



the planter you saw yesterday with the gourd on top. As the students arrange the planter on the table Luther comes up to you to ask how everything went this morning.

Although Luther suspects that Achechek may well have been behind all of the PCs problems, nobody can prove anything so there is nothing he can really do about it. He nevertheless thanks the PCs for all their work and asks them to stand guard during the lecture in case anyone should start behaving in a threatening manner. Luther stresses that the PCs should not be heavy-handed about this even if Achechek shows up. The ghoran is not the only awkward person filling this lecture hall today and he is keen to solicit interest from the other academics rather than frighten them off ...

... or so he tells the PCs. Luther is not being altogether truthful here as a PC who succeeds against his bluff skill will detect. Luther knows that the gourd is due to germinate soon and he's trying to attract someone within the academic community to take an interest in it. The reason why will become clear tonight.

Having taken your place amongst the aisles, near the doors, or wherever you have chosen to be, Luther embarks on what you imagine must be the most boring talk on botany ever endured by any living being. You struggle to find any sort of cohesive thread to the narrative which seems to leap from the general and trivial to the specific and obscure in crazy jumps almost as if he'd shuffled up his lecture notes into a random pile and then just read out the mess from top to bottom. Strangely, though, many of the visitors in the hall seem to be following him, or perhaps they're just pretending.

Ask everyone to make a DC 10 Will save. If they fail, they fall asleep. This is not a magical effect.

About half an hour into the lecture, Achechek will appear in the hall. He arrives in thrush form, using his second Wild Shape ability for the day and his first (hopefully) Walk the Lines. As a diminutive bird, he has no trouble finding a suitable plant to emerge from, and he has researched the area sufficiently to be sure roughly how to get there. Once arrived he changes into his normal self by dismissing his Wild Shape, doing so somewhere out of the immediate reach of any of the PCs.

Suddenly out of nowhere a strange bedraggled figure appears, though it takes you a moment or two to realize that the thing you are looking at is actually a person. Your first impression of Achechek is of a ball of hair on top of what looks like some sort tree with a couple of branches coming out of its sides wrapped in dirty white cloth. It's only when the branches start shaking about in agitation and spittle, mixed with some rather unpleasant shouting, emerges from the hair that you realize that this must be the ghoran that you've all been expecting.

Achechek rants and raves as you approach whilst Luther does the normal thing of telling everyone that there is no need for alarm, these objections have already been heard by suitable authorities, all proper investigations have been made, and so on. Eventually you escort the mad druid away.

It is clear from listening to Achechek that he believes the gourd is related to the ghoran race and that he also thinks that Luther has been experimenting on it. It is this latter part which has generated so much apoplexy in him and as the PCs lead him out of the lecture hall a grim look covers over his eyes.

Achechek leaves the lecture hall with the PCs' "help" if not exactly peacefully then at least non-violently.

If the PCs can either Intimidate him (DC 23) or make him friendly through a Diplomacy check (DC 40 assuming that a PC has the unusual ability to shift a target's attitude by three steps with one check), then Achechek will explain that the gourd must have been force-fed in some way since it has grown far too big far too quickly. He also thinks it's a miracle that Luther managed to revive it in the first place since a ghorus seed normally dies if it doesn't germinate within a few weeks. If pressed, Achechek will also grudgingly explain all the information that the PCs could have gathered the night before through gather information but he will not hang about any longer than necessary or be any more helpful than that.

By the time the PCs return from escorting Achechek out

of the building Luther's lecture will have pretty much drawn to a close. A few students and the odd academic will still be standing around talking to him but the lecture hall will be largely empty. By the look on Luther's face, things went relatively well, and the PCs will notice that he has a pad with a number of names next to him which Luther will explain list all those people who wish to be





kept in touch with the gourd's progress.

Luther will ask the PCs what they made of Achechek and whether they thought he might cause any further problem. Regardless of their answer, Luther will ask them whether they could keep an eye on the gourd again but overnight this time, in the greenhouse, in exchange for the same payment they've received so far, as in Luther's opinion Achechek will use his teleportation abilities again, whatever they are, to enter tonight and steal the gourd. Recent measurements of the gourd have indicated that it is in a fragile state right now and Luther doesn't want to risk damaging it by moving it from its carefully controlled environment.

Night Work (CR 7) Assuming the PCs agree to the request:

On returning to the Academy in the evening you are greeted once more by students and shown up to where the gourd is on its planter once more in the greenhouse. Food, drink and comfortable seating has been thoughtfully provided nearby. You are told that you are free to use The Royal Oak as well if you like and can wander around the academy as long as you don't break into any of the private areas (through obviously locked doors). At around about 1 or 2 in the morning Achechek arrives to steal the gourd.

Achechek prepares for his trip by casting a number of buffing spells. Of these the most critical are extended *bear's endurance* and extended *bull's strength*, for which he uses his Place Magic ability to compensate for the lower caster level he is suffering at present due to his temporary negative energy level. These two spells will last for 20 minutes, which gives Achechek a 20-minute deadline to get in and out with the gourd. His other buffing spells, which last 90 minutes and so are not critical, time-wise, to the operation are: *feather step*, *longstrider*, *barkskin*, *greensight* and *resist energy* (electricity/20).

Achechek has two more uses of Wild Shape left for the day. He uses the first of these to assume the form a thrush, or perhaps another bird if he was spotted as a thrush earlier, then uses Walk the Lines to transport to a small plant somewhere in the greenhouse. If he sees nobody around he drops his Wild Shape completely and moves over to the gourd to pick it up and take it away. If the PCs are trying to ambush him then note that Achechek's *greensight* prevents anyone from being able to hide in the greenery within 60' off him (i.e. undergrowth within 60' of Achechek does not grant concealment).

If Achechek spots the PCs then he flies over onto the branch of the tree nearest the gourd, reverts to normal form and uses 1 round of his Brachiation ability to anchor himself firmly onto it. Once in place he calls out to the PCs to reveal themselves as he is willing to parley for a few minutes to see if he can persuade them to give up their employment.

If the PCs agree to talk, Achechek uses Brachiation once more to descend from the tree and approaches the PCs with arms outstretched showing that he's both unarmed and unarmoured (in fact, Achechek has renounced all possessions apart from his rather smelly cassock, as mercenary PCs will discover to their disappointment when they start scanning him using *detect magic*).

The main thrust of Achechek's argument will be that the gourd clearly resembles the ghorus seed which his own race uses to perpetuate itself and should therefore be given over to his care. What is worse, the seed has clearly been tampered with in some unnatural fashion, and Achechek will accuse Luther of performing biological experiments on it. He will appeal to the PCs morality to have no part in this abhorrent practice as Luther, he says, is clearly one of those soul-less academics who puts the pursuit of "science" above the needs and lives of ordinary creatures.

How the argument proceeds will not change the events of this evening or, indeed, the plot of this adventure, though it may affect the way that the PCs interact with Luther and the other ghorans in the future. After the events of the next few days the PCs will have practical problems of their own to sort out so their sympathies in the science vs nature argument will merely form a background to what happens next. As far as tonight is concerned, however, after about 5 or 6 minutes there will be a crack from the table and the gourd will burst asunder. As the PCs and Achechek watch in a mixture of fascination and horror, a strange humanoid embryo will emerge from the gourd and start crying pitifully. The creature will look barely formed, like a child's doll made from clay, and even its sex will be unidentifiable let alone whatever its race is.

The effect on Achechek will be quite pronounced. After recovering from the initial shock his face will contort into rage and he will scream "what have you done!" before launching into an attack.

Achechek's tactics in combat are first of all to Wild Shape into a Shambling Mound then cast *blessing of the salamander* at caster level 10 (i.e. with his Place Magic ability). He will fight to the death not only because of what he has just witnessed but also because he has made arrangements for his own resurrection later on in this adventure. Whilst combat is taking place, anyone who makes a DC 20 Sense Motive check will notice Achechek's somewhat fearful attitude towards the gourd-embryo, as if unsure whether he should be running away from it or killing it.

If the PCs attack Achechek straight away, i.e. before any chance to parley, then the hatching of the gourd will happen after they have either killed or subdued him. Achechek will not participate in the hatching in any way and will in fact die mysteriously during the night if he's not killed by the PCs for reasons most likely unknown to the PCs (his ghorus seed has hatched).

Achechek in Shambling Mound form has abilities as follows:

Size Large Senses Greensight AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+1 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size) Hp 118 (10d8+70); fast healing 5 Fort +11, Ref +3, Will +9; +4 vs. fey and plant-targeted effects Resist electricity 20, fire 20 Speed 30 ft. (ignore difficult terrain) Melee 2 slams +11 (2d6+6 plus grab) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. Special Attacks constrict (2d6+6) Str 22, Dex 13 Base Atk +8; CMB +14 (+18 grapple); CMD 27 Skills Climb +18, Stealth -3, Swim +9

Ordinarily an encounter with a 10th level druid would be rated as CR 9, however Achechek has no equipment (which automatically lowers his CR to 8) plus he is carrying a negative energy level and has used most of his high level spells earlier on in the day (which lowers his CR by one more). If you compare his stat block with that of a normal Shambling Mound (CR 6) the two of them are pretty similar apart from Achechek having double the number of hit points (which would raise his CR from 6 to 7).

Achechek

Without his temporary negative level, which he gets from using his ghorus seed ability, and without any of his enhancing spells, Achechek's stats are as follows:

Achechek

Ghoran druid (menhir savant) 10 Neutral Medium plant Init +1; Senses low-light vision; Perception +10 DEFENSE AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +2 natural) Hp 93 (10d8+40) Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +10; +4 vs. fey and plant-targeted effects Defensive Abilities trap sense +3; Immune plant traits Weaknesses delicious, light dependent OFFENSE Speed 30 ft. Special Attacks wild shape 4/day Druid (Menhir Savant) Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +13) 5th (3/day) – animal growth (DC 18), blessing of the salamander (DC 18), wall of thorns

4th (4/day) - arboreal hammer, atavism (DC 17), moonstruck



(DC 17), rusting grasp

3rd (5/day) – extended *barkskin*, extended *bear's endurance*, extended *bull's strength*, *rain of frogs*, *venomous bolt* (DC 16)

2nd (6/day) – barkskin, extended blend, greensight (2), resist energy, tar ball

1st (6/day)—blend, cure light wounds, entangle (DC 14), feather step, glide, longstrider

0 (at will) – create water, light, resistance, stabilize

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, *Wis* 17, **Cha** 10 **Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 20

Feats Extend Spell, Natural Spell, Powerful Shape, Steadfast Mind, Toughness

Skills Climb +15, Fly +5, Heal +7, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +3, Knowledge (engineering) +3, Knowledge (geography) +3, Knowledge (history) +3, Knowledge (local) +3, Knowledge (nature) +3, Knowledge (nobility) +3, Knowledge (planes) +3, Knowledge (religion) +3, Perception +10, Spellcraft +3, Stealth +2, Survival +7, Swim +6

Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan

SQ brachiation (10 rounds/day), delicious, ghorus seed, light-dependent, nature bond (Jungle domain), past-life knowledge, place magic (6/day), spirit sense, walk the lines (3/day)

The Hatching

The gourd-child that has emerged from the gourd is small and pitiful. Its cries are almost like the mewling of a half-starved kitten. It struggles to get a bearing for itself blindly and it is clear that in the hatching it has fallen away from the warmth of the lamps and is now beginning to shiver. Unless helped back to its bed and warmth it will probably die.

No one else is around to help and Achechek, if still alive and conscious, will refuse to have anything to do with it, so it's going to be down to the PCs. If they are really that heartless as to let the gourd-child die, then I suggest you make everyone roll a Will save with whoever rolls the lowest finally succumbing to pity and moving the gourdchild back to its bed. In any case, it should be clear to the PCs that their contract with Luther was to protect the gourd and that keeping the gourd-child alive is likely to be part of the deal.

Whoever it is that finally helps out, or the PC with the highest charisma if a number of them move over together, that PC will make a link to the gourd-child for the briefest of instants. The pathetic little creature will open its eyes and catch the eyes of that one PC, stop crying, blink once or twice at him or her, then close its eyes and fall asleep. Nothing will wake it from then on.

Part 3 - A Sapling Grows

Day 1 - The Next Morning

Luther is, of course, very excited the next day when he arrives at the academy and hears about everything that went on overnight. He makes a genuine show of compassion about the death of Achechek, perhaps strangely, and has someone run off to alert both Achechek's companions and the city authorities. As he quizzes the PCs he is careful to discover who it was that made the link with the gourd-child without giving away his interest (roll a bluff check if necessary). Luther also pays the PCs double the agreed amount for their night's work and asks them to keep in touch with him as he may have further need of them in the future.

Should the PCs bring up the subject of their argument with Achechek, Luther assures them that the gourdchild will be treated with all due care and attention and that there was never any experimentation going on with the gourd at all (which is quite true). The gourd-child is sleeping peacefully now in his loamy bed under the heat lights and already is looking more like a normal child than the doughy shape that emerged from the gourd last night. Even as they speak, a male and female student arrive with a small basket, blankets and a little bottle of milk for it to feed, though the gourd-child is so fast asleep that it doesn't awaken even when it's transferred across to the basket and carried away.

Anduria's authorities, when they arrive, inform the PCs that in due course that there will have to be an investigation into last night's events since it resulted in the death of a citizen. Achechek's body in the meantime is carried away by four sombre looking ghoran druids. For now, however, the PCs' work appears to be done, however the coming week brings more interesting events.

Day 2 (Megatherium)

If the PCs succeeded with the Megatherium challenge, the next day they are visited at their inn by a large and burly man called Phaestus (LG male human expert 5).



Apparently his son and fiancée were in the main hall of the Academy when the Megatherium escaped and would have probably sustained some sort of injury had the PCs not prevented it. Phaestus, being a blacksmith of some skill, offers to make the PCs up to 1,500gp of masterwork metal items by way of thanks.

Day 3 (Wall of Thorns)

If the PCs succeeded with the Wall of Thorns challenge then they are approached by a young lad called Roty, only 13 years old, covered in lots of horrible scratches, a couple of days later. He presents the PCs with a clothwrapped bundle inside of which is a small wooden carving of a horse which he made himself and which he would like the PCs to keep by way of thanks, since he was one of the kids trapped in the thorns. Roty's parents are watching from the background, smiling, but allowing their nervous son to do all the talking. The carving is worthless, but assuming that the PCs are not aggressive Roty's father indicates that the PCs that should look at the cloth that the carving is wrapped in, which turns out to be a +1 *cloak of resistance* (donated by the parents).

Day 4 (Royal Oak)

Assuming the PCs succeeded with The Royal Oak encounter, the landlord, if such he may be called, of the tap-room comes to see them. A portly red-haired man with a bushy red beard Roldger (CG male human adept 2/expert 2) tells the PCs that they are welcome to visit the tap-room anytime they like and that the first drink in the evening will always be on the house. Additionally, whenever they wish to gather information about events in the city, he will automatically help them with whatever it is that they want to know (+2 to the check).

Day 5 Inquest

Anduria is a civilized city and people don't just get killed without some sort of judicial investigation taking place. A few days after the events at the Academy the PCs are summoned to a hearing at a court within the City Council Building to give evidence about what happened on the night that Achechek died. Luther is also there as are Achechek's followers, that same small collection of ghoran druids that the PCs saw taking Achechek's body away, plus a few members of the public who are allowed to attend since the hearing is to be held in an open court. During the proceedings the following points are established:

- Damien came into possession of a gourd which he promised to Achechek but then gave to Luther instead.
- 2. Achechek believed the gourd to be an old, dead ghorus seed.
- 3. The ghoran race uses ghorus seeds to perpetuate themselves, and Achechek thought the gourd was the remains of a ghoran which had failed to properly germinate out of its seed.
- 4. Luther insists that the gourd was given to him by Damien in payment for some help which he gave, and that he had no knowledge of any previous promises having been made by Damien to Achechek.
- 5. Luther was able to feed the gourd and revive it using methods which were entirely reasonable to his studies.
- 6. Although it is true that Luther could not have been completely certain that the gourd wasn't a ghorus seed, as he has never / had never seen such a thing, the fact that the child that hatched out of the gourd bears no resemblance to a ghoran justifies his belief.
- 7. Luther, and perhaps the PCs, explain the number of strange occurrences that occurred during that particular day and of Achechek's appearance during Luther's lecture, however since none of the occurrences can be pinned on the ghoran druid the evidence is considered inadmissible.
- 8. The ghoran druids explain that Achechek became very concerned when he saw the gourd at the lecture because he thought that the ghorus life-cycle might have been corrupted by Luther. He was worried that whatever hatched out of it in the end might be some sort twisted mutation.
- 9. The court concludes that Achechek not only sought steal the gourd but also possibly planned to destroy it and the ghoran druids, especially the older female one present, sadly agree.
- 10. It is established that Luther was entirely within his rights to hire the PCs as guards that night.
- 11. The PCs then explain what happened, assuring the authorities that they fought in self-defence and only used reasonable force.
- 12. Finally, it is confirmed that the child that hatched out of the gourd is fine and well now and being looked after by the staff at the Academy.
Assuming that the PCs behave themselves during the proceedings the final verdict is one of either accidental death, justifiable self-defence or an open verdict, and the PCs are free to go.

Day 6 (Tree Walk)

If the PCs succeeded with the Tree Walk challenge, the day after the hearing the pregnant woman whom the PCs saved from the catwalk appears at the inn which the PCs frequent, with her baby in her arms. She was present at the hearing yesterday as she wanted to make sure that the PCs really were benevolent rather than mercenary. She's not a rich woman so she has nothing she can give them as a reward but if the PCs are kind to her, help her with her child and generally behave in a "good" way, then when they get back to their table or room they will see that an anonymous benefactor has left them a fully charged *wand of cure light wounds*.

Day 7 (Water Garden)

If the PCs succeeded with the Water Garden challenge, one week after the event a rather effete middle-aged half-elf called Spugnoir (LN male half-elf wizard 7 (universalist)) will hail them in the street or in the market and offer to buy them dinner to thank them for what they did.

Spugnoir will explain that he had gone over to the Academy to attend Luther's lecture and hadn't been prepared for the poisonous frog attack which took place in the Water Garden (and he hasn't been out for a few days whilst recovering from the poison). He thanks the PCs for their help and, since he hasn't very much money, offers to repay them magically. Spugnoir is a bit of a scholar by way of arcane matters and, although he doesn't permanently reside in Anduria, while he's around he offers to provide free magic item identification once a day with an *identify* spell combined with his considerable skill at spellcraft (+18, rising to +28 with *identify*, for up to 7 items).

Day 8 A Private Party (Boobaloo)

The following day Luther invites the PCs up to a private party up at the greenhouse but this time as guests, rather than guards. It's an evening / night time affair, in informal dress, though nobody minds terribly much if the PCs turn up clanking in armour if they want – adventurers being what they are. Also present at the soiree are some recognizable faces from Luther's lecture plus a few older students who clearly study under Luther himself.

Although all the talk amongst the guests is about the gourd and the gourd-child, who everyone gathers hasn't been seen for a week, Luther plays a cagy game keeping everyone guessing about what might be going on. By the time it gets to midnight everyone's getting rather excited. If the PCs succeeded with the Boobaloo the Bear challenge the first thing that happens, however, is that a number of students arrive up from the halls below with a reward for the PCs for their efforts. It seems that they all had a bit of a whip round and with the proceeds managed to buy for the PCs a second-hand wand of bear's endurance with 20 charges in it (everyone felt that the spell was appropriate). The PCs are also given lots of pats on the back, and thanks, and offers of drinks at the Royal Oak if they ever visit. Boobaloo himself isn't around but that's only because the poor old bear hasn't recovered yet from his ordeal.

About half an hour after the presentation a young person (sex depends on which PC linked with the gourd-child) comes up to talk to Luther about something and then much to everyone surprise Luther not only announces that the gourd-child is about to make an appearance but then reveals that the gourd-child is that very young person – a boy or girl of about 8 years old who Luther introduces as "Pat".

The effect on the assemblage is electric - people slowly coming to terms with what they are being told. The effect on the PC that linked with the gourd-child, however, is likely to be more profound, as that PC perceives in Pat an exact duplicate of what they themselves looked like when they were about the same age (or the equivalent for non-human races).

Pat is dressed in a simple white shirt, brown trousers with a leather belt and open leather sandals, of either a masculine or feminine cut. Pat's shirt has a breast pocket in which Pat keeps a greensting scorpion as a pet (in fact the familiar of one of Achechek's ghoran druids). Pat also has a golden retriever (Saf – short for Safron) following Pat around and keeping an eye on him/her, which is also connected to the ghorans. It is clear that Pat is being well-looked after at the academy – witness the good quality of his clothing and his two pets (every child needs a pet or two), plus a rather matronly human woman called Rose who fusses around him and who Luther introduces as Pat's live-in nanny (and who is in fact yet another ghoran druid under the effect of her permanent *alter self* ability).

Neither Pat nor Luther himself is aware of this ghoran infiltration into Pat's life The druids mobilized pretty quickly into action after Achechek's death. Over the course of the next week, however, Rose and company will be busily recruiting Pat onto their cause, but for now they're just keeping their presences hidden.

The PCs can additionally glean the following bits of information by asking questions, eavesdropping on the conversations of others or simply being observant:

- Pat is a polite, articulate and intelligent young person.
- Pat appears to have remarkably similar skills and interests to the PC that he/she resembles.
- Nobody else appears to have noticed the resemblance, though if this is pointed out their reaction is merely one of identifying a coincidence.
- Pat really appears to be growing at the rate of 1 year a day – more or less. Luther has no idea why this is happening though a successful check against his bluff skill will reveal that he may know more than he's saying.
- Pat is no longer a plant of any sort. In fact, he is now recognizably of the race (and sex) of the linked PC.
- Pat's bodily functions (i.e. eating) are not unusual for a creature of his race and age. It is clear that this accelerated growth is magical in some way but it has yet to be discovered how this is working.
- The only people likely to understand what is going on with Pat are the ghoran followers of Achechek, though nobody knows where to find them.
- Rose was recently recruited from a wealthy family nearby for a few weeks and has proven to be most accomplished at her task, helping with all aspects of Pat's upbringing, including finding him a couple of nice pets.

At some point or another Pat and the linked PC will meet face to face. Pat is slowly acquiring the PCs memories as time goes on and though Pat will not reveal this, whatever Pat's Bluff skill may be the linked PC will know absolutely that Pat is holding something back. Pat cannot be taken away from the surroundings of interested people so intimidation will not be possible. PCs using Diplomacy can only make Pat indifferent as Pat is secretly hostile to the PCs at present but at pains not to reveal this, and an indifferent Pat will not reveal anything about what's going on inside Pat's head.

About an hour or so after midnight Pat will be led away by Rose and an hour or so later the party will come to an end.

Part 4 - Roots are Spread

Assuming that at least the linked PC is feeling considerable unease about what is going on then there are two paths which the PCs investigations can follow: they can either try to find out more about the ghoran enclave which is active within Anduria or they can try to make further contact with Pat in the Academy.

In the case of the former, two DC 20 Diplomacy checks to gather information, each taking 1-4 hours, reveal that there are two ghorans working in the city, one as a gardener, the other in the city's underworld. Pursuit of these two leads lead to The Gardener and The Thief below.

Trying to make further contact with Pat is constantly blocked by Rose, who insists that Pat is too impressionable at this stage of his/her development to allow visitors, especially given that nobody knows how Pat will mature. Trying to bypass Rose doesn't work as no one else in the Academy knows where Pat's being kept and Luther is also unavailable, though there's nothing hugely unusual about this latter fact as Luther is often too busy with his work to talk to anyone.

If the PCs mount a surveillance of the Academy, however, then they will be able to see Rose coming and going and so be able to follow her home probably in the middle of the afternoon. Following this clue is detailed in **The Nanny** below. During their surveillance the PCs will also note, to their surprise, that Pat's golden retriever also wanders out of the Academy by itself at different times. If the PCs choose to follow the dog refer instead to **The Pet**.

All clues eventually lead to a folly in the Bella Notte



gardens where the four ghorans live in hiding.

Until the ghorans are met in their lair, so to speak, then they will be very reluctant to tell the PCs anything. It is only when the PCs meet them there that they will have a bargaining chip to use against them (i.e. the location of their hideout). Until then, the ghorans will play their cards very close to their chests.

The Nanny

As an Urban Druid Rose has the ability to change her looks whenever she likes for as long as she likes. Most of the time Rose uses this to adopt the form of a middleaged human woman who works as a housekeeper to an elderly wealthy couple, the Bellamys, not far from the Academy. In this guise Rose has been able to live a reasonably well-integrated life with the citizens of Anduria plus it has given her access to a folly in the Bella Notte gardens which is owned but neglected by her employers but which is now home for the whole of the ghoran enclave.

Rose's employers have allowed her to take time off to look after Pat at the Academy as she has explained to them that this will only be temporary while a suitable foster home is found. Rose returns to the Bellamys house at different times during the day in order to perform her minimal duties for the couple, and if the PCs keep an eye out for her then they will be able to discover where this other working place of hers is.

Although Rose has a room at the Bellamy's house, and indeed at the Academy, she stays most nights at the folly with the other ghorans. Rose always adopts a different guise when travelling to the folly, typically that of a small boy with dirty knees and a bit of a foul mouth, which generally puts people off the scent and stops her from being followed.

Rose has incredible powers of persuasion, not just with people but also with animals and vermin. This makes her an excellent housekeeper (she convinces rats and cockroaches to stay away) and the natural leader of the ghorans now that Achechek is dead. All in all, she didn't get on all that well with Achechek, whom she felt was rather uncouth and opinionated, so now that he's gone she's leading the ghorans in a slightly different direction (as will be revealed later). The Bellamys' house is a tall brick-built terraced building in one of the wealthier districts of Anduria. A fleur-de-lis motif decorates the front door and the upper windows are also the same shape. If the PCs knock on the door they will be answered by either Rose or by Edward Bellamy, neither of whom will have much to say to them. The fleur-de-lis is the key clue to be discovered here.

Rose

Ghoran druid (urban druid) 6 Neutral Medium plant Init +1; Senses low-light vision; Perception +12 DEFENSE Aura deflection aura (2 ft.) AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+1 armour, +1 Dex, +2 natural) Hp 39 (6d8+6) Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +10; +2 bonus vs. divinations and enchantment effects **Immune** plant traits Weaknesses delicious, light dependent **OFFENSE** Speed 30 ft. Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +9) 1/day – detect poison, goodberry (sprout from own body), purify food and drink (DC 13) Druid (Urban Druid) Spells Prepared (CL 6th; concentration +9) **3rd** (4/day) – mass feather step, mad monkeys, protection from energy, speak with plants 2nd (5/day)-barkskin, cat's grace, eagle eye, hold animal (DC 15), summon swarm 1st (5/day)-aspect of the nightingale, faerie fire, produce flame (2), shield 0th (at will) - detect magic, detect poison, enhanced diplomacy, purify food and drink (DC 13) Domain Protection (Defense domain subdomain) STATISTICS Str 8, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 16 Base Atk +4; CMB +3; CMD 14

Feats Fast Empathy, Greater Wild Empathy (Vermin), Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +5, Diplomacy +16, Handle Animal +12, Heal +12, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (nature) +11, Perception +12, Survival +5

Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan

SQ a thousand faces, ghorus seed, lorekeeper, nature bond (defense domain), nature sense, past-life

knowledge, resist temptation, wild empathy +11 Other Gear bracers of armour +1, ring of eloquence (dwarven, elven, halfling, gnome)

The Thief

Greensting, as he is known, is the ghoran Druid who deals with Anduria's criminal element, generally by providing them with drugs. Although a junior member of the group his role is one of the most important, as not only does he front the participation of the ghorans in minor acts of revenge against humanoidity, his connections with the underworld are also instrumental in ensuring that the group is not themselves targeted by criminals and poachers.

If the PCs have credible low-life connections then a DC 25 Diplomacy check will get them an audience with someone who knows Greensting, otherwise it'll cost them 100 gp in bribes. A second check or bribe will then allow the PCs to meet up with Greensting himself in some dingy basement surrounded by other rogues and thieves (i.e. too many to fight).

In case the PCs haven't guessed the connection already, the key piece of information that they need to pick up here is the reason why Greensting has his name, which is that he keeps a greensting scorpion as a pet (though it is strangely missing at present). This clue links the ghorans to Rose since it was Rose who provided Pat with the scorpion and retriever.

Greensting

Ghoran druid 2 Neutral Medium plant Init +2; Senses darkvision 30 ft., low-light vision; Perception +7 DEFENSE AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (+6 armour, +2 Dex, +2 natural) Hp 19 (2d8+6) Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5 **Immune** disease, plant traits Weaknesses delicious, light dependent OFFENSE Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armour) Melee quarterstaff +2 (1d6+1) or quarterstaff +0 (1d6+1), quarterstaff +0 (1d6) **Druid Spells Prepared** (CL 2nd; concentration +4) **1st** (4/day) – faerie fire, jump, shillelagh (2, DC 13)

Oth (at will) – *detect magic, detect poison, guidance, stabilize* **Domain** Vermin domain STATISTICS **Str** 12, **Dex** 15, **Con** 15, **Int** 8, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10 **Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 14 **Feats** Two-weapon Fighting **Skills** Acrobatics -1 (-5 to jump), Climb +2, Perception +7, Stealth +1, Survival +4, Swim +2 **Languages** Common, Druidic, Sylvan **SQ** familiar (greensting scorpion: Alertness, +4 Initiative), ghorus seed, nature bond (vermin domain), nature sense, past-life knowledge, vermin friend, wild empathy +2 **Other Gear** dragonhide breastplate, quarterstaff

Arcane Familiar

Greensting scorpion N Tiny magical beast (vermin) Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9 AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +4 natural, +2 size) OFFENSE Hp 9 (1d8) Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3 **Immune** mind-affecting effects DEFENSE Speed 30 ft. Melee sting +6 (1d2-4 plus poison) Space $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft.; Reach 0 ft. Special Attacks poison STATISTICS Str 3, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 2 Base Atk +1; CMB +2; CMD 8 (20 vs. trip) Feats Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Finesse[B] Skills Acrobatics +7, Climb +11, Perception +9, Stealth +23, Swim +7; Racial Modifiers +4 Climb, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth SQ improved evasion

Poison: Sting - Injury (DC 10) (Ex) **Sting**—Injury; **save** Fort DC 10; **frequency** 1/rd for 6 rds; **effect** sicken for 1 rd; **cure** 1 save.

The Pet

The Hound, as he likes to call himself, is the biggest and toughest Druid of the ghoran group. He is also the only one of them who uses an animal companion, a golden retriever called Safron, and who regularly adopts a wild shape – that of either a dog or a wolf, the former for exploring, the latter for fighting.

The Hound likes fighting. Although subservient to Rose,

as she has greater seniority, he likes to bite where she likes to talk. This causes some tension between them but he is still basically loyal, somewhat like the dogs he likes to mix with.

The Hound's companion, Safron, is now Pat's adopted pet. From time to time Safron leaves the Academy to join up with the Hound typically in the middle of the afternoon though sometimes at night. If the PCs spot this and follow Safron then they will watch the golden retriever meet up with another dog of a similar breed who they might imagine might be a mate, and who sort of is, in the Bella Notte neighbourhood of the Trade Ward.

The two dogs will then frisk about together like lovers for a few hours, playing together, stealing sausages, chasing cats and all that sort of thing. Eventually with what seems like a kiss Safron will head back to the Academy. The other dog, strangely, will disappear into thin air, although in fact what will happen is that The Hound will change, out of sight, from dog to Druid, and then slink away keeping himself well covered up with a cloak so that no one can see that he's a ghoran.

The Hound

Ghoran druid 4 Neutral Medium plant Init +1; Senses low-light vision; Perception +6 OFFENSE AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +2 natural) Hp 35 (4d8+12) Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +6; +4 vs. fey and plant-targeted effects Immune plant traits Weaknesses delicious, light dependent DEFENSE Speed 30 ft. Special Attacks wild shape 2/day Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +5) 1/day – detect poison, goodberry (sprout from own body),

purify food and drink (DC 11) **Druid Spells Prepared** (CL 4th; concentration +6) **2nd** (3/day) – bear's endurance, bull's strength, savage maw **1st** (4/day) – blend with surroundings, magic fang, snowball (2 DC 13) 0 (at will) – create spater, guidance, light registered

0 (at will) – create water, guidance, light, resistance STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 12

Base Atk +3; CMB +6; CMD 17

Feats Dedicated Adversary, Natural Spell

Skills Bluff +1 (+3 vs. human), Climb +7, Handle Animal +8, Heal +6, Perception +6 (+8 vs. human), Sense Motive +2 (+4 vs. human), Survival +4 (+6 vs. human), Swim +7 Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan

SQ ghorus seed, nature bond, nature sense, past-life knowledge, trackless step, wild empathy +5, woodland stride

Other Gear druid's vestment

Safron (Dog)

Neutral Medium animal Init +3; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +5 DEFENSE AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +4 natural) Hp 36 (4d8+16) Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +4 Defensive Abilities evasion OFFENSE Speed 40 ft. Melee bite +7 (1d6+6) STATISTICS Str 19, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6 Base Atk +3; CMB +7; CMD 20 (24 vs. trip) Feats Iron Will, Toughness Tricks Attack, Down, Flank, Guard, Heel, Stay, Watch Skills Acrobatics +7 (+15 to jump), Perception +5, Stealth +7, Swim +8; Racial Modifiers +4 to survival when tracking by scent

The Gardner

For all that Ceanothus is the quiet ghoran of the group, he's the one that most tends to get picked on by ne'erdo-wells around Anduria as he's the one who refuses to keep himself hidden.

Employed by the Andurian council, Ceanothus spends all of his time looking after the parks of the city, of which there are many.

In fact, no one has ever seen him anywhere other than in a park or travelling between parks, leading to the joking conjecture that he probably sleeps up in a tree somewhere and lives on leafs and berries. Which isn't far from the truth.

It would take the PCs months to find Ceonothus in Anduria, given that he's always on the move between its parks and gardens and given that nobody takes much interest in what the ghoran is up to anyway. They're welcome to use up lots of time trying, of course. The key clue that they need to pick up here is that the ghorans, assuming they live together, live somewhere in one of the city's gardens.

Ceanothus

Ghoran druid (ape shaman) 2 Neutral Medium plant Init +1; Senses low-light vision; Perception +6 DEFENSE AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+3 armour, +1 Dex, +2 natural, +1 shield) Hp 17 (2d8+4) Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +5 **Immune** plant traits Weaknesses delicious, light dependent **OFFENSE** Speed 30 ft. Melee club +3 (1d6+2)(lethal or non-lethal damage) Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 2nd; concentration +4) 5/day - strength surge (+1)Druid (Ape Shaman) Spells Prepared (CL 2nd; concentration +4) 1st (4/day) – ant haul, monkey fish, shillelagh, true strike 0 (at will) – create water, detect poison, know direction, purify food and drink Domain Strength domain STATISTICS Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 10 Base Atk +1; CMB +3; CMD 14 Feats Bludgeoner Skills Climb +15, Heal +6, Knowledge (nature) +7, Perception +6, Profession (gardener) +7, Survival +4 Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan SQ ape's totem transformation, ghorus seed, nature bond (Strength domain), nature sense, past-life knowledge, wild empathy +2 Other Gear leaf armour, mwk light wooden shield, club

The Folly at Park Bella Notte (CR 7)

If the PCs have successfully pieced together all the clues presented in the last section, then they should eventually come to a tall building sporting fleur-de-lis shaped windows in a large park in the Bella Notte neighbourhood of the Trade Ward.



The GM will need to make sure that about a week passes whilst they slowly piece everything together in order for there to be enough time for Pat to grow from a pleasant 8-year-old child into a precocious teenager of about 16 years or more.

Bella Notte is a district of the Trade Ward which is well known for its eating establishments. During the day, inns and taverns serve good quality lunches at reasonable prices. At night the district becomes lit up by restaurants offering finer dining at higher prices, generally to the accompaniment of street musicians and flower sellers trying to cash in on the romantic dinner-for-two daters. Needless to say, all of this extravagance spills over into the large park in the centre of the district, day and night, and many of the park's buildings are used to cook



and serve food to outdoor diners.

Not all of the parks many buildings are used in this way though, and in the far north-east corner is a strange octagonal one with a glass-domed top which looks like it should be a temple of some sort though no religious insignia is visible on it. The interesting thing about it for you, of course, is the fleurde-lis design on its doors and windows, which you recognise from the Bellamy's house where Pat's nanny, Rose, also spends a lot of her time.

The building is about 80 feet across and 60 feet high. From the outside there are clearly two levels to it though you suspect inside it might all be one room. 20 feet up the structure narrows by 10 foot all around, as if a 60' wide, 20' high octagon had been placed on top of an 80' wide one of similar height. A railing around the top suggests that it might somehow be possible to get up there though the only thing that leads out of the building onto this upper story are circular windows with the fleur-de-lis motif, some of which are admittedly open.

There are no windows on the ground floor. One side of the octagon sports a tall arched wooden door, locked, the other sides all bear alcoves sporting statues of pleasing men and women with names beneath them which you do not recognise.

The lock on the door can be opened with a DC 30 Disable Device check. There are no traps on the door – the ghorans wouldn't want to hurt any innocent bystanders who just happened to come by looking for a toilet or something

as this would attract attention. The walls can be climbed with a DC 10 check.

If the PCs come here at night, then they will be surrounded and attacked by a pack of 12 dogs (the larger kind – i.e. CR 1 riding dogs). The animals will approach in a semicircle around the PCs when they reach the folly, snarling, and will attack as soon as any of them make a sudden movement (the first PC that wants to initiate combat gets a bluff chance to get a surprise round) or after about half a minute anyway. These creatures have been tamed and befriended by the ghorans, but they're not that loyal. They will run away if they've been hurt or if they don't outnumber the PCs, and will keep away from any fires. This behaviour lowers CR of the whole encounter to 7 rather than 8. The ghoran druids within the folly will not join in the attack; they're not confident enough in their own abilities to take on the PCs and they currently have more of a peacetime leader than the war leader that was Achechek. If the PCs arrive during the day and get in somehow they will find the inside deserted:

The interior of the octagonal structure betrays years of neglect. Frescoes on the walls are faded and most of the floor tiles are broken or missing. Vegetation rises up through cracks, some of it quite abundant, almost as if the original purpose of the structure had been to be some sort of greenhouse. The glass roof is undamaged, which allows plenty of sunlight through, though you deduce that water must be arriving by hand.

As you imagined from looking at it from the outside, the inside of the building is just one big room, however the northernmost part has a number of crude wooden partitions set up in order to create five private living or sleeping quarters, each no more than 20' square. In the centre of the room is a communal area with some comfortable seating and a low table, though like all of the furniture in here it looks like it's been salvaged from a tip. There are no cooking facilities or very much food that you can see beyond a few water-melons piled to the side along with a small wooden box with some apples and pears in it.

Investigation around the walls also reveals three tunnels entering the floor and disappearing underground. A DC 20 perception check reveals a distinct smell of canine in the room.

The tunnels all lead to hidden exits in the park, mainly used by the dogs. The ghoran druids come back here at night however prior to their arrival, i.e. just before sunset, the 12 dogs mentioned above will come in through the tunnels and attack waiting PCs in much the same way that they would have if they had been encountered outside at night. Once the PCs have dealt with the dogs, they will be able to make contact with the four ghoran druids.

Negotiations with the ghorans

Whatever the PCs might feel about them the four druids have not done anything wrong. They even have a legitimate reason for living in the folly, so the PCs do not have any motive for attacking them. Of course, you never know what PCs will do, but this adventure assumes that they will parley at this stage rather than attack. Killing the ghorans will not further their cause in any case. Rose and company are willing to talk in exchange for the PCs not revealing where the ghorans live, as they will explain that ghorans in Anduria are frequently persecuted just for being different, when they're not being hunted for their tasty flesh.

Rose will explain that all of them are pretty sure that Pat is not a ghoran, though Pat seems pretty well disposed towards them and they all rather like him/her. This troubles Rose slightly because Achechek warned her before he died that if the gourd was nothing to do with the ghoran race then they should stay well away from it, in fact he made her swear that she would do so as there was something about the gourd that frightened him. Rose, however, thinks that Achechek was a bit of a stupid and twisted old ghoran, of the sort that go too far in trying to persuade their race against assimilation into the civilised world at large and, quite frankly, she's rather glad that he's gone. Pat, however, seems quite progressive in his/ her thinking, and given the way that Pat's been growing up she thinks Pat might well make a suitable replacement for Achechek in a few days' time.

Rose cannot explain Pat's resemblance to one of the PCs. Given that Pat is not a ghoran then the truth about what Pat is will be known only to Luther. Apparently the gourd had been in Damien's possession for some months if not years before being passed over to the Horticulturalist.

By all accounts it should have been completely dead yet Luther managed to nurture it back to life. Whatever the answer to this riddle is, it can only be known to Luther or perhaps Pat his/her-self. Rose suggests that the PCs head back to the Academy tonight to talk to them but urges that they don't in any way harm Pat. Assuming they agree, she gives them the set of keys to the Academy that she's been entrusted with, which will allow the PCs to both enter the main building and the greenhouse in the roof where Pat can generally be found, especially at night. She doesn't know where Luther lives or studies, but perhaps Pat will be able to provide that information.

Finally, she asks the PCs to return her keys before the morning, so that she can get back in herself.

Part 5 - A Flower Blooms

The sun has set by the time you reach the Academy. Everything

is quiet, apart from the Royal Oak of course. Up in the greenhouse a full moon shines down through the glass onto all of the exotic plant-life held within, and Pat stands by the table where the gourd once rested only two weeks ago gazing out on to the city below with a distant expression on his/her face.

Pat now looks like the linked PC at the age of 17, but better. In fact, Pat is better, being the equivalent of that PC in every way save for possessing the advanced template. And it shows.

Assuming the PCs don't creep up on Pat then Pat turns towards them when they arrive with a smile on his face. The linked PC, however, detects something a little sinister about the way that Pat gazes at him/her.

Of course, Pat wants to hear all about what the PCs have been discovering. Pat knows now about the ghoran druids as they have revealed themselves to Pat but Pat is also interested to hear what discussions they have had with the PCs and is interested to learn where they actually live. Pat's feelings about the ghorans are a bit ambivalent – as if not sure what to make of them yet but being rather sure of him/her-self Pat finds the idea of being their leader rather attractive.

As the conversation proceeds, Pat is gracious towards the rest of the party but arrogant and patronizing towards the linked PC. It's almost as if the linked PC is a "poor man's Pat", which Pat tries to prove from time to time by challenging that PC to various tests of skill. It's a sad day for the PC as Pat repeatedly demonstrates to the rest of the party just how inferior they are, at some point even hinting that the they should think about who they would be better off with: Pat or the original.

Pat's view is that Pat is some sort of ghoran variant, however Pat no more understands Pat's own anthropology than the PCs understand theirs. Luther is the person that they need to speak to about the magic behind it all, but Pat's face clouds a little when speaking about Luther and the PCs do not have to press too hard for Pat to admit that Pat's far from happy about the way that Luther has been treating him/her.

Pat also believes that there is something unsavoury going on in Luther's house, particularly in the basement, as Pat has heard on a number of occasions that Luther has a private laboratory there. Now that the PCs are here Pat



suggests that they go over to Luther's house themselves to have a look. Apparently around the back of the house is a door that leads straight down into the basement. Pat gives them Luther's address and even provides them with a set of house keys from a drawer in one of the tables - Luther's spare set.

All the information that Pat is providing here is basically correct – i.e. there is no Bluff going on and Intimidation and Diplomacy will not reveal anything different or awry. Pat does know that Luther is also of the same race as Pat – i.e. not a ghoran as such, but some sort of extraplanar thing that has never been seen in this world before – but Pat will not bring this subject up even in thought just in case the PCs have some way to detect this. Pat wants the PCs to dispose of Luther now so that Pat can be free to pursue his/her own career without either being in debt or in any way beholden to the old horticulturalist. Knowing the sort of powers that adventurers have (Pat's one too, now, after all), Pat is being careful about passing on information.

Pat tells the PCs that they should come back here once they finish their investigations. Pat's intention, however, is to go and visit the ghoran druids next.

Luther's House

Luther lives in a simple two storey brick built house of the sort not uncommon in the city. Steps lead up to the main door on the right of the front of the house, the left being given over to a bay window on both ground and first floors, most likely for a sitting room in the lower storey and the master bedroom in the higher. Above the main door is a pair of box-sash windows with a pathetic little potted plant gazing out from behind dirty drawn white curtains. A dormer window in the gabled roof also looks out of the front.

To the left and right of the house, box-sash windows appear on the upper storey only, the rest being uninterrupted brick. The rear of the house has two doors at the end of a set of steps: short steps leading up to a door on the right, and long steep steps leading down to a door at basement level on the left. Windows appear at the upper storey only again to the rear. All windows round the house are covered by drawn dishevelled curtains.

Surrounding the house are gardens which have long



fallen into neglect. The whole house does not look particularly well-maintained either, though this is not out of place given its location close to the boundary between the Artisan Ward and the Lower Ward.

The little potted plant is a **petrifern**, a plant creature which is in fact Luther's familiar. In its current form it looks like an ordinary potted plant though a DC 31 (+1 for every 10' away) perception check will reveal that it is actually something more that. The petrifern sits between the curtains and the window keeping an eye on anyone coming and going from the house. When it sees the PCs, it will wait for them to move away (if possible) before going in to inform Luther of their arrival.

The Creature in the Basement (CR 6) *The area that lies below Luther's house looks like a mixture of*

a potting shed and an alchemist lab. Wooden tables of various shapes, sizes, heights and colours are strewn with flasks and alembics, jars and burners, seed-trays, water-feeders, flowerpots and propagators. Unlit oil lamps hang from the joists of the house above. The floor is hard-packed soil.

As you come down, on the right hand side of the stairs you spy a planter surrounded by lamps which is very reminiscent but not identical to the set up you saw at the Academy. Two halves of a broken gourd lie on the planter, but you cannot be quite sure whether this is the same gourd that you saw before.

Even more disturbingly, however, in one corner of the basement lies a humanoid slouched against the wall, chains connecting his hands to manacles on the wall though its seems like the final links between the chains and manacles have been broken. The humanoid's clothing seems familiar but ragged and torn and when he stands and gazes upon you with an expression of utter misery in his face you realize that this is Luther you are looking at – or perhaps what is left of him. He looks pale and gaunt and as he straightens up you can see that a horrible wound has been inflicted on his stomach, just below the ribcage, as if something forced its way out and in doing so killed him. Your gaze only meets for a second, however, as with a baleful shriek he springs forwards to attack.

The creature is indeed what is left of the original Luther, now a particularly pitiful form of **Revenant**. As explained in Luther's journal in his study (see below), a gourd-child can only perpetuate its species by laying an egg inside the creature that it is linked to. When that egg has grown inside its unwilling host into a full sized gourd, it erupts from the creature's stomach, killing it in the process and turning it into a Revenant.

These Revenants, however, are of a particularly twisted and torn variety, for while they have a burning compulsion to pursue and kill their murderers, the fact that their murderer looks exactly like they did when they were alive triggers their Self-Loathing at such strength that they get no saving throw. Thus, they are doomed to be always rendered helpless when confronting their killer, whilst at the same time constantly driven to seek them out.

Luther's Revenant never leaves the basement as it twists its pathetic mind into trying to come up with an answer to its predicament. No Revenant of this sort ever has.

Should the PCs somehow or another avoid combat with it

then it is perfectly capable of explaining what happened to it (basically the same information as Luther's journal, but rather more spookily delivered) before pleading with the PCs to kill the creature that has replaced him.

Confronting Gourd-Luther

Whilst what's left of the real Luther is down in the basement, the person that the PCs have been dealing with so far is a gourd-child just like Pat that happened to have made a link with Luther. This Gourd-Luther will soon realize that he has been betrayed by Pat when he sees that the PCs have managed to gain entry into his house.

If he's alerted to their presence by his petrifern familiar, he will drink his extracts of heightened awareness, monkeyfish, shield, barkskin, darkvision and invisibility and then creep downstairs to listen to what the PCs saying, climbing about to keep out of reach if necessary. If he discovers that they are basically hostile towards him, then he will start summoning foes to attack them using his special summoning extracts (plant versions of fiendish eagles, 1d3+2 with a 3rd level spell and 1d3+1 with a 2nd level spell). Summoning will not end his invisibility, and he will use his admixture vial to start combat by using two 3rd level extracts simultaneously. Once he's finished summoning, he will position himself out of reach and start throwing his herbal bombs into the combat, choosing to make them not affect his summoned plant creatures as is his option.

The only real change that Luther's extracts cause to his combat abilities are these:

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +17 AC 26, touch 14, flat-footed 22 (+3 armor, +4 Dex, +5 natural, +4 shield)

Skills Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +12, Knowledge (engineering) +12, Knowledge (geography) +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (nature) +19, Knowledge (planes) +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Perception +17

Chances are that he will sacrifice his *heightened awareness* for a +4 initiative bonus at the start of combat and so lose the +2 he's getting to Perception and his Knowledge skills.

Luther's Fiendish Augmented Plant Eagles are as follows:

N Small plant (animal) Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +10 DEFENSE AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size) Hp 7 (1d8+3) Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2 Immune plant traits Resist cold 5, fire 5; SR 7 OFFENSE **Speed** 5 ft., fly 70 ft. (average) Melee bite +3 (1d4+2), 2 talons +3 (1d4+2) Special Attacks smite good (+1 damage) **STATISTICS** Str 14, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 7 Base Atk +0; CMB +1; CMD 13 Feats Weapon Finesse Skills Acrobatics +2 (-10 to jump), Fly +8, Perception +10

If Luther is not forced into combat, either because the PCs creep up on him or because his eavesdropping on them reveals that they appear to be friendly towards him, then Luther will explain that he cannot help being what he is, had to kill the original Luther in order to procreate, and now warns the PC linked to Pat that Pat will be getting ready to capture him or her in order to implant his/her egg. The chances are high that Pat will be recruiting the help of the ghoran druids, but it probably won't stop there. If the linked-PC wishes to survive, then the PCs have to overthrow Pat and the druids.

Luther's Journal

A friendly Gourd-Luther will happily impart to the PCs the information found in Luther's journal in his study, otherwise the PCs can discover this for themselves after they've defeated him.

There's no shortage of notes, papers and journals scattered around Luther's study in his home, though one of them in particular that sits on top of his desk stands out to you since it is obligingly illustrated, on its cover, with a picture of the gourd that has occupied so much of your attention for the past two weeks.

The chronicles detailed inside start 8 weeks ago when Luther was handed over the gourd by Damien and as you read through

the various entries a clear picture emerges of what has since taken place.

Luther was clearly determined to see if he could find some form of life within what looked to all intents and purposes like a dead husk. Measurements of all sorts were taken, not only physical measurements but also such things as buoyancy, reflectivity to various types of light, analysis of scent and reaction to it by various animals summoned by Luther himself. There then followed numerous attempts to feed the gourd in various ways until eventually, to Luther's inexplicable delight, the gourd began to grow.

Over the next two weeks the gourd slowly but steadily increased in size. Luther never left its side, and doubtlessly his students at the Academy were left to fend for themselves. Then one day the gourd hatched and a little mini-Luther came into existence.

Luther's devotion to his little "child" is then quite touchingly described. Luther never married or bore children of his own so it is clear from the delight that he shows at the growth of the gourd-child that here he felt he'd finally found the son that he'd never been blessed with. For its part, gourd-Luther returned Luther's love quite faithfully until one fateful day when, well, when the writing comes to an end.

Looking at the dates on the journal gourd-Luther must have been about 2 weeks old when something significant happened, about the age that Pat is now. Luther's last entry in the journal talks about how the gourd-child had been explaining that something very important must soon take place in order for his species to propagate – something involving the production of a seed which must then be grown into an egg in a special and unique environment, and it would seem that the gourd-child could not emphasise enough just how important that next part of its life-cycle was.

Presumably the PCs have figured out what happened next.

Gourd-Luther

Without any of his enhancing spells, Luther's stats are as follows:

Luther Mendel (Gourd creature)

Advanced human alchemist (horticulturist, internal alchemist) 7

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; Senses Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+3 armor, +4 Dex, +2 natural)

Hp 66 (7d8+28)

Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +7; +4 vs. disease

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge; **Resist** disease resistance

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +7 (1d4+1/19-20)

Ranged bomb +9 (4d4+6 Fire)

Special Attacks bomb 13/day (4d4+6 fire, DC 19)

Alchemist Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +13)

Constant – speak with plants

Alchemist (Horticulturist, Internal Alchemist) Extracts Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +13)

3rd(2/day) – summon monster III (2)

2nd (5/day)—barkskin, darkvision, invisibility, summon monster II (2)

1st (6/day)—cure light wounds (2), heightened awareness, monkey fish, polypurpose panacea, shield

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 17, **Int** 22, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 14 **Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

Feats Alertness, Augment Summoning, Brew Potion, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Craft [alchemy]), Spell Focus (conjuration), Superior Summoning

Skills Craft (alchemy) +21 (+28 to create alchemical items), Disable Device +16, Heal +13, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Knowledge (engineering) +10, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nature) +17, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Perception +15, Profession (teacher) +13, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +16, Use Magic Device +12; **Racial Modifiers** +1 Knowledge (arcana), +1 Knowledge (nature)

Languages Aquan, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Halfling, Terran

SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +7), breath mastery, comprehensive education, discovery (lingering spirit), herbal bombs, seed extract

Other Gear leaf armor, mwk dagger, *admixture vial*, alchemist's lab, masterwork thieves' tools

Part 6 - A Fruit is Picked

Pat is no longer at the Academy when the PCs return. Given the run of events, it's probably well past midnight, and even the Royal Oak has closed for the night. If the PCs recall, they need to take Rose back her keys to the Academy, so they will have to head back to the Folly at Park Bella Notte. They may also have figured out that this is where Pat might have gone to gather his troops.

Except that Pat would really rather join up with the PCs now as a replacement for the PC that Pat's linked up with. Pat has inherited that PC's adventuresome spirit and really doesn't want to spend the rest of his/her life in the company of all these plant-people. The ghoran druids may well be well-disposed towards Pat, but they are ultimately still rather boring and tiresome company. But, at the very least, Pat needs to secure the body of the linked PC if Pat is going to be able to implant his/her egg now and so grow another gourd.

With this in mind, Pat has prepared a plan that has two possible outcomes, as explained below:

While the PCs have been away dealing with Luther, Pat has finally cemented his/her position as leader of the ghoran druids. Pat has then convinced his/her followers that what has actually happened is this:

- The gourd from which Pat has emerged represents an evolutionary step forward for the ghoran race (i.e. witness Pat's superiority – the "advanced" template Pat has).
- 2. Pat needs the original now in order to produce a new gourd. If that gourd is allowed to germinate and link with one of the ghorans, then the gourd process will work like the ghorus seed process except that the newly formed ghoran will be superior.
- 3. This new, superior, ghoran will then be able to generate their own seed and plant it in its dead previous body so as to produce a new gourd. Little by little, the whole of the ghoran druids can transform in this way, and perhaps even become powerful enough to take their seat amongst civilised humanoidity without fear of persecution.
- 4. Since Pat's linked PC is not a ghoran this technique will be uncomfortable but not fatal for them. Pat explains that the new gourd will exit the linked PC's body in much the same way that creatures of their kind give birth (the ghorans have no idea how this

work since they have no reproductive mechanism, so they won't spot the flaw in the argument if the linked PC happens to be male).

- 5. Pat intends to approach the PCs when they arrive at the Folly and ask for the linked PC to submit to them for a few weeks so that Pat can implant the egg and produce the gourd. After that, the linked PC will be free to return to his/her fellows.
- 6. If the PCs refuse the offer, then Pat and his/her followers will be forced to attack to capture that linked PC. It's unfortunate but there's too much at stake here. Pat also reminds the druids that the PCs ultimately killed their last leader, so they shouldn't have that many reservations about attacking them now. The linked PC, of course, must be protected at all costs.

When the PCs arrive at the Folly the ghoran druids will keep a respectful distance away, out of earshot, having been convinced by Pat's arguments above, in order to allow Pat to parley with them. Pat's message to the PCs, however, will be a little different:

- 1. Pat will start by asking the PCs how they got on at Luther's house and what did they learn.
- 2. If the PCs accuse Pat of plotting to capture the linked PC, Pat will point out how Pat has come to parley. Had Pat been planning such a thing, they would have attacked straight away.
- 3. However, over the course of the conversation, Pat will secretly suggest to each non-linked PC that they consider taking Pat on as a substitute for the original. Pat is clearly superior and this will benefit the whole party in the long run²⁰.
- 4. Pat will, unfortunately, need to implant his/her seed into the original, which will kill them. However, the sacrifice will have been worth it.
- 5. Assuming that the PCs seem open to the idea, Pat will explain that the ghoran druids are currently expecting the linked PC to be sent over so that it can be implanted with Pat's seed. Pat suggests that they overpower the linked PC now and bind or manacle them and hand them over. This will give them one fewer opponent to take on when they turn on the druids in order to reclaim the linked PC.
- 6. If the PCs are agreeable, then Pat will agree a sign with them to start an attack on the druids with

surprise.

Up near the roof of the Folly, a thrush watches and listens with interest. Who will the PCs pick – Pat or their original?

Part 7 – A Tree is Felled (CR 7+)

Unbeknown to everyone in the room, Achechek has returned. The wild old druid planted his own ghorus seed just before the night of the combat at the Academy and has been growing back from it over last two weeks. He now waits in wild-shape (thrush) form to see how things work out.

Achechek's already noticed that his protégé, Rose, has sold out on him in favour of the very creature that he warned her against, and that Pat is gradually taking control of proceedings.

Should the PCs refuse Pat's offer the situation will resolve into a straight forward combat between the PCs and Pat with the ghoran druids. Achechek will not interfere unless the combat ends with Pat still alive, in which case he will then attack Pat. Achechek considers Pat to be a danger and an abomination, but he will not help his own enclave if he feels that they have abandoned his principles and accepted completely the wrong creature as leader.

If the PCs accept Pat's offer, then Achechek will join combat straight away against Pat as soon as it is clear what is happening. Although Achechek will still be angry at Rose for ignoring his wisdom, on seeing that her actions resulted in her betrayal he will be sympathetic enough to help out by taking care of Pat whilst the druids are engaged against the PCs. Achechek will not, however, help any more than that, figuring that the ghorans have still decided to go their own way rather than his and that they should therefore live with the consequences.

In this latter case, if the player switched allegiance from his original PC to Pat, I would be tempted to let him keep playing Pat and keep the original as a very sullen, non-co-operative and very "betrayed" NPC. If the PCs prevail and the player that was originally playing the PC wants them back, you might like to keep control of

20 - You might also wish to explain to the player that controls the linked PC that they will be able to control the new Pat (who will change his/her name accordingly). This effectively tempts the player to sacrifice his/her *actual* PC for one with the advanced template. This slightly meta extra element to the negotiations is entirely up to you, of course, but it could prove interesting later on

this an NPC for a little bit just to see how the rest of the players persuade him to return to the party after they so heinously betrayed him, and for a bit of fun you could even ask the original player why his old PC should allow himself to be controlled by him again?

With Achechek at full strength and the PCs occupied with the ghoran druids Pat should not survive the encounter. If he somehow does then you will have a slight problem in your hands in that granting one PC the advanced template is too much of a reward and will unbalance your party. This is most unlikely to happen but if it does you may have to have Pat change his mind after all about becoming an adventurer and disappear back into the city. Otherwise, Achechek will depart without a word once Pat is dead, and the PCs can take the ghoran druids' possessions as a reward.

In terms of combat strategies, the ghoran druids cast a number of buffing spells as soon as they realize combat is imminent (before or as the PCs arrive at the Folly, bearing in mind they have been primed by Pat). Since these spells tend to last minutes per level, the chances are high that they will be in place before combat starts. Only Rose's Deflection Aura will kick in after combat begins, giving all her allies +2 to AC and CMD for 6 rounds (not included in the modifications given below).

Rose (changes when buffed) **Init** +3

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+1 armor, +3 Dex, +5

natural, +4 shield)

Ref +7

produce flame (once cast) +7 ranged touch (1d6 + 5 all fire) **Dex** 16

Greensting (changes when buffed) AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 21 (+6 armor, +2 Dex, +5 natural) Melee quarterstaff +3 (2d6+2) or

quarterstaff +1 (2d6+2), quarterstaff +1 (2d6+1)

The Hound (in wolf form, buffed) AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +5 natural) Hp 43 (4d8+20) Fort +8 Speed 50 ft. Melee bite +10 (1d6+10) Str 22, Con 19 CMB +9; CMD 20 (24 vs. trip) Skills Acrobatics +1 (+9 to jump), Climb +10, Swim +10 Ceanothus (changes when buffed) AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21 (+3 armor, +1 Dex, +7 natural, +1 shield) Melee club +4 (2d6+3)

Conclusion

The events of *The Gourd* should have few ongoing campaign ramifications for the PCs unless they went out of their way to break laws or endanger citizens of the city.

As Luther was a parasite that had slain the original, and he and Pat were essentially engaging a parasitic conspiracy of replacing people, actions against them are seen as not only lawful, but laudable, should the Watch somehow become involved.

Any ghorans that survive the adventure will go underground or leave the city, convinced that the events of the adventure are proof that they should not be interacting with humanoids, and return to a more withdrawn, natural existence.

If Luther is slain, the Academy will be in confusion for a few days, then elect an interim leader from the elder scholars, which will become a permanent position once Luther's circumstances are revealed or if he is not found after a few weeks.

Revealing the Luther as an imposter will see him/it expelled from the Academy, and sought by the Watch for murder. Unveiling the imposter will ensure a continued good relationship with the Academy.

If the PCs choose to spare and or cultivate a relationship with the imposter Luther, they gain a strong ally in the short term, but one who will eventually come to see that disposing of the PCs (and Pat too if he is with them) is the only way to ensure the secret of his existence. At some point he is likely to hatch a plot to quietly slay and turn the PCs into fertilizer, but that is left to GMs to develop if they wish.

If the PCs ultimately chose to replace the existing PC with his/her Pat clone, allow them to keep the enhanced version. The new character will eventually feel a powerful desire to propagate by producing their own gourd, and this may go on to cause issues in the future.

Bestiary

Crinisphaer

Crinisphaer are parasitic aberrations that grow rapidly from eggs implanted in a living host. Initially bursting forth from their host as small juveniles, they kill and consume to grow rapidly into mature monsters of frightening ferocity.

Crinisphaer, Juvenile

This small creature is a wet, slimy mess of tentacles that writhe and shift constantly as it undulates with a menacing motion. The central mass opens to reveal a fanged mouth.

Crinisphaer, Juvenile CR4 XP 1,600 CN small aberration Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7 DEFENSE AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+4 natural, +4 Dex, +1 size) Hp 38 (5d8+15) Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +5 DR 5/slashing and silver; Immune aberration traits; OFFENSE Speed 40ft. **Melee** bite +8 (2d6), 4 tentacles +6 (1d4 +grab) Special Attacks egg injection STATISTICS Str 10, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12 Base Atk +3; CMB +2; CMD 15 (cannot be tripped) Feats Multiattack, Weapon Finesse Skills Acrobatics +9, Climb +6, Escape Artist +10, Intimidate +6, Perception +7, Stealth +10, Survival +5, Swim +5 Languages aklo SQ extraordinary maturation, spherical **ECOLOGY** Environment any Organization solitary Treasure none SPECIAL ABILITIES Egg injection (Ex): When a Crinisphaer successfully

latches onto a creature with its Grab ability, in can inject an egg into its victim as a standard action. This is a disease effect.



Type Disease (parasite), injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 17 **Onset** 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day **Effect** Euphoria and 1d3 Con damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves or *Remove Disease*

When a creature reaches 2/3 of its original Con the affected area shows a deep purple welt. Once the infected creature reaches 1/3 of its original Con a small purple tentacle erupts from the affected area. The Euphoria effect induces mild hallucinogenic and pleasant sensations to dissuade the host from trying to remove it, causing a creature to believe that the 'growth' is normal.

The parasite is particularly susceptible to *Remove Disease*, and is automatically cleansed if subjected to this spell.

Extraordinary maturation (Ex): If the host creature is slain before the full process is complete, a juvenile Crinisphaer bursts forth as a fully mature Crinisphaer with a severely reduced lifespan (1d4 days), during which time it will frantically try to spawn as many new infestations as possible.

If allowed to spawn normally (host expires of the infestation) the juvenile Crinisphaer matures at a rate of growth of 1 foot per day (assuming plentiful food). It reaches maturity within a week (use Crinisphaer, Mature

stats) and full growth at around 10 days.

Spherical (Ex): A Crinisphaer is essentially a sphere with dozens of tentacles protruding from all sides. It cannot be effectively tripped.

A Crinisphaer is a parasitic aberration that seeks little more than to eat and to continue its life cycle through infecting hosts with its offspring. Before maturity, Crinisphaer tend to hunt small prey such as rats, cats and dogs, as they are easier targets and are susceptible to the creature's grab ability, where larger creatures are not. Once they reach maturity, almost anything is considered prey.

Juvenile Crinisphaer tend to use ambush tactics, but their damage resistance tends to make them quite confident against all foes. If a creature demonstrates an ability to hurt it, a Crinisphaer may flee until it reaches maturity, then return to seek revenge.

Crinisphaer, Mature

This massive creature is a wet, slimy mess of tentacles that writhe and shift constantly as it undulates with a menacing motion. The central mass opens to reveal a fanged mouth.

Crinisphaer, Mature CR7 XP 3,200 CN large aberration Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12 DEFENSE AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+6 natural, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, -1 size) Hp 75 (10d8+30) Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +8 DR 5/slashing and silver; Immune aberration traits; **OFFENSE** Speed 40ft. Melee bite +9 (3d6+8), 4 tentacles +7 (1d6+4 +grab +constrict) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (20 ft. with tentacles) Special Attacks constrict (1d6+4), egg injection **STATISTICS** Str 18, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12 Base Atk +5; CMB +10 (+12 to Grapple/Trip); CMD 20 (+22 to Grapple, cannot be Tripped) Feats Multiattack, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Combat Reflexes

Skills Acrobatics +10, Climb +12, Escape Artist +10, Intimidate +8, Perception +12, Stealth +6, Survival +8, Swim +10

Languages aklo SQ spherical. ECOLOGY Environment any Organization solitary Treasure none SPECIAL ABILITIES

Egg injection (Ex): when a Crinisphaer successfully latches onto a creature with its Grab ability, in can inject an egg into its victim as a standard action. This is a disease effect.

Type Disease (parasite), injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 17 **Onset** 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect Euphoria and 1d3 Con damage; Cure 2 consecutive saves or *Remove Disease*

When a creature reaches 2/3 of its original Con the affected area shows a deep purple welt. Once the infected creature reaches 1/3 of its original Con a small purple tentacle erupts from the affected area. The euphoria effect induces mild hallucinogenic and pleasant sensations to dissuade the host from trying to remove it, causing a creature to believe that the 'growth' is normal.

The parasite is particularly susceptible to *remove disease*, and is automatically cleansed if subjected to this spell.

Spherical (Ex): A Crinisphaer is essentially a sphere with dozens of tentacles protruding from all sides. It cannot be effectively tripped.

Mature Crinisphaer tend to be close to fearless, wading into combat with lashing tentacles to grapple and trip opponents, relying on its natural reach, reflexes and damage reduction to keep it safe.

Dough Boy

This mass of pliable white goo looks like a crude humanoid shaped by the hands of a simple minded child.

Dough Boy

CR 3

XP 800 N small construct Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception -1 DEFENSE AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size) Hp 32 (4d10+10) Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0 Defensive Abilities amorphous, bend don't break 4/ day, hardness 2; Immune construct traits Weaknesses vulnerability to cold OFFENSE Speed 30 ft. Melee 2 slams +5 (1d6+1 plus alchemical absorption) Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (15 ft. with stretchable) Special Attacks alchemical absorption **STATISTICS** Str 13, Dex 16, Con -, Int -, Wis 9, Cha 6 Base Atk +4; CMB +4 (+12 grapple); CMD 17 (25 vs. grapple) Languages common (can't speak) SQ compression, tied in knots ECOLOGY **Environment** any **Organization** solitary or gang (2–4) Treasure none SPECIAL ABILITIES Alchemical Absorption (Su) Whenever a dough boy

touches or is struck by an alchemical weapon such as alchemist's fire or bottled lightning it may absorb the substance instead of being affected by it. For one round after absorbing an alchemical weapon the dough boys slam attacks apply the effect of the alchemical weapon to the target on a successful hit. The dough boy may only absorb one alchemical weapon per round and may not absorb alchemical weapons that cause cold damage.

Bend Don't Break (Su) The dough boy's hardness represents its ability to deform its body without taking damage. As a swift action, a dough boy may increase its hardness to 10 for 1 round. A dough boy may use this ability once per day for each hit die it has.



Stretchable (Ex) As full round action a dough boy can increase its reach to 15 feet for 1 round. It may also make 1 slam attack this round.

Tied in Knots (Ex) Due to its malleable form a dough boy gains a +8 bonus on combat maneuver checks to grapple and to its combat maneuver defense against being grappled.

Dough boys are bipedal, vaguely human shaped masses of white or colorless clay-like dough. Undoubtedly the creation of some deranged arcane researcher, dough boys are the perfect mindless guardians that can be set to perform simple tasks such as patrolling or guarding important areas. Their affinity for alchemical weapons makes them especially useful to alchemists or anyone clever enough to control their exposure to such substances. The dough boy's compression ability means they can be stuffed into quite small spaces where they can lurk and wait to surprise unwanted trespassers.

Reportedly some ingenious trapsmith has created a device to give his doughy guardians the element of surprise.

Dough Bomb Trap CR 6

Type mechanical; Perception DC 25; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset none

Effect drops 2 glass jars, each containing a compressed dough boy, from the ceiling that shatter and release the dough boys.

Created by Russ Brown

Dough Boy Variants (by Micah Watt)

Hard Baked (CR +0)

A Hard Baked Dough Boy begins as a soft liquid form (and can be placed in a Dough Bomb Trap - above) but becomes hard and crusty once exposed to air.

A Hard Baked dough boy loses *Alchemical Absorption*, *Bend Don't Break*, *Stretchable* and *Tied in Knots* abilities but gains the following;

+3 Natural AC bonus (replacing the existing +1)

Jagged Crust (Ex) – Each successful strike by a slam attack also inflicts the Bleed condition, causing 1 point of bleed damage per round until cured. Each time a creature successfully grapples the dough boy, and each round it maintains the grapple it inflicts a bleeding wound on itself.

Ablative Crust (Ex) – the dough boy has DR 8/ adamantine, but every strike that deals damage to the creature reduces the DR by 1 point until the protection is completely removed. The Dough Boy can only regain this DR by being repaired by use of the Craft Construct feat, at a cost of 100gp per DR point (which takes a day per point of DR restored)

Liquefied (CR +1)

A Liquefied Dough Boy is larger, and has a more viscous composition than a standard creature. A Liquefied Dough Boy changes from size small to size large (-2 to



AC, Space becomes 10'x10', Reach becomes 10', Strength to 15 - net effect of +1 damage). It retains all listed abilities and gains the Engulf (Ex) monster ability (DC 12).

Sticky (CR +1)

A Sticky Dough Boy has a tacky coating on its surface. Any unattended objects in its path tend to be gathered up as the Dough Boy moves. It gains a +2 Circumstance bonus to Grapple and Disarm combat manoeuvres the following ability;

Adhere (Ex) On a successful hit an attacking creature must make a DC 12 Reflex save or have its weapon or natural weapon become stuck to the Dough Boy. A weapon can be released if desired, otherwise it (or the creature with natural attacks) is considered grappled. Escaping the grapple is resolved as normal, but the Dough Boy does not have to try to maintain it. Stuck weapons cannot be used effectively to deal damage.

Psychic Mote

This tiny creature appears to be a ball of energy, humming as it streaks by in irregular patterns

Psychic Mote

CR 1/2

XP 200 N Diminutive Elemental Init +9; Senses Mindsight 60 ft.; Perception +5 DEFENSE AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 14 (+5 Dex, +4 Size)

Hp 6 (1d8+2)

Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +5 Immune elemental traits

OFFENSE

Speed Fly 30 ft (perfect) (no land speed) **Melee** touch +1 (1 point of force damage)

Space 0 ft.; Reach 0 ft.

Special Attacks Psychic Static

STATISTICS

Str 2, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 1 Base Atk +1; CMB +2; CMD 7 (can't be tripped)

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Acrobatics +9, Fly + 18, Perception +5, Stealth +21(+1 Conspicuous) **Racial/Size Modifiers** +6 Fly, +6 Perception, +12 Stealth

Languages Psychic Harmonics (can't speak) SQ Psychic Repulsion, Conspicuous

ECOLOGY

Environment localised to the Eternal City and surrounds Organization solitary or colony (swarm) Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Mindsight (Su): Psychic motes are drawn to mental energy. If a creature has an Intelligence score of 1 or higher, a psychic mote can always see it. Psychic motes cannot detect unintelligent (Int 0) creatures with this sense. Mindsight can be fooled by magic or effects that shield or misdirect from mental or magical location or detection (ie the misdirect spell). The Psychic Mote must make a Perception check versus the DC of the spell or effect to overcome it.

Psychic Static (Su): A psychic mote emits a buzzing resonance in its vicinity that is psychically disturbing to intelligent living creatures. All Will saves and Concentration checks required within 5 feet of a psychic mote suffer a -1 penalty.

Psychic Repulsion (Su): A psychic mote is sensitive to powerful emotion and thought. A creature (or creatures)

can use this sensitivity to repel a mote by force of will. This is a standard action (provoking an Attack of Opportunity), at a range of up to 20 feet from the mote, and creates an effect to which the mote must successfully resist with a Will save, the DC equal to 10+the creature's Wis modifier. Several creatures can combine their will, increasing the DC to 10+highest Wis modifier of group, +1 per creature. Failure on the part of the mote causes it to gain the panicked condition for 1 minute. Creatures can attempt as many times as they like to repulse a mote. **Conspicuous (Su):** Despite its small size and agility, a psychic mote is not particularly stealthy courtesy of the light and sound in generates at all times. Unless in an environment where this is mitigated each imparts a -10 penalty to stealth (total -20).

Languages Psychic motes cannot speak, but can communicate with other motes through psychic harmonics

Psychic Mote Swarms

Psychic mote swarms are a far more dangerous prospect than the same number of individual motes because their combined psychic energy resonates, creating a far more intelligent and powerful 'hive mind' creature. Capable of complex thought and tactics, a psychic mote swarm no longer thinks like an elemental insect, but instead a dangerous psychic predator.

In order to form a swarm, there needs to be at least 5 motes present. There is theoretically no limit to the number of motes that can form a cohesive swarm. A swarm can form or disperse as a full round action.

Psychic mote swarms gain the Swarm subtype (variant), the Iron Will feat, the Psychic Shock special attack, and replaces the Psychic Repulsion quality with the Psychic Dispersion special quality. For every 5 motes in the swarm, the swarm gains;

- +1 HD
- +2 Int (Maximum 20)
- Its Psychic Static ability becomes more powerful, increasing in radius by 5 feet and incurring an additional -1 penalty

The Psychic Mote Swarm subtype is a variant. While technically made up of diminutive creatures, it acts as a swarm made up of 'tiny' creatures (1/2 damage from slashing/piercing weapons) and is made up of far less individual creatures. Similarly, it is unaffected by high

winds. It does generate the distraction ability. Swarm damage caused by a psychic swarm is force damage.

An example 10 mote swarm

Psychic Mote Swarm

This creature appears to be a swarm comprised of numerous tiny balls of energy, humming as they move erratically around each other.

Psychic Mote Swarm CR 3
XP 600
N Diminutive Elemental (Swarm)
Init +9; Senses Mindsight 60 ft.; Perception +10
Aura Psychic Static (20ft4 penalty to Will saves and
concentration checks)
DEFENSE
AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 14 (+5 Dex, + 4 Size)
Hp 24 (4d8+8)
Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +7
Defensive Abilities swarm traits (1/2 damage from
slashing/piercing) Immune elemental traits
OFFENSE
Speed Fly 30 ft (perfect) (no land speed)
Melee Swarm (1d6 points of force damage, plus
Distraction plus Psychic Shock)
Space 5 ft.; Reach 0 ft.
Special Attacks Psychic Static, Psychic Shock (Will DC
14), Distraction (Fort DC 14)
STATISTICS
Str 2, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 1
Base Atk +4; CMB +6; CMD 10 (can't be tripped,
grappled or bull rushed)
Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will
Skills Acrobatics +10, Fly + 20, Perception +10, Stealth
+21(+1 Conspicuous) Racial/Size Modifiers +6 Fly, +6
Perception, +12 Stealth
Languages None
SQ Psychic Dispersion, Conspicuous ECOLOGY
Environment localized to the Anduria and surrounds
Organization colony (swarm)
Treasure none
SPECIAL ABILITIES
Distraction (Ex) A creature with this ability can nauseate
Distraction (Ex) A creature with this ability can hauseate

the creatures that it damages. Any living creature that takes damage from a creature with the distraction ability is nauseated for 1 round; a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2

creature's HD + creature's Con modifier) negates the effect

Mindsight (Su) Psychic motes are drawn to mental energy. If a creature has an Intelligence score of 1 or higher, a psychic mote can always see it. Psychic motes cannot detect unintelligent (Int 0) creatures with this sense. Mindsight can be fooled by magic or effects that shield or misdirect from mental or magical location or detection (ie the misdirect spell). The Psychic Mote must make a Perception check versus the DC of the spell or effect to overcome it.

Psychic Shock (Su) Any creature damaged by s Psychic mote swarm must make a Will save DC 13 (10+1/2 HD +Con mod) or become psychically disoriented for 1d6 rounds. A psychically disoriented character incurs a -2 penalty to attack rolls and AC, and must make a concentration check to cast spells or spell like abilities.

Psychic Static (Su) A psychic mote emits a buzzing resonance in its vicinity that is psychically disturbing to intelligent living creatures. All Will saves and Concentration checks required within 20 feet of the psychic mote swarm suffer a -4 penalty.

Psychic Dispersion (Su) A psychic mote swarm cannot by psychically repulsed as single motes can, but is subject to being dispersed into its single component motes through force of will. This is a standard action (provoking an Attack of Opportunity), at a range of up to 20 feet from the mote swarm, and creates an effect to which the mote swarm must successfully resist with a Will save, the DC equal to 10+the creature's Wis modifier. Several creatures can combine their will, increasing the DC to 10+highest Wis modifier of group, +1 per creature. Failure on the part of the mote swarm causes it to disperse into its component motes for 1d10 rounds before it can reform. Creatures can attempt as many times as they like to disperse a mote swarm. Once dispersed, the individual motes can be repulsed.

Conspicuous (Su) Despite its small size and agility, a psychic mote swarm is not particularly stealthy courtesy of the light and sound in generates at all times. Unless in an environment where this is mitigated each imparts a -10 penalty to stealth (total -20)



Lonely One

Bones and alien organs are clearly visible through the bluishgrey skin of this tall, hairless and emaciated bipedal creature. Membranous wings stretch from the wrists of its elongated arms down to the creature's knees. Black pupil-less eyes stare out of an otherwise featureless face.

Lonely One

CR 5

XP 1,600

NE Medium aberration Init +4; Senses darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +10 DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 14 (+4 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)

Hp 49 (7d8+21)

Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +5

Defensive Abilities psychic shield; DR 5/silver; SR 16 Weaknesses light blindness, vulnerability to bleed OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (average) Melee 2 claws +9 (1d4+4), tail slap +4 (1d6+2) Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (tail 10 ft.) STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 15 Base Atk +5; CMB +9; CMD 22

Feats Deepsight, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Power Attack Skills Acrobatics +13, Fly +14, Perception +10, Stealth +11; Racial Modifiers +4 Fly, +2 Stealth Languages aklo, common (can't speak, tactile telepathy)

SQ alien nectar, tactile telepathy ECOLOGY

Environment any underground **Organization** solitary **Treasure** standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Alien Nectar (Ex) Alonely one secrets a viscous fluid from two glands on its back. Consuming a small amount of this nectar provides a medium creature with enough nourishment for an entire day. The nectar is also highly addictive, treat it as a drug with the following statistics.

Lonely One Nectar: type ingested; addiction severe, Fortitude DC 15; effects 1 hour, +1d8temporary hit points,

fatigue; damage 1d2 Wis damage.

Psychic Sanctuary (Su) All lonely ones radiate a feeling of peace and tranquillity. Treat this ability as a constant sanctuary effect that requires a successful DC 15 Will save to overcome. Creatures that make the will save can ignore the sanctuary effect for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Psychic Shield (Su) A lonely one has a +4 deflection bonus to its armour class. It loses this bonus when it is unconscious.

Tactile Telepathy (Su) Lonely ones can communicate via telepathy, but only with a creature they are currently touching.

Vulnerability to Bleed (Ex) Lonely ones are especially vulnerable to hit point bleed damage. They take a -4 penalty on saves against spells or effects that cause hit point bleed damage. Additionally they take one extra damage every round they bleed.

The strange, alien beings known as lonely ones always appear as solitary figures, usually in out of the way, forgotten places. They do seem to crave the

attention and companionship of others, often seeking out those who have been isolated or outcast from normal society. Their calming psychic aura and need to touch in order to communicate tends to lead to the formation of small, intimately connected groups of companions. Once a connection is made, the lonely one will begin to feed its nectar to its new companions. The narcotic effect of the nectar lowers the companion's resistance to the lonely one's psychic influence and its addictive nature binds them to the creature. Viewed from the outside, this strange symbiotic relationship is often viewed as a cult or secret society.

Created by Russ Brown

Lonely One Variants (by Micah Watt)

Elder One (CR +1)

An Elder One has maintained a rapport with its community of servitors through multiple generations, developing a more intimate connection with them. An Elder One has the following abilities;

Limited Telepathy (Su) In addition to its Tactile Telepathy ability, an Elder One has a telepathic connection and communication with its community out to a range of 1 mile. Community members are those that have been in proximity to the elder one since their birth.

Limited Clairvoyance (Su) An Elder one can use its telepathic connection to see through the eyes of its community members. It does not need to see an individual, it simply chooses a creature it is connected to. It can use this ability at will, for a total of 10 minutes per day (this can be used in increments as short as 1 round, and need not be consecutive).

Lost One (CR +1)

In some cases a Lonely One is born without, or loses its ability to produce nectar. In place it develops abilities that assist it in finding occasional, temporary servitors. A Lost One loses the *Alien Nectar* ability but gains the following;

Fascination (Su) Creatures that fail their saving throws to the Psychic Sanctuary ability also become fascinated for 1 hour, unless broken by hostile actions from the Lost One, being roughly handled or otherwise being in danger.

Charming Gaze (Su) A Lost One can turn its gaze on a creature and attempt to charm it. The gaze has a range of 60 feet, can be attempted once per round, and the victim must make a DC 14 Will save or be Charmed for 1 hour. Fascinated creatures (as the ability above) incur a -4 to their save. Standard charm rules apply, and the creature gains a save each hour or if harmed by the Lost One. Once a creature successfully saves it is forever immune to that Lost One's gaze.



Magma Crawler

This monstrosity resembles a red-skinned cuttlefish with extended tentacles and waves of heat radiating from its body.

Magma Crawler XP 4,800

CR 8

CE Large outsider (earth, extraplanar, fire) Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +15 Aura blistering aura (20 ft., DC 14) DEFENSE AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+2 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size) Hp 95 (10d10+40) Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +10 Immune fire; Resist acid 10 Weaknesses vulnerability to cold **OFFENSE** Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., bore Melee 2 arms +15 (1d6+5), 4 tentacles +13 (1d6+2 plus grab), bite +15 (1d8+5) Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (20 ft. with arms and tentacles) Special Attacks fiery rend (2 arms, 1d6+7 plus 2d6 fire), magma jet (2d6 fire, DC 19) **STATISTICS** Str 20, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 9 Base Atk +10; CMB +16 (+20 grapple); CMD 28 Feats Cleave, Cleaving Finish, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack Skills Escape Artist +15, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (planes) +13, Perception +15, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +11 Languages common, ignan, terran ECOLOGY **Environment** any (Plane of Fire) Organization solitary or pair

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blistering Aura (Ex) Waves of heat pour off of a magma crawler. Any creature within 20 feet of a magma crawler at the beginning of its turn takes 1d6 nonlethal damage and becomes fatigued from exposure to heat. A DC 14 Fortitude save negates the fatigue and reduces the nonlethal damage by half. This does not cause a creature that is already fatigued to become exhausted. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Bore (Ex) A magma crawler can burrow through lava or other forms of earth, even solid rock, at its full

burrow speed. When burrowing through non-molten earth or stone a magma crawler leaves behind a 10 foot diameter circular tunnel. This tunnel has extremely smooth sides where the rock has been melted. **Fiery Rend (Su)** When a magma crawler strikes the same target with both arm melee attacks it can tear the target apart with a violent twisting motion. This also releases a fiery blast from the creature's arms, adding 2d6 points of fire damage.

Magma Jet (Su) When it is in contact with a pool or stream of lava, a magma crawler can shoot a stream of lava at its opponents. Any creatures in a 50 foot line take 2d6 points of fire damage from the lava. A DC 19 Reflex save reduces the damage by half. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Native to the elemental Plane of Fire, when they are encountered on other planes magma crawlers will seek out environments as similar as possible to their home. This usually means active volcanoes, lava fields or other areas with heavy geothermic activity.

Not much is known about magma crawlers except that they are cruel predators that seem driven by an alien intelligence. They have been known to toy with their prey once it has been wounded before applying the death blow.

A magma crawler is about 12 feet long, plus tentacles and weighs approximately 3,000 pounds.

Created by Russ Brown



Shadow Revenant

Shadows cling to the black robes and cowl of this figure, shrouding its features in darkness.

Shadow Revenant

CR 10

XP 9,600 CE Medium undead (incorporeal) Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +21 DEFENSE AC 20, touch 20, flat-footed 14 (+4 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge) Hp 127 (15d8+60) Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +14 Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal; **Immune** undead traits; **OFFENSE** Speed fly 60 ft. (good) Melee incorporeal touch +12 (2d6 plus 1d6 Strength damage or anchor shadow) Special Attacks anchor shadow, shadow exile Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +19) 3/day-shadow conjuration (DC 18) 1/day – black tentacles **STATISTICS** Str 12, Dex 21, Con -, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 19 Base Atk +11; CMB +12; CMD 27 Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Blind-Fight, Iron Will, Lunge, Mobility Skills Fly +27, Intimidate +22, Perception +21, Stealth +23Languages common SQ possess shadow ECOLOGY **Environment** any **Organization** solitary Treasure none SPECIAL ABILITIES Anchor Shadow (Su) After a successful melee touch attack a shadow revenant can choose to use this ability

instead of dealing strength damage. The target's shadow is pinned in place preventing the creature from moving further than 10 feet from its current location for 2d4 rounds. A DC 21 Will save negates the effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Possess Shadow (Su) A shadow revenant may enter and possess the shadow of an adjacent creature. A DC 21 Will save negates this effect. While possessing a



creature's shadow the shadow revenant may ride along passively in which case it will can make Stealth checks to avoid being noticed. The shadow revenant may also control the movement of the creature's shadow although it is still a normal shadow and may not move away from the creature. Using any of its spell-like or other special abilities will cause this effect to end. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Shadow Exile (Su) As a full round action, a shadow revenant may attempt to banish a creature under the effects of its anchor shadow ability to the Plane of Shadow for 24 hours. A DC 17 Will save negates this effect. This also ends the anchor shadow effect on the target. The save DC is Constitution-based.

A shadow revenant is an incorporeal undead with a strong connection to the Plane of Shadow. A shadow revenant is usually created as a result of the murder of a wronged or long suffering individual. The victim's bitterness and desire for revenge carry over into the afterlife and power the creation of the shadow revenant. As a result the shadow revenant hates all life and seeks its revenge against any living beings that it encounters, believing them responsible for its own suffering and death.

A Shadow Revenant will typically appear first as lone, wandering figure wearing dark coloured robes and a hood or veil. They will often cry out with wails and moans, posing as someone mourning the death of a loved one. Shadow revenants are fond of using this tactic to lure unsuspecting victims in close before revealing their true nature.

Created by Russ Brown

Shadow Exile and the Plane of Shadow (*Micah Watt*) The Shadow Exile ability banishes a creature to the Plane of Shadow for 24 hours. The creature is left to fend for itself in this hostile environment. Where is goes or what happens to it has no effect on the ability. In exactly 24 hours the creature (or its remains) returns to the point of origin. If this is not possible (because something else occupies that space for example) it is shunted to the nearest safe adjacent space.

What happens is a Shadow Revenant uses this ability while on the Plane of Shadow?

In this instance the affected creature is transported into the very fabric of the Plane of Shadow itself in the space it was occupying, much the same as a creature on the material plane might be buried in the earth. While in the fabric of the plane the creature is immobile and helpless, but cannot be harmed or affected in any way. It retains use of its perceptive senses, and can see and hear what goes on around it. At the end of the 24 hour period, the affected creature returns to its point of origin, whole and able to act.

Shadow Exile is a supernatural ability, and can be ended early by anything that suppresses or dispels supernatural effects.

Shadow Revenant Variants (by Micah Watt)

Deep Shadow Revenant (CR +1)

A Deep Shadow Revenant has an even greater connection to the fabric of the Shadow Plane and an enhanced level of control over darkness. It gains the following abilities;

Umbral Aura (Su) - The revenant is surrounded by an aura that automatically reduces all light sources

(including direct sunlight) by one level within 60' feet. It can suppress this aura at will.

Shadowy Sojourn (Su) The revenant can enter any shadow and emerge from any other it can see within 100 feet. It can do so as part of a move action, and this distance does not count against its movement in any way.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +19) At will - *darkness* 3/ day - *deeper darkness*

Shadow Master Revenant (CR +2)

A Shadow Master Revenant has a terrifying level of control over shadows that are, or were, attached to living creatures.

Fear Aura (Su) A Shadow Master Revenant exudes an unnatural aura that unnerves even the most brave of creatures. Any creature entering within 30' feet of a revenant must make a DC 16 Will save or become *Frightened* for 2d4 rounds. A creature may return once the effect abates, but they are **forever** *shaken* by the sight and in the presence of the revenant. This effect abates if the revenant is slain. Creatures successfully making the save still remain shaken within the 30' aura (but are not forced to flee).

Shadow Master (Su) A Shadow Master Revenant can automatically take control of any Shadow, variant Shadow or creature with the Shadow template that has less HD than the revenant. This control breaks other forms of control including summoning spells and Command Undead abilities or spells.

Umbral Investiture (Su) Once per day, a Shadow Master Revenant can call upon the essence of the Shadow Plane to spontaneously create shadow monsters from the shadows of nearby living creatures. Each creature within 60' feet of the revenant must make a DC 18 Will saving throw, or have its shadow rip free and for a Shadow (monster) under the control of the revenant. The shearing loss of the shadow inflicts 1d4 Wisdom damage on the creature. A creature without a shadow slowly regains it over the course of a few days, as if it were growing back.

Vixxzetiflux

This oozing slug moves along on a bed of a thousand wriggling cilia, leaving a trail of slime behind its sting tipped tail. The buzzing of a thousand insects fills the air.

Vixxzetiflux

CR 2

XP 600

NE Small aberration Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8 Aura mind-numbing aura (30 ft., DC 12) DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size) Hp 19 (3d8+6)

Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +4

Immune sonic

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1d6), sting +3 (1d3 plus poison) Ranged cacophony +4 touch (1d6 sonic) Special Attacks cacophony, poison STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12 Base Atk +2; CMB +1; CMD 13 (can't be tripped) Feats Ability Focus (poison), Improved Initiative Skills Perception +8, Stealth +13, Swim +7 Languages Aklo (can't speak)

ECOlOGY Environment any Organization pair or pack (3–6)

Treasure none SPECIAL ABILITIES

Cacophony (Su) As a standard action, a vixxzetiflux can focus a buzzing sonic attack at a single target within 30 feet. This is a ranged touch attack that deals 1d6 points of sonic damage.

Mind–Numbing Aura (Su) The buzzing aura of the vixxzetiflux numbs the mind and clouds the senses. Any creature within 30 feet of a vixxzetiflux suffers a –1 penalty to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma for as long as he remains within the aura. Treat this penalty as ability drain that is healed as soon as the creature leaves the area of effect. A DC 12 Will save will negate this effect.

When more than a single vixxzetiflux are in close proximity this arua becomes more powerful. For each vixxzetiflux within 30 feet of another of its kind, the area of the aura becomes 30 feet from any single vixxzetiflux. The penalty becomes cumulative, so it is -1 for each vixxzetiflux and the DC for the Will save increases by 2 for each extra vixxzetiflux. This is a sonic, mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based. Poison (Ex) Sting – injury; save Fortitude DC 15; frequency 1/round for 4 rounds; effect 1d3 Dex damage; cure 2 saves. The save DC is Constitutionbased.

Sometimes called scorpion slugs, vixxzetifluxes are otherworldly pack hunters. Showing traits of both slugs and oversized insects, they are obviously not a product of the natural world and originate from somewhere else. A vixxzetiflux resembles a 2 foot long slug with large mandibles, insectoid eyes and a segmented tail tipped with a poisoned stinger. Their underside is covered in a bed of cilia that secrete a slimy mucus that allows them slither along the ground at a brisk pace.

While their poison is deadly, the real threat of the vixxzetiflux comes from the constant buzzing hum they emit from deep within their bodies. They can produce both a mind numbing aura and a shattering sonic attack with it. Their aura becomes more dangerous the larger the pack of vixxzetifluxes encountered as the buzzing hum builds a strange resonance between the creatures.

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