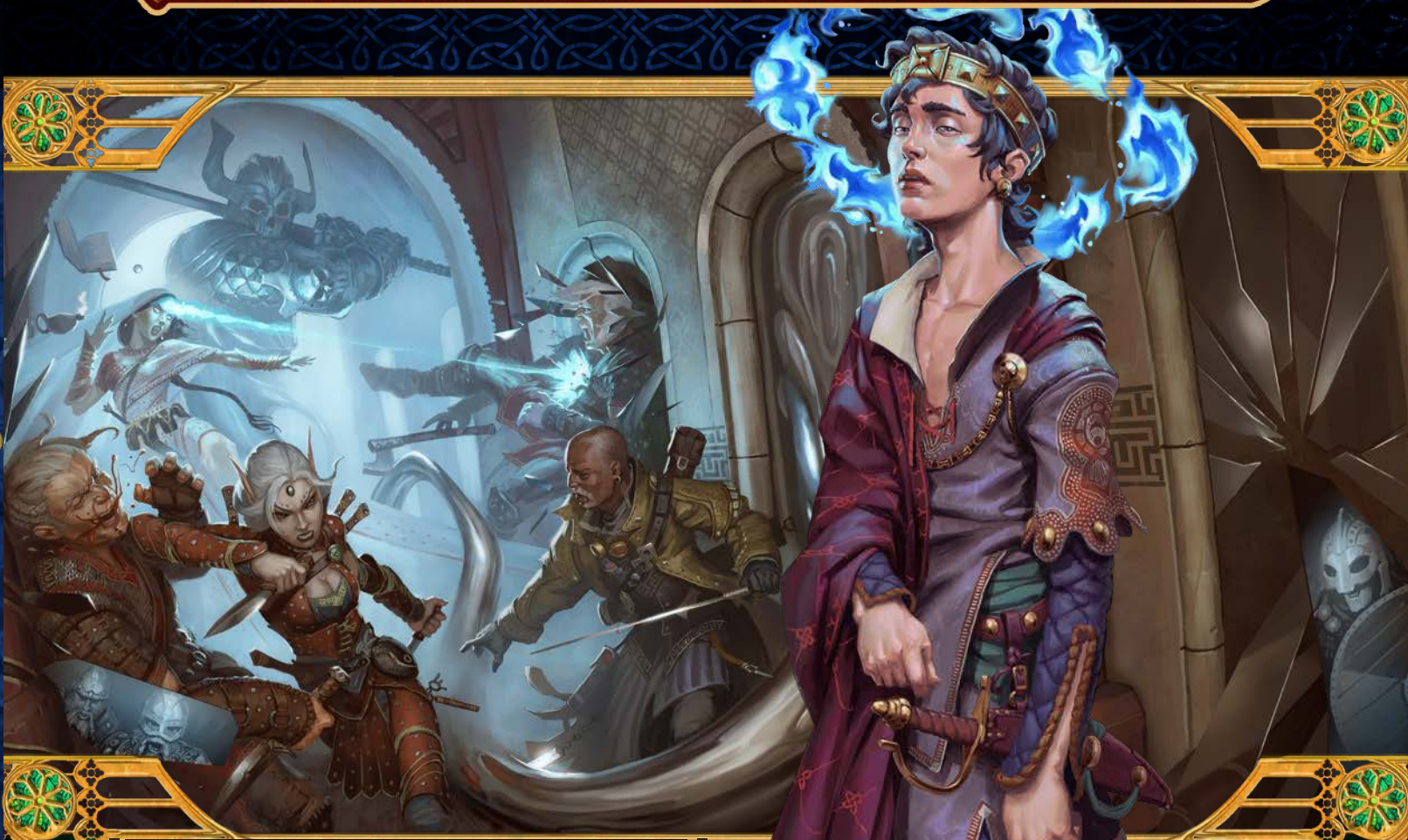


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ADVENTURE PATH[™]



WAR FOR THE
CROWN

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

by Amber E. Scott

PIN
DUR
SKI



PATHFINDER ADVENTURE PATH

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ON THE COVER



The beleaguered Prince Carrius Stavian graces this cover art by Hugh Pindur. In the background, Merisiel, Quinn, and Rivani are about to find more in the hall of mirrors than meets the eye.



ADVENTURE PATH 6 OF 6

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

by Crystal Frasier

2

The Six-Legend Soul

by Amber E. Scott

4

NPC Gallery

by Amber E. Scott

56

Continuing the Campaign

by Crystal Frasier

62

Spirits of Six Emperors

by Lyz Liddell

68

Ulfen Guard

by Ron Lundeen

74

Bestiary

by Kate Baker, Jay Erickson, Tom Hansen, Aerick Lim, and Nathan Reinecke

80

REFERENCE

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

<i>Advanced Class Guide</i>	ACG	<i>Occult Adventures</i>	OA
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>Bestiary 4</i>	B4	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Bestiary 5</i>	B5	<i>Ultimate Intrigue</i>	UI
<i>Mythic Adventures</i>	MA	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM



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Printed in China. I would rather see her lovely step, And the radiant sparkle of her face, Than all the war chariots in Lydia, And soldiers battling in arms.



BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE

I still remember this Adventure Path being nothing more than a few pages in my notebook. War for the Crown seemed like a fantasy back then. It involved major changes to the canon and focused on small talk, parties, and mysteries as much as swinging swords. It involved inventing a lot of new canon for the criminally underserved nation of Taldor. And now I'm wrapping up the very last issue of an Adventure Path I never thought would see the light of day, with a lasting impact on the campaign setting and a new monarch for one of our core nations. Everyone involved put in a lot of extra effort to make War for the Crown stand out!

Speaking of which...

AUTHOR SHOUT-OUTS

Writing an Adventure Path volume is grueling work. It can be great practice, and insightful, and even fun, but it is hard. At 35,000 words, each adventure is the size of a small

novel, but writing novels doesn't normally require this much math (unless, y'know, it's a math novel, in which case I would like to preorder three copies of *Scalene Potter and the Terminal Trigonometry*). A difficult job with a short timeline demands a special breed of creator, and these folks deserve plenty of love and credit for their hard work. Here are the real stars of War for the Crown.

Thurston Hillman: Thursty jumped right from the last volume of Ruins of Azlant to the first volume of War for the Crown without missing a deadline—an attempt that has, until now, killed every writer who attempted it. But that doesn't matter to Thursty, a savage, maple-driven yeti from the frozen north! Seriously, though: Thurston Hillman is an author whose work is always grounded enough in the rules to be an easy development job, but whose ideas are wahoo enough that reading even his rough drafts and pitches is a good time. When he came to me and said, "I want to build an escape room

into my adventure,” I told him to run with it. When he said, “I want to make this unnamed assassin cultist in the outline a creepy clown,” I said “Sure thing, Thursty. Just release my family alive and unharmed,” and he did! He is creative and energetic, takes feedback well, and really knows the system!

Richard Pett: Richard Pett is an author probably best associated with “disturbing, lavish parties,” given his track record of popular, socializing-themed adventures like “The Sixfold Trial” and “Dance of the Damned.” His twisted imagination helped flesh out the excesses of the Taldan nobility.

Ron Lundeen: Ron Lundeen is a perpetual optimist, and as a pessimist, I find that disgusting. Despite our philosophical differences, though, he’s an exciting and powerful author to work with, filled with creative ideas and incredibly organized. He’s a man who can take a prompt like “Give me a cult that knows it’s full of shit and make it believable” and return with “The Twilight Child,” a madcap urban adventure with a dubious chef, a medusa fangirl, and a terrifying warsheep! We’d met briefly at various conventions, but it wasn’t until Ron joined our Paizo team that I appreciated what an extraordinary man he was. Working alongside him on the back matter for the second half of *War for the Crown* has been a delight.

Mikko Kallio: Mikko is another veteran of *Ruins of Azlant*, alongside Amber, Thursty, and Ron, and one I’m glad I had the chance to steal. Perhaps my favorite memory of Mikko is that I had assumed he was a woman, given my unfamiliarity with Finnish names, and so I was a little shocked when I finally met him at PaizoCon and discovered he was quite the gigantic man with an awesome erl piercing. He’s honest, hardworking, and focused, ideal for fleshing out a very complex adventure in a unique city. To no one’s surprise—given his exhaustive list of *Pathfinder* RPG and *Pathfinder Player Companion* credits—Mikko is a dynamo with the rules, providing solid systems for weird encounters and exhaustive magical defenses that make perfect sense for military strongholds in a world where magic exists.

John Compton: A powerful supercomputer like John seemed like the obvious choice to write about the city of Axis, the embodiment of law and order, so take that, all you critics who insist we hired a computer only for diversity’s sake! Real talk: John is *probably* not a computer. He’s a ridiculously dedicated and hardworking human who happens to have mathematical precision, a great grasp of narrative, and the kind of barely concealed cruel streak that makes for a great writer.

Amber E. Scott: Fun fact: the first time I met Amber Scott, I thought she was so cool and intimidating, I almost cried. Today I cry only when we geek out about

Mad Max: Fury Road together, because Amber is basically my sister by another mister. I know the running theme for these introductions has been “They write such weird ideas,” but Amber is the exception. Amber writes the familiar, and she writes it very, very well. She’ll write about vampires and ghosts and shadow assassins and make them feel so damn alive that you want to read more about them instead of set them up to be knocked down by the PCs. And her farewell speech for little Carrius just broke my cold, shriveled heart. It doesn’t hurt that she’s also one of the friendliest, most empathic, most sarcastic people you’ll ever meet. I think it’s fair to say I wouldn’t be a professional writer today without Amber’s advice and insight.

Our ultimate hope for *War for the Crown* was to present a story that shows a complex, imperfect world and the complex, imperfect solutions necessary to make change happen. It’s easy enough to run the campaign and Princess Eutopia as traditional “good versus evil,” and the story certainly has its unrepentant bad actors in the form of the Immaculate Circle, but the larger hope was to present a campaign with more than one road to victory. Everyone’s campaigns can and will turn out a little bit different.

The *War for the Crown* doesn’t have to end at the table. If you like talking with others, finding solutions to tricky problems, and arguing for a cause, consider looking into local politics. Every community needs passionate, invested souls with insight and drive to help steer toward better solutions and serve the local needs. I live in a town of 4,000 people where only 80 votes were cast in the last mayoral election. If you can get 80 people excited about your ideas—and how many gamers aren’t amazing and passionate?—you can be a mayor! Or a council member! Or part of the school board! Republics and constitutional democracies are built on the idea that citizen involvement isn’t just a good thing—it’s necessary! Even if you feel like the odds are hopeless, you can’t win if you don’t play. And honestly, you don’t even need to win. You just need to carry the light as long as you can and leave enough room for someone to join you.

You’ve changed a fake world. You can change the real one too.



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THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1: Death of an Heir

Part 2: Carving the Circle

Part 3: Through the Granite Walls

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Spirits of Six Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

PART 1: DEATH OF AN HEIR.....5

The heroes return to Taldor to find Princess Eutropia dead at the hands of assassins, then investigate the scene of the murder to determine what happened to the princess.

PART 2: CARVING THE CIRCLE.....12

The heroes follow the trail of Eutropia's killers to an abandoned government library. Within the building, they find the secret cabal known as the Immaculate Circle.

PART 3: THROUGH THE GRANITE WALLS.....30

Prince Carrius has taken the throne and declared the heroes to be enemies of the crown. The only avenue left for them is to breach the castle's defenses and confront Carrius.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The Six-Legend Soul" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.



The PCs begin this adventure at 16th level.



The PCs should be 17th level by the time they begin their assault on the palace.

The PCs should be 18th level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Two hundred and fifty years ago, Duke Panivar Lotheed achieved immortality, after a fashion. Through his alliance with a powerful kimenhul sahkil, he was able to cheat death, a feat accomplished after a lifelong investigation into the afterlife and how to avoid it. Following his achievement, he drew other nobles to his side with the promise that any Taldan of sufficiently noble bearing could—by wit or force of will—find a way to escape the final judgment of the gods and rule on the mortal plane as they deserved, a philosophy that eventually allowed him to form a secret society he called the Immaculate Circle.

The Immaculate Circle has dabbled in Taldor's politics for 2 centuries, hidden in their stronghold beneath the ghost town of Hyden in the Hyden Marches. With the recent upheaval surrounding the throne's inheritance, Lotheed saw an opportunity. He contracted his kimenhul once more to rip the spirit of the departed Prince Carrius Stavian from the afterlife—a traumatic process that heavily damaged the teenager's soul. To repair this damage, Panivar dispatched night hag agents to the Astral Plane to steal the legends—the psychic impression left in the Astral by the memories of the living—of six of Taldor's greatest emperors, and use an artifact called the *Soul Crucible* to stitch these ragged bits of spirit into a functioning soul he could resurrect as the prince of Taldor.

Carrius is a body held together by a patchwork soul made of six legends; at times, he hardly knows who he is. The legends of Taldor's glorious past slowly grow more powerful over time, incubating within a mortal vessel. At first, the spirits were a distant voice in the back of Carrius's mind. Now they take over for periods of time, dominating the young prince's speech and thoughts outright and working him like a puppet. Carrius has become a powerful medium, but one at the mercy of the six spirits influencing him—and his six spirits want nothing more than to rule Taldor as they do in the grand stories people weave about them.

Kings do not want to be ruled, however, and the influence the Immaculate Circle holds is intolerable to the legends of great emperors. The six have conspired in the dark recesses of Carrius's mind, and while they cannot level their considerable power against the circle directly, it is all too easy to turn loyal agents against their would-be masters, removing both potential obstacles to their collective rule.

Destroying Panivar Lotheed is not enough to stop the spirit-ridden Carrius and remove him from the throne. The spirits have grown too strong for Carrius to fight off alone. Only the boy's death—or the dispersal of the spirits within him—will allow Carrius's sister, Princess

Eutropia, to rule. Killing the spirits may be the same as killing the boy, though, as their influence is all that's keeping the shreds of his soul from falling apart.

PART 1: DEATH OF AN HEIR

The heroes return from Axis to find the palace in mourning. Only days earlier, Eutropia fell to an assassin in her headquarters, the Palace of Birdsong. Martella Lotheed is beside herself, and Prince Carrius is distraught to the point of insensibility.

The PCs probably learned of the plot when they overheard a magical communication between the masked leader of Oppara's Norgorber cult, the Masked Marquis, and the vampire Nenareen at the end of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #131: The Reaper's Right Hand*. The PCs will no doubt have questions they wish to ask and actions they intend to take. Section A, "The Circumstances of Eutropia's Death," can happen immediately if the PCs wish to examine the scene of the murder, or they may choose to wait until after the funeral. If they ask Martella about the decorum of investigating the princess's death before she is laid to rest, Martella avers that Eutropia would want the PCs to investigate her murder as soon as possible. If they wait, valuable clues may be lost to time.

If the PCs ask Carrius about his wishes, he seems distant, almost catatonic. After a moment, though, he rouses himself and becomes wildly animated. "You must find who did this," he exhorts the PCs. "You MUST. Eutropia and I had just found each other again. Whoever is responsible for her death... they must meet justice."

Carrius orders that the PCs be given unrestricted access to Eutropia's room and belongings. Then he lapses once more into his quiet grief.

The PCs' ultimate goal in this part of the adventure is to pay their respects, receive the necklace that Eutropia concealed her soul within, and discover the location of the Immaculate Circle's headquarters in the ruins of Hyden.

TIMELINE OF EUTROPIA'S ASSASSINATION

Eutropia made a risky decision to do nothing to prevent the assassination, realizing it was an opportunity to draw out whatever secretive force has been stalking her, tampering with her brother, and goading Maxillar Pythareus from arrogant regressive into a warmongering maniac. Using magic, she transferred her soul into a family heirloom necklace, leaving her catatonic body to be murdered and trusting her agents' cleverness and resourcefulness to piece together the clues she

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1: Death of an Heir

Part 2: Carving the Circle

Part 3: Through the Granite Walls

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Spirits of Six Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

left behind. The following timeline (in days) can help adjudicate the PCs' actions and answer questions.

–4 **Days:** Eutropia receives a coded communication from one of her agents, indicating the Brotherhood of Silence has been contracted to assassinate her. She tells no one and burns the communication.

–3 **Days:** Eutropia retrieves the *thrums of the hidden soul* from her personal collection. She summons her advisor and adds a bequest to the PCs in her will.

–2 **Days:** After locking Taldogis in the kitchen and dismissing Ferna for the evening, Eutropia puts her necklace away in a special wooden case in her dressing table. She then uses the *thrums of the hidden soul* to send her soul into the necklace.

That night, the assassin Rhien uses a *scroll of teleport* to teleport into the palace. He creeps into the dressing room, where Taldogis, who has been released from the kitchen, attacks and bites him. Rhien kills the dog and then stabs Eutropia in the back. She falls forward, spurting blood. Rhien waits a minute to make sure she is dead, then uses a second *scroll of teleport* to return to the archive.

–1 **Day:** Archbanker Lady Paril, a cleric of Abadar, attempts to resurrect Eutropia with a *raise dead* spell with no result. She casts *gentle repose* on the remains, which are placed in the tomb. Carrius, influenced by the legends riding his spirit, hides the key to the archive in Taldogis's stomach before the dog is buried. Funeral planning commences.

o **Days:** The PCs return from Axis.

+1 **Day:** Eutropia is buried at noon. The will is read shortly after the funeral, and the PCs receive the necklace bequeathed to them.

A. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF EUTROPIA'S DEATH

The PCs have a few avenues open to them. They can interrogate the palace staff who were there the night Eutropia died, they can examine Eutropia's room, and they can use magic to investigate the murder. The PCs don't need to follow all these leads to find Eutropia's assassins—they can use a mix of some or all the leads. Although the investigations in this portion of the adventure strongly hint that the Immaculate Circle has stolen Princess Eutropia's soul (an assumption Carrius is happy to encourage), her soul remains safely inside the hand-me-down necklace she wills to the PCs.

Each of the following avenues of investigation requires approximately 4 hours.

A1. The Servants' Stories

The PCs can interrogate as many of the staff members as they like, but most tell the same story: they heard and saw nothing unusual until the alarm was raised, and shortly thereafter, rumors began to circulate that the princess was dead.

The guards who were on-duty the night of the murder report seeing and hearing nothing suspicious until they heard Ferna, Eutropia's lady-in-waiting, scream. If one of the PCs succeeds at a DC 22 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, one guard recalls Taldogis trotting up the corridor shortly after Eutropia retired. Thinking nothing of it, the guard allowed the dog into Eutropia's suite. Ferna confirms that Eutropia asked for Taldogis to be shut into the kitchen, and the cook admits the dog escaped sometime in the night.

The exception to these stories is that of **Ferna Denniar** (NG female Taldane expert 5), Eutropia's lady-in-waiting.

Asking Martella or another trusted informant reveals that Ferna has served Eutropia for 10 years, and the two have a close bond of friendship and respect. The PCs may have encountered Ferna earlier in a minor role, but even if they haven't spoken to her directly, they can easily recall seeing her near the princess on many occasions. She's distraught, but does her best to answer the PCs' questions.

"It was like any other night," Ferna says, choking back tears. "My Lady prefers to dress herself for bed. I entered when she rang the bell to comb her hair and put away her clothes and adornments. She seemed distracted, but that's no surprise with everything that's been going on. I asked if she needed anything else, and she said she'd ring if she did. Then I l-left. I-it was the last time I ever s-saw her alive..." Ferna's shoulders begin to shake.

The lady-in-waiting takes a moment to compose herself. "I sleep in the room next door, in case my Lady needs me in the night. I woke up when it was still dark—I couldn't think why. A moment later I heard a noise from my Lady's room. I went to her door and called, asking if she wanted me. There was no answer, but I had a sense something was wrong. I opened the door and saw her... sitting there at her table... there was b-blood everywhere..." Ferna breaks down, sobbing loudly as she covers her face.

The PCs can coax extra details from Ferna by gently interrogating her, drawing out more of her recollections. A PC can attempt a Diplomacy check with a maximum of one other PC aiding on the check. The table on page 7 shows the information the PCs receive in return.

The PCs may think of other skills to use in place of Diplomacy, such as Perform to put Ferna at ease or



even Intimidate to firmly order Ferna to focus. Allow these at your discretion. Using loud or threatening tactics—screaming, promising punishment, or accusing Ferna of conspiring with the assassins—imposes a –10 circumstance penalty on the check as fear shuts down Ferna’s memory.

This check can be attempted only once. After Ferna answers the PCs’ questions to the best of her ability, she breaks down and cannot recall any further details.

Check Result Information Gained

15	“The noise that woke me up was Taldogis, the princess’s dog. I heard him barking, and then he stopped. That’s how I knew something was wrong. The poor beast had tried to defend his mistress, and it cost him his life.”
20	“Poor Taldogis. I remember thinking it odd that my Lady asked him to be shut out that night. She said he’d been disturbing her sleep of late. I shut him in the kitchen as she asked, but he must have gotten out and returned to her door. We buried him out by the kennel.” (Eutropia suspected the attempt on her life, and didn’t want her dog caught in the attack. The faithful hound could not be dissuaded.)
25	“Now that I think about it, it’s unusual that my Lady was still at her table when... when it happened. She usually retires as soon as I leave. I don’t know why she would have gotten up in the middle of the night, nor sat there while they... while they k-killed her.” (Eutropia sat at her dressing table while she transferred her soul into the necklace she bequeathed to the PCs. Once the ritual was complete, her soul fled her body, leaving it incapable of moving on its own.)
30	“Nothing seemed unusual or out of place that night. The princess had lost her necklace, I remember. It was a simple chain she wore from time to time—her mother’s I believe. She’d been wearing it earlier, and when I asked for it so I could lock it in the jewel case, she said she put it away after the clasp had broken earlier.” (This is the necklace Eutropia leaves to the PCs. She had left it in a special box in her dressing table, and didn’t want Ferna to put it with her other jewels, in case there was confusion over her bequests.)

A2. The Faithful Dead

Princess Eutropia’s beloved pet, Taldogis, tried to defend his mistress from her attackers. While Eutropia had Taldogis locked out that night, the wily dog snuck out of the kitchen and was let into her chambers innocently by one of Eutropia’s guards.

The PCs can dig up Taldogis’s remains, which are buried near the kennel, but the dog’s body has begun to decompose. This makes examination difficult, but not impossible. With a successful DC 25 Survival or Heal check, a PC finds shreds of bloody cloth and human flesh in Taldogis’s mouth. Taldogis took a bite out of one of the attackers before he was killed. The residual flesh in the dog’s mouth can be used to aid in a *scrying* or *discern location* spell, which could lead the PCs to the Immaculate Circle in Part 2, or the PCs may think of another use for it.

Examining Taldogis: With a successful DC 30 Survival or Heal check, a PC notices a hard object in the remains of Taldogis’s stomach. A quick examination reveals a small tarnished key. The placement of the key is consistent with Taldogis having bitten the pocket off of one of the attackers and inadvertently swallowing the key. Like the flesh, the key can be used as a focus for a *discern location* spell.

In truth, Carrius planted the key in Taldogis’s stomach as a lure to draw the PCs to the Immaculate Circle stronghold. He used Taldogis’s unplanned death to further his plan.

Speaking with Taldogis: A combination of *Speak with dead* and *Speak with animals* spells (or in extreme cases, *raise dead* and *Speak with animals*) can allow the PCs to learn Taldogis’s accounting of events first-hand: That his “mom” was quite distressed after receiving a piece of paper 4 days before he died, and that she found “old thread” and then she made “Ferner” lock him up, but he was worried and so escaped. Then a nice guard let him into the hall leading to his mother’s room. There he encountered “bad shadow man,” and bit his hand. Taldogis can’t read, and so has no idea what the paper that upset Eutropia may have been, but if resurrected, he eventually vomits up the key.

Examining the Key: The key is the size of an ordinary door key and is made of silver. It is tied with an ornate bow that is decorated with Taldor’s coat of arms. With a successful DC 25 Knowledge (history) check, a PC recognizes the style of the coat of arms as one used roughly 200 years ago.

A3. Arcane Investigations (CR 16)

The PCs might turn to their spells, hoping divinations will lead them to Eutropia’s killer. Their divinations will gain them some information, but may leave more questions unanswered. The PCs could come up with creative spell use that requires on-the-spot adjudication, but some of the more common spells they might cast are detailed below.

Contact Other Plane: Asking “who killed Eutropia?” and similar questions return answers consistent with the assassin, Rhien, and the Brotherhood of Silence, if the PCs receive true answers. Though technically the

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1: Death of an Heir

Part 2: Carving the Circle

Part 3: Through the Granite Walls

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Spirits of Six Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

NEW MAGIC ITEM

The *thrum of the hidden soul* is old and unusual magic originally hailing from Azlant. Ragtag magic, it was created by desperate survivors who prayed for any means of escape from the destruction around them, even if it meant hiding away in the vain hope of someday being discovered and freed by strangers.

THRUM OF THE HIDDEN SOUL

PRICE
32,000 GP

SLOT none

CL 13th

WEIGHT —

AURA moderate necromancy

A *thrum of the hidden soul* appears as a single, unbreakable crimson thread. To use the *thrum*, you tie the thread around any Fine or smaller nonmagical object and will your soul into the marked object. The thread disintegrates and your soul transfers into the marked object as if it were a *magic jar*, leaving your body alive but catatonic. You cannot move your body or use its senses. You can remain within the *magic jar* for an unlimited amount of time, but cannot sense your surroundings or possess any other living creature. You may return to your original body at will. If your body is slain, you may only escape the *magic jar* if your body is resurrected or else a *wish*, *miracle*, or similar effect is used to restore you.

While within the *magic jar*, your soul is shielded from divination attempts. Spells such as *scrying* show the location of your corpse, and spells such as *divination* return information consistent with your body's death. While your soul inhabits it, the *magic jar* appears non-magical to divination magic, including *detect magic*, *identify*, and *legend lore*.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 16,000 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *magic jar*, *permanency*



of mighty giants who guard the edge of creation" with the foothills of the World's Edge Mountains. With a successful DC 25 Knowledge (local) check, a PC can surmise that "homes forgotten but not undwelt" may refer to one of Taldor's many ghost towns, abandoned as the empire's fortunes have receded. With a successful DC 35 Knowledge (nobility) check, a PC recalls that the Lotheed family are landgraves of the Hyden Marches, including the long-abandoned town of Hyden; spending at least an hour in the palace's archives grants a +10 circumstance bonus on this last check.

Scrying/Greater Scrying: If the PCs have the fibers and flesh from Taldogis's mouth, they can use spells to find Rhien. If they succeed at a *scrying* spell, they receive an image of Rhien entering the Imperial Archive building in a rundown town. With a successful DC 25 Knowledge (geography) check a PC can identify the area in question. Armed with their description, they can also consult with a local guide or Martella Lotheed to learn about the Lotheed holdings in the Hyden Marches.

The PCs might get the idea to scry Eutropia herself, thinking perhaps that there was a body switch or a kidnapping disguised as a murder. The magic of the *thrum of the hidden soul* means that *scrying* and similar spells return an image of Eutropia's corpse.

A4. The Murder Scene (CR 16)

Eutropia's room is in the old regent's apartment on the second level of the Palace of Birdsong (see page 48 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #128: Songbird, Scion, Saboteur* for details and a map of the palace). Corridors to her room are guarded at all times, and the windows of her sitting room are locked, barred, and warded with *arcane lock*.

The princess's sitting room is a small suite with open doors leading to her bedchamber. A large wardrobe stands across from a locked jewelry cabinet. A full-length mirror stands near the wardrobe. Hooks on the wall display a variety of scarves, shawls, and jackets. A silver mirror in a polished wooden frame engraved with flowers and vines sits atop a small vanity. In front of the vanity, a velvet-cushioned chair sits in a pool of dried blood. Rusty-red spatters cover the mirror and table as well. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Disable Device or Perception check confirms a lack of evidence of tampering with the windows or doors.

Nothing in the room has been disturbed. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check is certain there was no attempt to tamper with any of the locks or valuables in Eutropia's room. There's no evidence of burglary.

Divinations reveal the blood as belonging to Eutropia. With a successful DC 20 Heal check or DC 25 Perception check, a PC can deduce that the blood indicates Eutropia was sitting still when she was stabbed. Blood sprayed

princess killed herself, by removing her soul, the magic of the *thrum of the hidden soul* misleads divinations.

Divination: Asking who Eutropia's assassins are or where to find them points the PCs in the direction of the former Imperial Archives building in the ruined town of Hyden, in the Hyden Marches region in the foothills of the World's Edge Mountains. The response takes the form of the following riddle: "Among the watchers of Taldor old, at the feet of mighty giants who guard the edge of creation, stands home forgotten but not undwelt. A shadow falls over a crypt of knowledge; blood seeps from the walls."

With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (geography) or DC 25 Knowledge (local) check, a PC connects "the feet

out from the wound over the table and mirror, and then trickled down her body to pool on the ground below. She didn't stand up or fight back. This is where Eutropia used the *thrum of the hidden soul* to hide her soul away. This is a rare and unusual magic item Eutropia liberated from her family's private stores.

With a DC 25 Perception check, a PC can find a small bloodstain near the door to the bedroom. This blood doesn't belong to Eutropia; it's Rhien's, who was bitten by Eutropia's dog. Section A2 has more information on faithful Taldogis.

All of this suggests the killers used magic to enter Eutropia's room. With a successful DC 30 Perception check, a PC finds a tiny shred of parchment among the fibers of the rug in Eutropia's bedroom—the remains of a magic scroll, readily identifiable to any spellcaster. That PC also uncovers a broken piece of gray porcelain that doesn't match the palace's dinnerware or decorations—part of Rhien's unholy symbol of Norgorber that was broken in his fight with Taldogis, and fell free from his clothing when he stabbed Eutropia. This piece is enough for PCs to target with a *discern location* spell, should they not find Rhien's flesh or the key in Taldogis's stomach.

A5. Her Royal Self

The PCs might think to ask if they can examine Eutropia's body. After Ferna raised the alarm, a local cleric of Abadar, Archbanker Lady Paril, was summoned. After attempting a *raise dead* spell from a scroll, which failed, the cleric cast *gentle repose* on Eutropia's corpse. Her body lies in the antechamber of her family crypt, waiting for interment. Carrius grants the PCs permission to view the corpse, provided they treat Eutropia with respect. Lady Paril and two imperial guards accompany the PCs to oversee the investigation.

Eutropia's body lies on a slab, covered with a gauzy white sheet. Beneath the sheet, her figure lies pale and still, her arms crossed over her chest. Someone has dressed her in a simple white robe. A golden medallion engraved with the royal family's coat of arms lies around her neck.

Physical Examination: The cleric reports that Eutropia was stabbed from behind. The PCs can turn Eutropia over and find the single stab wound, as reported. There are no other wounds on the body, including on her hands and forearms. With a successful DC 25 Heal check or DC 30 Perception check, a PC can intuit the following: Eutropia was stabbed once, fell forward (spraying blood on her table and mirror), and bled to death within a minute or two. The stab wound nicked her heart, but didn't pierce it. This information should leave the PCs with the conviction that there's something strange about Eutropia's assassination. The noted swashbuckler didn't fight back or attempt to get help after she was stabbed; she just sat there until she died. (Since Eutropia's soul

INVESTIGATION REWARDS

As the PCs' investigations help them piece together the strange course of the princess's murder, they accumulate experience. Award the PCs 102,400 XP if they discover that the princess's assassin is lying low in the abandoned town of Hyden without Carrius's aid. In addition, award them 25,600 XP for each of the following clues they discover throughout their investigations:

- Find the key in Taldogis's stomach.
- Track Rhein, either via his flesh, bloodstain, or broken holy symbol.
- Conclude Eutropia's soul is missing.
- Confirm there was no forceful entry.
- Realize Eutropia did not fight back.

was already in the necklace bequeathed to the PCs, she left an uninhabited warm body to be killed.)

Magical Interrogation: Casting *speaking with dead* on Eutropia fails, as her soul is locked away in the enchanted necklace. With a successful DC 18 Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft check, a PC knows there are several reasons why a *speaking with dead* spell can fail. Someone (possibly the killer) may have already cast *speaking with dead* on Eutropia—in which case the spell won't work for another 4 days—but given that *raise dead* failed, it's more likely that Eutropia's soul was stolen in some fashion.

B. A ROYAL FUNERAL

Though Eutropia was a royal, and possibly the heir to the throne, Martella Lotheed recommends against a public funeral—or even announcing her death. Without an obvious heir in place, Eutropia's death could plunge the country into all-out civil war, or even invite attack from enemy kingdoms. Martella recommends delaying the announcement until the PCs have a chance to investigate Eutropia's death and hopefully bring the assassin to justice. While the PCs investigate, the imperial advisors work on a plan for succession and a way to handle a transfer of power without weakening the country.

B1. At the Mausoleum

As a result of the complicated political situation, there is no procession for Eutropia. No speeches are made. No black banners fly. The PCs are invited to attend a ceremony at noon in the private courtyard of the Palace of Birdsong where the royal mausoleum stands. Eutropia's ancestors lie in state there—including Stavian III, if he has died and been returned to the palace grounds.

Carrius requests the PCs join him at noon in the courtyard to say farewell to Eutropia.

It's a dark day, with heavy gray clouds overhead. A constant drizzle of rain falls like a shroud over the courtyard. Prince

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1: Death of an Heir

Part 2: Carving the Circle

Part 3: Through the Granite Walls

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Spirits of Six Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

Carrius stands at the entrance to the mausoleum. Behind his slight form, the body of Eutropia lies on a slab.

The princess has been adorned in royal regalia. A golden silk gown enrobes her body, and an emerald-studded tiara lies on her cold brow. Carrius bows his head and speaks a brief eulogy, his voice weary with grief.

"I knew my sister for far too short a time," Carrius says. "First, I was taken from her. Now, she has been taken from me. We should have been there to support each other as we grew up, worked together to lead our nation into security and prosperity. We live in a world too callous to allow a brother and sister the simple comfort of happiness in family. Now, all we survivors can do is mourn her, and carry on."

After Carrius is done speaking, he walks around Eutropia's slab, saying a last farewell to his sister. Martella Lotheed, the PCs, Ferna, several close family servants, the imperial advisors, and any other NPCs who have become important to the PCs and Eutropia over the course of the adventure may follow him to pay respects.

When the ceremony is done, priests of Abadar bring Eutropia to her stone coffin on a lower level of the mausoleum. Carrius invites Martella and the PCs inside for some refreshments in the library before the will is read.

B2. The Library

Once the PCs are in the library, the rainstorm intensifies. Rain beats on the library windows and the crackling fire in the hearth hardly seems to warm the room at all. Carrius waves away a servant and pours his own cup of tea, but lets it grow cold on the table next to him while he broods.

Martella asks where the PCs are in their investigation. The library affords an opportunity for the PCs to chat with Martella and Carrius, and for the players to roleplay. They could discuss their feelings about Eutropia, their plans for finding her killers, or the future of Taldor.

As the conversation winds down, Carrius seems to rouse himself. He fixes the PCs with his intense gaze and says, "A callous world didn't take my sister away from me. People did. Do whatever it takes to find Eutropia's killer. I beg you to stop them. Bring them to justice. Do this and you may have anything I now possess: my wealth, this palace, even the throne. Send my sister's killers to answer before the same courts she now stands before!"

The PCs can promise, or not. Regardless, when Carrius is done with his speech he falls back in his seat, exhausted. A moment later a servant offers to help him upstairs, and Carrius agrees, but not before pushing a

small lockbox across the table, adding "I recovered these items from the Palace of Birdsong's vault. I trust you can put them to good use."

Treasure: Carrius's lockbox contains a +3 alchemical silver heavy mace, a pearly white spindle ioun stone, a ring of spell storing, a rod of cancellation carefully wrapped in sheepskin, three scrolls of mage's magnificent mansion, and three scrolls of mass cure serious wounds.

B3. The Will Is Read

After several hours, Princess Eutropia's executor arrives to read her will.

Princess Eutropia's legal advisor, a plump, elderly woman with an enormous pompadour, invites you all to sit. Carrius has returned for the will reading and sits next to Martella. In a precise voice, the legal advisor reads out a seemingly endless number of dry legal paragraphs detailing all the assets under Eutropia's control. Most goes to Carrius, with various bequests for Martella, Ferna, and other beloved servants and friends.

Finally, the legal advisor reads an addendum tacked on to the end of the will. "To those heroes who have recently entered my life, and done so much for the country I love, I can think of no suitable bequest. Their deeds go far beyond monetary compensation. I ask instead that they receive the silver chain kept in the wooden box in my dressing-table—a gift from my mother that always helped me feel close to her. I beseech them to keep it always near, as a reminder of our bond of friendship and trust."

Carrius retires as soon as the will-reading is complete. Ferna retrieves the necklace and offers it to the PCs. Martella smiles at seeing the simple chain and its teardrop pendant. "She got that back in charm school. She used to wear it all the time."

With a successful DC 20 Sense Motive or DC 25 Perception check, a PC notices a confused expression flit across Ferna's face. If a PC asks the lady-in-waiting, Ferna admits that she saw Eutropia wear the necklace from time to time, and that it seemed to be a beloved piece of jewelry. "It's not particularly valuable, though, and she always kept it in a drawer in her jewelry cabinet. I don't remember ever seeing it in a special box before."

If the PCs ask the legal advisor if there's anything unusual about their bequest, she replies, "Only that it was added so recently. The princess summoned me only a few days past to add the bequest to the will. I had to come the day she called—she was insistent it be done immediately."

Examining the Necklace: The necklace doesn't radiate any magical auras. While within the jewelry,



Eutropia has only the vaguest awareness of the world around her. She knows if the Immaculate Circle believes her dead, they will likely be confident and overplay their hand, exposing themselves to the PCs. More importantly, she fully expects that they will watch for her resurrection—through spies or divination magic—and send far more dangerous forces to finish their work if anyone attempts to resurrect her before the secret society is exposed.

Only if the PCs use the necklace as the target of a *speak with dead* spell do they sense Eutropia's presence within. They can ask half the usual number of questions and receive ghostly, whispered answers in their mind (the answers come from Eutropia, though that may not be clear). Eutropia knows the Immaculate Circle is the group that planned her assassination, and she warns the PCs not to restore her to life until they are certain her killers won't strike again. She doesn't know where the Immaculate Circle keeps their base, only that they operate somewhere east of Oppara.

B4. Carrius's Revelations

If the PCs' own investigations don't point them toward Rhien or the town of Hyden within a day after the funeral, or their investigations stall out (or you simply have a group uninterested in investigating), Carrius returns from his seclusion and admits to having detailed visions that began when he saw his sister dead.

Carrius twists a handkerchief around his fingers several times before finding the words. "I... I've been seeing things, these past few days. Horrible visions. The men who held me captive in Yanmass—they worked for a secret society. I remember them dragging me back from the grave. I think they always meant to kill Maxillar and my sister and then use me as their puppet emperor. At least until you rescued me.

"It's all still a jumble... They brought me back somewhere dark and lonely, overlooked by the World's Edge Mountains. I remember the first time I saw daylight, Antios's Crown stood perhaps fifty miles off to the northwest.

"Now... that my sister lies dead, I fear they'll come for me, and drug me and control me again. And if they could drag my soul back from the dead, I fear what they may have done to Eutropia's. If—if I could have seen any of this earlier, then my sister would still be with me now. You have to stop them, please!"

Carrius's revelation is enough to point the PCs to Hyden, which stands approximately 50 miles southeast of Antios's Crown—a details easily discovered by searching older maps in the palace's archives or with a successful DC 25 Knowledge (geography) or (nobility) check.

The Carrius speaking now is still the genuine prince (spells such as *discern lies* reveal everything he says as truthful), but the spirits riding him feed him subtle visions. The legends plan to steer Eutropia's loyal

agents—no doubt thirsty for revenge—against the only other force that could still bind them. With any luck, one side or the other would win a pyrrhic victory, preventing any power from opposing or controlling them.

C. HYDEN (CR 17)

Whether they track down Hyden as part of the old Lotheed holdings, or identify and magically locate the assassin Rhien, the PCs eventually take the fight to the Immaculate Circle.

The town of Hyden was once a prosperous mining and farming community in the foothills of the World's Edge Mountains, in the Porthmos Prefecture. The Lotheeds have ruled the Hyden Marches—the surrounding foothills and lakes—since the family earned their noble title for cunning and magical mastery during the Fifth Army of Exploration. Most assume that, like countless similar towns across Taldor, Hyden simply ran afoul of the nation's dwindling fortunes, and its people moved on as the soil was depleted and the mines played out.

But Hyden's fields remain fertile, and the mines still bear veins of copper, malachite, and even gem-quality cuprite. In truth, Hyden lies dead and forgotten because Duke Panivar Lotheed stripped it from written record, relocating the citizens and razing the roads to and from his family's primary holding once he won dominion over the much richer Meratt county to the west. The abandoned city made an ideal setting for his blasphemous research, and its isolation later made it a perfect stronghold for the Immaculate Circle.

Hyden's urban core was a bustling population center at one point, handling administration for the entire county and supporting a thriving population of jewelers, metalworkers, and even a national mint. Today, most of the buildings are vacant and crumbling, but signs of passage—from carriages and horses, primarily—are abundant even to the untrained eye. Following these trails to the archive building near the old court and crumbling Lotheed castle requires only a successful DC 15 Survival check or some ability to magically locate Rhien in the archives.

Creature: Expecting a reprisal for killing the princess, Panivar summoned an additional guardian to prowl Hyden: an unusual qolok sahkil called Chadirrex Who Frays the Edges. While a physically powerful specimen, Chadirrex's true joy lies in taking treasures and relationships from others, leaving its victims poor and alone. The sahkil usually attacks by appearing next to a creature using its skip between ability, swallowing the target, and then passing back to the Ethereal Plane where it imbues its victim with a phobia of former friends or greatest achievements before ultimately releasing its prey.

Chadirrex doesn't press its attacks long enough to kill or be killed, vastly preferring to hit and run. Confronting it in a fair fight requires either requires tracking the beast to its

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1: Death of an Heir

Part 2: Carving the Circle

Part 3: Through the Granite Walls

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Spirits of Six Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

THE INNER CIRCLE

The Immaculate Circle itself consists of nearly a hundred nobles, scholars, and key bureaucrats across Taldor who visit this stronghold once a year for society meetings but otherwise operate on their own and communicate through clandestine operatives. The controlling body, the Inner Circle, dwells in the stronghold at least part time, though many maintain lives beyond the compound (Lotheed keeps a former laboratory and bedchamber in the Palace of Birdsong). The Inner Circle consists of the following:

Duke Panivar Lotheed: A wizard and master of the secrets of the beyond, Lotheed has headed his family for almost 3 centuries, posing as a succession of six reclusive patriarchs.

Lady Nenareen Adella: The Duchess of Blood found alchemical immortality by refining elf blood, transforming herself into a vampire. She is the only Inner Circle member who has completely abandoned society and lives entirely in the shadows.

Count Barenby Ghoom: The Huntsmaster sought to claim immortality by stalking a legendary fey and eating its heart, but instead found himself enslaved and transformed until rescued—a shame he hides to this day.

Earl Travarak Denzarni: The Dopant King stole his immortality from an obsessed but overly trusting scholar, transforming his body into an ever-changing magical fluid that keeps him perpetually vital.

Sir Milon Jeroth: The PCs likely dispatched this cunning rakshasa in *Pathfinder Adventure Path 130: City in the Lion's Eye*, but if Jeroth escaped he hides here, ready to exact revenge.

lair in the ethereal version of Hyden's former bank, or else goading it into attacking by using friendship and kindness to break the phobias it instills. A condition of Chadirrex's summoning prevents it from entering the old archives.

CHADIRREX

CR 17

102,400 XP

Advanced qolok sahkil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 217, 288)
hp 279

PART 2: CARVING THE CIRCLE

Once the PCs locate the Immaculate Circle's stronghold, they must penetrate its depths and find the leaders of the Circle: the vampire known as the Duchess of Blood, the shapeshifting Dopant King Travarak Denzarni, the

otherworldly Huntsmaster Barenby Ghoom, and Duke Panivar Lotheed I, a 3-centuries-old wizard.

Rather than build an obvious lair beneath his old family castle, Panivar elected to carve his own secret retreat beneath the old government archive building using magic and conjured minions. Visiting Circle members stay in the town's various abandoned homes.

D. IMPERIAL ARCHIVES

Four crumbling stone columns flank the bricked-over front doors of this two-story stone building. The face of a snarling lion is carved into the stone lintel above the doors. A cupola roof shows obvious scratches and gouges where the former gilding was scraped away by looters.

This was once a government-run library and records repository, housing deeds, genealogy records, and courtroom minutes from across the county, as well as a variety of texts and journals. The windows that once ringed the upper level, as well as the front door, have been sealed with brick and mortar, and then plastered over from within. Only one side door on the first floor remains usable, with most members of the Immaculate Circle arriving and departing via teleportation magic.

Interior walls are superior masonry with strong wooden doors. There are no light sources inside with the windows and doors bricked up, and so the interior is always dark.

D1. Entering the Archives (CR 16)

An enchanted lock seals the side door, though all members of the Immaculate Circle carry keys. If the PCs found the key in Taldogis's stomach or still have Milon Jeroth's front door key from *City in the Lion's Eye*, they can use it to open the door. They can also bypass the lock as if it were an *arcane lock* (CL 11) by casting *dispel magic* or succeeding at a DC 40 Disable Device check.

Trap: The door is also trapped with a deadly magical trap. Damaging the door or opening the lock without the proper key triggers the trap. Once triggered, the trap targets the nearest living creature with a *flesh to stone* effect. If the target succeeds at its saving throw against the initial *flesh to stone* effect, the spell bounces to the next closest living creature, repeating until it has targeted four creatures or there are no living creatures within 50 feet of the door. Once a creature fails its saving throw against petrification, the trap targets that creature with a *shatter* spell the next round.

Creatures damaged by the *shatter* effect, even if they are not completely destroyed, are too marred by the magic to be returned to flesh unless the damage is first repaired with *fabricate*, *make whole*, *mending*, or a successful DC 30 Craft (stonemasonry) check.

SPREADING SHATTER TRAP

CR 16

XP 76,800

Type magic; Perception DC 32; Disable Device DC 32

EFFECTS

Trigger touch (alarm); **Bypass** key or password ("forever shadow"); **Reset** repair

Effect spell effect (bouncing^{APG} *flesh to stone*; Fort DC 21 negates), spell effect (heightened *shatter*, 10d6 sonic damage, Fort DC 21 half)

D2. Archival Offices (CR 16)

This large room holds a half-dozen crumbling wooden desks. The desks still bear remnants of heavy ornamentation with carved spiral legs and designs of maps and explorers on their fronts. Now they are covered in dust, and their tops sag sadly. Empty shelves that once housed books and vellum line the walls, but are now home to nothing more than spiders and their webs.

A former storage room off this office has been converted into a secret room (Perception DC 30).

Creatures: In the adjacent secret room, two of Rhien's mercenaries keep watch over this chamber and the hallway. These cutthroats are Norgorber cultists and fanatically loyal to both Rhien and the Immaculate Circle. The moment they spot the PCs, they raise a silent alarm using a *bird feather token*, which might still give away their presence. The alarm takes 2 rounds to reach Rhien in area E5. Rhien gathers his other two mercenaries and joins the fight on the fourth round.

CIRCLE CUTTHROATS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

Human slayer 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 53)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +9; **Senses** Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 20, flat-footed 19 (+5 armor, +4 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 117 each (15d10+30)

Fort +12, **Ref** +16, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities trap sense +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 rapier +23/+18/+13 (1d6+5/15-20)

Ranged +1 composite shortbow +22/+17/+12 (1d6+4 plus poison/×3)

Special Attacks quarry, slayer's advance 1/day, sneak attack +5d6, studied target +4 (swift action, 4 targets)

TACTICS

Before Combat The cutthroats each drink a *potion of shield of faith* and apply giant wasp poison to their arrows if they hear anyone tampering with the door.

During Combat After they release their *bird feather token*, the cutthroats burst from the secret room, firing arrows and hoping to pin intruders in the doorway. If opponents

close to melee, they try to flank. Each cutthroat studies a new target each round.

Morale Circle cutthroats fight to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 38

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Manyshot, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Focus (shortbow)

Skills Acrobatics +23, Bluff +12, Climb +21, Disguise +17, Knowledge (local) +13, Perception +19, Sense Motive +14, Stealth +23

Languages Common

SQ slayer talents (combat trick, fast stealth, opportunist,



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

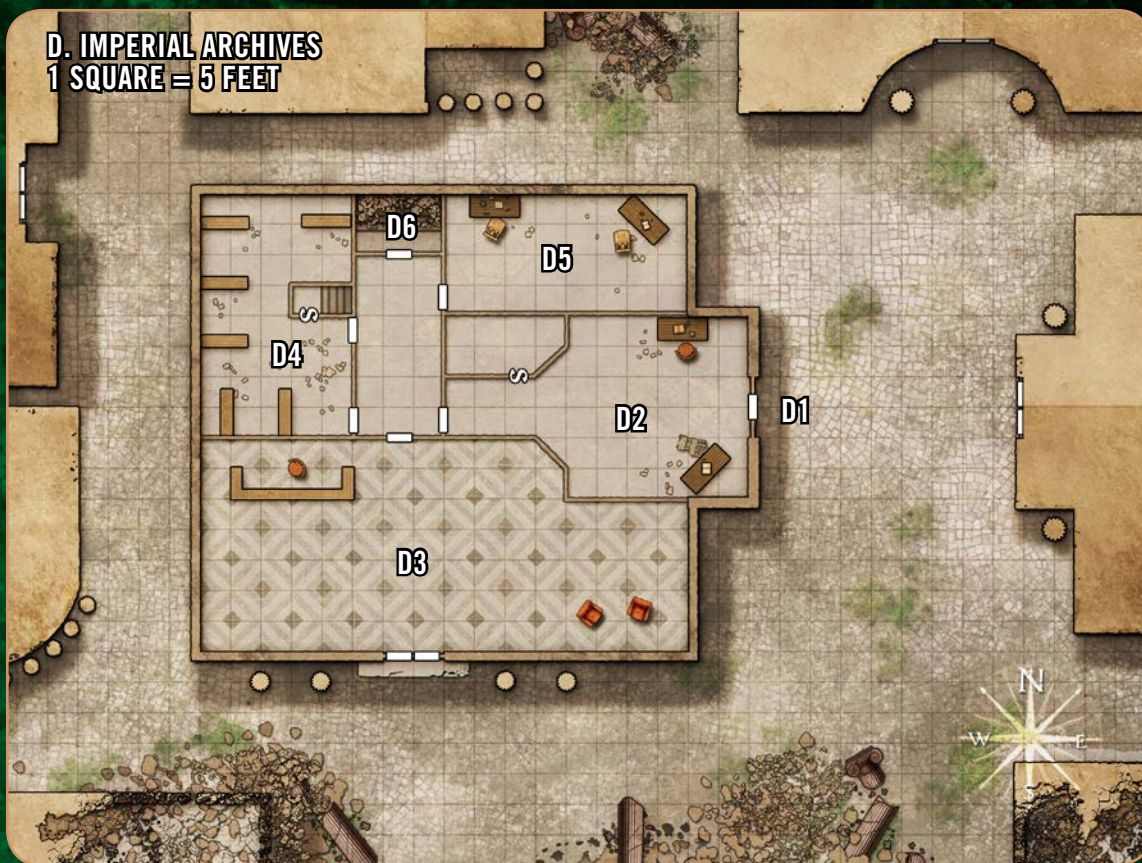
Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulffen Guard

Bestiary

D. IMPERIAL ARCHIVES 1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



poison use, surprise attacks, trapfinding, weapon training), stalker, swift tracker, track +7, trapfinding +7

Combat Gear bird feather tokens (2), oil of flame arrow, *potion of blur*, *potions of lesser restoration* (2), *potions of shield of faith* (3; CL 12th), *scabbard of keen edges*, giant wasp poison (4); **Other Gear** +2 studded leather, +1 composite shortbow (+3 Str), +2 rapier, belt of incredible dexterity +2, cloak of resistance +2, unholy symbol of Norgorber

D3. Foyer (CR 15)

Chips of marble on the ground suggest this room was once tiled in variegated marble. The tiles have been pried up and taken, leaving the rubble-strewn masonry subfloor exposed. Wooden railings, with a few chips of gold paint still clinging to them, mark the boundaries of a queue. A long stone counter stands against one wall, and the sagging remains of cushioned chairs lie broken in a corner. The ceiling here goes up to the second level, and countless empty shelves line the walls above. Metal tracks run from floor to ceiling between the shelves, made of metal plates, gears, and springs, with arms jabbing at the shelves as if replacing invisible books.

Visitors to the archives would enter here and give their requests to the archivists and librarians on duty. The public collection was stored in the overhead racks.

Creatures: The two racks of mechanized sorting arms are in fact specialized clockwork golems designed to serve the staff by fetching and replacing tomes on command. When the archive was moved, Panivar retained the golems and rebuilt them as guardians. The mechanisms remain largely disinterested in visitors, but they transform into humanoid forms and attack if anyone attempts to investigate the counter or take the few books remaining on the shelves.

ADVANCED CLOCKWORK GOLEMS (2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 150 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 137)

Treasure: The shelves high above still hold a small number of books, many of them outdated census reports or minutes from town hall meetings, but three valuable manuscripts remain: *An Account from the Army of Exploration* (2,200 gp), *The Heretical Prophecies of Kalistrade* (6,100 gp), and the original peace treaty signed between the Ulfen king and the Taldan grand prince in 2003 AR (10,000 gp). The shelves also contain two heavy tomes, one bound in silver leather and locked with a clasp set with a large piece of optical calcite and the other bound in gold and locked with a ruby clasp. These are a *tome of clear thought* +1 and a *manual of gainful exercise*.

D4. Library Stacks

This enormous room houses a dozen empty, glass-fronted bookcases, each one bearing a metal identification plate on its side. Much of the glass has been smashed, leaving the floor littered with glittering shards.

This room contains the door leading down to the basement. One of the bookcase doors (one of the few still intact) is painted on the inside to look like empty shelves. A PC notices the secret door with a successful DC 30 Perception check. Opening the door reveals a set of stairs hidden within the case which lead down to area E1.

Treasure: Lost in the room's rubble is an old bundle of 15 *+1 fey-bane cold iron crossbow bolts* (Perception DC 25).

Story Award: If the PCs find this secret door without falling for the decoy door in D6, award them experience as if they had overcome that trap.

D5. Archivist's Workshop (CR 17)

Scarred and battered workbenches line the walls of this room. Smashed panes of glass have been swept into a corner alongside the warped remains of parchment-stretching frames. Five bedrolls are arranged on the floor around a low table set with plates and cutlery. Sets of dice and cards, discarded clothes, cheaply printed books, and other such items are scattered among the bedrolls.

Creatures: A shadowy figure called the Masked Marquis runs the Brotherhood of Silence, Oppara's guild of thieves, assassins, and Norgorber cultists. Unknown to most, the Masked Marquis is not one person, but four sharing the identity at different times and places. Among these leaders stands Rhien, a native Taldan fetchling raised in the filthy underbelly of perhaps the richest, most glorious city in Avistan. As a young lad, he realized quickly that Taldans devour one another just as readily as the beasts of the field, and while he was not born to be a mighty and fearsome wolf, he could serve well as a serpent—small, quiet, imperceptible, and ten times as deadly. He nipped at the ankles of majestic Taldan nobles and ate richly when they fell. In time, his skill with a knife brought him to the Brotherhood of Silence and eventually to its command.

Rhien sleeps in this room along with two additional cutthroats, waiting for the furor over Eutropia's assassination to die down. Though well paid, he hopes to win membership in the Immaculate Circle and eventually subvert this secret society to serve Norgorber.

Rhien is a shadowdancer and has a shadow companion who always lurks in the wall or floor nearby. Though the shadow is a formless entity with two pinpoints of green light for eyes, Rhien originally gave "her" the melodramatic name Obsidian, though he and his companions have shortened this nickname to "Sadie."

If Rhien receives a messenger bird from the mercenaries in D2, or if the PCs fight the clockwork golems, he takes his cutthroats and launches an ambush on the PCs.

RHIEN

CR 15

XP 51,200

Male fetchling rogue 6/shadowdancer 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 123)

NE Medium outsider (native)



RHIEN AND SADIE

THE
SIX-LEGEND
SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulifen Guard

Bestiary

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision;
Perception -1

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 17, flat-footed 21 (+6 armor, +1 deflection,
+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 113 (16d8+38)

Fort +10, **Ref** +18, **Will** +9; +2 luck bonus when in dim light

Defensive Abilities defensive roll, improved evasion,
improved uncanny dodge, shadow blending, trapfinding;

DR 10/— (in dim light); **Resist** cold 5, electricity 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *heartseeker short sword* +19/+14/+9
(1d6+4/19-20)

Ranged mwk hand crossbow +17 (1d4/19-20)

Special Attacks shadow master, sneak attack +3d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +16)

1/day—*disguise self*, *plane shift* (self only; Shadow or
Material Plane) (DC 17), *shadow walk* (self only) (DC 15)

Shadowdancer Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th;

concentration +10)

5/day—shadow illusion (DC 11)

4/day—shadow call (DC 17)

2/day—shadow power (DC 15)

TACTICS

Before Combat Rhien does his best work from the shadows,
and he casts *darkness* on himself before joining a fight.

During Combat Rhien prefers to let his team attack while
he uses his shadow power to target troublemakers
with shadowy versions of *resilient sphere* or *chain of
perdition*^{UC}, after which he joins his minions in close
combat. He avoids lighted areas at all costs to maintain
the DR provided by his shadow master ability.

Morale Rhien presses the attack until his cutthroats fall, then
he uses shadow jump to escape to an adjoining room and
assume a stealthier hit-and-run strategy, attacking suddenly
from stealth before falling back. If reduced to below 25 hit
points, he instead uses *plane shift* to escape to the Shadow
Plane, and may return to vex the PCs at your discretion.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 20, **Con** 14, **Int** 14, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 30

Feats Combat Reflexes, Disorienting Maneuver^{UC}, Dodge,
Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Sidestep^{APG}, Spring
Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (short sword)

Skills Acrobatics +23, Bluff +18, Climb +20, Disable
Device +23, Disguise +18, Perform (dance) +8, Sense
Motive +17, Sleight of Hand +23 (+26 to conceal a
light blade), Stealth +30, Use Magic Device +18; **Racial
Modifiers** +2 Stealth

Languages Aklo, Auran, Common

SQ compression, hide in plain sight, rogue talents (assault
leader^{APG}, combat trick, fast stealth, finesse rogue, master
of disguise^{APG}, surprise attacks), shadow jump, slippery
mind, summon shadow

Combat Gear +2 *corrosive crossbow bolts* (20), *greater
hushing bolt*^{UE} (5), *wand of darkness* (49 charges); **Other
Gear** +4 *shadow leather armor*, +2 *heartseeker short
sword*, mwk hand crossbow, *amulet of natural armor* +4,
belt of the weasel^{UE}, *cloak of resistance* +3, *ring of
protection* +1, porcelain unholy symbol of Norgorber

SADIE

CR —

Shadow (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 245)

hp 56

CIRCLE CUTTHROATS (2) CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 117 each (see page 13)

Treasure: Rhien carries a heavy iron key. With a
successful DC 25 Knowledge (local) or (religion) check, a
PC recognizes the key as one for a vault security box in
Oppara's Abadaran temple. The PCs could try to gain
legitimate access to the box, arguing Rhien was an enemy
of the country and his belongings are forfeit, or they could
try to impersonate Rhien. Rhien's security box holds a *rod
of splendor*, 7,855 gp in assorted gems, and 2,502 pp.

D6. Decoy Door

This wooden door is locked (Disable Device DC 25), and
has a glass window showing the room beyond. Inside the
room, a set of stone stairs leads both up and down. None
of the creatures here carry a key to this door, as it's never
used and is only a decoy. The stairs within lead up to the
abandoned and empty second floor, and the stairs down
have been collapsed and filled with rubble and plaster
after 10 feet.

Trap: The door does not radiate any magical aura,
though it is trapped. When the trap is triggered, it
generates a *forcecage* in a 20-foot cube around the trap's
trigger. The *forcecage* is barred with half-inch bars
of force, spaced a half an inch apart. Each bar is also
studded with razor-sharp force spikes extending 10 feet
into the cage, filling the interior with slowly moving
blades. Anyone inside the area of effect when the prison
of blades trap goes off may attempt a DC 23 Reflex save
to leap out of the boundaries of the *forcecage*.

The prison of blades lasts for 10 rounds. A creature
inside the *forcecage* who takes no actions on a turn takes
3d6 points of slashing damage each round. A creature
inside the *forcecage* who takes an action of any kind
instead takes 6d6 points of slashing damage. A creature
can attempt a DC 23 Reflex save each round for half
damage. The prison of blades trap counts as a magic
weapon for the purpose of overcoming DR.

PRISON OF BLADES TRAP

CR 16

XP 76,800

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

EFFECTS

Trigger touch (*alarm*); **Reset** repair

Effect modified spell effect (heightened *forcecage*, see above); multiple targets (all creatures in a 20-ft. square)

E. THE SHADOWED HALLS OF THE CIRCLE

What was once a few archival vaults beneath street level has been radically transformed. Now the Shadowed Halls, as they are termed by the Inner Circle's leadership, are a coil of curtained corridors and bizarre traps. The walls and ceiling are draped with billowing lengths of red silk, lending the chambers an airy quality despite winding tens of feet below the surface.

The most notable feature of the Shadowed Halls is the constant whispering sound. Numerous cunningly designed air vents funnel fresh air into the halls while creating a constant, soft whispering that almost sounds like people conversing, but too indistinctly to make out words. Sound-based Perception checks within the Shadowed Halls take a -4 penalty.

The walls are magically treated reinforced masonry (hardness 16, hp 360). The Shadowed Halls' stone doors, even the ones that lead nowhere, are locked with superior locks (Disable Device DC 40), and all such doors are protected with minor traps (choose as you like or determine randomly), ranging from CR 2 to 8—too weak to threaten the PCs but common enough that describing them makes the truly deadly traps more difficult to spot.

The entire underground complex and everyone in it is shielded by a *nondetection* spell (CL 20th), maintained by the powerful sahkil Thassritoum.

E1. The Hall of Glory (CR 17)

The walls and floor of this long room are made of masonry blocks, each one of slightly different shape and size but fitted perfectly together, giving the room the appearance of a giant puzzle.

Along the two long walls, strands of black and purple cord stretch from the top of the walls down to iron rings set in the floor. The thousands of silken strands give the room the appearance of a giant cradle or cocoon, with a clear path leading to the double doors on the far end.

Several silken cords in this room are tied to bells elsewhere in the stronghold, alerting the members of the Inner Circle (Barenby Ghoom in area E6, Travarak Denzarni in area E8, Nenareen Adella in area E11, and Panivar Lotheed in area E15) to intruders.

Creatures: Hiding behind the canopy of cords are several creations of Nenareen Adella, the so-

called Duchess of Blood. To maintain her youth and immortality, Nenareen must infuse herself with the blood of elves who have been treated with special alchemical drugs and mutagens. These, combined with transfusions of Adella's own mutated blood, have transformed the elves into vampire-like undead creatures utterly addicted to their mistress's approval and life-giving blood.

Four blood spawn serve as guards for this chamber, rotating regularly through their number as individuals are taken to be drained or treated with Adella's various alchemical regimens.



BLOOD SPAWN

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

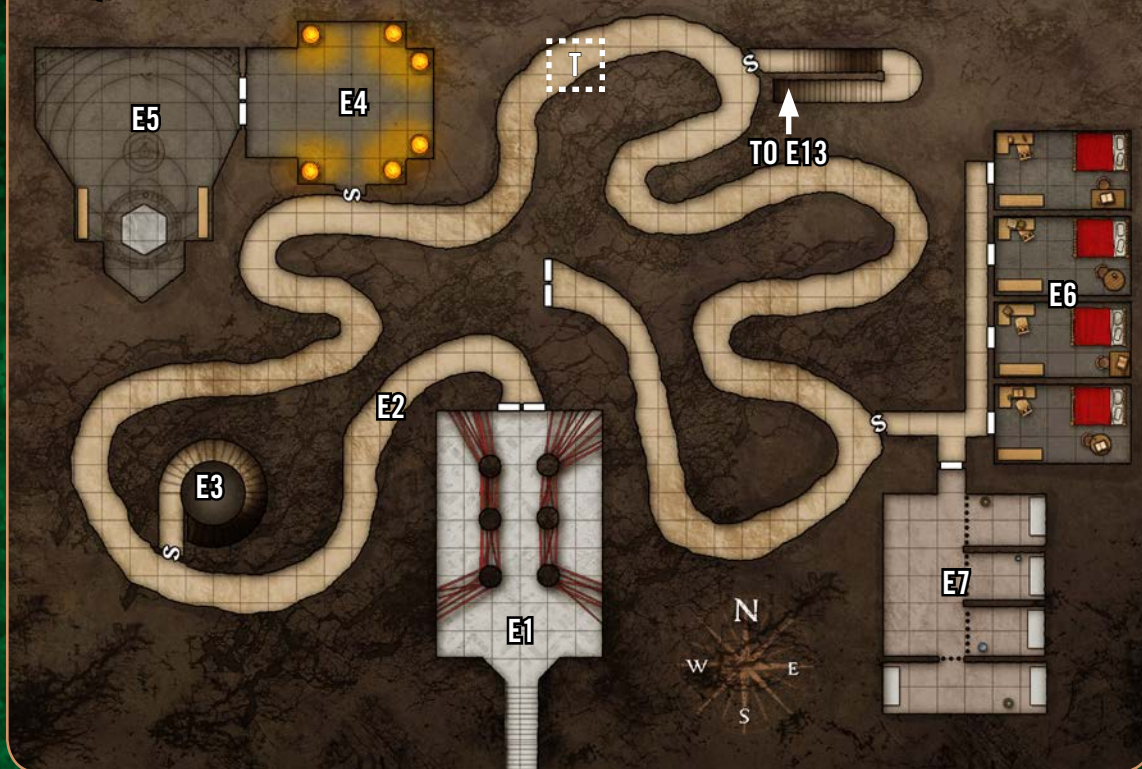
Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

E1.–E7. THE SHADOWED HALLS OF THE CIRCLE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

UPPER LEVELS



BLOOD SPAWN (4)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Variant vampire spawn elf fighter (savage warrior) 13

(*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 107)

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, elf)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;

Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 21 (+3 armor, +3 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 141 each (13d10+65); fast healing 2

Fort +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10; +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2, spark of life;

DR 5/silver; **Immune** sleep, undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses vampire weaknesses

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +20 (1d6+8/19–20 plus energy drain)

Special Attacks careful claw, death throes, energy drain (1 level, DC 19), savage charge

TACTICS

During Combat The blood spawn are straightforward combatants, charging foes with their claws. They try to overwhelm the largest or most threatening opponents first with sheer numbers.

Morale Blood spawn fight until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +16 (+19 grapple); **CMD** 29 (32 vs. grapple)

Feats Alertness, Bleeding Critical, Blind-Fight, Critical Focus, Eldritch Claws^{APG}, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Iron Will, Rending Claws^{APG}, Skill Focus (Perception), Step Up, Toughness, Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Specialization (claw)

Skills Acrobatics +11, Intimidate +12, Perception +23, Sense Motive +3, Stealth +11, Survival +14; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Acrobatics, +2 Perception, +8 Stealth, +2 Spellcraft to identify magic item properties

Languages Common, Elven

SQ armor training 3, elven magic, sanguine blessing, shadowless, spider climb

Gear mwk studded leather

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Death Throes (Su) When reduced to 0 hit points, a blood spawn's body can no longer contain the massive pressure of the blood it has been mutated to produce, causing it to explode in a spray of alchemical gore. All living creatures within 10 feet must succeed at a DC 19 Fortitude save or take 1 temporary negative level.

Sanguine Blessing (Ex) The duchess's infusions and mutagens imbue her blood spawn with overwhelming fury.

They add their Charisma modifier as a natural armor bonus to AC and as a morale bonus on saving throws.

E2. The Serpent (CR 15)

Beyond the Hall of Glory, a seemingly endless length of tunnel gradually descends through the ground. The masonry blocks have been smoothed and draped with silk to give the tunnel a sinuous, unbroken feel. There are no apparent doors until the end of the Serpent, but there are actually four secret doors along its length.

First Door: The first secret door (Perception DC 30 Perception check) leads to the circle's meeting room and the Duchess of Blood's laboratory.

Second Door: The second door leads to the thriar's chambers. A successful DC 25 Perception check is enough to notice this door.

Third Door: The third door (DC 35 Perception) leads to the Inner Circle's private gallery and library, as well as the private chambers of Panivar Lotheed and Nenareen Adella.

Fourth Door: The fourth door (Perception DC 30) leads to the Immaculate Circle's prison and the private chambers of several members.

At the end of the Serpent stands a wooden double door. Unlocking the good-quality lock (Disable Device DC 30) and opening the door reveals a featureless stone wall with nothing beyond.

Trap: Between the second and third secret doors lies a simple poisoned pit trap, waiting for an unlucky adventurer to step upon it. The trap door can be sealed for 5 minutes by pressing a concealed switch in the wall (Perception DC 32).

POISONED PIT TRAP

CR 15

XP 51,200

Type mechanical; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect 80-ft.-deep pit (8d6 falling damage); pit spikes (Atk +20 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d6+5 damage each plus purple worm poison); DC 25 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

Development: If the Huntsmaster in area E6 is alerted to intruders by the bells in E1, he begins scouting the hallways with his clairvoyance to prepare an ambush.

E3. The Helix

A set of gold spiral steps descends into the ground. Thick black

curtains hang closely around the staircase on all sides, forming a column of opaque silk. Motes of golden light dance up and down the stairs, reflecting off the shimmering curtains.



DRINAE

The spiral stairs descend 100 feet straight down, opening up in the last 12 feet to area E8. Until then, the silk curtains hide only stone walls. The silk curtains flutter from the motion of people passing on the stairs; descending the stairs without disturbing the curtains requires a successful DC 25 Stealth check.

Development: Small bells hang from the bottom of the silk curtains, ringing slightly whenever creatures approach and alerting anyone in area E8.

E4. The Occluded Foyer (CR 13)

Four silver braziers, one in each corner of the room, continuously overflow with pale blue mist that fills the room.

The mist in this chamber acts as a permanent *obscuring mist* spell.

Creature: Decades ago, a psoglav—a grotesque ambush predator known for inflicting wounds that cannot heal—moved into the ruins of Hyden above, thinking to prey on members of the Immaculate Circle as they arrived for seasonal visits. Lotheed and his summoned creatures had little trouble containing the monster, but rather than destroy it, he chained the ravenous beast in this room. Ghoom had captured the thriar seer Drinae only months earlier, and a sadistic part of Lotheed delighted in the idea of using one captive beast to guard another.

The psoglav, Dmortiv, reviles the Immaculate Circle but has been cowed repeatedly by the Inner Circle and will not attack them (or anyone who looks like them), slinking to the room's northeast corner and growling as he watches them pass. Ill-fed, he is always hungry and attacks anyone else on sight, though his chains—anchored firmly in the north wall—don't allow him to leave the room.

PSOGLAV

CR 13

XP 25,600

hp 187 (Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6 215)

E5. Sanctum of the Ocellus (CR 17)

In the south of this room, two pink marble statues of giant bees with enormous sparkling jewels for eyes face each other. A hexagonal plinth two feet tall sits between them. Against the north wall hang three oblong nets of silver silk,

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

resembling large cocoons or hammocks. The remaining walls are lined with inset stone bookshelves supporting heavy, metal-bound tomes.

This room serves as equal parts shrine and prison.

Creatures: The Inner Circle's Huntsmaster, Count Ghoom, captured a live thriar seer during an expedition to the Whistling Plains some 30 years ago and brought her to the Circle as a trophy and valuable intelligence asset, given the secret society's notable lack of divine casters or faithful. The prideful seer, Drinae, prefers to think of herself as an "unwilling guest" rather than a prisoner, and busies herself researching pet topics and studying

ancient tomes. She uses her powers to read the future for the Inner Circle and advises them on divine matters. Her personal investment in the organization has slowly increased over the course of her imprisonment despite her resentment, and now she is wary of anyone who would undermine the Immaculate Circle or attempt to "kidnap" her, though she is not immediately violent.

Drinae's jailers here are the two marble bee statues that flank the room, each a powerful stone golem immune to the bee woman's magic. The pair remain motionless decorations unless Drinae attempts to leave the chamber, violence breaks out, or the thriar calls for their help.

If the PCs approach Drinae respectfully, she is all too pleased to have someone new to talk to. She admits having used divination to foretell when the PCs would return to the palace so that the circle could execute their plan of assassinating the princess, and that she was responsible for the circle learning that Stavian III murdered his son 20 years ago, which prompted their increasing focus on the imperial family. Drinae relates these facts calmly and dispassionately—she has no interest in human affairs and no stake in local politics. If the PCs have suffered an embarrassing defeat or severe loss at the hands of the circle in the past, feel free to attribute their pain to Drinae's divinations and advice as well.

Additional magic compels Drinae's loyalty, and she won't allow trespassers to leave. With a successful DC 35 Diplomacy or Sense Motive check, a PC can determine the details of Drinae's compulsion implanted by the Immaculate Circle: She is required to defend the Circle's stronghold, but not to the death. If a PC proposes a battle wherein they can clearly demonstrate their superior strength (perhaps fighting one of Drinae's guards one-on-one), the thriar agrees to the proposal. If the PCs win against whatever odds they set, Drinae allows them to leave without further violence.

If the PCs suitably impress or subdue Drinae, they may think to ask her for information on the Circle. She knows the Inner Circle quite well (see the sidebar on page 12), and even carried on an affair with Milon Jeroth for several years, but feels no obligation to keep their secrets. She can accurately describe each member's name, history, and abilities, as studying her captors has helped her feel more empowered during her stay.

If the PCs eliminate the Immaculate Circle and return to Drinae (or find her for the first time), the thriar is making preparations to return to her home. She recognizes the PCs as the new owners of the circle's property, including the library, and willingly negotiates terms for continued access to the rare books. The PCs might use Drinae to divine a means of attack in Part 3, when they infiltrate the Imperial Palace.



COUNT BARENBY GHOOM

DRINAE**CR 12****XP 19,200**Advanced thriar seer (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 290, 266)**hp** 161**ADVANCED STONE GOLEMS (2)****CR 12****XP 19,200 each****hp** 135 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 163)**E6. Bedchambers (CR 16)**

These chambers serve several members of the Inner Circle—Count Barenby Ghoom, Earl Travarak Denzarni, and Sir Milon Jeroth (if he still lives). The remaining room serves as guest quarters for especially high-ranking general members of the Immaculate Circle. If you wish to play into the PCs' paranoia, this last chamber may instead belong to an NPC the PCs otherwise trusted who may, in retrospect, be revealed to be a member of the circle. Learning a close ally reports their movements and secrets to Panivar Lotheed poses no direct threat, but discovering a spy so close to them could make the PCs more paranoid, or help underscore the extent of the Immaculate Circle's reach.

Creature: Nearly a century ago, Count Barenby Ghoom was the greatest hunter in all of Taldor, felling the dragon of the Borderwood, trapping the Nightbeast of Karakuru, and ending the Plague of Serpents singlehandedly. He was also a member of the Immaculate Circle, and when the time came to find his own route to immortality, Barenby chose the hunt. Local legends suggested that devouring the heart of a powerful fey creature known as the wild hunt monarch (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6) could bestow everlasting youth to any hunter who could outwit the legendary sovereign, and so Barenby set his sights on new prey. The wild hunt proved far more cunning than he anticipated, and as with all hunters who think to best the monarch, Barenby instead found himself transformed into a fey servant of the First World noble—ironically granting him the immortality he sought.

It was Barenby's wife, Jirabelle, who finally slew the wild hunt monarch and freed her husband from his life of service. Rather than grateful, Ghoom was horrified that his lover had succeeded where he had failed, and so he quietly strangled her in her sleep the first night they lay together after his decade of servitude.

Barenby has served as the Inner Circle's tracker and scout ever since, bringing knowledge of woodcraft and the natural world that his more urban colleagues lack. He is far more practical and indiscreet than his fellow leaders, and so finds his role often relegated to tracking down rare creatures and reagents for the others' work—a life that suits him quite well.

If alerted to the presence of intruders via the alarms in area **E1**, Barenby begins observing his quarry using *clairvoyance/clairaudience* before deciding exactly when

to strike. He prefers to ambush already-tired opponents, and so he likely appears after the PCs face Travarak or Nenareen, or to reinforce the grisantian lions (his favorite trophies) in area **E13**.

If the PCs don't alert Ghoom to their presence, he remains in the hallway here, practicing his archery.

COUNT BARENBY GHOOM**CR 16****XP 76,800**Unique wild hunt scout (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 284)

CN Medium fey (wild hunt)

Init +12; **Senses** greensight 60 ft., low-light vision, scent, see in darkness; Perception +35**DEFENSE****AC** 29, touch 23, flat-footed 20 (+4 deflection, +8 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural)**hp** 299 (26d6+208)**Fort** +18, **Ref** +23, **Will** +22**Defensive Abilities** instinctive cooperation, wild grace;**DR** 15/cold iron; **Immune** blindness, cold; **Resist** electricity 10, fire 10**OFFENSE****Speed** 50 ft.**Melee** force longsword +20/+15/+10 touch (1d8+6/19–20)**Ranged** crystal +21 touch (3d6 force plus blindness)**Special Attacks** sneak attack +4d6, wild gaze (DC 27)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th; concentration +21)Constant—*know direction, pass without trace*3/day—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, quickened dimension door, hide from animals*1/day—*true seeing***TACTICS****Before Combat** Barenby prefers to strike when his prey is already exhausted or injured.**During Combat** Ghoom typically opens encounters with blasts from his crystal while he closes to melee. If surrounded, he teleports to safety with *quickened dimension door*.**Morale** Barenby is far less devoted to the society than his colleagues, and he is comfortable using his spell-like abilities to flee if clearly outmatched or reduced below 75 hit points. He knows about the secret passage (area **E16**) and will happily sell out Lotheed to save his own hide.**STATISTICS****Str** 22, **Dex** 27, **Con** 26, **Int** 17, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 19**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +19 (+21 disarm); **CMD** 42 (44 vs. disarm)**Feats** Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dazzling Display, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Lunge, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scimitar), Quicken Spell-Like Ability (dimension door), Shatter Defenses, Stand Still, Step Up, Weapon Focus (scimitar)**Skills** Acrobatics +31 (+39 to jump), Bluff +27, Climb +29, Diplomacy +17, Disguise +17, Knowledge (geography, nature) +26, Perception +35, Ride +12, Sense Motive +30, Stealth +31, Survival +32, Swim +29THE
SIX-LEGEND
SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an HeirPart 2:
Carving the
CirclePart 3:
Through the
Granite WallsNPC
GalleryContinuing the
CampaignSpirits of Six
Emperors

Ulffen Guard

Bestiary

Languages Common, Kelish, Sylvan

SQ planar acclimation

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Force Longsword (Su) As a swift action, Barenby can summon a crystalline longsword. Attacks with this blade resolve as if they were touch attacks and deal force damage. Outside of Barenby's hands, the force longsword vanishes.

Thousand Faces (Sp) Barenby lost many abilities tying him to the natural world upon the death of his monarch, but he has since learned to adopt mortal-seeming guises. He can create an illusory disguise at will as a standard action, as if using the spell *disguise self* (CL 20th).

Development: Barenby's room (the second northernmost) contains his weather-beaten journal tracking his past expeditions to collect rare components,

chart the movements of animals and unusual beasts in the area, and maps of impossible locations. The last dozen pages detail his expeditions into the Astral Plane with a trio of night hags in search of "legends"—constellations of psychic energy created by the public perception of great figures. His journal specifically names the six legends he helped track: Beldam I, Cyricas, Daronlyr XII, Gennaris III, Stavian I, and Taldaris—six of Taldor's most famous former grand princes (and conveniently detailed in the back cover of each volume of this Adventure Path).

E7. Prison

Several iron-barred cells line the east wall of this long room, with a larger cell in the south. Defeated PCs are imprisoned here, sans equipment, with four circle cutthroats left as guards. While there are currently no other prisoners held here, you can place other operatives here, agents loyal to the PCs, or opponents defeated in previous adventures but not slain.

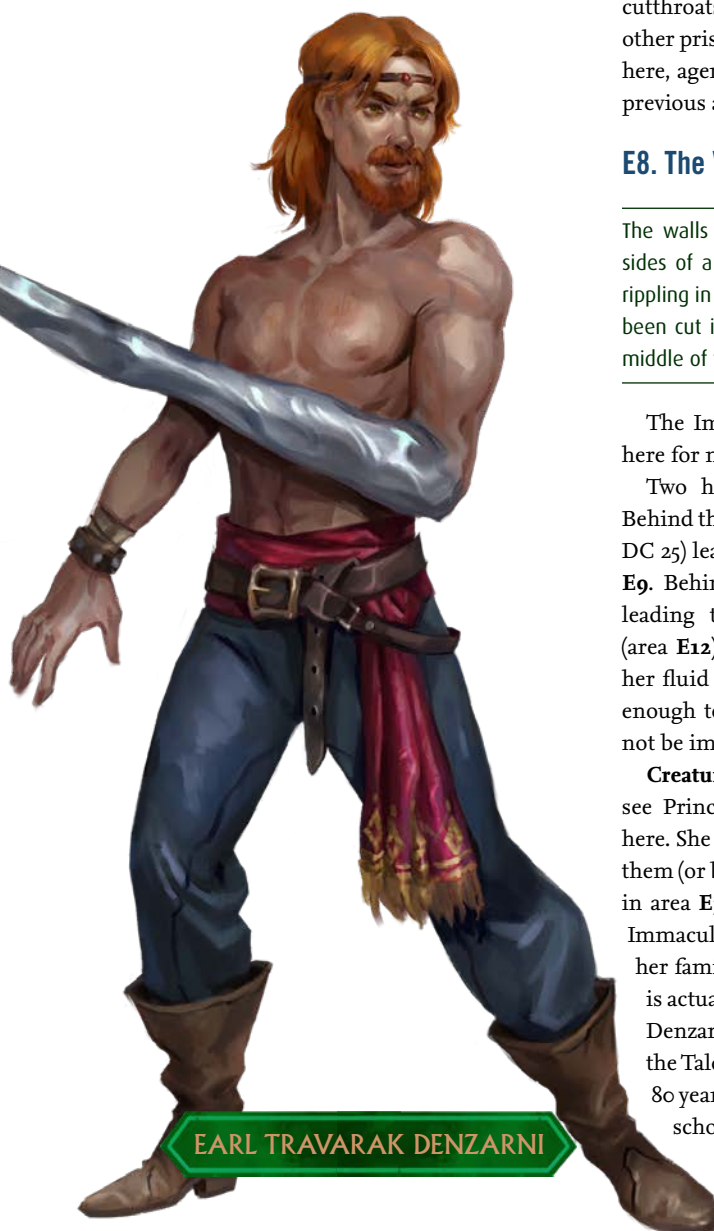
E8. The Vessel (CR 18)

The walls of this room sweep out in grand curves like the sides of a goblet. Snow-white silk curtains cover the walls, rippling in an unseen wind. An elaborate, knotted pattern has been cut into the floor, covering a large circular area in the middle of the room.

The Immaculate Circle gathers its sundry members here for meetings and pronouncements.

Two hidden passages lead away from this room. Behind the curtains to the west, a secret door (Perception DC 25) leads to the Immaculate Circle's holding cells in **E9**. Behind the curtains to the east, four small holes leading to Nenareen Adella's regeneration chamber (area **E12**) allow her to move to and from this room in her fluid form. A successful DC 30 Perception check is enough to discover these holes, but their purpose may not be immediately clear.

Creatures: When the PCs approach this room, they see Princess Eutropia, alive and chained to the floor here. She calls for her agents' help as soon as she notices them (or begins calling for help when she hears the bells in area **E3** ring), claiming she awoke here and that the Immaculate Circle left a duplicate of her to convince her family she'd been murdered. This captive princess is actually a member of the Inner Circle: Earl Travarak Denzarni, the Dopant King. A longtime member of the Taldan Phalanx recruited to the Immaculate Circle 80 years ago, he spent a fortune gathering and funding scholars investigating immortality in hopes of buying his way onto the Inner Circle. His efforts paid off when one of his beneficiaries recreated an ancient Azlanti science used to



EARL TRAVARAK DENZARNI

transform a human into a sentient, magical fluid called a mezlan. Denzarni sunk his family fortune transforming himself into an immortal shapeshifter, then burned his scholar's notes and the scholar alongside them.

Denzarni never shared the wit or charisma of Milon Jeroth, and so despite his shapeshifting abilities he has always been the least useful, least respected, and dumbest member of the Inner Circle, and he hopes killing or usurping the Circle's enemies will boost his prestige. His initial, unlikely hope is to convince the PCs he truly is Eutropia, and be returned to claim the throne, but in the very likely event they don't believe him, he at least hopes to lure the intruders into the chamber, where three circle cutthroats wait, flanking the door and ready to strike. If combat breaks out, the Dopant King unleashes his *chain lightning* spell before activating his *mage armor* and engaging. Composed entirely of liquid metal, he can free himself from his chains as a free action.

If his cutthroats are slain and Denzarni is reduced below half hit points, he flees into the pipes in the eastern wall to join Nenareen Adella in area E11.

EARL TRAVARAK DENZARNI

CR 15

XP 51,200

Advanced mezlan (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 288, 186)
hp 229

CIRCLE CUTTHROATS (3)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 117 each (see page 13)

Development: A podium in one corner still holds a sheet of parchment that appears to have a speech written on it in a tight, precise hand. This was the beginning of Panivar Lotheed's speech to his Immaculate Circle minions, declaring his intention to supplant Eutropia and Pythareus.

All is not lost! The Sisters of Indulgent Dreams have come through for us. From the silver void, they have plucked forth legends of Taldor's past; not snarled souls that would confuse divinations, but the psychic energy poured into reputation and myth, which will leave nothing for diviners to find beyond his destiny to rule as Grand Prince! We shall make him stronger, a more fitting tool for our use. These legends will drive him to rule once they mature, and whatever orders we deliver to that end, he will be compelled to obey. Soon we shall encircle Taldor's throne.

E9. Holding Cells (CR 16)

Five iron-barred cells extend from the end of a long hallway. Each grate is locked with a good-quality lock (DC 30 Disable Device). The Duchess of Blood carries the keys on her person.

Creatures: Three living prisoners occupy two of the five cells—all elves kidnapped by Adella to supplant her supply of alchemically treated blood. The victims are weakened from blood loss, sick from Adella's strange mutagens, and traumatized by their experiences. They can barely move and lack the energy and concentration to escape from the Shadowed Halls, even if freed.

The prisoners can tell the PCs details of how they were kidnapped, but have seen little of the complex. They were blindfolded when brought in, and have seen no other rooms. They have interacted with the Duchess of Blood, however, and can warn the PCs that she is something akin to a vampire, but appears immune to holy symbols and other normal vampire defenses. A *lesser restoration* spell can purge their bodies of toxins well enough to walk.

The fifth cell holds a catatonic and bloated elf named **Lanarel** (CG male elf expert 4), now almost finished with the process of conversion into a blood spawn. With a successful DC 20 Heal or Craft (alchemy) check, a PC can surmise the unfortunate soul is late in the process of some sort of conversion, and will likely finish transforming into a monster in the next day or two. A *restoration* or *neutralize poison* spell are the only things that can stop the process now except death.

Development: If cured of his transformation, Lanarel is immensely grateful, but he has little to offer. He was a visiting trader from Kyonin and lost most of his worldly possessions in his abduction. He does offer more details about Adella, however, describing her as a powerful alchemist and strange undead who specifically used a set of mithral scalpels and syringes from her lab to pierce her own tough hide for experiments, and that when he first arrived in the lab, he watched as she slowly "grew a boy from a lock of brown hair, but a boy whose eyes lacked any spark of light."

Lanarel also describes his one escape attempt. When he reached the lounge (E10), another member of the Inner Circle removed an iron sphere from a hidden panel, and it exploded into restrictive shackles. Anyone who hears his recounting of the events gains a +10 circumstance bonus to find the secret panel in area E10.

Story Award: If the PCs free the prisoners and see them to safety, award them 25,600 XP; the traumatized prisoners must be carried or led to the surface and placed in the care of someone trustworthy. If the PCs destroy or cure the catatonic Lanarel, award them 38,400 XP.

E10. Members' Lounge

Red silk curtains cover the walls here, billowing gently from unseen winds. Golden motes of light float in the air, illuminating the rich furnishings of the chamber: overstuffed leather and velvet chairs, tables and bookcases made of heavy,

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

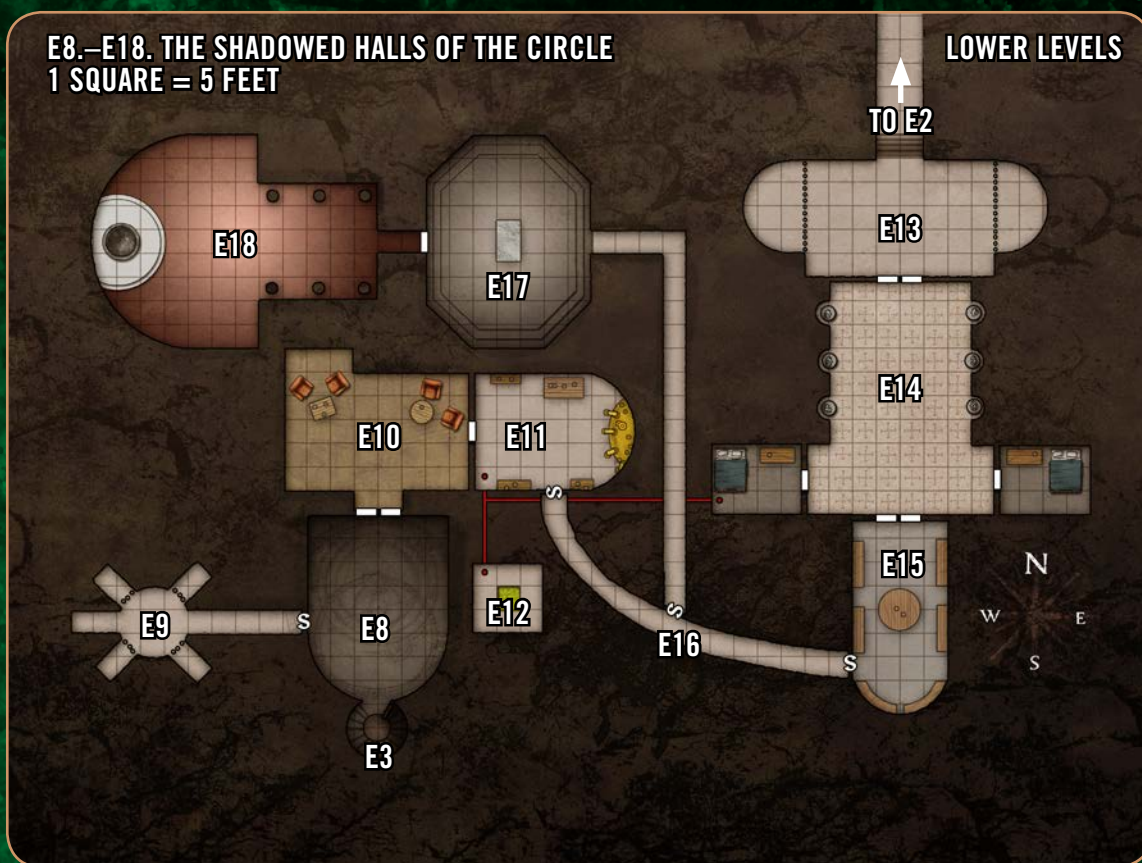
Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

E8.–E18. THE SHADOWED HALLS OF THE CIRCLE
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

LOWER LEVELS



dark woods, and large paintings fill the space. An enormous roasted beast sits on a large table in the room's center.

Visiting members of the Immaculate Circle relax in the lush confines of the lounge between meetings, or use the room for small, private discussions. Five permanent *unseen servant* spells clean and maintain the furniture and bring residents whatever drinks or food they request from the lounge's stores (currently brandy, cognac, red wine, and smoked Molthuni whiskey). The table is enchanted with a permanent *gentle repose* spell that prevents food set upon it from going bad; it is currently set with figs, grapes, jubilee pie, olives, pomegranates, tangerines, a variety of Taldan and Galtan cheeses, and a hunter's roast: a roast goose stuffed inside a roast boar, stuffed inside a roast black bear.

An open letter sits on one of the end tables, used by Lotheed in the last meeting to chastise the secret society's more reckless members. Penned by Travarak Denzarni to express his frustrations, it reads:

Damn Lotheed! I'm tired of doing nothing! We've known Stavian killed his boy for twenty years and never did a thing with it. Now he's dead, and that crown-worthy secret is just useless historical trivia! What's the point of immortality if

we skulk in the dark instead of making kings take a knee to us? I say it's time we took the throne ourselves. Adella's got a direct family claim, and Jeroth and I can be anyone. Why rule as a secret society when we can just rule? But I need your keen eyes watching my back, Ghoom. What do you say?

Treasure: The circle enjoys fine comforts from their amassed wealth. The furniture in this room is made of claro walnut, and the set of chairs, tables, and bookcases is worth 8,200 gp all together. The bookcase holds first printings of many popular Taldan books, as well as several older tomes on occult lore (3,000 gp). The preserving table is worth 6,000 gp.

The portraits depict Nenareen Adella, Travarak Denzarni, Barenby Ghoom, Milon Jeroth, and Panivar Lotheed I, and were commissioned from the famed Taldan portrait painter Genevixia Cross (worth 1,800 gp each), who passed away in a very public assault 50 years ago. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (nobility) check can identify each subject, and recalls that each supposedly died decades or centuries ago.

A concealed niche behind one of the wall's wooden panels (Perception DC 35) hides a simple security measure to capture escaping slaves and experimental subjects: a set of *iron bands of binding*.

E11. The Alchemy Lab (CR 16)

A huge glass and brass apparatus of connected beakers, tubes, retorts, and bottles covers the east wall. Liquid of all colors and viscosities drips and sizzles, moving through the tubes in an elaborate, synchronized pattern. A marble slab table holds more flasks and vials, crucibles and burettes. Wooden shelves and cabinets display countless stoppered bottles of powders and solutions.

Overhead, the ceiling is covered with a wooden lattice. Bundles of dried herbs and flowers hang from the lattice, canopied the room with withered beauty and filling the air with their musky odor.

Nenareen Adella conducts all manner of experiments here in her alchemy lab, occupying most of her immortal life. She grew the cloned body of Carrius Stavian in the large vat and related equipment on the eastern wall. The equipment here counts as a masterwork alchemy lab.

A 3-inch-wide hole bores through the southern wall, through the remains of an obviously bricked-over passage, and leads to area E12, where Adella rests and rejuvenates. The hole requires a successful DC 30 Perception check to spot among the lab's clutter. A well-concealed, human-sized secret door in the same wall (Perception DC 35) leads to a secret passage (area E16).

Creatures: Nenareen Adella continues to work here alongside two of her blood spawn minions, even after any alarms the PCs may raise, though if alerted to the presence of intruders, she drinks her mutagen and makes other basic preparations. Her overconfidence has convinced her that she can handle any petty mortals who enter her domain, even if they slip past lesser Inner Circle members like Barenby and Travarak.

If disturbed, the pale woman demands the intruders leave immediately or risk having their bodies and minds warped into truly horrible things to sate her curiosity. She entreats any elves with the party to remain by her side and enjoy the blessings of immortality. If ignored or disrespected, she orders her spawn to attack as she hurls shock and force bombs. If the Dopant King survived his encounter with the PCs in area E8, he joins the blood spawn in their close attack.

LADY NENAREEN ADELLA CR 17
XP 102,400
hp 187 (see page 56); fast healing 5

BLOOD SPAWN (2) CR 13
XP 25,600
hp 141 each (see page 17); fast healing 2

Treasure: A variety of valuable chemicals and experiments lie around Adella's lab, including a *boro bead* (5th level), three *bottled misfortunes*, an *elixir of gold*

dragon breath, an *oil of stone shape*, eight *potions of cure serious wounds*, three *potions of inflict serious wounds*, and two *potions of remove curse*.

Development: Adella's sizable notebook sits open on the marble worktable. Stained with a dozen different fluids, it contains details from her experiments over the past year, but one dog-eared section looks frequently referenced and details the laborious process of creating a duplicate of a living creature—as well as a few gruesome mistakes along the way, such as the attic whisperer Carr in *Pathfinder* #128—similar to the *clone* spell. In it, she credits the Huntsmaster with retrieving “a lock from the prince”—a keepsake Eutropia kept of her little brother, and that she believed was sealed away in the Imperial Palace by the Ulfen Guard. Scrawled in a much angrier hand near the end of this section is a personal note:

I should have expected Panivar's barbaric little “pet” to ruin my months of careful, precise work. He insists he has Thassritoum under his sway, but it certainly seems to be the opposite from my perspective. I replicated the boy down to his childhood scars, and Lotheed's cosmic dog mauled the soul into shreds pulling it back for us. Am I expected to put half a soul into this vessel and see it thrive? Well, my art is perfect! This mistake isn't on me!

Adella refers to the damage done to Prince Carrius's soul by the sahkil Thassritoum in retrieving it from Nirvana. The Immaculate Circle had originally plotted to clone and resurrect the dead prince, then layer enchantment magic and mundane brainwashing into his vulnerable mind. The extensive damage to the soul necessitated a more complex plan, using Lotheed's *Soul Crucible* to patch Carrius's soul with bits of psychic energy pulled from the Astral Plane.

E12. Sarcophagus (CR 16)

A marble tub filled with thick, red fluid bubbles quietly atop a dais in the center of this small room. Each side of the room appears to be a stone archway, carved in detail with immobile stone curtains hanging from either side of the blank wall. The curved ceiling above displays a stone relief of twisting branches, withered leaves, and obscenely plump fruit, all gilded in gold and illuminated with motes of dancing light.

Nenareen Adella's secret sanctum conceals the tub of alchemical fluid that maintains her immortality, and can only be reached via four tiny holes about half an inch in diameter, drilled through 3 feet of rock into area E8, or a similar hole in the wall which leads to area E11. The Duchess reaches her sarcophagus by assuming her fluid form, and then seeping through these holes.

If the PCs kill Adella or she is able to flee, she returns here to rest and regenerate. The PCs might find this

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

room by examining **E8** or **E11** or following the Duchess in mist form, or even with *scrying* or similar spells.

Treasure: The fluid in the tub is a serum made from elves' blood and a variety of rare reagents, but it is ultimately useless to anyone but a half-elven woman hoping to pursue Adella's journey to vampirism. The exact rules for this process are beyond the scope of this adventure, but may make a suitable side quest if you choose to continue the War for the Crown campaign.

A gold necklace hangs from a nearby goblet, with a single circular moonstone dangling from the chain. The chain itself is worth 150 gp, but the gem is a *gem of seeing*. The cup used as an impromptu display is a *chalice of poison weeping*^{UE}.

A secret panel (Perception DC 25 to find) in the wall hides an alcove in which the Duchess kept her jewelry box. This elegant adamantine-and-silver-filigree box has a strange magical lock shaped like an open, fanged mouth. A drop of the Duchess's blood or a successful DC 35 Disable Device or Use Magic Device check is required to open the box. A spellcaster with the Create Wondrous Item feat can attune the lock to a new blood donor for a cost of 1,000 gp.

Within the jewelry box are the Adella family jewels, long thought lost in the family's extermination: a rose gold tiara set with flower-shaped diamonds (12,300 gp); a rope of over 100 pearls (6,600 gp); a twisted platinum ring with a starburst-shaped ruby gem (4,900 gp), a yellow gold navel ring fashioned with a citrine-and-onyx wasp ornament (3,150 gp), and a silver-and-jade amulet designed in a complex knotwork pattern (2,200 gp).

E13. Antechamber of the Lion (CR 16)

A flight of steps leads down to a chamber, the floor covered in trapezoidal marble tiles. Gold bars cordon off the eastern and western alcoves flanking the stairs, shading curved alcoves beyond. The ceiling is a carved relief of a ferocious lion, large as a building, crushing armies beneath its paws.

Creatures: Panivar Lotheed keeps a pair of miserable and angry Grisantian lions—rare, golden-maned creatures from the Whistling Plains that supposedly descend from the mythical grogrisant itself—here as trophies and symbols of his supposed dominance over Taldor. If alerted to the PCs' approach, he locks the double doors to the south and uses his magic to open the lions' cages remotely.

GRISANTIAN LIONS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 184 each (see page 86)

E14. Trophy Room

This chamber has the look of a museum. Nooks in the walls, illuminated from above with magical light, showcase busts,

sculptures, and other pieces of art. Heavy-framed paintings hang between the nooks, and statues of heroic men in armor or long robes stand in the corners. From the ceiling hangs a massive crystal chandelier swarming with magical lights.

These are the chambers of Panivar Lotheed and Nenareen Adella, the founding Inner Circle members and longest-lived of the secret society. Three centuries ago, Panivar allied with an ancient and unique kimenhul sahkil, Thassritoum the Mewling Storm, exchanging sacrifices and access to the duke's enemies in exchange for the ancient outsider's protection and secrets. His centuries of accumulated treasures and victories stand on display here.

Panivar Lotheed and Nenareen Adella both maintain bedchambers off this museum, though neither sleeps any more.

Treasure: The collected artworks in this room, treasures of Taldor's history, are all but priceless. Many are stolen, though, and unless the PCs go through illegal channels to fence them for a fraction of their price, most will have to be returned to their rightful owners. Whether the PCs fence the art or return it (which garners them a modest reward from each grateful owner), they earn 16,000 gp for the art pieces.

With a successful DC 25 Appraise check, a PC can recognize one of the statues (that of a general from the Sixth Army of Exploration) as a fake. The statue's base is hollow, and with a successful DC 35 Perception check a PC finds a hidden panel (the DC of this check drops by 5 if a PC has noted the statue is fake). Inside the statue's base is a bag containing six small diamonds, each one worth 2,500 gp. Next to the bag are three ring boxes. One holds a *jailer's dungeon ring*^{UE} and the other two each contain a *prisoner's dungeon ring*^{UE}. Panivar Lotheed uses these on occasion to keep track of his agents.

Development: Panivar keeps an erratic journal in his bedroom, with many of the entries mundane accountings of vapid political secrets and debts owed. The most recent entry is from months ago and reads:

The soul is shredded. Thassritoum tells me it was unavoidable given the haste and difficulty of the task, but I suspect his cruelty got the better of his practicality once again. He does love presenting me with a challenge. I doubt what's left of the boy could survive more than a few hours outside the crucible. I've debated sending an imposter, or transferring my own soul into the vessel Adella prepared, but the return of Prince Carrius will be perhaps the most closely scrutinized miracle in Taldor's history.

The boy must remain pure, and his destiny must be to become emperor. I simply need some means of patching the damage done. Gods are not the only ones who live forever, so certainly they cannot be the only ones to make a soul. I simply need a powerful source of psychic energy.

E15. Arcanium (CR 17)

A dozen tomes with an eclectic mix of bindings, from snakeskin to blood-red leather, bob lazily in midair. Glass cases line the walls, filled with mounted skeletons of strange humanoids and birds. A circular desk stands almost in the center of the room.

Panivar Lotheed's personal study is lined with the fixation of his obsession. With a successful DC 25 Knowledge (planes) check, a PC identifies the skeletons not as mortal creatures, but magically preserved and dissected psychopomps, ranging from tiny nosois to vanths, morrignas, and even a moth-winged olethros.

A frequently-used hidden door between two cabinets (Perception DC 25) opens into a tunnel (E16) connecting to the Duchess's alchemy lab in E11.

Creature: Panivar Lotheed spends most of his time here studying and reviewing correspondence from various agents. If he is alerted to intruders via the alarms in area E1 or any of his Inner Circle members' warnings, he moves to the council chamber (area E17). There he prepares to face them, should they reach that far.

If the PCs somehow make it this far without alerting Panivar to their presence, they find him reviewing his journal here (though he may be alerted by the *alarm* spell in the secret passage).

DUKE PANIVAR LOTHEED

CR 17

XP 102,400

hp 189 (see page 58)

Treasure: A permanent *levitate* effect in the library keeps the duke's books suspended. Much of Panivar's wealth and library is hidden in a private demiplane not detailed in this adventure. The books here still contain all wizard spells from levels 1 through 7, as well as *dimensional lock*, *etherealness*, *gate*, *greater create demiplane*, *greater planar binding*, and whatever other high-level spells you deem appropriate.

The library's other tomes contain enough material to study for a year. If a PC studies them for at least 4 hours a day for a month, she gains a permanent +1 competence bonus to one of the following skills: Knowledge (arcana, planes, religion) or Spellcraft. A PC can select a different skill for every month of study (increasing her current competence bonus by +1), but she cannot change the skill once selected. A PC can obtain a maximum of a +5 bonus to a skill in this manner.

Development: The open tome contains Panivar's personal research notes regarding the *Soul Crucible*, detailing his discovery and subsequent modifications to the vessel. The first entry dates from 4607 and reads:

It's rare Thassritoum provides me an insight without a price or puzzle, but perhaps this one was too precious to serve as

a toy. He called it the Soul Crucible, and I see why he kept the knowledge of it hidden until now; it appears the Last Azlanti himself tucked it away from the world, and the locks and wards lost their sting without their master.

The vessel seems designed to store and refine immortal souls, constructed, I would wager, by a civilization predating even Azlant. A wily user can imprison his foes and study their secrets from their living essence, but I believe it could be improved upon, with what the Mewling Storm has taught me. This Soul Crucible could live up to its moniker, burning souls down to their most essential traits. Imagine brewing the sword arm of Arnisant? Or the cunning of Razmir? Splicing the greatest living talents together into a perfect whole!

I can master this device. With Thassritoum shielding my soul from Pharasma's gaze, I have all the time in the world.

The journals also contain notes on the *Soul Crucible* and how it works. The PCs can examine these sections of the journals to learn the *Soul Crucible* is a powerful artifact that can store, examine, dissect, and restore souls. More recent entries describe modifications to the artifact's original function, and the most recent pages discuss how to use powerful motes of psychic energy in place of soul-stuff.

With a successful DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check upon completing their review of the notes, a PC understands that placing a soul or corpse in the *Soul Crucible* will restore the subject to a complete, living form, even without a body. If a soul gem is placed in the pouring spout of the crucible, the magical jewel can strain some vital essence from a soul as it is resurrected. Anyone in possession of the gem can cast *raise dead* or *resurrection* on the subject should the creature die again, regardless of how long the subject has been dead, and even if the body is missing or destroyed. The soul gem also helps armor the resurrected figure against death magic, granting him a spell resistance equal to 15 + his Hit Dice against death effects. This stored soul energy may have other uses (see page 54), as Panivar surmises, though he has not yet had the time to experiment.

E16. Secret Passage

This unlit stone passage connects Panivar's arcanium to Nenareen's alchemy lab, and a secret door midway along the tunnel's length (Perception DC 30) leads to the true stronghold of the Inner Circle. An *alarm* spell alerts Panivar via a mental "ping" if any creatures pass through this hall.

E17. The Whispering Sanctum

Three wide steps run along the walls of this octagonal chamber, leading down to an altar in the center of the room. The altar seems to be formed of shadows and whispers—a magical creation of swirling darkness from which a susurrus of voices emanates.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

NEW MAGIC ITEM

Panivar Lotheed forged a unique magic item to allow him to enter Prince Carrius's mind and directly implant compulsions while taming and containing the overwhelming power of the legends used in the soul's construction. Because of the constant struggle between his own identity and the six possessing legends, Prince Carrius's mind is considered a permanent mindscape.

RING OF THE RECALLED SOUL

PRICE
150,000 GP

SLOT ring

CL 18th

WEIGHT —

AURA moderate illusion

The *ring of the recalled soul* allows the wearer to open a door into a nearby mindscape they are aware of as if using the spell *mindscape door*, but the targeted creature cannot resist this effect with a Will save. If the ring's wearer connects to the mindscape, he can designate up to 10 other creatures to be able to see and pass through the door as though it were a normal doorway. The ring grants no ability to detect mindscapes, so the wearer must already be aware of its existence via interactions, hearsay, or the *detect mindscape*^{OA} spell.

Once the ring's wearer has connected to the mindscape, he can open the door to that particular mindscape from anywhere on the same plane, so long as the mindscape still exists. Physical distance poses no barrier to the mindscape. Each time the ring's wearer opens the door to a mindscape he has previously visited, he can alter the designated creatures allowed to pass through the door as if he were opening the door for the first time.

The ring's wearer cannot prevent creatures within the mindscape from exiting to the real world so long as the door is open. The ring's wearer can close the door to the mindscape at any time as long as he is not within the mindscape.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 75,000 GP

Forge Ring, *mindscape door*^{OA}



charm ability to pull a morrigna psychopomp to his side to heal and protect him. Resentful of her compelled service, the morrigna tries to limit herself to nonlethal attacks such as *hold person* when not healing Panivar or using her *freedom of movement* and *dispel magic* spells to undo harmful effects targeting him. She does not attempt to resist if a PC targets her with a *dismissal* spell.

DUKE PANIVAR LOTHEED

CR 17

XP 102,400

hp 189 (see page 58)

E18. The Soul Crucible

A bizarre device of shining, white stone is the sole focus of this room. A deep vessel, large enough for an adult human to sit within, balances atop three stone pillars fitted with lenses and alien instruments. A tub below ripples with a milky, opalescent fluid whose earthy, sweet scent fills the room.

The rest of this almost temple-like chamber consists of shelves lining the walls, though they are largely devoid of books. Instead, only a single journal rests among the empty, stained jars and flasks.

This is where Panivar Lotheed brought the *Soul Crucible* for his experimentation in refining the mortal soul, and where the Immaculate Circle captured and rebuilt Prince Carrius's soul. They reinforced the child's patchwork essence with pieces of legendary heroes from Taldor's past—a process that seemed to restore him, costing only bits and pieces of his young memory. The process proved more complex, however, than even an immortal wizard could manage. The legends used were a poor substitute for soul-stuff, and far more hungry to latch onto a living host than Lotheed anticipated. He spent many months trimming back and caging the kings of legend inside Carrius's mind using his *ring of the recalled soul*.

Beyond its legacy with Prince Carrius, Panivar has been reluctant to experiment with the *Soul Crucible*, testing it sparingly on victims he already intends to kill and dissect. He ultimately hopes to use the artifact to augment his own vital essence, but for now considers his immortal life too precious to tamper with.

Development: The journal sitting alone on the shelf details Lotheed's weeks of careful grafting, surgery, and examination as he carefully nursed Carrius's shredded soul into a stable state using legends stolen from the Astral Plane—a grisly and painful subject to even read about. Later entries detail his frustrations with how quickly the legends seem to be growing to overwhelm Carrius himself. The final entry reads:

This is the Inner Circle's sanctum, where they conduct meetings and discuss their plots. The "altar" was a gift from Panivar's patron, Thassritoum, and shields the entire Immaculate Circle complex with a permanent *nondetection* spell (CL 20th).

Creature: If alerted to the PCs' trespassing, Duke Panivar Lotheed moves to this chamber to confront any trespassers before they can reach the *Soul Crucible*. He also casts *summon monster IX* and uses his summoner's



I have crafted a ring with which I can enter the boy's mind and take these delinquent emperors to task with my own hand. They are arrogant automatons—more like clever and willful pets than the emperors I had hoped for, but they've done their work. Now I need only prune them back hard, but not so much that my discipline destroys them; there is precious little holding the lad together save their ghostly egos. Another session or two and they should be permanently cowed, but if not, the ring will allow me to re-enter and establish dominance whenever I care to.

THE SOUL CRUCIBLE

The *Soul Crucible* is an artifact that can, with the proper incantations and rituals, tear souls from living bodies, destroy souls, call newly fled souls back from the afterlife, restore the souls of the dead to living bodies, and thanks to Lotheed's experimentations, extract and purify quintessential traits from one soul to bestow upon another (destroying the original soul in the process). The crucible requires various rare unguents and reagents, but is currently filled with three doses' worth of this arcane fluid—enough to resurrect up to three people.

Panivar Lotheed's notes from the library in area E15 might give the PCs enough information to discern the crucible's purpose and power. Drinae, the thriar seer, might also assist if the PCs have formed an alliance with her. Spells such as *legend lore* reveal the recent history of the crucible—including the fact that the circle used the

item to return Prince Carrius to life, patching his soul up with other spirits—but curiously can't reveal much before Lotheed rediscovered it hidden away outside Nidal over a century ago.

The exact statistics and abilities of the *Soul Crucible* itself are beyond the scope of this adventure, beyond its ability to resurrect creatures whose souls are bound to physical objects. You may wish to further explore these abilities and the artifact's mysterious origins if you continue the campaign. It radiates an overwhelming aura of necromancy.

RESTORING THE PRINCESS

The *Soul Crucible* can be used to restore Princess Eutropia, regardless of the state of her original body. If a PC carries her necklace within 30 feet of the crucible, a flickering emanation of Eutropia appears above the vessel as the crucible's hungry nature magically calls to her spirit. The princess cannot communicate with the PCs, even by motion or expression. The closer the *magic jar* necklace gets to the vessel, the stronger and clearer her image becomes.

To bring Princess Eutropia back to life, the necklace must be placed in the crucible. When the necklace is so placed, the stones below the crucible flare white-hot, and ghostly steam issues from the vessel. The winch must then be turned, tipping the vessel over and "pouring out" the soul energy into the arcane fluid below.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1: Death of an Heir

Part 2: Carving the Circle

Part 3: Through the Granite Walls

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Spirits of Six Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

Something is gravely wrong with Carrius. His demeanor has changed radically, from kind boy to power-obsessed tyrant. He's seizing the throne, arranging a quickly approaching coronation, and has blamed YOU LOT for Eutropia's assassination. You're possibly the most wanted figures in all of Taldor. He's like a man possessed, with magic greater than anything even my brother or father could wield, and skill with a sword that would rival Gennaris himself!

I'm sheltering in the Grandbridge Vagabond Camp, on Barrier Island just outside Oppara. The crowds and running water seem to help block the most reliable of Carrius's divinations. But the city crawls with investigators and paid informants, not to mention an angry citizenry eager to rally behind their "grieving" prince.

For now, Carrius seems untouchable. The Ulfen Guard have welcomed the heir into the Imperial Palace, and so he now commands an army of Ulfen warriors and the royal guard, along with the building's unmatched magical protections. Much of my support network has been wiped out, and even now he targets your own supporters. You must be swift if you hope to act, or else flee Taldor and do not look back! If you return to the city, do so with utmost caution, or else do what you can to operate from a distance. I will try to arrange whatever I can on your behalf; you have only but to ask.

Yours in spirit and blade,
Martella

PLAYER HANDOUT

Images pour forth from the crucible, a flickering parade of childhood memories. Princess Eutropia's memories spill over the vessel's lip, each heartbreak and victory, each friendship and loss that shaped the princess's spirit into the woman you know. You catch glimpses of young Eutropia and her brother playing at knights and dragons, reading together in the Imperial Palace, and other such innocent memories. You also see the grief and resolve on Eutropia's face as she stands next to her brother's body at his funeral, a memory that defines her so strongly it glows with a light that overshadows all other facets of her soul.

The PCs may also have learned that a portion of Eutropia's spirit can be reserved in a soul gem such as the one in Lotheed's arcanium. Keeping a fragment of her soul will make it easier to resurrect her should she fall again and also renders her resistant to death magic. Unbeknownst to the PCs, reserving some of Eutropia's soul can also help heal Prince Carrius in Part 4.

When the *Soul Crucible* finishes its work, the vessel slowly rights itself. The collected soul-energy of Eutropia coalesces into the form of the princess, pale and exhausted, clad in a simple gray shroud. Eutropia wraps

her arms around her shoulders to stop the shivering, musters a smile for the PCs, and says with a beaming grin, "You've restored me, exactly as I knew you could! That wasn't so hard now, was it?"

If the PCs don't use the *Soul Crucible* to restore princess Eutropia, she can be resurrected normally later, now that her primary reason for feigning death has been eliminated.

Story Award: For defeating the remaining four members of the secret society's Inner Circle, award the PCs 76,800 XP. If they resurrect Eutropia, award them an additional 76,800 XP.

PART 3: THROUGH THE GRANITE WALLS

By the time the PCs finish in the Shadowed Halls, the six emperors riding Carrius's soul have fully overwhelmed him and assumed control of the body, seizing the crown and using the PCs as convenient scapegoats for

Eutropia's murder. Taldor is surprisingly ready to stand behind the "tragic, mourning" prince who just laid his sister to rest, especially given the apparent betrayal by her close advisors (the PCs), who struck her down and then vanished like cowards!

This section assumes the PCs took some time—at least a day—investigating the Shadowed Halls. Given the strength of their opponents, they may have left the halls to rest and then re-entered, taking 2 days or more to clear out the cult. If the PCs eliminated the cult more quickly than expected, modify the following sections accordingly. For example, Carrius may have instructed the guards to keep the PCs out but not yet posted flyers.

A falcon—the target of an *animal messenger* spell—awaits the PCs when they conclude their business in the Shadowed Halls. It carries a small scroll from Martella Lotheed (see **Player Handout**).

A HOSTILE TALDOR

While the PCs' friends and close associates believe them innocent of the regicide laid at their feet, most of Taldor is more skeptical. The wounded nation is ready to move back to a place of familiarity and stability, and a male heir of royal blood, with no living elder siblings, eliminates all the messy questions of succession raised by the conflict between Eutropia and Maxillar. Given Carrius's superhuman charisma and the assumption of the PCs' villainy, even a living, breathing Eutropia will be viewed as a hoax until the PCs win some support to their side.

With Carrius shielded as he is behind the greatest security apparatus in Taldor, the PCs must act with guile rather than strength of arms. They must cautiously and quietly unravel the prince's support network to leave him vulnerable to a more direct approach. Seven major forces intertwine to undermine the PCs and shelter Carrius.

- **Public Perception:** The Taldan public sees Carrius as some combination of a return to normalcy, a tragic figure, and a divine omen, garnering him structural support and stability.
- **Paid Informants:** A number of minor nobles and enterprising servants earn a few gold on the side reporting disloyalty to Carrius's professional agents and Taldan security forces.



- **Professional Investigators:** Carrius has co-opted much of Eutropia's intelligence network to serve him, and he has bolstered these resources with agents of the Sleepless Agency, detectives renowned across Avistan for their mercenary loyalty.

- **First Imperial Arcanists' Guild:** The Imperial Palace is crisscrossed with some of the most advanced magical alarms, guards, and wards on the continent, bolstered and maintained by the First Imperial Arcanists' Guild.
- **Palace Servants:** In addition to their obvious duties, the servants of the Imperial Palace are well paid for their loyalty and discretion. They serve as a living alarm system, with eyes in almost every room at any given time of day or night.
- **Royal Guard:** The bravest, most trustworthy, and deadliest members of the Taldan Horse and Taldan Phalanx swear their lives to protecting the palace from all intruders.

- **Ulfen Guard:** Secured within the Imperial Palace and theoretically beyond corruption and bribery, the Ulfen Guard are the ultimate line of defense for whoever sits upon the throne.

Dismantling these protections is the only way to get inside the palace and get close enough to Carrius to either cure or kill the possessed tyrant, and doing so requires cunning, guile, and social graces the PCs have carefully honed. This portion of the adventure uses the same social combat rules the PCs relied on heavily during *Crownfall* and *Songbird*, *Scion*, *Saboteur* as they curry favor, unearth blackmail, and win back the loyalty of a recovering government and nation.

THE INQUISITION

Targeting and undermining Carrius's supporters takes time; all the while the emperor-to-be targets the PCs' own supporters and resources. PCs can target Carrius's seven pillars of support as if they were individuals, making bold public statements or blackmailing, bribing, threatening, or allying with key figures important to each.

Each turn of this social combat takes approximately 3 to 4 hours, giving PCs 3 social turns each day. At the end of each day, Carrius's forces corrupt, detain, or kill 2d6 agents loyal to each PC (see *Agents of Change* in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #128: Songbird, Scion, Saboteur*). Lost agents can be replaced using the Recover Agents operation, but only once per Persona Phase (once

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I: Death of an Heir

Part 2: Carving the Circle

Part 3: Through the Granite Walls

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Spirits of Six Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

OLD ALLIES

The PCs may have found many allies over the course of War for the Crown who can aid them now in Oppara. For each of the following characters still alive and on good terms with the PCs, the PCs gain a specific bonus to influence various elements of the city.

Count Bartelby Lotheed (#128): One automatic success to influence the First Imperial Arcanists' Guild.

Lieutenant Gallindra Jonrek (#129): +2 on discovery checks attempted against the Royal Guard and Ulfen Guard.

Baron Kalbio of Breezy Creek (#127): +5 on influence checks against Public Perception and Palace Servants.

Kathann Zalar (#130): +1 on all discovery checks.

Duke Leonard Centimus (#127): +1 on influence checks against Paid Informants and the First Imperial Arcanist Guild.

Maxillar Pythareus (#130): Royal Guards begin as unfriendly instead of hostile.

Baron Nikolaus Okerra (#128): +2 on influence checks against the Ulfen Guard.

The Night Swan (#128): +2 on discovery and influence checks against Professional Investigators.

per week). Once a PC has no agents left, the stress of the situation begins to quickly take a toll, inflicting 1d4 Charisma damage at the end of each day until the PC recovers agents or flees Taldor entirely to recuperate (losing any accumulated successes); this Charisma loss cannot be healed via magic until the character spends at least 1 week outside Taldor. Both forms of damage are more severe, increased by 2, if the PCs are in Oppara itself rather than operating from afar. This damage increase is negated if the PCs shift the general public's attitude to at least friendly, allowing them to personally operate within the capital without severe consequence.

The PCs are free to focus on the forces targeting them or on those forces protecting Carrius, but either way, time is of the essence. Carrius's coronation is scheduled for the seventh day after the PCs complete their attack on the Immaculate Circle (see Timed Events on page 36), and while a grand prince is no more immortal than a prince, he is considerably better guarded and can wield the full power of the *Primogen Crown*!

If you aren't using the optional Agents of Change subsystem, each PC instead begins with a pool of Loyalty points equal to 40 + her Charisma score. Lost agents instead reduce the PC's Loyalty Points, with the same consequences when the pool is reduced to 0.

Note that the challenge presented below assumes a group of four PCs. If your group is larger, you may wish to increase the number of successes required to

influence some or all of the listed entities (particularly Public Perception, Professional Investigators, Palace Servants, and Ulfen Guard) by 1 per additional PC.

The PCs do not gain support or resources until they render at least one entity friendly and three more indifferent or better; until then, there are no gaps in the palace defenses large enough to allow a direct attack without hundreds of soldiers and spellcasters flocking to the prince's aid. As the PCs win support, however, citizens protest or riot, spies leak security details, and factions within the guard abandon their post.

SUBTERFUGE AT RANGE

The PCs are safer from Carrius's inquisition if they remain outside of Oppara entirely, but doing so requires the use of agents to complete an agenda on their behalf. As with Operation checks, using agents to perform social combat requires one agent for every +1 bonus the PC wishes to apply; if a PC has fewer agents, the maximum bonus the PCs can apply at range is capped, and the party must either accept this limitation or enter Oppara to conduct their business in person.

Once an agent is committed to a task, that agent remains committed for the rest of the day. For example, agents committed to discovery checks on the Professional Investigators can only continue to attempt discovery checks against the Professional Investigators, but can do so each turn until the end of the day.

TRANSPARENCY

If the PCs elect to reveal everything they know about the Immaculate Circle and Prince Carrius's possessed state, they play a dangerous game with public confidence. To back up such outlandish claims they must first produce both Panivar Lotheed's journals from area E15 and Nenareen Adella's cloning notes from area E11. If they do so, public sentiment is shapely divided, with many still insisting their claims are an obvious smear tactic, while others lose faith in the authority of the central government altogether, and still others agree with Lotheed's theory: that the "resurrected" emperors of old are exactly the sort of leadership Taldor needs in this difficult time. This revelation permanently besmirches young Carrius's reputation, should he survive.

If the PCs use this tactic, they gain a +5 bonus to influence Public Perception and the Palace Guard, but take a -5 penalty to influence the Paid Informants and the First Imperial Arcanists' Guild.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

As celebrities and spies of legendary status, the PCs have graduated from coaxing individuals to their cause, and their challenge now is to sway entire organizations and the general public. Each of the entities listed in this section is treated as an individual opponent, but their sheer scope and complexity radically increases the

skill DCs required to influence them. Each entry lists persuasive individuals to provide a human face for these interactions, but interacting with these figures directly does not change that entity's DCs or skill modifiers.

Each entity is not a monolith, and the entries represent the general attitude within the organization. Even if the PCs win the approval of the public, some individual citizens still hate them, and even if they change the Ulfen Guard's attitude to friendly, some members of the Ulfen Guard still fight to defend the prince.

Martella's initial letter to the PCs (see page 30) provides a basic outline of these seven entities, but you may wish to clarify their nature and the roles they play to your players, either away from the table or as part of additional missives from the spymaster.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

N judgmental observers

Background The general public sees Carrius as a tragic hero, stepping in to rule after the gruesome death of his sister at the hands of traitors. Public Perception includes popular religious figures such as Father **Basri** (LN male venerable half-elf ex-cleric of Aroden 13), and local journalists like Lady **Petal Mictious** (CN female human expert 5).

DESCRIPTION

Personality The public is weary and tired of conflict, and still loves good stories that reinforce Taldor's exceptionalism and great history. Even citizens who didn't necessarily want Eutopia as empress still mourn her loss as a noteworthy public figure.

Goal The general public wants a return to normalcy after a tense and occasionally violent succession battle, but they also want improvements to Taldor's standing and general quality of life.

Skills Bluff +20, Diplomacy +15, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (local) +27, Perception +20, Sense Motive +20

DISCOVERY

Biases The public likes a natural performer: anyone with 8 or more ranks in two different Perform skills (+2).

Strengths (Knowledge [local] or Perception DC 22) The public readily rejects any information that conflicts with the narrative they've already heard.

Weaknesses (Knowledge [local] or Perception DC 27) The public adores a storybook-style conclusion to dread news.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Unfriendly.

Influence Checks (Knowledge [local] or Sense Motive DC 22)

Perform (any) DC 22; Diplomacy, Knowledge (local), or Profession (any) DC 27; Heal DC 31; Intimidate DC 35

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

Benefit If the PCs shift the public's attitude to friendly, they no longer take additional damage from working inside Oppara. If they shift the public's attitude to helpful, members of the

public actively begin hiding their loyalists and operatives, reducing the number of agents lost each day by 2.

Story Award If the PCs shift the public's attitude to friendly, award them 25,600 XP. If they shift the public's attitude to helpful, award them an additional 25,600 XP.

PAID INFORMANTS

CN profiteering bystanders

Background Several forces loyal to Carrius pay average citizens and minor nobles for any reports of disloyalty and suspicious behavior. While not a unified organization, certain local figures, like the notorious gossip Lord

Winchell Tetimus (N male human aristocrat 7) and gossip writer **Menarie Gusairne** (CN female human expert 5) serve as information hubs.

DESCRIPTION

Personality Oppara's informants love to know who said what and when, without much care about context or consequence.

Goal A few informants are genuinely interested in maintaining the peace and prosperity of the empire, but the vast majority simply want to improve their own standing by taking well-timed digs at others.

Skills Bluff +21, Diplomacy +16, Knowledge (local, nobility) +21, Perception +28, Sense Motive +24

DISCOVERY

Biases Informants' allegiance can be bought for one turn by spending 500 gp on bribes and enticements (+2).

Strengths (Knowledge [nobility] or Sense Motive DC 25) Informants know who pays their fees and thus are less interested in rumors targeting popular or powerful nobles.

Weaknesses (Diplomacy or Sense Motive DC 23)

Informants readily accept leads on new information they can use to better their own standing.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Unfriendly.

Influence Checks (Knowledge [nobility] or Sense Motive DC 23) Intimidate DC 23; Appraise DC 28; Bluff or Diplomacy DC 32; Knowledge (nobility) DC 36

Successes Needed Shifting the informants' attitude requires 4 successful influence checks

Benefit If the PCs shift the informants' attitude to friendly, the daily damage inflicted to their agents is reduced to 1d6 (if the PCs make both the informants and the investigators friendly, this damage is reduced to 1d3). If the PCs shift the informants' attitude to helpful, they gain access to a subtle intelligence network, granting each PC one free turn each day that can only be used for a discovery check.

Story Award If the PCs shift the informants' attitude to friendly, award them 38,400 XP. If they shift the informants' attitude to helpful, award them an additional 38,400 XP.

PROFESSIONAL INVESTIGATORS

LN hired muscle

Background Several mercenary intelligence organizations have been brought on board to help secure Oppara after

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

the recent assassination and dissent. Of note, **Scena deVoro** (LN female half-elf investigator^{ACG} 10) heads the legendary Sleepless Agency in Taldor, while the canny **Gusto Gaderlain** (N agender dwarf rogue 9) organizes many of the independent contractors.

DESCRIPTION

Personality While Carrius's informants work for the fun of it, his hired investigators are professionals with no agenda and a minimum of ego. They do their job, and at the end of the day clock out and go home.

Goal Oppara's investigators ultimately want to be paid for rendering a service.

Skills Bluff +22, Diplomacy +25, Disguise +25, Knowledge (local, nature) +22, Perception +25, Sense Motive +29, Sleight of Hand +25

DISCOVERY

Biases Investigators respect other socially minded individuals (bards, inquisitors^{APG}, investigators^{ACG}, mediums^{OA}, occultists^{OA}, rogues, and vigilantes^{UI}) (+2), but become wary around known criminals (–5)

Strengths (Appraise or Sense Motive DC 24) Appeals to emotion and decency almost universally fall on deaf ears.

Weaknesses (Appraise or Sense Motive DC 24)

Investigators are especially inclined to accept arguments that put them on leads for other existing cases or jobs.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Indifferent.

Influence Checks (Appraise or Profession [barrister]

DC 20, or Sense Motive DC 25) Appraise or Profession (barrister) DC 24; Sense Motive DC 29; Diplomacy, Knowledge (local), or Perception DC 33; Bluff DC 37

Successes Needed Shifting the investigators' attitude requires 6 successful influence checks.

Benefit If the PCs shift the investigators' attitude to friendly, the daily damage inflicted to their agents is reduced to 1d6 (if the PCs make both the informants and the investigators friendly, this damage is reduced to 1d3). If they shift the investigators' attitude to helpful, they also learn that Carrius's personal bodyguard, Vorr, is rumored to be a lycanthrope.

Story Award If the PCs shift the investigators' attitude to friendly, award them 51,200 XP. If they shift their attitude to helpful, award them an additional 51,200 XP.

FIRST IMPERIAL ARCANISTS' GUILD

LE wards and support staff

Background Much like the senate building, the Imperial Palace is a rat's nest of magical wards and alarms, both ancient and modern. The First Imperial Arcanists' Guild—Oppara's premiere association of abjurers and diviners, led by Guildmaster **Adula Stetsico** (LN female human abjurer 11)—helps record and maintain the defenses.

DESCRIPTION

Personality While the wards themselves are neutral, the devious minds who envision and construct new

ways to bind, punish, or kill trespassers lean toward overconfidence and casual cruelty.

Goal The guild welcomes the prestige and wealth that comes with helping protect the Imperial Palace, as well as the opportunity and funding to test out new theories.

Skills Diplomacy +16, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (planes) +24, Perception +21, Sense Motive +21, Spellcraft +28

DISCOVERY

Biases The Guild is more inclined toward arcane spellcasters (alchemists^{APG}, arcanists^{ACG}, bards, bloodragers^{ACG}, magi^{UM}, sorcerers, witches^{APG}, and wizards) (+2), and see themselves as rivals with "unreasonable" and "codependent" divine spellcasters (clerics, inquisitors^{APG}, oracles^{APG}, and shamans^{ACG}) (–2), especially druids and hunters^{ACG} (–5).

Strengths (Spellcraft 21 or Sense Motive DC 25) The guild deeply resents any insinuation they are less than omniscient when it comes to the palace's defenses. They likewise take poorly to threats.

Weaknesses (Knowledge [arcana] or Sense Motive DC 23)

The guild treasures the chance to refine magical theory and practice, and is easily swayed if convinced that a new ruler might mean a new perspective on magical defenses.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Hostile.

Influence Checks (Knowledge [arcana] or Sense Motive

DC 23) Spellcraft DC 23; Knowledge (arcana) or Linguistics DC 28; Bluff or Disable Device DC 32; Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 36

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

Special Interacting with the guild is difficult via agents, and attempts to influence this entity remotely rather than from within Oppara take a –5 penalty.

Benefit While the guild remains hostile or unfriendly toward the PCs, they take additional precautions, maintaining a powerful lightning bolt gallery trap (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 422) in the center of room **F1**. If the PCs shift the guild's attitude to friendly, the mages reveal that the Carrius who sits on the Lion Throne at almost all times is a sophisticated illusion created at Carrius's request, as he claims to fear an assassination like the one that took his sister. If the PCs shift the guild's attitude to helpful, they offer the PCs a greater *maximize metamagic rod^{DE}* in an attempt to entice any arcane spellcasters to join their ranks after the current unpleasantness concludes.

Story Award If the PCs shift the guild's attitude to friendly, award them 38,400 XP. If they shift their attitude to helpful, award them an additional 38,400 XP.

PALACE SERVANTS

NG wary helpers

Background The palace servants, under the oversight of Head Butler **Pattermis Si** (LG male human aristocrat 4/expert 5) and Seneschal **Wynne Sandermain** (N female

halfling expert 8/investigator^{ACG} 2), hail from a variety of backgrounds and watch nearly every room in the palace day and night.

DESCRIPTION

Personality The servants take pride in their work and like to think the empire rises and falls by virtue of the unseen hands who support great leaders. Most appreciate that a position in the palace is one of prestige and relative ease.

Goal More than most, the palace servants work out of patriotism. Most fondly remember Eutropia and can recognize the genuine princess at a glance.

Skills Bluff +21, Diplomacy +24, Knowledge (nobility) +16, Perception +28, Profession (various) +24, Sense Motive +24, Stealth +21

DISCOVERY

Biases Servants gossip constantly, they show strong favor to anyone who has treated other servants (regardless of their location) well in the past (+5), and have a strong bias against anyone cruel or capricious to “the help” (-5).

Strengths (Knowledge [local] or Perception, Sense Motive DC 19) The palace servants are notoriously difficult to bribe or blackmail, and they resent any attempts that involve these tactics.

Weaknesses (Knowledge [history] or Sense Motive DC 23) If the PCs can prove they work with the still-living Eutropia, the servants are far more willing to hear them out.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Hostile. If the PCs resurrect Eutropia, the servants begin as indifferent instead.

Influence Checks (Profession [any] or Sense Motive

DC 21) Profession (baker, butcher, clerk, driver, gardener, innkeeper, or stable master) DC 23; Diplomacy DC 28; Craft (any), Intimidate, or Sense Motive DC 32; Stealth DC 36

Successes Needed Shifting the servants’ attitude requires 5 successful influence checks.

Benefit If the PCs can shift the servants’ attitude to friendly, they pass along gossip, granting the PCs a +2 bonus on discovery checks against the First Imperial Arcanists’ Guild, Royal Guard, and Ulfen Guard. If the PCs can shift the servants’ attitude to helpful, their quiet network of whispers and flattery works quietly on the palace’s guardians even while the PCs are absent, granting each PC a bonus action each day to attempt discovery or influence checks against the First Imperial Arcanists’ Guild, Royal Guards, or Ulfen Guard, but with a -5 penalty. Helpful servants also mention that many doors in the palace—especially for secure areas—are concealed behind *illusory walls*.

Story Award If the PCs shift the servants’ attitude to friendly, award them 38,400 XP. If they shift their attitude to helpful, award them an additional 38,400 XP.

ROYAL GUARD

LN elite soldiers

Background Honorable and talented members of the Taldan Phalanx and Horse are called to defend the

Imperial Palace and all within, conducting regular drills and parades across the palace grounds. Over 200 guards protect the palace at any given time, under the auspices of Captain **Tren Fille** (LN male human fighter 15).

DESCRIPTION

Personality The royal guard are disciplined, honest, and supremely focused, with little time for socializing.

Goal The royal guard protects the Imperial Palace and all within.

Skills Diplomacy +17, Handle Animal +25, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (engineering) +22, Profession (soldier) +29, Perception +25, Ride +25, Sense Motive +25

DISCOVERY

Biases The royal guard are favorable toward anyone of high birth (anyone with the Child of Oppara trait or the Noble Scion feat) (+2), but have a strong bias against the PCs if they killed High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus (-5).

Strengths (Profession [soldier] or Sense Motive DC 22) The royal guard take threats against themselves as poorly as they take threats against the palace or the royal family.

Weaknesses (Diplomacy or Sense Motive DC 29) While the guards are well disciplined and generally above temptation, Captain Fille himself has a great difficulty remaining loyal to his husband, and risks a title and sizable lands if his indiscretions come to light.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Hostile.

Influence Checks (Diplomacy, Profession [soldier], or Sense Motive DC 22) Profession (soldier) DC 24; Knowledge (nobility) or Perform (sing, strings, or winds) DC 29; Diplomacy DC 33; Intimidate DC 37

Special Interacting with the Royal Guard is difficult via agents, and attempts to influence this entity remotely rather than from within Oppara take a -5 penalty.

Successes Needed Shifting the guards’ attitude requires 6 successful influence checks.

Benefit So long as the Royal Guard remains hostile or unfriendly, all palace guards and Ulfen Guards gain a +4 (hostile) or +2 (unfriendly) morale bonus on attack rolls, initiative checks, and saving throws while facing the PCs. If the PCs can shift the guards’ attitude to friendly, one of the palace gates is intentionally left unguarded at a prearranged time to allow the PCs easy entry. If the PCs shift the royal guards’ attitude to helpful, their positive reputation makes the Ulfen Guard easier to influence, granting a +2 bonus on influence checks against the Ulfen Guard.

Story Award If the PCs shift the royal guards’ attitude to friendly, award them 51,200 XP. If they shift their attitude to helpful, award them an additional 51,200 XP.

ULFEN GUARD

N honor-bound guardians

Background Sturdy northern warriors, supposedly recruited for their isolation from Taldan politics, the Ulfen Guard is the final line of defense for those who sit atop the Lion

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

Throne. Commanded by **Kol Kodranson** (N male human barbarian 10), the organization is just as much in the thrall of **Gunri Oathkeeper** (LN female venerable human fighter 6/Ulfen Guard 4; *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Combat* 34), a retired warrior who runs the Staggering Skald several blocks from the palace.

DESCRIPTION

Personality Dedicated, stoic, and imposing on duty, the Ulfen Guard are jovial and earthy among their own.

Goal The Ulfen Guard protect whoever lays claim to the throne, no matter the circumstances.

Skills Diplomacy +18, Intimidate +30, Knowledge (local) +18, Knowledge (nature) +23, Perception +26, Sense Motive +26, Survival +26

DISCOVERY

Biases The Ulfen Guard respect their fellow warriors (brawlers^{ACG}, cavaliers^{APG}, fighters, paladins, rangers, slayers^{ACG}, and swashbucklers^{ACG}) (+2), but harbor a superstitious distrust of all arcane casters (−2).

Strengths (Sense Motive DC 28) Any requests that require the Ulfen Guard to abandon their duty fall on deaf ears.

Weaknesses (Sense Motive DC 31) While not eager to die, the Ulfen Guard like to test their mettle against powerful opponents, and framing debates as part of a friendly rivalry or a test of their skills makes the Ulfen much more receptive to “nontraditional” (seditious) methods of defending the throne.

INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude Unfriendly.

Influence Checks (Sense Motive DC 26) Survival DC 25; Intimidate or Knowledge (history) DC 30; Diplomacy DC 34; Bluff DC 38

Special Interacting with the Ulfen Guard is difficult via agents, and attempts to influence this entity remotely rather than from within Oppara take a −5 penalty.

Successes Needed Shifting the Ulfen Guard’s attitude requires 8 successful influence checks.

Benefit While the Ulfen Guard is unfriendly, encounters in areas **F1**, **F3**, and **F4** each have one additional Ulfen Guard in addition to those listed. If the PCs can shift the Ulfen guard’s attitude to helpful, the guards refrain from using their rage ability (with the exception of Vorr) and are more interested in a battle of honor and skill than furious victory at all costs.

Story Award If the PCs shift the Ulfen Guards’ attitude to friendly, award them 76,800 XP. If they shift their attitude to helpful, award them an additional 76,800 XP.

TIMED EVENTS

A few events take place on specific days. These events affect all the social combat turns that day.

DAY 1: FESTIVALS

Taldor celebrates the naming of its next grand prince and approaching coronation with festivals and military

parades, filling the streets with colorful dancers and peddlers. The hustle and bustle on the streets makes it possible to roam the streets relatively unnoticed, eliminating the normal additional agent loss that accompanies the PCs’ physical presence in Oppara.

The free-flowing wine helps loosen lips, granting a +2 circumstance bonus on discovery checks.

DAY 4: ASSASSINS STRIKE! (CR 17)

An independent team of mercenaries tracks the PCs to whatever location they currently call home, hoping to collect the bounty on their heads. If the violence occurs in Oppara, the PCs take a −2 penalty on influence checks against public perception, paid informants, or the palace servants that day, but gain a +2 bonus on influence checks against the professional investigators, Royal Guard, and Ulfen Guard for the day.

Creatures: Cullver’s Cold Steel is a mercenary band that normally operates out of Sardis Township, tracking bandits and facing centaurs and gnolls, but the price on the PCs’ heads is enough to lure every sword arm with more bravado than sense. Led by the sorcerer Heele Cullver, the Cold Steel consists of the ice mage herself, her tracker half-brother Venigus, who focuses on defending his spitfire sister, and a trio of cold-blooded exiles from the Monastery of Seven Forms who target one opponent at a time as a team.

HEELLE CULLVER

CR 13

XP 25,600

Female human sorcerer 14

LE Medium humanoid (human)

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

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural, +4 shield)

hp 132 (14d6+81)

Fort +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12

DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** fire (120 points); **Resist** cold 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.; icewalker

Melee dagger +6/+1 (1d4−1/19–20)

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

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +20)
9/day—cold steel

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 14th; concentration +20)

7th (3/day)—*spell turning*

6th (6/day)—*freezing sphere* (DC 26), *transformation*, *true seeing*

5th (7/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 25), *hold monster* (DC 21), *icy prison*^{UM} (DC 25), *major creation*

4th (7/day)—*arcane eye*, *greater false life*^{UM}, *ice storm*, *stoneskin*, *wall of ice* (DC 24)

3rd (7/day)—*elemental aura*^{APG} (DC 22), *fly*, *protection from energy*, *ray of exhaustion* (DC 19), *sleet storm*

2nd (8/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 18), *glitterdust* (DC 18), *gust of wind* (DC 20), *rage*, *resist energy*, *scorching ray*

1st (8/day)—*endure elements*, *enlarge person* (DC 17), *icicle dagger*^{UM}, *mage armor*, *obscuring mist*, *shield* 0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *spark*^{APG} (DC 18)

Bloodline boreal^{APG}

TACTICS

Before Combat Cullver readies for an attack by casting *resist energy* (cold) on her teammates, then casting *greater false life*, *mage armor*, *protection from energy* (fire), *shield*, *spell turning*, and *stoneskin* on herself.

During Combat Heele attacks with a Rime Spell *cone of cold* to entangle foes for her brother and their hirelings, then tries to isolate foes with *icy prison* and *hold monster*. If her brother dies, she unleashes *freezing sphere* every round.

Morale Heele fights until both she and her brother are reduced to 30 hit points before fleeing. If her brother dies, she fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without her spells, Heele's base statistics are AC 16; hp 107.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Elemental Focus (cold)^{APG}, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative, Rime Spell^{UM}, Spell Focus (evocation), Toughness

Skills Appraise +5, Fly +15, Intimidate +19, Profession (barrister) +14, Spellcraft +13

Languages Common

SQ snow shroud

Combat Gear *ring of counterspells* (fireball); **Other**

Gear dagger, mwk light crossbow with 10 bolts, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *cloak of resistance* +2, *headband of alluring charisma* +4, *ring of protection* +1, white dragon tooth necklace (400 gp)

VENIGUS CULLVER

CR 13

XP 25,600

Desert stalker (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 137)

hp 130

DEATH INITIATES (3)

CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 88 each (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 209)

DAY 7: CORONATION

At the end of Day 7, Carrius is crowned emperor. This doesn't end the campaign, but does make the PCs' job harder. If the PCs make the public perception helpful, riots in the city delay the coronation by 1 day. If

the PCs improve the professional investigators' attitude to helpful, complications with security arrangements likewise delay the coronation 1 day.

Development: After this day, Grand Prince Carrius is more heavily protected. Increase the number of Royal Guards in areas **F1** and **F2** by 2, and increase the number of Ulfen Guards in area **F4** by 2. More importantly, after this day, Carrius and the six legends are bonded to the *Primogen Crown*, gaining spell resistance, immunity to mind-affecting effects, and various spell-like abilities (only usable on the Material Plane) as well as a +5 deflection bonus to AC, a +5 resistance bonus on all saving throws, and a +4 enhancement bonus to



ULFEN GUARD

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls


NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary



Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma (applicable to both Carrius's mortal form and the six legends inside him); see page 57 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #127: Crownfall* for full statistics for the *Primogen Crown*.

TRIGGERED EVENTS

While the timed events described above occur on a schedule, several events take place in response to the PCs' actions.

In addition to the events listed here, whenever the PCs spend time in public without a disguise, there is a 20% chance a citizen recognizes them as wanted criminals from the wanted posters and broadsheets circulating around the empire. Shopkeepers may refuse to deal with them, children might scream and run, and arrogant NPCs might even challenge the PCs. None of these encounters can really hurt the PCs, but could make it difficult for them to hide their movements.

EVENT: MEETING WITH MARTELLA

This event is triggered if the PCs return to Oppara and seek out Martella.

Martella, a few trusted guards, and any appropriate allies the PCs made in their adventures have gathered in a large, shabby tent in the Grandbridge Vagabond Camp, relying on the crowds and running water to foil most of Carrius's divinations. Some of the criminals in the camp might recognize the PCs and either challenge them to prove their strength or give the PCs nods of respect as they pass by. If the PCs defeated an enemy in a previous adventure but left their foe alive, that NPC could return as a challenge or erstwhile ally here.

When the PCs enter the tent, Martella is waiting.

Martella stands next to a table covered with parchments and letters, studying a map of Imperial Square. Her makeup gone and her hair tied up in a plain headscarf, she could be one of a thousand commoners in the city. She looks up when you enter, her face drawn and eyes worried. Her expression lightens at the sight of you, and she says, "Thank the gods. I knew you'd make it through."

If Eutropia is with the PCs, Martella tears up and embraces her friend. Eutropia quickly explains the situation, and Martella fills in the PCs in return.

"It was only a few hours after you left that Carrius was named the heir. In one swoop, Eutropia's murder was laid at your feet and the advisors unanimously declared Carrius the true heir. The nobles are scrambling, I know, but it's hard to argue the fact when all the divinations and tests are showing Carrius to be who he says he is.

"The thing is..." Martella frowns, thinking hard as she speaks. "The way it happened, so quickly and precisely, Carrius himself must have set it up. He waited for you to be

out of the way, then declared you criminals and set himself in position for the crown. Even I believed him.... It's as if there was a shadow hiding behind him the whole time, letting the child play a role on its behalf and quietly making these preparations. I never thought he could betray us like this."

With Panivar Lotheed's journal, the PCs should be able to explain how Carrius was resurrected and manipulated by the Immaculate Circle. It was not Carrius who betrayed them, but the spirits riding Carrius, under control of the duke and his sinister allies. If such is the case, Martella says, finding a way to destroy these spirits would free Carrius from their influence and put Taldor back in Eutropia's control. Eutropia, if she is present, beseeches the PCs to find a way to save her brother. "But if such a task is impossible," she concludes sadly, "at least lay him to rest. He doesn't deserve this tormented half-life."

Treasure: On her only reconnaissance mission into the Imperial Palace, Martella smuggled out a pair of *rings of friendship*, which she offers to the PCs with Eutropia's blessing.

Development: Martella has spent several days gathering intelligence on the palace's security and can share any of the information from the Imperial Palace section (see below) with the PCs.

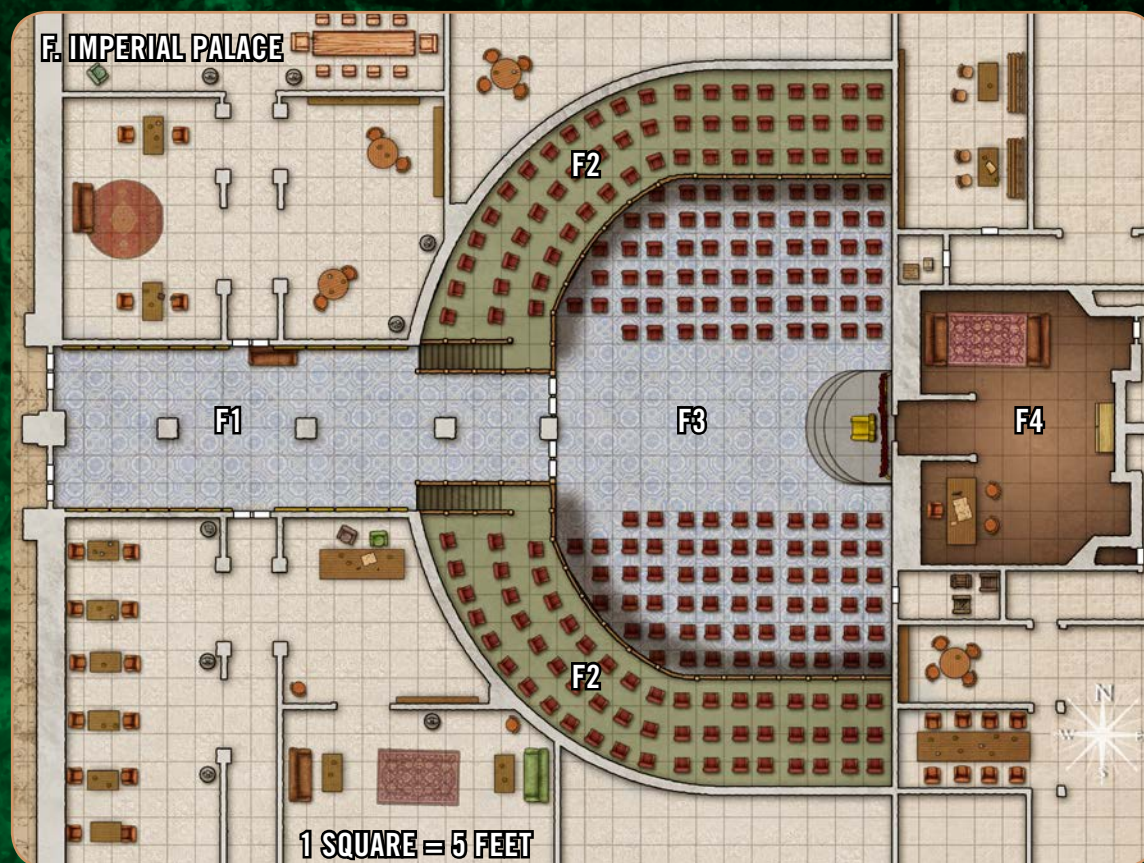
F. THE IMPERIAL PALACE

The Imperial Palace is a huge complex, covering nearly one million square feet, with 3,000 rooms, and standing up to four stories tall in the main palace. In addition to serving as the primary residence for the royal family, the palace hosts several vital government offices, a wing of the Taldan Phalanx, the Ulfen Guard, stables, extensive ballrooms, archives of all relevant government documents, libraries, chapels, gardens, multiple dining rooms and kitchens, servants' quarters, art galleries, and a private opera house nearly as large as any available in the city. Like the nearby senate building, the palace has been rebuilt, renovated, and added to continuously for millennia, creating a hive of underlevels and sealed rooms unseen by any living soul for centuries.

The PCs are powerful enough that many of these defenders can't truly threaten or hinder them, and they are mentioned here for reference's sake, or to provide you a base to improve and flesh out these defenses for a more in-depth assault on the palace. Likewise, the Imperial Palace's vast scope makes it impractical to map out in its entirety, and therefore much of this section focuses only on the approach to the throne from the Stavian Gardens, the largest courtyard in the palace complex.

Most of the interior walls are superior masonry, with 15-foot ceilings illuminated by enchanted chandeliers and wall sconces.

Physical Defenses: The Imperial Palace is surrounded by 30-foot-high stone walls that are reinforced with



magic (hardness 16, 360 hp) and lined with *continual flame* spells every 60 feet to provide the palace grounds with at least dim illumination at all times. Each of the five gates bears both an iron door and an iron portcullis, which are kept open by day but sealed every night. Most of the palace interior doors are strong wood with superior locks, while exterior doors are iron with superior locks.

Imperial Palace sentries (page 40) patrol the grounds in pairs every 15 minutes, and two sentries stand at attention at each of the complex's gates. In addition to these elite soldiers, large units of the Taldan Phalanx can be mobilized against intruders in 1d6 minutes if the alarm is raised (use statistics for an outlaw troop with the elite troop template; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 267, 265).

Note that if the PCs shift the palace guards' attitude to friendly, the guards agree to leave one gate unguarded for a brief window.

Magical Defenses: The entirety of the palace grounds are blanketed with a permanent *dimensional lock* effect, preventing the use of teleportation or summoning magic; specific individuals (often members of the royal family, or special guardians) can be attuned to the effect, allowing them to teleport or summon normally.

Thin lead sheeting in the walls shields most of the palace interior from divination effects.

Almost all doors and gates are protected with audible *alarm* spells, maintained by a small army of on-duty magi (use the statistics for a spellmaster on page 12 of the *Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex*) who respond to assist sentries at your discretion. All five gates are likewise warded with a unique effect that causes anyone affected by an illusion spell to glow bright blue when passing through the gates and for 1d4 minutes after—a seldom-discussed feature that has embarrassed countless nobles who arrive for social functions while benefiting from “mild” illusory beauty treatments.

Many doors—especially those leading to servants' areas or guard rooms—are concealed behind *illusory walls*, while secure areas are sealed with *arcane lock* in addition to their mundane locks. Many areas are also warded with *symbol of sleep* or *symbol of stunning* spells, while the palace vault is protected by several *symbols of death*.

Note that if the PCs can shift the First Imperial Arcanists' Guild's attitude to friendly, they can learn about any of these defenses, and if the PCs shifted the guild's attitude to helpful, they can bribe the mages to attune them to the palace's *dimensional lock* for a price of 5,000 gp per person.

Getting Around the Palace: Once inside the palace, the PCs have to find Carrius. He's in his private chamber near the throne room (area F4). The PCs should face one

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I: Death of an Heir

Part 2: Carving the Circle

Part 3: Through the Granite Walls

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Spirits of Six Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

or more patrol groups on their way to the throne room, depending on how and where they arrive.

If they teleported into the palace, the PCs can appear relatively close to the throne room (area F3). They should face at least one patrol group before they reach Carrius. If the PCs broke into the palace or chose to teleport farther away, they could encounter two or more patrol groups. If the PCs were arrested and escaped from the dungeon, they should face three patrol groups on the way.

It's possible for the PCs to get lost in the palace if they're not familiar with the layout,

putting them in conflict with more patrols, but many of their allies (Eutropia, Martella, and Gloriana, specifically) can give them a detailed layout if the PCs think to ask.

Creatures: Patrols inside the palace generally consist of two sentries and a commander. If the palace is aware of a threat, alert after a previous infiltration attempt, or especially hostile to the PCs, these patrols may be augmented with one or more additional sentries, imperial magi, or profane generals (*Pathfinder NPC Codex* 54). All these listed forces gain a +4 or +2 morale bonus to attack rolls and saving throws respectively if the Royal Guard entity is still hostile or unfriendly toward the PCs (see page 35).



IMPERIAL PALACE SENTRY

IMPERIAL PALACE SENTRY CR 14

XP 38,400

Human fighter (polearm master) 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 106)

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 24 (+8 armor, +4 deflection, +1 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 160 (15d10+45)

Fort +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities fortification 25%

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *halberd* +25/+20/+15 (1d10+13/×3)

Ranged +1 *composite shortbow* +17/+12/+7 (1d6+5/×3)

Special Attacks pole fighting (–1), polearm training, steadfast pike

TACTICS

Before Combat The sentries freely employ their *scrolls of detect magic* if they see or hear anything suspicious, and they drink a *potion of shield of faith* if they expect a fight.

During Combat The sentries drill to fight as a unit, and remain adjacent to take advantage of their teamwork feats, especially Outflank and Paired Opportunists. They freely use their Bodyguard feat to defend each other in combat. One sentry uses a *scroll of haste* if any allies are injured. These guards gain a +4 or +2 morale bonus to attack rolls and saving throws if the Royal Guard entity is still hostile or unfriendly toward the PCs.

Morale The Imperial Palace sentries fight to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 33

Feats Bodyguard^{APG}, Combat Reflexes, Coordinated

Defense^{APG}, Dazing Assault^{APG}, Disruptive, Improved

Initiative, Improved Iron Will, In Harm's Way^{APG}, Iron Will,

Lookout^{APG}, Lunge, Outflank^{APG}, Paired Opportunists^{APG},

Power Attack, Stand Still, Weapon Focus (halberd),

Weapon Specialization (halberd)

Skills Climb +8, Perception +14, Sense Motive +14, Swim +8, Use Magic Device +15

Languages Common

SQ flexible flanker, sweeping fend

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds, potion of shield of faith* (CL 12), *scrolls of detect magic* (3), *scroll of dispel magic, scroll of fly, scroll of haste*; **Other Gear** +2 *light fortification mithral breastplate, +1 composite shortbow* (+4 Str) with 20 arrows, +2 *halberd, amulet of natural armor* +2, *cloak of resistance* +3

IMPERIAL MAGUS

CR 15

XP 51,200

Human magus 16 (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 9)

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; **Senses** *true seeing*; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 12, flat-footed 27 (+11 armor, +2 deflection, +4 shield)

hp 123 (16d8+48)

Fort +17, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15

DR 10/adamantine

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee +1 *longsword* +18/+13/+8 (1d8+7/19–20)

Special Attacks arcane pool (17 points, +4), counterstrike, greater spell combat, improved spell recall, magus arcana (arcane accuracy, hasted assault, silent magic, spell shield, still magic), spellstrike

Magus Spells Prepared (CL 16th; concentration +23)

6th—*chain lightning* (DC 24), *true seeing*

5th—*cloudkill* (DC 22), *cone of cold* (DC 23), *interposing hand, wall of force*

4th—*dimension door, fire shield, greater invisibility, stoneskin, wall of fire*

3rd—*fly, haste, lightning bolt* (3, DC 21), *ray of exhaustion* (2, DC 20)

2nd—*acid arrow, blur, bull's strength, flaming sphere* (2, DC 20) *invisibility, mirror image*

1st—*chill touch* (2, DC 18), *magic missile* (2), *shield, true strike* (2)

0 (at will)—*arcane mark, detect magic, mage hand, ray of frost, read magic*

TACTICS

Before Combat An imperial magus casts *bull's strength, fly, shield, stoneskin*, and *true seeing* before combat.

During Combat An imperial magus uses her flight to stay at range from any attackers. While at a distance, she casts *chain lightning, flaming sphere*, and *lightning bolt* to harry enemies. If forced to enter melee, she casts *blur* and conjures walls to try to separate melee attackers.

Morale An imperial magus fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 12, **Con** 15, **Int** 25, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 29

Feats Arcane Strike, Combat Casting, Extra Arcane Pool^{UM}, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Spell Focus (evocation), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

Skills Acrobatics +11 (+7 when jumping), Fly +18, Knowledge (arcana, planes) +26, Knowledge (local, nobility) +23, Perception +16, Spellcraft +26, Stealth +11, Use Magic Device +18

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Halfling, Infernal

SQ fighter training (8th level), heavy armor, knowledge pool

Combat Gear *scroll of disintegrate, scroll of greater dispel magic*; **Other Gear** +3 *half-plate, +1 longsword, belt of physical might* +2 (Str, Con), *cloak of resistance* +3, *headband of vast intelligence* +4, *ring of protection* +2

F1. The Silver Hall (CR 18)

A wide avenue stretches almost one hundred feet long, ending in a pair of gilded double doors. Graceful marble columns line the center of the room, holding aloft an arched ceiling painted to mimic a bright sky. Along each wall, flawless mirrors of gleaming silver reflect the interior, making the room seem to stretch on into infinity. Crystal sconces bearing heatless torches illuminate the walk.

The royal family often uses this mirrored hall for social gatherings. *Illusory walls* to the north and south hide doors leading to various galleries and sitting rooms for these occasions. The doors to the throne room at the hall's east end are locked (Disable Device DC 40), though the stairways to the upper galleries (areas F2) are not.

Outside the western doors lies the Stavian gardens, the palace's largest gardens. The lush lawns, year-round flower beds, exquisite topiary, verdant orchards, and exotic plants provide some simple hiding places, should the PCs hope for a stealthy approach. Ironically, the front doors leading toward the throne room from the gardens are some of the few exterior entrances not heavily warded and alarmed.

Creatures: Three imperial palace sentries stand at attention in this hall day and night, but the hall's true guardian is a secret to most. One of the mirrors is actually a unique mithral golem called the Silver Sentinel who has guarded the palace for over a millennium. It can maintain its fluid form within its enchanted mirror frame indefinitely, and wields a battleaxe in place of the mithral golem's normal slam attacks. The concealed construct flows from its frame to join combat once it begins. The sentries are all aware of the golem, and use their *scrolls of haste* to heal it as needed.

Sounds of combat in this room alert the Ulfen Guards in area F3, giving them time to prepare for combat against any approaching intruders.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

IMPERIAL PALACE SENTRIES (3)**CR 14****XP 38,400 each****hp** 160 each (see page 40)**SILVER SENTRY****CR 16****XP 76,800**Unique mithral golem (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 139)**hp** 172**OFFENSE****Melee** mithral battleaxe +33 (6d10+16/×3)**Ranged** mithral throwing axe +29 (4d10+11/×3)**F2. Upper Galleries**

Although not as coveted as the lower seats in the throne room itself, seats in the upper gallery of the imperial throne room are prestigious and rare treats that Taldan nobles constantly squabble over. The balcony stands 20 feet above the throne room's floor level.

A permanent, silent *wind wall*, just beyond arm's reach from the balcony edge, protects any in the throne room proper against ranged attacks originating in the galleries. This wind wall only affects movement in one direction, allowing guards below to fire on would-be snipers.

F3. Throne Room (CR 19)

This semicircular auditorium reflects the grandeur of old Taldor: a sunburst pattern in blue and green is worked into the marble walls, radiating out from a gilded throne atop a dais. The crest of Taldor, painted on an enormous shield, hangs proudly above the throne. Gilded chairs with red velvet cushions fill most of the room, and a red velvet carpet leads up the center of the room to the base of the throne.

This room's ceiling reaches 50 feet overhead.

An illusion of Prince Carrius sits atop the Lion Throne. A tricky combination of *magic mouth*, *phantasmal killer*, and *programmed image* spells, the duplicate has even fooled several of the Ulfen Guard, who have sworn their lives to defend a mote of light and magic. The illusion demands to know what disrespectful clods would dare burst in on the heir to the throne (or the Grand Prince, if the coronation has already taken place), before ordering the assembled guards to kill them.

Anyone who speaks from atop the dais can be clearly heard in the throne room and upper galleries—a trick of engineering and acoustics rather than magic.

The rear wall behind the throne is an illusory wall; a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check from atop the dais hears the true Prince Carrius murmuring to himself on the other side.

Trap: The illusion of Prince Carrius isn't just a clever simulacrum; it also unleashes a terrifying fate on the first creature to attack the illusion in melee or at range. When triggered, the illusion targets its attacker with

a *phantasmal killer* spell, as Carrius transforms into a horrible and deeply personal fear before launching himself at his attacker.

PHANTASMAL PRINCE TRAP**CR 10****XP 38,400****Type** magic; **Perception** DC 34; **Disable Device** DC 34**EFFECTS****Trigger** touch; **Reset** none**Effect** spell effect (heightened *phantasmal killer*, Will DC 24 disbelieves, Fort DC 24 partial)

Creatures: The Ulfen guard have long served the grand princes of Taldor in exchange for handsome payment. Now they serve Prince Carrius, and consider defending the prince after his sister's assassination a point of pride. Two of the Ulfen Guard's finest wait here, led by Carrius's personal bodyguard, a hulking werebear bloodrager named Vorr.

VORR (HYBRID FORM)**CR 16****XP 76,800**Male human natural werebear bloodrager 16 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 181, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 15)

N Large humanoid (human, shapeshanger)

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +21**DEFENSE****AC** 32, touch 10, flat-footed 31 (+8 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex, +14 natural, -2 rage, -1 size)**hp** 273 (16d10+176)**Fort** +24, **Ref** +11, **Will** +15 (+4 vs. enchantments); +2 bonus vs. spells cast by self or an ally**Defensive Abilities** blood sanctuary, improved uncanny dodge, indomitable will; **DR** 10/silver, 4/—; **Resist** cold 10, draconic resistances**OFFENSE****Speed** 40 ft. (30 ft. in armor), fly 60 ft. (good); dragon wings**Melee** +3 *greataxe* +29/+24/+19/+14 (3d6+18/19-20/×3) or bite +20 (2d6+5), 2 claws +20 (2d6+5 plus 1d6 cold and grab)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** blood casting, breath weapon (16d6 cold, 30ft. cone, DC 27, 2/day), claws, curse of lycanthropy (DC 15), greater bloodrage (46 rounds/day)**Bloodrager Spells Known** (CL 16th; concentration +18)4th (1/day)—*black tentacles*, *enervation*, *fear* (DC 16), *stoneskin*, *wall of ice* (DC 16)3rd (2/day)—*haste*, *heroism*, *keen edge*, *lightning bolt* (DC 15), *vampiric touch*, *wind wall*2nd (4/day)—*bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *false life*, *ghoul touch* (DC 14), *mirror image*, *resist energy*, *see invisibility*1st (4/day)—*blurred movement*^{ACG}, *chill touch* (DC 13), *enlarge person* (DC 13), *line in the sand*^{ACG}, *long arm*^{ACG}, *shield*, *true strike*

Bloodline draconic

TACTICS

Before Combat Vorr prepares for combat by casting *mirror image* and *stoneskin* on himself.

During Combat Vorr opens most confrontations with his breath weapon, then uses *black tentacles* and *wall of ice* to isolate ranged combatants and spellcasters so he can focus his attacks on warriors and other “powerful” threats. If reduced below 150 hit points, he attempts to recover with the use of *false life* or *vampiric touch*.

Morale Vorr fights to the death.

Base Statistics When not raging, Vorr’s stats are

AC 30, touch 12, flat-footed 29, **hp** 225, **Fort** +21, **Will** +12; **Melee** +3 *greataxe* +26/+21/+16/+11 (3d6+13/19–20/x3) or bite +17 (2d6+3), 2 claws +17 (2d6+3 plus grab); **Str** 25, **Con** 23; **CMB** +24 (+28 grapple); **CMD** 37; **Skills** Climb +15, Swim +19

STATISTICS

Str 31, **Dex** 13, **Con** 29, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +27 (+31 grapple); **CMD** 38

Feats Eschew Materials, Extra Rage, Great Fortitude, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Reckless Rage^{ACG}, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (greataxe)

Skills Climb +18, Fly +0, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (nobility) +16, Perception +21, Survival +21, Swim +22;

Racial Modifiers +4 Swim

Languages Common

SQ change shape (human, hybrid, and grizzly bear; *polymorph*), dragon form, fast movement, lycanthropic empathy (+4 with bears and dire bears)

Other Gear +2 *breastplate*, +3 *greataxe*, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *belt of physical might* +2 (Str, Con), *cloak of resistance* +3, *ring of protection* +2

ULFEN GUARDS (2)

CR 16

XP 76,800 each

Human (Ulfen) barbarian (invulnerable rager) 17 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player’s Guide* 79)

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 22 (+7 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex, +5 natural, –2 rage)

hp 309 (17d12+153)

Fort +21, **Ref** +9, **Will** +14 (+4 vs. enchantments)

Defensive

Abilities

fortification 50%, indomitable will; **DR** 8/—;

Immune frightened, shaken; **Resist** fire 4, extreme endurance

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft. (30 ft. in armor)

Melee +1 *wounding greatsword* +26/+21/+16/+11 (2d6+11/19–20 plus 1 bleed)

Ranged throwing axe +18 (1d6+7)

Special Attacks greater rage (40 rounds/day), rage powers (come and get me^{APG}, fearless rage, flesh wound^{APG}, guarded life^{APG}, guarded stance +3, no escape, reckless abandon^{APG}, renewed vigor 4d8+8)

TACTICS

Before Combat Ulfen Guards prepare by drinking their *potions of barkskin*.

During Combat The Ulfen Guards are straightforward warriors, lashing out with Power Attack whenever possible.

Morale Ulfen Guards traditionally fight to the death. If the PCs shifted the Ulfen Guard entity’s attitude to helpful, they instead yield if reduced to 20 or fewer hit points.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle



VORR

Base Statistics Without their potion or rage, an Ulfen Guard's statistics are **AC** 20, touch 13, flat-footed 19; **hp** 241; **Fort** +17, **Will** +11; **Melee** +1 *wounding greatsword* +23/+18/+13/+8 (2d6+7/19–20 plus 1 bleed); **Ranged** throwing axe +18 (1d6+4); **Str** 19, **Con** 18; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 34; **Skills** Climb +9, Swim +7

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 12, **Con** 26, **Int** 8, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +24; **CMD** 35

Feats Diehard, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Raging Vitality^{APG}, Strike Back, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Acrobatics +8, Climb +12, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (nobility) +10, Perception +14, Sense Motive +14, Swim +10

Languages Common, Skald

SQ fast movement, tireless rage

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* (CL 12), *potion of fly*, *potion of haste*; **Other Gear** +1 moderate fortification chainmail, +1 *wounding greatsword*, throwing axes (5), *belt of giant strength* +2, *cloak of resistance* +3, *ring of protection* +2

F4. Carrius's Sanctum (CR 21)

Thick, plush carpet covers this large study, enclosed by sturdy marble walls carved with immaculate reliefs of olive trees and lions.

The grand princes maintain a safe room behind the throne, where they can retreat from aggressors or which they can use simply as an office in which to organize their thoughts before public addresses. Prince Carrius—or rather, the six spirits riding Prince Carrius—use this sanctum as a private throne room, where their mutterings and mood swings won't be immediately noticed while their illusory prince addresses the public. In addition to the primary door leading to the throne room, a smaller locked door in the northeast corner (Disable Device DC 40) provides access to additional private offices and the royal residences beyond.

Creatures: Prince Carrius broods here, watched over by a pair of Ulfen Guards, plotting how best to secure his hold over all of Taldor and quickly root out the last of his sister's trusted advisors. Carrius himself has no interest in harming his former saviors, or even ruling the empire, but the legends riding his soul are firmly in control now. While a punishingly difficult fight, this confrontation may simply be a pause, as canny PCs may have recovered notes and the *ring of the recalled soul* which allow them to avoid confronting Carrius directly and instead step into the mindscape within him.

The *ring of the recalled soul* can be used once the PCs are within 70 feet of and aware of Prince Carrius's true location. This creates a doorway in the location of the ring-bearer's choice that only designated creatures can see or pass through. If the PCs use the ring, proceed to area G.

PRINCE CARRIUS

CR 20

XP 307,200

hp 237 (see page 60)

ULFEN GUARDS (2)

CR 16

XP 76,800 each

hp 309 each (see page 43)

Development: Killing Prince Carrius immediately scatters the six legends riding him to the aether and sends the tatters of his soul back to the Boneyard. Because of the extensive damage done to the boy's soul by the Immaculate Circle, what is left of the prince cannot be resurrected.

G. THE MIND OF AN EMPEROR

The physical world fades away into a white mist. When the mist clears, the view has changed. Instead of a landscape of marble and plush velvet carpet, six doors lead out from this crack-riven circular chamber. In the center of the room, a human-sized rag doll sits on a wooden throne, his body and clothes stitched together from several sources and bound together with six distinct chains.

With a successful DC 30 Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (planes), or Knowledge (religion) check, a PC identifies the ragdoll figure of Carrius as the boy's conception of his own soul, though his identity is so thoroughly overwhelmed at this point the avatar cannot speak or act, only occasionally shift and sigh. The six doors in the room lead to the six mindscapes where the legendary spirits of Taldor lurk.

Each of the six unlocked doors is slightly different and leads to a different, isolated mindscape:

- **Fire Door:** This red marble door is engraved with leaping flames. It leads to the sixth legend, Stavian I (area G1).
- **Sword Door:** This iron door is set with a curved scimitar, its blade wet and dripping with blood. It leads to the fifth legend, Emperor Gennaris III (area G2).
- **Harbor Door:** This blue marble door is engraved with a three-masted ship in full sail. It leads to the second legend, Cyricas (area G3).
- **Whispering Door:** This white marble door is engraved with a hooded figure whispering into another man's ear. It leads to the fourth legend, Beldam I (area G4).
- **Crown Door:** This steel door is set with an inverted ruby crown. It leads to the third legend, Emperor Daronlyr the Overthrower (area G5).
- **Lion Door:** This golden door is engraved with a rampant lion. It leads to the first legend, the spirit of First Emperor Taldaris (area G6).

In this final section, the PCs can battle the legends of Carrius's mind in an attempt to free the prince from the spirits' influence. Normally, the *ring of the recalled soul*

allows its user to step freely in and out of the mindscape, but the dominance of the six legends locks down the mindscape's borders, preventing anyone from exiting via the ring or spells like *mindscape door*. Once they enter, the PCs are trapped inside Carrius's mindscape until the legends are destroyed.

As the PCs are in Carrius's mind, not the physical plane, there are some special properties to this area.

Accelerated Time: For every hour the PCs spend inside Carrius's mindscape, 1 minute passes in the real world.

Healing: Healing is accelerated in the central chamber. A living creature regains its HD in hit points for every hour spent in this room. In addition, healing spells and effects are always maximized in the central chamber.

Rest: When in the central chamber (where Carrius's fragmented spirit resides), the PCs rest at an accelerated rate. Every hour of rest in this chamber equals about 3 hours of normal rest in the real world, therefore roughly 2-1/2 hours of rest in the central chamber counts as 8 hours of normal rest. Eight hours resting in the central chamber counts as a full day of rest.

G1. The Fire Door (CR 18)

This red marble door glows from within and is warm to the touch. On its surface is engraved a vista of leaping flames. Tormented faces hidden within the flames stare out from the door with despairing eyes.

This is the realm of Stavian I, first of his line and the emperor who declared a religious pogrom against the church of Sarenrae. Once the PCs enter, read or paraphrase the following:

The red glow of leaping flames and drifting embers illuminates the endless expanse of collapsing and ruined buildings. Iron cages hang from buildings and posts, each one holding a burning, writhing skeleton that clutches the bars with blackened finger bones and works its jaw in silent agony. Now and then, a thin scream—more like the hiss of a kettle than a human sound—pierces above the crackle of flames.

The skeletons are a part of the dreamscape, not true creatures. The PCs accomplish nothing by interacting with the skeletons or opening the cages.

With a successful DC 20 Perception check, the PCs can hear someone talking and crashing through rubble nearby. If they follow the sound, or simply explore, they encounter Stavian I at work.

Creature: Stavian I is remembered as the emperor who forbade the worship of Sarenrae in Taldor, believing the faithful of Sarenrae aided the enemy Qadiran army. History describes Stavian I as a pious emperor who stamped out heresy for the good of the nation, though this goal was not accomplished without bloodshed.

The pogroms that ended Sarenrae's worship in Taldor were violent affairs. Innocent worshipers were caught up alongside spies and traitors, and executed all the same. Stavian allowed the torture of suspected enemy agents to obtain military intelligence and burned entire communities to the ground to drive "Qadiran loyalists" from Taldan soil. Despite the harm done, the legend believes he was justified in his actions. He embodies the belief that a nation must be united philosophically and religiously in order to remain strong, and he sees the PCs (especially any who worship Sarenrae) as heretics who will divide the empire.

Stavian I's legend appears as a handsome Taldan man, larger than life and sculpted from living flame. In a reasonable, resonant voice, he says, "All I have done, I did to protect Taldor. Can you not see how weak our nation was? The Cult of the Dawnflower would have broken us in two, with Qadira waiting to strike once we were brought low. What's this? More heretics. You shall serve as an example to others."

Though the legend serves a dead god, inside this mindscape his faith alone is enough to empower Stavian's spells and other divine abilities, as well as conjure the angels that join him.

This combat occurs in two phases.

Phase 1: Stavian attacks the PCs using his inquisitor abilities, reciting prayers to Abadar and litanies against the Dawnflower as he fights. If a PC recites prayers or holy text to Sarenrae as a standard action and succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check, Stavian I becomes dazed for 1 round.

Phase 2: When reduced below 140 hit points, Stavian shouts a prayer to Aroden as a free action, and is answered by the arrival of two astral deva angels, who focus on healing the emperor before turning their wrath on the "heretics." These angels can be dazed with powerful invocations to Sarenrae, but each must be targeted separately.

EMPEROR STAVIAN I'S LEGEND

CR 17

XP 102,400

Unique male Large fire elemental inquisitor of Aroden 15
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 124, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 38)

LE Large outsider (elemental, extraplanar, fire)

Init +14; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Perception +33

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 24 (+8 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 246 (23 HD; 15d8+8d10+131)

Fort +20, **Ref** +16, **Will** +20

Defensive Abilities *freedom of movement*, stalwart;

DR 5/—; **Immune** elemental traits, fire; **SR** 27

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

Melee +2 longsword +36/+36/+31/+26/+21 (2d6+21/17–20) or

2 slams +28 (1d8+10 plus burn)

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

Special Attacks burn (1d8 fire, DC 19), exploit weakness, greater bane (15 rounds/day), judgment 5/day (2 simultaneous), staff of order (7 rounds, 2/day)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +22)
10/day—touch of law

Inquisitor Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +22)
At will—*detect alignment*
15 rounds/day—*discern lies*

Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 15th; concentration +22)
5th (4/day)—*greater command* (DC 22), *righteous might*, *spell resistance*, *true seeing*
4th (5/day)—*cure critical wounds*, *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *hold monster* (DC 21)
3rd (7/day)—*cure serious wounds*, *keen edge*, *retribution*^{APG} (DC 20), *righteous vigor*^{APG} (DC 20), *searing light*
2nd (7/day)—*calm emotions* (DC 19), *cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (DC 19), *lesser restoration*, *spiritual weapon*, *weapon of awe*^{APG} (DC 19)
1st (7/day)—*bless*, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *doom* (DC 18), *shield of faith*, *true strike*
0 (at will)—*brand*^{APG} (DC 17), *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *stabilize*

Domain Law

TACTICS

Before Combat Stavian's legend exists in this mindscape under a constant effect of *true seeing*, *spell resistance*, *freedom of movement*, *divine power*, and *keen edge*. If dispelled, they resume in 1d6 rounds.

During Combat Stavian chooses the most formidable foe, selecting an appropriate *bane* against that target. He attacks that target relentlessly, using Step Up and Strike to keep close to his target. If needed, he drinks a *potion of fly* to keep up. He makes liberal use of his magic to keep his hit points in good condition.

Morale Stavian fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 29, **Dex** 16, **Con** 20, **Int** 13, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +19; **CMB** +35; **CMD** 45

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Following Step^{APG}, Improved Initiative^B, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Lookout^{APG}, Mobility, Outflank^{APG}, Paired Opportunists^{APG}, Power Attack, Precise Strike^{APG}, Shielded Caster^{APG}, Spring Attack, Step Up, Step Up And Strike^{APG}, Weapon Finesse^B, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Acrobatics +11 (+19 when jumping), Climb +21, Diplomacy +28, Escape Artist +9, Intimidate +35, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowledge (nobility) +24, Knowledge (planes) +13, Perception +33, Sense Motive +40, Swim +14

Languages Common, Ignan

SQ monster lore +7, solo tactics, stern gaze +7, track +7

Combat Gear *potion of fly* (2); **Other Gear** +2 mithral breastplate, +2 longsword, amulet of natural armor +1, headband of inspired wisdom +4, ring of protection +2

Development: When Stavian's legend is slain, a peal of thunder rolls across the sky, and heavy rains begin to fall across the ruins, extinguishing the flames and scrubbing the smoke from the air. Once the PCs leave this mindscape, the fire door crumbles.

G2. The Sword Door (CR 18)

This iron door is dull and marked with countless slices and nicks. A curved scimitar embedded in the door drips a constant stream of red blood.

Beyond the door stretches an enormous outdoor battlefield reaching across a rocky plain, heaped with the bodies of the dying. With a successful DC 25 Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (local) check, a PC identifies the battlefield as the Plains of Pares in western Qadira. Read or paraphrase the following:

Screams and cries of pain echo across this miserable battlefield. Buzzing flies and the stench of rotting flesh choke the air. Bodies lie piled in heaps on the blood-soaked ground, some of them still reaching out to beg for care or a swift death. Hands twitch and eyes blink in the charnel piles. Against the sky, an armored figure stands tall among the dead, surrounded by six gore-covered scimitars driven into the soil.

This is the territory of Emperor Gennaris III, the Conqueror, remembered as one of Taldor's greatest military leaders.

Creature: Gennaris made a name for himself as a general who fought on Qadiran soil for many years. The third in line for the throne, he never expected to become emperor, but the deaths of his older brothers saw him crowned late in life. Gennaris served as emperor for only a few years before returning to Qadira, determined to lead by example and inspire Taldans to fight. He was killed in a Qadiran ambush several months later and is remembered as a war hero and martyr.

Gennaris's legend manifests as a spirit of slaughter. His is the unwavering belief that war is necessary to protect a nation's freedom. The deaths of his enemies weigh heavily on him, but Gennaris is still convinced that military might is the only key to Taldor's survival as a nation. He sees the PCs as a threat to Taldor's security and when he sees the PCs arrive, he points and declares "Taldor is a nation that stands or falls by the strength of her blade. Such was true for Taldaris, and your hands are far from clean. But death's greatest failing is that it can stop but a single soldier. Never an army." As he speaks, the bodies of the dead and dying writhe toward

him, gathering together into a misshapen, serpentine form that merges with Gennaris.

Gennaris was famous for killing six Qadiran generals in single combat. He kept each one's sword as a trophy of his prowess. Those six swords, far larger in the people's memory than in life, now roam the battlefield on their own. Their protective energy shields Gennaris from physical damage, each contributing a cumulative DR 5/— to the emperor's defense in place of a warsworn's usual DR 10/bludgeoning and magic. Each sword also blocks up to 9 spell levels of spells targeting Gennaris, as if by a *spell turning* spell. Each time a sword is destroyed, Gennaris loses DR 5/— and can no longer benefit from the sword's spell absorption power.

THE SIX BLADES (6)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Unique animated objects (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 14)

N Large construct

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

Perception –5

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+5 Dex, +8 natural, –1 size)

hp 101 each (13d10+30)

Fort +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** –1

Defensive Abilities hardness 10; **Immune** construct traits

OFFENSE

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

Melee slash +21 (2d6+13)

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

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 38

Skills Fly –5

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Guardian Blade (Su) Each sword grants Emperor Gennaris a cumulative DR 5/—. Remove this DR from the emperor when a sword is destroyed.

Spell Parry (Su) Each sword blocks up to 9 levels of spells targeting Gennaris, as a *spell turning* spell. These spells are disrupted, not reflected. A sword can't block only part of a spell; if it does not have sufficient spell levels to block a spell, another sword must parry the entire spell instead. This ability refreshes after 12 hours.



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

EMPEROR GENNARIS III'S LEGEND**CR 16****XP 76,800**Variant Warsworn (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 272)**hp** 207**DEFENSE****DR** 30/—

Development: When Gennaris's legend is slain, the writhing bodies lie still and sink into the earth. After a few moments, fresh growth sprouts across the field, whipped gently by a rolling wind. Once the PCs leave this mindscape, the sword door crumbles.

G3. The Harbor Door (CR 17)

This narrow, rectangular door is cut from blue variegated marble. The top of the door is very pale, almost white, darkening to deep azure blue near the floor. Engraved into the door is an image of a three-masted ship.

Beyond the door is a humid jungle scene. The PCs can feel the cloying dampness of the jungle, hear the buzz of insects, and smell the dank, musty odor of rotting vegetation. Read or paraphrase the following:

A dense jungle stretches out beyond the door. Trees loom overhead, draped with brilliant green, while stifling humidity and buzzing insects fill the air. The cries of tropical birds echo in the distance. The drone of insects forms a constant backdrop, and bright-colored flowers peek through the foliage.

A deep, raspy voice seems to come from everywhere. "So... you come to hunt the hunter, eh? Damn good time! Find me, then, and I shall grant you the kindness of a swift death."

Creature: This is the domain of Cyricas, an explorer who led many expeditions to foreign nations and is renowned for his mind-over-matter dogma that he claims helped him conquer childhood illness and achieve greatness. In this time, he conquered many of Taldor's holdings in the Mwangi Expanse before he met his death at the hands of the Gorilla King. Though his body was never returned to Taldor, he was remembered as a bold explorer who brought wealth and natural resources to the nation.

Cyricas's legend reflects his myth, that of a Taldan visitor swaggering among a new land with the grace and ease of any longtime resident. Despite his bravado, though, Cyricas is also remembered as one of Taldor's kindest emperors.

This battle occurs in three phases.

Phase 1: The PCs must track Cyricas through the jungle. Cyricas leaves a difficult trail to find, requiring three successful DC 30 Perception or Survival checks in a row. If the PCs succeed at all three checks, Cyricas rasps, "Ah! Worthy opponents," and steps clear of the foliage while ordering his "animal companion" Mordal, a spirit-reflection of his ape companion in life, to attack.

If the PCs fail any of the three skill checks, Cyricas ambushes them from 60 feet away. His first attack is considered an automatic critical threat. He then continues combat with Mordal.

Phase 2: When Cyricas is reduced to 0 hp, he and his animal companion transform into glowing will-o'-wisps. They dart off through the jungle, leading the PCs out of the undergrowth and into a vast, swampy area.

The jungle ends at the edge of a vast, stinking swamp. The night sky is hidden by clouds of marsh gas, which glow with a faint green luminescence. The ground is sticky and murky, with hillocks protruding drunkenly from the muck.

Crossing the swamp requires a successful DC 30 Acrobatics, Swim, or Survival check, or else a flight speed. A failed check exposes the character to bloodsucking leeches, inflicting 1d3 Constitution damage.

Phase 3: Cyricas's mote of light continues to fly through thick, primeval forest, which eventually opens up into the throne room of Taldor's Imperial Palace. Cyricas stands before the dais, crestfallen. After a moment, he turns to face the PCs, and in a heavy tone says "I miss it dearly, you know—travel, adventure, the comforts of home. Life. And it's simply not in my nature to give up on the things I want." He turns back to look longingly at the throne once again.

Ultimately remembered as a kind man, Cyricas can potentially be coaxed to leave rather than fought as he pauses to reflect. He begins this encounter unfriendly toward the PCs, but if changed to helpful, he sighs and admits "Perhaps... perhaps it's not about what I want." If his attitude has been shifted to hostile, or if he is attacked, he fights with tenacity. He is restored to full health, but lacks Mordal here in the "civilized" setting of Taldor's throne room.

EMPEROR CYRICAS'S LEGEND**CR 17****XP 102,400**

Unique human animal lord brawler (wild child) 16

(Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 14; *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 23, 89)

CG Medium outsider (human, humanoid, native, shapechanger)

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +18**DEFENSE****AC** 30, touch 16, flat-footed 22 (+9 armor, +4 Dex, +4 dodge, +3 natural)**hp** 200 (16d10+80)**Fort** +18, **Ref** +18, **Will** +14**DR** 10/silver**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.**Melee** unarmed strike +29/+24/+19/+14 (2d8+11) or unarmed strike flurry of blows +27/+27/+22/+22/+17/+17/+12 (2d8+11)

Ranged +1 javelin +23 (1d6+7)

Special Attacks awesome blow, brawler's flurry, brawler's strike (cold iron, evil, magic, silver), knockout 3/day (DC 24), maneuver training (grapple +4, bull rush +3, trip +2, disarm +1), martial flexibility 11/day, rake (2 claws +29, 1d4+11)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +18)

Constant—*speak with animal* (apes only)

At will—*charm animal* (apes only, DC 13)

TACTICS

Before Combat Cyricas's legend benefits from constant *heroism* and *greater magic fang* +5 spell effects.

During Combat Cyricas leaps into combat using flurry of blows, drinking his potions of *enlarge person* and *haste* if he has the opportunity.

Morale Cyricas offers mercy to fallen foes, but fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +24 (+27 bull rush, +25 disarm, +32 grapple, +26 trip); **CMD** 40 (43 vs. bull rush, 41 vs. disarm, 44 vs. grapple, 42 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Iron Will, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Pummeling Charge^{ACG}, Pummeling Style^{ACG}, Step Up

Skills Acrobatics +17, Appraise +4, Bluff +4, Climb +19, Diplomacy +19, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +17, Fly +4, Handle Animal +19, Heal +13, Intimidate +17, Perception +18, Ride +4, Sense Motive +18, Stealth +4, Survival +15, Swim +19

Languages Celestial, Common, Polyglot

SQ +4 stealth in undergrowth, brawler's cunning, change shape (ape; *shapechange*), dominion, hunter's tricks, maneuver training, martial training, wild tricks (hunter's trick [deft stand], hunter's trick [stag's leap])

Gear celestial armor, +1 javelin, boots of striding and springing, cloak of resistance +4, swarmbane clasp^{UE}

MORDAL

CR —

Ape animal companion

N Large animal

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 22 (+5 Dex, +13 natural, -1 size)

hp 132 (13d8+52)

Fort +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +5 (+4 morale bonus vs. enchantment)

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +16 (1d6+8), 2 claws +16 (1d6+8)

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

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 20, **Con** 16, **Int** 3, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +18 (+22 grapple); **CMD** 33 (35 vs. grapple)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Greater Grapple, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack,

Toughness, Vital Strike

Tricks attack any target, defend, down, fetch, guard, heel, seek, watch, work

Skills Climb +16, Escape Artist +8, Intimidate +3, Perception +9

Development: When Cyricas's legend is slain or departs willingly, the throne room shifts and twists into a child's bedroom filled with books, flowers, and medical supplies. Once the PCs leave this mindscape, the harbor door crumbles.

G4. The Whisper Door (CR 16)

This white marble door is covered with a shifting silver film of mist. Engraved into the marble is the image of a hooded figure, its hand covering its face as it whispers into the ear of another man.

This is the domain of Beldam I, successor to Cydonus III. He manifests in a council chamber ringed with whispering, plotting nobles.

A polished wooden table stands in the center of this large meeting hall. Indistinct figures line the room's edge, just beyond a ring of marble busts, shifting and whispering indistinctly. Chairs ring the table, but only one is occupied. The man in the chair is heavy-set and pale, with thick, dark hair. He sits with his palms flat on the table, his brow furrowed with worry, as his eyes flick back and forth between six cups sitting on the table.

Cydonus III was assassinated by a conspiracy of nobles who felt the emperor badly mismanaged Taldor's wealth. Beldam was seen as an honest and reliable successor, and his legacy is one of caution and prudence. In truth, Beldam lived under the constant gaze of those same noble conspirators, ever aware that he would meet the same fate as his predecessor should he not prove a pliable puppet. While outwardly he was a scrupulous and jovial ruler (and did govern Taldor with severe austerity, at least temporarily), he was also deeply paranoid. He secured his position with blackmail to keep rebellious nobles in line, and poisoned those he could not control.

Creature: Beldam sits at the table, trying to decide which cup contains poison. When the PCs approach, he ponders aloud, "Good wine rarely makes for good prudence, but I genuinely believed I'd found the exception. Oh bother. I'd really rather not poison his wife." If the PCs speak, Beldam looks up with a yelp, but quickly collects himself and addresses the "servants," explaining that he decided to poison an advisor who has been plotting against him, but lost track of which cup he poisoned. To further confound him, the cups are specially designed to obscure spells like *augury*, *detect poison*, *divination*, and similar spells.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

If pressed, Beldam doesn't want to throw the poison out, as he believes he must strike back against this conspirator or be dead by morning, and his poisonings have always protected him in the past. He feels some guilt over the men he's killed, but ultimately justifies his grim actions as doing what is best for Taldor. If the PCs try to convince Beldam to leave Carrius, he says he similarly regrets having to ride the boy, saying "I learned one hard, bitter lesson in my time as emperor. Sometimes sacrifice is necessary for a kingdom to thrive. Sometimes, an act of violence can keep a nation at peace." He intends to remain here, guarding himself against the treachery of his supporters. The PCs cannot talk Beldam into leaving voluntarily, but his poisoned cup is the thing he fears most and is vulnerable to.

Six cups sit before Beldam. Each cup is made of a different material and has a different design. The six cups are as follows, from left to right (facing Beldam):

- A golden cup with a scallop carving, decorated with brilliant rubies
- A silver cup with a dragon carving, decorated with many emeralds
- A golden cup with a hippogriff carving, decorated with pink pearls
- A copper cup with an eagle carving and no gems
- A silver cup with a unicorn carving, decorated with pink diamonds
- A platinum cup with a naga carving, decorated with expensive jade

The PCs can try to pry clues out of Beldam with DC 30 Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge (nature), or Knowledge (nobility) skill checks. Any attempt to Intimidate the timid grand prince automatically counts as a failure. No PC can attempt the same skill check twice. Each time a PC succeeds at a check, they learn a new clue in order. If they fail three checks, Beldam declares he is done answering to peasants and demands to know which cup is poisoned.

- "The poison cup is next to either a silver cup or a platinum cup."
- "If the poison cup does not have scales, then it has hooves."
- "I know I did not poison the naga cup. Too obvious."
- "If the poison cup has feathers, then it is exactly two cups to the right of a golden cup."

A PC can deliberately point out the wrong cup with a successful DC 35 Bluff check.

Alternatively, a PC can poison a second cup with a successful DC 35 Sleight of hand check, but she must still succeed at a DC 35 Bluff check.

The hippogriff cup holds the poison. Regardless of which cup the PCs identify, Beldam takes them at face value and says "I see you are truly on my side. There are so few whom I can trust."

Once the PCs select a cup or attempt to leave, read or paraphrase the following:

The mists and shadows of the room swirl, and your bodies lurch. A moment later you find yourself seated around the long, dark table dressed in fashions and jewels centuries out of date. A goblet sits before you, and at the head of the table Beldam lifts his own. "To Taldor, long may she know peace!"

The PCs now sit in place of five of Beldam's advisors (if you have more than five players, select one at random to stand aside; if you have less than five players, they are joined by one of the room's indistinct shadows). The poisoned cup is set in front of one attendee at random, but never Beldam. If a PC successfully identified which goblet was poisoned, lied about it to Beldam, and failed the Bluff check, the poisoned cup sits in front of them. But if the PCs successfully identified which goblet was poisoned, lied about it to Beldam, and succeeded on the Bluff check, the poisoned cup sits in front of Beldam instead. PCs are unable to move from their chairs until all the cups of wine have been consumed.

The poisoned cup counts as a *poison* spell, inflicting 1d3 Constitution damage each round for 6 rounds (Fortitude DC 20 negates). To Beldam, the poison is instantly fatal. If Beldam survives the encounter, the PCs are then thrown from the room, but may re-enter and begin the puzzle anew. Beyond his vulnerability to poison, Beldam's legend is composed of mists and shadows and toxic fluids, rendering him immune to (almost) all weapons and spells.

There is a far simpler solution to Beldam's haunting. A PC who succeeds at a DC 35 Knowledge (religion) check recalls that despite all his paranoia and precautions, Beldam ultimately died when he startled his equally nervous wife, who subsequently beat him to death with



POISONED CUPS

a marble bust. Any PC who can lift one of the marble busts (requiring a successful DC 15 Strength check) from around the room and strike Beldam from behind (a successful DC 30 Stealth check) instantly kills him.

Development: When Beldam's legend is poisoned, the whispering shadows in the council chamber grow less sinister and more defined, eventually transforming into nervous-looking men and women. Once the PCs leave this mindscape, the whispering door crumbles.

Story Award: Once the PCs outwit or kill Beldam, award them 76,800 XP.

65. The Crown Door (CR 19)

This polished steel door is inset with an inverted golden crown. A single, teardrop-shaped ruby sits embedded in the crown, like a drop of blood.

A throne room appears beyond the door, identical to the throne room in the Imperial Palace which the PCs passed through not long ago, but much humbler in stature. The throne room is ornamented, but the mirrored walls are gone and the throne is a smaller, gold-plated chair rather than the magnificent piece it is today. Fur cloaks decorate the throne. With a successful DC 30 Knowledge (history) check, a PC identifies the style of the throne room as that of roughly 1,000 years ago. This is the realm of Emperor Daronlyr XII, called the Overthrower.

This mental recreation of the imperial throne room paints itself in longer shadows and deeper reds than the genuine article. Fur cloaks drape over a gilded throne in which a figure slumps, blood still pouring from a wound in his chest, forming a stream that flows through the rest of the room. A tall Taldan man stands beside him, turning to face the room as he places the crown atop his head. Bowing before him are dozens of strong Ulfen warriors.

Over a thousand years ago, Daronlyr became emperor when he slew his cousin, Parmain V, the reigning grand prince. Guided by equal parts national interest and vanity, Daronlyr had spent years steering the senate to circumvent or blunt his cousin's inept rule before turning to conspiracy. Finally, Daronlyr visited the court and drew his blade. The Ulfen Guard sprang to defend the emperor, but Daronlyr fought them off while reciting a litany of his cousin's failings. When Daronlyr finally ran his blade through his cousin's chest and took the *Primogen Crown*, the Ulfen Guard broke off their attack and bowed before him. Daronlyr claimed the crown, and the Ulfen Guard defended him loyally for decades until his death.

Daronlyr was known as a strong orator, an inspiring figure, and a canny leader. Though the Ulfen Guard initially followed him due to his battle prowess, they remained loyal because of his ability to lead. Daronlyr

believes he can still inspire Taldor, and he has no wish to leave Carrius to the task alone.

Creatures: When the PCs approach Daronlyr, he smiles and wipes the blood from his blade. "To a learned man, blades are no more threatening than a poorly wielded hickory switch. I command a thousand men, ready to die at my whim. Can your would-be emperor command that devotion? Can you?"

When the PCs ask Daronlyr to leave, or challenge or attack him, the spirit merely chuckles. True to his words, Daronlyr's legend is impervious to weapons and spells. He instead relies on his Ulfen Guard, who are both his tether to the world and his only vulnerability.

There are three times as many Ulfen warriors in the hall as the number of PCs, each one dedicated to Daronlyr's defense. Daronlyr offers the PCs a chance to sway the Ulfen Guard with a display of arms, an impassioned speech, or another method of their choice. Each PC has one chance to win over as many guards as they can before Daronlyr orders whichever bodyguards remain loyal to kill the intruders.

This trial should take the form of a series of skill checks, though the PCs may get creative with ways to impress the Ulfen Guard. A maximum of one PC can aid another PC's skill check. The Ulfen Guards' loyalty imposes a -4 penalty on the PCs' skill checks. At your discretion, the PCs may gain circumstance bonuses for particularly impressive weapons, displays of skill (especially for Intimidate), illusion spells, speaking Skald, or stories drawn from their firsthand experience; encourage the PCs to be creative in their presentation to gain bonuses. The skills and DCs for this task are the same as those used to win the loyalty of the Ulfen Guard in the real world:

Skill	DC
Survival	25
Intimidate	30
Knowledge (history)	30
Diplomacy	34
Bluff	38

Winning Over the Guard: A successful skill check wins over one of the guards. For every 5 points by which a PC's result exceeds the DC, the PC wins over another guard. If a PC rolls a natural 1 on a check, she loses the loyalty of one guard and gains no other converts. If a PC rolls a natural 20 on a check, he gains the loyalty of one additional guard. If the PCs win over two-thirds of the guards, the enraged warriors turn on Daronlyr, running him through.

Alternatively, PCs can instantly sway the loyalties of the Ulfen Guard if they think to resurrect Daronlyr's predecessor, still lying on the throne. If Parmain V is resurrected, the Ulfen Guard immediately turns on Daronlyr and rips him to shreds.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

Failure: If the PCs fail to win over enough guards after they have attempted all their checks, Daronlyr smiles and says, "Their loyalty is to the crown, and the man who wears it. Perhaps now you'll understand that loyalty to high-minded ideals is a child's fantasy." One Ulfen Guard attacks each PC while the others cheer them on.

ULFEN GUARDS

CR 16

XP 76,800 each

hp 309 each (see page 43)

Development: When Daronlyr is dead, the shadows and crimson tones of the throne room return to normal, the furs crumble to dust, and the stream of blood trickling from the throne soaks into the floor, leaving no trace. Once the PCs leave this mindscape, the crown door crumbles.

Story Award: Regardless of how successful the PCs' efforts to win over the guard were or how many they fight, award them 204,800 XP.

G6. The Lion Door (CR 20)

This arched door seems worked from solid gold. In the center of the door, the image of a lion rears on its hind legs, its mouth open in a silent roar.

Beyond this door stands an idealized vision of Taldor from the ancient past, as it exists in most citizens' minds:

Golden fields of wheat, rippled by the wind into ocean-like waves, extend as far as the eye can see, until they meet majestic mountains at the horizon. Bone-white ruins jut haphazardly from the landscape. A heroic figure stands atop a broken column, stark against the endless sunset.

The final door is the mindscape of Taldaris's legend. While the PCs have met the original Taldaris—a far older, wiser, and more humble man than ever ruled Taldor—the figure here is Taldaris as his empire remembers him: cunning, fearless, strong, and above all dedicated to Taldor's dominion over the world. As the PCs approach, he broods aloud: "In a single lifetime, I forged squabbling children into an empire of men. And this is what you've done with my legacy. Entitled, foppish, soft little children once again, squabbling and sniping. Taldor needs me now even more than she did before her birth. And I intend to remain, no matter the cost." As he finishes speaking, an elephant-sized lion stalks from behind the ruins, its six eyes and golden mane glowing in the sunlight—the legendary grogrisant.

Creature: This Taldaris is but a representation; an astral footprint the PCs likely saw themselves while visiting the city of Axis (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #131: *The Reaper's Right Hand*). Unlike the true Taldaris

they met, the legend is utterly convinced of Taldan superiority in all things and that the gods themselves decreed he should unite and rule the world, coupled with an arrogant faith in the supremacy of the military and personal strength. Ironically, the two-dimensional hero-myth that Taldans constructed around their founder now embodies many of the traits—stubbornness, willful ignorance, arrogance—that Taldaris himself loathed.

Taldaris and the grogrisant leap into combat, but the legend of the First Emperor is not beyond reason. PCs can engage him in a verbal duel (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue* 176), forgoing their standard action each round to try to get through to him. Taldaris has a determination of 60 and 3 edges thanks to his strong reputation. He has a bias against mockery and red herrings (–2), a strong bias against flattery and wit (–5), as well as a bias for emotional appeal and logic (+2), and a strong bias for allegory (+5). Each of the following things the PCs may have done in the past grants them one edge to use in this duel: brought Eutropia back to life, met the true Taldaris in Axis, and investigated the damaged legend of Taldaris on the Astral Plane. While engaging in a verbal duel with Taldaris requires a standard action to initiate each turn, responses (either Taldaris's own or the PCs' later retorts in the same exchange) are free actions.

If reduced to 0 determination, Taldaris finally yields and orders the grogrisant (if it still lives) to stand away. "Your words ring true to my ears. Taldor was a dream I strove toward, but perhaps that means I am still asleep. The world I knew is the one that needed me, and the world you hold now is one with very different needs. May the gods speed you on your way." After a few moments, he adds "The boy cannot survive without us to bolster him. Half a life is no life at all," before fading away.

EMPEROR TALDARIS'S LEGEND

CR 19

XP 204,800

Unique legion archon paladin 16 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 19)

LG Medium outsider (archon, extraplanar, good, lawful)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect evil*, low-light vision; Perception +14

Aura courage (10 ft.), faith (10 ft.), justice (10 ft.), aura of menace (20 ft., DC 21), resolve (10 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 29 (+11 armor, +5 deflection, +3 natural)

hp 348 (24d10+184)

Fort +28, **Ref** +12, **Will** +24; +4 vs. poison

DR 10/evil; **Immune** charm, disease, electricity, fear, petrification; **SR** 30

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (average)

Melee +2 *flaming burst holy greatsword* +32/+27/+22/+17 (2d6+9/17–20 plus 1d6 fire and 2d6 vs. evil)

Ranged +1 flaming holy javelin +25 (1d6+6 plus 1d6 fire and 2d6 vs. evil)

Special Attacks channel positive energy 6/day (DC 23, 8d6), smite evil 6/day (+5 attack and AC, +16 damage)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +18)

Constant—*detect evil*, *magic circle against evil*

At will—*aid*, *continual flame*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *message*

3/day—*align weapon*, *mirror image*, *versatile weapon*^{APG} (DC 17)

Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 13th; concentration +18)

4th—*break enchantment*, *death ward*

3rd—*dispel magic*, *heal mount*, *sanctify armor*^{APG} (DC 18)

2nd—*corruption resistance*^{APG} (DC 17), *eagle's splendor*, *resist energy*, *saddle surge*^{APG}

1st—*divine favor*, *grace*^{APG}, *hero's defiance*^{APG} (2), *protection from chaos*

TACTICS

During Combat Taldaris was a skilled warrior, but also a skilled tactician. He attempts to use the terrain to his advantage, keeping his back to walls to keep opponents from flanking him while lining enemies up for his own Cleave or Whirlwind Attacks. If his opponents surround him, he uses *teleport* to find some breathing room, and casts *mirror image* to distract multiple attackers.

Morale Taldaris's legend fights until destroyed or until talked down by reason.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 10, **Con** 24, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +24; **CMB** +29 (+31 bull rush); **CMD** 44 (46 vs. bull rush)

Feats Cleave, Critical Focus, Furious Focus^{APG}, Great Cleave, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greatsword)^B, Improved Vital Strike, Lunge, Power Attack, Strike Back, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Whirlwind Attack^B

Skills Diplomacy +20, Fly +11, Handle Animal +20, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (nobility) +15, Knowledge (religion) +15, Perception +14, Ride +21, Sense Motive +14, Survival +10

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech

SQ divine bond (weapon), flames of faith, lay on hands 13/day (8d6), mercies (exhausted, fatigued, paralyzed, staggered, stunned)

Gear +2 adamantine full plate, ring of protection +5

THE GROGRISANT

CR 16/MR 6

XP 76,800

N Huge magical beast (mythic)

Init +12^M; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +21

Aura blazing mane (60 ft., DC 20)

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 33, flat-footed 31 (+2 Dex, +23 natural, -2 size)
hp 285 (18d10+186)

Fort +20, **Ref** +13, **Will** +14

DR 10/epic and piercing; **Immune** disease, fire, light effects, poison; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +26 (3d6+15/19-20), 2 claws +26 (1d8+10)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks mythic power (6/day, surge +1d8), powerful bite

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th; concentration +19)

Constant—*nondetection*, *pass without trace*

At will—*dancing lights*, *fire shield*, *sunbeam* (DC 16)

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 15, **Con** 24, **Int** 6, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +30 (+32 sunder); **CMD** 42 (44 vs. sunder, 46 vs. trip)

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative^M, Improved Sunder, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will^M, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception, Stealth), Vital Strike^M

Skills Acrobatics +2 (+10 when jumping), Climb +22, Perception +21, Stealth +18

Languages Sphinx (can't speak)

SQ pure body^{MA}, quick recovery^{MA}, shrug it off^{MA}

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blazing Mane (Su) When in an area of normal or brighter light, the grogrisant's golden mane blazes like the sun. Creatures more than 60 feet away treat the beast as having total concealment due to the dazzling brilliance, and any creature within 60 feet that looks at the grogrisant must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or be permanently blinded. Creatures can avert their eyes as if this were a gaze attack.

Powerful Bite (Ex) The grogrisant's bite attack applies 1-1/2 times its Strength modifier on damage rolls and threatens a critical hit on a roll of 19-20.

Shimmering Coat (Su) The grogrisant adds its natural armor bonus to its touch AC.

Development: When Taldaris is defeated, the remaining ruins crumble. Fresh, new buildings constructed in the modern Taldan style spring from the ground until the wild landscape is a flourishing town. Once the PCs leave this mindscape, the lion door crumbles.

In addition to this normal effect, the defeated Taldaris also leaves behind a font of light in the central chamber. Touching the light cures a character of ability damage, negative levels, and other ailments as a *restoration* spell. Each character can benefit from this ability only once.

Story Award: If the PCs talk Taldaris down, award them XP as if they had defeated him and the grogrisant in combat.

WHAT REMAINS

Each time the PCs defeat a legend, a portion of the puppet figure in the central chamber is replaced with flesh of the true Carrius, though even a casual glance

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

TRIUMPHS IN THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

If you are using the rules from the “Relics of Old Taldor” article in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128 to add a sense of historical weight to your campaign, “The Six-Legend Soul” does not introduce any additional relics, but this adventure includes two triumphs for the PCs: wiping out every member of the Inner Circle, and helping Eutropia win the throne. Each triumph allows a PC to unlock a new tier of power in one relic she carries.

shows him exhausted and ill. When the PCs drive out or destroy at least four of the legends, the spirits’ influence over Carrius breaks down; he can finally communicate through his tired smile and even interact with the living world, though he remains confused and easily swayed by the remaining legends.

When the PCs defeat all six legends, read or paraphrase the following:

The boy looks at you with clear eyes. While his frame is fragile and his face lined with fatigue, Carrius’s expression is peaceful. “They are gone,” he says. “The only one inside is me now. I remember everything—my death, my passage on, and how the circle drew me back here. Thank you. All I ever wanted was the peace that was robbed from me.”

As Carrius speaks, the mindscape begins to shudder and warp. Cracks appear in the floor and walls as motes of light crumble from the ceiling above. Obvious pain crosses his face. “You are free to leave now. Return to my sister. Tell her... tell her I’m sorry I have to go, and that I know she can be... the ruler Taldor needs. But I can’t be there for her. What’s left of me... it’s not enough. My soul isn’t whole—that’s why the circle invited the spirits in. To control me, but also to heal me. Now it’s time for me to return. It was nice to visit. I’m so sorry for the trouble I’ve caused.”

The PCs might try to find a way to keep Carrius alive. The prince admits he’s sad to be leaving the Material plane, and that he wishes he could be there for his sister, but if life was as easy as a *resurrection* spell, the Immaculate Circle wouldn’t have needed the *Soul Crucible* in the first place.

If the PCs used a soul gem to reserve a fragment of Eutropia’s soul when they resurrected her, the jewel starts to glow and vibrate, echoing the pain in Eutropia’s soul as she loses her brother once again. If the PCs break the soul gem, the bulwark made from Eutropia’s soul flows into Carrius, stabilizing him.

If the PCs didn’t use the soul gem as part of their resurrection, they can still save Carrius’s soul by sacrificing one of their own. Inside Carrius’s mindscape, with the legends banished, a single PC can willingly sacrifice himself, giving up most of his own soul to stabilize the

boy’s. This slays the PC instantly, but restores Carrius to health. The grateful youth never forgets this final sacrifice, naming his savior a national hero and naming his firstborn child for him.

At your discretion, each PC may instead cull a portion of their own soul—not enough to kill them, but enough to collectively restore Carrius. Doing so inflicts 10 permanent negative levels, essentially draining away much of what they learned and achieved over the past year to bolster the young prince.

The death or level loss from either of these sacrifices can be restored only through the use of a *miracle* or *wish* spell to steal back the donated life force from Carrius, leaving the boy dying once again.

If the PCs don’t think to use the soul gem or don’t have one, and no PC willingly trades souls with Carrius, the prince bids them farewell. He closes his eyes and his form disincorporates into mist. The room dissolves, and the PCs are left standing in the palace once more. Carrius sits in his ornate chair before them, a peaceful expression on his dead face.

If the PCs restore the boy’s soul, they still return to the throne room—without the magic of the six legends, the mindscape that held them captive crumbles away—and prince Carrius thanks them in person and weakly calls off any remaining guards before he slumps into a deep sleep. The exhaustion of his ordeal leaves Carrius unconscious for several hours, providing the PCs with ample time to report back to Martella Lotheed, Princess Eutropia, and any other allies with all they have learned. By the time Carrius awakens, Eutropia has made arrangements with the palace sentries and Ulfen Guard to stand down.

Story Award: If the PCs use Eutropia’s soul or their own to restore Carrius, award them 153,600 XP.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once Carrius is freed of his spirits, the way is clear for Princess Eutropia to claim the throne. If her brother dies, Eutropia accepts her role with a quiet sadness, offering the PCs rewards and favors in time, once her mourning is complete. If the PCs managed to save Carrius, Eutropia sobs with joy and knights the PCs as part of her coronation, though she reserves greater titles for the next Grand Day of Exultation to help wash away the bloody legacy her father left on that day.

Her missing soul fragment leaves Eutropia more sickly than before, and somewhat susceptible to death magic, but the closer bond with her little brother leaves both far more insightful and even-tempered.



Carrius, if restored and stabilized with his sister's soul, resumes the personality he always had—that of a gentle and thoughtful young man. He has a knack for politics that he uses to advise his sister, but prefers to remain out of the public eye, especially after his unfortunate episode. Having experienced enough trauma for several lifetimes, he's content to be as ordinary as possible.

Eutropia's advisors devise a plan for revealing as much as they deem wise to the people of Taldor. It becomes common knowledge that a plan to assassinate Eutropia was foiled by Taldor's government and the brave work of the princess's heroic allies. The announcement of Eutropia's death and Carrius's coronation was an unfortunate but necessary ruse to convince the assassins to think they had succeeded, allowing the heroes time to work. Carrius, if he is alive, readily confirms this version of events. Eutropia quickly asks that the PCs keep the truth of the matter to themselves, to spare her brother the shame and to not disrupt the nation's faith in its own leadership in an already unstable time.

The *Mantle of Kings* proves Eutropia's right to rule, but the path to her coronation is not guaranteed. There remains a strong resistance to her leadership from some of the established noble families in Taldor, and foreign nations take a particular interest in this historic change in Taldor's inheritance laws. If Carrius

died, vicious rumors circulate that Eutropia ordered her brother executed, further undermining the people's faith in their new emperor. Regardless, with the support of the PCs and the senate, and the blessing of the *Mantle of Kings*, Eutropia eventually proves her claim to the throne, and she is crowned Grand Princess Eutropia, first empress of Taldor.

Martella Lotheed prefers her backstage role to the life of a noblewoman and remains in Eutropia's shadow, searching for threats to the Grand Princess and Taldor itself. Still aghast at the true depravity of her family legacy, she remains grateful to the PCs for undoing the terrible wounds her ancestor and her own brother inflicted on the nation.

The PCs themselves can look forward to lives of comfort, influence, and as much or as little involvement in Taldan politics as they desire. Princess Eutropia awards them the titles of Count or Countess on the next Grand Day of Exultation, grants them the county of Meratt (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #128) and the Palace of Birdsong as their domain—should they want it—and offers positions in her circle of advisors or the senate to the heroes who saved her and brought hope for a brighter future to Taldor. Her financial gifts total 250,000 gp for each PC, though she more than likely expresses her gratitude in art objects and magical treasures she knows the PCs prize. With the gratitude of an empress, the heroes' futures are bright.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I: Death of an Heir

Part 2: Carving the Circle

Part 3: Through the Granite Walls

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Spirits of Six Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

NENAREEN ADELLA

DUCHESS OF BLOOD

Born illegitimate and straddling two races, Nenareen is the last surviving member of the hated Adella bloodline, having perfected a blood serum that grants her everlasting youth.

NENAREEN ADELLA

CR 17

XP 102,400

Female half-elf vampire alchemist 16 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 26)
NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, elf, human)
Init +15; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +35

DEFENSE

AC 35, touch 15, flat-footed 30 (+8 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +12 natural)

hp 187 (16d8+112); fast healing 5

Fort +19, **Ref** +27, **Will** +11; +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 10/magic and silver; **Immune** sleep, undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses vampire weaknesses

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +26 (1d4+9 plus energy drain)

Ranged bomb +24/+19/+14 touch (8d6+3 electricity or fire) or force bomb +24/+19/+14 touch (8d4+3 force)

Special Attacks blood drain, bomb 19/day (8d6+3 electricity or fire, DC 21), create spawn, dominate (DC 23), energy drain (2 levels, DC 25)

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 16th; concentration +19)

6th—*shadow walk*

5th—*elude time*^{APG}, *polymorph*, *sending*

4th—*discern lies* (DC 17), *freedom of movement*, *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*, *universal formula*^{APG}

3rd—*arcane sight*, *displacement*, *haste*, *nondetection*, *protection from energy* (2)

2nd—*alter self*, *barkskin*, *eagle's splendor*, *false life*, *see invisibility*, *undetectable alignment* (DC 15)

1st—*bomber's eye*^{APG}, *comprehend languages*, *expeditious retreat*, *reduce person* (DC 14), *shield*, *true strike*

TACTICS

Before Combat Before combat, Nenareen drinks her mutagen and extracts of *eagle's splendor*, *freedom of movement*, and *stoneskin*.

During Combat Nenareen prefers to attack with her shock bombs, targeting clerics and other divine spellcasters first, but she isn't shy about entering melee with her claws or dominating imposing enemies.

Morale Nenareen fights until slain, and then she retreats to her tank to regenerate.

Base Statistics Without her extracts and mutagen,

Nenareen's statistics are **AC** 29, touch 15, flat-footed 24; **hp** 171; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +23, **Will** +12; **Melee** 2 claws +22 (1d4+5 plus energy drain); **Ranged** bomb +20/+15/+10 touch (8d6+4 electricity or fire); **Str** 14, **Dex** 24, **Con** —, **Int** 18, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 18; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 32; **Skills** Bluff +28, Craft (alchemy) +23, Diplomacy +12, Heal +28, Knowledge (nobility) +20, Perception +36, Sense Motive +31, Spellcraft +17, Stealth +27, Use Magic Device +20.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 32, **Con** —, **Int** 16, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 39

Feats Ability Focus (energy drain), Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Extra Discovery^{APG}, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Magical Aptitude, Mobility, Skill Focus (Heal), Skill Focus (Use Magic Device), Spring Attack, Throw Anything, Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Bluff +29, Craft (alchemy) +22 (+38 when creating alchemical items), Diplomacy +13, Heal +27, Knowledge (nobility) +19, Perception +35, Sense Motive +30, Spellcraft +16, Stealth +31, Use Magic Device +21; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Bluff, +10 Perception, +8 Sense Motive, +8 Stealth

Languages Aklo, Common, Draconic, Elven, Hallit, Kelish

SQ alchemical undeath, alchemy (alchemy crafting +16), change shape (any elf, *alter self*), discoveries (combine extracts, enhance potion, extend potion, fast bombs, force bomb, grand mutagen, greater mutagen, precise bombs [3 squares], shock bomb), elf blood, fluid form, mutagen (+8/+6/+4/-2, +6 natural armor, 16 hours), poison use, shadowless, spider climb, swift alchemy

Combat Gear grand mutagen; **Other Gear** +4 *shadow chain shirt*, *amulet of mighty fists* +2, *belt of incredible dexterity* +4, *cloak of resistance* +4, formula book

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Alchemical Undeath (Su) Nenareen uses vampire blood as a catalyst in her experiments. She does not have a vampire's weakness to reflections, holy symbols, or running water, and she can enter structures at will, but she lacks a true vampire's children of the night ability, and creating spawn requires her laboratory and several months of work. Her change shape ability allows Nenareen to take only the form of elves, and she cannot assume a *gaseous form*. Instead, she can assume a liquid form as a standard action or when reduced to 0 hit points, as per the spell *fluid form*^{APG}.

Nenareen was born a bastard daughter of the Adella line back when that name inspired fear and awe rather than scandal and resentment. As a half-elf, her obvious heritage left young Nenareen a constant embarrassment to the family, and she was continually kept in the shadows, shuffled from one poor relative to another. These distant relations cared for her in exchange for a pittance from the family until the girl became too troublesome, at which point they would pass her off to the next home.

Nenareen soon began to loathe herself. She blamed her “tainted” blood for her sad life, constantly fantasizing about who she would have been as a legitimate daughter. In her fantasies, the rest of the family treated her like a cherished princess, lavishing fine clothes and jewels upon her and parading her in the public eye. As a teenager, she became obsessed with the idea that a “cure” existed somewhere that could purge her elven heritage. The young woman first began training as a surgeon and then as an alchemist, learning what she could from potion hawkers and secondhand tomes. Eventually her skill grew great enough that her family paid for formal training, reasoning that Nenareen could repay some of the money wasted on her upbringing if she found a respectable career. None of them realized the extent of her talents until the girl used them to disappear, removing herself from the shame of family life and inserting herself into the shadow world of poisons and death philters.

Initially the bitter woman planned to hide herself until she could “cleanse” her blood. She dreamed of returning to her relatives as a human woman, welcomed to her proper place in the family. Months turned into years, and while she made incredible discoveries related to elven blood, the formula for erasing her elven heritage remained tantalizingly out of grasp.

Almost by accident, Nenareen discovered a new kind of formula—one that restored her wasted youth and beauty—brewed from the same elven blood she so despised. By then, Nenareen’s dreams of returning to her family had long since tarnished. Instead of hating herself, she hated the family that had so cruelly rejected her, most of whom were long dead.

Over the next century, Nenareen rose to power in the shadow societies of Taldor, maintaining her youth

by using unfortunate young elves as living crucibles. Styling herself a duchess, she attended the best parties and mingled with the pinnacle of Taldan society, where she enjoyed using her talents to manipulate others. At last her dreams had come true—she was admired and fawned over. She learned the art of changing her face and name every few years to enjoy an eternity at the center of attention, all the while ferreting secrets out of the elite. She used those secrets to further cement her power and eventually came to the attention of the other great shadow power of her day: Panivar Lotheed.

Panivar approached Nenareen one night and told her he knew her secret: that he had met her 50 years earlier, with a different name, and that neither of them had aged a day since then. He explained he was founding a society: the Immaculate Circle, a cabal of nobles who believed their superior knowledge and breeding should exempt them from death itself. Nenareen gladly joined.

Though her bloodline has long since turned to dust, Nenareen still harbors a centuries-old bitterness at her treatment as a child. She enjoys thinking about the day when she will be the one in control of every noble family in Taldor.

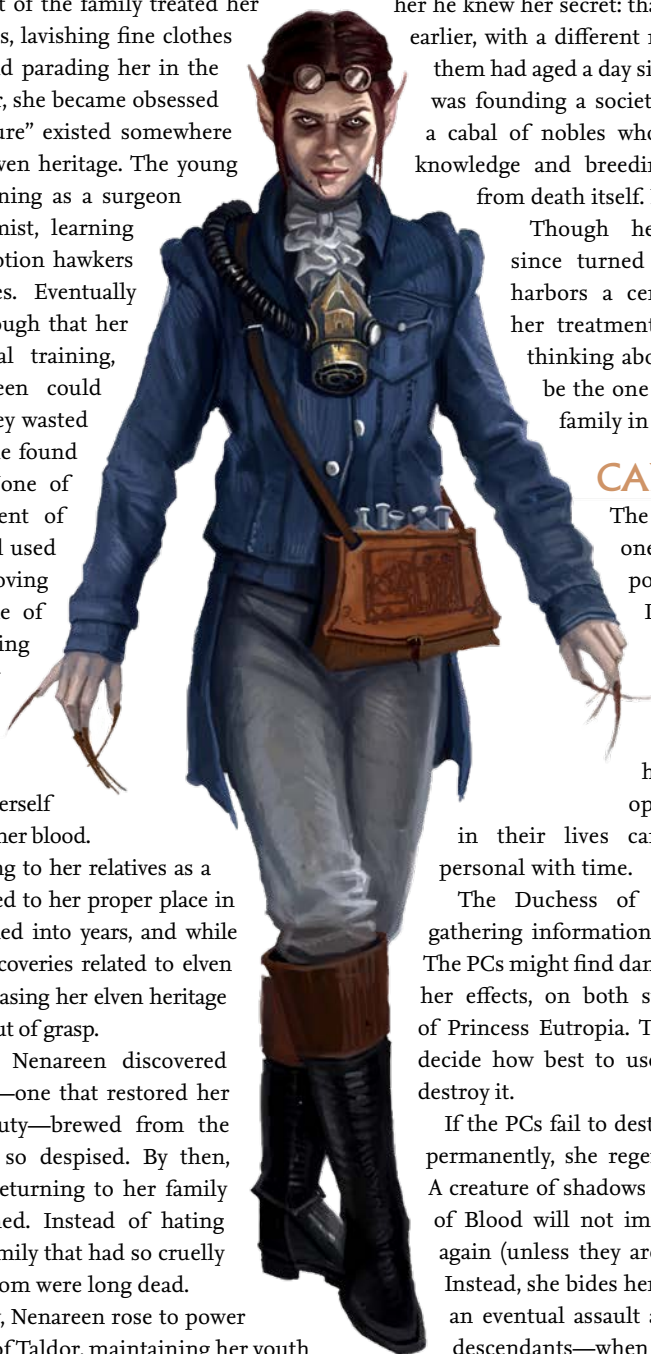
CAMPAIGN ROLE

The Duchess of Blood is one of the oldest and most powerful members of the Immaculate Circle, and she’s had centuries to plot and execute her plans. While at first the PCs might see her as a straightforward opponent, her involvement

in their lives can become much more personal with time.

The Duchess of Blood has spent years gathering information on the nobles of Taldor. The PCs might find damning information among her effects, on both supporters *and* detractors of Princess Eutropia. The heroes would have to decide how best to use this information, or to destroy it.

If the PCs fail to destroy the Duchess of Blood permanently, she regenerates in her sepulcher. A creature of shadows and subtlety, the Duchess of Blood will not immediately attack the PCs again (unless they are particularly vulnerable). Instead, she bides her time and begins plotting an eventual assault against the PCs—or their descendants—when they least expect it.



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

DUKE PANIVAR LOTHEED

As a soul shielded from the eyes of death, Duke Panivar Lotheed lives without the ultimate fear known to all other mortals, manipulating Taldor from the shadows.

PANIVAR LOTHEED

CR 17

XP 102,400

Male venerable human conjurer 18

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; **Senses** see invisibility; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 16, flat-footed 25 (+4 armor, +4 deflection, +2 Dex, +3 natural, +4 shield)

hp 189 (18d6+124)

Fort +18, **Ref** +15, **Will** +18

OFFENSE

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

Melee +1 dagger +10/+5 (1d4+1/19–20)

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th; concentration +27)

At will—dimensional steps (540 feet/day)

12/day—acid dart (1d6+9 acid)

Conjurer Spells Prepared (CL 18th; concentration +27)

9th—*crushing hand* (DC 28), *summon monster IX*, *time stop*, *wail of the banshee* (DC 28)

8th—*clenched fist*, *mind blank*, *prismatic wall* (DC 27), *summon monster VIII*, *wall of lava*^{APG}

7th—*banishment* (DC 26), *forcecage* (DC 26), *plane shift* (DC 28), *spell turning*, *summon monster VII*

6th—*disintegrate* (DC 25), *forceful hand* (DC 25), *greater dispel magic*, *planar binding* (DC 27), *summon monster VI*, *unwilling shield*^{APG}

5th—*cloudkill* (DC 26), *dismissal* (DC 24), *hungry pit*^{APG} (DC 26), *summon monster V*, *telekinesis* (2, DC 24), *wall of force*

4th—*acid pit*^{APG} (DC 25), *black tentacles* (2), *remove curse*, *resilient sphere* (DC 23), *stoneskin*, *summon monster IV*

3rd—*aqueous orb*^{APG} (DC 24), *fly*, *haste*, *protection from energy* (2), *spiked pit*^{APG} (DC 24), *summon monster III*

2nd—*create pit*^{APG} (DC 23), *false life* (2), *glitterdust* (DC 23), *see invisibility*, *summon monster II*, *web* (DC 23)

1st—*expeditious retreat*, *grease* (2), *mage armor*, *shield* (2), *stumble gap*^{APG} (DC 22), *summon monster I*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *open/close* (DC 19)

Opposition Schools enchantment, illusion

TACTICS

Before Combat Panivar maintains a constant bodyguard with his summoner's charm ability to keep a powerful outsider—normally a morrigna psychopomp—bound to him. He also maintains *mage armor* and *mind blank* spells

each day. If he expects a fight, he also casts *false life*, *fly*, *protection from energy* (fire), *see invisibility*, and *shield*.

During Combat Panivar begins by casting *time stop*, using the extra time to cast *prismatic wall* and *wall of lava* opposite each other, and then using any remaining time to cast *clenched fist*, *crushing hand*, and *wall of force* to protect himself. He directs his hands to bull rush opponents into either wall. When undefended by his *wall of force*, Panivar targets opponents with restricting spells such as *acid pit*, *black tentacles*, and *forcecage* before casting *cloudkill* from his staff, relying on his conjured morrigna to heal him.

Morale Panivar's immortality has bred overconfidence, and he won't retreat from a battle.

Base Statistics Without his spells, Panivar's statistics are

AC 19, touch 16, flat-footed 17; **hp** 173.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 20, **Int** 29, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 11

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

Feats Augment Summoning, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus (conjunction), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (conjunction), Still Spell

Skills Appraise +30, Diplomacy +18, Fly +36, Knowledge (arcana, history, nobility, planes, religion) +30, Perception +20, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +30, Use Magic Device +18

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Auran, Celestial, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Kelish, Terran

SQ arcane bond (Lotheed signet ring), summoner's charm (9 rounds)

Combat Gear scroll of fly, staff of conjuration; **Other Gear** +1 dagger, amulet of natural armor +3, belt of mighty constitution +6, cloak of resistance +5, headband of vast intelligence +6, ring of the recalled soul, ring of protection +4, Lotheed family signet ring

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Cloaked from Death (Su) Panivar has struck a deal that cloaks him from the awareness of psychopomps and death itself. Even those psychopomps he summons lose all memory of him upon returning to the Boneyard. This ability grants Panivar the mental ability score bonuses from his advanced age but none of the physical penalties. If reduced below 0 hit points, Panivar falls prone and is paralyzed, but he cannot die, regardless of the state of his remains, and he continues to heal naturally over time.

Born over 300 years ago, Panivar was the eldest son of his family and expected to rule over their holdings upon his parents' deaths. He embodied the Lotheed family tradition of arcane excellence, and he bonded with a familiar—a beloved canary—at a young age. Still a child when the bird died, Panivar felt the trauma of life draining away and the cold void left behind, and that insight quickly became an obsession.

The path of necromancy did not appeal to young Panivar. Necromancers dealt with the physical remains of the dead, while his obsession revolved around the soul and its strange transit and purpose. Years of research led Panivar to the study of psychopomps, and he became fascinated with these shepherds of souls.

Eventually, Panivar inherited his family's wealth. He carefully managed funds to keep his holdings secure and wisely invested the rest, quietly funding his research. Money gave way to the shadowy power games that nobles play. While Panivar had no prior interest in politics, he quickly learned the value of favors—and the new libraries they opened to him.

Lotheed was an old man by the time his research led him to the reclusive outsiders known as sahkils—avatars of fear and tyranny who dominated mortal souls just as he wished to. He summoned and bargained with an ancient kimenhul sahkil, Thassritoum the Mewling Storm, providing the former psychopomp with access to the slumbering minds of his mortal rivals in exchange for secrets and power. Thassritoum shielded the duke from death's call and the sight of psychopomps, rendering Panivar immortal.

In the centuries since, Panivar has become one of the most powerful individuals in Taldor, using his immortality to increase both his wealth and the contacts afforded by the Immaculate Circle. Frustrated by centuries of squandered potential, he finally resolved to act during this succession to flex the power he's spent lifetimes accumulating. Panivar's trade is information, and with his resources and allies, he's set to rule Taldor from the shadows for the rest of eternity.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Duke Panivar Lotheed is the penultimate villain of War for the Crown and the driving force behind much of the plot. Even when the PCs defeat Panivar, his role in the campaign doesn't necessarily end. The true horror of Panivar's bargain with Thassritoum is that his soul and body cannot be sundered—no matter how miserable the state of his remains! The heroes will need some sort of plan for dealing with a villain who cannot simply die at the end of a confrontation, even if he begs for death. The exact mechanics of this effect are left up to you—it may be as simple as a *disintegration* spell, or the PCs may need to lock the villain away for a hundred lifetimes.

Eliminating Panivar frees Thassritoum from many of the careful limitations set in place by Panivar, allowing it to begin a campaign of fear and anarchy in Taldor. Even if the PCs simply imprison the immortal wizard, his inability to reinforce the aging contracts spells an end to Taldor's safety from the oncoming Mewling Storm.

Lotheed maintains a private demiplane, created via the *greater create demiplane* and *permanency* spells, where he hides his library, research, and greatest treasures. Finding the demiplane and the riches it contains could be a campaign in and of itself.



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

PRINCE CARRIUS STAVIAN

Prince Carrius's botched resurrection and an infusion of astral energy have invested the formerly reserved boy with a fiery dominance and the experience of six lifetimes.

PRINCE CARRIUS STAVIAN

CR 20

XP 307,200

Male advanced human medium 20 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, *Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 30)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7; **Senses** *true seeing*; Perception +24

DEFENSE

AC 37, touch 22, flat-footed 34 (+11 armor, +3 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural, +6 spirit)

hp 237 (20d8+140)

Fort +25, **Ref** +22, **Will** +20

Defensive Abilities absorb blow, legendary guardian, sudden block; **DR** 10/—; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10, sonic 10

Weaknesses taboo

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee +4 *longsword* +27/+22/+17 (1d8+16/17–20)

Special Attacks astral beacon, haunt channeler (10d6), shared seance, spirit (Guardian), trance of three

Medium Spells Known (CL 20th; concentration +28)

4th (4/day)—*freedom of movement*, *greater command* (DC 22), *hold monster* (2, DC 22), *summon monster V*
3rd (5/day)—*dimension door*, *dispel magic*, *fly*, *greater invisibility*, *summon monster IV*, *vampiric touch*
2nd (6/day)—*blur*, *haste*, *hideous laughter* (DC 20), *hold person* (DC 20), *mirror image*, *touch of idiocy*
1st (6/day)—*command* (DC 19), *expeditious retreat*, *lesser confusion* (DC 19), *oneiric horror*^{OA} (DC 19), *paranoia*^{OA} (DC 19), *true strike*
0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 18), *ghost sound* (DC 18), *grave words*^{OA}, *mage hand*, *resistance*, *stabilize*

TACTICS

Before Combat Prince Carrius casts *freedom of movement*, *fly*, *mirror image*, and *true seeing* before combat.

During Combat Prince Carrius begins by casting *greater invisibility* and summoning elementals with *summon monster V* to disrupt spellcasters. He prefers to channel the Guardian spirit whenever possible, and his statistics reflect this. He readily uses astral beacon to use the marshall's call to bolster guards, the trickster's transfer magic, and the archmage's wild arcana. He does his best to flank with a guard. He reserves his legendary guardian ability to avoid a powerful spell or critical hit.

Morale Carrius fights to the death.

Base Statistics When not channeling, Carrius's statistics are

AC 31, touch 16, flat-footed 28; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +16.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 16, **Con** 22, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 27

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 39

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spirit Focus (champion)^{OA}, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Acrobatics –1, Diplomacy +31, Fly +13, Knowledge (history, nobility) +22, Perception +24, Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +25, Use Magic Device +31

Languages Common

SQ ask the spirits, astral journey, connection channel, location channel (20 rounds), propitiation, spacious soul, spirit bonus (+6 on AC, Constitution checks, and Fortitude and Reflex saves), spirit mastery, spirit surge 1d10

Gear +5 *chainmail*, +4 *longsword*, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *belt of physical might* +4 (Str, Con), *cloak of resistance* +5, *headband of alluring charisma* +4, *ring of protection* +3

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Six-Legend Vessel (Ex) Prince Carrius houses within him the legendary souls of six of the previous emperors of Taldor. The souls are working together to further their cause and grant their unified power to Carrius's body. Carrius gains the advanced creature simple template. Because the souls are working in tandem, they never gain influence over Carrius, even when using abilities that would normally cause a spirit to gain influence over him. In addition, when Carrius is using the trance of three ability, the chosen intermediate power remains in effect indefinitely until changed. This increases Prince Carrius's CR by 1.

As the heir to Taldor's throne, Carrius experienced a childhood of curtailed freedoms. He had few friends, only the carefully selected children of noble families who arrived at prescribed times and played approved games. A guard followed his every movement, a personal foottaster ensured his safety at mealtimes. With a dead mother and a distant, disturbed father, Carrius had only his older sister, Eutropia, who he could truly call family.

Despite it all, Carrius was a happy child who rarely minded these fetters. He was a boy wise beyond his years who understood the importance of his role and was grateful for the consideration of those around him.

When the young prince grew moody and fretful, threw tantrums, or retreated into himself, Eutropia was the only person who could soothe him. The two children were inseparable: Carrius looked up to his sister, and she fiercely protected the boy.

Carrius's death came as a great shock to everyone, not least of all the prince. One moment he was arguing with his father, and the next there was a sense of shock, falling, a distant pop in his neck, and then nothing. He found himself wandering the gray mists of the Boneyard, where he had time to come to terms with his death before judgment sent him to Nirvana.

But the prince's rest was not final. Torn from the afterlife and restored to the mortal world, he now suffers from fragmented memories of his childhood and the unceasing demands of the spirits patchworking his soul. In his moments of lucidity, Carrius longs to be free of the spirits that ride him. Most of all, he longs for peace.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Carrius is a person to be rescued, an informant, and the ultimate villain of War for the Crown. The spirits that ride his soul desperately need to rule the nation of Taldor, and despite his own wishes, Carrius finds himself complying. If the young prince doesn't die at the end of the campaign, the spirits of Taldor's legends leave him and he reverts to a 1st-level medium. Carrius still manifests his extraordinary connection to the spirit world, but nowhere near his former ability.

In the future, the legends of Taldor's past could return to Carrius—particularly those who were gently evicted (for example, if the PCs talked Emperor Taldaris into leaving rather than fighting him) rather than destroyed. These legends could return when Taldor faces some great danger, perhaps one the PCs aren't yet aware of. Carrius could bring messages to his sister and the PCs from these spirits, or he could experience dreams or visions about events in the afterlife that foretell trouble in the mortal world.

Princess Eutropia's rise to power could also be more dangerous than she anticipated. Eutropia's enemies might strike at her through Carrius, kidnapping the child or attempting to assassinate him. The cult of the Twilight Child still exists, now a circle of genuine fanatics who still believe the lies Vaddrigan Pol once spun about the returned prince, and could return to kidnap him or offer unwanted aid, believing Carrius the true heir to Taldor.

If Carrius dies at the end of this adventure, fragments of his soul may remain lodged within the PCs, allowing him to speak to the PCs through visions and dreams, answer them when they cast *contact other plane*, or even provide a basis for a long and difficult process of rebuilding the lost boy's soul using the *Soul Crucible*—provided they don't fall to the same hubris that ultimately claimed Duke Panivar Lotheed.



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary



CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

“For the briefest of moments, an eon ago, the living world knew no fear, for it knew no soul. An eternity and a moment, for nothing existed by which to measure it. No soul was present to break the time into ‘that which came before me,’ ‘that which I witness,’ and ‘that which comes after I am gone.’

“And into this time without time, the first mortal was born, already dying. Its end was nestled there neatly in its beginning. It knew, before it knew much else at all, that its death was within it and its ending was its heritage.

“It drew its first breath, the first and only in all creation.

“And it screamed to curse my name.”

—Thassritoum the Mewling Storm

Dismantling a secret society of soul-binders, stopping a warmongering rival, and placing Eutropia on the throne are monumental victories and provide a fitting end to the War for the Crown, but new adventures may still lie ahead. Some dangers arise from elements left behind in the PCs' wake, while others are new threats moving to take advantage of Taldor's internal strife. In addition to the adventure leads listed here, *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Taldor, The First Empire* contains several adventure locations with high-level threats, such as the Isle of Arenway and the Valley of the Azlanti.

Followers of the Twilight Child: While the PCs lopped the serpent's head from the Cult of the Twilight Child in Yanmass, many faithful cult members remain behind. They believe that the returned Prince Carrius is a divine ambassador meant to save Taldor from its spiritual and social decay. If Vaddrigan Pol or any of his aasimar disciples escaped, they may resurrect the cult, this time leading by example rather than parable. There are few forces more dedicated or cruel than believers who view themselves as laboring in their deity's own interest, and the cult might engender horrible, escalating violence until Carrius is crowned emperor of Taldor, whether he wants the position or not.

The Ninth Army of Exploration: Left without a leader or cause but unwilling to accept Eutropia's rule, many of Maxillar Pythareus's most strident supporters pool their resources to launch an unsanctioned "Ninth Army of Exploration." While this mighty group's stated goal is to restore the empire's former grandeur and scope, in reality it becomes a dangerous rogue army, moving swiftly to agitate the likes of Galt, Qadira, Andoran, or whatever other target strikes its leaders' fancy.

A Padishah's Embrace: Qadira has long survived by the philosophy of greeting friends and enemies with an open embrace—friends need aid, and enemies need a quiet dagger in the back. When Qadira and the Padishah Empire of Kelesh send praise and gifts to honor Taldor's new Grand Princess, is it an act of friendship, or are the ambassadors, artists, and scholars agents with a far-reaching agenda? And do their motives matter if the rest of Taldor already suspects the worst?

Prodigal Daughter's Return: Cheliox views Taldor's weakness as an opportunity to strike. With the nation still off-balance after its internal struggles with the Glorious Reclamation several years ago, an easy military victory over its mother nation would restore the feared reputation of the Infernal Empire and allow it to dominate lucrative trade routes. While the most obvious threats are Cheliox's warships and legions of Hellknights sailing toward Taldor's shores, the most insidious danger is the devils sowing dissent among Eutropia's enemies.

Psychopomp's Revenge: The subject of Carrius's stolen soul is never completely resolved, and psychopomps are

rarely known for their leniency when it comes to those who interfere with the proper journey of souls. After the PCs repel the psychopomp Xan in *Pathfinder #129: The Twilight Child*, he returns to the Boneyard and reports to Xalot, a unique and powerful yamaraj (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 222). Xalot insists on personally punishing those involved and is backed not only by his own force of psychopomps, but also by an elite team of inevitables and proteans invested in maintaining the proper flow of souls into the Great Beyond.

Six Emperors: The PCs may purge the six legendary emperors from Prince Carrius's soul, but those powerful, deluded spiritual forces don't vanish. Instead, each seeks a mortal vessel to give it flesh—a noble who best embodies that legendary emperor's strengths or sins—in order to return as a flesh and blood sovereign with unique defenses and powers, hungry to regain the *Primogen Crown*.

The Slumberer of Senate Hill: The PCs saw only the briefest glimpse of the vast levels beneath the senate building during their adventures in Crownfall. Buried far below the surface are the remnants of Old Oppara, destroyed by the Tarrasque over five millennia ago. The bloodshed of the Exaltation Massacre acted as a sacrifice for something deep below Taldor's halls of government. That something now stirs, shaking foundations across the city. Is some ancient defense active once again, or has a spawn of the Tarrasque finally grown into its full power?

What If the PCs Lose? War for the Crown presents many interesting options should the PCs fall, as the world doesn't lie in immediate peril and Eutropia is left far from helpless in their absence. The exact impact of the PCs' deaths depends on when they perish. An early death before establishing themselves as Eutropia's most reliable agents has little long-term impact, though Eutropia may lead for a time from the divided city of Oppara before retreating to Cassomir, as Meratt and the Palace of Birdsong remain firmly loyal to Maxillar Pythareus. If the PCs die before reining in the High Strategos, Taldor is divided and eventually split by civil war. Pythareus seems poised for an easy military victory, but his agitations against Qadira leave him with a war on two fronts and a protracted struggle that draws out for a decade, leaving Taldor a deeply divided and economically shattered land. Eutropia's fate is much worse if the PCs depose Pythareus but die before stopping Carrius and the Immaculate Circle. Without her trusted agents, Eutropia's soul remains trapped and Carrius—appearing to his subjects to be yet another in a long line of mad emperors—rules with fickle cruelty. The Immaculate Circle lines its coffers in the face of Carrius's apathy, plundering the country while protected by its association with the emperor. This ragged dystopia presents a rich landscape for new heroes.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

A WRETCHED THING STIRS

The most horrifying legacy of the Immaculate Circle is Panivar Lotheed's extensive contact with beings known as sahkils (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 212). These elusive outsiders view reality—however long—as finite, and relish the fact that all things in creation will eventually end. Sahkils' focus on the end of things is fitting, as they were once psychopomps who elected to prey upon souls rather than shepherd them. Sahkils view morality, ethics, and power as trivial and ephemeral goals; only fleeting, momentary indulgence matters. With their own absolutist perspective on creation, sahkils echo mortals' anxiety over death and endings, and over the eons

they have evolved into merchants and artisans of fear, drafting elegant nightmares to taint living souls.

Panivar first sought out sahkils because of their history as fallen psychopomps. To master his own mortality, Panivar needed agents who understood the workings of death. Thassritoum the Mewling Storm, a sahkil of immense power, eagerly provided Panivar with secrets few mortals ever knew in exchange for an anchor in the mortal world. The ancient beast feasted on the nightmares of Panivar's insecure, overachieving academic rivals and, more importantly, it gained access to the Immaculate Circle's members.

Now without Panivar Lotheed to keep it in check, Thassritoum and its minions are free to drive the Immaculate Circle's surviving members to heights of entitlement and excess. Thassritoum spreads dread like a plague across Taldor, carefully gathering the final vestiges of power it needs to ascend to the ranks of the tormentors—the sahkil demigods.

Within weeks after Panivar's death, Thassritoum takes overt control of the remnants of the Immaculate Circle. Its influence transforms the Immaculate Circle into a cult of fear comprising predators desperate to please their masters lest they become prey. Thassritoum's mortal adherents spread fear by targeting Taldor's most vulnerable populations with harassment and vandalism, slowly escalating to violence and kidnapping. Meanwhile, its sahkil agents haunt Taldor's dissatisfied nobles and merchants, who are already fearful of what they stand to lose under Eutropia's rule, and fan those anxieties into violent retaliation.

While Thassritoum's individual minions may be relatively weak compared to the PCs, the Mewling Storm commands legions, many of them capable of darting into and out of the Ethereal Plane to avoid capture and continue their campaigns of terror.

In addition to lesser sahkils and mortal servitors, the Mewling Storm commands several powerful minions.

The Dancers are two pakalchi sahkils (*Bestiary* 5 216) stitched into one gruesome being to spare them the agony of loneliness for even a moment, granting the pair strange divinatory powers and the ability to inspire such desperation in mortals that they think nothing of kidnapping, crippling, or even devouring their lovers. Their divination magic is supplemented by **The Lucid Rani** (LE female human ghost psychic^{OA} 19), a Vudrani mystic Thassritoum slew through fear alone. The Lucid Rani now walks through the dreams of the living, transforming their darkest fears into slavish obsessions. Those who cross the Mewling Storm without offering entertainment in their suffering are left to



its favorite enforcer, **Spawn Without End** (NE advanced xill rogue 15), a rare sterile xill whose eggs never mature, but instead slowly degrade the victim's sanity. Finally, the sahkil's former lover, **Nandrahl** (CE grim reaper^{B5}) remains by its side.

Thassritoum's stronghold is a demiplane called the Palace of Nightmares, accessible from the Ethereal Plane. In this palace of obscene delights, the Mewling Storm gathers lesser sahkils, corrupted outsiders, and mortal petitioners of extraordinary skill or insight. The city-sized Palace of Nightmares is a strongly evil-aligned demiplane where physical violence creates pain but no permanent injury and where conjuration and evocation effects do not function at all. As a result, a physical assault on the Palace of Nightmares is unlikely to succeed; however, the palace has its own social circles, etiquette, and pecking order based on loathsome gifts, shared nightmares, and soul-shattering horrors. Mortals hoping for an audience with Thassritoum must be wholly depraved or exceptionally talented liars.

New visitors to the Palace of Nightmares are permitted only in the Absence Loggia, a covered porch larger than a city block. The loggia is lined with grotesque entertainers, desperate courtiers, and merchants trading in experiences of agony and dread. Those who prove charming or creative enough may enter the Conservatory of Sobs, the Bleating Chapel, and the Reflecting Pool, before finally winning entry to Thassritoum's own Parlor of Lamentation, arranged in the style of an ancient courtroom. Here daemons, devils, demons, and sahkils jockey for approval, offering gifts of horrific memories and mortal lives shattered through slow and mounting dread. The Mewling Storm welcomes any PCs who approach so far into its domain, confident of the sins and horrors they must have committed to win such favor with its court.

Thassritoum's apotheosis requires more than causing an entire nation to live under a pall of fear; it must also utterly crush the will of a powerful cosmic arbiter called a yamaraj psychopomp^{B4}. This act is fitting, as Thassritoum was once a yamaraj, although it has revised its own history to insist it has always been a terror to mortals. Thassritoum has kidnapped a yamaraj named Harubic, drawing it into the Palace of Nightmares. There, Thassritoum slowly breaks Harubic's confidence in its millennia of judgments by parading petitioners and outsiders condemned to broken afterlives—broken by sahkil sabotage—past the yamaraj. But a powerful outsider such as Harubic cannot go missing from the Boneyard without raising concerns. Lieutenant Fanalyx or her inevitable comrades may contact the PCs, knowing them to be reliable investigators, to assist in solving the yamaraj's disappearance. This request might put the PCs on the path of stopping the growing plague of anxiety, nightmares, and hysterical violence creeping across Taldor.

THASSRITOU, THE MEWLING STORM

CR 23

XP 819,200

NE Huge outsider (evil, extraplanar, sahkil)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *true seeing*; Perception +44

DEFENSE

AC 39, touch 19, flat-footed 28 (+11 Dex, +20 natural, -2 size)

hp 462 (28d10+308)

Fort +27, **Ref** +20, **Will** +25; +8 vs. mind-affecting effects

Defensive Abilities all-around vision, *mind blank*; **DR** 15/good; **Immune** death effects, disease, fear effects, poison; **Resist** cold 20, electricity 20, sonic 20; **SR** 34

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., climb 50 ft.

Melee 3 bites +36 (2d8+10 plus grab), 4 claws +37 (1d8+10 plus 1d3 Charisma bleed)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks bleed (1d3 Charisma), eternal fear, look of fear (120 ft., DC 34), snatch between, spirit touch, trample (2d8+15, DC 34), unsettled mind

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +28)

Constant—*detect thoughts* (DC 20), *mind blank*, *true seeing*

At will—*air walk*, *enervation*, *greater teleport* (self plus

50 lbs. of objects), *magic circle against good*, *tongues*

3/day—*blasphemy* (DC 25), *circle of death* (DC 24),

crushing despair (DC 24), *fear* (DC 24), *greater dispel*

magic, *suggestion* (DC 21)

1/day—*antipathy* (DC 28), *eyebite* (DC 26), *summon*

(level 9, any one sahkil of CR 19 or lower, 100%),

miracle, *soul bind* (DC 27), *symbol of fear* (DC 26),

weird (DC 29)

STATISTICS

Str 31, **Dex** 32, **Con** 32, **Int** 25, **Wis** 28, **Cha** 27

Base Atk +28; **CMB** +40 (+42 disarm, sunder, or trip; +44

grapple); **CMD** 61 (63 vs. disarm and sunder, 65 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Blinding Critical, Cleave, Combat Expertise, Critical Focus, Disarming Strike^{APG}, Improved Disarm, Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Persuasive, Power Attack, Stunning Assault^{APG}, Tripping Strike^{APG}, Weapon Focus (claws)

Skills Acrobatics +21, Bluff +39, Climb +22, Diplomacy +43, Intimidate +43, Knowledge (arcana, nobility) +27, Knowledge (dungeoneering, nature, religion) +17, Knowledge (local) +35, Knowledge (planes) +38, Perception +44, Sense Motive +44, Spellcraft +38, Stealth +34, Use Magic Device +39

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Common, Infernal, Protean; telepathy 300 ft.

SQ easy to call, emotional focus, final judgment, skip between

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Final Judgment (Su) Unlike most sahkils, Thassritoum retains some of the authority it once held as a psychopomp. It can use *miracle* as a spell-like ability, but only to restore a slain outsider to life or reproduce the following spell effects: *banishment*, *dimensional anchor*, *greater restoration*, *plane shift*, and *true resurrection*.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

EMPRESS MAKER

What makes a queen is far more than her bloodline, her goals, or her best wishes. A queen is as much her road to power as what she intends to do with the power she gains. Every action taken, every compromise, every new agenda either magnifies or obscures the guiding light that set her on the path to glory. While Eutropia began her long journey to the throne 20 years ago with simple and kindhearted intentions—that no one should feel the sting of losing a loved one too early—she has made compromises and employed dubious agents in her quest to obtain the Lion Throne.

While the PCs don't have any direct control over Grand Princess Eutropia's personality or actions, she is directly accountable for actions the PCs took in pursuit of her goals. Eutropia understands on a deeply personal level that she is culpable for every life taken in her road to the throne. She had originally hoped to achieve this goal without bloodshed, but she understands now that her hopes were naive. If the PCs are brutal agents who enforced Eutropia's agenda with fear and violence, she hardens her heart to accept that a cruel world must be met with cruelty. If the PCs instead found peaceful and diplomatic solutions to the obstacles in Eutropia's path, it reinforces her youthful optimism—an inspiring attitude that has long been absent from Taldor's brutal political stage.

The PCs' decisions and victories over the course of the War for the Crown Adventure Path influence the type of ruler Eutropia becomes, contributing to her Compassion, Efficiency, or Practicality. Compassion tracks Eutropia's mercy, charity, and willingness to sacrifice—or ask the aristocracy to sacrifice—on behalf of the nation as a whole. Efficiency tracks Eutropia's willingness to reach her goals as quickly as possible, marginalizing or sacrificing those who would stand in her way. Finally, Practicality tracks her tendency to look at problems systemically rather than focusing solely on the human costs, as well as her ability to make difficult compromises for long-term benefits. Track each of these values for the actions the PCs took in the critical moments described below and total up the results at the campaign's conclusion. The highest value determines Eutropia's legacy as empress. If your PCs' solution doesn't fit within the outcomes described below, assign a point to whichever of Compassion, Efficiency, or Practicality seems most appropriate.

PATHFINDER #127: CROWNFALL

The PCs befriended (+1 Compassion), killed (+1 Efficiency), or subdued (+1 Practicality) Malphene Trant. Regarding the nobles trapped beneath the Senate, the PCs brought them out (+1 Compassion), left them in safety (+1 Practicality), or abandoned them (+1 Efficiency).

The PCs gained the assistance of the Pathfinder Society (+1 Practicality).

The PCs killed Mimips, the kobold merchant (+1 Efficiency). The PCs attempted to help the fantionette posing as a lost child in Martella's safe house (+1 Compassion).

PATHFINDER #128: SONGBIRD, SCION, SABOTEUR

The PCs killed (+1 Efficiency), captured (+1 Practicality), or negotiated a surrender from (+1 Compassion) Count Lotheed.

The PCs built improvements in Stachys worth at least 25,000 gp (+1 Compassion).

The PCs allied with the Nightswan (+1 Efficiency).

The PCs allied with Baron Okerra (+1 Practicality).

The Stachys trials resulted in the half-orc Partulles Mayne's execution (+1 Efficiency).

The Stachys trials resulted in Lucinia Mag's banishment, dismemberment, or fine (+1 Practicality).

The Stachys trials exonerated Anlel Oakleaf (+1 Compassion).

PATHFINDER #129: THE TWILIGHT CHILD

The PCs killed any charmed townspeople (+1 Efficiency).

The PCs befriended (+1 Compassion), fought but did not kill (+1 Practicality), or killed (+1 Efficiency) Lieutenant Gallindra Jonrek in the city park.

The PCs fought the mercenary group called the Kozan Bravos (+1 Practicality).

The PCs worked to reverse the petrification of any of the medusa Aresphena's victims (+1 Compassion).

The PCs either released (+1 Compassion) or ignored (+1 Practicality) Cassandra Florint in the Encircling Bower's dungeon.

The PCs attempted to hand over Prince Carrius to the psychopomp Xan (+1 Efficiency).

PATHFINDER #130: CITY IN THE LION'S EYE

The PCs destroyed (+1 Efficiency) or usurped control of (+1 Practicality) Milon Jeroth's spy network.

The PCs solved Tae Amalon's murder (+1 Compassion).

Prince Stavian was executed (+1 Efficiency), banished (+1 Practicality), imprisoned (+1 Practicality), or handed over to Eutropia (+1 Compassion).

The PCs killed (+1 Efficiency), captured (+1 Practicality), or negotiated a surrender from (+1 Compassion) Maxillar Pythareus.

PATHFINDER #131: THE REAPER'S RIGHT HAND

The PCs sided with Breezy Creek villagers (+1 Compassion), sided with the viscount (+1 Efficiency), or ignored the dispute to focus on archaeology (+1 Practicality).

The PCs disturbed Taldaris's grave goods (+1 Practicality) or left Taldaris's grave goods undisturbed (+1 Compassion).

The PCs killed Ohalia (+1 Efficiency).

The PCs killed (+1 Efficiency), stole from (+1 Practicality), or reasoned with (+1 Compassion) the Crowntop Coup.

PATHFINDER #132: THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

The PCs saved Carrius (+2 **Compassion**), killed Carrius (+2 **Efficiency**), or let Carrius die once the six legends were defeated (+2 **Practicality**).

EUTROPIA'S LEGACY

Eutropia's final legacy depends on whether the PCs relied more upon Compassion, Efficiency, or Practicality to help her win the War for the Crown. If all values are within 3 points of each other, then her legacy is balanced. If two values tie, both approaches contribute to her legacy, as determined by the GM. Otherwise, the trait with the highest value determines her legacy.

Eutropia the Bloody (Efficient): While Eutropia remains committed to the ideals of protecting and empowering the common Taldan citizen, she has learned that certain advancements come only through swift and merciless application of force—or, at least, fear of such force. Eutropia the Bloody's reign is marked by improvements in infrastructure, progressive education, and unparalleled religious freedoms, although these advances are enforced at the tip of a sword. Eutropia frequently seizes assets from her rivals and detractors, the blood of would-be usurpers flows freely, and word of these abuses sours many of the nation's foreign relations. Having learned not to trust others, Eutropia maintains the absolute power of the throne. Taldor still prospers internally, but many citizens smile for fear that a frown suggests criminal disloyalty.

Eutropia the Builder (Practical): Learning from the sound compromises that won her the throne, Eutropia realizes that a brighter future requires sacrifice in the present. Building a shining Taldor tomorrow sometimes requires that existing communities be relocated, disbanded, or compelled to find new industry to support the nation. Many of the hardships Eutropia hoped to curtail persist under Eutropia the Builder, but Taldor begins a new golden age of art and civil construction. Taldor revitalizes its cities, earthworks, canals, and fortresses. To expedite improvements, Eutropia divests some of the throne's power to the Senate. The booming

economy benefits the merchants and emerging middle class, but the poor remain largely hopeless, even as they see better education and cleaner streets, while nobles expand their scheming to fight against their increased taxes and curtailed power.

Eutropia the Kind (Compassion): Kind words and extended hands proved more effective than drawn blades

in winning Eutropia the throne, and she honors this simple truth through outreach and empathy for her subjects. Eutropia the Kind takes from those with much to give—the nobles, the merchants, and the coin generated by Taldor's many trade routes—and invests it in the common good to provide education, medicine, and a higher standard of living to all Taldans. To ensure that the needs of even the meekest citizens are met, she borrows from Andoran philosophy and introduces a publicly elected counterpart to the Senate to advise on government policy. While her reforms make Eutropia the Kind wildly popular with the common citizens, her heavy taxes and flouting of Taldan tradition enrage the nobility. Her reign sees a resurgence in aristocratic conspiracies and secret societies dedicated to usurping the throne.

Eutropia the Measured (Balance): Eutropia's legacy is remarkable for its nuanced balance. Her rule is marked by taking a firm hand against threats and rivals, treating allies and the poor with great respect, and using the benefits of both to invest in infrastructure. Eutropia the Measured is a cunning diplomat, expanding foreign trade and attracting foreign scholars, artists, and workers to Taldor's shore to enrich its culture, while sending Taldan envoys to the other nations of Avistan, Casmaron, and Garund to spread her country's knowledge and art. To help the nation see to its own needs more efficiently, she delegates the power to appoint Senators to regional nobility, allowing barons and landgraves to appoint representatives in the Senate. While her reign lacks a marked boom in economy, education, or conquest, it is a long and welcome period of gradual improvements in most areas of Taldan life.



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary



SPIRITS OF SIX EMPERORS

"Many like to speculate about potential heirs that General Arnisant might have sired during his years leading the Shining Crusade, and imagine themselves to be his long-lost descendants. I'm sorry to disappoint you all; we have no record that Arnisant had any children, and most of those who carry Arnisant blood today are descended from the general's younger sister or one of his many cousins.

"What often gets overlooked, however, is that the entire Arnisant line is descended from greatness. You see, Ridonport was part of the original land united under First Emperor Taldaris. Over the course of tonight's lecture, we'll see how that lineage of greatness spanned over one hundred generations between Taldaris and our beloved general. We'll begin with Caeladin, Taldaris's third husband..."

—Cincia Reviamo, curator of the General Arnisant Museum and Historical Residence, during a public lecture in Ridonport

The history of Taldor is expansive, stretching across millennia just as the empire itself once stretched across the continent. It forms perhaps the most fundamental cornerstone of Taldan society and identity. Pedigreed nobles and humble farmers alike recount tales of glorious days past and heroic deeds, tracing their lineage back to long before many modern nations existed. Antiquities carry tremendous value in Taldor, as they are a tangible piece of the empire's revered history. A new recruit in the Taldan Phalanx might bear a sword from an ancestor's time in an Army of Exploration, a mother could bestow upon her daughter a Qadiran necklace made during the Urian Peace, or a village church may display a centuries-old holy symbol of Aroden—each an heirloom with tales that are treasured and shared.

The great heroes of Taldor's history feature prominently in such tales, from the nobility and integrity of First Emperor Taldaris, who united the city-states into a nascent empire, to the charm and benevolence of the late Prince Carrius. Each city, town, and village has statues, plaques, frescoes, portraits, and more celebrating the heroes connected to the community by birth, death, or even merely passing through. Tales of these heroes almost universally focus on great deeds while downplaying any foibles or even outright crimes. Official histories are no less prone to displaying a favorable gloss, and outside historians are frequently confounded by Taldan records at odds with evidence from elsewhere in the world. Taldan scholars who probe so deeply into such histories that they expose faults in these beloved heroes find their research cast into doubt. Some of these scholars even find their careers—or, in some cases, even their lives—cut unceremoniously short.

Not every significant figure in Taldan history is given such high praise; after all, over the course of thousands of years of history, the majority of public figures have been merely mediocre. But individuals within certain roles tend to see a higher degree of adoration and exaltation than most. Emperors, as the most visible members of Taldan society, are more often either widely acclaimed or roundly renounced; few emperors are left to fade in significance. Given the long and proud military traditions in the nation, Taldor's generals also tend to receive a disproportionate share of glory, particularly those who led successful campaigns such as the Armies of Exploration. Taldor's most famous general was arguably General Arnisant of the Shining Crusade (who appears as a legendary spirit on pages 10–11 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Occult Realms*). Less commonly revered are senators and members of the aristocracy; tales of ignominious or humorous escapades are as common as stories of valiant efforts and heroic deeds performed by individuals holding such positions. Noble steeds often receive their own share of political fame or infamy,

including Katalon, a horse that Grand Prince Beldam I appointed to a senate seat, and Comolaudio, appointed as mayor of Oppara by Grand Prince Malixari II.

Though the reverence offered to the great Taldan heroes is widespread and holds a cultural place similar to a religion, Taldans don't actually worship their heroes and no Taldan hero has yet gained sufficient devotion to answer prayers or grant miracles. Nevertheless, some individuals find that the legendary heroes of Taldan glory still hold great power. Artifacts and magical heirlooms have aided more than one Taldan in making a name for herself before being passed on to the next generation; in fact, these relics may be the most common way in which the past continues to empower the present. Similarly, more than once through Taldan history, a spiritualist has found herself guarded by the phantom of a long-departed heroic ancestor. A number of Taldan warriors, many quite accomplished in their own right, model their fighting styles on those of the champions of legend. Perhaps most famously, mediums with close ties to Taldor and its history have found ways to call upon the legendary spirits of past heroes and emperors.

LEGENDARY SPIRITS

Mediums (*Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 30) steeped in Taldor's rich historical traditions and seeking to grasp some hint of the empire's past greatness might channel the truly legendary spirits of Taldor's greatest emperors. Gaining the ability to channel one of the following legendary spirits involves performing a certain deed to gain the spirit's favor, as well as swearing an oath and succeeding at an ability check (DC = 10 + 1/2 the medium's level), as described in each entry below. Taldan emperors demand absolute obedience and fealty from those who channel them: should the medium break the oath sworn when gaining the spirit, the spirit will no longer answer when he calls, and if the medium attempts to call a second legendary spirit, the first departs forever.

While the majority of those who channel the legendary spirits of past emperors are Taldans, this is not a requirement. These legendary spirits also answer calls from foreign scholars or visitors who recognize and respect the grandeur and gravitas of the empire's heroes. Respect for Taldan heroic tradition, rather than Taldan blood, is key to calling these spirits' favors.

A legendary spirit grants new abilities but otherwise uses the same rules as the original legend. For instance, Taldaris replaces the taboos, intermediate spirit power, and supreme spirit power from the champion spirit but still uses the champion's spirit bonus, seance boon, influence penalty, lesser spirit power, and greater spirit power. All of the legendary spirits of Taldor presented below treat lands belonging to Taldor—including embassies and strongholds in other nations—as favored locations.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

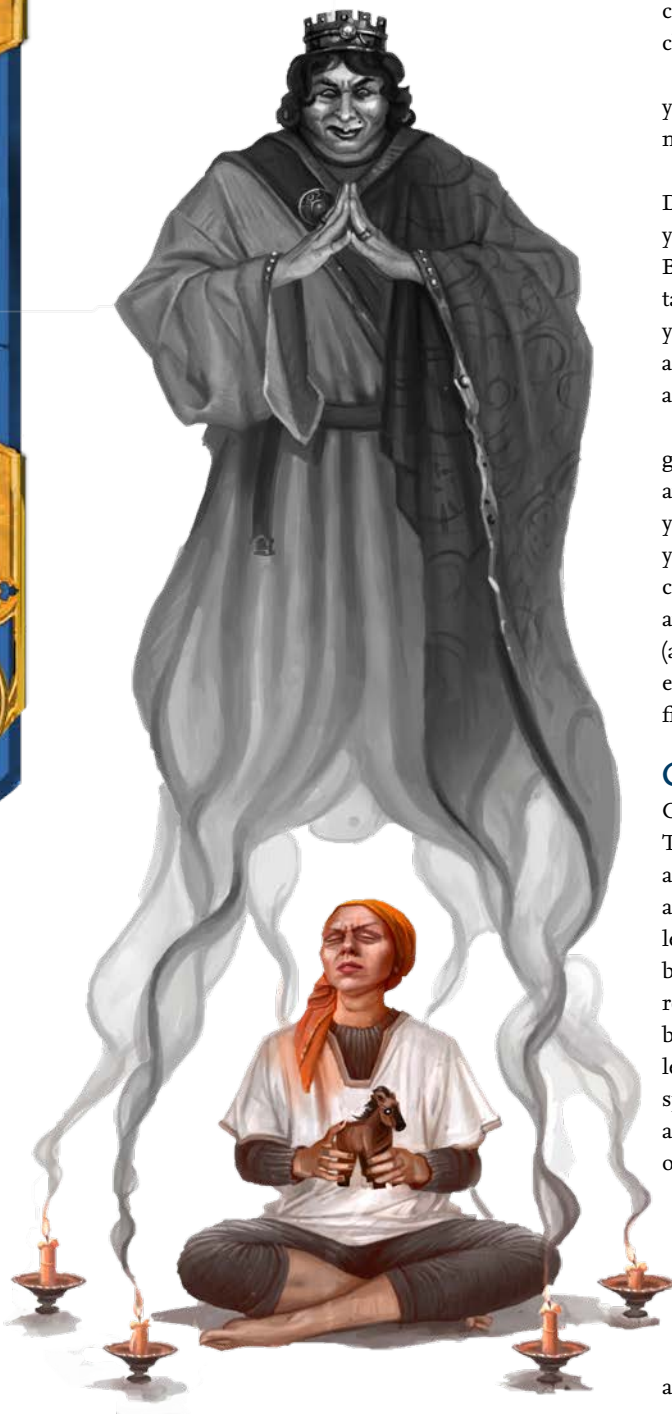
Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

BELDAM I (TRICKSTER)

History has a divided memory when it comes to Grand Prince Beldam I. Scholars of the schism that took place between Taldor and its erstwhile territories paint a picture of a diplomatic emperor whose insightful approach resulted in a largely bloodless transition from a monolithic empire to a collection of neighboring nations. Yet those who relate the tales for which the emperor is best known recall a quirky prankster with little regard for ceremony, tradition, or propriety. A rare few see the way in which these two personas combined



to form exactly the leader Taldor needed at this fraught point in its history: someone who could offset the difficulty of a painful decision with frivolous antics. It is this balance of effectiveness through trickery that those channeling the spirit of Beldam seek to emulate.

Gaining Favor: Beldam answers the call of only those who share his esoteric sense of humor. You must convince someone to place a non-sentient animal in a position of authority, so long as such an act would not cause civil unrest or instability. You must then swear a vow to never act without due consideration of the consequences of your actions and attempt a Charisma check. If you succeed, Beldam answers your call.

Taboo: If you accept a taboo while channeling Beldam, you must embrace every opportunity to pull a prank or make a jest, but never at your own expense.

Princely Humor (Lesser, Su): You gain Improved Dirty Trick^{APG} and Improved Feint as bonus feats. When you successfully perform a dirty trick, you can allow Beldam's spirit to gain 1 point of influence over you to target that opponent with *hideous laughter* (DC = 10 + 1/2 your medium level + your Charisma modifier) as a free action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, in addition to the effects of the dirty trick.

Atrocious Gift (Greater, Su): You can allow Beldam to gain 1 point of influence over you to make a melee touch attack against another creature as a standard action. If you hit, you can transfer one disease or poison from yourself to the touched creature. You are immediately cured of the disease or poison and the target must attempt a saving throw against the transferred affliction (at the affliction's save DC) or suffer its effect or initial effect immediately. The target then continues to suffer from the affliction's normal effects thereafter.

CYRICAS (HIEROPHANT)

Cyricas the Leaping Lion is a favorite hero among Taldan youth, due to both his miraculous recovery from a childhood ailment and his wild adventures with his ape companion Mardu. Most tales of Cyricas carry some lesson, whether encouraging kindness to animals or bravery in the face of adversity. Many Taldans grow to regard the adventures of Cyricas and Mardu as childish, but learn to respect his inspiring and widely circulated lectures. Those who seek rapport with this legendary spirit find that the bond between juvenile thrill-seeker and learned scholar is perhaps the strongest aspect of Cyricas's identity, superseded perhaps only by an unusual affinity for the number eight.

Gaining Favor: To gain the Leaping Lion's favor, you must release an animal that has been unjustly restrained. You must then swear an oath to never stand idle while an animal is being abused and attempt a Wisdom check. If you succeed, Cyricas answers your call.

Taboo: If you accept a taboo while channeling Cyricas, you must vow to never harm an animal.

Seance Bonus: Your bonus on attack rolls when flanking an opponent increases by 2 (normally, to +4).

Natural Magic (Lesser, Su): You can draw upon the power of nature itself. This functions as the archmage arcana spirit power, except that you select spells from the druid list instead of the sorcerer/wizard list (these spells count as divine), and you must present a sprig of holly or another sacred plant to cast spells that require a divine focus.

Princely Allies (Intermediate, Su): Add the appropriate *summon nature's ally* spell for each spell level you can cast to your medium spell list. As long as you have exactly 1 creature summoned, it gains the benefits of the Augment Summoning feat, even if you don't have that feat.

Breaking Chains (Greater, Su): As a swift action, you can allow Cyricas to gain 1 point of influence over you to grant the benefits of *freedom of movement* to you and all allies within 60 feet for 1 minute.

DARONLYR XII (ARCHMAGE)

While most of the legendary spirits of Taldor gained their fame through noble deeds, Daronlyr the Overthrower came to infamy through bold ambition. No one alive today—and likely no one other than Daronlyr himself—knows how much of his arcane might he leveraged in overthrowing his predecessor, but his ability to circumvent even the Ulfen Guard in claiming the throne left few doubting his abilities or his ruthlessness. Students of the arcane seek to trace their heritage to Daronlyr in the hope of capturing some of the Overthrower's prestige, but it is usually particularly ambitious students of the occult who find themselves calling upon the legendary spirit's power.

Gaining Favor: The Overthrower respects only those who are willing to reach out and claim power. You must use magic to gain control over the leader of a group of 50 or more individuals. Following this accomplishment, you must vow that you will never pass up an opportunity to gain further power for yourself, no matter the cost. This requires an Intelligence check. If you succeed, Daronlyr answers your call.

Taboo: If you accept a taboo while channeling Daronlyr, you must acknowledge no authority above your own and reject orders or directives from others.

Assume the Role (Intermediate, Su): You can allow Daronlyr to gain 1 point of influence over you in order to swap your position with that of a willing ally within 60 feet as a swift action. This is a conjuration [teleportation] effect. The next medium spell you cast within 1 round after making this swap doesn't expend a spell slot and doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity.

Usurp (Supreme, Su): Once per day, when a creature fails a Will save against one of your spell effects, you

can forfeit the spell's normal effects to instead affect the target creature as if you had cast *greater possession*^{OA}.

GENNARIS III (CHAMPION)

If Taldaris was the greatest leader of the empire's history, then Grand Prince Gennaris III was unquestionably Taldor's greatest general. No one before or since led as effective a campaign against the Qadiran encroachment as Gennaris, and the brevity of his time as an emperor only strengthened his legacy as a martyr. Few leaders have been so widely loved and so deeply mourned. Renowned for his tactical brilliance as well as his personal might, Gennaris is held up as a paragon of excellence to which Taldan warriors have since aspired. Those seeking to channel the Conqueror's legendary spirit know they must prove their own worth before they merit the attention of Gennaris's spirit.

Gaining Favor: To gain the favor of Gennaris, you must gather six weapons, each from defeating a significant enemy (a foe whose CR equals at least your character level – 3). Surrounded by the assembled weapons, you must recount the tales of the battles in which you obtained them and swear an oath that you will become a master of each of them. This requires a Strength check. If you succeed, Gennaris answers your call.

Taboo: If you accept a taboo while channeling Gennaris, you must face your opponents with confidence and never retreat from a fight out of cowardice.

Conqueror's Weapons (Lesser, Su): You are considered proficient with the weapon types you gathered in order to gain favor with this spirit (such as longswords or hand crossbows).

Conquered Blades (Greater, Su): You gain Improved Critical with the weapon types you gathered to gain favor with this spirit. In addition, your attacks with such weapons ignore up to 5 points of damage reduction, except for damage reduction without a type (such as DR 10/—).

STAVIAN I (GUARDIAN)

The Bounty Prince was blessed with many advantages: great charm, noble leadership, and adamant will. His stalwart defense of Taldor against the perceived incursions and offenses of the Sarenites—starting with those whose divinations sparked strife between Stavian and his own brothers—showed his resolve for protecting the nation against the might of divine magic in enemy hands. While some have questioned the necessity of the Great Purge, none can argue the effectiveness with which Stavian pursued his enemies. His spirit has since been called by any number of Taldans who oppose the divine, whether fighting worshipers of evil deities or continuing Stavian's crusade against Qadiran Sarenites.

Gaining Favor: Stavian tolerates no ambivalence toward or acceptance of an enemy's faith. To gain Stavian's favor, you must destroy an altar or other

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls


NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary



permanent fixture dedicated to a deity or religion whose followers have wronged you. You must then completely submerge yourself in purifying waters for as long as you can; this requires a Constitution check. If you succeed, Stavian answers your call.

Taboo: If you accept a taboo while channeling Stavian, you must relentlessly oppose your enemies and never consort with them.

Magical Purge (Intermediate, Su): Stavian grants you protection against the magical power of your enemies. You gain spell resistance equal to 11 + your medium level.

Confiscate Healing (Greater, Su): As an immediate action, when a creature within 30 feet would benefit from magical healing, you can allow Stavian to gain 1 point of influence over you to redirect the benefits of that healing from the original target to yourself.

TALDARIS (MARSHAL)

Never since the days of Taldor's founding has there been any leader so capable of unification as the one who brought together the disparate city-states vying for power along the northeastern coast of the Inner Sea. Already legendary when crowned Grand Prince of Oppara, Taldaris nevertheless went on to conquer neighboring territories and found the Principalities of Taldaris, a nascent entity destined to become the greatest empire in the Inner Sea region. Those who seek to channel the spirit of Taldaris must show courage, honor, and integrity, with noble goals of leadership and unification in the face of adversity.

Gaining Favor: To gain the favor of Taldaris, you must be publicly recognized as the leader of an organization of 50 or more individuals and swear an oath to ensure the cohesion of that group. This requires a Charisma check; if you succeed, Taldaris answers your call.

Taboo: If you accept a taboo while channeling Taldaris, you must place the interests of the many above your own, and you must not take any actions that would cause you to benefit at the expense of your allies or your allies' collective goals.

Legion Leader (Intermediate, Su): You gain a teamwork feat of your choice for which you meet the prerequisites. All of your allies who joined in the shared seance also gain this feat as a bonus feat, even if they do not meet the prerequisites. You can choose a different feat each time you channel this spirit.

First Emperor's Order (Supreme, Su): You have no limit on the number of times you can use spirit surge in a round, although you can't use it more than once on any d20 roll. When the spirit of Taldaris gains influence over you for using the marshal's order spirit power on an ally's check, further uses of marshal's order before the start of that creature's next turn do not cause the spirit to gain additional influence over you.

FEATS

Those who study the great emperors of Taldor have found many ways to put their revered legacies to action, some of which are presented below as feats.

BLADE OF THE PURGE

Emulating the fervor of Grand Prince Stavian I, you can identify a religion you perceive to be opposed to your own and empower your weapons to strike deadly blows against its adherents.

Prerequisite: Bane class feature.

Benefit: When you activate your bane class feature, you can select a deity or religion other than your own. Your bane effect applies only to followers of that deity or religion.

BLOOD FOR THE EMPIRE (TEAMWORK)

When fighting alongside your allies, the sight of a bloodied foe inspires you to greatness, while a martyred comrade compels you to vengeance.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +4.

Benefit: You gain a +2 morale bonus on attack and damage rolls against a target that was damaged by an ally with this feat within the last round. When an ally with this feat dies within 30 feet of you, you gain the effects of *haste* for 1 round.

BRASH STRIDE

You have studied the bold fighting style of Grand Prince Cyricas and emulate his intrepid tread through jungles and other dangerous lands.

Prerequisites: Dex 15, Acrobatic Steps, Nimble Moves.

Benefit: When you charge or run, you treat difficult terrain as normal terrain.

DRAGON GOLD CROWN

Inspired by tales of First Emperor Taldaris pulling the gold from the gullet of the terrible dragon Verksaris to forge the *Primogen Crown*, you have learned to fashion potent headgear from the remains of magical creatures you defeat.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcana) 5 ranks, Survival 5 ranks.

Benefit: You can use the remains of a dragon or magical beast that you helped to defeat to craft a crown, as if you were harvesting and creating a trophy (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Wilderness* 162). If you successfully create the trophy, it has no monetary value but it functions for you as a *headband of alluring charisma*. The bonus the trophy provides to you is based on the creature's base CR (not including class levels) or your character level at the time the crown was created, whichever is lower: +2 at CR 5 or 5th level, +4 at CR 10 or 10th level, and +6 at CR 15 or 15th level.

EYES OF THE PURGE

Through training and persistence inspired by the Great Purge of Stavian I, you have learned to detect the sources of divine magic in such effects' auras.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast *detect magic* as a spell or spell-like ability.

Benefit: When you use *detect magic* to determine the strength and location of the aura of a functioning spell, if that spell's caster used a holy symbol as a divine focus to cast the spell, you see a ghostly image of the deity's holy symbol as part of the spell's aura. Effects that block divination spells or effects also block the effects of this feat.

HEAVEN'S STEP (COMBAT)

Like the daring Heaven's Step Offensive championed by Grand Prince Gennaris III of Taldor, you confidently take the fight to your enemy and strike an unexpected blow.

Prerequisites: Dex 15, Following Step^{APG}, Step Up, Step Up and Strike^{APG}, Two-Weapon Fighting, base attack bonus +10.

Benefit: When you make an attack using Step Up and Strike, you can also make an extra attack with your off-hand weapon using your highest base attack bonus. Both attacks take the normal penalties for two-weapon fighting.

HORSE SENSE

You take Grand Prince Beldam I's insistence upon the resilience of simple creatures to heart, emulating them to shield yourself from complex mental effects.

Prerequisites: Wis 15, Iron Will.

Benefit: When you attempt a saving throw against an enchantment effect that cannot affect an animal (such as *charm person*), you can roll the saving throw twice and take the better result.

IMPERIAL PRANKSTER

You model your behavior on that of the legendary trickster, Grand Prince Beldam I, to confound proponents of law and order.

Prerequisites: Bluff 5 ranks, any chaotic alignment.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on Bluff checks and combat maneuver checks against lawful creatures. Against creatures with the lawful subtype, this bonus increases to +4.

LION'S HEART

Inspired by tales of Cyricas the Leaping Lion vaulting from his sickbed, you refuse to allow ability damage to hinder you.

Prerequisites: Wis 15, Great Fortitude.

Benefit: Choose one ability. You ignore penalties from ability damage to that ability until you have taken an amount of ability damage equal to your score in that ability.

Special: You can take this feat multiple times. Each time, choose a different ability to which its benefits apply.

USURPER'S GUARD (TEAMWORK)

You work with your allies to create a defensive guard to facilitate spellcasting.

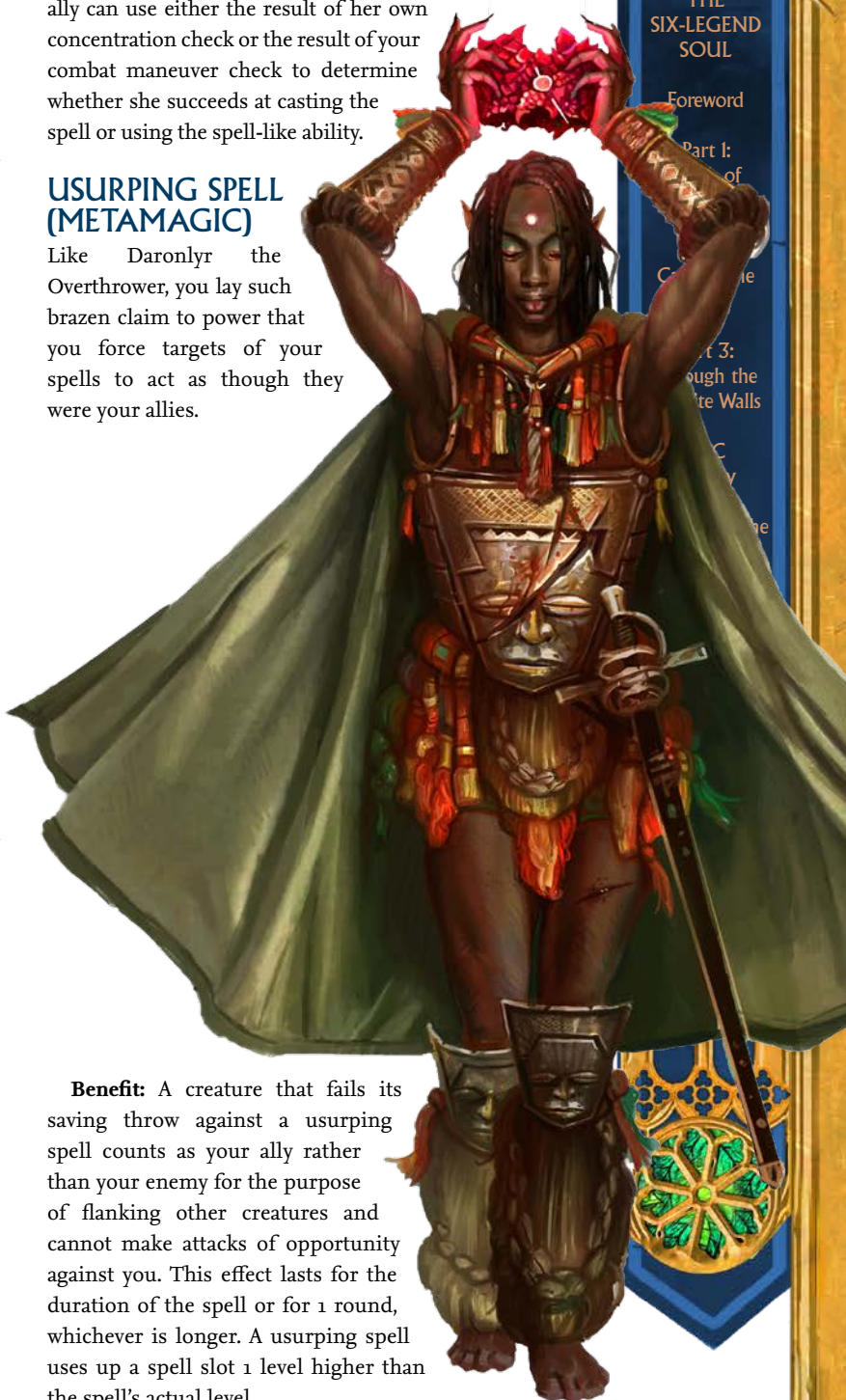
Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +3 or ability to cast 2nd-level spells.

Benefit: When an adjacent ally with this feat attempts a concentration check to cast a spell or use a spell-like ability defensively, you can attempt a combat maneuver check as an immediate action to guard that ally. Your ally can use either the result of her own concentration check or the result of your combat maneuver check to determine whether she succeeds at casting the spell or using the spell-like ability.

USURPING SPELL (METAMAGIC)

Like Daronlyr the Overthrower, you lay such brazen claim to power that you force targets of your spells to act as though they were your allies.

Benefit: A creature that fails its saving throw against a usurping spell counts as your ally rather than your enemy for the purpose of flanking other creatures and cannot make attacks of opportunity against you. This effect lasts for the duration of the spell or for 1 round, whichever is longer. A usurping spell uses up a spell slot 1 level higher than the spell's actual level.



THE
SIX-LEGEND
SOUL

Foreword

Part I:

of

Part II:

Part III:

Part IV:

Part V:

Part VI:

Part VII:

Part VIII:

Part IX:

Part X:

Part XI:

Part XII:

Part XIII:

Part XIV:

Part XV:

Part XVI:

Part XVII:

Part XVIII:

Part XIX:

Part XX:

Part XXI:

Part XXII:

Part XXIII:

Part XXIV:

Part XXV:

Part XXVI:

Part XXVII:

Part XXVIII:

Part XXIX:

Part XXX:

Part XXXI:

Part XXXII:

Part XXXIII:

Part XXXIV:

Part XXXV:

Part XXXVI:

Part XXXVII:

Part XXXVIII:

Part XXXIX:

Part XL:

Part XLI:

Part XLII:

Part XLIII:

Part XLIV:

Part XLV:

Part XLVI:

Part XLVII:

Part XLVIII:

Part XLIX:

Part L:



ULFEN GUARD

“We trendsetters need to stay ahead of the times. I knew the next winter would be a hard one, and I’d already been thinking about adding furs to the upcoming cold-weather fashions. While eyeing those northern brutes clustering around the throne like a herd of aurochs protecting their young, I had an epiphany! I could design a line of Ulfen-inspired clothing to be both warm and chic. The furs wouldn’t be common bear or rabbit or whatever those barbarians use, but the softest ermine and mink. The barbarians wear their clothes like a saddle draped over a cow. I’d make sure the lines were tighter and more fitting. I had a few prototype designs finished when I received a personal visit from Kol Kodranson himself, leader of the Ulfen Guard. The man is positively immense, and he radiates menace. ‘None of that,’ was all he growled, and then he left. I didn’t need to ask what he meant. I halted production immediately.”

—Vellesch Varrikan, Taldan clothing designer

The personal guard of the grand prince, the Ulfen Guard, fills its fearsome ranks with Ulfen from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, who travel from northwestern Avistan to serve as defenders of the Taldan emperor. As Ulfen barbarians from the distant north lack ties to the complicated web of patronage and conspiracy so prevalent in Taldan courts, they have long been seen as the safest-possible guards of the emperor's person. The Ulfen Guard cares little for the fate of Taldor as a whole, or for any of its soft, scheming aristocrats; their loyalty is to the wearer of the *Primogen Crown* alone, and their honor compels them to fight—and, when they must, to die—to protect their charge. Of course, the members of the Ulfen Guard aren't immune to the intrigue prevalent in Taldor, but their unfailing honor, extraordinary solidarity, and unfamiliarity with Taldan customs (and even, at times, Taldan language) make them nearly incorruptible. A member of the Ulfen Guard is not easily bribed—at the end of her term of service, she is entitled to take whatever treasure she can carry from the imperial vaults back home, and it is rare that an Ulfen sees a need for more wealth than this.

To an ordinary Ulfen leading a hardscabble existence in the north, Taldor is so alien and distant that the tales of gilded galas and backstabbing masquerades are no more real than fairy stories. But veteran warriors return from this distant land with gold and gems as living proof that Taldor is an actual place—one where fierce loyalty is rewarded with riches. Not every Ulfen who travels to Taldor to join the Ulfen Guard is accepted; current or retired members of the Ulfen Guard must testify that a newcomer is canny, honorable, observant, and resolute before she can be considered for membership.

Despite the organization's self-reliance, the Ulfen Guard does not act alone; a network of its allies provides the members of the Ulfen Guard with services and information. The Ulfen Guard does not accept anyone into this support network who they do not view as brave and worthy. Members of the network who are ethnically Ulfen are called *huscarls* and are eligible to join the Ulfen Guard. Those who do not share blood with the Ulfen are called *leidangs*; although a *leidang* may work closely with the Ulfen Guard, he may never join them.

Although the Ulfen Guard are best known as the highly capable and highly visible bodyguards of the grand prince, they also serve at the emperor's command to protect his interests throughout the Inner Sea region. While they are neither trained in espionage nor naturally inclined to it, Ulfen Guard members can operate in plain sight, seen as merely ignorant foreigners or brutish raiders as they pursue delicate missions on the emperor's behalf.

HISTORY

Grand Prince Hyrotte I formed the Ulfen Guard in 3129 AR, mere weeks after he assumed the Lion Throne. Qadiran spies had killed his predecessor, Grand Prince Jalrune, and Grand Prince Hyrotte knew that it would take only one lucky assassin for him to follow Jalrune to the grave. Immediately after taking the throne, Hyrotte began to leverage his most trusted connections for personal protection, including an Ulfen barbarian named Birgitte Redmane.

Birgitte had been imprisoned in Oppara for many years, freed after information she provided allowed Jalrune to drive off an ice linnorm marauding through communities along the World's Edge Mountains. Birgitte held no hard feelings about her imprisonment, and in fact she and Hyrotte—who had been the most vocal proponent of her release—became friends. When he became emperor, Hyrotte asked Birgitte to stand by his side as a bodyguard. Birgitte went even further, offering the service of her kin from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. Hyrotte was eager to have bodyguards completely unaffiliated with regional politics, and he agreed that the warriors could leave with as much treasure as they could carry from Hyrotte's vaults when their terms of service were through. The emperor decreed he would accept new Ulfen—and only Ulfen—as his personal bodyguards thereafter, and the Ulfen Guard was born.

Originally, only blood relatives of Birgitte Redmane were allowed to serve in the Ulfen Guard, making her home of Vasterborg one of the wealthiest communities in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. However, demand soon outstripped supply; subsequent emperors, wishing to prove themselves better defended than their predecessors, expanded the Ulfen Guard and accepted members from allied clans across the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. Although the emperors rarely bothered researching the complex webs of lineage and allegiance that bind Ulfen society, the bodyguards could name their relationship to each of their fellow members, whether bound by blood or clan fealty.

Birgitte's descendants were initially the most prestigious among the Ulfen Guard, but Vasterborg fell in the Winter War of 3313 AR, extinguishing Birgitte's line and funneling generations of accumulated Taldan treasure to Whitethrone. The commander of the Ulfen Guard at the time, Ingune Five-Embers, was Birgitte's grandson's great-granddaughter. She deserted her position in Taldor to march against the winter witches of Irrisen, forsaking her final payment, and was never seen again.

The Ulfen Guard is strictly devoted to the current wearer of the *Primogen Crown* and adapts quickly when the wearer changes. The Ulfen Guard fought against Daronlyr the Overthrower in 3564 AR, attempting to protect the grand prince, but as soon as the emperor fell

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

and Daronlyr declared that he would take the throne, the Ulfen Guard swore their allegiance to him.

Most former members of the Ulfen Guard return to the Lands of the Linnorm Kings—often to the town of Ullerskad—but some choose to stay in Taldor. Few of these former Ulfen Guard members have aspired to aristocracy, but one had a title thrust upon him. **Oltar Vinmark** (N male human expert 4/ barbarian 4) was a wise and kindly member of the Ulfen Guard who kept a vigilant watch over Grand Prince Stavian III as the distraught emperor buried his only son in 4698 AR. In gratitude, Stavian made Oltar a baron and the mayor of Oppara. Unrefined

and blunt, Oltar has few friends in his city's bloated aristocracy, but his personal friendship with the grand prince made his position unassailable for many years. Upon any change in Taldor's leadership, however, Oltar's position will become seriously jeopardized.

CODES AND PHILOSOPHIES

The Ulfen Guard protects the body of the wearer of the *Primogen Crown*, not his companions, his property, or even his family. At least a dozen members guard the grand prince during most public functions and are often near at hand in private. While on duty, a member of the Ulfen Guard is expected to be a silent observer, quick to draw her weapon and willing to die to protect the emperor. To fail to notice a threat is a great disgrace; the Ulfen Guard punishes the unwary and the unworthy, out of sight of the emperor and the public.

Although a member of the Ulfen Guard must serve a term of at least 1 year to receive the traditional payment from the imperial vaults, a short term is deemed selfish and, while not exactly dishonorable, a sign of unnecessary greed. Most members of the Ulfen Guard serve at least 5 years; some stay until age dulls their eyes and reflexes. In any case, a member won't step down

until a worthy and honorable replacement is ready to assume her duties. Many members insist on a replacement they personally know, such as a relative or fellow clan member.

Members of the Ulfen Guard are diligent and mighty, but they are not infallible. Throughout Taldor's history, some successful assassins have evaded the Ulfen Guard—usually by poison or magic—or overpowered it by force. Further, members of the Ulfen Guard do not watch over the emperor every minute of the day; they serve at the emperor's direction, and he usually dismisses them when in secure locations or when a retinue of burly bodyguards would be diplomatically inappropriate. In these cases, the guards are still rarely more distant than an energetic shout, but a skilled assassin could strike without allowing the emperor to make any sound at all. However, most Taldan emperors ultimately died from accidents or old age, which no bodyguard can prevent.

Unlike the wearer of the *Primogen Crown*, Ulfen Guard members do not have to be male. Historically, about a third of Ulfen Guard members have been female. Romantic entanglements between the Ulfen Guard and the emperor—or other members of the imperial court—are almost unheard of, as much due to the Ulfen Guard's honor as to the fact that few Ulfen



KOL KODRANSON

find soft, weak southerners appealing. Grand Prince Eudariano II, a notorious philanderer, insisted on an all-female Ulfen Guard, but failed to romance any of them during his 4 years of rule.

The Ulfen Guard enjoys a broad set of rights beyond those available to most Taldan citizens. Members are immune to arrest or prosecution by any Taldan forces other than the emperor himself, although they mete out severe internal discipline for outrageous or dishonorable behavior. The Ulfen Guard must be provided passage on any Taldan ship, including military ships, and members' belongings must remain secure and private while they travel. Members of the Ulfen Guard are entitled to room and board at any inn or tavern in Oppara, although most limit themselves to a large, rowdy establishment near the imperial court called the Staggering Skald. Only when a member of the Ulfen Guard leaves service does she claim her pay: as much treasure as she can personally carry away from the imperial vault. A former Ulfen Guard cannot be forced to spend or relinquish this payment while within the borders of Taldor, even by the emperor.

APHORISMS

Members of the Ulfen Guard use the following phrases often, whether talking among themselves or with outsiders, to reinforce their commitments.

Blood Is Our Gold: Although this grim aphorism seems to support the image of a violent barbarian valuing bloodshed over anything else, the actual meaning is much more nuanced. First, it reminds members of the Ulfen Guard that keeping the grand prince in one piece is key to earning the treasure they look forward to one day taking home. More deeply, the phrase also reflects that the Ulfen value their own heritage over any worldly goods, as their honor is tied to their families and their lineage. As their position is open only to those who are Ulfen by blood, it also marks the exclusionary nature of their organization.

The Ruler, Not the Throne: The Ulfen Guard is loyal to the person of the grand prince, not to the nation of Taldor or to the complicated hierarchy supporting the emperor. It serves the grand prince at all times, whether he is away on a hunting trip, holding court, or overseas on a diplomatic mission. This aphorism also serves as a warning to members of the Ulfen Guard to not get greedy; being tempted by the golden opulence of the Lion Throne is a distraction from their core duty.

Watch for Sharp Blades, Not Sharp Words: Members of the Ulfen Guard think very little of the bickering, name-calling, and veiled threats that constantly swirl about the imperial court; most see it as baseless posturing by those without the mettle to carry through. They know that their role is to protect the emperor, not his feelings, so they won't intervene against those

who shout at, insult, or demean the emperor. However, once a weapon is drawn—or looks likely to be drawn—members of the Ulfen Guard close ranks around the emperor and respond with swift and lethal force. This aphorism serves as a reminder to members of the Ulfen Guard to keep a careful eye on actions, rather than being distracted by hollow threats.

STRUCTURE

The Ulfen Guard is a close-knit, exclusive organization. All members must be at least half-Ulfen, with at least one parent born in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. Not every member of the Ulfen Guard is native to the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, but the additional requirement that they must have spent a substantial portion of their lives there ensures in practice that nearly all of them are. Similarly, while Ulfen ethnicity doesn't preclude half-elves or half-orcs from joining the Ulfen Guard, half-human members are rare.

Since new members of the Ulfen Guard need to be recommended internally, nepotism is endemic to the organization. Nearly all members of the Ulfen Guard are related by blood or adoption to a current or former member. This is seen as beneficial, rather than detrimental, to the organization's overall goal; Ulfen are generally distrustful of strangers, and they train and fight better when among their kin.

The Ulfen Guard has virtually no hierarchy beyond its commander, a post usually filled by its most respected and longest-serving member. The current commander of the Ulfen Guard is **Kol Kodranson** (N male human barbarian 10), who succeeded his father, Kodran Kullirson. Despite their close relation, the two leaders have very different personalities. Kodran worried constantly about the soft Taldan ways dulling the guards' honor and prowess, so he insisted on speaking Skald and adhering closely to Ulfen traditions. Under Kodran's leadership, *leidangs*, the non-Ulfen allies of the Ulfen Guard, were rarely utilized and never fully trusted. Kol, on the other hand, sees value in Taldan skills and customs; he insists that the Ulfen Guard be fluent in Common and knowledgeable about basic courtly manners. Kol prioritizes deploying the right person for any necessary support function, whether Ulfen, *leidang*, or hired outsider. Traditionalists among the Ulfen Guard—a group dominated by close friends of Kol's father—worry that Kol's style opens the Ulfen Guard to interference by foreign spies.

The Ulfen Guard punishes dishonorable behavior by its members, such as shirking responsibilities or drunkenness on duty, with beatings. In extreme cases, the Ulfen Guard has dismissed members while performing a ritual similar to that used for ceremonial exile from an Ulfen clan. To avoid further trouble after dismissal, it's typical to beat the offender unconscious

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls


NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary



and put him on a vessel headed back north, leaving him to awaken, ashamed and exiled, hundreds of miles away from Taldor.

HEADQUARTERS

Although the Ulfen Guard has private rooms in the Imperial Palace and quarters alongside the emperor's retinue wherever he travels, their hearth and home is the Staggering Skald. This Ulfen tavern is only two blocks from the Imperial Palace, and its sturdy wood construction is reminiscent of an Ulfen longhouse. Its current proprietor, **Gunri Oathkeeper** (LN female venerable human fighter 6/Ulfen Guard 4; *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Combat* 34), served Emperor Stavian II until his death and then used her payment to purchase and renovate the inn. Now almost 90 years old and still a hard drinker, the indomitable Gunri enjoys shepherding the younger members of the Ulfen Guard.

Only current or former members of the Ulfen Guard and their trusted friends are permitted entrance to the Staggering Skald; leidang on formal Ulfen Guard business can enter as needed for their task, but usually not to drink or socialize. The Staggering Skald doesn't have dedicated sleeping chambers, but Gunri keeps several piles of sleeping furs at the ready, should any patrons wish to claim a corner of the common room for the evening. Rowdy at nearly every hour, the Staggering Skald boasts the finest Ulfen drinks, shanks of meat cooked and seasoned in the Ulfen manner, and regular competitions of boasting and physical strength.

Members of the Ulfen Guard also gather in the homes and estates of Ulfen residents of Oppara, many of whom came to Taldor to join the Ulfen Guard but didn't meet the organization's exacting criteria. Some, entranced by the opulence and easy living Oppara had to offer, chose to stay and make a name and fortune independent of the Ulfen Guard, even owning manors that rival those of the merchant lords and lesser aristocracy. Acknowledging the Ulfen Guards as exemplars of honor and might—and, as soon as their service ends, holders of fabulous riches—these wealthy northerners keep their doors open to Ulfen Guard members who prefer to relax away from the oppressive grandeur of the Imperial Palace or the raucous Staggering Skald.

OPERATIONS

Although the members of the Ulfen Guard serve most visibly as the grand prince's bodyguards, they are deployed wherever the emperor commands. These operations might take the Ulfen Guard far from Oppara's gilded halls. The following examples illustrate the breadth of the Ulfen Guard's operations inside and outside of Taldor. The specific area tied to each Ulfen Guard operation is listed in parentheses.

The Blade Breaker (Maheto): As the premier provider of weapons to the Taldan military, the city of Maheto is always under many watchful government eyes. Representatives of several agencies in the imperial bureaucracy constantly measure weapon quality and monitor all weapon shipments to any customers unaffiliated with the crown. The Ulfen Guard is the most public and most recently appointed of these oversight groups. When a young and headstrong member of the Ulfen Guard, **Thrasvald Iron-Handed** (N male human barbarian 4/fighter 4), boasted publicly of the superiority of Ulfen weapons to Taldan ones, Grand Prince Stavian was equally amused and indignant. Rather than discharge the boastful warrior, Stavian sent Thrasvald to Maheto as a "weapons tester" for the Ulfen Guard. Any smithy that makes a blade that the powerful Thrasvald cannot sunder in three blows will earn Thrasvald's personal apology and a contract to arm the Ulfen Guard for a year. Since none of the Ulfen Guard want to use Maheto-made weapons over their personal arms, they all secretly support Thrasvald in his public—and increasingly well-attended—displays of weapon shattering.

Connection to Home (Absalom): The City at the Center of the World boasts envoys from nearly every nation in Avistan, and the Lands of the Linnorm Kings are no exception. The envoys from the north often share information with Ulfen Guard members in Oppara, usually through intermediaries or when the Ulfen Guard's duties take members to Absalom. Although Ulfen Guards are supposed to remain entirely focused on their duties and eschew involvement with their homeland while they serve, every member values news from home, especially if it concerns the fate of their loved ones or the status of clan feuds. Absalom is also normally the last stop departing Ulfen Guards make in the Inner Sea, as the envoys arrange for a departing guard's transit in exchange for some of the loot carried out of Taldor.

Good Stock (Lastwall): Dortrot Ranch in eastern Lastwall is well known as one of that nation's premier horse breeders. The Taldor jennets raised at Dortrot Ranch come from a stock that belonged to Grand Prince Bedlam I, given to the ranch generations ago in lieu of monetary payments to aid in Lastwall's vigilant defenses. At the time, the offer seemed like an acceptable way to maintain good relations with Lastwall while keeping a tight fist on Taldor's purse. Stavian III has heard rumors that Dortrot Ranch improved upon the Taldor jennets, and he wants several breeding horses back; rather than pay for them, he's sent several members of the Ulfen Guard to make the request, by intimidation if necessary. This operation is headed for a showdown between two strong-willed sides, as the ranchers consider the carefully bred stock to be theirs by right and the Ulfen Guard are unwilling to take no for an answer. As both sides

are honorable, the odds of trickery or theft are low, but careful and clever negotiators might defuse a situation that could otherwise erupt into a bloody confrontation.

Kintargo Raiders (Cheliox): Ulfen raiders sail far down the coast seeking plunder; their longships are known even as far south as Cheliox. Disguised as common raiders from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, a crew of Ulfen Guard has been active around the port city of Kintargo. The detachment is providing cover to seasoned diplomats that the grand prince sent to Kintargo to discuss its rebellion against House Thrune. While Chelish warships keep a close eye on all Taldan ships that pass by their coasts, they are less inclined to search out spies on Ulfen longships. The Ulfen Guard detachment has seen fit to “improve” its cover by actually sporadically raiding along the Hellcoast, though the grand prince has not officially sanctioned this activity.

Missing Giant Killers (Fog Peaks): Although members of the Ulfen Guard never cease to serve the grand prince, some still become restless after months of inaction in the imperial court. To give these barbarians an outlet and help protect Taldor’s northern border, the Ulfen Guard occasionally dispatches some of its members on giant-hunting expeditions into the Fog Peaks. Frost giants are a regular hazard in those rugged mountains, and the Taldan settlements there suffer from their depredations during the deep winters that blanket the region. Many Ulfen barbarians are highly skilled at hunting and fighting frost giants, and a winter spent in the Fog Peaks allows them to apply these skills for the benefit of Taldor. Although these expeditions are nominally only allowed at the grand prince’s direction, few emperors have ever forbidden these seasonal excursions so long as most members of the Ulfen Guard remained at their side. The most recent group—four seasoned barbarians led by **Graudil Groundshaker** (CN male human skald 8/ Ulfen Guard 2; *Inner Sea Combat* 34)—hasn’t returned. Divinations are inconclusive; all Kol Kodranson knows is that the barbarians aren’t dead, and he seeks explorers to uncover the fate of his missing kin before the grand prince disallows these excursions as too dangerous. Graudil was a close friend of Kol’s father, Kodran, and Kol worries that treachery is afoot.

Zimar Longships (Zimar): As part of the tenuous peace between Taldor and Qadira, both nations have agreed not to sail military ships on the Jalrune River. To discreetly maintain its military superiority, the Taldan government secretly supports a fleet of “independent” river privateers called the Zimar Corsairs. While the Zimar Corsairs theoretically prey

upon all river traffic, ships flying the Taldan flag are raided less often and less heavily than other ships on the river. Under the grand prince’s direction, the Zimar Corsairs include two longships operated by the Ulfen Guard: the *Sharptooth* and the *Storm Drake*. As well as joining in attacks on river traffic, these longships target other Zimar Corsairs who become too heavy handed in their raids against Taldan ships. The longships’ cover fools few people, least of all the Qadirans; after all, the only significant Ulfen presence within 200 miles of the Jalrune River is in Stavian’s court. But the raiders are too canny to be caught, and Stavian maintains plausible deniability, so many Qadirans are desperate for independent agents to expose the longships’ Ulfen Guard affiliation.



GUNRI OATHKEEPER

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary



BESTIARY

"My first clue was when I realized the druids were trying to dupe us. They were sending us a long way around to Adrast and telling us it was the straight path. I'll freely admit I overstated my wilderness skills when I signed on as the group's scout, but I know which way is which. Once we were underway, I steered us on a direct route.

"My second clue was the ravine. It was just a big ditch, without any river in the bottom, even a dried-up one. Someone had dug it but tried to make it look natural. The druids plainly didn't want anyone going that way. So I led everyone down into the ditch and up the other side.

"The going was rough. No one had been this way in a long time. I started to wonder what treasures the druids were trying to keep us away from. It wasn't until the trees started to move like enormous insect legs that I realized the truth: they weren't hiding a treasure... they were hiding a monster."

—Rufus Madellian, woodcutter

The bestiary in this volume of the War for the Crown Adventure Path contains a tree grown from the grasping desires of a dead ruler, a horrifying ambush predator, a legendary lion, an extraplanar prison warden, and a tormented ghost.

RAMPANT CHAOS

“The Six-Legend Soul” has the PCs crossing central Taldor to confront the Immaculate Circle and then returning to Oppara. As they cross Taldor’s heartland, they have a chance to encounter many foes seeking to exploit the chaos created during the War for the Crown. Although central Taldor is typically quite safe, several powerful creatures and agents are active in the region, making travel much more hazardous than usual. Generally, encounters with humanoids (or creatures that can pass for humanoids) are more likely near Oppara and western Taldor, while monstrous creatures are more likely to inhabit the abandoned region around the Immaculate Circle’s stronghold in Porthmos.

The Central Taldor Encounters table presented here features challenges the PCs might face beyond those detailed in the adventure. During the course of the adventure, the PCs have a 30% chance of a random encounter every hour they spend traveling through Taldor during the day, and a 40% chance of a random encounter at night. They should not have more than two random encounters in a 24-hour period. If the PCs utilize an expeditious method of travel, such as *teleport* or *shadow walk*, these checks should be made at the start and the end of the PCs’ journey.

Since this adventure spans a range of character levels, some random encounters might be either too trivial or too difficult for the PCs, depending on their current strength. If the result rolled is outside the Challenge Rating range appropriate for the PCs or is inappropriate for the terrain the PCs are traversing, roll again on the table or choose a different encounter.

Bold Beast (CR 16): Two brutal warlords (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 88) who serve a powerful orc chieftain in the World’s Edge Mountains recently negotiated an alliance with a powerful leonine creature called a grisantian lion (see page 86). The warlords promised blood and spoils to secure the lion’s aid in attacks against poorly defended communities in central Taldor. The lion works alongside the warlords for now, but it longs for a challenge greater than raiding villages and killing livestock. The warlords initially attempt to remain out of sight of the PCs, as they weigh whether assaulting the PCs is worth the risk, but the grisantian lion has other ideas. The lion charges the PCs, roaring fiercely, and drags the cautious warlords into the fight.

Immaculate Agents (CR 19): Although the leaders of the Immaculate Circle can be found within their stronghold, other cult members work throughout Taldor to quash

CENTRAL TALDOR ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–3	1 nemhain	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 182
4–7	1 bramble throne	16	See page 82
8–11	1 corbayrant	16	See page 84
12–15	1 ecorche	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 109
16–20	Bold Beast	16	See below
21–26	1d6 clockwork assassins	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 59
27–31	1 lilitu	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 84
32–36	1 shinigami	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 244
37–42	1 soulpierced	17	See page 90
43–48	1 ximtal	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 244
49–53	1 qolok and 1d4 zohanils	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 217, <i>Bestiary</i> 6 246
54–59	1 forest blight	18	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 41
60–65	1d3 lesser deaths	18	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 134
66–70	2 nightwalkers	18	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 201
71–75	Outcast’s Vengeance	18	See below
76–80	1 phylacator	18	See page 88
81–86	1 doomsayer	19	<i>NPC Codex</i> 43
87–91	Immaculate Agents	19	See below
92–96	Monarch’s Quest	19	See below
97–100	2 olethroses	19	<i>Bestiary</i> 6 220

the cult’s enemies. Among them are a death master (*NPC Codex* 230) and a grand necromancer (*NPC Codex* 193), accompanied by four loyal cult thugs (*Pathfinder RPG Villain Codex* 215). This group assaults the PCs, either to prevent their journey to the Shadowed Halls or to punish them for breaching the cult’s stronghold.

Monarch’s Quest (CR 19): A wild hunt monarch (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 282) named King Broadantler seeks the renegade wild hunt scout called Count Ghoom (see page 21). King Broadantler demands the PCs’ obedience and assistance; if the PCs aren’t appropriately deferential to the monarch, he blows his horn to summon a retinue of wild hunt fey to punish them for their insolence. If the PCs have already defeated Count Ghoom or courteously agree to do so on the monarch’s behalf, he rewards them with his +3 glaive.

Outcast’s Vengeance (CR 18): Driven from her family by the shame of her heritage, Krellia, a half-orc rage flame (*NPC Codex* 78), grew up deep in the Verduran Forest. In this time of chaos throughout Taldor, Krellia has come forth to help the nation burn. She learned that the PCs are working to help Taldor survive, and so decides to confront them with a retinue of shambling mounds created by her *shambler* spell. Krellia is hurt and angry, but not evil; if the PCs can discover the root of her rage and assure her they are working to improve things in Taldor rather than keep the same degenerate leadership, they might convince the angry outcast to stand down.

THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

BRAMBLE THRONE

The low branches of this stout tree form the shape of a throne. Gold-trimmed leaves and thick vines grow on the branches.

BRAMBLE THRONE

CR 16



XP 76,800

N Huge plant

Init +10; **Senses** low-light vision, *thoughtsense*^{OA}, tremorsense 120 ft.; Perception +17

Aura supplication (30 ft., DC 24)

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 14, flat-footed 24 (+6 Dex, +16 natural, -2 size)

hp 230 (20d8+140)

Fort +19, **Ref** +12, **Will** +12

Immune plant traits

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee bite +25 (2d6+11 plus grab), 4 vines +25 (1d8+11 plus bleed and grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (20 ft. with vines)

Special Attacks bleed (2d6), blood drain (1d4 Constitution), puppet ruler

Psychic Magic (CL 16th; concentration +20)

30 PE—*dominate person* (5 PE, DC 19), *greater command* (5 PE, DC 19), *paranoia* (2 PE, DC 16)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +24)

Constant—*thoughtsense*^{OA}

STATISTICS

Str 33, **Dex** 22, **Con** 25, **Int** 4, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +28 (+30 bull rush); **CMD** 44 (46 vs. bull rush, can't be tripped)

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite, vines)

Skills Perception +17, Stealth +11

Languages Common

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Puppet Ruler (Su) As a full-round action, a bramble throne can thrust psychically empowered tendrils into any Small, Medium, or Large creature seated on its throne that has been dead for less than 1 minute. The corpse becomes a zombie-like creature, but it isn't treated as being undead and is immune to spells and effects that affect only undead (including damage from positive energy). The puppet ruler shares the bramble throne's space, moves with it, and can make attacks independently of the bramble throne. If the bramble throne removes its tendrils as a move action, or if the puppet ruler is removed from the throne, it reverts to an ordinary corpse. The puppet ruler has cover while on the throne, but attackers can otherwise attack either the bramble throne or the puppet ruler freely. Area-effect spells

affect both the bramble throne and puppet ruler. Killing the bramble throne destroys the puppet ruler.

Supplication Aura (Su) While the bramble throne is using its puppet ruler ability, any creature that begins its turn within 30 feet of the bramble throne must succeed at a DC 24 Will save or fall prone and become fascinated by the puppet on the throne for 1 round, viewing it as a ruler worthy of adoration. A creature affected by this ability does not view either the bramble throne or the puppet as a potential threat, but an attack by either the bramble throne or the puppet ends the fascination. This is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Vines (Ex) A bramble throne's barbed vines are primary natural attacks that deal bludgeoning and piercing damage. A bramble throne doesn't gain the grappled condition when grappling enemies with its vines and can maintain grapples with any number of its vines with the same standard action.

Bramble thrones grow where the blood of power-hungry rulers has been spilled, and particularly where the bodies of these grasping monarchs have been laid to rest. A ruler's obsession over the power of a throne can be so powerful that it leaches into the soil, infusing a growing tree with a psychic fixation on the trappings of rule and powers of domination. As the plant grows, its branches form into the shape of the ruler's throne and its leaves sprout in regal colors such as gold and violet.

A bramble throne's wide trunk typically rises only 2 feet above ground before branching into a throne 8 feet wide and 10 feet high. Leaves surround the throne like an ornate canopy, and several thick, barbed vines wind around the entire tree. A bramble throne can slowly pull itself along the ground with these vines, although it more frequently uses them to lash out at creatures that stray within the range of its psychic senses. If it kills an intelligent creature, it seats the corpse upon the throne, using invasive tendrils to give the corpse the semblance of animation and regal authority. With a corpse seated upon it, a bramble throne can compel other creatures to make the obeisance it craves.

Bramble thrones retain an echo of the ruler's imperious nature, allowing it to speak basic commands such as "approach," "bow," and "kneel" through a jagged, mouth-like slit in its trunk. Bramble thrones speak whatever languages the ruler knew in life.

Bramble thrones grow up to 12 feet wide and 20 feet high and weigh about 4,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Bramble thrones draw nutrients from sunlight and soil, although their root systems are very shallow and they often supplement their diets with fresh blood. A bramble throne grows astonishingly quickly when prey is plentiful.

A bramble throne can detect when creatures are near and can readily distinguish between unintelligent and intelligent prey. When it detects an animal or other unintelligent creature, the bramble throne simply waits patiently, allowing the creature to approach within the range of its vines. Once its prey has ventured near, the bramble throne grabs the creature in a flurry of movement, draining it of blood through the barbs along its supple vines. Once the creature is dead, the bramble throne consumes its corpse whole, digesting it within its trunk. Against intelligent prey, a bramble throne adopts subtler tactics. It targets lone travelers with *dominate person*, compelling the traveler to approach within range of its lethal vines. A bramble throne that has recently fed might instead command its new minion to seek out others and bring them back to the tree, ensuring an audience (and further food) at a later time. A bramble throne uses *greater command* to compel groups to approach it, using *paranoia* against disobedient creatures to discourage them from interfering with the bramble throne's psychic control. Once a group of creatures has surrounded the bramble throne, the creature kills the most regal-looking victim, transferring the victim's corpse onto its throne once it is dead. The plant lends the corpse a mockery of life and authority, insisting that others bow before it with powerful psychic commands. It then kills these supplicants one at a time, staining the ground around its trunk with their blood.

Most bramble thrones perch atop a crypt, mausoleum, or monument of this ruler and are rarely ever found far from it. Instead of migrating, most hungry bramble thrones instead enter a dormant stage, appearing as a dead tree: a bramble throne can remain dormant for centuries, arousing itself when prey returns.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Since bramble thrones develop only from rulers who are both vain and ambitious, they are almost exclusively solitary plants. Where multiple power-hungry rulers share a gravesite—such as a king and queen, or ruling siblings—the resulting bramble throne can be particularly intelligent and sometimes even displays additional psychic powers. These bramble thrones are

often racked with indecision or hesitation created by the powerful dueling psyches that gave the creature its psychic abilities.

Native animals learn to avoid an area with a bramble throne, so keen-eyed travelers might suspect a predator is near even before spotting the distinctive throne-like tree. Vegetation is usually lush around a bramble throne as a result of the blood-soaked soil from the creature's kills, providing it with some concealment against its prey.



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
of

finishing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

CORBAYRANT

This enormous scorpion-like creature has legs like jagged bark and a moss-colored body. Its barbed tail drips foul-smelling venom and its wide mouth has multiple hinged jaws.

CORBAYRANT

CR 16



XP 76,800

CE Huge magical beast

Init +9; **Senses** blindsense 120 ft.; Perception +30

Aura virulence (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 14, flat-footed 24 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +16 natural, -2 size)

hp 237 (19d10+133); regeneration 5 (cold)

Fort +18, **Ref** +16, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities barbed defense, **DR** 15/bludgeoning or slashing; **Immune** gaze attacks, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sight-based effects, sleep effects, stunning, visual effects and illusions; **Resist** fire 10; **SR** 27

Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +27 (2d8+10 plus grab), sting +27 (2d8+10 plus poison), 2 spines +27 (2d6+10 plus contagious paralysis)

Ranged 4 spines +22 (2d8+10 plus contagious paralysis)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks contagious paralysis (1d4 minutes, DC 22), poison, swallow whole (5d8 piercing plus contagious paralysis, AC 18, 23 hp)

STATISTICS

Str 31, **Dex** 20, **Con** 25, **Int** 14, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +19; **CMB** +31 (+35 grapple); **CMD** 47 (59 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Mobility, Point-Blank Shot, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +14 (+18 when jumping), Climb +18, Intimidate +22, Perception +30, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +25 (+33 in forests), Survival +11; **Racial**

Modifiers +8 Stealth in forests

Languages Common, Sylvan

SQ plantlike

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forest

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Virulence (Su) A corbayrant emits an aura that suppresses defenses against paralysis and poisons. Creatures with bonuses on saving throws against paralysis or poison lose these bonuses while within 30 feet of a corbayrant. This aura doesn't negate general bonuses on saving throws—such as a bonus on all Fortitude saves—and it has no effect on creatures that are immune to paralysis or poison.

Contagious Paralysis (Su) A corbayrant's spines deliver an eldritch paralytic agent. A creature damaged by a corbayrant's spines or by its swallow whole attack must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 minutes and sprout thorny barbs that can pass on the paralysis to others. A creature that touches a target paralyzed by a corbayrant's spines or strikes the paralyzed target with an unarmed strike or natural weapon takes 1d6+10 points of piercing damage and is also affected by the corbayrant's contagious paralysis (a DC 22 Fortitude save negates the contagious paralysis but not the damage). A creature affected by contagious paralysis can attempt a new saving throw each round at the end of its turn to end the effect. When the contagious paralysis ends, the barbs fall off harmlessly and dissolve into rotten splinters. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Plantlike (Ex) Although they are magical beasts, corbayrants have many qualities common to plants. Corbayrants breathe and eat, but do not sleep. For the purposes of effects targeting creatures by type (such as a ranger's favored enemy and *bane* weapons), corbayrants count as both magical beasts and plants.

Poison (Ex) Sting—injury; *save* Fort DC 26; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Con; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Spines (Ex) A corbayrant's spines are primary natural attacks that deal piercing damage and deliver the corbayrant's contagious paralysis. A corbayrant can hurl up to four spines as a standard action. This attack has a range of 90 feet with no range increment. The corbayrant can target multiple creatures with its hurled spines, but all targets must be within 30 feet of each other.

An ambush predator that conceals itself among tall trees, corbayrants are bizarre amalgamations of insect and plant. Appearing somewhat like an oversized scorpion with barbed spines in place of claws, corbayrants have an exoskeleton made of thick layers of bark and moss. With their segmented limbs fully extended, their legs resemble tree trunks and their mossy underside blends in with the forest canopy. A corbayrant keeps its long tail curved above its body, its barbed stinger dripping viscous venom like tree sap. Corbayrants lack eyes, but they perceive their surroundings through a combination of sound and changes in air pressure.

A corbayrant's spiny forelegs deliver a magical paralytic toxin that causes afflicted victims to sprout barbs that can transmit the paralysis to others. A corbayrant rarely waits for this paralysis to run its course, as it prefers to snatch up paralyzed victims in its large quadrisectioning mouth and swallow them whole. The creature's abdomen contains sharp thorns that exude the same paralytic toxin as its spines, which keep its prey immobile while it is being digested.

A thin, miasmic cloud surrounds corbayrants. Although visually indistinguishable from ordinary

forest mist, this cloud suppresses creatures' resistances to paralysis and poisons, making the creature a far more effective hunter.

A typical corbayrant stands 19 feet tall and weighs nearly 3 tons.

ECOLOGY

Corbayrants originated in the First World and were once the favored hunters of the Green Mother, the Eldest of verdant growth and venom. During the Age of Anguish, when gnomes fled to Golarion from the First World, the corbayrants followed. History is unclear as to whether the Green Mother dispatched her corbayrants to hunt the fleeing gnomes, or whether the beasts were also refugees. In any case, the Eldest took steps to ensure that her hunters would remain on Golarion to spread chaos, severing their connection to the First World. Corbayrants spread throughout the forests of Avistan—and particularly throughout the vast Verduran Forest—gleefully preying upon travelers and sating their monstrous appetites. Patient and watchful, corbayrants can remain hidden for days or even months, waiting for the perfect time to strike at prey. Despite their exile, corbayrants retain many features that demonstrate their otherworldly origin, including a magical paralytic toxin, a whimsical and cruel demeanor, and a life span so long as to make them essentially ageless.

The corbayrants' depredations continued until the march of Taldor's First Army of Exploration. Pushing northward through the Verduran Forest, the armies not only annexed humanoid realms but also vanquished monsters that endangered Taldan civilization. Units of elite monster-hunters cornered and killed several corbayrants, driving the most powerful and cunning survivors deep into hiding. As millennia went by, the reclusive beasts became little more than legend, although many still prey upon animals and daring travelers who penetrate their remote forest lairs.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Corbayrants are incredibly rare, and those few that survived into the modern day are crafty and careful. Daring monster-hunters occasionally venture into their forests to learn whether rumors of surviving corbayrants are true; these brave warriors generally seek the glory from vanquishing such a legendary foe or wish to acquire a corbayrant's rare and valuable toxins. A few druidic cabals know that corbayrants exist, but they give the creatures a wide berth and steer others well away from the monsters'

hunting grounds to avoid triggering a corbayrant's capricious wrath.

Corbayrants dislike the company of others of their kind; they see other corbayrants as competitors and reminders of the days when they were hunted. Corbayrants can't reproduce outside of the First World and therefore can't expand their species, although some corbayrants are independently investigating magical methods of propagation that involve bizarre rituals and bloody sacrifices of fey creatures.

A corbayrant's strange biology is dramatically impacted by cold environments, making it sluggish and irritable. Cold damage causes its flesh to degenerate with surprising speed, and the touch of even a single snowflake causes it excruciating agony. Although corbayrants are reluctant to relocate from their established hunting grounds, prolonged periods of cold weather usually compel them to seek warmer territory. A rare few corbayrants have adapted to other habitats, lurking in warm, fetid marshes or amid desert oases.



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
White Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Green Guard

Bestiary

GRISANTIAN LION

This massive lion's fur and skin shimmer with a golden sheen.

GRISANTIAN LION

CR 14



XP 38,400

CN Huge magical beast

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

Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 13, flat-footed 24 (+5 Dex, +16 natural, -2 size)

hp 184 (16d10+96)

Fort +16, **Ref** +15, **Will** +8

DR 10/epic; **Immune** disease, poison; **Resist** fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +23 (3d6+13 plus grab), 2 claws +23 (1d8+9)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks pounce, powerful bite, rake (2 claws +23, 1d8+9), tearing claws

STATISTICS

Str 29, **Dex** 21, **Con** 22, **Int** 4, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +27 (+31 sunder); **CMD** 42 (44 vs. sunder, 46 vs. trip)

Feats Greater Sunder, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Run, Skill Focus (Perception), Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +16 (+20 when jumping), Climb +16, Perception +11, Stealth +8; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics, +4 Stealth

Languages Common (can't speak)

ECOLOGY

Environment warm plains or hills

Organization solitary

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Tearing Claws (Ex) When a grisantian lion hits a creature with two or more claw attacks in a single round, it savages any armor worn by the target—this grants the grisantian lion a free sunder attempt against armor worn by the target if the victim fails a DC 27 Reflex save. The save DC is Strength-based.

Powerful Bite (Ex) A grisantian lion's bite attack adds 1-1/2 times its Strength bonus to its damage rolls instead of its normal Strength bonus.

Taldan legends tell of the grogrisant (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Taldor, the First Empire* 59), a golden-furred leonine beast that First Emperor Taldaris killed in the early days of the empire. The grogrisant has reappeared throughout history to test great Taldan heroes, and scholars disagree as to whether this is the same ageless mythic beast or a rare race of creatures. In either case, the mighty grogrisant has sired powerful offspring among the dire lions of the Whistling Plains north of the World's Edge Mountains. Their legendary heritage

evident in their great size, lustrous hide, and rending claws, grisantian lions stalk the plains and mountains of northern Taldor. Haughty and powerful, grisantian lions seek easy meals but cannot resist an opportunity for a challenging fight, hurling themselves against large foes such as mammoths and giants to demonstrate their formidable attacks and supernatural resilience.

A grisantian lion stands 14 feet tall at the shoulder and weighs around 8,000 pounds. Female grisantian lions are slightly larger than males.

ECOLOGY

Descendants of an incredibly rare legendary beast, grisantian lions are themselves remarkably uncommon. Despite being few in number, grisantian lions are extremely hardy and long-lived. Their golden-hued hides, which retain some of their ancestor's legendary toughness, protect them from parasites as well as the rare attackers that dare to challenge them. A grisantian lion can easily live 2 centuries, and even longer in an area where regular prey is plentiful.

Grisantian lions are choosy regarding their mates, selecting only the largest and most powerful dire lions. Unlike regular lions, grisantian lions do not congregate in prides; they return to their solitary lives shortly after mating. Grisantian lion cubs grow quickly, becoming adults within a year of birth. A grisantian lion parent may teach its cub the rudiments of hunting and caring for itself, but grisantian lions are not nurturing by nature and rarely express affection for their offspring. A grisantian lion parent forces its cub away from its territory as soon as it can survive on its own, but before it becomes large enough to effectively challenge its parent for control of the area. A dire lion parent may attempt to incorporate its grisantian lion cub into its pride, but the creature's supernaturally resilient hide, savage cunning, and natural ferocity make it a danger to other dire lions, and the cub is quickly shunned. Adult grisantian lions therefore already have long experience in surviving on their own.

Grisantian lions are solitary hunters too large to stalk prey through tall grasses as effectively as their smaller cousins. Instead, grisantian lions bring their brute strength and intellect to bear, often targeting prey accompanied by their young; this forces the prey to either stand and protect their offspring, or flee and leave the lion an easy meal. Grisantian lions revel in challenging fights, and often attack larger animals just for the thrill of battle. Confident in their incredible hides, Grisantian lions have been known to attack mastodons, dinosaurs, hydras, and even dragons. Much like common lions, grisantian lions rarely attack humanoids when other food options are available. This reluctance is less out of a concern for self-preservation than because grisantian lions don't see humanoids as large enough to pose

a worthwhile challenge. If a grisantian lion learns otherwise—such as if a well-placed arrow manages to overcome its resilient hide—it leaps eagerly into battle. Many hunters have attacked a grisantian lion, believing the creature to be disinterested or even skittish, only to have a lucky shot provoke the lion's assault.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Although the grisantian lions' mythic progenitor inhabits the World's Edge Mountains, the lions have spread over much of Taldor and even into neighboring nations. Grisantian lions prefer warmer climates, but they can thrive in almost any environment. Their thick fur and dense flesh allow them to survive severely cold climates for short periods of time, generally long enough to hunt before returning to whatever warm cave or den they've made for themselves. Their fur becomes thicker in such climates within only a few weeks, helping to keep the creatures warm. In hot regions, grisantian lions tend to shed weight, becoming much lighter, and grow very fine coats, with the males losing their manes entirely.

Aside from the urge to find a mate and produce offspring, which strikes only every few decades, grisantian lions are creatures of solitude. They deem mundane lions too weak and dim-witted to be worth their company for long, and they consider the irritation of sharing food and glory with another of their kind more bothersome than the difficulty of hunting alone. Grisantian lions rarely ally with larger, more powerful creatures, as their inclination is to fight such creatures to prove their prowess rather than work together.

Hunters and trappers eagerly pursue rumors of grisantian lion activity, hoping to craft durable armor from its hide. Unfortunately for these hunters, the lion's skin nearly always loses its remarkable resilience after the beast is slain. Rumors of alchemical or magical treatments to preserve the hide are as pervasive (and, unfortunately, as frequently spurious) as rumors of the lions themselves.

Grisantian lions can't speak, although they understand languages spoken in nearby communities. Unwise Taldan nobles sometimes sponsor hunts to recover grisantian lion cubs, but the creatures grow so quickly that keeping them caged is often a difficulty. Even young grisantian

lions resist domestication with a petulant ferocity. With their keen intellect and ability to understand their keepers' language, grisantian lions escape confinement frequently; at best, a would-be master loses only a few servants or some livestock as the creature escapes back into the wild; at worst, the noble finds herself at the claws of the creature she sought to keep captive.

Bargaining with a grisantian lion is difficult but not impossible; the creatures like to receive tributes of meat and other delicacies and can be convinced to provide short-term services in exchange for the promise of future spoils. Orcs, in particular, find a particular kinship with grisantian lions and sometimes attempt to convince one to join a raid against a well-fortified settlement, although such alliances are often temporary.



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirit
Emblems

Ulfen

Bestiary

KYTON, PHYLACATOR

This imposing humanoid is clad in black chainmail with a featureless helm. It clutches a serrated dire flail in its gauntlets, and several pairs of manacles on its belt writhe of their own accord.

PHYLACATOR

CR 18



XP 153,600

LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, kyton, lawful)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Perception +26

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 12, flat-footed 30 (+6 armor, +2 Dex, +14 natural)

hp 297 (18d10+198); regeneration 15 (good weapons and spells, silver weapons)

Fort +19, **Ref** +15, **Will** +16

DR 15/good and silver; **Immune** cold, disease; **SR** 29

Weaknesses iron chair (see text)

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft. (30 ft. without armor)

Melee +1 *vicious dire flail* +28/+23/+18/+13 (1d8+16 plus 2d6), +1 *vicious dire flail* +28/+23 (1d8+6 plus 2d6)

Ranged mwk manacles +23 (1d4+11 nonlethal plus trip)

Special Attacks animated manacles, forbearance, unnerving gaze (30 ft., DC 26)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th; concentration +25)

Constant—*true seeing*

At will—*deeper darkness*, *detect thoughts* (DC 19), *discern lies* (DC 21), *order's wrath* (DC 21)

3/day—*greater command* (DC 22), *greater teleport*

1/day—*imprisonment* (DC 26), *greater prying eyes*

STATISTICS

Str 31, **Dex** 18, **Con** 32, **Int** 15, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +28 (+32 trip); **CMD** 42 (44 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Enforcer^{APG}, Great Fortitude, Greater Trip, Improved Trip, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (dire flail)

Skills Bluff +28, Intimidate +28, Knowledge (local, planes, religion) +23, Perception +26, Sense Motive +26, Stealth +21

Languages Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ institutionalized

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Plane of Shadow)

Organization solitary

Treasure double (mwk chain mail, +1 *vicious*/+1 *vicious dire flail*, 4 mwk manacles, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Animated Manacles (Su) A phylacator can throw a set of masterwork manacles like a masterwork bola. A target tripped by the phylacator's manacles is also entangled until it slips free of the manacles or breaks them. Manacles thrown by a phylacator automatically expand or contract to fit creatures of any size. As a move action, a phylacator can move a single set of manacles within 180 feet up to 30 feet in any direction, but if a creature is

locked in the manacles, the phylacator must succeed at a grapple combat maneuver check against the creature to move it. A phylacator can open or close any number of manacles within 180 feet as a free action, but it cannot open and close the same manacle in the same round.

Forbearance (Su) As a full-round action, a phylacator can end one *imprisonment* effect it previously created. This violently rips the target through the Plane of Shadow to an unoccupied square adjacent to the phylacator, automatically reducing the target to 0 hit points in the process. This is a pain^{UM} effect.

Institutionalized (Ex) In exchange for its service, a phylacator forms a bond with an institution that consists of 100 or more prisoners. While inside the limits of this institution, it gains a +2 bonus on initiative checks and Bluff, Intimidate, Knowledge (local), Perception, and Sense Motive checks. It must spend 1 day familiarizing itself with the institution to form this bond; once selected, it loses any bond it had with a previous location.

Iron Chair (Su) Each phylacator is bound to a specific metal throne covered with a thousand iron spikes, in which it must sit, unarmored, for 15 minutes each day. A phylacator that does not perform this ritual loses its regeneration and institutionalized abilities until it can do so. The iron chair has hardness 10 and 500 hit points; if destroyed, a phylacator must spend 1d12 days on the Plane of Shadow to acquire a replacement.

Unnerving Gaze (Su) A creature that fails its saving throw against a phylacator's gaze is overcome with submissive hopelessness, taking a –4 penalty to its CMD for 1d4 rounds. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Phylacator kytons serve as jailers, torturers, and executioners in the most terrible prisons across the planes. Although a phylacator normally relies on its intimidating presence and booming voice to quell its charges, phylacators also enjoy violence and relish opportunities to quash riots. In combat, a phylacator knocks foes to the ground with its flail and pummels them into submission, relishing the painful feedback it receives when using its weapon. Against fleeing foes, a phylacator hurls manacles it magically animates, incapacitating its foes until it can recover them at its leisure. Since a phylacator is often responsible for keeping prisoners alive, it frequently uses nonlethal tactics—but that doesn't mean it is any less brutal or efficient in its methods.

Although a phylacator normally wears armor and draped chains to cover its flesh, its skin is midnight blue in color and has the texture of rough-hewn stone. Phylacators are hairless and their steel-gray eyes lack pupils. They are unceasingly patient and can remain utterly motionless for hours.

Phylacators stand almost 7 feet tall and weigh approximately 350 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Phylacators claim to be the ones who exploited the weaknesses of the kytons' prison in Hell and helped to facilitate their race's escape into the Plane of Shadow. As a reward for their service and intimate knowledge of prisons, phylacators were chosen to serve as wardens in Xovaikain, the prison realm where their revered deity, Zon-Kuthon, resides. For ages, the phylacators' vigilance in maintaining security has been absolute. Wherever phylacators serve, they maintain a thorough knowledge of all chambers and passages, every lock and bar, and the habits of each other warden and guard.

Phylacators are deeply familiar with the sufferings mortal minds experience while imprisoned and are experts at provoking maddening desperation in even the most resigned prisoners. As a form of entertainment, a phylacator sometimes allows the most intelligent of its prisoners to think he has found a way to escape, such as by creating predictable patterns of guard shifts, instructing officials to seem to be susceptible to bribes, or appearing to overlook access points near supply routes. After letting a prisoner plan for weeks, months, or even years, those avenues are closed at the last minute to catch the prisoner in the act of escape, after which he is publicly tortured to serve as an example to others.

As powerful as they are, phylacators have a significant vulnerability. Every night, a phylacator must remove its armor and sit in a torture device known as an iron chair to shed its blood in tribute to Zon-Kuthon. This device is a dull metal throne covered with hundreds of spikes all over the back, seat, and leg-rests. A phylacator usually keeps its iron throne in a secluded location, such as behind a trapped secret door, but some phylacators keep their iron thrones hidden in plain sight among other implements of torture.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Although the creatures mortals call kytons are properly known as "velstracs," most don't mind the term "kyton" as it denotes a flattering appreciation for their skills. Phylacators are an exception; they bristle at being called kytons and insist that their kind be called velstracs instead. Failing to do so after a single instance of correction is sufficient to earn a phylacator's ire.

A select few phylacators are bound to the Material Plane to serve as jailers for military prisons or other high-security detention facilities. A spellcaster can bound a phylacator only with powerful

spells such as *greater planar ally* or *greater planar binding*. A conjurer that knows a phylacator's proper name can promise the phylacator sanction over not less than 100 good or chaotic creatures and ownership of the corpses of prisoners executed under the phylacator's jurisdiction. If these criteria are met, a phylacator serves willingly and obediently for 1 year. A phylacator might serve longer for a larger prison population, or increasingly sadistic authority over the prisoners.

Most phylacators on Golarion serve evil dictators or wicked cults, although a few secretly serve less despicable benefactors who use the outsiders to keep dangerous criminals securely locked away. For instance, many Nidalese know of phylacators serving in Pangolais, but rumors that taxmasters of Abadar employ a phylacator in a secret correctional installation beneath Oppara are stridently denied by the church.



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part 1:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
Through the
Granite Walls

NPC
Gallery

Continuing the
Campaign

Spirits of Six
Emperors

Ulfen Guard

Bestiary

SOULPIERCED

This translucent apparition wears tatters of once-fine clothing and jewelry. The creature's still-beating heart glows brightly around a dagger thrust through its chest.

SOULPIERCED

CR 17



XP 102,400

CE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +16; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +39

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 31, flat-footed 18 (+8 deflection, +12 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 275 (22d8+176)

Fort +15, **Ref** +19, **Will** +19

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +6; incorporeal; rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits; **SR** 28

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee incorporeal touch +28 (17d6 plus frustrating touch)

Special Attacks frustrating touch (DC 25), livid outburst (20d6, DC 25)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +28)

Constant—*non-detection*

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 34, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 27

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +28; **CMD** 47

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Skill Focus (Perception), Stand Still, Step Up

Skills Bluff +30, Fly +45, Intimidate +39, Perception +39, Sense Motive +33, Stealth +37

Languages Common

SQ site bound, soulpiercing blade

ECOLOGY

Environment any land

Organization solitary, pair, or agony (3–6)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Frustrating Touch (Su) A soulpierced's touch transfers some of its overwhelming frustration to its target. A creature damaged by a soulpierced's incorporeal touch attack must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude save or be staggered for 1 round. This is an emotion and mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Wisdom-based.

Livid Outburst (Su) Three times per day as a standard action, the soulpierced can release a burst of deep-seated rage to overwhelm the emotions of surrounding creatures. All creatures within 30 feet of the soulpierced take 20d6 points of damage and become livid with anger. Livid creatures take a –2 penalty to AC and can't cast spells, use Charisma- or Intelligence-based skills other than Intimidate, or use any ability that requires patience or concentration. A successful DC 25 Will save halves the damage and negates the livid effect. A livid creature can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turn to end

the livid effect, but it is fatigued for 1 round after the livid effect ends. This is an emotion and mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Wisdom-based.

Rejuvenation (Su) A soulpierced can be permanently destroyed only if the blade is first removed from its heart. Otherwise, A soulpierced that is destroyed reappears in the same location 2d4 days later.

Site Bound (Ex) A soulpierced cannot travel more than 100 feet from where it was created.

Soulpiercing Blade (Su) A soulpierced's spirit is anchored in place by the blade through its heart. While this blade is in place, the soulpierced cannot be restored to life by any means other than direct intervention of a deity. This blade is also the source of the soulpierced's rejuvenation ability. Although a soulpierced is incorporeal, a corporeal creature can remove the blade as though it had the *ghost touch* magic weapon special ability. Removing the blade requires a successful disarm or steal^{APG} combat maneuver made as a full-round action. As a free action, a creature removing the blade must succeed at a DC 35 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) check to recite an appropriate prayer; otherwise, the blade isn't removed, even if the combat maneuver was successful. The blade disintegrates once removed, and the creature that removed it must succeed at a DC 29 Fortitude save or incur 2d4 negative levels. The save DC is Charisma-based.

A soulpierced is created from the tormented spirit of a victim of ritualistic murder. Each soulpierced is bound to the site of its death by a magical blade thrust through its chest. Even as a spirit, the soulpierced's still-beating heart is gruesomely visible, as is the blade stabbed through it. Although a soulpierced resembles a ghostly version of its living form, its features are so twisted by rage and grief that it is difficult to recognize. Prevented from moving on and receiving Pharasma's judgment but also unable to be returned to life, these tormented creatures grow increasingly bitter and angry, magically inflicting its frustration and rage onto nearby creatures.

Even those who destroy a soulpierced find their work incomplete, as the blade through the creature's heart causes it to rejuvenate in the same location within days. Only by removing the soulpiercing blade can anyone free the creature and permanently eliminate it as a threat. But the attempt itself poses grave danger, as close proximity to the soulpierced exposes the opponent to the creature's wrathful attack and the blade itself can harm those who remove it.

ECOLOGY

No soulpierced is created by accident, nor could they be. The wicked spellcasters willing to perform the elaborate and expensive magical ritual to transform a victim into a soulpierced must do so deliberately and with the utmost care. The ritual is a closely guarded secret but

incorporates powerful spells such as *create greater undead* and *soul bind*. It destroys the victim's body, leaving only her heart, and places her under a permanent *nondetection* spell that prevents allies or next of kin from locating her. The ritual to create a souldpierced is usually performed in some location where the perpetrator is confident the spirit won't be discovered, such as an isolated crypt, remote woods, or an abandoned ruin. Because of the complexity and expense of the ritual, the spellcaster must be extraordinarily invested, and thus nearly every souldpierced was once a person with powerful enemies, such as a monarch with influential contenders for the throne, a military leader capable of turning the tide of a war, or a government advisor with significant authority.

The blade used in the ritual must have a personal connection to the victim, but need not be a conventional weapon; while one souldpierced's blade might be an heirloom dagger, another's might be a shard of mirror. The ritual can anchor any creature that has a soul, although non-humanoid victims are rare.

The torment of the binding ritual, coupled with years—or even centuries—of loneliness and spite, erodes the remains of what personality the souldpierced had in life. Each souldpierced is unaware of the link between the blade in its heart and its perpetual torment. Although it's not impossible to convince a souldpierced that its blade must be removed, it is very difficult to overcome a souldpierced's agony and suspicion. Even if successfully convinced of the link between her suffering and her blade, the souldpierced is unable to remove the blade from her own heart and highly unlikely to trust another creature to do so.

Removing a souldpierced's blade is no simple matter. If the creature attempting to remove the blade isn't familiar with powerful counter-curses and prayers of unbinding, the blade remains firmly lodged in the souldpierced's heart. Even if successfully removed, the blade rots the life force of any creature that removes it, while crumbling the blade itself to powder.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Each souldpierced haunts a lonely location and is likely to spend many years without seeing another sentient creature.

Multiple souldpierced might share a location, especially if the spellcaster who created them did so in great number or returned to a favorite spot to perform the ritual on successive victims. In a case where the family or friends of a victim have orchestrated a deliberate and coordinated search, a bounty hunter or tracker might encounter a souldpierced, but the spirit's wrath makes it unlikely a scout returns to report on what he has found. A powerful spellcaster might take advantage of a souldpierced's endless rage to create an intractable guard, permanently anchored to the murder site and unwilling to let creatures pass without experiencing the souldpierced's fury.



THE SIX-LEGEND SOUL

Foreword

Part I:
Death of
an Heir

Part 2:
Carving the
Circle

Part 3:
With the
Granny

Continued
Came

Spirits
Enemies

Guard

Stiary

NEXT MONTH

SECRETS OF RODERIC'S COVE

By Adam Daigle

The Return of the Runelords Adventure Path begins in the pine-shaded port town of Roderic's Cove. Grudges and gossip are ever present in small-town life, and Roderic's Cove is no different. The town has seen its share of troubles in the past with Riddleport pirates and a haunting by the town's founder, and now those tensions are bubbling up again. After a deadly brawl breaks out, the heroes must piece together what's troubling the small town. Along the way, they stumble upon something larger than faction squabbles among the townsfolk—an ancient smoldering threat has flared to life. The powerful ancient wizards who once ruled this land are returning!

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Nestled in the northeastern corner of the Varisian Gulf, the small community of Roderic's Cove is as fiercely independent as it is unabashedly insular. Unsavory troublemakers and unusual events afflict the town, and heroes are needed to separate gossip and superstition

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By James Jacobs

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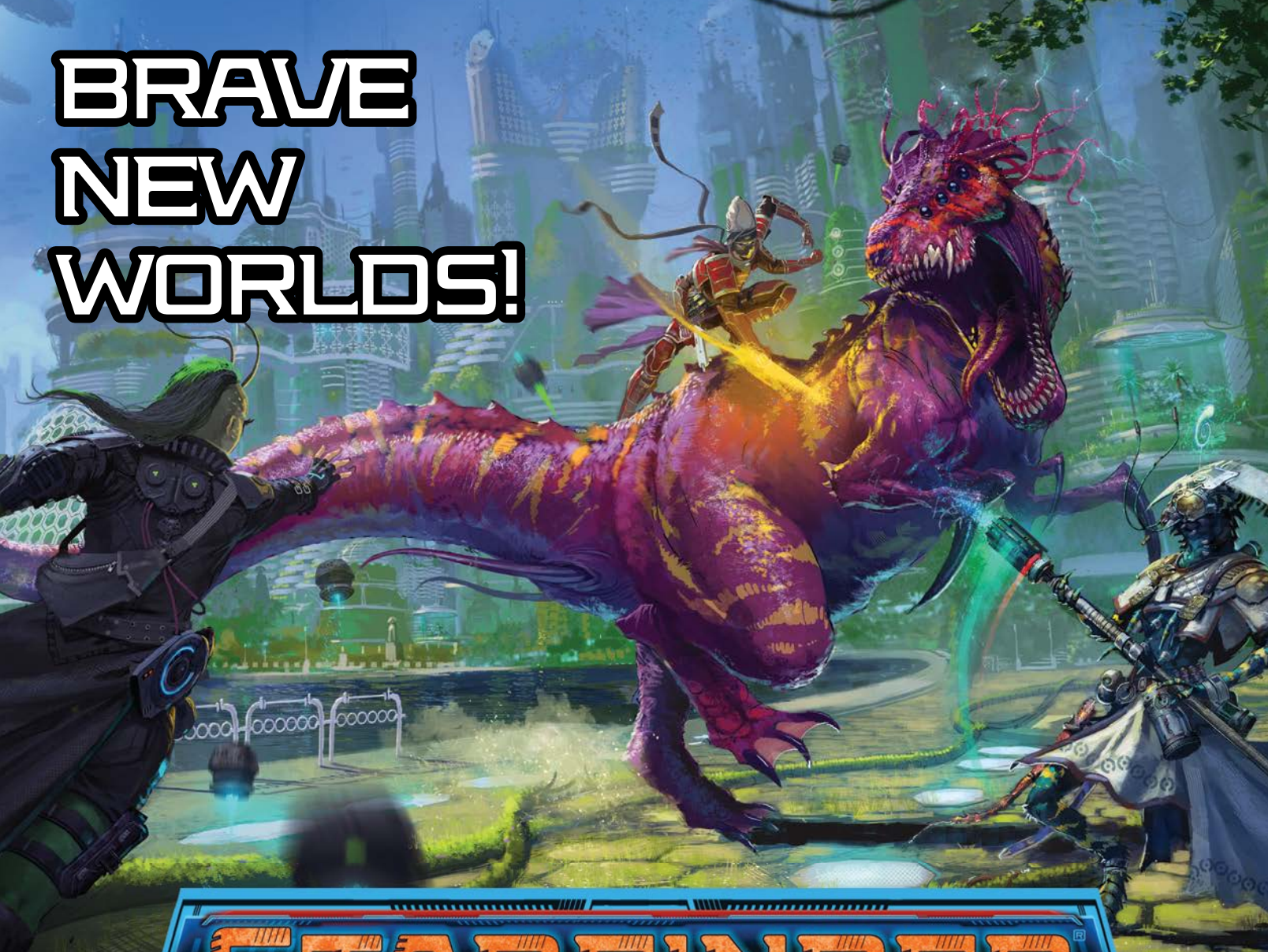
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Much hay has rightfully been made over the command and presence of many a grand prince, but few compare to the legendary usurper and savior Grand Prince Daronlyr XII.

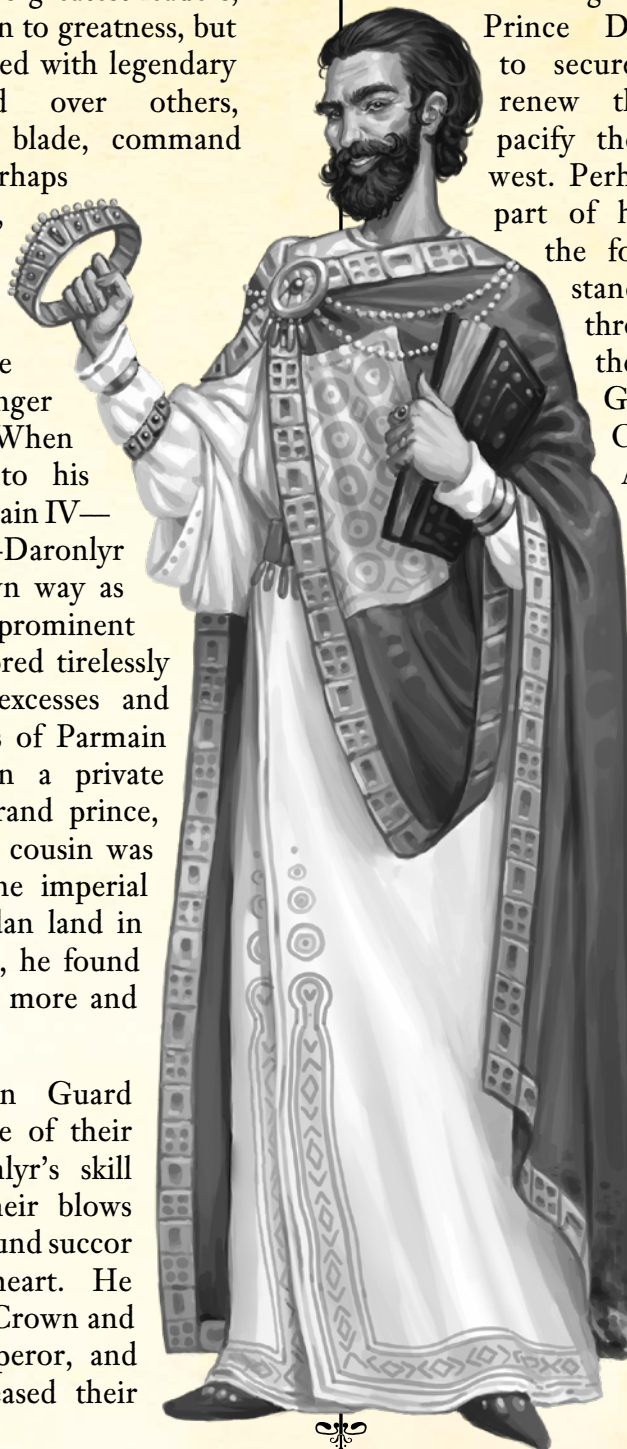
Like many of Taldor's greatest leaders, Daronlyr was not born to greatness, but instead seized it. Gifted with legendary command—command over others, command over the blade, command over magic, and, perhaps most importantly, command over himself—Daronlyr was born the only son of Grand Prince Parmain III's younger brother, Isidoron. When the throne passed to his indolent cousin, Parmain IV—cursed be his name—Daronlyr led Taldor in his own way as a loyal senator and prominent civic leader who labored tirelessly to ease the worst excesses and foreign appeasements of Parmain IV's rule. When, in a private audience with the grand prince, Daronlyr learned his cousin was plotting to undermine imperial unity by ceding Taldan land in Isgar to Kellid rebels, he found he could stomach no more and drew his blade.

The dutiful Ulfen Guard leaped to the defense of their emperor, but Daronlyr's skill and focus turned their blows aside, and his blade found succor in Parmain IV's heart. He seized the Primogen Crown and declared himself emperor, and the Ulfen Guard ceased their

attack and bowed before him. Many repeat this parable as a demonstration of the Ulfen Guard's loyalty to the position of emperor, rather than to any individual who holds that title, but surely all historians of merit can agree that such a feat would never have transpired for a less gifted orator than Daronlyr.

Following his swift coronation, Grand Prince Daronlyr XII proceeded to secure Taldor's borders and renew the empire's efforts to pacify the upstart Kellids to the west. Perhaps the best-remembered part of his legacy, however, was the founding of several long-standing arcane organizations throughout Taldor, including the First Imperial Arcanists' Guild in 3571 AR and Oppara's famed Kitharodian Academy in 3578 AR.

Grand Prince Daronlyr XII fell not to conspiracy or violence but to an outbreak of the Blanching Sickness that gripped western Taldor in late 3587 AR, proving that despite Daronlyr's mastery of so many skills, Pharama herself knows no mercy or admiration for even the best among the living.





GODS SAVE THE QUEEN

As the heroes return to Taldor, they discover that strange seeds have finally borne fruit—conspiracy has laid their patron low. They must now face the cunning secret society, the Immaculate Circle, and put an end to its immortal machinations, finding new enemies along their path. To finally set the world right and end the War for the Crown, the heroes must confront not one but six of Taldor's greatest emperors, resurrected from the past! Can the heroes survive, or will Taldor's past sins forever define its future?

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