

PATHFINDER[®]

ADVENTURE PATH  PART 2 of 6



Council of Thieves THE SIXFOLD TRIAL

by Richard Pett

THE CITY OF WESTCROWN

Nightshade Theater

Limehouse Theater

Shrine of Aroden (safe house)

Vaneo Arvanxi (Aberian's Folly)

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ADVENTURE PATH PART 2 of 6



Council of Thieves THE SIXFOLD TRIAL

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On With the Show

We're really excited about this volume. We're excited about every volume—mostly because it always seems like a small miracle when a book makes the transition from the realm of ideas and electronics to the real world—but this one especially. Our enthusiasm comes from seeing another of our crazy schemes unfolding, as this month, we're trying something very different. Something so unusual and offbeat that I don't think it's ever been attempted in the history of pen-and-paper roleplaying. You see, with this month's adventure, "The Sixfold Trial," your players get to do far more than fight and swindle their ways through the streets of Westcrown: they get to take the stage in a production of one of the most notorious pieces of theater in Golarion's history—literally, if they so please, as we've provide the playbook to the entire drama.

Something many might not expect is that the Paizo editorial pit has quite a theatrical crew. Theatrical, and musical. Our fearless leader, Erik Mona, once walked the path of the musical thespian, and it's not unusual to hear him belting out a few verses in his office late at night. Sean "the K is for *Khorus Line*" Reynolds is also a huge fan of musicals and frequently demonstrates his own off-puttingly good baritone. Jason often hearkens back to debauchorous days as a Renaissance Festival performer—playing an ogre, no doubt. James hordes musical instruments, hiding away a keyboard and trombone so they don't hear how loudly he covets a theremin. Sutter is the bassist for the metal band Shadow at Morning and lives with a cast too strange to be from anywhere other than the stage. And myself, I've been known to fan-boy over the occasional musical or Shakespearean drama. Thus, with

Foreword

our own proclivities and eccentricities in mind, it was a pretty easy task to get folks here excited about a Golarion-based stage production.

As usual, James and I can't take all of the credit for this one. From the word "go" we knew this plot needed a special touch, and any adventure that features a playhouse so prominently was going to need, well, characters—like, real, standout, memorable characters. And, of course, the first person who came to mind was the notorious Mr. Richard Pett. Rich holds a distinguished record of creating outlandishly memorable personalities within these pages, from Aldern Foxglove and Justice Ironbriar from *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #2 to Pilts Swastel and the Arkonas of *Pathfinder* #9, but those favorites weren't the only reason we summoned him up. Rather, it was his work on the Age of Worms Adventure Path, specifically *Dungeon* #131's "The Prince of Redhand," that made Rich our man for this job. One of the most unusual and loved installments of that series, the adventure sees the PCs invited to a nefariously decadent gala thrown by one of the campaign's most eccentric villains. It's a curious adventure that sidelines many typical RPG tropes, and aside from throwing the characters into a social setting with dozens of potential enemies, the evening's entertainments take the form of a series of roleplaying and skill-based encounters. Think of it as kind of a dark fantasy comedy of manners—with a blackguard for a host and a troupe of circus freaks for the wait staff. It's also one of our favorites, so when we decided we wanted a debauched cast party to follow the play aspect of "The Sixfold Trial," we decided to see if Rich would be up for refining some of the tricks he debuted in Redhand. The following pages prove he certainly was.

Yet Rich wasn't the only mad Englishman we abused on this project. Having recently moved to Mr. Pett's neck of the woods himself, Nicolas Logue also proved an obvious fit. For years Nick has toured the world performing and teaching theater in addition to inflicting his uniquely energetic and foul-mouthed brand of roleplaying upon all who dare to participate. With his love of gaming and professional theater background, having Nick actually write us a play that would sync up with our theater-based adventure seemed overly complex, laborious, and generally infeasible. But we did it anyway. The results appear on the following pages, one of the most elaborate and unlikely player handouts we've ever created: an entire short, multi-act play. Nick came up with what I hope you'll agree is a fun piece that really captures the feel of decadent Chelish theater, bringing an unexpected piece of Golarion right through into the real world.

So what's next? We're not really sure. "The Sixfold Trial," the adventure, and "The Six Trials of Larazod," the play, compliment each other perfectly, with the encounters expecting that the players are at least reading along with the

play and making rolls to determine their characters' success or incompetence as performers. But to what level groups take their performances, that's what we're really excited to see. I suspect most groups will probably read through the play in-character as part of the adventure, which is cool and what we've had in mind from the beginning—we're not asking anyone to jump up on the table and really ham up their lines if they're uncomfortable with that. But, as evidenced by the staff here, roleplaying games do tend to attract a theatrical lot, a big part of many games being essentially ad-lib acting after all. So I really hope to hear from the groups who take "The Six Trials of Larazod" and run with it. If your group takes to making a performance of the piece, jump on the messageboards and tell us how it went! And if you head down to the old community stage and put on a complete spectacle, make sure you have a YouTube account and bring the old camcorder along. If we were working on any other game I would really just expect this to be a fire-and-forget gimmick, but with all the creativity we're endlessly blown away by online, I can't wait to see what level you all take this to. So best of luck, we hope you have a truly memorable adventure, and break a leg!

THE MONSTERS GOT 'IM

Where's James, you ask? Well, ever read "The Cask of Amontillado?" "The Hounds of Tindalos?" "Casting the Runes?" All of those fates might actually be preferable to some of the torments our much-suffering editor-in-chief have been going through of late shepherding the second of our two massive Pathfinder RPG rulebooks, the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, through our grueling editorial process. We've all been doing double duty trying to get that behemoth monster book out the door, but to make sure everything is as clean and clear as it can be, we've pushed back its release by just a few weeks. There's a chance, though, that the *Bestiary* might not be available by the time this volume reaches folks. So, to assure that you have everything you need to run this adventure the second you have it in your hands, we've put up Pathfinder RPG versions of the monsters referenced herein on paizo.com. It's also a great preview of some of the new rules and looks the Pathfinder RPG brings to some old favorite beasts, so head on over and check it out. We promise we won't start the show without you.



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The Sixfold Trial

Since Aroden's death and the rise of the House of Thrune, Cheliax has increasingly become a nation of decadents and sinister rule. To hear the simple folk complain, an outsider might quickly come to the impression that the nation's nobility think of themselves as above the law of the land, and that the common citizen exists only as a resource for toil or, increasingly, a source of often cruel entertainment. Many nobles have found that a desperate shopkeep or starving artist will risk much for the promise of a pouch of gold, and as a result bloodsports, violent competitions, and other dangerous pastimes are on the rise, including the return of a long-outlawed genre of entertainment known as the murderplay—a performance in which actors engage in deadly peril on stage for the entertainment of an aristocracy grown increasingly bored with less-confrontational pastimes.

The Sixfold Trial

Advancement Track

The PCs should be 3rd level when “The Sixfold Trial” begins. By the time they finish performing the deadly play for Westcrown’s elite and are preparing to enter the Asmodean Knot, they should have reached 4th level, and by the adventure’s end they should be well into 5th level.



ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Westcrown’s infatuation with the stage predates the death of the nation’s deity, Aroden, but it is only in the past hundred years—with a government increasingly seeking decadence and spectacle and a citizenry growing more and more desperate to do whatever it takes to survive—that a play like *The Six Trials of Larazod*, banned after its first performance 200 years ago, could return from the obscurity of censorship and oppression to become one of the city’s best-known and most notorious plays. Certainly, since the play’s first performance in Westcrown (which resulted in riots and the eventual disappearance of its creator) 2 centuries ago, the social scene in the city has changed dramatically. Where once a night out on the town might have included fine dining, an overly long opera, and stimulating conversation thereafter at a noble’s manor, Westcrown’s theater patrons today have much different tastes. Indeed, with the constant threat of shadow beasts lurking on streets and alleys after dark, the very concept of a nighttime play has vanished from Westcrown, replaced by matinees or late afternoon performances of an increasingly violent nature. Bloodsports in small-scale fighting pits, public executions, salacious private performances that are little more than orchestrated orgies, and even (it is rumored) the sport of hunting men and women like animals through Westcrown’s ruined northern reaches (known as the Parego Dospera) are the entertainments of the day, while nights are spent at home and off the streets.

This is the Westcrown that brother and sister Ecarrdian and Chammady Drovege want to rule as the new lords of the Council of Thieves, yet before they can seize their prize, they must first establish control over the Council of Thieves itself—a difficult task as long as their father, Vassindio, still lives. Yet they can’t simply kill him, since any overt power play against the Council itself, steeped as it is in the traditions of assassination and treachery, would swiftly backfire on them. Instead, they have slowly been gathering allies and setting into motion a series of “distractions” to keep both the city’s guard (the Dottari) and the Council itself occupied so as to reduce the chance of anyone noticing what they and their allies are up to. The funding of several bands of brigands (among them the recently defeated Bastards of Erebus) was but the first public manifestation of their efforts, and now the two are preparing the second.

Deep under the infamous villa of Westcrown’s mayor (a place called Aberian’s Folly today) lies a secret known to only a few in the Twilight City—a pit fiend named Liebdaga the Twin. A gift to the new rulers of Westcrown after the House of Thrune seized control of Chelixa nearly 70 years ago, Liebdaga has remained imprisoned in a chamber deep beneath Aberian’s Folly ever since. Using magical techniques as old as the long-dead empire of Thassilon (who used powerful imprisoned fiends in a similar manner), the pit fiend serves as an infernal power source for the manor above, providing energy for things as petty as hot running water, lights, and self-igniting fireplaces up to much more elaborate works, such as the shadowy demiplane known as the Asmodean Knot, a place used by Aberian as both a prison and a vault.

While public knowledge of the imprisoned pit fiend is scanty, Ecarrdian and Chammady know it as fact. Thus was born the second stage of their audacious plan—to infiltrate Aberian’s Folly and secure an agreement with Liebdaga, by the terms of which, in return for freeing him, Ecarrdian and Chammady might secure his aid as an incredibly powerful ally when the time comes to seize control of Westcrown.

To set this plan in motion, the brother and sister researched Aberian’s Folly extensively—both its inhabitants and the structure itself. They’ve discovered that the secrets to releasing Liebdaga lie not only within the dungeon surrounding his prison deep underground, but also in the vault known as the Asmodean Knot. Further, they learned that Mayor Arvanxi’s majordomo Crosael is more than she seems—she is in fact a tiefling who has been successfully passing herself off as a human for decades, and has enjoyed a much more luxurious and comfortable life in Westcrown as a result. When Chammady approached Crosael and blackmailed her, the majordomo immediately agreed to serve the brother and sister as an agent in the Arvanxi household, and it was through documents and intelligence she gathered in the house that the two learned as much as they did.

The time has finally come for the long and dangerous process of contacting and eventually freeing Liebdaga. The first step is to send in one of their agents, a loyal minion named Sian Daemodus. Using their hold over Crosael, the siblings managed to get Sian hired on as part of the manor help, and Sian is now under cover and hard at work finding a way into the Asmodean Knot to pave the way for

Fame Points

At various points in this Adventure Path, there are times when the PCs' exploits are significant enough to gain them fame and admiration among the people of Westcrown. This growing fame is tracked by the accumulation of "Fame Points." Certain encounters in "The Sixfold Trial" indicate that you should award Fame Points to the party when they accomplish certain goals.

an upcoming foray by Ecarrdian and Chammady's forces into the dungeons below to secure their nefarious goal.

Yet just as their plans to use the Bastards of Erebus fell short when a group of rising heroes cut them down, their work within Aberian's Folly is about to face an unanticipated challenge when the mayor schedules a grand feast and party to celebrate the success of his favorite play, *The Six Trials of Larazod*—a gala event that just happens to include the same heroes who so recently defeated the Bastards of Erebus.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Impressed by the defeat of the Bastards of Erebus, the leaders of the Children of Westcrown ask the PCs to meet with one of their greatest allies—Pathfinder Ailyn Ghontasavos. Ailyn believes that the key to vanquishing the shadow beasts lies somewhere deep in Westcrown's sealed Pathfinder Lodge, but before anyone should dare brave the grounds of this building, the keys to its locks and the history of what actually befell the lodge must be recovered—keys and history kept safe within the vault of Westcrown's leadership.

In order to infiltrate the mayor's manor and search it for these keys and notes, the PCs must join a theatrical troupe, pose as actors, and brave a play no one has ever survived in order to be invited into the mayor's home to celebrate the production's success. Once in Aberian's Folly, disguised as nothing more than actors playing the parts of heroes, the PCs must endure a decadent feast long enough to slip away into the manor's halls, where they discover the entrance to a magical vault known as the Asmodean Knot. Within this hellish, shadowy demiplane, they encounter an agent

of the Council of Thieves eager to set into motion the release of a powerful devil—if they can best him and the guardians and traps of the Knot, they may just secure the secrets to the Pathfinder Lodge and take the first key step toward freeing Westcrown from its monster-haunted nights.

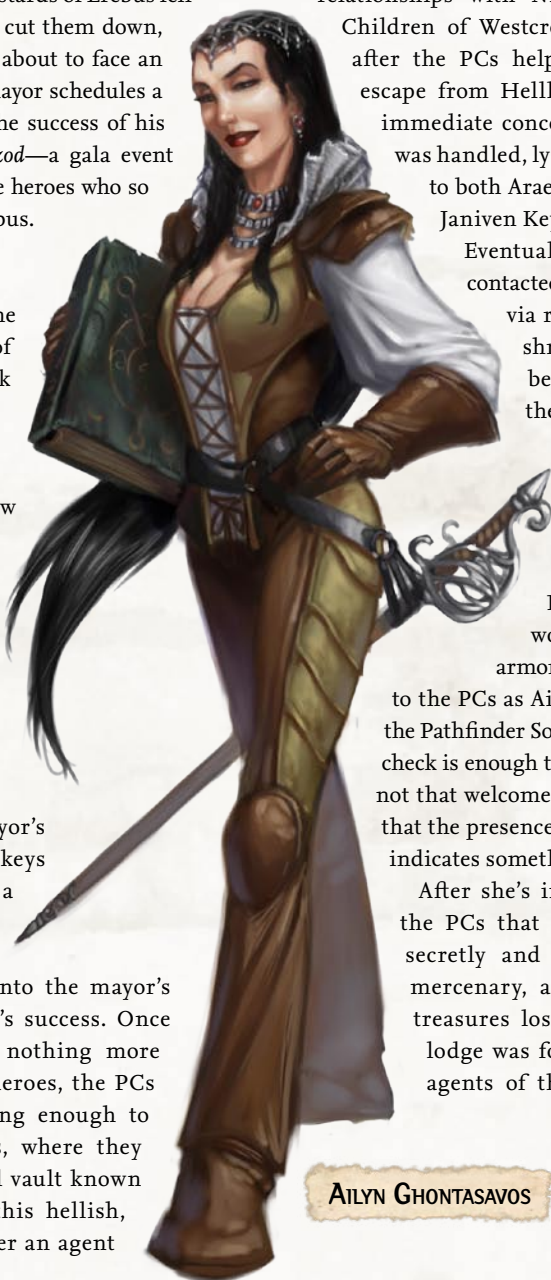
PART ONE: THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN

After the PCs complete "Bastards of Erebus," they should have some time to recover and perhaps handle other personal matters, spend their treasure, or pursue relationships with NPCs. During this time, the Children of Westcrown are relatively inactive—after the PCs helped the group's leader Arael escape from Hellknight custody and once the immediate concern of the Bastards of Erebus was handled, lying low for a time seemed wise to both Arael and his second-in-command, Janiven Key.

Eventually, though, the PCs are contacted by Janiven—she invites them via runner to meet with her at the shrine of Aroden the group has been using as a safe house. If the PCs ask why, she answers in an excited whisper, "We may have found a way to take back our nights!"

At the safe house, Janiven and Arael wait to greet the PCs, along with a beautiful woman dressed in well-worn armor. Arael introduces this woman to the PCs as Ailyn Ghontasavos, a member of the Pathfinder Society. A DC 10 Knowledge (local) check is enough to recall that the Pathfinders are not that welcome these days in Westcrown, and that the presence of one here, even under cover, indicates something big is building.

After she's introduced, Ailyn explains to the PCs that she has come to Westcrown secretly and under cover of a common mercenary, and hopes to recover several treasures lost when the city's Pathfinder lodge was forcibly closed decades ago by agents of the House of Thrune. Called Delvehaven, the lodge has been locked down tight for over 30 years, and even before then no Pathfinder has set foot inside since



AILYN GHONTASAVOS

The Sixfold Trial

Aroden's death. The fact that the shadow beasts came to plague Westcrown's streets so soon after the lodge was sealed by the House of Thrune seems to indicate a connection between the two events, and Ailyn believes she has discovered proof while researching Delvehaven in the libraries of Skyreach at the Great Lodge in Absalom. She goes on to explain that, as much as she would want to explore Delvehaven, she cannot—she's not officially here on Pathfinder business, and if the society were to find out that she had taken the exploration of Delvehaven into her own hands, she would be in a lot of trouble. Yet if, perchance, another group not directly affiliated with the Pathfinders were to enter the old ruin—say, a group of heroes eager to combat the shadow beast legacy—Ailyn would be able to make a formal request to have Delvehaven investigated again.

Unfortunately, one cannot just simply walk into Delvehaven. While the House of Thrune no longer actively guards the site, they transferred that responsibility to Westcrown's mayoral office. Worse, the fact that the House of Thrune has been engaged in an act of rewriting history (either by destroying existing documents or changing them to suit Thrune's preferences) means that reliable information about Delvehaven has become incredibly scarce. Ailyn knows that there are several powerful magical locks and wards on the lodge placed there by the House of Thrune to prevent entry, and her research has shown her that keys to the locks and documentation relating to those wards exists in only one place—Aberian's Folly. Further, the House of Thrune's devotion to order and tradition all but ensures that these keys and documents are kept in a complex, twelve-sided puzzle-box container known as a Chelish Crux, and that if it has been secured anywhere in Aberian's Folly, it is likely to lie within the manor's vault—a place known as the Asmodean Knot. Unfortunately, her research in the significantly sized libraries at the Grand Lodge in Absalom hit a dead end after that, and so she has come to Westcrown to continue her investigations.

At this point in the conversation, both Arael and Janiven observe that the banishing of the shadow beasts from the city's nights would be one of the greatest accomplishments the Children of Westcrown could do to earn the love and support of the city. If a method to achieve this goal, or even just clues that might point to such a method, are hidden in Delvehaven, an expedition to the old Pathfinder Lodge is very tempting indeed. And who better to mount such an expedition than the PCs, the heroes who, with the defeat of the Bastards of Erebus, are already well on their way to becoming the city's darlings?

While the urge to simply walk over to Delvehaven and start poking around and exploring might be tempting, such a plan is foolhardy. Not only are the wards and

guardians left by Thrune likely potent and deadly, but without doing the proper research on those protections, it's very likely that a blind exploration of the site would trigger one of many alarms that would alert the Chelish government, resulting in a swift reprisal that neither the Children of Westcrown nor the Pathfinders would appreciate. A better plan, and the plan Arael, Janiven, and Ailyn put to the PCs, is to find a way to infiltrate Aberian's Folly and secure access to the Chelish Crux and thus the keys and documents hidden within. With these, an investigation of Delvehaven can be made with greater safety and efficiency. Ailyn admits that the Pathfinders have long been curious about the exact details of the House of Thrune's interest in the lodge (as well as the nature of the wards they placed on it), and if the PCs can secure the contents of the Chelish Crux, the Society will pay them handsomely for the service.

As for how the PCs can infiltrate the home of one of Westcrown's most powerful government officials and have a good excuse to spend a fair amount of time searching it, Janiven has come up with a bold, unorthodox, and brilliant plan. All the PCs have to do is become actors!

THE INFILTRATION PLAN

Mayor Arvanxi is a lover of the theater, and in particular, the Theater Mortrescci—plays where not only the cast's reputations, but their very lives, are on the line during each performance. A cross between a play and a bloodsport, the Theater Mortrescci—more vulgarly referred to as the “murderplay”—has become one of Cheliox's fastest-growing forms of entertainment. Mayor Arvanxi's favorite play in this genre is a notorious work known as *The Six Trials of Larazod*, and as luck would have it, a prominent director is preparing to cast and direct this play with aims to perform the full and uncut version for the first time in years as part of the celebration of the newly reconstructed Nightshade Theater in Westcrown's Parego Regicon—the central island where the city's nobility and the traditional seat of government are located. If tradition holds true, and if the performance of the play pleases the mayor, he'll invite the cast and crew to his home for a banquet and party—a gala event that would give undercover agents of the Children of Westcrown a singularly perfect opportunity to explore the manor.

Janiven runs down the attractions of this plan, ticking each one off on a finger as she goes:

- As guests invited to the mayor's home, the heroes-as-actors don't need to worry about hiding from his guards or sneaking into the house.
- Mayor Arvanxi's obsession with and respect for the theatrical world would grant the heroes-as-actors a huge advantage in squeezing information from him.

What About the Other Rebels?

The other Children of Westcrown introduced in “Bastards of Erebus” have no further official roles to play in Council of Thieves—but that doesn’t mean they should fade away into the background. They are your NPCs to use as you wish, and if the PCs have forged relationships with any of them, those relationships should continue throughout the campaign. Let the fates of these NPCs develop organically as your game progresses, and if something unexpected happens to them, don’t worry that you’ll be ruining something scheduled to occur later in this campaign.

- The mayor’s parties have a well-known reputation for running long—sometimes over the course of days—so the PCs should have an excuse to remain in his home for more than enough time necessary to get the job done.
- The mayor will doubtless require the PCs to come in full costume from their performance, and since they’ll be playing adventurers and the like in the play, that essentially means they’ll be able to walk right in to his manor fully armed and armored, no questions asked.
- The mayor and his staff celebrate hard—it shouldn’t be long before he and the majority of his guards are so drunk and distracted that they’ll be in no condition to ask questions if the PCs slip away for several hours to look around.

The only real disadvantage of the plan, Janiven admits, is the nature of *The Six Trials of Larazod*. The play is notorious and was banned for many decades for a reason—the combats and torments the actors endure in the play are not faked, but real. And to date, no cast has survived a production of the full, uncut version of the play—the version the director, a man named Robahl Nonon, has promised to Westcrown and its mayor. But certainly, surviving a play should be a cinch for a group of heroes like the PCs. Even better, if the PCs become the first to survive the uncut version, the mayor’s delight and the subsequent invitation to his home will be all but guaranteed.

If the PCs seem reticent, Janiven points out that traditionally only wretched, half-starved convicts or truly desperate actors with no real talent have attempted to perform the play before, and thus it’s no small wonder that no one has yet survived the performance. Certainly a well-armed and successful group of adventurers can do the play justice!

Enough information is presented in this adventure to support alternate infiltrations of the mayor’s manor—if the PCs absolutely don’t want to follow the actor’s route, the play goes on as expected and the actors who do star in it become the talk of the town when they survive. The resulting cast party at the mayor’s home still presents a

great chance for the PCs to infiltrate the manor stealthily. Alternatively, if your group simply wants to cut to the chase and head straight to Delvehaven, you can skip to the next adventure, “What Lies in Dust,” and run it for the PCs—but without the key items and information they can secure in the Asmodean Knot (to say nothing of the extra experience levels and magic items this adventure awards), a premature invasion of Delvehaven can quite easily result in a sudden end to the campaign. Travel this route with care!

PART TWO: DRESS REHEARSAL

Once Janiven outlines her plan, she tells the PCs that there’s little time to waste—director Robahl Nonon is starting to cast parts for the play the very next day at his own venue, a small theater called the Limehouse. He’s already made the announcement that he’s looking for “authentic adventurers and legitimate risk-takers” over the use of established actors for most of the roles in the play—a move that has caused some discord among the performer’s circuit. In fact, apart from using regulars from his own acting troupe, he has made clear his hopes that all of the roles in this production will be filled by experienced “heroes.”

CASTING CALL

The Limehouse Theater is owned by Robahl Nonon, a relatively infamous director known for his temper and his knack for getting emotional performances out of his actors—at least out of those who don’t run in shameful tears from his stage. The theater itself is rather small, and for larger productions (like Robahl’s upcoming one), the Limehouse serves more as a headquarters and a place for dress rehearsals than an actual venue. The locals actually prefer this, as they find the dress rehearsals to be much more entertaining with their more-frequent errors, and Robahl himself has made a tradition of forcing his players to perform to this audience. Not only do the public dress rehearsals allow for additional income (he generally charges half price for such shows), but according to Robahl, “an actor who can remain focused before an audience as unruly and caustic as this one can perform anywhere!” Those who can’t handle the heckling are replaced.

Word of Robahl’s casting call for the uncut *Six Trials of Larazod* has spread throughout Westcrown, and while he’s cast a few of the supporting roles already, he has yet to settle on a Larazod and many of his companions. By the time the PCs arrive, the director is at his wits’ end—his call has brought only desperate actors who can’t fight or desperate adventurers who can’t act. He’s lowered his expectations, and when the PCs arrive to audition for the roles, Robahl

The Sixfold Trial

is ready to cancel the production—thus, even if none of the PCs can act, as long as they're competent (which, at 3rd level, they certainly are compared to the rabble that Robahl's seen so far), they've got the parts.

Have each PC make a level check modified by his Charisma modifier when Robahl interviews him—a character who has ranks in Perform (act) can make that check as well and take the better of the two results. Set aside the highest result for the party, then modify that result by +2 for every other successful DC 10 level check. The resulting number sets the party's base Popularity score. As they continue to rehearse and eventually perform, their Popularity rises and falls—at the end of the performance, assuming the PCs survive, their final Popularity indicates not only how many Fame Points they'll gain, but how much money they make for their hard work.

Story Award: If the PCs achieve a base Popularity of at least 15 in the interviews, award them 600 XP.

MEETING THE CAST AND CREW

Once he's accepted the PCs as his actors, Robahl invites them into the auditorium of the Limehouse to meet the rest of the cast and crew. The Limehouse auditorium seats about 60, and the stage is relatively compact at 20 feet wide and 10 feet deep—Robahl notes that, as a result, they won't be performing the more “complex” parts of *The Six Trials of Larazod* during rehearsal, but since those portions are traditionally “improvised” (by which he means unscripted combat and torture), that shouldn't be a problem.

Waiting to meet the PCs in the theater are the other members of the production—all of them already have their roles in the play and are eager to find out with whom they'll be working. Each of the five members of the troupe is presented below. Each NPC has a Role listed (this indicates the NPC's job during the play) and a Friendship Benefit with an associated Diplomacy DC. Becoming friends with an NPC requires a PC to spend 4 hours interacting with that NPC (usually practicing for the play, but any companionship counts) in a friendly manner, at the end of which the PC makes a Diplomacy check against the indicated DC. With a success, the NPC befriends the PC, and grants the indicated bonus as long as the friendship lasts—the benefit also ends if the NPC dies.

Story Awards: If a PC befriends one of their fellow cast and crew members, award the party XP as if they had defeated that NPC in combat.

ROBAHL NONON—INFAMOUS DIRECTOR

“Audacious! Unutterable! Incredible! The crowd pauses as I asseverate. They hang upon my every utterance, my every syllable is ambrosia to their jaded souls.”

A man so short and stout that he could pass for a dwarf, Robahl has a huge walrus moustache and a frightful frown. The toupee he wears is sadly obvious, as is the faded color of his once fine attire. A tyrant, minor noble, former military captain, and professional shouter, Robahl runs his troupe with military discipline. He delights in his fruitful and colorful use of language. Never betraying a paucity in his considerable vocabulary by resorting to abject profanity, he pummels those who disappoint him with outrageously long sentences containing obscure insults and flowery observations. His face and neck turn increasingly crimson as his anger builds and becomes a tirade, and he has been known to run out of breath while abusing an actor. Legend has it that he once railed against the great elven actor Lobbero for so long that the director passed out, leaving the still standing Lobbero speechless for the only time in his life.

Robahl's way with the ladies is equally legendary, and rumor holds he once married a Thuvian princess, but when her father found out, he had her put to death—Robahl escaped a similar fate by fleeing back to Cheliaz. Robahl is looking for a new conquest, and may set his eyes on an attractive female PC—if he does, he never yells at this character unless she turns down his advances, in which case he's too much of a professional to fire her but certainly chooses her as his primary target for ranting.

Robahl is a perfectionist, and subscribes to the theory that a person can only achieve true greatness if he is not hampered by false expectations of himself—hence, his attitude. He wants his insults to be remembered, his rants to strike a nerve, and his roars to sink in. Here are a few of Robahl's more printable put-downs. Make up your own, but above all, bellow them out like a sergeant at arms.

“No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no!”

“Inept, inefficient, incapable, incompetent, inadequate, insufferable... there aren't enough ‘in’ words to describe your mediocrity!”

“Never enter a battle of wits unarmed.”

“I'd say you were mediocre, but I'm not sure you've got that far yet.”

“Congratulations! You're the least talented nincompoop I have ever had the misfortune to meet.”

Role: Robahl is not only the director of *The Six Trials of Larazod*, but also plays the role of Asmodeus at the play's end.

Friendship Benefit (DC 23): A character attempting to befriend Robahl gets a circumstance bonus on his Diplomacy check equal to the number of days he has worked with Robahl without failing a Perform check in his presence (maximum +5 bonus). A character who befriends Robahl is no longer the target of his frequent tirades, and gains a +4 morale bonus on all skill checks made in a performance of a play Robahl directs.

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ROBAHL NONON

CR 3

XP 800

Male human expert 5

CN Medium humanoid

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

DEFENSE

AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9

hp 22 (5d8)

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee walking cane +3 (1d6-1)

STATISTICS

Str 9, **Dex** 8, **Con** 10, **Int** 12, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 11

Feats Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Perform [act])

Skills Bluff +11, Diplomacy +13, Disguise +11, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (local) +9, Linguistics +9, Perform (act) +14, Profession (director) +8, Sense Motive +8

Languages Azlanti, Common, Dwarven, Halfling, Infernal, Osiriani, Tien, Varisian

Gear darkwood walking cane (masterwork club), fine silk clothing worth 600 gp, gold and pearl ring worth 1,000 gp, 50 pp

VISBARONETESS DELOUR AULAMAXA—ARROGANT DIVA

“My talent is matched only by my beauty—and possibly my temper.”

The Visbaronetess' eyes show the passage of years that her alabaster skin and traditionally thick makeup conceal. A tremendous woman, both in size and personality, Delour Aulamaxa has long been one of Westcrown's most beloved divas. Although she normally demands huge sums of money for her participation in a play, the prestige that taking part in a production of the uncut *Trials* was enough to secure her in the relatively small role of chorus. It was at her urging that Robahl cast young and pretty Calseinica in the play as well, despite the director's better judgment. Of course, Delour's true reasons for encouraging this casting choice are motivated by revenge—see Calseinica's entry on the next page for details.

Delour typically wears extravagant clothing and jewelry, and her costumes during a performance are often less bombastic and outlandish than her tremendous day-to-day wardrobe.

Role: Aulamaxa is the chorus and narrator for the play—she sings during the play's introduction, at the start of each act, and at the play's close.

Friendship Benefit (DC 17; DC 27 to friends of Calseinica): Aulamaxa loves beautiful things, and gifts can influence her greatly. Giving her a gift worth 100 gp grants a +1 bonus on Diplomacy checks to befriend Aulamaxa; this bonus increases

by +1 for every additional 100 gp value of the gift. Aulamaxa accepts all gifts, regardless of the final result of the Diplomacy check. Flattery grants a static +2 bonus on all Diplomacy checks against Aulamaxa. She won't accept gifts from those she knows are Calseinica's friends, and in addition to having a higher Diplomacy DC against such PCs, any Diplomacy checks made to befriend Aulamaxa by someone she knows to be Calseinica's friend suffer a -4 penalty.

Securing Aulamaxa's friendship allows a PC to name-drop her once per day when purchasing anything in Westcrown worth a minimum of 100 gp—doing so grants a 20% price reduction from the actual price of the object being purchased.

DELOUR AULAMAXA

CR 2

XP 600

Female human expert 4

CN Medium humanoid

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

DEFENSE

AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9

hp 22 (4d8+4)

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +0 (1d3+1 nonlethal)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 8, **Con** 11, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 13

Feats Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Perform [sing]), Toughness

Skills Bluff +12, Diplomacy +9, Knowledge (nobility) +7, Linguistics +7, Perform (act) +9, Perform (sing) +12, Sense Motive +8

Languages Azlanti, Common, Dwarven, Infernal, Varisian

Gear fine clothes and jewelry worth 2,000 gp

THESING UMBERO ULVAUNO—INSUFFERABLE ACTOR

“My talent is unmatched, even by my beauty.”

Thesing Umberto Ulvauno is a handsome fellow whose extravagant garb and quick charm cannot long hide the color of his character. His chiseled good looks are brutal rather than delicate, and his sense of humor tends toward the cruel and dark. Impatient and insufferable, Ulvauno is nevertheless a master at maintaining his public image—those who don't work with him closely never see past his charming and friendly veneer. With the exception of Robahl himself (who views Thesing's personality as irrelevant in light of his talents in acting and entertainment and good looks), the rest of the players find Thesing unpleasant at best and an arrogant ass at worst—they avoid him when they can, which is in fact to Thesing's preference, as he views them as untalented

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competitors fit only to bask in his glory. Calseinica's recent addition to the performance is an exception—although she's rebuffed him several times already, Thesing still lusts after the starlet and is contemplating more drastic methods than flattery and bravado to win her favor.

The PCs already interacted with Thesing in the previous adventure, and thus are likely to have already established a relationship with the actor—unless the PCs went above and beyond in that initial encounter, Thesing sees them as crude thugs with no talent. He does not protest their casting as the key roles in the play simply because he is eager to see the PCs perish on stage, and his false professionalism and faux friendliness is simply engineered to encourage the PCs to put themselves in harm's way during the play for Thesing's eventual entertainment.

Role: Thesing has been given what he (and most of the city) assume will be the starring role in *The Six Trials of Larazod*—the role of Haanderthan. The possibility that the PCs might survive the play and steal his thunder from this juicy role doesn't cross Thesing's mind until several seconds after such an event actually occurs.

Friendship Benefit (DC 26): A character who aids Thesing in mocking and tormenting another for entertainment gains a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks to befriend him—an attractive female PC gains a +6 bonus as long as Thesing believes he has a chance to bed her (if he feels he has no chance, this bonus becomes a –6 penalty). In the end, all friendships with Thesing are false and immediately end in 3d6 days or when a PC makes a better Perform check than Thesing in a public venue, whichever comes first.

Thesing's friendship, as long as it lasts, imparts a +4 bonus on all Diplomacy checks made in Westcrown, but only on days in which Thesing and the PC are seen being friendly together in a public place.

THESING UMBERO ULVAUNO

CR 1

XP 400

Male human expert 3

CE Medium humanoid (human)

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

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 13 (3d8)

Fort +1, **Ref** +1, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee masterwork rapier +4 (1d6+1/18–20)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 11, **Con** 10, **Int** 11, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13

Feats Martial Weapon Proficiency (rapier), Skill Focus (Perform [act]), Skill Focus (Perform [sing])

Skills Bluff +7, Disguise +7, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (local) +5,

Knowledge (nobility) +6, Linguistics +1, Perform (act) +10, Perform (sing) +10, Ride +6

Languages Common, Infernal

Combat Gear *elixir of love*; **Other Gear** masterwork rapier, fine clothes worth 450 gp, 25 pp

CALSEINICA NYMMIS—RISING STARLET

"Isn't acting *wonderful*? It's a gift to be able to stand on stage!"

A petite beauty, Calseinica Nymmisis is not a trained actress—she is, instead, a natural talent, something that many other actors loathe and envy, particularly her greatest rival, Visbaronetess Delour Aulamaxa. For her part, Calseinica is somewhat naive about the realities of the profession—she simply loves to act and sing, and views the opportunity to perform as a chance to escape the drudgery of an aristocrat's life. Her family has all but disowned her for this scandalous lifestyle choice, but as her star seems to be rising, she holds no regrets.

For many years, Calseinica found it difficult to break into the acting scene. It wasn't until earlier this very year that she had her big break—she was serving as an understudy for Visbaronetess Aulamaxa in a production of the popular opera *The Winter of White Roses*. When Aulamaxa was caught in an accident involving a horse-drawn carriage and a panicked imp, she spent the production's premiere in the care of several priests of Abadar, barely able to walk, and Calseinica took the stage in her place. When Calseinica's portrayal of the domineering, scheming Witch of Roses took Westcrown's critics by storm, the director arranged for her to perform for all of the productions and fired Visbaronetess Aulamaxa from the part. The Visbaronetess suspects that Calseinica had something to do with causing her accident, and for many months her feud and hatred of Calseinica was both public and unbecoming. For her part, Calseinica barely noticed, so overwhelmed was she with her sudden rise to glory. Of course, this only further fanned Aulamaxa's jealousy and rage, and when she heard that Robahl was planning on directing an uncut production of *The Six Trials of Larazod*, the bitter diva saw a chance at revenge.

Feigning an apologetic stance, she crusaded to get Calseinica cast in the role of Ilsandra. The Visbaronetess managed to convince the young starlet to take the role, promising her that the play would give her an incredible boost in popularity and assuring her that the tales of its lethality are mostly exaggerations to boost anticipation for the premiere. In addition, the Visbaronetess has assured Calseinica that she'll have guards and priests in the audience to protect and save her in case things get out of hand—a precaution she's sure won't be necessary. Of course, these are all lies—Aulamaxa hopes that Calseinica

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will perish during the performance and thus pay for robbing her of the chance to play the Witch of Roses.

Calseinica is a pretty young thing who is still overwhelmed with the fact that she's living her dream of being an actress. She may be naive about the realities of the profession, but her talent is pure and her exuberance infectious. She's smart enough to know that Thesing is trouble, and trusts Robahl and her "friend" Aulamaxa to keep him from bothering her too much, but she may need to turn to the PCs for aid in keeping the aggressive actor from besmirching her honor. She'll certainly need the PCs' aid and protection once the actual and quite lethal performance begins.



CALSEINICA NYMMIS

Role: Calseinica has been cast as Larazod's love interest, the beautiful Ilsandra.

Friendship Benefit (DC 12): Calseinica is a welcoming soul and easy to befriend. An attractive PC who befriends her cannot befriend Thesing as long as Thesing considers the PC to be competition for Calseinica's attentions. A character who befriends Calseinica finds that her mere presence is inspiring during a performance, and thus gains a +2 bonus on all skill checks made during the performance. The character playing Larazod gains a +4 bonus due to the close relationship between their characters on stage.

CALSEINICA NYMMIS

CR 1

XP 400

Female human aristocrat 3

NG Medium humanoid

Init +1; Senses Perception -1

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10

hp 13 (3d8)

Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike -3 (1d3-1 nonlethal)

STATISTICS

Str 9, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 15

Base Atk +2; CMB +1; CMD 12

Feats Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Perform [sing])

Skills Diplomacy +11, Disguise +8, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Perform (act) +8, Perform (dance) +8, Perform (sing) +11

Languages Common

Gear fine clothing and jewelry worth 2,400 gp

MILLECH THE HUMP

"Actors... don't talk to me about actors..."

A stocky hunchbacked man with stringy white hair, Millech has long wanted to be an actor but knew from an early age that his deformity and lack of natural talent would make such a lifestyle impossible. As such, he threw his considerable skill in trickery, stealth, and illusion at the next-best thing—backstage support. Millech has worked with Robahl on all of the director's plays, and the two have an almost uncanny ability to know what the other wants. The resulting working relationship has as much to do with Robahl's success as the director's own skills.

Millech is in charge of most of the special effects, set building, and other backstage work on the play, with the exception of providing the devices and beasts the PCs are

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fated to face in the more dangerous parts of the play. These elements were paid for and provided by Mayor Arvanxi, and Millech's complaints that he won't be able to see these elements until the night of the premiere, combined with his general fears that the danger might extend beyond the actors to the crew, should hang over the entire production like an ominous cloud. When his mutterings start to make Calseinica get cold feet, arguments with Robahl and the Visbaronetess become daily, even hourly endurance tests to sit through.

Role: Millech is in charge of set design, lighting, special effects, and other backstage elements of the play.

Friendship Benefit (DC 19): If the PCs befriend Millech, he comes to their aid as best he can during the performance if things start to turn sour. Ever the showman, Millech makes sure to cast *invisibility* on himself before he heads on stage to help, and limits his aid to non-offensive help so that he'll remain invisible (not only to prevent the audience from noticing him but to prevent the monsters on stage from doing the same). Using illusions from off stage to distract monsters or to provide visual hints and aid to the PCs is his preferred method of helping.

MILLECH THE HUMP

CR 2

XP 600

Male human illusionist 3

CN Medium humanoid

Init -2; **Senses** Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 16 (3d6+3)

Fort +2, **Ref** -1, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee dagger +3 (1d4+2/19-20)

Special Attacks blinding ray +1 touch (6/day, blindness for 1 round [or deafness for 1 round if target has more than 3 HD], 30-ft. range)

Spells Known (CL 3rd)

2nd—*minor image* (DC 16), *mirror image*, *pyrotechnics*

1st—*color spray* (DC 14), *feather fall*, *shield*, *silent image* (DC 15)

0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *light*, *mage hand*

Prohibited Schools conjuration, evocation

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 13, **Int** 17, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13

Feats Alertness, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Stealth), Spell Focus (illusion)

Skills Climb +8, Craft (carpentry) +9, Knowledge (engineering) +9, Profession (stagehand) +7, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +9, Stealth +6

Languages Azlanti, Common, Dwarven, Infernal

SQ arcane bond (lizard familiar named Carbuncle), extended illusions, hunchback

Combat Gear *wand of minor image* (12 charges), *wand of invisibility* (13 charges); **Other Gear** dagger, spell component pouch, spellbook (contains all prepared spells, all cantrips, and *charm person*, *disguise self*, *magic aura*, *ventriloquism*, *hypnotic pattern*, and *make whole*)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hunchback (Ex) Millech's hunched and twisted back forces him to walk with a clumsy, shuffling gait. This reduces his land speed by 10 feet and imparts a -2 penalty on Reflex saves and Initiative checks.

CASTING

Once the PCs are accepted by Robahl and he brings them in to meet the other actors and crew, the process of casting begins. Robahl needs to fill four roles—if there are more than four PCs, see the More Roles to Play sidebar for advice on creating additional roles. If there



MILLECH THE HUMP

More Roles to Play

The version of *The Six Trials of Larazod* in which the heroes perform assumes that you have four PCs, and thus there are four roles to be filled, yet if you have more than four PCs you'll need more roles. Fortunately, various productions of the play in the past have added additional characters to aid Larazod, and if you need them, you can do the same. Two more traditional (non-speaking) roles for other companions to accompany Larazod are listed below, allowing you to extend the participation to up to six PCs. You can even have Calseinica chicken out before the PCs arrive and leave the production, in which case the role of Ilisandra opens up for a PC to fill as well.

Farus the Traveled: A self-styled gypsy king, Farus is a smiling tower of joy. He is a dancing clown who speaks in riddles. His role is comedic—generally it was felt that one clown was enough for the play, and so his character is dropped in many versions of the trial.

Monris Blaksward: A fiendish dwarf with blood-red eyes and a shock of ginger hair, Monris appears in many early versions of the play as the strong arm to help Larazod. He sings in a deep voice and carries bagpipes, which he frequently blows tunes from. An addition to some productions of the play, most omit this character, as his bagpipes often annoy the audience.

are fewer than four PCs, Robahl hires other actors to play the missing parts—these parts could even be played by Arael or Janiven if you wish, or by NPCs of your own creation. If you need stats for 3rd-level characters, you can simply use some of the pregenerated PCs found on pages 90–91 of this volume. The remainder of this adventure, though, assumes that you have four PCs being cast in four roles.

Robahl uses the following four challenges (and thus the results of four checks) to determine which PC gets cast in which role. Note that if a character *really* wants a specific role, he can also roll a Perform (act) check whenever he is required to make a challenge's check, and can then take the higher of the two rolls as his actual result. This doesn't guarantee a good actor the role he wants, but it does give him a better chance to secure that role than a non-actor. Robahl has no interest in entertaining PCs who are unhappy with the parts they're assigned, and points out that a big part of the job is learning to play roles you don't want to play, musing that "perhaps if you were a better actor, I could do something, but as you are who you are..." followed by a shrug. Note that while the roles the PCs are being cast in are specific characters with specific skills, those skills don't necessarily set requirements for who can and cannot play the part. Dentriss is a wizard, but he need

not be played by a wizard (or even by a spellcaster); Larazod is a tiefling, but can be played by any race, and Tybain is a paladin but a character of any religion can play his part. Likewise, gender and race don't really matter either, as costumes and illusions can be used to make anyone have the appropriate appearance for his role.

As you run through each of the following challenges, make a note of who rolls the highest result of each check—Robahl casts that PC for the particular role, but you shouldn't make these announcements until after all four casting challenges are done.

After each role presented below, several classes are listed—a character of one of these classes gains a +2 bonus on checks made during this particular casting challenge.

Casting Larazod (Bard, Monk, Rogue): Larazod is one of the play's two starring roles (the other being, of course, Montigny Haanderthan, who is being played by Thesing). As such, Robahl wants the best actor from the PCs to play this role. He asks every PC to read Larazod's first (and lengthiest) line from the play, the soliloquy that begins "Larazod knows no lies, great magistrate..." (see page 57). Have each player read this text aloud if you wish (and feel free to grant a +2 bonus on the resulting check if the player does a particularly good job), then have each character make a Perform (act) check; a character who actually has ranks in this skill can make two Perform (act) checks and take the better of the two results.

Casting Dentriss (Druid, Sorcerer, Wizard): Dentriss is a sharp-tongued wizard who has a knack for biting insults and a quick wit, and who acts almost as a father figure to Larazod. To cast Dentriss, Robahl asks each PC to insult and berate him, and to do so as wittily and cruelly as possible. Each PC must make an Intimidate check. Feel free to have each player come up with his own insult, and if the other players (and you) react favorably to the insult, give that PC a +2 bonus on his check.

Casting Tybain (Cleric, Paladin): Tybain is the comic relief of the play, a bumbling paladin whose devotion to Aroden is even more comical in this age, due to the deity's death. Traditionally, Tybain is the character who dies first in the play, but the longer he can survive, often the better the play is received. Thus, the actor portraying Tybain must be able to deliver his performance while being constantly on the defensive. For this casting challenge, Robahl has each PC stand on stage one at a time, invites the other PCs to join him in the crowd, and then asks the PC on stage to recite Tybain's first line of the play (the one that starts "Hurl his arrogance..." on page 57) while dodging rocks and rotten fruit hurled by those in the audience. The PC on stage must make a Reflex save to avoid being pelted—failure indicates that the PC takes 2d6 points of damage overall from several rounds of stoning. Note that even if all PCs fail their

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saves, Robahl still assigns the role to the PC who got the highest result.

Casting Drovalid (Barbarian, Fighter, Ranger): Drovalid, as the torturer who has a change of heart and joins Larazod's side to protect him, is the toughest character in the play—he often ends up being the star combatant of the performance, and thus, the actor portraying him must be able to speak his lines while being on the offensive. For this casting challenge, Robahl has the PCs mount the stage one at a time and asks them to deliver Drovalid's first line (the one beginning "Magistrate Maleficarum..." on page 59) while at the same time striking a blow with a weapon at a "flying monster." This monster is in fact a swinging sandbag filled with red sand inside a metal bucket that Millech swings down at the PC at some point during his line delivery. As the target approaches, the PC can make one melee attack with a weapon of his choice against the bucket's AC 16. If he hits, he punctures the bucket and causes red sand to spray everywhere. If he misses, the bucket makes a +8 attack roll against the PC and inflicts 1d6 damage on a hit. As with the casting challenge above, Robahl doesn't

require whomever he casts to actually hit the bucket—he simply casts the PC whose attack roll was the highest (but not without a few insults if the PC is unable to defend himself from the ferocious bucket).

Story Award: Each time a PC is cast after getting a result of at least 20 on the associated check, award the party 600 XP.

Popularity Award: Each time a PC rolls a 20 or higher on a check during casting, award the party +1 Popularity.

PAYMENT

The last matter to cover before rehearsals can begin in earnest is the matter of payment—Robahl informs the PCs and the NPCs that all of them will be paid a percentage of the house's take from the performance. Thus, it is in the interest of everyone involved to make the performance as great as possible, and to spend the next several days promoting the production. Until the performance is over, the exact amount of each character's payment is unknown, but Robahl does tell each of the PCs, in private, that they'll be paid 5% of the house's total take after the performance, with a possible bonus (at his

discretion) for jobs well done. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) or Perform (act) check confirms that this rate is relatively aggressive and respectable for such a production.

The actual amount the PCs earn from the production depends on their final Popularity—see page 11 for details.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Once the PCs are cast, Robahl doesn't want to delay. He explains that the performance for the mayor at the Nightshade Theater is scheduled to occur in 1 week, leaving the PCs only 7 days to get to know their parts. The night before the performance, the group is scheduled to do a public dress rehearsal at the Limehouse, although this dress rehearsal will exclude the actual onstage combats and trials, instead being the shorter, "false" version of the play. It's mostly just a chance to make sure everyone knows his lines and role, and to make sure the PCs can handle performing before one of the rowdiest audiences in Westcrown. If they can pull off their roles at the Limehouse, they should have no problem with the Nightshade, Robahl explains. What he won't reveal to anyone, though, is the exact particulars of what to expect on the final play—the nature of the combats and trials the PCs will need to endure are being kept as secret as possible to avoid spoiling the surprise, and that means only Robahl and a few "specialists" hired by the mayor himself to bring in the dangerous elements know the precise details. Robahl ensures the PCs over and over that there's nothing they won't be able to handle, but even if charmed or otherwise manipulated, he can't give out many details—in truth, even Robahl won't be sure what the PCs will face until just before the act begins. He'd rather not let anyone know he's not as "in the loop" as he says he is, though.

As the 7 days pass, the PCs are expected to be available for rehearsals, costume fittings, and the like from sunup to sundown, every day. This essentially means they'll be spending about 12 hours a day at the Limehouse. The following schedule outlines what takes place during those days—you can skip over these days as you wish, but allowing the PCs a chance to roleplay and interact with the NPCs or explore the city should give them plenty of hints and bonuses to aid them with the final production of *The Six Trials of Larazod*.

Day One: The PCs get their parts, then spend much of the remainder of the day being fitted for costumes. A

mix of practical makeup, complex material costumes, and magic, these costumes are quite intricate and must be customized to each PC. Since the adventure doesn't assume the PCs show up to audition at morning, you should vary the time fittings require so that it takes up

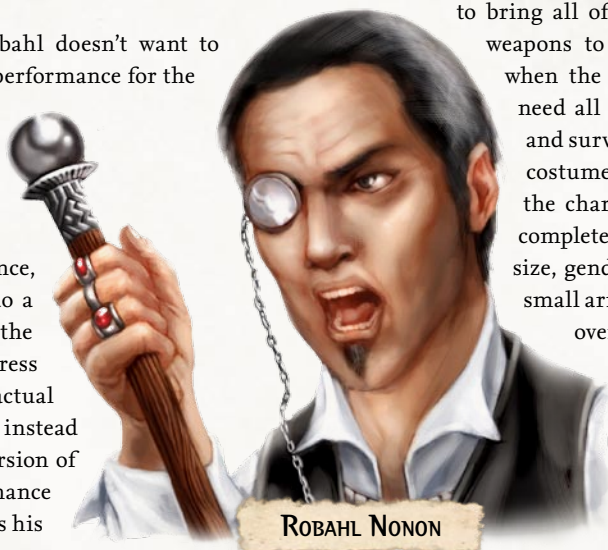
the remainder of the day. Robahl encourages the PCs to bring all of their favorite gear, armor, and weapons to these fittings, explaining that when the final play is performed, they'll need all the help they can get to endure and survive the spectacle. The bulk of the costume design is handled by Millech—the characters' costumes are all already completed, but adjustments for each PC's size, gender, and gear must be made by a small army of tailors he contracts to work overnight to make the costumes fit perfectly, and all of the PCs' gear is incorporated tastefully and skillfully. You might need to adjust exactly who Robahl casts in which role if certain PCs insist on wearing bulky armor or carrying particularly unusual weapons. In the worst-case

scenario, Robahl simply pays a high-level bard or wizard to cast a *veil* spell on the party just before the actual play to allow them to use their own weapons and equipment while masking incongruous elements with illusion.

Day Two: Most of this day consists of the PCs learning their lines and the blocking of motions and actions during the play. Robahl spends most of his time working with Millech to get all of the lighting and effects under control, giving the PCs a chance to practice their lines and spend time with Calseinica, Delour, and Thesing if they wish.

Day Three: Robahl starts doing full dry runs of the entire play during the day. Robahl spends much of his time with Calseinica and the PC playing Larazod, but the other NPCs should be available for other PCs to interact with. At the end of the day, have each PC make a DC 15 Perform (act) check; each success indicates that particular PC is growing more comfortable in his role. For each successful check, increase the party's Popularity by +2.

Day Four: This day goes much like Day Three, but by this point, the PCs should start to notice anticipation building in the city. If the PCs leave the theater (perhaps to go get lunch, or to relax later in the evening) you can have fun as town criers announce the "legendary skills" of the PCs who have "played to royalty in ten kingdoms" (according to Robahl). Build up anticipation throughout the day, and particularly into the evening when crowds begin to form around the playhouse. If the PCs appear in public areas, they'll be asked to give short preview performances. A DC



The Sixfold Trial

15 Diplomacy check is good enough to talk a crowd out of it, but otherwise the crowd demands a preview. To perform a preview, a PC must make a DC 15 Perform (act) check. Success is met with applause and cheers (and a +2 bonus to Popularity per PC making a successful check). Failure, either because of a failed Perform (act) check or because a PC doesn't diplomatically defuse the pressure and simply refuses to perform, causes a -4 penalty to Popularity.

Day Five: By this point, the play should be running pretty smoothly. The PCs should make their daily Perform (act) check as on Days Three and Four to hopefully increase their Popularity a little more, but then Robahl isolates a particular problem spot for each PC and has that PC go over his scene again and again. At this point, the PC must make a second Perform (act) check, this one against DC 20. Success indicates that the PC is making progress, and from here on out gains a +2 bonus on all Perform (act) checks to portray this specific role. Failure brings a wave of insults from Robahl, who eventually accepts the performance, muttering how it is a waste of time to expect anything but mediocrity from mediocrity.

Day Six: This is the last day to iron out problem scenes before the dress rehearsal. Just as on Days Two through Five, the PCs should make Perform (act) checks to attempt to increase their Popularity—if all of the PCs are regularly hitting these checks, Robahl is pleased. If, on the other hand, one or more of the PCs continually fail their Perform (act) checks, Robahl grows frustrated and angry. As practice concludes at the end of the evening, Robahl confronts the PC who has failed the most Perform (act) checks and tells him, "It's unfortunately too late to fire you and find a better actor, or to hire a second illusionist to replace you with an effect. We're all stuck with you, is what I'm saying, so to soften the blow of your dulcet tones, I think you should wear this during the play." At this point, he hands the shamed PC a *circlet of persuasion* to wear.

Day Seven: The first part of this day is spent tightening up any last minute issues with scenes or other logistics—the public dress rehearsal is scheduled to begin at 4:00 in the afternoon.

THE DRESS REHEARSAL

The Limehouse fills quickly as the time for the dress rehearsal draws near—by 4:00, the theater is packed with nearly a hundred excited, noisy theater patrons eager to see flubbed lines, missed cues, and not-quite-special effects. The din of the crowd should be intimidating—this is not an audience interested in remaining quiet and respectful during a performance. Just before the dress rehearsal begins, Robahl offers some last advice: "Do your job. Ignore the rabble. If they throw something, take it and move on. Anything less than them actually starting a fire is not cause to stop the performance."

Merciless Limehouse Heckling

d20 Roll Result

1–5	Ripe tomatoes, cabbages, or small bags of weevil-infested flour and grain are hurled at the stage (the next act's Perform checks suffer a -2 penalty).
6–10	Loud booing or cries for the actors to be arrested before they besmirch the tradition further echo through the theater (the next act's checks suffer a -4 penalty).
11–12	Several folk stand up, boo, and then just walk out, yelling out their displeasure to anyone who'll listen (the next act's checks suffer a -4 penalty; Popularity decreases by 1d6).
13–14	Someone in the crowd produces a life-sized effigy or scarecrow dressed like one of the PCs' characters; this effigy is used to mock the actor's motions for the rest of the performance (that particular actor suffers a -2 penalty on all Perform checks for the remainder of the dress rehearsal).
15–16	A donkey is brought out of the audience and proposed as the player's replacement, and the uproarious laughter takes some time to die down (the next 2 acts' Perform checks suffer a -2 penalty).
17–18	A pair of terrified sheep are led up on stage and suggested as replacements for the actors—the sheep run amok and foul the stage in their panic and continue to be distracting for the duration (Perform checks suffer a -2 penalty for the remainder of the play).
19–20	Another play, performed by the crowd, commences, continuing throughout this performance and roundly applauded at the end (Perform checks suffer a -4 penalty for the remainder of the play).

Since the PCs will be performing the entire play in the next part, you shouldn't have them go through the entire performance line by line. Instead, you should present each of the play's seven acts as a succession of Perform (act) skill checks, as outlined below. Of course, in the dress rehearsal, the PCs won't actually be fighting monsters or enduring real torments—each of these sections is simply skipped over.

For the dress rehearsal, the PC who plays Larazod takes the lead—he needs to make a series of seven DC 20 Perform (act) checks (one for each of the play's acts). The other PCs aid this check by making their own DC 10 Perform (act) checks—each of these successes increases Larazod's result

by +2. Each time Larazod makes his DC 20 check (with the other PCs' aid), the audience cheers and the PCs' Popularity increases by +10. Each time Larazod fails a Perform (act) check, however, the merciless Limehouse patrons unleash a round of heckling and abuse. Roll d20 and consult the sidebar on page 19 each act that this occurs to determine how the PCs are ridiculed.

After the performance, whether or not the PCs made most (or any) of their Perform (act) checks, the audience cheers wildly with approval. Robahl has no words of encouragement in either case—he merely tells the actors to go home and get some rest, for the big day is tomorrow!

Story Award: For enduring the dress rehearsal, grant the PCs 1,600 XP. For each act they pull off without driving the audience to heckle them, award them an additional 200 XP, for a maximum combined XP award of 3,000.



VISBARONETESS DELOUR AULAMAXA

troupe at noon and leads them on a procession from the Limehouse to the Nightshade intended to show off the actors in their full costumes as they wind their way through the streets to the west, board a large barge, sail across the river, disembark on Rego Aerum, and then proceed to the imposing facade of the Nightshade itself. Once there, Robahl bundles the PCs into the theater through a side entrance, sequestering them in the green room with enough food and drink to keep them happy until the play begins.

THE PLAY

The stage has a false floor, and various stagehands rush about moving props and preparing scenes between acts, all overseen with expert precision by Millech, who takes position on the wooden catwalk that runs across the back 15 feet of the stage (above the area set apart by the back curtains). These stagehands are employees of the Nightshade (and thus employees of the mayor), but are quite nervous—even

terrified—at the rumors of what will be coming out on stage. The majority of the play's deadlier aspects are wrangled by none other than **Vestus Savaska** (LE male human cleric 9), a high-ranking member of the church of Asmodeus who, after Mayor Arvanxi made a sizable donation, agreed not only to bless the construction of the Nightshade but to also provide the deadly props and creatures needed for this evening's performance of *The Six Trials of Larazod*.

While the PCs are unlikely to meet Vestus (the cleric spends the entire play backstage in his office, sipping wine and enjoying a plate of sweets during the performance, emerging only between acts into the prop room to prepare the next act's torments), the cleric does spend some time speaking with Robahl, informing the director of what he plans to use and working out with him how best to integrate things into the play. Intimidated by the cleric, Robahl says little during their meeting, and emerges only a few minutes before the play is set to begin, appearing before the PCs white-faced and sweating. Asked what the PCs are about to face, Robahl feigns a smile and says only, "You'll do fine... you'll do fine... hit your marks and remember your lines, and you'll do fine..."

As 4:00 rolls around, the sound of bells in a nearby tower pealing out the hour, the growing rush and din in the auditorium calms. Robahl takes a deep breath, then steps onstage to greet the audience and give the following short speech.

PART THREE: THE NIGHTSHADE THEATER

Whatever the PCs' impressions are of the ordeal of enduring Robahl's scathing insults, juggling the drama between several bitter and competing NPCs, or performing a play before a crowd of particularly unruly locals, these are mere inconveniences compared to what awaits them at the Nightshade Theater—or the uncult version of *The Six Trials of Larazod* is indeed quite deadly.

The Nightshade Theater is the latest of Mayor Arvanxi's attempts to "bring culture to Westcrown," an exercise in excess and misery. From outside, the theater looks like nothing less than an iron and stone cathedral to some nameless evil god—inside, the building is all soft lighting, thick red carpets, and devilish decor. Carvings and murals of leering faces and tormented souls decorate the walls, while the ceilings hang with iron chandeliers. The main theater can seat approximately 250 individuals, all facing a relatively spacious stage. The map on page 22 presents the auditorium and stage, along with backstage chambers used for actors (the green room, stage right) and to house the monsters and deadly props (prop storage, stage left). In both rooms, evidence of the Nightshade's recent construction is apparent; crates of tools and equipment, unfinished walls, and bare wooden floors testify to the fact that only the parts of the building that the public sees are fully finished.

The play itself is scheduled to begin, as with the dress rehearsal, at 4:00 in the afternoon—Robahl gathers his

The Sixfold Trial

"Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the premiere event at this wondrous new theater! Let me begin by extending my humblest thanks to the Church for providing the—how shall I say?—*punch* in tonight's spectacle. And also my sincere gratitude and thanks to our illustrious and benevolent lord-mayor, Aberian Arvanxi.

With that, Robahl bows and returns backstage. The lights go down, the seven-piece orchestra plays a short introduction, and then Visbaronetness Aulamaxa takes the stage and sings for a few minutes to introduce the play. She finishes to a round of tremendous applause, the orchestra falls silent, and with a strangely uncharacteristic whisper of encouragement from Robahl—the play begins!

RUNNING THE PLAY

The best way to run the play is to give each player a copy of the play itself, starting with "Act I" on page 56 of this book. You as the GM should take on the roles of the bailiff (in game, an illusion provided by Millech), the Prince of Darkness, and Haanderthan, reading their lines aloud as appropriate. In addition, you should read aloud the italicized stage directions as necessary—feel free to expand upon them if needed. The council, although they have no speaking parts, consist of several actors Robahl hired—they look frightened and nervous backstage but hide their fear well once the play begins—and once Act II begins, flee the building through the back door from the green room as per a prior arrangement with the director.

As each PC's lines come up, he should read them aloud. If your group is really into acting, they might even want to memorize their parts beforehand, although for most groups simply reading the lines from paper will work fine. Nevertheless, you should make notes whenever a PC breaks character, is late on a cue, or stumbles over a line—simply making a mark with a pen on the corner of your battlemat or on a piece of scratch paper will do. At the end of the performance, count up these error marks and subtract that total from the party's Popularity.

The following sections break down each act, indicating when you as the GM should break from the play to begin combat or ask the PCs to perform additional skill checks, saving throws, or other actions. Each of these acts is, in essence, one extensive and partially choreographed encounter. You should hand out XP for defeated monsters and traps as normal (note that all acts give a story award as well if the PCs manage to hit certain goals), and at the end of each act, all PCs should make their own Perform (act) checks to determine how well they performed. Record the numerical results of each of these checks; you'll add these results to the party's Popularity at the end of the play as well.

Collateral Damage

It's no secret that the trials and battles the PCs will face as part of the actual production of *The Six Trials of Larazod* will be real. Indeed, part of the play's attraction to the nobility is the same as that which draws the spectator to the gladiatorial pit—the thrill of seeing combat performed for entertainment. Most of the audience has never been on an actual "adventure," and the chance to see spells fly and swords clash is a treat for these decadent nobles. Yet they're not interested in putting themselves in harm's way, and the assumption is that the mayhem on stage is to be kept on the stage. All of the monsters the PCs face are controlled by an offstage cleric (Vestus Savaska) who takes care to not allow the creatures or their attacks to bleed offstage into the audience. Robahl asks the PCs to take the same precautions—the stage is soundly built, fireproof, and generally able to handle incidental damage, but large-scale fire effects should be avoided, as should any spells that specifically target and damage the building itself (such as *warp wood* or *soften earth and stone*). If the PCs fail to follow this simple rule and audience members are endangered, their Popularity immediately drops to 0 as the panicked nobles flee the theater.

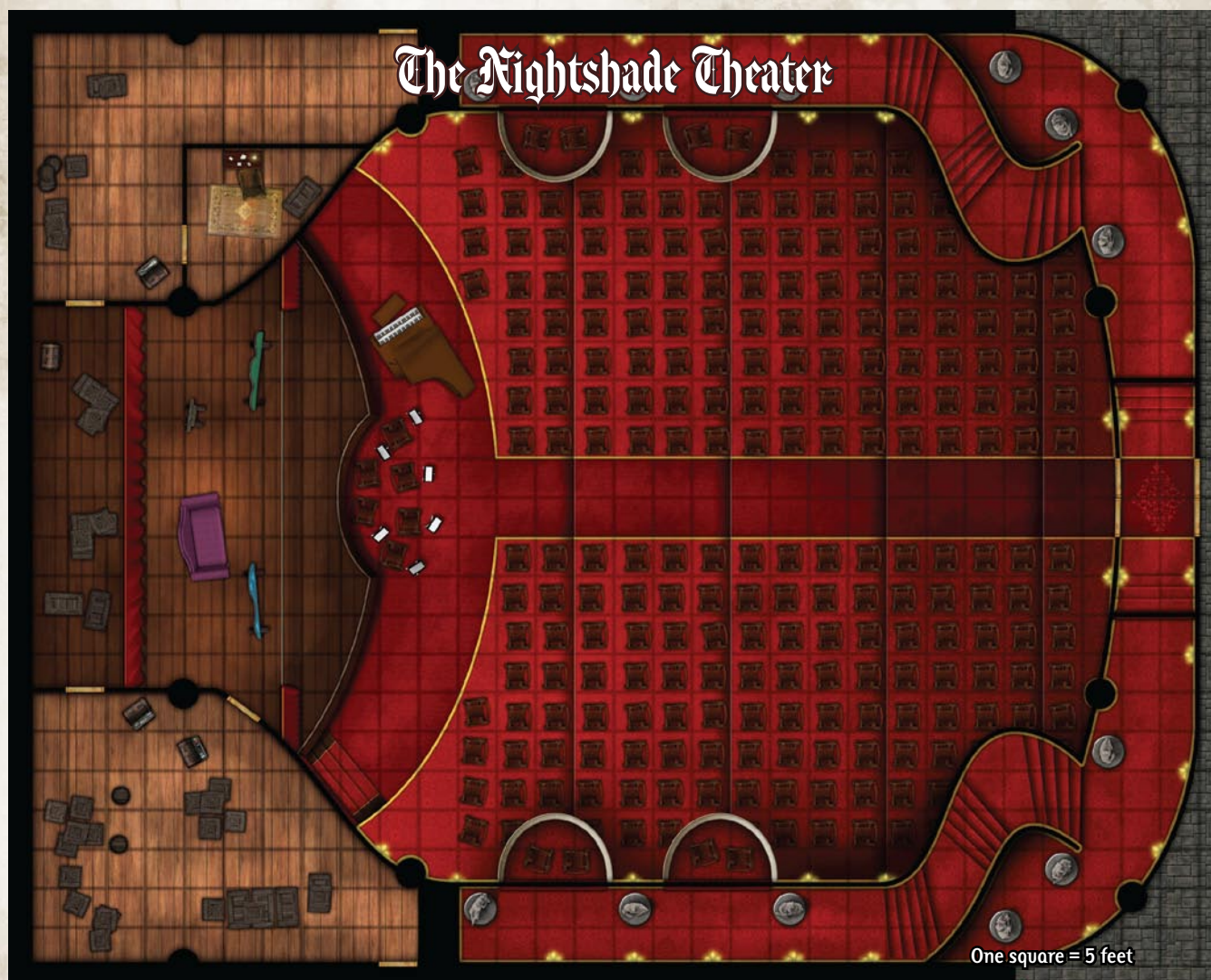
Breaking Character

If at any time during the performance a PC uses a power that is obviously beyond the scope of the character he is playing (Dentris using healing magic, for example, or Tybain using *fireball*), the act costs the party 1d6 points of Popularity.

Between each act is a 5-minute break for the PCs—during this time, Visbaronetness Aulamaxa is on stage performing an aria while the stagehands scramble to prepare the stage for the next act. These 5-minute breaks should give the PCs a chance to heal wounds, recover from conditions, or cast preparatory spells for the next act—as long as they're relatively quiet about it, that is. Regular spellcasting is fine, but loud explosions or flashing lights are noticeable by the audience, and each time something like this occurs, you should deduct 2d6 from the PCs' Popularity.

ACT I—CONDEMNATION

The first act of the play is relatively minor, and runs exactly as the PCs rehearsed it at the Limehouse. No combats, no torments, and no unexpected surprises await the PCs during this act—they need only read their lines and make their final Perform (act) checks at the end to determine increases to Popularity.



ACT II—TRIAL BY TORTURE (CR 2)

In this act, Larazod is affixed to a torturous implement referred to in the play as “the device.” This is a combination rack and wheel, meant to stretch the victim’s limbs and twist his body into increasingly painful positions. All the time, Drovalid must be inflicting whip strokes upon the three to further increase their torment.

At the start of the act, the device is brought on stage to a chorus of impressed “oohs” and “ahhs” from the audience. Once it’s been thoroughly and dramatically displayed, Larazod is stripped down to a loincloth (making him unable to use equipment in this act as a result) and strapped into the device. The actor playing Drovalid is expected to strike at one of the three actors with a whip after each line is delivered from this point until Drovalid’s line that begins, “He is as unbreakable as a marble tide,” at which point the torments cease for the rest of the act.

TRIAL BY TORTURE

Targets Larazod, Dentriss, Tybain (whipping); Larazod (device)

Torment—Whipping Drovalid makes a total of 10 whip attacks on the various prisoners, once after each spoken line until the play indicates the torment ends. He must make an attack roll against the chosen target’s flat-footed AC; he can attempt to miss on purpose, but each time he misses a stroke, he costs the party 1d4 points of Popularity unless he succeeds on a DC 20 Bluff check.

Torment—The Device Each time Drovalid strikes Larazod with his whip, the device twists and turns, inflicting 1 point of nonlethal damage on Larazod. A character who takes nonlethal damage while staggered or unconscious instead takes lethal damage. Each time a conscious character takes this point of damage, he can attempt a DC 15 Fortitude save to negate it.

Story Award: Completing Act II earns the party 800 XP.

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ACT III—TRIAL BY PLEASURE (CR 4)

In this act, four of the actors are subjected to the trial of pleasure—the “Flukes of Asmodeus” are fictitious creations of the playwright, but the rot grubs who play their roles are very real. When each is applied, it is the actor’s duty to act as if in the throes of unbridled passion while the rot grub burrows through his flesh before cutting the rot grub out with the offered knife. The knives bear minor magical enhancements that make them particularly efficient at cutting out rot grubs—this magic only persists for the length of this act, but while it does, any Heal check made to cut out a rot grub with one of these knives gains a +6 circumstance bonus (using these special knives is tradition, as having the actors die so soon is generally regarded as anticlimactic, even by the most bloodthirsty of directors or audiences).

TRIAL BY PLEASURE

Targets Larazod, Dentris, Drovalid, Tybain

Torment—Rot Grubs A rot grub inflicts 2 points of Constitution damage per round as it burrows—a DC 17 Fortitude save negates the Constitution damage for that round. In order to remove the grub, a victim must cut the grub out with a knife—this takes a DC 20 Heal check and inflicts 1d6 points of damage to the victim per round the grub has been burrowing (1d6 the first round, 2d6 the second, and so on). The PCs are free to attempt to cut out their grubs at any point after they make their Perform (act) check to pretend to be in the throes of ecstasy.

Story Award: Completing Act III earns the party 1,200 XP.

ACT IV—TRIAL IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST (CR 4)

Near the end of this act, a huge and curious sculpture of iron, polished wood, and green glass is wheeled onto the stage from behind the back curtain. The sculpture is that of a vast serpent, its mouth large enough for a Medium creature to slip inside, its belly made of transparent but very thick glass. The “Beast’s” tail is raised high and its head kept low so that a person on the stage can climb in easily. The glass belly is half filled with acid—the actors must clamber into the Beast’s maw and slide down into its transparent belly, one per round. Once all five actors are in the belly, stagehands dressed as lemures lumber out and tug on the sculpture’s head and tail, which wheel about on a set of rollers around the transparent belly so that the tail hangs low and the head rears high. Once this is done, the PCs within must climb up the beast’s throat and out of its upraised maw before the acid kills them.

The throat is smooth and impossible to climb, save for a series of tiny hooks that hang from the sides—these allow a Climb check (DC 20) to escape (one PC at a time). A PC may also balance on another PC’s shoulders to reach the

Handling Deaths

If all goes well for the PCs, there’ll be no deaths during the production. Yet traditionally, those who perform the uncut version do not make it to the play’s end. Some of the character roles assume deaths at certain scenes, and beyond that, these characters have no speaking parts. Yet it wasn’t unusual for a key character to perish before his lines were done—in this event, it was common to have a backstage illusionist create an illusory shade of the slain actor and have this “ghost” follow Larazod for a few more scenes to deliver his lines from beyond the grave—Millech is prepared to do the same with his *wand of minor image* if it comes to this.

maw. To form such a tower, each PC in the tower must make an Acrobatics check (DC 15); the failure of any check results in that character falling, taking anyone above him down as well. PCs can lift up to twice their maximum load (a character with 10 Str can therefore lift 200 pounds); however, a Strength check (DC 10) is required to keep hold in the sweaty and damp acidic conditions.

TRIAL IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

Targets Larazod, Dentris, Drovalid, Ilsandra, Tybain

Torment—Acid One PC may enter the Beast per round, and it takes 1 round to reconfigure it into its “escape” position, at which point the PCs may each attempt to clamber up the slippery throat to freedom. Each round, the acid in the creature’s belly inflicts 1d6 points of acid damage—a DC 15 Reflex save is enough to scramble and avoid acid damage for 1 round. The fumes in the belly are acrid as well, and each round a creature spends inside the belly it must also make a DC 12 Fortitude save or be sickened for the remainder of this act.

Torment—Escape The otherwise smooth inside of the snake’s throat is lined with small spikes that provide razor-sharp hand- and footholds that spring into position once its head and tail switch position. It’s a DC 20 Climb check to clamber up from the Beast’s belly, but the throat is narrow enough that only one character per round may attempt the check. Failure by less than 5 indicates that the climber makes no progress—failure by 5 or more indicates the climber takes 1d6 points of slashing damage from the spikes. A character at either end (perched in the Beast’s mouth or still within its belly) can aid another character climbing in the throat by making DC 10 Climb checks. There’s only room for one person in the Beast’s mouth at a time, though, and as a character clambers up into the mouth, anyone already there must either slide down into the throat or drop to the ground 10 feet below (1d6 points of falling damage; DC 15 Acrobatics check negates).

Story Award: Completing Act IV earns the party 1,200 XP.

ACT V—THE BIRTHING TRIAL (CR 6)

The crimson eggs given to each PC are magical devices—eating one of them causes it to hatch inside the PC's belly, becoming a roiling mass of infernal ooze that the PC then vomits up. The ooze pools on stage, at which point Vestus Savaska, from backstage, begins casting *summon monster* spells to summon lemures into the pools of vomited goo, creating the illusion among the audience that the PCs have “given birth” to malformed, melting children. Vestus casts *summon monster IV* first, summoning 1d4+1 lemures. Each round that follows, he casts an additional *summon monster II*, adding 1 lemure to the fight until he's summoned a total of one per actor (no more than five). The lemures immediately attack the PCs—the other actors are quick to move offstage during the combat, but if a lemure seems about ready to attack one of the wrong targets, Vestus barks a command from backstage to send it back against one of the PCs. The fight lasts until the PCs slay all the lemures or until the summoning spells end.

THE BIRTHING TRIAL

Targets Larazod, Dentriss, Drovalid, Ilsandra, Tybain

Torment—Crimson Egg A PC must make a DC 15 Fortitude save upon eating his egg. Failure indicates he is nauseated for 2 rounds. Success indicates he is merely sickened for 2 rounds.

LEMURES (5)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 13 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 79)

ACT VI—TRIAL BY COMBAT AND LOVE (CR 5)

In this penultimate act, the tormented heroes find support in each other's loyalty, only to face a legion of Hell's blasted souls come to take them below. As this act ends, the curtains along the back portion of the stage part to reveal a second stage beyond, decorated as a swampy, dreary hellscape. Waiting within are two troll skeletons, animated and controlled by Vestus.

TROLL SKELETONS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

NE Large undead (giant)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+3 Dex, +2 natural, –1 size)

hp 27 (6d8)

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

DR 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d8+5), 2 claws +8 (1d6+5)

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

TACTICS

During Combat Both skeletons immediately attack Larazod when the curtain goes up—only if he dies do they move to attack other foes, in which case they simply attack the closest target.

Morale The troll skeletons fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23

Feats Improved Initiative

ACT VII—TRIAL BY HIS OWN DARK HAND

In this final act, Robahl plays the part of Asmodeus himself in a shockingly realistic costume enhanced by illusion magic. He drinks a *potion of levitate* and applies *oil of faerie fire* to limn his body in red flames, then steps off the upper catwalk to float down to the stage below for his grand entrance.

This final act is, like the first act, a safe one. As each PC selects his scarf (ending with Larazod), the scarf turns to ashes to reveal the character's truth and honesty. As the last sash burns, Haanderthan is revealed to be the guilty party. As Robahl takes him and levitates down through a cleverly hidden trap door into the underworld below the stage, a DC 20 Sense Motive check is enough to note that Thesing's cries of anger and rage are not acting—he seems truly distraught and enraged that the PCs have survived the play.

Award 100 Popularity for each PC (including Calseinica) who survives to the end of the performance.

CURTAIN CALL

As Haanderthan is dragged away to Hell, the curtains drop and, even if no PCs survive the play, the house erupts into an explosion of applause. The more PCs who survive, the greater the applause. As the curtains rise again and the PCs and other actors come out to bow, the crowd goes even wilder. A shower of objects hurls onto the stage—brooches, chains, coins, gems, and other pieces of jewelry (these treasures are included as part of the production's total profits—see below). Robahl and any friendly Limehouse players rush onto the stage and hold the PCs aloft, carrying and leading them through the streets back to the Limehouse, where they are cheered as heroes. A local bard composes a heroic song, “The Sixfold Survivors,” which quickly spreads to street corners and is heard being whistled throughout the remainder of this Adventure Path. The surviving PCs and Robahl are the talk of the town. Thesing, and perhaps Delour, both of whom had hoped for more bloodshed and certainly hate to share attention, avoid the celebrations and slink off to sulk in the days to follow.

REWARDS

After the success of the performance, the exhausted actors wait for the rest of the crew to clean up and return

The Sixfold Trial

to the Limehouse (although a frustrated Thesing storms off into the night after a short argument with Robahl in which he gives up his share, saying that the production was a farce and he wants nothing more to do with it)—during this time, stagehands gather the take (both from the box office and the gifts thrown onstage) and see to the payment of the house. What remains is gathered in a velvet-lined coffer and presented to Robahl. The actors and crew aren't too tired to split the take, and the appropriate percentages are given to each PC as payment for a job well done. This payment comes to an amount equal to the party's final popularity—each PC earns this amount in gp as payment.

In addition, Robahl is so pleased with the performance that he gives each PC that survived the play a bonus of 500 gp in the form of choice gems and bits of jewelry.

If any of the PCs perished in the play but at least one survived to the end, Mayor Arvanxi is so pleased that he pays for all slain PCs to be brought back to life with a *raise dead* spell so they can take part in his cast party. With a DC 25 Diplomacy check, he can be talked into paying for additional *restoration* spells to remove the two permanent negative levels that being raised from the dead imparts.

Finally, the PCs' performance has further enhanced their local fame and reputations. Award Fame Points to the PCs as indicated on the table below, depending upon their final Popularity.

Final Popularity	Fame Point Award
Less than 0	-1
0-20	0
21-100	1
101-500	2
500 or more	3

After the take is split among the actors, Robahl thanks the PCs for their hard work and announces quietly that he's lost interest in producing this particular work. Whether he's decided that actual violence onstage isn't for him or he's intimidated at the idea of trying to outdo himself with another performance is unclear, but he does thank the PCs and indicates to those who made the most of their Perform (act) checks that he might not retch at the thought of working with them again. As mentioned above, Thesing leaves quickly to nurture his grudge against the PCs for stealing his glory (he was supposed to be one of the play's only survivors, after all)—he has no further role to play in this adventure, but returns later in the campaign to vex the PCs one more time. Both Delour and Calseinica thank the PCs for their performances—Delour somewhat less enthusiastically than Calseinica. Calseinica may become particularly infatuated with the actor who portrayed Larazod, and if that PC wishes to pursue a relationship

with the pretty starlet, he or she finds Calseinica only too willing to carry out her character's scandalous promises once they can secure a more private stage. Millech bids the PCs farewell at this time as well—unless a PC wishes to maintain a friendship with the deformed illusionist, he has no further role to play in Council of Thieves.

Story Award: For surviving *The Six Trials of Larazod*, the PCs earn a story award of 3,000 XP.

PART FOUR: THE CORNUCOPIA

After the play, the PCs have their old lives back—mostly. They are no longer expected to spend their nights promoting themselves, but as they walk the streets of Westcrown, they'll now and again have starry-eyed fans approach for an autograph, an offer of a free drink, or simply a request to chat about their experiences for a few moments. Many of these adoring fans were not even present at the performance, but the spreading fame the PCs are earning for their deeds is beginning to show.

Sure enough, within a day of their successful performances, the PCs each receive a spoken invitation delivered by a well-dressed servant. If PCs accept, the messenger gives them a description of a great feast called the Cornucopia and tells them to arrive an hour before sunset at Lord-Mayor Arvanxi's villa (known to locals as Aberian's Folly, but never to the mayor's face) dressed in their costumes from the play.

THE REBELS' JOY

Of course, soon after the PCs finish the play, both Arael and Janiven make contact with them and ask to be informed when the PCs are invited to the mayor's celebration. Once the invitations are sent, the Children of Westcrown rejoice and Janiven Key arrives to personally congratulate the PCs. She tells them that while the PCs have been otherwise engaged over the previous week, the Children of Westcrown have been gathering more information about the mayor and his home. What they have found out so far is detailed below. Key offers what help she can in the way of information and hands the PCs four *potions of cure serious wounds* and four *potions of lesser restoration* to aid against the events to come.

ARRIVING AT ABERIAN'S FOLLY

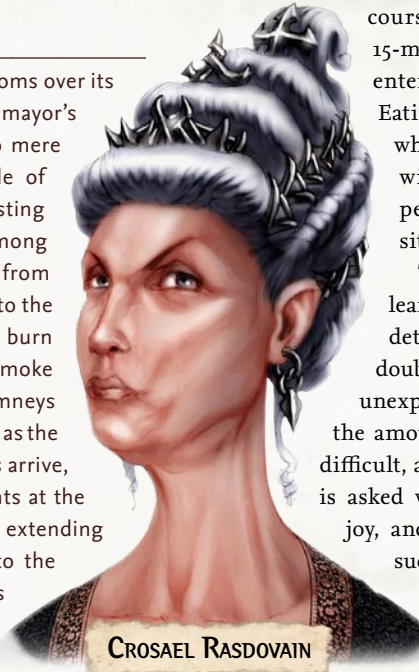
When the day of the Cornucopia arrives, the weather turns bad. Dark clouds stain the sky, and by the time the event draws near, it's raining. If the PCs don't travel in carriages or take other steps to keep their outfits from being rained on as they approach the manor, their costumes are soaked through by the time they reach Aberian's Folly and they suffer a -4 penalty to Bluff,

Council of Thieves Part 2 of 6

Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Perform checks for the evening as their first impressions—akin to drowned rats—elicit titters and unfavorable whispers.

As the PCs arrive at Aberian's Folly, read or paraphrase the following.

A corpulent building of iron and stone looms over its neighbors in southern Westcrown—the mayor's abode is anything but subtle. This is no mere house, but rather a bloated near-castle of ochre and black, a huge manor with rusting gargoyles dancing upon its gables among hooks and nails to prevent the birds from settling. Iron gutters vomit rainwater onto the cobbled streets below, but bright lights burn fierce in every window while plumes of smoke boiling up from nearly two dozen chimneys promise an interior as warm and welcome as the exterior is cold and forbidding. Carriages arrive, belching forth their well-dressed contents at the end of a long canvas-topped walkway extending from the manor grounds' front gates to the villa's front doors, offering new arrivals protection from the rain on the short trip by carriage to Cornucopia.



CROSAEL RASDOVAIN

As they arrive, the PCs are greeted by cringing, rain-soaked servants along the relatively dry, canvas-roofed pathway from the front gates to the main hall. There, drier servants take the PCs' coats and hats if they wish, securing them in area **A4** while other servants escort the PCs east to area **A21**, where many of the guests have already arrived. Unless the PCs take pains to get to the Folly first, it's best to have them be the last of the evening's arrivals—as they are ushered into area **A21**, the mayor's majordomo Crosael Simiin Rasdovain (see page 29) announces each of them in turn, by PC name first followed by the name of the PC's role in *The Six Trials of Larazod*. First impressions are important, particularly among Westcrown's elite. As each PC is announced and steps into the room, he must make a Diplomacy check to determine what sort of impression he makes—note the result of each PC's first impression Diplomacy check on a piece of paper, as this will determine each NPC's reaction to that PC as detailed under "Polite Conversations" on page 28.

THE CORNUCOPIA

Events take place in the Great Banquet Hall (area **A21**), although the guests tend to wander about rooms **A3**, **A19**, **A21–A23**, **A31**, and **A33** when they are not eating. In all, there are some 40 guests attending, some of whom are described later in "Polite Conversations."

Each course is eaten from tables laid with a dazzling array of cutlery, including a delicate barbed short spear on a slender thread and a fat silver goblet. The table settings are removed at the end of each course and set again for the next event in a 15-minute flurry of action while the guests entertain themselves in adjoining rooms. Eating generally takes half an hour, during which time attempts to leave the feast without being noticed are made at –4 penalty as everyone is seated. Guests can sit anywhere they wish.

The heroes can use the feast as a way to learn more about the Knot and the Folly, as detailed under "Polite Conversations," but doubtless your players may come up with unexpected ways to learn more. Note that with the amount of people about the use of spells is difficult, and anyone who is noticed casting spells is asked why he is casting in a house of peace, joy, and love—unless a good excuse is made, such characters face a –2 penalty to all Charisma-based checks for the rest of the evening (this penalty stacks).

As each hour rings, starting at 6:00 in the evening, a new course of the Cornucopia banquet begins in area **A21**. The PCs and other guests gather in the banquet hall to find the H-shaped table well stocked with food and drink. The wine the PCs are offered is Jeggarian 4683, known as "The Blood" for its rich red hue—anyone making a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check realizes this is an incredible vintage. This is but the first hint as to the level of decadence to which the PCs are about to be exposed.

With the impressive amount of alcohol, fine tobacco, and potent ingredients in the meal, most (if not all) of the Cornucopia's guests swiftly become inebriated and insensible as the night goes on. The same fate can strike the PCs if they don't take care to watch what they eat. A character who eats and drinks in moderation can avoid the effects of the gala and retain full control of his senses, but one who dives wholeheartedly into each course must make a DC 15 Fortitude save at the end of that course or take 1d4 points of Wisdom damage from the potent wine and food. A successful save reduces this to 1 point of Wisdom damage.

You don't need to track the Wisdom scores of every NPC guest, of course. It's easier to simply assume that with each course experienced, each of the guests takes a cumulative –1 penalty to Wisdom-based checks like Perception and Sense Motive until they either pass out or retire from the event, as detailed in each of the NPC write-ups under "Polite Conversations."

The Sixfold Trial



TROUBLESHOOTING

While this adventure assumes that the PCs simply wait for the guests (and particularly the Mayor) to become so drunk that they either pass out or retire to their guest chambers for the night, creative PCs are bound to come up with other methods of withdrawal. Spells such as *invisibility* may help, but remember that the heroes are guests of honor at a lavish party where staff mingle and serve every whim of their charges, so casting spells surreptitiously is not easy. A character who slips away will be missed at the start of the next course of the Cornucopia, and Mayor Arvanxi sends servants out to find the missing PC, postponing the gala until the “honored guest” can be returned. Each incidence of such delays makes the mayor and his guests more frustrated, and after two such delays the mayor grows angry and makes a very public request for the PCs to leave—the Cornucopia obviously isn’t to their tastes, and perhaps they’d rather spend the rest of the night in some tavern, assuming they can get there without the shadow beasts getting them first. A DC 25 Diplomacy check made at this point by a PC can get the mayor to recant, but any

further delay automatically results in the PCs’ ejection from the manor. Statistics for the majority of the guests are not provided, and if a fight breaks out, you’ll need to improvise. Needless to say, while getting in a public fight with the mayor, his staff, or his guests while inside Aberian’s Folly might appeal to some of Westcrown’s baser citizens, the majority of the cityfolk are taken aback by such reckless and barbaric actions—all Fame Points accumulated by the PCs so far are lost, and in such an event they’ll need to start building them up from scratch.

Of course, being ejected from the Cornucopia (or failing to secure an invitation to the event in the first place for lack of performing *The Six Trials of Larazod*) doesn’t mean that your Council of Thieves Adventure Path has to end. Enough details of the manor are presented here that you should be able to run a stealthy infiltration of the manor during the Cornucopia with relative ease—the PCs will need to avoid being seen or act fast to neutralize servants or guests who do see them before an alarm is raised, but an investigation of Aberian’s Folly during the gala could make for some enjoyable gaming—further details on such an infiltration are beyond the scope of this adventure.

Cornucopia Schedule

The following six courses unfold, one per hour, during the Cornucopia. Food is delivered to the tables on the hour, and tables are cleared on the half-hour, freeing guests to mingle and digest as they await the next course. The six courses are as follows:

7:00—The Feast of the Gluttonous Wolf: This course consists of beef marrow fritters, boiled side of axebeak, loach flavored with spices and sage, eels in jelly, and smoked fillet of giant gar set in jellied aspic.

8:00—The Worshipful Hog: This course consists of roast peacock, thick broth with salty strips of worg flank, fresh chuul soup served with Chelish black bread, and a roast dire boar of such size that it takes 12 bearers to bring it into the Garden.

9:00—The Fat of the Land: This course consists of honey-roasted hogfish, venison, sturgeon, and lampreys in hot sauce. In addition, a vast caravan of fruits and breads, olives, jars of curious pickles, huge stuffed peppers, figs, dates and honeycombs is offered as well.

10:00—The Dance of the Engorged Vulture: This course consists of whole roast baby squid served with honey sauce, minted lamb with fresh vegetables, sauced hatchling alligator, tureens of cod spawn in garlic, and leveret stewed in wine and parsley.

11:00—The Ambrosial Serpents: A particularly unsettling course that involves the guests eating live serpents that have been gorged on drugged mice and other mind-altering substances. The snakes are harmless, but PCs not expecting them might be shocked at discovering living reptiles upon lifting a platter's lid.

12:00—The Insatiable Hungers: This last "course" consists of exotic tobaccos and potent liquors that deliver the coup de grace, rendering many guests insensible and resulting in what can only be called an orgy. By this point, the PCs should be able to slip away unnoticed and uncontested.

POLITE CONVERSATIONS

The nobility of Cheliax thrive on gossip. Knowledge is power, after all, especially the right knowledge about the right person—or the right home. Many of the guests of the Cornucopia are particularly fond of gossiping about their mayor and his unusual house. Canny PCs can learn much about the manor and their goal from polite conversations with the guests, and even the host.

Listed below are several key attendees of the Cornucopia, together with any weaknesses they have to help PCs gain their trust, interest, and gossip. Most NPCs know at least one bit of juicy information, but wrestling it out requires first asking the right questions



ABERIAN ARVANXI

and then securing the NPC's trust with a Bluff or Diplomacy check opposed by the guest's Sense Motive check—remember, as the night goes on, Sense Motive checks grow increasingly difficult for an NPC to make as they grow more and more inebriated. As a general rule, a PC can attempt such a check to learn what an NPC knows once per course—since the Cornucopia is seven courses long and there are more than seven key NPCs, the PCs will need to divide and conquer if they hope to learn everything there is to learn.

Each guest is presented in the same format—name, alignment, gender, race, class, and level, followed by that NPC's role in Westcrown.

The Sixfold Trial

After that is the NPC's "first impression" DC. This DC applies to the initial Diplomacy check a PC makes when arriving at the gala—if the check equals or exceeds the DC, that NPC is favorably disposed toward the PC. As a result, checks made to learn that NPC's gossip gain a +4 bonus. Following this are details on the NPC's appearance and personality, gossip, weakness, and Sense Motive skills. Finally, an XP award for learning an NPC's gossip is listed.

LORD-MAYOR ABERIAN ARVANXI

NE male human rogue 7

Role mayor and Cornucopia host

First Impression DC 13

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Aberian is a rotund, balding man with a quick and somewhat too-wide smile. He wears the Westcrown colors in his elegant suit, along with a cloak made of winter wolf fur.

Personality As the mayor of

Westcrown, Aberian is used to his word being taken as law. While he was quite pleased with the PCs' performance, his goal with the Cornucopia isn't to learn more about them but to essentially parade the PCs before his other guests to increase his own standing. As such, he has relatively little to say to the PCs and is quick to request they mingle with the guests and leave him to the duties of host.

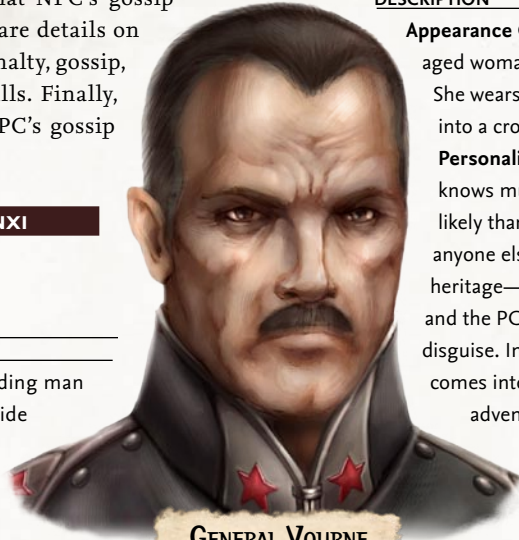
GOSSIP

Sense Motive +10

Weakness Performers—anyone who has achieved a successful performance in the mayor's presence receives a +2 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Perform checks made against him.

Gossip Mayor Aberian is focused on playing the role of host and has little interest in gossiping about his guests (though he's always interested in hearing gossip). Yet he does have something interesting to say about his home—for the past few days, he's been growing increasingly frustrated with "phantoms and gremlins," by which he means an increase in minor glitches and troubles with the lights, the fireplaces, the hot water, and other magical enhancements in effect on his house. He suspects that some sort of magical pest or mischievous spirit has gotten into the works—nothing to worry about, but he's afraid it'll set him back a fair amount to have it fixed later in the week. Unknown to the mayor, these "glitches" are in fact manifestations of damage done in the Asmodean Knot, and soon enough will escalate into something entirely more dangerous (see "The Infernal Syndrome" in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #28).

XP Award 800



GENERAL VOURNE

CROSAEL SIMIIN RASDOVAIN

LE female tiefling bard 9

Role Aberian's Folly majordomo

First Impression DC 18

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Crosael is a relatively attractive, middle-aged woman who has long served the Arvanxi family. She wears dark robes and has a knack for blending into a crowd and not being noticed.

Personality As the majordomo of the manor, she knows much about the building but is even less likely than Aberian to share that knowledge with anyone else. Crosael's greatest secret is her tiefling heritage—she's hidden this even from Aberian, and the PCs should be unable to see through her disguise. In any event, the revelation of this secret comes into play in the fourth Council of Thieves adventure, in which Crosael has a much larger role to play.

GOSSIP

Sense Motive +12

Weakness Poetry—Crosael's fondness for poetry is quite acute;

a PC who can carry on a sensible discussion with her for several minutes about poetry by making a successful DC 15 Knowledge (history) or Perform (act, comedy, oratory, or sing) check not only learns the name of her favorite poet (a long-dead Chelaxian named Nevezandius, about whom Crosael gushes) but gains a +4 bonus on checks made to learn her gossip.

Gossip Crosael is close-lipped about Aberian's Folly, but if asked about the Cornucopia, she'll warn the PCs that the food and wine is particularly potent. If they want to remain sensible by the feast's end, they should pace themselves and eat carefully. If the PCs do manage to earn her trust, though, she admits to them that she's particularly concerned about one of the newer hires—a servant by the name of Sian who's been missing for 2 days now along with a relatively valuable bust of Asmodeus. Crosael worries that Sian has stolen the bust and fled into the city to pawn it. What she doesn't say is that she's been blackmailed into hiring Sian as a maid by the Council of Thieves, who threatened to expose her tiefling heritage if she didn't comply. The latest request from the Council to allow Sian access to the Asmodean Knot has increased Crosael's worry, especially since Sian's been inside the Asmodean Knot now for 2 days, and she's worried that if Sian has perished, the Council will be very displeased. At 10:00, Crosael takes her leave of the Cornucopia to meet with Chammy elsewhere to discuss matters concerning Sian.

XP Award 600

GENERAL VOURNE

LE male human aristocrat 5/fighter 10

Role Commander of the Gemcrown Bay Imperial Fleet

Council of Thieves Part 2 of 6

First Impression DC 27

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Vourne is a grizzled, mean-looking middle-aged man with receding black hair and a neatly trimmed mustache. He wears a suit of stiff, black ceremonial leather armor that displays his rank in the Chelish navy.

Personality General Vourne is perhaps the most grim and sour-faced of the attendees at the Cornucopia. A stern man, the sight of so much frivolity and gaiety unsettles him. Arrogant and pragmatic, he has little time for fools—particularly “peasant actors whose claim to fame is ‘surviving a play.’” The mayor invited him as little more than a courtesy since the general was in town, and the general accepted the invitation for the same reason, but he does not enjoy wine or idle chatter. He does manage to deliberately mistake one PC for a waiter, and keeps snapping his fingers for service, complaining about the food and wine. As sunset nears, just before the second course ends at about 7:45, he thanks the mayor for a delightful repast and then apologizes for his early departure, citing a need to return to his ship at the imperial marina before sundown to prepare for the journey back north to Egorian the next morning. After he leaves, what was an imperceptible pall over the Cornucopia fades and the rest of the evening is even more filled with laughter and revelry.

GOSSIP

Sense Motive +10

Weakness War Talk—Vourne is a sucker for discussing great battles and naval tactics. A DC 20 Knowledge (history) or Profession (sailor) check causes him to warm somewhat, and grants a +4 bonus on attempts to learn his gossip.

Gossip Vourne can confirm that a pit fiend is imprisoned deep under Aberian’s Folly, a gift years ago from the House of Thrune and the source of the manor’s extravagances, such as its hot water and self-lighting fireplaces. Chances of the pit fiend escaping its imprisonment, says Vourne, are remote—“Andoran is more likely to reclaim Cheliox’s respect than that devil is to find its way out of its Thrune-built cage.”

XP Award 600

CHAMMADY DROVENCE

NE female human ranger 10/assassin 4

Role Drovence nobility

First Impression DC 27

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Chammady is a beautiful but dangerous-looking woman. She arrives dressed in a scanty blue gown cut high along the sides and low in the front, her long crimson

hair up in a ponytail and a strange fur draped over her shoulders—what appears to be a serpentine, wolf-headed creature with wings.

Personality Although the mayor invited several Drovenges, Chammady alone is here to represent the ancient Wiscrani family, and many of the lesser nobles spend much of the Cornucopia trying to get her attention. Haughty and proud, she pretends to have little interest in the PCs, but a DC 25 Sense Motive check is enough to note that she’s certainly keeping her eye on them all. If confronted, she smiles and admits that it’s not often that one gets to eat dinner with upcoming legends—but she leaves the impression that it’s unclear whether she was referring to the PCs or herself with the cryptic remark. In any event, not long after the PCs talk to her (or not long after the third course—whichever comes first), she announces that she must, unfortunately, leave early to attend another event. She wishes the other guests a good evening and calls for her

carriage—the fact that she rides back home after dark without apparent care for the shadow beasts becomes the favorite topic of discussion among most of the nobles for the remainder of the hour, with most whispering of how those Drovenges “always were something of fools.” Chammady is, of course, one of Council of Thieves’ primary villains—the PCs are destined to encounter her again in future adventures. Her appearance here is merely to establish her presence in Westcrown—if you feel that the PCs might overreact and assume she’s a villain they should confront at this time, feel free to omit her from the guest list.

GOSSIP

Sense Motive +1

Weakness None—Chammady is here not at her wishes, but because she’s gathering information about the nobility of Westcrown and the PCs as well at her brother’s request.

Gossip None—Although she’s courteous, Chammady avoids getting caught up in trading gossip. She has too many secrets of her own she doesn’t want to reveal.

XP Award none

EIRTEIN OBERIGO

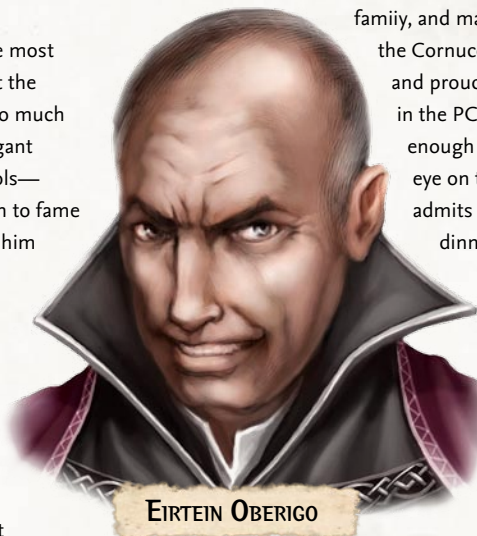
LE male human rogue 6

Role Oberigo nobility

First Impression DC 23

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Eirtein’s well-lined face always seems fixed in a tight grin—he greets everyone like a long-lost brother or sister, but his mellifluous voice is somewhat unsettling in its eagerness. He wears a flowing robe accented with black peacock feathers.



EIRTEIN OBERIGO

The Sixfold Trial

Personality The shrewd, traditionalist leader of the Oberigo family, the slick Eirtein is always out looking for information or opportunity. His visit to the Cornucopia is no exception, and he comes well-armed with gossip to trade for anything of interest.

GOSSIP

Sense Motive +9

Weakness Gossip—Eirtein's specialty is knowledge, particularly knowledge about other people. If the PCs give him a secret about another (this requires a Bluff check if the secret is fictional), Eirtein gives them one of his bits of gossip for free—no Bluff or Diplomacy check required.

Gossip Oberigo knows a lot, and you may wish for the PCs to make three checks to learn everything the crimelord has to say about Aberian's Folly.

- 1 Aberian's Folly consists of three distinct regions—the manor itself, the dungeons below (the Nessian Spiral—a place even he would hesitate to try to enter), and the manor vaults named the Asmodean Knot. The entrance to the Nessian Spiral is beyond a well-protected door in area **A21**, while the entrance to the Asmodean Knot is hidden elsewhere. If the PCs can find it, he'll pay them 2,000 gp for its location.
- 2 The Asmodean Knot, unlike the rest of the manor and the Nessian Spiral, is said to be contained wholly in a pocket dimension accessed from a special mirror hidden somewhere in the house.
- 3 The guardians of the Asmodean Knot—and the PCs can be sure there are guardians—are likely to be a mix of devils and shadowy undead, if rumors hold true. Whether or not this bespeaks a link between the Asmodean Knot and the shadow beasts that prowl Westcrown at night, Eirtein cannot say.

XP Award 400 each

SASCAR TILERNOS

LN female human aristocrat 6

Role Tilernos nobility

First Impression DC 13

DESCRIPTION

Appearance Sascar is a delicately featured woman who wears far too much makeup. Her silver hair is up in an extremely tight bun, over which she wears an outrageous headpiece shaped like a winged, erupting volcano.

Personality Sascar is shrill and prone to snorting when she cackles, and fancies herself a connoisseur of fine wine when in fact she's merely an alcoholic with deep enough pockets to maintain her sickness in style.

GOSSIP

Familiar Faces

The mayor invited most of the cast and crew of *The Six Trials of Larazod*. Thesing has no interest in attending, and the mayor just plain forgot to invite Millech (not that the deformed man would want to attend anyway), but the other three NPCs arrive ahead of the PCs (or with them if the PCs have become close to them). Securing gossip from these three is automatic if the PCs remain on good terms with the NPCs, or impossible if they do not.

Visbaronetess Delour Aulamaxa:

The visbaronetess is well-armed with gossip about several other NPCs, and can tell the PCs that Crosael is missing a servant who apparently stole something valuable from the manor, General Vourne is a sucker for naval war stories, Eirtein trades gossip for gossip, and Sascar is an alcoholic.

Robahl Nonon:

The director finds himself at the center of attention, a position likely rivaled only by the actor who portrayed Larazod. He knows that the food here is potent and warns the PCs to eat in moderation if they want to remain conscious until the end of the gala.

Calseinica Nymmis: The pretty starlett clings to her Larazod the entire evening—if the PCs hope to sneak off to explore the manor without her knowing, they'll need to engineer a way to disengage Larazod from her. Of course, if she learns that the PCs are interested in searching the manor, she gets a wicked grin and wants to come along, giving the PCs an entirely different problem to manage, since she's hardly an adventurer herself.

Sense Motive +4

Weakness Alcohol—Anyone who offers Sascar a glass of wine gains a +4 bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks to learn her gossip.

Gossip Sascar believes the popular rumor that Arvanxi has a sick, deformed son, and is all too anxious to express her deepest concern for the boy in whispers when she thinks the mayor cannot hear. According to her, the child lives in a secret room in the attic, his affliction making him both susceptible to terrible sunburns and unpleasant to look upon. This is an old rumor that has fallen out of popular circulation, one that rose when Aberian ended a gala early and ejected a dozen guests from his home when they all attempted to enter the manor attic under the mistaken impression that the mayor had a harem hidden up there. In truth, Aberian's only secret



SASCAR TILERNOS

in the attic is the entrance to the Asmodean Knot—he ejected his guests because he was worried they would inadvertently stumble into the dangerous vault.

XP Award 600

ABERIAN'S FOLLY

The walls of Aberian's Folly are of stone and iron, clad inside with horsehair plaster and a 4-foot-high dark oak wainscoting. Ceilings are 10 feet high, and windows are securely shuttered and locked (DC 30 Disable Device to open from the outside, or DC 20 Strength check to break open). Doors are of heavy oak and carved with images of capering devils (DC 30 Disable Device to open when locked; DC 26 Strength check to break down). The whole place is richly furnished; trophy-heads and paintings line the walls, and rooms and corridors are cramped with fine furnishings. Such furnishings, while valuable, are difficult to remove and pawn. While each room contains about 50 to 100 gp in expensive decorations, the PCs would be well advised to avoid looting.

The entire place is lit at night by glowing torches and candelabras hanging from ceilings—close inspection reveals that the crystals mounted where flames would burn in a lesser house glow with their own radiance as long as they remain fixed in their sconces. A touch at a sconce base turns a light off, while another turns it back on. Now and then, the lights flicker on and off, as if their power source was unstable—this is a subtle manifestation of the slowly failing wards in the dungeon beneath the Folly (known as the Nessian Spiral).

Traditionally, the Folly's fireplaces light and quench themselves in a manner similar to the lights, the “switch” in these cases being a grinning devil face at the center of each fireplace's mantle. The fireplaces do not burn wood—the flames within simply emerge from the carved mouths of devils within the fireplace and seem to burn without fuel. But with the recent damage done to the power conduits, the fireplaces have become unpredictable, periodically shooting out goutts of fire. As a result, Crosael has covered each of the activation switches with a cloth and they're burning actual wood in the fireplaces all night, something that somewhat embarrasses Lord-Mayor Aberian. A PC who activates a fireplace by touching the switch causes the fire within to suddenly flare up—all creatures within 5 feet of the fireplace must make a DC 12 Reflex save or take 1d6 points of fire damage, after which the fireplace burns normally for 1d6 hours before going out automatically.

Long imprisoned below Aberian's Folly, the pit fiend Liebdaga is the source of the manor's eerie power. The Nessian Spiral is built partially to contain this powerful devil, and is destined to be fully explored in “The Infernal Syndrome” (the fourth adventure in Council of Thieves).

For this adventure, events focus instead on the Asmodean Knot, a maze of terror where the shadows are alive and unseen things try to break through into the world.

All of the minor magic effects powered by the pit fiend function at CL 20th; if dispelled, they automatically reactivate in 1d4 rounds.

The Servants: Aberian's Folly employs no less than 16 live-in servants, and during the Cornucopia, the mayor has brought in an additional 14 servants to aid them. All of these servants have been ordered to remain silent at all times—each is a human expert 2, dressed in a strange black outfit decorated with white patches of felt to make the servants look like animated skeletons in dim light. The live-in servants know the layout of the manor quite well, but it takes magic like *charm person* to secure their aid. All servants have Perception +1.

S. Storage: This room contains tools, linens, barrels of water, and other mundane items.

P. Privy: This chamber contains a sink and a toilet. The sink has hot and cold running water (the water tends to run quite hot, and a PC who sticks his hand in the hot water without tempering it with cold must make a DC 12 Reflex save or take 1 point of fire damage). The toilets are polished metal and ivory affairs built to look like leering, gaping devil mouths, and double for the servants as general trash disposal. A few minutes after waste is deposited in the toilet's bowl, a sudden searing flash of fire incinerates whatever is inside, dealing 6d6 fire damage (Reflex DC 15 half) to anything that happens to be reaching into the toilet at the time. Both the hot water and the incineration effect are powered by the imprisoned pit fiend.

G. Guest Room: These chambers each contain a fireplace, a bed, a dresser, and a small sink with hot and cold water. Due to the fact that the shadow beasts prowl the streets, these rooms have all been assigned to guests of the mayor—but few if any of the guests ever make it up here. Feel free to assign the PCs or other guests any rooms you wish.

C. Closet: This room contains a sink, a toilet, a small washtub (also with running water) and a place to store dirty clothes.

A1. Manor Grounds: The grounds consist of a lawn of green grass with a simple dirt path connecting the various entrances—during the gala, a temporary canvas-covered shelter runs along the central path to protect guests from the rain as they approach the manor entrance.

A2. Stables: Arvanxi's horses are kept here.

A3. Entrance: Thickly carpeted and well lit, the walls of this manor hang with numerous paintings of past Westcrown mayors and nobility. Fully two-thirds of the spots are empty—their portraits and paintings having been seized and destroyed long ago by the House of Thrune. The stairs lead up to area A31.

A4. Tool Storage: Several shelves on the wall are lined with gardening tools. The secret door can be found with a DC 20 Perception check. The door leading outside is kept locked at night; the key hangs on the wall nearby.

A5. Servants' Quarters: Three bunks give a total of six servants a place to sleep here. The secret door can be found with a DC 20 Perception check.

A6. Servants' Dining Room: This plain oak table is where the servants take their meals and relax.

A7. Servants' Entrance: Servants are encouraged to use this plain room to come and go from the manor. The exterior door is kept locked at night; the key hangs on a wall nearby. The stairs lead up to area A35.

A8. Baths: A large metal and porcelain washtub sits in this room for servants to bathe in—as with the sinks, the tub has hot and cold running water (and it's just as easy to scald oneself with the water here as in the sinks).

A9. Crosael's Chambers: The manor's majordomo lives here. Although she keeps both doors locked at all times, she knows better than to keep evidence of her tiefling heritage here. A small cabinet at the foot of her bed is also locked (DC 30 Disable Device to open); it contains several small bags of gold (260 gp in all—this is the payroll for the servants), along with schedules, ledgers, and other paperwork associated with running the mundane aspects of the manor. Three items of possible interest among these papers include relatively recent paperwork for the hiring of a new maid, what appears to be a page filled with bad poetry, and an iron key (this key opens the door to area A51). A character who takes 15 minutes to look through the paperwork in detail (or a character who glances at the paperwork for the new maid and makes a DC 15 Knowledge [nobility] check) realizes that the hiring process for this newest maid, a woman named Sian, bypassed most of the typical interviews and background references. In fact, there's very little paperwork on Sian at all apart from a brief entry on her pay rate (unremarkable) and the fact that she was immediately given seniority over the other maids as regards access to various parts of the manor. The page of bad poetry is in fact a map of the ground floor, upper floor, and attic of Aberian's Folly that shows the locations of all secret doors in the manor, including the entrance to the secret room in the attic. The map itself is disguised by a *secret page* spell (CL 9th). The secret word to access the map is known only by Crosael (the word is "Nevezandius," the name of Crosael's favorite poet); without this word, PCs will probably need to successfully cast *dispel magic* to see what the map contains.

A10. Servants' Quarters: Four more bunks here provide sleeping quarters for eight servants.

A11. Staff Room: The serving staff meets here to discuss major events and work.

A12. Office: This room is used by the majordomo Crosael to meet with solicitors, visitors, and other business-related associates.

A13. Visitors' Lounge: The walls of this room feature somewhat disturbing paintings of various hellscape—visitors to the manor wait here upon the mayor's pleasure. The stairs lead up to area A37.

A14. Food Prep: Food is prepared on these two long tables once it has been cooked in the kitchen. The secret door can be discovered with a DC 20 Perception check.

A15. Kitchen: This large kitchen features four large fireplaces, a wide marble table, and numerous wall-mounted counters and cabinets.

A16. Pantry: All manner of food and drink are stored here. The temperature is kept low in this chamber, and a large box to the west always contains ice—both effects are powered by the manor's imprisoned pit fiend.

A17. Guardroom: Normally, Arvanxi keeps a few guards posted here to do periodic night patrols, but when he holds galas he generally sends the guards home in an attempt to show that his guests are so safe at his home that no guards are needed.

A18. Wine Storage: This room is cooled by the water to the north and the magic of the imprisoned pit fiend below—the wine stored here is quite fine, but it's the contents of a locked case to the south (DC 40 Disable Device to pick—the key is carried by Arvanxi) that hold the truly impressive wine. There are a dozen bottles in this case, each worth 200 gp.

A19. Garden of Earthly Pleasures: Although seemingly open to the sky, the upper portion of this garden is in fact a *permanent image* maintained by the pit fiend. The illusion matches the real world's day/night cycle, but the sky is always cloudless and either sunny or full of stars. A quaint wooden bridge arches over a river that flows from a large devil's mouth mounted on the north wall to a pool in the south—a magically maintained pump recycles the water under the garden and back up to the mouth to create a perpetually flowing stream. The banks are thick with wildflowers—the garden itself is maintained by servants who enter via the secret door in the north (this door can be discovered with a DC 20 Perception check); guests are normally not allowed to walk in the garden itself, but are welcome to enjoy it from the bridge or the balcony above in area A33.

A character who watches the "night sky" above for at least a few minutes can make a DC 20 Perception check; success indicates he sees a brief flash of movement as what appears to be a sinister devil-like shape flits furtively across the sky—this is a manifestation of the damage done to the manor's power source as Liebdaga the pit fiend slowly begins to flex his power in an attempt to break free.

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A20. Tool Storage: This room contains various tools for garden maintenance.

A21. Banquet Hall: This immense chamber is pleasantly heated by six huge fireplaces and lit by constantly glowing crystal chandeliers. The walls are decorated with unsettling landscapes of twisted hellish realms that, upon closer inspection, seem to depict Westcrown as if it were located in Hell itself. Two thick, wooden pillars carved to represent tangles of serpents rise to support the roof above, and a balcony for observing the banquets here from below winds along the east and west walls at a height of 15 feet. The largest feature in the room is a huge, “H”-shaped table—this is where the Cornucopia takes place.

Two other features are present in here. To the northeast stands an immense grandfather clock whose sides are carved to depict hungry devils chasing 12 unicorns, its bells deep and ominous when they strike the hour. About 20 feet south of the clock in the eastern wall is a huge black stone door, 6 feet wide and 14 feet tall. Beyond this door is a stone staircase that leads down to the dungeons below the manor—the Nessian Spiral. The door itself is locked both physically and magically via an *arcane lock* maintained by the pit fiend—as the mayor and his guests never leave this room, opportunities for the PCs to get through the door to explore beyond should be minimal. If they do manage to gain entry, full details on the dungeons below can be found in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #28.

A22. The Pool of Honey: The walls of this room have thick, thorny hedges of roses and other rare flowers and a long, thin pool of what looks to be honey sits in the room's center. The rose bushes are merely a *permanent illusion* (DC 19), but the pool of honey is quite real—the honey within is kept perpetually fresh and is only a few inches deep. Both illusion and honey pool are maintained by the pit fiend. The secret door to the northwest can be found with a DC 20 Perception check, provided the searcher can see through the illusion.

As in area A19, the permanent illusion here is malfunctioning. A PC who examines the roses and makes a DC 20 Perception check notices that blood drips from thorns here and there, and that maggots writhe amid the rose petals. When the PC looks again or attempts to draw someone else's attention to the eerie sight, the blood and maggots are gone.

A23. The Jungle of Nectar: This room contains a sparkling fountain of crystal clear water, an illusory sky similar to the one in area A19, and three large tropical trees filled with fruits. The fruits range from pineapples to mangos to papayas to more obscure fruit, all scattered and hanging from the same branches of the three magical trees. As with other magical effects in the Folly, these trees, which grow out of circular holes in the stone floor,

are maintained by the pit fiend—the fruits they bear are nonetheless delicious and safe to eat.

A24. Shrine: This is a small shrine dedicated to Asmodeus that features two marble statues of the Prince of Darkness. While clean, the shrine hasn't been used for years—Arvanxi isn't that religious, and when he does attend church services, he goes out.

A25. Empty Bedchamber: Previous mayors kept a house priest of Asmodeus on staff—the priest used this room to sleep and relax. Arvanxi broke with that tradition, and while this room is cleaned regularly, it's musty with years of disuse. Nevertheless, the previous priest's hidden stash of magic remains—a DC 25 Perception check discovers the hidden compartment in the bed's headboard he created, within which are stashed a *potion of lesser restoration*, a *potion of remove disease*, a *scroll of dispel magic*, a *scroll of remove curse*, a *wand of cure serious wounds* (18 charges), and a *wand of restoration* (11 charges).

A26. Private Library: The books here are mostly plays, poetry, and ribald novels—a mixture of Crosael and Aberian's tastes.

A27. Private Baths: Similar to area A8, but used exclusively by Mayor Arvanxi and his favorite guests.

A28. Private Lounge: This is a comfortable lounge with a private bar along the western wall used sometimes by Mayor Arvanxi when entertaining special guests.

A29. Inner Foyer: This empty chamber is the primary entrance to the private bedchambers above; the stairs lead up to area A40.

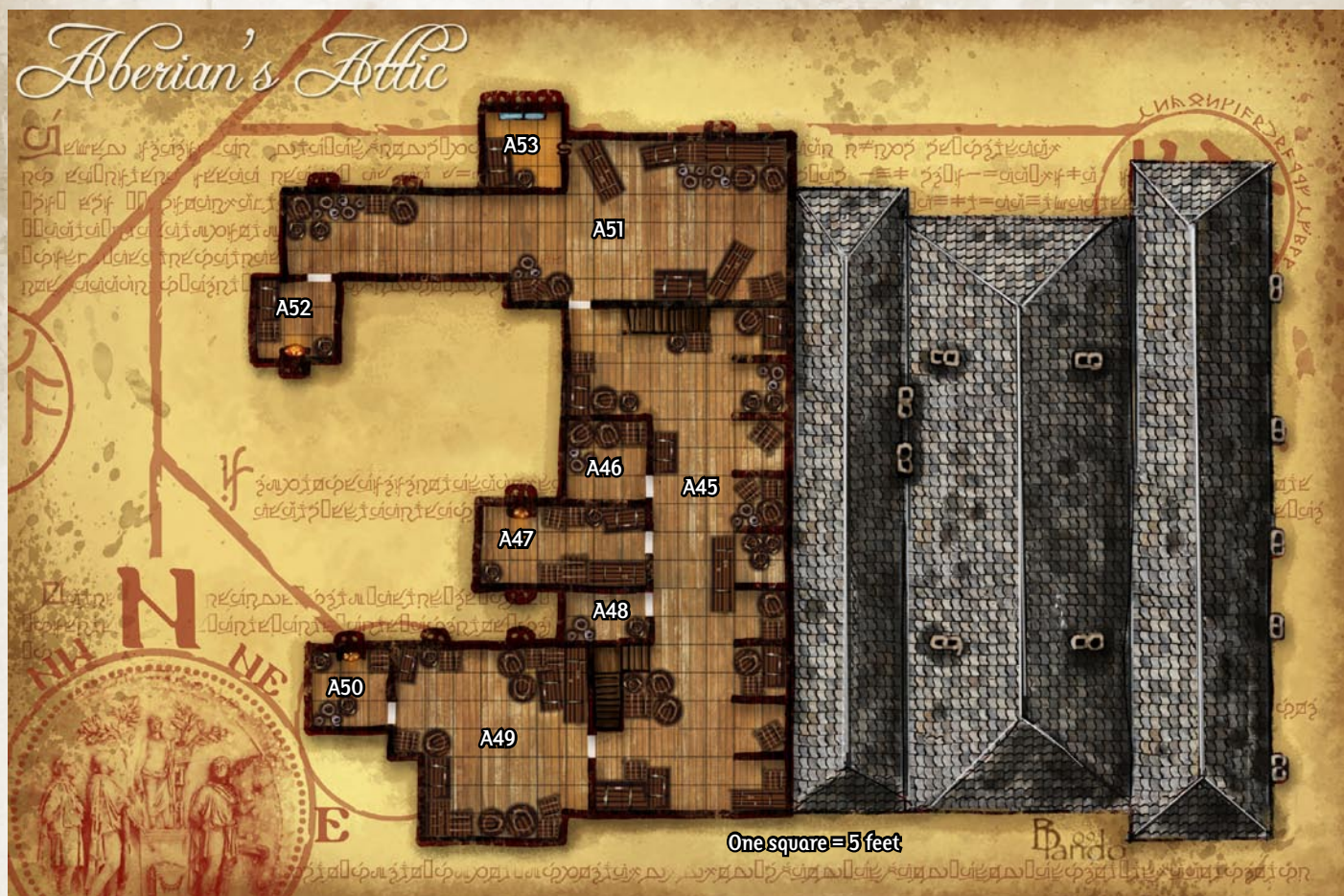
A30. Treasury: The secret door leading into this room is particularly well designed, and can be discovered with a DC 25 Perception check. Aberian, unlike the previous mayors, has little interest in using the Asmodean Knot as a vault, as he is unsettled and disturbed by it. Instead, he keeps much of his wealth safe in various investments throughout Westcrown, in smaller vaults near the beginning of the Nessian Spiral under his home, or here in this room. A single chest sitting around the corner (locked; DC 30 Disable Device) contains 4,400 gp and 750 pp in small velvet pouches of 50 coins apiece.

A31. Upper Galley: This large open space has a polished hardwood floor and serves as a place for guests to mingle—sometimes, the chamber is used as a ballroom, but not this evening.

A32. Guest Baths: Similar to area A8, but intended for the use of guests only.

A33. The Voyeur's Gallery: These open balconies allow individuals to stroll above areas A19 and A21–A23 below.

A34. Gallery: The walls of this long room are devoted to paintings and portraits of Aberian's great love—the theater. Pictured here are scenes from two dozen different plays—one even shows the scene from *The Six Trials of Larazod* in which Larazod is consumed by the beast. The paintings



are colorful but not particularly well crafted—Aberian’s taste in art is somewhat indiscriminating. The stairs lead up to area **A45**; a velvet rope with a sign in Common that says “Do Not Enter” hangs over the bottom of the stairs.

A35. Guest Lounge: Several chairs and sofas sit in this well-lit room, a place for guests to relax or take meals. The secret door can be discovered with a DC 20 Perception check. The stairs lead down to area **A7**.

A36. Storage: This empty storeroom is kept locked; the stairs lead up to area **A45**.

A37. Game Room: A few tables and chairs in here give a place for guests to play card games or one of several board games stacked on a shelf to the west, including three different copies of Aberian’s favorite—*Pits and Perils*.

A38. Trophy Storage: Several large stuffed animals, including a dozen hawks and leopards and an owlbear, have been put into storage here—leftover decorations from a previous mayor.

A39. Library: This library has comfortable leather chairs surrounded by shelves of books. The tomes are generally about art, opera, and the theater.

A40. Upper Lounge: A small room used by Aberian to relax and enjoy his favorite cigars.

A41–A42. Unused Bedrooms: As Aberian is a bachelor, he only uses one of the four bedrooms found along this wing; these rooms are empty but kept clean. Rarely, they are used by special guests.

A43. Aberian’s Bedroom: Unlike the other bedrooms, this room is well lived-in. Aberian keeps the door locked, but there is very little within that is particularly incriminating.

A44. Unused Bedroom: This room is identical to areas **A41–A42**.

A45. Main Attic: Dusty and vast, this attic is cluttered with crates, old furniture, and miscellaneous items that Aberian moved up here from the manor’s previous occupant. The clutter is tremendous; the northern stairs lead down to area **A36**, while the southern ones go down to area **A34**. The northern door, alone of all the doors in the manor, is locked with a particularly impressive padlock—it takes a DC 30 Disable Device, or the key kept in Crosael’s room (area **A9**), to open the padlock.

A46. Paperwork Storage: Several filing cabinets, chests, and boxes contain old paperwork from Westcrown mayors dating back to the manor’s original construction hundreds of years ago—there could be all manner of interesting

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adventure hooks in here if you wish, but none that pertain to Council of Thieves.

A47. Unused Lounge: Once used as an attic lounge by a previous mayor, this room is now empty, the fine furniture that once decorated it long since sold off.

A48. Attic Dungeon: This is an empty room with several sets of empty manacles hanging from the walls—Aberian has not used this room, although past mayors made much use of the chamber.

A49. Private Performance Hall: This room has been half converted into a private theater—several months of work remain before it can serve as a functional performance hall.

A50. Dressing Room: When the performance hall is finished, this room will serve as a dressing room/staging area for actors—the room is currently empty.

A51. North Attic: The contents of this room are similar to those of the main attic, but much dustier. The door to this room is kept locked (DC 35 Disable Device to pick the lock). The secret door to area **A53** can be found with a DC 25 Perception check.

A52. Empty Storeroom: The walls of this empty storeroom are scratched, as if by fingernails, although no other clue to the room's original use remains.

A53. Entrance to the Asmodean Knot: The only feature of this bare room is what appears to be a pair of double doors made of flat gray metal in the northern wall. The surface of the doors seems moist and reflections in the doors look more like vague shadows and smears of light. Those who stare at the doors for too long note that the “reflections” seem to writhe and move of their own accord. A DC 25 Perception check by a character with trapfinding reveals that what appears to have been a magical trap once warded the door, but that the trap is currently deactivated (2 days ago by Sian). The doors themselves do not actually open, but any characters who touch a door feel a sudden sense of vertigo as they are transported into the Asmodean Knot, arriving an instant later in area **B1**.

Story Award: For finding the entrance to the Asmodean Knot, award the PCs 2,400 XP.

PART FIVE: THE ASMODEAN KNOT

The Asmodean Knot is a relatively recent addition to the mayoral manor. When the House of Thrune annexed Westcrown and placed a new mayor in power 70 years ago, they gave that first mayor a potent gift—a bound pit fiend that would serve as a source of power. Much of the manor's minor magic stems from the pit fiend, but it is the Asmodean Knot that is the most impressive of these magical creations—for the Asmodean Knot is its own demiplane built from raw material drawn from the Plane of Shadow. The dungeons below the mayoral manor are

as old (if not older) than the building, and certain areas of them were dangerous and uncharted—as such, they made for a good place to imprison a pit fiend but not a great place to serve the mayor as a treasure vault or personal gaol. This was the original purpose of the Asmodean Knot—to provide Westcrown's mayor with an easily accessible and prestigious vault to call his own in return for unquestioning loyalty to the House of Thrune.

The traditional title of Mayor of Westcrown is older than Cheliah's current government. When Aroden died, the city's mayor (a devout worshiper of Aroden named Norren Betevesk) was murdered, and the manor burnt partially to the ground during the following riots. It served for a time as the home of various petty self-proclaimed lords until the House of Thrune reestablished order in Cheliah. The first mayor in this new era, a priest of Asmodeus and close ally to the House of Thrune by the name of Anvengen Doskivari, took office in 4640 AR. Over the next 20 years, Anvengen did much to help build and shape the Asmodean Knot—the man was a half-insane, half-brilliant engineer and a keen student of various hellish architectural styles, and the resulting structure is a masterwork of impossible construction. Taking advantage of the Shadow Plane's “fluid realities,” Anvengen included eternal stairways, bottomless pits, and other unusual features in his Knot, but when he attempted to draw forth a particularly dangerous element of raw shadowstuff to expand the Knot's size even further, he was absorbed into the Knot's architecture and destroyed. Fragments of Anvengen's spirit still suffuse the Knot's construction, but as a specific entity, the priest is no more. The second mayor of Westcrown, a secretive sadist named Dargentu Vheed, lasted a bit longer, in part because he did not attempt to expand the Knot's size or change its shape. Instead, he used the Knot to fuel his own depravities, populating it with horrific monsters and sending victims through the place armed with only a sword and a torch for his own entertainment. It was Dargentu who engineered the creation of the Outcast King as punishment for a particularly unruly bearded devil servant, and Dargentu who, after the House of Thrune sealed the Pathfinder lodge, saw to it that the keys and documents associated with the closing of Delvehaven were placed in a Chelish Crux and then in safe storage within the Knot. Dargentu himself died after he attempted to navigate the Nessian Spiral to see if he could adjust the pit fiend's prison to give the Asmodean Knot more magical traps and perils.

The third person to control the Knot is Westcrown's current mayor. Neither a powerful priest like Anvengen nor a sadistic sorcerer like Dargentu, Mayor Aberian Arvanxi has never had much interest in or use for the Asmodean Knot. Truth be told, he's somewhat afraid that the monsters that dwell within might someday escape, and paid a small fortune to have the entrance warded

with a potent magical trap. The Council of Thieves agent Sian managed to disarm this trap and secure entrance to the Knot, leaving the way open for the PCs. If Aberian Arvanxi were to learn that the Knot had been opened and that people were coming in and out of it, he would be both furious and frightened, a fact that his majordomo understands all too well.

FEATURES OF THE KNOT

The Asmodean Knot exists in its own demiplane, but as it was modeled on the Material Plane, things function much the same way within—save for a few key differences. Normal laws of physicality are not enforced in the Knot. Rooms fold in upon themselves, exist in the same space, or seem to descend into infinity. While in essence physical things behave as normal (arrows follow correct flights, dropped things fall, and characters get tired and heal through rest), many of the chambers in the Knot follow unusual rules or have strange features.

The walls, floors, and ceilings of the Asmodean Knot seem to be paneled in polished gray wood in most rooms, but in many places pieces of this paneling have fallen away to reveal smooth, glassy gray stone beneath. In areas with irregular walls, the smooth stone surface is readily apparent. This material is similar to polished marble in feel and strength, but attempts to dig beyond the walls of the Knot are fruitless, for the stone extends forever in all directions in this demiplane. Doors are made of stout gray wood and are unlocked and easy to open unless otherwise indicated. The entire complex is dimly lit by periodic torches in wall sconces whose flames flicker with unsettling slowness.

SIAN DAEMODUS

The PCs are not the only intruders in the Asmodean Knot—an agent of the Council of Thieves has already infiltrated the staff at Aberian's Folly, and 2 days before the PCs enter the Knot, this rogue, a tiefling named Sian Daemodus, enters ahead of them to explore the place and look for clues on how to release the imprisoned pit fiend Liebdağa (including clues on how to navigate the much deadlier Nessian Spiral).

Chammady and Ecarrdian Drovenga had hoped Sian would be able to take her time exploring the Knot, but when they learned that the mayor had invited a large number of nobles to his home for the Cornucopia (including, the Drovengas realized with a bit of nervous fear, the same folks who took out the Bastards of Erebus), Chammady urged Sian to step up her “schedule” and to get in and out of the Knot sooner rather than later. They gave Sian some additional gear in a *handy haversack* (including a runecurse parchment—see page 40) to aid her should she encounter opposition from the PCs, telling her that if she were able

to slay the rising heroes before they caused much more trouble, there would be a bonus in her payment. And so Sian entered the Asmodean Knot sooner than she'd hoped.

With the aid of a potion of gaseous form, Sian was able to reach the entrance with ease, and armed with information she'd been able to learn from her research, she was able to disarm the trap on that entrance. Since then, she's spent 2 days exploring the Knot, searching for clues about the Nessian Spiral and Liebdağa, and plotting her eventual attack on the PCs. By the time the PCs enter the Knot, Sian has already learned much about her primary objective, and has placed several traps and other alarms to alert her when they do finally enter the complex. What Sian doesn't realize is that her disarming of several traps and wards in the Knot, combined with her rather blunt methods of extracting the information she needed from the now-dead kyton in area **B12**, has damaged the conduits between the Asmodean Knot and the Nessian Spiral deep below. Although not enough damage to accidentally release Liebdağa immediately, this damage is enough that the actions the PCs are likely to take in the Knot will start a slow-burning chain reaction ultimately resulting in a catastrophic failure of the pit fiend's containment—an event detailed in “The Infernal Syndrome” in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #28.

Having completed her primary mission, Sian now lurks in the Knot, eager for a chance to earn her bonus pay for assassinating the PCs. Her first attempt to do them in is in area **B1**—the runecurse parchment she's placed on a dead body there. Feel free to have Sian attack the PCs at any time during their exploration of the Knot—an ambush on the group if they decide to make camp and rest in the Knot is a good opportunity. This adventure assumes that Sian waits for the PCs to reach area **B21** before she makes her move, and thus her statistics are presented there, but if an opportunity to use her before them comes along, feel free to take advantage of it!

Sian is a dangerous foe, and one the PCs should have a bit of work to defeat, but the simplest way to combat her is to trick her into accepting the runecurse from area **B1**. Sian knows enough not to accept the runecurse itself, but can be tricked into accepting an object that the runecurse is stored within, similarly to how her trap with the *handy haversack* works. Using an illusion to disguise the runecurse as a different dropped object during the heat of battle could work, as could hiding the object in something valuable and then surrendering and offering the valuable object up as a bribe in exchange for mercy. Even using magic like *charm person* or *suggestion* to manipulate Sian into accepting a gift in which the runecurse has been hidden would serve (although if the runecurse is obvious for what it is, Sian might gain a bonus to her save to resist taking an action opposed to her safety). In most cases, you

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can determine if Sian falls for such a deception by having her make a Sense Motive check against the appropriate PC's Bluff check. One thing she won't do is destroy the runecurse if she recognizes it for what it is—she doesn't want to risk the curse transferring to her at all.

As Sian is the one who started this particular runecurse (even though it was created by another, part of that creation process involved setting Sian up as the delivery mechanism), its effects resolve swiftly if she accepts the curse back. Only 1d3 rounds after she accepts the curse, the bone devil Nyxervex appears behind her in a burst of noxious smoke. When she realizes she's been duped, she tries desperately to convince Nyxervex to attack one of the PCs instead, but her pleas fall on deaf ears—the bone devil attacks her, and unless the PCs step in to aid her, it is likely to swiftly finish her off. Unless the PCs attack it, the bone devil ignores them completely in this ironic turn of events.

Sian is a particularly evil-looking tiefling, with blood-red hair and gray skin that shines almost like polished steel. Her horns sweep back over her head, and her eyes and mouth glow red from within. Her leather armor is black and gray, but when she was serving as a maid in Crosael's employ, she used her *hat of disguise* to appear as a middle-aged human woman.

SIAN DAEMODUS

CR 7

XP 3,200

Female tiefling rogue 5/shadowdancer 3

LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft.; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 16, flat-footed 15 (+3 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 71 (8d8+32)

Fort +5, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +1; **DR** 2/silver; **Resist** cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *short sword* +9 (1d6+3/19–20 plus poison on first hit)

Ranged mwk hand crossbow +9 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)

Special Attacks poison (save Fort DC 14, frequency 1/round for 4 rounds, effect 1d2 Str damage, cure 1 save), sneak attack +3d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)

1/day—*darkness*

TACTICS

Before Combat As soon as she realizes the PCs are entering the area (by hearing them or noticing their light sources), Sian drinks her *potion of invisibility* and her *potion of levitate*, then sneaks toward the PCs' location. Once she's in the same room as them, she drinks her *potion*

of *shield of faith*, moves into position, and takes a shot at a PC with her hand crossbow, hoping to score a sneak attack in the surprise round.

During Combat Once combat begins, Sian uses her hand crossbow again to take an attack against a foe who remains flat-footed; otherwise she makes use of spring attack to keep her distance, periodically using *hide in plain sight* to set up additional sneak attack opportunities if possible. She's not afraid to change the layout of the area by moving up or down through a "loop" via levitation, and knows this area well enough so that when she sees which archways open and close, she'll know the fastest route to strike at a PC who might be cut off from the rest.

Morale Sian fights until brought below 15 hit points, at which point she drinks her second *potion of invisibility* and then her *potion of gaseous form* and attempts to escape back to area B1 and thence back to Aberian's Folly. In this case, she decides picking up the bonus isn't worth the risk and returns to the



SIAN DAEMODUS

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Council of Thieves to report her success in sabotaging the manor's infernal power supply. Sian could return at a later point in the Adventure Path, perhaps after she's gained a few more levels of shadowdancer, to become a regular and recurring villain—just because she didn't kill the PCs in their first encounter shouldn't mean she won't try again as often as she can!

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 20

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Fiendish Heritage, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +14, Bluff +11, Climb +10, Disable Device +14, Disguise +19, Knowledge (local) +9, Perception +10, Perform (dance) +6, Stealth +16

Languages Common, Halfling, Infernal

SQ hide in plain sight, trapfinding

Combat Gear Medium spider venom (5), *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of gaseous form*, *potion of invisibility* (2), *potion of levitate*, *potion of shield of faith*; **Other Gear** +1 leather armor, +1 short sword, masterwork hand crossbow with 20 bolts, hat of disguise, bejeweled bust of Asmodeus worth 800 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fiendish Heritage This feat is detailed in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #25; Sian is a devil-spawn tiefling, which changes her racial ability modifiers to +2 Con, +2 Wis, -2 Cha; she also gains DR 2/silver from her devilish heritage.

NYXERVEX

CR 9

XP 6,400

Bone Devil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 74)

hp 105

Story Award: If the PCs defeat Sian by turning the runecurse back on her, award them XP for defeating Sian and an additional award of 3,200 for escaping the runecurse itself in such an ironic manner.

RUNECURSES

Runecurses are a popular method by which Chelish assassins and conjurers destroy their enemies. While not magic items in and of themselves, a runecurse can be incorporated into any item that bears writing—scrolls are particular favorites, as are spellbooks or treasure maps. A runecurse is a complex pact between a named devil and a spellcaster, created as part of the casting of a *planar ally* or *planar binding* spell. If the outsider agrees to take part in the runecurse, it agrees to track down and slay the current owner of the object bearing the runecurse as soon as the spellcaster commands, or as soon as a predetermined event occurs.

A runecurse is particularly pleasing to many Chelish spellcasters as it is not only insidious, but is a way to

strike at an enemy without the enemy realizing it. By cleverly integrating the runecurse into a gift, a spellcaster can give his enemy the runecurse without the enemy realizing it. Care must be taken not to use a runecurse against one who might be able to recognize the trap, though, for if the owner of a runecursed object can get another creature to accept the item as a gift, ownership is transferred and the devil will slay the new owner instead of the intended target. Tales of spellcasters who are tricked by their would-be victims into accepting re-gifted runecursed objects are quite popular in some circles—fortunately for the PCs, Sian may have underestimated their knowledge of runecurses, and in targeting them with such a subtle attack runs the risk of giving the PCs the chance to turn the tables on her.

Destroying a runecursed object is the worst thing a victim could do, since this does not lift the pact between devil and original spellcaster, but rather makes it impossible for the target of the runecurse to escape his fate by getting another to freely accept the runecursed object as a gift. (Removing the curse via *remove curse* or similar effects now becomes the only way for the cursed soul to escape his destiny with the devil.)

When a character makes a Spellcraft check to identify an item that incorporates a runecurse, he notices the runecurse if he exceeds the DC required to identify the item by 5 or more. If the object is not a magic item, the runecurse can be discovered with a DC 20 Linguistics or Spellcraft check made while studying the wording. Unfortunately, in most cases, studying a runecurse in this manner is enough to effectively claim “ownership” over the object. An unscrupulous researcher hired to examine the object by its actual owner can, of course, simply pass the object back to the original owner and thus escape impending doom.

In order for a runecurse to work, it must be willingly accepted, either as a gift or as part of a gift. The parchment cannot be so hidden inside another object that it can only be noticed with a Perception check, but it can be, for example, put inside a chest or in a jacket pocket where it can be easily noticed with a brief examination. If a creature accepts such a gift without bothering to check the pockets or contents first, he gets what he deserves.

Finally, once a character is under the effects of a runecurse, he slowly begins to feel oppressed and nervous, a creeping sense of doom building about him. As the runecurse persists, this sense of doom manifests as growing misfortune and peril. Effects like *remove curse* or *break enchantment* can remove a runecurse, but the fact that the cursed individual willingly (if unknowingly) accepts the curse makes it particularly difficult to remove in this manner.

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RUNECURSE

Type curse; **Save** none to avoid curse, Will DC 22 to avoid effects

Onset 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect Target becomes hunted by a specific devil (devil appears to attack and slay cursed victim after the victim fails 3 saving throws) plus 2 points of Wis damage; **Cure** slay devil or pass runecursed object to another person, who must willingly accept it as a gift (this transfers the curse to the victim, along with the curse's current "countdown," so if the original victim had already missed two saving throws, the new victim only need miss one before the devil appears—if the new target of the curse is the same person who originally started the curse, the devil appears in 1d3 rounds to kill the new victim or take its remains with it back to Hell); attempts to remove this curse via *remove disease* or *break enchantment* suffer a –5 penalty on the caster level check to remove it (and the cursed individual should take care not to have the runecurse in his possession at this time, because if he does he'll simply become cursed again by virtue of the fact that he's still technically the "owner" of the curse).

B1. THE WELCOME OF COUNTLESS SUFFERERS

A long corridor extends from a pair of dull metal doors. The walls, floor, and ceiling of this hall are paneled in gray wood, including several empty alcoves along each wall. No source for the dim illumination is apparent. Shadows seem to dance at the corner of the eye in the alcoves, and a soft, barely audible whispering floats in the air of this strange place. What appears to be a slumped-over corpse dressed in tattered robes lies heaped on the floor between the closest alcoves.

The figure on the floor is a dead elfen man, harvested by Sian from area **B8**, murdered, then placed here as bait. The elf is wretched creature with pale skin, long white hair, old scabs on his fingertips where his nails once grew, and an emaciated frame. The cause of death seems to have been several stab wounds to the chest and belly. The elf is dressed in wizardly robes and clutches a scroll in one hand. Two other used magic scrolls, their faces blank and useless, lie nearby, as if used just prior to death, and a well-made and well-used haversack is slung over one shoulder.

Sian hopes the PCs assume this was some hapless wizard who was slain by the Knot's denizens, and that they'll claim his gear as their own—in so doing taking ownership of the scrap of paper in the *handy haversack* at the wizard's side. Any character who takes the haversack from the dead body and carries it is effectively claiming it and its contents as his property, and when the bone devil comes calling later in this adventure, whoever carries the runecurse inside will be its target.

Speak with dead is an excellent way to get clues about who the dead body was—in life, he was a thief named Elandriu,

a man who tried to burgle the manor 3 decades ago only to be caught by then-mayor Dargentu Vheed. Dargentu easily overpowered the thief and imprisoned him in area **B8**, where Elandriu languished for the next 30 years in his cell, growing more and more insane. He remains mad in death, answering most questions with ravings and shrieked apologies for trying to steal from the manor. He references "Lord Vheed" as his antagonist often (a DC 12 Knowledge [history or local] check recognizes the name as Westcrown's previous mayor), and also references a "lovely crimson angel" who came to deliver him from his prison after all these years with a "blessed edge of welcome death." This was, of course, Sian, who may have done the insane old thief a favor by killing him. He knows nothing about the haversack or its contents—they didn't belong to him, but he notes that "maybe they did—it's hard for an old thief to keep track of what he owns, after all."

The double doors at the end of this hall are both an entrance to and exit from the Asmodean Knot. Originally, they could only be "opened" from the inside with a special key, but the damage Sian's done so far has removed this restriction—a character who touches the doors for 1 full round is transported back to area **A53**.

Treasure: The *handy haversack* contains a large collection of relatively worthless necromantic spell components, a *pearl of power II*, several scrolls (a *scroll of chill touch*, a *scroll of command undead*, a *scroll of ray of exhaustion*, a *scroll of vampiric touch*, and a *scroll of false life*), and a tattered parchment.

The parchment is in fact a runecurse keyed to a bone devil named Nyxervex, but casual observation makes it look like it's a page torn from an unknown book on devilish religion. Written in the margins in Common in a shaky script is the following—"Possible Passwords: Venderbaxis; Vlenderaxits; Vlenkervandis; Vledervaddus... hope one of them works to open the vault!" This message is, of course, nonsense—a clever ruse that Sian penned to trick curious PCs into keeping the page on them. Anyone who bothers to study the actual "text" on the page (which is written in Infernal) can make a DC 20 Linguistics or Spellcraft check to recognize the page for what it is (see Runecurses above).

B2. THE HOWLING HALL (CR 5)

This wood-paneled hall rises to a height of twenty feet above, and a single fifteen-foot-high shelf filled sparsely with books runs along the wall. Eerie wisps of shadowy fog coil and writhe on the floor, which unlike the walls seems to be made of polished black stone.

Creatures: The first of the ageless guardians of the vault prowl these halls—Sian avoided them by moving stealthily and quickly along the walls in gaseous form thanks to a

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potion, but the PCs are unlikely to escape notice from the three otherworldly hounds that guard the halls. These spine-covered creatures are howlers, fearsome monsters whose eerie howls echo throughout the Knot, immediately alerting Sian that the PCs (or some other intruders) have entered the complex.

HOWLER

CR 3

800 XP

CE Large outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

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

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +4 natural, -1 size)

hp 37 (5d10+10)

Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +3

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft.

Melee bite +7 (2d6+4), quills +2 (1d4+1 plus pain)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks howl



HOWLER

TACTICS

During Combat As soon as they notice the PCs, the howlers use their howl attack on the first round of combat to alert the rest of the Asmodean Knot, then rush in to bite and thrash about with their quills.

Morale The howlers fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 17, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 10

Base Atk +5; CMB +9; CMD 21

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Acrobatics +10, Climb +11, Perception +13, Stealth +6

Languages Abyssal

SQ abyssal strike, quill defense

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Abyssal Strike (Ex) A howler's bite and quills are considered to be chaotically aligned and evil-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Howl (Su) A howler's constant howling is a grating, exhausting baying that can drive listeners insane. All beings other than outsiders within 120 feet of a howling howler must succeed on a DC 12 Will save or become cursed by the creature's howl. Once a creature becomes cursed in this way, he suffers no additional penalty for being exposed to additional howlers' howls until the current curse is lifted. This is a sonic mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

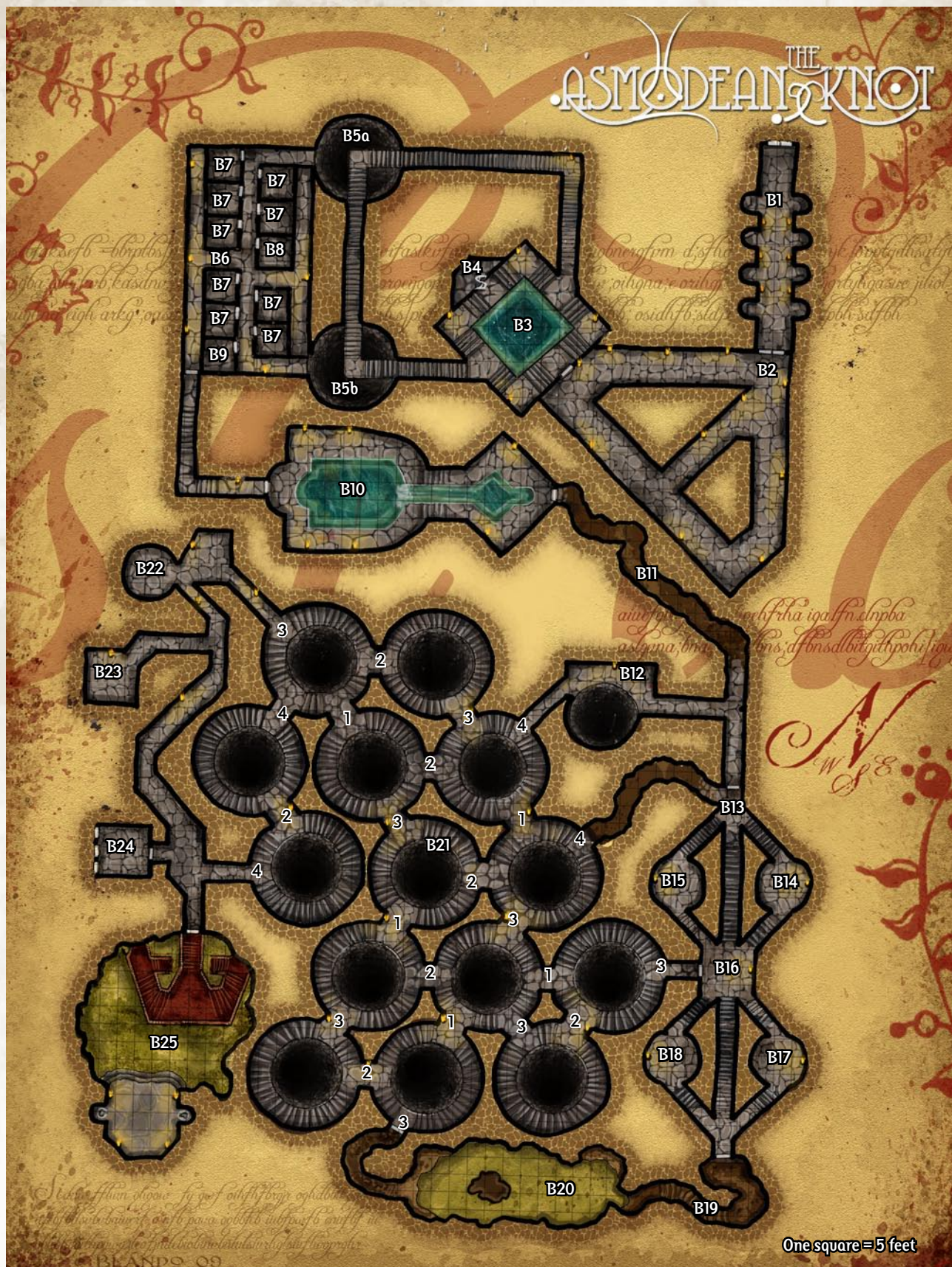
Howler Howl: Curse; save Fort DC 12 negates; frequency 1/hour; effect 1 Wis damage; cure 1 save.

Pain (Ex) Whenever a creature takes damage from a howler's quill attack or quill defense, he must make a DC 14 Reflex save or bits of the quills break off in his flesh, causing the target to become sickened until the quill fragments are removed. Removing quill fragments requires a DC 20 Heal check made as a full-round action—on a failed check, the quills are still removed but the process causes 1d4+1 points of damage. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Quill Defense (Ex) Any creature that strikes a howler with a non-reach melee weapon, an unarmed strike, or a natural weapon takes 1d4+1 points of piercing damage from the howler's quills.

Treasure: The books on the shelves are old and generally focused on methods of torture (both as a medium for interrogation and a medium for entertainment), and most are quite well illustrated. As a whole, the 120 books are worth a total of 2,400 gp. One book in particular (DC 20 Perception to notice) is thicker and in relatively good shape, and bears the title, in Common, *Drowned Jabe and His Miserable Brothers and Sisters*. This book looks brand new and is lavishly illustrated, and tells the tale of a thief who came into a place called the Asmodean Knot and drowned there, only to live on after death as "Drowned Jabe."

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This eerie book is only partially real—it's a manifestation of one of the fragments of Mayor Doskivari's soul, a reflection of one of the more vile atrocities set into motion by Mayor Vheed. The book grants the one who carries it a +2 competence bonus on Knowledge (religion) checks made on topics relating to undead, and can be of use in area **B10** if the PCs bring it with them. The book itself is worth 400 gp.

B3. THE TOWER OF PERPETUITY (CR 5)

This boggling chamber is a square shaft, the walls featuring a spiraling stone stairway that winds up to the left and down to the right. Yet following the stairs with the eye as they wind up to the left, impossibly, brings one right back to the initial landing. There is no floor below or ceiling above, only an endless shaft dropping away into a dimly lit infinity. A second flight of stairs leads up to one side of the room into another hallway, while a third flight descends down in the wall opposite into yet another hall.

The impossible stairway is one of the Knot's more twisted sections. No matter what direction the PCs go along the stairs, they end up at the same location they left without any apparent change in elevation. Likewise, the stairs that lead up to area **B5a** and down into area **B5b** exhibit this mind-numbing feature as well. So disorienting is the room that anyone who looks upon it suffers a –2 penalty on all Dexterity-based skill checks—closing one's eyes removes the penalty.

The secret door to area **B4** can be discovered with a DC 25 Perception check.

The pit itself is not truly infinite; anyone who falls into it quickly falls out of sight after falling for 2 rounds, only to fall back into this area from above. Gravity works strangely on those who fall in here—falling builds acceleration only slowly. Every 2 rounds, a falling victim may make a DC 15 Reflex save to land on the stairs. He takes 1d6 points of damage from the fall per round spent falling—thus, someone who manages to land after only one “revolution” takes 2d6 damage, while someone who only manages to land after 6 takes 12d6 damage. As with all falls, the maximum damage one can take is 20d6.

Creatures: Shadows spawned in the Room of Black Mirrors (area **B4**) patrol the stairs here—4 rounds after the PCs enter this room, a pair of shadows slide out of the wall from **B4** onto the stairs to track down and attack creatures in either this room or areas **B5a** and **B5b**. Every 4 rounds, two more shadows emerge from area **B4** as long as someone remains in area **B3**, to a limit of 6 shadows at a time.

SHADOWS (2) **CR 3**
XP 800 each
hp 19 each (Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 245)

B4. THE ROOM OF BLACK MIRRORS (CR 5)

Two mirrors of weird black metal hang on the opposite walls of this trapezoidal room. Strange shadowy figures writhe in the mirrors, and they do not seem to reflect light as much as absorb it.

The two black mirrors on the wall here are portals to the Plane of Shadow that allow only shadows (undead and normal alike) to pass through. This would be bad enough on its own—but the mirrors' reflections on the Plane of Shadow flare brightly whenever a living creature enters area **B3** or **B4**, attracting shadows at a rate of two every 4 rounds. There's no upper limit to the number of shadows that can come through these portals, but the shadows themselves cannot move far from the mirrors—the effective limit of their range is areas **B3–B5**.

Each mirror has hardness 10 and 30 hit points—destroying a mirror renders the link to the Plane of Shadows null, and inflicts 15 points of damage on all shadows in areas **B3–B5**.

Story Award: Destroying both mirrors earns the PCs 1,600 XP.

B5. THE EVERPITS

A rickety-looking wooden set of curved stairs, supported by creaking ropes above and a lattice of wooden boards below, passes like a bridge through the center of a circular shaft. No floor is visible below, and no ceiling above. An opening in the far wall beckons about 30 feet below the point where the stairs curve.

These bottomless pits function identically to the one in area **B3**. Due to the strange effect of the “slow” gravity here, a leap from the stairs into the hallway leading to area **B6** is possible with a DC 15 Acrobatics check. Jumping from **B6** up to the stairs is much more difficult, requiring a DC 30 Acrobatics check. Someone who misses and falls can make additional attempts to land on the stairs or the hall leading to **B6** by making DC 15 Reflex saves, as described in area **B3**.

B6. HALLS OF SPECIAL GUESTS

These halls are lined with doors—entrances into various jail cells built by Anvengen Doskivari long ago. He and Westcrown's second mayor used these cells often to hold those who annoyed them. Each stout wooden door contains a narrow barred window set at eye level, and is also barred from the outside, with the exception of the door to area **B8**, which is unbarred. These halls wrap around the back sides of the cells, where smoky glass windows are set at eye level. When someone in this hall touches the glass, it clears and allows observation of the cell beyond, while inside the cell the window remains unseen.

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B7. EXPIRED GUESTS

Each of these cells contains a simple straw mattress and the mummified remains of a long-dead prisoner. Although Dargentu made extensive use of these cells while he lived, Mayor Aberian Arvanxi does not—he's actually never been this far into the Asmodean Knot. These cells sustain anyone within as if he wears a *ring of sustenance*, removing the need to eat and sleep, but offer few other comforts—with the exception of the recently slain elf from **B8** and the unfortunately immortal howling occupant of **B9**, all of these prisoners have died of old age or neglect.

B8. EMPTY CELL

This cell looks like the others, save that no body is present—the body of the unfortunate elf who lingered here has been relocated to area **B1**.

B9. THE HOWLING FIEND (CR 5)

Creature: Mad with neglect and boredom, this chamber's occupant is a bearded devil named Szasmir—this cell alone is warded with a permanent *dimensional lock* spell to prevent Szasmir from escaping or summoning aid, and the wretch has gone insane over his long, dull imprisonment as a result. Imprisoned here by Dargentu Vheed decades ago for waiting until after another devilish servant betrayed the mayor to warn him, Szasmir is filled with rage at having been punished for doing what he thought was a favor to a vile and sadistic master.

SZASMIR

CR 5

XP 1,600

Bearded Devil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 73)

hp 57

Treasure: Although Szasmir was unarmed when he was imprisoned here, he didn't remain that way. Several years after Dargentu's death, Szasmir's rage drew the attention of one of Anvengen's spiritual fragments, and one day not so long ago, that fragment crystallized in Szasmir's hands into a graceful and deadly glaive made of smoky red crystal as hard and resilient as steel. The glaive is an evil intelligent weapon, but not a particularly powerful one, and most PCs who claim it as their own shouldn't have much of a problem keeping it in line. The glaive itself is most comfortable in the hands of one who worships Asmodeus, and if it gains control of its

wielder, it forces him or her to sing the praises of the Prince of Darkness, make offerings at his churches, and indulge similar urges that can have a dramatic impact on a nonevil wielder's alignment.



SZASMIR

ANVENGEN'S EDGE

Aura moderate transmutation; CL 13th
Slot none; Price 11,508 gp; Weight 10 lbs.

STATISTICS

AL LE; Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10; Ego 5

Senses 30 ft.; Communication

empathy

Powers bleed at will; divine favor

3/day

DESCRIPTION

This +1 keen glaive bears a fragment of the soul and mind of Westcrown's first mayor after the fall of Aroden and the rise of the House of Thrune. The glaive itself has taken Anvengen's name for its own, but can only communicate with its wielder via empathic urges. If its wielder

worships Asmodeus, the glaive uses *bleed* on any of its wielder's foes it notices is dying, and grants *divine favor* on a wielder who commands it to do so. If the wielder doesn't worship Asmodeus, the glaive uses *bleed* on any dying creature it notices and only grants *divine favor* against chaotic or good foes—if a wielder commands it to not use *bleed* in a battle or commands it to grant *divine favor* against a nongood or nonchaotic foe, a personality conflict occurs and the glaive attempts to gain control of the wielder.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor; **Cost** 5,908 gp

B10. THE RIVER OF TEARS (CR 5)

The domed ceiling above this large chamber sags, with long mildewy strips of wood paneling hanging down from above like drooping branches. A large pool of churning muddy water fills much of the room, flowing down a trough further into the room between a pair of slippery stairs to gather in a smaller pool beyond. Dozens of bones lie scattered along the five-foot-wide ledge that surrounds the pool.

Although the ceiling looks unstable, there is no danger of collapse here—the room itself was once intended to be a bath, but Dargentu used it to experiment in the art of creating aquatic undead—his first creation, a powerful lacedon, remains within. The water is filthy, a mix of mud and rot, and smells foul. Although the water constantly flows down into the lower pool, the water level above

never depletes and the water level below never overflows—another example of the Asmodean Knot's twisted reality.

Creatures: A total of four lacedons dwell in the slimy waters of this 10-foot-deep pool. Although as undead they cannot starve to death, the long years with little to feed upon has left them particularly ravenous, and they swarm up out of the pool to attack 1 round after the first living creature enters.

Three of the lacedons are typical members of their kind, but the fourth is a particularly large creature named Drowned Jabe—a lacedon ghast and the subject of the strange book in area **B2**. Presenting this book to Drowned Jabe startles the lacedon, who then becomes obsessed with flipping through the book, which effectively removes him from combat for 2d6 rounds—any attack against him causes him to throw aside the book in anger and to renew the fight.

LACEDONS (3) **CR 1**
XP 400 each
 hp 11 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 146*)

DROWNED JABE **CR 2**
XP 600
 Lacedon ghast
 hp 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 146*)

Treasure: Various oddments are scattered on the pool floor. Swimmers who spend a minute or so searching and make a DC 15 Perception check find one of the following—a rotted leather pouch containing 52 sp, a gold wedding ring worth 120 gp, a rotting leather glove clutching 4 fine amethysts worth 150 gp each, an ash wood *wand of levitate* (8 charges), or a scowling silver death mask worth 250 gp.

B11. THE SHADOW'S THROAT

The walls of this twisting circular tunnel are of smooth polished gray stone, shimmering with moisture and sloping downward at a sharp angle.

Descending this slippery slope requires a DC 14 Acrobatics check—failure indicates a character slips and falls, then immediately slides all the way down to the bottom of the shaft at a speed of 50 feet, taking 1d6 nonlethal damage per 10 feet traveled in this manner. A sliding character may arrest his descent with a DC 16 Reflex save; otherwise the slide stops only when the character's movement ends in the straight hallway at the lower end of the tunnel.

Those at the end of the tunnel can hear what sounds like a distant, beautiful voice singing wordlessly in a low, rhythmic chant. This comes from area **B12**.

B12. THE DAMAGED CONDUIT (CR 5)

A circular pit takes up much of this room. Thirty feet above, dozens of strange shadowy stalactites descend from the ceiling, their lengths transforming after a few feet into iron chains that descend into a tangle of chains suspended over the center of the pit below—the tangle wraps and suspends what appears to be a mutilated humanoid body at its core. Many chains dangle from this sphere into the glowing red depths of the pit below, but several chains float and writhe in the air like strands of seaweed in a churning tidepool, the tips of each fragmented and flaking away in bits of rust.

This chamber serves as a link to the Nessian Spiral, and it is via the magical chains that descend down into the pit that Liebdaga's prison transmits the pit fiend's infernal power up into the Asmodean Knot. The broken chains that writhe in the air around the central tangled mass are the result of Sian's attempt to secure an alliance with the now-dead kyton that once hung in the center of the ball of chains. When the negotiations went sour, a fight resulted and Sian managed (barely) to slay the kyton. This caused several of the chains that distribute power from Liebdaga to the rest of Aberian's Folly and the Asmodean Knot to fracture and snap, and set into motion a cascading series of failures that, while minor and barely noticeable now, will culminate in a cataclysmic meltdown in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #28.

The pit itself is 30 feet deep, and the chains attach to a red-hot floor below that is connected magically to the Nessian Spiral. This connection allows the flow of power drawn from the imprisoned pit fiend, but not physical travel. A creature that stands upon the burning floor of the pit takes 2d6 points of fire damage per round. The walls are smooth, and can be climbed with a DC 25 Climb check.

The nature of the power node itself is complex and confusing—without access to or first-hand knowledge of the prison chamber below in the Nessian Spiral, the most someone can hope to learn from this object by studying it (requiring a DC 35 Spellcraft check as if trying to identify a magic item) is that it is some sort of magical battery or a conduit used to transfer magical energy from one point to another. The entire structure is essentially an artifact that functions at CL 20th—as the Council of Thieves Adventure Path continues, the PCs will have additional chances to learn more about this device, but for now you should strive to keep things relatively obscure and mysterious.

Creature: There's no treasure to be found here, but there does remain a fair amount of danger. The kyton at the center of the tangle is dead, but its energy and spirit, so long a part of the infernal machine bound into this sinister power conduit by the House of Thrune and

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Anvengen Doskivari, still animates the central mass of chains—effectively transforming it into an immobile animated object.

SPHERE OF CHAINS

CR 5

XP 1,600

Animated object (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 14)

N Large construct

Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception –5

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 8, flat-footed 16 (–1 Dex, +8 natural, –1 size)

hp 52 (4d10+30)

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** –4

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

OFFENSE

Speed 0 ft.

Melee 2 slams +9 (1d8+6)

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

TACTICS

During Combat The chains mindlessly attack anything that comes within reach.

Morale The sphere of chains fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 20

Development: If the animated sphere of chains is destroyed, the entire object plummets into the pit below to vanish with a flash of red light. The entire Asmodean Knot shakes and rumbles, as does all of Aberian's Folly. At the same time, a deep, ominous laughter wells up from the pit below for a few seconds before fading, at which point the red glow below vanishes and the pit itself becomes an empty 30-foot-deep hole with nothing remaining within.

Whether the PCs leave this room untouched or destroy the sphere of chains and the link to the Nessian Spiral, the end result is the same—there's enough power stored in both the Asmodean Knot and in Aberian's Folly to keep both places functioning for several weeks or even months, but eventually, the damage done is enough to result in the situation presented at the start of "The Infernal Syndrome," where Liebdaga makes good on his plans for escape and the manor is partially destroyed. Fixing the problem is something that requires large amounts of resources and money, and if Mayor Aberian has his way (if he's even informed about the problem), he tries to patch over things without alerting the House of Thrune.

B13. THE WARD OF UNCOUNTED MANIAS

A junction in the hallway presents multiple methods to progress. A wooden door sits in one wall, while a rough, cave-like tunnel winds away to the side. Opposite the door, three stairways

proceed—two leading down to the left and right and one leading up in the center. Wooden signs with writing on them hang above the entrance to each flight of stairs.

Areas **B13–B18** are where Dargentu experimented with and studied the nature of phobias. He would wait in the central room, observing and taking notes while his "patients" would be forced to endure four different phobia effects in the side rooms. Originally, Dargentu could control the route through the phobia chambers, but this mechanism has malfunctioned—now, intruders are free to explore these areas in any order they wish.

The hanging signs are written in Infernal. The sign above the stairs leading to area **B14** reads "Arachnophobia," while the sign above the stairs to area **B15** reads "Ophidiophobia." The central sign above the stairs leading to area **B16** reads "Observation."

B14. THE SHAFT OF FALLING SPIDERS (CR 4)

Two flights of stairs allow access to this cylindrical room, one leading up and the other down. Above, the ceiling is obscured by thick tangles of drooping cobwebs.

The hidden ceiling is 30 feet high.

Creatures: One round after the first character enters this room, the cobwebs above shake and rustle as a rain of spiders tumbles down into the room's center. These hundreds of fist-sized hairy spiders immediately attack as a spider swarm. On the round after the spider swarm manifests, a pair of giant spiders clambers down from the webs above to join the fight; these giant spiders cling to the walls while the swarm stays on the floor. The spiders are magically sustained but nevertheless ravenous, and fight to the death but do not pursue foes out of the room.

SPIDER SWARM

CR 1

XP 400

hp 9 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 258)

GIANT SPIDERS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 11 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 258)

Treasure: As soon as the last spider dies, it shrivels up and transforms into a grape-sized red garnet worth 100 gp.

B15. THE COURT OF CLIMBING SNAKES (CR 4)

Two flights of stairs allow access to this cylindrical, thirty-foot-high room, one leading up and the other down. The walls of this room are studded with narrow holes and hundreds of short wooden pegs.

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Creatures: One round after the first character enters this room, hissing vipers slither out of six of the holes lining this room and slither down the walls, using the pegs and each other, to attack anyone in the room. As with the spiders in area B14, the vipers do not pursue foes out of the room.

VIPERS (6)

XP 200 each

hp 2 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 133)

Treasure: As soon as the last snake dies, it shrivels up and transforms into a grape-sized piece of green jade worth 100 gp.

B16. OBSERVATION CHAMBER (CR 2)

The wooden walls of this room are painted a somewhat nauseating yellow color. In one wall, an oak door with a large lock on the handle stands, a message burnt into the front. Likewise, hanging wooden signs bear messages as well, six in all, each hanging over a stairway leading out of the room. Ruined heaps of what may have once been chairs and a table lie scattered over the floor.

The messages on the door and signs above the stairway are written in Infernal. The one on the door reads, "Abandon All Hope." The signs over the stairways each bear a single word written in Infernal—"Exit" (B13 and B15), "Arachnophobia" (B14), "Ophidiophobia" (B15), "Hematophobia" (B17), and "Pyrophobia" (B18). The stairs that lead into this room, as with the stairs in area B3, don't quite behave as stairs should, looping back in eternal descent or ascent depending on the direction one travels.

Creature: This room is the den of a half-mad imp named Livia, once the familiar of Dargentu Vheed but now simply a crazed remnant of the now-undead wizard's (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #28) legacy. Livia went through a period of separation anxiety after Dargentu left her here to watch over the Knot while he went "below" into the Nessian Spiral, never to return, but she came out the other side of this period convinced that she's expected to carry on her ex-master's work. Unfortunately, with the exception of the odd lemur that stumbles into one of the four phobia chambers, there have been very few visitors to "test" over the past several decades. The arrival of the PCs changes that.

Livia becomes invisible as soon as she notices approaching intruders; when the PCs enter, she calls out to them in a shrill voice: "You poor things! Suffering so from such baseless fears! Please, step into the therapy

chambers and face these terrors. When you're cured, bring me your prizes and I'll pronounce you cured. You want to be cured, don't you?"

Livia does not reveal herself to the PCs until they present to her the four gems that appear after defeating each of the phobia rooms' denizens. If the PCs present only some of the gems, she congratulates the PCs on their partial cures, but encourages them to continue to work on their "lingering fears."

If the PCs locate and attack her, she shrieks in fear, calling them lunatics and maniacs as she tries to fly away to escape them. She does not fight unless cornered, preferring instead to lure her pursuers into other dangerous areas of the Knot in hopes of them being killed by denizens or traps.

If the PCs manage to secure all four gems, Livia congratulates them and becomes visible, flittering down to take the four gems

from them. She explains the gems are payment for the cures, and assuming the PCs give her the gems, she'll reward them by saying, "Well done! Isn't it better to be sane? Now, I understand you might have forgotten some important things while you were crazy. I can help! I can help six times, in fact! Ask me six questions! I can get the answers!"

If the PCs comply, Livia casts *commune* and answers their six questions as best as she (and her mysterious infernal contact) can—use these questions to help steer the PCs in the right direction to locate the Chelish Crux, to advise them on how to pass the runecurse off to another creature, to foreshadow events in coming adventures, or otherwise convey information. Since Livia is getting these answers from an infernal agent, you can be as evasive or forthcoming with the answers as you wish.

LIVIA

CR 2

XP 600

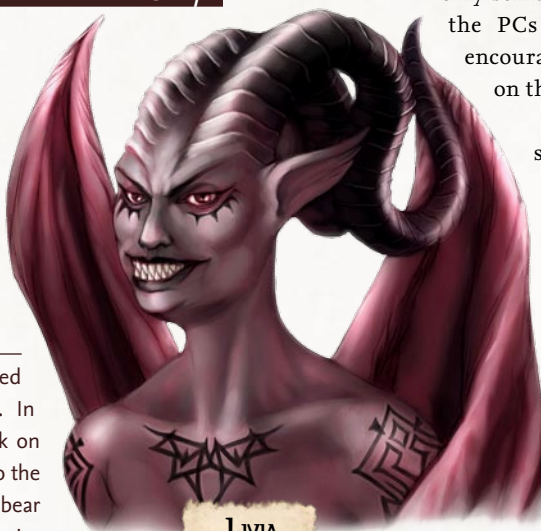
Imp (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 78)

hp 16

Story Award: If the PCs "earn their sanity" and get Livia to aid them, award them 1,200 XP points.

B17. THE AVIARY OF BLOOD (CR 4)

Two flights of stairs allow access to this cylindrical, thirty-foot-high room, one leading up and the other down. What appear to be



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dozens of wicker bird cages hang by thick ropes from the ceiling, each dangling at a different height above the floor.

Creatures: One round after the first character enters this room, six of the wicker cages above rattle as the stirges within flap out to swoop down and attack. As with the spiders in area B14, the stirges do not pursue foes out of the room.

STIRGES (6) **CR 1/2**
XP 200 each
hp 9 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 260)

Treasure: As soon as the last stirge dies, it shrivels up and transforms into a grape-sized piece of purple amethyst worth 100 gp.

B18. THE FURNACE OF FINAL REST (CR 4)

Two flights of stairs allow access to this cylindrical, thirty-foot-high room, one leading up and the other down. Hundreds of flickering candles burn in narrow niches lining the walls of the room all the way up to the ceiling.

Creatures: One round after the first character enters this room, the candles flash with fire and light. All creatures in the room must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1 round; an instant after this flash of light, three Small fire elementals burst out of the ground to attack any creatures in the room—they focus on blind targets first. As with the spiders in area B14, the elementals do not pursue foes out of the room.

SMALL FIRE ELEMENTALS (3) **CR 1**
XP 400 each
hp 11 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 124)

Treasure: As soon as the last elemental dies, it bursts into smoke, leaving behind a fiery orange, grape-sized pearl worth 100 gp.

B19. THE TWISTING STAIRS

A flight of cracked, crooked stairs winds down deep into the Knot here; as each step descends, they grow increasingly slippery. A character descending the steps must make a DC 12 Acrobatics check or slip and fall. If the roll fails by 5 or more, he falls all the way to the bottom of the stairs, taking 2d6 points of damage and plunging into the lake of filth in area B20 below.

B20. THE LAKE OF FILTH (CR 5)

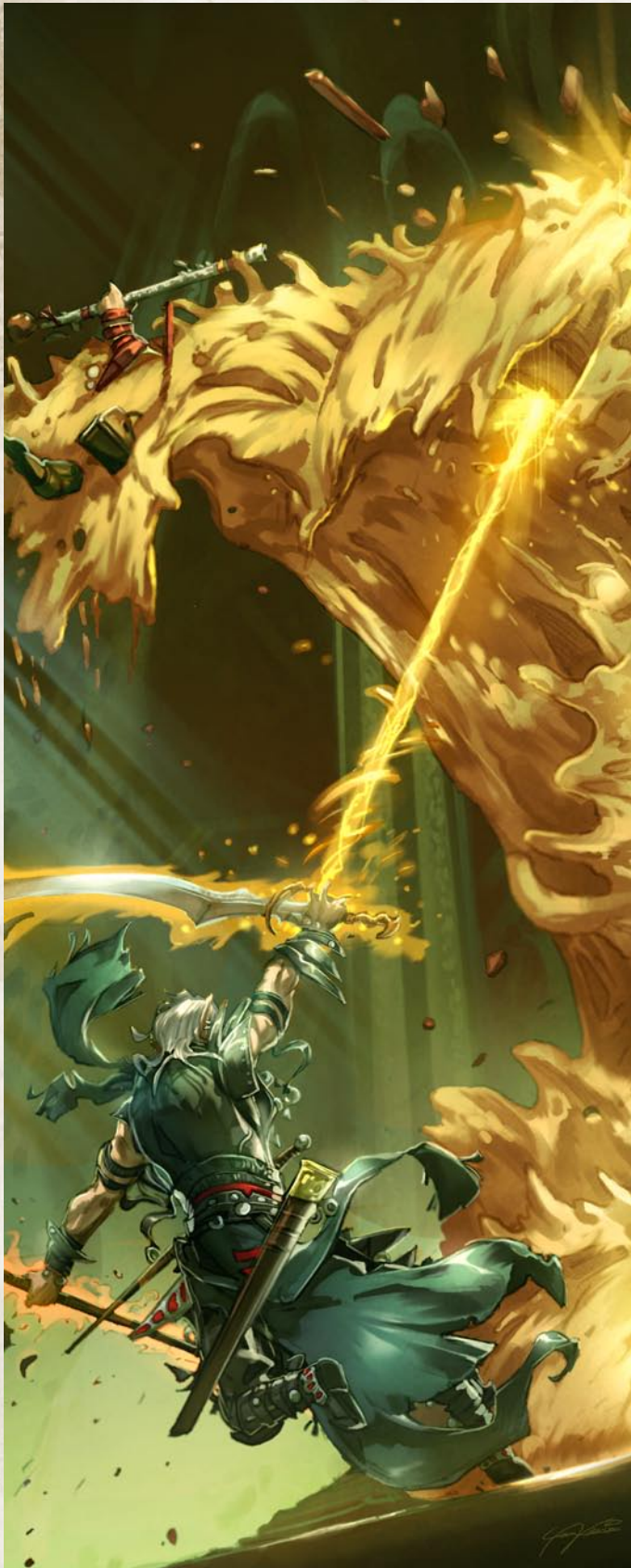
The twisted stair ends at a wide, circular chamber of thick yellow sludge—a lake of disease and decay over fifty feet across. An

island of filth, broken weapons, dead bodies, and worse floats in the center of this chamber, the walls of which loom nearly a hundred feet above and appear almost as half-melted walls of some grand cathedral.

This chamber is where the Asmodean Knot regurgitates what it absorbs. Left to their own for several weeks, dead bodies are relocated here, waste and filth created by the denizens of the place congeal in these waters, and the two combine with any other offal to make a hideous morass of foul-smelling ruin. Dargentu often placed a magical key or flag on the island in the lake's center, then let prisoners or other unfortunates into the Knot with promises that if they could find and secure the key or flag, they would be released. The sadist then watched the unfortunate's progress through the Knot via divination magic. Only one person ever made it to this room and secured the key—the elven thief Elandriu. Stunned at this event, Dargentu imprisoned Elandriu in area B8 and did some investigating, only to learn from one of his devilish servants (the bearded devil Szasmir) that another of his devil servants (a bearded devil named Molikandus) had given Elandriu aid and hints to help him defeat the gantlet in return for promises to aid in Molikandus's own escape from service to Dargentu. So wroth was Dargentu that he decided to keep Elandriu and Szasmir imprisoned and worked a hideous curse upon Molikandus, fusing his body with that of a particularly foul otyugh and consigning the resulting atrocity to the furthest chamber of the Asmodean Knot to serve eternally as a vault guardian in area B25.

The fluid in this lake is thick and slimy, the consistency of half-clotted blood or fresh, not-quite-set pudding. Averaging 20 feet deep, the scent of the stuff fills the room with such foul odors that any creature in this room (save the lake's denizen) must make a DC 14 Fortitude save each round to avoid being nauseated for that round. Additionally, the lake is so foul that anyone who spends at least 1 round immersed in the filth is exposed to both blinding sickness and filth fever (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 557), and must make Fortitude saves to avoid contracting these diseases.

Creature: This chamber's guardian is the lake itself—or more precisely, the Large water elemental that lives within it. Composed of the thick, rancid not-quite-water, this immense, slobbery guardian rises up like a wave to charge the first creature that dares to enter the waters. This water elemental has the same stats as a normal Large water elemental, save that its swim speed is only 30 feet due to its thick and partially solid consistency. In addition, each time it strikes a target, the creature struck must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or contract filth fever. The water elemental fights to the death.



LARGE WATER ELEMENTAL

CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 68 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 126)

Treasure: Sitting atop the central island is another object fashioned from a fragment of Anvengen's departed spirit—an unholy symbol of Asmodeus. The symbol is etched on a black disk of iron and dangles from an upthrust broken spear via its chain. Of the three soul fragment items found in the Knot, this unholy symbol bears the strongest remnant. A character who holds the symbol in his hand or wears it on the neck can feel an intelligence brooding in the object and instinctively understands how to contact this intelligence with his own mind. Doing so is a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, but as the contact with Anvengen's insane mind is established, the character takes 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. He may then telepathically ask one question of Anvengen's spirit—although questions about topics other than the Asmodean Knot, the worship of Asmodeus, or the nature of undead are generally wasted, as they are answered by ranting and insane babbling. For answers to the latter two topics, the symbol has Knowledge (religion) +15; for answers to questions about the Asmodean Knot, the symbol knows much about the realm's nature and defenses, and you can use it to give the PCs clues or fill them in on backstory elements as you see fit.

The symbol loses its link to Anvengen's madness the instant it is removed from the Asmodean Knot, thereafter functioning only as a relatively poorly made and nonmagical unholy symbol of Asmodeus, even if it is later returned to the Asmodean Knot.

B21. THE KNOT'S HEART

This chamber lacks a visible floor and ceiling—instead, what appears to be an endless shaft stretches to infinity both above and below. A ring of stone stairs winds upward counter-clockwise around the room's perimeter, winding back on itself in a mind-bending twist that, impossibly, brings one back to the starting point's elevation despite the fact that the stairs themselves seem never to change their ascent or descent. Stone archways, some opening into other similar rooms and some sealed with stone, extend off from landings here and there on the ring of stairs.

This series of linked chambers is the heart of the Asmodean Knot, the central miracle of impossible architecture that could exist only in a place where the laws of reality are fluid and untrustworthy. As in area B3, the shafts "loop back" on themselves and exhibit "slow gravity," so someone who falls from the stairs does so at a slowly increasing speed, and every 2 rounds the falling object

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or creature passes by the ring of stairs again. In addition, the chambers are so disorienting that all those who look upon them suffer a –2 penalty on all Dexterity-based skill checks—closing one's eyes removes the penalty.

Even more confounding is the fact that not all of the openings between chambers exist at the same time. Each of the various entrances into the Knot's Heart is marked with a number from 1 to 4. When the PCs first enter one of these circular rooms from elsewhere in the Asmodean Knot, the entrance they use (as well as all others with the same number) is open. Roll 1d4 at this time, rerolling a result that matches the number of the entrance the PCs used to enter the room. The resulting numbers indicate the other entrances that are open—all other entrances are closed, blocked by 3-foot-thick, hewn stone walls. One can use magic or force to bash down a wall blocking an exit (hardness 8, hp 540, break DC 50) to enter the room beyond, but there are two simpler ways to open and close these exits:

Falling: A character that falls (or flies or levitates) for at least one “loop” causes one of the previously numbered exits to open and one of the previously open exits to close. Roll 1d4 as soon as a falling character lands—exits bearing that number open if they were closed before, and close if they were opened before. Then roll 1d4 a second time and do the same changes—it's possible a falling character doesn't effectively change the combination if you roll the same number on both d4 rolls (indicating an exit changes and then changes back). When an exit closes as a creature is standing in the entrance, that creature chooses on which side of the newly formed stone wall it appears. If the creature (or object, as in the case of a rope strung through an exit) cannot move in time, it becomes partially or wholly encased in the stone until it is removed forcefully or until the exit is opened again. A creature trapped in this manner does not take any damage from becoming trapped, but cannot move from its spot until something else frees it or it escapes via magic or a successful DC 30 Strength or Escape Artist check.

Transmutation: Any transmutation effect that targets a stone wall blocking an entrance that has a specific effect on stone (such as *stone shape*, *soften earth and stone*, or *transmute rock to mud*) has no effect on the stone wall but it does cause it to open, along with all other entrances with the same number. When this occurs, one other randomly determined exit closes (roll 1d4, rerolling results that would close the arch that the transmutation effect just opened).

B22. THE SPIRAL STAIR TO NOWHERE

This strangely shaped chamber is empty of furnishings. A large, circular side chamber nearby contains what appears to be a

weirdly flickering spiral staircase leading up into the shadowy shaft above.

This room is one area that Anvengen Doskivari never had a chance to finish building—he once hoped to build a second “level” of the Knot above this area, but the spiral stair itself was never fully completed. All that remains is a 30-foot-high shaft in which this stairway, half-real and consisting of partially complete shadowstuff, rises up to a dead end. The stairs can be climbed, but they feel strangely pliant and soggy when used, almost as if they were threatening to melt away. In fact, if more than three creatures are on the stairs at any one time, they do precisely that, vanishing in a waft of shadow and dropping anyone on them to take falling damage as appropriate.

B23. THE FLAWED ONE (CR 5)

This chamber is filled with clutter and junk. Crates, old weapons, partially assembled suits of armor, statuettes, poorly preserved monstrous trophies, torture instruments, coils of chains, and more are piled ten feet high along the walls, oars and spears and flagpoles and ships' masts pressing at angles across the room to support one wall with the other.

This strange storeroom contains leftover tools and objects that Anvengen had been gathering and stockpiling to aid in creating and decorating the expansions to the Asmodean Knot—after he perished, Dargentu Vheed did little with this room or its sole guardian. The tangle of supports, hanging chains, and other clutter in this room make moving through it difficult terrain. Any area effect attack that inflicts at least 10 points of damage, or any successful melee attack against any of the supports (AC 5) causes the room's contents to come crashing down in a tumultuous roar not quite as deadly as a cave-in. All creatures in the room when it comes down take 4d6 points of bludgeoning damage (DC 15 Reflex half)—those who fail the save are buried by the clutter and must make a DC 15 Strength check as a standard action to push free and climb up onto the uneven pile of junk (which still functions as difficult terrain).

Creature: Anvengen only expected to be gone for a short time on his final trip, but that was long enough, he feared, for some of the Asmodean Knot's more curious denizens at the time to get into trouble. Therefore he placed one of his more loyal minions here to guard the storeroom—the undead remains of a man named Vletcher Smave. In life a treacherous priest who attempted to assassinate and replace Dargentu, Vletcher was tortured to death and transformed into a mummy—in death, he remains silently loyal to Anvengen, patiently waiting for the long-dead cleric to return and give him final rest. Anvengen took to

calling Vletcher the “Flawed One” after he transformed the one-armed, one-footed, twisted wretch—perhaps the mummy’s most hideous feature is its missing lower jaw and tongue, surgically removed to deny the traitor a voice and a way to eat.

The Flawed One stands motionless amid the clutter stacked high along the southern wall, partially hidden by a draped sheet and several chains. PCs can notice it before it steps out of the niche in the wall to attack if the mummy fails its Stealth roll. It soundlessly fights to the death unless presented with one of the three remnants of Anvengen’s spirit (*Drowned Jabe and His Miserable Brothers and Sisters* from area **B2**, the glaive *Anvengen’s Edge* from area **B9**, or the unholy symbol from area **B20**), in which case the mummy stands transfixed by the object. As long as the object remains in view, the person carrying the object can command the Flawed One as if via command undead. The Flawed One’s animating force is tied to the Asmodean Knot, and if brought out of the Knot, it immediately falls apart into inanimate bones, dried flesh, and strips of cloth.

THE FLAWED ONE

CR 5

XP 1,600

Mummy (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 210)

hp 60

Treasure: While the vast majority of the junk here is worthless or mundane, a person who spends 5 minutes looking through the clutter and makes a DC 15 Perception check finds one of the following six valuable objects: a spyglass, a functional suit of masterwork full plate armor, a masterwork halberd, a heavy repeating crossbow, a mithral scimitar, or a *rope of climbing*.

B24. THE THRICE-FOLD INFINITY OF COUNTLESS DOORWAYS

The far wall of this otherwise empty chamber is fitted with three wooden doorways. The left doorway is decorated with a carving of a book, the central doorway a carving of a glaive, and the right doorway a carving of an unholy symbol bearing a pentagram.

Each of these doorways leads to an identical chamber beyond—one with three doors at the far side, opposite a single door by which the PCs have entered, each door of which leads to another chamber, and so on. The chambers continue forever and endlessly as long as the PCs continue taking one of the three doors, but returning through the single door in the opposite wall always returns the traveler to the hallway beyond, no matter how many rooms through which he has traveled. This chamber is a partially

completed entrance into the forever-unfinished expansion to the Asmodean Knot.

The carvings on the doors represent the three spiritual fragments of Anvengen that can be found within the Knot. Each time a character passes through a door, he receives a brief vision of the chamber in which the depicted object is hidden—if the PCs have already found and claimed the object, no vision results.

These doors can also be used to exit the Asmodean Knot. Long ago, Anvengen could open any of the doors in the Asmodean Knot and step through the door into any room in the manor itself—a convenient way to exit the Knot after he grew tired of working on expanding it. Likewise, anyone who opens a door that matches one of the three spiritual fragments he carries knows immediately upon touching the door that he can cause the door to open into his home by concentrating. When the door opens, it looks into that character’s bedroom—or if he lacks a home, into a room he currently pays for or rents in a tavern or other location, including the old shrine of Aroden the Children of Westcrown use as a safe house. Those on the other side of the door simply see it open as if on its own, and as a character steps through, he appears as if from thin air on the other side—he cannot reenter the Asmodean Knot in this manner. The link to the PC’s home remains for as long as the door remains open, or for 1 hour, whichever comes first.

B25. THE CRUX SANCTUM (CR 7)

A wooden stairway, its risers carpeted in fine silk and its banisters carved of darkwood, descends into a lake of bubbling filth and olive-green sludge in this cavern. At the far side of the cavern, three natural stone steps rise up from the slime to a chamber of worked stone, its floor stained and slathered with strings of dried ooze and mounds of filth. Two alcoves to either side of this part of the chamber hold stone chests.

This is not only the ancient and, since Mayor Arvanxi’s arrival, unused treasure vault, but the home of the Outcast King, a wretched creature that spends its days deep in study and self pity. The wooden stairs descend 30 feet into a lake of bubbling sludge. This filth is similar to that in area **B20** as far as infectious diseases are concerned, but is much shallower (at only 4 feet deep) and less foul-smelling (DC 14 Fortitude save each round to avoid being sickened for 1 round).

Creatures: Three guardians remain here, perpetually watching over the mayoral vault and unknowing (or uncaring) that the Asmodean Knot is all but ignored by the current holder of that office. Two of these guardians are lemures that lurk in the filth, their heads just above

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the surface and difficult to tell apart from the surrounding ooze. The third guardian also dwells in the filth, lurking in the flooded alcove just to the side of the worked stone—this is the Outcast King himself.

Once the favored servant of Dargentu Vheed, the creature known now as the Outcast King was once a bearded devil named Molikandus. When Vheed discovered that Molikandus had betrayed him and many of the secrets of the Asmodean Knot to an elven thief named Elandriu, the mayor of Westcrown flew into a frenzy. He imprisoned the thief and the devil who had reported the treachery, but his full wrath was inflicted upon Molikandus. Dargentu called upon his magic to meld Molikandus's body and soul with a filthy and horrific creature—an otyugh—and then placed the resulting abomination here to serve as a guardian for his treasury and to wallow forever in filth. Molikandus has long since gone insane and forgotten his previous life—he has grown to enjoy feeding on the constantly replenishing, diseased refuse in this chamber, and sees the two lemures as his court. As part of his cursed existence, he has lost the use of his devilish spell-like abilities and his skill at wielding two weapons at once, but he retains much of the rest of his power and is a ferocious enemy indeed. He and his lemures wait for the PCs to be relatively spread out across the room before attacking. He fights with a pair of swords that he's harvested from unfortunate thieves who have stumbled into the Asmodean Knot—bits and pieces of their remains still float in the sludge, and some of their gear, ignored (and unusable) by the otyugh and devils, all but forgotten under the ooze.

THE OUTCAST KING

CR 6

XP 2,400

Male barbazu-otyugh amalgam (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 73, 223; *Advanced Bestiary* 16)

LE Large outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent, see in darkness; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18 (+1 *defending longsword*, +8 natural, –1 size)

hp 63 (6d10+30)

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

DR 5/good or silver; **Immune** disease, fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 16

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 *keen longsword* +8/+3 (1d8+6/17–20 plus infernal wound), +1 *defending longsword* +7 (1d8+2/19–20 plus infernal wound), bite +5 (1d8+2), 2 tentacles +5 (1d6+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with tentacle)

Special Attacks beard, constrict (tentacle, 1d6+5)

TACTICS

During Combat When the battle begins, the Outcast King strikes with his tentacles first in hopes of grabbing a foe in the surprise round. After that, he uses his defending longsword to bolster his AC while thundering through the sludge to attack foes in melee.

Morale The Outcast King fights to the death, and does not pursue foes out of this chamber.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 11, **Con** 18, **Int** 5, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +12 (+16 grappling); **CMD** 22

Feats Toughness, Two-Weapon Fighting (currently unusable), Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Intimidate +8, Perception +10, Stealth +9 (+17 in lair); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in lair

Languages Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

Gear Medium +1 *defending longsword*, Medium +1 *keen longsword*



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SPECIAL ABILITIES

Beard (Ex) To use its beard attack, the Outcast King must hit a single opponent with both tentacle attacks.

Infernal Wound (Su) The Outcast King inflicts infernal wounds (as per a normal bearded devil) with longswords, not with glaives.

LEMURES (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 13 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 79)

Treasure: A total of four valuable objects lie discarded on the floor of the filthy pond. Pick four squares as locations for each—a character who searches the square can discover the object with a DC 20 Perception check. Of course, all of these objects are magic, so *detect magic* automatically reveals their location. These objects are all that remain of several decades of would-be thieves and victims of the Asmodean Knot who had the misfortune to make it this far: a +1 *cold iron battleaxe*, a *wand of cure moderate wounds* (33 charges), a *ring of feather falling*, and *minor crown of blasting*.

The chamber's real treasures, though, lie within the two chests in the alcoves nearby. Both chests are locked (both physically and via an arcane lock at CL 14th)—the keys are long gone but the chests can be picked with a DC 30 Disable Device check. Alternatively, touching one of the three soul objects associated with Anvengen to a chest causes the chest to pop open with a click.

Inside one chest are several pounds of long-outdated investment papers, lists of debts, and various notes on blackmail victims—while once totaling nearly 120,000 gp in value, these papers are now worthless thanks to the passage of time and the deaths of most involved. Of greater value are this chest's other contents, including several valuable books. These books include an early Andoren philosophy book worth 200 gp, an illustrated scenic journey through Osirion worth 230 gp, a three-volume work on the teachings of a spirit naga entitled the *Libra Malfactum* worth 400 gp, and a spellbook containing 30 spells of your choice (10 of 1st level, 10 of 2nd level, seven of 3rd level, and three of 4th level). Hidden in the spine of the spellbook (DC 25 Perception to notice) is a *scroll of contagion* (CL 9th). Under the books is a layer of 1,300 gp, along with a narrow

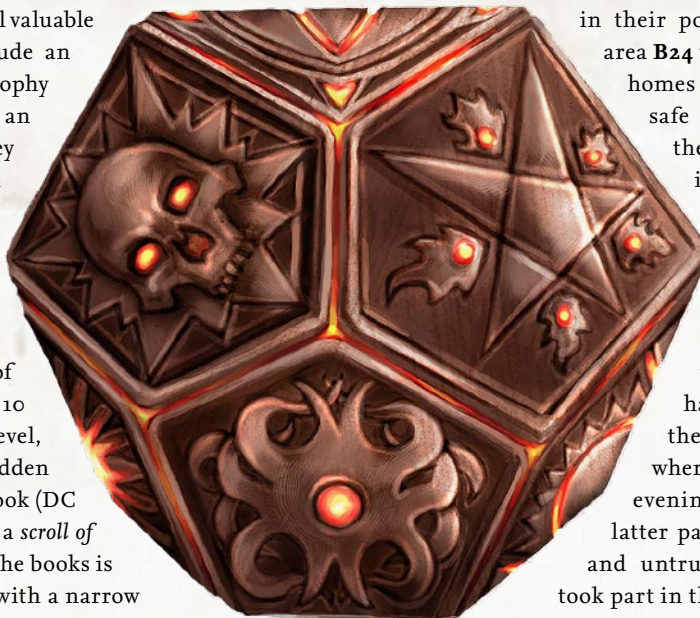
ivory box with a carved lid depicting an army of golems destroying a city wall. The box is worth 800 gp, and it contains a *golembane scarab* and a *wand of rusting grasp* with 7 charges.

The other chest contains only one object—the Chelish Crux. This strange and baffling object appears as a wooden and metal dodecahedron (similar in shape to a d12) that measures about 6 inches in diameter—each face of the crux is carved with a different rune, and when one looks upon the thing, the observer has the unsettling sensation that he can see too many or too few sides at once. The Chelish Crux is the object of the PCs' mission, but the puzzle box is quite difficult to open (even with force or as intended by tracing the runes in certain patterns and in certain order with one's fingertips). Rolling the Crux reveals that it is hollow, with numerous objects within sliding around inside. The methods for opening the Chelish Crux, as well as its strange and eerie contents, are revealed at the start of the next adventure, "What Lies in Dust," in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #27. If you're running "The Sixfold Trial" as a standalone adventure, the Crux should contain whatever strange treasures or lore the PCs were sent in to recover—in this event, opening the Crux requires merely a series of four DC 20 Intelligence checks made in a row.

Story Award: For recovering the Chelish Crux, award the PCs 3,200 XP.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure ends as the PCs emerge from the Asmodean Knot with the Chelish Crux in their possession—they can use area B24 to exit directly into their homes or the shrine of Aroden safe house if they wish, or they can exit from area B1 into Aberian's Folly (but if they spent more than several hours in the Asmodean Knot, they may need to sneak out of the manor since their time as guests may have passed). No NPC at the Cornucopia questions where the PCs went that evening, as memories of the latter part of the event are hazy and untrustworthy to those who took part in the feast.



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Good-hearted PCs may be driven to inform the mayor of their experiences in the Knot, in particular the fact that there seems to have been an amount of damage done to parts of it that might explain the strange fluctuations in his manor's functions of late. Unfortunately for the PCs, such a report is a poor choice, as it reveals to the mayor that the PCs have been snooping around in places he'd rather they stay out of. The resulting legal problems could hound the PCs for months, and if Aberian can prove that the PCs stole anything that belongs to him (including anything looted from the Knot), the PCs may even face prison time. Exactly what these ramifications consist of are up to you as the GM, but at the very least, the bad publicity and the spread of misinformation about the PCs by the mayor and his agents costs the PCs 3 Fame Points.

Conversely, even if the PCs managed to infiltrate the Knot and escape without being directly observed, as the months go on rumors that Aberian's Folly has been "cracked" by a group of heroes who managed to invade the Asmodean Knot and loot it spread far and wide throughout Westcrown. While publicly admitting to the deed can land the PCs in legal trouble as detailed above, as long as they remain somewhat circumspect about the

matter, they earn 2 Fame Points as their notoriety spreads throughout the city.

With the exception of Thesing (who returns later in the adventure as an undead antagonist), none of the other cast and crew members of the play have further roles in Council of Thieves—you can develop them as you wish, and if the PCs have formed strong relationships with certain members of the group, you should absolutely keep them in the game. Any of them could make excellent cohorts if, inspired by their PC friends, they started taking class levels by the time the PCs reach a level themselves where they could take Leadership as a feat.

The next adventure, "What Lies in Dust" in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #27, can begin whenever you wish, but it's keyed to the PCs' attempts to open the Chelish Crux. This could be immediately after they escape from the Asmodean Knot to their homes, or it could be after several days or weeks spent recovering, tending to other matters (such as item creation), or even after going on a few additional adventures of your design. If the PCs tarry for too long, though, feel free to have the Children of Westcrown and Pathfinder Ghontasavos track the PCs down and ask them when they think they'll get around to looking inside the magical puzzle box that they risked life and reputations to secure.



The following pages present *The Six Trials of Larazod*, an infamous play that features prominently in “The Six-Fold Trial.” In the adventure, the PCs have the opportunity to take on roles in a performance of this play. While it might be “performed” through a series of in-game challenges, GMs who think their groups might enjoy a completely unique roleplaying experience can make use of the following text to add additional depth to their game. How GMs employ this text is largely up to them, perhaps granting PCs minor bonuses based on the strength of their acting. Regardless, the following script is meant to add an entertaining twist to this theatrical adventure, and can be employed as subtly or elaborately as GMs and their parties find comfortable. The *Dramatis Personae* and history of this play can be found online at paizo.com/pathfinder.

Act 1: Condemnation

A high-backed obsidian bench stands upcenter. As the curtain rises, HAANDERTHAN himself perches there, an awesome figure of power looming above the shackled forms of LARAZOD, TYBAIN, and DENTRIS. The other members of the COUNCIL, including the sultry ILSANDRA, flank out stage right and left of HAANDERTHAN’S tribunal bench. The hulking bearded devil BAILIFF stands over them, spiked truncheon in his scabrous red, leather-like hands.

BAILIFF

Order in the Tribunal. The Court of His Honor Paraduke Montigny Haanderthan, Black Tongue of Asmodeus, Magistrate Maleficarum, now holds session. All rise.

HAANDERTHAN

Be seated, members of the Court. Today this court seeks truth, or at least shadows thereof, from one Larazod Rilsane, honored veteran of the Shadestar War, member of

a once gloried house, of recent fallen in Asmodeus’s regard. The accused stands on several counts of failed conspiracy, evidenced thereof by the industrious interrogations of the court’s own Seeker, Drovalid Vorclune, administered with his usual diligence and severity. In these interviews Vorclune gathered from notable sources, only a few of whom survived their conversations with the lash, that Larazod of the Rilsane held audience with undesirables—the topic of their whispered covenant the activities of none other than myself. A most serious affair. Service to Asmodeus’s ever-darkening glory is never without risk of menace, betrayal, and threat of doom. My family and I have long suffered the bumbling attempts of assassins who would tear at our dark lord’s visage as casually as they befoul their mothers’ beds.

What they lack in cunning they bolster with sheer desperation, evidenced by consorting with all manner of Aroden-suckling knaves, and aged wiz-worms who trust in mystic secrets over the Dark One’s love.

The Six Trials of Larazod

You hereby stand accused, Larazod, along with your ill-seeming compatriots, of conspiracy to undertake grievous harm to the institution of this tribunal, namely myself, Paraduke Montigny Haanderthan. How answer thee these charges, Larazod of House Rilsane? Be thou maligned by a scandal-brewer's wagging tongue, or dost thou cleave to my comings and goings as a bloat fly to a fresh cadaver?

Speak! And know that lies are my closest friends. They'll betray you before I. Speak the truth or do worse than die!

DENTRIS

Hold your tongue, boy, and we'll escape the firebrand yet. Your father was the model of a devil's squire. Summon his wiles now, and keep shut that Abyss you call mouth, before we all tumble down into its darkness. Had you been born deaf and dumb, this loyal servant would yet live to see another midnight.

TYBAIN

Hurl his arrogance and accusations back at him, Larazod. He wants precious golden-yoked truth? Give him more than he can choke down. For whether revealed by the brilliance of Aroden's eye, or the long red shadows cast by your Dark Lord's fiery gaze, a man false at heart and shrouded in hollow faiths is nothing more than a traitor to all. Let him that judges false be judged by wraiths—smote by his own brand shall he fall.

LARAZOD

Larazod knows no lies, great magistrate, and no slanderer's tongue caresses my dignity. The accusations you speak are as true as Asmodeus's sword. They cleave clean through. Let the witnesses suffer no more lash. To burn their innards with pokers and steal their eyes is simply to waste precious toil better spent in Asmodeus's service. There is but one point misaligned in this dark constellation—I seek not your death, though the secrets you harbor in your feeble heart deserve a gruesome demise.

I carry no assassin's blade, nor breath-stealing spell to rob your mortality. To end you I need only know you, and to cast you in an honest shade. I pierce your "shadows of truth" and show you for what I know—a false knave, a demon-sucking wag-tail, a balor's bawd, a pus-leaking cataract in the eye of Asmodeus's justice, and subject to the multi-handed ministrations of a marilith whore, dretch-loving plunderer, and traitor to our great Dark Lord.

There is much commotion among the council.

ILSANDRA

(Aside) And to think I almost spent this session in the orgy-baths of Kalrath. None of their fleshy delights could compare to the ecstasy this half-breed's words stroke within me! See

his fierce aspect burn in fury, even below the tribunal's culling justice. But how shall Haanderthan answer?

HAANDERTHAN

Heavy words for a forked tongue to manage, boy. You juggle them well enough, but like a poor fool, offer jest and jape. I assume this glib outrage, obviously a threadbare attempt to throw off the keening blade of justice, is backed by the testimony of a thousand law-loving fiends? Perhaps the ancient augurer at your side, ever your father's faithful lap-lizard, probed the ancient secrets of the cosmos and uncovered my blasphemous treachery? Or have you a soul-bonded scroll of bone-white parchment upon which my scrawled hand appears next to some Abyssal conspirator? You amuse me, half-breed, and it is the only reason your sniveling soul is not yet blasted away in hellfire and borne on a river of sorrow to some ignominious corner of the Nine. Whereof comes this lunacy? What disease vexes your broken mind? From what mystery of psychosis do you draw your lies?

TYBAIN

You mewl lies like a sullied maid on her wedding night, O Great One. Even a lord may be smote in darkness as Asmodeus sees the truth of you—a base and lowly thing, snivelling in crimson robes. These devil-bowing citizens about us are affront enough to Aroden's divine will, but ye, whose left hand clasps devil's claws, and right reaches out for demonic boon—oh double-dealing fiend-lover, who allies with the Abyss. Infernal oaths and Abyssal blasphemy spew in one breath from your twisting lips.

HAANDERTHAN

Does your Aroden arse-kissing pall-a-dine put you up to such resounding blasphemy? Have you no tongue of your own, half-breed, to answer my charge?

LARAZOD

Truth is spoken freely in many tongues, false magistrate, and by agents of light and dark. You know what you are.

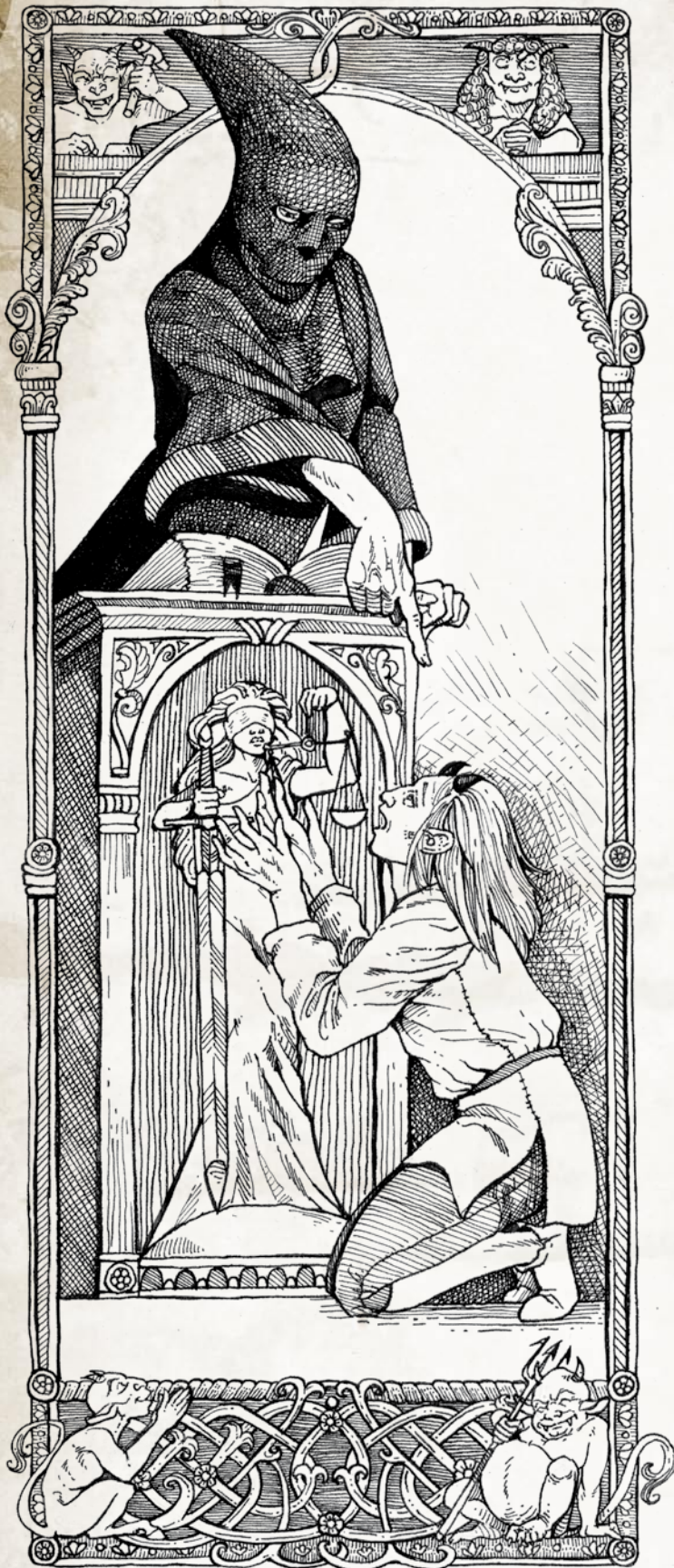
HAANDERTHAN

You persist in this foolishness? It shall go hard for you and yours. Recant and your deaths shall be swift, your souls consigned to diligent service in Hell. Refuse, and enlist in agony's service, consign your soul to wallow in the most ignominious corner of the Nine, and take eternal suffering as your bedmate.

ILSANDRA

(Aside) He's to have a much more interesting bedmate, if I've anything to say. The fire that one shows at tribunal, will no doubt burn even stronger between my sheets.

Council of Thieves



DENTRIS

(Aside) That one grows hot betwixt her infernal thighs. Hope beyond hope. One voice of dissent on the council and the slenderest chance of salvation is ours to clutch. Let this waxen sliver of hope not melt until she does—let her find her tongue.

HAANDERTHAN

Speak, boy. Do you still baffle with false charges, or have your battered wits returned? Speak.

LARAZOD

I recant nothing. You, accuser, so stand accused. How do you answer?

HAANDERTHAN

Innocent, of course. And so judgment is passed. My right as magistrate puts you to the flames on my command. My word is law.

DENTRIS

Respectfully, my lord, when I was a barrister of the tribunal, it was common practice to ask Consular Consent in any judgement of a matter involving the Magistrate personally in the case. Has the ancient code of Asmodeus's court, scorched on the Tablets of Law by our Great Lord's own fiery talon, so fallen as to warrant its complete disregard in this tribunal?

HAANDERTHAN

Of course, you are correct, old man. I've no intention of affronting our Great Lord. Council, what say ye on this matter? Do you concur with my judgment? These heinous slanders cast upon my great name warrant utter annihilation. So sayeth I, Magistrate of this Gloried Tribunal. Do you agree?

Councillors mutter and call "Aye."

ILSANDRA

Nay.

HAANDERTHAN

My ears deceive me. Do you, august erinyes, daughter of Hell, speak against our cause?

ILSANDRA

I speak against your judgment. Our cause is yet undetermined by my mark. According to our oldest codes, truth can be drawn from an offender, as pus from a wound. Asmodeus's Trials show the true heart from the false. Why, simply put the half-breed to the flames. Let us try him properly in accordance with the old ways.

The Six Trials of Larazod

DENTRIS

Well done, lad. Your pretty infernal face is good for something, even if your tongue offends all who hear. We may live yet.

HAANDERTHAN

Tut, the business of the tribunal heaps higher day by day. We've cases waiting in the wings by the thousands. Penitent souls singing out for justice. Shall we delay their flight to Asmodeus's waiting embrace to engage in infantile contests? Nay, expediency is our charge when matters so lacking in evidence are brought before our bench.

ILSANDRA

Come, come, sweet magistrate. The spectacle of a few trials would do my poor heart well. I wane at these tiresome sessions. Let the trials commence. 'Twould arouse me. 'Twould tickle me. 'Twould drive me to distraction.

HAANDERTHAN

Trials you say? How now? If it is to be so, let us sweeten the pot. A price I would exact for trials as you insist. If this half-breed fails, not only is my name cleared of all preposterous charges, but you shall compact to me for a full moon's service, to do my bidding and satisfy all my unwholesome needs.

ILSANDRA

Let it be so agreed. I hunger so for trials, I happily wager my body to your whim. We shall see if this half-breed's words strike true or false.

HAANDERTHAN

So be it. Larazod, you stand in trial. By my discretion you shall face six of Asmodeus's fell tests. You stand alone in the face of terrors over which no mortal has prevailed.

TYBAIN

Not alone, my lord. I stand with him.

HAANDERTHAN

You are under no obligation to do so, Arodenite. Back down and be discharged, to keep at your slobbering benedictions for a few more years at least.

TYBAIN

I am true to Aroden, my lord, but I am also true in loyalty and kinship. This man, though half-fiend his blood may turn, is bound to me in brotherhood, as I stand bound to him. Our blades both matched the enemies of Cheliax, and what faith divides, common cause unites. You cannot sunder me from his destiny. I stand trial at his side, as is my right, if I so beclaim it. Is it not so, Dentriss?

DENTRIS

'Tis true, my lord. If the half-brained, light-blinded knight wishes to perish alongside my good master, he is within his lawful right.

HAANDERTHAN

Very well. Burn with him, fool. Dentriss Maltrada, you are hereby discharged.

DENTRIS

Nay sir, though I wish nothing more. This boy, as wayward as his fancies take him, is in my care. I never waived from his father's service, and I shall not turn my back on the son.

HAANDERTHAN

Surely, you've no wish to die?

DENTRIS

There are worse fates, magistrate, than even can be promised on the deepest level of your Hell. To walk alive in a world, my duty undone, my sworn oath broken, is to walk through fires more smolderous than any Asmodeus keeps below. Though he be a fool, and possessed of a diseased wit, Larazod is my master, and I shall stand by him. Do your worst magistrate. I've rolled bones with demons, and gazed in dragons' hearts. Let us have these trials and be done with my life, if the lords of darkness so command.

HAANDERTHAN

Doddering old sack of bones. No demon's dice, nor dragon's musings await you—only torment beyond the stars' most infinite imaginings. When you mewl out for merciful death, I shall look on in pleasure, as your soul's wake burns from a withered old corpse. Make ready, supplicants. The trials begin anon. May Asmodeus take pity on your blighted souls.

Act 2: Trial by Torture

Enter DROVALID.

HAANDERTHAN

Good Keeper of Pain, Tormentor of Liars and Demon-suckling Miscreants, we are honored by your presence. Show these supplicants the favor of your stinging lash, and with rack and fire, purge lies from their lips. Break their souls, and let the mad and guilty appall our ears no more with ranting.

DROVALID

Magistrate Maleficarum, I come before you a simple hand whose lash is guided by the greater glory of Asmodeus, may my scourge do him and this devoted tribunal proud. With your permission I shall begin our first trial.

Council of Thieves

HAANDERTHAN

Begin at your leisure, Tormentor. End this fool's mockery of our court with cleansing agony.

Enter the Device and other implements of torture. Drovalid begins administering agonizing pain upon a stoic Larazod.

DENTRIS

Fools, my good master may be a fool of a tiefling, but if you think to wrack his spine, and wheedle mewled recantation from his black lips, you are even greater fools than he. Larazod is no coward, and he sneers in the face of pain with true faith in Asmodeus—he cannot waver. He faced Abyssal Tyrants and hordes of their slime-ridden minions in battle. His coal-black soul did not quake then. He stands resolute now. You cannot break his spirit.

DROVALID

Recant half-breed. Admit your twisted falsehoods, serpent-tongued traitor!

LARAZOD

Even an ocean of agony cannot turn truth to lie.

More bone-crunching, skin-flensing torment.

DROVALID

Recant and end this trial! Swift death shall embrace you and Asmodeus smiles upon those who admit their falsehoods—he may not rend your soul completely, may leave some semblance of your spirit intact.

LARAZOD

I recant... nothing! Grind on, honeyed torment. Sing sweetly as I may, no cries of “recant” shall you hear. I hate lies, as I hate demon-loving traitors.

More torture.

LARAZOD

Had enough, Magistrate? Can you withstand it any longer? Please give in and recant, for the only torment I cannot bear is your continued duplicity. Recant, Magistrate! Recant your own lies, and Asmodeus may have mercy on your slimy soul.

TYBAIN

Ha! Even in the face of soul-crushing pain, he taunts this ridiculous Magistrate of Hell. Hear me, Aroden, if Asmodeus has such as Larazod in his employ, all our efforts are doomed. Would your white fist command such steadfast loyalty as this one here, who laughs at death and grins at the grimmest pain.

ILSANDRA

(Aside) Such a sweet voice. I long to hear his screams more—ah, but to elicit them myself, with a soul-burning kiss, and an aching embrace. This torture is most stimulating, though I do hope the Tormentor doesn't mar the tiefling's choicest parts. Leave off those! They belong to me alone!

DROVALID

(Exhausted) Recant!

LARAZOD

Never! Lash every inch of flesh from me, leave only a bloody ruin where I stand—that skinned wreck of a man will gurggle only truth and never recant.

Drovalid ends torment and casts down his whip.

DROVALID

He is as unbreakable as a marble tide—dragon's scale would have shattered long ago—and yet he stands unbowed. No lie can evade this unholy lash of mine, gifted to me by Asmodeus himself. Larazod must speak the truth!

HAANDERTHAN

Fool! Continue the trial, you've yet to probe deep enough into his soul's painful lies!

DROVALID

My work is done. My findings true. You have never doubted my hand before. Why do you so now? Could it be this tiefling speaks true? Are you allied against our august master of darkness?

HAANDERTHAN

Mind your place, Tormentor! You speak blasphemy in the face of this land's own Magistrate Maleficarum. Beware, your words endanger your very soul. Take you this half-breed's part? Then you would join him on his trials? Don't be a fool.

DROVALID

If Asmodeus wishes it so then my soul stands with his. If my hand has failed you, then I shall burn for it. I shall face the remaining five trials at Larazod's side.

HAANDERTHAN

So be it, traitor. Your rending death, and his, shall be my vindication. Bring on the second trial!

Act 3: Trial by Pleasure

Enter the bailiff bearing four vials and four curved flensing knives. He hands one of each to Dentriss, Tybain, Larazod, and Drovalid.

The Six Trials of Larazod

HAANDERTHAN

It is said that a liar's pain is easy to bear, but pleasure steals truth from even the most well-tended fortress. So let it be with ye, Larazod. Here before you now are the Flukes of Asmodeus. Their bite more pleasurable than the caresses of a thousand succubi (which you no doubt have enjoyed, you treacherous Abyssal-loving fool). Taste of their deep burrowing bliss. Their rapturous journey through your body shall explore the deepest, darkest pleasures any mortal has ever known. Their soul-shuddering wanderings end in your skull, where they plant their young who consume you in an orgiastic frenzy—leaving you an empty husk of a thing—a spent lover, drooling in blissful oblivion forever. Unless, of course, you can resist these god-bending pleasures. This time, the trial is not yours alone to bear. Let us see if your trusted companions' faith remains as unshakeable as yours. Who shall be the first to die in spasms of ecstasy?

ILSANDRA

Oh, how I long to face this judgment!

DROVALID

Master Larazod, most unholy saint of our dark Asmodeus, please allow me to prove my devotion to your cause. To think my biting lash flayed your chaste red skin, and cracked such a noble hide as yours. I shall be first to face this trial, if you so wish it.

LARAZOD

Your courage is beyond question. Show this lickspittle Magistrate the meaning of devotion, my friend.

Drovalid administers the fluke, convulses in sheer orgasmic ecstasy, but as it crawls up his arm he suddenly plunges a flensing blade beneath the skin, skewering the fluke and removing it.

DROVALID

Asmodeus bear witness to my devotion. This half-breed speaks only truth!

Likewise, Larazod applies the fluke to his flesh, where it hungrily burrows beneath the surface. Larazod shudders in pleasure.

ILSANDRA

Oh, to be that fluke! To burrow into such sweet flesh!

LARAZOD

I sing only of the joy of supplication to our dark lord. This pleasure is only a gift of Asmodeus's truth. I would gladly die at this fluke's bite, but alas, my duty here is yet undone, and so I scorn this pleasure with

a bleeding blade. I shall not relent until your lies are revealed, foul Magistrate.

Larazod cuts out his fluke.

Dentris applies his fluke.

DENTRIS

Oh! It has been so long! Sweet, aching ecstasy!

Improvises a rendition of the Tallis and his Three Wives, and then cuts away the fluke when it is nigh in his neck.

DENTRIS

(Sourly) Between you, my hideous half-breed young master, and a dream of three succubi's frolics on my flesh—a hard choice, Larazod, but somehow your sweet countenance won out.

TYBAIN

My turn, I suppose.

Tybain applies his fluke and begins giggling uncontrollably.

TYBAIN

Ooooh! Aaaaah! I know not this feeling!

DENTRIS

Ha! Watch the virginal knight squirm!

TYBAIN

It is as if a thousand feathers assault my flesh—especially my most... tender... parts. What strange pleasure is this!

LARAZOD

Ah, Aroden's servants, so like sweet children they be. Hold true, my dear friend!

Tybain suddenly tears loose his fluke.

TYBAIN

I am well, though I may never be the same.

HAANDERTHAN

Curse your persistence. All lies eventually reveal their ugly fangs. I shall draw them as venom from a wound.

Act 4: Trial in the Belly of the Beast

DENTRIS

Such horrors. What next?

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LARAZOD

Hold true, old man.

DENTRIS

Easy for you to say! Youth laughs at death as a stranger. As you grow older you come to know it well—and fear it.

DROVALID

I have seen young and old break before this court. They all share one thing: a weak and watery eye speaking to a frailty of spirit. Your eyes are like grit and sand, obstinate even in the face of the storm-fraught sea. You cannot break, old wizard.

DENTRIS

Perhaps not, but tell me, Tormentor—what fresh horrors await?

DROVALID

Here follows the Trial in the Belly of the Beast. A great terror, gifted to this court by a Duke of Hell, the Beast is a hideous thing, whose stomach is a nest of acid-spewing serpents. It shall swallow us whole, and wash us clean in its acid well.

DENTRIS

Where is the “trial” in this!?

DROVALID

If we are innocent, and speak no lies, then the Beast’s Belly will leave us unscathed.

TYBAIN

Madness!

LARAZOD

Hold fast, my dear friend. Have faith in Asmodeus.

TYBAIN

But I do not!

LARAZOD

Well then you better learn to swim.

HAANDERTHAN

The next trial demands a great sacrifice. Ye, who speaks for the half-breed, the lone traitor on the council who speaks against my august personage. You must brave this trial, and all that follow, alongside the accused.

ILSANDRA

(Laughing) Gladly! I stand at this tiefling’s side, or at his back, or him at mine, or perhaps I should bolster him up from below or allow him to do the same to me. You shall see how devotedly I attend his pleasure, for he speaks the truth.

HAANDERTHAN

Then burn with him.

Ilsandra joins the companions, and embraces Larazod with a fiery kiss. He surrenders to her pleasures.

ILSANDRA

Know the gifts of Asmodeus, dear child. You have earned great boons by your devoted service, and I shall pay them all with interest. But soft, what terror approaches? Our pleasures must wait.

Enter the Beast.

LARAZOD

Come, horror, I shall tear my way from your gizzard with the white-hot blade of my truth.

DROVALID

Die though I might, melted to a puddle of liquid flesh in the bowels of the Beast, I cannot think of any greater man to join in death. I am honoured to die at the side of a man so filled with truth.

DENTRIS

Come and have a bite, Old Beastie. These old bones shall stick in your craw and choke the life from you.

TYBAIN

My holy flesh shall burn all the way down. Aroden’s blessings upon my soul ensure a most unpleasant meal for this Beast.

The Beast devours them. They fight their way free from his gizzard.

Act 5: The Birthing Trial

HAANDERTHAN

You have crawled from the maw of the Beast. Let us see what blasphemous lies slither from your treacherous insides. Show them.

The Bailiff brings out five crimson eggs.

DROVALID

Dear Asmodeus! Spare us!

LARAZOD

What means these strange crimson eggs?

DROVALID

Oh horror beyond nightmare! The eggs, they burrow deep within us. They hatch deep in our insides, churning our

The Six Trials of Larazod

guts to paste and slurping them through gritted devil teeth. They feed on our souls. When these foul devils have eaten their fill, they tear their way free—terrible things! Hideous devil-children bearing our own faces, but filled with hate for all we are. We are mothers to twisted things and look upon our own visage as we die by their taloned hands.

HAANDERTHAN

Shall you recant now, or will you give birth to abominations of your very flesh?

ILSANDRA

Do your worst, fool of a mortal. I am a princess to hell, and no child born of my black soul shall bear malice against me.

Larazod lifts the Bailiff off the ground by the throat with one mighty hand.

LARAZOD

Ha! Give me your egg, you lickspittle. If Asmodeus wishes it, I shall choke the life of my own devilish child with glee. I gulp this egg down before this court and our dark lord's very eyes.

DENTRIS

Well, give me mine. Not much good it shall avail you. The real Dentriss Maltrada was killed ages ago at my own devilish hands when I was born from his old soul. I am a child of this egg

TYBAIN

Truly?! I had no idea!

DENTRIS

If only everyone was as naïve as ye, paladin.

TYBAIN

I like eggs! Red, white, or otherwise. Hand me mine! I'll eat it raw!

The companions eat their eggs and hideous devil children are born from them. They battle the devil children valiantly. Ilsandra, amazed that her daughter attacks her, lashes out with ferocity.

ILSANDRA

No! My child! Forgive me! You'll pay for this, Haanderthan—with your heart's blood, and with every shred of your soul.

Act 6: Trial by Combat and Love

HAANDERTHAN

(Aside) How can this be? Four trials broken, and still they prevail. Asmodeus smiles upon them. Does the Dark Lord



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truly know of my compact with the Abyss? It cannot be, or I am utterly undone. True or nay, I must try the last. I shall plunge their faith in pitch and acrid stew, and see if they hold to the cause.

(*To the companions*) You sickly whelps profess undying devotion to one another. Another smoldering lie flung from your dark holes. You but conspire to confound this court and our Dark Majesty. 'Tis ye who contract with demon-spawn and seek my undoing, in service to some slimy mistress or master of the putrid Abyss. Your vile benefactors have thus far warded off justice's dark hand, but let us see if you hold steadfast before the promise of oblivion.

DENTRIS

More? I cannot last. My old heart gives out. Go on without me, master. I served your father faithfully. Alas, I am found lacking in the face of his half-breed son. The challenges, ever dire, cleave my soul from me. May Asmodeus keep me.

LARAZOD

No foolish talk, old wizard. Haven't you claimed immortality a thousand times to any bent ear? Old Dentrismaltrada cannot die, ye said. I've eaten the heart of an ancient Red Wyrms, and warmed by his fire, my soul burns eternal. Get up, my dear friend, more father to me, than ever any father was. Your duties are not abated. Your task is yet undone.

TYBAIN

Let him die. He's suffered long enough, and we've suffered his blustery speeches even more keenly. Kick off, old bag, and be done with ye.

DENTRIS

Why you shiny beetle! You quivering pall-o-dine of a young whelp-turned-demigod! You plump kettle! I'll bring the all-encompassing powers of a thousand worlds crashing down upon your head! The keening song of dead gods warble at my command. I'll leave your mind a tatterdemalion of a sad rag. Die! Die, you say! Nay, not till I've seen the last oafish breath squeezed from your lungs by tongs of fire—you simpering Aro-din-din!

TYBAIN

Looking more lively now, aren't we?

LARAZOD

Peace, old man. The pall-o-dine works a righteous healing upon your old bones—applying the only balm your withered heart desires—spitting ire and uncouth rage. Bile for balm, bile for balm—what a wolfish old man, a terror to kings and angels. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Dentrismaltrada. He knows no equal.

DENTRIS

Enough, pup! I am much abused. Lay not your hands on me, pall-o-dine! I'll rise without your young god's urgings. I've work left indeed.

ILSANDRA

Strange old wizard, loyal and dear heart. He'll join us in the marriage bed and one last night of bliss will be his for the taking!

LARAZOD

A lovely sentiment, my princess of Hell, disturbing though it may be.

DROVALID

Enough. It is time. I am not long of your company, but know that I would stand by you all through six hundred trials. Take hands with me, half-breed. My sins and yours are one. Our destinies intertwine, and I walk your path with you to the bitter burning end.

LARAZOD

I'm honored.

HAANDERTHAN

How touching. These sentiments of yours are nothing but dreamy clouds, soon to be shred by Asmodeus's blasting winds.

LARAZOD

Face of hazy dream-like bliss, kiss like fire. I burn for you, princess. Cling to me, dig your talons into my chest and touch my heart with white-hot caress.

ILSANDRA

I am yours for one thousand blissful years. Drink my sizzling blood from my wrist, or anywhere else you like—let us seal this sinful compact and consummate our love in the heat of battle.

TYBAIN

Dentrism, you old cur, dog curled by your master's feet. I can't call you friend, but a truer servant I've never known. Loyalty is the mark of greatness. Know that my sword is yours even as your spells bend to Larazod's cause. We stand as one, and we always shall.

ILSANDRA

Great Tormentor, Drovalid Vorclune, let it be said a man who can bear the vicious ministrations he renders upon his foes is a great man indeed. Though I am pledged to this young half-breed, know your courage sends shudders through my loins.

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DROVALID

You do me sweet honor, great lady. I stand in awe of your passion, and these worthy nobles' unshakable courage. Even this milksop of a pall-o-dine stands hard against the torments of Hell—harder than the fiercest witch.

The companions fight off a legion of devils.

Act 7: Trial by His Own Dark Hand

HAANDERTHAN

The final trial is at hand. Your souls shall be quenched at long last.

LARAZOD

This trial is yours, Magistrate Maleficarum. Asmodeus is the only true judge here. Bow before him.

HAANDERTHAN

Insolent dog! Asmodeus shall scour your soul as sauce from a pan. Ash for bones, and waxen souls melted by the dark lord's flame to puddle at his taloned feet.

LARAZOD

We shall see who is judged!

THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS enters in a burst of foul colored flames and shrieking, crimson skinned imps and offers Larazod a choice. His devils hang silk scarves around all the companions' necks—one of red, one of crimson. Each is handed a contract written in blood, which bursts into flames when read.

PRINCE OF DARKNESS

Choose. A true heart shall beat strong for all eternity at my side, a false one burns to cinder in an instant.

Larazod and his companions choose the crimson scarves and the red ones burn away. Haanderthan cries out in terror as the Prince of Darkness turns on him.

PRINCE OF DARKNESS

Treacherous magistrate who lords false justice over true souls. Your soul shall burn for all eternity—an everlasting torment awaits you.

Prince of Darkness carries Haanderthan into the mouth of Hell. Exeunt.





Iomedae

Iomedae (eye-OH-ma-day) was born a mortal in Cheliah. As a paladin of Arazni, she rose to prominence in the era of the Shining Crusade, in which she led the Knights of Ozem in a series of victories over the Whispering Tyrant. Success in the Test of the *Starstone* a short time later granted the valiant swordswoman a spark of divinity and the direct attention of Aroden, who took her on as his herald, replacing the fallen Arazni. She became a proactive force under the Last Azlanti's watchful eye, aggressively seeking out the enemies of humanity. When Aroden died, Iomedae inherited most of Aroden's remaining followers. Now out from under the shadow of her patron, she has proven she needs no mentor to guide her, no elder deity to help her find her place—she is valor, glory, honor, justice, and strength, and is unafraid to point her sword at the greatest evils facing the world. Though born in Cheliah, she is worshiped by many people outside that land, and once the direct threat of the Worldwound is ended she plans to wipe her homeland free of its diabolical taint.

At just over 900 years old, Iomedae is the youngest of the major deities of Golarion, and only in the last century has she been able to reach her full potential as an independent deity in her own right. Despite her youth and this late start, she has been instrumental in fighting evil in the world, starting with her mortal participation in the imprisoning of the Whispering Tyrant and most recently with her patronage of the Mendev crusades to battle the expansion of the Worldwound. She is a righteous knight, spreading the good word and crushing evil with the force of her presence and her mighty sword. Though skilled in war, she does not see herself as a war-deity; she would rather convince evildoers to lay down their arms in honorable surrender than cut them down in the midst of battle, but she is fearless and willing to fight for what she believes in. She is a missionary and crusader, bringing benign sovereignty to the good and merciful justice to the evil. She loathes incorrigible evil, fiend-spawn, traitors, and those who abuse good in the name of “greater” good.

"Justice and honor are a heavy burden for the righteous. We carry this weight so that the weak may grow strong and the meek grow brave."

—*The Acts of Iomedae*

As the only major ascended deity who is female, the Inheritor has a unique perspective when it comes to a woman's role in the world. She has abandoned none of her femininity in her pursuit of justice; she is not a masculine deity who happens to be a woman—she is a warrior woman, strong and supple like a tempered steel sword, able to bend without breaking. She doesn't stand for old-fashioned deities like Erastil and Torag telling her what a woman's role should be, nor does she let Cayden Cailean disrespect her like some common bar wench. Her church is a haven for women seeking freedom from oppression by men, whether slave-masters, pimps, or cruel husbands, and many of these have gone on to prove themselves warriors in their own rights or earn positions of influence in her church.

Iomedae appears as a fierce Chelish mistress of the sword, complete with full battle armor, heraldic markings, and resplendent shield. Iomedae's avatar is a majestic woman in white and gold, fully armored, carrying a shield and longsword; when she is roused to battle her white cloak turns red and her golden armor turns the silver-gray of adamantite. The light from her shield blinds all evil, the force of her aura causing the corrupt to weaken and collapse.

Iomedae manifests in the form of mundane objects reshaping into sword-like forms, mysterious white or golden lights on a person or object, or a compass-like pull on a longsword or other long metal weapon. Common folk in need of a weapon to defend themselves may happen upon an old, rusty blade that still has the strength of a new weapon and grows shinier the more it is used in the name of justice and honor. She is associated with lions, horses, eagles, griffons, and hippogriffs. The Inheritor shows her displeasure by flickering lights, causing weapons to suffer damage when used against inferior materials, and by metallic gold or silver items becoming dull and heavy. In the rare cases where one of her paladins turns from good and embraces evil, it is said that the first sign of this betrayal is the traitor's cloak turning black and his shining metal armor and sword turning to dull lead.

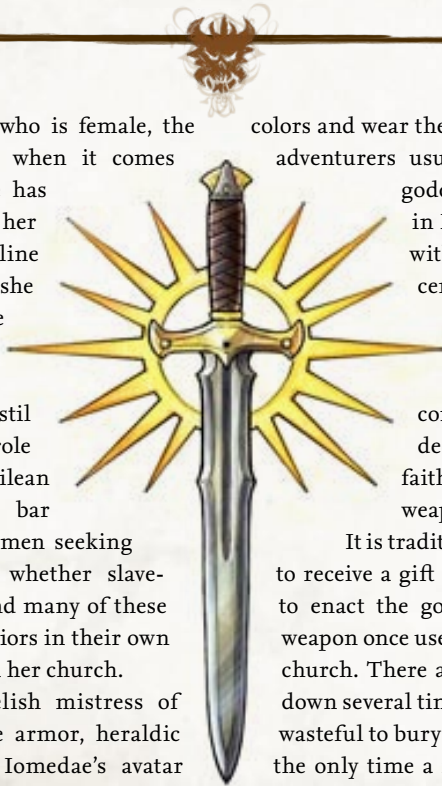
Formal raiment is a white cassock with gold or yellow trim and matching mitre; most followers prefer these

colors and wear them in their day-to-day garments. Pious adventurers usually wear a narrow chasuble in the goddess's colors; some (particularly those in Mendev) carry a white and gold banner with her symbol when at war. Most ceremonies involve the use of a sword; even the naming of a child requires touching the hilt of a sword. These weapons are always suitable for combat, though some become extensively decorated after decades of use; to the faithful, a sword that isn't serviceable as a weapon is useless.

It is traditional for a young priest of the Inheritor to receive a gift of a sword when she leaves the temple to enact the goddess's will; in some cases this is a weapon once used by a senior priest or other hero of the church. There are many blades that have been passed down several times in this way, as Iomedae believes it is wasteful to bury a perfectly good weapon with the dead; the only time a fallen hero is buried with his weapon is if it was broken or if there is unusual magic tying it to him, and even in these cases the weapons have been known to turn up in the hands of those in great need as if plucked from the tombs by the goddess herself. So great is the church's fixation on swords that even wedding rings for those married in the church are usually engraved with a sword as a sign of devotion and fidelity.

The church has no tradition to forbid burying a person in armor, though doing so is rare, as the church teaches that an afterlife without constant battle is the reward for all righteous souls who pursued honor and justice in life. Most faithful who are wealthy enough to own armor usually bequeath it to close relatives or their favorite temples so that it may find use in the goddess's name even after they are gone. It is common for the faithful to bury a small token sword (often just an inch long and usually made of copper, tin, brass, or bronze) with their dead, believing that the sword will watch over the departed in the afterlife; in effect, the sword will fight battles on behalf of the good soul so that person can remain at rest. In poorer communities they bury paper or wood stamped or branded with a sword symbol.

Iomedae is lawful good and her portfolio is valor, justice, rulership, and honor. Her favored weapon is the longsword.



Her holy symbol is “the sword of valor,” a longsword surrounded by a burst of light, whether sunlight, fire, or some other energy. Her domains are Glory, Good, Law, Sun, and War. All of Iomedae’s priests are clerics or paladins, though she has many ranger followers serving the church in important roles. The primary title she uses is the Inheritor, though the Knights of Ozem call her the Light of the Sword.

The Inheritor’s followers are good people. While many members of other faiths have “live and let live” attitudes, a typical Iomedaeen really wants justice for everyone, honorable behavior by everyone, and a righteous leader making positive decisions for the welfare of all. Though they look to heroes within the church to deal with the greater world of swords and magic, they understand that everyday things like cooking food, keeping a clean house, and working in a market all have their places and contribute to the rightness of the world. A typical follower of Iomedae is a right-minded, hard-working person, helpful toward others and accepting help when it is needed. As they believe in justice, fairness, and honor, they gravitate toward kind and charismatic leaders, whether a benevolent noble landowner, an order-minded sheriff, or a good-natured mayor. Many are associated with the auxiliary needs of the church, helping run temple-owned farms, smithies, and shops. Many feel an even stronger dedication to swordcraft, statesmanship, and bringing civilization to “savage” people.

Most temple music is upbeat, has repeated choruses, and is easy to march to, all written to inspire courage and invigorate tired flesh. Flutes and hand drums are common instruments for their simplicity and mobility.

The church is organized into circles, each consisting of 10 to 50 priests or knights of similar ability, attitude, and rank. The leader of a circle is called a sword knight, and each sword knight is part of a higher-ranked circle reporting to a superior sword knight. The high priest or priestess is called the first sword knight of Iomedae; her circle is the first circle, comprised of 14 second sword knights, each of whom leads a second circle, and so on. There is much competition to join a circle led by a famous valorous sword knight and it is a mark of honor to be selected for such a knight’s circle. The sword knight ranks correspond to military ranks in standard armies (general, colonel, captain, and so on).

As a very lawful-minded church, they strongly support couples who want to get married, and frown greatly on adultery, abuse, and other activities that threaten a healthy marriage. Even if it goes against local tradition, the church teaches that wives are not property, and allow either gender to initiate a divorce. Likewise, children must be treated with love and respect, though this does not preclude an appropriate level of discipline, and most faithful consider an unruly child or spouse to be an embarrassment.

Of all the good churches on Golarion, Iomedae’s is the most aggressive in seeking out and fighting evil. Her priests prefer to be out questing rather than doing mundane tasks in a city. Layfolk and talented acolytes staff most in-city positions, though veteran priests recovering from injuries or illness prefer to work in the temples rather than rest and convalesce. Older and infirm priests who cannot handle the rigors of battle work in courtrooms and as advisors to nobles and city leaders.

The church devotes a great deal of its focus to the Mendevian Crusades against the horror of the Worldwound. News of stake-burnings and pillaging by soldiers and mercenaries in Iomedae’s name has troubled church elders, and they are considering authorizing a small branch of the church to investigate these stories and rein in activities that exceed the goddess’s teachings; unfortunately, such a job would be unpopular and the elders would have a difficult time finding enough priests willing to conduct investigations of their own brethren. In the meantime, priests try to lead by example and curb any egregious behavior by other crusaders.

Having absorbed most of her dead patron’s followers, Iomedae informally enforces Aroden’s teachings as well, although she is more forward-looking in her goals and doesn’t let herself be constrained by the events of history. Her church’s sensitivity toward the legacy of Aroden is largely responsible for people accepting her as his heir and allowing her followers to take over his properties and holy artifacts.

There are many military orders that claim Iomedae as their patron; most of them are active in Lastwall and Mendev and number anywhere from as few as 10 to as many as 300 knights or knight-priests. The best known of these orders are the Knights of Ozem, which battled and imprisoned the Whispering Tyrant, and of which Iomedae was a member while still a mortal.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

Iomedae’s temples are whitewashed buildings that double as courts and living space for holy knights. Each has at least one fortified tower or wing that is easily defensible even if the rest of the structure is razed. Arched entrances, pillared courtyards, statues of knights, high stained-glass windows, and large fountains are common decorations. Iomedae’s followers also use converted churches of Aroden, slowly replacing the dead god’s ornamentation with that of her faith so as to not disturb the sensibilities of the dwindling population of Aroden worshippers. While priests and knights set aside an hour per day for prayer, the church usually only holds public worship once a week for 1 to 2 hours depending on local interest.

The devout often create a shrine of stones on the site of any great battle fought in the name of Iomedae, sometimes

capping it with a broken sword thrust into the top of the pile. A flat stone carved with the goddess's symbol, the sculpture of a down-tuned sword or, in its simplest form, a hilt-like cross marks where the faithful buried their dead. Locations of miracles or sites important to saints of the church are often shrines and may have either type of marker.

A PRIEST'S ROLE

An ideal day for an Iomedae priest is breakfast, an hour of solemn prayer, spell preparation, and a search for villains in need of a lesson in justice. If there is no sign of active villainy, the priest is likely to travel, perhaps in some way that helps a local official (such as transporting a criminal from a remote town to a city's jail). City priests keep their ears to the ground for news of local crime, always ready to attack a thieves' guild's headquarters, uncover an evil cult, or slay some monster fresh from the depths. Usually a priest travels with other members of her circle, though some circles are organized more loosely and the individual priests meet up monthly to give updates on their statuses.

In recent years it is often customary for a priest who wants to become a sword knight to travel the River Road to Mendev and serve in the crusade against the Worldwound for at least a year. Sometimes a particularly heroic sword knight is able to convince her entire circle to travel up the Sellen River and battle the demons, and the priests who survive earn much honor for themselves and go on to lead circles of their own or train others in demon-hunting.

Priests must act honorably, show courage in battle, uphold righteous laws, and bring evildoers to justice. They must set a good example for common folk and especially children, both in appearance and attitude, and even the most battle-weary priest stands proud and tall in the presence of impressionable youths. Some refuse to enter a city if they are dirty, stopping by an outlying inn or home for wash-water. They take their responsibilities very seriously, and most conduct themselves like great knights. It is common for a seasoned priest to mentor an acolyte as if he were a squire, though the priest never endangers the acolyte unless the church gives permission for such activity. Some priests vow to never use a weapon other than a longsword, though this oath is not required by the church. In their pursuit of fairness and justice, most learn how to separate fact from fiction, so that they may more easily weed out liars. Priests have a reputation for trustworthiness that serves them well in political affairs, and while few choose to retire to political offices, such as judge or magistrate, having an Iomedae priest as a witness in a trial is very advantageous.

HOLY TEXT

The one book common to all churches is the *Acts of Iomedae*, usually just called the *Acts* by the faithful. The book is a

The Acts of Iomedae

The holiest of Iomedae writings are the *Acts of Iomedae*, usually called simply the *Acts* among her faithful. Each act recounts an episode of heroism performed by Iomedae during her life as a champion in the service of Aroden. Tales of valor and adventure, these stories serve as examples of Iomedae virtues. While regional variations between the stories exist, all have the same general themes, with the goddess herself acknowledging that it is the lessons, not the particulars, that are important. The 11 Acts are as follows.

First: She slew the fell beast Nakorshor'mond and cut the still-sleeping bodies of her circle from its gullets.

Second: She defeated a coven of Garundi witches, freeing the city of Eleder from their tyranny.

Third: While riding a griffon in an aerial battle, she cut the wings from Segruchen the Iron Gargoyle, so-called King of the Barrowood, then slew him in his falling-crater before he could flee.

Fourth: With heartfelt words and a prayer to Arazni, she convinced a regiment of mortally wounded knights at the Second Battle of Encarthan to hold back a wave of wraiths long enough for reinforcements to arrive at dawn to save them.

Fifth: She smote Erum-Hel, Lord of the Morghs, at the Battle of Three Sorrows (where the Whispering Tyrant returned Arazni's body to the Knights of Ozem), causing him to flee, crippled, to Orv.

Sixth: After the Whispering Tyrant used magic to break her sword, she fused it together with a prayer and an oath to bring an end to his evil, her pure heart and righteous ire re forging it in an instant.

Seventh: An image of Iomedae appeared at a shrine to Aroden in Absalom, healing anyone virtuous who touched it and burning wicked folk who came too near. When she later became a goddess, the shrine was expanded into a temple dedicated to her, named the Seventh Church.

Eighth: She convinced the graveknight known only as the Black Prince to throw himself upon his sword as punishment for his evil. This reversed his undead state, redeeming his soul and allowing him to be judged in the Halls of Aroden.

Ninth: She gave nine drops of her blood to free nine righteous knights imprisoned by the vampire-mage Basilov; she and the knights then slew him when he attempted to recapture them.

Tenth: She ruled the city of Kantaria for a year and a day while its lord, heirless patriarch of House Narikopolous, was missing; the city prospered despite constant attacks by shapechanging horrors, which she battled personally.

Eleventh: At the Pit of the *Starstone* in Absalom, she cast her cloak of common wool before her. It straightened and expanded to become a firm walkway across the gap, allowing her to enter the Cathedral and take the Test.

recounting of 11 personal miracles performed in ancient times by Iomedae throughout Avistan and Garund as demonstrations of the power of Aroden (see sidebar on page 67). As all of these happened before she became a goddess, they are evidence and examples of the greatness within each person should they adopt the Inheritor's belief in honor, valor, and justice. Individual churches usually keep a ledger of names of local heroes and saints, important battles that took place nearby, and inspirational tales that reinforce the ideals of the faith. Given the relative newness of Iomedae's faith, there are no myths associated with her, at least none commonly accepted by the entire church as fact; the truth of the *Acts* takes the place of myths of the faith.



APHORISMS

Iomedae warriors have dozens of battle cries, some more common in certain lands than others, with many referring to parts of the *Acts* or things the goddess said while achieving those miracles. Outside of combat, one phrase sees frequent use among the goddess's worshipers.

For Victory, for the Heart: Whether whispered as a prayer or shouted as a challenge, this saying refers to striking at the heart to make sure a foe is slain. Knights use it in battle, priests use it when baptizing a new acolyte, and farmers use it when cutting a tree stump.

HOLIDAYS

The church keeps detailed records, and given that each holiday is less than 1,000 years old, it is possible to locate notes about the first celebration of some of them. In addition to these faith-wide events, the church has records of countless battles and slayings of named monsters, any of which might be mentioned in a weekly sermon but aren't quite important enough to merit their own holidays.

The Inheritor's Ascendancy: Originally called Herald's Day, this honors the day Aroden chose Iomedae as his herald, boosting her beyond the power of a fledgling goddess. It was renamed after Aroden's death.

Armasse: Observed on 16 Arodus, this is traditionally a day to train commoners in the use of simple weapons, choose squires for knights, and ordain new priests, though in recent decades it has begun to include jousts and duels. When Aroden was alive it was also a day to discuss past human wars and study the lessons of history in regard to how they shape the modern day.

Day of the Inheritor: This somber event of remembrance takes place on 19 Rova and recognizes the day when Iomedae formally invited all members of Aroden's failing church to join her faith. It is likely that after another human generation, this holiday will fade away.

Ascendancy Day: This holiday occurs on 6 Lamashan and is the anniversary of the day she entered the *Starstone Cathedral*. This celebration is a joyous one for the church, with much singing, pledging of friendship, and forgiving old grievances or repentant enemies.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Iomedae is on good terms with Abadar, Cayden Cailean, Erastil, Sarenrae, Shelyn, and Torag, seeing in them a supplementary or parallel interest. She does not deal with fiends of any status, has little to do with evil deities, and enlists the aid of the Empyrean Lords when appropriate, though she defers to Sarenrae if the elder goddess needs them first. Iomedae is very fond of Milani (see *Pathfinder Chronicles: Gods & Magic*, page 46), whom she calls her sister,

Iomedae

and is always ready to support the Everbloom when it is time to act. To all other deities she is indifferent, hoping to inspire them to great deeds but not setting her plans aside to do so.

NEW DIVINE SPELL

Clerics of Iomedae may prepare *holy sword* as an 8th-level spell. Her clerics may prepare *good hope* and *mark of justice* as 4th-level spells, paladins as 3rd-level spells. See *Pathfinder Chronicles: Gods & Magic* for more spells specific to Iomedae's faith.

INHERITOR'S SMITE

School transmutation; **Level** cleric 2, paladin 2 (Iomedae)

Casting Time 1 swift action

Components V, S, DF

Range personal

Target you

Duration see text

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

You channel the power of Iomedae into your weapon arm, allowing you to strike with great force. Your next melee attack (if made before the end of the next round) gains a +5 sacred bonus on the attack roll. If it hits, you may immediately attempt a bull rush (with a +5 sacred bonus on your check) against the target without provoking an attack of opportunity; if your combat maneuver check exceeds the defender's CMD by more than 5, you do not need to move with the target to push him back more than 5 feet. Most priests use this spell to create a break in an enemy's line or to force a dangerous opponent away from a fallen ally or strategic object.

INHERITOR'S CRUSADER

Honor, justice, and valor—while many righteous folk believe in these things, a select group of Iomedae's champions live and breathe them. It is in their blood and constantly at the forefront of their thoughts. The teachings of this once small, exclusive group of knights have inspired others, and now heroes all across Golarion take up swords in the name of these ideals. Most crusaders spend their time advancing the cause of the downtrodden, freeing the oppressed from tyranny and injustice, or helping the timid rise up in the face of evil, though their powers also make them suited for hunting down

criminals, breaking the mental shackles of brainwashing and witchcraft, and destroying monsters that pierce the bravest hearts with fear.

Crusaders may work alone, with others of their kind, or with other clerics and paladins of Iomedae. They tend to be rigorous in their discipline and have little tolerance for "heroes" who don't believe in at least one of the four ideals of their order.

Requirements

To qualify to become an Inheritor's crusader, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Alignment: Lawful good.

Deity: Iomedae.

Feats: Iron Will.

Skills: Knowledge (religion) 5 ranks, Sense Motive 5 ranks.

Special: Proficient in longsword, channel positive energy.

Class Features

The following are class features of the Inheritor's crusader prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Inheritor's crusaders gain no additional proficiency in weapons or armor.

Spells per Day: At each level, the crusader gains new spells per day as if he had gained a level in cleric or paladin (depending on whether he has cleric or paladin levels). He does not, however, gain other benefits a character of that class would have gained, except for additional spells per day, and an increased effective level of spellcasting. If the crusader has levels in cleric and paladin, he must decide to which class he adds the new level for purposes of determining spells per day.

Champion of Honor: An Inheritor's crusader follows a code of conduct identical to that of a paladin, with the same penalties. A crusader's class levels stack with paladin class levels for the purpose of determining the effects of the paladin's smite evil ability.

Aura of Great Courage (Su): At 1st level, the crusader gains an aura of courage equivalent to that of a 3rd-level paladin. If the crusader already has this ability, the aura's range increases to 20 feet.

Destroyer of Tyranny (Su): At 2nd level, a crusader can shatter the oppressive influence of others. Any creature

Inheritor's Crusader

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1	+1	+1	+0	+1	Champion of honor, aura of great courage	+1 level of cleric or paladin
2	+2	+1	+1	+1	Destroyer of tyranny	+1 level of cleric or paladin
3	+3	+2	+1	+2	Sword against injustice	+1 level of cleric or paladin

Iomedae's Sword Oath

By swearing to never use a weapon other than a longsword, you can achieve things normally limited to the most highly trained swordsmen.

Prerequisite: Proficient in longsword, Weapon Focus (longsword), base attack bonus +4, worshiper of Iomedae.

Benefit: You may select longsword-related feats as if you were a 4th-level fighter. For example, you may select Weapon Specialization (longsword) as a feat.

Special: If you ever use a melee or ranged weapon other than a longsword in combat, you lose the benefits of this feat until you receive an *atonement* spell. You may still use spells that act as weapons (such as *flame blade* and *spiritual weapon*) without affecting your oath.

Customized Summon List

Iomedae's priests can use *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spells.

Summon Monster IV

Celestial lion (LG)

Summon Monster/Nature's Ally VI

Celestial griffon (NG)

targeted by a crusader's channel positive energy ability or lay on hands gains a new saving throw against any ongoing charm or compulsion effect upon him. At the GM's discretion, this can also allow the target a new saving throw against effects brought on by the power of belief, intimidation, or trickery, even if not actually a charm or compulsion.

A crusader under one of these effects can expend a use of channel energy or lay on hands to attempt another saving throw against the effect; he can do this once per round as a swift action, and may use this ability even if doing so is contrary to the charm or compulsion effect; for example, a crusader charmed to defend an enemy against his own allies can use this ability to break the effect and turn on the enemy who charmed him. The crusader may indirectly benefit from this ability; for example, if the aforementioned enemy asks the crusader to heal him with channel energy, all creatures in the area (including the crusader) may attempt new saving throws against the controlling effects.

Sword Against Injustice (Su): At 3rd level, a crusader may use his power to judge the guilty and absolve the innocent. As a standard action he may announce he is bringing Iomedae's judgment upon a target who is accused of a crime, lie, or other

affront to justice; the crusader makes a melee attack with his sword against the target as part of this judgment. If the target is innocent of what he is accused, the attack stops just short of striking him, as if hitting an invisible wall; if the target is guilty, the attack automatically hits with a flash of white light. This attack requires no attack roll and cannot critically hit. If the target is protected by an effect that inhibits divinations (such as *mind blank*), the attack bounces off the target with an unpleasant metallic hiss, like quenching a red-hot blade in water. The crusader may use this ability once per day; each additional use beyond the first drains him, causing him to become fatigued. He cannot use this class ability if he is exhausted. He may expend a use of channel energy or lay on hands while activating this ability to prevent fatigue. Sometimes people wrongly accused of great crimes beg for the intercession of an Inheritor's crusader, knowing this power will exonerate them.

PRIESTS OF IOMEDAE

The church of Iomedae maintains dual aspects as a faith of both civilization and the frontier. As such, the goddess's clergy vary in province and expertise, though all seek to spread the protection of her defending shield and the fear of her avenging sword. The following priests carry out the will of Iomedae wherever they are needed.

Erret Palarme (LG male human wizard 3/paladin 3), formerly a grave robber and initiate necromancer, was saved from a lethal ghoul attack by a cleric of Iomedae. Infected with ghoul fever, he spent weeks convalescing under his savior's care, learning much of the goddess and her works. Upon recovering, he vowed to atone for his crimes, refusing to heal his mangled left arm and two lost fingers out of remembrance of his sinister past. In the 20 years since, Palarme has served as a devout evangelist and monster hunter along Lake Encarthan's southern shore. Recently, he has been called upon by the sword knights of his order to investigate reports of unsanctioned Iomedae witch-hunters.

First Sword Knight Anarrow (LN fighter 2/cleric of Iomedae 8) is a frighteningly intelligent and logical woman who oversees the House of the Gauntlet, the temple of Iomedae in New Stetven in Brevoy. The loss of her three crusader daughters has hardened her, and she manages her order with strict discipline. Every so many years, however, a young ward or acolyte seems to soften the matron's heart and reveal that there's more to the aging priestess than merely her armor.

Smiling Baraba (LG cleric of Iomedae 4) hardly looks the part of a priest of Iomedae, often wearing nothing more than worn breeches and suspenders as his "vessel," the decrepit skiff *Missy Mercy*, plies the treacherous northern Sellen River between Kyonin, Razmiran, the River Kingdoms, and Ustalav. With each land affording

Iomedae

its own dangers, Baraba lends aid to river travelers in return for goods and supplies he might pass on to others in need. He sees himself as a shepherd of those mercenaries and low templars traveling north to aid in the Mendevian Crusade, assuring that brazenness or ill preparation don't end the lives of useful soldiers before they reach the battlefield. Many frequent travelers know the jovial priest and share news with him, and he knows several safe berths and tricks of his river home.

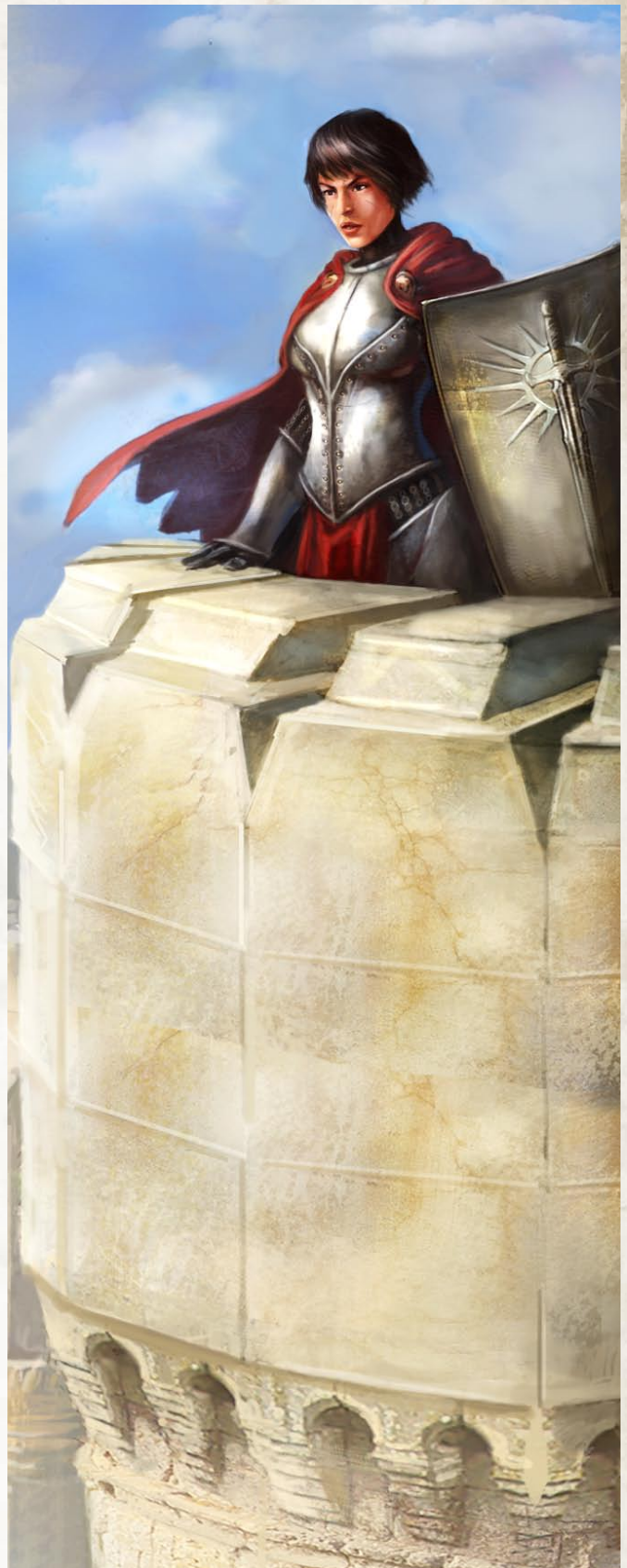
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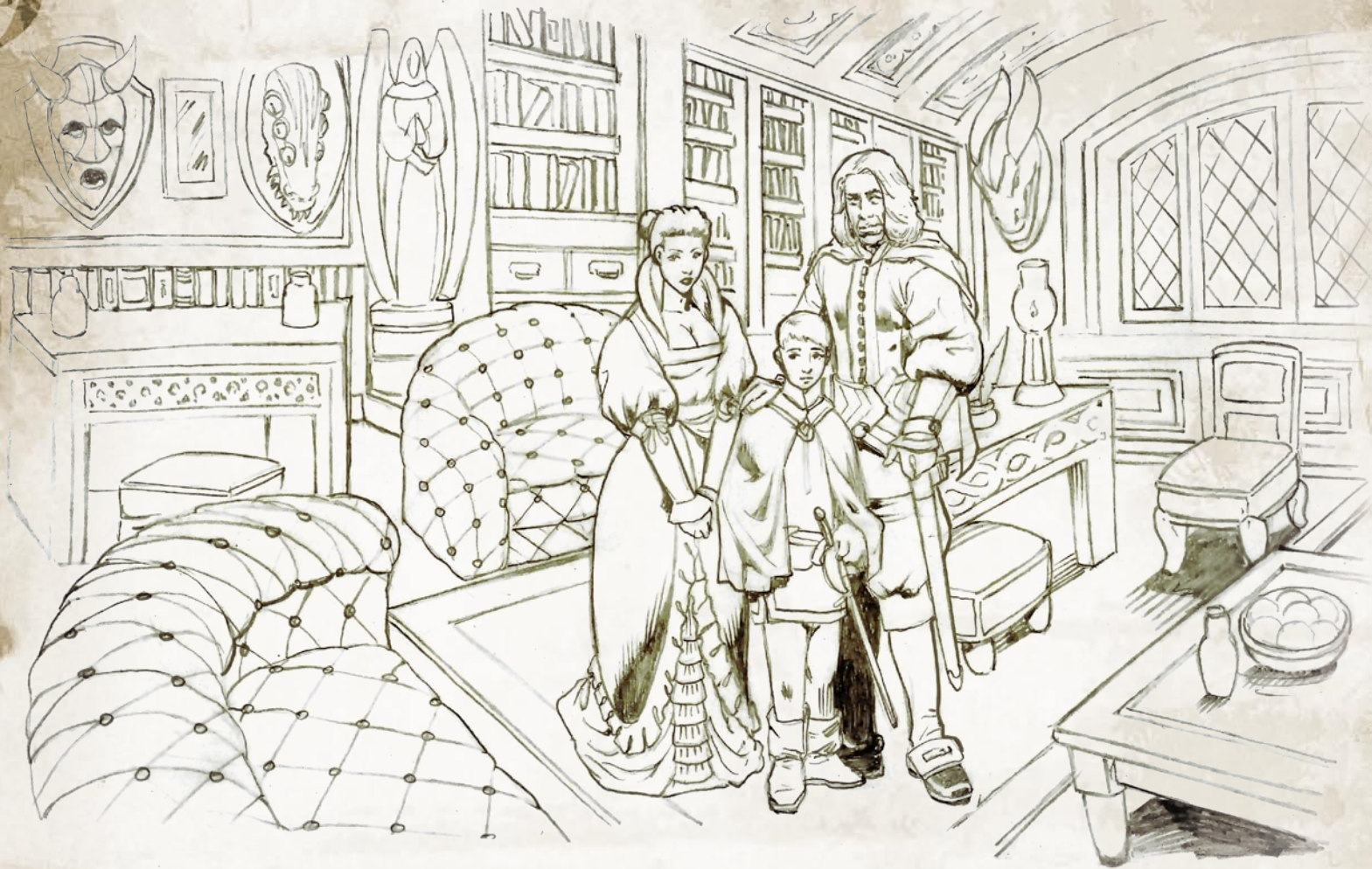
The church is known for its many saints, all of them dead mortals granted power and sometimes a new form in the afterlife; in many cases these saints are the patrons of a particular church or military order and may only be known locally or to religious scholars—and some only respond to requests from priests who frequent their particular churches or orders. Iomedae's herald is the Hand of the Inheritor (see page 86). The following are well-known supernatural servitors of Iomedae, suitable for conjuring with *planar ally* or similar spells.

Jingh: This strange being normally looks like a white metal wheel burning with golden fire, but he is able to separate the material of his “body” into hundreds of sword-like shards and spread himself over an area, acting much like a blade barrier, except that those who touch him take slashing, fire, and holy damage. He can dampen his fires in his natural state, though he complains that it is uncomfortable for him to do so. He prefers payment in the form of rare or exotic oils and magical swords, which he usually gives to deserving heroes elsewhere in the world.

Saint Lymirin: Though she normally appears as a Chelish woman with white feathered wings, this warrior-priest can transform into an eagle-headed shape, and in the heat of battle has been known to become even more bird-like, gaining taloned hands and feet. She is a nonsense sort of angel, intolerant of cruelty or injustice, and inclined to strike first and ask questions later. (In fact, she is the patron saint of first blood). She enjoys gifts or payments of feather-based magic items, often weaving them into her wings so she can use them later.

Peace Through Vigilance: This celestial young gold dragon never sits still for more than a moment, preferring to dart and coil about in anticipation of where he might be needed next, and rarely lets his summoner get a word in edgewise. He likes to take charge in situations where his strength and magic are especially suited for a task. He refers to his patron as “Mother Iomedae,” leading some to believe that he is the offspring of the Inheritor and Apsu, god of the good dragons. He prizes gems and is especially friendly toward mortals who offer them for his services.





House Henderthane

The most notable legacy from Count Varian Jeggare's elven father is the red carriage.

Half the size of the other famous vehicle in Cheliox, it displays nothing like the royal carriage's gold leaf or nine hundred tiny carvings of the city's war heroes, diabolic and otherwise. Elven braids line its seams and twist into elaborate knots at its joints, but its lacquered panels are otherwise unadorned. The deep color comes from the wood itself, harvested over a hundred years ago from the Verduran Forest. Four men can ride comfortably inside, if no one slouches. Sometimes the boss lets me join him there, but not this afternoon. He's still irritated that I brought him the Henderthane case.

From the footman's perch, I can see over the head of the slip driver, another advantage of the boss's mostly

halfling domestic staff. I would enjoy the breeze if the Jeggare livery weren't strangling me. As I tug at the collar, I spot a familiar figure at the corner of Ivy Lane. He turns away, but I've already marked him as one of Ivo Elliendo's informants. Despite his celebrated intellect, the paralictor hasn't realized his men's faces are known throughout the city.

Just as I'm about to slide open the tiny window to warn Jeggare we're being watched, I hear him call out to the driver to turn west, toward Cheapside. He has a good eye, the boss.

The misdirection takes us on a detour far enough into the dock district that the scent of spring gardens surrenders to the fishy stink of the waterfront. A few Goatherds spot me and turn away from the half-barrel they use as a dice table to hoot at my costume. I shoot them the tines, and their jeers turn to curses.

House Henderthane

The driver snakes through Cheapside and back toward the center of town. The stone and timber buildings give way to the red-veined black marble that has spread like a cancer from the heart of Egorian. Half the noble houses have beggared themselves to make their buildings uniform to the royal fashion, and the other half are queued up with builders. One day the infection will reach Old Egorian, and I wonder what the boss will do.

House Henderthane was one of the first to rebuild in the new style. Its crenellated towers make the ivy spires of Greensteeples look like a country chapel. I half-expect to spy watchmen patrolling the roof, but that'd be only fitting for the manor of the family responsible for arming the troops of Cheliax. At the sight of the red carriage, the guards open the gates and direct the driver to the entrance, a grand pair of studded doors beyond a circular gravel drive.

When I hop down to open the carriage door for the boss, I notice the doormen stiffen at the sight of me. I'm the sort of thing they're paid to keep away from the house, but while I wear the Jeggare livery, there's nothing they can do.

"Welcome to House Henderthane, Count Jeggare. I am Niccolo, at your service." The majordomo is a wasp-thin human somewhere between fifty and sixty years old, judging from his gray. He seems to have misplaced his chin. When he bows to the boss and sneaks a glance at me, he reveals no disdain for my tiefling ancestry. "Lord Henderthane awaits you in the master's den."

We follow him through a grand hall with sweeping stairs leading up past a chandelier big enough to sink a fishing boat. He leads us down a mirrored hall, and I wink at an endless army of the three of us, human, half-elf, and tiefling. Niccolo opens a door and steps through to announce, "Count Varian Jeggare, milord."

The room is all lacquered oak and taxidermy. I recognize maybe half of the wild beasts whose heads some Henderthane servants removed after their masters had slain their prey. Those on the east wall all seem to be from the Mwangi Expanse, as are several tribal shields and spears that look similar to artifacts the boss displays in his own library.

The late Einmarch Henderthane's portrait rests on a desk moved against one wall like an altar. Black crepe surrounds the frame, and a litter of calling cards and small mementos lies before it. The artist captured a robust, jocular face of a man perhaps fifty years old, so the painting must have been recent.

The boss bows with that old-fashioned hand gesture I've seen no one but actors imitate. I guess it was in fashion decades ago, but it still charms the nobility. Beyond him, a man and a boy nod back, while beside

them a woman in silks and lace dips behind her fan in a deep curtsy.

"It is an unexpected honor, Count Jeggare," says the boy. He is small, but his adult clothes and erect posture make it hard to tell his age. His voice hasn't dropped, but he speaks like a practiced orator. "I am Morvus Henderthane. This is my uncle Orxines." He pauses to let the man make another curt nod toward the boss. Orxines is tall and fair, with a neat little yellow beard that I envy. On the other hand, I save money on barbers.

"And this," says Morvus, turning to the young woman, "is my sister Pavanna."

I choke. This frilly vision looks nothing like the woman who put a hook in my—well, let's call it a heart—just a few hours earlier. Her hair is pinned up in an architectural fantasy, and the freckles that fascinated me over a few beers have vanished under a fine dusting of powder and rouge. When she lowers her fan to favor the boss with a smile, I recognize the bow of her lips and the faint mark where her nose-ring had been. She doesn't look at me.

"Enchanted," the boss says. "If I am not mistaken, I once had the privilege of your acquaintance some years ago, at the opera."

Pavanna's smile fades as she tries and fails to recall his half-elfen face. It has not changed much in her lifetime.

"You were surrounded by a fleet of admirers," says Jeggare. "It is no wonder that you do not remember."

She blushes in a way that makes me feel she does it on purpose, and I feel the heat on my own cheeks. The boss is smooth with the ladies, when he can be bothered, and I hope he's only feigning interest. I saw her first.

"I understand you wish to inquire about my father's death," says Morvus.

The boss hesitates, and I know he's caught off guard by the boy's directness. "My apologies, Lord Henderthane. Please accept my sincere condolences on your loss. I understand how painful it is to lose a parent so young."

This always works, but I've seen it so many times that I know it for the ploy it is. Jeggare's mother was hardly young when she died, but his eighty-year mourning is one of his most famous eccentricities. I notice it takes the edge off Morvus's inquisitorial expression.

"Of course," says the boy, but his uncle puts a hand on his shoulder.

"We are aware of the aid you have provided our peers in difficult circumstances, Lord Jeggare," Orxines says. "But I assure you we require no such assistance. Lord Henderthane has made no request for your services."

The way he says the last word is what the upper class think of as a veiled insult, but there's nothing veiled about it, even to a gutter-rat like me. The boss understands it too, but he doesn't let on. Plenty of his peers see his arrival as

the scandal instead of the remedy. He says, "I come at the request of another member of the family."

The boy's furrowed brow tells me that he has no idea who contacted Jeggare, since he has more cousins than I've had hot meals, but Orxines glances at Pavanna. Morvus says, "Let us discuss the matter further."

Niccolo clears his throat. When I turn toward him, he crooks his finger to lead me away. I glance at the boss, and he nods. To the Henderthanes, I've been dismissed. To the boss and me, I've been put to work.

I follow Niccolo out of the den and through increasingly less fabulous halls until we descend through a hidden door beneath the entry stairs. There the ceilings are barely higher than seven feet, and the walls are painted plaster. After a few turns, we reach a long hall with rooms to either side, all with windows at face level to allow the servants no privacy behind doors.

"As your master's visit will be short, I've got no chores for you," says Niccolo. His fine speech slips off like a doxy's skirts now that he's below stairs. He jerks his head toward a busy room. "You can have a cuppa tea in the kitchen."

I squeeze in between a couple of housemaids folding napkins at the kitchen table. They make a show of moving away, but when I give one the little smile, she looks down to hide her face. When she peeks back up, I tip her a wink and get a giggle.

"Here now, don't you bother them girls," says a woman I take to be the mistress of the kitchen. She must outweigh me by half, but it's all muscle and grit. She slides a clay mug of steaming tea across the table toward me. "They're dreamy enough without your encouragement."

While thinking of a way to break the ice with the tough old gal, I appraise the other servants. An under butler counts the silver while the maids responsible for it stand nearby, awaiting his verdict. A boy brings a yoke with two pails of water in for the woman I take to be the cook, and she points him to a scullery maid scrubbing what appears to be the last in a large collection of copper pots. Two more servants, a man and a woman, inspect bushels of produce and call out quantities to a one-armed man who checks off a tally with a drooping quill.

All of them are human, which tells me that the Henderthanes are a particular breed. Most noble houses employ at least a few halflings, knowing that they accept lower wages. Besides, for sweeping chimneys and other cramped jobs, you can't beat a slip.

Just before I can crack wise with the water boy, who looks a likely mark for gossip, I hear a woman's voice in the hall whisper, "What's he doing here?"

"Never you mind, Rusilla," says Niccolo. "Go check on your girls upstairs. Last week the guest rooms were in no state for visitors." Without turning my head, I peer over to see the majordomo turning away a woman in a maid's apron. She has a round, simple face with childlike eyes opened wide at the sight of me.

"But it's always a scandal with that one's master," she says.

Niccolo gives her a gentle push, but she is immovable.

"Go now, Rusilla dear," says a woman from behind her. I can't get a good look without giving away my attention, but with a sidelong glance I get the impression of sculpted cheekbones and hair wrapped tighter than a tourniquet.

Niccolo closes the kitchen door and draws the newcomer close into a whisper as Rusilla retreats. They face each other, so I look directly at them through the glass. The newcomer is a tall woman of severe beauty. In her iron-gray hair is pinned a nurse's bonnet.

Why has he come? says the woman. She has excellent diction, so it's easy to read her lips.

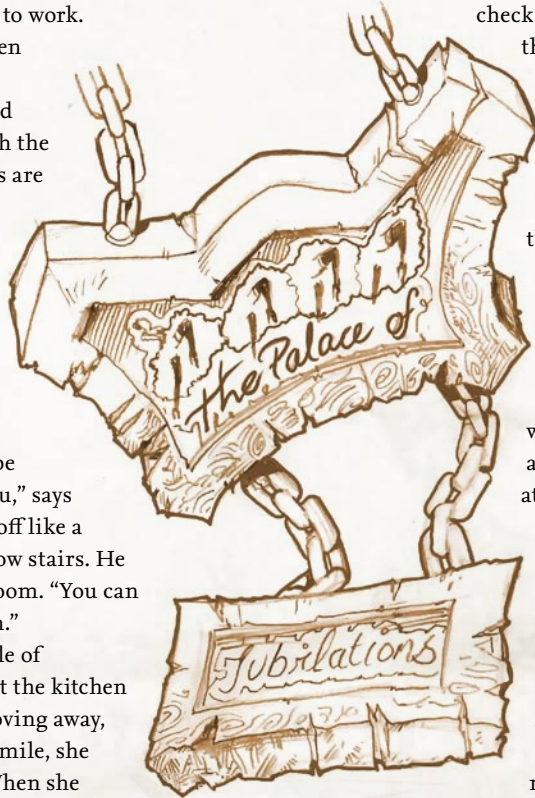
Niccolo shrugs and says something about the late Lord Henderthane and not knowing the details. I catch her name on his lips—Korva.

Then why aren't you still there? she says. I want to know every word.

He begins to protest but resigns with a sigh and marches back toward the den. Korva looks at me, and I meet her gaze as if only just seeing her. I try the little smile, but she gives me nothing back before turning on her heel and walking away.

"Such a fuss," says the cook. She brings the kettle over to give me a warm-up. "Why has your master come to Henderthane, hmm?"

"I was hoping you could tell me."



**"WHAT'S A CLASSY GIRL LIKE
PAVANNA DOING IN A PLACE
LIKE THIS?"**

House Henderthane

"Something about the late master's tryst, no doubt," says the man tallying carrots and cabbages. "The harlot must be blackmailing the young Lord."

"Who would believe the word of a tiefling whore?" says the cook.

Sometimes the best way to get the servants talking is just to listen, but I feel their eyes on me, and I know my cues. Since the masters of Cheliex first conjured diabolic legions rather than surrender another rebel holding, no one is more loathed than us hellspawn. That doesn't stop the men of Egorian from visiting tiefling doxies, especially those with certain features not found on human women. I recite the common protest of men spotted leaving a tiefling brothel: "Only a fool believes a Tall Tail."

After a moment's silence, the girl beside me stifles her laugh with the napkins she is meant to be folding, and then the cook guffaws. You can always bet the staff have heard of the city's most notorious tiefling brothel.

"Asmodeus knows what pox she gave him," says the tally man.

"Enough of such talk," says the cook.

I file away this information and change the subject. "Mistress Henderthane looks familiar."

"Don't get any ideas," says the cook. She gives me a warning scowl before turning her back to review a list by the stove. I listen to the household gossip for a while, but none of it sounds useful.

My boredom must be obvious, because the giggling maid nudges me with her knee. I lift an eyebrow.

"You might have seen Mistress Pavanna at the Palace," she whispers. "She skips her calligraphy lessons to visit her mother."

"At the Palace?" I can't help sounding impressed, but then I realize the maid knows perfectly well I'd never been within a street of the Royal Palace. She means the "Palace" in Cheapside.

"Aye," she says, lowering her voice further. "Her impresario tried to get her a place back in the opera chorus, but after the misfortune, there wasn't a hope."

"I know who you mean," I say. I have no idea. "That impresario by the name of..."

"Pandarus the Pleaser, he fancies himself."

Before I can ask another question, Niccolo leans into the kitchen to crook a finger at me. Time's up.

When we return to the den, the boss is sketching a map of the Mwangi Expanse in the air. Morvus hangs on his description of intertribal relations while Orxines gradually moves toward the door in a bald effort to encourage Jeggare's departure. Pavanna looks at Jeggare and her brother with a curious expression on her face. Is she puzzled? Disappointed? I can't read her beneath all that lace and powder.

"You should lecture at the Academy," says Morvus. His voice is charged with enthusiasm. "No one there knows half as much about Mwangi culture as you've just told me."

"It is a hobby horse of mine," says Jeggare. His understatement is lost on everyone but me. He has already spent two human lifetimes on his various hobby horses. "It would be a pleasure to share what I have learned with your fellows."

"A splendid idea," says Orxines. "However, I am sure the Academy schedule is fixed for months to come."

"But Uncle," says Morvus, "schedules can be changed."

"Of course," says Orxines. I can tell from his tone he's saving his objections for after we leave.

Morvus says, "It was an honor to meet you, Count Jeggare."

The boss bows a little lower than before. "The honor was entirely mine, Lord Henderthane." More bows and courtesies, and soon Niccolo has us back out beside the carriage. The edge of the sun has fallen beneath the silhouettes of the western buildings as we drive past the gates. Once we're out of sight of the guards, the boss has the driver stop and beckons me inside.

"What did you learn?" he says. I tell him about Korva and Rusilla, the rumor about Einmarch's doxy, and Pavanna's visits to the Palace of Jubilations.

"Excellent," he says. "Unfortunately, I spent most of our interview deflecting questions about the identity of our employer."

"Pavanna looks a lot better out of all that foofaraw."

Jeggare looks at me.

"I meant in different clothes."

"I found her quite fetching as she was," he says. "Did you note the family resemblance to Morvus?"

"I was in there for only a couple of minutes." Most of that time, I confess to myself, I was looking at Pavanna, but since they have different mothers, it's no surprise she looks nothing like her brother.

The boss raps on the roof. When the driver opens his little window, Jeggare says, "To Ruby Street."

It isn't the worst place in Cheapside, but no one boasts of going to the Palace. I've been there a few times to talk to afternoon drunks as they gaze mournfully up the singers' skirts.

The driver parks near the Ruby Street entrance, over which a sign advertises the name of the establishment in garish colors: The Palace of Jubilations. Above that is a long faded line of dancing girls kicking up their skirts. Paint flecks snow down on us as I push through the saloon doors.

We pause a moment to let our eyes adjust to the gloom. Red and green shades cover the lamps, casting carnival

colors over the crowd. A couple dozen men slouch over their drinks, a few of them slurring the sad clichés of their lives to each other but most staring at the one bright point in the room.

On a little stage in the corner stands a woman in what might have been an opera gown before someone cut the front of the skirt up to her thighs. Green-white light shines up from the little wells surrounding the stage, and motes of lime drift around her feet. The merciless light emphasizes the failure of her heavy makeup to mask the years of disappointment on her face.

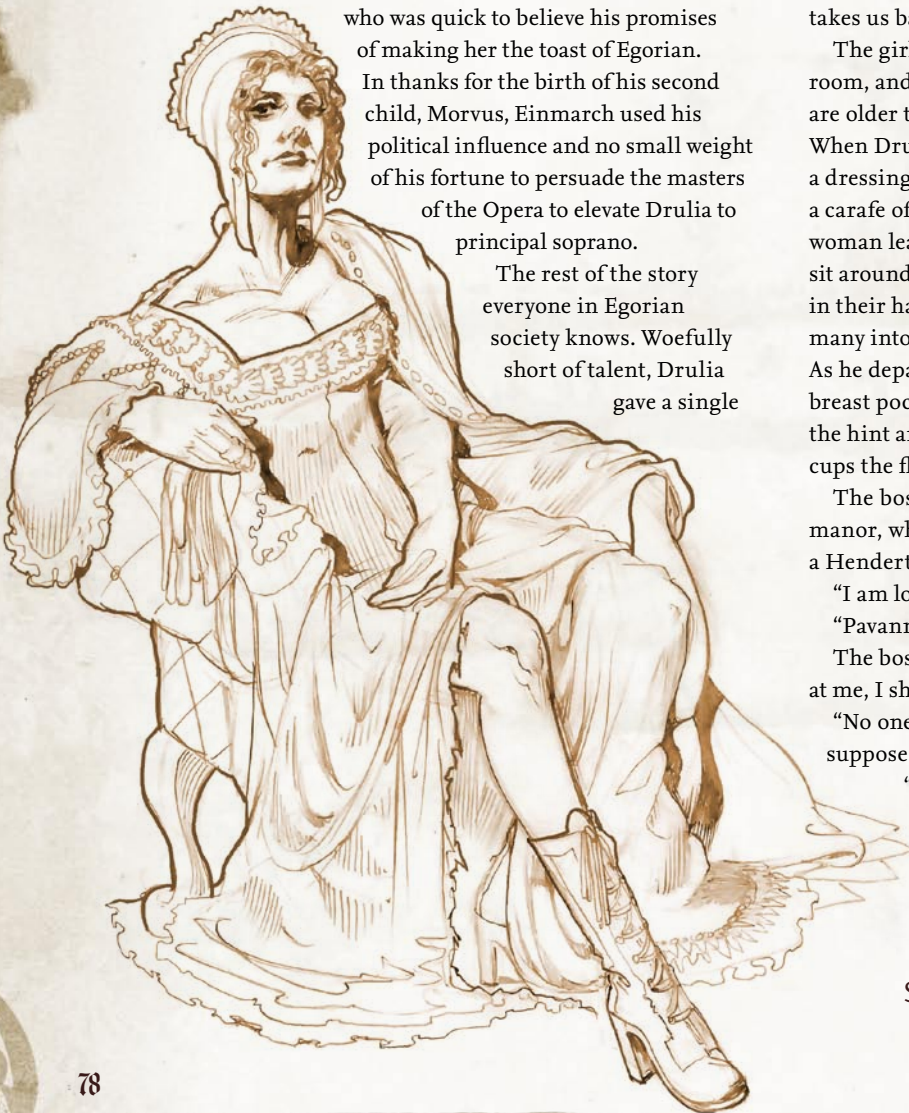
The sultry love song makes few demands on her voice, but I can tell she has a little talent. I can also tell it's only a little. Anyone who can really sing ends up in the opera chorus or in a legitimate playhouse.

"Drulia Henderthane," says the boss.

He filled me in on the way over. Einmarch Henderthane's second wife was a chorus girl in the Royal Opera. After the death of the first Lady Henderthane,

Einmarch took a fancy to the ingénue, who was quick to believe his promises of making her the toast of Egorian. In thanks for the birth of his second child, Morvus, Einmarch used his political influence and no small weight of his fortune to persuade the masters of the Opera to elevate Drulia to principal soprano.

The rest of the story everyone in Egorian society knows. Woefully short of talent, Drulia gave a single



performance before the mortified nobility. The peers were all very polite, but alehouses across the city crackled with mockery within moments of the closing curtain. All that remained was full retreat, and when the opera reopened two weeks later, it was without Drulia Henderthane. The marriage lasted slightly longer.

A barmaid finds us before we find a table. I flash the little smile and hand her one of the boss's coins, whispering "Pandarus" in her ear. She points us to a table just big enough for two goblets of wine before disappearing through a drape behind the bar. Moments later, a rotund little man with tiny brush strokes for mustaches bustles out from the curtain. He snaps his fingers at the bartender and points to our table before joining us.

"Pandarus the Pleaser, my lords." He makes an obsequious bow before pulling up a third chair with a flourish. "How may I be of service?"

"The singer," says the boss. "We'd like to meet her."

Pandarus smiles, and I see two gold teeth in his mouth. From that point, it's just a question of haggling before he takes us backstage.

The girls at the Palace share a common dressing room, and they aren't girls, strictly speaking. Most are older than me, a few old enough to be my mother. When Drulia's set is finished, she returns to sit before a dressing table cluttered with jars of cosmetics and a carafe of wine with a single pewter goblet. Another woman leaves to take her place on stage while two others sit around staring at us. I put a couple of Jeggare's coins in their hands, and they get lost. I have to put twice as many into Pandarus's fat fingers before he stops hovering. As he departs, Drulia plucks a slim brown cigar from his breast pocket and holds it just above her shoulder. I take the hint and fetch a candle from her dressing table. She cups the flame and draws a light.

The boss skips the courtesies he displayed at the manor, which I figure is a good call. Drulia wasn't born a Henderthane.

"I am looking into your late husband's death," he says.

"Pavanna hired you." It's not a question.

The boss never gives up his clients. When Drulia looks at me, I shrug.

"No one loved him more than she did," she says. "I suppose no one else loved him at all."

"You do not seem surprised that we are investigating his death," says Jeggare.

Drulia takes a long drag off the cigar.

"Nothing surprises me anymore."

"MRS. HENDERTHANE DOESN'T SEEM OVERLY DISMAYED BY HER HUSBAND'S DEATH."

House Henderthane

"How did you hear of it?"

"Pavanna told me," she says. "It was the last time I saw her, just before the funeral."

"You did not attend?"

She sets the cigar on the edge of her dressing table and wets a cloth in a basin. "What do you think?" she says. She begins wiping the caked powder from her face.

"But what of your son?" asks Jeggare. "Didn't he need you?"

Drulia sets aside the washcloth to look at him. The kohl is smeared in a half-spiral around her eyes, but I see her son's features clearly in the proud tilt of her head. "Morvus never needed anything his father didn't give him."

"His Uncle Orxines was there to support him during this difficult time."

"Uncle?" She emits an anemic laugh and picks up her cigar. "'Uncle' Orxines is headmaster of the Scions Academy. No doubt he wants to make sure Morvus doesn't withdraw his tuition during 'this difficult time.' Morvus must decide how to spend his portion of the inheritance."

Jeggare considers her words and says, "Morvus is sole heir to the Henderthane estate."

Drulia almost drops her smoke. "There must be some mistake. Einmarch showed me his new will when he reduced my inheritance. Pavanna was to have a third of his holdings outside the city."

"But you also have heard nothing from his executor since Einmarch's death?"

"No," she says. "But that's no surprise. Einmarch kept sending me money after we separated, even though I told him I didn't want it. I supposed he figured I'd already had my share and wrote me out entirely."

"But not Pavanna."

"He doted on that girl. We all did. She was the one bright spot in the family, even after the embarrassment of my one-night stage career."

"What about Morvus, your own child?"

Drulia takes a long drink of wine. Then she smokes her cigar and stares at the dirty wall. I'm beginning to think she's done talking when she says, "It's the strangest thing, but I have never loved that boy, not from the moment I first held him. I know how that makes me sound. But to me he was always the thing Einmarch wanted, the thing he wanted me for. A son. Now his sole heir."

It's one of those turns in conversations that makes me tense for the kill, as Jeggare pounces at moments of weakness, striking with the question no one expects. It can be thrilling, if you have the stomach for it. He moves his chair to sit closer to Drulia, placing himself in her vacant eyeline. She looks up at him, and I see her lips tremble for an instant.

"I was present during the night of your performance at the opera," he says. I cringe in anticipation. "The role was entirely wrong for you, madame. You are no soprano."

Drulia straightens her back as if bracing for a mortal insult.

Jeggare places a hand on hers. "But as I left the opera that night, there was no doubt in my mind that you belonged on that stage, in another part, not one that had been forced upon you. I hope to see you upon it again one day."

As we leave the Palace, the boss steps into the red carriage and closes the door before leaning out of the window to hand me a pouch of coins. "Perhaps you can learn something of this Tall Tail rumor tonight."

I don't relish the thought of walking through Cheapside in the Jeggare livery, but before I can complain, the driver pulls away. I look around to see whether anyone I know has spied me in this costume, and across the street I see Old Maccabus leaning against the sidewalk rails in front of a pawnshop. Glancing up and down Ruby Street, I spot a couple of the big young scrappers Zandros sends out from his headquarters in the Goat Pen for the rough stuff. They whistle a signal to their unseen companions. They've thrown a net around the Palace, and around me.

Mac crooks his finger, and I weigh the advantage of a head start against that of knowing what he wants to say. With his halo of white hair and a perpetual squint, he looks more like a bookkeeper than an enforcer, but he's the one Zandros sends out for the quiet work. Sometimes that means a soft word in your ear. Other times it means something other than a word. I go lean against the railing beside him.

"I'd bet on you if you ran," he says. "Today and tomorrow, maybe all week. But not for long."

"What's got him so worked up?"

Mac puts his hands in his pockets and shrugs. "I'm not even supposed to be here, but I finished my rounds early and saw the boys headed this way. Figured they could use some adult supervision. Make sure no one got his arm broke."

I imagine the wounded Ursio screaming for my head, not that Zandros would usually do more than laugh at the dwarf's misfortune. Still, it's probably better that it's Mac who arrived to ride herd on the young toughs. Ursio would as soon have them kill me as bring me in.

"Figured you go in, show some respect, find out what the old goat wants." Mac looks me in the eye like an uncle giving advice. "No harm in listening."

He's made his point. I won't have a peaceful hour until I face Zandros, and I can't keep looking over my shoulder while investigating the death of Pavanna's father.

"All right?" says Mac. He pushes off from the rail with his hands still stuffed in his pockets.

It's pretty damned far from all right, but I grunt a reluctant affirmative. Together we walk west toward the waterfront, a wake of gangsters forming behind us.





BESTIARY SYMBOLS

Creature Type

-  Aberration
-  Animal
-  Construct
-  Dragon
-  Fey
-  Humanoid
-  Magical Beast
-  Monstrous Humanoid
-  Ooze
-  Outsider
-  Plant
-  Undead
-  Vermin

Climate

-  Cold
-  Extrplanar
-  Temperate
-  Tropical

Environment

-  Desert
-  Forest/Jungle
-  Hill
-  Mountain
-  Plain
-  Ruins
-  Swamp
-  Sky
-  Underground
-  Urban
-  Water

Bestiary

That night a storm of fire consumed Stavintower. Winds of scouring flame raged through the streets, burning siroccos of smoke and cinders. From broken windows and shattered doorframes flashed fiery eyes and tongues, every home and shop transformed into a treacherous, blazing beast, their breath reeking of occupants charred like cordwood within. Avalanches of timber and daub crashed upon the searing cobbles, transforming the familiar avenues into unfamiliar blinds and labyrinthine hellscape. Walls of embers cracked like thunder, deafening those who fled and muting the screams of those who could not. And at the heart of the blaze, his shield buried, his vows severed by death, the last of the Seven raised his grave-tainted blade. Defender no more, destroyer reborn.

—Patron Ralston Daimoshea, "Histories and Legends of Galt"

Creatures long associated with the virtues and vices of nobility comprise this entry into the Pathfinder Bestiary. Seen in the grace and might of the Hand of the Inheritor, the divine herald of Iomedae, and the murderous discipline of the salikotals, the machinations of immortal lords clash amid the very spheres of existence, while in the mortal world, the metallic winged stymphalides have long appeared on the heraldry and amid the art of royalty, depicting the rulers' virtues of strength and grace. Yet not all lords prove so noble, as evidenced by the deadly graveknights, unliving warriors risen from their accursed burial pyres, proving that even death cannot end the reigns of the most nefarious tyrants. Spanning the planes of existence and the halls of power, these menaces show that there's more to rulership than the galas and gambols of the elite.

WANDERING MONSTERS

While the day brings the bustle and commerce of a vibrant city to many of Westcrown's regos, with the night descends a fearful quiet and oppressiveness more common to ruins and wastelands than vast cities. Such is the curse of Westcrown, where all who value their lives fear the night and the shadows that have a hunger all their own.

By night, the majority of Westcrown's occupants obey a loosely enforced citywide curfew, retiring to their homes and what few safe, well-lit avenues brighten the evening. Beyond the lantern-lit stoops of private homes and pyrahjes fires amid the major streets and plazas creep things that claim mastery over the dark and eagerly prey on those who intrude upon their realms. The Wiscrani night belongs to the shadows, and those who dare the darkness risk never seeing the sun again.

Presented here and in the random encounters sidebar are just a few of the beings that wander Westcrown's street after the sun sinks below the horizon. Daring and foolish PCs might encounter any of the creatures noted anytime they wander outside of the city's lit major avenues after dark.

Curfew Breakers: Daring or foolish citizens occasionally rush through the city after dark. Such NPCs might be parents or merchants with dire business, drunks on their way home, foolishly bold youths, or any other everyday citizen forced to risk life and limb. Curfew breakers are CR 1/3 characters with one level of any NPC class.

Dottari: The guards of Westcrown patrol the streets by night bearing long halorans (tall, lantern-bearing crooks). Even with such light, though, the guardsmen rarely patrol more than two or three blocks into the darkness, returning frequently to the city's better-lit avenues. When encountered, the majority of dottari hurry those they catch out past their curfew on their way

Westcrown by Night Random Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL	Source
1–6	1d4 dogs	1/2	Bestiary 87
7–12	1d6 curfew breakers	1	see text
13–18	1d8 dire rats	1	Bestiary 232
19–21	1 imp	1	Bestiary 78
22–25	1d4 monstrous cockroaches	1	Pathfinder #13
26–28	1d4 Small spiders	1	Bestiary 258
29–32	1d10 dottari	2	see text
33–36	1d6 thieves	2	see text
37–39	1d6 venomous snakes	2	Bestiary 255
40–46	1d4 lesser shadows	3	ToHR 311*
47–50	1 shadow	3	Bestiary 245
51–56	1d8 stirges	3	Bestiary 260
57–59	1d4 shadowgargs	4	Pathfinder #25
60–65	1d12 thieves	4	see text
66–67	1 vampire spawn	4	Bestiary 271
68–70	1d4 wererats	4	Bestiary 197
71–75	1d8 lesser shadows	5	ToHR 311*
76–79	1d6 rat swarms	5	Bestiary 232
80–84	2d8 thieves	5	see text
85–87	1d4 gray oozes	6	Bestiary 166
88–90	1d6 shadows	6	Bestiary 245
91–96	1 will-o'-wisp	6	Bestiary 277
97–100	1 shadow mastiff	7	Bonus Bestiary 16**

* See *Tome of Horrors Revisited*.

** See paizo.com for the *Pathfinder RPG Bonus Bestiary*.

(65% chance). Some, however, take a more rigid stance, and might attempt to arrest curfew breakers—especially suspicious-looking ones (25% chance). The most corrupt, though, make a sport of harassing, extorting, and perpetrating worse offenses upon those they catch out after dark, proving just as dangerous as any monster that haunts the city's streets (10% chance). To approximate dottari statistics, use the rules for Hellknight armigers, found on page 21 of *Pathfinder* #25, or similarly battle-ready CR 1/3 NPCs.

Thieves: In Westcrown, as in any city, the criminal element is heartened by the dying of the light. Yet, with the particular danger of the Wiscrani night, those rouges who dare the streets by dark prove a particularly audacious lot. Lone conmen, small gangs of thieves, and low-tier agents of the Council of Thieves on criminal business stalk the night, the most petty being prey for the shadows and other thugs, while the most audacious seem strangely immune to the predations of the night's creatures. Use the CR 1/2 stats for a tiefling rogue 1, found on page 251 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, to approximate statistics for Wiscrani thieves.

DEVIL, SALIKOTAL

On lean limbs the color of spilt blood creeps a being of sinister grace. Eyes like embers and a sneer full of needle-thin teeth gleam from an unmistakably fiendish visage. A pair of crimson wings sprout from the back of the hairless humanoid form, fluttering silently like an assassin's cloak, while in one hand it clutches the twisted, dagger-like horn of some infernal terror.

SALIKOTAL

CR 7



3,200 XP

LE Medium outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +4

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 17, flat-footed 16 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural)

hp 76 (9d10+27)

Fort +9, **Ref** +12, **Will** +7

DR 5/good; **Immune** fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 18

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee +1 dagger +14/+9 (1d4+5/17–20), tail +8 (1d4+2) or
2 claws +13 (1d4+4), tail +8 (1d4+2)

Ranged +1 dagger +16 (1d4+5/17–20)

Special Attacks contract killer, sneak attack +3d6, suicide, vengeance

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th)

Always active—*spider climb*

At will—*greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only),
locate creature, *knock*

3/day—*blur* (self only), *darkness*, *dimension door*, *dispel magic*,
silence (DC 16), *suggestion* (DC 17)

1/day—*mislead* (DC 20), *passwall*, *statue* (self only), *summon*
devil (level 3, 4 imps, 35%)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 22, **Con** 17, **Int** 15, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 30

Feats Dodge, Improved Critical (dagger), Improved Initiative,
Mobility, Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +15, Disable Device +18, Disguise +16, Escape
Artist +18, Knowledge (local) +11, Sense Motive +16, Sleight of
Hand +18, Stealth +18

Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

Gear +1 dagger

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Hell)

Organization solitary or team (2–8)

Treasure standard (+1 dagger, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Contract Killer (Su) A salikotal gains a +2 bonus on attack and damage rolls when attacking a specific individual it has marked for death. At the beginning of each day, it determines an individual to serve as its target and which one of its three vengeance it may make use of that day. It may not change this target or ability until the next day. The target may be any specific creature the salikotal knows of, even if it has not seen

its target before. This target is treated as being known to a salikotal for the purposes of using its *locate creature* ability, even if the devil has never seen its victim before.

Sneak Attack (Ex) Anytime a salikotal's opponent is denied his Dexterity bonus to AC, or if a salikotal flanks his opponent, he deals an extra 3d6 points of damage. This ability is just like the rogue's sneak attack and subject to the same limitations.

Suicide (Su) As a standard action, a salikotal may target itself with a coup de grace attack. If the salikotal reduces itself to fewer than 0 hit points—or fails to do so but still fails the associated Fortitude save (DC = 10 + damage dealt)—the salikotal erupts in a burst of destructive energy. Any creature within 15 feet of a salikotal that commits suicide is damaged by a blast of metal shards and needle-like scales, taking 6d6 points of damage (DC 17, save for half). The save DC is Constitution-based. Upon using this ability, a salikotal is permanently destroyed. This effect only takes place if a salikotal willingly ends its own life, not if it is killed by outside effects.

Vengeance (Su) While seeking a victim a salikotal prepares itself daily, honing its will to effectively slaughter its intended quarry. On a given day, chosen as part of its contract killer ability, a salikotal may gain the benefit of any one of the following powers, either the one it feels will most aid it or whichever one its summoner requests. Only one of these abilities is active on a given day, and it only comes into effect when a salikotal kills its intended target with a coup de grace. These executions only function on living creatures.

Fideicide: The victim's soul is immediately shunted to a infernal prison on Erebus, the third layer of Hell. The soul can be returned to life, but upon casting the spell, the spellcaster attempting the resurrection takes an amount of fire damage equal to 1d6 × the victim's number of Hit Dice, and must make an immediate concentration check (DC 10 + damage dealt + spell level) or lose the spell.

Necroicide: After 1d4 rounds, the victim's body animates as a zombie under the salikotal's control. The devil may permanently grant control of the zombie to any sentient creature as a free action.

Omnicide: The victim's body is utterly destroyed, disintegrating without a trace. Its clothing and possessions remain unharmed. Only spells that do not require a portion of the corpse may return the victim to life.

Prince-killers and assassins of souls, salikotals serve as the bloody chisels by which the lords of Hell subtly shape the mortal world to their whims. Soaring through the night on silent wings, these murderous devils care nothing for life or reason, knowing only a single, murderous goal. Cloaked by shadow and silence, few ever glimpse the sharp features of a salikotal, for Hell's death-dealers reveal themselves only amid the haze of fading life.

Lean, deft hunters, salikotals move like terrible predatory birds, each taloned step measured, cautious, and

full of deadly intent. Protected by an armor of sharp, thin scales, these agile devils universally stand 5 feet, 4 inches tall, and weigh 85 pounds, their barbed frames supporting the breadth of their 8-foot-wide, bat-like wings. They have full control over their slender tails, nimbly manipulating objects and even wielding deadly, Hell-forged blades in these dexterous, prehensile appendages.

Ecology

Salikotals rise from the tenebrous reaches of Erebus's vaulted heights. Unblinking and endlessly patient, salikotals haunt the claustrophobic upper realms of the lightless labyrinth, stealthy and watchful but caring little for the doings of intruders or their lesser kin. Only the summons of conjurers or the diabolical elite rouse them from their eerie aerial stalkings, drawing them forth from the shadows for a chance to hone their death-dealing expertise in the name of Hell.

Naturally silent, salikotals never vocalize even the slightest sound, relying on their innate telepathic abilities for communication. Even when using such mental interaction, though, the devils prove terse and resistant to conversation. For most summoners, a salikotal's only communication is a slow nod acknowledging its orders, and a nod in answer to the question of its murderous success.

Habitat & Society

Salikotals have little to do with others of their kind, be they other salikotals or other lesser devils in general. Emotionless and rigid even beyond the typical disciplines of Hell, these assassins realize they exist for but a single reason: to sow death. Their cold precision only wavers when they discuss payment for their most notorious murderous methods, wherein they demand specific types of gemstones in compensation for their grisly work. Few non-devils dare to suppose why salikotals request such precise payments, refusing to work for any other recompense, but among the damned spread rumors of vast vaults filled with glistening jewels, each a fabulous treasure and a representation of a life cut short by the blades of Hell.

Summoning Salikotals

As in all things, salikotals prove emotionless when it comes to being summoned. They have little reason to purposefully resist or accept a diabolist's call, unless ordered to do so by their infernal masters. Once a salikotal is summoned, though, only murder interests it. Any Charisma check made as part of the spell *planar binding* to convince a salikotal to undertake a mission other than assassination takes a -2 penalty.

Once a salikotal has agreed to perform a murder for its summoner, it explains the signature vengeance its

kind can inflict upon a victim and offers to exact one upon its summoner's victim for an associated price. The devil requests 1,000 gp for every Hit Die its target possesses (intrinsically gauging its victim's prowess), to be paid entirely in one of three types of gemstones: ruby for fideicide, onyx for necroicide, and jacinth for omnicide. Salikotals prove exceedingly particular in these payments, and if a summoner cannot pay the price in the type of gem requested, the devil refuses to exact one of its vengeance. If the summoner tries to force a salikotal to use one of its vengeance, the devil takes offense and all of the summoner's Charisma-related interactions with it in the future take a -2 penalty.



GRAVEKNIGHT

Darkness and sinister armor gird this powerful figure. Shadows veil what lurks within the imposing steel, though from it's closed visor gaze two piercing eyes, glowing with unholy light.

GRAVEKNIGHT

CR 11



XP 12,800

Male human graveknight fighter 10

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +20

Aura sacrilegious aura 30 ft. (DC 20)

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 24 (+10 armor, +1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 104 (10d10+45)

Fort +11, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5; +3 against fear

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, rejuvenation; **DR** 10/magic; **Immune** acid, cold, electricity; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 greatclub +23/+18/+18 (1d10+11 plus 2d6 acid)

Special Attacks channel destruction, devastating blast (6d6 acid; DC 19), undead mastery (DC 19)

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 29

Feats Cleave, Critical Focus, Dazzling Display, Greater Weapon

Focus (greatclub), Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat,

Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Shatter Defenses, Spirited

Charge, Toughness, Trample, Unseat, Vital Strike, Weapon

Focus (greatclub), Weapon Specialization (greatclub)

Skills Intimidate +25, Perception +20, Knowledge (nobility) +12,

Ride +18, Sense Motive +12

Languages Common, Dwarven, Infernal

SQ armor training +2, phantom mount, ruinous revivification (acid), weapon training (flails +1, hammers +2)

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or troop (graveknight plus 12–24 skeletal champions)

Treasure NPC gear (+1 greatclub, +1 full plate, belt of giant strength +2)

Undying tyrants and champions of the undead, graveknights arise from the corpses of the most nefarious warlords and disgraced heroes—villains too merciless to submit to the shackles of death. They bear the same weapons and regalia they did in life, though warped or empowered by their profane resurrection. The legions they once held also flock to them in death, ready to serve their wicked ambitions once more. A graveknight's essence is fundamentally tied to its armor, the bloodstained trappings of their battle lust. This armor becomes an icon of their perverse natures, transforming into a monstrous second skin over the husk of desiccated flesh and scarred bone locked within.

Creating a Graveknight

“Graveknight” is an acquired template that can be added to any living creature with 5 or more Hit Dice (referred to hereafter as the base creature). Most graveknights were once humanoids or monstrous humanoids. A graveknight uses the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as base creature +2.

Alignment: Any evil.

Type: The graveknight's type changes to undead (augmented). Do not recalculate class Hit Dice, BAB, or saves.

Senses: A graveknight gains darkvision 60 ft.

Aura: A graveknight emanates the following aura.

Sacrilegious Aura (Su): A graveknight constantly exudes an aura of intense evil and negative energy in a 30-foot radius. This aura functions as the spell *desecrate*, which the graveknight constantly gains the benefits of. In addition, this miasma of fell energies hinders the channeling of positive energy. Any creature that attempts to summon positive energy in this area—such as through a cleric's channel energy ability, a paladin's lay on hands, or any spell with the healing descriptor—must make a concentration check with a DC equal to 10 + the graveknight's Hit Dice. If the character fails, the effect is blocked, its number of uses of that ability being reduced by 1 or the spell being lost.

Armor Class: Natural armor improves by +4.

Hit Dice: Increase all racial Hit Dice to d8s. Class Hit Dice are unaffected. As undead, graveknights use their Charisma modifiers to determine bonus hit points.

Defensive Abilities: A graveknight gains channel resistance +4; DR 10/magic; and immunity to cold, electricity, and any additional energy type noted by its ruinous revivification special quality. A graveknight also gains spell resistance equal to its augmented CR + 11.

The graveknight also gains the following abilities.

Rejuvenation (Su): One day after a graveknight is destroyed, its armor begins to rebuild the undead warrior's body. This process takes 1d10 days—if the body is destroyed before that time passes, the armor merely starts the process anew. After this time has elapsed, the graveknight awakens fully healed.

Attacks: A graveknight gains a slam attack if the base creature didn't have one. Damage for the slam depends on the graveknight's size (see page 302 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*). Its natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Special Attacks: A graveknight gains the following special attacks. Save DCs are equal to 10 + 1/2 the graveknight's HD + the graveknight's Cha modifier unless otherwise noted.

Channel Destruction (Su): Any weapon a graveknight wields is shrouded in destructive energy, and deals an additional +1d6 points of damage for every 4 Hit Dice the graveknight

possesses. This additional damage is of the energy type determined by the ruinous revivification special quality.

Devastating Blast (Su): Three times per day the graveknight may unleash a 30-foot cone of destructive force. This blast deals 2d6 points of damage for every 3 Hit Dice a graveknight possesses. Creatures within the area may make a Reflex save for half damage. This damage is of the energy type determined by the graveknight's ruinous revivification special quality.

Undead Mastery (Su): As a standard action, a graveknight can attempt to bend any undead creature within 50 feet to its will. The targeted undead must make a successful Will save or fall under the graveknight's control. This control is permanent for unintelligent undead, while undead with Intelligence scores are allowed an additional save every day to break free from the graveknight's control. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same graveknight's undead mastery for 24 hours.

A graveknight can control 5 Hit Dice worth of undead creatures for every Hit Die it possesses. If the graveknight exceeds this number, it loses control over some of its minions, as per the spell *animate dead*.

Special Qualities: A graveknight gains the following special qualities.

Phantom Mount (Su): Once per hour, a graveknight can summon a skeletal horse similar to a *phantom steed*. This mount is more real than a typical *phantom steed*, and can carry one additional rider. The *phantom steed's* powers are based on the graveknight's total Hit Dice rather than caster level. A graveknight's mount looks distinctive and always appears the same. If the mount is destroyed, it can be summoned again with full hit points 1 hour later.

Ruinous Revivification (Su): At the time of its creation, the graveknight chooses one of the following energy types: acid, cold, electricity, or fire. This energy type should be relevant to the graveknight's life or death, defaulting to fire if none feel appropriate. This energy type influences the effects of several of a graveknight's special abilities.

Ability Scores: Str +6, Int +2, Wis +4, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a graveknight has no Constitution score.

Skills: Graveknights gain a +8 racial bonus on Intimidate, Perception, and Ride.

Feats: Graveknights gain Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, and Toughness.

Graveknight Armor

In death, the graveknight's life force lingers on in its armor, not its corpse, in much the same way that a lich's essence is bound within a phylactery. Unless every part of a graveknight's armor is ruined along with its body, a graveknight can rejuvenate after it is destroyed. A typical suit of full plate graveknight armor has hardness 10 and 45 hit points, though armor with enhancements or made of special materials proves more difficult to destroy. Merely breaking a graveknight's armor does not destroy it; it must be utterly annihilated, such as by being melted into slag, cast onto the Positive Energy Plane, or sunk into the crushing depths of the sea.



HAND OF THE INHERITOR

This masculine, golden-skinned angel stands taller than the greatest human champion. His halo is a spinning wheel of blades above his head, and with a gesture it flies to his left arm like a deadly spiked shield, while great wings of brilliant energy manifest from his back.

HAND OF THE INHERITOR CR 15

51,200 XP

LG Large outsider (angel, extraplanar, good, lawful)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +28

Aura protective aura

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 14, flat-footed 28 (+5 Dex, +15 natural, +4 shield, -1 size; +4 deflection vs. evil)

hp 207 (18d10+108); regeneration 10 (evil weapons and effects)

Fort +17, **Ref** +16, **Will** +13; +4 vs. poison, +4 resistance vs. evil

DR 10/evil; **Immune** acid, cold, fear, petrification; **Resist** electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 26

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., fly 150 ft. (good)

Melee +2 *longsword* +25/+20/+15/+10 (2d6+9), +2 *axiomatic holy spiked heavy steel shield* +27 (2d6+9)

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

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th)

At will—*aid*, *detect evil*, *dispel magic*, *lesser restoration*, *magic weapon*, *plane shift* (DC 23), *remove fear*

3/day—*burst of glory* (Pathfinder Chronicles: Gods and Magic 21), *flame strike* (DC 21), *holy smite* (DC 20), *mark of justice* (DC 20), *order's wrath* (DC 20), *power word stun*, *raise dead*, *see invisibility*

1/day—*blade barrier* (DC 22), *greater magic weapon*, *greater restoration*, *heal*

Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 18th)

4th—*death ward*, *dispel evil* (2)

3rd—*cure moderate wounds*, *prayer* (2)

2nd—*bull's strength* (2), *resist energy* (3)

1st—*cure light wounds* (4), *divine favor* (2)

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 21, **Con** 22, **Int** 22, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +26; **CMD** 41

Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Shield Bash, Power Attack, Shield Master, Shield Slam, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Focus (spiked shield)

Skills Craft (weaponsmithing) +27, Diplomacy +15, Fly +27, Heal +16, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (history) +27, Knowledge (nobility) +15, Knowledge (planes) +27, Knowledge (religion) +27, Perception +28, Sense Motive +28, Spellcraft +24, Swim +25

Languages Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech

SQ lay on hands (15/day, 9d6 hit points, as an 18th-level paladin)

Combat Gear +2 *axiomatic holy spiked heavy steel shield*

ECOLOGY

Environment any good-aligned plane

Organization solitary or squad (the Hand plus 2–5 astral devas)

Treasure double (+2 *axiomatic holy spiked heavy steel shield*)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Courage (Su) The Hand of the Inheritor radiates an aura of courage identical to that of an 18th-level paladin.

Protective Aura (Su) Against attacks made or effects created by evil creatures, this ability provides a +4 deflection bonus to AC and a +4 resistance bonus on saving throws to anyone within 20 feet of the angel. Otherwise, it functions as a *magic circle against evil* effect and a *lesser globe of invulnerability*, both with a radius of 20 feet (caster level equals angel's HD). The defensive benefits from the circle are not included in an angel's statistics block.

Truespeech (Su) The Hand of the Inheritor can speak with any creature that has a language, as though using a *tongues* spell (caster level equal to angel's Hit Dice). This ability is always active.

The Hand of the Inheritor is a warrior angel, first to answer Iomedae's call whenever she must directly intervene on Golarion. As fast as the greatest angels, he leads the charge when her celestial armies must go to war. A veteran of countless sorties into the Abyss, the Hand fights with a song of battle on his lips and unbreakable courage in his heart. He looks like a tall, golden-skinned angel with a halo of sword-like blades, which he can also wear on his arm like a spiked shield. He may manifest or hide a pair of feathered wings at will, which may be any color, though he does not actually need them to fly.

The Hand is not a diplomatic angel, and Iomedae rarely calls upon him when the situation requires someone willing to mince words. He once served the Empyreal Lord Ragathiel (at which time he was called the Hand of Vengeance) but asked to serve Iomedae after Aroden died, as she needed a hero to be her champion.

Ecology

The Hand of the Inheritor does not need to eat or sleep, though he is known to take a long pause after a great battle to think about fallen comrades with other veterans. He refers to Iomedae as "My Lady, the Just Queen of Heaven," and treats her as if he were a knight holding a chaste adoration for a righteous courtly lady. His halo-shield is called the *Brightsword*, and he sometimes refers to it as if it were an independent being, though it acts according to his will; as a free action he can pull a +2 *longsword* from the halo-shield at any time and wield it as a weapon, though the sword vanishes if ever separated from him.

Habitat & Society

The angel focuses on honorable combat, the preservation of just rulers, and valorous deeds. When he is not needed

on Golarion, he guards noble souls through the Astral to Pharasma's court, patrols the borders of Iomedae's realm in search of abominations from the Abyss, duels devils on neutral ground to better learn their tactics, and watches over youths his patron has marked for greatness.

He enjoys battle hymns and marching music, though his voice is more suited for harmonizing with a true performer than leading a song. He is adept at determining if a rampaging monster intends evil or if it is merely hungry, and is merciful enough to only slay the ones intending to do wrong. Likewise, he feels no guilt in slaying those who embrace evil, but strikes to subdue when his opponent is magically controlled or otherwise compromised in his decision-making.

Though he is actually older than Iomedae, he defers to her divine wisdom and experience as a mortal, for he understands his perspective as an immortal angel living in the realms beyond Golarion is very different and sometimes emotionally distant from the thoughts and concerns of humanity. He is an ally of the heralds of Sarenrae and Shelyn, but is wary of the herald of Cayden Cailean, for that one's overt sexuality makes him slightly uncomfortable (as he spent thousands of years serving the Empyrean Lord of chastity).

Heralds of the Gods: Revisited

The Hand of the Inheritor stands among a special class of unique, godly servants known as heralds. With few exceptions, every one of Golarion's deities has its own herald, a favored minion that serves as a messenger and emissary throughout the planes and upon the mortal realm. While not necessarily the most powerful of a deity's minions, heralds embody fundamental elements of a god's faiths and philosophies, and thus prove particularly suited to interactions with mortal worshipers—although a herald appears only at the direct order of a deity, not merely because a powerful cleric requires aid. Thus, heralds are creatures myth, and their appearances mark lives and events of legend.

In the Pathfinder RPG, heralds are unique outsiders of approximately CR 15 with 18 or fewer Hit Dice, making them available for summons via the spell *greater planar ally*. Only a deity's worshipers can summon its herald; thus, even the most powerful worshiper of Sarenrae can never summon the Hand of the Inheritor. In addition, only divine spellcasters can summon heralds, preventing arcane casters and spells like *planar binding* from effectively calling upon such beings. Even if a character proves powerful enough to call out to a herald, a deity has the final say in whether or not its emissary answers a worshiper's summons, granting its herald's service only to followers in the most extreme need or whose acts directly further its will.

Currently, the statistics for eight heralds have appeared in *Pathfinder Adventure Paths*, while all of these divine emissaries are described in *Pathfinder Chronicles: Gods & Magic*.

Herald	Deity	Volume
Yethazmari	Lamashtu	<i>Pathfinder</i> #5
The Night Monarch	Desna	<i>Pathfinder</i> #5
The Lawgiver	Abadar	<i>Pathfinder</i> #8
The Prince in Chains	Zon-Kuthon	<i>Pathfinder</i> #11
Thais	Cayden Cailean	<i>Pathfinder</i> #14
The Menotherian	Calistria	<i>Pathfinder</i> #17
Sunlord Thalachos	Sarenrae	<i>Pathfinder</i> #20



STYMPHALIDES

This cloud of long-necked birds rises into the air, screeching in a cacophony reminiscent of klaxons and clanging tools. As these avians flit among one another, their feathers glint with a metallic gleam, reflecting even the dimmest light back a hundredfold through a dim haze of blood.

STYMPHALIDES SWARM CR 6  **2,400 XP**

N Tiny magical beast (swarm)

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 17, flat-footed 18 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural, +2 size)
hp 52 (7d10+14)

Fort +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities half damage from slashing and piercing weapons, swarm traits; **DR** 5/magic; **Immune** fire

Weakness sonic

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee swarm +7 (2d6–2 plus bleed)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks bleed (1), dazzle, distraction (DC 15)

STATISTICS

Str 6, **Dex** 19, **Con** 14, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +7; **CMB** —; **CMD** —

Feats Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Step Up

Skills Fly +8, Perception +13

ECOLOGY

Environment warm plains and deserts

Organization solitary, flock (2–4 swarms), or host (5–8 swarms)

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dazzle (Ex) As a stymphalides swarm beats its wings, the birds' steel feathers reflect light in blinding patterns of flashes and flares. While in an area of normal or brighter light, anyone who occupies the same square as a stymphalides swarm at the beginning of its turn must make a DC 15 Fortitude save. Those who fail are blinded for 1d4 rounds, while those who make their saves are dazzled until they spend 1 full round outside the swarm's space. This is a sight-based effect.

GIANT STYMPHALIDIES

Every feather like a plate of shimmering armor and its beak the length and sharpness of a knight's lance, this towering, ibis-like bird looks to be sculpted from silver and brass. Standing upon long legs ending in powerful metallic talons, its beady eyes dart about voraciously.

GIANT STYMPHALIDES CR 8  **4,800 XP**

N Large magical beast

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+2 Dex, +11 natural, –1 size)

hp 94 (9d10+45)

Fort +11, **Ref** +10, **Will** +5

DR 10/magic and adamantine; **Immune** fire

Weakness sonic

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 120 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +14 (1d8+6 plus bleed/19–20), 2 talons +9 (1d6+3), 2 wings +9 (1d6+3 plus bleed)

Ranged 2 wing razors +10 (1d6+6 plus bleed)

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

Special Attacks bleed (1d6), glare, wing razors

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 15, **Con** 20, **Int** 2, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 28

Feats Alertness, Critical Focus, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Flyby Attack

Skills Fly +0, Perception +12

ECOLOGY

Environment warm mountains

Organization solitary, pair, or flight (3–9)

Treasure Value incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Glare (Su) As a standard action, in any area of normal or brighter light, a giant stymphalides can ruffle its metallic feathers in such a way as to dazzle all creatures nearby. Any creature within 30 feet must make a DC 19 or be blinded for 1d6 minutes. A creature can defend against this effect in the same way it would a gaze attack. This is a sight-based effect. The DC is Constitution-based.

Wing Razors (Ex) A giant stymphalides's metallic feathers are razor-sharp. In addition to being able to slash creatures with its wings as a melee attack, it may beat its wings, flinging two large, feathered shards at a single target. These wing razors deal 2d6 points of damage and cause bleed. A giant stymphalides can use this attack a number of times per day equal to its Constitution modifier.

Man-eating birds of prey, the rare creatures known as stymphalides stalk the arid plains and coastlines of Golarion in ravenous swarms, shredding warm-blooded animals and unwary travelers with their bladed feathers and dagger-like beaks. From a distance, stymphalides might easily be mistaken for cranes, ibises, or other long-necked birds, though in full sunlight their gleaming feathers and the haze of blood lingering from past meals are impossible to mistake.

Peculiarly, the feathers and beak of a stymphalides are made of steel, similar to the metallic hide of a gorgon. The wings of stymphalides are as sharp as knives and often lacerate their prey as the birds swarm and beat their wings against their unfortunate victims' skin. Similarly,

their beaks are supernaturally sharp and can pierce the tough hides of animal prey or the armor of those warriors foolish enough to hunt the creatures. Even if a victim of a stymphalides swarm's frenzied attacks manages to fend off the vicious creatures, the wounds caused by the birds continue to bleed long after being inflicted, and the victim often perishes from loss of blood before ever reaching help.

Most stymphalides stand approximately 2-1/2 feet tall and weigh little more than 40 pounds. Although mean-tempered and territorial, lone stymphalides prove relatively harmless, thus traveling in swarms of several dozen, relying on strength of numbers to bring down large or dangerous prey. Many tales also tell of enormous breeds of these monstrous birds, powerful enough to prey upon wyverns. These giant stymphalides are said to grow up to 13 feet tall and weigh over 250 pounds, with wingspans reaching upward of 25 feet. Such gigantic stymphalides are rarely seen, preferring to lurk upon desolate cliffs or even amid harsh extraplanar realms.

Ecology

Unlike vultures and other birds of the deserts and plains, stymphalides do not scavenge carcasses, although they are not above driving away natural scavengers if a large, fresh kill looks particularly inviting. When traveling in flocks, stymphalides prove fearless predators, swooping in and swarming any creature that wanders into their territory. The birds actively hunt their prey, harrying and killing lone individuals or stragglers. The attacks of a stymphalides swarm often prove so vicious that the creatures can take to flight once they have wounded prey, wait for it to bleed to death, and return to pick the corpse clean. Stymphalides generally avoid attacking large groups of people, unless the birds have gathered in a particularly sizable flock.

Stymphalides are not purely carnivorous. A lone stymphalides might resort to eating fruit and other plants if it is separated from its flock or food is scarce, and orchards and fields of crops have been devastated by stymphalides when great swarms of the birds, starving from overpopulation or lack of prey, migrate to new territories. Yet although the birds are omnivorous, they seem to prefer meat. Those plainsfolk or desert-dwellers whose livelihoods depend on livestock have learned to fear the sight of flocks of birds silhouetted against the sky, as herds of cattle and other grazing animals have been ravaged by their swarms.

Habitat & Society

Most swarms of stymphalides roost near watering holes, rivers, and coastal cliffs, preying upon unfortunate

creatures desperate enough to seek food or water so near to the dangerous birds' nests. The nests of stymphalides are frequently made from the bones of the creatures' prey, piled into macabre ziggurats upon which entire flocks of the birds rest. Particularly large flocks of the birds construct enormous nests, and giant stymphalides can create towers visible for miles.

When not at rest, flocks of the creatures soar high on warm currents of air, relying upon their keen eyesight to spot suitable prey far below. Because of their voracious appetites, flocks of stymphalides must claim a vast swath of territory to maintain their feeding habits. Stymphalides are fiercely territorial, and flocks of the birds frequently fight with one another in swooping aerial battles to determine possession of land.

Fortunately for the folk of civilized lands, stymphalides rarely encroach upon areas well traveled by humanoids and other creatures clever enough to bring down one of these metal-winged avians. Among the people of the plains, the metallic birds are often regarded as nearly legendary creatures. Stymphalides breed at an astonishing rate, however, and overpopulation and exhaustion of game frequently force extraordinarily large and deadly groups of the creatures to band together in search of new lands and new prey to devour.



Council of Thieves



LEM

MALE HALFLING

DEITY Shelyn
HOMELAND Cheliax

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Bard 3
ALIGNMENT Chaotic Good
INITIATIVE +3
SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 8
DEXTERITY 16
CONSTITUTION 13
INTELLIGENCE 12
WISDOM 8
CHARISMA 17

DEFENSE

HP 20
AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+2 armor, +3 Dex, +1 deflection, +1 dodge, +1 size)
Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +3; +2 vs. fear, +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, sonic effects

SKILLS

Acrobatics +9 (+7 to jump), Climb +1, Disable Device +5, Knowledge (local) +8, Perform (comedy) +7, Perform (wind instruments) +11, Perception +7, Spellcraft +7, Stealth +13, Use Magic Device +9

FEATS

Dodge, Extra Performance

OFFENSE

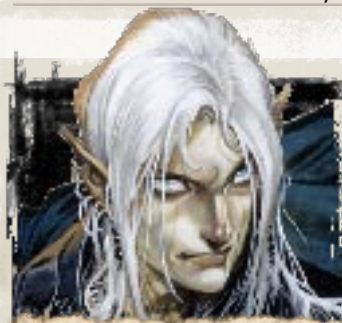
Melee short sword +2 (1d4–1/19–20)
Ranged dagger +6 (1d3–1/19–20)
Base Atk +2; CMB 0; CMD 15
Special Abilities bardic knowledge +1, bardic performance (countersong, distraction, fascinate, inspire courage +2), versatile performance (wind instrument: Diplomacy, Handle Animal), well-versed

Spells Known (CL 3rd)

1st (4/day)—*cure light wounds*, *disguise self* (DC 14), *hideous laughter* (DC 14), *silent image* (DC 14)
o (at will)—*detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *summon instrument*

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (42 charges); **Gear** leather armor, short sword, throwing daggers (4), *ring of protection* +1, backpack, masterwork flute, masterwork thieves' tools, rations (6), spell component pouch, sunrods (3), 22 gp

Although Lem was raised in the lap of luxury, his childhood was anything but comfortable. Born into slavery, Lem was sold a half-dozen times to different nobles before he reached the age of 2. Always quick to side with the underdog, Lem has learned that his most powerful trait is his optimism and sense of humor—skills that more than make up for his small stature and impulsive nature.



SELTIEL

MALE HALF-ELF

DEITY Asmodeus
HOMELAND Cheliax

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Fighter 1/Conjuror 2
ALIGNMENT Lawful Evil
INITIATIVE +3
SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 12
DEXTERITY 17
CONSTITUTION 13
INTELLIGENCE 14
WISDOM 8
CHARISMA 10

DEFENSE

HP 20
AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +3 Dex)
Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3; +2 vs. enchantment
Immune sleep
Senses low-light vision

SKILLS

Craft (alchemy) +7, Fly +6, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Perception +7, Sense Motive +2, Spellcraft +8

FEATS

Alertness, Arcane Armor Training, Combat Expertise, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (longsword)

OFFENSE

Melee longsword +4 (1d8+1/19–20)
Ranged shortbow +5 (1d6/x3)
Base Atk +2; CMB +3; CMD 16
Special Abilities acid dart (5/day), summoner's charm

Spells Prepared (CL 2nd)

1st—*mage armor*, *magic missile*, *summon monster I*
o—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 12), *dancing lights*, *detect magic*

Familiar bat named Dargent

Combat Gear acid, alchemist's fire (2), *scroll of scorching ray*, *scroll of web*; **Other Gear** +1 leather armor, longsword, dagger, shortbow with 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance* +1, everburning torch, flask of fine absinthe worth 50 gp, gold holy symbol worth 75 gp, mysterious spellbook, 8 gp

Seltyiel grew up surrounded by shame and disgrace. Before he came of age, his stepfather attempted to kill him, but after Seltyiel turned the tables, he fled into the wild. Since then, his life has been a cruel series of betrayals and pain. Recently escaped from a period of imprisonment after his true father, a notorious bandit, set Seltyiel up to take the blame for his crimes, the half-elf longs for revenge against both his fathers.

Pre-generated Characters



SEELAH

FEMALE HUMAN

DEITY lomedae
HOMELAND Katapesh

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Paladin 3
ALIGNMENT Lawful Good
INITIATIVE +0
SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 15
DEXTERITY 10
CONSTITUTION 14
INTELLIGENCE 8
WISDOM 13
CHARISMA 14

DEFENSE

HP 30
AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +2 shield)
Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +6
Immune disease, fear

SKILLS

Knowledge (religion) +5, Sense Motive +7

FEATS

Extra Lay On Hands, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

OFFENSE

Melee +1 longsword +7 (1d8+3/19–20)
Ranged longbow +3 (1d8/x3)
Base Atk +3; CMB +5; CMD 15
Special Abilities aura of courage, aura of good, detect evil, divine grace, divine health, lay on hands 5/day, mercy (sickened), smite evil 1/day (+2 to attack roll, +1 damage)

Combat Gear antitoxin (2), holy water (3), *potion of bless*; **Other Gear** banded mail, heavy steel shield, +1 longsword, longbow with 20 arrows, backpack, rations (4), silver holy symbol, 20 gp

When a group of lomedae's knights arrived to save Seelah's hometown of Solku from gnolls, Seelah knew where her destiny lay. Atoning for her misdeeds as a child, she devoted her life to lomedae. Over the years, guilt over her misspent youth has changed into a powerful faith and conviction. Today, she sees the good in everyone, and hopes that by leading by example, she can help other wayward souls (such as Seltiyel) find their way.



SEONI

FEMALE HUMAN

DEITY Pharasma
HOMELAND Varisia

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Sorcerer 3
ALIGNMENT Lawful Neutral
INITIATIVE +2
SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 8
DEXTERITY 14
CONSTITUTION 12
INTELLIGENCE 10
WISDOM 13
CHARISMA 17

DEFENSE

HP 19
AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural)
Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4

SKILLS

Bluff +9, Climb +2, Knowledge (planes) +6, Perception +3, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +6

FEATS

Alertness, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Focus (evocation)

OFFENSE

Melee quarterstaff +0 (1d6–1)
Ranged dagger +3 (1d4–1/19–20)
Base Atk +1; CMB 0; CMD 13
Special Abilities arcane bond, metamagic adept

Spells Known (CL 3rd)
1st (6/day)—*burning hands* (DC 16), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *identify*
0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *flare* (DC 15), *read magic*
Bloodline arcane

Familiar blue-tailed skink named Dragon

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds* (3), smokestick, tanglefoot bag, *wand of magic missile* (45 charges); **Other Gear** dagger, quarterstaff, *amulet of natural armor* +1, backpack, sunrod (5), rations (4), 14 gp

Seoni is something of an enigma—quietly neutral on most matters, bound by codes and mandates she rarely feels compelled to explain, the beautiful sorcerer keeps her emotions tightly bottled. Extremely detail-oriented, Seoni is a careful and meticulous planner who frequently finds herself frustrated by the improvised plans of her more impulsive companions.



WHAT LIES IN DUST

by Michael Kortez

Surviving the depredations of Westcrown's elite, the PCs embark on a morbid hunt to find the secrets they need to infiltrate Delvehaven, the city's long-abandoned Pathfinder lodge. Once within, however, they quickly find the exotic treasures and magical relics of the famed society don't rest unguarded. Confronted by more than mere traps, the PCs must overcome the lodge's depraved new residents and savage magics run out of control if they hope to free Westcrown from its twilight curse.

THE HELLKNIGHTS

by F. Wesley Schneider

Enforcers of absolute law, the Hellknights impose an unflinching order through discipline and fear. From the shores of Cheliax to the mountains of Varisia and beyond, the black armor of these deadly lawbringers strikes fear in the hearts of scoundrels across Golarion. Finally, this elite organization lies exposed, its infernal structure, diabolical training, and merciless prestige class revealed for those resolute enough to plumb its mysteries.

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by Craig Shackleton

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The Sixfold Trial Dramatis Personae

Aberian Arvanxi	(decadent mayor of Westcrown)
Ailyn Ghontasavos	(undercover Pathfinder agent, ally and supporter of the rebels)
Anvengen Doskivari	(previous mayor of Westcrown, architect of Asmodean Knot, deceased)
Arael	(leader of Children of Westcrown)
Calseinica Nymmis	(beautiful rising starlet and somewhat naive aristocrat-turned-actress)
Chammady Drovenge	(Ecarrdian's sister, wants to rule Council of Thieves and Westcrown)
Crosael Simiin Rasdovain	(Mayor Arvanxi's majordomo, secret tiefling)
Dargentu Vheed	(previous mayor of Westcrown, vanished in Nessian Spiral)
Delour Aulamaxa	(popular and arrogant diva, sings during <i>The Six Trials of Larazod</i>)
Drowned Jabe	(unfortunate thief who invaded Asmodean Knot, now a lacedon)
Ecarrdian Drovenge	(Chammady's brother, wants to rule Council of Thieves and Westcrown)
Eirtein Oberigo	(Patriarch of the Oberigo nobles, member of Council of Thieves)
Elandriu	(Elven thief who invaded Asmodean Knot years ago, deceased)
Janiven	(second-in-command of Children of Westcrown)
Liebdaga the Twin	(pit fiend imprisoned in Nessian Spiral under Aberian's Folly)
Livia	(imp ex-familiar of Dargentu Vheed)
Millech the Hump	(hunchbacked stagehand and bitter illusionist)
Nyxervex	(bone devil bound to Sian's runecurse)
The Outcast King	(bearded devil cursed to share same body with otyugh)
Robahl Nonon	(notorious director of <i>The Six Trials of Larazod</i>)
Sascar Tilernos	(member of the Tilernos nobility, alcoholic and gossip)
Szasmir	(insane bearded devil imprisoned in Asmodean Knot)
Sian Daemodus	(murderous tiefling agent of Council of Thieves)
Thesing Umbro Ulvauno	(talented but arrogant actor, misogynist, and likely long-term foil)
Vassindio Drovenge	(patriarch of Council of Thieves)
Vourne	(General of Gemcrown Bay Imperial Fleet)



The Play's the Thing

To banish the monstrous shadows that stalk Westcrown by night, the PCs go undercover, joining the city's chaotic theatrical community in an elaborate plot to infiltrate the estate of the decadent lord-mayor. Yet theater life turns deadly when they become players in a spectacle no actor has ever survived. Can the PCs endure their debut performance in a city where an actor's first big hit is often his last?

This volume of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* continues the Council of Thieves Adventure Path, and includes:

- ▶ "The Sixfold Trial," a Pathfinder RPG adventure for 3rd-level characters, by Richard Pett.
- ▶ *The Six Trials of Larazod*, the complete and unabridged text of that infamously deadly play, by Nicolas Logue.
- ▶ An exploration of the faith of Iomedae the Inheritor, goddess of valor, by Sean K Reynolds.
- ▶ Pathfinder Varian Jeggare investigating death among the aristocracy in the Pathfinder's Journal, by Dave Gross.
- ▶ Six new monsters by Darrin Drader, David Eitelbach, Sean K Reynolds, and F. Wesley Schneider.



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