



A 3.5/OGL ADVENTURE FOR LEVEL 9

J5

Beyond the Vault of Souls



PATHFINDER[®]

MODULE[™]

BY COLIN MCCOMB

The Cauldron

Lower Level



Upper Level



Main Level



One Square = 10 Feet

Taste of Anguish





BEYOND THE VAULT OF SOULS

PATHFINDER MODULE J5

A PLANAR ADVENTURE

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BEYOND THE VAULT OF SOULS

The moon-like god Groetus hovers ceaselessly above the great Spire of the Boneyard, his threatening face a constant reminder of the inevitable eschaton, the end of all life in the spheres. Its presence waxes and wanes upon some incomprehensible schedule due to fluctuations in the tides of the Maelstrom and the presence of the deities that keep it at bay. But the moon is dipping lower and lower, and has begun attracting souls to itself through a fearful spiritual gravity. Each soul it draws in turn brings the moon closer to the Spire, and it's said that when the moon of Groetus crashes into the Spire, the End Times begin, opening the Outer Sphere to the Maelstrom and ensuring the destruction of existence as we know it. Some believe that once life and order are swept away, the natural state of chaos resumes, as it was before the birth of the Positive Energy Plane cast life across the unending flux.

What has changed that allows Groetus to descend? Only this: within the Vault of Souls—the tombs and mausoleums of Pharasma—sit the souls of atheists, hardened and crystalline and beyond consciousness, awaiting the ultimate oblivion. The strength of their disbelief acts as a repellent to the hungry god, keeping him from the Spire and, ironically, protecting the post-mortal existence the atheists so devoutly refused. But now many of those gems have gone missing, stolen from the Vault of Souls. Word has it that some troublemakers spread the secret of drawing forth these gems from the Vault to various wizards across the Material Plane, employing loopholes in the cosmic laws protecting the Boneyard. The Keepers of the Vault are frantic. They need the gems back, and they need them as quickly as possible. As such, the Keepers have enlisted a huge number of adventurers, mercenaries, and other agents to recover the gems that have spread across the planes.

In the Chelish city of Westcrown, the wizard Khandescus has summoned five of these gems for study and possible use as a safeguard against demonic interference in his work. He has no idea of the repercussions of his act—he just knows that he has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to study the aftereffects of soul transmutation across the Astral Plane, and he is not about to lose his chance. The funny thing is that he means well. The sad part is that he's now a target.

The Children of the Reborn Glory is an Aroden-resurrectionist group, a disparate band of mortals and outsiders who believe that Pharasma has been hiding the fragments of Aroden's soul in her Vaults, and the Children covet these gems (although different factions within the group seek them for different reasons). Their sources in the Church of Pharasma have told them of the theft, and their allies in Westcrown have discovered Khandescus's acquisition. The Children's agents are converging on Khandescus to retrieve what they believe are fragments of Aroden's soul. They may be deceived, but that doesn't make them any less dangerous.

Adventure Summary

The GM should be sure that the Church of Pharasma is friendly toward the PCs, or at least that the PCs are known to be discreet and reliable. Once this basic condition is in place, give the PCs a reason to visit Westcrown or its immediate vicinity. As soon as these conditions have been established, the adventure can begin.

Taibhill, a Pharasmic mystic living outside the city, directs the PCs to the tower of the wizard Khandescus, who is experimenting with magical gems taken from Pharasma's Vault of Souls. While he considers returning them, unknown agents attack his tower and try to seize the gems, causing a terrible explosion and scattering them across the planes. The wounded wizard sends the PCs to

THE SOUL GEMS

These gems contain the souls of powerful mortals whose non-belief in ultimate reward or punishment in the afterlife was so strong that they could not be assigned to any god or plane. Instead, they calcified and condensed into brilliant gem-like stones and were buried deep within the Vault of Souls. In the Outer Sphere, each of them generates a strong field that warps reality around itself and the memories and personalities of nearby creatures. On the Material Plane, the soul gems resemble large and nearly flawless sapphires, each with a tiny imperfection at its center. When touched, they give off a palpable sense of thrumming, uncontrollable power.

Anyone handling one of these gems must do so carefully. Dropping one shatters it (hardness 0, 1 hit point), releasing a wave of powerful spiritual energy. This energy weakens anyone standing within 100 feet, dealing 1d8 Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity damage for 1d4 hours (Fortitude DC 20 negates), and prevents magical healing during that time. Each wave also animates 1d20 humanoid corpses. Dead bodies within 30 feet become wights, those within 100 feet become ghouls, and those within 300 feet become zombies if they still have flesh; otherwise, they become skeletons. Even when treated gently, the gems must be stabilized magically or else decay rapidly, bursting after a mere 12 hours.

In the Outer Sphere, the gems are more resistant to damage, more stable, and stronger in their effects on the local reality. They can take 20 points of damage before bursting (hardness 1), releasing a wave of destruction that deals 8d6 force damage.

Because of the gems' instability, the party cannot keep any of them unless they are willing to remain on the plane where they found it; these souls, once removed from the Vault, make their way to the plane where they are most comfortable. If they are removed from that environment and not sealed within the Vault, they return to their destination planes after 1d3 days, opening portals to reach their desired homes. It is only in the Vault or other areas designed to hold them that they are quiescent.

Axis, where the church of Pharasma recruits the PCs to retrieve the stolen gems from their planar destinations. Meanwhile, others locate the gems and form their own plans for the crystals' power.

PART ONE: GEMS ON GOLARION

Beyond the Vault of Souls begins in the city of Westcrown in Cheliax. Luring the players to Cheliax in the first place may not be easy; not everyone is willing to travel to lands under the sway of the Lords of Hell. Still, there are a

number of ways you can place the PCs in Cheliax without too much bother. Note that such hooks should be wrapped up before the adventure begins; you don't want the players distracted by other concerns. Some of these hooks might include visiting a friend or relative in town, guarding a shipment of valuables for an ally or mentor, spying on Cheliax for a rival faction or government, or researching something that requires a Chelaxian sage.

Outside the once mighty city of Westcrown, the party is hailed by **Taibhill the Mystic** (LN male human cleric of Pharasma 8), a small, shaven-headed man in ragged black robes, with blue eyes that somehow manage to be both piercing and faraway, as if he's seeing something beyond what he's looking at. Taibhill is a hermit dedicated to the studies of Fate. He explains that he received a vision from Pharasma herself, a sending he took seriously enough that he abandoned his shack and came down to the road to meet the PCs. To prove the accuracy of his source, he names each of the PCs individually, and describes one of their notable adventures.

He tells the party that he has been authorized to enlist them to retrieve gems for the Keepers of the Vault in the Boneyard—soul gems, acquired by a wizard. He calls this theft an abomination, a perversion, a cheating of these souls out of their rightful rewards. And, he says, if the party can retrieve these gems from the wizard and bring them back to this place, he'll provide them with a token that will allow them to call upon the Church of Pharasma for a great favor—even resurrection.

If asked why they were the people he saw, he believes it was because they were the closest people and the ones best suited for this task—Pharasma wouldn't send him a vision of people who couldn't accomplish the task or were a thousand miles away. Taibhill does not know the true use of the soul gems (to repel Groetus). He knows only that the Keepers want them back, and want them desperately.

The thieving wizard, Khandescus, lives in the southeastern part of the city in one of the great old noble towers. Taibhill would retrieve these gems himself, except that the members of his own noble family, the Hendarthanes, are in the midst of a feud with the wizard's family, the Leroungs, and no negotiation between the two is possible. Taibhill does not want the party to kill the man if they can avoid it, but he does stress the importance to the Church of Pharasma of retrieving these gems.

The remainder of the adventure is dependent on the party accepting this mission. You should feel free to improvise rewards.

Westcrown and the Tower of Khandescus

This city, once the center of the empire of Cheliax, saw its influence vanish with the ascension of the House of Thrune. With its power fled north to Egorian, the city's infrastructure has crumbled. Enclaves of wealth sit in gated communities, guarded by weapon-bristling pikemen and diabolical magics. Outside these enclaves city guards march in squads through the poverty-stricken

districts, but the city is mainly a playground for decadent nobles fighting old feuds and maintaining a bristly peace.

The common folk barricade themselves inside their homes at night to avoid the shadowbeasts that prowl the streets in search of criminals and revolutionaries. Mercantile activity and basic lifestyles have not entirely disappeared, but life is generally a harsher struggle in Westcrown than in other cities.

The wizard Khandescus Leroung has established his research tower in one of the largely abandoned quarters. It is a 60-foot-tall, 40-foot-diameter, 5-story red brick tower. The grounds are surrounded by a jagged metal fence, with lightning occasionally racing around the spikes. Inside its walls, a stair winds around the inner core of the tower, where Khandescus keeps his rooms.

When the players arrive, they may try to talk Khandescus into returning the gems, sneak in to steal them from him, or take them by force. If the PCs choose diplomacy, the valet asks them their business, ushers them into the entry hall, makes them at home, and bids them wait while he sees if the master is available. About 5 minutes later, Khandescus descends. He is about 50 years old, of medium height and build with a dark complexion, and sports a black goatee and graying hair. His eyes are serious and thoughtful, and he never smiles. He asks the PCs their business, and listens carefully. If they lie (Sense Motive +10), he demands to know their real business.

The speaking PC may make a Diplomacy check to influence his attitude (initially indifferent). Mentioning Taibhill's name increases the difficulty DC by +2. If the PCs manage to switch Khandescus's attitude to friendly, he agrees to show them the soul gems, warning them to be cautious in their movements so as not to disturb the wards he has around them. If the PCs mention Taibhill



once Khandescus's attitude is friendly, the wizard's respect for Taibhill's knowledge (if not his family) gives the PCs a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks to shifting his attitude toward helpful. If the PCs can switch his attitude to Helpful, he agrees to dismantle the apparatus immediately, and asks them to wait at the Hobbled Goat (a tavern across the street) to keep them from interfering with the operation. "The tavern's not the finest the city has to offer," he says, "but it's close enough that I will be able to reach you quickly."

If they cannot switch his attitude to Helpful, he tells the party that he needs a few hours to research their claims and asks them to await his decision at the Hobbled Goat.

If the PCs opt for stealth or combat, Khandescus's servants flee when they discover intruders, and the wizard makes use of his spells to defeat or contain them.

The gems are on the fifth floor of Khandescus's tower, placed haphazardly within a 10-foot-diameter magical circle that pulses with power. If the PCs disturb the magical field containing the gems, the field detonates, dealing 5d8 points of force damage (Reflex half DC 20) and hurling the gems into the Outer Sphere. The proper way to disable the field is to cast *dispel magic*, then *protection from energy*, followed by *break enchantment* (Khandescus has several scrolls of these spells prepared for this purpose). If the PCs cause the gems to scatter across the planess, Taibhill or Khandescus pushes them to go to Axis, contact Pharasma's minions there, and see what they can do to fix the problem they caused.

KHANDESCUS LEROUNG

CR 9

N human male wizard 9

As Olvan (page 29), except as follows:

hp 30 (9d4+9)

Spells Prepared (CL 10th)

5th—*baleful polymorph*, *feeblemind*

4th—*charm monster*, *dimension door*

3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *hold person*, *tongues*

TACTICS

During Combat Khandescus would rather neutralize opponents and turn them over to the local authorities.

Morale Khandescus uses *dimension door* to escape if he thinks the PCs may kill him, then calls the city guards.

The Hobbled Goat is unremarkable, with its scarred wooden walls, dirty floors, and filthy windows that look out onto the street. The tavern keeper is a squat and powerful man named **Lenguel** (LE human male war 4), who used to work as a city guard; he doesn't take kindly to brawls in his establishment. Khandescus's tower is visible from one of the taproom's windows.

Once the PCs are settled in the Hobbled Goat, an hour or so passes. If any of them are paying attention to the windows, read the following. Otherwise, allow them a Spot check (DC 15) to receive this information:

A group of eight people in hooded cloaks gather at the gate to Khandescus's tower. One of them gestures, and the gate flies open, with the electricity dissipating immediately. As one, the group races for the tower door and, with a bright flash and a clap of thunder, blasts the door from its hinges.

Even if the PCs rush from the tavern to protect the wizard, they are unable to reach him in time. As they reach the street, the top floor of the tower detonates and bricks shower down across the pavement. A series of lesser explosions—three in all—sounds next. The PCs see the roof and walls of the tower's fifth floor vanish, leaving that level open to the sky. On that floor stand seven of the eight hooded figures, and around them are three rents in the air, rapidly closing. The seven confer quickly among themselves and then step into these rents, which seal shut behind them. Khandescus then drags himself into view and waves for help.

Once the PCs reach the top of the tower, the badly wounded Khandescus tells them what just happened: the group burst in and saw the gems, and one of them immediately grabbed for one. That disrupted the wards, detonating them and disintegrating the grabby thief. The explosion interacted with the magic of the gems and punched holes between the dimensions, pulling the gems into them. The surviving thieves jumped through the holes before they closed. Based on the characteristics of the gems and the holes, Khandescus is sure they are in various locations in the Outer Sphere. If the PCs try to heal him, the spells fail, which he admits is the side effect of his wards—something he can overcome, but which requires some work, and he stresses that there are more immediate concerns.

"While you were waiting, I spoke to a comrade who lives on Axis about the gems. She confirms what you said—she told me they are dangerous and need to be returned as quickly as possible, and I was slowly taking down my wards when those thieves arrived.

"I'm hurt, but I'm still strong enough to help you somewhat." He props himself on an elbow, pulls a crystal device from a pocket, and uses it to create a portal, showing a blurry cityscape beyond. "You wanted those gems returned, but now they're gone and I'm not sure where. If you want to help Taibhill, step through this portal and speak to Torleinn in Axis. If she says this is important, it is. Hurry... the trail gets fainter the longer you wait."

The sage is unable to answer many more questions at this time—he is injured and exhausted, and impatient if the PCs don't immediately follow his directions.

Arrival in Axis

Stepping through Khandescus's portal, the PCs' senses are assaulted by the sights, sounds, and smells of a bustling city, its "sky" a rough-hewn cavern—the city

is underground. Wagons trundle along the cobblestone streets; merchants stand guard at their stalls. On closer examination, it appears that everyone's on guard, on edge, and ready for violence—an unusual state for Axis, City of Law.

The portal closes, leaving only a cramped alleyway in its wake. Coming up the alley is a hooded woman, her hands out in front of her in a gesture of goodwill. "I believe you are here on behalf of Khandescus?" she asks the group.

This woman is **Torleinn** (LE female human wizard 8), an exiled Chelish noble. She informs the party that they have landed in Norgorber's domain, the ugly underbelly of Axis. She has been Khandescus's contact in the city for years, ever since she fled the infernal destruction of her family, whose history has since been erased from all official records. She has built herself a new home here in Axis, where she hopes to gain understanding of the ways of Hell so she can restore her family and overthrow the ruling house of Thrune. She's cagey about whether Khandescus is aiding her in this, and whether this is indicative of broader support from House Leroung.

Torleinn says she'll let the PCs use her house as a base of operations while they meet up with the Keepers of the Vault, servitors of Pharasma. The Keepers, she says, are frantic to recover the lost soul gems, and if the PCs want to use this as leverage to glean a favor or two for Torleinn as payment for the use of her home, she wouldn't mind that at all. She shows them her house, gives them directions on how to return to it from other parts of the city, and then points them at one of the myriad twisting tunnels that lead to the upper side of Axis, where the party can ask for the Keepers of the Vault—when in doubt, the PCs can head for the gigantic spire near the edge of the city.

The party can shop for exotic items here in Norgorber's Domain, engage an otherworldly assassin for enemies back in the material world, or discover additional adventure hooks at your discretion. Keep in mind that this is the domain of the god of thieves and murderers, and that the PCs might find their purses lifted or their throats slit if they aren't careful.

Axis Planar Traits

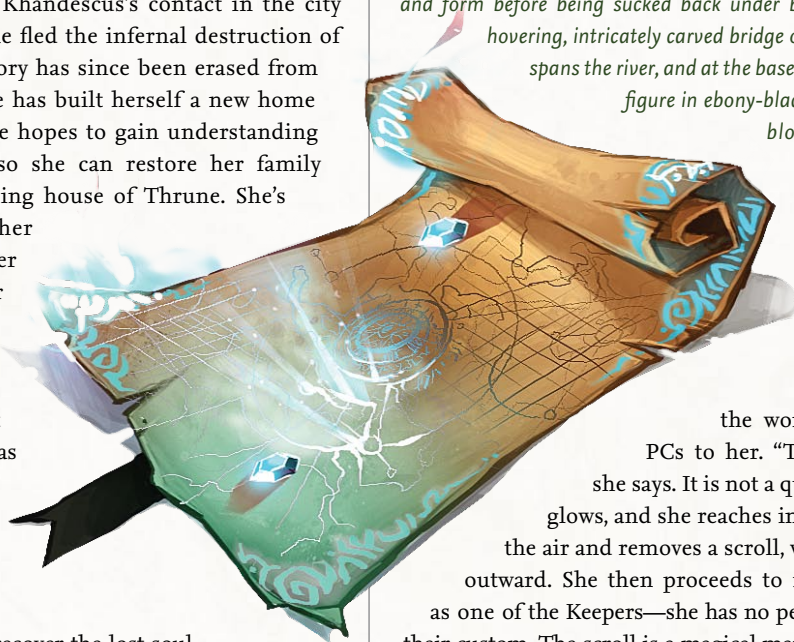
Axis is strongly lawfully aligned. Non-lawful creatures on this plane take a –2 circumstance penalty on all Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks.

The Keeper of the Vault

When the PCs head to the surface to contact the church of Pharasma, read or paraphrase the following.

Emerging from the dark tunnel into the light, the omnipresent golden shimmer and white marble are momentarily blinding. High above looms the Great Spire of Pharasma, and beyond that is the ominous moon Groetus. The crowded boulevard is straighter than an arrow, and its buildings exude an aura of whitewashed perfection.

Marring this perfection is a polluted and oily river coiling around the base of the Spire, in which disturbing shapes twist and form before being sucked back under by strange eddies. A hovering, intricately carved bridge of gold and lead wire spans the river, and at the base of it stands a female figure in ebony-black robes chased with blood-red trim, her face marked with the symbol of Pharasma. The woman's eyes are intense and ageless.



With a gesture, the woman beckons the PCs to her. "Taibhill sent you," she says. It is not a question. Her hand glows, and she reaches into a space behind the air and removes a scroll, which she extends outward. She then proceeds to introduce herself as one of the Keepers—she has no personal name, as is their custom. The scroll is a magical map of the three soul gems, with two locations crisply marked and one blurred and shifting. The Keeper explains that if a PC touches one of the markings indicating a gem and concentrates (DC 25), the map opens a portal to its approximate location, allowing them to travel there and retrieve it. After using the portal, anyone can concentrate on the map as a standard action to determine the direction of the gem (similar to *locate object*). Once the PCs acquire the gem, they simply touch it to its corresponding place on the map to open a portal back to the base of the Great Spire. She notes that there may be a slight delay between the activation and the appearance of the portal, as the map seeks a path through the planes to Axis, and that they should not expect immediate results. She explains that the more time they spend outside the Vault, the more powerful and dangerous each gem becomes. Finally, she says that the third glyph is blurry because someone is using advanced magic to obscure its location, but as the gem's power increases the map should be able to discern its location and create a portal to it.

The Keeper says that the Church of Pharasma will honor the deals the party made with Taibhill and

Khandescus. If a PC succeeds at a DC 25 Diplomacy check, the Keeper agrees to do a favor for Torleinn. At no time does she explain the true nature of the gems or their role in repelling Groetus from the Spire (though the PCs can use other magic to discover this).

Pursuing the Soul Gems

The PCs are free to go after the first two gems in whatever order they choose. The third gem (blurred on the magic map and the focus of the fourth part of this adventure) is hidden within Aroden's old realm in Axis, and it does not clearly appear on the party's map until they have retrieved or destroyed the other two.

This adventure includes quests for three missing gems, with the retrieval of the third being the climax of the adventure. These are not the only missing gems. You can expand these quests into a longer campaign by adding more gems and more planar sites, perhaps drawing on encounters in other books as suitable strange locations altered by the gem's powers. Khandescus had more than three gems, and may not be the only spellcaster who has stolen gems from the Vault. For a long-term, plane-hopping campaign, the PCs might have to hunt down a dozen gems (all marked on the Keeper's map) in strange and remote parts of the multiverse. To elevate the threat of the lost gems, perhaps 20 or more gems were stolen, and the PCs are just one of many teams (each with their own unique map) working for the Keepers to retrieve them before Groetus's descent is irreversible.

The Children of the Reborn Glory: The members of this group are also pursuing these gems, and seek to thwart the players' progress. Their opposition intensifies as the end draws near; they are desperate to retrieve what they believe are pieces of Aroden's soul, preaching that Aroden's soul was splintered in the accident that killed him, and that his shattered spirit took residence in these gems. When the PCs return to Axis with their first soul gem, before they can reach the Keeper at the base of the Great Spire, several members of the Children approach them. The speaker of this group greets the PCs and asks them if they venerate Aroden, gauging their reactions to the god's name. If the party seems sympathetic to the dead god, the speaker introduces himself as **Olvan** (see the Appendix for statistics), and his comrades Allston, Hestrix, Keira, Manawell, Omnis, and Trisan, all members of the Children of the Reborn Glory. Olvan tells the PCs that they can take part in the resurrection of Aroden. All they need to do, he says, is hand over the gem—or, failing that, bring it to the Children's headquarters, where they are assembling Aroden's soul one piece at a time.

If the PCs seem indifferent to Aroden's name, Olvan may instead threaten them. He's intent on retrieving the gem from the PCs, and he'll do what he must to get them. Olvan may fight for the gems; if the PCs prefer fighting

MAGIC ON THE PLANES

Remember that as the PCs travel the planes, they are the extraplanar visitors and their opponents are natives. This affects how certain planar spells work. For example, *banishment* forces extraplanar creatures out of the caster's home plane; if the PCs cast *banishment* on any of the demons or daemons in this adventure, it has no effect because the Abyss or Abaddon is not the PCs' home plane.

over talking, this may indeed be the only course of action. If the PCs prefer a mixture of diplomacy and action, Olvan settles for strong words, trying to emphasize the importance of returning Aroden to his rightful place and restoring the balance that has gone awry since the god's apparent death. Olvan appears again in the Cathedral (see page 22) if he is not killed here. If the PCs refuse to hand over the gem or to follow him to their base, he asks the party to reconsider his offer, and says that he'll continue to speak to them about this. Olvan is not evil, and does not intend to harm the PCs; he just wants to fulfill his mission to resurrect Aroden.

If the party insists on fighting Olvan and he's in danger of being killed, he flees and returns with more allies from his group when the PCs recover the second gem. If the Keeper is present, she comes to the party's aid, casting *aid* and *cure light wounds* spells but never directly injuring opponents. The Children do not attack the Keeper, for she is one of the guardians of Pharasma, and they do not wish to suffer the goddess's wrath for harming one of her own so close to the Great Spire. See the Appendix for more information on Olvan and his team. Keep track of how many of these NPCs are killed; they do not appear in the last part of the adventure.

If you include additional gems beyond the three described in this adventure, the third time the PCs come back with a soul gem, Olvan has six fighters and two rogues with him. As before, keep track of how many the PCs kill. Instead of attacking the party in Axis, they can also make an appearance in the plane in which the party seeks the next gem. They may attack the players immediately, hold back until the PCs are engaged in battle with an enemy before striking, or even attempt to circumvent the party altogether and seek the gem themselves.

If the PCs wish to help the Children regain the gems, they can use the magic map for this purpose and get two Children soldiers (see Appendix) to accompany them on each of their successive planar missions. Once they've retrieved all the gems, the PCs can then return to the final encounter area in Aroden's Quarter, where the various factions of the Children begin a misguided battle against each other for their god's soul.



THE ABYSS

Deep in the cracks of the Abyss, where the Maelstrom pours in to be tainted by unremitting evil, the first soul gem has found a fertile ground for its powerful magics. Caught in its fleeting passage by the twisted trunk of an abyssal tree at the heart of a demonic town called Taste of Anguish, the gem was discovered and identified by a vrock named Tarigwydin. Now called “the Upstart,” the demon has taken over this demonic town and is intent on turning it into the foundation of a kingdom.

The Upstart was but a common vrock, one of the vulture-headed shock troopers of the Abyss, when it came across the gem. Its stunted ambition flared, however, when it realized it held a weapon of unknown potential. It is a creature of elemental rage and hate, most defined by its desire to be great, and anything that stands in its way is its enemy. It believes it has an inexorable fate, and it gathers power to itself in any way it can. It has no

emotions other than rage, hate, pride, and fear; anything else is a mask. It may pretend to negotiate with the PCs, but only so it can catch them off guard. It will never let the gem—the key to its presumed success—slip through its grasp. The demon is quite adept at analyzing and utilizing the gem’s power, and it does not relinquish its hold on the gem without a terrible struggle.

The Upstart has remained in the tree since its discovery, standing over the gem and caressing it, coaxing more and greater power from its heart, and sacrificing the souls of unwary travelers to the tree’s bloodied roots, which feeds the gem. The vrock will only leave the tree in the event of a true emergency in its domain, such as a demonic attack from a greater power.

The leadership of the town has always changed every few weeks as rival demon lords send their minions to kill the current leader and take over; the Upstart’s power from the gem might be enough to cement its ownership of the town for much longer than that. Any combat draws the other demons’ attention, though they are more likely to place bets on the outcome than to aid one side or the other.

When the PCs use the Keeper's map to create a portal to the Abyss, read or paraphrase the following.

The teleportation from the Keeper's map is momentarily disorienting. Reality twists itself back to normal, revealing a whirling, crazy sky, a shifting kaleidoscope of nauseating, viscous colors that exude malice. The scene is a dusty, barren plain dotted here and there with thorny trees shaped from the groaning souls of petitioners. A light breeze moans by, kicking up some of the dust, revealing for a moment a buried head, eyes still open, before the dirt covers it over again. Across the plain this repeats—small puffs of dust and the barest glint of skin, revealing suffering souls bound into the very earth. An oily black bend of a river passes nearby.

Up ahead is a palisaded town on a hill, its outer wall made of thorn-covered logs. The buildings within are covered in thorns and spikes, built from the same wood and covered with a thick layer of dried mud. At the center of town, cresting the hill, is a small stone keep with a huge, gnarled tree. Demons fly to and fro over the town, sometimes alighting on the walls or the tree's outer branches.

The town is Taste of Anguish. Concentrating on the Keeper's map indicates the soul gem is in the direction of the great tree at the center of town.

Abyss Planar Traits

The influence of the soul gem on this area of the plane prevents demons from using their native *summon demon* ability. It also has the effect of nullifying any other summoning spells. Calling spells that require checks do so with a –5 penalty. The Abyss is mildly chaos- and evil-aligned. This means that lawful or good creatures take a –2 penalty on all Charisma-based checks. For creatures both lawful and good, these penalties stack.

A. The Palisade Wall

The palisade wall is 20 feet high, and is built from the wood of nearby thorn trees. Anyone attempting to climb it takes 1d10 points of piercing damage (Reflex half DC 15). Babau guards pass singly along the walls every 5 minutes, with individual quasits flying intermittent patrols to ensure that the babaus provide adequate protection. Alternatively, the party may attempt to gain entry through the guarded gate, where a vrock stands as supervisor. If they can claim no business inside the town, the guards either drive the party away or bring them before the Upstart as unwilling sacrifices. Dramatic effects like burning or disintegrating the palisade immediately attract the attention of the guard and all nearby demons.

At peak occupation, the town holds the Upstart, 1 hezrou, 5 vocks, 12 babaus, several dozen dretches and quasits, approximately 100 humanoids (mostly slaves, some mortal merchants or demonologists), and a few fiendish or half-fiend humans or orcs with varying agendas.

Once inside the wooden walls, the party must wend through the muddy streets and hovels and a few half-human or outsider merchants to reach the stone keep at the center of town. The denizens of Taste of Anguish are bullying and cruel, but they have learned to suffer visitors in order to increase traffic to the town. A few taverns cater to travelers, and truly unsavory entertainments are offered in pits dug into the graveyard soil of the plain outside the palisade wall.

TASTE OF ANGUISH ENCOUNTERS

Roll (d20)	Encounter	EL
1–3	Babaus (1–3)	6, 8, or 9
4–6	Bebilith (outskirts only)	10
7–12	Dretches (8 or 16)	8 or 10
13	Glabrezu	13
14	Hezrou	11
15–18	Quasits (4 or 8)	6 or 8
19–20	Vrock (1–3)	9, 11, or 12

Consider adding additional encounters within the city to make it more memorable to the PCs—this is an excellent place for the appearance of old antagonists and mysterious traders, and to generally show that the Abyss is not deadly combat all the time. It is also a place where friends of the PCs could be held in captivity—whether as mortals or souls stolen away after their deaths—and thus ready for rescue. This city is emblematic of the worst of mortal vices: prostitution, gambling with souls as currency, bargains with fiendish powers, rampant drug abuse with addictive qualities and evil side effects, and horrific crimes to which residents and visitors alike turn blind eyes. Encounters in the town are only hostile if the PCs appear weak or easily bullied; otherwise the indicated groups ignore them, or perhaps try to extort small bribes.

Note that the bebilith encounter occurs only outside the walls of Taste of Anguish. The creatures are attracted to the steady stream of traffic into and out of the city, but the city's guards (bands of 6 babaus led by vocks) keep the hunters at bay as much as possible. If the guards see visitors attacked by the bebilith, they come watch the battle, but do not get involved unless it appears the visitors are merchants; instead, they wait for the party to weaken the bebilith, and only join in to finish it off when they're sure the PCs are going to defeat it.

B. The Mercantile Exchange (EL 7)

Situated near the front entrance to the city, this is the place where the merchants, slavers, and other visitors to the city come to trade their wares. The place is a crowded mass of tents, temporary shelters, and occasional tall wooden towers that creak and scream in the wind which howls over the walls. Any manner of service or craft may be found here, as long as it can be used to further the cause of chaos or evil.

The party may also find information about the city here, and hear rumors about its founder. More specifically, if they begin asking questions among the denizens, a succubus with an aura of authority comes to speak to them. She says that she was attracted here by the power of the tree, and she believes that others may have come here as well. She asks the PCs to keep an eye open for creatures that are not as they seem or that demonstrate ancient wisdom, and she'll reward them handsomely.

The succubus is actually on a mission to retrieve the soul gem for her balor master. However, she felt the influence of the elder demon Aahtsil, and she has diverted all her energy to finding it—it would be a handsome prisoner and a source of great power and information.

SUCCUBUS CR 7

hp 33; MM 47

TACTICS

During Combat:

The succubus prefers to have others do her fighting, but she does the dirty work herself when necessary. She tries to place herself between two buildings so that she cannot be flanked. She attempts to charm martial enemies and use them as guards against hostile spellcasters, using energy drain against casters.

Morale: If reduced to 20 hp, she teleports away.

C. The Arsenal and Training Field

The great siege weapons of the town are kept here, commandeered by the Upstart to defend against any lords and princes come to take the soul gem. Should greater powers attempt to attack the city, the arcane engines here await their coming. These great devices cannot be moved or used by the PCs (like an opposite-aligned weapon, they give negative levels to any non-demon that touches them). This area is also a large and dusty parade ground, and it is here that babaus practice driving flocks of dretches back and forth, teaching them discipline, hatred, and the best use of raw strength.

D. The Pens

This area is a great pen of dretches, prisoners, slaves, and the like. The slaves are divided according to their spiritual

status (petitioner, mortal, demon, and so on), by race, and then by some intangible quality that the demons seem to have no trouble discerning. The stink is tremendous, and the streets here are covered with filth.

E. The Visitors

This is an area of brothels, inns, taverns, and other entertainments for visitors to the town. Gladiatorial pits, gambling houses, and other less-speakable delights are the norm, and it is not uncommon to see the bodyguards of merchants locked in mortal struggles for the entertainment of their masters.

Parts of this section of town have been torched and destroyed. Squatters and indigents pick through the rubble, fleeing at the slightest sign of motion. An elder (CR 30) vrock-like demon named Aahtsil, a guest of Tarigwydin, meditates here in a burned-down building, its eyes gray with age, its voice a dull rasp.

As Aahtsil greets the party, its very being exudes a menace unlike any they have felt before. Aahtsil does not attack; the demon is not a fighter, and if the party attacks it, it vanishes using quickened *teleport*.

A historian of the demonic race, it desires to learn and write about notable demons. It is here to study the effects of the gem on the local landscape, and to advise the Upstart.

If the PCs tell the ancient demon of the succubus from area E, it is amused to hear she is seeking it, calling her "the little spy." It invites the PCs to bring her to it, for the succubus is no match for its power, and it wishes to practice cruelty on her. However, if the party complies, the succubus attempts to charm the ancient demon. The resulting battle draws the guards from the keep and may even lure Tarigwydin from the safety of the tree for a few precious minutes; this is the party's best chance to enter the keep unmolested.



F. Uptown

Merchants and traders have made permanent homes in this portion of the city. Each home is a small building fortified with powerful magics and patrolled by imported guards. Some of them are mortals, some of the residents are outsiders; all know how to defend themselves. The lambent wards on these houses flicker under the ever-dusk of the plain, warning all viewers to not enter without permission.

G. The Open Field

The area around the keep is kept clear of buildings, tents, and other structures that might block a clear sightline from the fortress walls. Like his predecessors, Tarigwydin wants to ensure that no greater demon can sneak up on the walls without it knowing (though it can't yet prevent enemy teleportation), and it wants to be able to withstand a siege.

H. The Keep

The keep is a thick stone wall with several observation towers built into it. It is the fallback position for the local demons should their town ever be besieged. Most demons serving here don't take an interest in intruders, assuming that any mortal foolish enough to enter this place must be invited.

The real danger for the party is convincing the quasits who flit to and fro that they have a reason to be inside the outer wall of the keep. All quasits start with an unfriendly attitude toward visiting mortals they don't recognize; the PCs must at least shift their attitude to indifferent to keep any of them from raising the alarm (be sure to take into account the plane's penalty to Charisma-based checks for good or lawful creatures). Bribes and mind control may help this situation if the PCs aren't good at talking their way out of problems.

I: The Tree (EL 11)

The tree is over 100 feet high, and its thorns and brambles thrust out in a wicked tangle. The gem is embedded near the top of the trunk at the base of its uppermost branches. Those who wish to remove the gem now must hack it free from the spreading branches of the tree, which deals 2d10 points of piercing damage to the attacker each round (Reflex half DC 25). The tree has hardness 10, 75 hp, and cold, electricity, and fire resistance 30. The Upstart lurks among the branches and only rarely comes out to issue orders or deal with a rebellious underling.

Visitors normally wait at the base of the tree, either calling up to request an audience or coercing a quasit to do so on their behalf. If an unknown creature approaches the Upstart unannounced, the vrock considers it a threat and prepares for battle. The Upstart does not give up the gem willingly; it is the demon's means to power and greatness, and without the gem it is just another expendable warrior. Even if charmed, it refuses to cooperate. At best, the PCs may be able to lure it away from the tree in order to gain time to steal the gem, but if they try to touch or destroy the gem, it attacks.

TARIGWYDIN THE UPSTART

CR 11

Enhanced Vrock

CE Large outsider (chaotic, demon, evil)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +24, Spot +24, *true seeing*

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 20

(+2 Dex, +11 natural, -1 size)

hp 118 (10d8+73); fast healing 1

Fort +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +10

DR 10/good; resistance to acid, cold, and fire 10; **Immune** electricity, poison; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft.

Melee claw +15 (2d6+6) and

bite +13 (1d8+3) and

2 talons +13 (1d6+3)

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

Special Attacks dance of ruin, spores, stunning screech

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

At will—*dispel magic*, *mirror image*, *telekinesis* (DC 18), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs.)

3/day—*gaseous form*, *chaos hammer* (DC 17)

2/day—*fire storm* (DC 22), *power word stun*

1/day—*blade barrier* (DC 19), *heroism*

TACTICS

Before Combat The demon uses *heroism* if it expects a battle.

During Combat Tarigwydin uses its stunning screech, then *mirror image* and *chaos hammer* or *fire storm*. It teleports around the battlefield in order to take full advantage of its enemies' weaknesses, and uses *power word stun* against a winged target to make it plummet to the ground.

Morale The Upstart flees combat only if it appears the gem is being threatened. In this case, it takes *gaseous form* to remove itself from combat, and returns to the gem as quickly as possible. It would rather perish than lose the gem, and fights to the death to defend it.

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 15, **Con** 25, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +20

Feats Blind-Fight^B, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Multiattack, Power Attack, Toughness^B

Skills Concentration +20, Diplomacy +5, Hide +11, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Listen +24, Move Silently +15, Search +15, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +15, Spot +24, Survival +3 (+5 following tracks)

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, telepathy

Aftermath

Without the gem, Tarigwydin's main source of power is removed, and another demon eventually ousts it and takes over. If Tarigwydin survives this coup, it plans revenge on those who ruined its scheme—perhaps by entering a pact with a mortal spellcaster, or finding a way to Golarion, such as through the Worldwound.



ABADDON

Once the PCs use the magical map to return to Axis, they find the Keeper waiting for them. If they have not aligned with the Children of the Reborn Glory and plan to travel to Abaddon next, the Keeper holds a finger aloft to indicate they should pause.

“You are going to enter the realm of Abaddon, where the daemons hold sway. They are foul creatures, full of hate and power, and you will need assistance. Take these, and use them all—they will not survive the trip back to Axis.” With a gesture, she creates an extradimensional space near her, then pulls from it a large sack. Glass bottles clink within as she holds it forward, and the loose folds of canvas outline bulky objects.

In the bag is a sheaf of 10 *+1 daemon-bane arrows* (or crossbow bolts, if the archers in the party use crossbows rather than bows), a *+3 daemon-bane melee weapon* of the

same type preferred by the party’s primary melee character, five flasks of *oil of bless weapon*, and 5 *potions of cure serious wounds*. These items disintegrate into powder moments after the PCs leave Abaddon.

FINDING THE CAULDRON

In the depths of Abaddon, the River Styx winds in an oxbow around a spit of land. On this spit stands an ugly, squat, pipe-covered lump of porous rock and bone called the Cauldron. A mobile island bound in place by a submerged chain, the Cauldron is a place of vile experimentation, a tower plumbed with the polluted waters of the Styx, and the final torment of countless mortal souls. Charonadaemons pay for this research, funding the Cauldron and channeling souls to its master so that they can learn the deeper secrets of the Styx.

In certain parts of Abaddon near the River Styx, the great miasma of lost memory and the despair of oblivion plays tricks on intelligent minds. The daemons in these areas live in the interstices between moments, in the places between the blinks of an eye and the drawing of a breath. This leads

to a strange and disjointed life as their memories pass back and forth, their experience a flicker of moments and minutes, a mélange of precognition and ignorance. The Cauldron is one such place; the soul gem landed near here and was brought to the island for study. It is now in the possession of a daemonic vivisectionist named Couthwaile, the Crying Jackal. Like Tarigwydin in the Abyss, Couthwaile immediately recognized the tremendous power in this gem and seeks to tap it for his advancement and the glory of his race—in that order. To that end, the Crying Jackal has set aside the entire operation of the Cauldron to experiment with the power of the gem upon the souls in his keeping. As time progresses, he expects to twist the gem to create ever-stronger monstrosities, and in the final iteration, he will detonate the gem and harness its power to generate an enormous army of soul-slaved creatures to shake the foundations of the Outer Sphere. The longer the party waits to retrieve this gem, the more time the Crying Jackal has to understand and tether its energies.

The soul gem's arrival destroyed the hidden chain that keeps the Cauldron slowly circling Charon's palace, leaving it to drift idly downstream toward Szuriel's realm. When the PCs use the Keeper's map to teleport to Abaddon, read or paraphrase the following.

The sensory distortion from the map's gate ends. Here the Styx flows through a shattered obsidian canyon. Steam rises from the river, and the stench is unbelievable, like guts freshly spilled under a hot desert sun, or an alleyway between a tavern and a morgue. The steam twists and roils, faces and forms taking shape and whispering indistinct words before being snatched back into the rancid stew; the steam seems to tug at memories, pulling some to the forefront and discarding others. Frog-faced creatures break the surface, sometimes clutching humanoid victims, only to submerge again. Overhead, the sky is a sickly gray, offset by the strange twilight of a perpetual eclipse.

Above the lip of the canyon, soul-splintering winds howl, and streamers of dust and smoke whistle madly through the sky, but it is calm at the bottom. A massive lump of bone and rock has lodged in the shallows at a bend in the river, canted slightly to one side, its door opening onto a platform adjacent to the shore. Behind it and just beyond the canyon rises a massive dead volcano with fortresses and battlements carved into its sides.

The party arrives shortly after the Cauldron becomes mired on the shore of the Styx in Szuriel's volcanic realm. The archdaemon's forces have not yet noticed the Cauldron's arrival, giving the PCs some time to retrieve the gem from Couthwaile.

Abaddon Planar Traits

Abaddon is strongly evil-aligned. Non-evil creatures on this plane take a –2 circumstance penalty on all Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based checks.

THE STYGIAN MIASMA

The soul gem's influence in Abaddon amplifies the localized memory-shifting effect of the Styx, actually allowing minor alterations to time. The PCs can take advantage of the Stygian miasma to flash backward and forward in the island's timeline, avoiding the worst of the monstrosities lurking in the Cauldron. Unfortunately, the daemons have vast experience navigating the memory tricks of the Styx; the PCs do not. The practical result of this is that each time the party uses the miasma to reduce the difficulty of an encounter, Couthwaile becomes aware of the shifts in time and memory, and readjusts his strategies to confound the party in the final encounter, gaining additional abilities based on his awareness of the PCs and his link to the soul gem. It is only the PCs' previous interaction with soul gems that prevents Couthwaile from seeing their actions clearly and moving immediately to stop them.

At the beginning of each encounter in the Cauldron, the PCs may make a Will save (DC 20). If they succeed, they feel the fabric of time warping around them and understand that the Styx's foul air allows them to flicker through memory and locally alter time. If at least one PC chooses to exert his will on the timeline (a swift action), the PCs' opponents in that encounter suffer a –2 on attacks, saves, and checks, and the PCs may treat the first round of the encounter as a surprise round (where their opponents are surprised and they are not). This effect lasts for 1 minute. Its effects do not stack (more than one PC using the miasma does not give opponents multiple penalties). PCs cannot time-shift the encounter with Couthwaile.

Keep track of the number of times the PCs draw on the time-shift; the effect on Couthwaile's power is described in the encounter with him (area 15).

Styx Water

Any creature splashed by water from the Styx must make a DC 15 Will save or forget 1d3 random skills, feats, or (if the character is a spellcaster) spell slots for the next 1d4 days. Characters who forget skills or feats do not lose access to prestige classes, class abilities, or other abilities that rely on the forgotten skills or feats. Casters who prepare spells forget they have those spells prepared but the slots are not actually expended, and casters who do not prepare spells forget they have access to those spell slots. A *heal* or *restoration* spell recovers the lost memories immediately.

Immersion in the Styx is like being splashed, but the Will save DC is 20, a save must be made every round, and

failure means 2d4 random memories (skills, feats, or spell slots) are lost for the next 1d4 days. Any PC that forgets all his skills, feats, and spell slots loses all memories, personal identity, and sense of survival.

THE CAULDRON

The Cauldron looks more like a dead creature than something built, though much of it is solid rock. Fortunately for the heroes, this is not a fortress but a laboratory, and it was designed for functionality and ease of access rather than defense. Most of its interior has no light, as the daemons all have darkvision.

The sole official entrance to the tower is the main doorway that opens onto the platform resting on the shoreline (though creatures can also enter the drainage pipes using *gaseous form* and emerge in one of the machinery rooms on the lower level). The Styx flows quietly around the island, forming slow-moving pools on either side and a narrow causeway (100 feet long and 5 feet wide) connecting the shore to the door platform. The island is far too heavy for the PCs to move; it would take hundreds of slaves and miles of rope to inch it off of the riverbed so it could move freely again.

The Cauldron's door is a great metal affair, rune-carved, and the faces of tortured souls swim under its polished surface as if they were trapped under ice.

Two hydrodaemons guard the entrance. The door is bent in some places and hangs open.

HYDRODAEMON DOOR GUARDS (2) EL 9

hp 59; *Tome of Horrors Revised* 81

TACTICS

During Combat The daemons croak a warning as soon as they sight intruders (though there are no allies close enough to hear them over the noise of the canyon and the island's machinery). On the first round, one attacks while the other tries to use its summon daemon ability to conjure another hydrodaemon. On the second round, they reverse these roles. On all subsequent rounds, they both attack.

The Hallways (EL varies)

The interior of the Cauldron is gray and grim, constantly oozing water and other, less savory fluids from the sticky-slimed stones of the wall. The halls show signs of having been hewn, though portions resemble tunnels chopped through meat rather than lifeless rock. In some places, parts of the wall have been cut too close to nearby rooms, and swaths of animate tissue have been affixed across these thin areas like bandages or patches in a piece of leather clothing. Rusted pipes and tubes crawl crazily across the ceilings, walls, and floors, with little apparent regard for planning or foresight, ranging from 3 feet in diameter to just 1 inch; all of them are wet with condensation or active leaks.

Hazard: The water in these pipes is drawn from the Styx, and while it has been refined enough that it no longer steals memories, it is still harmful to mortals. Between the polluted water, the rust, and chemicals running through the pipes, any creature touching or drinking a significant amount of this water must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract the disease called slimy doom (DMG 292).

There is a 25% chance of a random encounter every 30 minutes the PCs spend in the Cauldron.

RANDOM HALLWAY ENCOUNTERS

d12	Encounter	EL
1–2	Derghodaemon*	10
3–6	Hydrodaemons (2)	9
7–8	Soul-fed golem**	7
9–12	Wraiths (4)	9

* Only encountered once. If killed, no encounter occurs.

** See sidebar on the next page.

DERGHODAEMON CR 10

hp 105; *Tome of Horrors Revised* 80

TACTICS

During Combat The derghodaemon is one of the few of its kind allowed here; there are only a few in the building. It starts the combat with *feeblemind*, then casts *deeper darkness* followed by *cause fear*.

Morale If reduced to 20 hit points, it tries to escape with *greater teleport* until it has recovered, at which point it tries to ambush the party later.

HYDRODAEMONS (3) CR 7

hp 59; *Tome of Horrors Revised* 81

TACTICS

Before Combat: Unless alerted to the presence of the PCs, these daemons are conversing and take a –2 penalty to initiative checks.

During Combat The daemons use their sleep spittle, then make melee attacks.

Morale The hydrodaemons fight until two are dead, at which point the third flees, hoping to raise the alarm.

SOUL-FED GOLEM CR 7

Modified flesh golem (see sidebar)

hp 79; MM 135

TACTICS

During Combat The golem targets the weakest-looking PC until that PC is dead, then feeds upon that PC's soul, repeating this tactic until all the PCs are dead. It follows the PCs if they try to flee.

Morale The golem fights until destroyed.

WRAITHS (4) EL 5

hp 32; MM 258

TACTICS

During Combat These wraiths are remnants of the soul-devouring experiments of Couthwaile, and they try to create more spawn if possible.

Morale The wraiths fight until destroyed.

1. Torture Chamber (EL varies)

This cruel chamber is marked by constant low moans of pain, punctuated by bouts of soul-wrenching screams. Inside are iron maidens, thumbscrews, racks, cats o' nine tails, scourges, wheels, cages, saws, nailed chairs, and other tools that defy description but show signs of frequent use. Tube-like apparatuses hang from the ceiling, some with handles and clamps attached.

The daemons use the torture chambers to learn about the nature of life and death, and how to extract life energy from creatures and corpses. The ceiling tubes are used to conduct Styx water to this location and to siphon away the energy of torture victims.

Stunted hydrodaemon torturers are present, either here or at the adjacent observation post (area 2, if one is adjacent to this room). Weaker than others of their kind, they are still useful here because of their resistance to the Styx water.

The Cauldron tortures its victims by place of origin—that is, outsiders are tortured in one chamber, elementals in another, and mortals in yet another, unless the daemons believe that torturing an angel near a mortal would inflict more pain than being tortured alone. None of the victims brought to these chambers has any chance of survival; even if the PCs attempt to save them, they have suffered irreparable physical and psychic wounds, and mercifully expire shortly after the PCs dispatch their tormentors.

HYDRODAEMONS (1–3)

CR 7

hp 43; *Tome of Horrors Revised* 81

TACTICS

During Combat The hydrodaemons are intent on their work and take a –4 penalty to initiative. They use their sleep spittle and follow up with melee attacks.

Morale The daemons fight until dead.

2. Observation Posts

Peepholes at eye level look out into an adjacent room. Under the peepholes are levers and knobs with no clear purpose.

The peepholes look onto the adjacent torture chamber. The levers activate or deactivate the pipes in that room, starting or stopping the flow of refined Styx water from the ceiling pipes onto potential victims. The knobs adjust the direction of the pipes. If the adjacent torture chamber has hydrodaemons present, they may wander to this area and back as their duties require.

SOUL-FED GOLEM

The Jackal has figured out how to use the soul gem's energy to animate corpses as soul-fed golems. These golems look like scarred and mutilated corpses with glowing eyes the same color as the soul gems. They have all the powers and abilities of flesh golems, plus the following ability.

Feed (Su) When a soul-fed golem kills a mortal, it can extract and consume his soul as a full-round action that provokes attacks of opportunity, pulling it out of the target's face in the form of protoplasmic goo. This destroys the target's soul. There is a 50% chance that a *wish*, *miracle*, or *true resurrection* spell can return the destroyed soul to life; if the check fails, the creature cannot be brought back to life by mortal magic. For every soul the golem consumes, it gains 10 temporary hit points, and its slam damage, natural armor bonus, Fortitude save, and Reflex save increase by +1 for 24 hours. These effects stack. The golem only gains these benefits if the target has at least 9 Hit Dice.

3. Oubliettes

This deep chamber is little more than a pit with a narrow stone walkway around the edge. Cages hang over the blackness, a drop with no end in sight. Remnants of prisoners hang from chains on the walls or drip from the cages; none of the prisoners are alive.

The pit is technically bottomless, for 20 feet below the walkway it becomes a one-way portal to an Abyssal plane of boundless night—this room is where the daemons throw all refuse and other unwanted materials. Light functions normally in the area but stops abruptly at the portal, which may convince the PCs it is actually a *sphere of annihilation*.

Creatures and objects that cross partway through the portal can return, but anything that fully crosses into the dark plane cannot use the portal to return. If a PC goes through the portal, he is lost in the night dimension unless he has some kind of plane-traveling magic (such as the Keeper's map, which he can use to transport himself to outside the Cauldron).

4. Library

The walls of this room contain at least a hundred small niches, each holding a book, tablet, group of scrolls, or other forms of writing.

The experiments conducted in the Cauldron generate an enormous amount of information, and whatever gets

recorded is stored here, though most of it is too abstruse to be of use to the party and the notes are written in a strange mixture of Abyssal, Draconic, and Infernal. The materials are organized in no particular order, but for every hour the PCs spend searching they can make a DC 30 Search check; success means they discover a fragment of a spellbook containing eight non-good arcane spells (GM's choice) from levels 3 to 7.

5. Psychochemical Tortures

These rooms contain scarred steel tables, with many chains and manacles attached. Mounted to the wall is a small rack of multicolored flasks, and nearby is a dull black orb that shines with an evil purple light.

The daemons use these chambers to test the long-term effects of fear on minds, as well as to break the spirits of especially resistant torture subjects. The tables are suitable for immobilizing human-shaped creatures from 3 to 15 feet tall; the manacles are made of steel, cold iron, or silver, suitable for restraining most outsiders. The rack holds vials containing horrid drugs that inflict waking nightmares on anyone exposed to them. Any creature touching the orb must make a DC 16 Will save; failure means it suffers the effects of a *fear* spell. Success means it can direct the *fear* to any creature on the table. If a drugged creature is subjected to this fear, the effects combine into an ongoing state of panic that lasts for 10 minutes. Each room contains 200 gp worth of these drugs; all of them are addictive and most are illegal in civilized places.

6. Barghest Pens (EL 9)

Five demonic wolves growl at each other, fighting over the gristle-coated remnants of a man-sized skeleton.

On occasion, the daemons use living creatures to torment their guests, and lately they have been using these barghests to savage the prisoners. These beasts are hungry and anxious to please their masters, having seen too many of their littermates destroyed at the hands of the daemons.

BARGHESTS (5)

CR 4

hp 36; MM 23

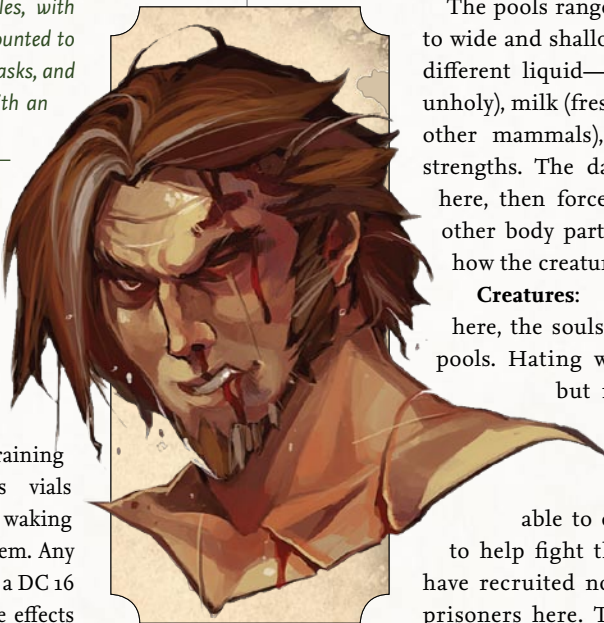
TACTICS

During Combat The barghests start a battle using *crushing despair* and *charm monster*, targeting the primary spellcasters, then use melee attacks.

Morale If three of them are killed, the remaining two use *dimension door* to escape and find help.

7. The Drowning Pools (EL 9)

This room is filled with thirty pools of varying sizes and colors. Near each pool is one or more shallow grooves with straps bolted to the floor, positioned so any creature held therein must touch the contents of the pool.



HAWKINS

The pools range from narrow and deep to wide and shallow. Each pool contains a different liquid—water (Styx, pure, holy, unholy), milk (fresh, curdled, cow, human, other mammals), and acids of varying strengths. The daemons tie the victims here, then force their heads, limbs, or other body parts into the liquid to see how the creatures react to the contact.

Creatures: Four wraiths hover here, the souls of fresh victims of the pools. Hating what they have become but not yet hating all life, these wraiths do not immediately attack.

The PCs may be able to convince or force them to help fight the daemons if the PCs have recruited no other allies from the prisoners here. Their initial attitude is unfriendly, but they help if the PCs shift their attitude to friendly.

WRAITHS (4)

CR 5

hp 32; MM 258

TACTICS

Morale The wraiths fight until destroyed.

8. Mortal Slave Pit

Resting in a hole in the ground are twenty humanoid prisoners—humans, elves, dwarves, and others. All of them look like they have been starved and tortured for a long time.

Most of these prisoners are in no shape to walk, let alone fight, and many are beyond sanity, curled into fetal positions and crying or shaking silently. Only two have the strength to assist the party—**Hawkins** (LG male human paladin of Iomedae 7, hp 20 out of 70) and **Mithini** (NE female human rogue 7, hp 10 out of 40). If the PC heal them and give them equipment, they'll help in the battle against Couthwaile; otherwise if freed they plan to lead the other mortal captives out of the Cauldron and try to find a way back to Golarion.

9. Fiend Slave Circles

Imprisoned within six magical circles are six fiends, all of them bloodied and bound with silver or cold iron shackles.

The daemons do not restrict their victims to mortals. Their researches have led them to capture both demons and devils, and they have thrown their fiendish prisoners together into a single chamber, their restraints keeping them from slaughtering each other or their captors. They are all emaciated and near death, their essence having been drawn away and erased by the waters of the Styx.

The devil captives call themselves **Vemurus** (osyluth, 20 hp), **Kithona** (erinyes, 15 hp), and **Vous** (barbazû, 10 hp). The devils offer to aid the party in exchange for their release, but use any loophole as an excuse to slip from their word. If the PCs make a DC 25 Bluff or Diplomacy check, they can convince the devils to aid them in the assault against the daemons.

The demon captives call themselves **Splinterbone** (babau, 21 hp), **Biting Kiss** (succubus, 18 hp), and **Bloodpinion** (vrock, 33 hp). They promise to aid the party in return for their freedom, but have no compunctions against breaking their word. If they are freed and the devils are still chained, they slaughter their hated foes and then leave the Cauldron, warning the PCs not to follow or interfere.

If Hawkins (from area 8) is with the party, he protests freeing or teaming up with the fiends (insisting they be put to the sword instead). He leaves if the PCs employ them in any fashion.

10. Axiomite Slave Crystal

A thin layer of transparent crystal seals off this chamber and coats its interior walls. Trapped within it is a dwarven man, though he is no normal dwarf, for as he moves he leaves behind trailing motes of light and strange magical symbols that fade into nothingness, and every few seconds he completely dissolves into these lights, reforming again into his humanoid shape.

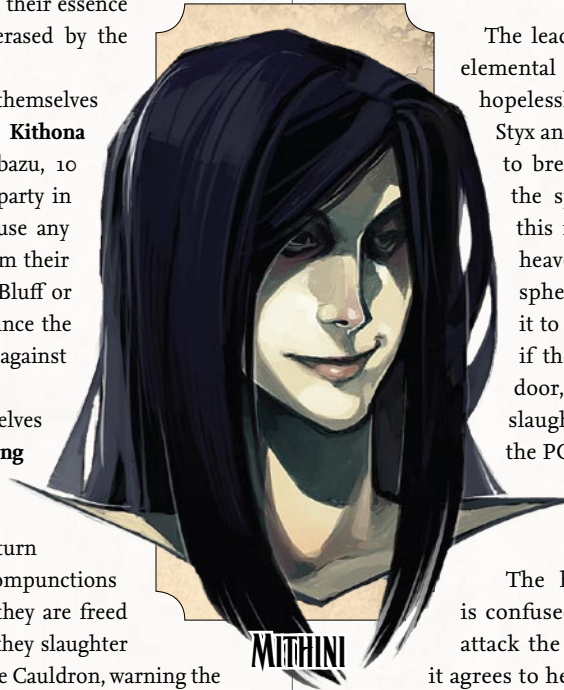
This creature is **Arobaini**, an axiomite—an outsider native to Axis and an epitome of pure law (the PCs saw many such beings during their brief stay in Axis). The crystal is warped by fiendish energy, dripping with water from the Styx, and Arobaini cannot find an orderly pattern in its shape, which is slowly driving him insane.

To free Arobaini, the PCs must break the crystal (hardness 8, 35 hit points, break DC 25). The axiomite has 15

hp out of his maximum 68, but he fights to his last breath to help those who freed him. For more information on axiomites, refer to Pathfinder Chronicles supplement *The Great Beyond, A Guide to the Multiverse*.

11. Elemental Slave Room (EL 9)

This room contains a 20-foot sphere of lead, dented outward in several places, and a sphere of fire, inside of which is a creature resembling an air elemental, recoiling from the heat of its prison.



The lead sphere contains a greater water elemental named **Wurr** that has been hopelessly polluted by the water of the Styx and now wants only death. Its efforts to break free have dented the sides of the sphere, and if the PCs linger in this room for more than 2 rounds, it heaves itself one last time against the sphere, cracking it open and allowing it to escape. It attacks anything it sees; if the party is not between it and the door, it moves into the hallway and slaughters all it can before it is killed. If the PCs leave the room before the water elemental frees itself, they hear it crash free and can choose to avoid it as it leaves the room.

The huge air elemental, **Saaahroon**, is confused and hurt (22 hp), but does not attack the PCs if they free it, and if asked it agrees to help them until the PCs have slain five enemies. The fiery sphere is a permanent *wall of fire* (caster level 10).

WURR, GREATER WATER ELEMENTAL CR 9
hp 37 (out of 176); MM 100

TACTICS

During Combat Wurr first attacks the bubble of fire containing the air elemental with its quench ability, then leaves the air elemental to fend for itself as it roams the Cauldron looking for other things it can kill.

Morale Wurr fights anything in its path, but does not pursue fleeing foes. It fights to the death.

12. Celestial Slaves

Two unconscious prisoners are bound to the wall with cold iron shackles. One is a stocky male elf, the other a bird-like humanoid.

Celestial captives rarely last long in the Cauldron; their blood and agony is prized in this place, and their holiness sends their tormentors into a frenzy. The manacles are etched with blood and malice and prevent **Valothan** (bralani, MM 93,

LET THE PLAYERS HELP

The PCs have the opportunity to free several prisoners who can help them battle the daemons of the Cauldron. They've used all of their special abilities (such as spell-like abilities) that have daily use limits. Rather than adding to your burden as GM in controlling all of these characters in a battle, have the players run these allies as if they were cohorts. Mortal allies may turn up again once the heroes return to Golarion, while the outsider allies may run into the PCs during planar adventures or be willing to help if summoned (with spells like *planar ally*).

13 hp) and **Kurreha** (avoral, MM 141, 21 hp) from using any of their magical abilities. They awaken if given any healing. If freed, they volunteer to help the PCs defeat the daemons of the Cauldron, to the death if need be. They will not join the PCs if the demons or devils from area 9 are with the party.

13. Treasury

Though most of what lies in this room looks like useless trash, the glint of coins, gems, and other valuables scattered about indicates this is some sort of treasury.

The Cauldron's captives have provided a vast amount of treasure to the island. Most of it has been tossed aside or traded away, but some of these items have been left here in case they have need of them later. If the PCs reach this room, they find 500 gp haphazardly scattered across the floor, 2–5 gems worth 100–300 gp each, several low-level magic items (three +1 daggers, five potions of cure light wounds), various spoiled and useless potions, shattered or burnt-out rings, a major circlet of blasting, a +2 flaming long sword, and a +2 heavy mace. Searching the entire room to collect these treasures takes one person 20 minutes.

14. Machinery (EL 6)

This room is filled with a convoluted arrangement of pipes, gears, containers, cranks, levers, and more incomprehensible things, all apparently controlling the movement of water. The sound of rushing water and clanking metal is loud enough to make normal conversation difficult.

Here in the bowels of the Cauldron, vast pumps suck water from the Styx. Repairs to these and other mechanical parts are handled by a diseased old hydrodaemon who wanders between these rooms, its carapace battered and broken, its summoning abilities gone. The first time the PCs come to this floor, roll 1d10 and count clockwise from the southernmost room on this level to see where the

daemon is; afterward, it wanders up and down the long hallway, changing rooms approximately every 10 minutes. Because of the noise of the pumps, add +10 to all Listen DCs in the machinery rooms or their connecting hallways.

Each room contains 2–3 vulnerable machine parts (hardness 4, 10 hit points). Damaging or destroying machinery at melee range requires a PC to make a DC 20 Reflex save or suffer one of three effects: 1d6 hit points of damage from flying shrapnel, 1d6 electricity damage, or a splash of Styx water (see page 13). If the PCs destroy at least six of these vulnerable parts, it slows the machine in area 15 where Couthwaile performs his experiments.

HYDRODAEMON

CR 6

hp 59; *Tome of Horrors Revised* 81

15. Ritual Chamber (EL 11+)

The snaking pipes do not extend into this hallway; the ceiling and walls are smooth and lack mechanical clutter. Nailed in various places on the wall are "tapestries" of stretched humanoid skin, some of them bearing tatoos or other body features such as scars, nipples, hair, and broken feathers. At least one of the skins shudders as if still in pain. The floor is bare except for a jagged carpet of long fingernails. Ahead is a curtain of crackling electricity that completely blocks the hallway. Visible through momentary gaps in the curtain is a room containing some large object.

The curtain is the equivalent of a permanent wall of fire (caster level 9) except it deals electricity damage instead of fire damage (directed outward, away from the room). Another wall of electricity blocks the room's other exit. The daemons all have electricity resistance 10, so they can stand near the wall unharmed, and even passing through it is merely an annoyance rather than lethal—most can merely teleport past it anyway. Once the PCs dispel or pass the energy wall, they can see the interior of the room.

This domed area is about 100 feet across, with buttresses holding up the roof. Strange pulleys hang around the perimeter, with chains and corpse-laden platforms connecting to various points on the wall. In the center of the chamber is a machine of dizzying complexity, smothered in tubes, gears, pulleys, wheels, and levers, suspended from the ceiling and shaped like an inverted pyramid. Beneath it is a metal slab with four humanoid corpses. The machine spits and flares, with a beam of energy connecting it to one of the bodies. Barely visible in the center of the machine is the missing soul gem.

The daemon Couthwaile monitors the machine, making adjustments to the energy it pumps into the dead body. If the PCs were noisy or careless passing through the energy barrier, or used the localized time-shifting ability in earlier battles in the Cauldron, the Crying Jackal is aware of them. If the PCs did not use time-shifting at all and somehow reached

this area quietly (such as by teleporting past the lightning barrier), it may be surprised by their arrival.

Standing next to the machine is a mangy, jackal-headed daemon, about nine feet tall and wearing tattered robes. Rank ichor oozes from pustules that litter its body and face, and even its eyes weep sickness. Its posture is stooped and bent, its movements strangely fluid, as if it were liquid held together by an act of will. Next to it is a scarred humanoid whose eyes glow with the power of a soul gem.

The scarred humanoid is a soul-fed golem (see page 14). The daemon is Couthwaile, master of the Cauldron. If it is aware of the PCs, it looks up from its work and speaks.

"I am Couthwaile, master of this place. You are interfering with my experiments. I will have your souls unless you explain yourselves immediately."

The daemon does not give up the soul gem without a fight; its powers have allowed it to make several remarkable breakthroughs in its research about light and death, and it expects similar advancements in the very near future. Once combat starts, the machine animates a corpse as a soul-fed golem on round 2 and another every 5 rounds thereafter (unless the PCs damaged the machinery on the lower level, in which case a new golem animates every 7 rounds). Once all four corpses are animated as golems, the machine does nothing. A newly-animated golem takes no actions unless it or the Jackal is attacked.

To reach the soul gem, a PC must climb the machine. The machine oozes polluted Styx water; every round a character touches it requires a saving throw to avoid contracting slimy doom. The gem rests in a newly-added socket inside the machine, guarded by a deathblade wall scythe trap (DMG 73). Removing the gem causes the machine to shut down immediately and keeps it from creating any more soul-fed golems. The PCs can destroy the machine (hardness 4, 100 hit points), which stops it from creating any more golems and allows them to retrieve the soul gem safely.

Couthwaile gains extra abilities depending on how many times the PCs used the time shift ability. These abilities are cumulative. Remember that the PCs cannot use the time shift in this battle.

COUTHWAILE'S SOUL GEM POWERS

Time Shifts	Additional Abilities
0	—
1	initiative boost*
2–3	quickened daemoniac explosion 1/day
4–5	quickened wall of fire 1/day
6+	quickened power word stun 1/day

* Described under Couthwaile's special abilities.

COUTHWAILE, THE CRYING JACKAL

CR 11

Soul-gem-enhanced meladaemon (see page 30)

Init +9 (see initiative boost)

TACTICS

Before Combat Couthwaile uses the golem as a living shield.

During Combat The daemon separates enemies with wall of fire and targets any enemy outsiders with its daemoniac explosion ability, and preferentially attacks anyone attempting to reach the soul gem or harm the machine. It uses quickened power word stun to disable a flanking character, and uses melee attacks and quickened magic missile to shred weak-looking enemies. If combat lasts 15 or more rounds, the machine begins to vibrate, and on round 16 the soul gem detonates, its power surging through the machine and blasting outward in all directions. Couthwaile shouts in triumph as its power enters his body, and five more soul-fed golems arise from the corpses along the edges of the room as the soul gem's energy activates them simultaneously.

Morale Couthwaile tries to teleport away at 25 hp.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Initiative Boost (Su) Unless it is surprised, Couthwaile's initiative roll is always treated as a natural 20.

16. Balcony

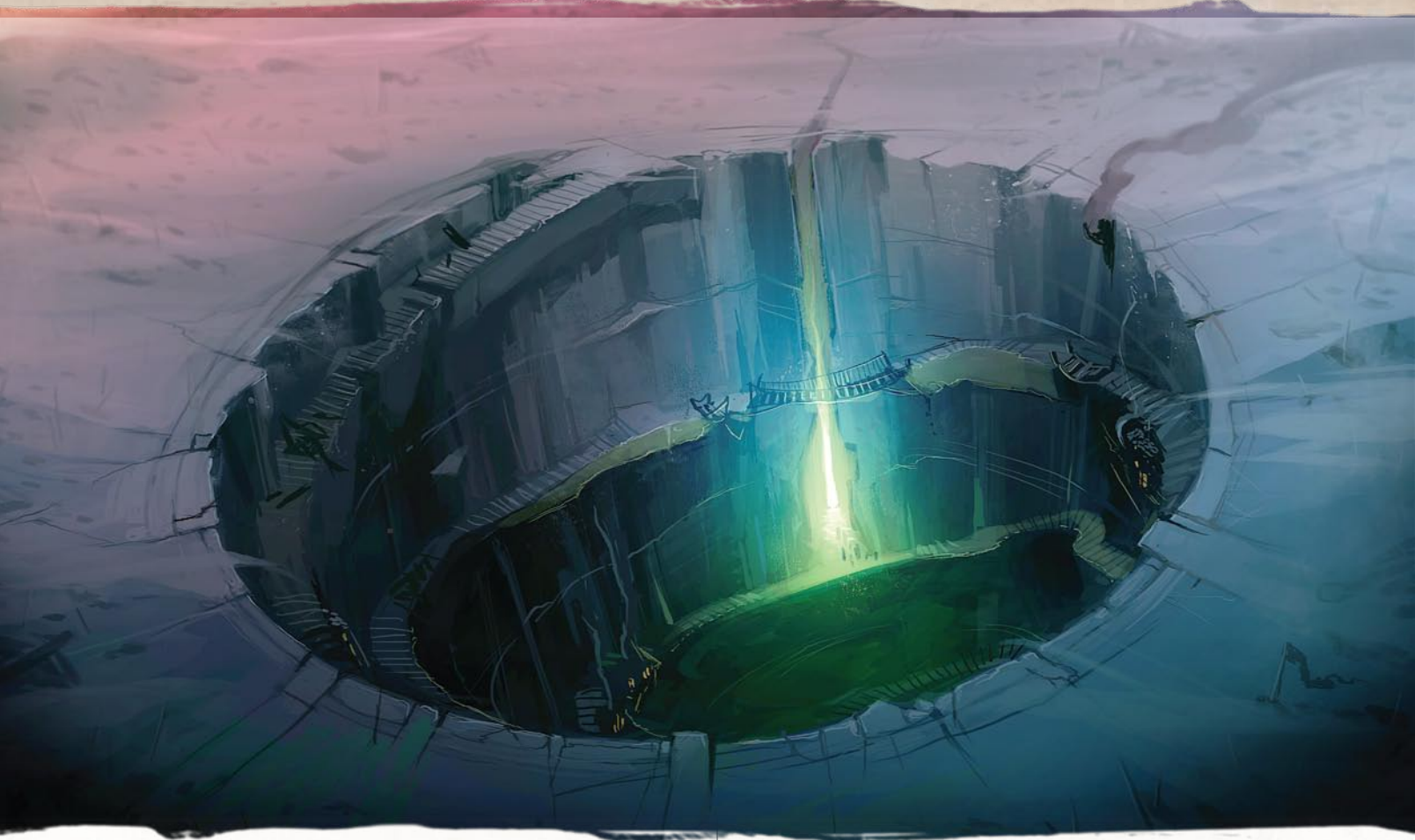
This balcony is protected by a hardy-looking dome of transparent crystal overlooking the front part of the mobile island, including the rune-carved front door. Countless tiny figures are visible on and around the many fortresses on the nearby volcano, and it appears that some kind of army housed there is heading toward the beach.

The dome allows Couthwaile to look out without fear of anyone else coming in. It is as hard as magically treated iron (DMG 60). The massing armies are those of Szuriel, lord of this part of Abaddon, investigating why Charon's minion's laboratory is here.

Abaddon Aftermath

If the PCs fight Couthwaile and the battle lasts long enough for the machine to overload the gem and animate multiple golems at once, the daemon gains the supernatural ability to create soul-fed golems without needing the machine, which it uses to bargain with Charon and Szuriel for more influence in Abaddon. It is very angry at the PCs for risking an early end to his great experiment, and hounds them with packs of soul-fed golems.

If the PCs destroy the machine or steal or destroy the soul gem, it is a major setback for Couthwaile and it loses much status among the other daemons. The jackal swears revenge on the mortals who took its prize from it, sending planar assassins after them, exposing them to strange diseases, and so on.



AXIS AGAIN

Once the PCs have returned the Abyss and Abaddon soul gems to the Keeper (or report that they are destroyed), she takes back her magical map, concentrates on it for a moment, then returns it to the PCs, explaining that the interference around the third gem is gone. Looking at the map, the PCs can see its gem-icon indicates the last stone is in Axis. The gem is outside the border of the city, but within the plane itself—hidden somewhere in the decaying realm of Aroden.

The PCs can travel overland to Aroden's domain by conventional means, but the Keeper explains that there are several powerful creatures warring over control of the dead god's realm, and they are very suspicious of visitors—some of them may see the PCs as threats or potential rivals. She suggests the PCs use the map to transport themselves immediately to the vicinity of the soul gem. If the PCs take the harder route, they encounter erinyes, formians, dragons and dragon-blooded hybrids, rogue angels, and other strange people, some of which may actually be coolly courteous toward the PCs. Any

battles should be vicious and difficult, for the stakes are high and the PCs' opponents want no upstart adventurers taking over Aroden's fallow realm. If a battle starts to turn against the PCs, remind them that they can still use the Keeper's map to escape.

Remember that the lawful nature of the plane affects all checks by non-lawful characters (see page 6).

THE CATHEDRAL OF THE REBORN

There is a pit within Aroden's old realm in Axis. It opened only recently, as the planes measure such things, having formed upon the god's death, but it seems as if it has always been there. Moss-covered walls extend deep into the earth, and stairways—some carved into the granite, some rickety wooden affairs crawling across it—line its face. A few desperate or half-mad residents of Axis have relocated here, carving out simple caves or building crude lean-tos, creating a vertical village in the ancient stone. At the bottom of the pit lie the abandoned hulks of ancient machines of war, useless and powerless, resting haphazardly upon each other as if thrown down by an angry giant. Some totter precariously on a stairway, used as temporary shelters or salvaged for wood before they eventually grow unstable and crash to lower levels.

Under the earth, in a bubble that rises some hundred feet, a cathedral is growing, its floor plan a mirror of Aroden's winged eye symbol. The discovery of this cathedral that was the true catalyst for the Children of the Reborn Glory, the seed at the heart of their belief that they could reconstitute Aroden's soul. They have been collecting soul gems and bringing them here to use in a ritual that they believe will bring Aroden back to life. The presence of soul gems has hastened the growth of the cathedral, providing a strange life to the building and twisting it into new forms. The Children husband this growth as they can, using subtle magic and sheer force of will.

Though they present a unified front to those outside their organization, individual members of the Children have their own ideas about the use of the soul gems, and here in their stronghold the differences between the Resurrectionist, Purifier, and Absorber factions become more evident, especially as their quest for the gems draws close to completion (see the next section for information on these factions). Keep in mind that the Children do not even hint that their group has any schisms unless they completely trust the PCs.

The Keeper's map can transport the PCs to the great pit. If Olvan and his followers weren't killed by the PCs, they appear again in this portion of the adventure. They have been out finding other gems for their ritual, and have acquired almost enough to begin it. During this part of the adventure, the Children acquire the last of the 20 soul gems they believe they need to reconstitute Aroden, with or without the party's help.

The PCs may use diplomacy or other tactics to convince one of the factions that the Children will fail in their goal. However, if they are successful in convincing one of the factions to give up their dream, the other two factions become more intractable—the end of this adventure will see the splintered Children fighting during the Great Ritual, seeking to control its outcome and channel its power, or (depending on which factions remain) trying to end the ritual, remove the gems, and return them to the Keeper at Pharasma's Spire. Under no circumstances will any faction members allow the PCs to take any of the soul gems.

The PCs have many opportunities to talk their way through this part of the adventure, but they can just as easily fight their way to its conclusion. Once they choose the way of battle, the rest of the adventure must be solved that way—until the final battle when the factions turn against each other, the Children will not stand for violence against their own by outsiders.

Unless the Children know the PCs have battled Olvan's team, they welcome the PCs to the temple, inviting them in and attempting to convert them to the cause. Each of the faction leaders finds an excuse to get the PCs alone, inviting them to a quiet place to talk about their interest in the cathedral of the reborn Aroden. Each leader attempts

to gauge the party's interest in the gems, the likelihood the party can be paid off or convinced to help, and the possibility of using the PCs as spies against the other factions.

If the party chooses to talk through this part of the adventure, the Children treat them as honored guests—they have, after all, been blessed enough to handle or at least see the soul gems, fragments of the essence of Aroden. **Galen** (founder of the Children) welcomes them to his office and speaks to them, urging them to join the Children. He listens to what they have to tell him, but he does not make any commitment to a course of action without thinking it through first.

THE FACTIONS

The Children are not a large cult, but they have great hopes of rapid expansion once they have achieved their goal. However, they are already factionalized, with members coming to the group for different reasons. Generally, the people who recruited the newest members found like-minded folk who agreed with their goals for the cult and warned the recruits to keep their views hidden if they differed from Galen's stated purpose. The Resurrectionists are the main branch of the group. The Purifiers and Absorbers know of each other's existence, but do not know the specifics of their rivals' goal; neither does any group know with certainty who and how many belong to each faction, but they have their suspicions, and as the time of the Great Ritual draws closer, the lines are being drawn. The following descriptions note each faction's goal, leader, and members. Game stats for the members of the cult are in the Appendix.

The Resurrectionists

These people are the core of the Children of the Reborn Glory, the ones who first gathered together in the hopes of resurrecting Aroden. They believe they will receive a share of the grace of their reborn god.

Leader: Galen was trained as an acolyte in Aroden's church, but the god died before Galen ever progressed to being able to cast spells, and he finished his training as a priest of Iomedae. His old faith in Aroden was reborn when he received a vision that his god's essence was freed of Pharasma's clutches. He is the founder and spiritual heart of the Children of the Reborn Glory, the one whose vision and faith in the rebirth is the most pure. He does not see that others might be in the Children for their own benefit; he is not a fanatic, but neither is he a cynic. Now he prays to Aroden using the gems as a conduit for his powers. He does not know that his original vision was a creation of a protean (see area 7), nor that the protean's manipulation is what allows him to draw spell power from the atheist soul gems.

Other members: Olvan the Gem Hunter, Caermyn (LN male human fighter 6), Harrt (LN male human fighter 6),

Keira (LN female human fighter 6), Kester (N male human rogue 7), Manawell (LN male half-elf fighter 6), Nilayt (LN human female fighter 6), Ravan (N male human fighter 6), Viskan (LG male human fighter 6).

Dissuasion: To convince this group to abandon their plan, the PCs must prove that the gems are not fragments of Aroden's soul, and they must learn of the duplicity of the other two factions. Showing Galen that his clerical powers diminish the farther he travels from the cathedral is one way; if they were truly pieces of the divine, they would not falter with distance, for faith does not diminish across space. If the party discovers the protean hidden in area 7, this provides ample evidence that trickery is afoot in the very nature of the cathedral, and Galen would sacrifice his dream rather than give birth to a nightmare. The PCs can convince individual members of this group with Bluff (DC 25), Diplomacy (DC 20), or Intimidate (DC 25) checks.

The Purifiers

This group wants to use the power of the gems to revive Aroden, but only after removing parts of his personality (particularly his lawfulness) and energy so they can rebuild him to their liking. They believe in the goal of restoring the dead god, but they do not fully trust the idea that Aroden will return, and they believe it better to have control over the final result than rest secure in the gratitude of a partial god.

Leader: Thangrim is a demon-hunter from Nidal whose family migrated to Mendev, and who made his name against the demons of the Worldwound before he came to Axis. He wants to bring the power of Aroden against the Umbral Court of Nidal, but he doesn't believe the god will support his cause, so he wants to alter the resurrected god into someone more tractable.

Other members: Allston (N male human rogue 7), Dunstan (N male human fighter 6), Inaya (NG female half-elf fighter 6), Lachlan (NG male half-elf fighter 6), Omnis (NE male human fighter 6), Ostenrov (NG male human fighter 6), Santiaro (NE male half-elf rogue 7), Theitreysu (N female half-elf fighter 6), Theovora (NG female human fighter 6).

Dissuasion: To stop the Purifiers, the PCs must show them that the soul gems are not the pieces of a god, or they must be shown the Absorbers' plan to betray them. For example, the PCs could ask them why, if Pharasma is a proponent of order, would she undermine the lawful

god Aroden and keep his essence imprisoned, rather than trying to resurrect him so he could continue to promote order? The PCs can convince individual members of this group with Bluff (DC 25), Diplomacy (DC 20), or Intimidate (DC 25) checks.

The Absorbers

Of the three factions, the Absorbers are the worst of the lot. They are evil or greedy men and women who don't want to bend Aroden's power or to share in his glory, but rather seek to steal the god's power altogether. They intend to do this by starting the ritual and then beginning a slaughter among their fellow cultists. They believe the blood of their former allies will smother and redirect the power, eliminating the god's consciousness altogether and allowing them to do with it as they please.

Leader: The leader of this faction is Nataru, a Garundi wizard, an agent of the mummy god Walkena (see page 105 of the *Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign Setting*). He claims to have come from the river-city of Nantambu, and to have traveled to Axis to learn greater magics to protect his city against the depredations of the reavers of Angazhan. He is actually here because Walkena heard of the soul gems, and wanted their power for himself; Nataru's goal is to steal the power of the gems and bring it back to his god.

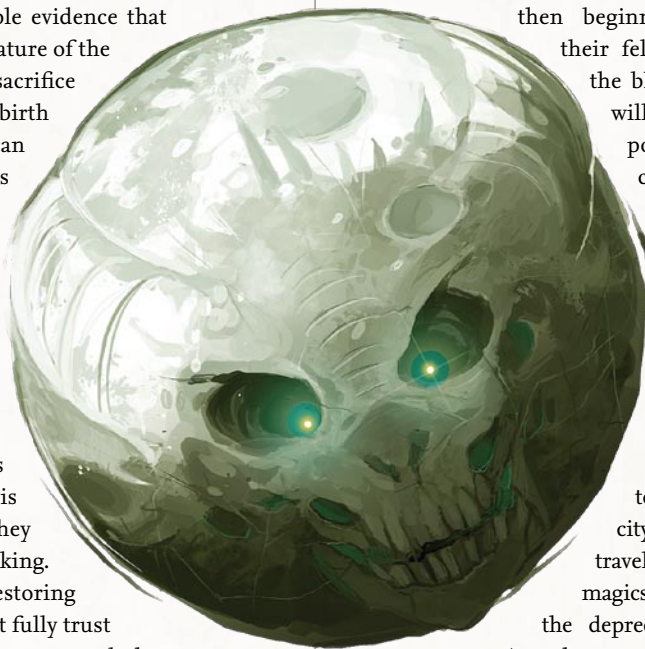
Other members: Abu-Kasm (NE human male rogue 7), Hestrix (NE human female rogue 7), Minwacht (LE human fighter 6), Prizis (NE female half-elf fighter 6), Salan (N male human fighter 6), Tanador (LN male half-elf fighter 6), Tristan (NE male human fighter 6).

Dissuasion: The Absorbers will not turn from their mission to destroy the Children and harness the power of the soul gems for themselves, and they pursue this goal single-mindedly.

APPROACHING THE CATHEDRAL

If the PCs teleport using the Keeper's map, they appear in the great pit, at the outer edge of the cave that holds the newly grown cathedral where the Children of the Reborn Glory hope to resurrect Aroden.

A narrow walkway spirals around the cylindrical chasm's interior, sometimes nearly obstructed by broken siege engines or small huts



built out of crude salvaged material. Far above, the impossible height of the Spire of Pharamasma is visible, with the dread visage of Groetus the god-moon lingering near. Ahead is a cave cut into the wall of the chasm, providing a subtle golden light from farther in, beyond a slight bend in the tunnel.

The Keeper's map indicates the soul gem is in the direction of the glowing cave. If the PCs proceed forward, after a narrow, stooped space it opens into a wide cavern that eventually opens up into an even wider area containing a crystalline cathedral.

At its widest point, this great cavern is more than two hundred feet across. The center part of the cavern's far wall is a cathedral of crystal and gold, seemingly growing from the rock itself. Its doors are open wide, and an air of peace and power radiates from it. Atop its spire is a winged eye. The light within the great cavern comes from the cathedral itself, a subtle but pervasive illumination that bathes the entire area in a welcoming brightness.

For the most part, the people here do not confine themselves to single rooms. The leaders stay in their offices most of the time, working on various plans, but other members walk around, fetch food, stop off to visit their friends in other rooms, and in general treat this as their home.

The walls are opaque crystalline stone in soft gold and green shades; the ceilings are translucent crystal, lit from the farther side, giving the appearance of being in an above-ground building rather than one buried in the earth. The entire temple is considered brightly lit (equivalent to a *daylight* spell); it is possible to extinguish the lights with *dispel magic* or other effects, affecting a 50-foot square for 1d10 minutes, but the glow from nearby areas makes it difficult to make the temple completely dark in anything but a small enclosed space.

Though planetary directions such as "north" are irrelevant on this plane, the map contains a compass rose to make it easier to describe directions within the cathedral.

1. The Entry

The outer walls meet at an angle here, forming a triangular space with one of the interior walls. The crystalline ceiling glows with the same warm, golden light as the great cavern.

If the party has not dispatched Olvan and his crew yet, they are here within the entryway, having just returned from another gem-hunting expedition. They are battered and dirty, but grimly triumphant—they have lost another member, but they recovered another soul gem and are confident that Aroden will restore their lost friend to life. (See The Great Ritual section for an alternate way of handling the PCs' approach to the cathedral.)

If he fought with the PCs previously, Olvan sends one of his team to bring reinforcements and then turns to face the party, his staff at the ready. "What do you want here?" he growls. If you want this adventure to focus on fighting, rather than speaking, Olvan rushes his group farther into the temple and raises the alarm, preparing his team for battle.

If the PCs answer honestly—that they're here for the soul gem—he says, "Come in and speak with our leader, Galen. Maybe he can change your mind." Olvan is too tired to bluster and threaten the PCs right now, and would rather have a peaceful resolution to this conflict, but he'll fight if he needs to. If the PCs agree, Olvan takes them into the Cathedral and introduce them to Galen.

2. The Atrium

The walls here are steel, granite, and crystal, with gold and green trim around the walls. The room looks like it has been converted into a mess hall, with long tables shoved against the walls and an improvised kitchen in the far right corner near some iron stairs.

Graceful iron stairs to the balcony (area 8) rise to the northwest and northeast. The stairs in the north part of the room lead under the balcony to the Great Eye (area 6). The servants working and cleaning here surrender or flee if attacked; the servants are all level 1 human, half-elf, or halfling commoners of neutral, lawful good, or lawful neutral alignment. They have no information about the soul gems, only knowing that their employers are faithful, wise folk who want to restore the dead god Aroden to life.

3. Rectory

This is some sort of barracks with several bunk beds. Curtains divide the room into several areas for privacy.

The Resurrectionists sleep here. Each person has a locked footlocker filled with basic adventuring gear (100–300 gp worth of rope, alchemical supplies, and so on). If nobody has raised an alarm that the temple is being attacked, there are usually 1d6+3 Resurrectionists here, recovering and resting from their last endeavor.

4. Coatrooms

This small room has many hooks to hang up cloaks and coats, though they're currently being used to hang weapons, with other arms stacked against the wall.

These rooms serve as the armory for the cathedral. Inside are two morningstars, three quarterstaves, five longspears, five maces, 15 longswords, 20 short swords, 30 daggers,

5. Galen's Office

This neat room looks like an office and a bedroom—a large desk, leather chair, bed, and footlocker are pushed against the walls, with two smaller chairs stacked nearby.

This is the place where Galen conducts everyday business not related to the rebirth of his god, and it doubles as his bedroom. A loose stone behind the desk hides a lever that opens a secret passage to the treasury (area 5a) and the presbytery (area 7).

The chest at the foot of the bed is not locked, and Galen keeps his +3 *heavy mace* there unless he expects battle. Should combat start, he immediately retrieves his weapon. The chest also contains 300 gp, 400 sp, and a map similar to the Keeper's map, except that this one shows more than 30 other gem locations, some of which are black or colors other than the familiar blue of the Keeper's map. Exactly what these gem notations mean is up to you—perhaps they are other magical gems the Children seek, soul gems that have been recovered, or something else entirely.

5a. Treasury

This large room contains only three chests. The first is unremarkable, the second is bound in silver, and the third is iron and mithral.

The wooden chest contains 1,200 gp and 10 diamonds worth 300 gp each. The silver-bound chest is trapped with a *glyph of warding* (DC 17, blindness) and contains a *pearl of power* (3rd level) that Galen planned to give Olvan as a reward for all of his hard work retrieving the soul gems. The mithral chest is also trapped with a *glyph of warding* identical to the other. Its interior is padded like a jeweler's case and contains 19 other soul gems, kept here for transport to the presbytery and brought out at the beginning of the Great Ritual (depending what the Keeper said to the PCs, it is possible this is the first time they realize there are more missing gems than just the three the Keeper sent them to retrieve).

The magic of the cathedral keeps the soul gems stable; removing them from the cathedral and not taking them immediately to the Keeper for storage in Pharasma's Vault is dangerous (as described in the first part of this adventure).

6. The Great Eye

This is clearly the central worship chamber of the cathedral—a great vaulted room, domed with crystal and admitting a green-golden light, with balconies overlooking the main floor. The symbol of Aroden is painted on the dome above, mirroring a mosaic laid out on the floor below. Rows of pews are pushed back to the rear of the room. An altar on a dais is at the far end of the room, with a large,

old tapestry showing Aroden covering the wall. Suspended from the ceiling is an orrery tracking the Outer Sphere, Inner Sphere, various godly icons, and other unrecognizable things.

On a closer look, the mosaic on the floor contains 20 sockets, each the size of a soul gem. Behind the old tapestry is a small door leading to the presbytery (area 7).

If the PCs have been invited into the cathedral by Olvan or Galen, their host explains their belief that the orrery's movements are approaching an important conjunction, and that they can resurrect Aroden using his power and personality that has been fragmented and stored within the gems. Now that the Children have 20 soul gems, they are ready to begin the Great Ritual, which will proceed in a few hours once the final preparations are made; if the PCs are friendly, the Children invite them to witness the ceremony.

7. The Presbytery

This room is a private chapel, a small place for priests to reflect, study, and dress themselves for religious ceremonies before stepping out into the main room to conduct services. Accoutrements hang on pegs on the wall, and religious objects—books, a chalice, and a scepter—sit in gilded cases near the door.

There are two secret doors here. One leads to a hallway connecting to the office (area 5), with a secret entry to the treasury (area 5a); Galen is aware of this secret passage and uses it almost every day. The other secret door is unknown to any humanoid resident of the cathedral, and holds the greater secret of this place—the mossy, pillar-strewn chamber (area 7a) of the protean named Song of Poison.

7a. Mastermind's Chamber

Unlike the rest of the cathedral, this place has a more primal look to it, with rough-looking stone walls, lush green moss covering most surfaces, and a flickering light that alternates between amber and violet.

A strange, serpentine creature with clawed arms and a crown of magical symbols floating above its head spins lazily in the air here, flying as easily as an eel moves through water. The creature is a protean, a native of the Maelstrom and the antithesis of all order, seeking to dissolve the other planes back into the unformed chaos of their home, which they believe is the natural state of the multiverse. Specifically, this is a keketar, a subrace of priest-scholar-noble proteans that hear the voice of the Maelstrom, which the proteans worship as a god. The protean's name is Song of Poison, and it is the being responsible for the entire mess: the one who spread the idea of using the soul gems as a source of power, and who whispered sweet lies of resurrection to Galen.

If the PCs find this room, the protean does not flee, nor does it begin to fight. Instead, it welcomes them to its sanctuary and offers them refreshment (using its ability to reshape reality, it can create quasi-real material out of pure chaos, including luxuries such as a banquet table). If PCs ask what it is doing here, it tells them honestly of its scheme and how it hoped to engineer the descent of Groetus, and to help generate more chaos among the followers of Aroden. It freely admits to having husbanded the growth of the Cathedral, and to channeling the power of the gems into Galen as “divine energy.” It also warns the party that although they have uncovered its involvement, this does not mean that its plans have come to an end. Rather, it says, they have simply entered a new phase; the Maelstrom will overcome the disease of order, and the misguided faith of the living will be replaced with the certainty of pure chaos.

If the PCs choose to fight, Song easily escapes using *greater teleport* (it is a CR 17 creature and the PCs have no chance to defeat it). It has no wish to die, and understands that the PCs may attack it out of ignorance, fear, or confusion; it may find the PCs at some point further in their careers, perhaps to offer them friendship, or perhaps to oppose them. It constantly schemes to bring more chaos to creation.

8. Balcony

This balcony overlooks the main room of the temple, allowing spectators to watch ceremonies below.

The balcony is 15 feet above area 6. During the Great Ritual, three members of the Absorbers faction watch from the northeast part of the balcony, with bows hidden nearby. Once open conflict begins, they fire down at rival faction members, targeting foes that attempt to flee for the doors.

9. The West Wing

Judging by the many empty bookshelves, this is supposed to be a library. It has been converted to a barracks, with curtains dividing the room into smaller sections.



SONG OF POISON

The west wing is home to the Purifier faction. Nine people live here; as with the Rectory, each bunk has a footlocker containing personal items and a small amount of adventuring gear (approximately 100 gp worth of goods).

If the PCs are guests of the Children (rather than hostile invaders), there are usually 1d4+2 Purifiers here playing cards. If one or more PCs want to play, the Children are happy to deal them in; the total pot for the game can go as high as 10 gp per participant.

9a. Thangrim's Office

This cramped office contains a chest, a bed, a desk, a chair, and a bookshelf with scrolls, books, and loose parchment.

Much of Thangrim's time is spent corresponding with friends and allies in Mendev, asking about their progress against the Worldwound and assuring them that soon they will have a great power on their side. The desk also contains a few papers about some of the more public members of the Umbral Court of Nidal (Thangrim's old homeland).

10. The East Wing

Bookshelves line the walls here, though they are mostly empty. Curtains divide the room into smaller areas for sleeping.

This wing is home to the Absorber faction. Nine members live here, and they are much less friendly than their counterparts in the west wing (area 9), though not obviously hostile or suspicious. A few books on theology, magical theory, and Golarion's history (worth 500 gp total) sit on the bookshelves here; all are old and well-thumbed.

10a. Nataru's Office

This austere room contains a chest, bed, desk, chair, and bookshelf.

If the PCs somehow manage to search Nataru's desk before the Great Ritual, they find a *dagger of venom*, a *wand of magic missile* (10 charges), and a *necklace of fireballs* (type II), all intended as rewards or bribes to his underlings or contacts in Axis. He brings these items with him to the

ceremony, and if the PCs somehow steal them before the ritual, he will be very suspicious of the PCs (as they are the only strangers present in the cathedral).

THE GREAT RITUAL

If the PCs are invited to the ceremony, they witness these events from the beginning. If the PCs are attacking the cathedral, they arrive just as things become extremely chaotic (proceed to Open War, below).

Warning: This encounter takes a lot of preparation and has many sides working against each other.

By Galen's decree, no one is to bring any weapons to the Great Eye (Galen offers a footlocker for the PCs' weapons if they wish to attend). A few hours after the PCs arrive, a horn sounds—the signal for the Great Ritual to begin. The senior members of the cult are invited to come and stand within the mosaic in the Great Eye to pray and direct their thoughts toward restoring the soul of Aroden to wholeness, while the rest (including the PCs, if invited) gather in the south part of the room or on the balcony. From the presbytery, Galen emerges, dressed in full, classic Arodenite regalia. His assistants are Olvan, Harrt, Inaya, Prizis, and Nataru, with the last four carrying the iron chest from the treasury (area 5a) that contains the soul gems.

The Ceremony: The five assistants move to various points around the mosaic, and Galen begins a call-and-response ceremony. At each response, his assistants retrieve a gem from the chest and place it in a socket on the floor. Once eighteen gems are placed, the assistants move to the altar with the chest, taking their places in order from west to east along its front end. Galen then takes the last two gems from the chest and places them within the mosaic. Bands of green and gold power spring from the gems, quickly creating a lattice of interconnected energy. Galen raises his hands to begin an invocation to Aroden.

Open War: As Galen begins speaking, one of the Absorbers on the northeast balcony fires a crossbow bolt into his chest, dealing 1d4 points of damage plus wyvern poison (DMG 297). Nataru has made his move.

Despite Galen's proclamation against arms at the ceremony, the Absorbers and Purifiers opted to bring smaller, concealable weapons like daggers and blackjacks. When the violence breaks out, the Absorbers try to drive their rivals away from the gems. The Purifiers move in for some up-close knife work. In the meantime, the Resurrectionists—who respected the ritual and didn't bring weapons—retreat to the armory (area 4) or their barracks (area 3) to fetch weapons and deal with this betrayal. If Galen is debilitated by the poisoned crossbow bolt, the other Resurrectionists may insist he remain out of the rest of the battle.

Smashing the Gems: Nataru moves to the eastern side of the mosaic. The Absorbers want to bend the lattice of magical energy toward him, and they try to accomplish this by smashing the four gems on the west side of the mosaic.

The energy from the smashed gems enters the lattice and it shifts as a unit to hover over the remaining soul gems, bringing it closer to Nataru. Because the Purifiers believe that the western side of the mosaic-symbol represents Aroden's lawfulness, the destruction of these gems still meets their goals, as the lattice will not draw upon those aspects as strongly without the gems there. However, when the Absorbers begin destroying the northwest and northern gems, the Purifiers believe that the Absorbers have gone too far, and turn against them.

If destroyed, a gem releases a burst of force damage (see page 3). Other gems in the burst take half damage from this explosion (no save).

Saving the Gems: The Resurrectionists believe that the loss of any gem is unacceptable, and attempt to shield the gems and kill those who would destroy them. Some try to remove the gems from their sockets and place them into the iron chest at the altar for safekeeping. The PCs may snatch some of the gems and make a break for the Keeper, or they can stay and try to save as many gems as possible.

Nataru's Goal: If the Absorbers are successful in destroying 10 gems, a crack in the floor appears, revealing the churning blue void of the Maelstrom. The destruction of 15 gems sees the crack widen to a 5-foot-wide rift, and the destruction of all 20 gems creates a chasm encompassing the entire mosaic. However, Nataru's plan is doomed to fail; destroying 15 or more gems means the energy lattice disintegrates him, and it is then absorbed into the Maelstrom aperture in the floor. A few minutes after the creation of this connection to the Maelstrom (regardless of its size), a team of axiomite soldiers and inevitable shock troopers arrives to seal the breach and arrest anyone still at the cathedral (including the PCs, though their connection to the Keeper eventually absolves them of all suspicion).

Aftermath: Even if the PCs defeat the Purifiers and Absorbers, the Resurrectionists want to try again. The only way the PCs can prevent this is to kill them all, steal their remaining soul gems, or convince them that the gems do not contain the essence of Aroden. If the Resurrectionists can repeat their ceremony (which may require the present planar conjunction or one of similar magnitude) with at least 10 gems, it sparks the creation of a new godling in Aroden's realm. The presence of this atheist-born paradoxical demigod keeps Groetus at bay for now; this gives Pharasma time to restock her Vault with more repelling souls. However, the personality and power of the new god is stunted because it was created from so many different psyches; depending on the composition of the gems that created it (particularly in regard to alignment) it may end up very different from the Aroden-like personality the Resurrectionists expect. The godling also senses that the PCs are somehow responsible for the missing pieces, and either makes enemies of them or charges them to help make it whole.

APPENDIX

CHILDREN OF THE REBORN GLORY

This section contains all the game statistics for the members of the cult, starting with the leaders and following with the rank-and-file of the group.

GALEN, CULT LEADER

CR 10

Male half-elf cleric of Aroden/Iomedae 10

LN Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +4, **Spot** +4

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 22

(armor +11, Dex +2)

hp 55 (10d8+10)**Fort** +13, **Ref** +8, **Will** +15

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.**Melee** +3 *heavy mace* +12 (1d8+5)**Special Attacks** turn undead**Spells Prepared** (CL 10th)5th—*flame strike* (DC 20), *greater command* (DC 20), *wall of stone*4th—*divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *neutralize poison*, *spell immunity*3rd—*dispel magic* (3), *searing light* (DC 18)2nd—*bear's endurance*, *hold person* (2, DC 17), *silence*, *spiritual weapon*1st—*bane* (DC 16), *bless*, *command*, *divine favor*, *entropic shield*, *remove fear*0—*guidance*, *light* (3), *purify food and drink*, *resistance***Domains** None. Galen has no domain spells because his power comes from the soul gems rather than a deity.

TACTICS

Before Combat If expecting battle, Galen casts *divine power* on himself.**During Combat** Galen casts *wall of stone* to separate Nataru from the soul gems. He throws a *bead of force* at any leaders he sees forming amid his enemies. He heals allies and casts offensive spells at those who attempt to move around the *wall of stone*. If there is a lull in the battle, he casts *neutralize poison* on himself to prevent taking any secondary poison damage.**Morale** Galen does not flee from combat.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 13, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 15**Base Atk** +7; **Grp** +9**Feats** Combat Casting, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Negotiator**Skills** Concentration +7, Diplomacy +11, Heal +12, Knowledge (the planes) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +4, Search +1, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +5, Spot +4**Languages** Celestial, Common, Elven**SQ** spontaneous casting (cure)**Combat Gear** +3 *heavy mace*, *bead of force*, *boots of speed*; **Other Gear** +1 *half-plate*, +2 *light steel shield*, +3 *cloak of resistance*

NATARU, ABSORBER LEADER

CR 10

Male human wizard 10

NE Medium humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** Listen +7, **Spot** +8

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 15

(+4 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 65 (10d4+40) plus 15 temporary hp**Fort** +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.**Melee** *dagger of venom* +4 (1d4)**Spells Prepared** (CL 10th; +4 melee touch, +7 ranged touch)5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 20), *feeblemind* (DC 20), *hold monster* (DC 20)4th—*animate dead*, *bestow curse* (DC 19), *enervation* (2)3th—*blink*, *dispel magic*, *vampiric touch* (2)2nd—*eagle's splendor*, *invisibility*, *see invisibility*, *web* (DC 17)1st—*chill touch* (DC 16), *color spray* (2, DC 16), *jump*0—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*

TACTICS

Before Combat Nataru casts *false life* and *mage armor* every day.**During Combat** The wizard's focus is staying close to the soul gem energy lattice so he can absorb and redirect it toward his master, the Mwangi god Walkena. He uses his spells to disable opponents (he can always kill them later), using his *wand of scorching ray* to destroy soul gems at a distance, and saving *vampiric touch* for when he needs healing.**Morale** Nataru sees the battle for the soul gems as his moment of victory, and only tries to flee if his allies quickly suffer heavy losses. Otherwise, he fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 14, **Con** 18, **Int** 20, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 16**Base Atk** +5; **Grp** +4**Feats** Alertness, Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Craft

Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Negotiator,

Persuasive, Scribe Scroll

Skills Bluff +11, Concentration +9, Craft (alchemy) +10,

Decipher Script +10, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information

+6, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge

(dungeoneering) +10, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge

(the planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +7, Sense

Motive +7, Spellcraft +10, Spot +8

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal**SQ** familiar (Shavi, snake)**Combat Gear** *dagger of venom*, *wand of ghoul touch* (10 charges), *wand of scorching ray* (10 charges), *necklace of fireballs* (type II), *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *scroll of teleport* (2, CL 9); **Other Gear** +2 *amulet of health*, +1 *cloak of resistance*, +1 *ring of protection*; spellbook with all prepared spells and 20 levels of wizard spells levels 1–5.

SIR THANGRIM OF WHITE'S STEADING, PURIFIER LEADER CR 10

Male human fighter 6/ranger 4

LE Medium humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19

(+9 armor)

hp 91 (6d10+24, 4d8+16)

Fort +13, **Ref** +6, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee +2 *bastard sword* +16/+11 (1d10+6/17–20/x2) or
mwk dagger +14/+9 (1d4+3/19–20/x2)

Ranged composite longbow (+3 Str) +10/+5 (1d8+3)

Special Attacks favored enemy (demons, +2)

Spells Known (CL 2nd)

1st—*longstrider*

TACTICS

Before Combat If at the Great Ritual, Thangrim carries a hidden dagger rather than his bastard sword.

During Combat Thangrim attacks any cultist who tries to destroy gems other than the “lawful” gems on the west side of the room. After 1 round of battle, he realizes things have gotten out of hand and retreats to his room to retrieve his bastard sword, then returns to the fight. Though he is evil, he is not openly hostile to the Resurrectionists, and only attacks them if they attack him first; he spends most of his effort on the Absorbers who get in his way.

Morale Thangrim does not flee from combat.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 11, **Con** 18, **Int** 11, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +13

Feats Alertness, Demon Hunter (*Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign Setting*), Endurance, Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Negotiator, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword)

Skills Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +4, Heal +6, Hide +4, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +2, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +8, Ride +6, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8, Survival +6

Languages Common

SQ animal companion (Flax, eagle), archery combat style (Rapid Shot, does not apply in medium or heavy armor), track, wild empathy +8

Combat Gear *potion of fly*; **Other Gear** +1 *full plate*, +2 *amulet of health*, 365 gp

SCOUTS OF THE CHILDREN CR 7

Male or female human or half-elf rogue 7

Medium humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision (half-elves only); Listen +5, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 15

(+3 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 38 (7d6+14)

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk short sword +7 (1d6+1)

Ranged hand crossbow +7 (1d4)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

TACTICS

Before Combat The rogues try to place themselves in flanking positions before combat begins. If they can, they use sneak attack with ranged attacks before joining melee.

During Combat The rogues shift position to maintain flanking against their opponents, and prefer flanking spellcasters.

Morale Resurrectionist rogues do not flee combat. Purifiers and Absorbers flee at 25 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 15, **Con** 14, **Int** 11, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6

Feats Acrobatic, Improved Initiative, Stealthy; humans also have Quick Draw

Skills Balance +7, Climb +5, Disable Device +5, Escape Artist +7, Hide +12, Intimidate +6, Jump +7, Knowledge (local) +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +7, Search +5, Sense Motive +2, Spot +5, Tumble +9; humans also have Knowledge (religion) +5

Languages Common

SQ trapfinding

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, masterwork short sword, hand crossbow, 10 bolts; **Other Gear** masterwork studded leather, 50 gp

SOLDIERS OF THE CHILDREN CR 6

Male or female human or half-elf fighter 6

Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18

(+6 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield)

hp 45 (6d10+12)

Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee mwk longsword +10 (1d8+4)

Ranged mwk short bow +7 (1d6)

TACTICS

During Combat Resurrectionist fighters work as a cohesive unit, staying close to their allies.

Purifiers are more loosely banded, preferring flanking with rogue allies and surrounding lone targets.

Absorbers strike at targets of opportunity, lone individuals,

and those who offer the most threat.

Morale Resurrectionists and Purifiers are fanatics, and do not flee from combat. The Absorbers are more mercenary, and individuals flee if reduced to 20 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword); humans also have Combat Reflexes

Skills Intimidate +6, Listen +4, Spot +4; humans also have Knowledge (religion) +3

Languages Common

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, masterwork melee weapon, masterwork short bow, 20 arrows; **Other Gear** breastplate, heavy steel shield, 50 gp

OLVAN, SOUL GEM HUNTER

CR 9

Male half-elf wizard (enchanter) 9

LN Medium humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 15

(+2 armor, +3 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 22 (9d4)

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk quarterstaff +7 (1d6+1)

Spells Prepared (CL 9th)

5th—*dominate person* (DC 18), *silent wall of ice* (DC 17)

4th—*charm monster* (DC 17), *fire shield*

3rd—*deep slumber* (2, DC 16), *fireball* (2, DC 16), *lightning bolt* (DC 16),

2nd—*darkness*, *flaming sphere* (2, DC 15), *hideous laughter* (2, DC 15), *shatter* (DC 15)

1st—*burning hands* (DC 14), *charm person* (2, DC 14), *shocking grasp* (2), *sleep*

0—*daze* (DC 13), *dancing lights*, *flare* (DC 13), *ray of frost*

Prohibited Schools abjuration, conjuration

TACTICS

Before Combat Olvan casts *fire shield*, selecting hot or cold depending on whether he thinks his opponents use cold or fire.

During Combat Olvan begins with *fireball* to eliminate weak opponents, then uses *dominate person* and *charm monster* to gain bodyguards and pacify enemies. If silenced, he casts *wall of ice* to buy time or escape.

Morale If Olvan's companions are losing quickly, he sounds a retreat, using his spells and wand to give his allies cover and a chance to escape. Otherwise, he fights until reduced to 10 hp, at which point he surrenders.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 15, **Con** 10, **Int** 16, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +5

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Investigator, Negotiator, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell

Skills Bluff +4, Concentration +4, Craft +7, Decipher Script +5, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +5, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (history) +7, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +4, Profession (investigator) +7, Search +7, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +15, Spot +4

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Infernal

Combat Gear masterwork quarterstaff, *wand of magic missile* (15 charges, CL 9); **Other Gear** +3 *ring of protection*, *ring of force shield*, *robe of useful items*, spellbook (all cantrips and prepared spells plus *floating disk*, *magic missile*, *wall of force*, and *wind wall*)



OLVAN

MELADAEMON

This jackal-headed fiend is as tall as an ogre but slightly stooped. It wears tattered robes and other accoutrements of alchemy and study. Oozing pustules cover its exposed flesh, and its eyes weep a crusted mess of yellowish goo.

MELADAEMON

CR 11

NE Large outsider (daemon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., telepathy 100 ft.; **Listen** +20; **Spot** +20

Aura corruption (50 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 18
(+5 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)

hp 112 (10d8+50)

Fort +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities amorphous body; **DR** 10/good; **Immune** acid, death effects, disease, poison; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 19

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee 2 claws +13 (1d6+4 plus slimy doom) and bite +8 (1d8+2 plus slimy doom)

Special Attacks daemonic explosion, slimy doom (DMG 292)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)

At will—*cause fear* (DC 13), *deeper darkness*, *desecrate*, *detect magic*, *dimension door* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)

3/day—*blight*, *quicken magic missile*, *wall of fire*

1/day—*greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *power word stun*, *waves of fatigue*

TACTICS

Before Combat Meladaemons prepare for combat by planning the best place to use *wall of fire* to separate opponents.

During Combat A meladaemon usually leads with *wall of fire*, then targets an enemy outsider using daemonic explosion, then disables a non-outsider with *power word stun*, then finishes off opponents with claws. It uses *quicken magic missile* as often as possible to deal extra damage to a dangerous melee foe or blast a ranged spellcaster.

Morale Meladaemons prefer to teleport out of danger when outnumbered or very injured, but one heavily invested in productive research might fight to the death to protect its plans.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 20, **Con** 23, **Int** 24, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +18

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*magic missile* 3/day)

Skills Heal +18, Knowledge (the planes) +16,

Knowledge (religion) +16, Knowledge (two others) +16, Listen +20, Move Silently +20, Search +16, Spot +20, Survival +18

Languages Abyssal, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Amorphous Body (Ex) A meladaemon's body has few distinct vital spots, and those it has shift about as the dripping mess of its flesh reshapes itself. A meladaemon has a 25% chance to treat critical hits and sneak attacks against it as normal attacks (as if it had the *light fortification* armor quality). A meladaemon fighting defensively or using total defense automatically manipulates its vital spots to avoid attacks, increasing this chance to 75%. This ability does not apply if the daemon is denied its Dexterity bonus against the attacker or is unable to take physical actions.



Daemonic Explosion (Sp) Meladaemons can transport themselves into the flesh of any living or dead outsider they can see or are in mental contact with. This functions like *teleport* combined with *slay living*; the meladaemon targets an outsider or outsider's corpse, then teleports into the target's body. The target must make a Fortitude save (DC 17) or die instantly, exploding outward in a burst of bone and disease-ridden gore that deals 3d6+10 points of slashing damage to all within 10 feet (Reflex half DC 17). The save DC is Charisma-based. Creatures who take damage from the burst must save again (Fortitude DC 14) or contract slimy doom. The daemon reforms instantly in the square formerly occupied by the target. If the targeted outsider makes its save, it takes 3d6+10 points of damage as it vomits forth the liquefied daemon from all of its orifices; the daemon reforms into any square adjacent to the target, and the target must make another save or contract slimy doom. Creatures immune to death effects are immune to this ability. A meladaemon can use this ability at will.

Corruption (Su) Saves against diseases made within 50 feet of the daemon have a –5 penalty. This includes saves against the daemon's own slimy doom disease. This aura also ruins nonmagical food after 1d4 minutes of exposure, dulling most of its flavor and negating its nutritional content.

Living manifestations of famine and wasting (both physical and spiritual), meladaemons toil constantly to spread their subtle afflictions across the planes. Like a cancer's progressive consumption, meladaemons take obsessive pleasure in causing prolonged agony, combining an artist's grace with a researcher's methodical rigor. Each mortal soul consumed is not enough—there must be an exploration of every nuanced scream and pain-wracked seizure, a savoring of each panicked death.

Meladaemons range from 7 to 9 feet tall, but their bodies are thin and scrawny like a humanoid on the brink of starvation, their wasted frames mirroring the afflictions they herald. Appearing like emaciated, upright jackals, the fiends move with unnatural, disturbing fluidity; their flesh is more like a slurry of mucus, blood, and bile wrapped around a hard skeleton than solid muscle and skin.

Ecology

As the deacon servitors to Trelmarixian the Black, Archdaemon of Wasting, meladaemons act toward a slow, deliberate genocide of all mortal life. Just as death by famine can be slow and excruciating, so are their methods. More so than any of their daemon kindred, they care as much about the process by which mortals die as they do the actual death. They endlessly experiment upon mortals and mortal souls, tormenting them simply to watch the progression of their misery, using them as the building

blocks of soul-fueled alchemy, and ritually consuming them to complete their knowledge of the process.

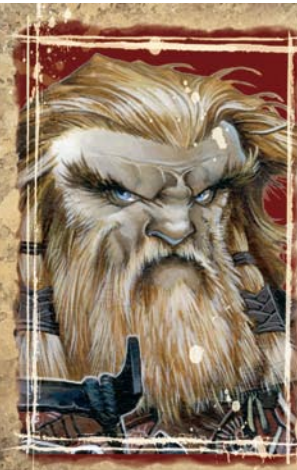
Most meladaemons believe that their current existence is a curse, placed upon them by the state of mortality itself, and as such their innate hatred of mortals finds perverse focus. The destruction of mortals brings them closer to lifting that curse and achieving oblivion or perhaps some promised apotheosis denied them by a jealous multiverse. The key to unlocking that status lies in the very mortals they loathe so much.

Despite that roiling hatred, they realize they began as mortals themselves, for Trelmarixian creates the meladaemons by combining mortal souls with lesser daemons, infecting and torturing them with planar diseases and unspeakable agonies until they fully transform into their jackal-humanoid shape. Other daemons whisper that the meladaemons harbor a drop of their patron's own essence within themselves like a spiritual cyst, never truly whole, never truly alone, acting as unwilling, ignorant eyes and ears for the Lord of Wasting.

Habitat & Society

While possessed of a frighteningly manic obsession with experimentation and ritualized consumption of mortal souls and even other outsiders, meladaemons react very differently to other daemons and even their own caste. They unite in common servitude to their archdaemon patron, but sometimes this tolerance of other daemons (and even other meladaemons) seems forced upon them. Though their loyalty to Trelmarixian never wavers, a small fraction of their kind retreat into seclusion for months or years at a time. During these periods, they often dwell on the borders of their lord's domain, or (at his bidding) forge temporary agreements with other archdaemons or Abaddon's lesser nobility, acting to further Trelmarixian's aims before their return to their kindred.

When dealing with lesser daemons, they act with an icy, clinical detachment, cold and pragmatic like a physician working in a quarantined area of a deadly plague outbreak, willing to use the creatures around them as chattel or subjects to analyze rather than treating them as thinking creatures. Meladaemons do not waste resources recklessly, but they have no compunctions against breaking down an obstacle with the weight of dead minions if they gain something in the process. Toward the other ranking daemons they display a false courtesy, a thin veneer over a callous sense of condescension, and that sense of smug superiority balloons when they interact with other fiends, turning into a rancid, acerbic arrogance. Meladaemons do not work well with demons or devils, and even less so with any other outsiders. Even if they manage to conceal their frothing hatred, they always secretly believe they're better than their partners.



Harsk
MALE DWARF RANGER 9 OF TORAG
ALIGN LN INIT +4 SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

14	STR
18	DEX
16	CON
10	INT
12	WIS
6	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 69

AC 21 (+4 against giants)
touch 14, flat-footed 17

Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +4
+2 vs. poison and spells

Animal Companion
Biter (dire badger, MM 268)



Combat Gear screaming bolt (3), +1 demon-bane bolt (6), +1 human-bane bolt (6), antitoxin, potion of cure moderate wounds (2), smokestick, tanglefoot bag, 30 bolts; **Other Gear** +3 studded leather armor, mwk silver dagger, +1 amulet of natural armor, bird feather token, +2 gloves of Dexterity, backpack, rations (4), signal whistle, teapot, 30 pp, 12 gp

OFFENSE

Melee +2 greataxe +13/+8
(1d12+5/x3)

Ranged +2 light crossbow +13
(1d8+2/19–20) or

Ranged +2 light crossbow +9/+9
(1d8+2/19–20) (using Manyshot)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +11

Special Attacks favored enemy
(giants +4, undead +2), +1 on attack
rolls vs. orcs and goblinoids

Spells Prepared (CL 4th):

1st—entangle (DC 12), resist energy

SKILLS

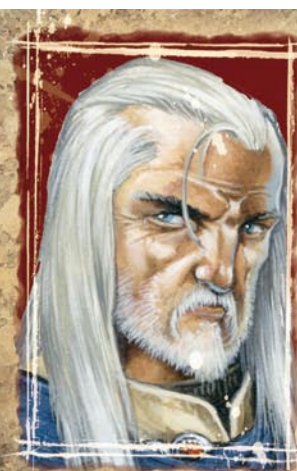
Heal	+11
Hide	+16
Listen	+13
Move Silently	+16
Spot	+13
Survival	+13
Wild Empathy	+7

FEATS

Endurance, Point Blank Shot, Manyshot,
Precise Shot, Rapid Reload (l. crossbow),
Rapid Shot, Track, W. Focus (l. crossbow)

SPECIAL QUALITIES

darkvision 60 ft., evasion, stability,
stonecunning, swift tracker,
woodland stride



Ezren
MALE HUMAN WIZARD 9
ALIGN NG INIT +4 SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

11	STR
11	DEX
12	CON
20	INT
15	WIS
9	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 34

AC 14
touch 11, flat-footed 13

Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +10;
Special Qualities 250 XP set
aside for item creation

Familiar Sneak (weasel,
MM 282)



Combat Gear alchemist's fire, potion of cure moderate wounds, pearl of power (2nd-level spell), scroll of rope trick, wand of magic missiles (CL 5th, 46 charges), 3rd-level wizard scrolls (3); **Other Gear** cane (as club), dagger, 20 bolts, +2 gloves of Dexterity, +3 bracers of armor, +2 cloak of resistance, +2 headband of intellect, +1 ring of protection, bag of holding (type I), rations (6), scroll case, spellbook, spell component pouch, diamond dust (250 gp), 100 gp pearls (2), 220 gp

SPELLS

Spells Prepared (CL 9th, +4 ranged touch
with ray):

5th—cone of cold (DC 20)

4th—ice storm (2), stoneskin

3rd—dispel magic, fireball (2, DC 18), fly

2nd—bull's strength, scorching ray (2),
web (DC 17)

1st—alarm, burning hands, magic
missile (2), shield (2)

0—daze (DC 15), detect magic (2), light

OFFENSE

Melee cane +4 (1d6)

Ranged cane +4 (1d6)
light crossbow +4 (1d8/19–20)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +4

SKILLS

Appraise	+9
Concentration	+13
Knowledge (arcana)	+16
Knowledge (geography)	+16
Knowledge (history)	+16
Knowledge (the planes)	+10
Spellcraft	+16

FEATS

Combat Casting, Empower Spell,
Great Fortitude, Greater Spell
Penetration, Improved Initiative,
Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration



Seelah
FEMALE HUMAN PALADIN 9 OF IOMEDAE
ALIGN LG INIT +0 SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

16	STR
10	DEX
16	CON
8	INT
14	WIS
12	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 79

AC 25
touch 11, flat-footed 25

Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +7
SQ aura of courage, detect evil,
divine health, remove
disease 2/week, special mount



Combat Gear holy water (4), arrows (20), brooch of shielding (34 points), potion of haste (2), wand of cure light wounds (50 charges), potion of cure serious wounds, potion of lesser restoration; **Other Gear** backpack, dagger, +2 full plate, +2 heavy steel shield, +2 amulet of health, +1 ring of protection, +1 cloak of resistance, rations (4), silver holy symbol, 233 gp

OFFENSE

Melee +2 longsword +15/+10
(1d8+5/17–20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow
(+3 Str) +10/+5 (1d8+3/x3)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +12

Special Attacks lay on hands (18 hp/day),
smite evil 2/day, turn undead 4/day
(+1, 2d6+7, 6th)

Spells Prepared (CL 4th)

2nd—shield other

1st—divine favor

SKILLS

Knowledge (religion)	+9
Ride	+4
Sense Motive	+11

FEATS

Cleave, Improved Critical
(longsword), Mounted Combat,
Power Attack, Weapon Focus
(longsword)

MOUNT

Aristide (heavy warhorse, MM 273)



Kyra
FEMALE HUMAN CLERIC 9 OF SARENRAE
ALIGN NG INIT +0 SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

14	STR
10	DEX
14	CON
10	INT
18	WIS
12	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 62

AC 23
touch 11, flat-footed 23

Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +13
Special Attacks
turn undead 4/day (+1,
2d6+10), +1 CL for healing
spells, greater turning 1/day



Combat Gear 20 bolts, holy water (3), wand of cure moderate wounds (40 charges), wand of bull's strength (11 charges), pearl of power (2nd-level spell); **Other Gear** +3 chainmail, +2 heavy steel shield, +1 cloak of resistance, +2 periapt of Wisdom, +1 ring of protection, +2 gloves of Dexterity, backpack, gold holy symbol (with continual flame), rations (4), 34 pp

SPELLS

Spells Prepared (CL 9th, +6 ranged
touch)

5th—flame strike^P (DC 19), slay living (DC 19)

4th—divine power (2), fire shield^P,
restoration

3rd—blindness/deafness (DC 17), dispel
magic (2), remove disease, searing light^P

2nd—aid (2), heat metal^P (DC 16), resist
energy (2), spiritual weapon

1st—bless (2), cure light wounds^P, divine
favor, shield of faith

0—detect magic (2), light, mending (2)

D domain spell; **Domains** Healing, Sun

OFFENSE

Melee +1 scimitar +9/+4
(1d6+3/18–20)

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

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

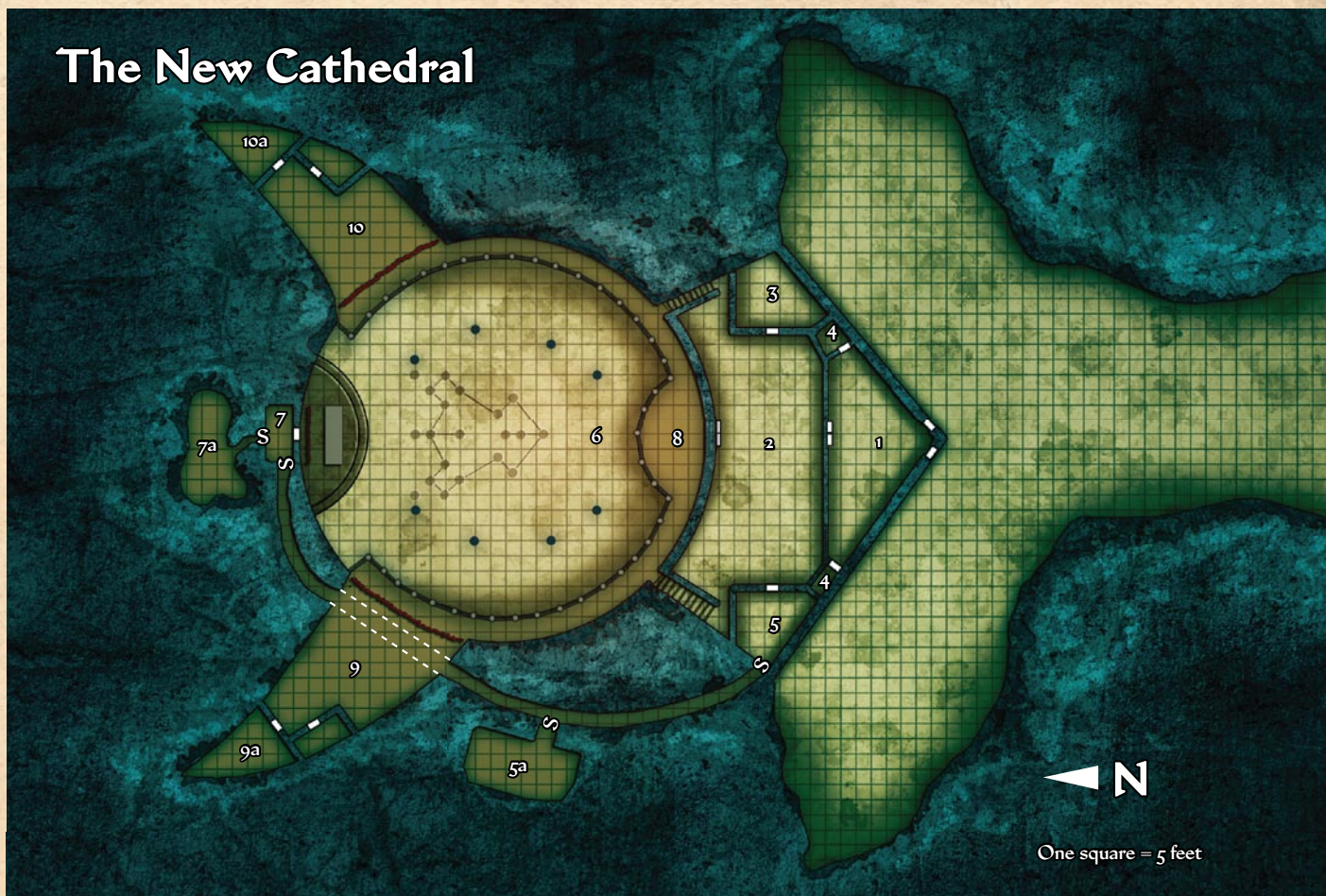
SKILLS

Concentration	+15
Heal	+23
Knowledge (religion)	+12

FEATS

Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Spell
Penetration, Weapon Proficiency
(scimitar), Weapon Focus (scimitar)

The New Cathedral



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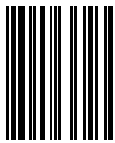


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