

SECOND EDITION

# PATHFINDER<sup>®</sup>



## AGE OF ASHES

ADVENTURE PATH

## AGAINST THE SCARLET TRIAD

By John Compton



# Katapesh

0 2,000 FEET



SILVER EWE •

GOLDEN SCARAB •

GOLDEN OASIS •

SALT WAREHOUSE •

MARBLE SPHINX •

GRAND COLISEUM •

COUNCIL HALL •

BHETSHAMTAL ESTATE •

RED PYRAMID •

IBIS FOUNTAIN •



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# AGAINST THE SCARLET TRIAD

## Chapter 1: Seeking the City of Trade..... 4

The PCs open Duskgate and emerge near Finderplain, a Katapeshi town under assault by supernatural weather and terrifying beasts.

## Chapter 2: The Threefold Demise ..... 16

The PCs must tear down the Scarlet Triad in Katapesh, destroying it once and for all. However, the Scarlet Triad enjoys the city's official protection, and only by dismantling their foes' political connections can the PCs face the villains directly.

## Chapter 3: The Red Pyramid Raid..... 50

When the political climate shifts, the Scarlet Triad goes on the defensive. The PCs must strike the organization's home base before its agents destroy key evidence—or worse, eliminate key hostages.

### DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

Chapter 2 of this adventure features a lengthy section wherein the PCs will perform downtime activities to work against the influence of the Scarlet Triad in the city of Katapesh. These downtime activities are summarized below—consider sharing these with your players when Chapter 2 gets underway.

**Build Connections:** Establish friendships and contacts among the city's movers and shakers.

**Earn Income:** Make extra cash using your skills.

**Host Event:** Run a special event to bolster your reputation.

**Influence Guild:** Gain influence with one of Katapesh's powerful guilds.

**Investigate the Scarlet Triad:** Search for clues about the Scarlet Triad.

**Issue Challenge:** Build hype for an upcoming battle in Katapesh's arena.

**Seek Unusual Items:** Look for that special something for sale in the markets.

### ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Against the Scarlet Triad" is designed for four characters.

**15** The PCs should begin this adventure at 15th level.

**16** The PCs should be 16th level after finishing the heist in Chapter 2.

**17** The PCs should be 17th level before they begin Chapter 3.

The PCs should reach 18th level by the adventure's conclusion.





## CHAPTER 1: SEEKING THE CITY OF TRADE

In the storms and chaos that followed Aroden's death, Mengkare found that Promise required ever greater amounts of his attention, guidance, and protection. Unable to personally recruit the influx of new talent needed for his Glorious Endeavor, he sought others who could search the world for him. An answer came in the form of the Scarlet Triad, a group of merchants based in Katapesh with the skills and infrastructure needed to serve the role of scout for the Endeavor. For decades the Scarlet Triad did just that, continuing to operate under the cover of a merchant's guild while each year transporting at least a dozen exceptional and willing individuals to Hermea. Only Katapesh's enigmatic Pactmasters had an inkling of the Scarlet Triad's true purpose, and a combination of professional courtesy and financial kickbacks ensured they never looked too deeply into the operation.

However, as Promise's population grew, Mengkare's need for new blood dwindled. Gradually he scaled back his support for the Scarlet Triad, asking for fewer and fewer recruits each year. Yet the organization had grown accustomed to decades of wealth, so in 4690 AR, its newest leader, Uri Zandivar, made a bold decision to apply the Scarlet Triad's headhunting skills to a new trade: slavery. With Uri's sister Emaliza serving on Mengkare's council, he found it easy to work with her to keep the Scarlet Triad's role as slavers hidden from the dragon.

For nearly 30 years the Scarlet Triad's success has balanced on a knife's edge, for Zandivar knows that behind Mengkare's unflinchingly pragmatic methodology is a dragon who abhors enslavement—both from his two encounters with the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* and on moral principle. Likewise, Zandivar knows that Mengkare's an extraordinarily



powerful dragon who doesn't hesitate to incinerate those he considers traitors or morally bankrupt. Fortunately for Uri, the Scarlet Triad has nearly completed two different tools to discourage Mengkare in the event that he ever learns of their exploits. First, the Scarlet Triad has used its wealth and connections to secure over half of the shards of the destroyed *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* (most recently a shard once owned by the magma dragon Veshumirix), which the operation's experts have nearly repaired into a functional version of the original artifact. Second, the Scarlet Triad has secured many of the portal keys connected to Alseta's Ring. By attuning the gates carefully, Uri Zandivar and his lieutenants believe they can release the cataclysmic spirit of Dahak within and leverage this threat of mutual self-destruction to keep Mengkare at bay.

Recently, though, two developments have put the Scarlet Triad's operations in peril. With the abolition of slavery in several nations in recent years (including Absalom, Ravounel, and Vidrian), many of the Scarlet Triad's most important clients have been driven from the trade and markets are closed. And perhaps more concerning are the PCs, who have been systematically claiming the portal keys to Alseta's Ring and defeating minor leaders in the Scarlet Triad's organization. With his two favored subcommanders Laslunn and Ilssrah out of commission and the portal keys they protected lost to the PCs, Uri feels increasingly cornered. Today, he clings to the final (and most important) portal key, which opens the way to Promise, and focuses much of the Scarlet Triad's resources on completing the repairs to the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, hoping to finish it soon so that he can gain control over Mengkare himself and, he wagers, a powerful weapon with which to defeat the PCs.

## Duskgate Way Station

Near the end of the previous adventure, the PCs secured the *guiding chisel*, the portal key required to open Duskgate. They've also defeated more agents of the Scarlet Triad and should be ready to open the penultimate portal and take the fight to the slavers themselves. Give the PCs time to pursue downtime activities in Breachill before opening Duskgate; this adventure's events then begin when they pass through Duskgate to Katapesh. If you find the PCs aren't motivated on their own to travel through Duskgate, feel free to have an NPC they trust make the suggestion to them. You can also use the results of divination spells the PCs cast to encourage them to open Duskgate.

In keeping with many other portals associated with Alseta's Ring, the area between Duskgate's Isgar side and its Katapesh side consists of an extraplanar series of rooms: the Duskgate Way Station. This way station is intact but, as with the others, hasn't been visited in thousands of years. Decorated with images of stags cavorting before the setting sun, Duskgate was the last of Candlaron's gateways constructed in Alseta's Ring. To a PC who succeeds at a DC 34 Perception check, this is evident from the workmanship of the exterior portal, which reveals an increased level of artistry in the carvings and sculpting of the portal itself—an appropriate development, considering Duskgate's dedication to Findeladlara, the elven goddess of architecture and art. Originally, the way station within was intended to serve as a monument to elven architecture and artwork, but millennia of proximity to Dahak's manifestation have lent the decor and guardians a destructive malevolence that manifests as a host of creatures and hazards.

## CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

When the PCs open the next portal in Alseta's Ring, they emerge into a ferocious dust storm in Katapesh. After helping the gnomes of the town of Finderplain endure the dust storm and defeat its supernatural source, the PCs finally set their sights on confronting the Scarlet Triad in their hometown.

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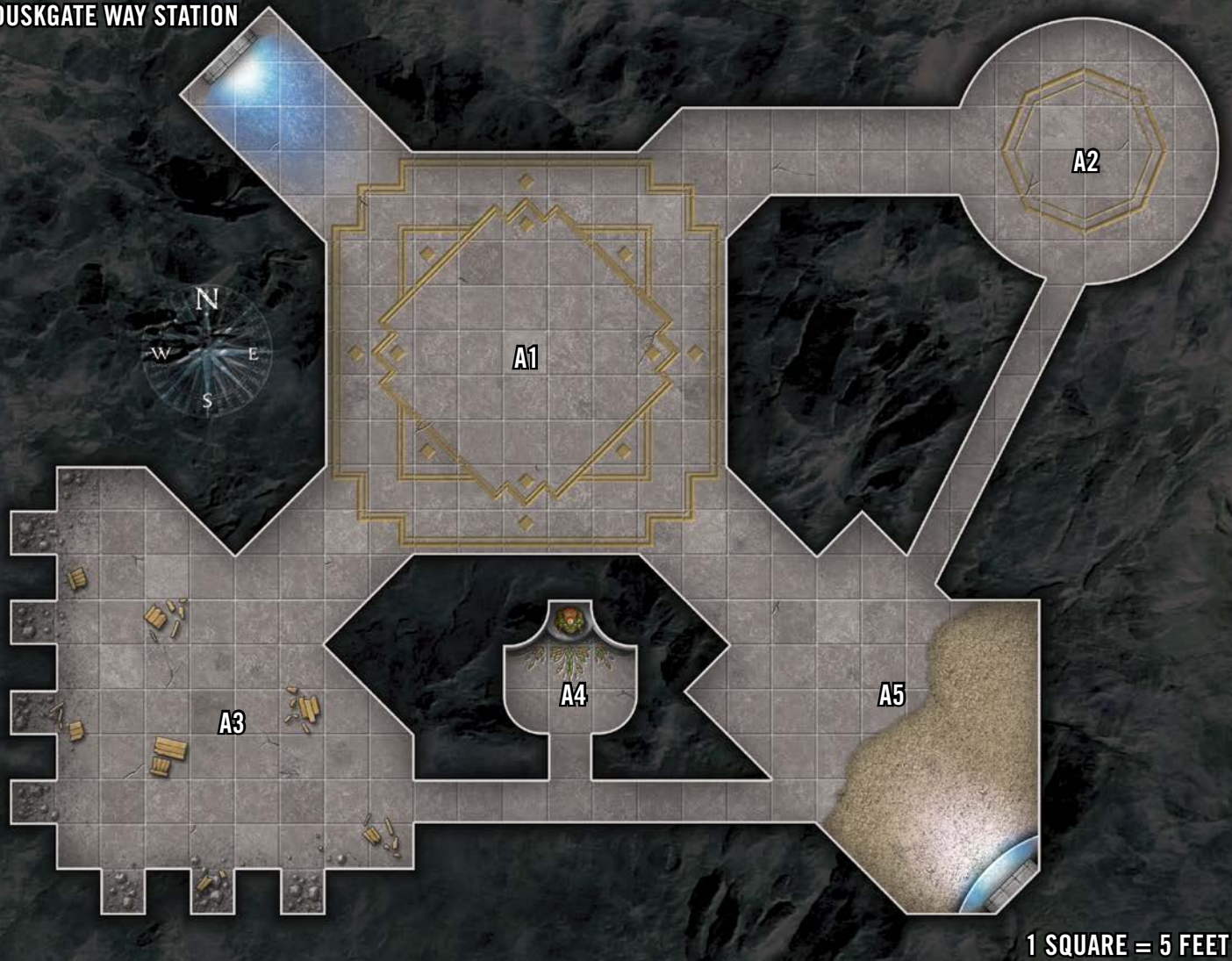
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## DUSKGATE WAY STATION



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

With the *guiding chisel* recovered from Embermead in “Fires of the Haunted City” in hand, the PCs can readily open the exterior entryway, causing the stone within Duskgate to turn misty, glow softly, and then sink into the ground like the sun setting over a foggy horizon, providing access to area A1.

The rooms within Duskgate Way Station are 15 feet tall at the walls, with delicately arching ceilings that peak at a height of 20 feet at their centers. The walls are all magically smoothed hewn stone decorated with shallowly carved friezes, fading frescos, or intricate mosaics consisting of thousands of precisely cut tiles. The entire place radiates dim lighting, as if lit by the setting sun, yet no obvious source for the illumination is apparent.

### A1. GALLERY OF ELVEN ARTIFICE Low 15

This broad antechamber features four towering, elaborate frescos that depict elves creating various forms of art: dance, music, sculpture, and metalwork. Four archways lead from the room's corners to other chambers, and above

each arch towers the sculpted form of an imposing elven woman with one hand raised toward the ceiling and the other hand holding an elegant staff.

This antechamber is a celebration of elven art. With a successful DC 29 Crafting or Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a PC discerns that the four murals depict four of the traditional elven crafts associated with the elven goddess Findeladlara—goddess of art, architecture, and twilight—depicted above each of the archways, in addition to determining that the metalcraft depicted involves casting mithral.

**Creatures:** The intricately painted elves are not just priceless artwork—four are powerful guardians created by way station's builders that have been instilled with murderous intent by Dahak's unholy influence. Once a PC attempts to enter areas A2–A5 or if any PC defaces the artwork, an elf from each of the four murals animates and pulls itself free from the pictures, in the process growing dramatically and assuming a three-dimensional form. Each of these functions as an elite stone golem that attacks immediately.



## ELITE STONE GOLEMS (4)

## CREATURE 12

Pathfinder Bestiary 6, 187

**Initiative** Perception +19

## A2. ENDLESS ART

## MODERATE 15

This chamber's wall forms an unbroken mural of an elven lifespan, advancing chronologically from dawn and childhood to twilight and old age to night and death.

This mural is but one of dozens, each purposefully painted atop one another in homage to the eternity of art, symbolically building upon past generations' accomplishments to create modern marvels. The result is a wall covered in more than a foot of paint.

**Hazard:** Findeladlara encourages her followers to create art in the traditional elven styles, both as a testament to their ancestors' deeds and to guide future generations. However, this cyclical homage has taken on an obsessive and haunted quality after millennia of proximity to Dahak's evil.

## ENDLESS ELVEN AGING

## HAZARD 17

COMPLEX HAUNT MAGICAL

**Stealth** +33 (master)

**Description** A haunted mural fascinates characters and swiftly drains their vitality.

**Disable** Occultism DC 38 (master) or Religion DC 38 (master) to calm the restless energies and suppress the haunt for 1 hour; a critical success deactivates the haunt permanently.

**Painting AC** 20; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +5

**Painting Hardness** 15; **Painting HP** 30 per square (6 squares must be destroyed to disable the haunt);

**Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

**Lifelike Scintillation** ⤿ (divination, occult) **Trigger** A living creature examines the mural or enters the room; **Effect** The haunt activates and rolls initiative.

**Routine** (2 actions) The haunt lures creatures into area **A2** using Captivate. Any actions it hasn't used to Captivate are used to drain a living creature in the room with Live a Thousand Lives.

**Captivate** ♦ (charm, enchantment, incapacitation, mental, occult) The faintly moving images compel one creature within 30 feet of the room to move into the room. The creature attempts a DC 38 Will save.

**Success** The target is unaffected.

**Failure** The target must spend all its actions on its next turn moving into the room, and is then paralyzed until the end of its next turn.

**Critical Failure** As failure, and the target is also stupefied 2 for 1 minute.

**Live a Thousand Lives** ♦ (mental, occult) The haunt causes a living creature in the room to experience a full elven life, weathering every wound, misfortune, loss, and consequence of aging centuries in a matter of seconds. The target must attempt a DC 38 Fortitude save.

**Critical Success** The target is unaffected.

**Success** The target becomes fatigued.

**Failure** The target becomes drained 1 (or its drained value increases by 1, to a maximum of drained 3), and it is paralyzed until the end of its next turn.

**Critical Failure** As failure, but the target also becomes doomed 1 (or its doomed value increases by 1).

**Reset** The haunt continues its routine until there are no targets within 30 feet of the room. It then resets over the course of 1 minute and is able to activate again.

**Treasure:** Leaning against the southwest wall is a +2 *greater striking mithral staff*, traditionally passed from one steward of this area to another.

## A3. TEMPORARY QUARTERS

This vaguely triangular room provided beds, food, and other accommodation for elves traveling through Alseta's Ring. Now the seven alcoves hold only the fragile fragments of what were once beds, and the dusty remains of tables, bowls, and food pots lie scattered about the room.

## A4. FINDELADLARAN SHRINE

This small chapel hosts a polished granite-and-gold statue of a handsome elven woman in archaic robes, holding a staff and pointing with an outstretched finger toward the sky as if tracing an image. Along the room's sides are scores of pots, brushes, chisels, charcoal sticks, and other art supplies.

**Treasure:** The statue depicts Findeladlara. The art supplies correspond to a wide range of crafts and have been preserved by the chapel's faint divine presence. Collectively, the magically preserved supplies are worth 1,100 gp. Among them is also a *scroll of overwhelming presence*.

## A5. EXIT ROOM

## Low 15

A stone archway featuring images of the sun setting over a desert sits in a curving alcove, with drifts of golden sand strewn for several feet around its base.

The irregular shape of this room provided space for larger parties to assemble around, enter, and exit the *aiudara* to the southeast with ease. However, the

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*aiudara* has malfunctioned occasionally over the millennia, sucking in bits of grit from its paired portal in Katapesh and disgorging them here. The southeast half of the room is now buried in a roughly 2-foot-deep dune of pebbles and sand that acts as difficult terrain.

The stone archway itself is the Duskgate exit. Touching the *guiding chisel* to its stone causes the portal to fade but doesn't immediately provide access to the nation of Katapesh—proceed with A Desolate Vision below after the PCs step through.

**Creature:** In addition to sand, the gateway inadvertently transported a powerful earth elemental called a *zaramuun*. After inspecting its new home, it settled into the growing pile of sand and hides there using its Dune power. It waits for the PCs to approach close enough to snatch a victim, after which it fights to the death.

## ZARAMUUN

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 339

**Initiative** Perception +30

## CREATURE 16

### A DESOLATE VISION

### EXTREME 15

First stirred by cultists' movements and increasingly riled by the PCs' own travel through Alseta's Ring, the manifestation of Dahak trapped within the portal's network is increasingly eager for escape. Each time the PCs use a portal in Alseta's Ring, the manifestation strains against its weakening prison, and by this point it's gained a limited degree of control over the space between the *aiudara*. This does not grant it much ability to permanently harm travelers, but it does allow the aspect to stretch this space and delay a traveler's transposition. This gives Dahak's manifestation a chance to taunt the PCs with promises of the destruction to come over the course of three short scenes: Devastation, Provocation, and Confrontation. During each scene, the PCs have a chance to combat apocalyptic events, and each scene has different conditions for what qualifies as successful resistance. The more scenes the PCs overcome successfully, the greater an edge they'll have against Dahak's manifestation at the beginning of "Broken Promises."

**Devastation:** As the PCs exit the Duskgate Way Station, they step into the middle of what appears to be Breachill's incinerated ruins. A volcano has erupted beneath Citadel Altaerein, obliterating the fortress and showering the surrounding area with lava bombs. The PCs' favorite buildings are ablaze, many with key NPCs trapped inside behind locked doors. Other structures have collapsed atop seriously injured townsfolk, innocents are stranded between narrow rivers of lava,

and tremors have damaged the few viable shelters. All the while, bolts of red lightning course through the volcano's cloud of ash, and the roiling mass takes the form of Dahak's visage.

There's no saving the town, but the PCs have opportunities to save their friends and neighbors. Each PC can attempt one DC 36 Acrobatics, Athletics, Breachill Lore, Crafting, Medicine, or Thievery check to help rescue vulnerable residents. At your discretion, the use of powerful spells that could divert a lava flow, create a solid shelter, or heal multiple targets could instead be treated as an automatically successful skill check result.

Count the number of successful checks, treat each critical success as two successes, and reduce the number of successes by one for each critical failure. If the PCs succeed at a number of these checks that exceeds half the number of PCs, they successfully overcome this scene—much to the looming dragon's fury. Whether or not they succeed, proceed to Provocation.

**Provocation:** The ash cloud's draconic appearance coalesces into a semisolid form and dives groundward, exploding into a choking pyroclastic flow that blocks all sight. Through this storm of ash, the PCs can periodically sense Dahak circling around them as his dragonstorm wreaks havoc in the surrounding area. While circling the PCs, the manifestation goads the PCs, taunts them with assurances that their efforts are futile, invites them to accept fast deaths, and promises an imminent apocalypse.

The PCs need not accept the dragon's doom-mongering and can refute its claims with wrath, deceit, and hope of their own. Likewise, knowledge of Dahak and dragons can help a PC dissect the manifestation's claims and refute its prophecies. Each PC can attempt a DC 36 Arcana, Dahak Lore, Deception, Diplomacy, Dragon Lore, Intimidation, or Religion check. Count the successes and determine the PCs' overall success in the same way as in Devastation above. Then proceed to the Confrontation scene.

**Confrontation:** In response to the rebuttals, the dragonstorm collapses in on itself into a solid draconic form that towers over the PCs. This is the Promise of Fire, a fragment of Dahak's power. It promises to make the PCs' deaths swift and prepares to attack. While the Promise of Fire has the statistics of an ancient red dragon, the confrontation with it is not a true fight. The Promise of Fire uses an Intimidation check to determine its initiative, and the PCs have precisely one chance to confront and wound it before it attacks.

On its turn, the Promise of Fire breathes fire over the entire party, hurling the PCs away into a sandstorm of



painful cinders. Not only do the PCs take the damage from the dragon's breath weapon, but it casts them out from the Duskgate exit and into Katapesh—even if a PC avoided the damage with a critical success for the Reflex save. There, a dust storm is already raging, making it difficult to initially tell whether the PCs are still caught in the Duskgate vision or are somewhere else. The dragon's attack effectively ends this encounter, beginning the Dust Storm encounter on page 10. A PC who would be slain by this breath weapon is instead reduced to 1 Hit Point and gains the doomed 1 condition.

For the PCs to successfully resist the manifestation, they must deal a total of 80 damage to it before it acts and casts them out of Duskgate. For each debilitating condition the PCs inflict on the manifestation, treat the creature as though it had taken 10 points of damage, though you might double the effective damage dealt by especially grievous conditions (like drained or unconscious) or conditions with high values (like frightened 4). If the PCs manage the unlikely task of slaying the Promise of Fire, it explodes, hurling the PCs back into the real world (without damaging them). The manifestation of Dahak trapped in the *aiudara* is not slain, but this defeat will grant the PCs a significant advantage in the next adventure.

## THE PROMISE OF FIRE

CREATURE 19

Ancient red dragon (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 112)

**Initiative** Intimidation +37

**Resolution:** Although the PCs are in no position to defeat Dahak's manifestation, their defiance can wound and rattle it. As the breath weapon hurls them away, the manifestation growls, "This is but the first of many devastations. Wherever you go, my fury shall follow." Note how many of the three challenges the PCs successfully overcame and whether they managed to slay the Promise of Fire before it was able to attack, and record that information for use during the first chapter of "Broken Promises."

**XP Award:** If the PCs manage to overcome one of the three challenges, grant them 60 XP. If they overcome two, grant them 80 XP. If they overcome all three, grant them 120 XP.

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The Promise of Fire



## FINDERPLAIN



### Dust Storm

The Duskgate exit stands near Finderplain, where the heavily weathered archway has long since toppled onto the dusty earth. This awkward alignment causes those who step from it to stumble or even be flung by the transferred force of their departure, landing harmlessly to one side of the aperture. For all its erosion and apparent damage, the gate remains functional. Its easily buried profile has kept it hidden from those who might recognize its origin, and its weathered exterior has convinced scavengers that it's not worth dismantling for raw material.

The toppled *aiudara* is positioned near a granite obelisk that stands atop a nearby rise on the outskirts of Finderplain. Propped against one side of the obelisk are the sand-blasted remains of a recently slain gnome wearing ragged heavy desert clothing. At the corpse's side is a small satchel containing a waterskin, a week's rations, and seven letters addressed to various parties in the city of Katapesh. Six of these are worried missives to gnome family members, and the seventh is an official plea for help from Soukmaster Satla Kivarn

to the Pactmasters. Each letter speaks of the terrifying dust storms and haunting wails that had been plaguing the town of Finderplain. The messenger made it only a mile out of town before vainly seeking shelter against the obelisk, only to be discovered and slain by the dust storm's creator: a dust wendigo. With a successful DC 25 Medicine check, a PC estimates that the gnome perished about 2 days ago from damage in keeping with a fall from a great height.

Of more immediate concern to the PCs is the raging dust storm that's ravaging a roughly 3-mile-radius area surrounding Finderplain. The strong winds that blast grit across the fairly flat terrain cut visibility to about 50 feet (periodic lulls allow the PCs to spot distant structures before those are obscured once more), give all creatures within concealment, halve overland speed, and can blow away flying creatures (Acrobatics DC 30 to Maneuver in Flight). Every 10 minutes a PC spends out in the open, they must attempt a DC 29 Fortitude save—failure indicates the PC is debilitated by the overwhelming sand and takes a –2 circumstance penalty to all checks for as long as they remain in the



storm and an additional 10 minutes thereafter; a critical failure results in the character also becoming fatigued by the storm's fury for the same duration.

With a successful DC 28 Nature check, a PC can ascertain that the dust storm's intensity suggests a supernatural cause, and the degree to which the storm has shredded local plants indicates the storm's been active for many hours.

Every minute, the PCs can attempt a DC 25 Perception check. On a success, they notice the nearby buildings of Finderplain through a momentary gap in the swirling dust. The PCs can reach it in about 10 minutes if traveling at a Speed of 25–30 feet, or about 20 minutes if they're traveling at a Speed of 20 feet.

## Finderplain

Finderplain is an eclectic mishmash of structures arrayed with the best of intentions along unregulated thoroughfares that have migrated gradually over the centuries thanks to a lack of formal building codes. Founded about 300 years ago, Finderplain serves as a waypoint for travelers between Nex, Katapesh, and the western wilds. Its predominantly gnome populace is largely transitory, rarely remaining for more than 6 months before departing for other excitement and opportunity. As a result, even the younger structures have often exchanged ownership a dozen times, and any property left abandoned for at least a week is up for grabs. What's more, Finderplain has weathered at least 50 different governments, having recently wished farewell to Chief Minarchist Dwalginstil's 11 months of governmental noninterference, and 2 months ago hailed Soukmaster **Satla Kivarn** (NG female gnome) and her commerce-minded initiatives.

The last few days of dust storm have forced Finderplain's occupants to shelter in their homes. Dunes of fine silt have accumulated in the streets, forming low mounds here and there that function as difficult terrain. The streets average about 20 feet in width, with narrow 5-foot alleys splitting off from major streets, and those streets sometimes constricting to 10 feet wide, widening into impromptu plazas as much as 50 feet across or turning abruptly to navigate the haphazard structures.

Encounters might occur throughout Finderplain based on the PCs' strategies. Several key areas in Finderplain are described below.



**Satla Kivarn**

**B1. Bazal's Basin:** The largest of Finderplain's buildings, this earthen hall acts as a town hall, dance parlor, theater, feast hall, temple, and more as needed. Like many of Finderplain's features, it's been renamed dozens of times. The main room can hold about 400 people comfortably with another 100 in side rooms—and half again that many if most of them are gnomes.

**B2. Bluemarket:** Largest of Finderplain's markets, Bluemarket gets its name from the blue-painted, 15-foot-tall obelisk at its center.

**B3. Spire Walk:** This neighborhood is among the oldest in Finderplain and earns its name from the several dozen apartment buildings that stand between three and five stories tall.

**B4. Royal Rise:** By building several strategic walls, High King Narvimelbs combined five different houses and shops into his royal palace in 4717. The compound sits atop a tiny hill that gives it a relatively commanding view.

**B5. The Wall:** In response to rumors of encroaching gnoll raids, Finderplain's chancellor Twilu requisitioned funds to build a wall around the young town in 4418 AR. The project resulted in a 20-foot-tall stone fortification that shields only a fraction of Finderplain, for after Twilu departed 3 months later, her successor canceled the project.

## ELEMENTAL OPPORTUNISTS MODERATE 15

This encounter can take place nearly anywhere in Finderplain, and should begin shortly after the PCs arrive in town.

**Creatures:** A powerful dust wendigo, known as the Weathered Wail to those who venerate and fear it, has descended from the Brazen Peaks far to the northwest. Finding easy prey in Finderplain, which is far from most powerful defenders, it cajoled several uthul allies to help perform the ritual that has inflicted the destructive dust storm paralyzing the area. It has sent its uthul minions into the town to torment villagers and to maintain the storm, while it circles the region and eagerly awaits chances to target lone fools who venture out into the dust. In time, the Weathered Wail will target the PCs themselves, but for now the dust wendigo prefers to operate in the background and let its uthuls play.

As the PCs explore Finderplain, the Weathered Wail descends to a nearby home to hunt. The creature

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uses Howl while out of sight, affecting the PCs and driving the three gnomes and one half-elf inside into a blind panic. They burst from their shelter, screaming in terror as they run down the street, just visible to the PCs through a break in the dust storm. At the same time, three opportunistic uthuls converge on the fleeing creatures. This combat takes place along one of the thoroughfares with the PCs approximately 50 feet away from the fleeing humanoids, and the uthuls in between, approximately 30 feet from those fleeing. Several 15-foot-wide dust dunes in the street and between homes act as difficult terrain, and the brutal winds and dust inhibit sight and flight (page 10).

These uthuls are composed of swirling clouds of dust-laden wind. Their coloration tends towards brown and red from the dust in their bodies rather than the more usual blue and gray, but they still churn with violent wind and lightning. They delight in savaging victims, though they quickly turn their attention to the PCs if attacked. Assuming the PCs engage the uthuls within a round of the combat starting, they divert the monsters' attention to themselves and save the gnomes and half-elf. It takes the four of these refugees 1d4+1 rounds to reach safety, and during any of those rounds, if any uthul isn't attacked by a PC, one of the four gnomes is slain (regardless of how many uthuls aren't attacked). In any event, as combat begins, the uthuls make surging, howling advances as they gust through and over buildings, using Acrobatics to determine their initiative.

### UTHULS (3)

### CREATURE 14

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 317

**Initiative** Acrobatics +29

**XP Award:** For each of the four victims who lives to the end of this encounter, award the PCs an additional 20 XP, to a maximum of 80 XP if all four live.

### GATHERING AT BAZAL'S BASIN

In defeating the uthuls and helping some of Finderplain's residents, the PCs make a good impression. The militia ushers the survivors toward Bazal's Basin as Tuomni, the squad's leader, waves for the PCs to join them. She knows that more danger may not be far away, so her answers to any questions are terse. The trek to the Basin takes 10 minutes.

Bazal's Basin currently shelters 450 residents. Finderplain's soukmaster Satla Kivarn has done everything she can to usher inhabitants here for relative safety. Satla prides herself on knowing (or at least knowing of) everyone in Finderplain. Even before Tuomni reports in, she's looking over the PCs

and asking questions about their motivations. The PCs likely have questions of their own, with likely queries and Satla's responses below.

**Who are you?** She makes a half-hearted pass at straightening her clothing. "I am Satla Kivarn, soukmaster of Finderplain for sixty-seven days now. That means I oversee trade, general mayoral duties, and emergency operations as needed."

**Is this storm normal?** "Short answer: no. Finderplain's not got a lot of longtime residents and historians, but a dust storm should not last this long and be this fierce. We're two days into it, and it's stronger than ever. Scouts have skirmished with monsters out there, yet we don't know if they started the storm or are just enjoying it."

**What was that howling out there?** Satla grimaces. "You heard it, too, huh? There's something—maybe somethings—really creepy out there prowling the streets. Worse, some of the survivors we've pulled in have mentioned hearing whispering urges toward violence, or were tormented for hours by hearing voices promising the end of the world. Others have seen glowing eyes and horns that disappear into the dust. Whatever it is, it's cruel, smart, and relentless."

**Has anything else suspicious happened recently?** "Not especially? We get all sorts of strange travelers through here. A pair of dour Nexian Arclords passed through town earlier in the week, and then we had some Scarlet Triad folks being obnoxious until just around just a few hours before the storm started, but that's nothing that should have triggered Rovagug's tantrum out there."

**The Scarlet Triad was here?** "Yeah, though they might have gotten out before the storm." Satla confirms the PCs aren't Triad members before adding, "Good riddance to them, too. They're utter jackals every time they're here."

**How can we help?** Satla gives a tentative smile. "Hey, we can use all the help we can get. There are only a few of us left who are strong enough to hold our own against the monsters. We've also got a lot of local leaders who we've yet to find, dead or alive. At this point, I need information, rescuers, those leaders, and supplies—food and water, especially. And if you can figure out how to stop the storm, all the better."

### SAVING THE SCATTERED

Once the PCs are prepared to help, Satla identifies three objectives for the PCs: the north granary, Bluemarket, and Royal Rise. The granary is one of the only food stores likely to remain intact. The Bluemarket is where most travelers do business, and it's likely that survivors unfamiliar with Finderplain are hunkered



down there in need of aid. Finally, Royal Rise is one of the larger residences and is home to one of Satla's predecessors, the former High King Narvimelbs. Although she considers the ex-monarch a boor, Satla knows he's resourceful, inspires his neighbors, and would be invaluable in defending the Basin.

The dust storm makes it difficult to navigate. Traveling from one site to another takes 10 minutes, exposing the PCs to the dust storm (page 10).

**XP Award:** For each of the sites at which the PCs fulfill Satla's objectives, award the PCs 40 XP. If the PCs also remove the gnome Eloisil's curse, grant them an additional 40 XP.

## NORTH GRANARY

Built atop a grid of 15 stone columns in the Spire Walk neighborhood, the north granary is a rectangular storehouse that stands 4 feet off the ground.

To keep the Basin's residents fed (and qualify for an XP award), the PCs need to bring back at least 30 Bulk worth of food. By carefully assessing the supplies, selecting only the best options, and packing the loads wisely, the PCs can increase the quantity of food they recover. One PC can attempt to do so with a DC 36 Survival check or an appropriate DC 32 Lore check (such as Cooking Lore, Farming Lore, or Milling Lore) to Search, increasing the party's total recovered supplies by 3 Bulk on a success (or by 6 on a critical success).

## HAUL SUPPLIES

EXPLORATION MOVE

You pack up as many supplies as you can carry and make your way back to Bazal's Basin with food and water. Attempt a DC 34 Athletics check to determine the amount and quality of the food you manage to haul and keep safe from being damaged in the storm. A character who uses powerful magic (such as *teleport*) to aid in transporting the food automatically achieves a result one category higher than they roll.

**Critical Success** You return with 15 Bulk of supplies.

**Success** You return with 10 Bulk of supplies.

**Failure** Some of the food was damaged in transport, and you return with only 5 Bulk of supplies.

**Critical Failure** All of the supplies you attempted to transport are ruined.

## BLUEMARKET

Some groups of travelers who were in Bluemarket when the storm struck have fared especially poorly and suffered many casualties or ongoing torment by the wendigo, including having individuals carried off by the wendigo or uthuls. **Eloisil** (CG male gnome) was one of those captured, but he considers himself

especially lucky for having escaped the monster's clutches and staggered back here.

To provide meaningful help for Satla here, the PCs need to succeed at three of four tasks: shepherding civilians to safety, locating any stragglers, assisting Eloisil, and recovering gear.

**Shepherding Civilians:** No check is required to find the 26 survivors—a mix of gnomes, humans, and dwarves—who took shelter in an inn called the Stove and Cupboard. Here they've survived on the inn's larders, but on three different occasions the wendigo has circled the building, howled, and rattled the building's walls. The civilians are all eager to relocate but won't do so without a major escort. While the PCs' presence is reassuring, most of the survivors here think the PCs are too few to protect the whole group in the open, so the inn's occupants are hesitant to leave their one place of safety. **Suluk Tark** (CN female dwarf) is especially outspoken against leaving the inn, and many here look to her as a leader in this disaster. A successful DC 34 Diplomacy check to Request that they join the other survivors for safety, Deception check to Lie about the dangers outside, or Intimidation check to Coerce (which likely involves taking down Tark with a nonlethal strike) can all convince the survivors to brave the harsh conditions and depart for the Basin. In any event, escorting the civilians back to Bazal's Basin is automatically successful once they're convinced to accompany the PCs to safety.

**Locating Stragglers:** Of the other folk who tried to find shelter in Bluemarket, many have already died of exposure or been picked off by monsters. Finding the remaining survivors is difficult work that exposes the PCs to the dust storm for 10 minutes. To search for survivors, the PCs must Scout and attempt a DC 35 Medicine, Perception, or Survival check. For each successful check, the PCs evacuate several survivors to a temporary shelter, but also turn up numerous corpses of humanoids and pack animals that fell victim to the weather, elementals, wendigo, or some combination of these. Three successes are required to finish this task—with a fourth success, the PCs confirm that there are unlikely to be more survivors sheltering in Bluemarket.

**Assisting Eloisil:** The civilian survivors in Bluemarket all know that a fearsome beast stalks Finderplain, but only a handful have seen it and can describe its appearance as a "towering horned man with glowing eyes." Only the gnome Eloisil has witnessed the wendigo up close, and he is currently afflicted with stage 1 of the wendigo torment curse (*Bestiary* 327), leaving his speech somewhat slurred and his thoughts muddled. He struggles to recount the experience, in which he was snatched by the antelope-headed beast,

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after which he felt his body growing lighter and lighter as the creature spoke hungry thoughts into his mind. In a panic, Eloisil bit at the creature's claw, and the beast dropped him atop a roof (less out of pain than in delight at the gnome's eagerness to tear flesh with his teeth). Eloisil made his way back to the inn, where the others have done what they can to comfort him. It's been more than a day since he returned, and the other survivors fear the trauma has left him badly disturbed. Due to the curse's high save DC, Eloisil will almost certainly critically fail his next Will save, shortly after he reaches the Basin (advancing to Stage 3); at this point he sneaks away, kills another gnome, consumes part of the victim, and then loudly flees to transform into a new dust wendigo.

Until then, with a successful DC 41 Arcana or Nature check to Recall Knowledge, a PC can use Eloisil's hazy description to identify the monster as a dust wendigo, a rare desert version of what is typically an arctic beast. Wendigos are particularly known for tormenting and cursing victims, releasing some infected prey to consume their friends and transform into new wendigos. What's more, that PC recognizes that Eloisil's symptoms match the early stages of this transformative curse. Even without identifying the wendigo, a PC who studies the gnome with *detect magic* can determine that he's under the effect of an enchantment. The DC to Identify this Magic using Nature is 41. The only ways to stop Eloisil's transformation are to keep him firmly restrained, remove the curse, or kill him. So long as the PCs prevent Eloisil from terrorizing the Basin and transforming, they succeed at this goal.

**Recovering Gear:** The PCs can search Bluemarket for useful tools and supplies. Finding these treasures requires succeeding at DC 34 Crafting, Perception, or Thievery checks as part of a search, with each attempt requiring 10 minutes spent in the dust storm. Once the PCs achieve three successes, they can transport the gear back to safety. Among this gear are some potentially useful or valuable items that Satla insists the PCs keep as a reward—37 sling bullets, a standard-grade cold iron scimitar, an assortment of several hundred animal figurines carved out of semiprecious stone (collectively worth 400 gp), and a trunk containing six different high-fashion outfits of Nexian style (collectively worth 330 gp).

## ROYAL RISE

Royal Rise is a cobbled-together compound atop a low hill. When the dust storm began, its owner, **Narvimelbs**

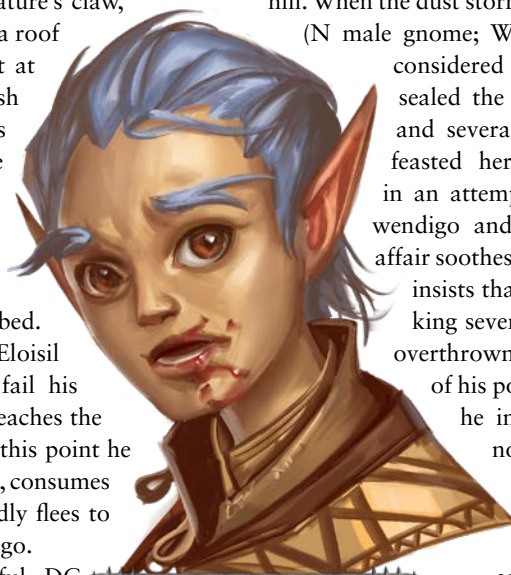
(N male gnome; Will +26), ushered in those he considered his loyal subjects and then sealed the doors. He, his two retainers, and several dozen other survivors have feasted here ever since, making merry in an attempt to drown out the howling wendigo and scouring winds. The whole affair soothes Narvimelbs's ego; although he insists that he abdicated his role as high king several months ago, he in fact was overthrown by citizens who were weary of his posturing. As monarch emeritus, he insists on being referred to as nothing less grandiose than "your majesty."

Once the PCs signal the guards from outside and confirm that they're not monsters, they are invited into Narvimelbs's feast hall. After 2 days

of increasingly forced revelry with periodic breaks to sleep, the party seems a little deflated. The arrival of new guests, though, encourages Narvimelbs to ascend his gilded throne and "hold court." He listens magnanimously to any request to join forces with Satla but waves them off as unreasonable. After all, he observes, there's still so much roistering yet to do!

Convincing the faux king to abandon his palace and assist Finderplain directly requires three successful DC 36 skill checks (or a single critical success) before failing twice (or critically failing once). Suitable skills include Deception, Diplomacy, Intimidation, Performance, and Society. In place of a skill check, a PC can try to impress Narvimelbs by out-drinking him, which requires a DC 36 Fortitude save. A success or critical success contributes to the PCs' overall success as above, whereas a failure doesn't offend him—it simply makes the PC clumsy 1 and stupefied 1 for the next 2 hours. On a critical failure, both condition values are 2 and the PC is also sickened 2.

If the PCs succeed at enough checks, Narvimelbs agrees (possibly in a state of some inebriation) to come with the PCs, bringing his entourage and supplies with him. If the PCs instead fail too many times, the haughty gnome banishes them. He lacks the force to significantly threaten the PCs (though his guards do leap to his defense as needed). Instead, failure represents his stubborn unwillingness to work with Satla, in which case dragging him to the Basin would merely aggravate the situation for everyone.



Eloisil



## THE WEATHERED WAIL MODERATE 15

As Finderplain increasingly resists the disaster with the PCs' help, the Weathered Wail abandons its weaker prey in order to seek out and slay the PCs.

**Creature:** The wendigo prefers to strike as the PCs are moving through the streets. Its favored tactic is to fly within about 60 feet of the PCs, Howl, and then charge in to snatch up an isolated target. Ideally, it carries off a PC using Ride the Wind; otherwise, it focuses on destroying anyone who poses a serious threat—especially those PCs who use cold iron weapons. Without cold iron, destroying the wendigo is virtually impossible; if the PCs lack such a weapon, there's one stashed among the treasures in Bluemarket. If at serious risk, the wendigo retreats, regenerates, and then attacks for a second and final time once it guesses the PCs' spell effects have worn off.

### WEATHERED WAIL

### CREATURE 17

UNIQUE CE LARGE BEAST FIRE

Variant wendigo

*Pathfinder Bestiary 327*

**Initiative** Perception +32

**HP** 315, regeneration 30 (deactivated by cold iron);

**Immunities** fear, fire; **Weaknesses** cold iron 10, cold 15

**Melee** ♦ jaws +33 (fire, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d10+12 piercing plus 2d6 fire

**Melee** ♦ claw +33 (fire, magical, agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d8+12 piercing plus 2d6 fire and Grab

**Treasure:** The wendigo carries trophies from its previous victims. Among these are a *grinning pugwampi* (page 77), a major bestial mutagen, a sapphire-studded wedding band worth 200 gp, five withered gnoll ears, the bejeweled hilt of a large sword (missing its blade but still worth 500 gp), and a gold chain with intricate charms worth 150 gp, one of which bears the inscription “spice of my life” in Kelish—a term of affection.

Once the wendigo is dead and the storm dissipated, the people of Finderplain take a day to clean out their dust-choked homes and gather money to help compensate the PCs for their assistance. This reward includes an assortment of currencies from 27 different nations, totaling 57 pp, 1,376 gp, and 1,420 sp. On top of this, Satla gives the PCs a major eagle-eye elixir and a major elixir of life.

**Aftermath:** Once the PCs defeat the wendigo, the *control weather* ritual gradually fades over the next 12 hours, during which time the dust storm weakens from a deadly gale to an irritating storm to clear skies. Any surviving elementals lose interest in the failing storm and retreat back to the surrounding desert and scrub.

## After the Storm

As the dust storm fades, Finderplain's residents emerge to assess the damage, plan repairs, and check on their friends and neighbors. The town is battered but intact, and numerous impromptu committees form to organize repairs and enumerate the victims. More than a hundred are dead or vanished, and several cargoes have gone entirely missing (including a shipment of rare metals bound for Katapesh, which the PCs may later learn was a critical cargo to save Mekrem Oagli's business; see page 38). Everyone is exhausted but thankful the situation wasn't worse—at least until reports trickle in about the Scarlet Triad's recent misdeeds.

Already known as pushy negotiators, opportunists, and slavers, the Scarlet Triad generally received only grudging cooperation from Finderplain's residents. Several days ago, Triad agents and an antiquities dealing gnome named Benneb engaged in a verbal altercation. As the dust storm gathered, witnesses saw the Scarlet Triad agents pack up and leave on the road to Katapesh with all speed. Benneb was nowhere to be found during the storm, and soon after the storm clears, Benneb's wagon is found ransacked with broken locks. Rumors quickly circulate that the Scarlet Triad agents kidnapped and robbed Benneb, and by examining the wagon and Benneb's temporary residence, the PCs can confirm the signs of struggle and forced entry—including a hastily scrawled “S.T.” (indicating “Scarlet Triad”) inscribed in a triangle carved low on the wall (at about the height of a crouching gnome).

The whole Scarlet Triad situation deeply upsets the soukmaster. Even in the 8 months she's lived in Finderplain, this wouldn't be the first time the organization has harassed the residents, yet it's easily the most egregious incident. The Scarlet Triad's kidnapping and enslavement of the residents falls to Satla Kivarn to resolve. After their capable rescue work, the PCs are local heroes, and she hopes to recruit their help before traveling to Katapesh herself. If she has learned that the PCs also have a history of opposing the Scarlet Triad, she presents this to them as an opportunity to team up against a shared enemy, and although her primary objective is rescuing her constituents and seeing the Scarlet Triad punished, she's amenable to any plan the PCs might have to end the organization completely. She promises the PCs an additional 2,000 gp for having them on retainer for the next 10 days and helping track down Benneb. Satla also has numerous acquaintances in the capital who can help the PCs get their bearings and provide news. This assistance will prove valuable during Chapter 2: The Threefold Demise.

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## CHAPTER 2: THE THREEFOLD DEMISE

Katapesh, the City of Trade and hometown of the Scarlet Triad, is the focus of the remainder of this adventure. Katapesh is the city of origin for the Scarlet Triad, so the PCs already have a good reason to explore it, but in addition, Finderplain's soukmaster, Satla Kivarn, hires the PCs to find several citizens she believes have been abducted by the Scarlet Triad and taken to the city for sale as slaves. After spending the better part of a day processing reports, surveying the damage to Finderplain, and appointing several proxies to oversee repairs, she requisitions camels for any PCs who lack mounts and are ready to depart. Katapesh is about 130 miles away, and although hot, the 4-day trek by camel is quite peaceful compared to the howling storm the day before. Should the PCs have access to faster travel methods, Satla is more than willing to use *wind walk*, *teleport*, or use other methods to reach the metropolis more quickly.

### Arrival in Katapesh

The sprawling city of Katapesh is the capital of the nation of the same name. Second in size only to Absalom within the Inner Sea region, the city of Katapesh houses 212,300 citizens and is a 13th-level settlement. The map on the inside front cover of this book presents the city at a glance, and the contents of the rest of this chapter and the next provide all the contextual information you'll need to run this part of the adventure. If you're looking for more information about Katapesh, however, *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Dark Markets* provides a much deeper look into the city.

Soon after the PCs arrive in the city, Satla leads them to the Inner City's Golden Oasis, the last of the city's surviving oases. After a few minutes' haggling, Satla secures several rooms and stable space for the PCs and their camels and invites them to rest for whatever lies



ahead while she calls on local friends for intelligence. She doesn't mind if the PCs come along or want to do their own research, and the findings are ultimately the same. Satla gathers the PCs the next morning before they've concluded their daily preparations (allowing the PCs to prepare spells afterward); read or paraphrase the following as she reports her findings.

Satla's face sags slightly from too little sleep and too much difficult news. "Let's start with the good news: I've learned where Benneb and his associates ended up." She nods nervously. "All right, that's all the good news; let's move on to the bad. The Scarlet Triad abducted them and brought them into Katapesh as slaves. You can't enslave anyone in the city of Katapesh itself, but anyone enslaved outside and brought in remains a slave by law. Benneb isn't the only one. The open secret's that the Scarlet Triad also abducted and enslaved Exavisu Kerndallion, head of Katapesh's Jewelers' Guild—sounds like she turned down a morally dubious contract from the Scarlet Triad, and her enslavement is retaliation."

Satla's voice shakes with anger, but she visibly deflates before continuing. "Worst of all, the Scarlet Triad's untouchable. I mean, they operate openly out of the Red Pyramid, but because they function as a legal and legitimate consortium—and have done so for decades—they've got the Pactmasters' protection. Attack the Scarlet Triad, and you've basically attacked the city. You're tough, but that's not a fight you can win.

"But we have options. Every month, there's a Council of Guilds where all of the major trade organizations gather, vote on new policies, punish misdeeds, and revoke charters. That's our in—if we can disgrace the Scarlet Triad, get their charter revoked, then anything that happens to them is on their heads and the Pactmasters won't retaliate. Seems simple, right? The trouble's that nearly all of the guilds currently support the Scarlet Triad, are under their thumb, or don't want to risk retaliation from them. If we can convince the guilds to stand against the Scarlet Triad, though? At that point, even the Pactmasters would rescind their protection... or maybe even expel the Scarlet Triad entirely."

Satla notes that the Council of Guilds traditionally takes place on the last Weald day of the month, so the next one should be on 27 Neth, 3 weeks from now (see Timing this Chapter below if you want to adjust this). She already knows that the Jewelers' Guild loathes the Scarlet Triad but is held hostage by their beloved leaders' unjust captivity, and any steps the PCs take to secure Exavisu's freedom would no doubt earn them that guild's support. Satla has a possible lead for how to begin, once the PCs are ready.

Beyond that, Satla's role is to help keep the PCs on track and remind them of opportunities they might have overlooked. She can provide the PCs an overview of the other major players in Katapesh's guild politics (see Katapesh's Guilds on page 20). She also ensures the PCs have a base of operations in the Inner City and keeps an ear to the ground; however, she recognizes they might be able to learn much more about the Scarlet Triad's stranglehold with enough investigation. In short, she encourages the PCs to move about the city and make the most of the downtime mode of play.

## TIMING THIS CHAPTER

This adventure presumes that the PCs arrive in the city of Katapesh on the evening of Weald day, the 6th day of the month of Neth. This gives them 3 weeks to turn public opinion against the Scarlet Triad and secure key support among the metropolis's most powerful guilds, culminating at the Council of Guilds on the 27th.

## CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

The city of Katapesh is the home town of the Scarlet Triad, and the PCs can't simply attack the organization without raising the ire of the powers controlling the city. Instead, they have a month to convince the city's powerful guilds to turn their backs on the Scarlet Triad; only then can the PCs force the Pactmasters of Katapesh to censure the Scarlet Triad for its illegal activities—removing any protection the organization might otherwise enjoy.

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Despite these assumptions about timing, there's plenty of room for flexibility. You can adjust the frequency of the Council of Guilds or allow the PCs to start earlier in the month if you want to give the players more time. If you've been keeping track of the time in your own game, feel free to adjust the exact date on which the next Council of Guilds takes place to occur 3 weeks after the PCs' arrival in Katapesh, regardless of the actual date.

## Downtime in Katapesh

Although there are numerous events in Katapesh that require decisive action more befitting encounters and exploration, much of the PCs' influence over the fate of the Scarlet Triad in this chapter comes from downtime actions. The following are considerations for common downtime activities as well as some special downtime activities relevant to this adventure. It can be helpful to provide players a list such as the one provided in the sidebar on page 3, perhaps provided in the form of a discussion with Satla as she prepares the PCs for this chapter's goal of destabilizing the Scarlet Triad's power base.

All of the downtime activities described here take 1 day unless otherwise noted.

## BUILD CONNECTIONS

Katapesh has many Keleshite inhabitants, and the Keleshite tradition of patronage influences this society. Proper connections speed up negotiations and secure opportunities to meet with important figures more easily.

### BUILD CONNECTIONS

#### DOWNTIME

You dedicate a day to making friends in high places, typically by inviting yourself to parties, performing small favors to be repaid later, and generally projecting an aura of confidence and capability. Attempt a DC 36 Crafting, Diplomacy, Performance, or appropriate Lore check. The result determines the impact of your efforts. If you have the Connections skill feat and roll a success, you get a critical success instead.

**Critical Success** For 1 month, you gain a +1 circumstance bonus to your skill checks to pursue the downtime activities listed here. You also earn a single favor that you can call in when you or an ally you're working with attempts a skill check for one of these downtime actions. That creature can roll twice and use the better result, after which the favor is considered repaid; calling in the favor is a fortune effect.

**Success** For 1 week, you gain a +1 circumstance bonus to your skill checks for the downtime activities listed here.

**Critical Failure** A faux pas embarrasses you, and rumors recount the incident widely. For 3 days, you take a -1 circumstance penalty to skill checks for the downtime activities listed here.

## EARN INCOME

Katapesh is rich in opportunities for enterprising PCs. Wealthy buyers and patrons are quite happy to employ the PCs' skills, so there are consistently tasks of 13th level and lower available.

## HOST EVENT

Rather than negotiate with guilds gradually, a PC can Host a major Event to appeal to hundreds or even thousands of Katapesh's residents. The PC can influence several organizations at once, which might grant the PCs a bonus to subsequent checks or make them the talk of the city—in exchange for a significant investment.

### HOST EVENT

#### DOWNTIME

You dedicate a day to planning and hosting a special event, such as a feast, a small festival, or a public performance. Doing so requires an expenditure of 250 gp. Attempt a DC 36 Diplomacy, Performance, Society, or appropriate Lore check. The result determines the impact of your efforts. You gain a cumulative +1 circumstance bonus to this check (maximum +4) for each additional 250 gp you spend on the event.

**Critical Success** Each PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus to skill checks to perform downtime activities for the next 3 days. Also, reduce the Support Points of two different guilds of your choice by 1 (see Influence Guild below).

**Success** Each PC gains a +1 circumstance bonus to skill checks to perform downtime activities the following day. In addition, reduce the Support Points of one guild of your choice by 1 (see Influence Guild below).

**Critical Failure** The party is a disaster. Each PC takes a -2 circumstance penalty to skill checks to perform downtime activities the following day.

## INFLUENCE GUILD

Of the 14 guilds involved in this chapter (see Katapesh's Guilds on page 20), five have no particular task or other special opportunity to win their approval. Instead, the PCs must woo these groups' favor by using downtime activities, primarily Influence Guild. Success allows the PC to reduce that group's Support Points—a representation of how much the guild supports the Scarlet Triad. Once a guild's Support Points are reduced to 0, the organization no longer supports the Scarlet Triad. Although Influencing these Guilds requires little more than invested time and good die rolls, consider using the organizations' descriptions to inspire periodic



roleplaying scenes or provide the PCs opportunities to garner the guilds' trust in creative ways.

## INFLUENCE GUILD

### DOWNTIME

You dedicate a day to befriending members of a particular guild, assisting the organization, and convincing the guild members not to support the Scarlet Triad. Attempt a DC 34 skill check tied to one of the organization's favored skills (pages 20–21).

**Critical Success** Reduce that organization's Support Points by 3.

**Success** Reduce that organization's Support Points by 1.

**Critical Failure** Increase that organization's Support Points by 1.

## INVESTIGATE THE SCARLET TRIAD

The Scarlet Triad's influence in Katapesh is deep and potent. As a result, attempts to Gather Information about the Scarlet Triad take much longer than normal, requiring a full day of downtime per attempt. Uncovering information about the Scarlet Triad requires a successful DC 35 check—on a critical success, a PC learns two pieces of information. You can choose an appropriate piece of information for the line of questioning from the list below, or randomly determine what information they discover.

**Aspis Consortium:** The Aspis Consortium has worked with the Scarlet Triad behind the scenes, even supplying mercenaries to defend key initiatives. However, the Consortium's representative, a shaitan genie named Ytrim Azas, increasingly distrusts the Scarlet Triad's spokesperson, Jelek Jaziman. If enough of a wedge were driven between them—or if Ytrim were convinced that the Scarlet Triad were a lost cause—the Consortium might abandon the Scarlet Triad in Katapesh.

**Auction Date:** The PCs learn of the Scarlet Triad's upcoming party and auction (see Task 1: Liberation on page 21).

**Farmers' Union:** The Farmer's Union has had a distasteful protection racket forced on it by the Scarlet Triad. Farmers carting in their harvests—particularly on Firedays, when the grocer stalls are especially busy—speak in hushed tones about how little profit they've made after paying off the Scarlet Triad, and how they doubt the group would even lift a finger if anything truly threatening attacked. A few even hazard that the only thing keeping the Scarlet Triad from robbing farmers outright is that they're already doing so legally. As this chapter begins, news also spreads of strange and frightening fire-breathing monsters that begin attacking farmer caravans to the northwest, further threatening the Farmers' Union. Despite being paid to protect

these shipments, the Scarlet Triad has done nothing, infuriating union leaders. This information allows the PCs to begin Task 2: Caravan Troubles (page 30).

**Fleshmongers' Federation:** Although the Scarlet Triad has cooperated with the Fleshmongers' Federation to knock out competitors and quietly fix prices in the slave trade, rumor holds that the Fleshmongers are eager and ready for the chance to turn the tables on the Scarlet Triad.

**Fraternal Order of the Anvil:** Eminent metallurgist Mekrem Oagli recently fell into bankruptcy following poor business and his expulsion from the Fraternal Order of the Anvil. Some believe his downfall was engineered by the Scarlet Triad for nefarious purposes. Mekrem is now living on the streets with his daughter. This knowledge allows the PCs to begin Task 5: Metals and Malice (page 38).

**Gladiators' Guild:** The Gladiators' Guild is among the Scarlet Triad's staunchest allies—no wonder, considering the Scarlet Triad engineered the overthrow of the former guildmaster and installation of a new, subservient leader, Bshez "Sand Claws" Shak. She has hosted increasingly deadly battles that distract viewers from the Scarlet Triad's exploitation and have killed off several rivals within the Gladiators' Guild. It is possible that a powerful and popular gladiator could challenge and overthrow Bshez, thus taking over the guild. Arena events occur every Toilday and Sunday. This knowledge allows the PCs to begin Task 3: Blood on the Sand (page 32).

**Imperial Union of Breeders:** For more than a year, the Imperial Union of Breeders has tried to capture a magnificent wild camel known as Duneshadow. The guildmaster, Aldane Zulran, is especially interested and might offer a boon to anyone who brings him the beautiful animal alive and unharmed. This knowledge allows the PCs to begin Task 4: Romancing the Camel (page 35).

**League of Peshmongers:** A bumper crop of pesh has threatened to flood the market and drive down prices, but the League of Peshmongers has attempted to restrict supply artificially. The Pactmasters seem displeased by this maneuver and have warned of consequences if the League doesn't abandon this strategy. This information provides the PCs more context for the events in Task 6: Unseen Approval (page 42).

## ISSUE CHALLENGE

If the PCs have completed the first stage of Task 3: Blood on the Sand and qualified as gladiators, a PC who wishes to contend for control of the Gladiators' Guild can use the Issue Challenge downtime activity to provoke Guildmaster Bshez Shak into an ill-advised duel.

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## ISSUE CHALLENGE

### DOWNTIME

You spend a day promoting your combat abilities, trash-talking the competition, calling out the leadership of the Gladiators' Guild, or performing public feats of bravado to compel the guildmaster of the Gladiators' Guild to accept your challenge to rule over the arena. This action ties specifically into Task 3: Blood on the Sand (page 32). Attempt a DC 36 Athletics, Deception, Intimidation, Performance, or appropriate Lore skill check.

**Critical Success** You provoke Bshez Shak into accepting your challenge.

**Success** You weaken Bshez's resolve. For the next 7 days, your checks to Issue Challenges gain a cumulative +1 circumstance bonus (maximum +4).

**Critical Failure** Your boisterousness accidentally leads to embarrassment that undermines your stature. You lose any circumstance bonuses you've earned as a result of successful Issued Challenges, and can't Issue a Challenge the next day.

## SEEK UNUSUAL ITEMS

It's said that everything is available in Katapesh. If you are comfortable letting the PCs acquire uncommon or rare gear, they can spend a day seeking out a specific item. With a successful DC 35 Diplomacy, Society, or appropriate Lore check, a PC meets with someone selling a specific uncommon item or access to a specific spell; to find a specific rare item, a critical success is necessary. If you want to ensure an option remains inaccessible, a successful investigation confirms no such item is to be found in Katapesh.

## Katapesh's Guilds

The key to undermining the city's support of the Scarlet Triad is rallying the city's guilds against the organization. A successful DC 20 Society check (or, barring this, aid from Satla) is enough to provide the PCs with a list of the city's major guilds.

To deny the Scarlet Triad the Pactmasters' protection, the PCs must rally at least 10 of the 14 guilds to shift their stance to be against the Scarlet Triad, so that they'll vote against the Scarlet Triad at the next Council of Guilds.

Each guild has a number of Support Points—a numerical representation of how much the guild supports the Scarlet Triad. Guilds that are actively allied with the Scarlet Triad also have a Task associated with them. To convince a guild to turn against the Scarlet Triad and vote against them at the Council of Guilds, the PCs must use the Influence Guild downtime activity to reduce their Support Points to 0, and also complete the guild's associated task. This can happen

in any order, but if the PCs reduce the Support Points to 0, they should always learn about the special task. Note that in some cases, a guild starts with 0 Support Points—in these cases, the guild either has been coerced into cooperating with the Scarlet Triad or is firmly in its pocket, and completing the guild's associated task is required to earn the guild's support against the Scarlet Triad. Such guilds do not list favored skills, since there is no need to Influence them.

A guild's favored skills are those the PCs must use to influence them. At your discretion, Lore skills other than the listed ones can also be used.

## ASPIS CONSORTIUM

**Support Points** 12

**Favored Skills** Deception, Guild Lore, Intimidation, Mercantile Lore

Efficient, profiteering, and opportunistic, the Aspis Consortium is a trade collective that dabbles in a wide range of exports and investments.

## CARPENTER'S GUILD

**Support Points** 4

**Favored Skills** Crafting, Guild Lore, Intimidation

The carpenters' no-nonsense approach to guild politics involves not making waves unless the guild's constituent carpenters, lumberjacks, and whittlers believe that they are at risk.

## FARMERS' UNION

**Support Points** 0; **Task** Caravan Troubles (page 30)

This union represents farmers scattered outside Katapesh for many miles who otherwise have difficulty communicating with each other. The Scarlet Triad is currently extorting these farmers.

## FLESHMONGER FEDERATION

**Support Points** 6

**Favored Skills** Diplomacy, Guild Lore, Society

This guild, which has ties to the nefarious slaver pirates of Okeno, always maintained as professional a public face as possible to deflect criticism—particularly as public sentiments sour toward the federation's chattel trade.

## FRATERNAL ORDER OF THE ANVIL

**Support Points** 0; **Task** Metals and Malice (page 38)

Representing smiths and metalworkers, this guild has profited off the Scarlet Triad's expanding mercenary operations. The order's run strictly, ensuring fair but fierce protection for its members.

## GLADIATORS' GUILD

**Support Points** 0; **Task** Blood on the Sand (page 32)



Run until recently by the notorious Magnus Boldheart, this guild's new Scarlet Triad-installed leader has a stranglehold on for-profit combats.

## GUILD OF BAKERS AND BUTCHERS

**Support Points** 4

**Favored Skills** Butchering Lore, Cooking Lore, Crafting, Diplomacy, Guild Lore

Although united for political power, this guild suffers from an ongoing schism with cooks and bakers on one side and butchers and meat mongers on the other.

## GUILD OF STREET SWEEPERS AND DUNG CARTERS

**Support Points** 4

**Favored Skills** Athletics, Guild Lore, Society

Hardly prestigious, this guild nonetheless commands quiet respect for its diligence and the constituents' familiarity with all of Katapesh's rumors, secrets, and shortcuts.

## IMPERIAL UNION OF BREEDERS

**Support Points** 6; **Task** Romancing the Camel (page 35)

**Favored Skills** Diplomacy, Guild Lore, Medicine, Nature  
Infamously adept at haggling, the breeders and stable masters of Katapesh are equally tough negotiators in their political dealings.

## JEWELERS' GUILD

**Support Points** 0; **Task** Liberation (see below)

Representing jewelers and appraisers, this guild has become both wealthy and tight-knit under the longtime leadership of Exavisu Kerndallion. However, the Scarlet Triad is holding the guild's beloved leader, using her as leverage against the jewelers.

## LEAGUE OF PESHMONGERS

**Support Points** 0; **Task** Unseen Approval (page 42)

A sister guild of the Farmers' Union, the League represents not only the cactus tenders but also the manufacturers who refine and sell the drug. They are infamously headstrong and apolitical, seeing themselves as a central Katapesh institution apart from other guilds.

## LEAGUE OF UPRIGHT BARRISTERS

**Support Points** 4

**Favored Skills** Deception, Guild Lore, Legal Lore, Society

Although they often end up at each other's throats in court, the league's barristers are chummy when not on duty. They're loath to throw their influence around politically but respect law-savvy and silver-tongued allies and propositions.

## ORDER OF ALCHEMISTS AND POTION MAKERS

**Support Points** 4

**Favored Skills** Arcana, Crafting, Guild Lore, Nature

These potable-brewers create a wide variety of goods, from special alcohols to magical elixirs. Their specialized ingredients haven't been impacted by the Scarlet Triad yet, and the guild is reticent to draw that organization's ire.

## POISON MAKERS' GUILD

**Support Points** 0; **Task** Toxic Relationships (page 45)

The poison makers try to keep a low profile on the council, knowing that their products are often connected to assassinations. As a result, they don't pick sides in larger conflicts unless it's clearly in their interests.

**XP Award:** Each time a guild is convinced to turn against the Scarlet Triad, the PCs earn 10 XP, to a maximum XP award of 140 XP if they convince all 14 guilds to do so.

## Task 1: Liberation

Over the past several years, a wave of anti-slavery sentiment has washed across the Inner Sea region, spurred in large part by Absalom's sweeping manumission of slaves. With the loss of this customer and other friendly ports, slavers have struggled to find new clients. The Pactmasters' commitment to promoting all trade has made Katapesh a bastion of slave trading, overseen in large part by the Fleshmonger Federation and the Scarlet Triad.

But for all its support of slavery and other nefarious trades, Katapesh maintains several protections to ensure slavers don't upset the city's safety and commerce. While any slave brought into the city retains slave status (ensuring slavers' inventory is safe from abolitionists), no free person can be enslaved within the city's jurisdiction except by the sentencing of city's magistrates (preventing slavers from threatening legitimate customers and merchants). Just because slavery's legal, though, doesn't make it popular. For decades, abolitionists have performed operations in Katapesh, intermittently raiding stockades and the Slave Block, where public auctions occur. In response, the city's guards—the Zephyr Guard—maintain tight security in the area.

Thanks to its favored position with the Pactmasters, the Scarlet Triad has quietly used its private guards and slave-trading network to eliminate political rivals over the last few months. The leader of the Jewelers' Guild, Exavisu Kerndallion, is their highest-profile victim yet, having been ambushed and enslaved by Scarlet Triad operatives miles outside the city while on business. By the time these agents returned to the city with their prey, the Scarlet Triad already had meticulous ownership documentation prepared

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and numerous bribed officials ready to overlook Kerndallion's underhanded capture. Since then, she and several of her colleagues have toiled beneath the Red Pyramid, applying their jewelery expertise to the task of rebuilding the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*. At the same time, the Scarlet Triad is using the outspoken and beloved guildmaster as a hostage, ensuring the Jewelers' Guild's obedience.

As work on the orb nears completion, Kerndallion's usefulness to the Scarlet Triad is fast running out. Hoping to secure needed funds, the organization has arranged her sale at a private auction that will be attended by a host of otherworldly buyers. Uri Zandivar is eager to have her out of the picture, for should she escape or be rescued, he knows she'd be a powerful force in turning guild sentiment against the Scarlet Triad.

## STARTING THIS TASK

Satla informs the PCs of Exavisu's abduction at the start of this chapter, so liberation should be one of the first tasks the PCs learn about, and rescuing Exavisu should be one of the first things the PCs seek to accomplish. Due to the Scarlet Triad's protected status and Katapesh's historic disdain for freedom fighters, kicking in the door and fighting every foe in sight is very unwise. Instead, Satla suggests the PCs perform a more subtle rescue, in the form of a heist.

## HEIST OVERVIEW

This task consists of four stages: legwork, infiltration, rescue, and extraction. Each contains several scenes divided into Obstacles, Opportunities, and Complications that provide the GM with challenges for the PCs to overcome. Obstacles have to be overcome for the heist to proceed, Opportunities give PCs advantages in other scenes, and Complications crop up if the PCs are drawing too much attention. How well the PCs handle these scenes shapes how cleanly the group enters the compound, avoids detection, and completes the objective. If the PCs do poorly, they might encounter armed opposition or have to abandon the operation altogether. The entire heist is meant to be played out in exploration mode, but now and then you might need to shift into encounters to resolve fights or conflicts. These events are always the result of failures, as a well-planned heist can, with a bit of luck, be pulled off without a single combat.

**Timing:** The PCs have a generous window in which to prepare for the heist. They can begin work on the heist at the start of Chapter 2, and must strike on the 15th. If the PCs haven't learned of the auction by the 14th, several of Satla's friends contact her that evening; this gives the PCs only the 15th to prepare before

performing the heist. If they don't act by then, the PCs lose their opportunity to rescue Exavisu Kerndalion and thereby earn the Jewelers' Guild's full support. In this case, a dejected Satla learns about some of Exavisu's revelations regarding the Red Pyramid's underground levels and the mysterious orb (page 30) through several recently escaped Scarlet Triad slaves—enough to provide context and keep the story moving.

Once the heist begins, the PCs move through scenes at a quicker pace, since the longer they remain in the estate, the more notice they draw. The amount of time it takes for the PCs to complete the heist depends on their tactics. A raid-like strategy could be done within 5 minutes, whereas a more measured approach might take several hours.

**Pacing:** At its core, the heist is a series of skill checks, and it's very easy to turn it into a mechanical challenge. However, try to take advantage of the tension to draw out roleplaying, problem solving, and memorable banter. The more you prompt the players to suggest solutions or skills—many of which will likely align with the heist mechanics—the more they'll feel they own their victory.

**Scene Structure:** PCs can stick together or split up for scenes, and can meet back up between them. If the group is split up, they carry out their scenes simultaneously in-world, though you might want to play them out one by one at the table. You can decide what order to play them in. Endeavor to keep each PC involved in the heist, but remember that only the PCs present for a scene can resolve it.

You control the flow of scenes, particularly Opportunities and Complications. When one PC or group draws more attention, it could cause a Complication for a different group elsewhere. Likewise, an isolated PC could be the only one who spots a new Opportunity.

If a player's roleplaying or strategy is particularly good—particularly when adapting to a Complication—consider granting them a circumstance bonus to their next check, typically +1, as described on page 492 of the *Core Rulebook*.

**Troubleshooting:** There are numerous ways a heist can go sideways, but if it does, that's okay! Ultimately, there's no right way to run the heist, and the system is intended to provide you flexibility to manage the pace and maintain tension. Use the scenes provided here as guidelines for creating your own on the fly to accommodate the PCs' hijinks.

**Larger Groups:** For a group of more than four PCs, chose two or three scenes in Phases 3 and 4 to be harder. Increase the successes needed to complete them by one each.



## HEIST TERMS

The following terminology is used in the Liberation task.

**Awareness Points:** This is a value for tracking how suspicious guards and bystanders are (see Awareness on page 25). Failures and critical failures typically increase Awareness Points. When Awareness reaches certain thresholds, new Complications and dangers come into play.

**Complication:** This type of scene represents an unexpected problem during the heist. It functions like an Obstacle, but the GM introduces it in addition to the current Obstacles. Typically, a Complication has to be completed before the PCs dealing with it can return to working on Obstacles.

**Edge Point:** This is a special advantage granted by good planning, quick thinking, allies' intervention, or the like. Edge Points are precious, and typically gained by pursuing Opportunities. When a PC fails at a scene, they can spend an Edge Point to succeed instead (even if they critically failed). Some Edge Points can be used only on certain tasks, and once used the Edge Point is lost. Consider using tokens or other physical objects at the table to represent the party's Edge Points.

**Obstacle:** This is a scene that the PCs need to overcome or bypass to achieve their objectives.

**Opportunity:** This is a scene that the PCs have the option to perform, but that's not required for final success. Completing an Opportunity provides an advantage, often an Edge Point.

**Overcome:** This part of an activity's stat block lists skill checks or other strategies PCs might use to resolve a scene. If the activity requires multiple successes to overcome it, that is listed here as well. Make the final determination on what strategies might work, based on what makes sense within the story, adding additional options as you wish. Resolving a scene should generally involve skill checks, expending resources (such as money, spells, or magic items), or exceptionally clever tactics. If a PC's spell, item, or other ability could resolve a scene (such as using a multi-target confusion effect to scatter guards), use +25 as the default saving throw bonus.

## PHASE 1: LEGWORK

This phase consists of Opportunities the PCs can perform before attempting their heist. Each activity takes half a day, allowing the PC to attempt an activity twice or combine it with one other legwork activity. While the PCs can perform these tasks multiple times, none of these activities can award more than 1 Edge Point each, regardless of the number of times it is attempted.



## OPPORTUNITIES

### CONTACT STEEL FALCONS

#### DOWNTIME

**Overcome** DC 32 Andoran Lore, DC 36 Diplomacy, DC 34 Society

The PC surreptitiously tries to contact the Steel Falcons in Katapesh.

**Success** The PC arranges a meeting with the Steel Falcons. They're eager to combine forces with powerful operatives like the PCs in the name of liberating the oppressed, and they can provide information about the upcoming auction equivalent to a Gather Information success. In addition, the Steel Falcons grant the PCs 1 Edge Point.

**Failure** The PC fails to make contact.

**Critical Failure** The PC's clumsy attempt spooks the Steel Falcons. Future attempts at this activity take a -2 circumstance penalty.

**Special** If the PCs don't succeed at this Opportunity, the Steel Falcons independently decide to launch their own heist that overlaps with—

and potentially interferes with—the PCs' heist. See the Unexpected Falcons Complication on page 26.

## FORGE DOCUMENTS

#### DOWNTIME SECRET

**Overcome** DC 34 Society

The PC prepares several forgeries that might serve as convincing props during the heist.

**Success** The PC creates convincing documents that grant the PCs 1 Edge Point they can use when presenting proper credentials, work orders, or invitations.

**Failure** The PC creates somewhat unconvincing documents. Inform the PCs the forgeries grant 1 Edge Point. However, when they use that Edge Point, it grants no benefit.

**Critical Failure** As failure, but a PC who uses the Edge Point on a failure gets a critical failure instead.

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## GATHER INFORMATION

**DOWNTIME** **SECRET**

**Overcome** DC 35 Diplomacy

The PC seeks out rumors about Exavisu's status and location.

**Critical Success** The PCs learn information as a success, plus supporting details that assist in their preparations. The

PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus to checks to perform legwork tasks from this point on. In addition, the PC learns that the scheduling of the auction experienced some delays due to disagreements between the Scarlet Triad and Fleshmongers' Federation over how to split profits—in the face of the gradual constriction of slave market, the longtime allies are both great taking pains to maintain their own profits without undercutting each other.

**Success** The PC learns that while nobody knows where Exavisu Kerndallion and her enslaved colleagues are, a private auction has been scheduled for the evening of 15 Neth, to be held at the Bhetshamtal Estate in Katapesh's Inner City. Invitations are nearly impossible to come by, and the audience is expected to include a large number of extraplanar bidders. Exavisu is among the slaves up for sale. Shipments into and out of the estate suggest preparations are already underway for the exclusive event, and the slaves are likely being kept off-site until the event begins.

**Failure** The PC learns nothing.

**Critical Failure** The PC learns a few misleading rumors that give the PCs a -2 circumstance penalty to their next check for a legwork task.

## SECURE DISGUISES

**DOWNTIME**

**Overcome** DC 35 Crafting, DC 33 Deception, DC 35 Performance, DC 37 Society

The PC tries to find disguises of a certain type (guards, for example, or socialites).

**Success** The PC finds or creates useful disguises that grant 1 Edge Point that the PCs can use for maintaining a cover identity.

**Failure** The PC finds no disguises.

## SECURE INVITATION

**DOWNTIME**

**Overcome** DC 35 Diplomacy, DC 35 Society

The PC seeks out someone with an invitation they're willing to sell.

**Critical Success** The PC finds an invitation-holder and convinces them to give away the invitation for free. The PCs gain 1 Edge Point.

**Success** The PC finds someone willing to sell their invitation for 250 gp. If they pay, the group gets 1 Edge Point. They can attempt to steal it instead (DC 34 Thievery), but if they do, increase Awareness at the beginning of Phase 2: Infiltration by 2.

**Failure** The PC is unable to find an invitation.

## SCOUT THE FACILITY

**DOWNTIME** **SECRET**

**Overcome** DC 36 Perception, DC 38 Society, DC 34 Stealth

The PC spends part of the day observing the Bhetshamtal Estate, recording patrols, noting escape routes, and creating a mental map.

**Success** The PC makes decisive observations that grant the PCs 1 Edge Point that can be used for sneaking through or navigating the estate.

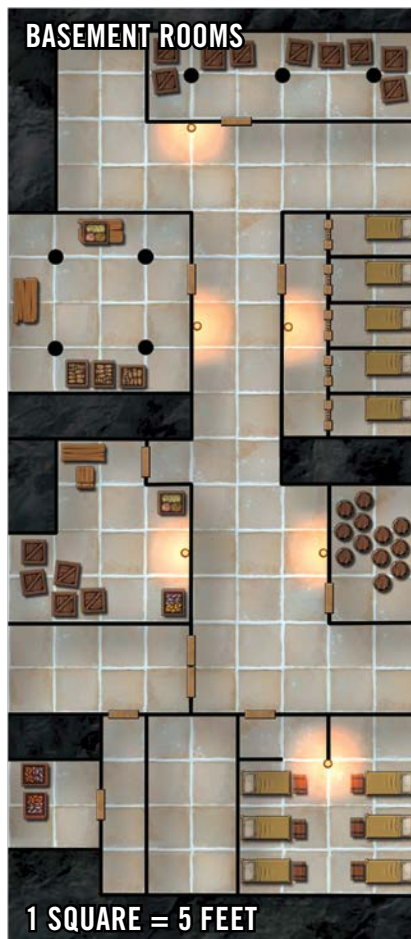
**Failure** The PC learns nothing noteworthy.

**Critical Failure** The PC misjudges some element of the security. Inform

the PCs that the scouting grants 1 Edge Point. When they use that Edge Point, they don't get the normal benefit, and if they rolled a normal failure they get a critical failure instead.

## PHASE 2: INFILTRATION

The Bhetshamtal Estate is a centuries-old palace rumored to have been new when the Pactmasters first arrived nearly a millennium ago, though records are hazy. It's now owned by the Scarlet Triad, which assumed control in 4712 as repayment for the previous owner's debts. The estate consists of a carriage house, kitchen, servant's quarters, well-watered gardens, and a manor—the last of which includes a ballroom, dining room, bedrooms, a variety of salons, and bathrooms. Numerous rooms have especially heavy





doors, reinforced windows, magical wards, and the like to ensure security and privacy. An 8-foot-high wall of cut stone blocks surrounds the estate.

Most days, the Scarlet Triad uses the estate to host influential visitors or hold meetings. The evening of the auction, the estate is abuzz with nearly 100 different visitors, servants, and auction staff. Slaves going up for bid at the auction include Exavisu Kerndallion and her three assistants, who are secretly transported into the manor from their cells under the Red Pyramid on the night of the auction—15 Neth.

Much of the evening's entertainment takes place in the gardens outside, where caterers bring in more food and drink throughout the evening, and performers play a variety of elegant tunes. Guards stand at the major entrances and patrol the walls on either side, and guard dogs are vigilant for trespassers. The event is an elitist soiree, moving inside to the ballroom later in the evening as the auction begins. The many supernatural creatures in attendance include some who can see through magical tricks, and the estate includes numerous wards that limit the degree to which thieves can simply teleport in and out (see the Dimensional Interference Complication on page 26).

## NOTEWORTHY NPCs

The Scarlet Triad has invited many of Katapesh's wealthier clientele to the auction, as well as an assortment of local allies. There are also a host of extraplanar beings in attendance, mostly from the elemental planes and Hell. **Jelek Jaziman** (NE male half-elf) is the Scarlet Triad's ranking representative and the event's host. The wiry, half-Garundi entrepreneur considers himself a rising star in Katapesh and likes to throw his influence around to prove it. **Ytrim Azas** (LE female shaitan) represents the Aspis Consortium, a powerful trade group with few scruples. The Consortium has worked closely with the Scarlet Triad several times over the past few years, and Ytrim is the official liaison for those deals. She considers Jelek pompous but largely reliable, and she enjoys discussing old architecture, rare jewelry, and tales of betrayal. Representing the Fleshmonger Federation is **Sehtba al-Izora** (LE female human), a Keleshite woman whose outward kindness belies her remorseless strategic approach to business.

Among the noteworthy buyers are **Reloon** (LE female raja rakshasa), **Altshal Gha** (LE male efreeti), and **Tersious Vind** (NE male tiefling). Reloon uses her ability to change shape to masquerade as Baroness Epminia Fahlsparr, a Taldan noblewoman supposedly here as part of a year-long Inner Sea tour to acquire unusual treasures. She's maintained her disguise fairly

effectively so far, and anything that reveals her true buzzard-headed form causes a scene. Muscular and boasting a broad rack of horns, Altshal Gha owns dozens of mines across the Plane of Earth and Plane of Fire. He arrogantly demeans anyone he doesn't consider strategically worthwhile. He's also the primary bidder for Exavisu, believing her jewelery talents could be an excellent addition to his business. Tersious Vind is a successful adventurer expelled from the Pathfinder Society 6 years ago after betraying his comrades and stealing their savings—a story he thinks makes him sound charming and clever. He's here to acquire several slaves to act as his minions in his next big treasure hunt.

## AWARENESS

Starting in Phase 2, if the PCs fail checks, cause disruptions, or misstep in ways that attract unwanted attention, Awareness of them increases. Awareness Points begin at 0 and increase in two ways.

- When a PC fails a check when trying to complete a scene, increase the PCs' Awareness Points by 1 (or 2 on a critical failure). Other failed checks made as part of a scene don't increase Awareness, only ones that would have counted toward overcoming it.
- Awareness Points go up by 1 at the end of each scene, as the passage of time makes it more likely the PCs will be discovered. If multiple scenes are happening simultaneously, Awareness does not go up until all those scenes are finished.

When the PCs reach the following amounts of Awareness Points, they face greater challenges.

**5 Awareness Points:** Rising suspicions cause the Scarlet Triad to call in more guards and be more vigilant. Increase the DCs of checks to overcome scenes by 1 as long as Awareness is 5 or higher. The first time the PCs reach 5 Awareness Points, a general Complication (page 26) occurs after the scene.

**10 Awareness Points:** Greater wariness means there are more ways for things to go wrong. The first time the PCs reach 10 Awareness Points, a general Complication (page 26) occurs after the scene.

**15 Awareness Points:** The first time the PCs reach 15 Awareness Points, a pair of Scarlet Triad enforcers (page 41) confront the PCs; use the Katapesh Streets map on page 40, the Manor Rooms map on page 23, or the Basement Rooms map on page 24 as needed to play out the fight. Increase the DC of checks to overcome scenes by 2 as long as Awareness is 15 or higher (this includes the increase from Awareness 5).

**20 Awareness Points:** The first time the PCs reach 20 Awareness Points, a Scarlet Triad mage (page 57) leading a group of three calikangs (page 84) confronts them.

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**25 Awareness Points:** The jig is up! Waves of Scarlet Triad guards are in pursuit of the PCs, and barring some extraordinary plan, the PCs must abandon the heist or face overwhelming odds. Exavisu is moved back to the Red Pyramid and kept imprisoned there in area C19 until the PCs can rescue her via more traditional methods during Chapter 3.

## RUNNING THE INFILTRATION

During Phase 2: Infiltration, the PCs' goal is to reach

the manor without arousing suspicion. To get in, each PC needs to overcome at least two Obstacles, with a critical success giving two successes. The GM decides, based on each PC's approach, whether that PC must gain all their successes from one Obstacle or not, and whether they can succeed multiple times against the same Obstacle. Someone who has made it in before their compatriots can pursue Opportunities. Once all PCs have the requisite successes, they have all infiltrated the estate and can move to Phase 3.

## GENERAL COMPLICATIONS

These Complications can work in many different phases and locations during the heist.

## DIMENSIONAL INTERFERENCE

### EXPLORATION

**Trigger** The PCs attempt to use a teleportation effect.

**Overcome** 2 successes; DC 35 Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion

Some of the protective wards in Bhetshamtal Estate provide magical static that causes teleportation effects to fail. If the PCs intend to just teleport away to safety, they need to disable these wards. This Complication is unlikely to arise until the PCs try to teleport and fail.

## DO I KNOW YOU?

### EXPLORATION

**Trigger** Awareness reaches 5 or 10.

**Overcome** DC 30 Deception, DC 35 Diplomacy, DC 28 Performance, DC 32 Stealth

A partygoer or worker thinks they recognize one of the PCs, attracting unwanted attention. That PC either convinces them otherwise before slipping away or finds a way to dodge the bystander entirely.

## UNEXPECTED FALCONS

### EXPLORATION

**Requirements** The PCs got a critical failure while attempting to Contact Steel Falcons (page 23). This Complication can occur whenever the GM sees fit.

**Overcome** 3 successes; DC 35 Deception, DC 33 Diplomacy, DC 37 Intimidation

The Steel Falcons are performing their own heist to rescue their captain, Wallen Iuphasti, and they and the PCs encounter each other suddenly. Expecting trouble, the Steel Falcons have weapons drawn and are poised to attack. To overcome this encounter, the PCs quickly talk down the Andoren operatives.

**Failure** The Steel Falcons become more vocal and threatening, and a brief fight breaks out. This increases the Awareness Point total by 3 (instead of the normal 1 for a failure).



Jelek Jaziman



**Critical Failure** As failure, but increase Awareness by 5.

## UNEXPECTED PATROL

### EXPLORATION

**Trigger** Awareness reaches 6 or 10.

**Overcome** 2 successes; DC 37 Deception, DC 37 Perception, DC 35 Stealth

The PCs notice a group of guards on patrol that's only seconds away from stumbling upon them. The PCs seek out a place to hide, look for an alternate route around the guards, or craft cunning lies.

## PHASE 2 OBSTACLES

### BLEND IN

#### EXPLORATION

**Overcome** DC 35 Deception, DC 37 Society, DC 35 Stealth

Sometimes the best option for crossing a crowded party is to act natural and join the crowd.

If a PC successfully Blends In, roll a secret DC 34 Perception check for them to notice that something seems off about one of the guests. On a success, inform them about the Dispel a Disguise Opportunity (see below).

## BREAKING AND ENTERING

#### EXPLORATION

**Overcome** DC 37 Acrobatics, DC 35 Athletics, DC 35 Nature, DC 35 Stealth, DC 35 Thievery

The PCs scale the walls, calm the guard dogs, hide from guards, and unlock gates.

**Special** If a PC successfully Breaks and Enters, they can attempt a DC 35 Perception check to notice a set of keys carried by a guard or resting in a somewhat hard-to-reach area, allowing for that PC to take the Steal Keys Opportunity (see page 28).

## CUNNING DISGUISE

#### EXPLORATION

**Overcome** DC 35 Deception or DC 33 (see below)

The PCs conceal their true identities, relying on false personas to be admitted onto the estate. A PC can use a skill closely connected to their chosen disguise in place of Deception, such as Intimidation for a guard, Guild Lore for a merchant, or any food-related Lore for a caterer.

If a PC succeeds at a Cunning Disguise, roll a secret DC 34 Perception check for them to notice something off about one of the guests. On a success, inform them about the Dispel a Disguise Opportunity (see below).



**Epminia Fahlspar**

## SMUGGLED

### EXPLORATION

**Overcome** DC 33 Stealth

The PCs hide themselves inside carts, wine barrels, or other large containers that are bound for the estate. This deposits them inside the walls but a distance from the manor.

**Special** This process leaves participating PCs disheveled, imposing a -1 circumstance penalty to checks tied to appearing well groomed or professional.

## PHASE 2 OPPORTUNITIES

### DISPEL A DISGUISE

#### EXPLORATION SECRET

**Requirement** When Blending In or using a Cunning Disguise, a PC has noticed something is off about a guest.

**Overcome** DC 35 Arcana, DC 33 Occultism, DC 37 Perception

The PC is sure there's more to Baroness Epminia Fahlspar than

meets the eye. They're right—she's Reloon, a rakshasa in disguise!

**Critical Success** The PC sees through the disguise and identifies a way to unveil the rakshasa without magic. Rakshasas are not unwelcome here, but the sudden reveal of Reloon's natural form and her dismayed outburst draws the attention of many partyers. Reduce Awareness by 2 (minimum 0).

**Success** The PC senses the magical disguise. To overcome this Opportunity, a PC must either magically counteract the disguise or succeed at a DC 40 Deception or Intimidation check to cause the baroness's concentration to waver, briefly disrupting her disguise. This reveals her, as described under critical success.

**Failure** The PC sees no evidence of a disguise.

**Critical Failure** The PC sees no evidence of a disguise, and their scrutiny invites a loud dressing down by the baroness.

## SMOOTH THE PATH

### EXPLORATION

**Requirement** The PC has successfully infiltrated the estate. Now that they're on the inside, the PC helps an ally who's still trying to infiltrate. They describe what they're doing to help, and give the ally the benefits of Following the Expert (*Pathfinder Core Rulebook* 479). The GM might require the PC to attempt a relevant skill check (typically DC 32) to Smooth the Path.

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## STEAL KEYS

### EXPLORATION

**Requirement** PCs noticed the keys while Breaking and Entering.

**Overcome** DC 35 Thievery

The PC steals a ring of keys that can unlock many of the manor's doors.

**Success** The PCs gain 1 Edge Point usable for opening locks.

## PHASE 2 COMPLICATIONS

## DIVINER ON DUTY

### EXPLORATION

**Trigger** A PC uses magic to aid in overcoming an Obstacle during infiltration.

**Overcome** 3 successes; DC 35 Arcana, DC 37 Deception, DC 35 Nature, DC 35 Occultism, DC 35 Religion

Among the Scarlet Triad's security is a highly competent diviner! With spells such as *discern lies*, *mind reading*, *see invisibility*, and *true seeing*, this diviner can see through most magical schemes the PCs might use.

The diviner is watching for magical threats, not poison. With a successful DC 33 Deception, Thievery, or food-related Lore check, a PC can trick her into consuming something laden with an ingested poison. Her Fortitude save bonus is +23, and she withdraws if successfully poisoned. If not successfully poisoned, increase the PCs' Awareness Points by 2.

## PHASE 3: RESCUE

Once the PCs infiltrate the manor, they still need to navigate its interior, find the slaves, and break them free. The interior has about a dozen guards and servants, all of whom are keeping watch and performing last-minute preparations before the auction occurs. Phase 3's Opportunity becomes available once the PCs reach the basement (see the Find the Cells Obstacle below).

During this stage, the PCs' goal is to free the captive Exavisu Kerndallion, who is held in a cell with one of her assistants. This process requires the PCs to navigate the four Obstacles below. The PCs can attempt the first three Obstacles in any order, but Breaking the Chains must be the final one. Depending on their successes and failures, they may need to overcome Complications.

If the PCs don't think to take the Opportunity to Loot the Vaults, allow each PC in the group a DC 30 Society check at the start of this phase to realize this Opportunity exists—whether or not they attempt it is up to them.

## PHASE 3 OBSTACLES

## DEADLY TRAPS

### EXPLORATION

**Overcome** 2 successes; DC 34 Arcana or DC 34 Thievery

The PCs suppress or disable dangerous traps set to kill would-be thieves and make an explosive ruckus.

**Special** If a PC fails a check to overcome this scene, they trigger a trap that deals 16d6 damage to that PC (DC 36 basic Reflex). If the PC critically fails, it deals this damage to all PCs in the scene.

## FIND THE CELLS

### EXPLORATION

**Overcome** 3 successes; DC 33 Architecture Lore, DC 35 Perception, DC 35 Survival

The PCs identify an efficient route through the manor and reach the holding cells and vaults in the basement—all without opening too many doors, making too much noise, or wasting time searching for secret doors.

## LOCKED DOORS

### EXPLORATION

**Overcome** 2 successes; DC 35 Athletics, DC 35 Thievery

Most of the manor is locked to prevent guests from wandering into restricted areas. The PCs quietly break into rooms or unlock doors.

## BREAKING THE CHAINS

### EXPLORATION

**Requirements** The PCs have overcome the other three Obstacles for this phase.

**Overcome** 2 successes; DC 37 Athletics, DC 33 Thievery

The captives are sealed behind bars and chained to the walls. The PCs undo these bindings as quietly as possible. Once the PCs defeat this Obstacle, they have freed Exavisu and one of her assistants and can begin Phase 4: Extraction. See the That's Not Everyone Complication on page 29 for more options.

## PHASE 3 OPPORTUNITY

## LOOT THE VAULTS

### EXPLORATION

**Requirement** The PCs have reached the basement by Overcoming the Find the Cells Obstacle.

**Overcome** 2 successes; Arcana DC 33, Perception DC 35, Thievery DC 35



Exavisu



In addition to the captives, the Scarlet Triad has stored numerous treasures in the manor's basement. The PCs take several minutes to unlock a vault and identify the best objects to steal.

This Opportunity can be completed twice. The first time, the PCs recover a *Nethysian bulwark* (page 77), a broad crystal bowl inlaid with faience designs of ibises (worth 300 gp), and an onyx-and-marble statue of Nethys (worth 200 gp). In addition, the PCs also find a ledger detailing many Scarlet Triad transactions. With a successful DC 28 Guild Lore or a DC 35 Society check, a PC paging through the ledger determines that the Scarlet Triad has been dodging taxes, undercutting competition, and attempting to accumulate a lot of money very quickly—all in ways that quietly harm the Fleshmonger Federation, Aspis Consortium, and church of Abadar. Once for each guild, a PC can use the ledger when Influencing a Guild to reduce that organization's Support Points by an additional 2 points.

The second time the PCs complete this Opportunity, they recover a *belt of regeneration*, as well as an alabaster-and-silver amphoriskos perfume bottle within which is bound the djinni vizier (*Bestiary* 162) Palqari the Wise. The Scarlet Triad trapped Palqari and offered him freedom in exchange for three wishes. Uri Zandivar already used two of these wishes to assist with the repair of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, but then refrained from redeeming his last wish. Palqari is amenable to granting this last wish to the PCs if they help him escape; until then, he can't travel more than 20 feet from his amphoriskos, nor can he move it himself. This wish can be used to automatically rescue all of the slaves, but the PCs will still need to escape on their own (see Extraction below). Although Palqari is eager to return to the Plane of Air, he could become a recurring ally later in the adventure at your discretion.

**Critical Failure** The PCs are noticed by a group of guards.

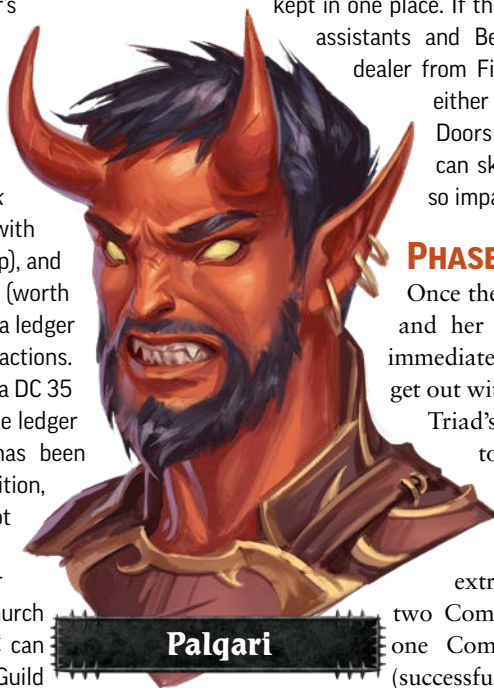
Play out this combat using the Basement Rooms map on page 24; this encounter is with a Scarlet Triad enforcer (page 41), a Scarlet Triad mage (page 57), and two calikangs (page 84). At the end of every round of combat, Awareness increases by 1.

## PHASE 3 COMPLICATIONS

### THAT'S NOT EVERYONE

#### EXPLORATION

**Trigger** The PCs complete Breaking the Chains.



Palqari

The enslaved members of the Jewelers' Guild were not all kept in one place. If the PCs intend to rescue all three assistants and Benneb, the missing antiquities dealer from Finderplain, they need to repeat either the Break the Chains or Locked Doors Obstacle a second time. The PCs can skip this Complication, but doing so impacts their rewards (page 30).

## PHASE 4: EXTRACTION

Once the PCs have recovered Exavisu and her assistants and resolved any immediate Complications, they have to get out without calling down the Scarlet Triad's wrath. The PCs merely need to escape—ideally without being chased by a host of armed guards! There are no set Obstacles, but extraction requires completing two Complications in any order, plus one Complication for each attempt (successful or not) the PCs made to Loot the Vaults, to a maximum of five

total Complications. You can use the Breaking and Entering or Locked Doors Obstacles from previous scenes as Complications as well.

## PHASE 4 COMPLICATIONS

### IMPROMPTU TOUR

#### EXPLORATION

**Overcome** 3 successes; DC 33 Architecture Lore, DC 36 Deception, DC 34 Society, DC 37 Stealth

In anticipation of the auction, Jelek Jaziman has gathered groups of guests to explore the manor in guided tours. The PCs can try to avoid notice, or—by blending in with a group and making informed statements about the artwork—they can deflect attention long enough to slip away.

### OBSTRUCTED ROUTE

#### EXPLORATION

**Overcome** 2 successes; DC 33 Acrobatics, DC 33 Architecture Lore, DC 37 Athletics, DC 35 Perception

The PCs' intended route is utterly impassible, perhaps due to witnesses, magical barriers, or collateral damage. The PCs squeeze through tight spaces, push aside the obstruction, or identify a quick alternate route.

## ENDING THE HEIST

Once the PCs have escaped Bhetshamtal Estate and made it a safe distance away, the heist is over. Exavisu Kerndallion thanks the PCs and directs them

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to nearby friends who can cover their trail and get her back to the Jewelers' Guild. Depending on how cleanly the PCs performed the heist, the auction might get underway only to come to an embarrassing end once Jelek Jaziman realizes that most of those being auctioned are missing.

By the next day, Exavisu convenes with her relieved guild colleagues and begins a whisper campaign to spread word of the Scarlet Triad's misdeeds—but quietly enough not to make her a target for further attacks. She contacts the PCs to arrange a meeting as soon as they're available. Once they arrive, the PCs are welcomed to a cool meeting room holding refreshments, Exavisu, and four of her senior colleagues. She thanks the PCs for the rescue, rewarding them with several of the guild's finest gems (see *Treasure* below). With that resolved, she explains what she experienced in captivity.

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"When Uri—Uri Zandivar, head of the Scarlet Triad—came to me wanting my best jewelers to immediately begin work on a secret project off-site that he wouldn't explain, I refused; I wasn't subjecting my people to ambiguous work orders. He didn't take it well, but I considered the matter closed. A week later, family business called me out to Solku. On my way back, I was ambushed by Scarlet Triad agents!

"They smuggled me back into the city and took me into the Red Pyramid before bagging my head, but I could tell that we went a fair way underground—further than the public areas of the pyramid we all know about. When they removed the hood, I was in a windowless, high-ceilinged workshop built around a supernatural forge. Along with my captured colleagues, we learned that we were slaves—slaves!—and were forced to toil at rebuilding a strange orb out of shards of golden crystal, as well as fashioning replacements for any missing sections. There were so many concave pieces, I was pretty sure we were making a sphere, roughly head-sized, but the work was frustratingly difficult, as if the shards wanted to stay broken!

"Every day, spellcasters would come in to examine our work and provide more instructions. Uri stopped by a few times to gloat but otherwise stayed out of our way. He called our work his 'little contingency,' and when I prompted him for anything more, he insisted the world would burn if I failed, and then he laughed and added that otherwise it would burn only at his command. After about two weeks, we were done. The result was indeed a golden sphere, as I predicted—with roughly two-thirds of its original pieces. And with that, I guess our usefulness was done. We were to be sold off... or erased!"

---

Exavisu's descriptions of her cell and her work area correspond to areas **C19** and **C21** on the map

on page 60, and she can provide a fair recounting of these locations from memory. The forge both intrigued and frightened her, for she could sense that something was trapped within, exuded supernatural heat, and was furious at being there. With a successful DC 36 Arcana check, a PC recalls rumors of powerful artifacts known as the *orbs of dragonkind* that granted control over dragons, and that the orb associated with gold dragons was supposedly shattered centuries ago. A critical success on this check is sufficient to confirm that the gold dragon Mengkare of Hermea was in possession of a large number of these shards, and is said to have given away many of them as gifts to various heads of state. A repaired *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* could allow someone to control the world's gold dragons—and potentially do yet more, depending on any other powers infused into the orb.

**Treasure:** For rescuing the jewelers, Exavisu gives the PCs a felt-lined box that contains the Thuvian Star, an egg-sized, rose-hued, and otherwise flawless star sapphire worth 5,000 gp. In addition, the guild awards the PCs cut gems worth 1,000 gp for each of the three assistants rescued.

**Awareness Repercussions:** If the PCs ended the heist with 15 or more Awareness Points, their infamy imposes a circumstance penalty on their downtime actions to Influence Guilds equal to one-fifth their final Awareness Point total. This penalty decreases by 1 at the end of each day.

**XP Awards:** The complex heist's Experience Points come almost entirely from story awards. Award the PCs 80 XP for completing the infiltration portion of the heist, and another 80 XP for the rescue. Give them an additional 40 XP if they rescued all three assistants and Benneb. For every Awareness threshold the PCs never reached (5, 10, 15, 20, and 25), award the PCs an extra 10 XP. Finally, award the PCs 80 XP if they avoided combat altogether.

## Task 2: Caravan Troubles

The nation of Katapesh is in a constant struggle with bandits, as the reach of the Zephyr Guards extends only a short distance beyond the capital's walls and the western reaches of the nation are infamous for their gnoll raiders. The Scarlet Triad has increasingly seized upon this as an opportunity, and has leveraged its political and military power against other guilds, particularly the Farmers' Union, offering protection services at usurious rates. The Union pushed back earlier this year, only to suffer several pesh fields "accidentally" catching fire a week later as retribution. After months of exploitation with only a modicum of



relief from the Pactmasters, the farmers—particularly those based many miles from Katapesh—are at a breaking point.

## STARTING THIS TASK

The PCs should first hear of this lead as a result of Gathering Information (see page 19 for more on the farmers' complaints), and as such you can time the point at which they start this task as best fits your game's pace. When the caravan routes the farmers rely upon become the hunting grounds of dangerous fire-breathing spawn of the legendary monster known as Xotani the Firebleeder, the desperate farmers reach their breaking point.

## CARAVAN CARNIVORES SEVERE 16

The Scarlet Triad periodically makes good on its protection services, escorting caravans and rooting out minor bands of raiders and gnolls. However, they are wary of any truly devastating threats represented by particularly dangerous monsters. Such was the case when word spread of a lumbering burrowing monstrosity the size of an elephant and capable of spitting fire that attacked a large caravan on the way to the city. Just before this chapter begins, Uri Zandivar penned a declaration to the Farmers' Union insisting that this attack was a one-time event and that there's nothing to worry about, yet his dismissive nonchalance left the farmers seething with rage. The Pactmasters have not yet investigated the attack, for it took place well beyond the city walls. They've promised to send the Zephyr Guard to investigate should a pattern of attacks emerge in the future, but this is not enough to reassure the Union. Representatives want decisive action before the fire-breathing monster strikes again.

This provides an excellent opportunity for the PCs to ingratiate themselves with the Farmers' Union. With little difficulty, a PC can find several witnesses to describe the attack. Each describes the monster as being larger than an elephant and shaped like an immense beetle, with fire glowing from within and plumes of steam and smoke venting from horns along its armored back. The creature attacked after the caravan had stopped to camp for the night. It burst from the ground an hour after sunset and overturned a wagon before guards had a chance to even draw their weapons, then devoured several people and incinerated more several before diving back into the sand with an entire horse clenched in its mandibles. The survivors made it to Katapesh, only to have their claims of being attacked by a fire-breathing monster all but ignored by the Scarlet Triad, who have

supposedly promised to protect the Farmers' Union from precisely these types of dangers.

The monster hasn't been sighted again, but the caravanners suspect that is because no other caravan has dared take the same route to the city, and detours are costing them time and resources. The attack itself, according to the survivors, took place in a stretch of arid desert about 120 miles southwest of the city. If she hears of this attack, Satla notes this site is only 60 miles east of Finderplain, adding a new element of worry to her fears and compelling her to pressure the PCs to investigate before these monsters have a chance to menace the town. Before the PCs leave, the survivors remind them that the creature didn't attack until well after sunset, suggesting that the monster hunts only at night, and that camping at the site of the massacre might be the best bet to lure the monster out.

Following the directions given by survivors, the PCs can reach the site of the attack after a 120 mile trip southwest from Katapesh. Details of this overland journey are not covered here, as high-level characters have a wealth of options for swift overland travel and the types of threats they'll meet on the road are not particularly significant, but feel free to spice up the PC's trip with additional encounters if you see fit.

Once the PCs arrive at the site, they find evidence of the battle in the form of a dry oasis, the vegetation at its edges burnt to a crisp, and patches of sand surrounding the now-barren watering hole have been cooked to sheets of glass.

**Creature:** The PCs don't have the whole story, as they will soon discover, for it's not one but two fire-breathing monsters that have chosen the caravan route as their territory. These monsters are relative newcomers to Katapesh, huge creatures spawned from the not-entirely-dead corpse of one of Rovagug's legendary spawn—Xotani the Firebleeder. Spawn hatch from its corpse infrequently, and most burrow deep into the Darklands to avoid the light of the sun, but in this case a pair of the monsters have instead traveled to the surface. Sunlight still vexes them, so they spend their nights slumbering under the sands and stones of the desert. Their last meal of horses and caravan guards left the pair sated for days, but by the time the PCs arrive and camp at the site of the previous attack, they are hungry once again.

Based solely on the description of the creature given by survivors, a successful DC 45 Nature check to Recall Knowledge about the monster suggests the creature's nocturnal nature might make light-based attacks useful, and its use of fire implies cold could be a potent weapon, but fire is unlikely to harm the creature. A critical success on this check allows the

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PC to realize the truth, that this is one of the spawn of Xotani the Firebleeder, in which case you can give the PC more information about the monster as you see fit. Once the PCs face the Xotanispawn in combat, the DC to Recall Knowledge about them drops to 40.

True to the survivors' prediction, the Xotanispawn do not arrive to investigate camping PCs until an hour after sunset. Although immense, these creatures are unusually stealthy as they burrow through the ground and they use Stealth to determine initiative. The combat begins with a single Xotanispawn emerging from the dry oasis, bursting from the grit to blast the PCs with its breath weapon. The second Xotanispawn doesn't join the fight until the start of the fourth round, or the round after the first Xotanispawn is slain—whichever comes first. The monsters fight to the death.

### **XOTANISPAWN (2)**

**LEVEL 17**

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**Initiative** Stealth +31

**Treasure:** If the PCs return with proof of the monsters' defeat (a set of mandibles or other body part is enough—the shape of the monster's body having been burned into the survivors' nightmares), the Farmers' Union rewards the PCs 3,000 gp (the fee they would have otherwise provided the Scarlet Triad the next month) upon their return to Katapesh. More importantly, completing this task is enough to convince the Farmers' Union to vote against the Scarlet Triad.

### **Task 3: Blood on the Sand**

The Gladiators' Guild is one of the Scarlet Triad's staunchest allies—because Uri Zandivar systematically and publicly undermined the previous guildmaster Magnus Boldheart, hyped a new arena champion as a rising star, convinced Boldheart to accept a duel for control of the guild, and used treachery to ensure that Boldheart lost. Utterly beholden to Zandivar, the new guildmaster, Bshez “Sand Claws” Shak, was more than a match for her predecessor and even more cruel. She's received acclaim for her management of the guildhall's ever more spectacular and deadly fights, but it's already cost many veteran gladiators their lives. Boldheart may have been unforgiving, but he respected strength and didn't waste lives. The attrition leaves the surviving gladiators itching for a change of leadership yet lacking the strength or means to usurp Bshez; she has banned armed challenges to her leadership, has the Scarlet Triad's backing, and seems to even have the Pactmasters' tacit approval. If a PC can make a name for themselves, they could potentially overthrow Bshez—

not only removing one of Zandivar's key supporters, but also becoming the new guildmaster!

### **STARTING THIS TASK**

For the past several months, gladiatorial games have been occurring twice per week. Once the PCs learn about the situation in the Gladiators' Guild, Satla suggests that the best way for them to undermine Bshez is for the PCs to build up their own fame. However, a PC can't earn the necessary respect overnight with just a single match. Instead, this task has three stages that must be completed in order: qualification, hype, and duel.

### **PHASE 1: QUALIFICATION MODERATE 16**

With the recent changes instituted by Bshez, the new lethality of the games has amazed the Katapeshi crowds but diminished the population of gladiators, so the guild doesn't discriminate when it comes to new contestants for the bloodsports. All the PCs need do to qualify for a fight is show up before noon on any Toilday or Sunday (the second or last day of the week), present themselves as contestants, and sign some basic paperwork that absolves the Gladiators' Guild of any responsibility. The armsmaster on duty takes note of each PC and schedules them for a feature fight, informing them that they'll be facing an immense invertebrate predator—a duneshaker solifugid—that trappers subdued and sold to the arena only last week (see Creature on page 33).

**The Arena:** The Grand Coliseum is immense, sporting dozens of rows of seating that hold more than 10,000 spectators. The performance field is a broad oval roughly 300 feet long and 200 feet wide, with a floor of hard-packed dirt covered in a layer of loose sand. Passageways beneath the field lead to various trapdoors and simple elevators that allow contestants to make dramatic entrances.

**Arena Rules:** Although accidents occasionally happen, contestants are to make every effort to avoid harming spectators. Contestants are forbidden from having spells in effect when the battle begins, and the fighting itself begins on the third blast of the armsmaster's horn—almost always after the participants have had a chance to grandstand and pander to the audience. Contestants typically begin 50 to 80 feet apart. It's traditional, but not mandatory, to offer a defeated intelligent foe mercy or to seek the crowd's direction in whether a fallen foe should live or die. Enchantments that provide extreme mental control are considered poor form, and officials intervene in the match if powerful enchantments would make a contest unsporting. There's no looting of the fallen allowed, as their equipment either belongs



to their patron or becomes the property of their family. Of course, in the case of this qualifying match with an immense solifugid, the fight is to the death and there's no loot to be had.

**Performance Combat:** The PCs can revel in the adrenaline of a supportive crowd or turn spectators against their foe. While fighting in the arena, any PC can Pander to the Crowd.

## PANDER TO THE CROWD

AUDITORY CONCENTRATE EMOTION VISUAL

**Requirement** This is your first action in a gladiatorial match, or you've damaged or visibly impeded a foe while fighting a gladiatorial match.

With a mocking gesture, a triumphant flourish, or a bold challenge, you inspire the crowd to cheer you on. Attempt an Acrobatics, Athletics, Intimidation, or Performance check, with a DC typically set by the encounter's level. Crowds grow bored with repetition though; and attempting to Pander to the Crowd using the same skill that was used the last time someone used this action imposes a -2 circumstance penalty on the check. If you critically succeeded at an attack roll this turn, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to your Pander to the Crowd attempt.

**Critical Success** The crowd goes wild! You can either give yourself a +3 status bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and skill checks until the end of your next turn, or give yourself and all your allies a +2 status bonus to the same rolls until the end of your next turn.

**Success** You appeal to the crowd. As critical success, but the bonus is +2 just for you, or +1 for you and your allies.

**Failure** You don't make an impression.

**Critical Failure** Your pandering is laughable, and the crowd begins to favor your opponents. The next creature hostile to you that attempts to Pander to the Crowd gains a +4 circumstance bonus to the check.

**Audience:** The Grand Coliseum is only about two-thirds full on this day, and the smaller crowd is easier to impress than normal for a 16th-level encounter. The DC for checks to Pander to the Crowd during the qualification match is 33.

**Creature:** The guild enjoys pitting gladiators against powerful beasts, paying well for especially large or uncommon creatures to fight. About a week ago, trappers returned to Katapesh with a true prize, a duneshaker solifugid. Bshez was delighted and let it loose on several warriors during the next combat; the solifugid shredded the competition—literally. She's been waiting for promising contestants to face the beast again, and her armsmaster identifies the PCs as ideal candidates.

The arachnid is not a subtle foe. It emerges into the

center of the arena from below, bursting out of a 30-foot-square pit filled with sand. After menacingly rattling its chelicerae, it charges at the PCs. Although the solifugid isn't particularly intelligent, the spectacle of its attacks allows it to Pander to the Crowd as a reaction after it damages a PC; it uses Athletics to attempt this check.

If the PCs are in trouble, they can indicate their desire to surrender, at which point arena staff rush out to distract the enormous solifugid. It takes another round of combat before the solifugid chases after the swift-footed staff, giving any surviving PCs a chance to escape. A full minute passes before the staff can lure the solifugid back into captivity and begin trying to stabilize the fallen.

If the PCs defeat the solifugid, the crowd cheers in admiration, and arena staff swiftly emerge from side gates to clean up the battleground and remove the corpse. Bshez glowers from the front row before leaping over the railing and landing deftly in the sand, where she makes a show of publicly praising the PCs' performance and uses the opportunity to promote upcoming events. She's not above muttering disparagement of the PCs (and their beginners' luck) as they depart the stage.

The PCs receive more sincere praise from the other gladiators, none of whom wanted to risk the solifugid's hunger and all of whom are glad to see it dead. This is a good opportunity for the PCs to hear more gossip about Bshez's decisive takeover, the Scarlet Triad's keen interest in the guild, the guild members' general displeasure at their drastically reduced life expectancies, and the difficulty of dislodging Bshez—ideally kickstarting a physically capable PC down the path of taking over the guild. The gladiators are somewhat heartened at any bold declarations of reform that PC makes, but for now they expect the words are all talk.

## DUNESHAKER SOLIFUGID

## CREATURE 18

Page 89

**Initiative** Perception +30

**Rewards:** For defeating the solifugid, the PCs receive 1,500 gp as prize money. Several of the guild's gladiators add an additional 500 gp to this as thanks and as a tribute to their fallen comrades, slain by the beast only days earlier.

## PHASE 2: HYPE

Once the PCs make names for themselves against the solifugid in the qualifying match, the city of Katapesh and (more importantly) Bshez herself take them seriously as contenders. Of course, Bshez won't immediately agree to a challenge from the PCs for

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control of the guild. Before she'll accept such a public invitation to a fight, a PC must successfully issue a challenge to her using the Issue Challenge downtime activity (page 20).

For 3 days after the qualifying event against the solifugid, a PC gains a circumstance bonus to Issue Challenge attempts equal to the number of times they successfully Pandered to the Crowd in the fight (to a maximum of +3).

### PHASE 3: GUILDMASTER'S DUEL SEVERE 16

Once a PC critically succeeds at the Issue Challenge downtime activity, Bshez Shak grows so furious with the party that she publicly confronts them to refute the PC's slander, defend her position as guildmaster, or otherwise unleash an outburst that the PC can readily exploit. If goaded further, she challenges the PCs to a fight at the next arena event—even wagering her leadership position against each PC's life if it will silence her accusers. If the PCs accept, the duel is featured as the final event of the next arena day, providing the PCs enough time to perform at least a day of downtime activity before showing up.

**Audience:** The Grand Coliseum is entirely full and focused on the combatants. The DC for checks to Pander to the Crowd is 35.

**Creatures:** Bshez Shak is ready for the fight, appearing in full battle armor that consists of pieces from at least four different foes' panoplies. Although goaded into this duel, she's a cautious combatant and knows better than to face the PCs on her own, regardless of how intense they were in issuing their challenge. She's joined in the fight by four elite calikangs known as the Blood Blades of Katapesh—specially trained calikangs who fight in blood-red armor and revel in the act of cutting down foes. Bshez keeps this addition quiet until the last moment, announcing that she'll be joined on the field of battle by the Blood Blades, to the uproarious approval of the crowd and giving her a free attempt to Pander to the Crowd.

When combat begins, the Blood Blades swiftly move into melee with the PCs; Bshez prefers to circle and study her foes before hurling her javelin, drawing her kukri, and using dirty tricks to trip and blind before cutting the target to ribbons. She fights until incapacitated, and with every intention to kill the PCs. She Panders to the Crowd once per round if possible, alternating between Intimidation and Performance checks.

#### BSHEZ "SAND CLAWS" SHAK

#### CREATURE 17

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID  
Perception +26

**Skills** Acrobatics +30, Athletics +30, Deception +28, Intimidation +33, Performance +33, Society +28

**Str** +6, **Dex** +8, **Con** +5, **Int** +3, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +5

**Items** +2 greater striking javelin, +2 greater striking thundering kukri (2), potion of flying, potion of quickness, +2 resilient scale mail

**Incredible Initiative** Bshez gains a +2 circumstance bonus to initiative rolls.

**AC** 40; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +32, **Will** +27

**HP** 330

**Attack of Opportunity** ↻

**Speed** 30 feet

**Melee** ♦ *thundering kukri* +35 (agile, finesse, magical, trip), **Damage** 3d6+14 slashing plus 1d6 sonic

**Ranged** ♦ *javelin* +35 (magical, thrown 30 feet), **Damage** 3d6+14 piercing

**Graceful Double Slice** ♦♦ Bshez makes two Strikes, one with each kukri, using her current multiple attack penalty. If both attacks hit, combine their damage and add any applicable effects from both weapons. This counts as one attack when calculating her multiple attack penalty.

**Fling Sand in the Eyes** ♦ **Requirements** Bshez is standing in an area with loose sand or soil; **Effect** Bshez flings sand into an adjacent creature's eyes. If the target fails a DC 38 Reflex save, they are dazzled until the beginning of Bshez's next turn. If they critically fail, they are blinded until the beginning of Bshez's next turn. If they succeed, they are unaffected. Regardless of their save, they're temporarily immune until the battle ends.

**Rend** ♦ *thundering kukri*

**Shield Breaker** When the target of Bshez's javelin Strike uses Shield Block, the Strike deals an additional 4d6 damage to the shield.

**Weapon Master** Bshez has access to the critical specialization effects of any weapon she wields.

#### ELITE CALIKANGS (4)

#### CREATURE 13

Page 84 (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6)

**Initiative** Perception +22

**Rewards:** If the PCs win this battle, the gladiators unanimously agree to let them claim Bshez's gear as a reward.

**Aftermath:** If the PCs defeat Bshez and the Blood Blades, the spectators are momentarily silent before they cheer in amazement. The officials declare the PCs the winners and escort them from the floor to where most of the guild's gladiators are waiting. These fighters also cheer the PCs, happy to end Bshez's lethal policies. However, this leaves the Gladiators' Guild without a leader; they disavow Bshez if she survived the fight. If left to their own devices, the quorum of gladiators elects **Amrah al-Jifin** (LN female human fighter) as



their new leader, and she is amenable to voting against the Scarlet Triad's interests in an upcoming Council of Guilds. If one of the PCs instead wishes to take control, the gladiators listen as that PC makes their case. Have the player give a short speech about their skills and the guild's future before attempting a DC 37 Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Performance check. If the PC succeeds, the gladiators appoint the PC the new leader. If the check fails, the gladiators politely decline but celebrate the PC as one of their finest. A PC who is made leader of the guild can continue to serve in that interest in absentia (Amrah takes over to run day-to-day matters), but at your discretion may need to periodically return to Katapesh to defend their title from new challengers; in any event, such repercussions are not scripted into the remainder of the Age of Ashes Adventure Path.

## Task 4: Romancing the Camel

As one of the Imperial Union of Breeders' more reliable customers, the Scarlet Triad has enjoyed the peaceable neutrality of this guild in political matters. The aging, rotund, and loquacious guildmaster **Aldane Zulran** (LN male human equestrian) cares more for the steeds in his care, securing a good deal, and horseback riding than he does about getting the Union embroiled in squabbles. It is possible to convince him otherwise through the Influence Guilds downtime action, but a far more reliable way to get his attention is by presenting him with an unsurpassed horse, camel, or pony. And there's none that has captured the imagination of Zulran and his colleagues as much as the legendary Duneshadow, a unique bull camel said to roam the wilds of Katapesh. Beautiful, powerful, and sporting purple stripes in his fur, Duneshadow is a wild creature that dozens of trappers and breeders have tried to capture and tame, but the canny beast has evaded every attempt to date. To Zulran, Duneshadow represents the pinnacle of camel husbandry, and is capable of revitalizing his herd's bloodlines. A long-standing bounty of 1,000 gp for retrieving the camel in good health has stood unclaimed for more than a year.

## STARTING THE TASK

This task is available as soon as the PCs use the Influence Guilds action on the Imperial Union of Breeders or learn about the rumor of Duneshadow through Gather Information; they'll still need to reduce the Support Points the union has for the Scarlet Triad, but this task is required to secure their allegiance against the organization.

## TRACKING DUNESHADOW

Union members can provide the PCs enough information to identify the broad swath of territory where Duneshadow is said to roam—a swath of desert about 90 miles northwest of Katapesh near the eastern side of a wide gap in the Brazen Peaks on the Osirion–Katapesh border. The PCs need to Scout Duneshadow first to narrow down his location, Track him to his exact location, and then carefully Approach Duneshadow.

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Bshez "Sand Claws" Shak



## SCOUT DUNESHADOW

CONCENTRATE EXPLORATION MOVE

Duneshadow's known to traverse a wide territory in north-central Katapesh, and the PCs first need to narrow down his current location to within a few miles. A full scouting attempt takes 4 hours, during which each PC attempts a skill check chosen from the following options, depending on how they wish to scout: Diplomacy DC 40 (to ask local nomads about sightings) or Nature DC 36 (to know about camel behavior and where Duneshadow might best be found). At your discretion, a PC can substitute an appropriate Lore skill for any of these skills, in which case the DC is reduced by 2.

To find the camel's trail, the party must successfully Scout Duneshadow three times. Critical successes count

as two successes, and critical failures negate one success. If all PCs abandon this task and no one is Scouting Duneshadow, the number of accumulated successes resets to zero. Magic such as *discern location* gives two successes toward finding Duneshadow, though he moves so often and in such odd ways that even in the 10 minutes it takes to *teleport*, only his trail will remain.

Once they get three successes, the PCs can then Track him (DC 40). They need to succeed twice in a row or critically succeed once, and can try again on a failure. On a critical failure, the PCs must wait at least 24 hours before Scouting Duneshadow again.

## APPROACH DUNESHADOW

CONCENTRATE EXPLORATION MOVE

Once the PCs have Tracked Duneshadow, they begin intermittently sighting him atop distant hills, hear his bellowing calls, or sense other signs that he's near. The camel is remarkably cunning and stealthy, able to exploit heat shimmers to hide his movements, predict hunters' next steps, and make exceptional use of the terrain. All the while, his path leads the PCs farther into the foothills of the Brazen Peaks.

An attempt to Approach Duneshadow is a slow and deliberate activity that takes 1 hour to perform, during which each PC attempts a skill check chosen from the following options: Acrobatics or Athletics DC 37 (to approach quickly via a shortcut), Deception DC 38 (to trick Duneshadow into evading pursuit in the wrong direction), Nature DC 35 (to keep Duneshadow calm and appear non-threatening), Performance DC 34 (to intrigue Duneshadow with calming music), or Stealth DC 36 (to approach undetected). Lore skills can be substituted for any of these skills, reducing the DC by 2.

To reach Duneshadow, the party must successfully Approach four times. Critical successes count as two successes, and critical failures negate one success. If this reduces the total to two or fewer, Duneshadow runs off and the PCs must Scout for his location all over again.

**XP Award:** The first time the PCs manage to successfully Scout Duneshadow, grant them 20 XP. The first time they successfully Approach Duneshadow, grant them another 40 XP.

## SIMURGH'S SHADOW MODERATE 16

Once the PCs Scout, Track, and Approach Duneshadow, they can readily overpower, restrain, or coax the camel into submission; despite his legendary status, he is no challenge to such high-level PCs and is, after all, just an animal.

Duneshadow



**Creature:** Dunesshadow has been able to run free for so long because he has more going for him than mere cleverness. His natural beauty and grace have earned him a powerful and supernatural patron—a simurgh named Prihayn Ti Huet—who sees the camel as an expression of Shelyn’s artistic will. Shortly after the PCs capture Dunesshadow, the simurgh alights atop a 20-foot-diameter boulder about 50 feet away. He menacingly fans his wings and inquires what the PCs are doing, accusing the PCs of stealing living art from the canvas that is Katapesh and challenging them to justify their actions.

The simplest way to meet this challenge is to fight the simurgh, but PCs who recognize the creature for what it is may balk at attacking a good creature. Additionally, if any PC is obviously a worshipper of Shelyn, Prihayn appeals to that character’s sensibilities—in such a case, Diplomacy might be a better choice (see below). Further possibilities are explored below—at your discretion, other methods of appealing to the simurgh could also result in a peaceful solution. If the PCs do opt for a fight, Prihayn fights valiantly to protect Dunesshadow and defeat the disrespectful thieves, favoring ranged powers for several rounds before descending to dispatch foes with his claws. If he detects evil among the PCs, he fights to kill, but otherwise he seeks only to drive off or subdue the PCs. If reduced to 50 or fewer Hit Points, he denounces the PCs loudly and flees combat—he may attempt to rescue Dunesshadow from captivity at a later date, if you see fit.

## PRIHAYN TI HUET

## CREATURE 18

Male simurgh (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 295)

**Initiative** Perception +32

**Deception:** The PCs can Lie to Prihayn about why they seek Dunesshadow with a successful DC 42 Deception check. You’ll need to judge if their lie is potentially compelling to the simurgh, and if it’s not, the PCs need a critical success to fool him and gain his permission to bring Dunesshadow back to Katapesh. If the PCs fail, they can still attempt diplomacy, but they take a –2 circumstance penalty to their checks since they’ve tested the simurgh’s patience.

**Diplomacy:** Prihayn begins this encounter with an unfriendly attitude, unless one of the PCs is obviously a worshipper of Shelyn, in which case the simurgh begins with an indifferent attitude. If the PCs wish to abscond with Dunesshadow without provoking a fight from the simurgh, they need to attempt a DC 42 Diplomacy check first to Make an Impression in

hopes of increasing the simurgh’s attitude to friendly. If Prihayn starts out unfriendly, the PCs need to critically succeed at this Diplomacy check to do so. During the conversation in which the PCs speak to Prihayn to Make an Impression but before the Diplomacy check is rolled, keep track of the topics and themes the PCs use to appeal to the simurgh, and once the conversation is over, allow certain PCs to attempt additional skill checks to reduce the Diplomacy check DC to Make an Impression. A PC who demonstrates reverence for Shelyn can attempt a DC 35 Religion check; a PC who demonstrates talent for art can attempt a DC 33 Crafting or Performance check, and a PC who displays an understanding and respect for animals can attempt



Prihayn

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a DC 37 Nature check. With each successful check, the Diplomacy check DC to Make an Impression is reduced by 1 (or by 2 for each critical success on these checks). If the PCs manage to make Prihayn friendly, with a successful DC 36 Diplomacy check to Request his permission, he allows them to take Duneshadow to Katapesh—if the PCs manage to make him helpful, he automatically grants his permission.

**Intimidation:** An attempt to Coerce the simurgh requires a DC 42 Intimidation check. On a critical success, Prihayn allows for Duneshadow to be taken without repercussion. On a success, he'll allow it, but will then attempt a rescue operation for the camel 2d4 days later—in which case the Union of Breeders sides once more with the Scarlet Triad out of spite for the PCs, who they feel betrayed them. On a failure, the simurgh attacks.

**Compromise:** If the PCs and the simurgh can't come to an agreement but avoid a fight, Prihayn sighs and suggests a compromise. If the PCs agree to create a work of art commemorating Duneshadow's majesty for the simurgh to keep and can convince him that Duneshadow will be treated well (this is automatically successful as long as the PCs are polite and not obviously evil; otherwise, it requires a successful DC 35 Diplomacy check), Prihayn will allow them to escort Duneshadow to the city. The simurgh gives the PCs a week to craft a work of art; doing so requires either a Crafting check to create a physical piece of artwork or a Performance check to create a song, dance, or other form of entertainment. Prihayn agrees to meet with the PCs at sunrise in 1 week at a secluded cove just north of Katapesh for delivery of the artwork, at which point a PC must attempt a DC 40 Craft or Performance check to appease the simurgh. If this results in a failure, Prihayn demands Duneshadow's return within another week—this may give the PCs enough time to secure the Union's vote before the simurgh takes matters into its own hands.

**Rewards:** If the PCs deliver Duneshadow to Zulran, he awards them the bounty of 1,000 gp, along with a set of *greater horseshoes of speed* in thanks for being able to secure such a spectacular creature.

**XP Award:** If the PCs manage to deliver Duneshadow to Zulran, grant them 80 XP. If they did so without fighting Prihayn, award them additional XP as if they had defeated the simurgh in battle.

## Task 5: Metals and Malice

One of the first organizations that the Scarlet Triad allied with was the Fraternal Order of the Anvil, Katapesh's premier guild of armorers, smelters, and smiths. The wealth that the Scarlet Triad earned from

slavery was readily converted into arms and armor to equip its growing mercenary force, and once the Scarlet Triad had enough political clout, it leaned on the Order for ever more exploitative deals. The Order has suffered in these negotiations, further emboldening the Scarlet Triad and encouraging it to further intimidate the smiths to ensure their support in the Council of Guilds—until they are just another pawn in the Scarlet Triad's growing stranglehold of Katapesh.

The Scarlet Triad still engages in the occasional criminal act against the Order—either to secure pricey resources at a discount or to reinforce the pecking order. For unfortunate smelter and ingot merchant **Mekrem Oagli** (N male human merchant), who is well known to Satla from previous dealings, both are true. Well known for his ability to secure even rare skymetals for the right price, Mekrem received numerous visits from Jelek Jaziman, one of the Scarlet Triad's top agents in Katapesh. Jelek made a small down payment for Mekrem to secure samples of a skymetal known as *djezet* for a secret project (this component was needed to repair the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*), and when the metal arrived, Jelek showed up with armed bodyguards to demand Mekrem sell the metal for a fraction of the original price. Insulted, Mekrem refused.

Jelek bitterly paid the original asking price for the *djezet*, but he could not stand the sting to his pride. Over the weeks that followed, he's had two Scarlet Triad enforcers, a woman named Weyir and a man named Aanam al-Jebir, secretly harassing Mekrem and working to set him up for a humiliating fall. These two have taken to their task a bit too eagerly, and are enjoying the time spent slowly ruining Mekrem's business by scaring away customers, stealing or sabotaging shipments, and—most recently—framing him for embezzling from his guildmates and engaging in the black market sale of deadly and poisonous ores. When evidence of Mekrem's alleged misdeeds came to light, the guild withdrew its support entirely, leaving Mekrem in a desperate position indeed.

## STARTING THE TASK

Before this chapter began, Mekrem was on the verge of bankruptcy, and on the day the chapter starts, the Zephyr Guard arrives to confiscate his storefront and remaining stock to auction off in repayment of his debts. Mekrem suspects his run of bad luck is retaliation from Jelek for refusing to back down and offer him the *djezet* at the criminally low price demanded, but he lacks any actual proof. At first, shame over his situation keeps him from asking for help, but if the PCs don't learn about his plight via Gathering Information by the 14th, his 10-year-old



daughter Ansa tracks down Satla, asks for a place to sleep that's off the streets, and ultimately admits her father's recent woes. Satla is distraught and brings this to the PCs' attention after providing a place for Mekrem and his daughter to shelter until his reputation can be restored.

## SPEAKING WITH MEKREM

Mekrem's specialty is metallurgy, and while he can describe the appearance of the enforcers who regularly showed up to menace him, detail some of his business losses, and relay some of the accusations against him for fabricated crimes, he's exhausted and doesn't have the evidence or training necessary to exonerate himself. He wearily recounts his woes, starting with the mysterious loss of shipments and customers abandoning him for other smelters, then finally laments that the Fraternal Order of the Anvil cut ties when evidence that he was extorting funds from the guild came to light. Mekrem's only defense against these accusations is his continuing claims of innocence, but even those are starting to falter as he comes to believe this is his fate.

from the PCs to get Mekrem to admit his suspicions that the Scarlet Triad is behind his woes. He'll point out that his bad luck began the day after he refused to cut his prices for a shipment of djezet he'd gathered for Jelek Jaziman, the Scarlet Triad's public spokesman (and a man whom the PCs may have had a brush with already during Task 1: Liberation). Mekrem knows Jelek is too crafty to directly implicate himself, and suspects (correctly) he had agents do the dirty work to set up Mekrem's doom. He suggests the PCs might find clues in his shop (the Silver Ewe), at the Auctioneer's Guild where his holdings were sold to pay off his debts, or by speaking to locals around his shop to see if they saw anything suspicious. If the PCs can track down the agents who did this to him, and if they could extract confessions from them or secure proof they framed him, Mekrem will be able to rebuild his reputation.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Crafting or Nature check to Recall Knowledge knows that djezet is a fantastically rare skymetal that is liquid at room temperature and isn't particularly useful as a crafting component. A critical success allows the PC to note that djezet is particularly valued for its capacity to enhance magic, particularly enchantment magic, and

that it could be a valuable component for someone seeking to craft or repair a magical item that is associated with such magic.

## SEARCHING FOR CLUES

Mekrem's shop, the auction records for the sale of the shop's belongings, and testimony from locals are the best places for the PCs to learn the identities of the two Scarlet Triad enforcers responsible for Mekrem's sad fate, but feel free to allow them to learn of these two via other means, particularly if the PCs make use of powerful divinations. As long as the PCs do something Mekrem couldn't do for himself, their role in this task will be validated. Keep track of the number of clues the PCs find, since this number will help them prove Mekrem's innocence at

the end of this task (with 9 or more clues being an automatic success).

**Mekrem's Shop:** The Silver Ewe is Mekrem's spacious shop; roughly one-third of it is devoted to storefront, one-third is set up as an open-air smelter, and one-third is storage. Most of the shop's contents have been sold off, and all that's left behind are paper scraps, incidental damage to the building, traces of ore, and several potted plants in dire need of water. The walls are covered with graffiti that accuses Mekrem of being a crook and a poisoner. A successful DC 30 Crafting check or DC 35 Perception check while searching the shop provides no evidence that any dangerous ores were ever stored or worked with in the smelter; this is 1 clue.

A PC who thinks to use *Speak with Plants* on the potted plants can learn that the last people to visit the place were a man and a woman who spent time laughing, defacing the walls, and not watering plants—the plants can give vague descriptions of the two as well (the man was tall and lanky, while the woman was short and stocky). These sparse descriptions of the two Scarlet Triad enforcers and their visit to the shop after it had been closed down are 2 clues.

**Auctioneer's Guild:** After Mekrem failed to make good on his Scarlet Triad-inflicted debts and his guild kicked him out for embezzlement and black marketeering, his assets went to the Auctioneer's Guild to recoup his creditors' losses. The auctioneer overseeing the closest auction house is **Maz Loturo**



Mekrem

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(LN male merchant), a Zenj man who carries himself with unflappable dignity. The auctioneer has nothing remaining of Mekrem's stock other than the paperwork identifying the goods, their buyers, and their sale prices. He agrees to share those notes with the PCs if they Lie, Request, or Coerce him into cooperating with a successful DC 35 skill check.

A PC who examines the notes immediately notices the sale of Mekrem's assets to a pair of merchants listed only as "Weyir and Aanam." With a successful DC 35 Society check, a PC notes that the auctions went for an unusually low amount, and that the sale wouldn't have come close to paying off Mekrem's supposed debts, suggesting that those selling the assets might have sold them to an ally to enable them to scoop up valuable resources—Scarlet Triad representatives were quick to snatch up most of the assets from the Silver Ewe, but his superiors seemed slow to question the circumstances. These strange elements bothered Maz, which the PCs can note with a successful DC 35 Perception check to Sense Motive; if they ask him about his concerns, he admits it troubles him. If the PCs learn of Weyir and Aanam, they earn 1 clue; if they notice the strangely low price paid for the assets, they also gain 1 clue. Finally, if they get Maz to admit the strangeness, they'll earn a final clue as he promises, when the time comes, to share his suspicions about this auction with Fraternal Order of the Anvil.

**Local Witnesses:** If the PCs question Mekrem's neighbors and try to learn more about the misfortunes

that befell him over the last month, they'll need to Gather Information over the course of 2 hours. On a success, they hear multiple accounts of how shocked people are that Mekrem was engaged in shady business ("He seemed like such an up-and-up honest fellow!"); this is 1 clue. On a critical success, they also learn that a dwarven woman and a Keleshite man were the two most eager rumormongers spreading news about Mekrem's illegal activities (since these two were careful in who they chose to spread rumors to, the locals don't piece this information together until the PCs' critical success at Gathering Information helps them realize this); this is 2 clues.

## CONFRONTING TRIAD THIEVES Low 16

A pair of Scarlet Triad enforcers performed the majority of Mekrem's abuse at Jelek Jaziman's command, but they did so a bit more robustly than he hoped. Jelek is worried that word of the over-the-top activities of the two enforcers will potentially spread and create a backlash for the Scarlet Triad, and so he's ordered the two to lie low for several weeks. Fortunately for the PCs, Weyir and Aanam al-Jebir aren't very good at lying low. Once the PCs pick up on the fact that two people were involved in all three clue sites, they can attempt to track them down. Gathering Information about the whereabouts of the pair requires a DC 40 Diplomacy check; reduce the DC by 1 for every clue the PCs have discovered. On a successful check, the PCs learn that the pair have been hanging out near



the Golden Scarab, a famous gambling hall near the docks. On a critical success, the PCs also learn that the two have been bragging about “that fool getting what he deserved.”

**Creatures:** Although they’re ostensibly equals, **Weyir** (NE female dwarf enforcer) usually makes the threats and decisions, relying on **Aanam al-Jebir** (LE male human enforcer) to watch her back and apply force when words aren’t enough. The two are likely debating card game strategies when the PCs show up. They try to read the PCs’ intentions, and if the PCs are aggressive, they verbally push back with threats of Scarlet Triad retaliation. Accusations of ruining Mekrem’s livelihood elicit nonchalant denials and dismissals, though if a PC can deliver their claims with finesse or force with a successful DC 34 Deception or Intimidation check (gaining a +2 circumstance bonus if they have 3–5 clues or a +4 bonus for 6 or more), they goad Weyir into admitting to bullying Mekrem, roughing up, and economically strangling his business. With a second such successful check, a PC can fluster Aanam enough that he accidentally admits to helping frame Mekrem for embezzlement. Each of these admissions earns the PCs 1 clue.

The two fight back if met with violence, if a PC critically fails a Deception or Intimidation check against them, or after a second successful check tricks them into admitting to their role in Mekrem’s downfall. At that point, Weyir and Aanam realize they’ve said too much and try to kill the PCs. Weyir is a daring combatant who fights to the death. Aanam is more cautious, and if Weyir falls in combat, he does what he can to ensure she doesn’t die—even surrendering if necessary.

Defeating Aanam and Weyir does more than rid the Scarlet Triad of two capable warriors. If the PCs capture one or both alive, a successful DC 34 Intimidation check allows the PCs to coerce either of these enforcers into testifying to Fraternal Order of the Anvil representatives, clearing Mekrem of wrongdoing and acknowledging the Scarlet Triad’s decision to frame the metallurgist; in this case, the PCs are automatically successful when they attempt to restore the his reputation.

## SCARLET TRIAD ENFORCERS (2)

## CREATURE 15

RARE LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

**Perception** +25

**Languages** Common, Osiriani

**Skills** Athletics +30, Intimidation +28, Stealth +27, Thievery +25, Underworld Lore +26

**Str** +8, **Dex** +6, **Con** +6, **Int** +3, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +5

**Items** +2 striking composite shortbow, good manacles

moderate healing potion, +1 striking sap, +2 greater striking scimitar, +2 resilient studded leather

**AC** 36; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +26, **Will** +24

**HP** 275

**Stunning Retort** ➤ **Trigger** An enemy critically fails a Strike against the enforcer; **Effect** The enforcer Strikes with their sap against that enemy if they’re within reach; otherwise, the enforcer attempts an Intimidation check to Demoralize that enemy.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ➤ *scimitar* +32 (forceful, magical, sweep), **Damage** 3d6+15 slashing

**Melee** ➤ *sap* +32 (agile, magical, nonlethal), **Damage** 2d6+15 bludgeoning

**Ranged** ➤ *composite shortbow* +31 (deadly 1d10, magical, propulsive, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 2d6+12 piercing

**Dual Abuse** ➤➤ The enforcer uses the pain of one attack as an opening to deal a devastating second blow. The enforcer makes two attacks against the same target: a scimitar Strike and sap Strike (in any order) or two composite shortbow Strikes. If both attacks hit, the second attack deals an additional 3d6 damage, and the enforcer gives the target one of the following conditions until the end of the enforcer’s next turn: dazzled, enfeebled 2, flat-footed, or slowed 1. This counts as two attacks when calculating the enforcer’s multiple attack penalty, but the penalty doesn’t increase until after both attacks.

**Efficient Capture** ➤➤➤ (attack, manipulate); **Requirements** The enforcer has manacles in hand and is adjacent to a creature; **Effect** The enforcer attempts to bind the creature’s wrists or ankles with the manacles. If the enforcer succeeds at an attack roll with a +30 modifier against the target’s AC, they apply the manacles.

## RESTORING MEKREM’S REPUTATION

Merely tracking down the Scarlet Triad enforcers and punishing them exacts some justice for Mekrem, but this isn’t enough on its own to restore his reputation. Doing so involves both clearing his name of embezzlement and recovering his seized property. Once the PCs feel they’ve investigated things as far as possible, tally the number of clues they secured. If it is 3 or higher, the PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus to the checks below. If it’s 6 or higher, this increases to +4. If it’s 9 or higher, or if the PCs capture one or both of the Scarlet Triad enforcers alive and secure their confessions, the PCs automatically succeed after spending the necessary time.

So long as the PCs secured any evidence of the Scarlet Triad framing Mekrem for embezzlement, a trio of representatives from the Fraternal Order of

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the Anvil agrees to meet with the PCs in short order and listen to their testimony. With a successful DC 35 Diplomacy, Society, or appropriate Lore check, a PC can use the evidence to convince the representatives of Mekrem's innocence. On a critical success, the guild also dispatches workers to help track down some of Mekrem's goods and tools. On a failure, the Order is willing to reconsider, but only so long as someone pays a 500-gp reinstatement fee (which Mekrem can't afford). On a critical failure, the guild denies the appeal.



**Scarlet Triad Enforcer**

Once reinstated, Mekrem just needs help setting up again. This provides the PCs a special downtime activity for which they can attempt a DC 35 Crafting, Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Mercantile Lore check to track down the missing wares or help set up the shop again. The PCs need to earn three such successes (two if the Order agreed to help), after which the Silver Ewe is back in business.

**Reward:** Once Mekrem's shop is restored, he is happy to lend his crafting expertise to the PCs' cause. He can use his extensive trade connections to secure a small quantity of adamantine or orichalcum—enough for him to fashion armor, a weapon, or other item at market price, or he can give the PCs 1,000 gp after a week of resumed work and recovering his lost assets.

**XP Award:** If the PCs restore Mekrem's reputation, grant them 80 XP. If they help him reestablish and reopen the Silver Ewe, grant them an additional 40 XP.

## Task 6: Unseen Approval

The Pactmasters have ruled Katapesh for nearly a millennium, and although their reign is largely fair and promotes commerce, their harsh policies and punishments have also earned them many critics. Chief among these is the Unseen Hand, a clandestine network of provocateurs led by "Ghost," an anonymous mastermind. Although not a formal guild, the Unseen Hand nonetheless influences guild activity and even the Council of Guilds through blackmail, bribery, threats, and outright terrorism. With most members of the Unseen Hand unaware of the identities of more than a few other members, the operation has proven virtually impossible to wipe out.

What's known to almost nobody is that Ghost is in fact one of the Pactmasters, who has encouraged the Unseen Hand as a way to lure in and keep watch over potential enemies. The PCs represent some of the newest and most promising arrivals in Katapesh this month, and the Pactmasters are interested in assessing their motives and morality while also punishing a few rivals through untraceable means.

## STARTING THE TASK

The PCs might learn something of this task's nature by Gathering Information about the League of Peshmongers, but not enough to move forward with it. Instead, the PCs come to the attention of the Unseen Hand once they've successfully influenced at least three guilds to ally against the Scarlet Triad, and the Unseen Hand then seeks them out.

## MEETING GHOST

Once the PCs have influenced three guilds, they come



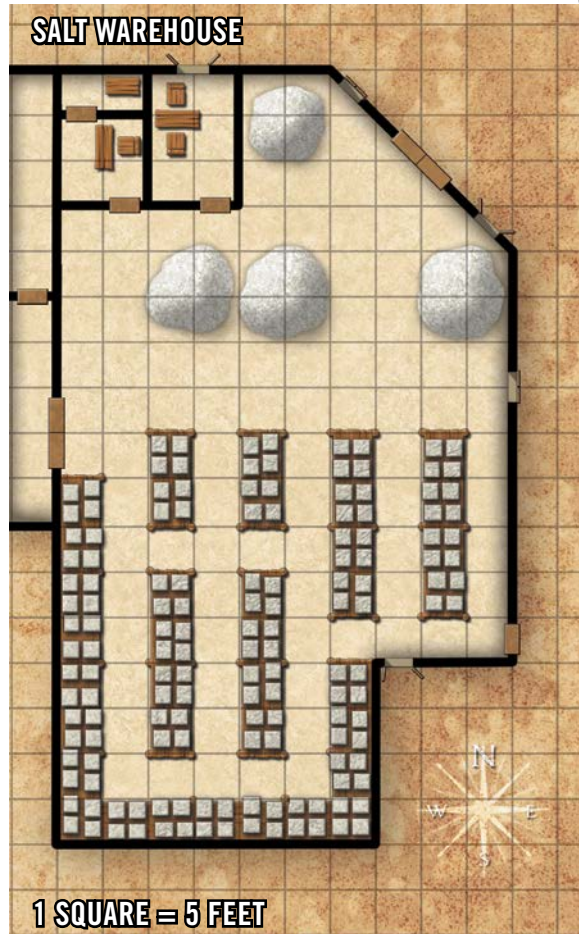
to Ghost's attention. An Unseen Hand agent and unflappable scallywag named **Whahar** (CN male dwarf) leaves the PCs an invitation to meet at the Red Dhabba, an untidy tavern near the docks, to discuss an extraordinary opportunity. Whahar's waiting for them and has already ordered their favorite drinks; any surprised PC is met with a knowing, gold-toothed smile and "I've got my sources." Whahar gives a few pleasantries before making his case in a hushed voice.

"Word is that you're looking for guild support to appeal to the Pactmasters against the Scarlet Triad, yeah? But here, you're going about it all wrong, see? Why beg for the Pactmasters' mercy when you could force their hand? I, ah, represent a consortium of esteemed operatives that has more pull with the guilds than your bogeyman, the Scarlet Triad, and that's help you need. My boss is willing to negotiate the details. Interested?"

With a successful DC 30 Society or appropriate Lore check, a PC intuits that Whahar's referencing the Unseen Hand, and the PC knows basic information about the group and their goals. Whahar chuckles if asked about the Unseen Hand, noting only that the PCs' theory is likely true. Of course, less criminal PCs might consider meeting with the boss of the Unseen Hand as a way to corner Ghost and deliver them to justice, impressing the Pactmasters.

If the PCs agree, Whahar smiles amicably and insists that his boss doesn't meet with just anyone; that's too dangerous. Instead, the PCs need to prove they're trustworthy, and that means helping out with a quick job. If the PCs are suspicious, Whahar insists that it's not a particularly dangerous task, just picking up and delivering a package. He asks the PCs to retrieve the package from a merchant called the Seer, and then drop off that package at a local landmark: the Marble Sphinx. If the PCs accomplish this in the next 24 hours, Whahar can secure a meeting and provide his personal recommendation.

**The Seer:** The marketplace known as the Nightstalls encompasses scores of shops that specialize in deadly, ill-gotten, or morally corrupt wares. Among the merchants there with the longest tenure is the **Seer** (NE male lich), a spell component merchant who keeps covered in a heavy red robe and relies on his eerie reputation and magic to handle overly righteous browsers. At the behest of Whahar, the Seer acquired a trio of sapphires ensorcelled to seem highly magical, when in fact they bear only a modest enchantment. The Seer is no fool; once the gems arrived from his suppliers, he realized they resemble the blue gems used in aluum charms (page 82) and he suspects someone



plans to create fake charms. Hoping not to offend the Pactmasters, he cancelled the contract with Whahar and prepared to sell off the gems.

He still has the gems when PCs arrive at his spiraling tower, and the lich politely welcomes them into the combination library and shop. Once they inquire about the delivery for Whahar, the Seer tersely asserts that the package arrived but the deal is off. If pressed for more detail, he admits the contents threaten his livelihood and business—a point that seems almost absurd, considering his role in the Nightstalls.

The PCs can convince the Seer otherwise with three successful DC 35 skill checks. Good candidates for skills that could earn the lich's cooperation are Arcana or Occultism to show that the PCs aren't ignorant of powerful magic and its consequences; Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation to cajole or trick the Seer into finalizing the transaction; or Society to point out how unlikely it is that he'd be punished for carrying dangerous cargo after so many years of operating in the Nightstalls. If the PCs succeed, the Seer relents, retrieves a small wooden box bearing a heavy lock, and notes that he expects payment to arrive through

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the usual channels. If the PCs attack the seer, the lich holds up his hands to stop the battle and simply hands over the gems; he has no interest in a fight, but if the PCs persist, you can use the statistics for the lich on page 221 of the *Bestiary* to represent the Seer.

**The Drop Off:** Reaching the drop point is straightforward. The Marble Sphinx is one of Katapesh's largest landmarks, and at night it's quiet and rarely frequented (due in part to urban legends that it eats passersby). The PCs can easily leave the crystals obtained from the Seer at the appointed place at night.

**An Invitation:** One day after the PCs complete these tasks, they receive a letter from Whahar. Assuming the PCs accomplished the task with good intentions, he invites them to meet with Ghost the following day in the alley north of the Ibis Fountain in the Lower City at an hour past noon. The letter also encloses a pair of *grinning pugwampis* (page 77) for the PCs as thanks.

## IBIS FOUNTAIN

## MODERATE 16

Ibis Fountain is the centerpiece of a small plaza associated with the League of Peshmongers, which sees just enough traffic for the PCs not to attract notice and little enough to avoid a crowd. Use the Katapesh Streets map on page 40 for this encounter. Many of the buildings feature open storefronts and wholesale vendors selling pesh of varying quality. However, Ghost has no intention of showing up for a meeting with the PCs. Instead, this is a opportunity for the Unseen Hand to sabotage some of Katapesh's iconic aluums and cast doubt on the Zephyr Guards' ability to keep the peace.

**Creatures:** As the PCs are waiting, two Zephyr Guards accompanied by a pair of spiritbound aluums enter the plaza. The onlookers give the procession a wide berth, but the guards show a charcoal illustration to various bystanders as though searching for a criminal. With a successful DC 35 Perception check, a PC can see the image of a middle-aged human woman, and they can spot that woman fetching water from the fountain. Moments later, the guards spot her as she tries to sneak away, presenting their aluum charms and commanding the aluums to detain her. At first, the constructs don't respond. However, any PCs who succeeded at the Perception check see two figures—one in the southeast alley

and another in a third-story window—present their own aluum charms and issue quiet commands.

The aluums respond to these orders, each grabbing a Zephyr Guard and crushing them messily.

With that, the aluums begin rampaging around the plaza. They ignore mere bystanders, inflicting property damage on the pesh shops and attacking anyone who fights back. If the PCs don't intervene, the aluums do considerable damage before a larger group of Zephyr Guards finally arrives to deactivate them.

## SPIRITBOUND ALUUMS (2)

### CREATURE 16

Page 83

**Initiative** Perception +28

**Aftermath:** If the PCs defeat the aluums, witnesses approach to assess the damage caused by the golems and to investigate the noise. Many complain that this isn't the first time the Pactmasters' pet golems have escaped control, and they question how the Zephyr Guard could have failed like this. Some of the surviving pesh merchants quietly accuse each other of inviting this disaster, citing the League of Peshmongers' unpopular attempts to control the drug supply. Everyone observes the PCs, waiting to see if they can clarify the matter.

This is an opportunity for the PCs to speak out in favor of the Pactmasters, denounce the Pactmasters, or remain neutral. A pro-Pactmaster stance might involve revealing that this event was the work of the Unseen Hand or that it was an accident. This pleases the Pactmasters, who encourage several other guilds to view the PCs favorably. The PCs reduce Support Points for one or more guilds by a total of 4, divided as they choose among the guilds. An anti-Pactmaster stance might involve declaring that the incident was retaliation from the Pactmasters for the League's defiance. Although this displeases the Pactmasters, it shows the League that the alliance with the Scarlet Triad is insufficient protection; this shifts the League's stance to anti-Scarlet Triad and ensures it'll vote against the group.

The following day, the PCs receive a final letter from Whahar that notes Ghost is most intrigued by how the meeting went and will continue watching their actions with interest.



Whahar



**XP Award:** If the PCs take a stance regarding the Pactmasters (regardless of which stance they take), grant them 40 XP.

## Task 7: Toxic Relationships

As guild sentiment turns against the Scarlet Triad, Uri Zandivar becomes increasingly aggressive in how he neutralizes the PCs' newfound allies. He has hired **Ishti** (CE female lamia matriarch), a master poisoner and enthusiastic assassin, to eliminate one of the guild leaders who dares to defy the Scarlet Triad, using a toxin of her own design—nightmare salt (page 79).

## STARTING THE TASK

This task begins automatically once the PCs have shifted at least 5 guild stances to anti-Scarlet Triad. At this point, a worried representative of the guild the PCs most recently convinced to stand against the Scarlet Triad (referred to here simply as "The Guild") delivers a message to the PCs, both requesting help and implicitly accusing them of bringing misfortune upon that guild. Once this letter arrives, the PCs have 4 days in which to seek a cure before that guild's master expires from the poison.

The Guild continues its business as usual as though nothing were the matter, but if the PCs ask to meet with the guildmaster, several professionals lead the PCs to meet with their leader while insisting this is the PCs' fault and scolding them for getting involved with the Scarlet Triad. The guildmaster is very ill from the poison, suffering intermittent hallucinations, and is being attended to by a stern woman known as **Doctor Remie** (N female halfling physician). The guildmaster is in the middle of a waking nightmare when the PCs arrive, shortly after which they regain their senses and can speak.

The guildmaster can convey how they first fell ill earlier that day and hadn't done anything particularly out of the ordinary that might have exposed them to disease or toxins. Their dinner the previous night consisted of djamet, a stew of chicken, tomatoes, onion, and strong spices, served with salted flatbread. They slept poorly and awoke suddenly from a nightmare in which a dragon had set the bedroom on fire. Nightmares since have consistently involved deserts, heat shimmers, fire, and dangerous beasts.

Doctor Remie hasn't managed to identify the condition's cause, and while she has been treating the symptoms as best she can, the poison's potency is beyond her skill to effectively combat. She can describe what the guildmaster has experienced over the last few hours, and at this point she's desperate enough to agree to let any PC who seems capable of handling poison

## HASHIM'S SECRET

Hashim ibn Sayyid harbors a secret—he's not human at all, but is in fact one of the veiled masters of the alghollthu, a creature named Olordaera who has dwelt among Katapesh's citizens for nearly 2 centuries. In his current role as Pactbroker Hashim ibn Sayyid, the veiled master uses his position of power to advance his own mysterious agendas beyond the scope of this adventure. None of this particularly matters for the events of "Against the Scarlet Triad," and Hashim's true identity should not come into play during Age of Ashes, although at your discretion, attracting the attention of a veiled master might have long-term repercussions on the PCs' futures.

try to cure or at least treat the guildmaster's affliction. With a successful DC 38 Medicine check, a PC can Treat the Poison, extending the guild leader's life by 1 day. A PC can attempt this check once per day to buy more time to create a cure, but if the guildmaster goes 4 days without treatment, they perish. A successful DC 32 Medicine check allows a PC to measure key vital signs and procure small samples that confirm the affliction is a poison of unknown type, it's slow-acting yet deadly, and it will be extremely difficult for the guildmaster to recover without a cure; on a critical success, the PC also notes traces of nightmare vapor, indicating that this more common toxin may have been used as a base for whatever exceptionally potent poison afflicts the guildmaster.

This information provides the PCs an edge in the investigation that follows. *Detect poison* heightened to 2nd level can identify that the guildmaster is suffering from an ingested poison but won't reveal its exact nature other than to also detect the presence of nightmare vapor in the victim. Since nightmare salt is an 18th-level poison, *neutralize poison* must be heightened to have a chance of curing it. If the PCs manage to cure the guildmaster of the effects of nightmare salt, the guildmaster remains weak for a short time but suggests it would be wise to continue the charade of illness. After all, the poisoner is still out there, and if word spreads that the guildmaster has recovered, the poisoner might strike again; curing the guildmaster buys the PCs much more time but doesn't remove the threat.

If the PCs don't decide to seek out experts on their own, Remie recommends they contact the Poison Makers' Guild for assistance.

The PCs can interview the guild's kitchen staff, contractors who arrive to prepare the afternoon and evening meals. These cooks know that there were five

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of them on duty the afternoon before the guildmaster became ill; however, none of the four whom the PCs can question has a firm recollection of who their fifth cook was. They do remember there was a middle-aged Garundi woman whom they didn't recognize yet never questioned, and they can describe her to the PCs.

## THE POISON MAKER'S GUILD

Although considered part of the Nightstalls, whose storefronts tend to be hidden, the Poison Makers' Guild is an influential fixture of Katapesh that operates fairly openly and isn't difficult to find. By this point, the PCs are well enough known in Katapesh that they can quickly secure a meeting with the guildmaster **Hahcuss Hrann** (LN male human alchemist). He welcomes them and invites them to share a drink, wryly laughing

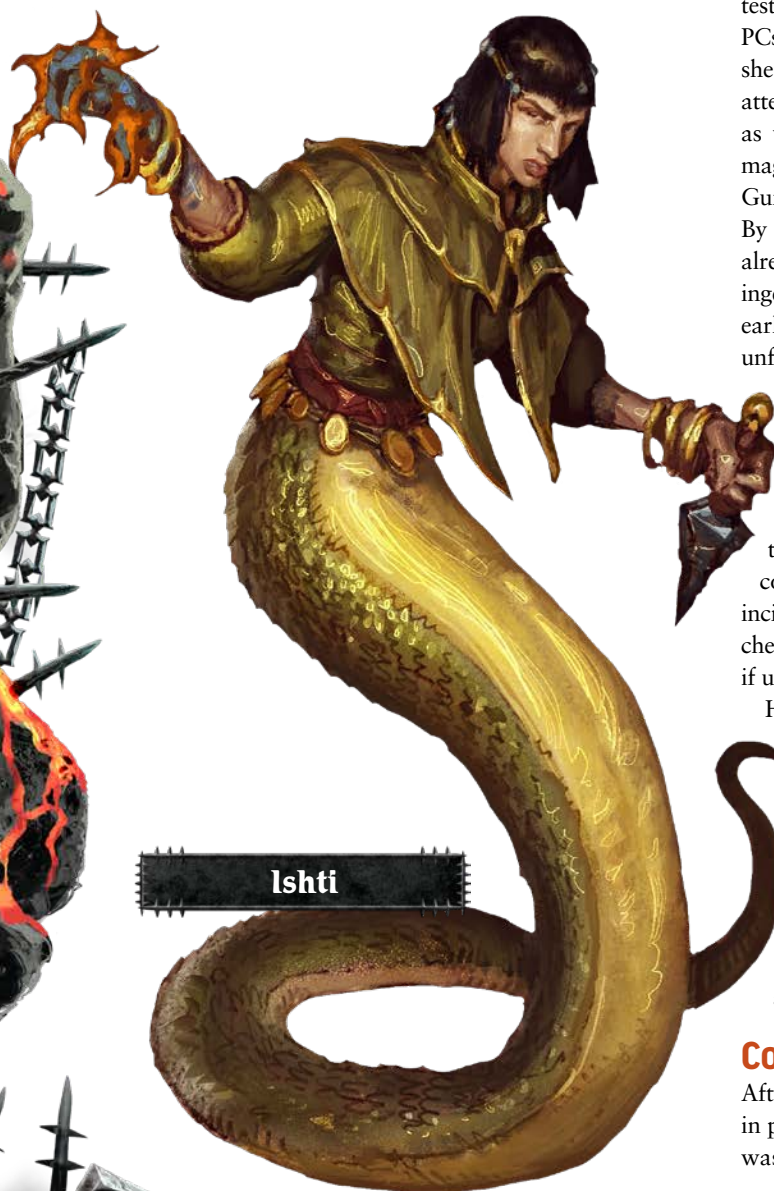
off any reticence about accepting beverages from a known poisoner. The wiry Garundi man swirls his own beverage—a fruity mixed drink in a salt-rimmed glass—while listening to the PCs' report and grievances with concern. He insists that he's not responsible for his fellow guildmaster's unfortunate state, admits that he doesn't recognize the poison from the description, and volunteers to help research the toxin and its cure. He requests that the PCs provide him whatever additional information they can and give him a day to investigate, after which he expects he'll have better information. He isn't interested in the PCs' direct help but doesn't begrudge it if they investigate elsewhere.

True to his word, Hahcuss and several assistants dutifully research poisons, toxins, and reagents that might replicate the reported symptoms, all while running tests on any samples the PCs provided. However, the PCs' visit to the guild attracts Ishti's attention, so she assumes her human guise, confirms Hahcuss is attempting to counteract her poison, and poisons him as well to stymie any cure. Her use of enchantment magic and Lamia's Caress leaves the Poison Makers' Guild members with no clear recollection of her visit. By the time the PCs return for answers, Hahcuss is already under the effects of nightmare salt, having ingested it from his salt-rimmed glass when he took an early break. One of his assistants remembers seeing an unfamiliar Garundi woman working in a nearby lab, but enchantment magic caused the assistant to not question her presence; they can describe her, however, and particularly remember her hands being speckled with tiny scars, as if from handling poisons or alchemy for years. The PCs can inspect the drink glass, but the nightmare salt's all been consumed, leaving no clean sample—as with the prior incident, with a critical success on a DC 32 Medicine check, a PC notes traces of nightmare vapor, as they do if using *detect poison* heightened to 2nd level.

Hahcuss is now on a similar countdown to death as the first guildmaster, and while his research notes are substantial and highly technical, he has not yet reached any substantive conclusions. He is able to inform the PCs of a breakthrough, though—he's fairly certain that the poison he ingested was from the salted rim of his drink. If the PCs don't recall that the first guildmaster mentioned eating salted flatbread, allow them a DC 35 Perception check to do so.

## CONFRONTING ISHTI **MODERATE 16**

After learning that the same Garundi woman was seen in proximity to both victims, and that the poison itself was delivered in salt form, the PCs have enough clues



Ishti



to begin tracking Ishti down. She's been dispersing her newest poison through a small salt warehouse that specializes in rare minerals, including pink-hued mountain salts, slabs of Thuvian rock salt, and even some salts from the Plane of Earth. The distribution network also keeps her abreast of rumors and provides her a reason to visit a wide range of clients.

To track Ishti once these clues are uncovered, a PC must succeed at a DC 35 Diplomacy check to Gather Information. On a success, the information leads them to Ishti's salt warehouse, while on a critical failure, the PC's investigation attracts Ishti's attention, and she attempts to poison a PC with a dose of nightmare salt smuggled into their food. (In this case, a PC can attempt a DC 40 Perception check or a DC 35 Medicine check to notice the poison before ingesting it.) If the PCs repeatedly fail to confront Ishti after three attempts to Gather Information, she eventually ambushes them at the Golden Oasis (consider using the Manor Rooms map on page 23 for this encounter).

Ishti's salt warehouse stands at the end of a series of interconnected shops, neighboring a meat-curing facility (accessible through the double door to the west), with small streets on its other three sides. Inside, shelves are loaded with slabs of rock salt and thick bags filled with salt crystals. Four piles of more common salt are waiting to be bagged, and a few offices to the northwest contain simple desks and cabinets. The ceiling is 15 feet high, and a 10-foot-by-10-foot section of roof in the middle of the warehouse has been propped open to release the day's heat. Use the Salt Warehouse map on page 43 for this area.

**Creature:** Ishti is a powerful lamia matriarch whose innate occult powers have only grown stronger with time, but she never mastered the art of casting spontaneous occult spells; instead, she's developed incredible skill at working with poison and a complete immunity to poisons of all kinds. She is usually in her human form, but she transforms into her true form in combat. If reduced to 40 or fewer Hit Points, she attempts to flee, abandoning the warehouse and Katapesh for the rest of the adventure.

## ISHTI

## CREATURE 18

UNIQUE CE LARGE BEAST

Female lamia matriarch (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 217)

**Perception** +29; darkvision

**Skills** Athletics +33, Crafting +31 (+35 for poison), Deception +32, Intimidation +30, Occultism +29, Stealth +33

**Str** +9, **Dex** +7, **Con** +3, **Int** +3, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +6

**Items** +2 *corrosive greater striking dagger*, nightmare salt poison (2; page 79), oblivion essence poison (page 79), weeping midnight poison (3; page 79)

**AC** 41; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +33, **Will** +29

**HP** 340; **Immunities** controlled, poison; **Resistances** mental 15

**Speed** 40 feet, climb 40 feet, fly 40 feet, swim 40 feet

**Melee** ♦ *corrosive dagger* +37 (agile, magical, versatile S),

**Damage** 3d4+17 piercing plus 1d6 acid

**Occult Innate Spells** DC 40; **9th** *charm* (×3), *nondetection*, *suggestion* (×3); **8th** *sleep*; **6th** *illusory disguise* (at will), *illusory object* (at will), *mirror image*, *ventriloquism* (at will); **Constant** (4th) *fly*

**Change Shape** ♦ As lamia matriarch.

**Quick Dervish Strike** ♦♦ As lamia matriarch, but 2 actions and using her dagger.

**Matriarch's Caress** ♦♦ As lamia matriarch, but DC 40.

**Poison Weapon** ♦ (manipulate) Ishti applies a poison to a piercing or slashing weapon of her choice.

## FINDING A CURE

Even with Ishti defeated, there is no immediate cure that the lamia had hidden away. However, among her carried possessions are two doses of nightmare salt—more than enough to test and formulate a cure. With a successful DC 37 Crafting, Medicine, or appropriate Lore check, a PC can convert a dose of nightmare salt into a cure over the course of an hour. Once administered to a poisoned character, they recover completely over the course of a day. This not only saves a vital guild ally, but could also save the life of Hahcuss Hrann and shift the stance of the Poisoners' Guild to anti-Scarlet Triad.

If the PCs are unable to concoct a cure on their own, the guild's staff can create one from the poison samples. If they must do so, the PCs do not receive the reward below.

**Reward:** For their inspired work concocting a cure, Hahcuss gives the PCs two doses of weeping midnight (page 79) and offers the PCs access to the guild's specialized techniques. These include the feats and poisons on pages 78–79.

## The Council of Guilds

On the last Wealday of each month, the Council of Guilds convenes to discuss, debate, and resolve any business and complaints. After several weeks of the PCs' influence, the city is abuzz with rumors about and grievances against the Scarlet Triad, and the council is little different. Attendees begin filing into the council hall in the Lower City shortly after dusk, mingling, dealing, and gossiping until the Pactmasters' representative, Pactbroker **Hashim ibn Sayyid** (N human politician—but see the sidebar on page 45), calls the meeting to order. The PCs, of course, not only are welcome to attend the meeting, but are expected.

The council meeting involves three stages: mingling, debating, and voting, giving the PCs an opportunity

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to assess each guild's stance, make their case, and potentially gain a few last-minute allies.

In all, 15 guilds are represented this evening, along with the Pactmasters themselves as a sixteenth group. By tradition, each sends its guildmaster or selected representative, plus a second official. These include **Ytrim Azas** (Aspis Consortium), **Uri Zandivar** (Scarlet Triad), **Aldane Zulran** (Imperial Union of Breeders), **Exavisu Kerndalion** (Jewelers' Guild), **Sehtba al-Izora** (Fleshmongers' Federation), and **Hahcuss Hrann** (Poison Makers' Guild). In addition, the PCs might be meeting other guild leaders for the first time: **Rin Zilver** (N male halfling) of the Farmers' Union, **Pardu of Scarhill** (LN agender human) leading the Fraternal Order of the Anvil, **Treman "Spikeface" Ulkulratu** (N male dwarf) with the League of Peshmongers, **Torbin Dooly** (NG male half-elf) of the Carpenters' Guild, **Stral** (N female half-orc) of the Guild of Butchers and Bakers, **Eketra Sheerpeak** (CG female dwarf) of the Guild of Streetsweepers and Dung Carters, the esteemed **Huena Ilvos** (LN female halfling) of the League of Upright Barristers, and **Okztrok** (N female lizardfolk) representing the Order of Alchemists and Potion Makers. The representatives of the Gladiators' Guild depend on the outcome of Task 3: Blood on the Sand. In addition, one of the Pactmasters attends the meeting, joining just as the debating phase begins.

Much as if they were a guild, the PCs can provide one spokesperson and an assistant. If a PC is guildmaster of the Gladiators' Guild, they too can join the proceedings and nominate their own assistant, so up to four PCs can directly participate.

## MINGLING

As leaders arrive, the PCs have the opportunity to chat and ascertain each guild's current stance toward the Scarlet Triad. Leaders whose guilds the PCs have helped directly are generally open about their stances, whereas guilds the PCs wooed via Influence Guild are more coy. A PC interacting with one of the latter leaders can ascertain a leader's stance through conversation and a successful secret DC 35 Perception check (a critical failure provides misleading information). Anti-Scarlet Triad guilds intend to vote with the PCs, pro-Scarlet Triad guilds intend to vote against the PCs, and neutral guilds expect to abstain from the vote.

Of special note at this point is Ytrim, the shaitan genie who serves as the representative for the Aspis Consortium. If the PCs have not managed to sway the Aspis Consortium away from supporting the Scarlet Triad, Ytrim takes one PC aside to issue a veiled threat that they should "leave the Scarlet Triad alone if you want to avoid a complicated incident." While this

might sound serious, the threat is hollow. On the other hand, if the PCs have convinced the Aspis Consortium to abandon its support for the Scarlet Triad, Ytrim takes a PC aside to thank them for the advance warning to disassociate with the doomed guild, and tells them, "Should you find yourself in the Scarlet Triad's headquarters later on, keep an eye out for the frog—he's the one who knows how to get downstairs, after all!"—a clue to the location of the secret passage in area C4.

## DEBATING

The council begins with the Pactbroker—the Pactmasters' mouthpiece—calling for order and reviewing several pieces of old business before calling for new business. This is the point where one of the participating PCs can publicly denounce the Scarlet Triad. The Pactbroker calls for the PC to name the complaints and request. The PC spokesperson and assistant can speak at length, after which one of those two PCs must attempt a DC 36 Deception, Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Performance check (the other PC can Aid). If successful, the PC reduces the Support Points of a single guild of their choice by 1 (or by 3 points on a critical success), potentially changing a guild's stance at the last minute.

It is fairly common and acceptable for official attendees to make short quips, voice questions, or comment quickly, so these debates should be a back-and-forth with the speaker doing most of the talking. The Pactbroker steps in to restore order as needed. Uri Zandivar and his assistant Jelek Jaziman provide snide context for some of the PCs' accusations before taking the floor to issue a forceful denunciation of the PCs' claims. The refutations focus on the PCs' status as strangers, the Scarlet Triad's long-standing reputation in Katapesh, any crimes the PCs might have committed in their pursuit of justice, and the many services the Scarlet Triad has provided over the years.

Once the PCs and the Scarlet Triad have spoken, the Pactbroker acknowledges any other guild leaders who wish to speak. At this point, if another PC is serving as a guildmaster, they too can attempt the skill check above to reduce a guild's Support Points. Each guild speaks in turn, denouncing the Scarlet Triad, supporting it, or making clear that this dispute is none of the respective guild's business. Keep the action lively. This is an opportunity for the PCs to see their hard work pay off, and having numerous guilds praise them should feel good.

## VOTING

Once the debate has concluded, the Pactbroker calls



for a vote on whether the Pactmasters should formally censure the Scarlet Triad, which might carry fines or the revocation of special protections. Each guild casts a vote or abstains. To pass, at least two-thirds of the guilds must vote in the motion's favor.

**The Motion Passes:** If the motion passes, the Pactbroker looks to the Pactmaster in attendance. The latter nods once, and Hashim announces that the Pactmasters have rescinded the special protections and boons extended to the Scarlet Triad. Although this still allows the Scarlet Triad to operate in the city as a guild, any attacks on the Scarlet Triad are crimes against private citizens, not against the city itself (eliciting a very different level of intervention and force). What's more, numerous anti-Scarlet Triad guildmasters begin calling for the Scarlet Triad to be held accountable for recent crimes.

Uri scowls and requests a chance to speak. He takes the floor and announces that the Scarlet Triad has long expected his organization's ungrateful neighbors to betray him, despite the many services provided by the Scarlet Triad over the years—including to morally hypocritical guilds known for peddling their own sinister wares. Therefore, the Scarlet Triad will be departing Katapesh immediately to seek "more enlightened and welcoming allies." To ensure ongoing civility during the Scarlet Triad's departure, Uri reveals that the Scarlet Triad is currently "hosting" a Pactmaster as a "guest"—heavily implied to be a hostage—whose safety shall mirror the Scarlet Triad's own. Several guildmasters begin angrily moving on Uri Zandivar, only for the Pactmaster present to stand, clap once, and motion for everyone to cease. The Pactbroker intervenes, calling on the guilds present to not waylay or inconvenience the Scarlet Triad for 3 days, which should be enough time for the group to vacate their headquarters and for their "guest" to return home. Uri nods in agreement and leaves at once with his aide, Jelek.

If the PCs try to harm Uri at this time, the other leaders intervene, warning that any attack would threaten the Pactmaster hostage. The tense meeting comes to an end shortly after the Scarlet Triad's leaders withdraw. Hashim ibn Sayyid motions for the PCs to stay, beginning Chapter 3.

**The Motion Fails:** If the vote fails to result in a two-thirds majority, the Scarlet Triad representatives are vindicated and cast threatening glares the PCs' way. In such a case, the PCs have a choice—they can either choose to proceed into Chapter 3 without removing Pactmaster support from the Scarlet Triad (see *Attacking Too Early* on page 51), or they can attempt to try again next month. In the later case,

you can come up with new tasks and adventures for the party to undertake, along with new retaliations against them by the Scarlet Triad, or you can simply reuse encounters that the PCs missed the first time around through Chapter 2. If the party simply can't get the vote to come off the way they wish, attacking the Scarlet Triad when it's still supported by the Pactmasters may become their only option.

**XP Award:** If the Council of Guilds passes the motion to condemn the Scarlet Triad, award the PCs 120 XP.

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Ytrim





## CHAPTER 3: THE RED PYRAMID RAID

Uri hopes that the Scarlet Triad's gambit has bought the organization enough time and protection to evacuate their key assets from Katapesh and destroy evidence of their misdeeds. The Pactmasters are all too familiar with the Scarlet Triad's tactics, but sending in the Zephyr Guards would only prompt the Scarlet Triad to execute their hostage. Instead, the Pactmasters elect to ask an independent team to do the job for them: the PCs.

After the Council of Guilds' abrupt end, Hashim ibn Sayyid signals for the PCs to follow him, quietly indicating that the Pactmasters wish to speak with them. He leads the PCs into a back room where two of the Pactmasters (Angruul and Morvithus) await them. The two wait for the PCs to file in before explaining the delicate situation the Scarlet Triad has created and the Pactmasters' intention to have the PCs raid the Red Pyramid, do whatever damage they wish to the Scarlet

Triad, and recover their colleague Tsandarkon. The Pactmasters admit that they learned of Tsandarkon's disappearance not long before the Council meeting, and that they had suspicions about the Scarlet Triad's involvement but no proof. Now that they know their colleague has been abducted, they ask the PCs to step in and solve the problem. The Pactmasters themselves wish to stand back from these events, so that if the PCs try and fail, the Pactmasters will be able to disavow collaborating with the PCs, and can condemn them publicly—but they also matter-of-factly state that they expect the PCs to succeed. If they do, the Pactmasters promise that no charges of public endangerment or aggression against a guild will be filed against the PCs, and further, they promise to see that the PCs are well rewarded for their service to the city.

However, the two Pactmasters caution that the Scarlet Triad is moving quickly. It's only a matter of a



few days before the entire organization escapes, and each attack on them is likely to encourage more resistance. If the PCs propose just ambushing the Scarlet Triad as they move from the pyramid to the docks, the Pactmasters veto the plan, arguing the PCs will provoke the Scarlet Triad into believing the city is defying the cease-fire's terms and therefore execute their hostage. What's more, many Triad members can teleport short distances, allowing them to move their most crucial treasures directly to unidentified ships in the harbor or outside the city. If the PCs move ahead with such a plan, you'll need to rework the rest of this chapter's contents as needed; "Against the Scarlet Triad" assumes the adventure ends with a tense invasion of the Scarlet Triad's headquarters under the Red Pyramid.

## Attacking Too Early

Should the PCs attack while the Scarlet Triad is still under Pactmaster protection, adjust the encounters in this chapter as follows. The public-facing ground floor has an additional four Triad enforcers (page 41) on staff at most hours, and the basement levels have an additional three enforcers and two Scarlet Triad mages beyond what is present later in the adventure. In addition, a contingent of four Zephyr Guards and one spiritbound aluum (page 83) are present to aid in the site's defense. Once the attack begins, additional Zephyr Guard contingents arrive on site every 1d6+2 minutes to assist the Scarlet Triad.

### ZEPHYR GUARD

### CREATURE 14

UNCOMMON N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

**Perception** +24

**Skills** Athletics +28, Diplomacy +24, Intimidation +24, Katapesh Lore +24, Society +22

**Str** +8, **Dex** +5, **Con** +5, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

**Items** +1 resilient breastplate, greater healing potion, +1 striking heavy crossbow (10 bolts), +2 striking scimitar

**AC** 36; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +26, **Will** +29

**HP** 255

**Attack of Opportunity** ↻

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ *scimitar* +30 (forceful, magical, sweep), **Damage** 2d6+14 slashing plus subduing strikes

**Ranged** ♦ *heavy crossbow* +30 (magical, range increment 120 feet, reload 2), **Damage** 2d10+6 piercing plus subduing strikes

**Adroit Disarm** ♦♦ The Zephyr Guard attempts to Disarm a creature, with a +2 circumstance bonus to the roll. On a critical success, the guard can also deal their scimitar damage to the creature.

**Hampering Shot** ♦♦ The Zephyr Guard makes a heavy crossbow Strike that deals one additional weapon damage die. If the Strike hits, the target takes a -10-foot status penalty to its Speeds and is slowed 1. These last for 1 round, or 2 rounds if the Strike was a critical success.

**Subduing Strikes** A Zephyr Guard takes no penalty for making nonlethal attacks with a weapon that doesn't have the nonlethal trait. The guard's nonlethal Strikes against a creature that is not wielding a weapon deal an additional 2d6 damage.

## CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Having arranged for the censure of the Scarlet Triad, the PCs must move quickly to confront the organization in its headquarters under the Red Pyramid. There, they have a chance to rescue hostages, defeat the slaver ring, and most importantly discover the hidden link between the Scarlet Triad and the island nation of Hermea—and to that land's ruler, the gold dragon Mengkare.

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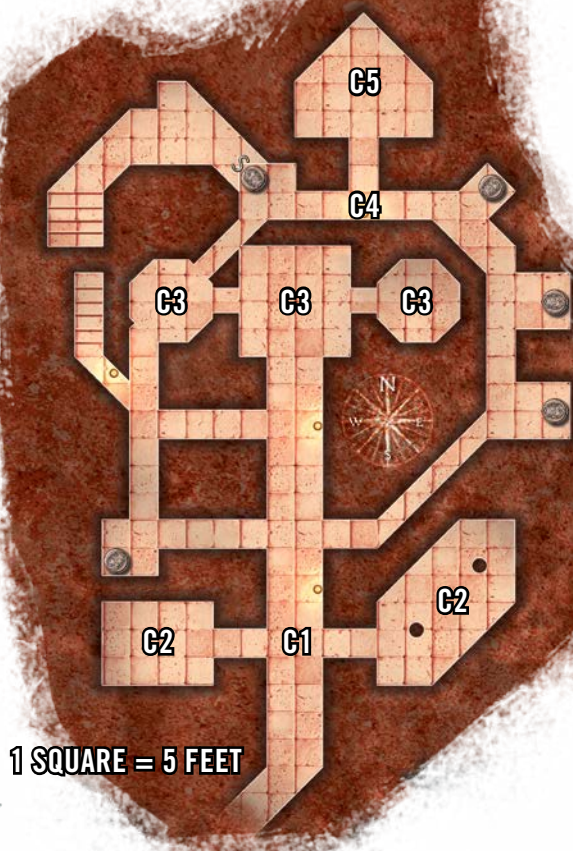
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Zephyr Guard



## RED PYRAMID: FIRST FLOOR



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

## The Red Pyramid

The Red Pyramid is a three-sided pyramid made of red brick that's stood for roughly two millennia, since Katapesh's Golden City era. Built by the noble-born wizard Teyam Ishtori, it served as a refuge and fortress from which she could research powerful magic. Raiders attacked the site several times during her lifetime, but after becoming aware of her magical prowess, they learned to give the pyramid a wide berth. Teyam settled into her own habits, eventually sought lichdom as a way to defeat death and continue her studies, and slowly faded from public memory.

When the Scarlet Triad secured ownership of the Red Pyramid decades ago, they set up their base of operations in the relatively small complex of chambers on the ground floor, but when Uri Zandivar recently discovered a long-forgotten secret door hidden beyond a statue of a frog, he realized there was far more to the pyramid. This discovery, combined with an uneasy truce with Teyam (who exists to this day as a demilich), helped propel Uri into a position of leadership in the Scarlet Triad. Today, the Scarlet Triad runs tours of the pyramid's ground floor, bringing in a modest income

while simultaneously working to draw attention away from the secret labs, prisons, and other chambers below that serve as their true headquarters.

Except where noted, ceilings within the Red Pyramid are 15 feet high. The pyramid's main entrance is located about 15 feet up its southwest side, at the end of a short flight of stairs. A tunnel ascends at a steep angle from here into area C1. The stairs directly west of C3 lead upward to area C6; a red ribbon is strung over the entrance to these stairs, indicating to tourists that access beyond this tunnel is not allowed.

## EVACUATION SCHEDULE

Once the Scarlet Triad is censured, they turn their attention to the process of evacuating staff, extracting key treasures, sabotaging what they can't take, and destroying incriminating records. The following entries illustrate how that process occurs over the course of 72 hours, from start to finish.

**12 Hours:** Triad agents have removed most of the valuables from areas C6 and C11, eliminating the rewards in those areas. The fiends guarding areas C5 and C6 are relocated—the crucidaemons to guard the hall at area C9, and the cornugon to patrol the hall around area C20.

**24 Hours:** Reinforcements sneak past the Zephyr Guards and strengthen the Scarlet Triad. Replace any defeated combatants in either area C10 or C11, and reset the trap in area C9.

**48 Hours:** Triad agents have removed many of the valuables from area C23, including the *possibility tome* and the *scroll of time stop*.

**72 Hours:** Uri Zandivar declares the evacuation complete, executes Tsandarkon, gives the remains to any surviving fiends, and has a spellcaster teleport him out of Katapesh. All Triad combatants depart.

## C1. GRAND GALLERY

Heavily damaged frescoes and wall paintings depict capering spirits, funerary processions, and offerings of grave goods to Pharamasma as the goddess sits in judgment.

**Creature:** During typical business hours, the 22-year-old **Dwazo Yelsi** (NG male human) serves as a combination greeter, docent, and caretaker for the Red Pyramid. Having studied Osirionology in Sothis and Absalom's Blakros Museum, Dwazo accepted a paid opportunity from Uri Zandivar to study and maintain the Red Pyramid. What the Garundi anthropologist thought would be his big break in academia has proven to be quite dull, with the pyramid having been looted several times over.



If the PCs visit the Red Pyramid before the Scarlet Triad is censured, Dwazo contentedly leads them through areas C1–C5, serving his role as tour guide. He explains that the stairs leading upward are off limits to tourists, claiming that the chambers above are unstable and until they can be repaired, no visitors are allowed (in fact, he's been instructed by his employers to allow no access to area C6 above). He does not mention why access is prohibited, nor has he investigated—curiosity is not one of Dwazo's vices.

If the PCs arrive with hostile intent or after the Scarlet Triad's been censured, Dwazo is still here, albeit anxious about any conflict and his future employment. Dwazo nervously greets and guides the PCs around, hoping not to be killed. After the tour, he insistently asks them to leave. The PCs can convince Dwazo to help them by succeeding at a DC 30 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check—particularly since he's had a bad feeling about his employers' true motives for some time. Most importantly, he knows that there is a secret passage in area C4, just not how to open it, having seen Triad officials occasionally disappear or reappear from that direction. He also knows that there's danger on the second floor and near the priests' chamber, having been warned by the Scarlet Triad about defenses in the area.

Dwazo is not a combatant. While he's curious to see what lies below the pyramid and might come to idolize a scholarly PC—particularly anyone who pays off his remaining 436 gp in student loans—he's more likely to survive if instructed to depart the premises.

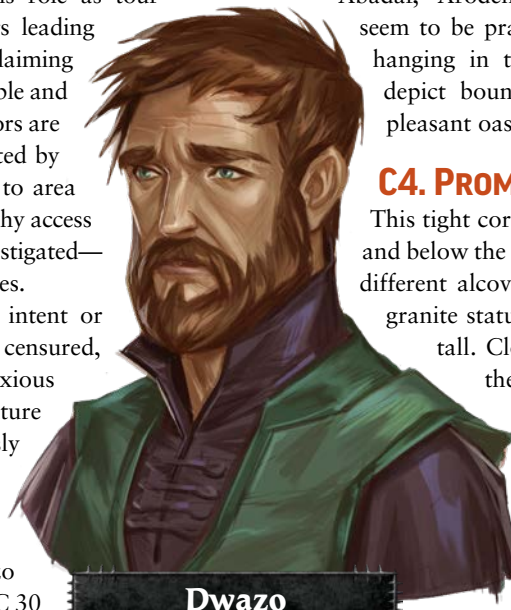
## C2. TREASURE ROOMS

Short halls lead from the grand gallery to these chambers, each of which bear evidence of having once been sealed with brick and plaster.

The grave goods and treasures once kept here are long missing.

## C3. THE ROYAL CHAMBERS

Scratches along the southern entrance show where a stone door had been slid here to seal off the square burial chamber. An eight-foot-tall set of sarcophagi stand to the north. Several of the wall paintings hanging here have been purposefully defaced, leaving vacant gaps in the artwork.



Dwazo

What wall artwork survives shows a regal man issuing orders and riding in a chariot. Images of Abadar, Aroden, Pharasma, and Sarenrae seem to be praising the individual. The art hanging in the east and west chambers depict bountiful harvests along a river, pleasant oases, and elaborate lion hunts.

## C4. PROMENADE OF STATUES

This tight corridor creates a circuit around and below the royal chambers, featuring five different alcoves that each hold a different granite statue, each approximately 4 feet tall. Clockwise from the southwest, these statues depict a hawk, a frog, a baboon, a lion, and a rhinoceros beetle. The frog statue conceals a secret passage, activated by a lever that has long since been broken off and lost, leaving only hints of the mechanism. A PC can detect

this secret passage and how to jury-rig the mechanism with a successful DC 38 Perception check. When activated, the northwest wall slides open, and the frog statue slides 20 feet northwest along a track in the wall to clear the way into the room beyond. Wide stairs lead down to area C7 below.

## C5. PRIESTS' CHAMBERS MODERATE 17

The angled walls of this room bear fragmented and faded Ancient Osiriani hieroglyphic carvings.

Here, priests prayed and consecrated the pyramid prior to interment. The hieroglyphs on the walls beseech the gods and attempt to ward off mischievous spirits. Those who visit this room often report sudden chills or hearing whispers, and the chamber has a reputation for being haunted. If he's giving a tour, Dwazo recites the popular tale that Nausimaset murdered a priest to use the latter's soul as a bargaining chip in the afterlife, and that the priest's ghost yet remains herein. A PC who succeeds at a DC 35 Perception check notices cleverly hidden vents near the ceiling that allow for drafts to periodically whisk through the room, revealing that the "haunt" is merely a clever architectural stunt.

**Creatures:** Once the Scarlet Triad has been censured, Uri places a few fiendish guardians within this chamber, with orders to attack the PCs should they enter the complex. Because the creatures are

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invisible, Dwazo is unaware of their presence. These guardians consist of four crucidaemons who stand vigil invisibly in the room. Uri's forbidden them from creating *glyphs of warding* (in part to prevent accidental complications as Triad agents move in and out of the area, and to keep Dwazo's role as tour guide distraction from ending abruptly), but has described the PCs to them and ordered them to attack the PCs should they encounter them.

The crucidaemons keep alert for Dwazo's voice, and move out, invisible, to stalk the PCs once they are aware of their presence. They wait to attack either when the PCs open the secret door to the basement or once they clamber up to area C6, hoping for the PCs to trigger the trap there first. Once a battle begins, the crucidaemons fight to the death.

Twelve hours after the censuring takes effect, these daemons are repositioned to area C9.

## CRUCIDAEMONS (4)

CREATURE 15

Page 85

**Initiative** Stealth +30

## C6. THE GOLDEN CHAMBERS LOW 17

A panoramic painted scene of Katapesh during its "Golden City" era decorates the walls of this room, but the colors and images have faded over time, leaving only a few larger features like the ocean and the Marble Sphinx readily identifiable. Empty desks and boxes sit along the walls.

These chambers were once used by the Scarlet Triad as a place to conduct business with visitors, to store supplies, and to otherwise present a front to anyone curious about them. The rooms here are among the first that the Scarlet Triad abandons once the group has been censured. The side rooms once served as barracks.

**Creature:** After the censure, Uri places another of his fiendish minions here as a guardian—a single elite cornugon devil with orders to prevent anyone from meddling with the stash of money in the secret room to the south. The cornugon has received descriptions of the PCs, and he orders to attack them on sight.

## CORNUGON

CREATURE 16

Page 87

**Initiative** Perception +28

**Hazard:** Uri's also reactivated an ancient trap that once warded this chamber; the cornugon knows about the trap and does what it can to avoid its effect while simultaneously attempting to lure the PCs into the area of its effect.

## ACIDIC NEEDLE LAUNCHER

HAZARD 16

COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

**Stealth** DC 38 (master)

**Description** A ceiling-mounted launcher rains resinous needles onto intruders, after which the needles melt into acid.

**Disable** Thievery (DC 36) to disable some firing mechanisms, making three adjacent squares in the trapped area safe to enter.

**AC** 39; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +22

**Hardness** 26, **HP** 104 (BT 52);

**Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

**Needle Rain** ⚡ (attack) **Trigger** A creature moves into the area indicated on the map; **Effect** The trap shoots an acidic needle at a random target in the area indicated on the map, then rolls initiative.

**Ranged** acidic needle +35, **Damage** 2d6 piercing plus 8d6 acid

**Routine** (3 actions) The acidic needle launcher fires a needle at a random target in the area indicated on the map.

**Treasure:** The north office includes several crates that contain various memorabilia and souvenirs for sale worth a total of 45 gp.

A concealed door to the south (Perception DC 40 to locate) leads to a small vault that contains dried rations sufficient to feed 10 people for a week, a major acid flask, and a locked chest (Thievery DC 36 to Pick the Lock) containing 760 gp and a record of the Scarlet Triad's local payroll estimates for the coming month.

## C7. BLOOD MOSAIC

MODERATE 17

Four columns support the wide, vaulted ceiling of this gallery. A broad diamond-shaped area of inlaid bronze creates a pattern of elegant whorls on the floor.

A secret door (Perception DC 40) in the southern wall opens into a short passage that avoids the trapped hallway (area C9).

**Creatures:** This room contains the first of the demilich Teyam Ishtori's defenses, an intricate

## RED PYRAMID: SECOND FLOOR



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



summoning area that conjures a marilith the moment blood touches the bronze (i.e., a creature in the marked area takes damage). The two guards posted here know nothing of the conjuration effect, having been advised only that the bronze area provides them with occult protection. As a result, the two try to stay in the area—at least until the marilith appears. The fiend largely avoids the guards until given no other targets to kill.

## TRIAD ENFORCERS (2)

CREATURE 15

Page 41

Perception +25

## ELITE MARILITH

CREATURE 17

Pathfinder Bestiary 6, 81

Initiative Perception +32

## C8. ASPIS OFFICE

Low 17

This wide room includes numerous desks, cabinets for holding documents, and an offset sitting area for holding meetings.

As part of its partnership with the Scarlet Triad, the Aspis Consortium maintains a small office in the Red Pyramid to better coordinate operations in the area.

**Creatures:** Several Aspis agents are rushing about in here, sorting through, boxing up, and moving any sensitive documentation and equipment. Should they hear the sound of combat in area C7, they arrange themselves on either side of the door to stage an ambush. If it seems the intruders have bypassed them, the Aspis agents take their valuables and sneak out, leaving the door open.

If the PCs shifted the Aspis Consortium's stance to anti-Scarlet Triad, the room contains only emptied furniture; the Consortium has already evacuated the premises, and the shaitan Ytrim Azas has left a pleasant note for the PCs, voicing her appreciation for their efforts over the past few weeks—in particular helping her recognize the Scarlet Triad for the sinking ship that it is and getting out. The note also states that there are a few gifts in one of the cabinets.

## ASPIS OPERATIVES (4)

CREATURE 14

As Zephyr Guard (page 51)

Initiative Perception +24

**Treasure:** Ytrim's gift (if she left one) consists of a *disintegration bolt* and a *truesight potion*.

**XP Award:** If the PCs shifted the Aspis Consortium's support away from the Scarlet Triad and they don't encounter operatives here, grant them 60 XP.

## C9. TRAPPED HALLWAY MODERATE 17

This hallway bears a long mural along its west and north wall, depicting a war between efreeti and a team of five djinni and humanoid heroes.

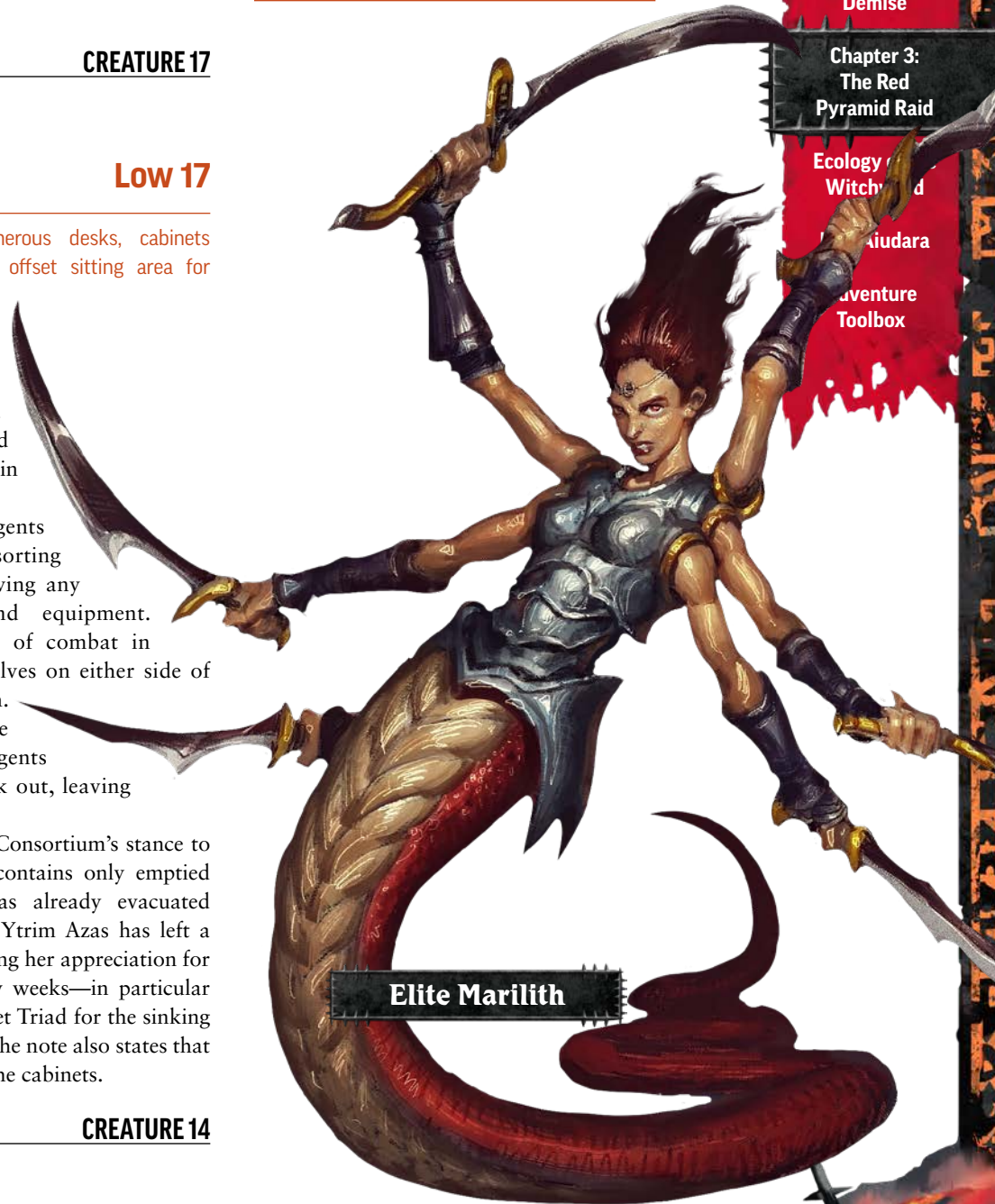
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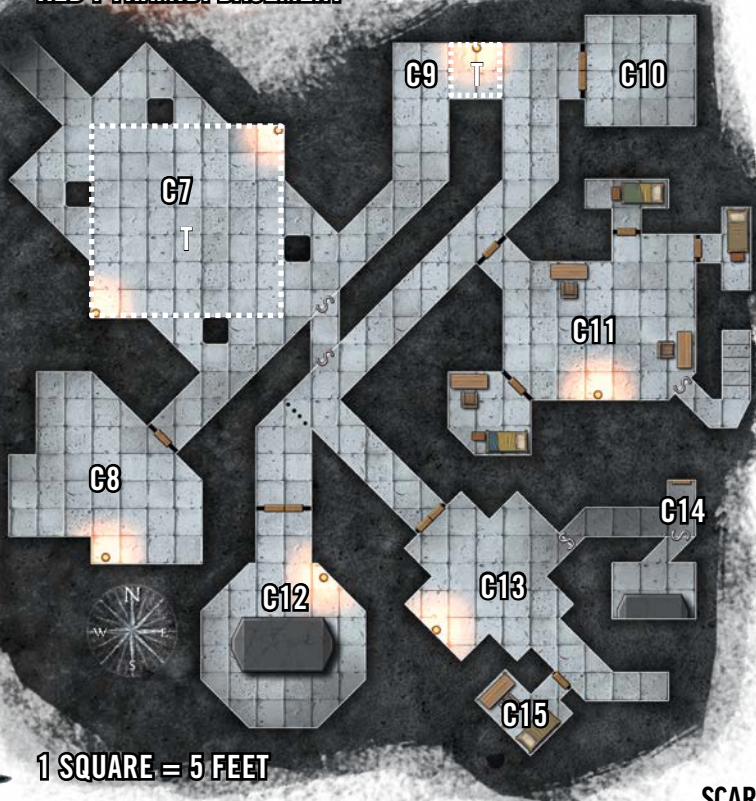
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## RED PYRAMID: BASEMENT



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

A PC who succeeds at a DC 32 Society check recognizes the djinni and humanoids as the Templars of the Five Winds, heroes from Katapesh's early history. The templars are better remembered now, following the return and subsequent defeat of their ancient efreeti foes in the hinterlands about a decade ago.

**Creatures:** Note that if 12 hours have passed and the crucidaemons in area C5 are still alive, they've been repositioned here.

**Hazard:** A magical ward strikes intruders who enter the square indicated on the map with devastating psychic noise. The keening alerts the creatures in areas C10 and C11, who move to investigate.

### MENTAL SCREAM TRAP

HAZARD 19

MAGICAL TRAP

**Stealth** DC 43 (master)

**Description** A psychic scream disorients creatures in the area.

**Disable** Arcana (DC 41) to suppress the magic or Thievery (DC 41) to scratch out the ward

**Psychic Screech** (arcane, enchantment, incapacitation, mental) **Trigger** A creature enters the marked area;

**Effect** A psychic wail affects all creatures within 10 feet of the marked area, requiring them to attempt a DC 41 Will save.

**Critical Success** The target is unaffected.

**Success** The target is stunned 2.

**Failure** The target is paralyzed for 1 round, then stunned 2 when the paralysis ends.

**Critical Failure** The target is paralyzed for 4 rounds. At the end of each of its turns, it can attempt a new Will save to reduce the remaining duration by 1 round, or end it entirely on a critical success.

## C10. BARRACKS Low 17

This chamber holds eight sets of bunk beds, a table for dining, and several easily covered lanterns.

This is the primary barracks for Scarlet Triad mercenaries stationed in the Red Pyramid.

**Creatures:** While not working on the evacuation efforts, three off-duty Scarlet Triad enforcers rest here. When they hear the trap in area C9, they become alarmed and move toward the area to investigate.

## SCARLET TRIAD ENFORCERS (3) CREATURE 15

Page 41

Perception +25

## C11. ARCHIVE

MODERATE 17

Boxes stuffed with papers and scrolls crowd the shelves along this archive's walls, with yet more cabinets and shelves stuffed into the three side chambers.

Decades of blackmail, contracts, reports, and more are stored here. However, what the Scarlet Triad boasts in criminal effectiveness, it lacks in proper archival technique; sorting through what's potentially useful later, what's worthless, and what might incriminate the Scarlet Triad takes many hours. By spending an hour or more perusing these files, the PCs can find a host of handy missives, including documentation exonerating any of their blackmailed and framed friends.

A secret door (Perception DC 38) in the southeast corner leads to a narrow passage to area C16.

**Creatures:** One of Uri Zandivar's lieutenants leads two Scarlet Triad mages in a search for key documents, sorting through everything stored in the cabinets to determine which ones they should keep (and transport off site), which to destroy, and which can be safely left behind. Confronted by PCs, they fight to the death.



## SCARLET TRIAD BOSS

## CREATURE 17

LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

**Perception** +30

**Languages** Common, Gnoll, Kelish, Osiriani

**Skills** Acrobatics +32, Deception +29, Diplomacy +27, Intimidation +31, Society +28, Stealth +30, Thievery +33

**Str** +6, **Dex** +9, **Con** +5, **Int** +7, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +4

**Items** +2 greater striking composite shortbow (40 arrows), +2 striking shortsword, +2 resilient studded leather armor, infiltrator thieves' tools, arrow with weeping midnight poison (page 79)

**AC** 39; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +33, **Will** +29

**HP** 315

**Return Fire** ➤ **Trigger** The Scarlet Triad boss is the target of a physical ranged attack; **Effect** They gain a +4 circumstance bonus to AC against the triggering attack. If the attack misses and the boss has their shortbow in hand, the boss Strikes the attacker with their shortbow.

**Speed** 30 feet

**Melee** ➤ **shortsword** +34 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 2d6+12 piercing

**Ranged** ➤ **composite shortbow** +34 (deadly 2d10, range increment 60 feet, reload 0); **Damage** 3d6+9 piercing

**Darting Shot** ➤➤ The Scarlet Triad boss Feints a target, Strides up to their Speed, and makes a Strike with their shortbow in any order. They can Feint any target within 30 feet when using this ability.

**Sneak Attack** 4d6

## SCARLET TRIAD MAGES (2)

## CREATURE 15

LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID TIEFLING

**Perception** +26; darkvision

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Daemonic, Draconic, Infernal, Osiriani

**Skills** Arcana +30, Crafting +27, Intimidation +25, Occultism +27

**Str** +3, **Dex** +6, **Con** +4, **Int** +5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +7

**Items** +2 striking dagger, greater healing potion, wand of crushing despair

**AC** 37; **Fort** +23, **Ref** +26, **Will** +29; +2 status to all saves vs. arcane magic

**HP** 270; **Resistances** electricity 10, fire 10

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ➤ **dagger** +30 (agile, finesse, versatile P), **Damage** 2d4+9 slashing

**Arcane Prepared Spells** DC 36, attack +30; **8th** horrid wilting, lightning bolt, mind blank; **7th** energy aegis (×2), fly, power word blind; **6th** purple worm sting, slow, teleport (×2); **5th** magic missile (×2); **Cantrips (8th)** detect magic, message, ray of frost, read aura, shield

**Divine Innate Spells** DC 36; **2nd** darkness

**Rituals** planar binding

**Treasure:** Among the documents, the PCs can find a scroll of spirit song (9th level) as well as the deed for the Bhetshamtal Estate, which the PCs could keep for themselves or sell off quickly for 4,000 gp.

## C12. FALSE VAULT

## MODERATE 17

An immense octagonal pillar of stone looms in the center of this room, while glittering golden coins lie scattered along the floor to the south beyond the pillar.

In the tradition of Osirian pyramid construction, the Red Pyramid features a decoy vault meant to mislead, discourage, or kill looters. This false vault features several defenses intended to defy and entice thieves. A sturdy portcullis (Hardness 18, HP 72, BT 36) blocks the hallway, and a massive iron double door (Hardness 18, HP 72, BT 36, Thievery DC 40) seals the vault. The vault's interior is scattered with gold-plated ceramic coins that seem to be piled to the south, just out of sight from the entrance.

**Creatures:** In addition to the dangerous trap that wards this chamber, powerful oozes have been bound by ancient magic to perpetually guard this false vault—a quartet of immortal ichors drawn from the corpse of a long dead Horseman of the Apocalypse. The immortal ichors lie beyond the central pillar, out of sight from the northern doors, but slither forth to attack 1 round before the room's trap activates or as soon as they're spotted, whichever occurs first. The ichors cannot pursue foes out of this chamber.

## IMMORTAL ICHORS (4)

## CREATURE 15

Page 88

**Initiative** Perception +20

**Hazard:** Three rounds after a living creature steps into the vault, the door slams shut; a creature within 5 feet of the door can attempt a DC 35 Reflex save to jump to the other side before the door closes. Poison gas (a caustic form of nightmare vapor) then floods the vault.

## CAUSTIC VAPOR

## HAZARD 17

MECHANICAL TRAP

**Stealth** DC 40 (master)

**Description** The door slams shut, and poison gas fills the room.

**Disable** Occultism DC 36 (master) or Religion DC 36 (master) to exorcise the spirits

**Breath Snatcher** ➤ (conjunction, occult) **Trigger** A living creature other than an ooze spends at least 3 rounds in the room; **Effect** The trap activates and fills the area with caustic nightmare vapor, exposing all creatures within.

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**Caustic Nightmare Vapor** (acid, poison) Oozes are immune to this poison; **Saving Throw** DC 38 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 round; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 4d6 acid damage and confused (1 round); **Stage 2** 6d6 acid damage, confused, and flat-footed (1 round); **Stage 3** 8d6 acid damage, confused, flat-footed, and stupefied 2 (1 round)

**Reset** The trap resets after 1 day.

**Treasure:** The vault contains 53,117 gold-plated ceramic coins, collectively worth 688 gp. There are also three flasks of lemon-scented water stored in fancy potion bottles and enchanted to appear magical with *magic aura*.

### C13. UNFINISHED WING MODERATE 17

This oddly shaped chamber seems almost unfinished, its walls bare of decoration. Crates, chests, boxes, and other storage containers fill the chamber, making it difficult to discern its exact dimensions.

The Scarlet Triad uses this area for general purpose storage. A secret passage (Perception DC 38) leads to area C14.

**Creatures:** Among the resources stored here is a spiritbound aluum, a powerful construct given to the Scarlet Triad by the Pactmasters shortly after Uri Zandivar secured a privileged position in the city. Two agents are also present, currently sorting through more than a decade of odds and ends hoping to find anything worth salvaging. The aluum sluggishly assists them in upending crates or shredding any papers they give it. This creates enough noise that the three are unlikely to hear the PCs, but once the PCs are noticed, the agents command the aluum to attack.

#### SPIRITBOUND ALUUM

#### CREATURE 16

Page 83

**Initiative** Perception +28

#### TRIAD ENFORCERS (2)

#### CREATURE 15

Page 41

**Initiative** Perception +25

### C14. TRUE VAULT

### MODERATE 17

This hallway ends at a large stone door, its face decorated with a ring of skulls wearing ornate head dresses.

The stone door is false; the real door out of this area is a secret one hidden in the opposite wall (Perception DC 38) that opens into the Red Pyramid's true vault

(see Treasure below). This room and the vault beyond have so far evaded notice by the Scarlet Triad.

**Hazard:** The false door bears a devastating trap that triggers when anyone so much as touches the door, let alone attempts to open it.

#### LUMINOUS WARD

#### HAZARD 18

MAGICAL TRAP

**Stealth** DC 40 (master)

**Description** A burst of radiance explodes from the door.

**Disable** Thievery DC 40 (master) to disable the wards or *dispel magic* (9th level; counteract DC 38) to counteract the ward

**Radiant Explosion** ☞ (fire, light) **Trigger** A creature touches the door; **Effect** All creatures within 20 feet of the door are scorched with brilliant light, taking 20d6 fire damage (DC 40 basic Reflex save). A creature that fails this save is blinded for 1 hour (or permanently on a critical failure).

**Reset** The trap resets after 1 hour.

**Treasure:** The vault contains four decayed bags from which spill 33 pp, 780 gp, and 1,911 sp. Atop a fragile frame rests a platinum-and-lapis recorder shaped like a serpent (a *greater maestro's instrument*). Among the treasures are also a broad golden necklace depicting a vulture in flight (worth 650 gp), a pectoral of green faience beads threaded with delicate mithral wire (worth 800 gp), nine silver ushabti figurines (worth 100 gp each), a 2-foot-tall crystal ewer shaped like a flamingo (worth 700 gp), a cut ruby (worth 1,000 gp), a carved jade tablet depicting Urgathoa beheading Pharasma (worth 350 gp—or twice that to either faith depicted for reasons of pride or destruction), a clay perfume bottle shaped like a hedgehog that contains a *major healing potion*, and a steel flask containing a true elixir of life.

### C15. FOOD STORAGE

This simple storage room contains wooden shelves and enough hard biscuits, water, dried meat, and dried fruit to feed a few dozen people for at least a week.

The Scarlet Triad stored food and other supplies here, but largely abandon the stores once they're censured.

### C16. ANTECHAMBER

### LOW 17

Numerous chairs, rugs, and knee-high tables decorate this comfortable room for sitting and chatting. A rectangular alcove to the east has strangely warped and rippled walls.



The stairs to the south ascend to the secret door in area C11.

**Creatures:** As the Scarlet Triad clears out its old files, it's also been selling off slaves who would be too difficult to transport. As if his slaving ways were not despicable enough, Uri Zandivar invited a pair of daemons to purchase some of the remaining humanoid captives. The two astradaemon guests are engaged in telepathic banter while awaiting Uri's next offering. When the PCs arrive, the daemons stand and admire the PCs' apparent power—all the while assessing how mighty their souls must be. The daemons inquire which of the PCs are Uri's guards and which are his captives, offering a bag of onyx gems in exchange for one or more of the PCs. In the likely event the PCs refuse to sacrifice one another to fiends, the daemons grow impatient and attack.

## ASTRADAEMONS (2)

## CREATURE 16

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 73

**Initiative** Perception +28

**Treasure:** The astradaemons' bag is a *type I bag of holding* that contains onyx gems of varying quality worth a total of 1,600 gp.

## C17. URI'S ROOM

The magically reinforced steel door (Hardness 25, HP 120, BT 60) to this room bears a powerful lock (Thievery DC 41 to Pick the Lock) to which only Uri Zandivar (area C23) has the key.

*This room contains a lavish bed with silk sheets, a chest of drawers, and a writing desk and chair. Several leather-bound journals sit atop the desk.*

The chest of drawers contains six different outfits of fine clothing as well as four much simpler outfits designed for physical training and exercise. Among the modest other possessions are five journals providing a detailed look into Uri Zandivar's past 12 years operating the Scarlet Triad in Katapesh, including the Scarlet Triad's original foundation by Mengkare as scouts for his Glorious Endeavor, the frustration with reduced funding from Hermea forcing the Scarlet Triad's increasingly public shift into slave trading, coercive measures taken to better control rivals in Katapesh, concerns about the end of slavery in Absalom, and increasingly risky plans with Uri's unnamed sister to confront Mengkare himself and establish the Scarlet Triad as its own entity and not, in Uri's words, "slaves to gather slaves." The journal hints that these plans are tied to an unnamed artifact referenced only as the "Orb." This is, of course, the *Orb*

*of Gold Dragonkind*. Uri takes care never to mention his sister or the Orb by name, but the implication that it can be used to confront Mengkare and claim the city of Promise as a base of operations for the Scarlet Triad is unmistakable. The last few entries in the journal indicate that the repair work for the Orb has been completed and that it is currently in transit to Uri's sister in Promise, and bemoan the fact that Uri "couldn't use the amber bauble to take the short route through Vengegate to Promise quite yet"—a clear hint toward where the final gate in Alseta's Ring might lead. In fact, the final entry in the journal concerns the PCs themselves. Once Mengkare "falls into line," Uri writes, "we won't need to worry about what he might think about our use of Alseta's Ring, and the heroes who've been using it should be our next targets. That they're active here in Katapesh makes it even more convenient—let me know when it's safe to make my move, and I'll take them down!"

If the PCs invaded the Pyramid without first seeing the Scarlet Triad censured, these journals can prove the Scarlet Triad's illegal activities and, if presented to the Pactmasters, can exonerate the PCs of any crimes committed in the course of invading the Red Pyramid.

## C18. ELITE AGENT QUARTERS Low 17

*This room provides sleeping quarters, recreation space, and a dining area.*

**Creatures:** A pair of Triad agents are busy sorting documents from the library. If they hear combat, they cautiously move to join in the area's defense. If desperate, the Scarlet Triad agents rush to C22 to activate the golem there.

## SCARLET TRIAD BOSS

## CREATURE 17

Page 57

**Initiative** Perception +30

## SCARLET TRIAD MAGE

## CREATURE 15

Page 57

**Initiative** Perception +26

## C19. CELL BLOCK

The door opens into a guard post and general-purpose break room that is fairly unkempt following the Scarlet Triad's urgent need to process and destroy documents. The nearby door leading north opens into a series of five locked prison cells (Thievery DC 30 to Pick the Locks; Hardness 15, HP 50, BT 25). All but one is empty, as the rest of the captives have been fed to the astradaemons in area C16.

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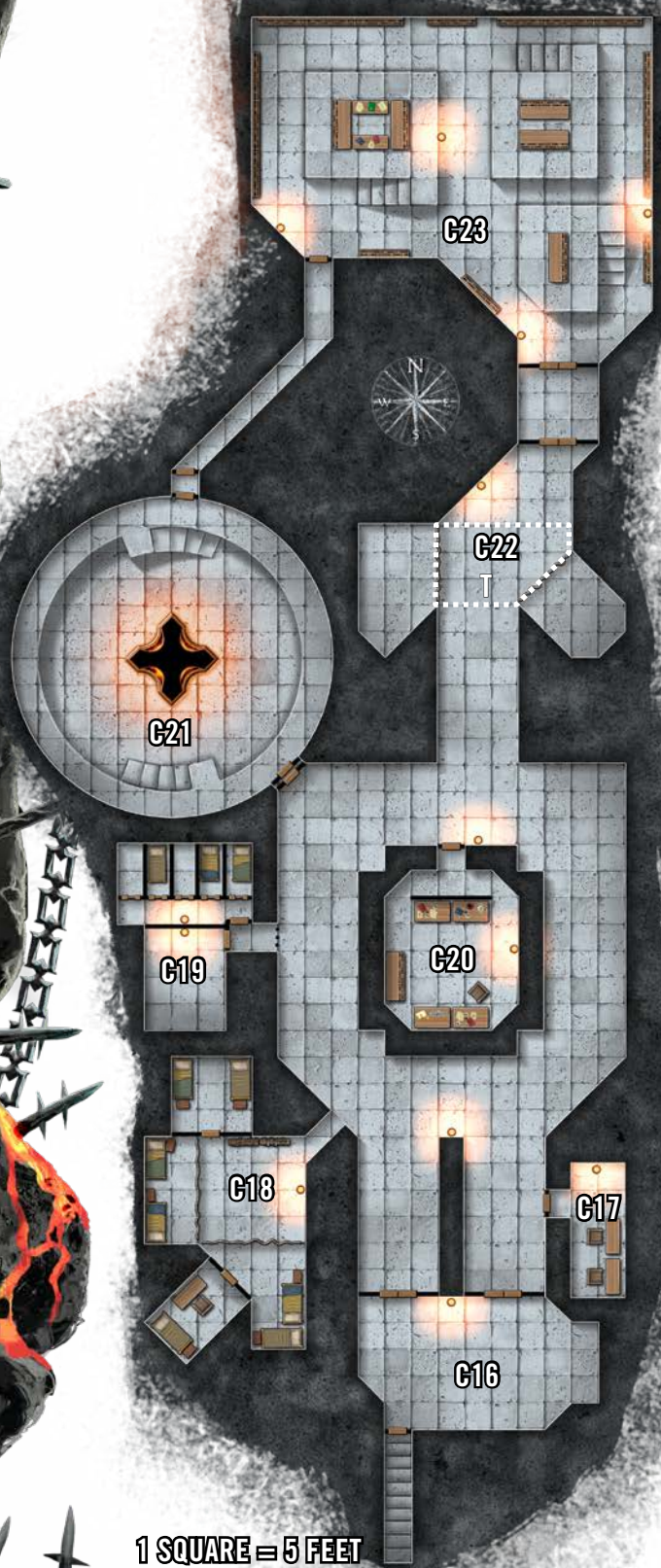
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## RED PYRAMID: SUBBASEMENT



**Creature:** The sole remaining occupant of these cells once the Scarlet Triad is censured is Pactmaster Tsandarkon, an indignantly underdressed witchwyrd. The moment he spots someone other than a known Triad associate, he snaps at them to not gaze upon his bare skin, insisting that he won't abide rescue or visitors unless he can do so with dignity. He remains adamant on this point, even fighting the PCs if necessary despite the fact that he's a relatively minor member of the Pactmasters and is no match for high-level PCs. The clothing supplies in areas C17 and C18 include enough robes, scarves, and capes for him to cover himself to his satisfaction, muttering that the PCs are not to speak of what they've seen. After settling into his borrowed garb, he relaxes considerably and thanks the PCs for helping him break free.

Without knowing his exact location or having sight of his destination, Tsandarkon is unable to escape with *dimension door*. Further, he is incensed at the Scarlet Triad's gall at having abducted him and strongly prefers to watch the PCs mete out justice for the crime. He follows them at a distance, providing occasional insights if the PCs were considerate enough to provide him clothing and not ogle his alien form. Otherwise, he watches with silent judgment. If the PCs insist and escort him, he is willing to depart the Red Pyramid.

**XP Award:** For freeing Tsandarkon, award the PCs 40 XP. Award them an additional 40 XP for escorting him to safety.

### TSANDARKON

CREATURE 6

Male witchwyrd (page 90)

Initiative Perception +12

### C20. TEYAM'S LAB

MODERATE 17

Inset shelves run along the perimeter of this room, which contains numerous tables, tools, and manuals fit for an arcane laboratory.

**Creature:** The wizard Teyam Ishtori used this chamber as her lab for more delicate procedures—including her transformation into a lich millennia ago—preferring the phoenix forge in area C21 for grander projects. However, the loss of her phylactery centuries in the past left her increasingly listless, and this lab is now a riot of unfinished experiments, spoiled components, and half-realized projects.

As a growing malaise set in, Teyam eventually settled here, slowly crumbling until reduced to a bitter demilich. When Uri Zandivar first explored



the surrounding rooms, he only briefly peeked into this room before recognizing the danger and wisely shutting the door. The Scarlet Triad left Teyam to her listless musing ever since, and as long as they don't intrude into this room, she has continued to ignore them. Teyam hides nestled amid the tomes and a precariously balanced alembic, rising into the air to challenge anyone who investigates the area and accusing them of desiring her arcane secrets. She chases intruders a modest distance before growing bored and returning to her lab.

## TEYAM ISHTORI

## CREATURE 19

UNIQUE NE TINY UNDEAD

Female demilich (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 222)

**Perception** +25; darkvision, *true seeing*

**Languages** Abyssal, Ancient Osiriani, Daemonic, Draconic, Elven, Infernal, Necril

**Skills** Acrobatics +31, Arcana +38, Deception +33, Occultism +35, Religion +31, Stealth +33

**Str** -3, **Dex** +6, **Con** +0, **Int** +8, **Wis** -2, **Cha** +6

**Items** *demilich eye gem* (2)

**Torpor** As demilich.

**AC** 44; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +32, **Will** +35; +1 status to all saves vs. positive

**HP** 300, negative healing; **Immunities** disease, paralyzed, poison, polymorph, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10, physical 10 (except bludgeoning)

**Telekinetic Whirlwind** (arcane, aura, evocation) 20 feet; As demilich.

**Contingency** ⤴ As demilich.

**Countermeasures** ⬠ As demilich.

**Speed** fly 30 feet

**Melee** ⬠ jaws +36 (reach 0 feet, finesse, magical);

**Damage** 1d4+3 piercing plus 8d6 negative

**Arcane Innate Spells** DC 43, attack +37; **10th** *wail of the banshee*; **8th** *spell turning* (at will); **4th** *blink* (at will), *dimension door* (at will), *telekinetic maneuver* (at will); **Cantrips** (10th) *mage hand*, *telekinetic projectile*;

**Constant** (6th) *true seeing*

**Demilich Eye Gems** (arcane) As demilich.

**Devour Soul** ⬠ (arcane, necromancy, negative) As demilich.

**Mental Magic** As demilich.

**Staff Gems** As demilich, but 10 charges and the spells of a *staff of power*.

**Trap Soul** ⬠ As demilich, but DC 43 Fortitude.

**Treasure:** In addition to her two *demilich eye gems*, the most prominent gem in Teyam's skull is the unfinished focus for a *staff of power*. Her rambling logbooks here record her intended process for creating the staff, but due to her growing distraction and lack of materials, she abandoned the project.

A PC who's legendary in Crafting can combine this gem and a +2 *greater striking staff* (such as the one found in area A2) to craft this *staff of power*. This takes a full day's work and a successful DC 40 Crafting check.

## C21. THE PHOENIX FORGE SEVERE 17

This cylindrical, domed workshop is forty feet tall from floor to ceiling, with its two doors opening onto a stone walkway ten feet above the floor. At the center of the room stands a powerful forge with four hearths, each of which glow with deep red flames that pulse slowly, as if in time with the breath of an unseen beast. Metal shelves underneath the walkways support bags of coal, metal ingots of multiple materials, blacksmithing tools, crucibles, sheaves of blueprints, and molds for a variety of weapons and ornaments.

**Creatures:** Two Triad operatives are in charge of sorting through the equipment here, assessing what to keep, and destroying the rest. They're especially cautious about the forge, which has sputtered and raged unpredictably. They're right to be concerned, for this magical forge is powered by a phoenix named Vtrik who has been imprisoned within for many centuries. Ever since Vtrik lashed out at the lich Teyam Ishtori and inadvertently destroyed her phylactery, the beast has endured punishment as the source of this forge's fire. Over the centuries, Vtrik has been slowly breaking free from his prison. While trapped here and forced to toil for the Scarlet Triad, the gnome Exavisu Kerndalion worked to subtly sabotage the forge, hoping to release the frantic creature within. Now, the forge is just a push away from catastrophic failure.

The encounter begins with only the Scarlet Triad operatives and a pair of nalfeshnee demons who have been bound to the site as guardians. However, on its turn during the second round, Vtrik spends one action to finally break free, cracking the forge in half. The enraged phoenix appears in the room near the PCs, then attacks anyone in sight. Centuries of rage make the phoenix indiscriminate in his attacks, though a PC who can Make an Impression quickly (such as with *Legendary Negotiator*) can calm him (DC 41 Diplomacy) to cease his attack. Otherwise, Vtrik fights until slain, then is considerably calmer upon resurrecting.

## SCARLET TRIAD BOSS

## CREATURE 17

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**Initiative** Perception +30

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### TRIAD ENFORCER

Page 41

**Initiative** Perception +25

### NALFESHNEES (2)

### CREATURE 14

Page 86

**Initiative** Perception +25

### VTRIK

### CREATURE 16

Male elite phoenix

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 261

**Initiative** Perception +29

#### Freeing the Phoenix:

Although he may be free from the forge (either after being calmed or after he resurrects), Vtrik is immense and unable to escape without help. Teleportation is an expedient option, though it is also possible to seal the phoenix within another receptacle, such as any lamp, brazier, or gem worth at least 1,000 gp. Vtrik sees this as a desperate measure, but so long as the PCs make him friendly (he begins as indifferent), he accepts the plan. While Vtrik is sealed in this way, the receptacle functions as a *demilich eye gem* (*Bestiary* 223) that contains the spell *fiery body* (9th). So long as he's freed within a week or so, Vtrik is content and uses his magic to create a *greater flaming rune* for the PCs as recompense. If the PCs wait much longer, he breaks free the next time the receptacle is activated and attacks the PCs.

**Treasure:** Among the tools and papers are some of the blueprints the Scarlet Triad has yet to destroy for the repaired *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, showing the experiments and techniques used to restore the artifact to partial working order. Among the tools is a *gold wyrm dragon's breath potion*, and a suit of high-grade adamantine half-plate (heavier than most are willing to wear in this climate) lies atop the pile of worthwhile treasures the Scarlet Triad had set aside.

**XP Award:** For freeing Vtrik, award the PCs 40 XP.

## C22. FORBIDDEN HALL MODERATE 17

The hallway widens here, where two heavy fabric curtains hang on the walls to the east and west.

**Creature:** An adamantine golem built in the shape of an ancient Osirian guard stands motionless behind the eastern curtain. The golem reacts to anyone

### CREATURE 15

passing between the curtains or triggering the trap, and the only safe means to reach the library to the north involves going through area C21 or sneaking through this hall. Once it senses intruders in the immediate vicinity, the golem activates and charges out to attack, chasing foes around the halls to the south and as far as area C17. However, it will not attempt to break down doors or force its way through stone walls, so if it is unable to reach its targets, it retreats here.



Teyam Ishtori

### ADAMANTINE GOLEM

### CREATURE 18

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 189

**Initiative** Perception +26

**Hazard:** The ceiling above the curtained intersection bears numerous tiny glyphs that channel the raw power of the Planes of Earth and Fire, savaging the area with lava spears. The adamantine golem does not trigger this trap, nor does it suffer any negative effect, but it is healed by the fire damage.

### SEISMIC SPEARS TRAP

### HAZARD 19

MAGICAL TRAP

**Stealth** DC 43 (master)

**Description** Lines of searing lava lance through the area, causing targets to shake as if caught in an earthquake and potentially become petrified.

**Disable** Thievery DC 43 (master) to disable the wards or *dispel magic* (9th level; counteract DC 38) to counteract the ward.

**Cataclysmic Rain** ⚡ (arcane, earth, fire) **Trigger** A creature enters the marked area; **Effect** Fiery spears make one Strike against each living creature within 5 feet of the marked area.

**Ranged** ⚡ seismic spear +40, **Damage** 3d10+10 fire damage and 3d10+10 piercing damage plus personal quake; no multiple attack penalty

**Personal Quake** A creature struck by a seismic spear is clumsy 3 for 1 round as their body shakes uncontrollably. On a critical hit, a target must succeed at a DC 39 Fortitude save or be petrified for 1 minute, or permanently on a critical failure.

**Reset** The trap resets after 1 minute.



## C23. GRAND LIBRARY EXTREME 17

This twenty-foot-tall room boasts floor-to-ceiling shelves loaded with books and scrolls, as well as three columns that support elevated walkways and yet more inset shelves. Many of the books appear to be brittle and are crumbling with age and neglect.

The lich Teyam Ishtori compiled this extensive library before sealing herself beneath the Red Pyramid.

**Creatures:** Having never read more than a small fraction of the collected works here, Uri Zandivar has been tirelessly skimming these texts in search of valuable manuscripts along with one of his closest allies, Jelek Jaziman. If surprised, they are scattered throughout the room. If aware of an imminent threat, they hide near an entrance to ambush the PCs in this last stand. Uri prefers melee combat after poisoning one or more targets with darts, and he especially delights in any opportunity to hurl foes into the trap and golem in area C22.

**Development:** With Uri's death, the Scarlet Triad in Katapesh disbands. Those who have already escaped the Red Pyramid with treasures hastily escape to safety, and those who remain surrender in the hope of securing a merciful sentence. If the PCs haven't recovered Uri's journals in area C17 yet, consider allowing them to recover them here from Uri's person.

### URI ZANDIVAR

### CREATURE 19

Pages 92-93

**Initiative** Perception +35

### JELEK JAZIMAN

### CREATURE 17

Scarlet Triad boss (page 57)

**Initiative** Perception +30

**Treasure:** Among Uri Zandivar's possessions is a wasp trapped in amber, which functions as the portal key for Vengegate in Alseta's Ring. He also has a collection of letters from Emaliza Zandivar, counseling Uri, updating him of developments in Hermea, and inquiring about his progress in repairing the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*. These letters contain cryptic references to plans in motion, the "god within

the ring," and the need to secure more deterrents lest Mengkare learn of their plans.

What survives of the other books covers a range of histories and arcane treatises written between 300-2250 AR, including the hitherto unknown *When Gods Become Men*, a salaciously skeptical biography of Aroden and the first centuries of Absalom (worth 100 gp). Of greater use is a *possibility tome* and a *scroll of time stop*.

## Concluding the Adventure

Following the rescue of Tsandarkon, the Zephyr Guard relaxes considerably, and the Pactmasters quickly thank the PCs for their raid on the Red Pyramid. The Pactmasters are less accommodating if the PCs didn't take basic

measures to maintain Tsandarkon's dignity and conceal his form from the public. But so long as the PCs were successful, they receive the Pactmasters' public accolades and are each awarded a *Pactmasters' grace ring* (page 77) in acknowledgement of their service.

With the Scarlet Triad's collapse in Katapesh, its former partners hasten to distance themselves from any previous connection to the failed institution. Simultaneously, its old enemies revel in its demise and snap up abandoned clients and business opportunities, like new growth in a forest sprouting around a fallen tree. For at least two weeks, and perhaps longer, the PCs find themselves invited to a host of parties by merchants, guild masters, and ambassadors, during which time they also have ample opportunity to perform downtime actions—particularly any lucrative opportunities to Earn Income that the PCs might have secured.

Yet, a greater threat still looms. With the PCs' recovery of Uri's journals, they should have learned of the link between Hermea and the Scarlet Triad, the destination point of Vengegate, and the fact that Uri has a sister in Promise who's been sent a powerful tool with which she can hopefully influence or even control Mengkare. The PCs may or may not know this tool is a repaired *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, but the actual identity of Uri's sister and the truth of Mengkare's goals should remain a mystery—one that the PCs will need to travel to Hermea to solve.

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Uri Zandivar







# ECOLOGY OF THE WITCHWYRD

**T**he origins of the four-armed, interplanetary merchant-wanderers known as the witchwyrd (page 90) are as mysterious as the beings themselves. They claim to originally hail from the planet Cyrune in another star system, though beyond this fact witchwyrd are tight lipped about their ancestral homeland. Interplanetary travelers who have been to Golarion's neighbor Akiton have reported extensive witchwyrd influence upon that red planet, suggesting that witchwyrd have dwelled in Golarion's star system for millennia, if not entire eons.

Extensive archaeological evidence speaks to the witchwyrd flourishing on Akiton during Golarion's Age of Serpents and Age of Legend. Surviving artifacts show records of early transactions in the Hivemarket, rare illustrations of Akitonian life-forms from nearly forgotten eras—including the famous *Tal Klatok Codex*, which portrays what is thought to be a contemplative of Ashok before that species evolved their exaggerated brains—and even accounts of Golarion's devastating Earthfall witnessed from afar. It is here that witchwyrd's historical records nearly shudder to a halt. At the outset of the Age of Darkness, witchwyrd's technological, artistic, and commercial pursuits seem to have all but ceased; the surviving letters, tablets, and weathered monuments from that time all speak of war.

The war in question was started by an unlikely people: the Azlanti. During the Age of Legend, the kingdom of Azlant looked to the stars and sent colonists far beyond Golarion to the neighboring planet Akiton. These settlers found the planet already inhabited, yet there was space enough for all. The contemplatives of Ashok contentedly studied, ikeshiti lizardfolk wandered the deserts, witchwyrd settlements formed strategic hubs, and ysoki carved out opportunistic niches wherever possible. The Azlanti looked upon the land as a blank slate and swiftly raised sprawling cities, regularly drawing upon their new neighbors' expertise and making space in these budding metropolises for everyone. So long as Akitonian ores flowed back to Golarion in exchange for Azlanti wealth, nearly everyone prospered.

The mood soured swiftly after Earthfall. With Azlant demolished by the impact, human city-states on Akiton such as Arl, Eckarib, and Yanto found themselves cut off from their home and support

network. Unrest grew within the cities, but historical accounts are inconsistent as to exactly what sparked the violence that followed. Regardless, humans and witchwyrd found themselves on opposite sides of the ensuing planetwide conflict.

Though canny and powerful, the witchwyrd were far outnumbered. Their only option was flight, but the decision was not unanimous; as a result, three separate camps formed. A small population of witchwyrd negotiated a disadvantageous peace with the Azlanti and lived among their conquerors. A larger group combined their magic and technology to craft starships that carried them throughout the solar system to found other colonies. The largest contingent—now known as the shobhad-neh—remained on Akiton and continued to fight. This latter group continues to rage against its enemies, fighting from the desert wastelands and outskirts of ruined cities that dot the red planet.

The shobhad-neh are not the only species that can be traced back to witchwyrd, who seeded numerous worlds with their progeny—offshoots that eventually become full-fledged ancestries in their own right. Kasathas are the most well-known witchwyrd descendants on Golarion, though their presence is limited primarily to the alien-touched lands of Numeria.

But witchwyrd themselves are the most likely of their kind for humans and other folk to encounter around the Inner Sea region. Shrouding their unfamiliar forms in voluminous robes so as not to perturb smaller, two-armed peoples, witchwyrd have gained a considerable foothold all over Golarion. Their nomadism means witchwyrd are rarely encountered en masse, though their organizational acumen means that when they do choose to congregate, they are a force to be reckoned with. Nowhere is this more evident than in the city of Katapesh, a metropolis practically founded by witchwyrd, who created a caste system centuries ago to oversee the bands of raiders who had theretofore controlled the city.

Witchwyrd populate many other worlds and even other planes of existence, and their kind is nearly synonymous with the idea of trade, especially when it comes to rare or esoteric goods. Legends speak of a time in the distant future when witchwyrd might return to their home world, yet in the meantime these beings seem absorbed in their extraterrestrial prospects.

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## Ecology

Witchwyrds bear numerous adaptations suited to desert survival. Their hairless, lithe bodies shed heat readily, and their sheer height—more than 7 feet for a typical witchwyrd—keeps their heads far above the heat radiating from the hot ground. Their blue-gray skin is an environmental adaptation to an especially bright sun—perhaps that of their original home world; it scatters a hot star's powerful blue light to mitigate the effects of frequent exposure to harmful rays.

Yet for most of Golarion's inhabitants, the most noteworthy of a witchwyrd's features are their arms. With two sets of upper limbs, a witchwyrd can perform a variety of tasks with considerable dexterity, ranging from fighting with multiple weapons to weaving elaborate cloth to playing otherwise impossible instruments and chords. The muscle attachment points are stronger for the upper arms, resulting in slightly weaker lower arms that have less overall mobility. As a result, witchwyrds typically favor their upper arms in combat and when performing other athletic tasks, and it is invariably the upper arms that are left mobile when a witchwyrd folds one set of appendages to maintain a disguise. Witchwyrds display a curious form of handedness; most favor their upper right hand and

lower left hand for day-to-day tasks, much as a human typically favors their right hand. Conversely, what humanoids would think of as left-handed witchwyrds prefer their upper left arm and lower right arm.

Just as many creatures regulate their body temperatures to compensate for different levels of heat, witchwyrds instinctively sense, absorb, and radiate magic in a process they refer to as thaumaturgy. In most areas, witchwyrds reflexively absorb background magic, which their bodies process and release in a semisolid aura that helps them retain water and protects them from attacks. With conscious effort, a witchwyrd can shape this magical force for more direct applications, ranging from levitation fields to violent thrusts to projected mirror images of themselves. When in heavily enchanted areas, witchwyrds can convert portions of this magic into caloric nourishment, though they can survive on such an ephemeral diet for only a few additional days before suffering malnutrition. When subjected to extraordinary or forceful amounts of energy, a witchwyrd instinctively attempts to deflect and vent excess magic, often causing that energy to gather in their free hands before they shake it free or direct it at a foe.



## Society

Given the cosmic scale of witchwyrd's widespread populations, there is no monolithic witchwyrd culture. Instead, the witchwyrd of each solar system or planar hub develop their own traditions and strategies to survive and thrive in their unique circumstances. However, an increasing number of witchwyrd have access to plane-spanning magic, so ever-larger numbers of witchwyrd can convene and share their social mores. The result is that most witchwyrd share a smattering of cultural traits that help establish their identity as a species while also upholding local conventions that are more directly applicable to everyday life.

Untold generations of travel, relocation, disguise, and competition have shaped witchwyrd society. Whereas a few far-flung planets have larger witchwyrd population centers, across much of the Material Plane these beings live in informal families that rarely exceed a dozen adults and several adolescents. Children remain with one or both parents at least until approaching adolescence at about 15 years old, at which point the parents seek out another witchwyrd to take on the child as an apprentice. Although this might be a neighbor in a larger group, more often it involves seeking out a distant witchwyrd, providing a considerable sum to pay for expenses, and leaving the child in the master's care for a decade or more. A young witchwyrd often travels with one or more adults for as much as a century before being expected to depart to seek their own opportunities, yet others seek independence much earlier. As a result, a witchwyrd may assume the responsibilities of a full adult anywhere from age 30 to 100, depending largely on their training, initiative, and opportunities.

To a witchwyrd, the magical nature of the universe means that reality is subjective. With sufficient willpower or coaxing, nearly anything can be changed, evaded, or destroyed. As a result, witchwyrd rarely take any proposition at face value, taking some amusement in debating for the sake of debate unless doing so would undermine a deal or relationship. Nowhere is this truer than in commerce, where haggling is among the most central cultural traditions. A witchwyrd is often happy to bargain over the price of a good or massage the details of a contract for hours if the stakes are high enough, and even a minor transaction comes with a measure of back-and-forth to test each party's mettle and establish rapport. In places like Qadira or Katapesh where haggling is a long-held tradition, witchwyrd thrive. Their keen intellect, knowledge of logical fallacies, and elaborate verbal gymnastics make them unmatched merchants, and many fellow business owners befriend witchwyrd in the hope of learning from these expert bargainers.

## WITCHWYRD NAMES

Although witchwyrd have lips, forming labial consonants like B, M, and P does not come naturally to them. As a result, witchwyrd names rarely use these sounds, instead favoring coronal and dorsal consonants like K, L, and R. Names typically consist of several syllables, with the U sound carrying feminine connotations and the K sound considered masculine.

## SAMPLE NAMES

Akhenakh, Curyiel, Elshikar, Intufasar, Jekartekh, Nurisen, Orcyntiesk, Sekhuraska, Tenksheketek, Urstenta, Yurifet

## Homes and Businesses

Witchwyrd are most comfortable in warm, arid environs, attracting them to desert regions such as Garund's northern and eastern coasts. In particular, witchwyrd prefer cosmopolitan cities where they can exercise their mercantile talents without worrying about violent prejudice. A few witchwyrd, however, favor smaller settlements where they can earn an entire populace's trust and acceptance, particularly when those towns exist near magical ley lines that the witchwyrd can tap into for sustenance.

Within a settlement, a witchwyrd is likely to maintain a modest lifestyle, typically setting up their domicile at a local inn or in an apartment above their storefront. The less attention a witchwyrd can attract, the better, so the thinking goes. The benefits of such frugal living are obvious but carry extra weight for these nomadic aliens, who at any moment might suddenly decide to leave a town in which they've dwelled for decades.

## Witchwyrd Consortia

Witchwyrd operate independently or in small groups less out of antisocial predilections and more due to their relative rarity, concern about the danger of appearing in larger numbers, and competitiveness that drives off rivals. However, the creatures often maintain several levels of organization. A witchwyrd who establishes considerable wealth or connections in an area might exert influence on their region's other witchwyrd, pushing some to relocate, congregate, or cooperate in order to maintain peace or provide an informal support network. These guild-like collectives are simple matters that form and dissolve organically as sufficiently charismatic or canny witchwyrd rise to power.

Witchwyrd's true power lies in their consortia. When like-minded witchwyrd identify an opportunity lucrative or complex enough to warrant the formation of a larger group, their partnership often grows into a

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## WITCHWYRD TECHNOLOGY

Witchwyrd combine magic and technology to incredible effect, though their species' diaspora means large-scale technological endeavors are rare and many cultural traditions have been lost. Nevertheless, witchwyrd as a whole have made several notable contributions to science and technology on Golarion.

**Aluums:** Built of bronze and stone, these towering constructs allow loyal retainers to extend their service as bodyguards. For more information, see pages 82–83.

**Orreries:** Elves were among the first to make Golarion's natives aware of their place in the cosmos, but witchwyrd offer powerful tools of perspective as well. With their vast knowledge of the space beyond Golarion's atmosphere, talented witchwyrd artisans craft some of the finest orreries, star charts, and astronomical clocks found on the planet.

**Starships:** Stories tell of Katapesh's Pactmasters descending upon the city in fearsome airships. However, surviving illustrations of these vary widely, and records disagree on exactly what form they took or even where these crafts disappeared to afterward. It seems clear, though, that witchwyrd once had the technology with which to travel between planets, and some may yet know where these starships have remained buried for millennia.

formal consortium. These larger operations not only direct the members' resources toward a united goal, but also attract capital and neighboring witchwyrd. Theoretically, a consortium's size is limitless, yet in practice a consortium rarely grows beyond the scope of its foundational purpose or opportunity. Those that grow much larger often break apart, particularly if they lack a suitable visionary at the helm. Beyond the Pactmasters (see Katapesh below), the following are noteworthy consortia on Golarion.

**Crownforge Collective:** Incorporated in 4668 AR by witchwyrd fleeing the turmoil in Galt, the Crownforge Collective formed not just to escape political chaos but to profit from it. The consortium operates out of Druma's capital Kerse, from which it supplies a wide range of weapons, armor, and magical items to would-be monarchs and generals. Although most of its business has benefited the likes of Gralton, Razmiran, the Stolen Lands, and Pitax, its most recent customer may be its most reliable and lucrative yet: the nascent hobgoblin nation of Oprak. At this point demand outstrips the Collective's inventory, and the witchwyrd are always on the lookout for independent agents who can identify and secure new trade routes and suppliers.

**The Tetrad:** Among the few consortia to expand beyond its founding purpose—the exploitation of now-depleted minerals on a distant planet—a branch of the Tetrad has survived on Golarion for at least 400 years with known representatives in Sothis, Katheer, and Merab. In fact, the Tetrad includes many hundreds of witchwyrd spread across Golarion's solar system, even more distant planets, and other planes entirely, with noteworthy enclaves on Axis and in the trade city Zjarra on the Plane of Fire. Despite its power, the Tetrad doesn't actively try to chase off nonmember witchwyrd, of which there are many; a number of witchwyrd actively distance themselves from the Tetrad in the belief that gathering too many of their kind under one business might make them a target for attacks. In spite of this, the Tetrad is steadily growing, and it frequently hires contractors to help with its latest ventures.

## Witchwyrd on Golarion

Although Golarion is home to many strange humanoid species, witchwyrd's combination of height, additional arms, and longevity are considered alarming even in the more cosmopolitan cities. As a result, witchwyrd rarely congregate in large groups and often operate independently of each other for decades at a time. In addition to the regions below, witchwyrd most regularly frequent Nex, Qadira, Rahadoun, and distant Kelesh. The only places witchwyrd seem to actively avoid are those touched by foul magic or completely devoid of such energies—places like the Mana Wastes, where traveling witchwyrd fall victim to a variety of mystical ailments.

**Absalom:** Many witchwyrd thrive in the fast-paced bustle of Absalom, setting up shop in the markets of the Ascendant Quarter or Foreign Quarter. Among Absalom's permanent witchwyrd residents is the cutthroat Zweiloth, who has long since abandoned his spice trade interests in favor of dealing in mercenary contracts. From his Foreign Quarter office above a restaurant specializing in Vudrani food, this fixer maintains a catalog of hundreds of sellswords, adventurers, and would-be heroes whom he connects with distant patrons for a small cut of their earnings. He's also among the first stops for visiting witchwyrd, whom he eagerly helps navigate the city and find local opportunities—for a nominal fee, of course.

**Katapesh:** The most successful of Golarion's witchwyrd are Angruul, Jivnar, Krimiltuk, Morvithis, and Tzandarkon—five Katapeshi moguls better known as the Pactmasters. Together they have transformed Katapesh into one of the world's greatest trade cities and ruled virtually uncontested for a millennium. Even so, they veil their features and alien identities beneath heavy



robes and imposing masks, finding the air of anonymity grants them greater authority and mystique. Although they are known to be extraordinarily powerful arcanists, rumors have begun to surface that these ancient beings may be nearing the twilights of their lives. Gossipers variously claim that the Pactmasters have extended their longevity with the *sun orchid elixir*, become immortal, or secretly groomed younger witchwyrd to assume their identities and responsibilities. Whatever the case, the Pactmasters show no outward signs of decrepitude, and few Katapeshi are interested in trying their luck at usurping the ancient witchwyrd.

**Kyonin:** Thanks to their shared longevity and alien origins, elves and witchwyrd tend to get along well. Although witchwyrd most often arrive at Greengold with other foreign travelers, elves from Iadara regularly invite known witchwyrd and their entourages for extended visits to learn about their travels and share news of other worlds. In Greengold, the most prominent and long-standing witchwyrd resident is Ulutuar, who has spent the past 14 years there developing a practically unmatched inventory of wooden musical instruments. Despite this, Ulutuar has little artistic talent of their own and is known to provide discounts for those who demonstrate true musical mastery.

**Mwangi Expanse:** The rowdy sailors and cutthroats of Bloodcove hardly perturb Grekopek, a witchwyrd who has cowed local Aspis Consortium authorities using his formidable contacts and who coordinates periodic expeditions from the coastal city into the Mwangi's interior. Grekopek rarely works alone, preferring to hire independent adventurers to accompany him to far-flung ruins in search of his favored treasures: ancient Mwangi relics. His buyers are insatiable, so he is increasingly aggressive in planning and executing these missions, to the point that many inland Zenj and Ekujae communities attack him and his teams on sight. Yet for those willing to stomach his cultural theft and tactics, Grekopek is one of the most generous employers along the coast of western Garund.

**Numeria:** Thanks to the strange starship that crashed there millennia ago, Numeria attracts countless technology enthusiasts and actual aliens in disguise, and witchwyrd are no exception. However, the now-defunct Technic League's unsavory reputation—one that native Numerians

associate with anyone who seeks to use technology to further their aims—convinced most witchwyrd that it was best to live in the safety of the cities along the region's periphery, such as Chesed and Hajoth Hakados, where they could better keep a low profile. Among these is Cythrul, who specializes in Numerian skymetals and, unlike most witchwyrd, gladly consorts with the Technic League, trading knowledge for safety in a land rife with hostility. In the wake of the Technic League's dissolution and fall from power, Cythrul has found herself in need of new friends capable of acquiring technological artifacts from Silver Mount for the witchwyrd to study and sell.

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Sometimes offensively termed “elf gates,” *aiudara* are a network of magical portals found on both Golarion and Castrovel, allowing travelers to step instantly between distant locations on the same planet.

All *aiudara* owe their existence to the elven hero Candlaron the Sculptor. Born on Castrovel, the artificer was obsessed with the mysterious interplanetary portals found on various worlds throughout the solar system. While never able to completely replicate their ancient magic, he eventually reverse-engineered enough of it to create the *Sovyrian Stone*, an artifact capable of permanently activating a portal linking his home with its sister world of Golarion. In addition, he learned to craft lesser versions of these gateways, which he dubbed *aiudara*: magical stone arches capable of folding space to create doorways across nations and continents. Each was operated via a specific key—an object, gesture, astronomical phenomena, or other trigger capable of waking the *aiudara*’s magic and locking in a specific destination. As his prototypes grew from simple point-to-point models to a more versatile hub system allowing a single gate to access multiple locations, he began constructing them across both planets. A utopian idealist, Candlaron believed that enhanced communication and trade between diverse groups could unify the planets, ending war as society became increasingly interconnected.

Yet making the worlds smaller came with unintended consequences. Globalization resulted in theretofore unknown tensions as groups began competing not just with their immediate neighbors, but with whole new civilizations. Armed conflicts grew in scale as troop movements became terrifyingly fast, while the new trade networks led to ever more complicated alliances and factions. Despondent over what he’d wrought, Candlaron stepped through one of the ancient portals that had first inspired him and disappeared, taking the secret of creating new *aiudara* with him.

In his absence, the elves struggled to maintain portals they only half understood. While they found reasonable success on Castrovel, causing many of that planet’s gates to last into the modern era, the elves’ retreat from Golarion and the devastation of Earthfall took a heavy toll on the portals. Many *aiudara* were destroyed outright, while others were corrupted by demons and

evil spellcasters. Keys were lost, and their gates fell dormant. When the elves returned to Golarion, they found the network in shambles, and the few functioning *aiudara* regarded with fear and awe by younger peoples.

Thanks primarily to the toil of elven scholars, a handful of gates have been reclaimed, their destinations recorded and keys deciphered. A full dozen of these active gates, along with many more that still lie dormant, stand in Kyonin’s capital of Iadara, giving that city its name. Others that see regular use include Icegate in the frozen Crown of the World, tended by the Snowcaster elves, and Galtgate, with cathedral caverns dedicated to the elven pantheon. Still others are technically active but kept under careful quarantine, such as Lichgate in Ustalav, which leads to the fallen Tanglegate, taken by the demon lord Treerazer during his campaign to twist the *Sovyrian Stone* and redirect its portal into the Abyss.


Yet these are not the only gates. An unknown number of intact *aiudara* still stand in forgotten corners of the Inner Sea region, waiting for the right key to awaken them. The following pages present four such *aiudara* and the fantastical locations they once accessed, now fallen to ruin. Since some *aiudara* can access multiple locations via different keys, exactly where these portals might connect to is up to you—each location is designed to inspire GMs and can be used as either a new adventure location where players might find themselves after passing through an *aiudara* elsewhere, or as a challenge players must surpass to gain access to a functional *aiudara* necessary to transport them to the next stage of a quest. In addition to the monstrous residents and rare treasures contained within, each entry also notes the nature and location of one of the *aiudara*’s activation keys, as well as potential ramifications should the gate come back into regular use.

## Breachgate

Deep in the deserts of eastern Rahadoum lies a wonder few humanoid eyes have beheld in modern times. Bursting with life, the Wayhouse is not so much an oasis as a manor, its lush grounds a verdant confession of its otherworldly origin.

Long ago, a poludnica fey named Izera lived in the blistering Thoraso Desert of the First World, reveling in the fierce sunlight and preying upon lesser fey attracted





to her aura of fertility. One day, the mysterious fey lord known as Ng the Hooded arrived bearing a *breachblade*—a rare artifact capable of slashing holes between the First World and the Material Plane. Ng, the Eldest of secrets and crossroads, tasked Izera with safeguarding the blade, offering her great power and authority until such time as he returned to claim it.

Izera eagerly accepted, using Ng's mandate and the magic of the blade to gather a retinue of servants. Yet as the ages rolled on, Izera grew anxious. She'd come to enjoy her royal status and began to dread the day Ng would return to take it all away. Eventually, her paranoia grew so great that she fled the plane, using the *breachblade* to carve a passage to the Material Plane and taking her court into hiding.

Settling in Rahadoum's desert, Izera commanded her followers to build her a pleasure palace, using the wild nature magic leaking through the planar breach to force the desert into bloom. Her manor was a chaotic combination of ecosystem and architecture, a twisting mass of living towers and stone porticos, every balcony and ledge dripping with fruiting vines. Grodairs encircled the grounds in intricately carved canals, while dryads maintained thorn mazes full of living topiary guardians.

Despite its wonders, Izera quickly grew bored with her new home—for what was the point of majesty if there are none to impress? And so she quietly made contact with a nearby band of elves, offering them passage through her planar portal in exchange for tribute. Eager to explore the magical possibilities of the First World, the elven adventurers took her up on her offer, going so far as to establish an *aiudara* just outside the gates of Izera's manor.

Yet if ever Izera had a chance of hiding from the Eldest, sending mortals through the portal sealed her fate. Within less than a century, Ng returned. Frantic, Izera attacked him with the *breachblade*. In response, the Eldest cursed her—yet as his spell hit the blade, it shattered, the magic branching out to affect every poludnica on the Material Plane. Instead of being banished permanently, Izera and her siblings were instead bound to spend each night on the Ethereal Plane, helpless and suffering, before returning to the Material Plane each day at dawn.

Ng himself seemed strangely unsurprised by this turn of events. Informing the elves that the Wayhouse was closed for business, he encased the shards of the *breachblade* in a lozenge of amber, setting it floating in the middle of the manor's great hall. Then he left, sealing the planar breach behind him save for a pinprick of a portal, one that seeped just enough sylvan energy to keep the magical manor functioning.

Today, the Wayhouse is a shadow of its former glory.

With many of her former servants gone, Izera—now calling herself the Day Queen—has been forced to accept what followers she can get, adding a tribe of fractious pugwampis to those dryads, grodairs, pixies, redcaps, and other attendants who still maintain the house. Of particular note are Gohar, the dryad mistress of the house's Shifting Gardens; Mochelo the Builder, the pech who maintains the house's vast network of cellars and hidden passages; and the Seneschal, a satyr dervish who acts as the Day Queen's consort and her second-in-command while she's away each night. In addition to these ostensibly civilized residents, however, the trickle of nature magic has also attracted numerous feral fey and monstrous desert creatures that have taken up residence in the slowly collapsing manor, forcing the Day Queen's retinue to step carefully or be devoured.

Though the portal to the First World is essentially closed, the Day Queen still sometimes lures mortals to her manse—and not just for entertainment. Shortly after the chaos of Ng's departure, Izera's servants discovered that the manor had been altered in subtle ways, its walls bearing cryptic inscriptions that appear only in the presence of humanoids. The Day Queen believes that these clues may reveal a way to release the *breachblade* from its shell or even cure her curse, and she would happily gift the manor's significant stores of magical wealth to anyone capable of solving the puzzle.

## ACTIVATION

After Ng shut down the Wayhouse, he reprogrammed its *aiudara* to make the *breachblade* its key. While it's still possible for visitors to arrive from elsewhere via the gate, using it to travel from this end first requires a non-fey creature to decipher and follow Ng's mysterious instructions. Should someone succeed, the release of the *breachblade* also offers the chance to reopen the portal to the First World, potentially reestablishing a permanent route to that plane. Of course, how Ng and the other residents of the First World would feel about mortals flooding into their realm—or the effects of a deluge of primordial magic into Rahadoum's desert—remains anyone's guess.

## Caulgate

Nidal's Barrowmoor region has long been renowned for its burial mounds—the last resting places of the nomadic horselords who ruled the land before Earthfall and Zon-Kuthon's dark bargain. Yet few scholars today realize that the barrows were themselves an echo of an even older tradition.

During the earliest years of Kellid settlement in the region, when a prominent horselord died, their followers would carry them down into the Braided



Caves, a maze of water-carved caverns in the mountains east of Whitemound. After 3 days of squeezing through ever-narrower passages, the weary mourners would at last reach their goal: a massive chamber filled with tall, leafless trees of living ivory, their bone-bark pale in the permanent dusk. Glowing, bulbous droplets of every color hung from the branches like gelatinous fruit, illuminating the forest's inhabitants—robed and eyeless humanoids calling themselves Tenders. Guided by these eerie gardeners, the Kellids would lay their fallen to rest in the cavern's stone, the grave providing fodder for a new bone tree. Over centuries, the new tree would absorb the corpse's memories, distilling them into its glowing fruit. In return for this offering, the Tenders would guide the mourners to a single tree of their choosing, allowing them to drink directly from the memories of one of their lost heroes. To be laid to rest in the Grove of Memory was a high honor, and in this way the Kellids ensured that the wisdom of the past would never be entirely forgotten.

Yet not all of the horselords were comfortable with this magic. As their society advanced, more and more clans forsook the grove, choosing instead to bury their dead in surface mounds and cairns, until only those closest to the caves maintained the practice. It was at this point that elven scouts from Celwynvian first encountered the tradition and recognized the Tenders for what they were: an ancestry of planar scholars called caulborn. Unable to form new memories on their own, the hive-minded caulborn live in symbiosis with other races, ingesting their memories and storing them in living memory banks. As the horselords no longer provided sufficient tribute, the elves received permission to set up an *aiudara* in the cave, allowing them to trade freely with the caulborn, gifting the Tenders with corpses or memories pulled fresh from their own minds in exchange for access to the Grove of Memory and its living lore. But Earthfall ended this trade, as the elves lost the key to the *aiudara* and the last practicing Kellids renounced their old traditions as part of their pact with Zon-Kuthon. Yet the Grove of Memory and its ageless attendants live on, tending the fruit of the past and waiting patiently for surface races to once more delve the depths and add to their eerie archives.

## ACTIVATION

The *aiudara* originally paired with the one in the Grove of Memory stands in the ancient elven capital of Celwynvian. Both gates operate via the same key: a tile made from the

ivory of one of the grove's bone trees, emblazoned with the elven glyph for "memory." The elves kept their copy safely secured in Celwynvian's famed Library of Reenai, yet with that city's abandonment, the key's whereabouts have become uncertain. If the elves are lucky, it still lies hidden in plain sight in the repository's depths. If they're unlucky, however, it's been looted by drow pillagers, who could no doubt find many ways to turn the grove's lost knowledge to dark uses.

The caulborn, for their part, have little sense of time, and thus have remained only moderately inconvenienced by their millennia of isolation. Should adventurers encounter their legend in Nidal and brave the Braided Caves, the Tenders would be happy to trade memories for memories—or corpses for memories. Sequestered within their grove are firsthand insights into ancient empires, the last resting places of great artifacts, and, quite likely, the origins of humanity and elvenkind on Avistan.



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## Eidolongate

Long before the opening of the Worldwound, Kellids inhabited the cold northern reaches of the territory now called Mendev. During the Age of Legend, some of their settlements expanded beyond camps and villages, their city-states organizing around patron spirits and their god callers. Such was the case with Timal, the Pillar City.

Built high on a stone butte, Timal began as a small holy site, with the faithful traversing a dangerous path up the cliffs to the fortified temple at its top. Here the clan's god callers summoned avatars of their clan spirit, Ygrir Skymane—a smilodon with the sleek silver scales of a fish and the wings of a mighty eagle. And it was here that elven scouts from the Estrovian Forest first encountered the concept of god calling. A contingent of elven scholars settled among the Kellids to learn the practice, and the temple complex expanded over generations into a bustling city, its structures a curious mix of brooding Kellid stonework and elegant

elven artistry. In time, an *aiudara* was built to connect the elves' remote outpost to the rest of elven civilization. In addition to its hanging gardens and elaborate winches for hauling supplies up from the plains, the city also became famous for the Pride, a faction of elite Kellid holy warriors. Each year, crowds gathered for a festival called the Sky Pledge, in which warriors of the Pride threw themselves from the cliffs as a test of pious bravery, with only the worthy being saved by Ygrir.

Alas, Earthfall proved the city's undoing. Warned of the impending doom, the city's elves were offered sanctuary via the *Sovyrian Stone*—but only the elves. Led by the Pride, Kellid, elven, and half-elven rioters surged through their *aiudara* into the elven stronghold of Iadara, and the dour elven government deactivated the gateway in response to these violent protests. Those still trapped in the Pillar City suffered along with the rest of Golarion under the Age of Darkness, and within two generations, the remote settlement was deserted.

Today, the ruins of Timal are mostly forgotten. Earthquakes and erosion have destroyed the paths that once wound up its sides. For millennia, an unfettered eidolon claiming to be the true Ygrir Skymane has dwelled within the central temple complex, gathering a retinue of inhuman worshippers to repopulate his city. Though many of the creatures nesting here—griffons and drakes, lammasus and manticores—wouldn't normally cohabit, the eidolon maintains the peace through magical compulsion and a cadre of maftet warriors called the Pride Reborn. Ygrir believes it's his sacred duty to maintain the city until the coming of someone he calls the Soulbinder—a god caller destined to bind him and lead his forces in taking revenge against the elves who let his city fall.

### ACTIVATION

As Timal was considered an elven settlement, many on both sides knew its activation key, which was to touch the *aiudara* with a feather. Thus, when Iadara had to shut it down, the Iadarans installed a magical lock on their own corresponding gateway—a twining vine of gold and silver capable of disrupting its magic. During the elves' retreat to Sovyrian, however, knowledge of how this lock works—or why it was installed—was lost. Recently an elven artificer named Lyranen has been investigating the device, and now unwittingly stands on the brink of accidentally reactivating the portal. At the same time, in Mendev, a Kellid folklorist named Redkir Hoqua has been attempting to gather adventurers to brave the city ruins in search of artifacts, most notably something called the *Shield of the Sky*.



Pillar City



## Wormgate

By the time Earthfall finished it off for good, the great cyclops empire of Ghol-Gan had already been in decline for generations. Corrupted by the influence of bloodthirsty deities and reluctantly abandoned by those seers and hero-gods who had once kept their nation's worst impulses in check, the people of Ghol-Gan's post-classical age descended into depravity and violence. The elves who'd once maintained careful relations with the giants slowly distanced themselves as their former allies grew more fearsome. Yet one location remained so valuable to scholars that the elves left its *aiudara* active long after other ties had been severed: Kokori, the College of Worms.

Located deep in the jungles of the Kaava Lands and avoided by local humanoids, Kokori stands remarkably untouched by time or the planetary disaster that ended its empire. A campus of low stone walls, plazas, and algae-choked reflecting pools surrounds three massive stone ziggurats set in a triangle. While unconnected at the ground level, each of the three pyramids sports several 30-foot-tall stone "branches" that connect it to the others at various heights. Twenty-foot-tall metal doors atop each ziggurat provide the only obvious entrance down into the pyramids' interiors, each with doors of a different color—one set red, one gray, and one white.

Within these forbidding structures lies one of the greatest libraries of magical knowledge Ghol-Gan ever produced: a university dedicated to Mother Kor, the Worm That Guides. A lesser Ghol-Gani deity of scholarship, magic, and sacred murder, Mother Kor taught her priests to seek wisdom in the bodies of those they sacrificed, and to record it the same way. From their lairs within the pyramids, her tripartite priesthood sent forth stone-armored guardians to bring back sentient beings to be ritually slaughtered, at which point the Worm That Guides would reveal secrets in the corpses of the deceased. While many elves found the process abhorrent, the fact that the schools initially sacrificed only condemned criminals led their governments to look the other way—especially since Mother Kor granted her professors shocking advances in magical knowledge.

The College of Worms broke its studies down into three schools, based on what it saw as the three prime elements of a corpse. Most powerful were the Bloodworkers, casters who received divine revelations by transfusing blood from the dying into their own veins, crafting oozing golems and homunculi and distilling their knowledge into injectable hallucinogens.

Second came the Students of Ivory, necromancers dedicated to the secrets of bone and marrow. During their rituals, bones emerged from victims already

covered in cryptic scrimshaw, and the Students of Ivory grew legendary for their facility with codes and puzzles. Beneath their ziggurat, countless skeletons formed a shambling library, animated to defend the divine lore scribed on their bones.

Least respected by their fellows were the Flensers, those who specialized in flesh. Their sleek knives peeled back skin and meat to reveal hidden internal tattoos illustrating magical secrets, maps, and ancient histories, all of which were carefully transcribed onto scrolls of their victims' tanned skin. Cherishing the flesh their comrades disdained, the Flensers made zombies and flesh golems, milked organs for alchemical concoctions, and wore the skins of those they slew, learning to bond with them to create impeccable disguises or gain echoes of their former owners' power.

When Ghol-Gan fell, the scholars of the College of Worms retreated into the elaborate corridors of their respective temples, turning to undeath to sustain themselves. The three schools have come to deeply distrust each other, raiding each other's libraries and sacrificing each other when their minions fail to bring back suitable subjects. While the immortal scholar-priests never leave their catacombs, their servitors pull victims from both the surrounding jungles and tunnels leading lower into Reguare, a section of the Darklands their empire once controlled, now fallen to violence and home to purple worms and other predators.

## ACTIVATION

Fearing an invasion by the college's undead monstrosities, elven officials in Iadara ordered the closure of the Wormgate. The gate's key—the word "gravelore" written in blood upon the arch's stone—was never told to the Kokori scholars, the knowledge kept under lock and key in the restricted vaults of Iadara's Endowhar Archives. For millennia, that seemed the end of the story. Yet just recently, Khalzhor Ru, current Bonespeaker of the Students of Ivory, unexpectedly learned the nature of their *aiudara*'s key via the oracular bones of a sacrifice. Only the fact that the knowledge has fomented a three-way brawl between the college's schools over how best to proceed has stopped the school from reopening the *aiudara*, with some faculty arguing for a resumption of scholarly exchange, others seeking vengeance and sacrifices, and still others seeing a divine sign that they should transform Iadara into the center of a reborn Ghol-Gan. Fortunately for the elves, a discredited seer in Kyonin named Aomiel Redleaf has had a revelation of the impending danger, giving the government a chance to reactivate the *aiudara* and send a team through to deal with the situation—assuming anyone bothers to listen to him.

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# ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

The following rules appear throughout “Against the Scarlet Triad” or complement adventures set in the city of Katapesh.

## Katapesh Items

Katapesh has many local specialties rarely found outside the region, including those below.

### GRINNING PUGWAMPI

ITEM 14

UNCOMMON CONSUMABLE ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL MISFORTUNE TALISMAN

Price 700 gp

Usage affixed to weapon; Bulk –

This bone statuette of a sneering gremlin crumbles to dust when activated, imparting a fraction of its subject’s infamous misfortune unto those you strike.

**Activate** ♦ envision; **Trigger** You damage a flat-footed creature with the affixed weapon; **Effect** The damaged creature must attempt a DC 33 Will save.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected.

**Success** The creature must roll twice and take the worse result on the next check it attempts.

**Failure** The creature must roll twice and take the worse result on all checks until the end of its next turn.

### NETHYSIAN BULWARK

ITEM 16

UNCOMMON ABJURATION EVOCATION MAGICAL

Price 8,000 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk 1

This round shield is often fashioned to resemble the religious symbol of its dual-natured namesake. A *Nethysian bulwark* is a high-grade cold iron shield (Hardness 10, HP 40, BT 20) that defends the wielder and can explode with retributive force when struck.

**Activate** ♦ envision; **Trigger** The shield becomes broken when performing a Shield Block; **Effect** The shield explodes in a burst of bright light and shadowy tendrils, releasing a 15-foot cone of force that must include the attacker if possible. The cone deals 6d8 force damage to all creatures in the area (DC 34 basic Reflex save).



### PACTMASTERS’ GRACE

ITEM 14

UNCOMMON DIVINATION INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 4,000 gp

Usage worn; Bulk –

Granted by Katapesh’s Pactmasters to influential merchants, exceptional Zephyr Guards, and favorite retainers, these blue crystal-studded platinum rings sharpen their wearers’ urban instincts. You gain a +3 item bonus to Mercantile Lore checks while wearing the ring, and you can attempt checks that require a proficiency rank of master in Society. While invested, the ring grants a +2 item bonus to saving throws while you are in an urban setting, and this increases to a +3 item bonus if you have legendary proficiency in Guild Lore, Katapesh Lore, Mercantile Lore, or Society.

### PESHSPINE GRENADE

ITEM 1+

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL BOMB CONSUMABLE SPLASH

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Strike

Peshspine grenades are explosive bombs packed with alchemically treated needles from the pesh cactus. A peshspine grenade deals the listed piercing damage and splash damage. On a hit, the target gains the stupefied condition until the end of its next turn.

Many types of peshspine grenade grant an item bonus to attack rolls.

**Type** lesser; **Level** 1; **Price** 3 gp

The bomb deals 1d6 piercing damage and 1 piercing splash damage, and the target is stupefied 1.

**Type** moderate; **Level** 3; **Price** 10 gp

You gain a +1 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 2d6 piercing damage and 2 piercing splash damage, and the target is stupefied 1.

**Type** greater; **Level** 11; **Price** 250 gp

You gain a +2 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 3d6 piercing damage and 3 piercing splash damage, and the target is stupefied 2.

**Type** major; **Level** 17; **Price** 2,500 gp

You gain a +3 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 4d6 piercing damage and 4 piercing splash damage, and the target is stupefied 3.

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## Katapesh Poisoners

Famous not only for its pesh cash crop and the host of medicinal plants that grow naturally in the nearby desert, but also for the consistent demand for efficient toxins, Katapesh has developed its own specialized poisons and toxic techniques. The city's infamous Poison Maker's Guild is the source of many of these concoctions as well as secret techniques for using them, though unscrupulous Katapeshi bodyguards, thieves, and assassins all know at least one poison recipe or a unique means of inflicting such toxins.

### CLASS FEATS

With the right teacher—such as an elite member of the Poison Maker's Guild—characters who meet the prerequisites can take the following feats.

#### DEADLY POISON WEAPON

FEAT 12

UNCOMMON ROGUE

**Prerequisites** Improved Poison Weapon

Your poisons are devastatingly potent. When you apply a simple poison with Poison Weapon, the poison deals 4d4 poison damage instead of 1d4 poison damage. When you apply an injury poison to your weapon, the DC to resist that poison increases by 2, to a maximum of your class DC.

#### PESH SKIN

FEAT 12

UNCOMMON DRUID MORPH

**Requirements** You are transformed into a plant by a polymorph spell.

Your plant form sprouts hundreds of spines, and your blood causes mild hallucinations in creatures exposed to it. Each time a creature touches you, hits you with an unarmed attack, or hits you with a melee weapon attack while adjacent to you, that creature takes 1d6 piercing damage. Increase the damage to 2d6 if the polymorph spell is 8th level or higher, or to 3d6 if it's 10th level.

When an adjacent creature damages you with piercing or slashing damage, it must succeed at a Fortitude save against your class DC or become stupefied 1 (or stupefied 2 on a critical failure) until the end of its next turn.

These benefits last until you're no longer polymorphed into a plant.

#### SHAPED CONTAMINANT

FEAT 12

UNCOMMON ALCHEMIST

Through a combination of careful manipulation and precise breath control, you can deploy inhaled toxins precisely. When you activate an inhaled poison, you can cause it to fill a 20-foot line that's 5 feet tall rather than a 10-foot cube. You gain a +3 status bonus to saving throws against inhaled poisons that you activate.

## POISONS

The following poisons appear in Katapesh's markets—and in the bloodstreams of those who make too many enemies in the City of Trade.

#### FALSE DEATH

ITEM 5

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE INGESTED POISON

**Price** 25 gp

**Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

**Activate** ♦ Interact

Typically used to fake one's death, this poison swiftly causes the imbiber to lose consciousness and suppresses vital signs. A creature examining the unconscious target must succeed at a Medicine check against the imbiber's Deception DC + 4 to determine that the target is alive, and a critical success allows the examiner to determine that a toxin is causing the effect. The false death toxin has an extremely bitter taste (Perception DC 10 to detect), making it difficult to trick a creature into consuming the poison against its wishes.

**Saving Throw** DC 18 Fortitude; **Onset** 10 minutes; **Maximum Duration** 5 days; **Stage 1** clumsy 2 (1 round); **Stage 2** unconscious (1 hour); **Stage 3** unconscious (1 day)

#### FRENZY OIL

ITEM 16

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE CONTACT POISON

**Price** 1,500 gp

**Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

**Activate** ♦ Interact

This oil, which is pressed from vrock spores and mixed with a combination of acacia ash and thistle seeds, seeps into the skin of living creatures, initially inspiring irritability that unpredictably manifests as berserk rage.

**Saving Throw** DC 37 Fortitude; **Onset** 1d6 minutes; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 4d6 mental damage, quickened 1, attack nearby creatures as if confused (1 round); **Stage 2** 6d6 mental damage, attack nearby creatures as if confused (1 round); **Stage 3** 8d6 mental damage, fatigued, attack nearby creatures as if confused (1 round)

#### GORGON'S BREATH

ITEM 13

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE INHALED POISON

**Price** 475 gp

**Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

**Activate** ♦ Interact

Gorgon's breath is a fine powder that can easily enter living creatures' bloodstreams through their lungs before binding to mucous membranes and causing any nearby soft tissues to harden.

**Saving Throw** DC 32 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 round; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** slowed 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 4d6 bludgeoning damage and slowed 1 (1 round); **Stage 3** petrified (1 round); **Stage 4** petrified permanently



## ISOLATION DRAUGHT

ITEM 7

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE INGESTED POISON

Price 55 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Interact

Derived from steeping toxic highland plum pits in refined grain alcohols, this clear tonic slowly shuts down the imbiber's senses.

**Saving Throw** DC 25 Fortitude; Onset 10 minutes; **Maximum Duration** 30 minutes; **Stage 1** dazzled, -3 to all Perception checks (1 minute); **Stage 2** dazzled, deafened, -5 to all Perception checks (1 minute); **Stage 3** blinded, deafened, -5 to all Perception checks (5 minutes)

## MAGE BANE

ITEM 12

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE INJURY POISON

Price 325 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk L

Activate ♦♦♦ Interact

Upon being mixed and injected into the bloodstream, this powder of the crimson orchid quickly assaults the brain and nerves, disrupting the victim's ability to piece together coherent thoughts and spells.

**Saving Throw** DC 32 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 2d6 mental damage and stupefied 2 (1 round); **Stage 2** 3d6 mental damage and stupefied 3 (1 round); **Stage 3** 4d6 mental damage and stupefied 4 (1 round)

## NIGHTMARE SALT

ITEM 20

RARE ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE INGESTED POISON

Price 14,000 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk L

Activate ♦♦♦ Interact

This potent poison consists of crystals whose flavor and appearance mimics edible salt but whose effects are deadly: victims experience periods of waking nightmares that overload the senses and eventually result in death through a combination of shock and exhaustion.

**Saving Throw** DC 43 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 hour; **Maximum Duration** 5 days; **Stage 1** frightened 2 once every 1d4 hours, plus fatigued (1 day); **Stage 2** confused for 1 minute once every 1d4 hours, plus frightened 3 and fatigued (1 day); **Stage 3** frightened 3, plus confused for 1d4 minutes, once every hour, plus fatigued (1 day); **Stage 4** death

## OBLIVION ESSENCE

ITEM 19

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE INJURY POISON

Price 6,500 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Interact

Created from a daemon's powdered soul gems or refined from the waters of Abaddon's rivers, oblivion essence causes victims to rapidly age and decay.

**Saving Throw** DC 42 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 8d6 poison damage and slowed 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 10d6 poison damage, enfeebled 2, and slowed 1 (1 round); **Stage 3** 12d6 poison damage, enfeebled 3, slowed 1 (1 round)

## WEeping MIDNIGHT

ITEM 16

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE INJURY POISON

Price 1,400 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk L

Activate ♦♦♦ Interact

Alchemists have refined the devastatingly allergenic pollen of the widow orchid to create this venom, which swiftly causes the victim's eyes to leak mucus and swell shut.

**Saving Throw** DC 36 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 6d6 poison damage and dazzled (1 round); **Stage 2** 7d6 poison damage, dazzled, and sickened 1 (1 round); **Stage 3** 8d6 poison damage and blinded (1 round)

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## Katapesh Companions

Many animals are adapted to the arid hills, rocky deserts, and warm grasslands of Katapesh. Characters who travel these lands often select from among the following animal companions (*Core Rulebook* 214), which all thrive in these environments.

### CAMEL

Your companion is a camel or llama.

**Size** Medium or Large

**Melee** ♦ jaws, **Damage** 1d6 piercing

**Str** +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

**Hit Points** 8

**Skill** Survival

**Senses** low-light vision, scent (imprecise, 30 feet)

**Speed** 35 feet

**Special** mount; your camel ignores the harmful effects of mild, severe, and extreme cold or heat, selected when you gain the companion

**Support Benefit** The camel makes a ranged attack to spit a long string of saliva at a foe within 10 feet. On a hit, the foe is dazzled for 1 round.

**Advanced Maneuver** Sand Stride

### SAND STRIDE ♦♦

MOVE

The camel Strides twice with a +5-foot circumstance bonus to Speed, ignoring difficult terrain caused by rubble, sand, and uneven ground made of earth and stone.

### HYENA

Your companion is a hyena.

**Size** Small

**Melee** ♦ jaws (finesse), **Damage** 1d8

piercing

**Str** +2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

**Hit Points** 6

**Skill** Intimidation

**Senses** low-light vision, scent (imprecise, 30 feet)

**Speed** 40 feet

**Support Benefit** The hyena mockingly yowls at your enemies and bites at them when you create an opening. Until the start of your next turn, each time you hit a creature in the hyena's reach with a Strike, the creature becomes frightened 1.

**Advanced Maneuver** Gnaw

### GNAW ♦

**Requirements** The animal companion's last action was a successful jaws Strike.

The Strike's target takes 1d6 persistent bleed damage and takes a -10-foot status penalty to its Speed until it removes the bleed damage. If the hyena is a specialized animal companion, the persistent bleed damage increases to 2d6.

### VULTURE

Your companion is a vulture, condor, or other large scavenging bird.

**Size** Small

**Melee** ♦ jaws (finesse), **Damage** 1d8 piercing

**Str** +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

**Hit Points** 6

**Skill** Survival

**Senses** low-light vision, scent (imprecise, 30 feet)

**Speed** 10 feet, fly 45 feet

**Special** Your vulture gains a +1 status bonus to all saves against disease, and if it rolls a success on a save against a disease, the result is a critical success instead.

**Support Benefit** The vulture retches and vomits onto a foe within 10 feet. Until the start of your next turn, if you hit and deal damage to the target, the target must succeed at a Fortitude save or become sickened 1 (sickened 2 on a critical failure). The DC of the Fortitude save is 12 (or 14, if the vulture is a specialized animal companion) + your level + the vulture's Constitution modifier.

**Advanced Maneuver** Feast on the Fallen

### FEAST ON THE FALLEN ♦

HEALING

MANIPULATE

**Frequency** once per hour

**Trigger** A creature adjacent to the vulture is reduced to 0 Hit Points

The vulture consumes a piece of the defeated foe, regaining 18 Hit Points. If the vulture is a specialized animal companion, increase the Hit Points regained to 30.



## Zephyr Guard Archetype

You are one of the Zephyr Guard, professional soldiers who protect Katapesh from military threats, economic sabotage, and elite thieves.

### ZEPHYR GUARD DEDICATION

### FEAT 2

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE DEDICATION

**Prerequisites** member of the Zephyr Guard; **Access** You are from Katapesh.

As a Zephyr Guard, you're always vigilant against crime and threats to the city's safety. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Perception checks against attempts to Palm an Object, Steal, or Conceal an Object (including you're Seeking concealed objects). You become trained in Society and Katapesh Lore; if you were already trained, you become an expert instead.

**Special** You can't select another dedication feat until you have gained two other feats from the Zephyr Guard archetype.

### DECRY THIEF

### FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE

**Prerequisites** Zephyr Guard Dedication, trained in Intimidation  
When you attempt to Demoralize, you can make it harder for the target to flee, in place of the action's normal effects.

**Critical Success** For 1 round, the target takes a -10-foot status penalty to Speed and a -4 status penalty to Stealth.

**Success** For 1 round, the target takes a -5-foot status penalty to Speed and a -2 status penalty to Stealth.

### KNOW THE BEAT

### FEAT 3

ARCHETYPE SKILL

**Prerequisites** Zephyr Guard Dedication

You become trained in your choice of Guild Lore, Legal Lore, Mercantile Lore, or Underworld Lore. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks to Gather Information and to checks made to investigate crimes.

### RELENTLESS DISARM

### FEAT 6

ARCHETYPE

**Prerequisites** Zephyr Guard Dedication, trained in Athletics  
When you succeed, but don't critically succeed, at a check to Disarm a creature, your circumstance bonus to further checks to Disarm that creature is +4 instead of +2. Other creatures gain only the normal bonus.

When you critically succeed at a Disarm check, you can immediately Demoralize your target as a reaction.

### UNFAZED ASSESSMENT ◆

### FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE

**Prerequisites** Zephyr Guard Dedication, expert in Perception  
You have witnessed hundreds of fighting styles and quickly adapt to defend against complicated maneuvers. Choose a

creature within 30 feet who you're aware of, and attempt a Perception check against that target's Will DC. If you succeed, you size up their fighting style, gaining a +1 circumstance bonus to AC and saving throws against that creature's attacks (or a +2 circumstance bonus for a critical success). These benefits last until the end of your next turn.

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## ROGUE ALUUMS

Although members of the Zephyr Guard stop at nothing to detain and destroy rogue aluums, several such renegade spiritbound aluums remain at large.

**Daemon of Dogtown:** Following the Silk Riots of 4303 AR, the Pactmasters dispatched this aluum to eliminate straggling instigators.

It succeeded, but not before gaining sentence and enacting a 3-day string of murders. Although officials claim it was destroyed, the so-called Daemon of Dogtown's body was never actually recovered, leading to rumors that it still haunts the outskirts of Katapesh.

**Queen Halkuar:** Assigned to protect a gnomish emissary from the Spotted Hide pack, this aluum failed to protect its charge from assassins. Instinctively, it bound the gnomish's soul, assumed the fabricated persona of "Queen Halkuar," and fled into the hinterlands. The queen is said to still wander the wastes in search of additional "packmates."

## Aluum

Aluums are powerful metal and stone constructs originally created by the Pactmasters to maintain order in Katapesh. The construction of each aluum includes the creation of an *aluum charm*, a brass pendant set with a blue crystal designed to control that particular construct. The charm constructed at the same time as an aluum is called its linked charm.

### ALUUM ENFORCER

The most common aluum is powered by the bound soul of a loyal city servant, but its creation is among the Pactmasters' most guarded secrets. There are dozens of dormant aluums spread throughout Katapesh, and only someone wearing an *aluum charm* can activate and command one of these 14-foot-tall soldiers. The Pactmasters entrust few beyond the Zephyr Guard to carry these charms, and stealing such a charm is one of the most severe crimes in the city.

### ALUUM ENFORCER

CREATURE 10

UNCOMMON N LARGE CONSTRUCT MINDLESS

**Perception** +17; darkvision

**Skills** Athletics +23

**Str** +7, **Dex** +2, **Con** +5, **Int** -5, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -5

**AC** 30; **Fort** +21, **Ref** +18, **Will** +15

**HP** 145; **Immunities** bleed, disease, death effects, doomed, drained, fatigued, magic (see below), mental, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** 10 physical (except adamantine)

**Attack of Opportunity** 2

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ fist +23 (magical), **Damage** 2d10+13 bludgeoning plus paralyzing force

**Aluum Antimagic** Aluum enforcers are immune to spells and magical abilities, with two exceptions. A negative spell or magical ability grants an aluum enforcer the quickened condition until the end of its next turn instead of its normal effects. A positive spell or ability makes an aluum enforcer slowed 1 until the end of its next turn instead of its normal effects.

**Paralyzing Force** (arcane, incapacitation, necromancy) A creature damaged by the aluum enforcer's fist Strike must succeed at a DC 27 Fortitude save or become paralyzed for 1 round. On a critical failure, the creature is paralyzed for 1d4 minutes and falls prone.

**Soul Shriek** ♦♦ (arcane, auditory, evocation, mental, sonic) The aluum enforcer emits a keening wail in a 15-foot cone that deals 9d6 sonic damage (DC 27 basic Fortitude save). A creature that fails its save is stunned 1, or stunned 3 on a critical failure. The aluum can't use Soul Shriek again for 1d4 rounds.

### ALUUM CHARM

ITEM 10

UNCOMMON ENCHANTMENT INVESTED MAGICAL

**Usage** worn; **Bulk** -

This ornate pendant of brass is adorned with a vibrant blue gemstone. An *aluum charm* grants control over a particular aluum and lesser influence over other such constructs. As long as you wear an aluum's linked *aluum charm*, that aluum follows your verbal commands, including somewhat nuanced orders like "subdue this target" or "strike anyone wearing a blue robe."

**Activate** ♦♦ command; **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The charm grants you control over an aluum you can see within 60 feet, with a level equal to or lower than the charm. This has the effect of *dominate* and allows a DC 28 Will save. If the aluum is currently under the control of someone wearing its



linked charm, it gets a result on its saving throw one degree higher than what it rolled. You can control only one aluum at a time using this activation, and controlling a new aluum ends the effect for one you had previously affected.

## SPIRITBOUND ALUUM

Whereas most aluums are animated by the souls of volunteers loyal to Katapesh, the Pactmasters created a handful of more capable (and deadly) aluums powered by the souls of a dozen or more dangerous criminals. These spiritbound aluums are rarely used as peacekeepers, instead serving as assassins, elite bodyguards, or riot control during times of martial law.

A spiritbound aluum has a dull blue crystalline focus that stores constituent souls, surrounded by a host of smaller gems used for trapping souls the Pactmasters wish to deny from entering the Great Beyond. Spiritbound aluums rarely use this soul-binding ability except when instructed by their masters. However, the murderous or embittered souls within the aluum sometimes exert control and willfully consume a departing soul either out of malice or to incorporate it into the construct's core. If not relieved of its trapped souls in a timely manner, a spiritbound aluum can develop enough will to overcome its masters' orders and even awaken to full sentience. These rogue aluums typically lose the mindless trait, are evil, have an Intelligence modifier of -2 or higher, and gain several skills with bonuses ranging from +25 to +32.

## SPIRITBOUND ALUUM CREATURE 16

RARE N LARGE CONSTRUCT MINDLESS SOULBOUND

**Perception** +28; **darkvision**

**Skills** Athletics +33

**Str** +9, **Dex** +3, **Con** +6, **Int** -5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** -2

**AC** 39; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +25, **Will** +28

**HP** 255; **Immunities** as aluum enforcer; **Resistance** 15 physical (except adamantine)

**Attack of Opportunity** ➤

**Speed** 25 feet, fly 25 feet

**Melee** ➤ fist +33 (magical), **Damage** 3d10+17 bludgeoning plus paralyzing force

**Aluum Antimagic** As aluum enforcer (page 82).

**Arcane Innate Spells** DC 38; **9th** *bind soul* (×3); **5th** *locate*

**Obliteration Beam** ➤➤ (arcane, evocation, force) **Requirements**

The spiritbound aluum has bound a soul using its *bind soul* innate spell; **Effect** The spiritbound aluum transforms the captured soul's essence into raw magical energy, channeling the spirit into a beam that deals 20d6 force damage in a 30-foot line (DC 38 basic Reflex save). The remaining fragments of the captured soul are released to the Great Beyond.

The spiritbound aluum can't use Obliteration Beam again for 1d4 rounds.

**Paralyzing Force** (arcane, incapacitation, necromancy) As aluum, but DC 35.

**Soul Binder** When a spiritbound aluum uses its *bind soul* innate spell, it binds the soul into its central crystal instead of the normal material component.

The crystal can hold up to 60 souls. When encountered, a spiritbound aluum's crystal typically contains 1d6 souls.

**Soul Shriek** ➤➤ (arcane, auditory, evocation, mental, sonic) As aluum enforcer (page 82), but 16d6 damage.



## LOYAL CITY SERVANTS

Retired Zephyr Guards are the most common soul donors bound within an aluum's crystalline focus, typically agreeing to it early in their career in exchange for a higher salary.

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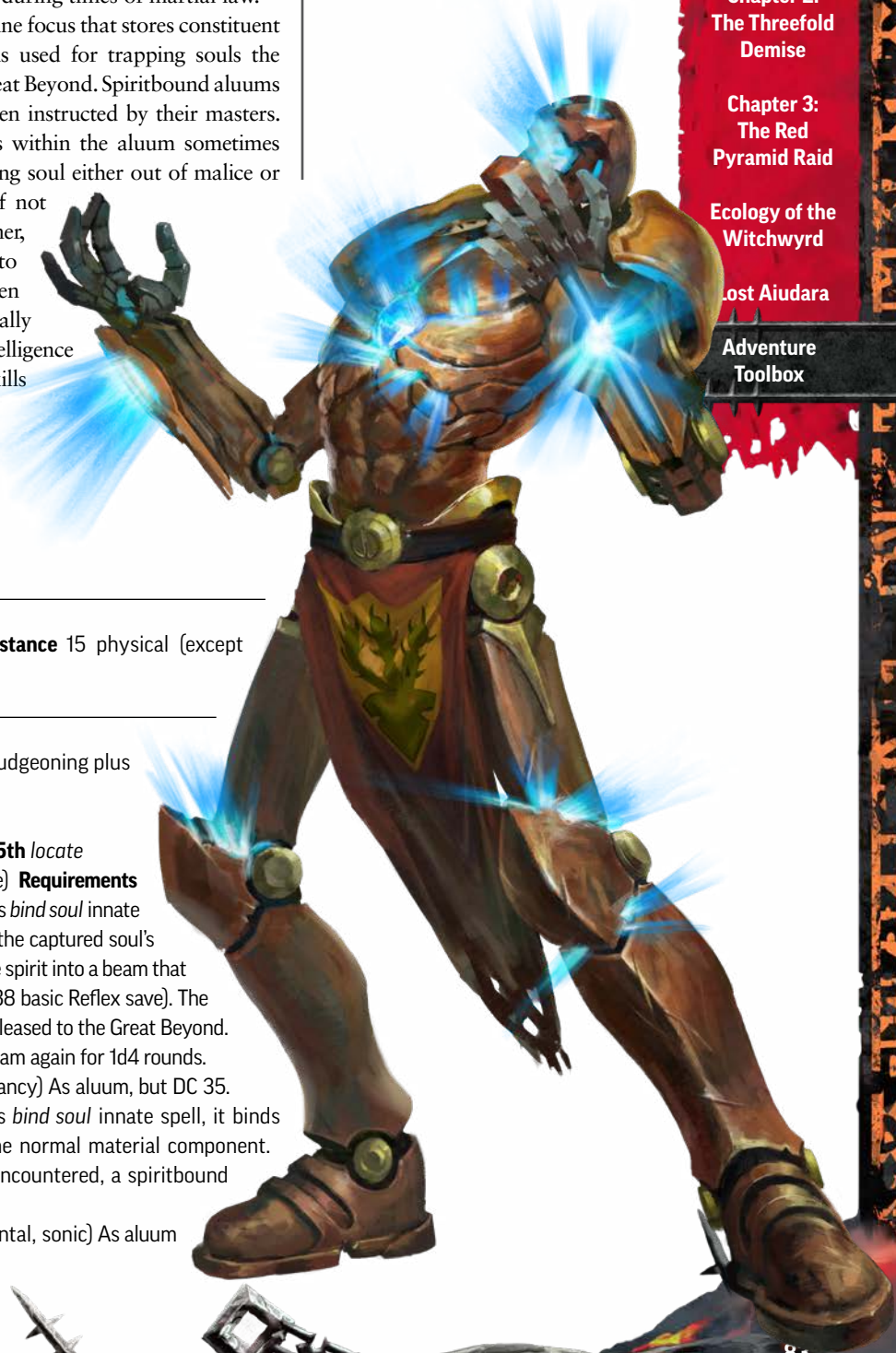
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### CALIKANG ORIGINS

Legend holds that an ancient god failed to protect an important treasury, and in shame he severed the fingers from his hand and cast them down upon the world. Calikangs arose from these severed remains, and as penance, they have sought to protect worldly holdings from robberies or invasions ever since.

## Calikang

The calikangs are giant blue-skinned, six-armed guardians of ancient tombs and treasures. Their unique physiologies enable them to absorb and manipulate electrical magic, as well as other energies. A calikang can live for 200 years—though it may further extend its life via suspended animation.

### CALIKANG

### CREATURE 12

UNCOMMON LN LARGE HUMANOID

**Perception** +20; darkvision, *true seeing*

**Languages** Common, Jotun

**Skills** Athletics +25, Intimidation +24

**Str** +7, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** -2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

**Items** +1 striking longsword (2)

**Suspended Animation** (concentrate) By spending 5 minutes concentrating, the calikang can enter a state of suspended animation, freezing in place and becoming motionless but remaining aware of its surroundings. While in this state, the calikang gains a +4 status bonus to all Fortitude saves, does not age, and is immune to disease, inhaled toxins, poison, starvation, and thirst. The calikang can exit suspended animation as a free action. If it exits this state to attack, the calikang gains a +4 circumstance bonus to its initiative roll.

**AC** 35; **Fort** +23, **Ref** +22, **Will** +20; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

**HP** 235; **Immunities** electricity

**Defensive Stance** A calikang gains a circumstance bonus to its AC equal to the number of its hands that aren't wielding weapons, to a maximum of +4 (this bonus is already factored into this calikang's stats).

**Energy Conversion** (abjuration, arcane) Whenever the calikang is hit by an electricity spell or rolls a successful save against a spell that deals energy damage, it absorbs the energy. This heals the calikang for an amount of HP equal to quadruple the spell's level, and recharges its Breath Weapon. A calikang can't absorb its own spells this way.

**Speed** 35 feet

**Melee** ♦ longsword +28 (magical, reach 10 feet, versatile P), **Damage** 2d8+15 slashing

**Melee** ♦ fist +25 (agile, reach 10 feet, nonlethal), **Damage** 3d8+13 bludgeoning

**Arcane Innate Spells** DC 28; **6th** chain lightning; **1st** magic weapon (at will); **Constant** *true seeing*

**Breath Weapon** ♦♦ (acid, arcane, cold, electricity, evocation, fire, sonic) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The calikang breathes a blast of energy that deals 13d6 energy damage to all creatures in a 60-foot line (DC 28 basic Reflex save). The calikang can choose the damage type each time: acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic. Increase the die size to d8 if the calikang chooses electricity.

**Sixfold Flurry** ♦♦ The calikang makes up to six fist Strikes. Each Strike can be against a different target. These attacks count toward its multiple attack penalty, which doesn't increase until after all the attacks are complete.



## Daemon, Crucidaemon (Torture Daemon)

Of all the ways to die, crucidaemons represent perhaps one of the least desirable: death by torture. The fiend's shapely body, which appears to be sculpted from iron or mithril, belies a sinister wrath and love of inflicting pain. Crucidaemons particularly enjoy inflicting pain with their curved, serrated daggers, which are attached to their bodies via a chain that pierces each wrist.

A crucidaemon's existence is dedicated to subjecting its prey to an eternity of pain and terror. Unlike other daemons, many of which are eager to feed on mortal souls as soon as they can, the crucidaemon takes much greater pleasure in prolonging the agony of its victims. Oftentimes, a crucidaemon will inflict such torment and pain upon its prey that when the end finally comes, the victim tearfully thanks the daemon for the mercy of oblivion. An encounter with a crucidaemon that does not end with its death is far from over—crucidaemons have unequaled patience for those who dare oppose them.

### CRUCIDAEMON

### CREATURE 15

NE MEDIUM DAEMON FIEND

**Perception** +26; darkvision, *detect alignment* (good only), lifesense 30 feet

**Languages** Abyssal, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 100 feet

**Skills** Acrobatics +30, Arcana +26, Crafting +30, Deception +26, Intimidation +28, Stealth +30, Thievery +26

**Str** +4, **Dex** +7, **Con** +7, **Int** +3, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +5

**AC** 38; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +30, **Will** +26;

+1 status to all saves vs. magic

**HP** 225; **Immunities** death effects; **Weaknesses** good 10; **Resistances** physical 10 (except adamantine)

**Trap Dodger** Crucidaemons are all but impossible to fool with traps. Whenever a crucidaemon rolls a saving throw against a trap hazard, its degree of success is one better than it rolled.

**Speed** 50 feet; *air walk*

**Melee** ♦ chained dagger +30 (agile, finesse, magical, reach 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 4d4+14 piercing plus 2d6 persistent bleed

**Divine Innate Spells** DC 32, attack +28; **7th** *glyph of warding* (×3), *paralyze*; **4th** *death knell*, *fear*, *invisibility* (at will), *phantom pain* (at will); **Constant (2nd)** *detect alignment* (good only)

**Daemonic Trap Making** (divine) When the crucidaemon casts its innate *glyph of warding* spell, it can store any arcane or divine spell of an appropriate level in the glyph, even if it can't otherwise cast the spell.

**Flurry of Daggers** ♦ The crucidaemon makes two chained dagger Strikes against a single target. These attacks count toward the crucidaemon's multiple attack penalty and its multiple attack penalty doesn't increase until after both attacks.

**Manifest Dagger** ♦ The crucidaemon summons a new chained dagger to replace a destroyed one. A crucidaemon's daggers can't be disarmed, and they become non-magical when severed from the daemon or upon the daemon's death.



### DAEMONIC TRAPMAKERS

Crucidaemons excel at trapmaking, and they line their lairs or the lairs of their masters with mazes of intricate and deadly traps and enchanted *glyphs of warding* through which they draw their victims. Perhaps even eerier than the crucidaemon's methodical nature in trapmaking is its nearly medical interest in the mutilation and crippling of captured foes.

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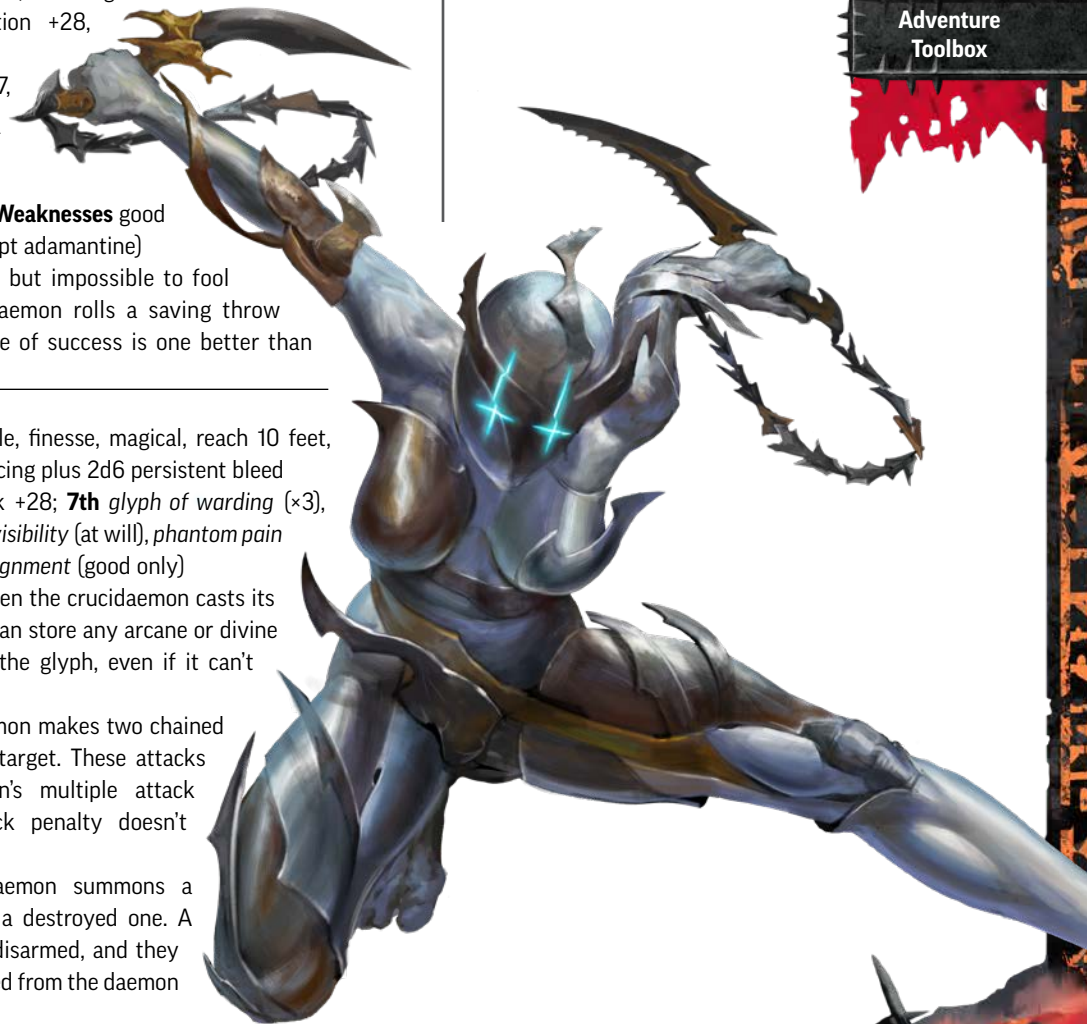
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### SECRET MONGERS

Nalfeshnees covet knowledge as well as goods, especially if such information can help satisfy the needs and desires of the Abyss. Each nalfeshnee has areas of interest in which it is highly knowledgeable, but before a nalfeshnee reveals a secret, it typically demands a secret of at least equal value in return.

## Demon, Nalfeshnee (Boar Demon)

Nalfeshnees are huge, corpulent, boar-headed demons that hoard treasures and knowledge alike and form from the souls of avaricious mortals.

### NALFESHNEE

CREATURE 14

CE HUGE DEMON FIEND

**Perception** +25; darkvision, *true seeing*

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 feet

**Skills** Abyss Lore +25, Arcana +25, Athletics +28, Deception +26, Diplomacy +24, Intimidation +28, Religion +25

**Str** +8, **Dex** +2, **Con** +8, **Int** +5, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +4

**AC** 34; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +22, **Will** +23; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

**HP** 360; **Weaknesses** cold iron 15, good 15

**Forfeiture Aversion** A nalfeshnee's greed is such that losing possessions causes it harm. If an item is stolen from a nalfeshnee, the demon takes 3d6 mental damage.

**Greedy Grab** **Trigger** A creature critically fails a weapon Strike against the nalfeshnee; **Effect** The nalfeshnee attempts to Disarm the weapon used in the triggering Strike at a -2 circumstance penalty.

On a success, the nalfeshnee steals the weapon.

**Speed** 30 feet, fly 40 feet

**Melee** jaws +28 (magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d12+14 piercing

**Melee** claw +28 (agile, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d8+14 slashing

**Divine Innate Spells** DC 34; **6th** *dispel magic* (at will), *divine wrath* (at will); **5th** *dimension door*, *illusory object* (at will); **4th** *circle of protection*, *dimension door* (at will); **Constant (6th)** *true seeing*

**Divine Rituals** DC 34; *Abyssal pact*

**ClaimWealth** (conjuration, divine, extradimensional)

The nalfeshnee steals all unattended items glowing with its Light of Avarice into an extradimensional space. The demon can Interact to regurgitate any number of these items into its hand or onto the ground. If the demon dies, is affected by a teleportation effect, or consumes an extradimensional space (such as a *bag of holding*), it vomits up all the items.

**Light of Avarice** (divine, enchantment, light, mental);

**Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Beams of unholy light shoot out from the nalfeshnee toward four items within 60 feet. If someone is holding or wearing a targeted item, they can keep it from being affected with a DC 34 Reflex save. For 1 minute, all affected items glow in nauseating colors. Any non-demon is sickened 2 and slowed 1 as long as it holds, wears, or touches a glowing item. Recovering from this sickness requires a DC 29 Will save instead of a Fortitude save. Ending the sickness in this way ends the slowed condition and makes the creature temporarily immune to the Light of Avarice for 24 hours. If the creature removes or drops the item, both the conditions end immediately, but the creature doesn't become immune.



## Devil, Cornugon (Horned Devil)

The cornugon, or horned devil, is a hulking red fiend with a crown of deadly horns and a body bristling with spines. Cornugons serve as the commanders of Hell's infernal armies.

### CORNUGON

### CREATURE 16

LE LARGE DEVIL FIEND

**Perception** +28; greater darkvision

**Languages** Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 100 feet

**Skills** Acrobatics +28, Athletics +32, Intimidation +30, Religion +28, Stealth +26, Warfare Lore +30

**Str** +8, **Dex** +6, **Con** +7, **Int** +2, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +6

**Items** +2 greater striking unholy spiked chain

**AC** 38; **Fort** +31, **Ref** +26, **Will** +26; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

**HP** 300; **Immunities** fire; **Weaknesses** good 15; **Resistances** physical 15 (except silver), poison 15

**Circle of Protection** (abjuration, aura, divine, evil) 10 feet. A constant circle of protection against good is centered on the horned devil. The horned devil can disable or activate this aura as a single action, which has the concentrate trait.

**Commander's Aura** (aura, divine, enchantment) 100 feet. Lower-level, allied evil creatures in the aura gain a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, AC, saves, and skill checks.

**Frightful Presence** (aura, divine, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental) 10 feet, DC 34

**Attack of Opportunity** ⤵

**Speed** 25 feet, fly 50 feet

**Melee** ♦ *unholy spiked chain* +34 (disarm, evil, finesse, magical, reach 10 feet, trip), **Damage** 3d8+14 slashing plus 1d6 evil and stunning chain

**Melee** ♦ *claw* +32 (agile, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d10+14 slashing

**Melee** ♦ *tail* +32 (magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d10+14 slashing plus infernal wound

**Divine Innate Spells** DC 36; **7th** *dispel magic*, *fireball* (×2), *lightning bolt* (×2); **5th** *dimension door*; **4th** *dimension door* (at will)

**Divine Rituals** DC 36; *Infernal pact*

**Chain of Malebolge** ♦ **Requirements** The cornugon hit a creature with its spiked chain on its most recent action this turn; **Effect** The devil pulls the creature 5 feet closer and grabs it with the spiked chain (Escape attempts use the cornugon's Athletics DC). The creature is automatically freed if the devil makes another spiked chain attack or moves away.

**Infernal Wound** (divine, necromancy) A cornugon's tail Strike deals 4d6 persistent bleed damage. The flat check DC to stop the bleeding starts at 20, and is reduced to 15 only if someone successfully assists with the recovery. The DC to Administer First Aid to a creature with an infernal wound is increased by 10. A spellcaster or item using healing magic on an infernally wounded creature must succeed at a DC 34 counteract check or the magic fails to heal the creature.

**Stunning Chain** If the cornugon critically hits with its spiked chain Strike, the target must succeed at a DC 34 Fortitude save or be stunned for 1 round (1d4 rounds on a critical failure).



### THE MALEBRANCHE

Every 5,000 years, the mightiest of the cornugons is chosen to rise to the station of malebranche, a form of lesser divinity just below that of the archdevils. Currently 12 members of the malebranche are known to exist, and while each exhibits unique forms of depravity and wickedness, all share the same goal of conquering the Material Plane.

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## DEAD DEITIES

Immortal ichors can arise from practically any evil, dead deity. Cults whose deities have fallen sometimes rededicate themselves to the search for the blood of their former master.

## Immortal Ichor

An immortal ichor is an intelligent mass of blood from a dead evil deity. The cultists who perform the ritual to create immortal ichor typically seal up the sentient ooze in an underground or remote chamber that blocks its magical abilities, but over time these seals break or weaken, freeing the unholy monster.

### IMMORTAL ICHOR

CREATURE 15

RARE NE MEDIUM OOZE

**Perception** +20; motion sense 60 feet, no vision

**Languages** Abyssal, Aklo, Infernal, Undercommon; telepathy 100 feet

**Skills** Ancient History Lore +30, Arcana +30, Religion +29

**Str** +6, **Dex** +3, **Con** +9, **Int** +7, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +6

**AC** 26; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +20, **Will** +29

**HP** 350, regeneration 15 (deactivated by good); **Immunities** acid, critical hits, mental, precision, unconscious, visual;

**Resistances** physical 15

**Immortality** The immortal ichor doesn't age, nor does it need to eat or breathe. It can die only as a result of violence.

**Speed** 20 feet, fly 20 feet

**Melee** ♦ pseudopod +27, **Damage** 3d8+12 bludgeoning plus mental erosion

**Divine Innate Spells** DC 37, attack +31; **7th** charm (×3), *feeblemind*, *possession*, *suggestion*;

**6th** *crisis of faith*, *telekinetic haul* (at will);

**3rd** *mind reading* (at will); **2nd** *telekinetic maneuver* (at will); **1st** *charm* (at will), *command*

(at will); **Cantrips (7th)** *telekinetic projectile*

**Cleric Domain Spells** DC 37, attack +31; **8th** (3 Focus Points) *cry of destruction* (Pathfinder Core Rulebook 390), *destructive aura* (Pathfinder Core Rulebook 390)

**Corrupt Ally** (divine, enchantment, mental) A

creature that fails to save against an immortal ichor's *charm* spell becomes stupefied 1. The stupefied value

reduces by 1 every 24 hours. The first time each day a creature stupefied by the ichor's *charm* fails to

save against another casting of the ichor's *charm*, the value of the condition increases by 1d4. If the stupefied

condition ever equals the creature's Wisdom score, it becomes controlled by the ichor permanently; if it dies, it rises

the next round as a zombie (of the GM's choice) under the ichor's control. If the ichor is killed, these zombies are destroyed.

**Dead Spells** An immortal ichor can cast an initial and advanced domain spell of a domain that belonged to the dead deity from which the ichor arose (the domain spells presented here are from the destruction domain).

**Mental Erosion** A creature hit by the ichor's pseudopod is stupefied 2 for 1 day unless it succeeds at a DC 35 Will save.

**Resanguinate** ♦♦♦ (divine, healing, necromancy) The immortal ichor draws blood from the pores of living creatures around it. Any living creature within 30 feet that has blood takes 4d6 damage (DC 33 basic Fortitude save). The immortal ichor regains HP equal to the total damage dealt. A creature that fails its save is also drained 1 (or drained 2 on a critical failure).



## Solifugid

Giant solifugids are monstrous vermin with six legs and two large feeding appendages easily mistaken for an additional pair of legs. They are often called camel spiders, sun spiders, or wind scorpions, despite the fact that they are neither spiders nor scorpions.

### GIANT SOLIFUGID

The smallest of giant solifugids are still large enough to harry desert traders and their mounts.

#### GIANT SOLIFUGID

#### CREATURE 1

**N** **MEDIUM** **ANIMAL**

**Perception** +6; darkvision

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Athletics +6, Stealth +6 (+10 in deserts)

**Str** +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +3, **Int** -5, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -4

**AC** 16; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +4

**HP** 20

**Speed** 35 feet, climb 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ jaws +8, **Damage** 1d10+1 piercing

**Melee** ♦ claw +8 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 1d8+1 slashing

**Pounce** ♦ The giant solifugid Strides and makes a Strike at the end of that movement. If the giant solifugid began this action hidden, it remains hidden until after this ability's Strike.

**Rend** ♦ claw

### DUNESHAKER SOLIFUGID

The largest solifugids, duneshakers, literally make the terrain around them tremble.

#### DUNESHAKER SOLIFUGID

#### CREATURE 18

**N** **GARGANTUAN** **ANIMAL**

**Perception** +30; darkvision, tremorsense (imprecise) 30 feet

**Skills** Acrobatics +33, Athletics +35, Stealth +33 (+37 in deserts)

**Str** +9, **Dex** +7, **Con** +7, **Int** -5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** -4

**AC** 42; **Fort** +31, **Ref** +33,

**Will** +28

**HP** 340

**Speed** 50 feet, burrow 25 feet, climb 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ jaws +35 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d10+17 piercing

**Melee** ♦ claw +35 (agile, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 3d10+17 slashing

**Earth Shaker** The first time per turn the duneshaker solifugid moves adjacent to a Large or smaller creature, that creature must succeed at a DC 39 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

**Pounce** ♦ As giant solifugid (see above).

**Rend** ♦ claw

**Venom Spray** ♦♦ (poison) The duneshaker solifugid spews toxic barbs at all creatures in a 30-foot cone. Each creature within the cone takes 10d6 poison damage (DC 39 basic Fortitude save). A creature that fails is blinded for 1d6 rounds (or permanently on a critical failure). The duneshaker solifugid can't use Venom Spray again for 1d4 rounds.



### SOLIFUGID BURROWS

Most species of solifugid lay their eggs in burrows. The female doesn't eat while guarding her eggs, and thus fights even more aggressively against any creatures she deems potential threats to her brood. The bodies of wayward adventurers often litter such burrows, though the risks of exploring such treasure-laden nests often deter fortune-hunters from trying their luck with such caches.

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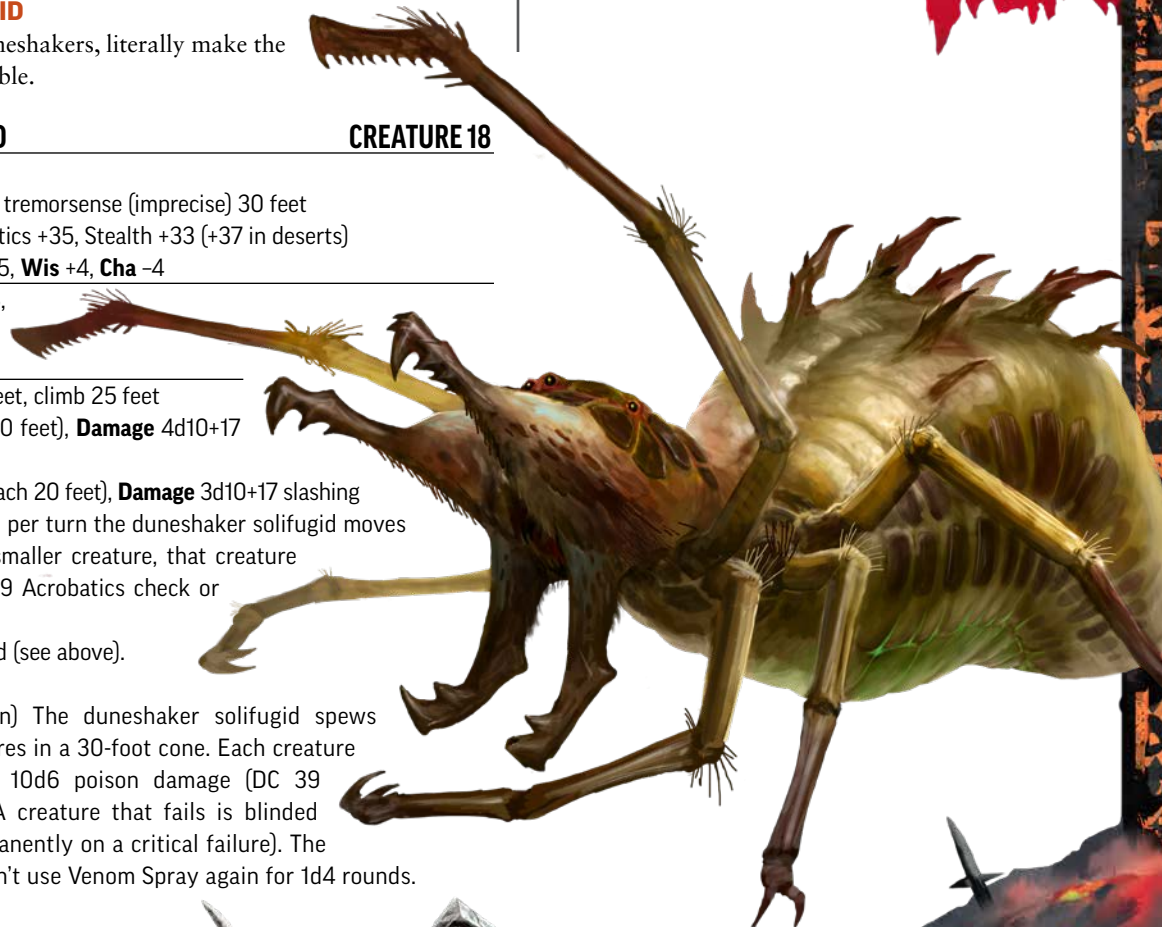
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## ALIEN ALLIES

While witchwyrd often appear to be solitary creatures, the most successful among them rarely wander the planes and planets alone. High-ranking or wealthy witchwyrd employ a variety of bodyguards to accompany them, and their entourage is usually composed of a variety of strange beings met during their travels.

## Witchwyrd

Witchwyrd are four-armed humanoid creatures with hairless blue-gray skin and glowing yellow eyes. They are typically 6-1/2 feet tall and weigh 300 pounds. Their hands possess three evenly sized and spaced digits in a tripod-like arrangement. Witchwyrd conceal most of their faces, leaving only their eyes unmasked. Their inscrutability is a boon to one of their most significant interests, mercantilism, and many haughty witchwyrd openly revel in the befuddlement inspired by their mysterious guises and mannerisms. Witchwyrd have a keen eye for new opportunities and markets, and a witchwyrd almost always knows when someone is trying to pull one over on them.

When not trying to blend in with the local community, witchwyrd favor outlandish, loose-fitting clothes in bright reds or yellows and a signature conical hat. Witchwyrd tend to prefer the driest, warmest regions of the areas they visit—perhaps an indicator of their mysterious home world.

For more on witchwyrd, see page 65.

### WITCHWYRD

### CREATURE 6

UNCOMMON LN MEDIUM HUMANOID

**Perception** +12; darkvision, *detect magic*

**Languages** Common, Draconic, one or more planar languages; *tongues*

**Skills** Arcana +16, Deception +15, Desert Lore +14, Diplomacy +15,

Intimidation +15, one or more Lore skills related to a specific plane

**Str** +3, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +5

**Items** +1 *ranseur*

**AC** 22; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +13, **Will** +15

**HP** 110; **Resistances** force 5

**Absorb Force** ☞ (arcane, evocation, force) **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The witchwyrd uses a free hand to “catch” a single *magic missile* fired at it, as long as it is aware of the incoming *magic missile*. This absorbs the missile and causes that hand to glow while it holds this energy. A hand that’s holding energy can’t be used for any other purpose except to use Force Bolt. The energy lasts for 6 rounds or until it is released.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ☞ *ranseur* +16 (disarm, magical, reach

10 feet), **Damage** 1d10+6 piercing

**Melee** ☞ fist +15 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d6+6 bludgeoning plus Grab

**Arcane Innate Spells** DC 23, attack +15; **5th** *dimension door*; **4th** *resist energy* (×2), *suggestion*, *resilient sphere*; **3rd** *dispel magic*; **2nd** *mirror image*; **1st** *floating disk* (at will), *unseen servant* (at will); **Cantrips** (3rd) *detect magic*; **Constant** (5th) *tongues*

**Force Bolt** ☞ to ☞☞☞ (arcane, evocation, force) The witchwyrd fires one *magic missile* per action spent (dealing 1d4+1 damage each). It can’t spend more actions on this ability than it has free hands. If it uses a hand that has Absorbed Force, that hand hurls two missiles instead of one, expending the held energy.



## Xotanispawn

Xotanispawn are monstrous versions of scavenging beetle larvae that have been corrupted and mutated by feeding on the remains of Xotani the Firebleeder, a slain Spawn of Rovagug buried beneath Pale Mountain in Katapesh. These creatures look vaguely like the minute insects they once were, with a sclerotized head and chitinous body plates, six legs, and numerous dorsal spines lining the joints and edges of each segment. However, by feeding on the unholy remains of Xotani, the spawn have manifested many of the traits of the infamous Firebleeder, most notably a blisteringly hot internal temperature and powerful fire attacks—to say nothing of their monstrous size.

Internal heat radiates from every surface of a Xotanispawn, even from its mouth. Any contact with a Xotanispawn results in burns and the risk of catching on fire. Thankfully, Xotanispawn have also inherited Xotani's weaknesses to cold and sunlight. They are rarely encountered on the surface during the day, opting to emerge from their subterranean lairs only at night.

### XOTANISPAWN

### CREATURE 17

RARE CE LARGE ANIMAL FIRE

**Perception** +29; darkvision, tremorsense (imprecise) 60 feet

**Skills** Athletics +34, Stealth +31, Survival +29

**Str** +9, **Dex** +6, **Con** +8, **Int** -5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +5

**Frightful Presence** (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 60 feet, DC 36

**AC** 40; **Fort** +31, **Ref** +29, **Will** +23

**HP** 340; **Immunities** chaotic, evil, fire; **Weaknesses** cold 20

**Explosion** (fire) When a Xotanispawn dies, it explodes, dealing 15d8 fire damage to creatures in a 30-foot emanation (DC 39 basic Reflex save).

#### Light Blindness

**Internal Furnace** ☞ (fire) **Trigger** A creature adjacent to the Xotanispawn touches it or hits it with a physical attack; **Effect** The triggering creature takes 5d8 persistent fire damage (DC 37 Reflex save to negate).

**Speed** 40 feet, burrow 40 feet, climb 40 feet

**Melee** ♦ jaws +30 (reach 10 feet),

**Damage** 4d8+9 piercing plus 2d8 persistent fire and Grab

**Melee** ♦ claw +30 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d6+9 slashing plus 2d8 persistent fire

**Breath Weapon** ♦♦ (arcane, evocation, fire) The Xotanispawn sprays a 60-foot cone of magma that deals 10d10 fire damage and 2d6 persistent fire damage to all creatures in the area (DC 39 basic Reflex save). The Xotanispawn can't use its Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

**Heat Surge** When the Xotanispawn critically hits, its body surges with heat, increasing the damage of its Internal Furnace to 10d8 until the start of its next turn.



### THE FIREBLEEDER'S MARK

Terrible rumors speak of other monsters that have emerged from the Firebleeder's corpse in the centuries since the Legion of Wands put the beast to rest. Reports of massive clouds of noxious black sand, gray-blooded gnoll zombies with spider-like limbs, and guttural, otherworldly howls during harvest moons have long fueled local rumors that more terrors lurk in the valleys of the Brazen Peaks than a single dead god-spawn.

### AGAINST THE SCARLET TRIAD

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# URI ZANDIVAR

*As the leader of the Scarlet Triad, Uri Zandivar has leveraged his extraordinary upbringing and training to dominate those he perceives as inferior in a bid for wealth, influence, and control of Hermea.*

As a third-generation son of Hermea, Uri received an exemplary education funded by the dragon Mengkare's bottomless pockets. Even among the other Hermean students, Uri was exceptional, excelling at physical exploits, oratory, mysticism, and business. Desiring to see the world beyond Promise, he attained an honored role as one of Hermea's recruiters.

However, the more he saw of the world, the less convinced he was that the rest of humanity deserved any place alongside Mengkare. Jaded, he returned to Promise to seek the dragon's counsel. The golden sovereign was delighted in what he interpreted as Uri's growing wisdom and granted him a place on the Council of Enlightenment to help govern the island. As his influence increased, Uri earned ever-greater responsibilities, trust, and insight into Mengkare's vision for Hermea. But after witnessing the world's evils, he increasingly sensed derision and menace in Mengkare's words and mission. With his sister Emaliza (also a member of the Council of Enlightenment), Uri speculated as to their patron's nefarious designs and agreed to do whatever they could to protect Hermea.

While Emaliza remained on the island to research Mengkare's schemes, Uri left his post at the Council of Enlightenment to join the Scarlet Triad. He swiftly took over the group, which had become an increasingly disorganized operation as its role of providing recruits for the Glorious Endeavor grew less relevant. Under his leadership, the Triad was reinvigorated—as much by his leadership as by his decision to engage in the lucrative slave trade. After several decades of prosperous chattel trafficking, keeping the Triad's new endeavors secret from Mengkare while still collecting the stipend of support from Hermea, Uri received a visit from his sister, who had come up with an audacious plan to seize control of Mengkare and his resources for themselves.

In that fateful meeting, Emaliza revealed to Uri that she'd discovered one of Promise's greatest secrets—an ancient *aiudara* named Vengegate, within which was trapped the essence of the god Dahak. She further

explained to Uri that Mengkare intends to use this essence somehow (misinterpreting Mengkare's goal of destroying Dahak for a wish to use the god's power as a weapon), and posited to her brother that if they could gain control of Mengkare and Alseta's Ring, this vast power would be theirs to use instead.

But Mengkare is dangerous, and Emaliza warned Uri that should the gold dragon discover their plot, he would surely destroy them. She then gave her brother several shards of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* she'd smuggled out of Mengkare's treasury. She wasn't able to retrieve them all, but knew that Mengkare had sent out other shards to various movers and shakers around the world as tokens and gifts. If Uri could use the resources of the Scarlet Triad to gather enough of these shards, and then recruit (or enslave) enough talented help, he could secretly rebuild the orb, allowing him and Emaliza to seize control of Mengkare. Emaliza knew that pursuing such an audacious plan in Promise would be too risky, but in Katapesh, her brother wouldn't have to worry about hiding the work from the dragon's attention.

Once Mengkare is controlled, Emaliza explained, nothing would stand in their way to harness the power of Dahak trapped in Alsetta's Ring. But until the orb was complete, Emaliza urged patience. In the meantime, she gave Uri the portal key for Vengegate and urged him to use his minions to gather up all the other portal keys to Alsetta's Ring they could find. Once Mengkare was under their control, they could then converge on the ring and harness the vast, destructive might hidden within, bolstering their position and making the Scarlet Triad a true global power. Convinced, Uri agreed to her plot.

True to his upbringing in Promise, Uri has subjected himself to a lifetime of physically and mentally grueling training regimens to measure up to Hermea's unforgiving standards. As a result, he has transformed his body into a living weapon with mastery of countless fighting styles. His keen eyes, unforgiving demeanor, and practiced counterattacks



punish the imperfections of all who would challenge him. Uri is also a skilled negotiator, deceiver, and orator, groomed for leadership and inadvertently taught to respect few beyond Hermea's shores. His composed exterior belies his prejudiced derision of nearly everyone he works with.

## URI ZANDIVAR

## CREATURE 19

UNIQUE LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

**Perception** +35

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Gnoll, Kelesh, Osiriani

**Skills** Acrobatics +37, Arcana +33, Athletics +37, Deception +40, Diplomacy +37, Intimidation +40, Society +27, Stealth +31, Thievery +33, Underworld Lore +31

**Str** +9, **Dex** +7, **Con** +5, **Int** +7, **Wis** +8, **Cha** +9

**Items** +2 greater resilient chain mail, +2 striking returning dagger, superior manacles, oblivion essence (page 79), +3 major striking speed scimitar, steel shield with +2 greater striking shield spikes (Hardness 5, HP 20, BT 10), wasp trapped in amber (portal key), weeping midnight (page 79), winged boots

**AC** 43 (45 with shield raised); **Fort** +32, **Ref** +29, **Will** +35 (perfect will)

**HP** 350

**Perfect Will** If Uri rolls a success on a Will saving throw, he gets a critical success instead; if he rolls a critical failure on a Will save, he gets a failure instead.

### Attack of Opportunity

**Punish Imperfection** **Trigger** A creature within Uri's reach fails an attack roll, saving throw, or skill check; **Effect** Uri makes an unarmed Strike against the triggering creature. If the attack hits, the target must succeed at a DC 41 Fortitude save or become enfeebled 3 until the end of its next turn (enfeebled 4 on a critical failure).

### Shield Block

**Speed** 30 feet

**Melee** **Speed scimitar** +37 (forceful, magical, sweep), **Damage** 4d6+17 slashing

**Melee** **Shield spikes** +36 (magical), **Damage** 3d6+17 piercing

**Ranged** **Dagger** +34 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 4d4+12 piercing

**Slash and Slam** **Uri** makes two Strikes: one with his scimitar and one with his shield spikes. If both hit, the overwhelming power of the attack leaves the target stunned 1 (stunned 2 if one of the Strikes was a critical hit, or stunned 3 if both Strikes were critical hits). These Strikes count as one attack for Uri's multiple attack penalty, and the penalty doesn't increase until after both attacks.

### Swift Capture

**Uri** has manacles in his possession and is adjacent to a creature; **Effect** Uri sheathes a weapon he's carrying, then attempts to bind the creature's wrists or ankles with the manacles. If Uri succeeds at an attack roll with a +36 modifier against the target's AC, he applies the manacles.

**Swift Slash** **Uri** Strides and makes a scimitar Strike at any point during the Stride.

**Reactionary** Uri can use 2 reactions in a round, but he can't perform the same reaction more than once per round.

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# AGE OF ASHES

ADVENTURE PATH

## Next Month

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by Luis Loza

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### HERMEA

by Luis Loza

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## Crink Twiddleton

Breachill certainly has no shortage of quirky locals, but Crink Twiddleton takes the concept of quirky even further. His taste in clothing (which invariably includes a jaunty hat with an equally jaunty plume) is matched by his attitude as a fast-talking merchant whose cheesy sense of humor always seems to come across as simultaneously improvised and impeccably timed. He prides himself on ensuring that the goods he imports to Breachill are things that the locals never knew they wanted but now can't imagine living without. If asked about the burn scars on his face, Crink always has a new and often humorous explanation.



## Trinil Uskwold

The Wizard's Grace is one of Breachill's favorite watering holes for adventurers, particularly in the days leading up to the monthly Call for Heroes. The tavern's owner, Trinil Uskwold, is noted for her open-arms policy—anyone and everyone is welcome at the Wizard's Grace, and the establishment prides itself in the diversity of its clientele as well as the wide array of drinks and food it offers. Trinil comes from a long line of adventurers, and while she never took up the life herself, she has fostered friendships with numerous explorers and daredevils, and even a few Pathfinders. Should the identities of those she welcomes to her tavern ruffle feathers, she's quick to oust customers interested in causing problems—and her many friendships with adventurers come in handy during such circumstances.



## Duskgate

Duskgate appears to be carved from pale marble, shot through with faint striations of gray. Graceful pillars of stone carved to appear as if rising from grasslands flank the central arch, while the rays of a setting sun are depicted above. Upon closer inspection, wisps of white vapor ripple along the carving, moving just under the surface of the stone. Duskgate feels warm to the touch, as one might expect of stone that has spent the day baking under the desert sun, yet nothing in the portal's decor suggests that it leads to any one specific location. A PC who studies it and succeeds at a DC 25 Religion check to Recall Knowledge determines that this particular style of architecture, particularly the image of the setting sun, indicates this portal was created to honor the elven deity of architecture, art, and twilight—Findeladlara. The way station within Duskgate is corrupted by Dahak's presence, but the most curious element lies on the other side, where the far end of the portal's arch has toppled into the desert sands. This doesn't affect the portal's use as a method of travel, other than to offer those who exit from within the way station into the Katapesh side an unexpected and disorienting shift in gravity.





ADVENTURE

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