

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER[®]



EXTINCTION COURSE

THE SHOW
MUST GO ON

By Jason Tondro

AYEL'S AMAZING AVIARY

TRAITS: ANIMAL



CHECKS: NATURE +7

SEE HIM PRODUCE BIRDS FROM UNDERNEATH HIS CLOAK! THEY FLY, THEY SING, THEY DELIVER SWEETS TO CHILDREN IN THE AUDIENCE!

LEVEL 1
(DC 15)

The Dwarven Throwers

TRAITS: TEAM



CHECKS: ACROBATICS +7
ATHLETICS +10

SEE THESE TUMBLERS SHAPE THEMSELVES INTO A LIVING BALLISTA AND LAUNCH THEMSELVES THROUGH THE AIR!

LEVEL 1
(DC 15)

ELIZIA AND

MISTER TICKLES

TRAITS: ANIMAL



CHECKS: INTIMIDATION +7,
NATURE +7

SEE HER HANDLE DEADLY VIPERS OF MANY KINDS AND DANCE WITH A 16-FOOT-LONG ANACONDA!

LEVEL 1
(DC 15)

PATHFINDER

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Chapter 1: Murder in the Center Ring..... 4

The Extinction Curse Adventure Path begins as the Circus of Wayward Wonders prepares to dazzle the small town of Abberton. But when someone murders the ringmaster right before the opening act, the heroes must step in to save the show and find the killer.

Chapter 2: Abberton Investigations..... 16

The mayor of Abberton comes to the heroes with a problem: the ringmaster's killer has already caused a great deal of trouble around town, and her demonic and bestial allies must be stopped. The heroes can leverage their new status as de facto leaders of the circus to gather clues, defend the town, and rescue captured townspeople.

Chapter 3: The Corrupted Hermitage..... 32

The mayor insists the hermits at the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning are innocent of wrongdoing, but when he doesn't return from his trip to the hermitage, the heroes must travel there to free the mayor and learn more about the corruption that has gripped the killer and others in Abberton. Once there, they find that the hermitage's kindly leader, Harlock Hamdeel, was overthrown and imprisoned by the corrupted hermits.

Chapter 4: Xulgaths in the Tower..... 46

Harlock tells the heroes that the magical Erran Tower nearby is failing, and the entire Isle of Erran is dying. Xulgaths recently invaded the tower and are connected to the demonic corruption in the hermitage. The heroes can cleanse the Isle only by ascending the tower and defeating the xulgaths' leader.

THE TRAVELING CIRCUS

The Extinction Curse Adventure Path puts the heroes in the role of leaders of a traveling circus. Their circus will venture across the Isle of Erran and the Isle of Kortos throughout the adventure path, seeking larger or more lucrative venues. The inside cover of each volume presents new and exciting acts the heroes can discover during their adventures.

It's not a coincidence that these travels also correspond with the primary thread of this adventure path: investigation of the aeon towers and the xulgaths who plot their destruction. As GM, you can run Extinction Curse with a heavy focus on the circus element (with the heroes planning and running each show) or you can let the traveling circus take a back seat to getting the heroes from one aeon tower to the next. Be flexible in molding these two elements to your players' desires.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The Show Must Go On" is designed for four characters.

- 1** The heroes begin this adventure at 1st level.
- 2** The heroes should reach 2nd level by the start of Chapter 2.
- 3** The heroes should be 3rd level before exploring the hermitage in Chapter 3.
- 4** The heroes should be 4th level when they reach the Erran Tower in Chapter 4.

The heroes should reach 5th level by the end of the adventure.



CHAPTER 1: MURDER IN THE CENTER RING

Nemmia Bramblecloak has hate in her heart.

The halfling has been a hermit of Gozreh for many years, living among other Gozrens in the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning on the northeast coast of the Isle of Erran. Of late, the hermits have watched their landscape die slowly: once-lush meadows are now bare, trees grow more slowly and are becoming stunted, and animals are less healthy and less numerous with each generation. For priests who revere nature, these effects are demoralizing, and the hermits are looking for someone to blame. They have historically had little to do with the people of Abberton—a nearby settlement consisting of fewer than a thousand farmers, ranchers, and artisans. However, the people of Abberton have also been adversely affected—the town's rivers have started to dry up into mud (and in some cases, dust), and local crops have yielded poorer and poorer results each year. Most of the hermits

believe civilization is responsible for these challenges, and many hold Abberton specifically responsible, claiming its residents' efforts to tame the land have poisoned it. To most of the hermits, it doesn't matter that the people of Abberton suffer as well, as their pain results from wounds that are ultimately self-inflicted. Nemmia speaks the loudest among those hermits who want the people of Abberton to pay for their actions.

The leader of the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning, Harlock Hamdeel, knows better. He's learned from the hermitage's records that the Erran Tower, a strange, mudbrick tower located a few miles from the hermitage, gives the Isle of Erran life. More specifically, the glowing *aeon orb* that orbits the top of the tower emanates life-sustaining energy. Though the orb shines as brightly as ever, its power to bolster nature seems to be fading. Harlock has visited the tower a few times, hoping to find answers, but he hasn't discovered how to repair its

ancient magic. Harlock insisted to those at the hermitage that the people of Abberton are innocent, and the gradual ecological decline has another source, but he decided not to tell the hermits about the *aeon orb* until he knew better how to restore it. And so years passed, the land declined further, and hostile sentiment against the people of Abberton grew like a weed.

The hermitage received a dangerous visitor a few months ago: a human priestess who introduced herself as Balenni. Since the priestess demonstrated a deep knowledge of Gozren lore, the hermits invited her to join them as an honored guest. However, Balenni is no traveling cleric, but a scholarly succubus well versed with religious lore and obsessed with corrupting the pious. Balenni soon discovered the undercurrent of ill sentiment at the hermitage and took Nemmia as a lover and protege. The succubus stoked the halfling's hatred, teaching her secret lore focused on summoning mighty extraplanar minions and infusing animals with greater strength that was, in truth, demonic power. Nemmia spread this corrupted lore to the other hermits, unknown to Harlock, who was too wrapped up in his investigation of the *aeon orb* in the Erran Tower to notice. Eventually, of course, the hermits learned the demonic source of their new abilities, but many embraced this power nonetheless. They killed or drove away the hermits who wouldn't join them and captured Harlock.

Nemmia and Balenni both left the hermitage shortly thereafter. At Balenni's urging, Nemmia traveled to Abberton to plan a spree of killings. Balenni herself had learned enough about the Erran Tower from Harlock's notes to be intrigued, and she left to investigate it on her own.

At the Erran Tower

Evil xulgaths from the depths of the earth have infiltrated the *aeon* towers—of which the Erran Tower is but one—to destroy the *aeon orbs*. Their leader is the vile priest Sarvel Ever-Hunger, who orchestrates his destructive agenda from the distant Kortos Mounts. Sarvel sent one of his most aggressive acolytes, Cavnakash, to the Erran Tower. Like Sarvel, Cavnakash venerates the brutish demon lord Zevgavizeb. Cavnakash and his followers have thus far kept their presence on the surface a secret, but Cavnakash hasn't been able to damage the *aeon orb* at all.

When Balenni arrived at the Erran Tower and found it occupied, she quickly made an alliance with Cavnakash. She has since soured on his mission, however. She considers Cavnakash's single-minded pursuit of the *aeon orb*'s destruction to be short-sighted and steeped in ignorance. She'd rather study the artifact and learn to harness its powers, but Cavnakash doesn't believe gleaning any further information is valuable. He doesn't need to know what the *aeon orb* does or what will be gained by destroying it; he considers such questions irrelevant to the larger goal of advancing his status in Zevgavizeb's priesthood. Balenni has increasingly ignored Cavnakash to focus on fostering dissent within the xulgath ranks, but she remains ostensibly loyal to the xulgath priest for now.

The Circus Arrives

The heroes begin the adventure as members of a traveling circus called the Circus of Wayward Wonders. They might be performers, roustabouts, or other assistants, but they each consider the circus their home. This circus is very new; less than a year ago, several performers in Mistress Dusklight's Celestial Menagerie in Escadar—including the heroes—tired of their heartless ringmaster's cruel ways and quit to form their own circus.

CHAPTER 1 SYNOPSIS

The Circus of Wayward Wonders, the traveling circus that the heroes have joined, is hosting its opening night in the small town of Abberton on the eastern edge of the Isle of Erran. Just before the show begins, the ringmaster is found dead from poison. At the beginning of the adventure, the heroes face two challenges: putting on a spectacular show and finding the killer.

CHAPTER 1 TREASURE

The permanent and consumable items available as treasure in Chapter 1 are as follows.

- +1 sickle
- everburning torch
- feather token, holly bush
- healing potion, minor
- lesser bravo's brew
- low-grade cold iron pick
- owlbear claw
- potency crystal
- splint mail

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

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Murder in the
Center Ring

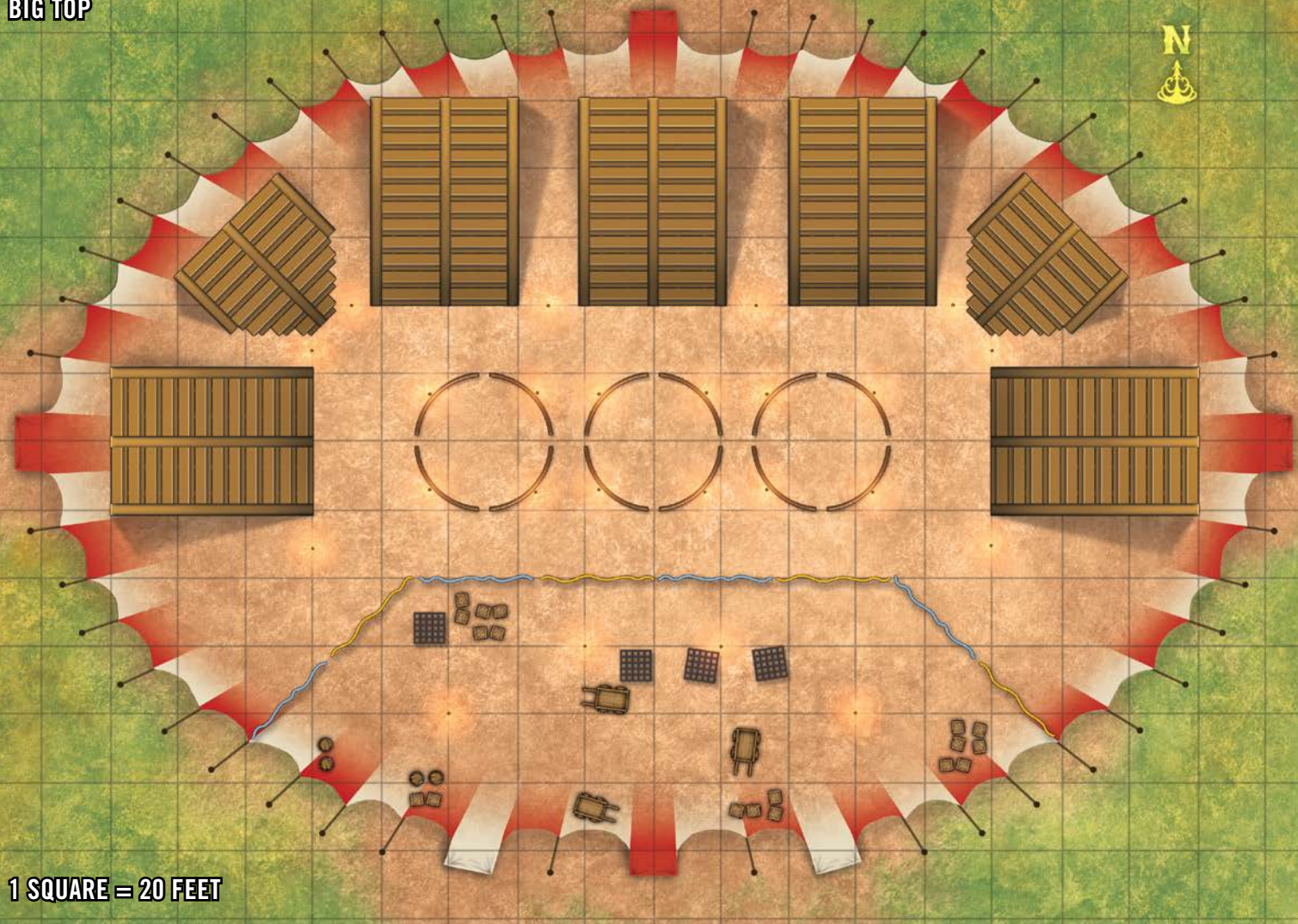
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1 SQUARE = 20 FEET

These performers knew they would need to leave Escadar quickly to avoid Mistress Dusklight's wrath, and they committed themselves to the life of wayward wanderers. The new circus's leaders, an elderly circus veteran known only as the Professor and a bombastic showman named Myron "Thunder" Stendhal, led the Circus of Wayward Wonders out of Escadar and across the Isle of Erran. After several months of practices and performances for homesteaders and farmers, the circus is ready to perform a large show in a sizable town. Abberton isn't what many people would consider a destination for performers, but it's where the Circus of Wayward Wonders must start.

The people of Abberton are excited for the circus, if only to take their minds off of recent troubles. On the night of the circus's first performance, nearly every resident of the town—including Mayor Jae Abber—crowds the tent to experience the magic of the big top. But Nemmia has recently struck the circus and murdered Myron "Thunder" Stendhal. The performers soon discover this killing, but the show must go on...

To begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following introduction.

The Circus of Wayward Wonders performs in an enormous tent capable of holding hundreds of people—and that's a good thing, as it seems the entire population of Abberton has turned out for the show. Many of the town's most prominent citizens, including the mayor, are among the throng jostling for seats, peering at the three rings that fill the center of the tent, and waiting excitedly for the show to begin.

As the lights go down and the audience settles onto their seats, the circus's performers take their places backstage, awaiting their cues. Suddenly, several of the performers closest to the curtain that separates the three rings from the rest of the tent leave their assignments, gathering in a small crowd to exchange frightened whispers and hushed gasps. Amid the group, his body contorted as if caught forever in the throes of terrible pain, is the corpse of ringmaster Myron "Thunder" Stendhal. Everyone in the circus knew Myron for his amazing, powerful voice that could bring instant silence to the largest crowd, and he knew everything there is to know about putting on a successful performance. Now he's dead, but the crowd is still out there, and they're expecting a show.

The heroes begin the adventure crowded around Myron's body with several other performers. Members of the circus are shocked, afraid, and uncertain what to do next. The heroes may want to investigate the body, but there is no time. Their first priority should be ensuring that the show continues as planned. After all, the performers' livelihoods depend on the spectacle they create; if they don't perform, they don't eat. One of the older members of the circus, a sideshow barker named Professor Zarlian Kyosophus, covers Myron's body with a silk cape and addresses the group backstage.

As the other performers stare at the corpse, whisper to each other, and anxiously peer around the curtain, the Professor—a thin and frail veteran of the circus—looks up. “Well, what are you all standing around for?” he asks, his weak voice barely audible in the hushed silence. “Have you seen that crowd? We haven't ever had the tent packed this full. There's a show to put on, and we have to find a way to do it. So finish your makeup, get into your costumes, and send in the clowns!”

Quick to follow the Professor's advice, the circus's clowns immediately bound through the curtain and into the three rings. This buys time for the Professor to approach the heroes—who seem to be the only performers who haven't been shocked into inaction in the face of strife—and implore them to take charge of the show. While many of the circus performers know their jobs and don't need to be told what to do, there are still several important decisions to be made before the opening curtain. The order of circus acts isn't yet set and many of the circus's most talented performers are too stunned by Myron's death to go on. It is up to the heroes to address these challenges in Myron's absence and ensure the performance is one the audience will never forget.

Putting on the Show

The mechanics of putting on a circus performance are set forth in the *Life in the Circus* article beginning on page 59. For the purposes of this first performance, much of the preparation and many of the statistics are already established; the circus has a Prestige of 1 and this performance has an Anticipation of 15. Although the Professor had the clowns distract the crowds to

delay the show's opening, the heroes can still send in the Clowns once during the show, as normal.

The remaining task, which falls to the heroes, is to decide how to arrange seven different tricks in the circus's four acts: one trick for the opener in the center ring, two tricks for the build-up in the side rings, one trick for the big number in the center ring, and three tricks for the finale in all three rings. Only six NPC tricks are ready to perform; they are presented in this adventure's inner covers. Thus, at least one hero must perform a signature trick, but multiple heroes can perform signature tricks if the group wishes to use fewer NPC tricks. Several NPC tricks have some problems that must be resolved, as described in the *Circus Challenges* section below. The Professor can explain the details of the NPC tricks and make recommendations, but he leaves the final decisions to the heroes. He admits that Myron

had likely already decided on the tricks and their order, but didn't have the opportunity to tell anyone before he was killed.

Treasure: When the heroes have overcome the relevant challenges described below and completed the show, the Professor ensures they receive a larger portion of the house receipts than usual; each hero receives 5 gp. He also gives the heroes two *minor healing potions* from his own stores.

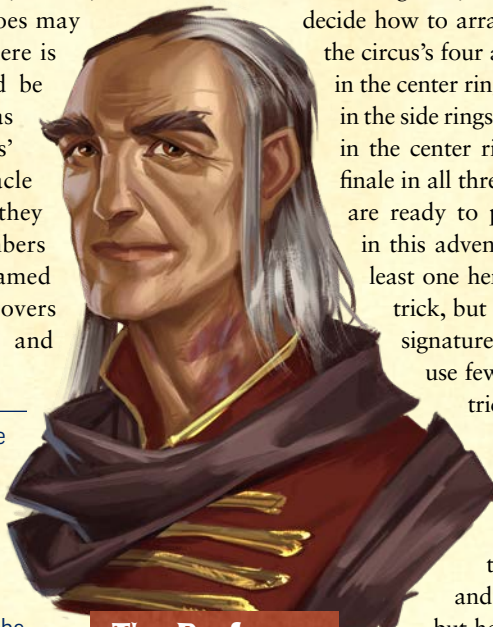
XP Award: If the show generates more Excitement than its Anticipation (of 15), award the heroes 80 XP. If not, their efforts still earn them 30 XP. In addition, for each hero who successfully performed a signature trick, award every hero 30 XP.

Circus Challenges

While deciding which tricks to use in the show, the heroes discover several challenges that need to be addressed. The first four challenges deal directly with NPC tricks the heroes may have selected; each trick's challenge must be resolved before that trick can be used. The final three challenges can occur any time during the show; you should use these as short encounters during acts in which few or none of the heroes are performing.

AXEL THE UNPROVEN

Axel has been following the Circus of Wayward Wonders for about a week, begging Myron to give him a chance to audition. Myron always turned him down



The Professor

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in public but, among the other circus performers, he acknowledged that he was testing Axel's commitment to circus life. Myron never got the opportunity to give Axel his chance. The heroes likely know that Axel hasn't ever performed in front of an audience before, and the other entertainers express overt skepticism about his abilities. Axel insists that he's ready and begs to be included in the show; however, when his time comes to perform, he freezes with stage fright and won't leave the backstage area. A hero can attempt a DC 17 Diplomacy check to Request he perform or a DC 15 Intimidate check to Coerce him to go on. Other methods to ease his stage fright might also work, at your discretion. On a success, he performs as normal; on a critical success, he gains a +2 circumstance bonus to his skill checks. On a failure, he can't be persuaded to perform, and the heroes must swap in another trick; on a critical failure, any character who performs the substituted trick takes a -2 circumstance penalty to skill checks due to lack of time to prepare.

XP Award: If the heroes convince Axel to perform, award them each 10 XP.

GNAWED NETS

As a ring is being prepared for the Kanbali family, a group of acrobatic performers collectively known as the Feather-Fall Five, these tight-rope walkers discover their nets have been sabotaged. The entire family comes to the heroes and asks them what to do. A hero who succeeds at a DC 13 Perception or Nature check finds the nets have been chewed through by rats, but targeting the nets specifically is unusual behavior for rodents. There isn't likely time to repair the nets, and the Kanbalis are reluctant to perform without them. A hero must succeed at a DC 17 Diplomacy check to Request the family perform without a net. If the heroes point out that the damage was caused by rats and not some humanoid saboteur, they are somewhat mollified, and the Diplomacy DC to convince them to perform without a net is reduced to 15. Performing without a net is dangerous; the trick gains the Injury trait, as described on page 64. However, performing without a net thrills the crowd so much that success generates an additional 2 Excitement.

XP Award: If the heroes convince the Feather-Fall Five to perform, award them each 10 XP.

ELIZIA'S SICK SNAKE

Elizia the snake charmer comes to the heroes with a problem. Mister Tickle, her anaconda, is lethargic and won't eat or drink. A hero who succeeds at a DC 15 Medicine or Nature check to Recall Knowledge identifies the malady as goblin pox. Goblin pox isn't lethal, and

when Elizia learns that Mister Tickle is in no real danger and will recover within a few days, she is relieved. She has no idea how Mister Tickle got the pox. (In fact, Nemmia sickened the snake with magic when Elizia wasn't looking to keep her distracted.) A hero can attempt a DC 19 Medicine check to Treat Disease to suppress the snake's illness just enough to allow it to perform as planned. Regardless of the result, Elizia agrees to go on. On a success, Elizia has a -1 circumstance penalty to checks during her trick due to Mister Tickle's illness. On a critical success, she has no penalty. On a failure, her penalty is -2, and on a critical failure her penalty is -4.

XP Award: If the heroes succeed at the Medicine check to treat Mister Tickle, award them each 10 XP.

MORDAINE THE DIVA

Mordaine the Magician flatly refuses to perform unless she is in the big number. Everyone in the circus knows about her incredible ego, and she had argued with Myron many times when he refused to agree to her demands. To convince Mordaine to perform in anything other than the big number, a hero must succeed at a DC 17 Deception check to Lie about the value of her performance in a different act, a DC 17 Diplomacy check to Request her to perform in another act, or a DC 15 Intimidate check to Coerce her to perform. Mordaine's assistant, Hod, is well aware of her intransigence; if the heroes enlist Hod to speak with her, reduce the DC of the Diplomacy check to 13 (Hod won't aid attempts to trick or bully Mordaine).

XP Award: If the heroes get Mordaine to perform in an act other than the big number, award them each 10 XP.

TROUBLESOME GAMBLERS

LOW 1

A trio of mean-spirited gamblers are moving through the crowd, loudly offering bets on various calamities. They provoke the crowd, asking questions that inspire fear or panic: Will one of the Feather-Fall Five fall to their death? What are the odds on each family member to die? Will Mordaine the Magician drown in the water tank? Will Mister Tickle eat someone? These gamblers are plainly bothering other members of the audience with their noisy jeers. This encounter can take place at any time, but likely occurs early in the show—perhaps even during the opener.

Creatures: These ruffians are fundamentally cowards. A hero can chase off a ruffian with a successful DC 20 Diplomacy check to Request they leave. Also, any ruffian who is injured or gains the frightened condition flees. Even though the surrounding crowd dislikes the ruffians' jeers, they like outright violence even less; if the heroes use lethal damage against the ruffians, reduce

the Excitement of the audience by 2 unless the heroes succeed at a DC 15 Deception or Diplomacy check to placate the crowd.

ABBERTON RUFFIANS

CREATURE -1

NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human ruffians (3)

Perception +4

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +5, Deception +3, Gambling Lore +1, Intimidation +3, Thievery +3

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** -1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Items bottles (2), dagger

AC 13; **Fort** +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

HP 8

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +7 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+3 piercing

Melee ♦ fist +7 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+3 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ thrown bottle +5 (range 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Opening Threat ♦ **Requirement** The ruffian hasn't acted yet on their turn; **Effect** The ruffian uses an Interact action to draw their dagger, then uses Demoralize.

XP Award: If the heroes chase away the ruffians, award them XP as though they had defeated the ruffians in combat.

SNAKES IN THE STANDS

LOW 1

Nemmia brought three vipers into the circus tent and compelled them to bite the ringmaster Myron, killing him. Afterward, the snakes retreated to a quiet space under the bleachers to rest. The activity of the crowd has roused and frightened them. This encounter should occur during the build-up.

Creatures: The three vipers have slithered up into the crowd. They aren't malicious, but they strike out at anyone who treats them aggressively. A viper flees if given a clear way out of the tent; this requires a hero to succeed at a DC 15 Diplomacy check to Request that the crowd part or a DC 20 Nature check to shoo away the vipers. Any hero with the wild empathy class feature can use that ability to convince the snakes to depart; the DC of the Diplomacy check for this Request is only 10. So long as the heroes dispatch or chase away the snakes promptly, the crowd is thrilled; increase the Excitement of the audience by 1.

VIPERS (3)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 302

Initiative Perception +5

XP Award: If the heroes shoo the vipers away, award them XP as though they had defeated the snakes in combat.

DRUNKEN BRAWLERS

MODERATE 1

A married pair of drunken brawlers named Jaleen and Rhovo jeer and holler in their seats. They deride and scoff at every trick, no matter how successfully performed. Other audience members seated nearby ask the drunken couple to be quiet, but this only provokes violence. A hero who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notices this altercation before any punches have been thrown. Otherwise, the heroes don't notice the disturbance until the drunken pair has already tackled a few other audience members, beating them while laughing uproariously.

Creatures: The brawlers can't be dissuaded or reasoned with; unlike the cowardly gamblers, these brawlers fight until they're defeated. The brawlers gleefully engage anyone making nonlethal attacks but flee as soon as either of them takes damage from a lethal attack. As with the fight against the ruffians, the crowd responds unpleasantly if the heroes resort to lethal damage; reduce the Excitement of the audience by 2 unless the heroes succeed at a DC 15 Deception or Diplomacy check to placate the crowd.

JALEEN AND RHOVO

CREATURE 1

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Female and male human drunken brawlers (2)

Perception +4

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +7, Intimidation +3, Society +3

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** -1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -1

Items leather armor

AC 14; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7

HP 27 each; **Resistances** mental 3

Speed 25 feet

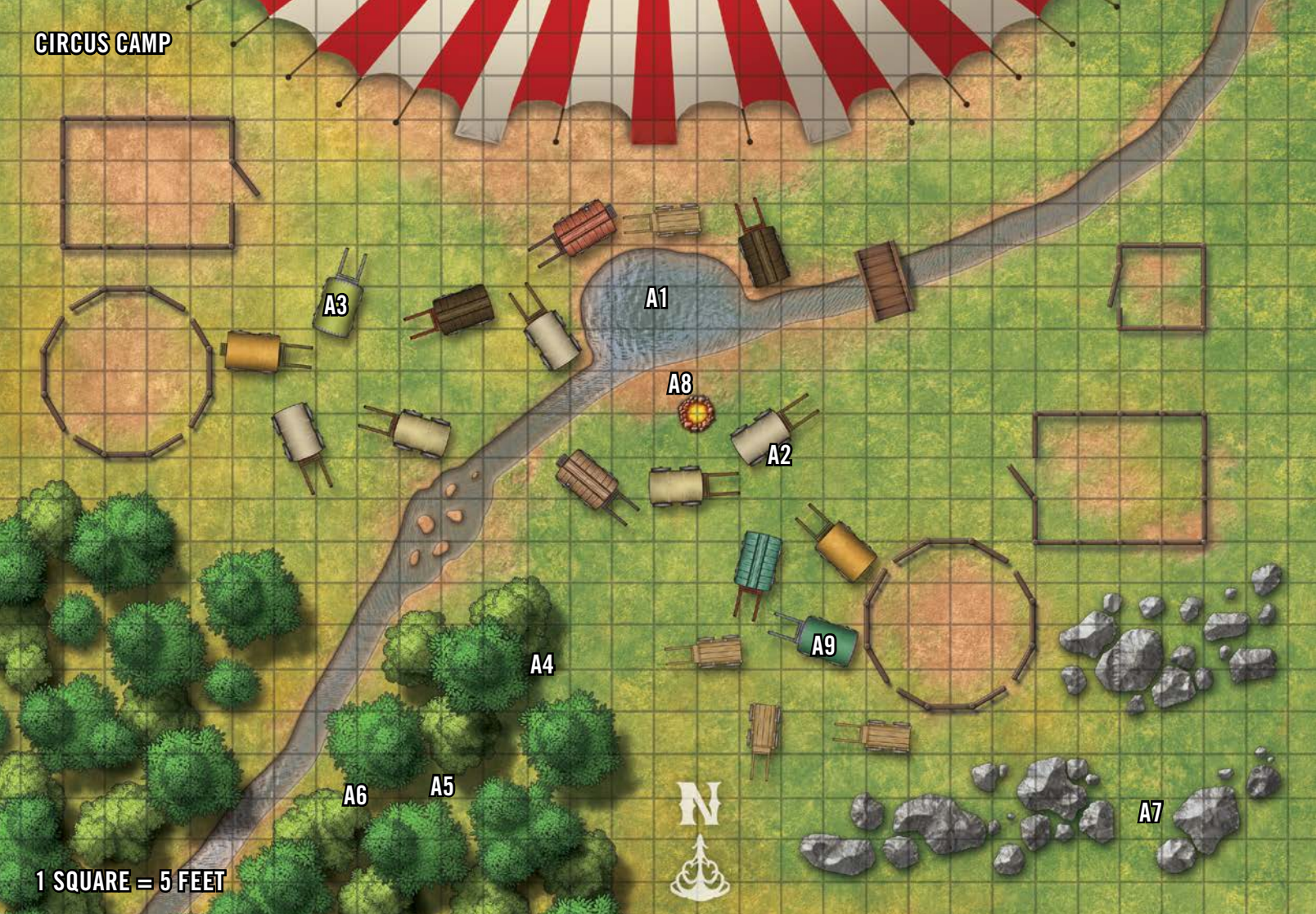
Melee ♦ fist +8 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d4+3 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ improvised weapon +6, **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing

Drunken Rage ♦ (concentrate, emotion, mental)

Requirement The drunken brawler isn't fatigued or raging; **Effect** The drunken brawler begins raging. They gain 4 temporary Hit Points and deal 1 additional damage with fist Strikes. They have a -1 penalty to AC and can't use actions with the concentrate trait unless those actions also have the rage trait. The drunken brawler can still Seek while in a drunken rage. The rage lasts for 1 minute or until the drunken brawler falls unconscious, whichever comes first. When the drunken rage is over, the drunken brawler is fatigued, loses all temporary Hit

CIRCUS CAMP



Points they received from the rage, and cannot rage again for 1 minute.

Improvised Surprise ♦ The drunken brawler uses an Interact action to pick up an improvised weapon within reach and then Strikes with it. The drunken brawler has a +2 circumstance bonus to this attack.

After the Show

Once the show is over—or even during the performance, if the heroes aren’t otherwise occupied with addressing challenges or performing their own tricks—the heroes can investigate the murder. If the heroes don’t think to search the circus camp behind the tent for clues, the NPC entertainers express concern that the mysterious killer may be planning to inflict further harm to the members of the Circus of Wayward Wonders, and suggest the heroes do so.

EXAMINING THE BODY

A close evaluation of the dead ringmaster reveals that his legs are so swollen that his pant legs can’t be rolled up; his trousers must be cut off or cut open. Doing so reveals many snake bites on both his calves. A hero

who succeeds at a DC 13 Medicine check determines that snake venom caused his death; on a critical success, the hero knows the exact type of snake that bit Myron. If the heroes also discover the vipers hiding under the bleachers, they likely piece together that the vipers killed Myron.

Such vicious and repeated attacks are uncharacteristic of normal vipers. A hero realizes the vipers must have been controlled or coerced somehow with a successful DC 13 Nature check. If no hero succeeds at this check, Elizia offers them this information instead.

The area immediately around Myron’s body bears strange tracks. A hero who succeeds at a DC 17 Perception check or a DC 15 Survival check to Track notes the tiny prints of countless rats. These numerous rat tracks hide any other footprints that might have been here, including Myron’s own. The rats aren’t present any longer, and their behavior is just as unusual as that of the vipers.

IDENTIFYING SUSPECTS

To solve Myron’s murder, the heroes must identify a suspect—someone with the opportunity to kill him,

as well as the means and sufficient motive. Several witnesses, perhaps even including the heroes, saw Myron prior to the performance both in the circus tent and in the camp behind the tent. It wasn't unusual for Myron to move about so much before a performance to make sure everything was ready, and he often spent time out of sight to get his costume in order or to speak to a performer in private. Unfortunately, this means nearly anyone would have had the opportunity to attack him.

Elizia is an obvious suspect, as she has a large collection of venomous serpents. Elizia notes that all of her snakes are accounted for; the vipers that killed Myron didn't come from her collection. If the heroes ask around, they learn Elizia and Myron have known each other for years and were good friends; the snake-charmer had no motive to kill him.

Although the heroes might suspect the motives of other performers, such as Axel (the novice performer who Myron hadn't provided the opportunity to work) or Mordaine (whose personality has caused her to clash with Myron in the past), no one else in the circus had the means to control snakes, and no one could control rats.

The killer therefore seems to be someone who isn't with the Circus of Wayward Wonders. Some of the performers—again, perhaps including the heroes—might suspect that Mistress Dusklight sent someone from the Celestial Menagerie to kill the ringmaster. This isn't out of character for the devious catfolk, but she isn't involved in this murder—although there's no harm in letting the heroes run with this assumption for a while.

Circus Camp

The Circus of Wayward Wonders includes many performers, along with numerous roustabouts, hangers-on, and family members. The entire group travels in wagons of various sizes; some are small and drawn by a single horse or mule; others are much larger and are pulled by teams of horses or oxen instead. The circus also includes several animals, from Elizia's snakes to assorted camels, bears, and even elephants. Some of these animals are kept in or near their owners' wagons, but others follow along with the wagons and must be corralled when the big top is up.

The circus camp consists of two dozen mismatched wagons parked on a grassy field broken by a meandering stream. A large, communal fire burns near a deep pond formed by the stream. Even if the circus performance was successful, the mood in the camp is subdued. The performers huddle together by the fire, nervously watching the camp and jumping at shadows. The performers have good reason to be

concerned; Nemmia has spent a lot of time in and around the camp already. She's currently lurking in the Kanbali family wagon and planning her next strike.

It's up to the heroes to investigate the circus camp for dangers; if the heroes don't look around on their own, the nervous circus performers—still largely stunned into inaction—ask them to do so. Use the following locations to guide the heroes' investigation and note that some of the encounters can be triggered by circus performers who call for the heroes to help (such as the roustabouts gathering more wood from area A4).

A hero who searches the camp for tracks and succeeds at a DC 17 Perception check or DC 17 Survival check to Track notices multiple rat tracks throughout the camp. Most of these tracks are near the ringmaster's wagon (area A2), Bardolph's wagon (area A3), the edge of the woods (area A4), and the Kanbali wagon (area A9). They also lead to and from the performers' entrance to the big top.

Lucky heroes might encounter Nemmia in the Kanbali wagon right away; although this means they've found the killer, the camp still isn't safe, and a performer's unexpected encounter with one of the remaining dangers should encourage the heroes to thoroughly explore the camp.

A1. POND

Members of the Circus of Wayward Wonders prefer to set up camp within easy access to water, and this pond on Abberton's outskirts served their needs perfectly. The circus performers cross the stream by means of an old wooden bridge to the northeast and a shallow ford with stepping stones to the southwest.

A2. THE RINGMASTER'S WAGON MODERATE 1

Myron's personal wagon is parked very near the pond, right in front of the meeting fire. A colorful banner on each side of the wagon advertises the Circus of Wayward Wonders in large capital letters, surrounded by images that depict some of the most famous acts in the show (including one or more of the heroes, as well as some of the NPC acts, such as the Feather-Fall Five, Elizia and Mister Tickles, and Mordaine the Magician). Three steps affixed to the wagon's rear lead up to a red door with a golden knob. The door is locked, and the key isn't on Myron's body (Nemmia took it, and still has it). A hero can Pick the Lock with two successful DC 17 Thievery skill checks, or they can Force Open the door with a successful DC 20 Athletics check. The interior of the wagon is lit with an *everburning torch* that emits a golden hue.

Hazard: Nemmia left four deadly plants in Myron's wagon to confuse and injure anyone investigating

his death. When she placed them here, each could fit in her hand; the fast-growing plants are now 2 feet tall with large stalks that droop heavy with pollen pods. The air inside the wagon is thick with sparkling golden pollen, and the moment the heroes open the door, the same substance sprays from the plants inside the wagon.

DREAM POLLEN PODS HAZARD 3

COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL TRAP

Stealth +12 (trained)

Description Four magical plants inside the wagon release hallucinogenic pollen when disturbed.

Disable Thievery DC 18 (trained) to carefully remove a pollen pod or Nature DC 18 (trained) to prevent a pod from bursting.

AC 18; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +3

Hardness 1, **HP** 32 (BT 16); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Pollen Burst **Trigger** The wagon door is opened or the pods are disturbed; **Effect** A pod makes a pollen spray Strike against an adjacent creature or the creature that opened the door, the door falls off the wagon, and the trap rolls initiative.

Routine (4 actions) The trap loses 1 action each turn for each removed or disabled pollen pod. The trap doesn't take a multiple attack penalty.

Ranged ♦ pollen spray +12 (range 20 feet), **Damage** 1d8 poison and hallucinogenic pollen

Hallucinogenic Pollen A creature hit by the trap's pollen spray must succeed at a DC 20 Will save or it is confused for 1 round and takes a -2 status penalty to Perception checks and saves against mental effects for 1d4 hours. On a critical failure, the penalty is instead -4.

Reset The trap resets after 1 hour, when the pods have regrown additional pollen. If all the pods are removed or disabled, the trap doesn't reset.

Searching the Wagon: Myron's wagon is filled with many personal belongings gathered from his travels. There's no indication that Myron was expecting any kind of violence.

Treasure: Among Myron's mementos are a *lesser bravo's brew* in a crystal vial, an *everburning torch* engraved with the phrase "See what you want to see," a bearskin hat marked with a golden leaf worth 7 gp, and a cape once worn by a skilled animal trainer named the Great Fortunato worth 5 gp.

A3. BARDOLPH'S WAGON

MODERATE 1

Bardolph is the circus's bear, and he has been something of a beloved mascot ever since his previous owner and caretaker, the Great Fortunato, was robbed and killed in an alleyway in Escadar. Myron couldn't stand leaving the bear behind in Mistress Duskligh's clutches, and so he took the bear and the Great Fortunato's wagon. Bardolph continues to live in Fortunato's old wagon and still knows all the tricks that make up his act, so he can perform with minimal direction from the circus folk. They consider Bardolph part of the family and akin to a giant pet.

The wagon is large and decorated with faded paintings that depict Bardolph dancing, balancing on a ball, and menacing the Great Fortunato, who is armed with a whip. There is a large door in the rear

of the wagon; it has no lock, and each side of the door boasts a thick and well-chewed length of rope (Bardolph clasps this rope with his mouth to pull the door open and shut). The inside of the wagon, which has been emptied of all furniture and instead layered with countless blankets, smells as one would expect a bear den to smell.

Creature: Bardolph has been resting for a week after suffering a foot injury in another town, and thus he was in his wagon when Nemmia came looking to cause mischief prior to murdering the ringmaster. Nemmia charmed the bear and convinced him that the Great Fortunato's killer is finally coming for him. The bear therefore attacks the next creature to open the door to his wagon, even if it's someone he knows. The bear comes to his senses after 2 rounds, breaking off the fight.

If a hero is carrying the cape from the ringmaster's tent (area A2), Bardolph scents his former owner on the cape and is convinced the hero with it is the killer. Bardolph attacks that character to the exclusion of all others, and doesn't come to his senses until that hero is knocked out or killed.

BARDOLPH

CREATURE 3

Male grizzly bear (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 40)

Initiative Perception +10

Treasure: An *owlbear claw* hangs from a dreamcatcher in the wagon. The Great Fortunato hung it in plain sight in the event of an emergency, but he never got the chance to use it to defend himself.



Dream Pollen Pod

A4. SNAKES IN THE WOODS

MODERATE 1

Since the murder, Nemmia has been watching the circus camp from a hidden blind in the woods, quivering with rage each time one of the circus workers came to chop wood for fires or to procure materials for minor construction. She isn't in the woods now; she's hiding out in the Kanbali family wagon instead (area A9). The heroes are likely to investigate this area when a pair of roustabouts come to cut more wood and spot the vipers lurking there.

Heroes who fight the snakes spot a short path that leads further into the woods (area A5).

Creatures: A giant viper and a smaller one lurk in the woods, ready to make a meal of anyone who comes by. If the heroes don't investigate the woods right away, a pair of roustabouts come to cut firewood, see the smaller viper, and raise the alarm. The roustabouts don't spot the larger viper; it's lurking amid the tangled undergrowth. Both snakes fight until slain.

GIANT VIPER

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 303

Initiative Stealth +8

VIPER

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 302

Initiative Perception +5

A5. TRAPPED PATH

LOW 1

Hazard: Taking no chances of discovery while she was plotting her attack on the circus, Nemmia fashioned a simple trap here to lash intruders with thorny vines laced with snake venom.

ENVENOMED THORNS TRAP

HAZARD 2

MECHANICAL **TRAP**

Stealth DC 20 (trained)

Description A trip wire strung 4 feet above the ground releases a branch studded with envenomed thorns.

Disable Thievery DC 18 (trained) to remove the trip wire.

AC 18; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +4

Hardness 5, **HP** 28 (BT 14); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Thorny Branch ⤵ (poison); **Trigger** The trip wire is touched;

Effect The trap's poisoned thorns attack the creature or object touching the trip wire.

Melee poisoned thorns +14, **Damage** 1d6+4 piercing plus 1d8 poison

A6. NEMMIA'S CLEARING

MODERATE 1

This small clearing—no more than a widening in the path through the thick woods—contains a small pile of leaves a

few feet in diameter with a thin blanket. Next to the leaves rests a small backpack emblazoned with a green patch. The stream burbles merrily nearby.

Nemmia rested here while spying on the circus and making her plans; she expects to come back here once she's done terrorizing the circus so she can clean up her camp and return to the Lindell barn (areas E1 and E2) on the outskirts of Abberton. Heroes who find the camp here—either before or after confronting Nemmia—can learn a bit more about her background and her schemes.

The patch on the backpack is the religious symbol of Gozreh, which the heroes can identify with a successful DC 10 Religion check to Recall Knowledge; it is Nemmia's from her time with the hermits at the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning.

Creatures: Two water mephits came with Nemmia to this camp, but they proved reluctant to perform the cruelties Nemmia had planned. Tiring of the creatures' admonishments and jokes, Nemmia left them here. One water mephit currently lurks in the stream, hiding, while the other has crept out and is filling Nemmia's bag with river stones to make it heavy. Both mephits are startled to see anyone other than Nemmia, and the mephit at the backpack looks particularly guilty. Both attack intruders to try to drive them away, but they don't pursue creatures that retreat into the forest. A mephit reduced to fewer than 6 Hit Points dives into the river to flee.

WATER MEPHITS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 151

Initiative Perception +3, **Stealth** +6

Treasure: Nemmia's backpack contains 2 Bulk of wet river rocks on top of a highly detailed map she made of Abberton and its surrounding environment. While not as fully detailed as a survey map, this map is nevertheless worth 6 gp. Nemmia has scribbled notes about different locations all over the map, most notably on the Circus of Wayward Wonders, and the detail on the movements of the circus members is disturbingly accurate. Oldlin's Orchard and the Hawfton Mill are both marked on the map, although other locations in Chapter 2 (such as the Lindell barn) aren't marked. The backpack also contains a few handfuls of tasty nuts and a *holly bush feather token*.

A7. COCKATRICE ROCKS

MODERATE 1

The circus set up its horse corral and one of the practice rings near a large heap of scattered boulders. Unknown to the circus members, however, the

boulders are the home of a surly and lazy cockatrice. A hero who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check while looking at the boulders notices that one of them looks startlingly like a crumbled statue of a cow; this is the cockatrice's most recent victim.

Creature: The cockatrice attacks any creatures that enter the area of the jumbled stones, pursuing them aggressively if they flee and fighting until slain.

COCKATRICE

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 66

Initiative Perception +8

Treasure: The cockatrice's nest contains several valuables from past victims, including 30 sp and the corpse of a dwarf wearing a suit of splint mail armor and a low-grade cold iron pick.

A8. THE FAERIE FIRE

MODERATE 1

This encounter should occur when the heroes return to the main camp after exploring a more distant location, such as Nemmia's clearing (area A6) or the cockatrice rocks (area A7).

As the heroes are looking for dangers around the camp, the rest of the circus workers are huddled around the meeting fire. Eventually, a few of the circus folk pull out musical instruments in an attempt to lighten the mood. The heroes might hear this music drifting from the meeting fire as they explore.

The music attracted the attention of Tarisia and Cannono, a pair of grigs who watched the circus performance. Tarisia and Cannono consider themselves circus aficionados and adored the performance; when they realized the circus folk were all gathered around making music, the two sprites could not resist participating in the impromptu concert. Most of the circus folk fell sway to the grigs' fiddling music and are now compelled to dance around the fire. When the heroes approach, read or summarize the following.

The sound of pipes, fiddles, and horns echoes across the camp from the meeting fire, where members of the Circus of Wayward Wonders have been waiting for a proclamation that it is safe for them to return to their wagons. But now, everyone has formed two concentric rings, with the musicians on the inside, and everyone else dancing on the outside. Their energetic prancing seems incongruous with the weariness on their faces.

"Help us!" the Professor pants, sweat pouring down his frail face as his limbs jerk in time to the lively jig.

Creatures: The grigs don't really understand the trauma they are inflicting on the circus members; they

presume that those caught up in their music are having fun. For the heroes to intervene, they must first reach the center of the circle, where the grigs are playing on a dinner plate set by the fire. A hero can pass through the dancers by using brute force (with a successful DC 15 Athletics check), using finesse (with a successful DC 15 Acrobatics check), or joining the dance and working through it to the center (with a successful DC 13 Performance, Society, or a relevant Lore check).

Once the heroes reach the center of the circle, Tarisia and Cannono are delighted to see them. They proclaim themselves to be huge fans of any hero who succeeded at performing a signature trick in the show. They encourage the heroes to join the festivities and have fun. If told to stop, they brush off the instruction, insisting, "Everyone is having such a good time!"

Convincing the grigs to stop playing and release the circus folk requires a successful DC 17 Diplomacy or Intimidation check. If a hero succeeds at this check, the grigs depart, dejected by the sudden end to their revel.

Alternatively, a hero with a musical instrument can guide the tune to an end with two successful DC 15 Performance checks (one to join the music and the second to lead it to a proper conclusion). If a hero ends the music this way, the grigs are particularly pleased and stay to chat with the circus folk. In this case, the grigs are likely still present when Nemmia attacks, and they aid the heroes in that conflict as described in area A9.

Of course, the heroes can simply attack the grigs; the fey defend themselves, but flee if reduced to fewer than 6 Hit Points. If they're driven off or defeated, their music ends and the circus folk collapse, exhausted.

TARISIA AND CANNONO

CREATURE 1

Female and male grigs (2; *Pathfinder Bestiary* 308)

Initiative Perception +7

Treasure: Tarisia carries a glimmering *potency crystal*. If the heroes defeat the grig, they find it on her person; if the heroes deal with the grigs peaceably, she leaves it behind on the dinner plate when she departs.

A9. KANBALI WAGON

SEVERE 1

Nemmia has been hiding out in the wagon of the Kanbali family, collectively known as the Feather-Fall Five. With the aid of her rat spies, she observes the heroes as they explore the camp. The heroes might check the Kanbali wagon on their own, triggering a fight with Nemmia themselves, but she's otherwise content to watch them. (The Kanbalis, like many of the performers, are too shaken up to return to their wagon and instead stay with the other circus folk around the meeting fire until the mystery of the murder is solved.)

If the heroes haven't discovered Nemmia's location before their encounter with the grigs, Nemmia decides to strike while the circus folk are exhausted and vulnerable after their compulsory dancing. She emerges from the Kanbali wagon with her horde of rats and strides confidently toward the meeting fire. When you decide the time has come for Nemmia's final attack on the circus, read or paraphrase the following.

The rustling of leaves can be heard as hundreds of red-eyed rats scurry about the foliage. The rats surround a halfling woman wearing a headdress in the shape of a rat's head, its open mouth framing her face.

"Isn't this a pretty sight," she cackles, twisting her grip on a gnarled staff. "I had hoped to murder more of you while the whole town was watching. That would have frightened them away from here for good! But a bigger slaughter might be even better; the foolish farmers and poisoners of Abberton will discover your rat-chewed corpses. No one will know how it happened, but everyone will whisper that nature is taking its revenge. And it is, through me! I'll wager most of the town will be gone in a week, and the rest will fall easily. Then, perhaps, the land can heal from the cancer known as Abberton."

Creatures: Nemmia plans to kill the heroes, but she's willing to banter a bit with them first. She insists that the townspeople are wounding the environment and placing the world out of balance. Nemmia doesn't mention Balenni or the demonic corruption she's embraced, but the heroes might get her to reveal that she's a follower of Gozreh from the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning. She reiterates that she's been active in town recently, and she hints that there are many more aspects to her plans to kill or chase off the people of Abberton than just her attack on the circus.

After a short discussion with the heroes, Nemmia gestures with her staff, and her rats rush forward to attack. Nemmia prefers to hang back. If the heroes pleased the grigs Taria and Cannono with their music, the grigs fight along the heroes against Nemmia and her rats. All of these foes fight to the death.

NEMMIA BRAMBLECLOAK

CREATURE 3

Page 90

Initiative Perception +9

RAT SWARM

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 276

Initiative Perception +5

GIANT RAT

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 276

Initiative Perception +5

Capturing the Killer: The heroes might capture Nemmia rather than kill her. She is sullen and uncommunicative in captivity, and she doesn't reveal much more than described above. If the heroes seek to turn her over to the authorities, then Mayor Jae Abber escorts her away after he speaks with the heroes at the beginning of Chapter 2.

THE SHOW
MUST
GO ON

Chapter 1:
Murder in the
Center Ring

Chapter 2:
Abberton
Investigations

Chapter 3:
The Corrupted
Hermitage

Chapter 4:
Xulgaths in the
Tower

Life in
the Circus

Adventure
Toolbox



Taria & Cannono





CHAPTER 2: ABBERTON INVESTIGATIONS

Nemmia Bramblecloak hinted at her motivation for attacking the circus: she believes the townsfolk of Abberton are responsible for environmental damage in the region, and she was hoping to frighten them off with mass murder. But there is more to this mystery than a single corrupted halfling. The morning after the confrontation with Nemmia, having heard about the heroes' impromptu leadership the night before, the mayor of Abberton comes to ask for their help investigating dangers cropping up all over Abberton.

Several townsfolk have gone missing, including the sheriff, and hostile creatures are prowling the streets. As the heroes investigate, they find predatory plants and animals, malevolent demons, and evidence that points them to Nemmia's lair in a remote barn.

The heroes aren't alone in investigating these dangers. The Professor offers the assistance of his Sideshow of Everyday Marvels.

The Sideshow of Everyday Marvels

The Circus of Wayward Wonders has, by mutual agreement of its ringmaster and performers, refused to encourage the spectacle of putting bodies on display for sensational titillation. Yet the Circus of Wayward Wonders does have a sideshow: the Sideshow of Everyday Marvels is devoted to the idea that anyone can be fantastical, interesting, and extraordinary. The sideshow sets up outside the big top, entertaining patrons with extraordinary tales about its stars.

Due to their commonplace appearances when dressed as typical townsfolk, the performers of the Sideshow of Everyday Marvels are good at moving unnoticed among a town to pick up (or spread) rumors. The current roster of the Sideshow of Everyday Marvels is as follows.

Professor Zarlian Kyosophus: Formerly a juggler and fire-eater, the Professor has grown old and frail, and few people now realize he ever had a name other than “the Professor.” Years of fire damage to his throat have rendered him hoarse and unable to raise his voice, but he remains a compelling speaker to small crowds. The Professor is both the narrator and organizer of the sideshow. He introduces each performer to the audience and augments their stories with funny and incredible historical anecdotes that “prove” the veracity of each story. The Professor talked the heroes through putting on their first performance at the beginning of Chapter 1, and he is likely to remain one of their most reliable allies and outspoken supporters in the circus.

Gidarron Elbus, “The Bearded Man”: A 6-foot-tall, broad-shouldered man with long brown hair, a full beard, and thick mustache that thoroughly obscure his features, Gidarron is skilled at portraying accents and mannerisms from all across Avistan. The Professor claims the “Bearded Man” is an exact double of a significant political figure who must conceal his identity and live on the run. Assassins want to kill him and rival agents want to kidnap him for their own nefarious purposes. The Professor tells exciting stories of the Bearded Man’s many narrow escapes, but he will not confirm which important figure Gidarron is purported to look like; the Professor teases several potential candidates (the most common being the missing Gyr of House Gixx), and Gidarron is swift to adopt matching accents and mannerisms as needed.

Tahala Roadwatcher, the “Tattooed Woman”: Tahala is a middle-aged Shoanti who left her quah, or clan, in Varisia years ago, acting upon omens she received. Like many Shoanti, Tahala is bald, fit, and covered in complex tattoos—notably the roc that spreads across her back and several resembling gemstones. She normally wears a simple cloak with a hood, revealing each of her tattoos before explaining what the illustration represents. A gifted storyteller, Tahala does more than show off her elaborate tattoos to sideshow gawkers; she has wise and witty stories to tell, each with morals about caring for the earth, revering ancestors, and other aspects of Shoanti spiritualism. Tahala sees her position in the Sideshow of Everyday Marvels as an opportunity to enlighten as well as entertain.

Hesper and Meitas Jaxis, “The Unjoined Twins”: Identical twin sisters in their thirties, Hesper and Meitas enjoy the traveling life of the circus. The Professor spins elaborate tales of how the Unjoined Twins were separated at birth and never knew the other existed until very recently, when they met at the circus (a lie, as they grew up together). According to the Professor, the twins’ lives have nevertheless seemed incredibly parallel as a result of bizarre coincidence. One married a miller named Smith, while the other married a smith named Miller. Each was cursed by a different witch on her wedding day: one sister for not inviting the witch to the wedding, the other for disturbing the witch with too many invitations. Both have had four children; one had an eldest child drowned, but other’s youngest child died of thirst in the desert. Both of these deceased children were named Tavi. The list of strange coincidences goes on and on—and grows with every telling.

Cubby, “The Dog-Faced Dog”: This large male beagle was just a puppy when he was the subject of an *awaken animal* ritual that gave him human intelligence and the ability to speak Common. Cubby is offended by the idea that he might “belong” to anyone, but the Professor has been his best friend for years. According to the Professor’s outlandish tales, Cubby

CHAPTER 2 SYNOPSIS

In this chapter, the heroes investigate several disappearances and unusual events around the town of Abberton. In between their investigations of an orchard where dangerous beasts lurk, a mill whose owners have been kidnapped, a dangerous roadside tavern, a defiled church, and an isolated barn, the heroes encounter a group sent by a rival circus called the Celestial Menagerie bent on doing them harm. Although many of the troubles the heroes uncover in this chapter are the legacy of the murderous halfling priest Nemmia, others point to sinister goings-on at the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning outside of town.

CHAPTER 2 TREASURE

The permanent and consumable items available as treasure in Chapter 2 are as follows.

- +1 crossbow
- bracelet of dashing
- brooch of shielding
- crying angel pendant
- dancing scarf
- holy water
- lesser antidote
- oil of mending
- onyx dog wondrous figurine
- savior spike
- scroll of unseasonable squall

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Chapter 1:
Murder in the
Center Ring

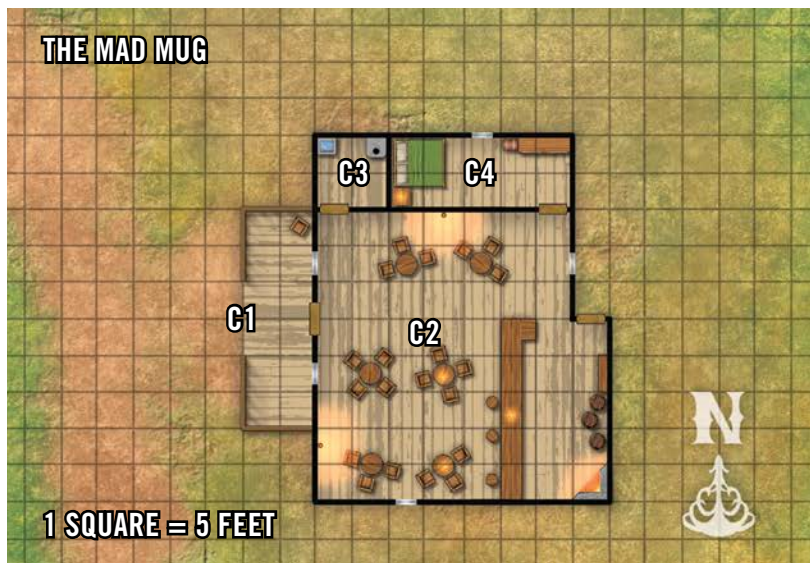
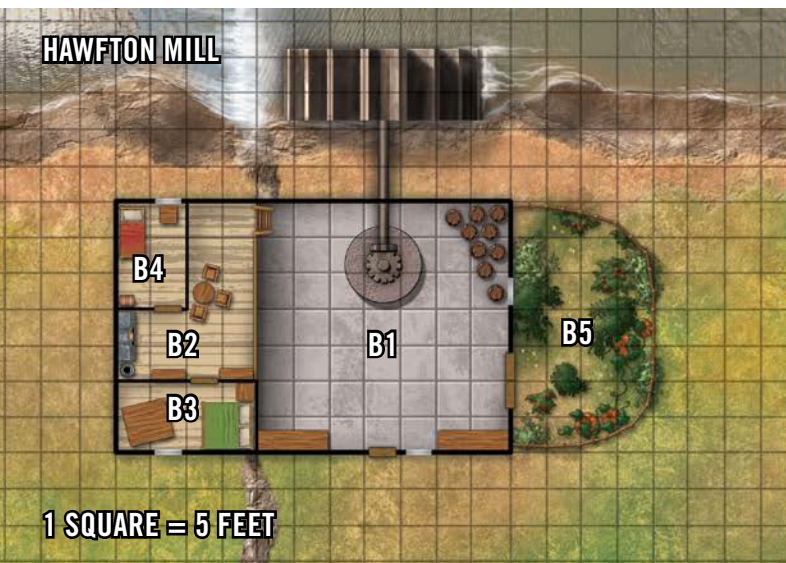
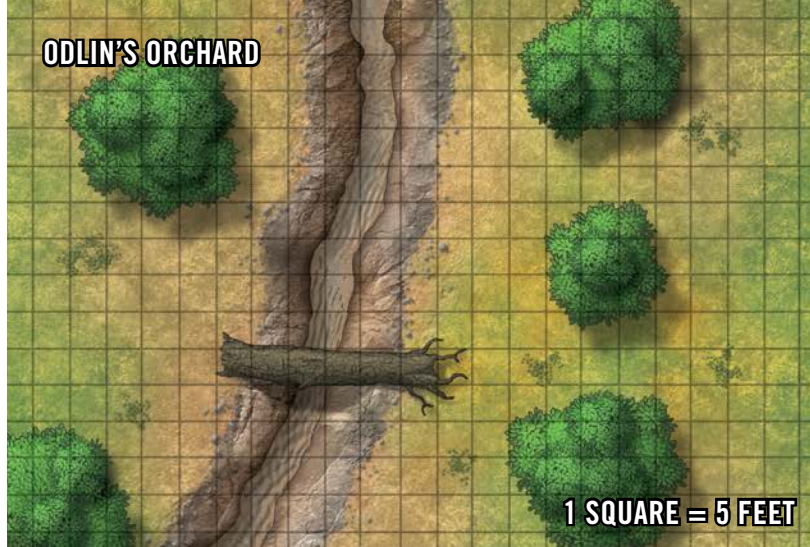
Chapter 2:
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Life in
the Circus

Adventure
Toolbox



has traveled the world; survived uncounted amazing adventures; and dined with heroes, villains, religious leaders, and monarchs. Cubby doesn't dispute anything the Professor claims, but he's also quick to lavish praise on his traveling companions. The dog therefore comes across as lucky, brave, and humble. He enjoys encouraging others to live their lives to the fullest.

A Visit from the Mayor

Jae Abber is the current mayor of Abberton. His family founded the town generations ago, and he's been mayor for the last 20 years, when his mother passed the job to him. Mayor Abber is a bland human man in his fifties, with thinning brown hair and a short beard. On the morning after the confrontation with Nemmia, he comes to the circus wagons and asks for the heroes by name. He clearly believes the heroes to be in charge of the circus, whether or not they personally consider this to be true.

The heroes probably talk to Mayor Abber outside the big top tent, but they might invite him into one of the larger wagons for a conversation; if they do, the mayor remarks positively about their hospitality.

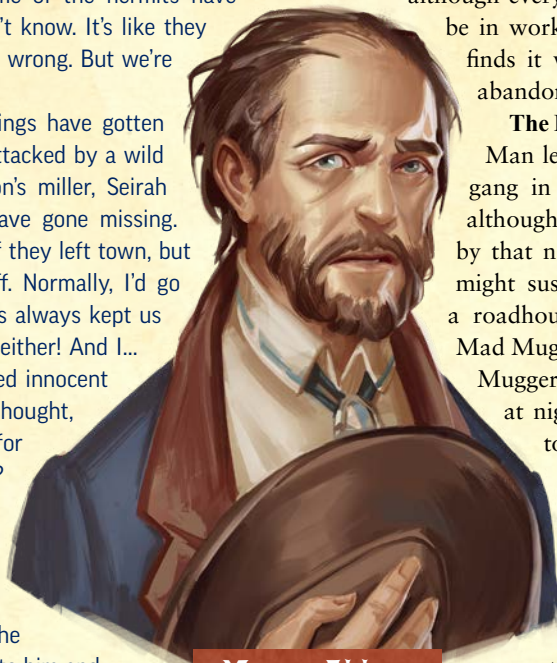
The mayor takes off his hat and holds it before him with both hands. "Thank you so much for agreeing to see me. My name is Jae Abber, and I'm the mayor of this town. I saw your show last night, and it was spectacular! But then, this morning, I learned that you and your people were attacked by someone from Abberton, or perhaps from the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning? Our little town, it's been terrorized for weeks, since long before you showed up. I'm so sorry that you got caught up in this.

"I can't see how anyone from our town would be involved in such villainy, but I can't believe anyone at the hermitage would do so, either. The hermits are kind, humble, and pious folk, devoted to Gozreh. Their master is a man named Harlock Hamdeel. He's a fine person, loves animals and nature and such. Honestly, it's impossible to imagine him countenancing anything like what happened last night.

"But that doesn't mean the town and the hermitage always agree. Abberton has had some challenges lately. There's been little rain, and the fields are dry. The heat has withered plants, and then we got a cold snap that froze what survived. The wind has pulled what's left of the topsoil into dust storms. Many of our wells have dried up, and the streams... I've never seen them so low. Some have

vanished completely. Now, it's nature, and it goes in cycles, I know. Many of us figure we just need to be patient. The rains'll come back. But some of the hermits have blamed us... for what, I don't know. It's like they think we've done something wrong. But we're just farmers!

"Over the last month, things have gotten really bad. Hemmema got attacked by a wild boar in the street. Abberton's miller, Seirah Hawfton, and her family have gone missing. No one would blame them if they left town, but maybe they were driven off. Normally, I'd go to the sheriff with this; she's always kept us safe, but no one's seen her, either! And I... I... I heard how you protected innocent people here last night, and I thought, maybe, maybe you could do for us, what you did for them? If you could, I'd gladly speak to Harlock about the woman who attacked you last night, perhaps even get you admission to the hermitage so you could talk to him and see for yourself they're harmless."



Mayor Abber

Mayor Abber means well, but he's used to ordinary problems with mundane explanations. He can try to answer questions, but he knows little else. His offer to speak with Harlock and secure entrance for the heroes into the hermitage is genuine, however, though it leads to his capture in Chapter 3.

Last night, after the battle with Nemmia, the Professor sent the members of his Sideshow of Everyday Marvels out into Abberton to gather information and spread the word about the heroes' heroic defense of the circus. After the mayor departs, they can report on the strange activities around Abberton, providing the heroes with some leads to pursue.

Oldlin's Orchard: Hesper and Meitas, the Unjoined Twins, can confirm that Hemmema, a polite grandmother who recently sold her farm and moved into town, was attacked by a wild boar in the street. The twins provide their report together, alternating sentences as they talk. "She ran, of course. Who wouldn't! And she's unhurt, thank goodness. As for the boar, it's been spotted in an orchard on the east side of town, and it's not alone. Apparently there's a whole brood of smaller boars that are just as nasty and ill-tempered as their mother!"

Hawfton Mill: Tahala, the Tattooed Woman, investigated the mill this morning and found the region infested with wasps. She notes that their behavior

seemed unusual, and she suspects outside influence. There was no evidence of the miller or her family, although everything about the mill seemed to be in working order from a distance. She finds it very unlikely the owner simply abandoned the mill.

The Mad Mug: Gidarron the Bearded Man learned that there's a small crime gang in Abberton called the Muggers, although they don't call themselves by that name for the reasons the heroes might suspect. Rather, they hang out at a roadhouse outside of town called the Mad Mug. According to town rumors, the Muggers drink all day and cause trouble at night. The sheriff has been trying to break up the gang for a while now, and the Muggers might have gotten brave or reckless enough to do something about the sheriff.

Church of Abadar: Cubby the Dog-Faced Dog learned that, although the hermitage itself is isolated and remote, there's a church here in Abberton. He thought there might be a connection, but when he went to look he saw that the church is dedicated to Abadar, not Gozreh. Nevertheless, he nosed around the church's back fence and detected something different and unpleasant: the scent of rotting flesh. Cubby believes something unnatural lurks in the church's graveyard.

The heroes can investigate further in any order they choose. During their investigations, a group of performers from Mistress Dusklight's Celestial Menagerie finds and confronts them, as described in the Rivals Arrive encounter on page 27.

Oldlin's Orchard Moderate 2

Crotchety Bosk Oldlin succumbed to a chest infection over 2 years ago, and the town has treated his apple orchard as a community resource ever since. Nemmia was exploring this apple orchard when she discovered a boar that had recently given birth. Using her *Speak with Animals* ability, she persuaded the boar that the people of Abberton all want to turn the boar and her offspring into bacon. The boar has since begun attacking anyone passing the orchard.

Creatures: The boar dwells deep in the orchard, in a muddy irrigation channel underneath a fallen log that serves as a bridge. The boar is particularly aggressive and suspicious of any humanoids. Heroes able to communicate with the boar might be able to change

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her attitude from hostile, but Nature checks aren't sufficient to persuade the boar to halt her attacks. If the boar detects the presence of the heroes, she attacks, along with the most aggressive of her offspring.

BOAR

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 43

Initiative Perception +8

JUVENILE BOARS (2)

CREATURE 0

N **SMALL** **ANIMAL**

Perception +5; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +3, Athletics +5, Survival +5

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -2

AC 15; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

HP 16 each

Ferocity 2

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ tusk +8, **Damage** 1d6+3 piercing

Boar Charge ♦♦ The juvenile boar Strides up to two times and then makes a tusk Strike. As long as it moved at least 20 feet, it gains a +2 circumstance bonus to its attack roll.

Treasure: The boar's first victim was the gnome who tended the orchard. A hero who succeeds at a DC 14 Perception check finds the gnome's corpse stuck under the fallen log and mostly buried in mud and leaves. The corpse has a scroll tube containing a *scroll of unseasonable squall* (page 79) and a lesser antidote.

Hawfton Mill

The Hawfton family has operated Abberton's flour mill for generations, and is a fixture in the town's economic life. The current miller is Seirah Hawfton, who inherited the mill from her father 17 years ago. Nemmia singled out Seirah and her family because the mill is a vital business in Abberton; every farmer in the area uses the Hawfton Mill. Nemmia kidnapped the Hawftons from the mill with the assistance of a group of loyal mephits, taking them to the Lindell barn outside of town.

From the exterior, the mill is easily identified by its large mill wheel. The west half of the building, where the Hawftons makes their home, sits upon the same level of the upper stream, higher than the rest of the mill. The other side of the building features a well-tended, fenced garden.

B1. MILL FLOOR

MODERATE 2

The single door leading into this room from the south is bolted shut from the inside; a hero who succeeds at a DC 20 Athletics check can Force it Open. Alternatively,

a hero can unhook the bolt from the outside with a successful DC 20 Thievery check to Pick a Lock. The double door connects the mill floor to the garden (area B5); mills are notorious for the danger posed by the flammability of the materials inside, and the large doors helped keep the building well ventilated. The double door is unlocked.

This spacious chamber is two stories high and has a well-fitted stone floor. In the center of the space, a millstone grinds away, rotated by a wooden shaft projecting through the north wall. A second level of the house overlooks this room from the west, and a table and four chairs are visible near the top of a sturdy ladder. A double door leads east. A massive wasps' nest hangs from the ceiling in the center of the room.

The wooden shaft rotated by the water wheel outside is clearly visible in this mill room; a rotating wheel on this end turns a millstone into which grain can be poured by means of an overhead chute. A wide, shallow pan on the floor beneath the millstone is positioned to catch milled grain, but it's currently empty. Barrels of grain waiting to be milled occupy one corner of the mill floor.

A ladder against the west wall gives access to the upper level, where the Hawftons made their home.

Creature: Nemmia brought a swarm of wasps here to deter nosy neighbors. The swarm attacks anyone who enters the mill floor, but the wasps won't venture more than 60 feet from the mill.

WASP SWARM

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 324

Initiative Perception +10

B2. LIVING AREA

The ladder from the mill floor allows characters to ascend to an open living area that includes a small round table with three chairs, a long counter for food preparation, and several cupboards where kitchen supplies and food are kept. There are two doors out of this space: one leading south to Seirah and Rikart's room (area B3) and the other to the bedroom of their only child, Aima (area B4). The walls bear recent scorch marks; these are the only signs of the struggle when Nemmia and her mephits kidnapped the Hawftons.

B3. MASTER BEDROOM

TRIVIAL 2

Seirah and her husband Rikart slept here. Several vases containing dried flowers stand atop sturdy shelves. A heavy armoire has fallen, face-down and open, onto the floor of the room.

Hazard: The armoire is made of thick wood (Hardness 10) and is very heavy. Lifting the armoire requires a successful DC 21 Athletics check. If the heroes successfully lift the armoire, a huge pile of sand and grit spreads out across the floor, making the room difficult terrain. Lifting the armoire also releases the air mephit trapped inside it.

Creature: Several impish fire mephits tipped the armoire over on an air mephit searching it. The air mephit has been unable to get free. Its Breath Weapon ability did little more than scoot the heavy armoire a few inches, and it quickly realized that its breath weapon wasn't helping when, after several attempts, it managed only to fill its prison with sandy grit. The air mephit darts out from underneath the armoire as soon as possible. It fights any creatures it sees for only a round or two before fleeing.

AIR MEPHIT

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 150

Initiative Perception +3

After the Mephit: If the air mephit flees, it heads directly back to the Lindell farm to seek revenge on the mephits there. If the heroes can keep up with the creature, they can follow it to the barn. Even if the heroes can't keep up with the mephit, a hero who watches it flee can attempt a DC 15 Survival or applicable Lore check to ascertain where the mephit is going. On a success, the hero realizes it's headed toward a farm outside of Abberton; on a critical success, the hero can follow its aerial path to the Lindell farm.

Once the air mephit finally catches sight of the Lindell barn, however, it realizes it would be badly outnumbered. It then decides to leave the Abberton area entirely.

Treasure: A strongbox under the bed that contains the Hawftons' savings: 110 sp, an assortment of jewelry and other heirlooms worth 14 gp, and a *dancing scarf*. The iron strongbox is locked, but a hero who succeeds at two DC 21 Thievery skill checks can open it. The strongbox can also be Forced Open with a successful DC 24 Athletics check or broken by dealing it 18 points of damage (Hardness 18). Of course, these items belong to the millers, who are currently imprisoned in the Lindell Barn. When freed, the millers happily reward the heroes with these items.

XP Award: If the heroes determine where the mephit is fleeing, award them 10 XP.

B4. AIMA'S ROOM

This room is where the teenager Aima Hawfton usually sleeps. She has decorated her room with paintings

of various fantastical beasts, including a hydra, a manticore, a centaur, and a phoenix. Her clothing and furnishings are both durable and finely made, as her family is well-off.

B5. GARDEN

LOW 2

Rikart Hawfton maintained this garden, which boasts an impressive tomato and pumpkin collection, as well as herbs and potatoes. The garden is surrounded by a low wooden fence. A hero who succeeds at a DC 14 Perception check while examining the garden notes several spider webs that seem fairly recent. The large double door leading into the mill floor from here is closed, but it isn't locked or barred.

Creatures: Nemmia lured two large river spiders into the garden to further discourage visitors. The spiders now lurk amid the neat rows of plants. They eat the occasional wasp that enters the garden, but they prefer larger prey. They attack any creature that enters the garden and fight until slain.

HUNTING SPIDERS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 306

Initiative Stealth +7

The Mad Mug

The Mad Mug is a roadside tavern where a gang composed of a half-dozen thieves and highway robbers socialize, drink, and plan their crimes. This gang calls themselves Muggers, though they insist they are named not for their crimes but for their ubiquitous presence at the Mad Mug. Sheriff Ralhain has been trying to break the gang apart and arrest its leader, Pruana Two-Punch, but the sheriff wasn't able to organize a large enough posse before being killed while investigating the Lindell Barn. The Muggers are debating their next move now that Abberton is bereft of any real law enforcement.

C1. MAD MUG PORCH

LOW 2

The Mad Mug is a one-story structure with a broad front porch. A sign outside depicts a cartoonish beer mug bearing a furiously angry expression, its frothy contents steaming.

Creatures: Four members of the Muggers linger on the porch, watching the townsfolk pass by and hollering insults. They used to be more circumspect in harassing passersby, but since the sheriff disappeared, they've become fearless. When the heroes approach, the ruffians warn them off. "Ain't nothin' hereabouts that merits a visit from the likes'a you," one snarls, while the others stand and look menacing. Unless the heroes

withdraw, the gang takes the opportunity to start a fight with gusto. These ruffians use Intimidation to determine their initiative.

Initially, these ruffians fight with only their fists, and each ruffian singles out a different hero to Demoralize with an Intimidation check. If a hero draws a weapon or makes a lethal attack, the Muggers call for help and Pruana Two-Punch emerges from the common room with her pet goat Violet 1d3 rounds later. If two or more of the ruffians become frightened or incapacitated, the remainder flee into the Mad Mug. If flight seems impossible, they instead surrender and beg for mercy.

ABBERTON RUFFIANS (4)

CREATURE -1

Page 9

Initiative Intimidation +3

C2. COMMON ROOM

MODERATE 2

The Mad Mug's common room has six tables and a long wooden bar. Narrow lattice windows provide natural light and a view of the porch out front. The bar has three staff members: the humans Lenky and Beina who own the place and tend bar, and a male half-orc server named Rulf Oddfingers. There are four to a dozen patrons present during the day, and twice as many at night. No one in the tavern other than the Muggers has any interest in a fight.

Creatures: The leader of the Muggers is Pruana Two-Punch, a dwarf with a killer haymaker. She's usually here drinking with her pet goat, Violet. Pruana can see out the front of the common room onto the porch. Although she might observe the heroes' fight with her gang members, she doesn't like to save stupid people from their own mistakes. Unless the fight turns bloody, Pruana doesn't get involved, preferring to let the heroes teach her gang a lesson.

If the heroes get past her gang and enter the common room, Pruana seizes the opportunity for conversation. She's glad not to be harassed by the sheriff any longer, but she knows other troubles are afoot because the sheriff's disappearance isn't her doing. So long as the heroes haven't been in combat with her, Pruana begins the conversation with an unfriendly attitude toward them. The heroes can try to improve her attitude, but after the heroes have accumulated a total of three failed Deception or Diplomacy checks, her attitude hardens and she cannot be further influenced. If Pruana becomes hostile, she attacks.

If the heroes improve Pruana's attitude to indifferent, she tells them she and her gang saw "a little halfling witch sneaking around town after dark." She'll disclose where the halfling went only if the heroes agree to pay

her 10 gp. If the heroes pay up, Pruana reveals that the Muggers tracked her to the Lindell barn outside town.

Should the heroes manage to improve Pruana's attitude to friendly, she sells the information for only 5 gp and reveals that her ruffians couldn't get too close to the barn because the plants tried to grab them. If the heroes improve Pruana's attitude to helpful, she charges no fee for the information and admits—with some healthy skepticism—that one of her ruffians claims to have spotted small fire creatures in the barn.

If the heroes enter combat with Pruana, such as by reducing her attitude to hostile or by fighting her on the porch, she surrenders when reduced to fewer than 15 Hit Points and offers the information above in exchange for her life.

PRUANA TWO-PUNCH

CREATURE 3

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM DWARF HUMANOID

Female dwarf brawler

Perception +7; darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven

Skills Abberton Lore +7, Athletics +9, Deception +8, Intimidation +8, Thievery +7

Str +4, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Items chain mail

AC 20; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7; +2 circumstance to Fortitude and Reflex vs. Shove or Trip

HP 46

Speed 20 feet

Melee ✦ fist +9 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Haymaker ✦ (press) Pruana makes a fist Strike against a target she has previously attacked this turn. If she hits, she gains a +3 circumstance bonus to the damage, and the creature must attempt a DC 20 Fortitude save to resist the staggering force of the blow.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target is stunned 1.

Failure The target is stunned 3.

Critical Failure The target is knocked prone and stunned 5.

VIOLET

CREATURE 1

UNIQUE N SMALL ANIMAL

Male goat pet

Perception +6; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +5, Athletics +6, Survival +5

Str +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -2

AC 16; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7

HP 24

Protect ⤵ **Trigger** A creature adjacent to both Violet and Pruana Two-Punch hits Pruana with a melee attack;

Effect Violet shields Pruana from the worst of the blow,

taking half the damage from the attack and Pruana takes the remainder.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ horns +8, **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ jaws +8, **Damage** 1d4+3 piercing

Ram ♦♦ Violet Strides twice and then makes a horns Strike. As long as he moved at least 20 feet, he gains a +2 circumstance bonus to his attack roll.

Eat Anything If Violet hits with a jaws Strike, he can also deal the same amount of damage to either the target's armor or shield, ignoring 5 points of the item's Hardness.

XP Award: If the heroes negotiate with Pruana and get information that leads them to the Lindell barn, award them XP as if they had defeated Pruana and Violet in combat.

C3. WASHROOM

This is a public washroom for customers of the tavern. When a customer runs up a tab they can't pay, Beina makes them scrub the washroom under her stern glare.

C4. BEDROOM

Lenky and Beina sleep in this private room off the tavern's common area.

Goldenlaws Church

Abadar is the most-worshipped deity in Abberton; indeed, there is a local legend that the settlement's name was shortened generations ago from "Abadartown." This legend doesn't comport with the name of the Abber family whose members have traditionally served as mayors of the town, but the townspeople don't seem to mind the inconsistent legends. The church is properly called "the House of Gold and Laws," but most townspeople call it "Goldenlaws" or "Goldenlaws Church." Goldenlaws Church is near the center of Abberton and serves as the hub of the townspeople's worship of Abadar as well as its only bank. Behind the church is a sprawling, fenced cemetery. Generations of townspeople have been interred in the cemetery—in fact, it reached capacity 20 years ago—and its grave markers range from subdued headstones to family tombs and expensive monuments.

Both coin and church attendance have dwindled in the past few years due to the hard economic times affecting the town, and only a single priest-banker, Nellyn Drend, remains to operate the building. Nellyn works hard to maintain the church and the cemetery grounds around it, but there's only so much one person can do; the church and its grounds are beginning to

look a little unkempt as a result. Nellyn is a decent man and a talented orator, but he's recently called in several outstanding debts in Abberton and refused to advance unsecured loans; as a result, his reputation is gradually becoming as shabby as his church.

The doors leading to the church and the cemetery grounds are constructed from wood planks banded with brass. None of the doors are locked; the door leading from the porch into the nave was once secured shut, but the demons (see area D2) smashed the lock to gain entry. The chapel's thick stained glass windows are heavily reinforced and are predominantly a rich yellow in color, illuminating the interior of the church with a golden hue. Ceilings within the church are 15 feet high. The walls of the church and the stone wall around the cemetery are stone, with a Climb DC of 25.

The heroes likely visit Goldenlaws Church while investigating the rumor that something unpleasant is lurking around the cemetery grounds. While this is



Pruana Two-Punch & Violet

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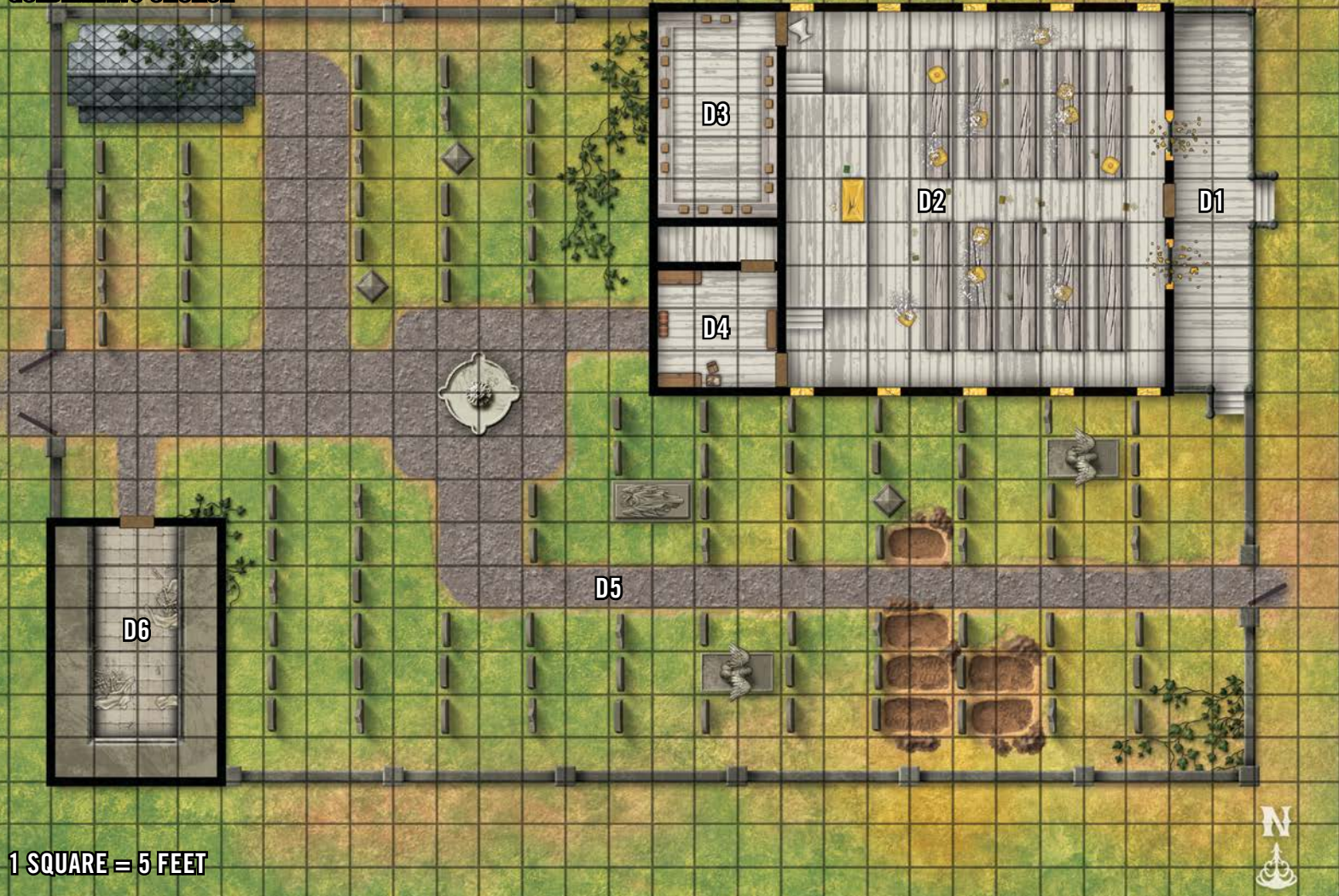
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GOLDENLAWS CHURCH



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

true, by the time the heroes arrive, the church faces a much larger problem. Just hours ago, several demons from the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning crept into Abberton to defile the town's most sacred building. These demons imprisoned Nellyn in his own vault and are vandalizing the church's interior and cemetery. If the heroes don't investigate the location on their own, a townspeople eventually notices the demons' presence and rumors soon fly of demons infesting Goldenlaws Church. Assuming the heroes have established themselves as capable troubleshooters in Abberton, some of these townspeople—and perhaps Mayor Abber himself—ask the heroes to investigate.

D1. PORCH

A wide, high porch of white wood fronts the town church. Two stained glass windows face the road; the one to the north depicts Abadar, the Master of the First Vault, and the one to the south is emblazoned with dozens of golden keys. Both are broken in several places, with bits of yellowish glass littering the porch. The door frame around the wood-and-brass door is splintered.

The damage to the door frame isn't immediately apparent from the street, but it's obvious to anyone who ascends to the porch.

D2. NAVE

SEVERE 2

The nave is filled with long wooden pews marred by long claw marks. Comfortable cushions of gold velvet have been shredded, their feather stuffing spilling out upon the benches and the wood floor. Leather-bound books have been yanked from the small wooden shelves built into the back of each pew and torn apart, their illuminated pages mixing with the accumulated mess that covers the ground.

A chancel at the west end of the nave contains an altar in front of a magnificent mural of Abadar and other gods defeating the monstrous Rovagug. The altar has the appearance of a desk, although its cloth-of-gold covering, abacus, scales, and ledgers are ripped and knocked over. In the northwest corner of the sanctuary, an overturned stone font leans against a stone door.

Three doors lead out of this room: the door to the east leads to the porch, while the other doors lead to

the vault (area **D3**) and storage room (area **D4**). The upended font effectively barricades the vault door, as it's too heavy for Nellyn to push aside from the other side of the door. Moving the font aside requires a successful DC 20 Athletics check. When Nellyn hears anyone trying to move it, he shouts for help.

Creatures: Two demons—a quasit and an abrikandilu—are trashing the furnishings of the church. The quasit is at the banking desk that serves as the altar, perusing the town's financial records to identify wealth landowners who are likely targets for corruption. The abrikandilu stands behind the altar, defacing the mural of Abadar and the other gods that has decorated this chapel since its construction centuries ago. The demons are both distracted and are unlikely to notice the heroes immediately, although they are quick to attack anyone who interrupts their fun. Both demons fight to the death.

ABRIKANDILU

CREATURE 4

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Initiative Perception +10

Items gray cloak, wooden religious symbol of Gozreh

QUASIT

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 76

Initiative Perception +7

Signs of Gozreh: A hero within 15 feet of the abrikandilu who succeeds at a DC 16 Religion check recognizes the hoodless cloak it is wearing as the formal vestments of a priest of Gozreh. In addition, the demon has a religious symbol of Gozreh—a leaf with a hanging drop of dew—draped loosely around its neck. This evidence suggests that the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning is responsible for the Abberton's many woes.

Treasure: Nearly everything of value in the chapel has been destroyed or defaced. The golden scales are worth 20 gp, and the quasit wears a *crying angel pendant*. Both belong to the church, although Nellyn doesn't protest if the heroes claim them as rewards for rescuing him and defeating the demons.

XP Award: If the heroes recognize the abrikandilu's religious paraphernalia and connect it to the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning, reinforcing their suspicions, award them each 10 XP.

D3. VAULT

The door to the vault is stone and can be locked with a high-quality mechanism made of gold. The door is presently unlocked, however; Nellyn used his keys to unlock it from within the vault, even though he couldn't open it with the heavy font leaning against it.

The vault contains hundreds of lockboxes stored on shelves lining the walls. These boxes contain the family treasures of most of Abberton's residents. Each box is secured with a high-quality lock that has only a single key, and that key is held by the family that owns the lockbox. Picking a Lock on a lockbox requires four successful DC 25 Thievery checks. Even if the heroes can get into these lockboxes, few contain anything other than items with sentimental value that belonged to long-dead ancestors. The town's hard times have already forced most residents to reclaim and sell anything of genuine value in their lockboxes. If the heroes are insistent on ransacking the lockboxes, Nellyn reduces his promised reward (see below) or withholds it altogether.

Rescuing Nellyn: Nellyn Drend, the priest-banker who maintains this chapel, has been locked in the vault for hours. He's exhausted and badly injured from a fight with the abrikandilu and the quasit. Many of his wounds are gruesome and swollen, but these injuries reflect the abrikandilu's mutilating bite ability, not any actual infection. Nellyn has a –3 status penalty to Charisma checks due to his injuries.

Nellyn is exceedingly grateful for being rescued and insists that it was Abadar's will that sent the heroes to his rescue. He tells the heroes of the attack on the temple: a hunchbacked demon, two flying fiends, and two masked men charged into the church. Nellyn tried to fight, but the hunchbacked demon overpowered him and he was forced to flee. He took shelter in the one place he knew Abadar would never permit to be violated: the church's vault. Although the demon didn't follow him, it jammed the door shut from the other side. Nellyn has been trapped in the vault ever since. He's been thinking back over the attackers and feels the masked men looked familiar, but he can't remember who they are. (In fact, they are the Lindell brothers, whose bodies have been occupied by vermleks—worm demons; the Lindell brothers weren't members of Nellyn's congregation.)

Nellyn hasn't laid eyes on the chapel since he fled, and when he sees the damage the demons have inflicted, he chokes up with tears. After a few moments, he stands tall, straightens his shoulders, and insists that order will prevail and Abadar's worship will be restored. After looking over the devastation, he quickly notices that the church's two most holy books, *The Manual of City-Building* and *The Order of Numbers*, are both missing. They were on the altar when the demons arrived, and their pages aren't among the shredded papers littering the church (they are currently in the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning; see area **F19**). Nellyn would like these books back, and he'd also like the

heroes to find the other intruders (the quasit and the masked men) and bring them to justice.

Treasure: Nellyn uses his keys to open two lockboxes in the vault that belong to him personally. He offers the heroes their contents, an *onyx dog wondrous figurine* and a *brooch of shielding*, if they agree to help him recover the two missing holy books. If the heroes press for payment in advance, he provides whichever of the items the heroes prefer to demonstrate his good intentions. Nellyn has also recovered his crossbow during his imprisonment. Although he doesn't initially offer his +1 *crossbow* to the heroes as a reward—as he feels he needs it to defend his church—he'll swap the crossbow for one of the other treasures if the heroes prefer.

D4. STORAGE

Vestments, candles, polish, and other accoutrements for running a church are kept in this storage room. The demons haven't yet done more than knock some of these supplies onto the floor.

Treasure: Three vials of *holy water* rest within a lacquered box on one of the shelves.

D5. GRAVEYARD

This small cemetery holds over a hundred graves, arranged in neat rows divided by well-kept paths. Each grave has a headstone, but the stones are different and varied; some are large and expensive marble, while others are simple granite slabs. The dates on these graves go back to Abberton's founding; because this cemetery is full, the more recent dead are interred in another cemetery outside town.

Creatures: As the player characters explore the cemetery, they spot two humanoid figures digging in the graveyard. Although they appear to be human men wearing handkerchiefs over their faces, these figures are in fact vermleks. These vermleks had been holed up at the Lindell barn with Nemmia, but when the heroes defeated her, the demons came here in the bodies of Jano and Bindo Lindell seeking corpses. Unless all of the heroes successfully Avoid Notice (the demons have a Perception DC of 18), one of them calls out to the heroes. Read or paraphrase the following.

Several of the cemetery's graves have been dug up, and large mounds of fresh, dark earth lie piled around

gaping holes. Two individuals—swollen-looking human men equipped with shovels—are working in one of the graves.

Bent over in their labor, they are barely visible until one of them stands straighter and hefts his shovel over one shoulder. "Keep back, good masters," he says, through a handkerchief tied round his face. "I wouldn't come no closer. This one's all ripe with the plague, and they say she's contagious. One whiff, and you could turn black as pitch and be deader than old Tar-Baphon."



Nellyn Drend

Anyone from Abberton knows that there are no grave-diggers employed here because the cemetery is full, and the plague story is a complete fabrication. A hero can detect the vermleks' falsehood with a successful DC 17 Perception check; on a critical success, the hero realizes the gravedigger is wearing some sort of disguise. Other methods—such as *detect alignment*—can also reveal that the gravediggers aren't what they seem.

The two vermleks maintain their story as long as possible, attempting to scare the heroes away from the cemetery, and in particular, the graves they're pillaging. The graves dug up by the vermleks have all been desecrated by the demons; they took the decomposing bodies from their coffins, partially devoured them, and worse. If the heroes penetrate the vermlek's disguises or get close enough to see that the graves contain only opened coffins and shriveled corpses, the vermleks attack; one bursts from his corpse disguise to attack, while the other tries to shove heroes into open graves. The open graves are 6 feet deep, so anyone pushed into one takes 3 bludgeoning damage and lands prone. The vermleks fight to the death.

VERMLEKS (2)

CREATURE 3

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Initiative Deception +7

Recognizing the Lindells: Although the vermleks are reluctant to pull aside their handkerchiefs, anyone from Abberton recognizes the men as the Lindell brothers, who own a farm outside of town. Although the boneless corpses left behind by the vermleks can also be recognized as the Lindells, doing so requires a strong stomach.

XP Award: If the heroes learn the demons came from the Lindell barn, award them each 30 XP.

D6. MOULTER CRYPT

LOW 2

This stone building is dedicated to the Moulter family, which has been prominent in Abberton for generations. The general decline in cemetery maintenance is most present here; Nellyn believes the surviving Moulters care for this crypt, but the Moulters think Nellyn does so. As a result, several troublesome gremlins have crept into the crypt without anyone noticing. One of the quasits who recently came to the church noticed signs of the gremlins' presence and is negotiating for them to join the demons in despoiling the cemetery. As the quasit doesn't share a language with the gremlins, their communication consists of jabbering and pantomime.

There is only one entrance to the crypt, a wooden door barely 5 feet high. The gremlins broke the lock several days ago to get in, and anyone close enough to inspect the door sees the broken lock hanging from it. A hero who succeeds at a DC 16 Perception check while near the door can overhear high-pitched voices squabbling inside.

The crypt interior is in disarray, as the gremlins have opened all of the coffins in the crypt and pulled out the "treasures" into a heap on the floor. This pile includes several tarnished buttons, loose teeth, and buckles from disintegrating clothing.

Creatures: The quasit and two pugwampis attack once the door is opened and fight ferociously to the death. The quasit is temporarily immune to the pugwampis' unluck auras, but their auras could make the ensuing combat more difficult for the heroes.

QUASIT

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 76

Initiative Perception +7

PUGWAMPIS (2)

CREATURE 0

Pathfinder Bestiary 193

Initiative Perception +6

Treasure: The pile of plunder on the floor includes a gold ring worth 10 gp and a *bracelet of dashing*.

Event: Rivals Arrive

At some point while the heroes are investigating Abberton, a group of performers from Mistress Dusklight's Celestial Menagerie comes to town. Mistress Dusklight doesn't plan to leave Escadar any time soon—and the heroes will encounter her there in the next adventure, "Legacy of the Lost God"—but she wants to keep tabs on the Circus of Wayward Wonders

because so many of its members (perhaps including the heroes) recently escaped her tyrannical grasp. During the heroes' investigations around Abberton, but before they head to the Lindell farm, three members of the Celestial Menagerie come to Abberton and advertise their skills while denigrating the Circus of Wayward Wonders. The three members are the fire-eater Viktor Volkano, the lion-tamer Daring Danika, and the clown Jellico Bounce-Bounce. If possible, you and the players should collaborate to tie these characters to one or more of the heroes' backgrounds, to enhance the dramatic effect of these rivalries during the performance dual.

A small crowd has gathered along the street to watch three colorfully dressed people shouting and playing tambourines and pipes. "Prepare yourselves and your souls, people of Abberton, for a cavalcade of celestial marvels! For sights so spectacular and so marvelous, that you shall speak of them forever after with awestruck tears in your eyes! Prepare for the show to surpass any you have ever seen, either yesterday or in days before! Prepare for the dawning of... Mistress Dusklight's Celestial Menagerie!" The speaker is a tall, broad-shouldered woman carrying a whip and accompanied by a magnificent lion. A shirtless man covered in strange tattoos walks to her left, periodically breathing gout of fire across metal batons he carries in his hands. To the woman's right is a brilliantly bedecked clown who leaps, rolls, flips, and cavorts in constant feats of acrobatics.

The three members of the Celestial Menagerie have heard the Circus of Wayward Wonders is in Abberton and are looking to upstage their rivals. The moment they see the heroes, they overreact with dramatic expressions and outbursts of alarm, warn the people of Abberton against these "cheap imposters," and promise to show the townsfolk "a real show, not some amateurish parade of feeble animals and struggling charlatans." Soon, the three performers challenge the heroes to an impromptu contest in the street to see which circus puts on a more crowd-pleasing show.

THE PERFORMANCE DUEL

A time-honored tradition among traveling performers, a performance duel pits rival acts against each other one-on-one in front of an audience for the most applause. Each of the three Celestial Menagerie members challenges one of the heroes; these one-on-one duels will be followed by—and influence—a climactic group contest.

Each participating hero should resolve the outcome of the one-on-one duel with a DC 18 Performance check

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

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(the Performance DC of each rival from the Celestial Menagerie). Although other heroes can't interfere in these duels, each hero can build up to their own Performance check by first attempting a DC 15 check with a different skill (Acrobatics, Athletics, Diplomacy, and Thievery are the most likely, although you can allow any skills that seem relevant to putting on an entertaining show). A success at this first check grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the hero's Performance check. A critical success adds a +4 bonus instead, but a critical failure imposes a -2 circumstance penalty. Invite each player to describe their character's act as the hero performs in the street in front of an ever-growing gathering of Abberton's citizens.

A hero who succeeds at the Performance check puts on a more crowd-pleasing demonstration than that of their rival from the Celestial Menagerie. On a critical success, the hero's performance is so much better than their rival's that the townspeople openly boo and jeer at the hero's rival. On a failure, the rival puts on a better show; on a critical failure, the hero makes a terrible mistake or error that upsets or offends the townspeople, and they boo the hero instead.

Once all three individual contests are complete, all three members of the Celestial Menagerie perform again together, effectively challenging the entire group of heroes to a climactic group duel. To resolve this duel, a single lead character—who should be selected by the heroes together—attempts another DC 18 Performance check. Other heroes can Aid this skill check as normal (*Core Rulebook* 470). In addition, the DC decreases by 1 for each hero's success in the one-on-one duels, or by 2 for each critical success. The DC increases by 2 for each critical failure in the one-on-one duels.

If the heroes succeed at the Performance check in this group duel, the townspeople cheer and the members of the Celestial Menagerie slink away in shame. This success adds 2d4 to the circus's starting Excitement for the next show.

Creatures: These three vindictive and ruthless members of the Celestial Menagerie made the trek to Abberton to spy on the Circus of Wayward Wonders and report back to Mistress Dusklight, but they revel in this opportunity to outperform the heroes.

DARING DANIKA

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Female human lion-tamer

Perception +7

Skills Athletics +6 (+7 to Disarm), Diplomacy +7, Intimidation +7, Nature +6, Performance +7

Str +0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3

Items lion tamer's outfit, short stool, whip

AC 17; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7; +2 circumstance vs. Disarm
HP 30

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ whip +10 (disarm, finesse, nonlethal, reach, trip),
Damage 1d4+5 slashing

Melee ♦ stool bash +6 (disarm), **Damage** 1d6 bludgeoning

Sting of the Lash ♦ Danika targets a single minion creature within reach of her whip to spur its ferocity. That creature gains 5 temporary Hit Points. The target is temporarily immune to Sting of the Lash for 24 hours.

LEANDRUS

UNIQUE N MEDIUM ANIMAL MINION

Male lion

Perception +8; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +6, Athletics +7, Intimidation +5, Performance +5, Stealth +6

Str +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

AC 18; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5

HP 30

Speed 35 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +9, **Damage** 1d10+3 piercing

Melee ♦ claw (agile), **Damage** 1d8+3 slashing

Minion If Danika uses the Command an Animal action, Leandrus can use 2 actions on her turn. Otherwise, he can use only 1 action, which he can use to Stride or Strike.

Stalker Leandrus deals an extra 1d4 precision damage against flat-footed targets.

JELICO BOUNCE-BOUNCE

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male human clown

Perception +7

Skills Acrobatics +7, Performance +7, Stealth +7, Thievery +9

Str +2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +1

Items bowling pins (6), clown costume, daggers (6), pots of grease paint (4)

AC 17; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

HP 32

Bob and Weave ↻ **Trigger** Jellico is the target of a Strike by an attacker he can see; **Effect** Jellico gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the triggering Strike.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ bowling pin +9 (agile, nonlethal), **Damage** 1d6+2 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ dagger +10 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+2 piercing

Ranged ♦ bowling pin +10 (agile, nonlethal, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+2 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ dagger +10 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+2 piercing

Bounce ♦ Jellico makes a High Jump or Long Jump.

Bounce-Bounce ♦♦ Jellico Strides up to his Speed and does not trigger reactions during this movement.

Juggler If Jellico's bowling pin ranged Strike hits, the bowling pin bounces off the target back toward Jellico. Jellico can catch it again if he has a free hand.

VIKTOR VOLKANO

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male human fire-breather

Perception +7

Skills Arcana +6, Athletics +6, Crafting +4, Performance +8

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

Items batons doused in flammable oil (2)

AC 16; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

HP 40; **Resistances** fire 5

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ flaming baton +10, **Damage** 1d6+2 bludgeoning plus 1d6 fire

Ranged ♦ flame spit +10 (range 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8 fire

Breathe Fire ♦ (primal, fire); **Requirements** Viktor is holding an ignited baton; **Effect** Viktor breathes fire in a 20-foot cone. Creatures within the cone take 3d6 fire damage (DC 18 basic Reflex save). Once Viktor breathes fire, he cannot do so again for 1d4 rounds.

Ignite Baton ♦♦ Viktor ignites or douses a baton. Ignited batons burn for 10 minutes or until Viktor douses them.

Set on Fire If Viktor critically hits a target with an attack that deals fire damage, or if a target of one of his effects that deals fire damage critically fails its saving throw, the target takes 1d4 persistent fire damage.

XP Award: Award the heroes 10 XP for each one-on-one duel they win. If they win the group duel, award them 30 XP.

RETURN ENGAGEMENT

MODERATE 2

A few hours after the duel, a Celestial Menagerie member ambushes the heroes to seek revenge. Choose whichever NPC got the strongest reaction from the heroes; an NPC who was humiliated by a hero is an especially good choice. This attack shouldn't be in a public place; spring this attack while the heroes are traveling between locations. The NPC brings a loyal automaton to aid in the fight.

VENGEFUL CELESTIAL MENAGERIE MEMBER LEVEL 2

Page 28 or 29

Initiative Perception +7

MECHANICAL CARNY

LEVEL 2

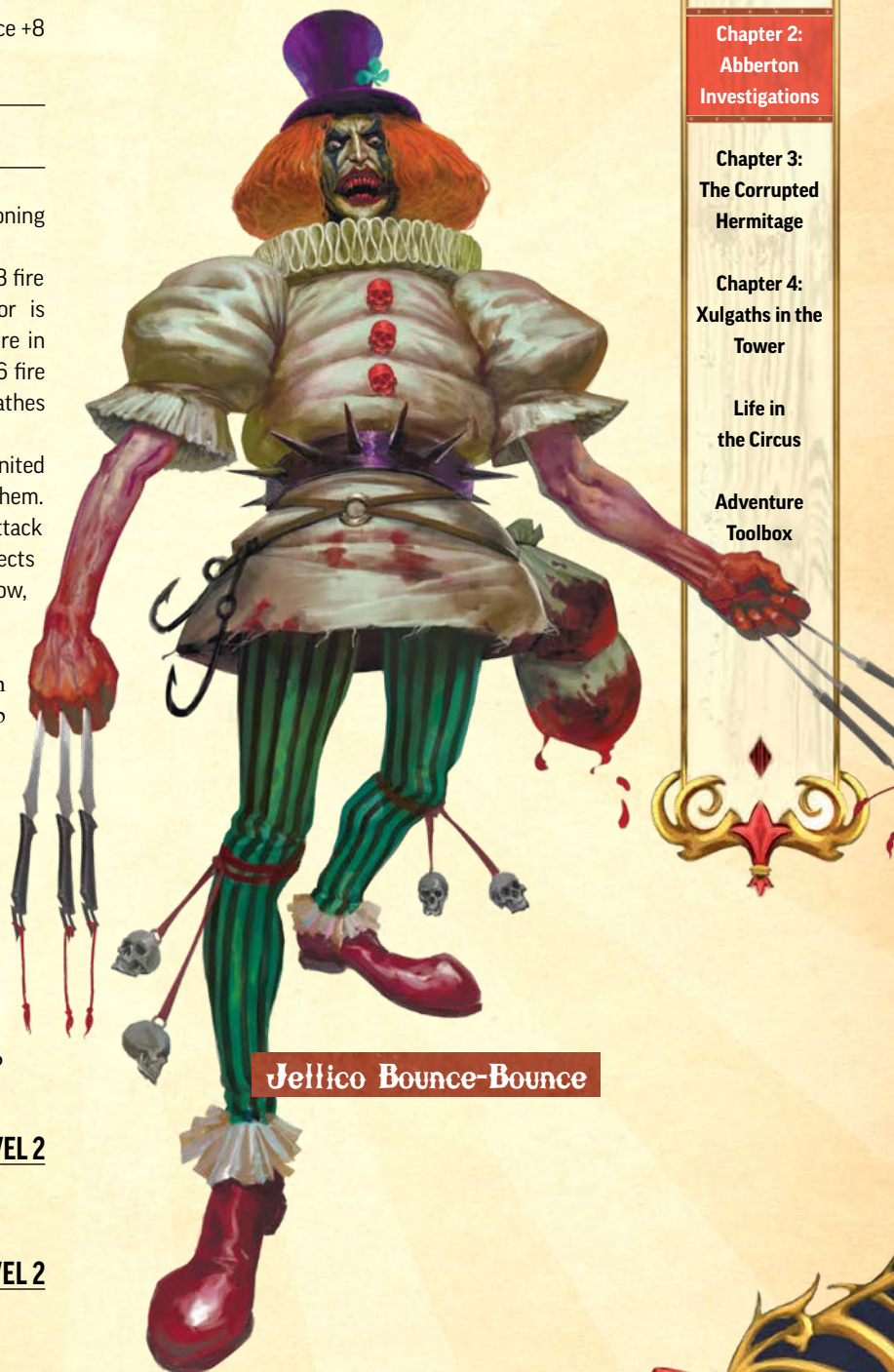
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Initiative Perception +6

Lindell Barn

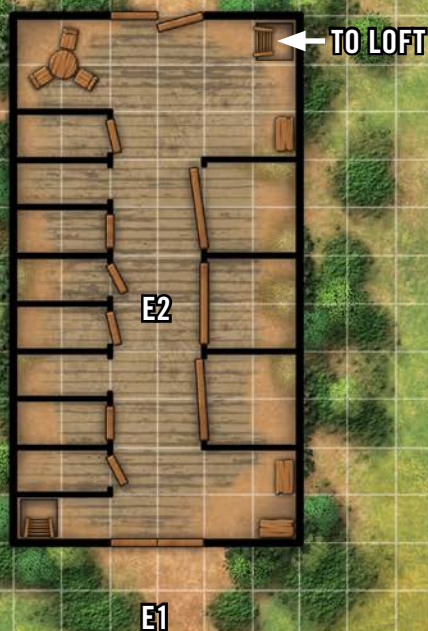
The Lindell brothers, Jano and Bindo, own a barn just outside of Abberton. Nemmia chose it as her hideout because of its location: it's near Abberton, but at the end of a quiet road. She imprisoned both the Lindells and the Hawftons there and brought in several powerful allies.

Sheriff Ralhain came alone to investigate the barn but was killed by a snapping flytrap Nemmia had



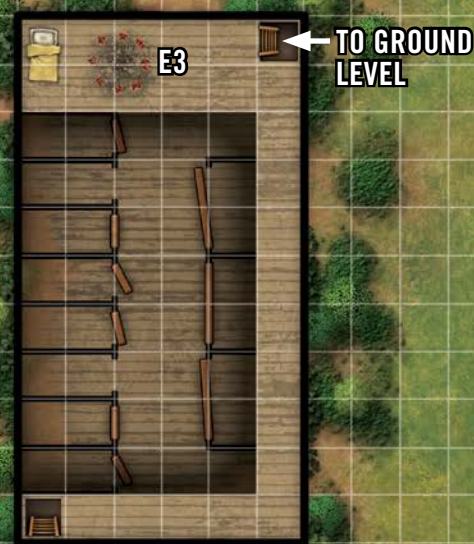
Jellico Bounce-Bounce

LINDELL BARN GROUND LEVEL



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

LOFT



relocated to the site. Two vermleeks later came to the barn to check up on Nemmia, wearing the skins of priests from the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning. Nemmia offered the Lindell brothers to the demons, and the voracious demons happily shed their old flesh to take on these new hosts. (The heroes may have encountered these demons digging in the cemetery behind the Goldenlaws Church.)

Nemmia's last visit to the barn was sometime before her attack on the Circus of Wayward Wonders. The Hawfton family remains chained in the barn, desperately thirsty and worried that the murderous halfling or her demon allies might return at any time. The heroes can free these prisoners, and they can also gain additional evidence pointing them to the hermitage as the next step in their investigations.

The Lindell farm is at the end of a dead-end road, surrounded by trees and undergrowth.

E1. BARN EXTERIOR

LOW 2

The barn is two stories high with two entrances, both large double doors. The south entrance faces the road, and the north entrance faces a large, overgrown

pasture that hasn't held animals for months. Both of the doors are barred from the outside; removing the bars is a simple matter.

Creatures: Nemmia's snapping flytrap lurks in the overgrown scrub around the barn. It moves to intercept any creatures it detects and fights to the death.

SNAPPING FLYTRAP

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 160

Initiative Stealth +13

Treasure: Searching the scrub reveals some bloody boots and a wide-brimmed hat. These are all that's left of Sheriff Ralhain, and anyone from Abberton recognizes them as the sheriff's property. A hero who Searches the overgrowth also discovers a silver chain worth 15 gp and a *savior spike* among the thorns.

E2. BARN INTERIOR

SEVERE 2

This large, dark barn has a row of animal stalls along the west wall and three large cubicles for hay and food storage to the east. A table and chairs are tucked into

the northwest corner of the barn, and the walls are covered with hooks and shelves for harnesses and other equipment useful for keeping animals. A loft twelve feet above the floor circles the barn's perimeter. Two ladders provide access to the loft: one in the southwest corner of the barn, and one in the northeast.

The hay in the barn is badly scorched from the fire mephits playing catch with balls of flame over the last few days; it's a minor miracle that the barn itself hasn't caught fire from their games.

Creatures: Four mephits lair here: two fire mephits and two earth mephits. The different types of mephits don't like each other and keep their distance; the earth mephits lurk sullenly in the northernmost cow stall, while the fire mephits lob flames back and forth near the loft. If the barn doors open, an earth mephit calls out, "Mistress Nemmia? Is that you?"

When the mephits discover Nemmia hasn't returned, they attack. The mephits have been left alone in the barn for what they consider far too long; they are now impatient and reckless. Although the earth mephits and fire mephits don't actively attack each other in a fight, they enjoy "accidentally" including any mephits of the other type in their breath weapon attacks. The mephits fight until destroyed.

EARTH MEPHITS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 150

Initiative Perception +3

FIRE MEPHITS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 151

Initiative Perception +3

Freeing the Hawftons: The Hawfton family—Seirah, Rikart, and Aima—are roped together and lashed to the post in the middle feed bin. As the bin's gate is closed, they aren't immediately visible to anyone entering the barn. They have just enough room to move about the enclosure, but not to leave it. They've been working on fraying the ropes binding them, but haven't yet made a lot of progress, as they can work at it only when the mephits aren't paying attention.

As soon as combat begins, the Hawftons cry for help and ask to be freed; doing so is a simple matter of cutting the rope or untying them with a successful DC 21 Dexterity check. If Seirah or Rikart are freed, their first priority is to free Aima. The Hawftons haven't had any food or water since Nemmia left, but they have not otherwise been physically harmed.

The captives can tell the harrowing tale of their abduction and imprisonment. They confirm that

Nemmia was from the Hermitage of the Blessed Lightning, as she spoke of it often, between furious outbursts blaming the people of Abberton for a wide array of environmental calamities. The halfling seemed to blame Abberton for everything—any negative environmental changes, such as heat waves, dry spells, wells going dry, and even a decline in birth rates among local animals. The Hawftons saw Nemmia command the mephits and various animals, especially the rats that followed her everywhere. Her plan, as best the Hawftons can tell, was to terrorize Abberton so persistently that everyone would leave; when she heard about the arrival of a circus, she seized on it as a highly visible target and was certain the town would evacuate if the entire circus were slaughtered. Nemmia's only visitors were two members of the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning with strange, loose skin. Hideous worm-like creatures burst from the hermits, and after some horrible screaming, the Lindell brothers—who had been kept tied up in the southernmost cow stall—left the barn. The Lindells had the same strange looseness in their skin, and the Hawftons are grateful they didn't see exactly what the worm-creatures did to them.

Hermit Bodies: The southernmost cow stall contains two piles of skin left behind by the vermleeks from the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning. These remains, each from a middle-aged human male, are clad in gray robes the color of a storm cloud and a wooden religious symbol of Gozreh. The religious symbols have been defaced with jagged runes; with a successful DC 16 Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a hero identifies these as demonic symbols (a hero can also attempt this check using Arcana, Occultism, or an applicable lore skill, but the DC is 18). Two bloody tridents lean against the wall of the stall.

XP Award: If the heroes rescue the Hawftons and hear their harrowing tale, award them each 30 XP.

E3. LOFT

The loft is mostly bare; it contains only a small bedroll Nemmia left behind and a prodigious quantity of rat droppings showing that many rats once laired here with her. Nemmia engraved the wood floor of the loft with a detailed summoning circle; a hero who succeeds at a DC 16 Religion check to Recall Knowledge identifies several sigils that represent Gozreh, as well as many demonic runes (a hero can also attempt this check using Arcana, Occultism, or an applicable lore skill, but the DC is 18). This circle demonstrates the same corruption of the Gozren faith to demon worship that is prevalent in the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning.

Treasure: Nemmia left behind an *oil of mending* near her bedroll.



CHAPTER 3: THE CORRUPTED HERMITAGE

The Hermitage of Blessed Lightning stands on a wide ledge along the sea cliffs a day's walk northwest of Abberton. The trail to the hermitage is narrow, windy, and frequently wet, discouraging casual visits. The hermitage appears to be a small stone structure abutting the cliff a few dozen yards above the sea, but its chambers extend far back into the cliff face. From the ledge around the building, the hermits can watch the storms and waves that exemplify their deity's whims. The exterior structure is blackened from repeated lightning strikes; why lightning from sea-blown storms so often strikes this building is a mystery, but the hermits consider it a clear sign of Gozreh's favor. They are generally welcoming to visitors, but guests are only rarely permitted to venture deep into the structure and must stay for no more than one night at a time. The hermits' organization is quite loose; most pursue their own studies or individual meditations. The leader of

the hermitage is its most senior priest, and that position has been held by a human man named Harlock Hamdeel for nearly 20 years. The other hermits are either priests of Gozreh or retainers who dedicate their lives to serving the hermitage.

Although Gozrens have inhabited the hermitage for many generations, the structure is far older. Its original builders are unknown, and since moving into the structure, the hermits have remodeled and expanded it repeatedly over the centuries (such as by transforming the dungeons into an animal hospital and expanding the crypts).

Few of Abberton's townspeople and farmers have ever been to the hermitage, and only Mayor Jae Abber has been there more than once, as he and Harlock are friends. No one in Abberton knows precisely how many people live at the hermitage, but they suspect that about a dozen priests and another dozen

retainers live there. Every few weeks, retainers from the hermitage travel to Abberton with a battered cart to purchase supplies—mostly food and writing materials. These visitors haven't been seen in almost a month.

The townspeople don't realize that the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning has wholly fallen to evil. The mayor is convinced that Harlock is innocent of any wrongdoing—and he's right. But Harlock has been imprisoned by hermits who have been corrupted into trafficking with demons. Demons now have free rein to corrupt not only the priests and their retainers, but the animals in the hermitage as well. When Jae Abber arrived at the hermitage to check in with Harlock, he was also taken prisoner.

Journey to the Hermitage

After the heroes have rested from their exploits in Abberton, a group of concerned townspeople (possibly including the priest-banker Nellyn or other townspeople the heroes have saved) come to the circus grounds with dire news: Mayor Abber left for the hermitage and hasn't yet returned. He's been gone longer than anyone anticipated, and the townspeople are worried. The heroes might already have reason to suspect the hermits if they discovered Gozreh's religious symbols among the demons in Goldenlaws Church or evidence of Nemmia's presence in the Lindell barn.

The heroes' next logical step is to check out the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning for themselves. If the heroes are conflicted about this investigation due to other priorities in town (such as a desire to keep an eye on the Mad Mug), other circus members step in to help. Their willingness to run errands, promote the circus, and accomplish other non-dangerous tasks should free the heroes up to investigate the hermitage. The heroes shouldn't have any trouble getting directions to the site, which lies about 12 miles west of town and a bit north, along the coast.

The journey to the Hermitage of the Blessed Lightning is uneventful unless you want to spring unexpected encounters on your players or they need additional XP to reach 3rd level. The path leading down to the hermitage descends along sea cliffs. There are no fences or guide rails along the path, which averages 5 feet wide, and the wind is strong enough to deter all but the most determined visitors. The hermitage rests on a jutting cliff 50 feet above the tumultuous sea, which smashes against the rocks below.

The outside of the hermitage structure is made of stone blackened from thousands of lightning strikes over the decades. The nearby shed is made of weathered wood. Unless noted otherwise, the hermitage's doors are made of wood and are unlocked. Most exterior rooms have windows 1 foot wide and 2 feet high, but these each bear shutters latched closed from the inside. Ceilings are 10 feet tall throughout except in the grand hall and the main temple, which are 20 feet high. Lanterns and torches throughout the hermitage keep the interior well-lit except where indicated.

F1. HERMITAGE LEDGE

LOW 3

This wide ledge juts from the cliff fifty feet above the Inner Sea, but is nonetheless splashed with spray and smells strongly of salt. Two buildings hug close to the cliff wall. One is made of stone blackened in places as though from severe spot fires; the other is a large shed made of weathered wood.

Creatures: Several slurks, drawn by the lure of delicious sea-birds, occasionally infest this ledge. The hermits usually chase them away, as their

CHAPTER 3 SYNOPSIS

The Hermitage of Blessed Lightning was until recently a sacred community dedicated to Gozreh, the neutral deity of nature, wind, and waves. But now it has fallen to evil. The hermits have embraced the corruption offered by the succubus Balenni and now consort with demons to gain their power. The hermits hope to use their new powers to drive away the stain of civilization from the land; in time, they are bound to become as murderous as the halfling Nemmia. The heroes can quash this heresy by defeating the corrupted hermits and their demonic allies. In the process, they can rescue Mayor Jae Abber and the hermitage's benevolent leader, Harlock Hamdeel, from the hermits' clutches.

CHAPTER 3 TREASURE

The permanent and consumable items available as treasure in Chapter 3 are as follows.

- *animal staff*
- *climbing bolt*
- *coyote cloak*
- *fighter's fork*
- *healer's gloves*
- *lesser salamander elixir*
- *monkey pin*
- *scroll of personal rain cloud*
- *scroll of sea surge*
- *scroll of sudden bolt*
- *silversheen*

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

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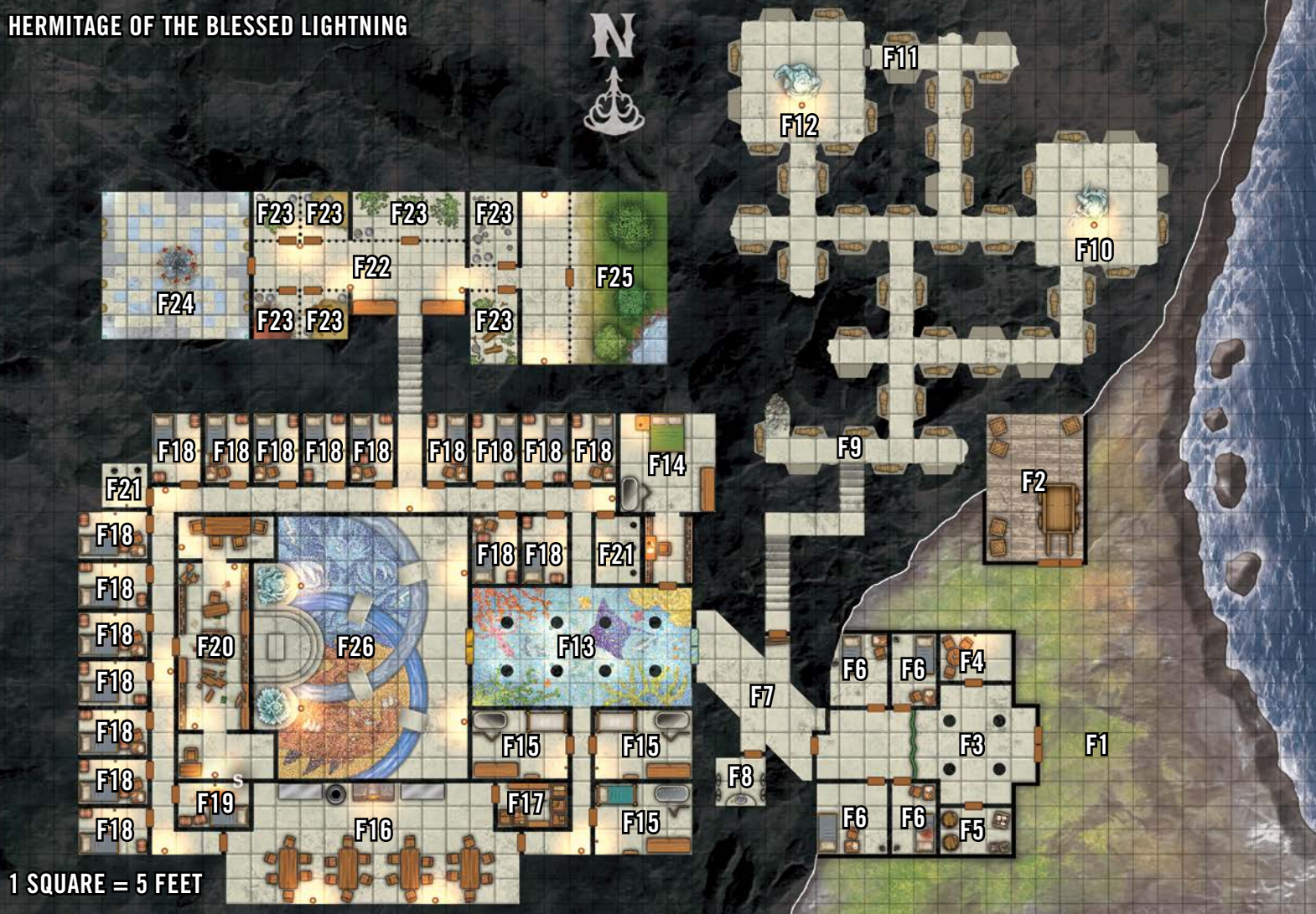
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belly grease poses a danger on the already-slick rock, but two of the creatures recently returned. Constant exposure to the slurks' belly grease has made the area within 20 feet of the creatures uneven ground. The DC to Balance on the ground around the creatures is 18. Tired of being displaced, the surly slurks fight anyone who approaches, though a slurk reduced to fewer than 8 Hit Points scales the cliffs to retreat.

SLURKS (2)

Pathfinder Bestiary 301

Initiative Perception +6

Drawing Attention: If the heroes make a lot of noise near the door to the hermitage, they attract the attention of the corrupted retainers in the vestibule (area F3) and a corrupted retainer comes to investigate.

F2. SHED

This weathered wooden shed shelters a cart and several crates, which the hermits use to obtain supplies from Abberton from time to time. Sea birds roost in its rafters and squawk noisily when anyone enters.

F3. VESTIBULE

MODERATE 3

The entrance to the hermitage is an elaborately carved double door depicting both of Gozreh's forms: on the left he is a sky god rising from a whirlwind with lightning in his hand, and on the right she is a sea-goddess surrounded by a whirlpool. The artisanship is astonishing, but their placement means no one but the hermits and the handful of visitors who make the difficult trek to the hermitage ever sees them. The hermits feel this is an allegory for themselves, as they pursue their devotion to Gozreh without concern for whether the outside world takes notice of them. The double door can be bolted from the inside, but it's currently unlocked. It opens with a firm push.

The stone chamber within contains four columns, two shaped like trees and two shaped like coral. A heavy green curtain conceals the hallway leading west.

Creatures: Three retainers of the hermitage who have been corrupted by demonic influences guard the hermitage from intruders. When Mayor Abber arrived recently looking for Harlock, they invited him in only to interrogate and abuse him. When they aren't beating him here—which they do frequently—they keep him

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

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locked in one of the nearby guest rooms. When the heroes arrive, the corrupted retainers are crowded around Mayor Abber, who cowers in a corner trying to shield himself from harm. When he spots them, the mayor shouts with relief, “Thank the gods you’ve come! They’ve...” just as one of the corrupted retainers slaps him with the end of his trident, knocking the mayor unconscious. The corrupted retainers quickly advance on the heroes and fight to the death.

CORRUPTED RETAINERS (3)

CREATURE 2

CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human hirelings

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +6, Athletics +6, Survival +6

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

Items hide armor, gray robes, trident, wooden shield (Hardness 3)

AC 19 (21 with shield raised); **Fort** +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7
HP 30

No Escape ⤿ (rage); **Trigger** A foe within the corrupted retainer’s reach attempts to move away from them; **Effect** The corrupted retainer keeps pace with the triggering foe. The corrupted retainer Strides up to their Speed, following that foe and keeping it in reach throughout its movement until it stops moving or the corrupted retainer has moved their full Speed.

Shield Block ⤿

Speed 25 feet

Melee ⬥ trident +11 (fatal d10, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 2d8+2 piercing

Demonic Strength Corrupted retainers deal an extra 1d8 damage with their tridents, and any trident gains the fatal d10 trait while the corrupted retainer is using it (both the extra weapon damage die and the fatal trait have already been included in the corrupted retainer’s trident Strike above).

Tainted Rage ⬥ (concentrate, emotion, mental) The corrupted retainer begins to rage and gains 5 temporary Hit Points. The rage lasts for 1 minute or until they fall unconscious, whichever happens first. While raging, the corrupted retainer deals 2 additional damage with melee weapons, has a –1 penalty to AC, and cannot use actions that have the concentrate trait unless those actions also have the rage trait. The corrupted retainer can still Seek while raging.

The Mayor’s Story: Once the heroes have defeated the corrupted retainers, they can tend to the mayor. He tells the heroes that he came looking for Harlock and was immediately imprisoned. Word of his capture

was sent to those deeper in the hermitage, and a few priests came to see him—but all were as cruel and pitiless as his captors. They were accompanied by small flying demons, and Mayor Abber shudders to think the hermits are dealing so openly with fiends. Through the abuse shouted at him during beatings, the mayor learned that Harlock is also a prisoner in the hermitage.

Mayor Abber is incredibly grateful to be rescued and prepared to quickly return to town. He asks that the heroes do their best to rescue Harlock.

Treasure: The mayor gives the heroes 40 gp from his personal funds once he’s back in town.

XP Award: For learning what the mayor knows and freeing him, grant the heroes 30 XP.



Corrupted Retainer

F4. WAITING ROOM

Visitors to the hermitage are normally led to this room to wait while the hermits discuss the visit and decide what to do. The waiting room is simply furnished with a table and chairs, and its stone walls are bare. The furniture isn't particularly comfortable, and the only nod to courtesy is a copper vessel filled with water on the table.

F5. STORAGE

The retainers unload supplies obtained from Abberton into this closet. As it's been weeks since the last supply delivery, this room is mostly empty. A few wooden casks half-full of salted pork and mead are all that remain, along with a crate of parchment paper and a few boxes of ink and goose quills.

Treasure: A jar containing a lesser salamander elixir lies forgotten on a shelf here.

F6. SIMPLE GUEST ROOMS

These four rooms are reserved for the rare guests allowed to stay overnight at the hermitage. Each room has a single uncomfortable bed, a desk with a candle and writing supplies, a chamber pot, and a copy of the Gozren holy book, *Hymns to the Wind and the Waves*. The corrupted retainers kept Jae Abber in the southeastern guest room. The bedsheets there are stained with blood, and a few wooden shims rest just outside the door. The guards used the shims as an improvised lock to keep the door from opening while the mayor was imprisoned inside.

F7. SECURE PASSAGE

MODERATE 3

The door from area **F3** to this hallway is a large and imposing granite slab broken only by a small viewing slot at eye level. It is barred from the opposite side and guarded, although the guards are focused on the door leading to the crypts rather than this secure door. The heroes have several ways to get through this door. First, they might Force Open the door with a successful DC 23 Athletics check or lift the bar on the other side with a successful DC 18 Thievery check to Disable a Device. If the heroes can't do so quietly, they alert the corrupted retainers guarding this room. Alternatively, the heroes might pretend to be corrupted retainers and use Deception to trick the guards to open the door; doing so requires a successful Deception check against the retainers' Perception DC of 16.

This wide hall leads into the cliff face at an angle. A double door at the west end of the room is carved from blue and green marble and depicts a magnificent abstract pattern

that evokes both the wind of a tornado and the water of a whirlpool. The handles are green-enamelled metal leaves, each bearing a drop of water. Smaller doors lead out of this hall to the north and south directions. The door to the north has several planks nailed across it.

The north door leads to the hermitage's crypts. The hermits recently killed a ghoul attempting to make its way into the hermitage and deduced it had come up from the crypts. The retainers here boarded up the door and are watching it carefully. They've heard occasional scrabbling on the other side of the door and suspect—correctly—that more ghouls have infiltrated the crypts.

Prying the boards aside is easy from this side; from the other side, a successful DC 21 Athletics check is required to Force Open the boarded-up door.

Creatures: Two corrupted retainers named Ebbern and Faldinor are posted here with a slurk that Ebbern has been training. They're watching for ghouls attempting to come through the north door, but they're so terrified they'll likely flee if the ghouls manage to get the door open. Unless the heroes are immediately aggressive, the retainers seize upon the heroes' presence as an opportunity to solve their ghoul problem. They do their best to convince the heroes to enter the crypts; if the heroes insist on seeing Harlock, for example, they lie and say he's down in the crypts. Faldinor even removes the boards for the heroes, but he nails them back up again as soon as the heroes are through. The retainers' Deception skill is particularly poor, so the heroes aren't likely to fall for their tricks, and the corrupted retainers resort to combat if pressed. A corrupted retainer reduced to fewer than 10 Hit Points flees or surrenders, but Ebbern's slurk fights to the death.

EBBERN AND FALDINOR

CREATURE 2

Corrupted retainers (2; page 35)

Initiative Perception +6

SLURK

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 301

Initiative Perception +6

Reinforcements: An hour or so after the heroes first enter this room, Yoril (the corrupted priest in area **F13**) resolves to make a strike against the ghouls. She comes into this room to add the corrupted retainers and the slurk to her forces, but the presence of the heroes surprises her, and she's likely to attack.

Treasure: Faldinor carries a tin of *silversheen*, which he plans to use against the undead in the catacombs.

F8. WASHROOM

This small room contains a wall-mounted basin with water, a few hooks bearing gray robes, and rough soap. The hermits were expected to stop here to wash themselves before passing further into the hermitage.

F9. CATACOMB ENTRANCE

LOW 3

The stone steps from the secure chamber lead down into darkness. While torch sconces are mounted on the walls, the torches all burnt out long ago. The stairs lead to a narrow series of corridors containing over a hundred burial niches. While most followers of Gozreh prefer sky burial or burial at sea, residents of the hermitage long ago established a tradition of being interred within the hermitage they occupied for so long. The horizontal niches are each large enough for a human body and are vertically arranged in groups of three: one niche at knee level, one at waist level, and another at eye level. Most niches hold a single corpse, all hermits who have died here over the generations. The remains are in chronological order, with the oldest corpses near the bottom of the stairs and more recent corpses further out. Every few decades, the hermits extend these passages even further in the solid stone to make room for more niches. The hermits also constructed two larger rooms in the crypts, each containing holy statues (areas **F10** and **F12**).

Hazard: The ghouls entered the crypt through an underground passage just west of the base of the stairs. This passage collapsed behind them, trapping the ghouls in the crypt. Clearing the rubble would take many days, and the ghouls are instead filling their time by picking through the bounty of corpses throughout the crypt. The area remains unstable and caves in upon anyone approaching within 5 feet of the collapse.

CATACOMB CAVE-IN

HAZARD 4

ENVIRONMENTAL TRAP

Stealth DC 23 (trained)

Description The ceiling is unstable, and any Medium or larger creature that approaches within 5 feet of the collapsed tunnel triggers a cave-in.

Disable Thievery DC 21 (trained) to prop up the ceiling in key locations prior to the cave-in.

AC 21; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +8

Hardness 11, **HP** 44 (BT 22); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** sonic 10

Falling Stones **Trigger** A Medium or larger creature approaches within 5 feet of the collapsed tunnel; **Effect** Massive stones in the ceiling fall, dealing 4d6 bludgeoning damage to the triggering creature and all creatures within 10 feet (DC 18 basic Reflex save). Creatures that fail the saving throw are also buried

and begin to suffocate. A buried creature can attempt a DC 20 Athletics check every round, breaking free on a success. Other characters who are not buried can Aid on this check.

F10. STATUE OF FURY

MODERATE 3

The catacombs here widen into a chamber housing a marble statue of the Personification of Fury, one of Gozreh's chief servants. The Personification is an elemental, but they are a hybrid of air and water, rising up on a curling wave that transforms into a muscular upper body made of cloud. An iron brazier built into the stone in front of the statue is enchanted to give off flickering light like that of a campfire.

The niches in the walls bear more remains from the hermits who died here centuries ago, but many of the bones have been pulled out of their resting places and now litter the floor. Fragments of old clothing are mixed among these broken bones.

Creatures: Four ghouls have been searching through the corpses for anything of value; they've already given up on trying to eat these dry old bones. If they detect the heroes' approach—such as if the heroes are bringing a light source with them—they hide on either side of the passage and try to grab the first person they see, dragging their victim into the room while other ghouls try to keep the remaining heroes bottled up in the passageway. Once three ghouls are defeated, the fourth flees to area **F12** to alert Smiler.

GHOULS (4)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 169

Initiative Stealth +7

Treasure: While scavenging among the corpses here, the ghouls discovered a *coyote cloak*. It currently lies on the floor amid the jumbled bones and tattered clothing, as the ghouls have little use for it.

F11. DOOR OF WIND AND WATER

This passage ends at a solid stone slab, the first of several doors the hermits planned to install in the catacombs. The door has no handle or lock and requires a successful DC 28 Athletics check to Force Open. The door opens magically when in contact with liquid and wind simultaneously; even something as simple as a drop of sweat and an exhalation of breath suffice. The ghouls know about this door but haven't been able to open it; as a result, heroes who open this door surprise the ghouls around Saltbeard's statue (area **F12**) and gain a +8 circumstance bonus to their initiative checks if combat begins in that room right away.

F12. SALTBEARD'S STATUE

MODERATE 3

This chamber contains a marble statue of Saltbeard, one of Gozreh's legendary servants. Saltbeard is an old triton with a grim expression—furrowed brow, dark eyes, and pursed lips—as well as a large and imposing beard. The statue grips a metal trident in its hands. As with the Statue of Fury in area F10, this statue is magically illuminated by an iron brazier set into the stone in front of it.

The bodies here are all more recent and include some hermits who died within the last year. Many of these burial niches are empty, reserved for the bodies of still-living hermits. Most of the corpses in this section have now served as meals for the ghouls; limbs are scattered all over, with occasional gobbets of flesh still clinging to the bones. The stench of death and decay in this section of the catacombs is overpowering.

One wall of this room contains an imposing slab of stone that opens only when in contact with liquid and wind; this is the other side of the Door of Wind and Water, described in area F11.

Creatures: The ghouls in the hermitage are led by an especially old and sadistic ghast who calls himself Smiler. Smiler's skin is stretched tight around his face, giving him a perpetual grin that he emphasizes further

with jawbones strapped to his face as ornaments. He's lounging under the statue of Saltbeard, where his ghoul minions feed him delicacies from among the dead hermits in the catacombs. One ghoul is by his side at all times; the other searches the niches for bits of flesh or marrow. As soon as Smiler sees the heroes, he orders his ghouls to attack. He lingers behind them, trying to remain out of melee range but close enough to inflict his stench upon the heroes. If one of his ghouls is defeated, he steps into melee. Once he is reduced to 20 Hit Points or fewer, or if all his ghouls are destroyed, he tries to flee out of the crypts and away from the hermitage entirely.

SMILER

CREATURE 3

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM GHOUL UNDEAD

Male ghast (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 169)

Perception +12; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +9, Intimidation +9, Stealth +9

Str +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Items composite shortbow (20 arrows)

AC 19; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8

HP 45, negative healing; **Immunity** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Stench (aura, olfactory) 10 feet. A creature entering the aura or starting its turn in the aura must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or become sickened 1 (plus slowed 1 as long as it's sickened on a critical failure). While within the aura, the creature takes a –2 circumstance penalty to saves against disease and to recover from the sickened condition. A creature that succeeds at its save is temporarily immune for 1 minute.

Speed 30 feet, burrow 5 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +12 (finesse), **Damage** 2d6+4 piercing plus ghast fever and paralysis

Melee ♦ claw +12 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d4+4 slashing plus paralysis

Ranged ♦ shortbow +12 (deadly 1d10, propulsive, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 1d6+4 piercing

Consume Flesh ♦ (manipulate) **Requirements** Smiler is adjacent to the corpse of a creature that died within the last hour; **Effect** Smiler devours a chunk of the corpse and regains 3d6 Hit Points. He can regain Hit Points from any given corpse only once.

Ghast Fever (disease) **Saving Throw** DC 18 Fortitude; **Stage 1** carrier with no ill effect (1 day); **Stage 2** 3d8 negative damage and regains half as many Hit Points from all healing (1 day); **Stage 3** as stage 2 (1 day); **Stage 4** 3d8 negative damage and gains no benefit from healing (1 day); **Stage 5** as stage 4 (1 day); **Stage 6** dead, and rises as a ghast the next midnight.



Paralysis (incapacitation, occult, necromancy) Any living creature hit by Smiler's attack must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or become paralyzed. It can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns, and the DC cumulatively decreases by 1 on each such save.

Swift Leap ♦ (move) Smiler jumps up to half his Speed. This movement doesn't trigger reactions.

GHOULS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 169

Initiative Perception +7

Treasure: Smiler has amassed all the valuables his ghouls have found among the buried hermits; these treasures are scattered around the statue of Saltbeard, where Smiler has easy access to them. They include 20 sp, a jade-and-silver necklace worth 15 gp, a coral statuette of a dolphin with emerald eyes worth 40 gp, and a *climbing bolt*. The metal trident can be pulled from the statue's hands; it is a *fighter's fork*.

F13. THE GRAND HALL

MODERATE 3

This magnificent gallery glows with light from magical spheres set into eight twisting pillars that stretch from the floor to the ceiling twenty feet above. That ceiling depicts a cloudy, storm-tossed sky with remarkable realism. The floor is covered with mosaic tiles that portray the depths of the ocean, complete with coral reefs, seaweed beds, and schools of fish. Corridors lead away from the gallery to the north and south, and the hall ends in a massive bronze double door sculpted in a fantastic diorama of animals of all kinds: fish swimming in the sea, beasts walking the earth, and birds soaring in the sky.

The double door to the main temple (area **F26**) has no lock, but it is secured with a 2nd-level *lock* spell (DC 28 Athletics or Thievery check to open).

Creatures: A corrupted priest named Yoril has summoned a vermllek to destroy the ghouls who infest the catacombs. As soon as these two notice the heroes, the priest orders the demon to attack, supporting it from a distance with spells such as *flaming sphere* and *fear*. These foes fight to the death.

YORIL, CORRUPTED PRIEST

CREATURE 3

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Female human hermit

Perception +11

Languages Common

Skills Diplomacy +7, Gozreh Lore +8, Nature +9, Religion +9, Survival +9

Str +1, Dex +0, Con +1, Int +1, Wis +4, Cha +2

Items leather armor, gray robes, trident, wooden religious symbol of Gozreh defaced with demonic runes

Wild Empathy The corrupted priest can use Diplomacy to Make an Impression on animals and to make very simple Requests of them.

AC 17; Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +11

HP 45

Roiling Mind ⤵ **Trigger** The corrupted priest is targeted by an effect with the mental trait or that requires a Will save; **Effect** The hermit's mind is a storm of chaos due to demonic influences. The creator of the triggering effect takes 3d8 mental damage (DC 20 basic Will save).

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ trident +10 (fatal d10, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 2d8+1 piercing

Primal Prepared Spells DC 20, spell attack +12; **2nd** *barkskin, flaming sphere, summon elemental*; **1st** *fear, heal, spider sting, summon animal*; **Cantrips (2nd)** *light, produce flame, stabilize, tanglefoot*

Demonic Strength Corrupted priests deal an extra 1d8 damage with their tridents, and any trident gains the fatal d10 trait while the priest is using it (both the extra weapon damage die and the fatal trait have already been included above).

VERMLEK

CREATURE 3

Page 82

Initiative Perception +8

The Door Awakens: If the heroes defeat the corrupted priest and the demon in this room, they witness a magical event prompted by Gozreh's will. The beasts depicted on the door turn to look at the heroes, and speak the following words in an unearthly chorus.

"Corruption has shut this door, but that cannot keep us out.

"Cleanse these halls of the corrupted that infest it, and we will open this door for you.

"Or, if you are one of the chosen of the Wind and Waves, then you may enter."

After delivering this message, the beasts on the door return to their original positions and do not speak again. The door that leads to area **F26** opens on its own in one of three situations: when touched by a champion, cleric, or druid whose patron deity is Gozreh; when touched with one of three temple keys (one held by the dead librarian in area **F19**, one held by the corrupted priest Carlessa in area **F24**, and the last held—unhelpfully—by Harlock on the other side of the door); or when all corrupted humanoids other than the ones in the main temple are dead or removed from the hermitage.

F14. HARLOCK'S SUITE

These two chambers served Harlock Hamdeel as his office (to the south) and his bedchamber (to the north). The office includes a small desk and a few chairs, and it is lined with bookcases that hold Harlock's personal library devoted to historical and religious lore, bestiaries and beast fables, and the occasional adventure story. Harlock's bedroom is furnished with a double bed, armoire, and metal bathtub. His personal journal is tucked into a nightstand next to the bed. This journal contains his

MODERATE 3

suspicions about the gradual failure of the Erran Tower and his frustrations about being unable to do anything about the resulting environmental decline. He also notes recent reports of xulgaths seen around the tower, but without any detail. In short, this journal should provide sufficient information to lead the heroes to the tower in Chapter 4 if Harlock doesn't survive.

Creatures: Two corrupted priests, a gaunt man named Bak and an elderly woman named Lessa, each independently decided to take over Harlock's accommodations upon his capture. They are both currently here, arguing.

Bak and Lessa are unlikely to notice the heroes until they enter Harlock's suite, and perhaps not even then if the heroes are quiet. If Bak and Lessa become aware of intruders, the priests temporarily put their quarrel aside to fight together. A hero can spend an action to attempt a Deception check to reignite the argument between the two. The DC for this check is 18; on a success, the priests are both slowed 1 for 1 minute as they renew their bickering. On a critical success, the priests attack each other on their next round and are then slowed 1 for 1 minute. Whether this attempt succeeds or fails, the priests are temporarily immune to this provocation for 1 hour. Unwilling to abandon their claims to Harlock's room, the priests fight to the death.

BAK AND LESSA

CREATURE 3

Corrupted priests (2; page 39)

Initiative Perception +11

Treasure: Harlock's desk contains a recent letter from a distant Gozren abbey discussing rare spells. Included with this letter is a *scroll of personal rain cloud*, a *scroll of sea surge*, and a *scroll of sudden bolt*. These spells appear on pages 78–79. A small cash box in one of the desk drawers contains 29 gp.

F15. LARGE GUEST ROOMS

Only esteemed, wealthy, or powerful visitors were allowed beyond the hermitage's vestibule area and permitted to stay in these special guest rooms. Each room has a large and very comfortable canopied bed, an armoire for clothes storage, a full-length mirror (which the heroes may find useful against the abrikandilus in area F20), and light provided by fist-sized glowing orbs mounted in ornate wall sconces. A folding screen in each room conceals a metal bathtub. In the two northern guest rooms, the bedclothes are neatly folded and tucked



Yoril

away in the armoire. Only the southern guest room shows evidence of recent habitation; its bed is made and its bathtub is filled with lukewarm water.

F16. DINING HALL

MODERATE 3

The north wall of this long dining hall contains a stone oven, a cauldron, and several metal tables. Several long, wooden tables and benches are lined up against the south wall, providing accommodations for two dozen people to eat together. Doors lead east and west.

The hermits cook and eat their meals communally in this long dining hall.

Creatures: Most of the kitchen staff have perished, slain by demons or the corrupted mortal inhabitants of the hermitage, but the chef remains. A brute named Horba, she is as corrupted by demonic influence as the other surviving hermits. Horba has bullied and cajoled several quasits into being her new kitchen helpers. She spends her days preparing food for the hermits and their demonic allies. If anyone dares disturb Horba in her work, she and her quasits attack. If Horba doesn't suspect danger—which is likely, as she is involved with cooking and bossing the quasits around—her trident and shield are near the door to the pantry, and she must rely on the meat cleaver she's currently holding until she can pick them up.

HORBA

CREATURE 2

Female corrupted retainer (page 35)

Initiative Perception +8

Melee ♦ cleaver +9 (sweep, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+2 slashing

QUASITS (3)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 76

Initiative Perception +7

F17. PANTRY

This pantry contains large bins to hold vegetables and fruit, and racks for all sorts of dry goods, such as salt, farro, and spices. The supply of fresh foods is starting to run low, but there's still sufficient goods to feed the remaining hermits simple rations for weeks.

F18. HERMIT CELLS

Each of these rooms contains a wooden bunk bed with simple, straw-filled mattresses and chests for storing clothes and personal belongings. These lodgings are the same for both priests and retainers, although rooms for priests usually have two wooden writing desks, and rooms for retainers have space to store work gear.

Each room has been personalized by its inhabitants, including manuscripts in progress or art that honors Gozreh (usually dramatic landscapes). As the hermits fell into demon-worship and violence, they began to neglect Gozreh and their scholarship and revel in sin. Paintings are torn or defaced, books are torn or scribbled in, and some chambers are stained with blood where the corrupted hermits murdered those who refused to stoop to their depravity. No bodies remain in these blood-stained cells, as the vermleeks in the hermitage either took their skins or ate them.

F19. LIBRARIAN'S CELL

The door to this cell from the hallway is locked from the inside. It can be Forced Open with a successful DC 20 Athletics check, or a hero can open it with three successful DC 20 Thievery checks to Pick a Lock. When the heroes enter the room, read or paraphrase the following.

This small cell looks like many of the others in the hermitage, but it is remarkable for the bloody corpse that stretches across the small single bed. The figure, a human male, is dressed in the gray robes of the other hermits, and also wears a gold sash decorated with a badge depicting an open book. A stack of books sits on a small bed stand, and an imposing mural of Gozreh that depicts the deity as a raging elemental looks down from the southern wall.

The hermitage's librarian initially listened to Balenni's corrupting whispers. When one of the attackers of Goldenlaws Church recently brought him that church's two holy books, *The Manual of City-Building* and *The Order of Numbers*, the librarian finally realized that the demons were a threat to all religious people, Abadarans and Gozrens alike. He confronted his fellow priests to get them to see the errors of their ways, but they lashed out at him violently. The librarian managed to retreat to his room before dying from his wounds.

The north wall contains a secret door leading to one of the library's reading rooms (area **F20**). A hero who succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check locates the door. Unlike the door to the hall, the secret door isn't locked.

Treasure: The two illuminated holy books stolen from Goldenlaws Church, which the priest-banker Nellyn likely asked the heroes to recover, rest on the nightstand. The dead librarian also carries a key to the main temple door that leads to area **F26** (described in area **F13**) as well as the key to this room.

XP Award: Should the heroes return the Abadaran holy books to Nellyn, award them 30 XP.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Chapter 1:
Murder in the
Center Ring

Chapter 2:
Abberton
Investigations

Chapter 3:
The Corrupted
Hermitage

Chapter 4:
Xulgaths in the
Tower

Life in
the Circus

Adventure
Toolbox

F20. LIBRARY

SEVERE 3

The door to this library has been torn from its hinges and lies in the hall. The violent activity of the room's occupants is audible even from the hallway.

This library must once have been magnificent. Tall wooden bookcases still line the room's walls, but many have been pulled over, spilling books of all types and sizes over the carpeted floor. Statuary busts decorate a few cases that remain standing, but others have toppled and shattered. Shredded paper and torn parchment cover the ground. Tables where hermits must once have studied ancient lore are flipped on their sides or upside down, their legs broken off. Archways to the north and south lead to reading rooms that have so far been spared from the damage to the library.

The north reading room was used for study and contains only a simple table and a few sturdy chairs. The south reading room contains a desk the librarian used for copying books; its drawers contain supplies of paper and parchment as well as inkwells and quills. This south reading room also contains a secret door to the librarian's cell (area F19); a hero can discover it with a successful DC 18 Perception check.

Creatures: Two abrikandilus are trashing the library; they only reason the reading rooms are intact is that they haven't yet gotten around to smashing those furnishings. As soon as they notice the heroes, they attack, hurling books and broken shelving before approaching to engage in melee combat. The demons fight to the death.

ABRIKANDILUS (2)

CREATURE 4

Page 81

Initiative Perception +10

Fire Hazard: The torn pages throughout the library are flammable. Any use of fire in this room (including alchemist's fire and spells such as *burning hands*) risks setting the entire collection ablaze. For each such use, attempt a DC 15 flat check; on a success, the fire causes the books to begin burning. After 1d4 rounds, each creature in the room then takes 1d8 fire damage and 1d4 persistent fire damage. The fire burns out in 2 minutes and doesn't spread to other areas of the hermitage. The abrikandilus don't think to use fire on their own, but if they see any open flame, they stop attacking long enough to try to set the library on fire.

Treasure: If the library doesn't burn, a hero who Searches the library finds a battered formula book. The book contains formulas for lesser elixir of life, moderate cheetah's elixir, and moderate eagle-eye elixir.

F21. PRIVIES

These noisome rooms contain little other than pit toilets whose shafts drop at a slant to open at the base of the cliff, and bunches of herbs to mask the smell.

F22. ANIMAL CARE

The hermits cared deeply about the native animals around the hermitage. This chamber is the entrance to a network of rooms where ill, injured, or orphaned animals were housed, cared for, and trained before being released back into the wild. The worse the environmental damage on the Isle of Erran became, the more animals the hermits kept here. Wooden cupboards on the south wall of this room hold veterinary medicine, animal food, bandages, and other items necessary for the long-term care of animals of various size. The floor is covered in tile.

Treasure: The cabinets contain a pair of *healer's gloves* amid the bandages.

F23. ANIMAL PENS

The hermits repurposed these dungeon cells long ago to serve as pens for one or more animals. Each pen is dedicated to a particular type of animal (such as canines or rodents), with predators and prey animals kept in pens far apart from each other. The cells contain water bowls, food, leaves, stones, or other accoutrements to make the pens feel more like a natural environment to the animals kept within. A hero who succeeds at a DC 13 Nature check realizes the purpose of these pens and the care that went into establishing them.

The bars in the pens are old and rusted, and the cell doors contain only simple latches rather than locks. Wrenching aside the bars requires a successful DC 20 Athletics check to Force Open.

The hermits formerly kept a wide variety of animals here—including wolves, lizards, ravens, snakes, bears, bats, and other more unusual beasts—but the demons instructed the corrupted priests on how to infuse the animals with fierce demonic power. As a result, these pens are currently empty; the more powerful animals have been transformed into Abyss-tainted creatures, and the weaker animals have been eaten by the former.

F24. TRAINING AREA

MODERATE OR SEVERE 3

This large, stone chamber has a smooth tile floor bearing abstract spiral patterns that evoke whirlpools or tornados. Four small glowing orbs, one in each corner, brightly illuminate the room. Hooks on the walls hold wicker baskets with dozens of fur, felt, and bone toys clearly intended for animals. The center of the floor bears a large circle of spiky glyphs drawn in blood.

This room was once used to train animals to get along better in the wild by themselves. The corrupted hermits now use this room to infuse animals with Abyssal energies to enhance their power and ferocity.

Creatures: The hermitage's best animal handler is a priest named Carlessa. Her longstanding desire to breed larger and stronger animals to overcome hunters and their traps made her an easy convert to Balenni's corruption. She's the one primarily responsible for the Abyss-tainted animals in the hermitage, and she's nearly completed a ritual to infuse a gray-furred wolf with vile Abyssal energies. A small air elemental protects Carlessa as she works, zipping around the room to keep anyone from disturbing the ritual. Carlessa casts *barkskin* if possible before charging forth with her trident. Both Carlessa and the elemental fight to the death.

The gray wolf lies within the summoning circle, its front and hind legs bound to keep it from fleeing. The wolf remains motionless, terrified, for 3 rounds after the heroes enter this room. The heroes can remove the wolf from the summoning circle by dragging it (the wolf has a weight of 6 Bulk) or by cutting the bonds around its legs, which allows it to leave on its own. If it remains in the summoning circle for 3 rounds, it grows in size and its fur turns bloodred. It breaks its bonds automatically and joins Carlessa in the battle, fighting until slain.

CARLESSA CREATURE 3

Female corrupted priest (page 39)

Initiative Perception +11

ZEPHYR HAWK CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 144

Initiative Perception +7

BLOOD WOLF CREATURE 3

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM ANIMAL FIEND

Perception +9; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +10, Intimidation +8, Stealth +8, Survival +9

Str +5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -1

AC 18; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

HP 50; **Weaknesses** good 3; **Resistances** electricity 5, poison 5

Attack of Opportunity ☞

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +12, **Damage** 1d8+5 piercing plus Knockdown

Aggressive Rush ♦ (move) The blood wolf moves up to half its Speed. This movement doesn't trigger reactions. At the end of the movement, it attempts an Intimidation check to Demoralize a target within 5 feet of it. This Intimidation

check doesn't take the -4 circumstance penalty for the wolf not speaking a language.

Pack Attack The blood wolf's Strikes deal an extra 1d6 damage to creatures within reach of at least two of the wolf's allies.

Freeing the Wolf: If the heroes remove the wolf from the summoning circle before the ritual is complete, it gains only a small measure of supernatural power but retains its natural intelligence and demeanor. As its transformation into a blood wolf is incomplete, its has only a few streaks of red in its gray fur and pinpoints of red light glow in its eyes. Dimly aware that the heroes saved it from a terrible fate, the rescued wolf does not attack them.

A hero with the ability to take an animal companion can select this wolf (replacing any existing animal companion the hero has). This wolf follows all the rules for wolf animal companions found on page 216 of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*, except it has 8 ancestry Hit Points rather than 6, it has Intimidate as a trained skill instead of Survival, and it gains darkvision.

Treasure: Carlessa carries a key to the main temple door that leads to area F26 (described in area F13).

XP Award: Award the heroes 10 XP if they free the wolf from the summoning circle before it completes its transformation into a blood wolf.

F25. HABITAT

MODERATE 3

The large pen in this room resembles a forest habitat: trees grow from heaps of earth sloped like a hill and covered in brush and undergrowth. A pool of water ringed with rocks fills one corner of the pen. The door in the bars separating this pen from the main hallway is latched shut and looped with wire to keep it closed.

The corrupted hermits used this largest of the animal pens to keep their Abyss-tainted animals caged until it came time to use them. Due to their demonic cunning, however, the animals kept figuring out how to unlatch the pen's door and escape. The tightly looped wire keeps the pen's current occupants inside; unwinding the wire and opening the latch requires 3 Interact actions.

Creatures: A mated pair of black leopards dwells here, hiding amid the foliage. Due to the influence of demonic spirits, their ink-black pelts continually give off wisps of dark smoke. The corrupted hermits don't yet control these animals; if the door is opened, they rush out and attack any creatures they see, even hermits or other animals. If the heroes spot the leopards but don't open the gate, the leopards rush the bars and

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attempt to knock them over to get free (this requires a successful DC 20 Athletics check to Force Open).

SMOLDERING LEOPARDS (2)

CREATURE 3

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM ANIMAL FIEND

Perception +11; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +10, Stealth +11 (+14 in dim light or darker)

Str +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -2

AC 19; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +6

HP 45; **Weaknesses** good 3; **Resistances** electricity 5, poison 5

Aura of Smoke 10 feet. Every creature within the aura is concealed; smoldering leopards can see through this concealment.

Speed 30 feet, climb 20 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +12 (finesse), **Damage** 1d10+3 piercing plus 1d4 fire and Grab

Melee ♦ claw +12 (agile, finesse); **Damage** 1d6+3 slashing plus 1d4 fire

Pounce ♦ The smoldering leopard Strides and makes a Strike at the end of that movement. If the leopard began this action hidden, it remains hidden until after making this ability's Strike.

Scorching Maul ♦ The smoldering leopard makes two claw Strikes against a creature it has grabbed. A creature hit by both claw Strikes also takes 1d4 persistent fire damage. Both attacks count toward its multiple attack penalty, but the penalty increases only after both attacks are made.

Sneak Attack (precision) The smoldering leopard deals an extra 1d4 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

F26. MAIN TEMPLE

SEVERE 3

The only door to this area is magically sealed; see area **F13** for how the heroes can open it. When the heroes enter, read or paraphrase the following.

Beyond the door is a large and resplendent shrine to Gozreh, the Wind and the Waves. The floor, which bears a mosaic depicting Gozreh's battle against Rovagug in the defense of all creation, is broken by two narrow moats, one filled with churning water and the other with shrieking winds. Four slender bridges cross these moats, which appear bottomless. At the far end of the chamber is a raised dais with an altar in front of two massive statues. One depicts a bearded storm elemental holding aloft a bolt of lightning; the other is a stern woman wearing clothing of sea foam and wearing an ornate coral crown.

Few outsiders ever see this main temple of the hermitage, although the hermits used to attend services here several times each day. Despite the corruption rampant throughout the rest of the hermitage, Gozreh's influence remains strong here. Two corrupted priests brought Harlock Hamdeel here in a misguided attempt to "reform" him; these efforts are little more than torture and have only reinforced Harlock's convictions that the corrupted hermits have perverted Gozreh's will.

Moats of Wind and Wave: The magical moats cross one another, yet the water remains in one moat and the wind remains in the other. Both moats are 30 feet deep. The water is particularly turbulent; a character without a swim Speed must



Smoldering Leopard

succeed at a DC 13 Athletics check to Swim each round in the water or become submerged. Additionally, the water pulls at anyone attempting to leave its moat; exiting requires a successful DC 16 Athletics check to Swim. The Reflex save DC to Grab an Edge of the wind moat is 23. However, the winds soften the landing of anyone falling into the moat; a creature falling into the moat takes only 5 bludgeoning damage. Climbing up the stone walls in the moat requires a successful DC 25 Athletics check to Climb, but a Medium or larger creature can brace against the other side of the moat, lowering this DC to 20.

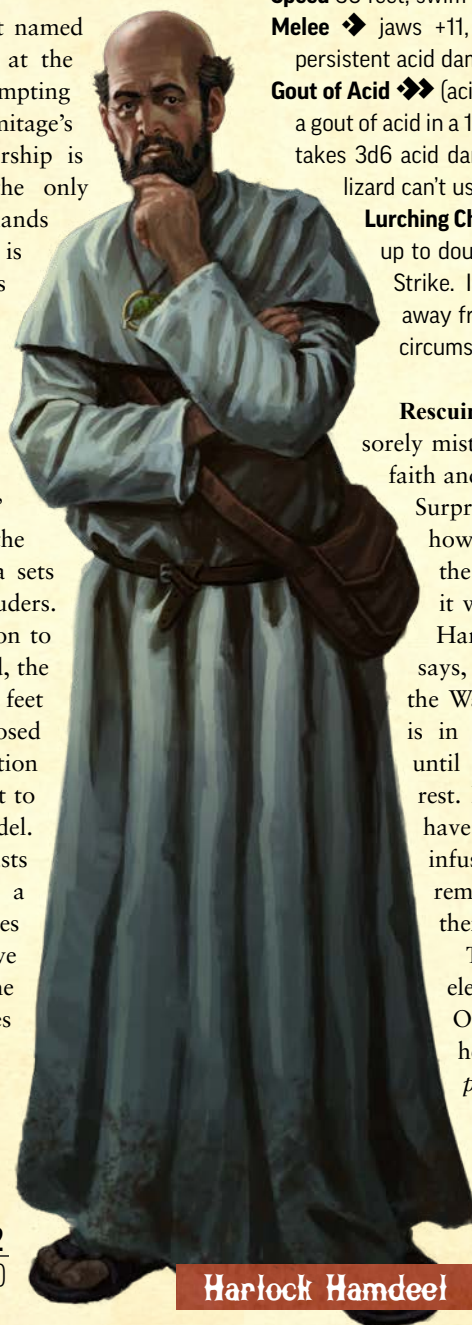
Creatures: A corrupted priest named Threndel is currently shouting at the crumpled form of Harlock, attempting in vain to convince the hermitage's former leader that demon worship is sanctioned by Gozreh and the only path to protecting the wild lands on the Isle of Erran. Threndel is accompanied by a pugnacious corrupted retainer named Enkrisha. Enkrisha holds metal leashes to two giant monitor lizards infused with demonic power. The lizards have shimmering, nacreous green skin. Acid drips from the lizards' jaws, dissolving small holes in the stone floor. In a fight, Enkrisha sets the lizards loose to attack intruders. Until she takes an Interact action to unwrap the leash from her hand, the lizards can't move more than 10 feet away from her. Once she has loosed the lizards, she maintains a position on one of the bridges to attempt to keep everyone away from Threndel. Threndel hangs back and casts *summon elemental* to conjure a water elemental to Shove heroes into the moats. These foes have nowhere to go and fight to the death, hoping to force the heroes to flee the hermitage.

THRENDEL CREATURE 3

Male corrupted priest (page 39)
Initiative Perception +11

ENKRISHA CREATURE 2

Female corrupted retainer (page 35)
Initiative Perception +6



Harlock Hamdeel

CORROSIVE LIZARDS (2)

CREATURE 2

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM ANIMAL FIEND

Perception +7, darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +6, Athletics +8, Stealth +6

Str +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -2

AC 18; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5

HP 30; **Immunities** acid; **Weaknesses** good 3

Gnashing Bite **Trigger** A creature grabbed by the corrosive lizard's jaws fails a check to Escape; **Effect** The lizard's jaws deal 1d6 piercing damage and 1d6 acid damage to the triggering creature.

Speed 30 feet, swim 30 feet

Melee jaws +11, **Damage** 1d10+2 piercing plus 1d6 persistent acid damage and Grab

Gout of Acid (acid, primal) The corrosive lizard vomits a gout of acid in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in this area takes 3d6 acid damage (DC 20 basic Reflex save). The lizard can't use Gout of Acid again for 1d4 rounds.

Lurching Charge The corrosive lizard Strides up to double its Speed and then makes a jaws Strike. If the lizard moved at least 20 feet away from its starting position, it gains a +2 circumstance bonus to this attack roll.

Rescuing Harlock: Harlock has been sorely mistreated, but he has maintained his faith and his spirit throughout his ordeals.

Surprised by the heroes' arrival, he asks how they passed through the doors to the temple; if the heroes imply that it was Gozreh's will that they do so, Harlock is nonplussed. He calmly says, "I put my trust in the Wind and the Waves, and here you are." Harlock is in no condition to aid the heroes until he gets a significant amount of rest. If the heroes rescue Harlock and have defeated all demons and demon-infused animals in the hermitage, the remaining corrupted hermits surrender themselves to Harlock.

Treasure: Leaning against the storm elemental statue is an *animal staff*. One of the carvings on the staff's head is a monkey; this is a *monkey pin*, which can be detached from the staff. Harlock suggests the heroes take this staff and allows them to keep any valuables they claimed in the hermitage as recompense for their efforts.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP for saving Harlock.

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CHAPTER 4: XULGATHS IN THE TOWER

Once the heroes have rescued Harlock Hamdeel and purged the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning of its demonic corruption, Harlock tells them all he knows. He offers the heroes use of the large guest rooms for as long as they'd like. He apologizes for the troubles that the corrupted hermits have caused, and particularly the damage that Nemmia inflicted. Although Harlock isn't directly responsible, he blames himself for not catching the corruption in his hermitage sooner. He has long maintained that the hermitage and the people of Abberton can live in peace with each other, and the intensity of the other hermits' hatred surprised him. He suspects that a visiting priest named Balenni was the instigator of this aggression and, ultimately, the hermits' corruption, but he's unaware that Balenni is a succubus.

When there's a good opportunity, Harlock also reveals the following.

Harlock sighs wearily. "I suppose I should start at the beginning. The Hermitage of Blessed Lightning was established here to protect and learn from the Erran Tower, an ancient landmark a few miles inland. You might have spotted it on your journey here. We hermits know very little about it. It was created by Aroden thousands of years ago. At its summit is what we call the aeon orb, so named because it orbits the summit of the tower the way an aeon stone orbits the head of its owner.

"Lore passed down to me from previous masters of the hermitage suggests more. The aeon orb is a powerful artifact. It enriches life for dozens of miles in all directions, making the land more abundant, the seasons milder, and harvests more bountiful. In just the past few generations, however, this bounty has faded. The soil is drying out. Vegetation is stunted, and some crops won't grow at all. Birth rates among animals are declining. Some here at the hermitage blamed the townspeople of Abberton for this

decline, but I suspect a different cause: I think the aeon orb's power has begun to fail. The Isle of Erran is dying.

"I've tried to understand the aeon orb and perhaps restore its power, but its nature eludes me. While I've made a few trips into the Erran Tower over the years, nothing there provided any clues. On my most recent visit, just a few weeks ago, some foul-smelling creatures hurled spears at me before I could get close. They are xulgaths, I believe—reptilian humanoids you might have heard called troglodytes. I spied on them from a distance. There are at least a dozen, and they are accompanied by large lizards and several demons. It was an unpleasant surprise, but I soon had my hands full dealing with the newcomer Balenni and the resentment she stoked among the hermits and didn't have a chance to investigate further. It seems obvious in hindsight, but the sudden rise of demon worship here must be connected to the demons accompanying the xulgaths in the Erran Tower. I overheard a few of the most debased priests say they'd planned to visit the Erran Tower and speak to someone named Cavnakash. I believe Cavnakash is the leader of the xulgaths, and he must have some power over demons.

"You have done so much for Abberton and my hermitage already, but there is more to do. Will you cleanse the Erran Tower of the demons and xulgath infesting it, so that we can perhaps work together to restore life to this land?"

Harlock gives the heroes directions to the Erran Tower. It's about 15 miles to the southwest of the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning, on a route through rolling grassland. The 200-foot-tall tower is visible during most of the trip, making it nearly impossible to get lost while headed there. He also provides a brief overview of the rooms of the tower's interior, starting with the tower's entrance 40 feet up on its western side. When he was last there, the rooms all seemed empty and abandoned. He knows of the secret door to the vault (area **G7**) and the binding runes in areas **G10** and **G11** (although he doesn't know they are connected or that they are occupied). He hasn't encountered the gelatinous cubes that wander the tower, but he recognizes the suspiciously clean rooms and corridors as evidence of their passage. He warns the heroes that an ooze might be present, although he assumes there is only one gelatinous cube, not two.

Travel to the Erran Tower from the hermitage (or from Abberton, if the heroes return to town first) takes several hours. You can introduce encounters on the way if the heroes aren't yet 4th level.

Xulgath Territory

Moderate 4

When the heroes get close to the Erran Tower, they enter the xulgaths' hunting area. A hero who Searches or Tracks while traveling identifies the tracks of reptilian humanoids that crisscross the area, remaining out of sight behind low ridges and high clumps of brush.

Creatures: The heroes encounter a hunting party consisting of four xulgath warriors led by a xulgath skulker. They are dragging a recently slain ox back to the tower and aren't particularly alert for danger.

XULGATH SKULKER

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 337

Initiative Perception +7

XULGATH WARRIORS (4)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 336

Initiative Perception +6

CHAPTER 4 SYNOPSIS

In the adventure's final chapter, the heroes investigate the Erran Tower and discover that it is filled with xulgaths, the xulgaths' dinosaur allies, and other monsters. In addition, the succubus Balenni retreated here after corrupting the hermitage and inflicting the murderous Nemmia on the town of Abberton. The heroes can avenge the townspeople and the hermits by vanquishing the succubus, or learn more about her schemes by talking with her. At the top of the tower, the xulgath priest Cavnakash is attempting to destroy the *aeon orb*; he won't stop until the heroes defeat him.

Many of the encounters in the Erran Tower are complex, involving multiple foes and roaming dangers. This serves to keep the heroes on their toes throughout the finale of the adventure.

CHAPTER 4 TREASURE

The permanent and consumable items available as treasure in Chapter 4 are as follows.

- +1 *full plate*
- +1 *striking maul*
- *belladonna*
- *bloodseeker beak*
- *cytillesh oil*
- *demon mask*
- *fear gem*
- *lesser elixir of life*
- *lesser healing potion*
- *shark tooth charm*
- *wand of heal* (2nd)

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Questioning the Xulgaths: The heroes might interrogate a captured xulgath by succeeding at an Intimidation check to Coerce (DC 14 for the warriors and DC 15 for the skulker). The xulgaths know that nearly two dozen of their kind are in the tower, along with several dinosaurs and demons (although these xulgaths don't know much about demons and, in fact, consider the gargoyles that watch the entry to be some kind of demons). The xulgaths don't think to mention the other dangers in the tower, as they don't interact with them. The xulgaths' leader is a priest of Zevgavizeb named Cavnakash, although they don't see much of him, as he's involved in a lengthy ritual in the tower's highest chambers. Instead, they take orders from their war-leaders (the warriors answer to Ashagith and the skulker answers to Lakkai One-Fang).

The Erran Tower

The Erran Tower is a pyramidal structure with steep sides and a flat summit. It is composed of mud-brick, but rather than being created like a traditional structure, it was built in one piece by Aroden as a base for one of his *aeon orbs*. The *aeon orb* that circles the top of the Erran Tower is about 3 feet in diameter and sheds light visible for miles. Although the orb never approaches closer than within 40 feet of the tower's summit, it illuminates the summit at all times. The tower interior is dark, except where the xulgaths' dinosaurs are present, as the xulgaths keep torches burning so their dinosaurs can see. Xulgaths burn out their dinosaurs' sense of smell when young, so all the dinosaurs here (and throughout this adventure path) lack the scent ability but are immune to olfactory effects.

The ceilings in most rooms are 15 feet high, and corridors are 10 feet wide and tall. The dried mud that makes up the tower is smooth and slick; scaling the walls requires a successful DC 32 Athletics check to Climb (the tower exterior is slightly angled, reducing this DC to 30). There are no doors inside the tower, but the xulgaths have erected a few tattered curtains and mounds of heavy stones to mark individual chambers.

Environmental Effects: At the tower's summit, Cavnakash is struggling to destroy the *aeon orb*. He's been unable to damage the artifact thus far, but his efforts have produced frequent—and increasingly dangerous—environmental hazards to occur in the tower. The environmental effects within the table should occur every few hours, at your discretion. Roll 1d8 to determine a random environmental effect; add 1 to the result for each day that passes since the heroes' arrival

at the Erran Tower to show that the environmental effects are becoming increasingly dangerous.

d8	Effect
1	The walls, ceiling, and floor are suddenly overgrown with moss that lasts for 1d4×10 minutes before dissolving; the moss has no mechanical effects but has a pleasant taste.
2	A peal of thunder echoes within the tower.
3	Rain falls inside the tower, slowly flooding every floor of the pyramid to a depth of 1 foot over the course of an hour. All ground in the tower becomes difficult terrain; ground that was already difficult terrain becomes greater difficult terrain instead. After an hour, the rain ceases and the rainwater evaporates with startling speed.
4	Fog fills the tower, limiting vision to 30 feet and imposing a -4 penalty on vision-based Perception checks. The fog dissipates in 1d4×10 minutes.
5	The tower interior is affected by severe heat (<i>Core Rulebook</i> 518) for 1d4 hours.
6	A cold snap affects the tower interior with severe cold (<i>Core Rulebook</i> 518) for 1d4 hours.
7	Strong winds gust throughout the tower, as <i>gust of wind</i> (DC 19 Fortitude).
8	The tower shakes with a minor tremor. Each creature in the tower must succeed at a DC 19 Reflex save or fall prone.
9+	A serious earthquake shakes the tower, causing minor collapses. Each creature in the tower takes 4d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 19 basic Reflex save). On a critical failure, a creature is also pinned by rubble (DC 19 Escape).

TOWER CUSTODIANS

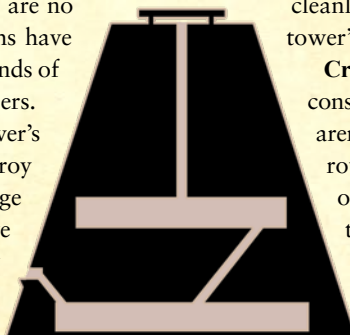
LOW 4

Despite the xulgath's presence, most of the rooms and chambers of the Erran Tower are free of offal, grime, and even dust; this cleanliness results from the presence of the tower's largest denizens.

Creatures: Two gelatinous cubes rove constantly through the Erran Tower. They aren't included in any encounters and their routes aren't marked. Instead, introduce one or both of the cubes when the heroes are traveling through a corridor or retreating from another encounter. You might even have an ooze creep up on the heroes while they're dealing with the other blocking a corridor in front of them.

The xulgaths have erected short columns of heavy stones to keep the oozes out of areas where they sleep and work; otherwise, they let the oozes roam freely.

ERRAN TOWER
SIDE VIEW



GELATINOUS CUBES (2)

Pathfinder Bestiary 254

Initiative Perception +5

CREATURE 3

G1. ENTRANCE LEDGE

MODERATE 4

The entrance to the Erran Tower is a landing located 40 feet up the western side of the tower. A switchback ramp leads up to this landing, but it is made of the same smooth mudbrick as the rest of the tower. The xulgaths have hammered bits of wood into the ramp to make the ascent a bit easier. Ascending the ramp requires a successful DC 14 Athletics check to Climb.

Creatures: Two gargoyles perch on this ledge, serving as sentries in exchange for food. They remain motionless unless attacked or until creatures other than xulgaths approach within 30 feet of the ledge. They then fight from the air to maintain a tactical advantage. A gargoyle reduced to fewer than 15 Hit Points flees the tower and doesn't return.

GARGOYLES (2)

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 161

Initiative Stealth +12

Difficult Descent: The staircase that descends into the tower has exceptionally steep stairs that are both difficult terrain and uneven ground. A character moving on the stairs must succeed at a DC 14 Acrobatics check to Balance. Characters who fall also tumble 10 feet down the stairs unless they are anchored.

Regardless of how gracefully the heroes descend these stairs, the eye-watering stink of xulgaths is unmistakable, as the odor permeates the tower.

G2. GUARD ROOM MODERATE 4

A campfire burns in the southwest corner of this room. The remains of two messily butchered cattle are heaped near this fire. In addition to the staircase leading up to the west, passageways exit from the north and south in this room. Three stacks of heavy stones—each stack about 4 feet tall—stand in the southern opening. Medium and smaller creatures can move between the stacks, which are difficult terrain. Larger creatures must either leap over them, Squeeze between them with a successful DC 17 Acrobatics check, or push them over with a successful DC 19 Athletics check. The xulgaths use these piles to keep out the gelatinous

cubes that roam the tower, as they make no attempt to get past them.

Creatures: While Cavnakash works to destroy the *aeon orb*, he has placed the entire tower on alert. Four xulgaths are on duty here along with a pale deinonychus they brought with them from the Darklands.

XULGATH WARRIORS (4)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 336

Initiative Perception +6

DEINONYCHUS

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 97

Initiative Perception +7

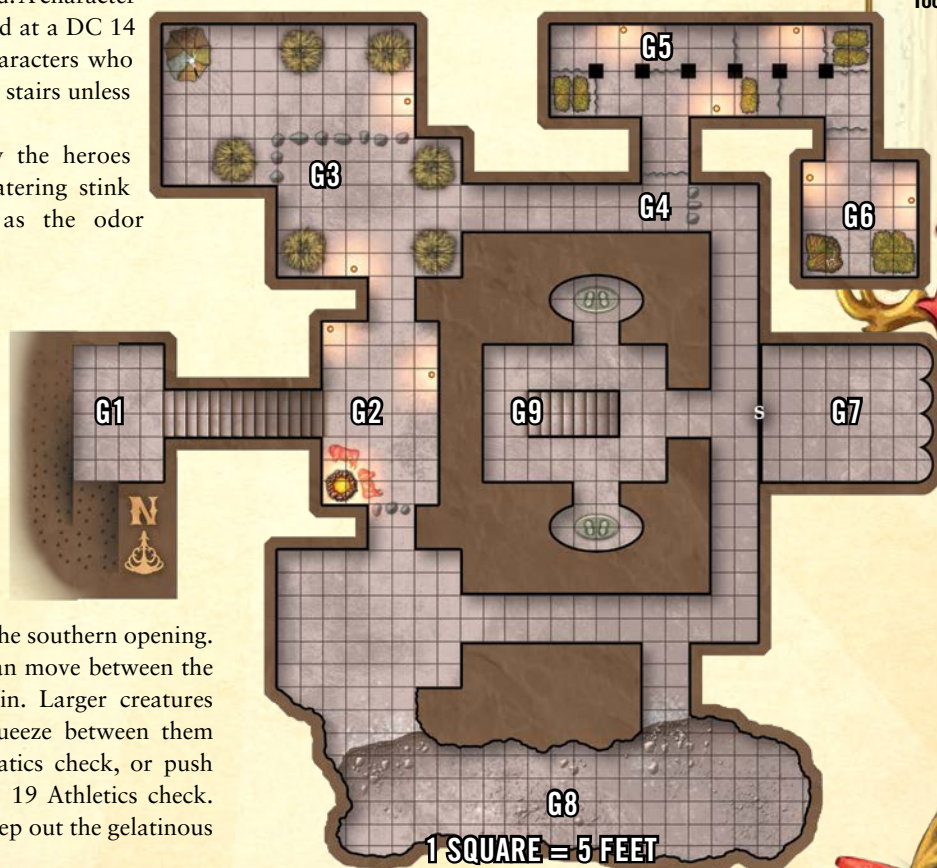
Treasure: Although all of the xulgaths wear gruesome trophies harvested from past victims, only one has a trophy of any value: a *bloodseeker beak*.

G3. DINOSAUR DEN

MODERATE 4

This odd-shaped room is divided by several piles of stacked stones, each stack about four feet tall. Large nests made of sticks and mud are spread around the room on both sides of the stone stacks. The northwestern corner of the

ERRAN TOWER FIRST FLOOR



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room contains a large hut made of poorly tanned hides and topped with the skull of some enormous fanged beast. The eye-watering smell of xulgaths, animal dung, and unwashed reptiles fills this room.

The xulgath dinosaur-master, a brute named Golgukan, lives in the large tent, although he's nearly always in the company of the leader of the xulgath scouts in area **G6**. Passages exit the room to the south and east. The stacked stones are the same as those described in area **G2**, but here they keep the larger dinosaurs fenced in.

The nests are for the various dinosaurs spread throughout the tower; one nest has two deinonychus eggs in it. These cream-colored eggs are the size of a small vase and weigh 3 pounds each.

Creatures: The only two dinosaurs present are a pair of pinacosauruses, smaller versions of the better-known ankylosaurus. The dinosaurs are penned in the area north of the stone columns so they don't roam free. They lumber forward when any creatures enter the room but don't attempt to push through the stacked stones unless attacked. They charge any non-xulgaths crossing the stone stacks. The ill-tempered brutes fight to the death, or until Golgukan commands them to stand down.

PINACOSAURUSES (2)

CREATURE 4

N **LARGE** **ANIMAL** **DINOSAUR**

Perception +10; low-light vision

Skills Athletics +13

Str +5, **Dex** +0, **Con** +4, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -1



Pinacosaurus

AC 21; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

HP 70

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ tail +13 (backswing, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d6+5 bludgeoning plus Punishing Tail

Melee ♦ foot +13; **Damage** 1d8+5 bludgeoning

Punishing Tail A creature hit by the pinacosaurus's tail must attempt a DC 21 Fortitude save. On a failure, it's slowed 1 until the end of its next turn; on a critical failure, it's stunned until the end of its next turn.

Trample ♦♦♦ Small or smaller, foot, DC 21

Treasure: Deinonychus eggs have significant value in the right markets. If the heroes keep the eggs warm and take them to Escadar or another large city, they can sell the eggs for 80 gp (40 gp each). A hero might instead keep one or both of the eggs and try to raise the dinosaurs instead.

Golgukan's tent contains a few trophies, including an urn with nearly a hundred dinosaur teeth—he keeps one tooth from each dinosaur he's killed for being too slow to learn his commands. Among these teeth is a *shark tooth charm*.

G4. TRAPPED STACKS

Three stacks of heavy stones stand just to the east of the corridor leading into area **G5**; these stones are similar to those found in area **G2** and keep the gelatinous cubes at bay. A tattered black curtain conceals the passageway leading north to area **G5**.

Hazard: The leader of the xulgath stalkers, Lakkai One-Fang, created two thunder snares (page 76) here between the three stacks to alert the xulgaths of anyone coming this way. Lakkai's Craft DC (and therefore the DC for detecting or disabling the snare) is 16. Because Lakkai is an expert in Crafting, only creatures trained in Perception who are actively Searching can find her snares, and only creatures trained in Thievery can disable them. Lakkai's skulkers know about the snares, but none of the other xulgaths do; that these snares are more likely to alert her to one of Cavnakash's unexpected visits rather than the presence of intruders isn't something the other xulgaths have yet realized.

G5. SKULKER CAMP

MODERATE 4

This chamber contains a row of square columns that stretches from west to east. The columns are covered in a phosphorescent lichen glowing with a dim, green hue.

Tattered black curtains hang between many of the columns, obscuring much of the room.

The curtains break this chamber up into small, private areas for the xulgath skulkers. Each contains a smelly bed of grasses and mud, along with a few valueless personal items like bone knives, painted stones, and chips of obsidian.

Creatures: Three xulgath skulkers lair in this chamber. They're currently training two velociraptors as hunting animals, using a wicker basket filled with a half-dozen rabbits hanging from the ceiling. If they spot intruders, the skulkers take the opportunity to see how their dinosaurs fare in a real fight; they send the velociraptors into melee while they attempt to Hide. If two skulkers are defeated, the third rushes to warn their leader Lakkai in area G6.

XULGATH SKULKERS (3)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 337

Initiative Perception +7

VELOCIRAPTORS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 96

Initiative Perception +6

Treasure: One of the skulkers hid a *lesser healing potion* in a small ball of smelly mud. Locating this potion requires a successful DC 17 Perception check.

G6. LAKKAI'S CHAMBER

MODERATE 4

The entrance to this chamber is concealed with a tattered black cloth like those the skulkers use in their chamber to the north. This room is the personal lair of the leader of the xulgath scouts, a lean xulgath with yellowish skin named Lakkai One-Fang. Her chambers are strewn with grasses for comfort and several pine boughs because she enjoys their scent. A wide variety of leather straps, sharpened bits of obsidian, and woven vines are piled in the southwest corner; these are raw materials Lakkai uses to fashion her snares.

Hazard: The squares containing Lakkai's snare components are themselves trapped with a scent marker snare (*Core Rulebook* 590) that marks a creature with pine sap. The DC to detect or disable this marker snare is Lakkai's Crafting DC of 16.

Creatures: Lakkai is usually found here with her mate Golgukan. As dinosaur-master of the xulgaths, the hulking Golgukan is supposed to be training his animals in area G3, but he most often shirks his duties to spend time with Lakkai. Golgukan keeps his oldest and best-trained deinonychus with him at all times.

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Lakkai One-Fang

GOLGUKAN

CREATURE 3

Male xulgath leader (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 337)

Initiative Perception +9

LAKKAI ONE-FANG

CREATURE 3

Female xulgath leader (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 337)

Initiative Perception +9

Skills Athletics +9, Crafting +6, Intimidation +6, Stealth +8

Items breastplate, greatpick, javelin (4), snare kit

Melee ♦ greatpick +11 (fatal d12), **Damage** 1d10+6 piercing plus Weakening Strike

DEINONYCHUS

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 97

Initiative Perception +7

Treasure: Lakkai's initial payment from Cavnakash is concealed among her snare components. A battered leather pouch contains four tiny emeralds worth 15 gp each and a dose of cytillesh oil.

G7. HIDDEN VAULT

The door to this room is almost imperceptible (DC 24 Perception to locate). Pushing the door sideways and down releases it, causing it to slide into the ground. The door slides back up and into place 30 seconds later. At one time this was a treasure vault, but previous explorers long ago emptied it. It is now a bare stone chamber devoid even of decoration apart from four alcoves to the west, each bearing the image of another tower only slightly different from the Erran Tower in shape and size. The heroes don't yet have any way of knowing it, but these images depict the four aeon towers on the Isle of Kortos. If the heroes need a safe place to rest, they can do so here, as the xulgaths are unaware of this room.

G8. COLLAPSED CHAMBERS

MODERATE 4

The floor has partially collapsed here, creating a large chasm. Two exits overlook this chasm: a large room to the west and a short hall to the east. The floor of the chasm, as well as the ground within 5 feet of the chasm ledge, is covered with bat guano accumulated over the last several centuries by generations of bats. The demarcation of guano is a surprisingly even line; this is because the roaming gelatinous cubes won't approach within 5 feet of the edge, as they sense it is unsafe. Most of the guano is dried into lumpy gray mounds; walking on it or touching it causes it to collapse into powder. There are no light sources anywhere in this chasm, and the xulgaths have thus far avoided it.

Hazards: The western ledge overlooking the cavern is unsafe, crumbling away whenever a Medium or

larger creature steps within a few feet of it. When it crumbles, each creature adjacent to the ledge must attempt a DC 19 Reflex save. On a failure, the creature falls 40 feet to the bottom of the chasm, but they can attempt to Grab an Edge (*Core Rulebook* 472) to stop their descent; on a critical failure, however, the edge also crumbles and Grabbing an Edge isn't possible.

The guano that fills this chamber carries a dangerous fungus. Anyone who touches the guano (by falling into the chasm or Grabbing an Edge) or who remains in the room for 10 minutes is exposed to the disease.

GUANO FUNGUS

LEVEL 3

CONTACT **DISEASE**

Bats are immune to guano fungus. You can't reduce your enfeebled condition until the disease is cured. **Saving Throw** DC 18 Fortitude; **Stage 1** enfeebled 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** enfeebled 2 (1 day); **Stage 3** enfeebled 3, sickened 1, and you can't reduce your sickened value below 1 (1 day); **Stage 4** unconscious (1 day); **Stage 5** dead

Creatures: Since the collapse that created this cavern long-ago, it has become home to several vampire bats. Recently, an ether spider discovered the chamber; although it has survived on bats so far, it's eager for a larger meal. The bat swarms attack intruders immediately, but the ether spider lurks on the Ethereal Plane for the first round of combat and maneuvers into position behind a character hanging back from the bats. These creatures fight until slain.

ETHER SPIDER

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Bestiary 155

Initiative Stealth +15

VAMPIRE BAT SWARMS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 39

Initiative Perception +10

Treasure: At the bottom of the cavern is the skeleton of a previous explorer. It is visible even from the ledge as a guano-encrusted heap the size of an armored human. The skeleton's +1 *full plate* is filthy but still serviceable. A nearby falchion is shattered, but a *gem* remains affixed to its broken hilt.

G9. CENTRAL STAIRCASE

This room has a sloped ceiling at the eastern end, which accommodates a staircase ascending steeply upward from the middle of the room. Round alcoves to the north and south each bear stone daises with the booted feet of a statue, but both statues are broken off at the shins.

The statues that once stood here depicted Aroden in his glory and were filigreed with gold. Past looters broke off the statues and carted them away, leaving only the statues' valueless feet behind.

Difficult Ascent: This steep staircase has steps worn nearly smooth by the comings and goings of the gelatinous cubes, and it is now more of a steep ramp than a staircase. It is both difficult terrain and uneven ground with a Balance DC of 14. Characters who fall also tumble 10 feet down the staircase unless they are anchored. This tumble deals no damage, but anyone a character tumbles into must also immediately succeed at a DC 14 Acrobatics check to Balance or fall and tumble down the stairs as well.

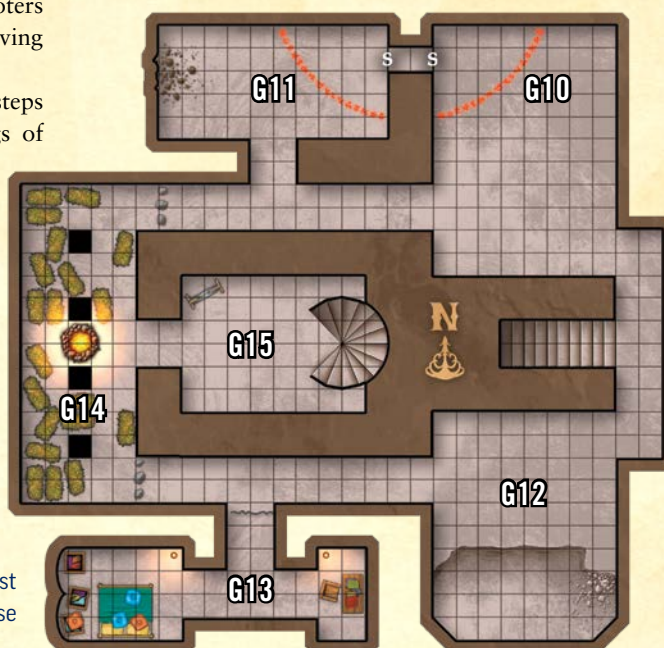
G10. EAST SUMMONING CHAMBER LOW 4

This large, rectangular room has an arc of faintly glowing runes on the floor to the northwest. The east side of the room contains a battered xulgath corpse slumped against the wall.

One of two summoning chambers created long ago, this room contains summoning runes in a semicircular shape rather than the usual circular shape. The runes radiate an aura of conjuration magic to spells and effects such as *detect magic*. Creatures summoned within the runes can't damage or cross them, although the runes don't inhibit the movement of any other creatures. The west wall contains a cunningly concealed secret door (DC 21 Perception to locate), but this secret passage doesn't allow escape for imprisoned creatures; it merely leads to a similar arc of runes in area G11. The creators of these summoning runes hoped to test the intelligence of their summoned creatures without allowing any genuine means of escape. They also used the dual chambers to pit summoned creatures against each other in fights.

Creatures: The dead xulgath was slain by the invisible stalker that retreated to the western summoning chamber (area G11) after hurling its foe against the far wall. Other xulgaths spotted the corpse and are now exceptionally suspicious of the circle, fearing it is some form of deadly magic trap. Cavnakash ordered three xulgath bilebearers to investigate, deeming them ultimately expendable. Although the bilebearers are focused on conducting a detailed examination of the summoning circle—as well as they can without approaching within 5 feet of it—they are quick to attack any intruders. If alerted to danger, they hide on either side of the passages leading into the room to ambush anyone passing through.

ERRAN TOWER SECOND FLOOR



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

Once two bilebearers are defeated, the last one flees. If they haven't heard the alarm gong, the xulgath rushes to area G14 to warn the other xulgaths there; otherwise they assume those xulgaths have also been defeated and flee the tower entirely.

XULGATH BILEBEARERS (3)

CREATURE 2

Page 87

Initiative Perception +6

G11. WEST SUMMONING CHAMBER MODERATE 4

The floor in the eastern half of this room bears summoning runes similar to those in the chamber to the east (area G10); as described there, a secret passage (DC 21 Perception to locate) connects the two rooms. The western wall has been badly cracked, and a jumble of mudbrick fragments lies at its base.

Creature: The only creature currently contained by the summoning runs is an invisible stalker. The elemental has been confined here for decades, long forgotten by its summoner, and its essence has begun to falter. It can't pass beyond the summoning runes in this chamber, although it knows about the secret door and can pass into that room, where it is similarly constrained. Its only diversions have been hurling mudbrick shards at the far wall as hard as it can, and taking swipes at the gelatinous cubes when they get too close. With the arrival of the xulgaths, the invisible

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stalker saw an opportunity for freedom, but when it couldn't communicate with a curious xulgath warrior, its temper got the better of it. The invisible stalker killed the xulgath in the adjacent room and retreated here, sulking.

If it becomes aware of the heroes, the invisible stalker tries a different tactic. It cracks the secret door open and then closes it softly, drawing the heroes' attention. It then attacks a hero who steps past the runes to investigate the door. As it attacks, it threatens to kill its target unless it's set free (although it speaks only Auran). If badly injured, the invisible stalker flees through the secret door to area **G10**.

When it realizes more xulgaths have arrived there, it attempts to lure them through the passage in the same way and into a fight with the heroes.

WEAK INVISIBLE STALKER

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 6, 144

Initiative Stealth +16

Freeing the Invisible Stalker: If the heroes deface a glowing rune (which requires dealing damage in excess of the mudbrick's Hardness of 16), the containment magic is dispelled and the invisible stalker can escape. If it is fighting the heroes at the time, it continues to attack out of stubborn rage, fleeing only if reduced to fewer than 20 Hit Points. If it communicates with the heroes and they deface a rune on its behalf, it flees immediately.

XP Award: If the heroes free the invisible stalker, award them 80 XP, as if they had defeated it in combat.

G12. GROTHLUT PIT

MODERATE 4

The southern half of this large room contains a 15-foot-deep pit. A short ramp leads into the pit, but stops after 5 feet, ending with a sudden drop-off that descends to the bottom. The crumbled mudbrick that was once the rest of the ramp litters the bottom of the pit. Scaling the crumbled ramp requires a successful DC 25 Athletics check to Climb.

Creatures: The succubus Balenni captured and tormented three farmers over many painful weeks, trapping them at the bottom of this pit. Balenni infused the farmers with demonic spirits, in a manner similar to the corruptions inflicted on the animals in the Hermitage

of Blessed Lightning. In the case of these farmers, the transformation was more severe. Now mere lumps of flesh with vaguely humanoid torsos, these piteous fleshwarped creatures do little but moan. If these fleshwarps are attacked, or if they spot any humans (who remind them of their lost heritage), they fly into a rage and attempt to climb out of the pit to attack. They fight until destroyed.

GROTHLUTS (3) CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 158

Initiative Perception +5

G13. BALENNI'S CHAMBERS SEVERE 4

The succubus Balenni stays in these three connected chambers. The entrance is blocked by a rich velvet curtain bearing the image of storm cloud emitting lightning. Balenni stole this curtain from

the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning while she was there. Lingering magic causes any creature touching the curtain to feel a prickling of static electricity and smell ozone; although this effect is harmless, it's sufficient to keep the wandering gelatinous cubes out of Balenni's chambers.

The chambers beyond are crowded with furniture and luxuries. To the west, a massive four-poster bed at the center of the south wall is littered with colorful silk pillows. A nearby brass brazier gives off bright light and is surrounded by thick carpets, more pillows, and crates overflowing with clothing in all styles and colors. To the east stand another brazier and a desk covered with religious treatises bearing annotations in Balenni's flowing handwriting.

Creatures: Balenni is almost always found here. She occasionally visits the other chambers in the Erran Tower, and she's idly encouraging the dinosaur-master Golgukan to shirk his duties by spending his time with the scout leader Lakkai. Balenni is accompanied by a loyal quasit and her pet blood wolf, a red-furred wolf infused with Abyssal energy.

If alerted to the heroes' arrival, such as by combat in area **G14**, Balenni takes the form of a scholarly human and pretends to struggle to free herself from one of the crates; if the heroes consider her a prisoner and assist her, she uses her Passionate Kiss ability in feigned gratitude. Given any warning of a pending attack, the quasit changes shape into a red-furred wolf that appears similar to the blood wolf to confuse attackers.



Balenni

The quasit and the wolf fight to the death, but Balenni surrenders if reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points. She freely admits to engineering the corruption at the hermitage, as well as pushing Nemmia to attack Abberton. She now works for Cavnakash, the xulgath leader attempting to destroy the magical orb at the top of the tower. Balenni admits she doesn't know what Cavnakash hopes to gain by this; he's working for more powerful xulgaths—whom Balenni doesn't know—in an abandoned temple underneath Escadar called Moonstone Hall.

Balenni isn't apologetic for her past actions, but she offers to revoke the Profane Gift she's granted to Cavnakash if the heroes agree to let her go. She knows the heroes have no way of confirming this, however, so while she pretends to revoke the Profane Gift with some momentary concentration, she instead merely informs Cavnakash telepathically about the heroes' presence and general combat tactics. If the heroes don't agree to release Balenni, she telepathically informs Cavnakash anyway and then fights to the death.

BALENNI **CREATURE 6**

Weak succubus (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 77)

Initiative Perception +15

BLOOD WOLF **CREATURE 3**

Page 43

Initiative Perception +9

QUASIT **CREATURE 1**

Pathfinder Bestiary 76

Initiative Perception +7

Treasure: Balenni has numerous plundered luxuries that she brought with her. These include elegant clothing worth 16 gp, six silk pillows worth 2 gp each, and a golden statuette of a flying fish worth 11 gp. Four matching crystal vials in a velvet-lined case are worth 4 gp each. Two vials hold strong spirits, one holds a dose of belladonna, and the fourth holds a *lesser elixir of life*. Hanging above the desk is a *demon mask* resembling the scowling visage of Balenni herself.

THE MOONSTONE CONNECTION

The heroes should learn that the xulgath leader, Cavnakash, was sent by his superiors from a place called Moonstone Hall beneath the city of Escadar. Even if the heroes don't question Balenni to learn this information, it's contained in the notes on her desk. Balenni speculates that Cavnakash's superiors are powerful priests of Zevgavizeb, although

"Moonstone Hall" isn't likely a temple to Zevgavizeb, but rather a co-opted temple once dedicated to some other deity.

G14. HALL OF COLUMNS

MODERATE 4

A campfire illuminates this long room and the row of broad, square columns bisecting it. Rough pallets for a dozen xulgaths are scattered throughout the room,



Ashagith

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and the creatures' foul stink is strong. The xulgaths have erected short stone stacks, like those found in area **G2**, at both entrances to keep the gelatinous cubes at bay.

Creatures: The xulgaths in the Erran Tower rest here, where they can keep an eye on the only passage leading to the tower summit. A scarred war-leader named Ashagith commands the xulgath warriors in the tower, ruling by fear and brutality. Two quasits accompany her, under Balenni's orders.

If alerted to danger, the quasits turn invisible while the xulgaths crowd together around the passage to area **G15**. Otherwise, the foes are scattered around the room.

These creatures hope to stop any intruders themselves to earn Cavnakash's praise. Once Ashagith or any two other creatures are defeated, the survivors realize the danger the heroes pose. A xulgath retreats to area **G15** to ring the gong there and return to the fight (the quasits don't do so, as they find the stone hammer used to ring the gong too unwieldy to lift). These creatures all fight to the death.

ASHAGITH

CREATURE 3

Female xulgath leader (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 337)

Initiative Perception +9

XULGATH WARRIORS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 336

Initiative Perception +6

QUASITS (2)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 76

Initiative Perception +7

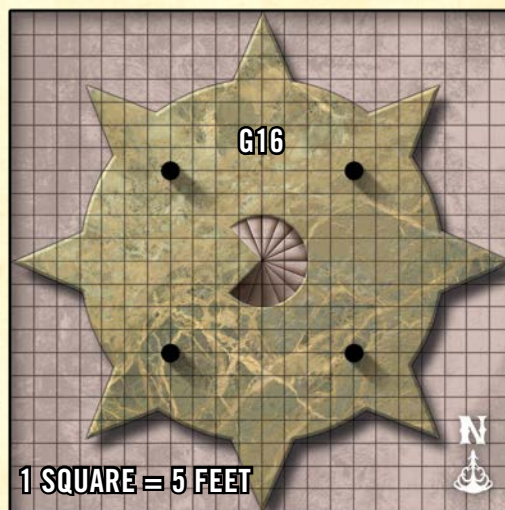
G15. ALARM GONG

An enormous spiral staircase leads up from the east end of this room. Near the doorway, a large, jagged iron ring—apparently the top half of a cauldron—hangs from a frame of wood and bones next to a large stone hammer.

The spiral stairs ascend for 100 feet to the tower summit. The iron ring serves as a makeshift gong, which the xulgaths use to alert Cavnakash of danger. If the gong is struck, the ringing can be heard everywhere

on this level and at the tower summit (area **G16**) above. Creatures in areas **G10**, **G13**, and **G14** prepare for danger as described in those rooms.

ERRAN TOWER TOP



Reinforcements from Above:

Cavnakash responds to the gong by sending his four xulgath warriors to investigate. It takes them 3 rounds to descend the spiral stairs. If there are intruders in areas **G14** or **G15**, they attack and fight to the death. Otherwise, they report back to Cavnakash.

G16. SUMMIT SEVERE 4

A sun-shaped platform of marble rises ten feet above the flat, mud-brick summit of the Erran Tower. Four large columns support another marble slab over

the circular staircase in the center of the tower summit, but there are no walls, so the open-air platform provides a commanding view of the Isle of Erran, the Inner Sea, and the Isle of Kortos to the south. A blazing ball of light three feet in diameter swings around the tower summit in a lazy circle, never approaching closer than within forty feet of the tower, causing shadows to spin across the marble. The orb provides bright light but no heat; instead, a soothing feeling of growth and life emanates from it. On the platform, a small heap of ripped nets, broken poles, and other debris is surrounded by several charcoal marks of geometric shapes.

The *aeon orb* around the tower is failing, but it remains a powerful artifact that emits life-giving energy. Even if the heroes can reach the *aeon orb*, they don't have any means to capture or destroy it; the orb cannot be targeted by spells and it smashes through or swings around any obstacle placed in its path to continue its ceaseless revolutions. This smashed debris and the charcoal marks of failed calculations hint at Cavnakash's unsuccessful attempts to affect the orb.

The columns are 15 feet tall, and the 70-foot-diameter marble slab they support serves to keep rain out of the stairwell. Its top is smooth and flat.

Creatures: Cavnakash stands on the platform, contemplating how else he might affect the *aeon orb*. His mount, a pteranodon, perches at one of the points of the marble sunburst. The pteranodon injured its left wing on an earlier effort to swoop close to the *aeon orb*, and it can't fly for more than a few seconds at a time until its wing injury is healed—something

Cavnakash hasn't yet bothered to do. Cavnakash is normally accompanied by four xulgath warriors, but he might have sent these warriors down into the tower if he heard the gong ringing from below.

These foes are inclined to attack intruders; Cavnakash uses his maul and his spells while the pteranodon uses its Swoop ability as it makes hopping glides across the platform and atop the marble slab over the staircase. If the heroes express a desire to parley, Cavnakash is interested only in information they have about the *aeon orb* or how to destroy it. When it becomes clear the heroes can't help him in this endeavor, he attacks.

CAVNAKASH

CREATURE 5

Page 88

Initiative Perception +12

PTERANODON

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 272

Initiative Perception +8

Injured Wing The pteranodon must end its turn on solid ground or it falls. This injury can be healed only by binding the wing for 2 weeks.

XULGATH WARRIORS (4)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 336

Initiative Perception +6

RESONANT REFLECTION

Aeon orbs aren't sentient, but they nevertheless bequeath a reflection of their powerful energies to certain creatures in their presence. This energy is called a *resonant reflection*. Cavnakash and the xulgaths, so keen on destroying the orb, could not receive this *resonant reflection*. The heroes, on the other hand, receive the *aeon orb's resonant reflection* once they defeat Cavnakash, as doing so demonstrates their dedication to preserving the *aeon orb*. The statistics for the *resonant reflection* granted by the Erran Tower's *aeon orb*, called the *reflection of life*, are presented below. *Resonant reflections* are magic items that do not have any physical substance, are automatically invested, and don't count toward a character's limit of 10 invested items. *Resonant reflections* aren't visible, even though their effects can be—although a hero with one is aware of its presence.

The heroes will have the opportunity to gain additional *resonant reflections* in the course of the Extinction Curse Adventure Path; there is no limit to the number of *resonant reflections* a hero can gain. A hero who later joins the campaign can receive the *reflection of life* by returning to the Erran Tower's

summit and standing in the presence of the *aeon orb*; the new hero's connection to the heroes who received the initial *resonant reflections* allows it to be shared.

REFLECTION OF LIFE

RESONANT REFLECTION 5

HEALING MAGICAL

You regain double the normal number of Hit Points when resting (meaning you regain double your Constitution modifier multiplied by your level). The healing you gain from long-term rest is similarly doubled. In addition, you can focus this healing energy to accelerate your body's natural healing processes even further.

Activate ➤➤ envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You gain fast healing 3 for 1 minute. This amount of fast healing increases by 1 for every 2 levels you have beyond 5th level.

Concluding the Adventure

Cavnakash's defeat ends the immediate xulgath threat, but there are still several unresolved matters. The heroes should realize that the *aeon orb* is still failing; Cavnakash's recent tampering isn't the cause of its decades of gradual decline. Further, Cavnakash is only the agent of a greater power occupying a structure called Moonstone Hall underneath the city of Escadar on the other side of the Isle of Erran, and more information is bound to be available there.

Harlock Hamdeel remains both deeply troubled and ashamed. He is heartened by the role the heroes played in cleansing the hermitage, though, and he vows to make it a sacred place once again.

The people of Abberton are grateful for everything the heroes have done. In a ceremony a few days after the heroes return from the Erran Tower, the mayor pronounces them "Abbertonians in perpetuity."

Perhaps most personally, the Circus of Wayward Wonders now sees the heroes as their leaders. The heroes can put on more circus shows, but Abberton isn't large enough or wealthy enough to support the circus for long. As long as the heroes remain in Abberton, their Prestige can rise no higher than 5, and each payout after the first show is reduced by an additional 25% (when this reaches 100%, the circus receives no payout at all). The show must go on, so eventually the heroes must consider other venues. Escadar is the island's largest city, but Escadar is also the home of Mistress Dusklight's Celestial Menagerie. Some heroes might have an unpleasant history with Mistress Dusklight, and the agents she sent to Abberton show that she hasn't forgotten about her new rivals.

Escadar is the heroes' next stop, and the mysteries there are revealed in *Legacy of the Lost God*.

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The smell of animals, incense, and burning pitch fills the air. Murmurs of excitement punctuate the dark, open space. From outside, silver light cast by a crescent moon slices through the tent's entryway. Suddenly, music bursts in from all sides. The curtain rises, spotlights flood the ring in the middle of the tent, and a lone figure standing in the center spurs the crowd's cacophonous applause. "Welcome, welcome!" the figure booms. "Welcome to the greatest show on Golarion!"

At the start of this adventure, the PCs inherit the Circus of Wayward Wonders, and they're thrust into the roles of showrunners in addition to their responsibilities as adventurers. Throughout the Extinction Curse Adventure Path, the PCs will travel all over the Isle of Erran and the Isle of Kortos, undertaking a grand adventure to save the land from an ancient evil. Thankfully, it's not all dire omens and life-or-death circumstances—during their off time, the PCs can unwind by running a joyous circus where the worst case scenario is a comically clumsy show. To ensure their circus is a success, the PCs will need to promote, orchestrate, and execute fantastic shows in towns big and small.

The rules in this article are designed to give the PCs agency over their circus and approximate the fun and responsibility of running a traveling troupe of entertainers. While intended for use throughout the Extinction Curse Adventure Path, the rules are flexible enough to be used in any campaign.

Running a Circus

Throughout the Extinction Curse Adventure Path, the Circus of Wayward Wonders will travel from the Isle of Erran to the Isle of Kortos, where the PCs' adventure to protect the *aeon orbs* will take them to a variety of settlements and locales across the island. While their circus might play into their main adventure to varying degrees, the rules in this article give the players the ability to manage their troupe in the abstract and focus in on specific shows as they like. (An outline of the Extinction Curse Adventure Path can be found on page 73.)

CIRCUS BASICS

The PCs' management of their circus is separated into two parts: downtime, during which the PCs prepare for their show by promoting their circus and purchasing advertisements or circus upgrades; and the night of the big show, when the PCs actively take part in the grand performance or otherwise ensure their circus's show is a success.

During downtime, the PCs must generate Anticipation in order to draw a sizable crowd to their circus show. In order to drum up Anticipation, the PCs can purchase advertisements or Promote the Circus using a special downtime activity. The circus's Prestige and random variables also determine a show's starting Anticipation.

Up to once per week, the PCs can put on a circus show, which takes place in encounter mode. During the performance, the PCs and their chosen NPC performers perform in four acts to generate Excitement. To complete an act, the PCs choose which tricks—circus parlance for a particular stunt or performance—to put on during the act, the performers then attempt the appropriate trick checks to determine the success of each trick. A trick's level determines how much Excitement each of its trick checks generates. In addition, random variables beyond the PCs' control can affect their performances, making it impossible to fully predict the outcome of any one show.

The players can track the progress of each circus show, including Anticipation, Excitement, and the outcome of tricks and acts, using a copy of the Circus Show Sheet on page 68. At the end of the show, if the PCs generated more Excitement than Anticipation, they earn their full Payout—an amount of money determined by the show's final Anticipation and the circus's Prestige. The party can spend this Payout to upgrade their circus facilities, purchase advertisements for future shows, and hire more performers.

Terminology

Below are the key terms used in these circus rules.

Acts: Every circus show is broken up into four acts, each of which consists of one or more tricks: the opener (one trick), the build-up (two tricks), the big number (one trick), and the finale (three tricks).

Advertisements: The PCs can pay for criers, newspaper listings, and signage either mundane or magical to build up Anticipation for their next show.

Anticipation: Anticipation is a value that represents the crowd's overall enthusiasm and expectations for the PCs' show. The higher the Anticipation, the bigger the PCs' Payout. However, if the PCs generate more Anticipation than the show can satisfy, the show is a failure.

Excitement: Excitement is a value that represents the crowd's satisfaction with the PCs' show. The PCs generate Excitement by successfully completing tricks, and must generate more Excitement than Anticipation in order to earn their full Payout.

Payout: After putting on a show, the PCs earn an amount of money that depends on how their performance went. They can use this money, called Payout, to purchase advertisements, circus upgrades, or new tricks.

Prestige: Prestige is a value that represents the circus company's renown and fame. The default Prestige of the PCs' circus starts at 1. The PCs can increase their Prestige by performing shows or purchasing the spotlights circus upgrade.

Promotion: The PCs can Promote the Circus during the week before they put on a show to generate Anticipation.

Random Events: Before each circus performance, the GM rolls a random event, which may make it more or less difficult to perform certain tricks, increase Excitement or Anticipation, or have some other effect on the upcoming performance.

Tricks: Each circus act consists of one or more tricks, which is circus parlance for a stunt or spectacle. Each performer employed by the circus has one trick, and every trick requires the NPC or PC performing it to attempt at least one trick check (for NPCs, the GM can roll or delegate a player to do so; tricks performed by PCs are also called signature tricks). Succeeding at a trick check generates Excitement, but critically succeeding generates additional Anticipation as well (which may not be desirable because it makes subsequent trick checks more difficult). Critically failing a trick check decreases the show's Excitement value. Each trick also has at least one trick trait associated with it, which can modify how the trick is performed depending on other circumstances such as random events or circus upgrades.

Upgrades: The PCs can purchase circus upgrades to improve aspects of their circus or affect the performance of certain tricks.

Preparing for the Show

Before putting on a show, the PCs must generate interest in their circus and draw a crowd of paying customers. This is represented by Anticipation, a numerical value that the PCs increase during the days leading up to a show. The higher the show's Anticipation, the higher the circus's potential Payout at the end of the show.

GENERATING ANTICIPATION

One of the most important parts of running a circus troupe is getting the word out and drawing in paying audience members. Before the big night, the PCs need to generate Anticipation for their upcoming show. This value represents the audience's expectations and overall enthusiasm for the upcoming performance.

The PCs need to generate Anticipation for every show they put on. Anticipation lasts only 1 week, meaning the PCs have 6 days leading up to a show to build Anticipation. It resets to 0 after each show or 6 days after the first Anticipation is generated (in the event the PCs don't put on a show).

During the week before they put on a show, the PCs can purchase advertisements or Promote the Circus to increase their Anticipation. Purchasing advertisements requires no expenditure of downtime, but must be done at the beginning of the week (before Promoting the Circus) and costs money (either from the circus's Payout funds or the PCs' own wallets); see Purchasing Advertisements below for more details. Promoting the Circus costs nothing, but requires a PC to undertake a downtime activity that takes 2 days.

Maximum Anticipation: The PCs' tent can hold only so many spectators, which limits how much Anticipation the circus can generate for each show. The circus's starting maximum Anticipation is 20. Any Anticipation generated in excess of this (either from downtime, random events, or any other source) is ignored. The circus's maximum Anticipation can be increased by certain upgrades, non-performer roles, or random events.

Purchasing Advertisements

At the beginning of the week preceding a show, the PCs can purchase an advertisement tier, which represents varying levels of advertising, such as posters for a low-level tier, endorsements from town influencers at mid-tier, and even magical billboards at higher tiers. They must do so before they have Promoted the Circus (page 61). The PCs can purchase only one advertising tier per week. Higher-tier advertisements generate more Anticipation but cost more money. Advertisements are good for only one show; after that show, an advertisement tier must be purchased again to generate Anticipation.

The PCs can purchase an advertisement tier using their circus Payout or their own adventuring money (see Earning and Spending Payout on page 67).

TABLE 1: ADVERTISEMENTS AND ANTICIPATION

Tier	Cost	Anticipation
1	1 gp	1
2	5 gp	2
3	20 gp	4
4	40 gp	6
5	80 gp	9
6	150 gp	12
7	250 gp	16
8	500 gp	20
9	800 gp	25
10	1,200 gp	30
11	2,000 gp	40
12	3,000 gp	50

Promoting the Circus

PCs can use the following untrained downtime activity to generate Anticipation for their next show. Only one PC can Promote the Circus at a time (unless that PC is being aided by another PC; see below), meaning the party has three chances to Promote the Circus before each circus show.

PROMOTE THE CIRCUS (SOCIETY)

CIRCUS **DOWNTIME**

You spend 2 consecutive days in town generating Anticipation for your next circus show. Attempt a Society check. The DC of this check is equal to the DC appropriate for the group's party level; see Table 10–5 on page 503 of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*. One other PC can spend 2 downtime days to Aid you, providing a +2 circumstance bonus to your Society check if they succeed at a DC 20 Society check.

Critical Success You generate Anticipation equal to twice the sum of your level plus your Charisma modifier (minimum 2).

Success You generate Anticipation equal to your level plus your Charisma modifier (minimum 1).

Failure You generate 1 Anticipation.

Critical Failure You generate no Anticipation.

PRE-SHOW EXCITEMENT

In addition to generating Anticipation before the next show, the PCs can generate Excitement as well, which is carried into the start of the show and marked in the Starting Excitement box on the Circus Show Sheet. The most common ways of generating pre-show Excitement include circus upgrades and certain random circus events.

Putting on a Show

All of the circus company's hard work and time is put to the test during the night of the big show. The PCs can put on up to one show per week. You as the GM should make clear to the PCs at what points during the campaign they'll have the opportunity to put on a show, so they can plan their downtime accordingly and promote or advertise the show as needed. Generally, the PCs should be allowed to plan and put on performances whenever they are in a settlement or peaceful communal area suitable for gatherings (such as a region of interconnected farms), and they should have 6 days before the show to generate Anticipation and pre-show Excitement.

Some parts of the Extinction Curse Adventure Path preclude circus performances for a significant amount of time; these sections are noted in the adventures' text as they occur, and should be made clear to the PCs as well.

After downtime, during which the PCs generated Anticipation for their show, the time has come to actually perform for an audience. A circus show is divided into four acts: the opener, the build-up, the big number, and the finale. Each act consists of one or more tricks. Each trick involves rolling a trick check. The results of these checks determine how much Excitement is generated. The PCs' goal is to generate more Excitement than the crowd's Anticipation, resulting in a successful show.

The steps for putting on a show, in order, are as follows.

1. Purchase Temporary Upgrades (page 69): The PCs purchase temporary upgrades (if any) for the show.

2. Choose Non-Performer Roles (page 66): The PCs choose which non-performer roles, if any, they will each take during the show. A PC who selects a non-performer role can't perform any tricks during the show.

3. Roll for Random Events (page 66): The GM rolls to determine which random event affects the show.

4. Tally Starting Anticipation (page 60): The GM marks the starting Anticipation for the show (Anticipation may change throughout the show).

5. Perform Acts and Tricks (below): The PCs choose which tricks to perform during each act, then follow the rules for performing tricks until all four acts are over.

6. Calculate Payout (page 67): The GM calculates the PCs' Payout, which depends on the success of the show.

ACTS

Each circus performance consists of four acts composed of a total of seven tricks. The first act is called the opener, and it consists of only one trick to capture the crowd's attention. The build-up involves two tricks to impress the crowd; the big number has just one that's often the focus of the entire evening's show; and the finale has three tricks to present a dazzling spectacle of all the circus offers.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Chapter 1:
Murder in the
Center Ring

Chapter 2:
Abberton
Investigations

Chapter 3:
The Corrupted
Hermitage

Chapter 4:
Xulgaths in the
Tower

**Life in
the Circus**

**Adventure
Toolbox**

At the beginning of each act, the PCs choose which trick or tricks to include in that act. They can pick from any that the PCs or their NPC performers know (see Tricks, below). For acts with multiple tricks, the tricks happen concurrently in separate rings, but the PCs take turns describing their performances.

Just like in combat encounters, each performer in an act can use up to 3 actions. At least 1 action must be used to Perform a Trick (page 63); otherwise, each performer can Costar with another performer, Send in the Clowns, Perform their Trick again, or skip their remaining actions.

After each performer has used their actions for the act, the PCs choose the tricks for the next act; they repeat this until they've used their actions for the finale, after which the show is over.

The PCs can choose any combination of tricks for their show, with one major restriction: each trick can be performed only once per show. NPC tricks may have additional restrictions (see Reading NPC Tricks, page 63).

TRICKS

A trick consists of one or more trick checks—this is a skill check, saving throw, or attack roll that represents the performer's feat of grace or strength. PCs attempt trick checks by taking the Perform a Trick action (page 63) while they are onstage during an act. This action may have one or more trick traits associated with it, such as alchemical for tricks with alchemy or musical for tricks that involve songs or sound effects (see Trick Traits on page 63).

Tricks come in two types: NPC tricks and PC tricks (which are also called signature tricks). A performer, whether NPC or PC, can perform only their own trick, although it's possible for a PC to design a signature trick almost identical to an NPC's trick. NPC tricks have different restrictions than PC tricks, but don't scale with their level; that is, a 6th-level NPC trick is always a 6th-level NPC trick. PC tricks, however, grow in level alongside the PC who performs them, and can be modified as the PCs progress through the campaign.

At the beginning of the Extinction Curse Adventure Path, the Circus of Wayward Wonders has six NPC tricks and one signature trick for every PC in the party who wants to create one. A PC's signature trick is of their own design and can't be performed by anyone else. The PCs can hire additional talent as the campaign goes on, gaining access to more traits for their own signature tricks. As the showrunners, the PCs decide which tricks are performed during which acts in each circus show.

NPC Tricks

When an NPC performs their trick, either a player or the GM can roll the trick checks for the NPC, using the DC and the modifiers listed in the trick description. NPCs can't perform other NPCs' tricks, nor can they perform PC tricks. NPC tricks may have any number of trick traits and types of trick checks; these are not limited by their level, as PC tricks are.

New NPC tricks become available to the PCs' circus as the PCs hire additional performers. These NPC tricks might have new trick traits (below), to which the PCs gain access as soon as they hire the NPC.

Reading NPC Tricks: NPC tricks include the name of the trick, the trick's level (and associated DC for the trick check), any traits associated with it, the types of trick checks used to perform the trick, a description of the trick, and additional requirements (if any). NPC tricks appear on the inside covers of each volume of the Extinction Curse Adventure Path.

PC Tricks (Signature Tricks)

Each PC can design their own signature trick. The player decides their signature trick's trick check (which can be a skill check, saving throw, or attack roll), chooses a trick trait (below), and names and dramatically describes the trick. The signature trick's level is equal to the PC's level and increases whenever the PC gains a level. Only the PC who created the signature trick can perform it; NPCs or other PCs cannot perform another PC's signature trick. Otherwise, signature tricks do not have additional requirements or challenges associated with them.

PCs' signature tricks improve and grow more complex as they go up in level, as shown on Table 2: Trick Progression. For example, while a 1st-level performer can use only a single type of check to perform their trick and their trick has only one trick trait, a 10th-level performer can use one of two different checks for each trick attempt and their trick can have up to two trick traits.

Redesigning Tricks: Once a signature trick is created, it is difficult to change. A PC can change their signature trick (including its trick checks and trick traits) whenever they gain a level or by spending 6 consecutive downtime days redesigning the trick.

TABLE 2: TRICK PROGRESSION

Level	Benefits
1	1 trick check, 1 trick trait
4	2 trick checks
8	2 trick traits
12	3 trick traits
16	3 trick checks
20	4 trick traits

Generating Excitement with Tricks

Each PC or NPC performing in a circus act must attempt the following action at least once and up to three times.

PERFORM A TRICK

CIRCUS

You perform your signature circus trick. Attempt one of the trick checks associated with your trick. The DC for the trick check is determined by your level, as shown on Table 10-5 on page 503 of the *Core Rulebook*. The result of each trick check determines whether you generate Excitement, generate Excitement and Anticipation, or lose Excitement.

Critical Success You generate Excitement equal to the trick's level; this Excitement is added to the circus's total Excitement for the show. You also generate Anticipation equal to half the trick's level (rounded up); this Anticipation is added to the circus's total Anticipation for the show.

Success You generate Excitement equal to the trick's level; this Excitement is added to the circus's total Excitement for the show.

Failure No effect.

Critical Failure The circus's Excitement value decreases by a value equal to half the trick's level (rounded up).

You can Perform a Trick multiple times per act, and can choose a different possible trick check for each attempt. If you Perform a Trick twice during the same act, you take a -5 penalty to your second trick check. If you Perform a Trick three times, the penalty for the third check is -10. (This is similar to how the multiple attack penalty works; see page 446 of the *Core Rulebook*.) The penalties are reduced to -4 and -8, respectively, if your trick has the agile trait.

This action always has the circus trait. Starting at 1st level, you can choose one additional trick trait you have access to for your signature trick, and apply it to this action as well. You can add additional traits as your level increases (see Table 2: Trick Progression).

For example, a 3rd-level trick generates 3 Excitement with each successful trick check, 3 Excitement and 2 Anticipation for each critical success, and -2 Excitement for each critical failure. Other factors, such as the trick's traits, the PCs' purchased circus upgrades, or other circus roles (page 66) may alter the amount of Excitement generated by certain tricks.

Trick Traits

The Perform a Trick action can have one or more special traits associated with it. These traits tie into other circus rules, such as random events, non-performer roles, or purchased upgrades. Some of these traits share names with other traits found in the *Core Rulebook*, but have different rules associated with them in the context of these circus rules.

Starting at 1st level, each PC can add one trick trait to their signature trick. This trait must be chosen when the trick is first designed or when the PC changes their signature trick after gaining a level, retraining, or redesigning the trick. A PC must have access to a trait to add it to their signature trick; to gain access to a trait, the circus must have hired an NPC performer whose trick includes that trait. For example, a PC can't add the alchemical trait to their signature trick until an NPC whose trick has the alchemical trait joins the circus.

A PC can add additional trick traits to their signature trick by taking the Advanced Circus Trick general feat. See the *Extinction Curse Player's Guide* for more details.

The following are descriptions of every trick trait. At the start of the Extinction Curse Adventure Path, the PCs have access to the following traits: agile, animal, fire, and water. More traits become available to the PCs as they hire additional NPC performers.

If a trick trait's name is followed by the name of a skill in parentheses, then a performer gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Perform a Trick with that trait using that skill check. For example, a performer whose trick has the aerial trick trait gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Acrobatics trick checks.

Some traits are compulsory, meaning that if a signature trick meets certain criteria then that trick must have the indicated trait. For example, any signature trick that uses a saving throw for one of its trick checks must have the injury trait. These compulsory trick traits do not count toward a signature trick's maximum number of traits. Compulsory trick traits are marked with an asterisk (*).

Aerial (Acrobatics): The trick involves flight by either magical or mundane means.

Air (Survival): The trick involves the manipulation of mist, wind, or another prop with atmospheric properties.

Alchemical: As part of the trick, the performer can expend one alchemical item in their possession. Upon doing so, the performer gains a +1 circumstance bonus to their trick check. This destroys the item.

Agile: The penalty for performing an agile trick a second or third time in the same act is -4 or -8, respectively, instead of -5 or -10.

Animal (Nature): The trick utilizes trained animals.

Audience (Society): The audience participates in the trick.

Beast (Arcana): The trick relies on intelligent beasts.

Dance: The trick involves dancing or choreographed movements. Circumstance bonuses to trick checks gained from performers using the Costar reaction (page 65) stack. For example, if two other PCs successfully Costar with their ally and have the master proficiency rank in that trick check, the total circumstance bonus granted from the Costar reaction is +6 (rather than +3).

Earth (Occultism): The trick involves the use of mud, earth, or stone.

Emotion: The trick uses alchemical or magical effects to induce a powerful emotional response from the audience. A trick must have either the alchemical or magical trait in order to have the emotion trait. Whenever a performer succeeds or critically succeeds at a trick check with the emotion trait, they can reduce the amount of Excitement or Anticipation (or both) the trick generates however they wish, down to a minimum of 0 Excitement or Anticipation.

Fire (Intimidation): This trick involves fire, smoke, or pyrotechnics.

Injury*: Anytime a PC uses a saving throw for one of the trick checks, the trick has this trait. If an NPC or PC performing a trick with the injury trait critically fails any trick check, they have a chance of becoming injured. To determine if the performer is injured, roll a flat DC 15 check. On a failure, the performer becomes injured. An injured performer (whether PC or NPC) cannot perform tricks for the rest of the show. In addition, at the beginning of the next show, the injured performer must succeed at a flat DC 15 check to determine if they have recovered sufficiently to perform again. On a failure, the performer cannot perform in that show, either due

to the lasting effects of the injury or due to fright of becoming injured again. A performer can miss only one show after the show in which they were injured. On subsequent shows, no check is necessary and the PC or NPC can once again perform as normal.

Magical: The trick involves the use of magic. While Performing the Trick, the performer can expend one spell slot of any level. If the performance succeeds or critically succeeds, the trick generates an additional amount of Excitement equal to the expended spell slot's level.

Musical (Performance): The trick involves musical cues or is somehow augmented by sound effects or music.

Plant (Nature): The trick uses plants such as trees, flowers, or fungi, or uses magic that affects such plants.

Prop (Crafting): The trick requires the use of some mundane prop or stage setup.

Team*: This trick requires more than one person. Anytime a PC performing a signature trick accepts the Costar reaction from a performer, the trick has this trait.

Time: The trick involves distorting or altering time in some way. A performer whose trick has the time trait can perform that trick one additional time per act, taking a penalty to the fourth trick check equal to the penalty to the third trick check.

Water (Athletics): The trick features water as a primary component of its performance.

OTHER SHOW ACTIONS

In addition to Perform a Trick, PCs can perform the following action and reaction during their turn in the ring. A PC must be performing in an act to do so and must use the indicated number of actions.

COSTAR

CIRCUS

Trigger Another performer in the same act as you is about to attempt a trick check.

Requirements The performer is willing to accept your aid. You help another performer in the act pull off their trick, possibly granting them a bonus to the triggering trick check. Attempt the same check as the trick check you are attempting to aid. The DC to Costar is equal to the DC of the trick check. NPCs cannot Costar. This reaction otherwise acts as the Aid action described on page 470 of the *Core Rulebook*.

SEND IN THE CLOWNS

CIRCUS

Requirements You or another performer has failed or critically failed a trick check during the current act.

You give the signal for the circus's clown troupe to come onstage and rescue a botched trick. A failed trick becomes a success instead, or if it was a critical failure, it is instead

EXAMPLE OF AN ACT WITH TWO TRICKS

For the second act of this week's circus show, the build-up, Gerard the rogue is attempting his signature trick, the Deep-Sea Dunk, which involves shackling his hands together before he is dropped in a water tank from which he must escape. Performing alongside him in the other ring is Janelle the ranger, who will be performing as the Incredible Manticore Tamer (with some help from her lion animal companion in costume).

Because he is a 4th-level PC, Gerard's trick can have one trick trait and he can choose from one of two different trick checks whenever he performs the Deep-Sea Dunk. When he last leveled up, Gerard chose the agile trait for his trick and decided his available trick checks would be a Thievery check (representing his ability to undo his manacles) and a Fortitude saving throw (representing his ability to hold his breath).

Janelle, also 4th level, has chosen the animal trait for her trick, and uses either Nature or Intimidation for her trick checks (representing her ability to keep her animal under control and her ability to scare the audience with her stunt, respectively).

The group decides that Gerard will describe his performance and take his actions first. Gerard describes his trick—the trapdoor drops, he plunges into the tank of water!—and rolls a Thievery trick check for his first action. Including his check modifier, his result is 26, which handily overcomes the DC of 19 for 4th-level characters and generates 4 Excitement. He decides to attempt two more trick checks, this time Fortitude saves to hold his breath, taking the -4 and -8 penalties on his rolls (because his trick has the agile trait) and getting results of 20 (just beating the DC) and 9 (a critical failure). His second roll generates 4 Excitement, but his last roll, a critical failure, subtracts 2 Excitement from the circus's running total. Because his critically failed trick check was a saving throw, Gerard must also attempt a DC 15 flat check to determine if he is injured as a result of his trick. Thankfully he rolls a 16, allowing him to avoid injury.

Janelle attempts a Nature trick check for her first action, and her result is a 29—a critical success! She generates 4 Excitement but also 2 Anticipation. She decides to attempt another Nature trick check for her second action but gets only a 17—a failure. For her last action, she Sends in the Clowns, changing her failed trick check to a success instead and generating a total of 8 Excitement and 2 Anticipation from her performance.

a failure. The clowns can be sent in only once per act, and only one trick check is affected.

NON-PERFORMER ROLES

Of course, some PCs might not want to perform in every circus show their troupe puts on. In this case, PCs can take part in auxiliary roles that, while not the focus of the show, can still play a big part in the circus's success.

Each of the following non-performer roles requires a PC to abstain from performing in the show but grants a bonus to various parts of the performance. NPCs cannot perform these roles; it is assumed that they are fully occupied with preparing for their acts. Once chosen, a non-performer role cannot be changed until the next show. Only one PC can perform a particular non-performer role per show (for example, two PCs can't both choose the role of animal handler). Some roles can be chosen only after purchasing certain circus upgrades.

The GM can create additional non-performer roles for the PCs, using the roles listed here as baselines.

Animal Handler: Trick checks with the animal trait gain a +2 circumstance bonus, and a PC whose signature trick has the animal trait can perform twice in the same show (though not in the same act). If the animals break loose event is rolled on Table 3: Random Circus Events (below), reroll on that table instead.

Backup Clown: Performers can Send in the Clowns one additional time per act.

Bandleader: After each trick is completed, the bandleader can choose to generate Anticipation equal to half the bandleader's level rounded up. The circus must have the acoustics permanent upgrade (page 69) before a PC can choose the bandleader role.

Carnival Barker: The carnival barker draws in more audience members as the show goes on and increases the show's maximum Anticipation. For every successful trick check performed, the carnival barker can choose to increase the show's maximum Anticipation by 5.

Clown Coordinator: You can Send in the Clowns as a reaction instead of using 1 action.

Costumer: Performers get a +1 circumstance bonus to trick checks with the audience trait.

Lighting: Performers gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Deception and Thievery trick checks. The circus must have the spotlights permanent upgrade before a PC can choose the lighting role.

Medic: Performers can't become injured from critically failing tricks with the injury trait.

Pyrotechnic: Trick checks with the fire trait generate double Excitement.

Security Guard: Any rolls of hecklers or scalpers on Table 3: Random Circus Events are negated and have no effect on the performance.

RANDOM CIRCUS EVENTS

It's impossible to account for every possibility before the curtains go up and the show starts. At the beginning of each circus show, roll a d12 and refer to the following table to determine which random event takes place. The GM can create additional random events, using the following events as baselines.

TABLE 3: RANDOM CIRCUS EVENTS

D12	Event
1	Animals break loose
2	Bad weather
3	Clown lung
4	Equipment malfunction
5	Food poisoning
6	Hecklers
7	Injured performer
8	Overflowing crowd
9	Scalpers
10	Stars align
11	Tent breaks
12	Roll again twice (reroll subsequent 12s)

Animals Break Loose: Animal tricks can't be performed during the show, and the crowd's Excitement and Anticipation each increase by 2d6 (rolled separately).

Bad Weather: Trick checks with the aerial or fire trait take a -2 circumstance penalty and trick checks with the earth trait gain a +2 circumstance bonus. If the show is a success, the Payout is doubled.

Clown Lung: Performers cannot Send in the Clowns unless a PC takes the backup clown non-performer role.

Equipment Malfunction: The NPC with the highest trick level (chosen randomly in the case of a tie) cannot perform in the show.

Food Poisoning: Trick checks take a -1 circumstance penalty. The GM randomly selects two trick traits; trick checks with those traits take a -2 circumstance penalty.

Hecklers: During each act, one performer (chosen randomly for acts with more than one performer, after the PCs have selected which tricks will be performed) takes a -1 circumstance penalty to trick checks.

Injured Performer: One of the PCs (chosen randomly) cannot perform during this show. The PC can still take on a non-performer role.

Overflowing Crowd: The crowd's starting Anticipation increases by 4d6 and the maximum Anticipation limit for the show increases by 20.

Scalpers: The PCs' Prestige (page 67) is treated as 3 less (minimum 1) when calculating Payout.

Stars Align: Trick check DCs decrease by 2.

Tent Breaks: The circus's maximum Anticipation for the show decreases by 10.

Payout and Prestige

For each show the PCs put on, they'll earn fame and increase the wealth in their coffers. Payout is the PCs' earnings, which they can use to upgrade their circus facilities, hire new talent, or purchase advertisements. Prestige represents the circus's overall renown and the influence it has in towns where it performs.

DEGREES OF SUCCESS

The circus's show can be either a critical success, a success, or a failure. If the PCs generate more Excitement than Anticipation, the show is a success. If they generate less Excitement than Anticipation, the show is a failure.

A critically successful show is much more difficult to achieve than other critical successes in Pathfinder: in order to put on a critically successful show, the PCs must generate exactly as much Excitement as Anticipation.

EARNING AND SPENDING PAYOUT

At the end of a successful performance, the PCs earn an amount of Payout, which is calculated using the following formula. (Note that the PCs earn Payout before earning Prestige, so they use the Prestige value they had when they performed the show, not their new Prestige value after the show.)

$$(\text{Prestige} + \text{Final Anticipation}) = \text{Payout (in gp)}$$

If the show was a critical success, the Payout is doubled. This doubling stacks with the increase granted by the bad weather event (see opposite page), in which case the Payout is effectively quadrupled.

If the PCs fail to generate more Excitement than Anticipation, their show is a failure. Calculate Payout using Excitement instead of Anticipation, then multiply the final amount by one-quarter (rounded down). The formula is as follows, instead.

$$(\text{Prestige} + \text{Final Excitement}) \times 1/4 = \text{Payout (in gp)}$$

For example, if the PCs' circus has a Prestige of 3 and they perform a successful show with 20 Anticipation, then they would earn 23 gp as their Payout ($3 + 20 = 23$ gp). However, if they generated only 15 Excitement during the show and thus their performance was a failure, they would earn only 4 gp instead ($3 + 15 = 18$, and $18 \times 1/4 = 4.5$ gp).

The circus always earns enough money to cover its baseline expenses and pay its employees; Payout represents profit in excess of this baseline. Payout can be used only for circus-related expenses (the PCs

SIMPLIFIED CIRCUS RULES

Your group might not have the time or might simply not be interested in running a full-fledged circus operation between adventures. The Extinction Curse Adventure Path can be run entirely without the PCs' involvement in the Circus of Wayward Wonders. Alternatively, your group can use the following guidelines to run simplified circus shows.

Ignore the Anticipation and Excitement rules; instead, use a simple Performance check for each act. During a show, each PC can attempt one Performance check (or other relevant skill check, at your discretion) to determine the success or failure of each act. The DC for this check is equal to the appropriate DC for that PC's level (see Table 10-5 on page 503 of the *Core Rulebook*). The PCs can attempt more difficult tricks by modifying the DC (as shown on Table 10-6 on page 504 of the *Core Rulebook*); for each step above the standard DC attempted, the trick counts as one more trick for the purpose of tallying the PCs' failed versus successful tricks (a very hard trick, for example, would count as three successful tricks on a successful Performance check or three failed tricks on a failed check).

The show is successful if the PCs succeed at as least as many Performance checks as they fail. Ignore the rules for Payout but tally Prestige as normal, since the party's Prestige may still affect other aspects of the campaign.

If you use this system, be sure to encourage roleplaying and give the PCs bonuses to their rolls if they describe their acts creatively. You may also still want to incorporate random circus events (page 66) to prevent the performances from becoming predictable. Either way, be sure to go into detail describing the audience's reactions and the town's overall enthusiasm toward the PCs' troupe, since this system will make for very quick circus shows.

cannot use their profits from the circus to fund their adventures, for example).

EARNING PRESTIGE

The circus starts with a Prestige of 1, which the PCs increase by performing shows. After a failed show, the circus earns 1 Prestige. If the show was a success, then the circus earns 2 Prestige instead, or 4 Prestige if the show was a critical success. Some circus upgrades (page 69) require the circus to have a minimum Prestige before they can be purchased.

In addition to its use in the circus rules in this article, the circus's Prestige will factor into several rewards and events throughout the Extinction Curse Adventure Path. These rewards and events are always optional, but may help the PCs in their quest to save the Isle of Kortos.

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CIRCUS SHOW SHEET

Circus Name

Date

Settlement Name

STARTING STATS

Prestige

Excitement (EXC)

Anticipation (ANT)

Max ANT

Downtime

Advertisement Tier

gp ANT

Downtime Activities

Day 1 ANT

Day 2 ANT

Day 3 ANT

Day 4 ANT

Day 5 ANT

Day 6 ANT

Showtime

TEMPORARY UPGRADES

- ☐ Beer
☐ Confections
☐ Disposable Binoculars

Merchandise

- ☐ Basic
☐ Quality
☐ Extraordinary

☐
☐
☐
☐

NON-PERFORMER ROLES

PC	Role
PC	Role
PC	Role
PC	Role

Random Event

ACT 1: OPENER

Trick 1

Performer	Level	Trick DC
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT

ACT 2: BUILD-UP

Trick 2

Performer	Level	Trick DC
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT

Trick 3

Performer	Level	Trick DC
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT

ACT 3: BIG NUMBER

Trick 4

Performer	Level	Trick DC
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT

ACT 4: FINALE

Trick 5

Performer	Level	Trick DC
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT

Trick 6

Performer	Level	Trick DC
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT

Trick 7

Performer	Level	Trick DC
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT
Action	(Result)	EXC ANT

PAYOUT

Final EXC

Final ANT

Prestige

Total Payout

CIRCUS UPGRADES

The PCs can upgrade their circus anytime between shows. Each upgrade has a price; the PCs can pay for the upgrade using either Payout or their own personal funds.

Two types of upgrades can be purchased: permanent upgrades and temporary upgrades. Permanent upgrades, once purchased, affect every show thereafter. Temporary upgrades can be purchased on a per-show basis; a temporary upgrade affects only the next show, and each temporary upgrade can be purchased only once per show. Some upgrades grant access to certain non-performer roles (page 66). Additional upgrades may become available throughout the Extinction Curse Adventure Path.

Certain upgrades can be purchased only after the PCs have purchased a preceding upgrade, such as the huge and massive tent size increases. These upgrades are indented on Table 4: Circus Upgrades, and must be purchased in the order presented.

TABLE 4: CIRCUS UPGRADES

Permanent Upgrades		
Upgrade	Price	Min. Prestige
Acoustics	30 gp	5
Flooring		
Safety net	20 gp	—
Padded floors	100 gp	6
Seating		
Bleachers	50 gp	5
Assigned seats	100 gp	10
Upholstered seats	250 gp	15
Spotlights	40 gp	4
Tent Expansions		
Big	40 gp	3
Huge	100 gp	10
Massive	300 gp	15
Watermarked tickets	50 gp	—
Temporary Upgrades		
Upgrade	Price	Min. Prestige
Beer	5 gp	—
Confections	15 gp	5
Disposable binoculars	25 gp	8
Merchandise, basic	20 gp	3
Merchandise, quality	40 gp	6
Merchandise, extraordinary	60 gp	10

Permanent Upgrade Descriptions

Permanent upgrades can be purchased only once, and convey their benefits to every circus show thereafter.

Acoustics: PCs and NPCs gain a +1 circumstance bonus to trick checks with the musical trait. After purchasing this upgrade, the bandleader role becomes available to PCs.

Flooring: Performers whose tricks have the injury trait are at a lower risk of getting hurt after a critically failed trick check. With a safety net, the DC of the flat checks to determine if a performer becomes injured or can perform at the next show decreases to 10. With padded floors, the flat check DC decreases to 5.

Seating: Quality seating options generate additional Excitement for the circus's shows but reduce the circus's maximum Anticipation by 10. At the start of each show, a circus with bleachers generates 5 Excitement. A circus with assigned seats generates 10 Excitement instead, and upholstered seats instead generate 20 Excitement.

Spotlights: This upgrade grants a permanent +1 increase to the circus's Prestige. In addition, after purchasing this upgrade, a PC can choose the lighting role during circus shows.

Tent Expansions: Bigger tents increase the circus's maximum Anticipation limit. A big tent increases the circus's maximum Anticipation to 50, a huge tent increases the Anticipation limit to 100, and a massive tent increases the Anticipation limit to 200.

Watermarked Tickets: An intricate ticket design makes forgeries near impossible, reducing sales of counterfeit tickets. For the purpose of calculating Payout, the circus's Prestige is treated as 2 points higher than it actually is.

Temporary Upgrade Descriptions

Each temporary upgrade can be purchased only once before each show. A temporary upgrade affects only the next show.

Beer: The circus generates an additional 2d6 Anticipation for the next show, and tricks with the audience trait gain a +2 circumstance bonus. However, the hecklers event (page 66) is automatically triggered, in addition to any other random event rolled.

Confections: The circus generates an additional 2d6 Excitement at the start of the next show.

Disposable Binoculars: There is no maximum Anticipation limit for the next show.

Merchandise: This temporary upgrade has no effect on the next show; instead, a fraction of the final Anticipation total of the next show is carried on to the show after that. With basic merchandise, the circus retains 25% of its final Anticipation (rounded down). This amount is instead 50% with quality merchandise, or 75% with extraordinary merchandise. This upgrade cannot be purchased for two shows in a row (that is, it cannot "stack" with itself).

For example, if this upgrade were purchased for a show that ultimately generated a final Anticipation of 20, then the show after that would start with an additional 5, 10, or 15 Anticipation (for basic, quality, or extraordinary merchandise, respectively).



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Xulgaths—the reptilian humanoids who surface dwellers call troglodytes—are one of the oldest sapient races on Golarion. Long ago, xulgaths built a powerful civilization, with vast holdings that encompassed many of the vaults established by the vanished, enigmatic vault builders in the deep underground realms called Orv. Yet despite its past glory, xulgath society has since descended to a rudimentary level of technology and a brutal social order based on might. Many xulgaths venerate demon lords, and chief among these is bestial Zevgavizeb, who slumbers in the Abyssal realm known as Glutondark.

One of the vaults the xulgaths inhabited was an Orvian vault named Vask, a primeval jungle with six tiny, hovering suns that kept the deadly radiation of the nearby rock at bay and created a wellspring of life. Though other creatures lived within the bountiful vault as well, the xulgaths perceived it as their sacred place and a mirror of Zevgavizeb's realm. They raised (or perhaps merely occupied) enormous stone structures within Vask, which remained their sole domain until five millennia ago, when a visitor from the surface world arrived.

The Aeon Orbs

When Aroden used his powerful magic to pull the Isle of Kortos from the Inner Sea, it was mere rock covered with slime from the seafloor, unfit for habitation. In seeking a method to give life to his new land, Aroden discovered the life-giving suns in Vask. Each an orb only a few feet across, these tiny suns emitted a life-giving light. In the eyes of the new god of humanity, these orbs could be put to far better use aiding humans. He took all but one, leaving a single orb behind in Vask to maintain the ecosystem there. He called the floating balls of life-giving energy *aeon orbs*, naming them in his Azlanti tradition, and placed each atop a mudbrick tower to illuminate his new land with its life-giving light. Aroden placed four of these so-called aeon towers on the western half of the Isle of Kortos, and the fifth

on the Isle of Erran, which he had set apart for his clergy's use. Each *aeon orb* orbits the top of its tower in the same manner an *aeon stone* orbits its bearer's head, due to Azlanti technology Aroden imbued in the orbs, and each emits a soft, warm glow that can be seen for miles, like a lighthouse. Although the *aeon orbs* are all identical, each tower is slightly different, though all are hundreds of feet tall and appear as steep-sided structures with a form somewhere between a pyramid and an obelisk.

Even the *aeon orbs'* powerful magic, however, was not sufficient to transform a slime-covered rock into a verdant island suitable for human habitation. Aroden linked his own essence to the *aeon orbs'* magic, reflecting their resonance through his own spirit. He performed this linking ritual from a stronghold he named the Verdant Beacon, built into a high peak in the Kortos Mountains (a site from which he could see each of the five aeon towers on a clear day). Soon, the magic of the linked *aeon orbs* made the islands green and bountiful, particularly around the aeon towers.

Humankind has a remarkable ability to take the wondrous for granted. Although the aeon towers were among the most visible of the many wonders Aroden created, their presence was eventually considered part of the landscape. The *aeon orbs'* purpose was forgotten by those who lived and worked near them, and few connect the bounty of the islands to the orbs' life-sustaining energy.

When Aroden died, the power of the *aeon orbs* was disrupted and began to slowly fail. Over the past century, locals have noted a steady decline in the local ecology; the Immenwood's growth is no longer spectacular, the grasslands on Erran are less bountiful, and so on. Worse, the *aeon orb* nearest the Dunmire was stolen a decade ago, and now a creeping blight called the Welt grows a mile or more each year. In only a few decades—perhaps a century at most—the *aeon orbs* will fail entirely, and both Kortos and Erran will return to lifeless rock. The locals recognize their

failing ecology, but they don't know how to repair it; few even realize that the *aeon orbs* (which still blaze brightly atop four of the five towers) are in danger.

Unfortunately, the *aeon orbs* don't have decades, as a malevolent force from below seeks to extinguish them now.

Sarvel Ever-Hunger

A xulgath high priest of Zevgavizeb named Sarvel Ever-Hunger recently learned that a vault called Vask once existed as a haven for his people. He also learned of Aroden's theft and Vask's resulting desolation. A kinder or more reasonable xulgath might try to steal the orbs back, or even negotiate for their return, but Sarvel is neither kind nor reasonable. He wants the surface dwellers to experience the anguish and misery of the xulgaths who were driven from Vask millennia ago. This hateful xulgath will be satisfied only when life has been extinguished from Aroden's islands.

Sarvel sent xulgath war-leaders to each of the *aeon* towers to destroy the *aeon orbs*. These leaders emerged from subterranean tunnels with their followers, keeping their presence concealed to prevent a unified response from the surface-dwellers. Sarvel monitors his xulgaths from the Verdant Beacon, which he's discovered has its own ancient magic that can deploy a deadly curse across the islands; this *extinction curse* can undo Aroden's accomplishments with a single stroke and bring death across the lands Aroden once walked.

Vault of the Black Desert

Aroden didn't realize that one orb was insufficient to sustain Vask's ecology. The radioactive crystals in the vault's ceiling soon killed the ecosystem, transforming the entire vault into a land of irradiated black sand that came to be known as the Black Desert. This disaster forced the xulgaths to scatter. Urgathoan drow fugitives of House Shraen later discovered the lifeless desert and established their own city in the xulgaths' ruins. There, the undead nobles of that family remain in the city they call Shraen, warring endlessly with urdefhan raiders and taming the great cave worms of the vault. Only one drow—a mummy named Dyzallin Shraen—thought to investigate how the cave worms could thrive in a vault so deadly to other living creatures. He recently discovered the *aeon orb* Aroden left behind and now labors to unlock its powers.

Resonant Reflections

To reconnect the *aeon orbs* and restore their matrix of life-giving energy, the heroes must replicate Aroden's work from millennia ago. They must visit each of the

orbs and obtain a reflection of its power. The heroes gain the first of these *resonant reflections* at the end of *The Show Must Go On*, although they don't learn its importance—or the need to gather the other *resonant reflections*—until the second adventure, *Legacy of the Lost God*. The heroes must gain a *resonant reflection* from each of the five *aeon orbs*, so the missing orb from the tower near Willowside presents a complication. In “Lord of the Black Sands,” the heroes must venture into the Vault of the Black Desert to wrest the missing orb from the drow mummy Dyzallin Shraen. Once the heroes have all five *resonant reflections*, they must travel to the Verdant Beacon in the Kortos Mountains to discharge the reflections and reestablish Aroden's network. They're racing against time, however, as Sarvel Ever-Hunger plans to unleash the *extinction curse* and wipe the islands clear of life.

Campaign Timeline

The following is a rough history of significant events relevant to this adventure path.

Date	Event
Age of Legends	Xulgaths have a mighty empire stretching throughout several vaults of Orv, including Deep Tolguth and Vask.
1 AR	Aroden raises the <i>Starstone</i> from the Inner Sea. He transports five of the six <i>aeon orbs</i> from Vask, placing four on the Isle of Kortos and one on the Isle of Erran. Even with one orb remaining, Vask becomes the lifeless Black Desert.
820 AR	The outcast, Urgathoa-worshipping drow of House Shraen reach the Black Desert and occupy the city at its center, which they call Shraen.
4171 AR	Moonstone Hall, a temple to Aroden, is constructed in Escadar to serve the secular populace.
4606 AR	Aroden dies. The <i>aeon orbs</i> on the Isle of Kortos and the Isle of Erran, severed from Aroden's power and disconnected from each other, begin to gradually fail.
4710 AR	The <i>aeon orb</i> atop the <i>aeon</i> tower called the Marsh Stone is stolen; it becomes known as the Tower of Empty Stones.
4719 AR	Mistress Dusklight brings her Celestial Menagerie to Escadar. Internal exposure of unethical practices and overt abuses causes a schism, and a troupe calling itself the Circus of Wayward Wonders leaves Escadar to tour on its own.
4720 AR	The current year. Sarvel Ever-Hunger begins his invasion of the <i>aeon</i> towers.

Extinction Curse Summary

A summary of the six adventures in Extinction Curse, along with their character levels, appears below.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

By Jason Tondro

Pathfinder Adventure Path #151, Levels 1–4

In the remote town of Abberton, the Circus of Wayward Wonders is about to start its show when the ringmaster is found dead. With the livelihood of the circus performers on the line, the heroes must scramble to put on a successful show, find the killer, and end her plots. Clues point to sinister events at a hermitage of Gozreh outside of town; the once-peaceful scholars have been corrupted by demons, and the killer was just the first of them to take violent action against civilized lands. Upon rescuing the hermitage's kindly leader from the hands of his corrupted followers, the heroes learn that the magical orb atop the nearby Erran Tower is failing. The resulting ecological damage is what stoked the fires of resentment between the Gozrens and the town. This leader asks the heroes to investigate the tower, where they learn of a xulgath plot to extinguish its life-giving *aeon orb* entirely.

LEGACY OF THE LOST GOD

By Jenny Jarzabski

Pathfinder Adventure Path #152, Levels 5–8

Now the leaders of the Circus of Wayward Wonders, the heroes bring their performers to the city of Escadar to capitalize on their newfound fame and skill. But old enemies lurk in the city; the cruel Mistress Dusklight and her Celestial Menagerie consider the heroes' circus a rival to be crushed. The heroes also need more information about the xulgath invasion and the *aeon orbs*, and they earn the right to explore the shuttered Moonstone Hall, once a temple to Aroden. There, the heroes learn of the broader xulgath designs against all life on the islands. Further, they learn that Mistress Dusklight has been illegally plundering Moonstone Hall. With city sanction, the heroes enter the Celestial Menagerie to bring the evil ringmaster to justice.

LIFE'S LONG SHADOWS

By Greg A. Vaughan

Pathfinder Adventure Path #153, Levels 9–11

Fresh from their successes in Escadar, the heroes bring the Circus of Wayward Wonders to the Isle of Kortos. As their circus tours the farming communities in the breadbasket known as the Swardlands, the heroes can explore the three *aeon towers* that impart bounty to the land. Yet all is not well in the Swardlands, as

ecological damage and raiding beasts threaten the hardworking farmers and loggers. Xulgaths are using the *aeon towers* as their bases of operation, and the heroes must overcome stony guardians, xulgath hordes, and a zealous dero before they can corner and defeat these xulgaths' alchemist leader.

SIEGE OF THE DINOSAURS

By Kate Baker

Pathfinder Adventure Path #154, Levels 12–14

The heroes arrive in Willowside, a swamp community in need of diversion from the relentless expansion of the blighted land known as the Welt. Willowside soon experiences a problem of a different sort, as dinosaur-riding xulgaths blockade the town. The heroes mount a defense of the city and learn what has brought the xulgaths to this isolated settlement. When the heroes break the siege, they learn that one of the xulgaths' *gug* slaves is secretly manipulating the forces for her own ends. The heroes also learn that the xulgaths remain stymied in their assault on the nearby *aeon tower*, as its orb was stolen many years ago. The tower's current residents—a strange nature sect called the Circle of Stones—offer a solution to the mystery of the missing *aeon orb*.

LORD OF THE BLACK SANDS

By Mikko Kallio

Pathfinder Adventure Path #155, Levels 15–17

The Circle of Stones tells the heroes that a lost *aeon orb* exists far beneath the surface in a blighted region known as the Vault of the Black Desert. The heroes travel alone to this dangerous realm, where they face off against vampire-like urdefhan and even stranger beasts. They learn the *aeon orb* was taken from the Cradle of Worms by the drow mummy Dyzallin Shraen, and that they must infiltrate the city of undead drow to confront the mummy and reclaim the orb.

THE APOCALYPSE PROPHET

By Lyz Liddell

Pathfinder Adventure Path #156, Levels 18–20

Now that they bear *resonant reflections* of all five *aeon orbs*, the heroes can ascend the Kortos Mounts to reach Aroden's fortress, the Verdant Beacon. The trip into the mountains is arduous, and mysterious forces seek to thwart the heroes. Meanwhile, the leader of the xulgath invasion, Sarvel Ever-Hunger, labors in the Verdant Beacon to unlock the secrets of the *extinction curse* to wipe out all life across the islands. The heroes must overcome ancient traps, powerful demons, and Sarvel himself to restore the failing *aeon orbs* and undo the ecological damage that Aroden's death began.

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Juggler Archetype

You're a skilled performer, with impressive balance and coordination that help you greatly in battle.

JUGGLER DEDICATION

FEAT 2

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE DEDICATION

Prerequisites Dexterity 14

You become trained in Performance; if you were already trained in Performance, you instead become trained in a skill of your choice. You also gain the Juggle skill feat (page 76), even if you don't meet its prerequisites.

Special You cannot select another dedication feat until you have gained one other feat from the juggler archetype.

FOCUSED JUGGLER

FEAT 4

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE CONCENTRATE MANIPULATE

Prerequisites Juggler Dedication

Trigger Your turn begins.

You continue Juggling until the end of your next turn. Increase the maximum number of items you can Juggle by one.

QUICK JUGGLER

FEAT 4

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites expert in Performance, Juggler Dedication

When you start to Juggle or add another item to those you are Juggling, you add two items instead of one. Increase the maximum number of items you can Juggle by one.

REFLEXIVE CATCH

FEAT 4

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE CONCENTRATE MANIPULATE

Prerequisites expert in Acrobatics, Juggler Dedication

Trigger An item falls within your reach or an attacker fails an attack roll to hit you or a creature within your reach with a thrown weapon.

Requirements The item or thrown weapon is of a Bulk you can Juggle. If the trigger was a thrown weapon attack targeting you, you can't be flat-footed to the attack. If you were already Juggling, you can't be Juggling your maximum number of items.

You grab the triggering item. If you are Juggling, you can immediately add the item to the objects you're Juggling as a free action, which has the concentrate and manipulate traits.

LOBBED ATTACK

FEAT 8

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites master in Performance, Juggler Dedication

Requirements You are Juggling a thrown weapon.

You make a thrown ranged Strike with the required weapon, using the weapon's normal range increment. This attack doesn't trigger reactions, and if the target has never seen you use this feat before, the target is flat-footed against this attack.

OPPORTUNE THROW

FEAT 16

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites legendary in Performance, Juggler Dedication

Trigger A creature within 10 feet of you uses a manipulate action or a move action, makes a ranged attack, or leaves a square during a move action it's using.

Requirements You are Juggling a thrown weapon.

You make a thrown ranged Strike with the required weapon against the triggering creature. If you critically succeed and the trigger was a manipulate action, you disrupt that action. This Strike doesn't count against your multiple attack penalty, and your multiple attack penalty doesn't apply to this Strike.

Staff Acrobat Archetype

You can perform amazing acts in and out of combat when you have a spear, staff, or polearm.

STAFF ACROBAT DEDICATION

FEAT 2

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE DEDICATION

Prerequisites Dexterity 16; trained in Acrobatics; trained in Athletics; trained with at least one of the following weapons: staff, bo staff, halfling sling staff, or any weapon in the spear or polearm group (referred to in this archetype as “your staff”)

When you High Jump, Leap, or Long Jump while wielding your staff, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to any Athletics check required and add 5 feet to the distance you can Leap vertically and horizontally. You can Shove and Trip even if you don't have a free hand, provided you are wielding your staff. Finally, when you roll a success on a check to Balance while wielding your staff, you get a critical success instead.

Special You cannot select another dedication feat until you have gained two other feats from the staff acrobat archetype.

BULLYING STAFF

FEAT 4

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Staff Acrobat Dedication

Requirements You are wielding your staff.

You can attempt to Shove or Trip creatures up to two sizes larger than you. If you have master proficiency with your staff, you can attempt to Shove or Trip creatures up to three sizes larger than you.

STAFF SWEEP

FEAT 6

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE FLOURISH

Prerequisites Staff Acrobat Dedication

Requirements You are wielding your staff.

You sweep your foes away with your staff. Roll an Athletics check to Shove or Trip, and compare the result to the appropriate DCs of up to two foes, each of whom must be within your reach and no more than 5 feet apart.

LEVERING STRIKE

FEAT 8

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE PRESS

Prerequisites Staff Acrobat Dedication

Requirements You are wielding your staff.

Make a Strike with your staff. As long as you don't critically fail, the target becomes flat-footed and takes a -2 circumstance penalty to its DC against Shove, Trip, and Tumble Through attempts until the start of your next turn.

WHIRLWIND STANCE

FEAT 10

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE FLOURISH STANCE

Prerequisites Staff Acrobat Dedication, expert proficiency in your staff

Requirements You are wielding your staff, which must have the parry trait.

You use your staff as a defensive implement as well as an offensive one. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to AC as long as you remain in this stance.

PIVOT STRIKE

FEAT 14

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE ATTACK OPEN

Prerequisites Staff Acrobat Dedication

Requirements You are wielding your staff.

You Leap and then Strike using your staff. You gain a circumstance bonus to damage for the Strike equal to twice the number of weapon damage dice. Regardless of whether your Strike hit, you can then attempt to Shove or Trip the target.

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Feature
Month X



Skill Feat

Any character can learn the art of juggling.

JUGGLE ◆

FEAT 2

UNCOMMON **CONCENTRATE** **GENERAL** **MANIPULATE** **SKILL**

Prerequisites Dexterity 16, trained in Performance

You can juggle items and still use your hands between tosses. You can use the Juggle action in several ways.

You can start to Juggle with a single stored item, an item you were carrying, or an unattended item within your reach. The item must be of light or negligible Bulk. You Juggle the item until the end of your next turn, unless you use this feat against next turn to continue Juggling (see below). While you are Juggling, you can use this action again to add another item to the Juggle, which must meet all the same requirements. You can Juggle a number of items equal to one more than the number of hands you are using to Juggle.

You can also use this action to continue Juggling as long as you aren't fatigued. When you do, you continue to Juggle until the end of your next turn. If you do not continue Juggling by the end of your turn, you cease Juggling and you drop all the items. You become fatigued if you continue Juggling for more than 10 minutes (60 rounds) within the course of an hour.

As long as you're Juggling fewer than your maximum number of items, you have a free hand. You can wield weapons you are Juggling (but not shields or other items) as long as they can be wielded in one hand. For example, while you Juggle a dagger in one hand and wield a shield in the other, you are wielding the dagger but still have a free hand to Cast a Spell with a material component. Juggling two or more weapons with one hand doesn't allow you to use feats that require two weapons each held in a different hand.

Nature Snares

DUST PODS

SNARE 1

UNCOMMON **CONSUMABLE** **MECHANICAL** **SNARE** **TRAP**

Price 3 gp

You hide fragile pods of pollen or other clinging powder that get in the eyes of the first creature that enters the snare's square. The creature must attempt a DC 17 Reflex saving throw. A creature dazzled by the pollen can use an Interact action to attempt a DC 5 flat check to remove the condition.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is dazzled for 1 round.

Failure The creature is dazzled for 10 minutes.

Critical Failure The creature is blinded for 1 round and dazzled for 10 minutes after.

THUNDER SNARE

SNARE 2

AUDITORY **CONSUMABLE** **MECHANICAL** **SNARE** **TRAP**

Price 6 gp

The snare makes a thunderous noise when a creature enters the snare's square, which can be heard up to 1,000 feet away. The creature must attempt a DC 18 Fortitude saving throw.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target is deafened until the end of its next turn.

Failure As success, and the target also takes 1 sonic damage.

Critical Failure As success, and the target also takes 1d4 sonic damage.

Craft Requirements 1 lesser thunderstone

GRASPING TREE

SNARE 3

UNCOMMON **CONSUMABLE** **MECHANICAL** **SNARE** **TRAP**

Price 9 gp

You rig tree branches, thin strands of bark, or other plant matter to close in on a creature that enters the snare's square. The first creature to enter the square must attempt a DC 19 Reflex saving throw.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target takes 1d4 slashing damage.

Failure As success, plus the target is flat-footed.

Critical Failure The target takes 2d4 slashing damage and is immobilized until it destroys the snare (AC 16, HP 25) or Escapes (DC 19).

TORRENT SNARE

SNARE 3

UNCOMMON **CONSUMABLE** **MECHANICAL** **SNARE** **TRAP**

Price 9 gp

You pile waterlogged plants or access a nearby source of water to rain down on a Medium or smaller creature that enters the snare's square. When a creature enters the square, the snare's square and all adjacent squares become slippery difficult terrain, and the triggering creature must attempt a DC 19 Reflex saving throw, with the following effects.

Success The target is unaffected.

Failure The target falls prone.

Critical Failure The target falls prone and is forced into one of the other squares soaked by the snare.

FANG SNARE

SNARE 4

UNCOMMON **CONSUMABLE** **MECHANICAL** **SNARE** **TRAP**

Price 15 gp

You set snake fangs, poison stingers, or other venomous animal parts in the ground where they can be touched or stepped on by a creature that enters the snare's square. The first creature to enter the square must attempt a DC 20 Reflex saving throw.

Success The target is unaffected.

Failure The target takes 1 piercing damage and 2d8 poison damage.

Critical Failure The target takes 2 piercing damage and 4d8 poison damage.

Circus Weapons

Various circus implements can also be used as battle weapons and vice-versa. Thrown and agile weapons are particularly popular for use in circus tricks, especially Juggling and feats of acrobatic skill.

Bladed Diabolo: This weapon consists of two bladed discs joined by a central axel, and is spun on a rope whose ends are attached to wand-like sticks. The wielder can hurl the diabolo from the rope like a stone from a sling, or swing it on the rope in melee.

Bladed Hoop: This circular hoop has blades along its outer edge. You can wield it in two hands (using the two-hand damage) or by spinning it around an arm. While you spin the hoop, it gains the free-hand trait. Setting the hoop spinning takes 1 Interact action. In addition to the normal restrictions of the free-hand trait, extended use of the arm for locomotion (such as to Climb) interferes with the hoop's spinning and forces you to Release the hoop. You can't spin a hoop underwater. Keeping the hoop spinning requires a free action each round, which has the concentrate and manipulate traits. You can keep a hoop spinning as an exploration activity, but doing so for more than 10 minutes makes you fatigued, similarly to Hustling.

Fire Poi: These special poi are made from a rare, light metal or from fire-retardant fibers and can be ignited before being wielded. Igniting a pair of fire poi is an Interact action and requires 1 pint of oil for every 10 minutes the

poi remain ignited. While lit, fire poi cast dim light in a 10-foot radius; in combat, they deal 1d4 bludgeoning plus 1d4 fire damage. On a critical hit with a lit fire poi, the target takes 1 persistent fire damage. The fire can be extinguished using the Interact action. When unlit, the poi deal only the listed bludgeoning damage. Regardless of whether it is lit, the poi's 1d4 bludgeoning damage is the weapon damage dice, so *striking* runes and other effects don't affect the fire damage.

Juggling Club: A juggling club is lighter than a typical club and balanced to be easily caught and thrown again by a juggler. While a juggling club deals less damage, the extra throwing distance its light weight allows is important for Juggling.

Poi: Poi are light weights tethered to ropes or chains. Performers swing the weights, usually one in each hand, in rhythmic patterns.

Scorpion Whip: A scorpion whip has a series of razor-sharp blades set along its tip. Unlike ordinary whips, a scorpion whip doesn't have the nonlethal trait, making it deadlier in combat but less effective when the wielder seeks to bring in foes alive.

Throwing Knife: This light knife is optimally balanced to be thrown accurately at a greater distance than a common dagger. While this comes at the cost of a significant cutting edge, the difference is worth it for characters focused on thrown weapons.

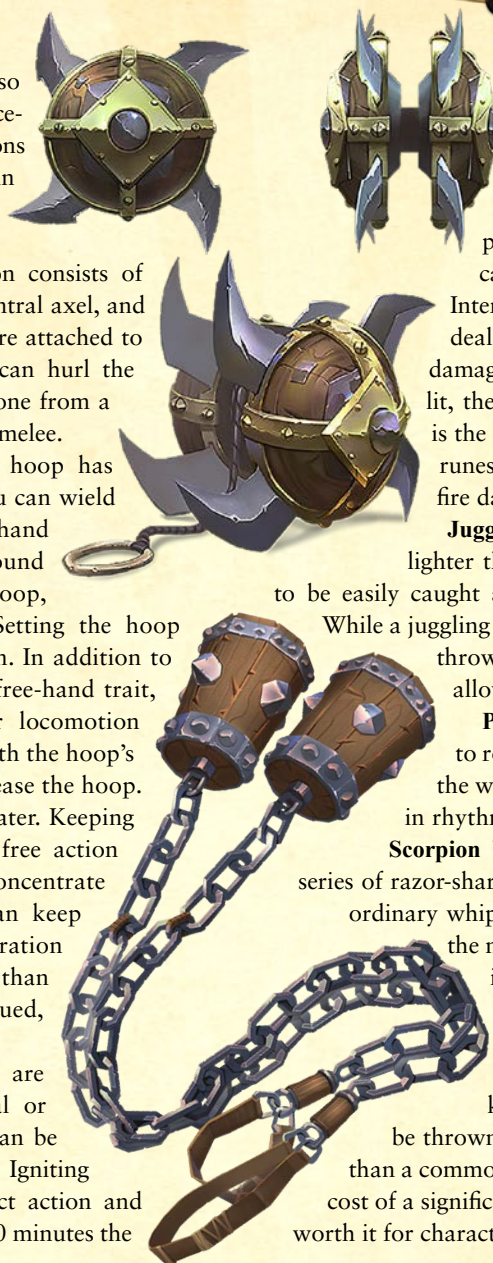


TABLE: CIRCUS WEAPONS

Uncommon						
Simple Weapons	Price	Damage	Bulk	Hands	Group	Weapon Traits
Juggling club	1 sp	1d4 B	L	1	Club	Agile, nonlethal, thrown 20 feet
Poi	2 sp	1d4 B	L	1	Flail	Agile, backswing, finesse, nonlethal
Throwing knife	3 sp	1d4 P	L	1	Knife	Agile, finesse, thrown 20 feet, twin
Uncommon						
Martial Weapon	Price	Damage	Bulk	Hands	Group	Weapon Traits
Scorpion whip	5 sp	1d4 S	L	1	Flail	Disarm, finesse, reach, trip
Uncommon						
Advanced Weapons	Price	Damage	Bulk	Hands	Group	Weapon Traits
Bladed diabolo	20 sp	1d4 S	L	2	Flail	Backswing, disarm, finesse, thrown 40 feet, trip
Bladed hoop	25 sp	1d6 S	1	0+	Knife	Finesse, sweep, two-hand d8
Fire poi	50 sp	1d4 B + 1d4 F	L	1	Flail	Agile, backswing, finesse, twin

Environmental Spells

BREATH OF DROUGHT

SPELL 2

UNCOMMON EVOCATION FIRE

Traditions primal

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 30 feet; **Area** 10-foot burst

Duration sustained

You fill the area with an oppressive, arid swelter that overwhelms creatures with heat exhaustion. Objects are unaffected. Each creature in the area when the spell is cast or that ends its turn in the area afterward must attempt a Fortitude save. Water creatures and plant creatures use the outcome one degree of success worse than the result of their saving throw. Creatures whose bodies contain no significant moisture (such as fire elementals) are immune to *breath of drought*.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is sickened 1.

Critical Failure The creature is sickened 2.

Heightened (4th) Once per round when you Sustain the Spell, you can move the center of the burst to a new location within range.

Heightened (7th) As the 4th-level version, except the range is 120 feet and the area is a 20-foot burst.

PERSONAL RAIN CLOUD

SPELL 1

UNCOMMON EVOCATION WATER

Traditions arcane, primal

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 60 feet; **Target** 1 creature

Duration 1 minute

Saving Throw Reflex

You conjure a 5-foot-wide rain cloud that follows the target wherever it goes. It stays roughly an arm's length overhead, unless it must drift lower to fit under a ceiling. The cloud rains constantly on the target, keeping it wet and dampening the ground in the wake of any movement. The rain extinguishes non-magical flames. The target gains fire resistance 2. Creatures with weakness to water take damage equal to their weakness at the end of each of their turns. Creatures can attempt a Reflex save to avoid the cloud.

Heightened (+1) The amount of fire resistance increases by 2.

RIME SLICK

SPELL 2

UNCOMMON COLD EVOCATION

Traditions arcane, primal

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 60 feet; **Area** 15-foot burst

Saving Throw basic Reflex; **Duration** 1 minute

You call down a chill wind. When you Cast this Spell, you

deal 2d4 cold damage to each creature in the area (basic Reflex save). If a creature in the area critically fails its Reflex save and was standing, it also falls prone.

You also create a layer of ice on all surfaces in the area, which become difficult terrain. Unattended objects in the area become slick with ice, and picking them up requires a successful Reflex save or Acrobatics check against your spell DC. The ice melts on any object that takes fire damage as well as in any square included in the area of a higher-level spell or effect with the fire trait.

Heightened (5th) The damage increases to 8d4 cold damage and the area is a 30-foot burst.

Heightened (8th) The damage increases to 14d4 cold damage and the area is a 60-foot burst.

SCOURING SAND

SPELL 1

UNCOMMON EARTH EVOCATION

Traditions arcane, primal

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 60 feet; **Area** 10-foot burst

Duration sustained up to 1 minute

You blast the area with grit that scours away soil and gets into creatures' eyes. For the duration of the spell, any plant-based difficult terrain smaller than a tree becomes loose, allowing each 5-foot square of it to be cleared with a single Interact action. In addition, *scouring sand* attempts to counteract *entangle* and other effects that create or manipulate plant-based terrain in its area. Successfully counteracting an effect removes only the portion of its area that overlaps with *scouring sand*'s area. After one such attempt, the effect is temporarily immune to *scouring sand*'s counteract for 24 hours. Each creature in the area when you Cast this Spell or that ends its turn in the area must attempt a Reflex save.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is dazzled for 1 minute or until it uses an Interact action to get the sand out of its eyes.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature is also blinded for its next action.

Heightened (3rd) Once per round when you Sustain the Spell, you can move the center of the burst to a spot within range.

Heightened (6th) As the 3rd-level version, except the range is 120 feet and the area is a 20-foot burst.

SEA SURGE

SPELL 2

UNCOMMON EVOCATION WATER

Traditions arcane, primal

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Duration until the start of your next turn

You slap or stomp on a nearby solid or liquid surface, sending a surge of water rushing away from you. The water forms a flat, 5-foot-thick, 10-foot-high wall of

water between 5 and 15 feet wide (you decide). It moves 60 feet in a direction of your choice along the struck surface, extinguishing all non-magical fires, carrying along unattended objects of 1 Bulk or less, and pushing larger objects. The wave moves another 60 feet in the same direction at the start of your next turn, then vanishes. Large or smaller creatures in the area or that enter the area the wave moves through must attempt a Fortitude save.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is knocked prone. If the creature was Swimming, it gets a critical failure instead.

Critical Failure The creature is pushed 20 feet in the wave's direction, is knocked prone, and takes 3d6 bludgeoning damage.

SUDDEN BOLT

SPELL 2

UNCOMMON ELECTRICITY EVOCATION

Traditions arcane, primal

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 60 feet; **Target** 1 creature or object

Saving Throw basic Reflex

You call down a small bolt of lightning on the target, dealing 4d12 electricity damage.

Heightened (+1) The damage increases by 1d12.

UNSEASONABLE SQUALL

SPELL 3

UNCOMMON AIR EVOCATION

Traditions arcane, primal

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 60 feet; **Area** 20-foot burst

Duration until the start of your next turn

You issue a blast of sudden wind that ripples outward from the center of the burst. The wind extinguishes small non-magical fires, disperses fog and mist, scatters objects of light Bulk or less, and pushes unsecured objects of 1 Bulk or less 5 feet away from the spell's origin point. Each Medium or smaller creature in the area when you Cast the Spell or that moves into spell's area must attempt a Fortitude saving throw.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is knocked prone. If the creature was Flying, it gets a critical failure instead.

Critical Failure The creature is pushed 30 feet away from the center of the burst, is knocked prone, and takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

VERDANT SPROUT

SPELL 1

UNCOMMON CONJURATION PLANT

Traditions primal

Cast ♦♦♦ material, somatic, verbal

Range 30 feet

You imbue a single ordinary, inexpensive plant seed with primal energy and throw it onto a surface, where it gradually sprouts into a Medium plant. After 10 minutes, the plant is sturdy enough to provide standard cover, and its space is difficult terrain. The plant is laden with nutritious nuts or fruit sufficient to feed one Medium creature for a day. The plant has AC 10, Hardness 5, and 20 Hit Points.

Heightened (+1) You throw an additional seed, which grows into an additional plant within range.





A DEAL YOU CAN'T REFUSE

Bone croupiers rely on than their charm to manipulate their victims. Rather, these undying gamers pride themselves on using good old-fashioned guile and persuasion to drive others to destitution and doom. To these bone croupiers, magical compulsion is the laziest form of influence. This corrupt form of honor, of course, doesn't extend toward using magic to cheat or swindle in games of chance—a bone croupier is all too glad to use its divinatory powers to change the outcomes of its dread bargains.

Bone Croupier

For many, gambling is just fun and games, but for some, it can become a bad habit or even a life-consuming addiction. Bone croupiers take the meaning of “life-consuming” to its literal extreme. Undead gamblers whose lust for cards and dice couldn't be sated in life, they haunt the shadowy corners of gambling halls and continue their search for that next hit of adrenaline.

In undeath, gaming takes on a different flavor; with nothing left to lose, bone croupiers turn their attentions toward others, cajoling and palavering normally casual gamers into committing themselves to ever higher stakes. Before they know it, these unsuspecting victims have called in decades-old favors and put liens on their homes in the hope of winning back just a fraction of the pot. But by then the bone croupier has already claimed its prize—for to this undead chiseler, any earnings are incidental, and the real prize is encouraging others to lose their own.

Bone croupiers often enshroud themselves in thick layers of cigar smoke or voluminous robes to mask their undead nature, but they almost always wear wicked grins at the table. This smile is no ruse or part of its poker face, however—the truth is that bone croupiers truly delight in games, regardless of whether they are winning or losing, and despite their incredible skills of deception and trickery, most simply can't disguise their unbridled mirth.

BONE CROUPIER

CREATURE 5

NE MEDIUM UNDEAD

Perception +11; darkvision

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +14, Deception +14, Diplomacy +14, Gambling Lore +12, Stealth +14, Thievery +14

Str +2, **Dex** +5, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +5

AC 22; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +14, **Will** +14

HP 50, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 5, piercing 5, slashing 5

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claw +14 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d8+5 slashing

Occult Innate Spells DC 22; **4th** *discern lies*; **3rd** *mind reading*; **1st** *illusory disguise*; **Cantrips (4th)** *prestidigitation*

Change of Luck ♦ (divination, misfortune, occult) **Frequency**

once per day; **Trigger** A creature within 30 feet of the bone croupier attempts a check that uses a d20, but hasn't rolled yet; **Effect** The bone croupier pulls on the threads of luck that

bind all things. Instead of rolling its check, the target automatically gets a failure.

Roll the Bones ♦♦ (death, occult) The bone

croupier targets an adjacent creature that is dying. That creature can either increase its dying value by 1 or roll a d4. On a 4, the creature is no longer dying and is unconscious at 0 HP. On a 1, 2, or 3, however, the creature increases its dying value by that amount. Regardless, the creature is temporarily immune for the next 24 hours.



Demon, Abrikandilu (Wrecker Demon)

Wrecker demons, also known as abrikandilus, despise beautiful things and do everything in their power to destroy both people and objects that might be regarded as such. An abrikandilu forms from the soul of a mortal who in life was a vandal or defacer of artworks, particularly if those acts of destruction stemmed from feelings of powerful envy.

The only thing an abrikandilu loathes more than beauty is its own visage. The mere sight of its own face—reflected in a mirror, a shield, or even a pool of water—is enough to send a wrecker demon into a rage. Many demon slayers use this tactic to their advantage, venturing into battle with polished steel shields and cold iron blades at the ready.

ABRIKANDILU

CREATURE 4

CE MEDIUM DEMON FIEND

Perception +10; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Athletics +12, Intimidation +8

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** -2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

AC 19; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

HP 70; **Weaknesses** cold iron 5, good 5

Hatred of Mirrors A wrecker demon loathes the sight of its own reflection. When a creature Interacts with a mirror within sight of the wrecker demon, the demon takes a -2 penalty to Will saves against Intimidation checks. A wrecker demon that ends its turn adjacent to a mirror or that is attacked by a creature holding a mirror takes 1d6 mental damage (this usually leads wrecker demons to focus their efforts on destroying nearby mirrors using Wreck).

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claw +14 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+4 slashing

Melee ♦ jaws +14, **Damage** 3d6+4 piercing plus mutilating bite

Ranged ♦ hurled debris +11 (range increment 20 feet), **Damage** 2d6+4 bludgeoning

Divine Innate Spells DC 20; **2nd** fear (×2)

Divine Rituals Abyssal pact

Mutilating Bite (curse, divine, necromancy) When the wrecker demon hits a creature with a jaws Strike, the creature must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or become physically mutilated. The creature then takes a -1 status penalty to Charisma-based checks. This penalty is cumulative up to -3, and remains even if the wounds are healed. The penalty is reduced by 1 every 24 hours until it reaches 0.

Wreck ♦ The wrecker demon makes two claw Strikes against an object (if the object is worn or held by a creature, this action gains the manipulate trait). If both Strikes hit, combine their damage for the purpose of overcoming its Hardness. These Strikes do not count toward the wrecker demon's multiple attack penalty, nor does that penalty apply to these Strikes.



DEMONS OF VANDALISM

It is a strange irony that abrikandilus despise all works of artistry, yet without the objects of their jealousy they would have nothing to rage at but themselves.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

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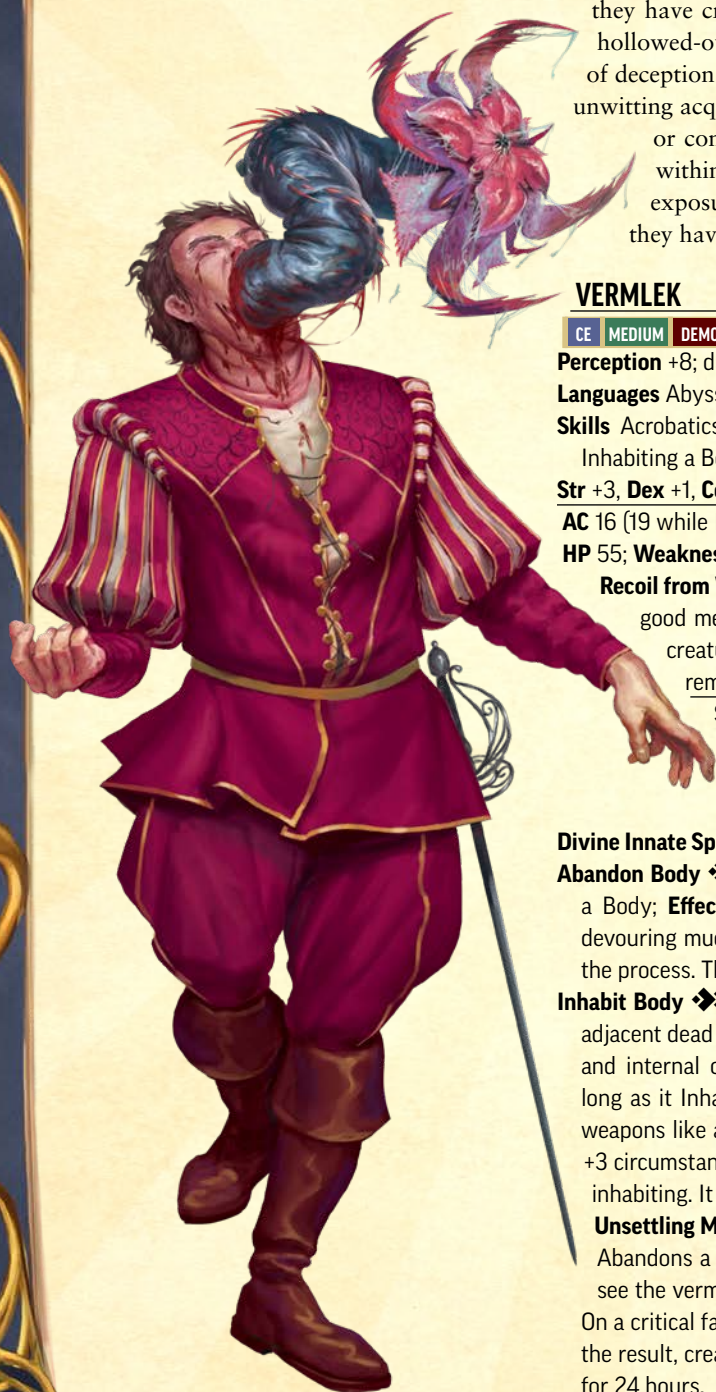
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TELLTALE DESECRATION

Coroners and priests in demon-infested lands know immediately that they're dealing with a vermlek when they're brought a corpse that is little more than a sack of skin.



Demon, Vermlek (Worm Demon)

Vermleks, also called worm demons, manifest from the souls of mortals who desecrated the dead, such as grave robbers or necromancers. These fiends take their violations to a new extreme, using their demonic powers to horrifically core their living victims and don the flesh-husk that remains.

In its natural form, a vermlek resembles an oversized pinkish worm with four long tails that end in writhing fibrils. Its mouth splits into four segments like a profane tulip lined with rows of dozens of pointed teeth. More often than not, however, these fiends are encountered only after they have crawled into the body of a dead humanoid and made the hollowed-out flesh their temporary host. Vermleks use their powers of deception and disguise to infiltrate mortal settlements and influence unwitting acquaintances of the bodies they wear. Particularly intelligent or conniving vermleks might even reach stations of real power within the ranks of an army or government, at which point exposure of their true form can wreak havoc among the populace they have so thoroughly duped.

VERMLEK

CREATURE 3

CE MEDIUM DEMON FIEND

Perception +8; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +10, Deception +7 (+10 to Impersonate while Inhabiting a Body), Stealth +8

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

AC 16 (19 while Inhabiting a Body); **Fort** +11, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

HP 55; **Weaknesses** cold iron 5, good 5, sonic 5

Recoil from Wasted Opportunities Worm demons can't stand the sight of a good meal presented and then swiftly taken away. Whenever a dying creature within sight of the worm demon has its dying condition removed, the worm demon takes 1d6 mental damage.

Speed 25 feet, burrow 15 feet

Melee ♦ bite +12, **Damage** 2d8+3 piercing

Melee ♦ fist +12 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+3 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ longsword +12 (versatile P), **Damage** 1d8+4 slashing

Divine Innate Spells DC 19, attack +11; **3rd** *fear*, *harm*

Abandon Body ♦♦ (manipulate); **Requirement** The worm demon is Inhabiting a Body; **Effect** The worm demon crawls out of the body it is inhabiting, devouring much of the body's remaining flesh and regaining 10 Hit Points in the process. The corpse it leaves behind is little more than a husk.

Inhabit Body ♦♦♦ (manipulate) The worm demon crawls into the body of an adjacent dead Medium humanoid, consuming the bulk of the victim's skeleton and internal organs as it does so and cramming itself into the cavity. As long as it Inhabits a Body, the worm demon loses its bite attack, can wield weapons like a humanoid, gains a +3 circumstance bonus to AC, and gains a +3 circumstance bonus to Deception checks to Impersonate the creature it is inhabiting. It cannot use this ability if it is already Inhabiting a Body.

Unsettling Movement (emotion, fear, mental, visual) Whenever the vermlek Abandons a Body or Inhabits a Body, all creatures within 30 feet who can see the vermlek must succeed at a DC 19 Will save or become frightened 1. On a critical failure, the creature is frightened 1 and sickened 1. Regardless of the result, creatures are immune to the same vermlek's unsettling movement for 24 hours.

Flea

Fleas are little more than a nuisance in most circumstances, but can be lethal when they grow to monstrous proportions or gather in enormous swarms.

GIANT FLEA

Giant fleas are commonly found in areas containing hardy megafauna, such as dinosaurs or mammoths.

GIANT FLEA

CREATURE 3

N **LARGE** **ANIMAL**

Perception +10; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +9 (+15 to Jump)

Str +2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +3, **Int** -5, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -4

AC 19; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +4

HP 50; **Immunities** disease

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ proboscis +10, **Damage** 1d8+4 piercing plus Suck Blood and flea fever

Suck Blood ♦ **Requirements** The giant flea's last action was a successful proboscis Strike; **Effect** The giant flea drinks the creature's blood.

The victim becomes drained 1 and the flea regains 5 HP.

Flea Fever (disease) Drain from flea fever can't be reduced or recovered from naturally until the disease is cured. **Saving**

Throw DC 18 Fortitude; **Stage 1** drained 1 (1d4 hours),

Stage 2 drained 1 and sickened 1 (1 day), **Stage**

3 drained 2 and sickened 1 (1 day), **Stage 4**

drained 3 and sickened 1 (1 day), **Stage 5** dead

FLEA SWARM

Flea swarms roil across city streets and rural hinterlands in a hissing, scraping scrabble, draining blood from any creatures unfortunate enough to cross their path.

FLEA SWARM

CREATURE 5

N **LARGE** **ANIMAL** **SWARM**

Perception +13; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +9 (+13 to Jump)

Str -2, **Dex** +5, **Con** +4, **Int** -5, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -4

AC 18; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +16, **Will** +6

HP 55; **Immunities** disease, precision, swarm mind; **Weaknesses** area damage 4, splash damage 4; **Resistances** physical 8 (except bludgeoning)

Speed 30 feet

Flea Fever (disease) As giant flea, except DC 19.

Suck Blood ♦ **Requirements** The flea swarm's last action was

Swarming Bites, and it dealt damage to at least one enemy; **Effect**

The flea swarm drinks the creatures' blood. Each

victim becomes drained 1 and the swarm regains

3 HP for each victim drained.

Swarming Bites ♦ Each enemy in the

swarm's space takes 2d4+7 piercing

damage and must attempt a DC 22 basic

Reflex save. A creature that fails its

save is exposed to flea fever.



FLEA ALLIES

Flea swarms and giant fleas make for natural pets and monstrous minions for creatures who live in areas of filth and concentrated populations. Goblins and gremlins are unperturbed by fleas' disturbing physiologies and are unfazed (though not necessarily unaffected) by the diseases these vermin carry. Ratfolk have been known to tame giant fleas for use as mounts, and urban-dwelling druids whose magic focuses on blight or disease naturally find much to like about the flea swarms they frequently summon.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

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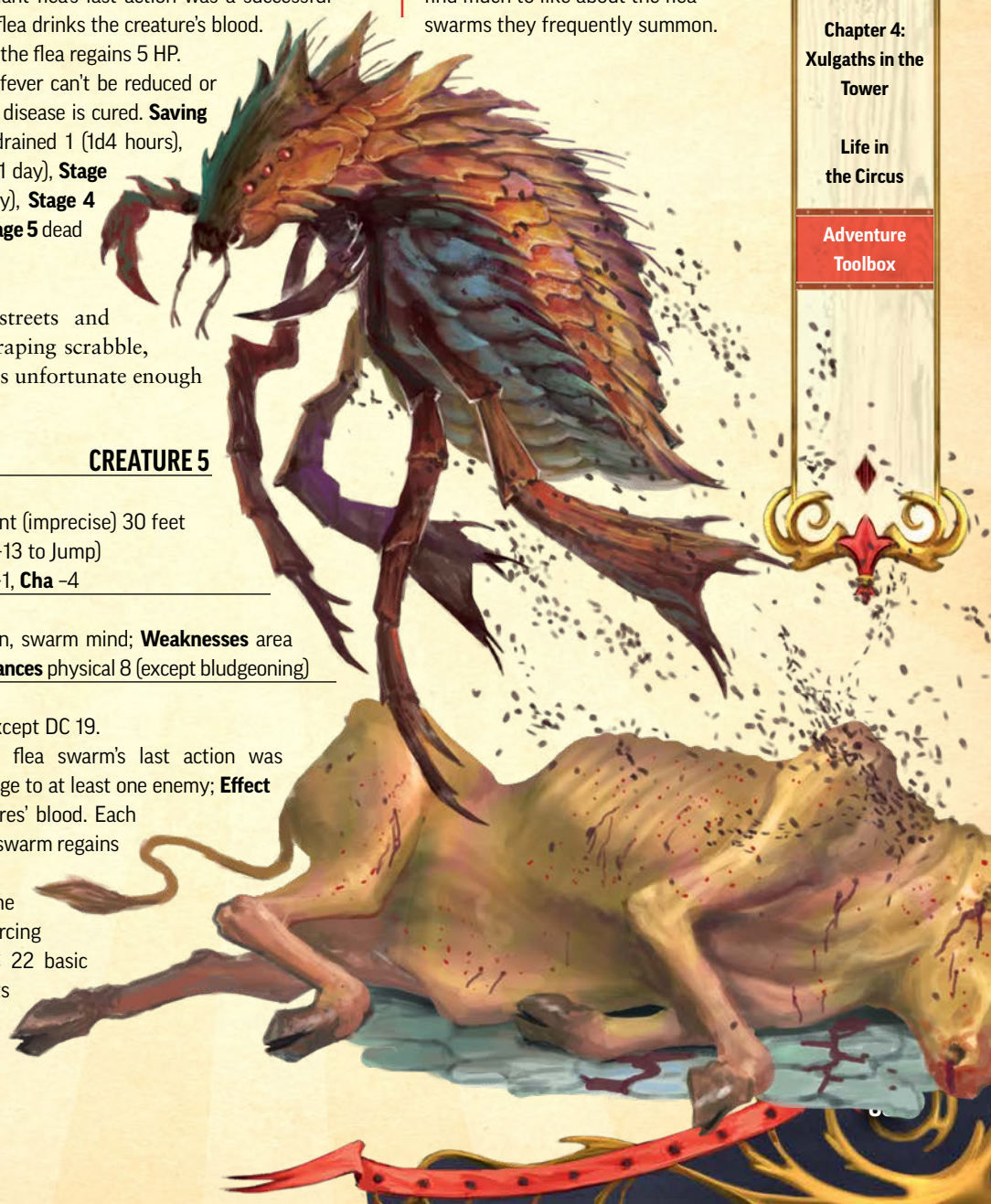
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DIFFICULT TO DESTROY

Adventurers claim that the most reliable way to destroy a living graffiti is to trap it on a levitating canvas or to abandon its host surface in a windy desert.

Living Graffiti

A living graffiti is a painting or drawing that has come to life by way of strange magic. It typically looks like a cartoonish humanoid made of wet oil paint. These two-dimensional beings are unbound from the canvases on which they were originally drawn and can move along any flat surface they touch, including walls, floors, furniture, doors, and even bodies of still water. They cannot exist apart from the surfaces they traverse except in brief bursts, which they typically use to harass or attack nearby creatures. Although they are not incredibly intelligent, living graffiti exhibit a mischievous spitefulness and seeming desire to make the real world as much of a caricature as their own two-dimensional domain.

VARIANT LIVING GRAFFITI

The living graffiti below is but one type of this strange creature. Other living graffiti exist, made from media like chalk, pastels, ink, or tempera, or even more archaic materials like mud, beeswax, or blood. The following are a few examples of the kinds of abilities such a variant living graffiti might have.

Blood: The living graffiti gains the following ability.

Absorb Blood Anytime a creature within 5 feet of the living graffiti takes slashing, piercing, or persistent bleed damage, the graffiti gains a number of temporary HP equal to half the damage dealt to the adjacent creature.

Chalk: The living graffiti gains the following ability.

Cone of Chalk ♦♦ The living graffiti expels a 15-foot cone of chalk. Creatures in the area must succeed at a DC 20 Reflex save or be blinded for 1 round. The living graffiti can't use Cone of Chalk again for 1d4 rounds.

Ink: The living graffiti's HP increases to 60 and its splatter Strike deals 2d6 damage (in addition to blinding for 1 round), but it gains the following weakness.

Water Weakness When the living graffiti is doused with water or starts its turn in water (either through a spell or some other effect, such as pouring a bucket of water over it), it takes 2d6 damage.

OIL LIVING GRAFFITI

CREATURE 3

CN MEDIUM CONSTRUCT

Perception +9; darkvision

Languages Common (can't speak any language)

Skills Acrobatics +11, Crafting +5, Deception +10, Stealth +11

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +1, **Int** -2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

AC 19; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

HP 50; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, necromancy, nonlethal, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious

Backdrop When a creature attempts to Strike a living graffiti and critically misses, the attacker hits the surface (a wall, canvas, or so on) behind the living graffiti. This may damage or break the weapon or surface.

Surface-Bound A living graffiti can move only along flat surfaces such as floors and walls. If the surface it's on is destroyed (such as a portrait hit by a *fireball* spell or a puddle being splashed), the graffiti takes 2d6 damage and is shunted to the nearest flat surface.

If there is no flat surface within 5 feet, the living graffiti is destroyed.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +13 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d4+4 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ splatter +11 (nonlethal, range increment 20 feet), **Damage** 1d4+4 plus blinded 1 round

Luminous Ooze

Luminous oozes are strange globular creatures that glow with brilliant multicolored light. Unlike many oozes, which rely on camouflage and stealth to attack their prey, luminous oozes attract victims with their impressive light displays before blinding them and launching into a frenzied attack. They are often found on the ceilings or walls of dark caverns, and more than a few curious spelunkers have met their end simply by investigating their strange yet beautiful light. The effects of electricity on luminous oozes are ill understood, though those who have studied these creatures liken their static-absorbing power to that of lightning rods.

These creatures are highly sought after by status-hungry socialites, flamboyant barkeeps, and daring showrunners, for in addition to being dangerous monsters, luminous oozes are also incredible sources of beautiful prismatic light, comparable to a magical light show but available for a fraction of the price. The trick, of course, is capturing and penning such a specimen. The most reliable means of caging a luminous ooze is with a permanent *wall of force* shaped into a cube or sphere, but few have the means to create or commission such an enclosure. Instead, most people who find themselves in possession of a luminous ooze simply put it in a thick glass box. As long as they are well fed, luminous oozes accept this treatment, though woe be unto anyone in the vicinity if a hungry luminous ooze should escape from its display case.

LUMINOUS OOZE

CREATURE 4

N **SMALL** **MINDLESS** **OOZE**

Perception +6; motion sense 60 feet, no vision

Skills Athletics +11

Str +3, **Dex** -5, **Con** +3, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +1

Motion Sense A luminous ooze can sense nearby motion through vibration and air movement.

AC 11; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

HP 80; **Immunities** critical hits, electricity, mental, precision, unconscious, visual

Bedazzling (aura, light, visual) 5 feet. A luminous ooze constantly sheds distracting multicolored light. A creature that ends its turn within the aura must attempt a DC 21 Fortitude save or become dazzled until the end of its next turn. On a critical failure, it instead becomes blinded until the end of its next turn.

Lightning Catcher Whenever the luminous ooze's electricity immunity prevents it from taking damage, it gains 8 temporary HP. Until the end of its next turn, the luminous ooze's pseudopod Strike deals an additional 1d6 points of electricity damage.

Speed 25 feet, climb 15 feet

Melee ♦ pseudopod +13, **Damage** 2d8+5 bludgeoning

Light Up ♦♦ (light, visual) The ooze glows with blinding brightness. All creatures within a 30-foot emanation must attempt a DC 21 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is dazzled until the end of its next turn.

Failure The creature is blinded until the end of its next turn.



NUISANCE IN NUMBERS

Smaller and faster than most ooze creatures, luminous oozes rely on their speed and radiant light to wear down prey. In groups, they can be a terrible nuisance, as they take turns lighting up and blinding foes while other oozes wear down victims with surprisingly painful blows. Disturbingly, luminous oozes' internal light dims to a soft, contented glow as they feed, and researchers claim they even emit a low, high-imperceptible hum while feasting.

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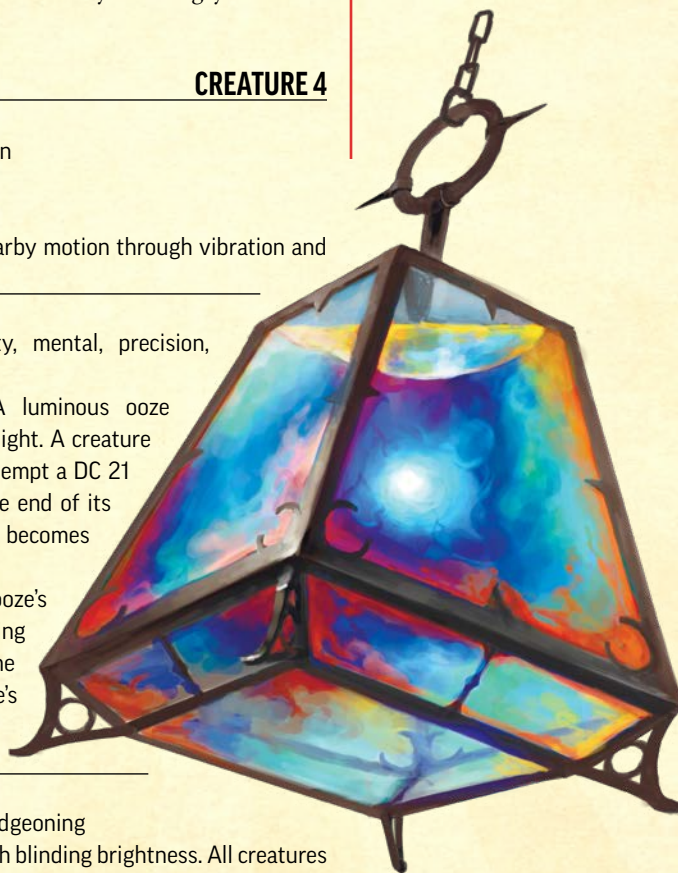
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CREATING MECHANICAL CARNIES

Constructing a mechanical carny is a difficult feat and requires the supervision of a specialized (and expensive) tinkerer. A thrifty ringmaster may employ a budget-level tinkerer and mechanical carny, though they get what they pay for; many a cheap troupe leader has found a malfunctioning mechanical carny wreaking havoc in their circus tent.

Mechanical Carny

Mechanical carnies are constructs manufactured to serve as entertainers, cleaners, and guards at carnivals and circuses. The first of these constructs was created by a gnome inventor who yearned for a tireless companion who could make her laugh and smile. Her invention was so successful that it has spawned countless imitations and knockoffs throughout the Inner Sea, and mechanical carnies of some form or another are a staple throughout metropolitan lands in both Avistan and Garund.

OTHER MECHANICAL CARNIES

The statistics here represent a relatively simple mechanical carny; the extravagance and range of a mechanical carny's abilities are limited only by the skill and imagination of its creator. To represent other kinds of mechanical carnies, you can swap out the mechanical carny's Berserk and Berserk Slam abilities with one of the following.

Bounce Back ➤ **Requirement** The mechanical carny takes damage from a melee attack; **Effect** The mechanical carny wobbles violently to and fro, making two headbutt Strikes: the first against the creature (if any) on the opposite side of itself from the creature that triggered this reaction and the second against the creature that triggered this reaction.

Spring-Loaded Jump ➤ (move) The mechanical carny leaps up to 25 feet into the air and lands within 25 feet (or a distance equal to the height of the carny's jump, if fewer) of where it started, taking no falling damage.

Water Cannon ➤➤ (water) The mechanical carny sprays a 15-foot cone of water, dealing 2d6+4 nonlethal bludgeoning to creatures in the area (DC 18 basic Reflex save) and extinguishing any non-magical fires.

MECHANICAL CARNY

CREATURE 2

N MEDIUM CONSTRUCT MINDLESS

Perception +6; low-light vision

Languages Common (can speak pre-recorded phrases only)

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +9, Performance +6

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +2

AC 17; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +11, **Will** +4

HP 33; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Weaknesses** electricity 6; **Resistances** physical 3 (except adamantite)

Haywire A severely damaged mechanical carny has a chance of malfunctioning. If a mechanical carny has 15 or fewer Hit Points at the start of its turn, it must succeed at a DC 5 flat check or go haywire. A haywire mechanical carny wildly attacks the nearest living creature, or the nearest object if no creatures are nearby. It takes a -1 circumstance penalty to Strikes but deals an additional 1d6 bludgeoning damage plus Knockdown. This effect lasts 10 minutes or until the mechanical carny is destroyed.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ spring-loaded fist +11 (nonlethal, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d4+4 bludgeoning

Melee ➤ headbutt +11, **Damage** 2d4+4 bludgeoning

Xulgath Bilebearer

While many xulgaths impose their will by strength or sheer numbers, some resort to more nefarious—and grotesque—means to take care of matters. The bilebearer takes its name from its eponymous bile, a putrid substance that oozes from gill-like folds in its colorful, bulging neck. Bilebearers coat their weapons with the viscous substance or secrete a concentrated dose that suffuses the air around them and disables foes.

A bilebearer's neck bulges with folds of scaled flesh that extend almost to the creature's shoulders, containing its namesake bile productions glands inside. These folds expand and contract with each breath, and each fold has a vertical line of muscled pores that gradually exudes the thick substance, providing a perpetual supply for coating weapons. Bilebearers' necks also contain inflatable bladders, which they can quickly pressurize to expel a blast of vaporized bile in a noxious, overwhelming cloud.

Bilebearers serve their clutches by kidnapping or slaying specific enemies. They frequently accompany their kin, particularly xulgath skulkers, to raid rival clutches or intercept foes. A bilebearer's mode of attack typically involves sneaking in, overwhelming any guards with a noxious blast of bile, and then turning their attention to the primary target. The xulgath either shreds the rapidly weakening victim on the spot or drags them away for future violence.

XULGATH BILEBEARER

CREATURE 2

CE MEDIUM HUMANOID XULGATH

Perception +6; darkvision

Languages Draconic, Undercommon

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +6, Deception +5, Stealth +8, Thievery +8

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -1

Items 2 daggers

AC 18; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +4

HP 30

Stench (aura, olfactory) 30 feet. As xulgath warrior (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 336). A xulgath bilebearer can activate or deactivate its stench aura as a free action.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +12 (agile, finesse, versatile S),

Damage 1d4+4 piercing plus xulgath bile

Melee ♦ jaws +10, **Damage** 2d4+4 piercing plus xulgath bile

Melee ♦ claw +10 (agile), **Damage** 1d6+4 slashing plus Grab

Ranged ♦ dagger +12 (agile, finesse, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+4 piercing plus xulgath bile

Putrid Blast ♦♦ (olfactory, poison)

Frequency once per minute; **Effect**

All adjacent creatures must attempt a DC 18

Fortitude save. On a failure, the creature is slowed 1 (slowed 2 on a critical failure) until the end of its next turn and takes a -2 circumstance penalty to Fortitude saves against xulgath bile for 1 minute.

Xulgath Bile (poison) **Saving Throw** Fortitude DC 16; **Maximum Duration** 1 hour; **Stage 1** fatigued (1 minute); **Stage 2** fatigued and unconscious (1 minute).



BILEBEARER HUNTERS

While they are primarily assassins and kidnappers, bilebearers may also accompany their kin on hunts for more mundane prey. On such hunts, bilebearers surround a large prey animal and disable it with their secretions. Xulgaths' preferred cooking method—charring to near inedibility—neutralizes any residual poison in prey's flesh.

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CAVNAKASH

This brutish xulgath priest is as dedicated to destruction as he is to Zevgavizeb, demon lord of caverns and reptiles. Cavnakash uses his spells and his stone hammer to crush any opposition.

The less said about the childhood and adolescence of xulgaths, the better. Suffice it to say Cavnakash lived in a fetid, stinking cave in the Darklands for years, feasting on the flesh and blood of his kin. He survived only because he was fiercer than his rivals and better able to withstand pain and hardship. As he triumphed over his clutch mates, Cavnakash sacrificed them each to the demon lord Zevgavizeb, the Glutton in the Dark, and in this way established himself as a self-appointed priest. By virtue of his strength and aggression, he attracted followers willing to serve him in exchange for his protection, and after subjugating these followers to his will, Cavnakash received divine magic, the sanction of his deific master.

Dominating lesser xulgaths wasn't enough for the power-hungry Cavnakash, though, and the priest began to reach out across the planes to call forth demonic allies. By a combination of domineering personality and utter faith in Zevgavizeb, Cavnakash became a talented and successful demon binder.

With his allied demons and a massive stone maul enchanted by a human wizard—ostensibly in exchange for the wizard's life, although Cavnakash ate him anyway—Cavnakash soon ruled a sizable tribe of xulgaths. He eventually came to the attention of the priest Sarvel Ever-Hunger, who sought Cavnakash out. Cavnakash could do little other than marvel at this mighty priest who claimed the full measure of the demon lord's power, so when Sarvel sought loyal adherents for missions of destruction, Cavnakash practically begged to be included in Sarvel's crusade.

Sarvel and Cavnakash are enough alike in faith and temperament that Sarvel knew to be cautious of the younger priest. Sarvel told Cavnakash only that an ancient tower on the east side of the Isle of Erran shone with a revolving magical orb, and that Sarvel wanted the orb destroyed. Missions of destruction being among Cavnakash's favorites, the xulgath quickly swore to complete Sarvel's task.

Only then did Sarvel put additional conditions on Cavnakash's undertaking. First, Cavnakash needed to

reach the tower in secret, and his minions must hunt only near the tower to avoid being spotted by locals. Cavnakash finds subterfuge distasteful and holds little respect for surface-dwelling creatures, but he knows better than to question Sarvel's commands.

The journey under the Isle of Erran was straightforward, and the xulgaths emerged in the shadow of the Erran Tower, just as Sarvel had directed. No sooner had the last of the xulgaths cleared the passage than Cavnakash swung his mighty maul to collapse it. He was determined to finish his mission or to die in the attempt, and he wanted to ensure his minions couldn't make an easy retreat.

The xulgaths found the Erran Tower to be virtually uninhabited, its rooms picked clean by looters over many long years. Cavnakash ascended the tower, and he spends most of his time attempting to destroy the *aeon orb* that encircles its top. His three lieutenants—the dinosaur-master Golgukan, the stealthy Lakkai One-Fang, and the scarred veteran Ashagith—have significant day-to-day authority, although they're each aware that Cavnakash will be quick to murder any of them whose actions displease him. Nevertheless, with the lack of either danger or firm command, the xulgaths have become careless, ranging much further from the tower than Cavnakash would prefer. As the xulgaths haven't yet encountered any resistance even as they travel further afield to capture food, they've started to wonder whether Cavnakash's insistence on secrecy stems from cowardice—although none would dare voice this in his presence.

On the lofty platform atop the tower, Cavnakash is becoming increasingly desperate and discouraged. When it became clear that he couldn't simply smash the orb by hitting it with his maul, he was forced to consider more complex alternatives. Cavnakash is no great thinker, and the *aeon orb's* remarkable durability has provided him a great deal of frustration.

The arrival of the succubus Balenni gave Cavnakash renewed hope, and he enlisted her aid in destroying the *aeon orb*. Yet Balenni initially pestered Cavnakash

with irrelevant questions about what the orb did and what would be gained by destroying it. Cavnakash deflected all such questions with firm insistence that Zevgavizeb's will must be served. The succubus has ceased bothering Cavnakash so much, which he welcomes, but neither has the succubus been particularly helpful in destroying the orb. Cavnakash now sees Balenni only rarely, and she, like the xulgaths, wonders how long it will take him to admit he's not up to the task set before him.

Campaign Role

Cavnakash is unlikely to survive his encounter with the heroes. Apart from the bloodlust that compels him to fight to the bitter end, he has no real avenue of escape; his pteranodon's injured wing makes it unable to fly him to safety. If, against the odds, Cavnakash survives, he returns to Sarvel armed with convincing lies that place all the blame for his failure on the heroes. In this case, Cavnakash might reappear in a later adventure of the Extinction Curse Adventure Path seeking retribution.

CAVNAKASH

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM HUMANOID XULGATH

Male xulgath fanatic

Perception +12; darkvision

Languages Common, Draconic, Undercommon

Skills Arcana +10, Athletics +13, Intimidation +13, Religion +15, Stealth +10

Str +3, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +2

Items +1 striking maul, wooden religious symbol, scale mail, wand of heal (2nd)

AC 22; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +10, **Will** +15

HP 83

Stench (aura, olfactory) 30 feet. A creature that enters the aura must attempt a DC 22 Fortitude save. On a failure, the creature is sickened 1, and on a critical failure, the creature also takes a -5-foot status penalty to its Speeds for 1 round. While within the aura, the creature takes a -2 circumstance penalty to saves to recover from the sickened condition. A creature that succeeds at its save is temporarily immune to all xulgaths' stench for 1 minute.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ maul +17 (shove, magical),

Damage 2d12+3 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ jaws +16, **Damage** 2d8+3 piercing

Melee ♦ claw +16 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+3 slashing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 24, spell attack +17; **3rd** chilling darkness, crisis of faith, harm (3); **2nd** death knell, harm (2), see invisibility; **1st** bane, harm (2), protection; **Cantrips (3rd)** chill touch, divine lance, guidance, shield

Cleric Domain Spell 1 Focus Point, DC 22; **3rd** cry of destruction (Core Rulebook 390)

Channel Smite ♦ Cavnakash expends a harm spell and attempts a melee Strike. If he hits, he adds the spell's negative damage to his Strike damage. If he misses, the harm spell is still expended.

Profane Gift Cavnakash has a profane gift from Balenni, giving him a +1 status bonus to attack rolls, skill checks, and saving throws (already factored into his statistics).



NEMMIA BRAMBLECLOAK

A halfling druid dedicated to Gozreh, Nemmia sees all civilization as a blight to be ruthlessly exterminated. She has gone to great extremes—even coercing natural animals—to further her murderous plans.

Nemmia was deposited at the door to the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning as an infant. For most of her life, she never left the hermitage and considered the devotees there to be her family. Even from a young age, Nemmia's empathy for nature was strong, and she had the supernatural ability to speak with animals and to see the world through their eyes. Nemmia likes to believe her parents were powerful druids whose calling to safeguard the wilds left no time for rearing children.

A few years ago, Nemmia petitioned the hermitage's leader, Harlock Hamdeel, to leave the hermitage and explore the wider world for the first time. Nemmia was struck by the contrast between how the Isle of Erran was described in the hermitage's ancient texts and how she saw it. The grasslands were no longer green, the ground was barren, and the weather fiercer. Fish were less plentiful, and butterflies no longer filled the fields with color. For years, the hermits had tracked these changes, but the dry accounting didn't strike Nemmia's heart like seeing the decline firsthand.

Nemmia soon realized that civilization was part of the problem. She had always assumed that people everywhere lived with the same respect for nature the hermits did. But she found "civilized" people to be noisy, polluting, and greedy.

Nemmia returned to the hermitage and pleaded with Harlock. Civilized folk—such as those in the nearby town of Abberton—were causing the deterioration and needed to be culled like overpopulated herds. Harlock didn't agree; he knew from his own study that the *aeon orb* atop the Erran Tower, which had artificially augmented the land's bounty, was fading. This, not the town of Abberton, was responsible for the failing ecology. But Harlock made a decision while Nemmia was raging in his presence, and he chose poorly: he kept the truth of the *aeon orb* from Nemmia, hoping that if he could discover how to repair the orb's magic, Nemmia's resentment would ebb.

Time passed, and Nemmia's desperation grew. She performed rituals intended to divine the answer to the isle's problems; her efforts were fruitless, but her

passion convinced some of the other hermits to help her. She was prohibited from leaving the hermitage again, as Harlock worried she might take drastic or even violent action against Abberton. So Nemmia snuck out in secret, and witnessed the casual cruelty and violence performed by the local criminal gang, the Muggers. She decided the town's priest of Abadar was a hypocrite, the mayor a fool, the sheriff a brute, and the miller and her family greedy cheats and misers. She began to hate the people of Abberton not only for what she believed they were doing to the environment, but for who she believed they were.

Nemmia soon built up a conspiracy within the hermitage consisting of those hermits willing to take drastic action to save the island from environmental destruction. Few shared Nemmia's dislike of Abberton, but they all agreed that action was necessary. When the succubus Balenni arrived at the hermitage in human guise, she quickly identified Nemmia's conspiracy as a key to corrupt the entire hermitage. She took Nemmia as her protege and her lover, whispering accursed secrets to the hateful halfling and sharing rituals using demonic energy. Nemmia shared these rituals with her coconspirators, hiding the evil nature of the rituals' power until her fellow hermits were wholly committed.

By the time the adventure begins, Nemmia has become wholly corrupted by Balenni and her own desire to punish the people of Abberton. She has convinced herself that saving the Isle of Erran's ecosystem is a greater good that rationalizes almost any evil deed. Her goal is to force the complete evacuation of the town, and for weeks she has been waging a one-woman war. She has taken the miller's family hostage, interrogating them for a confession of their hateful schemes, but she has been unsatisfied by their repeated denials. She has led destructive demons to the temple in town and has been working to corrupt local animals. Nemmia was contemplating the best way to tip all of Abberton into a panic when the Circus of Wayward Wonders arrived. Seizing upon this opportunity, Nemmia resolved to infiltrate

the circus camp, kill the circus performers to shock the townsfolk, and then send her animals against the terrorized townspeople. This, she thinks, should tip the balance and compel everyone to abandon Abberton. Nemmia is temporarily stymied when the heroes step forward to lead the show to success, but she soon decides that these strangers must pay with their lives.

Campaign Role

Nemmia is the primary villain of the adventure's first chapter. If Nemmia survives her encounter with the party, compassionate and patient heroes could potentially reform her. Separated from Balenni's profane influence, Nemmia could be receptive to demonstrations of how civilized people can also be kind, far-sighted, and dedicated to living in concert with nature. She'll never be comfortable in any community larger than the Hermitage of Blessed Lightning, however, and she knows that she has done too much damage to the hermitage to ever be allowed to return. She might therefore withdraw into the wilderness and use her powers to help animals and plants harmed by the island's environmental decline.

NEMMIA BRAMBLECLOAK CREATURE 3

UNIQUE NE SMALL HALFLING HUMANOID

Female halfling zealot

Perception +9; keen eyes

Languages Abyssal, Common, Druidic, Halfling; *speaks with animals*

Skills Diplomacy +8, Gozreh Lore +6, Nature +11, Religion +9, Stealth +8, Survival +11

Str -1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +1

Items hide armor, key to the ringmaster's wagon (area A2), rat hood, +1 sickle, staff

AC 19; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11

HP 45

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ sickle +9 (agile, finesse, magical, trip), **Damage** 1d4+3 slashing

Melee ♦ staff +5 (two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4-1 bludgeoning
Primal Innate Spells DC 19; **3rd** *animal vision* (at will; target must be a rodent, serpent, or similar animal considered troublesome by humans); **2nd** *paranoia* (targets animals only); **1st** *charm* (3, targets animals only); **Constant (2nd)** *speaks with animals*

Primal Spontaneous Spells DC 21, attack +11; **2nd** *darkvision*, *entangle*; **1st** *fear*, *goblin pox*, *shocking*

grasp; **Cantrips (2nd)** *produce flame*, *read aura*, *stabilize*, *tanglefoot*

Keen Eyes Nemmia has a +2 circumstance bonus when using the Seek action to find hidden or undetected creatures within 30 feet. When she targets a concealed or hidden opponent, she reduces the DC of the flat check to 3 for a concealed target or 9 for a hidden one.

Reach Spell ♦ If the next action Nemmia takes is to Cast a Spell that has a range, increase that spell's range by 30 feet.

Wildwood Halfling Nemmia ignores difficult terrain from trees, foliage, and undergrowth.

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LEGACY OF THE LOST GOD

by Jenny Jarzabski

The city of Escadar holds clues about why the xulgaths have come to the Starstone Isles. Unfortunately, it's also the home of the Circus of Wayward Wonders's greatest rival, Mistress Dusklight's Celestial Menagerie!

CATFOLK OF GOLARION

by David N. Ross

Explore amurrun society, history, and more in this article focusing on the proud and curious catfolk!

AMONG THE XULGATHS

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Mighty subterranean people known as troglodytes on the surface, xulgaths are inheritors of a long, bloody history and the fearsome powers of a demon lord.

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