

Waunder

A Pathfinder Fanzine made for Fans by Fans



PaizoCon 2009



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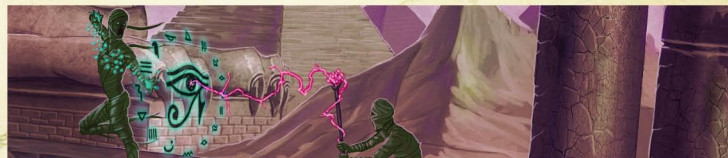
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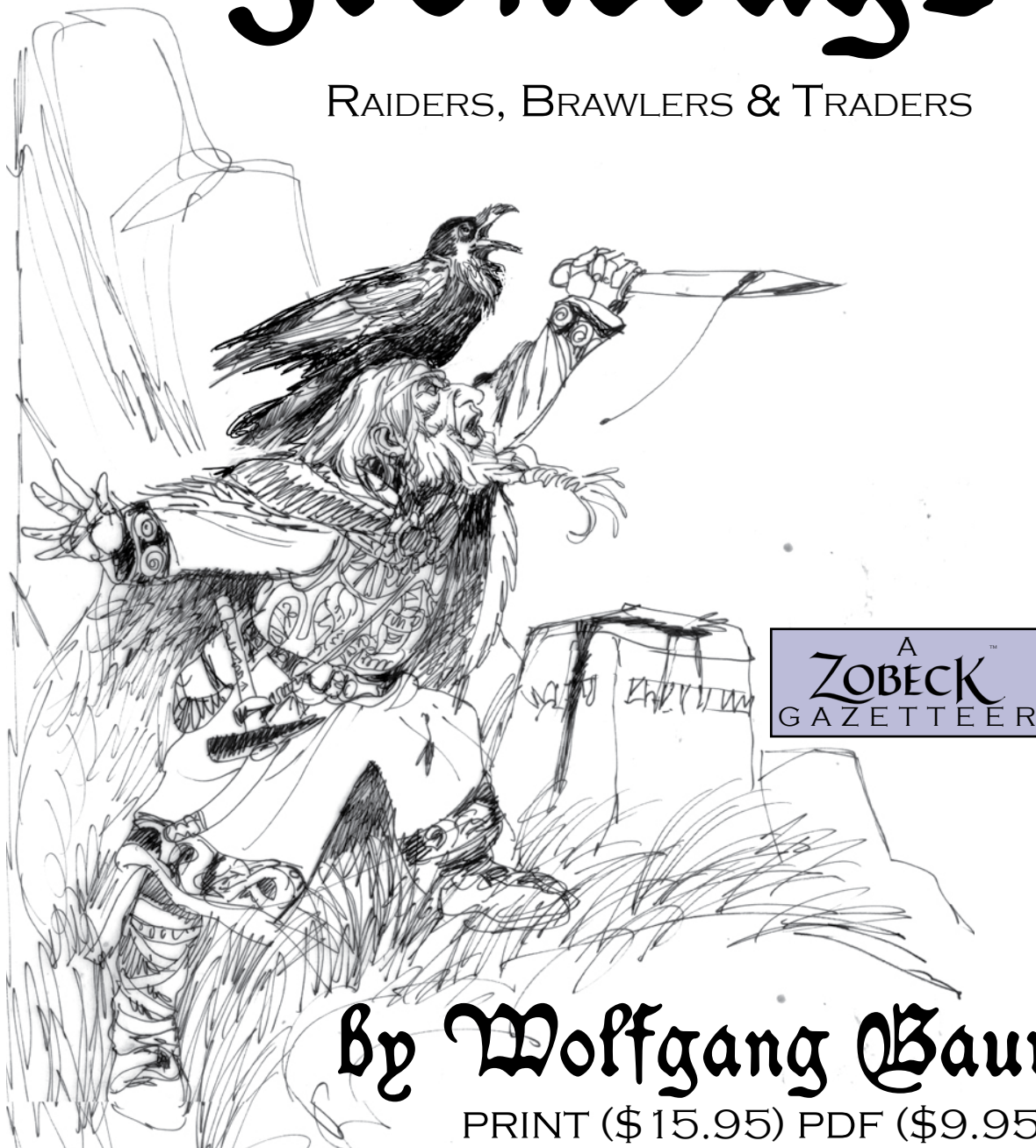


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Foreword

Art by Glen Zimmerman and Kevin "Callous Jack" Coleman

I should have known better.

I mean, I already knew that all of you were a step above the rest. Since we launched Pathfinder only a few years ago (it still boggles my mind that I'm about to send volume #25 off to the printer—seems like only yesterday I was worrying that Nick Logue wasn't going to be up to the challenge of properly capturing the backwoods horror of "Hook Mountain Massacre"—another thing about which I should have known better), you guys and gals (by which I mean all of Pathfinder's fans) have produced fan fiction, fan art (even—especially—of the naughty variety!), websites, recorded goblin songs, paper miniatures, chat rooms, and videos. We have a home-made leather-bound copy of the Beta in the office as the result of your hard work. Last year at Gen Con we saw the first Pathfinder cosplay—a priestess of Desna that Wes and I freaked out about perhaps a little too much (I hope we didn't scare her off from doing another costume this year!). You've given us holidays (Erik Mona day), you've founded a convention in our honor, and you've ordered us pizza when we had busy days at the office. There's even a school play of "Burnt Offerings" in production as I write this! We've asked the director to send us pictures.

So I'm not sure why I thought that *Wayfinder* would be short.

When Liz asked me to write the foreword for *Wayfinder*, of course I immediately agreed. "This would be a great place to thank all of the fans for their dedication, creativity, and support," I thought, but when she sent me the PDF to do "a quick review," I was stunned. Here was no 10-page collection of house rules and tales from the game

table. This was a huge treasure trove of exactly the sorts of things I'd love to publish in a Pathfinder product. And it was 72 pages long! Excited, intrigued, and quite a bit humbled, I spent the next hour or so looking through *Wayfinder*'s contents. Inside you'll find original artwork, fiction, spells, encounter areas, magic items, poems, character traits, prestige classes, monsters, templates, cartoons... the list goes on and on.

I won't lie. Two years ago, things were pretty scary at Paizo. The company had been built on the business of magazine publishing, and while we'd started to dip our toes into the book publishing scene and had our own web store up and running, the magazines were very much the backbone of the company. We had no idea if a line of monthly adventure path books would be successful, but we had no real choice but to find out.

Now, here we are two years later, and Pathfinder's expanded from adventure paths and modules into player-focus supplements, gazetteers, Game Master sourcebooks, hard-cover campaign settings, and in only a couple months, our very own RPG. It's been a crazy two years, but the advance orders and buzz building about the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* is incredible. And, of course, we pretty much owe it all to the people who actually threw down their hard-earned money to support Paizo and our crazy schemes. So... thank you, everyone! Thanks for supporting us, for inspiring us, and for keeping up the demand for high-quality products!

But most of all, thanks for reminding me what it's like to be a fan. It's easy to lose sight of that from this side of the industry.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some 72 pages of awesome to read!

James Jacobs
Wayfinder Fan





Regional Traits of Osirion

By Michael "Ask a Shoanti" Kortez & Hal Maclean
Art by Crystal "Immora" Frasier

They say there are more kinds of animals in the desert than any other terrain in all the world. The same might be said of Osirion's people: there's more diversity from Sothis to Shiman-Sekh than that found in several continents.

— Venture Captain Jalden Krenshar

Antiquities Dealer

You are no stranger to the grey market trade in relics of the past. You have turned a tidy profit overtime, though the school of hard knocks has taught you to keep your eyes peeled for fakes. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Appraise checks and Appraise is always a class skill for you.

An Tomb Treader

Your exposure to the An tradition of masonry has given you an instinctive ability to find your way out of any structure. Once each day you can, if inside a man made structure, make a DC 20 Survival check. If you succeed, you retrace your steps and find the entrance you used to get inside.

Bilingual Background

Osirion teems with many languages and dialects. You have taken it upon yourself to ensure that you are conversant with the two most prevalent. You gain Osirion or Common as a free bonus language. You also gain a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (local - Osirion).

Civic Artisan

A member of Osirion's Khemet dynasty has seen fit to publicly purchase one of your works. Your creation either rests in the Palace of the Forthbringer or another famed locale such as the Exhibitory of Sothis. This recognition of your talents has enabled you to fetch better prices for your subsequent works. When you make a Craft check to earn money for the week, you earn an extra 10%.

Child of the Khamsin

Life amongst Osirion's greatest sandstorms has taught you to stand fast against the forces that would seek to bring your people to their knees. You have a +2 trait bonus to opposed rolls to resist bull rushes and trip attempts. In addition, when facing a windstorm or other wind effect, you are treated as one size larger than you actually are.

Dawnflower Initiate

Well-versed in the text of The Birth of Light and Truth, you have taken the words of Sarenrae's teachings to heart. The Cult of the Dawnflower's introduction to Osirion from the East is pivotal to the philosophies and character that now ingrain Osirion's people. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (religion) and one of the following: Weapon Proficiency with the scimitar; a +1 to trait bonus to turning checks; or Knowledge (religion) is always a class skill for you.

Desert Laborer

You do not shy away from putting your back into your work, investing long days into projects that others might not even contemplate. You receive a +2 trait bonus to Fortitude saves to resist damage from a hot environment. You also recover from fatigue and exhaustion in one-half the time.

Dromedary Warrior

Your people have fought while using camels as their cavalry of choice for centuries, confounding their foes with these deceptively intelligent beasts. Your skill with a camel in battle provides you with a +4 trait bonus to Ride checks to perform a fast mount or dismount on a camel, as well as to all Ride checks to spur on your camel or use it as cover while riding. You also receive a +2 trait bonus to Handle Animal checks to train a camel to adopt the combat purpose or to teach it the attack trick.

Elemental Swarm Caller

Your people have followed and even lived amongst the nomadic elemental clans that act as the desert's soul. When you cast summon monster or summon nature's ally and choose to summon 1d3 earth or air elementals of a level lower than the level of your spell, you automatically summon one extra elemental (1d3+1 in total).

Eto Haggler

The mercantile ambiance of Eto has made you very shrewd when trying to find or strike bargains. You get a +1 trait bonus on Appraise and Bluff checks.

Feline Devotee

For some, such as you, cats are more than pets, they are creatures of deep karmic significance. Cats may be portents of great fortune and, to those who mistreat them, harbingers of doom. You have a +2 trait bonus to wild empathy checks with cats of all sizes, be they domestic or wild. If you select a cat, leopard, tiger, or lion as your animal companion or familiar, the creature gains your choice of Run, Skill Focus (Climb), or Stealthy as a bonus feat.

Hetkoshu-Hes (Friend of the River Fiends)

The banks of Osirion's River Sphinx are fraught with iridescent black-scaled cobras and crocodiles, collectively known as Hetkoshu. There are some such as you, however, who have made communion with these dangerous predators. You have a +2 trait bonus to wild empathy checks with all snakes and crocodiles. If you select a constrictor snake, crocodile or viper snake as your animal companion or familiar, the creature gains your choice of Athletic, Run, or Stealthy as a bonus feat.

Hetkoshu Wrestler

You are one of the courageous few who dare to tackle river crocodiles with your bare hands – and you have the scars to prove it! You get a +4 trait bonus to grapple checks made while underwater.

Hieroglyphic Cipherist

Steeped in the math, grammar and history of symbolic writings, you have a deep appreciation for the mysteries of the hieroglyphics of ancient Osirion. You receive a +1 bonus to all Cipher Script checks as well as a +2 trait bonus to all of your saves against traps and spells that arise from glyphs and sigils.

Ipeq Reservist

The martial atmosphere of Ipeq has given you a soldier's instinct for fighting as part of a unit. The first time you strike a creature, you get a +1 trait bonus to damage if it has already been damaged by an ally in that round. If your ally also has this trait, you deal +2 damage instead.

Keeper of the Old Ways

The past is the key to the future. Nowhere does this adage have more currency than in Osirion, the cradle of civilization, and you have mined the past for its secrets. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (history). You also gain Ancient Osirion as a free bonus language.

Lightning Lasher

You have worked with a whip for most of your life and wielding it is second nature. When you need it most, it just seems to find your hand. You may draw a whip as a free action or pick-up a loose whip in your square or in an adjacent square as a swift action. You also receive a +2 trait bonus to your attack roll when

you use your whip to snare a beam, post or other terrain item so that you may use your whip as a fulcrum to swing across its length.

Osirion Embalmer

You are well versed in the ancient traditions of necromantic embalming and the secrets of their origins. You receive a +1 trait bonus to Profession (embalmer) checks. In addition, should you create undead with an animate dead, create undead, or greater create undead spell you may choose to grant your resulting creations either an extra +1 to their natural armor or +5 to their Speed.

Risen Guardsman

The Risen Guard is the elite fanatical bodyguard of Osirion's ruling dynasty. The Ruby Prince rewards its devotion by granting its leadership access to the Sothis treasury to fund their needs for healing and resurrection as required. Your time amongst the Risen Guard has taught you well that as long as a cleric is nearby, there is little to fear in any battle. Indeed, protecting your priests is among the best of stratagems a warrior can adopt. You receive a +2 trait bonus to saves against fear and intimidation whenever an allied cleric is within your line of sight. If you witness a foe injure an allied cleric, you gain a +1 trait bonus to damage against that foe should you hit with your next attack.

Shiman-Sehk Scavenger

The abundance of food and water at Shuman-Sehk and their scarcity elsewhere has left you with a ferocious drive to avoid the rigors of hunger and thirst. You get a +2 trait bonus on Search and Survival checks made for the purpose of finding or locating food and drink.

Tephu Scholar

The information you gleaned while poring through the historical archives of Tephu sometimes prove useful in other fields too. Once each day when making a Knowledge check, you can choose to first make a DC 20 Knowledge (history) check. You gain a trait bonus on that check equal to the amount by which you exceeded the DC of the Knowledge (history) check. You do not suffer a penalty if you fail the check.

Totra Pride

The legacy of oppression suffered by the citizens of Totra makes you very hostile towards anyone who tries to push you around. You get a +2 trait bonus on your next attack roll made against any creature that unsuccessfully targets you with a fear effect. This bonus increases to +4 against creatures who failed their Intimidate check against you.

Wati Remedies

After listening to countless tales of the ancient pestilence that devastated Wati, you find yourself almost instinctively taking steps to keep yourself and your friends free from contacting illness. Your constant vigilance gives you a +1 trait bonus on Fortitude saving throws against disease. In addition, you get a +2 trait bonus on any Heal check made to treat a disease. ☉



The Road to Varno, Chapter 1

By Clinton J. Boomer

Art by Hugo "Butterfrog" Solis

Cold, thick rain patters and spatters along the unlit road; the crunch of forgotten cobblestones and ancient roots under boot, hoof and wagon wheel near drowned by the echoes of wind racing through the black trees beyond.

"Fie, Hell and Damn, this torch won't stay lit."

Soaked to the bone through layers of black cloth, the thin man curses his ill fortune at the fencing of his fancy new hooded lantern to fund a night of ale and perfumed revelry between the sheets a week ago in Caliphas.

"Oi, back there! Loz! You sure we've no oil for the bleeding lamp?"

A low voice like churning gravel answers him, a beast's growl shaped by a too-human tongue and spat back between clenched teeth. "Damn your eyes, you learn to keep in character or so help me I'll slit you belly to chin and find myself a new priest."

"I've heard that before."

"Say what?"

"I say, in-character? Loz, we're fifty miles from bleeding nowhere!"

"The woods in these lands have ears, Father. Asides, it's good for the act."

With a sigh and a shake of his tapered, black three-corner hat, the pale man tries again, his voice suddenly all silk and honey.

"Son, by the virtue and grace of Aroden, long did he reign and much blessed is he in the sight of all good men, do we have any bloody lamp oil back there?"

The voice returned. "We've had no oil since the day we left Thrushmoor, sire."

"Ah, yes, my son. How awful indeed. And, perchance, have we any hope of getting out from under this black weather and into a warm bed before daybreak?"

"None, good Father. The weather won't let up, and the Ver-sex highlands north of Avalon Bay are famed unfriendly to strangers."

"Due to the depredations of scoundrelly Varisians, no doubt. Never trust a Varisian, my son – an entire people, naught but pickpockets and cardsharps, the lot."

"You're thinking of Shoanti, sire."

"All the same, son. Well, then – we shall just have to make due. Fortunately, the cargo of salvation never spoils!"

"Aye at that, Father. Make due until Carrion Hill, at least."

"Bless you, son. A mere four-day walk from the bay – and we've covered three of that already, yes?"

"We'll see the black spires of Carrion Hill by next nightfall. A few copper at the gate and we'll be in. Then a short errand

for Paymaster Splitt, and we're on our way 'round to the piety-starved lands of Varno."

"And the rosy-cheeked maidens of that land shall surely find us a great and deeply spiritual comfort indeed! And what sort of errand are we running for the Paymaster in Carrion Hill, may I be reminded?"

"Someone owes him money."

"Ah, yes. Well, that was very stupid on their part, wasn't it?"

"Very stupid indeed, Father."

"And once we relieve this poor, bedeviled sinner – the Baron what's-his-name, yeah? – of his ill-gotten goods and of his aching guilt, what ever shall we do?"

"We three – that's the pair of us and the Baron's money, that is – rendezvous with Garreth and his boys at a private cove west by north-west of Thronestep in three weeks. Plenty of time for us to scrape up a few donations for the new sanctuary and all."

"Gah. Thronestep – the very parlor of Razmir. Now there's a town I'd not like to be caught red-handed in."

"Feel outclassed by a better breed of con artist, Kinterkoff?"

"Outclassed? No. Out-gunned, perhaps."

"Well, that's why you have me, Father."

"Indeed, my son. Indeed."

Pale sun finally breaks over black trees as the thin man scrapes the last remains of his meal out of a wooden bowl and onto the side of the overgrown road. Fixing a squint at the weak rays above, he sucks on his teeth and spits into the bushes.

"As always, you make a fine breakfast, Loz."

"We'll have better tonight – best get moving before the sun gets hot. And don't light up your pipe. Priests aren't supposed to smoke pipes."

Fishing pipe, tinder and leaf all from the thick web of his elaborately wrapped rope belt, he says, "Huh? Now, what do you know of the Last Azlanti's priesthood, half-blood?"

"Well as much as you do, skinny boy."

"I'm sure the old bugger enjoyed a puff or two between military conquests and bedding his nuns. He was a god of the people, you daft heathen!"

"In that instance, I'll have a drag or two myself."

"Enjoy – it's the last we have until we hit Carrion Hill this eve. I've got the bed-rolls, you hitch up Mrs. Black Pepper, and we'll be on our way."

Nodding and puffing at the pipe, the shirtless shape of the hulking penitent moves to secure the horse and wagon. "You know, Father, you'll have to think of a better name for her afore we sell her."

"Sell her? I'd sooner sell you, Loz! She's like family to me!"

"Bah, you farm folk and your horses. If a fat Carrion Hill merchant offered you a hundred gold for her..."

"I could get two hundred. She's of Qadiran breeding, you know."

"That's news to me – and to her, no doubt."

"No imagination, Loz. That's your one true weakness."

"What I lack in imagination is what you lack in sense."

"I'm ignoring that, Loz. Now, as to yon gates of Carrion Hill: in-character or out?"

The big man only stares.

Then, speaking in tandem, "In-character."

An hour later, the pair marches on in the fog.

"What is troubling you, my son?"



Ask a Shoanti

By Michael Kortes

Art by Drew Pocza

For the august occasion of the first Pathfinder Fanzine, Ask a Shoanti, the violent advice columnist, has resurfaced from his recent battles to take the time to provide some answers to our burning etiquette questions on the following sidebars.

“Nothing, Father.”

“Oh, don’t be like that. Is it the job in Carrion Hill?”

“No, that’s easy. You talk a man out his money, or I stab ‘im a half-dozen times.”

“What if he has guards?”

“Then you do a bit of hocus-pocus, and I stab each of them a half-dozen times. Maybe leave one for you. Simple. It’s not a question of logistics that troubles me.”

“You’ve never confided in me a need for complex plans before, of that I’m quite securely unconcerned – and all the best for it. You know I’ve no head for numbers.”

“Which is why I hold the purse, O Ye Father of the Empty Mug and His Barren Pockets.”

“What’s it bugging you then, Loz? We’re nothing if not co-conspirators.”

“About last night, Kinterkoff...what makes you so sure Razmir’s a charlatan? He’s got plenty of people aneath his banner.”

“We true professionals can smell them, is all. Predatory instincts.”

“Oh, come off it. Talk of ‘true professionalism’ to me? Save it for the paying customers. My question stands: What if the Living God really is a living god?”

“Then he’s got very poor taste in divinity.”

“Oh, I forget – you were born in Xer, weren’t you?”

The thin man snaps a look at his hulking penitent, which suddenly softens into a friendly chuckle.

“No, no, you’re mistaken – I’m surely of Taldan nobility!

“Bastard son of a bastard son seven by seven times, no doubt; little better than me and mine.”

“Of course! We’re better than everyone, didn’t you know that?”

“Feh. So what’s your answer?”

“To what?”

“Are you sure he’s a charlatan?”

“Look, I take a very dim view of any religion that preaches the aggregation and enjoyment of material wealth or well-being to its petitioners. Look at the prancing, self-righteous dimwits who follow after the Prophecies of Kalistrade. No, a proper

faith involves a lot of suffering and self-examination, like those old Garundi fellows who sit at the tops of mountains and starve for their souls.”

“Then what are we?”

“We? We are the mirror of hypocrisy, shining back the false glory of bought salvation into the fat faces of rich men looking to purchase a plot in heaven.”

“Great sales pitch, Father.”

“Quiet. And then we give quite heavily of our profits to the poor, which is more than I can say for most.”

“To the alehouses and the harlots, Father?”

“Well, we want them to make an honest living. Wouldn’t do to have the serving girls turning to petty theft. And you can’t cheat an honest man, Loz – you know the types, who look over the writs and the saint’s bones and walk on like they’ve got the Great Beyond all locked away in their hearts. Those types aren’t buying what we’re selling, and more power to them.”

“...I hate those people, Father.”

“Well, yes, so do I.”

A long pause, with only the clomp of hobnailed boots and the clank of counterfeit sacraments to invade the still morning air.

“You know, Garreth asked me about my soul, once.”

“Did he, now? And what does an Ercathan pirate late of the very worst of many River Kingdom’s jails want to know about your half-blood soul?”

“He asked if I ever felt a danger to my immortal being, with selling ersatz relics and miracles of the Last Azlanti to the desperate and the poor.”

“Hmm. And what did you tell him?”

“I told him that hell is a hard day’s work with no wages to show for it, heaven a cold drink and a warm bed when you’ve well earned it.”

“That’s actually quite brilliantly said. You’ve become quite the theologian, Loz. If this keeps up, the two of us are going to have to trade jobs.”

“Not unless you learn to fight, Father.”

“Fight? As in a *fair* fight? I’ll do nothing of the sort. We’ll just have to hire a new penitent, is all.”

“I’ve heard that before.” ☸

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Dangers of Darkmoon Vale

By Troy E. Taylor

Art by Ashton "N'wah" Sperry

Valers are hardy folk, to be sure. Burly lumberjacks, wily explorers and woodland mystics are familiar with the fell side of Darkmoon Vale. But even they can get jittery, spooked — or just plain scared — by these encounters.

The Ghost of Droskmere Shore

"Running into that ghostly bugbear was far from the worst of it. Three of us got lost in the bog near Droskmere. If 'tweren't for that friendly ol' hermit, we'd still be sloggin' it out of there. Well, sure we rewarded the old fella. To tell you the truth, I'd paid twice that to be rescued. My only regret was losing my trusty feather token. Don't know how I could've dropped it."

—Oskar Towpath, dwarven expedition leader

Pathfinders are familiar with the sandy beaches and footpaths along Droskmere's shoreline that are generally reliable and safe, if you take precautions against wildlife. But many warn of the ghost that haunts one of the fens on the southern shore.

The story goes that a bugbear captain named Snarl Lowbrow from the Goblinblood Wars faced a mutiny from his war party because they refused to cross the fens, which they believed then to be haunted by will-o'-wisps. Instead of taking a shortcut that would enable them to sneak up on an enemy encampment, they rose up and overpowered their leader. Wrapping him in weighted chains, they dropped him into the marsh and left him to die. Now

he howls in anguish and despair and attempts to gain his revenge upon any living creature that crosses his ghostly path.

The ghost is a fearsome bugbear spirit that rises from the marsh where the trail cuts back away from the shore and crosses the fens for a short stretch. The apparition has been known to appear behind travelers, rattling the chains that bind it, howling angrily and threatening them with its mighty ax. The ghost is said to laugh heartily as travelers scatter, sometimes becoming lost in the marsh.

The ghostly image of Captain Lowbrow is actually a *permanent image* conjured by one of the fen's more mean-spirited inhabitants, the pixie Puddleprick Turp. He especially delights in seeing disoriented travelers meander into the bog after he casts *lesser confusion*. Safely hidden within the curving roots of a nearby cypress tree, Puddleprick further torments the unwary by casting *entangle* on the fleet of foot, *dancing lights* to lure others down a dark path or *dispel magic* to douse magical light sources.

After a good belly laugh, Puddleprick then uses *alter self* to transform into a kindly, old halfling hermit named "Franz." He then emerges from behind a tree, offering aid in exchange for the promise of a reward. If all they offer is their gratitude, Puddleprick is not above making a Sleight of Hand attempt to relieve them of some more prized possessions.

If empty handed still, Puddleprick may choose to harass the travelers by peppering them with longbow shots, using *memory loss* or *sleep arrows* depending on his feelings of vindictiveness.

PUDDLEPRICK TURP — CR 6

Male pixie rogue 2

NE small fey

Init +10; **Senses** trapfinding, Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 17, flat-footed 12 (+6 Dexterity, +1 natural, +1 size)

hp 11 (2d8+2)

Fort +1, **Ref** +9, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities evasion

DR 10/cold iron; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee short sword +8 (1d4-3/19-20)

Ranged longbow +8 (1d6/x3/100 ft.)

Atk Options sneak attack +1d6, special arrows

Spell-like abilities (CL 8th)

1/day—*lesser confusion* (DC 14), *dancing lights*, *detect chaos*, *detect good*, *detect evil*, *detect law*, *detect thoughts* (DC 15), *dispel magic*, *entangle* (DC 14), *permanent image* (DC 19; visual and auditory elements only).

STATISTICS

Abilities Str 4, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 21, Wis 14, Cha 19

Base Atk +1, **CMB** -3

Feats Dodge^B, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Acrobatics +11, Appraise +10, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9,

Disable Device +11, Disguise +19, Fly +15, Escape Artist +11, Knowledge (Local) +10, Perception +9, Sleight of Hand +11, Stealth +15, Swim +2

Languages Common, Sylvan, Elven, Gnome, Halfling

SQ fast stealth, *greater invisibility*, trapfinding

Other gear 300 gp hidden in nearby tree

The Mauler of Falconridge

"I was sure the ugly brute was an easy mark. With those short, deformed legs, I was certain we could outmaneuver him. Then he walloped poor ol' Feris with that warhammer of his, taking fight out of all of us. The beast guarded that stone block building with his life. Surely it holds some treasure. But someone tougher than me will have to find that out. I'm never going to Falconridge again."

— "Brisk Harry" Helmerson, human rogue

Falconridge, the lumber town abandoned nearly four decades ago, has a reputation for all manner of ghostly apparitions, especially near its graveyard and stone wall.

About a quarter-mile northwest of the ruins, stands a little-known stone blockhouse. This was a well and pump house constructed for a satellite lumber camp that existed during logging's heyday. It is the camp's only existing structure from that time, although the stone foundation of a bunkhouse is nearby.

An ogrekin outcast named Ugruel, who uses his over-sized arm to easily operate the pump, has made this structure his home. He can usually be found on the pump house's main floor, where the pump mechanism and filling pool are located.

Ugruel's living quarters are in a room down two flights of stone stairs, adjacent to the shaft of the main well. This room's contents are a lice-ridden straw bed, a well-used butcher's block and a chest where he keeps his worldly possessions. The chest holds a wood bowl, a goblin dogslicer, a chunk of moldy cheese and a bag half-filled with salt. Wrapped in strips of cloth are fist-sized chunks of salted beef, pork and other meats of questionable origin.

Ugruel wants to be left alone. But he is a far-ranging hunter despite having deformed legs. There is a 30 percent chance he is about the surrounding territory, hunting small animals and harassing travelers. Trouble sometimes follows Ugruel to his doorstep, nevertheless he has defended his home with ferocity and stubbornness.

UGRUEL — CR 2

Male ogrekin hobgoblin fighter 2

CE Medium giant

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dexterity, +3 natural)

hp 22 (2d10+8)

Fort +7, **Ref** +1, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee Large warhammer +8 (2d6+5/x3)

Large warhammer (Power Attack) +6 (2d6+7/x3)

Ranged Large javelin +3 (1d8+5)

Atk Options Power Attack

STATISTICS

Abilities Str 21, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 6

Base Atk +2, **CMB** +7

Feats Weapon Focus (warhammer), Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Climb +10, Stealth +7

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ ogrekin deformities (oversized limb and stunted legs)

Other gear chest filled with mundane items

The Katapesh Carnival of the Sunflower Market

"Consider yourself a lucky soul the day the Katapesh Carnival comes to town. I've never seen a more beautiful selection of goods. Our merchants had a field day — these foreigners don't know how to bargain. They always take the low price. And the parties in the evening, all I can say is that it's a good thing there weren't any married men or women in our expedition. Their vows would've been broken for sure."

—Natasha Alverna, half-elf bard

Colorful tents stand on a hillside outside the town of Olfden. The Katapesh Carnival of the Sunflower Market has come, offering the delights, exotic goods and lavish entertainment of the desert kingdom to the far south.

Smoke of incense swirls intoxicatingly inside one of those tents. A line of male and female dancers, all alluringly attired in beaded silks, veils and frills, move their hips and arms in time to the pulsating music of rhythmic drums and finger cymbals. The audience, all seated or reclining on pillows and colorfully striped rugs, watches the exotic performance avidly.

Behind the curtain, a creature in the guise of the caravan mistress, Sybellessa, soaks in the rising passion with an insatiable thirst. It is a totenmaske, an undead shapechanger that craves sensations.

If the night goes well, and these backwater simpletons remain captivated by the fine wines, succulent fruits and carnal pleasures being offered, the totenmaske will grow in power as it joins the decadent feast.

The real Sybellessa lies helpless, a captive in her own wagon, with her flesh reshaped over her mouth to prevent her from raising alarm. The totenmaske occasionally cuts the deformed flesh open, freeing her mouth to allow her to eat to stay alive, before sealing it again. The totenmaske knows that maintaining the bounty of the caravan requires it to continue in the guise of its leader, and to do that, it must keep her alive — if only for a little while longer.

The caravan itself is far from home, and many of its merchants, salesmen and entertainers are beginning to grumble. They should be haggling for double or triple on the value of these goods, but their mistress has said to accept low bids. For certain, Sybellessa's tent parties are putting a dent in her own purse — and many of the performers are starting to resent Sybellessa's suggestions that they become "friendlier" with the Valers.

"SYBELLESSA"

Totenmaske (*Pathfinder 3: The Hook Mountain Massacre* 82)

hp 78 ☼



Excerpts from the Journal of Zertus Hargon

By Ian "cappadocious" Cunningham

Art by James Keegan

14 Gozran 4707

In the name of Irori, Master of Masters, I set ink to this scrap of paper to enlighten those who follow of the fate befalling these humble men of Kelesh. My name is Zertus Hargon, a son of Qadira and the fifth born child of Gauterin Hargon, spice-merchant of Katheer. My companions are Huzoor Ghaus-ul-Azam, Great Sage Naeem Minhaj-ul-Quran, and Adalith Nahira of Vudra. They are archaeologists of the great University of Gurat, and members of the Avistani Pathfinder Society. They bear artifacts excavated from one of the glorious ruins found in the Ever-Lasting Padishah Empire. With them are a small handful of bearers, simple men to carry the great treasures of the ages.

I am but a humble servant of the great Irori, finding service in guiding the lost through the desert. I am a student of privation and of reading the hidden signs of the desert. I seek to ensure

that none shall suffer as my father suffered in my thirteenth year, lost and rudderless after being driven from the Silken Road by the bandits of the northern steppes. For seven years now I have studied, and for three have I been a light in the darkness to those who needed me.

I encountered my companions some miles from the cavern in which I write. The scholars were returning to Gurat from their dig, but had become lost after their native guide slipped away in the night. Honored both to serve and to hear the wisdom of such learned men, I quickly offered to guide them to the safety of a caravansera I knew of, a mere handful of miles away. Alas! I curse my boastful tongue that fateful day, and cringe from my blind hubris. Surely, Irori heard my tales of false heroism and my ego-driven tales of men saved that day. Why else should we be in the straits we find ourselves in?

We had naught but started on our way when out of the east came a sandstorm of such ferocity and magnitude that it could only have been sent by the gods as punishment! Before we could even react to the howling of its approach, we were engulfed by its fury. The sand felt as if it would flay the flesh from our bones even as we sought for shelter. Irori, merciful even in his anger, guided me to this cavern. Building a fire, I laughingly told a story of a wind that blew away the palace of lost Ibydos to calm the nerves of these men of learning, who were unused to the capricious fury of the desert. Within the hour, we would be on our way again, I assured them. O, hubris! O, insolence before the divine!

We have been in this cave for eighteen days. The storm has shown no sign of abating its fury; I fear for the world beyond this cave.

Food has been rationed. I have been relying on techniques taught to me by a wandering yogai of the Master of Masters to survive on but a handful of rice and a glass of water each day, to ensure the scholars a larger share. I fear it may not be enough. Irori in thy divine palace, take pity not on me, but on these simple men of learning!

26 Gozran 4707

By my reckoning, we have been trapped for a month in this darkened hole. Surely not even the divine can seek to punish the hubris of youth with this kind of anger. The scholars and their bearers have been reduced to a yogai's diet, while I simply ignore the gnawing in my belly. We cannot last many more days.

2 Desnus 4707

I write with a stronger hand now. How curious it is to read my entries before and see how weak and mewling I was. The storm abates. I shall finish my tale, and move on.

The night after my last entry, I crawled to the crates of artifacts the scholars had carried. Minhaj-ul-Quran, had gone mad with hunger, and ran into the storm, screaming of the

buzzing voices in his mind. His companions were too listless to pursue, sleeping most of their days in order to conserve their energy. I have dragged the lifeless, flayed corpse of the fool back to this cavern. He deserves whatever horrors await him in the afterlife for his crimes.

Crawling to those crates, driven to desperation by the howls of Minhaj-ul-Quran, I sought any ancient leather or preserved carcasses that might allow us to eke one more day. I still hoped the storm might end due to the mercy of the gods. The crates were sealed with a thick wax - the fools did not even think to eat that, preferring to keep their blasphemy secret even in the face of death! Carefully cutting the seals, planning a thick soup of wax to fill our stomachs, I opened the container. Sitting in a pile of straw was a great Maul of obvious antiquity and the most exquisite craftsmanship. I grabbed it, ready to drag it out of the way, as I rooted through the straw.

A vision was granted me! I could see the maul in the hands of a dark-skinned elf, dressed in robes both magnificent and tatterdemalion. He wore a golden symbol, a fanged-maw surrounded by nine spider's legs about his neck, and he used the weapon ("Breaker. Breaker of Worlds, of Men, of Gods." a voice whispered) to dash in the head of a man, tied to an altar. The elf reverently set Breaker aside, and began to feast on his brains. A chant, at once abhorrent and compelling, could be heard, singing holy blasphemies from hidden chambers surrounding the altar. Then others; humans, elf, gnoll, orc, and less identifiable things emerged from these chambers. They feasted as one; they gained strength as one. A glorious unity of strength.

A second vision! The same temple, the same altar. Thousands of years have passed, and the temple lies quiescent. Destroyed by time, succumbing to the might of entropy. The holy symbols, the votives and idols, even the sacred Breaker, lie sleeping under a blanket of sand and age. Three men, lesser men than those of the previous age, grasping and scheming broke into the temple chamber. Laughing and pointing in contempt, they hold the sacred artifacts, making base gestures of profiteering at one another. The eldest lies on the sacred altar and sings a bawdy song. This is not the behavior of scholars! This is not the respect due to the great God of the temple!

A third vision! I could see myself peering into the crate that held Breaker. I lifted the holy weapon with a strength the man-god Irori refused me, and I watched myself as I dashed the brains of those blasphemers and their idiot servants out with Breaker's sacred head. I watched myself gorge myself on the fresh, steaming flesh, strengthening me! I was invigorated, and fell to my knees singing the ancient sacred hymns

of Gormuz. The winds outside began to howl with less fury, the sand began to settle

The vision ended. I knew what I must do.

The great God calls from the desert night. I shall gather the last of the flesh to carry me through the desert, and I shall heed His song...

Rovagug ftaghn! Ph'nglui agll xthan't Rovagug! Rovagug ftaghn!

Ravager of Rovagug

by Justin "Black Fang" Sluder

Art by Hugo "Butterfrog" Solis

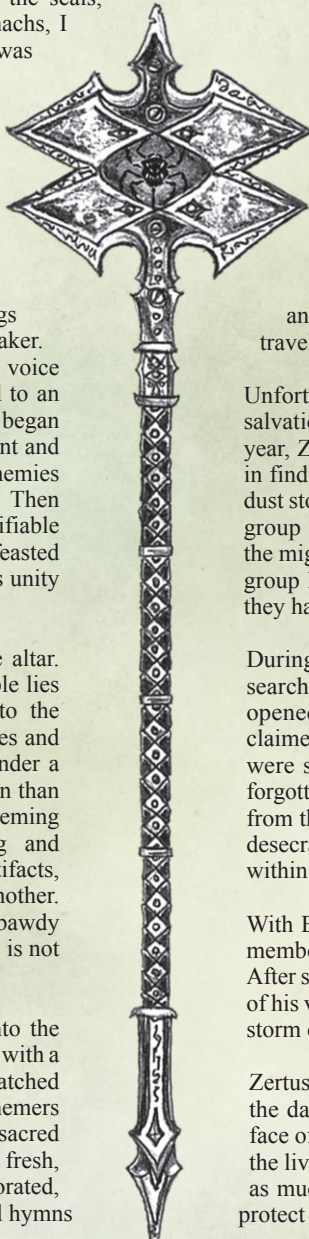
Born the fifth son of a Qadiran spice merchant, Zertus spent his youth helping his father during spice runs. Upon reaching adulthood, Zertus entered the priesthood of Irori and began traveling the deserts of Qadira helping travelers wherever he found them.

Unfortunately, Zertus was not destined to remain a salvation to those lost in the sands. In his twentieth year, Zertus assisted a small group of archaeologists in finding their way back to the Silken Road when a dust storm unlike any seen before fell upon them. The group found shelter within a cave and marveled at the might and duration of the storm. For a month, the group lived in the cave, rationing what few supplies they had left.

During the second month of the storm, Zertus was searching the supplies for any remaining food and opened a crate containing what the group leader claimed were simple, salvaged artifacts, but in reality were sacred relics stolen from the tomb of a long forgotten high priest of Rovagug. Upon lifting Breaker from the crate, Zertus received a vision of the tombs desecration. The revelation awoke a ravenous hunger within Zertus.

With Breaker in hand, Zertus made his way to each member of the group, murdering them one by one. After slaying the last, he gorged himself upon the flesh of his victims. Only once his hunger was sated did the storm outside end.

Zertus had a new purpose in life — to destroy. Since the day of the storm's end, Zertus has traveled the face of Golarion slaying those he can and destroying the lives of those who escape him. He always carries as much fresh human flesh with him at all times to protect himself from starvation.



Zertus Hargon – CR 10

Male ravenous human cleric of Rovagug 5/fighter 4 (*Advanced Bestiary* 211)

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+3 Dex, +7 armor, +2 deflection)

hp 84 (5d8+4d10+36); fast healing 10

Fort +13, Ref +6, Will +10; (+1 against fear effects)

DR 5/-

Defensive Abilities armor training

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.; Sprint

Melee Breaker +15/+10 (2d6+11/x3 plus *shatter*) and bite +9 (1d4+3) or

unarmed strike +14 (1d3+7) and bite +9 (1d4+3)

Special Attacks Power Charge +2d6, battle smite, channel energy (negative) 2/day, destructive smite, favored prey (humanoid +2, human +4), hungry special attacks

Spell-like Abilities (CL 5th):

2/day – *inflict light wounds* (DC 10), *magic weapon*

1/day – *shatter* (DC 11), *spiritual weapon*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th):

3rd – *animate dead*, *bestow curse* (DC 17)

2nd – *bull's strength*, *death knell* (DC 16), *undetectable alignment*

1st – *bane* (DC 15) (2), *entropic shield*, *shield of faith*

0 (at will) – *bleed* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*

Domains: Destruction, War.

TACTICS

Before Combat Zertus begins each day by feeding upon human flesh and casting undetectable alignment. If he expects combat, he casts *bull's strength*, *entropic shield* and *shield of faith*.

Active spells are factored into Zertus' stats.

During Combat Zertus attacks foes he perceives as weak before moving onto strong opponents.

Morale Zertus fights without mercy. If reduced to 10 hit points or less, he withdraws until he is fully healed.

STATISTICS

Str 24, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8

Base Atk +7; CMB +14

Feats Athletics^B, Blind-Fight^B, Cleave^B, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Grapple^B, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder^B, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Power Attack^B, Power Charge

Skills Acrobatics +11 (+16 when jumping), Climb +15, Escape Artist +7, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (engineering) +7, Knowledge (religion) +8, Linguistics +5, Perception +12, Spellcraft +8, Stealth +7, Survival +19, Swim +7

Language Common, Goblin, Kelish, Orc, Osiriani

SQ ageless, bravery, cannibalistic healing, ravenous body, skilled, weapon training

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (30 charges); Other Gear *Breaker*, +1 *mithral breastplate*, *bracers of resistance* +1, *boots of striding and springing*, *handy haversack*, 7 gp, 28 sp, 20 cp.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ageless (Ex): Zertus does not age.

Cannibalistic Healing (Ex): So long as Zertus has fed upon human flesh within the last 24 hours, he has fast healing 10. Feeding on a human killed within the last hour heals all ability damage and ability drain.

Favored Prey (Ex): Zertus gains a +2 bonus on damage rolls against humanoids and a +2 bonus on Bluff, Perception, Sense Motive and Survival checks when using these skills against humanoids. Against humans, each of these bonuses increases to +4.

Hungry Special Attacks (Ex): Any human takes a -2 penalty on saving throws against Zertus' spells and special attacks.

Ravenous Body (Su): Zertus can eat other food, but only the flesh of humans satiates his hunger. He must feed on human flesh at least once every three days or suffer the effects of starvation.

Sprint (Ex): Once per hour, Zertus can move at ten times his normal speed when he makes a charge.

Skills: Zertus has a +4 bonus on Escape Artist, Intimidate and Stealth checks, and a +8 bonus on Acrobatics, Climb, Perception and Survival checks.

Breaker

Aura faint evocation [sonic]; CL 5th

Slot none; Price 8,340 gp; Weight 14 lb.

DESCRIPTION

Forged in an age before Earthfall, this +1 *earth breaker* is sacred to the faithful of Rovagug. On a successful critical hit, a *shatter* (DC 13) effect activates.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *shatter*; Cost 4,340 gp

Power Charge (General)

Once you start a charge, you become extremely dangerous.

Prerequisites: Power Attack, Strength 13

Benefit: When using the charge action, you deal an additional +2d6 points of damage with a melee weapon on a successful attack. Do not multiply this damage in the case of a critical hit. ☼

Dear Ask a Shoanti

She is of the Moon Clan, I am of the Wind Clan. Can it ever work out?

Sincere Regards,

Dating in the Iron Peaks

Dear Dating in the Iron Peaks

It can and will, but only if you work at it. Remember to bring her parents a dead wyvern – it always makes an impression.

Yours very truly,

Ask a Shoanti

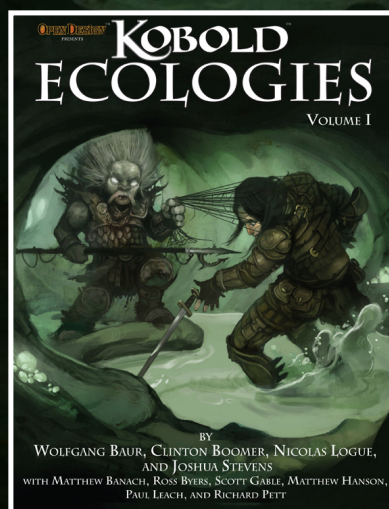
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Dawnflower Dervish of Sarenrae

By Lissa "SunshineGrrrl" Guillet
Art by Crystal "Immora" Frasier

The Dawnflower dervish sect of the Church of Sarenrae is a group of combat-oriented clerics working towards the destruction of evil. They wander the world to bring Sarenrae's light to its darkest corners.

The first of the Dawnflower dervishes were desert nomads who spread the faith of Sarenrae through their beautiful sword dances. Eventually other priests saw not only the beauty, but also the martial prowess that these dances conferred in combat. They shared this with the head church, which gave the Dawnflower dervishes official sanction and status.

A Dawnflower dervish of Sarenrae uses dance as a beautiful but deadly martial art. As the Dawnflower dervish dances, she channels a fragment of her patron goddess. In this way, a devout dervish becomes a burning whirlwind of divine justice.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Dawnflower dervish, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +4

Skills: Perform (Dance) 4 ranks, Tumble 4 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Focus (Scimitar).

Deity: Sarenrae.

Special: Ability to turn undead.

Class Skills

The Dawnflower dervish's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Craft (Int), Heal (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (religion), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Spellcraft (Int), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level

4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features for the Dawnflower dervish prestige class:

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Dawnflower dervishes gain no proficiencies with any armor or weapons.

Turn Undead (Su): A Dawnflower dervish of Sarenrae adds her levels in this class for all abilities related to turning undead.

Light Scimitars (Ex): A Dawnflower dervish learns to move with the grace of fire. She may treat scimitars as light weapons.

AC Bonus (Ex): A Dawnflower dervish gains a +1 bonus to armor class. This bonus to AC applies even to touch attacks or when she is flat-footed. She loses this bonus whenever she is helpless or immobile, wearing medium or heavy armor, carrying a shield, or carrying a medium or heavy load. This bonus increases to +2 at 5th level and +3 at 9th.

Dawnflower Dance (Ex): Once per encounter, a dervish can use a swift action to enter an ecstatic Dawnflower dance. She must be wielding a scimitar, and her other hand must hold a scimitar or be empty.

In this state, the Dawnflower dervish adds her Wisdom modifier or half her class level (whichever is lower) to all scimitar attack and damage rolls. In addition, if the Dawnflower dervish charges a foe, she can make a full attack (instead of a single attack).

While dancing, the Dawnflower dervish cannot cast spells (except as described under domain dance) or activate magic items that require a command word, a spell trigger (such as a wand), or a spell completion (such as a scroll) to function. She can use bardic performances that utilize Perform (dance).

The Dawnflower dance lasts a number of rounds equal to 4 + half her Dawnflower dervish level. A dervish may prematurely end the dance. At the end of the dance, the Dawnflower dervish loses the dance's benefits and restrictions, and becomes fatigued for the remainder of the encounter.

A Dawnflower dervish can use this ability once per day at 1st level. At 3rd level, and every odd level after that, she can use Dawnflower dance an additional time per day.

Domain Dance (Su): At every even level, a Dawnflower dervish may choose one of Sarenrae's domains. The dervish may cast divine spells from the chosen domain (whether as domain spells or from her regular slots) during a Dawnflower dance. This ability does not give access to the domain's spells or granted powers; just the ability to cast those spells during a Dawnflower dance.

In addition, whenever a dervish casts a spell from a chosen domain during a Dawnflower dance, she gains magical effect related to the spell's domain. This effect lasts until the end of her next turn, until she is disarmed, or the Dawnflower dance ends. While any of these effects are active, the Dawnflower dervish's scimitar attacks are treated as good-aligned for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

Fire: The dervish's scimitar(s) ignites with fire, gaining the *flaming* weapon quality.

Glory: Golden runes appear along the scimitar(s) blade. It deals an extra 1d6 points of damage to evil outsiders.

Good: The dervish's scimitar(s) glows with golden light, radiating a *magic circle against evil*.

Healing: The scimitar(s) loses its luster. The dervish may choose to deal nonlethal damage with the weapon without penalty.

Sun: The dervish's scimitar(s) trails sunlight, which inflicts an extra 1d6 points of damage to undead.

Multiple instances of the same effect do not stack.

Fast Movement (Ex): At 2nd level, a Dawnflower dervish gains a 5-foot enhancement bonus to her speed. At 5th level this becomes 10-feet and at 8th level this becomes 15-feet. A Dawnflower dervish loses this bonus if she is wearing medium or heavy armor, carrying a shield, or carrying a medium or heavy load.

Spells per Day: At each level (except 1st, 5th, and 9th), the Dawnflower dervish gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in any one divine spellcasting class she belonged to previously. She does not gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If a character had more than one divine spellcasting class before she became a Dawnflower dervish, she must decide to which class she adds each level of Dawnflower dervish for the purpose of determining spells per day.

Dance Mastery (Ex): At 3rd level, a Dawnflower dervish may take 10 on any Balance, Perform (dance), or Tumble at any time, even in times of stress.

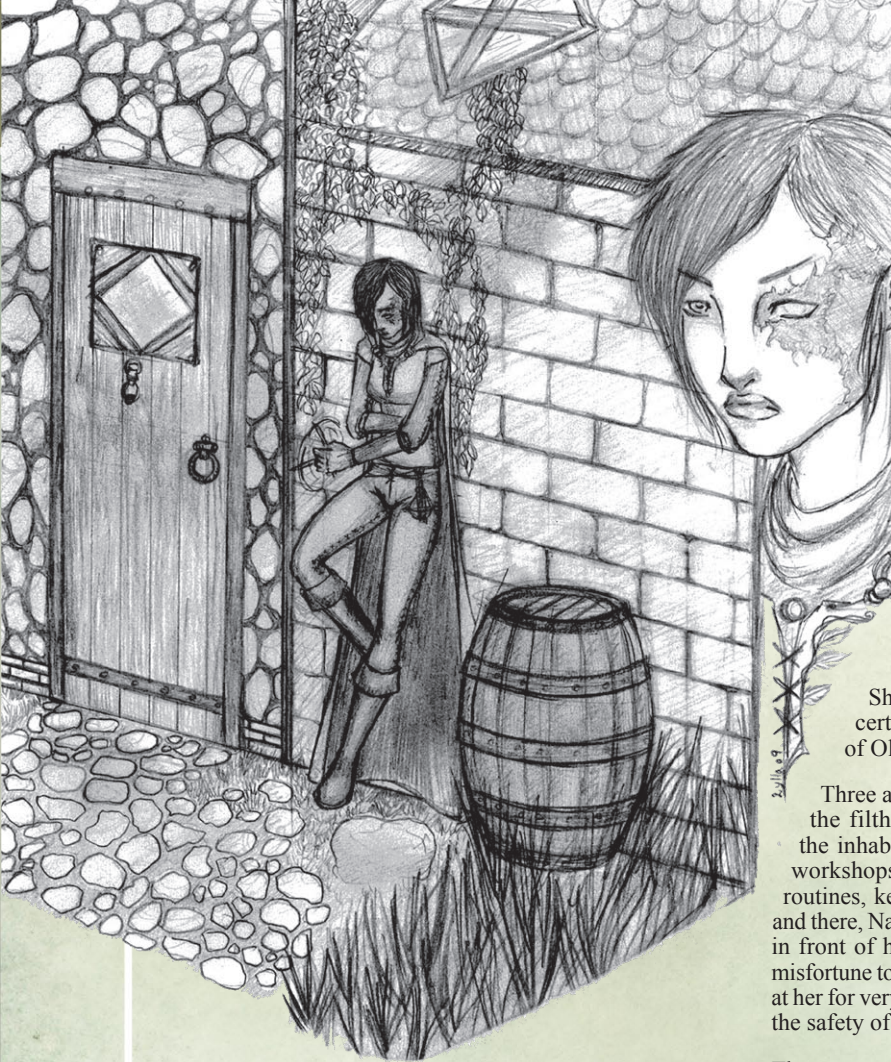
Elaborate parry (Ex): At 7th level, a Dawnflower dervish gains an extra +4 bonus to Armor Class when she fights defensively or uses all-out defense.

Tireless Dance (Ex): At 9th level, a Dawnflower dervish is no longer fatigued after a Dawnflower dance.

Dawnflower Blossom (Su): At 10th level, while performing a Dawnflower dance, a dervish can gain the magical effects of domain dance by expending one or more turn attempts as a swift action. The Dawnflower dervish may activate any number of domain dance effects of her choice. These effects last for two rounds per turn attempt expended, until she is disarmed, or the Dawnflower dance ends. For example, a Dawnflower dervish can expend two turn attempts to keep the Fire, Sun, and Good domain effects up for four rounds.

In addition, while these effects are active, a Dawnflower dervish radiates *daylight* as the spell, except that it dispels spells with the Darkness descriptor of 6th level or lower. ☼

Level	Fort BAB	Ref Save	Will Save	AC Bonus	Special	Spell Progression
1 st	+0	+0	+2	+2	+1	Dawnflower Dance 1/day, Light Scimitars, Turn Undead -
2 nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	+1	Domain Dance, Fast Movement +5 ft +1 level existing divine class
3 rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	+1	Dance Mastery, Dawnflower Dance 2/day +1 level existing divine class
4 th	+3	+1	+4	+4	+1	Domain Dance +1 level existing divine class
5 th	+3	+1	+4	+4	+2	Fast Movement +10 ft, Dawnflower Dance 3/day -
6 th	+4	+2	+5	+5	+2	Domain Dance +1 level existing divine class
7 th	+5	+2	+5	+5	+2	Elaborate Parry, Dawnflower Dance 4/day +1 level existing divine class
8 th	+6	+2	+6	+6	+2	Domain Dance, Fast Movement +15 ft +1 level existing divine class
9 th	+6	+3	+6	+6	+3	Tireless Dance, Dawnflower Dance 5/day -
10 th	+7	+3	+7	+7	+3	Dawnflower Blossom +1 level existing divine class



Life in Korvosa

By Ernesto "Montalve" Ramirez

Art by Michelle "Mishi" C. & Conceicao "Lylla4" Hallen

The pain was unbearable.

An agonizing wait filled the space between each new drop falling – my face became a burning sea, each new drop a wave of fire. Held in eternity, I waited for the next wave, dreading that fire, but it never came. Instead, scared and angry screams replaced the laughter to which I had become far too accustomed.

The soft familiar sound of leather boots became too slowly distant and the clamor of steel followed. A metal arm grabbed at me. I made myself small; I tried to move away. But the arm grabbed me anyway. Then I heard the voice and stopped struggling. "By the Vault's Perfect Key, what did those animals do to you?"

The hard soil was gone; instead arms of icy steel cradled me.

The pain was unbearable, but that was good... it meant I would live.

Natalia leaned against a store wall, silent and calm except for her left hand. In it she held a cruel looking switchblade which she flipped open, habitually, every so often in a casual automatic movement requiring no conscious effort.

She wore an old dark leather outfit stained with grease between the colors. Short raven hair and emerald eyes highlighted her silky white skin. She was beautiful, except for the scar. Half the left side of her face flowed like melted wax, wrinkled and discolored – her eye an empty milky orb that just followed the movement of the right one, the normal one.

She seemed distracted, unfocused, yet moved with certainty through her surroundings, the seedy side of Old Korvosa.

Three and four story buildings loomed overhead, filling the filthy, narrow alleys with long shadows. Most of the inhabitants were working, at either the docks or the workshops. Those that remained slept after their nightly routines, keeping away from the streets even by day. Here and there, Natalia noticed someone in a window of the building in front of her. Sometimes a kid or an old woman had the misfortune to notice Natalia, who snarled at them if they looked at her for very long. Those unfortunates crept quickly back into the safety of the holes from whence they came.

The narrow alleys would make most claustrophobic, but not Natalia. Experienced with working and moving in tight places, she worried more about open areas where anyone lingering at crumbling windows might see her and take interest; she kept herself to the shadows with a snarl on her lips and her blade moving in hand, open then closed, habitual, automatic, threatening.

Jedediah walked slowly to the door of his house, though he could hardly call it a house. It lacked the elegance, the artistry of architecture, of the apartments in Midland District. It was barely more than a room.

He stopped, gut instinct kicking in even before he saw the slim figure leaning beside his door. The figure had already noticed him, twisting the weapon it held ready in its hand ever so slightly toward him. Jedediah took a breath and approached, but not before surreptitiously feeling for the dagger hidden in his sleeve.

The figure, now clearly visible as a woman, concealed her weapon and moved away from the wall, stepping directly into his path. She showed her now empty hands, allowed her face to soften a bit. "Come on Jed, you know I mean no harm," she said. "Keep your hands off that dagger – you are not as fast as you once were."

Jedediah shook his head and breathed out in frustration with a huff and a glare, but put his hands in front of him all the same. He might not be getting any younger, but he still had enough wits and reflexes about him to keep on top of his game, even without the dagger. "What do you want, Miss Crow?" he asked, "You know you are not permitted here. He won't be pleased."

Natalia shrugged, her eyes watching his. Jedediah felt a shiver run through his body when he met the dead, expressionless orb on her left side. "You know what I want Jed," she said.

He expected and feared that answer and shook his head vigorously. "You know I can't sell you any more pesh," he whispered angrily, "You know what your father would do to me if he found out."

Her expression changed suddenly from a moment of rage to sadness and then frustration. "I don't care what he thinks," she said, "he was never there. If he wants to protect one of his bastards he can go and find another one." Natalia bit her lip, the burning pain making her feel a bitterness she did not intend.

"Miss Crow," Jed said, hoping his next words would be enough to allow him to pass, "whatever problem you have with your kin is exactly that... your problem, so stop wasting my time." It was too much to hope for. One of her hands went to his torso, stopping him – the other grabbed his wrist as Jedediah instinctively let the dagger slip from his sleeve into his hand. She was inside his defenses before he had any time to react. Her face came close to his, the left milky eye looking directly into his eye, her scar almost brushing against his skin. Her lips so nearly touched his that anyone looking would mistake her for his lover.

Her whisper was sharp and cold like metal, piercing his flesh. "I will tell you this, once. I don't want pesh, I need it. It's the only damn thing that takes the pain away. You will sell it to me, or..."

"Or what?" said Jedediah, "Are you telling the guard about me?"

Natalia smiled, not a nice smile but a cold and calculated one. Her good eye looked at him intensely and she knew, whatever she said, she was going to have a hold over him. "Tell me, Jed, why aren't you using the guild's uniform, or the colors of your gang?" Jedediah went pale as she continued, "Oh sorry, I forgot. You are a freelancer, right? Why is that? In a city where the only legal guild is the criminal one, that makes you what?"

Jedediah went from pale to red so fast that Natalia almost began laughing. She took a breath and said calmly "Jed, don't take me wrong. I think your violation of the guild's rules is your own damn

business, but if I go through the guild, a friend of mine will know, and that imbecile would do anything in his power to keep me without my medicine. So let's be reasonable, Jed. Give me what I want and I will leave you alone."

He breathed deeply. The girl was nothing but trouble. For a moment he considered killing her and good riddance. But it was just a thought. He might risk getting caught selling to her, but he was not crazy enough to kill her. After all, she was a bastard of a Hellknight captain, killing her would have consequences. There were a lot of things they could do to a murderer, things worse than execution. The ruthless, relentless Order of the Nail never offered mercy or compassion.

Jedediah said nothing; he carefully opened his coat and took out a bag. He opened it, exposing five clay vials. Natalia took one with a steady hand and uncorked it. The milky, viscous liquid's smell assaulted her senses, and she slowly corked it again, putting it inside her belt pouch.

Natalia took a bag of her own, heavy with the sound of coin against coin. "This should be enough Jed... but let me ask you something first. What do you know about Lamm's little lambs?"

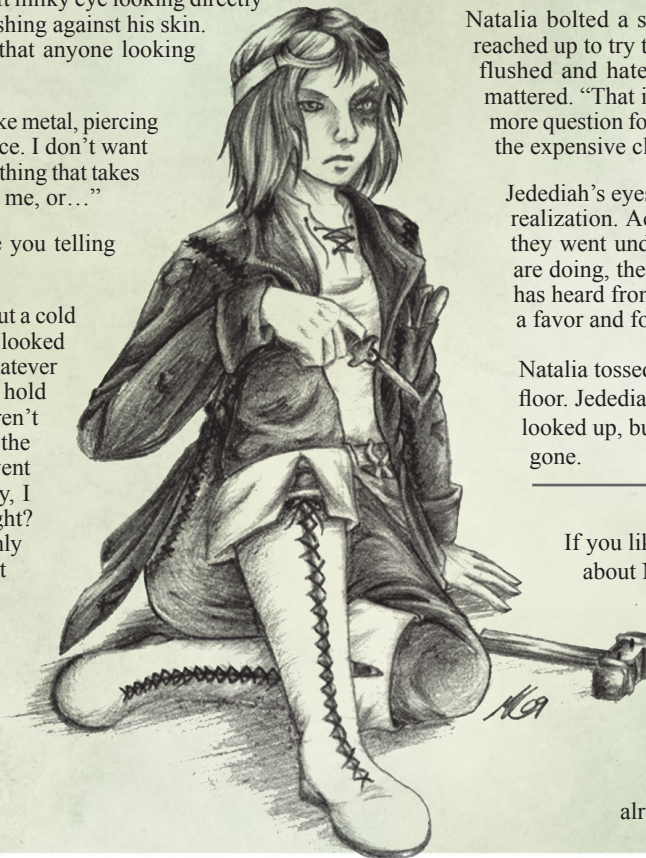
Jedediah forgot himself for a moment and burst into laughter. Just posing that question could end up haunting the mad girl. "Kid, forget about them. Lamm and his boys are monsters." He glanced meaningfully at the scars covering her face, "So, they were the ones, right?"

Natalia bolted a step back when Jedediah reached up to try to touch her scar. Her face flushed and hate filled the only eye that mattered. "That is my business. I have one more question for you. Who is the one with the expensive clothes?"

Jedediah's eyes lit up for a moment with realization. Acid. "Yargin. Months ago they went underground. Whatever they are doing, they are hiding well. No one has heard from them since. Do yourself a favor and forget about them."

Natalia tossed the bag of coins to the floor. Jedediah reached for the bag and looked up, but Natalia was already gone.

If you liked the above story, more about Natalia (in the near future) and other characters and stories can be found at <http://www.pathfinderchronicler.net/>, feel free to come around and comment on the stories already there. ☼





Claw of Abendego

By Eric "Epic Meepo" Morton

Art by Hugo "Butterfrog" Solis

Discovered by Pathfinders adventuring in the Sodden Lands, this pricey seafood dish has made inroads at lavish Taldan dinner parties, where it has become quite popular.

Ingredients

- 6 quarts of water
- 6 tablespoons of salt
- 4 pounds of meat from the combat claw of a monstrous Sodden Lands lobster
- 2 Tbsp thyme (optional)
- 2 tsp lemon juice, fresh (optional)
- 1 bay leaf (optional)

Preparation:

Add salt and any herbs used to water and heat to boiling in a large kettle. Add meat to water, cover and allow the water to again reach boiling. Simmer for ten minutes and drain. Remove and mince boiled meat.

Serving:

To serve in the style of a Taldoran dinner party, provide one pincer spoon for each dinner guest and place minced meat in a claw-shaped serving pan. Sprinkle meat liberally with crumbs of Taldan fish breading prior to serving. Serves 4.

Monstrous Lobster

This aquatic carnivore has a huge appetite, often attacking smaller creatures on sight. Its primary weapon is its single,

over-sized combat claw, which it uses to grab prey. The smaller claw opposite it is used as a secondary weapon.

Monstrous lobsters can be found in any sea, but are most often encountered off the coasts of the Sodden Lands, where constant storms and wild currents regularly deposit them in shallow waters, and provide an abundant influx of prey.

Monstrous lobsters do not die of old age. As a result, some alchemists claim that a diet of monstrous lobster meat contributes to a long and healthy life.

MONSTROUS LOBSTER – CR 5

Always N Huge vermin (aquatic)

Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft, Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20 (+12 natural, -2 size)

hp 75 (10d8+30)

Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +3

Weaknesses vulnerable to sunder

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee claw +11 (2d6+9 and improved grab) and claw +6 (1d8+3)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (15 ft. with primary claw)

Special Attacks constrict 2d6+9, improved grab

STATISTICS

Abilities Str 23, Dex 10, Con 16, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2

Base Atk +7; CMB +15

Skills Perception +4, Stealth -4, Swim +14

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Constrict (Ex): A monstrous lobster deals automatic combat claw damage on a successful grapple maneuver. A monstrous lobster whose combat claw is broken loses this ability.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a monstrous lobster must hit with a combat claw attack. A monstrous lobster whose combat claw is broken loses this ability.

Vulnerable to Sunder: A sunder combat maneuver can be used to break a monstrous lobster's combat claw (15 hit points, hardness 5). If its claw is broken, the monstrous lobster immediately drops any creature it is grappling. Until its claw heals in 1d4 weeks, the monstrous lobster cannot use its combat claw melee attack, its constrict special attack, or its improved grab special attack.

Skills: A monstrous lobster has a +4 racial bonus on Perception and Stealth checks. Due to its swim speed it receives a +8 racial bonus on Swim checks. ☼

"Golarion, a living land where legends are born...
...from the ink of a Pathfinder's Quill.



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Chronicles of Xain Marrick

By Colter "Dreamweaver" Guthrie

Art by Ashton "N'wah" Sperry

Erastus 1, 4708

We are to the last leg of our journey, but the last week of travel was the easy part. The mountain we must climb looks treacherous and there is no real path up to the lake. Raynard's map is pretty good, but I don't see any trail indicated. That is the way most maps are. Raynard Forbes is my Venture Captain, who I just met the week prior. After training in the Grand Lodge in Absalom, I was sent to Kintargo in Cheliah to meet him. Raynard is an older man in his late forties. His friend and fellow Pathfinder, Andis Shem, are the leaders of the expedition. Two other young men,— Kelson Mort, a local man ready to prove himself and Jaz Lem, a young man that lived his entire life in Absalom — make up the rest of the team. Having recently come into the possession of a map leading to an ancient tomb in northern Cheliah, Raynard needed a couple of younger men to carry the supplies and set up a base camp near the tomb's location. Kelson, Jaz and I were tasked with carrying up the extra provisions for the camp, which we later found out mostly consisted of dwarvish whiskey.

I have heard this happens quite frequently when Raynard and Andis get together on expeditions. Anyway, five days after we set out, Raynard and Andis will follow with more supplies and meet us at the base camp.

We set out from Kintargo and headed up the Yolubilis River by boat to the base of the Menador Mountains. Once we could no longer travel by boat, we started the long hike into the mountains. The initial hike was uneventful outside of the entertaining questions and looks Jaz had as we traveled through the lower mountains. Tomorrow we will be leaving the well-used trail behind and heading straight up the mountain to our destination, Lighting Lake, where we will be setting up our base camp.

Erastus 2, 4708 Midday

The way was slow. Fallen trees formed high piles like the defensive walls around some villages. We quickly found that just climbing over them was faster than going around. That is, until Kelson stepped on the wrong tree branch and broke it.

We had just finished crossing a small river and came to what must have been the fifth or sixth major pile up of trees that morning. Jaz and I made it over the trees pretty quickly but Kelson's muscled body is better suited for swinging a sword than nimbly traversing logs. As I looked back to see how Kelson was progressing, he stepped down on a branch and it cracked. The strangest sound echoed through the pile of fallen trees, like trees flexing in a strong wind. The whole pile bucked and suddenly shifted. A tree limb shot out and swatted Kelson off the pile. I ducked as he soared over my head and crashed into a large bush. I looked up just as one of the trees stood up. It looked at Jaz and I with its strange eyes and then turned and headed down the mountain. After the shock passed, Jaz started rattling off questions but Kelson shouted over Jaz, "Would you shut up and help me?" So we spent the next few minutes pulling a rather foul tempered Kelson out of the brush. Other than some scraps and a bruised ego, he was unharmed, but after that encounter, we tried harder to find a way around the piles of fallen trees. We made it to the base of an old rockslide. None of us is really looking forward to the climb up the steep slope studded with loose boulders.

Erastus 2, 4708 Night

It is great to lie down next to the fire, even if it is small — we don't want to attract attention. I have had enough terror in my day. We started up the rockslide hopping from stone to stone, heckling each other at every near fall and slip. Now that we didn't

have to climb through and over trees, the mood improved and our pace increased. As I was climbing, I remembered when I was a kid my father warning me about rock slides and I was trying to remember what that was. It wasn't until I stepped down on a boulder that looked clean and safe that I remembered. Lichens, a type of moss, start growing on boulders, but only where the sun hits them. They also grow slowly – a lichen two inches across might be nearly one hundred years old. Boulders without lichens on them are the one that have shifted or fallen recently, usually the new looking boulders. This all came flooding back as the boulder shifted and started to roll. I managed to jump off the rock as it tipped over the edge and crashed down knocking more rocks loose. Jaz stared up at me, wide eyed for a second, before he scrambled like a little monkey over the rocks trying to get out of the path of destruction. Suddenly it seemed like the whole mountain came alive, rocks under my feet started to shift and some above us started rolling. Kelson darted behind a huge boulder. "Over here, quick!" he shouted as more rocks started falling all around us. Jaz darted and weaved, just missing some boulders until he got next to Kelson. I started running over the tops of the rocks as fast as I could. I was nearly safe when a rock that felt like an ogre's fist smashed into me and I went crashing to the ground. I remember the deafening roar of the rockslide, and I thought that this would be the end but a pair of strong arms grabbed me and drug me to safety. By the time my head cleared, the rockslide had slowed and only a few dozen small rocks were still bouncing down the mountain.

"That was great!!" Jaz shouted. "I haven't been that scared in my entire life." He spoke to soon.

Blood poured out of a cut on my head and my left arm was numb and already turning purple, but miraculously I made it out with no broken bones. Jaz handed me a clean cloth and bottle. The potion tasted foul but the cut quickly scabbed over and I could move my arm again. Just as I was going to voice my thanks to Kelson and Jaz, a terrible roar erupted from above us.

All three of us instinctively scampered under the huge boulder and waited. I could hear movement far above us, and my curiosity was too much, so I slowly crawled around the edge of the rock and peered up the mountain. My blood ran cold, as I laid eyes on the largest most terrifying creature I have ever seen. Smoke swirled around the horn on its nose as it tasted the air. Its eyes scanned the valley and the sun sparkled red off its large spiky scales as it looked up and down the valley. It slowly stepped out of the cave near the top of the mountain, rock shattering under its feet. It crouched and with a quick lunge, it spread its red wings and swooped down the mountain towards us.

I froze like a statue, my head poking out from under the boulder, watching the dragon beat its wings gathering speed. I could have almost reached out and touched its tail as it streaked over us and continued flying down the valley. I rolled over gasping for breath and trying to will my body to stop shaking, but it took several minutes before I could even sit up. I looked at Kelson and Jaz both staring at the horizon the dragon disappeared over. For the first time in several days, Jaz was silent.

"I didn't sign up for dragons," Kelson whispered and Jaz only nodded.

"It didn't even see us, we will be fine," I said hoping that I sounded more confident than I felt. "Besides, I think that was a pretty young one, probably no older than you or I."

I have always been good at making things sound better than they really are. A red dragon that was three days old could probably roast us alive with a sneeze, but I still entertained the thought of checking out the cave above us. Kelson and Jaz would have never followed me, which was probably a good thing too. I have plenty of time to tempt fate in the future, I hope. We made it to the lake and set up camp.

My muscles are sore, my belly is full and I am ready for some rest. Hopefully our neighbor will not be coming back soon. I don't want my journal to be filled with only a couple pages when someone finds its charred remains. If so, it would be a good start and finish to my Pathfinder career.

Xain Marrick, Pathfinder ☼

Dear Ask a Shoanti

The Dungeon Master has advised my party and I that next week we will face a challenge that will hinge upon Diplomacy. Any advice?
*Sincere Regards,
Not Exactly a Class Skill*

Dear Not Exactly a Class Skill

This is a delicate problem and one that will require both careful thought and patience. I advise you to take pause and consider the encounter most carefully. For example, should you pummel your foes with your earthbreaker or the klar? Should you charge on round one, or first soften them up with a salvo from your bow? These, I am afraid, are situational game time decisions. Best of luck,
*Yours very truly,
Ask a Shoanti*



A Lost Pathfinder's Journal: From Talithia's Tomb

By Paris Crenshaw

Art by Hugo "Butterfrog" Solis

*Do you want to know a secret?
Do you promise not to tell?
Do you want to know what's lurking
In the dead White Witch's well?
Come closer, now, my children,
Lest my whispers carry long
The deepest, darkest secrets
Hidden here, within my song.
And once my song has ended,
'Ere I free you from my spell,
You'll be sure to keep my secrets
When I drag you down to Hell!*

Irrisen children's rhyme

16 Erastus, 4707 AR

After all these years, after all I've seen, you'd think I'd have known better. The fact is I don't know near as much as I thought. None of us did.

It won't end for me like it did for them. I've got some time. They won't come in here. They might be waiting for me, but they can't get in. As long as my decanter works, I'll have plenty of water. I'm just trying not to think about food, that's going to be a problem, eventually.

There's not much to do, now, so I'll take my time and tell you what happened. If you're reading this, you'll need all the help you can get.

I realized early in my career that I might one day make a journal entry like this; as a Pathfinder, I've read them myself often enough. I'm prepared. I bought this book in Oregent just in case. Anya gave me the quill as an anniversary gift. She enchanted it so I'd never have to worry about carrying ink bottles – always practical, Anya.

I'm stalling because I don't know how to start. I suppose I'll begin with our location. We're a hundred feet below Hoarwood Forest in southeastern Irrisen. The catacombs above us are where my team expected to find the resting place of the White Witch, Talithia. A daughter of Queen Lisgeria, history tells us Talithia died in 3911, two years before Baba Yaga replaced Lisgeria with her next chosen daughter, Kirstienna.

According to the legends, Queen Lisgeria didn't inter Talithia beneath the palace in Whitethrone. Instead, she buried her daughter in a sealed tomb somewhere far from Irrisen's capital. She never told anyone how her daughter died or why she buried her so far away. They say many questioned why the queen hadn't raised her daughter from death. Others whispered that she had tried, but failed. All rumors faded quickly, though, even if they survived as footnotes in histories. Baba Yaga's Riders began their rounds shortly after Talithia's death. When the Three Riders appear, the people of Irrisen stop talking, one way or another.

But that's just history. You've just stumbled into this room, you poor souls. Hopefully, you've found my body, if there's anything left, and discovered that the creatures won't cross the threshold or come through the walls. I don't know why, but I think it's related to the altar. I just wish I could make them stop the scratching noises. If they want to get at me, they might as well wait for Aroden to return. I wouldn't let them take Anya; they won't take me.

Finding the tomb's entrance proved difficult. We'd spent weeks searching the archives at the Lodge in Absalom before visiting the library at Augustana, and still we didn't know quite what to look for. Anyone who delves into Irrisen lore knows you don't get much help from the locals, so we didn't search bother searching here in Irrisen. Folks in these frozen lands are either fanatically loyal to the queen or too scared to talk.

It took us several days in Hoarwood Forest to find the tomb. We barely avoided Hoarwood's troll squads, even though we stayed clear of Anelisha and Grathis's accursed palace. We

fought a few snow goblins and their winter wolves. Our most dangerous foe was the cold. Without Anya's magic, we might not have survived it.

As it turned out, our clue came from Irrisen—a sick old nursery rhyme. The entrance does look like a well. We had to figure out the right notes, but Sarrish managed to sing it correctly and a platform rose up to meet us.

We'd read that Talithia was buried with all of her house servants. We found plenty of crypts, just no bones. We should have recognized the danger then, but we weren't worried. We'd dealt with undead before. With Anya's prayers to Sarenrae we thought we were well prepared.

We had passed through all those chambers without encountering even one skeleton. We were actually disappointed. We thought that no servants meant not finding Talithia's remains either. We felt better once we reached the central crypt. The sarcophagus with the cat, dog, and tree motifs must belong to a White Witch.

Ever the scholar, Sarrish pointed out the lack of gates in the carvings first. There had to be a good reason for excluding such an important Irrisen symbol.

Foolishly, I opened the coffin. I've never made a worse decision. At the time, though, it seemed like genius. The empty sarcophagus proved to be the gateway leading to a deeper level—that is once I found the mechanism that opened the door within the box.

If you're reading this, you already know why we didn't find any bones. They line the walls down here. Only now there were too many bones. It's obvious that more than just the servants' bones went toward building these tunnels.

We'd only just made it past the entry chamber of this new level when they came at us. They took Orsen first. He'd stopped to take a rock out of his boot. He leaned against the wall of bones, and it rippled and shivered. Claws, shadowy limbs made of bones from many creatures, reached out toward him.

From the way Orsen screamed when they grabbed him, their touch must have hurt like hellfire. It took them only seconds to reduce him to bare bones. He screamed the whole time. It sounds crazy, but his bones still screamed when they merged with the wall.

They kept coming, moving in the walls. I couldn't get a good

look at one. They were all shadow and very fast. We kept moving. They kept up. They didn't come at us in force until we got to the circular room beyond this chamber.

I've been a tracker my whole life. I knew we'd been herded. When I saw that door—those carvings of worms and eyes and gods only know what else—I wasn't going through it without a fight.

We closed ranks and fought back to back. Nothing seemed to work against them. We couldn't tell if we were fighting the same creatures or new ones that arrived to replace those that fell. When Sarrish died, I knew we couldn't last. I took Anya's hand and headed for the door.

They grabbed her just at the threshold. I tried to pull her free, but couldn't. She screamed, my precious Anya. Her eyes said everything when she looked at me that last time. I don't know if she heard my last words to her, but I hope so. One dagger thrust ended her pain, and they left her alone. They were backing off when the door slammed shut. I think it's locked with magic.

So, here I am—and if you're reading this, so are you. I'm not sure how long I've been here. I haven't explored, much. The altar is not of Irrisen design. Sarrish probably knew more. It's probably been here since before Baba Yaga conquered the territory.

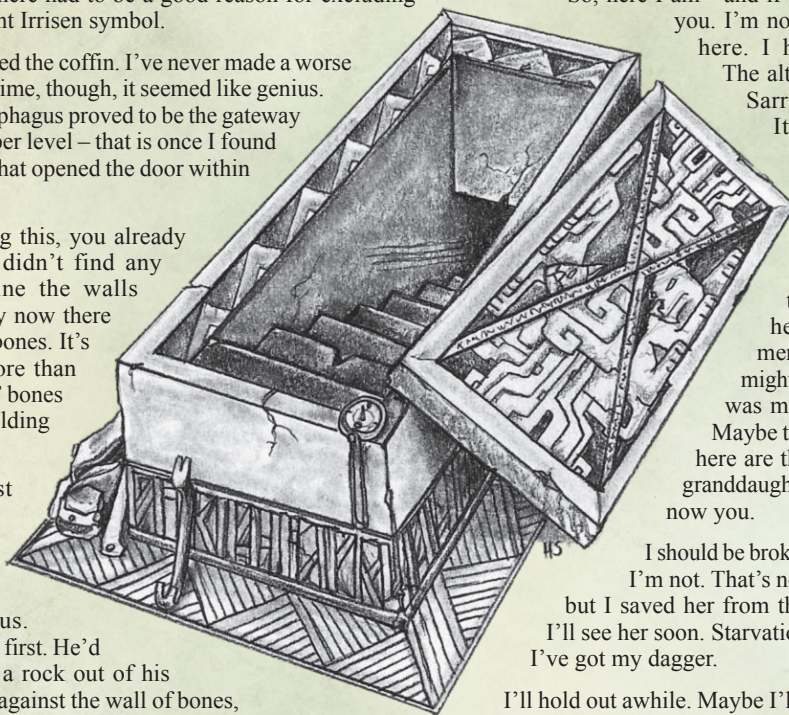
A few theories about Talithia suggested she had dabbled with powers that Baba Yaga denied even her children. There was no mention of what those powers might have been. I'm not sure this was meant to be Talithia's crypt. Maybe the only things buried down here are the secrets of a disobedient granddaughter. And me, of course. And now you.

I should be broken with grief and horror, but I'm not. That's not my nature. Anya's gone, but I saved her from those things. Gods willing, I'll see her soon. Starvation's a tough way to go, but I've got my dagger.

I'll hold out awhile. Maybe I'll think of a way out. If not, I'll take the shortcut to the Bone Yard and get in line on my own terms. This place wouldn't be so bad if it weren't for the incessant scraping.

If you find a way out, please take my quill with you. Anya would have liked that. If you don't make it, feel free to make some notes of your own. I've left a few pages for you.

The scraping seemed to come from the walls at first, but now I think it's coming from the altar. It's getting louder. I'm going to check it out. ☹



emc
'09

Pathfinders of Qadira – Suri's Chapbook

By Theodore "Zuxius" Thompson

Art by Liz "Lilith" Courts

23 Pharast 4709 AR, Late Evening – Katheer, Majeer's Weaponry and Antiquities

I arrived at Majeer's tent of Exotic Weaponry and Antiquities. Realizing they were already closed for the night, I went behind the tent to Mansoor's house and stared at the door. The last time I had seen it, Mansoor had been screaming at me to never set foot in his house again.

I knocked, feeling a tad anxious. I expected a frosty reception at my return, but Mansoor opened the door and smiled. I was so surprised at the warmth in his gaze that I smiled back. He invited me in and showed me about his home. Things had changed; I was completely spellbound by new additions of ancient relics that adorned his walls. Though not magical or notorious, an archaeologist such as I could see their intrinsic value. Mansoor's house had become a gallery of ancient art. There were a few pieces in particular that I wished I could study all night, but Mansoor literally pulled me away.

He led me down a long hall to his lavish new study. My jaw dropped as I took in the room, for it had artifacts, maps, and hunting trophies, as well as certificates and medals of everything Mansoor had ever accomplished. I turned to him and commended his success.

He then left for a moment and returned with a neatly organized tea set. He poured two cups and offered one to me. I drew the tea close to have a sip, but stopped when my eyes saw the ancient engravings on the cups. Mansoor noticed my surprise with a twinkle in his eye.

"Yes Suri, we found this entire set in the Royal Naefsta's burial chamber. Believe it or not, it was meant for his cat to drink from, somewhere in the great beyond."

I laughed, for this was a tea set of kings, or at least a king's cat. I shook my head at the story and brought the teacup close to my lips once more. I hoped to gain strength from the kay leaves that lay within. It had been a long day.

As we sipped our tea, Mansoor and I shared a moment of silence. I glanced around the study until I noticed a small painting of his daughter. I looked away hoping Mansoor hadn't noticed, but he had. At that moment I felt compelled to say something.

"I am sorry for what happened between your daughter and I. I have wanted –" Mansoor cut me off in mid-speech, raising his hand.

"The past is done Suri, I should have used more discretion with my daughter. I could have been ahead of things, but I was preoccupied. It was my fault that I put you both in such a situation, but she is married now, and all is well. So let us move ahead and forget the past."

Mansoor studied me for a moment as I reveled at the artifacts on his wall, hesitating. "Suri, I will be moving out of this house very soon to one of the richest homes in Katheer. My dreams are coming true, my friend." Mansoor looked around the room as if somehow this room's greatness was shallow. He sighed deeply.

"Suri, the Qadiran desert is a deadly place. Many have died out there. Many Pathfinders. I know you have respect for my methods, as well as our Kelishite customs, and that will go far in saving your life. But the work in these ruins is very tricky. My father and mother passed many in their travels, but kept their distance from them. They knew few ever returned." Mansoor stood up and looked at the wall I was studying.

"Now, tell me, what do you see on that wall?"

I looked over the artifacts for a moment until a modest plate caught my eye. "I see a plate that is nearly two thousand years old. The inscriptions on that plate are arranged in Old Qadiran. If I were to guess, I would say it was one of the ceremonial plates of the Dune Druids." I turned to Mansoor confidently.

Mansoor nodded his head. "Yes, I think you are right. I didn't know that, until now. This piece was found at a ruin guarded

by an iron golem. It surprised us, killing three of my friends and nearly me. That protector had been in that ruin for many ages, covered with spider webs and dust, until we woke it. To me, this plate is no more than a grim reminder of what can be lost. Good friends.” Mansoor went red in the face and brushed at his eyes with his hand.

“Come, my friend, I have a room prepared.”

24 Pharast 4709 AR Noon – Katheer, Mansoor’s Home

I awoke late the next day to a knock at the door and Mansoor’s voice behind it, asking if I would join him in his study. I agreed and quickly dressed. When I entered the study, Mansoor was reading an open letter using his eyepiece. He motioned for me to sit down. After a moment, the eyepiece slipped from his face and fell to his side. He sighed, looking at the letter one last time before putting it down.

I stood up, but he asked me to sit once more. Mansoor then left the room and returned with the tea set we had used the night before. He poured kay leaf for both of us and handed me a cup. With the tea he had also brought bread and grapes for me to eat. He then sat down next to me and put his hands together.

“Suri, we have found a temple, a defiled one. We need to identify it. Victonius, one of my pathfinders, recently discovered it. If we can learn more about it, we may be able to find clues to solving...questions. Are you up to it?” Mansoor’s eyebrows raised inquiringly, though his facial expression showed reluctance.

“Of course Mansoor, it’s what I do.” I said reassuringly.

“Okay, okay. Then you will be going.” Mansoor pulled out a map and a magnifying glass.

We spent the rest of the afternoon discussing the temple, with no more signals of his reluctance.

Victonius had found the temple by accident, stumbling upon a Rovagug cult in the middle of a gruesome ceremony. The cultists were not pleased, and tried to kill him. Victonius, being a Hellknight, decided he would kill them first, and did so. Beyond that, Mansoor provided little other details.

I was intrigued, and Mansoor let me know the cultists’ desecration of the temple made it hard to identify. To help me, he had made a few sketches of the exterior. I noticed it was incomplete in places, and he explained that the temple was still mostly under sand. We spent hours looking through every source in Mansoor’s home, but found nothing to tie it to. Exhausted, Mansoor declared he would wait until morning to discuss the arrangements for my travel there. As we closed our books and maps, the intoxicating smell of chicken led us to the kitchen.

For dinner, Mansoor’s wife had created a feast of stuffed game hens with Hisem-spiced vegetables. Qadiran meals heighten one’s awareness of what a meal can be, and the food did not stop coming that night until I refused everything offered. Mansoor then pulled out a hookah and we both smoked as his wife brought us tall bottles of thick Qadiran ale.

After that, I quickly forgot the rest of that evening.

25 Pharast 4709 AR Next Morning – Katheer, Mansoor’s Home

I awoke feeling refreshed, despite the ale, eager to head to the site. I met Mansoor for breakfast, and we discussed the details of the trip. He gave me maps and instructions for the trail. The temple was 150 miles south of Katheer and Mansoor had men there, waiting to assist. A camp had been staged near the site secretly so as not to draw attention. Everything seemed straightforward as Mansoor walked me to Majeer’s tent, until he admitted to having one more thing to say.

“Suri, I was at the temple. There is something strange about it. Call it my ‘soldier’s intuition’ warning me. There could be a reason why a cult of Rovagug chose that place. Be careful.” Mansoor reached out and lightly gripped my shoulder. It was the first time he and I had touched since the night I was with his daughter. He put his hand down and smiled, turning away.

I thought for a moment about what he had said since I arrived, and then headed inside the tent. I procured an old dusty carpet, leaning in a corner. This mangy thing was never touched by anyone but pathfinders. It wasn’t for sale. Mansoor’s brother, Majeer, didn’t even blink as I grabbed it. “*Kirak*,” I spoke, and the carpet transformed into a brilliant tapestry that floated just off the ground.

I stepped aboard the carpet. The temple awaited. ☼

Dear Ask a Shoanti

There is no separate entry for Shoanti in the Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign Setting hardcover. Does Paizo not love us anymore?

*Sincere regards,
Heartbroken of the Lyrune-Quah*

Dear Heartbroken

Not at all. The key thing to remember is that the book contains more Shoanti weapons than weapons for any other group. This is what counts. No one reads the other parts of the book.

*Yours very truly,
Ask a Shoanti*

Like Lightning

By Craig "flash_cxxi" Johnston

Art by Hugo "Butterfrog" Solis

From the Journal of Kem Kepi – 15 Gozran 1407

Today I finally found what I've been searching for these past few weeks. Ironically, after all that time sifting through the desert, I stumbled across it by accident. I found a small village and took refuge for the night. One of the residents kindly offered me the use of their small but serviceable barn and provided a simple but nourishing meal. As I prepared to bed down, my night shirt snagged on a bent nail in the floor. Cursing, I attempted to free it and found that the floorboard was loose. At that point it suddenly hit me. Why did they even have floorboards in here? Curious, perhaps more than good sense would allow, I slowly pried the board up, making as little noise as I could so that I could take a look. Black. Pitch black. I quickly ran over to my pack and pulled a sunrod from it, activating it and allowing it to shine into the space between the floorboards. I thought I could see what might have been a floor below me, but I wasn't quite sure. Oh well, I thought, and dropped the sunrod through the hole, watching it drop a short distance and bounce across what appeared to be a stone floor. Smiling to myself, I grabbed my gear and got dressed in record time, my armor securely fitted and a rope and grappling hook resting snugly in my hands. I set about pulling up enough floorboards to allow me access and secured the rope tightly to a hitching post, letting it trail away into the now much larger hole. Checking my equipment one last time, I prepared to descend into the darkness as the midnight hour approached.

16 Gozran 1407

As soon as I had lowered myself to the floor some forty feet below, I rushed to the sunrod and picked it up, swinging it around to get a good look at the place. It was a fairly large room by the looks of it, but completely barren of any decoration at all. Faint red traces marked the floor

and what appeared to be viewing rooms spaced around the upper reaches of the walls looked ominously down upon the floor where I stood. I couldn't believe my luck! I had found an ancient arena for pit fighting located right under the noses of the peasants above. Amazing! I could see four large doors in each wall, but rusting barred gates still secure after all this time barred the way to three of them. That makes my decision easy, I thought as I headed off down the eastern tunnel, the sunrod held before me to light the way.

After a about twenty feet the tunnel curved and appeared to loop back towards the southern tunnel's entry, a fact that I soon confirmed when I entered a large holding room. Barred cages lined one wall and three other tunnel entrances also converged here along the northern wall. A small door stood next to me in the eastern wall and appeared to be the only exit from the room. I considered remaining here to search the room, but my greater curiosity finally won out and instead I opened the door.

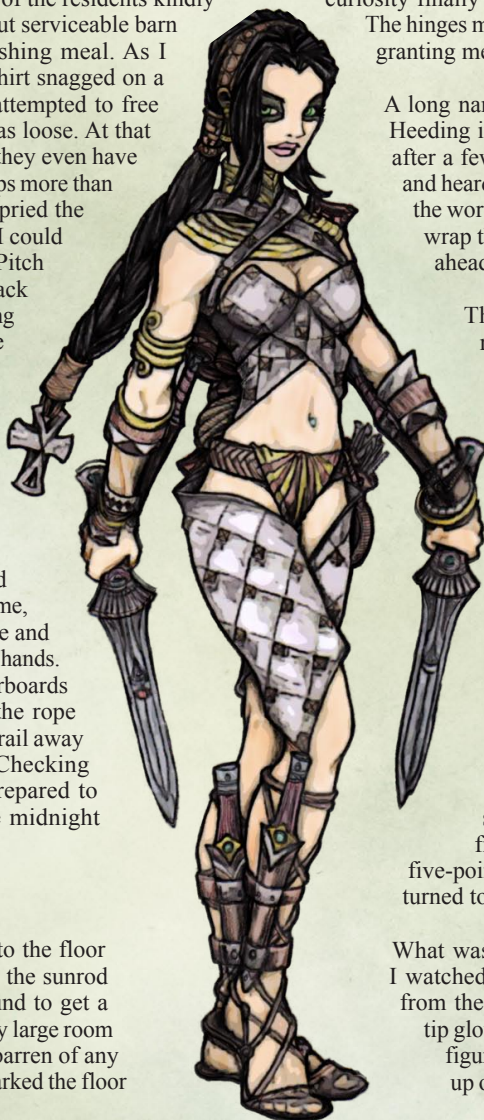
The hinges made a grinding noise but finally gave way, granting me access to the passageway beyond.

A long narrow hallway beckoned me to follow it. Heeding its siren lure I set off at a brisk pace and after a few minutes I could make out a faint light and heard a voice up ahead, too distant to make out the words. I stopped for a moment and decided to wrap the sunrod and put it away, using the light ahead to slowly and silently creep forward.

The voice got louder as I approached. I reached an open arched doorway and carefully, quietly peered around the corner of it. I could see a man in black and red robes walking around a much larger man seated in a huge chair.

A brazier with what looked like a branding iron stood set off to one side. While chains bound the man's arms and legs to the chair, the tone of the robed man's conversation with him indicated that he had undertaken his shackling voluntarily. A leather gag was tied around the seated man's mouth, but his eyes were calm and he kept nodding as the other spoke. The robed man directed the other to "endure the pain, for in pain the service to their lord would be strengthened" or some such nonsense. I caught a glimpse of the front of the robe, emblazoned with the five-pointed symbol of Asmodeus, as the speaker turned towards the brazier.

What was going on here, I thought to myself as I watched the robed man grab the branding iron from the brazier and turn to the seated man, the tip glowing evilly in the candle light. The seated figure turned his wrists so that his palms faced up on the arms of the chair and the robed man



pressed the brand first to one and then the other of the man's open palms. The seated man managed a muffled scream even through the gag as each palm sizzled. I turned away in revulsion from the stench of burning flesh.

The man slumped in the chair, unconscious. The robed man poured water over the wounds that ran down the sides of the chair. Then he started to chant softly and a reddish glow seeped from his hands and covered the wounds. As I watched, the flesh around the brands slowly started to mend and the mark could be seen more clearly. It depicted a circle enclosing a lightning bolt tipped with the barbs of the holy symbol of Asmodeus. I watch mesmerized as the seated man awoke and flexed his hands. As he did so, small sparks of electricity jumped across his fingertips and the corners of his mouth turned upwards in a smile visible even with the gag. The robed man removed the gag, leaving the restraints remained in place. The man looked up, still flexing his hands and said, "I feel it, Master."

Puzzled by these events, I watched as the big man spread his fingers apart, almost like a claw and a bolt of lightning shot forth to strike the wall of the chamber blasting a smoking hole into it. Stifling a gasp, I ducked back into the corridor lest I be found out. That branding iron couldn't be allowed to remain in the hands of followers of Asmodeus!

Peering back around the corner, I could see the broad smile on the face of the priest, as that was surely what the robed man was, as he cackled to himself about his newfound power. Placing his hand on the side of the bound man's head, he quickly chanted an arcane phrase and the big man screamed and slumped in the chair, blood slowly leaking from his ears. While he checked the body and the scars, distracted, I steeled myself and crept as quickly and quietly as I dared into the room and over to the brazier. I grabbed the branding iron and ran back to the corridor, silently moving down the tunnel until I thought it was safe enough to start an all out run for the arena. I could see by the glow of the still glowing brand and didn't bother with the sunrod. Thankful that my rope remained in place, I climbed back up it and pulled it up behind me, packing it quickly away and leaving the barn. I took the poor peasant's only camel to escape, assuaging my guilt by leaving some money in its place.

19 Gozreh 1407

Making my way into Totra, I booked passage back to Absalom as quickly as I could manage, eager to report my amazing find.

LIGHTNING BRAND

Aura evocation; CL 20th

Slot none; Price minor artifact; Weight 3 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

When this artifact sacred to the Asmodean faith sears its barbed lightning bolt symbol into each of a person's palms, arcane electricity courses through the recipient, imbuing the branded palms with the power to call forth a bolt of lightning

3/day (as a *lightning bolt*). The first bolt each day strikes for 6d6 damage; each successive bolt strikes for 2d6 less damage (4d6 then 2d6) as the power drains away. This imbued power requires 8 hours of uninterrupted rest to recharge.

The recipient takes 2d6 damage from the application of each brand and cannot use the imbued powers until this damage is healed. Only a *wish* or *miracle* can remove the scars themselves.

The *Lightning Brand* can administer 10 magical brands (5 people) each month, after which it needs to recharge for a full month. Both palms must be branded for the imbued power to function, and the brands interfere with any magical rings worn, causing them not to function.

DESTRUCTION

Wrapping the *Brand* in a nest of yew and oak branches blessed by a follower of Gozreh, then placing it on an altar of Sarenrae during the Summer Solstice at high noon causes the *Brand* to sputter and melt, destroying it. ☼

Dear Ask a Shoanti

I noticed that Pathfinder's new trait mechanics did not come out until after the Shoanti were explored in the first two Adventure Paths. Are there any Shoanti traits out there we should know about?

Sincere regards,

Trait Frenzied Barbarian

Dear Trait Frenzied Barbarian

Personally, I ultimately look forward to seeing the Shoanti tribal bonus feats in the Rise of the Runelords Player's Guide reworked as traits. In the meantime, below are two new traits to whet your appetite.

Total Coolness

You are just a shade cooler than everyone else and everyone knows it. There is no game effect needed for this trait, it just permeates every aspect of the way you play – and, once again, everyone knows it.

Excessive Brutality

When you hurt someone who has crossed the Shoanti, it is graphic and final. Your opponent wishes they were never born and dearly hopes that they are never raised. Whenever you roll your melee weapon damage dice against a traditional Shoanti enemy, reroll all 1's. In addition, whenever you strike an opponent, everyone at the gaming table briefly cringes and winces – they might not show it outwardly, but we all know they're doing it.

Yours very truly,

Ask a Shoanti



The Old Lady of the River

By Crystal "Immora" Frasier

Art by Claudia "Darkhanna" Burgos

A Reflection on Korvosa's Bogeyman – Kendara Rehan, Gozran 4682

"Damn him to the Old Lady, I say!" – Overheard in Domina Square

In a city of ancient architecture, mysterious statuary, and an infestation of minor devils, I must say I find it both odd and refreshing to have stumbled across a local legend that everyone seems to know, yet no one seems to believe in. While Kaizen and Flora investigate the Thassilonian pyramid beneath the palace, and Morvo investigates the local cuisine, I have chosen to catalogue the reports and background of Korvosa's so-called "Old Lady in the River."

*Watching and waiting on the river shore,
Got a dozen kids but she still wants more.
Fat little children make a treat,
How many of us will she eat?* – Korvosan children's rhyme

The first I ever heard of this entity was from three youths, skipping rope on Merchant's Walk. They were kind enough to inform me that the rhyme kept the Old Lady from crawling out of the river and snatching them in their sleep. At first, I just thought it an adorable local game, until mentioning it offhand to my maid at Tenna's.

"Oh, the Old Lady is 'orrible! I lost me poor cousin Alike to 'er years ago, that was back in North Gate, mind you. We were close then, the 'ole neighborhood, and one day she just vanished! No one could find 'er, and we looked for days! Mister Wix, the chandler, kept a vigil for a solid week, but finally said that some children just never get found. We never saw more of 'er than a ribbon left in the mud. She was out too late by the water, and she paid for it, poor thing. A course, that's why we keep brick dust on the windowsills, even this far up the shore. No sense in taking silly chances. Not anymore." – Veneretta Exion, maid

The Old Lady in the River is a legendary local monster that lives in the Jeggare River and eats children – specifically naughty ones, if the stories are to be believed. Her tactics sound horrific, stalking only children and abducting them without leaving a trace. Her legend is amazing for what is never seen: no gore, no signs of struggle, and no bodies. Korvosan youths live in fear of a grinning old hag in the shadows, just as frontier children might see goblins lurking in the closet or under the bed.

"Whassat Chel? Ye wanna know 'bou the Lady? S'all solly slop. Mas just tell ye 'bout the Lady ta make yeh go ta bed er keep yer trap shut. Me own ma said the Lady'd come and eat me if 'n I din eat mah fish heads. Said the Old Lady couldna stand fish heads, livin' wid the fish an' hearin' em chatter all day. But I bin fishin' the Jeggare fer twenny year now, an' ain't eatten a fish head sin' I started, and I never seen no old hag come ta sneak mah soul ner gobble mah giblets." – Sanzo Kerny; Old Docks native

Despite having never heard of the Old Lady before coming to Korvosa, I find her quickly occupying my mind. It seems everyone in the city has a heartbreaking tale of a lost childhood friend or relative they blame on this spirit. Since I began my research, not a day has gone by when I haven't heard a snatch of local gossip mentioning, repelling, or invoking the Old Lady. The abductions seem to occur most frequently during periods of strife, such as the Key-Lock Killer's reign of terror or the cholera outbreak of '68. The Old Lady of the River may serve as a valuable 'face' to whom the average Korvosan can assign their hatred or fear. She seems to be a constant scapegoat for Korvosa's infamous child-snatchers, Shingles stalkers, or even the plague.

"Of course I've heard about the Old Woman of the River. Everyone in Korvosa who makes it to adulthood has. Growing up

out in Old Korvosa, we had to be extra careful; that's where she likes to hunt, you know. She like places where one or two more children gone missing won't even be noticed. Mom used to grow mint in the windowboxes. The smell keeps her away. No superstition, just science – forces like the Old Woman ride in on evil vapors, just like a plague. If you keep the air fresh and clean, that's as good as any wall. I still grow some myself. Reminds me of mother, Pharasma rest her soul." – Orin Kek, bookkeeper

While everyone in Korvosa has heard of the Old Lady, actual belief in the river spirit is far from universal. Eminently practical, many of Korvosa's citizens see her as a bogeyman: a fairy-story to tell children around the hearth. They believe in very little that cannot be proven, and many disappearances over the years fit the hunting techniques of chokers, reefclaws, and more human predators.

Still, the name and reputation has survived so enduringly that there could easily be a sliver of truth. Varisia, after all, is filled with reports of spirits, elementals, and undead that only appear during specific times of the year or under unusual circumstances, then vanish without a trace. Old Shoanti folklore from the area even mentions a *tras'kar*, or hungry force, within the Jeggare (though these could just as easily be referring to the wicked riptide the river experiences in the spring months).

"Oh, well, it's a bit embarrassing. I do tell my children that the Old Lady will take them if they misbehave. Some days I swear it's the only way to set them straight. I'd never let that happen, of course. As soon as each one was born, I nipped off a lock of their hair and tied it to a lamb, then threw it in the river. That way the Old Lady already thinks she's gotten them, and she'll leave my boys alone." – Pakanna Cahzion, potter

If we are to assume, for the time being, that the Old Lady of the River is a genuine threat and not simply myth, it raises the

interesting question of what she might be. Her favored prey would hint at a being of unspeakable evil, and the cunning she displays would suggest humanoid intelligence. As a legend that has persisted at least three hundred years, many of Varisia's supernatural and mundane predators can be ruled out.

However, any sort of demon would fit this description, and would certainly be in good company in Korvosa. Likewise, many sorts of undead could be drawn to children, who are beacons of life and innocence. Varisia is also home to a sizable population of lamiae and hags; aquatic varieties of either are fully capable of these horrific actions. Neither should we preclude more mundane sources: A similar case of the "Exodar Sand Stalker" turned out to be an elf, feral with the ravages of time and sun madness. Without hard evidence, no precise conclusions can be drawn.

"No, I don't believe in the Old Woman. There are enough real dangers in this city that we need to teach our children to be wary of. We can't fill their heads with notions that a pocket full of salt will keep them safe. Nothing kept me alive as a youth but keen eyes and quick wits." – Jando Brak, day laborer

Real or not, the Old Lady mythology haunts many aspects of Korvosan life. Many locals curse to her in place of one of the more foul or violent gods. Others blame her for spoiling milk and cheese. I even witnessed one young couple beseeching her for a favor they dared not request of Abadar. Even those who believe her to be nothing but a figment can quote a handful of ways to repel her.

Certainly the deep, muddy Jeggare holds more than a few secrets, whether they're sunken dwarven barges, mad Thasilonian aberrations, or an ageless child-thief. Whatever the truth, this strange story has nestled its way into the hearts and minds of the Korvosan populace, and will undoubtedly remain a part of the city so long as the palace stands. ☼

Sentimental Horde



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The Real Bir Gatland

Art and Story by Matthew "The Twitching King" Stinson

5 Pharast – Rookroof, 30 miles south of Harse

The sun was out that day, two days ago on the 3rd, bringing a soft yellow glow in through the three small, circular windows.

The room was orderly, dusted and swept every morning by the young servant boy. The building was not large and was only this single room. There was a tiny loft just large enough for a bed box, while below was a writing desk, a round iron stove, and a tall cabinet, all located in the back. The rest of the space was taken by the sixteen large bookshelves that flanked the center of the room creating a walkway to the desk in the rear. I sat in the doorway that day, writing my latest findings in this very journal.

The old man was behind his desk with his half-filled book turned at a forty-five degree angle. He dipped his pen into the inkwell methodically with a bony hand, its surface a maze of veins protruding from dark leathery skin. Above his large nose, his beady eyes darted from the book he was copying to the blank pages he was inscribing with Chelish calligraphy. A school of eyeball fish floated around the elder. They looked everywhere at once, some

blinked rapidly and some not at all. They swam through the air around him like fifty alien halos or Ioun stones from the First World. They were truly bizarre, but over my eight days here at his book repository, I have grown accustomed to the sight and they now seemed part of the old man.

The old man's longhaired cat had found a place in my lap purring with contentment. I petted her in between writing in the journal balanced on my knee. As I did so, the old man said without looking up, "We will renew our conversation at ten o'clock sharp and not a moment sooner, young Pathfinder. I do have my own work to do you know."

"Yes, Master Gatland. I just wanted to clear up my notes before we began sir," was my answer.

Bir Gatland is a retired military man – my informants told me – who now made his living copying manuscripts. I was told he had traveled to many places afar: to great libraries and booksellers, to noble houses with their private collections, foreign bazaars, and even old tombs and grave vaults. In those places, he acquired or copied books to bring back here to these shelves. Most of these books contained laws from different countries, city-states, and religions. Some even contained the codes of conduct among dragons, giants, or a thousand savage tribes. He even had a book from Geb focusing on the rights of the living versus those of the dead. Within all the pages he copies, Bir adds a practical, strict-toned commentary of his own thoughts wherein he points out loopholes, law boundaries, and useful legal manipulations.

Master Gatland seemed to have every document in this place memorized and many Pathfinders of the area would come and study under this man before trekking away to far off places. The information gained



here could save you from a catastrophic social blunder or a hasty trip to the chopping block. Bir charged a small fee, but I have noticed that he enjoys answering questions and the opportunity to discuss his findings and books more than the payments. However, it wasn't until this day that I or any Pathfinder would really understand this man. It started with the smell of smoke.

I noticed it first, there in the open doorway. It was thick in my nostrils and seemed to make the inner hairs curl. I stood up. The cat landed sure-footed and ran off as I walked outside. There was dark smoke rolling up from the corner of the town behind the houses across the street. I did not hear the old man come up next to me. He was peering at the smoke as well and stroking his white beard. Then a woman came running out of a nearby alley frantically yelling, "Call the alarm, call the guards! There are goblins in the hundreds! Goblins!" She was covered with soot and blood poured freely from a small cut above her eye.

I heard Master Gatland call for his servant boy Marcrite. The lad zipped around the house and they both went inside. I remember thinking it was for the best; this would be no place for boys and old men in a moment. I met the hysterical woman in the street and pushed her into the book house, ignoring her protests. I saw Bir removing boards from the floor in the walkway where a rug had been and thought that they would hide there until this was all over. I closed the door and drew my long knife.

I stood for a minute focusing, gathering my thoughts. I had never been one for killing, gobby bastards or no. I took no pleasure in it, like chopping wood. Then the little greens came around the corner cursing and burning. I could see why the woman had said hundreds, in the tight streets it did seem so. I saw some women down the street running away, but no men. Most of the town's men were out in the fields or over on Cart Street where all the labor shops were located. I was going to face these greens alone and I was going to die. Not a bad death I thought, defending a town from dung-mouthed raiders, but I was still scared to be honest. I just remembered thinking over and over again, "I'm so young." When they caught sight of me, a lone and poorly armed, short man in the middle of the street, they charged with a bloodlust abandon.

The ball of fire seemed to have come from nowhere. It threw some of the gobs into the air, while others became clumps of ash about the cobblestone. There were screeches and howls, and many took off down a nearby alley with a hasty zigzag step. Then Master Gatland stepped up beside me in black ornamental armor bearing the devil-faced chest plate of the Order of the Nail. It had a coat of dust on it and a few buckles were not fastened as tightly as they should have been, but you could tell this was his armor, made for him by some master smith. Then all the facts slammed together between my ears: Bir Gatland was a retired Hellknight living out his end days here, still studying law.

He placed his fearsome helmet atop his head and covered his wrinkled face. The school of eyes flew about him in a frenzy with all their eyelids narrowed to slits. He held no weapon, just oversized, clawed gauntlets on each hand that he flexed and moved about in a creepily practiced manner. He straightened his back and stood tall, and I saw that this elderly man was just a sleeping warrior, a black devil of death. "Young Pathfinder, I will walk along the left hand walls where ever we go and you will hold my right flank and call out danger." It was an order that he knew I would followed.

Then he set off, with me walking to the right of him, watching the slaughter ensue. The old man was a cruel juggernaut, killing in the most violent ways. Goblins screamed like rabbits. They cried out like pitiful children. Their insides were gray and stunk of vinegar and feces. I will never forget it. I will never close my eyes and not see the gore, the blood soaked hell that bathed the streets that day. With spell and claw, he raked their skin and removed their limbs. A horde of desperate villagers began to follow, each with a board or hammer or farmer's fork in hand. As my pen and mind wander here, I find that I do not wish to write and dwell on it anymore.

I left this morning with a group of colorful wagon folk. I could not study under the old man anymore. When he talked in that low monotone voice, I heard only words of arcane powers. His simple hand gestures made me envision iron claws ripping. Worst of all was his face with its heavy eyelids and cavernous crow's-feet, a thousand wrinkles crisscrossing a coat of loose leather. I knew that this was the mask and the black helmet was the real Bir Gatland.

That is how I learned my most important lesson so far: in all Golarion, no one is ever who they seem. ☸

Dear Ask a Shoanti

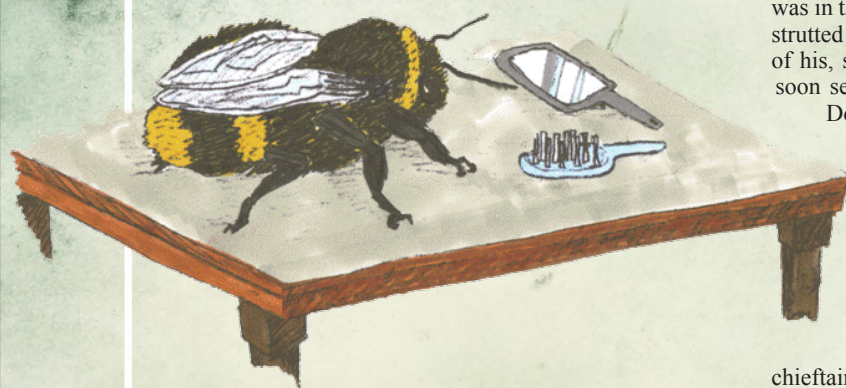
I am of course going play to a Shoanti in our upcoming Pathfinder Society game. But what faction should I join?

*Sincere regards,
Society Shoanti*

Dear Society Shoanti

This is complex. Clearly none are worthy, yet you are too deserving to miss out on the benefits of faction points. I suggest you avoid besmirching your reputation with a faction but grant the other players the privilege of donating their faction points to you at the end of each session. (If necessary, refer to preceding advice with respect to the Campaign Setting hardcover.)

*Yours very truly,
Ask a Shoanti*



Dear Diary

By Charles Evans

Art by Dave "The Eldritch Mr. Shiny" Mallon

Dear Diary,

I left Cheliix in an attempt to get away from Cousin Abrogail's secret services, to escape Andoran fanatics who seem to want to assassinate me, and to join the Pathfinders in the hope of a life of rather more pedestrian excitement as far away as possible from the former two groups. Sometimes even the pedestrian excitement gets downright weird. Events here in Sargava since I last wrote have been a distinct example of just how weird it can get.

When I last wrote, I had just departed the dismal colonial capital, having managed to make contact with some local tribesmen who appeared, at least initially, trustworthy, and I was travelling to their village. Their tribal shaman took some persuasion to convince that I wasn't a spy of some wretched baron whose name I couldn't be bothered to learn, or an agent of the lowlife sea-robbers said baron seems to associate with these days. Out of respect for their beliefs, I was obliged to avoid making any kind of written record at all during my stay with them. Now that I no longer need to take pains to avoid offending my hosts, I am free to write again.

Gaining the tribe's trust in order for them to talk to me about ruins and other sites in the jungles proved to be the usual frustrating experience. I had to participate in a tribal initiation test, this one involving local food delicacies. At least it wasn't as messy as that Gavar'rati one on the Mwangi Expanse and was over much more quickly than that tedious lunar month observation with the Moon Clan Shoanti on the Cinderlands.

That idiot Methrir passed through, having gotten wind that I was in the area. He still has no idea how to talk to people. He strutted around the whole time cracking that oversized whip of his, so full of himself and abrasive that the tribal elders soon sent him on his way. He showed up later, of course. Doesn't he always?

After spending about a month with the tribe, I felt finally able to approach the chieftain and shaman without undue risk. I explained that I was seeking more information about the history of my own people, and that a man in my people's past claimed that he visited certain places that I believed to be in their territory. I described some of the sites from memory in the oral tradition of the tribe, and both the chieftain and shaman grew very still as I gave them details of the site Estradgan called "The Mirror of Destiny."

Apparently, the place had tribal rituals of last resort associated with it. The chieftain explained that when a tribal council wished to dissuade their leader from a course of action, they brought the leader to this place to see the possibilities arising from their actions. I wish now that I had taken that as the warning that I believe they intended, to stay away. Unfortunately, "The Mirror of Destiny" was the only place from Estradgan's journal which they recognized. I so wanted to prove Estradgan had traveled across the Arcadian Ocean in my next report to Absalom that I couldn't afford to spurn such a valuable lead.

The chieftain and shaman discussed the matter and agreed that there couldn't be any harm in visiting the place. The place held no allure for visiting foreigners after wealth, for it was, by custom, a place of ritual, a place to learn of poor choices before they became history. They arranged guides, food for the trip, and provided their tacit approval for the visit, if not an outright blessing.

After four days of travel through the jungle, my guides brought me to an avenue marked by standing stones that they said would lead me to the site. They agreed to wait here for three days before heading back to the village without me. I thanked them, and said that if I failed to return after three days, they should certainly return to their homes. This provided a means to be without them should I find anything useful or important enough to take away with me.

I followed the stones half a mile through the jungle to a crater that stretched perhaps a quarter of a mile wide. There was no vegetation within it, rather it was populated by a number of curious obelisks of black rock arranged around the bottom. Scrambling a little, I made my way down to the bottom and like Estradgan, I waited for night to fall. Both the hints from the shaman and chieftain of the village and Estradgan's writings agreed that if there were to be anything worth seeing, it would only manifest after dark.

I tried to count the obelisks whilst I waited, but they shimmered and glittered in a confusing manner, and almost

seemed to shift, making their exact number impossible to determine. At times, it seemed there might be only a handful, at others as many as the soldiers in a Taldan legion.

Night fell and although the moon had yet to rise, I began to see glimmers in the depths of the stones as they seemed to start to spin around me at the bottom of the crater. Perhaps the world had changed on its axis, and rotated about me. One by one, gossamer shapes of grey light emerged, phantom shapes, as I had long ago deduced from the journal, of how I might be in the future. Estradgan had been unprepared for such sights, the phantoms driving him insane. His companions found him wandering in the jungle only after four days, and while in time he regained his wits and function, his sanity never really recovered.

I expected to see myself in a variety of forms, as a war-leader, empress, beggar, merchant, and other trades and positions both better and worse than my true station. Indeed, I had steeled myself for it, determined not to become unhinged by my senses. What I failed to expect was the moment when all the other phantoms froze and one emerged from a stone, bat-wings flared, nor the searing, piercing, rending fire and shadow that invaded my consciousness in the moment immediately thereafter.

My recollection of the subsequent events remains very hazy. I recall a sensation of fighting for my life, but as in some sort of vision, against dozens of other creatures and persons, and then a strange glimpse of my mother and father, and the haughty face of a she-demon I can only take to have been one of the lords of the Abyss, a sly smile in her eyes.

I'm unsure how much time passed in the crater. Sonia thinks it must have been somewhere over three months. I can try to reckon it up tomorrow, but I'd rather not try to deal with the calculation of it now.

I came to my senses crouched on a piece of rock at the bottom of the crater in the midst of a tropical downpour, my clothes reduced to rags and practically falling from my back. Twelve blackened and split obelisks still stood in the crater, disappointingly easy to count. Sonia sat under a nearby awning, sipping tea, whilst Methrir struggled nearby to erect a tent. One of Sonia's freak pet giant bumblebees perched on one shoulder. She waved me across to sit down on a folding stool across the table from her, and I went, trying all the while to untangle my hair, and pull leaves and spider webs from it. For a moment I felt horribly jealous of Sonia with her elaborately coiffed golden elven hair, her elegant and doubtless comfortable silk dress, and her emerald green eyes, looking as imperturbable as ever, whilst I stood dressed in sopping wet rags. But I was glad of the company and the offer of a hot drink, suddenly and acutely aware of how damp, cold, and hungry I felt.

She said something about coming out to look for me after I missed an appointment for tea, and of having tracked me down with Methrir's assistance, leaving her mother in charge of her precious beehives.

Damn him. I don't mind Sonia's assistance – but I don't like having to owe Methrir. ☹





Black Sails

By Jonathan 'Wicht' McAnulty

Art by Dave "The Eldritch Mr. Shiny" Mallon

Do you see the black ship, my lad, with its curiously shaped hull and the black sails that flutter though there is no wind? Walk with me, my lad, and you will learn more of such a vessel. Surely, you are thinking this strange ship must hail from distant Katapesh, exotic Jalmeray or perhaps even the remote shores of Tian Xia, but though it has in eons past called at all those ports, and more besides, it is an emissary from lands oft unseen by mortal eyes and barely imagined in the deepest dreams of slumbering men.

I was perhaps your age when I first saw the black sails of Leng, the seventh child of a poor merchant of Sothis. I still remember the ship as it came into port in the dusk of a storm. It was a frightful omen, causing women to faint and weak men to weep when they saw it. There were certain stories that are remembered from the dark years and though none would admit to believing these tales there are few who, in the dark loneliness of night, do not remember the ancient fears and dreads.

The sailors of that ship, as they came ashore in Sothis, were most certainly not like other men. They were, without exception, heavily clothed in bulky robes that hid their form

and their faces covered with veils and bulky horned turbans. When they walked, their movements did not seem quite natural and, when they talked, their tones were hushed and sibilant. Though their faces were ever hidden under their turbans and thick veils, few refused to do business with them for they paid with gems, large rubies, red as blood and worth more than the life of a man. They bought no discernable food, potted no water nor did they seek for goods of cloth or spice. They desired one thing only, living slaves, though they would not say why.

Even more curious were the slaves they desired. Whereas others sought comely women for their harems, strong men for labor, or perhaps even clever artisans, the sailors from the black ship wanted only men for whom others had little use. They bought wretched madmen and blind crazed poets. They called for men by name and paid goodly bounties for the capture of desired individuals. I remember that there was a prophet of the sands, a curious individual who muttered his dreams in the marketplace. For a price, two large unearthly rubies, unsavory men beat the prophet, trussed him and handed him to the strange sailors from the black ship. Nor was it only grown men they desired. They knew of children, again by name, often the youngest and least wanted in a family, and for these children they did commerce with the parents.

I was one such child. There was little remarkable about me to the eye, though I had secrets which I had never shared with my father. The demons of the dust made themselves known to me from a young age and I could make a pin dance on the table if I thought no one was watching. Somehow, the slavers knew this of me, they handed my father a ruby, and he handed me to them. He told me that it was for my own good and I would find a better place in the world under the tutelage of such wise, learned men. He did not believe it and I saw the greed in his eye as he weighed the scarlet stone in his hand. I went with the slavers for I was curious and unafraid.

Though I was unafraid, most of those who had been bought were terrified. Many of the madmen screamed horribly as they were led in chains up the strange walkway and into the dark hold of the ship. The blind poet died in fright even before his feet touched the gangplank and I have always felt that he saw something before he died, something hidden from my own sighted eyes. Nevertheless, I had never known fear and when it came my turn to board I walked with my young head held high and my heart resolved to rise to any challenge.

Through the long years I spent in the belly of the black ship, I kept my resolve though there were horrors aplenty in the darkness. Mortal men do not pull the oars of that ship nor do earthly winds drive the sails. The sailors wear neither turbans nor cloaks aboard their own ship and their visages alone have driven lesser men than I mad. Most of the children with me went insane, swelling the ranks of the madmen and joining in the litanies of the crazed poets. And yet there were wonders as well to be had in the darkness of the hull, and I savored both horror and wonder alike.

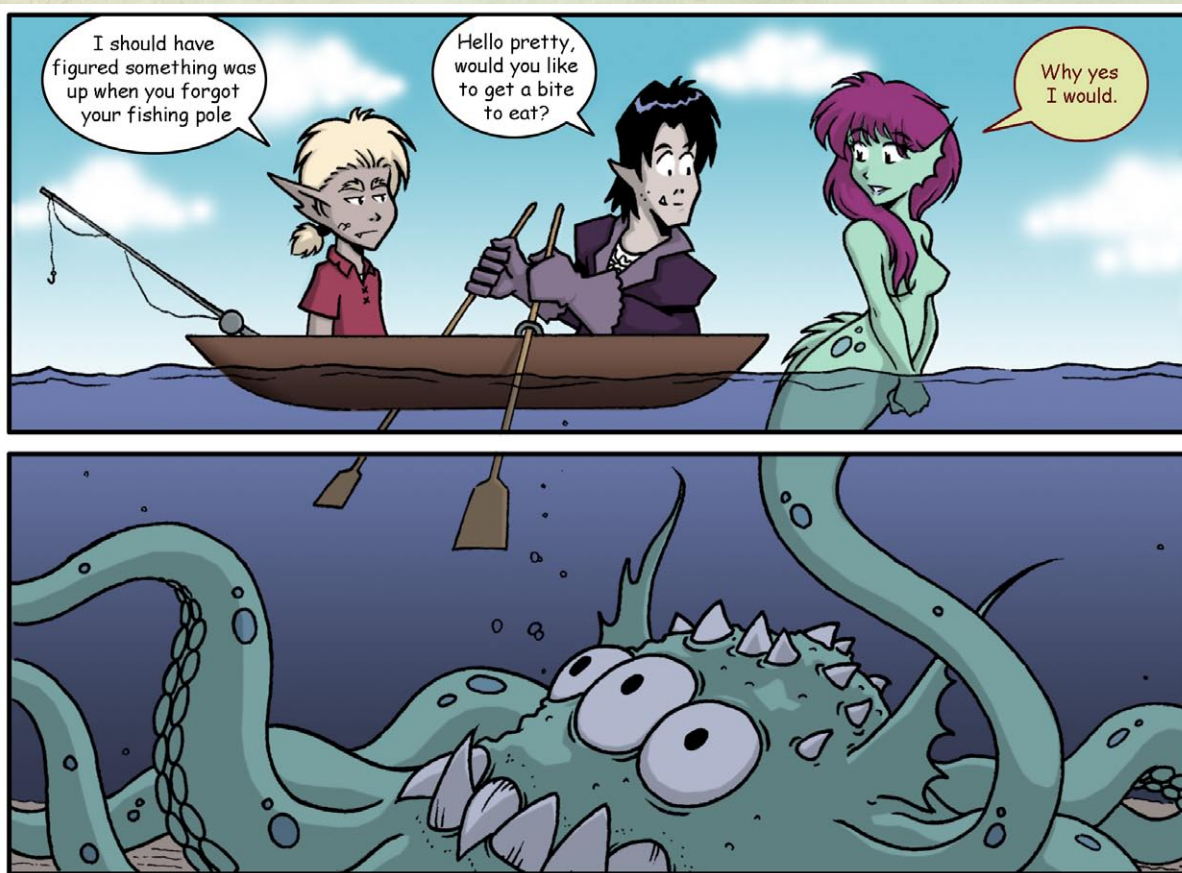
Around and over the waters of Golarion, the ship sailed. Port after port it did visit, always buying the strange and unwanted refuse of men or those children who displayed some aptitude for the arcane, and I sailed with it. For some years, I was a slave in chains but as the sailors observed that I did not cower nor try to flee, when they learned of my strength of mind and desire to learn, they freed me of my chains. In time, I became a sort of cabin boy to the ship's unnatural captain. The captain never left the ship, but he knew all that his sailors saw and much that they did not. I served him, though I will not say how, and at night the captain would whisper strange things to me, wondrous and alien things. In time, I learned much that was hidden from even the learned of this world.

At last, the ship sailed beyond the seas of Golarion and I saw then wonders unimagined and lands untrod by the feet of men. I heard the piping of the stars and saw the dance of the woods on the Ebon Tableau. There, in the realm of dreams, the madmen, the poets and the children, now grown, at last left the ship, sold to strange masters who had much use for their dreams and their rantings and their hidden powers. Though the reason of it all was never fully explained, I came to believe that the lands of dreaming are powered by the delusions of the crazed.

When the ship sailed once more, there remained only one seeming mortal, myself, for the captain found me pleasing and was loathe to lose my company, and so I stayed with the black ship for many more years uncounted. We traveled through the lands of gods, the lands of demons and the lands of men. Always the sailors bought flesh and always these slaves were sold to strange masters from the sailors' own realms. Many worlds did I visit and though I saw many great and horrible marvels, always did I wonder after the world of my birth. I longed to see once more the blue skies of Osirion and taste the waters of the Sphinx, but the black ship runs its own course and it visits this world only infrequently.

Therefore, it is with joy that I walk now on this solid earth, and though this is not yet Osirion, I am assured that when we sail from Korvosa today, we will port briefly in Cheliax before setting our sights on Sothis. It will be good to be home.

But now lad, you must come with me. I have given your father a ruby the size of a hen's egg and your future now lies in the hold of the black ship. Do not fear. If your mind is strong enough and your courage great enough, you will see wonders unknown and learn secrets unfathomable. ☼



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The Pharaoh's Treasure

By Kelly "Gotrek22" Gragg

Art by Jason Kirckof

In addition to the item of interest, I am including this brief account of how we recovered it, which may assist in identifying its history and provenance. The dried black substance was an unfortunate side effect of its recovery and quite unavoidable. Based on the limited fragments of lore provided to me concerning this item, I was hesitant to touch it and also unable to clean it properly before sending it to you. I hope this does not lower your assessment of my capabilities but care must be exercised with such powerful arcane items. Rest assured that it is not my blood.

My two companions and I sailed across the Inner Sea and through the Swells of Gozreh arriving at the great city of Sothis on the fifth day of Erastus. We searched for a record of the tomb but the scanty information we found was insufficient to discover its location.

We dispatched a group of assassins, sent by someone who got wind of our search. I "convinced" the sole surviving assassin to take us to his employer. He led us through the Malhitu Bazaar winding through a maze of tents and vendors that had us quite lost. Luckily, his injuries prevented him from running or he could have easily abandoned us in the heart of bazaar. He led us to an auction house on the edge of the market, The Pharaoh's Treasure, or so Fulgor translated for me.

Yosna guarded the prisoner, while Fulgor and I entered The Pharaoh's Treasure. Upon entering three men sprung upon us from hiding, their long knives slashing through the air. A fourth bellowed an order and fled out the back. The men leapt at me, as I was clearly a greater threat than frail Fulgor. My chainmail turned aside their knives as my flail whirled and cracked against heads and backs dropping them to the floor. I commanded Fulgor to stop the last one and he rushed out the back door as fast as he could. I admit that Fulgor was successful in subduing the fleeing man, but only after he had climbed far enough over the wall that he fell on the far side. I had to scale the wall and drag him back over myself – Fulgor was in no condition to climb walls. Please assign me more competent companions on my next task, as I tire of having to carry their bodies or corpses back with me.

The captured man was Alsolen Yasif, an antiquities merchant, and quite distressed to find us alive. He knew the location of the pharaoh's tomb and kindly consented to let us "borrow" a map to it drawn on an ancient crumbling piece of papyrus. Of course, I found it necessary to threaten to turn the murderous wretch over to the authorities, but he proved most cooperative afterward.

We left Sothis by barge up the River Sphinx toward An, the City of Triangles. I saw several of the enormous scaled beasts,

called the hetkosu, sunning themselves on the riverbanks. It amazes me the monsters they allow to exist within sight of their homes.

Once in An, I purchased several camels and hired a guide, Hortek, a sly little man who haggled with me for over an hour about his tracking and guide skills. I got the better end of the bargain. He led us into the desert towards the ancient pyramids and the tomb we sought.

I do not have room here to set down the accounts of the sandstorms and sand denizens we encountered as we traveled through Osirion's harsh desert, but after several days of searching, we arrived at the tomb. After much digging, while the others watched, I uncovered the entrance, long since buried in drifting sand. I left Hortek outside to guard the camels.

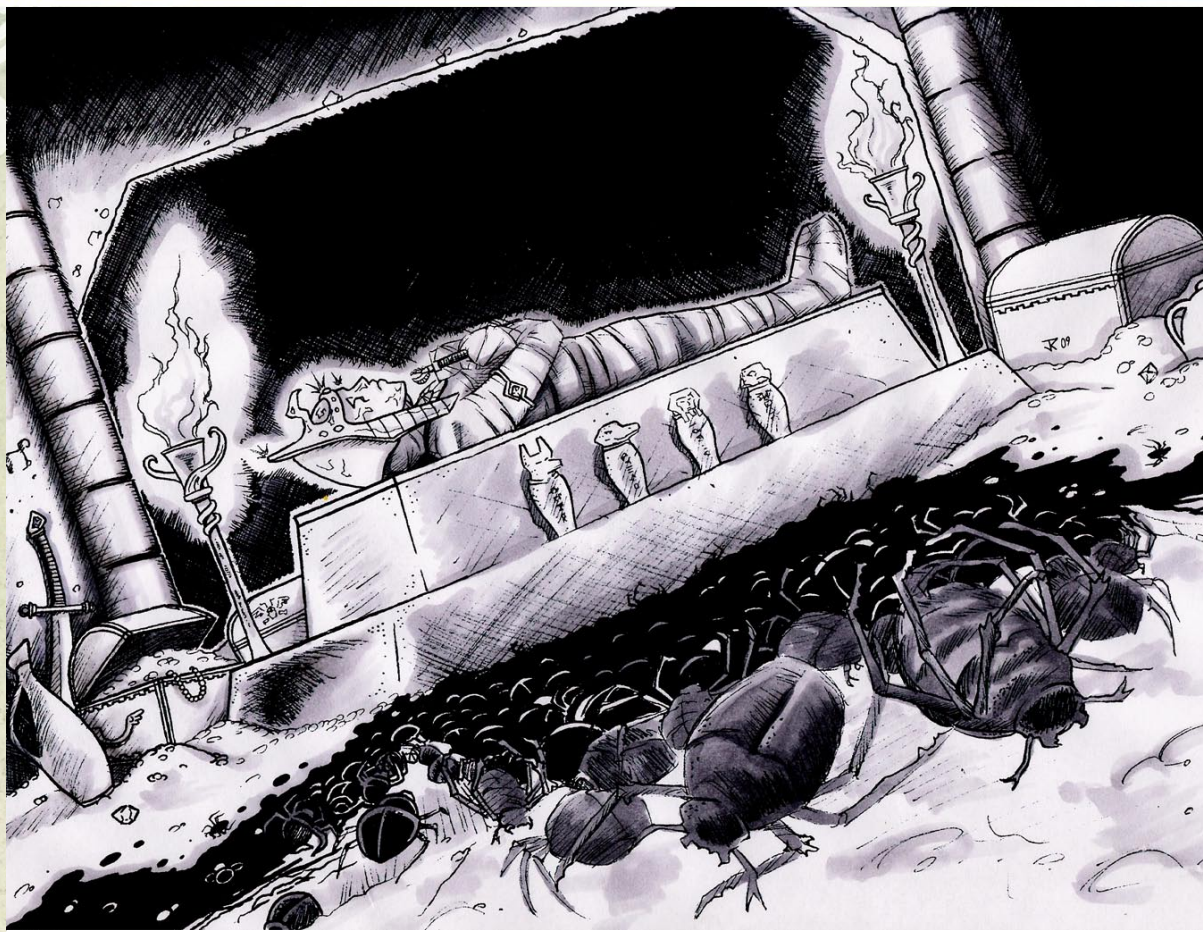
The tomb had been plundered long ago, though I held hope that the true burial chamber remained hidden. Several desiccated corpses littered the halls, possibly expired Pathfinder members or grave robbers fallen victim to traps or guardians.

Yosna located and disabled several traps. They were still operable after so many centuries, giving me confidence that the secret tomb was still there. If the ancients could create such devices, then they could undoubtedly conceal the pharaoh's resting place from common grave robbers.

We passed the false tomb, long since stripped of anything of worth, confident that what we sought lay ahead. We continued through the maze of hallways and finally ended in a blank wall of tight fitting stone blocks, one of many dead ends created to confuse tomb robbers.

Fulgor consulted the fragile papyrus and verified that we had reached the entrance, though I perceived nothing. Yosna inspected the wall and declared that it was hollow behind. I handed the torch to Fulgor and went to work with my crowbar. In a short time, broken fragments of the ancient wall lay in rubble at my feet, a passage open before me. The walls of the hallway glittered in the torch light, gold leaf hieroglyphics adorned walls and ceiling. The map hinted at the pharaoh's tomb beyond the Hall of Ancestors Remembered.

At the end of the passage, Yosna's normally careful inspection triggered a trap. Spears lanced out from concealed holes in the wall; two impaled Yosna, one flew past her and lodged into my shield only inches from my chest. Fulgor screamed behind me as he fought off two tomb guardians, shrouded in wrappings that had appeared out of concealed chambers. I discarded my shield and charged the undead with my flail, splitting one's head open and scattering desiccated brain matter throughout the hall. This failed to stop the creature which continued to pummel Fulgor. Two more attacked me from behind dropping me to the floor. I leapt to my feet and called upon Asmodeus' hellfire. My flail burst into flame and fire danced upon my armor. The creatures burned themselves as they struck me, and I lashed out with the flaming flail burning away their ancient flesh. Fulgor blasted one with a piercing white ray just as the second pummeled him unconscious. I brought the last guardian down before it could finish him off. Fulgor lived and I left him to rest. I removed the two spears from Yosna's corpse and laid her



next to Fulgor. Such fragile things; I sometime wonder why elves join the Pathfinder Society.

The trap had revealed a door which I forced open – the burial chamber lay beyond. The mummified body of the pharaoh rested on a stone bier, his golden mask glittering in the torchlight. A line of four canopic jars stood in a row at the base of the bier, while chests of gold lined the walls. Stepping into the room, I heard a series of crunches and looked down to see a carpet of dead scarab beetles littering the floor. I approached the ancient pharaoh stepping carefully to avoid the ceramic jars housing his extracted organs, beetles crunching underfoot. With a broken spear haft I gently hooked the golden mask and lifted it from its resting place. The wrapped face of the mummy hidden for thousands of years stared up at me, the dead eyes looking very much alive. I stepped away from the pharaoh, and opened a leather satchel at my belt.

Suddenly the floor no longer crunched, but chittered. The beetles crawled over each other in a writhing mass to get at me. They began to swarm up my boots seeking exposed flesh for their poisoned mandibles. I called on Asmodeus' fire once again and his fire enveloped me. Beetles charred in the heat, their bodies exploding in black fountains of puss, splattering the golden mask, dulling its glory. I dropped the blackened mask into the satchel and cinched it tight. With a quick glance

at the pharaoh, I ran from the tomb, but the swarm of beetles followed. I scooped up Yosna and Fulgor as I passed them, glad that elves and old men were light. With burdens on both shoulders, I raced from the tomb, beetles skittering behind me. Horteck leapt to his feet as I exited the tomb.

"Guard the entrance," I commanded. "Something followed me." He moved toward entrance as I lashed Yosna and Fulgor to the camels. I rode off just as the black chitinous carpet swarmed over Horteck. I left him his camel, though I doubt he escaped.

Fulgor regained consciousness by the time we returned to An. We buried Yosna in the City of Triangles and I have included her gear for her family with the item's shipment. We continued on to Sothis and booked passage home to Cheliah.

What other treasures lay beneath the sands of Osirion waiting for Chelaxians to free them from the desert's grip?

Praise Asmodeus.

Your Servant, Thalvish ☉



The Greenhorns

By Jonathan "Wicht" McAnulty, Trevor
"Tarren Dei" Gulliver & Neil Spicer
Art by Liz "Lilith" Courts

Garret Gurretna's Journal

26 Desnus, 4707 AR

Heed my words!

On this day did I, Garret Gurretna of Janderhoff, son of Gilret, son of Harnet, son of Gurret, who did slay the beast Trilgane and found the clan that does bear his name, begin my quest for the truth behind the Ravenous Queen and her four Consorts, well-known pyramids of ancient Osirion.

It was on this date that I, having completed my thirty year apprenticeship to Kilmon Thunhoven, son of Kolmon and renowned skald of the stony fastnesses, did begin my journey in the city of Absalom, having joined myself to the Pathfinder lodge there. The Society, having been pleased to accept my services, did inform me of an expedition to Osirion itself. Long had I desired to see the stone work of that ancient land, to learn more of its golden history. It was thus with a light heart that I had accepted the opportunity to join this expedition, especially when I was informed that it would be led by Akkunhis, famed author of the Strongdrink Island Chronicles and, if tales were to be believed, the awakened Guardian of the Floating Temple.

It was on this date that I met the first of my companions, Tanglehead and Ashallah, each chosen to make this journey. We met in the Lodge of the Pathfinders, where I arrived early and saw to our supplies and prepared a meal to welcome those who would travel with me. There had been prepared for our journey a prodigious quantity of rations, ample ale, stout ropes, and gear with which one could camp in any

environment. Besides all of this there were many maps and I was in the midst of poring over those maps provided to us when Tanglehead arrived, a gnome. I was pleased to learn he, being well versed in the lore of stone and structure, had walked some of the same dwarven halls as I. The second of my companions was a priestess, though she venerated Calistria, for whom few dwarves have any use. Nevertheless, she accepted my rebuffs at her initial flirtations and we soon were conversing of our plans of travel. May Torag bless our steps and may skalds long sing of our deeds!

27 Desnus, 4707 AR

Let it be known that on this date I didst prepare my immortal soul for my quest. Well and rightly do the ancient loremasters say that faith is the foundation upon which one should build, and so in accordance with the teachings of my fathers, I did visit the shrine of Torag in the city of Absalom and there did I offer a tribute of gold and ale, worked and unworked iron. And I did receive the blessing and counsel of the priest therein. So should all honest dwarves behave before battle or journey.

1 Sarenith, 4704 AR

Lo! There has no epic been written which do full justice to the horrors of sea travel. There is no solid earth. There is no firm steadiness underfoot. All is movement and rocking and sickness. May Torag have mercy on his servant.

3 Sarenith, 4707 AR

Let it be known that on this day, our party of stalwart companions did dock. Our hearts beat valiantly within us as we surveyed the ancient wonder that is Osirion. The crowds of Sothis were mighty, and the city was vast. Yet we did not falter as we sought for shelter. One young rascal tried to steal my purse but the quick eyes of Tanglehead deterred him. We made many purchases and, remembering my clan, I did send them some items of note, as a good son. I did also acquire a scroll of antiquity for my mentor, as a dutiful disciple.

4 Sarenith, 4707 AR

Listen well! Wisely do the ancient loremasters tell us to look carefully before treading into strange tunnels.

The greatest surprise of my quest yet is Akkunhis himself, for though I knew his name, I knew not his curse. I mistook him at first for a common minotaur, a hated eater of flesh and it was well that my axe was not at hand when first he entered the room for I recalled well the grudge that was written when my mother's sister's husband's brother's child was slain on the plains of Taldor by one of the cursed man-bulls. Yet the horned head showed no mindless rage nor did blood stain its teeth, and it behaved itself as one cultured. Thus did I meet Akkunhis, awakened guardian of the Floating Temple and, by his own mouth, a son of Osirion. Thus did our quest for truth begin.

Our patron is named Bannick, a well known traveler and chronicler. He it was who awakened Akkunhis. There were many plans made this day and much wisdom was shared. Yet through it all I could not help but notice the eyes of Ashallah. They do linger long upon both our guide and our patron when she thinks they are not looking.

Torag preserve us from the wiles of women and give us strength for the journey.

5 Sarenith, 4707 AR

Heed well my words!

Well do the ancients say that the strength of a people is its lore, and the loremaster is its heart. There has been no higher honor in my life to sit at the feet of my mentor Kilmon Thunhoven. When questioned as to my profession and my learning it was my distinct pleasure to proclaim myself as the First Trumpeter of the School of Kilmon, for it was only after many long years that I did earn the right to accompany the ballads and measure the time for all the clans. I look forward to that day when my beard is long and I stand in the midst of the trumpets and recite to the accompaniment of horns and the beat of hammers the long history and many grudges of my clan and my people.

I am saddened that so many fail to understand the honor that has been accorded me.

For what it is worth, a barge on a wide river is much to be preferred over the rolling of the sea. If one must travel over water I recommend to all the measured pace of an ox drawn barge.

11 Sarenith, 4707 AR

Behold! Woe comes to those who stand before us.

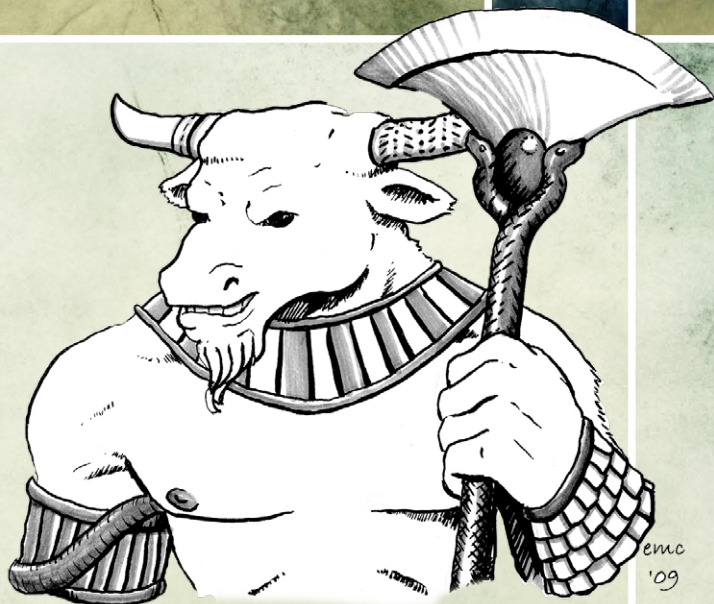
A monster of the sands did rise to devour my camel. It was a fearsome beast, like unto some great insect. It arose out of the sands with death in its mouth and did fasten upon the neck of my unfortunate steed. Yet we did battle with it and we did overcome it. My axe tasted its blood and the divine wrath of a god did strengthen the arm of the priestess as she smote it with her steel. In the end, it was Akkunhis who laid it low with a mighty strike that did sunder its neck from its body.

Akkunhis called the beast an ankheg, a fearsome foe that I had known of only by reputation and until this fateful day never seen. May the hammer of Torag fall mightily upon all such monstrous children of the Destroyer.

15 Sarenith, 4707 AR

Listen well, for my heart trembles within me.

I have learned much during our journey of the ways of the sand. Sand lacks the steadiness of rock and though you dig, it pours back into the hole, determined to hide its depths and secrets. On the morrow, Akkunhis has declared, we shall be at our goal. And yet I wonder at his goal for it is clear that he knows more than he says. Though his face is inscrutable, I wonder when his eyes glitter at the mention of vengeance. Akkunhis is no normal ravenous minotaur but I fear the beast lurks beneath his cursed visage. The gnome seems oblivious, determined only to gather more ancient masonry for his pouch. The priestess is as reckless as her goddess. She has become enamored of him and they spend their nights together. Torag grant me the strength and the wisdom to be as steadfast as the halls of my birth.



Akkunhis' Journal

4 Sarenith, 4707 AR

I arrived at the Sothis lodge an hour after sunrise. I had no need to ask the functionary where I would find the Venture Captain – Bannick prefers a meeting room furnished in the style of the hunting cabins of his frigid northern home. I took the stairs two at a time, hoping to have time to talk with my old friend before these raw recruits he wrote of arrived. I was too late. From the way they had settled into the room, they had probably slept here last night. At least they had breakfast cooking in the old stone fireplace.

A dwarf. A gnome. A human female. Bannick was not there.

Leather-bound manuals held down the four corners of the map that the three had spread over the low wooden table. I recognized one of the manuals as the illustrated text on hieroglyphics that I prepared for the society last year. The dwarf was carefully placing vials of what looked to be antitoxin in a padded leather pouch. The human female was coiling a recently oiled whip. The gnome was scowling over a treatise on falling block traps, which kept the western edge of the map from rolling up.

"A minotaur!" the gnome whispered loudly. They always notice my race first.

The gnome, to his credit, looked slightly embarrassed at his outburst. The dwarf's eyes narrowed. No doubt some ancient clan member of his had been gored by one of 'my kind'. The human female attempted to act disinterested but her eyes kept flitting up to my horns. They always check out the horns.

Their supplies were spread out against one wall—backpacks, lanterns, crowbars, poles, miner's picks, a length of chain, and a length of rope. Nothing I would not bring and almost everything I would. Weapons looked clean; armor seemed well-cared for. Their clothes were suitable for traveling and not too flashy. The three of them looked professional enough

at first glance. Perhaps these new Pathfinders would work out tolerably well after all. We'll get along fine, I decided, as long as no one says anything stupid.

And, then, someone said something stupid.

"Bannick said nothing of a labyrinth!" complained the gnome. "Have I just been for wastin' an hour studyin' 'bout trapped pyramids?"

The fat from the meat popped from the pan and sizzled in the fireplace. A low chuckle behind me told me Bannick had arrived. Introductions were brief and strained. I left to make arrangements for our journey and told them where to meet me tomorrow.

5 Sarenith, 4707 AR

A gold coin secured passage for four on a slow moving river barge amongst crates of rations and arms bound for Ipeq. The barge was pulled against the current by two oxen walking on shore and steered by an operator with a long quant pole. I could feel the gnome watched me expectantly when the operator put the yoke on the oxen, as if I might object.

The greenhorns perched themselves on crates and stared out at the desert as if ten thousand year old mysteries would pop out of the sand whenever a herd of Pathfinder Society members happened to float by. As Bannick suggested, I took some time to get to know my companions before judging them. Through brief discussions I learned that, before joining our noble society, the dwarf, Garret Gurretna, was a hornblower for some petty king. The gnome, Firbestum Tanglehead, had been employed as an engineer, and the Calistrian, whose name escapes me, was a temple whore. Having learned more than I wanted to, I took a nap.

When I awoke, they were rehashing yesterday's conversation with Bannick.

"I don't follow," complained the gnome. "How can he be both Akkunhis, Guardian of the Floating Temple, and the Akkunhis who authored the *Strongdrink Island Chronicles*? Wouldn't that make him five thousand years old?"

"Bannick implied he was born five thousand years ago. Not that he'd lived that long... although I am not yet clear on the difference," observed Garret.

"Bannick said Akkunhis was a friend... and the most brilliant Osirionologist, he had ever met. That's all I need to know." This was the Calistrian whore. Perhaps, I should not be so quick to judge her.

"He's stopped snoring," she added with a hint of mischief in her voice. "He's probably listening. Let's ask him."

Bannick, my friend, you saved me. You freed me from the stones in which I had been imprisoned for millennia. You nursed me back from madness, lifted me above my bestial nature and introduced me to the ways and languages of a new world. You tamed me and taught me. I would follow you into Rovagug's Pit. I would stand between you and Lamashtu herself. But, if you ever put me on a slow-moving barge with three chatty greenhorn recruits again, I will pound my hooves through the floorboards and sink us all.

8 Sarenith, 4707 AR

"What's the point," they asked me, "of bothering with the five most picked over pyramids in all of Osirion?"

They have spent the last three days reading the *Sandscourged Chronicles* chapter on "The Four Consorts and the Ravenous Queen." By their count, the site of their first undertaking as Pathfinders has been "inspected" by no less than seven Pathfinders, a dozen Osirionologists, a few raving cultists, and uncountable honest grave robbers. Some survived but none found anything of more value than broken statues and empty sarcophagi.

"They have been looking in the wrong place."

10 Sarenith, 4707 AR

We traded some of the Calistrian's potions and her temple's mead for camels. Garret is reasonably good at haggling even with tribesmen for whom every concession increases the risk of death in an unforgiving climate. He won a good price for the camels—low enough to earn the respect of the nomads but not so low as to earn their wrath. The priestess added a spare healer's kit to the payment after the deal was set, but lessened the risk of insult with the formulaic expression, "Should ever your kinsmen meet mine, let there be kindness." Not bad.

I've yet to find a camel able to hold my weight. Three of the camels are for riding; one is for supplies. I will walk.

11 Sarenith, 4707 AR

Not much to write. The journey has been uneventful. One camel died in an ankheg nest. Usually, ankhegs are pests but pose little real danger. This time, however, Garret rode his camel right into a sand trap the bugs had dug between two large outcroppings of rock. The ankhegs—the yellow kind you see in the desert—surged from the sand when the camel stumbled and dragged it down. The dwarf will know what to look for next time. The loss of one camel should not slow us. With half of the supplies bartered or consumed, Tanglehead can ride on the supply camel without the added weight troubling the beast.

12 Sarenith, 4707 AR

The night is cool. The fire is warm. Tanglehead wove walls of sound from the wind and the crackling of the flame. He made the desert sing. The mead was sweet. The meat was tender. The Calistrian danced. Her temple trained her well. Garret sang. I did not know that dwarves could sing. It was a song of the desert. They said the song was as old as the pyramids but I do not recall it. Still, a good song. It has been a good day.

The priestess is asleep at my side. Her hair, spread across our blanket, shines in the moonlight like molten gold. I have had little time for religion, but this Calistrian makes a good argument. I believe that religion, if it is to be of any use, should draw us towards the universe without ignoring our earthly appetites. What could be more universal than desire? More earthly than lust and revenge? Perhaps, I will visit one of Calistria's temples when we return to Absalom if they will have me. Evidently, they will.

15 Sarenith, 4707 AR

We have pitched camp within sight of our destination. I told the others I wanted to study the pyramids for a while before we entered but, in truth, I wanted to bask in their beauty. The journals say that much of the Ravenous Queen and her Four Consorts have been marred by war and defaced by tomb raiders but from this distance and these cliffs, they look intact. They glow brightly in the moonlight just as I remember them, declaring to the world the immortal power of Queen Nellatantha.

"Nellatantha, the Ravenous Queen," they still call you. After five millennia, Nellatantha, they still remember your appetites. They still remember your orgies, your bloodbaths, your rages. They remember nothing of your beauty. Nellatantha, you have eluded all of them. Tomorrow, I will find you, my queen. I will find you again. The last time was for lust. Tomorrow, it will be for revenge.

Tomorrow.

Tonight, I lie beside a child of a newer world who desires me only because I remember when Osirion was young.



Ashallah's Journal

Greetings, and woe to anyone reading this journal without my permission. To access these hidden pages, you must have exceptional expertise in the arcane arts. But know that the Savored Sting shall have her revenge upon you, enacted by Ashallah's hand if I yet live.

25 Desnus, 4707 AR - Absalom

I met the Rabbit Prince today. A cagey one, he is. I found him dressed as a harrower in the Coins District right off the docks. I knew to seek him out when I found the Courtesan card tucked under my pillow. I'm amused and curious to know how he put it there. After all, I changed the silk sheets myself just yesterday, and the lover who paid for a night in Calistria's temple lingered in my bed well into the following afternoon. Perhaps they're one and the same? How delightful, if true. Chasing this Rabbit could be so much fun.

But I'm hesitant to say the same for the task he presented me today. Long have I served Absalom, spying on her enemies, passing along information whispered to me in the throes of passion, and putting a knife in those who wronged me or my country. I've traveled far, but he would have me travel farther still...to Osirion this time, and the five pyramids known as the Ravenous Queen and her Four Consorts.

How apropos. I'm intrigued by the names alone. But wandering the desert in the guise of a Pathfinder again brings back a lot of bad memories, and not just the sunburn and the chafing of so much sand.

"Ashallah," he told me, "Bannick will be the venture-captain."

We have some history, he and I...and a score to settle, too. The Rabbit knows that. He's probably counting on it to motivate me. He's right about that.

"His little Society must want something from these pyramids pretty badly to include me," I told him.

Turns out, the Rabbit wants it too. I couldn't keep the grin off my face if I tried. I will take great pleasure in stealing it from Bannick.

26 Desnus, 4707 AR - Absalom

I've joined a couple of crows...a gnome named Tanglehead and a dwarf called Garret. The gnome supposedly knows a lot about traps and stonework, something we'll certainly run into when we reach the pyramids. Garret fancies himself a bard. Not your typical dwarven vocation, but any knowledge he has about Osirion could prove useful.

We're taking a ship to Sothis and then we'll find Bannick at the local lodge. We pick up a fourth when we make landfall...some local Osirionologist he dug up. I just hope this one is easy on the eyes.

In the meantime, I look forward to a long voyage. I can already feel the gaze of every sailor watching me. Maybe I'll tease them a little just to pass the time.

4 Sarenith, 4704 AR - Sothis

My, my, Bannick has really outdone himself. A minotaur?! He's found a man-bull to lead us to the Ravenous Queen and her Consorts?

The others can't stop talking about him, especially Tanglehead. It's funny to watch his reactions. I don't think any of them realize I can read their thoughts as a favored daughter of Calistria.

I already know the minotaur's name...Akkunhis. Born five thousand years ago according to Bannick, but the Venture Captain failed to mention how he dug the beast out of the sand...nothing more than a petrified statue, returned to flesh, and given a new life. He cares for this bull. Probably more than he ever cared for me. How appropriate if I could entice Akkunhis away from him.

This minotaur comes from an age when Osirion's pharaohs still ruled the desert. No wonder he makes such a good Osirionologist. That kind of knowledge could ensure anyone the upper hand in retrieving the lost artifacts and lore of the pharaohs. Perhaps that's what the Rabbit Prince had in mind by sending me here?

5 Sarenith, 4704 AR - River Sphinx

We're headed upstream towards Ipeq. The river barge moves quite slowly, but at least we can rest in the shadows cast by the crates of supplies. I'm glad I packed a few potions to help offset the oppressive heat. They'll prove even more useful when we leave the river behind.

For now, I've chosen to present myself as less experienced than the others. I see no need to tip my hand as to my capabilities just yet. The minotaur thinks we're all greenhorns anyway. Perhaps I can use that to my advantage when the time comes?

I noticed him eavesdropping while pretending to sleep during Garret and Tanglehead's conversation about him. Maybe he'll present more of a challenge than I thought?

10 Sarenith, 4704 AR - Ipeq

We've reached Ipeq and just in time for the Burning Blades festival in honor of Sarenrae. Taking advantage of the townsfolk's good spirits, I assisted Garret in bartering for some camels to see us the rest of the way. Akkunhis has taken an interest in watching our interaction with the locals. I wonder how he views them? These people must surely remind him of his past. But they've come a long way in the millennia since he last served as a guardian of the Floating Temple.

I secured a night's lodging at one of the pavilions for us. It includes the use of a functioning bathhouse. Turns out the Rabbit Prince left word for me. He received my last missive and, as I expected, has taken great interest in Akkunhis. But others have as well. Qadira and Chelias suspect Absalom stands on the brink of unearthing a valuable treasure from the sands of Osirion. They've dispatched their own agents. Some will likely trail us to the pyramids. Others wait in Ipeq and Sothis for our return. I'll need to remain vigilant. And I'll have to turn these pathfinders into allies before I double-cross Bannick.

11 Sarenith, 4704 AR - Open Desert

What fun we had today! Garret rode his camel straight into an ankheg nest! Although we lost the camel, I relished wounding and distracting one of the ankhegs long enough for Akkunhis

to shear away its head. Watching such a man-bull in action certainly quickens the pulse. We then pulled Garret out of the sand trap using my whip. Tanglehead wanted to collect some rock chip specimens from the outcropping of stones where the ankhegs laired, but we talked him out of it.

"You'll have far prettier gems to dig from the treasures of the Ravenous Queen," I told him, "No need to risk your life on sand-scoured rock."

12 Sarenith, 4707 AR - Open Desert

We made good progress today. At my encouragement, Tanglehead and Garret provided entertainment for our evening meal. Meanwhile, I wove my seduction as cunningly as any dalliance planned by Calistria herself. A well-cooked meal of spiced meats I procured in Ipeq. The leftover mead brought all the way from my goddess's temple in Absalom. It created the perfect aphrodisiac before I danced to the music conjured by Tanglehead and accompanied by Garret's strong voice. Akkunhis couldn't keep his eyes off me.

We chatted well into the night after the others crawled into their blankets. Something haunts this minotaur. A need for vengeance delayed over far too many years. He dwells upon someone named Nellatantha. Someone from his past.

"Like aged wine," I explained as I shared Calistria's teachings, "Revenge is so much sweeter when you bide the years to plan and prepare yourself. That way, when you finally drink, and strike back at those who wronged you, all your training helps you endure long enough to savor the lashing you inflict upon them. Revenge is just another form of passion. An earthly appetite," I pressed, "It can be quick and furious like a rainstorm, of course. Or you can draw it out, riding one crest after another feeling every drop of rain that strikes your flesh...until it builds into the most powerful release with a scintillating stroke of the purest lightning and a crash of thunder, elevating you to a higher plane of satisfaction."

I taught him passion tonight. But soon he'll learn true revenge as well.

15 Sarenith, 4707 AR - The Pyramids

The Ravenous Queen and her Four Consorts await us. I can see their shadows reaching across the sand in the dying sun. Akkunhis watches them in silence, while Tanglehead and Garret grow impatient tending to the camels. As for me, I have a growing sense of dread about this place...not unlike that of a new mistress going to meet a paramour's ex-lover for the very first time.

Nellatantha. The Ravenous Queen.

Her restless spirit pervades this place, and I know now that Akkunhis intends to seek her out. I suppose we're all here for our own reasons. But we'll face the same dangers inside those pyramids regardless. We'll have to face them together to survive. If Nellatantha lingers here, I can only hope Calistria sees fit to bless the minotaur's need for vengeance, for he's the key to my own as well. ☉

Poems of the Vale

By Trevor 'Tarren Dei' Gulliver

Faerie Army

Her army advances
to seize the town
built too close to nymph-filled woods
built on faerie ground

Each faerie's arms and armour
newly forged and bright
sharpened blades of grass
newly cast shields of light

Down the hill and through the woods
the faerie army marches
flutters over rushing rivers
and emerges through maple arches

Adult eyes cannot see them
but children peeping over windowsill
see six hundred faerie warriors
surging down the hill

But fifty feet from the town
the faerie army rests
sparrow beaks for helmets
fish scales shield their breasts

And then the faerie queen
-- poisoned heart set for war tonight --
hears a human voice singing
a song of pure moonlight

Between doomed village
and brightclad hordes
came a human voice
forming faerie words

This deep dark voice
sings a faerie song
one the queen had once sung
a hymn both sad and long

Caged

What babe was born in sunny glade
to fairy queen and forest mage?
What power was it nature obeyed,
in crafting this growing living cage?
What strange beast is trapped within?
This pacing shadow, growing thin?

When mortal man and fairy queen
bred a heir that could not be seen
did they not fear?
Did they not wonder
if they'd let loose above
what should be under?

Settling Darkmoon Vale

I'm lost here now as promised
living cold and free

One daughter in the river
One son lost at sea
A wife taken by the forest
Found hanging from a tree
The gods' good earth abhors us
This land is killing me

Came looking for open spaces
Looking to be sovereign and free
But spun out on a map of nameless
places
Undone by the terrain beneath me
Boundaries and borders leave no traces
This land is killing me

One year to cross the mountains
two to settle in
three to lose my sanity
four to see I'd never win
five years in this forest
five years and it still abhors us

I've lost her now as promised
this land is killing me

Lost Wings

Two voices
do you hear them?
coming through the green

One buzzing chirping
fairy's voice
that taught mortal man to sing

The other a man's
halting
uncertain
of what this song could mean

Yet to the fairy
a voice dark and deep
enough to tempt away her wings

The Consortium Comes

Been mad
and lost
and found

now mad to be losing
retreating from those marching borders
the boys and soldiers given orders
taking blade to forest
and, yes, they too abhor us

The real world encroaches
giving order
to this edgeless wild --
ancient, green, yet still a child!
the ordered world approaches!

Waiting for the Axe to Fall

I wait in haunted glade
by wood nymph's bath-creek
wild hair and a tattered uniform
hanging on to body-mountain
bones of rock and flesh of mud
tangles of moss hiding looking-pools
lost to the real
my children growing tall and green
born of this wild earth

Faeries' Wood

I dreamt a dream in which I fell
into her hidden wishing well
and many sleepless nights did dwell
in possibility and bliss.

I dreamt she learnt the nature tune
by which faeries called me to the
womb
and with it she lured me to an earthen
room
where I waited on her kiss.

I dreamt she wove from her hair
a web and with it trapped me in her lair
hanging me from the rafters there
never to dream again. ☺



The Last Wish

By Cristian "Cicatrix" Bodea

Art by Crystal "Immora" Frasier & Raluca Rusu

She ripped an empty page from the end of the journal, took the quill, and started to write...

My Dear Venture-Captain and Friend,

Greetings from the Taldor border!

As you suggested, Alletto proved to be quite a charming little town. The money brought in by Lord Morayk had made life easy and everyone here seems pleased with the new situation. As for the mission you entrusted to me, I must confess that I am very disappointed.

As you know, I love adventure and new challenges and I've started with high expectations, however, as my investigations

have advanced, everything we assumed, based on the rumors that have come to Oppara, has proven wrong. Lord Morayk is just a lucky adventurer who seems to have found a treasure that enriched him overnight. All that we heard about him is nothing but political intrigues. Yes, he is ambitious and seems to fight hard to gain more power in the messy political affairs of Taldor, but, between us, is this not of what every Taldan noble dreams?

Also, I can't confirm the suspicions about infiltration of agents of Cheliex, because I've not discovered even the smallest evidence of a link or devotion to Asmodeus or his associates. Yes, Lord Morayk and his wife, Kaleih, seem a little too devoted to Calistra, but the folks here say that the goddess has something in common with their love and that 'secret treasure'. I've searched the fatuous temple of Calistra that they have built here, but I've found nothing to say that it is more than it is supposed to be. Yes, it is as big as a palace and it has gained great influence in the region in a short time, but this is due to his 'sacred' prostitutes, rather than some hidden cabal.

I've got an audience at the Morayk palace, but his wife hasn't given me any clues that she is a devil or that she had some

connection with fiends, and I wasn't able to find anything at all in this regard during my investigations. Yes, she is very beautiful (trust me!) and Morayk is totally charmed by her, but my guess is rather that she was a priestess or cleric of Calistra and that he had fell in her 'net' in one of the goddess' temples.

As you can see, I haven't had too many dangerous adventures here. I will give you more boring details when we next meet. Until then, leave me a few days to find some compensation for my disappointments exploring the faith of the Calistra priestesses.

Yours,

Vago

Starday, 5 Rova 4710

After the feather was down, she roused from the table and turned to the bed. There a man was lying in a pool of blood, unable to move or talk.

«I see you are still fighting with the death, Vago. Brave until the last moment, no?» she said telepathically.

His life was draining from him with every drop of blood and he did not have much left in his veins. It was hard to him even to keep his mind clear.

«What are you?» he thought.

The question made the woman smile.

«Well, your journal was interesting to read and even if you were wrong about me, I think you deserve one last wish. »

Vago's eyes grew bigger as her body transformed and the horns, bat wings and tail appeared. «Aaah! Succubus...» was all he could think before his final breath.

After she reclaimed her human form, she threw the journal and the candle on Vago's chest. As the hungry flames began eating the paper and the clothes, she took the letter from the table and teleported to her room at the palace.☞



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Family Ties

By Larry "Larcifer" Wilhelm

Art by Hugo "Butterfrog" Solis

Whispers of exotic magic in the lands of the Tian Empire far across the Crown of the World tell of strange sorcerers who harness the power of those who came before them. A family bond between the living and the dead transcends the mortal realm and fuels the sorcerer's fire. Guided by a hundred voices speaking in harmony, familiar, yet unknown, these foreign sorcerers gain power from their ancestors. I have witnessed the power of the Tegin-Kul Urn, a gilded porcelain funeral vessel that awakens those spirits closest to its user—the deceased family.

- An excerpt from the journal of Antov Andrezi

It was supposed to be simple, thought Antov, a member of the Pathfinder Society, infiltrate the Sczarni family and intercept an urn. As he pulled his dagger from the fresh corpse of a Sczarni thug, a heavy sigh escaped Antov's lips. Days earlier Antov befriended the fool ruffian, Grigore, in hopes of getting close enough to the Tegin-Kul Urn to steal it.

"Sorry friend, nothing personal," he said, knowing it would do nothing to assuage his guilt. He couldn't second guess his

tactics; he had a job to do and he would not let the Society down, no matter the cost. Antov could not help but feel sorry for the lifeless husk below him, blood pooling on the cobbled floor of the Sczarni warehouse. *Who was this poor soul leaving behind?*

Antov caressed his smooth leather pack where, inside, the urn rested, wrapped carefully. Suddenly a wind blew past and he heard a voice, *It is too late, they have found you. Be ready.* Antov startled, heart racing as he fumbled for his dagger and with a loud clang it clattered to the warehouse floor. From around crates of contraband on both sides, two distinct groups surrounded Antov. On his right stood the olive skinned Varisians, members of the crime syndicate Sczarni family, on the left dusky skinned foreigners, representatives from the White Orchid, a nefarious group from the distant lands of Tian Xia. Antov looked dumbstruck as he saw the leader of the White Orchids, Kuro Sachiko. Strikingly beautiful, her stark white hair fell like gentle snowflakes from under ornate hair pins; almond-shaped eyes the color of jade shined, and a flawless yellow-hued complexion flashed from beneath a green silk kimono, the precise shade of her eyes. The swirling patterns of black, blue, red, and orange ink that peeked from under her kimono indicated her standing within the Orchid's hierarchy. At her side, tucked within the folds of a great fabric belt, she wore an ornate sword with a finely carved ivory hilt.

Earlier he witnessed these same groups bartering over the urn. The White Orchids travelled a great distance to provide the urn to the Sczarni. Their negotiations opened with a strange ceremony involving drinking a steaming liquid from a fancy pot, its spout the sculpted outstretched paws of a monkey. The foreigners took this ritual very seriously, and tension rose when the Varisians did not reciprocate with equal sincerity. Antov remembered the fear that the urn would not change hands – his mission would fail. He and poor Grigore had the job of transporting the urn from the warehouse. Antov had already planned to double cross Grigore as they left. He had been so relieved when the tension broke and they entered a warehouse office to finalize the deal.

Now a hulking man from the Sczarni faction strode towards Anton growling, "What have you done to Grigore? Where is our urn!" His meaty hand clenched a wicked looking barbed club. Antov's stomach sank. He was discovered and soon his body would lie next to poor Grigore's. In a swift motion, the hulking man swung his club towards Antov's flank. He braced for the impact, then something strange happened. The world around him slowed to a crawl, the club moving as if it swam through thick molasses. A wisp of smoke emerged from Anton's chest and it coalesced into a familiar form as everywhere around him time seemed to skid to a stop. Standing in front of him was his deceased mother. She smiled at him and he felt both joy and sorrow for that instant as she held her hand towards the incoming club and its path changed. The once sure hit flew by rapidly as the world rushed back to its favored speed. The spirit disappeared just as quickly as it formed, dispersed like campfire smoke in the autumn breeze.

The hulk in front of him looked stunned. The White Orchid leader pulled her exotic bastard sword in one fluid motion, a resonant ring echoing through the warehouse as the blade escaped its scabbard. The Sczarni's head left its body cleanly, thudding against floor and rolling against a wooden create. Sachiko purred, "Your urn? I believe we did not yet decide on its price." With that the remaining White Orchids quickly slew the stunned Sczarni. Antov stood there in disbelief amidst the slaughter, *How can I still be alive?*

Before Antov could recover his wits, Sachiko stood in front of him. Their eyes locked, and she spoke to him in accented words, "The Tegin-Kul Urn has chosen you. This is both a blessing and a burden. Its magic is no use to us now. Take it, but be warned if you ever venture into the lands beyond the Crown of the World, we will cut you down." Sachiko bowed once, gracefully, and left. The White Orchids fled the warehouse quickly, leaving only the dead bodies as testimony of their presence. Antov did not wish to remain behind for the Sczarni to discover their betrayal. *I hear the markets of Katapesh are a fine sight this time of year*, mused Antov. He hoped to be as far as possible from the Sczarni wrath by the time they started searching for him.

These voices guide me, protect me, and nurture me on my new journey. I know my ancestors have come before me, and I will join them when I pass on. I am but a part of a greater legacy shown to me by those who have gone before. An uncle, a great grandmother, and many others I never knew are now with me. The urn awakened a world to me which ties me forever to my family.

— An excerpt from the journal of Antov Andrezi

New Bloodline - Ancestral

The spirits of your ancestors flows within and around you at all times. You may have been born with this ancestral connection, or it may have awakened at a later date due to a heroic deed or a stressful situation. Regardless, you are favored by your family's deceased, and their combined power courses in your veins.

Class Skill: Knowledge (history).

Bonus Spells: *unseen servant* (3rd), *false life* (5th), *speak with dead* (7th), *glòbe of invulnerability* (9th), *contact other plane* (11th), *heroism* (13th), *banishment* (15th), *moment of prescience* (17th), *foresight* (19th).

Bonus Feats: Alertness, Arcane Strike, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Skill Focus: Knowledge (history), Skill Focus: Knowledge (planes), Toughness.

Bloodline Powers: You have the power of your collective ancestors surrounding you, and the powers you gain manifest in part due to the heroic or dastardly deeds your family members have achieved before your time. You have been selected by these spirits to build upon your family's greatness.

Touch of the Ancients (Su): Starting at 1st level you may touch a creature as a standard action dealing 1d6 points of cold damage +1 for every two caster levels you possess. Creatures damaged by this attack become fatigued for 2 rounds. Once targeted by this touch, creatures are immune to its fatigue effect for 24 hours.

Ancestral Protection (Su): Starting at 3rd level, up to a number of times per day equal to your Wisdom modifier, after an attack roll is made against you but before damage is determined you may grant yourself a concealment bonus (20% miss chance). If the hit is still successful apply damage normally.

At 12th level this becomes total concealment (50% miss chance). Any effect that normally bypasses concealment negates this ability.

Ancestral Guidance (Su): Starting at 9th level once per day as a full round action you may call upon your ancestors for aid allowing you to roll two dice for any attack roll or skill check and choose either result. At 17th level once per day as a full round action you may roll three dice for any attack roll or skill check and choose the most preferable result.

Superior Lineage (Ex): At 15th level gain a +4 inherent bonus to your Charisma and a +2 luck bonus to your Armor Class.

Mandate of the Forefathers (Su): At 20th level you serve your ancestors and no one else, gaining immunity to all charms, compulsions, and morale effects. ☞





Necro-Lord of Urgathoa

By Ross Byers

Art by Michael Jaecks

Necro-lords are servants of Urgathoa, favored for their ability to spread the plague of undeath amongst the world of the living. They lead cults of the Urgathoa, initiate pestilences and pandemics, and create undead wherever they can.

Necro-lords are overwhelmingly clerics and necromancers (both living and undead), though vampires, ghouls, wights, and other spawn-creating undead can also take up the mantle of a necro-lord.

Skills: 2 + Int bonus per level.

Class Skills: Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Use Magic Device (Cha)

HD: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a necro-lord, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

Alignment: Any evil.

Deity: Urgathoa.

Base Attack Bonus: +4

Skills: Heal 5 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 5 ranks.

	Fort	Ref	Will		
Level	BAB	Save	Save	Save	Special
1 st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Gluttony, One with Death, Plaguebearer
2 nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Create Food and Water
3 rd	+1	+3	+1	+3	Spawn Mastery
4 th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Greater Plaguebearer, Heroes' Feast
5 th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Truly One with Death, Cheat Death
					Spell per Day
					+1 level in existing spellcasting class
					+1 level in existing spellcasting class
					+1 level in existing spellcasting class
					+1 level in existing spellcasting class
					+1 level in existing spellcasting class

Special: Ability to create undead. The ability to cast *animate dead*, *create undead*, or *create greater undead* qualifies, as does many undead's Create Spawn ability. Using magic items, however, does not qualify.

Class Features

Gluttony (Ex): A necro-lord requires twice as much food and water as he would otherwise.

One With Death (Ex): A Necro-lord lives at the intersection of life and death. A living necro-lord becomes immune to damage from negative energy, while an undead one becomes immune to damage from positive energy. (Other effects relying on negative or positive energy, such as a cleric's Turn Undead ability, work normally, they simply deal no damage.)

At 5th level, a necro-lord is healed by both positive and negative energy.

Plaguebearer (Su): A necro-lord is immune to nonmagical diseases. However, the necro-lord may choose at the time of infection to become a carrier for the disease. A carrier shows all superficial signs of a disease (such as sores, boils, a cough, etc.) and can infect others, but suffers no ability damage or other serious ill effects. A carrier can attempt Fortitude saves to recover (or choose not to) or be magically healed as normal.

Additionally, a necro-lord may cast *contagion* or *remove disease* each once per day as a spell-like ability. The save DC is Charisma-based.

At 4th level, a necro-lord becomes immune to magical diseases as well, and may cast *contagion* and *remove disease* each twice per day.

Spells per Day: When a necro-lord gains a level, he gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. This essentially means that he adds the level of necro-lord to the level of whatever other spellcasting class he has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly. If the character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a necro-lord, he must choose which class he adds each necro-lord level to for the purpose of determining spells per day.

If the necro-lord has no levels in a spellcasting class, he instead gains one 1st-level spell slot, which he may use to prepare spells from any of Urgathoa's domains as if he were a cleric. His caster level is equal to twice his necro-lord class level. With each new necro-lord level, he gains a new spell slot for a spell level equal to his class level. A 5th level necro-lord would thus have a spell slot for one domain spell from 1st to 5th level spells. The necro-lord's Wisdom score determines the number of bonus spells and spell save DCs.

Create Food and Water (Sp): At 2nd level, a necro-lord may cast *create food and water* (CL 1st) once per day as a spell-like ability, save that the food and drink produced is delicious, in addition to being nourishing.

At 4th level, the necro-lord may cast *heroes' feast* (CL 3rd) instead.

Spawn Mastery (Su): At 3rd level, whenever a necro-lord would create a free-willed undead, that undead is instead under the necro-lord's control. A necro-lord can control up to 4 HD of undead per necro-lord level in this manner. Excess undead are free-willed unless previously controlled undead are released.

Cheat Death (Ex): At 5th level, if a necro-lord is ever slain or destroyed, his soul steals away from Pharasma's Boneyard, just as Urgathoa did ages ago. The necro-lord rises as if affected by *raise dead* 1d4 hours after its death. This affects even destroyed undead, but not a creature that has been dismembered or had its body destroyed.

However, escape from Pharasma is fleeting. A creature restored in this manner will simply drop dead after 2d6 days, unless otherwise restored to full life. The GM should roll this secretly, so the necro-lord does not know how much time remains. A *raise dead* or similar spell will restore a living creature to life. Undead creatures, such as a lich, can replace a destroyed phylactery. As most undead cannot be restored to life (or unlife), they will be destroyed when the effect ends. ☹

Dear Ask a Shoanti

An Axe Clan brave is on a train headed east at 70 miles per hour. 210 miles to the east a Sun Shaman boards a train headed west travelling at 30 miles an hour. Assuming the two trains are on parallel tracks, how long before the two trains pass one another by?

Sincere regards,

Troubled by Math in the Cinderlands

Dear Troubled by Math

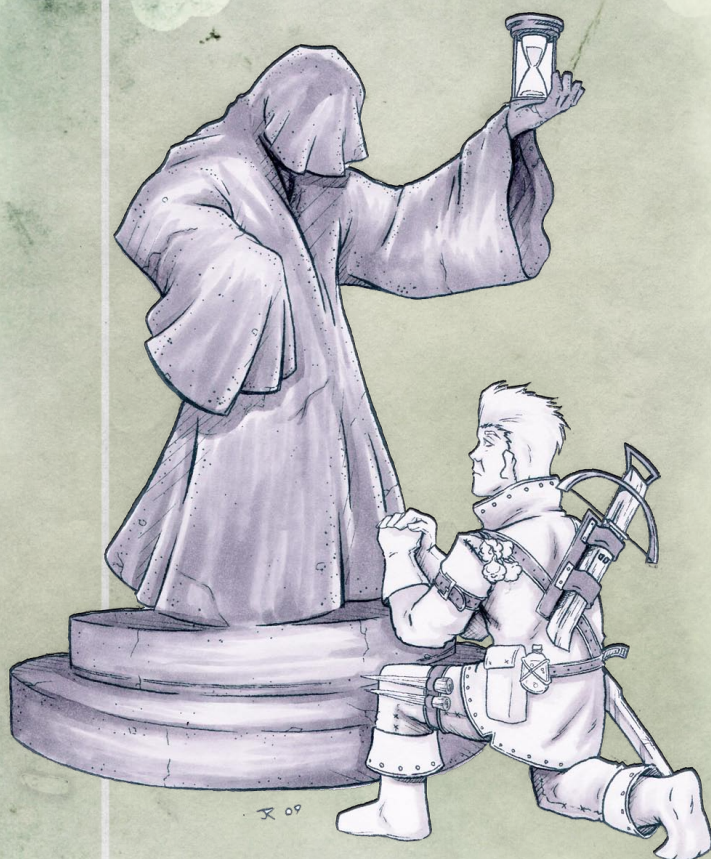
Math is easy. Observe:

Ten minutes after the Axe Clan brave boards the train, it is stormed by Hellknights. The brave climbs atop the train and faces them down on the rooftop, klar-to-sword, with the wind in his face. At the last moment the brave derails the train in a collision of smoldering steel, slaying the opposing Paralicor as he rolls to safety.

Meanwhile the Sun shaman simply decides his train is an affront to nature and summons a fire elemental exploding his train in a conflagration of fire and steam. Therefore the answer is: never.

Yours very truly,

Ask a Shoanti



Tools of the Trade: Hunters of the Dead

By Ernesto "Montalve" Ramírez
Art by Jason Kirckof

Thankless and dangerous... that is how one can describe the duty of those dedicated to the destruction of the undead – creatures brought from beyond the veil, animated by foul energies or dark curses.

The greatest portions of these stalwart hunters die young. Some others turn into what they hate most. The least, yet best of them, gather not only success, but fame of their own, be that for good or ill. The dead do not suffer long to let live those who successfully hunt them.

Anyone can take the path of the hunt, no matter race, class or nationality, however some are better prepared to deal with

the unending battle than others. Clerics, paladins and rangers have skills and abilities specifically trained to handle the rigors. Also, the people of Ustalav and the neighbors of Geb will have a frightfully closer experience with the undead than most citizens of Absalom.

Here are tools and training gathered from around Golarion that have proved useful to the successful hunter in his quest. Hope that you live long enough to use them.

Traits

Combat

Jaded: You have seen horror and death as far back as you can remember. Maybe you are unfazed by the gruesome, or have become a cynic as a defense against the dark realities of the corners of the world. You have a +2 trait bonus on saving throws against Fear.

Religion

Slayer's Oath: You have sworn your life to stopping the propagation of the undead; your goddess has heard and approved your choice. You earn a +1 trait bonus on weapon damage rolls when battling the undead. You must be a follower of Iomedae, Pharasma or Sarenrae to take this trait.

Magic

Ghost Sight: When you were younger you suffered a brush with death. Perhaps you were almost killed by a wight, close to dying from a grievous wound, or actually died and were raised. Since then you have not been the same. You can see beyond the veil, able to see ghost and spirits and detect the taint of the undead. You receive a +2 trait bonus to Perception checks when trying to locate undead, and can attempt to locate ethereal undead (though they are still considered merely invisible, +20 to Stealth).

Regional

Redheaded (Ustalav, Kingdoms of the Linnorm Kings): In your land there is a saying that redheaded women are born with strange blood in their veins. Many are called witches and many do not survive. You not only survived, but learned the truth of your heritage. There is magic in your blood. You know one cantrip of your choice from the sorcerer-wizard spell list and can use it at will as a spell-like ability. This ability is cast at your character level. The spell-like ability's Save DC is Charisma-based. If you are an arcane spellcaster, you can instead choose one 1st-level spell and it is always cast as if one level higher.

Social

Hunter's Blood: You didn't choose the path of the hunt, the hunt chose you. You were born inside a family of those dedicated to hunting the undead. Since an early age you

were taught the tools of the trade, how to hunt and kill your quarry. Be careful when using your family name – it's better known than you are. You earn a +1 trait bonus on Diplomacy when used to gather information, Knowledge (religion), and Survival when used for tracking when related to an undead quarry. Choose one as these as a class skill. The undead have a +1 bonus on any roll to learn about you, as your family's fame precedes you.

Without a Past: You knew you were going into a world where none go unscathed, and there is no turning back, so you decided to forsake your past in order to protect your loved ones. You earn +1 trait bonus to Bluff and Linguistics when used to forge documents, and choose one as a class skill. You have no old friends or family to go in times of need, yet at least they remain safe from your enemies finding and taking their wrath out on them.

Feats

Halo [Background]

Your deity has blessed you with her holy symbol, showing you as one of her chosen ones, and even when the birthmark is not seen your aura is strong enough to be felt and sometimes seen.

Prerequisites: Birthmark trait, any good alignment, must follow a good deity.

Benefit: Whenever your birthmark is seen you gain one of two benefits. If it is seen by good-aligned creatures or someone of the same faith, you gain a +2 morale bonus to Diplomacy checks when dealing with them. If seen by the undead or enemies of your deity, you instead get a +2 morale bonus to Intimidate checks against them (even mindless undead). If you can channel energy, you may do so without the use of a holy symbol and can instead touch your birthmark.

Special: If you are not a cleric or paladin you gain an aura of good as strong as a cleric of your character level (see the *detect evil* spell for more information on auras). If you are a cleric or paladin then your aura is twice as strong, as if you were a character of twice your level.

Normal: You need a holy symbol to channel positive energy.

Hunter of the Dead [Achievement]

You have dedicated yourself to the hunt whole heartedly, and it has paid off. Your experience battling the undead has given you insight in how better to confront and destroy your quarry.

Prerequisite: Deliver the killing blow to 30 undead creatures, necromancers, or clerics and minions of Urgathoa.

Benefit: As long as you carry some sort of trophy harvested from an undead creature, you gain a +2 morale bonus on all saving throws to resist energy drain attacks and necromancy spells. You also gain a +2 competence bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls against undead, necromancers or clerics and minions of Urgathoa.

A Light in the Darkness [Achievement]

Your deity has blessed you for your dedication in the destruction of the undead. From now on, whenever you battle them, you can feel their will and strength more clearly fueling your actions.

Prerequisite: Deal 200 points of damage to undead creatures by channeling positive energy.

Benefit: Whenever you channeling positive energy, you deal +1d6 damage against undead and add +2 to the DC of the saving throw to resist. ☼

Blammo goes to PaizoCon 2009

For more Blammo strips visit www.atomicarray.com

Written by Rone Barton, drawn by HS





The Wretched of Ustalav

Mike "taig" Welham

Art by Hugo "Butterfrog" Solis

5 Rova

When Venture-Captain Alkara sent us to Bregar, a village too close to Virlych's border, I almost quit the Society. Not a typical reaction for someone in the Pathfinder Society, true, but I don't think anyone in their right mind would want to go there. The Venture-Captain asked Rechar, Villus, and me to check out a rumor that a cache of diamonds had been unearthed there. He figured the diamonds represented only a portion of an ancient treasure hidden when the Whispering Tyrant conquered the land. Discovering a treasure from Ustalav's glory days would help my standing, so that made the decision for me.

We arrived in Bregar at midday. The villagers hardly noticed us, and no one spoke to us. They shambled around and performed menial tasks with an utter lack of spirit. Children somberly assisted their parents. Dogs and cats plodded alongside their masters. Rechar joked, quietly, that zombies ran the village. Villus grasped his spiral-shaped holy symbol and gave a quick prayer to Pharasma.

We strode through the streets and arrived at the village's center. At least a dozen diamonds sat on a table there, and none of the villagers meandering from place to place paid any attention to the gems. With no noticeable leader around, we decided to approach the table. This spurred the villagers to action, if one could call it that. Several of them surrounded us. They grabbed at us and whispered "No." I wanted to push them away, but their wretchedness stayed my hand. Rechar scooped up the diamonds and managed to break through the crowd forming around us. We followed him and made for the village's edge. The villagers gave half-hearted pursuit, but suddenly returned to their tasks once we exited the village. I felt guilty for just walking off with their wealth, but they didn't seem to realize its worth or importance.

None of us spoke for a long time after leaving Bregar. Even though we had retrieved the diamonds, we knew we wouldn't be able to go back and find any other treasures. Guilt at taking a defenseless village's treasure gnawed at me, and I saw the experience's effects on my companions. Rechar stopped wisecracking. More worrying, Villus no longer reached for his holy symbol.

Tonight it rained. Rechar half-heartedly set up the tent. Villus kept looking back in the direction of Bregar. Light no longer played in either man's eyes. I shuddered to think of what these men were going through.

6 Rova

My sleep was plagued with visions of vacantly staring faces and hands clutching at me. When I awoke, the day didn't make me feel any better. Villus had left the camp. Rechar didn't care about where he had gone, and the rains made it impossible to track him. I packed up the camp, hoping we would catch him, or he would catch us, though my heart told me otherwise. Rechar watched, indifferent to everything. I should have been angry, but I found it difficult to muster up the feeling. Bregar took something away from all of us and all I wanted was to put some distance between me and it. We continued on, with Rechar constantly peering over his shoulder towards that wretched village.

The rain stopped before nightfall. We didn't want to make camp. Neither of us had the energy to do so. Rechar and I said nothing to each other as we lay on our backs gazing numbly up at the stars.

7 Rova

I was not surprised to discover that Rechar was gone. He left all his provisions, including the diamonds. I grabbed what I could carry. I should have tried to find him. Him and

Villus. I was certain they had returned to Bregar. I could have gone back and tried to bring them home, but I didn't want to. I couldn't face that place again. Instead, I trudged away from Bregar.

When I reach the Lodge, I will present the diamonds we retrieved and I will give the Society a warning to leave Bregar alone. I hope that I can get back to some semblance of a normal life too.

—From the Journal of Quentin Trask

Bregar's Gloom

This disease, currently limited to the village of Bregar, destroys a creature's self-worth, making them pliable subjects for a would-be tyrant. Those that succumb to the disease become one of the wretched. Any victim of the disease who finally succumbs while away from Bregar seeks to return there.

BREGAR'S GLOOM

Level 5 disease, contact; **Save** Will DC 14

EFFECTS

Frequency 1 day; **Effect** 1d6 Cha damage. A creature that reaches 0 Cha becomes wretched (see template below); **Cure** 3 consecutive saves

Wretched Creature

Wretched creatures have fallen prey to Bregar's gloom. They listlessly toil for an unseen master.

Creating a Wretched Creature

"Wretched" is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal animal, humanoid, or monstrous humanoid (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A wretched creature uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here. Do not recalculate the creature's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, saves, or skill points if its type changes.

Size and Type: Animals with this template become magical beasts, but otherwise the creature type is unchanged.

Armor Class: A wretched creature takes a -4 circumstance penalty to its Armor Class, as it will not try to defend itself.

Attacks: A wretched creature retains all base attacks. However, the wretched creature loses all aggressiveness, and it will not attack unless its master wills it.

Special Attacks: A wretched creature retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following special attack.

Bregar's Gloom (Su): A wretched creature transmits Bregar's gloom with a successful touch or natural attack.

Dear Ask a Shoanti

I will be vacationing in Ustalav this winter with the wife and kids. Any suggestions for the flight?

*Sincere regards,
Seeking Some Sun*

Dear Seeking

I am glad you are getting some well-deserved time away. When travelling, be sure to accept the moist towlette as they are ideal for garroting vampires in front of you who recline their seats into your personal space. Consider also bringing a travel pillow. Not only is it a godsend for comfort, should you need to bludgeon any uppity lycanthropes, you needn't worry they will collapse on the first critical before you can work up a sweat.

*Yours very truly,
Ask a Shoanti*

Special Qualities: A wretched creature retains all the special qualities of the base creature and also gains the following special qualities.

Wretchedness (Su): Any opponent attempting to strike or otherwise directly attack the wretched creature, even with a targeted spell, must attempt a Will save. If the save succeeds, the opponent can attack normally. If the save fails, the opponent can't follow through with the attack, that part of its action is lost. The save DC is Wisdom-based.

Immunity: A wretched creature is immune to charm effects.

Abilities: Same as the base creature, but its Charisma is reduced to 1.

Environment: Same as base creature.

Organization: Village (20–80).

Challenge Rating: As base creature.

Treasure: Incidental.

Alignment: Always neutral.

Advancement: As base creature.

Level Adjustment: — ☉

Absalom Character Traits

By Russ Taylor

Art by Hugo "Butterfrog" Solis

Venture Captain Aura Steelborn:

I hope this letter finds you in fortune's favor. I continue my time in Absalom, cataloging the many peoples of this city so that our fellow Pathfinders might not find themselves at such a disadvantage here at the order's heart. I believe these latest observations will remedy your critique of the less-than complete nature of past communications.

Have you given further thought to mounting another expedition to the Hammerfalls? I weary of the strangeness of this city and long for home, and for news of fate of my ancestors.

As always, your obedient servant, Durthin Deetreader

Detailed below are several new character traits intended for characters from the city of Absalom and the island of Kortos. The traits are presented using Pathfinder RPG Beta rules, with conversion notes for use with the OGL SRD 3.5 rules. Rules for using traits in your campaign are available at <http://paizo.com/traits> and in most Pathfinder Companion products.

Religion Traits

To choose a religion trait, a PC must follow a specific god, though they do not need to be capable of casting divine spells. The following traits are designed for PCs who follow the deities commonly worshipped in Absalom.

Child of Spring (Gozreh): You have spent long months tending the ever-blooming flowers and lush trees of Evergreen Park in the Green Ridge district, the largest park in Absalom. You receive a +1 trait bonus on Knowledge (nature) checks, and Knowledge (nature) is always a class skill for you. You may always make Knowledge (nature) checks as though you were trained in the skill.

Envoy of Iomedae (Iomedae): Before you took up the mantle of adventurer, you traveled far and wide in Absalom's most storied messenger corps, the Winged Sandals. You gain a +1 trait bonus on Knowledge (geography) and Diplomacy checks.

Faith of the Failed (various): You follow one of the many would-be gods who accepted the Test of the Starstone. The less faithful say your god failed and perished, but you know

they merely await the proper time to reveal their ascension. Your deep-rooted conviction provides a +1 trait bonus on Will saves.

Hero of the Hall (Cayden Cailean): Burned to the ground more than a dozen times, Cayden's Hall is home to the most boisterous revelry in Absalom. You've survived many a night of drunken carousing at the Hall, and even started a few successful adventures there. You receive a +2 trait bonus on Fortitude saves against poison (including alcohol) and on saves against effects that cause the nauseated or sickened condition.

Keeper of Coins (Abadar): Commerce is the lifeblood of any great city, and grist for the mill of the Vault of Abadar. As a faithful servant of your god, you've served the Vault, whether as clergy or laity. You've learned to keep a sharp eye out for the best deal, and gain a +1 trait bonus on Perception and Sense Motive checks.

SRD 3.5: Receive a +1 trait bonus on Spot checks instead of Perception checks.

Masked in Shadow (Norgorber): While Absalom allows the faith of the Reaper of Reputation, his adherents prefer to conceal their true identities beneath masks. When masked or disguised, you receive a +1 trait bonus on Bluff and Stealth checks. You never risk poisoning yourself when applying poison to a blade or using a poisoned weapon.

SRD 3.5: Receive a +1 trait bonus on Hide checks instead of Stealth checks.

Regional Traits

To choose an Absalom regional trait, a PC must have spent at least one year living in or near the city of Absalom. At the GM's discretion, characters formerly from Absalom may also select one of these traits.

Audience of the Holt (Absalom): You have spent many afternoons seated on the roots of the Grand Holt, listening to the wisdom of its druids, learning patience and the lore of the natural world. You receive a +1 trait bonus on Perception, Knowledge (nature) and Animal Empathy checks.

SRD 3.5: Receive a +1 trait bonus on Listen checks instead of Perform checks.

Blackblade Student (Absalom): Trained at Blackblade's, a new and successful dueling academy, you've learned to think on your feet and anticipate your enemy's reaction. When you are not surprised and have a weapon in hand, you gain a +2 trait bonus on initiative checks. In addition, you receive a +1 trait bonus to your CMB against disarm attempts.

SRD 3.5: Instead of a CMB bonus, you receive a +2 trait bonus on the opposing roll to defend against a disarm attempt.

Dancer of Kortos (Absalom): The Grand Dance Hall of Kortos is famed for the skill and grace of its Vudrani-trained dance troupes. The performers of the Hall are known for their social grace as well, all a part of Lord Punjeer's carefully choreographed grooming of merchants and investors. You receive a +1 trait bonus on Diplomacy and Perform (dance) checks. Perform (dance) is always considered a class skill for you.

SRD 3.5: You also receive a +1 trait bonus on Gather Information checks.

Green of the Grotto (Absalom): The performers of the Grotto are renowned throughout the Inner Sea. You've worn the green tunic of an apprentice of the Grotto and honed your talents at the feet of masters. You gain a +1 trait bonus on any one category of Perform check as well as Craft (painting) and Craft (sculpting) checks. You may choose one of Perform (dance), Craft (painting) or Craft (sculpting) to always be a class skill for you.

Hotspur (Absalom): Noted for their brash attitudes and tight leather clothes, the hotspurs are Absalom's bravos, equally quick with blade and cutting gibe. Your misspent youth as a hotspur provides a +1 trait bonus to initiative checks and Bluff checks.

Kite Battler (Absalom): You've spent long hours in the parks of Absalom, testing your skill against other kite fliers. In the process, you've learned patience and a keen eye for distance. You receive a +1 trait bonus on checks to cast a spell defensively or under difficult conditions, and a +1 trait bonus on any attack roll that includes a range penalty.

SRD 3.5: You receive a +1 trait bonus on Concentration checks instead of the bonus for casting defensively.

Liberated (Absalom): You survived the wretched environs of Misery Row, Absalom's slave district. Whether you escaped or one-time master freed you, your days of slavery left their mark on you. You receive a +1 trait bonus on Fortitude saves and ignore the first point of nonlethal damage taken each hour.

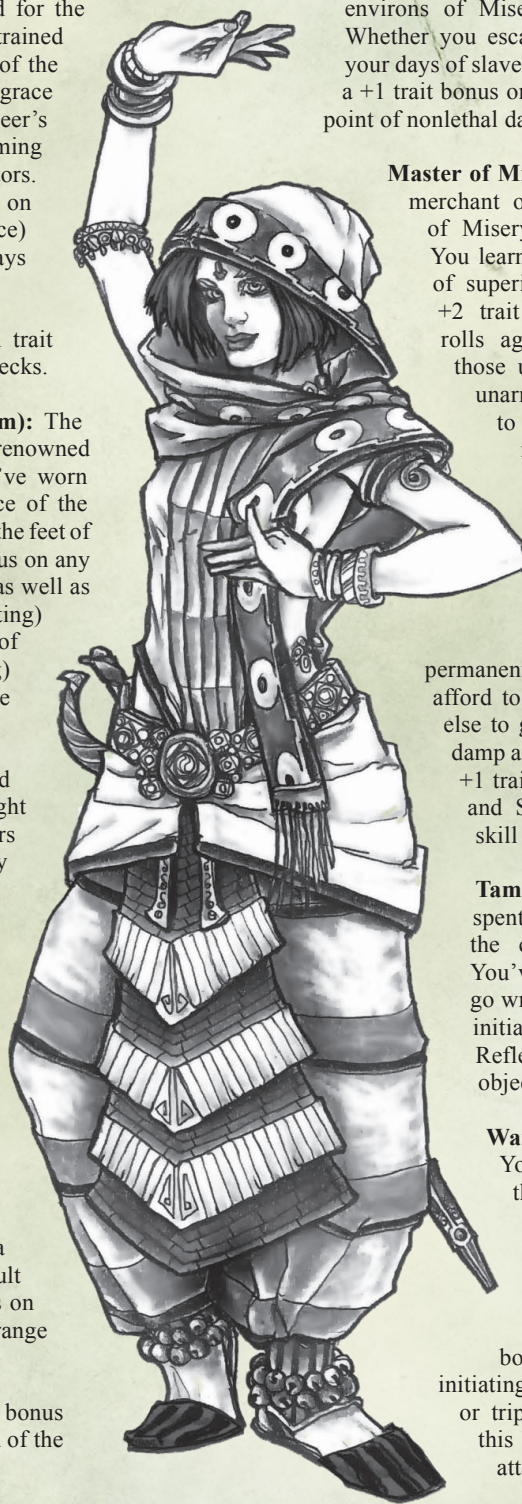
Master of Misery (Absalom): Whether as guard, merchant or mere laborer, you are a veteran of Misery Row, slave market of Absalom. You learned well how to assert your position of superiority. When armed, you receive a +2 trait bonus to melee weapon damage rolls against unarmed humanoids – even those using natural weapons or improved unarmed strikes. This bonus applies only to creatures with the humanoid type, not human-appearing creatures of other types such as monstrous humanoids and outsiders.

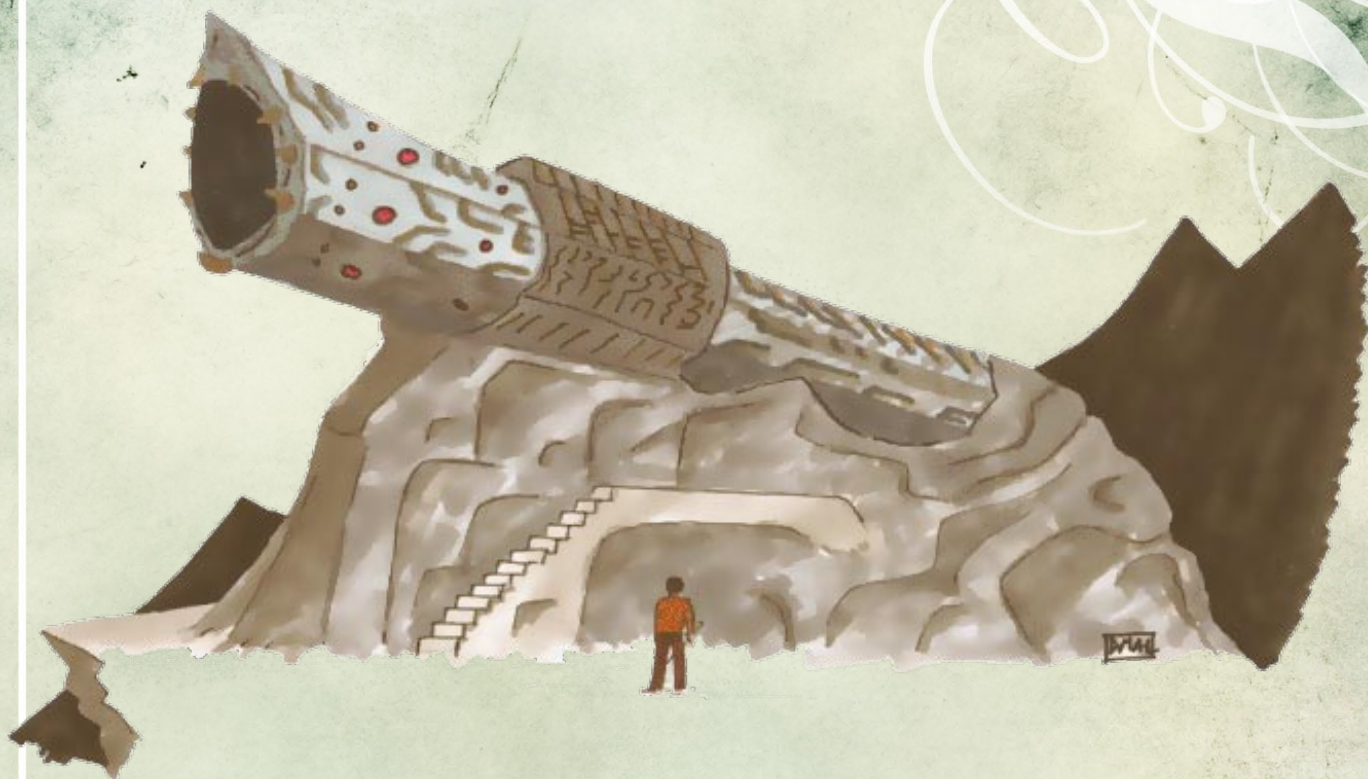
Sodden (Absalom): When the quake turned the Puddles district's all-too frequent flooding problems into a permanent situation, every resident who could afford to leave moved on. You had nowhere else to go, and spent your days eking out a damp and miserable existence. You receive a +1 trait bonus on Climb and Swim checks, and Swim is always considered a class skill for you.

Tamer of the Beast (Absalom): You've spent long hours laboring at the Beast, the cargo crane at Absalom's docks. You've learned to move fast when things go wrong. You receive a +1 trait bonus on initiative checks and a +1 trait bonus to Reflex saves against physical attacks and objects (but not spells).

Warrior of the Irorium (Absalom): You have trained among the warriors of the Irorium arena, mastering crowd-pleasing combat techniques. You receive a +1 trait bonus to a combat maneuver of your choice.

SRD 3.5: You receive a +2 trait bonus on opposed checks when initiating a bull rush, disarm, grapple, sunder or trip (choose one). You do not receive this bonus when defending against these attacks.Ⓢ





The Great Maw of Rovagug

By Joseph "Guy Humual" Scott

Art by Dave "The Eldritch Mr. Shiny" Mallon

My trip to Alkenstar was not planned. My flying machine seemed capable of safely navigating the Mana Wastes, but I fear I was at the mercy of the winds. I decided to drop into Alkenstar than risk floating further south into Geb. Here I was still in lands neutral to Nex and I was able to refuel and make the necessary adjustments to prepare my ship for the return to home. The locals were understandably interested in my flying ship and I was understandably interested in their own technological marvel — Firearms!

My own pistol was made somewhere in this region (by an extremely compliant manufacture I was told) and I initially had delusions of touring this gunsmith's shop. I was quickly informed that this technology was strictly a state secret. Moreover, there was some talk about seizing my own ship for state research! Naturally averting this potentially disastrous thinking required extreme tact and diplomacy. Thankfully, my name was not unknown in these parts and thankfully,

Mqu'Gro's savage ape act had the local constabulary believing that seizing the ship would be more trouble than it was worth. Although Wissbe and I blathered rather well, I believe it was the eight foot, six hundred pound gorilla that made the greater impression. Once again, I owe the continued sovereignty of my ship to the Mwangi native.

I was eventually compelled to explain the basics of my flying machine. It seemed only fair, as I undoubtedly caused some undue distress with my unexpected arrival. It is my experience that it is the fear of the unknown that people find the most worrying. Once again, I needed to dispel the myth that the mere elevation is the wonder of my machine — it is the controlled descent that makes mechanical flight even remotely useful. I must say that I was impressed with the technical knowledge the people of Alkenstar. I was able to explain the air release valve without a single blank look, and some of the questions they asked had me reevaluating my own design. I imagine that the people of Alkenstar could use the information from my makeshift symposium to build basic observation balloons.

Our symposium turned out to be quite mutually beneficial. Aside from the stimulating questions, I was able to make the acquaintance of a gentleman responsible for overseeing a large smithy where they manufactured these incredibly complex weapons at the impressive rate of one firearm per day. Moreover, I discovered that this same gentleman was

also responsible for maintaining the impressive siege weapon known as “The Great Maw of Rovagug.” This weapon, I should remind my readers, is capable of launching a three ton ball over eight miles! Naturally, being familiar with firearms, my first question dealt with the safe dispersion of all that back force. My own pistol fires a ball that weighs but a few ounces and only manages a little over a hundred feet but the kick is notable. How could a weapon of that size not blast through the back of the mountain with the significant back force generated by the explosion? He sadly had no answer. Next, I asked him what thickness of the barrel and how it was reinforced? Again, sadly, he had no answer. Then I asked him how much black power he needed to fire the weapon, but he just looked at me sadly. It seemed there was little he was allowed to tell me.

“Would you like a tour?” he asked, by way of an apology for his lack of declassified information.

“Would I?” I responded in surprise. “I’d be honored!”

Having an 81-inch bore means having a weapon big enough to actually walk into! And that’s exactly what we did. The gentleman and I were able to comfortably walk side by side down the barrel of that bombard. I did note the thickness of the mouth of bombard (though it was richly decorated) and I estimate it to be slightly over four feet! I imagine there are larger bands reinforcing the weapon, especially towards base of the thing, and therefore I estimate the weapon could be as wide as fourteen and a half feet wide! Sadly, I was not allowed to see the firing mechanism or the outside of the loading hatch, but the inside was impressive, and the scorch and stress marks I witnessed inside spoke of the incredible pressure such a weapon would generate. As we walked out of the weapon, my companion pointed to a crater several miles away.

“Do you see that?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied, drawing out my spyglass for a better view. “What is it?”

“That’s the mark this gun left some thirty three years ago,” he said staring out rather dreamily at the horizon. “I was just a kid then, scarcely through basic training, and I had no idea then the danger involved with firing this weapon. It had only been fired once before you see, as a demonstration, and I suspect that they hadn’t used a full load of powder as they weren’t trying to hit anything. The weapon had sat silent for over a hundred and fifty years since then! We got the alarm and started arming the bombard, a task that took us an hour to complete I should add. Meanwhile, the guard started evacuating the civilians from around the area. Naturally, being young and stupid, we assumed that this was in case we missed. Our target was a small group of sandkrakens – they were so large I figured how could we ever miss them? When we fired this thing, the whole hilltop shook. I was crouched down there, behind the battlements, hands over my ears and bees wax jammed in there on top, the blast still left me with

a hum in my ears for weeks after. I stood and ran over to the battlements just in time to see the results — a miss! A catastrophic miss! There must have been sand and rock thrown up nearly half a mile high! The land seemed to roll like water around the crater. One of those bigger sand creatures actually shattered with the force. The others ran like roaches in the light. I’ve never before witnessed such destruction, and I imagine that I’ll never see anything like that again, but I think about my responsibility all the time. Could you imagine such force brought against troops? Against city walls or the people living within them? We’re standing in the mouth of a monster my friend... a monster that obeys the will of simple men like you and me. The common man might fear powerful wizards, men who can rain down fire and ice, but I fear simple men armed with weapons like these. A wizard must learn to wield his power and through that learn to respect it, but with black powder, with firearms, a common man may be taught to use them without learning anything. Technology is a monster that requires understanding to set loose on mankind. Please remember that as you build your flying machine.”

With his cautionary tale finished, the gentleman led me back to my ship and left me and my rag tag crew to finish our preparations for our return home. I thought it best to record the tale to the best of my memory for society. Although I fail to see how my humble flying machine could ever compare to the savage beauty of “The Great Maw of Rovagug,” or how such an unpredictable thing could ever be used in war, I do think this tale should be recorded for posterity!

Yours truly,
Boswic C. Hamptin ☼

Dear Ask a Shoanti

I want to beat one of my fellow players over the head with my Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign Setting book, but I worry about the delicate binding. He is playing a Chelaxian so the urge is strong – what can I do?

*Sincere regards,
Criticals with Hardcover*

Dear Criticals with Hardcover

You need not worry. Chelaxians are soft and squishy. The book will hold.

*Yours very truly,
Ask a Shoanti ☼*



The Sweetest Fruit

By Jeff "Shadowborn" Lee

Art by Jason Kirckof

Orrin d'Vaul awoke to many sensations, all unpleasant. Pain was first, followed by the feeling of damp, cold stone against his palms and cheek. The air stank of stagnant water, rot, and filth. Over these were scents of smoke and pitch. He opened his eyes to flickering torchlight. He moved an arm, causing a roach nearly the size of his palm to skitter across the moldy straw before him. With a groan, d'Vaul pushed himself up from the floor. The pain increased, throbbing in the back of his head. He slumped against a nearby wall with a groan, taking in his surroundings. Despite the dim light, the eyes gifted him by his elven father ensured he missed little.

The room was cramped, fashioned of mortared stone. A torch sat in a rusty cresset above, each flicker of light punctuated by a sizzle or pop. Mold clung in patches to the ceiling, circled the pools of water on the floor, and grew rife over piles of damp straw. Roaches were in abundance. A rusty door stood opposite the torch. A rectangular aperture was set into the door at eye level, covered with more iron.

"Amazing how a dungeon in Mwangi looks just like one in Korvosa, or anywhere for that matter," muttered d'Vaul. He ran hands about his person, testing for wounds: a large knot on back of head (painful), several scrapes and bruises, skinned palms and likely a bruised rib or two. All in all, much less than he'd expected. As for his equipment, the sword was gone, and dagger scabbard empty. His spell component pouch was missing, as well as his tool kit. His feet were bare, which meant the second set of picks he kept in the hollow left sole of his boot were gone as well. No pack. He leaned over one of the pools on the floor and peered in.

The face looking back at him sported a couple more bruises, and a nasty cut across the bridge of a long nose, now clotted and crusty. A firm chin, smooth brow, and gray eyes completed a handsome face, if a bit scuffed. He reached up and ran his hands through thinning, blond hair, revealing the points of his ears. D'Vaul normally wore fashionable hats, not proud of his ever-thinner coif. This was one weakness of his human heritage he preferred to keep to himself.

"Well, old boy, it doesn't look like this particular chapter of life will end well," d'Vaul announced to himself. He wished he had his journal. At the very least, he could record what he knew in the hopes that another member of the Society would find it later. As it was, his fate would remain a mystery, unless his shrunken head ended up on a pole, guarding the borders of this strange cult's demesne. Before he could lapse into darker musings on his fate, he noticed the bundle lying in the corner of the cell. The shock of incredulity dulled the pain enough for him to rise and quickly retrieve the sack. Pulling back the cloth, he gazed with wonder at the object within.

The jewel! How could his captors have overlooked reclaiming it?

D'Vaul studied the object nestled in the sackcloth, lying heavily in his palm. It was the size of an apple, and spherical. Smooth and pinkish-peach in color, one might think it an immense pearl at first glance. He ran his long fingers over its surface. It was faintly warm to the touch, despite the chill of the room, and he could feel in its smooth surface the faint, nearly indiscernible piping that ran vein-like over its surface. The jewel was not quite opaque, and there were twisting gray designs in its depths, like smoke frozen in the crystal. In the trembling light, they almost seemed to move.

It made no sense. He had sailed all this way from Katapesh to find it. All those interminable days with his hirelings—a bumbling Ulfen and an eccentric Varisian druid—to capture this treasure for the Pathfinder Society. To succeed where others had failed, that would be the sweetest fruit of all. That wind-bag lout, Alvan Vancaskerkin, had returned empty-handed with naught but stories of dark cults and strange magic. Yet here he was with the storied jewel in his grasp. If there was just a way out of here, to salvage the expedition and return triumphant! Then his keen ears took note of a noise outside the door. D'Vaul rose, stepping nearer the door. He stooped slightly to keep the top of his head from bumping the low ceiling. If his captors opened the door, perhaps he could surprise them and—

The plate over the spy hole drew back. More torchlight shone in. A Mwangi tribesman stood there, his shaved head gleaming blue-black in the light. D'Vaul recognized him from his initial reconnaissance—this was the high priest of the cult. The Mwangi met his gaze and smiled a wide, white, toothy grin.

"Ah, Orrin d'Vaul, my friend, I see you are awake." The priest spoke the Common tongue perfectly.

"You have an odd way of treating friends," d'Vaul replied, motioning to his surroundings. "I've been received by the Korvosan guard in similar fashion and I'd hardly number them among my friends." The priest made an apologetic bow.

"The accommodations are temporary, I assure you. Your large, golden-haired companion slew several of my followers during your attempted escape. It was necessary to ensure they did not kill you in retribution."

D'Vaul visibly winced. The Ulfen oaf was the reason they'd been found out in the first place. Rather than run for it, he'd charged into the fray. Idiot.

"Next time I'll have to choose muscle that knows the meaning of the word discretion. I could have escaped easily if he hadn't alerted your guards."

"Of course," said the priest, flashing his white teeth once more.

"Are you mocking me?"

"Not at all, Orrin d'Vaul. You would, of course, have escaped. Just as we intended." The Pathfinder frowned in response.

"You would have allowed me to escape, to carry your sacred jewel away with me? I find that difficult to believe."

"You do not have the whole story, my friend. We wished you to escape with the jewel, just as your compatriot before you."

"Vancaskerkin? He returned empty-handed. All he managed to bring back was the information that—"

"—brought you to us. Yes, as was intended. He did, however, leave with a 'jewel,' much like the one we've gifted to you."

"You're going to give me what I want and let me go?"

"Yes, because that was the plan all along. We did not know it was going to be you, specifically, but that does not matter. You came — you will do."

Anger flared up in d'Vaul's breast. He would not be another's pawn. He had been stripped of his possessions, but was not without power. He hissed out arcane syllables and raised his hand, sending three faintly glowing bolts of power from his fingertips. They lanced through the slot in the door, striking the priest in the face and the side of the head. Perhaps they'd

be fatal and he could get the key, or the angered priest would come in to kill him. All that mattered now was that he got out of this cell with his prize. What came next was unexpected.

The Mwangi reeled then slowly turned back to the door. D'Vaul was about to throw another spell, but then he saw the priest's eyes and froze. They had gone black. Not simply black, it was like staring into the void between worlds. Where the magic missiles had punctured the flesh flowed not blood, but something yellow like bile. When he spoke again, the voice was a deep rumble that seemed to come from somewhere beyond, rather than within, the man.

"That was foolish. We will not be destroyed by your petty magics. There is much in your world we have yet to learn. You shall be free, Orrin d'Vaul, and return to your Pathfinder Society. As one of us."

With that, the panel slid shut. D'Vaul stepped to the door, pounding the rusted metal futilely with his fists. A clatter behind him drew his attention. He turned and saw the jewel lay upon the floor, having somehow rolled free of its sack. The gray smoke within seemed closer to the surface now, writhing with intensity. A splintering sound, and a crack appeared in the surface of the sphere. The sputtering of the torch increased, as its light dimmed. More cracks in the jewel, a sliver clinked to the floor. In the dimming light, something wriggled free of its shell. The torch went out; the light died. A skittering sound from the floor. Screams.

From the Journal of Orrin d'Vaul, Pathfinder

Monday, 7th Kuthona

Arrived in Katapesh. Will return to Society Headquarters with a surprise: an entire casket of the sacred jewels. Can't wait to see Vancaskerkin. We have much to discuss. ☼

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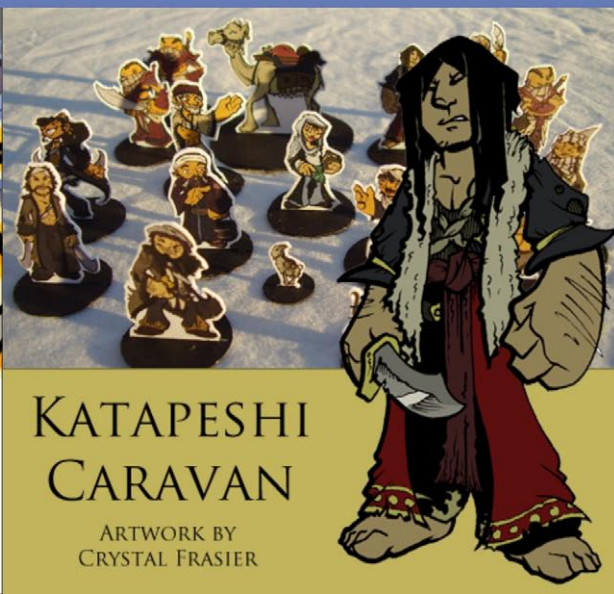
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MONSTER SET

Goblins

ARTWORK BY ASHTON SPERRY



KATAPESHI
CARAVAN

ARTWORK BY
CRYSTAL FRASIER



TACTICS

Before Combat A gro'kosh is difficult to surprise. When it becomes aware of nearby combat through its implanted minions, the gro'kosh diverts its followers to defend their master, to engage the enemy in combat, and to block the enemy's escape routes.

During Combat A gro'kosh uses *soften earth and stone* and *transmute rock to mud* to slow any melee fighters while it moves forward to engage spellcasters and archers. If able, a gro'kosh avoids killing creatures that it believes could be useful to dominate.

Morale If a gro'kosh still has a creature controlled with an implanted seed, it fights to the death, commanding any controlled creatures to escape. Otherwise, when reduced to less than 20 hit points it attempts to flee using *soften earth and stone* and *warp wood* to slow anyone chasing it.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +15

Feats Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (vine), Iron Will, Weapon Focus (vine)

Skills Knowledge (geography) +17, Knowledge (nature) +17, Sense Motive +16, Spot +16

SQ improved telepathy

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

Advancement 13-15 HD (Medium), 16-24 HD (Large)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Implant Seed (Su) As a full round action that provokes attacks of opportunity, a gro'kosh can implant a seed into a pinned or helpless intelligent living creature. The target can resist with a DC 20 Fortitude save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

The gro'kosh can control a creature implanted with one of its seeds as *dominate monster*. At any one time, a gro'kosh can control creatures whose total Hit Dice does not exceed twice its own Hit Dice. It may dispel this ability on an affected creature as a free action. *Remove disease* destroys the seed and ends the domination.

Improved Telepathy (Su) A gro'kosh can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language. A gro'kosh can communicate telepathically with a creature implanted with one of its seeds at unlimited range (as long as both are on the same plane).

Gro'kosh

By Joshua "Zynete" Blazej

Art by James "Sir_Wulf" Mackenzie

A tumbling array of writhing plant material rolls across the ground. Covering the undulating vines are vicious blue-tipped spines and a variety of strange blooming flowers in a variety of colors and shapes.

Gro'kosh – CR 10

Usually NE Medium plant

Init +7; **Senses** lowlight vision, telepathy 100 ft.; **Listen** +1, **Spot** +16

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 22 (+3 Dex, +12 natural)

hp 102 (12d8+48)

Fort +12, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7

Immunities plant traits; DR 10/bludgeoning or slashing; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee 4 vines +16 (2d6+6)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

3/day – *soften earth and stone* (DC 16), *warp wood* (DC 16)

1/day – *transmute rock to mud* (DC 19)

Regrow (Su) When killed, a gro'kosh can transfer its essence to a creature implanted with one of its seeds. A gro'kosh can continue to command that creature, but not others. The gro'kosh reforms 2d6 days later, consuming the body of the host. If the implanted creature dies or the seed is removed before the gro'kosh reforms completely, then the gro'kosh dies and cannot regenerate itself.

Bizarre and intelligent, a gro'kosh is a mass of plant life that one could describe as a living and vibrant tumbleweed. These plants use the sharp thorns on their numerous vines to grip and drag themselves across the ground at exceptional speed. The distinctive flowers populating their forms separate them from other plant life and are always strange and numerous, often combining at least a half a dozen different types of flora with most of them found only on the gro'kosh's body. These flowers act as the creature's eyes and ears.

The average gro'kosh in its natural form is roughly spherical in shape with a diameter of 4 feet, but it is capable of shifting its form to fit into a smaller area. The gro'kosh can stretch out in order to squeeze into a passage as narrow as one foot wide.

"After a close escape from the palace of the wizard Krosk with what had been his magical gem of Belinsea, I had little choice but to seek the assistance of the gro'kosh Tonehso."

Gro'kosh are intelligent plant-like creatures from the exotic lands of Numeria. They are adept leaders and are very effective at combating the powerful mages that also reside in that land. However, this does not make them a benevolent nor trustworthy ally. Their greatest strength is the ability to control other creatures and use them to further the gro'kosh's cause.

Ecology

The gro'kosh gathers sustenance by boring its vines deep into the earth and drawing moisture and other nutrients from the soil. They are not able to consume the flesh of creatures or other plant life.

"I saw Tonehso do this himself for a mere few minutes and upon questioning, he claimed that was all he needed to consume for the day. Tonehso himself describe that he favored the taste of soil that included the buried dead, noting that some of those that sought to remove him now rest within the ground of his garden."

Distinct from other plants, gro'kosh live almost exclusively within the metal dungeons that dot the lands of Numeria.

"Tonehso claimed this was to provide additional protection from attacks from burrowing enemies, but information I have gathered prior seems to give another reason."

When gro'kosh remain near stone, earth, and wood for several days, those objects begin to lose their form, as if they were melting at an incredibly slow pace.

"This may explain why the gro'kosh do not expand their territories beyond Numeria. It could be that any other habitat for

the creatures would slowly collapse on itself. It should be noted however that this is based on legends, rumor, and guesswork rather than facts. The gro'kosh themselves are not willing to share what may be their most significant weakness."

Habitat & Society

"The gro'kosh Tonehso had taken a relatively small metal dungeon as his home and surrounded it with a small village of warriors to defend him. Oddly enough, most of the warriors were not under the direct control of Tonehso, but seemed perfectly aware of the control he held over the minds of their leaders. They seemed to fear those controlled by Tonehso, but were unwilling to leave the village for fear of reprisal from both the gro'kosh and the dangers that Tonehso's defenses held at bay. This appears to be a standard method for gro'kosh to gather cults of power around themselves."

The gro'kosh dominates a few key individuals and through them controls the rest of its flock. Often these followers do not know even who there true master is. When one controlled by the gro'kosh becomes aware of a threat, it quickly relays this information back to the gro'kosh, who can pass this information to other thralls. In this way, the gro'kosh can easily coordinate defenses, responding nearly instantaneously when a threat appears.

How the cults around them act largely differentiates the gro'kosh. No two gro'kosh can work together for too long before they find the goals and methods of the other lacking.

"The village Tonehso has gathered is harsh. Pure strength determines position within the village; the most powerful are given more privileges than their brethren. Tonehso described to me how several of his brethren chose to guide those under their protection. He told of a gro'kosh who favored the elders among a tribe, while another gave more attention to those with greater storytelling abilities. He seemed unimpressed by both and even described others of his race as idiotic and working against what is best."

Gro'kosh seek to establish powerbases for themselves, and to a lesser extent their race. They do not care about others' goals unless it coincides perfectly with their own.

"Tonehso's method was to gather unto him the strongest and most vicious warriors and remake the realm into one of brutal barbarians that followed him. Tonehso found my reliance on spells distasteful and informed me that he had no use for me in his army. However, he did offer me protection from the wizard Krosk's reprisal, but only in trade for information on the interior of the wizard's palace. I offered him maps to within, but instead he had his men grab me and hold me down. His plan was to use me as a spy to determine the exact positions of defenses before his sent his forces into battle, promising to free me if I happened to live through the experience. Thankfully, I did not have to discover how that would have turned out as at that moment Krosk began his assault on Tonehso's village. I took the opportunity to teleport away, leaving Krosk and Tonehso focused on each other as I made my escape." ☼

Shadows of the First World

By Dennis "daOgre" Baker

Art by Hugo "Butterfrog" Solis

For some people the veil between the realm of Shadow and the Material Plane is easier to pierce. They can reach through the veil and bring forth raw shadow material to mask the truth or to create wholesale illusions. Sometimes the shadows they bring forth are even partially real. Gnomes insist they brought the magic of shadow and illusion to Golarion from the First World, but elves dispute this claim. In any case, it is clear that of all the races, gnomes seem to have the easiest time manipulating illusions and shadow.

The sorcerer bloodline and prestige class listed below are available to any race but occur far more frequently among gnome-kind.

New Bloodline: Shadow

Born with the ability to bend the perceptions of others to their advantage, sorcerers with the shadow bloodline are masters of deception. Where shadow bloodline sorcerers get their powers is as mysterious as the power itself. Is it in the blood? Perhaps they are touched by some fell power? Regardless of the source, these sorcerers have a penchant for secrecy, silence, and stealth. As their power grows, they gain the ability to manipulate shadow so well it is nearly impossible to determine what is real and what is illusion.

Class Skill: Stealth.

Bonus Spells: *silent image* (3rd), *invisibility* (5th), *displacement* (7th), *shadow conjuration* (9th), *shadow evocation* (11th), *shadow walk* (13th), *greater shadow conjuration* (15th), *greater shadow evocation* (17th), *shades* (19th).

Bonus Feats: Blind Fight, Deceitful, Dodge, Lightning Reflexes, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Stealth), Spell Focus (Illusion), Wind Stance.

Bloodline Powers

Veil of Darkness (Su):

As a standard action, you can conjure a 10 foot square plane of shadow within 30 ft. This veil lasts for one round and obscures vision, providing 20% concealment in both directions. The veil does not hinder movement, but a creature passing through the veil becomes dazed for the

remainder of its turn (Will DC 12 plus Cha modifier to resist). Once a creature has been dazed by veil of darkness, it is immune to this effect for one day.

Shadow Mask (Ex): At 3rd level, you gain the ability to manipulate raw shadow. As a move action, a shadow sorcerer can alter the shadows around him to conceal his presence. The effect lasts as long as he maintains concentration. Shadow mask provides a +4 circumstance bonus to all Stealth checks while it is active. At 9th level, the Stealth bonus increases to +6 and for the duration of the effect the sorcerer has 20% concealment. At 15th level, the bonus to Stealth increases to +8 and he can summon the shadow mask as a swift action.

Shadow Step (Ex): At 9th level, as long as the sorcerer is in an area of shadowy illumination, he can step into and move through the Plane of Shadow as a standard action. Every round spent moving through the Plane of Shadow, the sorcerer moves up to triple his normal speed in the Material Plane. A shadow sorcerer can spend a number of rounds equal to his sorcerer level per day in the Plane of Shadow. This duration need not be consecutive. When returning to the Material Plane, the sorcerer appears in a random unoccupied location within a 10 foot square. This ability is otherwise identical to the *shadow walk* spell.

Deeper Shadows (Su): At 15th level, any spell that is part of the Shadow subschool that is partially real is 10% more real than normal. For example, *shadow conjuration* cast by a sorcerer with this ability is 30% real. This ability does not stack with other similar abilities.

Cloak of Shadow (Su): At 20th level, the barrier between the Plane of Shadow and Material Plane around a sorcerer with this bloodline blurs. In any lighting except full natural daylight, a cloak of shadows extends in a 10 foot radius around the sorcerer.

The sorcerer gains 50% concealment against attacks originating outside the cloak. The sorcerer's own vision is unimpaired by the cloak. Illusions within the cloak of shadow are partially real and much more difficult to disbelieve. The DC to disbelieve illusions within the cloak increases by +2 and any quasi-real effects are 20% more real than normal (this overlaps but does not stack with deeper shadows or any other similar ability) as long as they remain within the cloak.

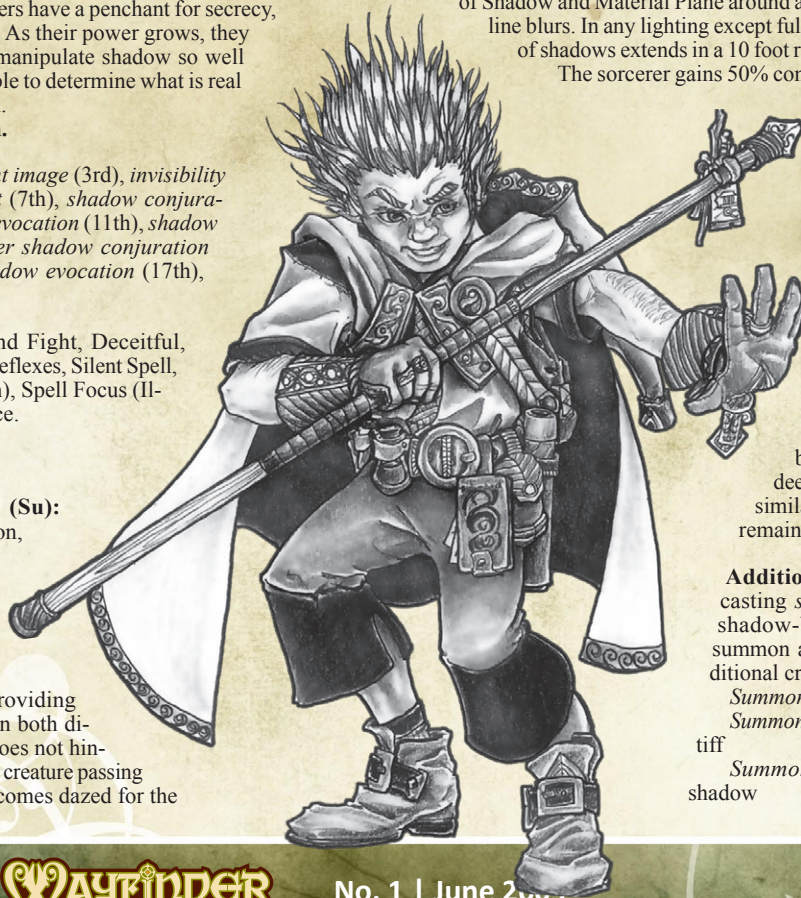
Additional Summons: When casting *summon monster* spells, shadow-blooded sorcerers can summon any of the following additional creatures:

Summon monster III: shadow

Summon monster V: shadow mas-

tiff

Summon monster VII: greater shadow



Shadow Scout

Gnomes were plunged into a hostile world when they first arrived on Golarion. Many of them died before the gnomes found some relatively safe havens. During this time of chaos a new tradition was formed, a blending of traditional pathfinding and the gnomish affinity for shadow and illusion magic. These were the first of the shadow scouts.

Shadow scouts are pathfinders in the truest sense, they are scouts and rangers but they lean heavily on magic, stealth, and deception in addition to more mundane skills. The tradition of the shadow scout is carried on in all enclaves, including among the svirfneblin in the Darklands. While it's primarily a gnomish tradition, there are a few humans and halflings who have discovered the path of the shadow scout as well.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become a shadow scout, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Skills: Stealth 8 Ranks, Spellcraft 8 Ranks, Knowledge (planes) 8 ranks.

Spellcasting: Ability to cast 2nd level arcane spells without preparation.

Special: Favored Enemy class ability.

Class Skills

The shadow scout's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Knowledge (planes) (Int), Perception (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Stealth (Dex), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str) and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the shadow scout prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Shadow scouts gain no new proficiencies with any weapon or armor.

Spells per Day: At the indicated levels, a shadow scout gains new spells per day and spells known as if he had also gained a level in an arcane spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. This essentially means

that he adds the level of shadow scout to the level of whatever other arcane spellcasting class he has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly. If the character had more than one arcane spellcasting class before he became a shadow scout, he must choose which class he adds each shadow scout level to for the purposes of determining spells per day.

Legacy of Shadow: If a shadow scout has sorcerer levels with the shadow bloodline the levels from both classes stack for the purposes of determining his bloodline powers and bonus spells known. If the shadow scout does not have levels of sorcerer or is a sorcerer of a bloodline other than the shadow bloodline, he instead gains bloodline powers and bonus spells of a shadow bloodline sorcerer of level equal to his shadow scout level.

Hunter's Bond (Ex): If the shadow scout has an animal companion from another class, he adds half his shadow scout level to his effective level for determining the abilities of his animal companion. If the scout does not have a hunter's bond from another class, this class feature does not grant one.

Fast Stealth (Ex): At 2nd level, a shadow scout can move at full speed using Stealth without penalty.

Arcane Armor Training (Ex): At 2nd level, a shadow scout gains Arcane Armor Training as a bonus feat.

Shadow Stalker (Ex): At 3rd level, a shadow scout adds his favored enemy bonus on Stealth checks when used against creatures of the selected type.

Insightful Casting (Su): A 3rd level, a shadow scout adds his favored enemy bonus on damage dealt by spells with a casting time of "Instantaneous." Each applicable creature in the spell's area of effect takes this additional damage.

Shadow Step (Su): At 4th level, a shadow scout gains the *shadow step* power of the Shadow bloodline.

Favored Enemy (Ex): At 5th level, a shadow scout may select an additional favored enemy. In addition, the bonus against any one favored enemy (including the one just selected, if so desired) increases by +2.

Insightful Deception (Su): At 5th level, any time the shadow scout uses illusion magic against a favored enemy, the scout adds ½ his favored enemy bonus to the Will save DC to disbelieve the illusion.

Nondetection (Sp): A shadow scout gains the ability to cast *nondetection* as a spell-like ability, usable 3/day. The caster level is equal to the character's level. The save DC is Charisma-based. ☼

Level	BAB	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1 st	+0	+0	+1	+1	Legacy of shadow, hunter's bond	+ 1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
2 nd	+1	+1	+1	+1	Fast stealth, Arcane Armor Training	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
3 rd	+2	+1	+2	+2	Shadow stalker, insightful casting	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
4 th	+2	+1	+2	+2	Shadow step	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
5 th	+3	+2	+3	+3	Favored enemy, insightful deception, <i>nondetection</i> 3/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class



The Blood-Slicked Mantle

By Clinton J. Boomer

Art by James Keegan

BLOOD-SLICKED MANTLE OF THE-BEAST-THAT-DOES-NOT-DIE

Aura strong transmutation; CL 20th

Slot shoulders; Price major artifact; Weight 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

This magnificent, bejeweled lion-pelt cloak, stained deep crimson with the blood of thousands, is studded and decorated with the fur, teeth, feathers, claws and jaws from every predatory beast that stalks or hunts the Mwangi Expanse; it contains within it the churning fury of the beast destined to someday eat the world. Most holy to the cults of Rovagug and Angazhan, the *Mantle* is less than useless when worn or carried by any being that cannot enter into a rage – the Curse of the Blood-Slicked Mantle still affects them, and the Aura of the Apocalypse Storm afflicts the area when the *Mantle* is worn, but the Spirit of The-Beast-That-Does-Not-Die cannot be enticed to emerge.

Curse of the Blood-Slicked Mantle: Those who willingly carry or wear the *Blood-Slicked Mantle* invite the gruesome cloak's terrible Curse – all who have ever worn or borne the *Mantle* must forever consume ten times their normal rations each day or become exhausted. Only by consuming the hot, still-writhing flesh of a sentient being can the curse be satiated and the exhaustion removed, a fact vividly conveyed to the cursed creature in frightful waking nightmares. This curse can only be permanently removed by a properly worded *wish* or *miracle*.

Aura of the Apocalypse Storm: Once donned, the dark power of the *Blood-Slicked Mantle* obscures the stars, the moon, and even the sun. While wearing the *Mantle*, the skies within a one-mile radius grow dark

from thick, scarlet-tinged storm clouds that mark the end of the world, following always after the Spirit of The-Beast-That-Does-Not-Die.

When the wearer enters a rage, the skies shudder, thunder tears the heavens, and a bloody rain pours forth from the clouds above, accompanied by a screaming wind (treated as severe wind). No known means exists to counter these effects.

Spirit of The-Beast-That-Cannot-Die: When the wearer of the *Blood-Slicked Mantle* enters a rage, their body instantaneously undergoes a most horrible transformation, temporarily calling forth the power of Rovagug himself. The wearer gains the following benefits and restrictions for the duration of their rage:

- Scent
- Tremorsense (15 ft.)
- DR equal to (1 per HD)/-. This stacks with any DR from any barbarian levels.
- SR: 15 + 1 per HD
- Immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease and death effects. The wearer is not subject to ability drain or energy drain and is immune to damage to physical ability scores (Strength, Dexterity and Constitution), as well as to fatigue and exhaustion effects. These effects last only until the wearer's rage ends – they are once again subject to poison, diseases, and all other effects with duration longer than instantaneous when their rage ends.
- *A Heart that Beats with Cries of War:* The wearer gains free use of Power Attack. If the wearer already possesses this feat, the extra damage when performing a Power Attack is doubled.
- *A Strength that Cleaves the Mountain's Heart:* The wearer is treated for all purposes, including weapon damage, as being one size category larger. Their space and reach do not increase. This effect stacks with all other increases to the wearer's size category.
- *A Hate that Burns with the Stench of Death:* The wearer receives each round a number of temporary hit points equal to their HD. This is treated in all respects like fast healing, except that these temporary hit points vanish when their rage ends.
- *A Skin that Shatters the Blades of Men:* Any manufactured weapon that successfully strikes the wearer suffers damage equal to the wearer's hit dice plus their Constitution modifier. This damage is dealt to the manufactured weapon even if the successful strike fails to overcome the wearer's DR.
- *A Fury that Knows Not Friend From Foe:* The wearer must attack a creature, or advance directly toward a creature with the intent of attacking, every round. This lethal instinct can be overcome with a DC: 24 Will save. Succeeding at this save ends the wearer's rage immediately.

Once the wearer's rage ends, they are permanently exhausted. The wearer may abate this special exhaustion only by consuming the hot, still-writhing flesh of a sentient creature, as required for mitigating the Curse of the Blood-Slicked Mantle. Such an act instantaneously ends the exhaustion effect. Any creature killed while clothed in the *Mantle* is instantly and utterly consumed by Rovagug, body and soul, and only a properly worded *wish* or *miracle* can end this eternal torment.

Upon the death of its wearer, the *Mantle* vanishes, reappearing elsewhere within the territories of the Mwangi Expanse – eager to be discovered by a soul that aches with rage. Pathfinder Society agents have identified three distinct *Mantles* that haunt the Expanse, including one that hangs, ever ready for use in war, in the greatest treasure hall of the terrible Silverback King.

DESTRUCTION

It is rumored that one of the *Blood-Slicked Mantles* can be unwoven, and the Spirit of The-Beast-That-Does-Not-Die within it can be put to rest, if a fasting holy man of exceptional virtue – one who raises no angry fist nor unkind word – wears the *Mantle* for a year and a day. During this time, the holy man must slay one hundred demons; upon slaying the last, he himself must willingly submit to death. ☹

The Mwangi Expanse – Senghor

By Clinton J. Boomerr

Art by Ashton “N’wah” Sperry

Well known for its art, music, food, wine, blinding-white beaches, crystal clear harbor and the vibrantly-colored birds that dwell here, the jubilant, ever-shifting port-city of Senghor is centered around the largest temple to Gozreh in the world, the vast House of Kind and Also Unkind Waves. The seafaring Bonuwat tribesmen of the Mwangi Coast, who worship both Gozreh and Desna in a unique janiform incarnation they call Shimye-Magalla, hold this city as a place of holy pilgrimage - but also a place of great danger. Here the blood-favors of Angazhan, Dagon and Zura are bartered by the slave-takers and flesh merchants of the ruling Bekyar-Mwangi.

Universally considered the most civilized of the Expanse’s settlements by outsiders, it is a thriving conglomeration of foreign tongues, native goods and exotic tastes. For those with gold to spend, it is a living paradise. For those who cannot afford to pay off the corrupt officials, it can swiftly become a hell. Pit fighting is a well-loved sport, as is gambling, drinking, dance and prostitution – the chaotic street celebrations of the city’s many holidays often combine all four.

Beautiful Cruelness and the Sweetly Whispering Shadows

In the glistening, sun-baked coastal city of Senghor, south of the Eye of Abendego and west of Desperation Bay, the sinister half-elven sorcerer and peddler of flesh who calls himself Beautiful Raki-Kakiki dreams of godhood by means of the *Starstone*.

Although his name goes all but unspoken within Senghor, and the full extent of his power is all but unknown outside the city, Raki-Kakiki’s personal treasures have grown full to bursting with gold via clever manipulation of the trade

between The Shackles, Eleder, and the limitless bounty of the Kaava Lands. Indeed, the charming mage Raki-Kakiki fancies himself the Secret King of Senghor – his subtle reach extends into the private affairs of Port Peril, the colonial courts of Sargava, and the tribal doings in the forbidding jungles that extend all the way to the Bandu Hills. Within the bounds of Senghor, the Beautiful Cruelness personally commands a veritable army of seamen, cutthroats, militiamen, and politicians. Transactions of wealth or blood within three days ride of Senghor, on land or at sea, neither escape his smiling notice nor evade his taxes.

Smugglers, bandits, aristocracy and priests alike supplicate themselves before the lanky and well-appointed form of the coca-skinned, blue-eyed, dreadlocked sorcerer, who keeps as his personal entourage an ever-shifting harem of beautiful assassins plucked from the streets that he rules over. The fanatical Sweetly Whispering Shadows that serve the Beautiful Raki-Kakiki are more than the Secret King’s private bodyguards though, and more than his eyes and ears in the bed-chambers of those who do business in Senghor. They are the first of his growing cult, a cult that even now prepares to journey with their lord to the Ascendant Court of Absalom.

The Namer of Nantambu

In and around the Song-Wind-City, stretching out among the lush farms and riverbanks that dwell within sight of the breathtaking mosaic-lined towers of the ancient Magaambya academy, the people share many tales about the Old Mage Jatembe, the greatest spellcaster of all time. He founded the great college of wizardry in Nantambu in his later years, and took the city as his home and her people as his family after a span longer than any seventeen mortal lifetimes.

It is in Nantambu that the Old Mage and his company, the Ten Magic Warriors, are buried, with quiet ceremonies held every spring, upon the 13th of Desnus, to commemorate their epic deeds. As for their deeds: if even half of the many tales of Old Mage Jatembe’s exploits are true, he walked a dozen worlds, defeated a hundred armies, and wrote a thousand spells. Indeed, it is said that sorceries such as *mage’s disjunction* and *mage’s sword* are named for him. Multi-colored images of the Namer of Nantambu, most often depicted with a sly and gap-toothed grin, are common in the city, and those who graduate with honors from the Magaambya carry with them a necklace adorned with a mosaic of the clever Old-Mage himself. ☼





From the Rookery

By Hal Maclean

Art by Liz "Lilith" Courts

A sense of duty and the firm belief that no one else could do a better job keeps Telandia Edassaril, queen of Kyonin, from passing the Viridian Crown on to someone who actually craves the office. An expert falconer and one of the most gifted spellcasters in the kingdom, she views the time she spends on administration and mediating the squabbles of her mercurial subjects as distractions that she must simply accept. Like most of her people wedded to belief in the Brightness, and the endless cycle of growth and reincarnation it promises, she believes that her current incarnation is part of a larger plan, and pledges to play the role assigned to her.

However, not even her faith in the Brightness allows her to draw any joy from governing. For that, she turns to the rookeries filled with her raptors, especially Nyranin, her beloved hawk familiar. Only there, surrounded by these kindred spirits, does she truly find peace and happiness. This profound contentment even influences her subconscious as she devises new magic to help defend her realm. Each of the spells detailed below, originally created by Telandia but soon passed on to many of her subjects and perhaps even beyond, makes clear the link between her twin passions for falconry and magic.

ENERGY LOOP

School transmutation; **Level** cleric 2, druid 2, sorcerer/wizard 2

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M (copper ring)

EFFECT

Range long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level) (minimum distance of 40 feet above caster's head)

Effect 20 ft. radius ring that affects any creature passing through it

Duration 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw Yes (harmless); **Spell Resistance** Yes (harmless)

DESCRIPTION

This spell forms a crackling circle in the air that gives creatures passing through it an energy aura that not only protects them from that sort of energy but also allows them to deal extra damage of that type when they make a melee attack. The caster must choose which sort of energy to make the circle from at the moment of casting and once made cannot change this decision. Any creature passing through the circle develops a flickering corona, the color of which corresponds to the energy type of the circle (acid=black, cold=white, electricity=blue, fire=red, sonic=green). The creature gains energy resistance 10 to that energy type for one minute, until it deals damage with a melee attack, or it touches ground (whichever comes first). If the creature makes a successful melee attack while protected with this aura it deals an extra 1d6 points of energy damage to its opponent.

Creatures may travel through this circle multiple times, regaining the energy aura with each trip. If a mounted creature passes through the circle both the mount and the rider gain the energy aura and continue to share its effects if one of them loses the aura but remains in contact with the other.

Animals and similar creatures only fly through this circle if specifically trained to do so (see sidebar).

FALCON FLAG

School transmutation; **Level** cleric 5, paladin 3, sorcerer/wizard 5

CASTING

Casting Time 1 round

Components V, S, F (silk flag, banner, or something similar worth at least 200 gp)

EFFECT

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Targets All willing creatures within 30 ft. radius burst

Duration 1 hour/level (D)

Saving Throw Yes (harmless); **Spell Resistance** Yes (harmless)

DESCRIPTION

This spell temporarily folds and animates a flag, banner, or

similar object bearing some symbol linked with the caster. The flag takes the shape of a bird of prey and grants enhanced movement and vitality to any friendly creature that chooses to follow it. The flag flies with a speed of 90 ft. per round towards the destination set by the caster at the time of casting. The destination must be known to the caster or be a specified distance and direction. Creatures following the flag on land may keep pace with it, regardless of their normal speed, without any risk of suffering fatigue so long as it remains in view. Though these creatures gain a limited ability to bypass minor obstacles (leaping over fences, streams, etc.) the flag always chooses a route that avoids more formidable barriers that might cause followers to lose sight of it during their journey. Creatures following the flag may choose to stop at any time, including if attacked or threatened.

When the flag reaches the destination set by the caster or the spell duration ends, the flag unfolds and flutters to the ground. Creatures guided by the flag to its destination experience a burst of energy and valor on arrival lasting for the remaining duration of the spell. This grants them a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, and Will saving throws, as well as 1d8 + caster level temporary hit points.

FALSE FEATHER SCREEN

School illusion (phantasm) [mind-affecting]; **Level** druid 3, sorcerer/wizards 3

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M (handful of feathers)

EFFECT

Range Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target 1 creature

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw Will disbelief; **Spell Resistance** Yes

DESCRIPTION

This spell subjects the target to the unceasing harassment of a flock of birds that only it can see and hear. The aggravation caused by these illusory birds leaves the target distracted and unable to adequately defend itself or strike at its enemies. The target becomes flat-footed and all of its opponents gain concealment against its attacks. If the target attempts to cast a spell or perform any other action which requires intense focus it must succeed in a Concentration check (or Spellcraft if your game does not have the Concentration skill) to avoid losing that action.

LAUNCHING PERCH

School transmutation; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 2

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, F (thick leather glove)

EFFECT

Range Touch

Target 1 willing creature of equal or smaller size than caster

Duration Concentration + 1 round

Saving Throw Yes (harmless); **Spell Resistance** Yes (harmless)

DESCRIPTION

This spell enables one creature no larger than yourself to balance on a glove covering your forearm and briefly gain the ability to make a devastating flying charge once it leaps off. While the target may take no action while perched on your arm in this way, it is effectively weightless from your perspective and has no impact on your encumbrance or speed. However, this does fully engage your arm, meaning you cannot use it for any other purpose. The glove, similar in appearance to what falconers wear when taking raptors hunting, provides extraordinary stability to the target, allowing it to maintain its balance under even the most extreme conditions unless it chooses to step off or you stop concentrating on the spell.

When the target leaves your arm it gains the ability to fly for one round at three times its base land speed or twice its fly speed (whichever is greater). During that round, the creature may also choose to make a special flying charge. This allows it to make a full attack and grants it an additional +2 bonus on its attack rolls. In addition, any successful attack it makes as part of this charge automatically scores a critical threat (but the target must still make a confirmation roll as normal).

PLUMAGE LURE

School illusion (pattern) (mind-affecting); **Level** druid 4, sorcerer/wizard 4

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

EFFECT

Range Touch

Target 1 willing flying creature with feathers

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** Yes

DESCRIPTION

This spell causes the feathers of a willing creature with a fly speed to emit pulses of light that other specific sorts of creatures find almost irresistibly intriguing. The caster must designate a particular type or subtype of creature as susceptible to these pulses at the time of casting. Creatures normally immune to mind-affecting effects, or those who lack the ability to see, are not vulnerable to this spell. Any eligible creature belonging to the category established by the caster that comes within 30 feet of the target and has a clear line of sight must make a Will saving throw to avoid becoming fascinated. Fascinated creatures follow the target if it moves away and remain under its influence so long as they can continue to see it and stay within 90 feet of it.

Animals and similar creatures only stay within sight of those they have fascinated if specifically trained to do so (see sidebar).

PLUNGING HOOD

School conjuration (creation); Level sorcerer/wizard 1

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

EFFECT

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target 1 creature

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw Reflex negates; **Spell Resistance** Yes

DESCRIPTION

This spell creates a black leather mask around the target's head that renders it both blind and deaf until removed. Though vaguely similar to the hood falconers use to make birds of prey more docile, this mask perfectly fits the contours of the target's head but has neither eye nor ear holes. Any creature (whether the target or another) with hands or similar manipulative limbs can remove the mask as a standard action, but those lacking them must also succeed in Dexterity check (DC 15) in order to do so.

If cast on a creature with multiple heads the caster must decide on which head the mask appears. If cast on a creature with eyes, ears, or similar sensory organs on any part of its body except its head (or on a creature without a head), the mask tears and falls to pieces without actually affecting the target.

The mask renders the target immune to all fear effects (including those already affecting it when this spell is cast) until it is removed. Once taken off the mask loses this ability, even if placed back on the target again, but it still makes the target blind and deaf while worn.

TALON TAGALONG

School transmutation; Level druid 3, ranger 2, sorcerer/wizard 3

CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M (eggshell dipped in honey)

EFFECT

Range personal

Target 1 willing flying creature

Duration Concentration

Saving Throw None; **Spell Resistance** No

DESCRIPTION

This spell makes you effectively weightless to one particular flying creature (including but not limited to animal companions and familiars) allowing it to carry you without any impact on its speed or encumbrance. You must remain in contact with the creature and in the air at all times. If either of you chooses to break free, the creature lands, or it suffers damage, the spell ends immediately. Similarly, if you take damage or suffer any other sort of distraction you must succeed in a Concentration check (or Spellcraft if your game does not have the Concen-

New Tricks

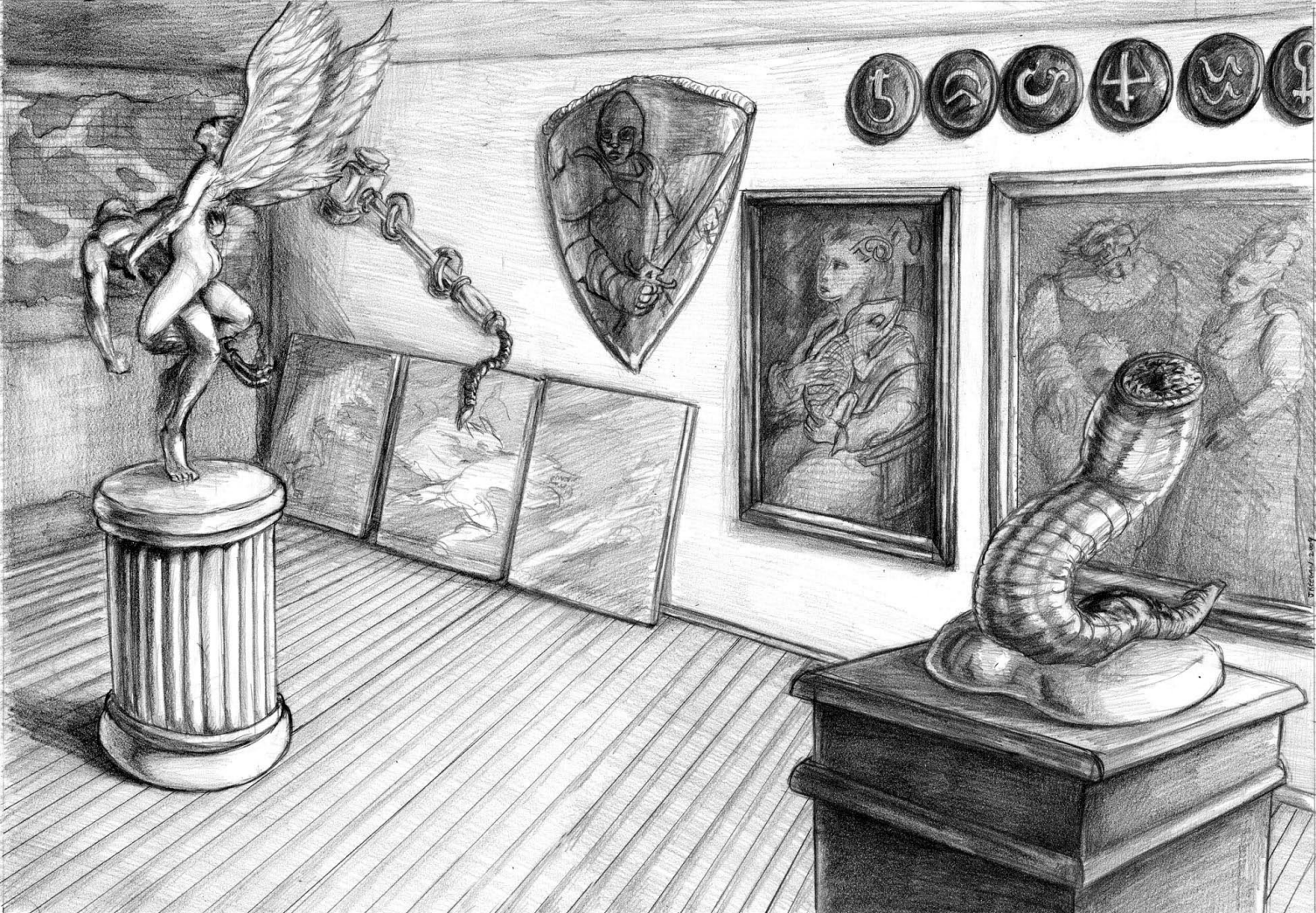
Some of the spells described above require that animals and similar creatures act against their instincts to exploit their effects. Mindful of this limitation the elves of Kyonin have developed specialized training techniques that teach animals to respond properly to these spells. Each of the tricks described below requires one week of training and a successful Handle Animals check against the indicated DC in order for the animal to learn.

- **Bait (DC 25)** (must know Seek) (*plumage lure*): The animal stays within the sight and range of creatures fascinated by the pattern of light emitted by its feathers. Unless specifically trained to also stay in one location, it slowly leads them away in either a random direction or one determined by you.
- **Dart (DC 25)** (must know Attack) (*energy loop*): The animal flies through the circle of energy before making an attack.
- **Ferry (DC 20)** (must know Heel) (*talon tagalong*): The animal attempts to lift the creature you designate (including yourself) regardless of any difference in size. If it succeeds in lifting the creature, it carries the creature in a direction determined by you.

tration skill) in order to keep your grip. If the spell ends in mid-air, you fall to the ground in the exact same manner as an expired *fly* spell.

Since the spell eliminates weight as a consideration, it allows you to use creatures far smaller than yourself for transportation. In theory, assuming you find some way to communicate with it, even a housefly or bee could carry you to your destination. However, only one caster may use this spell on any given creature at a time. Even if the creature is large enough to carry multiple passengers, additional castings of the spell automatically fail and the weight of these casters affects the creature as normal.

Most creatures only consent to serve as transportation for this spell if specially trained (see sidebar) or are somehow persuaded to do so whether by magic or other means. If you have the ability to communicate with the creature, it must have a friendly attitude towards you in order to ferry you through the air. If you do not have the ability to communicate with the creature, it must have a helpful attitude instead. ☼



The Gallery Below

By Adam Daigle

Art by James Keegan

Somewhere beneath Kaer Maga, amidst sweeping darkwood beams upholding a polished stone ceiling, a chamber overflows with art from across the Inner Sea region. Paintings adorn well-appointed walls, statues pose in the center of the gallery and stand guard in alcoves, and ornate cabinets hold smaller, more delicate treasures. This, however, is no normal gallery. It is the Gallery Below.

Rife with black market deals and all manner of illicit transactions, Kaer Maga serves as a suitable location for underground art trade. Business transactions typically looked down upon by more organized societies find themselves at home with the lawless attitudes of the city. Tolerance is an important factor in Kaer Maga and this tolerance allows these types of transactions, and oftentimes transgressions, to occur. No one asks questions, and if in fact someone is asking about your business, you best take heed.

Anyone looking for a fix knows where to find a dealer. Scholars seeking lore know which books they need. Likewise, anyone wanting artwork currently owned by someone else, or previously in some cases, knows they'd best search out Cullen Foss and the Gallery Below.

Foss runs a widespread art theft ring. He holds exquisite offices in the Highside Stacks district, enjoying its local protection and semblance of luxury. While he sets himself up in the station and guise of a businessman, Cullen Foss is in fact a master cat burglar. Using his uncanny skills to perform immaculate heists, Cullen worked his way up from an urchin youth pilfering from the upper class to a true artist of the trade. Though the actual number of people in his immediate employ numbers less than a dozen, he maintains a web of agents and contacts.

Potential clients contact Foss through agents stationed in cities throughout Varisia, or in faraway Absalom, where a crooked restaurateur serves as his agent. Once contact with an agent occurs, the agent contacts Cullen and arranges an appointment with one of his agents based in Kaer Maga. Rumor says that Foss himself attends many of these meetings in disguise. Regardless, this representative assesses the target item and the client and assures them that a bid for the project and location of the initial meeting should arrive within two weeks. Typically,

a client receives this letter, delivered by an impartial courier, sooner. From this point, the client travels to Kaer Maga with instruction to wear a certain sign, be it color and style of hat, particular corsage, a delivered lapel pin or even a potion that allows the person to assume a particular disguise.

Once the client arrives in the city, one of Cullen Foss's hired urchins in the Warren guide them to one of the meeting points within the city. Among his typical meeting places, two are in Hospice. The Starry Night, a tavern doubling as a luxurious brothel catering to all types, sits between a rowdy taproom and a playhouse in the district. A second typical meeting place is the Blind Monkey Tavern, a nice and clean place with a glut of monkey-themed paintings and sculptures decorating the place. As well, the Spinning Wheel, a two-story gambling hall in the Ankar-Te district serves as a safe meeting place for these interviews. Cullen Foss has connections with these venues' proprietors and rewards them nicely for their confidence.

If the client and the agent agree upon the transaction, an invitation to meet in Foss's office in the Highside Stacks follows. There the client must submit to magical scrutiny to insure that they are sincere in their desire to obtain the work of art, have the ability to pay for said piece, and to sniff out any evidence of the client being or working for an enemy of the Gallery. Passing this test, the client provides the Gallery with half of the agreed payment ahead of time and is told when and where the delivery will take place.

Special clients, typically repeat customers and trusted allies, may access the Gallery Below and browse the artwork firsthand. Cullen Foss attempts to only target art, yet art has a way of peeling off the page. The lines blur between sculpture and religious icon, between a simple figurine and a magical artifact, between tapestries and political symbols. The Gallery Below traffics in fantastic art from across Golarion from hundreds of different artists, both long dead and those still practicing. Listed below are just a handful of examples of artwork found in the Gallery Below:

- A portrait of a royal Taldan family painted to resemble bugbears
- A statue of a harpy mating with a humanoid mid-flight
- A stamped metal urn said to bear the remains of a forgotten Linnorm King
- A gigantic painting of an idyllic riverside scene showing families picnicking and rowing
- A triptych depicting a hunting scene with anthropomorphic hounds hunting humanoid foxes with horses in the background accompanied by wispy shadows
- A set of three carved stones that interlock
- A mural, cut from a stucco wall in once massive piece, depicting four military generals who look related
- A tapestry depicting a massive battle near the Worldwound
- A set of brass puzzle pieces that assemble to form a globe with strange and alien features
- A three-foot long wooden and ivory box that looks like it could accommodate a rod
- A dozen jet-black disks with silver runes embedded within their surface
- A portrait of a young tiefling girl holding her pet lizard
- A life sized crystal statue of a hunting dog
- An ancient Mwangi headdress of colorful feathers, ruby beads, and hammered gold plates
- A beautifully rendered map of the Sodden Lands before their destruction
- An intricate cabinet filled with giant-sized silverware complete with serving utensils and delicate napkins the size of tablecloths
- A hand-stitched book of extremely realistic anatomy drawings of various supernatural beasts
- A portrait of a magnificent warrior painted on an enormous dragon scale
- A delicate warhammer made of thin blown glass, around the loop at its handle a braid from a beard hangs
- A linen painting of a black and white bear eating some sort of reed
- An embossed depiction of a crocodile sunning in a rocky river pressed into thick tanned leather
- A golden statue of a leech
- A complex music box that when cranked displays a handful of twirling succubi dancing around a gyrating winged demon in the center
- A painting of a fight at Green Blood on a Black Rock: a massive, grey bipedal beast bearing a shriveled conjoined twin grapples a gigantic tentacled worm
- A puzzlingly balanced sculpture of solid-colored geometric shapes formed with exaggerated angles and dimensions
- A figurehead depicting a beautiful merfolk with a determined look readying a trident
- An exquisitely rendered flag of the Heelcrush tribe from the northern reaches of the Hold of Belkzen
- A smuggled Hermean porcelain decanter and cup set
- A three-foot long ivory longboat manned by dozens of miniature warriors carved from a mammoth tusk
- A runic bas-relief stripped from the walls of some ancient Mwangi ruin
- A rough-woven tapestry of a swallowtail butterfly woven from dyed wool braided with silver threads and beaded with glistening stones
- A stack of sheet music in an etched glass box rumored to be hymns to an archdevil

While art is entirely subjective, there are a number of otherwise unremarkable pieces residing in the gallery. The reputation and skill of the artists creates the value and thusly, stacks of simple portraits, vast landscapes and animated battle scenes adorn the gallery. Many of these unpaid for pieces Cullen adds into a big purchase as a gesture of goodwill or gives them away to friends and associates. Bartering being what it is in Kaer Maga, Cullen Foss treats many of these forgotten or discarded pieces as currency and in a way, the whole city makes up a scattered extension of the Gallery Below.☼

Too Small to Notice

By Tae-Bin "Nerrat Dei" Gulliver

Art by Liz "Lilith" Courts

These are my entries about a halfling named Aggen Small that I wrote. Here, I am going to prove that you don't have to be an adult to write for the fanzine. You can be a nine year old, just like me.

7 Kuthona, 4708 AR

After fifteen grueling days of nothing but pickled fish, I'm finally off the *Seal Hunter XI*. I'd rather arm-wrestle a frost giant than ride on a ship with fifty barbarians that I can't even communicate with again. When I finally got off the ship, and onto the dock, I was nearly run over by a barbarian carrying the skin of a white dragon. I'm probably too little to notice in this Land of Linnorm Kings.

Before I began searching for the *Sword of Efreeti Trapping*, I went exploring the city of Kalsgard. The sword, it is believed, was teleported here... sent to the north. That's all I know about it.

To all appearances, the city of Kalsgard was a great place to shop for me, a small halfling Pathfinder by the name of Aggen Small, barely three feet tall and raised in a small town in Andoran. It was a great place to be, yes indeed, but the chilly weather and all the people here, did not make me comfortable. I'm too little to notice, like I said, and the man working in the inn didn't even notice me. I asked for a room for the night, and the man still didn't notice me. Or at least he didn't seem to.

I gave up and set up a tent outside in the freezing cold. That's when I noticed something very interesting. A tall man wearing a dark blue jacket that I thought I remembered – from time to time, people forget things you know – using a Wayfinder, a device that only us Pathfinder folk use. A fellow Pathfinder... I wonder what he is doing here.

8 Kuthona, 4708 AR

I decided to consult a bard that knows a lot about swords. He described the sword's great power, saying, "It is said that if the blade of this sword hit the evil creature – an efreeti – it

would be trapped inside the sword forever. Yet, if someone unworthy were to come across this sword and attempt to use it, he would be turned away by the sword. It would fly back to where the person had first picked it up. Only a true-hearted person with courage, bravery, and determination, only the person who works for the sword, can use it." Wow, I thought. Could this be true? I was determined to find it. I would do anything to find it. I must find it.

When I was leaving the bard's house, I saw that man with the Wayfinder again. What else was there to do?

I'd find some treasure or other by following him, although I'd rather have the sword. Luckily, it had snowed and he left footprints. When I lost sight of him, the tracks told me where to go. I followed him until I encountered the Rimeflow River. I fortunately caught the same ferry as the tall man. I saw beautiful sights while on the ferry—the water splashing on the side of the ferry, with the full moon in the sky. Of course, I barely ate the fish they gave me on the ferry.

After about one hour, the *Splashdock III* ferry was moored and I got off. Unfortunately, the man I was tracking disappeared in the crowds of barbarians and I began to lose hope. I thought to myself, "Where would treasure be hidden around here?" There is no treasure in sight. "Where would the sword be hidden around here?" There is no place you could hide a sword from the barbarians around here. If there is any treasure, it would probably be hidden in the Grungir Forest.

So now I've set my tent up in the middle of nowhere. Boy, am I ever tired.

9 Kuthona, 4708 AR

I need to start searching in the forest for treasure or the sword before the other Pathfinder does. I started heading for the forest early in the morning. I walked even more. I wish I had a horse to ride. Then, I heard shouting, "Help! Help!" I immediately followed the shouting. It was the other Pathfinder. And I saw something ferocious attacking the man. Something white. Something evil. Its tail was swinging in the air and the man was on the ground attempting to get away. It was a white dragon. I could tell that it was still young but it could still do a lot of harm... I shot fire out of my magical gloves. The white dragon turned around, surprised and angry. He attacked me, missing me with his tail, his claw, and his



breath attack. I shot fire out of my magical gloves once more. Part of my attack had stung him in the eye. The white dragon had had enough. He – or was it a she? – flew away into the sky.

The Pathfinder said his name was Alcatraz. He asked me if I could help him search for what he was searching – the *Sword of Efreiti Trapping*. Exactly what I was looking for! I told him that I was looking for it too and that I had followed him here. I told him that I knew all about the sword and explained what the bard had told me.

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We are now in the middle of the dark and scary Grungir Forest. With all the arctic animals around, it is quite frightening. We have put up our tent. Alcatraz will take the first watch until 2 am. Then, I will take the second watch until dawn. I'm nervous. I'm in the middle of nowhere. The white dragon attacked him in front of the forest. Surely, that means that there are more creatures in the forest such as polar bears and maybe even – linnorms! Best get some sleep now... If I can.

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Wayfinder

A Pathfinder Fanzine made for Fans by Fans

Well, there you have it: a true testament to the “awesomeness” of the Paizo fan community.

This fanzine idea started out the exact same way the idea of the very first PaizoCon did. It was the idea of one fan, who shared his idea with a couple other fans, who, in turn, told even more fans, who then donated their time and talents to produce something truly special. And, just like PaizoCon, the outcome exceeded all expectations. The original concept was 100 copies of 24-page fanzine. Look what you crazy people ended up producing: 350 copies of a 72-page ‘zine, which included thirty-four articles, complete with illustrations, advertisements, and COMICS!!

Madness! Madness, I tell you!

As our second year of PaizoCon has come to a close, I have seen everything I had hoped the event could become, and so much more. I can only begin to guess what you, the incredibly talented and inspired Paizo community, can come up with for the second Wayfinder.

There...the gauntlet has been thrown. Show us what you’ve got!

Tim Nightengale
“Timitius”



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