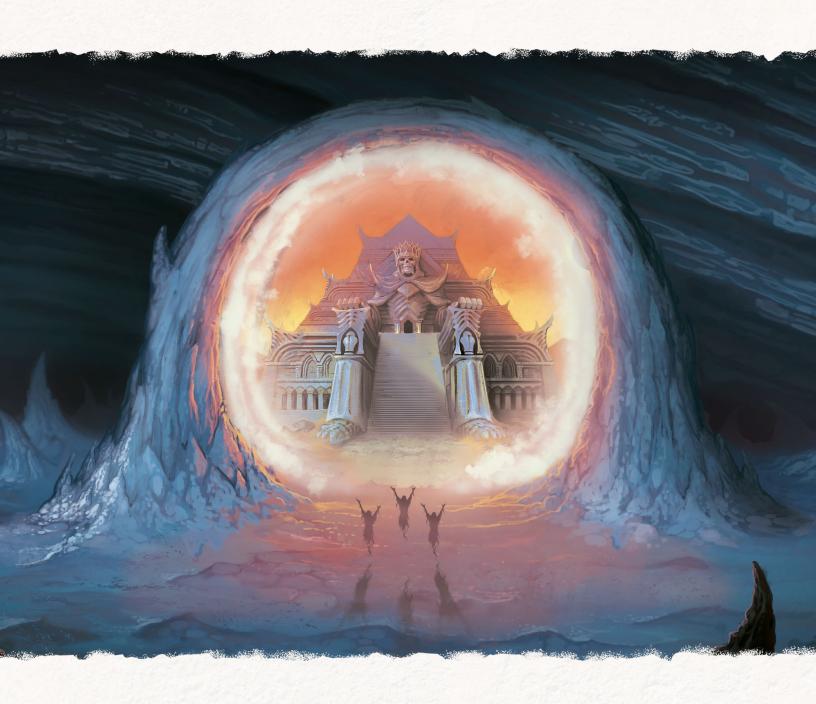


A HIGH-FANTASY CITY SOURCEBOOK FOR LAZY GMS

BY MICHAEL E. SHEA

SLY FLOURISH'S ON CITY OF ARCHES





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Thanks to our Kickstarter backers for supporting this project!

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Websites referenced in this book and GPSR information can be found at the City of Arches resource page: https://slyflourish.com/cityofarches.

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I met a traveler from an antique land Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand, Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown, And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command, Tell that its sculptor well those passions read Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things, The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed: And on the pedestal these words appear: "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings: Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" Nothing beside remains. Round the decay Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare The lone and level sands stretch far away.

-Percy Shelley, "Ozymandias," 1819

WELCOME TO THE CITY OF ARCHES

For thousands of years, the City of Arches has stood as a kind of citadel along the border between this world and others. Built on a location where the boundaries between planes and realms are naturally thin, the city was once a waypoint to hundreds of other locations in this world and beyond. With the tyrant who built the city long fallen and most of the portals his servants created having long since decayed, the City of Arches now appears much like any other worldly city, serving travelers from near and far who seek its welcoming hospitality and bustling markets.

However, many of those visitors also come in search of the mysteries that are the legacy of those older days, still hidden within the city, in the mountain above it, and in the endless depths below. At the same time, travelers from other worlds still sometimes arrive in the City of Arches by accident—beings who have stepped from their own worlds through one of the city's decaying but still functional portal archways. Most have little memory of where they came from and no way to return.

For many who walk its streets, the City of Arches is simply home. But below, above, and beyond the city lie ancient ruins, the shrouded mysteries of the site's ancient origins, and the relics of its past.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

City of Arches is a Gamemaster's setting book for your tabletop fantasy roleplaying games. A site of mystery, magic, and adventure, the city can serve as an urban hub within a larger region of your world, a stopover location in a longer journey, or as the central focus of a campaign filled with high adventure.

This book details notable locations in the city, prominent nonplayer characters (NPCs), hooks to inspire your own adventures, and much more. *City of Arches* is a toolkit that will help you build your own fantastic adventures with the players at your table.

A CITY OF ADVENTURE

City of Arches is designed to fuel your imagination as it provides you with a remarkable setting for your fantasy RPGs. This book has been built from the ground up to be fantastic in scope and scale, even while being easily

DESIGNER NOTES

Throughout the book, you'll note boxes like this one featuring designer notes about the City of Arches, written from me to you as one lazy Gamemaster (GM) to another. These designer notes talk about the approaches the book takes to the setting material, and how best to make use of that material. They provide all kinds of tips and tricks on how to customize this setting for your own games.

usable at your table. The city has been designed as a place that you and your players will love to explore and discover together as you create high-fantasy adventures and campaigns.

WORLD ON THE EDGE

The City of Arches is an entirely worldly setting, but is designed to tap into a multiversal, multiworld feel in a way that doesn't make the characters bystanders in their own adventures. Though the city is a kind of focal point for many realms and worlds, the characters' focus is on life in the city, adventuring in its environs, and standing at the center of important events as those events unfold. When threats against the city and its people manifest, the characters have the opportunity to take charge, as opposed to being obliged to follow the orders of more powerful extraplanar NPCs. The planar aspect of a City of Arches campaign is a dial you can turn up or down as you desire to change the tone of the campaign, and to ensure that the stakes of the campaign stay real and personal from beginning to end.

PITCHING THE CITY OF ARCHES

Before you sit down to run a City of Arches campaign with your players, you might want to pitch the concepts of this setting to get them excited to play in it. Here are a few points to be considered when describing a City of Arches campaign:

- The City of Arches is a high-fantasy adventure setting, whose stories can include navigating political intrigue, uncovering secrets from the city's dark past, and delving into the city's endless caverns, crypts, and ruins.
- The strange magic archways for which the city is named can bring in creatures of nearly every race, species, origin, or ancestry.
- The vibrant city was once the capital of a fallen tyrannical empire that spread through multiple worlds, with secret servants dedicated to that empire working tirelessly for its return.

You can then use the truths of the city below to further describe the City of Arches to your players.

TRUTHS OF THE CITY OF ARCHES

Most residents of the City of Arches know a number of well-known truths regarding the city. You can pass on information regarding the city as the characters become acquainted with it, or you can offer these truths to players whose starting characters are already familiar with the city.

REVEAL THESE TRUTHS

In appendix E (page 153), you'll find a player's guide that reworks some of the truths presented here. But even though the players have access to that information, you can reshare these truths with the players whenever it feels right. Doing so can help to not overwhelm the players by expecting them to memorize a bunch of backstory all at once, and can help you focus and clarify what makes the City of Arches different from other city settings or campaign settings the players might be familiar with.

Specific information about the city is presented throughout the later sections of the book, but the following truths are widely known:

- The City of Arches is thousands of years old. However, most of those who live here have little idea of the city's true origins.
- Dozens of archways of different shapes, sizes, and ages can be found in, around, and under the city. Many are freestanding, but some are built into ancient walls and edifices. Some still radiate the chaotic magic that all the city's arches were once infused with, though many have stood dormant for centuries.
- No one controls the arches. Occasionally, creatures from other lands or other worlds enter the city by stepping through archways from the other side. These visitors are often disoriented, and have little or no memory of where they came from.
- Those who know the arches speak of magic keys that can activate them, opening portals to faraway lands or worlds. Such keys are exceedingly rare.
- A group known as the Archkeepers helps new arrivals stepping through the arches to feel safe and welcome.
 Senior members of the Archkeepers have developed magical devices that can sometimes predict when an archway might unexpectedly open.
- When creatures come through the archways with possible violent intent, the Archkeepers seek the protection of the Golden Knights who defend the city, or local adventurers who happen to be nearby.
- A vast network of sewers, cisterns, and ruins spreads beneath the city streets. Whole forgotten settlements can be found below the City of Arches, containing all manner of danger and treasures.
- A waterfall sourced from the glacial ice of the Skyreach Mountains that flank the city flows over the statues of three gods and into the open-air pool of the Public

ADVENTURE HOOKS AND GAME PREP

It often works well to put multiple adventure hooks in front of the characters, then let the players choose which one to pursue. Whenever you're getting close to the end of an adventure, prepare two or three hooks and drop them in near the end of a session. Ask the players which one they're interested in pursuing before the game ends, so you know where things are going and can prepare for your next session.

- Baths. Many in the city claim that the baths have restorative power.
- The Cliffs of the Dead on the mountainside above the city hold crypts that have been used to inter the dead for thousands of years.
- A powerful tyrant once ruled over the City of Arches and its surrounding lands. This evil ruler's name and visage were magically stricken from every known record long ago, but fragmentary remnants of the legacy of this Nameless King still remain.

USING ADVENTURE HOOKS

Nearly every location and nonplayer character in this book comes with an adventure hook that you can use to draw the characters into the City of Arches and its many adventure locations. You can alter these adventure hooks any way you wish, from changing the NPC involved in a hook to one more relevant to the characters, to attaching a location hook to an NPC (or vice versa), to coming up with new hooks of your own.

The following table presents a number of potential ways the characters might pick up adventure hooks. You can roll randomly for a setup, choose one you like, or use the table as inspiration for your own ideas.

ADVENTURE HOOK SETUPS

d20 Setup

The characters hear about the hook on a job board. The characters receive an anonymous note containing information regarding the hook. A local business provides the hook to the characters. A person connected to a faction or group brings the hook to the characters. The characters overhear a conversation discussing the hook. An NPC with the hook seeks out the characters based on their reputation. A local job recruiter connects the characters to the hook for a small fee. A mysterious letter or message directs the characters to the hook. A faction or organization the characters are connected to assigns them the hook. A local temple requests assistance from the characters. The hook appears as a job posting in a newspaper or flier. A character has a dream or vision guiding them to the hook. A town crier announces the hook in the streets.
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13 A town crier announces the hook in the streets.
14 A retired adventurer passes the book on to the characters
A Tetried advertible passes the floor off to the characters.
15 A magical creature guides the characters to the hook.
An aristocrat known to the characters seeks them out to provide them the hook.
17 The characters are introduced to the hook after helping an NPC who knows about it.
18 The characters are introduced to an NPC with the hook through a family member or friend.
19 A strange hooded and masked NPC provides the characters with the hook.
A member of a faction or organization hires the characters as private investigators and provides them the hook.



RUNNING WITH OTHER SYSTEMS

City of Arches assumes that you and your group are running a 5e fantasy roleplaying game such as the 2014 or 2024 versions of Dungeons & Dragons, Level Up: Advanced 5th Edition by EN Publishing, or Tales of the Valiant from Kobold Press. However, this book can be used with nearly any fantasy roleplaying game, and you can easily convert the City of Arches setting to older versions of Dungeons & Dragons, Pathfinder, Shadow of the Weird Wizard, 13th Age, Old School Essentials, the Shadowdark RPG, or other systems.

Converting material from this book to your system of choice mostly means replacing 5e ability checks and DCs with your system's mechanics for action resolution, using monster stat blocks from your system as replacements to those in this book, adding your own magic items, and so on. Given this book's light approach to game mechanics, such conversions should take little work.

USING MONSTER REFERENCES

Throughout this book, creatures who the characters might interact with or come into conflict with are set in **bold**. Whenever you see a creature name in bold, that tells you to go to "Appendix A: Villains and Monsters" and check what options are available for that creature in different 5e games.

Many of the creatures the characters might face in a City of Arches campaign can be used straight from different fifth edition monster books, including the Monster Manual for 2014 and 2024 Dungeons & Dragons, the Monstrous Menagerie for Level Up: Advanced 5e, and the Monster Vault for Tales of the Valiant. For other creatures, the appendix provides guidelines for how to replace those creatures with the stat blocks from your monster book of choice, or how to quickly and easily

reskin and mash up existing creatures to create unique challenges.

Either way, you're free to use stat blocks from your own favorite monster books whenever it suits you. Always treat bold creature entries as suggestions and sources of inspiration that you can build on as you run your games.

Appendix F (page 156) also includes material to help you build fifth edition monsters as you need them, even during gameplay.

RUNNING WITH DEADLY SYSTEMS

City of Arches is intended to provide a foundation for high-fantasy, character-focused adventures in which the characters shape their own story as they explore the city and its endless locations and situations. However, some tabletop roleplaying games have a greater focus on resource management and deadly gameplay, and this book can support those darker and grittier RPGs with just a few changes.

When running a game where character death is more frequent, consider having the players choose a particular faction for all their characters to be associated with, such as the knights of the Golden Order, the spies of Roselyn Zeshe, or the rogues of the Black Hand (all detailed in later sections). That way, if a character dies during their adventures, the core driver of their motivations for adventuring can remain the same as a new character tied to that faction comes into play. Individual characters might die off, but their quests and goals continue.

CHOOSING AND FILLING OUT MAPS

The City of Arches features hundreds of adventure locations and hooks, and has room for many more if you want to expand the setting. Thankfully, all GMs have access to hundreds of maps for their games, including many free map resources online.

When the players choose a location to explore, look for a map appropriate to that location, then fill in its details based on the location description in this book. Don't worry about spending too much time developing locations this way. A one- or two-word description for each area in a location is often enough to give you an idea what might be found if the characters decide to explore. You can then work out the numbers and types of monsters you want in your location encounters during your prep, building appropriate encounters based on the beats and pacing of your game. The book *Sly Flourish's Return of the Lazy Dungeon Master* includes a whole framework for building out adventures this way.

City of Arches includes a number of maps and short adventures you can use when you're unable to come up with your own. You can even reuse the maps in the book by flipping them horizontally or vertically, sealing off areas, and changing the location descriptions and inhabitants as needed.

USING THE CITY OF ARCHES

This book is intended to support the creation of your own adventures in your own campaign setting. You're free to use the material in *City of Arches* any way that helps you run great adventures with your friends. Use as much or as little of this book as you like, and change any of the content to fit your own stories and campaigns. There's no wrong way to approach the City of Arches.

In this book, you'll find particular approaches and design considerations intended to make it easy to run high-action, high-fantasy roleplaying adventures.

All Races, Ancestries, Species, Classes, and Backgrounds Have a Place Here. The unpredictable archways of the city bring in beings from all over the multiverse, often breaking those creatures' connections to their place of origin. This lets you include virtually any character-focused material you want to include in your campaign.

Limitless Adventure in Multiple Environments. The City of Arches is the center of a larger territory holding multiple distinct environments, each of which lets you set up different styles of adventure locations. The Cliffs of the Dead, the Lower Reaches, the Endless Warrens, and the perilous extents even farther below the city (all of which are detailed later on in the book) keep adventure always close at hand. At the same time, the magic of the archways can connect the city to any worlds you want to explore.

Fantastic Yet Familiar. Though clearly a high-fantasy urban setting, the City of Arches is intended to fit into any typical fantasy world. Farmsteads and grazing lands surround the city, and merchants within sell the typical goods found in any fantasy setting. Building on this starting point, you're free to make the City of Arches as fantastic or as mundane as you choose.

An Open History. Only the broadest strokes of the history of the City of Arches are presented here, leaving the rest of that history wide open. You can add your own events, create new nations or empires, or fit any other details into the history of the city.

Reskinnable Factions and Powers. The factions, deities, and legendary figures described in this book can be easily replaced or reskinned by the factions, forces, orders, and deities from your own campaign setting or other published campaign worlds. You can reskin every aspect of the factions and powers the characters might interact with in the City of Arches, or use the details provided in this book to more fully flesh out the named factions and powers for your campaign.

Bring Your Own Character Options, Monsters, and Magic Items. This book focuses on the setting and adventure potential of the City of Arches. Though the "City of Arches Player's Guide" (appendix E in this book) introduces one new character background, the rest of the book isn't filled up with new character options, monsters, magic items, and other mechanically crunchy bits for any particular game system. Instead, it focuses on tools to let you build your own monsters, flavor your own magic items, and help you and your players build unique characters for this unique setting.

MAKING THE MOST OF THIS BOOK

City of Arches offers a wealth of potential for your games, and you're free to use the book any way you wish. But as you dig into the book, consider the following approach to maximize the value of what's presented here.

Familiarize Yourself with the Book. Spend some time skimming through the book. Focus on the intro text and location summary pages for the major location areas in and around the City of Arches, which will give you a sense of which sections will best help you build your adventures and campaigns.

Run a Session Zero. Give the "City of Arches Player's Guide" (appendix E, or available as a free download ☑) to your players. Then run a session zero (see below) in which you describe the campaign setting, help players build characters together, and establish your house rules and safety tools for the game.

Run "Golgoron Arises." Run the short introductory scenario "Golgoron Arises" (page 9) to allow you and your players to become familiar with the city and some of its unique features.

Choose Your Next Path. Decide whether you want to run one of the adventures at the end of this book (starting with "The Obsidian Skull" on page 122) as a first entry point into the City of Arches, or whether you want to use the locations and ideas in the book to create and run your own adventures.

DIAL UP THE DREAD?

As presented in this book, the City of Arches is a happy place. Dangers exist around, above, and below the city, but daily life is relatively safe and the people who live here are optimistic and content.

You're free to change this baseline, though, by dialing up the level of dread in your games from high fantasy to dark fantasy, as you and your players desire. Perhaps the residents of the city aren't so happy. Maybe increasing numbers of horrors are making their way through the arches, or the creatures lurking deep beneath the city have begun to grasp for the light above. The city might be on the edge of downfall, giving the characters a chance to save it—or maybe the City of Arches has already fallen, and it's up to the characters to help rebuild.

Read the Campaign Arcs. If you're looking for ideas to generate a full campaign, read the three campaign arcs presented in the book (starting with "The Key of Worlds" on page 105). Each campaign arc gives you an idea of how you can tie together some of the concepts of the City of Arches into a larger story. You can run any arc as indicated, mix multiple arcs together, or strip them for specific ideas to be used in a campaign of your own.

RUNNING A SESSION ZERO

Before delving straight into the adventures of the City of Arches, you likely want to run a "session zero." When running a longer campaign, it often works best to have players build their characters together during this initial session, after they hear about the City of Arches and the campaign you plan to run.

Many Gamemaster guides include information on running a session zero and managing RPG safety tools. *The Lazy DM's Companion* includes material on both.

During this session zero, you likely want to cover the following topics:

- Give the players the campaign's elevator pitch. What sort of campaign can the players expect to play?
- Read out the truths of the City of Arches (page 5) to outline what makes this setting unique.
- Hand out or read through the "City of Arches Player's Guide" in appendix E (page 153).
- Define a core bond that the characters can share in this campaign, such as: "You and your fellow adventurers seek to keep the people of the City of Arches safe from the lingering evil of its former empire."
- Describe which potentially troubling content will not be used in the game at all (often known as "lines" when discussing safety tools) and which content will be handled off-camera (often known as "veils"). As well, establish a way for players or the GM to break character and ask to move away from sensitive topics should they come up, perhaps using the X card system or the "pause for a minute" approach. (*The Lazy DM's Companion*

- talks about all these safety tools, and the City of Arches resource page has links to other safety tools sites \square .)
- Present options to the players for a potential group patron they can choose.

With these topics covered, you're ready to start your campaign. If you don't have an introductory adventure prepared, the short intro scenario "Golgoron Arises" in the next section makes a great introduction to the City of Arches.

INTRODUCTORY SCENARIO: GOLGORON ARISES

This section presents a short introductory 5e scenario that sets the stage for adventures in the City of Arches. It's intended to play out in an hour or so, and to reveal key features of the setting. You can run this scenario on its own or as part of your session zero (see above) for a City of Arches campaign.

This scenario is intended for three to six 1st-level characters.

GARLAND NEEDS HELP

The scenario begins with the characters in the City of Arches. You and the players can decide why the characters are together and whether they're walking, sitting down at an outdoor eatery, and so forth. Take the time for everyone to do a short character introduction.



When the introductions are done, Garland Willowmane, head Archkeeper for the City of Arches (see page 28 in "Factions of the City of Arches"), arrives and asks the characters for help. Garland's plea includes the following points:

- The Archkeepers are an order whose members watch out for creatures traveling unexpectedly through the mysterious portals of the City of Arches.
- Using magic developed by the order, the Archkeepers suspect that a nearby archway is about to activate—with some unknown creature coming through.
- Whoever comes through the archway portal is likely to be confused as its magic removes their memories, as is typical for the city's arches.
- Garland usually has members of the Golden Knights back her up when an archway activates, but they can't get here in time.
- Most creatures who come through the arches aren't hostile, and the characters shouldn't automatically threaten this new arrival.
- Garland carries a peaceful offering—a gift basket containing artisanal cheeses and crackers, scented soaps, soft towels, and an invitation to the city's Public Baths. Such offerings can help start things off on the right foot.
- That said, sometimes new arrivals are overcome with fear or anger that makes things get ugly. For the safety of the city, the characters should be prepared for trouble.

With the characters' agreement, Garland leads them to a nearby archway—a rough stone structure some twenty feet high, and clearly older than the buildings around it. As they arrive, the archway's magic crackles to life.

THE ARCH AWAKENS

As the archway activates, Garland steps forward, basket in hand. She waves the characters back to avoid creating a threatening presence for the newcomer. But she isn't prepared for the flock of stirges that emerge before that creature appears! Two **stirges** per character fly out of the archway and attack, with one stirge focusing on each character while the rest attack Garland and other bystanders. Roll for initiative!

Consider running this battle as "theater of the mind" combat, asking the players what they want to do and helping them accomplish their intentions. If characters want to target multiple stirges with spells like *burning hands*, they can easily hit two stirges without hitting an ally or bystander.

During the fight, have each character make a Wisdom (Perception) check. The character with the highest check notices a hooded **cultist** come out of the crowd, knife in hand as she moves for a distracted Garland Willowmane. If no character intercedes, the cultist stabs Garland—not

fatally, but enough to cause the Archkeeper to drop the gift basket and stagger back.

The cultist then yells out, "Behold the coming of Golgoron! Sunderer of Rylovox, Prince of Akara, and herald of He Who Shall Rise Again!"

GOLGORON ARRIVES

When half the stirges are defeated, the portal crackles again and a **horned devil** steps through, wielding a huge spiked chain. Upon arrival, the devil looks around, snarling, "I am Golgoron! Sunderer of ... I forget ..." The devil then looks around the chaotic scene before the now-dormant arch, clearly confused. Garland, distracted either by stirges or the cultist, can't properly greet Golgoron.

Give the characters a chance to address Golgoron, ideally welcoming the devil as Garland Willowmane intended. If a player makes a suitable speech to have their character address Golgoron and introduce them to the city, no ability check is needed to win the devil's trust. Otherwise, a character speaking with Golgoron must succeed on a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion or Performance) check. A character who offers the devil the fallen gift basket has advantage on this check.

If welcomed successfully, Golgoron drops their spiked chain, takes the basket, sniffs the soaps, and heads to the Public Baths. If the characters fail to properly welcome the horned devil, or if any character attacks them, Golgoron gives one of the characters a whack with their spiked chain, then flies off and returns to the city later.

"NPCs of Sunken Revvia" on page 71 has more information on Golgoron and gives the characters a chance to interact with the devil once more.

AFTERMATH

If the cultist isn't incapacitated or captured by the characters, she flees into the crowd. The character with the highest passive Intelligence (Investigation) score discovers a note the cultist left behind, which describes the coming of Golgoron and how the devil's arrival aids the Children of Ibraxus. (Page 29 in "Factions of the City of Arches" has more information on that notorious cult, which Garland Willowmane can share.) The note also shows a map leading to one of the cult's hideouts in the Cliffs of the Dead (page 50).

If the characters succeeded at welcoming Golgoron, a grateful Garland offers them 20 gp each. If the characters want to pursue the cultist, Garland first takes them to an eatery known as the Golden Sunrise (see page 18), known for fantastic coffee and lemon biscuits. There, she introduces them to Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster to the queen, who hires the party to investigate the cult. This provides a hook to the adventure "The Obsidian Skull" on page 122.

GAZETTEER OF THE CITY OF ARCHES

This chapter takes a closer look at the City of Arches, including its politics and important factions, noteworthy NPCs, major locations, and more.

POLITICS

The government of the City of Arches is built on three branches, collectively known as the Golden Order. The Golden Council consists of elected members representing the merchants, workers, artists, and other folk of the city. The Golden Throne represents the constitutional monarchy ruled over by Queen Karsara Aventus IV. The soldiers and guards of the Golden Knights protect the City of Arches from internal and external threats, swear allegiance to the queen, and serve the people of the city through their representatives on the Golden Council.

MONARCH AND DEFENDERS

Queen Karsara Aventus IV is known by family members and close advisors as the Whispering Willow—a childhood nickname that serves a double purpose for her now (see page 14). Though only in her midtwenties, Queen Aventus has already held the Golden Throne of the City of Arches for a few years, and has proven her skills as both a leader and as an ambassador to neighboring realms. Her advisors trust and love her, as do the representatives of the Golden Council and the people of the City of Arches. As queen, Karsara commands the soldiers and guards of the Golden Knights, but they take their day-to-day orders from a small council for military affairs that is a subset of the Golden Council.

Adventure Hook. Queen Karsara Aventus's elder sister, the noble Atretha Aventus, was expelled from the royal family a decade before the death of their mother, Queen Elandyn IV, who Atretha attempted to depose. Unwilling to execute her own daughter, Elandyn stripped Atretha of power but kept her in the city under the watch of the Golden Knights, allowing her to reside in seclusion in a manor villa of the Second Rise (see page 26). Rumors in and around the city suggest that Atretha now plots to supplant her sister on the throne, and has materials in her possession that threaten Karsara's reign. The queen's

ADVENTURE HOOKS EVERYWHERE

The City of Arches is first and foremost a site of adventure. Challenges and threats can be found everywhere in the city, and every NPC and location described in this book features a hook you can either use directly, or that you can modify to fit adventures of your own. Each of these adventure hooks is intended to be *actionable*, giving you a setup you can use directly in your games.



spymaster, Roselyn Zeshe, seeks trustworthy adventurers to recover these materials and bring them to her.

COUNCIL MATTERS

The Golden Council is made up of thirty-two elected council members, selected as representatives of specific factions and groups within the City of Arches. Councilors are reelected every six years, with voter loyalty determining who gets rotated out quickly and who stays in office for life. From time to time, corruption worms its way into the council, leading to bribes, blackmail, and even violence. So far, such incidents have been thankfully limited in their scope, and those on both sides of the corruption know to keep a low profile lest they face Golden Knight inquisitors.

Adventure Hook. Councilor Irva Mentra, representative of the city's textile workers, has discovered a crypt beneath the Golden Council's meeting chamber. She believes that **ghosts** bound to this crypt have possessed at least a half-dozen of the city's councilors, and that the undead have some unknown agenda. Irva is looking for adventurers to travel into the crypts and discover the plots of these ghosts.

POLITICAL FRICTION

The various political factions in the City of Arches oppose and ally with each other to different degrees, and you're

SIMPLE YET MANIPULATABLE POLITICS

The political setup of the City of Arches is simple enough for players and characters to grasp but complicated enough to add political intrigue to your game if desired. Queen Karsara Aventus IV is good-hearted. However, her loyal advisors, the city's force of protective knights, and a council of politicians all have the potential to do right for the city, to be motivated by greed, or to actively cause harm. As well, the characters can get mixed up with more sinister forces adjacent to the city's leadership, including corrupt nobility and the Mages of Kartan. Campaigns set in the City of Arches aren't intended to focus on political machinations, but those machinations are there to make things more complex and interesting when needed.

free to turn up or tone down that friction to suit the type of game you want to run. You can use any of the following elements to add background flavor to your campaign, or you can make them a cornerstone of more politically focused adventures.

Deposing the Queen. Agents of Queen Aventus's older sister Atretha plot to replace young Karsara on the Golden Throne (see "Monarch and Defenders" above). This motivation might manifest as the bribery or blackmail of Golden Council members, shifts in economic power among the merchants and guilds of the city, subtle magical influence, or violent assassinations.

The Throne Versus the Council. A perpetual struggle for power exists between the Golden Throne and the Golden Council, even when queen and councilors work toward common goals. All members of the council seek ways to influence the queen, while militant council members might plot to depose or kidnap Karsara to increase their authority.

The Golden Knights Versus the Black Hand. The Golden Knights are dedicated to preserving peace above ground in the City of Arches, but largely leave the Lower Reaches under the control of the criminal guild known as the Black Hand (see "Mekello" on page 46 of "The Lower Reaches" and page 29 in "Factions of the City of Arches"). However, plots of larceny, blackmail, or bodily harm carried out against nobles, council members, or other upstanding citizens might force the Golden Knights into the shadows of the Lower Reaches—creating the risk of an all-out war between the two groups.

The Golden Knights Versus the Archkeepers. For centuries, the Archkeepers have helped new arrivals stepping through the city's many dimensional portals find peace and a home in the City of Arches. Members of that order treat each new arrival with the best of intentions, but not every such creature comes peacefully. Normally benign beings who lose their memories while passing through the archways might be driven to fearful violence. Evil and predatory creatures might come through with memories of their past fully intact. The struggle of the Archkeepers to create peaceful introductions to the city often clashes with the Golden Knights' need for safety and order. A horned devil might step through an archway with

a newfound love of pottery making—or they might desire to build a throne from the bones of the first people they see.

The Golden Throne Versus the Knights of the Nameless King. The cult known as the Knights of the Nameless King has claimed many citizens of the City of Arches, of high and low standing alike. Grim cultists lurking in the shadows of the Lower Reaches whisper twisted prayers to their fallen tyrant, while nobles and members of the Golden Council hide secret shrines to the Nameless King in their opulent manors. Some people are drawn to the cult by the mystery of a forgotten past. Others are motivated by the belief that they will be favored servants of the Nameless King when he takes his throne once again in the City of Arches. Operatives of the Golden Throne, particularly the queen's spymaster, Roselyn Zeshe, seek always to stamp out the sects of the cult, even as the selfstyled Knights of the Nameless King attempt to destabilize the city and conduct the rituals they believe will return their tyrannical overlord to the world.

The City of Arches Versus the Lords of the Borderlands. Beyond the City of Arches, numerous bandit bosses, warlords, and self-styled kings build small fiefdoms in the ruins left behind after the fall of the Nameless King. These warlords covet the artifacts and the sites of great magical power that they believe lie within and beneath the City of Arches, and many actively plot to move against the city. Each branch of the Golden Throne is dedicated to protecting the city and its people from outside attack. (Chapter 8, "The Borderlands," has more details on some of these ambitious rulers.)

ECONOMICS

The City of Arches stands at the center of a broad territory known as the Borderlands (see chapter 8 on page 80), featuring agrarian settlements to the south and southwest, marshes and lakes to the north, and blasted lands and ancient ruins occupied by warring raiders and bloodthirsty monsters due west. The eclectic origins of the many residents whose folk first came to the city by way of a portal makes the City of Arches home to a wealth of foods, crafts, tools, and artwork found nowhere else in the world. Much of the city's trade with the people of the Borderlands revolves around these goods.

Likewise, much of the city's wealth derives from the varied skills of its people, including art, scholarship,

YOUR KEYS TO DIFFERENT WORLDS

As the GM, you can use the keys to the city's arches as your tool to steer the campaign wherever you think it'll be fun to go. Arch keys can give the characters access to any location, from isolated dungeons tied to long-fallen empires, to the far reaches of the world or other planes of existence. You can control the flow of your campaign by deciding how many keys to award the characters, and which new locations those keys might open.

arcane knowledge and crafting, history and lore, culinary excellence, and more. Illicit dealings in magical relics, scrolls, tomes, and treasures found in the ruins below the City of Arches also fuel a vibrant economy among its less scrupulous traders.

Four times a year, the folk of settlements across the Borderlands and beyond come to the City of Arches for week-long trade festivals, bringing with them goods and wealth from across the surrounding realm.

KEYS TO THE ARCHES

Though no one truly understands how the mysterious dimensional arches of the City of Arches are powered and activated, it is known that numerous keys able to control the arches are buried in the ruins beneath the city. These keys can take the form of nearly any object, and activate the archway they are attuned to when brought close.

Once activated, an arch becomes a dimensional gateway to another location in the world—or to locations beyond the world. Some keys work only once or twice. Others might work periodically, or even continually. Some keys allow only one-way access through an arch, while others also open arches in distant locations to give the characters shortcuts back to the city. Likewise, a single arch exposed to different keys might open gateways to multiple locations.

REVEALING SECRETS

The City of Arches is packed with thousands of years of secrets, whether buried in ancient vaults, hidden in forbidden texts, or whispered in the shadows. You can use the history, NPCs, location descriptions, and factions of the city to wrap your adventures in secrets

SECRETS REVEALED

d20	The Secret Is	
1	Overheard at a local tavern or public house	
2	Sung by a bard on a street corner	
3	Found on a dust-covered mosaic	
4	Etched into the bottom base of a worn statue	
5	Carved along the blade of a magic weapon	
6	Revealed by a stubborn sage	
7	Found in a dusty tome	
8	Passed along from an antique vendor	
9	Referenced in religious texts	
10	Revealed by an intelligent magic item	
11	Imparted as a dream to a wizard or cleric	
12	Recalled from heraldic markings on a suit of armor	
13	Whispered by a ghost in a forgotten tomb	
14	Described during a religious sermon	
15	Carved into the lid of a sarcophagus	
16	Pieced together from scraps of vellum	
17	Remembered from the teachings of an old mentor	
18	Noted as pictograms painted on ancient stones	
19	Carved into a monolith at the grave of an ancient monster	
20	Described by a talkative skull	



that the characters uncover through their exploits and explorations. The Secrets Revealed table offers up twenty ways the characters might uncover those secrets.

NPCS OF THE CITY OF ARCHES

The City of Arches is a vibrant location made noteworthy by the people who live there. During their time spent in the city, the characters might meet any of the following notable NPCs.

BREVA WINDSONG (CITY HERALD)

Once a famous troubadour, Breva Windsong (a human **commoner**) now serves the queen and council of the City of Arches. The herald wanders the city each day as they recite the Golden Order's midmorning decrees, often with their own dry satirical humor thrown in to keep people interested

Adventure Hook. Thieves have stolen Breva's prized bagpipes, an instrument the herald greatly adores. They believe the crime to be revenge by the baker's guild, for whom they once added the wrong form of sarcasm to a paid sponsorship deal, with the guild's overseers never forgiving them. Breva dares not confront the guild themself lest they anger the guild's council representative, Irvan Machollo. They thus seek discreet adventurers to track down the thieves, recover the bagpipes, and discover who ordered the crime.

GARLAND WILLOWMANE (HIGH ARCHKEEPER)

Garland Willowmane (a middle-aged human **priest**) has been leader of the Archkeepers for more than thirty

A HANDFUL OF USEFUL NPCS

This section covers just a few useful NPCs so as to not overwhelm you. These NPCs represent some of the main players in the city, and those most likely to meet the characters and involve them in different adventures. The hundreds of other possible NPCs the characters might meet in and around the City of Arches are left to your creativity, or can be reskinned from NPCs in your favorite game books and adventures.

years. Garland tries to be the first person seen by creatures coming through the arches for the first time, a gift basket in hand to help those creatures start their new lives on the right foot. Some whisper that Garland's unassailable optimism comes from a dark past that she tries to forget.

Adventure Hook. Garland has received word that something is coming through a lesser-known arch in one of the catacomb chambers in the Cliffs of the Dead—but that chamber is filled with undead. She's on the lookout for adventurers willing to clear a path through to the arch, and to serve as bodyguards should she need protection from what comes through from the other side. In addition to her order's gratitude, Garland can arrange authorization for the characters to enter the Cliffs of the Dead from the Magistrate of Tombs (see page 50).

LORD BIANCA SWIFTHAND (GOLDEN KNIGHT COMMANDER)

The broad, scarred commander of the Golden Knights, Lord Bianca Swifthand (a human **knight** with double hit points) commands a force of twenty **knights**, forty **veterans**, and sixty **guards** whose sole focus is the security of Queen Karsara and the City of Arches.

Patrols of one or two veterans leading a dozen guards constantly walk the streets of the city in shining gold-plated armor. In times of crisis, Lord Swifthand can also call upon volunteer **mages** from Kartan to defend the city (see "Kartan, Tower of the Arcane" on page 20), usually when some horror steps through the arches and doesn't take well to the gift basket presented by the Archkeepers (page 28).

Though her stern exterior projects the strength of the Golden Knights, those who know Lord Swifthand appreciate her sense of humor and her love for the people of the city. She and her dwarf **knight** second-in-command Joslyn Halfcloak both make excellent quest-giving NPCs, enlisting the characters as troubleshooters on behalf of the Golden Knights. Both can often be found at the Citadel of the Golden Knights (page 15).

Adventure Hook. Joslyn Halfcloak calls on adventurers to help search for a Golden Knight patrol lost in the Lower Reaches of the city. The patrol had been investigating a collapsed wall leading into a series of ancient chambers, into which a number of would-be explorers have disappeared after reporting hearing strange telepathic whispers.



QUEEN KARSARA AVENTUS IV ("WILLOW")

The young human **scout** Karsara Aventus is, by all accounts, a wise and empathetic queen. She understands the importance of her role and her leadership to the people of the City of Arches, but a lifetime at court has left the young queen filled with wanderlust. More than once, Karsara has left the palace by posing as a young scout named Willow—a play on the queen's private nickname, the Whispering Willow—to experience city life on her own.

Adventure Hook. The young queen, in her guise as Willow, searches for adventurers to discuss exploring a recently discovered crypt in the Cliffs of the Dead that's caught her eye. Eager to learn from experienced explorers, she hopes to recover a gemstone known as the

DESIGNED FOR LAZY GAMEMASTERS

GMs who have read Return of the Lazy Dungeon Master will likely note how this book fits in well with the eight steps of game prep from that book. While you need not follow the eight steps when building adventures in the City of Arches, focusing on those core concepts can help you regardless of how you prepare your game:

- Review the characters
- Create a strong start
- · Outline potential scenes
- · Define secrets and clues
- · Develop fantastic locations
- Outline important NPCs
- Choose relevant monsters
- Select magic item rewards

No book can cover every one of these topics for every adventure. But *City of Arches* focuses on material that fits easily into these eight steps as an aid to helping you prep your game sessions.

UNDERSTANDING ADVENTURE LOCATIONS

This book is packed with locations broken out as short sections, suitable for providing details for characters just passing through, or as a foundation for you to build encounters and adventures.

Each location starts off with an initial italicized sentence, which can be safely read to the players when they first experience a location. In addition to describing the appearance of a location and giving you a reminder of its purpose, this introductory text provides a taste of the location's history and place in the world. Think of each of these introductions as a prewritten secret or clue you can reveal to the characters as they explore the location.

This introduction is followed by information on the history of the location, what's going on there now, inhabitants, descriptions of specific areas, and more. To expand a location into a site for one or more encounters—or even a full adventure—just find a suitable map and let the details of the location provide inspiration for your own ideas.

Amber Heart, rumored to be hidden there. She claims to be a member of the family whose ancestors occupy the tomb, and thus the rightful heir to the stone. If her true identity is discovered, Karsara explains that her guards and advisors aren't aware of her mission. (In fact, they are aware, but have long let the young queen enjoy her adventures while clandestinely watching her.)

ROSELYN ZESHE (QUEEN'S SPYMASTER)

Having served three generations of queens reigning over the City of Arches, Roselyn views the protection of the city and its political stability as her lifelong duty. The middle-aged elf **assassin** wears a disarming smile and moves slowly, yet many whisper of the deadly battle prowess she shows off in defense of the queen.

Roselyn Zeshe serves well as a major quest-giving NPC for the characters, asking them to take on jobs too mundane—or too high profile—for the Golden Knights.

Adventure Hook. After hunting down and killing three leaders of a centipede cult who attempted to assassinate Queen Karsara, Roselyn believes that the cult remains active. She seeks adventurers to hunt down the cult's new leader in an abandoned duergar temple below the city, and to end their threat for good.

LOCATIONS IN THE CITY OF ARCHES

The City of Arches sits beneath the sheer cliffs of the Skyreach Mountains, a range of high peaks across which glacial streams feed high pools and deep-blue alpine lakes. A great river flowing out from these lakes descends the mountainside above the city as a spectacular waterfall, cascading down the statues known as the Three Sisters and feeding the pools of the Public Baths (see below for more information on both).

This section describes a number of major locations of interest in the City of Arches, in alphabetical order. Some of these locations are further expanded in later chapters.

ARCH OF KINGS

A towering archway of corded bands of bronze dominates the skyline for those entering the City of Arches, dwarfing the buildings beneath it. One can only imagine what the world on the other side of such a formidable portal might look like should it open—and what behemoth might step through.

The Arch of Kings is the largest above-ground archway in the City of Arches—and is thought by most sages to be the largest arch anywhere in, above, or below the city. Standing over two hundred feet high and stretching four hundred feet from one base to another, the arch towers above the buildings beneath and around it. Built at the start of the reign of the Nameless King from a bronze-colored material with the qualities of both stone and metal, the archway has never been opened as far as any histories tell. Sages argue incessantly about what would happen should it do so.

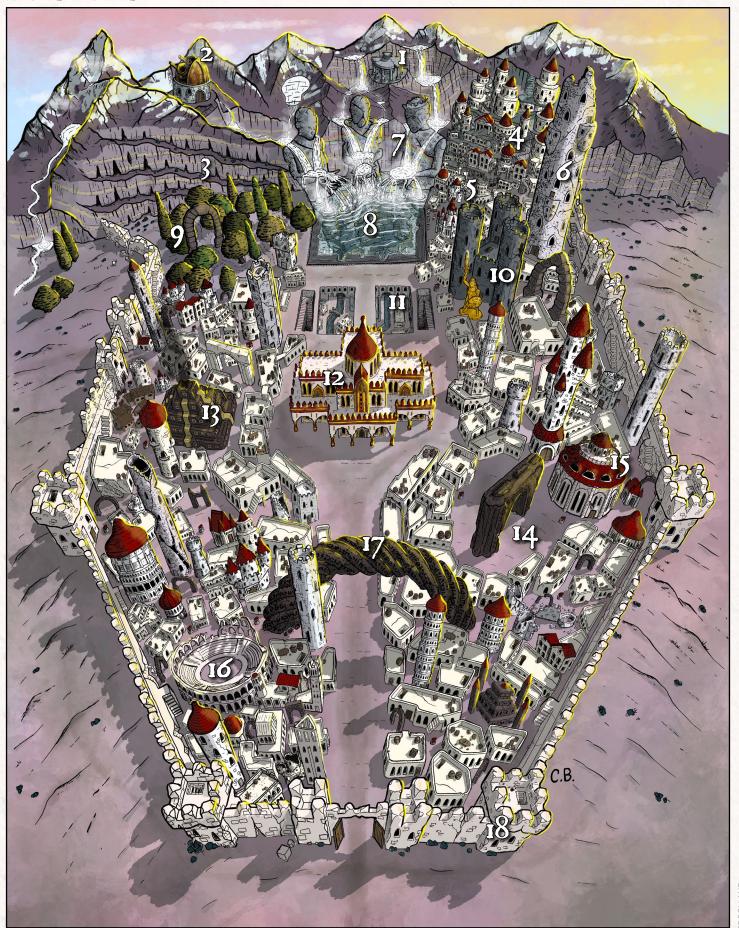
A small number of ancient and incomplete texts suggest that the arch might be a massive portal to the abyssal realm of Choul, through which the demon prince Ibraxus will one day step to seize the world. (See "Children of Ibraxus" on page 29.) Other accounts describe it as a portal to the Outside (see the sidebar on page 121), through which entities of pure antilife can reach through to steal the souls of the living. Certain religious zealots speak of the arch as a gateway to the celestial heavens. But whatever the truth of the arch's power, simply staring at the colossal structure fills the minds of most observers with awe and wonder.

Adventure Hook. Dennyse Alakamp, a retired adventurer, stumbles toward the characters, badly wounded. He tells how a group of bandits and thugs wearing bestial masks broke into his shop near the Arch of Kings and stole a book he had hidden beneath the floorboards. Dennyse claims that the book holds the ritual required to open the Arch of Kings, but that he was too fearful of its magic to have ever looked in the book while waiting to find a buyer for it. Investigating the situation leads the characters to discover that the thieves sold the tome to a mage named Drakus, who plans to use the book during a ceremony at the Temple of the Three Sisters. If successful, the ceremony will open the arch and bring forth a twisted monstrosity who Drakus can bend to his will

CITADEL OF THE GOLDEN KNIGHTS

Sunlight shines off the domed towers of the Citadel of the Golden Knights—a bastion of defense against threats to the City of Arches.

Three connected circular towers form the headquarters of the knights sworn to protect the queen and the City of



CITY OF ARCHES MAP KEY

- 1. Temple of the Three Sisters
- 2. Observatory of Infinite Skies
- 3. Cliffs of the Dead
- 4. Villas of the Second Rise
- 5. Korvela's Edge Apartments
- 6. Kartan, Tower of the Arcane
- 7. Falls of the Three Gods
- 8. The Public Baths
- 9. Sunset Grove
- 10. Citadel of the Golden Knights
- 11. The Lower Reaches
- 12. Queen's Palace
- 13. Vathrex's Forge
- 14. Market Square
- 15. Sevenge and Gam's Public House
- 16. Theater of Whispers
- 17. Arch of Kings
- 18. City Wall

Arches. Before the citadel's intimidating iron doors stands a thirty-foot-tall statue of a gold-armored woman—Lord Salvana Swiftblade, first knight of the Golden Order and veteran of the wars against the Nameless King.

The citadel holds the barracks, offices, watchtowers, and training grounds of the Golden Knights. Two dozen **guards** and nine **veterans** are typically on duty at the citadel, and Lord Bianca Swifthand (see above) can often be found here. Commander Joslyn Halfcloak, assistant to Lord Swifthand, also has an office in the citadel, where she often meets with prospective mercenaries or adventurers with whom the Golden Knights might do business. Her office is adorned with commendations for her valor defending the city, and has a greatsword that has been in her family for six generations hanging on the wall.

Adventure Hook. The Golden Knights have received information that a young aristocrat named Vesper Braylin living in the Villas of the Second Rise has been robbing local shops with the help of a group of street toughs. Joslyn Halfcloak seeks adventurers willing to catch the noble and her troublesome thug friends, and knows that the gang has been using a network of abandoned sewers connecting to dozens of buildings by way of the Lost Cisterns (see below). She wants the job done quickly, to ensure the ruffians don't get eaten by ghoulish crocodiles. But the thieves must also be handled quietly, so that a political scandal doesn't arise from the noble heir's formal arrest.

CITY WALLS

Tight-packed stones raised over centuries shape the massive fortification surrounding the City of Arches. Sunlight shines on the golden helms of the knights who watch over the central gates and walk the ramparts of the city walls, protecting the city day and night from any outside forces that might threaten it.

Thirty-foot-high walls of white stone surround the City of Arches, continually repaired and reinforced for centuries by master masons. The Golden Knights watch over the city from the walls' numerous palisades, and have used the strength of those walls many times to protect the city from invading forces. At the same time, ballistas and patrolling mercenary mages from Kartan (see below) stationed on the walls protect the city from threats attacking from above.

The towers that line the walls contain their own chambers, holding the offices of the city watch, armories, barracks, training rooms, and more. Other chambers are built inside the walls, some of which were long ago forgotten and remain undiscovered.

Adventure Hook. While repairing a section of the western wall, workers from the Hard Pick masonry company fell into a set of hidden barracks sealed up hundreds of years ago. Though the workers were rescued, several armored skeletons scaled up the collapsed floor to enter the city and attack bystanders in the streets. The skeletons were repelled, but Joslyn Halfcloak of the Golden Knights now seeks adventurers willing to enter the hidden chambers and root out any dangers that might remain there. Within the barracks, the characters find skeletons, zombies, specters, and the undead cult fanatic Kyvus Drogon, who controls the undead.

CLIFFS OF THE DEAD

A webwork of switchback paths wind their way up the ancient stone cliffs north of the city, revealing ranks of stone doorways opening up to ancient tunnels and tombs beyond.

The sheer cliffs abutting the City of Arches are filled with catacombs laced through the mountainside, which are reached by dozens of switchback paths and walkways. For thousands of years, the people of the area have entombed their dead in the catacombs of the mountain, building small shrines to numerous deities to watch over their fallen loved ones. However, the earliest folk to excavate the catacombs here didn't recognize a strange magic in the mountain. This force slowly but inexorably draws older tombs deeper within while exposing new rock near

A NOTE ABOUT MAPS

The maps of the City of Arches and other locations featured in this book are an abstract representation of areas and features. They're not intended to be an accurate depiction of the city and the subterranean realms beneath it. Certain features might be missing in these maps. Some features depicted on the maps aren't detailed in the book, but are left for you to develop. Likewise, features and locations might be depicted larger, smaller, closer, or farther away than they truly are.

Use these maps as you would any game-related artwork, letting them fuel your imagination and generate ideas. And be as flexible as you like in running *your* City of Arches, making it bigger or smaller as desired, and adding your own locations or removing those depicted herein.

ADJUSTING ENCOUNTERS

Where the many adventure hooks throughout the book set up suggested encounters, always use your discretion when choosing the number of monsters, basing that choice on the difficulty you want for a specific scenario and the current energy of your game. Even in areas such as Sunken Revvia that are intended for higher-level characters (see page 63), don't be afraid to run easy encounters that give the characters the clear upper hand.

the catacomb entrances, with those rock faces eventually given over to newer tombs. The tombs nearest the cliff face are thus hundreds of years old at most, with the drawing-in of the mountain so slow a process that it can be noticed only by comparing generational records.

Tomb raiding is illegal in the City of Arches, and many catacomb caverns deemed dangerous are sealed over by the Golden Knights as new ones are carved inside the mountain. From time to time, the walls of tunnels and caverns collapse to reveal tombs and chambers long sealed off and forgotten—some featuring iconography of grim and bloodthirsty deities lost now to history.

The Cliffs of the Dead is an excellent location for adventures catering to low-level characters, and is further described in its own chapter (see page 50). Characters exploring the catacombs can also discover networks of caves leading deeper into the Endless Warrens (see below).

Adventure Hook. A noble family recently buried their fallen patriarch in their communal tomb. During the interment, the wall of the tomb collapsed and a small army of **skeletons** spilled out. The family fled, leaving the body of their patriarch to the claws of those undead. Now members of the family have begun to hear the haunting whisper of their patriarch calling them back to the tomb. The family is in need of adventurers willing to fight their way into the tomb, defeat the horrors within, recover the patriarch's body, and lay him to rest.

ENDLESS WARRENS

Beyond the worked stone of ancient tombs, a thousand miles of tunnels and caverns honeycomb the Skyreach Mountains, filled with the mysteries and dangers of countless ages.

The mountain beyond the Cliffs of the Dead is riddled with seemingly endless tunnels, chambers, chasms, and caverns. Many of these warrens are home to horrific monsters who have never seen the light of day. The effigies of brutal deities, cyclopean monoliths of vast age, and forgotten archways still thrumming with power mark the lairs of the warrens' most dangerous creatures.

The areas of the Endless Warrens closest to the Cliffs of the Dead are suitable for low-level adventurers, while deeper tunnels and caverns hold threats appropriate for mid-level and high-level characters. The Endless Warrens are further described in their own chapter (see page 57).

Adventure Hook. The floor of one of the tombs in the Cliffs of the Dead has collapsed to reveal a deep shaft. The first explorer to descend the shaft never emerged from its depths, and bloodthirsty giant spiders now ascend from the darkness below, their minds calling out to prey with psychic whispers. The husband of the explorer, a human commoner named Noel Whitehand, seeks adventurers willing to recover the body of his late husband and end the threat of the psychic spiders who took his life.

FALLS OF THE THREE SISTERS

Glacial-fed waterfalls flow as scintillating cascades over the shoulders of three towering statues, their features washed smooth over centuries, but the sense of faith surrounding them still strong.

Carved from the cliffside mountain wall, three statues of now-faceless gods stand two hundred feet high at the north end of the City of Arches. Their outstretched hands receive the glacial waters that flow down from the mountain and over their shoulders, magically warming those waters even as they pour into the Public Baths below.

The oldest lore of the realm where the City of Arches now stands names the statues as the Three Sisters—gods of good named Levyl, Kryssa, and Dura. However, folk worshiping different gods often pray to the statues, imprinting their own patron deities onto the three faceless figures.

Adventure Hook. For centuries, rumors have circulated that the statues of the Three Sisters are hollow at their cores, and are filled with ancient lore and relics from the days before the Nameless King. The aged dwarf veteran Gelered Stonehome recently came by a map showing a tunnel beneath the city that appears to lead into the base of the central statue. Believing that the tunnel marks a secret entrance into the statue's hollow core, Gelered discreetly seeks adventurers to locate the tunnel, enter this secret chamber, and claim the history hidden within.

GOLDEN SUNRISE

A nondescript coffee shop and bakery on a busy workingclass street, the Golden Sunrise serves some of the best coffee and the finest baked goods in the city—especially to its most important client, the queen's spymaster, Roselyn Zeshe.

Roselyn Zeshe is often seen sitting at her favorite table outside the Golden Sunrise, engaging in idle chitchat with passersby, many of whom are in her employ. A centaur named Kalibus Splithoof operates the shop, and several pixies serve drinks and food to those who stop in—the quality of which greatly improves for those working with Zeshe.

On matters of mundane business, Zeshe invites guests to a back booth where they can speak in moderate secrecy. But for important matters, she invites them

LEVEL AND YOUR GAMES

Wherever this book notes that a specific area or region makes a good adventure location for characters of a specific level band, that level band is described generically. This makes it easy for you to set up a City of Arches campaign using your own favorite fantasy RPG, not just a 5e system.

For the purpose of encounter building, characters are described as low level, mid level, mid-high level, and high level. This corresponds to the four tiers of play in a 5e game—levels 1 to 4, levels 5 to 10, levels 11 to 16, and levels 17 to 20. For other games, use your own best judgement to determine when characters are best suited to face off against the challenges of your City of Arches campaign.

to her sitting room upstairs from the bakery. Heavy enchantments from a set of magical wind chimes in her adjacent private office prevent teleportation and most forms of divination from reaching the office and the sitting room.

Zeshe's private office door is heavily trapped. Two human-sized **shield guardians** within activate on her command, or if anyone attempts to enter the office without her permission. The office is littered with notes, sketches, maps, and other objects indicative of her vast connections in and outside the City of Arches. A secret stairwell hidden behind one wall in the office leads down to a ruined shrine in the Lower Reaches. A stash of disguise kits hidden there allows Zeshe to easily blend in with the denizens of the lower city. The spymaster also



holds a key—a glyph-marked black tooth—that lets her open an archway in the ruined shrine. Stepping through the arch leads to a demiplane of tunnels, through which she can reach several other arches inside and outside the city.

Adventure Hook. The Black Hand fence Adel Rosethorn (see "Adel's Curio Shop," page 42 in "The Lower Reaches") has a client who desperately wants evidence of certain misdeeds recovered from Roselyn Zeshe's private office above the Golden Sunrise. Adel will pay adventurers handsomely for the clandestine recovery of these notes, but getting into Zeshe's office is no easy feat. It's possible that the entire operation is a ploy of the spymaster's to seed disinformation into the operations of the Black Hand, but she has no intention of making things easy for anyone who accepts Adel's assignment.

HOLE IN THE WORLD

In a crumbling temple, an inverted black sphere hangs in the air, its interior revealing an uncountable number of stars in an alien void.

A small temple dating back to the time of the Nameless King sits hidden away among ramshackle buildings, cheap shops, and abandoned apartments. The door has long since broken away from its stone frame, leaving the inner temple open to the street. Within the temple floats an archway of sorts—always active, forming a two-way portal, and one of the few arches in the city requiring no key.

Floating in the center of the temple's domed central chamber, the portal is a kind of inverted sphere—resembling the interior of a bowl, but maintaining that appearance no matter what angle it is viewed from. The interior of the sphere swims with stars, giving it the name "the hole in the world." Those who stare into its depths for too long often find themselves nauseated or afflicted by random psychological or physical maladies.

Sages from Kartan (see below) have investigated the portal thoroughly, and believe that it leads to the Astral Plane. Of the small number of explorers who have stepped through the portal, some have returned aged ten years for every day they are away from the City of Arches—while others return decades after their disappearance, having aged only a few days. Most never return at all.

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE ASTRAL PLANE

The hole in the world serves as a permanent connection to the Astral Plane for your campaign, should you wish to use it. Leaving the portal wide open is a great big dare to your players, but you'll want to be ready for them to leap through. If you're not interested in astral adventures, you might have the hole be inert and activated only with a long-lost key. But if you choose to make use of it, talk to the players and explain your intentions for the hole in the world—preferably before the characters leap through it without warning and you have to ask the players to roll up new characters.

Those who have come back describe an amazing cosmic starscape beyond the portal—a plane seemingly connecting all worlds, known and unknown. They describe fantastic ships sailing through this starscape, and monsters beyond imagination feeding on mortal intellect like a whale sifting krill. The corpses of dead gods and arcane machines left behind from millennia-old wars litter this otherworldly realm, along with other treasures just waiting for those who risk stepping through.

Adventure Hook. For three decades, the elderly halfling Breynna Copperpot has sought her missing brother. Thirty years earlier, Dougvas Copperpot kissed his sister's cheek, packed a bag, and stepped into the hole in the world. Now Breynna hears Dougvas's voice in her dreams, begging her to bring him back. Breynna is looking for adventurers willing to step into the hole in the world and find her brother—or to determine whether some creature has taken Dougvas's voice for themself.

KARTAN, TOWER OF THE ARCANE

Many gaze upon the crumbling edifice of Kartan stretching skyward above the City of Arches. But few truly understand the wonders and terrors contained in its halls, studies, libraries, vaults, and laboratories.

Kartan, the Tower of the Arcane, is a hollow spire of cracked stone that is the tallest structure in the City of Arches. The site is home to hundreds of students and practitioners of all the arcane arts, who come to the tower to make use of its vast libraries, comfortable studies, and secluded laboratories. The mages are said to know who or what the tower is named for, but never share that information with outsiders.

Thousands of years ago, evil wizards and warlocks serving the Nameless King spent lifetimes in the tower, researching heretical magic and corrupt rituals to serve his ends. When the tyrant fell, the Mages of Kartan were among the few groups serving him to survive that fall relatively intact, turning away from the worst excesses of their former labors. Today, the reclusive human **archmage** Savandra Thricecursed and her **mage** apprentices control the tower, opening it up to sages, historians, wizards, sorcerers, and warlocks who seek knowledge of the world, the multiverse, and themselves.

Kartan's above-ground space is formidable, but an ironbound glyph-marked door in the first floor of the tower seals off a stairwell leading deep into the ground.

MULTIPURPOSE MAGES

The Mages of Kartan are a group of sinister spellcasters who can play multiple parts in a City of Arches campaign—benevolent wizards, mysterious mages, corrupt villains, and more. By unwritten agreement, they serve the Golden Order and protect the city from threats. But it is commonly believed that many of the Mages of Kartan conduct secret experiments using heretical magic to advance their own power.

There, numerous laboratories and vaults are overseen by the inner circle of wizards serving Savandra. It is commonly said that the passageways and stairs beneath the tower lead all the way to the lowest levels of the ruins beneath the city—even to Sunken Revvia (see page 63). Likewise, rumors speak of the many archway portals that can be found there.

Adventure Hook. Savandra Thricecursed recently came into possession of a key able to open one of the archways in the lower laboratories of the tower, which leads to an ancient barrow on the other side. She suspects that another key lies in the sarcophagus of the archmage interred in the barrow, who once ruled over a clan of fire giants now long dead. Broyce Broylan, an apprentice of Savandra, seeks adventurers willing to enter the monster-haunted barrow and claim the second key.

KORVELA'S EDGE APARTMENTS

Laughter and the sound of parents calling their children echo across the rising tiers of these stone apartment blocks, which are home to many residents of the city.

East of the Three Sisters, dozens of apartment blocks have been carved out of the rock of the mountainside below the Villas of the Second Rise (see below). Owned by the elf **commoner** Korvela Winterwind, these modest and comfortable apartments serve as temporary and long-term residences to many of the city's people. Korvela also runs a tavern and feast hall in the apartments' lower levels known as the Smiling Satyr, serving food and drink to her tenants and folk from outside the neighborhood. Four large iron-wrought cage elevators bring tenants up and down the mountainside to their domiciles, driven by heavy iron gears and waterwheels fed from streams flowing within the mountain.

Adventure Hook. One of the wrought-iron elevators serving Korvela's Edge has stopped working. Korvela seeks adventurers willing to traverse the tunnels below the apartments, find the elevator's mechanism, and fix it—all the while avoiding the strange and hostile creatures said to lurk in those depths.

LIBRARY OF VRASSA

Bespectacled gargoyles leer over the stone tomes in their hands as they crouch along the arched rooftop of the Library of Vrassa. The blank eyes of these stone guardians seem to judge the tastes of library patrons passing below them.

LIVING SPACE

Characters in a City of Arches campaign all need a place to stay, whether they just arrived in the city or have lived there for years. Korvela's apartments can make a modest and convenient home base for starting characters not yet able to afford or acquire something more opulent—such as a villa captured from corrupt noble cultists in the Second Rise.

Hidden along the outer edge of the City of Arches, a nondescript building block is actually one of the oldest structures in the city—and holds one of its greatest treasures, the Library of Vrassa. Details of the library's eponymous founder have been lost to history, and the three-story interior filled with shelves appears unimpressive at first glance. But when the library's proprietor, a male **medusa** named Ixyvan the Unseen, manipulates a series of levers and wheels connected to a large brass sphere in the center of the room, the shelves begin to move.

Each column of shelves in the library can slide up or down under Ixyvan's control, while new sets of shelves rise or descend to fill the space. The effect is very much as if each set of shelves was part of a great rotating track or wheel of books hidden behind the library's walls. But despite many attempts, no one has ever figured out the physics behind the mechanism—or indeed, whether the unseen shelves are held entirely behind the walls or actually pass through some extradimensional space.

As a seeker of knowledge, Ixyvan finds endless delights in the books drawn forth from the library's secret spaces, and not even he knows what mysteries might be found beyond its walls. He talks of how controlling the shelves has more to do with the thoughts in one's mind than the manipulation of the library's gears and wheels—almost as though the library senses the lore one seeks and is able to draw it forth from the archives.

Ixyvan wears gray robes and a hood that shifts constantly with the movement of the serpents that adorn his head. He wears a set of dark glasses that conceal his dangerous gaze from his patrons, even as the petrified forms of those who have attempted to steal books from the library stand as statues in various corners. Ixyvan typically releases petrified thieves after a few days, though some of the statues appear to have been there for decades.

Adventure Hook. Mertho Drakewing, an elf commoner with a propensity for drink, has managed to steal a rare and dangerous volume from the Library of Vrassa. Ixyvan would very much like the tome back before Mertho causes irreparable harm to himself—or to the city as a whole—should the thief read the wrong passage from the book. Ixyvan seeks adventurers willing to retrieve the book, and would also like a word with Mertho if possible. Unfortunately, Mertho's older brother, Sylas Drakewing, serves as a spy enforcer to the Black Hand criminal guild, and is rumored to be sheltering the thief in a manor in the Lower Reaches (see pages 29 and 40).

LOST CISTERNS

Huge green-tinted pipes act as an outflow from the Public Baths, connecting to a great network of pipes drawing water through the city—and down through successive layers of ruins beneath it.

Large iron outflow pipes keep the waterfalls cascading into the Public Baths from flooding the City of Arches, drawing water into canals, sewers, and cisterns across

and below the city. Iron grates block off most of these waterways to keep citizens from being washed down into the maze of ancient channels, reservoirs, and pump stations below the city, collectively known as the Lost Cisterns.

In addition to controlling the flow of fresh water and sewage into and out of most of the city's buildings, the Lost Cisterns are rumored to connect to dangerous sites long forgotten in the shadows. Horrific shrines to dead gods, torture chambers of the Nameless King, magicwarded vaults, primeval effigies of subterranean horrors, strange half-sunken monoliths, underground lakes, and forgotten subterranean citadels can all be accessed through this watery network of pipes, tunnels, channels, and pools.

The Lost Cisterns can be the site of many adventures suitable for low-level or mid-level characters.

Adventure Hook. Days ago, a huge tremor shook a small section of the City of Arches. Now fetid water flows through pipes where clean water once ran, and people are beginning to get sick. Ynerva Ovelatte, a dwarf commoner who is one of the city's engineers, believes that one of the huge pump stations below the city has ceased working. She needs adventurers to escort her down into the Lost Cisterns so that she can locate the pump station and restart it once again.

LOWER REACHES

Beneath the shining city above spreads an undercity cloaked in eternal shadow, where steely-eyed street merchants offer questionable bargains and hooded assassins await their next assignments.

Multiple layers of abandoned ruins lie beneath the City of Arches, but the first of those subterranean layers is as densely populated as the city above. The Lower Reaches is home to those unable or unwilling to make their lives in the city proper, as well as those who seek to keep a lower profile than life above ground allows. This district is filled with the same range of residences, inns, taverns, and shops as the city above, but with trade focused on illicit goods, pilfered treasures, and vices of all kinds. The owners of businesses in the Lower Reaches know to keep their most illicit activities under control, however, lest they feel the gauntleted grip of the Golden Knights or the piercing blade of the Black Hand criminal guild. The most profitable trade in the Lower Reaches deals in relics found in the lost chambers and caverns beneath the city, or in the catacombs of the Cliffs of the Dead—even though

SITES FOR ENDLESS ADVENTURE

Many of the locations in the City of Arches are intended to be "endless." The Cliffs of the Dead, the Endless Warrens, the Lower Reaches, Sunken Revvia, and more are all dungeons that can be expanded to countless layers of tunnels, caverns, tombs, caves, and more, letting you shape multiple megadungeons for your campaign.

such trade remains as illegal here as in the above-ground city.

The Lower Reaches are described in more detail in their own chapter (see page 40).

Adventure Hook. One of the characters discovers that they have been targeted by a pickpocket. However, instead of losing a personal item, they now possess a small grinning devil idol with shining ruby eyes. Cultists of the Cult of Ivires, a sect partaking of self-mutilation and flaying, hunts for the idol. They operate from a ruined tower at the farthest extents of the Lower Reaches, where they've built a temple to their devil god Ivires and want to return the idol to their blood-soaked altar.

MARKET SQUARE

The scents and sounds of uncounted cultures hang in the air around the brightly colored banners and awnings of merchant shops and stalls. Goods from far-flung cities and worlds are always for sale in the Market Square of the City of Arches.

A central square holding several dozen shops and stalls surrounds one of the city's more notable arches, a square megalith of gray volcanic stone scribed with images of grim humanoid faces. Permanent shops and temporary carts and stalls sell all manner of food, supplies, weapons, armor, and other goods at reasonable prices. In addition to drawing in traders from the Borderlands abutting the City of Arches (see page 80), the Market Square highlights the eclectic nature of the people of the city, with folk of widely varied ancestries and origins selling food and wares from all over the multiverse.

Adventure Hook. After eating a strange food prepared in an unfamiliar style from a vendor in the Market Square, one of the characters has a vision of an alien tomb sealed off in the Endless Warrens—and knows how it might be reached. If ignored, the vision persists, eventually exhausting the victim by preventing them from sleeping until they face the creature in the tomb.

MUSEUM OF WORLDS BEYOND

A tiny doorway in the middle of a block of crumbling stone buildings leads to a museum where relics from other worlds delight observers.

Hidden away in a busy but nondescript corner of the City of Arches, a rundown building houses one of the city's most curious and extensive collections of relics from this world and beyond. The dwarf **archmage**Vinnic Longshanks has been the museum's proprietor and caretaker for more than a century, dedicated to the discovery, recovery, and treatment of historical and magical relics from the City of Arches and all the other realms it touches. The museum also acts as headquarters for the Seekers of the Sun (page 30), the adventuring guild led by Vinnic. Meetings of the seekers and guest visits by the Golden Council often occur in the museum's numerous meeting rooms.

Vinnic claims no ownership of any of the museum's relics, instead offering to display and study them on behalf of their true owners, whether known or unknown. Unlike the treasure hunters of the Lower Reaches in the employ of the Black Hand, Vinnic believes that every relic serves as a lens through which one can learn about other cultures, and he is the only person authorized by the Golden Council to legally possess such treasures. Travelers coming to the City of Arches often bring such relics to Vinnic, hoping to learn more of their history.

The museum is a fantastic relic in its own right, as its unremarkable front door is actually an archway leading to a pocket dimension much larger than the exterior building. This becomes apparent as people explore the museum, finding staircases rising higher than the roof and passages that travel well past its walls. It is always noticeably warm in the museum, which Vinnic seems to enjoy.

All throughout the museum, visitors can interact with wondrous relics great and small from a variety of realms, cultures, and worlds. None of these items are available for sale or can be borrowed, as Vinnic doesn't claim the right to offer either service. However, the caretaker is always eager to sponsor the recovery of lost treasures, particularly those belonging to living creatures tied to those treasures' history. He pays adventurers willing to take risks to recover lost relics, though he admits he can't pay nearly as well as the fences of the Black Hand.

Adventure Hook. Thoryn Grynn, an elephantfolk druid and groundskeeper at the Sunset Grove (see below) has come to Vinnic with a grave problem. Thieves have stolen a glyph-scribed tusk belonging to one of Thoryn's ancestors, and he's convinced that agents of the Black Hand operating out of the Lower Reaches are responsible, on orders from the fence Adel Rosethorn. (See page 42 in "The Lower Reaches" for more details.) Thoryn and Vinnic need adventurers to go after the relic—but neither realizes that the tusk has been stolen by a **cult fanatic**



hoping to use it to resurrect a long-dead knight of the Nameless King, interred in a secret tomb in the Cliffs of the Dead.

OBSERVATORY OF INFINITE SKIES

Above the bustling city, a large brass cylinder surrounded by floating rings peers into the sky above—not to the moons and stars of this world but to the stars of all worlds.

A centuries-old observatory sits atop the Skyreach Mountains above the City of Arches, its bronze dome shining in the light of day. At night, the dome's door opens and a series of concentric rings emerges, feeding into a scientific apparatus of clockwork and arcane construction. Through this apparatus, scholars study the sky, catching sight of multiple layers of the planes of existence as they drift past each other against the backdrop of the multiverse. The observatory's chief artificer is a gnome **mage** named Darven Malathond, who originally came to the City of Arches from an alien world through one of the city's portals.

The observatory acts as the headquarters for the Archkeepers (see page 28), though Garland Willowmane and other members of that order most often meet adventurers at coffee shops or taverns in the city, including the Golden Sunrise (above) or Sevenge and Gam's (below).

In a secret chamber beneath the observatory is a huge orrery the Archkeepers use to predict which archways of the city might next open, and when. The results are inconsistent, but are correct often enough to warn the Archkeepers of an arch's imminent activation and the arrival of someone new to the City of Arches.

Adventure Hook. Through his observations, Darven believes that a portal will soon open at one of three archways in and around the City of Arches. The Archkeepers and the Golden Knights have agreed to watch two of the three arches, but Darven wants adventurers to watch the third, set in a long-abandoned series of chambers that are part of the Lost Cisterns. He fears that each of the portals connects to an abyssal plane known as Karchari, a swamp-like realm of malevolence and hostility, and he worries about what might slither through.

OLD KARDASH

The people of the city all seem to unconsciously avoid this ruined three-story building. Children who pass too close learn why, as pleading whispers are heard from the darkness beyond the site's collapsed front door.

In a residential neighborhood of the City of Arches lies one particular old ruin, the origin of its name lost alongside most of its history. Most folk expect Old Kardash to collapse upon itself any day, but some unknown magic keeps the building upright in a permanent state of decay. No one lives in Old Kardash, but none doubt that something is in there. Children shun

the place, claiming to hear whispers beckoning them inside. Adults avoid it without knowing exactly why. On occasion, groups of novice explorers enter Old Kardash, hoping to find treasure or fame. Few return.

Some historians of the city say that a twisted **ghost** rules over the place. Others suggest it's the den of a coven of **hags**, or that the entire dwelling is a single mind-altering **mimic** who slowly devours all who step within. No one has yet uncovered the truth.

Adventure Hook. Brianne, a tear-streaked halfling child, desperately calls for adventurers to save her sibling Tomtom, who entered Old Kardash and hasn't returned. Wary characters might be able to compel Brianne to reveal herself to be a green hag. However, she swears that the story of the lost child is true, as the characters can easily confirm by speaking to others who saw the child disappear.

PUBLIC BATHS

Dozens of bathers of different ancestries and genders smile, laugh, and swim in the sparkling waters flowing down from the Falls of the Three Sisters.

Where the north edge of the city meets the cliffs of the Skyreach Mountains, the waterfalls that descend through the hands of the three gods flow into a huge pool whose stone steps form an inverted pyramid. Huge pipes drain the pool at the same rate water enters it, carrying the outflow into and beneath the city (see "Lost Cisterns" above). With the glacial waters of the mountain magically warmed as they pass through the hands of the statues, many residents of the City of Arches rest and exercise in the enormous pool, bathing, swimming, and meeting friends and business partners away from the bustle of the rest of the city. It is common for folk to bathe in the nude, but public nudity outside the baths is looked upon unfavorably.

Many residents believe that the waters of the Public Baths offer minor healing and regenerative effects for both mind and body. The Archkeepers encourage creatures newly arrived through the arches to partake of the baths, and many who do report feeling calmed and soothed by the experience.

Adventure Hook. A strange, deep rumble leads to one of the older cistern pipes of the Public Baths belching up one or more giant octopuses from the Lost Cisterns, and panicked folk in the baths call for adventurers to save them. You can extend this hook by having a third giant octopus pull down Kelven Brane, a tiefling commoner, into the deeps, with Kelven's wife Gelane begging the characters to delve into the cisterns to save her husband from a watery doom.

QUEEN'S PALACE

Guards in golden armor stand watch at the gates of the Queen's Palace—the place from which so many sovereigns have resided over the City of Arches, its gleaming white stonework edged in deep red and gold.

Originally built as the seat of the Nameless King's puppet governor, this great palace was reclaimed and restored in the aftermath of that tyrant's fall. The palace currently serves as the court of Queen Karsara Aventus and houses the city's Golden Council, with court and council chambers separated as a sign of their independence. A common rumor talks of how a younger Karsara once slipped into the council chambers dressed as a page, but found the business undertaken there terribly boring and never returned.

Constructed and reconstructed over centuries, the palace holds many secret chambers and cellars—along with spaces that have yet to be discovered despite years of searching by the queen's spymasters.

Adventure Hook. Wishing to test the palace's security, the queen's spymaster, Roselyn Zeshe, intends to hire discreet adventurers to sneak into the site, either through the crumbling walls of its subterranean sewers or by way of secret passages accessible after climbing to an upper balcony. Once inside, the intruders must steal the queen's hairbrush and leave a dagger in its place, highlighting for the stubborn queen the dangers she faces. (You can set this hook up as a legitimate job offer from the spymaster, or as the secret plot of a **doppelganger** assassin who plans to retrace the characters' route inside the palace.)

SEVENGE AND GAM'S PUBLIC HOUSE

Lines of cheerful patrons eager to partake of a tasty meal stand outside this high-walled stone building, whose chimneys vent the scents of delicious cuisine through the surrounding neighborhood.

The most popular and best-reviewed eatery in the City of Arches, Sevenge and Gam's Public House is owned and operated by its namesake—the ettin Sevenge and Gam. Having stepped through a portal three decades past, Sevenge and Gam is one of the best examples of how creatures passing through the arches can make new lives in the city. Formerly a bloodthirsty warlord, the ettin has since found their true calling in the culinary arts. Over the years, they've trained dozens of chefs to serve some of the best food in the city and the surrounding territory. The queen's own personal chef, Altus Witherthorp, was once an apprentice to Sevenge and Gam.

A HUB FOR ADVENTURE HOOKS

Sevenge and Gam's works well as a central location where the characters can pick up new and interesting jobs. Such jobs might come from patrons of the public house seeking adventurers directly, or from notices left on the house's high-volume job board. Starting a new adventure this way might feel a bit cliche, but this approach to adventure hooks works well when you want to get things moving quickly, and lets you set up Sevenge and Gam's as a kind of home base for characters who haven't yet established a base of their own.

Sevenge and Gam's is not just a single establishment. The main restaurant is surrounded by several outdoor eateries and cafes where the ettin's former pupils serve excellent coffee, pastries, sausage rolls, and other fine fare. Though they could easily charge much more for their food, Sevenge and Gam keep their prices reasonable to allow all folk in the City of Arches to sample their gift.

The public house is a popular place for fine dining and stimulating conversation for many in the city, and serves as a central hub for adventurers and those who employ them. A large job board always has fresh requests for those willing to delve into the city's ruins or deal with the problems adventurers are often best suited to solve.

Adventure Hook. Stocks of Sevenge and Gam's favorite variety of mushroom are dwindling, but those mushrooms grow only in a cave deep in the Endless Warrens. The ettin seeks adventurers willing to enter those caverns, deal with the basilisks and cockatrices who infest them, and return with their prized fungi.

SUNKEN REVVIA

Far below the City of Arches lies a realm of war-torn ruins, where ambitious warlords vie for power, dangerous magic flares out of control, and lost treasures lie waiting for those brave enough to claim them.

Deep beneath even the subterranean streets of the Lower Reaches of the City of Arches spread the ruins of the city of Revvia. Revvia was a thriving subterranean settlement even before the rise of the Nameless King (see "History of the City of Arches" on page 36). But in the millennia since, the site has been slowly crushed by the weight of earth and stone above it, and even more slowly swallowed by the planar instability around the City of Arches.

Despite its ruinous state, however, Revvia is still home to many who have abandoned the city above or who have reasons to hide away from the larger world, including members of three factions who seek to control the site. The slowly collapsing ruins of Revvia's sundered towers, shattered keeps, bone-filled hovels, and decaying temples to fell gods date back to the Age of Warlords and even beyond. This area is suitable for mid-level, mid-high-level, and high-level adventurers, and is further described in its own chapter (see page 63).

Adventure Hook. Thelek Threepaws, a wererat assassin, has stolen a powerful magical relic known as the gauntlet of the Blue Star. Worn by one of the leaders of that order a thousand years ago, the gauntlet was in the possession of an aide to archmage Savandra Thricecursed of the Mages of Kartan. With the treasure in hand, Threepaws fled to the Sanctum of Severed Hands in Sunken Revvia, the lair of a mercenary group of hobgoblin veterans and an ogre blackguard known as the Gray Butcher. Savandra is looking to hire adventurers willing to delve into Revvia, slay the assassin and her guardians, and return the gauntlet to Kartan.

A PLACE FOR DRUIDS AND RANGERS

The Sunset Grove can be used as a place of rest and comfort in the City of Arches for visitors who prefer the wilds to an urban landscape. Any character whose class or background isn't the best fit for life in the city can find their solace here.

SUNSET GROVE

A grove of thick trees stands to the west of the great Public Baths, providing a stark contrast to the hustle and bustle of the city beyond. Forest paths lead past flowing streams and reveal wild game among the trees, as the sounds of the city seem to fade away.

Winding paths thread through a lush forest grove rising along a hillside overlooking the City of Arches. The tall trees of Sunset Grove provide shade throughout the day along an intricate network of winding paths. Some folk believe that magic makes the grove feel larger than its true physical boundaries, with visitors often becoming joyfully lost for hours among the trees and foliage. An ancient stone archway that sits in the middle of the park is thought to be the source of this unusual effect.

Graysen One-Eye, a wild and unkempt elf-human **druid** tends to the plants and animals here, though he is quick to point out that no one truly controls the grove—for the grove has a life and will of its own. A small number of druids and rangers reside in the grove while in the City of Arches, and welcome travelers who find their way through the grove's arch.

Adventure Hook. Graysen recently discovered a source of corruption in the grove. A hollow beneath an old dead tree known as Father Blackroot leads to a network of natural tunnels, and a cavern holding a black spire that draws shadows, shadow demons, and wraiths from a faerie realm. Graysen hopes to convince adventurers to seek out the spire, drive back its unseelie invaders, and use a magic ritual scroll he can provide to establish a circle of protection around it.

TEMPLE OF THE THREE SISTERS

An open-air temple stands near the top of the central peak of the Skyreach Mountains above the City of Arches, home to priests who worship the holy triumvirate whose towering statues watch over the city below.

Above the Falls of the Three Sisters stands an open-air temple whose perimeter is marked out by beautifully carved pillars above sheer cliffs below. The site has been dedicated to the gods known as the Three Sisters since ancient times—Levyl, Kryssa, and Dura, representing life, knowledge, and death, respectively. But the temple has long since become a place open to all worshipers, by mutual agreement of multiple religious leaders in the city.

Waterfalls flanking the temple send up spray that sets up shifting rainbows on sunny days. Visitors who ascend to the temple by way of switchback paths and tunnels

DEITIES, PATRONS, AND THE ARCHES

Characters with a connection to a god or otherworldly entity who stepped through an archway to arrive in the City of Arches might still maintain their divine connection to that entity. In particular, clerics, paladins, and warlocks might still feel the strength of that connection—even as they no longer remember who resides at the other end.

Such disconnects can be fun elements of character growth during a campaign. A cleric's god might turn out to not be who they thought they were. A warlock's relationship with their patron might shift subtly—or drastically—when they step through an archway. Alternatively, you can have a cleric's divine connection or a warlock's bond with their patron shift over to new entities in your City of Arches campaign.

You and your players can decide how much effort to put into these otherworldly (dis)connections, and might choose to dial up their importance over the course of the campaign.

inside the mountain are welcomed by its caretaker, an elderly sylvan elf from the lands of the fey named Grace Ebonlight (a **commoner**).

Adventure Hook. Every few decades, members of a strange cult appear at the temple, dancing, chanting, and engaging in rituals dedicated to the vision of an alien moon that appears in the sky at midnight. Such behavior would normally be tolerated by the temple's caretakers—except that at the last such gathering, rumors spoke of humanoid sacrifices made to the alien moon, even though no bodies were found. Joslyn Halfcloak of the Golden Knights has received intelligence suggesting that the next gathering of this cult is imminent. She's looking for adventurers to investigate the cult, and to ensure that no sacrifices are carried out on their night of celebration.

THEATER OF WHISPERS

The nighttime sky is aglow with starlight above an openair amphitheater, as plays, performances, and gladiatorial battles unfold for the entertainment of the city's citizens.

The ancient amphitheater known as the Theater of Whispers hosts weekly plays, nightly concerts, and bouts of nonlethal gladiatorial combat free for all residents of the City of Arches. The dragonborn **minstrel** Kaylex Thren is master of revels for the theater, putting on plays depicting the stories of some of the unusual folk who have appeared in the city, demonstrations of strength and combat prowess, shows of magical wonder, and songs and dances to brighten the heart.

A gilded archway within the amphitheater often serves as a centerpiece for performances—with beings from other worlds occasionally arriving through the arch in the middle of the show. Resident Archkeepers stand ready to help shepherd confused arrivals lest they become overwhelmed by the performance around them.

The amphitheater's performance space features a central platform raised from below the floor by heavy chains and gears. When the platform is lowered into the space below the amphitheater, it opens up to numerous branching halls and shadowy chambers holding props and statues from centuries of performances. Many of the theater's staff members have noted the whispers of long-gone thespians echoing through the halls of this under-theater, giving the Theater of Whispers its name.

It is also rumored that the theater once belonged to husband and wife Vyctor and Evylend LeStrange, who entertained the elite servants of the Nameless King. A play performed on the Night of the Dead (see "Events in the City of Arches," page 31) tells the tale of the two entertainers, and how they drank the blood of the Nameless King to serve him forever as vampires. Some believe that the crypts of these vampires lie hidden still beneath the lowest levels of the theater, from which they range out by night to feed on the lost and forgotten of the City of Arches.

Adventure Hook. Not all the ghosts and spirits residing in the under-theater are benevolent. Recently, one of the theater's best-known entertainers, the famed gnome singer Bryessa Star, emerged screaming from those lower levels, claiming that a band of thespian specters embracing murderous roles had chased her through the halls. Kaylex is on the lookout for adventurers willing to hunt down and quell these murderous specters and prevent further disruptions. (You can decide whether the specters are truly a threat, or whether they just want a show of their own.)

VATHREX'S FORGE

Plumes of smoke rise from the top of an ancient stone ziggurat transformed into a mighty forge. Everburning fires keep the forge always alight, where workers smelt ingots into armor, weapons, and tools for the people of the city.

Vathrex's Forge is named for an archdevil who was destroyed on the site where the ziggurat was raised. Smoke continually rises from an open vent at the top of the ziggurat, and the sound of clanging metal and water sizzling to steam emanates from the forge's large stone doorway. Inside, forgemaster Erna Ironhorn, a hulking minotaur, oversees the dozen smiths who serve her, forging goods both common and exotic, from nails, cups, and hinges to gilt armor and legendary weapons.

At the center of the forge, a massive furnace is fed by elemental fire shooting up a deep shaft from hundreds of feet below the ground. As with many features of the City of Arches, none know the true origins of this limitless heat. However, more than a few rumors speak of the shaft still holding the everburning body of Vathrex the slain pit fiend, or ending in an always-open archway leading to a hellish domain.

Adventure Hook. A wide rift has split the ground open in one of the many storerooms of the forge, revealing previously unknown chambers beneath. Erna Ironhorn sent two smiths' assistants down to investigate, but neither has returned. She now worries about what the mysterious chambers might hold, and whether more cracks could

cause the forge to collapse. She seeks adventurers willing to descend into the rift, discover its origin, and ensure that it doesn't cause any more damage. The chambers beneath the forge might hold fire mephits, fire elementals, salamanders, or bearded devils.

VAULTS OF THE NAMELESS KING

In the deepest extents beneath the City of Arches, where few mortal creatures dare tread, ancient rumors speak of a series of chambers that were once the personal residence of the Nameless King—and where some of the most dangerous artifacts of his reign might still be found.

Originating far below even the depths of Sunken Revvia, the accounts of long-dead explorers describe vast chambers containing the last remnants of the power of the Nameless King. Scrawled notes and frenzied ramblings speak of titanic chained monstrosities, altars older than the world itself, strange laboratories built to create malevolent creatures, and a dark lake that serves as a portal to realms beyond the world. At the center of all these sites stands the First Archway—an ancient arch of relief-carved and glyph-marked black stone, so-named by sages who believe it to be the original natural portal archway discovered by the Nameless King (see "The First Archway" on page 76). Among the scant and chaotic rumors surrounding the Vaults of the Nameless King, only one note remains consistent—therein lies death.

The Vaults of the Nameless King are intended only for very high-level adventurers, and are further described in their own chapter (page 74).

Adventure Hook. A map found on the corpse of a cultist of the Nameless King appears to show a network of passages leading from Sunken Revvia into the chambers surrounding the First Archway. Savandra Thricecursed, archmage of Kartan, intends to recruit seasoned adventurers to investigate these passages, and to test a recently discovered key to determine whether it can wake the First Archway to determine what's on the other side.

VILLAS OF THE SECOND RISE

A series of beautiful and serene villas nestle against the high mountain cliffs above the City of Arches, home to many of its council members and wealthiest merchants.

Long switchback roads lead from the lower streets of the City of Arches to the mountainside ridge known as the Second Rise. There, rows of palatial two- and three-story villas line the cliffs. Owned by some of the city's most affluent citizens, the Villas of the Second Rise are served by their own shops and businesses, and protected by a mercenary security force known as the Silver Talons.

Adventure Hook. The back walls of a merchant's villa have collapsed to reveal a series of chambers cut into the mountainside, and which appear to have once been a temple to a fell and feral god. All the members of the Reynold family, owners of the villa, have gone missing. Tanya Steelfang, an orc veteran overseer of the Silver

CONNECTING THE CITY OF ARCHES TO THE RUINS OF THE GRENDLEROOT

You can easily tie the content of City of Arches to the adventures and locations in the book Fantastic Adventures: Ruins of the Grendleroot. Just use the following setups:

- Travelers can reach Deepdelver's Enclave through passageways leading through the Cliffs of the Dead and into the Endless Warrens. The enclave and the ruined city of Shadowreach that spreads out below it are both part of the Endless Warrens.
- The asteroid that first created the Grendleroot was a side effect of the battle between primordials tens of millennia ago. The magic of the asteroid is also what gives the City of Arches its strange extraplanar properties.
- The Magocracy of the Black Star served the Nameless King, who gave the order free reign to conduct experiments for his gain. The tyrant conquered the lands above and the other planes while the Magocracy ruled the depths in his name.
- The Crusaders of the White Sun were a branch of the Army of the Blue Star, and fought with common cause. The crusaders focused on battling the Magocracy of the Black Star while the Army of the Blue Star fought the forces of the Nameless King.
- Remnants of the Grendleroot's black spires twist through many of the caverns of the Endless Warrens.

Talons, seeks discreet investigators willing to enter the rediscovered temple and determine the family's fate. Within the ancient site, the characters might face **skeletons**, skeletal **veterans**, and spectral **cult fanatics**, all led by a **wraith mage**.

CITY OF ARCHES LOCATION SUMMARY

This section summarizes the notable locations of the City of Arches described above. Use this information to reference locations while prepping or running your game.

Citadel of the Golden Knights. The headquarters of the knights and guards of the City of Arches is commanded by the human knight Lord Bianca Swifthand.

Cliffs of the Dead. Thousands of tombs and catacombs are cut into the cliffs above the City of Arches, from recent excavations to sepulchers thousands of years old.

Endless Warrens. Hundreds of miles of unexplored caves, tunnels, and caverns wind through the mountains behind the Cliffs of the Dead, and hold many threats.

Falls of the Three Sisters. Huge statues of three faceless gods are carved from the great cliffs where waterfalls descend into the city.

Golden Sunrise. A popular coffee shop and bakery, the Golden Sunrise is also the place where the queen's spymaster, Roselyn Zeshe, conducts business with her many agents and hired adventurers.

Hole in the World. A ruined temple hidden away in the city houses a magical portal thought to lead to the Astral Plane, with few who step through it ever returning.

Kartan, Tower of the Arcane. This great tower of spellcasters and sages has been dedicated to the study of magic since the days of the Nameless King. It is now overseen by the archmage Savandra Thricecursed.

Korvela's Edge Apartments. Affordable apartments for short- or long-term stay have been carved out from the cliff walls above the city, and are owned by Korvela Winterwind.

Library of Vrassa. This nondescript library is seemingly bigger inside than out, and is administered by the medusa Ixyvan the Unseen.

Lost Cisterns. Outflow pipes in the Public Baths feed huge stone cisterns, water-filled chambers, and ancient sewers deep below the city.

Lower Reaches. In the seedy underbelly of the City of Arches, thieves, scoundrels, and other unsavory figures deal in commerce frowned upon—or outright banned—by the Golden Order.

Market Square. In a broad courtyard around a megalith arch carved with grim faces, permanent and temporary shops sell all manner of wares.

Museum of Worlds Beyond. An extensive collection of relics from multiple realms and worlds can be found in this nondescript museum, which also serves as the headquarters for the Seekers of the Sun. Dwarf archmage Vinnic Longshanks oversees both the museum and that adventuring guild.

Observatory of Infinite Skies. Set atop the cliffs above the city, this magical observatory allows scholars to peer into other worlds, and is maintained by the gnome artificer Darven Malathond.

Old Kardash. A ruined building in a residential neighborhood, this site is shunned by children for the voices only they can hear coming from within.

Public Baths. The waterfalls descending over the statues of the Three Sisters fill a huge pool where many of the city's residents bathe, swim, and relax.

Queen's Palace. This opulent palace is home to Queen Karsara Aventus and her court, including the elf spymaster Roselyn Zeshe.

Sevenge and Gam's Public House. This popular public house offers fine and affordable dining, served up by the renowned ettin chef Sevenge and Gam.

Sunken Revvia. The magic-filled ruins of another ancient city spread deep beneath the City of Arches, filled with creatures hiding away from the world above, and fought over by factions seeking to control the site.

Sunset Grove. A lush and wild magical grove set within the city, this great park feels far larger than it appears to those who explore it. The site is overseen by the druid Graysen One-Eye.

Temple of the Three Sisters. An open-air temple high above the city serves the folk of multiple faiths under the direction of the sylvan elf Grace Ebonlight.

POPULATION OF THE CITY

The overall population of the City of Arches is left to your determination, as best fits your campaign and the stories you wish to tell there. As a general suggestion, though, a population of ten thousand people, split between the upper city and the Lower Reaches, is a good starting point.

Theater of Whispers. A great outdoor amphitheater run by the dragonborn minstrel Kaylex Thren, this site is home to a gilded archway and extensive mysterious sublevels below.

Vathrex's Forge. An ancient ziggurat-shaped forge is run by the minotaur Erna Ironhorn, and fueled by a central shaft drawing tremendous heat from deep below.

Vaults of the Nameless King. The lowest and most dangerous subterranean spaces beneath the City of Arches are home to ancient vaults rumored to hold the lost magic of the fallen tyrant.

Villas of the Second Rise. The cliffside villas rising above the city are home to its wealthiest citizens, served by the district's own shops and protected by private mercenaries.

LOCATIONS BY CLASS

A number of different locations in the City of Arches might be of specific interest to characters of particular classes, as noted on the following table.

LOCATIONS BY CLASS

Class	Location
Barbarian	Lower Reaches, Theater of Whispers
Bard	Queen's Palace, Sevenge and Gam's, Theater of Whispers
Cleric	Library of Vrassa, Museum of Worlds Beyond, Observatory of Infinite Skies, Temple of the Three Sisters
Druid	Sunset Grove
Fighter	Citadel of the Golden Knights, Public Baths, Theater of Whispers
Monk	Observatory of Infinite Skies, Temple of the Three Sisters
Paladin	Citadel of the Golden Knights, Queen's Palace, Temple of the Three Sisters
Ranger	Sunset Grove
Rogue	Lower Reaches, Queen's Palace
Sorcerer	Hole in the World, Kartan, Observatory of Infinite Skies
Warlock	Hole in the World, Kartan, Observatory of Infinite Skies
Wizard	Kartan, Library of Vrassa, Museum of Worlds Beyond, Observatory of Infinite Skies

FACTIONS OF THE CITY OF ARCHES

A number of prominent groups and orders hold power in the City of Arches. In the course of their adventures, the characters might end up joining one of these factions, allying with a faction, or opposing a faction, depending on the story of your campaign. Allying with or being part of a faction can work particularly well if you run high-risk games with a strong chance of character death. That way, the quests and goals of fallen characters can stay in place as new characters serving the same faction join the party.

The name of each faction is accompanied by an alignment that gives a general sense of the faction's moral and ethical focus. However, characters working with a faction don't need to adhere to that alignment, and even good characters might be able to justify working with an evil organization for subterfuge or short-term gain.

THE ARCHKEEPERS (NEUTRAL GOOD)

A mix of city natives dedicated to welcoming otherworldly travelers and folk who have stepped through portals themselves, the Archkeepers greet all new arrivals through the arches with open arms, soft towels, fancy cheeses, and the promise of a new life.

The Archkeepers vigilantly watch the arches of the city, welcome new arrivals when they step through those arches, and try to protect their fellow residents from any violence that might manifest through those ancient gates. Led by the High Archkeeper Garland Willowmane, the Archkeepers are dedicated to ensuring that the latent magic of the City of Arches creates the least amount of disruption, both to incoming travelers and to the people of the city.

The Archkeepers greet new arrivals with open arms and gift baskets, containing a bottle of water, a soft towel, scented soaps ready for use in the Public Baths, and delicious cheeses and crackers from Sevenge and Gam's Public House (see page 24), offered in remembrance of Sevenge and Gam's own journey through the arches. Although not every creature traveling through the arches cares for such gifts, most appreciate the calm and peaceful welcome. If a creature steps through and becomes hostile, the Archkeepers step up to defend the city, usually with the aid of **knights** and **veterans** of the Golden Knights. In rare circumstances, they call upon **mages** from Kartan to help contain truly dangerous arrivals.

As a Character Faction. Characters bound to the Archkeepers can spend their time greeting new creatures coming through the arches or learning more about the history of the arches and their mysterious magic. At the same time, many dangerous magical relics and groups can threaten the safety of the arches and those who travel through them, leading characters to seek out threats against the city, defend against dangerous arrivals, and search for keys that can open the arches before those keys fall into the wrong hands.

Adventure Hook. Garland Willowmane and the other Archkeepers are struggling to deal with a number of arches about to activate, and recruit adventurers to bring a gift basket to a potential new arrival at the Gate of White Sand, just outside the city. Unfortunately, cultists of the

Children of Ibraxus (see below) also await the imminent arrival with a gift basket of their own—one filled with heretical scrolls, poisons, and a sacrificial dagger.

THE BLACK HAND (NEUTRAL EVIL)

The Black Hand's consolidation of criminal activities in the City of Arches is a delicate balancing act between protections, profits, and courting the favor of the city's corrupted politicians, all the while avoiding the notice of the Golden Knights.

Secretly led by the elf assassin mage Iofel the Knife's Edge, the Black Hand is a criminal guild named for a god of shadow revered by thieves, tricksters, and murderers, and whose members include bandits, scouts, thugs, spies, and assassins from in and around the City of Arches. Iofel works tirelessly to keep the Black Hand's activities from drawing the attention of the Golden Knights, eliminating anyone who violates the guild's primary code—don't get caught.

While the Seekers of the Sun (see below) strive to uncover history and restore the relics of the past, the Black Hand cares only about profiting from the riches found beneath the City of Arches—or stolen from those who found those riches first. Adel Rosethorn, a halfling Black Hand **spy** and fence, regularly sells useful purloined magic and equipment from her small shop in the Lower Reaches. She often offers jobs to explorers willing to take on risky activities while keeping the Golden Knights at bay. (Adel and her curio shop are explored in more detail on page 42.)

As a Character Faction. Characters who wish to join the Black Hand begin as agents working for Adel Rosethorn, but can easily rise in the ranks to serve Iofel directly. Typical adventures for Black Hand operatives might include destabilizing the Golden Order through corruption, acquiring magical relics, or dealing with threats to the guild both in and below the city. Characters following the Black Hand need not be evil, but should definitely be ambivalent toward the law.

Adventure Hook. Adel seeks adventurers willing to enter a recently uncovered tomb in the Cliffs of the Dead and recover a magical jeweled necklace said to be worn by the noble interred there. Unfortunately, Golden Knight veterans guard the tomb until it can be sealed up again, requiring the characters to find a way past them or discover another way into the tomb through the monsterhaunted tunnels around it.

CHILDREN OF IBRAXUS (CHAOTIC EVIL)

Corrupted beings seeking to open a gateway and end the world, the Children of Ibraxus revere a demon prince of the abyssal realm of Choul—the same prince who the Nameless King once served.

Led by the **archmage** Irthrain of Choul, the Children of Ibraxus are a cult dedicated to the coming of their foul demonic deity Ibraxus, known as the Fetid Prince. Having arrived in the City of Arches through an archway, Irthrain believes that he is a child of the demon prince, sent from the abyssal realm of Choul to prepare the world for his master's arrival. Irthrain has amassed a following of dozens of **cultists** and **cult fanatics** to his cause, but though the Children of Ibraxus are clearly full of foul intent, the Golden Knights have yet to catch them in any direct wrongdoing. (More information on Ibraxus and Choul can be found in "Appendix A: Villains and Monsters," page 143, and in the campaign arc "Return of the Nameless King" on page 110.)

As a Character Faction. The Children of Ibraxus work well as a long-term villainous faction opposing the characters.

Adventure Hook. Rumors have reached the Golden Knights that one of Irthrain's chosen cult fanatics will attempt to open a gateway to the realm of Choul, making use of a colossal cairn deep in the Cliffs of the Dead. Joslyn Halfcloak of the Golden Knights searches for adventurers willing to travel to the cairn and stop the cult from opening the gate—or to drive back whatever has already come through it, then close it again.

KNIGHTS OF THE NAMELESS KING (NEUTRAL EVIL)

Members of a secret cult dedicated to the fallen tyrant call themselves the Knights of the Nameless King, and are led by scholars, aristocrats, priests, and mages who desire to unearth forbidden and dangerous lore at any cost.

Often simply known as "the cult of the Nameless King" to those not versed in their secrets or actively hunting them, these anarchistic and contrarian zealots search endlessly for texts and relics that survived the curse that ended the tyrant's reign, hoping to piece together a more complete history of his rule from the City of Arches—and to restore the Nameless King to power. As part of that, the so-called Knights of the Nameless King plot constantly to pull Queen Karsara Aventus from her throne. Though the Golden Knights more often focus on that immediate threat than the outlandish notion of the Nameless King returning to power, recent discoveries suggest that the cult's agenda may be advancing faster than anticipated.

Some members of this cult join out of sheer boredom, or are simple dupes drawn to the thrill of being part of a secret movement. But the leadership of the cult is made up of truly dangerous villains, many of whom are rumored to hear the endless whispering of their cursed monarch every moment of their lives.

As a Character Faction. The Knights of the Nameless King is one of the most dangerous organizations in the City of Arches. Whether acting as part of another faction or operating independently, characters can easily end up in conflict with these self-styled knights.



Adventure Hook. Lord Bianca Swifthand of the Golden Knights recruits adventurers to trail a group of Knights of the Nameless King to the Lost Cisterns, where that cult uses a sunken citadel as a headquarters. She hopes that the characters might learn the truth of rumors suggesting the group has uncovered a powerful artifact leading to the potential origin and lineage of the Nameless King.

THE GOLDEN KNIGHTS (LAWFUL GOOD)

Following in the footsteps of the Army of the Blue Star who cast down and cursed the Nameless King, the Golden Knights protect the City of Arches from threats within and without.

The protectors of Queen Karsara Aventus and the City of Arches, the guards and soldiers of the Golden Knights stand against all threats to the city. The Golden Knights are roughly two hundred strong, with **guards**, **knights**, and **veterans** serving as foot soldiers alongside numerous **scouts**, **spies**, and mercenary **mages** acting as investigators and specialists.

WHY ADVENTURERS?

Whenever the characters are recruited by the Golden Knights, it might occur to the players to ask why those soldiers aren't handling missions themselves. Joslyn Halfcloak or Lord Bianca Swifthand can explain that although the Golden Knights work hard to keep the City of Arches safe, they can almost always use additional operatives in times of trouble. Moreover, the Golden Knights' need to always act under the direct supervision of the queen and the Golden Council means that trusted adventurers can often act with greater flexibility than members of the guard—especially when dealing with criminal elements who might recognize soldiers of the Golden Knights acting undercover. The Golden Knights see their relationship with adventurers as a partnership that best serves the city.

Because of their limited size, the Golden Knights often hire adventurers, private investigators, or mercenaries for assignments they can't take on themselves. For adventurers whose reputation hasn't yet brought them to the attention of Lord Bianca Swifthand, Joslyn Halfcloak serves as the Golden Knights' primary contact person. (See "NPCs of the City of Arches," page 13.)

As a Character Faction. Characters tied to the Golden Knights can undertake many types of adventures, including stamping out evil cults, defending the City of Arches from overt and covert attacks, delving into the many ruins and secret sites around the city to end potential threats, uncovering corruption among city folk or members of the Golden Order, and protecting the queen. Allies of the Golden Knights will often be at odds with members of the Black Hand.

Adventure Hook. Two nights past, members of a secret and unknown cult rushed to one of the arches of the city and scurried away with a traveler who had just stepped through from the other side. The cultists assaulted an Archkeeper named Laim Nevelle before fleeing to the Villas of the Second Rise. Joslyn Halfcloak of the Golden Knights seeks adventurers to investigate the situation, expose the cult, and learn more of the creature who stepped through the arch.

SEEKERS OF THE SUN (LAWFUL GOOD)

Filled with awe, wonder, and fear of the countless magical relics lost in the ruins beneath the City of Arches, the Seekers of the Sun wish to unearth and claim those relics for their historical potential, and to return them to where they belong.

The Seekers of the Sun are a guild of adventurers dedicated to unearthing the mysteries below the City of Arches. Unlike typical treasure hunters, the Seekers approach their task with a focus on respecting the cultures, societies, and people who came before them, restoring the histories represented by relics, and returning those relics to their rightful owners.

When lost ruins and the magic they hold prove malevolent to those exploring them, the Seekers of the Sun try to disarm those dangers. They also pay particular attention to the lore of the Nameless King, fearing that in the wrong hands, such lore could prove dangerous—or even herald the tyrant's devastating return.

The head of the guild is the dwarf **archmage** Vinnic Longshanks, proprietor of the Museum of Worlds Beyond (page 22), who operates on behalf of the Magistrate of Tombs with connections to the Golden Knights. It is whispered that informants in the Black Hand keep Vinnic apprised of potential thefts by that criminal guild, allowing the Seekers of the Sun to protect and hide away relics before they can be stolen.

As a Character Faction. Characters tied to the Seekers of the Sun operate within the law and with the authority

of the Magistrate of Tombs of the Golden Council. They are often sent to recover magical relics that might prove dangerous to the city, or which are at risk of being lost or stolen. The assignments earned by characters working with the Seekers might include tomb delving and treasure recovery, as well as disrupting cult rituals that threaten the City of Arches.

Adventure Hook. Vinnic Longshanks recently came into possession of a crystalline key supposedly able to open a vault in a ruined watchtower in the depths of Sunken Revvia (page 63). Vinnic believes that this vault leads to a sealed underground fortress where the defenders of the watchtower, supposedly followers of the Nameless King, made their last stand. He wishes to recruit adventurers to locate the fortress and learn its secrets before the Knights of the Nameless King get to it first.

EVENTS IN THE CITY OF ARCHES

Throughout the year, numerous celebrations and memorial events take place in the City of Arches. You can choose one of these events whenever you want to provide an interesting backdrop to an adventure, or if you want to build an adventure around an event.

CELEBRATION OF THE FOUND

During this festival, those who have traveled through the archway portals are welcomed once again to the City of Arches, and are asked to share tales of their arrival and what they remember of their former lives.

WOLF RACES

Originally a goblin celebration, the racing of wolves has become a popular attraction for all city folk. Fearless riders mount up on large wolves and dire wolves to race a complex course throughout the streets.

BLESSING OF SUN AND MOONS

Religious leaders from multiple faiths celebrate those faiths across the City of Arches on this day. Parades, plays, and banquets fill the streets, and a spectacular display of magical light flows down the waterfalls alongside and below the Temple of the Three Sisters.

THE QUEEN'S HIGH DAY

On this celebration of the birthday of the city's ruler, Queen Karsara Aventus hosts a banquet featuring food and desserts she has prepared herself.

NIGHT OF THE DEAD

This celebration brings the people of the city to the Cliffs of the Dead to speak with departed loved ones and ancestors of old. Priests aid those seeking to commune with the dead, and many folk wear skull masks or white face paint to honor those they've lost.

FINAL REST OF THE NAMELESS KING

Rowdy drunken celebrants parade an empty coffin through the streets during this night of unparalleled revelry, during which the Golden Knights tolerate all but the worst public drunkenness. In recent years, though, folk have become wary of mysterious tomb break-ins and murders reported the day after the celebration.

DAY OF SWORD AND FIST

The leaders of the Golden Knights use this martial festival to seek new recruits, hosting tournaments and displays of weapon prowess, and taking note of the many brawls taking place on this day. Victors are offered the chance to train with the knights and serve the queen and the City of Arches. Others attend the festival just to witness the best warriors of the Knights, including Lord Bianca Swifthand, face off against all who challenge them.

THE SHOWERS OF THE GODS

On this day, priests and mages magically color the great pools of water near the crest of the Skyreach Mountains. The waterfalls descending past the Temple of the Three Sisters and down the three great statues flow as rainbow hues that magically swirl within the water of the Public Baths. Many folk of the city wear colorful flowers on this day, and festivals and parties take over many of the city's dining and drinking establishments.

DEMON'S NIGHT

This raucous event celebrates the anniversary of the night a powerful demon stepped through one of the larger archways of the city and unleashed destruction until put down by the Golden Knights. Many people of the city stay indoors on this night, as younger folk and drunkards don monstrous masks and prowl through the streets. Revelers demand food, coin, or drink, lest they mark the doors of those who deny them with evil sigils or urine.

THE SPRING BAZAAR

Smaller bazaars and trade fairs occur year-round in the City of Arches, but the Spring Bazaar is by far the largest. With traffic on the trade roads picking up after winter, neighboring villages and faraway cities send caravans filled with goods to the City of Arches. A large open-air bazaar forms outside the city gates, welcoming all to barter and enjoy a week-long festival celebrating many cultures

ADVENTURES IN THE CITY OF ARCHES

The City of Arches is built for all types of high-fantasy RPG adventures, including dungeon delving, political intrigue, heists and infiltrations, travel and exploration, and more. This section offers advice for running different





CITY OF ARCHES SIDE VIEW MAP KEY

The side-view map of the City of Arches is not detailed in the same way as the top-view map. Though it shows many of the same details as that map on page 16 and references other areas detailed in the book or mentioned in the campaign arcs of chapter 10, it also features many areas that are not mentioned or detailed in the book in any way. As such, treat the side-view map as an invitation to further develop areas for exploration and adventuring as you make the city your own.

- 1. Lost King's Tomb
- 2. Rekel's Ossuary
- 3. Tomb of Giants
- 4. Dragon's Reach
- 5. Bone Pit
- 6. Ziggurat of Ix
- 7. The Endless Warrens
- 8. Tomb of the Seventh Emperor
- 9. Cliffs of the Dead
- 10. Entombed Vessel
- 11. The Far Reaches
- 12. Black Monoliths
- 13. Pumps of Earth's Heart
- 14. Sundered Ship
- 15. The First Archway
- 16. Shattered Keep
- 17. Abhuman Effigy
- 18. The Lost Cisterns
- 19. Sealed Vaults
- 20. The Ageless Sepulcher
- 21. The Charnel Pit

- 22. Sunken Revvia
- 23. The Lower Reaches
- 24. The Public Baths
- 25. Kartan, Tower of the
 - Arcane
- 26. Therex Tower
- 27. Throne of Ivek
- 28. Hanging Cages
- 29. Hall of Silence
- 30. Titan's Skull
- 31. Demon's Arch
- 32. The Hot Depths
- 33. Chained Vyronax
- 34. Tomb of the Joined
- 35. Vathrex's Forge
- 36. Theater of Whispers
- 37. Arch of the Mind's Eye
- 38. Entombed War Machine
- 39. Mask of Duality
- 40. Stone of Sett
- 41. Betrothed Crypts

adventure types in the city. "Appendix C: Adventure Generators" (page 150), features a number of tables you can use to help build out those adventures.

DUNGEON DELVING

The City of Arches is surrounded by locations rife for dungeon delving, including the Cliffs of the Dead, abandoned locations in the Lower Reaches, the caves of the Endless Warrens, the ruins of the Borderlands, the formidable dungeons of Sunken Revvia, and the deadly Vaults of the Nameless King.

In dungeon delve adventures, patrons such as Garland Willowmane (see page 13) or Adel Rosethorn (page 42) can hire the characters to locate objects or conduct other activities in these ruins. Characters might undertake such missions with the permission of the Magistrate of Tombs (page 50), or could delve surreptitiously in the service of the criminal guild known as the Black Hand (page 29).

In addition to the short adventures featured in chapter 11, dungeon delve adventures in the City of Arches might include any of the following:

• Sanctify the cursed crown of the minotaur queen Sulvara Windrunner in the Cliffs of the Dead.

- Find the lost halfling explorer Littlejohn Gnarlroot in a sunless bog of the Endless Warrens.
- Destroy the unholy altar of Ourboran (see the "Collision of Worlds" campaign arc in chapter 10) in a temple in Sunken Revvia dedicated to that worlddestroying entity.

INVESTIGATIONS AND MYSTERIES

The City of Arches can include as much or as little political intrigue as you wish to dish out during your campaigns. Several powerful factions operate continually in the city, including people loyal to the queen, benevolent and corrupt figures on the Golden Council, the sinister mages of Kartan, the organized criminal organization the Black Hand, and cults such as the Knights of the Nameless King and the Children of Ibraxus.

This chapter details a number of major NPCs and factions in the city, any of which could draw the characters into intrigue. Patrons such as Roselyn Zeshe (page 15) or Joslyn Halfcloak (see "The Golden Knights" on page 30) might hire the characters to investigate the activities of some of these NPCs and factions, explore murder scenes, gather evidence of corruption, or bring evildoers to justice.

Investigation and mystery adventures in the City of Arches might include any of the following:

- Learn why the noble Lord Guston Summervine has been granting favors to the head of the gemcutter's guild, Kain the Emerald Eye.
- Investigate the attempted assassination of the Black Hand's master of the purse, Urfin Bloodcowl, without alerting that criminal guild to your investigation.
- Root out the spy loyal to the Knights of the Nameless King cult who pretends to serve as a protector of the city in the Golden Knights.

INFILTRATIONS AND HEISTS

While caught up in the political intrigue between any of the factions of the City of Arches, the characters might find themselves faced with needing to infiltrate a location to accomplish a goal. This might include stealing a magic relic, gathering information, destroying a powerful entity, or disrupting a ritual. Such adventures can take place in noble villas in the upscale Second Rise ward, the council chambers of the Golden Order, the thieves' dens in the Lower Reaches, or in the citadels, keeps, and strongholds of the Lower Reaches or Sunken Revvia.

The adventure frameworks "Secrets of Summervine Villa" and "Infiltration of Bonespur Keep" in chapter 12 (page 128) offer overviews for running infiltration-style adventures in and around the City of Arches. Additionally, infiltration and heist adventures in the City of Arches might include any of the following:

• Sneak into a fallen temple of Sett (see pages 148 and 95) in the Lower Reaches, steal the serpentine idol

- used in the temple's heretical rituals, and return it to Kartan, Tower of the Arcane.
- Enter the citadel of the Golden Knights and find evidence connecting knight captain Blake Graytouch to the Children of Ibraxus cult, without letting the other guards know your intentions.
- Infiltrate upcoming rituals of the Knights of the Nameless King at the Cairn of the Last Titan in the Borderlands (page 88). Learn all you can of that cult's plans before disrupting the ritual and slaying the high priest.

EXPLORATION AND TRAVEL

Though focused on the City of Arches, this book includes dozens of locations outside the city in the three regions of the Borderlands. Exploration and travel can easily connect the characters to further quests outside the city, or might serve as the focus of an adventure. Exploration adventures often involve following routes connecting specific locations, and might feature random or prepared encounters while characters are on the move.

Exploration and travel adventures around the City of Arches might include any of the following:

- Kaylee Treewind, a healer from the Revlend Marshes village of Heron's Stride (page 82), needs to return home from the City of Arches and seeks adventurer escorts to protect her from the dangers of the road.
- A group of bandits known as the Ebon Spear stole a valuable tome from a mage of Kartan. The characters are hired to hunt down these bandits, who are making their way to the City of Blades in the Deadlands (page 92).
- Famed historian Gaven Tiberion needs an escort to the village of Elgrym, deep in the Briarheart Forest of the Doorish Hills (see page 87). There, he hopes to record the history of the secluded village.

BETWEEN ADVENTURES

The City of Arches is packed with opportunities the characters can pursue between adventures. This section discusses some of the most common of those activities, why a character might engage in activities between adventures, and locations they might visit to do so.

The game system with which you choose to run your City of Arches adventures and campaigns might include specific mechanics for downtime activities, including what can be accomplished by the characters, and how. The prompts below are intended to help you connect those kinds of downtime activities to the city.

RESEARCH

As the characters delve into dungeons deep, they'll come across scraps of old lore, mysterious maps, unknown relics, and shadowy threats. Researching such mysteries might take them to the Museum of Worlds Beyond (page 22), the Library of Vrassa (page 20), or Kartan, Tower of the Arcane (page 20).

TRAINING

As they rise in experience, characters might wish to train their mental or physical potential. They might engage in combat training at the Citadel of the Golden Knights (page 15), or in magical training with the mages of Kartan, Tower of the Arcane (page 20). The "Locations by Class" section on page 28 can also provide inspiration for locations to serve as training areas for characters of specific classes.

CRAFTING

Between adventures, some game systems allow characters to craft potions and other magic items or implements. Physical objects and magic weapons might be forged at Vathrex's Forge (page 26). Other magic implements might be crafted at Kartan, Tower of the Arcane (page 20). Religious relics might be created at the Temple of the Three Sisters (page 25).

BUYING OR SELLING MAGIC ITEMS

Characters might be able to purchase magic items in the City of Arches, and items no longer of use to characters might be sold here. The sale of magic items and relics found in and around the city must often be approved by the Magistrate of Tombs (see page 50). The Museum of Worlds Beyond (page 22) is another option for characters selling magic through official channels, while less scrupulous dealings occur at Adel's Curio Shop in the Lower Reaches (page 42).

CAROUSING

Resting, relaxing, engaging in revelry, and enjoying one's wealth can occur in various places in the city. The Theater of Whispers (page 25) puts on nightly entertainment. Adventurers often enjoy food and drink at either Sevenge and Gam's Public House (page 24) or the Smiling Satyr in Korvela's Edge Apartments (page 20). Those preferring a quiet coffee might enjoy the Golden Sunrise (page 18). But the best-known halls of rest and recreation are found beneath the city, in Guildred's Grotto in the Lower Reaches (page 45).

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Characters wishing to commune with higher powers between adventures often find themselves above the city at the Temple of the Three Sisters (page 25). Those seeking more nature-focused communion visit the Sunset Grove (page 25). Other folk with a connection to more sinister powers might commune with those powers at the Temple of the Lower Twelve in the Lower Reaches (page 48).

PIT FIGHTING

If the dangers in and around the city don't sufficiently challenge the characters, those seeking fortune and glory in the arena can put their blades to the test in nonlethal gladiatorial combat at the Theater of Whispers (page 25), or in even more dangerous battles at the Arena of Blood in the Lower Reaches (page 42). Still, all who know the Borderlands beyond the City of Arches understand that the truest tests of battle take place in the City of Blades (page 92).

ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIETY

Sometimes characters want to rub elbows with the higher social class. Dinners and parties are a common fixture among the nobility housed in the Villas of the Second Rise (page 26), while royalty and members of the Golden Council can be visited at the Queen's Palace (page 23).

HISTORY OF THE CITY OF ARCHES

Few residents of the City of Arches know the full history of the site. Most folk understand that the city has stood in its present form for centuries, but few would guess that its past goes back some fifteen hundred years—and that its origin has been concealed by the curse that destroyed the city's creator, the Nameless King.

That mighty tyrant once ruled over a vast region surrounding the City of Arches, reshaping an existing city on the site to become a central hub to reach other worlds. After determining that the location of the city, nestled beneath the slopes of the mountains then known as the Teeth of the Gray Worm, was marked by a natural thinning of the barriers between planar realms and worlds, the Nameless King used powerful magic to create the portal arches that still stand throughout the city, each leading to different lands and different worlds. Yet the king's hubris led to his eventual downfall during a rebellion of mortals and celestials—and to a deva's curse proscribing that none should remember him or the realms he once ruled. Every record and memory of the tyrant's history has been lost, save for a few partial fragments that survived destruction and have been claimed from the empty ruins of his former dominion.

For a thousand years since the fall of the Nameless King, different rulers claimed control of the city, from benevolent councils to bloodthirsty autocrats. Over the course of that millennium, the magic of the arches waned. Now, nearly a dozen fallen civilizations lie hidden beneath the city, whose buildings rise atop the remains of older ruins sunk deep into the ground.

100,000 YEARS AGO—AGE OF PRIMORDIALS

A hundred millennia ago, when the world was a cold and desolate globe beneath a paler sun, unnaturally powerful creatures ruled over the lands around the site where the City of Arches now stands. These titans, behemoths,

and primordial horrors—not quite gods, but arguably as powerful—warred with one another while mortal creatures hid in the shadows, hoping not to be crushed by their might or blasted into dust by their eldritch power.

Countless lesser titans warred endlessly in attempts to control the lands of the present-day city, tearing up the ground with otherworldly power and interring the bones of their fallen foes deep beneath the earth. Over centuries, however, four of these titanic creatures became the most notable of their kind:

Ix the Sky Sunderer. A scaled flying creature whose wingspan is said to have darkened the sky, Ix is thought by some to be a progenitor of dragons and dragonkin in the world.

Gthuun of the Outside. A massive ape-like being taller even than the most towering mountains, Gthuun was possessed of jet-black skin that reflected the stars of an infinite void, and which shattered the minds of mortals unfortunate enough to stare into its depths.

Ovelek the Gray Worm. A great segmented worm whose domain spread beneath the ground, Ovelek was said to be able to tear open mountains by cracking their roots and collapsing dry lands into deep seas.

Tarryx the World Ender. Tarryx was a horned and scaled titan said to have been bred by faraway gods intent on destroying worlds that fell out of their control.

Diviners whose magic has glimpsed the past claim that in a rare alliance, Gthuun and Ovelek joined forces and destroyed Ix. The primordial dragon's death cry ripped open the sky, forever thinning the boundaries between worlds, and suffusing the land with powerful magic—both creative and destructive.

None can say for sure where the last of the titans disappeared to. They might have traveled to other worlds, died in battle, or burrowed deep underground to hide themselves. But in time, fearful mortals recognized that land and sky were threatened by these great creatures no more.

12,000 YEARS AGO—AGE OF WARLORDS

Over thousands of years after the fall of the primordials, humanoids and other sapient creatures crawled out from the shadows and began banding together, evolving from

A BRIEF HISTORY WITH MANY GAPS

The history presented in this section is intended to tie elements of the City of Arches together. However, it is far from a hard canonical timeline meant to be followed when you run campaigns in, around, or below the city. Like every aspect of this book, this history is here to provide backstory when you need it, even as it lets you fill in the many blanks in that backstory with your own ideas or with timelines from other campaign settings. Replace, rewrite, rework, reskin, and rebuild this history to serve your needs and the desires of your players when running campaigns in the City of Arches.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

The following timeline summarizes the last hundred millennia in the area around what is now the City of Arches.

100,000 Years Ago—**Age of Primordials.** During a great battle of titans, the boundary between worlds grows thin in the area where the City of Arches now stands.

12,000 Years Ago—**Age of Warlords.** Warring city-states battle one another for domination of the local area, including Casaryn, City of Wonders, built where the City of Arches now stands. The first of the city's portal archways is discovered in caves beneath Casaryn.

2,000 Years Ago—**Age of the Nameless King.** The horrific reign of the Nameless King begins when he takes over the warlords' city-states, and expands seemingly without limit when he completes the City of Arches as a way station to other realms and worlds.

1,000 Years Ago—Fall of the Nameless King. The humanoid and celestial Army of the Blue Star fights the forces of the Nameless King, who is cast down by a powerful curse. The tyrant's name is lost to history, never to be written or spoken again. His visage is destroyed, and he vanishes from the world.

700 Years Ago—**Age of the Golden Order.** The Golden Order rises to power in the City of Arches. King Avgon Aventus I holds the Golden Throne for nearly a century, working with the Golden Council and the Golden Knights to bring peace and security to the realm.

Today. The Golden Order serves the will of the people of the City of Arches, whose lands have long known peace. Yet threats spawned by the legacy of the Nameless King still remain.

small clans of cave dwellers to the builders of city-states. Some joined forces to create allied nations, while others conquered their weaker neighbors, subsuming their people and resources.

Dozens of city-states eventually dotted the region around what is now the City of Arches. But after centuries of instability, five of those city-states came to dominate all others.

Astexa, the City of Blades. Ruled by the elven warlord Varynna Shivon, the city-state of Astexa dominated neighboring states with sword and spell. Millennia later, the City of Blades still stands in the desert west of the City of Arches known as the Deadlands (see page 92).

Casaryn, City of Wonders. Not all city-states were built on violence and tyranny, including the marble city of Casaryn—a great metropolis whose folk embraced divergent cultures and used their mastery of alchemy and magic for the benefit of all people. Their first leader, the beloved orc artificer Garyn Everax, ruled the city for two centuries, during which time Casaryn's protection and influence spread throughout neighboring lands.

The City of Wonders was built along a cliffside waterfall, where statues of three gods were raised above a great open pool. The wizards and priests of Casaryn found the

location ideal for their magical experimentation, which led them to discover a number of naturally occurring otherworldly archways far below the surface.

Casaryn fell when it was claimed by the Nameless King, then transformed into the City of Arches.

Delenith, City of Towers. Carved out from massive crystalline growths thrust up from the northern peaks of the Shattered Teeth mountain range west of the City of Arches, the city of Delenith was a haven for those delving into arcana and divinity. Physical and magical wards protected the city from its warlike neighbors, and only those with an aptitude for channeling magic were allowed to dwell there.

An elf archmage named Sharalyn Starshaper ruled over the city for nearly a thousand years before its fall, long before the rise of the Nameless King. An unknown catastrophe destroyed Delenith and left no trace of its presence behind. Some of the oldest legends say that the magic shaped within the city destroyed it—even as others speak of how Sharalyn transported the city to another world before a natural disaster, where it remains hidden to this day.

Revvia, City of the Depths. Spreading beneath the Teeth of the Gray Worm, the subterranean city-state of Revvia was ruled for centuries by Xrake the Relentless, a fiendish blue dragon. A city fueled by fell magic and pacts with demons, devils, and other beings of the planes, Revvia raised great armies that would crawl forth from sinkholes and caverns to raid neighboring settlements.

Long after Xrake was destroyed in battle, the city of Revvia became one of the Nameless King's primary residences during his reign, and its ruins still lie in the depths beneath the City of Arches. (Sunken Revvia is explored in more detail starting on page 63.)

Syssara, the City of Snakes. Even before the formation of the area now known as the Deadlands (see page 92), vast areas of desert west of where the City of Arches now stands gave rise to the city-state of Syssara. Ruled over by the dragonborn serpent-king Tharuus the Black Fang, Syssara was dedicated to the worship of the fell deity Vithra the Serpent King. Tens of thousands of mortals are said to have been sacrificed upon the city's altars, feeding Vithra's great hunger from across the planes.

2,000 YEARS AGO—AGE OF THE NAMELESS KING

The city-states that spread throughout the region where the City of Arches now stands rose and fell over thousands of years. But then some two thousand years ago, a single ruler seized control of all. None can say for sure where the Nameless King came from, for the same curse that has washed his existence from the annals of history hid his arrival. Some sages speculate that he was originally a figure of power from one of the city-states,

while others maintain that he came to this world from another.

Whatever the truth of his origins, this new ruler rose to power quickly. After millennia of wars and alliances between the city-states, the Nameless King took control of all of them within a year. Some of the lords ruling those realms bent the knee quickly. Others were wholly destroyed. Every weapon, every soldier, every divine or arcane relic in all the land fell into the Nameless King's possession.

For the first five hundred years of his millennium-long reign, the Nameless King led his wizards in the creation of the City of Arches, transforming the former Casaryn, City of Wonders. By studying the magic of the natural portal archways beneath the city, the Nameless King was able to recreate and control their magic, creating portals that would tap into the same thinning of planar boundaries.

When this new city of portals was completed, the Nameless King could reach any world or realm he desired, seizing power wherever he could. He left monuments to his greatness scattered across countless worldly and planar realms. He destroyed entire worlds, making himself appear as a god to their denizens before wringing the energy of life from those worlds and leaving only dead husks behind. (Arkus, the World of Dead Temples, is one such world; see page 103.)

For centuries, the Nameless King seized and drained every resource he could in his drive for power. His loyal followers advanced his agenda of acquiring arcane power, magic, artifacts, and energy from other worlds, then expanding his domain across those realms. The wizards and warlocks who served him tapped the potential of arcane disciplines outlawed for thousands of years, including necromancy, demonology, and blood magic. No source of power was off limits. Those who resisted the will of the Nameless King were enthralled or destroyed.

But such power cannot last.

1,000 YEARS AGO—FALL OF THE NAMELESS KING

One thousand years ago, a coalition formed intent on resisting the Nameless King's rule. In secret shrines, people under the yoke of this tyrant had long prayed to gods of light, life, and justice who had seemingly abandoned the realms through which the Nameless King's power spread. But after an age of silence, a deva named Astaria, called the Blue Star by some, was drawn to witness the horror of the Nameless King's reign—and to recognize that if his power continued to grow, it would soon threaten the divine realms. With the scope of the tyrant's atrocities relentlessly increasing as his reign went on, Astaria was able to show those atrocities to a host of angelic beings and win over their divine council.

Led by Astaria, this angelic host reached out to those who sought to end the rule of the Nameless King. They armed those would-be freedom fighters, giving them access to powerful divine magic. They began to break the hierarchy of tyranny by destroying some of the Nameless King's key lieutenants, breaking the chain of command.

Thus was formed the Army of the Blue Star, named for Astaria who would lead it—a force of wizards, paladins, clerics, and divine beings who waged war against the forces of the Nameless King. The ranks of this army included folk who had hidden their magical potential or trained in secret, alongside those who had no outlet for it under tyranny—including people from realms the Nameless King hadn't taken control of yet, but which would inevitably fall if his corruption was not ended.

War raged for nearly ten years between the Army of the Blue Star and the forces of the Nameless King. But then a group of archmages and high priests, aided by their divine allies, discovered the Nameless King's true name. With that name, Astaria used the tyrant's own power to invoke a terrible curse that tore away his very existence from all reality.

Every statue depicting the tyrant crumbled. His mosaics were shattered. Papers and parchments holding any name or symbol used by him were turned to ash. Even as the Nameless King vanished from the world, the history of the tyrant simply disappeared from the minds of mortals. People remembered the plight of servitude and war as a fading nightmare, even as factions controlling the splintered remains of his empire began to fight for control.

700 YEARS AGO—AGE OF THE GOLDEN ORDER

Peace did not come immediately to any of the realms once controlled by the Nameless King, and the City of Arches was no exception. With the fall of the Nameless King, Astaria vanished. Tremendous losses in their final battles against the forces of the tyrant shattered the Army of the Blue Star, and the factions who claimed power in the aftermath quickly began to fight one another. Some of the followers of the Nameless King hung onto their own territories, while others greedily sought out powerful artifacts scattered across his once-mighty domain. One group known as the Mages of Kartan survived the transition from serving the Nameless King to serving those who came after, tying themselves to local warlords and despots in a series of loose and fragile alliances. ("Kartan, Tower of the Arcane" on page 20 has more information on this powerful faction.)

Three hundred years after the fall of the Nameless King, a new order rose to power in the City of Arches. Created with a mandate to protect all people from the threat of renewed tyranny, this new Golden Order—named for the brighter days still sought after since the Nameless King's fall—featured three independent pillars of power. The Golden Throne was the seat of the monarch, with King Avgon Aventus I the first to take the crown and ruling for nearly a century. The Golden Council would be the chosen councilors of the people, elected every six years. The Golden Knights were the army serving as protectors of the people.

Over the past seven hundred years, eighteen rulers have sat the throne. Today, Queen Karsara Aventus IV rules the City of Arches, working alongside her closest advisors and acting in partnership with the Golden Council.

TODAY

For seven hundred years, the people of the City of Arches and its neighboring lands have known peace. Folk enjoy their safety and freedom under the rule and protection of the Golden Order. Yet over that time, threats have always lingered in the shadows. Despite the curse that laid him low, the Nameless King's legacy endures, and a shadowy cult has arisen among those who revere that legacy.

Calling themselves the Knights of the Nameless King, the followers of this cult search for the lost lore of his reign, seeking his name and visage in the shadows. Gleaning the sparse legends, they weave a narrative of a godlike figure whose reign they seek to restore. They search for the magical relics that once marked the

CITY OF ARCHES ENCOUNTERS

d20 Encounter

- A shadowy observer is caught watching the characters, then attempts to flee down an alleyway. You can decide whether they are a cult spy, a suspicious rival, or a potential employer hoping to meet the characters in a less-conspicuous location.
- A being of unique ancestry wanders up to the characters, having unexpectedly emerged through an arch with no one to greet them. Confused regarding where they are and with no memories of their past, the new arrival becomes frightened—and potentially hostile—if the characters can't help to calm them.
- The street ahead suddenly collapses to reveal a cavern below, up from which crawl **skeletons** with armor and weapons that are centuries old. The cavern is revealed as a vault that holds a sealed obsidian sarcophagus.
- A shooting star arcs down across the sky, then suddenly descends to form a swirling ball of glowing energy in front of the characters. A voice speaks of a prophecy and tasks the characters with recovering a magical relic from the depths below the city before forces of evil can find it.
- A band of rough-looking **orcs** known as the Footloose Fangs approach the characters, taking insult at any provocation, intended or not. The furious orcs challenge the characters to a synchronized dance-off at the Theater of Whispers.
- 6 A masked **cult fanatic** confronts the characters, demanding they return a relic recovered on a previous adventure, and threatening their deaths should they not turn it over.
- 7 A hostile **cambion** bursts out of a nearby archway. An Archkeeper lies unconscious nearby, and two Golden Knight **guards** are struggling to subdue the fiend.
- 8 After buying poor-quality baked goods from a vendor's cart, a character recognizes the young baker as none other than the young queen of the City of Arches, Karsara Aventus IV, having disguised herself as her alter ego Willow to move freely through the city.
- 9 One of the characters notices that a minor possession has gone missing, then spots an elf slipping down a nearby storm drain leading to the Lower Reaches—where a group of Black Hand **bandits** lie in wait.

Nameless King's domain, now lost in ruins and the depths beneath the earth—including artifacts that promise unimaginable power to any who can find them.

However, an even greater threat might yet manifest from the forgotten past. For unknown to any mortal folk, the Nameless King was not destroyed by the curse that laid his empire low. Somewhere beyond the mortal realm, the tyrant seethes in an extradimensional prison, awaiting the day when his deathly grip takes hold of the world once more, letting him once again squeeze the life out of mortals whose souls he believes belong to him.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE CITY OF ARCHES

As the characters explore the City of Arches, you can make use of random encounters to help bring an area to life or set up larger adventures. Roll a d20 or choose from the encounters on the City of Arches Encounters table, or use the table as inspiration for encounters of your own.

Encounter

- Several thugs, cultists, and cult fanatics attack the characters, claiming to have seen prophecies in which the characters thwart the Nameless King's coming ascendance. After defeating the cultists, the characters find them carrying ancient scrolls that accurately describe the characters' appearances.
- 11 An **awakened tree** uproots itself from a nearby park and makes its way to the Sunset Grove.
- 12 A young boy from the Lower Reaches offers to sell the characters a map to the Nameless King's lost treasure vault—but only if they prove they're cool enough to deserve it.
- Two clearly outmatched **bandits** stumble drunkenly into the characters, demanding payment for the slight and threatening violence. Meanwhile, a halfling **spy** tries to pick a character's pocket.
- 14 Several **shadows** peel away from an ancient fresco on a nearby wall and attack.
- 15 Ablex Drynnar, a kobold artificer, hurries out of a building yelling "Run!" Behind them, several suits of **animated armor** burst out and start attacking folks.
- 16 A cat wanders past, introduces themself as Zucchini Troublebox, asks the characters what they're looking at, then slides into a shadow and disappears.
- 17 A man playing with a strange glyph-marked puzzle box accidentally summons a number of **hell hounds** into the street. When the fiends are dealt with, the man says that a robed figure dropped the box while wandering past.
- 18 Two **allosauruses** go running past, chased by several bugbear animal handlers who profusely apologize for the disruption, and who ask if anyone has any apple cakes to help calm the beasts.
- 19 A masked and hooded **vampire** walks by, revealing sharp fangs as they smile at the character with the highest Charisma.
- A necromancer mage from Kartan acts rudely to the characters. Four hooded ghouls, stinking of death, follow close behind him.

THE LOWER REACHES

Beneath the streets and buildings of the City of Arches lie the Lower Reaches. Crossed through with murky canals and dimly lit by everburning magical torches, this city beneath the city is home to lost souls and the shadiest of deals.

The Lower Reaches aren't entirely lawless. Although the Golden Knights aren't a regular presence in the shadowy undercity, folk here are still bound to the laws of the City of Arches. They just view those laws as more malleable than do surface-dwelling folk. People living in the Lower Reaches prefer a hands-off approach to governance. They acknowledge that the queen, the Golden Council, and the Golden Knights rule over them, even as they enjoy the unique liberties of their chosen home.

The buildings of the Lower Reaches are typically squat two- or three-story structures, many of which are carved directly out of solid rock and serve as load-bearing pillars supporting the ground above. The streets, canals, and alleyways of this realm stretch for miles beneath the surface, far beyond the borders of the city above. The farther out one travels, the more desolate and rundown these dwellings become.

Water flowing down from the mountains descends through outflow pipes and storm drains in the City of Arches to fill the freshwater canals crisscrossing the Lower Reaches. Well-engineered cisterns and aqueducts provide fresh water across the undercity, combining with hot springs and natural vents from pockets of molten rock below to provide many residences with both hot and cold running water.

The Lower Reaches are a suitable adventure location for low-level and mid-level characters.

HISTORY OF THE LOWER REACHES

Over a millennium ago, servants and thralls of the Nameless King carved out the Lower Reaches from solid rock to house the tyrant's armies, far from the commanders and sycophants living in luxury in the city above. As they dug, they discovered and connected numerous existing caverns carved out by underground rivers.

In the centuries following the defeat of the Nameless King, the Lower Reaches became wild and dangerous. Renegade soldiers, necromancers with undead servants, and others still loyal to the Nameless King held their ground in the easily defended chambers and caverns of the undercity, even as the Army of the Blue Star finally trapped and cursed the Nameless King, then pushed his remaining forces farther back into the shadows.

Adventure Hook. Unscrupulous explorers venturing into the uninhabited extents of the Lower Reaches have

opened a vault containing a hundred armed and armored skeletal soldiers and knights (skeletons and skeletal champions), which now rampage through the shadows. Reeve Lightson, a surly tiefling taskmaster for the Black Hand, seeks adventurers willing to enter the vault in search of a magical jeweled skull rumored to command the skeletons. He offers half payment for destroying the skull, or full payment to characters who bring the skull back.

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

The Lower Reaches is part of the City of Arches, and as such, has no local government. It's well known, though, that the Black Hand criminal guild (see page 29) holds the greatest authority over the shadowed undercity, though it's a loose authority at best.

Citizens and businesses wanting protection in the absence of Golden Knight patrols often hire guards from competing mercenary bands whose martial prowess increases in proportion to their fees. These mercenary groups include the following:

The Red Masks are a low-ranking group of thieves and bandits.

The Sodden Fiends are a rough group of former sailors and dockhands, many of whom pilot boats up and down the canals of the Lower Reaches.

The Crimson Talons are a group of former thieves, spies, and assassins led by the masked Lady Crimson. They operate almost entirely unseen, moving along rooftops and cavern ceilings.

The Stalwart Sentinels include many former guards of the Golden Knights, and are the closest thing the Lower Reaches has to a public police force—for those who can afford it.

The Gilded Guardians are an order of warriors wearing gilded armor and masks. They are feared for their ruthless treatment of those who cross them or their protected clients, and are the most expensive of the mercenary companies.

The Stormborn Marauders draw their members from the Stormborn clans of the Skyreach Mountains beyond the city. Those mountain-dwelling hunters are descended from folk who fled the city of Casaryn when the Nameless King claimed it and turned it into the City of Arches. The marauders use their ruthless ways and people's fear of their strange gods to keep their opponents in check.

(You can roll a d6 to randomly assign one of these mercenary bands to any NPC, location, monument, or relic found in the Lower Reaches.)



Shops in the Lower Reaches often have two or more mercenary **guards** or higher-priced **veterans** protecting them, while cooperatives of merchants sometimes pay larger contracts to have mercenaries patrol the streets out front and keep business flowing. All these mercenary groups have agreements with the Black Hand, understanding that it's far easier to pay a percentage of their fee to that guild than to deal with them as competitors—or worse, as enemies.

SECRETS AND CLUES OF THE LOWER REACHES

Characters who spend time in the Lower Reaches, or who deal with NPCs who have, might learn one or more secrets and clues of the undercity. You can drop in any of the following secrets and clues wherever they best fit during your game:

- While law and order are well established and upheld in the city above, the law is far more fluid—and less dependable—in the shadows of the Lower Reaches.
- Many small criminal bands operate in the Lower Reaches, though they rarely engage in activities terrible enough to invoke the wrath of the Golden Knights.

A CITY FOR SHADY DEALINGS

The Lower Reaches are designed as a place the characters can explore and interact with NPCs, but with an element of danger. It's a great place for a party to deal with shady operatives, buy from unscrupulous vendors, and negotiate deals with unsavory figures. This is also a place where a couple of ogre brigands might shake the characters down, or where a twisted horror might slither out of the shadows at any time. The Lower Reaches aren't nearly as dangerous as Sunken Revvia (see page 63), but wandering here is far more hazardous than walking the ground-level streets of the City of Arches.

- A single criminal guild known as the Black Hand oversees all the smaller criminal bands operating out of the Lower Reaches.
- Adel's Curio Shop deals in all manner of goods, including potentially illicit treasures looted from any part of the City of Arches. Adel is rumored to be protected by the Black Hand.
- The inn and resort called Guildred's Grotto is a shady establishment—both literally and as regards its moral value. Still, it's a popular site in the Lower Reaches for those seeking drink, gambling, and companionship.
- The caverns surrounding the Lower Reaches are vast.
 The farther out one goes, the more dangerous they become.
- The Black Hand appears to have an unwritten agreement for the Golden Knights to leave them alone, in exchange for not letting criminal activities in the Lower Reaches get out of control.
- No one seems to know who leads the Black Hand, but the organization uses the ruins of a temple called Mekello as their headquarters.
- Countless minor cults to fell gods lurk in the shadows of the Lower Reaches, their members conducting profane rituals away from observation.
- The Arena of Blood in the Lower Reaches is used for duels and entertainment, as well as executions sanctioned by the Black Hand for those who cross them.

LOCATIONS IN THE LOWER REACHES

Residents of the Lower Reaches mostly inhabit refurbished buildings built more than a millennium ago during the reign of the Nameless King. A number of enterprising engineers have also constructed newer buildings where old ones had collapsed with time and the shifting of the earth. The farther out one travels into the seemingly endless caverns beneath the City of Arches,

the more desolate the Lower Reaches become, featuring ruined buildings, sinkholes, shattered pillars, cave-ins, and the lairs of monstrous creatures hunting in the shadows.

This section describes a number of major locations of interest in the Lower Reaches, in alphabetical order. Most of these locations are part of the inhabited core of the Lower Reaches, away from the more dangerous ruins.

ADEL'S CURIO SHOP

At a glance, this dingy storefront hardly suggests itself as one of the most powerful hubs of commerce in the City of Arches. But some of the most valuable relics, magic, and information claimed in the city and its ruins are regularly brokered through Adel's Curio Shop.

A nondescript and rundown shop just on the edge of some of the more dangerous streets of the Lower Reaches, Adel's Curio Shop is familiar to adventurers and criminals throughout the City of Arches. It's well known that the shop and its proprietor, the halfling Adel Rosethorn (secretly a spy), are under the protection of the Black Hand—and it is rumored that Adel might be a Black Hand member herself. Agents of the Golden Knights know that the site is a way station for stolen goods and illgotten treasures claimed from the ruins beneath the City of Arches. However, the value of such treasures is weighed against the need for security in the undercity, with the Golden Knights recognizing the profits of treasure hunting as a kind of pressure valve that helps keep the Lower Reaches peaceful.



THE ULTIMATE SHADY VENDOR

Adel's Curio Shop is intended to be the primary shady vendor of the City of Arches. Whenever there's an illicit item to be found, Adel likely knows where it is. If the characters recover a strange unholy relic that no one else dares to deal with, Adel will buy it. As sinister or foreboding as you want to present the shop, it should be clear to the characters that dealing with Adel is always a viable option—even when the deals she offers seem just a little bit too sweet.

Adel's shop was established within the ruined villa of a wizard who served the Nameless King more then ten centuries ago. Many of the wizard's magical secrets are still part of the strange dwelling, including the thousand-year-old **iron guardian** who now guards the site. The shop's cluttered front room is just one of the villa's many vaults, all of which are filled with goods and treasure waiting to move from one set of hands to another. Some folk whisper that the shop contains its own private archway, allowing Adel to instantly reach other hidden portals across the City of Arches, all accessed with a glyph-scribed medallion she wears.

Adventure Hook. Roselyn Zeshe, the spymaster to the queen, wants to know more about Adel and her connections. Her plan is to have a group of adventurers sell a particular relic to Adel, whose magic will allow Roselyn to follow the halfling's movements and listen in on her conversations. However, the relic lies in a sealed tomb in the Cliffs of the Dead that can be unlocked only by a drop of vampire blood.

ARENA OF BLOOD

The clang of iron and the cheers of frenzied crowds sound out night and day from the Arena of Blood, echoing across the caverns of the Lower Reaches. Centuries of bloodshed have unfolded here, all for the amusement of a willing audience.

Once the testing ground of the mightiest warriors and wizards in service to the Nameless King, the Arena of Blood still sounds out with the ringing of steel, explosions of magic, and the cries of the crowd. This sunken oval pit features tiered stone seating leading down to the arena's sand floor, which has soaked up the blood of thousands of victims over the centuries. Fourteen monstrous and iron-masked gargoyles crouch atop pillars set around the arena's upper tier of seats, once used to ensure that gladiator thralls didn't attempt escape. There have been no reports of seeing the gargoyles move since the days of the Nameless King, but many who look upon them shudder to imagine them coming to life again.

The volunteers who battle in the arena these days typically fight matches that end in first blood or the surrender of the vanquished. Battle to the death isn't unheard of, however, and it's rumored that anyone condemned to death by the Black Hand can demand trial by mortal combat in the arena. Most times, the condemned ends up just as dead, but those who survive—usually standing atop a mound of dead bodies—have their crimes expunged and can gain a fresh start with the criminal guild.

A demon-masked **minstrel** of elven and orcish ancestry named Sytheria Redsong is the master of ceremonies at the arena, a position she's held for two centuries. Only she and her hired stagehands know the full layout of the network of tunnels and chambers beneath the arena, from which various machines, obstacles, and traps can be raised up to the arena floor as part of elaborate battle narratives. However, it is rumored that the locations of certain secret chambers beneath the arena remain a mystery even to Sytheria.

Adventure Hook. The incompetent halfling rogue Belmont Grayboot has been caught stealing from the Black Hand for the last time, and is presently imprisoned in the ancient cells beneath the Arena of Blood waiting to be killed by a menagerie of monstrosities. His rich aunt, Doris Grayboot, puts a call out for adventurers willing to rescue her beloved nephew so that he can make amends for his questionable life choices—which might involve standing at his side when facing the onslaught of terror.

BLACK GOAT'S TAVERN

Within this rundown tavern, even the most mortal enemies can meet with no fear of violence erupting. For it is well known that any who attempt violence here never pass through the front doors again.

Built up from the ruins of a fallen domed tower, the Black Goat's Tavern doesn't look like much. A wooden sign hangs above its door, showing the silhouette of a large horned goat with a single yellow eye. Those who enter find themselves in a strangely quiet drinking establishment whose layout is strangely asymmetrical, with no wall standing perpendicular to any other, and floors and ceilings all slightly tilted. The large central common room is a half circle with a long wall on one side. Alcoves cut into the curved wall are set with tables, and the establishment also features several private rooms where much of the business conducted in the tavern takes place.

The owner and operator of the Black Goat is a tiefling named Vynan Halfhorn. He welcomes patrons with a quiet greeting, offering them a seat in the central room or one of the alcoves, or a private room for the low price of 20 gp. Food and drinks are expensive in the tavern, as the price paid for its secluded atmosphere. A strange magical aura, detectable by characters attuned to magic, prevents scrying or teleportation in or out of the tavern. And a sign above the bar makes clear the one rule of the establishment: "No Roughhousing."

The Black Goat's Tavern is an anomaly in the Lower Reaches, in that the establishment pays no protection to the Black Hand and no members of the Black Hand visit it. No one knows why, but many speculate that Vynan and the leadership of the Black Hand have some special agreement. Either way, the tavern is the perfect place for quiet conversations and clandestine meetings that might otherwise attract the attention of that criminal guild.

Those who know the Black Goat are quick to talk of the few times violence has broken out in the tavern. In one particularly popular tale, an up-and-coming band of street toughs came to the tavern to strike an accord with another lower-ranking band of cutthroats. These cutthroats expected to jump their rivals and kill them on the spot—except at the first sign of a knife, both groups were lifted off the ground, garroted by invisible chains, and torn to pieces. Many speculate that the tavern's unseen wardens are two invisible **chain devils** bound to Vynan's service.

A nest of hidden chambers behind the tavern's common room and private meeting places includes Vynan's own domicile and the deep shaft of a well leading hundreds of feet down into the depths of Sunken Revvia. The remains of those who challenge the tavern's rule against violence, as well as patrons who annoy Vynan by nonviolent means, are disposed of down the well. Reportedly, no one dropped down there alive has ever made it back up again.

Adventure Hook. A thief recently stole a musical skeleton key of elven make from the Mages of Kartan and brought it to the Black Goat's Tavern. Rumors suggest the key might be an actual arch key, or at least the key to a lost vault in the Lower Reaches. But neither the key nor the thief has been seen since. Alita Goldsong, an acolyte of the Mages of Kartan, seeks adventurers willing to go to the tavern, find out what happened to the thief, and locate the relic.

CASTLE GRIMSKULL

From a mound of rock whose shape resembles a monstrous skull, a large keep rises to dominate the shadowed streets of the Lower Reaches.

Once the citadel of the elven warlord Atrivos of the Red Blade, one of the Nameless King's most notorious commanders, the abandoned Castle Grimskull has slowly crumbled under the weight of the cavern ceiling above it for a millennium. Built around the petrified skull of a titan from the Age of Primordials (see page 36), the citadel houses dozens of chambers across its five levels, in addition to countless cellars and subterranean tunnels.

Various gangs regularly attempt to make Castle Grimskull their headquarters but quickly flee the site, usually with half their number lost to the castle's horrors. The Black Hand is a notable exception, for its members are forbidden by their leadership from entering the site—though no specific reason for this edict has ever been given. Lower-ranking members of that guild whisper

LOWER REACHES MAP KEY

- 1. The Lost Cisterns (see chapter 2)
- 2. Laboratories of Kartan
- 3. Guildred's Grotto
- 4. Stairs to the City of Arches
- 5. Adel's Curio Shop
- 6. Mekello
- 7. Temple of the Lower Twelve
- 8. Black Goat's Tavern
- 9. Arena of Blood
- 10. The Stacks
- 11. Castle Grimskull
- 12. Wreck of Saint Varrys
- 13. Entrance to the Lost Cavern of the Sundering Saurians

that the castle is haunted by murderous undead raised from those slain before the fall of the Nameless King. Some speak also of the curse of the Red Blade—the last words whispered by Atrivos as the Army of the Blue Star broke his defenses and cut through his fiendish forces in a hideous and bloody battle.

Seasoned adventurers who have delved within the castle speak of it being filled with wights, skeletal demons, and the specters, wraiths, and ghosts of celestial soldiers whose souls were torn from their bodies by the Red Blade's curse. These defenders have largely kept the Red Blade's long-lost treasury intact, leading many explorers into the gaping maw of the castle's front entrance, often never to return.

Adventure Hook. Though its members are forbidden from entering Castle Grimskull, the Black Hand is always looking for agents willing to seek out the castle's treasures. Adel Rosethorn at Adel's Curio Shop has a job for adventurers willing to discreetly enter the castle through a shattered tunnel alongside the canals adjacent to it. Once inside, the characters must recover a headband of intellect once worn by the Red Blade's servitor, a mage named Alexis Makryn. The party can keep any other treasures they find along the way, but the circlet must be returned to Adel—with the soul of the mage still trapped inside it.

GUILDRED'S GROTTO

The inn and resort known as Guildred's Grotto allows nobles, councilors, and others in the City of Arches with substantial coin to spend time out of the public eye—and to engage in vices they would never dare in their daily lives.

A sprawling estate consisting of connected buildings rising above the canals and streets of the Lower Reaches, Guildred's Grotto is an inn, a public house, and a resort for those with coin to spend. The Grotto is large enough to have its own canal entrance, leading to a small lake at the center of the open-air complex. Three eateries of different levels of quality and decorum can be found

along the lakeside, serving not only the resort's wealthiest patrons but folk with just enough coin to get close to the elite.

Gleaming Guildred, a dwarf priest of luck, coin, and merriment, owns and operates the Grotto, which she built with funds from a two-decade-long career adventuring for treasure beneath the City of Arches. She speaks little of those adventures, however, having lost her closest companions during a failed expedition in Sunken Revvia.

In addition to the resort's staff, Guildred has her own mercenary force to protect the Grotto and its patrons, and she treats them well. An **erinyes** warlord named Kylsandra serves as head of security, directing two dozen **veterans** and **ogres** under her command. Wealthier patrons of the Grotto are escorted down from the upper City of Arches by these guards, then escorted to the resort in well-armed skiffs along the canals of the Lower Reaches.

Rumors suggest that the mysterious head of the Black Hand has a private suite in the Grotto, and that they dine at the resort in many different guises. Whether that is truth or not, the Black Hand never engages in any illicit business within the Grotto's fortified walls.

Adventure Hook. Though she never speaks of her adventures, Guildred still mourns for her lost love Salstara, a human barbarian. Salstara's axe and an amulet depicting the couple still lie in Sunken Revvia, in the ruined barrow of a wraith lord and servant of the Nameless King named Stalak Grymm. A minstrel in Guildred's employ named Kessa Starsong is looking for adventurers willing to travel to the lost barrow, recover the axe and amulet, and bring them back to Guildred, who will likely be forever grateful for their return.

LABORATORIES OF KARTAN

In ancient chambers deep beneath their tower of mysteries, the Mages of Kartan conduct their most secret experiments far from prying eyes.

Kartan, Tower of the Arcane, is the tallest structure in the City of Arches. But the full extents of the tower also run deep into the ground, to its base foundations in the Lower Reaches. A series of buildings surrounding the tower's

ABOVE THE LAW

The Mages of Kartan are a powerful faction in the City of Arches, able to serve as quest-givers, villains, or both. The order is considered relatively untouchable by the Golden Knights, allowing mages to operate in the open even when everyone knows they're engaged in shady activities. This makes them fantastic quest givers, and even characters who are good and honest might find that their goals align with the self-serving arcanists from time to time. Throughout their adventures, the characters might find themselves at odds with the Mages of Kartan, serving alongside them, or switching back and forth. For more details of the order, see "Kartan, Tower of the Arcane" on page 20.

base are walled off to create a secure compound. A pair of hulking **fire giants** stand guard night and day outside the compound's magically warded black gates, making no response if passersby ask about what lies within.

Those who gain access to the laboratories of Kartan see an open courtyard beyond the gates, flanked by numerous buildings. In addition to the half-dozen laboratories connected to the tower, the courtyard also holds a blacksmith's forge, a private alehouse, and a stable of giant spider mounts ridden by the Mages of Kartan while traveling through the Lower Reaches. A crumbling titanic iron guardian sits crouched at the center of the courtyard, holding a massive blade driven deep into the ground, and tilting forward so that its mouth and eyes drip poisonous liquid into a pool at the guardian's base.

All manner of magical experiments take place in the lower laboratories beneath Kartan—sometimes openly, but often in secret. Gouts of flame, blasts of lightning, and the roaring of summoned fiends echoes intermittently from within the laboratory compound's walls, keeping most nosy observers away. Yet it isn't the loudest experiments that frighten those with the most knowledge of the laboratories of Kartan, but the ones from which nothing is ever heard. All manner of rumors surround what goes on in these "silent laboratories," including the opening of portals to forbidden realms, the remaking and casting of the most deadly spells, or the summoning of monstrosities beyond the nightmares of mortal beings.

In addition to the mages and acolytes of the tower, the laboratories are staffed by civilian workers and protected by mercenaries. These workers and guards pass through the gates at regular times throughout the day, and bear gemstone necklaces marking them as servants of the Mages of Kartan.

Adventure Hook. An exiled mage of Kartan named Skalas Wintertouch left a spellbook in one of the laboratories and desperately wants it back. She claims that her experiments and spells could aid all folk of the City of Arches, with the spellbook held in a laboratory known as the Split Skull—a massive skull half-buried in the ground of the courtyard. Skalas seeks trustworthy adventurers willing to steal into the laboratories and recover her book.

LOST CAVERN OF THE SUNDERING SAURIANS

Massive glowing stalactites illuminate an underground jungle in a huge cavern shrouded in mist, where the cries of unseen predators sound out and leather-winged creatures out of a lost past soar overhead.

During his endless push for conquest, the Nameless King commanded a coven of debased transmuters known as the Forgers of the Fang. The tyrant charged these wizards with creating an army of the multiverse's most formidable creatures—including those discovered in an ancient primeval cavern holding a natural archway connected to a land lost in time. The transmuters built a series of great step pyramids in the cavern, from which

they would conduct their vile experiments. Though they never succeeded in building their master's army before the Nameless King's fall, the monstrous results of those experiments remain.

Few living beings know the full route through the labyrinthine natural caverns beyond the Lower Reaches that lead to this massive underground cavern. Those who have seen the site describe it as an underground jungle, featuring lush foliage, waterfalls flowing down mile-high cliff walls, and scintillating blue rivers, all obscured by a mist that never breaks.

At the center of this underground jungle stands a huge natural archway with an unstable connection to a primeval world of great beasts. Dinosaurs of all sizes and species have long dwelled in this unnatural realm, many evolved over centuries to possess innate magical powers. Beasts and monstrosities dwelling outside the cavern are drawn to the magic that suffuses the site, where they enter battle against the dinosaurs and litter the ground with their corpses.

The ruins of several step pyramids are all that remain of the Forgers of the Fang, their secrets left untouched over time. Some historians speculate that after the fall of the Nameless King, the surviving transmuters retreated to the world on the other side of the arch, where they might now rule over any civilizations able to survive in that hostile world.

These lost caverns and their saurian threats are suitable for mid-level adventurers.

Adventure Hook. The Mages of Kartan seek a book called *The Tome of the Claw*, thought to have been lost in one of the ruined step pyramids in the saurian caverns, known as the Throne of Thrykes. Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster to the queen, is recruiting adventurers to find their way to the caverns and locate the tome before agents hired by Kartan recover it first.

MEKELLO

This ancient temple now serves as the central sanctum of the Black Hand, with few people able to imagine the amount of wealth, power, and blood that flows through its halls and chambers.

A temple named for a fell and long-forgotten god and a number of the buildings surrounding it were long

YOUR LOCAL THIEVES' GUILD

The Black Hand is meant to be the top thieves' guild in the City of Arches. Rogue characters can have great fun interacting with the guild, whether as someone who wants to work with them, as a wary member of a dependent guild, or as an independent operator not wanting to attract their notice. For all characters, the Black Hand can serve as allies, quest-givers, or villains depending on the scenario, with that relationship changing from adventure to adventure. For more details of the guild, see "The Black Hand" on page 29.

ago claimed as the headquarters of the Black Hand, the criminal guild whose shadowy grip extends throughout the City of Arches and controls the Lower Reaches. A half-dozen small public houses and eateries surrounding the sanctum serve low-ranking members of the Black Hand, those who want to become members of the guild, and the many small gangs, minor thieves' guilds, and mercenary companies acting as auxiliaries to the larger guild.

Spies for the Black Hand keep watch over every ruined building within three blocks of Mekello, peering out from rooftops or the shadows of alleyways. Several of the other buildings surrounding the former temple site serve as sleeping chambers, gaming parlors, armories, and safe houses for guild members or their hirelings.

The main doors leading to the central hall of Mekello are flanked by towering and headless humanoid statues. Though these doors are guarded, they haven't been opened in over two hundred years. Instead, a network of side doors, ramshackle wooden ramps, and wide cracks in the lower foundations of the building offer multiple well-guarded routes inside. Anyone coming up to the main doors and knocking creates a clear sign that they know precious little of the Black Hand's operations.

A large, two-story audience chamber dominates the central hall of Mekello. Grim hooded statues line the walls, one of the few features untouched by the vandalism and graffiti that mars the rest of the site. Meetings of the full membership of the Black Hand are rare, but smaller groups often congregate here. When they do, on a dais at the end of the hall, the six open lieutenants of the Black Hand sit in high chairs to hold court over the guild. A larger chair at the center of the others is always vacant, set there for the mysterious leader of the organization. Many folk believe that the six lieutenants secretly run the Black Hand themselves, setting up a fictitious leader as a feint. Others believe that the leader poses as one of the lesser members of the guild, always watching and listening to the lieutenants' proclamations. (The true secret leader of the Black Hand, the elf assassin mage Iofel the Knife's Edge, is described in that order's write-up on page 29.)

Several layers of chambers, passages, tunnels, and natural caverns extend below Mekello, known as the Fingers. Though no one knows the full extent of these subterranean pathways, members of the Black Hand of sufficient seniority can use the Fingers to move throughout the Lower Reaches, to gain access to the city above, or to delve into the depths farther below.

Adventure Hook. Diamanda Redflower, a botanist of the upper city, is desperate to find her missing son. Desmond Redflower fell in with the wrong crowd, and will soon undertake a ritual initiation to join a den of thieves known as Shadow's Touch, with the initiation taking place in one of the chambers beneath Mekello. A former member of the Black Hand sold Diamanda a map showing a route to Mekello through the Fingers. She now seeks adventurers willing to traverse that underground

labyrinth and recover her son before he commits to a life from which he cannot return.

THE RUSTY CUTLASS

Scarred veterans laugh over games of dice in this roughand-tumble inn and public house. A job board hangs on the back wall, featuring offers scrawled on parchment scraps tacked onto rusted nails. But the eyes of the Cutlass's patrons turn uniformly cold each time strangers step through the doors.

The Rusty Cutlass is a well-known inn and public house catering to veterans, mercenaries, and adventurers who prefer to take on jobs outside the notice of the Golden Order. The inn's ancient job board includes posts seeking adventurers for challenging assignments, mercenaries seeking employment for guard or escort duties, and all kinds of other work focused on blades and muscle.

The upper two stories of this large building include rooms for rent by the night or the week. Rumor has it that one can also rent the cellars of the Cutlass for clandestine meetings from the establishment's trusted owner, the dwarf veteran Bronan Bronzewhiskers.

Adventure Hook. Bronan recently discovered a previously unknown subcellar beneath the cellars of the Rusty Cutlass. Two assistants sent down to clear the space out have not returned, and Bronan now seeks eager adventurers to delve into the subcellars and find his employees. Rumors among the mercenaries who know the Cutlass best speak of hairless blind giant rats, nests of stirges, and primeval grimlocks lurking in the unknown depths beneath the inn, all with a taste for humanoid flesh.

THE STACKS

A place of last resort for those who can find no other shelter in the City of Arches, the Stacks offers a safe space behind a sturdy door—especially for members of the city's criminal underworld.

Once the cells of thralls serving the Nameless King in the depths beneath the City of Arches, the blocky towers now known as the Stacks serve as apartments for those who wish to escape the world, or who have nowhere else to go. Members of the many criminal gangs of the Lower Reaches live here, including lower-ranking members of the Black Hand. The Stacks is a rough place at the best of times—and deadly in the worst. Yet those who live here know that it's easy to avoid trouble by staying out of other people's way and keeping to one's own business.

The Stacks are a series of stone blocks piled up seven high and fifty wide, with the structure of the complex acting as a support pillar for the cavern ceiling above. The individual units are staggered, with crumbling walkways and staircases connecting the streets below to the highest stacks. Each block in the stack is its own dwelling, often just a single room. In some places, the walls between stacks have been broken open, connecting two or more such rooms into a series of apartments. Water flowing

down from the roof of the cavern is channeled through conduits carved into the stone, bringing fresh water in even as other conduits direct sewage down and away. That foul runoff feeds a large cesspit below the Stacks that is the lair of Good Morty, a beloved **otyugh** content to feed off waste, garbage dumped down from above, and the occasional body.

Adventure Hook. Lady Gabyla, a goblin noble, wants adventurers to find her estranged partner, Gretta, who fled their home in the Second Rise to live in the Stacks. Gretta is now protected by a gang known as the Frost Blades, operating out of the Lower Reaches. In truth, Lady Gabyla only seeks the heirloom necklace Gretta absconded with, though Gretta believes it belongs to her.

TEMPLE OF THE LOWER TWELVE

An unholy temple set in the midst of the bustling undercity reminds all who look upon it of the fell gods who blessed the Nameless King's tyranny.

Though demanding of absolute fealty, the Nameless King did not prevent the worship of evil deities as long as their goals aligned with his. Many temples from these dread days can still be found in and below the City of Arches, though most are in ruins. The Temple of the Lower Twelve in the Lower Reaches is one of the few still standing.

Carved of pale stone and set with spires reaching to the ceiling of the cavern in which it stands, the Temple of the Lower Twelve is said to set a chill in the souls of all who observe it, many of whom report hearing the screams of the thousands sacrificed on the site's blood-soaked altars. Carvings of the twelve malevolent gods and demon princes who make up the Lower Twelve adorn the temple, though their names are long forgotten, with the pantheon now worshiped as a single source of malevolent power.

Statues depicting two hulking and faceless abominations flank the site's main doors. The inner nave of the temple has collapsed into lower caverns perpetually shrouded in fog, with the skeletal remains of foolish explorers visible where they've been impaled on shattered stone spires jutting up through the mist. The few explorers who have returned from delving into this unholy site describe being set upon by acidic **shambling mounds**, whispering **shadows**, screaming **specters**, and feral **gray oozes** and **ochre jellies** of huge size. Profane libraries and forgotten crypts fill the temple, along with hidden chambers which echo with the wailing of the trapped dead.

At the heart of the cathedral lies a vast vault known as the Well of Worlds, the center of which holds a secret shaft that becomes a tunnel leading into the ruins of Sunken Revvia far below. Rumors say that the well is also an archway to the worlds of the twelve unholy deities once worshiped at the temple, each of which requires its own grim key to access. Deeper within, a titanic iron sarcophagus is said to hold a **vampire giant** of terrible

renown—a slayer of thousands under the command of the Nameless King.

Though the temple is shunned by most folk, secret sects still serving the profane and nameless gods once worshiped here continue to perform terrible rites within its ancient halls. When they do so, storms of swirling violet light rise to the height of the temple's spires for all denizens of the Lower Reaches to see.

Adventure Hook. Garland Willowmane of the Archkeepers has heard rumors that a cult known as the Touch of Winter possesses a key that can open the arch of the Well of Worlds in the Temple of the Lower Twelve. She fears that opening the well could allow unnatural creatures from other worlds to flood the Lower Reaches, and searches for adventurers able to stop this cult and recover the key so that it might be safely sequestered away.

WRECK OF SAINT VARRYS

No one knows how the wreck of a sailing ship managed to end up deep beneath the City of Arches, but that hasn't stopped the water rats of the Lower Reaches from calling the ship home.

The schooner Saint Varrys was somehow drawn below ground and marooned in the Lower Reaches some hundred and fifty years ago, and a powerful gang of bandits, thugs, spies, and veterans known as the Sodden Fiends has long since taken it for a headquarters. The sloping halls and cabins inside the ship form a veritable maze, with some areas having collapsed to open up to razor-sharp rocks and the fast-flowing water of underground streams. Even the best infiltrators of the Black Hand know not to move within the ship without being guided by one of the Sodden Fiends. And though they never speak of it to outsiders, no member of the Sodden Fiends ever descends to the ship's bilge, where ghouls can be heard to howl for living flesh under the control of a hideous ghoulish black pudding called the Cold Reach.

Adventure Hook. Operatives of the Sodden Fiends recently stole a wand from Allister Venthom, a low-ranking member of the Mages of Kartan. Allister now seeks adventurers willing to enter the wreck of Saint Varrys and recover the wand, but who can do so without alerting either the Mages of Kartan or the Black Hand.

LOWER REACHES LOCATION SUMMARY

This section summarizes the notable locations of the Lower Reaches described above. Use this information to reference locations while prepping or running your game.

Adel's Curio Shop. This small curio shop is run by the shady Adel Rosethorn, a fence for the Black Hand criminal guild, and buyer and seller of relics claimed from the City of Arches and the depths below.

Arena of Blood. This sunken pit arena saw the deaths of thousands of gladiators a millennium ago, and is a popular venue now for volunteers engaging in bouts of battle—as well as the occasional execution by combat hosted by the Black Hand.

Black Goat's Tavern. Owned and operated by the tiefling Vynan Halfhorn, this small, nondescript tavern is a place where shady negotiations can take place without the threat of violence—because those who threaten violence quickly meet a bloody end.

Castle Grimskull. Once the citadel of a warlord of the Nameless King, Castle Grimskull is filled with vengeful undead who haunt would-be treasure hunters.

Guildred's Grotto. Owned by Gleaming Guildred, a dwarf priest of luck, coin, and merriment, the Grotto is a high-class inn, public house, and resort where the wealthy of the City of Arches can enjoy feasts and festivities far from the public eye.

Laboratories of Kartan. Where the base of Kartan, Tower of the Arcane, descends deep beneath the City of Arches, hidden laboratories allow Kartan mages to conduct their most dangerous experiments in secrecy.

Lost Cavern of the Sundering Saurians. On the far edge of the Lower Reaches, this massive jungle-filled

LOWER REACHES ENCOUNTERS		
d20	Encounter	
1	A bandit comes running up to the characters, holding another bleeding bandit in her arms. "Get help!" she screams.	
2	The characters are crossing a precarious bridge when two bandits run to either side and begin to shake the bridge. They're quickly chased off by a passing gladiator who asks for a reward for the service.	
3	A pack of wild worgs stalks the characters from the shadows. A nearby signpost offers a reward for a worg with a fuzzy collar and a tag reading "Charlie."	
4	A group of cult fanatics and cultists corner the characters, planning to bring them to the Temple of the Lower Twelve for a sacrifice.	
5	Spies and bandits of a gang known as the Gilded Fox confront the characters, demanding payment for entering their territory.	
6	A seedy bandit wants to sell the characters a key to a nearby archway, but must sell it fast.	
7	A young man approaches the characters, asking for help to break free of a gang of wererats . The young man's own wererat features quickly become apparent.	
8	The characters stumble upon a bandit stashing stolen goods in a hidden location before running away. The goods include a powerful magic item marked with the sign of the Black Hand.	
9	A section of the street suddenly collapses, and a group of screaming specters flow out of a forgotten sepulcher below.	
10	A stone statue the characters have passed many times suddenly turns its head toward them and smiles.	
11	The characters witness a hooded assassin murdering a well-dressed noble in an alleyway. When the assassin notices the characters, she holds a finger to her lips, then tosses one of	

them a red ruby carved to resemble a drop of blood.

cavern is home to dinosaurs bred for war, and to the ruined laboratories of their long-gone arcane masters.

Mekello. The headquarters of the Black Hand criminal guild is built within a former unholy temple and connects to a maze of chambers and tunnels below.

The Stacks. Formerly the quarters of the Nameless King's thralls, these block apartments now serve as housing for criminal gangs and other folk of the Lower Reaches.

Temple of the Lower Twelve. A spired temple from the Age of the Nameless King, this site was dedicated to twelve profane gods—and still serves as a ritual site for active cults of evil.

Wreck of Saint Varrys. A sailing ship incongruously wrecked in the Lower Reaches is used as a headquarters by a gang known as the Sodden Fiends.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE LOWER REACHES

As the characters explore the Lower Reaches, you can make use of random encounters to help bring that area to life or to set up larger adventures. Roll a d20 or choose from the encounters on the Lower Reaches Encounters table, or use the table as inspiration for encounters of your own.

Encounter	

- 12 A hooded beggar comes up to the characters with a hand extended. If anyone offers him something, he grabs that character's hand and tries to bite it as a pack of fellow ghouls attack.
- 13 A wandering Kartan mage bumps into the characters and takes umbrage, demanding to know if they understand who he is and how they tempt the fates. Only if the characters undertake a mission for him will the mage forgive the insult.
- An **imp** commanding several **bearded devils** claims that a bounty has been placed on the characters' lives. He shows them an infernal contract with sketches that clearly aren't the characters, despite his protests to the contrary.
- A hooded figure demands money from the characters. If they don't pay, he whistles loudly and several swarms of rats attack.
- 16 A drunken noble departing Guildred's Grotto is under escort not by quards, but by several bandits and veterans of the Sodden Fiends who attempt to con him.
- 17 A halfling **bandit** wants to sell the characters tickets to the free gladiatorial games at the Arena of Blood. If they refuse, he tries to stab them and run away.
- A woman in a beautiful but out-of-style gown passes by, dabbing blood from her lips with a lace handkerchief while eyeing the character with the highest Charisma.
- Two young bandits confront the characters, challenging 19 them to a fight so they can gain initiation into the Red Masks
- 20 A group of bandits and thugs silently make their way past the characters, their faces painted white and gray to resemble ghouls. The characters notice that one of the group is actually a ghoul, but she shushes anyone who tries to approach or confront her.

THE CLIFFS OF THE DEAD

Above the City of Arches, spreading to the west of the Falls of the Three Sisters, stand the Cliffs of the Dead. Countless antechambers, crypts, ossuaries, tombs, shrines, and charnel pits can be found carved into the mountain here, with the oldest sites dating back thousands of years.

The Cliffs of the Dead are a suitable adventure location for low-level and mid-level characters.

BORDERLANDS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Priests and sages established centuries ago that the borders between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead are thin within the cliffs northwest of the City of Arches. However, it remains unknown whether this thinning arose from millennia-long traditions of interring the dead inside the mountain, or whether the living found themselves drawn to entomb their dead there because of this effect. Either way, many who place friends and loved ones into their final repose in the Cliffs of the Dead hope that doing so allows their spirits to pass easily into the afterlife—even as others do so to keep the spirits of the dead close by, allowing the living to continue to speak with those they've lost.

THE TWISTING OF THE VEIL

For thousands of years, folk interred their fallen in the Cliffs of the Dead, dreaming of sending loved ones into a peaceful afterlife. But that changed with the rise of the Nameless King. Fascinated by the thinness of the barrier between life and death within that section of the Skyreach Mountains, the tyrant and a host of servant necromancers reshaped that barrier, connecting the cliffs not to the peaceful realms of the afterlife but to the voids of undeath. Thousands of the Nameless King's subjects and prisoners were slaughtered to fuel horrifying rituals that filled vast charnel pits inside the mountain with restless undead—a veritable army serving the Nameless King.

After the tyrant's demise, the magic in the Cliffs of the Dead mostly returned to its former state, and the interment of the dead for the journey to the afterlife began again. But it remains well known that lingering magic of the Nameless King makes some of the dead within the mountain restless. Rumors hold that lost charnel pits can still be found in the deepest secret reaches of the cliffs, radiating necromantic energy and filled with writhing corpses raised a millennium ago by terrible power.

THE DEVOURING MAW

In addition to the planar instability of the area, unknown magic causes the Cliffs of the Dead to somehow draw the oldest chambers, catacombs, and tombs cut into the rock ever deeper into the mountains. New tombs can be carved into stone close by any of the entrances of the multiple tunnels leading into the mountain. But over decades and

generations, observers can note that the space between the tunnel entrances and the closest tombs slowly increases, eventually leaving enough blank stone to dig out new tombs once more.

To some, it seems as though the realm of the dead is claiming not only the souls of the departed but their remains as well—perhaps drawing the oldest lost tombs of the cliffs directly into that shadowy dimension. More alarming are the views of certain sages that the entire mountain might be the site of a massive archway known as the Devouring Maw, which is slowly drawing the entire mortal world into another planar realm.

THE MAGISTRATE OF TOMBS

The City of Arches has strict laws against raiding the tombs of the Cliffs of the Dead. The theft or sale of goods and relics plundered from these tombs is illegal, punishable by steep fines and restitution determined by a committee of the Golden Council known as the Magistrate of Tombs. The Golden Knights have permission to detain individuals attempting to enter unauthorized tombs and those found with possessions stolen from such tombs.

At the same time, the Magistrate of Tombs can authorize entrance to the Cliffs of the Dead and the recovery of the relics found there under certain circumstances:

Authorization. Those with legally recognized ancestry connected to specific tombs or the relics within can seek permission of the Magistrate of Tombs to enter those burial chambers. Such permission allows for the recovery of relics and heirlooms for the sake of preservation or need (beyond just their monetary value). Those with permission can also hire agents to claim those relics on their behalf.

Preservation. Knowing that the Cliffs of the Dead draw their oldest tombs ever deeper into the mountain, the

TOMBS OF ENDLESS ADVENTURE

The Cliffs of the Dead are intended to serve as an initial stomping ground for low-level adventurers. However far the characters might explore within the mountainside, any number of deeper tombs, antechambers, shrines, and catacombs wait always to be discovered. You can place nearly any subterranean tomb-based location here, or you can reskin maps of outdoor temples, shrines, or burial vaults as sitting in vast underground caverns undiscovered for thousands of years.

The Cliffs of the Dead also serve as an access point to the wilder and more dangerous caverns of the Endless Warrens. See that chapter (page 57) for more information.



Magistrate of Tombs might decree that the recovery of certain ancient relics is critical to those relics' preservation and the history of those who once owned them.

Direct Threat. Undead and other dangers lurk within the Cliffs of the Dead, with free access to the city below. When such threats are detected and discovered, the Magistrate of Tombs often hires adventurers to eliminate them, working either alongside or in place of the Golden Knights.

Permission. The spirits of the dead sometimes ask for aid in the recovery of their former material possessions. While many explorers claim to have been given such permission, the Magistrate of Tombs insists on clear proof before authorizing any incursions into the mountain, which can be difficult to arrange with fickle ghosts and spirits.

Interception. Unscrupulous tomb raiders and cultists often delve into the Cliffs of the Dead to illegally recover ancient relics and lore. The Golden Knights or the Magistrate of Tombs hire adventurers to intercept such groups and ensure their attempts at looting are thwarted—making it abundantly clear that such missions don't grant adventurers the right to pillage those same materials themselves.

Whenever the Magistrate of Tombs authorizes expeditions into the Cliffs of the Dead, authorized parties are granted a writ marked with magical glyphs known as a Tomb Agreement. The writ is recognized by any of the Golden Knights who regularly patrol the tombs of the mountainside, and is all but impossible to forge.

ILLEGAL TOMB RAIDING

Though the laws against raiding the tombs of the Cliffs of the Dead are well known and stringently enforced, illegal tomb raiding remains a common problem in the City of Arches. The trading of stolen relics takes place in shadowy alleyways of the city or in the deeper darkness of the Lower Reaches. The Black Hand often hires adventurers to recover items of great worth and power in the Cliffs of the Dead, and is known to use the dangerous and illegal raiding of tombs as a test for those who hope to prove themselves to the guild. Adel Rosethorn of Adel's Curio Shop in the Lower Reaches is well known to be involved in such operations. See "The Lower Reaches" on page 40 for more information.

SECRETS AND CLUES OF THE CLIFFS OF THE DEAD

Characters who explore the Cliffs of the Dead, or who engage with NPCs who have, might learn one or more secrets and clues of those tombs and catacombs. You can drop any of the following secrets and clues wherever they best fit during your game:

- People have been interring their dead in the cliffs above the City of Arches since long before any true settlement stood on this spot.
- Older crypts and tombs are somehow drawn deeper into the mountain over generations, leaving open space for new excavations closer to the surface. It's as though some force deep within the mountain is constantly pulling the old tombs in.
- The boundary between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead grows thin within the cliffs.
 This boundary was corrupted by necromancers of the Nameless King more than a thousand years ago.
- Delving into tombs to remove relics or treasure is expressly illegal. Only under rare circumstances are such activities sanctioned by the city, and only with the approval of the Magistrate of Tombs.
- Imminent danger to the city or its people, requests from descendants of those interred in the cliffs, or attempting to stop illegal tomb robbers are the most common reasons for adventurers to be authorized by

the Magistrate of Tombs to undertake missions into the Cliffs of the Dead.

- The Black Hand clandestinely deals in relics and treasure illegally acquired from the tombs in the cliffs, and evades all attempts by the Golden Knights to prove it. The fence Adel Rosethorn of Adel's Curio Shop is widely rumored to be a point person for the Black Hand in such dealings.
- Some crypts and tombs in the Cliffs of the Dead hold the remains of creatures not of this world, alongside strange altars and portals leading to other planar realms.
- Necromancers serving the Nameless King tapped into powerful magic within the cliffs, creating armies of undead. Some of that magic—along with the vast charnel pits it filled with undead servants—still lingers in long-lost tombs deep inside the mountain.
- Ancient laboratories in the depths of the Cliffs of the Dead were created by servants of the Nameless King, and are said to have stripped the souls from living creatures to fuel terrible necromancy.
- The deep tombs of the Cliffs of the Dead grant access to the wild caverns of the Endless Warrens, but that access is often protected by powerful undead. (See "The Endless Warrens" on page 57 for more information.)

LOCATIONS IN THE CLIFFS OF THE DEAD

The Cliffs of the Dead are reached by following a series of rocky switchback paths leading up from behind the statues of the Three Sisters. Hundreds of tunnels opening up to tombs large and small line these pathways, leading to greater tomb complexes deep within the mountain. Along many tunnels, sections of the rock wall have collapsed inward to reveal passages or sinkholes leading to deeper halls and chambers. The Golden Knights place ropes across such open areas with warnings of the physical and legal dangers risked by entering the ruins. Some heed such warnings—others do not.

ALIEN CRYPTS

In the deepest reaches of the Cliffs of the Dead, mysterious and ageless tombs memorialize beings from beyond this world.

The boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead in the Cliffs of the Dead extends beyond this world, drawing in creatures from strange alien realms. In the deepest sections of the catacombs lie a set of chambers opened up by these creatures, where their own dead have been laid to rest alongside portals to the stars.

The alien crypts of the Cliffs of the Dead are a legend among explorers and tomb robbers. They are described as vast chambers set with towering statues of strangefeatured beings resembling humanoids, stone altars glimmering with starlight, and spherical sarcophagi

ETHICAL TOMB RAIDING

Delving into ancient crypts and stealing stuff is a common activity in fantasy RPGs. The fact that illegal tomb raiding is ever present in the City of Arches provides an opportunity for the characters to explore such shady activities if that's the style of campaign you and your players want to run. But the intent of this book is to avoid the common colonialist tropes of much fantasy storytelling, wherein powerful "civilized" groups lay claim to the history and relics of those they consider "uncivilized" and those who can't defend themselves against the theft of their wealth and culture. That kind of historical organized violence has no place in the City of Arches.

That said, it's possible to explore the difference between an entire civilization engaging in widespread cultural pillaging and four adventurers delving into a tomb to grab a magical gemstone—simply by asking the question "Why?" What motivates the characters to do so? Is it to stop a powerful evil? Do they have permission from the descendants of those who once owned the gem, who know that the relic holds the spirit of the gem's original possessor? These are questions that can be kept in mind as you create adventures in the City of Arches, and which can be front and center in the minds of the characters and players.

Discuss this topic with your players during a session zero before you start a campaign in the City of Arches, and decide what's right for your group.

shaped of crystal. Great rifts in the walls of these tombs leads to a realm beyond mortal understanding, from which gibbering mouthers, gray oozes, and black puddings emerge intermittently to feed off the necrotic energy of the dead—and to attack when they sense any mortal creatures enter the crypt. Side chambers and vaults off the main tombs are said to contain otherworldly suits of animated armor, spheres that impart knowledge to the mind when touched, and relics from unknown worlds.

Adventure Hook. A former explorer of the Cliffs of the Dead has been offering to sell adventurers a map leading to the strange alien crypts—which he claims to have visited, leaving him forever traumatized. He tells of how the crypts hold an artifact that must be sealed in a special sarcophagus lest it call forth an alien horror beyond any threat the City of Arches has ever seen.

ARCH OF THRESKA

A crumbling tomb opens up into a hemispherical chamber, within which a thrumming archway stands atop a stone plinth. Hazy fog swirling in the archway reveals a landscape of scorched sands, crumbling towers, and titanic petrified hones.

As the Cliffs of the Dead inexorably draw old tombs deeper into the mountain, the walls of recently constructed tombs often break through into lost and unknown chambers of the past. One of the most dangerous discoveries resulting from such a collapse was

an archway leading to the realm of Threska, the Desert of Dead Gods. Those with knowledge of this horrid realm (detailed in "Worlds Beyond the Arches," page 98) recognize its blasted red sands and the petrified remains of dead titans. Nothing is known of the arch's history or construction, though some sages believe that it was built by the Nameless King to connect more than one corrupt world to the mortal realm.

Adventurers who have peered into the hemispherical chamber have reported seeing flitting **shadows**, moaning **specters**, and armored **wights** defending the arch, as they might have for a thousand years. The archway thankfully remains closed, though the baleful realm beyond can be clearly seen through it. Horrid abominations also lurk on the other side, sometimes drawing close to raise long-fingered hands toward the arch—as if sensing something on the other side.

Peripheral chambers connected to the central vault contain displays of relics drawn from Threska, including the skulls of unknown monstrosities, a bone staff scribed with glowing glyphs, weapons and armor shaped for no known creatures, and a black sphere floating over a rune-scribed pedestal, said to whisper grave secrets to those who gaze upon it.

Adventure Hook. Julvia Dustyglove, a halfling baker in the City of Arches, desperately seeks adventurers willing to travel to the Arch of Threska and rescue her partner, Jayson. A would-be adventurer, Jayson recently set out for the distant tomb that provides access to the arch with a key he claimed would open it, given to him by a mysterious hooded elf from the Lower Reaches.

CELL OF THE ONE BELOW

Not all the vaults in the Cliffs of the Dead hold the remains of the departed. In a section of lost tombs stands a cell that holds a being of the lower hells—chained, bound, and forgotten.

The depths of depravity reached by the wizards and warlocks who served the Nameless King knew no bounds. Sometimes, however, those magic-users tapped into power they could not deal with, summoning creatures who could not be killed or relics that could not be destroyed. When necessary, they buried such things in the deepest holes they could find—including the Cell of the One Below.

In one of the deeper tunnels in the Cliffs of the Dead, a stone door bound with cold iron seals off a series of chambers lined in black iron and silver. The key to the door hasn't been seen in centuries, but old legends speak of diviners who mapped out a series of rooms and vaults on the other side. Those chambers serve the singular purpose of containing the One Below—an unknown creature from the lower hells. Bound by massive glyphscribed chains, the creature sits motionless, their single baleful eye staring out through an ancient crack in the

cold-iron shell surrounding their head. The gaze of that eye is said to tear the life from those who behold the creature too long. (You can use the **nalfeshnee** stat block as a baseline for the One Below, or any other suitably high-powered fiend or aberration.)

Stone guardians stand watch over the alien horror, though they would be no match for the One Below if that creature were ever freed. Rather, they serve to deter anyone else from reaching and freeing the creature, intentionally or otherwise. The mummified remains of several cultists who attempted to do just that are scattered across the floor, and might be reanimated by the One Below into skeletal veterans and cult fanatics serving the creature's will.

Adventure Hook. The halfling sage Eldwyn Angeltraveler has received fell visions, which suggest to her that the creature bound in the cells has begun breaking their bonds. If the One Below escapes the vault, they will wreak havoc throughout the City of Arches. Eldwyn recently inherited the long-thoughtlost key to the vault, claimed and hidden away by her great-grandfather a century ago. She now searches for trustworthy adventurers to enter the cells and reseal the creature's bonds, ensuring that the One Below will pose no threat to the world.

CENOTAPH OF QUEEN SETT

Deep in the Cliffs of the Dead stands a memorial raised to Queen Sett, the consort of the Nameless King. Those who are drawn here are compelled to engage in deadly trials, paying the price of failure with their souls.

Sett's Ziggurat in the Deadlands (see page 95) stands as a forbidding monument to the power of the god-queen who ruled at the side of the Nameless King. But within the Cliffs of the Dead, a less well-known monument serves as a shrine to Sett's memory and evil ambition. Many know of the Cenotaph of Queen Sett, but most who visit here do so in secret. A massive ebony statue of the god-queen stands in the empty tomb's central chamber, depicting a humanoid woman shrouded by coiling snakes. Some say the statue can move, revealing a staircase to Sett's most devout followers.

Down those stairs lie secret chambers said to contain tests for the devout, along with undead heralds who marshal those faithful to their likely demise. The cenotaph is known to be guarded by **shadows**, **specters**, and **wraiths** spawned by Sett's followers. Others claim that a community of **cult fanatics** and skull-masked **thugs** and **veterans** lair in the shadows of the tomb, waiting to dispatch any nonbelievers who dare enter the site and send their souls to their god-queen.

Adventure Hook. Stillis the Suntouched, a hobgoblin priest of the Three Sisters, despairs over the fate of acolyte Berte Tallrock, a loving halfling who spoke of whispers calling him to the Cenotaph of Queen Sett. Stillis fears that her colleague has succumbed to the call of the trials

beneath the tomb, and asks adventurers to travel to the site and find him—or bring his remains back to the light.

HOWLING CATACOMBS

Not all those interred in the Cliffs of the Dead lie at rest, but the frenzied undead of the Howling Catacombs are more feral than most—and protect a grim secret.

The most learned sages know that a source of corruption lies deep at the heart of the Cliffs of the Dead—a twelve-foot-high spike of gleaming metal hammered into the rock by the necromancers of the Nameless King. No one has ever succeeded at dismissing or nullifying the energy emanating from this unholy artifact, and so every tunnel and hallway leading to the site at the center of the Howling Catacombs has been sealed.

The legends of the catacombs are extensive, and the treasures held within call out to tomb robbers throughout the city. However, those who delve into these haunted halls put more than just themselves at risk. In decades past, **ghouls** have poured out through the catacombs' shattered gates to spill into the city, and an army of **skeletons** once marched forth to fight in wars that ended a thousand years ago.

The Howling Catacombs also call to **necromancers** and **priests** of death, who know that the site provides them a nearly endless supply of corpses to animate and unholy energy to tap into. In one of the catacombs' larger halls stands an obelisk of gleaming white metal, which rises from deep within the earth and thrums with the power of undeath. A hundred **zombies** surround the obelisk, stirring to frenzied action whenever living creatures approach.

Adventure Hook. Brenna Bluefont, nephew of the minotaur forgemaster Erna Ironhorn (see "Vathrex's Forge" on page 26), foolishly delved into the Howling Catacombs seeking to make a name for himself. Erna now seeks adventurers willing to enter the catacombs to rescue her nephew. To complicate matters, Erna has a longstanding feud with Sevla Southpaw, a gnoll magister serving the Magistrate of Tombs, who refuses to give her leave to enter the catacombs and has spies watching her every move in hopes of arresting her for doing so.

PRIMEVAL BURIAL VAULTS

The oldest tombs in the Cliffs of the Dead stretch back into the mountain and through the annals of history, dating to a time before mortals ruled these lands, and when the connections between sentient beings and grim deities were stronger than today.

As adventurers travel farther into the Cliffs of the Dead, worked-stone halls become rough-carved tunnels, with caverns and passages of natural stone stretching out for miles. The moldering journals of long-dead explorers describe chambers in these farthest extents that are thousands of years older than the reign of the Nameless

King, as well as hundreds of burial vaults carved into the walls that still hold their ancient dead.

A hulking idol depicting a bestial primordial sits at the center of the largest of these chambers—and threatens to shatter the minds of those who observe it. Smaller side chambers hold the tombs of **mummies** raised from the dead royalty of prehistoric civilizations, or house piles of corpses infested with hundreds of **crawling claws** that scramble over each other like spiders. Superstitious explorers claim that a curse hangs over these primeval vaults, shaped by a **mummy lord** who commands a host of **wights** she hopes to unleash upon the world of the living.

Adventure Hook. Delbor Dundlegrymm, an unscrupulous dwarf grave robber, recently brought a strange relic to the catfolk archaeologist Alkessa Syvan. Alkessa had Delbor arrested by the Golden Council before studying the relic—a necklace of gemstones that somehow each hold a humanoid tooth. Since then, nightmares have plagued the archaeologist, warning of the rise of an undead army deep inside the Cliffs of the Dead. Alkessa has received permission from the Magistrate of Tombs to hire an adventuring party to learn of the location of this primeval vault from the arrested grave robber, travel to the vault, return the necklace to its original location, and assess the undead threat.

ROYAL TOMBS

Golden Knights stand watch over the tombs of each monarch to have ruled over the City of Arches, where countless mourners come to pray for a peaceful future they might never see.

Eighteen kings, queens, and monarchs have reigned over the City of Arches over the past seven hundred years. All but one of those rulers now lies interred in the Royal Tombs. A permanent honor guard of two Golden Knights stands outside the open door to the tombs, allowing visitors from the city to enter and marvel at the site's vaulted architecture, the statues of past rulers, and murals depicting their reign. New stonework is commissioned here every decade or so, to rework the blank rock that appears as the tombs are drawn slowly into the mountain, as with all the tombs in the Cliffs of the Dead.

A magical everburning brazier stands within the tombs' central chamber, where hallways and stairs lead to individual burial chambers.

Old tales have long suggested that a forgotten antechamber sits below the tombs, unknown to the Golden Knights or the queen's advisors. More recent rumors suggest that the Knights of the Nameless King plan to use the site in an attack against the queen.

Adventure Hook. Royal spymaster Roselyn Zeshe is on the lookout for discreet adventurers to investigate the disappearance of one of the residents of the Royal Tombs—King Mestovar Whitecloak, grandfather of Queen Karsara Aventus. The guards on duty reported no trouble during their shift, yet the changing of the guard

revealed that the king's coffin was open and his body missing. The only evidence might be a strange chalk sigil drawn on the floor in front of the gilded coffin, which mysteriously appeared the day after the disappearance.

TOMB OF THE SERVITOR

Violet light shed by a floating sphere ripples along the walls of the ancient tomb of a warlock servitor of the Nameless King. Those unfortunate enough to step inside report their minds filled with an endless screaming.

All followers and servants of the Nameless King knew that their service transcended life and death, but none learned this more harshly than Xysis, a warlock lieutenant to the tyrant whose tomb lies in the deepest reaches of the Cliffs of the Dead. Questionable maps scrawled on cracked stone lead the way to this forgotten tomb, which is visited sporadically by cultists of the Nameless King. These supplicants kneel or lie prostrate in front of a swirling sphere of violet energy hanging at the center of the tomb—which holds the warlock's soul. From the raving screams of this trapped soul, the cultists claim to receive instructions to advance the campaign to restore the Nameless King to power.

The side chambers of the servitor's tomb include mosaics depicting their accomplishments in the name of the tyrant, secret laboratories where they conducted vile experiments, and stores of weapons and terrifying alchemical substances. Many of the servitor's guards and thralls continue to wander the halls of the tomb, including skeletal veterans, spectral acolytes, ogre zombies, and servants liquefied into hideous black puddings.

Adventure Hook. The corpse of a wicked cultist who died in the City of Arches bears an intricate tattoo depicting a possible route to the Tomb of the Servitor. Parchments found on the corpse detail a series of targets for assassination, noting specific locations, dates, and times—and featuring one death that's already come to pass exactly as predicted. Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster to the queen, seeks adventurers willing to follow the map to the warlock's tomb, discover how these predictions were made, and end the threat of those responsible for them.

VAULT OF SHADOW

Secreted away in the depths of forbidden crypts within the mountainside, a vault to a hooded god is said to bear an altar adorned with blades and blood.

Among the many passages, tunnels, and catacombs within the Cliffs of the Dead, one secret pathway leads to a shrine dating back to long before the days of the Nameless King. Inside this shrine stands a hooded statue with one hand open and outstretched, the other hidden behind their back and holding a long stiletto. Though the statue is carved from stone, the black-iron blade it holds is quite real, and covered in dried blood.

Many of those who have seen the statue believe it to be the oldest known depiction of the Black Hand—a god of shadow, thievery, and murder who is the namesake of the dominant criminal guild in the City of Arches (see pages 29 and 148). At an altar in front of the statue, visitors to the vault offer up gifts in the hope of gaining favor for fell deeds. Coins and rusted daggers lie atop and around the altar, along with scraps of parchment bearing rough portraits of doomed assassination targets, a bloody thumbprint marking each one.

Gangs of **bandits**, **thugs**, and **spies** hoping to make their mark with the Black Hand sometimes lurk in the vault, waiting to spill the blood of would-be explorers. Others say the statue can manifest into a **shadow assassin** in response to anyone defiling the shrine.

Adventure Hook. Grimbald Forgeheart, a dwarf noble living in the Second Rise, believes he has been marked for death by Black Hand assassins hired by a rival—the halfling Chulsea Willowind. Grimbald wishes to hire adventurers to enter the Vault of Shadow and locate his bloody portrait as evidence. (If the characters undertake this mission, you might decide that when they arrive at the altar, they do not find Grimbald's portrait, but their own!)

WELL OF THE DAMNED

Down a roughly carved staircase deep within the Cliffs of the Dead, a forsaken chamber opens up around a well of milky liquid infused with the power of undeath.

Necromancers of the Nameless King conducted countless foul experiments in the chambers of the Cliffs of the Dead. In a deep series of fell laboratories, they crafted one of the most unholy sites in the Nameless King's empire—the Well of the Damned. This vast pit is filled with a milky liquid that can draw the souls from living beings, trapping their energy in its limitless depths to fuel foul necromancy.

The well opens up inside a huge central chamber with a towering buttressed ceiling, its walls piled high with the bones of those fed into the well. Side chambers opening up along adjacent corridors cut through these bone walls, and hold libraries filled with forbidden works, vaults holding unholy relics, and deep cells filled with trapped undead imprisoned in torment for more than a thousand years. Stone guardians, ogre zombies, and soulless suits of animated armor guard the site. Their commander is Kalys Doomtouch, a wraith mage who has served as the guardian of the well since its creation—and who is more than happy to feed it the souls of hapless adventurers.

Adventure Hook. Delnan Vykroft, a spymaster of the Mages of Kartan, is recruiting adventurers to hunt down a rogue necromancer mage of Kartan named Sylva Dreadwinter, whose heretical studies have caused her to seek and find the Well of the Damned. Sylva's fellow mages want her eliminated before she can channel the

power of the well in some hideous ritual—and without attracting the attention of the Golden Order.

CLIFFS OF THE DEAD LOCATION SUMMARY

This section summarizes the notable locations of the Cliffs of the Dead described above. Use this information to reference locations while prepping or running your game.

Alien Crypts. Beings from other worlds are interred in crystalline sarcophagi within these ancient tombs, and surrounded by alien relics.

Arch of Threska. Beyond a collapsed wall, an ancient tomb holds an arch leading to the realm of Threska, the Desert of Dead Gods.

Cell of the One Below. This hidden cell holds an otherworldly horror that not even the servants of the Nameless King could kill.

Cenotaph of Queen Sett. A memorial tomb dedicated to the sinister consort of the Nameless King features hidden chambers beneath it, in which her followers' faith might be tested.

Howling Catacombs. A network of sealed catacombs holds hordes of restless undead, raised by the power of a great spike hammered into the ground and thrumming with necromantic energy.

Primeval Burial Vaults. The oldest tombs in the mountain hold the mummified lords of a past age, all paying homage to a hulking primordial idol.

Royal Tombs. The well-guarded tombs of the kings, queens, and monarchs who have ruled over the City of Arches are open to those who want to pay their respects.

Tomb of the Servitor. This ancient tomb holds a warlock lieutenant of the Nameless King, whose screaming spirit still endures.

Vault of Shadow. This secret shrine honors the god of shadow, thievery, and murder, paid fealty to by the assassins of the Black Hand.

Well of the Damned. A deep well channels necromantic power drawn from the souls of countless dead victims sacrificed to the Nameless King.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE CLIFFS OF THE DEAD

As characters explore the Cliffs of the Dead, you can make use of random encounters to help bring that area to life or to set up larger adventures. Roll a d20 or choose from the encounters on the Cliffs of the Dead Encounters table, or use the table as inspiration for encounters of your own.

CLIFFS OF THE DEAD ENCOUNTERS

d20 Encounter

- Screaming specters spawned by warlocks serving the Nameless King demand the characters' lives for their unholy master.
- 2 Dozens of **skeletons** march past the characters in lockstep as they head off to a war that ended a millennium ago.
- A noble crouching over a fallen Golden Knight **veteran** reveals herself to be a **vampire spawn**.
- 4 A wall crumbles outward, revealing a deep shaft leading to an unknown series of tombs—from which a voice can be heard whispering for help.
- A child spotted in the shadows laughs as they playfully run from the characters. If followed, the child reveals themself to be a playful **ghost**.
- 6 A mourning family is sprawled in pools of blood, their **zombie** grandfather feasting upon them. As the characters watch, the family members begin to rise as undead.
- 7 A tomb robber wants to quickly sell off a relic he "found."
- 8 An ancient wall mosaic depicting a dead noble suddenly animates, the figure laughing at the characters before manifesting as a wraith.
- 9 A floating black sphere explodes into several **shadows**.
- 10 A glowing magical relic is clutched in the hands of a dead elf, her gray skin dry and cracked. A sudden flash of light distracts the characters, after which the body is gone but the relic remains.
- 11 The characters come across a Golden Knight **guard** attacking a dwarf **commoner**, shouting out that the dwarf is possessed by a malevolent **ghost**. (You can decide whether the guard speaks the truth, or whether they are the one possessed.)
- 12 A crumbling floor collapses to reveal an ancient charnel pit below. An **ogre zombie** clambers out, swarming with **crawling claws**.
- 13 A pack of **ghouls** attack from the shadows, but they target the party's rations at first. If food of any sort is thrown to distract them, the ghouls break off.
- 14 A **mage** from Kartan is leading a half-dozen **zombies** toward a tomb entrance and the city beyond, telling the characters to keep quiet about it.
- 15 A well-dressed merchant who wishes the characters a pleasant day is clearly a **zombie**. He calls them rude if they bring up his undead state.
- One of the characters experiences a vision of a lich floating above a golden pyramid in a vast chamber. At the last moment, the lich turns toward the character as if aware of them
- 17 A distraught **banshee** soars past the characters, weeping at having lost his chance long ago to offer up the greatest musical performance in the City of Arches.
- 18 A section of stone floor shifts as three **swarms of rats** push up and through it, chased by fifty **crawling claws**.
- 19 A **revenant** comes up to the characters, asking about an orc cobbler named Brusk Irontoe who insulted her forty years earlier.
- 20 Several wights formerly serving the Nameless King hunt the characters, declaring that their lives are forfeit for future transgressions against their tyrannical lord.

THE ENDLESS WARRENS

Natural tunnels and caverns wind throughout the depths of the Skyreach Mountains where they rise above the City of Arches. Those who travel deep into the Cliffs of the Dead eventually note the ancient worked stone of the tombs giving way to natural passageways, underground streams, deep rifts, and tunnels bored by creatures unknown. Explorers in the City of Arches often travel deep into the mountain in search of remnants of ancient subterranean civilizations, relics and artifacts from other worlds, and natural treasures, knowing that the Endless Warrens hold riches that might set them up in luxury for life

The Endless Warrens are a suitable adventure location for mid-level, mid-high-level, and high-level characters.

CAVERNS SPANNING WORLDS

Many sages studying the accounts of explorers braving the Endless Warrens believe that this network of tunnels and caverns touches on and crosses over into other worlds. Strange ruins, wrecked airships, and the bones of massive and mysterious creatures are often found in seemingly impossible locations deep in the mountains. Like the Cliffs of the Dead, the Endless Warrens also shift and change, as though the tunnels, caverns, canyons, rivers, and chambers of the depths might be part of some massive living creature, slowly moving through a sleep of eons

TRAVELING TO THE ENDLESS WARRENS

Several routes are known to lead deep into the heart of the Skyreach Mountains and the Endless Warrens beyond, including by way of the Cliffs of the Dead. Three of these routes are most commonly used by explorers, with a fourth that the characters might discover while adventuring in the City of Arches.

The Old Overflow. One of the great outflow pipes set into the walls of the Public Baths (see page 23) connects to a subterranean watercourse fed by underground springs, which quickly becomes an underground river leading ever downward. Explorers often visit the baths late at night, loosen the grate meant to prevent children and errant bathers from being drawn down, and hop on homemade rafts to enjoy a wild ride down the pipe and deeper into the mountain. The current makes it impossible to return the same way, however, and explorers who travel the Old Overflow must find another way back out.

Varym's Cleft. Little-known natural caves at the base of the mountain north of the City of Arches lead to Varym's

Cleft—an underground canyon many miles long, a quarter-mile across, and thousands of feet deep. Said to be a great wound dealt to the world during a battle between two titans during the Age of Primordials, the site features several narrow paths winding their way along the cleft's crumbling stone walls. Multiple cracks in those walls lead to the caverns of the Endless Warrens.

The Falcon's Walk. Within the tombs and catacombs of the Cliffs of the Dead, explorers can find a long, workedstone hallway that provides access to natural tunnels descending into the Endless Warrens. However, that long walkway is haunted by the revenant of Feloven, a general of the Golden Order known as the Falcon. Those seeking access to the warrens must first justify the reasons for their exploration to the general, or face his wrath.

Summervine Villa. This fine villa of the Second Rise (page 26) holds many secrets, including a tunnel beneath the villa that leads to the Endless Warrens. The villa is explored in the "Secrets of Summervine Villa" adventure framework (page 128), and plays a part in the "Return of the Nameless King" and "Collision of Worlds" campaign arcs in chapter 10 (page 105).

SECRETS AND CLUES OF THE ENDLESS WARRENS

Characters who explore the Endless Warrens, or who engage with NPCs who have, might learn one or more secrets and clues of those tunnels and caverns. You can drop in any of the following secrets and clues wherever they best fit during your game:

- Deep within the Skyreach Mountains, beyond the Cliffs of the Dead, endless natural tunnels and chambers are filled with ancient wonders, and inhabited by creatures who have never seen the sun.
- Thralls of the Nameless King mined the rare mineral known as bloodcrystal within the warrens, whose empty caverns became a staging ground for armies of undead.
- Stone giants and fire giants whose lineage dates back to the Age of Primordials are said to have once ruled over vast expanses of the Endless Warrens.

A BIOME FOR CAVERNOUS ADVENTURES

The Endless Warrens exist so you can drop any number of typical cave-based dungeon crawls or underground exploration scenarios into your City of Arches campaign. From making use of Deepdelver's Enclave and the ruined city of Shadowreach from the book *Ruins of the Grendleroot*, to rebuilding classic adventures such as *Descent into the Depths of the Earth, Vault of the Drow,* and *Queen of the Demonweb Pits*, the Endless Warrens let you tie the City of Arches to any underground setting.



- Rumors speak of a massive chamber in the warrens housing a huge pillar of stone that holds the world above aloft.
- A powerful white dragon has made his lair in the Endless Warrens, amassing monstrous followers as he seeks the power of godhood.
- Artists, poets, and other creative folk have long claimed to be haunted by visions of an ancient keep buried in the mountain, and to have heard an ancient voice within, begging for help.
- A fallen temple to the minotaur god Akanu is infested with spiders and ettercaps, led by a half-spider demigod.
- The subterranean city of Mountainhome is the largest settlement in the Endless Warrens, and enjoys a longstanding alliance and good relations with the City of Arches. The people of Mountainhome trade in special ores, and in metalwork and stonework of unparalleled quality.
- Many sites in the Endless Warrens defy all logic, including reports of a sailing ship wrecked within the caverns and surrounded by rock.
- Titanic monoliths abound in the warrens, sunken in vast underground lakes and thought to date back to the earliest days of the primordials.

LOCATIONS IN THE ENDLESS WARRENS

Countless caverns, tunnels, and chambers make up the Endless Warrens where they wend their way through and below the Skyreach Mountains. Though you can fill the warrens with any locations you might imagine, the characters might seek out or stumble upon a number of notable sites in their journeys.

BLOODCRYSTAL MINES

In the days of the Nameless King, hundreds of thralls excavated bloodcrystal in these vast mines to fuel the fell magics of the tyrant's followers.

The otherworldly nature of the mountains through which the Endless Warrens twist has created deposits of strange minerals found nowhere else in the world, including the magical mineral known as bloodcrystal. Veins of pulsing red eldritch energy flow through these translucent violet crystals, making them useful in the creation of magical relics or in fueling powerful rituals. The crystals are volatile, however, exploding with chaotic magic if mishandled, and thus must be extracted carefully by skilled miners. A crystal cracked by accident might teleport a victim partway into a rock wall, open an unstable rift to a deadly elemental domain, or draw rayenous creatures into the mines.

The caverns and chambers found in and around the bloodcrystal mines include deep mine shafts long abandoned, swirling pools filled with crystalline shards, and crumbling laboratories from the Age of the Nameless King. As well as creatures who bathe in the bloodcrystals' energy, the caverns of the mines are also home to raging elementals, fiendish vrocks and hezrous, and the skeletons of beasts and humanoids who once labored here. Rumors also speak of an ogre mage recently come to the mines, who has begun to use undead and elemental thralls to start up the mining operation again.

Adventure Hook. Dyana Elestis, a sage of Kartan, has recently learned of a powerful artifact known as the Bloodcrystal Chalice, once held by a warlock commander of the Nameless King in charge of the bloodcrystal mining operation. Knowing that others have heard rumors of the artifact, she seeks adventurers willing to travel into the bloodcrystal mines and recover the chalice before it falls into the wrong hands.

BONEFIELD BASTION

The bones of thousands of soldiers lie in piles around the basalt walls of this millennia-old bastion—one of several hidden keeps that once housed the Nameless King's vast armies.

Thousands of **skeletal soldiers**, **skeletal knights**, and **skeletal champions** stand at attention outside the basalt keep known as the Bonefield Bastion, awaiting orders that never come. **Specters** and **wraiths** stand at the head of the ranks, having waited to lead the skeletons into battle for over a thousand years.

Divinations have hinted that the bastion holds a mithral crown set with a violet jewel, which gives the wearer control over the armies outside. Chambers below the keep conceal weapons of great power intended to arm the Nameless King's strongest soldiers—the wights, skeletal knights, and skeletal mages who are the keep's defenders.

Adventure Hook. A rogue necromancer mage of Kartan named Helles Grayfingers has learned the location of the Bonefield Bastion and plans to recover the crown for themself. Alita Goldsong, an acolyte of the Mages of Kartan, has put a call out for discreet adventurers who can hunt down Helles, recover the crown, and bring it back to Kartan for safekeeping.

FALLEN CITY OF THE WORLDPILLAR

A huge cavern surrounds a natural stone pillar nearly a thousand feet wide and standing almost a half-mile high, which legends say holds up the world above.

In the gloomiest depths of the Endless Warrens stand the remains of a city of stone titans known as the Worldpillar. The entire surface of the pillar is ornately carved with scenes depicting towering faceless titans and the legendary battles of the primordials, with details that suggest the stone titans witnessed those battles firsthand. The titans are gone now, their once-living bodies embedded into the walls of the cavern, or frozen crouched, hands held up defensively as though avoiding some terrible fate. Only a few of these once-living statues stand, hands extended as if attempting to ward off a magic strong enough to terrify creatures made of solid stone.

Some of the areas explored inside the Worldpillar hold archives of stone tablets kept by the titans thousands of years ago, and abandoned archaeological digs from explorers seeking knowledge and relics in centuries past. But the abandoned city is also filled with the lairs of deadly monsters, including **chuuls**, **cloakers**, **gibbering mouthers**, **bulettes**, **wyverns**, corrupted **xorn**, and **ropers**. Ruling over many of these creatures, a **young shadow dragon** known as Ebonclaw has become obsessed with the strange magical energy suffusing the city and the cavern around it, and has claimed the site as her domain.

Adventure Hook. An order of apocalyptic priests and mages calling themselves the Divine Hand are obsessed with acquiring the source of primordial power that destroyed the titans of the Worldpillar, and plan to use it to end the world above. Royal spymaster Roselyn Zeshe needs adventurers to make their way to the abandoned city, locate these dangerous spellcasters, and stop them from acquiring this source of power.

FORGE OF ASHBURN

Elemental fire roars in the cavern surrounding the largest known forge in the land—one that burns night and day to build the war machines of tyrants past and future.

A clan of **fire giants** ruled by a **half-primordial fire giant** king named Kalavak Ashburn are the current masters of this ancient site, once a hidden laboratory for a long-forgotten sect of wizards. An open archway to the elemental plane of fire serves them as a mighty furnace, with which they forge formidable siege engines, burrowing war machines, and weapons of incredible strength. With these weapons, the giants plan to arm themselves for an eventual war against the folk of the surface world, fueled by Kalavak's paranoia and the whispers of his fiery primordial father, Xarr, on the other side of the blazing archway.

Chambers inside the Forge of Ashburn include several independent forges, the armories of the fire giants, a feasting hall for the clan, the pens of the enormous beasts they keep, and a temple dedicated to Xarr. A number of other creatures dwell alongside the giants, including salamanders, hell hounds, fire elementals, and a young red dragon named Hellspark who has a loose alliance with the Ashburn clan.

Adventure Hook. Word has reached the Golden Knight second-in-command Joslyn Halfcloak that the Ashburn fire giants are drawing ever closer to mobilizing against the City of Arches, with their war machines set to burrow up and out of the mountain. She seeks adventurers willing to make their way to the Forge of Ashburn and use a key acquired from the Mages of Kartan that will shut down the giants' forge, by breaking the connection between Kalavak and his primordial father.

LAKE OF MONOLITHS

Ancient monoliths thrum with unknown power in a remote cavern of the Endless Warrens, rising from dark water hiding dreadful secrets.

Underground rivers and ancient pipes connecting to the Lost Cisterns (see page 21) empty into this vast underground lake. Three towering monoliths rise up from the lake's unknown depths to tower fifty feet above the water, halfway to the 100-foot-high ceiling. A low rhythmic hum emanates from the monoliths, thought by some explorers to connect to a source of magical power as yet undiscovered. Few explorers ever make more than a cursory survey of the lake, but those who have describe large eel-like creatures lurking in its depths, along with devil-worshiping sahuagin, giant octopuses, giant crocodiles, and hydras.

Caves and coves along the edges of the lake hold the wrecks of many small boats, altars to profane gods, and the lairs of various monsters. Waterlogged journals claimed years ago from one of those lairs describe an entire city beneath the surface of the lake, where an ancient aboleth commands an army of lizardfolk thralls

ready to expand the aboleth's territory—perhaps all the way to the City of Arches above.

Adventure Hook. Garbord Gearforger, an orc artificer, believes that he has located a key that might activate the magic of the centermost of the three monoliths in the lake. Garbord believes the monoliths can channel a tremendous source of beneficial magical power that might greatly improve the lives of the people of the City of Arches. He hopes to recruit explorers willing to bring the key to the monolith and use a breathing apparatus of his own design to reach the bottom of the lake. There, the adventurers can use the key to activate the monolith and record the results.

LOST TEMPLE OF AKANU

Rivers flowing through the Endless Warrens converge to fill a dark lake, upon whose shore stands a lost temple to the brutal and uncaring minotaur god Akanu.

In a jagged lake cavern known as the Six Fingers, the fallen Temple of Akanu has long been taken over by **giant spiders**, **phase spiders**, and **ettercaps**. Kelset Dreamwalker, a **stone giant half-spider** cursed to take that form, leads these creatures, along with several dozen humanoid **berserker** and **drider** thralls. For years, Kelset has had his murderous thralls searching the caverns around the lake for a jade idol, which he believes can end his curse if it is destroyed.

The many ruined chambers within the Temple of Akanu include a **specter**-haunted torture chamber, a tomb of a minotaur high priest raised as a **wraith**, and a hidden chamber filled with ancient and valuable relics.

Adventure Hook. An independent birdfolk archaeologist named Gretta Halfwing descended into the Endless Warrens ten days ago in search of tomes and scrolls describing the history of the minotaur temple of Akanu. Gretta expected to return within a week, and her spouse, the human archivist Jula Dustdelver, is worried. Jula now seeks adventurers willing to follow her wife to the lost temple and bring her back.

MORGHEST'S KEEP

Flickering glyphs etched into ancient stone barely contain an elder evil long forgotten in the depths of this sundered keep.

At the end of a series of tunnels protected by dangerous magical glyphs, a small keep has been carved out from the wall of the cavern that surrounds it. A moat of dark water surrounds the keep, flowing in and out of the chamber through watery tunnels. A cracked stone bridge leads to stone doors set with a large glowing seal that sputters and sparks, their magical wards unstable after centuries of neglect. Thankfully, a deep crack in one of the keep's walls offers another way in.

Dusty tomes in the libraries of Kartan suggest that an **elder vampire** named Morghest the Harvester rests within the keep, emaciated after being imprisoned here centuries before by the Army of the Blue Star. **Shadows** and **wights** who once served the vampire now haunt the keep's halls, while Morghest sits atop a crumbling throne, hands held to his face in perpetual despair. Around him stand a vault of weapons sealed away by the Army of the Blue Star, a library of forbidden tomes, and deep cracks leading to tainted underground rivers seething with **black puddings**.

In addition to the Blue Star magic that seals the keep and prevents the vampire's escape, a **deva** named Kalesa of Sorrow was bound to protect the site. However, centuries in the presence of Morghest have allowed the deva to become corrupted by the vampire's continual whispers.

Adventure Hook. Archibald Ravenmist is a sage and advisor to the Golden Council. He fears that even though Morghest remains sealed in his keep, the vampire still holds an artifact of great value and terrible power—one of the archway keys needed to restore the Nameless King to his former glory. Archibald seeks seasoned adventurers willing to travel to the vampire's keep and recover the artifact any way they can.



MOUNTAINHOME

The City of Arches draws folk to it from many neighboring lands, but not everyone enjoys life under an open sky. Those who prefer the quiet and shadow of the world beneath the mountain often find themselves drawn to the underground realm of Mountainhome.

Spreading out within a vast cavern, the great subterranean city of Mountainhome surrounds a massive cylindrical machine crafted of iron and stone by unknown builders, which extends deep into the rock below and rises to punch up into the rocky ceiling above. Fueled by arcane power, the machine is a conduit for geothermal heat that keeps the city warm and powers its numerous forges. Shadow elves, duergar, goblins, hobgoblins, bugbears, kobolds, giants, ogres, and other folk who prefer peaceful darkness over noise and light fill the affluent city. A standing guard of bugbears, hobgoblins, and ogres protects Mountainhome, and an elected council of twelve rules over the city.

Mountainhome's primary trade is in raw ore, but its folk are also known for crafting exotic weapons, armor, artwork, and relics, many of which make use of adamantine mined from veins deep below the city.

Adventure Hook. The miners of Mountainhome recently broke into a series of old mines and natural caves beneath the city, unleashing hell hounds, gibbering mouthers, gricks, and other horrors. These creatures range out from a mysterious crystal pylon in a chamber at the heart of the newly revealed caverns, inspiring the council of Mountainhome to call for adventurers willing to delve into the old mines and collapse the entrances, or to discover what power the pylon holds and how to destroy it.

RIMECLAW'S LAIR

A winding pathway spirals down the walls of a miles-deep shaft in the Endless Warrens, leading to the frozen lair of a winged horror worshiped as a god.

The adult white dragon Rexxolan Rimeclaw found his way into the Endless Warrens centuries ago. Beyond the ornately carved icy entranceway to his domain, the dragon has amassed a following of creatures who worship him as a demigod. Rimeclaw's lair is the frozen remains of an underground citadel ruled over by a goblin warlord a thousand years before the rise of the Nameless King. Goblinoid war machines, magic laboratories, and a dormant archway to an unknown world can all be found within the ruined citadel.

Rimeclaw happily plays the part of a living deity, reclining on the shattered altars of a crumbling temple, and soaring up the long tunnel when overcome by the urge to see the open skies. Twelve **frost giants** led by two **frost giant paladins** act as Rimeclaw's personal bodyguards, while a host of **veterans**, **hobgoblins**, and **dragonborn** attend to their nascent god.

Adventure Hook. The secret weapon behind Rimeclaw's "godhood" is an enhanced rod of rulership found in the citadel centuries ago, which allows him to magically manipulate his followers. Marcea Gant, a councilor of the City of Arches focused on the identification and prevention of threats to the city, has put out a call for hearty adventurers willing to steal or fight their way into Rimeclaw's lair and abscond with the relic, breaking the dragon's hold on his growing number of worshipers.

WRECKAGE OF THE KRYS VASSER

In a flooded cavern fed by trickling waterways lies the wreck of the Krys Vasser—a three-masted ship too large to have passed through any of the tunnels leading into the cavern.

No one knows how long the doomed sailing ship *Krys Vasser* has foundered in the Endless Warrens, though it was first sighted centuries ago. Over the years, different groups of creatures both sentient and monstrous have made the wrecked ship their home. Some explorers believe the lowest deck of the ship remains intact, and is likely filled with **zombies** and **ogre zombies** raised from the original crew, along with the **mummy** of Captain Starex Steelhull.

Adventure Hook. Members of a mercenary band known as the Keen Edge—bandits, thugs, and veterans formerly working the Second Rise—have holed up in the upper decks of the Krys Vasser after murdering a young acolyte of the Mages of Kartan and stealing a powerful ritual scroll. The mercenaries are lying low while waiting to sell the scroll to a notorious fence of the Black Hand known as the Gray Spider. Alita Goldsong, an acolyte of the Mages of Kartan, is seeking adventurers willing to travel to the Krys Vasser and recover the scroll before it disappears into the Black Hand's illicit inventory—or before it can be accidentally activated to disastrous effect by one of the Keen Edge's clueless battle mages.

ENDLESS WARRENS CAVERN CONNECTORS

As the characters explore the Endless Warrens, you can use the following table to flavor their journey with descriptions of the different types of tunnels and passages connecting the caverns, ruins, and other sites that fill the Skyreach Mountains. You can roll on the table or use it to inspire your own ideas, then flavor the tunnels and passageways of the warrens with random monuments or encounters as desired (see "Appendix C: Adventure Generators" on page 150).

To create more interesting connections between sites in the Endless Warrens, roll twice and mix two entries together. This can yield up locations such as abandoned mining tunnels illuminated with phosphorescent fungi, or a huge bridge over a deep chasm covered with thousands of primeval handprints.

d20	Connector
1	Long-abandoned sewers
2	Ancient burial chambers
3	Underground river
4	Tunnels carved by ancient laborers
5	Massive worm-carved passageways
6	Narrow pathway alongside a deep fissure
7	Tunnels illuminated with phosphorescent fungi
8	Spiraling shaft
9	Abandoned mine tunnels
10	Primeval tunnels adorned with thousands of handprints
11	Smooth tunnels bored out with magic
12	Natural tunnel strewn with webs
13	Underwater passage
14	Moss-covered natural tunnel
15	Collapsing sinkhole leading to tunnel network
16	Ice tunnel
17	Cooled lava flow
18	Huge bridge over a deep chasm
19	Otherworldly passage
20	Massive platforms crossing a bottomless pit

ENDLESS WARRENS LOCATION SUMMARY

This section summarizes the notable locations of the Endless Warrens described above. Use this information to reference locations while prepping or running your game.

Bloodcrystal Mines. In these ancient mines, thralls of the Nameless King once delved for arcane-powered crystals.

Bonefield Bastion. One of the many undead armies of the Nameless King stands ready here, forgotten and awaiting orders for battle.

Morghest's Keep. An emaciated elder vampire was imprisoned in this stone keep centuries ago, surrounded by deadly creatures.

Fallen City of the Worldpillar. A city once ruled by stone titans harbors ancient secrets and terrible power.

Forge of Ashburn. A fire giant clan crafts weapons at a forge fueled by an archway linked to the Elemental Plane of Fire, and prepares plans for an assault against the folk of the surface world.

Lake of Monoliths. Three huge monoliths stand in this deep underground lake, the depths of which are rumored to hold a forgotten city.

Lost Temple of Akanu. A former temple to a minotaur god, this site is now infested with spiders and other servants of a cursed half-spider stone giant.

Mountainhome. This great underground city is home to many subterranean peoples, and is known for its mining, forging, and crafting.

Rimeclaw's Lair. An adult white dragon leads an increasingly large group of followers who worship him as a demigod.

Wreckage of the Krys Vasser. For centuries, the wreck of a large sailing ship has been impossibly stranded in the middle of a flooded cavern.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE ENDLESS WARRENS

While the characters travel through the tunnels and caverns of the Endless Warrens, you can make use of random encounters to help bring that area to life or to set up larger adventures. Roll a d20 or choose from the encounters on the Endless Warrens Encounters table, or use the table as inspiration for encounters of your own.

ND	LESS WARRENS ENCOUNTERS
d20	Encounter
1	A band of kobold crafters from the city of Mountainhome, protected by armored ogres , are bringing weapons, armor, and artworks to the City of Arches.
2	A fiery pit belches forth azer mercenaries and magmin seeking metal treasure to bring back to their elemental citadel.
3	An evil mage protected by earth elementals is searching for lost relics of power.
4	Convenient ropes swinging out over a gorge turn out to be the tendrils of upside-down ropers .
5	Stone statues adorn the lair of a medusa and his basilisk pets.
6	Glowing gemstones illuminate a deep pool, within which lairs a hydra .
7	An ogre mage invites the characters to enjoy his hospitality in an extradimensional spa run by three green hags .
8	A band of humanoid veterans and mages want something the characters have.
9	A friendly gelatinous cube cleans up after the characters.
10	A wandering hill giant poet wants to recite his latest work, and takes poorly to criticism.
11	A night hag and their two green hag coven mates have a deal for the characters that they can't refuse.
12	A sinkhole leads to a pool of caustic acid, where acid-based salamanders hope to boil the characters alive.
13	A still pool of unusually dark water reflects a black pudding hanging on the ceiling.
14	Three earth elementals silently pray at an altar to the primordial Gthuun.
15	A group of humanoids with strangely slick skin speak on behalf of their master, an aboleth who wars with the ancient aboleth in the Lake of Monoliths.
16	A confused xorn steps out of a stone archway.
17	A drider leads several cultists and giant spiders seeking the jade idol of Akanu.
18	Doppelganger spies sent by enemies of the characters pretend to be their allies.
19	A wall collapses to reveal a cavern filled with ravenous

ghouls who were trapped by a landslide centuries ago.

collapsing their current tunnel but opening up two new

20

ones.

A purple worm suddenly roars by in front of the characters,

SUNKEN REVVIA

Deep beneath the City of Arches lies Sunken Revvia—a ruined city filled with lost treasures and brutal horrors. The subterranean Lower Reaches of the City of Arches remain moderately safe, even if not fully lawful, under the keen protection of the Black Hand criminal guild and the watchful presence of the Golden Knights. But Sunken Revvia is lawless, secret, and deadly in equal measure.

Monsters of all descriptions dwell in the tunnels, passages, caverns, and ruins surrounding the City of Arches. But the remnants of powerful spells and forgotten magic draws far more formidable creatures to Sunken Revvia. Those same things draw adventurers into the city, the ruins of which are soaked in blood and echo with the screams of lost souls.

This chapter presents Sunken Revvia as a shattered city of danger and discoveries, usable as an extension of the City of Arches or as a standalone subterranean ruin that can be placed in any campaign. Sunken Revvia is a suitable adventure location for mid-level, mid-high-level, and high-level characters.

ENTERING SUNKEN REVVIA

Adventurers in the City of Arches with extensive experience of Sunken Revvia know of three main ways to enter the ruined city. Rumors abound of other means of access for those canny enough to find them (including through the Temple of the Lower Twelve in the Lower Reaches; see page 48).

Sewers to the Mephitic Pools. Ancient iron pipes tall enough to walk through descend from the Public Baths, through the Lost Cisterns and the Lower Reaches, and empty out into the Mephitic Pools of Sunken Revvia. The farther one travels through the ancient sewers, the more likely they are to encounter gray oozes, ochre jellies, black puddings, and shambling mounds. Shady explorers in the Lower Reaches sometimes sell maps of these sewer routes.

Stairs of Darkspire. Deep inside Kartan, Tower of the Arcane, a narrow spiral staircase leads thousands of feet downward to the ruined tower of Darkspire in Sunken Revvia. The Mages of Kartan have warded the staircase and the vaults it connects to with powerful magic, preventing the horrors of Revvia from ascending. They often send adventurers on quests down the staircase with keys that can bypass the wards. These keys work only for a short time, though, lest they fall into the hands of enemies.

Shattered Caves of Omen's End. Natural tunnels in the Endless Warrens lead down to the shattered remains of Sunken Revvia's citadel of Omen's End. Even creatures dwelling in the warrens know to stay clear of these

dangerous tunnels, where the minions of Ouryvax the Sallowsworn (detailed below) protect the lair of their black dragon ruler. However, denizens of the Endless Warrens have no problem selling information regarding the dangerous route to would-be adventurers.

Shattered Arches. Like the City of Arches above it, Sunken Revvia holds many freestanding archways that once connected to other such archways in distant realms and worlds. Over long centuries, most of these arches have fallen into ruin, but some of those that survive in the depths connect to arches in the city above. All known keys to these arches are held and protected by the Golden Knights, to protect the City of Arches from the horrors haunting the ruins below. In the hands of the characters, however, the right arch key could give them easy access to the ruins of Sunken Revvia—and a fast escape from that deadly realm.

SECRETS AND CLUES OF SUNKEN REVVIA

Characters who explore Sunken Revvia, or who deal with NPCs who have, might learn one or more secrets and clues of that ruined city. You can drop in any of the following secrets and clues wherever they best fit during your game:

- Revvia was once an independent subterranean city-state ruled by Xrake the Relentless, a fiendish blue dragon.
 Fell magic and fiendish pacts once ruled here, driving Xrake's armies to raid and claim neighboring lands.
- When the Nameless King claimed the lands above more than a thousand years ago, Revvia became one of his primary residences, and an enclave of servants, soldiers, thralls, and other low folk.
- Mages, warlocks, and sorcerers devoted to the Nameless King conducted fell experiments, rituals, and conjurations in Revvia, creating or summoning monsters of terrible power and disposition.
- In the centuries after the fall of the Nameless King, Revvia sunk even deeper into the ground, exposing natural caverns and tunnels that remain part of the city today.
- Dozens of humanoid and monstrous warlords have attempted to rule over Sunken Revvia in recent centuries, but have been destroyed to the last.
- Before the coming of the Nameless King, a terrible battle was fought in Revvia by the fiendish blue dragon Xrake the Relentless and the archmage Tryvanus of Krate. Their conflict tore open a huge rift in the city still known as Xrake's Scar, splitting Revvia in two.
- Several hidden pathways lead into Sunken Revvia from the City of Arches and the tunnels, tombs, and ruins that surround it.



 The ruins of Revvia are so dangerous that many treasures, relics, and artifacts from the Age of the Nameless King still lie where they were lost centuries ago.

FACTIONS OF SUNKEN REVVIA

In addition to the monsters roaming independently throughout Sunken Revvia, three main factions of creatures vie for control of the ruined city. These factions battle one another constantly, defend themselves against monstrosities and other deadly threats, and neutralize any adventurers who dare enter their realm.

The brutal nature of these factions precludes any chance of an alliance between them, even to take on the threat of monsters not loyal to any faction. As such, though each faction is powerful, none of them is powerful enough to take over the whole of the ruins. However, it's possible that characters in a Sunken Revvia campaign might make an impact big enough for one faction to step over the other two. If the characters dismantle the forces of General Krash and the Cult of Vrys, the followers of Ouryvax the Sallowsworn might rise in strength. Or perhaps with two factions focused on fighting the characters, the influence of the third will grow substantially—enough to lay claim to the whole city.

CULT OF VRYS

Not every creature who steps through an archway in the City of Arches finds a better life on the other side. One such unfortunate soul is the **deva** Vrys, who has no memories of where they came from, and who endures the pain of having passed from the heavens into the mortal realm. Unsure as to whether they were cast out or accidentally thrust into this world, Vrys is nonetheless desperate to escape it and return to the heavens. Their

disdain for mortal life led Vrys to enthrall their followers and foment violence in the City of Arches, inspiring the Golden Knights to attempt to imprison the deva. To escape that fate, Vrys delved into the ruins of Sunken Revvia.

Vrys has numerous **cultists** and **cult fanatics** in their service, most of them desperate humanoids who worship the deva as a fallen god, and about whom Vrys cares not at all. With no response to the prayers they've long directed to the heavens, Vrys has also accepted the service of demons of the Abyss, including a half-dozen **hezrous** and a **glabrezu** advisor and bodyguard named Charvix. Additionally, a **mage** from Kartan named Velenda Thyrade has gone on an extended sabbatical, spending time with the deva to understand their origin and ambitions for a book she's writing. So far, Vrys appears not to mind the mage's company, seeking the mutual benefits of shared knowledge.

In the crumbling tower of Gray Reach (see page 67), Vrys sits upon a gilded throne. When humanoid pilgrims seeking to worship the deva come to the tower, Vrys watches as each kneels in supplication. Then the deva slowly drains their life, turning victims into **zombies** and **skeletons** who continue their worship in death.

Adventure Hook. A small cracked bell shaped of some unknown material can supposedly open portals to other worlds with no archway needed. Cultists of Vrys have learned of the artifact, but a spy in their ranks leaked that information to the Golden Council. Now the cultists desperately seek the bell, even as the Golden Knights recruit adventurers to ensure the artifact doesn't end up in the fallen deva's hands. The characters are charged with traveling to a fallen temple of Prince Arazuun near the site of that demon prince's bones (see "Locations in Sunken Revvia" below), around which an open planar rift seethes with writhing tentacles. Within the temple, they must battle aberrant horrors and face off against the cultists of Vrys to claim the bell and its powerful magic.

GENERAL KRASH

Numerous warlords continue to attempt to take control of the ruins of Sunken Revvia, but continual conflict, brutal battles, and constant assassinations between war bands have long prevented any single leader from attaining supremacy. But that changed some seventy years ago, when a hobgoblin adventurer named Krash fell into a forgotten vault and emerged with a powerful relic of enchantment called the *rod of command*. With the rod in hand, Krash (use the **knight captain** stat block) compelled his fiercest foes to bend the knee, and began to unite bands of **bandits**, **thugs**, **berserkers**, **ogres**, **orcs**, **goblins**, **hobgoblins**, **bugbears**, and **giants** previously fighting among themselves for supremacy in the ruined city.

After decades of building up his forces, General Krash now commands from the floating citadel of Heart's Splinter (see "Locations in Sunken Revvia" below). A precarious stone bridge leads to the citadel's main entrance, where two loyal **fire giants** stand guard. Whenever Krash leaves the citadel, he flies across Revvia on the back of a **young green dragon** named Grevelus the Skincursed, who he raised from an egg. That tale has long raised conjecture about Krash's true age and his unusually youthful appearance. Some whisper that Krash's advisor since his adventuring days, the **night hag** Mother Sevella, offered him long life as a reward for rescuing her from forgotten cells beneath Revvia. Others say the hobgoblin's eternal youth is a terrible curse that will one day turn Krash and all who follow him into horrid undead.

Adventure Hook. Ruthless scouts in service to General Krash have murdered an agent of the queen's spymaster, Roselyn Zeshe. That agent carried coded intelligence regarding archways in Sunken Revvia, which might allow Krash to activate those portals and send his forces into the City of Arches above. Roselyn looks to recruit adventurers to descend into Sunken Revvia and infiltrate Heart's Splinter, then find the stolen intelligence before Mother Sevella and Krash's war mages can decode it.

OURYVAX THE SALLOWSWORN

Three hundred years after the fall of the Nameless King, the adult black dragon Ouryvax the Sallowsworn shattered the cavern walls where his subterranean swamp pushed up against Sunken Revvia. Now the black dragon rules over a broad swath of the city, commanding platoons of troll and stone giant warriors and the dwarf smiths who arm them. Tethrya Goldenborn, an elf archmage and alchemist who escaped from the Golden Knights following a series of hideous murders, also serves the dragon, using Ouryvax's acidic breath to fuse the flesh of his troll thralls to their weapons.

Though most dragons shun the company of their own kind, Ouryvax has managed to claim fealty from several

young dragons, both chromatic and metallic, seeking to build their own lairs in or around Sunken Revvia. The adult dragon manipulates the greed of these youngsters to pit them against one another, promising riches and power to those who serve him most faithfully and with the greatest fervor.

Ouryvax and his right-hand commander, a brutal dwarf **knight captain** named Gervant the Grizzled, plan to unleash an army of armored trolls into Sunken Revvia, overwhelming the city's other factions before moving upward into the Lower Reaches. Both understand that they must wait for the right moment, however, recognizing the danger of facing the factions of Krash and Vrys plus the city's other monstrous inhabitants at the same time.

Ouryvax's lair consists of a series of natural caverns filled by the waters of his former subterranean swamp, connected to a sundered keep known as Omen's End (page 69), where his dwarf and troll thralls keep watch on the city beyond. Underneath the keep stand the forges and acid pools where new trolls are fused with hideous weapons before joining Ouryvax's army.

Adventure Hook. Dwarf spies of Ouryvax have kidnapped the famed alchemist Essery Alvenica and brought her down to the laboratories beneath Omen's End. Essery's apprentice, the halfling Geoveld Whitewhiskers, searches for adventurers willing to find her and bring her back. To do so, the characters must travel to Sunken Revvia and infiltrate Omen's End before the alchemist is forced to give up the secret that Ouryvax seeks—a formula for an elixir that allows a troll to regenerate even after being damaged by the flames they fear.

LOCATIONS IN SUNKEN REVVIA

The remains of Sunken Revvia are filled with shattered ruins, sunken monuments, and monstrous lairs. This section presents the major landmarks of Sunken Revvia, but the decaying city's natural caverns and desolate halls can be expanded with additional locations of your own.

BONES OF PRINCE ARAZUUN

A rotting demonic corpse lies embedded in the stone floor of the cavern, putrid pools of toxic ichor welling around it.

Centuries after the fall of the Nameless King, a demon prince named Arazuun was summoned to the world by a handful of liches loyal to the banished tyrant, who offered the fiend a chance to rule in Sunken Revvia in exchange for helping bring their lord back from his planar prison. However, Arazuun quickly turned against them, and in a terrible battle, the liches smote the demon down, binding him within the cavern floor. The fell magic they used to do so corrupted the demon's body, which began to break down to a pool of black sludge.



Even in death, the ichor released by Arazuun's body is so toxic that none can go near it. The pools surrounding his bones poison all living things and intermittently spawn new demons, including horde demons, vrocks, hezrous, and lone glabrezus. Demon cultists, cult fanatics, and high priests devoted to Arazuun come to this site often, hoping to restore horrid life to the demon prince.

Adventure Hook. Alchemists of Kartan routinely call on adventurers to bring back samples of the ichor of Prince Arazuun, for use in questionable experiments. But a dwarf master **alchemist** of the tower named Josaine Willmott

has a more complicated task for the right adventurers—retrieving a black gemstone held inside the cage of the decaying demon's chest, which she believes to be the fiend's shrunken heart.

DARKSPIRE TOWER

A great tower of black stone set with countless spires and turrets rises above the ruins of Sunken Revvia, ancient magic keeping it standing despite the ravages of time.

During the reign of the Nameless King, mages, sorcerers, and warlocks in service to the tyrant conducted all

SUNKEN REVVIA MAP KEY

- 1. Omen's End
- 2. Mephitic Pools
- 3. Bones of Prince Arazuun
- 4. Fetid Falls
- 5. Fallen Avantys
- 6. Mines of the Damned
- 7. Profane Cathedral
- 8. Heart's Splinter
- 9. Xrake's Scar
- 10. Well of the Underworld
- 11. Darkspire Tower
- 12. Visage of the Nameless King
- 13. Gray Reach

manner of horrible arcane experiments, with the worst of those experiments conducted in Darkspire Tower. This great edifice has been deteriorating for centuries, but its interior can still be accessed from the cavern floor. It can also be reached by way of a secret spiral staircase that cuts unseen into the walls of the cavern alongside the tower, and which eventually snakes up into the lower vaults of Kartan. Tower of the Arcane.

The shattered chambers and turrets of the ruined tower—some cracked off the main edifice and held aloft by magic—are stalked by hideously corrupted **veterans** and aberrant **mages**, **hezrous** and **vrocks** bound by magic, and ravenous hordes of screaming **ghouls** and **ghasts**. Deep beneath the tower, a chamber containing an active archway calls forth undead **shambling mounds** from a distant world.

Adventure Hook. An NPC important to the characters is cursed with an ancient disease no cleric can cure, which is slowly transforming them into a gibbering mouther. An opportunistic mage of Kartan named Gylda the Blood Spider agrees to cure the NPC—but only after the characters recover a set of lost scrolls from Darkspire Tower that contain the rituals required to do so. Gylda gives the characters a magic key for the Darkspire staircase, but that magic expires in five hours, giving the characters a firm deadline to enter the ruins, recover the scrolls, and return before being trapped in Sunken Revvia.

FALLEN AVANTYS

A huge horned draconic skull, mouth agape, reveals a cavern entrance lit up by the glow of molten rock.

The skull of an enormous ancient red dragon half-buried in rubble at the far edge of Sunken Revvia marks the entrance to the cavern of Avantys, where a population of kobolds and goblins mine rich beds of raw gems. A **construct adult red dragon** watches over the site, called Mother Avanta by the kobolds and goblins, and protecting them from the dangers of the sunken city.

The cavern village of Avantys, named after the dragon whose bones still stand here, is hospitable to friendly

visitors, making it a place of respite against the dangers and threats of Sunken Revvia. Under the ever-watchful burning red eyes of Mother Avanta, goblins and kobolds welcome adventurers, and are always eager to trade the fine gemstones they mine and the curious mechanical devices of their own creation.

Adventure Hook. The magical strength of Mother Avanta, who has protected Fallen Avantys for more than five centuries, has begun to wane. A powerful gemstone hidden away in Darkspire Tower can restore the construct to full strength, and the folk of Avantys know they must recruit fearless adventurers to enter the dangerous site and retrieve the gem.

FETID FALLS

Putrid green water cascades down the cavern walls, with faint light shining through it to reveal ramshackle hovels and dwellings hidden behind.

A massive waterfall crashes down one wall of the cavern surrounding Sunken Revvia, echoing across the ruined city. The corrupted water for which Fetid Falls is named shrouds a dilapidated settlement of ramshackle structures attached to the cavern, built of hollow rock, mud, and the skins of underground beasts. Mutated by the corruption of the falls over centuries, a small clan of humanoid- and giant-descended **grimlocks** lives in these structures, surviving by hunting in the tunnels beyond Revvia. Some who have met the grimlocks, who call themselves the People of the White Hand, say that they serve an elf **archmage** queen named Queen Asharena—a figure as beautiful in appearance as her heart is twisted and vile. The grimlocks worship Asharena as a god, doing her bidding until the day they die.

Adventure Hook. Bethena Goldensong, a human priest at the Temple of the Three Sisters, is secretly the sister of Asharena, and has seen visions of what the archmage has become and the tortures she inflicts on those who worship her. She seeks adventurers willing to travel to the Fetid Falls of Sunken Revvia and bring her sister back to her—or to end Asharena's brutal reign.

GRAY REACH

A crumbling tower rises from a mound of crushed rock and scattered bones, around which dozens of skeletons and zombies gather. They stretch their hands toward the white light radiating out where their master holds court at the top of the tower—the very light responsible for draining their souls.

Long ago, the Gray Reach—so named for the lighter shade of its stone against the obsidian of the cavern around it—served as a gateway between the City of Arches and the city of Revvia. Vast spiral staircases inside the Gray Reach once connected to chambers holding translucent disks that would magically rise through open shafts, connecting to a citadel of the Nameless King's armies that was razed at the end of the tyrant's reign.

The cult of Vrys now holds the tower, with the fallen **deva** occupying the roofless uppermost chambers where the lords of the City of Arches above once treated with the lords commanding Revvia below. The shafts leading up through the cavern ceiling have been magically sealed by Vrys to defend their position, though they might reopen should Vrys be defeated and the key controlling those magical seals claimed.

From across Sunken Revvia, followers of Vrys come and pay fealty to their god, unaware that the radiance of the tower is stealing their souls. For Vrys's cursed presence causes the white light that radiates from them to drain the life from the mortals who follow the deva, eventually turning their cultists and cult fanatics into skeletons and zombies. Larger undead, including undead ogres and undead giants, are drawn to the deva's unholy light.

Adventure Hook. Perytus Shieldhollow, a soldier in the Golden Knights, issues an open offer for adventurers willing to travel to the Gray Reach. An old friend and fellow soldier named Thrydwulf has fallen under the spell of Vrys's cult and become one of the deva's chosen, and Perytus is desperate to save him.

HEART'S SPLINTER

A great citadel stands atop a floating island of rock hanging over the vast chasm that splits Sunken Revvia. A number of stone walkways once connected to the floating island, all but one of which have crumbled away.

The citadel of Heart's Splinter sits atop an earthmote floating above the rift of Xrake's Scar that splits Sunken Revvia asunder. Once home to mages dedicated to the Nameless King, the site is named for the splintered state of the shard and the red effluent that coats its rocky sides, leaking out from destroyed laboratories beneath the citadel. The earthmote is hollow, with those laboratories and the magic that holds Heart's Splinter in the air still hidden within it. Only one of the elevated streets of Heaven's Walkway (see below) still connects to the earthmote, and one of the citadel's four guard towers shattered and fell long ago—all signs of how time is slowly tearing the citadel apart.

A central keep inside the citadel is the residence of the hobgoblin warlord General Krash (see "Factions of Sunken Revvia" above). A small host of the hobgoblin's most loyal servants reside with him in the keep, but most of his forces bivouac in ruined buildings below the earthmote.

Adventure Hook. Seeking to destroy Krash in his own domain, Golden Knight commander Lord Bianca Swifthand recruits adventurers to infiltrate Heart's Splinter by way of a forgotten archway in the secret vaults inside the earthmote. She asks the characters to either steal Krash's rod of command, thus breaking his control of his forces, or find and disable the source of magical energy keeping the earthmote afloat.

MEPHITIC POOLS

Dark liquid flows from large iron pipes to fill a series of pools and sinkholes along the edge of Sunken Revvia, giving rise to a toxic ecosystem where corrupted creatures thrive.

Where the waters of the Lost Cisterns flow ever deeper beneath the City of Arches, they are channeled through large iron pipes painted phosphorescent green with poisonous algae and fungus. Three such pipes jut out of the cavern wall surrounding Sunken Revvia, sending streams of acidic water into pools and sinkholes that have eaten away the stone of the cavern. This erosion provides access to even deeper tunnels and chambers that were once the site of a poisonous arboretum for alchemists serving the Nameless King.

Corrupting magic and the toxic waters of the pools have spurred wild plant growth in the form of giant poisonous flowers whose tendrils seek the sustenance of mortal blood. Those who get past those horrors discover that the pools are filled with **ochre jellies**, **gray oozes**, and **black puddings**, and are patrolled by mold-infested **veterans**, fungus-covered **zombies**, and toxic **shambling mounds**.

Within one of the largest of the chambers below the Mephitic Pools, a fractured statue depicting a tentacled figure stands at the center of a pool of acid, tentacles writhing together in front of their body, and their hooded head tilted down. The decomposing bodies of humanoids kneeling as though in prayer face the statue from the edge of the pool. Rumors also speak of a **young green dragon** named Krynthak Shardscale, now known as Krynthak the Infested, who lairs in the caverns below the Mephitic Pools.

Adventure Hook. The elf Avril Whitewillow, a favorite apprentice cook of Sevenge and Gam (see page 24), is near death after having ingested a strange mushroom. A note found in her possession suggests that the mushroom came from an adventurer claiming it had magical properties, and that it was sourced from the Mephitic Pools of Sunken Revvia. Sevenge and Gam are desperate for adventurers to journey to the Mephitic Pools and find another of the mushrooms, then return with it so that it might be studied to create an antidote to its toxicity.

MINES OF THE DAMNED

A smoking spiral-carved mine pit opens up like a hideous infection in the floor of Sunken Revvia, the shrieks of the dead echoing from its depths.

The Mines of the Damned are said to hold more corpses than even the Cliffs of the Dead above the City of Arches. Minions and thralls of the Nameless King were put to work here by the thousands, digging deep into stone suffused by fell magic to uncover relics of power buried there. In lost vaults that were opened up deep in the mines, those servants found the earliest known natural archways, whose study allowed mages serving the tyrant to replicate their power throughout the City of Arches

above. It was also here that explorers serving the Nameless King discovered vast vaults and chambers in which unnatural beings had been trapped for millions of years, and whose life force would then be harvested for power.

Today, the mines are home to thousands of **skeletons**, **zombies**, and **ghouls**, many of which emerge unexpectedly from rockfalls in response to the approach of the living. The countless side passages, tunnels, and chambers that open up off the mines are infested by monsters of this world and others, including **gibbering mouthers**, **chuuls**, and **intellect devourers**.

At the deepest point of the mines, a labyrinth of tunnels is said to eventually lead down to the Vaults of the Nameless King (see page 74), where ancient archways still stand alongside the remnants of unknowable creatures tortured by the tyrant for their power. Though rumors of these sites have been handed down through generations of adventurers, few mortals have laid eyes on these lost chambers and returned to tell the tale.

Adventure Hook. Agents of Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster to the queen, have learned that a faction of the Knights of the Nameless King seek an artifact lost in the Mines of the Damned—a fragment of a key thought to open the First Archway (see page 76) to a deadly void beyond. The spymaster requires adventurers willing to infiltrate the mines and recover the key fragment before the Nameless King's cultists find it first.

OMEN'S END

A fortress along the cavern wall of Revvia has been shattered, its towers and ramparts fallen and its main gate standing open. Where a cleft opens up behind it, sickly steam rises from a fetid subterranean swamp.

Built directly into the cavern wall of Revvia, Omen's End once served as the citadel of the elite guard of the city, and was razed in the final battles against the Nameless King. Barely half the citadel remains standing, but the subterranean cellars beneath the shattered site survive intact, and are home to prisons and torture chambers from which the screams of **specters** still echo.

Where the cavern wall behind the fortress was shattered three centuries after the Nameless King's fall, it opens up to the steaming subterranean swamp lair of the **adult black dragon** Ouryvax the Sallowsworn. **Trolls** and corrupted **stone giants** loyal to the dragon patrol the surviving upper ramparts of the citadel, their presence usually enough of a deterrent to any monsters intent on infiltrating the fortress. Inside the walls, dwarf **smiths** and other folk loyal to Ouryvax spend their days toiling for the dragon. The poisonous swamps behind Omen's End are home to corrupted **treants**, loyal **medusas** and their pet **basilisks**, subservient **lizardfolk**, and the **trolls** who make up the bulk of Ouryvax's armies.

Adventure Hook. The adventurer Kaspian Wintersong, the brother of an ally of the characters, has been captured by trolls in service to Ouryvax and taken to the dungeons

beneath Omen's End. Kaspian's sibling begs the characters to infiltrate the shattered fortress and rescue her brother without awakening the wrath of Ouryvax.

PROFANE CATHEDRAL

A chill light shines from the doors and windows of a grand and horrid temple of red-veined granite.

Over the course of the Nameless King's reign, the tyrant was worshiped as a god. Followers of his false faith built cathedrals in his honor, where his thralls offered their lives to his service. The greatest of these corrupt churches was the Profane Cathedral of Sunken Revvia. The redveined gray granite spires of the cathedral channel unholy power whose chill radiance keeps most monsters away. Statues of twisted and malformed monstrosities decorate the buttresses of the fortress, and stained-glass windows show scenes of ritualistic horror and bloodshed as if to dissuade those who might enter. However, greedy treasure seekers know that powerful and valuable relics can still be found inside the cathedral's abandoned vaults, sacristies, shrines, and libraries.

Powerful **wraiths**, still believing themselves to serve the high priests of the cathedral, lurk in its central chambers of worship, which echo with the clattering of a thousand **skeletons** trying to climb up from the depths of the oubliettes below. Eight undead **high priests** still reside in the cathedral, demanding that their undead parishioners worship their god-king even in death.

Adventure Hook. Seeking to learn more of the mysterious origin of the Nameless King, the famed historian Eldryd Roundcloud wants to send adventurers to the Profane Cathedral. Their goal is the last remaining holy book of the Nameless King, said to be bound in rune-scribed skin and etched bone, and to sit in plain sight in a vestibule of the cathedral.

VISAGE OF THE NAMELESS KING

A titanic figure carved from the stone of the cavern wall towers over the ruins of Sunken Revvia, the face of the statue carved away to leave a featureless mask behind.

The largest known statue of the Nameless King in this world is visible from every part of the ruins of Sunken Revvia. Once the figure's grim eyes beheld the entire city, but with the execution of the curse that washed away nearly all images of the tyrant, the face of the statue melted away into raw stone.

Only a handful of those who have explored Sunken Revvia have ever shared the secret that the statue is hollow. A series of passageways and staircases lead to hidden vaults and chambers within, including pleasure dens established for the Nameless King's most loyal sycophants. Hideous rituals and blood sport were conducted in these hidden chambers, and the souls of those who died here still seek revenge as screaming

specters. Armored **flesh guardians**, each empowered with a unique selection of spells, also wander the halls of these secret vaults to protect them from would-be intruders.

Adventure Hook. A wererat adventurer named Scarred Skyla who spends much of her time in Sunken Revvia came across a key able to access the vaults inside the statue of the Nameless King. Too scared to explore the site herself, Skyla offers the map to any group of adventurers willing to trade for a suitably valuable magic item. She is certain that an item of much greater power—an intelligent frost brand sword named Quickrime—can be found within the treasure vaults of the statue, assuming one lives long enough to acquire it.

WELL OF THE UNDERWORLD

A half-shattered step pyramid rises above a great hole cut into the cavern floor of Revvia, leading down to unknown depths below.

This pyramid was once a sacrificial temple frequented by the more debased followers of the Nameless King. But the battle that created Xrake's Scar caused half the structure to collapse, revealing the well once hidden beneath the temple's foundations. A precarious narrow path winds down the inside of the sinkhole, leading to caves opening up as crevices in the rock. Strange glyphs mark many of these cave entrances.

The shaft of the sinkhole acts as an archway connecting to an unholy world known as the Infernal Pit of Kharysis. **Bearded devils**, **barbed devils**, and **chain devils** routinely rise from the pit to hunt in Sunken Revvia, seeking mortal flesh and souls. These devils serve Krovix the Eternal, a **horned devil** who sits atop a throne of misshapen bone in the depths of Kharysis.

The chambers and halls that once filled the step pyramid are fully exposed and accessible along its shattered interior. Rumors from those who have ventured into the site suggest that a former high priest named Ethelryd, now a **mummy lord**, still rules the ruins of the pyramid, served by **mummies**, **wights**, and **wraiths**.

Adventure Hook. Krovix the Eternal has acquired a terrible soul-stealing hammer that channels power from those dying in and around the City of Arches. The more soul energy the artifact channels, the more powerful the horned devil becomes. The Golden Council and the Mages of Kartan enlist adventurers to delve into the well, find the horned devil, defeat him, and turn the hammer over to the care of the mages.

XRAKE'S SCAR

A huge rift splits open the city of Sunken Revvia like a gaping wound, filled with shattered earthmotes hanging in midair and tendrils of blue and violet smoke twisting up from its obscured depths.

A massive rift cuts through the center of Sunken Revvia, splitting the floor of the great cavern to leave one side standing a hundred feet higher than the other. Before

the coming of the Nameless King, the rift was created during a battle between the fiendish blue dragon Xrake the Relentless, lord of the city-state of Revvia, and the archmage Tryvanus of Krate. Their terrible duel nearly destroyed the city, and claimed the lives of both combatants before it was done.

When Xrake's Scar was formed, it tore open numerous rifts to the Elemental Planes, whose magic causes the rubble and ruins that fell into the scar to float within it as clustered earthmotes. Aberrant **elementals** and other planar beings infest the rocks and half-destroyed buildings that drift within the scar, including the shattered pieces of working arches that erupt with chaotic bolts of energy cutting through space and time. Creatures touched by that energy sometimes tumble forward or back in time, or are drawn to worlds unimaginable.

A great citadel called Vorthrun once stood where the rift opened up, its floating ruins now controlled by a void-touched **dao** named Kreseel. The dao rules over **hezrous**, corrupted **water elementals**, and depraved **cult fanatics** and **mages**, all of them seeking lost relics from the Age of the Nameless King that might open a portal to an endless void and turn the world inside out.

Adventure Hook. Nightmares plague the sleep of famed halfling artist Etgar Ebonhound. He regales every explorer he can find in the City of Arches with fantastic tales of a corrupted dao, a floating fortress, and a portal to a deadly void opening ever wider in the depths of Xrake's Scar. The halfling is desperate to find adventurers brave enough to investigate before all is lost.

MOVING THROUGH SUNKEN REVVIA

Sunken Revvia is a uniformly dangerous site, but a number of slightly safer paths cut through the city and connect its major locations. Some of these paths are well known and easily found. Others are revealed only to those who look carefully enough to find them.

Using the routes in this section to connect the locations of Sunken Revvia lets you set up the city as a "dungeon of dungeons," with major and secondary locations instead of rooms, and routes of travel instead of hallways.

SHATTERED STREETS

Used by the least servants of the Nameless King more than a millennium ago, the cavern-level streets of Sunken Revvia now lie in ruins. Only a handful of streets are still easily traversable, connecting a few of the city's locations. Others disappear into huge sinkholes or end at mountains of rubble from the collapse of buildings and overhanging walkways. Traveling the shattered streets is dangerous, with **bandits**, **cultists**, **grimlocks**, and fouler monsters lying always in wait for those foolish enough to do so.

OPEN CAVERN

A few foolish adventurers coming to Sunken Revvia for the first time believe that flying can give them free

access to the city. They soon find out how wrong they are. Countless flying horrors haunt the open cavern above the city, including **giant bats**, **gargoyles**, **harpies** lurking in ruined towers, and demonic **vrocks** and **young dragons** warring for territory. Meanwhile, threats such as chaotic **mages** on the ground can't help but throw deadly ranged attacks at those who dare fly above the city, reveling in being presented with such easy targets.

HEAVEN'S WALKWAY

Once used by the highest-ranking members of the Nameless King's sycophants, this raised walkway has been partially destroyed over centuries but still connects several locations in the city. In the past, servants allowed to use the walkway would use teleportation archways to reach it, avoiding having to walk among laborers, soldiers, and thralls who traveled below. With those archways long gone, travelers can access the raised walkway by climbing piles of collapsed rock or clambering across from destroyed buildings.

DRUDGEWAYS

The Drudgeways is the name given to the ancient sewers twisting beneath the streets of Sunken Revvia, which function now as a network of tunnels. Collapsed streets expose access to the Drudgeways, whose many tunnels often dead-end in rubble or open up to the shattered cliff walls of Xrake's Scar. Many who travel these tunnels know of a secret passage in the Drudgeways that leads to Fallen Avantys.

SCAR'S STRIDE

A series of natural clefts along the precarious edges of Xrake's Scar became a pair of rough pathways over centuries of use, now known as Scar's Stride. The pathways traverse the center of the city, partially covered by the lip of the chasm to provide travelers with better cover from observation than traveling the open streets.

TREXA'S TUNNELS

Named for the leader of the wererat gang whose yearslong excavation work over the last century connected the natural tunnels weaving through the cavern walls of Sunken Revvia, Trexa's Tunnels provide covered access to roughly half the city. At multiple points, the tunnels open to overlooks that give travelers a full view of the ruins below. However, many of the city's dangerous predators lurk in the tunnels, including **goblins**, **wererats**, **bandits**, **cultists**, and **grimlocks**, all feeding on each other or hoping to catch a wayward traveler.

NPCS OF SUNKEN REVVIA

While many of the inhabitants of Sunken Revvia would rather devour adventurers body and soul on first sight, a number of fellow explorers, long-term residents, and other open but wary folk might instead engage in meaningful conversation and even alliance. During their time spent in the subterranean city, the characters might meet any of the following notable NPCs.

SKRYFF THE UNSEEN (WERERAT SURVIVOR)

A mangy, rat-like humanoid peers out from hiding, giving a yellow-toothed smile and a friendly wave.

The wereat Skryff might be considered one of the luckiest creatures to ever delve into the ruins of Sunken Revvia. Once a spy for the Black Hand, Skryff's propensity to double-, triple-, and quadruple-cross eventually became too much for even his most stringent supporters. But when four guild assassins sneaked into his den, they found nothing but a note of apology detailing Skryff's plans to relocate to Sunken Revvia. The bosses of the Black Hand let him go—for how long could a lone wererat survive in the deadly depths?

Quite a long time, apparently. For in addition to his luck, Skryff absconded with a *ring of invisibility* and a pair of *boots of elvenkind*. Now, even when he doesn't see danger coming, that danger rarely spots him first.

For five years, Skryff has explored Sunken Revvia, forming alliances with the underlings of the city's rising and falling factions, and establishing long-term ties to the kobolds and goblins of Fallen Avantys. Skryff is loving even if not exactly loyal, enjoying helping people and making new friends—even if those friends happen to be enemies of the last friends he made.

Skryff isn't easily intimidated and grows bashful when flattered, but he enjoys interesting people and good company. If he feels threatened, he disappears behind cover and uses his boots and ring to fade away for a while—a technique that's saved his life countless times.

Adventure Hook. Skryff has collected many maps showing secret locations in Sunken Revvia, and is willing to trade with any adventurers who can retrieve a relic in a ruined vault known as the Lake of Stone. Since hearing about the relic, the wererat has become obsessed by it—a petrified tattooed finger of a demon, capable of casting the maze spell once. A pair of bulettes dwell in the vault, however, having destroyed most of the structure to leave statues, pillars, and cracked walls standing in a dangerous field of razor-sharp shattered stone.

MALYN THE DUSTWALKER (SHUNNED MAGE)

An orc in clean, well-cut robes sits upon the stones of a fallen archway, his fine appearance a stark contrast to the ruined city around him.

Once a scholar of the Mages of Kartan, Malyn left that order after numerous clashes with its leaders. Last seen descending the stairwell running from Kartan into Darkspire in Sunken Revvia—a promise of certain death

in the view of his fellow mages—he has managed to survive for more than a decade in the ruined city.

An accomplished orc **archmage**, Malyn seeks the greatest knowledge Sunken Revvia has to offer, but balances his drive for lore with the need to survive in the city. Though many of those doomed to wander Revvia are quickly destroyed or driven to helplessness by the horrors and dangers there, Malyn has so far managed to keep his physical body and mental faculties intact. Two **stone guardians** named Mountainhewer and Stonerift protect the mage since he found them in a long-forgotten vault. A bracelet on the mage's wrist lets him redirect damage he takes to either of the two constructs.

Malyn isn't easily intimidated, but he is prone to flattery. Like most mages or former mages loyal to Kartan, he considers himself superior to many other humanoids, and despite his own status as a fallen mage, he scoffs at spellcasters who do not belong to any academic order. Malyn despises "the sycophant" Velenda Thyrade, the Kartan mage in service to the fallen deva Vrys (see "Cult of Vrys" on page 64).

Adventure Hook. Cultists of Vrys have been hunting Malyn, based on information provided to the fallen deva by Velenda Thyrade. Now Malyn hopes to recruit adventurers willing to hunt down Velenda and eliminate her. Though Velenda spends most of her time in the Gray Reach, the characters might get the drop on her when she travels to the Well of the Underworld with a group of cult fanatics, veterans, and bearded devils. There, she channels necrotic energy into a glyph-scribed cup to bring back to Vrys, who drinks the black ichor once a fortnight. Malyn wants Velenda dead, and offers a duplicate of the cup the mage carries to the characters as payment—with that cup magically making its contents poisonous to Vrys, potentially weakening the deva before any confrontation with the characters.

GOLGORON (FALLEN DEVIL)

A black-scaled devil steps from the shadows, holding both hands up in a sign of peace.

Like many of those who step through the arches from other worlds, Golgoron the **horned devil** has lost all memory of their former life (as detailed in "Introductory Scenario: Golgoron Arises" on page 9). Despite the devil's hulking fiendish form, the people of the City of Arches accepted him openly. Representatives of the Golden Knights took a special interest in the devil, loving the idea of a fifteen-foot-tall fiend armored in gold to show off the strength and diversity of their force.

In their new life, however, Golgoron had no taste for violence in any form. Apprenticing at first to Sevenge and Gam (see page 24), the devil took a liking to the culinary arts before eventually settling on pottery as a trade. But Golgoron would not know peace for long, as memories of their former life returned and the call of their siblings whispered to them from the shadows.

Golgoron knew that they would need to face what they once were to make peace with who they had become—and that doing so meant traveling to Sunken Revvia.

Having dwelled for a time in the ruined city, Golgoron seeks knowledge of their former life in hopes of understanding and making peace with it. Ancient tomes in lost libraries have provided details from that life, talking of how Golgoron greedily fought their way to power among their fiendish kin. But the devil has also learned of the existence of their siblings (see below)—including the horned devil Krovix the Eternal who resides past the Well of the Underworld.

Though Golgoron makes no signs of threats or violence, the denizens of Sunken Revvia avoid the horned devil, fearing what the fiend once was or might become again. A small cult of Golgoron thrives in the city, seeking to restore the devil's memories, drives, and ambitions through the recovery of a relic called *Golgoron's black-iron gauntlet*. Golgoron fears what the recovery of the gauntlet might portend, but believes that they can only ever be truly whole if they face their original self.

Golgoron is not easily intimidated or flattered, but is friendly with any humanoids who do not attack them. The devil is known to offer travelers in Sunken Revvia seasoned vegetable-and-mushroom skewers they learned to make from Sevenge and Gam. If faced with violence, Golgoron takes flight and leaves their attackers behind.

Adventure Hook. Golgoron has learned that four of their siblings are trapped in Sunken Revvia. In addition to Krovix the Eternal, Golgoron knows of a bone devil named Ithlyx Graymarrow, caught by magical wards in caverns beneath the Mephitic Pools. Another sibling is an ice devil named Qellex Rimeblade, who serves as an enforcer for the fallen deva Vrys. The last is the chain devil Kavryax Bloodbarbed, currently bound by Queen Asharena at the Fetid Falls and serving as her executioner. Golgoron hopes to release all their siblings from their captivity in the mortal realm, and the devil realizes that violence is likely the only way to accomplish this. They want to recruit adventurers to destroy the other devils, knowing that doing so will free their siblings from their bondage in the material world.

SUNKEN REVVIA LOCATIONS SUMMARY

This section summarizes some of the notable locations of Sunken Revvia. Use this information to reference locations while prepping or running your game.

Bones of Prince Arazuun. The slain corpse of a demon prince bound within the stone of the cavern floor oozes toxic blood that spawns lesser demons.

Darkspire Tower. This ruined tower was once used for the most debased experiments of the servants of the Nameless King, and is now filled with corrupted creatures and deadly magic.

Fallen Avantys. The half-buried skull of an ancient red dragon marks the gateway to a village of kobold and goblin miners and crafters.

Fetid Falls. Putrid green water cascades down the cavern wall to shroud a ramshackle grimlock settlement, under the rulership of the elf Queen Asharena.

Gray Reach. A ruined tower once offered magical access to the City of Arches above, and is now the seat of power of the fallen deva Vrys and their cult.

Heart's Splinter. Atop a floating earthmote, a crumbling citadel is the base of operations of the hobgoblin general Krash and his forces, who plot to rule Sunken Revvia.

Mephitic Pools. Water fed by poisoned pipes feeds a pool filled with deadly oozes, and eats away at the cavern floor to create access to caverns and chambers below.

Mines of the Damned. A huge pit mine descends to an even larger maze of tunnels and shafts filled with thousands of undead—formerly thralls of the Nameless King who dug down to seek access to lost chambers filled with magic and alien creatures.

Omen's End. A fallen fortress carved from the cavern wall now opens up to the swamp lair of the black dragon Ouryvax the Sallowsworn, and is home to the dragon's followers.

SUNKEN REVVIA ENCOUNTERS

d20	Encounter
1	Several cultists and cult fanatics in service to the fallen deva Vrys demand that the characters come treat with their god, who seeks information on the politics of the world above.
2	A red half-dragon veteran named Commander Valentyn Flamehammer leads a band of hobgoblins and bugbears hunting for a kobold spy escaped from Ouryvax the Sallowsworn. The kobold spy is actually a scout and hunter of Fallen Avantys.
3	Two ettins threaten a band of kobold scouts from Fallen Avantys.
4	A statue outside a collapsed library reveals itself to be a gorgon whose breath activates several suits of animated armor in the area.
5	A young blue dragon scout serving Ouryvax flies past overhead, ridden by a mage in service to the dragon lord.
6	A section of a nearby walkway collapses, exposing black liquid trapped within the stone that animates into black puddings .
7	A wraith devoted to the Nameless King floats through Sunken Revvia as if a lord, attended to by specter servants and skeleton guards. The undead demands tribute from the characters, and erupts into raging violence if told of the tyrant's fall.
8	A pillar of blue fire suddenly erupts from a shattered monument, with a number of violent blue-flame fire elementals close behind.
9	A mage artifact hunter of Kartan demands to be escorted back to Darkspire so she can return to the City of Arches. She has no key to the stairs, however, and has been taken over by an ice devil who tears free from her body and attacks if exposed.
10	Two bulettes chase several goblin miners of Fallen Avantys out of a collapsed section of the Drudgeways.

Profane Cathedral. An unholy temple to the Nameless King built from red-veined granite still glows with unholy radiance, and is occupied by undead priests, wraiths, and skeletons still serving their long-fallen master.

Visage of the Nameless King. A towering statue of the Nameless King, now faceless, rises above the ruined city. Rumors speak of the statue being hollow, and concealing a host of undiscovered chambers and treasures.

Well of the Underworld. A half-shattered step pyramid surrounds a vast sinkhole, said to be an archway to the infernal realm of Kharysis.

Xrake's Scar. This huge rift splits Sunken Revvia in two, with elemental magic keeping rubble earthmotes afloat within it.

ENCOUNTERS IN SUNKEN REVVIA

As the characters explore the dangerous sites of Sunken Revvia, you can make use of random encounters to help bring the subterranean city to life or to set up larger adventures. Roll a d20 or choose from the encounters on the Sunken Revvia Encounters table, or use the table as inspiration for encounters of your own.

- An armored **hill giant** bounty hunter serving general Krash, attended to by armored **ogres**, has been ordered to slay the characters by Mother Sevella, Krash's night hag advisor.
- 12 A **night hag** takes her three **hell hounds** out for a walk, before spotting the characters and whispering, "Fetch ..."
- Two fiend-worshiping driders lead a pack of phase spiders on a hunt for Pelas Northwhisper, a goblinoid dimensional traveler who phases in and out of the world.
- 14 Adelyn Moonstone, a dapper vampire, is out for an evening stroll. Other monsters cringe and react with horror each time he walks up and says hello.
- 15 The characters discover the petrified remains of several humanoids, before being confronted by a brother and sister pair of **medusas** who were thrown out of the City of Arches a century previous.
- 16 Vampire spawn and their ghoul thralls hunt throughout the ruined city for fresh blood.
- 17 An **oni** takes the guise of a gnome explorer named Orwyn Faeriesmile when they ask the characters to help them return home. In reality, the oni plots to infiltrate the town and disable Mother Avanta.
- The infamous assassin Brekkyn Kingchaser and his band of thugs and spies is hunting down the dragonborn adventurer Vaughn Swordtooth, who hides somewhere in Sunken Revvia.
- 19 A corpse chained up to a monument animates into a hideous chain devil, who wants to slay enough mortal creatures to return themself to hell.
- Finola Forgewhisper, a haughty dwarven **mage** of Kartan, hunts for a powerful relic. Protected by two **invisible stalkers**, she believes herself well capable of dealing with the dangers of Sunken Revvia.

VAULTS OF THE NAMELESS KING

In the most remote depths beneath the City of Arches lie the Vaults of the Nameless King—the personal residence of the tyrant, where all his foul plots and horrid ambitions were formulated and finalized. When the Nameless King fell, the locations of these vaults became the stuff of legend. Countless soldiers and explorers who sought them lost their lives, and of the very few who stumbled upon the doors to the vaults, fewer still ever found a way inside.

Inside the vaults, nothing has changed in the thousand years of the Nameless King's absence. Artifacts of tremendous power, alien beings imprisoned by stone and magic, and treasures beyond mortal comprehension await anyone able to open the vaults—and to survive what lurks inside.

The Vaults of the Nameless King are a suitable adventure location for high-level characters, and might prove deadly to characters of even mid-high level.

TRAVELING TO THE VAULTS

The Vaults of the Nameless King are all but impossible to reach. Some are completely cut off from the rest of the world, requiring an archway and a key to enter. Others are protected by the most powerful and terrible monsters lurking in the depths below the City of Arches. While rumors and legends of the vaults circulate constantly in the city, little unassailable evidence of their existence, even in the forms of maps or keys, has ever been found. The only known access point to the vaults is said to lie within labyrinthine tunnels beyond the Mines of the Damned in Sunken Revvia (see page 68), but those tunnels are a deadly gauntlet that has destroyed countless adventurers.

It is said that lore of the vaults is known to certain devils who once served the Nameless King, and who would be willing to trade that knowledge for true names. Other rumors whisper that such information still lingers in the memories of dead gods. As with any map or key allowing access to the vaults, such lore would be equal in worth to any king's treasury or dragon's hoard.

SECRETS AND CLUES OF THE VAULTS

During their other adventures and while spending time in the City of Arches, the characters might learn one or more secrets and clues of the Vaults of the Nameless King. Drop in any of the following secrets and clues wherever they best fit during your game:

 While the Nameless King's reach stretched across countless realms and worlds, his greatest treasures and most powerful artifacts were held secure in hidden vaults deep beneath the City of Arches.

- The Vaults of the Nameless King can't be accessed by mundane means, and are hidden beyond keyed archways or in sites requiring powerful magic to reach.
- Dangerous otherworldly entities who once served the Nameless King might have information regarding how to reach the vaults and what they hold—for the right price.
- Even the most powerful adventurers will find themselves hard pressed to survive the traps and guardians still protecting the vaults a millennium after the Nameless King's fall.
- The Nameless King is said to have sequestered himself away in his vaults for years at a time, even as he maintained perfect knowledge of what was going on in the many worlds he had conquered.
- Many powerful creatures were imprisoned in the vaults of the Nameless King, and remain there even after a thousand years.
- One of the vaults contains a huge archway connecting the world to the Astral Sea. It's said that the Nameless King had a vessel that can travel through this arch.
- One of the vaults surrounds the very first archway, whose magical workings allowed the Nameless King to build countless other archways and invade multiple worlds
- The Nameless King possessed a number of crystal spheres that granted him the ability to peer into any corner of his realm, and to control the minds of those he observed.
- The Nameless King's treasury is said to hold artifacts plundered from many worlds—and to be the largest treasure hoard in existence.

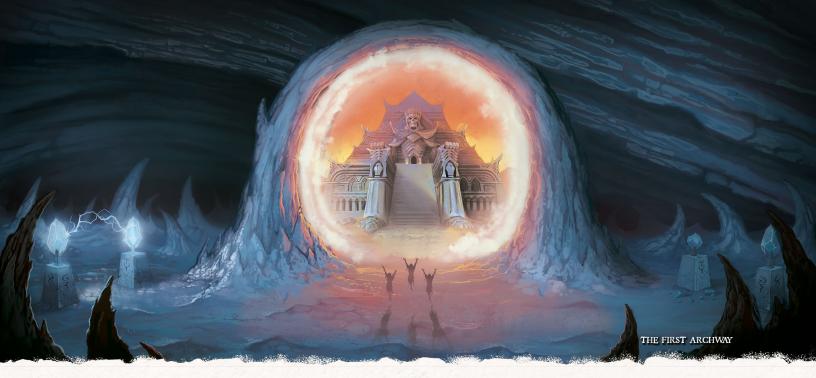
HIGH-LEVEL ADVENTURE

The Vaults of the Nameless King are intended to serve as the adventuring grounds of truly high-level characters. For you as the GM, this is where the gloves *really* come off. These dungeons and locations aren't fair. They're not balanced. They're potentially deadly to all who step inside them, regardless of what adventures they've had before.

Foreshadow the threat of the Vaults of the Nameless King. Stress that many know of the vaults, but not how to find them or to get inside. But everyone who's heard of the vaults knows the danger they represent. Not just the threat of death, but of the loss of one's soul—or the destruction of the world itself.

The Vaults of the Nameless King are the adventuring sites that, when the players of lower-level characters inquire about them, make you say, "Yeah, those aren't for you"—even as you let them dream of the dangers and treasures held within.

And if the characters ever do dare to find and open such vaults? Unleash hell.



LOCATIONS IN THE VAULTS

No one knows the full number or extents of the Vaults of the Nameless King, but a number of the best-known vaults continue to be the center of rumor and legend. In addition to the vaults detailed here, you can make any dungeon-based site part of the Nameless King's legacy in your own campaign.

THE ATTENDANT'S STUDY

Hundreds of candles drip down the sides of every horizontal surface in this small, round-walled study. Dozens of books, scrolls, and tablets lie scattered about, all of them scorched where they once bore the name of the Nameless King.

Few mortals were ever allowed to enter the Vaults of the Nameless King, let alone allowed to live there. A human sage named Ranier Vanderbright was a notable exception. Though never undead, Ranier lived in these vaults for nearly two thousand years, instilled here since the vaults were first constructed by the fell power of the Nameless King.

Kept alive with mysterious magic tattooed across every inch of his skin, Ranier served as the Nameless King's attendant and personal scribe for centuries, recording campaigns and activities across hundreds of worlds. As a result, the attendant's study holds the greatest single collection of the history of the Nameless King across all known worlds.

Small wooden doors lead off from Ranier's study to a seemingly endless network of small libraries, studies, and storage rooms. These rooms float within a vast extraplanar labyrinth, stretching up and down through an infinite shaft of impossible staircases, and haunted by legions of wraiths.

Adventure Hook. To understand the scope of the Nameless King's history of conquest—and to ensure his true banishment and demise—Vinnic Longshanks of the

Seekers of the Sun (see pages 22 and 30) asks the characters to travel to the Vaults of the Nameless King and recover one or more of Ranier's tomes. Savandra Thricecursed, archmage of Kartan (page 20), seeks the lore of Ranier's study as well, and has sent her most formidable treasure seekers—a group of ruthless mercenaries known as the Crimson Crows—to recover that lore at any cost.

AUDIENCE HALL

In one of the few vaults where the Nameless King allowed outsiders, a mystical silver pool once served as part of the tyrant's quest for power.

This great vault was carved out as a series of antechambers that served as meeting rooms for lieutenants and other important allies of the Nameless King, alongside map rooms, studies, private scrying vaults, and archways to other key locations of the tyrant's realm.

All these side chambers led to an enormous central hall where the Nameless King would hold court. His great throne there was formed from a titan's skull and flanked by four huge **iron guardians**, who protected the tyrant alongside **doom knight** and **lich** bodyguards. It is likely that all these guardians stand there still.

A huge pool of gleaming silver liquid in the center of the audience hall gave the Nameless King and his lieutenants a way to scry upon any world or plane as part of preparing their plans for domination.

Adventure Hook. The liquid that filled the Nameless King's scrying pool is legendary for its value to divination magic. Savra Silverhand, an **alchemist** of Kartan, is recruiting adventurers willing to enter the Nameless King's audience hall and return with a single vial of the liquid. She possesses a scroll imbued with unique teleportation magic, found in the depths of one of the tyrant's other citadels. According to her research, the scroll will take the characters close to the audience hall—and most likely can be used to exit the vault again.

NOLNOD

This ancient forgotten prison once contained the most powerful and hated enemies of the Nameless King—and perhaps still does.

After the Nameless King's demise, the creatures he doomed to eternal torment in his donjon remained trapped in cells whose magic extended their lives, alongside many of the tyrant's most vile torturers. Though some prisoners finally succumbed to death, others remain alive still, bound and broken after long centuries.

The creatures imprisoned by the Nameless King include **balors**, **pit fiends**, and even a fallen **solar**. One chamber of the donjon holds heroes turned to vampires, trapped eternally in silver-lined sarcophagi. The Nameless King's prize prisoner is an emaciated godling plucked from the Astral Plane and encased in an anti-divination sphere that prevents any magic from revealing their location.

Adventure Hook. Grace Ebonlight, caretaker of the Temple of the Three Sisters (page 25), has heard a call from a divine child claiming to have been trapped underground for a thousand years. The creature whispers of a threat that promises the destruction of the world—unless they are freed. Grace seeks adventurers willing to brave the dangers of the Nameless King's vaults to find and rescue this poor creature and prevent an apocalypse.

THE FIRST ARCHWAY

A natural archway deep beneath the earth, perhaps a million years old, once served as the catalyst for the Nameless King's obsession—connecting worlds through hundreds of archways and conquering all he found there.

A series of warded stone doors protects an ancient cavern holding the remains of dead primordials, hundreds of thousands of years old. At the center of this ageless site stands the First Archway—a natural stone arch over forty feet high, filled with mist through which the images of countless worlds can be seen.

A network of now-dormant crystalline obelisks throughout the cavern once channeled energy from this immensely powerful archway to smaller archways in side chambers, each connected to the life-devouring machines the Nameless King installed on other worlds. A pedestal standing near the archway once held a black sphere used by the Nameless King to power the archway, along with the rest of those machines.

Dread wraiths, dread knights, and **skeletal tyrannosaurus rexes** still roam the cavern of the First Archway, ready to destroy any creatures who trespass here while they await the return of their king. An **empyrean dread knight champion** stands guard over the archway itself, along with a host of **giant ape zombies** who awaken from their long slumber in response to any intrusion.

Adventure Hook. In an abandoned vault deep in the Deadlands west of the City of Arches (see page 92), a debased group of zealots known as the Cult of Endless Days has discovered the black sphere that once operated



the First Archway. The cultists plan to use the sphere to enter the archway cavern, then tap into the power of any still-functioning life-draining machines in other worlds to fuel an apocalyptic ritual. Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster to the queen, is recruiting powerful adventurers to travel through a secret archway in the city, thought to connect to the cavern where the First Archway stands, on a mission to stop the cult and recover the sphere.

LABORATORY

The ruins of hundreds of profane laboratories overseen by the Nameless King's followers can be found across multiple worlds, but none ever rivaled the tyrant's personal laboratory below the City of Arches.

Vast chambers in the laboratory vault of the Nameless King still hold the creatures the tyrant studied to gain access to their power, or which he sought to augment with arcana or mechanical improvements.

One chamber in the vault contains a black, oily pool that is a massive **black pudding** pulled from another world, and whose pseudopods can drag victims across planar boundaries. Another contains a **construct tarrasque** forged of adamantine. A great cage in the laboratory holds a bound **balor**, their arms and part of their head replaced with clockwork and alchemical devices that belch acid, fire explosive glass cylinders, and create auras of flesh-searing radiance. Dozens of similar horrid creations can be found throughout the lab, built around undead, aberrant, and fiendish creatures alike.

Adventure Hook. The Nameless King's most vile experiments are documented in a tome bound in fiendish leather and known as the *Codex of Creation*. Recent divinations suggest that the codex is hidden somewhere in the Nameless King's laboratory. Archmage Savandra Thricecursed of Kartan wants it, and is willing to pay a king's ransom to adventurers who can locate and secure it. At the same time, Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster to the queen, is equally committed to ensuring the codex does not end up in the archmage's hands.

LAKE OF WORLDS

In the hidden depths, a plane-spanning lake and a cavernous archway allowed the Nameless King to explore worlds beyond number and the vast spaces in between.

A huge set of black-iron doors opens upon a vast natural cavern holding a dark lake, whose far shore is obscured by swirling gray mists. Along the shore floats a massive black-iron ship set with wing-like sails of woven gold. A narrow dock provides access to a single door set into the ship's hull, just above the waterline.

This ship, the *Nightstar*, once served as the Nameless King's personal astral vessel. Crossing the lake and entering the mists eventually reveals a huge archway opening up to the Astral Plane, large enough for the *Nightstar* to pass through. Since the tyrant's fall, the vessel has stood idle in the inky waters of the lake.

Several worked-stone chambers open up off the cavern, each containing stores of strange crystals that fuel the magical ship. The crystals are attended to by **stone giant constructs** who serve as caretakers for the vessel, but have begun to crumble over the centuries. If communicated with, the constructs issue warnings of a great white **kraken** who lurks in the lake, and who can grasp vessels and hurl them through the arch and into the Astral Sea.

Adventure Hook. Captain Haveran Skydancer, a famed halfling explorer of the Astral Plane, has learned of the powerful astral vessel held in the Nameless King's vaults and yearns to claim it, having obtained a featureless blackiron rod that he believes acts as a key to pilot the vessel. Skydancer seeks powerful adventurers to help him reach and enter the vault, deal with its threats, and pilot the Nightstar out into the Astral Sea.

MENAGERIE

Each time the Nameless King claimed new realms and worlds for his domain, the most unusual creatures found there were transported to his own personal menagerie deep in his private vaults.

The magic that kept the creatures of the Nameless King's great menagerie alive persisted after the tyrant's fall. As a result, many of the creatures he claimed still wander the halls of the menagerie or remain bound in magical cages, their minds broken from endless captivity.

Tales of the menagerie describe a titanic remorhaz once held there, alongside an invisible dire tyrannosaurus rex whose skin was marked with magical glyphs. A huge tank in the vault contained a psionic-empowered kraken, while extradimensional spheres held purple worms and other massive creatures. Cages that shattered long ago released hundreds of horrors into the menagerie, including packs of hell hounds, gibbering mouthers, and a massive pyrohydra. The magic of the menagerie has kept these creatures alive over the centuries, but all are eager to devour any fresh meat that comes calling.

Adventure Hook. One of the Nameless King's most treasured creatures was said to have been a faerie dragon named Covolo, whose knowledge spans millennia and covers multiple worlds. Gnome artificer Darven Malathond, the caretaker of the Observatory of Infinite Skies (page 23), has recently been visited by prophetic dreams in which the faerie dragon has revealed that she

is alive but dying. Darven is desperate to find powerful adventurers willing to find a way into the menagerie, battle its horrors, rescue the faerie dragon, and bring her back to the City of Arches.

PERSONAL STUDY

As his domain expanded through ever more worlds, the Nameless King would seek isolation more often, retreating for months at a time to the personal study that was one of his most prized vaults.

The personal study of the Nameless King included a private library holding some of the rarest and most dangerous texts in the multiverse, a scrying chamber holding dozens of multicolored crystal spheres able to reach into multiple worlds and the minds of creatures perceived there, and an isolation chamber in which he could lose himself in the embrace of nothingness. Some of the oldest legends of the Nameless King suggest that the perfect emptiness of the isolation chamber was where the tyrant first heard the voice of the demon prince Ibraxus of Choul.

Several arcane-empowered **iron guardians**, bound **ice devils** and **horned devils**, and **invisible stalker assassins** protect the study, along with a series of devastating traps that only the Nameless King can dismiss.

Adventure Hook. Adel Rosethorn, fence of the Black Hand in the Lower Reaches (see "Adel's Curio Shop" on page 42), recently came across a glyph-scribed finger bone said to have belonged to the Nameless King, and which functions as a key to the tyrant's study and a bypass for some of its deadliest traps. Rosethorn seeks adventurers who can claim a specific artifact from the study for an unnamed buyer—a silvered crystal ball among the multicolored spheres in the Nameless King's scrying chamber, for which the buyer has offered several powerful magic items in trade.

SOUL TOMB

This vault, hidden in the dark spaces between worlds, contains the first soul vessel of the Nameless King—one of the most dangerous objects in this world and those beyond.

As an archlich, the Nameless King was known to have split his soul into several vessels, feeding his power from across multiple worlds. Rumors suggest that his first and most powerful soul vessel rests in an extradimensional tomb in the hidden vaults beneath the City of Arches, accessible only by using secret rituals to channel the power of the First Archway (above). Incomplete depictions of the vessel suggest it is an egg-shaped object, within which writhes a radiant being—a trapped god who funnels the energy of the souls of the dead into the Nameless King. The failure of the celestial-led armies that defeated the Nameless King to find this vault is what forced them to imprison the archlich rather than destroying him—and what allows the tyrant's followers to dream of restoring him to power one day.

The Nameless King's god-fueled soul vessel is just one of many artifacts to be found within the black-iron walls of this tomb. The vessel rests deep in a pool of pure necrotic essence, which drips from an obelisk scribed with glowing glyphs, set in a circle of one-way archways to the worlds the Nameless King visited most often. Other areas within the tomb include armories and libraries of spellbooks, all intended to let the Nameless King rearm himself should he ever be defeated to the point when his body would need to reform in the tomb.

A trio of **demiliches** known as the Attendants protect the tomb, along with several **wraith lords** empowered by demonic essence, **dread knights** bound to guard the tomb against any intrusion, and the **stone guardians** and **skeletal marilith tomb guardians** they command.

Adventure Hook. Rumors have reached the Golden Knights that a historian of the Mages of Kartan believes they have found an arch key able to access the Nameless King's tomb by way of the dead world of Arkus (see page 103). Royal spymaster Roselyn Zeshe and commander Bianca Swifthand seek powerful and discreet adventurers willing to steal this key from Kartan, journey to Arkus, then use the key at an archway there to enter the Nameless King's tomb. Once inside the tomb, the characters must find a way to either steal or destroy the tyrant's first soul vessel—and perhaps end his threat forever.



TEMPLE OF IBRAXUS

This great temple at the heart of the Nameless King's vaults is dedicated to the demon prince Ibraxus—the one foe to whom the tyrant bent the knee.

When his exploration of other worlds and planes brought the Nameless King to the world of Choul, he faced the demon prince Ibraxus and recognized a power greater than his own. Dozens of wizards and priests oversaw the magical construction of a massive temple to Ibraxus and the power of Choul within the Nameless King's vaults, carving it out inside a great cavern. When the temple was completed, the Nameless King killed every one of those architects, who still lurk within its sealed halls. Dozens of undead **priests**, **mages**, and **dread knights** serve the tyrant's majordomo of the temple, a high priest **mummy lord** named Alssavar the Silent.

After the Nameless King's fall, the floor of the great central hall of the temple collapsed into a sinkhole portal leading to the world of Choul. Side chambers of the temple include summoning halls, libraries of profane scrolls and tablets, and sealed chambers holding undead spawned from hundreds of sacrifices to the demon prince.

Adventure Hook. Upon the altar in the central hall of the temple of Ibraxus rests an unholy artifact—an iron eye surrounded by squirming ethereal tentacles, known as the Eye of Choul. Lord Bianca Swifthand of the Golden Knights has learned that high-ranking members of the Children of Ibraxus (page 29) and their hired mercenaries have recently discovered the entrance to the temple and are intent on finding the eye. She needs to recruit powerful adventurers to enter the temple, battle their way through its undead servants, and seize the eye before the cultists can claim it.

TREASURY OF WORLDS

Of all the legendary sites to be found within the Vaults of the Nameless King, the tyrant's treasury is the most coveted—and the most unattainable.

The Treasury of Worlds is the Nameless King's greatest treasure vault, said to be filled with unimaginable mundane wealth, alongside priceless magical staffs, robes, rings, and weapons. But the treasury also holds the greatest artifacts of the many worlds plundered by the Nameless king. One such artifact is a golden sarcophagus containing the remains of the titan king of Arkus (see page 103), defeated and entombed by the Nameless King more than fifteen hundred years ago. Another is the legendary *staff of worlds*, which the Nameless King used to activate the uncountable archways across his domain.

In addition to deadly magical wards set against intruders, the treasury is protected by **iron guardians** empowered with unique suites of spells. **Invisible stalkers** and **dread wraiths** flow through the treasury's many chambers, armed with soul-draining weapons.

Adventure Hook. Pete Swiftfingers, a young gnome rogue of the Lower Reaches, recently "found" a map

supposedly showing the convoluted route through the Mines of the Damned to the adamantine doors of the Nameless King's treasure vault. He dares powerful adventurers to enter the vault and bring him a single coin from the mountains of treasure rumored to be found within. If they do so, they earn Pete's respect—otherwise, they have only his scorn and disappointment.

VAULTS OF THE NAMELESS KING LOCATION SUMMARY

This section summarizes the notable locations of the Vaults of the Nameless King described above. Use this information to reference locations while prepping or running your game.

Audience Hall. In this great chamber, the Nameless King held court over important allies and prepared his plans for domination.

Donjon. The Nameless King's most hated foes were trapped in the cells of this vault for eternity.

First Archway. The first portal archway was discovered in this ancient cavern, providing a blueprint for the creation of the City of Arches and for the Nameless King's worlds-spanning domain.

Laboratory. Horrid experiments were conducted here to steal the power of otherworldly creatures, or to improve them with magical and mechanical augmentations for service to the Nameless King.

Lake of Worlds. A dark lake in a vast natural cavern flows through a great arch into the Astral Sea, and is home to the Nameless King's personal astral vessel, the *Nightstar*.

Menagerie. The strangest creatures found across the many worlds of the Nameless King's domain were imprisoned and placed on display here.

Personal Study. The Nameless King spent much time in his personal study, home to his private libraries and a scrying chamber whose crystal spheres let him perceive any point in his domain.

Soul Tomb. Having split his soul into multiple vessels, the Nameless King protected the first and most powerful of those soul vessels here.

Temple of Ibraxus. The Nameless King cultivated the power of Choul in this temple dedicated to the demon prince Ibraxus.

Treasury of Worlds. Perhaps the greatest store of wealth in any world, the treasury of the Nameless King holds unimaginable wealth and the most powerful artifacts of the multiverse.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE VAULTS OF THE NAMELESS KING

As the characters delve into the long-lost Vaults of the Nameless King in search of the secrets and treasures found there, you can make use of random encounters to help bring those ancient sites to life or to set up larger adventures. Roll a d20 or choose from the encounters on the Vaults of the Nameless King Encounters table, or use the table as inspiration for encounters of your own.

VAULTS OF THE NAMELESS KING ENCOUNTERS

d20	Encounter
1	Several wraith lords drift through the shadows, dragging ethereal chains that bind them to the will of the Nameless King.
2	A point of shadow expands outward, conjuring up a demilich backed by a host of swirling specters .
3	Two balors manifest before the characters and attack, snarling that they are bound to hunt the party on behalf of a known or unknown villain.
4	The spectral image of a bound solar appears, begging the characters to find them and free them from the Nameless King's donjon.
5	Two dread knights and a host of wight retainers confront the characters.
6	A starving elder vampire begs the party for help.
7	A dimensional rift pulls the characters into an unnatural pocket dimension, where they must battle massive gibbering mouthers to escape.
8	Four huge statues animate as stone guardians and attack.
9	A small child with golden eyes approaches the characters, asking about their father who has been missing for a long time.
10	Four glyphs along a wall or floor suddenly flare with light, then conjure fire elementals, earth elementals, water elementals, and air elementals.
11	A row of sarcophagi hold the mummified remains of powerful priests and warriors serving the Nameless King, which animate into mummy lords and mummies .
12	A skeletal champion with wight retainers attacks the characters. If defeated, the skeleton is transformed into a black dragon lich .
13	A small vase contains a djinni noble , who offers the characters a wish in exchange for being let loose upon the world once again.
14	A small, emaciated animal crawls toward the characters, claiming to be a fallen god who escaped the Nameless King's menagerie.
15	Three shadow-shrouded liches claim to be clones of the Nameless King as they confront the characters, demanding fealty or death.
16	A lost bandit challenges the characters, demanding they hand over all their loot " or else!"
17	The floor collapses into a sinkhole revealing a vast chamber filled with thousands of skeletons and crawling claws .
18	A marilith emissary of the demon prince Ibraxus, polymorphed into a fairy, visits the characters to offer a deal.
19	Horned devil mercenaries hunt for one of their own—a fiend named Golgoron (see page 72), who went missing while surveying the vaults some time ago.
20	A portal opens to the Outside (see the sidebar on page 121), where a planet-destroying entity naming themself Ourboran wishes to conscript the characters as heralds to

the entity's arrival in the world. (Ourboran appears in the

campaign arc "Collision of Worlds," page 114.)

THE BORDERLANDS

Beyond the City of Arches lie the Borderlands—three distinct territories strewn with reminders and ruins of the past—especially the Age of the Nameless King. This chapter describes each of these three lands—the Revlend Marshes, the Doorish Hills, and the Deadlands—detailing their most notable locations and hooks to draw characters into adventures away from the City of Arches.

You can use the Borderlands simply to provide background detail for your City of Arches campaign. But you can also expand your campaign out of the city into new adventuring areas, or use these territories independently or as part of another campaign setting. Although many of the most significant sites in the Borderlands are broken out in the sections that follow, players should never feel like their characters have fully explored any of these regions, and you can add new locations and mysteries as you wish.

THE REVLEND MARSHES

North and northwest of the City of Arches, glacial waterfalls from the Skyreach Mountains flow into a wetland territory some hundred miles across, and dotted by marshes, lakes, and ponds. The Revlend Marshes are home to fishers and hunters, and also to explorers seeking lost treasures in the watery depths. Folk here name themselves Revlenders, keeping to themselves in quiet communities in small villages built on stilts. Revlender traders visit the City of Arches regularly, exchanging the bountiful fish found in their lakes for other food and goods. Revlenders are known for their festivals coinciding with the seasons, and many folk from the City of Arches travel here at festival times to take part in elaborate and beautiful celebrations.

SECRETS AND CLUES OF THE REVLEND MARSHES

Characters who travel through the Revlend Marshes, or who interact with Revlenders in the City of Arches, might learn one or more secrets and clues of that wetland realm. You can drop in any of the following secrets and clues wherever they best fit during your game:

- The Revlend Marshes were once an area of grassy highlands, but were transformed by a natural disaster that sunk the region centuries ago. Sages speculate that a series of underground caverns collapsed, lowering the lands above into the marshes in which they now sit.
- Some of the lakes of the Revlend Marshes are hundreds of feet deep. Locals talk of huge beasts that lurk in the depths of many of these lakes, surfacing only rarely.

- Dozens of small ruins and shrines dot the marshes, many now sunken beneath the waters. Some of these sites date back to even before the Age of the Nameless King.
- Revlenders prefer to dwell in small settlements rather than larger towns or cities. Folk of many different ancestries can be found here, all embracing a quiet and secluded life.
- North of the City of Arches, a vast field of cascading waterfalls washes over dozens of caves cutting deep into the Skyreach Mountains. Those who've explored them swear that some caves connect to vast subterranean cities.
- A black dragon named Rynfeyr Blacktongue resides in a ruined watchtower deep in the marshes, along with a number of troll and lizardfolk servants known as the Children of Rynfeyr.
- A mysterious wicker hut is said to manifest in the marshes, promising a respite for weary travelers—most of whom are never seen again.
- Countless caverns extend beneath the marshes, most completely submerged since the land fell. But many caves hold air pockets at their ceilings, while others are entirely dry. Many such caverns are said to hold lost laboratories once overseen by sages of the Nameless King.

LOCATIONS IN THE REVLEND MARSHES

While traveling through the Revlend Marshes, the characters might hear about or stumble across any of that area's settlements or notable sites. Each of these locations can serve as a stopping point on a longer journey or as the focus of an adventure.

Encounters at any of these locations are suitable for mid-level characters.

BLACKWATER CAVERNS

Few who travel to Blackwater Caverns know of the ancient altars to primordial gods standing deep within them. Yet all who gaze upon the fathomless lake below the caverns feel the call of what dwells beyond.

A broad stretch of water near the base of the northern Skyreach Mountains is so deep that its waters appear black to those staring down into them, even in full sun. The Blackwater Caverns dot the mountainside above the lake, carved out by underground rivers. These caverns and tunnels connect larger spaces deep inside the mountain, where ancient altars to primordial gods loom in the shadows. Mixed clans of **lizardfolk**, **ogres**, and **trolls** who still worship these ancient and callous deities dwell in



the caverns, striking out regularly in search of humanoid sacrifices.

The clan folk of the caverns believe that one of their gods dwells in the depths of the lake, to which they commit their sacrifices. This being, a **kraken** known as the Hunger of the Void, stays quiescent as long as they are regularly fed the flesh of sentient beings. But if the sacrifices cease, the kraken might rise.

Adventure Hook. Hunters of the village of Heron's Stride (see below) have gone missing after hunting too close to Blackwater Caverns. Other hunters investigating the first group's disappearance found broken weapons of the Blackwater clans and bloody tracks leading back to the caverns. The remaining hunters of Heron's Stride seek adventurers willing to travel to the caverns and rescue their comrades.

BLOODRUST COVE

The rotting timbers of a long-deserted shipwreck rise up from the red waters of Bloodrust Cove—a physical manifestation of the blood shed over the years by the cove's murderous denizens.

At their northern extents, the Revlend Marshes open up to a broad sea, with an adjacent inlet known as Bloodrust Depths for the red hue of its waters. Walled in by rocky cliffs along the inlet's western shore is Bloodrust Cove, an underground grotto stretching deep into the mountain. For centuries, pirates plying the Amber Sea beyond the mountains would sail their ships to Bloodrust Depths and hide in the shadows of the cove. Eventually, though, most found themselves displaced by the cove's monstrous denizens.

Presently, the cove is home to the halfling pirate Alia Needlestorm (a **bandit captain**) and the sea- and landbased **bandits** of her gang, the Silver Needle. With three small ships and over a hundred pirates and brigands, Alia

commands much of the north of the Revlend Marshes, both on water and land. From Bloodrust Cove, she sends her ships out into the Amber Sea to raid merchant vessels, while a land-based force of bandits robs travelers and caravans journeying through the marshes. In addition to humanoids, the Silver Needles include a number of **ogres** and **hill giants**, as well as the members of a small clan of **ettins**.

Adventure Hook. A gang of Silver Needle bandits have mistakenly kidnapped Benton Trailblazer, the teenage son of a local farmer from the village of Heron's Stride. The bandits believe Benton to be the son of a rich merchant, traveling in disguise through the Revlend Marshes on his way to the City of Arches, but Benton's father Fergus can't afford the ransom demanded by the Silver Needles. Fearing that the bandits will kill his son, Fergus seeks adventurers willing to confront or deceive the Silver Needles and rescue Benton. The Silver Needles expect to trade the boy at a foggy cairn known as Bellow's Rest, but hold Benton at Bloodrust Cove until the time of the meeting.

DROWNED ELVENYA

A strange illumination shines up from the bottom of a murky stretch of water, tendrils of light stretching forth like the fingers of a grasping hand.

A temple once stood on this spot, raised by the elusive starlit elves—a clan of elves said to dwell partly in the mortal world and partly in the faerie realm. The temple was dedicated to the elves' deity, Elvenya the Star's Song. But long before the marshlands fell, the temple was the site of a horrifying massacre when one hundred and one assassins of the Crimson Fang—a specialist brute squad serving the Nameless King—slew the starlit elves almost to the last. When the Revlend highlands fell, a sinkhole swallowed the temple, which quickly became submerged. Even today, though, twisting tunnels lead down to air-

filled caverns within the ruins of the ancient temple, where evidence of the massacre can still be found.

The ruins of the drowned temple to Elvenya are haunted by **skeletons** and **wights** raised from the fallen of the Crimson Fang, and greater numbers of screaming **specters**, **banshees**, and **wraiths** of the slaughtered starlit elves seeking their revenge. The dangers of the ruins mean that many of the treasures of the starlit elves remain hidden, including a glass sphere said to let the elves whisper to beings of light who serve Elvenya still.

Adventure Hook. Typhinia Nightsong, a celestial-born traveler who stepped through an arch in the City of Arches before relocating to the Revlend Marshes, has been hearing a faint song coming from the direction of Drowned Elvenya. Believing that she is hearing the lament of one of the lost starlit elves, she searches for adventurers willing to seek out the singer of this mournful song, learn their tale, and lay their soul to rest.

HAUNTED HUT

In storm or darkness, the unexpected appearance of a welcoming hut promises shelter and a warm hearth—but at what cost?

Even the youngest children of the Revlend Marshes whisper to each other of the tale of the Haunted Hut, said to be the site of horrible murders and fell rituals dedicated to the reclusive gods of the marshlands. Still, most residents of the marsh maintain that the hut is a folk tale and nothing more.

Some folks say that the wicker hut appears only when travelers are lost or desperate, enticing them with the promise of a roof over their heads—and that such travelers who try to spend the night in the hut are never seen again. Legends say that the hut manifests atop mass gravesites infested with ravenous **ghouls**, or that the entire hut is a massive **mimic** eager to devour unwary travelers. Explorers who claim to have seen the hut speak of it as the home of a trio of elusive hags. The wildest rumors warn that the hut is a conduit to an alien world visible only to the minds of those individuals staying within it, and that knowledge of that world slices through the mind like an assassin's stiletto.

Adventure Hook. Oswin Earthkin, a halfling farmer of the village of Heron's Stride, is desperate to find adventurers willing to seek the Haunted Hut. His adventurer daughter Ruby was last seen heading into the hut by the others in her party, and is now lost in another world accessed through an archway beneath the hut. Oswin asks the characters to engage in a ritual that can draw Ruby back out into the world, while dealing with the threats of the hut's inhabitants—and perhaps the hut itself.

HERON'S STRIDE

Raised up on thick wooden stilts above the marshes, the village of Heron's Stride is built around a headless statue whose towering form extends deep into the swampy ground.

The raised village of Heron's Stride is one of many similar small settlements standing on stilts above the sodden land of the Revlend Marshes. The people of the village love the quiet and seclusion of life in the marshes, yet remain close enough to the City of Arches that the journey there is easily made.

As in the rest of the marshes, the people of Heron's Stride are representative of many different ancestries, and share a common desire for a quiet existence. The village primarily trades in fish and wild rice, along with the occasional treasures and magical relics found in the depths of the marshes. Egala Wildgrace, an orc **priest**, acts as the village's elder. A local adventuring guild known as the Order of the Creased Boot operates out of a small stilt-raised lodge here, recognizable for the old boot nailed above its doorway.

The houses and shops of the raised village surround the remains of a shattered humanoid statue missing its head and all but half of one arm. None can say who the statue once represented, but a hollow at the back of the statue's neck leads down into submerged and well-explored ruins below.

Adventure Hook. A ten-year-old dwarf child named Madlyn Stoutcloak, determined to make her mark as an adventurer and explorer, has disappeared down into the headless statue. Her parents, Davyn and Valyk, want her returned safely, and are desperate to find adventurers willing to delve into the ruins to find the wandering child before she runs into trouble.

MIREWRAITH'S BARROW

Large flat stones rise out of hills covered with wild grass, marking mysterious barrows holding the brutal warriors of a long-gone age.

A series of ancient cairns known as Mirewraith's Barrow dot the low hills along the north edge of the Revlend Marshes. Old histories suggest that the barrow once contained the remains of the Nameless King's Eternal Blades—his most ruthless elite forces, sworn to his service in life and death. Many sites in the barrow have been raided over centuries by treasure seekers coveting the magical weapons and armor of those fell warriors. But just as many cairns have yet to be discovered, sunken beneath the adjacent marshes or hidden in unmarked underground chambers.

Some who have explored the barrow talk of hearing the whispering of the warriors interred here, trapped underground and desperate to return to the surface world. Those warriors are **wights** now, yearning to ravage the living atop **nightmare** mounts. They are ready to be

commanded once again by the **dread knight** Lord Krux of Dreadspire and his **undead green dragon** mount, Tharanyx the Despoiler.

Adventure Hook. Dalmas Shieldbound, a paladin of the Golden Knights, recently received a vision of what he believes is the cairn of Lord Krux. Old tales tell of how that cairn contains a key to an archway within the City of Arches leading to the ruined world of Threska (see page 102). Dalmas seeks adventurers willing to find this undiscovered tomb and recover the key, worried that his vision means the dread knight Krux and his undead legions are about to awaken.

PEAK OF LIFE RETURNED

Where a steep rocky hill juts up out of surrounding marsh, lightning hammers down upon its flat-topped peak—and the mysterious stone altar that stands there.

Storms swirl perpetually around this natural rock formation jutting up from swampy water, sending lightning crashing down upon its summit. A natural path snakes up from the water's edge to the flat peak, upon which sits a stone altar set with a metal spike at one end.

Alchemists serving the Nameless King are said to have conducted experiments atop this peak, including crafting powerful guardians stitched together from the flesh of the dead. Some say that the peak is hollow, though no entrance has ever been found, and that the altar shunts lightning down into the lost laboratory of the alchemist Vesta the Fleshcaller. Vesta obsessed over her desire to bring life back to dead flesh, and her creations undoubtedly still lurk within the peak, including flesh guardians, flesh-stitched hill giants, and a hydra abomination called the Gray Flayer.

Adventure Hook. Maisenta Earthmaster, acclaimed alchemist of Kartan, is obsessed with finding the lost notes of Vesta the Fleshcaller, fearing that in the wrong hands, those notes might allow evil forces to forge a construct army to threaten the City of Arches. She seeks adventurers willing to find the secret way into the Peak of Life Returned.

RYNFEYR'S REST

Few folk can look upon this ruined watchtower without feeling the terror inspired by what lies within—a creature unrelenting in her plan for dominance over the lands around the tower, and the subjugation of those who live there.

Once known as the northern watchtower of Klysell, named after the sycophantic regent of the Nameless King who ruled here, this ruin now serves as the throne and lair of the **adult black dragon** Rynfeyr Blacktongue. The dragon came to the marshes two decades ago, destroying the troll warlord who once ruled over the tower, then subjugating his followers. Rynfeyr now spends her days

resting in the hollowed-out watchtower, flying out to hunt by night.

Below the tower, half-submerged tunnels and chambers were once used by the warlocks of the Nameless King to scry and study realms beyond the mortal world. Neither Rynfeyr nor her **troll** and **lizardfolk** servants—known as the Children of Rynfeyr—are aware of the tunnels. In those hidden spaces, warlocks turned to **wight mages** continue performing unholy ceremonies and calling to beings in unfathomable dimensions.

Adventure Hook. The former adventurer Decima Titanseeker lost a beloved amulet while sneaking into Rynfeyr's Rest during one of the black dragon's hunts, and the amulet is now part of Rynfeyr's hoard. Decima is on the lookout for adventurers willing to infiltrate the old watchtower and recover her amulet. In return, she offers the key to a rusted gate leading into the tunnels beneath Rynfeyr's Rest, as well as her +2 dagger, Witherpierce.

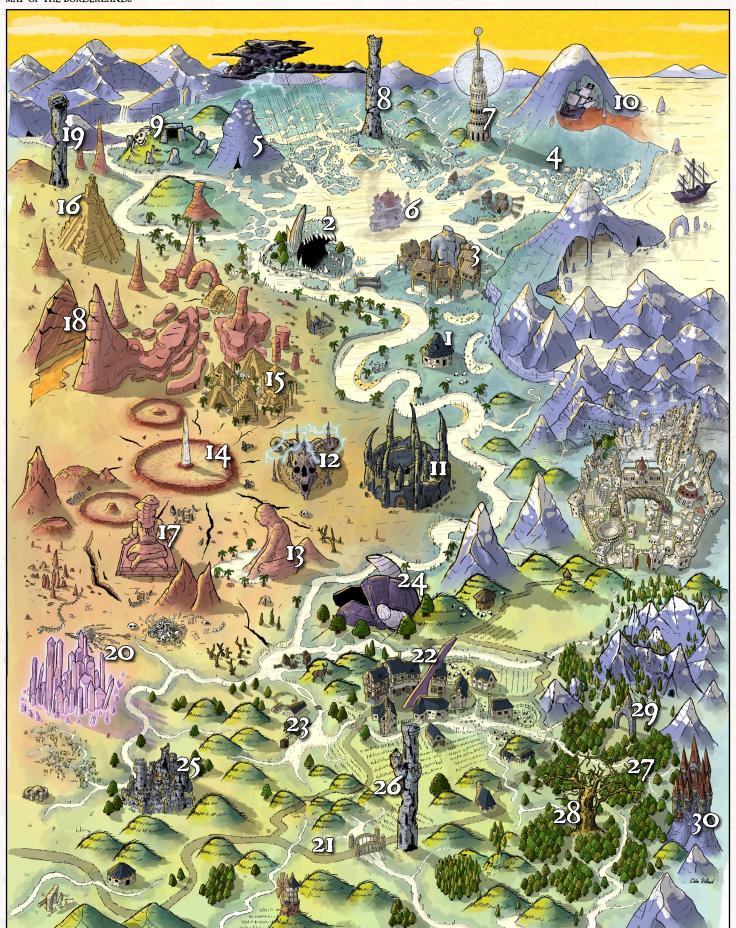
SKULL OF THE WORLD'S END

The skull of an impossibly titanic creature lies half-buried in the ground, its three-foot-long teeth raised to the sky as if in defiance.

Along the western edge of the Revlend Marshes, a monstrous skull lies half-submerged in swampy ground. Its huge horns rise toward the sky, while its three-footlong, razor-sharp teeth still draw blood from any creature who stumbles too close. Inside the dome of the massive skull stands an altar to primordial gods, always showing fresh signs of sacrifice conducted atop it.

Sinkholes beneath the skull lead to a network of passages and caverns that manage to stay dry despite being below the waterline of the marsh. Ancient pictographs decorating the tunnels depict the summoning of a world-ending monstrosity predating the Age of the Nameless King—a creature who destroyed entire civilizations before being defeated in what is now the Revlend Marshes. The deepest caverns are occupied by corrupted and cannibalistic grimlocks, grimlock ogres, and grimlock hill giants who still worship the primordial world-eater, led by a grimlock cyclops mage named Drakkag. Though they mostly keep to themselves, members of this clan sometimes come out at night to raid nearby villages.

Adventure Hook. Dyana Elestis, a sage of Kartan, believes that the worshipers conducting their grim ceremonies at the skull possess a book containing rites capable of summoning the civilization-destroying monstrosity. She wants to recruit adventurers willing to travel to the primordial altar, await those conducting the ceremony, acquire the tome, and bring it back to her for safekeeping.



BORDERLANDS MAP KEY

- 1. Haunted Hut
- 2. Skull of the World's End
- 3. Heron's Stride
- 4. Blackwater Caverns
- 5. Peak of Life Returned
- 6. Drowned Elvenya
- 7. Tower of the Moons
- 8. Rynfeyr's Rest
- 9. Mirewraith's Barrow
- 10. Bloodrust Cove
- 11. The City of Blades
- 12. Graydust Keep
- 13. Oasis of Mother's Tears
- 14. Crater of the White Spire
- 15. Lost City of Thrine
- 16. Sett's Ziggurat
- 17. Idol of the Serpent King
- 18. Sundered Mountain
- 19. Watchtower of Helsys
- 20. Spires of the Crystal Sorcerer
- 21. Suntouched Highway
- 22. Village of Peat
- 23. Predalion's Belt
- 24. Cairn of the Last Titan
- 25. Sevelet's Throne
- 26. Watchtower of Averost
- 27. Briarheart Forest
- 28. Blackmoon Hollow
- 29. Arch of Flowers
- 30. Castle Nightfall

TOWER OF THE MOONS

When any of the world's three moons rises over the marshes, its light shines upon an ivory-white tower not there just moments before—as though the moonlight itself has summoned the site into existence.

Whenever one of the three moons that wander the sky waxes full, a mysterious white tower shimmers into existence somewhere in the Revlend Marshes, surrounded by angelic statues with hands raised to the skies above. Some folk say that the tower contains a gateway to the celestial realms—while sages speak of the site being a trap created by the wizards of the Nameless King to draw in those seeking to aid the tyrant's downfall.

The centuries after the fall of the Nameless King haven't hindered the tower's regular reappearance, but have sown corruption inside the site. **Gray oozes, black puddings**, and other oozes now infest the tower, whose ground floor has collapsed to reveal a network of tunnels spanning multiple worlds. Adventurers foolish enough to explore those tunnels are hunted by a jet-black **purple worm** who devours intruders' bodies and souls. The upper reaches

of the tower feature pillars carved into the images of heavenly entities and golden warriors. At the center of the tower's highest level stands an archway taking the form of three rings that constantly move and shift, and which open a gateway to the celestial realms when they align.

Ancient rumors speak of how the Tower of the Moons once had a sinister sister tower of black onyx, known as the Tower of Oblivion. However, sightings of that legendary tower haven't been reported in centuries.

Adventure Hook. The halfling sage Eldwyn Angeltraveler has divined the location of the next appearance of the Tower of the Moons. She seeks adventurers willing to battle past the tower's infesting oozes to locate the archway, await its alignment, and throw in a magical stone provided by Eldwyn. Doing so will allow her to study a specific location in the celestial realms that the stone is keyed to.

REVLEND MARSHES LOCATION SUMMARY

This section summarizes the notable locations of the Revlend Marshes described above. Use this information to reference locations while prepping or running your game.

Blackwater Caverns. A series of caverns cut through the mountainside above a deep stretch of water are filled with altars to primordial gods, and with clans engaging in humanoid sacrifice to a monstrous denizen of the depths.

Bloodrust Cove. The red-hued waters of the cove known as Bloodrust Depths are used by pirates to hide their ships, and by bandits as a base for raids into settled lands.

Drowned Elvenya. A sunken temple of the lost starlit elves is filled with undead risen from those slaughtered by the Nameless King's brute squad, the Crimson Fang.

Haunted Hut. This mysterious hut appears in the marshes to those in need of shelter, and reveals its dangerous secrets only to those who enter.

Heron's Stride. A typical stilt-raised village of the Revlend Marshes, Heron's Stride is home to quiet fishers and rice farmers, and built around a huge ruined statue.

Mirewraith's Barrow. A series of ancient cairns holds the restless remains of the Nameless King's undead Eternal Blades.

Peak of Life Returned. An altar stands atop this perpetually storm-shrouded peak, set with a metal spike rumored to feed lightning strikes to a lost laboratory below.

Rynfeyr's Rest. This ruined watchtower serves as the lair of the black dragon Rynfeyr Blacktongue. In hidden chambers below the tower, undead warlocks continue to serve the Nameless King.

Skull of the World's End. The titanic skull of an unknown monstrosity now stands as an altar to primordial gods, and covers ancient tunnels occupied by corrupted cannibals who worship the creature.

Tower of the Moons. A mysterious white tower appears from nowhere each full moon, home to a portal connecting to the celestial realms, but filled with oozes and even worse threats.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE REVLEND MARSHES

As the characters explore the settlements and sites of the Revlend Marshes, you can make use of random encounters to help bring that territory to life or to set up larger adventures. Roll a d20 or choose from the encounters on the Revlend Marshes Encounters table, or use the table as inspiration for encounters of your own.

These encounters are designed for mid-level characters.

REVLEND MARSHES ENCOUNTERS

Encounter

1	A band of lizardfolk hunters and traders meet the characters and wish to buy and sell goods.
2	A medusa and his death dog companions reside in a half-sunken ruin.
3	Wights on nightmare mounts ride through swampland on their way to Mirewraith's Barrow.
4	Fishers from Heron's Rest are accosted by cult fanatics worshiping a vile water primordial.
5	A seething spirit naga watches over the remains of a defiled temple, threatening destruction against any who come close unless they recover a stolen amulet.
6	A hydra bursts forth from the waters of a placid marsh.
7	Demonic invisible stalkers hunt the characters after they trespass through a magically warded site.
8	A banshee child doesn't realize that she's undead, and asks the characters to help find her mother.
9	An ogre mage taking the guise of an elderly halfling wants the characters to enter a nearby ruin and find a goblet marked with glyphs that drip blood.
10	Several cyclopes attempt to capture the characters, intent on sacrificing them to their fell god.
11	The characters stumble into an indignant treant .
12	A triceratops comes roaring past the characters, chased by two giant apes .
13	A revenant hunts down a magical relic carried by one of the characters.
14	Bandits and a bandit captain of the Silver Needle gang attempt to rob the characters.
15	Grimlocks led by a grimlock ogre hunt the characters for
	their tasty flesh.
16	• = =
16 17	their tasty flesh.
1.11	their tasty flesh. A lost elf ghost seeks to return to the Tower of the Moons. Lizardfolk warriors serving Rynfeyr Blacktongue attempt to capture the characters and bring them before the black
17	their tasty flesh. A lost elf ghost seeks to return to the Tower of the Moons. Lizardfolk warriors serving Rynfeyr Blacktongue attempt to capture the characters and bring them before the black dragon, who has a proposition for them. The sky is suddenly filled with storm clouds, with bolts of

THE DOORISH HILLS

South and southwest of the City of Arches, the Doorish Hills are a realm of gently rising grasslands stretching out for more than a hundred miles. Paths, canals, and roads crisscross the hills, allowing travelers to bring grain and livestock from the many farms of the territory to the City of Arches and other lands. The Doorish worship gods of food and fertility, with their settlements hosting dozens of small temples and hundreds of shrines.

The hills are a relatively peaceful land, though ruins and dangers from the Age of the Nameless King are always present here. Exposed clefts and eroding hillsides often reveal caves, tunnels, and tombs that the folk of the hills know are better left unexplored.

SECRETS AND CLUES OF THE DOORISH HILLS

Characters who travel the roads and canals of the Doorish Hills, or who interact with Doorish folk in the City of Arches, might learn one or more secrets and clues of those pastoral lands. You can drop in any of the following secrets and clues wherever they best fit during your game:

- The people of the Doorish Hills are a diverse lot, but all share a love for simple living, agriculture, and good food.
- The roads winding through the hills are mostly safe to travel, but bandits sometimes challenge caravans or couriers if they think the rewards outweigh the risks.
- Sinkholes in the less-populated areas of the hills sometimes lead to centuries-old ruins, where adventurers might uncover the buried history of these lands
- The Watchtower of Averost is one of the most notable landmarks from the time of the Nameless King, its idyllic appearance belying its blood-soaked history.
- A single working archway is known to all folk of the Doorish Hills. The Arch of Flowers to the north of Briarheart Forest is assumed to lead to a faerie realm, but few who enter it have returned to confirm its destination.
- Rumors hold that two other active arches are hidden away in the hills. Gulon's Arch is said to be carved into the exposed side of a rocky hill, and connects to the Elemental Plane of Earth. The Arch of the Pale Moon is formed by two massive freestanding ribs from some unknown monstrosity, scribed with glowing glyphs and leading to a primordial land where massive beasts rule and clans of humanoid hunters hide in the shadows.
- Queen Karsara Aventus of the City of Arches rules over the Doorish Hills, but the Doorish people are mostly left to themselves. Representatives on the Golden Council speak on behalf of the Doorish, and are elected by the folk of the hills every three years.

- The Golden Knights make regular patrols along the roads of the Doorish Hills, working with local wardens who keep the peace in towns and villages. Their presence is welcomed by the Doorish, but the knights can't be everywhere at once.
- It is rumored that a number of evil cults can be found in the hills, with members gathering in secret late at night to conduct profane rituals to fell and unforgiving gods.
- The ancient fortress of Castle Nightfall lies along the eastern frontier of the Doorish Hills. The vampire Lady Straythe who dwells here does not accept the rule of the City of Arches, and folk of the nearby village of Elgrym obey only their pale queen.
- Thick forest covers the southeast edge of the Doorish Hills, and is almost entirely untamed. Far older than even the original settlements of the hills, the forest holds secrets and dangers that might date back to the Age of Primordials a hundred thousand years ago.

LOCATIONS IN THE DOORISH HILLS

While traveling through the Doorish Hills or talking to the folk of that territory, the characters might hear about or discover any of that area's settlements or notable sites. Each of these locations can serve as a stopping point on a longer journey or as the focus of an adventure.

Encounters at most of these locations are suitable for low-level to mid-level characters. Encounters in or around Castle Nightfall are suitable for mid-level to high-level characters.

ARCH OF FLOWERS

Deep in the wild green of Briarheart Forest, the cracked stones forming the Arch of Flowers still thrum with primal power.

Within the green of Briarheart Forest stands the Arch of Flowers, an arc of stone slabs carved with swirling forms and intricate knots that once connected the forest to a faerie realm. The arch stands close enough to the edge of the forest that farmers, hunters, and villagers often visit the site, leaving offerings in the hope of warding off ills or attracting good fortune.

Occasionally, a spark of green light flares up from the center of the silent archway, opening a narrow portal to the land of the fey—allowing humanoids to only see through it, but letting faeries pass through from the other side. As with the arches in the City of Arches, creatures who travel through the portal arrive disoriented, forgetting where they came from or who they are.

The area around the archway exhibits some of the qualities of a faerie realm. Huge lightning bugs float through the trees like lanterns, while thick vines twist and grow fast enough that their movement can be observed. A sparkling brook cutting through the center of the archway glows with its own green light, and cuts through stands of massive mushrooms as high as barstools. People who

have drunk from the stream report finding themselves refreshed and gaining a new perspective on their lives.

A number of tricky **pixies**, **satyrs**, and **harpies** often lurk around the archway, harassing those who spend too much time in the area—including confused faerie creatures who have stepped through from the other side.

Adventure Hook. Each summer solstice, people from nearby villages gather around the Arch of Flowers at the sun's zenith. This year, however, sages of the City of Arches have noted that a solar eclipse is set to occur at the same time—an event that dragonborn sage Mavros Skeyvald believes might twist the Arch of Flowers into a portal leading to a different and sinister world. Those wishing to celebrate might need the protection of stout adventurers should things go awry.

BLACKMOON HOLLOW

A decaying grove spread around a towering dead tree hides fell secrets.

Within the overgrown landscape of Briarheart Forest (see below) stands a grove filled with decaying trees and skeletal grasses. Brown-and-red creeper vines spread here, their needle-like thorns sucking the blood of creatures they pierce. A twisted dead tree rises at the center of this morbid grove, with a hollow at its base leading deep into the earth below.

Caverns beneath the tree are said to be full of demonworshiping gnolls, hyenas, cult fanatics, and necrotic gray oozes and ochre jellies. A significant number of the adventurers who have attempted to explore the site have not returned, their nightmarish screams said to echo through the desolate forest for days.

A nomadic clan of **gnolls** known as the Dawn's Blade range across the Doorish Hills, and its members have spoken of how some of their kin have recently left the clan to worship a demon known as Karigulon the Dread Fang. The gnolls believe that an idol of this defiling deity is hidden deep within Blackmoon Hollow, and that its fell magic is responsible for draining the life out of the land around it.

Adventure Hook. A tiefling druid named Orvyst Starsong seeks adventurers willing to travel to Blackmoon Hollow and face the corrupted gnolls of Karigulon, who he believes guard the idol in ancient tunnels beneath the hollow's great dead tree. Once the idol is in their possession, the characters must find a way to destroy it and end the demon's corruption.

BRIARHEART FOREST

The thick forest of Briarheart has stood seemingly unchanged for millennia, its fey-fueled growth concealing a violent past and ever-present dangers.

The ancient forest known as Briarheart presses up against the mountains along the southeast edge of the Doorish Hills. This sylvan wilderness has lain largely untouched over tens of thousands of years, and even the armies of the Nameless King dared not venture too far into it. No roads cross the forest, and the game paths and narrow trails that weave their way through it are known to change their courses every few months, making the forest impossible to reliably map.

Centuries ago, elves of the faerie realms ruled over Briarheart. Their settlements wrapped around great trees, hung over the sides of the vast waterfalls flowing down the mountainside, and lined the deep canyon known as Therys's Scar, named for an elven deity all but unknown in the mortal world. Two warring elven nations claimed the forest—a seelie folk known as the Sapphire Children and unseelie shadow elves known as the Kingdom of the Small Moon. Their conflict raged for centuries, with each side committing horrible atrocities against the other.

Both elven nations fell hundreds of years ago, corrupted by demons drawn out of the Abyss to join in their war. A lifeless stretch of the forest known as the Gray Heart still serves as the seat of power for a dread demon queen, a marilith known as Seskys Strifehands. Other faerie folk, both seelie and unseelie, reside in the forest in small villages, but those settlements are visible only to creatures the faerie folk reveal themselves to. The ruins spread throughout the forest are highly sought out for the wondrous treasures the elves abandoned. However, folk who have attempted to explore Briarheart Forest know that elf specters and wights wander there, victims of the wars long past, while corrupted giant spiders, ankhegs, and awakened trees hunt outsiders who dare enter the wood.

Adventure Hook. Two children from a village called Humphry near Briarheart Forest have wandered into those haunted woods. Fearing the wrath of the forest's ancient spirits, the villagers send out a call for brave adventurers willing to rescue the children. After finding the two safe in a faerie folk settlement, the characters must negotiate for their return—but the faerie folk will free the children only if the characters deliver a gift to the demon queen Seskys.

CAIRN OF THE LAST TITAN

A gigantic iron helm rises from the ground as a titanic cairn, the chambers beneath it filled with treasures and undead.

Known as the Cairn of the Last Titan, this massive burial site was constructed by unknown builders and is mostly left alone by Doorish folk. However, all know the tale of a warrior titan who once protected the land from vengeful gods, and some people leave offerings at the cairn, hoping for improved crop yields, the health of children, or safety from raiders.

Archaeologists and treasure hunters long ago discovered a series of large chambers beneath the cairn, accessible by way of a sinkhole under the site's foundation stones and from the mouth of an underground stream



nearby. Adventurers brave enough to explore beneath the cairn speak of shattered stone sarcophagi, **skeletons** wearing armor and wielding the arms of long-forgotten armies, and packs of **zombies** raised from adventurers slain in the ruins. In one chamber, another sinkhole descends deeper into the ground, surrounded by **stone giants** held in a magical slumber, kneeling as if in prayer.

Frescoes on the walls throughout the underground complex depict humanoid armies following the titan, who led those armies to protect the land from celestials and devils alike. Some explorers whisper of other, more disturbing images, including one depicting a vessel or urn surrounded by sigils warning of something trapped in the depths of the complex. However, no sign of this vessel has ever been found.

Adventure Hook. Tanvey Stonefoot, an orc prophet living in the village of Peat (see below), has seen visions of a cracked obsidian vessel lying in the darkness beneath the Cairn of the Last Titan, and believes that this vessel contains an alien horror that would ravage the land if freed. She wants to recruit adventurers to enter the chambers beneath the cairn, find the vessel's hiding place,

perform a ritual to seal it, and prevent the release of this terrible being.

CASTLE NIGHTFALL

Looming along the edge of towering mountains above a doomed village below, Castle Nightfall's grim visage reflects the evil of its unholy queen.

Overlooking the forest of Briarheart, Castle Nightfall is hewn directly from the black stone of the mountain peak upon which it stands. The castle's only known entrance is a narrow stone bridge crossing a seemingly bottomless gorge, protected by **gargoyles** and **giant bats** who swirl in the sky above and threaten to shred any creature attempting to reach the castle by air.

Though Castle Nightfall is known across the Doorish Hills, few folk have ever traversed the forest to see the site up close, save for the inhabitants of the isolated village of Elgrym just beneath the castle. But all folk know the legend that a **vampire** known as Lady Straythe rules here, possessed of powerful magical relics (including a *ring of three wishes*) and surrounded by **vampire spawn** consorts and servants both living and undead. The castle sits atop a massive maze of catacombs and deep chambers, including a huge cell where the vampire has summoned and bound a **pit fiend** named Kessel the Doom Hammer. Kessel desperately seeks release so that he might take vengeance against the vampire who has imprisoned him for decades.

The people of Elgrym eke out a bleak existence in the shadow of the castle. Three **green hags** known as the Sisters of Dusk oversee the village, and run a lottery each year whose lucky winners are selected to visit the castle, promised a generous reward and the opportunity to serve Lady Straythe—and who never return. Several **cult fanatics** worshiping Lady Straythe as a god of life and death keep the villagers in line.

Adventure Hook. In the most recent lottery of the Sisters of Dusk, a young man named Cavler Millbond drew the fated glyph-marked stone and will soon be sent to his doom in the castle. His mother Doriana seeks adventurers willing to infiltrate the castle and rescue her son before his unholy demise, then take on the hags to end the dreaded lottery.

PREDALION'S BELT

Cutting across the lowlands of the Doorish Hills, the network of canals known as Predalion's Belt are traversed by hundreds of small boats and barges, carrying travelers and the goods of farmers, merchants, and traders.

After the fall of the Nameless King, the newly free villages and settlements of the Doorish Hills connected themselves with a network of canals for travel and trade. Named Predalion's Belt after the local deity of travel and trade, these canals run for many miles and pass through numerous locks, whose initial construction was funded by

selling arms and relics claimed from servants of the fallen tyrant after his defeat.

Each of the locks on the canals is overseen from a lock house run by a family that lives nearby, whose members take coin from travelers to operate and maintain the locks. These families also have rooms to rent, and offer travelers a quick meal and a warm hearth in exchange for tales of their journeys.

Adventure Hook. Travelers along Predalion's Belt have been sharing rumors that the lock house known as the Nyad's Knot has been taken over by bandits, thugs, and hired ogre mercenaries, and that money and goods are being extorted from travelers passing through. Jameson Rynes, a warden of the village of Peat, is recruiting adventurers to travel to the Nyad's Knot and deal with these ruffians. However, he doesn't know that the leader of these bandits has been possessed by a ghost from a nearby tomb.

SEVELET'S THRONE

Cattle now graze within sight of the ruined citadel of Sevelet's Throne, once the centerpiece of the terror that spread across these lands.

Along the southwest edge of the Doorish Hills stands a ruined citadel, its walls sundered during a great siege centuries ago. The citadel once served as the seat of the warlord Sevelet, a giant-blooded commander of the Nameless King before the tyrant's fall. Sevelet survived her master's end, though, taking command of the legendary battalion of the Nameless King's army known as the Blood Spears, and ruling these lands as a warlord for over a century.

An alliance of local lords eventually sent an army to Sevelet's Throne, smashing down its walls and destroying the citadel. Sevelet escaped to hidden chambers beneath the rubble, only to fall to the spells of her duplicitous advisor, the dragonborn archmage Lyliv Blacksynge—even as Lyliv met her own end beneath Sevelet's massive magical axe, Soulhewer. It is whispered that the souls of Sevelet and Lyliv are both now bound in the magical blade of the axe, which remains lost in the hidden chambers beneath Sevelet's Throne. The two trapped souls battle each other still, fighting each other for domination and control of the weapon.

Explorers who have entered the ruins of Sevelet's Throne say that the chambers below are haunted by warring **skeletons**, **wights**, and **wraiths**, all locked in eternal battle by their allegiance to Sevelet or Lyliv.

Adventure Hook. The infernal-blooded treasure hunter Prothos Skaarn seeks adventurers willing to delve into the chambers beneath Sevelet's Throne and find the legendary axe Soulhewer. Skaarn knows the axe's location but is leery of entering the ruins himself. However, he promises the characters that the souls of Sevelet and Lyliv will know of numerous treasure vaults hidden in the Doorish Hills, making finding the axe more than worth their while.

SUNTOUCHED HIGHWAY

An unassuming wagon track snaking through rolling grasslands is just one small part of a much more impressive roadway extending across the entirety of the Doorish Hills.

Small paths and wagon trails across the Doorish Hills all inevitably feed into the Suntouched Highway, a well-maintained road running northeast to the City of Arches, and southwest to other cities beyond the Borderlands. The highway crosses the rivers and canals of Predalion's Belt by way of ancient bridges, control of which is often contested by the **guards** of the Golden Knights, **bandits**, mercenary **veterans**, or wandering bands of **ogres** or **hill giants**.

Much of the Suntouched Highway is well maintained, home to well-armed caravans and traveled by the people of the Doorish Hills. However, other sections have fallen into decay over the years. Along the border with the Revlend Marshes, a ten-mile stretch of the road has sunken into boggy ground, making travel difficult. Wooden boardwalks have been set up between natural islands in the fetid waters, but travelers who go that way sometimes whisper of distant lizardfolk and trolls who eye those attempting to cross. Strange effigies to a local deity known as the Sodden Maiden tempt these creatures with promises of power that they'll receive at the price of the blood of travelers.

Adventure Hook. Bromos Brightflower, a dwarf caravan leader, hopes to recruit adventurers to help him take a load of silks, wool, and other textiles across the marshlands road where the Suntouched Highway is partly submerged. During the journey, the characters must deal with two warring bands of lizardfolk—one group happy to purchase Bromos's wares, and another whose leaders plot to sacrifice the characters and the dwarf to the Sodden Maiden.

VILLAGE OF PEAT

This bustling village shows off the hardworking and peaceful lives that the folk of the Doorish Hills are known for—even as that gentle facade conceals aberrant horror beneath the ground.

At the center of the Doorish Hills, the village of Peat is home to two hundred farmers, hunters, and woodsfolk, most of whom have lived here their whole lives. More people make their way here from the City of Arches each year, finding their place and enjoying the simpler lifestyle Peat has to offer. Buildings in the village are of wood and stone, hemmed in by stacked stone walls and the canals of Predalion's Belt.

A towering spire known as Sulin's Sundial juts up from the ground in the village's center. Named after a god of light worshiped in the hills, the spire has long been thought by archaeologists to be the top of a vast temple buried below the village. Locals are unsure if the spire was always consecrated to this god of light, or was previously dedicated to secret gods of evil.

Where an underground stream feeds the village's three wells, the flow of water has eroded a number of caves that end in worked stone, perhaps forming an outer wall of the underground temple. A few explorers have attempted to map these caves, returning with stories of **black puddings**, **gelatinous cubes**, **chuuls**, and **cloakers** lurking below. The villagers of Peat know to leave the caves alone.

Adventure Hook. Vorlyn Darksong, an elf archaeologist of the City of Arches, believes that the temple located beneath Peat is the lair of an aboleth who has begun claiming villagers as their thralls. He seeks stout adventurers willing to face the aberrant creatures of the caves, locate the temple's secret doorway, and find a way inside.

WATCHTOWER OF AVEROST

Wild grass all but obscures the ancient stones of this abandoned watchtower, creating a peaceful tableau that denies the horrors once known here.

A watchtower for the forces of the Nameless King, Averost once housed the Blood Spears, a legendary battalion of raiders feared throughout all lands, with the tower named for their founding captain. Today, the crumbling walls of the once-mighty fortress barely stand, watched by grazing cows who scatter quickly when the occasional blood-soaked **skeletal veteran** claws their way up from under the ground.

Prisoners once hung from scaffolds here, their blood flowing into troughs in which the Blood Spears bathed their weapons and armor, in addition to using that blood to tattoo glyphs of power on their skin. The ruins rise some four stories high, the upper battlements decorated with rusted outward-facing spikes. The roof and floors have long collapsed, leaving the inner tower open to the elements and covered in moss. But beneath that moss, a magical seal set into the ground floor remains intact.

Legends say that the seal can be unlocked with a lost arch key, revealing passages and chambers below where priests of the Nameless King conducted terrible rituals to empower the Blood Spears. Old lore suggests that those deep halls might contain an archway to the world of Irax, a wind-torn hellscape where the Blood Spears tested themselves in battle against infernal horrors.

Adventure Hook. Mikah Southsage, a goblin mage of Kartan, is looking for adventurers willing to take a recently discovered arch key to the Watchtower of Averost, and to determine whether it opens the seal to the chambers below. If so, the characters are to explore the depths beneath the tower, find any written works inside, sketch any notable markings on the walls, and test the key on the archway of Irax should it be discovered.

DOORISH HILLS LOCATION SUMMARY

This section summarizes the notable locations of the Doorish Hills described above. Use this information to reference locations while prepping or running your game.

Arch of Flowers. At this ancient faerie archway in Briarheart Forest, local folk leave offerings for good fortune, but the fey who dwell here can be capricious.

Blackmoon Hollow. A dead tree stands at the center of this decaying forest, a hollow at its base leading to foul caverns housing demon-worshiping gnolls and other threats.

Briarheart Forest. This ancient woodland appears untouched by time. Once home to warring elven nations destroyed by demonic power, Briarheart Forest is still occupied by faerie folk, along with undead, corrupted creatures, and a marilith lord.

Cairn of the Last Titan. Towering slabs of stone mark the grave of a titanic warrior, around which locals leave offerings. Chambers beneath the cairn house shattered stone sarcophagi, undead, and grim secrets.

Castle Nightfall. A great mountainside castle is home to the dread vampire Lady Straythe. A coven of hags known as the Sisters of Dusk rule over the nearby village of Elgrym in her name.

Predalion's Belt. A network of canals and trails crisscrossing the Doorish Hills, Predalion's Belt is essential to trade and a prime target for banditry.

Sevelet's Throne. Held by a powerful commander of the Nameless King who ruled as a warlord after his fall, this ruined citadel is now filled with undead and rumored to hide away a magic axe possessed by warring souls.

Suntouched Highway. A well-traveled trade route across the Doorish Hills, the Suntouched Highway has been claimed by the Revlend Marshes in certain sections, making travel difficult and monstrous incursions common.

Village of Peat. This quiet village of farmers, hunters, and woodsfolk is built around a spire known as Sulin's Sundial, and sits atop a buried temple accessible from eroded caves nearby.

Watchtower of Averost. This ruined tower was once home to the Blood Spears—legendary raiders in service to the Nameless King, who once made use of a hidden archway to test their battle prowess in a hellscape world called Irax.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE DOORISH HILLS

As the characters explore the settlements and sites of the Doorish Hills, you can make use of random encounters to help bring that territory to life or to set up larger adventures. Roll a d20 or choose from the encounters on the Doorish Hills Encounters table, or use the table as inspiration for encounters of your own.

These encounters are designed for mid-level characters.

DOORISH HILLS ENCOUNTERS

d20 Encounter

- A group of Golden Knights in ill-fitting armor and tabards demand tribute from the characters. In truth, these knights are opportunistic **bandits** and a **bandit captain**, with the actual Golden Knight **guards** tied up in an old barn nearby.
- 2 Hooded vampire spawn attempt to capture the characters and drain their blood for Lady Straythe, their vampire queen.
- The ground quakes, and the characters hear a world-shaking roar off in the distance.
- 4 Spectral dire wolves hunt a herd of spectral deer that have bolted out of the Arch of Flowers.
- 5 A group of Golden Knight **guards** is losing a battle against two angry **ettins**.
- 6 Gnoll hunters of the Dawn's Blade clan are surrounded by a larger force of **gnolls** and **hyenas** serving the demon Karigulon.
- 7 Cult fanatics serving the vampire Lady Straythe attempt to coerce the characters into joining the next lottery in the village of Elgrym.
- 8 **Skeletal veterans** garbed in the heraldry of the Blood Spears march past the characters, led by a **wight** atop a **nightmare**.
- 9 A sinkhole opens up before the characters, revealing a series of caves infested by gray oozes, ochre jellies, and a sentient gelatinous cube with tales to tell.
- An **ogre mage** disguised as a confused elf asks the characters to escort them to Peat. They secretly want to ally with the aboleth rumored to be below the city, and plan to set the characters up to become powerful thralls.
- 11 Outside an old ruin, a **gorgon** animates from beneath a pile of rubble and attacks.
- 12 A wandering **mage** of Kartan drops from the sky upon a **wyvern**, demanding spellbooks or any other magical relics the characters possess.
- 13 A **green hag** disguised as a young tiefling begs the characters to enter Briarheart Forest with her so she can find her mother. In truth, she seeks her sisters and hopes to dine upon the characters with them.
- 14 A farmer's cart is hopelessly stuck in mud along the Suntouched Highway. If the characters help to free it, a friendly **ogre** arrives to work with them.
- 15 Two Golden Knight **guards** riding **griffins** greet the characters and ask for news.
- 16 A pack of **jackalweres** try to trick the characters into visiting their **lamia** master. If the characters discover the ruse, the jackalweres reveal they have already captured a number of locals
- 17 A solitary **knight** wants to duel the toughest opponent they
- 18 Two **chimeras** descend upon the characters, demanding all the food they carry.
- 19 A small child is drowning in a broad marsh, dragged down by a vicious **sea hag**.
- 20 Two trolls ask the characters for help acquiring a gleaming idol, lost in a ruin infested by fire elementals and fire mephits.

THE DEADLANDS

West of the City of Arches stands a bleak desert of windblown dust, cracked earth, and dead trees rising out of the ground like skeletal claws. The Deadlands stretch out some hundred miles to end at a range of mountains known as the Shattered Teeth, covering an area where a lush landscape once thrived. But corrupt magical experiments of the wizards, clerics, and warlocks serving the Nameless King ripped all life from the earth here, leaving behind a decayed husk scoured by the dispassionate sun.

All but the most hearty or foolish adventurers leave the Deadlands alone. The bleak sands of the desert are said to fill the minds of those who travel here with hallucinations and paranoia. But those willing to brave the deadly landscape know that powerful artifacts, lost treasures, and caches of forgotten knowledge await discovery beneath the lifeless sands.

SECRETS AND CLUES OF THE DEADLANDS

Characters who travel through the Deadlands, or who talk to NPCs who have braved the desert, might learn one or more secrets and clues of that wasteland. You can drop in any of the following secrets and clues wherever they best fit during your game:

- During the Age of the Nameless King, the tyrant was served by a group of warlocks and wizards known as the Council of the Black Sun. A terrible arcane experiment destroyed their city of Crimson Watch, then drained all life from the once-fertile territory now known as the Deadlands.
- Servants of the Nameless King built numerous temples and shrines throughout the Deadlands during his reign.
 These remnants of that previous age have long fallen to ruin, but remain filled with treasures, lore, and terrible dangers.
- An undead draconic horror known as Xereth, Oblivion's Embrace, once served as the mount of the Nameless King, and now hunts for souls in the deep desert.
- The former location of Crimson Watch is now a massive crater at the center of the desert, blasted out by a huge white spire thought to have been summoned from another reality.
- The only permanent residents of the Deadlands are nomadic clans of hunters known as the Deadland Shadows. Some of them provide help and guidance for wayward travelers. Others seek blood for their corrupt gods.
- Two settlements offer shelter for those journeying through the Deadlands. The Oasis of Mother's Tears welcomes all travelers, providing safety, rest, respite, and nourishment. The City of Blades deals in questionable commerce (including drugs and artifact hunting that would be illegal in the City of Arches), unsavory mercenaries, and blood sport.

- The sun and sky feel different in the Deadlands than they do in adjacent territories. While gentle sunlight nourishes the world elsewhere, the Deadlands sun burns hotter somehow, seemingly intent on the death of those living under it.
- Ancient tales tell of a mass warren of giant spiders, ettercaps, and driders that once lay beneath the surface of the Deadlands. Some say that this warren connected to a vast subterranean city of spider-worshiping elves, and that folk traveling the Deadlands sometimes tumble into sinkholes that are the ancient entrances to this dread realm.

LOCATIONS IN THE DEADLANDS

While traversing the grim deserts of the Deadlands, the characters might hear about or stumble across any of that area's notable sites. Each of these locations can serve as a stopping point on a longer journey or as the focus of an adventure.

Encounters at any of these locations are typically suitable for mid-level to high-level characters, with some locations threatening even the highest-level characters.

THE CITY OF BLADES

Standing in opposition to the altruistic and peaceful nature of the City of Arches, the City of Blades is built on strength, power, and freedom from core rulership, law, and central government, from the tips of its iron-spiked walls to the caverns hidden beneath its streets.

Standing at the leading edge of the hostile Deadlands, the walled City of Blades is a haven for those who venerate strength and power. The horrors of the deep desert are an ever-present threat to the city, whose residents enthusiastically await any opportunity to defend its walls. Many of the folk of the City of Blades come from the much larger City of Arches, finding the peaceful governance of the Golden Order unpalatable, and preferring a life built on independence, strength, and competition.

The City of Blades has no central government or army. Instead, a number of independent warlords rule over sections of the ramshackle city, whose chaotic construction constantly threatens to fall apart. Rival gangs commonly engage in furious battles on the streets, with each such battle defined by predetermined rules of engagement. One-on-one or small-group bouts take place in the Cage, a sunken arena at the center of the city, filled with traps and obstacles. Still, the city does have some rules governing those who dwell here, enforcing a strict sense of hierarchy and observed law. Although many who dwell here are evil, most folk of the city simply respect power and strength over law and order.

Like the City of Arches, the City of Blades accepts all those wishing to make a life here, as long as they stand up for themselves. While a horned devil might find solace in a new life as an artisan baker in the City of Arches, a

faerie princess might paint her face with stripes of black oil and let her twin axes drink the blood of her foes in the arena of the City of Blades. One such faerie princess, the Red Belle, is the longstanding champion of the arena, and many consider her the leading warlord of the city. Other warlords don't pay fealty to the Red Belle—but they are careful to not accidentally cross her.

Residents of the City of Blades who prefer a cooler climate or time away from the sun reside in underground warrens connecting to deeper caverns beneath the city. One of those caverns opens onto the entrance to an ancient temple of the Nameless King, known as the Throne of the Void. Pilgrims and cultists of the tyrant still visit this temple, calling out to their lost god-king.

Adventure Hook. A long-forgotten tome titled *The Last Cries of a Dead Sun* is held in a hidden library in the Throne of the Void beneath the City of Blades. A kobold sage named Breccan Hilltouch seeks adventurers willing to travel to the City of Blades, find a scout who can take them to the ancient temple, locate the book, and bring it back to the City of Arches.

CRATER OF THE WHITE SPIRE

An otherworldly thrumming resonates from a gleaming white spire thrust down into the center of a miles-wide crater—a life-draining weapon from beyond this world.

In the center of the Deadlands sits a crater nearly two miles wide and half a mile deep, its center covered in swirling violet mist through which a spire of mirror-bright white metal juts up from the shattered ground. Compasses and lodestones pull strongly toward the spire, and metal objects held by those who get close to the site sometimes begin to vibrate. Dozens of caves and fissures split the walls of the crater, leading to vast underground chambers marking the ruins of the arcane city once known as Crimson Watch.

During the Age of the Nameless King, Crimson Watch was a great center of magical research for the tyrant. The eldritch laboratories that filled the city were overseen by the Nameless King's most powerful warlocks and sorcerers, the Council of the Black Sun—until the city and the lands around it were utterly destroyed.

Sages hypothesize that toward the end of the Nameless King's reign, an experiment of Viseraad Starwatcher, a warlock of the council, went awry. A vast portal opened above the city, drawing down the white metal spire from another reality. The great crater marks the destructive power of the spire when it struck the world, destroying Crimson Watch and washing the lands around with magic that destroyed all life and left the Deadlands behind.

Many who have investigated the spire believe it to be not just a relic from another plane of existence, but some kind of otherworldly ship. Traversing the poisonous violet mist swirling around the spire's base reveals a crack leading within, giving access to chambers where corrupted **devas** and **planetars** fight beside **bone devils** and **ice devils** against any intruders. Accounts from the

time of the tyrant's fall speak of an imprisoned **solar** writhing in a crystalline sarcophagus at the heart of the spire, their whispers and cries corrupting the minds of those who hear them. However, some religious scholars speculate that this ship might instead have been a weapon of the gods, fueled by celestial and fiendish power, and unleashed with the specific purpose of marking the beginning of the end of the depraved reign of the Nameless King.

Adventure Hook. The Golden Knights of the City of Arches have heard travelers of the Deadlands speak of a group of hooded wizards cast out from Kartan, Tower of the Arcane. These mages seek to establish a new center of arcane study where no knowledge is forbidden, and are attempting to use the power of the white spire to fuel the shaping of dangerous magic. The Golden Knights are recruiting adventurers willing to make the trek to the Deadlands, locate these heretical wizards, and end their sinister experiments.

GRAYDUST KEEP

The skull-shaped fortress of Graydust Keep stands as a continual reminder of the threats the City of Arches faces from the desolate west.

Ruined Graydust Keep was once a military bastion of the City of Arches, with control of the keep changing hands hundreds of times over the centuries since the fall of the Nameless King. Carved out of a mountain of rock jutting up from the desert, the keep takes the form of an enormous fiendish stone skull surrounded by five spires, rising skyward like the claws of a gigantic beast. The open maw of the skull forms the front entrance to the keep, creating a stone bridge crossing a vast crevasse known as the Rift of Tears that surrounds the site.

A humanoid war band known as the Fallen Angels presently holds the keep. A **hobgoblin warlord** known as Galvrex the Red Gauntlet leads the company, whose members include **veterans**, **mages**, **ogres**, and armored **hill giants**. The war band mostly raids caravans along or across the border with the Revlend Marshes, and extorts gold from adventurers and explorers ranging through the desert. However, word passed on by those who have treated with them suggest that the Fallen Angels are arming for a campaign against the City of Arches.

Balls of crackling energy swirl around the top of Graydust's five spires—power first channeled by the keep's creators. Bolts of blue-white lightning arc out from the spires to tear through any creature larger than a small bird attempting to fly to the upper reaches of the keep. The reanimated **skeletons** of humanoids, avian creatures, and even dragons who've fallen victim to the lightning over centuries swarm across the lowest reaches of the Rift of Tears.

Those who have been inside the keep talk of a network of caves beneath it, originally intended as an escape path in case of siege. A dormant archway stands at the center of these caves, whose key is known to have been the hilt of a shattered sword lost somewhere beneath the City of Arches. Powerful traps, **chuuls**, **bulettes**, and demonworshiping **gnolls** still reside in this cavernous labyrinth.

Adventure Hook. Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster to Queen Karsara Aventus of the City of Arches, seeks a clandestine party of adventurers willing to find a way into Graydust Keep and learn whether and when Galvrex intends an attack against the city. If the characters are able to prevent such an attack or facilitate a change in the Fallen Angels' leadership, a bonus might be considered.

IDOL OF THE SERPENT KING

The towering statue of the serpentine demon prince Vithra stares out across the swirling dust of the Deadlands, a dry pool before it stained by the blood of endless sacrifice.

Among the countless strange altars that dot the Deadlands, many are the product of the Cult of Vithra the Serpent King. Some of Vithra's altars depict a half-human, half-serpent figure, while others take the form of a pair of serpents with two heads each staring at the other. A few altars are titanic effigies of bone and scale resembling fanged giants.

Deep in the desert stands the greatest of the altars built, maintained, and worshiped at by Vithra's bloodthirsty cultists—a huge monument to the serpentine demon prince. Carved from solid rock and towering nearly a hundred feet high, the idol depicts Vithra's serpentine head and muscular humanoid body. Each of the statue's outstretched hands once held a curved blade, but wind, sand, and time have eroded those weapons and erased many details of the demon prince's visage.

The idol is known to be hollow, with several chambers accessed through vertical ladderways, and a hidden shrine in the demon prince's head where only his most devout followers may tread. Once each year in a ceremony known as the Night of Vithra's Kiss, **cult fanatics** of Vithra travel to the idol and engage in horrifying rituals in its inner chambers. The blood of victims sacrificed in the shrine is made toxic by ritual magic, then channeled down spillways to flow from the idol's mouth, allowing loyal followers outside to bathe in that horrid stream. Most die. Those who survive become new priests of the Serpent King.

The leader of Vithra's cult is currently the **lamia high priest** Alesta, the Voice of Vithra, who rules over her supplicants protected by **giant constrictor snakes**, fanatically loyal **jackalweres**, and poisonous **salamanders**. It is rumored among her followers that Alesta will soon transcend mortality, becoming a **marilith** in Vithra's service.

Adventure Hook. In the Lower Reaches of the City of Arches, the Black Hand fence Adel Rosethorn seeks a gemstone known as the Serpent's Heart, said to be hidden away inside the Idol of the Serpent King. Her plan is to send stout adventurers to infiltrate the idol on the Night of Vithra's Kiss, steal the Serpent's Heart, and return with it—without attracting the cult's notice or wrath.

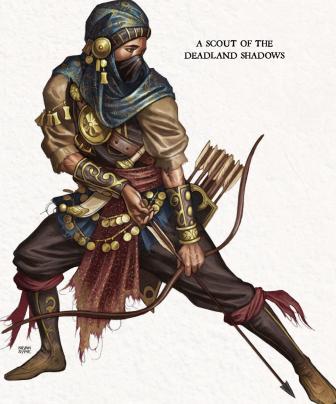
LOST CITY OF THRYNE

Once home to thousands of elite followers of the Nameless King, the city of Thryne stands now as a silent witness to the tyrant's fall, its buildings turned to tombs for the restless dead

Seemingly forgotten by time since its residents were killed en masse when the Deadlands were created, the lost city of Thryne has become a dire legend carried on the desert winds. Some say that to reach the city, one must walk into the desert to a place where no life can exist—and then walk a little more. During the Age of the Nameless King, the city was the seat of power of Larys the Voice of God, governor over the verdant territory that became the Deadlands.

That same governor still rules in Thryne, but as a **mummy lord** overseeing a city of the dead. **Mummies**, **wights**, **specters**, **undead mages**, and **skeletons** by the thousands dwell here now, alongside undead demonic **hezrous**, **vrocks**, and **glabrezu** summoned by warlocks serving Larys a millennium ago. **Gibbering mouthers** also lurk in the shadows, transformed from mortals who dared to enter the cursed city.

Cracked streets and crumbling ziggurats are all that's left of Thryne, above which looms a red storm that has swirled for nine hundred years, and which often bathes the city in droplets of burning blood. Notable locations in Thryne include the governor's palace; Doomspire, a tower of magical study now controlled by mage wights; and the cathedral of Varsys of the Gray Wastes, a demon prince ruling over an abyssal layer formed of undead creatures merged together to form one solid mass of horrific limbs and screaming faces.



Adventure Hook. A map found in the skeletal hands of a lost explorer claims to show the location of a vast treasure vault beneath the governor's palace in the lost city of Thryne. A dragonborn merchant named Samatha Stormscale has long tried to sell a map that purportedly leads to the city—and which has seemingly been scribed by the same hand. Making use of both maps, brave adventurers might discover treasure beyond imagination.

OASIS OF MOTHER'S TEARS

A singular oasis in the wastes of the Deadlands, the towering form of the weeping Mother is one of the few signs of life in a realm of death.

Along the southern edge of the Deadlands stands a large formation of natural rock marred by numerous cracks. Underground springs in the area force water up into the rock, from which streams of fresh water flow to fill a great pool. The nomadic clans known as the Deadland Shadows refer to this rocky spire as the Mother for her life-giving waters, and call the pool and the thriving village that has grown alongside it the Oasis of Mother's Tears. Clanfolk use the oasis as a place of refuge on their journeys across the desert, and protect the site from wandering monsters and bandit raids.

Family farmers and hunters make up most of the folk who dwell permanently in the village, in addition to a handful of merchants ready to serve adventurers who come to the oasis during expeditions across the Deadlands. A former goblin adventurer named Riley Gustborn has established an adventurer's refuge here, renting large tents whose fine amenities feel out of place for the setting. Riley is also the best source for tales of lost treasures rumored to be hidden in the many caverns that open up beneath the oasis.

Adventure Hook. A corruption has taken root in the underground streams feeding the Mother, shortly after an adventurer named Gulak Sandrunner delved into the underground caverns beneath the oasis. Riley Gustborn is anxious for other adventurers to follow Gulak's trail, find the source of this corruption, and end it. Characters who do so discover that an archway in the caverns connects to a poisoned world called Uvarys, and has been opened. A venomous blade carried by Gulak was secretly the key to the arch, which now poisons the water and fills the caverns with gray oozes, ochre jellies, and poison-corrupted grimlocks.

SETT'S ZIGGURAT

What appears at first to be a mountain beyond the dim haze of blowing desert sands is revealed to be a massive stepped pyramid—a ziggurat temple dedicated to the godqueen Sett.

Said to become visible on the horizon of the Deadlands to any creature on the verge of death in the desert, Sett's Ziggurat is a stepped pyramid whose seemingly impossible height makes it easily mistaken for a mountain. Travelers who survive the arduous journey

through the desert to find the pyramid recognize the statue of Sett, the sorcerer who became the god-queen consort of the Nameless King, seated atop the ziggurat, untouched by time or scathing sands. Towering statues depicting faceless armored hulks flank the queen like vigilant guardians. A thousand steps lead up the front of the ziggurat to a broad alcove where the heart of Sett should be, marking the entrance to secrets and horrors within.

Sett's Ziggurat was constructed in the image of the throne of the Nameless King—the pyramid of Averast on the dead world of Arkus (see page 103). One could spend years exploring the halls, passages, and chambers inside the ziggurat and never cross through the same area twice. More than thirty interconnected levels rise from the base of the pyramid to the opulent chambers of Sett at its peak. Some of those who have explored the site speak of just as many nested levels of hidden vaults and natural chambers below ground as above.

On the night of the fall of the Nameless King, Sett's own sycophants dragged her from her chambers and cut out her black heart—but the god-queen did not die at once. Staring down at her heart in another's hand, she laughed at those who had betrayed her, and with her last breath, she cursed them to undeath and eternal servitude in her halls. Then her body turned to ash driven on a sudden wind, scattering it far and wide inside the ziggurat.

Sages and adventurers alike believe that Sett resides still in the ziggurat, now a **lich** of staggering power served by a retinue of **mage wights**, **dread knights**, and undead **horned devils**, **bone devils**, and **ice devils**. Treasure hunters whisper of the vast wealth the queen accumulated over her centuries of rule, and the artifacts of power she once possessed.

Adventure Hook. Centuries-old rumors suggest that one of the many forbidden libraries of Sett's Ziggurat holds an invaluable tome—one that somehow still records the true name of the Nameless King. Naverre Foxglove, a seer of the Mages of Kartan, has learned of hidden entrances into Sett's Ziggurat from Coster the Red Knife, a scout of the Deadland Shadows. Naverre searches for adventurers willing to travel across the Deadlands with Coster to Sett's Ziggurat, take on the threats of the pyramid to find the book within, and return it to him intact.

SPIRES OF THE CRYSTAL SORCERER

Towering glass spires rise from the shattered landscape of the Deadlands, marking the place where an abandoned child took their revenge against the folk who cast them out—and the site from which a new threat against the City of Arches will rise.

After the destruction that created the Deadlands, untapped magical power flowed freely over the shattered landscape. When a child named Venriik was born in a small village to survivors of that destruction, the babe was corrupted by that magic, and so was abandoned in the desert and left to die. The desert, however, had other plans for them.

Venriik (a sorcerer with the general powers of an **archmage**) learned to channel the raw power that shaped the Deadlands, not only surviving but thriving as they wandered the desert. At twelve years old, they returned to the village of their birth—then channeled their magic to transform the settlement and everyone in it to glass.

Starting at the center of the ensorcelled village, Venriik forged a series of towers of opaque violet glass, now known as the Spires of the Crystal Sorcerer, with the largest standing five hundred feet high. Smaller spires jut up chaotically from the ground around the towers, drawn forth by Venriik to mark their claimed territory. Crystalline earth elementals guard the lands around these spires, and crystalline mephits spy on any activities in their master's domain. Within the central spire, chambers open up like bubbles formed inside the glass, their walls cut to facets that reveal images of distant lands and wars of the past.

A deep shaft beneath the central tower leads to a massive thrumming crystalline heart blazing with violet energy—a crystal manifested from the physical corruption of the Deadlands, and to which Venriik became attuned at birth. Crystal-forged assassins, veterans, and mages guard Venriik's tower while the Crystal Sorcerer sits on their throne at the height of the spire, plotting to extend their territory across the desert and the Doorish Hills to the City of Arches.

Adventure Hook. Agents of Venriik have recovered a key that can open an archway inside the City of Arches, giving the Crystal Sorcerer the means to send crystalline armies into the city. Lord Bianca Swifthand, commander of the Golden Knights, seeks adventurers willing to pursue the crystalline agents to the Spires of the Crystal Sorcerer, then recover the key before Venriik can use it to wage war upon the City of Arches.

SUNDERED MOUNTAIN

Where a great mountain along the western edge of the Deadlands has been cracked open from peak to root, it marks a gateway to a world of abyssal fire.

At the farthest western reaches of the Deadlands stands a mountain split asunder, a deep chasm tearing the isolated peak in two. Noxious smoke pours forth where the chasm marks a wound in the earth, illuminated by the red glow of lava far below. In those depths lairs the **undead ancient red dragon** Xereth, called Oblivion's End. A few centuries into the Nameless King's reign, the tyrant defeated the then-living Xereth in a battle that cracked the mountain open, then raised the dragon as his loyal undead companion and mount. Xereth survived the purge of the tyrant' servants and allies after his fall. Threatened with destruction, she fled into the newly created Deadlands, where warriors of the Army of the Blue Star assumed the desert would quickly end her threat. But the magic

seething within the desert and her chasm lair only made Oblivion's End more powerful.

Xereth maintains several lairs in the Sundered Mountain, filled with corrupted **fire elementals**, a clan of **undead fire giants**, and demons pulled from the depths of the Abyss—**hezrous**, **nalfeshnees**, **mariliths**, and even **balors**. The undead dragon rarely leaves the mountain except to scour nearby territories to reinforce the borders of her domain. The few travelers and hunters who delve this far into the Deadlands tell nightmarish tales of Oblivion's End soaring overhead, her scream threatening to rend the soul from any mortal who hears it.

A spire of rock rises from the ground five miles away from the Sundered Mountain, atop which sits an altar to Oblivion's End. On nights when any of the world's three moons rises within the cleft of the mountain, a sect of priests loyal to the Nameless King call to Oblivion's End. The dragon heeds their call, flying forth to renew the sect's orders to seek their fallen king and return him to power.

Adventure Hook. The rock of the Sundered Mountain is thought to be uniquely infused with abyssal energy emanating from the rift below it. A bugbear geologist named Chelsea Gloomrunner wants to study a sample of this strange rock, and puts out a call for adventurers able to cross the Deadlands, reach the Sundered Mountain, and bring a piece of it back to the City of Arches.

WATCHTOWER OF HELSYS

Smoke rises from the depths of the shattered tower of Helsys, remade as the sanctum of a fire giant king whose followers obsessively forge weapons and machines of war.

The watchtower of Helsys, named for the captain who oversaw its construction, once served as a base for the aerial forces serving the Nameless King, including manticores, nightmares, and young dragons. Helsys now lies in ruins, its upper floors sundered during a battle between chromatic dragons serving the Nameless King and metallic dragons allied with the Army of the Blue Star, with the bones of those dragons now littering the cracked landscape surrounding the tower. Various warlords and monstrous entities have laid claim to the ruins since the fall of the Nameless King, the most recent of which is a fire giant king named Traksus Hellbound. Traksus took over the tower a few decades ago, and is served now by two dozen fire giants, three dozen ogres, and hundreds of conscripted goblins, hobgoblins, and dwarves.

Those conscript laborers dig through the collapsed chambers beneath the tower in search of ore to feed the fire giants' forges. In those depths, an archway is said to lead to a hellish realm known as Maphotar. Tremendous amounts of infernal energy radiate from this arch, infusing magic into massive fire-breathing siege engines and other war machines built by Traksus's engineers and artificers. A handful of fire giant **mages** led by the fire giant **archmage** Keles Flametongue conduct arcane

experiments to further refine the machines' destructive potential.

Adventure Hook. Spies serving the City of Arches who have learned of the work being done at Helsys fear that Traksus is building his war machines with the intent of conquering the city. Royal spymaster Roselyn Zeshe wants to find adventurers willing to sneak into the ruined watchtower, find the source of power that allows Traksus to create these machines, and destroy them if possible.

DEADLANDS LOCATION SUMMARY

This section summarizes the notable locations of the Deadlands described above. Use this information to reference locations while prepping or running your game.

The City of Blades. This walled city is home to those who crave power and live for violence, making a stark contrast to the City of Arches.

Crater of the White Spire. The center of this huge crater is shrouded by violet mists and marked by a spire of gleaming white metal from beyond the world—which was the cause of the Deadlands' long-ago destruction.

Graydust Keep. Surrounded by a vast crevasse and protected by powerful magic, this skull-shaped keep has been home to countless warlords since the fall of the Nameless King.

Idol of the Serpent King. A towering idol depicts the serpentine demon prince Vithra, whose depraved cultists congregate here to engage in blood-soaked rituals.

Lost City of Thryne. Beneath an ever-swirling red storm, this ruined city is filled with undead and demons, all of whom serve a mummy lord who once governed these lands for the Nameless King.

Oasis of Mother's Tears. A life-giving oasis opens up where water spills from a rock formation known as the Mother, making a resting place for merchants, desert hunters, and adventurers.

Sett's Ziggurat. This massive step pyramid was once home to the god-queen Sett, consort of the Nameless King, and holds uncounted treasures and deadly threats.

Spires of the Crystal Sorcerer. Great towers shaped of crystal are the sanctum of the vengeful Venriik the Crystal Sorcerer, who plots to seize the City of Arches.

Sundered Mountain. Where a great peak has been split by a deep chasm, it opens up to the fiery domain of Xereth, the undead dragon mount of the Nameless King.

Watchtower of Helsys. Once the base of the Nameless King's aerial forces, this ruined watchtower is now home to the fire giant king Traksus Hellbound, whose servants forge great machines of war.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE DEADLANDS

As the characters explore the bleak landscape of the Deadlands, you can make use of random encounters to help bring that territory to life or to set up larger adventures. Roll a d20 or choose from the encounters

on the Deadlands Encounters table, or use the table as inspiration for encounters of your own.

These encounters are designed for mid-level, mid-high-level, and high-level characters.

	DLANDS ENCOUNTERS
120	Encounter
1	A party of scouts of the nomadic Deadland Shadows approach the characters, asking of their plans and offering to escort them to the Oasis of Mother's Tears.
2	A sect of serpent-worshiping cultists and cult fanatics are making their way to the Idol of the Serpent King.
	Wights riding on nightmares and led by a dread knight attempt to ambush the characters, intending to bring them as sacrifices to Sett's Ziggurat.
	A fire giant accompanied by crossbow-wielding dwarves and goblins roars by on a scouting war machine, on their way back to the watchtower of Helsys.
	A set of blackened crystalline earth elementals burrows up from the ground to attack the characters. Each elementa is marked by a glyph connected to the Spires of the Crystal Sorcerer.
5	A band of undead vrocks hunt for travelers to drag back to the lost city of Thryne.
•	A huge shadow crosses the sun, and a draconic roar threatens to steal the life from the characters as the undead ancient red dragon Xereth, Oblivion's End, flies past on their way back to the Sundered Mountain.
	An army of skeletons and skeletal veterans marches through the desert, some riding atop undead bulettes .
	In a temporary fighting arena in the open desert, veterans of the City of Blades cheer as an ettin blademaster battles two armored ogres . The elf gladiator referee of the bout asks if the characters want to join in.
0	A huge purple worm breaks the surface to surge past the characters, ridden by desert-dwelling goblins .
1	A huge sinkhole in the desert descends into a once-hidden crypt swarming with specters , banshees , and wraiths .
2	Two clay guardians walk past the characters, bearing a magical relic for delivery to an archmage master who died centuries ago.
13	The characters stumble across an ancient ruin where a sentient magic sword calls out to them, but the site is protected by a powerful guardian naga and their harpy conscripts.
4	A whirling tornado moving straight for the characters reveals itself to be a feral mage borne aloft by her air elemental servants.
15	A band of cyclopes approach the characters, looking to make their way from the violent tumult of the City of Blades to the more peaceful City of Arches.
16	Several dozen skeletons carry royal mummies on

A trio of **night hags** offer food and lore to the characters in

A tyrannosaurus rex battles a giant ape among the pillars

guardian asks the characters for current news regarding the

The characters find a jeweled skull atop an altar in the open

An exiled mage of Kartan protected by a servant stone

desert, which turns into a **demilich** when approached.

exchange for tales of their valor.

politics of the City of Arches.

of a ruined courtyard.

17

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WORLDS BEYOND THE ARCHES

Built on a site of unstable planar boundaries, the City of Arches touches on countless other realms, any of which the characters might hear about or actually be able to reach during the campaign. You can make use of any other campaign worlds or planar realms as one of the many worlds touching on the city, but this chapter presents ten new realms (including one realm broken out with extra detail) that you can use as part of your campaign or to generate ideas of your own.

Use the descriptions of these realms when working up the history and lore the characters might discover in their adventures within or outside the City of Arches. The lore of these worlds might appear in conversations with NPCs, ancient writings, or crumbling mosaics and frescoes in the tombs and forgotten chambers around the city. Names and details are intentionally brief, meant to be used as mysterious starting points for your further development. The adventure seeds presented here can then be used to expand each world and turn your City of Arches games into a multiversal campaign.

DEATHREACH—THE ENDLESS DUNGEON

The rocky walls of a vast cavern shift and flow to expose dozens of worked stone tunnels and half-formed halls. Titanic pillars rise from the floor to touch the ceiling, stretching out to form a great chamber where natural stone once stood. Networks of tunnels stretch like fingers into solid rock as the dungeon of Deathreach forms a new web of passages and chambers in its endless expansion.

Built according to the twisted designs of a family of archmages, Deathreach is a sentient world of winding corridors, expanding halls, and vast underground chambers—a living dungeon. Crumbling halls known as the Dead Fingers twist and narrow down before expanding into the Shadowed Deeps, a range of caverns large enough to hold entire mountains in their depths.

Underground cities inside Deathreach are home to obsessed dwarves and duergar, working endlessly in huge forge works. There, they craft the tools and machines that dig new shafts and passageways in the quest to discover long-forgotten sections of the Endless Dungeon. Even deeper, caverns known as the Abhorrent Vats focus the malevolent consciousness of the dungeon to spawn **gibbering mouthers**, **black puddings**, **otyughs**, and worse creatures out of lakes of primordial fluid.

ADVENTURE SEED

One of the characters awakens from a terrible dream of a faceless god rising in a dark cavern, and discovers a small clay statue of a faceless humanoid in their hand. On the wall, they have scrawled a map in their sleep showing an archway of knotted rock found in a cavern beneath Sunken Revvia. A sense of urgency calls to the character to stop a new and terrible god coming through that archway.

After defeating **clay guardians** protecting the archway, the characters step through into Deathreach, the Endless Dungeon, to witness natural rock forming into shaped stone seemingly on its own. Deadly traps and maze-like tunnels challenge them, as though the dungeon seeks to devour them. **Chuuls, behirs, fomorians, purple worms,** and other threats hunt them, seemingly spawning out of the very ground.

Eventually, the characters discover a band of **lizardfolk** mages serving Deathreach, and learn that the suffering and deaths of thousands of adventurers within the living dungeon serve to awaken Voor the Hunger, a god who yearns to walk across all worlds and devour everything in their path. The characters must find and destroy the heart of Voor—a powerful *sphere of annihilation* hidden in the Endless Dungeon—before the god awakens.

DRAKEHOLM—LAND OF DRAGONS

Towering mountains stretch into swirling skies, while winding rivers flow through mile-deep valleys in this land of impossible extremes. Titanic statues lie half submerged in vast swamps, and steel-walled citadels gleam in the light of the blue sun overhead. The carving of a huge platinum dragon's head stares out from a tall mountain, while five spires of stone carved into the heads of five chromatic dragons glare from another.

Drakeholm is a world of extremes, its lands formed from the lives and souls of the dragons who rule over this realm. Armies of humanoids and dragonborn wage constant war here, serving as proxies for the cruel Chromatic Dragon Queen and the iron resolve of the Metallic Dragon King.

The **ancient gold dragon** Kavella serves as steward to the platinum king, residing in the floating cathedral of Ellevyn. There she kneels in prayer, receiving word from the king and sending his messages down through dragon priests, commanders, and other servants.

In a deep chasm known as the World's Wound, the ancient red dragon sorcerer Thallyx Five Flames serves as second-in-command to the chromatic queen. A host of half-dragon priests and shadow elf archmages pass the dragon's orders to the chromatic commanders, each an adult dragon ruling over armies of humanoids and half-dragons dedicated to endless war.



ADVENTURE SEED

Galeos Titancowl, a silver dragonborn, comes to the characters with a mystery. She knows she came to the City of Arches with great purpose, but lost that purpose when she stepped out from the archway that brought her here. All she carried with her was a glyph-scribed dragon claw serving as an arch key, and a note written in her own handwriting saying: "Find the heroes, find the orb." She asks the characters to join her as she returns to the twin dragon-horn archway where she arrived, in the deep reaches of the Endless Warrens. However, elf assassins and mages serving the Chromatic Dragon Queen, their minds shielded with circlets cast of a strange metal, await her return, intending to take the key and abscond with it through the archway.

After traveling through the arch, the characters arrive in the upper reaches of a ruined mile-high tower in Drakeholm. Elf **knights**, **driders**, and a **blue shadow dragon mage** named Iraevyan Blackstorm are also there, serving the Chromatic Dragon Queen as they hunt for an *orb of dragonkind* tied to the life force of a dying **ancient gold dragon** named Everathon the World Spirit. The characters have a chance to track down the orb, hidden away in the ruins of the tower, before Blackstorm and her followers find it first.

DRENDAAN—WORLD OF AIR AND WATER

An endless sea spreads below an infinite sky of swirling clouds and empty blackness. Bioluminescent plants rise above the surface of the roiling water to light the world in blue and green. Winged creatures, both humanoid and bestial, soar around a crystalline citadel that floats above the waves.

The world of Drendaan is an endless expanse of air and water. No sun hangs above. No stars dot the sky. Great miles-high strands of bioluminescent vines rise up from

the dark sea into the clouds above, wrapped around the hulks of derelict ships and bathing the world in blue and green light.

Even more imposing against the endless horizon, the great pillar of stone known as Gorvund's Spindle extends beyond the clouds to connect the sky to the roiling sea below. Impossibly tall, the spindle once served as the limitless laboratory and museum of the **djinni archmage** Gorvund. Individual levels of the spindle are said to hold slices of entire worlds, transported whole from countless dimensions.

Moving a random course across the sea, a floating crystalline mote holds the aerial city of Irathas. The **ancient gold dragon** Veragon once ruled over draconic subjects here, but has recently gone missing. **Adult silver dragon** sages now search across multiple worlds for their lost lord.

Miles below the surface of the water lies the aquatic city of Barthen. **Merfolk**, **sea elves**, and **sahuagin** all dwell there, forming a tenuous alliance maintained by the three queens of Barthen—the sea elf queen Varuel, the merfolk queen Nora, and the sahuagin witch queen Thrancev.

ADVENTURE SEED

A birdfolk named Verosa approaches the characters in the City of Arches, asking for help. Having arrived through one of the city's archways decades ago, Verosa has long had no recall of who she was or where she came from. But she has recently remembered a family she left behind when she stepped through a crystalline portal that transported her to the City of Arches.

A key Verosa was carrying when she arrived in the city—a crystalline figurine of a silver dragon—has been stolen by **thugs**, **veterans**, and a **mage** of the Black Hand residing in a ruined forge in the Lower Reaches. Once the characters recover the figurine, Verosa asks them to travel with her through the crystal arch where she arrived, found beneath the waterfalls on the cliffs above the city.

Beyond the arch, the characters discover a collapsed crystalline garden on an island in Drendaan's endless sea. Glowing crystals illuminate the island, where rogue air elementals serve a cruel djinni named Kesset. Kesset has enthralled Verosa's people, who mine the island in search of rare magical stones. The characters must defeat Kesset's elementals and dethrone the djinni to save Verosa's family and reunite them with their long-lost daughter.

ERUWYND—THE ENDLESS FOREST

Rolling hills and ageless mountains break above the tops of lush trees that mark the Endless Forest. Above that green sea stands the petrified husk of the Worldtree, once the center of life in the forest but now long dead. Dwarven airships soar through the skies above the Worldtree, piloted by legendary hunters who seek out the most formidable creatures in the forest below.

Only the bravest of hunters can trek the shifting trails of the Endless Forest, face its mighty beasts, and come out alive. The roots of massive trees tear through the ruins of the elven city of Celevis, said to be the resting place of the Immortal's Blade. That vorpal sword of the radiant knight Kalasar lies in a vault protected by ageless sentinel elves who guard its impregnable door.

The petrified dead Worldtree, now known as Dreadroot, is the citadel of the hobgoblin queen Tresiira. The hobgoblin **archmage** Iverix, her **young red dragon** companion Vesser, and a group of **fire giant** bodyguards known as the Iron Six, all attend their queen in the citadel's audience chamber. Beneath the great tree's dead roots, the queen's fire giant servants dig in search of the bones of their titan-god Elduun the Colossus.

Above the forest soars the Bluesteel Armada, seven airships piloted by seven dwarf sisters. The Bluesteel sisters hunt the mightiest beasts of the ancient forest, ready to claim trophies to decorate their castles and keeps in faraway worlds.

ADVENTURE SEED

Deep beneath Vathrex's Forge in the City of Arches (page 26) lies a gate shaped of metal roots wrapped around each other. A charred iron hammer serves as the key to this gate, buried among the tools Erna Ironhorn uses at her forge. Erna comes to the characters after a half-elemental **spy** named Kresta Firebound steals the hammer and makes her way down below the forge. Fearing the danger of an open archway, Erna asks the characters to pursue Kresta and reclaim the key.

On the other side of the open arch, the characters arrive in Eruwynd, and are trapped in the mines beneath Dreadroot. Traversing huge tunnels and forgotten ruins, they are pursued by **hobgoblins**, **fire giants**, and **hell hounds**. When the spy Kresta is found, it is revealed that she plans to turn the hammer over to the **hobgoblin war**

mage Drenyk, an agent of queen Tresiira, who hopes to use the archway to invade the City of Arches.

IO—THE FORGE OF CREATION

An impossibly large city spreads out along the interior of a massive spherical shell. Huge machines within the city feed lines of energy into the center of the shell, surging past the floating husks of mechanical titans, then feeding into three concentric rings orbiting a glowing globe—the central Forge of Creation.

Housed inside the shell of a dead star, the mechanized world of Io once served as a forge for building colossal warriors dedicated to the god Iverundus, before that deity's fall eons ago. Molten starstuff still flows down trenches within the city, feeding into the Forge of Creation at the sphere's center. There, half-construct beings called Iverundians now build great star-spanning machines for exploration and war.

A floating disk along the outer surface of the sphere is home to the Silent Watch, an army of colossal constructs built to wage war across planets, but which have gone dormant over the millennia since Iverundus's fall. Sages serving bloodthirsty warlords hunt across the planes for the crown and scepter said to control this unstoppable army.

ADVENTURE SEED

The characters come across a multicolored spherical stone and a map showing a location beneath the City of Arches, where a chamber holds a circular floating ring cast of some unknown metal. As they approach, the stone reveals itself as an arch key that opens the ring, revealing a portal to a chamber made of the same metal. Stepping through brings the characters to a derelict astral ship known as the *Dreamcaster*, floating inside the sphere of Io.

The ship is overrun by **gibbering mouthers** escaped from experimental laboratories, and is controlled by iron-plated **chuuls** serving the ancient **aboleth** Cythe. Sentient suits of **animated armor** beg the characters to rescue the true captain of the ship, an **adult bronze dragon** named Yvondia who is trapped in a crystalline cell in the ship's hold. With Yvondia rescued, the *Dreamcaster* can become a staging ground for exploring the world below.

KORAX—PRIMEVAL LAND OF THE RED STAR

A small red sun blazes star-like above barren lands where the petrified skeletons of titanic mammoths jut up out of cracked red clay. Huge creatures lumber through dead forests, breaking the titanic trunks of desiccated trees with cracks like thunder. The entrance to a system of deep caves has the appearance of the gaping maw of a skull formed from lifeless stone, and is marked by primeval white sigils.

The blazing red star called Veles hangs in the twilight skies of barren Korax, where mutated mammoths and



fiendish dinosaurs hunt through desolate forests and swamps. Deep networks of caverns and tunnels are cut through the petrified earth, leading to the primeval city of Kor. There, primeval humanoids fight for survival against the horrors found in the tunnels and caverns known as the Red Deeps.

On the surface world, the mountain temple of Zyx serves as the lair of the **ancient blue dragon archpriest** Ceveron, who rules over a land of fanatical dwarves and half-dragons. The dragon priest speaks the will of Veles the Red Star, who is the only god in this world, channeling the star's voice through a red sphere that floats around them.

ADVENTURE SEED

When a shady vendor from the Lower Reaches is caught stealing from the characters, he begs forgiveness and offers them a bargain. The vendor knows of a rough archway of ancient stone hidden in a secluded cavern of the Endless Warrens, its edges covered in strange runes, and which leads to a world filled with untapped treasures. The skeletal remains of ancient humanoids are spread around the strange arch, as if they died while trying to reach it. The vendor has learned that the Mages of Kartan hold the arch's key, a glyph-scribed bone rod, in their vaults. Characters wanting to investigate the arch can either steal the rod or negotiate for it with the reclusive mages.

Beyond the gate, the characters enter Korax through the Sundered Vaults of Athraxa—ruined chambers half-submerged in mud swamps known to local folk as Gorrah. More than a millennium ago, warlocks in service to the Nameless King plundered the natural magic of Korax on this site—magic fueled by the red sun of Veles. One of these warlocks, now a **wraith mage** known as Ythiin, resides in the vaults still, served by **orcs**, **ogres**, and **hill giants** who bear the mark of Veles and worship the blazing star. An *ioun stone of insight* swirls around Ythiin's burning-eyed skull.

MAPHOTAR—THE INFERNAL MACHINE

Black smoke shot through with screaming souls rises into hellish red skies from a mountain of metal—an incomprehensibly large infernal machine. Rivers of black liquid pour forth from the machine, flowing into bottomless crevasses that surround it. In the nearby wastes, cowled and hooded figures delve into the mangled wrecks of war machines half-buried in sands of finely ground bone turned red with blood, seeking salvage. Above it all floats a diamond-shaped citadel hanging cold and unforgiving above the tormented lands below.

At the heart of the machine-riddled wasteland that is the hellish domain of Maphotar, the titanic soul-fueled war machine known as the Grenneth was forged by the archdevil Klamas before his fall. Resembling a mountain of mangled iron, the Grenneth devours the living in its great boilers, consuming their souls and belching out the ectoplasmic smoke of their mortal remains.

Around the great machine stretches a wasteland known as the Iron Reaches, where otherworldly constructs lie twisted together where they fell in ancient battles. Rivers of red-black poison leaking from the Grenneth flow into the Deep Reaches—subterranean trenches opening up as huge cracks in the ground with caves beneath. Humanoid scavengers known as the Triset scour the remains of an apocalyptic war remembered by no one, taking what they can salvage to the subterranean warrens where they dwell. There, they revere and serve the fallen angel Yventa, who sits silently on her twisted metal throne.

Above the shattered wasteland floats the diamondshaped fortress Agulon, once the seat of power of Klamas. Though the archdevil is long departed, his servants still prowl the fortress, awaiting their lord's return.

ADVENTURE SEED

As part of their dealings with beings of the Lower Planes, the characters acquire a cold-iron dagger marked with infernal glyphs. A sage of Kartan explains that the dagger is the key to an arch shaped of twisted cold iron bands, hidden in the vaults beneath the Theater of Whispers. The sage offers the characters a hefty sum to pass through the arch and recover a glyph-scribed green crystal she has seen on the other side in hazy visions.

Stepping through the archway, the characters arrive in the shattered remains of a titanic construct half-buried in the bone sands of the Iron Reaches. While inside the ruined construct, the characters face off against devilish mercenaries, including cambions, barbed devils, and bearded devils led by a horned devil. A powerful iron guardian bars passage to the construct's brain cavity, where the gemstone seen by the sage is found. But the characters realize that the gem contains the memories of the construct's war against Klamas, including the archdevil's true name—something the sages of Kartan would pay handsomely for.

TERRACHE—THE JAWS OF CHAOS

An underground cavern of unimaginable size has its walls shrouded in volcanic mist, rising from a great sea fed by ribbons of water flowing down from above. Mile-high stalactites and stalagmites jut from above and below like the teeth of a huge maw, linked by narrow bridges of stone that glow with red and violet light.

Within a seemingly endless cavern, settlements carved into stalactites, stalagmites, and natural columns define the subterranean world of Terrache. Emerald waterfalls flow down from unknown sources above the ceiling, filling a deep sea below. Spidery walkways connect stalactite cities that are the domains of Qinroris and Kraketen, a **shadow elf** queen and king who each rule over their half of a realm at war.

On volcanic islands rising above the shadowed sea, the five-spired tower of Vestellis is the sanctum of a sect of warlock lords known as the Violet Eye. Vestellis is an independent realm within the cavern, with the warlocks ignoring the conflict between the elves as they focus on hunting for their lost god in the lake, which they call the Seas of Madness. Meanwhile, deep beneath the water, the **aboleth** Zyn and their brood transform natural stone columns into the Pillars of Sin—twisted sculptures that emit a cacophony of psychic screams that shatter the minds of those who hear them.

ADVENTURE SEED

After coming into possession of a curiously inexpensive magic weapon, the characters inadvertently activate a natural stone archway while exploring the Endless Warrens, leading them to an incandescent mushroom grove where sentient **myconids** have become caught between the forces of Vesper and Kraketen. A myconid sage agrees to shift the magical polarity on the characters' one-way arch key if they'll protect the grove from these warring factions.

One faction, led by the **cyclops mage** Vettex, includes **goblin** spies, **bugbear** mercenaries, and the dwarf **priest** Druvel of the Outside (see the sidebar on page 121). The other, led by the **shadow elf spellcaster drider** Tharunvel, includes **shadow elf** soldiers, **bearded devil** shock troops, and a **night hag** advisor named Auntie Clackclaws. The characters must either defeat both groups or figure out how to work one against the other to save the myconid grove and return to the City of Arches.



THRESKA—DESERT OF DEAD GODS

Scorched sands bake red under the heat of three suns hanging in the sky, holding the half-buried and petrified remains of ancient titans. In the distance, a great and baleful mountain rises along the horizon, dominating the land with divine purpose, and forcing those who observe it to turn away.

A world gifted to a council of warlocks, sorcerers, priests, and wizards who served the Nameless King, Threska has fallen into ruin to become a desert filled by roaming undead and titans called from other worlds. These lands were once covered by ancient temples that were plundered for the council's experiments, their gods long dead. Ruined cities dot the landscape, held by the world's surviving folk as bastions in the fight against endless hordes of undead.

Thousands of undead and mutated abominations shamble across the Red Wastes of Threska, where obsidian towers thrust up out of the cracked ground like the fingers of the dead. Within these towers, an unholy circle of **liches** still paying fealty to the Nameless King obsess over the experiments and research they've been conducting for millennia.

Inside Teveron the Shadowed Mountain, aberrant monsters and other primordial horrors slumber, worshiped by generations of **grimlocks**, **ogres**, and **giants** who have never seen the world outside. The soothing chanting of the **ogre mages** who rule over those peoples echoes through the mountain's countless halls, ensuring the primordial monstrosities never awake.

ADVENTURE SEED

The loving sister of an obnoxious dwarf explorer named Ederym Graycowl begs the characters to find her brother, who she believes is lost in the domain of Threska. She gives them an arch key—a petrified eye marked with a magical glyph—and a map leading to a grim basalt arch in an ancient tomb of the Cliffs of the Dead. After dealing with **skeletal tomb guardians** to gain access to the arch, the characters cross over to a grim basalt bastion carved into a mile-high cliff-face over burning red sands.

Inside the bastion, **minotaur blackguards** and **medusa priests** serve the **mummy lord** Tevex the Last Breath. Tevex plans to sacrifice Ederym above a sleeping primordial named Ghulon the Unending Maw, with regular sacrifices necessary to keep the primordial slumbering. If rescued, a grateful Ederym informs the characters of a nearby treasure vault they can raid on their way out, not realizing that a **demilich** known as Death's Embrace lies within.

VYNAN—THE FORGOTTEN LABORATORY

In the endless astral void, the dead city of Vynan is held within towering circular walls of black stone. Burning blue lights dot the city, and rise along a great central spindle a thousand feet high. The crackling of arcane power and the echo of steel on stone is the only sound to be heard in Vynan, hinting at the violence that rules here.

Once a city-sized laboratory for the **lich** Ivextus of Gral, Vynan was abandoned and fell to ruin long ago. The circular walled city floats in the depths of the Astral Plane, home now to humanoids who have fought for survival against arcane horrors for generations.

Where the central spire known as Canus rises above the city, a baleful blue light shines from its uppermost windows. In chambers beyond, the lich Ivextus has had his petrified body fused with a throne of cold iron, from which he explores countless worlds as an astral projection. In caverns beneath Canus, the lich's alien servants still conduct research on the world above, occasionally capturing residents of the city and replacing them with psionic **doppelganger** agents as part of some centurieslong inscrutable experiment.

At the same time, in the great citadel of Braatis at the edge of the city, the **storm giant** king Uzul commands an army of constructs created from living bodies. Uzul waits for the day when he can move against Ivextus, always seeking to slay the city's humanoid survivors and

use their bodies to bolster his army. However, the alien doppelgangers work tirelessly to thwart his raids.

The humanoid residents of Vynan know that they came to the city from somewhere else, but their origins have been long forgotten. They have spent generations repairing a titanic astral vessel that crashed into the city, known as the *Yondoth* and fitted with a strange ghost-fueled engine that whispers to the people of the city in dreams. If they can repair the vessel, the survivors of Vynan hope to escape the city and travel to the stars, hunting for their lost homeworld.

ADVENTURE SEED

A friend of the characters suddenly attacks them, revealing themself to be a **doppelganger** arrived in the City of Arches from Vynan. On the body of the doppelganger, the characters find a tome once owned by the lich Ivextus, a portal key to the Forgotten Laboratory, and a crude map leading to a tomb in the Cliffs of the Dead. Inside that tomb sits an arch resembling the gaping mouth of a great skull.

Seeking their lost friend on the other side of the gate, the characters find themselves in the acidic sewers beneath the city of Vynan, watched by vigilant **phase spiders** lurking above. In a nearby laboratory complex, **flesh guardians** overseen by **doppelganger veterans** and **mages** feed dead humanoids into huge transformation vats where new doppelgangers are created. The characters can find their lost companion alive in an area of nearby cells, guarded by a spell-infused **clay guardian**.

ARKUS—WORLD OF DEAD TEMPLES

Once a beautiful and thriving world, Arkus now stands as a planetary monument to the unhindered greed of the Nameless King. Hot sands flow like rivers across the blasted landscape, eroding mountains into claws grasping up out of the dead earth. Former oceans lie bare and desolate, marked by titanic skeletons and bottomless trenches. All that remains of the civilizations once prevalent across Arkus are ever-hungry undead, and the monuments raised to a tyrant who cared nothing for the people who worshiped him as a god.

A red sun permanently eclipsed by a dead moon hangs in the sky above the wastes of Arkus, staring down like a baleful eye. Most of the world is now uninhabitable, scorched clean by deadly heat and toxic radiant energy that leaves only scattered shallow lakes and pools of necrotic water on the surface.

Enormous undead monstrosities lumber across the land, roaring in pain and hatred. Jagged mountains are thrust up from the buckling ground, leaving fissures extending deep below the surface. There, acidic rivers flow through endless caverns, where a few struggling clans of living beings manage to maintain a meager existence while waiting for their inevitable extinction.

UNFATHOMABLE TEMPLES

Huge pyramids, step-pyramids, and towers are scattered across Arkus, built in homage to the tyrant now known as the Nameless King, and with the strength to withstand the savage sandstorms that started during his reign. These once-grand temples were marvels in their day where they towered above the horizon. But even in ruin, their unique forms can astound the few living beings who ever behold them. Featuring spiral-walled twisting towers, hollow floating earthmotes at their apexes, vast inverted steps leading into black voids below ground, and even more wondrous architecture, these temples once held tens of thousands of worshipers. Now, only tormented souls and animated corpses remain.

PLANET-KILLING SPIRES

Almost as numerous as the temples, towering spires forged of an unknown metal and scribed with alien glyphs can be found across all the lands of Arkus. The grim skeletal face of the Nameless King decorates these spires, with the eyes of those graven images sending tendrils of purple eldritch light up into the sparse clouds surrounding them to scour the sky. Each spire rises hundreds of feet into the air, even as its base extends deep into the dead earth.

Warlocks and wizards serving the Nameless King once used these spires to draw forth the life energy of the world, fueling terrible magic, and ultimately summoning the alien moon to permanently blot out the sun. With Arkus dead, these spires stand hollow and empty now, save for the animated remains of the warlocks sacrificed in the name of their dread lord before the end. However, a few spires still hold the remains of the life energy they drained from the world, trapped in eldritch crystals. Anyone possessing such a crystal could use its energy to bring life to a small region of the dead world—or to channel that energy as the servants of the Nameless King once did, fueling the most powerful spells.

LIVING CLANS IN A DEAD WORLD

Hidden in caves beneath the razor-sharp mountains or in the shadowed depths of the ruined plains of Arkus, a small number of living humanoid clans cling to a fragile existence. Constant battle against the undead horrors who now rule the world has hardened the folk of these clans, who hunt through Arkus's ruins in search of portals by which they might leave their dead world behind. These humanoids long ago abandoned their worship of the Nameless King to follow other gods—but those gods are seemingly too far away to answer their desperate calls for salvation.

AVERAST—THRONE OF THE GOD-KING

The grandest of the temples of Arkus is Averast, a pyramid standing over two thousand feet high. A cyclopean statue of the Nameless King sits upon a carved throne embedded in the front of the temple. The statue is thought to be the only image of the tyrant to escape the curse that scoured his existence from history, its dead eyes looking out over the lone and level sands stretching away to the horizon. Magic suffused into the towering staircase leading up and into the pyramid imparts a single phrase into the minds of all who climb those stairs: "Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"

An entire city still spreads out inside Averast, which once featured vast and opulent chambers in its highest levels atop tiers of dismal housing for tens of thousands of servants below. Tens of thousands of cursed undead now dwell in those shadowed vaults, within which they were entombed when the Nameless King fell.

Undead priests led by the **mummy lord** Thuvaro-Ket now rule the levels above, going through the motions of worshiping their vanished god. In the center of the pyramid lies the former throne room of the Nameless King—a vast chamber now serving as a lair to the **undead blue dragon** Kavoritus Dreadstar.

A vast labyrinth opens up below the surface of the pyramid, extending thousands of feet deep and running for miles in all directions. Fifty generations of living dwarf and duergar thralls, unaware that their king no longer rules the world above, pilot armored zombie purple worms to expand the labyrinth. They endlessly cut new tunnels and city-sized chambers through earth and stone—and draw forth eldritch horrors from the dying core of the planet.

ADVENTURE SEED

Just as the great statue on the front of Averast remains the only intact image of the Nameless King, a dragonborn sage of Kartan named Vesta Feybound believes that a tome detailing the deeds of the tyrant likewise remains intact in one of the vaults of the pyramid. Vesta has a single-use key that will open an archway to Arkus—a glyph-marked black-iron dagger whose blade spilled the blood of thousands of sacrifices during the tyrant's reign. She seeks adventurers willing to enter Averast's haunted halls to retrieve this volume, said to be named *The Tome of the Third Eye* and held in a location called the Vault of Sorrow. Vesta is willing to trade a powerful magic item or another item sought by the characters for the tome.

MAKING NEW WORLDS

In addition to the worlds presented in this chapter and the existing realms, planes, and domains you want to bring into your City of Arches campaign, you can quickly and easily build out your own worlds beyond the arches with the tables in "Appendix D: World Generator" (page 152).

CAMPAIGN ARCS

This chapter presents three full campaign arcs making use of the locations, NPCs, conflicts, and magic in the City of Arches. One arc covers an exciting heroic-tier campaign taking characters from 1st to 12th level, while two arcs break out possible paths for a full 5e campaign taking characters from 1st to 20th level. Each arc also presents unique options for play, including weaving the events of the arc in with other adventures, or using different sections of the arc as smaller adventures rather than running it as a whole campaign.

Many of the locations and NPCs in the campaign arcs key to other sections of the book. But just as the overall setup of the City of Arches is meant to give you room to refine and develop what's presented in the book, when the campaign arcs mention locations that aren't fully broken out, those locations are yours to develop.

THE KEY OF WORLDS

For a thousand years, a key has been hidden in the depths beneath the City of Arches—a key able to open all of the gates of the city to the worlds that lie beyond. Though this artifact-key was hidden by a group known as the Order of the Black Flame, secured in the Vault of Worlds, and bound by the three fires of the Blackflame Braziers, word of its existence has finally reached out from the depths like the grasping hands of the restless dead. Will the key fall into the hands of followers of the Nameless King who forged it? Or will it be claimed by the heroes charged to protect it once again?

The Key of Worlds is a 5e campaign arc suitable for starting characters, and can extend to high-level play. (For non-5e RPG systems with different leveling systems, you can adjust the specific levels in the campaign arc as desired.)

This is a largely exploratory campaign set in the deepest reaches of the City of Arches, with the characters choosing which paths to take and possibly engaging in other adventures between different sections of this campaign. This campaign arc can also be threaded through one or more other campaigns, tying into those campaigns where necessary, or can act as a focused quest in a larger campaign.

CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

Danvon of Duskwater, a sage residing in Kartan, Tower of the Arcane, hires the characters to recover a scroll of ancient lore in one of the tombs of the Cliffs of the Dead. In the course of recovering the scroll, the characters uncover the legend of the *Key of Worlds*—an artifact said to be able to open any archway in the City of Arches. As

the characters learn, the key was created by the Nameless King, but was claimed after the tyrant's fall, then locked away deep beneath the city by a group of long-dead knights known as the Order of the Black Flame.

Under Danvon's guidance, the characters seek out further lore. After locating the chamber in the Lower Reaches where the extradimensional Vault of Worlds that holds the key can be accessed, they must discover the locations of the Blackfire Braziers—three magical braziers that must be lit to open the vault. The characters also uncover one of two items able to light the braziers: a *staff of fire* and a *flame tongue* longsword, which once belonged to two members of the Order of the Black Flame.

With one of the two items in hand, the characters undertake quests to locate and light two of the three braziers. Before they can light the third brazier, however, they discover that a rival group of adventurers hired by Danvon's duplicitous apprentice has captured the second of the two items to light the braziers, and has already used it. The characters confront this group at the extradimensional entrance to the Vault of Worlds, now unlocked with all three braziers burning.

In the final arc of the campaign, the characters enter the vault and face the guardians who protect the key—as well as demons who have slipped into the vault through planar cracks, intent on using the key to release an abyssal horde upon the City of Arches. At the campaign's conclusion, characters who are successful at overcoming the threats within the vault acquire the *Key of Worlds* and can choose what to do with this powerful artifact.

USING THIS CAMPAIGN ARC

The Key of Worlds is written as a template meant to inspire your own adventures. You can fill out each part of the overall arc with your own selection of maps, monsters, secrets, clues, NPCs, and treasures, and can expand or abbreviate any part of the arc to fit the campaign you wish to run. The pacing of this arc is intended to be relaxed, giving the characters opportunities to engage in other adventures, put their quest for the Key of Worlds on hold, and pick it back up when it suits them.

You can use the campaign arc's rival adventuring party, the Seekers of the Gray Dawn, as a kind of dial to turn up the urgency of the campaign, making it clear to the characters that if they don't follow through with the quest for the key, the Seekers will do so. Depending on how you wish to motivate the characters using these rival adventurers, you can either reveal the Seekers' progress to the players or not.

NOTABLE NPCS

The following NPCs play key parts in this campaign arc. You can build on these short descriptions as you wish.

Danvon of Duskwater. A mage and historian residing in Kartan, Tower of the Arcane, Danvon loves unearthing the secrets hidden beneath the City of Arches, but has absolutely no desire to go into the depths himself. He hires numerous adventuring groups to investigate mysteries and seek lost lore, often focusing on one such mystery intently before suddenly losing interest as another bit of history grabs his attention. You can keep Danvon as engaged in the campaign arc as you desire, depending on the interest the characters take in the history of the Key of Worlds.

Renault Bluewynd. An apprentice **mage** to Danvon, Renault becomes known to the characters when they discover that the mage is secretly stealing information from Danvon and feeding it to their own adventuring party, the Seekers of the Gray Dawn. Renault covets the *Key of Worlds* in their quest to become the most renowned archmage in the city, if not the world.

Lizbeth and Rose, the Gray Dawn Sisters. These twin former **gladiators** put together the Seekers of the Gray Dawn, a mercenary adventuring party operating from



LOCATIONS TO PLAY WITH

Many of the locations mentioned in these adventure arcs aren't fully fleshed out elsewhere in the book, and are left to your imagination to fully detail. As such, you can make modifications to the setup and relative positioning of locations in any adventure arc as you desire. Grab an idea and run with it, get your own maps, and let your imagination run free as you make these adventure seeds and locations your own.

the Lower Reaches, and with the permission of the Black Hand criminal guild. The Gray Dawn sisters are happy to search for the *Key of Worlds* on Renault's behalf, but will be equally happy to sell the key—or to use it themselves.

HISTORY OF THE KEY OF WORLDS

The Key of Worlds might well be the most powerful artifact of the City of Arches. Created by the Nameless King during his thousand-year reign, the key can open any archway in the city to reveal the faraway lands and worlds beyond. Like much of the Nameless King's legacy, the key was lost in the ruins beneath the city when the tyrant fell. But some eight hundred years ago, after that fall but before the rise of the Golden Order, the key was discovered by a group of holy knights known as the Order of the Black Flame.

Realizing the power of the *Key of Worlds*, the Order of the Black Flame sealed the artifact in what they called the Vault of Worlds—a pocket demiplane hidden away in the far reaches of the multiverse that the key allowed them to find. Believing that no one without the key would be able to repeat that feat, the members of the order sealed the extradimensional entrance to the vault and bound it to three magical braziers known as the Blackfire Braziers, located at different points inside the city that were then under the order's control.

Each brazier could be lit only by one of two items possessed by the two brothers who led the Order of the Black Flame—the *staff of fire* held by the mage Servlyn, and the *flame tongue* longsword of the knight Irixthius. But as they held their secret close over long centuries, the guardians of the *Key of Worlds* began to die off. The Order of the Black Flame faltered and fell. The braziers, the staff, the sword, and the location of the vault all became lost to history and the ruins beneath the city. Until now.

THE SCROLL OF LEGEND

In this introductory adventure, Danvon of Duskwater hires the characters to locate a lore scroll rumored to have been secreted away in a recently discovered tomb in the Cliffs of the Dead, long hidden behind the collapsed wall of a newer tomb. Danvon has acquired authorization from the Magistrate of Tombs to search for dangerous relics

in the tomb, but the previous expeditions he's sent have either turned up nothing—or have not returned.

The scroll lies in the sarcophagus of Akrave, a historian of five centuries past whose tomb is guarded by **skeletons**, **shadows**, and **specters**. However, the characters aren't the only ones searching for the scroll. A **thug** named Shella and her **bandit** gang the Red Teeth were hired by a mysterious masked benefactor to recover the scroll, and they do not take kindly to other groups attempting to beat them to it.

Within the tomb, the characters can find one uncommon magic item—perhaps a *brooch of shielding*, a *wand of magic missiles*, or a *cloak of protection*. When the characters return with the scroll, Danvon also rewards them with 50 gp each.

This quest is suitable for 1st-level characters, who reach 2nd level upon its completion.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

From the scroll found in Akrave's tomb, Danvon and the characters learn of the *Key of Worlds*, a powerful artifact of the Nameless King recovered after the tyrant's fall and hidden away eight hundred years ago in a vault whose entrance stands somewhere beneath the City of Arches. The vault was opened by the Order of the Black Flame, a group of holy knights fighting against the evil warlords who ruled the city before the coming of the Golden Order. However, the location of the vault, the means of opening it, and the power of the Nameless King's artifact remain a mystery.

Danvon's research guides the characters in their quest as he discovers the information detailed below, and determines that even after the characters learn the location of the vault, they must track down three ancient magical braziers that are the keys to open it. The characters must then acquire one of two magic relics able to light these Blackfire Braziers and unlock the vault.

The characters can complete three of the following four quests in any order, gaining one level for each completed quest to take them to 5th level. The characters are expected to complete both of the first two quests, providing intelligence regarding the braziers and the two relics. They then complete one of the next two quests to recover one of the relics able to ignite the braziers. If they attempt to acquire both items, they discover that someone else has already acquired the second relic.

Throughout the campaign, the characters might become aware that the borders of the vault are beginning to crack, drawing in a demonic corruption that threatens the security of the key. Use this growing corruption to add urgency to the campaign if the characters are too passive about acquiring the relics or lighting the braziers.

DUNGEON OF THE HOODED INQUISITOR

Centuries ago, one of the custodians of the secret of the *Key of Worlds* was captured by a warlord's agents and taken to a torture chamber in Sunken Revvia. Shady

information brokers of the Lower Reaches know of this hideous torture chamber, controlled by the Hooded Inquisitor—an ogre torturer who served the Nameless King, and whose bloodlust was so great that even death could not end it.

The inquisitor, now an **ogre zombie**, is known to carry a book of the confessions he has heard over centuries. When the characters obtain the book, they learn that the member of the Order of the Black Flame revealed the location of the extradimensional entrance to the Vault of Worlds, in a seemingly empty chamber in the ruined outskirts of the Lower Reaches. They also learn of the locations of the two magical relics able to light the Blackfire Braziers: the staff of Servlyn and the sword of Irixthius.

WHISPERS OF THE MONOLITH

Centuries ago, humanoids traveling deep in the caverns under the Cliffs of the Dead found an ageless monolith that supposedly whispered to them. Down in the dark, something happened to those humanoids, taking over their minds and linking them together into a telepathic network. The humanoids were able to learn secrets from faraway worlds, but had to give up their own secrets in return. One of those who did so was Orathe, a sage once belonging to the Order of the Black Flame.

Upon the surface of the monolith, Orathe etched the locations of the three Blackfire Braziers, whose lighting opens the Vault of Worlds. However, this ancient site is protected by ageless psionic **cult fanatics**, and surrounded by **gibbering mouthers**, **ankhegs**, and **harpies** who come to the monoliths' call.

THE STAFF OF SERVLYN

In an outer district of the Lower Reaches lies a crushed ruin known as the tower of Therex. The undead **mage** Therex still lingers there, wielding the Staff of Servlyn that can ignite the Blackfire Braziers. Therex is served by an axe-wielding **flesh guardian**, a pair of loyal **hell hounds**, and a host of **magmin**. Vincent Grace, a neutral-aligned **ghost** from ancient days, might also be discovered roaming one of the chambers of the ruined tower, confused and angered by Therex's continued existence.

THE SWORD OF IRIXTHIUS

Above the Cliffs of the Dead lies the hidden Tomb of the Seventh King, the resting place of a warlord who ruled over the City of Arches before the coming of the Golden Order.

Inside the tomb, the characters encounter a lost tomb raider, who hides from a pack of demon-worshiping **gnolls** and their fiend-touched **troll** leader. Those foes have taken over the site, and plan to use it as a staging ground for raiding the City of Arches. Once the raiders have been dealt with, the characters face off against the Seventh King—now a **mummy** who wields the *flame tongue* longsword of Irixthius.

THE BLACKFIRE BRAZIERS

With the location of the entrance to the Vault of Worlds, the locations of the three Blackfire Braziers, and an item to light the braziers all in hand, the 5th-level characters continue their quest by seeking the braziers.

To add urgency to this arc, you can have the Seekers of the Gray Dawn, who have acquired the second relic able to ignite the Blackfire Braziers, use that second relic on the third brazier once the characters have ignited the first two. The characters must then face the Seekers at the entrance of the vault before going in. If you don't choose this approach, you can reduce the locations for each path below from three to two, so that the characters can reach all three braziers without hitting too many quests.

Each expedition to locate one of the Blackfire Braziers takes the characters through multiple adventure locations. Each time they complete one of the adventure locations, the characters gain a level. The characters should gain three levels for each brazier lit (or two if they don't face the Gray Dawn), then reach 11th level by the time all three braziers are lit and the extradimensional entrance to the Vault of Worlds opens.

The characters can undertake these quests in any order the players wish.

BRAZIER OF THE NAMELESS KING

Hidden in the farthest reaches of the Cliffs of the Dead, the Order of the Black Flame placed the Brazier of the Nameless King in a temple dedicated to their most hated enemy. Though this temple was looted long ago, traps and screaming undead guard it still.

To reach the Brazier of the Nameless King, the party must travel through the following areas, gaining one level for each area successfully crossed.

Endless Warrens. Beyond the worked stone walls of the ancient crypts of the Cliffs of the Dead, the characters pass through a collapse into the deep natural tunnels of the Endless Warrens. There, a nest of wererats known as the Longclaws serve their master Vestabelle, a faerie mage expelled from the world of the faerie. Vestabelle wars with a clan of deep orcs and hill giants serving the fire giant warlord Lord Drakanon. To cross the warrens, the characters must work with one lord or the other against their foe.

Dragon's Reach. Intelligent creatures of the Endless Warrens know to stay far away from Dragon's Reach. For millennia, this series of large interconnected chambers has been a place to which dying dragons journey to await their end—a ritual set up by the dragons that even the Nameless King made no attempt to interfere with. Members of the Drakeskull kobold clan dwell here, led by half-dragon priests who whisper to the draconic skeletons to prevent them from waking from their eternal slumber. These priests in turn serve the young silver dragon twins Salvenus the Shine and Verunathan the Shimmer—both sworn to guard and protect Dragon's Reach against any outsiders.

Temple of the Nameless King. A deep natural shaft in the lair of Shine and Shimmer leads to the worked stone chambers of a forgotten temple of the Nameless King. Here, a shattered statue of the tyrant continues to be worshiped by profane **undead priests** who serve him still in the afterlife, though his cursed name draws fire from their torn lips. Hulking **undead bone devils**, **armored flesh guardians**, and Yvelle Darkwhisper, a **vampire priest** of the Nameless King, all protect the lost tomb and the cold Blackfire Brazier held within.

BRAZIER OF GRAYON

The Order of the Black Flame placed the second Blackfire Brazier in the fortress lair of a dragon loyal to the order named Grayon, on the outskirts of Sunken Revvia. However, a major collapse in Revvia centuries later buried the keep and sundered its connection to the city. Those seeking the site must now pass through natural waterways and caverns occupied by cursed folk worshiping a terrible god.

To reach the Brazier of Grayon, the characters must traverse the following areas, gaining one level for each area successfully crossed.

Sunken Revvia. Beneath the Lower Reaches, Sunken Revvia is a den of monsters, murderers, and demon worshipers. To reach the keep of Grayon, the characters must travel through the ruined city while facing ghoul assassins, abyssal dire wolves, and demon-touched berserkers. Along the way, they might encounter bandits known as the Lost—former mercenaries who once worked the Lower Reaches, and who now seek the riches of Sunken Revvia—or Skithers, an obscure merchant in the City of Arches.

The Abhuman Effigy. Traveling along an underground river leads the characters to a cavern dominated by the towering effigy of a fallen god, worshiped by hundreds of grimlocks, grimlock ogres, and grimlock hill giants who believe the ancient figure to be the fallen deva Vrys (see "Cult of Vrys" on page 64). The cultists might see the uncorrupted life energy of the characters as a worthy sacrifice to the deva. When the characters finish with or avoid trouble in the temple, they find a crumbling passageway leading to the keep of Grayon.

The Shattered Keep. The keep lair of the bronze dragon Grayon now lies crushed beneath a mountain of stone from the collapse of the cavern ceiling long ago. Necrotic-infused wights, death-breathing gorgons, and bound barbed devils prowl the half-collapsed halls of the shattered keep, ruled over by a trio of night hags known as the Skullrot Coven. When the keep collapsed, Grayon died and became a young bronze dragon wraith, to whom the coven feeds terrible nightmares that keep him in a murderous state. In the center of the keep's crumbling throne room rests the Brazier of Grayon.

BRAZIER OF THE BETROTHED

The Brazier of the Betrothed rests below the Theater of Whispers (see page 25) in the crypts of Vyctor and

Evylend LeStrange, two vampires who have lived and rested together there since the days of the Nameless King.

To reach the Brazier of the Betrothed, the characters must travel to the following locations, gaining one level for each area successfully crossed.

Under-Theater. The characters must gain entrance to the twisting halls and chambers beneath the Theater of Whispers from the theater's current caretaker, the dragonborn minstrel Kaylex Thren. Kaylex might first demand a performance by some or all of the characters, or might send them to find a legendary war horn said to be able to play the perfect note. The horn is known to be lost in a site called the Tomb of the Joined, where oozes and dead veterans have converged into a horrid towering warrior construct.

Beneath the theater, the characters face **spectral minstrels**, **vampire spawn** thespians, animated props come to life (treat as **animated armor**), and **banshee** opera singers, some of whom might not even know they're dead, before discovering the passageways leading even farther down.

Infernal Machines. In vaults below the under-theater, war machines infused with devilish power were sundered and abandoned centuries ago. In response to the characters' presence, the malevolent spirits of these war machines come to life, forming into fire giant constructs, armies of elementally infused animated armor, and an infernal young red dragon construct. A powerful voice is heard commanding these terrible forces—and is eventually revealed to be an imp who found a crystal rod that allows them to command the constructs. A collapsed wall at the far edge of the vaults reveals the Crypts of the Betrothed.

Crypts of the Betrothed. The two vampire lovers Vyctor and Evylend LeStrange rest in their sarcophagi in the Crypts of the Betrothed, as they have for centuries. They are attended upon by a host of loyal minotaur veterans, priests, and mages. A host of vampire spawn spies, vampire spawn assassins, and vampire spawn berserkers claim to be the children of the betrothed vampires, yet the LeStranges care not for them. The Blackfire Brazier stands in an alcove of the crypts, but the vampire couple must be convinced of the destructive potential of the key—or bested in battle—before they give up control of the brazier.

THE VAULT OF WORLDS

With all three Blackfire Braziers lit, the characters can travel to the remote chamber holding the extradimensional entrance of the Vault of Worlds. If they were not the ones to light the third brazier, they might come face to face with the Seekers of the Gray Dawn: the two **gladiator** sisters Lizbeth and Rose, along with their fellow **assassins** and **veterans**. Renault Bluewynd, the apprentice **mage** to Danvon who has hired the Seekers, might accompany the adventurers, attempting to acquire the *Key of Worlds* for themself.

With this host defeated (or if you decide not to make use of the Seekers as a foil for the party), the characters enter the Vault of Worlds. In this pocket demiplane, sounds, smells, and the pressure of the air all feel different than they do in the world left behind.

The Vault of Worlds is divided into two sections, with the characters gaining a level for completing each section.

DEMON-SUNDERED VAULTS

As the characters first explore the vault, they confirm what they learned earlier in the campaign—the borders of the demiplane have cracked, allowing planar corruption to push through. The ruined remains of the small number of individual vaults that make up the Vault of Worlds feature crumbling walls weeping foul ooze, and stalactites dripping acid into pools below.

A fiendish incursion has also breached the deteriorating vault, with a **balor** named Uruvarth leading **hezrous**, a **glabrezu**, and a **marilith** to seize the *Key of Worlds*, with the intent of launching an abyssal incursion through the City of Arches. The spirits of two knights of the Order of the Black Flame, Sir Galea of Brightstar and Sir Minrova Heaven's-Bastion are powerless to defeat the demons in their spectral forms, but offer guidance to those willing to slay the horde. After defeating the balor, the characters discover a golden bridge passing over an empty void—and leading to the final vault holding the key.

PLINTH OF THE KEY

A series of platforms floating in a void at the heart of the demiplane holds the final guardians protecting the key. However, those guardians have been corrupted by the planar incursion, and will not initially treat with the characters or listen to reason. These guardians include a pair of **elementally infused iron guardians**, several bound **efreet**, and the key's final guardian—the spirit of the knight Irixthius bound within the body of an **adult gold dragon**.

When defeated or convinced of the characters' benevolent purpose (after a good healthy fight), the spirit of Irixthius steps aside and the characters are free to take the *Key of Worlds*.

THE FATE OF THE KEY OF WORLDS

With the *Key of Worlds* in hand, the characters must make a choice. Do they keep the artifact for themselves, becoming its new guardians and exerting considerable power in the City of Arches? Do they turn the key over to a more powerful NPC or faction within or outside the city? Do they cleanse the corruption of the key's demiplane vault, throw it back in, and seal the entrance forever?

In the denouement, Irixthius can explain that the key's power once prevented any wielder from destroying or abandoning it, but the characters might be strong enough to overcome the artifact's will. Whatever choice they make, the fate of worlds will be forever changed.

RETURN OF THE NAMELESS KING

For ten centuries, a powerful lich ruled over the City of Arches, its surrounding lands, and countless otherworldly dominions accessed through the city's archways. Cursed by the deva Astaria and brought down by the Army of the Blue Star, the tyrant was erased from history in the end, his name and visage torn from reality, leaving the City of Arches to flourish in peace. But the Nameless King could not be destroyed. Now his servants endlessly seek his return, delving into the depths below the City of Arches, the catacombs in the mountain above, and into the planes beyond to find what they need to free their dark lord.

Return of the Nameless King is a full 5e campaign arc designed to take characters from 1st level to 17th or 20th level. (For non-5e RPG systems with different leveling systems, you can adjust the specific levels in the campaign arc as desired.)

This campaign charts the Nameless King's return to power after a millennium of exile, as the characters thwart the plots of the tyrant's followers, dismantle his risen army, deal with his powerful servants, and attempt to end his threat once and for all.

CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

The core of the campaign plays out in three main parts. In a lead-in adventure incorporating the "Golgoron Arises" introductory scenario and one of the adventures in chapter 11, the characters become aware that cultists of the Nameless King are attempting to find the tyrant's true name, hoping to restore his reign over the City of Arches and the worlds he once ruled. In subsequent adventures, they learn of betrayal among the Golden Council and travel to the dead world of Arkus to stop a ritual meant to begin the process of the Nameless King's rise. Even though they hinder that process, the ritual summons up a fortress lost to time in the Deadlands outside the City of Arches, called the Dread Necropolis.

Needing to take their fight against the cultists to the new fortress, the characters must first seek the armory of Astaria, the celestial who cursed and imprisoned the Nameless King, then the monastery where Astaria has been in exile since the tyrant's fall. From Sunken Revvia, they use an arch to reach the Dread Necropolis, then travel to the extraplanar Monastery of Astaria, taking on cultists of the Nameless King and the foul creatures drawn to their quest. The mortally wounded Astaria reveals the whereabouts of the Nameless King's two most powerful soul vessels, before manifesting into a weapon to help the characters take the fight to the tyrant. But with the celestial's death, the Nameless King is restored to his former glory and former name—Ozymandias.

In the final part of the campaign, the characters defend the City of Arches from the forces of Ozymandias. Kartan, Tower of the Arcane, becomes the center of a fierce battle as servants of the Nameless King attempt to tear open a rift to the abyssal realm of Choul—home to the demon prince Ibraxus who the Nameless King served. As archways open up across the city to let the tyrant's followers pour through, terrified folk are forced to flee, and the characters seek access to Ozymandias's floating citadel. Destroying the tyrant in a first standoff ends the threat against the City of Arches. But the characters must fight past a fiendish horde deep beneath the city to reach the legendary First Arch that will take them to the lich king's Soul Tomb. There, they face Ozymandias one final time, with the fate of worlds in the balance.

In an optional final section of the campaign, the characters travel to the abyssal realm of Choul to face the demon prince Ibraxus and sunder Ozymandias's second soul vessel—destroying the lich forever.

THE FAITHFUL OF CHOUL

The campaign starts off with the "Golgoron Arises" introductory scenario (page 9). It then continues with the adventure "The Obsidian Skull" in chapter 11 (page 122), when Roselyn Zeshe hires the characters to go after the missing halfling spy Quintus Harrowtoes and learn more about the plans of the Children of Ibraxus cult.

This introduction to the Rise of the Nameless King campaign arc is suitable for 1st-level characters, who attain 2nd level at its conclusion.

NAMELESS WHISPERS

From 2nd to 4th level, the characters learn the origin of the Nameless King and take on the more powerful cult whose members yearn to bring the tyrant back to the world. The characters gain one level after each of these adventures, reaching 5th level after completing "Secrets of Summervine Villa."

BLACK SUN

An otherworldly solar eclipse forms in a planar rift in the sky above the City of Arches, even as a sinkhole collapses in the center of the city to release hordes of **skeletons** and diseased **giant rats**. A voice echoes from across worlds in the minds of people across the city—"I return!"

After the characters help put down the initial incursion, the Golden Knights conscript them into descending into the depths of the sinkhole. In a ruined shrine just beneath the surface of the city, the characters face **zombies** and **manes** alongside several dead and burned cultists of the Nameless King. In the aftermath, the characters discover documents on the fallen cultists connecting them to Irvana Spellstar of "The Obsidian Skull," indicating that the leaders of the cult hope to speak the Nameless King's true name and awaken him from his cursed imprisonment. They also discover a map leading to a lost monastery in the outer caverns of the Lower Reaches.

MONASTERY OF SHADOWS PAST

Spymaster Roselyn Zeshe conscripts the characters to seek out the lost monastery, looking for evidence to determine whether the fallen cultists who caused the incursion were part of a larger group that remains a threat to the city. Following the map, the characters discover the monastery—an ancient space carved into the wall of a crumbling cavern. Inscriptions at the entrance indicate that the monastery was once a site where loyal followers of the Nameless King were made knights in his service.

Deeper within the monastery, the characters find a number of **cultists** and **cult fanatics** swearing allegiance to Sir Tarvon Bane, a **wight** still in the service of the Nameless King, and his **skeleton** conscripts. On one of the cult fanatics, the characters discover an invitation to an upcoming masquerade ball at a place called Summervine Villa, involving "festivities and discussions of mutual benefit."

SECRETS OF SUMMERVINE VILLA

Roselyn Zeshe procures invitations for the characters to attend the masquerade at Summervine Villa, an estate in the Second Rise belonging to Lady Elvenia Summervine, a well-respected member of the Golden Council. Their goal is to expose cultists of the Nameless King also attending the ball, and obtain evidence regarding their current and upcoming plans. This scenario makes use of the "Secrets of Summervine Villa" adventure framework in chapter 12 (page 128).

In appropriate costumes, the characters attend the masquerade ball, mixing and mingling with elite guests from across the city even as they clandestinely search the villa. Whether from overheard conversations or secrets discovered during their investigation, the characters discover that Elvenia Summervine possesses a key that can open an arch to Arkus, World of Dead Temples. They also determine that the masquerade ball is a cover for a meeting between Elvenia and her fellow Knights of the Nameless King in secret chambers beneath Summervine Villa.

Beneath the villa, the characters face hired **guards**, **thugs**, and **veterans**, summoned **gibbering mouthers**, and the **priest** Elvenia Summervine. With Elvenia's defeat, the characters learn that she has already sent a contingent of Knights of the Nameless King through an archway beneath the villa into Arkus, to continue the dark ritual begun by the cultists beneath the streets of the city. When the ritual is complete, it will raise the armies of the Nameless King and return the tyrant to his lost throne.

DREAD NECROPOLIS

From 5th to 10th level, the characters journey to the dead world of Arkus, sanctified to the Nameless King. They then must deal with the threat of the Dread Necropolis—a fortress raised in the Deadlands outside

the City of Arches. The characters gain one level for each completed adventure, reaching 11th level after completing "Monastery of Astaria."

ARKUS, THE DEAD WORLD

Using the key that activates the archway beneath Summervine Villa, the characters travel to Arkus, arriving at the foot of Averast—a great pyramid-temple whose front is set with a titanic statue of the Nameless King. Ancient bones litter the area around the ziggurat, with the permanently eclipsed sun burning like a baleful red eye above. Arkus is a world whose people once worshiped the Nameless King as a god, and who paid for that fealty with destruction and death. Undead basilisks, ankhegs, and ettercaps roam outside the temple. Inside, cult fanatics, veterans, and knights led by a half-serpent blackguard named Thavus Bloodbile work a dark ritual in the name of the **mummy lord** Thuvaro-Ket who rules the pyramid. That ritual—whose first stage opened the rift above the City of Arches—is intended to begin the process of returning the Nameless King to the world.

Though the characters' interruption of the ritual hinders the plans of the cult, they can't stop powerful magic from conjuring up a great fortress in the Deadlands. Known as the Dread Necropolis, this ancient bastion of the Nameless King rises from the desert where it stood before being razed from existence during the tyrant's fall. From this imposing citadel, a **dread knight** general of the Nameless King named Karavon the Gray Blade plans to invade the City of Arches.

KEY OF RAE

Queen Karsara Aventus and the Golden Council of the City of Arches conscript the characters to end the threat of the Dread Necropolis. Sages of the Golden Council have determined that an ancient subterranean archway known as the Arch of Skulls connects to the citadel, but activating the arch requires a sentient and corrupted key held in the ruined Temple of Rae, lost below Sunken Revvia. Rae is rumored to be the sister of Astaria, the deva who cursed and imprisoned the Nameless King, and takes the form of an **erinyes** when the characters face off against her. Corrupted by the key, Rae is served by numerous planar **knights**, **priests**, **hezrous**, and the whispers of a **cambion mage** advisor.

ARMORY OF ASTARIA

Rae's final words whisper of an ancient armory below Sunken Revvia, created by Astaria when she led the Army of the Blue Star. A second key in Rae's possession promises access to the site. The characters find the sealed armory already being sought by agents of the Knights of the Nameless King, including **veterans**, **mages**, and a demon-touched **high priest** of Choul named Xerverin. Beyond the door of the vault, the characters must stand against Astaria's still-functioning defenses, including a **stone guardian** wearing the visage of the deva. In the vault, the characters find weapons and armor blessed

by the celestials to aid them in their battles against the Nameless King.

ARCH OF SKULLS

Ready to enter the Dread Necropolis, the characters delve even farther below the City of Arches with Rae's key. In an ancient citadel of the Nameless King that holds the Arch of Skulls, primeval **trolls** worship the **fiendish young black dragon** Neveran, who absorbs the otherworldly darkness of the archway into their scales. After defeating the dragon and their servants, the characters are ready to step through the gate.

DREAD NECROPOLIS

The characters arrive in ancient dungeons beneath the citadel restored for Karavon the Gray Blade, now home to thousands of skeletons and armored ghouls, alongside a small host of demons sent through temporary portals from the abyssal realm of Choul. Unexpectedly, the characters meet nomadic hunters of the Deadland Shadows (see "The Deadlands," page 92), who were trapped in the citadel when it appeared in the world over top of them. The hunters help the characters find their way to Karavon's throne room, where they face the dread knight general. After destroying him, the characters discover a key and an archway. Lore collected by Karavon indicates that the arch leads to a planar realm known as the Monastery of Astaria, where the deva has dwelled in self-imposed exile since the fall of the Nameless King. But serpentine assassins have already been sent there to slay Astaria in an attempt to free the tyrant.

MONASTERY OF ASTARIA

Using the archway inside the citadel, the characters are transported to the planar realm that is the Monastery of Astaria, an earthmote hovering over an endless celestial ocean beneath golden skies and titanic floating mountains. Within the monastery, the characters face a host of serpentine **high priests** and **assassins** led by a **marilith**. They then find the mortally wounded Astaria, who shares with them that the Nameless King needs the two most powerful of his multiple soul vessels in order to be returned to the world—the primary vessel stored in the Soul Tomb in the Vaults of the Nameless King (see page 74), and a secondary vessel held by Ibraxus, the demon prince of Choul who long fed power to the tyrant.

As Astaria dies, their soul manifests into a weapon of power suited to one of the characters, which the deva promises will aid them in their hour of need. But with the deva's death, the curse that bound the Nameless King is lifted, and the characters hear the voice of the tyrant in their minds:

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings! Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!



OZYMANDIAS

From 11th to 16th level, the characters face the threat of Ozymandias's risen followers, demonic guardians, and dark allies—then must face the tyrant himself. The characters gain one level for each of these adventures, reaching 17th level when they slay the lich and destroy his original soul vessel.

FALL OF KARTAN

The greatest bastion of arcane knowledge in the City of Arches, Kartan, Tower of the Arcane, has a sinister origin. Warlocks and wizards serving the Nameless King founded the tower, doing the tyrant's bidding for centuries before capitulating to the Army of the Blue Star and continuing under the new order.

Three of the most nefarious of those original arcane servants have been summoned back to Kartan on a mission for the Nameless King, serving in undeath as they served in life a millennium ago. A shield of eldritch energy now surrounds the tower, disintegrating anyone who attempts to pass through it. The characters must activate an archway to enter Kartan and defeat the Nameless King's three servants—the half-fiend lich Zaruvos, the vampire archmage Tovent, and the high priest wraith Uldrin—before those servants can use the magic of the tower to tear open a rift to the abyssal realm of Choul.

WAR OF THE LICH KING

Though the rift to Choul remains closed, the archways of the city start to open as the invasion of the lich king's army begins. The characters must work with the Golden Knights and the bravest folk of the city to hold those forces back, while other residents find safety in the Lower Reaches and other hidden spaces. Even as the characters face Ozymandias's forces, they seek an archway that will let them face the lich king in his citadel of Amberholme—a fortress set upon a floating mote of amber encasing the bodies of hundreds of thousands of the Nameless King's former enemies.

AMBERHOLME

After locating the archway leading to Amberholme, the characters lead a force of Golden Knights and Black Hand mercenaries into the floating citadel. While those other forces keep the lich king's **skeletal veterans** busy, the characters race to find the tyrant. After running a gauntlet of **erinyes** and **skeletal giants**, the characters finally face the **Nameless King** Ozymandias (see page 146), along with his **glabrezu** bodyguards Tharish and Morguun. When the tyrant is defeated, the Dread Necropolis falls and the forces assaulting the City of Arches are broken. But Ozymandias proclaims his inevitable return as his spirit flees to his Soul Tomb in the Vaults of the Nameless King.

THE SECRET NAME EVERYONE KNOWS

It's very possible that the players recognize or even guess that Ozymandias is the true name of the Nameless King—especially if they read the poem by Percy Shelley at the start of the book. The name being a secret to the players isn't actually important. The idea is that the *characters* don't know it—nor does anyone else in the known multiverse, due to Astaria's curse.

If one of your players goes meta to insist that their character knows and speaks the name before it's revealed in the story, you can warn them of the infernal fire they feel beneath their skin as the words begin to form in their mind or cross their lips. If they still demand to speak the name, the character's body combusts before the third syllable—destroyed in a manner that means nothing short of a wish spell can bring them back.

THE FIRST ARCHWAY

With Ozymandias's corporeal form slain, the characters must reach his extraplanar sepulcher to defeat the lich once and for all. Doing so requires traveling into the Vaults of the Nameless King (see page 74) and reaching the First Archway—with the weapon bound with the soul of Astaria revealing to the characters that it can activate that archway to reach the Soul Tomb. Sensing the chaos in the city above, two **pit fiends** named Broviax and Kalgoran lead armies of **horned devils**, **ice devils**, and **bone devils** surrounding the First Archway. Once those forces are defeated, the weapon of Astaria is able to open the gate leading to Ozymandias's tomb.

SOUL TOMB OF OZYMANDIAS

Traveling through the First Archway brings the characters to the extradimensional, black-iron-walled soul tomb. There, they must take on **stone guardians**, **skeletal marilith tomb guardians**, **wraith lords**, and **dread knights**, then a trio of **demiliches** serving Ozymandias—before facing the **Nameless King** one last time. The final battle takes place before the pool of pure necrotic essence that holds the soul vessel, from which rise the screaming **specters** of the Nameless King's worst enemies. With the lich slain, the characters can claim and destroy the vessel, dealing a terrible blow to the tyrant's power.

CHOUL

The destruction of the once-Nameless King makes a great climax to a worlds-spanning campaign for the victorious characters, who attain 17th level when they return to the City of Arches. But if you want to continue the campaign, the characters might choose to hunt down and destroy Ozymandias's second-most-powerful soul vessel—known as the Rod of the Void, and carried by the demon prince Ibraxus who was Ozymandias's true master.

The characters gain one level after each of these missions, reaching 20th level before facing Ibraxus at the Mountain of the Fetid Prince.

GATE OF CHOUL

To enter Ibraxus's abyssal realm of Choul, the characters must convince both the Golden Council and the remaining sages of Kartan to give them access to one of the most secret archways in the City of Arches. The Gate of Choul is one of the oldest of the original arches discovered by the Nameless King. It stands in a lost chamber beneath the Lower Reaches, activated by a key hidden away in the vaults of Kartan for centuries. With that key in hand, the characters make their way to the gate, where they face armies of hezrous, huge abyssal ochre jellies, and the gate's guardian, the ancient red dragon Thaverax the Tainted—all drawn to the site or awakened from a millennium-long slumber by the return of the Nameless King. With the dragon defeated, the characters can make their way through the gate.

FENS OF THE FORGOTTEN

The characters arrive at an archway in the horrid realm of Choul—a land of terrible mountains and vast swamps holding sunken ruins drawn to the Abyss through space and time. To reach the citadel where the Fetid Prince Ibraxus dwells, the characters must push through the ghastly Fens of the Forgotten, hunted by great **shambling mounds**, cursed **stone giants**, and abyssal **young green dragons**. All those guardians serve the fallen **empyrean** Ivex the Sallow, who is bound to guard the paths leading out of the fens.

ABYSSAL MACHINE

Making their way toward Ibraxus's citadel, the Mountain of the Fetid Prince, the characters discover that the demon prince's most cunning magical servants built a huge arcane construct a thousand years ago—a giant orrery that howls with eldritch energy. Capable of opening all the arches in the City of Arches simultaneously, this abyssal machine was meant to be activated a millennium ago with the destruction of the Nameless King and his first soul vessel—an event that the Army of the Blue Star accidentally averted when they were unable to completely destroy the tyrant.

With the characters having accomplished both those goals, the decaying machine is now being restored to full power—and will allow Ibraxus to send his abyssal armies into the world. To prevent that, the characters must face a host of **erinyes**, corrupted **horned devil** mercenaries, and corrupt **archmages** before destroying the core of the machine and sealing the gates to the City of Arches.

TEMPLE OF THE VOID

Only those carrying the seal of Ibraxus can gain entrance to the Fetid Prince's citadel. The characters learn that a **rakshasa high priest** named Severyn the Foul carries one such seal, and resides at the Temple of the Void—a floating pyramid set above an acidic sea of bile guarded by a corrupt **kraken**. Protected by hordes of the most faithful **cultists**, **cult fanatics**, and **glabrezus**, Severyn the Foul worships at a great altar to Ibraxus with the seal in hand—the crystalline heart of a bound **solar** named Truest, who is forced to fight the characters under Severyn's control.

MOUNTAIN OF THE FETID PRINCE

At the center of Choul, a great mountain rises from the chaos of the plane, carved into the citadel and seat of power of the Fetid Prince Ibraxus. With the seal of Ibraxus in their possession, the characters must choose whether to seek the demon prince by traversing the steps ascending the citadel, or by traveling through a great dungeon that worms its way through the mountain.

Balors, glabrezus, and mariliths guard the front steps, while swarms of chasmes, hulking nalfeshnees, and vrock priests inhabit the ancient tunnels and chambers beneath the citadel. Whichever route they take, the characters eventually reach the demon prince's great throne room, where Ibraxus awaits them (see page 147), along with his two balor bodyguards, Ivex the Red Waste

and Ulvyn the Disemboweler, and his **marilith archmage** advisor Eventress.

When the demon prince is defeated, the characters can shatter the Rod of the Void that is the Nameless King's second soul vessel. When they do, they learn that the earlier destruction of Ibraxus's abyssal machine, combined with the destruction of the second soul vessel after the characters bested Ozymandias, has drained his remaining hidden soul vessels. This ends the threats of the once-Nameless King and the demon prince alike.

COLLISION OF WORLDS

In the deepest reaches of the void beyond all worlds lies a malevolence that has never tasted the essence of life—until now. Hearing the call of cultists of apocalypse, this entity is drawn toward the world in search of souls to feed on. As the rift between void and world begins to grow wider, Ourboran—as those who call to the planet-destroying force name it—draws ever closer, threatening to overcome the mortal realm and devour every soul in it.

Collision of Worlds is a four-act 5e campaign arc set in the City of Arches that runs from 1st to 20th level. (For non-5e RPG systems with different leveling systems, you can adjust the specific levels in the campaign arc as desired.)

In this campaign, cultists revering a world-destroying entity called Ourboran, known also as the Moon of Oblivion, research ancient magic, seek powerful relics, and attempt to tear open the thin boundary between planar realms to bring a force of endless destruction into the world above the City of Arches.

In addition to building an entire campaign, each of the four acts of this campaign arc can be run independently as a shorter campaign. Each act has its own main hook to draw the characters into the adventure, and each has its own conclusion that can either end the campaign or lead into the next act.

CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

Act 1 of the campaign arc begins with the characters hired to look into a strange new doomsday cult in the City of Arches, known as the Apostles of End. During this act, the characters investigate an old bookshop, delve into hidden vaults below the shop, acquire a decoder for a strange scribed tablet they find there, and confront one of the cult's leaders in a temple hidden in the Lower Reaches—a temple dedicated to a horrid extraplanar entity known as Ourboran, the Moon of Oblivion.

During act 2, the characters pursue the Apostles of End as the cult collects magical components in and around the City of Arches and the Borderlands. With those components, the leaders of the Apostles of End hope to assemble an artifact known as the *Catalyst*—a magical conduit that will allow them to communicate with Ourboran. From a number of possible locations where the components might be found, the characters choose where their investigation will take them, even as the cult

secures a number of components at other locations. The act concludes at the Observatory of Infinite Skies, as the characters face off against cultists and their horrid servants while a corrupt high priest reaches out to make contact with the Moon of Oblivion.

In act 3 of the campaign arc, the cult sets plans into motion to draw Ourboran through a planar rift above the City of Arches. To do so, they must obtain a number of harbingers—powerful beings, relics, or sources of magic that can act as anchors for a ritual that will sunder reality. As before, the characters race to find and eliminate certain harbingers while the cult tracks down others. At a site called the Altar of Worlds above the City of Arches, the characters have a final showdown with the Apostles of End, even as the titanic form of Ourboran manifests in the sky—and begins to drain the life from all it sees.

During act 4, the characters must close the rift through which the Moon of Oblivion has appeared by traveling into the Outside—the planar void that is Ourboran's home. Stepping through an ancient archway takes them to a dead city in the void, then to a derelict planar craft holding a powerful psionic artifact—the *Helm of Uloth*—that gives them a chance to defeat Ourboran. In a timeless floating ziggurat known as the Temple of Aeons, the characters use the *Helm of Uloth* to devolve the world-sized entity down to a form that can be fought. They then must take down Ourboran's powerful servants before destroying the Moon of Oblivion and saving the City of Arches.

ACT 1: APOSTLES OF END

During this act, the characters learn about the Apostles of End—a new cult quickly rising to prominence in the City of Arches. The characters begin act 1 at 1st level, gaining one level for completing each scenario in the act and reaching 5th level by its conclusion.

THE GILDED GRIMOIRE

Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster to Queen Karsara Aventus of the City of Arches, asks the characters to investigate a strange new cult known as the Apostles of End. She believes the cult has some connection to an old bookshop called the Gilded Grimoire. When the characters investigate the bookshop, they uncover a secret set of tunnels infested by cursed **giant rats**, through which **cultists** delve into the ruins beneath the city in search of relics and forbidden tomes.

VAULTS OF THE FORBIDDEN

Exploring beneath the Gilded Grimoire, the characters find an old vault stacked high with old scrolls, books, and tablets. **Cultists** of the Apostles of End led by a **cult fanatic** attack the characters, who must also contend with traps and **animated armor** protecting the vault. When the fight is done, the characters discover that one tablet is written in a strange language that defies understanding.

TOWER OF THE THIRD EYE

Consulting a sage regarding the strange tablet, the characters learn that only a specialized magical relic known as a *decoder crystal* can decipher it. One such crystal can be found in a ruined wizard's tower called the Tower of the Third Eye, in the outer ruins of the Lower Reaches. Delving into the tower, the characters come up against **gray oozes**, **skeletons**, **giant spiders**, and other dungeon denizens before they finally locate the crystal. When they do, they find that the deciphered tablet holds details of a site called the Temple of Oblivion beneath the Lower Reaches. As well, notes on dead cultists who had tried and failed to retrieve the crystal indicate that someone called Apostle Kantrabe, Speaker of End, plans to enact a ritual to draw an alien entity into the City of Arches—and destroy the world.

TEMPLE OF OBLIVION

Using the tablet, the characters come to the Temple of Oblivion and find **cultists**, **cult fanatics**, and **veterans** of the Apostles of End gathering there. After infiltrating the temple, the characters must stop the **priest** Apostle Kantrabe's ritual before he permanently opens a gateway to the Outside (see the sidebar below). Before they can stop him, he lures a soul-eating **chuul** into the world.

The characters reach 5th level when this adventure is complete. If you use this act to create a self-contained low-level campaign, ending the ritual ensures that no further dangers from the Outside threaten the City of Arches. If the campaign continues, the characters learn from his journals that Kantrabe is just one of several priests and mages seeking to draw a powerful life-ending horror into the world, and that these cultists seek the materials to build a conduit to reach out to this entity, then summon it to the City of Arches.

ACT 2: CONDUIT OF THE BEYOND

During this act, the characters attempt to thwart the plans of the Apostles of End in their attempts to construct an artifact known as the *Catalyst*, capable of creating a telepathic connection to the alien entity known as Ourboran, the Moon of Oblivion. This arc begins and ends with specific scenarios, but offers several optional adventure scenarios in between.

The *Catalyst* is a powerful artifact, able to amplify the mental capabilities of a telepath so they can reach the alien mind of Ourboran. Creating the artifact requires a minimum five of nine possible components. The more components the cultists of the Apostles of End acquire, the stronger the telepathic connection.

The characters start this act at 5th level, gaining one level at the end of each scenario and reaching 11th level at the end of the act.

MEETING INTERRUPTED

Roselyn Zeshe, the queen's spymaster, recruits the characters to infiltrate a fine town house of the Villas

of the Second Rise (page 26). Summervine Villa (see "Secrets of Summervine Villa" on page 128) is the site of an upcoming party for the city's elite—which Zeshe's intelligence suggests will provide cover for a secret meeting of the Apostles of End. The characters must infiltrate the event, discover the location of the secret meeting, and uncover the cult's new plots after the loss of their high priest. In the lowest reaches of the villa, the characters face zealous **veterans**, **mages**, and **cult fanatics**, and the **clay guardians** who protect them. They also learn of the existence of the *Catalyst*, the cult's current attempts to recover the components of the artifact, and the locations where they seek those components.

If you've already used "Secrets of Summervine Villa" in your City of Arches campaign, you can move this scenario to the Watchtower of Averost in the Borderlands (page 90).

RECOVERING THE COMPONENTS

As the cult seeks the components of the *Catalyst*, the characters undertake missions to recover those components ahead of them. The following sections outline nine possible locations, five of which must be explored to recover enough pieces of the *Catalyst* to limit its power if the Apostles of End successfully collect its remaining components.

Roselyn Zeshe can give the characters three of these locations at a time. Once they have explored two locations, she can add two new ones. The characters can choose which locations to explore while Roselyn seeks information on the remaining locations. This model gives players a choice of two or three locations at any given time until they've recovered five of the nine items.

As the characters explore these locations, you can decide whether they arrive before the cult, whether they run into members of the cult also trying to recover the *Catalyst* components, or whether the cult has already recovered the component at a specific location. This can add interesting complications to the situations at each of these locations.

Vault of Lower Kartan. The Mages of Kartan hold one of the components of the Catalyst, a crystalline sphere that holds the soul of a long-dead telepath. The sphere is stored in a clandestine vault in the Lower Reaches not connected to the tower in the city above, and is protected by flesh guardians, clay guardians, hezrous, and undead mages.

Shrine of the Lost. Deep in the ancient sewers of the Lost Cisterns, an abandoned shrine holds a massive idol to a dead god, worshiped by murderous aquatic berserkers, veterans, and cult fanatics. A fiery gemstone component of the Catalyst sits in one of the eye sockets of the massive unholy idol, but the characters must deal with two warring factions of worshipers to recover the eye.

Rynfeyr's Hoard. One of the Catalyst components is a wand of telekinesis that lies in the hoard of the adult black dragon Rynfeyr Blacktongue in the Revlend Marshes.

Members of the cult have already tried to recover the wand, but their acid-etched bones are now spread outside the ruined watchtower known as Rynfeyr's Rest (see page 83). The characters can battle the black dragon and her **troll** and **lizardfolk** minions, or can bargain with her to trade the wand for something even more desirable.

Tomb of Azeel. Another of the *Catalyst* components, a magical jeweled crown, rests on the head of a fallen sorcerer named Azeel. Once an advisor to the Nameless King, Azeel is now a **sorcerer mummy lord** in a forgotten tomb deep in the Cliffs of the Dead. **Wraiths, specters**, and **banshees** scream eternally in those crumbling burial chambers, while Azeel basks in their pain.

Crypts of the Betrothed. The vampire lovers Vyctor and Evylend LeStrange have laired deep beneath the Theater of Whispers for centuries (see page 25). Vyctor's wedding ring contains a Catalyst component—a gemstone imbued with the mental energy of hundreds of mortals the vampires have corrupted over their lifetimes. A vial of blood from one or more characters can inspire the vampires to part with such a beloved token—though they make no mention of what use they might make of it.

Tower of Oblivion. Deep in the Revlend Marshes, a legendary extradimensional tower of black onyx manifests in the world for the first time in centuries, on the night of a new moon. (See "Tower of the Moons" on page 85 for information.) Within is a sphere of tangible darkness said to contain a piece of the alien realm in which Ourboran dwells, and which will help build the Catalyst. Undead fire giants, tormented vrocks, and shadow mages lurk in the lost tower, ready to turn back all who enter.

Sunken Citadel. In Sunken Revvia, the citadel of Omen's End collapsed to ruin when the cavern wall it was adjacent to was brought down by the black dragon Ouryvax the Sallowsworn (see pages 69 and 65). On the outskirts of the ruined citadel, a heavily protected vault contains a set of scrolls that is a component of the Catalyst, said to be written in the tongue of the otherworldly entity Ourboran. Acid-empowered bone devils and horned devils lurk outside the vault, seeking blood and bargains to appease their erinyes overlord.

Cell of the Profane Seer. A cell buried beneath the Lower Reaches holds a night hag archmage named Lady Glave. Once a seer serving the Nameless King, the hag was imprisoned for her predictions of his eventual defeat. A gemstone necklace worn by Lady Glave contains a Catalyst component—a stone from Ourboran's realm, said to have fallen through cracks in the sky above the City of Arches.

Mote of Peregon. Above the deserts of the Deadlands floats a half-destroyed keep known as the Mote of Peregon. This ancient site serves as the lair of a powerful efreeti named Kryscharr, his horned devil guardians, and a host of air elementals and fire elementals. Kryscharr holds one of the Catalyst components—a glass scimitar said to be so sharp that it can slice through the boundaries between the planes.

TT MORROW (OVERLEAF)

OBSERVATORY OF THE WORLD'S END

With their recovery of the fifth *Catalyst* component, the characters learn that the Apostles of End plan to use the components they've also managed to collect to reach out to Ourboran at the Observatory of Infinite Skies (see page 23).

On arriving at the observatory, the characters find most of the staff killed or fled, and a powerful force of veterans, priests, and mages attempting to use their partially assembled *Catalyst* to reach out to the Moon of Oblivion. Their degree of success depends on how many components of the artifact the cult recovered (and on whether you plan to continue the campaign into the next arc). Protected by construct champion warriors, corrupted cult fanatics and mages, and gibbering mouthers, a planetouched archmage named Ulvendys Khaven calls out to Ourboran—and must be stopped before the otherworldly entity answers.

The characters reach 11th level when this adventure is complete. If you wish to end the campaign at this point, the characters succeed in stopping the ritual before it reaches out to Ourboran the Moon of Oblivion. To continue the campaign, even as the characters defeat Ulvendys, the *Catalyst* makes initial contact with Ourboran—whose unearthly presence is drawn toward the City of Arches.

ACT 3: HARBINGERS OF DOOM

In this act, the remaining members of the Apostles of End attempt to tear open a rift above the City of Arches where the boundary between planes is thin, granting passage for the horror of Ourboran to enter the world. To do so, the cult needs anchors—powerful harbingers taking the form of relics, beings, or sources of power that can sunder reality.

Across a number of optional adventure scenarios, the characters must deal with the cultists of the Apostles of End before they can enact their world-ending plans, hunting down these harbingers to end each one's connection to the ever-widening rift.

The characters start this act at 11th level, gaining one level at the end of each scenario and reaching 17th level at the end of the act.

PROFANE PLOTS

While the characters take a respite after defeating the cultists of the Apostles of End at the observatory, spymaster Roselyn Zeshe learns that a remaining sect of the cult meets in the Profane Cathedral in Sunken Revvia (see page 69). She recruits the characters to travel down to the dangerous caverns of the subterranean city, infiltrate the cathedral, learn the remaining cultists' plans, and terminate the cult's leadership.

At the cathedral, demon-summoning **cult fanatics**, **priests**, **mages**, and recruited mercenary **veterans** consort with **hezrous**, **glabrezus**, and **mariliths** as they discuss

their plan to seek out the Harbingers of Doom—powerful beings, relics, or sources of power they wish to awaken or activate. When the characters have put down the threats here, they learn that the cult has already sent teams to carry out this mission, and discover a journal containing encoded plans for the harbingers.

As Roselyn begins decoding the journal, she asks the characters to hunt down these harbingers, laying any powerful beings to rest and bringing magical relics to her so that allied mages working for Kartan can properly dispose of them.

HUNT FOR THE HARBINGERS

The scenarios presented in this section set up possible locations where the characters can seek out the Harbingers of Doom. Roselyn Zeshe initially directs the characters toward three locations of your choice, marking the sites that her agents have indicated are currently sought by cultists of the Apostles of End. When the characters complete two of the initial three adventure scenarios, she gives them three more possible locations. This part of the campaign ends when the characters have successfully completed four scenarios.

As the characters undertake these scenarios, a rift begins to open above the City of Arches as the Apostles of End acquire or activate other harbingers. After the characters complete their fourth mission, Roselyn sends them to a forgotten site above the City of Arches known as the Altar of Worlds, where she's learned that the Apostles of End are ready to complete the ritual that will open the rift and bring Ourboran into the mortal realm. On completing that final mission, the characters either close the rift above the City of Arches (should you wish to end the campaign here) or the rift remains open and the otherworldly essence of Ourboran manifests within it, leading into act 4.

Oblivion's End. The powerful undead ancient red **dragon** Xereth (see "Sundered Mountain" on page 96) has never forgotten or forgiven the loss of her lord, the Nameless King. She is known to be worshiped by a sect of priests who revere the Nameless King, and who make the deadly trek across the Deadlands to pay homage to her. A group of high-ranking priests of the Apostles of End have made such a trek to Xereth's lair of Oblivion's End, beneath the Sundered Mountain, where they play to the dragon's desire for revenge. They offer to conduct a ritual that will use the dragon's immense power as one of the anchors for the coming of Ourboran, promising the destruction of the City of Arches in return. The characters must battle through the corrupt priests, intimidate or defeat cult fanatics serving Xereth, and get past the dragon's undead fire giants and corrupted fire elementals. They must then convince Xereth not to accept a role as harbinger—or must slay the undead horror once and for all.

Entombed Demon Prince. The deepest dungeons beneath the City of Arches hold vaults and cells forgotten





by nearly every living mortal or historical tome. The Apostles of End recently discovered lore suggesting that a powerful demon prince was imprisoned in such a cell centuries ago by the Mages of Kartan. Now the cult seeks to release the demon prince, restoring them to their former glory in exchange for serving as a harbinger of the Moon of Oblivion. The characters must go up against ancient and forgotten **stone guardians** and **iron guardians** protecting the cell, take on other trapped demons, including **glabrezus** and **mariliths**, then face and destroy the demon prince—a **balor general**.

Skull of the Nameless Prince. Among the ruins of the dead world of Arkus (see page 103) stands a half-shattered obelisk, revered by a small sect of cursed mortals as a cenotaph for the only son of the Nameless King. The fifty-foot obelisk is a marker of the prince's tomb below ground, where wraiths, mummies, and wights continue to stand vigil for the fallen heir. At the heart of the tomb lies the prince's gilded skull—an artifact imbued with tremendous power by his father, which the Apostles of End hope to use as a harbinger to draw Ourboran into the world.

Child of Starlight. Before their demise, the starlit elves of Elvenya (see "Drowned Elvenya" on page 81) created a being formed of starlight in an attempt to give life to the purest form of their ideals. Though the elves lost their lives to Crimson Fang assassins serving the Nameless King, the being remains encased in a crystalline creche in the ruins of the temple of Elvenya, leading the Apostles of End to seek this Child of Starlight as a harbinger. Led by an archmage cast out from Kartan known as Sandara Starblight, a group of cultists raised the ruined temple from its watery grave—but were destroyed by the spirits of the starlit elves, now spectral knights, mages, and priests. The characters must contend with those undead, as well as wight assassins and undead champions of the Crimson Fangs, restarting their ancient battle.

Towers of the Eternal. A cluster of ruined towers jut up from the Deadlands like bones piercing torn skin, but are eternally concealed within an extradimensional effect that warps the land around them. Inside the towers, wight mages spawned from spellcasting servants of the Nameless King seek the power of otherworldly patrons to restore the tyrant to his throne. Over a thousand years of twisted rituals, the undead mages have managed to summon a powerful artifact to the towers, known as the Chalice of Endless Night, and said to be able to swallow the light of the sun.

Sages of the Apostles of End learned of the artifact and of rituals that will let them find the towers, and intend to bargain with the undead warlocks to acquire and use it. The characters must battle past a host of **wraith bone devils** and **ice devils** guarding the towers, before making a counteroffer to the **wight mages** and their leader, a **lich** named Kester Starkiller—or they must destroy the undead to claim the harbinger.

Ring of the Queen of the Damned. A ring of three wishes adorns the slender finger of Lady Straythe, the vampire queen of Castle Nightfall in the Doorish Hills (see page 89). Only one wish remains on the ring, which the Apostles of End want to use as a harbinger. The cult has sent previous emissaries to the shadowed castle, but none have returned after facing Lady Straythe's vampire spawn and her warrior, mage, and assassin thralls. The characters must acquire the ring before the cultists succeed in their attempt to do so, either by convincing Lady Straythe to part with her beloved relic or by taking it by force.

The Fallen Deva. Vrys, the fallen deva whose cult controls parts of Sunken Revvia (see "Cult of Vrys" on page 64) carries a pain so strong that cultists of the Apostles of End believe it can be channeled into a beacon to hasten the coming of Ourboran. Ambassadors of the cult hope to convince Vrys that being sacrificed will help end their pain when Ourboran devours the city and the world. If Vrys doesn't accept their offer, the cult plans to take the deva by force, encasing them in an iron maiden and transporting them to the Altar of Worlds above the City of Arches (see below).

The characters must travel to Sunken Revvia, defeat **hezrou**, **glabrezu**, and **marilith** guardians drawn to Vrys in response to the planar instability caused by the cult's earlier rituals, and convince the deva to spurn the offer. If unsuccessful, they must destroy Vrys before the cult can use their power.

THE ALTAR OF WORLDS

When the characters have completed their fourth scenario from the options above, they receive word from Roselyn Zeshe that the cult is ready to attempt to call Ourboran at a site called the Altar of Worlds. This open-air shrine on the cliffs above the City of Arches is generally avoided by folk of the city, who know it was used by the Nameless King and his summoners to call a final host of demons to his defense at the end of his reign. The shrine has long been magically inert—but the rituals of the Apostles of End have changed that.

Reaching the altar means traversing the paths along the Cliffs of the Dead to reach the summit of the mountain. But the cultists who preceded the characters have undertaken rituals to draw forth hordes of ancient undead guardians from forgotten tombs within the cliffs. Even as the characters fight their way past **giant skeletons** once part of the legions of the Nameless King, storm clouds roiling above the City of Arches begin to take the form of a great watching eye, presaging the coming of Ourboran.

As the characters reach the altar, the sky opens above them to reveal an enormous entity descending toward the city and thirsting for destruction—a great spherical mass with tentacles extending from it, and a huge, unblinking central eye. The characters must battle the twin **archmage** leaders of the Apostles of End, Seleva and Sekundus, along with their **high priest** defenders, summoned

THE OUTSIDE

The Outside is a planar realm whose details are left to your imagination, giving you the freedom to fill that realm with the strangest, weirdest science fantasy you want to throw at it. Everything from the Cthulhu mythos to *Numenera* to *Warhammer 40k* can work here. Alternatively, you can choose to keep the Outside rooted in more traditional planar fantasy and fill it with familiar monsters and villains.

You can hint at the setup of this otherworldly realm earlier in the campaign, through strange relics turned up during the characters' adventures, murals or frescoes in forgotten sites covered with centuries of moss, or the ravings of shattered minds detailed in forgotten tomes.

glabrezus, and **cloud giant** followers before being able to stop the ritual.

The characters reach 17th level when this adventure is complete. If you wish to end the campaign at this point, the characters successfully stop the ritual, destroy the Apostles of End, and save the City of Arches from the destructive touch of Ourboran. To continue this campaign, the characters are able to defeat the cult but can't close the rift, which allied wizards of Kartan say can be shut down only from the chaotic planar realm of the Outside.

ACT 4: THE END OF WORLDS

In this act, the Apostles of End have been defeated but the rift above the City of Arches remains open. The single baleful eye of Ourboran gazes down on the city, beginning to absorb the life force of every creature it beholds. Only by entering the rift can the characters save the city and the world beyond.

The characters start this act at 17th level, gaining one level at the end of each scenario and reaching 20th level when they enter the Temple of Aeons.

TRAVELING TO THE OUTSIDE

With the characters needing to cross the rift between worlds, Savandra Thricecursed, master of Kartan (see page 20) brings them a key to the Outside—a *ring* of spell turning set with a single stone taken from that chaotic realm. Savandra gives the characters directions to a vault deep below the city that holds an archway linked to the Outside. With the key in hand, the characters can step through the arch and into the heart of a dead city floating in the void.

The Dead City of Klygon. The ancient archway leads to the center of a floating disk-shaped dead city, once known as Klygon, and lost in the void of the Outside for millennia. The mortals who once dwelled here either transformed into spell-warped chuuls, gibbering mouthers, murmuring worms, or spectral mages, or were the ancestors of a long line of aberrant-hunting scouts, veterans, and berserkers who now stalk the ruined streets. From the folk of the city and lore recovered

there, the characters learn that they can't defeat Ourboran in the entity's current titanic miles-wide form, but that a psionic artifact aboard a derelict plane-traveling craft might even the odds. They also learn that the ship's captain, an **archmage** named Uloth of the Outside, hid several weapons of tremendous power in the Vaults of Uloth—a hollowed-out asteroid floating within the Outside.

The Derelict Craft. With clues regarding the psionic artifact in hand, the characters travel to a lost laboratory in Klygon, where a portal lets them transit to the inner hull of a massive derelict plane-traveling craft called the Stardancer. On the ship, the characters face off against alien ice devils, horned devils, and bone devils running rampant, kept alive by divine power drawn from a captured solar at the ship's core.

On the ship's bridge, the characters find the psionic artifact known as the *Helm of Uloth*. The helm allows its wearer to bend reality, reducing the physical entity of Ourboran down to a size the characters can battle. By freeing the captured **solar** Xiveran, the characters can convince the celestial to power up the *Stardancer* again, letting the characters sail the ship to the Vaults of Uloth to arm themselves for their final conflict.

The Lost Vaults of Uloth. Uloth of the Outside, the original captain of the Stardancer, collected an arsenal of powerful magic items over decades of planar exploration. With the help of the solar Xiveran, the characters arrive at the hollow asteroid where that arsenal is locked away. After battling the archmage (now a lich) and his iron guardian and stone guardian sentries, as well as summoned chain devils and pit fiends, the characters can recover weapons of great power, including a staff of the magi, a vorpal longsword, a ring of invisibility, and other legendary magic items of your choice.

Also in the vaults, the characters learn that to have any chance of defeating Ourboran, they must face the entity in a site called the Temple of Aeons. With helm and weapons in hand, the characters travel to the temple, ready for their final confrontation with the Moon of Oblivion.

THE TEMPLE OF AEONS

The Temple of Aeons is a titanic ziggurat floating in the void of the Outside, as old as that realm and home to the consciousness of Ourboran. Atop its stepped sides, the characters battle aberrant **storm giants**, corrupted planar **cloud giants**, and hundreds of **skeletons**, **wights**, and **wraiths** under Ourboran's control. Using the *Helm of Uloth*, the characters manage to devolve the otherworldly entity into a material form—that of a huge levitating **archmage kraken**—battling it and its remaining minions with sword and spell until the entity is destroyed.

When the fight is done, the characters can return to Klygon, then use an archway there to return to the City of Arches. A citywide celebration greets them upon their return, with the great rift in the sky now closed and the destruction of the Moon of Oblivion bringing peace to the city once more.

ADVENTURES

This chapter presents three short adventures set in and around the City of Arches. These adventures make a great starting point for your City of Arches campaign, with the introductory scenario "Golgoron Arises" (page 9) connecting to the first adventure, "The Obsidian Skull."

THE OBSIDIAN SKULL

In the catacombs of the Cliffs of the Dead, the Children of Ibraxus, led by the **cult fanatic** Irvana Spellstar, are set to use an ancient relic known as the obsidian skull to open a gateway to the abyssal realm of Choul. With the gate open, Irvana hopes to unleash creatures from the domain of the demon prince Ibraxus upon the City of Arches.

Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster to Queen Karsara Aventus, has been working with Quintus Harrowtoes, a loyal halfling spy who infiltrated the cult and learned of their plans—but who hasn't been heard from since his last report. Not wanting rumors of the cult's activities to spread, Zeshe is reluctant to ask the Golden Knights who normally patrol the Cliffs of the Dead to investigate. As such, she hires the characters to go after and locate Quintus in an abandoned crypt where he believed the cult was operating. She then charges them with rooting out the Children of Ibraxus from the catacombs and stopping their fell ritual.

"The Obsidian Skull" is a two-hour adventure for two to five 1st-level characters, who reach 2nd level upon completing the adventure.

ADVENTURE START

The adventure starts with the characters preparing to enter the crypt where the cultists are operating. Read or summarize the following:

You stand at the doorway to one of the many crypts lining the Cliffs of the Dead above the City of Arches. The spymaster Roselyn Zeshe laid out your mission clearly: Enter the crypt, find her lost spy Quintus Harrowtoes, and stop the ritual undertaken by the Children of Ibraxus before they can bring forth fiendish horrors into the City of Arches.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the stone door leading into the crypts has been recently opened and closed, though it is not locked or trapped. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the voices of two cultists interrogating a prisoner on the other side of the door. Pushing open the door requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. If multiple attempts must be made, the cultists in area 1 are alerted to the party's presence.

1. CRYPT ENTRYWAY

This now-empty noble's crypt connects to much older chambers beyond a door to the south. Smoldering torches in shrouded iron sconces fill the crypt with dim light. The ceiling here is 15 feet high, with the crypt divided in half by a ceiling-high empty sepulcher and two tattered curtains. Two broad stone alters stand in both halves of the chamber.

Inside the crypt, two **cultists** interrogate the halfling **spy** Quintus Harrowtoes, who is tied to the altar in the south side of the room. Quintus has 5 hit points remaining and is in no condition to fight. The cultists attack as soon as they notice the characters.

When the two cultists are defeated and Quintus is freed, the wounded spy relays the following information:

- Cultists of the Children of Ibraxus found an obsidian skull in a hidden chamber in the Lost Cisterns beneath the City of Arches, along with scrolls detailing a ritual to open an arch hidden away in an old tomb.
- The leader of this branch of the cult, Irvana Spellstar, determined that this tomb is the location of the archway, which stands in one of the older chambers to the south.
- Irvana and her followers have begun the ritual, which will open the arch unless the ritual is disrupted.
- The obsidian skull is a dangerous magical relic, but Roselyn Zeshe would like it turned over to her for safekeeping rather than destroyed.

Treasure. The cultists carry 45 gp worth of gold, gems, and jewelry between them. One cultist also carries a magic ring set with three rubies, whose magic they hadn't tested yet. Anyone wearing the ring understands that they can use an action to cast the *scorching ray* spell from it with a +5 bonus to the spell attack roll. The ring loses this property once it is used.

Stone Door. The stone door to the south is cracked and crumbling. Pushing open the door requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failure, the door shatters and falls into the cavern beyond, causing enough noise to alert the cultists in area 3.

2. COLLAPSING CATACOMBS

This section of the catacombs is much older than the first chamber. Once a curving 10-foot-high corridor, its worked-stone walls have long since crumbled and collapsed to resemble a natural cavern. The area is dark when the characters enter.

Where stretches of the original wall can still be seen, they reveal fragments of painted murals from a previous age. Any character who studies the walls and succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check can discern one or more of the following pieces of information:

 In times past, the many archways in the City of Arches opened to numerous worlds, some pleasant and some terrifying.

- A key was required to open any arch, taking the form of a dagger, a necklace, a mask, or some other magically empowered item.
- Evil priests and wizards once conducted horrible sacrifices in front of certain arches, luring powerful demons into the world.

One of the mural fragments shows a robed figure ruling from a floating palace above the City of Arches, their face obscured by soot. If anyone attempts to wipe the soot away, a blast of fire suddenly erupts in front of the mural, and each creature within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 4 (1d8) fire damage. No matter what effort the characters make, they cannot uncover the face of this figure—the Nameless King.

Crossbow Trap. The Children of Ibraxus have set up a crossbow trap at the end of the corridor, connected to a tripwire halfway down the corridor. A character who succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, or whose passive Wisdom (Perception) score is 10 or higher, notices the tripwire. Characters aware of the tripwire can step over it to avoid the trap, or it can be disarmed with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using the Sleight of Hand skill or thieves' tools. If the trap is triggered, two crossbows hidden under canvas that blends in with the stone of the corridor fire bolts at two random targets in the corridor. Each bolt is +5 to hit and deals 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

round, Irvana and her cultists have advantage on attack rolls and saving throws.

Round 2. A huge yellow eye peers out of the shadow swirling within the arch. Before initiative count 20 on the next round, each creature who starts their turn within 30 feet of the arch (including Irvana and the cultists) must succeed on a DC 10 Charisma saving throw or take 4 (1d8) psychic damage. The cultists are compelled to behold the eye, but a character can avert their eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of their turn. A character who does so is treated as blinded until the start of their next turn.

Round 3. Any remaining cultists die and Irvana takes necrotic damage equal to half her hit point maximum. A **dretch** then steps forth from the archway, acting on their own initiative. On their first turn, the dretch randomly chooses a character to attack and focuses on that character until one or the other falls.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

If Irvana is defeated, the ritual ends and the swirling shadow in the archway fades away as the obsidian skull falls to the ground. The characters can decide what to do with the skull. Do they keep it? Do they return it to Roselyn Zeshe? Do they destroy it? Do they sell it to a shady fence? The choice is theirs.

3 become aware of intruders and prepare for their arrival.

If the trap is sprung, the cultists in area

3. GILDED ARCH CHAMBER

An archway set with gold leaf stands against the north wall of this worked-stone chamber, shadows swirling within it. The ceiling here is 15 feet high. Torches in iron sconces fill the chamber with bright light.

Irvana Spellstar, a **cult fanatic** holding a skull carved
of obsidian, stands before
the arch, in the process of
completing a ritual that will open
a portal to the abyssal realm of Choul.
She is accompanied by one **cultist** per
character.

Irvana must concentrate to keep the ritual going, as if concentrating on a spell. If her concentration is broken, she must use her action to restart the ritual.

Each round on initiative count 20, Irvana's ritual creates the following effects:

Round 1. A grim chanting is heard emanating from the other side of the archway. During this



PIT OF THE VILE PRINCE

A gentle priest at the Temple of the Three Sisters is haunted by nightmares visited upon her by the spirit of a tormented ancestor, and opening his tomb is the only thing that can end her suffering. In the ruined outskirts of the Lower Reaches beneath the City of Arches, a sundered statue of an infernal warlord stands at the entrance to a series of toxic caves known as the Pit of the Vile Prince. It was there that the key to the tomb was lost, with the caves protected now by undead guardians, terrible hazards, and the spirit of a vengeful priest.

"Pit of the Vile Prince" is a two- to four-hour adventure suitable for two to five 2nd-level characters, who reach 3rd level upon completing the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For forty years, the hobgoblin priest Stillis the Suntouched has served the people of the City of Arches at the Temple of the Three Sisters. But even as she finds peace every day in her work, Stillis now finds herself haunted by nightmares. Each time she sleeps, she hears the endless screams of the hobgoblin warlord Rorathix the Razor—her ancestor, and a former servant of the Nameless King.

Studying Rorathix's history, Stillis learned that his tomb is located in the Skyreach Mountains, not far from the temple. However, the tomb is locked behind a door protected by powerful magic, which only the right key can open. Through divine guidance, Stillis has learned that the key was lost in the Lower Reaches, in a cavern below a shattered statue of an infernal warlord known as Kressek the Vile Prince.

ADVENTURE START

The adventure begins with the characters meeting Stillis the Suntouched—a lawful good hobgoblin **priest** serving at the Temple of the Three Sisters (see page 25), whose plight they might have learned of in a few different ways. Characters who have a background connection to Stillis or have interacted with her previously might have received a note from her asking for help. They might learn of Stillis's nightmares from another friendly NPC who sends them to the priest. Alternatively, characters visiting the Temple of the Three Sisters on other business might have Stillis or one of the other priests ask for their help.

During their conversation with Stillis, the characters can easily note that she is not well. Her eyes are dark and sunken, her skin pale. She has trouble concentrating as she explains the dreams she's had, relaying the following information:

- Stillis and her family have served the people of the City of Arches for generations, but her family line once held much evil in it.
- One of her ancestors, Rorathix the Razor, served as a warlord to the powerful and evil tyrant known as the Nameless King. Rorathix followed a path of violence and evil even after the Nameless King's fall,

- but eventually turned his back on the past and led his people to a better future.
- Rorathix's change of heart turned out to be his undoing, when he, his daughters, and a number of his retainers were captured and killed by a vengeful priest of the Nameless King. As a final indignation, Rorathix was entombed in a bastion in the Skyreach Mountains once used by the Nameless King's most loyal warlords.
- The door to Rorathix's tomb is protected by powerful magic, and can be opened only with a key held by the long-dead priest who killed him—Skarval of Norvun.
- Skarval was known to worship an infernal warlord named Kressek the Vile Prince, a being who served the Nameless King, and to dwell in a series of hidden caverns below Kressek's fallen statue in the ruins of the Lower Reaches.
- Stillis has determined the location of the statue, but the ruins are too dangerous for her to explore. She can offer 10 gp and a *potion of healing* to each character willing to take on this quest.

If the characters agree to aid her, Stillis gives them a rough map to the location of the sundered statue of Kressek.

JOURNEY TO THE PIT

With the rough map in hand, the characters can easily find the specific location of the sundered statue by seeking out any shady NPC in the Lower Reaches and offering them a few coins. You can expand this adventure with additional encounters as the characters make their way to the statue (see "Encounters in the Lower Reaches" on page 49).

STATUE OF THE VILE PRINCE

In the ruined outskirts of the Lower Reaches, the statue of Kressek the Vile Prince once stood over fifty feet tall, commissioned by the sycophantic warlord to impress the Nameless King. Now, only a pair of spiked hooves and lower legs still stands where the statue shattered and fell, the face of the corrupted fiend glowering and half-submerged in a pool of sludge nearby. The statue's ruins partially obscure a shaft leading down to a series of caverns. Skarval of Norvun's remains and the key to Rorathix's tomb can be found inside.

The characters can use ropes to easily make their way down to the pit below.

THE CAVERNS

The caverns beneath the statue are a mix of natural and worked stone, with pressure from above causing sections to crack and crumble. Unless otherwise noted, the caverns are dark and have ceilings that are fifteen feet high.

SKARVAL'S KEY

Skarval's key, the main objective for this adventure, is a large black-iron key inscribed with a screaming, sharp-toothed skull. The key is set up to be found in area 7, but

you can adjust the length of the adventure by moving it to a different location, allowing the characters to find it whenever it seems appropriate. This is especially useful if you want to run a longer adventure but the characters go to area 7 straight from area 2.

1. STEEP DROP

A 50-foot shaft drops into this area from the sundered statue of the Vile Prince. The floor of the cavern is littered with the bones of beasts and humanoids.

2. HALL OF THE DEAD

The scattered bones from area 1 continue into this ruined hall, with one hobgoblin **skeleton** per character animating to rise when the first character enters here. The skeletons have diseased-pocked bones and wear scraps of ancient armor. When a skeleton is destroyed, each creature within 5 feet of them must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 2 poison damage, and their hit point maximum is reduced by 2 until they finish a long rest.

3. FETID POOL

A deep pool of fetid and poisonous water opens up at the center of this cavern, which is littered with bones. An **ogre zombie** lurks in the pool, dressed in cracked leather armor (increasing their Armor Class to 10) and wearing a horned helmet with a demonic face resembling the Vile Prince. When the ogre zombie emerges suddenly from the pool, each character must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check or be surprised.

Reduce the hit points of the ogre zombie by 15 for each character fewer than four in the party. For six characters, add two hobgoblin **zombies** who also crawl out of the pit.

4. OBSERVATION LEDGE

Relief images of grim and hooded hobgoblins have been carved into the natural columns of this cavern, staring down into the pool in area 3. Steps between two of the columns lead up to the next level of the ledge at area 5.

5. THRONE OF NORVUN

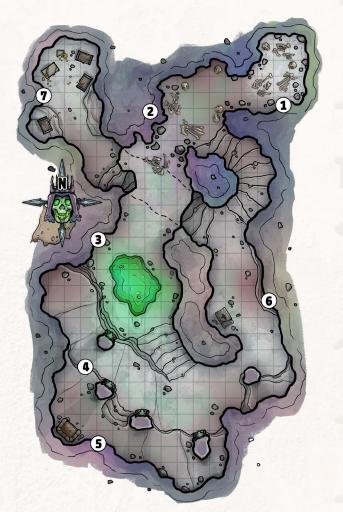
The spiky stone throne of Skarval of Norvun sits here. Skarval was a hobgoblin priest who began worshiping Kressek after the fall of the Nameless King. Sitting on this throne, Skarval would watch victims captured in the Lower Reaches forced into the pool to drown in its poisoned waters and emerge as undead horrors.

For a longer session, the characters can face the spirit of Skarval of Norvun here, manifesting as a **cult fanatic specter** with 33 hit points.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a secret drawer under the throne containing a *wand of web*.

6. ALTAR TO THE NAMELESS KING

An ancient, cracked stone altar stands on the south side of this cavern, with a skeletal hand atop it gripping a dusty scroll. If the scroll is touched, the hand animates into a **crawling claw** and attacks.



The scroll contains a map showing a hidden vault holding secret lore of the Nameless King. However, any attempt to read it causes the scroll to burst into flames because of the Nameless King's curse. Any character proficient in the Arcana skill notes unusual magic protecting the scroll. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check understands that reading the scroll will make it combust, giving careful characters the option to pass the unopened scroll on to an experienced sage or spellcaster who might be able to work around the curse's protection. The vault to which the scroll leads might contain more revelations of the Nameless King's origin and demise.

7. TREASURY

Down a flight of rough stone stairs, this chamber holds rotted chests containing 1,612 cp, 1,484 sp, 82 gp, and a number of gem-cut stones worth 10 gp each—two blue quartz, a malachite, an obsidian, and a rhodochrosite.

A rotting oilskin bag in one chest also contains a set of goggles of night, two potions of greater healing, a potion of growth, and Skarval's key.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

With Skarval's key in hand, the characters can return to Stillis, who thanks them, rewards them, and asks if they will help her once more. If they agree, she asks them to use the key to enter Rorathix's tomb and lay her ancestor to rest, ending the nightmares that plague her. This sets up "The Tomb of Rorathix" adventure on the next page.

THE TOMB OF RORATHIX

A hobgoblin priest named Stillis the Suntouched recently began hearing the cries of her lost ancestor Rorathix the Razor, tormenting her each time she tries to sleep. Having recovered a key that allows access to Rorathix's tomb, Stillis seeks adventurers willing to enter the tomb and lay the warlord's tormented spirit to rest. But the fate of Rorathix is more complicated—and more tragic—than Stillis knows.

"The Tomb of Rorathix" is suitable for two to five 3rd-level characters, who reach 4th level upon completing the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Seven centuries ago, the last followers of the Nameless King continued to fight in his name, seeking to find a way to undo the curse that had ended his reign. Among the most fanatical of the tyrant's followers was the hobgoblin warlord Rorathix the Razor. But in time, Rorathix turned his back on violence and his former master, forging a new path of growth and honor for his people.

For this treachery against the Nameless King, a hobgoblin priest of the tyrant named Skarval of Norvun captured and killed Rorathix, his daughters, and a number of his retainers. Unknown to everyone, however, Skarval didn't simply kill Rorathix, but wanted to condemn the former warlord to an eternity of torment for turning his back on the Nameless King. He fed Rorathix and his daughters vampiric blood, killing the daughters but turning Rorathix into a vampire. Skarval then encased Rorathix in a cold-iron sarcophagus and sealed him up in an ancient bastion used by the Nameless King's most loyal warlords, where he would suffer for an eternity.

ADVENTURE START

The adventure starts when the characters meet Stillis the Suntouched, a lawful good hobgoblin **priest** whose story—and connection to Rorathix—is told in the "Adventure Background" section of "Pit of the Vile Prince" (page 124). If the characters recovered the key to Rorathix's tomb for Stillis in that adventure, she calls on them again to aid her by seeking Rorathix's tomb and ending his suffering. If you are running this adventure on its own, Stillis has obtained the key in some other way, and the characters might meet her at the Temple of the Three Sisters or have her reach out to them through another NPC they know.

GORGE OF THE FAITHFUL

Rorathix's tomb lies alongside a dry riverbed snaking through the Skyreach Mountains above the City of Arches, and is a half day's journey on foot. After traveling up and into the mountains along rough but accessible paths, the characters can reach the gorge by ascending a 20-foot-high dry waterfall, then continuing north.

The former bastion is shaped from worked stone, and sealed away behind a magically warded door. The ceilings of the complex are 10 feet high and its halls are dark.

1. SHATTERED STATUES

Twelve statues of warlords sworn to the Nameless King once lined the south end of the gorge. Over the centuries, six statues have collapsed, leaving no sign of who they once were.

A much larger thirteenth statue depicting the Nameless King once stood at the north end of the gorge, but scorch marks and charred rubble are all that remain of it now. With a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a character searching the area notes that the rubble appears to have once been a statue of great size.

A **manticore** uses the gorge as her hunting ground, and swoops down on any creatures making their way along it. The violent predator flees if reduced to half her hit points.

2. DOOR TO THE TOMB

A cold-iron door plated with silver marks the entrance to the ancient site where Rorathix was bound. Magical wards make it impossible to force the door or pick its lock. Additionally, a *glyph of warding* that deals cold damage and has a saving throw DC of 15 protects the door, and triggers in response to any contact. The key to the tomb collected by the characters or given to them by Stillis unlocks the door and bypasses the glyph, which resets after 1 minute.

3. ANTECHAMBER OF WAR

Statues depicting armored knights flank the doors to this chamber, with mosaics on the walls depicting battles in which the armies of the Nameless King destroyed forces of elves, dwarves, and humans. A skeletal **hobgoblin knight** stands at attention at the center of the room, attacking all who enter.

Cowering in the corner of the chamber is the **ghost** of a hobgoblin girl named Seva—one of the daughters of Rorathix who was entombed in area 10 like her sister and father. Seva can relay the full story of what happened to her father (see "Adventure Background" above), and begs the characters to release him or end his suffering.

The door to area 9 is black iron scribed with the face of a grim, fanged hobgoblin. Magical wards make it impossible to force the door or pick its lock, but it can be opened with the key in area 8.

4. SCREAMING SKULL

A narrow staircase leads upward to a circular chamber whose far wall holds a carving of a huge fanged skull. Cracks in the eyes and mouth of the skull lead out to the rock face outside the tomb, and can be used by Rorathix to escape the complex in the form of a swarm of flies if he is freed from area 10.

5. UPPER HALLWAY

This hallway leads to chambers once occupied by Skarval, the hobgoblin priest who transformed and entombed Rorathix here. A necromantic glyph at the intersection can be discovered with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check, and can be disabled with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check.

If the glyph is not detected and disabled, the first creature to pass over it causes it to release one **shadow** per character. The shadows pursue the characters anywhere in the complex, but won't go outside. If the characters leave the tomb to escape the shadows, the undead hide and attempt to ambush them upon their return.

6. SKARVAL'S LABORATORY

Broken vials and rotted tomes line the wooden shelves and tables in this laboratory. Searching the area reveals two potions of poison, a potion of clairvoyance, a potion of gaseous form, and a spell scroll of blight. Diagrams on the walls show the process of creating a vampire by infusing a living creature with vampire blood, and can be interpreted with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check.

7. CHAMBER OF AWAKENING

A large slab set with iron manacles sits along the south wall of this chamber, whose floor is stained black with old blood. It is here that Skarval infused Rorathix and his daughters with vampire blood.

A vat along the north wall holds a viscous acidic fluid that animates into a **gray ooze** if touched.

8. TREASURE VAULT

Old chests in this chamber contain 2,940 cp, 1,080 sp, 52 gp, and four art objects worth 50 gp each—a bloodstone goblet engraved with arrowheads, a brass rod inlaid with a filigree of electrum, a cloth robe trimmed with rabbit fur, and a golden frog.

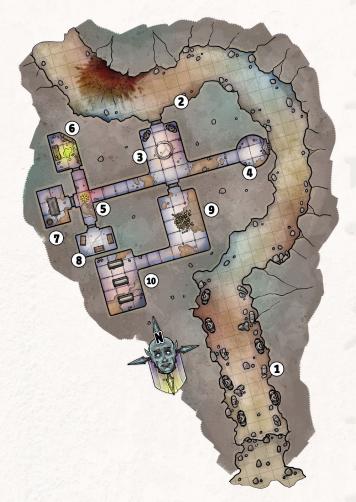
A silver key with obsidian inlay sits in one of the chests, and opens the door to area 9. (For a shorter adventure, you can move this key to area 3 or 4 and allow the characters earlier access the crypt.)

9. HALL OF TRAITORS

The loyal retainers captured alongside Rorathix were murdered and entombed with the former warlord, their bones now piled high in this chamber. When the door is opened, those bones animate into two hobgoblin **skeletons** per character. The supernatural wailing of the fallen rises in the character's minds as the skeletons slash with their blades, fighting until destroyed.

10. CRYPT OF RORATHIX

Three cold-iron sarcophagi stand at the center of this area. Any character who succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, or who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 10 or higher, hears a voice begging for release in the center sarcophagus. The two other sarcophagi contain the bones, dust, and skulls of Rorathix's two daughters, Seva and Styreen. Although all three were fed vampiric blood by Skarval, only Rorathix survived the transformation.



When released, Rorathix is a ravenous and emaciated hobgoblin **vampire spawn** with the ability to transform into a swarm of flies as a bonus action. He might attack the first creature he sees, attempting to grab and bite them, or he might beg to feed on one of the characters if you wish to avoid combat. After he makes one Bite attack, his body regains its strength.

If Rorathix attacks and is reduced to half his hit points in a subsequent combat, he breaks off from the fight and begs forgiveness. If the characters continue to attack, you can choose whether Rorathix fights to the death, or whether he transforms into a swarm of flies and flees the tomb through area 4.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

If Rorathix lives, he is able to share his tale, as detailed in the "Adventure Background" section. Though a **vampire spawn**, Rorathix is not evil. If brought back to the City of Arches, he marvels at how peace has replaced the tyranny of the Nameless King, and promises to feed only on creatures the characters deem worthy of his attention.

With Rorathix's release or defeat, Stillis's nightmares cease. If Rorathix returns to the city and reveals himself to her, you can decide how she feels about her ancestor returning as an undead.

In time and with regular feedings, Rorathix eventually turns into a full **vampire**, and can become either a valuable ally or a long-term enemy of the characters, depending on the choices they make and how he reacts. Use him in your campaign however he best serves the story.

ADVENTURE FRAMEWORKS

When building adventures in and around the City of Arches, you'll likely find yourself making use of two different points of inspiration—an exciting location or a malevolent villain. This chapter makes use of both those approaches to give you three adventure frameworks for use in your City of Arches campaign. "Secrets of Summervine Villa" is a site-based adventure built around the palatial Second Rise villa of a corrupt noble. "Infiltration of Bonespur Keep" sets the characters up to investigate and infiltrate a remote stronghold in the Deadlands, where a would-be warlord plots against the City of Arches. And "Brother Cavel" sets up an investigation adventure built around a murderous priest-assassin channeling the power of a forgotten god.

USING THESE TOOLKITS

These toolkits aren't finished adventures. As the GM, you flesh out the adventure framework by determining goals for the villains and the characters, then build out the scenario that unfolds. The goals you set up for the characters should allow them to familiarize themselves with the location or villain, building on the setup of those adventure elements.

All these adventure frameworks are designed to be part of a City of Arches campaign, but you can use any of them as a drop-in setup for any campaign.

SECRETS OF SUMMERVINE VILLA

Fell secrets hide in the chambers below Summervine Villa. Though a well-respected member of the Golden Council, Lady Elvenia Summervine serves a different master—one seeking to crush the City of Arches. Her opulent villa of the Second Rise hides ancient vaults beneath it, and even portals to other worlds.

You can use this adventure framework to build any number of different scenarios in which the characters explore the villa and uncover its secrets, including using it in two of the campaign arcs in chapter 10 (starting on page 110).

This toolkit is designed for low-level characters, but can be easily modified to support a wider range of levels.

SUMMERVINE VILLA

Summervine Villa stands on the cliffs above the City of Arches known as the Second Rise (see page 26). Its gated compound includes a two-story main house, a separate stable, and a guard tower.

Below the villa lies a series of chambers far older than the compound. Some of the villa's previous owners didn't know about these chambers, while others believed them to be haunted and left them sealed up. Lady Summervine was the first to explore these secret spaces, finding the altar and a well that leads to other worlds for those holding the right key. A secret tunnel in these chambers leads even deeper beneath the cliffs, into the natural caverns of the Endless Warrens (see page 57).

GOALS

The characters might come to the villa for any number of reasons. A few such goals are presented below, or you can create your own. Many of these goals can be fulfilled only if the characters acquire certain keys. You can choose where these keys might be found, and can move them during the characters' exploration of the villa to establish the best pacing for the adventure.

RECOVER EVIDENCE

Representatives of the Golden Knights or spymaster to the queen Roselyn Zeshe might seek operatives willing to enter Summervine Villa in search of evidence of Lady Elvenia's disloyalty or of the murders she's committed in the name of her dark lord. This evidence, in the form of a red leather-bound journal, might be found in Lady Elvenia's chambers or in the vaults below the villa. The characters might also discover Elvenia's crimes firsthand as she conducts her dark rituals.

FIND THE KEY TO ARKUS

The characters learn that a secret that might lead to the rise of the Nameless King is found in the dead world of Arkus (see page 103), and that a key activating an archway to that world is hidden away somewhere in Summervine Villa. The portal's key is the glyph-scribed cracked skull of a long-dead high priest from Arkus. The key might be in Lady Elvenia's possession, it might be hidden in her bedchambers on the second floor of the villa, or it could be found in the vaults below.

CLOSE THE GATE TO CHOUL

The characters learn that Lady Summervine plans to conduct a terrible ritual that will open a gateway to the abyssal realm of Choul, summoning a **horde demon** to her foul service. The characters must infiltrate the villa, get to the summoning chamber, defeat the horde demon, and end the ritual.

INHABITANTS

Roughly two dozen guards, servants, cultists, and members of the Summervine family reside at the villa at any given time. You can decide which of these NPCs are present during the adventure, and which of those serving Lady Summervine are actively complicit in her plans.

LADY ELVENIA SUMMERVINE

The ninety-year-old elf **priest** Elvenia Summervine is master of the Summervine estate. Cool and calculating, she rarely meets her match in the dance of political debate. Down deep, Elvenia hopes to dethrone the queen of the City of Arches, then use the power of the Nameless King and the abyssal domain of Choul to ascend to the throne. Elvenia sometimes loses patience with those around her, letting the potential for violence always simmering in her heart run free.

LORD GUSTON SUMMERVINE

A seventy-year-old human **noble**, Guston cares little for the political ambitions of his wife. He focuses only on seeking his own pleasures in strong drink, and in the mind-bending leaves and mushrooms he has his servants purchase for him in the Lower Reaches.

VENA SUMMERVINE

The twenty-year-old elf **noble** daughter of Guston and Elvenia, Vena has no interest in the politics of her mother, instead seeking out a life of adventure. The young noble has already made a few forays into the Cliffs of the Dead and the Lower Reaches, but keeps her adventuring activities secret from her parents. The twisted ambition of her mother has found no root in Vena's pure spirit, and if her mother's dark secret were revealed to her, she might very well turn against Elvenia.

EVONDEL GRIMWALKER

A former **veteran** of the Golden Knights disgracefully court-martialed for acts of brutal violence, Evondel now serves as captain of the guard for Lady Summervine's mercenary guards, the Grim Watchers. Though loyal in her protection of the Summervine family, Evondel might turn against Lady Summervine if reminded of her original oath to the City of Arches.

THRINE AND TERACE BLACKCLOAK

The twin human **cult fanatics** Thrine and Terace live at the villa full-time, posing as tutors and researchers working for Elvenia. They secretly research how the well beneath the villa might be opened, hoping to use its portal to bring forth demons of Choul or former servants of the Nameless King from the dead world of Arkus.

ORBURYN BRONZEBEARD

The long-time head butler at Summervine Villa, Orburyn (a dwarf **commoner**) has worked on the estate since even before the Summervines bought it, staying on for his love of the place and its history. He knows of the secret chambers beneath the villa, and has suspicions that his current employers use it for dark dealings. However, he doesn't have the courage to investigate those dealings himself.

THE GRIM WATCHERS

Several **guards**, **thugs**, and **veterans** serve as mercenary sentries for Summervine Villa. Six guards, three thugs,

and a veteran are on watch at the estate at all hours. If an emergency arises, three more guards, another thug, and another veteran awaken in the guard tower (area S4) and can be called upon to defend the villa. Although most of these guards are simply hired mercenaries, a handful know of and support Lady Summervine's secret mission.

CULTISTS OF CHOUL AND THE NAMELESS KING

At any given time, six **cultists** posing as guests or servants operate in the villa. Some are dedicated to the goal of seeing the Nameless King returned to the world, while others worship the demon prince Ibraxus of Choul. Though their goals are strongly aligned, cultists of both factions often don't get along.

SERVANTS OF THE VILLA

A half-dozen **commoner** servants work in and around Summervine Villa, none of whom know of Lady Summervine's secret plots. Those who accidentally discover the truth often meet their end beneath a sacrificial blade on the stone slab in the chambers beneath the villa.

LOCATIONS IN THE VILLA

The following descriptions are keyed to the Summervine Villa map. Unless otherwise described, the villa is lit with small lanterns and candles. The lower chambers are dimly lit with everburning torches.

S1. MAIN ENTRANCE

A wrought-iron gate watched over by two **guards** leads into the villa's central courtyard. An iron gargoyle head mounted on the gate is imbued with magic that lets it greet visitors with a number of programmed phrases.

S2. BACK ENTRANCE

A wrought-iron gate at the back of the estate is usually locked and watched over by a **guard**. The gate leads to a narrow ravine in the cliffs above the villa.

S3. STABLES

One or two servants work here during the day, caring for three horses stabled here. By night, one servant sleeps in the loft above. One horse, named Matreled, has been made sapient with the *awaken* spell. If the characters talk with her, the horse expresses that something about Elvenia makes her feel uncomfortable.

S4. GUARD TOWER

Three **guards**, a **thug**, and a **veteran** of the Grim Watchers typically bunk in this watchtower while their fellow mercenaries stand guard across the estate. A small armory on the second floor holds an assortment of weapons and armor, and a locked trapdoor allows access to the tower from the roof.



S5. FOYER

Two suits of **animated armor** guard this entry hall to the villa. The constructs ignore the villa's guards and staff, and members of the Summervine family. They can be commanded to defend the villa with the command word "Kressus" and deactivated with the command word "Calvera." These words are known to the Summervine family, Orburyn, Thrine, Terace, and Evondel.

S6. GRAND HALL

A scintillating fountain depicting the goddess of the sun stands beneath a dual staircase in this two-story hall. The fountain has crystal goblets set along its edge, but those who drink its refreshing water come under Elvenia's influence as if affected by the *friends* spell. Elvenia encourages visitors to drink from the fountain before trying to convince them that Queen Karsara Aventus IV is weak and should be deposed.

S7. SITTING ROOM

A fireplace burns day and night in this comfortable sitting room. Any careful investigation of the room reveals that it is less deep than it should be. A grinning gargoyle statuette sitting in a bookcase on the far wall is attached to a lever that opens a secret door. Beyond, a spiral staircase leads up to area S21 and down to area S22.

S8. GARDENS

An unusually intelligent good **twig blight** named Mavalik maintains this small beautiful garden. They have no knowledge of Lady Summervine's plots, but can talk of how certain servants in the villa (actually cultists posing as servants) always seem surly and rude.

S9. DINING HALL

Large paintings of the Summervine family adorn this opulent dining room. An optical illusion creates the impression that the eyes of the figures in the portraits seem to always watch those in the room.

S10. GUSTON'S OFFICE

By day, a fireplace burns in this office, whose desk is littered with Guston Summervine's meaningless paperwork, including business ledgers filled with errors, inappropriate drawings, and bad poetry.

S11. GUSTON'S SITTING ROOM

Comfortable chairs and a cabinet holding bottles of fine spirits adorn Guston's private sitting room. A boar's head on the wall is magically programmed to snort at any jokes told in the room.

S12. SERVANTS' HALL

Servants use this back hall to move between the dining room and the kitchen. A privy stands at the far end of the hall.

S13. KITCHEN AND PANTRIES

Loaded shelves, storage rooms holding barrels of water, flour, and other staples, and the cooks' quarters fill out this large kitchen.

S14. UPPER HALL

The sweeping stairs from area S6 lead to this large hallway connecting the chambers of the upper floor of the villa.

S15. BATHING ROOM

A large brass bathtub stands at the center of this area. A magical blue jewel set into the tub fills it with warm water at a touch. A door in the far corner opens to the second-floor privy.

S16. PRIVY

This upper-story privy connects to an outdoor cesspit. Three-foot-wide channels behind the walls connect it with the privy in area S12 below.

S17. VENA'S ROOM

Vena Summervine's bedroom is adorned with old maps, models, and adventuring gear. A diorama of flying ships slowly spins where it hangs from the ceiling.

S18. GUEST QUARTERS

This guest room is set up with two comfortable beds. Peepholes in the wall between the guest quarters and area S19 allow Guston Summervine to spy on guests.

S19. GUSTON'S BEDROOM

Guston Summervine's private bedroom is austere and featureless. A storage area at the far end of the room is filled with junk and detritus.

S20. ELVENIA'S BEDROOM

Elvenia Summervine's bedroom and dressing chamber is well appointed with finery and art. The door to the balcony is trapped with a *glyph of warding* spell (save DC 14) that deals lightning damage.

Moving a painting of a forest landscape where it hangs on the wall of the bedroom opens a secret door to area S21.

S21. SECRET STAIRCASE

This concealed staircase leads down to area S7 on the ground floor, and to area S22 of the lower levels.

S22. FALSE LIBRARY

This dusty library is filled with moldering tomes covering mundane subjects, and appears to be have been long abandoned. Pulling a specific book on a shelf on the wall opposite the stairs opens a secret door revealing the passage to area S23.

S23. WELL CHAMBER

This ancient stone well is filled with toxic water, and serves as a portal to the world of Arkus or the abyssal

realm of Choul, depending on which key is used to activate it. Four pillars in the room are set with chains that hold potential sacrifices to creatures summoned through the well. A stone throne sits atop a dais to the south.

S24. FORBIDDEN LIBRARY

Lady Summervine has set up a library of forbidden lore here. Evil tomes filled with horrible rituals line the shelves, threatening to shatter the minds of those who read them.

S25. STATUE AND ALTAR

A bloodstained stone altar in this area is dedicated to beings of forbidden worship. The statue might depict either the Nameless King or the demon prince Ibraxus of Choul, depending on the adventure you wish to run in the villa.

S26. ACCESS TO THE ENDLESS WARRENS

This worked-stone passageway is filled with traps before it becomes a rough-walled tunnel twisting downward. Following the tunnel leads eventually to the caverns of the Endless Warrens (see page 57).

ADVENTURE SCENARIOS

The following adventure scenarios set out what the characters might find when they come to Summervine Villa. You can build your adventure using any of these scenarios, or use them as inspiration for a scenario of your own.

THE SUMMONING OF KRAVYX

Elvenia Summervine, using the power granted her as a **priest** of Choul, plans to use a key recovered from the depths of the Endless Warrens to open the portal of the well in area S23. The ritual that will open the well requires the sacrifices of two victims recently kidnapped from the City of Arches—a halfling grocer named Willow Sandevent and a gold dragonborn explorer named Kravel Sungleam. Both are chained to pillars around the well.

Elvenia uses the pain of her victims to draw the demon Kravyx into the world—a **horde demon** covered in black slime. She is aided by the **cult fanatics** Thrine and Terace Blackcloak, and several masked **cultists** of Choul.

The true servants of Summervine Villa all know that something terrible is happening, but are too frightened to act. Loyal **cultists** in the guise of servants do their best to distract any characters seeking access to the lower levels beneath the villa. At the same time, Vena Summervine has somehow been affected by the ritual, her shrieks echoing from her bedroom as she unconsciously thrashes in her bed

THE NIGHT OF PEERING EYES

The Summervines host a party at the villa, inviting affluent acquaintances and members of the Golden Council. Most of the guests are upstanding residents of

the City of Arches, but a number of others are twisted and corrupt followers of the Nameless King or Ibraxus of Choul. Lady Elvenia Summervine is using the party to conceal secret meetings in various rooms of the villa, including some in the hidden chambers beneath the estate. Elvenia's loyal **cultists** watch carefully for potential enemies while posing as servants.

MEETING OF THE FAITHFUL

Lady Elvenia Summervine has summoned a number of the Knights of the Nameless King to the villa (see page 29). She plans to read a long-sealed holy writ describing the mysterious curse that laid the Nameless King low—and which is rumored to hold the secret of how to break that curse so the tyrant might return to the world. Setting up the event as a dinner party to avoid the notice of the Golden Knights, the cultists plan to celebrate with a great feast before descending into the secret chambers beneath the villa for the reading. Coming from affluent backgrounds, many of the Knights of the Nameless bring their own guards with them, who wait in or around the villa while their patrons conduct their secret agenda.

COMPLICATIONS

During any given situation in the villa, complications might occur while the characters conduct their missions.

UNEXPECTED VISITOR

In addition to the well portal in area S23, one of the doorways of the villa might secretly be one of the city's mystical archways. While the characters explore the villa, a sudden shimmering in the doorway lets them glimpse another world just before a confused creature steps fourth. Use "Appendix D: World Generator" (page 152) and the "Patrons and NPCs" section of "Appendix C: Adventure Generators" (page 150) to bring this creature to life.

RELICS GONE WILD

Having recently found a strange magical relic while exploring the Lower Reaches, Vena Summervine accidentally activates the relic to tumultuous effect. As you determine, the relic might cause part of the villa to explode. An angry **djinni** might appear, trapped in the relic and demanding to be set free. The relic might accidentally release a **fire elemental**. Vena might be possessed by a powerful spirit temporarily giving her the statistics of a **wraith** or a **wight** before she flees to another part of the city. Whatever the effect, chaos ensues.

CLASH OF DAGGERS

While exploring Summervine Villa, the characters might run into **spies** or **assassins** hired by the Black Hand on an unrelated mission to assassinate Guston Summervine. The characters might find a reason to work with the opposing operatives, fight in an attempt to drive them off, or ignore them and hope that their actions don't alert Elvenia Summervine or her guards to the party's presence.

A NEW HOME BASE

If the characters defeat Elvenia Summervine and expose her evil secrets, Queen Karsara or the Golden Council might award them ownership of Summervine Villa. Give the players a copy of the villa map and let them decide how to make use of or convert its interior spaces for their own purposes.

Owning an estate on the Second Rise can be quite useful for the characters' further adventures in the City of Arches. The chambers beneath the villa grant access to the Endless Warrens, and might reveal other routes to the Lower Reaches or the city of Sunken Revvia.

KEYS AND ARCHES OF THE VILLA

Owning the villa might grant the characters access to their own personal archways, activated with keys picked up during their adventures. The well in area S23 might safely reach other destinations if its connections to Arkus and Choul are broken by the destruction of those keys. Alternatively, the alcove behind the throne in area S23 might secretly be an archway unto itself.

As GM, you can decide whether to give the characters keys they can use to either explore far out from their home base or keys that can bring them back—potentially allowing them to return to their home base even when traveling in other multiversal realms. Such keys might be single use, usable only once per day, or usable at will, as you decide.

One easy option is to give the characters a key that lets them use any doorway or archway that is part of the villa's original construction as a teleportation arch. This key can activate an archway once per day, and regains the ability to do so at the next dawn. The characters might need to recover another key from a location they visit through a villa archway to return to the villa later.

Giving the characters access to different keys can help you manage and control their journeys to various locations, and to manage the rests they take between adventures without having to make use of lengthy travel from place to place.

The characters might also come across keys that can activate the villa's archways in the hands of other adventurers or shady vendors. Obtaining those keys can serve as a fun and useful expense for the characters' hard-earned treasure.

VILLA UPKEEP

Characters who take over Summervine Villa will need to pay for services and upkeep unless you decide otherwise. A majordomo to oversee the villa costs 10 gp per day. Most other servants, including cooks, cleaners, carpenters, groundskeepers, gardeners, masons, stablehands, and guards, cost 2 gp per day per person. Limited upkeep of the villa might cost 1,000 gp per month for a staff of

twelve. Maintaining the villa in a lavish manor runs 3,000 gp per month for a staff of thirty.

VILLA UPGRADES

Once having acquired the villa, the characters might decide to enhance, retrofit, and upgrade it. The following table notes potential upgrades and their suggested costs. Such upgrades might be offered as rewards for services rendered to the City of Arches.

Upgrade	Cost
Alchemist's laboratory	2,000 gp
Armory	500 gp
Artist's studio	100 gp
Blacksmith's forge	200 gp
Complex trap	1,000 gp
Distillery	100 gp
Herbalist's garden	300 gp
Kennel	100 gp
Library upgrade	500 gp
Locked vault	2,000 gp
New paintings	400 gp
One-use trap	100 gp
Potter's workshop	100 gp
Scriptorium	200 gp
Shrine retrofit	1,000 gp
Spa upgrade	500 gp
Training room	200 gp
Wine cellar	1,000 gp

MAGICAL UPGRADES

With access to greater resources, the characters might decide to purchase one or more of the following magical upgrades to the villa, including magic items, constructs, and permanent castings of specific spells.

Dwelling	Cost
Animated paintings	1,000 gp
Glyph of warding	2,000 gp
Elemental furnace	5,000 gp
Animated armor	5,000 gp
Unseen servant	5,000 gp
Guards and wards	10,000 gp
Magical kitchen	10,000 gp
Magical hot springs	20,000 gp
Crystal ball	25,000 gp
Scrying mirror	25,000 gp
Summoning circle	50,000 gp
Healing vessel	75,000 gp
Resurrection vault	200,000 gp

INFILTRATION OF BONESPUR KEEP

Deep in the desert wastes of the Deadlands, the ancient fortress of Bonespur Keep was once a command post and staging ground for the forces of the Nameless King. Standing atop a plateau whose crumbling ivory-white slopes have the look of jagged bones, the keep was abandoned in the aftermath of the tyrant's fall. But its ancient walls still endure—as do the horrors rumored to dwell in ancient tunnels and chambers winding deep within the plateau.

You can use this adventure framework to build several different types of adventures around a party's infiltration of Bonespur Keep. This toolkit is designed for mid-level characters, but can be easily modified to support a wider range of levels.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

At the height of the Nameless King's power fifteen hundred years ago, Bonespur Keep served as a garrison and command post for the armies of the tyrant. Over the centuries since the keep was abandoned after the Nameless King's fall, gangs of bandits, sects of cultists, and countless monsters have laid claim to the ruins. But ancient terrors lurking in the tunnels and caverns beneath the keep have ensured that no one holds the site for long.

The latest would-be master of Bonespur Keep is Thravus Hexblood, an elf blackguard who leads a bandit army known as the Red Hydra. Neither Thravus nor his followers are aware of the chambers and tunnels lacing the rocky plateau upon which the keep sits, or of the threats found in those depths.

The Red Hydra use Bonespur Keep as a staging ground for attacks against trade caravans and travelers drawing too close to the Deadlands. However, recent rumors suggest that Thravus Hexblood believes his forces to be strong enough to cut off all trade to the City of Arches, creating a blockade that would expand his power and resources significantly—as a precursor to attacking the city.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

The characters might come to Bonespur Keep for many reasons and with any number of goals in mind. The following adventure seeds can be used to set up an incursion into the fortress, or as inspiration for adventures of your own.

CAPTURE THE PLANS

Lord Bianca Swifthand, commander of the Golden Knights of the City of Arches, hires the characters to infiltrate Bonespur Keep and recover plans describing the Red Hydra's impeding blockade of the city. The characters must capture these plans without Thravus Hexblood realizing they have been compromised, learning the timetable and tactical details of the Red Hydra's assault and bringing this information back to the city. With the plans in hand, Lord Swifthand is confident that the Golden Knights and allied adventurers can thwart the Red Hydra with minimal losses.

DECAPITATE THE HYDRA

The queen's spymaster Roselyn Zeshe seeks to destabilize the Red Hydra by eliminating Thravus and his two key followers—the orc mage Herkanya Bluefang and the bugbear assassin Guldruun of Dusk. If all three are killed, Zeshe believes that the remaining members of the Red Hydra will succumb to infighting before inevitably abandoning the keep.

Each of the characters' three targets might need to be sought out within the keep. Alternatively, it might be possible to lure them away from the site. Depending on how the characters run the mission, they might face two or even all of their targets in a single encounter—saving themselves time but increasing the risk of defeat. If any of the three villains are left alive, the Red Hydra will inevitably return to threaten the City of Arches again.

RECOVER AN ARTIFACT

Vinnic Longshanks, leader of the Seekers of the Sun (page 30), has learned that Thravus's lieutenant, the orc mage Herkanya Bluefang, recently acquired the powerful artifact known as the *Deck of Many Things* from a lost treasure trove of the Nameless King. The full powers of the deck's magic are unknown to anyone in the City of Arches, even the mages of Kartan. Vinnic hires the characters to enter Bonespur Keep and recover the deck before Bluefang's curiosity gets the better of her and she starts turning the cards.

After the characters agree to take on Vinnic's assignment, they are contacted by Broyce Winterstouch, an agent of Kartan, Tower of the Arcane (page 20). The mages of the tower likewise want to obtain the deck, ensuring that it remains in Kartan's vaults, and Broyce offers a powerful magic item to the characters if they agree to deliver it to him.

SECRETS OF BONESPUR KEEP

As the characters infiltrate Bonespur Keep, they might learn one or more of the following secrets regarding the location and its inhabitants. These secrets might be found as notes, gleaned from examining mosaics or frescoes on the walls, or revealed when talking to NPCs. They might even be things the characters recall or tap into through their own experiences or backgrounds.

Drop in any of the following secrets wherever it makes sense for the characters to learn them:

- Like so many other people of the region, Thravus
 Hexblood came through an archway from a world he
 can't remember. Over long years, he has been driven by
 a deep desire to rule.
- Thravus bristled against the order and organization of the City of Arches, loudly rejecting the structure of its institutions and questioning the authority of the Golden Council. When his posturing turned to threats of revolution, he was arrested and exiled to the Deadlands.
- Over a decade in the Deadlands, Thravus built a following of mercenaries and brigands from many smaller groups, uniting them with a hatred for the City of Arches and calling this group the Red Hydra.
- Thravus originally led the Red Hydra with four other leaders of the groups that came together under his banner. Over the years, though, he secretly had the other four killed, making it look as though they either fell in battle or had engaged in treachery against each other. He now rules the Red Hydra alone.
- Those who have explored Bonespur Keep talk of seeing spirits lurking in the halls who are drawn to weak creatures and drain the life from them. Some of those who have survived such assaults talk of hearing unknown creatures whisper to them in their sleep.
- Rumors talk of a network of caves and old cellars below the keep, but those who seek hidden treasures there most often find only death.
- Soldiers of the Red Hydra describe having seen an old woman lurking at the base of the plateau, who they suspect is connected to the disappearances of several patrolling soldiers. So far, no one has been able to find or track her.
- The Red Hydra enjoys the allegiance of several manticores, using them for reconnaissance and aerial strikes against unsuspecting targets. Each manticore can carry four riders employing special harnesses, dropping these soldiers atop their foes.
- Thravus, his lieutenant Herkanya Bluefang, and his master of assassins Guldruun of Dusk don't trust one another. However, this joint mistrust prevents Herkanya and Guldruun from allying with each other against Thravus, ensuring a dangerous stability.
- Thravus's best treasures are kept in his quarters in the upper levels of the western keep.
- The orc mage Herkanya Bluefang conducts strange experiments in her chambers in the northwest towers of Bonespur Keep.

PRIMARY NPCS

While the characters explore Bonespur Keep, they might run into one or more of the following NPCs. You can decide which NPCs might be central to a given adventure or play a part in specific situations at the keep.

AUNTIE BLACKNAILS

The caverns beneath the keep are host to a **green hag** named Auntie Blacknails, who hunts wayward members

of the Red Hydra and devours them in her lair. Two **basilisks** named Marva and Casp serve Auntie Blacknails, following her everywhere and acting on her command. Auntie Blacknails is able to brew a special salve from basilisk saliva that restores a petrified creature to flesh. She uses these salves to return victims to life before she boils and eats them.

Auntie Blacknails knows much of the keep and its inhabitants from her nightly hunts. Ultimately, she's a coward who will offer information in exchange for her life if pressed. She also seeks the soul of Herkanya Bluefang, with which she plans to draw out the mage's secrets and absorb her magic using a special ritual. If Auntie Blacknails knows that slaying Herkanya is the characters' goal, she offers them one of a pair of specially constructed soul gems that will siphon off Herkanya's soul if the mage is killed within 30 feet of it, transferring her soul to the other gem held by the hag. In exchange for this service, Auntie Blacknails can provide the characters with secrets of the keep and information on its layout, as you determine.

Auntie Blacknails might be encountered outside the base of the plateau, wandering in the Fetid Caverns (see page 137), or in her lair in area F3 of the caverns.

GULDRUUN OF DUSK

Born and raised in the Deadlands, Guldruun of Dusk was once an independent bugbear **assassin** operating out of the City of Blades. Six years ago, he was bested by Thravus Hexblood after the bugbear failed to assassinate the Red Hydra leader on behalf of a rival. In exchange for Thravus sparing his life, Guldruun killed that rival, and has acted as Thravus's personal assassin and spymaster ever since.

Guldruun oversees a group of **thug** and **scout** operatives of the Red Hydra known as the Barbed Splinters. They operate exclusively for Guldruun, and look down on other members of the bandit army.

Guldruun is lean for a bugbear, with dark-red fur and uncaring black eyes. He speaks little, letting his reputation speak for him. Guldruun wears a suit of +1 studded leather armor called Nightborn. A creature attuned to this armor can use an action to cast the *invisibility* spell, and regains the ability to do so at the next dusk.

Guldruun can be found anywhere in Bonespur Keep, including his quarters in area K19.

HERKANYA BLUEFANG

The orc **mage** Herkanya Bluefang was kicked out of Kartan, Tower of the Arcane, for acts the mages of the tower considered distasteful. She took up service as a mercenary mage for Thravus, but soon became his valued lieutenant. She has an insatiable appetite for arcane power, seeking relics and spells across the Deadlands and beyond. Her latest acquisition is a *Deck of Many Things* found by her agents in a long-forgotten desert vault of the Nameless King. Thus far, she has not dared to use the

deck, fearing the results of drawing even a single card. Still, she spends many hours in her laboratory in the northwest tower of Bonespur Keep staring at the powerful artifact.

Herkanya has light-green skin and sharp golden teeth. She often dresses in magical dark-red robes embroidered with Infernal runes that give her an Armor Class of 13. She is always accompanied by one of her two ogre **flesh guardians**, Drom and Krand, with the other guarding her quarters in area K17. When not studying in that area, Herkanya is most often found addressing soldiers in area K16.

THRAVUS HEXBLOOD

One hundred and fifty years ago, Thravus stepped out of the Arch of Flowers in Briarheart Forest (page 87), dressed in the torn garb of an elf noble. Traveling to the City of Arches did not calm his confusion, paranoia, and tendency toward violence. Soon, the elf found himself alienated from every group who tried to take him in, and his calls for uprising saw him cast out of the City of Arches. Left to wander alone, he joined up with various gangs of bandits in the Deadlands, raiding travelers in the desert and the Doorish Hills.

Since the moment he stepped forth from the archway, Thravus was drawn to seek power, filled with an unexplained yearning to be a warlord who would rule over all. His brutality and cunning helped him rise among his brigand peers until he had built his own mercenary company. After amalgamating with other bandit groups, he formed the Red Hydra—a bandit army now firmly under his control. Though he speaks to his followers of establishing a trade blockade to reap the riches of the City of Arches, Thravus plans to then return to the City of Arches with his army at his back.

Thravus wields a +1 greatsword called Starblaze. A creature attuned to Starblaze can use a bonus action to cast the *magic missile* spell at 4th level, regaining the ability to do so at the next dawn.

Thravus can be found throughout Bonespur Keep, but is often in the throne room (area K20) or his private quarters (area K24).

ENTERING BONESPUR KEEP

Characters making an incursion into Bonespur Keep might infiltrate the site by a number of different approaches.

THROUGH THE FETID CAVERNS

The Fetid Caverns are one of the subterranean spaces beneath Bonespur Keep, and can be reached by way of a natural tunnel at the base of the plateau (see area F1 on the next page). The characters might learn about this hidden entrance from the NPC who hires them to enter the keep, through historical knowledge of the location, or by observing the site before their infiltration. An approach through the Fetid Caverns is unlikely to be detected by Red Hydra patrols, but the caverns are home to other dangers.

CLIMBING TO THE WALKWAY

At the lowest level of Bonespur Keep, a stone walkway crosses a deep gorge separating the east and west sides of the fortress (see area K10). Characters might free-climb the rock walls, ascend using ropes and pitons, or make use of spells such as *fly* or *levitate* to access the walkway. However, the area is open to the air and easily observable from below, creating a risk of alerting guards or manticores.

THROUGH THE MAIN ENTRANCE

The main entrance to the keep leads to the first-level training yard (area K1) through the west entryway. There's no way to use the main entrance undetected, but the characters might come this way disguised as members of the Red Hydra, as hired mercenaries, or as members of an allied group.

THROUGH AN ARCHWAY

For greater control over the size and scope of the adventure, you can add an archway to any chamber in or below the keep. The NPC who hires the characters can offer a two-way dual-use key that can let them enter the keep, conduct their mission, and escape back through the arch. For a more complicated scenario, the key might work only once—either to enter or exit the site.

OTHER INHABITANTS

Bonespur Keep rises three levels above the plateau on which it sits, and features two other subterranean levels within the plateau. Each section of the keep holds a different assortment of inhabitants.

The lowest layer of the keep is the Fetid Caverns, holding natural caves, foul pools, and dank chambers. Above that is the Moaning Crypts, containing old tombs, cells, and vaults left behind from the days of the Nameless King. The keep and its towers atop the plateau are occupied by members of the Red Hydra and creatures allied with them.

FETID CAVERNS OCCUPANTS

The creatures of the Fetid Caverns are largely unthinking monsters. Roll on the table below or use the creatures on the table to inspire encounters within the caverns.

d8	Occupants
1	Giant rats gnaw on a decaying zombie.
2	Gricks hide among phosphorescent mushrooms.
3	A black pudding hides in an oily pool whose bottom gleam with treasure.
4	Ochre jellies writhe in large and delicate ceramic vats.
5	A cursed elven drider attacks, begging for death.
6	Piercers hang from the ceiling above a big crosshairs symbon the floor.
7	A cloaker hides on the shoulders of a robed skeleton .
8	A gelatinous cube waits motionless in a tunnel with a glowing gemstone floating at their center.

MOANING CRYPTS OCCUPANTS

The worked-stone chambers below Bonespur Keep have been sealed up since the last days of the Nameless King, yet undead still shuffle within these dark halls. Roll on the table below or use the creatures on the table to inspire encounters within these cellars and dungeon chambers.

d8	Occupants
1	Skeletons crawl forth from oversized shattered funeral urns
2	Specters spawned from sycophants of the Nameless King wail and moan.
3	Imps approach the party, looking to make a deal.
4	An armored skeletal ogre swings a huge axe.
5	A wight in ancient armor defends a crypt.
6	A wraith , once a necromancer of the Nameless King, seeks souls to devour.
7	A revenant in rusting mail and wielding a maul attacks relentlessly.
8	A confused ghost mistakes the characters for former comrades.

BONESPUR KEEP OCCUPANTS

The following creatures can typically be found in and around the three levels of Bonespur Keep:

- One hundred soldiers (a mix of goblins, hobgoblins, orcs, and humanoid guards, bandits, and thugs)
- Eighteen bugbears
- Twelve ogres
- Twelve scouts
- Six manticores
- Six hell hounds
- Six hobgoblin captains
- Six veterans
- Three mages
- Twenty commoners

At any given time, one third of these occupants patrol outside the keep, one third are active within the keep, and one third are resting, relaxing, or eating somewhere in the keep.

As the characters explore the three levels of Bonespur Keep, roll on the table below or use the creatures on the table to inspire encounters.

d12	Occupants
1	Two hobgoblins argue.
2	A goblin cook staggers by, dragging a huge pot of stew.
3	An escaped commoner prisoner runs past, chased by three thugs .
4	A heavily armored ogre carries a huge ballista while being barked at by a halfling veteran .
5	A wandering mage mumbles to themself, lost in thought.
6	Dwarf commoners drag waste buckets to dump off the keep's walkway.
7	Four veterans march past.
8	A hobgoblin captain pets a ravenous hell hound while two nervous hobgoblins fidget nearby.
9	A gnome commoner drags a huge bucket of meat toward the manticore dens.
10	Two scouts are returning from a rough journey.
11	A commoner cleans a bloodstained floor.
12	Five disgruntled bugbear mercenaries wander by.

FILLING OUT BONESPUR KEEP

The presence and behavior of the inhabitants of Bonespur Keep will change depending on the scenario you intend to run at the site. Area descriptions below don't break out specific creatures, so that you can fill out these locations with encounters from the tables above or with creatures and encounters of your own devising. However you build encounters at this location, include a mix of easy, challenging, nonhostile, and beneficial encounters to suit the pacing of your game.

The locations below also don't include traps or hazards. You can choose traps and hazards that fit the situation, placing them where you think they'll add to the fun of the game. Always remember that the most entertaining traps are often those that are detected by the characters before they go off.

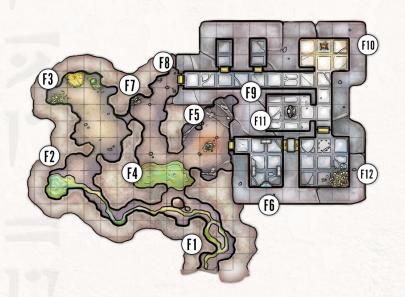
THE FETID CAVERNS

The Fetid Caverns are a mix of natural stone tunnels and worked-stone chambers dating back to the time of the Nameless King. Tunnels and hallways here are 10 feet wide and 10 feet high, while larger chambers are 20 feet high. These areas are unlit.

Squares on the map are 10 feet across.

F1. ENTRANCE TUNNEL

Foul water flows out of a low tunnel at the base of the plateau beneath Bonespur Keep. Characters can easily approach the tunnel to gain access to the plateau and the keep above.



F2. POOL OF THE DEAD

Foul water bubbles up into an underground pool filled with the decaying corpses of beasts and humanoids victims of Auntie Blacknails (see below) who were deemed not worth eating.

F3. HAG LAIR

This chamber serves as the lair of the green hag Auntie Blacknails (see "Primary NPCs" on page 135). It holds a thatched hut, piles of decaying bones, and a large cooking pot still holding humanoid remains. Searching the area reveals a small tunnel leading to area F7.

F4. RANCID POOL

The ancient bones of beasts and monstrosities fill a rancid pool at the center of this chamber.

F5. DRIDER LAIR

A cursed **drider** dwells in this cave, which holds a number of half-eaten corpses hanging from webs, a discarded explorer's pack, and a podium with a bestial skull atop it that is surrounded by treasures. A sealed crypt door leads east to area F6.

F6. SECRET CRYPT

This secret crypt contains a healing fountain. Its mosaiccovered walls depict millennia-old battles, with the face of a great leader—the Nameless King—burned away by fire. A secret door to the east leads to area F12.

F7. PRIMORDIAL SHRINE

This chamber contains the bone-and-skin effigy of a primordial god.

F8. CHAMBER OF SKULLS

Small piles of humanoid skulls adorn this chamber. A door marked with a graven image of a skull leads

F9. MOSAIC HALL

The mosaic-covered walls of this long hall depict battles of the Nameless King's armies. Two doors to the north are inscribed with images of knights. Crypts beyond hold the bones of warriors who once served the Nameless King.

F10. ETERNAL BRAZIER

An endlessly burning brazier roils with angry undead

F11. GUARDIAN STATUE

A huge statue at the center of this chamber threatens intruders.

F12. OSSUARY

This chamber contains only a pile of decaying bones. A secret door to the west leads to area F6. A shaft opening up in the ceiling leads up to area C1 of the Moaning Crypts.

THE MOANING CRYPTS

The crumbling stone walls of the Moaning Crypts are covered in carvings and mosaics depicting the battles and conquests of the Nameless King, and are scorched in every place where the Nameless King's visage once appeared. Corridors in this area are 10 feet wide and 12 feet high. Chambers have 20-foot-high ceilings. These areas are unlit.

Squares on the map are 10 feet across.

C1. SECRET EGRESS

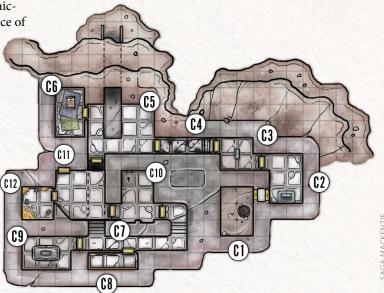
Bones are piled in the corners of this chamber, whose floor opens up to a shaft leading down to area F12 of the Fetid Caverns. A secret door leads east to area C3.

C2. BURIAL CHAMBER

This burial chamber contains an altar adorned with a charred and melted helm that once depicted the visage of the Nameless King.

C3. BURIAL CHAMBER

The burial chamber of a high priest holds treasures intended to be carried to the afterlife. A door leads west to area C4.



C4. SCORCHED HALL

This hall contains mosaics depicting the destruction of Arkus, the World of Dead Temples (see page 103). Scorch marks cover the walls and flow down from the mosaics onto the floor.

C5. OLD CISTERN

This dry cistern opens up to an exit chute leading to the north side of the plateau. A hallway to the south leads underneath area C11.

C6. CARETAKER'S CHAMBER

This chamber once belonged to the caretaker of these crypts—now a pile of bones lying on a rotted bed, rusted knife in hand.

C7. HALL OF WORLDS

Both legs of this hall feature mosaic-covered walls showing various otherworldly domains (see "Worlds Beyond the Arches," page 98).

C8. ARMORY

Decaying armor and rusted weapons decorate this ancient armory.

C9. FORGOTTEN TOMB

This chamber contains a sarcophagus of a hierophant once loyal to the Nameless King.

C10. GUARD CHAMBER

Armored skeletons stand at attention in this chamber, their decaying bodies falling apart. Iron rungs set into the wall create a ladder leading up to a secret trapdoor in area K9 of Bonespur Keep.

C11. SENTRY CHAMBER

Suits of plate armor filled with the bones of the dead stand along one wall of this dusty chamber.

C12. TREASURE VAULT

Ancient treasures lie in this forgotten vault.

BONESPUR KEEP

Bonespur Keep is built from thick stone weathered with age. All hallways and chambers in the lower level have 15-foot-high ceilings. The chambers of the upper levels have 25-foot-high ceilings. Rooms and hallways are lit with lanterns and torches in sconces.

Squares on the map are 10 feet across.

K1. TRAINING YARD

Members of the Red Hydra practice combat drills in this open courtyard. Levers on the southwest wall of the training yard control two portcullises protecting the main entryway to the west.

K2. NORTH WATCHPOST

Arrow slits along the south wall of this chamber open up to the entryway leading to area K1. Shortbows and quivers of arrows are stored here, ready to be taken up. Stairs along the west wall lead up to Herkanya's audience chamber (area K16).

K3. NORTHWEST TOWER (FIRST LEVEL)

Longbows and arrows are stored in this chamber, ready to be used by sentries looking out through the chamber's arrow slits to the area northwest of the keep.

K4. SOUTH WATCHPOST

Arrow slits in the north wall of this chamber open up to the entryway. Light crossbows are mounted on the walls here, with bolts stored in barrels for easy access.

K5. WEST WATCH

Arrow slits in the north and west walls open up to the entryway and to the approach to the main entrance west of the keep. Heavy crossbows mounted on the walls and bolts in barrels are ready to be taken up by sentries here.

K6. STATUE STAIRCASE (LOWER)

A headless statue of the Nameless King looms along the wall of this two-story staircase leading to area K14.

K7. COMMANDER'S OFFICE

This well-appointed office contains a desk, chairs, and many maps on the walls. Scattered across the desk are multiple written orders to Red Hydra troops.

K8. GRUESOME HALL

Gruesome tapestries commissioned by Thravus Hexblood decorate this open hall and the corridor beyond.

K9. BARRACKS

Bunks line the wall of this grimy chamber. In the southeast corner of the room, a floor tile can be lifted to reveal a trapdoor and a ladder leading down to area C10 of the Moaning Crypts.

K10. WALKWAY

A stone walkway bridge with no railing connects the two sides of Bonespur Keep, crossing over a 50-foot-deep gorge.

K11. GUARDS' LOUNGE

A large table and multiple chairs stand at the center of this messy rest area.

K12. NORTH TURRET

Arrow slits along the north and northeast walls of this area allow guards to fire down on intruders approaching the keep. Heavy crossbows hang on the walls here, alongside cases of bolts. Stairs in the southeast corner of the room lead up to the manticore nests in area K21.

K13. SOUTH TURRET

Arrow slits in this area allow line of fire around the southwest corner of the keep. Heavy crossbows and cases of bolts stand here, ready to be used.

K14. STATUE STAIRCASE (UPPER)

The top half of a huge statue of the Nameless King, its face melted away to misshapen stone, looms on the wall of this two-story staircase. Longbows and quivers of arrows here allow guards to fire down on enemies advancing up from area K6.

K15. GUARD ROOM

This well-kept chamber features a table and chairs set up for Herkanya's personal guards.

K16. AUDIENCE CHAMBER

Herkanya's audience chamber features a throne standing on a stone dais, where the mage holds court with members of the Red Hydra. Magical glyphs protect the north door to Herkanya's study and fill the area with a pink glow. Stairs opposite the throne lead down to area K2.

K17. HERKANYA'S QUARTERS

A bed, cluttered bookshelves, and a number of glass canisters decorate Herkanya's private quarters and study. A spiral staircase here leads up to the laboratory in area K23.

K18. GUARD HALL

Large tapestries bearing the image of a twelve-headed blood-red hydra line the walls of this chamber, whose large meeting table is set up for Thravus's personal guards. The door leading to area K19 is locked and trapped.

K19. GULDRUUN'S QUARTERS

Bloodstains are spattered across the floor and carpet of this bedchamber, spreading out from a shrine dedicated to the god of murder.

K20. THRONE ROOM

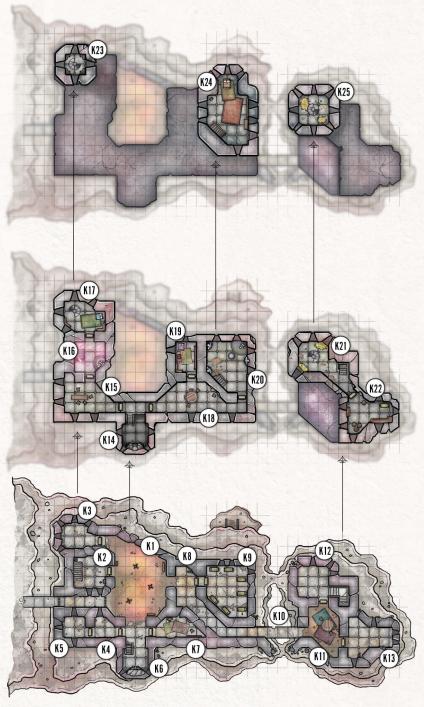
Large statues depicting armored warriors line the walls of Thravus's dismal throne room, where the Red Hydra leader conducts business from atop a stone throne. Stairs here lead up to Thravus's quarters in area K24.

K21. MANTICORE LAIR

Nests of foul blood-stained straw are spread around this chamber, which reeks with the stench of rotten meat. Stairs to the southeast lead down to area K12 and up to area K25.

K22. STABLEMASTER'S QUARTERS

The stablemaster responsible for feeding the manticores dwells here. Bloody haunches of meat hang from hooks in the ceiling, and barrels of water stand about the room.



K23. LABORATORY

Herkanya's tower laboratory is lined with alchemical gear and equipment, and features a stuffed giant bat hanging from the ceiling.

K24. THRAVUS'S QUARTERS

The private chambers of the leader of the Red Hydra feature a large bed, fine floor coverings, and a large treasure chest that is locked and magically trapped.

K25. MANTICORE ROOST

When not sleeping in their lair below, the **manticores** serving the Red Hydra roost in this open-air tower, taking to the air in response to spotting anyone approaching the keep. A set of stairs leads down to area K21.

BROTHER CAVEL

An immortal priest channeling the corrupt magic of a forgotten god has returned to the City of Arches—and intends to see the people of the city sacrificed to the Blood Lord he serves. When the characters first hear of Brother Cavel and his deathless halfling servant, you have the opportunity to draw them into an investigation adventure built around the character of this evil priest-assassin. This character-focused adventure framework includes a detailed backstory for Brother Cavel and his sidekick, a customized stat block, and encounter notes for when the characters eventually face him in combat.

BACKGROUND

Long ago in a world beyond the arches, Brother Cavel served as a field lieutenant in a terrible conflict known as the Holy War of the Red Ocean. Terrible magic and war machines slaughtered hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians in that twenty-year war, during which Lieutenant Cavel lost half his family to bloody vendettas—then killed the rest by his own hand, labeling them betrayers of his misplaced faith in an uncaring god. With the last remnants of his morality shattered, Brother Cavel found a new god known only as the Blood Lord—a god of blood, death, and murder who loved Cavel as a mortal son.

Like most beings who come through the arches, Cavel originally remembered nothing of his old life but his name. Over time, though, the memories of the horrors he had lived through began to return. In response, Cavel took up a new mantle of morality in which nothing is so divine as murder in the service of another, for taking life merely according to one's own needs and whims is a selfish act. And so did Cavel leave the City of Arches to become a wandering assassin for hire, not caring for the money he earned, but seeking only to be directed toward new victims.

APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOR

In his daily life, Brother Cavel is kind, quiet, and introspective. Folk know him as an excellent listener, always ready to enjoy stories no matter how mundane or fantastic. He dresses in the manner of a monk, wearing plain brown robes of rough cloth with a rope belt. Though Cavel wears no holy symbol to identify his evil faith, his chest bears a tattoo of a knife-pierced heart trailing bleeding veins as a hidden sign of his beloved god. He has short-cropped blond hair and soft blue-gray eyes that help put others at ease. However, insightful observers might note a deadly and sinister calm deep within those eyes.

When hunting his victims, Brother Cavel uses his brown robes to cover a suit of leather armor, and carries an inward-curving blade he calls the Fang of the Blood Lord. That blade might have taken the lives of thousands of victims over long years of wandering from settlement



to settlement, for Brother Cavel is rumored to be over two hundred years old, even as he appears to be a human in his forties. Cavel has been known to say that the Blood Lord will never let him die, ordaining him as a mortal vessel of their unholy will for as long as the god desires it.

HEKES WINDRAKE

Perhaps the most horrifying legacy of Brother Cavel's centuries-long killing spree is Hekes Windrake, a halfling storyteller who met Cavel's blade over seventy years ago—and who is now the Herald of the Blood Lord. Hired to silence Hekes after the halfling's ever-running mouth antagonized the wrong people, Brother Cavel was confused when Hekes used his last breath to whisper, "Thanks ..." Cavel then resurrected the halfling to learn of his longstanding desire to actually be slain. Believing such a willing victim of death to be a sacrilege to his blood god, Brother Cavel now forcibly keeps the halfling alive as his spy and ambassador. Even when Hekes's smart mouth gets him killed, as it often does, Brother Cavel simply pays to resurrect the halfling once more to serve him.

Clients who seek the services of Brother Cavel must work through Hekes (a **spy**), who makes a sharp contrast to his master with flamboyant clothes, a tall hat, and a face painted to resemble a skull. Hekes accepts payment on Cavel's behalf, never speaking of the murderous monk, but only intoning, "The Blood Lord's will be done." Within days, the intended victim is discovered in a gruesome state of being flayed, dissected, drained, or dismembered.

RETURN TO THE CITY OF ARCHES

Just a few months ago, Brother Cavel returned to the City of Arches with Hekes in tow, drawn back to the place where his bloody journey began. Since arriving in the

city with his master, Hekes often speaks in bars and inns of the Blood Lord coming to the City of Arches, and how the city's streets will one day be washed in the lifeblood of sinners. The halfling's sermons often come just before the discovery of another of Brother Cavel's victims, leading the authorities and angry mobs alike to accuse Hekes of the crimes. Hekes always has an alibi for such crimes, though he does not fear execution or murder by vigilantes, knowing that Brother Cavel will resurrect him once again. Still, the halfling secretly hopes to one day find a death from which even Cavel cannot save him.

ENCOUNTERS AND TACTICS

The characters are likely to engage in combat with Brother Cavel in two situations—him hunting them, or them hunting him.

When knowing that he'll be engaging a full party, Brother Cavel often has Hekes hire mercenaries such as **thugs**, **veterans**, **spies**, evil **priests**, or even a **mage**. These mercenaries know that they must protect the monk, but don't know Cavel's true power. He often sends such allies in first, using *invisibility* and his Stealth skill to stay hidden. He then engages the characters after two or three rounds of combat have softened them up.

Cavel uses Aura of the Dead to continually harry melee combatants, while using Step through Darkness and Blood Lord's Curse to attack ranged opponents. He might cast *banish* against any truly troublesome foe, such as a healer or spellcaster. He keeps *dispel magic* handy for any troublesome spell effects.

For a more difficult encounter, Brother Cavel might use *darkness* to shroud his foes, knowing that his blindsight lets him attack with advantage while enemies are blinded. Such tactics can be frustrating for the players, though, so use them sparingly.

KNOWLEDGE CHECKS

Characters who investigate Brother Cavel, Hekes, or both might learn the following information using Intelligence (Investigation or History) or Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion) checks:

DC 10: Recent grisly murders in the city have been presaged by the rantings of a halfling named Windrake.

DC 15: Hekes Windrake, a loudmouth halfling in flamboyant clothes and with a face painted like a skull, rants about some Blood Lord taking vengeance on folk in the city—just before victims are found brutally murdered. The halfling has an alibi, and doesn't appear bothered at all by the accusations.

DC 20: Hekes Windrake speaks of the Blood Lord, but clearly isn't the perpetrator of these crimes. Whispered rumors hint that a priest of the Blood Lord is committing the murders—and has done so for decades in many lands without being caught.

BROTHER CAVEL

Medium Humanoid (Cleric), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (bracers of defense)

Hit Points 195 (23d8 + 92)

Speed 30 ft.

 STR
 DEX
 CON
 INT
 WIS
 CHA

 12 (+1)
 18 (+4)
 18 (+4)
 14 (+2)
 16 (+3)
 14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Wis +7

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances necrotic

Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Elvish, Undercommon **Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If Brother Cavel fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Spellcasting. Brother Cavel casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

At will: darkness, invisibility, spare the dying 1/day each: banishment, command, dispel magic, hold person, lesser restoration, greater restoration, resurrection

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Brother Cavel makes three Fang of the Blood Lord or Blood Lord's Curse attacks. He can replace one attack with a use of Spellcasting (spells cast as an action or bonus action only).

Fang of the Blood Lord. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d6 + 6) piercing damage and 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.

Blood Lord's Curse. Brother Cavel targets a creature within 120 feet who he can see. That creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 18 (4d8) necrotic damage and be blinded until the end of their next turn.

Bonus Actions

Aura of the Dead. While conscious, Brother Cavel can surround himself with the screaming specters of his victims or suppress that manifestation. While the specters are active, whenever a creature hostile to Brother Cavel moves within 15 feet of him for the first time on a turn or starts their turn there, that creature must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. The creature takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Step Through Darkness (2/Day). Brother Cavel teleports, along with any equipment he is wearing or carrying, up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space he can see.

TREASURE

Brother Cavel wears *bracers of defense* and wields a blade known as the Fang of the Blood Lord—a legendary +2 *shortsword* that grants its attuned wielder blindsight out to a range of 30 feet. Additionally, a creature attuned to the Fang of the Blood Lord can use an action to cast the *darkness* or *invisibility* spell. Once cast, each spell can't be cast again until the next dusk. (Because of his connection to the Blood Lord, Brother Cavel can cast these spells at will.)

Brother Cavel also wears a small pouch around his neck containing 3d8 blood rubies, each worth 150 gp.

VILLAINS AND MONSTERS

Threats abound in the City of Arches, from the dangerous creatures who routinely step through archway portals, to undead and monstrosities slipping into the city from the timeless depths below. Additionally, many NPCs in the city hold agendas that might prove detrimental to its people—or plot in secret to see the city once more become the seat of power of the Nameless King.

Any of the usual foes of 5e can have a place in the City of Arches, but this appendix presents a number of specific threats for use in your City of Arches campaigns—including the Nameless King and his dread master, Ibraxus of Choul. Both the Nameless King and Ibraxus are presented as villains to highlight how you might build a campaign around each of those foes, and as stat blocks for use in the exciting culmination of such campaigns.

NPC VILLAINS

This section details a number of high-profile villains who might operate in, around, and below the City of Arches. These villains are presented in order of relative power, from the low-level threat of Lady Kalya to the insurmountable destructive potential of the demon prince Ibraxus and the Nameless King. Each villain entry includes a main goal and lists a number of quests they can take to accomplish that goal, with those quests playing out whether the characters get involved or not.

You can run these villains one at a time or have their plots unfold in parallel to one another, as fits your campaign. As those plots intertwine, they focus on the coming of Ibraxus, the Demon Prince of Choul.

LADY KALYA, EYE OF IBRAXUS

Though a relatively minor player in the apocalyptic cult known as the Children of Ibraxus (see page 29 in "Factions of the City of Arches"), the **cult fanatic** Lady Kalya Nightraven might be the most dangerous member of that order, due to her dual role as cult leader and powerful merchant lord in the City of Arches. While the archmage Irthrain who leads the cult obsesses with opening ever more archways to the world of Choul, Lady Kalya is more patient. She works in the shadows and spends her gold to move the plots of Ibraxus forward—and is more than willing to sacrifice Irthrain for the cause if need be. (The campaign arc "Return of the Nameless King" on page 110 talks more about the plots of the cult.)

Some among the Children of Ibraxus question Lady Kalya's beliefs, speculating as to whether she truly cares about the coming of the demon prince at all. However, those who question too loudly often end up run through by the longsword of Silent Asher, Lady Kalya's loyal **gladiator** bodyguard, messenger, and personal assassin.

The Golden Knights suspect Asher of dozens of murders, but have as yet been unable to prove her guilt.

Lady Kalya has no combat prowess to speak of, counting on the protection of Asher and her band of **knights** known as the Steel Hands. However, although Asher would fight to the death for her mistress, the mercenary Steel Hands might be bought off. Those close to her know that Lady Kalya's superior attitude and wealthy position fill her with a false sense of invulnerability.

Lady Kalya serves well as a villain for low-level characters.

Kalya's Goal: Gain power through investment, subterfuge, and bloodshed in the City of Arches, while advancing the coming of Ibraxus through the archways of the city.

First Quest: Hire shady explorers, adventurers, and spies to seek out lost rituals that can secure, control, and open the portals of the City of Arches.

Second Quest: Bribe, blackmail, or murder any powerful merchants or guild leaders who threaten the Children of Ibraxus or thwart Kalya's power, replacing them with her own loyal followers.

Third Quest: In lost chambers in the Lower Reaches, secure and open a gateway to Choul, the abyssal realm of Ibraxus, through which **vrocks** and a **hezrou** loyal to Ibraxus will pass as ambassadors for the imminent coming of their lord.

STAR, WIDOW OF THE RED ROSE

Trained from birth by the infamous elven assassins known as the Children of the Red Rose, the assassin known only as Star is a master of disguise and illusion. She uses those traits to lure in her prey before striking with poisoned blades. For many years, Star was the master of assassins for the Black Hand (see page 29 in "Factions of the City of Arches"). But she was betrayed two years ago by Iofel, the leader of that criminal guild, and left to rot in a hanging cage in an ancient cell of Revvia. Now the elf **assassin** plots her revenge against both the Black Hand and the leadership of the City of Arches.

A hero to many in the Black Hand, Star had a loyal following, and many speculated that she would rule the guild herself one day—a position she never desired until Iofel's own assassins left her for dead. Star now bides her time, slowly eliminating those loyal to Iofel, ensuring that the guild master continues to have no idea that she still lives, and building a new following in the Lower Reaches.

Star's leadership skills are not nearly as well honed as her blades. Those who follow her either do so out of fear, or from the hope of attaining riches and posterity as a byproduct of her tenacious drive for power. However, a good number of those followers have found only death in her service.

Star makes a good villain for mid-level characters.

Star's Goal: Take over the Black Hand and push that criminal guild to become the most powerful faction in the City of Arches.

First Quest: Assassinate the four senior members of the Black Hand—Urfin, master of the purse; Brathe, liaison to the Golden Council; Goroth, master-at-arms; and Wyrthon of Vul, Iofel's councilor.

Second Quest: Assassinate Iofel and take over the Black Hand, breaking the guild's truce with the Golden Knights and letting disorder sweep through the streets of the City of Arches.

Third Quest: Kidnap and control Atretha Aventus, sister of Queen Karsara Aventus (see "Monarch and Defenders," page 11). Assassinate the queen and plant Atretha on the throne as Star's loyal servant. Bribe, blackmail, or murder members of the Golden Council who refuse to support the Black Hand under Star's leadership.

SKRATHE, LORD OF BELOW

The **efreeti** Skrathe once served as an advisor to the Nameless King, and was bound by powerful magic in the ruins of Sunken Revvia after the tyrant fell. Having recently broken free of those bonds, Skrathe is consumed by the desire to serve his fallen master once more, with the goal of restoring the tyrant's rule burned into the efreeti's soul. Skrathe knows the Nameless King's true name but dares not use it until the curse that laid the tyrant low is ended, knowing that the curse will seek him out in some unknown and horrifying way.

Skrathe uses his ability to pass for a mortal to walk the streets of the City of Arches, appearing as a tall, bronze-skinned, red-haired human. He holds a leadership role in the Knights of the Nameless King (see page 29), whose members revere the efreeti for his link to their patron. However, Skrathe views the cultists only as weak-minded sycophants and expendable tools in the quest to awaken his master—a quest that routinely leads him to make impulsive choices and engage in acts of abrupt and brutal violence.

Skrathe's most loyal servant and herald is a **cult fanatic** named Zaeg, who styles himself Voice of the Flame. A former member of the Golden Council before being kicked out for various scandals, Zaeg found a place with the Knights of the Nameless King and rose quickly in the cult's ranks. As with the rest of the cult, Skrathe cares nothing for the failed politician.

Skrathe is a suitable villain for mid-level characters.

Skrathe's Goal: Remove the curse that felled the Nameless King and awaken the tyrant once again.

First Quest: Recover *Duskfire*, Skrathe's necrotic-fueled intelligent sword that was lost in Sunken Revvia before the Nameless King's fall.

Second Quest: Discover the means to reach the Monastery of Astaria, where the deva who put down the Nameless King dwells in self-imposed exile.

Third Quest: Seek and slay Astaria, which frees the Nameless King.

THE NAMELESS KING

Once a powerful archmage, the Nameless King took the title "King of Kings" over a thousand years ago when he ruled over the City of Arches and its surrounding lands. Within the mages' tower even then called Kartan, a group of the great king's apprentices known as the Dread Seven learned the secrets of lichdom. The King of Kings repaid their service by using their souls to fuel his undeath and rebirth as a lich.

As his desire for power grew, the King of Kings found that sacrificing mortal lives alone could no longer fuel his fell magical experiments. He thus formed a pact with the demon prince Ibraxus, bolstering his mortal armies with Ibraxus's demonic brood. Over ten centuries, the portals he created in the City of Arches let the King of Kings claim, rule, and ruin hundreds of realms and worlds.

At the end of the tyrant's reign, the Army of the Blue Star defeated the demonic armies of the King of Kings, under the command of the angelic deva Astaria. But because they could not destroy the tyrant, they bound his material essence to a black-iron-walled extradimensional tomb reached from deep beneath the City of Arches. There, Astaria laid a dread curse upon the tyrant, calling him the Nameless King and decreeing that no mention of his true name or his conquests would be written or spoken while he remained bound.

For ten centuries, the curse has held. But the cultists who name themselves the Knights of the Nameless King mean to change that, freeing the Nameless King and restoring the power he lost. The true name of the lichtyrant will once again be spoken in fear across the City of Arches. He will open the lost Gate of Choul and restore his pact with the demon prince Ibraxus. He will rule once again—and this time, his hunger for conquest will not be stopped.

The Nameless King is a suitable villain for high-level characters.

The Nameless King's Goal: Restore his power, take over the City of Arches, and open the Gate of Choul.

First Quest: Recover the magical relics lost to him when he was overthrown: his *robe of the archmagi*, *staff of the magi*, and *crystal ball of true seeing*.

Second Quest: Find the *Key of Worlds* (see that campaign arc on page 105).

Third Quest: Use the key to open the Gate of Choul (see the "Return of the Nameless King" campaign arc on page 110) and draw the demon prince Ibraxus into the world.

IBRAXUS, DEMON PRINCE OF CHOUL

Ibraxus the Fetid Prince is a horrid figure, his bloated form floating atop a stone dais embedded with skulls.

The upper half of his massive, misshapen body rises from a floating, glyph-marked vessel resembling an inverted pyramid, into which the rest of his body has been forced. In one hand, he grasps the Scepter of Vyse, an artifact of tremendous and terrible power. The other hand grips his spectral scourge, a weapon able to shred the minds of those struck by its horrific tails.

Ibraxus is served in Choul by both demonic followers and devils corrupted to his service. He is never found without his two **balor** bodyguards, Ivex the Red Waste and Ulvyn the Disemboweler. His advisor, the **marilith archmage** Eventress, Whisperer of the Lower Depths, likewise slithers always at the demon prince's side.

Ibraxus is one of the most powerful figures in the multiverse, ruling from a crumbling keep known as the Mountain of the Fetid Prince that rises from the swamps and sunken ruins of Choul. For millennia, he has sought a way to enter and lay waste to the mortal world, obsessed with overcoming the wards and covenants that thwart the worldly ambitions of all demon lords and greater devils. Twenty centuries ago, Ibraxus forged a pact with the Nameless King that promised to bring that dream to fruition, but the curse that laid the tyrant down thwarted those plans.

Today, the Fetid Prince continues to seed his toxic presence into the City of Arches, making use of the thin planar barriers between Choul and the city. That presence infuses the minds of the weak, twisting them into fanatic cultists who loyally seek to destroy the world. He also delights in corrupting infernal cults to his service, knowing that sowing chaos and breaking down the rule of law in the city serves his greater purpose—emboldening those who strive to restore the Nameless King to power, as the next step to seeing Ibraxus ascendant.

Ibraxus is a suitable villain for high-level characters.

Ibraxus's Goal: Permanently open the largest portal in the City of Arches to the world of Choul, through which Ibraxus and his fiendish followers will invade the mortal realm.

First Quest: Send the Dread Walkers—five shadow demon assassins—to the City of Arches. There, they will recruit and command Ibraxus's followers to seek out the recently discovered lore of the key that can open the archway to Choul.

Second Quest: Send Garuun the Sunderer, the goristro general of Choul, to lead an army of barbarians, giants, and bloodthirsty humanoids from the Deadlands and the City of Blades against the City of Arches.

Third Quest: Send Eventress, an archmage marilith,

IBRAXUS OF CHOUL

to lead expeditions of demons and mortals to find the *Key of Worlds* (see that campaign arc on page 105), or to conduct the sacrifices required to open the Gate of Choul so that Ibraxus might enter the world and feast upon the souls of mortals.

THE NAMELESS KING

Medium Undead, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 24 (natural) **Hit Points** 561 (66d8 + 264) **Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

 STR
 DEX
 CON
 INT
 WIS
 CHA

 12 (+1)
 14 (+2)
 18 (+4)
 24 (+7)
 22 (+6)
 20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Con +12, Int +15, Wis +14, Cha +13 Skills Arcana +15, History +15, Perception +14, Religion +15 Senses darkvision 60 ft., truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 24 Languages all

Challenge 26 (90,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +8

Legendary Resistance (5/Day). If the Nameless King fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Arcane Weaver. The Nameless King can change the damage type of any of his spells or attacks to acid, cold, fire, lightning, necrotic, poison, psychic, or radiant damage at will.

Aura of Death. The first time a creature moves within 30 feet of the Nameless King or starts their turn there, they take 27 (6d8) necrotic damage. Any creature who restores hit points while within 30 feet of the Nameless King restores only half the expected number of hit points.

Spellcasting. The Nameless King is a master of magic. He knows and can cast any spell in existence, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 23, +15 to hit with spell attacks).

The following are some of the Nameless King's commonly used spells, any of which he can replace with any known spell of the same level:

At will: alter self, counterspell, detect magic, dispel magic, gaseous form, invisibility, light, mage hand, magic circle, major image, message, prestidigitation, shield

3/day each: disintegrate, mind blank, plane shift, polymorph, telekinesis, wish

Actions

Multiattack. The Nameless King makes two Claw of Ibraxus attacks and uses Hurl Through the Arches.

Claw of Ibraxus. Melee or Ranged Spell Attack: +15 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit*: 36 (8d8) force damage.

Hurl Through the Arches. One creature within 120 feet of the Nameless King who the Nameless King can see must make a DC 23 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is hurled through a temporary archway created by the Nameless King, takes 44 (8d10) force damage, and disappears until the start of their next turn. The creature reappears in an unoccupied space of the Nameless King's choosing within 60 feet of the Nameless King. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and does not disappear.

Twin Eyes of Death (1/Day). Two creatures within 120 feet of the Nameless King who the Nameless King can see must each make a DC 23 Constitution saving throw, taking 100 necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this attack dies.

Bonus **A**ctions

Curse of Arkus. One creature within 120 feet of the Nameless King has disadvantage on saving throws until the start of the Nameless King's next turn.

Step Through the Arch. The Nameless King teleports, along with any equipment he is wearing or carrying, up to 90 feet to an unoccupied space he can see.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Nameless King can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Nameless King regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Claw of Ibraxus. The Nameless King makes a Claw of Ibraxus attack.

Elemental Apocalypse (Costs 3 Actions). If the Nameless King is at half his hit points or fewer, he creates a burst of energy in a 60-foot-radius sphere centered on his position. Each creature of the Nameless King's choice within that area must make a DC 23 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 42 (12d6) damage of a type chosen by the Nameless King and 42 (12d6) damage of a second chosen type, including acid, cold, fire, lightning, necrotic, poison, psychic, or radiant damage. A creature takes half as much damage on a successful save.

Hurl Through the Arches (Costs 2 Actions). The Nameless King uses Hurl Through the Arches.

THE NAMELESS KING

Creator of the City of Arches. Destroyer of worlds. None know where the Nameless King came from, but signs of his tyranny and the destruction it wrought can be seen in countless realms and worlds.

ENTOMBED BY THE BLUE STAR

A thousand years ago at the height of his power, the Nameless King was cursed and entombed by the deva Astaria, leader of the Army of the Blue Star, whose operatives had learned the true name of the tyrant to enable his defeat. Today, cults dedicated to the Nameless King work tirelessly toward the goal of releasing him from his prison beneath the City of Arches. Should they succeed, claiming the throne of the city will be the first step in the tyrant's plan to rule over all once more.

ENCOUNTERS

The Nameless King almost never fights alone. With a single word, he can summon several bound **pit fiends** or **iron guardians** to his aid.

TACTICS

The Nameless King is a force of ultimate destruction, tearing open archways to other worlds and summoning the claws of his master, the demon prince Ibraxus, to shred his foes. The undead tyrant prefers to fight from the air and away from melee combatants, using his Hurl Through the Arches action to throw powerful foes out of the world.

Unless circumstances demand it, the Nameless King doesn't use his Spellcasting feature in combat, focusing on his other potent magic to destroy his foes.

IBRAXUS OF CHOUL

A bloated alien form rests atop a floating inverted pyramid, with fleshy cilia writhing on his back and six eyes glowing with hideous malevolence.

DEMON PRINCE OF CHOUL

Ibraxus rules over the abyssal realm of Choul—a land of teeth-like mountains and fetid swamps where the ruins of hundreds of worlds sink into the forgotten depths. He resides in a palace known as the Mountain of the Fetid Prince, where he is served by scores of demons and swamp-dwelling horrors.

The Demon Prince of Choul is a being of both flesh and artifice. The upper half of his body rides atop an inverted pyramid of glyph-marked iron, which supports his bulk and allows him to fly and teleport. His six red-glowing eyes are set to either side of his hairless head, above a maw filled with thousands of needle-like ivory teeth.

ENCOUNTERING IBRAXUS

Ibraxus is most likely found at the Mountain of the Fetid Prince. But should things go very badly for the City of Arches, he might also be encountered preparing to invade the material world through the largest archway of the city. He is almost always protected by his **balor** bodyguards Ivex the Red Waste and Ulvyn the Disemboweler, and his **marilith** archmage advisor Eventress, all of whom defend him to the death.

TACTICS

Ibraxus floats atop his inverted pyramid, staying out of reach of powerful melee attackers whenever possible. He uses his Spectral Scourge attack on multiple opponents, saving his Scepter of Vyse attack for the strongest foes. When threatened, the demon prince makes use of his Pyramid Teleportation to move into an ideal position to attack with his Spectral Scourge, then engulf enemies within his Aura of the Poisoned Depths.

IBRAXUS OF CHOUL

Huge Fiend (Demon), Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 24 (natural and arcane) Hit Points 666 (46d12 + 368) Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

 STR
 DEX
 CON
 INT
 WIS
 CHA

 28 (+9)
 14 (+2)
 26 (+8)
 26 (+8)
 22 (+6)
 22 (+6)

Saving Throws Con +17, Wis +15, Cha +15

Skills Arcana +17, Perception +15, Religion +17

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison, necrotic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 25 Languages all

Challenge 30 (155,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +9

Legendary Resistance (6/Day). If Ibraxus fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead. Each time Ibraxus uses his legendary resistance, one of his eyes goes black. If all six of his eyes go black, Ibraxus is blinded and loses his darkvision and truesight.

Aura of the Poisoned Depths. Whenever a creature willingly moves within 30 feet of Ibraxus for the first time on a turn or starts their turn there, Ibraxus can choose for that creature to take 22 (5d8) acid damage and 22 (5d8) poison damage.

Molecular Transportation (3/Day). If Ibraxus starts his turn and is unable to move freely or take his Multiattack action, his body (including his pyramidal base) disassembles, then reassembles in an unoccupied space within 90 feet of his original location. Any effects that prevented Ibraxus from moving or using his Multiattack action are ended on him.

Actions

Multiattack. Ibraxus makes two Spectral Scourge attacks and one Scepter of Vyse attack.

Spectral Scourge. Melee Attack: +18 to hit, reach 60 ft., one creature. Hit: 40 (6d10 +7) psychic damage, and the target can't use reactions until the start of Ibraxus's next turn.

Scepter of Vyse. Melee Attack: +18 to hit, reach 15 ft. or range 120 ft., one creature. Hit: 62 (10d10 +7) necrotic damage. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this attack dies.

Bonus **A**ctions

Arcane Disassembly. One creature within 120 feet of Ibraxus gains vulnerability to a damage type of Ibraxus's choice until the start of Ibraxus's next turn. If the target had resistance to that damage type, they instead lose that resistance. If they had immunity to that damage type, they instead have resistance to the damage type.

Pyramid Teleportation. Ibraxus can teleport to any unoccupied space within 90 feet.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Ibraxus can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Ibraxus regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Spectral Scourge. Ibraxus makes a Spectral Scourge attack.

Scepter's Call (Costs 2 Actions). Ibraxus makes a Scepter of Vyse attack. On a hit, the target can be teleported up to 120 feet to a space within 5 feet of Ibraxus.

LEGENDARY FIGURES

This appendix summarizes a number of the legendary figures—some of whom are worshiped as deities—whose histories connect to the City of Arches, the lands around it, or the Age of the Nameless King. You can roll on the table or choose any of these figures to flavor the NPCs, locations, items, monuments, treasure, and relics the characters come across in a City of Arches campaign.

d20	Figure		Figure
1	Prince Arazuun	11	The Nameless King
2	The Black Hand	12	Ourboran
3	Elvenya	13	Predalion
4	God-Queen Sett	14	Sulin
5	The Hunger of the Void	15	The Three Sisters
6	Ibraxus of Choul	16	Vithra
7	Karigulon	17	Vrys
8	Lady Straythe	18	The World's End
9	The Lower Twelve	19	Xereth
10	Mother Avanta	20	Xrake

If you don't already have a pantheon for your campaign, player characters are free to worship the good- or neutral-aligned entities described below. Each entry includes the symbol most commonly representing the entity, their alignment, and suggestions for potential domains of worship consistent with the standard domains of many high-fantasy RPGs.

PRINCE ARAZUUN

A fanged upper jaw dripping acid

The chaotic evil demon prince Arazuun was drawn from the depths of the Abyss centuries after the fall of the Nameless King, but quickly turned against his summoners. The demon prince was slain and left embedded in the floor of the great cavern of Sunken Revvia, where his toxic bones corrupt the underground city to this day. See "Bones of Prince Arazuun" on page 65.

Domain: War.

THE BLACK HAND

A hand clutching a black dagger, point downward

A neutral evil god of shadow long-worshiped by thieves, murderers, and other malcontents, the Black Hand long ago lent his name to the largest guild of thieves and treasure hunters in the City of Arches. See "The Black Hand" in "Factions of the City of Arches," page 29.

Domains: Murder, Theft, Trickery.

ELVENYA THE STAR'S SONG

A finger pointing up toward a multipointed star

In the Revlend Marshes, the starlit elves—a clan of both the mortal and the faerie worlds—once worshiped this neutral good elven god. See "Drowned Elvenya" on page 81.

Domains: Knowledge, Light.

GOD-QUEEN SETT

A hooded pair of burning eyes

In the realm that is now the Deadlands, this chaotic evil sorcerer queen was worshiped as a god and the consort of the Nameless King. See "Sett's Ziggurat" on page 95.

Domain: Magic, Secrets.

THE HUNGER OF THE VOID

Black tentacles reaching out of dark water

This mighty neutral evil kraken lurks in Blackwater Caverns in the Revlend Marshes (see page 80).

Domain: Tempest.

IBRAXUS OF CHOUL

A four-fingered hand holding a bleeding humanoid skull

For centuries, the chaotic evil demon prince Ibraxus was the secret source of much of the Nameless King's power. Long banished to the horrid abyssal realm of Choul, Ibraxus seeds corruption into the City of Arches to create a following in the Children of Ibraxus cult (see page 29). See pages 145 and 147 of "Appendix A: Villains and Monsters" for more on Ibraxus.

Domains: Death, War.

KARIGULON THE DREAD FANG

The profile of a roaring hyena with blood dripping from their mouth

Clans of corrupted gnolls in the Doorish Hills have long worshiped this chaotic evil demon. See "Blackmoon Hollow" on page 87.

Domains: Death, War.

LADY STRAYTHE

A white glove speckled with blood

This lawful evil vampire queen holds court in her castle in the Doorish Hills, from which she rules over the terrified folk of the nearby village of Elgrym. See "Castle Nightfall" on page 89.

Domains: Blood, Death.

THE LOWER TWELVE

Twelve black candles surrounding a pentagram cracked in half

Twelve malevolent gods and demon princes of old have had their names and origins long forgotten, but are still worshiped as a single profane entity by those who perceive the world and its people as a disposable means to power. See "Temple of the Lower Twelve" on page 48.

Domains: Death, Trickery, War.

MOTHER AVANTA

A curved fang wreathed in flames

The neutral ancient red dragon Mother Avanta once laired in Sunken Revvia. Dead for centuries, she is now worshiped by the kobolds of Fallen Avantys (see page 67).

Domain: Fire.

THE NAMELESS KING

A charred skull wearing a crown

The neutral evil lich who ruled the City of Arches, its surrounding lands, and countless otherworldly domains over a thousand years ago was trapped and cursed so that his name would be forgotten and forever unknown. Even as the Nameless King, though, the fallen tyrant is still worshiped by cultists dedicated to chaos or power. See "Knights of the Nameless King" on page 29, and pages 144 and 146 of "Villains and Monsters" for more on the Nameless King.

Domains: Death, Knowledge.

OURBORAN, THE MOON OF OBLIVION

A black disk against a field of stars

A chaotic evil alien entity of ultimate destruction, Ourboran hungers for and consumes life energy, and can lay waste to whole worlds. See "Collision of Worlds" on page 114.

Domains: Darkness, Destruction, Calamity.

PREDALION, GOD OF TRAVEL AND TRADE

A wagon wheel behind crossed sheaves of wheat

The lawful good deity Predalion is worshiped in the Doorish Hills, and has the canals of Predalion's Belt named after him (page 89).

Domains: Knowledge, Nature.

SULIN, GOD OF LIGHT

An eight-pointed star

The lawful good Sulin is worshiped by the folk of the Doorish Hills. See "Village of Peat" on page 90.

Domains: Life, Light.

THE THREE SISTERS

A silhouette of three humanoid women, heads bowed and hands outstretched

Little is known of the ancient deities Levyl (lawful good), Kryssa (neutral good), and Dura (chaotic good), who shaped the power of life, knowledge, and death. The huge statues overlooking the City of Arches represent the Three Sisters, who are revered by many folk of the city. See "Falls of the Three Sisters" on page 18 and "Temple of the Three Sisters" on page 25.

Domains: Life, Knowledge, Death.

VITHRA THE SERPENT KING

A hooded and fanged serpent head

The neutral evil half-humanoid, half-serpent demon prince Vithra is a god of serpents and reptiles, and is worshiped by corrupt folk in the Deadlands. See "Idol of the Serpent King" on page 94.

Domain: Poison, Sacrifice, Serpents.

VRYS THE FALLEN

A weeping, mouthless humanoid face

The lawful evil fallen deva Vrys is the powerful leader of one of the main factions of Sunken Revvia. Their cultists are many, worshiping the deva where they reside in the ruined tower of Gray Reach. See "Cult of Vrys" on page 64 and "Gray Reach" on page 67.

Domains: Darkness, Knowledge.

THE WORLD'S END

A horned skull with a humanoid skull in its jaws

A chaotic evil monstrosity capable of laying waste to whole civilizations was defeated in what is now the Revlend Marshes millennia before the rise of the Nameless King. The monster's skull now lies half-buried in swampland, where it is a center of worship for corrupted and cannibalistic creatures. See "Skull of the World's End" on page 83.

Domain: Death, Tempest.

XERETH, OBLIVION'S END

A silhouette of a mountain split in two

The chaotic evil undead ancient red dragon Xereth was once the companion and mount of the Nameless King. Now lairing beneath the Sundered Mountain in the Deadlands (see page 96), Oblivion's End is worshiped as a god by groups of cultists in that dead realm who also revere the Nameless King.

Domain: Death, Fire.

XRAKE THE RELENTLESS

A draconic head wreathed in lightning

The neutral evil ancient fiendish blue dragon Xrake the Relentless was ruler in Revvia, City of the Depths, long before the rise of the Nameless King. Slain in a battle of mutual destruction with the archmage Tryvanus of Krate, Xrake is worshiped now by cultists in Sunken Revvia (page 63).

Domains: Death, Knowledge, Storm.

ADVENTURE GENERATORS

The tables in this appendix can help you generate adventures in and around the City of Arches. By mixing and matching elements from the tables with lore from the rest of the book, you can build NPCs, locations, monuments, magic items, secrets, clues, and other elements for your game.

PATRONS AND NPCS

Whenever you need a patron for the party, are looking to describe an NPC the characters interact with in the City of Arches, or have a random creature stepping out from an archway, you can roll twice on this table to create a baseline character. NPC stat blocks can then be easily applied to turn a character created from the table into a villain, sidekick, rival, or herald.

d20	Behavior	Origin
1	Enthusiastic	Human
2	Flighty	Elf
3	Shifty	Dwarf
4	Optimistic	Halfling
5	Paranoid	Orc
6	Talkative	Goblin
7	Superior	Tiefling
8	Good humored	Dragonborn
9	Thoughtful	Celestial
10	Suspicious	Fiendish
11	Worried	Lionfolk
12	Greedy	Elephantfolk
13	Brave	Turtlefolk
14	Stern	Birdfolk
15	Sly	Clockwork
16	Wise	Faerie folk
17	Reserved	Elemental
18	Cheery	Giant
19	Opportunistic	Planetouched
20	Soft spoken	Minotaur

QUESTS

Any quests the characters are asked to fulfill might be distilled down to one of the following starting points.

d20	Quest		Quest
1	Find an item	11	Open an archway
2	Kill a villain	12	Activate a monument
3	Rescue an NPC	13	Disable a magical relic
4	Uncover a secret	14	Recover an item
5	Clear out monsters	15	Convince an NPC
6	Protect an archway	16	Awaken a monster
7	Protect an NPC	17	Put a monster to sleep
8	Steal an item	18	Bury a secret
9	Return an item	19	Discover a monument
10	Close an archway	20	Dig up a magical relic

LOCATIONS, MONUMENTS, AND ITEMS

Characters adventuring in and around the City of Arches will explore various locations, spot recognizable monuments, and discover items you deem important.

d20	Location	Monument	Item
1	Tower	Sarcophagus	Key
2	Crypts	Obelisk	Coin
3	Keep	Orb	Ring
4	Cairn	Pyre	Figurine
5	Statue	Machine	Stone
6	Caves	Megalith	Knife
7	Sewers	Pillars	Earring
8	Temple	Throne	Urn
9	Mines	Statues	Goblet
10	Mansion	Well	Bracelet
11	Academy	Orrery	Quill
12	Dungeon	Effigy	Medallion
13	Cenotaph	Arcane circle	Brooch
14	Vault	Spire	Circlet
15	Tomb	Altar	Glove
16	Warren	Pit	Bowl
17	Laboratory	Fountain	Monocle
18	Library	Archway	Bottle
19	Ruins	Cage	Die
20	Lair	Brazier	Lantern

Locations, monuments, and items can then be flavored by determining their condition, description, or origin.

d20	Condition	Description	Origin
1	Smoky	Ruined	Human
2	Acidic	Decrepit	Elven
3	Bloodied	Obsidian	Dwarven
4	Burning	Haunted	Halfling
5	Frozen	Unholy	Gnomish
6	Poisonous	Sunken	Tiefling
7	Necrotic	Forgotten	Dragonborn
8	Thunderous	Macabre	Orc
9	Ringing	Ancient	Goblin
10	Lightning	Festering	Undead
11	Radiant	Monstrous	Celestial
12	Shadowed	Gilded	Faerie
13	Oozing	Spired	Elemental
14	Ethereal	Towering	Giant
15	Whispering	Forsaken	Fiendish
16	Windswept	Gloomy	Astral
17	Drowned	Horrific	Aberrant
18	Diseased	Colossal	Shadow
19	Crystalline	Overgrown	Ethereal
20	Silvered	Shattered	Abyssal

DUNGEON CHAMBERS

Use this table when you need to define the purpose of a chamber in a dungeon-type environment. Any of these options can be reflavored to better suit a dungeon's theme.

d20	Chamber		Chamber
1	Armory	11	Torture chamber
2	Prison	12	Bedchamber
3	Throne room	13	Gallery
4	Crypt	14	Dining hall
5	Treasury	15	Library
6	Barracks	16	Kitchen
7	Monstrous lair	17	Laboratory
8	Storeroom	18	Cesspit
9	Charnel pit	19	Boneyard
10	Museum	20	Scrying chamber

DUNGEON DISCOVERIES

Adding useful discoveries from the following table lets you create upward beats in an adventure.

d20	Discovery		Discovery
1	Helpful NPC	11	Adventurer's journal
2	Holy fountain	12	Escape tunnel
3	Inspiring statue	13	Useful teleporter
4	Revealing mosaic	14	Enlightening mural
5	Radiant shrine	15	Healing spring
6	Friendly spirit	16	Wounded enemy
7	Hidden campsite	17	Well-stocked armory
8	Edible mushrooms	18	Friendly creature
9	Explorer's pack	19	Useful machinery
10	Spy hole	20	Historical library

DUNGEON FOES

The following table lets you create a quick roster of monsters and other foes to challenge low-level adventurers in a dungeon-type environment. Roll a d8 for easy monsters, roll a d12 to expand the range into harder monsters, or roll a d20 to include the possibility of dangerous foes.

Use a number of foes consistent with the setup of an encounter. To quickly build a boss monster, give them double hit points and one additional action per turn.

d20	Foe		Foe
1	Bandit	11	Ghoul
2	Cultist	12	Specter
3	Giant rat	13	Cult fanatic
4	Guard	14	Gelatinous cube
5	Stirge	15	Ogre
6	Scout	16	Wererat
7	Skeleton	17	Basilisk
8	Gray ooze	18	Green hag
9	Shadow	19	Hell hound
10	Spy	20	Mummy

TRAPS AND HAZARDS

You can add traps to any location where they make sense. Roll twice to combine two traps together, mix them with elemental effects, or do both for a unique challenge.

d20	Trap or Hazard		Trap or Hazard
1	Spiked pit	11	Bear trap
2	Lightning blast	12	Ghostly haunting
3	Poisoned darts	13	Poisoned gas
4	Swarms of insects	14	Magical instability
5	Explosive runes	15	Barbed spear
6	Psychic pillar	16	Dense fog
7	Flame-jet idol	17	Psychic feedback
8	Force beam	18	Greasy floor
9	Crippling caltrops	19	Thick webs
10	Acidic pool	20	Freezing jets

TREASURE

Use this table to generate treasures for low-level adventures. Roll a d10 to determine monetary treasure or a d20 to generate monetary or magical treasure, of a value and type appropriate for the adventure and your campaign.

d20	Treasure		Treasure
1	Gold coins	11	Potion of healing
2	Bag of gems	12	Other potion
3	Platinum jewelry	13	Magical scroll or spell scroll
4	Rune-scribed gemstone	14	Bag of holding
5	Golden goblet	15	Wondrous item
6	Ancient tome	16	Wand or rod
7	Treasure map	17	Magic light weapon
8	Ancient relic	18	Magic heavy weapon
9	Fantastic art	19	Magic ranged weapon
10	Jeweled idol	20	Magic armor

SPELLS

Any magic item or relic found during an adventure might be imbued with magic that allows a character to cast a useful spell once. A powerful magic item or relic might hold a spell that can be cast daily. Use the common spells on the following table or choose other spells of the same level and utility to create unique magic item rewards.

d20	Spell		Spell
1	Magic missile	11	Spiritual weapon
2	Burning hands	12	Lesser restoration
3	Shield	13	Daylight
4	Cure wounds	14	Mass healing word
5	Guiding bolt	15	Revivify
6	Invisibility	16	Lightning bolt
7	Scorching ray	17	Fireball
8	Shatter	18	Dispel magic
9	Aid	19	Haste
10	Misty step	20	Fly

WORLD GENERATOR

The tables in this appendix can be used to generate the wondrous or dangerous worlds beyond the portals of the City of Arches. Just roll for or select options from each table to inspire your creativity.

Each table produces more heroic and peaceful worlds on a roll of 1 to 10 and more sinister and dangerous worlds on a roll of 11 to 20. If you want to specifically build a world focused less on threats, roll a d10 instead of a d20. For a more threatening world, roll a d10 + 10.

WORLD NAMES

A world's name might reflect an aspect of its appearance or theme rendered into Common, or it might be drawn from one of the unusual languages of that world.

	d20	Name		Name
	1	Whispering Vale	11	Selventys
	2	Clea	12	Din
	3	The Ivory Palace	13	The Thorns
	4	Arboryn	14	Vrexxa
	5	The Highlands	15	Helvurra
	6	Belnura	16	The Gray Rust
	7	Obrivon	17	Phryxxia
	8	The White Stairs	18	Malventis
	9	Privva	19	Carcasia
	10	Borria	20	The Dead Wastes

ALIEN SKIES

The sky above this world can help to strongly set the scene for the characters' adventures there.

d20	Sky Features
1	Beams of sunlight in a golden sky
2	Ancient castles floating on earthmotes
3	A dark sky swimming with stars and stardust
4	Ever-swirling clouds of autumn leaves
5	An inverted sea of roiling waves
6	A swirling starscape depicting the battles of gods
7	Towering spires rising high into the sky
8	Shattered otherworldly ships floating lifeless
9	Swimming violet clouds traced by black lightning
10	Roiling clouds racing across gray skies
11	Black clouds bearing the images of screaming faces
12	The limitless ceiling of an endless cavern
13	Rolling waves of fire
14	A vast ocean of blood
15	A bubbling membrane of ooze
16	Clouds of bone shards that form into skulls
17	An inky pool dripping to the ground
18	The swirling, shattered remnants of dead worlds
19	A vast sky filled with ever-turning clockwork gears
20	Great masses of mouths and eyes

OTHERWORLDLY THEMES

Choose as many themes from this table as you need to create a world of the appropriate complexity for your campaign.

d20	Theme		Theme
1	Celestial	11	Machine
2	Floating	12	Draconic
3	Crystalline	13	Fiery
4	Astral	14	Ruinous
5	Forest	15	Entombed
6	Ethereal	16	Oozy
7	Prehistoric	17	Bloodscape
8	Earthy	18	Aberrant
9	Frozen	19	Abyssal
10	Watery	20	Infernal

LANDMARKS

Broadly visible landmarks can help anchor the characters' connection to a new world. You can add detail to such sites using the second table in "Locations, Monuments, and Items" in "Appendix C: Adventure Generators" (page 150).

d20	Landmark		Landmark
1	Towering vistas	11	Bubbling oil
2	Golden citadels	12	Oily rivers
3	Angelic statues	13	Dead gods
4	Sapphire pools	14	Primordial bones
5	Crystalline spires	15	Huge skulls
6	Skyscraping trees	16	Bloody pools
7	Carved mountains	17	Impaled titans
8	Gargantuan castles	18	War machines
9	Glyph-scribed towers	19	Primordial ooze pools
10	Crashed ships	20	Hellish citadels

INHABITANTS

Your world might be home to only one major group of inhabitants, or to many groups whose relationships shape life in the world.

d20	Inhabitants		Inhabitants
1	Celestials	11	Dinosaurs
2	Faerie folk	12	Dragons
3	Animal folk	13	Sentient weapons
4	Elementals	14	Malevolent spirits
5	Sentient light	15	Aberrations
6	Primeval humans	16	War machines
7	Star elves	17	Ghouls
8	Planar dwarves	18	Undead
9	Machine folk	19	Demons
10	Ooze folk	20	Devils

CITY OF ARCHES PLAYER'S GUIDE

Dozens of the towering archways that give the City of Arches its name line its ancient bustling streets. Sunlight shines on the gilt armor of the city's Golden Knights as they walk their patrols. Distant waterfalls flow down a steep mountainside to bathe three titanic statues seemingly watching over the city. The mountain's slopes are marked by fine villas to one side of the statues, and by ancient catacombs to the other, said to hold the dead of thousands of years of tumultuous history. Above, below, within, and around it, the City of Arches promises limitless adventure.

TRUTHS OF THE CITY OF ARCHES

The City of Arches is thousands of years old, and has been ruled over by numerous leaders and warlords, both benevolent and tyrannical, over its long history. Many of those who live here and pass through the city regularly know the following truths:

- The City of Arches is ruled over by the Golden Order—a triumvirate made up of Queen Karsara Aventus IV, a force of soldiers and guards known as the Golden Knights, and the elected members of the Golden Council.
- Dozens of mysterious archways within, above, and below the city are the source of its name. Each arch was once a planar portal, though most are now dormant.
- When archways activate of their own accord, travelers from other lands or worlds sometimes step out and into the city. Most of these travelers arrive with little or no memory of their past and have no way to return.
- Activating an archway usually requires a special key an item imbued with magic tied to the archway. Many folk in the city seek keys that can open stable portals within the archways.
- Members of a group called the Archkeepers warmly greet new arrivals through the archways. They present them with gift baskets of food, artisanal cheeses, scented soaps, and more, and suggest that they deal with any uncertainty or confusion by spending time in the Public Baths beneath the Falls of the Three Sisters.
- The boundaries between worlds are thin around the City of Arches. Sages use the Observatory of Infinite Skies atop a peak of the Skyreach Mountains to peer at starscapes from worlds beyond this one.
- The catacombs of the Cliffs of the Dead along the
 western flank of the mountains have housed the city's
 dead for millennia. The mountain somehow slowly
 draws old crypts ever deeper inward, with many of the
 oldest tombs long forgotten or sealed off centuries ago.
- Seemingly endless layers of ruins lie below the City
 of Arches. The Lower Reaches is an underground
 extension of the city, housing many of its seedier
 businesses and personalities, and effectively controlled
 by the criminal guild known as the Black Hand.

- Where water spills down from the city into the depths below, it enters a network of tunnels, chambers, and caves filled with dangers and wonders, collectively known as the Lost Cisterns.
- Far below even the deepest caverns of the Lower Reaches, crumbling caverns open to reveal the horror-filled ruined city of **Sunken Revvia**.
- Three broad territories stand adjacent to the City of Arches. To the north and northwest spread the Revlend Marshes, home to fishing villages and submerged ruins. To the south and southwest stand the farmlands, villages, and ancient forests of the Doorish Hills. Due west, deserts, tombs, ruins, and corruption cover the blighted landscape known as the Deadlands.

YOUR CHARACTER IN THE CITY

Characters of any race, ancestry, species, class, or background can find a place in the City of Arches. You might have grown up in or around the city. You might be a new arrival from a nearby land, ready to make a new life in a place you've heard much about. You might have just stepped through an archway from a distant realm or another world, with only hazy memories of who you are and where you came from.

The City of Arches is a city of adventure, with plenty of intrigue arising among powerful factions and figures, and the mysteries of the past hidden in every nook, cranny, and cavern. Here, you'll discover many NPCs with whom to speak and interact, countless mysteries to uncover, and a never-ending supply of horrors to stand against with sword or spell.

Regardless of what brought you here, the unique nature of the City of Arches makes this place precious to you. Working together with your companions, you protect the city as you seek out the adventures it has to offer.

PATRONS OF THE CITY OF ARCHES

Many of the NPCs in the city might act as a patron to your adventuring. When you meet any of the following NPCs, an invitation to adventure might not be far away.

Garland Willowmane (High Archkeeper). A middleaged human priest, Garland Willowmane and her Archkeepers greet new arrivals to the City of Arches as pleasantly as possible. Over many years, the Archkeepers have learned that even beings of fell or fiendish origin can become upstanding citizens of the city after coming through the arches. But when new arrivals don't respond peacefully to the Archkeepers' overtures, hired adventurers must often step up to assist.

Roselyn Zeshe (Queen's Spymaster). Roselyn Zeshe, a middle-aged elf, serves Queen Karsara Aventus IV, diligently working to support her continued reign over

the City of Arches. Roselyn often recruits adventurers to help root out plots against the queen and hidden dangers threatening the city.

Joslyn Halfcloak (Second of the Golden Knights). The second-in-command of the Golden Knights, Joslyn Halfcloak is a dwarf warrior who often hires adventurers to protect the City of Arches against threats, focusing on missions where the knights' visibility is a detriment.

Vinnic Longshanks (Head of the Seekers of the Sun). Dwarf archmage and archivist Vinnic Longshanks leads the Seekers of the Sun, a guild of explorers active in and around the city. Vinnic often looks for independent adventurers willing to recover lore and relics recently come to light, before criminals and mercenaries can.

Adel Rosethorn (Fence of the Lower Reaches). A smiling halfling merchant, Adel Rosethorn runs a relic and curio shop in the city's Lower Reaches. She is the first contact for many independent adventurers looking to sell relics and treasure, and often hires adventurers to recover treasures lost in the city's many secret spaces. Rumors suggest that Adel is intimately connected with the Black Hand criminal guild, though the Golden Knights usually leave her alone.

CHARACTER BACKGROUNDS

Standard backgrounds from various 5e games can be fine-tuned for strong ties to the City of Arches. For other backgrounds not noted here, feel free to use the suggestions for these backgrounds to inspire additional points of connection between your character and the city.

ACOLYTE

While living in or around the City of Arches, you found yourself connected to a particular deity revered in the city. While you might not directly channel the divinity of this being, you adhere to their philosophies and ideals. Among other options, you might be an acolyte of the Temple of the Three Sisters, a low-ranking member of the Archkeepers, or a traveling acolyte of the god Sulin of the Doorish Hills.

CHARLATAN

In a city where many people's memories of their past lives have been washed away by the passage through an arch, it's easy to pretend you're someone that you aren't. You might remember more of your history than you let on. Perhaps you claim to be a traveler passed through an archway but really grew up in a fishing village in the Revlend Marshes. Or you might have connections to certain individuals or factions of the city that you desperately want to leave behind.

CRIMINAL

Even in a city that provides a good life for most of its people, you can't help but want a little more. Perhaps it's the gleam of gold that inspires you. Maybe it's the thought of being the first person in centuries to lay hands on an undiscovered relic in a sealed vault. Or maybe you just

can't help yourself from swindling folks who have more than they deserve. Even if your heart's always in the right place, your hands sometimes are not.

ENTERTAINER

With so many tales wrapped up in its history, the City of Arches is the perfect place for an entertainer. Numerous eateries, taverns, and coffee shops are home to entertainers of all kinds. Sevenge and Gam, the ettin owner of their eponymous public house, are always generous to those who entertain patrons with tales and songs of worlds far away.

NOBLE

The City of Arches is an egalitarian society—but in any society, there are those who somehow end up above others in station. Perhaps you're part of a wealthy guild. Perhaps your family has sat on the Golden Council for generations. You might have grown up in the wealthy Villas of the Second Rise. However you came by your noble status, you get to decide how that carries with you in your life as an adventurer, whether you use it to your advantage or make a point of turning your back on that part of your past.

SAGE

The lore of countless years and worlds threads through the City of Arches, and that knowledge calls to you. You might be connected to Vinnic Longshanks, proprietor of the Museum of Worlds Beyond. You might be a former victim of the medusa librarian Ixyvan the Unseen at the Library of Vrassa. You might have a connection to the mysterious mages of Kartan, Tower of the Arcane. Whatever its source, your craving for knowledge drives you now, and the secrets of the city will be yours.

SOLDIER

Whether you served in the armies of another world or learned the arts of combat in the City of Arches, you've always been most comfortable with a blade at your side. You might be a former member of the Golden Knights, or could have served as a mercenary for hire in the Doorish Hills. Or you might have of hazy memories of battles fought long ago before you stepped through an archway, uncertain as to whether that past is something you want to go back to or something you fled.

SPY

Head clear. Mouth shut. See much. Say little. These maxims were driven into you, even if you might not remember where you heard them or from whom. You notice things others don't. You keep quiet while others talk. You might spend an hour at a coffee shop and have no one there remember you at all. Perhaps you've worked in the past for the queen's spymaster, Roselyn Zeshe. You might hire yourself out to the notorious Black Hand. Or perhaps you don't remember who you served before coming through an archway, even as you understand that the ways of a spy do not easily fall away.

URCHIN

You grew up on the streets of the Lower Reaches or in a working-class neighborhood of the City of Arches, resentful of those who placed themselves above you. Still, you enjoyed the freedom your life gave you, even if it meant not knowing where your next meal might come from. At last, though, you have a chance to make a greater name for yourself as an adventurer, ready to turn your back on the poverty of your past—or to make those who looked down on you finally pay for their impertinence.

NEW BACKGROUND: ARCHKEEPER

As an Archkeeper, you found the calling to help confused beings stepping through archways from foreign lands or worlds, and to welcome them into the City of Arches. Perhaps you were such a person yourself once, left alone and confused as you passed from one life to another with no memory of who you were. Or perhaps you simply empathize with those who have done so, wanting them to feel as at home in your city as you do.

As a past or present Archkeeper, you are often sought out to help shepherd new folk into the city when it's suspected that an archway is about to open. Yours is a noble calling, and one that has helped many find a new home in the City of Arches.

Skill Proficiencies: Persuasion and your choice of either Arcana or History

Languages: Your choice of two languages from among the following: Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, Primordial, or Sylvan

Equipment: Robes, a symbol of the Archkeepers, a book describing known extraplanar folk, a gift basket to be given to those traveling through an archway (holding artisanal cheeses, salted crackers, scented soaps, a bottle of water, and a soft towel), and 15 gp

FEATURE: SPEAKING RELIC

Each Archkeeper is issued a special magic item to aid them in their work, known as a *speaking relic*. As an action, you can use this relic to cast the *tongues* spell. Once you do so, that spell can't be cast from the relic again until you have its power restored by a senior member of the Archkeepers.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Archkeepers come from as many different walks of life as those they shepherd into the city. Their eclectic life experiences shape each Archkeeper in unique ways—and sometimes inspire their greatest fears.

If your RPG doesn't use these characteristics directly, you can use them to inspire your roleplaying.

d8 Personality Trait

- 1 As a lost traveler myself, I want to help others coming through the arches to feel loved and welcome.
- 2 As a protector of the city, I feel it is my duty to welcome new citizens and ensure they understand our society.
- I find the worlds beyond the arches intoxicating, and take every opportunity to observe an archway being opened.
- 4 The wide spectrum of personalities and backgrounds of those who step through the arches makes the city stronger.
- War is coming, and we need allies. Those stepping through the arches might serve us in our time of need.
- 6 My mentor and friend helped me when I stepped through an archway. I want to repay that favor by helping others.
- 7 I welcome those who step through the gates peacefully and bring swift justice to those who choose violence.
- 8 I have learned from every visitor I've met who steps through the arches. I hope to share this knowledge far and wide.

d6 Ideal

- 1 **Patience.** Those who come through the arches need a calming presence to soothe their fears.
- Suspicion. Not everyone who comes through the arches should be welcomed.
- 3 **Love.** Every creature stepping through an archway deserves the opportunity for a fresh start among new friends.
- 4 **Protection.** It is my greatest honor to protect the city from the dangers that might enter it from other lands and worlds.
- 5 **Honor.** I serve the City of Arches in the most important duty a citizen can hold—welcoming new citizens.
- 6 **Curiosity.** I can only imagine the worlds these travelers have seen, and I hunger to hear their stories.

d6 Bond

- One day, I hope to step through an archway myself and learn what's on the other side.
- 2 A prophecy has warned me that my nemesis will step through an archway one day, and I will be ready.
- 3 Helping those who come through the arches might one day lead to me remembering my own lost past.
- 4 My lost love is trapped on the far side of an archway I passed through, and I must discover the key that opens it again.
- In the face of each of those who step through the arches is another chance at looking into the face of my deity.
- 6 Every time an archway opens, I hope to face the creature I've always wished to defeat in battle.

d6 Flaw

- 1 My enthusiasm in welcoming people stepping through the arches often creates anxiety in those I wish to soothe.
- 2 I can't help but size up every creature stepping through an archway, wondering if I could defeat them in combat.
- 3 I'm suspicious that every being coming through an archway could be a lost agent of the Nameless King.
- 4 I secretly eat all the artisanal cheese in my gift basket myself. Sometimes this makes welcoming new visitors difficult.
- I hear fell whispers of the past from those who step through the arches. They don't know who they once were, but I do.
- 6 My curiosity often sees me secretly claim talismans or other belongings from the confused beings I usher into the city.

MONSTER STATISTICS, CONVERSION, AND IMPROVISATION

This appendix talks about the process of selecting or building monsters for your City of Arches adventures and campaigns.

Throughout the book, many creature names in **bold** represent statistics that can be found in typical 5e creature books. The Common 5e Monsters table below lists monsters mentioned in *City of Arches* who can be found in the D&D 2014 *Monster Manual*, *Tales of the Valiant's*

Monster Vault, and Level Up Advanced 5e's Monstrous Menagerie under the exact same name. The 2024 D&D Monster Manual includes a conversion guide for those creatures whose names changed from the D&D 2014 Monster Manual.

Challenge ratings in the table are taken from the *Monstrous Menagerie* of *Level Up: Advanced 5e*.

COMMON 5E MONSTERS

Name	CR	Name	CR	Name	CR	Name	CR
Aboleth	11	Deva	10	Hill giant	6	Sahuagin	1/2
Adult black dragon	17	Djinni	11	Hobgoblin	1/2	Salamander	6
Adult bronze dragon	18	Dretch	1/4	Horned devil	11	Satyr	1/2
Adult gold dragon	20	Drider	6	Hydra	9	Scout	1/2
Adult silver dragon	19	Druid	2	Hyena	0	Sea hag	2
Adult white dragon	16	Earth elemental	5	Ice devil	12	Shadow	1
Air elemental	5	Efreeti	11	Imp	1/2	Shambling mound	6
Ancient gold dragon	26	Erinyes	12	Invisible Stalker	6	Shield guardian	7
Ancient red dragon	26	Ettercap	2	Knight	3	Skeleton	1/4
Animated armor	1	Ettin	4	Kobold	1/8	Solar	21
Ankheg	2	Fire elemental	5	Kraken	25	Specter	1
Archmage	11	Fire giant	11	Lamia	4	Spirit naga	6
Assassin	7	Gargoyle	2	Lich	21	Spy	1
Awakened tree	2	Gelatinous cube	2	Lizardfolk	1/2	Stirge	1/8
Azer	2	Ghast	2	Mage	6	Stone giant	8
Balor	19	Ghost	4	Magmin	1/2	Storm giant	14
Bandit	1/8	Ghoul	1	Manticore	3	Swarm of rats	1/4
Bandit captain	3	Giant ape	7	Marilith	16	Thug	1
Banshee	4	Giant bat	1/4	Medusa	7	Treant	9
Barbed devil	5	Giant constrictor snake	2	Merfolk	1/8	Triceratops	5
Basilisk	3	Giant crocodile	5	Mimic	2	Troll	5
Bearded devil	3	Giant octopus	1	Minotaur	4	Tyrannosaurus rex	8
Behir	11	Giant rat	1/8	Mummy	3	Vampire	11
Berserker	2	Giant spider	1	Mummy lord	15	Vampire spawn	4
Black pudding	4	Gibbering mouther	2	Nalfeshnee	13	Veteran	3
Bone devil	9	Glabrezu	10	Night hag	5	Vrock	6
Bugbear	1	Gladiator	6	Nightmare	3	Water elemental	5
Bulette	6	Gnoll	1/2	Noble	1/4	Wererat	2
Cambion	5	Goblin	1/4	Ochre jelly	2	Wight	3
Chain devil	9	Gorgon	6	Ogre	2	Worg	1/2
Chimera	7	Gray ooze	1/2	Ogre zombie	2	Wraith	5
Chuul	5	Green hag	3	Oni	7	Wyvern	6
Cloaker	8	Grick	2	Otyugh	5	Xorn	5
Cloud giant	10	Griffon	3	Phase spider	3	Young blue dragon	10
Cockatrice	1/2	Grimlock	1/4	Pit fiend	20	Young green dragon	10
Commoner	0	Guard	1/8	Planetar	16	Young red dragon	11
Cult fanatic	2	Guardian naga	10	Priest	2	Young silver dragon	10
Cultist	1/8	Harpy	1	Purple worm	15	Zombie	1/4
Cyclops	7	Hell hound	3	Remorhaz	12		
Death dog	1	Hezrou	10	Roper	5		

REPLACEMENT MONSTERS

Creature	CR	D&D 2014	Level Up: Advanced 5e	Tales of the Valiant	Note
Alchemist 2		Priest	Alchemist	Priest	
Allosaurus 3 Allosaurus		Allosaurus	Plesiosaurus*	*Make nonaquatic	
Ancient aboleth	11	Aboleth*	Ancient aboleth	Aboleth*	*Double hit points
Balor general	24	Balor*	Balor general	Balor*	*Double hit points
Blackguard	5	Gladiator	Blackguard	Gladiator	
Champion	5	Gladiator	Champion warrior	Gladiator	
Clay guardian	9	Clay golem	Clay guardian	Clay golem	
Demilich	18	Demilich	Demilich	Lich	
Djinni noble	11	Djinni	Djinni noble	Djinni	
Doppelganger	3	Doppelganger	Doppelganger	Bandit captain	
Dread knight	19	Death knight	Dread knight	Death knight	
Elder vampire	11	Vampire*	Elder vampire	Vampire*	*Double hit points
Empyrean	22	Storm giant	Empyrean	Storm giant	
Faerie dragon	1	Imp	Faerie dragon	Imp	
Flesh guardian	5	Flesh golem	Flesh guardian	Flesh golem	
Fomorian	8	Cloud giant	Fomorian	Cloud giant	
High priest	6	Priest*	High priest	Kobold witch	*Double hit points
Hobgoblin warlord	3	Hobgoblin warlord	Hobgoblin warlord	Hobgoblin commander	
Horde demon	3	Barlgura	Horde demon	Husk demon	
Intellect devourer	3	Intellect devourer	Intellect devourer	Mordovermis	
Iron guardian	14	Iron golem	Iron guardian	Iron golem	
Jackalwere	1/2	Jackalwere	Jackalwere	Gnoll	
Minstrel	2	Spy	Minstrel	Bard	
Murmuring worm	12	Behir*	Murmuring worm	Behir*	*Deals psychic damage
Necromancer	6	Mage*	Necromancer	Mage*	*Deals necrotic damage
Pixie	1	Pixie	Pixie	Sprite	
Pyrohydra	13	Hydra*	Pyrohydra	Hydra*	*Deals fire damage
Red half-dragon veteran	3	Red half-dragon veteran	Red half-dragon veteran	Veteran	
Revenant	5	Revenant	Revenant	Death knight	
Shadow demon	4	Shadow demon	Shadow demon	Wraith	
Shadow elf	1/4	Drow	Shadow elf	Drow	
Skeletal champion	3	Veteran*	Skeletal champion	Veteran*	*Add skeleton traits
Stone guardian	10	Stone golem	Stone guardian	Stone golem	
Warrior	1/8	Tribal warrior	Warrior	Wild warrior	
Wraith lord	13	Wraith*	Wraith lord	Wraith*	*Double hit points
Young shadow dragon	10	Young black dragon	Young shadow dragon	Young black dragon	

REPLACING MONSTERS

If a creature in *City of Arches* appears only in a 5e creature book you don't have access to, you can easily substitute another creature from your book of choice. The Replacement Monsters table above suggests common creatures you can swap in, with adjustments as appropriate. And even if you don't have one of the non-*Monster Manual* 5e creature books available to you, all the monsters taken from those books can be found in the freely available System Reference Documents for those other 5e games. You can find links to those SRDs online at the City of Arches resource page.

In addition to being able to find common replacement monsters in the monster book of your chosen system, most systems include ways to quickly build a monster given its overall level of challenge. Look at the challenge ratings provided here and compare them to 5e's range of CR 0 to CR 30 to determine a monster's general difficulty. Then use a monster of an appropriate difficulty from your chosen system.

You are, of course, free and encouraged to find your own monsters to replace any of the monsters referenced in this book. Make the City of Arches and the worlds it touches your own!

MASHING UP MONSTERS

Throughout this book, you'll note the use of another technique for making unique creatures—the monster mash-up. This is the process of taking a monster stat blocks and combining it with another stat block or set of features to create a new hybrid foe. The Hybrid Monsters table below lists the monsters found throughout the City of Arches built using this technique.

To create a hybrid monster, you add the special features of one creature or a general creature type—abyssal, construct, undead, and so forth—to the baseline statistics of another. Typically, you'll use the baseline statistics for the more powerful of the two stat blocks. For example, an ancient blue dragon archmage would use the baseline statistics of an ancient blue dragon, then add the archmage's spellcasting and other magical features.

Mashing up creatures this way is more art than science. The intent is to give the baseline creature the flavor of the creature or creature type added to it, but without

requiring too much time to put the new stat block together, and without making the mash-up stat block too unwieldy to run. Ideally, you can mash up a new monster without even writing anything down. Just bookmark the two entries in your creature book of choice, then flip back and forth to add special features from one creature to the other. One or two features from one monster is generally enough to give that monster the flavor of another.

Sometimes a mashed-up monster brings over traits such as resistances and immunities, so keep those in mind when running your new creature. For example, to create a fire giant lich, you would add not just the fire giant's weapon attacks to the baseline lich stat block, but also the giant's immunity to fire damage.

In some cases, you don't need to modify a stat block at all to create a mashed-up monster. You might simply use the lich stat block for a fire giant lich without adding any fire giant mechanical traits, instead describing that foe as a hulking undead fire giant hurling spells. You can go far using just flavor—a powerful technique for lazy GMs.

HYBRID MONSTERS

Name	CR	Name	CR	Name	CR
Abyssal dire wolf	1	Grimlock cyclops mage	7	Skeletal tyrannosaurus rex	8
Ancient blue dragon archpriest	25	Grimlock hill giant	6	Skeletal veteran	3
Ancient red dragon sorcerer	26	Grimlock ogre	2	Sorcerer mummy lord	15
Archmage kraken	25	Half-dragon priest	2	Spectral acolyte	1
Archmage marilith	16	Half-primordial fire giant	11	Spectral minstrel	2
Armored flesh guardian	5	High priest wraith	6	Spectral mage	6
Assassin mage	7	Hobgoblin knight	3	Spell-warped chuul	5
Black dragon lich	20	Hobgoblin veteran	3	Stone giant construct	8
Blue shadow dragon mage	19	Hobgoblin war mage	6	Stone giant half-spider	8
Cambion mage	5	Invisible stalker assassin	7	Undead ancient red dragon	26
Construct adult red dragon	20	Lamia high priest	6	Undead blue dragon	25
Construct champion warrior	5	Lizardfolk mage	6	Undead bone devil	9
Construct tarrasque	30	Mage wight	6	Undead fire giant	11
Crystalline earth elemental	5	Marilith archmage	11	Undead green dragon	18
Crystalline mephit	1/2	Medusa priest	7	Undead mage	6
Cult fanatic specter	2	Minotaur blackguard	5	Undead ogre	2
Cyclops mage	6	Minotaur veteran	3	Undead priest	2
Demon-touched berserker	2	Night hag archmage	11	Vampire archmage	11
Dire tyrannosaurus rex	8	Rakshasa high priest	13	Vampire giant	11
Djinni archmage	11	Shadow assassin	7	Vampire priest	11
Doppelganger spy	3	Shadow demon assassin	7	Vampire spawn assassin	7
Doppelganger veteran	3	Shadow elf archmage	11	Vampire spawn berserker	4
Elementally infused animated armor	1	Shadow elf spellcaster drider	6	Vampire spawn spy	4
Elementally infused iron guardian	14	Shadow mage	6	Wererat assassin	7
Empyrean dread knight champion	22	Skeletal demon	5	Wight assassin	7
Fiendish young black dragon	9	Skeletal giant	7	Wight mage	6
Fire giant construct	11	Skeletal knight	3	Wraith bone devil	9
Frost giant paladin	11	Skeletal mage	6	Wraith mage	6
Ghoul assassin	7	Skeletal marilith tomb guardian	16	Young bronze dragon wraith	10
Ghoulish black pudding	4	Skeletal ogre	2	Young red dragon construct	11
Ghoulish crocodile	1	Skeletal soldier	1/2	Zombie purple worm	15
Giant ape zombie	7	Skeletal tomb guardian	3		

MONSTER STATISTICS BY CHALLENGE RATING

CR	Equivalent Character Level	AC/ DC	Hit Points	Proficient Ability Bonus	Damage per Round	Number of Attacks	Damage per Attack	Example 5e Monsters
0	< 1	10	3 (2–4)	+2	2	1	2 (1d4)	Commoner, rat, spider
1/8	< 1	11	9 (7–11)	+3	3	1	4 (1d6 + 1)	Bandit, cultist, giant rat
1/4	1	11	13 (10–16)	+3	5	1	5 (1d6 + 2)	Acolyte, skeleton, wolf
1/2	2	12	22 (17–28)	+4	8	2	4 (1d4 + 2)	Black bear, scout, shadow
1	3	12	33 (25–41)	+5	12	2	6 (1d8 + 2)	Dire wolf, specter, spy
2	5	13	45 (34–56)	+5	17	2	9 (2d6 + 2)	Ghast, ogre, priest
3	7	13	65 (49–81)	+5	23	2	12 (2d8 + 3)	Knight, mummy, werewolf
4	9	14	84 (64–106)	+6	28	2	14 (3d8 + 1)	Ettin, ghost
5	10	15	95 (71–119)	+7	35	3	12 (3d6 + 2)	Elemental, gladiator, vampire spawn
6	11	15	112 (84–140)	+7	41	3	14 (3d6 + 4)	Mage, medusa, wyvern
7	12	15	130 (98–162)	+7	47	3	16 (3d8 + 3)	Stone giant, young black dragon
8	13	15	136 (102–170)	+7	53	3	18 (3d10 + 2)	Assassin, frost giant
9	15	16	145 (109–181)	+8	59	3	22 (3d12 + 3)	Bone devil, fire giant, young blue dragon
10	16	17	155 (116–194)	+9	65	4	16 (3d8 + 3)	Stone golem, young red dragon
11	17	17	165 (124–206)	+9	71	4	18 (3d10 + 2)	Djinni, efreeti, horned devil
12	18	17	175 (131–219)	+9	77	4	19 (3d10 + 3)	Archmage, erinyes
13	19	18	184 (138–230)	+10	83	4	21 (4d8 + 3)	Adult white dragon, storm giant, vampire
14	20	19	196 (147–245)	+11	89	4	22 (4d10)	Adult black dragon, ice devil
15	> 20	19	210 (158–263)	+11	95	5	19 (3d10 + 3)	Adult green dragon, mummy lord, purple worm
16	> 20	19	229 (172–286)	+11	101	5	21 (4d8 + 3)	Adult blue dragon, iron golem, marilith
17	> 20	20	246 (185–308)	+12	107	5	22 (3d12 + 3)	Adult red dragon
18	> 20	21	266 (200–333)	+13	113	5	23 (4d10 + 1)	Demilich
19	> 20	21	285 (214–356)	+13	119	5	24 (4d10 + 2)	Balor
20	> 20	21	300 (225–375)	+13	132	5	26 (4d12)	Ancient white dragon, pit fiend
21	> 20	22	325 (244–406)	+14	150	5	30 (4d12 + 4)	Ancient black dragon, lich, solar
22	> 20	23	350 (263–438)	+15	168	5	34 (4d12 + 8)	Ancient green dragon
23	> 20	23	375 (281–469)	+15	186	5	37 (6d10 + 4)	Ancient blue dragon, kraken
24	> 20	23	400 (300–500)	+15	204	5	41 (6d10 + 8)	Ancient red dragon
25	> 20	24	430 (323–538)	+16	222	5	44 (6d10 + 11)	
26	> 20	25	460 (345–575)	+17	240	5	48 (6d10 + 15)	
27	> 20	25	490 (368–613)	+17	258	5	52 (6d10 + 19)	
28	> 20	25	540 (405–675)	+17	276	5	55 (6d10 + 22)	
29	> 20	26	600 (450–750)	+18	294	5	59 (6d10 + 26)	
30	> 20	27	666 (500–833)	+19	312	5	62 (6d10 + 29)	Tarrasque

IMPROVISING MONSTERS

Sometimes you want to build a quick foe during a session without looking up a stat block in a creature book. The Monster Statistics by Challenge Rating table above comes from the book *Forge of Foes* by Teos Abadía, Scott Fitzgerald Gray, and Michael Shea.

It lets you use the following steps to improvise a 5e-compatible monster.

Select a Challenge Rating. Choose a challenge rating (CR) for your monster based on their fictional setup in the game. The table includes example monsters to compare your own monster to, so you have an idea what challenge rating might be appropriate. Once you select a challenge rating for your creature, write down the baseline statistics for that CR—Armor Class, save DC for the creature's attacks and traits, hit points, proficient ability bonus, number of attacks, and damage per attack.

Determine Proficient Abilities if Needed. Is your improvised creature strong or fast, wise or charismatic? This information helps you determine the creature's core statistics. You can skip this step and improvise ability scores as needed during the game by asking yourself, "How good would this creature be at this saving throw or ability check?" If the answer is "Very good," use the modifier from the table's Proficient Ability Bonus column. Otherwise, choose a number from 0 up to that proficient modifier based on how good you think the creature should be at that save or check. A creature who feels as though they should be especially bad at a particular save or check might even have a negative modifier!

Customize Armor Class if Needed. If the fictional setup of your creature suggests an Armor Class different from the default suggestion for their CR, feel free to adjust AC

up or down. Big blob monsters likely have a terrible AC regardless of their CR. Armored hulks have higher AC.

Customize Attacks. A monster's attacks can often be described with whatever flavor you like. At other times, you might want to add a mechanical effect to an attack or feature of a monster to reinforce their story. The following section breaks out a few of the most common 5e monster features that you can throw onto an improvised creature to make them feel different. You can also find a plethora of special attacks and features in the book *Forge of Foes*.

IMPROVISED MONSTER FEATURES

This section features a number of common 5e monster features that you can add to an improvised monster to make them feel mechanically different and support their place in the fiction of the game.

ELEMENTAL OR ARCANE EFFECTS

The features in this section can create creatures tied to particular elements and damage types. These features work well for elemental-connected monsters, spellcasters, or undead creatures.

Choose from or roll on the following table to determine the type of elemental or arcane effect you want to apply.

	110	Effect		Effect
_	110	Lifect	100	Lilect
	1	Fire	6	Necrotic
	2	Cold	7	Radiant
	3	Lightning	8	Thunder
	4	Acid	9	Psychic
	5	Poison	10	Force

Then choose one or more of the following traits to customize your creature.

Damage Resistance. The creature has resistance to the chosen damage type.

Extra Damage. When the creature hits using a weapon attack, the attack deals extra damage of the chosen type. Choose an amount of damage that makes sense for the story of the creature, defaulting to half the damage noted in the Damage per Round column in the Monster Statistics by Challenge Rating table for the creature's CR.

Damaging Blast. The creature creates an energy blast shaped like a cone, line, or sphere—a breath weapon, a pulse of elemental or arcane power, and so forth. Choose a size for the blast based on the challenge rating of the creature—the higher the CR, the bigger the area.

Each creature caught in the area makes a saving throw against the DC noted in the Monster Statistics by Challenge Rating table for the creature's CR. The type of saving throw depends on the type of blast—most often Dexterity, Constitution, or Wisdom. A creature who fails the save takes half the damage noted in the Damage per Round column in the table. A creature who succeeds on the save takes one quarter of the indicated damage.

Damaging Aura. Any creature who starts their turn in a specified area surrounding the improvised creature, or who enters that area for the first time on a turn,

takes damage of the chosen type. Choose the size of the aura based on the creature's challenge rating or fiction. This damage is equal to one quarter of the improvised creature's damage per round.

Damaging Shield. The first time each turn that a creature touches the improvised creature or hits them with a melee attack while within 5 feet of them, the creature takes damage of the chosen type. This damage is equal to one quarter of the improvised creature's damage per round.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

The features in this section cover a common range of traits and special abilities for 5e monsters.

Blindsight. A creature with blindsight can perceive their surroundings without relying on sight, within a specific radius.

Burrowing. A creature with a burrowing speed can use that speed to move through sand, earth, mud, or ice.

Command. A creature with this feature can force a target to make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target uses their reaction to move up to their speed and make an attack against another creature of the commanding creature's choice.

Cunning Action. On each of their turns, the creature can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Death Touch. A target struck by this creature's attack must then succeed on a Constitution saving throw or drop to 0 hit points.

Fly. A creature with a flying speed can use all or part of their movement to fly.

Grapple. A target struck by this creature's attack is grappled, with an escape DC determined by the Monster Statistics by Challenge Rating table. While grappled in this way, a target is restrained.

Innate Spells. This creature can cast one or more spells per day, of a maximum level equal to half the creature's CR.

Life Drain. A target who takes damage from this creature's attack must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or have their hit point maximum reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces their hit point maximum to 0.

Magic Resistance. This creature has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Pack Tactics. This creature has advantage on an attack roll against a target if at least one of the creature's allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Poison. A target hit by the creature's attack is poisoned until the end of their next turn.

Resistance to Nonmagical Damage. This creature has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks.

Spider Climb. This creature can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.



Two thousand years ago, a tyrant of unimaginable power conquered a city built on a site of powerful planar magic, letting him build portal archways to hundreds of worlds he intended to conquer. A thousand years after his defeat, all remnants of the tyrant—including his very name—have been magically washed from history.

Today, the city is a bustling metropolis filled with people of different races, species, ancestries, and heritages, from this world and many others. Yet in the depths and outer reaches of the city, secret cults sense the void where the lost tyrant once ruled, and seek to bring the Nameless King back to power.

City of Arches is a high-fantasy city sourcebook for your fantasy roleplaying games. Designed for D&D and other fifth edition variants but easily usable with any fantasy RPG, City of Arches gives you a site of endless adventure you can drop into any campaign setting.