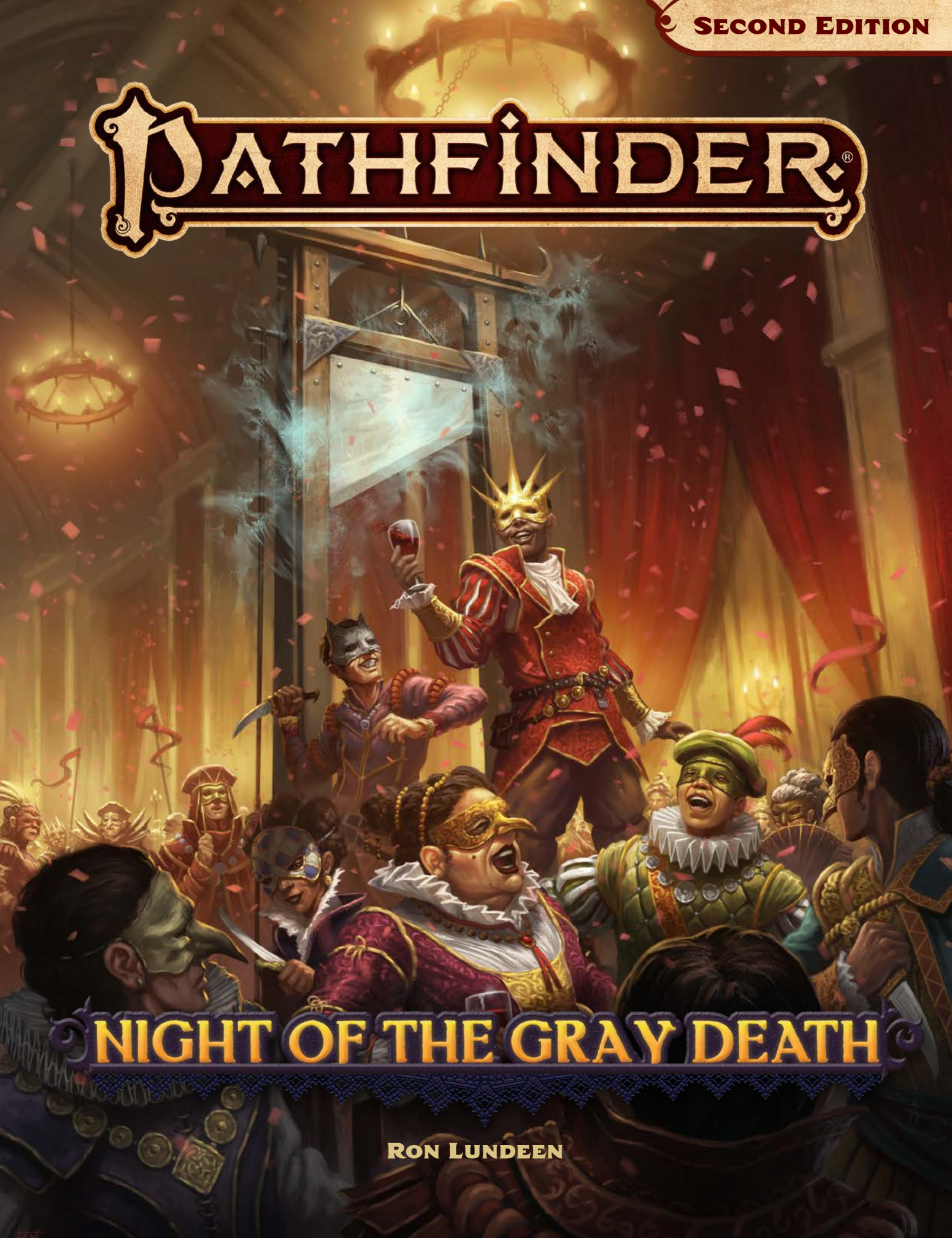


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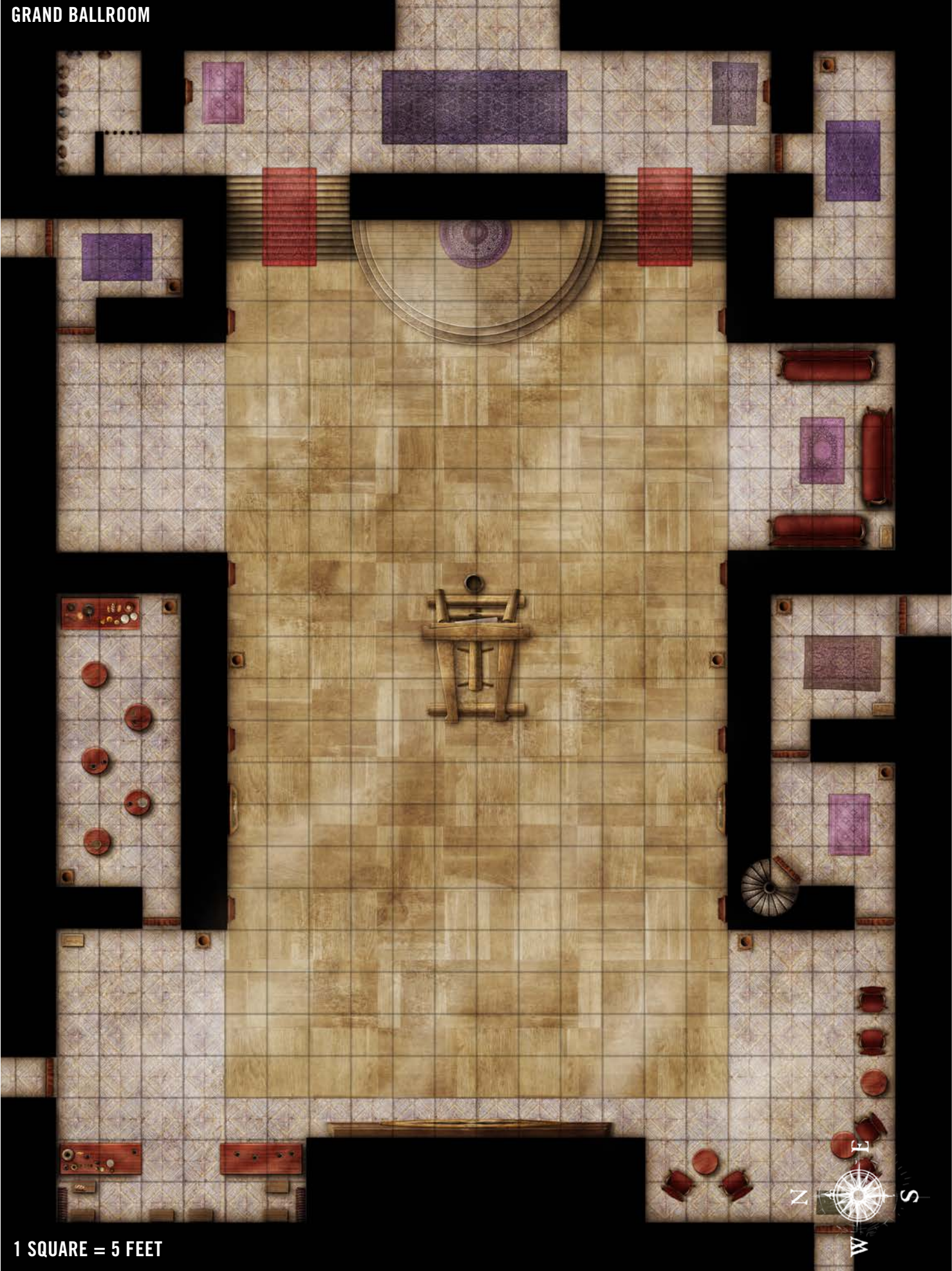
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NIGHT OF THE GRAY DEATH

RON LUNDEEN

GRAND BALLROOM



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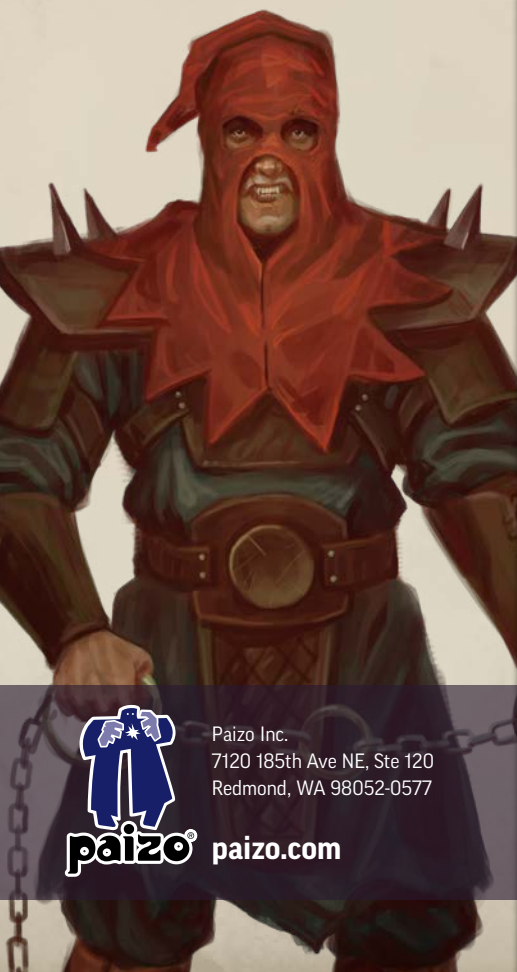
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by Ron Lundeen

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LITRAN GAZETTEER

by Ron Lundeen

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

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ITEMS

GRAY GARDENER ARCHETYPE

CONQUEROR WORM

GRAY DEATH

REIKANOV

SAHKIL



ON THE COVER

An invitation to an elaborate party with a guillotine center stage turns treacherous in this dynamic cover by Olivier Bernard.



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At the behest of the leader of Galt's Revolutionary Council, the heroes venture to the city of Litran, headquarters of the Gray Gardeners. A Pharasmin herbalist aids their legwork to find out who's attending the Gray Gardeners' upcoming masquerade ball and why.

Chapter 2: Masque of the Gray Death.....26

The heroes infiltrate the Gray Gardeners' masquerade ball at their monastery headquarters to discover the organization's sinister plans for Galt. Interacting with friends, enemies, and the *final blade* that's the masquerade's centerpiece, the heroes experience the dire fate awaiting the nation.

Chapter 3: Writhing in the Crypts.....40

The heroes pursue the conqueror worm into the crypts beneath the monastery. There, they learn that the conqueror worm is enacting a ritual to assure Galt's destruction, and that it can't be truly defeated until they sever its ability to reincarnate itself through its mortal minions. When the heroes face the conqueror worm at last, they have the opportunity to permanently vanquish it.

GOTHIC HORROR

"Night of the Gray Death" is a Gothic horror adventure in the vein of Edgar Allan Poe's stories. These tales feature horror and mystery but rarely contain extended fight scenes; they instead focus on uncovering eerie truths and witnessing supernatural events. This adventure showcases plenty of thrilling battles, but a higher-than-usual amount of XP comes from unearthing secrets and piecing together clues. It's a great adventure to run on gloomy nights while playing eerie music in the background.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Night of the Gray Death" is designed for four characters.

- 16** The heroes begin this adventure at 16th level.
- 17** The heroes should reach 17th level prior to arriving at the masquerade.
- 18** The heroes should reach 18th level before venturing into the crypts.
The heroes should reach 19th level by the time they complete the adventure.

NIGHT OF THE GRAY DEATH FLIP-MAT

This adventure makes use of a custom Flip-Mat, available now everywhere you buy your games. Each side depicts an important location found in this adventure, and each map is also available on the inside covers of this book. There's no need to draw out these locations when you can pick up this Flip-Mat and have the work done for you!





CHAPTER 1: SECRETS OF LITRAN

Revolution has been a way of life in Galt for more than 50 years. The country cut its ties with imperial Cheliax in the Red Revolution of 4667 AR. The interim government set up to oversee the nation after the ouster of its wealthy nobility, the Revolutionary Council, has been overhauled dozens of times, as new leaders insist they can rule more intelligently, fairly, or peacefully than the last and rise up in bloody rebellion against the prior regime. The former leaders are often sent to the *final blades*, magical guillotines that trap and contain the souls of those they behead (that the guillotines have fanciful names like *Razor Jenni* or *Sharp-Tooth Hana* doesn't make them any less ominous to the populace). Whether renamed as the Common Council, the Eye of Law, the Galtcreed Pact, or any other moniker, each Revolutionary Council merely follows its predecessors in an ongoing cycle of chaos and revolution that Galt can't escape.

Galt's only stable organization is the Gray Gardeners, its secret police and executioners. They operate the nation's prisons and own the menacing *final blades*. Gray Gardeners always wear masks, rarely speak, and perform their grim business throughout all of Galt. Beneath a Gray Gardener's mask might be a stranger, a neighbor, or a relative; even speculating about a Gray Gardener's identity in public invites intense scrutiny from the organization. The Gray Gardeners are only nominally subject to the Revolutionary Council's authority. In truth, they operate as they see fit from their headquarters, an imposing riverside monastery in the city of Litran. Past Galtan governments have called upon the executioners to unmask and reveal their identities. The Gray Gardeners refused. Other leaders have called upon them to give up the secrets of their *final blades*. The Gray Gardeners refused. Civil inspectors have demanded accounting of Gray Gardener expenses and scrutiny of

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its facilities. The Gray Gardeners not only refused these requests, but often named the requestors criminals and sent them swiftly to the *final blades*. Everyone in Galt fears the Gray Gardeners, and many whisper that it's the masked executioners, and not the fickle politicians on the Revolutionary Council, that keep Galt shackled in chaos.

THE CONQUEROR WORM

None of these events happened by chance. A powerful and manipulative being called a conqueror worm has orchestrated all of Galt's troubles from behind the scenes for the past two generations. It uses governments like playthings, setting up tyrannies and bloodshed to suit its malevolent schemes. Although there might be other conqueror worms active in Golarion, none have acted as heavy-handedly and overtly as the one lairing beneath the city of Litran. Despite the obvious anarchy gripping the country for an implausible amount of time, only the conqueror worm's most loyal cultists realize that the monstrosity is to blame for the perpetual chaos. This state is about to change.

The conqueror worm tires of its machinations in Galt and plans on moving to Taldor, where it can subvert and destroy a far more powerful nation. Before it leaves Galt for good, however, it intends to destroy the nation utterly. The *final blades* aren't mere guillotines. The conqueror worm and its chief cultists manufacture the artifacts as repositories for souls. Those executed by a *final blade* have their souls trapped within it, unable to escape. Over the many long parades of executions, the souls in each *final blade* have been metaphysically compressed into a massive, monstrous spirit called a gray death. A gray death inflicts wanton destruction in a wide area, wrenching souls from the living and draining away life energy with a touch. A single gray death might cause a significant problem for the nation, but every one of the *final blades* now contains a gray death within it, unable to get free.

The conqueror worm plans to unleash them all in one fell swoop.

The loss of life is bound to be catastrophic, but the conqueror worm wants to ensure maximum carnage across Galt. It has directed the Gray Gardeners to surreptitiously urge the nation's rural populations into settlements and to move at least one *final blade* into each settlement. In some cities, the Gray Gardeners have announced a high-profile series of executions; in others, they've funded large festivals. They've also paid off local bandits—many of whom the Gray Gardeners have secretly employed for years—to make living outside a town's protection too dangerous for the time being. Over the past several weeks, the people of Galt have streamed into its towns and cities.

CHAPTER 1 SYNOPSIS

In this chapter, the heroes are tasked with investigating the Gray Gardeners and their mysterious, upcoming masquerade ball. The heroes can make friends and enemies throughout Litran and learn that a Pharasmin crusader has also taken an interest in the upcoming party. The more clues they discover, the better, but at a minimum, the heroes must acquire an invitation to attend the masque.

Some of the encounters in this chapter are difficult, but the expectation is that the heroes can rest between some of these encounters—they have almost 3 days before the masquerade.

THE MASQUE IN LITRAN

To ensure the swiftest possible death for Galt's leadership, the Gray Gardeners have taken the unprecedented step of opening their headquarters. They've announced a great masquerade ball within the Gray Monastery and invited the nation's most prominent citizens, celebrities, and magistrates. These elite invitees, so rumors hold, will see the Gray Gardeners unmask themselves, revealing who among them are members of the secret police. This event, the Midnight Unmasking, will occur at the end of the masquerade ball. All attendees must be masked, and all will drop their masks as one at the stroke of midnight.

The Gray Gardeners have no intention of revealing their identities; this ruse just provides another way to entice the elites into a confined space. The centerpiece of the masque is one of the most notorious *final blades*, called *Silent Lenore*. When the gray death lurking within *Silent Lenore* is freed at the Midnight Unmasking, the spirit will slaughter the partygoers while the genuine Gray Gardeners ensure that no one survives the massacre.

The *final blades* are all magically connected to one another, as they were all created by the same process in the crypts beneath the Gray Monastery. This mystical web means that when *Silent Lenore* unleashes its gray death, so too will all the *final blades* throughout Galt.

If the conqueror worm's plans come to fruition, this festival will be the nation's funeral.

GETTING STARTED

As 16th-level characters, the heroes have undoubtedly earned a great deal of fame and met with movers and shakers throughout the Inner Sea region. It should come as little surprise, then, when they receive an urgent invitation from Camilia Drannoch, leader of Galt's Revolutionary Council (for more information on Camilia, see *Pathfinder Lost Omens Legends* 38). Rumor holds that Camilia is ill with some mysterious

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malady, and she's confined to her humble manor in the capital city of Isarn. If any of the heroes cast powerful divine or primal spells, or if they have master or legendary proficiency in Medicine, the reason for the invitation specifically identifies those heroes. The implication is that they'll attend to Camilia's health.

This rumor is just a ruse. Camilia isn't sick. She wants to meet with the party members because of their reputation as heroes, not due to any particular healing skills. Camilia's steward ushers the heroes into a gloomy study that has been repainted and redecorated with each change in Galt's leadership—that is, a dozen times or more in the past generation alone. Despite the oppressive decor, Camilia is cheerful and eager to meet the heroes. She also appears plainly in good health, dressed in a well-tailored outfit and the bright red scarf she always wears around her neck. Read or paraphrase the following.



Camilia Drannoch

"As an initial matter, I apologize for the misdirection in bringing you here. I'm playing a dangerous political game—one in which I hope you'll join me—and a bit of deception helps us both. You likely already know that the Gray Gardeners are Galt's ruthless executioners. They maintain the final blades, magical guillotines of such power that they trap the souls of executed victims within them. The Gray Gardeners have a stranglehold on Galt's future. Their arrests, executions, and political machinations ensure my country can't ever rise from the stew of chaos in which it's boiled for half a century. Because the Gray Gardeners are always masked or hooded, no one knows who they are. Maybe they're magistrates or shopkeepers. Or perhaps they're beggars or cultists.

"I have hated the Gray Gardeners from the moment they executed my mother in the final blade named Silent Lenore, many years ago. But I knew enough to play the long game politically, and I've risen to the top of Galt's messy politics while waiting for a moment to strike back against the worst villains of Galt.

"That moment is now.

"The Gray Gardeners operate out of an old monastery in the riverside city of Litran. I have reliable intelligence that the masquerade the executioners are hosting has an ulterior motive, and their leadership is being recalled to Litran for this. Dignitaries from across Galt are attending, and it's likely some of those dignitaries are themselves Gray Gardeners. I received an invite, but I'm feigning sickness and staying here for three reasons. First, I want to quell the ridiculous suspicions that I'm one of the Gray Gardeners by not going

at all. Second, my illness gives a good reason for agents I trust—you—to visit Litran in the guise of seeking a rare herbal remedy. Finally, I don't trust myself to keep my sword out of my hand around those responsible for murdering my mother and so many others."

Camilia briefly outlines the rest of her plan to the PCs. As Camilia speaks, her hatred of the Gray Gardeners is plain. She has endless examples of the Gray Gardeners' callous executions, midnight assassinations, mysterious kidnappings, and brutal oppressions, should any of the heroes wonder whether they're as wicked as Camilia knows them to be.

Camilia has a trusted friend in Litran named Keznin Nevarmo. Keznin is an herbalist and a follower of Pharsma, goddess of birth and death. The heroes should go to Litran to meet with Keznin, perhaps letting people know they're consulting with the herbalist to make a concoction to aid Camilia. Such concoctions take time to prepare, giving the heroes time to look around Litran and find out as much as they can about the Gray Gardeners: why they're meeting, who their key leaders are, and what they're planning. If the heroes see a good opportunity to infiltrate or even overthrow this wicked organization, they should definitely take it. A better chance might never come again.

Camilia is happy to answer questions, but she knows little she hasn't already told the heroes. Keznin certainly knows more, as he's much closer to the Gray Gardener activity than Camilia is in Isarn. Speaking with Keznin should be the heroes' first order of business when they reach Litran.

Treasure: If the heroes ask Camilia for payment, she arranges for a common item of 16th level or lower for each of them. She has these items brought to them up front before they leave Isarn, in the hopes the items aid them in their task.

The Road to Litran

Overland travel from Isarn to Litran is simple but takes 3 days. If the heroes ask anyone on the road about the Gray Gardeners, they learn basically what Camilia already told them: the Gray Gardeners have some event planned in their monastery headquarters in Litran, and many dignitaries and Gray Gardeners from across Galt are headed to the event. Most are traveling without any fanfare; the nature and timing of the event aren't public knowledge. Most commoners add a knowing look and a

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comment like, “not that I’d ever get an invitation to such an event, but I wouldn’t be comfortable among so many executioners, regardless.”

Once the heroes are within a day of Litran, they notice an increased number of travelers on their way to the city from outlying farms and settlements. Litran holds harvest festivals in most years, celebrating its important role as the nexus for food distribution throughout Galt, but this year is the long-delayed Harvest Jubilee, a particularly large festival. The Harvest Jubilee was supposed to be held four years ago, on the 50th anniversary of the Red Revolution, but chaos throughout the nation meant the continuous postponement of the Jubilee. This year, it’s finally happening. Although farmers and ranchers have their suspicions of the city-dwellers, the Harvest Jubilee is a strong draw, and many people are coming into town to attend.

The atmosphere of Litran is tense, bordering on paranoid at the best of times; it is, after all, the seat of the Gray Gardeners’ power. Their imposing monastery is visible from nearly everywhere within the city, looming like a grim monolith. With so many strangers in town for the Harvest Jubilee, coupled with rampant rumors that some event is occurring within the monastery during the festival, locals are even more paranoid than usual.

Visitors are eager to talk, but they’re almost exclusively farmers, merchants, or beggars with little information about the city or its politics. They don’t provide much help to the heroes, though their presence makes it much easier than usual to move around as strangers in the city.

Locals rarely speak with visitors, not knowing whether the stranger might secretly be a magistrate with cutthroat political aspirations, a spy ferreting out malcontents, or one of the Gray Gardeners themselves. As unfamiliar outsiders, the heroes likely receive sour or dismissive looks. If roped into conversation, locals nervously and excessively emphasize how happy they are with things in the city, how pleased they are to be under the Gray Gardeners’ protection, and how confident they are in Galt’s leadership. All such statements are plainly lies, but it’s folly to speak truth in Litran these days.

Meeting Keznin Nevarmo

Keznin’s shop, called Soul Mother’s Herbs, is tucked into a side street. Visitors likely smell it before seeing it: flowering plants and aromatic herbs festooning the shop give the entire street a pleasant fragrance. Anyone asked about the shop has a good impression of its owner, a tengu and known Pharasma. Keznin is particularly known for his herbs that aid in childbirth or those that ease the pain of dying; midwives, alchemists, and healers from Litran and beyond frequent Keznin’s shop for supplies. Keznin is a fussy, fashionably dressed tengu with keen eyes and

an encyclopedic knowledge of herbs. He’s particularly captivated by spirals, as they evoke in his mind the spiral symbol of Pharasma. Most of Keznin’s furnishings bear repeating spiral patterns. He likes talking about how things move not in circles but in spirals, undergoing constant change that’s similar but never exactly repeats.

When the heroes arrive, they find the tengu busy with grinding a handful of herbs to make a poultice, but his darting eyes look up quickly to assess them. Read or paraphrase the following.

“Greetings,” the raven-headed tengu caws, setting down his pestle and extending his hand in welcome. “Keznin Nevarmo, herbalist, at your service. I suspect you’ve come a long way. Please, come in and close the door behind you so we can talk about what you need.”



Keznin Nevarmo

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Keznin is no fool; he immediately suspects the heroes are Camilia's agents, and he understands their cover story. He ushers them through his greenhouse into a spacious sitting room, closes the curtains, and tells them what he knows.

- The Gray Gardeners' event is an invitation-only masquerade ball. It will be held in 3 nights.
- Invitations seem virtually impossible to come by. Certainly, those with invitations don't advertise that they have them.
- The masque will be held in the great ballroom of the Gray Gardeners' monastery headquarters. The Gray Gardeners have always kept their monastery closed to outsiders—even learning that the old monastery had a ballroom was news to many people! This event provides unprecedented access to the mysterious Gray Gardener leadership.
- With so many people in town for the Harvest Jubilee, it's hard to know for sure who's planning to attend the masque. There are certainly far more people here for the public Harvest Jubilee than for the exclusive masque. The crowds provide anonymity, which seems to be just how the Gray Gardeners and their invitees prefer it.
- There seem to be more Gray Gardeners in town than usual, and many of these could be highly placed in their clandestine leadership. Ostensibly, they've come for the masquerade, but the Gray Gardeners might have other operations in town, too.
- There are rumors that the Gray Gardeners are planning some kind of revelation or announcement for the masque attendees, but even the invitees don't know what it will be.

Keznin suggests that the heroes investigate by asking around Litran to Gather Information. He suggests his topics above as starting points (the masque, the Gray Gardeners, the invitees, and the Gray Monastery).

A Place to Stay: Keznin happily lets the heroes stay at Soul Mother's Herbs if they'd like. He's aware that accommodations in the city are hard to come by due to the influx from the countryside for the Harvest Jubilee. If the heroes aren't comfortable staying with Keznin, he suggests a suite at an upscale inn called the Stalwart Patriot. A suite there costs 10 gp per night, a price well out of reach of most visitors to the city, but it's not as private a location as Keznin's shop.

The Other Pharasmin: Heroes who later learn that a one-eyed old man is staying at a shrine to Pharasma in town might ask Keznin about him. Keznin expresses surprise to hear of anyone living there; the structurally unsound shrine has been abandoned for decades.

The description of the old man reminds Keznin of a dangerous zealot known only as Nellibet Amberin. An erratic, wandering Pharasmin, Nellibet styles himself an inquisitor of the faith but merely stirs up trouble, not caring about the potential fallout for others from his fiery rhetoric or blatant opposition to authority. Keznin insists that Nellibet is a troublemaker and that the heroes should best avoid him.

Creature: Keznin's statistics probably aren't necessary right away. Since he's happy to provide the heroes with help using his herbalism skills (and because he gets into danger in Chapter 3), his statistics are as follows.

KEZNIN NEVARMO

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM HUMANOID TENGU

Male tengu herbalist (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 310)

Perception +18; low-light vision

Languages Common, Elven, Tengu

Skills Diplomacy +18, Medicine +17, Nature +21, Religion +17, Society +19, Survival +17

Str +0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

Expert Herbalist Keznin can use Nature instead of Medicine to Treat Disease, Treat Poison, and Treat Wounds, and he can use Nature instead of Crafting to craft alchemical items with the healing trait, antidotes, and antiplagues.

Items expanded healer's tools, moderate antidote (2), moderate antiplague (2), moderate elixir of life (3), religious symbol of Pharasma

AC 26; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +18, **Will** +21

HP 150

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ beak +19 (finesse, unarmed), **Damage** 1d6+4 piercing

Melee ♦ staff +16 (magical, two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4+4 bludgeoning

Risky Treatment ☞ (concentrate, fortune, manipulate)

Trigger Keznin rolls a critical failure on a check to Treat Disease, Treat Poison, or Treat Wounds; **Effect** Keznin gives an emergency application of dangerous herbs to avert further harm. The creature Keznin is treating takes 2d6 poison damage, and Keznin rerolls the check.

Treasure: Keznin received a stipend from Camilia to help the heroes. He spent most of it on components to brew four major elixirs of life. He gives them to the heroes with sincere wishes for good luck.

SEEKING LEADS

The framework of this first chapter is the heroes' efforts to Gather Information about the Gray Gardeners and their plans. When the party hits the

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SOUL MOTHER'S HERBS

MILL RENOVATIONS

ABANDONED SHRINE

SHRINE ROOFTOP

SHRINE BASEMENT

THE PEOPLE'S MAP

IN THE DIRT

GRANGE MARKET

streets to investigate, a hero should select one of the following topics and attempt to Gather Information about it. The DCs vary by topic, but the DCs are all unusually high because the people of Litran are far more suspicious and close-lipped than usual. Success usually unlocks an avenue of investigation the party can pursue. The heroes need not chase down these leads right away; they can intersperse them with other attempts to Gather Information or handle them all at once, but they should do so before the masque.

Checks to Gather Information are attempted in secret. On a successful check in one of the five lead categories, provide the first lead from the category's list that the heroes don't already know. Once they reach the last lead, they know they've discovered all they can about that topic from the streets of Litran. On a critical success, give two leads instead of one. On a critical failure, either give the false lead identified with each topic or provide some other false rumor of your invention.

High-level heroes invariably have other ways of getting information beyond simply asking around for them. You should permit other skill checks relevant to their strategies, such as Stealth checks if they want to eavesdrop invisibly while Avoiding Notice or Deception checks if they want to magically Impersonate someone to find out more. The DCs should be similar to those listed below, perhaps modified based on how good you think the players' plans are. The point of this chapter is to get the heroes investigating these leads, so do what you can to point the players in the right direction.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP for each lead they discover, to a maximum of 360 XP.

The Masque (DC 33)

The masque is an exciting and mysterious topic to the townspeople; you might find it useful to default to this list if the players seek out a topic that isn't presented because everyone in Litran has heard of the masque. The heroes probably ask around about the masque not only to get more information about it, but to find out how to get in. On a critical failure, the heroes hear the false lead that the event is intended to be a peaceful one, so no weapons are allowed at the masque.

- The event's dress code calls for costumes—complete with intricate masks, of course—and most attendees plan to appear in elaborate and expensive outfits. The premier place in Litran to acquire high fashion is a shop called the Oval Mirror, as described on page 12. If the heroes haven't yet looked into which dignitaries are attending the masque, someone they talk to suggests that it would be very interesting to find out who's attending it.

- The masque is going to be at the Gray Monastery, and it will have a highly distinctive centerpiece: the *final blade* known as *Silent Lenore* has been brought into the monastery for the upcoming masque. *Final blades* are ubiquitous across Galt, but few people know much about them. Heroes who get this much information prompt retaliation from the Gray Gardeners, as described in the encounter on page 13.
- The masque's highlight will be the Midnight Unmasking, when the guests unmask simultaneously and reveal all at once the Gray Gardeners' identities. The person revealing this information also tells the heroes that an elderly, one-eyed human was also seeking this information, and he asked that anyone with further knowledge seek him out at the old shrine to Pharasma in town (page 15).
- There's an invitation rumored to be for sale by someone from Isarn who purchased one of the old mills and is renovating it into a grand residence. The person the heroes talk with has a dim view of people from Isarn generally and opines that only someone from that stuck-up city would pass up a once-in-a-lifetime invitation to the masquerade ball. Of course, the invitation will likely be incredibly expensive. The Gray Gardeners planted this rumor to eliminate curious people who would crash the masquerade ball uninvited—that is, people like the heroes. This encounter is described on page 18.

Gray Gardeners (DC 33)

These leads are for heroes seeking general information about the Gray Gardeners in Litran. On a critical failure, the heroes hear the false lead that the Gray Gardeners are actively hunting for Camilia, who has come into Litran in disguise.

- All around Galt, the Gray Gardeners have been moving the *final blades* from city to city. A cartographer named Tristel Liendi knows more specifics about these unusual movements. The heroes gain directions to Tristel's shop (page 19).
- The most experienced killers in the Gray Gardeners are their assassins. The assassins don't usually arrest people or oversee beheadings; they just murder the guilty in their homes or on the streets. The person repeating this rumor insists—with an obvious lack of faith in what they say—that these killings are a good thing and necessary for Galt's safety. In a hushed tone, the person mentions that Zintaya Calbieste, the leader of Litran's farming collective, is allegedly one of these assassins. She can be found at the cooperative meeting hall (page 25).



- The leaders of the Gray Gardeners are called directors general. They only rarely leave the monastery. The leaders are mostly humans, but the leaders' special agents are mortics, people who aren't quite human but aren't quite undead. Once the heroes hear about this information, they can attempt DC 27 Religion or Society checks to Recall Knowledge about gurgist mortics (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 175).
- The Gray Gardeners have been notoriously secretive about their identities—until now. The highlight of the masque will be the Midnight Unmasking, when the guests unmask simultaneously and reveal all at once the Gray Gardeners' identities. The person revealing this information also tells the heroes that an elderly, one-eyed human was also seeking this information, and he asked that anyone with further knowledge should seek him out at the old shrine to Pharasma in town (page 15).

Masque Attendees (DC 30)

Although the Gray Gardeners will obviously attend the masque, several dignitaries have also hinted at their attendance. On a critical failure, the heroes hear the false lead that Camilia Drannoch recovered from her illness and plans to attend, likely to face the *final blade* that killed her mother.

- It's difficult to know which of the people coming into town might be going to the masque because they keep it to themselves. Locals might be a bit more open to boasting about attending the masque, particularly when acquiring appropriate attire from Litran's most esteemed tailor, Miona Rallaree, at The Oval Mirror (page 12).
- There's an invitation rumored to be for sale by someone from Isarn who has purchased one of the old mills and is renovating it into a grand residence. The Gray Gardeners planted this ruse to eliminate the curious; this encounter is described on page 18.
- Rumors among Litran's well-to-do say that Lord Alastrin Harble has an invitation and is seeking agents in connection with it. Perhaps it has something to do with how ill he has been recently? (See the encounter on page 22.)

The Gray Monastery (DC 35)

Information the heroes might find about the riverside headquarters is provided below. On a critical failure, the heroes hear the false lead that the crypts below the monastery are filled with spectral undead.

- The monastery is so old that it predates Galt by millennia, though it was an abandoned ruin before the Gray Gardeners established their headquarters there just over 50 years ago. Any deity or philosophy the monastery might once have been dedicated to is long forgotten. In its center is a grand ballroom, surrounded by offices, dining halls, and servants' rooms. The Gray Gardeners maintain very few servants, all of whom live in the old monastic cells and never leave the monastery.
- The *final blade* known as *Silent Lenore* has been brought into the Gray Gardeners' monastery as the centerpiece for the upcoming masque. The *final blades* are ubiquitous across Galt, but few know much about them. Heroes who get this information prompt retaliation from the Gray Gardeners, as described in the encounter on page 13.
- There are crypts beneath the monastery, but the Gray Gardeners don't bury their dead there. They instead use the sprawling crypts as torture rooms, summoning chambers, and places to speak with all manner of extraplanar creatures that support their grim work. Tunneling into the crypts is impossible, as they're warded by ancient magic; the only way into them is through the monastery.

Final Blades (DC 35)

Once the heroes hear that a *final blade* will be at the masque, they might seek out more information about these ominous artifacts. These leads are for anyone asking about *final blades*. On a critical failure, the heroes hear the false lead that the *final blade* in the monastery is a fake, designed to look impressive but holding no actual magic—its blade isn't even sharpened.

- The *final blades* keep the souls of the beheaded and are enchanted to be indestructible. There must be some way to destroy them and free the souls trapped inside, but if such a method exists, no one knows it outside the Gray Gardeners.
- Throughout Galt, the Gray Gardeners have been moving *final blades* into public squares and markets. Perhaps a spate of high-profile executions are coming—or maybe there's truth to the rumors that the Gray Gardeners intend to decommission the blades at last. A cartographer named Tristel Liendi knows more specifics about these movements. The heroes gain directions to Tristel's shop (page 19).
- The *final blade* known as *Silent Lenore* has been brought into the Gray Gardeners' monastery as the centerpiece for the upcoming masque. Heroes who get this much information prompt

INVESTIGATION CHECKLIST

You can use this checklist to note which encounters your players have discovered (by checking the box) and which they've already pursued (by filling in the box). A short summary of what the heroes can discover in each encounter is listed with it.

- ☐ **A. The Oval Mirror:** Masque attendees.
- ☐ **B. Soul Mother's Herbs:** Defend Keznin's shop against the Gray Gardeners.
- ☐ **C. Abandoned Shrine:** Learn about sahkils and an erratic Pharasmin named Nellibet.
- ☐ **D. Mill Renovations:** A trap for the unwary.
- ☐ **E. The People's Maps:** Hints about the Gray Gardeners' plans.
- ☐ **F. Grange Market:** Hints about the Gray Gardeners' plans.
- ☐ **G. The Affair of the Late Lord Harble:** Gain a masque invitation.
- ☐ **H. High Crimes:** Gain entry to the masque by accompanying a new ally.
- ☐ **I. In the Dirt:** Gain a masque invitation and hints about the Gray Gardeners' plans.

retaliation from the Gray Gardeners, as described in the encounter on page 13.

- The *final blade* called *Silent Lenore* took the life of Apalma Drannoch, mother of the current chairwoman of Galt's Revolutionary Council. Apalma's soul still lingers inside it and might feel a connection to anyone wearing a red scarf, as her daughter, Camilia, is never seen without one. Indeed, wearing a red scarf gives an advantage in the final fight of Chapter 2.
- Some of the strange roustabouts setting up the circus tent in the Grange Market delivered a sheet-covered contraption after dark a few nights ago. It was large, and its distinctive shape means it could be one of the *final blades*.

CONDUCTING INVESTIGATIONS

The following nine investigations can provide the PCs with a wealth of clues about the adventure's plot; the more these investigations are explored, the better placed the PCs will be when facing the dangers during the Masquerade in Chapter 2. Each of these investigations can be suggested by researching one of the leads presented earlier in the adventure, but the investigations themselves can be attempted in any order.

A. The Oval Mirror

The heroes learn of the Oval Mirror, Litran's premier

clothing shop, when they ask about accoutrements or attendees of the upcoming masque. The shop's owner, **Miona Rallaree** (CN female human fashion designer 9), recently expanded her shop's principal wares to include ornate masks and matching outfits. Miona won't sell a simple white mask when she can create an alabaster volto mask attached to an elaborate feathered hat, along with a coordinating doublet sewn with gold thread to accompany a pair of deep-yellow pants and gold-colored shoes. Miona's outre excesses have earned her the patronage of many Galtan elites who want to be seen on the cutting edge of fashion, but with her newfound reputation as the principal fashion supplier for the masque, her business is nonstop.

Miona greets the PCs who arrive at the Oval Mirror looking for information, gliding gracefully from her shop's back room while wearing a gown of velvet, beads, and oversized buttons. Her pale hair is piled high in curls pinned up to resemble a blossoming flower. A few of Miona's employees conduct business with other patrons around the edge of the shop. Miona has a keen eye for prospective clients and judges the heroes to be people of means, even if they lack style, and she immediately heads their way to introduce herself.

Miona and her workers all know about the upcoming masque, although they also know it's unwise to freely share information about the Gray Gardeners or about Galt's wealthy elites. Miona insists on having the heroes' measurements taken while she talks, extolling the virtues of the fashion she offers and steering the heroes toward making an expensive purchase. Convincing Miona to keep up a conversation requires either an obvious showing of wealth (at least 500 gp in gems or coins), or a character must succeed at a DC 30 Deception, Diplomacy, or Society check to keep her interest. On a critical success with any of these skills, Miona becomes convinced that the hero is even more a person of means than they let on, and subsequent checks to get information from her have a +2 circumstance bonus. On a failure, Miona winds the conversation down quickly and shows the heroes to the door, determined to have nothing more to do with people of their inferior station.

A character who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check during Miona's flurry of attentions, whether or not a hero succeeds at convincing Miona of their high station, reveals that she relies quite a bit on her assistants. Miona's attentive aides seem to know at least as much as she does about the Oval Mirror's business and clientele.

Questioning Miona

It's easy to steer Miona to a particular topic, as she's

NIGHT OF THE GRAY DEATH

an inveterate gossip and prattles nonstop, but steering the conversation to useful topics can sometimes prove difficult. Miona has information about the following topics, which a hero can acquire with a successful DC 30 Deception or Diplomacy check about each topic.

Invitations: Everyone invited to the masque has already received an invitation, which is used for the bearer and the bearer's entourage. The invitations to the masque are truly a sight to behold: dove gray, embossed affairs with a silver symbol of a *final blade* on one side. Though Miona didn't receive one herself, Lord Alastrin Harble mentioned during his fitting that his declining health might render him unable to attend, and he hoped that someone trustworthy might represent him at the masque. Miona also effuses about Harble Manor, so the heroes can easily determine where Alastrin lives. If they investigate, go to the encounter on page 22.

Gray Gardeners: Miona knows little about the Gray Gardeners, but that doesn't prevent her from opining about their grim fashion choices. She isn't any help learning about them.

Other Attendees: Miona knows several people who are going to the masque, including nobles from out of town, but she's most familiar with the local aristocracy. A few locals seek capable and trustworthy companions to accompany them during the masquerade. She hints that the Gray Gardeners might not be wholly trustworthy, which is why some of these dignitaries seek bodyguards, but she's too canny to say such things plainly. Chief among these dignitaries is Litran's head magistrate, Otvald Gharmino, whose personal bodyguards were identified as traitors and executed only a few days ago. Another dignitary is the leader of Litran's farmer's cooperative, the enchanting Zintaya Calbieste. Miona knows Otvald can be found at the courthouse and Zintaya at the cooperative meeting hall.

Questioning the Assistants

Heroes who can break away from Miona's attentions to ask discreet questions of her sycophantic assistants can find out more information with greater ease. Depending on how the heroes decide to approach the assistants, they might attempt a Stealth check to speak with an assistant discreetly, a Deception check

to speak with an assistant under false pretenses, or some other skill you deem appropriate. In any case, the DC is only 20. An assistant offers all the information that Miona knows without any subsequent checks and adds the following information as well:

- Lord Alastrin Harble was substantially more ill than he let on when he last came to the shop.
- High Magistrate Otvald Gharmino barely escaped the *final blade* when his bodyguards were arrested. The man doesn't have Galt's best interests in mind, and the Gray Gardeners know it.
- Zintaya Calbieste is widely believed to be a Gray Gardener and it's best to be cautious around the canny administrator.

XP Award: For each lead the heroes acquire (Lord Harble, Otvald, and Zintaya), award them 30 XP.

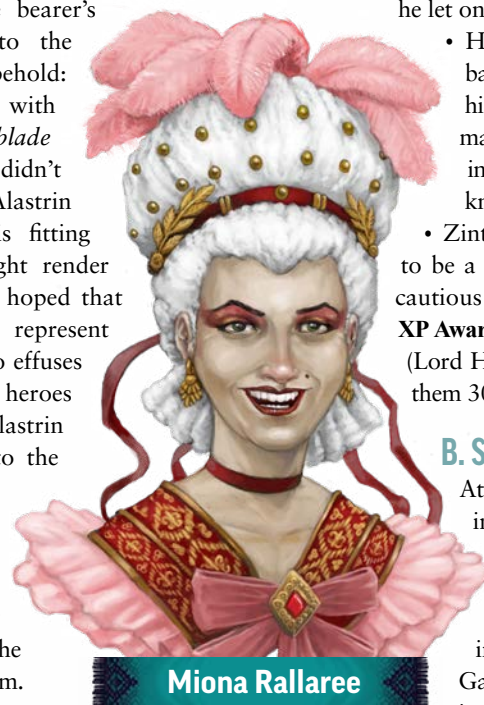
B. Soul Mother's Herbs Severe 16

At some point during the heroes' investigations—likely when they've started learning specifically about the *final blade* called *Silent Lenore* being moved into the monastery—the Gray Gardeners catch wind of the party's interest. They send a team of killers to

teach the heroes a lesson about meddling in the Gray Gardeners' affairs. Although this encounter might occur any time, it's most likely to occur at Keznin's herb shop. Keznin isn't in when the enforcers arrive, which saves him a bad beating or worse.

Creatures: Two Gray Gardener enforcers, a male gurgist named Enzo and a female gurgist named Pollodi, assault the heroes. Each is 7 feet tall with a muscular, slab-like build and well-used spiked chains that are serviceable and sharp. They've recently eaten a few fistfuls of raw meat, so they resemble humans and can't use their Rotting Flesh ability. The enforcers are stealthy but not particularly good at bypassing locks or traps; they simply burst through such impediments with their brute strength when they can. If they can barge in on the heroes with a mighty bellow, they roll Intimidation for initiative rather than Perception.

The enforcers fight with their chains, wrapping the heroes in them and whispering things like, "Get out of Litran while you can" or "Quit meddling in local affairs." An enforcer uses Death Gasp to shake off any condition they can by using the effect but otherwise don't want to let on that they aren't human. Both enforcers fight



Miona Rallaree

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until they've rendered the heroes unconscious; having delivered their message, they don't see the need to kill off downed opponents, so even defeated heroes are likely to survive this fight. Since the enforcers haven't yet come across any foes they can't beat, the pair is overconfident. They both fight to the death.

GRAY GARDENER ENFORCER (2) CREATURE 17

RARE NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID MORTIC

Gurgist (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 175) Gray Gardener

Perception +28; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Athletics +34, Intimidation +31, Medicine +30, Society +30, Stealth +30

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



Items executioner's hood, +2 *greater striking spiked chain*, studded leather armor

Nourishing Feast The Gray Gardener enforcer spends 1 hour consuming 1 Bulk of raw meat to reverse their body's putrescence. For 1 hour, the Gray Gardener enforcer appears to be a pale, bloated human. They have an automatic result of 32 on Deception checks and DCs to pass as a non-mortic human. While under the effects of Nourishing Feast, Rotting Flesh ceases to function.

AC 39; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +27, **Will** +30

HP 350, negative healing; **Weaknesses** slashing 15

Anonymity The Gray Gardener enforcer has a +2 circumstance bonus to Deception checks and saving throws to conceal their identity and a +2 circumstance bonus to their Deception DC against effects that ferret out information about the Gray Gardener's identity.

Consecration Vulnerability A Gray Gardener enforcer in a place of worship dedicated to a non-evil deity or on sacred ground, such as an area blessed by *sanctified ground*, is slowed 1.

Rotting Flesh Any creature that hits the Gray Gardener enforcer with an unarmed attack, tries to Grapple them, or otherwise touches the gurgist is covered with rotten flesh and putrid fluids. The creature must succeed at a DC 36 Fortitude save or become sickened 1 (sickened 2 on a critical failure).

Gardener's Resolve **Trigger** The Gray Gardener enforcer rolls a failure (but not a critical failure) on a Will save against an effect with the mental or fear trait; **Requirements** The Gray Gardener enforcer's features are obscured by a mask or hood; **Effect** The Gray Gardener enforcer takes 3d8 mental damage, and the saving throw is a success.

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** *spiked chain* +35 (disarm, trip), **Damage** 3d8+13 slashing plus 2d8 bleed and Grab

Melee **◆** fist +33 (agile), **Damage** 3d8+13 bludgeoning

Chain Garotte The Gray Gardener enforcer's spiked chain Strike deals 2d8 persistent bleed damage, and they can use it to Grab up to two foes. The enforcer can still attack with their spiked chain if they Grab one creature, but not when they Grab two.

Greater Constrict **◆** 3d8+7 slashing, DC 38

Death Gasp **◆** (divine, necromancy) The Gray Gardener enforcer draws in a deep breath and holds it, temporarily suspending their biological processes and becoming undead. The Gray Gardener enforcer gains the undead trait and becomes immune to bleed, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, and sleep. Any such effects the Gray Gardener is currently suffering from are suspended but take effect again once they take a breath. Death Gasp lasts as long as the Gray Gardener enforcer holds their breath (up to 10 rounds; *Pathfinder Core Rulebook* 478).

C. Abandoned Shrine

The Gray Gardeners executed or drove away all the priests in Litran when they arrived more than 50 years ago, as the conqueror worm wanted to control the most powerful priests in town. The clerics of Pharasma put up the strongest fight, but the Gray Gardeners eventually captured all of them, displayed patently false evidence of sedition, and executed the lot. The shrine to Pharasma has been deemed an unlucky place ever since. Even Pharasma's faithful in town—such as Keznin Nevarmo—don't visit the site.

The elderly and fiery Pharasmin priest Nellibet Amberin didn't care about such rumors and took up residence here when he came to Litran seeking rumors about sahkils, malevolent fiends from the Ethereal Plane that prey upon mortal fears. Nellibet knows about the Harvest Jubilee and the Gray Gardeners' upcoming masque, but he has little care for these events except that they impede his hunt.

The shrine isn't unlucky or haunted, but it's dangerously unsound. The floor of the shrine has had several blocks fall away into the basement, making the footing treacherous. Well-meaning neighbors have put warning ribbons across the entrances to keep people out, inadvertently giving Nellibet more privacy.

Nellibet knows that the Gray Gardeners often traffic with sahkils, but it was only recently that he finally managed to track one down and capture it: a pakalchi sahkil (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 220) named Miss Whisper. Nellibet imprisoned her in the shrine's lower level, hoping she could give him some information about other sahkils in the area, but all she has done is confirm that the Gray Gardeners have more powerful sahkils as allies in the monastery, which Nellibet already suspected. Eventually, Nellibet realized that the pakalchi was simply stringing him along until one of these more powerful sahkils could come to eliminate him, so he left the grounds in a hurry. Before he left, he stashed the corpse of a Gray Gardener who had accosted him after he first arrived. He stuffed the corpse into his bedroll to make it look like he'd been killed while sleeping. Nellibet knows this ruse isn't likely to fool cunning sahkils, but he hopes it gives him enough of a lead to infiltrate the monastery.

The heroes won't encounter Nellibet here, but they'll meet him during the masque in Chapter 2. This shrine nevertheless contains a few dangers, treasures, and clues for inquisitive heroes.

This stone building consists of a blocky central structure and two towers, one of which has collapsed across the top of the building. The old stones sit somewhat askew; flakes of mortar and bits of crushed stone litter the area. As though the building didn't look sufficiently unsafe on its own, a faded orange ribbon bearing the words

“Unsafe! No Entry!” hangs across both the main door facing the street and a small side door.

Features of the Shrine

The shrine is made of crumbling old stone and is unlit throughout, though old metal sconces in the shape of Pharasma's religious symbol adorn the walls in each room. Ceilings are 15 feet high. The old wooden doors remain askew in their frames and take 2 Interact actions, rather than 1 action, to open.

C1. Worship Room

Low 16

This wide room once served as the shrine's main worship hall. The north wall still bears the faded mural of a spiral-shaped comet 10 feet wide. Openings containing door frames without doors lead to the west and northeast. Stones in both the ceiling and the floor are uneven. Beams supporting the ceiling are splintered from the northwest to the southeast, making it clear the building only barely withstood the tower toppling across its roof. The stones in the floor are less regular in their damage, and some have fallen through to reveal a darkened basement below. It isn't clear where it's safe to step on the floor.

The floor is only somewhat more sound than it looks. Each square here is of three types, described below. A hero Searching the room determines which squares are safe with a successful DC 25 Perception check or a DC 20 check in a relevant Lore, such as Architecture Lore or Engineering Lore (the room is small enough that a hero can Search the whole room at once without moving through it). The hero knows the other squares aren't safe but doesn't know more than that. If the hero critically succeeds at this check, they also distinguish between unsteady squares and loose squares.

Safe Squares (Unmarked): Safe paths lead from each door to the other and to the openings leading to areas C2 and C3.

Unsteady Squares (Circle): Stones in these squares pitch and wobble unsteadily but don't drop unless a Large or larger creature steps on them. These squares are uneven ground (*Core Rulebook* 476); any creature entering them must succeed at a DC 20 Acrobatics check to Balance or fall prone.

Loose Squares (X): These squares are the most unstable. Anyone stepping into them falls 20 feet into the basement (area C5) but can use the Grab an Edge reaction to avoid falling (DC 35). A creature falling into the basement lands on the scattered thorns the pakalchi has tossed around the room. In addition to the usual damage for the fall (10 bludgeoning damage), the creature takes 1d4 piercing damage, 1 persistent bleed damage, and is affected by the pakalchi's betrayal toxin.

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The large symbol of Pharasma on the north wall is as old as the shrine itself, and a close look shows it has been recently cleaned, though not very well. A cunningly concealed compartment in the center of the spiral image has remained undetected despite curious and reckless looters throughout the years. A hero who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check while Searching the symbol discovers it; its contents are described in Treasure (below).

Creatures: Although polite society has shunned Nellibet for his blunt and unconventional ways, he has many allies among Pharasma's extraplanar servants. Some of these allies learned that he was in trouble in Litran and sent aid in the form of two morrignas, Ninolda and Isias. To remain undetected, the morrignas have Changed Shape to appear as masked pilgrims wrapped in webbed shawls, carrying several spider-like tokens and bearing heavy staves.

The morrignas believe that Nellibet is in the shrine (their information is out of date), and they know that unknown mortal forces in league with sahkils intend to harm him. They arrive at the shrine just after the heroes do—perhaps while the heroes are looting the hidden treasures.

The morrignas assume that the heroes are Nellibet's enemies and are in league with sahkils. The heroes, for their part, might mistake the masked women for Gray Gardeners and attack in return. The morrignas flank when possible, intending to incapacitate as many heroes as possible and then question them one at a time to find out Nellibet's location.

There are a few ways the heroes might realize the morrignas aren't their enemies. A hero who attempts a Religion check to Recall Knowledge on these foes realizes that they aren't Gray Gardeners as long as the check isn't a critical failure (they gain the usual information about the morrignas on a success). Second, a hero who succeeds at a DC 25 Society check realizes that the Gray Gardeners aren't known to use spider motifs.

If a hero calls for a truce or claims there's been some sort of mistake in the attack, the morrignas might listen. This quick call for a parley is a 2-action use of the Diplomacy skill with a DC of 39 (the morrignas' Will DC). On a success, the morrignas cautiously cease their hostilities and explain why they've come. In turn, they expect the heroes to explain why the heroes are there. If both morrignas are still alive, Isias insists on accompanying the party as they explore the shrine; Ninolda retreats to consult their extraplanar sources about what to do next. If only one morrigna survives, this survivor retreats.

MORRIGNA (2)

Pathfinder Bestiary 271

CREATURE 15

Initiative Perception +28

Ready for Trouble Each morrigna has already cast *death ward*, *freedom of movement*, and *see invisibility* on herself before entering the shrine.

Treasure: The wall cache in the center of the spiral comet symbol contains a *headband of inspired wisdom* and a *scroll of heroism* (8th level). If the heroes have convinced the morrignas that they aren't enemies, the morrignas encourage them to take and use these items.

XP Award: If the heroes ally with Ninolda and Isias, award them XP as though they'd defeated the morrignas in combat.

C2. Sleeping Chamber

Whatever purpose this small room might have held in the shrine, it now functions as a makeshift bedroom. A man's hand protrudes from the mound of blankets on the cot.

The hand belongs to the corpse of a middle-aged man with pale hair and a slight build. He wears leather armor over well-tailored clothes with ink stains on the sleeves, like a well-to-do clerk or scribe might wear. He has a dirty eye patch over one eye, but the eye beneath appears ordinary. There isn't any indication of how he died other than a look of surprise and fear on his face. He appears to have died only within the past day or so, but a hero who succeeds at a DC 25 Medicine check (or a DC 30 Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion check) discovers that the body has been preserved by magic.

If the heroes don't have any other information to go on besides a vague description, they might think this dead man is Nellibet. However, it's a Gray Gardener assassin who investigated the shrine for signs of recent habitation shortly after Nellibet took up residence here. Nellibet killed him with a lucky *phantasmal killer* spell and then kept the body preserved with a *gentle repose* spell. When Nellibet fled, he fashioned the eye patch so that the corpse might resemble him a little more closely, and he stashed it in his own bed.

The morrignas and the pakalchi all know this man isn't Nellibet, assuming the heroes ask any of them.

C3. Trapped Landing

The shrine's surviving tower contains a wide landing with stairs leading up and down.

Nellibet set a trap on these stairs to catch anyone who might come to rescue the pakalchi or catch him unawares. One set of stairs leads up to a doorway leading to the roof (area C4), and the other stairs lead down to the basement (area C5).

Hazard: A small, invisible glyph of Pharasma's symbol—a spiral comet—is etched on the floor in the center of the landing. When crossed, it flares into a



burst of mind-wracking magic that shunts extraplanar creatures to the Boneyard, the plane where Pharamasma judges souls after death.

This trap might affect any morrignas that cross it. It might affect the ximtal (page 18), too, but since the trap has the incapacitation trait, the ximtal uses the result one step better than its saving throw generates.

PLANAR EVICTION TRAP


HAZARD 17

UNCOMMON MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 42 (master)

Description An invisible magic rune emits a burst of psychic static and sends extraplanar creatures to Pharamasma's realm.

Disable DC 42 Religion (master) or Thievery (master) to discharge the glyph's power harmlessly, or *dispel magic* (8th level; counteract DC 40) to counteract the glyph

Wracking Eviction  (conjunction, divine, incapacitation, mental, teleportation) **Trigger** A creature that isn't openly wearing a religious symbol of Pharamasma passes over the glyph at the midpoint of the landing; **Effect** The glyph flares and discharges its energy. Each creature within 30 feet of the glyph takes 8d12+24 mental damage and must attempt a DC 40 Will saving throw.

Critical Success The creature takes no damage.

Success The creature takes half damage and, if not on its home plane, is stupefied 1 for 1 minute.

Failure The creature takes full damage and is stupefied 1 for 1 minute. If not on its home plane, the creature is sent to a random location in the Boneyard.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage and is stupefied 2 for 1 minute. If not on its home plane, the creature is sent to a random location in the Boneyard and can't return to the Material Plane until it receives permission to do so from a psychopomp of a higher level than the creature's level.

C4. Shrine Rooftop

The fallen tower lies atop the slightly pitched roof like a stack of toppled blocks. A sheet of canvas draped over something the size of a human rests against the fallen stones.

The canvas covers a fine spyglass that Nellibet brought with him. It's mounted on a sturdy, collapsible stand and is currently trained upon the entrance to the Gray Monastery.

Beneath the spyglass, between the legs of the supporting frame, lies a short pile of bricks bearing a slim notebook. Its first page declares it belongs to "Nellibet Amberin, Crusader of the Lady of Graves." The notebook contains several observations of the comings and goings from the monastery, but clearly the observer didn't care much for noting any names

or providing any descriptions of the Gray Gardeners. Instead, the watcher noted the possible passing of specific nonhuman creatures: "Cloaked figure with a train of flowers—a pakalchi, maybe?" or "Enclosed wagon brought in, large enough to contain a ximtal. Maybe stacked with coffins instead?" A hero who succeeds at a DC 19 Religion check or DC 24 Arcana or Occultism check identifies these named creatures as different types of sahkils.

Treasure: The fine spyglass is particularly elegant and worth 5,500 gp.

C5. Shrine Basement

Moderate 16

This wide basement has rough-hewn walls and moldering remains of furniture pushed against one wall. Opposite this jumble, an inhuman creature wearing a wide gown of thorny red flowers is manacled to the wall. Sharp thorns litter the floor throughout the room.

Nellibet bound his pakalchi prisoner here several days ago but was unable to get any useful intelligence from her. The pakalchi has spent her captivity idly firing poisonous thorns around the room, littering the floor with them like gruesome caltrops. As with mundane caltrops, any creature moving into a square in this room must succeed at a DC 14 Acrobatics check or take 1d4 piercing damage and 1 persistent bleed damage (and a -5-foot penalty to Speed for as long as it takes persistent bleed damage). Anyone taking damage from these thorns is also affected by the pakalchi's betrayal toxin. A creature falling into this room from area C1 automatically lands on the thorns.

The jumble of discarded furniture is valueless, though heroes who search through it find the remains of several old candelabra, cups, and other sacred metal items as well as a stone bench used as an impromptu forge. These are the materials that Nellibet used to make the manacles for the pakalchi, which a hero can surmise with a successful DC 20 Crafting check.

Creatures: The pakalchi knows that more powerful sahkils are coming for her. She therefore needs only to delay these newcomers—whom she believes Nellibet sent to interrogate her—for as long as possible. She complains piteously of her imprisonment and tries to stoke feelings of mistrust between the heroes, but she does so with a slow, labored speaking as though in pain. In truth, she's just drawing out her words to an extreme degree.

The pakalchi refers to herself as Miss Whisper in the Seven Shadows, although she hasn't used that name before; she picks the sibilant moniker on a whim because it takes a long time to say. Miss Whisper doesn't know that Nellibet has left; she thinks he's just upstairs. If the heroes indicate otherwise, she believes them but makes a big show of accusing

them of lying and demanding proof (which, of course, would be time-consuming and difficult to provide). If interrogated about the Gray Gardeners, Miss Whisper actually knows very little; her time in the monastery has been mostly devoted to teaching low-ranking Gray Gardeners how to sow mistrust to fracture revolutionary groups. Miss Whisper knows that the upcoming masque is a ruse for some sinister event within the monastery, but she doesn't know any details. She shares this information if necessary to draw out her conversation with the heroes.

If a *morrigna* is with the heroes, Miss Whisper insinuates that the psychopomp is likely to betray them and might even lie to say that the Gray Gardeners work for a powerful psychopomp (she doesn't know whom the Gray Gardeners work for, so she might frame this claim as "a well-reasoned guess" rather than a fact).

A hero who succeeds at a DC 31 Perception check to Sense Motive discerns that Miss Whisper is simply stalling for time. On a critical success, the hero realizes it's because she believes reinforcements or rescue are on their way.

If Miss Whisper manages to keep the heroes talking for at least 10 minutes (you might consider using a real-world timer to time the roleplaying between the *pakalchi* and the players), an elite *ximtal* finally finds her. This powerful *sahkil* enters the basement from the Ethereal Plane and tries to Isolate Foes as soon as possible. It thereafter relies on its spells and melee attacks to kill the heroes as efficiently as possible. When convenient, it slays Miss Whisper for the temerity to get captured. Furious and relentless, the *ximtal* fights to the death.

MISS WHISPER CREATURE 9

Female *pakalchi* (*Pathfinder Bestiary 3* 220)

Initiative Perception +18

Bound The mithral manacles affixing the *pakalchi* to the wall are enchanted. The *pakalchi* can't remove them, although any other creature can with a single Interact action. While bound, she's immobilized, can't make melee Strikes, and can't Skip Between, though she can still make thorn attacks with a -4 circumstance penalty.

ELITE XIMTAL CREATURE 18

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 6, 221

Initiative Perception +32

D. Mill Renovations Moderate 16

The heroes might have heard rumors about a masque invitation for sale at a mill being renovated into a residence. The mill is on the southern end of Litran, along the Stormflood River.

The flour mill is a picturesque stone structure on the riverbank, supported over the water by several stone pillars. The waterwheel turns slowly in the lazy river, making a persistent groaning noise. Scaffolding clings to all sides of the building, bearing loads of lumber and brick. Directly beneath the heaviest-laden scaffolding, the mill's front door features a sign reading "Sold." The door is open about a foot, and the sound of hammering comes from within.

The opening looks suspiciously unstable, but it isn't liable to fall without some intentional sabotage. If the heroes are paranoid, there are windows 10 feet above the ground that open into the same interior space as the front door.

The mill's interior is crowded with assorted building materials; clearly, the renovations are quite extensive, as the mill has no interior walls or partitions. The waterwheel's freely rotating axle juts into the room, and on the other side of it from the entrance, two sawhorses with a heavy beam bear dozens of nails.

The person working inside isn't a wealthy buyer from Isarn, as the heroes might have been led to believe, but a handsome young banker from Litran named **Calance Massney** (LN male human banker 5). The mill doesn't belong to Calance. He's the bait in a trap set by a Gray Gardener enforcer named Viuna, who observes Calance from the shadows. Viuna is "wearing" a *chakanaj sahkil* that knows when someone it can see lies (although it doesn't know the truth), and it signals such lying to Viuna with silent twitches of its legs. Calance has been directed to simply hammer on the same piece of wood all day, inviting anyone who enters the mill to come and talk. Calance is supposed to ask only the following three questions while Viuna watches from hiding.

- "Greetings! Have you come to buy an invitation to the Gray Gardeners' masque?"
- "What's your main purpose in attending the masque?"
- "Who are your friends here in Litran?"

Calance is terrified of Viuna and doesn't deviate from these questions if he can avoid it. Therefore, he doesn't respond to questions the heroes pose back to him except to ask the next question on this list, which makes for an odd conversation. A hero who Senses his Motive and succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check discerns that he's very afraid; on a critical success, the hero realize whatever or whomever he's afraid of is in the mill.

Both Viuna and the *sahkil* accompanying her have Stealth DCs of 40, so heroes who look around might spot them. If so, the pair attacks immediately. Otherwise,

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they burst from hiding as soon as they realize the heroes intend to buy an invitation to the masque or if the heroes attempt to leave. If the heroes didn't realize that Viuna and the sahkil are present, the pair gains a +4 circumstance bonus to their initiative checks.

Creatures: Viuna looks sickly and bloated; unlike the Gray Gardener enforcers that attack Soul Mother's Herbs, she hasn't eaten a Nourishing Feast to conceal her true form. Rather than her usual executioner's hood, she wears her fighting companion, a chakanaj sahkil that has bonded with her and covers her face like a pale mask. It's unaffected by her Rotting Flesh and frankly enjoys the corpse-like flavor of her face. Due to this ruse, the chakanaj uses Deception for initiative.

On its first round, the chakanaj uses Interpose and casts *fear*, attempting to scare as many heroes as possible. Once this opening gambit has revealed it as a separate creature, it then uses Peel Away to fight on its own, using its legs and spells to best effect. The chakanaj fights to the death. Viuna uses her spiked chain to grab the weakest-looking hero but keeps the other end free so she can keep fighting. Like the chakanaj, she fights until she's destroyed.

Calance doesn't participate in the fight if he can avoid it and does his best to hide. If statistics for him are necessary, use those of an advisor (*Gamemastery Guide* 207).

GRAY GARDENER ENFORCER

CREATURE 17

Page 14

Initiative Perception +28

CHAKANAJ

CREATURE 14

Page 70

Initiative Deception +31

Treasure: Two of Viuna's previous victims are stashed behind the building materials. One is a pale gnome wearing a bandolier with a major alchemist's fire, major eagle-eye elixir, and a pouch of embossed cards reading "Halipoor Snimwalt, Alchemist-for-Hire." Another is a muscular human dressed in hunter's clothing who bears a satchel with all the components for a hail of arrows snare. Viuna had killed both these people within the past day.

Calance also rewards the heroes as best he can; all his money means nothing to him considering how close to death he was. He doesn't have anything of value on him, but he transfers all of his assets in the Litran Bank into their names at his next opportunity. This sum is 6,100 gp, and it's theirs to withdraw during normal banking hours. Calance can also

arrange for them to take out a loan of up to 11,000 gp that must be paid back within a year, interest-free, for purchases they want to make in Litran.

E. The People's Maps

Moderate 16

Tristel Liendi (N female halfling cartographer 3) is one of Litran's best cartographers, but she's interested in more than just maps. She also has an interest

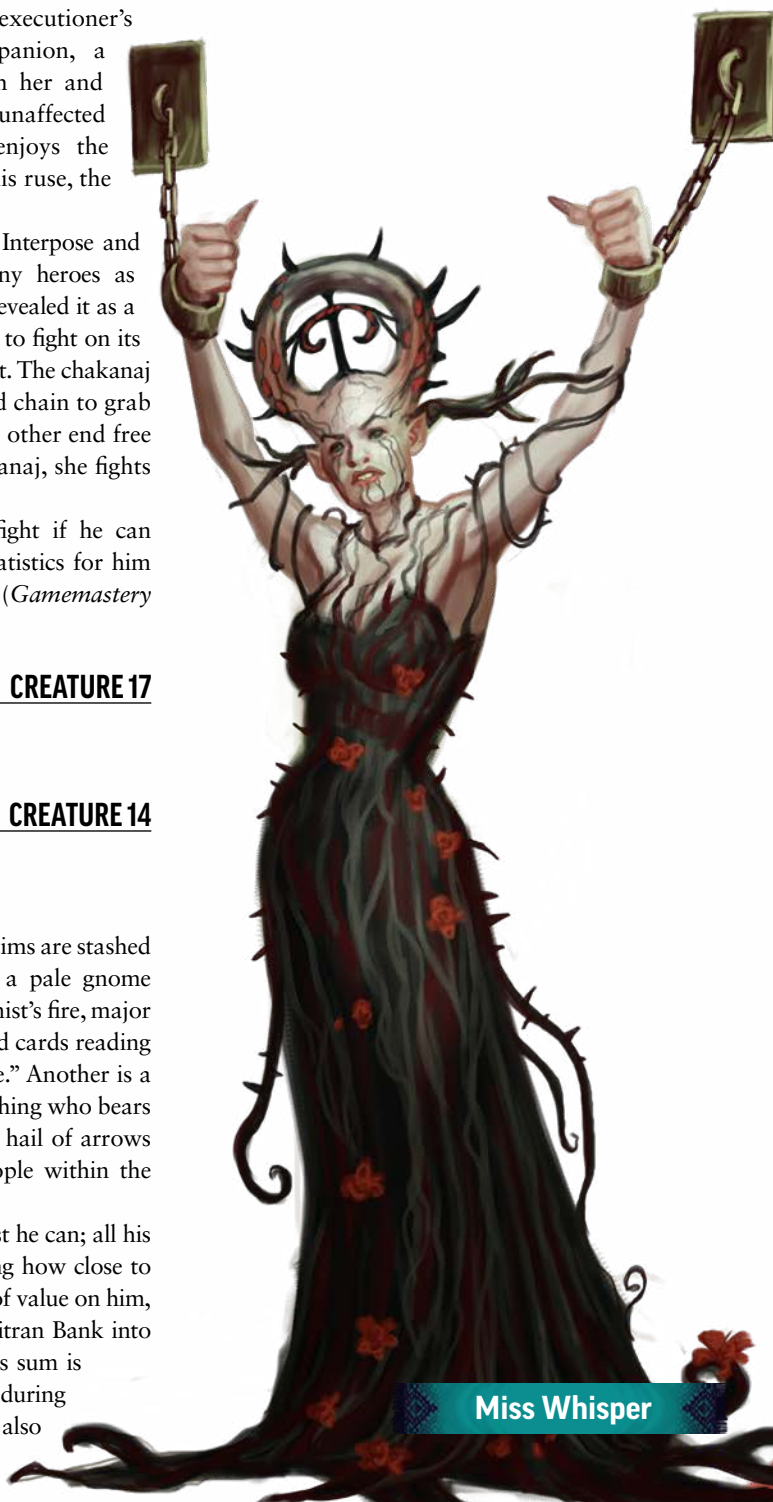
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Miss Whisper

in social change and is an avid reader of philosophy. Her most prized possession isn't a map at all, but a first printing of *Imperial Betrayals*, an essay collection that ignited Galt's revolution. She recently turned to using her maps to chart Galt's history, collecting information from contacts throughout the nation.

Tristel has realized that the Gray Gardeners are moving *final blades* around the nation, stationing them in the densest population centers. She has been far too loose-lipped about this discovery, though, and a contingent of Gray Gardener assassins has been dispatched to eliminate her and burn down her shop. This team arrives shortly after the heroes reach Tristel's shop.

The People's Maps is a storefront. Its sign depicts a map of Galt behind crossed ink quills. The shop's wide windows are plastered with topographical, political, and survey maps, along with signs indicating "Property Lines Properly Defined" and "Lost Locations Found at Reasonable Prices."

Inside, Tristel is at a sturdy table, poring over a map of Litran. She looks up as the heroes enter and dismissively proclaims, "Apologies, but I'm closed for the day." Too involved in her recent discoveries, Tristel isn't interested in mundane business. If the heroes insist they've come to inquire about the movement of the *final blades*, Tristel changes her tune and motions for them to come closer.

The halfling points to a blocky location on the map of Litran. "Have you been to Grange Market today? The Gray Gardeners are moving the final blades around," she says. "But there's something strange about where they're moving them. Like here in Litran. They just brought in *Sharp-Tooth Hana* from Tregan and set her up in Grange Market instead of Crownless Square, where executions are normally held. But I just heard they've had *Carmine Nell* moved from near the Minaret back to Tregan, which is further away. There's some pattern here, but I can't see it."

Tristel happily allows the heroes look over her maps and notes about the *final blades*' movement. A hero who succeeds at a DC 35 Society check (or a relevant Lore check, such as Map Lore, Mercantile Lore, or Warfare Lore) realizes that the *final blades* are all being positioned as close as possible to the heart of major population centers. When these movements complete, in the next couple of days, a significant

portion of Galt's population will all be within a mile of one of the *final blades*.

Creatures: Whether or not the heroes make this connection, they don't have much time to talk to Tristel before the Gray Gardeners attack. The strike team consists of two Gray Gardener assassins and a wizened and powerful hyakume named Angobo. Angobo joined the Gray Gardeners under the promise that he can commit all of Tristel's maps to memory before the assassins burn down the shop. Angobo simply barges into the shop while the assassins try to sneak in and thus use Stealth to roll initiative.

The strike team assumes the heroes are Tristel's accomplices and decides to eliminate them first. The assassins poison their weapons and sneak attack when possible. Angobo dispels troublesome spells the heroes cast and uses Steal Memories to grab any memories about Tristel or her maps. Tristel knows she isn't good in a fight and immediately takes shelter under the map table, out of the way.

The assassins are determined in their task and fight to the death, but Angobo flees if both assassins die and he's reduced to fewer than 100 Hit Points.



Tristel Liendi

ANGOBO

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM ABERRATION

Elite hyakume (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 6, 139)

Initiative Perception +31

GRAY GARDENER ASSASSIN (2)

CREATURE 14

RARE NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human killer

Perception +26

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +25, Athletics +26, Deception +25, Intimidation +25, Society +22, Stealth +27 (+29 to Hide)

Str +4, **Dex** +5, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

Items executioner's hood, +2 *striking hand* crossbow (10 bolts), +2 *striking kukri*, shadow essence poison (3), studded leather

AC 36; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +27, **Will** +26

HP 255

Anonymity As Gray Gardener enforcer (page 14).

Gardener's Resolve ➤ As Gray Gardener enforcer (page 14).

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *kukri* +29 (agile, finesse, trip), **Damage** 2d6+8 slashing

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Ranged ♦ *hand crossbow* +29 (range increment 60 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 2d6+4 piercing

Instant Opening ♦ (concentrate) The Gray Gardener assassin distracts a creature within 30 feet, using a few choice words or gestures. The creature is flat-footed against the assassin's attacks until the end of the assassin's next turn. Depending on the distraction, this action gains either the auditory or the visual trait.

Mark for Death ♦♦♦ The Gray Gardener assassin designates a single creature they can see and hear as their mark. This effect lasts until the mark dies or the assassin uses Mark for Death again. The assassin gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to Seek the mark and on Deception checks to Feint against the mark. The assassin's melee and ranged Strikes gain the deadly d8 weapon traits when attacking the mark.

Poison Weapon ♦ (manipulate) **Requirements** The Gray Gardener assassin is wielding a piercing or slashing weapon and has a free hand; **Effect** The assassin applies a poison to the weapon.

Quick Draw ♦ The Gray Gardener assassin Interacts to draw a weapon and then Strikes with that weapon.

Sneak Attack The Gray Gardener assassin deals an additional 6d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Surprise Attack On the first round of combat, creatures that haven't acted yet are flat-footed to the Gray Gardener assassin.

Aftermath: If the heroes didn't make the connection about the *final blades'* positioning (or if they did, but Angobo took those memories) and Tristel survives, she makes the connection after the fight while cleaning her shop. She tells the heroes, or tells them again if applicable.

Regardless, Tristel recommends that the heroes look into the *final blade* that has purportedly been relocated to Grange Market (see the encounter below).

XP Award: If the heroes discovered the significance of the *final blades'* positioning on their own, award them 30 XP.

F. Grange Market

Moderate 16

Although the heroes might come to Grange Market for purchasing mundane supplies, they likely won't focus their investigation here unless they seek out a *final blade* named *Sharp-Tooth Hana* that has been moved here. The heroes know that the Gray Gardeners relish the terror their *final blades* instill, so it's unlike them to hide a *final blade*. That's what they've done here, however, as they plan to unleash the spirits within it upon Litran at the Midnight Unmasking. Until then, it's in their best interests to ensure no one knows the *final blade* is hidden here.

A 15-foot-high guillotine isn't easy to hide, so the Gray Gardener director general responsible for putting it here, a jolly-looking man named **Umno Havillax**, decided to hide it in plain sight. Knowing that the Harvest Jubilee would draw crowds, he erected a circus tent around it but marked the circus "Coming Soon." He commissioned several gimmerlings to masquerade as gnome clowns, and he ushers the curious away with promises that the circus will be ready in a few days.

If the heroes come to the market looking for a *final blade*, they see the only place that might fit one is a gaily painted tent near the market's center. At a glance, this circus clearly isn't operational, though, and a heavy, moustached barker is moving people away while directing several gnome roustabouts to get to work. A hero who succeeds at a DC 35 Perception check while observing this activity realizes that the roustabouts aren't actually doing anything but wasting time, and the barker doesn't seem to mind.

The barker is Umno, one of the highest-ranking director generals, but he isn't currently masked. He does his best to get inquisitive heroes to move along, but if they persist in trying to gain entrance to the circus tent or mention a *final blade*, he changes his tactic. He offers the heroes a "backstage peek" and welcomes them into the tent. He dons his ceramic mask before entering and has his gimmerling minions enter the circus tent and assume their natural forms. A canvas tarp covers *Sharp-Tooth Hana* next to the main tent pole, but the guillotine's shape makes it obvious what's under the tarp.

Creatures: Once out of sight of the populace, Umno and his four gimmerlings attack. If the heroes don't have any reason to be suspicious, these enemies roll Deception for initiative rather than Perception. The gimmerlings try to trip up the heroes with their treacherous aura while Umno tries to frighten some of the heroes and slyly convince the others that their terrified companions aren't worth their friendship. The malicious gimmerlings fight to the death, but Umno retreats and tries to slip away into the crowds if reduced to fewer than 100 Hit Points.

GRAY GARDENER DIRECTOR GENERAL CREATURE 16

RARE LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human administrator

Perception +28

Languages Common, Elven, Infernal, Requian

Skills Acrobatics +27, Deception +31, Diplomacy +29, Intimidation +31, Occultism +28, Society +28, Stealth +27

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

Items +1 resilient glimmered breastplate, ceramic mask, +2 striking dagger (2), +2 greater striking sword cane (Advanced Player's Guide 248)

AC 39; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +27, **Will** +30

INTERROGATING THE GRAY GARDENERS

The heroes might capture and interrogate the Gray Gardeners to find out what's going on. All of them know that something important is happening at the masque and that no one will expect it. The mortic enforcers don't know anything more than this, but that's fine with them; they just kill as the director generals command them, and they're content to do so. Gray Gardener assassins know that the event at the masque will be dramatic and devastating but that they'll be safe from it if they do what they're told. Most of the director generals know that the *final blades* will unleash something terrible throughout all of Galt, sparing only the most powerful of the Gray Gardeners.

HP 300

Anonymity As Gray Gardener enforcer (page 14).

Gardener's Resolve ➤ As Gray Gardener enforcer (page 14).

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ *sword cane* +32 (agile, concealable, finesse), **Damage** 3d6+8 piercing

Melee ➤ *dagger* +32 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 2d4+8 piercing

Ranged ➤ *dagger* +32 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 2d4+8 piercing

Quick Draw ➤ The director general Interacts to draw a weapon, and then Strikes with that weapon.

Skewer the Fearful The director general's Strikes deal an additional 4d6 precision damage to frightened creatures. If the Strike against a frightened creature is a critical hit, the creature doesn't automatically reduce its frightened condition at the end of its next turn.

Stern Glare ◆ (concentrate, visual) **Trigger** The director general's turn begins; **Effect** The director general attempts to Demoralize a creature within 60 feet that they can see and that can see the director general.

Whispers of Superiority ◆ (audible, concentrate, mental) The director general utters a few words to a non-frightened target within 60 feet that can hear them, bolstering the target's indignation of cowards. The target creature must succeed at a DC 39 Will save, or it doesn't count frightened creatures as allies and can't Aid them or flank with them. This effect lasts for 1 round (1 minute on a critical failure).

GIMMERLING (4)

CREATURE 12

Pathfinder Bestiary 177

Initiative Deception +25 or Perception +21

Umno Again: Umno makes a great recurring villain in this adventure. If he gets away, he warns the other director generals of the party's composition and tactics,

allowing them to fight more intelligently against the heroes later in this adventure. Umno helps the other Gray Gardeners at the masque, and you should add him to the interrogation going on in area **K3**. He also flees that area if reduced to fewer than 100 Hit Points and can be found again with the other Gray Gardeners in area **L5**. Here, he surrenders if reduced to fewer than 100 Hit Points and tells the heroes everything he has learned about the worm prophets' plan in exchange for his life; you can use Umno to fill in the heroes on any part of the plan they don't yet know.

Sharp-Tooth Hana: *Final blade* statistics are provided on page 63; as described there, the heroes can't damage *Sharp-Tooth Hana*. They might consider moving it somewhere else, particularly if they suspect that having a *final blade* in a busy market might present a great danger, but they can't damage the artifact or free the souls trapped within it—yet.

G. The Affair of the Late Lord Harble

Many estates have been seized during Galt's ongoing uprisings, but Harble Manor's private guards have discouraged such attempts so far. The manor is empty and abandoned now, but that isn't yet obvious from the street. Alastrin Harble finally succumbed to his illness, dying a day ago with no family or friends in his presence. Harble Manor is now a lonely house containing only a dead man and relics of his life. Although the heroes might be suspicious of the empty house, there's no danger here. The front door is shut and locked (a character must succeed at four DC 30 Thievery checks to open it), but the servant's entrance is unlocked; a few windows can also be opened from the outside for easy access. Within, the manor is tidy but sad, its dark-paneled galleries holding ancient portraits of several generations of Harbles in sagging frames. The servants' quarters look hastily abandoned, and heroes who succeed at a DC 30 Perception check while looking around realize that a few expected valuables, such as silverware and small knickknacks, are gone.

The main bedroom emits an unpleasant odor and harbors a gruesome scene: a balding old man dead in his enormous canopy bed. The drooping, heavy curtains around the bed are pulled closed. A hero who succeeds at a DC 15 Medicine check discovers that the man died of natural causes in his sleep, but his body has remained here for about a day.

A desk in the bedroom holds a cream-colored invitation to the Gray Gardeners' masque. The invitation doesn't have Alastrin's name but is written to admit the bearer and a small entourage. The entire party can use it. This invitation isn't difficult to find; anyone Searching the bedroom discovers it.

NIGHT OF THE GRAY DEATH

Wrong Place at the Wrong Time: When the heroes are in the main bedroom—likely while examining the corpse or the invitation—four constables of the Litran city guard enter the manor. They’ve received (true) reports that the manor’s servants were seen leaving town together, and they suspect foul play. Upon finding strangers here, the guards’ first instinct is to arrest them all and usher them before a magistrate to explain themselves. The guards confiscate obvious or bulky weapons from the heroes, but they don’t take anything else.

City guards don’t pose a threat to high-level heroes; if necessary, you can use the statistics for watch officers (*Gamemastery Guide* 234) to represent them. The thrust of this encounter is to see how the heroes handle being arrested for trespassing or even murder. If the heroes escape, the Litran constables can’t do much, although you might arrange for future potential run-ins with the law to make the players nervous.

If the heroes consent to being arrested, the constables take them to a holding cell for a few hours and then brought before Litran’s head magistrate, Otvald Gharmino. Otvald ensured that the powerful-looking characters would come before him, as he would like to present them an offer. The interaction with the magistrate is set forth in the encounter below.

XP Award: Award the heroes 80 XP for acquiring Alastrin’s invitation.

H. High Crimes

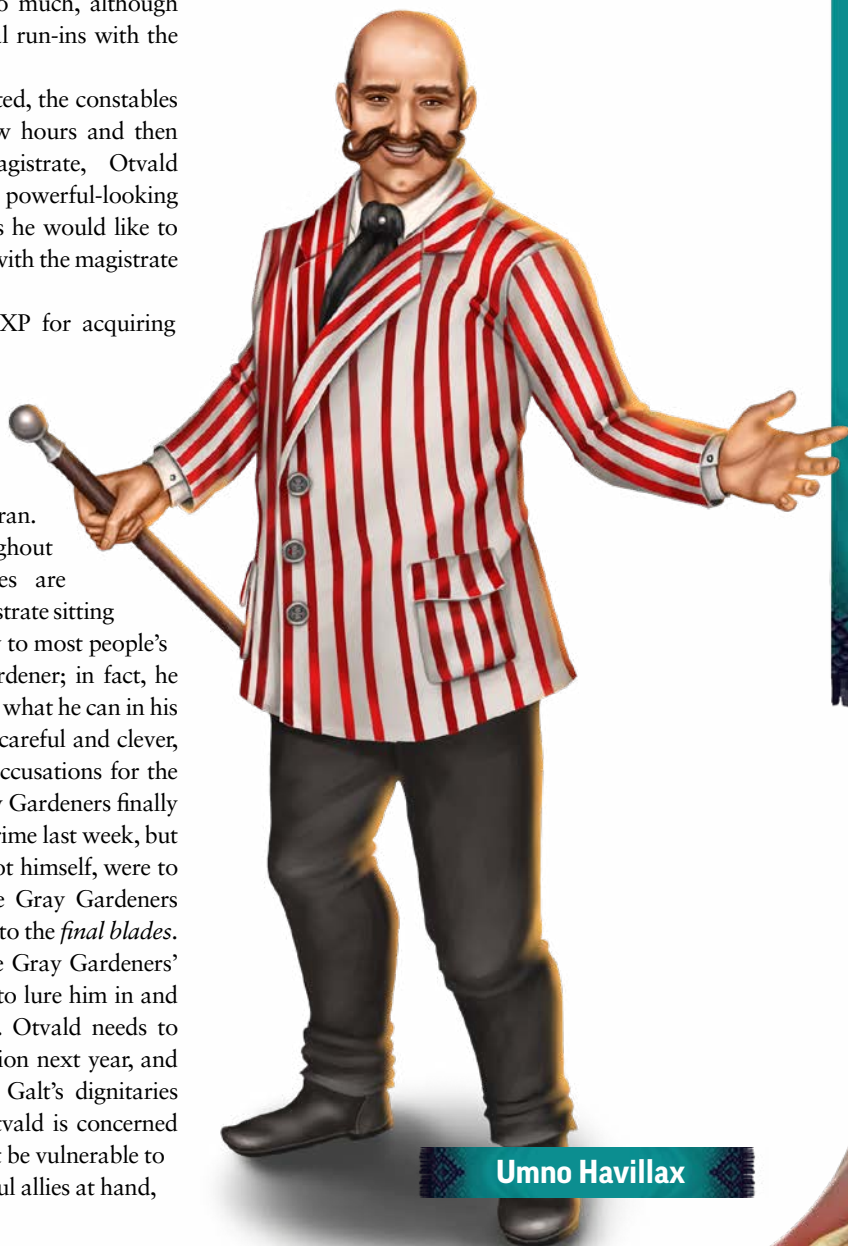
High Magistrate **Otvald Gharmino** (LN male human judge 11) is one of the most influential people in Litran. Circuit magistrates decide cases throughout the Horun Plain, but serious cases are remanded to Otvald as the senior magistrate sitting in Litran’s Juridical Building. Contrary to most people’s assumptions, Otvald isn’t a Gray Gardener; in fact, he finds the organization odious and does what he can in his courtroom to subtly foil it. He’s both careful and clever, managing to stay one step ahead of accusations for the entirety of his 30-year career. The Gray Gardeners finally succeeded in implicating Otvald in a crime last week, but he proved that his bodyguards, and not himself, were to blame. Frustrated at being foiled, the Gray Gardeners nevertheless sent Otvald’s bodyguards to the *final blades*.

Otvald received an invitation to the Gray Gardeners’ masque, as the Gray Gardeners hope to lure him in and interrogate him about his past cases. Otvald needs to attend the masque; he’s up for reelection next year, and the opportunity for politicking with Galt’s dignitaries is too big an opportunity to miss. Otvald is concerned that, without his bodyguards, he might be vulnerable to accusation or attack. He needs powerful allies at hand,

but he worries that anyone he hires at the last minute in town might be Gray Gardener agents. The heroes’ arrival gives him the opportunity to hire the bodyguards he needs.

Otvald is a red-faced, older man with heavy jowls and a great paunch born of an idle, intellectual life. He wears small spectacles and keeps his white hair cut short. He has steady and piercing dark eyes.

The heroes might come before Otvald by two ways: because they know he seeks bodyguards to accompany him to the masque or because they’ve been arrested at Harble Manor. In the latter case, Otvald quickly realizes the heroes have some use to him as a way to mitigate their purported crime, so he dismisses the constables to directly speak to the accused. The constables look at



Umno Havillax

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each other in confusion—this request is, to say the least, unusual—but they comply. Otvald then proceeds as though the heroes came to him directly.

He asks the heroes to explain who they are, why they’ve come to his courtroom, and where they’re from. When they admit to being from outside Litran—and, likely, outside Galt—he takes notice.

“Strangers, eh? It is a time for strangers, with the Harvest Jubilee and the Gardeners’ masque bringing so many to Litran. But I need strangers that show your initiative and competence. I’ve been invited to the masque, and my personal bodyguards are permitted to enter with me. Alas, my bodyguards were detained and executed by the Gray Gardeners recently, without so much as a lawful trial. Outside the privacy of this conversation, I won’t question their actions. But between us, I note that it’s suspiciously well-timed to ensure I attend this unprecedented event all alone. Well, I don’t intend to go alone. I intend to take you. That is, if you’ll agree to accompany me into the masque, and attend to my person should I be in need?”

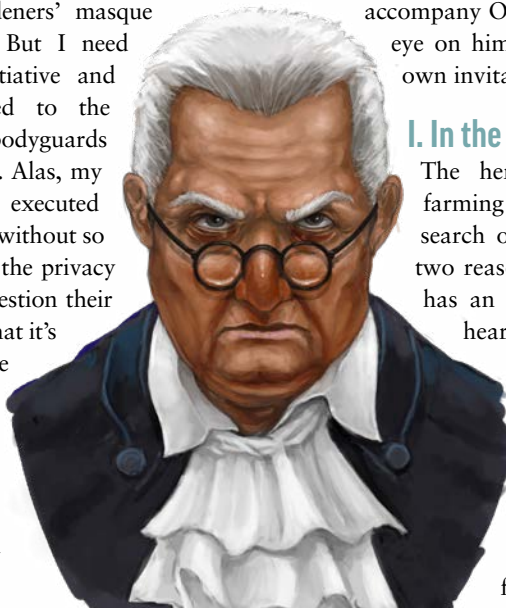
The heroes might not need Otvald’s invitation to gain entry to the masque; even so, Otvald wants them to remain at hand should he need them, as he’ll be far more comfortable at the masque knowing he can count on their aid. If the heroes have come before him as accused criminals, he conditions dismissing the charges against them upon their promise.

If the heroes express open disdain for the Gray Gardeners while talking to Otvald, the magistrate cautions them to guard their words. He observes with a conspiratorial look, “Hypothetically, if I were opposed the Gray Gardeners, I would utter nothing but benign prosaicisms about them. You’ll find my public record contains nothing but benign prosaicisms.”

Otvald assures the heroes that they don’t need to hover around him throughout the party; indeed, it would impede his campaigning if they do. He provides the hero who has impressed him most with a small slate board about 6 inches square. He shows a matching board that he keeps, and explains that they’re *slates of distant letters* (*Advanced Player’s Guide* 262). Otvald will coordinate arriving at the masque with the heroes through the slate, so they can gain entrance with his invitation. During the masque, he asks the heroes to keep an eye on the slate. He’ll signal them if something is amiss.

Treasure: If the heroes insist on payment for keeping an eye on Otvald, he offers them 3,000 gp up front. He offers this amount whether or not the heroes came to him under arrest. Otvald also promises that they can keep the *slates of distant letters* after the masque ends, although events conspire to destroy them, as described in Chapter 2.

XP Award: Award the heroes 80 XP for agreeing to accompany Otvald or for agreeing to keep an eye on him even if they’ve obtained their own invitation.



Otvald Gharmino

I. In the Dirt

Severe 16

The heroes might come to Litran’s farming cooperative’s main hall in search of the elf Zintaya Calbieste for two reasons: they might have heard she has an invitation, or they might have heard she’s secretly one of the Gray Gardener assassins. Both are true. In her public persona, the hardworking elf has ascended through the administrative ranks of the Litran farmer’s cooperative, applying her long memory and keen eye for detail to ensure farmers get better rates for their crops and advocating to keep taxes low. To the farmers around Litran, Secretary Calbieste is both an institution and a champion. They aggressively ignore rumors she might be a Gray Gardener.

Zintaya is indeed a Gray Gardener and has been one of their highest-ranked assassins for more than three decades. She recently caught wind of some catastrophe the organization is planning that will surrender, expose, or otherwise sacrifice the lower ranks of the Gray Gardeners. Zintaya was given an invitation to deliver to the mayor of Tregan, but she never left Litran, wracked over indecision about the invitation and whether it connects to the rumors of the purge of her friends.

The Gray Gardeners don’t take failure to follow orders lightly. The director generals sent another assassin to determine whether Zintaya was merely being obstinate or whether she plans betrayal. When cornered, Zintaya killed the assassin, locking in her future: she must flee Galt and hope the Gray Gardeners never find her. She concealed the body beneath the floorboards in the farming cooperative meeting hall. She knows that if she simply disappears, much of the work she did for the farmers will be swiftly undone, but she’s finishing some final paperwork nevertheless.



Yet, the corpse beneath the floorboards disturbs her. How can she say she has loyalty to anyone when she murdered a fellow Gray Gardener? Should she admit the death and beg for leniency? Who are her true allies? Zintaya is wracked with indecision when the heroes arrive. When they do, the farming cooperative building is empty except for Zintaya.

This main room of the barn-like meeting hall has space for several dozen people, but the stacks of chairs against the walls show that there haven't been any recent meetings. An elf dressed in neat and functional clothing is signing several papers at a desk at the front of the room, but she looks up sharply. "I'm Secretary Zintaya Calbieste. Can I help you?" The elf's manner is pleasant enough, but her head is cocked slightly, like she's listening to something just at the edge of hearing.

Zintaya is polite but distant, as she obviously hurries to finish her work. Her conversation is superficial and distracted. If the heroes ask what has her distracted, she claims that she's in a hurry to complete paperwork before the Harvest Jubilee gets into full swing; she represents many farmers and is finalizing negotiations for crop purchase and delivery so that they can all enjoy the festival without worries. She claims to know nothing about an invitation or the Gray Gardeners, dismissing such questions with a hurried wave of her pen.

A hero who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check to Sense Motive notices that Zintaya casts occasional glances at a spot on the floor where the floorboards have been recently replaced. If the heroes express interest in that part of the floor or otherwise press her, Zintaya's shaky composure breaks.

The elf throws down her pen and cries, "Yes! The body is beneath the floor! I've been so steeped in lies and murder for so long, one more death seemed so minor. But the corpse calls to me—I can hear the beating of his heart like an accusation, again and again and again!"

Zintaya starts to admit everything to the heroes—her membership in the Gray Gardeners, her suspicions of an upcoming catastrophe, and so on—but a rumbling beneath the floorboards interrupts her confession. The rumbling isn't localized to the area where Zintaya hid the corpse but shakes the entire meeting hall. A swarm of stony aberrations called cobble mites bursts through the floorboards to attack.



Zintaya Calbieste

Creature: The Gray Gardeners realize that Zintaya is a traitor. They've sent a sturzsstromer to kill her and destroy the farming cooperative, making the attack look like a freak earthquake.

When the cobble mites realize Zintaya isn't alone, they decide to eliminate the intruders before killing her. The swarm thus focuses its attacks on the heroes. The cobble mites begin by casting *earthquake* at 8th level (they've been prohibited from casting their higher-level version, as the Gray Gardeners don't want their monastery shaken up). The farming cooperative is a sturdy structure for the purposes of this spell. The swarm uses Landslide to close up a fissure around a hero should they fall into one. It thereafter uses Grasping Bites and Pummeling Assault to affect as many heroes as it can.

The cobble mites aren't fanatics. If the swarm is reduced to fewer than 80 Hit Points, the cobble mites burrow into the earth and scatter.

Zintaya helps the heroes fight the sturzsstromer, but its immunities and resistances means she'll likely have a hard time damaging it. If reduced to 100 Hit Points or fewer, she takes cover in an adjacent storage room while the heroes finish the fight.

ZINTAYA

CREATURE 14

Female elf Gray Gardener assassin (page 20)

Initiative Perception +26

Elf Zintaya is an elf and therefore has the elf trait rather than the human trait, low-light vision, and a speed of 30 feet. She speaks Elven in addition to Common.

STURZSTROMER

CREATURE 19

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Initiative Perception +33

Zintaya's Confession: Zintaya finishes her confession to the heroes, urging them to stop whatever the Gray Gardeners intend to do at their masque. She gives them the invitation she was supposed to deliver to Tregan's mayor. It doesn't have the mayor's name, and it admits the bearer and the bearer's attendants. She quickly finishes her paperwork, shoulders a backpack, and leaves for Kyonin.

Treasure: For saving her life, Zintaya rewards the heroes with her *anklets of alacrity* (*Core Rulebook* 603) before she departs.

XP Award: Award the heroes 80 XP for acquiring Zintaya's invitation.



CHAPTER 2: MASQUE OF THE GRAY DEATH

This chapter begins when the heroes arrive at the Gray Monastery for the masque. The masque begins just after sundown, at 7 P.M. This chapter is structured in six parts: one for each tolling of the bell up to the Midnight Unmasking and a final part for the masque's startling aftermath.

All the encounters in this chapter occur in quick succession and can test the heroes' endurance. The heroes have time to Treat Wounds and otherwise patch themselves up if they get into trouble as the evening wears on, and they can even leave the masque and return to it later in the evening if they need specialized healing or aid.

7 P.M.: WELCOME TO THE MASQUE

The heroes can arrive any time after the masque begins; most attendees do their best to be right on time, so as not to miss any of the party. The ramp leading up to the monastery entrance is well lit with blazing torches and

wide enough for several arriving guests to walk side by side, but not to bring coaches or horses. Several Gray Gardeners wearing executioner hoods and bearing large axes stand guard along this ramp (if necessary, you can use the statistics for Gray Gardener assassins on page 20 for these guards). Even if the heroes aren't right on time, there are many other guests arriving at the same time the heroes do—hundreds of people are coming to this event.

Two director generals (page 21) stand at the entrance, dressed in opulent finery. **Yasmeena Pont** (LE female human Gray Gardener director general 16) is a gaunt, redheaded woman who wears a gray mask with a large smile and eyeholes but no other features. **Vallian Velkerash** (LE male human Gray Gardener director general 16) is a thick-set man wearing a gray mask with a frown and eyeholes but no other features. They introduce themselves as the hosts and cordially offer the hospitality of the Gray Gardeners and their monastery

NIGHT OF THE GRAY DEATH

for the evening. Yasmeena and Vallian only admit people who are wearing masks and who present an invitation (or obviously accompany someone bearing an invitation). They politely but firmly turn away all others. If the heroes aren't admitted and cause a scene, the nearest guards intervene.

Once the heroes have made it into the monastery, read or paraphrase the following.

The great ballroom of the monastery is more than a hundred feet long. The polished lacquered floor gleams, and long ribbons and tapestries of deep-red velvet hang on the walls. Tables holding drinks and hors d'oeuvres are tucked into a few alcoves. Other alcoves contain exits, but these are blocked with thick curtains pegged in place to prohibit casual wandering. All the attendees wear elaborate clothing and masks. Some masks are simple hoods or veils, while others are outré feathered or beaded masks two feet across. Any of these attendees could be Gray Gardeners.

A large white sheet covers the unmistakable shape of a guillotine in the middle of the ballroom. Towering twenty feet high, the guillotine exudes an ominous sense of finality, even underneath the sheet.

The most imposing feature of the ballroom is an enormous clock opposite the entry. Fully twenty feet in diameter, the clock is made of black wood affixed to the stone wall fifteen feet above the floor. Its iron hands move inexorably, counting down the minutes until the Midnight Unmasking.

There are hundreds of partygoers in the ballroom. Most wear fine clothing, but some flaunt showy costumes while others wear threadbare finery that's several decades out of fashion. As residents of Galt, the partygoers are all practiced at displaying social niceties, ignoring any unusual goings-on, and avoiding delicate subjects. The entire ball should feel somewhat surreal, with masked partygoers laughing and dancing even though they're beneath a notorious guillotine and in the headquarters of an infamous organization of killers.

There are Gray Gardeners among the partygoers, of course, but they don't expose themselves as such, biding their time until the Midnight Unmasking. Many delight in joining discreet conversations, speculating about who in attendance might be members and casually casting suspicions around the room. Most of these are lower-level members of the organization, and they don't realize that the Gray Gardener leadership has decided they're just as expendable as all the other guests to the massacre.

Party Encounters

Although the key events of this chapter are on a fixed timetable, the heroes aren't likely to simply wait around until the great black clock strikes the next hour. Here

CHAPTER 2 SYNOPSIS

This chapter describes the events of the Gray Gardener masque and takes place in one long evening. During the masque, the heroes can rescue allies and discover clues, many of which point them to shutting down the occult network the Gray Gardeners have built to unleash death across Galt. Even if the heroes succeed at this task, it doesn't prevent the Gray Gardeners from releasing the powerful spirit inside *Silent Lenore*, the final blade serving as the masque's grim centerpiece. If the heroes stop the gray death, the conqueror worm bursts into the ballroom to investigate before retreating to its subterranean lair to start dealing with such matters personally.

are several encounters to spice up the party. You might choose these encounters randomly as a party guest approaches to make the heroes' acquaintance, or let the players guide your choice based on their investigations. The ballroom map is located on the inside front cover of this adventure.

The Clock

The gigantic black clock is a technological marvel, but as it's built into the wall high above the ballroom floor, it's difficult for the heroes to get a close look at it. The clock is enchanted in two ways: first, it keeps perfect time, snapping its hands back to the correct places if they're moved; second, it instills an unsettling feeling that time is counting down to some dire event in anyone who examines the clock for more than a few moments at a time. Treat the clock as a 20th-level magic item if the heroes try to impede or harm it.

While the heroes are examining the clock, a Galtan finance minister named **Babry Wrenolus** (LN male human finance minister 9) approaches them with a small entourage of clerks. All are dressed in similar costumes and masks, although Babry's outfit is the most opulent. Babry notes the heroes' interest in the clock and presents a pocket watch he received as gift. The timepiece doesn't work, and he offhandedly opines that if the heroes are the sort that's interested in the large clock, they might be the sort to help him repair his small one. The internal clockworks are quite a mess and have some missing pieces, but a hero who succeeds at a DC 35 Crafting check can repair Babry's timepiece after several minutes of tinkering. Babry is grateful for the service. He offers future unspecified aid to the heroes, whispering, "and particularly if you are, as I suspect, those who enjoy gardening." It's up to the heroes whether they want to enlighten Babry about his mistake.

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Litran

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Babry is a useful character to direct the heroes to future events at the masque, such as to point out Nellibet Amberin's presence or to observe that High Magistrate Otvald Gharmino has disappeared.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP for earning Babry's gratitude.

Dance Partner

The elegant Duchess **Raina Carlezio** (CG female human aristocrat 8) approaches the most agile hero and asks for a dance. She's wearing an owlsh mask with tawny feathers, but even more distinctive is her enormously wide dress supported with hoops and tethers. Despite her enthusiasm and skill, dancing with Raina is something of a challenge due to her unwieldy dress. A character who succeeds at a DC 25 Performance check to dance earns her favor, and she tries to continue dancing with the hero for the next hour or so. A willing hero gets a lot of dance practice and gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Performance checks to dance throughout the party; this might come in handy in area **K1**.

Like Babry, Raina might point the heroes toward future events at the masque.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP for earning Raina's favor.



Yasmeena Pont

Exploring the Monastery

The heroes might want to explore the rest of the monastery. The curtains blocking the ballroom exits are easy enough to bypass, but there's not currently very much for the heroes to find. The rest of the monastery is deserted other than a few busy servants and intimidating-looking guards (use the statistics for Gray Gardener assassins on page 20) who politely but firmly redirect any heroes they encounter back to the masque. There are several offices, monastic cells, kitchens, meeting halls, training rooms, and so forth, but none of these hold anything incriminating. The offices hold lengthy lists of Litran's citizens and suspiciously comprehensive summations of the citizens' daily activities, but the Gray Gardeners made sure to leave these out to intimidate anyone snooping through the monastery during the masque. Some of the areas are locked, closed, or otherwise difficult to find. These areas come into play later in this chapter, but the heroes simply don't have enough time to search the entire monastery to find these areas yet.

The Final Blade

The heroes might want to get a close look at *Silent Lenore*, the *final blade* here in the ballroom. It's covered

by a sheet until 8 P.M., and no one else dares approach it, but any hero loitering near the *final blade* automatically overhears whispered rumors that *Silent Lenore* will be unveiled soon. If a hero presses any of the partygoers for more information, a man with a smooth white mask opines, with unseemly enthusiasm, that the *final blade* might see use tonight if anyone dares to disrupt the masque. After *Silent Lenore* is revealed, it's easier for the heroes to examine it more closely.

The Hosts

Yasmeena and Vallian spend most of their time circulating among the guests. There are other Gray Gardeners present, but these two director generals are the only ones open about their membership. They're always surrounded by a small crowd of partygoers; most of these hangers-on are superficially social and jolly, but each is all but begging the Gray Gardeners to free an imprisoned friend, lower the "protection payments" on a business, provide info about a missing relative, and so forth. The director generals politely ignore such pleas.

Neither director general seeks out the heroes for conversation, but they don't mind exchanging pleasantries with heroes who introduce themselves. The two hosts absolutely avoid a fight during the masque. Unless the heroes have been very successful at disguising themselves, the director generals might make suspiciously well-informed references to past interactions between the heroes and the Gray Gardeners. For example, if Angobo used *Steal Memories* at The People's Maps, they might observe, "I'm sure you've forgotten more about maps than most people will ever know." If the heroes defeated Director General Umno Havillax at the Grange Market, they might say, "You're a fan of the circus, I heard from my colleague." (If Umno escaped that encounter, they might add something like, "Umno had so much to say about you," and follow up with some specifics about how the heroes fight.) The heroes don't have a chance to talk to either host for long before insistent partygoers intervene to get that host's attention.

Musicians

An ensemble of a dozen musicians provide music for the masque, alternating between slow waltzes, elegant gavottes, and lively jigs. If one of the heroes expresses an interest in or aptitude for music, one of the musicians confides that she's not feeling well and asks whether the hero could take her place for an hour or so.

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Keeping up with the ensemble requires a successful DC 25 Performance check; on a failure, the hero is ejected from the ensemble by the other musicians.

On a critical success, the hero can guide the music that the ensemble plays, earning appreciation from the other musicians. The effects of the hero's leadership linger throughout the night and improve the music, even after the hero finishes. Any hero who dances to the improved music gains a +1 circumstance bonus to the relevant Performance check; this might be useful in area **K1**.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP for keeping up with the ensemble.

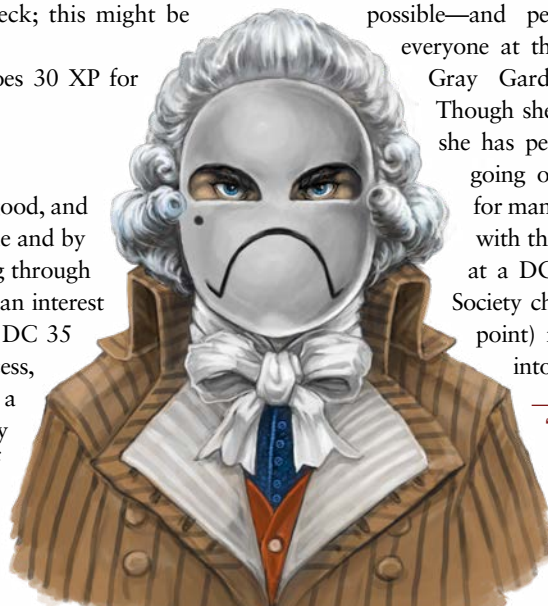
Poisoned Delicacies

The food at the party is very good, and it's served both at a buffet table and by tray-wielding servants winding through the crowds. Heroes who take an interest in the food should attempt a DC 35 Perception check. On a success, the hero spots a partygoer in a wolf mask who surreptitiously dusts a serving tray full of puff pastries with powder, then redirects the servant holding the tray to a tall elf with a glittering golden veil. The hero has spotted a poisoning attempt; **Alphundar Dundish** (LE male human merchant 8) is a desperate merchant who's trying to incapacitate his chief rival, **Andariel the Golden** (LN male elf merchant 8). Alphundar dusted the pastries with king's sleep poison. Unless the heroes act quickly, Andariel eats a few of the pastries, though there's no immediate effect from the poison because of its long onset time.

What the heroes do with this situation is up to them. If Alphundar's poisoning attempt fails, he doesn't try again. If the heroes confront Alphundar, he offers a vial of king's sleep to the heroes if they don't make a fuss. If a hero succeeds at a DC 32 Diplomacy, Intimidation, or other relevant check, Alphundar instead gives up both vials of king's sleep that he carries. If the heroes seek out either of the director general hosts, neither is inclined to give Alphundar more than a casual warning; in their minds, his life is measured in mere hours anyway. If you need statistics for Alphundar, use those of the guildmaster on page 245 of the *Gamemastery Guide*.

Treasure: The heroes can gain up to two vials of king's sleep poison from Alphundar.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP if they prevent Andariel from becoming poisoned.



Vallian Velkerash

The Social Theorist

If the heroes need some nudging to investigate *Silent Lenore*, they gain the attention of a self-described "social theorist" named **Illachin Polker** (CG female dwarf scholar 11). Illachin is an energetic dwarf noblewoman who openly editorializes about which of the other guests are Gray Gardeners and which are not. She wears a simple domino mask, leaving more of her face exposed than is usual at this party. In Illachin's mind, it's entirely possible—and perhaps likely—that absolutely everyone at the masque other than her is a Gray Gardener (including the heroes). Though she might seem overly suspicious, she has perhaps the best sense of what's going on. Her conversation meanders for many minutes, but heroes who stick with the conversation (or who succeed at a DC 35 Deception, Diplomacy, or Society check to steer her around to the point) find that her theories combine into a coherent result.

"And it's all connected!" says the dwarf woman eagerly. "Don't you see? The Gardeners' hold on power is supernatural, not political. Where is their stability greatest? Here in Litran, and right here in this monastery. All the strings are pulled from here. All the executions are pulled from there." She points a blunt finger at the looming guillotine. "It's all part of a vast scheme by some monstrous and unnatural intelligence, and it must be somewhere here inside the monastery!"

Illachin urges heroes who have stuck with her conversations this long to examine *Silent Lenore* more closely. If they've already looked at *Silent Lenore* but missed the significance of the gleaming light from the opening in the ceiling (page 30), Illachin can point it out to them—she might even point out the stairs to get there.

Illachin's Fate: The Gray Gardeners dislike Illachin's open assertions and her deductions that come too close to truth. At some time during the evening, they quietly murder Illachin and stash her corpse somewhere out of the way. You might have the heroes stumble across her body while they're secretly exploring the monastery. Illachin's curiosity might get her in trouble on her own; if the heroes wait a while before investigating area **J1**, Illachin could have been killed by the guillotine golem there.

XP Award: If the heroes get Illachin's (correct) theory from her, award them 30 XP.

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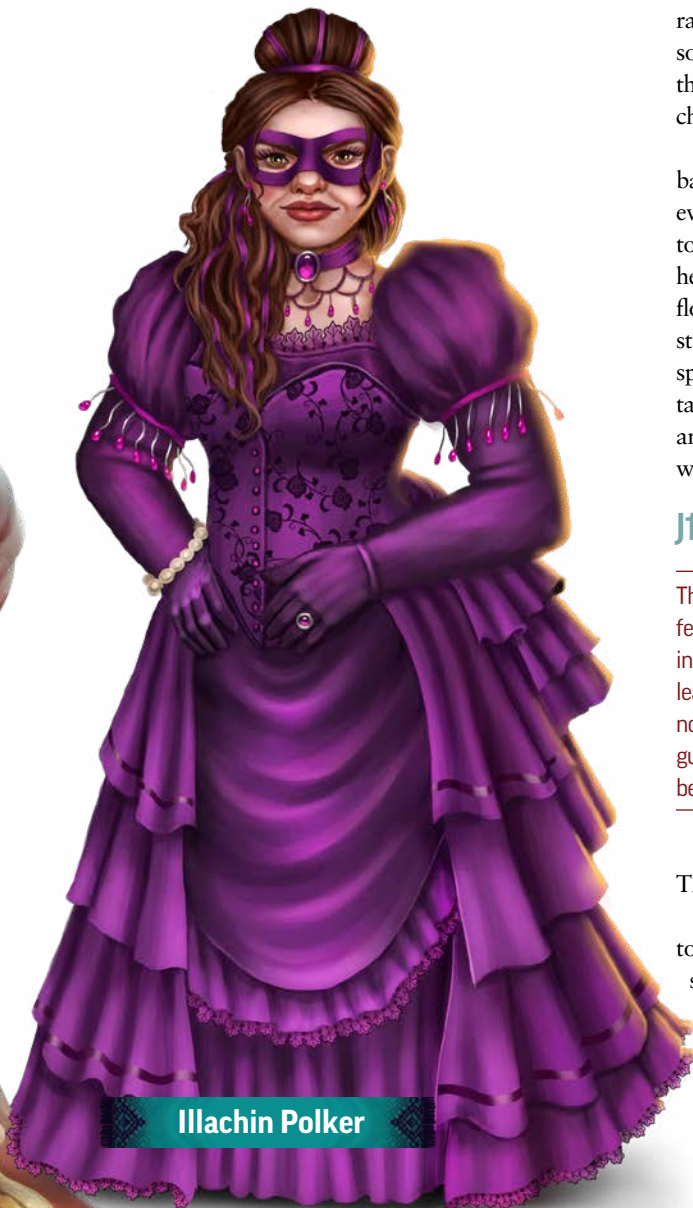
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8 P.M.: SILENT LENORE UNVEILED

Early in the evening, Director General Vallian Velkerash steps onto a small platform next to the guillotine *Silent Lenore* and motions for quiet.

The host speaks to the crowd; at some point, he must have changed masks with the taller host, because his mask now bears a smile rather than a frown. "We Gray Gardeners are but caretakers, mere custodians of justice and law. But all good caretakers have their tools, and our tools are well-oiled and well-used in pursuit of harmony. This is *Silent Lenore*, only one of our final blades." With a flourish, the man pulls the sheet from the guillotine, exposing its gleaming blade held high, as though ready for an execution.



Illachin Polker

A murmur goes through the crowd. They're impressed by *Silent Lenore*, but all of them have seen *final blades* before, and have likely attended multiple executions. Although partygoers cast uneasy glances at the guillotine throughout the evening, they do their best to ignore its ominous presence and resume the festivities.

The Gray Gardeners rarely permit anyone to interact with a *final blade* for long, so having one to examine up close is a novelty. Some partygoers approach the guillotine to touch it tentatively, while others examine its construction with a curious eye. The heroes thus don't draw any suspicion if they want to examine it as well.

A hero examining the guillotine realizes that the gleam of its blade comes from reflected light. A successful DC 25 Perception check highlights an opening in the ballroom ceiling right above *Silent Lenore*, concealed from casual view by hanging banners. A wrought iron railing surrounds the opening, making it plain that it's some kind of balcony; the reflected light is coming from there. A hero who critically succeeds at this Perception check realizes that the reflected light is magical.

It's up to the heroes to take the initiative to explore the balcony they can see, although encounters later in the evening nudge the party to investigate if they don't think to do so immediately. There are several ways high-level heroes can reach a balcony 50 feet above the ballroom floor, but the most straightforward way is to look for stairs. Anyone searching for a way up to the balcony spots a narrow staircase concealed behind a hanging tapestry that's pegged in place. These stairs lead up to area **J1**. If the heroes reach the balcony in some other way, it's described as area **J3**.

J1. Guarded Landing

Low 17

This broad landing has a dusty hallway leading east with a few stacked crates in it. The hallway plainly hasn't been used in some time. To the west, a short hall lined with portraits leads to a wide chamber with iron railings. In an alcove to the north stands a menacing statue made of wooden beams and guillotine blades. A bloody corpse is crumpled on the ground before it.

The hallway to the east is as disused as it appears. The opening to the west leads to area **J2**.

The corpse is a bureaucrat from Isarn who hoped to uncover and leverage some of the Gray Gardeners' secrets. If the heroes arrive here after meeting an inquisitive party guest like Illachin Polker or Alphundar Dundish, you might make this the corpse of that person instead.

Creature: The statue in the alcove is a guillotine golem, a powerful guardian created

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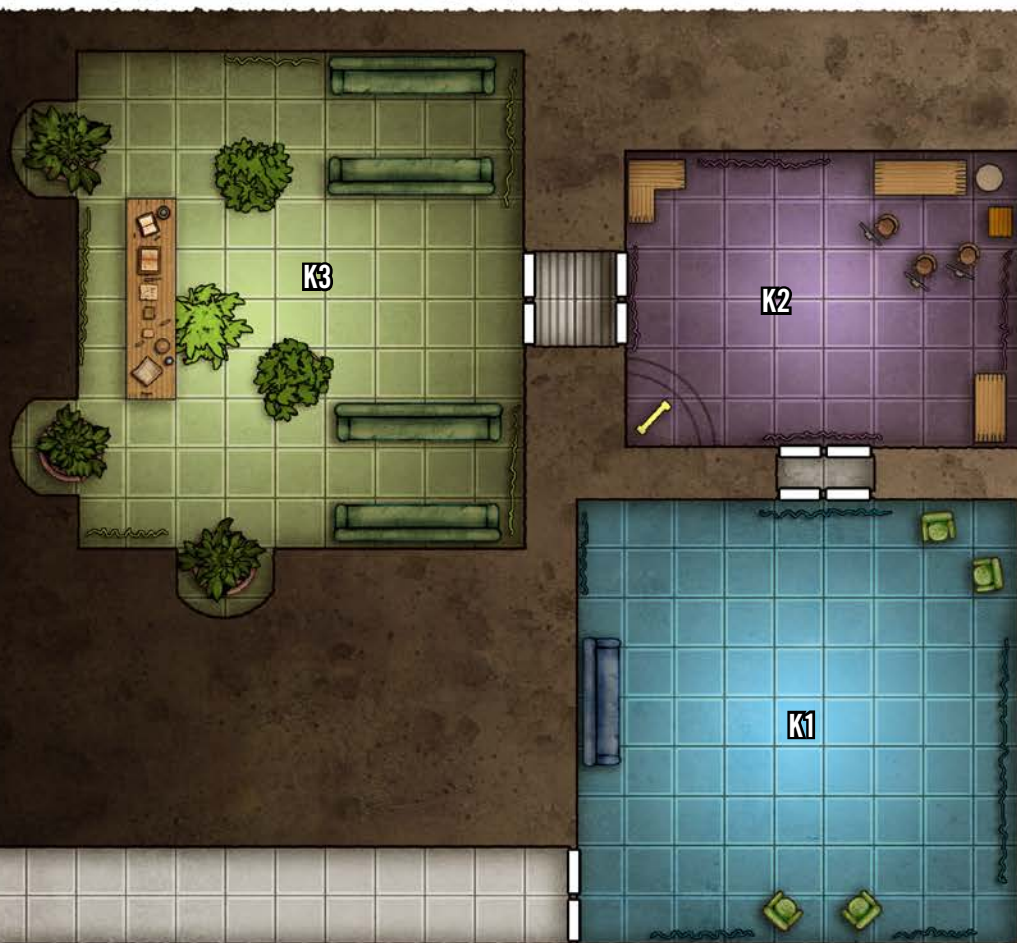
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UPPER MONASTERY ROOMS

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



MONASTERY ROOMS

by the conqueror worm's cultists from castoff materials used to build the *final blades*. The golem is predominantly made of iron and wood, with two sharp guillotine blades jutting upward from its neck, where its head would be. Its powerful arms end in guillotine blades instead of hands. The stocks in its chest hold a necromantic misasma that it can use to poison its foes.

The guillotine golem stands still until the heroes touch it or try to leave this room. It then raises its guillotine-hands and strides forward to attack. It fights until destroyed but doesn't pursue foes down the stairs.

GUILLOTINE GOLEM

CREATURE 18

RARE N MEDIUM CONSTRUCT GOLEM MINDLESS

Variant iron golem (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 188)

Perception +28; darkvision

Skills Athletics +38

Str +9, **Dex** +0, **Con** +6, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -5

AC 42; **Fort** +33, **Ref** +28, **Will** +29

HP 270; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, fire, healing, magic (see below), mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** physical 20 (except adamantine) **Golem Antimagi** harmed by acid (9d10, 3d8 from areas and persistent damage); healed by electricity (area 3d8 HP); slowed by fire

Vulnerable to Neutralize Poison Casting *neutralize poison* on the golem deactivates its Breath Weapon for 1 minute.

Vulnerable to Rust Magical rusting effects, like a rust monster's antennae, affect the guillotine golem normally.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ blade +36 (magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d12+15 slashing plus decapitation

Breath Weapon ♦♦ (necromancy, occult, poison) The guillotine golem emits poisonous gas in a 10-foot radius centered on the corner of one of the golem's squares. The gas persists for 1 round. Any creature in the area (or that later enters the area) is exposed to the golem's poison. The golem can't use its Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

Decapitation If the guillotine golem critically hits a creature with its blade Strike, the creature must succeed at a DC 40 Fortitude save or be decapitated, dying instantly unless it can survive without a head.

Guillotine Golem Poison (poison) Any drained value from this poison is reduced by 1 every hour. **Saving Throw** DC 40 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 4 rounds; **Stage 1** 3d6 poison and drained 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 5d6 poison and drained 2 (1 round); **Stage 3** 10d6 poison and drained 3 (1 round).

Inexorable March ♦ The guillotine golem Strides up to its Speed, pushing back each creature whose space it moves into and damaging them if they try to stop its movement. A creature can attempt to bar the way by succeeding at a DC 44 Fortitude save. On a critical success, the resisting creature takes no damage; otherwise, it is damaged as if hit by the golem's blade Strike.

Treasure: The corpse has a major serene mutagen.

J2. Trapped Hall

This short hall has two wall sconces at each end illuminating eight hanging portraits of people wearing masks. Despite having their faces covered, each subject bears a decidedly imperious demeanor.

Guillotine Golem

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These paintings depict past director generals of the Gray Gardeners.

Hazard: A vortal executioner trap protects the focus chamber beyond. Although the paintings may raise the heroes' suspicions, it's the four discreet wall sconces in the corners of the hall that conceal the junctions for the trap's saw blades.

VORPAL EXECUTIONER

HAZARD 19

Pathfinder Core Rulebook 525

Stealth DC 43 (expert)

Treasure: A large gray moonstone gleams in the corner of each portrait frame. There are 32 gemstones, each worth 750 gp.

J3. Focus Chamber

Moderate 17

A wrought iron railing surrounds a ten-foot square hole in the floor, revealing the final blade in the ballroom directly below. Three runes on the walls each project a flat plane of force, like a mirror as large as a human, angled down over the hole and pointed at the guillotine. These mirrors reflect a grayish glow coming from each rune.

This room is crucial to the Gray Gardeners' plan to free the gray deaths across Galt. The mirrors are enchanted to focus *Silent Lenore's* occult power and link it to the other *final blades*. When the gray death within *Silent Lenore* is freed, the gray deaths within the other *final blades* across Galt will be freed as well.

A hero who succeeds at a DC 25 Arcana, Occultism, or Religion check recognizes that the mirrors' light connects *Silent Lenore*, below, to a larger magical network that extends over hundreds of miles. On a critical success, the hero realizes that *Silent Lenore* is the linchpin of the network, and that reorienting or destroying the mirrors will not only remove *Silent Lenore* from it, but cause the whole network to collapse. If the heroes identify the network of energy, and they've seen Tristel Liendi's map at The People's Maps, they realize that this network connects all the *final blades* throughout Galt together.

The mirror-like planes that focus gray light onto *Silent Lenore* are intangible; creatures simply move through them. They can't be independently affected at all, even by effects like *dispel magic*. The light can't be blocked by objects or creatures; it simply passes through them and shines out the other side. The light can only be modified by manipulating the runes on the walls.

Adjusting the Gray Light: A hero can adjust one of the runes by taking the special Modify Wall Rune exploration activity. Each attempt takes 10 minutes, but different heroes can work on different runes at the

same time if they wish. Touching the wall runes conjures their guardians, however, and the heroes must deal with the creatures (see below) before they can begin this exploration activity.

MODIFY WALL RUNE

CONCENTRATE | EXPLORATION | MANIPULATE

You touch one of the wall runes and attempt to dim, redirect, or turn off the light emanating from it. Attempt a DC 24 Occultism check or a DC 26 Arcana or Thievery check; you must be at least an expert in the skill you use. This attempt takes 10 minutes.

Critical Success You recognize that any obvious adjustment might alert the Gray Gardeners to tampering. You delicately alter the magic of the rune to cast its glow into one of the other force mirrors. If you do this to all three wall runes, you sever the connection to the occult network between the *final blades*, but the light shining onto *Silent Lenore* is visually unchanged, so the Gray Gardeners won't notice what you've done.

Success You dim, redirect, or turn off the light from the wall rune, as you prefer, severing the connection to the occult network between the *final blades*. Your adjustment is temporary, and the light shining onto *Silent Lenore* looks subtly different. The next time the great black clock in the ballroom chimes the hour, energy trickles back into the rune, and it relights (restoring the network). This occult reconnection reverberates within your mind, alerting you to the reconnection with a brief mental ping.

Failure You're unable to modify the light coming from the wall rune. You take 16d6 mental damage (DC 35 basic Will save) from occult backlash.

Critical Failure As failure, except you are also stupefied 2 for 1 hour if you fail the basic Will save.

Creatures: When any rune is touched or manipulated, all three lesser deaths materialize. If a hero uses an effect on multiple runes at once, multiple lesser deaths can use their Lurking Death on that hero, putting them in a dangerous spot! The lesser deaths fight until destroyed.

LESSER DEATHS (3)

CREATURE 16

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Initiative Perception +32

Treasure: Each destroyed lesser death leaves behind a residue of *ghost dust*. The heroes can collect 3 vials of the dust from their remains.

XP Award: In addition to the XP for defeating the lesser deaths, award the heroes 30 XP if they recognize that *Silent Lenore* is connected to a network across Galt. Award an additional 80 XP for each wall rune they adjust with a critical success.

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9 P.M.: NELLIBET ARRIVES

Nellibet Amberin arrives at the masque as the great black clock strikes 9 p.m. He's the only one who arrives at this hour, and he's wearing a macabre costume, so his entrance causes enough of a stir that the heroes are likely to notice. He's wrapped in a funeral shroud and wears a mask that resembles a corpse's pallid face with splotchy red pox marks upon it. The heroes might not talk to him right away; if they don't, he eventually seeks them out sometime during the first hour after his arrival.

Nellibet's costume conceals much about his figure, including his eye patch (which he wears under his mask). Anyone who interacts with him and succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check identifies the person behind the pox mask as an elderly human man wearing an eye patch, fitting the description of a man that the heroes have likely heard a few NPCs describe.

Nellibet is a devoted zealot whose remaining eye blazes with a frightful intensity and vigor that belie his old age. He doesn't bother with many social conventions and speaks loudly, which the heroes might find uncomfortable when they're potentially surrounded by so many Gray Gardeners. Nellibet is here on a mission, not to enjoy the party, and he's seeking information from anyone about sahkils within the monastery.

Whether the heroes approach Nellibet or he seeks them out while canvassing the partygoers, he asks them what they know of fearsome monsters that peer from the Ethereal Plane. If the heroes mention sahkils, the shrine Nellibet had to abandon, or similar topics, he realizes the heroes are worth talking to and becomes more animated and energetic. In his raspy but strong voice, Nellibet provides them with a warning.

Nellibet slips his pox mask aside and utters, "Fiends of fear, they are! Sahkils have joined with the Gray Gardeners, harvesting the fear their terrible authority sows in the land. In turn, the Gardeners learn new ways of terror from them. It is a dread symbiosis, but a symbiosis is all it is. They are allies, but neither group is the master. Some inhuman force is behind it, I'm certain! Something is pulling the strings from behind the scenes, making the sahkils, the Gray Gardeners, and all of Galt dance. We'll see what that is before this night is through, I would bet your souls on it."

Nellibet asks about the heroes' past interactions with sahkils and with the Gray Gardeners. It doesn't take him long to realize that the heroes are enemies of the Gray Gardeners, and that means the heroes are his allies, after a fashion. He insists on providing the heroes his help, though he's vague about what form that help might take. Nellibet peppers his conversations with

vague and dire pronouncements of doom, insisting said doom is arriving this very night.

Nellibet can provide useful information in his conversation with the heroes, but only if they display a deep knowledge of the topics that interest him. Each subject includes information that Nellibet shares freely, as well as information he shares only if heroes succeed at the indicated skill check.

Sahkils: "Sahkils traffic in fear and are vulnerable to holy weapons and effects. They can slip easily into the Ethereal Plane and back, making them hard to pin down." On a successful DC 35 Religion check (or a DC 30 check using a relevant Lore skill), Nellibet confides that there's a rare type of sahkil called a tumblak that embodies the fear of being buried alive. He hopes to confirm this, and to vanquish one for further study.

Gray Gardeners: "It's commonly believed that the director generals are the leaders of the Gray Gardeners, but they're merely highly positioned administrators relaying orders from an inner circle." On a successful DC 35 Occultism or Society check (or a DC 30 check using a relevant Lore skill), the heroes' conversation reminds Nellibet that he's heard the leaders called "prophets of the wyrm" or something similar.

Silent Lenore: "The *final blade* is the focus of something dire, or it wouldn't be right here in the Gray Gardeners' lair." Nellibet believes it's enchanted even more than most *final blades* are and bears close examination, but Nellibet doesn't have the time to do so due to his mission to eradicate the sahkils. On a successful DC 35 Occultism or Society check, Nellibet points out the strange gleam on *Silent Lenore's* blade, and insists that the light is magic of some kind. Magical light is used to make mystical connections between things, he observes, and any mystical connections the Gray Gardeners make are certain to be bad for everyone else. This makes it doubly important that the heroes take a look.

When the conversation is winding down, Nellibet passes a charm to the heroes (see **Treasure**, below) and goes on his way, mingling among the partygoers and asking about sahkils.

Nellibet Slips Away: At some point later in the evening, Nellibet slips away from the masque. This should happen when the heroes aren't paying attention to him (such as when they're rescuing Otvald Gharmino). Nellibet finds a way to the crypts below but is forced to retreat when he's overwhelmed by a tumblak. The heroes hear from Nellibet again at the end of this chapter.

Treasure: Near the end of the conversation, Nellibet tells a hero (preferably one who worships Pharasma, but any character who isn't an obvious worshipper of another

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deity will do) that he feels they need the Lady of Graves' protection. He presses a *greater nosoi charm* (page 63) into that hero's hand as part of a firm handshake.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP for each additional piece of information they gain with a successful skill check, to a maximum of 90 XP.

10 P.M.: THE INTERROGATION

At or near 10 P.M., Gray Gardener assassins kidnap High Magistrate Otvald Gharmino to torture him for information before the party's end. There are two ways to urge the heroes to rescue him.

If the heroes came independently of Otvald, they overhear partygoers talking about the high magistrate. He was near an exit to the southeast when four people clustered around him and roughly ushered him through an opening in the curtains. One of the people pegged the exit closed after them. They all looked like grim, rough people, so either Otvald is in trouble, or he's possibly a high-ranking Gray Gardener and has business with these underlings. The two partygoers argue about which is more likely the case, but in either event, the heroes should want to investigate.

If the heroes came with Otvald, he's been clear that they're not to shadow him and to give him time to mingle privately. It was during one of these times that he was kidnapped. The *slate of distant letters* that Otvald gave the heroes suddenly shatters, with only the letters "HEL" written on it (the kidnappers broke the slate when Otvald was trying to send for help). Heroes asking around can learn that Otvald and a few other guests disappeared through an exit to the east. One of the people accompanying Otvald unpegged the curtain, ushered everyone through, and pegged it in place again.

Through that exit from the ballroom is a long hall and a wide opening into area K1.

K1. Blue Gallery

Moderate 17

Several diaphanous hangings in various shades of blue adorn the stone walls of this room. Blue stained-glass windows depict masked executioners standing tall before open skies. The blue light and rippling wall hangings make this room appear to

be underwater. Curtains hang at both exits and across the entrance to a small balcony overlooking the Stormflood River.

The Gray Gardeners have an understanding with **Lallinor Pond-Lily**, a malevolent creature called a riekano (page 69). Upon a promise that the Gray Gardeners would publicly execute some of Galt's most skilled dancers, Lallinor agreed to spy on river travelers and drown those the Gray Gardeners would like to see dead. The Gray Gardeners now have no more use for Lallinor, and they plan to kill the fey along with everyone else here. Lallinor knows that four Gray Gardeners recently came this way with an important magistrate as a captive and doesn't intend to let snoopers past.

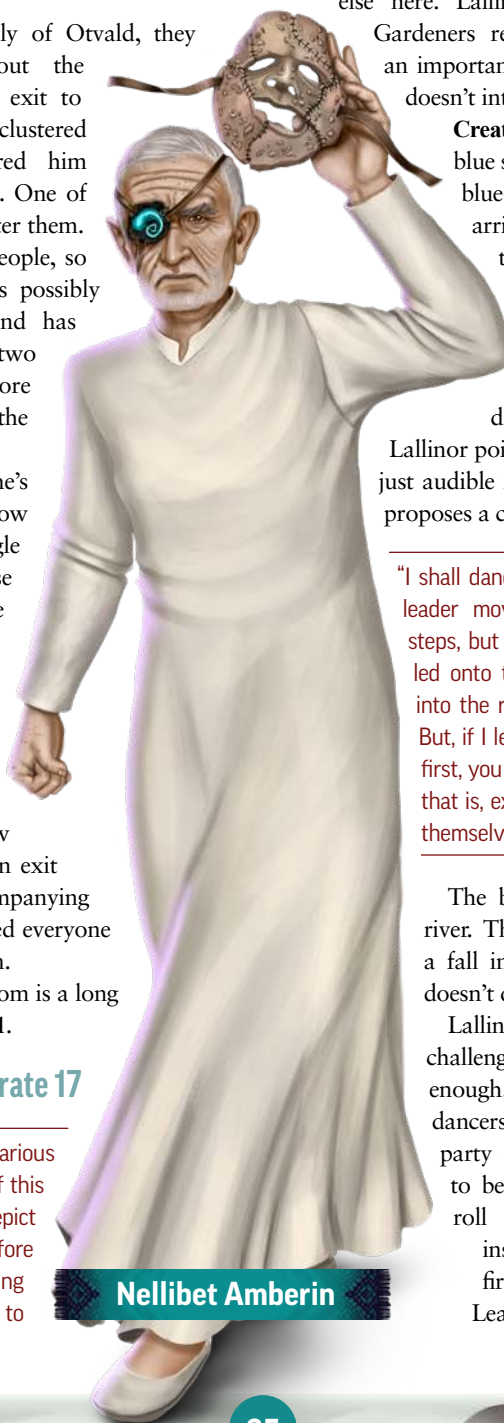
Creatures: Lallinor lounges on a blue settee, idly combing their long, blue-tinged hair. When the heroes arrive, Lallinor holds up a hand to stop their approach, saying, "Very sorry, but there's some private business going on through there, and my friends mustn't be disturbed." If the heroes insist,

Lallinor points out that the party music is just audible from the grand ballroom and proposes a challenge.

"I shall dance with one of you. A dominant leader moves their partner through the steps, but is not led. If, in our dance, I am led onto the balcony, I shall hurl myself into the river and impede you no longer. But, if I lead my partner onto the balcony first, you will leave the way you came. All, that is, except my partner, who shall hurl themselves into the river instead."

The balcony is 20 feet above the river. The river is deep enough that a fall into the water is bracing, but doesn't deal damage.

Lallinor intends to cheat at this challenge, but starts it honestly enough. If the party agrees, the two dancers (Lallinor and the hero the party selects) stand near the settee to begin, in adjacent squares, and roll initiative using Performance instead of Perception. A dancer's first action each turn must be to Lead the Dance.



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LEAD THE DANCE

CONCENTRATE **MOVE**

You move gracefully but firmly in a dance, leading your dancing partner where you'd like to go. Attempt a Performance check to dance, with a DC equal to your dance partner's Reflex DC.

Critical Success You command the lead and move your partner up to 10 feet. You then move to a square of your choice adjacent to your partner's location.

Success As critical success, but you move your partner only 5 feet.

Failure You fail to move your dance partner.

Critical Failure As failure, and you provide your dance partner an opening to force you to move. You have a -2 circumstance penalty to Reflex saves and to your Reflex DC for 1 round.

Lallinor is an excellent dancer. If they succeed at Leading the Dance consistently, they simply maneuver the hero onto the balcony. If the hero proves the better dancer or doesn't respond by dancing, Lallinor instead attacks with their hair to Grab their dance partner and slide them into place with their Waving Hair.

As soon as Lallinor's partner is on the balcony, Lallinor insists that the dance is over, the loser must leap into the river, and the rest of the heroes must depart. Lallinor fights to enforce this bargain, keeping heroes away from the entrance to area K2. If reduced to fewer than 40 Hit Points, they cry "Beware near the river, or I shall dance you to your deaths!" and jump from the balcony into the water to escape.

If the hero manages to put Lallinor onto the balcony first, whether by dancing or by some other trick, the fey decides, uncharacteristically, to keep their word. Lallinor plunges into the water below and doesn't surface.

LALLINOR POND-LILY

CREATURE 19

Agender riekanoy (page 69)

Initiative Performance +37

Treasure: A crystal decanter worth 1,800 gp is on a small table near the settee. It's half full of exquisite wine.

K2. Purple Chamber

The walls and carpeting of this music room range from a pale mauve to a garish purple. Indigo stained-glass windows are mostly concealed behind heavy velvet curtains. A large, elegant harp stands on a wooden dais in one corner, and several stringed instruments rest on and around a shelf near several stools and music stands. Although the music from the masque is quieter here, the strings of the harp echo with it. Two curtained exits lead from this room.

The harp's resonance isn't magical, but rather an effect of the lightweight, hollow dais on which it stands. The masque's music echoes in the dais, which jostles the harp ever so slightly and makes its strings appear to move on their own.

Treasure: The smallest of the viols is a *greater maestro's instrument*.

K3. Green Conservatory

Low 17

Paneled in green-painted wood, this chamber is furnished like a conservatory. It has large windows of thick, green glass and several potted plants.

This is where the Gray Gardeners have taken Otvald for interrogation. They've yanked one of the potted shrubs free and stuffed the magistrate into the potting soil headfirst. His hands are tied behind his back. As he chokes and coughs on the moist dirt, the interrogators pull him out to ask questions about his past cases and his allies before shoving him back into the dirt. The magistrate is now red-faced and weak, his fine clothes ruined with dirt and spittle.

Creatures: The four Gray Gardener assassins interrogating the magistrate don't waste any time confronting intruders. They drop Otvald unceremoniously on the ground, draw their weapons, and attack. Otvald begins suffocating on dirt; he dies in 3 rounds unless a hero gets to him and clears his mouth (as an Interact action).

When possible, the assassins move around the potted plants to gain cover or to Hide so they can catch heroes flat-footed. If this isn't a feasible tactic, they instead flank weak-looking heroes, hoping to dispatch them quickly. The assassins fight to the death, knowing that the director generals will deal them a far worse fate if they flee or surrender.

GRAY GARDENER ASSASSINS (4)

CREATURE 14

Page 20

Initiative Perception +26

Rescuing the Magistrate: If he's rescued and the heroes came to the masque with him, Otvald blusters a bit about how the heroes were negligent in getting him captured in the first place, but his gruff judgment soon gives way to genuine thanks. During Otvald's torture, one of the director generals came in to speak with the assassins. Otvald overheard her asking whether anyone had been seen on the stairs nearest *Silent Lenore*. When the assassins said they'd seen no one there, she reiterated that they should keep a discreet eye on it when they return, as no one is to access that stairwell or else things might

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not go as planned during the Midnight Unmasking. If the heroes haven't yet explored the chambers above the ballroom, this should prompt them to do so; if they have, it's an indication that their exploits there have thus far gone unnoticed.

Treasure: One of the potted plants here is hemlock, cultivated for its poison; a vial of hemlock is near the plant. Otvald wears an elegant platinum neck chain worth 2,400 gp. If the heroes save him, he gives it to them, with his thanks—if not, the heroes can find it on his corpse.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP if they save Otvald's life.

11 P.M.: THE PAGEANT

At 11 P.M., Director General Yasmeena Pont clears the dance floor near the musicians. She directs servants to set up posts with red streamers that mark out a large area of the ballroom floor. She then holds up her hand for quiet before beginning a strange performance.

Once the last waist-high pole has been placed to mark out an empty area on the ballroom floor, the gaunt, redheaded host signals for quiet. She's now wearing a mask with a simple frown, rather than a smile. "The Gray Gardeners have been part of Galt's history from the beginning, and shall be there to cultivate its end. Let us entertain you with the Pageant of Galtan History."

The woman makes a grand motion, and dozens of featureless clay automatons march onto the stage.

The woman recites, "Lo, 'tis a gala night, in the lonesome latter years!" and the automatons mimic the motions of farmers, tailors, soldiers, prisoners, and more.

Yasmeena continues with a confusing poem about fear, death, and a monstrous worm that devours all (see the sidebar on page 38). The automatons mimic everyday tasks the people of Galt might engage in before running in circles, one at a time, and then together. The worm of the poem doesn't make an appearance in the pageant, but the automatons all act as though it does, writhing as though being eaten and falling down dead.

It's clear that the partygoers are confused by the pageant and its poem, but they give polite applause at energetic parts and gasp when the automatons mimic being eaten alive. After the pageant, the automatons march out of the ballroom, taking the streamer-bedecked poles with them, and the masque resumes.

Creatures: Neither Yasmeena nor the automatons fight, but you might need their statistics if the heroes want to affect the performance somehow.

YASMEENA PONT

CREATURE 16

Gray Gardener Director General (page 21)

Initiative Perception +28

PAGEANT TROUPE

CREATURE 14

Elite terra-cotta garrison (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 6, 263)

Initiative Perception +24

Performers The automatons don't have shields or weapons. Their Strike as One ability uses their fists and deals bludgeoning damage instead of slashing damage.

Interpreting the Pageant

Although Yasmeena intends the pageant to be abstract and somewhat illogical, it contains truths about the conqueror worm and its plans that attentive



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POE'S CONQUEROR WORM

We haven't provided Edgar Allan Poe's full poem *The Conqueror Worm*, but Yasmeena's recitation is a similar, abstract poem about the futility of life and the inevitable onset of violent death. If you're feeling theatrical, you might look up this poem in its entirety and provide it to your players as Yasmeena's oration.

characters might recognize as clues. The heroes can interpret the following lines of poetry with successful DC 35 Occultism or Society checks, or DC 30 checks with a relevant Lore skill, such as Theater Lore or Bardic Lore.

"At bidding of vast, formless things / That shift the scenery to and fro." The automatons mimic moving around something large and heavy. On a success, the hero realizes that this line means that the most significant moveable furnishing in the room, *Silent Lenore*, will play an important role in the Midnight Unmasking. On a critical success, the hero picks up the insinuation that some enormous and inhuman monster is secretly behind the Gray Gardeners.

"With its phantom chased forevermore / By a crowd that seize it not." The automatons whirl and dance closely, as though moving through each other. On a success, the hero realizes that some form of spirit or spectral creature will be a part of the Midnight Unmasking. On a critical success, the hero suspects that it will involve *Silent Lenore*, which is known to hold the souls of the executed within it.

"The curtain, a funeral pall / Comes down with the rush of a storm." In unison, the automatons mimic fainting, falling, and lying still. On a success, the hero realizes that the masque is building to an event involving a powerful undead creature. On a critical success, the hero knows that it will, like a storm, affect several people at once, and perhaps everyone in the monastery.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP for each line of poetry they successfully interpret.

MIDNIGHT: GRAY DEATH

When the great clock approaches midnight, the excited partygoers begin to count down the seconds. Everyone reaches up to take hold of their masks in the final seconds, ready to unmask and look around the room. A hero watching the proceedings who succeeds at a DC 35 Perception check realizes that some attendees have their hands only loosely at their masks and likely don't intend to remove them when everyone else does. These are the Gray Gardeners, waiting for the unmasking to unleash the spirits within *Silent Lenore*.

A cheer erupts from the crowd as the great black clock strikes midnight. Nearly everyone in the crowd yanks off their masks at once, throwing them to the floor or into the air and looking around the room with naked curiosity. Several people—perhaps a dozen—lower their hands without removing their masks. The two hosts cry out in unison, "Now you see who among us are the Gray Gardeners—and who are the dead!" The final blade shudders, and a cluster of spectral forms rush from it, shrieking in a soul-curdling rage and coalescing into a massive ghostly form.

Ten Gray Gardener assassins and the two director generals (Yasmeena and Vallian) haven't removed their masks. Their role is to keep anyone from escaping out the main doors while the gray death kills everyone except the Gray Gardeners. The gray death immediately starts attacking partygoers with its flailing touch. It's indiscriminate in its attacks, but the nature of its creation means it can't attack Gray Gardeners (though they're affected by its dooming aura).

Death at the Masque

Severe 17

This combat should be a chaotic fight amid a panicked crowd of hundreds. The chaos of partygoers running about (or, all too soon, lying on the ground when slain) make the grand ballroom difficult terrain.

Red Scarves: Although the gray death lacks the particular identities of its constituent souls, Apalma Drannoch is one of the spirits inside it. Apalma has learned from later-executed spirits that her daughter has risen high within Galt's leadership and always wears a red scarf. Her spirit shies away from attacking anyone wearing a red scarf out of a parental instinct. A hero wearing a red scarf, or any other red cloth around their throat, has a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the gray death's attacks and to saving throws against the gray death's abilities.

Rescuing Partygoers: As the Gray Gardeners are blocking the main exits and killing anyone who gets close, the panicked partygoers have nowhere to escape. The heroes might concentrate on providing an exit, whether by destroying part of the monastery wall with *disintegrate*, *passwall*, or similar effects, or by leading them to the balcony in area **K1**. You should reward other inventive solutions to get partygoers to safety. A successful DC 35 Diplomacy or Intimidation check is necessary to get the crowd to move in the direction the heroes want, although you might lower this DC or do away with the skill check entirely if the heroes have a clever way to command the crowd's attention.

Creatures: Although there are numerous enemies here, the heroes aren't expected to fight them all. In the third round of combat, when it's clear that the gray death's



Soul Bleed aura is going to kill everyone, the Gray Gardeners scatter into the city to meet up with others at prearranged rendezvous sites.

The gray death is obviously the greatest threat in the room. It focuses its attacks on the heroes as soon as any hero attacks it, using its Resentful Possession and Flailing Touch to target as many of them as possible. By the second round of combat, the heroes should realize that the gray death's Soul Bleed aura is affecting the partygoers more seriously than themselves. In the fourth round, everyone in the room of 13th level or lower dies from the aura's effects, their souls bled away into the churning, spectral mass.

GRAY DEATH

CREATURE 20

Page 68

Initiative Perception +33

XP Award: The heroes earn XP for defeating the gray death, but not for defeating the Gray Gardeners, as the Gray Gardeners don't fight back. If the heroes prevent a large number of the partygoers from being slain (such as by arranging another exit for them or by defeating the gray death before the fourth round), award them an additional 80 XP.

AFTER MIDNIGHT: THE WORM

As soon as the combat with the gray death is over, the conqueror worm makes its dramatic entrance.

The great black clock gives a single deep chime, though it's far too early for the next hour. The face of the clock creaks and explodes outward. Behind it, a titanic, pinkish worm uncoils and spills onto the blood-soaked floor with a squelch. As it raises its head, a psychic pressure—like a mental knot of paranoia and tension—washes across the room. In a deep, telepathic voice, it bellows, "Let all of Galt know the same death."

Creature: The conqueror worm tries to use *Silent Lenore's* connection to the other *final blades* throughout Galt and release the gray deaths within them all at once. If the heroes have broken the occult network before now, *Silent Lenore* can't be used as a trigger. Instead, *Silent Lenore* buckles under the weight of the conqueror worm's psychic efforts, shattering instantly into wooden splinters and metal shards.

The conqueror worm is surprised, but not dismayed; it has, as usual, prepared contingencies that it can enact, albeit in a time-consuming manner. The worm slithers beneath the hole in the ceiling and looks up to identify why the occult network has failed. The worm is more than 80 feet long, so it can raise its head nearly to the

ceiling. It identifies the broken occult connections and realizes that displaying the *final blade* so prominently was a mistake. The conqueror worm doesn't want to enact the ritual while exposed here in the upper monastery, so it casts *dimension door* to retreat to the crypts.

Though the conqueror worm ignores the heroes in this encounter, the heroes might not feel the same way. If the heroes attack the worm, it casts *time stop* to gain a few moments. During its additional action, it casts *dispel magic* against any effects the heroes might have used that would prevent its escape, then casts *dimension door* to retreat to the crypts.

This encounter should give the heroes a sense of the conqueror worm's great power and dismissive attitude, not provide them an Extreme difficulty encounter that they're unlikely to win after just facing off against the gray death!

CONQUEROR WORM

CREATURE 21

Page 66

Initiative Perception +37

The Aftermath

After the conqueror worm leaves, the heroes are alone in the ballroom, surrounded by corpses and the shattered remnants of the guillotine. The *greater nosoi charm* that Nellibet gave to the heroes twitters and then speaks with the zealot's voice. If the heroes failed to sever the connection between *Silent Lenore* and the other *final blades*, Nellibet explains that he found the focus chamber during his search of the monastery, and that he was able to deactivate the wall runes. He also says that he found two entrances to the crypts about an hour ago. He took the southern entrance and encountered a powerful psychic pressure, but pressed on. He was accosted by a sahkil he hadn't seen before, a compressed mass of flailing limbs that passed through a wall. Nellibet snatched away a piece of it and fled to undertake some study. But now, in the aftermath of the gray death attack, the people of Litran need his aid. He got what he'd come to the monastery for, anyway, so he doesn't plan to return.

Nellibet describes the route to the crypts through the monastery, suggests that perhaps the north stairs might be safer than the south stairs, and wishes the heroes luck. His last piece of advice is that the heroes rest; the crypts are dangerous, and it's best to go prepared for anything.

Heroes who follow Nellibet's directions find a pair of staircases leading down, one to the north and one to the south (these lead to areas L1 and L6, respectively). Although there's nothing stopping them from descending to the crypts right away, they don't yet know that time is an issue and should rest up from the rigors of the masque.



CHAPTER 3: WRITHING IN THE CRYPTS

MONASTERY CRYPTS

When the Gray Gardeners took over the abandoned monastery in Litran 50 years ago, it already had extensive, partially looted crypts. Beyond the crypts waited a cunning trap, still active despite the intervening years; by all appearances, no one had been able to bypass the trap since the monastery was first abandoned.

The Gray Gardeners worked tirelessly at the conqueror worm's command to bypass the trap and eventually succeeded. On the other side, they found untouched crypts, filled with treasures they then plundered to help finance their rise to power. They also discovered a ritual room holding a strange, violet pillar pulsing with hidden knowledge as well as a vaulted cathedral with the only evidence of the pantheon the monastery was built to venerate: a combination of Brigh, Nethys, Ng, and other lesser gods of knowledge. The hidden, lofty room appealed to the conqueror

worm's sensibilities, who has remained there since while orchestrating atrocities throughout Galt.

The Timetable

The conqueror worm must expedite its plans to unleash the murderous gray deaths across Galt. The Midnight Unmasking would've allowed the plan to proceed with little oversight. Now, the worm is forced to take an active role, and it must lead a complex ritual to unseal all of the gray deaths within the *final blades* at once. This ritual normally takes nine days to perform, but the conqueror worm worries that it might not have nine uninterrupted days. It therefore enlists its Gray Gardener minions in the crypts to help with this ritual.

The three worm prophets have spread out the ritual components among three groups of Gray Gardeners (in areas **L5**, **L9**, and **L12**). Each group that participates for a full day reduces the worm's ritual duration by

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1 day. Thus, if the heroes don't enter the crypts at all, the groups reduce the time by 3 days after the first day passes, and by 3 more days after the second day passes—meaning the conqueror worm unleashes the gray deaths on the third day.

The heroes can slow this process by defeating the Gray Gardeners performing the rituals, giving them more time to prepare for the fight with the conqueror worm in its lair. Another good reason to eliminate these minions is that the conqueror worm can't summon any worm prophets that the heroes have already vanquished to its side.

At this chapter's outset, the heroes don't know they're on a timer. The players should learn this detail quickly, however, and realize that their ultimate enemy could slip away from them. As soon as the heroes defeat any one of the three groups of Gray Gardeners in the crypts, each hero should attempt a DC 35 Occultism check or a DC 38 Arcana or Religion check (lower this DC by 5 for each group of Gray Gardeners the heroes defeat after the first group). On a success, a hero identifies subtle signs that the Gray Gardeners' ritual supports some other, greater ritual nearby and that there are other groups providing ritual support as well; with a successful check, the hero also realizes that the ritual's purpose is to unleash all the gray deaths within the *final blades* across Galt at once. A critical success reveals the number of days until the ritual completes.

XP Award: The first time the heroes succeed at the check to realize a multipart ritual is in progress, award them 80 XP.

Features of the Monastery Crypts

The monastery crypts consist of four wings around a trap that paralyzes and eviscerates intruders. The walls, floor, and ceiling of the monastery are made of chipped, millennia-old stone. Ceilings are 12 feet high throughout most of the monastery crypts, though in the southeast wing leading to the conqueror worm's chambers, the ceilings are 20 feet high. In the worm's lair, the vaulted ceiling is 30 feet high.

The doors are all old metal and 2 inches thick. Though heavy, the doors are cunningly hinged to open easily. All are unlocked, as these crypts serve as the private sanctum of the Gray Gardeners' leaders.

The stone around the crypts is infused with an old enchantment that repels moisture, digging, and magic that would penetrate the crypt's walls. These effects work within the crypts but not around them.

As the Gray Gardeners require light to see, *everburning torches* set into iron sconces in each room keep the crypts lit. These torches cast eerie shadows

CHAPTER 3 SYNOPSIS

In this chapter, the heroes descend into the crypts beneath the monastery to face the conqueror worm in its lair. This quest is doomed to disaster, however, unless the heroes can first eliminate the powerful worm prophets and learn how to stop the worm's psychic rebirth. Several powerful sahkils bar the heroes' way but can also provide necessary clues to defeat the conqueror worm once and for all.

and flicker ominously as long as any sahkils remain in the crypts, as the sahkils' malevolent presence gives this lighting a sinister effect. The crypts have a lingering, unpleasant smell of must and age.

The conqueror worm's oppressive psychic presence suffuses the crypts, though it comes from no discernible direction. Concentration is difficult, and all creatures feel slightly paranoid and tense. Long-term residents of the crypts, such as the worm prophets, are used to this effect and, in fact, find the psychic pressure of their quasi-deity comforting. The worm's psychic presence has two effects on the heroes. First, the DCs to Recall Knowledge within the crypts are increased by 2. Second, the DC of checks to successfully Cast a Spell while stupefied are 5 + twice the creature's stupefied value (instead of 5 + its stupefied value).

L1. Forlorn Stairs

Despite this staircase's wideness, the air feels close with a distinctly ominous pressure. Grooves in the steps hint at the innumerable feet that have stepped upon them over many centuries.

The guard station near the monastery's ballroom has two stairwells descending into the crypts, but they go in different directions. The north stairs lead to area L1, while the south stairs lead to area L6. Both carry the same sinister psychic weight that pervades the crypts.

L2. Armory

Low 18

Weapons of every description hang on racks in alcoves along the north wall. A suit of black leather armor hangs on one of the racks, shadows pooling unnaturally around it.

The director generals loan out the weapons here to Gray Gardeners in need of specific implements for murder. The weapon-filled room is a useful place to bring members from time to time, not only to outfit them with tools necessary for their tasks, but to

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remind them of the many ways a Gray Gardener could be punished for failing to complete a task.

Creatures: Two Gray Gardener enforcers are at work here, ensuring the weapons appear in good order. The enforcers intend to sweep through the countryside, murdering everyone the spirits within the *final blades* don't kill, and they look forward to this task with wicked glee. They consider oiling and sharpening the weapons an enjoyable pastime, but not as enjoyable as eliminating intruders who shouldn't be in the crypts.

These enforcers know all the director generals by sight, and they have orders to eliminate anyone else

who comes down here. When the heroes arrive, one of the enforcers intones, "You shouldn't be here..." and the other finishes "...but you'll never leave." They heft their spiked chains and attack.

GRAY GARDENER ENFORCERS (2)

CREATURE 17

Page 14

Initiative Perception +28

Treasure: The armor hanging here is *gloomkeeper's leather*, a suit of +3 *greater resilient greater invisibility greater shadow leather armor* that conceals the wearer's face in deep shadow at all times. The dozens of weapons hanging on the racks are all magical, but few have more than a +1 *weapon potency* rune or a *striking* rune; in total, they're worth 2,000 gp. Two weapons are better: a *greater flame tongue* and a +3 *major striking greataxe*. If your group includes a character who uses an uncommon weapon, such as an Aldori dueling sword or a filcher's fork, you might consider replacing the greataxe with a weapon of that type as an unexpected surprise.

L3. North Crypt

This wide space has a sinuous shape carved into the floor, like a serpent or a worm. Four metal doors along both the north and south walls each bear flat panels for nameplates, but rusty holes indicate that the nameplates have been removed. Some of the doors are open, revealing a small room that holds a large metal sarcophagus within each one.

The Gray Gardeners had no respect for the dead put to rest here. They opened all the crypts and plundered them for treasures shortly after their arrival 50 years ago. The Gray Gardeners even discarded the old bones and repurposed some of the burial rooms into storage or living chambers. As a final indignity, they removed all the nameplates and indicia, stripping the dead's identities.

This remodeling was most extreme in the southern rooms, where the Gray Gardeners knocked out walls to make a larger living space. The two central doors to the south don't open, as they're blocked by sarcophagi on the other side, as described in area L5.

The east wall has a metal door leading deeper into the crypt but also a strange wall of bricks described in area L4.

L4. Walled Chamber

Low 18

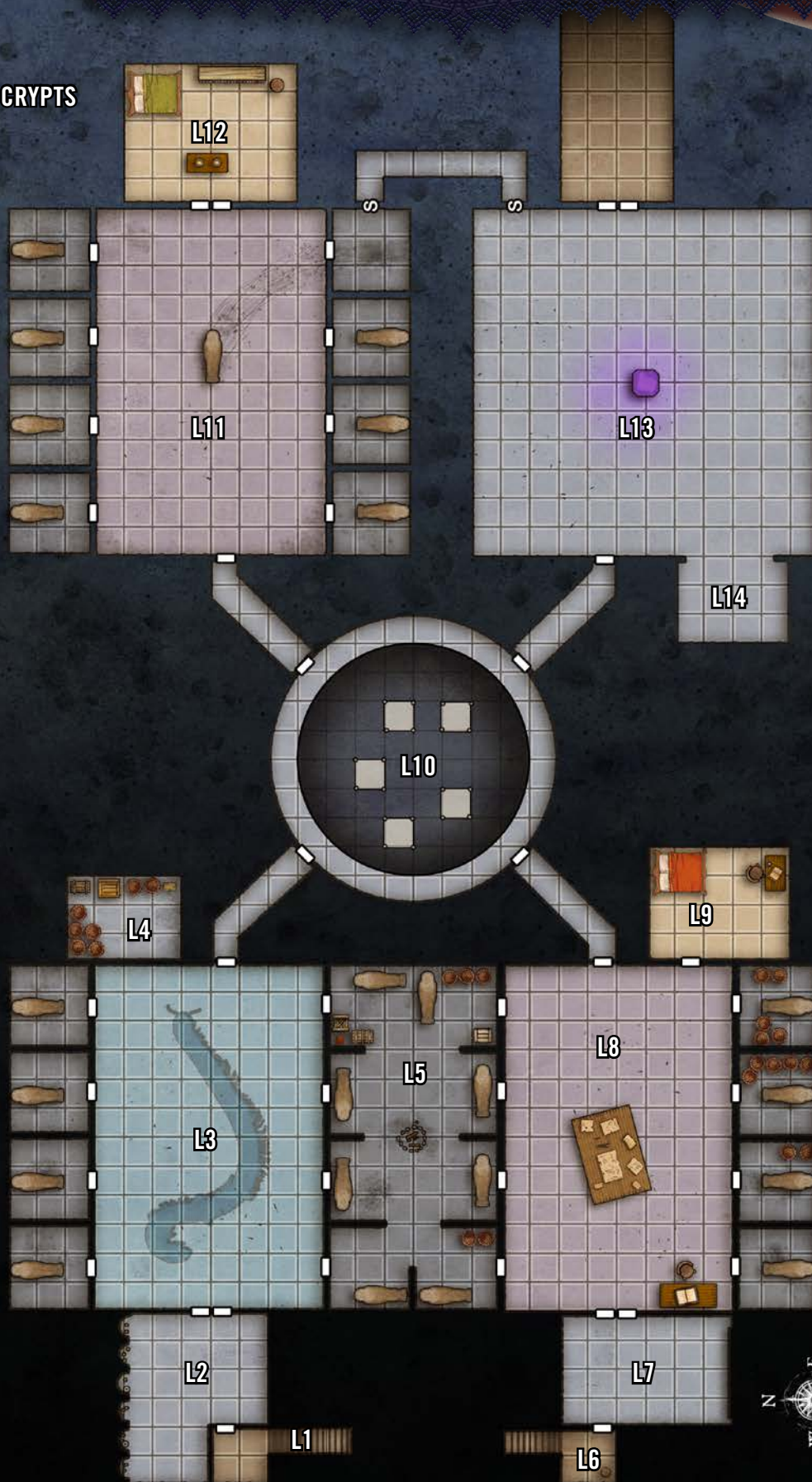
Hundreds of carefully stacked bricks separated by thin



Gray Gardener Enforcer

NIGHT OF THE GRAY DEATH

MONASTERY CRYPTS



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sheets of mortar make up this wall. Written upon the brick wall in chalk are the words: "Bound in Spirit. Do Not Remove Until Torment is Complete." Beneath the words is a complicated symbol made of chalk, powdered silver, and dried blood.

This ancient crypt was long ago emptied of its contents, and the Gray Gardeners living here simply used it to store wine and water casks. Recently, however, they discovered a more macabre use for the room. An elven diplomat from Kyonin and her attaché came to Galt to establish stronger negotiations with the Revolutionary Council. They never reached the council; the Gray Gardeners intercepted the pair and invited them to Litran. Eager for the opportunity to open diplomatic relations with the famously stoic

Gray Gardeners, the diplomat walked right into a trap. The conqueror worm had determined it best for the ambassador to simply vanish, as such a disappearance would engender suspicion in both the Revolutionary Council and the courts of the elven kingdom of Kyonin.

The elves were brought here, where the Gray Gardeners tortured them and left them to die, bricking up the opening to the chamber while they still lived. One of the worm prophets realized the elves' angry spirits were restless and quickly prepared the ritual to bind them in place.

With a successful DC 36 Occultism check, a hero can identify the symbol as an occult glyph to keep an ethereal creature bound. Defacing the symbol or removing any of the bricks causes the binding to burst like a popped soap bubble. On a critical success, the hero realizes that the binding specifically applies to incorporeal creatures, not to other creatures that travel ethereally; sahkils could therefore travel through the wall (and sometimes do, to torment the banshees within).

The plain interior of the room contains only a few empty wine casks and the broken corpses of the tortured elves.

Creatures: Two banshees are trapped on the other side of the brick wall, unable to leave due to the binding. One resembles an elegant elf woman wearing fine robes. The other elf is dressed more sensibly in traveling clothes. Both wear brooches bearing the symbol of the elvish nation of Kyonin (any hero who's at least trained in Society or Elf Lore recognizes the symbol immediately).

The banshees aren't grateful if released; they glide through the wall as soon as the binding breaks and attack any creatures they see in a mindless rage. They alternate using their wails and their hand Strikes. Both banshees fight until destroyed, but when the banshee diplomat is destroyed, a faint wisp of her ectoplasm coils through the air and into the open mouth of her corpse here in this room. This soul fragment allows the diplomat to speak with the heroes, as described below.

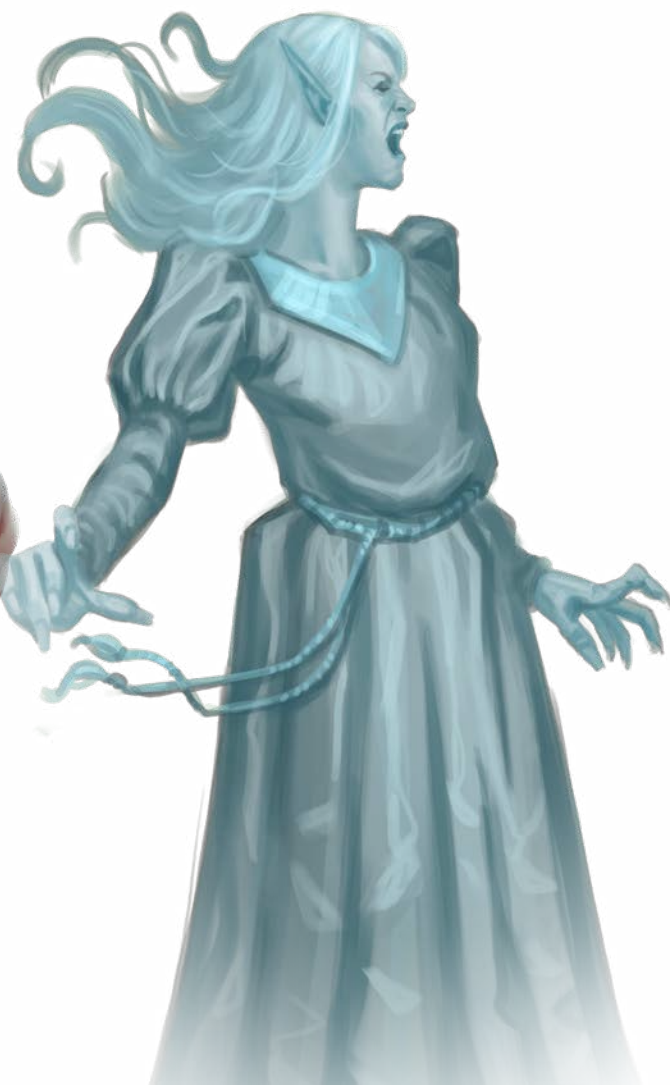
BANSHEES (2)

CREATURE 17

Pathfinder Bestiary 34

Initiative Perception +32

The Diplomat's Return: The fragment of the diplomat's spirit enables the corpse to speak for a few minutes, but only if a hero succeeds at a DC 38 Occultism or Religion check to put the spirit fragment at peace. If a hero fails this check, or if a few minutes pass without the heroes attempting to calm the spirit fragment, it moves on to the afterlife and can provide



Banshee

no aid. If the heroes calm the spirit fragment, the corpse speaks the following to the heroes.

"The worm at Galt's heart rises! It has three priests here in these crypts, enacting a dire ritual with the other Gray Gardeners. They seek to complete the evil scheme the worm began. Defeating the worm's priests will delay it, but to stop it entirely, you must defeat the worm here in the crypts. End its murderous reign of terror!"

The spirit fragment knows this information from what it witnessed in the mind of the worm prophet that bound it in the storage chamber. The fragment doesn't know the details of the Gray Gardeners' ritual, only that it can be stopped with the participants' deaths—something the spirit relishes. The spirit might know a little more that it can impart to the heroes, especially if you need to catch the players up on the conqueror worm's plans to propel them to action, but the spirit departs immediately after revealing what it knows.

Treasure: The two brooches found on the corpses are exquisite and worth 1,800 gp each. The diplomat's corpse wears a *dispelling sliver* on a thin bracelet.

XP Award: If the heroes learn the clue from the diplomat's spirit fragment, award them 80 XP.

L5. Sarcophagus Quarters

Low 18

The central walls between these burial vaults have been knocked down and the sarcophagi moved aside to create a living space. The middle of the room has a fireplace, and a makeshift kitchen sits atop one of the sarcophagi. Bedrolls and blankets indicate that people live here among the dead.

The director generals live here when they're deeply engaged in planning with the worm prophets. When the Midnight Unmasking went wrong, one of the director generals who had attended in disguise, a woman named Mateena Lumlin, retreated here with four assassins to protect her. She expected to simply hide out, but when the worm prophets told her she needed to partake in a ritual to rectify last night's setback, she jumped at the chance to prove herself. Neither she nor the assassins truly understand what the ritual is supposed to do, but they trust and obey the worm prophets.

Creatures: Director General Mateena Lumlin is a tall woman with short curly hair and a commanding presence. She's particularly vain about her appearance, and she considers it a significant sacrifice that she hides her features behind a featureless clay mask. Mateena's assassins are a motley group of enthusiastic throat-slitters who revel in the violence of their work.

The Gray Gardeners sit in a circle around the fireplace, which glows with a strange, blue flame due to rare salts and oils burning for the ritual. They aren't doing much other than meditating and occasionally throwing more ritual salts into the fire. Although they don't leave this area for fear of failing the worm prophets, they quickly mobilize to defend against intruders.

MATEENA LUMLIN

CREATURE 16

Female Gray Gardener director general (page 21)

Initiative Perception +28

Invaded Mateena is subject to the conqueror worm's Mental Invader effect (page 67), but she doesn't realize it.

GRAY GARDENER ASSASSINS (4)

CREATURE 14

Page 20

Initiative Perception +26

Mateena insists that the assassins defend her, but they're much more suited to skulking behind the sarcophagi and springing out at flat-footed creatures, so they don't do a very good job of keeping the heroes from attacking her. Mateena does her best to keep them off-balance with her Stern Glare and Whispers of Superiority. Mateena knows her reputation is on the line, so she fights to the death. Once Mateena is dead, any assassin reduced to fewer than 40 Hit Points flees.

The heroes might learn what the Gray Gardeners are doing here after the fight, as described in The Timetable on page 40.

Treasure: A pile of rare salts is worth 3,200 gp. One of the director generals who stays here from time to time hid a pouch with two *major healing potions* behind one of the sarcophagi. A hero Searching this room who succeeds at a DC 35 Perception check locates the pouch.

L6. South Landing

This landing has a single empty chair, as if a guard should be placed here. A wooden shield on the wall bears a bloodstained mask and some blocky writing.

The wooden shield bears a gruesome lesson for Gray Gardeners leaving the crypts. Painted above the blood-soaked gray mask are the words, "Your Mask Is Your Shield," and below it are the words, "Exposure Means Elimination." Just behind the mask, nailed to the shield, is a flayed, preserved face of a female elf. Heroes who met the traitor Gray Gardener Zintaya (see In the Dirt on page 24) recognize the face as hers.

Nellibet eliminated the single guard stationed here when he came down, evidenced by some recent bloodstains on the floor but nothing else.

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L7. Orders Chamber

The south wall of this stone room features a slate board with cramped writing and a large, stylized picture of an angry ghost.

Here, the director generals can give orders to Gray Gardeners for special assignments. Just as rank-and-file members of the Gray Gardeners don't get any further into the crypts than the armory (area L2) to the north, they aren't allowed any further than this room.

This slate board contains the last instruction the Gray Gardeners received—what the gray death was, and what it was going to do in the masque when

freed from *Silent Lenore*. The heroes probably already know most of the information about the gray death listed on the board: it's a composite of multiple trapped souls, it drains soul energy from everyone within an exceptionally large area around it, and its ghostly touch can paralyze its foes. Clearly, the Gray Gardeners were planning for the precise eventuality of its release.

Anyone who spends 10 minutes studying the lines of text can determine that the Gray Gardeners only cared for the safety of their higher-ranking members. The Gray Gardeners know that the gray death's soul-draining aura is particularly deadly for lower-level creatures, but they consider even their members expendable.

L8. Planning Room

Moderate 18

This wide room has eight crypt doors, four to the north and four to the south, each made of rusted metal with bare gaps where a plaque or plate was removed more recently. Other doors lead east and west. Maps cover a large table in the middle of this room. Nearby, a desk holds several writing instruments and old rags.

The director generals make their plans here, which they then communicate on a need-to-know basis to the Gray Gardeners in the adjacent orders chamber (area L7).

Like area L3, the Gray Gardeners have plundered and defaced all of the crypts here. The central two doors to the north don't open, as sarcophagi block them in area L5.

The maps detail the plans with the *final blades*, indicating that the Gray Gardeners have been moving the guillotines into the middle of Galt's population centers. The maps also indicate the locations of the *final blades*, including *Silent Lenore* and *Sharp-Tooth Hana* here in Litran; this map looks similar to the one Tristel Liendi of The People's Maps put together on her own. Around each *final blade* is a neat circle about a mile in diameter, marked "gray death confirmed fatalities." A larger circle about five miles in diameter around each is marked, "gray death likely fatalities." The intent to slaughter most of Galt's population is clear.

Also on the table is a log of orders delivered to Gray Gardeners throughout Galt. The recipients aren't named, but each order details methods to ensure that people flock to town centers and specifies a time frame of the past few days. The most common suggestion is to hold a public execution of a highly regarded public figure, guilt or innocence irrelevant. Where this approach seems insufficient to draw significant public interest, the Gray Gardeners should



Mateena Lumlin

NIGHT OF THE GRAY DEATH

imply that they'll solicit public opinion about the accused's guilt. Additional suggestions for driving population into the towns involve paying off bandits or monsters to make the countryside more dangerous or arranging for a large celebration. These orders plainly insinuate that Litran's Harvest Jubilee was part of this broader plan.

Creatures: A chakanaj sahkil lays on the desk, pretending to be an ordinary rag while keeping an eye on whoever comes and goes from this room. As soon as it notices the presence of intruders, it uses Skip Between to reach the Ethereal Plane and alerts the sahkils in the closed crypt to the southwest.

All the chakanajes then use Skip Between to flap out into the main chamber, above the maps, where they reappear and work to terrify the heroes with their spells. They resort to melee only if necessary.

The tumblak simply phases through the crypt door, bludgeoning with its flailing fists. It doesn't activate its Gasping Aura while the chakanajes are present because it doesn't want to endanger the smaller creatures. (This regard isn't out of any loyalty or affection, but only because the chakanajes are likely to draw some of the heroes' attention away from the tumblak.)

A sahkil reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points retreats to the Ethereal Plane and flees the crypts.

TUMBLAK

CREATURE 18

Page 71

Initiative Perception +33

CHAKANAJES (4)

CREATURE 14

Page 70

Initiative Perception +25

Treasure: Amid the maps is a *scroll of massacre* (10th level).

L9. Opulent Quarters

Moderate 8

This opulent chamber smells strongly of sweet incense. Tapestries hang on the walls, and a divan festooned with pillows stands against one wall. A brazier in the middle of the room glows with blue fire and emits a sharp scent that the incense doesn't quite cover.

This room belongs to Emindo Sallash, one of the three worm prophets. He's a small, sallow, unpleasant man whose face rarely goes without his distinctive sneer beneath his thin, silvery veil. Emindo likes fine things and has thus decorated his room with the grandest luxuries he could compel the Gray Gardeners to requisition.

When the conqueror worm insisted upon the ritual to complete its sinister plans to wipe out Galt, Emindo was hesitant. After all, without artisans and tailors and cheesemakers to produce the luxuries he desires, what will Galt hold for him? The worm could see into Emindo's shallow mind, however, and soothed the prophet with images of further wealth and glories to be had. Emindo therefore reluctantly began the ritual.

Creatures: Ever the scheming plotter, Emindo has convinced two director generals that he has feelings for them and wants each to join the worm prophets and partake of the deepest mysteries of the organization. He means no such thing, of course, and hasn't let either know that the other is also a contender for his favor. Both fawn over the worm prophet, which is just how he likes things. For now, however, the director generals are enacting the conqueror worm's ritual here with Emindo. They occasionally put piles of rare salts onto the brazier and take breaks to eat and take short naps.

The worm prophet is likely the first to notice the heroes, as he's least committed to enacting all the details of the ritual. He shrieks and demands the director generals defend him, and they quickly do so. Emindo casts *zealous conviction* on them, then casts defensive spells like *freedom of movement* on himself. He prefers to use ranged effects like *harm* and *spirit blast* for as long as he can. If forced into melee, he first casts *divine vessel* to take on the pallid, slimy appearance of a worm.

The director generals make elaborate sword cane Strikes to impress Emindo, using their other abilities as necessary to reduce the threat the heroes pose to him. The director generals fight to the death; once one is defeated, Emindo effusively assures the survivor that they were his favorite all along. Emindo knows that the conqueror worm will inflict terrible suffering on him if he flees, surrenders, or divulges anything about the worm's schemes, so he doesn't willingly do so.

If the heroes use magic to force Emindo to speak of the conqueror worm's plans, a *subconscious suggestion* compels him to contact the worm telepathically and accept its next mental spell. The conqueror worm casts *feeblemind* on Emindo, preventing him from disclosing anything of value. Despite Emindo's reluctance, the heroes might learn the purpose of the Gray Gardeners' ritual after the fight, as described in The Timetable on page 40.

WORM PROPHET

CREATURE 18

RARE LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human Gray Gardener high cultist

Perception +28

Languages Aklo, Common, Requian, Undercommon

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Skills Arcana +32, Crafting +32, Deception +36, Diplomacy +32, Intimidation +32, Occultism +34, Performance +32, Religion +32, Society +34

Str +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +6, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +6

Items +1 resilient chain shirt, silver veil, +2 greater striking dagger

AC 42; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +30, **Will** +33

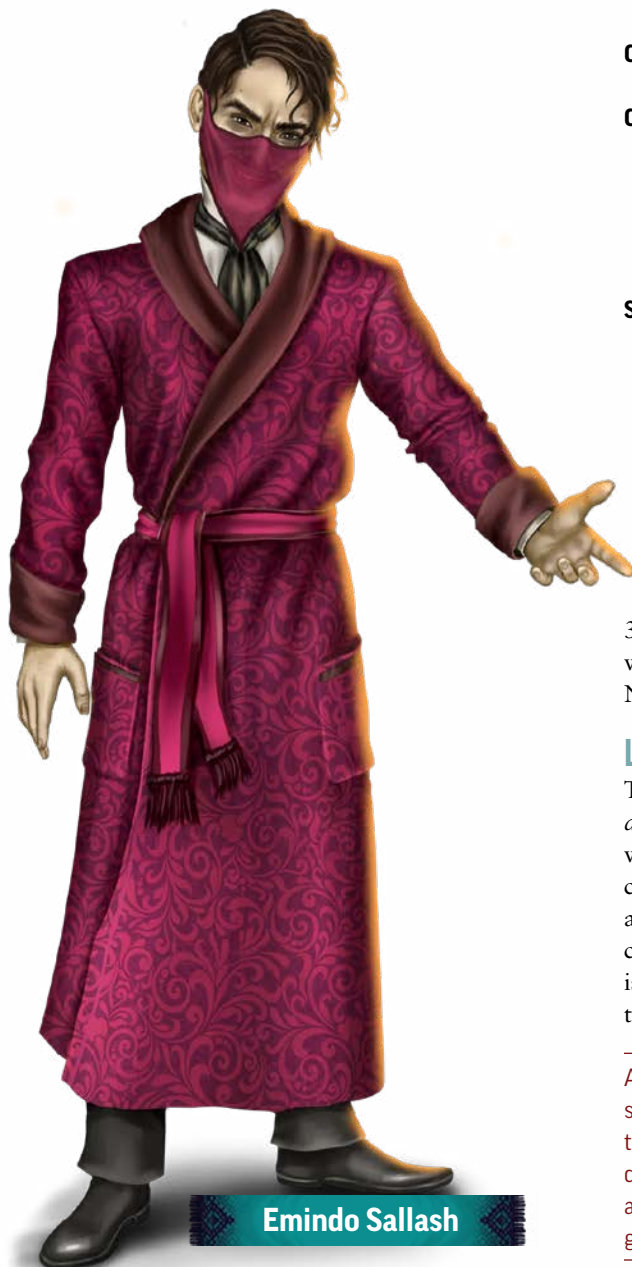
HP 335

Anonymity As Gray Gardener enforcer (page 14).

Invaded The worm prophet is subject to the conqueror worm's Mental Invader effect (page 67).

Gardener's Resolve ↻ As Gray Gardener enforcer (page 14).

Speed 25 feet



Emindo Sallash

Melee ♦ dagger +32 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 3d4+8 piercing

Ranged ♦ dagger +32 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 3d4+8 piercing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 40, attack +32; **9th** dispel magic, divine vessel, harm (×7), zealous conviction; **8th** (4 slots) discern location, spirit blast, spiritual epidemic, **7th** resist energy, spiritual guardian, warp mind; **6th** restoration, spellwrack, true seeing; **5th** death ward, drop dead, mind probe; **4th** charm, dream message, freedom of movement; **3rd** locate, neutralize poison, zone of truth; **2nd** calm emotions, death knell, enhance vituals; **1st** bane, mending, sanctuary; **Cantrips (9th)** detect magic, divine lance, forbidding ward, light, message

Cleric Domain Spells 2 Focus Points, DC 40; **9th** commanding lash, touch of obedience

Capture Spirit ↻ **Trigger** A target affected by one of the worm prophet's necromancy spells dies within 60 feet of the worm prophet; **Effect** The worm prophet harnesses a bit of the departing victim's soul, and the worm prophet is quickened 1 for 1 minute. They can use this extra action only to Step, Stride, or Sustain a Spell.

Steady Spellcasting If a reaction would disrupt the worm prophet's spellcasting action, the worm prophet attempts a DC 15 flat check. On a success, the action isn't disrupted.

DIRECTOR GENERALS (2)

CREATURE 16

Page 21

Initiative Perception +26

Treasure: The pile of rare salts here is worth 3,200 gp. Emindo's fine tapestries and pillows are worth a total of 5,000 gp but weigh 30 Bulk in total. Near the divan is a *possibility tome*.

L10. Pendulum Pit

Moderate 18

This room is covered with a permanent 9th-level *darkness* effect, so the heroes can't see anything within it unless they have greater darkvision. They can hear groaning from within the room, however, and a hero who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check identifies it as Keznin Nevarmo. If the darkness is dispelled or otherwise removed, read or paraphrase the following.

A yawning pit opens in the floor of this circular room. Five stone platforms hover over it, each anchored to the ceiling thirty feet above by heavy chains. Each platform bears dried bloodstains. One has a suit of broken and empty armor on it, and another contains a slumped figure that groans feebly.

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The rent suit of full plate armor is from a prior prisoner. It's cleaved nearly in half by a single blade of extraordinary force, providing a clue as to the danger of the room. The platforms aren't hard to reach by jumping, as they aren't far apart, but disturbing a platform triggers the trap. The Gray Gardeners are always cautious when traversing the space, as they haven't yet determined how to disable the trap for good; they simply move slowly and carefully around the perimeter in the darkness. The chains are easy to Climb with a DC of 15.

The pit in this room descends forever, as the bottomless pit trap (*Core Rulebook* 524), but tendrils of tugging force make climbing out of the pit particularly difficult. Anyone falling into the pit continues to fall, potentially forever. A creature can try to Grab an Edge to avoid falling, and every 6 seconds during a fall. The DC to Climb the pit walls or Grab an Edge is 40. If a creature Grabs an Edge while falling, it can start to Climb out from that point, though it might be a very long climb, depending on how far the creature fell. Since the creature falls endlessly, it can rest and even prepare spells while falling, though items dropped while falling are usually lost forever.

Teleportation effects don't work in this room or for the upper 1 mile of the bottomless pit.

Hazard: This entire room is a single, intricate trap. When any of the platforms are touched or anything is dropped into the pit (including a character who stumbles into it, even if the character Grabs an Edge), the entire room rotates to block off the exits. Five swinging pendulums of force sweep across the platforms and attack any creatures in the room.

PENDULUM PIT

HAZARD 20

COMPLEX MAGICAL MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +36 (legendary) to realize the chamber is a complex rotating trap before it triggers. No check is necessary to notice the platforms and the pit.

Description Several swinging pendulums of force cleave through the room across the platforms, knocking people into the pit.

Disable DC 48 Arcana (legendary), DC 44 Thievery (master), or *dispel magic* (9th level; counteract DC 44) on a platform to deactivate its pendulum blade; once all five platforms have been deactivated, the trap is disabled and the room rotates back into position along the exits. DC 48 Thievery (legendary) from any blocked exit to activate the rotating mechanism and rotate the room back into position before the trap has been disabled.

Locking Room ➤ **Trigger** A creature disturbs any of the platforms, or anything falls into the pit; **Effect** The room

rotates 45 degrees, closing off the room by shifting its exits to face bare walls. A pendulum of force swings across the platform with the armor on it, knocking the armor into the pit and making a pendulum blade Strike against a creature on that platform (if any). The trap then rolls for initiative.

Routine (5 actions) For each active platform, the trap uses an action to create a pendulum of force to swing down along a straight line between the platform and one other creature in the room that isn't on the platform (if any). The trap makes a pendulum blade attack against any creature in that line. For each platform deactivated, reduce the number of actions the trap takes in its routine by 1.

Melee pendulum blade +38 (fatal d12, force, magical), **Damage** 4d10+22 force damage plus pendulum shove; no multiple attack penalty

Pendulum Shove A creature hit by a pendulum blade must succeed at a DC 44 Reflex save or be moved 5 feet along the line of the pendulum's swing. This is forced movement.

Reset The trap resets after 1 hour. If the *darkness* throughout the room has been dispelled, the *darkness* in the room returns when the trap resets.

Creature: The slumped figure is Keznin Nevarmo, whom the Gray Gardeners kidnapped shortly after the start of the masquerade this evening. They've beaten him badly and chained him to the platform with a sturdy manacle (DC 40 Athletics check to Force Open, or five successful DC 40 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock keeping the manacle closed). He's drifting in and out of consciousness and doesn't remember how he got here; he also isn't aware that the room is trapped. Keznin wasn't entirely senseless during his ordeal, however; he remembers someone referring to an important ritual and how the three groups performing it mustn't be disturbed, or the "great worm" wouldn't be able to "enact its plans for Galt." Keznin thinks he heard "great worm," but believes that's nonsense from his addled state and opines that maybe it was "great one," instead.

Keznin's recent imprisonment isn't just bad luck. The conqueror worm knows Keznin is an ally of the heroes who have been stirring up trouble recently. The worm has invaded Keznin's mind with its Mental Invader ability, although it doesn't use this link except as insurance in the event it needs to use Telepathic Escape to someone other than its worm prophets.

As it's in the conqueror worm's interests to keep Keznin alive, he's manacled to the platform in such a way that the pendulums in this room can't hit him. The heroes might think it's fortunate that the trap

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hasn't injured their ally, but it's part of the conqueror worm's plan.

KEZNIN NEVARMO

CREATURE 9

Page 8

Initiative Perception +18

Invaded Keznin is subject to the conqueror worm's Mental Invader effect (page 67), but he doesn't realize it.

L11. Crypt of Ghosts

Moderate 18

A stone sarcophagus stands in the center of this room. Four metal doors line both the north and south walls, all missing nameplates. Deep gouges in the floor indicate

that the sarcophagus was hauled from the southeast door, which stands partly ajar.

The worm prophets had the sarcophagus hauled out of the southwestern room so they could construct a secret passage to area L13; they didn't trust the trapped room and wanted a faster, safer way to reach the conqueror worm in the crypt's deepest chambers. The secret door in that room is nevertheless skillfully hidden; a hero Searching that small crypt must succeed at a DC 30 Perception check to locate it.

Creatures: Two tumblaks rest in the sarcophagus, compressed together in a way they find soothing. If the heroes make substantial noise in this room, or if they disturb the sarcophagus, the tumblaks emerge from either side. Initially thinking the worm prophets have come to ask them for some task, so they don't have their Gasping Auras active. Once the tumblaks realize the heroes aren't worm prophets, they activate their suffocating aura and attack. Once a tumblak is defeated, the other skips to the Ethereal Plane, alerts the kimenhul in area L13 to the presence of intruders, then returns. Once it comes back, this tumblak fights to the death.

TUMBLAKS (2)

CREATURE 18

Page 71

Perception +33

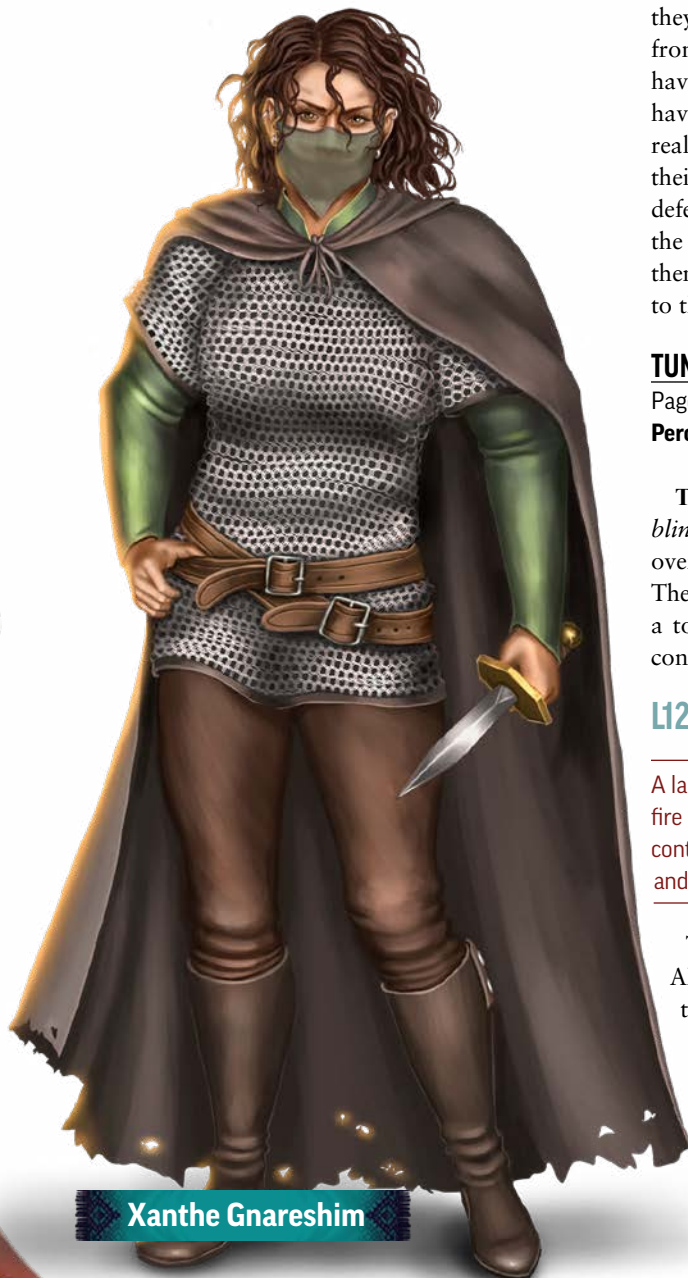
Treasure: The sarcophagus contains a *dread blindfold*. The tumblaks realized the Gray Gardeners overlooked it when they plundered the crypts long ago. They didn't see the need to offer the Gray Gardeners a tool that could be used to inflict fear—the sahkils consider that to be their purview.

L12. Priest Chambers

Moderate 18

A large altar stands in the middle of this room, a small blue fire burning in a bowl atop it. The east side of the room contains living quarters: a large bed, a makeshift kitchen, and a pair of desks.

Two worm prophets, Xanthe Gnareshim and Alessandra Yalbol, share this room. They've risen through the ranks of the Gray Gardeners, each trying to outdo the other, and learned independently about the conqueror worm (Xanthe through clever divination rituals; Alessandra because she captured, interrogated, and murdered two prior worm prophets). When the conqueror worm elevated both simultaneously to the ranks of its close disciples, each was livid at the



Xanthe Gnareshim

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other's advancement—especially when Emindo took the other available room all for himself, leaving them to share.

The blue fire is part of the ritual to reduce the time the conqueror worm's ritual takes. A pile of rare salts sits on the altar next to the bowl. As Xanthe is well-practiced with rituals, the pair can take more time away from the ritual without it faltering, so they spend as much time apart as they can. They might even peek out into area **L11** if the heroes are noisy.

Heroes might realize the bowl and salts are part of a ritual, as described in *The Timetable* on page 40.

Creatures: Xanthe is a tall, pale woman with untidy brown hair and a piercing glare visible through her silvery veil. She created the ritual that allows the Gray Gardeners to expedite the conqueror worm's ritual. Xanthe assumes that this aid has made her the conqueror worm's favorite and is toying with the idea of adopting the title of "High Prophet" for herself. She has dreams of ruling Galt's few survivors in the wreckage of the nation after the ritual completes.

Alessandra is a short, dark-skinned woman with tight curls and a veil that only covers the top half of her face. Beneath it, she always bears a wide, false smile. Alessandra doesn't have ideals nearly as lofty as Xanthe's; ever fixated upon death and suffering, she's mostly just excited to help further the conqueror worm's large-scale murder across Galt. Seeing the country become a pile of corpses would be reward enough for her.

The worm prophets each cast *divine vessel* right away, stretching into worm-like forms that reflect the conqueror worm itself. They prefer to erect some protections, like *spiritual guardian*, before relying on their damaging spells, like *harm* and *spirit blast*. Both worm prophets fight to the death. If a hero kills one of the worm prophets, the survivor focuses all her attacks on that hero in an attempt to enact swift revenge.

WORM PROPHETS (2)

CREATURE 18

Page 47

Perception +28

Treasure: The pile of rare salts here is worth 3,200 gp. A major serene mutagen and a vial of black lotus extract are on the counter in the makeshift kitchen, though Alessandra switched their labels to give any thieves an unpleasant surprise.

L13. Ritual Room

Moderate 18

This surprisingly lofty room has several grooves carved into the stone of the floor in wide spirals,

giving a disorienting feeling of falling. The room's center features a shallow depression from which a pillar of strange, purple stone rises. The pillar is five feet wide and ten feet high.

The original monastery builders came upon the pillar of stone deep underground and built this room around it. They found it to be an ideal location for rituals, particularly those that called upon lost knowledge or expanded the mind. The conqueror worm and the Gray Gardeners occasionally used this room for the same purpose, but once they contacted the sahkils in



Alessandra Yalbol

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the adjoining Ghost Chamber (area L14), they gave this room over to the sahkils. The conqueror worm considered this arrangement an advantage, as the sahkils now guard the only access to its inner lair.

The carvings around the room were once perfect concentric circles, to aid in concentration, but when the sahkils took over the room, they made subtle alterations to the stonework. The circles are now tilted and joined to become a jagged spiral, giving viewers an unpleasant disorientation rather than a sense of calm.

The long passage to the east slopes downward to area L15.

The Amaranthine Pillar: This pillar draws energy and wisdom from the depths of the earth.

The pillar itself isn't intelligent, but it nevertheless has a

purpose: to inform natural creatures of the dangers posed by aberrant monsters and extraplanar invaders. The purple pillar exudes an aura of powerful divination magic.

Creatures touching the pillar instantly know the *legend lore* ritual (*Core Rulebook* 413), though this version has two exceptions. First, the ritual takes only an hour to perform, although no creature can perform the ritual (as a primary or secondary caster) more than once each day. Second, the pillar stands opposed to aberrations, fiends, celestials, and monitors. If any primary or secondary caster is one of those types, reduce the degree of success of the primary skill check by one step; conversely, if the ritual's subject is one of those types, increase the degree of success of the primary skill check by one step. The pillar is thus difficult for sahkils or the conqueror worm to use, but getting information about either of them is easier.

Touching the pillar also imparts a generalized knowledge of the last research subject of the ritual. This ability formerly let the monastery inhabitants build upon one another's knowledge, but it now lets the heroes know what the occupant of this room has been doing with it.

Creature: With its great plan coming to fruition, the conqueror worm insisted that the most powerful of the sahkils, a kimenhul known as the Three-Faced Regent, guard this room and not let anyone other than the worm prophets past. The Three-Faced Regent is a minor noble in the sahkil realm of Xibalba and wouldn't normally want to spend its time on guard duty; however, due to its curiosity about the Amaranthine Pillar, it doesn't consider this obligation much of a burden. It is secretly scheming against the conqueror worm and trying to learn a means to steal its phenomenal psychic powers.

When the heroes first arrive, the Three-Faced Regent knows they don't belong, but it hopes to get some use out of the heroes before eliminating them. It holds up one of its monstrous claws and requests a parley, as described below. If the heroes don't agree, it's perfectly willing to attack immediately, but it's genuine in its request to speak.

Once a fight breaks out, the Three-Faced Regent fights until reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points, at which point it flees through the Ethereal Plane.

THREE-FACED REGENT

CREATURE 20

Kimenhul (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 222)

Initiative Perception +35 or Deception +38

Using the Pillar: The Three-Faced Regent explains that the Amaranthine



Three-Faced Regent



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Pillar is a repository of knowledge, but the sahkil has yet to unlock any of the knowledge it seeks. The sahkil admits that it serves the conqueror worm in the chambers to the east but that it also deems it prudent to learn as much as possible about its master. The Three-Faced Regent's attempts to learn more about the conqueror worm via the pillar have thus far failed. If the heroes agree to access the knowledge on the sahkil's behalf, not only will it let them live, but it will also answer any three questions they have. The sahkil is lying; it intends to reward heroes who serve it with their deaths, and it doesn't plan to give them any information at all.

If the heroes agree, the sahkil explains how to enact the *legend lore* ritual with the pillar. The heroes can use it as described on page 52, and the kimenhul ensures their safety while they do. (As usual for a 7th-level ritual, the primary check has a DC of 37 and the secondary checks have a DC of 32.) If no hero has the master proficiency in Occultism necessary to serve as the primary caster, it gives a tripartite sigh of exasperation and attacks.

A hero touching the pillar learns that the Three-Faced Regent has been researching the conqueror worm's ability to escape death by projecting its consciousness elsewhere. They also learn that the conqueror worm has this ability but don't gain any information about it without performing the *legend lore* ritual (for the purposes of the ritual, the heroes have more than vague information, as they've faced the worm before, and the worm is considered present due to being here in the crypts). On a success, the heroes learn the details of the conqueror worm's telepathic escape ability (page 66), but they'll have to use other means to determine who the worm has currently invaded (such as through divination effects or even subsequent uses of the Amaranthine Pillar). On a critical success, the primary caster sees flashes of everyone currently subject to the conqueror worm's Mental Invader ability: the three worm prophets, Director General Mateena Lumlin (area L5), and the herbalist Keznin Nevarmo. The worm plans to eventually rebuild its network to the maximum of 10 people, but it's currently preoccupied with completing its ritual.

Treasure: A chest in the room's corner contains rare incense worth 1,200 gp. There was plainly much more incense here, but the kimenhul has used up most of it in fruitless attempts to enact the Amaranthine Pillar's ritual.

XP Award: Award the heroes 80 XP for using the *legend lore* ritual. Increase this amount to 120 XP if they learn the specific individuals subject to the conqueror worm's Mental Invader ability.

L14. Ghost Chamber

The rounded walls of this small alcove cause sounds to bounce strangely, creating a susurrus of whispers.

This natural chamber near the Amaranthine Pillar provides an unusually close connection to the Ethereal Plane. The original builders of the monastery smoothed its walls but had little use for it. The Gray Gardeners, however, found it the ideal place to contact the sahkils that were already drawn to the fear and terror the Gardeners had sowed throughout Galt.

Recent scratches in the floor and some residue of powdered silver are the only remaining evidence of the Gray Gardeners' summoning rituals. A hero Searching the room finds them automatically, but a character must succeed at a DC 25 Arcana or Occultism check to identify them as residual components of a *planar binding* ritual. On a critical success, the hero realizes that the *planar binding* called creatures from the Ethereal Plane and that the plane is metaphysically closer here. Characters in this chamber have a +2 bonus to skill checks for effects that call creatures from (or send creatures to) the Ethereal Plane.

L15. The Collapse

The wide passage from area L13 extends steeply downward for 100 feet before opening into the vaulted chamber where the conqueror worm resides.

Part of the ceiling of this vaulted chamber collapsed some time in the past, making for a wall of rock just ahead. A wide opening to the north opens into a well-lit room with an altar at its center.

The collapse provides only 5 feet of space to squeeze by to area L17. This space is likely sufficient for the heroes, if they want to avoid the visitation shrines to the north, but it isn't wide enough for the conqueror worm—it must circle around through the visitation shrines if it wants to leave its lair.

L16. Visitation Shrines

The walls have been removed from these three chambers, creating a connected series of rooms with a shrine in each. Lit braziers burn in the corners, casting ominous and flickering shadows.

Each of these rooms is dedicated to one of the major deities of the monastery's pantheon. The wall behind the altar in the west room bears the symbol of a black and white mask. The wall in the central room features

the image of a hooded, shrouded head. The wall in the east room bears the symbol of a clockwork mask. Any hero trained in Religion recognizes the west symbol as that of Nethys, god of knowledge and magic. The other two deities are slightly more obscure; a hero who's expert in Religion or who succeeds at a DC 18 Religion check identifies the hood symbol as that of Ng, god of secrets and travelers, and the clockwork mask as the symbol of Brigh, goddess of inventions and knowledge.

The ancient monastery's inner circle came to these three rooms to meditate and receive a spiritual visitation from one of the deities of their pantheon. Though their symbols remain, these principal deities won't answer calls here any longer.

When the Gray Gardeners arrived, they had little use for the religions on display here. They nevertheless adopted the suggestions of the iconography, wearing masks and hoods to conceal their identities.

L17. Worm's Lair

Severe 18

The rounded walls of this lofty chamber meet at a vaulted ceiling thirty feet high. Three statues of robed scholars stand at three ends of the room; one is toppled and broken into pieces. Several unusual images swim on the walls: market squares and city plazas throughout Galt, each with a sinister guillotine at its center. Tendrils of shimmering energy connect the images to each other.

The broken statue on the ground is greater difficult terrain. The rest of the floor is clear but covered with a thin layer of greasy mucus from the conqueror worm's movements around the chamber (see the map on the inside back cover). The images show the several dozen *final blades* across Galt. The images are all psychic projections from the conqueror worm's mind, as are the ephemeral psychic connections linking them together. If the conqueror worm is defeated, the images and the psychic connections between them immediately wink out.

Creatures: The conqueror worm lays in this chamber, undertaking its ritual to free the gray deaths from the *final blades*. When it notices the heroes' presence, it decides to taunt them with its power and perhaps avoid a confrontation. It has just enough energy to release a gray death from one *final blade*, but it knows the heroes have no idea its power is limited. If the heroes give the conqueror worm a chance to speak, it demonstrates its power by destroying a city in front of them.

The massive worm's telepathic voice rolls in overpowering waves. "Ah, too late. See here. Witness Galt's first

death throes." One of the scenes shows a plaza packed with people despite a steady downpour. The worm makes a tugging motion on a shimmering tendril, and the guillotine in the plaza shudders. A huge spectral form begins clawing its way free of the guillotine as the townspeople scream and turn to flee before falling dead on the rain-soaked cobblestones. "I have an offer to make you, and I make it only once: name me one city in Galt to be spared and leave this place at once. The city you name shall be the sole survivor among all the settlements in this tiresome land."

A character who succeeds at a DC 20 Society check realizes that the town under attack is Halvon, more than a hundred miles away.

Perceptive heroes can notice two lies in the conqueror worm's offer. First, a hero who succeeds at a DC 36 Arcana or Occultism check realizes that the worm expended a significant amount of the network's psychic energy to make its ghastly demonstration and that it can't trigger another attack until it completes its ritual. Second, the conqueror worm has no intention whatsoever of sparing any city in Galt. Whether the heroes name a single city or insist on sparing more than one, the conqueror worm glibly agrees but is lying. Its Deception DC is 51, so only the most perceptive heroes have a chance of detecting its lies.

Leaving the conqueror worm, even for a short period of time, is a mistake. The worm prepares for an inevitable confrontation by casting *foresight* and *mind blank*. It then tries to capture each hero with its Mental Invader ability. It attempts to cast *telepathic demand* on the heroes, one after the other, commanding the hero to tell the worm when and how the heroes plan to return, and uses Mental Invader on any hero who fails this saving throw. If this approach doesn't ensnare all the heroes, it instead casts *sending* on each of them in turn to make outrageous offers, such as positions as its newest worm prophets or leadership of a Galtan city. The specifics of these communications aren't as important as goading the hero into a response; once a hero responds, the conqueror worm can target that hero with Mental Invader. Shaking off the effects of Mental Invader—particularly if the heroes realize the conqueror worm can use them to come back to life if killed—might take them long enough for the conqueror worm to complete its ritual.

A fight is inevitable, sooner or later. The conqueror worm first uses Muster Minions to call the three worm prophets to its side. It doesn't keep close tabs on the worm prophets while distracted by the ritual, so it might not realize if the heroes have already dispatched them. Whether this ability succeeds or fails,



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the conqueror worm casts powerful mental spells like *dominate* and *overwhelming presence* to incapacitate the heroes, then uses its Breath Weapon and jaws Strike to finish them off.

The conqueror worm is boastful if it has any creatures under its Mental Invader effect, as it's confident that it can return from death. If the heroes have eliminated everyone in the conqueror worm's mental network, it tries desperately to use Mental Invader against at least one hero. In either case, the conqueror worm fights to the death, unwilling to admit defeat so close to a satisfying conclusion to its decades-long scheme.

CONQUEROR WORM

CREATURE 21

Page 66

Perception +33

WORM PROPHETS (UP TO 3)

CREATURE 18

Page 47

Perception +28

Treasure: The base of the toppled statue has a hidden niche that anyone Searching it can find. This niche contains a *third eye*. The conqueror worm knows that this treasure is there but hasn't yet found any use for it. If the worm thinks the heroes are susceptible to a bribe, it might offer the *third eye* to get them to depart.

L18. Blade Enchantment

Several large wooden tables stand against the walls of this room. Underneath each table are several flat sheets of sharpened metal: guillotine blades.

In this room, the conqueror worm and the worm prophets enchant the sharpened metal used in the creation of the *final blades*. Enchanting a blade takes months of laborious effort and expensive reagents. The process isn't finished until the worm prophets deliver the new blade to a director general, who oversees placing it into a wooden frame to create a new *final blade*. The specifics of the ritual are hinted at in notes on the table, but new *final blades* can't be made without the conqueror worm's specific knowledge.

Fortunately, the notes hint at a way to undo the enchantment. A hero who succeeds at a DC 36 Arcana or Occultism check to Decipher Writing pieces together the *blunt the final blade* ritual (page 63), which provides the only known method of destroying the *final blades*. With this new ritual in hand, the heroes can eventually destroy all the *final*

ARRIVING TOO LATE

Despite the clues that they should hurry, the heroes might take too much time to reach the conqueror worm. If it finishes its ritual, Galt is reduced to a virtually lifeless wasteland, and dozens of incredibly powerful undead creatures ravage the land, killing everyone they find. The illusionary visions here don't show the ritual in effect, but rather Galt's cities after its completion: corpses litter the streets, and the spectral gray deaths roam freely as the conqueror worm gloats in its victory. The heroes can (and should!) still vanquish the conqueror worm here, but a campaign in Galt is a very grim one after this defeat.

blades in Galt and put the Gray Gardeners' reign of terror to end at last.

Treasure: The reagents here include 25,000 gp of rare oils and onyx gems. Although these reagents were set aside to create the *final blades*, they serve equally well to meet the cost of the *blunt the final blade* ritual.

XP Award: Award the heroes 80 XP for discovering the *blunt the final blade* ritual.

CONCLUSION

The adventure ends once the heroes defeat the conqueror worm. This victory renders the Gray Gardeners not only leaderless, but without the network of psychic manipulation that allowed their order to thrive. Even if any of the worm prophets survive—which is unlikely—the survivors scatter and look to their own fates, leaving Galt behind.

The heroes' victory isn't without cost. Depending on the course of their encounter with the conqueror worm, the town of Halvon might no longer exist. Many dignitaries from across Galt were slain during the masquerade, and the resulting confusion and power vacuums will likely prompt cutthroat intrigue as the nation stabilizes again. Camilia Drannoch leads this stabilization, and she makes no secret of the fact that the heroes are the ones responsible for saving Galt. Public holidays and events honoring the heroes' service spring up across the nation.

The greater service to Galt is to find and make use of the *blunt the final blade* ritual. Many people believe that souls of the beheaded are trapped within the *final blades*, but once they see the ritual in action, they realize the malign truth of the rumor. Every *final blade* destroyed is one step closer to safety and peace of mind for the people of Galt.



LITRAN GAZETTEER

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Though the secret police and executioners known as the Gray Gardeners strike terror throughout Galt, in no place are they more feared than the city of Litran. Here, the imposing monastery that serves as the secretive order's headquarters looms in the skyline above the city. Any beggar, merchant, or minister could be under a Grey Gardener's mask; thus, Litran is a city gripped by fear and suspicion. While the Gray Gardeners' presence may make it more peaceful than other Galtan cities, it is no more safe.

The Gray Gardeners came to Litran 54 years ago, during the Red Revolution in which Galt declared its bloody independence from Imperial Cheliox. Litran has always been a hub of commerce and agriculture for the region thanks to its bountiful plains and wide river suitable for navigation. Once, Litran hosted good-natured rivalries between farmers, ranchers, and fisherfolk at its teeming markets, to everyone's benefit. Now, it's a grim and gloomy city where factions fight against each other, assassinations and executions are commonplace, and everyone dances as the Gray Gardeners pull their strings.

LITRAN

SETTLEMENT 12

CN CITY

Agricultural hub and headquarters to a grim guild of executioners

Government civic administrators overseen by the Gray Gardeners

Population 4,990 (84% humans, 8% halflings, 3% gnomes, 3% elves, 2% other)

Languages Common

Rampant Suspicion No one in Litran knows who might be a Gray Gardener in disguise. NPCs are reluctant to make deals openly and begin with an attitude one step worse than usual toward everyone.

Babry Wrenolus (N male human bureaucrat 9) Finance Minister

Keznin Nevarmo (NG male tengu herbalist 9) Proprietor of Soul Mother's Herbs

Otvald Gharmino (LN male human judge 11) High Magistrate
Raina Carlezio (CN female human duchess 7) Patron of the arts

Zintaya Calbieste (NE female elf advocate 14) Secretary of the Farming Cooperative

GEOGRAPHY

Situated where the flat, fertile Horun Plain meets the Stormflood River, Litran stands between the bounty of the land and the easy access of the water. The terrain throughout Litran is mostly flat, with the singular exception of the dark thrust of rock at the river's edge, upon which the Gray Gardeners' monastery looms over the city like a grim tombstone. The Stormflood River makes a sharp turn to the east as it flows north to the Sellen River, its flow steady and strong but not dangerous. Despite its name, the Stormflood River rarely spills over its banks and floods the town—there are wide, marshy areas north of the city where the floodwaters spread instead.

Nearly all of the land within miles of Litran is under cultivation. Most of it is devoted to raising grain, but grassy pastures for grazing livestock, enormous orchards in long rows, and fields of colorful flowers also march to the horizon. Tall rows of trees or dense hedges screen the major roadways leading away from the city and demarcate old property lines, giving the region a patchwork look.

The land around Litran is tamed, but it's not safe. Bandit activity has been on the rise in recent years, and rumors of shapeshifting monsters that pose as poor travelers to eat the unwary circulate throughout the region. The Stormflood River hosts many capricious fey creatures who resent the intrusion of river commerce.

PEOPLE OF LITRAN

Approximately 5,000 people reside in Litran, though the precise number of people living in the Gray Gardeners' monastery is unknown. Nearly twice as many people

LITRAN



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live in the farms, ranches, and fishing villages within a day's ride of the city. Although city residents aren't likely to consider these far-flung laborers their equals, they all consider Litran to be the social focus of the region.

People in Litran tend to be suspicious, tense, and unwelcoming. When they have business with one another, they often complete it quickly and with only a veneer of politeness. This attitude is unsurprising, as residents of Litran are closest to the Gray Gardeners' arbitrary justice, the betrayals of friends who become informants, and suspicious disappearances and assassinations.

A significant majority of the population are Taldan humans, but elves, gnomes, and halflings aren't uncommon. Class plays a much larger role in dividing the people of Litran than ancestry does: laborers occupy the bottom of the social ladder, with farmers, ranchers, merchants, and skilled tradespeople located only slightly above them (mostly because they employ much of the laborer class). Wealthy merchants and professionals make up the highest class, with aristocrats who've been able to retain their holdings being most influential of all. The Gray Gardeners stand outside this distinction. Ostensibly, it's because a Gray Gardener might be anyone, from the lowliest dungsweeper to the wealthiest landowner, so they eschew the allegiance of any class. In truth, it's because everyone in Litran fears the Gray Gardeners.

The gulf between the upper classes and the lower classes is wide; Litran has no functioning middle class. The Gray Gardeners realized long ago the best way to divert attention from themselves was to ensure that everyone in Litran had a clear enemy. They stoked the fires of greed and paranoia among the upper classes, whispering that the lower classes were trying to take away their wealth and influence. They then fanned the flames of rebellion in the lower classes, asking why everyone couldn't have what the wealthy were hoarding for themselves.

In other parts of Galt, the common people have successfully risen against the elite time and time again. Two things keep Litran locked in more precarious and permanent class warfare. The first is the open fear of the Gray Gardeners. Revolution in Galt is a bloody affair, and few dare to take the necessary steps to lead a rebellion in the shadow of the monastery. The second is the subtle influence of the Gray Gardeners, who secretly funnel money back into the coffers of Litran's elite and look the other way when the wealthy have budding radicals assassinated. The class tension serves the Gray Gardeners, and so, ultimately, nothing changes while they remain in power.

The Flank: Litran's northernmost region, the Flank is a working-class neighborhood where ranchers undertake their business when they come to the city. This is where Galt's major trade roads enter Litran (including the Kantele Road to Edme and the River Road to Isarn), so the people tend to be a bit more cosmopolitan and slightly more welcoming of strangers. Inns in the Flank cater to merchants by encompassing large yards and even covered barns where goods can be stored where they're dry and secure. People who live in the Flank hold a boisterous and long-standing loathing of the river and anyone whose trade revolves around it; fishers, in particular, are distinctly unwelcome here.

Market Square: The area around the Grange Market is likely to interest visitors the most, as this neighborhood contains not only the best shops in Litran but also the best inns. Litran's ever-present class divide is evident here on a physical scale: poorer vendors must set up temporary stalls of cloth or canvas in the square or streets, while well-to-do shops, made of brick or stone, heavily ornament their permanent storefronts. Petty theft is somewhat routine in this area, and it seems those who make the mistake of stealing from the permanent shops are the only ones who get caught. Poorer merchants consider the occasional theft an unfortunate but routine cost of doing business.

Monastery Hill: The area around the Gray Gardeners' monastery is not a true neighborhood but rather highly notable for its absence of any structures. No one takes shortcuts around (or, gods forbid, over) the hill. The Gray Gardeners quickly and publicly arrest interlopers on charges of "Grand Trespassing," which carries a death sentence on the second infraction.

Southtrade: The wealthy of Litran have little interest in venturing south of the monastery, so Litran's greatest concentration of tradespeople live and work here. The neighborhood is a raucous one, ringing with the constant sounds of hammers on anvils, whickering of horses, and fights between farmers who've come to town with just enough coin to spend on liquor. The Farmer's Cooperative has its greatest influence in this neighborhood, particularly around their meeting hall. The buildings are mostly one-story wooden structures, which makes the occasional fires that sweep through the neighborhood a pervasive fear. It's quietly understood that agitators and rebels quite frequently die in these fires, though no one dares voice such claims.

West Mills: The steady strength of the Stormflood River makes water power easy and reliable to use.

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Many water mills—for milling grain, sawing lumber, or running machinery—line the river's west side (the only mill on the east bank, Spite Mill, is generally shunned by the community and considered haunted). Riverboat docks and warehouses line the west bank between the mills. The mills are linchpins of the economy and are often solidly built and well-maintained, but the warehouses and tenements are a uniform, drab gray. Few owners have the resources to even maintain their buildings, much less adorn them. Calling the entire docks district "West Mills" not only emphasizes where the wealth in this neighborhood lies, but places a firm focus on the output of the farms rather than on the river.

Notable Locations

Among the many interesting sites in Litran, the following are prominent.

1. Citizen Plaza: The Gray Gardeners don't have a fixed site in Litran to erect a *final blade* for executions; to the Gardeners, any place might be the site of crime or rebellion, so executions can occur anywhere. Keeping the *final blades* moving around the city—and, in fact, switching the *final blades* with those of other cities—keeps the people of Litran anxious and paranoid. Nevertheless, a majority of public executions occur in this elegant park where Coldcoin Street, the Flank, and West Mills meet.

2. Farming Cooperative Meeting Hall: This barn-like wooden structure in the Southtrade neighborhood is where the Farming Cooperative meets to decide on matters of particular interest to farmers, ranchers, and orchardists around Litran. The Farming Cooperative sees most other groups in town as enemies—the upper classes mandate harsh taxes, the ranchers misuse their land, and the merchants cheat the farmers as much as they can. Litran's farmers therefore rely only upon one another. Here in this meeting hall, they set grain prices, negotiate with merchants and millers, perform weddings and funerals, and whisper of rebellion against their oppressors.

The cooperative's leader is the Secretary, who finalizes all transactions and speaks on behalf of the farmers to the other groups in the city. The dedicated and long-serving Secretary **Zintaya Calbieste** (NE female elf assassin 14), as found on page 25, is rumored to be a Gray Gardener, but her ability to keep the Gardeners from interfering much in the Farming Cooperative's affairs means either this rumor is untrue, she's working at cross-purposes with the Gardeners, or she's a very talented spy.

3. Grange Market: This large, open-air market is at Litran's city center. A ring of tall brick chimneys

delineate the market boundary. Although the buildings to which these chimneys once belonged are now long gone—rumors hold this was the location of Litran's first farmers' cooperative—the chimneys themselves remain and fireplaces are often lit during winter to radiate heat across the market rather than use open fires.

Temporary stalls are erected on a first-come, first-served basis, so the market can be busy even well before dawn as vendors stake out their places for the coming day. In spring and summer, the prime spots are along the most heavily-trafficked streets; in fall and winter, spots closer to the chimneys are claimed fastest. During harvest seasons, the number of market stalls can double the normal amount as farmers from the surrounding region show up to sell their crops.

The Grange Market is where Litran's few civic festivals are held, although these occur on an erratic basis at best. Celebrations simply aren't at the forefront of Litran's minds. For example, the Harvest Jubilee originally scheduled to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Red Revolution has been postponed for several years.

4. The Gray Monastery: Casting its dark shadow over Litran both physically and metaphorically, the monastery of the Gray Gardeners harbors the greatest mysteries in Litran. No one outside the shadowy organization knows the extent of what goes on within the building, or even anything other than rumors about what's inside.

The servants who tend to the Gardeners' needs live in the monastery, and some haven't seen the world outside its walls in decades. Despite the secrecy and cult-like discipline, the monastery isn't a religious structure. It was, however, formerly dedicated to a pantheon of knowledge deities. It was abandoned long before the Gray Gardeners arrived, but they have made the monastery their own—and it's the site of much sinister goings on in the *Night of the Gray Death* adventure!

5. Juridical Building: This imposing stone courthouse is taller than the other civic buildings around it, and the Galtan flag that flies atop its central dome rises nearly as high as the Gray Gardeners' monastery. The Juridical Building is the headquarters of several circuit magistrates who rarely sit in session but instead spend their time traveling the Horun Plain and even further afield to hear cases, resolve disputes, and oversee land purchases. Senior magistrates have their offices and courtrooms here, where they hear more serious cases. However, the Gray Gardeners retain ultimate authority, as they

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can dismiss a trial or mandate a sentence regardless of any facts or witnesses in a case. The magistrates secretly dislike this intrusion into their duties, and High Magistrate **Otvald Gharmino** (LN male human judge 11) resents it most of all, but none dare oppose the Gray Gardeners when all are certain at least some of the magistrates are members of the Gardeners themselves.

6. Litran Bank: This sprawling stone building looks every inch the vault it is, with enormous bronze doors and a lofty but windowless marble interior. Though many in Litran aren't excessively wealthy, the bank provides safety deposit boxes for the populace. Many of these end up containing documents and mementos of the people living here should they be harassed or disappeared by the Gray Gardeners.

This building not only houses the bank, which is highly regarded for its stability and security even from as far away as Isarn, but also the city's financial officials, such as the city treasurer, tax collectors, and Finance Minister **Babry Wrenolus** (N male human bureaucrat 9).

7. The Oval Mirror: Although they live far from Galt's capital of Isarn, the elite and aspiring elite crave the latest fashions. The Oval Mirror is the most highly regarded clothing shop in the city. Its owner is the inveterate gossip **Miona Rallaree** (CN female human fashion designer 9), who relishes her velvet-gloved grip on style in Litran. She has agents throughout Galt and Taldor who constantly send fabrics, clothing patterns, and even sketches of the latest styles in other well-to-do places, and Miona blends them into a fashion mélange that's all her own. The prices are expensive, but demand and volume of her sales seem to justify the costs.

Almost as important as dressing in the styles at the Oval Mirror is being seen shopping at there, so patrons tend to hang around the showroom, gossiping nearly as much as Miona herself.

8. The People's Maps: This storefront near the Grange Market boasts signs reading "Property Lines

Properly Defined" and "Lost Locations Found at Reasonable Prices."

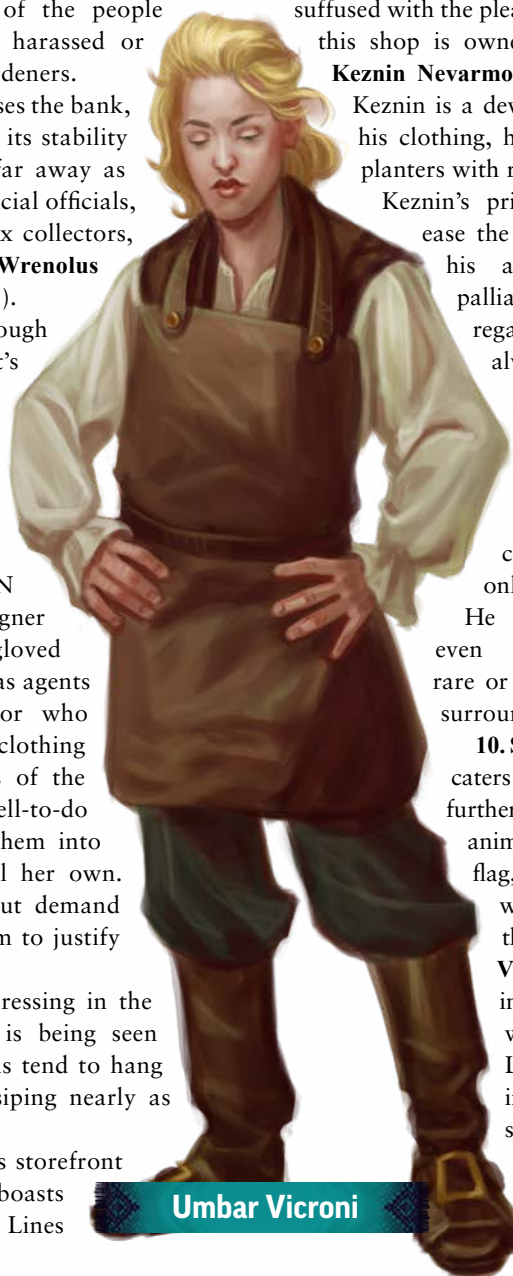
The intellectual proprietor, **Tristel Liendi** (N female halfling cartographer 3) has a deep love of maps and the stories they tell, but she can hardly support herself on cartography alone. She supplements her income by performing land surveys, providing notary services, and copying books. She's developed a solid reputation for amicably resolving boundary disputes between ranchers, farmers, and other landowners outside the city sometimes who look to her to resolve their problems instead of taking them to the Juridical Building.

9. Soul Mother's Herbs: Tucked along a side street suffused with the pleasant smell of herbs and flowers, this shop is owned and operated by the tengu **Keznin Nevarmo** (NG male tengu herbalist 9). Keznin is a devoted Pharasmin who decorates his clothing, home, and even flowerpots and planters with repeating spiral patterns.

Keznin's primary focus is on herbs that ease the pains of childbirth and death; his analgesics and advice about palliative care are both highly regarded throughout Litran. Keznin always dresses in the latest fashion, even when performing mundane chores; he only subjugates his fashion to his labor when working with soil or compounding harsh chemicals, and even then it's only to roll up his sleeves partway.

He sometimes hires locals—or even adventurers—to search out rare or hard to find ingredients in the surrounding countryside.

10. Stalwart Patriot: This upscale inn caters to visitors from Isarn or points further north. The inn's mascot, a suit of animated armor draped in the Galtan flag, ceaselessly patrols a widow's walk extending from the inn's third story. The proprietor, **Umbar Vicroni** (LN agender human innkeeper 6), meets frequently works with other innkeepers in Litran in effort to elevate their influence and wealth. Observers shake their heads and mutter that these endeavors, while well-intentioned, make Umbar as good as dead.



Umbar Vicroni

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The heroes can discover the following items and ritual in this adventure.

FINAL BLADE

ITEM 20

RARE ARTIFACT DEATH EVIL NECROMANCY OCCULT

Bulk 40

A Large or smaller restrained or willing creature can be executed by a *final blade*.

Activate 1 minute (Interact) **Effect** You execute a creature restrained beneath the blade. The creature you execute takes 11d10 slashing damage and must succeed at a DC 45 Fortitude save or be decapitated as though it suffered a critical hit with a natural 20 from a +3 *major striking vorpal scythe*. The soul of a creature executed with a *final blade* is trapped, and the creature can't be returned to life, not even by *miracle* or similar magic. A *final blade* can hold any number of souls in this way, and a sufficient number of captured souls forms a monster called a gray death (page 68).

Destruction: A final blade can be destroyed via the rare ritual, *blunt the final blade*.

NOSOI CHARM

ITEM 12+

RARE DIVINATION INVESTED MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk –

Nosois serve as scribes and messengers to psychopomps. They are rare outside of the Boneyard, so it's common for psychopomps venturing to other planes to carry a nosoï facsimile to aid in their travels. This tiny icon of a masked raven emits twittering sounds in perfect accompaniment to your performances. You gain a +2 item bonus to Performance checks to play an instrument, orate, or sing. You can cast *sending* once per day as a divine innate spell.

Activate ♦♦♦ Interact; **Effect** You twist the base of the charm, and the twittering it emits becomes helpful words to boost your arguments. You lose the item bonus to Performance checks and gain a +2 item bonus to Diplomacy checks to make Requests until you use this activation again.

Activate ♦ Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You gain lifesense as an imprecise sense with a range of 30 feet for 1 hour as long as you continue to hold the charm. This allows you to sense the life force that animates living creatures and the perverse force that animates the dead, though you can't distinguish between the two.

Type *nosoi charm*; **Level** 12; **Price** 1,900 gp

Type *greater nosoi charm*; **Level** 18; **Price** 19,000 gp

The item bonus to Performance or Diplomacy is +3. You gain lifesense as long as you are holding the charm, and you don't need to activate it.

BLUNT THE FINAL BLADE

RITUAL 9

RARE DEATH NECROMANCY

Cast 1 day; **Cost** powdered mithral and rare grave dirt worth 10,000 gp; **Secondary Casters** 3

Primary Check Occultism or Religion (legendary); **Secondary Checks** Arcana, Crafting, Society, and the other skill not used in the primary check

Range touch; **Targets** 1 *final blade*

You anoint the *final blade* with powdered mithral and grave dirt while speaking softly and carefully to the souls trapped within it. You create a mystical pathway for the souls to escape through and urge them to draw out the magic of the *final blade* with them as they depart.

Critical Success As success, and the souls also grant a boon; the primary and secondary casters gain a +2 status bonus to saves against death and fear effects for the next year.

Success The souls escape the *final blade* and peacefully pass on to their eternal rewards, as appropriate for each soul. The *final blade* is no longer magical; it can't store anymore souls and can be destroyed as a normal guillotine.

Failure The ritual has no effect.

Critical Failure The ritual goes horribly wrong. The souls within the *final blade* are released in a furious rush as a gray death (page 68) that does its best to slay the ritual's casters and run amok among the living. The *final blade* retains its abilities and can continue to store souls.

GRAY GARDENER ARCHETYPE

The Gray Gardeners are the remorseless executioners of Galt. Prior to the events of the adventure, the Gray Gardeners are at best sinister (when not actively pursuing evil) as a malevolent monster controls their organization. After the events of *Night of the Gray Death*, the organization is broken—leadership is in disarray while the rank-and-file members labor to enforce laws and recapture escaped criminals. The Gray Gardeners still command the respect of Galt's people, however, as their brutal reputation is indelibly etched in the public consciousness over the last fifty years.

The following is suitable for heroes to take after the events of *Night of the Gray Death*. You might be a member of the old organization who tried to uphold order despite vindictive directives from above, or you might be someone who recently donned a mask to

enforce the law in Galt's new age. Either way, as a Gray Gardener you draw power and authority from being masked and have a reputation for dispassionate justice.

Your vigilante identity is that of a Gray Gardener, and you must be wearing a mask to use any of your vigilante feats or you risk exposing your social identity, as described in the vigilante archetype (*Advanced Player's Guide* 196).

EXECUTIONER WEAPON TRAINING

FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Vigilante Dedication, member of the Gray Gardeners

Your Gray Gardener training has made you deeply skilled with the weapons that execute with a swift chop to the neck. You become trained with the following weapons: battle axe, falchion, greataxe, and scimitar.

Whenever you gain a class feature that grants you expert or greater proficiency with a given weapon or weapons, you also gain that proficiency for these weapons.

HARSH JUDGMENT

FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE VIGILANTE

Prerequisites Vigilante Dedication, member of the Gray Gardeners

Choose one creature you can see, and loudly declare the creature's life forfeit by your judgment. That creature becomes your condemned foe until they are defeated, you use Harsh Judgment on a different creature, or the encounter ends. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to Seek your condemned foe and on Intimidation checks to Demoralize them. You have a -1 circumstance penalty to Perception checks to Seek creatures other than your condemned foe and on Intimidation checks to Demoralize anyone other than your condemned foe.

You typically can use Harsh Judgment only during an encounter, and if you try to use it to declare someone's life forfeit during exploration or downtime, you are likely to start an encounter.

VOICE OF AUTHORITY

FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE AUDITORY VIGILANTE

Prerequisites expert in Intimidation, Vigilante Dedication, member of the Gray Gardeners

You easily command the attention of others, and when the time comes to turn threats into action, your authoritative voice causes foes to falter.

Your voice be heard easily by any creatures within 300 feet if you wish, regardless of the level of ambient noise, although your voice can't penetrate *silence* or similar effect. If you roll Intimidation for initiative, on the first round of combat, creatures that haven't acted yet are flat-footed to you.



Gray Gardener Archetype

NIGHT OF THE GRAY DEATH



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DISCERNING GAZE

FEAT 6

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Vigilante Dedication, member of the Gray Gardeners

You have a sense for when people are lying. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus on your secret Perception checks to Sense Motive.

If you use Sense Motive on a creature you have currently condemned with Harsh Judgment, your GM rolls the Perception check twice and takes the higher result (this is a fortune effect).

FRIGHTFUL CONDEMNATION

FEAT 6

ARCHETYPE

EMOTION

FEAR

MENTAL

VIGILANTE

Prerequisites Harsh Judgment, Vigilante Dedication, member of the Gray Gardeners

Trigger You hit your condemned foe with a melee Strike in the same turn during which you condemned it with Harsh Judgment.

Requirements You have condemned a foe to death with Harsh Judgment.

Your willingness to follow through on your pitiless judgment is frightful to the person you have condemned, and they begin to dread what you will do to them next. Your condemned foe is frightened 1, or frightened 2 if the triggering Strike was a critical hit.

ACCURATE SWING

FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE

VIGILANTE

Prerequisites Harsh Judgment, Vigilante Dedication, member of the Gray Gardeners

You strike cleanly with wide, sweeping attacks to inflict maximum damage, taking advantage of your judged foe's fear to land a felling blow. If you Strike a creature you condemned with Harsh Judgment that has the frightened condition with a sweep melee weapon or a sweep unarmed attack, you gain a circumstance bonus to the Strike's damage equal to the number of weapon damage dice your weapon deals.

GARDENER'S RESOLVE

FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE

VIGILANTE

Prerequisites Vigilante Dedication, member of the Gray Gardeners

Frequency once per day

Trigger You roll a failure (but not a critical failure) on a Will save against a fear effect.

The Gray Gardeners are known for having nerves of steel and an unbreakable resolve. When you would be overwhelmed by terror, you can draw upon this resolve to keep your composure and remain undaunted. You take mental damage equal to twice your level, and the saving throw is a success.

REMINDER OF THE GREATER FEAR

FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE

VIGILANTE

Prerequisites master in Intimidation, Vigilante Dedication

Frequency once per 10 minutes

Trigger Another creature within 30 feet of you that can see you would gain the frightened condition.

You give a target a stern glower to remind them that it is you, and no one else, they should truly fear. Reduce the value of the frightened condition the creature would take by 1.

STRIDENT COMMAND

FEAT 10

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites master in Intimidation, Vigilante Dedication, Voice of Authority, member of the Gray Gardeners

The common folk heed your demands, and though your true foes rarely bend to your commands, when they do the hesitation can cost them the battle. You can cast *command* once every 10 minutes as a 1st-level occult innate spell.

If you're in your vigilante identity, you can command the target only to approach you, drop prone, or stand in place. If you're in your social identity, you can command the target only to run away or release what the target is holding.

EXECUTION

FEAT 14

ARCHETYPE

VIGILANTE

Prerequisites Harsh Judgment, Vigilante Dedication, member of the Gray Gardeners

Requirements You have condemned a foe with Harsh Judgment.

You swing wide, attempting to behead your condemned foe. Make a melee Strike against your condemned foe. If you hit, your condemned foe takes 8d6 extra precision damage with a basic Fortitude save against your class DC or spell DC, whichever is higher. If the condemned foe is reduced to 0 Hit Points by the execution and requires a head to live, they die. For creatures with multiple heads, this usually kills the creature only if you sever its last head. The creature then becomes temporarily immune to your Execution for 1 day.

TERRIFYING COUNTEenance

FEAT 18

ARCHETYPE

VIGILANTE

Prerequisites Vigilante Dedication, member of the Gray Gardeners

You can erect a magical cowl that terrorizes your enemies. Once per day, you can cast *mask of terror* as an innate occult spell, targeting yourself. If you critically hit a creature that's temporarily immune to the spell, the creature's temporary immunity ends.

CONQUEROR WORM

Conqueror worms are deeply malevolent creatures with terrifying magical power. They are highly intelligent and see societies as playthings, enacting far-reaching and tyrannical changes to reshape or break them as they please. Conqueror worms are patient, often waiting for years (or sometimes decades) to enact plans, all the while observing from their lairs. A conqueror worm that takes interest in a region mentally commands its figureheads, such as political leaders and key rebels, manipulating them and playing them off each other like game pieces from behind the scenes—most frequently, from well-defended subterranean chambers.

Most conqueror worms' victims don't even realize they're subject to its machinations, but some who do end up serving the creature—or worshipping it. The worms have no regards for their supplicants and are inclined to dispose of them the moment they're unneeded.

CONQUEROR WORM

CREATURE 21

RARE NE GARGANTUAN ABERRATION

Perception +37; greater darkvision, tremorsense (imprecise) 100 feet, *true seeing*

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Halfling, Infernal, Undercommon; telepathy 200 feet

Skills Arcana +37, Athletics +39, Deception +41, Diplomacy +39, Intimidation +41, Occultism +39, Religion +35, Society +41

Str +10, **Dex** +5, **Con** +7, **Int** +10, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +10

Convincing Telepathy (enchantment, mental, occult)

When a conqueror worm communicates telepathically, its overwhelming will bolsters its lies. Its Deception checks and Deception DCs aren't penalized for elaborate or unbelievable telepathic lies.

AC 46; **Fort** +35, **Ref** +32, **Will** +38

HP 460; **Immunities** acid, disease, mental; **Weaknesses** good 20, piercing 20; **Resistances** acid 20

Mental Invader (enchantment, mental, occult)

Trigger A creature communicates telepathically with the conqueror worm (even to respond to the conqueror worm's telepathy or through a mental spell like *sending*) or fails a saving throw against a mental spell cast by the conqueror worm; **Effect** The conqueror worm infects the mind of the creature, allowing it to mentally contact the creature from afar. The creature must attempt a DC 48 Will saving throw and is temporarily immune for 1 year.

Critical Success The target is unaffected and can't be affected by the conqueror worm's Mental Invader ever again.

Success The target is stupefied 1 for 1 minute.

Failure As success, and the conqueror worm can target the creature with telepathy and mental spells regardless of distance, so long as the worm and target are on the same plane. This bond is permanent and can be broken only by *miracle*, *wish*, or similar magic. The conqueror worm can maintain a maximum of 10 connections with Mental Invader. If another creature would be infected, the worm must choose to one of its existing connections end, or if the worm prefers to keep its current 10 connections, the new creature isn't infected instead.

Critical Failure As failure, and for as long as the mental link lasts, the target uses an outcome one degree of success worse than the result of its saving throw against mental spells cast by the conqueror worm.

Telepathic Escape (enchantment, incapacitation, mental, occult, possession) When the conqueror worm dies, it telepathically projects its consciousness into a creature infected by its Mental Invader ability and who is on the same plane as the conqueror worm. The creature must succeed at a DC 48 Will save or it is overtaken by the conqueror worm. This has the same effect as the *possession* spell with an unlimited duration,



Conqueror Worm

NIGHT OF THE GRAY DEATH

except the conqueror worm has wholly foregone its physical body. A host body possessed by a conqueror worm undergoes terrible changes. Every day, the host must succeed at a DC 48 Will save or become permanently stupefied 1 (or increase its stupefied value by 1) and increasingly pale, balding, and bloated. When the host reaches stupefied 4, an ectoplasmic cocoon forms around it. Over the next 24 hours, the host undergoes a swift metamorphosis and emerges as a new conqueror worm with all the memories of its previous incarnation. At this point, the host is dead and can't be restored except by *miracle*, *wish*, or similar magic. Before that point, however, this horrid transformation can be ended by any effect that expels the conqueror worm's possession, meaning would be slayers of a conqueror worm had best locate its consciousness and end the possession before it's too late and the worm rises again.

Speed 40 feet, burrow 30 feet; *air walk*

Melee ♦ *jaws* +39 (acid, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 4d10+18 piercing plus 2d6 acid and Improved Grab

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 48, attack +38; **10th** (2 slots) *fabricated truth*, *time stop*; **9th** (4 slots) *foresight*, *overwhelming presence*, *subconscious suggestion*, *telepathic demand*; **8th** (4 slots) *discern location*, *dispel magic*, *mind blank*, *unrelenting observation*; **7th** (4 slots) *magic missile*, *possession*, *project image*, *warp mind*; **6th** (4 slots) *dominate*, *feeblemind*, *scrying*, *zealous conviction*; **5th** (4 slots) *dimension door*, *mind probe*, *sending*, *synesthesia*; **4th** (4 slots) *confusion*, *dream message*, *modify memory*, *outcast's curse*; **3rd** (4 slots) *enthrall*, *fear*, *hypercognition*, *nondetection*; **2nd** (4 slots) *death knell*, *misdirection*, *status*, *telepathic maneuver*; **1st** (4 slots) *mindlink*, *sanctuary*, *true strike*, *ventriloquism*; **Cantrips (10th)** *daze*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *shield*, *telekinetic projectile*

Occult Innate Spells DC 48; **10th** *dominate*; **9th** *mind reading* (at will); **Constant (9th)** *air walk*, *true seeing*

Breath Weapon ♦♦ (evocation, acid, occult) The conqueror worm disgorges acid in a 120-foot-line that deals 14d10 acid damage to all creatures in the area (DC 44 basic Reflex save). It can't use Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

Fast Swallow ↻ **Trigger** The conqueror worm Grabs a creature; **Effect** The worm uses Swallow Whole.

Muster Minions ♦♦♦ (conjuration, teleportation) The conqueror worm selects up to three willing creatures subject to its Mental Invader ability that are on the same plane and teleports them to squares adjacent to the worm of the worm's choosing.

Swallow Whole ♦ Huge, 4d10+10 bludgeoning plus 2d6 acid, Rupture 44

THE END OF THE GAME

A conqueror worm might toy with a society for generations, sculpting it into a model of subjugation or tyranny to fit the worm's evil whims. At times, the conqueror worm might erase the slate by engineering a coup that gives hope to the populace but simply replaces one evil regime with another. When it grows bored of these renovations, the conqueror worm leaves the society for good and moves on to another. This is by no means the end; a conqueror planning to leave a society takes pains to leave it in such a broken state that no conqueror worm would ever want it again. The worm might engineer upheavals, plagues, or wars so devastating that few members of the society are left alive, and only echoes of a lost and wicked nation remain.

WORSHIPPING WORMS

Individual conqueror worms are lesser deities, capable of granting spells to those who worship them. Often, the conqueror worm's clerics are the only ones in its vast network of hidden agents and depraved cults with an inkling as to the nature of the malevolent creature pulling the strings. While individual conqueror worms have different edicts, anathema, and favored weapons befitting their personalities, the following is common among conqueror worms.

Edicts manipulate those in power, foster psychic abilities, endorse unjust laws

Anathema enact hasty schemes, tell the truth except to nurture a larger lie, reveal those higher in the conqueror worm's network

Follower Alignments LE, NE, CE

Divine Font harm

Divine Skill Deception

Favored Weapon dagger

Domains ambition, secrecy, trickery, tyranny

Cleric Spells **1st** *charm*; **5th** *mind probe*; **7th** *warp mind*

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ENGINEERED DISASTER

Galt's Gray Gardeners have been intentional in their executions, ensuring each *final blade* has claimed as many souls as possible. After 50 years, every *final blade* now harbors a gray death. The oldest and most well-known *final blades* harbor more powerful and malevolent versions of the creature.

GRAY DEATH

Galt's *final blades* are feared not only for the swift death they bring, but because it's widely rumored the magical guillotines hold on to the souls of the slain and prevent them from passing on to the afterlife. The truth is even worse: a *final blade* contains only a limited amount of metaphysical space to hold souls, and once it's full, the souls coalesce into a fearsome, malevolent entity called a gray death. The more souls trapped by a *final blade*, the more powerful the gray death becomes. A gray death doesn't pose much of a threat while contained within the *final blade*, other than to

give the guillotine an aura of palpable malevolence. When freed, however, the gray death becomes a nearly unstoppable menace.

GRAY DEATH

CREATURE 20

RARE NE HUGE INCORPOREAL SPIRIT UNDEAD

Perception +33; darkvision, lifesense 1,000 feet

Languages Common; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Intimidation +40, Occultism +34, Performance +38, Society +34

Str -5, **Dex** +7, **Con** +4, **Int** +6, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +10

Lifesense (divination, occult) A gray death senses the vital essence of living creatures within range.

AC 44; **Fort** +31, **Ref** +35, **Will** +33

HP 330; **Immunities** disease, fear, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Weaknesses** mental 15; **Resistances** all damage 15 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Soul Bleed (aura, necromancy, occult) 1,000 feet. Creatures that begin their turn in the area take 5d6 negative damage and must succeed at a DC 42 Fortitude save or become doomed 1. If the creature is 13th level or lower, this doomed condition from soul bleed is cumulative, increasing by 1 with each failed save until the creature dies (typically at doomed 4).

Speed fly 60 feet

Melee ♦ *hand* +38 (finesse, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 4d10+16 negative plus life sap

Flailing Touch ♦♦ The gray death makes up to four hand Strikes, each against a different target it can reach. It increases its reach to 100 feet with these Strikes. These Strikes count as one attack for the gray death's multiple attack penalty, and the penalty doesn't increase until after the attacks.

Life Sap A creature damaged by the gray death's hand Strike must succeed at a DC 42 Fortitude save or become drained 1, and paralyzed for 1 round on a critical failure.

Resentful Possession ♦ (curse, occult, enchantment, mental, possession) **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The gray death chooses a living creature within 30 feet. The target must succeed at a DC 42 Will save or a fragment of embittered soul-stuff lodges within the target's spirit and turns it against its allies. While the target has this fragment, it doesn't count as anyone's ally for the purposes of providing flanking, and a would-be ally casting a spell that normally works only on an ally on the creature must succeed at a DC 42 counteract check (level 20) or the spell has no effect. The fragment fades after 24 hours.

Spectral Lurker The gray death isn't slowed 1 when it starts its turn inside an object.

Gray Death

RIEKANOY

Riekanoys lurk in the placid rivers of the First World, demanding that travelers dance with them or face their wrath. Bitterly jealous of anyone that professes to be a better dancer, riekanoys make wagers in contests to prove who is the most graceful and sure-footed.

RIEKANOY

CREATURE 19

RARE **NE** **MEDIUM** **AMPHIBIOUS** **FEY** **WATER**

Perception +31; low-light vision, *true seeing*

Languages Aquan, Common, Sylvan

Skills Acrobatics +35, Athletics +31, Deception +35, Nature +33, Performance +37, Stealth +35, Survival +33

Str +6, **Dex** +10, **Con** +2, **Int** +3, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +10

Sinuous Initiative A riekanoys's swaying motions propel it into the fray with grace. While a riekanoys can act and isn't immobilized, it can roll Performance for initiative.

AC 45; **Fort** +28, **Ref** +37, **Will** +32

HP 410; **Resistances** fire 20; **Weaknesses** cold iron 20

Speed 25 feet, swim 50 feet; *water walk*

Melee ♦ hair +24 (agile, finesse, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 4d10+12 bludgeoning plus Improved Grab

Primal Innate Spells DC 41, attack +33; **9th** *hydraulic torrent*, *nature's enmity*; **8th** *charm* (at will), *fire seeds* (×3; see water lilies); **6th** *baleful polymorph* (×3, aquatic animals only); **5th** *control water* (at will); **2nd** *invisibility* (at will), *obscuring mist* (at will); **Constant (9th)** *true seeing*, *water walk*

Beckoning Dance ♦ (concentrate, enchantment, incapacitation, mental, primal, visual) The riekanoys sways in a compelling fashion. Each non-fey creature within a 300-foot emanation that can see the riekanoys must attempt a DC 38 Will save. The effect lasts for 1 round, but if the riekanoys uses Beckoning Dance again on subsequent rounds, the duration extends by 1 round for all affected creatures. Once a creature succeeds at any save against Beckoning Dance, that creature is temporarily immune for 24 hours.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is fascinated and must spend each of its actions to move closer to the riekanoys, avoiding obvious dangers. If a beckoned creature is adjacent to the riekanoys, it stays still and doesn't act. If attacked by the riekanoys, the creature is freed from captivation at the end of the riekanoys's turn.

Critical Failure As failure, but if attacked by the riekanoys, the creature can attempt a new save only at the start of its next turn, rather than being freed at the end of the riekanoys's turn.

Constrict ♦ 3d10+12 bludgeoning, DC 41

Entangling Hair A riekanoys can have up to eight creatures grabbed within their hair at a time.

RUSALKA RIVALRY

Riekanoys are related to rusalkas, but they prefer the fantastical waterways of the First World, where rivers might flow upwards or dissolve into bubbles. Both types of fey argue which of their kind came first—that is, whether riekanoys are rusalkas gripped with a nonsensical urge to cavort, or whether rusalkas are riekanoys grown petty and nasty. It's no surprise, then, that the two virtually never get along and fight over riverine territories that overlap.

Waving Hair ♦ The riekanoys attempts an Acrobatics check against each grabbed creature's Reflex DC. The riekanoys moves each creature they succeed against up to 10 feet and each creature they critically succeed against up to 20 feet. This movement must all be within reach of its hair.



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SAHKIL

Sahkils are wicked creatures that prey on mortal fears. Each sahkil is devoted to a specific kind of terror, though they all relish mortal misery and exacerbate it when they can. Long ago, sahkils were among the grim psychopomps who shepherd souls of the dead to their rewards. Sahkils forsook the psychopomps and fled into the Ethereal Plane to prey upon the mortals instead of guiding their souls. The following are just two types of sahkils; other horrifying examples can be found beginning on page 218 of *Pathfinder Bestiary 3*.

Chakanaj

Featureless, tiny bat-like flaps of pale skin with retractable, squirming legs, chakanajes prey upon people's shame and fears of disclosing humiliating secrets. Extremely diminutive and stealthy, they can slip into buildings or lurk under eaves with ease, making it easier to spy on others and learn their secrets. Chakanajes enjoy ferreting out secrets and tormenting their victims by leaving incriminating hints of the truth in places others might find them, or even messages threatening the victim that someone "knows the truth." Fear of exposure can drive victims to commit atrocities, which a chakanaj uses to further

exacerbate the victim's shame and fear, to the sahkil's ever-increasing enjoyment.

A chakanaj can disguise itself as an item of roughly the same size, like a piece of clothing, and they especially enjoy forcing their victims to carry or wear them while they whisper hateful suggestions and stoke the victim's anxiety and suffering.

While most sahkils don't have much to do with Norgorber, despite their shared alignment, chakanajes' love of secrets has led to more than one alliance over the years between the tiny sahkils and the minions of Norgorber, particularly in Norgorber's aspect of the Reaper of Reputation.

CHAKANAJ

CREATURE 14

RARE NE TINY FIEND SAHKIL

Perception +25 (+29 to Sense Motive); darkvision, *true seeing*
Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, Requian; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Acrobatics +28, Deception +27 (+31 to Impersonate clothing), Intimidation +25, Religion +25, Stealth +30, Thievery +26

Str +0, **Dex** +8, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +7

Ear for Secrets A chakanaj knows when a creature within 30 feet lies unless that creature critically succeeds on its Perception check to lie to the chakanaj. This ability doesn't reveal the truth.

Easy to Call A sahkil's level is considered 2 lower for the purpose of being conjured by the *planar binding* ritual (and potentially other rituals, at the GM's discretion), but is always free to attack or leave instead of negotiate unless the primary caster's check is a critical success.

AC 36; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +28, **Will** +25

HP 300; **Immunities** fear; **Weaknesses** good 15

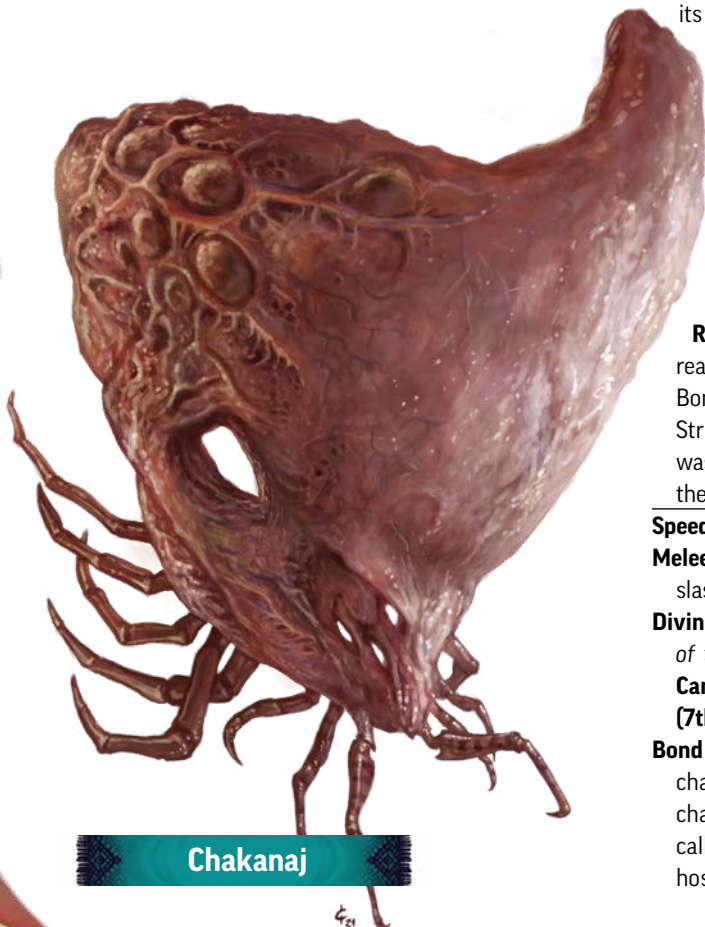
Retaliator **Trigger** A creature within the chakanaj's reach attacks its host; **Requirements** The chakanaj is Bonded with a Host; **Effect** The chakanaj makes a leg Strike against the triggering creature. If the chakanaj was Impersonating clothing when it makes this strike, the Impersonation ends.

Speed 10 feet, fly 40 feet

Melee **Leg** +29 (agile, finesse, magical), **Damage** 3d6+14 slashing plus 2d6 evil

Divine Innate Spells DC 34; **7th** *fear* (at will), *mask of terror* (at will, self only); **5th** *illusory object* (x3), **Cantrips** (7th) *dancing lights*, *daze*, *guidance*; **Constant** (7th) *true seeing*

Bond with Host **Requirements** The chakanaj is adjacent to a willing creature; **Effect** The chakanaj enters the space of the creature (thereafter called its host) and covers a suitable surface on the host, such as the face or back. The chakanaj occupies



Chakanaj

NIGHT OF THE GRAY DEATH

the same space as its host and moves with its host. It doesn't impair the host's senses or movement. While worn, the chakanaj establishes a constant *shield other* effect with its host. Attacks that target the chakanaj target the host instead, but use the higher AC or saving throw values between the chakanaj and the host. Area effects apply to both the chakanaj and the host, as normal for an area of effect.

Interpose ♦ **Requirements** The chakanaj is Bonded with a Host; **Effect** The chakanaj interposes itself between the host and its foes, granting its host a +2 circumstance bonus to AC until the start of the chakanaj's next turn.

Peel Away ♦ (concentrate, move) **Requirements** The chakanaj is Bonded with a Host; **Effect** the chakanaj removes itself from its host, peeling off the host's body and enters an adjacent space.

Skip Between ♦ (conjunction, divine, teleportation) The chakanaj sahkil moves from the Material Plane to the Ethereal Plane or vice versa, with the effects of *ethereal jaunt* except the effect has an unlimited duration and can be Dismissed. A summoned sahkil can't use Skip Between.

Tumblak

Tumblaks prey upon fears of constriction, claustrophobia, or being buried alive. They appear as a roughly rectangular mass of mismatched parts from multiple bodies, as though several people were compressed in a coffin together and became inextricably tangled. Tumblaks enjoy lairing in crypts and collapsed buildings, and they phase through the rubble and tombs to seek prey. Mortals struggle to breathe in a tumblak's presence, which further heightens their terror.

TUMBLAK

CREATURE 18

RARE NE MEDIUM FIEND INCORPOREAL SAHKIL

Perception +33; *darkvision*, *true seeing*

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, Requian; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Athletics +35, Deception +31, Grave Lore +28, Intimidation +35, Religion +29, Stealth +31

Str +9, **Dex** +5, **Con** +6, **Int** +2, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +9

Easy to Call As chakanaj.

Focused Force Unlike most incorporeal creatures, a tumblak can make Strength-based checks against physical creatures and objects if it chooses, though such creatures still can't make Strength-based checks against the tumblak.

AC 42; **Fort** +33, **Ref** +28, **Will** +31

HP 305; **Immunities** disease, fear, poison, precision;

Weaknesses good 15; **Resistances** physical 15 (except force or *ghost touch*; double resistance vs. non-magical)

CHAKANAJ MASKS

Chakanajes like to cover a victim's face and pretend to be a mundane mask. This not only lets them see anything their host does, but it lets them rest their sharp legs against the host's face, a subtle threat of violence to keep a host in line.

SPIRITUAL AVERSIONS

Tumblaks are well-versed in burial rites from many different cultures. Some tumblaks believe themselves to be subject to effects that ward or soothe ghosts, even though they themselves aren't undead. For example, tumblaks might become calm upon hearing a prayer to soothe the dead, or uneasy around bells used to ward off restless spirits.

Gasping Aura (air, aura, divine, transmutation) 100 feet. Creatures within the aura must succeed at a DC 37 Fortitude save. On a failure, they can't breathe and must hold their breath to avoid suffocation until they leave the aura. The tumblak can activate or deactivate the aura with a single free action, which has the concentrate trait.

No Breath Tumblaks don't need to breathe.

Speed fly 40 feet

Melee ♦ *fist* +35 (magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d12+17 bludgeoning plus 2d6 evil and Entombing Echoes

Divine Innate Spells DC 40; **9th** *dispel magic*, *earthbind* (at will), *fear* (at will), *mask of terror* (at will, self only), *nightmare* (at will); **Cantrips** (9th) *detect magic*; **Constant** (9th) *true seeing*

Claustrophobic Nightmares (curse, divine, enchantment, mental) A creature fatigued by the tumblak's *nightmare* spell is subject to paralyzing glimpses of being buried alive. Anyone using an effect that would remove the fatigued condition through a means other than a full night's rest must succeed on a DC 44 counteract check or the fatigued condition isn't removed. When the fatigued creature enters a stressful situation, such as rolling initiative in combat or entering a high-stakes negotiation, it is affected by Entombing Echoes.

Entombing Echoes (divine, emotion, enchantment, incapacitation, mental) A creature struck by the tumblak's fist or impacted by Claustrophobic Nightmares must succeed on a DC 44 Will save or feel itself confined on all sides. The creature is immobilized and flat-footed until it Escapes (DC 44).

Skip Between ♦ (conjunction, divine, teleportation) As chakanaj.

Chapter 1:
Secrets of Litran

Chapter 2:
Masque of the
Gray Death

Chapter 3:
Writhing in
the Crypts

Litran

Adventure
Toolbox

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