

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER[®]

AGE OF ASHES

ADVENTURE PATH

BROKEN PROMISES

By Luis Loza

Promise

0 2,000 FEET



FARMER

HUNTER

SHEPHERD

GENERAL
RESIDENTIAL

2

3

ARTIST

MERCHANT

5

BEGGAR

6

SCHOLAR

GENERAL
RESIDENTIAL

4

ARTISAN

7

FISHER

THIEF

TAILOR

SOLDIER

1. GOLDEN CITADEL
2. OPEN LANDS
3. MENGKARE PARK
4. TRAINING GROUNDS
5. BANK OF ABADAR
6. DOCKS
7. ULDANOS PARK



PATHFINDER

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Chapter 1: Secrets of the Aiudara 4

With the *aiudara* key in hand, the PCs return to Alseta's Ring one more time to activate the final gate in the network. The activation is not without its complications, however, as the manifestation of Dahak trapped within lashes out now that it has greater access to Golarion.

Chapter 2: The Price of Paradise..... 20

Once the heroes have dealt with the unleashed dangers, they are finally safe to travel through the final gate. The PCs find themselves in the lair of the gold dragon Mengkare. From here, they meet two members of the Council of Enlightenment. Each member presents different plans for stopping Mengkare's scheme. The PCs can choose to support any of these plans and eventually confront Mengkare, either to convince him to put an end to his plans or slay the dragon if he does not back down.

Chapter 3: Ashes 50

The PCs take the fight to the manifestation of Dahak. They enter the network within Alseta's Ring and venture into the planar depths of the *aiudara* network. The PCs need to corner the manifestation of Dahak so they can finally face it directly and hopefully destroy it. This is their last chance to defeat the manifestation before it escapes and unleashes the age of ashes!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Broken Promises" is designed for four characters.

18 The PCs begin this adventure at 18th level.

19 The PCs should reach 19th level before entering Vengegate's way station.

20 The PCs should be 20th level before starting Chapter 3.

MENGKARE'S ALIGNMENT

Mengkare began life as a lawful good creature, as most gold dragons do. His experiences in seeing the worst of humanity and his exile to Axis saw his alignment drift to lawful neutral, but it was when he finally pushed forward on the plan to use the *Anima Invocation* to sacrifice others that he became lawful evil. Still, Mengkare's methods are subtle, and he has persuaded himself that his acts serve a greater good. In his self-delusion, the gold dragon feels justified in his course of actions, yet the truth of the matter is that without intervention, his plunge into evil will only go deeper. The PCs represent his one chance at redemption, and if they play their cards right in this adventure, they can convince the dragon to change his course before he becomes irredeemably wicked.



CHAPTER 1: SECRETS OF THE AIUDARA

As darkness reigned after Earthfall, Golarion faced a tumultuous and uncertain period, called the Age of Darkness. Using this postapocalyptic era as cover, Dahak secretly invaded Golarion by projecting a tiny portion of his deific power into the world without alerting his father, Apsu, who had forbidden him from meddling in the Material Plane. Dahak's hidden invasion manifested through a flaw in the dimension-warping magic of Golarion's first *aiudara* network, Alseta's Ring, and in so doing unleashed his manifestation upon a ruined and reeling world. Though this avatar held only the smallest fraction of Dahak's true might, it was still a devastating force as it rained supernatural dragonstorms of fire, ice, acid, lightning, and poison across the landscape of an already devastated world.

As the manifestation continued its destruction, the Ekujae elves of the Mwangi Expanse took a stand. They prayed and studied until they understood

the manifestation and discovered a way to end its terror—a potent and dangerous ritual known as the *Anima Invocation*. By drawing upon this ritual, the elves could weaponize their very souls against Dahak, and by choosing of their own free will to martyr themselves, they used the ritual to slay the avatar's body and trap its deific essence in the space “in between” within the portals of Alseta's Ring, using the very same flaw in the elf gates that allowed Dahak to invade Golarion in the first place. This process was not without complications, however, and the pure, destructive power of Dahak's manifestation raged through the network and beyond as it was imprisoned. This power surged with its greatest might against Lotusgate, the *aiudara* standing opposite Huntergate. As the dragon god's fury melted the Huntergate way station from within, Lotusgate shattered and severed Alseta's Ring from the rest

of the network. Yet the *Anima Invocation* had done its job—Dahak’s manifestation had been defeated.

But even as Dahak turned his attentions elsewhere in the wake of these events, his trapped manifestation did not stay still. With power rivaling that of a demigod, the avatar’s energies pushed against the boundaries of its new prison. It quickly learned that while it could not escape, it wasn’t completely powerless. The manifestation learned to manipulate and infect the *aiudara* network from within, building its own nested demiplane within the ruins of Huntergate’s demiplane way station. The manifestation bided its time by creating and replaying realities within this realm for it to destroy and rebuild over and over, allowing it to satiate its need for destruction—at least for a time.

Millennia later, after escaping his second encounter with the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, the gold dragon Mengkare entered a self-imposed exile. He retreated to his home on Hermea where he spent decades recovering from his trauma, occasionally returning to civilization to reacquaint himself with current events. But in a hidden cavern below his home, Mengkare discovered something astounding—Vengegate. Unable to reactivate the portal at first, he was nevertheless able to determine where it led—Alseta’s Ring in central Avistan. Here, he discovered Vengegate’s key and opened the portal. It was then that he learned the awful truth of what was trapped within the ring.

The discovery of Dahak’s trapped avatar shook Mengkare. Horrified at the knowledge that the god of evil dragons had infected such a dangerous magical relic, Mengkare dedicated himself to finding a way to eradicate the manifestation from Golarion once and for all. He spent two centuries researching in Axis’s libraries, and eventually learned how the Ekujae banished the avatar before. As astounded as he was at the nature of the *Anima Invocation*, Mengkare believed that he saw a flaw in the elves’ magic. He believed that the magic unleashed by the *Anima Invocation* seemed to have no upper limit other than the quality of the souls that fueled it, and had the elves’ souls been more perfect and powerful, they not only would have banished Dahak’s manifestation but could have, in theory, wounded or even slain the dragon god himself. Mengkare grew obsessed with the idea that if he gathered enough “perfect” souls, he could use the *Anima Invocation* to finish the job and destroy Dahak himself.

So began the slow process of planning and enacting what he dubbed the Glorious Endeavor. After a few false starts (including the town of Breachill), Mengkare’s plans finally came together in Hermea during the founding of the city of Promise. He oversaw every detail and step of the project until it was realized to his satisfaction and executed to his exact specifications. The creation of the Contract of Citizenship, a document that all those deemed worthy to dwell in Promise had to sign, gave Mengkare final say in the actions of every inhabitant. Mengkare also enchanted the Contract of Citizenship with a magical compulsion that made it easier for the gold dragon to enforce his will and limitations upon the citizens. Now several generations in, Promise is approaching Mengkare’s planned endgame. With just another generation or two, he believes he can achieve his goal and finally move ahead with the final stage of his plan—to sacrifice a city of perfect souls to save the world from Dahak’s dragonstorms once and for all.

Getting Started

This adventure begins with the PCs opening Vengegate in Alseta’s Ring. Note that once the PCs attempt this, they’ll unknowingly invoke the wrath

CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

The PCs return home to activate the final portal in Alseta’s Ring, only to release the full fury of Dahak’s manifestation. As the dragon god lashes out at the region, the PCs must move quickly to defend their citadel and the town of Breachill from dragonstorms, monsters, and the wrath of the god of evil dragons before they can explore the way station hidden within Vengegate.

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of Dahak's manifestation and face a deadly series of encounters that will put not only their lives, but the lives of all of Breachill's citizens at risk. As such, you should make sure the PCs are ready, rested, and eager to start this final adventure. Give them time to recover from the prior adventure, finish up long-term projects or other downtime activities, and otherwise get their affairs in order before proceeding. Of course, if the players are eager to open Vengegate before doing so, the ramifications of their haste are theirs to deal with.

Note that this first portion of the adventure hinges on the PCs opening Vengegate—if for some reason the PCs decide not to activate this portal and instead seek more traditional ways to reach Hermea, you can either skip this chapter entirely and rework Chapter 2 as needed, or have one of the PCs' allies potentially trigger these events while the PCs are in town.

THE FINAL GATE

MODERATE 18

During the events of "Against the Scarlet Triad," the PCs recovered the final portal key. With this portal key in hand, the PCs are free to return to Alseta's Ring beneath Citadel Altaerein at their leisure. Once they are ready, the PCs need only touch the key to Vengegate to activate it, but as they do so, the portal opens not into the way station, but into Dahak's wrath.

With the final remaining portal of Alseta's Ring reactivated, the manifestation's prison has been fully unlocked for the first time. Yet the avatar can't escape immediately—just as an entire lake beyond a dam does not cascade into the valley below when a hole appears in the dam itself, manifestation of Dahak's power can't instantaneously burst forth from Alseta's Ring.

Once this occurs, none of the portals in Alseta's Ring can be opened until the effects of the manifestation of Dahak's influence over the region are ended.

Hazard: Even with Mengkare's wards in place, the manifestation of Dahak can still reach out into the Material Plane and begin to sow destruction. The first of these acts is creating a lesser dragonstorm in Alseta's Ring under Citadel Altaerein. Regardless of whether or not the PCs manage to prematurely end the lesser dragonstorm, Dahak's divine energy escapes Alseta's Ring and makes its way outside, expanding into an apocalyptic event above Citadel Altaerein and Breachill—see Dahak's Retribution for more details.

LESSER DRAGONSTORM


HAZARD 20

RARE COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL MAGICAL

Stealth +38 (legendary)

Description A small-scale version of a dragonstorm—a churning vortex of wind infused with fire, acid, lightning, poison, and ice—fills Alseta's Ring.

Disable Religion DC 40 (legendary) to call out to a non-evil deity for direct intervention to disperse the lesser dragonstorm (prayers to Apsu allow characters who are masters in Religion to attempt the check as if they were legendary instead), Thievery DC 42 (legendary) to deactivate Vengegate while the manifestation is forcing it open, or a successful *dispel magic* (10th level; DC 40) to counteract the lesser dragonstorm.

Manifest Lesser Dragonstorm  **Trigger**

A creature attempts to activate Vengegate;

Effect The chamber within Alseta's Ring fills with a dragonstorm. Creatures within this area take 10d8 damage, equally split between acid, cold, electricity, fire, and poison.

Routine (1 action) On its initiative, the lesser dragonstorm reaches out and blasts all creatures within Alseta's Ring. Affected creatures take 10d8 damage (DC 46 basic Reflex save), evenly split between acid, cold, fire, electricity, and poison. Creatures that fail their save are pulled 20 feet toward the center of Alseta's Ring (or are knocked prone and pulled 30 feet on a critical failure). After 10 rounds, the lesser dragonstorm is destroyed, but a much greater dragonstorm manifests in the surrounding region—see The Dragonstorm on page 7.

Dahak's Retribution

Once all of the remaining *aiudara* in Alseta's Ring are activated, the manifestation of Dahak is finally free to lash out against Golarion after millennia of imprisonment. The manifestation uses its ability to reshape the energy within the *aiudara* network to create pure destructive force, causing it to take the form of monsters and environmental attacks upon Citadel Altaerein and Breachill.

It's up to the PCs to defend the citadel and Breachill from these disastrous events, for if left unchecked, they quickly overwhelm the locals and destroy everything in their path. The attacks and events of the manifestation's retribution come in several waves as the deity's manifestation focuses and directs its energies, requiring a short amount of time to rebuild and launch a new attack after each one. As such, there



is some time between each wave to allow the PCs to recover. However, as there are multiple simultaneous attacks during each wave, it's likely that the PCs will have little time to recover between waves. Each wave notes how much time the PCs have until the next and how much of that they spend automatically. This spent time represents the PCs dispatching minor foes, assessing damage, administering care to injured locals, coordinating efforts, and so on.

During each wave, the PCs can acquire Victory Points that represent their efficiency in dealing with Dahak's aggression. Once all the waves are finished, the total Victory Points earned reveals how successful the PCs were in defending Citadel Altaerein and Breachill, as described on page 17.

THE DRAGONSTORM

During Earthfall, Dahak's manifestation unleashed dragonstorms over the regions it attacked. These dragonstorms contained the destructive power of the various elements associated with chromatic dragons—acid rain, bolts of lightning, clouds of poisonous fog, cyclones of fire, enormous stones of hail, and freezing winds. In addition, these storms contained the pure fury of Dahak—emotional poison that seeped into the minds of all dragons caught within their effects. Affected dragons became filled with rage and lashed out against their environments, bringing even greater destruction with them. Fortunately for the PCs, at this time there are no other dragons in the immediate area to become enraged by the storm—but the PCs (and Breachill's residents) must still endure the other effects.

Once the whirlwind within Alseta's Ring ends (either naturally or as a result of the PCs' actions), Dahak's influence escapes the Citadel and pierces the skies above, manifesting as a 20-foot-wide churning pillar of fire that starts 50 feet above Citadel Altaerein's courtyard and extends 500 feet upward. Any creature that comes within 20 feet of this column of fire takes 5d6 fire damage (DC 42 basic Reflex save), while any creature that enters the column takes 20d6 fire damage (DC 44 basic Reflex save).

Thankfully for the PCs and everyone in the region, this dragonstorm is weaker than those of the Age of Darkness. Although it is less powerful, the dragonstorm is nonetheless destructive, forming a spiraling black cloud over the Breachill region centered just above Citadel Altaerein. As time goes on, the wind and rain in the region grow more and more powerful, finally manifesting damaging and deadly effects during the waves of devastation described in the following pages.

Locals quickly seek shelter during the dragonstorm, but the number of Victory Points the PCs accumulate

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DEFYING DAHAK

In the prior adventure, "Against the Scarlet Triad," the PCs endured a desolate vision that predicted the events at the start of this adventure (see pages 8–9 of "Against the Scarlet Triad"). In that vision, the PCs had three chances to overcome challenges and thus defy Dahak enough to wound and rattle his ego. As a result of this, the PCs gain a cumulative +1 circumstance bonus per challenge they overcame to all saving throws against the effects of the dragonstorm hazard, to a maximum bonus of +3 if they overcame all three. If the PCs also managed to slay the Promise of Fire in this vision, there's a chance that a dragonstorm flare-up simply will not occur at the start of a wave event. Attempt a DC 15 flat check—on a success, the dragonstorm flare-up does not occur for that encounter.

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determines how many actually survive—the more successful the PCs are at defeating Dahak's influence, the greater the chance the locals have to survive.

Hazard: Dahak's Retribution plays out in three waves, each of which is further split into a number of events. At the start of each event in a wave, as Dahak's influence inflicts some new deadly event or attack on the PCs or the region, a flare-up of power from the dragonstorm strikes the PCs. These manifest as blasts of acid rain, bolts of lightning, fiery tornadoes, poisonous miasmas, or freezing winds that target the PCs during the first round of the event, after which the event itself plays out as detailed. Treat each of these individual dragonstorm flare-ups as a one-time hazard with random effects, as detailed below.

DRAGONSTORM


HAZARD 18

RARE ENVIRONMENTAL MAGICAL


Stealth +40 (legendary)

Description A massive storm stirs in the skies above Breachill and Citadel Altaerein. As specific events begin during the three waves of the manifestation's retribution, the dragonstorm wreaks localized havoc.

Disable The dragonstorm can't be disabled—only endured. It ends only once the attack on Breachill and Citadel Altaerein is over.

Localized Dragonstorm  **Trigger** A new wave begins; **Effect** Roll 1d10 to determine which effect manifests from the following possibilities. The placement of these effects is guided by Dahak's will, and they should manifest in the most detrimental locations possible to the PCs.

1-2: Acid Rain (acid) A torrent of acid drenches creatures in a 20-foot burst. Creatures in the area take 6d10



acid damage (DC 42 basic Reflex save). Creatures that critically fail also take 5 persistent acid damage.

3-4: Freezing Wind (cold) A barrage of freezing wind and hail assaults all creatures in a 20-foot burst. Creatures in the area take 3d10 cold damage and 3d10 bludgeoning damage (DC 42 basic Reflex save). Creatures that critically fail are slowed 1 for 1 round.

5-6: Bolts of Lightning (electricity) Several bolts of lightning strike all creatures in a 20-foot burst.

Creatures in the area take 6d10 electricity damage (DC 42 basic Reflex save). Creatures that critically fail their saves become blinded and deafened for 1 round.

7-8: Flaming Vortex (fire) Gouts of flame fall on all creatures in a 20-foot burst. Creatures in the area take 6d10 fire damage (DC 42 basic Reflex save). Creatures that critically fail their saves also take 5 persistent fire damage.

9-10: Poison Miasma (poison) Poisonous mist rolls forth, covering a 20-foot burst for 1 round. Creatures within the mist become concealed, and creatures outside it become concealed to creatures within it. Creatures within the mist take 6d10 poison damage (DC 42 basic Fortitude save). Creatures that critically fail their saves become enfeebled 2.

XP Award: Once all of the waves are dealt with, award the party 120 XP for dealing with the constant threat of the dragonstorm.

CITADEL DEFENSES

Citadel Altaerein is a prime target during many of these attacks. As these attacks progress, specific portions of the Citadel can become damaged, making later encounters more difficult, but if the PCs have taken the time and resources to reinforce the citadel by using the Upgrade Defenses downtime activity (see page 75 of “Cult of Cinders”), the citadel takes significantly less damage, as detailed in each specific encounter.

Note that the map of Citadel Altaerein provided on page 9 shows the castle’s condition in the first adventure—you should adjust this map as needed to represent the unique choices your players have made over the campaign to adjust and repair and perhaps expand on the castle floor plan as needed.

First Wave

As the dragonstorm begins, Dahak’s manifestation spends some time testing its abilities at first. Though the manifestation’s creations are not as powerful as they could be, they are no less dangerous as they focus on Citadel Altaerein itself.

These first three events encounters are assumed to occur

Dragonstorm

simultaneously. Keep track of the number of rounds it takes the PCs to overcome all three encounters, and keep track of any damage to the citadel's defenses.

In any event, the PCs should immediately hear the muffled sounds of devastation, thunder, and worse roaring down from above, letting them know that something bad is happening to their castle. The actual events of the First Wave should begin as soon as the PCs enter the upper works of the castle.

EVENT 1. WARSWORNS **LOW 18**

Creatures: Dahak's manifestation knows that if it can thin the citadel's numbers, it will be a simple matter to take the rest of the stronghold, regardless of what defenses are in place. The manifestation believes that the quickest way to overwhelm the citadel's forces is to use those forces against themselves. To this end, it draws upon the spiritual agonies of all those who have perished over the years in Citadel Altaerein, from prisoners who were executed during the time the castle was ruled by Hellknights to more recently when the PCs swept through the ruins and clashed against the Cinderclaws. The resulting mass of bodies that manifest is not animated from the actual remains, but forms from the energies of the dragonstorm, appearing as a pair of warsworns in the Citadel's courtyard. When the PCs confront the warsworns, they may recognize some of those they fought and defeated in the castle during "Hellknight Hill" (although a PC who succeeds at a DC 40 Perception check realize these creatures are duplicates, rather than the actual bodies of the dead).

Once they manifest, the two warsworns mostly stay in place, and are likely the first monsters the PCs encounter if they simply exit Alseta's Ring by climbing up the stairs to reach the courtyard. If the warsworns are not defeated within 10 rounds of the First Wave beginning, they grow impatient and start to smash their way into the citadel, slaying anyone they encounter.

ELITE WARSWORNS (2)

CREATURE 17

Pathfinder Bestiary 6, 323

Initiative Perception +29

Victory Points: If the PCs destroy the warsworns before the creatures start smashing into the surrounding structure on round 11, grant them 1 Victory Point.



EVENT 2. STORM SIEGE **MODERATE 18**

The manifestation of Dahak has determined that while Citadel Altaerein's destruction isn't required for its eventual escape, demolishing the citadel certainly appeals to it symbolically as a first act of devastation.

Creatures: Dahak's manifestation intends to give the dragonstorm a physical form, condensing the supernatural storm into solid forms as constructed incarnations. A pair of these powerful, spontaneously formed animated objects manifest outside the citadel's walls and begin to batter the structure during this event. Each of these constructs appears as a skeletal draconic humanoid, its bones infused with energy. Choose two separate locations on the outside of the citadel for the animated dragonstorms to begin hammering at the building. The sound of the animated dragonstorms attacking the castle walls is audible anywhere on the ground floor. At the end of every other round, each animated dragonstorm destroys a 15-foot-square section of wall (or at the end of every fourth round if the PCs have improved the castle's defenses); once a section is destroyed, the animated dragonstorm moves clockwise to attack the next wall section.

If the constructs are defeated before they manage to destroy a total of six wall sections, the damage is minimal enough that the PCs can claim victory.

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ANIMATED DRAGONSTORMS (2)

CREATURE 18

RARE N HUGE CONSTRUCT MINDLESS

Perception +30; darkvision

Skills Athletics +35

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

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

HP 255; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious;

Resistances acid 15, cold 15, electricity 15, fire 15, physical 15; **Weaknesses** good 20

Vulnerable to Dispel The animated dragonstorm can be targeted by *disjunction* and *dispel magic*. If targeted by such a spell of 9th level or higher, the construct loses its resistance to acid, cold, electricity, fire, and physical damage and is slowed 1 for 1d4 rounds.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ fist +35 (deadly 3d12, magical, reach 15 feet),

Damage 5d10+12 bludgeoning plus dragonstorm strike

Channel Dragonstorm ♦♦ (divine) The animated dragonstorm directs a 30-foot cone of dragonstorm energy. This deals 3d8 acid, 3d8 cold, 3d8 electricity, 3d8 fire, and 3d8 poison damage to creatures in the cone (DC 40 basic Reflex save). The animated dragonstorm can't use Channel Dragonstorm again for 1d4 rounds.

Destructive Strikes The animated dragonstorm's attacks ignore the Hardness of objects with Hardness 20 or less.

Dragonstorm Strike On a critical hit, the animated dragonstorm's fist bursts with dragonstorm energy. The target takes 1d6 acid, 1d6 cold, 1d6 electricity, 1d6 fire, and 1d6 poison damage.

Victory Points: If the PCs can stop the constructs before they destroy six wall sections, they gain 1 Victory Point. This increases to 2 Victory Points if they stop the constructs before they destroy any wall sections.

EVENT 3. REALITY RIP Low 18

While the walls and staff of Citadel Altaerein are certainly targets for Dahak's wrath, the manifestation understands that the PCs themselves represent the biggest immediate threat. As a result, it begins to rip and tear at the boundaries between this world and the Great Beyond, a process that takes a few rounds to complete once the First Wave begins. This event starts 4 rounds after the First Wave starts.

Creatures: At the start of the fourth round of the First Wave, whether the PCs are currently engaged against foes from **Event 1** or **Event 2**, this event begins. Two tears in reality rip open—one each at a point within 20 feet of two randomly determined PCs—allowing a marilith demon to slither out of each to attack. The mariliths are compelled by the manifestation's influence to attack the PCs and fight until slain.

This event can repeat, releasing two additional mariliths to attack the PCs each time, but the PCs earn Experience Points only

Animated Dragonstorm

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for the first time they defeat the mariliths. Every 10 rounds, a new reality rip manifests next to the PCs; this event ends only once no creatures from **Events 1–3** are active, at which point the First Wave ends.

MARILITHS (2)

CREATURE 17

Pathfinder Bestiary 81

Initiative Perception +30

Victory Points: If the PCs avoid causing a second reality rip by defeating all three events in time, they gain 1 Victory Point.

Second Wave

Once all of the monsters assaulting the citadel in the First Wave have been defeated, Dahak's manifestation takes some time to recover and regroup. The dragonstorm's churning clouds continue to spiral above in the sky, and the pillar of fire above the castle itself remains, serving as a reminder that all is not yet well. Give the PCs some time to recover and regroup. The Second Wave of the manifestation's retribution should occur at a point where the PCs are outside and capable of seeing Breachill in the distance (or at a place where others in the citadel can see what's about to manifest in town and report to the PCs quickly), but before they get too distracted by attempts to open more portals below or to actually dispel the dragonstorm or its pillar of fire directly.

During the Second Wave, Dahak's manifestation lashes out at the town of Breachill, realizing that this settlement is a perfect place to vent its pent-up need for devastation. When the Second Wave begins, the clouds above Citadel Altaerein expand dramatically, moving to sprawl over the entire region. Bolts of lightning, plumes of fiery tornados, torrents of hail and acid rain, and clouds of noxious green fog become plainly visible as the storm worsens, and no Perception check is needed to realize that the focus of these energetic displays is headed directly toward Breachill.

Unlike the events of the First Wave, the events in the Second Wave play out one at a time over a longer period. This adventure assumes the PCs use magic to move quickly from location to location, but you should adjust the timing of each of the following events so that, regardless of the methods of travel PCs use, they should be able to reach each event's location just as it starts, provided they don't get distracted or take too long between each one to rest and recover.

EVENT 4. MONUMENT CIRCLE SEVERE 18

The first target in Breachill is its core—the manifestation of Dahak begins to send bolt after bolt of lightning

down into Monument Circle, and the strikes hit the tops and sides of the water towers that surround the area again and again. These blasts of lightning deal little actual damage to the water towers, each of which has lightning rods and is grounded, but should serve to draw the PCs' attention.

Creatures: As the PCs approach Monument Circle, three burning blasts of lightning lance down from the clouds above. When they strike the ground within Monument Circle, they coalesce and transform, creating three animated dragonstorms who are much better equipped to destroy water towers. Each construct seeks out its own water tower to attack, and left on its own, can destroy a tower after 3 rounds of activity. The animated dragonstorms abandon attacks on water towers if they are attacked, but return to their destructive focus on the towers after any round in which no apparent foe distracts them in such a way. They fight until destroyed—or until all of the water towers collapse, at which point the energy holding them together dissipates and they vanish.

ANIMATED DRAGONSTORMS (3)

CREATURE 18

Page 10

Initiative Perception +30

Victory Points: The PCs earn 1 Victory Point for every two water towers that remain intact at the end of the encounter.

EVENT 5. THE BURNING BAR

As the dragonstorm continues to rage in the sky above Breachill, it rains destruction and chaos upon the town. A few minutes after **Event 4** ends, a potent blast of this destruction hits Cayden's Keg, a popular local tavern. A column of flame lowers from the sky and sets the tavern ablaze, the storm's rain seeming to have no effect at all on stemming the fire.

The dragonstorm fire engulfing Cayden's Keg is supernatural in nature and grows at a rate far beyond what an ordinary fire could. As the PCs arrive at the site, explain to them that they've two options if they wish to help the situation—they can **Fight the Fire** or they can **Rescue Citizens**. Each of these exploration activities is detailed on page 12. In both cases, if a PC uses a powerful spell or magic item in a way that you feel provides a significant advantage, you can grant that PC up to a +4 circumstance bonus to their skill check to resolve their chosen activity.

As the fire begins, there are 30 citizens trapped in the building. This event plays out in multiple phases, and in every phase, each PC can attempt one of the following activities. At the end of every phase, roll



1d6 to determine the number of citizens trapped in the building who perish from the flames. The PCs have 4 phases to try to rescue as many citizens as they can—at the end of phase 4, though, the building collapses, all remaining citizens trapped in the building perish, and the event ends. Alternately, if no living citizens remain in the building at the end of a phase, the event ends (if the building hasn't collapsed yet, the surviving citizens help to put the rest of the flames out before the tavern is destroyed).

FIGHT THE FIRE

EXPLORATION MANIPULATE

You work to contain the fire. Attempt a DC 36 Acrobatics check to move quickly through the building and extinguish burning areas opportunistically, a DC 38 Athletics check to remove debris to prevent the spread of fire or haul buckets of water or sand to extinguish flames, or a DC 40 Diplomacy or

Intimidation check to organize bystanders into helping fight the fire.

Critical Success You make significant progress, allowing 1d6 citizens to escape to safety on their own, and no citizens still trapped in the building perish at the end of the phase. Any checks to Rescue Citizens for the remainder of this phase gain a +2 circumstance bonus. Increase the number of phases remaining before the building collapses by 1.

Success You curtail flames in areas where citizens are still trapped. No citizens still trapped in the building perish at the end of the phase. Any checks to Rescue Citizens for the remainder of this phase gain a +1 circumstance bonus.

Failure You take 4d6 fire damage.

Critical Failure Your attempts to Fight the Fire accidentally spread the flames instead. You take 8d6 fire damage. Reduce the number of phases remaining before the building collapses by 1.

RESCUE CITIZENS

EXPLORATION MOVE

You focus your efforts on helping citizens escape or recover from wounds. Attempt a DC 36 Diplomacy or Intimidation check to direct citizens to safety, a DC 38 Medicine check to treat injured survivors, or a DC 40 Society check to know about unusual escape routes to safety from the building and the surrounding alleys.

Critical Success Your efforts are resoundingly successful. Roll 2d6—this is the number of citizens trapped in the building who you lead to safety or the number of citizens who succumbed during this or the previous phase who you've managed to nurse back to life from the brink of death, split any way you wish.

Success You rescue 1d6 citizens from the flames.

Failure You fail to rescue any citizens from the fire and take 2d6 fire damage.

Critical Failure You take 4d6 fire damage as a blast of fire and falling debris strikes you. For every 5 fire damage you take from this, one citizen still trapped in the building perishes.

Victory Points: If the tavern survives the fire and does not collapse, grant the PCs 1 Victory Point. They earn an additional 3 Victory Points if all 30 citizens survive. This additional award is 2 Victory Points if

15–29 citizens survive, or 1 Victory Point if only 1–14 citizens survive.

XP Award: If at least 15 citizens are rescued, grant the PCs 10 XP. If no citizens perish in the fire, instead grant the PCs 30 XP.

EVENT 6. COLLAPSED BUILDING

As the dragonstorm continues to rain destruction down upon Breachill's structures, one in particular takes significant damage—the Great Dreamhouse. The temple of Desna opened its doors to the fearful almost as soon the dragonstorm began in the skies above, and Dahak's manifestation took notice as many citizens sought refuge inside. As this event begins, the PCs witness a powerful bolt of lightning and a vortex of enormous hailstones strike the temple, destroying a portion of the southeastern wing. The collapse traps a number of citizens who will surely perish if they do not receive help soon.

When the PCs arrive at the temple, they see many citizens, priests, and acolytes working to rescue those trapped beneath the rubble, but without the PCs' aid, most of those who are trapped within are doomed to perish from further collapse, suffocation, or acid burns as acid rain continues to seep down through the rubble toward those buried below.

This event is intended to pose a problem to the players and leave it up to each of them as to how they want to proceed in aiding those trapped within the ruins. Ask each player in turn how they would like to aid the other priests and citizens in the rescue attempt, then decide what sort of skill check would make sense to resolve the success of the plan. Acrobatics and Athletics are good choices for PCs who want to work to quickly clear away rubble. Diplomacy and Intimidation are good choices for PCs who want to direct efforts and organize workers. A PC who wishes to use magic to aid in the rescue attempt must expend at least one spell that would make sense to support the plan, and then roll an Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion check, as appropriate. Characters who wish to use their knowledge of physics, engineering, or architecture to efficiently and quickly isolate key areas where rescue attempts would have the most impact might use Crafting or an appropriate Lore skill. PCs who simply wish to scout the area to look for victims who are easier to rescue might roll a Survival or Perception check.

Once you've made your rulings, each PC must attempt a DC 38 check using the skill you've determined is appropriate for the situation. Total up the number of successes the PCs get, counting critical successes as two successes instead of one, then compare them to the

AGE OF ASHES

ADVENTURE PATH

EXPLORING THE DEVASTATION

To keep the events of the Second Wave moving quickly and to keep variety between encounters, **Event 5**, **Event 6**, and **Event 9** are resolved in Exploration mode. This helps to keep things fast-paced as the PCs move from location to location without you having to get bogged down tracking movement or preparing complex maps for play.

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following possible outcomes to determine the results of their efforts.

No Deaths (Successes Exceed the Number of PCs): With the PCs' aid, there are no deaths. This overwhelming level of success not only is enough to earn the thanks of Kellen Carondil, as described in Minimal Deaths below, but attracts the attention of Desna herself. This greater blessing restores 7d8+56 Hit Points to every PC and grants each PC Desna's favor—this allows a PC to reroll any check after they determine the result of a check, and to choose the better result. Doing so is a free action that can be performed on any check, but only once per character.

Minimal Deaths (Successes Equal the Number of PCs): The PCs manage to help clear rubble quickly enough that only 1d6 citizens perish. Head priest Kellen Carondil declares the act a minor miracle and he grants the PCs a blessing of Desna. The blessing grants the PCs a +5-foot bonus to land Speed for the remainder of Dahak's Retribution.

If the PCs use powerful magic or resources to restore the dead to life, this result improves to no deaths.

Tragedy (Successes Less than the Number of PCs): The PCs manage to save only a few of those who were trapped within the rubble.

Overwhelming Tragedy (No Successes): All NPCs trapped within the rubble perish.

Victory Points: A result of Minimal Deaths grants 1 Victory Point, while No Deaths grants 2 Victory Points.

XP Award: If the PCs achieve only a Tragedy, grant them 10 XP. Increase this award to 30 XP if they manage a Minimal Deaths result, or to 60 XP if they rescue all of the victims.

EVENT 7. STORMING GIANTS SEVERE 18

Not all of the dragonstorm attacks are intended to strike at strategic targets. Some of these are intended only to cause as much havoc as possible.

Creatures: A small group of powerful fire giants created directly from dragonstorm energy manifests in Breachill amid blasts of lightning. They then move throughout Breachill, destroying what they can.

As in **Event 4**, the giants appear initially in Monument Circle, but then they move out individually to attack nearby buildings. If the PCs confront some of these

giants, their roars of rage draw the attention of the others, who move to join the fight as soon as possible.

DRAGONSTORM FIRE GIANTS (3)

CREATURE 18

RARE NE HUGE GIANT HUMANOID

Variant fire giant (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 172)

Perception +30; low-light vision

Languages Auran, Common, Draconic, Jotun

Skills Acrobatics +31, Athletics +35, Intimidation +35

Str +9, **Dex** +6, **Con** +7, **Int** +3, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +2

Items +2 greater striking greatsword, +2 greater resilient hide armor, sack with 5 rocks

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

HP 400; **Immunities** fire; **Resistances** acid 20, electricity 20, cold 20, poison 20; **Weaknesses** good 20

Catch Rock ⤵

Speed 35 feet

Melee ⤵ greatsword +35 (magical, reach 15 feet, versatile P),
Damage 3d12+20 slashing plus 1d6 electricity

Ranged ⤵ rock +35 (range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 3d10+12 bludgeoning plus 1d6 electricity

Arcane Innate Spells DC 40; **3rd** *levitate* (at will);

Constant (4th) *freedom of movement*

Dragonstorm Blade ⤵⤵⤵ (divine, evocation) The dragonstorm fire giant raises one hand to the sky, channeling dragonstorm energy into the blade held in the other. The giant makes a greatsword Strike with a -2 circumstance penalty against each creature within its reach. It makes only one attack roll and compares the result against each creature's AC. This Strike deals an additional 1d8 acid, 1d8 cold, 1d8 electricity, 1d8 fire, and 1d8 poison damage and counts as two attacks for the giant's multiple attack penalty.

Throw Rock ⤵

Victory Points: The PCs gain 1 Victory Point for defeating all four giants.

EVENT 8. BALOR RAGE MODERATE 18

Many of Breachill's citizens attempt to flee during the attacks on the town, and the manifestation of Dahak revels in their fear. It knows that in their panicked state, the citizens of Breachill are easy targets and sets its forces to intercept the citizens as they flee.

Creature: Dahak's manifestation unleashes its most powerful minion yet just outside of Breachill's city limits on the northern side of town, ripping reality open in a manner similar to how it began **Event 3**. This time, though, it's a balor demon who steps through into the world. The demon assaults anyone who attempts to leave Breachill, but it does not enter the town proper, preferring to roar and make threatening gestures at

Dragonstorm Fire Giant

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the settlement's periphery. The balor is content to leave the citizens within the town alone as it knows the dragonstorm will take care of most of them on its own. If the PCs confront it directly, it turns its attention to them, ignoring any of the citizens.

The PCs don't have to face the demon, but if they ignore it, the balor joins the fight against the PCs at the manifestation's side in **Event 10**.

BALOR

CREATURE 20

Pathfinder Bestiary 83

Initiative Perception +36

Victory Points: The PCs gain 2 Victory Points for defeating the balor. If the PCs do not face the balor themselves, the citizens flee the town entirely and do not reinforce the battlements.

EVENT 9. PANIC IN THE STREETS

By this time, the disasters and monsters have resulted in a widespread general panic in Breachill. If left to fend for themselves, the citizens increasingly succumb to panic, abandoning their homes and even each other to flee haphazardly, which only hurts the town even more. Without neighbors helping neighbors, a lot of citizens are left without any essential supplies and are doomed to become injured, or worse.

During this event, the PCs have a chance between dragonstorm-related disasters to take some time to fight against the chaos in Breachill and to rally the citizenry to help. Doing so requires the PCs to soothe the feelings of hopelessness and fear that pervade the citizens. The PCs can use any number of methods to do so. A PC can succeed at a Diplomacy or Intimidation check to convince or cow the people of Breachill into working together. Or they can succeed at an Arcana, Occultism, or Lore check to explain the dragonstorm and its associated phenomenon so that the citizens can minimize the damage to their homes. A PC who succeeds at a Performance, Society, or Breachill Lore check can remind the citizens of Lamond Breachton's great efforts to help the town when it was founded, inspiring the fearful to take action.

Regardless of what technique they opted for, each PC must succeed at a DC 40 check to help calm the citizenry. The PCs must achieve a total of three successes before they achieve three failures. If the PCs succeed, the citizens band together and coordinate efforts to help others escape the town or to protect what they can; otherwise, many panicked citizens end up fleeing town only to be savaged by the balor if it remains at the edge of the settlement.

Victory Points: The PCs gain 1 Victory Point for rallying the citizens. They gain 1 additional Victory

Point if they achieve at least one critical success in the process. If fleeing citizens are attacked by the balor, reduce the PCs' total Victory Points by 2.

XP Award: Award the party 30 XP if they convince the citizens of Breachill to work together.

Third Wave

After the attacks in Breachill die down at the end of the Second Wave, the PCs have an hour to recover and rest while the manifestation rebuilds its energies. During this time, the dragonstorm continues to churn above, initially lessened in power but slowly growing in strength. A successful DC 38 check to Identify Magic or a DC 40 Perception check to study the supernatural weather patterns is enough to let the PCs know how much time they have left before the dragonstorm returns to the level of violence it exhibited before.

Once this hour is up (or sooner, if you wish, and if the PCs seem eager to forge ahead), the Third Wave begins with **Event 10**.

EVENT 10. DAHAK'S WRATH EXTREME 18

Hoping to unleash more of its wrath on the Citadel or its defenders, a lesser version of Dahak's manifestation forces its way through the portal and emerges at the base of the pillar of flame above Citadel Altaerein with a mighty roar. Once it appears in the flesh above the citadel, Dahak's manifestation immediately begins to rain destruction on the structure below. It flies above the citadel, keeping a safe distance while using Breath Weapon and its magic to create mayhem.

The PCs aren't alone in this fight, however. All of their allies stand ready to aid in the Citadel's defense. As this battle begins, inform the PCs that they can use the momentum of their victories in the first two waves against the dragon. At the start of each round, ask the PCs if they wish to distract the dragon god's manifestation with their citadel or its defenders—if the PCs choose to do so, reduce their total Victory Points by 3 and, for that round, Dahak's manifestation spends one of its actions attacking or lashing out against the citadel or its defenders, leaving it with only 2 actions to use against the PCs for that round. The citadel can be used to distract it up to two times (or up to three times if the PCs upgraded the citadel defenses), and the defenders only once. (Make sure to let the PCs know that Victory Points spent in this way aren't lost permanently—they'll regain Victory Points spent calling on the citadel or its defenders in this way if they defeat the manifestation.)

Furthermore, if the PCs befriended the red dragon Kyrion in "Cult of Cinders," he arrives in the region in the nick of time to provide what aid he can, as detailed in the "Kyrion's Return" sidebar.

KYRION'S RETURN

In "Cult of Cinders," the PCs can earn the friendship of a not-so-evil red dragon named Kyrion. If the PCs trusted the dragon enough in that adventure to reveal to them that they hailed from Breachill, the dragon arrives in the town at some point before **Event 10** begins, swooping in to provide what assistance he can. Alternatively, Kyrion can arrive earlier, during the First or Second Wave, to rescue the PCs from a disaster if you wish.

Kyrion's still only a 10th-level creature, so his aid won't be particularly helpful directly in the fight against Dahak's manifestation, but the presence of a red dragon in the area who stands against the manifestation is enough to significantly upset and distract it. As long as Kyrion remains alive during **Event 10**, the manifestation of Dahak is distracted and takes a -3 status penalty to all checks.

Kyrion's return grants the PCs one additional benefit—the shard of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* that's embedded in his chest could provide them with a much-needed edge over their foes later in this adventure. See the Kyrion's Shard sidebar on page 26 for more details.

KYRION

CREATURE 10

Chaotic neutral young red dragon (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 112)

Initiative Perception +20

LESSER MANIFESTATION OF DAHAK CREATURE 22

UNIQUE CE GARGANTUAN DRAGON FIRE

Variant red dragon (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 112)

Perception +39; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet, smoke vision

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven

Skills Acrobatics +37, Arcana +42, Athletics +42, Deception +42, Diplomacy +37, Intimidation +45, Stealth +35

Str +10, **Dex** +5, **Con** +9, **Int** +5, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +7

Smoke Vision As young red dragon.

AC 50; **Fort** +36, **Ref** +33, **Will** +39; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 500; **Immunities** fire, paralyzed, sleep; **Resistances** acid 24, cold 24, electricity 24, poison 24; **Weaknesses** good 24

Dragon Heat (aura, divine evocation, fire) 10 feet, 6d6 fire damage (DC 42 basic Reflex save)

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 90 feet, DC 42

Attack of Opportunity Jaws only.

Redirect Energy (abjuration, divine) **Trigger** A creature

within 100 feet casts an acid, cold, fire, electricity, or poison spell, or such a spell otherwise comes into effect from a source within 100 feet; **Effect** The manifestation makes all the choices to determine the targets, destination, or other effects of the spell, as though it were the caster.

Speed 60 feet, fly 240 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +42 (fire, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 4d10+22 piercing plus 3d6 fire

Melee ♦ claw +42 (agile, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 4d8+22 slashing

Melee ♦ tail +40 (magical, reach 25 feet), **Damage** 4d10+17 slashing

Melee ♦ wing +40 (agile, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 3d8+17 slashing

Arcane Innate Spells DC 46; **8th**, *wall of fire* (×4); **4th** *suggestion* (×3); **Cantrips** (9th) *detect magic*, *read aura*

Breath Weapon ♦♦ (divine, evocation) Dahak's manifestation breathes a blast of dragonstorm energy that deals 5d6 acid, 5d6 cold, 5d6 electricity, 5d6 fire, and 5d6 poison damage in a 60-foot cone (DC 46 basic Reflex save). It can't use Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

Draconic Frenzy ♦♦ As young red dragon.

Draconic Momentum As young red dragon.

Manipulate Energy ♦ (concentrate, divine, transmutation)

The manifestation attempts to take control of a magical acid, cold, electricity, fire, or poison spell within 100 feet. If it succeeds at a counteract check (counteract level 10, counteract modifier +36), the original caster loses control of the spell, control is transferred to the manifestation, and the manifestation counts as having Sustained the Spell with this action (if applicable). The manifestation can end the spell instead of taking control, if it chooses.

Victory Points: The PCs gain 2 Victory Points for defeating Dahak's manifestation, and regain all Victory Points they spent during **Event 10** to distract it.

Aftermath

Once the PCs defeat Dahak's manifestation, the dragonstorm above the region suddenly dissipates, the clouds fading away to be replaced by blue skies over the course of a single minute. While the body formed by Dahak's manifestation remains a crumpled corpse on the ground, the manifestation's energy returns to its prison in Alseta's Ring where it slowly begins to regain its power to try again at a later date. (The PCs' final crusade to destroy the manifestation is chronicled in Chapter 3 of this adventure.) For now, Breachill and Citadel Altaerein are safe, and the ultimate result of the attacks is dependent on the number of Victory Points the PCs have earned.

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5 or Fewer Victory Points: The attack is catastrophic. The people of Breachill need a long time to recover. The next months are spent burying the dead and cleaning up the town. It will be a lengthy process before the town can start rebuilding. Citadel Altaerein ends in a state similar to how the PCs first found it at the start of the campaign. They will need to spend several months to repair the keep. The PCs do not receive any bonus XP.

6 to 11 Victory Points: The battle is hard-won. Breachill was damaged, but it survived the brutal attack. Though there were losses, the people of the town recover relatively quickly. Citadel Altaerein was damaged as well but can be easily repaired. With only a few weeks of work, the citadel should return to a state close to what it was before the attack. The PCs gain 40 XP.

12 to 17 Victory Points: The day is saved and losses are minimal. The damage Breachill sustained is relatively minor. The town's residents will recover fully in a few weeks and throw a festival in the PCs' honor. The Citadel takes minor damage, which the citizens offer to repair as thanks for the PCs' efforts. The PCs gain 80 XP.

18 or More Victory Points: Dahak's manifestation is pushed back by the might of the PCs and the will of the people of Breachill. Even with all of its destruction, the manifestation is unable to inflict any lasting harm on Breachill or Citadel Altaerein—there is very little damage beyond the cosmetic. The citizens of Breachill work together to help each other, and the bonds between neighbors grows stronger. The PCs gain 120 XP.

Vengegate Way Station

Once the PCs have dealt with the manifestation of Dahak and its minions, they are free to return to Alseta's Ring and investigate the final gate. Now that Dahak's vengeful energies have, for the time, been dissipated, it is safe to open Vengegate. This is accomplished simply, as with the other *aiudara* in Alseta's Ring: merely touching the portal key (obtained in the previous adventure) to the stone within Vengegate's arch causes that stone to fade away into mist. The portal remains active for 10 minutes before closing—the other side of the portal allows travelers from within Vengegate's way station to emerge, but not to reenter without activating the portal again. Stepping through the portal transports the traveler to area **A1** of the Savored Chapel: the way station within Vengegate.

Candlaron, the creator of Alseta's Ring, worshipped Calistria and chose to craft Vengegate in her honor when he built it. This was in part to pay tribute to the

elven deity and to avoid drawing her ire, as she is a particularly envious goddess. He hoped that over time, elves traveling through Vengegate would establish a colony devoted entirely to the Savored Sting at the portal's destination, but instead the elves who traveled through here set to the seas and explored, eventually choosing a more northern island to settle. When Earthfall struck, these elves had other things to worry about, and in time, these Mordant Spire elves lost track of their original path to the seas.

Travelers passing through Vengegate arrive in a way station that once served as a chapel to Calistria—a place of pleasure and worship for her followers or any traveler who used the portal to venture to the isles of the west.

The chapel's vaulted ceilings rise to a height of 40 feet. The ceilings are specially designed to improve acoustics within the chapel, granting a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to hear creatures and sounds.

Magical lighting along the ceilings fills the chapel with dim light. The lights are keyed to specific elven words that allow the inhabitants to change the light level within each room between darkness, dim light, and bright light. The floors and walls are made of worked stone.

While Dahak's influence has been staunch for the moment, lingering remnants of the dragon's anger remain in the chambers of the Savored Chapel; once these remaining threats are defeated, though, they do not return, making the Savored Chapel a safe place for the PCs to use thereafter.

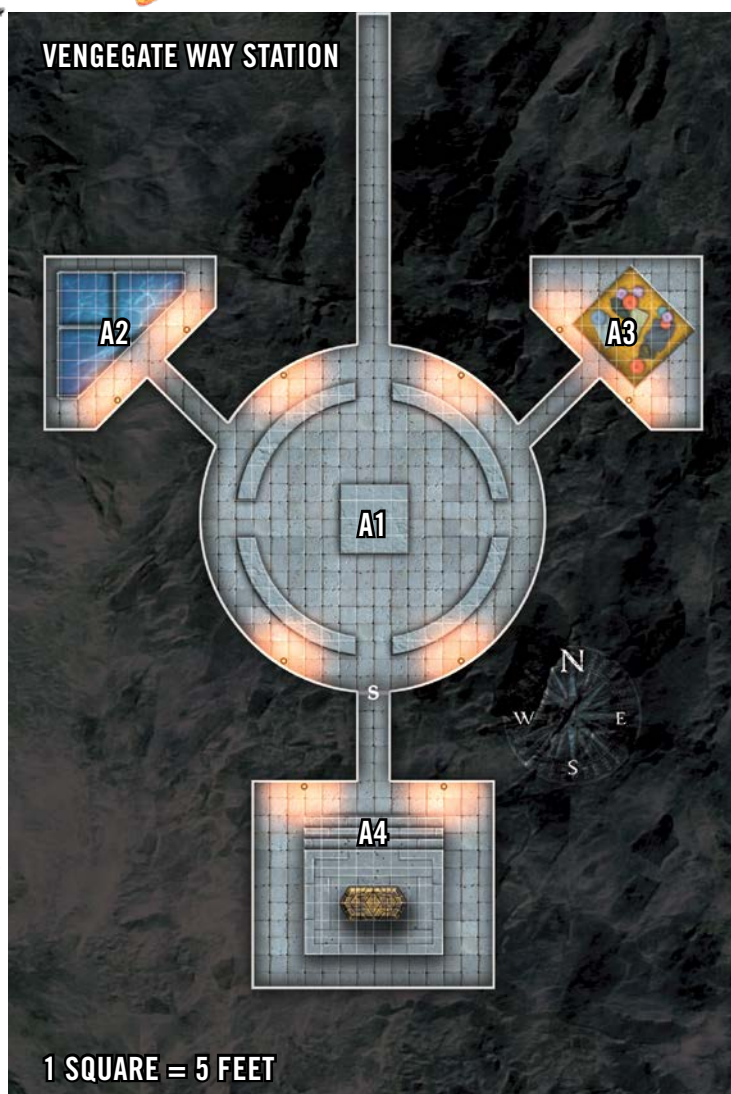
A1. MAIN CHAMBER

Low 19

This large chamber is decorated with carvings of daggers and wasps along its walls. The image of a trio of daggers pointing outward adorns the ceiling above. A large stone platform in the center of the room is surrounded by four stone benches. Three halls extend out from equidistant locations along the northern half of the chamber.

This chamber served as the main place of worship in the chapel. Calistrian priests used the platform to give sermons and other demonstrations to the Calistrian faithful. The benches are low enough to step over with some effort and are difficult terrain for creatures attempting to do so.

A hidden door is built into the southern wall of the chamber. A successful DC 25 Perception check reveals the door's presence. Characters who are legendary in Perception automatically notice the door. Candlaron chose to close off the portal chamber,



at the bottom of one section. The walls are decorated with imagery of bathing elves. A hall extends out from the southeastern wall of the chamber.

Calistrian worshippers used this chamber to bathe during their stays within the chapel. The pool is magically enhanced to keep the waters clean. In addition, the pool's magic allows someone in the chamber to manipulate the waters within. A specific elven word alters the temperature of the water from cold to warm to hot; a successful DC 25 check to Identify Magic is all that's needed to discover this method.

Hazard: The last people to make use of the pool before Alseta's Ring was cut off from the *aiudara* network were the elven lovers Damurdiel and Erveniss. The priestess Damurdiel believed Erveniss to be unfaithful, and after she finally confirmed his infidelity (based on the traitorous whispers of a rival), she invited him to bathe within this chamber. Here, the priestess enacted her revenge, plunging a dagger into Erveniss's heart only to receive a vision from Calistria that she had seen infidelity where none existed. Distraught, she took her own life. As fate would have it, Earthfall struck soon thereafter, leaving the remains of both elves abandoned within for ages.

Since then, the pool's magic has completely dissolved the elves' remains, but their spirits still linger on as a fell haunt forever seeking revenge. The haunt manifests as an elven woman who attempts to convince anyone to join them in the pool, before attempting to enact her revenge once more. Once her attack begins, she shifts into a nightmarish, skull-headed figure with the wings of a giant wasp. During her attack, she constantly mutters Erveniss's name, detailing every time she ever slighted him—whether real or imagined.

as most of the chapel's visitors were not interested in traveling beyond to Hermea. He kept the door obscured from typical visitors but obvious enough for those already aware of the portal beyond.

Creatures: Although the manifestation of Dahak is contained for the time being, two of its minions still linger here from its attack on the citadel above. Two animated dragonstorms thrash about in the chamber, smashing the walls and floors in constant fury.

ANIMATED DRAGONSTORMS (2) CREATURE 18

Page 10

Initiative Perception +30

A2. BATHS

Low 19

A large pool, divided into three sections by low stone walls, fills most of this roughly triangular chamber; a dagger lies

DAMURDIEL'S VENGEANCE

HAZARD 19

COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +37 (legendary) or DC 47 to notice the dagger left in the pool start to move on its own

Description An elven woman wearing a robe stands in the water. She beckons anyone who enters the room to join her in the pool.

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Disable Deception 45 (legendary) to pretend to be Erveniss and ask for forgiveness, Diplomacy 45 (legendary) to convince Damurdiel to stand down (elves who are masters in Diplomacy can attempt the check as if they were legendary instead), or Religion 40 (legendary) to call upon Calistria to calm Damurdiel's spirit.

AC 43; **Fort** 26; **Reflex** 26; **Will** 35

HP 128 (BT 64) dagger

Surprise Strike  (attack) **Trigger** A creature approaches within 5 feet of the pool's edge; **Effect** The ghostly elf causes a dagger to rise out of the waters and then fling toward the triggering creature. If the attack is a hit, it is a critical hit instead. The haunt then rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) The haunt attempts to Strike with the dagger.

Ranged  (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S) dagger +40, **Damage** 4d4+10 piercing plus 20 negative

Reset Damurdiel's spirit subsides once she is destroyed or if she manages to reduce a creature to 0 Hit Points. She returns after 1 minute.

Treasure: Once the haunt has been disabled or the dagger is broken, the dagger falls with a light splash into the pool. The dagger is a +3 *major striking keen dagger* (but if it's broken in the fight, it still needs to be repaired).

A3. RESTING CHAMBER

A number of elegant pillows, thin sheets, and mattresses lie in a shallow pit in the center of this chamber. A number of suggestive carvings decorate the walls, each depicting embracing elves in various poses. A hallway extends out from the southwest wall of the room.

Calistrans used this chamber both as a place to relax as well as to fulfill their physical desires with each other and their guests. The furnishings are still intact thanks to a magical treatment.

Treasure: One of the chapel's priests misplaced her *greater phylactery of faithfulness* ages ago in this room. The small box is hidden beneath the pile of pillows and sheets sitting here. A PC who succeeds at a DC 40 Perception check to search the room locates this phylactery.

A4. PORTAL CHAMBER

This large chamber is decorated with carvings of wasps. A large dais rests in the center of the room. A set of stone steps lead up to a large, stone archway in the

center of the dais. The archway bears a similar motif to that of the room adorned throughout with carvings of wasps and daggers.

Candlaron created this chamber to hold the exit from the way station. The room is relatively bare save for the dais and gate. The PCs should recognize the gate as an obvious exit from the way station. When the PCs activate this *aiudara* and step through, they arrive in area **B1** within Mengkare's lair on Hermea.



Damurdiel's Vengeance



CHAPTER 2: THE PRICE OF PARADISE

The Promise of today is, on its surface, a thriving but isolated settlement where everyone's needs are provided for. In truth, while Mengkare sees himself as a benevolent and kind ruler who seeks to help his people by coordinating the minutiae of their lives on a daily basis, Promise is a stagnated false utopia. Its citizens are safe, but what none realize is that they are simply being protected for a sacrifice that is destined to amount to nothing. Mengkare hopes to devastate Dahak by using the souls of Promise to fuel the *Anima Invocation*, but he hasn't realized that he's lacking the most crucial element in making this powerful ritual succeed—the souls to be sacrificed must do so of their own free will.

Mengkare has lapsed in another way. Over the years, he's increasingly ceded control of the day-to-day actions of the government to the Council of Enlightenment, allowing himself more time to study, prepare for the

Anima Invocation, and continue to philosophically curtail the second-guessing about his plans for the city that nags at the corners of his conscience. For the most part, the Council of Enlightenment has done a commendable job in maintaining Promise as a “utopia,” but the lack of oversight has allowed the machinations of the Scarlet Triad to flourish.

Emaliza of Hermea (formerly Emaliza Zandivar) used her position as the high councilor of Hermea and took advantage of Mengkare's distraction to continue her work with the Scarlet Triad unseen. As the highest-ranking member of the Council of Enlightenment, Emaliza was afforded a large amount of autonomy, which made it a simple matter for her to correspond with her brother Uri without Mengkare noticing. Uri's most recent correspondence was an important package that contained the *Flawed Orb of Gold Dragonkind*—a vital piece of the puzzle in

Emaliza's attempts to take Promise for herself and claim both Mengkare and the manifestation of Dahak as weapons to hold Golarion ransom.

As the PCs arrive in Promise, a number of events have recently taken place. When the manifestation attempted to escape after the activation of Vengegate, Mengkare noticed with alarm, caught off guard by the fact that the portals have been active again (the Scarlet Triad's campaign of secrecy and control of information has, so far, kept the PCs' actions in Alseta's Ring hidden from the dragon). He called upon Emaliza and her followers to step in to bolster the wards on Vengegate and protect his lair, then left Promise entirely to travel to Axis where he began the hasty process of gathering the last few resources he needed to be able to enact the *Anima Invocation* early, if it came to that.

Taking advantage of Mengkare's absence, Emaliza and her agents quickly searched Mengkare's lair for any remaining shards of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, only to come up empty. Rather than bolster the wards on Vengegate, Emaliza has decided to leave the portal open so that the PCs can step through. She intends to recruit them to her side once they arrive so that when Mengkare returns, the PCs can aid her in defeating the dragon, should the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* fail to work as planned.

Mengkare's Lair

When Mengkare originally arrived in Hermea, he lived in a state of melancholy. His first decades were spent exploring the island and reflecting upon his life up to that point. He eventually settled on living the rest of his life on the island and decided to finally put down roots. Mengkare traveled Hermea and searched the Altinar Mountains high and low for a suitable location for a permanent lair. His search ended when he found a mysterious cavern that appeared to have already been used before, wherein the dragon made a startling discovery: Vengegate.

Intrigued by the *aiudara*, Mengkare began studying it and eventually learned of Alseta's Ring and the manifestation of Dahak trapped within. At this point, Mengkare claimed the cavern as his lair both to allow him to more easily study the gate and to stand guard should anything attempt to make use of it.

B1. PORTAL CHAMBER

This grand cavern holds a large dais at its center. A stone archway bearing carvings of daggers and wasps stands in the center of the dais and a set of stone stairs lead down from the archway. A wide tunnel continues south from the dais.

When creating the first *aiudara*, Candlaron relied heavily on ley lines to augment the gates' power and capabilities. He intended to place the Vengegate on the smaller island now known as Two Tree Island, but the lack of a proper ley line caused him to rework his plans and place the gate on Hermea proper. The ley line running beneath the island was not fully accessible, however, and Candlaron had to carve into the Altinar Mountains to find a suitable location for the gate.

Vengegate's current resting place was meant to be the beginnings of a greater project. Candlaron hoped to continue carving out the cave into a proper Calistrian cathedral, but his work expanded into the creation of the larger network of *aiudara* portals, causing this project to fall by the wayside and lie incomplete.

CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

After traveling through Vengegate, the PCs find themselves in no less a storied location than Mengkare's lair. After encountering some of the dragon's most trusted agents, the PCs must decide how they wish to proceed as they explore Promise and, in time, infiltrate the city's Golden Palace to learn the dragon's secret plans. In the end, they must confront Mengkare with words or weapons if they hope to prevent him from sacrificing the citizens of Promise in his desperate attempt to destroy Dahak.

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B2. MENGKARE'S LIBRARY

A large rug lies on the ground of this cavern. Several shelves surround the rug, each packed with books. The cavern continues to west.

After settling into his lair, Mengkare brought over his immense library, a massive collection of tomes from his childhood and time on Axis. Anyone using the library gains a +4 item bonus to checks to Recall Knowledge related to history and the various planes.

Treasure: The enormous collection of tomes numbers in the thousands. The library is altogether worth a total of 85,000 gp. In addition to the general nature of the collection, Mengkare has a number of specific volumes of particular note. The first is a *possibility tome* that sits at the bottom of one of the shelves. A second book, titled *Performances through the Ages*, is in fact a magical relic. The holder of the book can convert it into a musical instrument of any kind as an Interact action. While in instrument form, the book becomes a *greater maestro's instrument*. To transform the book into another musical instrument, the holder must first return it to book form with an Interact action.

Finally, the largest volume on the shelves is in fact a spell book that once belonged to the wizard Ilgreth. Mengkare stole the tome away as he fled from the wizard's lair centuries ago. The spell book contains all common arcane spells up to 9th level as well as *discern lies*, *false vision*, *magnificent mansion*, *mind blank*, *private sanctum*, and *telepathic bond*. Anyone who spends at least a few hours reading the glosses of the book can piece together enough information to note that Ilgreth was a cruel and sadistic wizard who had attempted to harness the volcanic power of one of Avistan's largest volcanos—known at the time as Torag's Crag. The notes also make clear that Ilgreth had recovered the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* and used it to enslave dragons to aid his plots. Dates in the spellbook confirm that the last few entries were made days before the Rending, in 3980 AR, when Torag's Crag exploded, thereafter becoming known as Droskar's Crag.

B3. MENGKARE'S CHAMBERS

The domed ceiling of this massive cavern rises to a height of eighty feet. A garden of small bushes and flowers rests

beneath an opening in the ceiling above. Two tables stand in the northeast portion of the cavern. The smaller table holds a number of glass containers and other scientific equipment. The larger table supports a model of a city that features large, red walls and a number of walk ways that span the length of the model. A large bed of stone and a massive pile of gold, jewels, and other treasure fill up much of the space at the southern end of the room. The cavern connects with a smaller cavern to the east and a large, stone staircase to the west.

Mengkare's attachment to better times in his childhood led to him re-creating as much of his childhood chambers as possible. Although much of what's here has remained unused over the past decades, Mengkare still makes use of the model city. The model is a miniature replica of Promise, and the dragon uses the model to plan new additions to the city or changes to its current layout. A successful DC 30 Society or appropriate Lore check is enough to recognize the model as depicting Promise. Mengkare created the hole in the ceiling to enter and leave the cave at his leisure and uses the sunlight that pours in to grow a small garden of fragrant flowers and herbs.

Treasure: Mengkare's hoard contains the following treasure. Keep notes on how many PCs loot this treasure, as removing anything from this hoard may make it more difficult to engage diplomatically with Mengkare in the future.

- 756,063 cp
- 453,872 sp
- 128,161 gp
- 8,127 pp
- A trio of emeralds cut into interlocking shapes that form a gem replica of the Mordant Spire worth 5,000 gp each
- A fine sapphire cut to resemble a dragon's eye worth 3,000 gp
- A pair of diamond earrings worth 1,500 gp
- An opal necklace worth 2,500 gp
- Various other gems and jewels worth 38,230 gp in total
- An onyx sculpture depicting Dou-Bral and engraved with a poem titled "The Sealed Stars" worth 10,000 gp
- A slab of adamantine worth 17,000 gp
- A journal recounting various chance encounters, rousing adventures, and other exciting tales penned by Chaldira Zuzaristan worth 35,000 gp
- A pin in the shape of the eagle on the Andoran flag fashioned from gold worth 2,500 gp
- A pure gold statuette in the shape of Mengkare,

presented as a gift by Kalistocrat envoys from Druma, worth 13,000 gp

- A pair of portraits of Grand Prince Taldaris and Grand Prince Gennaris III that Mengkare received as gifts from Taldan ambassadors; these portraits are worth 8,000 gp each
- Four statuettes of metallic dragons (brass, bronze, copper, and silver), each made from their respective metal, worth 10,000 gp each.
- A +2 *major striking dancing wounding clan dagger*
- A +3 *greater resilient antimagic breastplate* forged from the body of a dead kolyarut
- Two *disintegration bolts*
- A *frost brand* with a hilt crafted from the bones of a frost giant
- A suit of *impenetrable scale* embossed with the religious symbol of Torag
- A *reflecting shield* bearing the image of a burning rose
- Five runestones bearing *axiomatic*, *greater disrupting*, *greater invisibility*, *greater thundering*, and *major shadow* runes
- One dose of *antimagic oil*
- A *belt of regeneration*
- Two fine crystal vials (worth 150 gp each) each holding an elixir of rejuvenation
- A pair of *greater daredevil boots*
- Two sets of *greater doubling rings*, each crafted to resemble snakes consuming their own tails
- *Major goggles of night* made from the hollowed eyes of a barbed devil
- An *inexplicable apparatus* that hums working songs whenever it's in use
- A small, tightly wound, platinum coil that unravels into an *instant fortress*
- A *greater persona mask*
- A *ring of climbing* in the shape of a looped monkey tail
- A *ring of maniacal devices*
- A *ring of sustenance* that bears the Thassilonian rune for temperance
- A *ring of wizardry type IV* that also grants the ability to cast 3rd-level *message* at will
- A *robe of eyes*
- A *rod of negation*
- A *rod of wonder* fashioned from darkwood that bears sylvan runes along its length
- A small, silver case (worth 1,000 gp) that holds an obsidian *crystal ball*
- A *wand of manifold missiles (5th-level spell)*
- A pair of *winged boots* that bear small spire drake wings

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XP Award: If the PCs resist looting any items from this hoard until they've been given permission to do so by Mengkare or until after the dragon is defeated, award them 80 XP for their foresight and temperance.

B4. LAIR ENTRANCE

SEVERE 19

This barren cavern opens to the outside via an opening in the southwest. A staircase in the northern portion of the cavern leads down further into the cave.

Candlaron's only progress toward making the cathedral he envisioned was building a large staircase leading down toward the underground structure. He expected throngs of followers to visit and made sure the staircase had ample space to accommodate the large groups of faithful patrons.

Creatures: Emaliza Zandivar discusses possible plans with her bodyguard, Rinnarv Bontimar in this room. Rinnarv is one of the handful of half-elves in Promise, specifically tasked with guarding the high councilor. Mengkare chose to commit a half-elf to the position in part due to his longer life span and angelic bloodline, but also based on Emaliza's recommendation (she already knew Rinnarv was a secret loyalist to her interests, after all). Rinnarv's position has special requirements above and beyond those outlined in the Contract of Citizenship. As a bodyguard, Rinnarv's entire commitment is to the high councilor first and foremost and the rest of Hermea second. He is to follow the high councilor's orders and keep her safe regardless of what these orders may be or what situation may arise—a requirement enforced by the magical compulsion kept in place via the Contract of Citizenship. Mengkare is the only one able to override this requirement.

Emaliza has taken advantage of Rinnarv's commitment to his position, tasking him with never reporting to Mengkare, clueing him in on some of her plans, and even asking for his counsel in some situations. Often, Emaliza dispatched Rinnarv as her own personal enforcer to cow others into fulfilling her wishes. Rinnarv executes these tasks without question, but he has kept a detailed log of every event should the time come that Mengkare relieves him of the position or after Emaliza's term as high councilor is up.

Emaliza and Rinnarv expect the PCs' arrival, and if they hear loud noises (such as cries of astonishment by the PCs at the sight of the treasure in area B3), they descend to that room to investigate. While Rinnarv is mostly silent in an initial encounter, Emaliza greets the PCs cordially—if the PCs react in kind, continue with An Audience with Emaliza on page 25.

If the PCs start a fight with Emaliza and Rinnarv, the two attempt to make a tactical retreat and seek a swift return to Promise. If their escape is blocked or the PCs seem weak enough for the two to handle, they try to decisively put an end to them. Rinnarv conjures a *spiritual guardian* and *spiritual weapon* and then moves forward, hoping to take out an enemy spellcaster quickly. Emaliza uses her spells to separate the PCs, making them more manageable as single combatants. Rinnarv focuses his healing magic primarily on Emaliza and is willing to put his own life before hers.

EMALIZA ZANDIVAR

CREATURE 20

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Initiative Perception +36

RINNARV BONTIMAR

CREATURE 20

UNIQUE LN MEDIUM ELF HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +32; low-light vision

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven

Skills Arcana +32, Athletics +38, Diplomacy +38, Deception +34, Hermea Lore +32, Occultism +34, Religion +38

Str +8, **Dex** +7, **Con** +8, **Int** +3, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +10

Items circlet of persuasion, +3 major striking elven curve blade, +2 greater resilient full plate

AC 45; **Fort** +36, **Ref** +33, **Will** +30

HP 400

Attack of Opportunity ➤ Rinnarv can use Attack of Opportunity when a creature within his reach uses a concentrate action, in addition to its normal trigger. He can disrupt triggering concentrate actions, and he disrupts actions on any hit, not just a critical hit.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ➤ elven curve blade +38 (finesse, forceful, magical),

Damage 4d8+24 slashing

Divine Spontaneous Spells DC 42, attack +38; **10th** (2 slots) *miracle*, *revival*; **9th** (4 slots) *blade barrier**, *divine wrath**, *foresight**, *heal**, *massacre*, *resist energy*, *spiritual guardian*, *telepathic demand*, *vampiric touch*, *weapon of judgement*; **8th** (4 slots) *blade barrier**, *discern location*, *divine aura**, *divine inspiration*, *divine wrath**, *heal**, *moment of renewal*, *regenerate*, *resist energy*, *spiritual guardian*, *vampiric touch*; **7th** (4 slots) *blade barrier**, *dimensional lock*, *divine decree**, *divine wrath**, *heal**, *regenerate*, *resist energy*, *spiritual guardian*, *sunburst*, *vampiric touch*; **6th** (4 slots) *blade barrier**, *divine wrath**, *field of life*, *repulsion*, *resist energy*, *spiritual guardian*, *true seeing*, *vampiric touch*; **5th** (4 slots) *breath of life*, *divine wrath**, *drop dead*, *flame strike**, *heal**, *resist energy*, *spiritual guardian*, *vampiric touch*; **4th** (4 slots) *dimensional anchor*, *divine wrath**, *freedom of movement*, *heal**, *resist energy*, *spell immunity*, *vampiric touch*; **3rd** (4 slots) *circle of protection*, *heal**, *heroism*, *resist energy*,

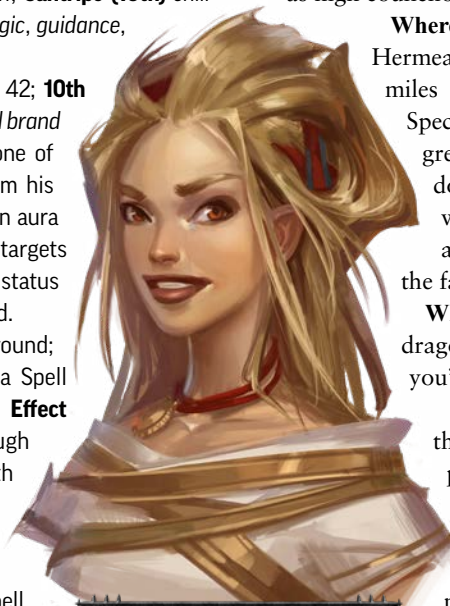
searing light*, vampiric touch; **2nd** (4 slots) darkvision, resist energy, see invisibility, spiritual weapon*; **1st** (4 slots) bane, bless, heal*, protection; **Cantrips (10th)** chill touch, forbidding ward, detect magic, guidance, light*, message, shield, stabilize

Bloodline Spells 3 Focus Points, DC 42; **10th** angelic halo, angelic wings, celestial brand

Blood Magic When Rinnarv casts one of his bloodline spells or a spell from his list of granted spells, he creates an aura that protects himself or one of the targets of the spell. The aura grants a +1 status bonus to saving throws for 1 round.

Spell Strike ♦ **Frequency** once per round;

Trigger Rinnarv begins to Cast a Spell that targets at least 1 creature; **Effect** Rinnarv channels his spell through his blade. He makes a Strike with his blade against a target within reach. If the Strike is successful, the target is automatically subject to the spell. If the spell required an attack roll, the target is hit. If the spell required a saving throw, the target takes a -4 status penalty to its saving throw instead. If the spell could target multiple creatures, it targets only the creature Rinnarv hit with his Strike.



Emaliza Zandivar

AN AUDIENCE WITH EMALIZA

Emaliza immediately recognizes that the PCs are powerful adventurers and would serve as valuable tools in her plans. She knows more about the PCs than she lets on, having received plenty of reports about their activities from her Scarlet Triad contacts. Furthermore, she knows that they are not bound by the Contract of Citizenship. She is quick to strike up a conversation and welcome the PCs to Hermea once she meets them in Mengkare's lair, and doesn't seem surprised that the PCs have infiltrated the dragon's den from within. She adopts a friendly persona and takes the time to answer the PCs' questions.

Emaliza's overall intent is to convince the PCs that Mengkare's efforts in Hermea need to be stopped, but she is willing to take her time to reach that point. She is also content to lie to achieve her goals. She prefers to use half-truths and technicalities when doing so to make it easier to backpedal and correct any inconsistencies. If caught in a lie, she explains that she must keep certain truths from the PCs due to the nature of her position and work within Promise, hoping that her excuse gives the PCs a reason to refrain from further investigation. The PCs can ask her a number of questions, such as those found below.

Who are you? "I am Emaliza of Hermea. I serve on the Council of Enlightenment for Hermea, specifically as high councilor, the highest ranking member."

Where are we? "You're on the island of Hermea in the Steaming Sea, about two miles northwest of the city of Promise. Specifically, this cave is the lair of our great leader, Mengkare." (If the PCs don't know who Mengkare is, a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Society or appropriate Lore check recalls who the famous dragon is.)

Who is Mengkare? "A powerful gold dragon. Ruler of Promise. I'm surprised you've never heard of him!"

Mengkare? Is he here? "No, there was an anomaly with the portal through which you must have entered this place. In short, the gate had been inactive for centuries, and when he noticed magical energies building within it, he said he was leaving to investigate the cause of the issue. He left several

hours ago."

Where did Mengkare go? "He has contacts on Axis and access to grand libraries in that realm. He should be returning shortly."

Why are you here? "Mengkare asked me to watch the portal. There are many wards in place protecting the gate and we were reinforcing these wards."

Do these wards help contain Dahak? (At this, Emaliza feigns surprise. A PC who succeeds at a Perception check to Sense Motive against Emaliza's Deception DC notes the fake shock. A PC who critically succeeds determines that she must have obviously known about the manifestation trapped within already.) "Dahak? The evil god of dragons? Is he inside that portal? I always believed that Mengkare placed the wards to keep the gate safe and stable for travel, but if Dahak has an influence over them... hmm."

Mengkare didn't tell you about the aspect of Dahak within the portal? "No, but he's always been secretive about the portal. Even though I am his high councilor, I remain in the dark about some matters here."

Did you know Mengkare has connections to slavers in Katapesh? (Again, Emaliza feigns surprise.) "Slavers! That's not true! Mengkare is adamantly opposed to slavery and I refuse to believe he would willingly work with them."

Do you know about a magical orb that was sent here? "An orb?" Emaliza thinks for a moment. "I do not, but again, I am not privy to all that goes on in Promise."

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KYRION'S SHARD

The red dragon Kyrion bears a shard of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* in his chest, something the PCs might not immediately realize. As soon as they recover a shard in this adventure, though, they should instantly recognize the shard in the dragon's chest for what it is. If the PCs wish to claim Kyrion's shard for use in this adventure, they can do so provided they have a way to contact him. If he came to the PCs' aid in Breachill, he can be found waiting at a safe location in the city. Otherwise, he resides in a lair somewhere in the northern reaches of the Mwangi Expanse and the PCs must use powerful magic to contact him.

Removing the shard from Kyrion's dead body is a simple task, as is removing it from his body if he is immobilized. As long as he lives, an attempt to remove the shard requires his cooperation. Convincing him to let the PCs attempt this dangerous procedure requires either a DC 39 Diplomacy check to Request or a DC 36 Intimidate check to Coerce him. Removing the shard requires someone to Interact with the shard for 2 consecutive rounds, after which it slides out of the dragon's chest and forces him to attempt a DC 36 Fortitude save; if he fails, he immediately perishes, but on a success he is merely reduced to dying 2.

Who was the orb sent to? I do know that Mengkare has a history with a powerful orb indeed—the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, but it was destroyed long ago. Mengkare's kept the shards safe. But... I've noticed that many of the shards have gone missing of late, and this worries me. And if what you say of an orb being shipped here is true, then my fears are coming to life!

What are Mengkare's goals in Promise? "I'm not exactly sure of his overall goals here. He has told me that his general goal is to help humanity grow to its true, ultimate potential. So far, he's made great strides toward realizing his vision. Promise is the pinnacle of the arts and sciences, and its people are the peak of physical perfection and beauty. But things have come to my attention that cast that all into doubt for me..."

Do you believe what Mengkare is doing is right? "Once, I did. If what you're saying is true and Mengkare is supporting slavers, he may be planning something malicious. His increased secrecy also concerns me."

What do you believe Mengkare is up to? "The missing shards of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* concern me. If Mengkare sent the shards to agents with orders to rebuild the orb, he could use it to devastating effect.

With Mengkare gone, though, we might have a chance to discover what he's up to."

What can we do stop him? "I believe that Mengkare is planning to rebuild the shattered *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*. It might have a great power that he could access only by first shattering it. If we can recover what shards of the orb remain here on Promise, we should be able to stop his current plans."

Where does Mengkare keep his pieces of the orb? "I had thought he kept them here in his lair, but I was unable to locate any. He also maintains a vault deep beneath the Golden Citadel, the capitol building of Promise. There is a massive archive beneath the citadel, and the vault is at the end of the archive. However, our Contract of Citizenship has a magical component tied to the vault's magical wards. It prevents anyone but Mengkare and anyone he has designated from even approaching the vault, let alone accessing it. Any remaining shards are likely held within, along with information about his plans." (This is true and part of the main reason why Emaliza has yet to go through with her plan to repair the orb and take control of Mengkare.)

Could we access the vault instead? "Yes, I suppose you could. Reaching the vault requires you to travel through the Golden Citadel and make your way past the guards within. It would be a difficult task, but if any shards remain, they surely lie within."

Can you help us access the vault at all? "I intend to speak with the other councilors about what we can do about Mengkare, especially with these rumors of his involvement with slavers. Things move slow in Promise, though, and I may not be able to get help from the other councilors for several days. Mengkare will most likely return before then, so it is in our best interest to work fast. If we can claim even one of the remaining *orb shards* before he returns, Mengkare will be at a disadvantage, should he try to retaliate.

"I can provide you with safe passage through Promise, at least. These badges mark you as official visitors and allow you to move through the city freely. They also grant you lodging within the visitor's district of the city. Visitors are not permitted in most areas of the Golden Citadel, however, so you will have to be discreet inside."

Helping Emaliza: If the PCs choose to work with Emaliza (or at least play along), she grants them each a small golden pin in the shape of a dragon's wing. This pin is an official signifier of the PCs' status as guests to Promise and allows them full passage through the city as noted in *Traveling in Promise* on page 28. If the PCs have obviously looted Mengkare's hoard, she wryly

notes that while the magic items may help them in the short term, Mengkare is likely to attack them on sight if they openly carry such purloined goods.

Before the PCs head out to Promise, Emaliza warns them to be wary of speaking with any other members of the Council of Enlightenment—any one of them could know more than they let on, and Emaliza fears that at least one of them may be allied with the slavers and could be the recipient of the orb sent from Katapesh. Once the PCs secure as many shards as they can, she asks them to contact her—see page 49 for more details.

Opposing Emaliza: It's entirely possible that the PCs see through Emaliza's ruse. If that's the case, she tries a last-ditch tactic that comes very close to the truth. She claims that she knows about Dahak's influence and fears that Mengkare has fallen under the dragon god's control—she didn't mention this before fearing Dahak would hear. She fears that Mengkare plans to offer the orb to Dahak's cult in return for immunity to its effects, granted by Dahak himself, and that recovering even one shard from the vaults could stave off this plot.

If the PCs still oppose her, though, she attempts to retreat and hide as noted above. She remains hidden until she finds a suitable time to ambush the PCs, either during their stay in Promise or as they move through the Golden Citadel. She hopes to cast *dominate* on at least one of the PCs to get them to retrieve the pieces of the golden orb for her.

If the PCs defeat Emaliza and keep Rinnarv alive, he is grateful for their help in freeing him from his mandated stewardship to Emaliza. He is able to explain most of Emaliza's plan up to this point, including her intent to repair the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* in hopes of dominating Mengkare and to possibly contain the manifestation of Dahak within. He is unsure if such a gambit would be successful, but he prefers to leave the remaining shards under lock and key for the moment. If Mengkare hasn't returned yet, Rinnarv provides the PCs with Visitor's Pins and secures lodging for them in the Beggar neighborhood of Promise. He then contacts Inizra Arumelo to notify her of the new visitors to the city.

XP Award: Award the PCs 80 XP for their informative conversation with Emaliza.

Arriving in Promise

Eventually, the PCs make their way to Promise to continue their quest. They might head to the city on their own to investigate Mengkare's involvement with the Scarlet Triad and Alseta's Ring, or it could be that the PCs choose to aid Emaliza in her endeavors and are directed to visit the city to reach the archive beneath the Golden Citadel. Feel free to use the information provided about Promise on page 69 as the PCs explore the city.

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Kyrion



TRAVELING IN PROMISE

Once the PCs arrive in Promise, they have a number of options available to them. If they have Visitor's Pins to travel through the city, they can move through all of the neighborhoods in Promise during the day. After sundown, the PCs are required to remain in the Beggar neighborhood. There, they'll receive free lodging in one of the exquisite visitor suites which provides all the amenities the PCs could ever need or want. During their stay as visitors, the PCs receive a guard escort to travel with them throughout the city. Once the PCs have met with Inizra and if they agree to work with her, she personally reassigns this escort. This escort is willing to look the other way or even intercept other guards while following the PCs.

Any PCs who enter Promise without a Visitor's Pin have a much more difficult time. They will have to secure their own lodging. Each hour the PCs spend traveling the city, at least one PC must succeed at a DC 39 Diplomacy check to maintain the impression that they belong—if no PC succeeds at this check, or if any PC critically fails the check, the city guards take notice (see Guards in Promise below). Each time a PC attempts to make a purchase in Promise without showing a Visitor's Pin, they must attempt this Diplomacy check again. If the PC fails this check, the shopkeeper alerts the guard.

SECURING VISITOR'S PINS

If the PCs don't gain Visitor's Pins from Emaliza or Inizra, they have a few shady options to procure them on their own. You can use the following rules as guidelines if your players come up with other ideas on how to gain pins. Note that for most of the following situations, the PCs must first study a real Visitor's Pin before they can attempt to counterfeit, steal, or otherwise craft their own pins. To locate an NPC on the streets of Promise wearing a pin requires a PC to spend an hour in Exploration mode on the streets while performing a Search. A PC who succeeds at a DC 38 Perception check spots an NPC wearing such a pin. Alternatively, a PC can already know what a Visitor's Pin looks like with a successful DC 42 Society check (or a DC 38 appropriate Lore check).

Note that if any attempt to secure a Visitor's Pin using the following options results in a critical failure, the guards take note (see Guards in Promise for details).

Black Market: The black market for Visitor's Pins in the Beggar neighborhood exists, but is difficult to make contact with. To do so, a PC must succeed at a DC 35 check to Gather Information to first contact agents of the black market, and then pay 500 gp per Visitor's Pin they purchase.

Counterfeiting: The PCs could craft counterfeit pins of their own. Doing so requires they study a real Visitor's Pin first, after which the PC can craft one counterfeit Visitor's Pin with 8 hours of work and a successful DC 39 Crafting check to Craft the counterfeit. On a critical success, the PC crafts two pins instead of one.

Magic: A PC can craft a counterfeit pin using magic, either via illusion or via a spell like *shape stone*. In such a case, the DC for a Promise guard to see through the trickery is equal to the appropriate DC per spell level, as shown on page 503 of the *Core Rulebook*.

Theft: If a PC locates an NPC wearing a Visitor's Pin, they can attempt to Steal the pin with a successful DC 35 Thievery check.

GUARDS IN PROMISE

The city's guards keep an eye out for the uninvited. Immediately upon entering the city, the PCs are greeted by a pair of guards. After this, every 4 hours the PCs spend in the city, attempt a DC 5 flat check; on a success, a pair of Promise guards approach the PCs to inspect them. If presented with a Visitor's Pin and a calm demeanor, the guards thank the PCs for their cooperation and move along. If the Visitor's Pins are counterfeit, each guard can attempt a DC 35 Perception check to see through the counterfeit.

If the PCs are belligerent, hostile, carry counterfeit pins, or don't present a Visitor's Pin, the guards chide them and attempt to escort the PCs back to the Beggar district with a stern warning. The third time any of the PCs draw the guards' attention in this way, they are placed under arrest. A PC who complies has their gear taken (this gear is placed in storage in area C11) and are placed in a cell in area D2, awaiting Mengkare's return.

Creatures: If the PCs resist arrest or assault a guard, they are attacked. The city's guards typically travel in pairs, but if they've been notified of a particularly dangerous threat, they move in groups of four. In combat, the guards keep close to each other when possible, allowing them to defend each other with their shields. A guard rush to flank a target and attempt to shove them toward the other guards. If necessary, they will drink their *potion of flying* to keep up with flying creatures. At the end of every round, attempt a DC 15 flat check—success indicates that two new Promise guards have taken note of the fight and hasten to join. They immediately cease combat if the PCs surrender and try to take prisoners alive. A PC who is slain in a fight against the guards will be restored to life via one of the elixirs of rejuvenation kept in area D11—albeit with all their gear impounded and themselves imprisoned—to stand before Mengkare when he returns.

PROMISE GUARD

CREATURE 17

RARE LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +29

Languages Common, Draconic

Skills Athletics +33, Diplomacy +30, Hermea Lore +33, Intimidation +33, Society +30, Survival +28

Str +8, **Dex** +2, **Con** +9, **Int** +2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +2

Items +2 greater striking longsword, +2 greater resilient full plate, greater sturdy shield (Hardness 15, HP 120, BT 60), +2 striking composite shortbow (20 arrows), potion of flying

AC 43 (45 with shield raised), **Fort** +32, **Ref** +26, **Will** +29
HP 330

Promise Guard Stance A Promise guard always has their shield raised as if they had used the Raise a Shield action, as long as they meet that action's requirements.

Shield Warden A Promise guard can use their Shield Block reaction to prevent damage to an adjacent ally.

Attack of Opportunity ➤ A Promise guard can use Attack of Opportunity when a creature within their reach uses a concentrate action, in addition to its normal trigger. They can disrupt triggering concentrate actions, and they disrupt actions on any hit, not just a critical hit.

Shield Block ➤

Speed 30 feet

Melee ➤ *longsword* +38 (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 7d8+8 slashing

Ranged ➤ *composite shortbow* +36 (deadly 3d10, magical, propulsive, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 4d8+8 piercing

Shield Shove ➤➤ The Promise guard makes a Strike with their longsword, then attempts to push the target back. If the Strike hits, the target is flat-footed until the start of the guard's next turn, and the guard can automatically Shove the target, with the same benefits as the Shove action (including the critical success effect if the Strike was a critical hit). If the guard moves to follow the target, this movement doesn't trigger reactions. In addition, if the target has to stop moving because it would hit an object, it takes damage equal to the guard's Strength modifier.

Sudden Charge ➤➤ The Promise guard Strides up to double their Speed. If the guard ends their movement within melee reach of at least one enemy, they can make a melee Strike against that enemy.

XP Award: The first time the PCs encounter Promise guards, award them 30 XP if they avoid a fight.

SHOPPING IN PROMISE

Promise is home to great artisans and crafters, and most of its economy is based on the various wares its

citizens produce. Normally, the citizens share these items with each other freely, but as outsiders, the PCs must pay normal prices for any items they wish to purchase. The PCs can find any common item of 20th level or lower for sale in the city, but locating items of 11th level or higher requires a PC to succeed at a DC 30 Diplomacy check to Gather Information. At your option, uncommon or rare items can be found here

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as well, perhaps with a higher DC for the Diplomacy check. Note that merchants in Promise sell only to those carrying a Visitor's Pin, but unlike the city's guards, merchants don't think to check for counterfeit pins.

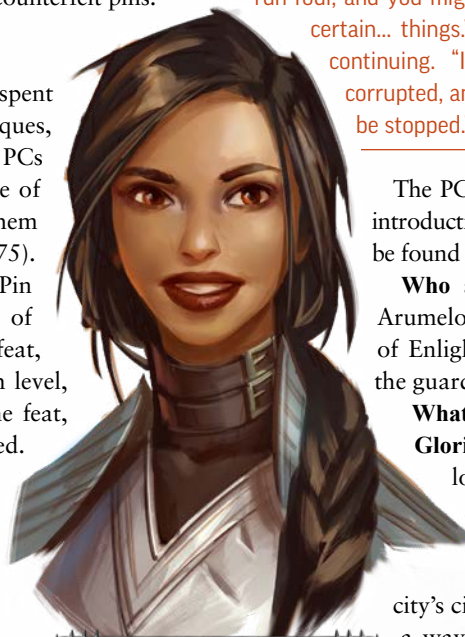
TRAINING IN PROMISE

The citizens of Promise have spent centuries perfecting fighting techniques, magical skills, and other talents. PCs can spend some time learning some of the new techniques available to them (see Paragons of Promise on page 75). Any visitor who bears a Visitor's Pin can seek retraining with the aid of Promise's masters to retrain any feat, skill, or class feature of up to 15th level, at a cost of 100 gp per level of the feat, skill, or class feature being retrained. Retraining a feat or a skill in this way takes only 3 days, while retraining a class feature takes only 2 weeks.

INIZRA ARUMELO

Although the PCs won't realize it at first, they have a potential ally waiting to contact them once they reach Promise—Inizra Arumelo, the commander of Promise's city guard and one of the city's 13 council members. Inizra's noticed strange behavior of late, but not just with Mengkare—she's grown to suspect the leader of the Council of Enlightenment, Emaliza, of having nefarious plans of her own. Unless the PCs take significant steps to hide their arrival, agents report the PCs' arrival to Inizra within the hour of the PCs' first contact with Promise's guards.

As a result, it's likely that Inizra learns of the PCs' presence in Promise within the hour of their arrival, after they present their Visitor's Pins to the guards at the city gates. At some point soon thereafter, the PCs are approached by a squad of four guards who greet them by name (or whatever names they gave when entering the city). These guards are extremely cordial and polite, inviting the PCs to a nearby guardhouse, most likely at the city's northwestern gate. Once inside, the guards notify Inizra, who arrives a few minutes later and asks for a briefing from her guards. She takes a moment to size the PCs up while they explain their reasons for being in the city. Once they provide their explanation, she asks the guards to leave her alone with the PCs. When Inizra is alone with them, she speaks more candidly. Read or paraphrase the following.



Inizra Arumelo

"I don't know exactly why you've shown up when you did, but I suspect it's quite the blessing that you're here at all. I fear that many factors have caused things in Promise to run foul, and you might be able to help me take care of certain... things." She lets out a large sigh before continuing. "I fear that Mengkare has been corrupted, and that his Glorious Endeavor must be stopped."

The PCs can ask questions after Inizra's introduction. Some of the most likely can be found below.

Who are you? "My name is Inizra Arumelo. I'm a member of the Council of Enlightenment and acting captain of the guard for the city of Promise."

What is Mengkare doing?/Why is the Glorious Endeavor wrong? "You may

look at Promise and see a utopia, but look closer. It is a place without freedom, without choice, without faith. The

city's citizens are well cared for... but in a way that treats them like livestock. Humans should not be kept as pets, should not be bred for qualities,

should not be kept from making their own choices. I've only recently developed these convictions myself after speaking to a specialist Mengkare brought in a few years ago—a man named Jonivar. And now he's gone missing! I need someone not bound by the Contract of Citizenship to infiltrate the citadel archive and seek anything that could provide insight into Mengkare's plans, or at the very least learn of Jonivar's fate. Someone like yourselves!"

Who is Jonivar? "He is an elven scholar from the Mwangi Jungle. Mengkare recruited him as an expert on elven magic, but in his time here, Jonivar and I became friends. When I realized that my feelings for him were threatening to go beyond friendship, I tried to put an end to that friendship, for at that point I believed in Mengkare's plan and, under the Contract of Citizenship, my choice of mate was Mengkare's to decide, not my own. Jonivar convinced me otherwise, and I made a promise to return with him to the Mwangi once he completed his service to Mengkare. Yet, he never returned—he simply vanished! This occurred just over a year ago, and I've been unable to determine his fate. Such disappearances have happened here before, but I've always assumed they were for good cause. Now... I don't know what to think."

"While I've no idea where Jonivar was taken, I've learned more. I discovered that his area of expertise

was not merely elven magic, but a very specific type of magic involving potent rituals, including something called the *Anima Invocation*—an ancient ritual that was once used to destroy a great evil.”

What else do you know about the Anima Invocation? “Unfortunately, I haven’t been able to learn any more, other than that it is a potent weapon that requires the expenditure of a large sacrifice. What Mengkare’s interests in such a ritual could mean, I can’t say, but it worries me greatly.” (If the PCs have learned about the *Anima Invocation*, such as from Nketiah in “Cult of Cinders,” this additional information only worries Inizra all the more.)

What would you have us do? “I need you to infiltrate the archive below the Golden Citadel and seek any information you can find regarding Mengkare’s actual plans, and to try to determine what happened to Jonivar. Now is the best time to do so, with Mengkare away, but you must be quick about it—he could return at any time.”

Could you go with us? “I feel that I might be of more service elsewhere. I need to maintain the charade that all is well, for I suspect others on the council may be working with Mengkare in pursuit of these nefarious ends. Further, if things grow bad, as I fear they might, I need to be ready to mobilize what control I can over Promise’s guards so that I can try to protect as many of the city’s citizens as I can. If you really wish me to join you, I will.”

Can you send some guards with us? “I can spare two guards, if you wish, but the rest need to continue their duties and avoid arousing suspicion.”

Can you tell the guards in the citadel to let us pass? “No, unfortunately. The citadel guards are specially chosen by Mengkare to defend the citadel. They answer directly to him and would not be afraid to turn on us at a moment’s notice if they believed we were planning to reach the archives or the hold without proper access. When we send individuals to the citadel hold, I have to hand them off to the citadel guard as they are the only ones allowed in the hold.”

Can we get some of the citizens to help us? “Most of Promise’s citizens believe in the cause—that they are doing good work here for the betterment of Golarion. In many ways, they’re right; we’ve made great strides in many fields, but I feel that most people would be unable to accept the actual truth, deluded by the false Promise they’ve come to know. Were we to try to inform the masses or if they saw us storm the citadel, they would most likely turn against us. Even the entire guard force can’t stand against the might of the rest of Promise. I think that discretion is key in this case.”

Is there anything else you can do to help us? “Of course. I have access to the city’s armories and can spare weapons and armor for you to use as you need.”

Bringing up Emaliza: If the PCs mention at any time their conversation (or fight) with Emaliza, Inizra grows pale. She’s suspected that at least one of the council members had their own plans, but never suspected Emaliza—this knowledge only furthers Inizra’s desires for the PCs to move quickly and quietly to secure information from the archives.

Working with Inizra: Once the PCs have put forth their questions, Inizra allows the PCs to decide whether they would join her cause. If the PCs agree to help her, Inizra provides the PCs with armor and weapons as noted in Treasure below. If they choose not to assist her, she is disappointed but understanding. She provides the PCs with a set of Visitor’s Pins and lodging in the Beggar neighborhood in hopes that they will change their mind and reach out to her later.

Treasure: PCs who agree to aid Inizra gain access to the city’s weapons stockpile. Inizra agrees to provide each PC with a single weapon and armor of their choice as a gift. The PCs have their choice of any armor and weapon from the *Core Rulebook* plus any fundamental runes of their choice for that armor and weapon. If the PCs prefer, Inizra will instead provide the fundamental runes and ask her smiths to transfer the runes to any armor and weapons the PCs already own. If PCs prefer the likes of *bracers of armor* or *handwraps of mighty blows*, she is able to provide these as well. Inizra can’t provide any property runes, but her smiths will transfer runes free of charge at any time for the PCs.

XP Award: Award the PCs 80 XP for their informative conversation with Inizra.

WAITING FOR MENGKARE

The PCs may find that they would prefer to speak with Mengkare directly instead of going through the process of being Emaliza’s or Inizra’s lackeys. As written, Mengkare will return to Promise in 3 days, giving the PCs that much time to explore the Golden Citadel. If the PCs seem insistent on seeing Mengkare, allow them to meet with the dragon on their own turf; see Meeting with Mengkare on page 45.

Into the Golden Citadel

The Golden Citadel was one of the first buildings constructed in Promise. Mengkare wanted this structure to be the crown jewel of the city—a place for his citizens to partake in the city’s governance, and a sight to inspire all those who gazed upon Promise’s skyline. The citadel is the heart of the greater

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administration of the city, with much of the city's finances handled within. The citadel also serves as the city's library and a hub for debate and philosophy.

The PCs could have one or several reasons to enter the Golden Citadel. If they've met with Emaliza or Inizra, they most likely have been tasked with accessing the citadel archives or hold. PCs who avoided meeting the two councilors may still find themselves drawn to the citadel. A PC who succeeds at a DC 40 Hermea Lore check, Society check or Diplomacy check to Gather Information ascertains the citadel's purpose within the city. The PCs can investigate the building for clues as to what Mengkare is doing in Promise and his part in the Scarlet Triad's plans.

CITADEL FEATURES

The Golden Citadel, as viewed from outside, appears as an immense dome made of gold. In truth, the dome is made of magically altered stone to give the appearance of gold, but with magically enhanced strength. The building is immense, measuring a thousand feet in diameter and rising to a height of 400 feet in the center, yet much of its interior is open to the air. This gives a feeling of openness and immensity to any who enter the citadel, as the central portion is a sprawling cathedral-like space. A 600-foot-high tower rises at each the four corners, and at the base of each sits a stone complex that houses several specialized rooms. These rooms are quite large, yet are only one story high, with gently sloping roofs that angle upward at slight inclines, ranging from a height of 25 feet close to the center and 40 feet near the citadel's walls. A 400-foot-diameter expanse directly above the center shows blue sky above with an eternal illusory sun shining golden light down below to nourish the plants and light the chamber at all times. Mengkare can will this illusory sun to fade and be replaced by a moon as he desires, and generally leaves the sun-moon transition on a repeating cycle that matches the day and night outside.

Visitor's Areas: Some of the rooms in the citadel are open to the public (citizens and visitors with pins). Those that are off-limits to the public are shaded in gray on the map on page 34.

Doors: Every door on the citadel ground floor is a towering portal of stone, large enough to accommodate Mengkare. Each of these 18-foot-wide stone doors also bears a smaller door for humanoids to use. Unless otherwise noted, doors are unlocked unless the citadel is on alert, at which point all doors become magically locked. These locks can be opened at a touch from a citadel guard, a council leader, or Mengkare. They also can be Forced Open with a successful DC 38 Athletics

check (the doors are sturdy enough that success doesn't break them), opened by Picking a Lock with a successful DC 38 Thievery check, or unlocked by countering the locking magic with a successful *dispel magic* (against a 10th-level spell). The smaller doors require only a success, while the larger doors require a critical success.

Walls: The citadel's walls are made of magically enhanced stone that has been cosmetically altered to appear golden, save for where paint has adorned them with murals. All walls have Hardness 25 and 100 Hit Points (50 BT) per 5-foot section. Anyone attempting to climb these smooth walls can do so with a successful DC 35 Athletics check to Climb.

Illumination: Bright light constantly fills the rooms of the citadel. Each room has one or more small magical panels on the walls near the entrance that can be used to control the light level. Particularly large rooms have several panels that control the light level in a specific area of the room.

Citadel Guards: The well-trained human guards who patrol the Golden Citadel move in pairs, patrolling the halls at all times. At any given moment, one patrol stands watch in the council chamber (area C1) while another makes their way slowly through one of the four smaller complexes to the sides. Roll 1d4 to randomly determine which of the four quadrants is currently patrolled if needed—a pair takes 15 minutes to patrol a quadrant before emerging into the council chamber, replacing the patrol stationed there who then moves into the next quadrant in a clockwise manner. Additional guards are posted throughout the citadel as noted in the specific area encounters.

If the guards notice the PCs without Visitor's Pins, they seek to escort the PCs out of the citadel and into the hands of a pair of Promise guards to thence be escorted to the Beggar district. Any PCs encountered within a non-public area in the citadel are immediately escorted to the closest public area. If the PCs do not immediately comply, the guards raise the alarm and attempt to arrest them. Likewise, the third time the PCs are caught breaking these rules, the guards attempt to arrest them. Arrested PCs are placed in cells in area D2 and gear is confiscated and held in area C11.

A citadel guard is equivalent to an elite Promise guard. In all, there are 16 citadel guards on duty on the ground floor of the Golden Citadel, and an additional eight of them off-duty elsewhere in Promise who can be recalled to the citadel as needed. Reinforcements beyond these are limited—if the PCs slay or incapacitate all 24 citadel guards, they won't have to worry about additional guards being posted until, theoretically, after Mengkare returns (at which

point he'll replace the Citadel guards with Promise guards for the time being).

CITADEL GUARD

CREATURE 18

Elite Promise guard (*Pathfinder Bestiary 6*; page 29)

Initiative Perception +31

GOLDEN CITADEL ON ALERT

All citadel guards carry a warhorn enhanced with minor magic that they can use to sound the alarm. To sound an alarm, a citadel guard must first Interact to retrieve the warhorn, and then Interact to sound it. Once sounded, the warhorn issues a resonant peal that echoes throughout all of the Golden Citadel (including the prison and the archives). A citadel guard attempts to sound the alarm as soon as possible once combat begins.

Once a warhorn is sounded, the citadel goes on alert and a number of changes take effect. First, patrols double in number, reinforced by the extra four guards resting in area **C13**. The increased vigilance of the building causes the PCs to take a -2 circumstance penalty to Stealth checks. All citadel guards receive a +2 circumstance bonus to their initiative checks during alerts. Additionally, any attempts to Coerce, Lie, or Make an Impression take a -4 status penalty. An alert generally lasts for 4 hours.

Once the citadel goes on full alert, all noncombatant inhabitants of the citadel swiftly abandon the building; they return after 4 hours only if a Citadel guard gives them the all clear.

NAVIGATING THE CITADEL

The PCs' primary goals in the Golden Citadel should be to free prisoners (be they fellow PCs or the elven scholar Jonivar) from the prison and to research Mengkare's actual plans in the archives. Adventuring in those two subterranean portions of the citadel should be played out in encounter mode.

While you could certainly play out scenes on the Golden Citadel's ground floor in encounter mode as well, the expectation here is that the PCs will use methods other than direct combat to reach the prison or the archive—there's not a lot of reward for PCs who seek to explore and loot the chambers here (with the possible exception of the treasure in area **C11**).

Instead, consider letting the PCs use exploration mode to navigate the citadel. You can even provide the PCs with a basic map of the citadel's ground floor if you wish, either providing it in-game from an NPC like Emaliza or Inizra, or as a reward to a PC who succeeds

at a DC 30 Gather Information check to secure the information (the layout of the ground floor is, after all, public knowledge). None of these resources can provide maps of the prison or archive—there, the PCs will need to explore to get the layout.

As long as all of the PCs have Visitor's Pins, they won't be challenged as long as they remain in public areas of the citadel. Entering the nonpublic areas will potentially require the PCs to use Stealth to sneak by any guards or patrols, provide distractions to lure guards away, or use magic to bypass guards. Feel free to shift into encounter mode as needed should the PCs be confronted by guards. You can also use the following exploration mode activity to resolve any distraction attempts or investigations the PCs might attempt.

DISTRACT GUARDS

EXPLORATION MANIPULATE MOVE

You attempt to distract a specific group of guards away from their patrol route or their post. You can do so by attempting a DC 41 Deception check, or by using a spell effect, in which case you attempt a DC 41 Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion check (as appropriate) to determine success. Each attempt to Distract Guards takes a minute to play out—from the initial distraction to the guard's reaction.

Critical Success You significantly distract the guards away from their patrol area or post to an area in the citadel of your choice. The guards return to their original post after 1 hour has passed.

Success You distract the guards away from their patrol area or post to an area in the citadel of your choice. The guards return to their original post after 20 minutes have passed.

Failure You fail to distract the guards. Any attempt made in the next 10 minutes to distract the same guards takes a -2 penalty to the check.

Critical Failure As failure above, but the guards realize you're trying to distract them and escort you out of the building. If this is your third critical failure against that particular group of guards, the guard instead places you under arrest.

INVESTIGATE CHAMBER

EXPLORATION MANIPULATE MOVE

You take 10 minutes to investigate a specific room in the Golden Citadel to learn any information about it. Guards won't normally be annoyed by this if you investigate a public area, but if they see you investigating a private area they will attempt to escort you out before you can complete the investigation. Attempt a DC 36 Perception check to determine your level of success.

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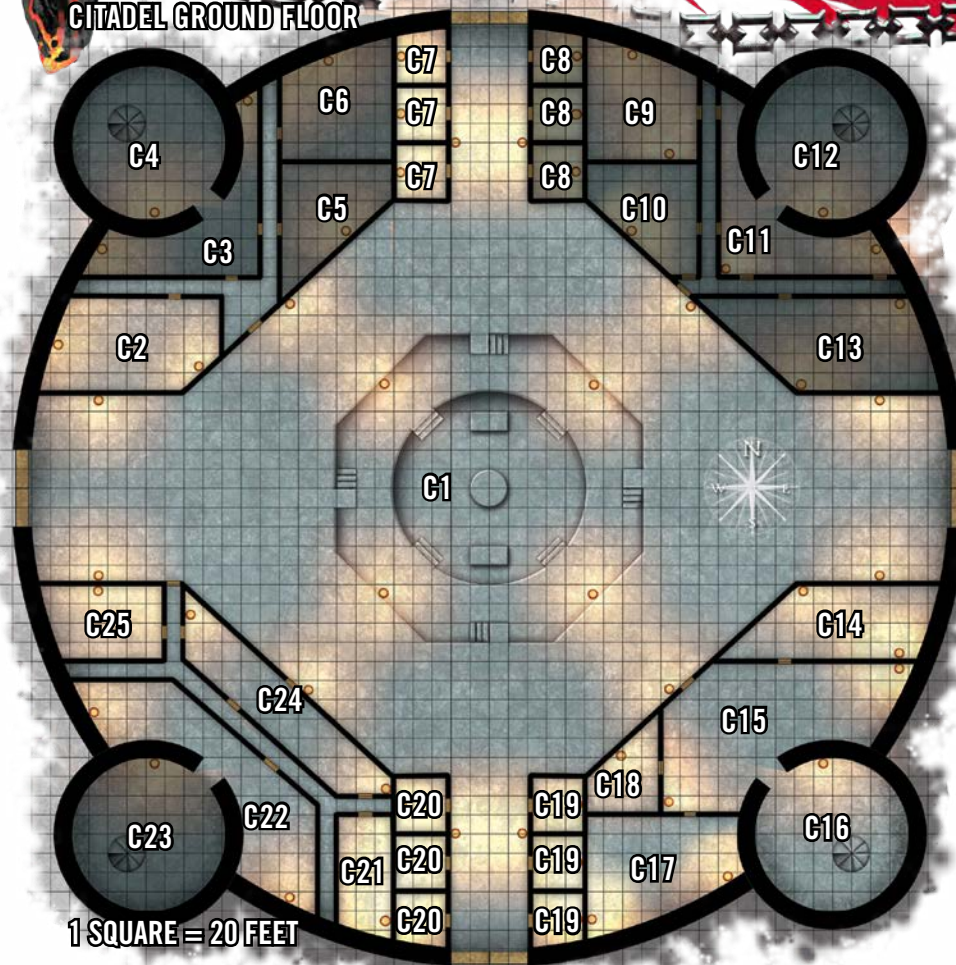
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CITADEL GROUND FLOOR



Critical Success You learn the room's read-aloud text, basic information, and any secret information.

Success You learn the room's read-aloud text and basic information.

Failure You fail to learn anything about the room other than its read-aloud text.

Critical Failure As failure above, but any guards who can observe you notice suspicious activity and attempt to escort you out of the area, either to the council chamber (area C1) or out of the building entirely.

XP Award: Grant the PCs 20 XP for the first time they reach the prison or the archives. The first time they reach either of these locations without alerting the citadel, grant them an additional 60 XP.

Citadel Ground Floor

Each area of the Golden Citadel's ground floor is presented below in one of three sections—a short read-aloud section that anyone who glances into the room can gain, a Basic entry that presents information a character who successfully Investigates the chamber can learn, and a Secret entry that presents information a character who critically succeeds at Investigating

the chamber can learn. Certain areas also contain creatures and treasures; these generally should be handled in encounter mode.

C1. COUNCIL CHAMBER

A large, octagonal depression is carved into the floor in the center of this enormous chamber. Sets of stairs lead down into the pit and allow access to a large stone platform at its center. A smaller group of stairs leads up to this platform where a table stands surrounded by thirteen elegant chairs. Two platforms, each holding a podium, are located at the north and south ends of the pit. The room itself is an immense, open chamber with what appears to be a four-hundred-foot wide opening to the sky above. The domed walls curve down on all sides, decorated with carvings of glittering cliffsides and forested slopes on the dome's inner surface, painted with exquisite, realistic detail. What appears to be mist and clouds drift slowly across the painted landscape. Below, to four sides of the immense area, sit smaller structures built into the dome's inner walls. These structures' rooftops are covered with soil, serving as gardens with berry bushes, pleasant wildflowers, and small trees, giving the interior space four green swaths to help

create the illusion that the central council hall sits at the bottom of a natural gully in a forested valley.

Basic: This area is used by the Council of Enlightenment when they hold public meetings or discussions. The two podiums in the central area are for speakers to deliver their speeches, while the central circular platform is meant as a throne of sorts for Mengkare himself. None of the councilors are present at this time.

Secret: Magical augmentations to the chamber allow anyone in the room to hear the council at a reasonable volume, regardless of how far they are from their central platform. Perception checks to hear noises gain a +4 circumstance bonus in this room.

Creatures: Two citadel guards are always on duty in this room.

C2. SCRIPTORIUM

This room is filled with long desks stacked with papers and parchments, while the walls hold numerous scroll tubes.

Basic: This chamber is where contracts are penned and copies of existing financial documents are made; the walls hold copies of all of Promise's citizen contracts.

Creatures: A half dozen noncombatant human scribes work here during the day to review contracts and sign off on copies.

C3. FINANCE OFFICE

This chamber houses several paper-cluttered desks and numerous shelves holding scrolls and books.

Basic: The main office of the finance wing handles both the day-to-day finances of Promise and the greater financial transactions required to maintain the city.

Creatures: A half dozen noncombatant accountants toil in this room to keep track of city finances.

C4. NORTHWEST TOWER

An elegant iron staircase spirals up several hundred feet inside of this tower to a door set in the roof far above.

Basic: A climb up these stairs leads to a beautiful rooftop garden that gives a glorious view of the city and the central dome. In the center of this garden stands a stone pavilion large enough for Mengkare to lounge within.

Creatures: Two citadel guards are posted here at all times while Mengkare is away. The guards politely turn the PCs away when they first enter, believing them to be lost visitors.

C5. FINANCIAL RECORDS

The walls of this room are covered with shelves cluttered with thousands of scrolls. Smaller freestanding shelves filled with even more paperwork stand in the middle of the room.

Basic: This chamber houses records of various transactions dating back to the founding of Promise.

Secret: The PC locates several records that confirm Mengkare's connection to the Scarlet Triad, indicating that it was originally founded in 4607 AR to serve as a scouting force to identify new recruits to the Glorious Endeavor—no indication of the Triad's interests in slavery can be found here, but recent paperwork indicates that the Triad's current leader, Uri Zandivar, is the younger brother of Emaliza.

C6. FINANCE VAULT

The door to this room is always locked.

This chamber contains several large metal chests and numerous documents on shelves along the walls.

Basic: This large vault holds the city's transitory funds, either incoming or outgoing funds, before they are transferred to the Bank of Abadar.

Creatures: Two citadel guards are always on duty in this room.

Treasure: The vault holds a total of 18,000 gp in various coins.

C7. CLERICAL OFFICES

This room contains several work desks stacked with paper.

Basic: The citadel's accountants use these smaller offices for completing specialty contracts with visitors or to tackle very specific projects.

C8. INTERROGATION ROOMS

This room contains a single wooden chair surrounded by several other chairs, with folding screens against a wall allowing for portions of the room to be obscured as needed.

Basic: The citadel guards use these rooms to interrogate any prisoners before they are taken to the hold below.

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C9. ARMORY

The door to this room is always locked.

A large supply of armor and weapons are stored here.

Basic: The citadel guards keep all of their weapons and armor in this room.

Creatures: Two citadel guards are always on duty in this room.

Treasure: The room holds 20 suits of full plate armor and two dozen longswords and steel shields. The room also holds 20 runestones. There are four +2 *armor potency runes*, four *greater resilient runes*, five *greater striking runes*, five +2 *weapon potency runes*, a +3 *weapon potency rune*, and a *major striking rune* among the various runestones.

C10. REGISTRATION

This room contains a long counter and a scroll-filled shelf.

Basic: Prisoners that are to be transferred down into the hold are brought here to be properly documented and registered for record purposes.

Secret: Locations of any PC prisoners can be found here. The elf Jonivar is listed as having been arrested for “insubordination and treason” and has been placed in “special holding” under one Ingnovim Tluss’s watch. These notes describe the secret doors in areas D3 and D4 so that when the PCs reach those areas they automatically find the doors when they look for them.

C11. SECURITY STORAGE

The door to this room is always locked.

This chamber has several shelves stocked with various objects and clothing.

Basic: This room holds any prisoner’s belongings, though they rarely return to claim their items. Any PCs who have been arrested have their gear stored here.

Secret: A hidden panel in one wall reveals a cache of four elixirs of rejuvenation that have been set here to restore important prisoners who were accidentally slain during arrest or escape attempts.

Creatures: Two citadel guards are always on duty in this room.

C12. HOLD ACCESS

This large tower reaches up to a height of six hundred feet, the walls carved with images of gold dragons in flight. A spiral staircase in the middle of the room leads down below.

Basic: There is no roof access to this tower; a spiral staircase leads down to area D1 of the prison below.

C13. BARRACKS

Nearly two dozen beds fill this large barracks.

Basic: Citadel guards remain here while on duty and when not on patrol.

Creatures: At any one time, four guards are resting in this room.

C14. HERMEA MUSEUM

The walls of this long room are adorned with paintings and framed parchments, while numerous display cases in the middle of the room hold all manner of items.

Basic: Items that are significant to the histories of Hermea and Promise are on display here. No important secrets can be found here, but a PC who achieves this result can learn more about the city of Promise as you see fit, based on information in the article beginning on page 66 of this book.

C15. VISITOR’S LOUNGE

This large room features numerous plush sofas, comfortable chairs, and tables set with snacks and drinks.

Basic: This room’s main purpose is for visitors to enjoy themselves while they wait for their hosts or for their accommodations. The lounge has several comfortable chairs, tables, and even a fully stocked bar for guests to enjoy.

Creatures: A half dozen noncombatant human servants clean and restock this room, along with a dozen or so noncombatant visitors to the citadel.

C16. EXCLUSIVE LOUNGE

This circular chamber features numerous plush sofas, relaxing looking chairs, and tables set with snacks and drinks. The ceiling is six hundred feet up, the dizzying walls carved with images of flying dragons. An iron staircase winds up into an opening in the center of the ceiling high above.

Basic: This room is much like the visitor’s lounge, save that it is for exclusive meetings with Mengkare. The stairs lead to a rooftop garden similar to the one in area C4.

Secret: This room appears to be very seldomly used. (Per Mengkare’s orders, this room is to be left

undisturbed and as such, the guards skip past this room on their patrols, making it an ideal place for the PCs to hide; attempts to hide in this room gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Stealth checks against guards.)

C17. REFECTORY

This large mess hall has several long tables for dining.

Basic: The citadel's inhabitants use this room to eat their meals throughout the day. A dozen or so noncombatant visitors to the Citadel can be found here.

C18. KITCHEN

This large kitchen has several ovens and an oversized pantry.

Basic: This room can feed the dozens of people that visit the citadel daily. A half dozen noncombatant servants prepare food here.

C19. MEETING ROOMS

This is a large meeting room featuring several comfy chairs arranged around an oval table.

Basic: These rooms are available for anyone looking to have more personal meetings. Each room contains a large table, several chairs, and a small assortment of food.

C20. STUDY ROOMS

This large room contains several comfortable chairs paired with small reading desks.

Basic: These rooms are used for larger group studies.

Creatures: A few noncombatant researchers study documents in these rooms.

C21. LIBRARY RECORDS

This chamber's walls are covered with shelves bearing hundreds of drawers.

Basic: This room contains a simple catalog of the library's entire contents. Anyone searching for a book comes here first to determine where exactly a given tome is located in the library.

Secret: Truly important documents are stored in the archives, but no records defining the exact nature of those texts can be found here.

C22. LIBRARY

This enormous library holds hundreds of books about a dizzying number of subjects.

Basic: The books here cover a wide range of topics.

Secret: The PC becomes familiar enough that they can use this library to gain a +2 item bonus to any check to Recall Knowledge regarding dragons, Hermea, or generalized urban lore.

C23. ARCHIVE ACCESS

This large hollow tower reaches up to a height of six hundred feet, the walls carved with images of gold dragons in flight. A spiral staircase in the middle of the room leads downward.

Basic: This stone staircase spirals down to the entrance to the archives (area E1).

C24. READING ROOMS

This section of the library is filled with dozens of small reading rooms. Each room has a desk and comfortable chair.

Creatures: A dozen or so noncombatant scholars can be found here.

C25. LIBRARY STORAGE

This room is a small maze of shelves and containers.

Basic: New books that have yet to be placed into the library are kept here. The room also holds other supplies used in the library.

Secret: A misfiled tome contains information that can be studied to learn the rituals for *animate object* and *legend lore*.

Citadel Prison

Mengkare realized early on in the establishment of Promise that not every citizen would be capable of meeting his high standards or even wish to partake in the Glorious Endeavor. Concerned that these failures and nonconformers would be a threat to the endeavor, he had a prison built beneath the citadel. Anyone who did not willingly leave Hermea or appeared to be a potential problem to the city was placed in the hold while Mengkare decided their fate. Usually, this would lead to the offending individual's demise, though Mengkare would sometimes hold on

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to an individual for other reasons. Only a few rare prisoners ever managed to convince Mengkare to give them a second chance.

Ceilings in the prison are 15 feet high. Doors here are made of iron and have superior locks; each of the guards posted here carry keys to all locks in the prison. Lighting is provided by frequently spaced everburning torches.

D1. HOLD ENTRANCE MODERATE 19

This sparse-looking chamber's northwestern corner features a wide, spiral staircase leading up. An iron prison door is set in the wall to the east.

This landing is 100 feet below the citadel above.

Creatures: A group of three Citadel guards are posted here, preventing anyone from accessing the cells beyond. They immediately turn away anyone they don't recognize as a citadel guard. If a fight breaks out, the wardens yell out a warning into the hallway beyond before trying to stop any intruders from getting past them.

CITADEL GUARDS (3) CREATURE 18

Elite Promise guard (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6; page 29)

Initiative Perception +31

D2. CELLS

Dozens of prison cells line this long, bleak hallway, each separated from each other by solid stone walls.

Each prison's door features a sliding slat at eye level and one at ground level.

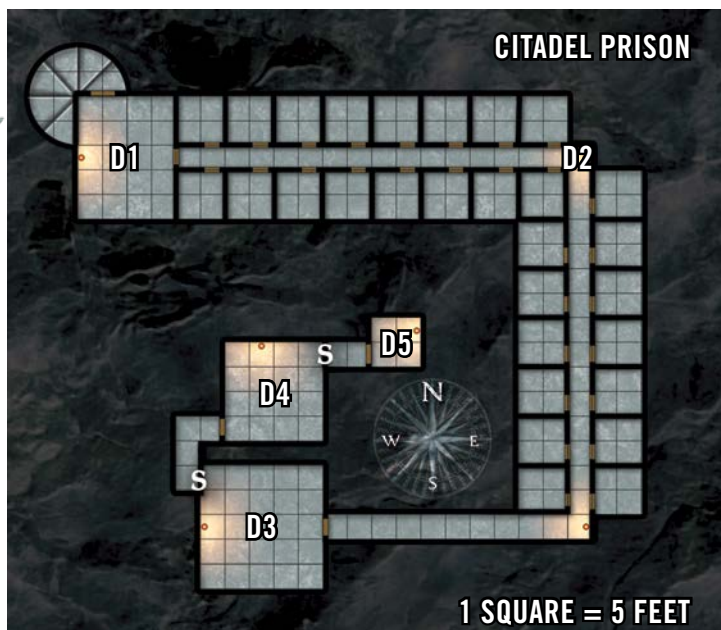
Prisoners: Many of these cells are filled with hapless humans who have accepted the fact that they'll live out the rest of their lives here. Some of them were unable to live up to Promise's strict standards and refused deportation. Others are visitors who attempted once too often to explore the city without any kind of invitation. Most of them have been here for so long that they are convinced they are at the end of their life's journey and don't even call out for help as the PCs move by. The prisoners are all noncombatants and in miserable condition. They won't even try to escape unless the PCs can prove to them that there won't be repercussions—generally, this requires the PCs to not only defeat Ingnovim (see area **D3**) but also arrange for a change in policy with Mengkare, either through discussion or a fight to the death.

Any PCs who have been captured are placed in cells here.

XP Award: If the prisoners here are set free, grant the PCs 40 XP.

D3. INGNOVIM'S LAB MODERATE 19

Countless glass bottles and other containers fill the various shelves of this room. Medical tools and other experimental equipment dot the shelves. Large glass containers stand against the northern walls, each filled with what appears to be mounds of still-living flesh. A door in the east wall allows passage in and out of this room.



Initially, Mengkare simply exiled any individuals who failed to meet his qualifications for citizenship in Promise, but recently, under the poisonous influence and advice of one of the least palatable of the Council of Enlightenment—a bitter man named Ingnovim Tluss—Mengkare has been convinced to allow certain rejected citizens to be “recycled” here. After all, if Ingnovim manages to eventually make good on his goal of crafting an alchemical elixir capable of “perfecting” an imperfect citizen, Mengkare won't need to continue to breed humans—he can simply create perfect souls with a single draught. Mengkare doesn't expect Ingnovim to succeed at this grandiose plan before the time comes to perform the *Anima Invocation*, but on the off chance the alchemist might have an unexpected breakthrough, the dragon's allowed him

free reign in this lab to continue his experiments without oversight.

The secret door in the northwest corner of the room can be discovered with a DC 39 Perception check.

Creatures: Mengkare hasn't visited this laboratory in years, a fact the current caretaker, Ingnovim Tluss, has abused. Ingnovim is an alchemist dedicated to the study of change upon the human body, and the lengths to which he's experimented on humans would shock and disgust the dragon—if only he could be shown these experiments. Ingnovim has already subjected himself to various trials and tests to the point where his own body has grown accustomed to his use of bestial mutagens, but it's his test subjects who bear the brunt of his alchemical explorations.

Ingnovim's latest trials have been attempts to salvage the best parts of a given prisoner in hopes of creating a new human from the parts of several others. While he has made astounding leaps in the process, this has mostly resulted in creating cruel amalgams of several individuals bound together a single body. Several of these hideous mutants now serve him as guardians in area **D4**, while a half-completed one—a howling, shrieking conglomeration of spare body parts—twists and shakes atop the table to which its contorted body has been tightly strapped. Ingnovim curiously watches each of his creations with glee in hopes of improving his technique—the one on the table is essentially a noncombatant creature, but those to the north are not.

Two of Ingnovim's earlier experiments—a pair of Promise guards who, according to the city's records, fled Promise years ago and are considered persona non grata by Mengkare, should they ever dare return. In truth, these two men have lingered down here, alchemically augmented in strength but diluted in will to be the alchemist's loyal bodyguards and assistants. These two never remove their armor, which has been bolted in places directly to their flesh, and the alchemical infusions they've been dosed with provide them with accelerated healing. Ingnovim abandoned this technique soon after he realized that he couldn't separate the restorative nature of the serum from its devastating impact to the mind—it left the guards pliant to his suggestions but useless to Mengkare as “perfect souls.”

Ingnovim is not expecting visitors when the PCs enter, and he is surprised at their appearance. He is not one for words and just sees the PCs as another opportunity to test his experimental techniques. He offers them a chance to volunteer to be his latest test subjects and becomes obviously annoyed if they decline his offer. In that case, he sends his two

“assistants” to collect the PCs so he can use them as experimental stock anyway. As combat begins, Ingnovim consumes one of his bestial mutagens and also attempts to subdue any PCs, specifically any humans. If combat does not seem to be going in his favor, he attempts to flee via the secret door toward area **D4** and make a final stand among his other experiments.

INGNOVIM TLUSS

CREATURE 19

UNIQUE LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +33

Languages Common, Draconic

Skills Athletics +36, Crafting +39, Deception +32, Intimidation +32, Medicine +38, Society +36

Str +8, **Dex** +6, **Con** +9, **Int** +10, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +2

Items alchemist's tools, +2 *greater resilient chain shirt*, +2 *greater striking dagger*, formula book (contains formulas for all common alchemical items of 19th level or lower), syringe filled with unstable mutagen (4)

Infused Items Ingnovim carries 4 major acid flasks, 4 major alchemist's fire, 2 infused major bestial mutagens, 4 major bottled lightnings, 4 major frost vials, 2 infused major juggernaut mutagens, and 4 true elixirs of life. These items last for 24 hours or until the next time he makes his daily preparations.

AC 43, **Fort** +35, **Ref** +29, **Will** +32

HP 350; **Immunities** poison

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *dagger* +29 (agile, finesse, magical, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 4d4+10 piercing

Melee ♦ syringe +34 (agile), **Damage** 2d8+10 piercing

Ranged ♦ bomb +36 (range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** varies by bomb

Inject Unstable Mutagen ♦ (alchemical, mutagen, polymorph) **Trigger** Ingnovim damages a creature with a syringe Strike; **Effect** The creature injected with unstable mutagen must attempt a DC 41 Fortitude save to resist the injection.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target is sickened 2.

Failure The target's body shifts and mutates, growing difficult to control; the target is clumsy 2 and enfeebled 2 for 24 hours.

Critical Failure The target's body completely distorts into a shuddering blob of warped flesh that is incapable of action; the target is paralyzed. Every 24 hours, the target may attempt a new saving throw against this effect; on a critical success, the paralysis ends.

Mutagenic Adaptation Ingnovim's body has adapted to the constant use of his mutagens. He does not suffer the drawback of any bestial mutagens but is still affected normally by other mutagens.

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Quick Bomber ♦ Ingnovim draws an alchemical bomb with an Interact action and throws it as a ranged Strike.

INGNOVIM'S ASSISTANTS (2)

CREATURE 17

RARE LN MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

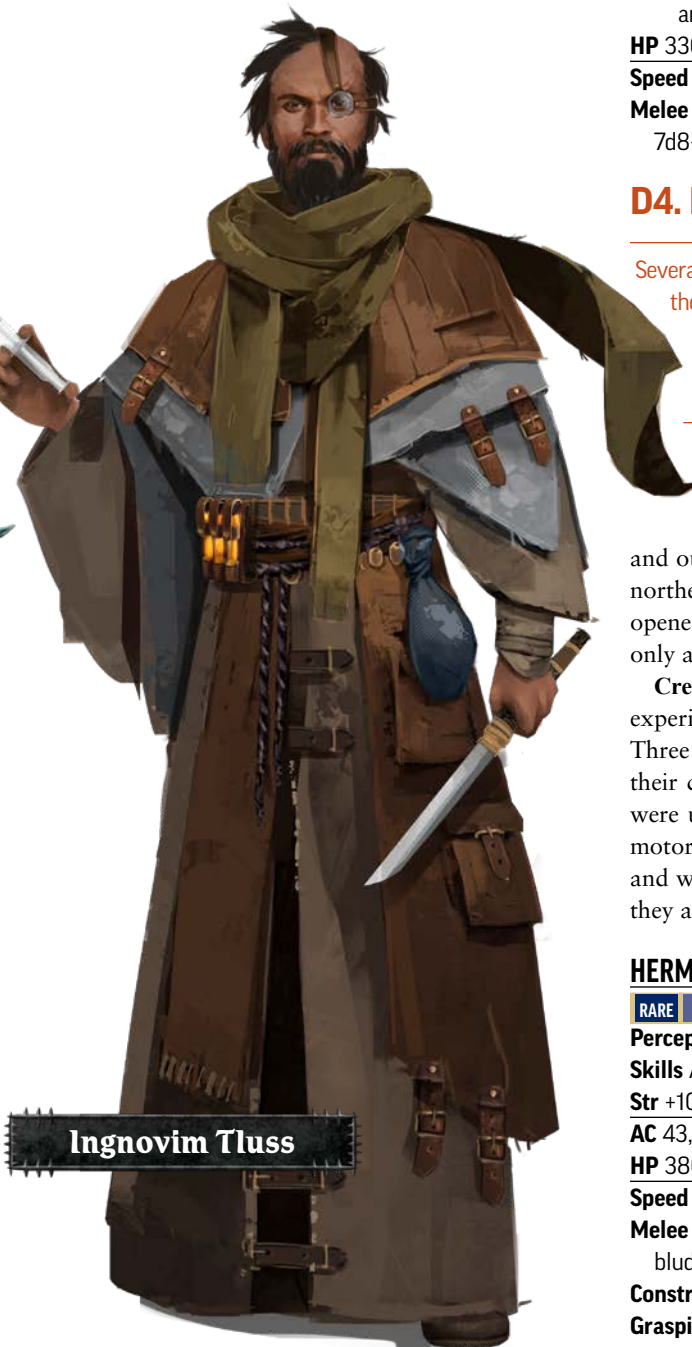
Perception +29

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +33, Intimidation +33

Str +8, **Dex** +2, **Con** +9, **Int** -4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** -4

Items +2 greater resilient full plate, +2 greater striking longsword



Ingnovim Tluss

AC 43, **Fort** +32, **Ref** +26, **Will** +29

Death Throes (alchemical, poison) When one of Ingnovim's assistants dies, it bursts open in a foul-sounding and smelling explosion of toxic viscera and poisonous vapors. All creatures within a 20-foot burst must attempt a DC 38 Fortitude save to resist this blast of poison.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is sickened 2.

Failure The creature takes 7d8 poison damage.

Critical Failure The creature takes 14d8 poison damage and 2d8 persistent poison damage.

HP 330, fast healing 20; **Immunities** poison

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ *longsword* +33 (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 7d8+8 slashing

D4. MUTANT STORAGE

SEVERE 19

Several large glass containers line the walls of the room, though most of them are shattered and broken. A few small tables litter the room, each covered with soiled medical and science equipment. A door in the east wall leads in and out of the room.

This room is where Ingnovim did most of his initial experimentation. Over the past months, he's left many projects half-started and outright abandoned. There is a secret door in the northeast corner that has been obviously left partially opened by the room's inhabitants. Noticing it requires only a successful DC 20 Perception check.

Creatures: Ingnovim left many of his failed experiments in here as he moved on to other projects. Three of these poor creatures eventually broke free of their containment and attempted to escape, but they were unable to do so because of their lack of proper motor skills. These mutants fear and loathe Ingnovim and won't attack him, but any others are fair game—they attack intruders on sight and fight to the death.

HERMEAN MUTANTS (3)

CREATURE 19

RARE LE MEDIUM ABERRATION MUTANT

Perception +35; darkvision

Skills Athletics +37

Str +10, **Dex** +0, **Con** +9, **Int** -3, **Wis** +3, **Cha** -4

AC 43, **Fort** +36, **Ref** +28, **Will** +27

HP 380

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ fist +36 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 6d8+10 bludgeoning plus Grab

Constrict ♦ 4d8+10 bludgeoning, DC 41

Grasping Hands ♦♦ The mutant's various hands stretch and reach out in an attempt to grab nearby creatures.

The mutant attempts an Athletics check to Grapple all creatures within 10 feet. The mutant's multiple attack penalty doesn't increase until it has made all the Athletics checks that are part of its Grasping Hands. Creatures that are grabbed are pulled to a space adjacent to the mutant. This is forced movement.

D5. JONIVAR'S PRISON

This small room has modest accommodations such as a bed, a small table, and a small shelf sparsely filled with books. A door stands in the southeast wall.

Prisoner: Just over 4 years ago, Mengkare lured an Ekujae scholar named Jonivar to Hermea with the promise of a chance to study an ancient *aiudara* gate in return for helping Mengkare understand the complexities of the *Anima Invocation*. Mengkare was true to his word and allowed Jonivar to conduct some studies on Vengegate, but the dragon increasingly shifted Jonivar's focus toward the study of the *Animus Invocation*—particularly ways in which it could be enhanced even further to maximize the damage it could inflict. When Mengkare offered Jonivar the position as his head ritualist, Jonivar confronted the dragon with accusations of having a god complex, pointing out that even one as powerful as Mengkare had no right to decide the fate of an entire population. The argument spiraled out of control, and when Jonivar threatened to reveal to the world just how tyrannical Mengkare's control over Promise's citizens had become, the dragon had the elf imprisoned. In time, Mengkare hoped the elf would reconsider and change his mind, but he underestimated Jonivar's stubbornness.

For the past year, Jonivar has used meditation to keep his senses, though not without difficulty. For the first few months, Ingnovim was his only point of contact, and the alchemist's fear that Mengkare would eventually want the elf returned to his side kept Jonivar safe from experimentation. But over the past few months, as Ingnovim has come to realize Mengkare never intends to let Jonivar free, the alchemist has begun experimenting on the elf, drawing blood regularly in hopes of isolating what he believes to be a "longevity gene" from his blood.

When the PCs enter the room, Jonivar expects Ingnovim and his latest tale of cruelty. He is surprised and almost brought to tears at the sight of the PCs. He doesn't know why they are here but is quick to plead that they take him with them. If he learns that the PCs came looking for him at Inizra's request, a wistful

smile crosses his face and he eagerly asks after her, expressing his hope that she's doing well.

While Jonivar is eager to see the sun again, he's just as eager to ensure that Mengkare's plans for the *Anima Invocation* are stopped. Soon after he's rescued, he gives the PCs a brief warning about what Mengkare's actual goals are. Read or paraphrase the following.

"While I appreciate the risks you took to rescue me, what Mengkare plans to accomplish still poses an extreme danger. The true nature of his so-called 'Glorious Endeavor' is to use an ancient ritual once used by my people to banish the manifestation of Dahak from this world—the *Anima Invocation*. Mengkare intends to perform this ritual again, but this time using the populace of Promise in an attempt to directly harm Dahak! I've tried to make him see reason, to convince him that even if the ritual could do what he expects it could, sacrificing a city of mortals is itself an abominable sin. His response was to lock me away in this dungeon—all the proof I need that he may be beyond redemption. But perhaps you can convince him of the errors of his ways where I could not—or if it comes to it, defeat him before he can put his plan into motion."

The PCs likely have questions after this. Jonivar's responses to potential questions are summarized below.

How does the *Anima Invocation* work? "I can give you more details later, but in brief, it weaponizes the souls of the secondary casters who take part in the ritual, using

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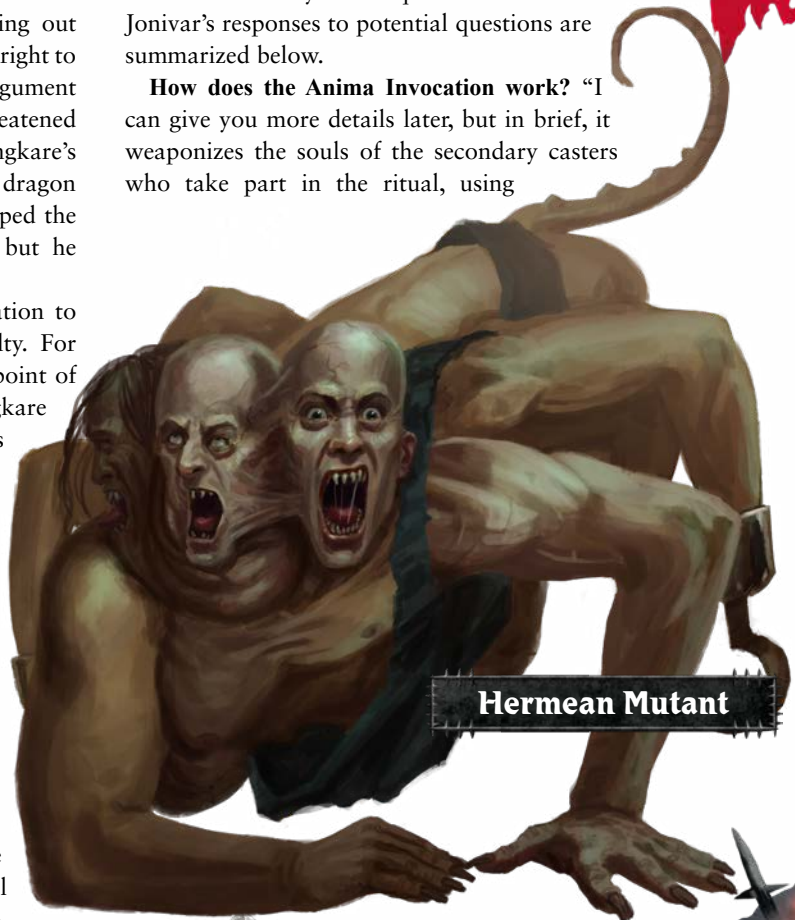
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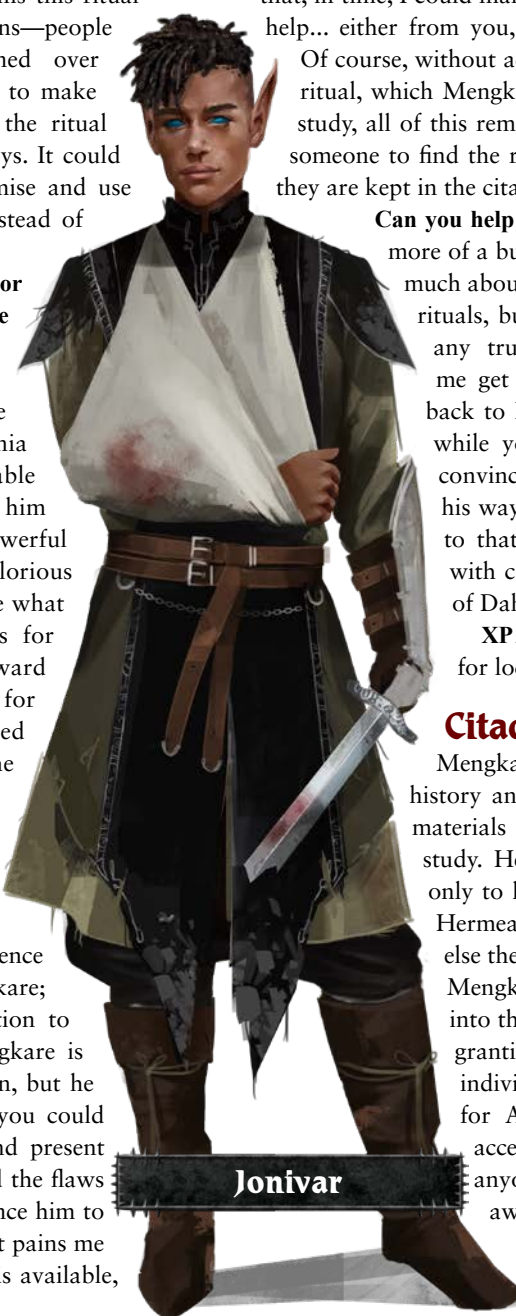
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those souls to produce a potent blast of energy capable of driving back or slaying even the most powerful of beings. It requires a mass sacrifice, and to my knowledge it has been used only once: to banish the manifestation of Dahak from this world during the Age of Darkness. I suspect that there could be a way to adjust the ritual to use its power in a different way, but Mengkare would hear none of that talk and never gave me a chance to pursue this theory.”

Should we let Mengkare attempt his plan? “No! Mengkare doesn’t understand one of the core truths of the *Anima Invocation*: it requires the souls of willing participants. If he performs this ritual and sacrifices Promise’s citizens—people he’s engineered and conditioned over generations to lack the free will to make their own choices—I fear that the ritual could backfire in devastating ways. It could well slay all who dwell in Promise and use that energy to bolster Dahak instead of destroy him!”

How does the Glorious Endeavor help with the ritual? Couldn’t he just sacrifice anyone? “Mengkare knows my ancestors used the *Anima Invocation* to banish the incarnation of Dahak millennia ago. He believes they were able only to banish him and not kill him because their souls were not powerful enough. Mengkare began the Glorious Endeavor in an attempt to create what he believed to be perfect souls for use in the ritual. His efforts toward a utopia were mostly a front for his schemes to selectively breed Promise’s citizens to reach the perfection that he sought.”

Why haven’t you done anything to stop him yet? “I tried, but I admit I let my passions get the better of me. I should have used logic and evidence in my arguments against Mengkare; should have resisted the escalation to insults and verbal attacks. Mengkare is proud, dangerously arrogant even, but he is also incredibly intelligent. If you could secure an audience with him and present the case to make him understand the flaws and risks, I believe we can convince him to change his mind. And, although it pains me to suggest it, if no other option is available,

Mengkare may have to be destroyed to save the city he built.”

How can we adjust the ritual? “During my studies of the *Anima Invocation*, I believe I discovered a way to alter its usage so that it draws upon the power of the soul in a different way. Rather than sacrificing a person and using their soul as a weapon, the ritual could, in theory, augment a person’s soul to an extent that their living bodies could become bolstered enough to stand against the manifestation of Dahak’s will in person, to gain a fighting chance to defeat it. Mengkare didn’t believe this theory at all, but I think that, in time, I could make it work. Especially if I had help... either from you, or from Mengkare himself.

Of course, without access to the full details of the ritual, which Mengkare has never allowed me to study, all of this remains theory—we would need someone to find the ritual notes as well. I suspect they are kept in the citadel’s archives.”

Can you help us? “Alas, I fear I would be more of a burden than assistance. I know much about ancient history and magical rituals, but I am no warrior and lack any true spellcasting power. Help me get back into the city, lead me back to Inizra so she can protect me while you prepare, and if you can convince Mengkare of the errors of his ways—or defeat him, if it comes to that—I’ll aid you as best I can with confronting the manifestation of Dahak.”

XP Award: Award the PCs 80 XP for locating and rescuing Jonivar.

Citadel Archives

Mengkare values learning from history and makes sure that historical materials are available for him to study. He created these archives not only to hold records of the events in Hermea, but also to house anything else the dragon considers important. Mengkare normally allows access into the archives on a limited basis, granting entry only to approved individuals. Before he recently left for Axis, Mengkare revoked all access to the archives, forcing anyone within to leave while he’s away from Promise. As such, the archives are empty of visitors at this time.

Jonivar

Ceiling height in the archives is 20 feet; all doors are made of iron but do not lock. Lighting is provided by numerous *everburning torches*.

E1. ENTRANCE

A spiraling flight of stairs ascends in the southwest corner of this room, while three large bookshelves stand to the east.

The archive sits about 100 feet beneath the Golden Citadel. The shelves in this room hold a lengthy catalog that details all individuals who have been granted access to the archives over the years. Feel free to include significant NPCs of interest here to imply prior connections with Mengkare at your discretion. If a PC looks up the elven scholar Jonivar, they discover that he has been placed in indefinite imprisonment in the citadel prison on charges of “insubordination and treason.”

E2. REST CHAMBERS

Mengkare usually grants access to the archives for short periods of time, typically not longer than a week. To maximize their time in the archives, these rooms allow researchers a chance to rest without having to leave. Each room has a simple bed and a small side table.

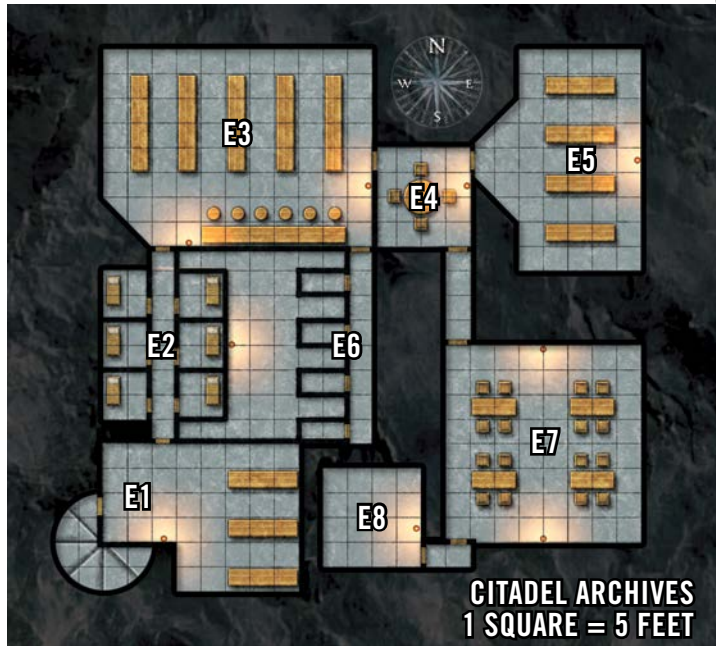
E3. REPOSITORY

SEVERE 19

Bookshelves fill the majority of this room. Each bookshelf is packed with dozens of tomes and scrolls. A large table and several stools stand against the room’s southern wall. A pair of doors are located in the southern wall. Another door can be found in the eastern wall.

Mengkare keeps most records in this room along with other important volumes. The shelves hold the entire history of Promise in the form of copies of official decrees, financial receipts, and other official documents. The PCs can take the time to search through these records to get a general understanding of Promise’s history, though the process takes several hours to do so.

Creature: Mengkare created a special construct to serve as the archive’s guardian. His intent was to keep anyone who was not strictly permitted to be within the archives out of the area. The guardian has



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orders to remove unpermitted individuals from the archives—at this point in time, that includes anyone other than itself, as Mengkare has closed the archives to all. The guardian is a crystalline construct, draconic in shape and built around a core containing a shard of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*. When the dragonshard guardian notices intruders, it attacks at once. It pursues foes throughout the archives, but it does not follow them up the stairs in area E1.

DRAGONSHARD GUARDIAN

CREATURE 22

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Initiative Perception +39

Treasure: When the dragonshard guardian is destroyed, it crumbles to powder and dust, leaving behind a shard of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*.


E4. MEETING ROOM

This room is intended for a larger group to meet and study or have discussions. It has enough chairs to accommodate a group of five, with additional chairs in the southwest corner for larger groups.

The southern door leading to area E7 bears a potent ward that prevents anyone who has signed a Contract of Citizenship from passing through it or even opening the door.

E5. CITIZEN ARCHIVE

Thin volumes fill four enormous bookshelves in this room. A door is located in the western wall.



Mengkare keeps records of every citizen that is or once was a part of the Glorious Endeavor. A specific volume contains a copy of an individual's Contract of Citizenship as well as a list of all of the individual's major accomplishments during their time in Promise. A character that studies the contract and succeeds at a DC 45 Legal Lore or Society check determines that the actual contract is magical in nature. Anyone who signs the contract is subject to a unique magical compulsion similar to the *geas* ritual that allows Mengkare to keep citizens away from anywhere he designates.

E6. READING ROOMS

Each of these chambers contains a desk and a small table. Citizens can make use of these rooms to quietly review and study any items.

Treasure: The second room in the hall still contains several open tomes, having been left here by a citizen who left and expected to return later, only to have her access revoked when Mengkare left. A successful DC 42 Perception check locates a *wand of widening* (9th) that she left behind here.

E7. MENGKARE'S ARCHIVE

The walls of this square room are lined with shelves containing tomes, scrolls, stone tablets, and more. Four tables surrounded by comfortable chairs sit in the middle of the room.

Despite the presence of seating for up to 16 people, Mengkare has never allowed anyone else access to this room (or to the archive vault beyond)—the tables and chairs are more decoration than anything else.

The walls of this archive contain a wealth of knowledge about Mengkare's plans for Promise, but very little about the dragon's personal history. Much of the information about Promise can be found in these documents, and if the PCs wish to learn more about the city, you can let them find out more here. Specific topics the PCs may wish to search for are listed below; the archive is well organized, and it only takes a PC 10 minutes of searching to uncover the information they seek.

Anima Invocation Notes: The tomes, scrolls, and texts that comprise the gathered notes and details of the *Anima Invocation* constitute 2 Bulk altogether. The PCs will need these notes to perform and adjust the *Anima Invocation*, as detailed on page 51. If the PCs haven't spoken to Jonivar yet and learned that there's a way to adjust the *Anima Invocation*, any PC who spends 8 hours studying these notes and

succeeds at a DC 50 Arcana or Occultism check will come to the same conclusion. A PC who has legendary proficiency in either of these skills automatically comes to this conclusion after only 4 hours of study. A PC who studies the *Anima Invocation* and succeeds at a DC 35 Religion check notes something additional that Mengkare missed: if a participant in the invocation does not do so under their own free will (something that, arguably, the citizens of Promise did not have, since the ritual's true meaning has been kept from them), the ritual could backfire in unanticipated ways.

Archive Vault Instructions: If the PCs are perplexed as to how to access the contents of the archive vault, instructions for how to do so can be found here.

Mengkare's Personal History: Mengkare kept sparse records of his personal life and history, but what can be gathered here by curious PCs is telling. This information reveals all of Mengkare's Story as detailed on pages 71–72 of the Adventure Toolbox in "Hellknight Hill", but a brief summary of the significant points appear in **Handout #1** on page 45.

Mengkare's Plans for Promise: A search for Mengkare's plans for promise reveal his intention to grow a utopia of "perfect souls" for use in the *Anima Invocation*, making clear his intent to sacrifice the citizens of Promise in an attempt to destroy Dahak's manifestation and, he hopes, mortally wound the god himself. Much of these notes spend their time agonizing and justifying this act—the phrase "Tomorrow must burn so the days thereafter can prosper," is oft repeated.

XP Award: If they recover the texts detailing the *Anima Invocation*, award the PCs 40 XP.

E8. ARCHIVE VAULT

The walls of this large, empty chamber shimmer and glow with a dim, eerie light. A door is set in the southeast corner of the room.

Magical wards prevent any citizen of Promise from entering this room. Anyone who attempts to do so immediately turns around and returns to the main floor. The ward alerts Mengkare so he can handle the situation as he sees fit. Mengkare will occasionally provide an individual with a unique archive pin that overrides this ward, allowing access into the vault.

Treasure: The room's walls connect to an extradimensional space that holds all of the vault's contents. Acquiring an item from the vault requires a person to rest their hands against the wall and then loudly and clearly state the item they wish to retrieve.

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The item then passes through the wall into the person's hands. If the PCs haven't learned how to withdraw items in area E7, a PC must succeed at a DC 35 check to Identify Magic to learn how to use the vault. Requesting the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, orb shards, or anything similar results in a dozen slender crystalline shards manifesting in the character's hands. Numerous other strange objects may be locked away in the archive vault at your discretion, but as a general rule, Mengkare didn't hide away magic items or valuable treasures here—he's still a dragon, after all, and prefers having his valuable treasures on display in his hoard. You can add other objects as you wish to the vault, but unless you give the PCs the items' names, they shouldn't be able to retrieve them.

XP Award: If the PCs retrieve the remaining shards of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, award them 40 XP.

Meeting Mengkare

From the time the PCs first arrive in Promise, they have 3 days before Mengkare returns to the city from his trip to Axis to gather the last resources and information he needs to get the *Anima Invocation* underway. Mengkare returns to Promise fully expecting Dahak's influence to have nearly broken through Vengagate, but is pleasantly surprised to find his fears were misplaced. At first, he assumes this is because Emaliza reinforced the wards on the portal as he requested, but he soon learns the truth—that the PCs' clash against Dahak at Breachill is what slowed the manifestation down. This information intrigues Mengkare, and he focuses on arranging a meeting with the PCs as soon as possible. He swiftly learns about any public (and most private) incidents involving the PCs in Promise, so it shouldn't be long after his return that the PCs receive a formal invitation to meet with Mengkare in the council chamber (area C1). The nature of how this invitation is sent is left to you, but it's most likely delivered via the NPC with whom the PCs have formed the strongest attachment in the city's government, be that Emaliza, Rinnarv, or Inizra. (Note that if the PCs are still working with Emaliza, she has other plans for how they might confront Mengkare; see Emaliza's Gambit on page 49.) Mengkare can issue the invitation directly via *sending* if you wish, unless the PCs have managed to keep themselves so unusually secretive that no one in Promise could have noticed them. If the PCs refuse to meet with the dragon, he seeks them out instead and, in time, will find them—in this case, the PCs take a –1 penalty to all skill checks made while interacting with him as a result of his annoyance at being forced to travel to the PCs rather than them coming to him.

Notes on Mengkare's History

Listed below are key points of interest from Mengkare's journals.

- Mengkare and his parents were controlled by the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* during the Dragon Plague. His parents were slain by heroes, and Mengkare was banished to Axis for centuries.
- After returning from Axis, Mengkare again fell victim to the orb when a wizard named Ilereth used it to control him. Events gave Mengkare a chance to destroy the orb and break free, but doing so triggered the eruption of Draskar's Crag.
- Mengkare gathered up the shards of the orb to prevent its reconstruction, then periodically scattered them to further stymie such attempts by giving them to allies as gifts.
- Mengkare discovered Alreta's Ring, but upon learning Dahak's manifestation was trapped within, devoted his research to finding a way to defeat the manifestation.
- Mengkare discovered an ancient ritual, the *Anima Invocation*, that worked once before to defeat Dahak. Mengkare decides to build a utopia of "perfect souls" to use in this ritual, hoping that these handcrafted mortals would possess souls that would greatly enhance the *Anima Invocation's* power once they were sacrificed—enhanced enough that they could even destroy Dahak himself.
- Mengkare's first attempt to create a utopia failed after he shared the plans for sacrifice with his subjects. He wiped clean the memories of his subjects, then in the guise of a "kindly wizard" named Lanond Breachton, he helped the people reestablish themselves before abandoning them again. Breachill was the result.
- Mengkare's current attempt to create a utopia, Promise, is destined to be sacrificed in an attempt to destroy Dahak.

Handout #1

Once they meet with Mengkare, read the following.

The gold dragon Mengkare extends his wings in a clear sign of intimidation and dominance, letting out a deep growl in the process. He retracts his wings and breathes out a thick cloud of smoke before he speaks. "You have come to my island uninvited and have seen fit to interfere with my affairs." He growls once more. "But I am patient. Know that you have received a glorious mercy this day, for I shall allow you to explain yourselves. Tell me. What is your intent in Promise?"

STARTING DISADVANTAGES

Certain actions the PCs might have taken during this adventure penalize their initial stance against Mengkare by lowering his Doubt from 10, as detailed below. Mengkare's Doubt can't be reduced below zero. Apply these modifiers only once, at the start of the argument.

Hoard Robbers: Each PC who stole anything from Mengkare's hoard reduces Mengkare's Doubt by 1 (the dragon automatically senses stolen treasures). If a PC admits to taking from the hoard and returns the stolen treasure, Mengkare is impressed and his Doubt increases by 1. The party can remove this penalty by giving back all they stole.

Lawbreakers: If any of the PCs have been caught breaking any of Promise's laws (such as being caught with counterfeit Visitor's Pins, or by resisting arrest), reduce Mengkare's Doubt by 1.

Murderers: Each Promise guard or Citadel guard the PCs have slain decreases Mengkare's Doubt by 1. Each Promise citizen the PCs have slain decreases Mengkare's Doubt by 2.

Prisoners: If any of the PCs have been arrested in Promise, reduce Mengkare's Doubt by 1.

At this point, Mengkare earnestly listens to the PCs explain their journey to Hermea or even their entire set of adventures so far. He keeps his emotions in check the entire time, even if the PCs mention the Scarlet Triad and the reconstructed *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*. Mengkare finally reacts if the PCs reveal that they know of Mengkare's plans with the *Anima Invocation*, letting out a frustrated sigh. At this point, he immediately understands the PCs' ultimate goal is to stop him from going forth with the Glorious Endeavor and using the *Anima Invocation*. He interrupts the PCs at this point, speaking again.

"Ah, so this is what this is all about. You've learned about the incarnation of Dahak and my plans to stop it. Young ones, I have spent decades studying and planning this effort. I have considered countless solutions, and this one will result in the least harm to Golarion. It's for the greater good of all of the world. Tomorrow must burn, I fear, so the days thereafter can prosper. It seems that you have other thoughts, however. Go on, explain your concerns and what other solutions you may have."

CHANGING MENGKARE'S MIND

At this point, the PCs must work to change Mengkare's mind by raising his doubts that the Glorious Endeavor

is the right choice. Mengkare begins this debate with a Doubt score of 10, and as the PCs present arguments or points about the flaws in Mengkare's plan, they'll increase the dragon's Doubt. There is no time limit for how long the PCs can debate with the dragon, but at a certain point, they'll run out of arguments or begin to repeat themselves. At this point (at your discretion), Mengkare calls an end to the discussion with a wave of his hand—proceed with Mengkare's Reaction on page 48. Alternately, if at any point the PCs raise Mengkare's Doubt to 21 or higher, the dragon immediately cedes his stance and admits the PCs are correct; continue with Mengkare's Reaction on page 48.

The PCs are free to present their case to Mengkare in any manner they wish, but keep track of the points they bring up. There are a number of key factors that, once they're mentioned, allow the PCs to attempt a skill check to drive home a point and raise Mengkare's Doubt. Whenever the PCs bring up one of these points, as listed under Arguments Against Glory, consult that point's key skills and ask one of the PCs to attempt a check using a key skill of the party's choice with the Convince Mengkare activity. Presenting key pieces of physical evidence can grant circumstance bonuses to these skill checks, as detailed below.

CONVINCE MENGKARE

AUDITORY CONCENTRATE LINGUISTIC MENTAL

You spend several minutes debating with the gold dragon Mengkare and have presented a piece of information that could potentially raise his Doubt score and cause him to reconsider his plans to sacrifice the citizens of Promise. Select one of the key skills associated with the argument you made, and attempt a check with that skill—the required DC depends on the skill used, as indicated in the Arguments against Glory section below.

Critical Success You increase Mengkare's Doubt by 2.

Success You increase Mengkare's Doubt by 1.

Failure You fail to increase Mengkare's Doubt.

Critical Failure You undermine your argument. Reduce Mengkare's Doubt by 1.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST GLORY

Listed below are several arguments and tactics the PCs might use to convince Mengkare his plans for Promise are flawed. Feel free to expand on these as you see fit or as the PCs present other points with their case.

ALTERING THE INVOCATION

Key Skills Arcana or Occultism (DC 39), Diplomacy (DC 43), Nature or Religion (DC 41)

If the PCs spoke to Jonivar (or if they studied the *Anima Invocation* notes properly themselves), they may know that the *Anima Invocation* can potentially be altered to confront Dahak in a different way. If the PCs have brought Jonivar with them, his additional impassioned testimony grants a +4 circumstance bonus to the check.

APPEALING TO MERCY

Key Skills Breachill, Kintargo, or any other city Lore (DC 39), Diplomacy (DC 41), Society (DC 43)

Mengkare asked people to be part of the Glorious Endeavor, but was not fully forthcoming with his goals. Officially, every citizen of Promise believes they are only attempting to create a utopia and are unaware of Mengkare's goal to use them as a sacrifice. It is not fair to these people to ask them to be part of these plans without their knowledge. If the PCs specifically bring up Breachill's history, citing how the people of the first attempt rebelled against the idea of self-sacrifice, yet continued to thrive into a modern town even after Mengkare left them on their own, they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to the check.

DAHAK IS THE REAL FOE

Key Skills Dahak Lore (DC 39), Diplomacy (DC 43), Religion (DC 41)

Ultimately, the PCs and Mengkare have similar goals and desires—the defeat of Dahak. If the PCs remind Mengkare that Dahak is the real foe, and that if there's a less self-destructive route to defeat his manifestation available, then logically such a route should be attempted first before something as drastic as a city's sacrifice is performed. If the PCs specifically cite their own triumphs against Dahak over the course of the Age of Ashes campaign, be it in more recent confrontations like those in Chapter 1 of this adventure, or even as early as their defeat of his cult in "Cult of Cinders," they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to the check.

EMALIZA'S BETRAYAL

Key Skills Diplomacy or Intimidation (DC 39)

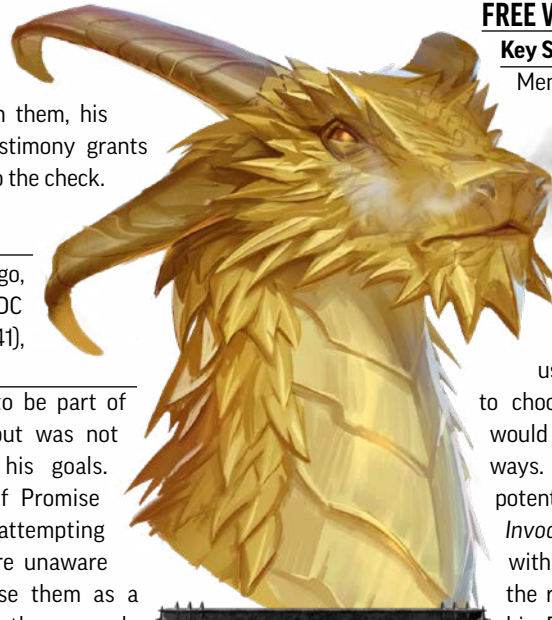
If the PCs reveal Emaliza's betrayal to Mengkare, he is shocked. If they offer proof, they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to this check. Rinnarv's testimony can provide this proof, as can revealing to Mengkare that Emaliza was in possession of a partially restored *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*

or describing her connections to the Scarlet Triad and her full knowledge of that group's engagement in slavery.

FREE WILL

Key Skills none (see below)

Mengkare is quite intelligent, but his intellect is lacking in certain areas—particularly in topics associated with religion and faith. In his studies of the *Anima Invocation*, he never noticed that if those sacrificed aren't fully aware of their role—if they weren't able to use their free will as mortal beings to choose martyrdom—that the invocation would backfire in strange and unexpected ways. If the PCs have discovered this potentiality (either by studying the *Anima Invocation* themselves or after speaking with Jonivar) and bring it up to Mengkare, the revelation catches him off guard and his Doubt increases by 2 automatically without requiring a skill check.



Mengkare

ORB OF GOLD DRAGONKIND

Key Skills none (see below)

If the PCs tell Mengkare that the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* has been partially repaired, he scoffs. Only if they present the actual orb to him does he believe it, in which case his shock automatically increases his Doubt by 1. If the PCs also give him the orb, his Doubt increases by 2 instead. Once he sees that the orb has been partially rebuilt, the PCs gain a +1 item bonus to any further checks to Convince him and to increase his Doubt.

PRIDE IN PROMISE

Key Skills Architecture or Engineering Lore (DC 39), Diplomacy (DC 43), Society (DC 41)

If the PCs point out the wonders and glories of what Mengkare has achieved in creating Promise and remind him that if he goes through with the *Anima Invocation*, Promise will be remembered as a tragedy instead of a triumph, his own pride works against him.

REMEMBER YOUR PAST

Key Skills Diplomacy (DC 41), Dragon Lore (DC 39), Intimidation (DC 43)

Mengkare has endured several tragic events—the loss of his parents, witnessing the atrocities of the Shining Crusade, his enslavement to the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, the accidental triggering of Droskar's Crag, and his first failed attempt to create a utopia, Breachill. If the

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PCs bring these up in a way that offers forgiveness or understanding, or challenges Mengkare to rise above these tragedies, they can raise his Doubt. If the PCs specifically ask what Mengkare's parents might think of his actions and plans, Mengkare's shame and humility grants the PCs a +4 circumstance bonus to this check.

SCARLET TRIAD TRUTHS

Key Skills Diplomacy (DC 43), Politics Lore (DC 39), Society (DC 41)

By revealing to Mengkare the truth of the Scarlet Triad as slavers and villains who sought to control him via the rebuilt *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* and weaponize Dahak's manifestation, the PCs can increase his doubt. Offering concrete evidence, such as Uri Zandivar's journals or the testimony of a repentant Emaliza, grants the PCs a +4 circumstance bonus to this check.

VOLUNTEERING THEMSELVES

Key Skills any ancestry Lore (DC 39), Diplomacy (DC 43), Intimidation (DC 41)

If the PCs offer themselves and their considerable skills to aid Mengkare in his goal to defeat Dahak, he may be impressed. If the PCs seek to use an ancestry Lore (such as Elf Lore, Dwarf Lore, Halfling Lore, etc.), they must do so by extolling how they honor their own ancestry. If, at your option, the PCs recount a particularly brave, harrowing, or exciting incident that showcases their heroics from any point during the Age of Ashes Adventure Path, they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to this check.

MENGKARE'S REACTION

Once the PCs finish presenting their case, Mengkare's reaction depends on his final Doubt score.

Doubt 21 or higher: As soon as Mengkare's doubt reaches 21 or higher, he breaks down in tears—a sight that might shock even the most jaded of heroes. He apologizes both to the PCs and to the people of Promise, explaining that his intentions were for the good of Golarion and all of its people, but he now realizes that he had been blinded by his own arrogance and pride. Further, he admits he was obsessing over the failures of humanity, when there have always been just as many, if not more, examples of humanity's triumphs. “One Ilgreth should not undo the good works of an entire nation,” he muses. He recovers his composure quickly and promises to aid the PCs in any way he can in preparing an alternate method to deal with Dahak's manifestation and allows them their pick of treasures from his hoard in thanks. (If the PCs have already stolen from his hoard, he graciously forgives

them and lets them keep what items they already claimed as their own.) Mengkare's alignment shifts from lawful evil to lawful neutral, and in time, he may become fully redeemed back to lawful good.

Doubt 16–20: Mengkare's doubt causes him to have second thoughts. He isn't quite ready to admit that Promise was built on lies, nor does he repent for his fall to evil, but he grants the PCs the benefit of the doubt and will consider alternatives to his plan. Proceed with Preparing the Ritual on page 51.

Doubt 15 or Less: Mengkare is unconvinced, and intends to move forward with his plans for Promise. At this point, force is the only way to prevent him from going forward. Mengkare orders the PCs to leave Hermea at once, and if they don't, they provoke the dragon to attack. Proceed with Fighting Mengkare on page 49.

XP Award: Award the PCs 160 XP if they increase Mengkare's Doubt to 21 or higher (this reward is equal to what they'd earn if they defeated the dragon in combat). Award the PCs 80 XP if they increased his Doubt to 16–20.

DIPLOMACY WITHOUT DICE ROLLS

You or your players may find that using game mechanics to represent the PCs' attempts to appeal to Mengkare is unsatisfying for such an important encounter. Rather than allow the dice to determine how well spoken and convincing the PCs are, consider playing out the scene entirely via roleplaying. Your players may find playing out a philosophical debate in-character to be more interesting than skill checks. Use the points presented in this section as examples of arguments the PCs can use to adequately change Mengkare's mind. So long as the PCs present enough of these points, they should be able to win Mengkare over. Remember that Mengkare is actually open to the idea of alternate solutions, but he wishes to bring minimal risk to the Glorious Endeavor to keep it as a backup plan. This means that the odds are in the PCs favor, so long as they make genuine attempts to present credible arguments.

You may want to combine roleplaying with game mechanics. In this case, grant the PCs bonuses to their checks, typically a status bonus to a check ranging from +2 to +4. You might also grant the PCs a fortune effect, allowing them to reroll a check. Ultimately, the choice on how to play out this event is up to you. Keep that in mind as a few poor rolls in this encounter may sour the mood and lead to an unsatisfying outcome for your game. As GM, you have power to reward the players with a victory regardless of the results of the various rolls.

EMALIZA'S GAMBIT

If the PCs have bought into Emaliza's story, went into the Golden Citadel looking for the shards of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, and never found evidence to suggest she had an ulterior motive, then when Mengkare returns, he chooses her as the vector by which the PCs should be summoned to speak with him.

Emaliza seeks the PCs out and asks them if they've found any shards—if they have, she asks them to give them to her for safekeeping and then to accompany her to meet with Mengkare, hoping to confront him with the "truth." If the PCs prefer to carry the shards, that's fine with Emaliza because she knows their mere proximity will be enough to bolster the *Flawed Orb of Gold Dragonkind* she carries.

Instead of a philosophical debate with Mengkare, accompanying Emaliza all but insures a fight will result. In this scenario, play out the PCs' meeting with Mengkare the same as presented under Meeting Mengkare on page 45, but once the topic of the *Anima Invocation* comes up and he asks the PCs to explain themselves, Emaliza instead steps forward. She withdraws the *Flawed Orb of Gold Dragonkind* from her bag of holding and attempts to use the device to command Mengkare's obedience. The move shocks Mengkare (and likely the PCs as well); Mengkare takes a -4 penalty to initiative rolls in combat as a result. Emaliza attempts to use the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* to control him each round—but as detailed in the Adventure Toolbox, the faulty orb can't fully control a dragon. The best it can do is render a dragon senseless and immobile—something that the presence of additional shards will make even easier (the save DC against the orb's effects increases by 1 for each shard present—increasing by up to 13 if the PCs recovered all possible shards from the archive). In this fight, Mengkare focuses his anger on Emaliza; if he destroys her before the orb incapacitates him, he turns his attention to the PCs and gives them a chance to state their case—in this event, proceed with Changing Mengkare's Mind (page 46), but reduce Mengkare's starting Doubt to 0, penalize the PCs' checks during the debate by -2, and remove the arguments of Emaliza's Betrayal and Orb of Gold Dragonkind from the PCs' options.

FIGHTING MENGKARE EXTREME 19

If the PCs are either unable or unwilling to convince Mengkare to put an end to his plots, or at least allow them to attempt to fight the manifestation of Dahak first, they'll find themselves facing Mengkare's fury. The dragon won't tolerate anyone attempting to

undo his centuries of work and plans to make an example of the PCs. At this point, he refuses to listen to further arguments and will not even accept the PCs' surrender.

This fight can take place in a number of places, but it is most likely to occur in the Golden Citadel. If the fight breaks out into the streets of Promise, Mengkare immediately takes flight and keeps his distance, using his breath weapon and spells to attack from afar while trying his best to avoid collateral damage to Promise's citizens or architecture.

Fighting in Promise presents an additional wrinkle. Many of the city's guards remain committed to Mengkare and his cause. These guards attempt to support him in his fight, rushing to overwhelm the PCs. As this happens, Inizra commands the guards to stand down, but many of them ignore the order, only to be intercepted by their fellow guards. The guards clash, and in short order a full-blown uprising begins to ripple through the city. Mengkare is further enraged by this development, insisting that the PCs' meddling is responsible for this unrest, and not the spectacle of the city's glorious leader running amok. In this event, feel free to have Promise guards step in to attack the PCs or aid them as you see fit.

While fighting in the Golden Citadel, Mengkare is much more limited in his tactics—especially if the PCs retreat into one of the four surrounding complexes. While in the central chamber, Mengkare can use flight and ranged attacks much easier, and he attempts to deal as much damage to the PCs as possible. Regardless of where the fight leads to, Mengkare battles to the death, intent on stopping the PCs from interfering further with his plots.

If the PCs slay Mengkare, the citizens of Promise are obviously shocked. Without their leader, the citizens' reactions vary from anger to confusion to grief. Eventually, the citizens of Hermea turn to the city's councilors for advice. If Emaliza still lives, she places the blame on the PCs and argues that they must stand trial for their crimes. In such an event, the PCs' best option is likely to flee Hermea and never return. If Emaliza is dead or imprisoned, or if her crimes are made public, Inizra blames Emaliza and the corrupting influence of the Scarlet Triad for Mengkare's fall. In this case, the PCs do not escape the public's wrath entirely—they will not be able to take advantage of Promise's training facilities, for example, but they aren't forced to flee Promise entirely.

MENGKARE

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Initiative Perception +40

CREATURE 23

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CHAPTER 3: ASHES

The climax of the Age of Ashes Adventure Path begins once the PCs have confronted Mengkare and achieved access to the *Anima Invocation* ritual. At this point, the timing of when the climax begins is left to the PCs—their goal should be to use the *Anima Invocation* not to sacrifice the citizens of Promise to attempt to destroy Dahak, but instead to use the ritual to bolster their own souls so they can confront Dahak's manifestation within Alseta's Ring. Once the PCs start to turn their attention to this plot, continue with Preparing the Ritual on page 51. If you need to have an NPC suggest a course of action, Mengkare is an excellent choice to suggest the PCs work with him to defeat Dahak's manifestation.

But first, the PCs have time to rest and recover and even to retrain. If they finished Chapter 2 without throwing Promise into total chaos and being forced to flee, they can take advantage of that utopian

city's resources to develop amazing new powers. In addition to taking advantage of the city's training resources (page 40) to retrain prior choices, the PCs should have reached 20th level and can now choose their most powerful class feat. Access to the Golden Citadel's resources and archives allows the players to choose this class feat from any of the rare class options presented in the Adventure Toolbox as well.

It will take Dahak's manifestation many months, or perhaps even years, to regain enough power to attempt another escape akin to what it attempted in Chapter 1 of this adventure, but if you wish to inject a sense of urgency, you can have the PCs witness new dragonstorms attempting (and failing) to form over any of the Alseta's Ring *aiudara*. Eventually, they'll need to address the fact that if they do nothing, it's certainly only a matter of time before the manifestation of the god of evil dragons escapes.

Preparing the Ritual

As detailed in *What if the PCs Fail?* on page 74, if Mengkare goes ahead with the unaltered *Anima Invocation* and sacrifices Promise to try to destroy Dahak's manifestation, Hermeans' lack of free will causes the ritual to backfire. This not only immediately frees the manifestation from its prison but also causes dragonstorms to manifest over all five of the remaining *aiudara* linked to Alseta's Ring, devastating much of the region around Breachhill. Needless to say, such an event is borderline apocalyptic.

A better solution is for Mengkare and the PCs to leave well enough alone. In this case, the manifestation remains trapped, buying Breachhill (and Golarion) years, if not decades. This only postpones the inevitable, however—eventually, Dahak's manifestation will try to escape again, forcing the PCs (or other heroes) to endure a repeat of the events of Chapter 1 over and over and over. In time, the manifestation will win one of these conflicts and escape, resulting in a situation very much akin to the one above.

The best solution is to alter the *Anima Invocation* so that it bolsters the PCs against the dragon god's power, giving them a chance to confront the manifestation in the heart of its prison empire—a demiplane that exists inside of the linked portals of Alseta's Ring. If the PCs don't hit upon this idea on their own, NPCs like Jonivar, Inizra, or even Mengkare (assuming that he's open to alternate plans and ideas) can suggest it.

When the PCs are ready, they can attempt to enter the *aiudara* network of Alseta's Ring to face the manifestation of Dahak. Doing so isn't a simple process, however. Merely passing through one of the portals to a way station isn't enough to reach the demiplane where the manifestation resides. Instead, the PCs must access the underlying magical structure that connects all of the gates. Thankfully, Candlaron built an easy access point to this metaphysical support network during his creation of Alseta's Ring. He called this realm Alseta's Landing.

If Mengkare or Jonivar is aiding the PCs, they can explain Alseta's Landing to the PCs, having learned about it in their studies. Emaliza and Inizra are also aware of the portal to the demiplane but are unsure of how the details work. Left to their own devices, the PCs can puzzle out the existence of Alseta's Landing with a successful DC 45 check to Identify Magic while studying any of the *aiudara* of Alseta's Ring.

Once the PCs are aware of Alseta's Landing, it's a relatively simple process to access it. They must place all five remaining portal keys against any one of the gates while concentrating on the metaphysical "spaces between." This process temporarily shifts the *aiudara*'s focus, projecting a lightless void within. The *aiudara* now has created an open passage into area F1 of Alseta's Landing. If the PCs do not have all the keys with them, they can still access Alseta's Landing with a successful DC 45 *Aiudara* Lore, Arcana, or Occultism check.

However, PCs who enter Alseta's Landing without first protecting themselves with an altered *Anima Invocation* will soon discover that they are in well over their heads!

ALTERING THE INVOCATION

Using Mengkare's records on the *Anima Invocation* from area E7, a PC can Learn the Spell with a successful DC 43 check, 10 hours of study, and an expenditure of 7,000 gp in materials. If Mengkare still lives and is allied with the PCs, he can teach the ritual, in which case the gp cost is waived (he supplies the materials from his own resources) and the DC of the check

CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Whether Mengkare's been defeated or convinced to change his plans, the threat posed by Dahak's manifestation remains. The time has finally come for the heroes to enter the demiplane within Alseta's Ring to confront Dahak in person!

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AN UNLIKELY DEVELOPMENT

In the unlikely event that Emaliza still lives and Mengkare is incapacitated, the gold dragon can still serve as an anchor point for the altered *Anima Invocation*. In this event, Emaliza encourages the PCs to enter Alseta's Landing while she remains behind to finish work on repairing the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* by integrating the last few shards into it, and she enacts her final plot as detailed on page 63 in Emaliza's Plan.

to learn it is only 41. If Mengkare still lives, he can also serve as the ritual's primary caster, with the PCs functioning as secondary casters.

Altering the ritual to protect the PCs from Dahak's power requires additional work, which must be performed by a character who knows the *Anima Invocation* ritual—this can be Mengkare, Jonivar, or any PC who has learned the ritual. The process of adjusting the ritual in this way takes 8 hours of work but is automatically successful, after which the primary caster of the ritual can decide if they want to cast the *Anima Invocation* in its original or altered form—rules for the altered form appear on page 74 of the Adventure Toolbox.

When the PCs are ready, they can perform the *Anima Invocation* at any location within a mile of one of the portals of Alseta's Ring—if they're working with Mengkare, he suggests performing the ritual in his lair. This adventure assumes from this point forward that the PCs are performing the ritual's altered form to bolster themselves against the manifestation's influence. Note that this alteration requires one creature who knows the ritual to function as an anchor for the ritual's magic—this creature need not be actively involved in casting the ritual, but must be within a mile of the ritual site. Mengkare volunteers to serve as the anchor for the casting, freeing the PCs of the tough choice of selecting one of their own to stay behind. If Mengkare isn't available, Jonivar volunteers for this job. If neither is available, the PCs need to teach someone else the ritual if they don't want to leave one of their own behind while the rest enter Alseta's Ring. Mengkare points out that he would be an awful choice to be sent into the ring in place of one of the PCs—while he's certainly powerful, Dahak's manifestation has particular power over dragons that won't be as potent against the PCs.

Alseta's Landing

When the Ekujae elves defeated Dahak's manifestation and banished it into the “in-between”

that existed within the portals of Alseta's Ring, the god's banished energies infected and infused the demiplane Candlaron originally intended to serve as a framework for the portals. Over the centuries, this demiplane, known as Alseta's Landing, has become Dahak's playground. Cut off from its source, Dahak's manifestation has come to believe itself to be the true form of Dahak and even refers to itself as such. It has infused Alseta's Landing with its divine essence, creating a series of five linked realms, each populated with its own inhabitants. Some of these creatures are creations of Dahak's manifestation, some are undead fueled by souls who became trapped in Alseta's Landing as an unfortunate side effect of the original use of the *Anima Invocation*, and some are planar travelers who have been drawn into the demiplane and trapped as well.

While Dahak's manifestation believes itself to be a living deity in charge of its own destiny, it still lives its life according to the ideals instilled into it by Dahak himself. The manifestation constantly gives in to its primal urges and seeks to cause destruction and ruin as best as it can. To satisfy this desire, the manifestation uses its abilities to cyclically wreak destruction in the five linked realms connected to Alseta's Landing. Often times, these are re-creations of moments that the manifestation witnessed in the past. Other times, they are scenes of possible destruction, fictional accounts the manifestation creates to revel in what may be. Sometimes, these vignettes are reinterpretations of scenes or even emotions that the manifestation has sensed during its time in the network.

The cycle of Dahak's manifestation constantly creating new realities within these nodes for it to enter, destroy, and recreate has ended recently, however. When the PCs first opened Vengegate during Chapter 1, the manifestation dropped its routine to lash out against the PCs and attack them. Since its failure to escape, Dahak's manifestation has been lying in wait, partly sulking in its own frustration and partly regaining its energies while plotting its next escape attempt. In its distracted negligence, the manifestation has left its most recent vignettes in place for the moment, and it is in these realities adjacent to Alseta's Landing that the PCs can find their way to the heart of the manifestation and, hopefully, slay it!

INSIDE THE NETWORK

Alseta's Landing is a unique form of demiplane composed of several smaller demiplanes known as nodes. Five of these nodes are linked to a sixth, central node that serves as a hub, while a seventh node—the

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manifestation's actual prison—lies behind them all. In essence, the five surrounding nodes are akin to individual rooms connected to a central chamber. These five nodes' arrangement mirrors the arrangement of the *aiudara* in Alseta's Ring and provides those portals the metaphysical support they needed to exist. The manifestation's prison exists behind the scenes and can be accessed only once his influence in the other five nodes is expunged. (Note that the second generation of *aiudara* that Candlaron would go on to create abandoned this approach to portals, leaving Alseta's Landing as a unique creation.)

Each of the nodes are separate areas, and each has its own environmental rules and a slightly different shape and size. In some, the node boundaries are physical, appearing as solid walls. In others, what appears to be a larger expanse is little more than a solid boundary adorned with clever illusions to give the impression of a much larger area. In such areas, the illusory ceiling rises to a height of 100 feet. Attempts to pass beyond a node's border fail—nothing exists beyond these borders, and they can't be damaged or altered by the PCs. In each node, a repeating cycle of devastating events plays over and over in an endless loop that resets each time intruders into the node completely exit. Only by defeating the influence of Dahak in a node can this cycle be ended; once all five nodes are cleansed, the PCs can enter the manifestation's lair.

SOULDRAIN

While some of the nodes may have additional environmental effects, one particularly dangerous effect that infuses all of them is a devastating souldrain that affects all non-native creatures within the demiplane—including all PCs. Each round a visiting creature remains in Alseta's Landing, their doomed value increases by 1. A visiting creature that dies as a result of this is transformed into an *aiudara* wraith (page 78). The modified *Anima Invocation* (page 74) can provide the PCs complete immunity to this souldrain effect.

F1. ALSETA'S LANDING MODERATE 20

This large chamber appears to be made of walls that resemble a starry night sky. A constant hum echoes throughout the space, while a circular stone platform sits in the middle of the polished stone floor. The chamber has six sides, five of which contain a shimmering stone archway that resembles one of the five *aiudara* in Alseta's Ring. Within each arch simmers a vague, blurry image of a different scene. A large rift torn into the sixth wall opens into what appears to be a small, grassy clearing.

When the PCs enter Alseta's Landing, they appear on the stone platform in the center of the room. Any visitor to Alseta's Landing instinctually understands that they can leave the demiplane by stepping onto this platform and Activating it by envisioning, as if it were a magic item.

The five portals in the walls of this room correspond to the portals in Alseta's Ring, with the sixth wall, which opens into area F2, corresponding to the destroyed Lotusgate in Alseta's Ring. A character can pass through any of these portals by simply stepping through an open stone archway—doing so transports them to the arrival point at the corresponding node. The scenery vaguely visible within the five arches and the node to which each connects are detailed below.

F1a. Jewelgate: This portal depicts a large underground chamber cut through with canals of molten rock and leads to the Jewelgate Node (area G).

F1b. Duskgate: This portal depicts arid badlands cut through by rivers of bubbling lava and leads to the Duskgate Node (area H).

F1c. Huntergate: This portal depicts a river flowing through a dense jungle. A shrine has been built atop the river and leads to the Huntergate Node (area I).

F1d. Dreamgate: This portal depicts a small stone keep sitting in a sunlit grassland and leads to the Dreamgate Node (area J).

F1e. Vengegate: This portal depicts an underground cavern that appears to be a dragon's lair and leads to the Vengegate Node (area K).

Creatures: Three extradimensional creatures known as *vazgorlus* lie in wait here. Unlike the other denizens of Alseta's Landing, the *vazgorlus* are visitors, having been attracted to the area by the unique magical emanations exuded by the portals within the demiplane. Naturally immune to the souldrain effects of Alseta's Landing, they've been crawling around inside of this chamber for some time, basking in the portal energies, but the allure of freshly arrived planar travelers is too much for them to resist—they attack the PCs at once and fight to the death.

VAZGORLUS (3)

CREATURE 20

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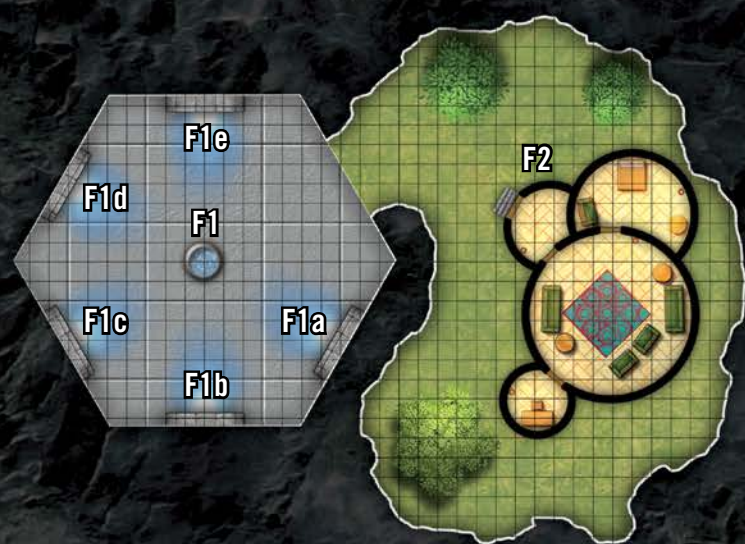
Initiative Perception +33

F2. CANDLARON'S HOME

Low 20

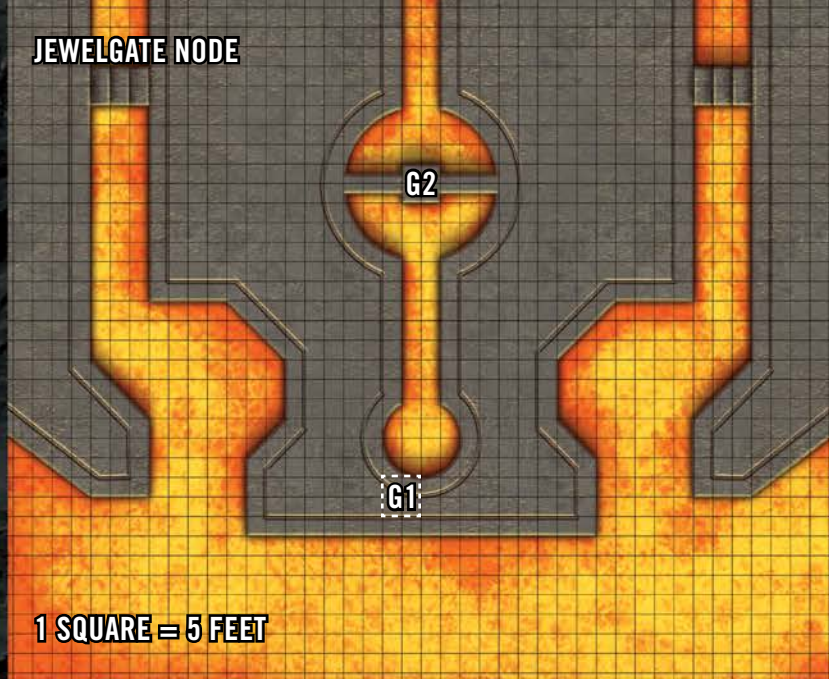
This chamber appears to be a small, grassy clearing dotted with vibrant trees, situated at the bottom of a one-hundred-foot deep valley surrounded by sheer stone walls. A large building made of pearlescent stone stands at the far side of the clearing. The building is made up of

ALESTA'S LANDING



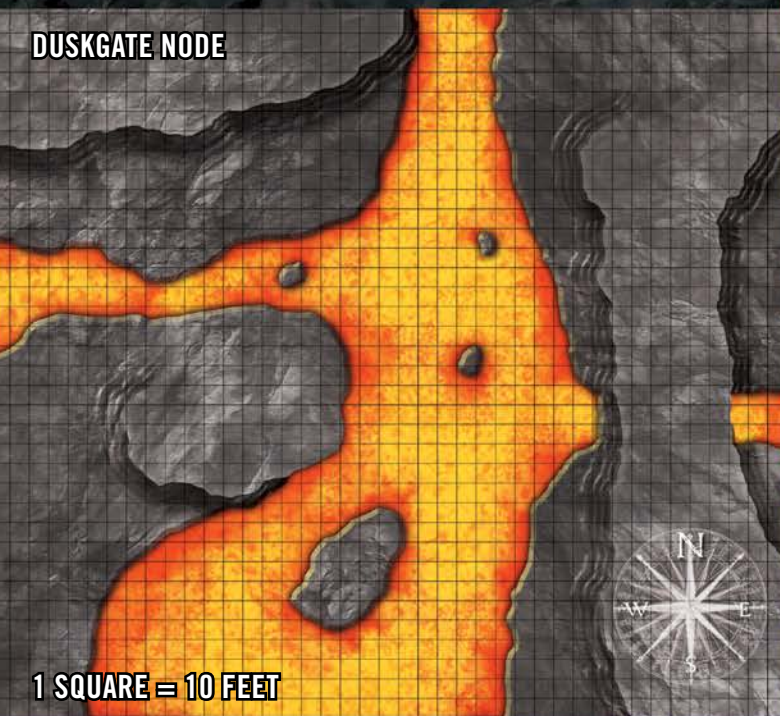
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

JEWELGATE NODE



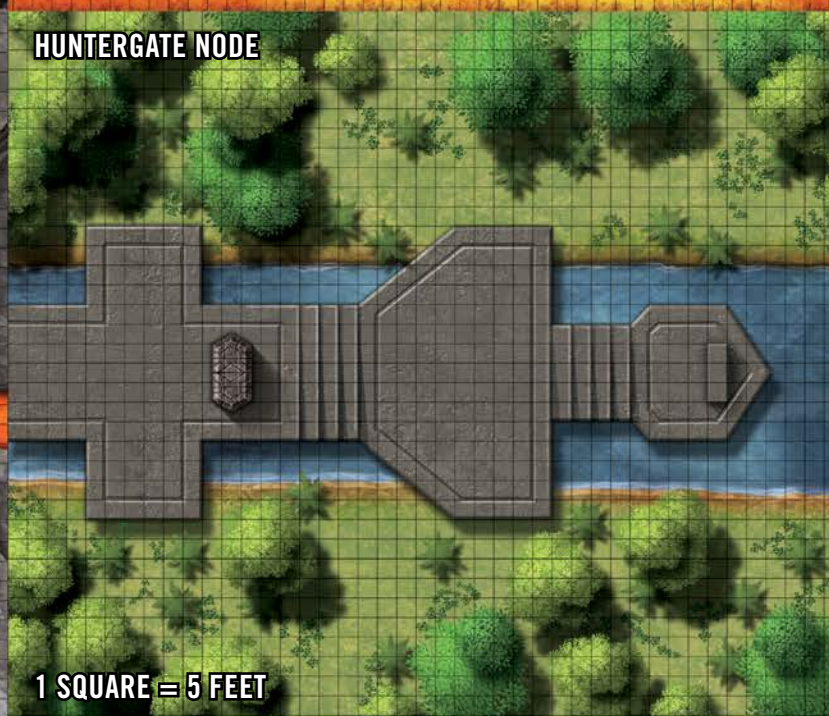
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

DUSKGATE NODE



1 SQUARE = 10 FEET

HUNTERGATE NODE



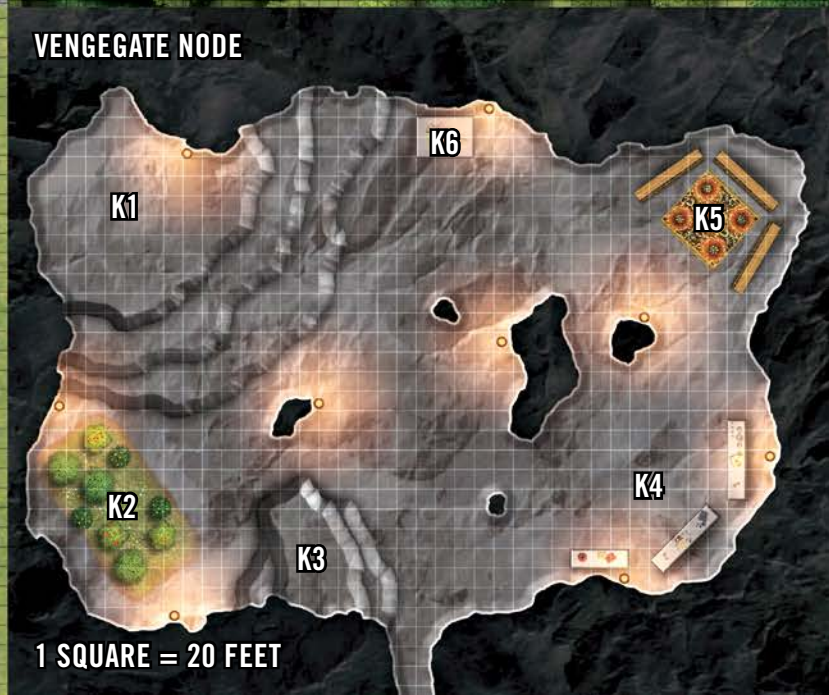
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

DREAMGATE NODE




1 SQUARE = 10 FEET

VENEGATE NODE



1 SQUARE = 20 FEET



three connected domes, with a small deck leading up to the front door. Above, the sky is blue and vibrant, although no sun is visible.

This wall of the hub was originally intact and led to Lotusgate's node, but when the manifestation of Dahak was trapped within the *aiudara* network, the violent process destroyed the Lotusgate link within Alseta's Ring. This destruction was echoed within Alseta's Landing, with the hub's wall collapsing in turn. The process liberated the node's planar energies but did not destroy them. Instead, the energies reconstituted into a snapshot of the area around the far side of Lotusgate before the gate's destruction.

This clearing is an accurate representation of the clearing beside Lotusgate at the time of the gate's destruction, although the sheer stone walls are a fabrication. Candlaron maintained the domed building as his home while he was working on Alseta's Ring. This home allowed him to come and go with ease, especially during his long nights of working on the network, and remains fully furnished and open for the PCs to use as a place to rest as they travel between nodes—provided they can befriend its unusual undead inhabitant.

Creature: The real Candlaron vanished from the world long before Dahak's imprisonment and Lotusgate's destruction, but Alseta's Landing retained a sort of psychic impression of his presence after the many hours he spent toiling on the *aiudara* of Alseta's Ring. When Dahak's imprisonment devastated the area and created this facsimile of Candlaron's home, the latent spiritual energies Candlaron left behind coalesced into a ghostlike duplicate of the ancient elven spellcaster. This spiritual echo of Candlaron is effectively an incorporeal duplicate of the man up until he abandoned Alseta's Ring. Though he is incorporeal, his connection to the area allows him to affect objects within as if he had a physical form. This connection also prevents him from leaving the clearing and venturing into Alseta's Landing.

Candlaron's echo has some of the real elf's memories, but he's an imperfect copy. The echo welcomes the PCs if they enter the clearing, inviting them into his home to share tea and good conversation. Candlaron's echo is much like the man was in life: charming, knowledgeable, and warm. The echo's partial memories means he can't really detail much of life during his time, but he is eager to explain his work on Alseta's Ring. He is also eager to listen to any stories the PCs have, always chiming in with insightful thoughts or with the right question to encourage the PC to speak for hours. Due to his

CLEANSING NODES

Each time the PCs cleanse one of the nodes, the purified magical essence of the chamber washes through them and infuses them with additional power that bolsters them in potent ways. These effects are, basically, permanent boosts, in that they persist for as long as this adventure continues—with these boosts, the PCs will be even more protected against their final fight in the Adamantine Fen against Dahak's manifestation. If you wish to continue this campaign, you can choose to have the benefits from cleansing the nodes remain permanent or have them fade over time as you see fit.

incomplete personality, there are times when the echo's face will freeze on a given emotion for seconds or even minutes before the echo can call upon a reaction that's fitting for the situation. If the PCs are unclear on how the fundamental plane within Alseta's Ring functions, Candlaron's echo eagerly explains it to them, as this is one of the few details that are cemented in the echo's memory. As the PCs interact with him, they should soon realize that the echo has no ability to see the surroundings for what they actually are—he believes the area is located within Kyonin, in close proximity to Lotusgate. Likewise, any talk of demiplanes, Dahak, or the presence of stone cliffs in close proximity confuses him; he waves these notions aside, implying that it is the PCs who are confused.

If the PCs leave for a node and return, Candlaron retains no memories of them. He is happy to welcome them as his friends and he quickly apologizes for forgetting any previous interactions they had. If the PCs wish to stay within Candlaron's home, he accommodates the PCs as best as he can and even offers to leave the building if there is not enough space for everyone. He insists on this, stating that he likes taking long walks outside.

As the PCs continue to wipe Dahak's influence from the other five nodes, though, the dragon god's anger grows and begins to seep up from its prison—and these violent emotions find root in Candlaron's echo. As a result, once the PCs have freed three of the five nodes from the manifestation's influence and they return here, they'll find Candlaron's echo to be obviously different—he's grown tense and irritable. If the PCs approach the home, the echo tells them to stay away, and he even attacks them if they continue approaching. Candlaron's echo fights until destroyed, only to reappear the next time the PCs return from

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their travels. He is once again cheery and friendly and is quick to apologize about his actions if told about the attack, the influence of Dahak's anger having been removed by his destruction and re-formation.

A PC who interacts with the echo and succeeds at a DC 43 Religion check to Recall Knowledge realizes what the echo is, and that he is little more than a magical copy of the real Candlaron. No actual fragment of the elf's soul remains trapped in the echo.



Candlaron's Echo

The echo will continue to rejuvenate if destroyed as long as Dahak remains trapped in Alseta's Landing, but once the manifestation is defeated, Candlaron's echo vanishes as well.

CANDLARON'S ECHO

CREATURE 21

N **MEDIUM** **GHOST** **INCORPOREAL** **SPIRIT**

Male elf ghost (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 166)

Perception +35; darkvision

Languages Draconic, Elven, Sylvan

Skills Arcana +40, Diplomacy +36, Occultism +40, Religion +36, Stealth +34

Str -5, **Dex** +10, **Con** +0, **Int** +10, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +8

Site Bound

AC 46; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +33, **Will** +36

HP 315, negative healing, rejuvenation; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 15 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Rejuvenation (divine, necromancy) Candlaron's echo rejuvenates so long as Dahak's manifestation lives.

Speed fly 25 feet

Melee ♦ ghostly hand +39 (agile, finesse, magical), **Damage** 8d8+8 negative

Arcane Innate Spells DC 44, attack +39; **10th** *wish*; **9th** *disjunction*, *telepathic demand*; **8th** *maze*, *power word stun*; **7th** *duplicate foe*, *prismatic spray*, *reverse gravity*; **6th** *chain lighting* (×2), *mislead*; **5th** *cone of cold*, *crushing despair*, *hallucination*; **4th** *resilient sphere*, *suggestion* (×2); **3rd** *blindness*, *dispel magic*, *slow*; **2nd** *blur*, *telekinetic maneuver* (×2); **1st** *grease*, *ray of enfeeblement* (×2); **Cantrips** (10th) *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Frightful Moan ♦ (auditory, divine, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental) DC 44

Telekinetic Assault ♦♦ (divine, evocation) 12d6 bludgeoning, DC 44

G. JEWELGATE NODE

MODERATE 20

Channels of lava cut through this massive stone chamber, surrounding a stone platform that features a third channel flowing through its center. A small stone walkway provides passage over the central channel, connecting to a square platform in the very middle. A glowing golden orb sits atop a small pedestal in the middle of this platform. Sets of stairs on either side of the chamber allow access to a raised walkway that wraps around the main chamber.

Just as Mengkare studied Dahak's imprisoned manifestation from outside of Alseta's Landing, so too has Dahak's manifestation been intrigued by the

gold dragon. Over the centuries of Mengkare lairing in close proximity to Vengegate, many fragments of his dreams have drifted through the layers of reality, and Dahak's manifestation was quick to snatch up those that particularly troubled Mengkare. The gold dragon's memories of his time spent enslaved by the human wizard Ilgreth particularly appealed to Dahak's manifestation, and it was from these memories that the manifestation shaped this node.

When the PCs arrive in Jewelgate, they appear in the dotted area near the end of the central lava canal, as indicated on the map (area **G1**). The floor here continues to glow softly, allowing them to return to area **F1a** by stepping into this spot and activating the portal. Beyond the edges of the node as shown on the map, what appears to be a vast workshop built into the inner edge of a volcanic caldera stretches off into the distance (this is, in fact, just a clever illusion concealing the node's borders).

Ilgreth used the central pool of lava during his research to test various materials and the lava's effects on the materials. The square platform (area **G2**) was a place for him to take notes as he observed the results. The golden sphere is a recreation of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*—it lacks any of the orb's actual powers, though, as the dragons controlled by it are merely creations of Dahak's manifestation.

The ledges on either side of the chamber rise 15 feet above the main portion of the workshop. The wizard intended his minions and his guests to watch from above as he demonstrated his magic.

Creatures: The manifestation of the wizard Ilgreth is, perhaps, even more cruel than the wizard was in life, shaped as he has been from raw nightmares harvested from Mengkare's mind. As the PCs arrive, he stands on the central walkway, poring over his notes, but he immediately becomes intrigued once he notices the PCs. Ilgreth is open to conversation, at least at first, and is curious if the PCs can offer him any new magical insight or interesting topics for him to research—the wizard isn't particularly shocked or puzzled by their appearance in the area.

The PCs can use Ilgreth's interest to their advantage, provided they speak on topics that intrigue him. Discussions of elemental magic, mind-controlling magic, and portal magic are all of interest to Ilgreth, and if a PC can succeed at a DC 44 Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion check while speaking to the wizard, they can impress him with their knowledge. At this point, the wizard asks the PCs where they're from, making it obvious he'd like to accompany them beyond this chamber. He can't activate the portal at area **G1** himself (and in fact, before the PCs arrived,

didn't know it existed), but if the PCs activate the portal for him, he steps through the portal and immediately ceases to exist, reverting to the raw planar energies Dahak used to create him in the first place.

If the PCs fail to impress Ilgreth, or if they take offense to his attitude or simply attack, the wizard decides to capture the PCs as his latest specimens. As he attacks, he waves his hand over the orb, using it to calls upon two of his dominated red dragons, Jhalniv and Traminant, to aid him. The red dragons rise from the pools on either side of the chamber and attack at once—they and Ilgreth do their best to capture obvious spellcasters alive but have little interest in non-spellcasters, whom they fight to the death.

ILGRETH

CREATURE 20

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +39

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Ignan, Infernal, Undercommon

Skills Arcana +35, Athletics +28, Deception +34, Intimidation +32, Plane of Fire Lore +39, Occultism +35, Religion +28,

Str +3, **Dex** +5, **Con** +5, **Int** +10, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +6

Items +3 major striking dagger, major staff of fire (arcane focus)

AC 28; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +19, **Will** +19

HP 350; **Immunities** fire

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *dagger* +35 (agile, finesse, magic, versatile S), **Damage** 4d4+14 piercing

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 44, attack +36; **10th** *cataclysm* (×2); **9th** *fireball* (×3), *meteor swarm*; **8th** *earthquake*, *maze*, *polar ray* (×2); **7th** *energy aegis*, *fireball*, *prismatic spray*, *warp mind*; **6th** *chain lighting* (×2), *disintegrate*, *dominate*; **5th** *cone of cold*, *dispel magic* (×2), *fireball*; **4th** *blink*, *dimension door*, *fly*, *wall of fire*; **3rd** *acid arrow*, *fireball*, *invisibility sphere*, *slow*; **2nd** *acid arrow*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *obscuring mist*; **1st** *command*, *fear*, *magic missile*, *shocking grasp*; **Cantrips (10th)** *acid splash*, *detect magic*, *electric arc*, *prestidigitation*, *read aura*, *shield*

Wizard School Spells DC 44, 3 Focus Points; **10th** *elemental tempest*, *force bolt*

Arcane Rituals DC 44; *imprisonment*, *inveigle*

Drain Bonded Item ♦ **Frequency** once per day; **Requirements** Ilgreth hasn't acted yet on this turn; **Effect** Ilgreth can cast one prepared spell he has already cast today without spending a spell slot. He must still Cast the Spell and meet the spell's other requirements.

Overwhelming Energy ♦ If Ilgreth's next action is to Cast a Spell, the spell ignores 20 resistance to acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic damage.

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JHALNIV AND TRAMINANT

CREATURE 19

Ancient red dragons (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 112)

Initiative Perception +35

Hazard: The channels of lava are particularly dangerous. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to lava takes 3d6 fire damage. Any creature submerged in the lava takes 20d6 fire damage. Ilgreth had his workshop magically acclimated so it is always cool to allow

guests to visit without taking damage from the extreme heat.

Cleansing the Node: Once the PCs slay Ilgreth and his pet dragons, or as soon as Ilgreth is lured into stepping through the portal, the lava in this node immediately cools and the node's borders turn gray as the node is cleansed of Dahak's influence. The cleansed magic helps protect the PCs against being magically controlled—whenever they attempt a saving throw against an effect that attempts to control them, the PCs use the outcome for one degree of success better than the result of their saving throw.

H. DUSKGATE NODE

SEVERE 20

An enormous river of lava flows through a rugged badlands canyon during a moonlit night, filling the cracked landscape from below with the glow of molten rock. Ledges rise up from the lava river from all sides, providing bridges and platforms to stand upon. A large, mesa-like escarpment stands in the center of the area some thirty feet above the roiling lava below. To the north, an immense volcano, its slopes strangely pale as it belches fire and ash into the sky, looms like a harbinger of the apocalypse.

Dahak is not the only god of destruction. An even greater capacity for destruction exists, in Rovagug—one that Dahak simultaneously covets and recoils in horror from. Dahak aided the other gods in the ancient war that imprisoned Rovagug eons ago, but ever since, the dragon god has harbored a complicated opinion on Rovagug. On one hand, Dahak understands the threat posed by the Rough Beast, but on the other, he is intrigued by Rovagug's pure embodiment of destruction—particularly in his capacity to unleash powerful, devastating spawn upon the mortal world. In many ways, the spawn of Rovagug are analogous to Dahak's manifestation: offshoots of a god placed into the mortal realm to do his bidding.

Recent stirrings of one of the spawn of Rovagug have captured Dahak's attention. In 4709 AR, an efreeti prince named Jhavul nearly completed his task of granting one thousand *wishes* to be reborn as Xotani the Firebleeder, one of the Spawn of Rovagug. This process was ultimately halted by a group of adventurers, but the adventurers were only able to interrupt Jhavul mid-*wish*. The incomplete final *wish* still held enough power to cause Xotani to stir from its deathly hibernation, and this stirring caused Pale Mountain to have a small but powerful eruption. The PCs likely encountered some of Xotani's offspring in the previous adventure, and the Firebleeder itself



Ilgreth

continues to slowly awaken deep under Pale Mountain to this day.

Dahak can feel Xotani's stirrings through the metaphysical magical pathways that connect Alseta's Landing to Duskgate, and he took those ripples as inspiration when he corrupted the Duskgate node. As the PCs step into the Duskgate node, with a successful DC 20 Katapesh Lore or DC 30 Nature check to Recall Knowledge, a PC identifies the illusion of the volcano as Pale Mountain, but the PCs won't have much time to contemplate this before the creatures that inhabit this node rise up.

Creatures: Dahak created not one incarnation of Xotani but three—the most that the underlying structure of this node could contain. The three incarnations of Xotani rise up from the lava and attack at once, roaring in rage as they do their best to devastate the PCs.

XOTANIS (3)

CREATURE 20

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Initiative Perception +39

Hazard: The lava here poses a similar hazard to that in area G (page 58).

Cleansing the Node: If all three Xotanis are slain, the surrounding walls of this area go dark and the lava rivers cool into solid stone as the node is cleansed. The cleansing magic grants all PCs fire resistance 20.

I. HUNTERGATE NODE SEVERE 20

A river flows below a stone platform in this sprawling, steaming jungle. An obsidian archway stands in the center of the structure, while a small stone altar lies at the far end of it. The forest around the clearing is on fire, filling the dark sky with orange flame, though the flames have yet to reach the river's banks, where dozens, perhaps hundreds, of Ekujae soldiers lie dead. Periodically, the smoke parts just enough to reveal an eclipsed sun in the sky above.

The manifestation of Dahak is a spiteful being, holding grudges from even as far back as Earthfall. To manage its

frustrations, the manifestation recreated one of its most hated memories: the time when the Ekujae elves completed the *Anima Invocation* and banished it to this prison. The manifestation periodically returned to this node, a recreation of the original site on which the Ekujae performed the ritual, to destroy the shrine. A PC can identify this site with a successful DC 40 Arcana, Occult, or appropriate Lore check to Recall Knowledge. The PCs step through the obsidian portal as they arrive in this location.

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Xotani



Creatures: During the Age of Darkness, a number of powerful and dangerous creatures roamed Golarion. Among these were the enigmatic tzitzimitls. One of these horrifying undead emerged from the ground in the Mwangi Expanse near the shrine and began to terrorize the Ekujae elves of the area as they prepared for the *Anima Invocation*. The manifestation of Dahak recreated this powerful terror to repeatedly destroy the shrine within the Huntergate Node; the immense undead rises up from the ground to attack the PCs as soon as they arrive, along with four *aiudara* wraiths who have been attracted by the tzitzimitl's presence.

TZITZIMITL

CREATURE 19

Page 82

Initiative Perception +32

AIUDARA WRAITHS (4)

CREATURE 18

Page 78

Initiative Perception +33

Cleansing the Node: Once the PCs destroy the tzitzimitl and the *aiudara* wraiths, the node is cleansed. The resulting outflow of magic that surges through the PCs bolsters their ability to survive—whenever they attempt a saving throw against an effect that would deal negative damage or inflict the drained condition, the PCs use the outcome for one degree of success better than the result of their saving throw.

J. DREAMGATE NODE MODERATE 20

A large fortress stands here, rising from rippling fields of grassland. The fortress's walls rise to a height of thirty feet, while its central stone tower rises to a height of sixty feet. A large, red pentagram is emblazoned on the walls of the central tower. A few cypress trees grow nearby. The sky above is sunny and clear, and a coastal cliff's edge nearby grants a majestic view of a vast, blue sea.

Several years ago, the Chelaxian city of Kintargo became swept up in a violent rebellion when a newly instated lord-mayor, Barzillai Thrune, enacted a number of tyrannical laws to subjugate the local populace. Eventually, a local rebel group known as the Silver Ravens overthrew Barzillai, yet not before his spirit tried to merge with the region to become a *genius loci*. Some of this energy seeped through Dreamgate into Alseta's Landing, intriguing Dahak's manifestation with the notion of a nation ruled by diabolists. It reworked this small duplication of Ravounel's coastline to experiment with that concept. PCs who succeed at a DC 25 Society or appropriate Lore check to Recall Knowledge

recognize the surrounding terrain as matching that where modern-day Kintargo stands—yet instead of a sprawling city, there is only a single small fortress.

The PCs appear in a 10-foot-square area indicated on the map when they arrive in this node.

Creatures: In the manifestation's alternate take on Kintargo, Barzillai Thrune lives on—after a fashion. The fortress itself is empty, while what appears to be a single human stands atop the central battlements and leers down at the PCs as they arrive. With a successful DC 25 Society or appropriate Lore check to Recall Knowledge, a PC recognizes the man as Barzillai Thrune.

Barzillai addresses the PCs as his subjects and commands them to step forth, bow before him, and pledge their allegiance to his cause. If the PCs choose to speak with Barzillai, he attempts to steer the conversation toward the idea of the PCs signing an infernal contract, promising anything in return for their eternal servitude to his cause. Barzillai doesn't really care what the PCs ask for; he just wants to convince the PCs to sign their souls away. A successful DC 40 Occultism, Religion, or appropriate Lore check is enough for a PC to note that something seems askew about the manner in which Barzillai is offering the contracts, almost as if he were speaking not as a man but as a high-ranking fiend in Hell's armies.

In truth, this Barzillai is nothing more than a pit fiend called to and imprisoned within the node by the manifestation's power, along with a compatriot. The first pit fiend has been cloaked in a powerful illusion that remains active as long as it doesn't move from the spot atop the tower. This illusion otherwise has the effects of *veil*, heightened to 10th level. The second pit fiend remains out of sight behind the tower while the first engages the PCs. Bound by the manifestation's will, the pit fiend posing as Barzillai has no true power to offer contracts of its own, but if the PCs agree to sign, it casts copies of the contract down to them to sign. Any PC who signs has the effects of the *Anima Invocation* immediately cancelled, after which both pit fiends emerge to show their true nature and attack at once. If the PCs all refuse to sign, Barzillai sighs in disappointment, casts the contract aside, and then attacks the PCs with its ally.

PIT FIENDS (2)

CREATURE 20

Pathfinder Bestiary 92

Initiative Perception +37

Cleansing the Node: Slaying the pit fiends cleanses this node. As the node's magic is cleansed, the PCs become infused with magic that allows them to see through magical lies, granting each PC the ability to cast *true seeing* once per day as an innate spell.

K. VENEGATE NODE

SEVERE 23

A carpet and several bookshelves are located in one corner of this cavern, while a number of tables with scientific implements stand in another. A pewter replica of a large city rests on the table, surrounded by a handful of pewter figurines of dragons. A garden grows in another corner of the room, maintained by sunlight pouring into the cavern from an opening in the ceiling above. A broad tunnel leads out of the cavern.

Unknown to Mengkare when he first noticed Dahak's manifestation within Alseta's Landing, the manifestation noticed the gold dragon as well, sensing his self-doubt and internal conflict. The manifestation has since drawn upon these feelings, infusing them into this node, which is now its favorite vignette. In the centuries since corrupting this node, the manifestation has refrained from destroying it due to the enjoyment the node brings it.

This node contains a reproduction of Mengkare's childhood chambers, drawn from the dragon's memories—a chamber that once connected to the caverns near Breachill many years ago. The PCs enter this node from the southern tunnel. Specific areas in the lair are detailed as follows.

K1. Mengkare's Bed: This large, open area served as the dragon's preferred place to sleep.

K2. Garden: The gold dragon used this garden as a place of meditation.

K3. Tulminar's Bed: Mengkare kept a dire wolf named Tulminar as his pet. The wolf was surprisingly gentle and loyal to the dragon and was Mengkare's best friend for many years. Tulminar's life was lengthened through the use of magic, but he ultimately passed away after several decades. The dire wolf appears to be sleeping on this stone, but never wakes. Dahak's manifestation placed this false Tulminar only so that it could ignore Mengkare.

K4. Workshop: Mengkare used this area of his chambers to tinker and experiment. He maintained a sizable alchemy lab and various other tools.

K5. Library: Mengkare's personal library was filled with tales from all over Golarion. These included fables, tall tales, heroic adventures, and historic retellings of notable events. The dragon spent hours every evening consuming these stories.

K6. Model City: As in Hermea, Mengkare kept a model of a city in his lair—but this model does not depict Promise. Instead, it depicts an idealized

version of Breachill. Any PC who studies this model recognizes the terrain and certain features, such as the city's water towers or the statue of its founder, but the model itself depicts Breachill in some potential future where it has expanded to house well over a hundred thousand citizens.

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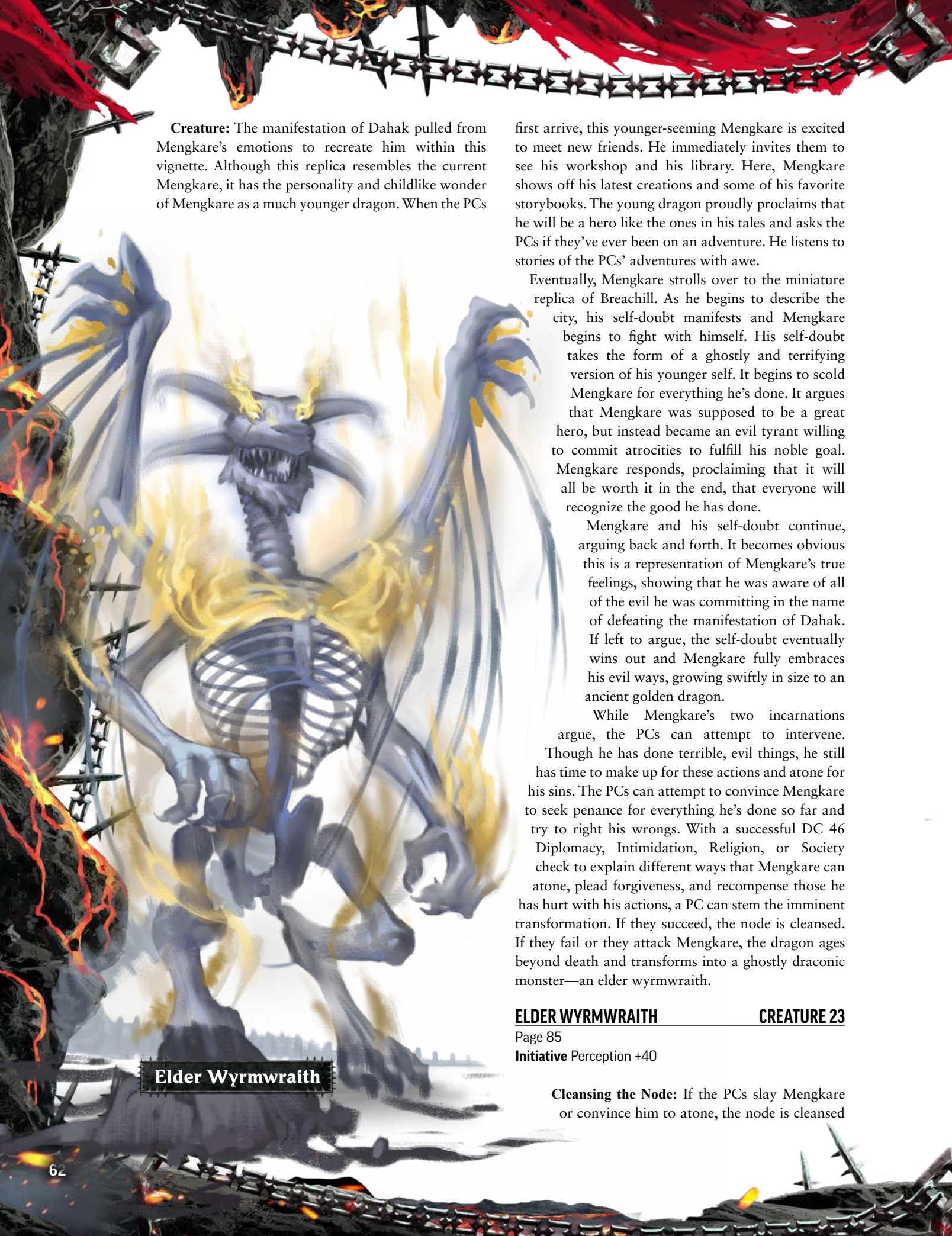
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Pit Fiend



Creature: The manifestation of Dahak pulled from Mengkare's emotions to recreate him within this vignette. Although this replica resembles the current Mengkare, it has the personality and childlike wonder of Mengkare as a much younger dragon. When the PCs

first arrive, this younger-seeming Mengkare is excited to meet new friends. He immediately invites them to see his workshop and his library. Here, Mengkare shows off his latest creations and some of his favorite storybooks. The young dragon proudly proclaims that he will be a hero like the ones in his tales and asks the PCs if they've ever been on an adventure. He listens to stories of the PCs' adventures with awe.

Eventually, Mengkare strolls over to the miniature replica of Breachill. As he begins to describe the city, his self-doubt manifests and Mengkare begins to fight with himself. His self-doubt takes the form of a ghostly and terrifying version of his younger self. It begins to scold Mengkare for everything he's done. It argues that Mengkare was supposed to be a great hero, but instead became an evil tyrant willing to commit atrocities to fulfill his noble goal. Mengkare responds, proclaiming that it will all be worth it in the end, that everyone will recognize the good he has done.

Mengkare and his self-doubt continue, arguing back and forth. It becomes obvious this is a representation of Mengkare's true feelings, showing that he was aware of all of the evil he was committing in the name of defeating the manifestation of Dahak. If left to argue, the self-doubt eventually wins out and Mengkare fully embraces his evil ways, growing swiftly in size to an ancient golden dragon.

While Mengkare's two incarnations argue, the PCs can attempt to intervene. Though he has done terrible, evil things, he still has time to make up for these actions and atone for his sins. The PCs can attempt to convince Mengkare to seek penance for everything he's done so far and try to right his wrongs. With a successful DC 46 Diplomacy, Intimidation, Religion, or Society check to explain different ways that Mengkare can atone, plead forgiveness, and recompense those he has hurt with his actions, a PC can stem the imminent transformation. If they succeed, the node is cleansed. If they fail or they attack Mengkare, the dragon ages beyond death and transforms into a ghostly draconic monster—an elder wyrmwraith.

ELDER WYRMWRAITH

CREATURE 23

Page 85

Initiative Perception +40

Elder Wyrmwraith

Cleansing the Node: If the PCs slay Mengkare or convince him to atone, the node is cleansed

and transforms into an empty cavern. The magic that infuses the PCs bolsters their bodies and minds alike—each PC gains an ability boost to an ability score of their choice.

EMALIZA'S PLAN

SEVERE 20

Creatures: If the PCs allied with Emaliza, she encourages the PCs to explore Alseta's Landing and cleanse its nodes while she remains behind. As the PCs cleanse nodes, Emaliza takes uses any recovered shards of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* and further augments its repairs. She soon realizes that even with all of the recovered shards, the repaired orb still lacks the full abilities of the original, making it useless as a method to completely dominate Mengkare—the best it can do is keep him in a vegetative state. But Emaliza hopes she can extract some portion of the original draconic essence contained in the manifestation to rebuild and repair the orb entirely. Rather than risk siphoning off Dahak's energy, though, she waits to ambush the PCs at some point after they've cleansed at least three of the nodes, hoping to capture the energy they've absorbed as a method of bolstering the orb.

Emaliza's ambush occurs in Mengkare's lair, as the PCs exit Alseta's Landing. She is accompanied by her bodyguard Rinnarv and two Citadel guards. When she begins her attack, she attempts to fly as high up as she can to harry the PCs with her spells, allowing Rinnarv and the guards to surround the PCs. One guard stays with Rinnarv at all times to attempt to shield him from attacks. If the PCs manage to slay Emaliza first, Rinnarv immediately surrenders and commands the guards to stand down, explaining that he was duty bound to serve Emaliza, but that with her defeat he can begin the process of making amends. He and the guards offer to help the PCs in their fight against the manifestation and may prove to be pivotal in the fight against the manifestation of Dahak.

In any event, Emaliza's hopes of fully restoring the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* are likely destined to fail. Whether or not her plan to siphon energy from the PCs after they've cleansed nodes might work is left to you to determine.

EMALIZA ZANDIVAR

CREATURE 20

Page 87

Initiative Perception +36

RINNARV BONTIMAR

CREATURE 20

Page 24

Initiative Perception +32

CITADEL GUARDS (2)

CREATURE 18

Elite Promise guard (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6; page 29)

Initiative Perception +34

ADAMANTINE FEN

EXTREME 20

Once the PCs have cleansed all five nodes, Alseta's Ring begins to twist and warp and shudder as Dahak's manifestation strains against the suddenly constrictive confines of the prison. The five *aiudara* of Alseta's Ring shimmer with fiery energy at this point—they still function if used to travel from Alseta's Ring to its five linked locations, and PCs within Alseta's Landing can use them to exit normally, but from this point onward, any attempt to enter Alseta's Landing from the Material Plane side of the *aiudara* instead transports the PCs into an even deeper, nested node—a node modeled off of Dahak's planar realm, the Adamantine Morass. This node, known as the Adamantine Fen, is a prison of endless caverns in which the manifestation has dwelt for the past several thousand years. When the PCs arrive, they do so at the entrance of one of these tunnels, looking into a vast cavern.

Dark tunnels extend out in every direction from this enormous cavern. The ceiling, floor, and walls of the cavern are made from a jet-black material with a faint violet sheen. A large pit in the central portion of the room contains a churning pool of acid and flame.

The cavern's various tunnels extinguish light 20 feet beyond the main chamber, creating a supernatural darkness. Only creatures with greater darkvision can see through the darkness. The tunnels do not lead anywhere in particular, but the manifestation can move to the end of a tunnel and emerge from any other tunnel, though it must travel an additional 30 feet to move to another tunnel.

Creature: The manifestation of Dahak takes its true form in this node. After millennia of using its abilities to reshape Alseta's Landing, it has done what it can to recreate its true planar realm in Hell here. In combat, the manifestation uses hit and run tactics, flying between tunnels to make it difficult for the PCs to realize where the manifestation is coming from.

MANIFESTATION OF DAHAK

CREATURE 24

UNIQUE **CE** **GARGANTUAN** **ACID** **COLD** **DRAGON** **ELECTRICITY** **FIRE** **POISON**

Variant red dragon (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 112)

Perception +46; darkvision, scent (precise) 120 feet, smoke vision

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven, Infernal, Jotun, Orcish, Sylvan; telepathy 200 feet

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ADAMANTINE FEN

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Skills Acrobatics +38, Arcana +45, Athletics +45, Deception +45, Diplomacy +38, Dragon Lore +48, Intimidation +48, Occultism +40, Religion +40, Society +38

Str +12, **Dex** +8, **Con** +10, **Int** +8, **Wis** +8, **Cha** +9

Smoke Vision As young red dragon.

AC 52; **Fort** +42, **Ref** +36, **Will** +38; +2 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 600; **Immunities** fire, paralyzed, sleep; **Weaknesses** good 26; **Resistances** acid 26, cold 26, electricity 26, poison 26

Dragonstorm Aura (aura, divine, evocation) 10 feet, 10d6 damage split evenly between acid, cold electricity, fire, and poison (DC 45 basic Reflex save)

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 120 feet, DC 45

Imprisoned Dahak's manifestation can't physically exit the Adamantine Fen until conditions are right, as described in Dahak Escapes on page 65. Planar travel effects do not allow it to escape, nor can they banish it from the Adamantine Fen.

Attack of Opportunity ⤴ Jaws only.

Redirect Energy ⤴ (abjuration, divine) **Trigger** A creature within 100 feet casts an acid, cold, fire, electricity, or poison spell, or such a spell otherwise comes into effect

from a source within 100 feet. **Effect** The manifestation of Dahak makes all the choices to determine the targets, destination, or other effects of the spell, as though it were the caster.

Speed 60 feet, fly 200 feet

Melee ⤴ claw +44 (agile, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 8d8+8 slashing

Melee ⤴ jaws +44 (fire, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 5d10+10 piercing plus 4d6 fire and Improved Grab

Melee ⤴ tail +43 (magical, reach 25 feet), **Damage** 6d10+12 slashing plus Improved Push

Melee ⤴ wing +43 (agile, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 8d8+8 slashing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 48, attack +44; **10th** *miracle*; **9th** *massacre*, *telepathic demand*; **8th** *harm*, *heal*; **7th** *dispel magic*, *eclipse burst*, *finger of death*; **6th** *blade barrier* (×2), *spirit blast*; **5th** *Abyssal plague*, *drop dead*, *heal*; **4th** *divine wrath*, *heal* (×2); **3rd** *blindness*, *chilling darkness*, *vampiric touch*; **2nd** *heal* (×2), *see invisibility*; **1st** *command*, *ray of enfeeblement* (×2); **Cantrips** (10th) *detect magic*, *divine lance*, *guidance*, *read aura*, *shield*

Constrict ⤴ 2d10+10 plus 2d6 fire

Draconic Frenzy ⤴⤴ As young red dragon.

Draconic Momentum As young red dragon.

Dragonstorm Breath ♦♦ (divine, evocation) The manifestation of Dahak breathes a blast of dragonstorm energy that deals 5d6 acid, 5d6 cold, 5d6 electricity, 5d6 fire, and 5d6 poison damage in a 60-foot cone (DC 48 basic Reflex save). It can't use Dragonstorm Breath again for 1d4 rounds.

Focused Breath Weapon ♦ (divine, evocation) The manifestation of Dahak breathes a blast of energy that deals 12d12 damage in a 90-foot line (DC 44 basic Reflex save). The type of damage this Breath Weapon deals can be acid, cold, electricity, fire, or poison, as chosen by the manifestation when it attacks. The manifestation can't use its focused Breath Weapon again for 2 rounds, and the next time it uses its Breath Weapon, it must deal a different type of damage than the previous usage.

Hazard: The pool of acid and fire is the Well of Venoms. Any creatures knocked into the pool fall 20 feet and take 15d6 acid and 15d6 fire damage. This damage ignores any immunities or resistances the creatures may have.

Dahak Escapes: It's only a matter of time before Dahak's manifestation rebuilds enough power to attempt another escape from the Adamantine Fen, and once that time passes, the dragon god's manifestation can emerge once more as it did in Chapter 1. As long as its projections are not opposed for 24 hours, it can finally emerge completely from the prison, bringing about a new Age of Ashes as detailed in the Adventure Toolbox under What If the PCs Fail? It's up to you how long it is before the manifestation can make this new attempt.

Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs clean the five nodes of Alseta's Landing and defeat the manifestation of Dahak, the prison realm created so long ago collapses in on itself. As the Adamantine Fen implodes, the PCs are shunted (harmlessly) out through Vengegate. They may receive a hero's welcome if they were able to convince Mengkare to aid them. If not, the PCs are likely safer slipping away from Promise, lest they face the wrath of the upset populace.

If the PCs stop Dahak's manifestation and Mengkare still lives, he celebrates the PCs as heroes. Tales of their exploits eventually

reach beyond Hermea, while on Promise itself the day of the manifestation's defeat becomes known as the Day of Promise.

Regardless of the ultimate outcome, Golarion has thankfully been spared a new Age of Ashes, and the island nation of Hermea may well enter a new age of glory. If the PCs live, they can finally rest and look forward to comfortable lives. They could return to Breachill or choose to live among the people of Promise. The PCs may not be content to retire after their grand adventure, instead seeking to take on greater dangers. Refer to the information in Beyond the Campaign, beginning on page 73, for what the future may hold.

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HERMEA

BROKEN PROMISES

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Hermea

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The island of Hermea is shrouded in mystery. Before it was first settled, the island sat relatively unnoticed for millennia, with travelers writing it off as too remote or too small to be of any significance or worth. But when the first wave of letters from the island, penned by a mysterious benefactor, arrived to a select few humans on Golarion, the world finally took notice of Hermea. Since that day, people have looked at Hermea as both a mythical island paradise and as a mysterious site shadowed by a pall of dread and unease. The secretive nature of the island only fuels the constant speculation and fear of its citizens and its leader, the great dragon known as Mengkare.

History


The town of Breachill was Mengkare's first attempt to craft a utopia of perfect souls to one day harvest as a weapon against Dahak, but after he wrote that attempt off as a failure, he returned to his lair on Hermea to brood. Lacking true allies and increasingly convinced humanity was incapable of truly cooperating toward an obvious good, he fell into melancholia. Mengkare resigned himself to shrinking away from the world among his collection of coins, jewels, and other treasures, never to be seen again. He wiled away his time for months, organizing and reorganizing his hoard before stumbling upon a great revelation—if he could maintain the same degree of control over a populace as he could over his treasures, his goal might just be achieved. Finding a renewed passion in this approach, Mengkare began working on his greatest plan yet: the Glorious Endeavor.

Over the next few years, Mengkare used his vast wealth to travel throughout Golarion under various guises, recruiting architects, builders, artists, and other workers to help him create his dream city of Promise. These people suspected the ultimate goal of the endeavor, and Mengkare had to learn the price of being too transparent about his aspirations. He made sure from then on to hide the truth through lies of omission. Those building Promise believed they were working to create a utopia and nothing more. Soon enough, Promise was ready, and Mengkare spent some time meeting humans of all kinds, slowly collecting a list of those he wished to invite to reside in the city.

Once he identified these individuals, he reached out to them separately via a letter inviting each to travel to Hermea and share with him in his Glorious Endeavor.

As indicated in these letters, Mengkare intended to curate and shape his Glorious Endeavor into a perfectly controlled utopia. He selected every individual citizen based on their expertise in their respective field or mastery of their respective craft, attempting to build a community that represented the best humanity could offer. Mengkare promised members of the Glorious Endeavor unlimited resources and time to pursue their personal goals and vocations. He assured them that they would be taken care of for the rest of their lives and encouraged to strive toward self-fulfillment, so long as they followed Mengkare's rules and ceded any major decisions about their lives to Mengkare himself. A few rejected this proposal and were allowed to return home, with Mengkare's gratitude. The coincidence that many of these people died over the next few years—seemingly from natural or accidental causes—escaped the attention of the world at large. In truth, Mengkare hired Red Mantis Assassins to track them all down and kill them. The majority chose to remain, inspired by Mengkare's charisma and vision. They found their lives to be just as Mengkare vowed, and everyone agreed to name Mengkare's city Promise, as a reminder of the dragon's commitment to them and the pledge they made in pursuit of its perfection.

Over the years, the people of Promise have worked in conjunction with Mengkare to steadily improve the city. These people provided suggestions for new buildings, new possible citizens, and other ways to help expand the city's resources. Mengkare's willingness to cooperate with his citizens earned him great rapport, and he was quite pleased with how easily the citizens accepted his decisions, even when he overruled those suggestions he found unfit for his vision. Soon enough, Promise flourished, as fewer guests declined his proposal and fewer citizens came to challenge Mengkare's judgement. Now after several decades of conditioning and development, the people of Promise remain a largely unquestioning populace, content to live their lives without want and pleased to serve Mengkare. Few of Promise's citizens miss having free will, for most have known only a life of comfort



in which important choices are made for them and they're shielded from danger. Yet dissidents exist, and those who don't have the skill or foresight to hide their differences of opinion quietly vanish from the island colony, never to be seen again.

Government

A dozen individuals initially committed their lives to Promise during the first wave of Mengkare's invitations. The gold dragon worked with these individuals to establish the first guidelines and laws for Promise, trusting them with a large portion of his plans. When the second wave of citizens arrived, the initial 12 became Mengkare's most trusted advisors. This group, plus Mengkare, became the first Council of Enlightenment.

A council of 13 still serves today as the main ruling body of Promise, with Mengkare leading it. Council members serve staggered 3-year terms and must step down for at least one term before running for reelection. This allows the council to benefit from the perspective of differing individuals on a constantly rotating basis. Elections are held yearly with minimal

fanfare. Mengkare preselects those he deems the best candidates for the open positions, and citizens vote from these available candidates. A second term on the council is common enough, but any further terms are quite rare.

The Council of Enlightenment handles the everyday affairs of Promise and Hermea as a whole. They are in charge of allocating resources to city maintenance, maintaining trade, accommodating ambassadors, and helping pass on Mengkare's wishes to individuals or the entire city, as he deems necessary. Most of this work is delegated to the individual citizens best suited to a particular task, though members of the council are not afraid to take on tasks themselves if they or the rest of the council determines it to be the best course of action.

In 4708 AR, Runelord Karzoug's near return to power just across the sea in Varisia prompted Mengkare to seek improvements to Hermea's defenses. He recruited Alustriv and Thalminar, powerful brine dragons, to act as Hermea's security viziers. The two dragons make regular patrols of the island to ward off any unwanted visitors or anyone else that may be an outside threat to Hermea. Though the council understood Mengkare's decision, many of the members felt a sense of betrayal in Mengkare's choice. They believe that the council is capable of addressing matters of security on its own, and some still have an uneasy relationship with the twin dragons. The council continues to work with the dragons without grievance, however, and frequently turns to them regarding issues of defense and protection.

Notable Sites

Four notable locations on the island of Hermea beyond Promise's walls are of particular interest.

ALTINAR MOUNTAINS

The island's main mountain range is home to unique birds of prey unknown elsewhere in Golarion. These large creatures, known as scythe gulls, have long, hooked beaks that allow them to scoop up fish from the sea as they fly, as well as pierce their enemies when in combat. As they have no natural predators and generally keep to their individual peaks, these birds never became territorial. They exhibit little fear and commonly land in Promise to steal food, including the city's livestock or pets. Scythe gulls can be represented in play as elite rocs (*Bestiary* 6, 281).

MENGKARE'S LAIR

Nestled in the depths of the Altinar Mountains, Mengkare's lair houses both his hoard and Vengegate (see page 21 for full details).

Two Tree Island

RORTINOS FOREST

This forest rests at the foot of the Altinar Mountains. While the woodland is mostly free of dangerous creatures, rumors abound of mysterious people who live among the trees. These rumors are true: a small group of rejected citizens has taken up residence in the forest. Mengkare doesn't want them to influence the Great Endeavor, but at the same time, he's curious to watch their continued progress toward an independent settlement, so he'd prefer not to dispatch them. For now, he keeps his citizens in the dark about the true situation, believing their fear of what may lie in the forest enough to keep them from investigating.

TWO TREE ISLAND

Mengkare's emotional attachment to his parents has not waned in his long life. Once he chose to undertake the Glorious Endeavor, he relocated a pair of trees from near his childhood den as a reminder of his time with his family. The trees now thrive on a nearby island, each tree symbolizing one of his parents. Mengkare makes regular trips to Two Tree Island to visit the trees, sometimes staying for days at a time. His close advisors say he speaks with the trees as if they were his parents, leading some to believe he has a means of actually communicating with their souls.

Promise Gazetteer

The idyllic city of Promise is surrounded by enormous red stone walls that rise to a height of almost 100 feet where they face the coast. This is mostly to prevent viewing of the city from the sea; the majority of the city's landward walls rise to a much more reasonable height of 30 feet. Within the walls, many of the city's buildings are made of white granite and marble. These buildings sport grand spires and large domes, each with unique and breathtaking architecture.

The city is divided into neighborhoods by large sky bridges. These elevated walkways are wide enough for Mengkare to walk on, granting him an elevated view of the city. They are also magically enhanced to boost the speed of anyone walking along them, allowing for quick traversal between districts. Sets of stairs allow access to the streets below.

LIFE IN PROMISE

A citizen of Promise sheds all former allegiances, nationalities, religion, and any other such ties to their previous life. In return, they are granted full citizenship in Promise, which provides for all basic needs, plus giving them access to their fellow citizens and their contributions to the city. Citizens have no need for money and instead give and take as necessary.

In Promise, a bard's tale has just as much value as a scholar's theorem or a fisher's catch, and all are encouraged to share freely.

In return, Mengkare is free to make decisions on each citizen's behalf. Mengkare cedes minor, everyday choices to individuals, but greater decisions like long-term projects, potential mates, and when to have a child all fall under Mengkare's purview. The dragon chooses the qualities he deems most favorable and pairs couples accordingly; influenced by his increasingly corrupt judgment and fanatical worldview, he believes this plan will create stronger, smarter, and more attractive generations, which will better serve him and the world. Mengkare responds to any attempts to circumvent or oppose these decisions with disappointment and later reciprocates by removing those who challenge his ideas from Promise.

The majority of Promise's citizens are human, though Mengkare has occasionally introduced other peoples into the city. He believes dwarves' hardier natures make them prime subjects for research projects, while he values elves for their ability to create longer-lived half-elf offspring, who he personally finds more attractive than humans without elven blood. Mengkare has often recruited gnomes as prime teachers of magic, though many who move to Promise succumb to the Bleaching in a short time frame. He dismisses halflings as amusements and novelties, inviting them only as visiting entertainers. Mengkare forbids goblins and others he considers disruptive influences from entering the city. Many citizens' views are tinged with Mengkare's racial prejudices, particularly in the higher echelons of society.

Children born in Promise receive exceptional care and attention. They learn from the finest tutors and enjoy the richness of life in the city. At the age of 10, children are required to dedicate themselves to a vocation and take on an apprenticeship with a local expert. They are free to change vocations as they wish until the age of 14, at which point they must commit to a skill or study. At the age of 16, every child undergoes a rigorous test, both academic and physical in nature. Those who pass can choose to either sign the Contract of Citizenship or leave Promise forever. Those who fail must undergo rigorous retraining for 1 year and then take a more difficult test. Those who fail again are removed from Promise.

Anyone removed from Promise is sent to a port city in Golarion with enough funds to start a new life. In extreme cases, Mengkare eliminates the individual entirely, believing that their continued existence would bring even more harm to the world. He typically prefers swift, painless executions though he sometimes chooses imprisonment beneath the Golden Citadel instead.

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PROMISE'S NEIGHBORHOODS

Promise is broken up into distinct districts, each separated by the skybridges that Mengkare and the Council of Enlightenment use to survey the city. These neighborhoods vary in population, with each neighborhood's denizens focusing on a particular trade or vocation. Over the years, the people living within these neighborhoods have named them each after one of the guises of Aroden. The god of humanity seemed like an apt symbol for the city, and his 12 guises were all the more appropriate for the way the city had divided itself. Although citizens tend to live near their respective vocations, Promise's citizens are free to live where they wish. Many live within the neighborhoods appropriate to their work, but others enjoy living in different areas and the associated commute that takes them through the city.

Artist: This neighborhood contains some of Avistan's greatest artistic minds. These include musicians, painters, poets, sculptors, singers, and writers. The neighborhood has large, shared spaces where communes of artists live together and gather to collaborate on pieces. Many of the buildings here sport elaborate decorations, unique color schemes, and an array of other creative accessories. Many of the city's artists work with those living in the Artisan, Tailor, and Thief neighborhoods to acquire supplies and tools for their projects.

Artisan: The hammering of metal, sawing of wood, and other industrious sounds constantly ring throughout this neighborhood. The Artisan is home to expert crafters representing a variety of fields. These include leatherworkers, masons, metallurgists, smiths, and woodworkers, many of whom provide basic materials to other neighborhoods. The citizens of the Artisan will help with the construction of new buildings, reinforcement of the city walls, and creating armor and weapons for the city's guard.

Beggar: Although travel to Promise is rare, Mengkare knew he needed a specific area of the city to put up visitors. The Beggar lies near the Golden Citadel, just within sight of Mengkare's palace to allow the dragon to keep watch over his guests. Mengkare makes sure to fully accommodate any visitors, providing luxurious lodging, a bevy of entertainment options, and free rein to travel throughout the city—with an assigned escort, of course.

Farmer: Those citizens with a mind for agriculture and botany center their lives within the Farmer. This area holds large fields and gardens that Promise's citizens tend to on a regular basis; many of those who labor here live elsewhere in the city to maximize the open space here. They use these fields and gardens

to grow basic foods like vegetables, but also expand their focus to medicinal plants and more experimental flora. (More land-intensive crops, such as grains and flax, are grown in the fields surrounding the city.) This neighborhood also holds a mill for grinding the city's grain. Most of the crops grown here find their way to the Fisher where they are then served as part of daily meals. The rest are placed into stores.

Fisher: This neighborhood is where most residents go to obtain food. The city's few restaurants create unique meals that blend various cooking techniques and cuisines to create a near limitless combination of new dishes. All citizens can visit the neighborhood to enjoy one of these meals, have a meal delivered to their home, or request ingredients to prepare a meal of their own. The neighborhood also houses bakers and other specialty food purveyors. A number of fishing ships dock near the neighborhood, setting out into the Steaming Sea during the day to catch the sea's various types of fish for use as ingredients or for study. A number of warehouses throughout the Fisher store extra food that can help prevent hunger during leaner months.

Hunter: The Hunter's parklands harbor a forest that acts as a miniaturized replica of Promise: an idyllic setting where its denizens are never left wanting and live together without conflict. Several woodland species live in this reserve, as well as in other similar reserves that dot Hermea. Individuals studying these creatures can do so without concern of outside influence or interference. Promise's hunters prey on a small number of these creatures, but such kills are performed as humanely as possible and only to provide for the citizenry. Nothing is allowed to go to waste.

Merchant: Promise is not an entirely isolationist place—the city engages in trade with the rest of Golarion, mostly Absalom and Katapesh. The city exports its fine crafts and goods to the greater Inner Sea region and uses its funds to purchase resources that Hermea does not offer. To facilitate these trades, Mengkare recruited a number of accountants, merchants, and other tradespeople. Most of their affairs are handled within the buildings of the Merchant. In addition to these buildings, the neighborhood is also home to the other administrative buildings for the city, such as the city's international relations center, the city's bank, and important public utilities.

Scholar: The pursuit of knowledge and improvement of the self is one of the greatest tenets for the citizens of Promise. This neighborhood houses most of the city's libraries, meditative temples, schools, and other places of learning. Here, citizens further the fields of architecture, mathematics, medicine, science, and magic. The city's children undergo their schooling here

until they are of age to choose their apprenticeship, and all of Promise's citizens visit when they are in need of medical attention.

Shepherd: To complement the crops grown in the Farmer, this area of the city holds large, open fields that accommodate the city's horses, smaller livestock, and other animals as well as a dairy; larger animals such as cows and sheep are kept in the farmlands outside of town. Various animal caretakers and ranchers watch over herds of cows, horses, sheep, and other animals, as well as the herds of beasts that roam the rest of Hermea.

While some of these animals are raised for slaughter or for milk, egg, or fiber production, many are bred as working animals or even as companions or pets. Residents maintain and innovate techniques to care for these creatures.

Soldier: The majority of the city's combat training takes place within the Soldier. Here, various martial academies train students of all kinds. Some of these facilities teach general combat practices, while others focus on more specialized skills, such as ranged combat or training with a specific weapon. Others dedicate themselves to improving the body as a weapon and teach techniques like hand to hand combat or specialized grappling. Open fighting circles and practice battlefields litter the area, allowing anyone to practice their technique in sparring sessions or simulated combat. Every citizen of Promise is required to undergo a few hours of training at one of these academies at least three times per week so as to stay in top physical form. As a result, most of the citizens are capable fighters in their own right.

Tailor: This neighborhood focuses on the creation of fine clothing, cloth, and materials for use in other projects. Colorful clothing hanging from lines, vats of dyes, and fashionable outfits in window displays can be seen throughout. Many of the neighborhood's denizens push the envelope in regard to fashion, exporting their new pieces out into Golarion in hopes of setting new trends. Others dedicate themselves to improving on current materials or clothing to help accommodate the various needs of Promise. These include water-resistant clothing made from magically treated materials for those out on the seas and wind-resistant clothing that is invaluable against the storms of spring and autumn.

Thief: Though the citizens of the Thief are aware of the connotations associated with the neighborhood's

title, they enjoy doing their best to subvert expectations. These citizens focus on tasks that require dexterity and precision, but most apply these techniques to areas other than thievery. They use their skill to create clockwork devices, design delicate and precise tools for specific crafting needs and tasks, and tinker with mechanical baubles and devices. The neighborhood is filled with all manner of specialized workshops, and residents are happy to share their blueprints and inventions with each other. These workshops tend to stack two or three stories high. This allows more space between the buildings that can be used to display the fine works of the artisans here.

CITY LOCATIONS

The following are some of the more notable sites in Promise.

1. Golden Citadel: The grand palace is the regular meeting place of the Council of Enlightenment and the city home of Mengkare. See page 68 for more details.

2. Open Lands: These grounds are intentionally left open for citizens to do as they wish, from festivals to new projects. The only restriction is that any use of the grounds is limited to 1 month at most.

3. Mengkare Park: Mengkare reached out to an arcane botanist from the Arcadian nation of Jolizpan to design this park. A localized arcane network runs beneath this park to siphon and purify water from the sea. The lake here is part of a large system that distributes and purifies water for the entire city.

4. Training Grounds: Promise's children come to the training halls and battlefields here to face their fates during their coming-of-age tests.

5. Bank of Abadar: Although religion is forbidden in Promise, Mengkare has made an exception to this rule. Clergy of the Bank of Abadar are permitted as members of the city to assist with matters of trade and commerce. Mengkare is curious regarding the possibilities of divine influence on his Glorious Endeavor, and maintains these champions and clerics as a small test group.

6. Docks: The docks are the only way in or out of the city by water. Although ships do visit regularly, they are strictly scheduled and overseen by the Council of Enlightenment. Mengkare employs privateers to destroy any unwelcome visitors.

7. Uldanos Park: The city's second park is the site of many local festivals, mostly honoring notable events in the city's history. Its lush flower gardens add a delightful bit of color to these festivities.



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ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

With the conclusion of the Age of Ashes campaign, the PCs have achieved the height of power and are probably legendary characters in your world—but what do their accomplishments mean to your ongoing games?

Beyond the Campaign

What role the PCs play in the world is best left to you and your players to decide, but a few ways in which the world can evolve and change after the events of Age of Ashes take place are summarized below.

Dahak's Revenge: Dahak really takes notice of events on Golarion only once he feels his manifestation's death, and in a petulant sort of reaction, he decides it's time to increase his presence in the world. He honors Apsu's threatening command and does not make direct moves into the world, but his cult begins to rise throughout the lands of the Lost Omens—particularly in central Avistan. Here, an ancient red dragon named Daralathylx (considered by some to be the “sixth king” of the Five Kings Mountains) awakens from a long slumber after receiving vivid visions from Dahak that also grant him even greater powers. In time, Daralathylx could well become a potent villain to rival other regional threats like Treerazer or the Whispering Tyrant!

Mengkare's Redemption: If the PCs managed to convince Mengkare of the errors of his ways, his alignment reverts to lawful neutral and he has a new take on humanity—inspired in large part by the heroics of the PCs. He may well ask the PCs to remain with him on Hermea for the next several years to help him undo the damage he's done—to help spread the idea that diversity and freedom of choice are valuable pursuits. The Glorious Endeavor loses momentum, and the city enters a time of turmoil as Mengkare admits his original plans for the populace. Many citizens choose to abandon the city, and others cling to the old views and stubbornly try to keep the Endeavor alive, but in time—and with the proper humility, guidance, and luck—Hermea can be saved and emerge an even stronger society.

Mengkare's future is less certain. He's committed atrocities, and he has a long way to go to atone. Some may see it as a righteous obligation to punish the dragon for his crimes. Whether forgiveness or punishment lie in Mengkare's future, only time will tell.

LEGACY BACKGROUNDS

Once you've played through Age of Ashes, these rare backgrounds can become available in your future campaigns after the events of this Adventure Path.

AIUDARA SEEKER

BACKGROUND

RARE

The *aiudara* of Alseta's Ring have become more well known, and you are interested in learning more about them.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be in Intelligence or Wisdom, and the other is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Arcana skill and the Portal Lore skill. You gain the Quick Identification skill feat.

HERMEAN HERITOR

BACKGROUND

RARE

With the restrictions on Hermean citizenship lifted, you may have fled the city of Promise or have spent some of your childhood in the company of someone who did.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be in Constitution or Wisdom, and the other is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Society skill and the Legal Lore skill. You gain the Multilingual skill feat or the Assurance skill feat for Society.

LEGENDARY PARENTS

BACKGROUND

RARE

One or more of your parents (either biological or adoptive) were heroes of the Age of Ashes Adventure Path. Others tend to treat you with a bit more respect, or perhaps fear your connections to people of great power.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be in Dexterity or Charisma, and the other is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Intimidation skill and the Genealogy Lore skill. You gain the Group Coercion skill feat.

TOUCHED BY DAHAK

BACKGROUND

RARE

As the manifestation of Dahak was destroyed, a shard of the dragon god's wrathful nature infused you, resulting in a violent temper, strange apocalyptic dreams, an obsession with dragon hunting, or some other touch of his influence.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be in Strength or Charisma, and the other is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Athletics skill and the Dragon Lore skill. You gain the Titan Wrestler skill feat.

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A large, detailed illustration of a red dragon breathing fire. The dragon is the central focus, with its head turned towards the viewer, mouth open, exhaling a massive plume of orange and yellow flames. Its body is covered in scales, and its wings are partially spread. In the foreground, a wooden treasure chest and a sword lie on the ground. The background is a dark, rocky landscape with more fire and a chain-link fence at the top.

WHAT IF THE PCs FAIL?

The following notes and ideas offer suggestions for what might happen if your PCs fail to prevent the Age of Ashes.

Emaliza's Rise: If Mengkare has been defeated and Emaliza survives, she's able to use the partially repaired *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* to weaponize Dahak's manifestation. The manifestation remains imprisoned, and Emaliza can use that energy to unleash dragonstorms in any region the *aiudara* of Alseta's Ring touch. She seizes control of Promise, pushing the island nation of Hermea into a much more aggressive role as she uses dragonstorms to force

compliance from Ravounel, Isger, Katapesh, the Five Kings Mountains, and the Mwangi Expanse, quickly establishing Hermea as a significant threat in the Inner Sea region. Promise becomes a hub for the slave trade, and the evil practice increases once again throughout the Inner Sea region under her watch.

Localized Devastation: If Dahak's manifestation escapes, the Age of Ashes begins! A 100-mile radius around each *aiudara* of Alseta's Ring transform into postapocalyptic wastelands under perpetual dragonstorms. This ruins Hermea, most of Ravounel, and much of southern Katapesh and northern Nex. In the Mwangi Expanse, Ekujae elves and the Magaambya contain and control the devastation at a terrific cost to their resources. The dwarves of the northern Five Kings Mountains are sheltered from that region's dragonstorm, but the storm's energies extend north into Tanglebriar and become harnessed by Treerazer, who drastically increases his own hold over the surrounding lands. In Isger, the dragonstorm centered above Alseta's Ring reaches a radius of 200 miles—destroying much of that nation, along with a significant portion of eastern Molthune, western Druma, and northern Andoran. Dragons in these areas are the only significant creatures who survive, and they grow ever more violent. Dahak's manifestation claims the region around the central storm as its own domain.

Mengkare's Fall: If Mengkare goes forward with the *Anima Invocation* as planned, his use of unwilling and unsuspecting sacrifices to fuel the ritual backfires tragically, allowing Dahak's manifestation to partially escape from its prison. This causes smaller dragonstorms than those in the Localized Devastation development above, with each storm measuring only 10 miles in diameter and lasting only for a week. Moreover, Dahak's manifestation merges with Mengkare, further corrupting the gold dragon into a unique and dangerous monstrosity that abandons all thought of improving humanity and instead seeks to wipe humanity from all worlds—starting with Golarion!

Broken Promises Magic

ANIMA INVOCATION (MODIFIED)

RITUAL 10

RARE ABJURATION

Cast 1 hour; **Secondary Casters** 4

Primary Check Occultism (legendary); **Secondary Checks**

Arcana, Religion

Range 10 miles; **Targets** primary and secondary casters

Duration 1 day

The exact effects of the unmodified *Anima Invocation* are not necessary for this Adventure Path—what's presented here is the modified version of the ritual.

When casting the modified version of the *Anima Invocation*, it instead draws upon the latent spiritual energies of sapient creatures within range of the spell without requiring their deaths, then uses this energy to bolster the connection between body and soul among all of the ritual's casters. This shift from an offensive effect to a defensive one results in a much less dangerous spell that helps to protect against Dahak.

Critical Success You gain full access to your own potential for 1 day. You gain resistance 10 to all damage and a +4 status bonus to saves against effects created by evil creatures. Your Strikes gain the effects of the *ghost touch* rune and deal an additional 1d10 good damage. You are immune to the soul-draining effect within Alseta's Landing.

Success You tap into your own potential for 1 day. You gain resistance 5 to all damage and a +2 status bonus to saves against effects created by evil creatures. Your Strikes gain the effects of the *ghost touch* rune and deal an additional 1 good damage. You are immune to the soul-draining effect within Alseta's Landing.

Failure You are unable to tap into your own spiritual essence, but you still gain immunity to the soul-draining effect within Alseta's Landing.

Critical Failure You botch the ritual, damaging your own spiritual essence. You gain doomed 1 or increase your doomed condition by 1 if you're already doomed. This doomed value decreases by 1 every week. This is a curse effect.

FLAWED ORB OF GOLD DRAGONKIND

ITEM 25

UNIQUE ARTIFACT ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

Each of the legendary *Orbs of Dragonkind* contains the essence and personality of a powerful dragon. The *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* was the most powerful of them all, until it was shattered by Mengkare's draconic breath. Reconstructed at great expense by enslaved spellcasters toiling under the Scarlet Triad's watch, the *Flawed Orb of Gold Dragonkind* is a shadow of its prior self, yet it remains a potent weapon against dragons of all types.

While carried, the *Flawed Orb of Gold Dragonkind* grants its owner resistance 30 to the Breath Weapons of gold dragons. The owner also can sense if there are any dragons within 10 miles, or any gold dragons within 100 miles. When within 1 mile of a dragon, they can determine the direction to the dragon and the dragon's age category (such as young, ancient, or wyrm).

Activate ♦♦ envision, Interact **Frequency** Three times per day; **Effect** You attempt to overwhelm a dragon's mind—while you cannot control the dragon, you can render it immobile for a short time. Choose a dragon within 60 feet; the dragon can attempt to resist the orb with a DC 30 Will saving throw (or higher with *orb shards*). Gold dragons take a -4 circumstance penalty to this saving throw. Any stun from this activation ends if the dragon is attacked or otherwise subject to a hostile act other than that of the orb.

Critical Success The dragon is unaffected.

Success The dragon is stunned 3.

Failure The dragon is stunned for as long as the orb's wielder Sustains the Activation.

Critical Failure As failure, but hostile actions don't end the dragon's stun.

Destruction The *Flawed Orb of Gold Dragonkind* is resilient, but its imperfect nature leaves it vulnerable. It can be damaged or even destroyed by mundane attacks (Hardness 40, HP 200, BT 100). It has weakness 30 to the Breath Weapons and Strikes of gold dragons.

ORB SHARD

ITEM 20

RARE ARTIFACT ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** —

A shard of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* resembles a pointed length of crystal about the size and shape of a shortsword without a hilt. It functions as a +3 *striking shortsword* that deals 2d6 extra damage to dragons.

Each *orb shard* within 60 feet of the flawed orb of Gold Dragonkind increases the save DC against the orb by 1; thus, if all 13 remaining *orb shards* are in this area, the save DC against the flawed orb increases from DC 30 to DC 43. A talented spellcaster or crafter can integrate an *orb shard* back into the flawed orb to make this DC increase permanent.

Destruction An *orb shard* is extraordinarily resilient, but it can be damaged or even destroyed by mundane attacks (Hardness 40, HP 50, BT 25). It has weakness 30 to the Breath Weapons and Strikes of gold dragons.

Paragons of Promise

The citizens of Promise represent some of the most capable experts, greatest minds, and powerful warriors on Golarion—ideal teachers and trainers for PCs who want to maximize their own potential. If the

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PCs secure Visitor's Pins or an alliance with Mengkare, their access to Promise's trainers and records unlock all of the following uncommon class feats.

CLASS FEATS

APEX COMPANION

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON DRUID

Prerequisites Animal Companion

You can call upon the essence of every individual animal of a particular species to temporarily transform your animal into an exemplar of its kind. You learn the *apex companion* order spell (page 77). Increase the number of Focus Points in your focus pool by 1.

AURA OF UNBREAKABLE VIRTUE

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON CHAMPION

Prerequisites tenets of good

You are a paragon of all that is good, your overwhelming aura causing evildoers to cower. All evil creatures within 15 feet of you take a -1 status penalty to checks and DCs that target you or your allies. This penalty is -2 against creatures you have taken an oath against (such as dragons if you have the Dragonslayer Oath feat). You can choose to suppress or resume this aura as an action, which has the concentrate trait.

BLOODLINE METAMORPHOSIS

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON SORCERER

You have learned to manipulate the innate power of your bloodline and adapt it to your needs. When making your daily preparations, you can swap out a single spell of 9th level or lower for another spell of the same level. You can't swap out spells granted specifically by your bloodline.

EFFICIENT ALCHEMY

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON ALCHEMIST

Your daily preparations are particularly efficient and plentiful. When using your infused reagents to create alchemical items during your daily preparations, you make a batch of three of a given item instead of a batch of two, or a batch of four if your field normally lets you create three of that item.

EMBLAZON DIVINITY

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON CLERIC

Prerequisites Emblazon Armament

Your sacred etchings imbue objects with power. It takes you only 1 minute to emblazon a symbol using Emblazon Armament, and you can have up to four symbols emblazoned at a time. Each item can still have only one symbol emblazoned upon it, and if you exceed the limit of four, the oldest symbol disappears. These symbols can

benefit even those who don't follow the deity, provided they aren't directly opposed (as determined by the GM).

You can select a different benefit for each emblazoned symbol, chosen from any you have from Emblazon Armament or other feats such as Emblazon Energy or Emblazon Antimagic.

ENDURING DEBILITATION

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON ROGUE

Prerequisites Debilitating Strike

Frequency once per minute

Trigger You apply a debilitation to a creature.

You can make your debilitation last an exceptionally long time. The triggering debilitation lasts for 1 minute instead of until the end of your next turn.

GOLDEN BODY

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON MONK

You perfect your body, refining the flex of every muscle and the bend of every joint to maximum efficiency. Your unarmed Strikes gain the deadly d12 trait, and you have fast healing 20, causing you to regain 20 HP at the start of each of your turns provided you have at least 1 HP.

INVULNERABLE JUGGERNAUT

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON BARBARIAN

You are unstoppable, able to shrug off mortal wounds with ease. You gain resistance equal to 3 + your Constitution modifier to all damage, and your resistance from raging resistance increases to 8 + your Constitution modifier.

In addition, if you are reduced to 0 Hit Points, you can end your rage as a reaction to stay at 1 Hit Point. If you do, you become wounded 2 (or increase your wounded condition by 2 if you are already wounded).

SONG OF THE FALLEN

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON BARD

Prerequisites focus pool

The moving power of your songs can stir the spirits of the dead to rise once more and fight alongside you. You learn the *song of the fallen* composition spell (page 77). Increase the number of Focus Points in your focus pool by 1.

SPELL MASTERY

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON WIZARD

You have mastered a handful of spells to such a degree that you can cast them even if you haven't prepared them. Select any four spells of 9th level or lower that you have access to. Each spell you select must be of a different level. These spells are automatically prepared when you make your daily preparations and have their own spell slots. You can select a different array of spells by spending 1 week of downtime retraining your mastered spells.

SUPERIOR SIGHT

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON RANGER

Your senses are peerless. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks, and you gain low-light vision. If you already have low-light vision, gain darkvision instead. Furthermore, when you target an enemy, you automatically succeed at the flat check if that enemy is concealed, hidden, or undetected.

ULTIMATE FLEXIBILITY

FEAT 20

UNCOMMON FIGHTER

Your experience keeps you on your toes, allowing you to adapt to even the most dangerous challenges. When you gain a fighter feat using combat flexibility, you gain three fighter feats instead of one. The first feat must still be 8th level or lower, the second feat can be up to 14th level, and the third feat can be up to 18th level. You can use the first feat to meet the prerequisites of the second or third feats and the second feat to meet the prerequisites of the third feat. You must meet all feats' prerequisites. In addition, you can adapt to the battlefield's challenges by spending 1 hour to train. If you do, you can reselect the feats chosen with combat flexibility as if you had made your daily preparations.

FOCUS SPELLS

APEX COMPANION

FOCUS 10

UNCOMMON DRUID POLYMORPH TRANSMUTATION

Cast ◆◆ somatic, verbal

Range 30 feet; **Targets** 1 animal companion in your service

Duration 1 minute

You focus on the energies of all members of your animal companion's species, transforming your animal companion into its apex battle form. Your animal companion gains the following statistics and abilities while in its apex form.

- Your animal companion becomes Huge and its attacks have 15-foot reach. It must have enough space to expand into or the spell is lost.
- 30 temporary Hit Points.
- Darkvision.
- Your animal companion's attack's damage dice increase by one step, and its attack gains the deadly d12 trait.
- +10-foot status bonus to its Speeds.
- Ignores difficult terrain and greater difficult terrain.

SONG OF THE FALLEN

FOCUS 10

UNCOMMON BARD COMPOSITION NECROMANCY

Cast ◆◆ focus, verbal

Range 30 feet; **Targets** up to 4 dead creatures or up to 4 undead creatures

Duration sustained up to 1 minute

You chant a dirge or an elegy that either rouses the dead to action or reminds undead that they should lay to rest.

If you target dead creatures, the bodies animate and can continue acting as if they were alive. A creature animated in this way has 60 temporary Hit Points. The animated creatures are slowed 1 but can otherwise act normally. Creatures animated with this spell die again once the spell ends.

If you target undead creatures, each undead must attempt a basic Will save.

Critical Success The undead takes 5d6 positive damage.

Success The undead takes 10d6 positive damage and is slowed 1 for 1 round.

Failure The undead takes 100 positive damage and is slowed 1 for 1 minute.

Critical Failure The undead is destroyed.

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DRAINING MEMORIES

Aiudara wraiths hunger for memories that they feel they once owned but, in fact, never had at all. Their life-draining touch saps physical and mental energy alike, and those who suffer this effect and become stupefied report feelings of forgetfulness and unnerving incidents of temporary, highly localized amnesia.

Aiudara Wraith

Dahak's influence in Alseta's Landing created a soul-draining effect that slays unprotected creatures within, transforming them into ghostly creatures known as aiudara wraiths, but these rare undead can rise within modern *aiudara* portals as well. Each time an individual travels through an *aiudara*, there's a chance their passage could leave a faint imprint of their subconscious in the network. Normally this imprint simply fades away, but when an *aiudara* is damaged or the individual is suffering from necromantic contagions, these imprints can accumulate and, in time, coalesce on the Astral Plane or within Alseta's Landing as a full-fledged aiudara wraith. The wraith is forced to live with an incomplete sense of self, always seeking its own memories and swiftly growing violent and vengeful as its quest to reclaim these ephemeral notions constantly meets with failure.

AIUDARA WRAITH

CREATURE 18

RARE NE MEDIUM ASTRAL INCORPOREAL UNDEAD WRAITH

Perception +33; darkvision, lifesense 60 feet

Languages Common, Elven, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +35, Arcana +31, Stealth +35

Str -5, **Dex** +9, **Con** +5, **Int** +0, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +8

AC 45; **Fort** +33, **Ref** +37, **Will** +33

HP 300, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 15 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Teleportation Attachment ⤿ (conjunction, teleportation) **Trigger**

A creature within 60 feet uses a teleportation effect; **Effect** The aiudara wraith teleports with the creature, arriving in an empty space of its choice adjacent to the triggering creature's destination. If the triggering effect targets multiple creatures, the aiudara wraith chooses which creature it arrives beside.

Speed fly 60 feet; instantaneous movement

Melee ⤿ spectral hand +35 (agile, finesse, magical), **Damage** 4d10+16 force plus dimensional shunt and drain life

Dimensional Shunt (arcane, conjuration, teleportation) The aiudara wraith's touch displaces creatures and flings them through space. The creature must attempt a DC 40 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected and becomes temporarily immune to dimensional shunt for 1 minute.

Success The creature is pushed 5 feet in a random direction.

Failure The creature is teleported 20 feet in a direction of the aiudara wraith's choice.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature is also stunned 2.

Drain Life (arcane, necromancy) When an aiudara wraith damages a living creature with its spectral hand Strike, the aiudara wraith gains 18 temporary Hit Points and the target must succeed at a DC 40 Fortitude save or become drained 1 and stupefied 1 as long as it is drained. Further damage dealt by the aiudara wraith's spectral hand Strikes increases the value of the drained and stupefied conditions by 1 each on a failed save, to a maximum of 10 for both.

Instantaneous Movement (arcane, conjuration, teleportation) An aiudara wraith moves by means of localized teleportation. An aiudara wraith's Stride does not have the move trait. When an aiudara wraith Strides, it reaches its destination within the range of its Speed immediately.

Dragonshard Guardian

Created by Mengkare and powered by a shard of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*, this construct is made of sculpted crystal draped in a beautiful gold filigree frame.

DRAGONSHARD GUARDIAN

CREATURE 22

UNIQUE N LARGE CONSTRUCT

Perception +39; darkvision, *true seeing*

Skills Arcana +30

Str +10, **Dex** +8, **Con** +9, **Int** -5, **Wis** +7, **Cha** -5

AC 48; **Fort** +39, **Ref** +36, **Will** +33

HP 430; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Weaknesses** sonic 24;

Resistances fire 24, physical 24 (except bludgeoning adamantite)

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental)
90 feet, DC 42

Reverberating Revenge ⤿ (arcane, fire)

Trigger The dragonshard guardian takes cold, fire, electricity, or sonic damage from a non-dragonshard guardian source; **Effect** The dragonshard guardian's body absorbs the energy entirely, preventing the damage from harming the construct. Its body reverberates and transforms the absorbed energy before projecting it outward in a 60-foot burst. Each creature within the burst takes an amount of fire damage equal to the amount of energy damage absorbed by the triggering attack, including any damage resisted by the guardian's resistances and additional damage from its weakness (DC 45 basic Reflex save). This fire damage doesn't harm objects or constructs.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ⬥ jaws +41 (magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 6d10+8 piercing plus 2d10 persistent bleed

Melee ⬥ claw +41 (agile, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 9d6+8 slashing

Breath Weapon ⬥⬥ The construct breathes in one of two ways, then can't use Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

- **Flame** (arcane, evocation, fire) A blast of flame deals 15d10 fire damage to all creatures in a 60-foot cone (DC 45 basic Reflex save). This fire damage does not harm objects or constructs.
- **Weakening Gas** (arcane, necromancy) A cloud of gold-flecked gas forces each creature in a 60-foot cone to attempt a DC 45 Fortitude save; the effect lasts 1 minute.
Critical Success The creature is unaffected.
Success The creature is enfeebled 2.
Failure The creature is enfeebled 5.
Critical Failure The creature is enfeebled 8.



OTHER GUARDIANS

Similar guardians may exist, created from fragments of other destroyed artifacts. These guardians should be unique in appearance, each with their own special abilities and purposes, but you can use the guardian presented here as inspiration for creating more.

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HIBERNATING SPAWN

All spawn of Rovagug can sleep for centuries and do not need to eat, drink, or even breathe while hibernating. While hibernating, a spawn's resistances double in value.

It cannot be located by divination effects, and for any saving throw, it uses the outcome for one degree of success better than the result.

Spawn of Rovagug

The spawn are titanic terrors of immense size and strength that live only to destroy. Tarrasque and Xotani are but two of Rovagug's spawn. Others, including Chemnosit (the Monarch Worm), Kothogaz (the Dance of Disharmony), and Volnagur (the End-Singer) hold places of horror in the history of various regions, but the most famed is Ulunat (the Unholy First), whose beetle-like carcass remains sprawled in Sothis, the capital of Osirion.

TARRASQUE, THE ARMAGEDDON ENGINE

The most powerful spawn is Tarrasque, whose legend spread across countless worlds beyond Golarion. Its destruction of the nation of Ninshabur and its march across Avistan in –632 AR culminated in the destruction of the flying Shory city of Kho before this spawn was sealed away in a remote cavern.

TARRASQUE

CREATURE 25

UNIQUE CE GARGANTUAN BEAST

Perception +48; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 120 feet

Languages Aklo (can't speak any language)

Skills Acrobatics +47, Athletics +50

Str +12, **Dex** +9, **Con** +12, **Int** –3, **Wis** +9, **Cha** +7

AC 54; **Fort** +47, **Ref** +37, **Will** +39; +2 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 540, regeneration 50; **Immunities** acid, clumsy, disease, drained, enfeebled, mental, paralyzed, persistent damage, petrified, poison, polymorph, stupefied; **Resistances** fire 25, physical 25

Carapace Tarrasque is immune to cones, lines, rays, and *magic missile* spells. These effects bounce harmlessly off its scales.

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 300 feet, DC 39

Inexorable Tarrasque recovers from the slowed and stunned conditions at the end of its turn. It's also immune to penalties to its Speeds, and it ignores difficult terrain and greater difficult terrain.

Reactive Tarrasque gains 3 reactions each round. It can still use only one reaction per trigger.

Attack of Opportunity ☞

Reflect ☞ **Trigger** Tarrasque's carapace deflects an effect. **Effect** The effect is redirected back at its source.

Speed 50 feet, swim 50 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +45 (chaotic, evil, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 5d12+20 piercing plus Improved Grab

Melee ♦ claw +45 (agile, chaotic, evil, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 5d10+20 slashing

Melee ♦ tail +45 (chaotic, evil, magical, reach 30 feet), **Damage** 4d12+20 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ horn +45 (chaotic, evil, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 4d10+20 piercing

Ranged ♦ spine +45 (brutal, chaotic, evil, magical, range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 3d10+20 piercing



SLAYING SPAWN

A spawn of Rovagug has regeneration powerful enough to revive it even if slain by a death effect. If the spawn fails a save against an effect that would kill it instantly, it rises from death 3 rounds later with 1 Hit Point. It can be banished, imprisoned, or transported away as a means to save a region, or kept in a state of dying by an effect that deals constant damage. A complex and expensive ritual culminating in a word that douses Xotani's flames can be used to deactivate its regeneration, but no method of deactivating Tarrasque's regeneration has yet been discovered.

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Destructive Frenzy ◆◆◆ Tarrasque makes a jaws Strike, two claw Strikes, two horn Strikes, and one tail Strike in any order.

Fast Swallow ➤ **Trigger** Tarrasque Grabs a creature with its jaws; **Effect** Tarrasque uses Swallow Whole.

Spine Volley ◆◆ Tarrasque flings spines in a 120-foot cone, dealing 3d10+20 piercing damage to each creature in the area (DC 53 basic Reflex save). Tarrasque can't use Spine Volley again for 1d4 rounds.

Swallow Whole ◆ (attack) Huge, 10d6+12 bludgeoning plus 10d6 acid, Rupture 50

Trample ◆◆◆ Huge or smaller, claw, DC 49. When Tarrasque Tramples, it can Stride up to triple its Speed.

XOTANI, THE FIREBLEEDER

A monstrosity of living flame and magma, Xotani may be the weakest of Rovagug's spawn, but it remains a formidable threat. Xotani was slain in 2104 AR by an alliance of spellcasters, but recently its deathlike slumber was interrupted. Its corpse twitches, signaling that it might be close to returning.

XOTANI

CREATURE 20

UNIQUE CE GARGANTUAN BEAST FIRE

Perception +39; blindsight (precise) 120 feet, darkvision

Languages Aklo (can't speak any language)

Skills Athletics +41

Str +10, **Dex** +8, **Con** +9, **Int** -4, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +6

AC 48; **Fort** +36, **Ref** +33, **Will** +30

HP 385, regeneration 25; **Immunities** clumsy, disease, drained, enfeebled, fire, mental, paralyzed, petrified, poison, polymorph, stupefied; **Weaknesses** cold 22; **Resistances** electricity 22, physical 22, sonic 22

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 300 feet, DC 39

Light Blindness Xotani's light blindness is caused by only sunlight.

Reactive Xotani gains 3 reactions each round. It can still use only one reaction per trigger.

Attack of Opportunity ➤

Firebleed ➤ (fire) **Trigger** Xotani is damaged; **Effect** Xotani's wound erupts with magma in a 30-foot cone, dealing 6d8 fire damage and 6d8 persistent fire damage (DC 42 basic Reflex save).

Speed 60 feet, burrow 40 feet, climb 60 feet

Melee ◆ jaws +38 (reach 20 feet), **Damage** 5d10+8 piercing plus 2d10 persistent fire

Melee ◆ claw +38 (agile, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 5d8+8 slashing plus 2d8 persistent fire

Ranged ◆ lava bomb +38 (range increment 80 feet), **Damage** 2d10+8 bludgeoning plus 2d10 persistent fire

Bomb Barrage ◆◆ Xotani makes three lava bomb Strikes. These Strikes can be made against the same creature or different creatures, as long as all targets are within 40 feet of each other.

Breath Weapon ◆◆ (arcane, evocation, fire) Xotani breathes a blast of flame that deals 18d6 fire damage plus 4d6 persistent fire damage to all creatures in a 70-foot cone (DC 42 basic Reflex save). It can't use Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

Swallow Whole ◆ (attack) Huge, 8d6+8 bludgeoning plus 12d6 fire, Rupture 35

Trample ◆◆◆ Huge or smaller, claw, DC 42. When Xotani Tramples, it can Stride up to triple its Speed.



HARBINGERS OF THE END

A tzitzimil's arrival in a region often presages a deadly disaster or apocalyptic event.

Tzitzimil

Due to their affinity for darkness and apocalyptic terror, tzitzimils are widely feared as harbingers of death and destruction. Some sages consider them to be instruments of the gods, called down to destroy worlds whose times have come, while others believe that tzitzimils are exiles from a far-off civilization of spacefaring giants. The truth of their nature is likely even more disturbing.

TZITZIMIL

CREATURE 19

UNCOMMON NE GARGANTUAN ELECTRICITY UNDEAD

Perception +32; darkvision, *true seeing*

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Common

Skills Acrobatics +33, Arcana +37, Athletics +33, Nature +37, Occultism +37, Religion +40

Str +10, **Dex** +8, **Con** +6, **Int** +5, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +8

AC 43; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +32, **Will** +35

HP 390, fast healing 15, negative healing; **Immunities** cold, death effects, disease, electricity, negative, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Weaknesses** good 15; **Resistances** cold 15, fire 15, physical 15 (except bludgeoning)

Light to Dark ⚡ (divine, negative) **Trigger** A creature uses an ability or spell with the positive trait within 120 feet of the tzitzimil; **Effect** The tzitzimil inverts the energy used in the triggering ability or spell, causing it to lose the positive trait and gain the negative trait, and changing all instances of positive energy or healing in the ability's description to negative energy.

Speed 50 feet, fly 60 feet

Melee ⚔ claw +34 (agile, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 6d8+10 slashing plus 3d8 electricity and drain life

Ranged ⚔ eye beam +34 (range 100 feet), **Damage** 10d6 electricity plus 10d6 force

Occult Innate Spells DC 38; **9th** *teleport, wail of the banshee*; **7th** *eclipse burst, teleport* (×3); **5th** *Abyssal plague*; **4th** *darkness* (×3); **3rd** *haste* (×3); **Cantrips** (9th) *detect magic*; **Constant** (6th) *true seeing*

Occult Rituals DC 38; *create undead* (9th), *imprisonment* (9th)

Drain Life When a tzitzimil's claw *Strike* deals damages to a living creature, the tzitzimil gains 20 temporary Hit Points, and the target must succeed at a DC 41 Fortitude save or become drained 2.

Further damage dealt by a tzitzimil's claw *Strike* increases the value of the drained condition by 2 on a failed save, to a maximum of drained 10.

Eclipse ⚡ (cold, occult) **Requirements** The tzitzimil is within 120 feet of an active *darkness* spell; **Effect** The tzitzimil drains the heat and warmth from the *darkness* spell, and each creature within the spell's area must attempt a DC 41 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The creature takes 4d8 cold damage.

Success The creature takes 8d8 cold damage and is slowed 1 for 1 round.

Failure The creature takes 16d8 cold damage and is slowed 1 for 1 minute.

Critical Failure The creature takes 16d8 cold damage, is slowed 2 for 1 minute, and is doomed 1.

Vazgorlu

The arthropod monstrosity known as a vazgorlu makes its home on the Astral Plane or inside of a stable portal, ambushing creatures that travel there using dimensional magic.

VAZGORLU

CREATURE 20

RARE NE LARGE ABERRATION ASTRAL

Perception +33; darkvision


Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Daemonic, Infernal, Protean, Requian, Utopian

Skills Arcana +38, Deception +38, Portal Lore +41, Stealth +34, Thievery +32

Str +6, **Dex** +7, **Con** +6, **Int** +7, **Wis** +8, **Cha** +5

AC 45; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +33, **Will** +36

HP 380; **Immunities** acid, paralyzed, sleep; **Resistances** cold 15, physical 10 (except cold iron)

Hostile Juxtaposition  (arcana, teleportation) **Trigger** A creature targets the vazgorlu with a Strike; **Effect** The vazgorlu chooses a different creature within 60 feet and attempts to swap places with that creature using *dimension door* in the instant before the Strike. The target must attempt a DC 39 Will save.

Critical Success The target resists the teleportation, and the vazgorlu can't use Hostile Juxtaposition for 1d4 rounds.


Success The target resists the teleportation.

Failure The target and the vazgorlu instantly swap places, and the triggering Strike is resolved against the target instead.

Critical Failure As failure, but the target is transported to the vazgorlu's demiplane after resolving the triggering Strike against it.

Speed 30 feet, climb 30 feet

Melee  fangs +38 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d10+8 piercing plus 3d10 acid

Ranged  web +38 (range increment 60 feet), **Effect** 6d6+8 acid plus dimensional tether

Arcane Innate Spells DC 35; **7th plane shift** (to and from the vazgorlu's demiplane only), *teleport* (×3); **4th dimension door** (at will); **Constant (4th) air walk**

Dimensional Tether A creature hit by a vazgorlu's web Strike is immobilized and stuck to the nearest surface until it Escapes (DC 42). As long as it remains immobilized by the web, the web attempts to counteract any effect that would move the webbed creature to another plane, with a counteract level of 10 and using the vazgorlu's Arcana skill to attempt the counteract check.

Demiplane Lair A vazgorlu maintains a 30-foot-diameter demiplane in the Astral Plane. Gravity in this demiplane pulls out from the center, so that creatures can walk upon the inner surface. A vazgorlu's demiplane lair lacks a built-in point of exit, and if the vazgorlu fails to visit the demiplane during a 24-hour period, the demiplane collapses—all objects and creatures within are then returned to their original locations in the multiverse before they entered the demiplane. A vazgorlu can create a replacement demiplane lair with 24 hours of concentration.

Redirect Portal A vazgorlu can spend 10 minutes in contact with a magical portal to redirect it, causing the portal to instead lead to its demiplane lair. To do so, the vazgorlu must succeed at a Portal Lore check (the DC is either equal to the caster's spell DC for a portal created by a spell, or set by the portal's level, as listed on Table 10-5 on page 503 of the *Core Rulebook*; if the portal in question has no level listed, assume it's a 20th-level portal).



VAZGORLU DIGESTION

A vazgorlu gains nourishment from both the biological result of digesting a creature and the metaphysical consumption of that creature's connection to the multiverse once it has been cut off from other dimensions. As such, a vazgorlu can only be truly sated while consuming prey in its own lair, where it can devour a creature in both ways.

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Wyrmwraith

Wyrmwraiths rise from the souls of dragons who refuse to accept death or have an irrational fear of the afterlife.

WYRMWRAITH

CREATURE 17

RARE CE GARGANTUAN DRAGON INCORPOREAL UNDEAD WRAITH

Perception +29; darkvision, lifesense 120 feet

Languages Common, Draconic, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +30, Arcana +30, Intimidation +33, Religion +33, Stealth +33


Str -5, **Dex** +9, **Con** +0, **Int** +7, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +9

AC 39; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +32, **Will** +32


HP 280, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all 20 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)


Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 90 feet, DC 33

Sunlight Powerlessness A wyrmwraith in sunlight is clumsy 2 and stunned 2.

Positive Energy Transfer  (divine, conjuration) **Trigger** The wyrmwraith succeeds at a saving throw to resist positive damage, but still takes damage from that effect; **Effect** The wyrmwraith transfers all positive damage from the effect to a single undead creature of its choice that it controls within 120 feet.

Speed 50 feet, fly 80 feet

Melee  spectral jaws +33 (reach 20 feet), **Damage** 7d8+8 negative plus drain life


Melee  spectral claw +33 (agile, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 7d6+8 negative plus divine dispelling and drain life

Divine Innate Spells DC 35, attack +33; **8th** *charm* (undead targets only);


7th *divine wrath* (×3), *finger of death*; **6th** *vampiric exsanguination*;

4th *charm* (×3; undead targets only), *darkness*; **3rd** *bind undead* (at will)

Divine Rituals DC 35; *create undead* (8th)

Breath Weapon  (divine, necromancy, negative) The wyrmwraith unleashes a burst of negative energy that deals 18d6 negative damage to all creatures in a 60-foot cone (DC 38 basic Reflex save). It can't use Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

Divine Dispel (abjuration, divine) A wyrmwraith's claws rend divine magic. Whenever a wyrmwraith hits a creature with one of its spectral claws, the wyrmwraith can attempt a Religion check to counteract an ongoing divine spell effect (of spell level 8th or lower) on the creature.

Draconic Frenzy  The wyrmwraith makes two claw Strikes and one jaws Strike in any order.

Drain Life (divine, necromancy) When a wyrmwraith deals damage to a living creature with a spectral jaws or spectral claw Strike, the wyrmwraith gains 18 temporary Hit Points, and the creature must succeed at



ELDER WYRMWRAITHS

The most powerful of these monsters, elder wyrmwraiths, sometimes form spontaneously from legendary dragons who were haunted with an irrational fear of the afterlife, but most are wyrmwraiths who have grown in power during an existence of well over a thousand years. The most powerful wyrmwraiths survive for millennia, typically by hiding away in remote caverns or wastelands and enacting their far-reaching plots through proxies. Some elder wyrmwraiths dedicate themselves to the pursuit of learning, but typically the only knowledge they crave is that which grants advantages against their enemies.

a DC 38 Fortitude save or become drained 2. Further damage dealt by the wyrmwraith's spectral jaws or spectral claws Strikes increases the value of the drained condition by 2 on a failed save, to a maximum of drained 8.

Ectoplasmic Form ♦ (divine, necromancy) A wyrmwraith can push through the ectoplasmic veil to temporarily assume a physical form made of ectoplasm. The wyrmwraith loses the incorporeal trait for 1d4 rounds, though it can return to its incorporeal form as a free action before then. Once this ability ends, the wyrmwraith can't use this ability again for 1d4 rounds. While in ectoplasmic form, the wyrmwraith's AC increases to 43 and it gains 100 temporary Hit Points. It loses its immunity to non-magical attacks and precision damage, as well as its resistance to all damage. Its claw and jaws Strikes deal slashing and piercing damage, respectively, instead of negative damage.

Phase Lurch ♦ (divine, move) **Requirements** The wyrmwraith is in ectoplasmic form; **Effect** As the Stride action, but the wyrmwraith can pass through walls or material obstacles as though it were incorporeal. It must begin and end its movement outside of any physical obstacles, and passing through solid material is difficult terrain.

ELDER WYRMWRAITH

CREATURE 23

RARE CE GARGANTUAN DRAGON INCORPOREAL UNDEAD WRAITH

Perception +40; darkvision, lifesense 120 feet

Languages Common, Draconic, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +38, Arcana +38, Intimidation +43, Religion +43, Stealth +43

Str -5, **Dex** +11, **Con** +0, **Int** +9, **Wis** +9, **Cha** +11

AC 49; **Fort** +32, **Ref** +38, **Will** +42

HP 450, negative healing; **Immunities** as wyrmwraith; **Resistances** all 25 (except force, ghost touch, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 90 feet, DC 46

Sunlight Powerlessness As wyrmwraith.

Positive Energy Transfer ♫ As wyrmwraith.

Speed 50 feet, fly 100 feet

Melee ♦ spectral jaws +42 (reach 20 feet), **Damage** 9d8+8 negative plus drain life

Melee ♦ spectral claw +42 (agile, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 9d6+8 negative plus divine dispelling and drain life

Divine Innate Spells DC 46, attack +42; as wyrmwraith plus 10th miracle

Divine Rituals DC 46; create undead (10th), imprisonment (10th)

Breath Weapon ♦♦ As wyrmwraith, but a 90-foot cone, DC 46, and the wyrmwraith's breath deals 24d6 negative damage.

Consume Souls ♦♦ (divine, death, necromancy) The elder wyrmwraith inhales sharply, sucking in the souls of nearby creatures. Each creature in a 60-foot cone must attempt a DC 46 Will save. The elder wyrmwraith can't Consume Souls again for 1d4 rounds.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature gains doomed 1.

Failure The creature gains doomed 2 and takes 100 negative damage.

Critical Failure The creature is slain. As long as the wyrmwraith still exists, the slain creature cannot be returned to life through any means.

Divine Dispelling As wyrmwraith.

Drain Life As wyrmwraith, but 24 temporary Hit Points, DC 46, and a maximum of drained 14.

Draconic Frenzy ♦♦ As wyrmwraith.

Ectoplasmic Form ♦ As wyrmwraith, except AC 52 and 125 temporary Hit Points.

Phase Lurch ♦ As wyrmwraith.

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EMALIZA ZANDIVAR

Discontent with Mengkare, Emaliza schemes with her brother Uri of the Scarlet Triad, intending to become a powerful figure in Promise so that she can one day take full control of the city.

Much like her brother Uri, Emaliza received excellent education and continual care while growing up in Promise, but rather than focus on physical training like her brother, Emaliza chose to sharpen her mind. She dove into her arcane studies with great enthusiasm, marveling at the power and control magic could give her, only to find herself frustrated by Promise's restrictions and Mengkare's demands.

Uri eventually left Promise to serve Mengkare as a recruiter, leaving Emaliza to climb the political ladder in the Council of Enlightenment. Emaliza delighted in every message and letter from her brother, marveling at the opportunities those in the world beyond Hermea's shores had to seize power for themselves. Emaliza's appreciation for such prospects grew stronger after Uri returned from his multiyear mission and regaled her with tales of ambitious and powerful people encountered in his travels. It was then the siblings began to refine their plans for taking control of Hermea.

Emaliza masterminded these plots and, realizing that the support of a distant but well-funded organization would support their goals, suggested that Uri leave Promise again to take control of the Scarlet Triad. She secretly began to investigate Mengkare, attempting to find weaknesses she could exploit. Unable to access the deepest archives of the palace due to the restrictions imposed by her citizenship, Emaliza focused on ingratiating herself to Mengkare instead. In time, she learned about Alseta's Ring, the imprisoned manifestation of Dahak, and the shards of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*. The details of Mengkare's plan eluded her, but she decided they were irrelevant. If she could rebuild the orb and control Mengkare, and if she could claim Alseta's Ring and weaponize the divine entity trapped within, the resulting power would be more than enough to meet her needs. She spent years gaining Mengkare's favor and furthering her position within the Council of Enlightenment, eventually becoming that organization's senior member, second only to the dragon.

Decades later, Emaliza secured permission from Mengkare to make her first voyage beyond Hermea's borders—a trip to Katapesh to review the Scarlet Triad's finances and efficiency. She'd already been working to hide the Triad's dealings with slavery, but now she revealed to Uri what she'd learned. She gave Uri the few shards of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind* she'd managed to recover, asked him to gather more shards and organize the orb's repair, and then returned to Hermea to set the stage for her coup.

Today, as the high councilor, Emaliza has access to almost all of Hermea's resources. She has been using this access to continue supporting the Scarlet Triad in secret, partially shoring up the losses the group suffered when Mengkare cut its funding.

Emaliza is an arrogant woman, believing herself to be the pinnacle of intelligence and an incomparable mastermind. The fact that she's been able to keep the efforts of the Scarlet Triad a secret from Mengkare for so long only reinforces her self-assessment and the indulgence of her ego. When speaking with others, she is curt and pedantic, except when she recognizes that kindness could be of more use. In this case, she adopts a persona appearing overly curious and almost naive to make her seem more innocent and unassuming.

Campaign Role

Emaliza spends most of her time during this adventure away from the PCs. She is unsure if the PCs know about the *Orb of Dragonkind's* abilities or whether she even has the orb. It's likely that Emaliza knows full well the PCs' role in defeating the Scarlet Triad, but with the faulty orb in her hands, she considers Uri's work a success, even if she doesn't particularly mourn his death (less power to share in the end, after all). She considers the PCs to be dupes powerful enough to trick into securing resources and information from the archives, and she hopes they can reach that part of the Golden Citadel and gather information for her.

If Uri escaped death in the previous adventure, Emaliza keeps his return to Promise a secret. The PCs

may hear rumors that Uri lives, but he should not make an appearance until the final confrontation when the PCs fight Emaliza, at which point Uri appears at her side, just in time to join the fight.

Emaliza keeps *mage armor* active at all times; it's listed as one of her 8th-level spells but has already been cast for the day.

EMALIZA ZANDIVAR CREATURE 20

UNIQUE LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +36

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Kelish, Osiriani, Ignan, Infernal, Undercommon


Skills Acrobatics +32, Arcana +41, Deception +38, Dragon Lore +32, Intimidation +38, Hermea Lore +38, Occultism +34, Society +34

Str +2, **Dex** +8, **Con** +5, **Int** +10, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +6


Items anklets of alacrity, Flawed Orb of Gold Dragonkind, ring of spell turning (arcane focus), +3 major striking staff, winged boots

AC 45; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +33, **Will** +36

HP 375

Contingency  **Trigger** Emaliza is attacked; **Effect** A 5th-level *dimension door* spell is cast on Emaliza; she uses this to escape an attack that she fears would incapacitate or kill her.

Speed 25 feet, fly 30 feet.


Melee  staff +31 (magical, two-hand d8), **Damage** 8d4+8 bludgeoning

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 45, attack +36; **10th** *remake, time stop*; **9th** *disjunction, implosion, massacre, prismatic sphere*; **8th** *contingency**, *horrid wilting, mage armor**, *uncontrollable dance*; **7th** *energy aegis, mask of terror, power word blind, warp mind*; **6th** *dominate, repulsion, spellwrack, true seeing*; **5th** *chromatic wall, dimension door**, *dispel magic, wall of stone*; **4th** *blink, dimension door, freedom of movement, suggestion*; **3rd** *nondetection, paralyze, slow, vampiric touch*; **2nd** *dispel magic, invisibility, mirror image, resist energy*; **1st** *command, fear, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips (10th)** *acid splash, detect magic, electric arc, prestidigitation, read aura, shield*


*This spell has been cast already.

Arcane Rituals DC 45; *freedom, legend lore, planar binding*

Wizard School Spells DC 45, 3 Focus Points; **10th** *energy absorption, protective ward*

Drain Bonded Item  **Frequency** once per day; **Requirements** Emaliza hasn't acted yet on this turn; **Effect** Emaliza can cast one prepared spell she has already cast today without spending a spell slot.

She must still Cast the Spell and meet the spell's other requirements.

Warded Casting  **Frequency** once per round; **Trigger** Emaliza Casts a Spell; **Effect** Emaliza's magic creates a small defensive aura around her. She gains 20 temporary Hit Points and resistance 20 to either acid, cold, electricity, or fire damage. The defensive aura remains until the beginning of her next turn.

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INIZRA ARUMELO

Ever hopeful, the captain of Promise's guard hopes to steer the city toward becoming a true haven for good. She sees Mengkare as someone who has lost his way and hopes to return him to the path of righteousness.

Inizra Arumelo was born to a family of warriors in the Taldan city of Cassomir in 4695 AR. Her family dedicated themselves to becoming renowned sellswords throughout Taldor and the surrounding region, offering their services to any nobles willing to pay the family's hefty fees. This spread members of her family throughout the region, each serving separate houses and coming together only after their duties were complete—or in the unfortunate situation where conflict brought two opposing houses to blows.

Inizra shared her relatives' ambitions and aimed to follow in her family's footsteps, training alongside her siblings and cousins under the tutelage of her uncle Bronthum, a local hero famed for his skill with a shield and blade. Inizra proved herself a fast learner and dedicated student, quickly becoming one of the most promising warriors of her generation. Having already served in minor bodyguard roles, Inizra was preparing to become a full-time guard for a noble house in Druma when she received a letter from Hermea penned by Mengkare himself.

The letter noted her combat prowess and lauded her connection with the rest of the Arumelo family before inviting Inizra to join Mengkare and the people of Promise. Inizra was initially hesitant about the invitation, but her uncle encouraged her to honestly consider the request. Although arrangements had been made for Inizra's employment in Druma, she still had time to step back from that position if she desired. After serious consideration, she agreed to join the Glorious Endeavor, inspired by the good her uncle had done as a local figure in Cassomir. She believed that if she could follow in his footsteps, then she would be able to make a great impact on the world.

After tearful goodbyes, Inizra set off for Hermea, intending to never return to Cassomir. When she arrived, she found herself in awe of the city that Mengkare had built and volunteered for every opportunity to learn from the greatest minds in Promise, only to be taken aback when Mengkare explained that she was an equal in Hermea and her skill and knowledge should be

considered just as valuable as anyone else's. Inspired by the dragon's words, Inizra became a diligent student and an invaluable member of Promise. After just a few years, she joined up with the city guard, moved up through the ranks on her merits, and helped train the guard using the techniques she had learned from her uncle.

Inizra's initiative and progress within Promise's guard impressed Mengkare. He personally guided her training, hoping to mold her into an exemplar of martial prowess in the city. As he learned more about her, he began to believe that she shared his convictions regarding the Glorious Endeavor. While he saw her as a spirited individual hoping to do the best for the world, his cynicism for those that had failed to embrace his vision compelled him to test her. He offered her a chance to choose a mate, something that Mengkare would normally simply choose himself. Inizra was taken aback by Mengkare's words, recognizing how rare it was in Hermea for Mengkare to offer an individual autonomy over any aspect of their life, but she nevertheless refused, seeing the choice as irrelevant. Pleased at this outcome, Mengkare decided that Inizra would be a perfect fit for the Council of Enlightenment.

When the yearly nominations came around, Inizra was elated at the news of her nomination for the council. She thanked Mengkare again, her gratitude only cementing Mengkare's esteem. It was soon after she accepted this role that she met another of Mengkare's favorites—an elven scholar named Jonivar, who had been recruited to help Mengkare research elven magic. Inizra initially began meeting with Jonivar to work with him to developing what she intended to be a new city guard division focused on arcane magic, but as they two worked together, two significant developments occurred. First, her philosophical discussions with Jonivar on the nature of family and freedom kindled homesickness for Taldor and her family, and cast into doubt her opinions on the Glorious Endeavor. Secondly, she found herself falling in love with Jonivar. When she confessed her feelings to him and tried to explain that they needed to

inform Mengkare, Jonivar confessed his own feelings for her. Their resulting conversation brought a swift change to Inizra's opinions on Promise, and she found herself wondering if Mengkare's control over the city's populace was a mistake.

Then Jonivar went missing. Inizra began to investigate his disappearance, and in time she secured a meeting with Mengkare to ask what had happened to her elven friend. During the discussion, she brought up the dragon's earlier offer, saying she had decided to choose her own mate. She was shocked when Mengkare denied her permission, and grew increasingly suspicious when the dragon told her Jonivar's services to the city had finished and he had been sent back home. Since then, Inizra dug deeper, and what she's started to uncover worries her all the more. Not only is she convinced Jonivar never left the island, but she's begun to fear that Mengkare himself has become corrupted, and that his true plans for Promise are anything but just.

Campaign Role

Inizra is starting to see evidence of Mengkare's corruption, but she still believes the Glorious Endeavor can be salvaged. What she's learned so far about Mengkare's plans, including brief snippets about the *Anima Invocation*, have only increased her concern and her convictions.

INIZRA ARUMELO

CREATURE 20

UNIQUE LG MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +36

Languages Common, Draconic

Skills Arcana +32, Athletics +38, Diplomacy +38, Hermea Lore +41, Medicine +34, Society +38

Str +7, **Dex** +1, **Con** +5, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Items +3 greater resilient full plate, potion of flying (4), +3 major striking returning spear, supreme sturdy shield (Hardness 20, HP 160, BT 80)

AC 46 (48 with shield raised); **Fort** +36, **Ref** +33, **Will** +31
HP 375

Boundless Reprisals Inizra gains a reaction at the start of each enemy's turn that she can use only during that turn.

Paragon's Guard Stance Inizra always has her shield raised as if she had used the Raise a Shield action, as long as she meets that action's requirements.

Attack of Opportunity Inizra can use Attack of Opportunity when a creature within her reach uses a concentrate action, in addition to its normal trigger. She can disrupt triggering concentrate actions, and she disrupts actions on any hit, not just a critical hit.

Mirror Shield See page 151 of the Core Rulebook.

Shield Block

Speed 30 feet

Melee spear +38, **Damage** 6d6+20 piercing

Ranged spear +38 (thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 6d6+8 piercing

Weapon Supremacy Inizra is permanently quickened 1. She can use her extra action only to Strike.

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MENGKARE

Intent on living up to his own unrealistic expectations as a force for good in Golarion, the gold dragon Mengkare has fallen far from his original intentions.

Mengkare's parents made sure he knew that he was to help the other people of Golarion, particularly humans, in hopes of bringing out the best in everyone he met. The young gold dragon took to these early lessons well, only for them to be torn apart bit by bit by the cruelties of the world over the course of the centuries to come.

The first and perhaps most bitter of these lessons came when Mengkare and his parents were magically controlled by the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*. The resulting draconic uprising came to be known as the Dragon Plague, and as heroes rose up to save Taldor, Mengkare's parents were slain by dragonslayers while he was himself banished to the Wastelands of Axis by the violet ray of a *prismatic spray*.

His grief at losing his family transformed into a simmering disappointment in humanity. The concept of how free will seemed to engender tragedy increasingly intrigued Mengkare. As his years on Axis reached the century mark and then beyond, Mengkare grew jaded and came to the conclusion that merely doing good was not enough to help the world. Not long after, Mengkare returned to Golarion and lived his life among humans to better understand them.

Mengkare's travels during this time led him to join the Shining Crusade, where he witnessed the atrocities of humanity manifest in the lich Tar-Baphon. Mengkare fled to Hermea, only to return to Avistan to face the wizard Ilgreth, who had gained control of the *Orb of Gold Dragonkind*. Ilgreth used the orb to dominate Mengkare, and for some time the dragon found himself once again enslaved. When he was able to break free of the influence, his destruction of the orb resulted in the eruption of Droskar's Crag and countless deaths. Mengkare fled the mainland once again to lick his wounds on Hermea with the shattered remnants of the orb, where he spent many more years justifying the sacrifice of all those who perished in the volcanic eruption as a necessary price to secure the destruction of an object that had twice ruined his life and forced him to do evil. It was during this dark period of his life that Mengkare began to

use the phrase, "Tomorrow must burn so the days thereafter can prosper" as justification for his actions.

When he discovered the manifestation of Dahak trapped in Alseta's Ring, Mengkare took that phrase to heart, beginning the Glorious Endeavor with the secret goal of building up the perfect supply of perfect souls to weaponize against the dragon god. Since starting the Glorious Endeavor, however, Mengkare has increasingly lost sight of the tragic part of his plan and now sees himself as a self-appointed savior of Golarion. He believes that completing the Glorious Endeavor and destroying the manifestation of Dahak is the only act that would live up to the unrealistic expectations he set for himself. Mengkare is now committed to see the Glorious Endeavor through until the end, even if it means that he has to commit increasingly unscrupulous acts in the process. He believes the ends justify whatever means he takes to reach them and is willing to dispose of anyone that could pose a threat to his goal. As ever, tomorrow must burn so the days thereafter can prosper.

Campaign Role

Mengkare is the greatest force standing between the PCs and the manifestation of Dahak. Mengkare is so dedicated to the Glorious Endeavor that he sees the PCs as competition for the glory he believes himself entitled to. Mengkare is not entirely cruel and uncaring, however, and he still cares for the people of Promise, if only as a dog breeder cares for the kennel. His change in alignment to evil was a long time coming, and recent enough that, with the right argument from player characters, it can be reversed—but direct confrontation with a party of PCs eager to fight him only cements his opinion that tomorrow must burn.

MENGKARE

CREATURE 23

UNIQUE LE GARGANTUAN DRAGON FIRE

Male great wyrm gold dragon (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 124)

Perception +40; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 120 feet

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnomish, Infernal, Sylvan, Utopian

Skills Acrobatics +32, Arcana +38, Athletics +36, Diplomacy +43, Intimidation +43, Medicine +36, Nature +32, Occultism +38, Society +43

Str +11, **Dex** +5, **Con** +9, **Int** +8, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +7

AC 50; **Fort** +37, **Ref** +34, **Will** +42; +2 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 575; **Immunities** fire, paralyzed, sleep; **Weaknesses** cold 25

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 90 feet, DC 43

Extra Reaction Mengkare gains 2 reactions at the start of his turn each round.

Attack of Opportunity ⤴ Jaws only.

Contingency ⤴ **Trigger** Mengkare fails a saving throw against a spell. **Effect** *Dispel magic* (7th level) attempts to counteract the triggering spell.

Golden Luck ⤴ As adult gold dragon.

Speed 60 feet, fly 200 feet, swim 60 feet

Melee ⤴ jaws +42 (fire, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 6d12+11 piercing plus 4d6 fire

Melee ⤴ claw +42 (agile, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 6d10+11 slashing

Melee ⤴ tail +40 (magical, reach 25 feet), **Damage** 6d10+11 slashing

Melee ⤴ horns +40 (agile, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 5d12+11 piercing

Arcane Innate Spells DC 45, attack +42; **10th** *contingency**, *wish*; **9th** *disjunction*, *meteor swarm*, *telepathic demand*; **8th** *dream council*, *maze*, *power word stun*; **7th** *dimensional lock*, *dispel magic**, *plane shift*; **6th** *dominate*, *true seeing*, *wall of force*; **5th** *chromatic wall*, *mind probe*, *sending*; **4th** *creation*, *dimension door*, *suggestion*; **3rd** *dream message*, *locate*, *slow*; **2nd** *comprehend language*, *invisibility*, *water breathing*; **1st** *charm*, *magic missile*, *unseen servant*; **Cantrips** (10th) *daze*, *detect magic*, *forbidding word*, *prestidigitation*, *read aura*

*This spell has been cast already.

Arcane Rituals DC 45; *animate object*, *Anima Invocation*, *geas*, *imprisonment*, *inveigle*, *legend lore*, *resurrect*

Breath Weapon ⤴⤴ As a young gold dragon, but an 80-foot cone, DC 46. Mengkare's flame deals 24d6 fire damage, and his weakening gas causes enfeebled 4 (enfeebled 5 on a critical failure).

Change Shape ⤴ (arcane, concentrate, polymorph, transmutation) Mengkare assumes a Medium humanoid form, posing as the human wizard Lamond Breachton.

Draconic Frenzy ⤴⤴ As young gold dragon.

Draconic Momentum As young gold dragon.

Explosive Breath When Mengkare uses *Breath Weapon*, he can expel an explosive orb of flame instead of a cone. When he does, he fires the orb at the corner of a square within 60 feet.

The orb immediately detonates and deals 24d6 fire damage (DC 48 basic Reflex save) to all creatures within a 30-foot burst. Creatures that critically fail their save catch on fire and take 4d6 persistent fire damage.

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THE SHOW MUST GO ON

by Jason Tondro

In the remote town of Abberton, the Circus of Wayward Wonders is about to put on its first show when the ringmaster is found dead. With the livelihood of their fellow circus performers on the line, the heroes must scramble to put on a successful show and find the killer before she strikes again. Their investigations uncover demonic infiltrators, corruption in a local hermitage, and a plot by subterranean horrors to extinguish the magical beacon that gives Abberton its bounty.

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Brynne Taithe

Breachhill features several taverns, yet Cayden's Keg may be the most popular of them all. Its proprietor and primary bartender Brynne is also its head priestess, for the tavern doubles as a temple to her god, Cayden Cailean. Brynne enjoys hearing stories of daring adventures, viewing such tales as offerings to Cayden. As a result, she welcomes all who step foot into her tavern and temple, knowing that judging a person by their appearance is a surefire way to miss out on what might be her next favorite story—and perhaps even her next best friend! Brynne can serve as a trainer for Performance or Religion at Citadel Altaerein.



Jorell Blacktusk

Jorell has become one of Breachhill's most important historians, a role he's quite proud of having achieved—even if he reached it quite by accident. When he first began working in the town's archives, he was curious about his own ancestry, but it wasn't long before he grew fascinated with the entire town's history. He views the town's founder as a personal hero and hopes to carry forward Lamond Breachton's goal of teaching others to support not only themselves but their neighbors. Jorell sees the curation of the town's historical documents as the best route to success for this plan, and by preserving Breachhill's triumphs and tragedies, Jorell hopes to learn from the past and use that knowledge to educate tomorrow's citizens. Jorell has become a master bookbinder as well, and he can serve as a bookmaker for Citadel Altaerein.



Vengegate

Vengegate appears somewhat undecorated compared to the other *aiudara* of Alseta's Ring, with its upper frame appearing a bit austere. Images of the open sea with a cloudy horizon decorate its sides, but close inspection reveals numerous tiny carvings of wasps, realized in meticulous detail, adorning the entire archway. Once noticed, the wasps are hard to unsee, and what first appeared as a plain stone arch thereafter seems to buzz with insectile activity as the wasp carvings shift and change position after even a brief moment's glance away. A PC who studies Vengegate and succeeds at a DC 15 Religion check to Recall Knowledge recognizes these wasps are sacred animals to the goddess Calistria, yet little else about the carvings suggests anything particularly related to her worship. Vengegate leads to the island of Hermea, but before the PCs can use this portal to travel to Mengkare's domain, they must deal with the manifestation of Dahak preparing to emerge from the prison plane within. When the PCs first activate the gate in Chapter 1 of this adventure, the wasps decorating the arch visibly buzz and crawl in agitation until Dahak's manifestation is defeated, at which point Vengegate may be used safely.



ADVENTURE

PORTALS TO THE APOCALYPSE

The city of Promise was founded in order to create a utopia, but the revelation of a sinister agenda pursued by the city's highest authority could spell disaster. With knowledge of the conspiracy, the PCs must find a way to navigate the complex politics of a city ruled by a dragon—while simultaneously enduring in the face of the growing fury of a dragon god! The Age of Ashes Adventure Path concludes with “Broken Promises,” a complete adventure for 18th- to 20th-level characters.



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